

INTENSIFICATION OF MACEDONIAN IDEOLOGY AT THE EU'S DOOR

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Abstract

The paper reflects on the rising wave of neo-Macedonianism in the Republic of North Macedonia (RNM). The author stipulates that this ideology is alive, resilient, and expressed in its most extreme forms. The paper suggests that the political institutions of the EU must be aware of the historical inaccuracies, misleading information, and perpetual violations of the Treaty of friendship, good-neighbourly relations, and cooperation. The author examines the anti-Bulgarian propaganda and all the political, historical, and social complication that such behavior can impose on Bulgarian-Macedonian relations. There is no doubt that the described political phenomena must be taken into consideration, having in mind the possible acceptance of RNM into the European Union.

Keywords: neo-Macedonianism, ideology, nationalism, national interest, European integration.

JEL: H70, H79, F53

Introduction

According to the agreement signed between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia (RNM) on 1 August 2017, a Joint Expert Committee for clarifying what the two neighboring countries share in common in their history was established (TFGC, 2017). From the very beginning the Macedonian participants in this political instrument showed hesitation when assessing the realities related to the past. When the discussions reached the assessment of Gotse Delchev's life and deed, the Macedonian participants did not accept at all the indisputable facts about his Bulgarian family origin. They failed to admit the truths that G. Delchev studied only in Bulgarian schools, that he wrote only in literary Bulgarian and more than once expressed the opinion that he is Bulgarian by nationality. Therefore at the sixth meeting of the Committee that was held in Sofia at the end of September 2019, the Committee's work was practically blocked².

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² These data have been provided to the Bulgarian public by the head of the Bulgarian part from the members of the mixed committee Professor Angel Dimitrov during the meeting-

However, in Skopje a new document also appeared pompously entitled Open Letter, written by the *intellectuals* in Skopje. It was published in the newspaper with the highest circulation in the Republic of North Macedonia *New Macedonia* and via the foreign embassies was sent to the European Commission in Brussels as well (Kirov, 2019). The occasion for creating its text was the declaration voted by the Republic of Bulgaria's National Assembly on 10 October 2019 vis-à-vis the so called red lines that should not be crossed in the future negotiations on the Republic of North Macedonia's EU accession.

The aforementioned official document of the Bulgarian state clearly declares that “the rewriting and appropriation of the history of part of the Bulgarian people after 1944 is among the pillars of the anti-Bulgarian ideological constructs of the Yugoslav totalitarianism”. Therefore the Bulgarian Parliament explicitly declared that “The National Assembly's support for the European integration (*of the RNM – author's note*) will not be secured at the expense of distorting the historical events, documents and artefacts, neither of the role of the views of individuals from the Bulgarian history”.

On this basis the Bulgarian Parliament calls for: the Macedonian party efficiently and in a spirit of goodwill implementing the Agreement, signed on 1 August 2017; the Republic of North Macedonia “adhering strictly to art. 8 of the Agreement” for an objective, based on sources “scientific interpretation of the historical events”; refraining from actions “related to attempts to support and encourage claims for recognizing the so-called “Macedonian minority in Bulgaria – including in international organizations”; exculpating “the victims of repressions because of their Bulgarian national consciousness”; adhering “strictly to the established and ratified by the two countries' parliaments clause regarding the Republic of Macedonia's official language”; fully implementing “the agreements reached in the multidisciplinary expert committee on historical and educational issues, and these should be reflected in the school curricula and materials as soon as possible”; “stopping any form of language of hatred toward Bulgaria and toward the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia with a Bulgarian self-consciousness – including in media, inscriptions on monuments, memorials etc.”; providing assistance in “tracing down, restoring and preserving the Bulgarian military monuments and graveyards on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia.” At the end of the parliamentary declaration it is clearly stated: “On this basis and under these conditions the 44th National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria supports launching the pre-accession negotiations of the EU with the Republic of North Macedonia” (Declaration 44 NA, 2019).

This document is practically an attempt made by the Bulgarian party to correct the weaknesses created when drafting the agreement of 1 August 2017, which the

talks in the Macedonian Scientific Institute, held on 28 June 2019.

Macedonian party misuses. However, the appearance of the respective letter gave reasons to the *intellectuals* in Skopje to act both collectively and individually on the anti-Bulgarian front. Thus in the post-2019 period practically a substantial number of texts which essentially summarize the enrