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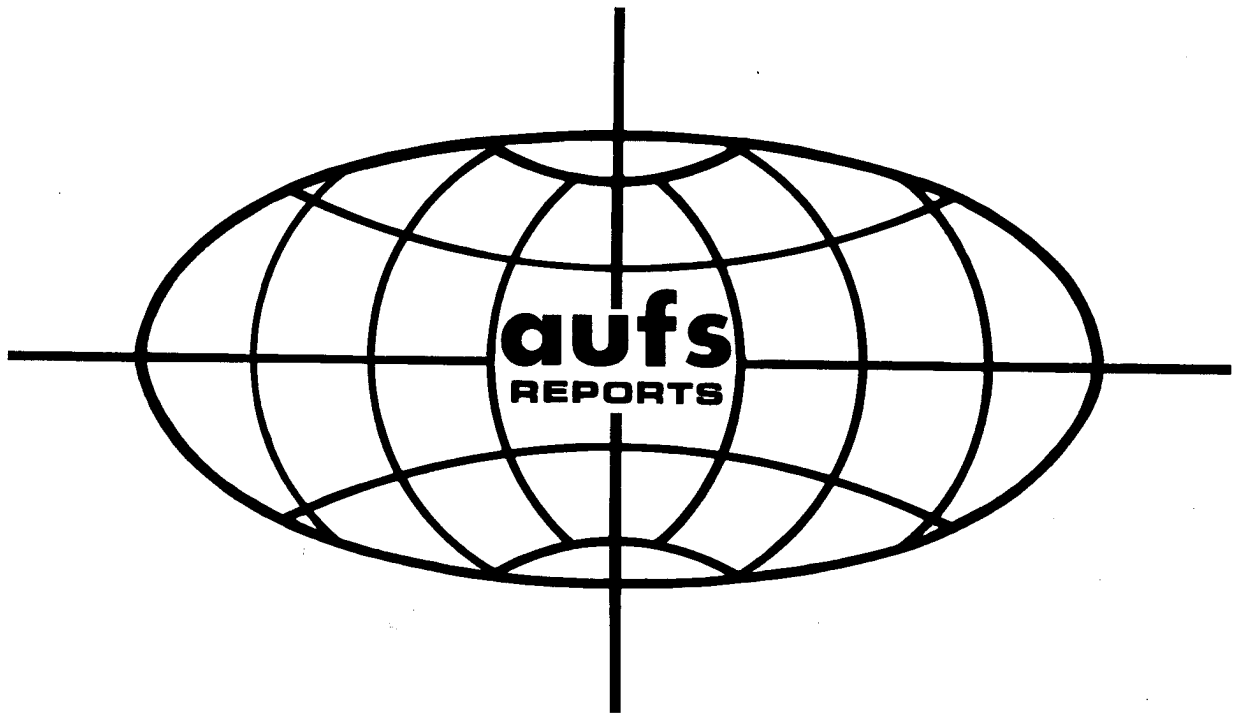
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THE "MACEDONIAN QUESTION" NEVER DIES

by Dennison I. Rusinow

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TEG C. GRONDAHL
Executive Director



DENNISON I. RUSINOW, who writes from Yugoslavia on Eastern Europe, has maintained an interest in Adriatic Europe since 1952, when he specialized in the problems of the Habsburg Successor States as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University and traveled

in this connection to Vienna, Trieste, and Belgrade. He returned to the area in 1956 as an officer of the United States Sixth Fleet. In 1958 he was awarded a fellowship by the Institute of Current World Affairs, and after a year's residence in Vienna he moved to St. Antony's College, Oxford, where he continued his study of recent Italian, Yugoslav, and Austrian history. He holds a B.A. from Duke University, and an M.A. and D.Phil. from Oxford. While at Oxford, Mr. Rusinow held an appointment as Extraordinary Lecturer at New College, teaching modern history, international relations, and political institutions. He joined the AUFS in 1963.

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THE "MACEDONIAN QUESTION" NEVER DIES

The San Stefano Trauma Again—or When Is a Macedonian Bulgarian?

by Dennison I. Rusinow

Belgrade

March 1968

It will never appear on a Balkan calendar of coming cultural or political events, but it is almost as certain to occur as the Dubrovnik Festival or the Plovdiv Fair. The "Macedonian Question"—that ninety-year-old territorial, political, and cultural dispute involving Bulgaria, Serbia (later Yugoslavia), sometimes Greece, and even Albania—is a hardy perennial of the Balkan scene, and one that can be counted on to continue to produce irredentist claims, the adventurous speculations of outside Great Powers, terrorism and assassination, and/or the lately more popular if less spectacular offering, an efflorescence of scholarly and pseudo-scholarly polemics focused on the sensitive question: is there a Macedonian nation?

In the winter of 1967-68 the polemical harvest was larger and richer than in any recent year—one of the few sectors, a Belgrade cynic has been heard to say, in which both Yugoslavia and Bulgaria have exceeded planned production figures. Many foreign and domestic observers have consequently been speculating about the motivations and intentions of both the attack and the verbal counterattack. Are the Bulgars really raising a territorial issue again? Or is there a simpler, domestic reasons for the apparent Bulgarian press campaign? If so, why are the Yugoslavs making such a fuss? Are there other, domestic reasons for their apparently exaggerated response? What sinister role, if any, are the Russians playing?

The occasion for the latest revival of the Macedonian question has been provided by the ninetieth anniversary of the signing on March 3, 1878, of the Russo-Turkish Treaty of San Stefano, which liberated Bulgaria from Ottoman rule. In preparation for the anniversary, a series of commemorative articles appeared in various Bulgarian periodicals in December 1967 and January 1968; and several familiar themes, to

which the Yugoslavs are known to be hypersensitive, have been replayed: heroes and events which in Yugoslavia are claimed as "Macedonian" are listed as "Bulgarian"; the anniversary of the Ilinden revolt of 1903 against the Turks, which took place on the soil of present-day Yugoslav Macedonia, is claimed as a Bulgarian holiday; Ohrid, in western Yugoslav Macedonia, is described as a Bulgarian bishopric, one of Bulgaria's three historic capitals, and a proud center of Bulgarian culture.

Most specifically and alarmingly, the frontiers of the Treaty of San Stefano's Bulgaria, which would have included all of Yugoslav Macedonia and parts of southern Serbia, eastern Albania, and Greek Macedonia, are considered to have been the "just" and "ethnic" frontiers of the Bulgarian nation. The Congress of Berlin, by revising the San Stefano dispensation, therefore committed an injustice: "The Bulgarian state could not gain her national frontiers," a Sofia professor wrote in the Bulgarian Communist party's official newspaper, Rabotnichesko Delo, on January 12, 1968, "because under the Berlin Agreement parts of what are unquestionably parts of the Bulgarian nation remained as vassals under the Sultan (southern Bulgaria, Macedonia, etc.). New struggles and progressive wars had to be started for their liberation and unification, which, however, could not be realised in full because of the corruption of the dynasty and the ineffectiveness of Bulgarian diplomacy."¹

The existence of a separate "Macedonian" nation is thus explicitly denied, and the territory of Yugoslav Macedonia is implicitly still Bulgaria irredenta.

The Yugoslav press reacted strongly. Questions were asked in Parliament; and in Yugoslav Macedonia the republican legislature, the Central Committee of the League of Communists, and the republican executive of the Socialist Alliance all debated the problem and passed resolutions, as did the Federal Conference of the Socialist Alliance in Belgrade.² On January 22 the Bulgarian Ambassador to Yugoslavia was summoned to the Foreign Ministry to hear a formal protest from Deputy Foreign Minister Miša Pavičević; but in February the Belgrade press complained that the Bulgarian campaign had not abated.

Press polemics on the Macedonian question are hardly novel, even in the period of improved Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations that began after Nikita Khrushchev passed the word to Sofia in April 1962; for in the past thirty months alone, according to my certainly incomplete file, the subject has come up on at least seven different occasions. This time, however, the Bulgarian attitude appears to the Yugoslavs to be more "official," because the leading role in advertising it has been played by official party and army publications like Rabotnichesko Delo and Narodna Armija, as

well as by such more traditional if less authoritative vehicles as the review Slavljani. The Yugoslavs have also noted, with apprehension, that the Bulgarian position appears to enjoy a new Soviet "imprimatur" in the form of a third volume of The Liberation of Bulgaria from Turkish Oppression, covering the period of the Berlin Congress and written cooperatively by a group of four Soviet and three Bulgarian historians, which was published in Moscow early in 1968.

For a detached foreign observer, the answer is deceptively simple. The Bulgars are historically correct; it is difficult, unless one juggles the sources, to speak of a Macedonian national consciousness or therefore of a Macedonian nation in 1878 or 1903. But the Yugoslavs are politically correct, for in terms of most accepted definitions, including classical Marxist ones, both a Macedonian nation and a national consciousness do exist today. Therefore, the Yugoslavs feel that they may legitimately query the intentions of those who again publicly challenge the existence of this nation, even though they use perfectly valid historical arguments, within the context of a campaign to "put patriotism on the agenda" (as one Belgrade journalist phrased it) for a new generation of Bulgars.

The distinction between historical and political justifiability is not made—and perhaps it cannot be—by the Yugoslav press. There was a hint of it, however, in a dispatch from the Moscow correspondent of Politika (Belgrade) on February 12, 1968, in which, in commenting on the new third volume of The Liberation of Bulgaria from Turkish Oppression, he complained not about the reproduction of historical documents in which Macedonians of the 1870's called themselves Bulgars and demanded union with Bulgaria, but about the failure of the Soviet and Bulgarian editors to add any commentary or footnote disclaiming contemporary validity in 1968 for such an identification.

From San Stefano to Bled and Back Again

The piece of Balkan geography historically called "Macedonia" belonged to the Ottoman Empire from the fourteenth century until its "liberation" in the First Balkan War of 1912-13. Since then, like ancient Gaul, it has been divided in three parts: 52 per cent of the total area belongs to Greece ("Aegean Macedonia"), 38 per cent to Yugoslavia ("Vardar Macedonia"), and 10 per cent to Bulgaria ("Pirin Macedonia," or in recent official Bulgarian terminology, the "District of Blagoevgrad").³

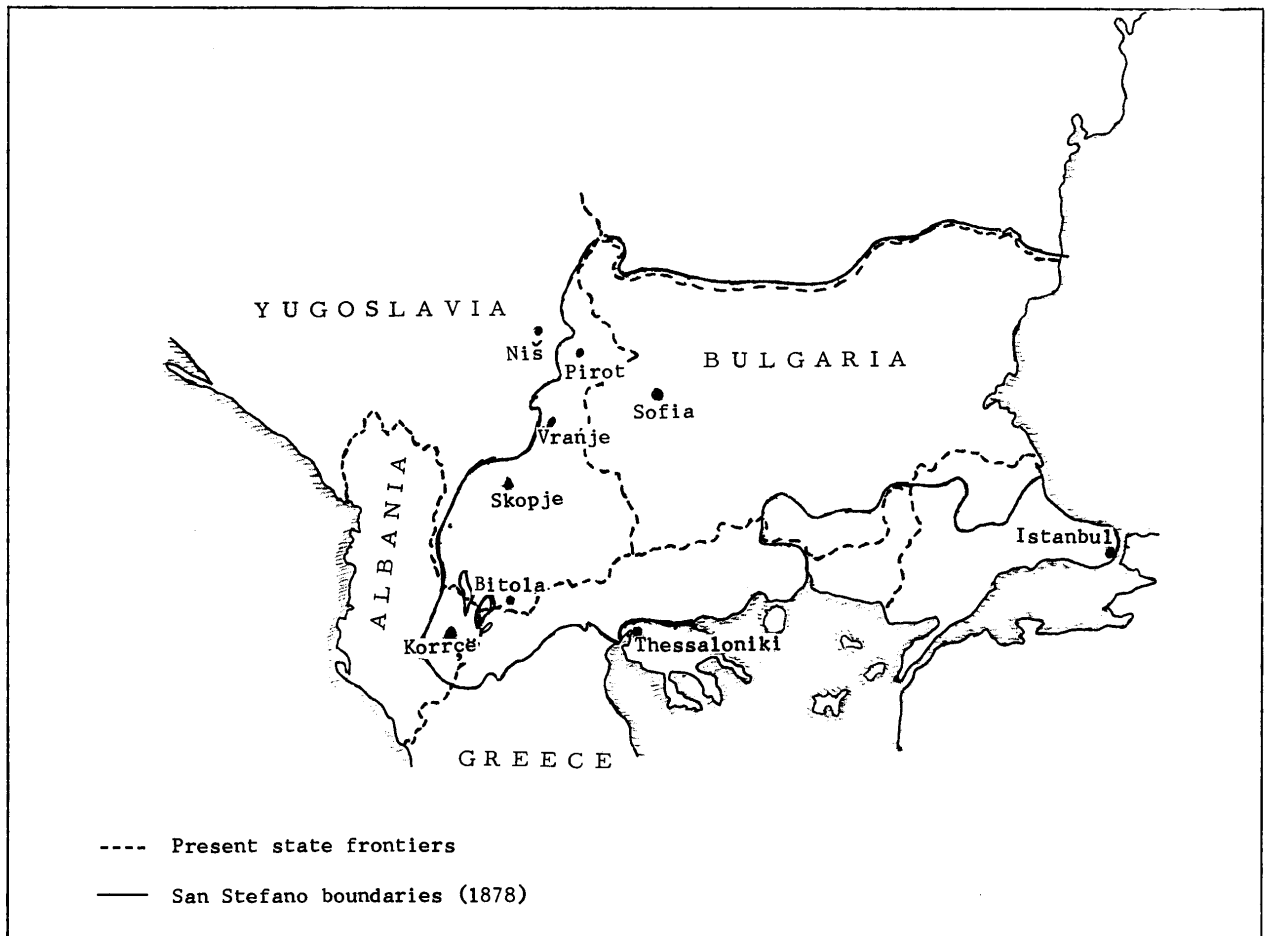
It is impossible to arrive at a genuinely objective determination of the ethnic structure, because many of the inhabitants are not quite certain what to call themselves and therefore tend to shift their national

allegiance to suit the prevailing political winds in the districts where they live. In Bulgaria's Pirin Macedonia, for example, out of a total population of 281,000 inhabitants, there were 188,000 "Macedonians" recorded in the 1956 census, but only 8,750 "Macedonians" in the census of 1965. The one certainty is that the population of Aegean Macedonia (now 1.7 million in all) is overwhelmingly Greek—at least since the Greek-Bulgarian population transfers following World War I and the exodus of thousands of the remaining "Slavophones" after the Greek civil war ended in 1949—while there are almost no Greeks in Yugoslavia or the Pirin district. A sizable Turkish minority, the residue of the Ottoman Empire, is scattered throughout Vardar Macedonia (where there were 131,000 Turks of a total population of 1.4 million in the 1961 Yugoslav census), and Albanians (183,000 in 1961) constitute local majorities in several western districts.

Most of the rest of the inhabitants of Vardar and Pirin Macedonia are Slavs, the overwhelming majority of whom speak a South Slavic language, or dialect, roughly halfway between Serbo-Croatian and Bulgarian, but somewhat closer to the latter. Before 1870 most of these Slavs who called themselves anything at all seem to have referred to themselves as "Greeks," which was primarily a religious identification with the then Greek-dominated Orthodox Christian Church in European Turkey. (By the same religious logic, the Serbo-Croatian-speaking and undeniably Slavic Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Sandjak are even today often bewilderingly referred to—and refer to themselves—as "Turks"; the resulting confusion in their own minds still sometimes leading them to emigrate to Turkey!)⁴ However, after the establishment of a separate Bulgarian Orthodox Exarchate in 1870, the Greek and Bulgarian churches competed for the loyalty of these Macedonian Slavs, and those who chose the Exarchate came to call themselves Bulgars; as theretofore they had been Slavs without a specific national consciousness, it was then a short and easy step from a religious allegiance to ethnic identification.

The misery of the Christian peoples of European Turkey had meanwhile led to uprisings in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Bulgaria, bringing Russia, Serbia, Montenegro and Rumania into war with Turkey in 1877. The peace treaty subsequently imposed on the Turks by the victorious Russians, and signed at San Stefano on March 3, 1878, created a "Greater Bulgaria" which included all of the disputed ethnic patchwork of geographic Macedonia, except for a few southern Greek communes, plus the Pirot and Vranje districts of today's southern Serbia and the Kõrrçë region of southeastern Albania.

This Bulgaria, created by the Treaty of San Stefano, however, is a state that never was; for, as everyone who has ever taken a course in modern European history knows, the other great powers, alarmed at the



prospect of a Russian-satellite Bulgaria dominating the Balkan peninsula and both approaches to the Turkish straits, forced the Russians to the conference table again. At the Congress of Berlin, three months after the signing of the Treaty of San Stefano, Greater Bulgaria was undone: Macedonia was returned to the Sultan and inner Bulgaria itself was partitioned into an autonomous principality in the north, open to Russian influence, and a semi-autonomous Turkish province of "Eastern Rumelia" in the south, with a Christian governor appointed by the Sublime Porte. The partition of inner Bulgaria was ended eight years later, after the Bulgars themselves defied all the powers (including Russia) by annexing Eastern Rumelia; but Macedonia remained unhappily Turkish for another generation, coveted in whole or in part by Bulgaria, Serbia, and Greece.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the Greeks were no longer serious contenders for the national allegiance of the Slavs of today's Vardar and Pirin Macedonia. Their place as the competitor of the Bulgars had been taken by the Serbs, who temporarily turned the main focus of their own aspiration for national expansion from their kinsmen in Bosnia-Herzegovina (under Austro-Hungarian occupation after 1878) to their kinsmen in what they came to call "South Serbia." If the Bulgars could reinforce a somewhat dubious ethnic claim to Vardar Macedonia with memories of the First and Second Bulgarian Empires and a Bulgarian capital and cultural and religious center at Ohrid, the Serbs could support an even more dubious ethnic claim with their more recent memories of the fourteenth-century Empire of Tsar Stevan Dušan, who had been crowned at Skopje. Great power politics also played a role: from the 1880's until after 1903 Serbia was a client state of Austria-Hungary, encouraged by Vienna to expend Serbian irredentist energies in the south rather than in Austrian-occupied Bosnia; while Bulgaria was considered (not always correctly) a Russian satellite, supporting Russian interests in seeking to restore the territorial dispensation of San Stefano. The Hapsburg Drang nach Südosten and the Russian thrust toward warm seas—those two over-worked favorites of the geopoliticians—intersected in Macedonia. The habit of looking for machinations of the great powers behind any revival of the Macedonian question, noticeable again in recent weeks, has a long and respectable past.

Like all such ethnic contests of the period (for example, those along the borderlands of the German and Italian nations, in Carinthia, Styria, West Hungary, Istria, the Italian Tyrol, etc.), the Serbo-Bulgar competition was waged with the aid of rival schools, churches, reading rooms, and cultural societies. But in the Balkans, under Turkey, the struggle also inevitably assumed more violent organizational forms: e.g., the notorious Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, known as IMRO, was founded in the 1890's to foment terrorism and an

eventual armed rising. From the beginning and throughout its long and faction-ridden history, there were always two currents in IMRO, one aspiring to a Bulgarian annexation and the other dreaming of an autonomous Macedonia; some adherents of the latter current eventually became Communists and the protagonists of today's (Yugoslav) Socialist Republic of Macedonia. In this context, one must understand the contemporary Yugoslav-Bulgarian dispute over the relics of such IMRO heroes as Gotse Deltchev and of the IMRO-sponsored and unsuccessful "Ilinden" (St. Elias Day) revolution of 1903. Do they belong to Bulgaria or to Yugoslav Macedonia?

Propaganda, terrorism, and open rebellion had failed to liberate Macedonia. The joint intervention of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Emperors, in the form of the Mürzsteg agreement to impose reforms on the Sultan in order to de-fuse the "Balkan powder keg" after the Ilinden bloodletting, failed to ameliorate the condition of the Christian inhabitants of the unhappy province, and so did the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. When all else had failed, the aspirant Balkan states at last swallowed their rivalry and agreed to a joint attack on Turkey and a division of the territorial spoils, with the Bulgars scheduled to get the lion's share of Macedonia.⁵ The First Balkan War ended in victory for the Christian aggressors and the expulsion of Turkey from all but a toehold in Europe; however, Austria-Hungary and Italy then intervened to prevent Serbia from annexing northern Albania, which had been conquered by a Serbian army. The excuse given—and valid enough—was that the non-Slavic Albanians, too, should have a national state of their own, but a more serious reason was to prevent the landlocked Serbs from gaining access to the Adriatic, where the Austrians feared that a Serbian port might in reality be a Russian port. The Serbs demanded compensation from Bulgaria in the form of a larger share of Macedonia; the Bulgars demurred and launched a preventive war against their former allies—which they promptly lost.

In 1878 the Bulgars had been cheated of all of Macedonia and more; in 1913 they were cheated of most of Macedonia and were unconsolated by the small fragment, the Struma and Strumica valleys, that they did get. This bitterness has poisoned Bulgarian domestic and foreign politics ever since and was the major reason for their entering both World Wars on the German (because anti-Serb, anti-Yugoslav, and anti-Greek) side. It was, of course, also the losing side in both wars, but each time initial victories brought the Bulgars temporary occupation of most of the coveted terra irredenta, where their behavior, despite good intentions, did not increase the number of their supporters. On the other hand, the ethnic policies of the Serbs, who ruled Yugoslavia between the wars and who insisted that the Macedonians were also Serbs, do not seem to have won many friends there either.

Both Yugoslavia and Bulgaria emerged from World War II with new, revolutionary, Communist regimes; and it was generally assumed that both were satellites of the Soviet Union—a Stalinist realization of a Tsarist dream. This apparently identical status, plus a common and internationalist ideology, also suggested that a new and co-operative approach to the Macedonian question might be expected. The Third International had, after all, devoted much attention to national problems, including the Macedonian, and had evolved a consistent and generally liberal ideological position on the subject. For Marxist-Leninists, national conflicts are derivative, being either the reflection of class divisions along ethnic lines ("oppressor" and "oppressed" nations) or artificially engendered by rival national bourgeoisies in pursuit of narrow class interests. For Communists in power, the ideology prescribes a gingerly mixture of liberal cultural policies and strict party-political control in order to tame inherited acute ethnic divisions until such time as the successful building of socialism and liquidation of class enemies can render these divisions irrelevant and harmless.

Ideological principles, however, are always subject to varying interpretations under differing conditions and to tactical modifications; and in coping with the Macedonian question both the Yugoslav and Bulgarian Communist parties had long displayed an understandable tendency to favor interpretations which suited their distinct and basically contradictory national aspirations. During most of the interwar years, the Communist International had adopted a view which roughly accorded with the hopes of the Bulgarian party (incidentally, the most important of the Balkans), and the reluctant Yugoslav and Greek comrades were bullied and cajoled into agreeing, to the detriment of their domestic popularity. From 1923 until 1935 the Comintern declared itself in favor of an "autonomous and independent Macedonia and Thrace," implying the separation of these provinces from Yugoslavia and Greece, and also in favor of the eventual inclusion of this independent Macedonia in a federation of Balkan Communist republics, which more generally implied the total disintegration of Yugoslavia into its national components. Only after the Nazi threat became dominant, and the Comintern shifted to the advocacy of a Popular Front against fascism, did it seem expedient to favor the survival of Yugoslavia; and in the end it was the Germans and Italians, not the Communist International, who espoused and successfully exploited separatist movements in the South Slav state, and incidentally gave most of Yugoslav and Greek Macedonia to their Bulgarian ally.

During the war years, ironically, it was the Yugoslav Communists who found it to their interest to realize a modified version of the old Comintern answer to the Macedonian question: i.e., Yugoslavia itself should constitute that federation of Balkan Communist republics in embryo, on the basis of the autonomy of its major ethnic units, and Mace-

donia should be one of these republics. Politically, and even ideologically, this was a solution with much to commend it: if a Macedonian nation did not exist, it was necessary to invent one, because once Macedonians are neither Bulgars nor Serbs, but themselves, the ground has been cut out from under the poisonous rival irredentisms of Sofia and Belgrade. The "invention" of a Macedonian nation, autonomous within a federal Yugoslavia, was therefore designed to provide a definitive solution to the "Macedonian Question," liquidating a classic "powder keg of Europe" and taming the "Greater Serbian and Greater Bulgarian chauvinists" who had made life so unpleasant for so many people between the wars.

An autonomous republic might also prove tactically useful, incidentally, in weakening the position and appeal of those Macedonians, including most of IMRO and not a few leading Communists, who still preferred either incorporation in Bulgaria or an independent Macedonian state. Even on the presupposition of an Allied victory, without which there would be no more Yugoslavia, it was by no means a foregone conclusion that a restored Yugoslav state would include Vardar Macedonia. During the first years of the war, the Bulgarian and Yugoslav Communist parties had competed, like good bourgeois nationalists, for control of the Communist movement in the Vardar region, and for a time the Bulgars had the best of the argument. Indeed, it was not until the summer of 1943 that a Titoist Partisan armed rising, or even a Titoist Macedonian Communist party, could be organized in the Bulgarian-occupied south. There is also evidence that as late as 1946 some Macedonian separatists, Communist or otherwise, were still active in the region.

At least for a time, it was now Tito, and not the Bulgarian (or Greek) Communists, whose solution enjoyed the support of Stalin and even apparently of Georgi Dimitrov, the aging Bulgarian former head of the Comintern who returned after the war to become Prime Minister of his homeland; and on this basis Tito projected a larger design. It was only natural that an autonomous Macedonia should include all members of the Macedonian nation, and therefore natural that Vardar, Pirin, and eventually Aegean Macedonia should be reunited, but this time within a federal Yugoslavia. It would be equally natural that the Bulgars, linked to the Yugoslavs by blood and now also by ideology, should also join the federation, realizing at last the Land of (all) the South Slavs that nineteenth-century advocates of the Yugo-Slav idea had originally had in mind. Then perhaps one could think in terms of a wider confederation, including all the Communist republics of the Balkans

The history of this grand design, and of its failure, is the central theme of the well-known history of the Tito-Stalin quarrel. For present purposes it is only important to note that for four years, from 1944 to

1948, the Bulgarian Communist regime was forced to accept the Yugoslav argument that the Macedonians constitute a separate nation. They also actively, if reluctantly, prepared Pirin Macedonia for unification with Vardar Macedonia inside Yugoslavia, although they sought to postpone the evil day by insisting that unification could come only after federation between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. This was the substance of a Tito-Dimitrov agreement signed at Bled, in Slovenia, in August 1947, and re-affirmed in a Yugoslav-Bulgarian Treaty of Friendship signed at Sofia when Tito returned the visit the following November. Whenever the Bulgars have subsequently raised the ghost of San Stefano, the Yugoslavs reply by exhuming the Bled Agreement.

The best brief summary of the fluctuations in the Bulgarian regime's position on Macedonia since the end of World War II is that of Evangelos Kofos, in the conclusions to his valuable study of the problem, Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia:

In less than twenty years since liberation, the Bulgarian communists five times adopted totally contradictory views on the Macedonian issue. Thus, in 1944-1948 not only did they relinquish in favor of the Yugoslavs their territorial claims over Macedonia, but even accepted the Yugoslav theory that the Slav inhabitants of Macedonia as a whole were "Macedonian," i.e. a new ethnic group. Following the Tito-Cominform split—from 1948 to 1954—the Bulgarians passed to the offensive by advocating the establishment of a Bulgarian-sponsored Macedonian state within a Balkan communist federation. By official act, the "Macedonians" became Bulgarians again. Only when the new Soviet leadership thought it expedient to try to bring Tito back to the communist fold in 1955, did Bulgaria drop her pretensions over Macedonia and acquiesced to recognition of the existence of ethnic "Macedonians" even inside Bulgaria. But, this was only a short-lived retreat which lasted only for the duration of the new Soviet-Yugoslav rapprochement. In 1958, amidst sharp criticism of the Yugoslav "revisionists" by the entire Soviet bloc, the Bulgarians lost no time to declare their independence on the Macedonian issue, welcome back the "Macedonians" as "Bulgarians" and do away with the theory of the "Macedonian nationality". But Moscow's new international orientations brought

about a new reconciliation with Belgrade. As a result Sofia found itself abandoning the polemics on the Macedonian issue. There were indications that following the Tito-Zhivkov meeting in Belgrade in January 1963, the Bulgarians might harden their position to Yugoslav demands. However, Soviet-Yugoslav relations have not apparently reached perfection to compel the Bulgarians to decide definitely whether "Macedonians" do exist outside the People's Republic of Macedonia.⁶

Why Today's Polemics?

Kofos' summary was written in 1964. Since that time, as we have seen, polemics have not in fact been abandoned, nor have the Bulgars decided that "Macedonians" exist in Yugoslavia—much less in Bulgaria. In September 1965, Tito paid an official visit to Bulgaria. It was, significantly, the first time that he had been there since the meeting with Dimitrov in November 1947, although he had visited every other Eastern European Soviet ally at least once since the latest Soviet-Yugoslav rapprochement began in 1961. The Western press speculated that Macedonia had been discussed, although it was not mentioned in speeches or the communiqué; but on the way home, speaking in Pirot on the Yugoslav side of the border, Tito referred to difficulties that occur when "some historians write and interpret the history of our people according to their own will."

Minor press polemics continued at irregular intervals during the next two years, and in November 1966 there was a more serious incident when a delegation of Yugoslav Macedonian writers walked out of a meeting with Bulgarian writers in Sofia. The Macedonians were protesting the insistence of the Bulgars that their joint communiqué be published in Bulgarian and Serbo-Croatian, and not in Bulgarian and Macedonian; the Bulgars having refused to recognize the separateness (from Bulgarian) of the Macedonian language, even though it is the official language of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia, which their conference partners officially represented.

The Yugoslav press repeatedly denounced the head of the Bulgarian writers' association (an appointee of Prime Minister Todor Zhivkov), speaking of "deliberate political tendentiousness with clearly revanchist implications"; and the dispute was considered serious enough to bring Zhivkov to Belgrade in December 1966, on his way home from Budapest, for talks with Tito and the Yugoslav Macedonian party leader, Krste Crvenkovski. The New York Times quoted "an informed Communist source"

as saying that during the autumn of 1966 the Bulgarian Ambassador in Belgrade had been sending embassy officials to Yugoslav Macedonia to "study the conditions for the establishment of a separate Macedonian Socialist republic under Bulgarian guidance."⁷ In May 1967, during preparations for an official visit by Prime Minister Zhivkov to Belgrade (which was cut short by the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli war), Crvenkovski himself went to Sofia for further talks about the Macedonian problem.

Against this background, the intensity of the Yugoslav reaction to the present, more widespread, and higher-level series of verbal "attacks" by Bulgaria on the territorial integrity of their country is a little more understandable. Indeed, the Bulgarian polemics seemed the last straw — coming at the end of a year in which many Yugoslavs had become curiously hypersensitive to real or imagined "attacks" on their country and society from all sides.⁸

Bulgarian motives are more obscure, and from Belgrade one can only report Yugoslav speculations about them. Two simplistic explanations enjoy wide circulation. One holds that the Bulgarian regime is in trouble at home, where its enduring unpopularity has recently been aggravated by inflation, business stagnation, and comparisons with the relative independence and prosperity of all its neighbors; therefore, the rulers of Bulgaria, like good students of Bismarck, are distracting the attention of their people from domestic woes by drumming up a popular foreign issue and threat. The other explanation views the Russians as playing their Bulgarian pawn against the Yugoslavs as a reminder, on the eve of the Budapest preparatory conference for a world Communist conference, that there are ways and means of making life uncomfortable for Communist mavericks who do not play the game Moscow's way.

There are alternative explanations, related to the above but more sophisticated and not mutually exclusive; the difference between them depends on whether or not one chooses to include a Russian factor. According to Yugoslav officials who would like to play down wider or more alarming implications of the recent campaign, domestic considerations provide an adequate motivation, and involvement in polemics with Yugoslavs, although undesirable, has been something of an accidental by-product. The Bulgarian regime has lately engaged in a self-conscious and purposeful glorification of Bulgarian history. Party and government leaders are tired of being viewed, both at home and abroad, as puppets of the Soviet Union; and they have noted the success and popularity that neighboring regimes seem to have enjoyed because they identified themselves with the national aspirations and history of their peoples. They are therefore establishing a claim to being Bulgarian as well as Communist, socialist successors to Khan Krum, Samuilo, the Exarchate, and the

Bulgarian national revolutionaries of the nineteenth century. Given the nature of Bulgarian history, however, any glorification of it inevitably carries with it a head-on collision with Yugoslav historical sensitivities; and this is what happened in the winter of 1967-68.

Considering the need that Bulgarians should also feel for better relations with Yugoslavia, one at this point may ask why officials in Sofia have decided that the presumed domestic value of emphasizing San Stefano is worth the cost in terms of an inevitable Yugoslav reaction. The most common high-level Yugoslav answer is interesting: i.e., the Bulgars do not understand what is happening in Yugoslavia today; they are misinterpreting the current open Yugoslav debate about the role of the party and, especially, about internal inter-republican and inter-nationality relations—interpreting these as signs of Yugoslav weakness, even of a tendency toward the disintegration of the state. Therefore, they feel that they can, at the moment at least, challenge the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia with impunity, because the Yugoslavs are in no condition to react with more than verbal protests. They may also be speculating on the possibility that aggravated ethnic disputes within Yugoslavia really will lead to its disintegration, believing that it would therefore be useful to have another reminder of their latent claim to Vardar Macedonia on record.

The Yugoslavs who offer this interpretation would like, for obvious reasons, to leave the Russians out of the story, but this is not entirely easy. The arrangements for the celebration of the ninetieth anniversary of San Stefano, presumably including the scope and emphasis of publications about the event, were made by the Soviet-Bulgarian Friendship Association, a joint and official agency. It would be naïve to suppose that the Russian participants were either uninformed of Bulgarian plans or unaware of their implications, and that they did not enjoy some power of veto.

If Soviet knowledge and approval, if not instigation, are therefore clear, Soviet motivation is not. It is difficult to see what the Russians have to gain from an aggravation of Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations at the present time, despite the superficial attractiveness of the theory that the Russians would like to remind Belgrade of the trouble that they can make for Yugoslavia if they want to. Perhaps the explanation is to be found not in Soviet concern for their relations with Yugoslavia but for their relations with Bulgaria, their last reliable ally in Southeastern Europe. In keeping such an ally reliable—and also to forestall Bulgarian flirtations with an independent foreign policy in the style of Rumania or Yugoslavia—reminders of past Russian favors lavished on the Bulgars, at the expense of Serbs, Rumanians, and others, would not be amiss. As the Yugoslav press has noted, with sarcasm, San Stefano was not a Bul-

garian victory, but a Russian one bestowed on Bulgaria in the pursuit of Russian imperial interests.

The most that Yugoslav officials will say about a putative Soviet involvement in the present campaign is that the Russians have assured them through diplomatic channels that there is none. Still, the Yugoslavs wish they would say this publicly and in print.

Are Macedonians (Still) Bulgars?

If the more alarmist interpretations of Bulgarian intentions are correct, and the Bulgarians really are speculating on a second disintegration of Yugoslavia, seeing themselves as successors in Macedonia, then it would appear that the Bulgars continue to believe that most of the one million "Macedonians" of the Republic still consider themselves—or at least could be persuaded to consider themselves—Bulgarians.

It seems highly probable that the Bulgars are wrong in this evaluation, if indeed they do make it. ⁹ For a social scientist, in fact, the fascination of Macedonia lies in precisely the story of the "creation" of a "new" nation in Europe in the middle of the twentieth century, a complex process involving the interplay of emotional, historic, social, and political factors, personal ambitions, and the laws of bureaucracy and power. It is difficult to be categorical, because no really competent observer is also objective, but for many like myself, who hope to substitute objectivity for specialized competence, it is at least clear that most of our friends from the Vardar region now think of themselves as Macedonian and are proud of it.

Their defense of their new status continues to be directed not only against Bulgarian pretensions, but also against Serbian. Thus they were led, in defiance of their heretofore apparent economic community of interest with the other less-developed southern republics, into a de facto alliance with the developed republics, Croatia and Slovenia, and to introduce the economic reform of 1965 and the purge of the Serbian leader, Aleksandar Ranković, and his Serb-dominated political police in 1966.

Similarly, their struggle for a separate Macedonian Orthodox Church, partly successful in 1958 and completely so last year, dates back to 1944 and is by no means purely an "invention" of the regime and party to cater to their Macedonian comrades, as the Serbian Orthodox Church seems to want to believe. Even for non-religious Macedonians, an identity of ethnic and religious self-consciousness somehow still seems necessary: when they identified with the Greek Orthodox Church, they called

themselves Greeks; when they became Exarchists, they became Bulgars; the Serbian annexation of 1913 meant annexation by the Serbian Church. To put the seal on Macedonian nationhood it was therefore necessary to establish a Macedonian Church—or, more precisely and with a final touch of irony, to re-establish the ancient and autocephalous Archbishopric of Ohrid, which the Macedonians claim was Macedonian, although the Bulgars claim it was Bulgarian.

If excesses are committed these days, they are usually in the name of the Macedonian nation, and are directed against the minorities that comprise nearly 30 per cent of the population of the Republic. As the latest outbreak of Yugoslav-Bulgarian polemics over Bulgarian pretensions to Macedonia slowly passed from the front pages, a Plenum of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Macedonia met to consider the problem of "inter-nationality relations" inside the Republic. It seemed evident from the tone and content of the principal speeches that the trouble had been serious, and had revolved around the ancient dilemma of every new nation-state: if Macedonia is the land of Macedonians, how much toleration can there be for un-Macedonian behavior by members of minority groups, especially when the very existence of a Macedonian nation is still being challenged? The minorities—especially the most numerous, the Albanians (13 per cent) and Turks (9.3 per cent)—were assured that Macedonian would not be imposed on them as an exclusive state language, that they would not (or should not) be subject to discrimination in employment (the republic has the highest unemployment rate in Yugoslavia), and that Macedonia should be considered their home too.¹⁰

It would seem that some Macedonians are not only enjoying their sense of national identity, but are also demonstrating that they are not at the bottom of the ethnic pecking order. The last of the assurances given to the minorities also suggests, however, that another kind of worry may be bothering government and party leaders in Skopje. At the Plenum, Krste Crvenkovski made a point of attacking the concept of an ethnic "vertical link-up," which would lead members of each nationality, wherever they live, to look to their own political and cultural center. He cited the danger for Bosnia-Herzegovina, if the Bosnian Serbs were to look to Belgrade and the Bosnian Croats to Zagreb for leadership; but he seemed to be thinking of the 183,000 Macedonian Albanians, living for the most part in a compact area adjacent to the Autonomous Province of Kosovo-Metohija, where Albanians are in a majority and where recent reforms suggest that they may come to enjoy a genuine autonomy. Does Crvenkovski fear a demand from the Albanians of Tetovo, Gostivar, and Debar for annexation to the neighboring Province if the Macedonians do not treat them nicely?

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The Macedonians of Yugoslavia are still struggling with their identity and its implications. In the midst of such turmoil, it is pleasant to discover that at least some of them are at peace with themselves. I am thinking of several Macedonian friends—hardworking business people with a healthy Balkan interest in politics, but personally uninvolved. One has a brother living in Bulgaria, where he fled in the interwar years, and therefore is presumably a good Bulgar, but this does not matter; my friend and her family are happily Macedonian and laugh at Bulgarian pretensions. I recently asked them to whom they thought such contested historical personalities as Saints Kliment and Naum and historic monuments as Ohrid and Skopje belong? I thought that they would have to choose between the Bulgarians and the Macedonians, but they replied promptly, and apparently without political forethought: "To Old Slavonic culture—to the Slavs who wrested the Balkans from Byzantium." It seemed a sensible and conclusive answer.

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NOTES

1. As quoted by Nedeljne Informativne Novine (NIN), Belgrade, February 4, 1968.
2. A total of seventeen articles on the subject in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Skopje newspapers have come to my attention, but these are presumably only a representative fraction of the Yugoslav counterattack published since the beginning of 1968.
3. There is no statement about Macedonia that cannot be disputed by someone, a fact that holds true even for these percentages and names. It depends on what is included in the geographic definition, and whose labels are accepted.
4. According to Borba (Belgrade) March 10, 1968, some 350 Muslim families, made up of 4,000 members, who are not ethnically Turkish, have emigrated to Turkey in the past five years from the district of Rožaj (total population, 17,000!) in the Montenegrin Sandjak.
5. Actually, and of interest in the light of later developments, the secret territorial annex to the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty of alliance provided for partition of what is today the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia only if it should prove impossible to establish an autonomous state there, and stipulated that partition should be arbitrated by the Russian Tsar.
6. Evangelos Kofos, Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1964). Part Two of Kofos' book, from which I have borrowed heavily in writing this Report, is the best available study of the Macedonian question in later years and makes extensive use of previously unpublished documents. Also useful is Robert Lee Wolff's now classic survey, The Balkans in Our Time (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956); and for the earlier period (1878-1886), see Charles Jelavich, Tsarist Russia and Balkan Nationalism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962).
7. David Binder, "Ethnic Disputes Erupt in Balkans," New York Times, December 7, 1966.
8. See Dennison I. Rusinow, Ghosts That Haunt Yugoslavia's Foreign Policy (DIR-1-'68) and Tito Between Neo-Cominform and Neo-Nonalignment (DIR-2-'68), American Universities Field Staff Reports, Southeast Europe Series, Vol. XV, Nos. 1 and 2, February 1968.
9. At least some of the more qualified of them do not. One Western historian, recently resident in Sofia, reports that most of his colleagues accept the existence of a separate Macedonian nation today. As historians, their quarrel is with Yugoslav colleagues who want to project the existence of this nation back to the nineteenth century or even earlier.
10. See especially the Plenum speeches of Krste Crvenkovski and Vančo Apostolski in Nova Makedonija (Skopje), March 2 and 3, 1968, and Borba (Belgrade), March 3. The Plenum took a surprisingly mild line on the issue of "Greater Bulgarian chauvinism," which had been announced as the principal item on the agenda, but which was treated as a peripheral matter.

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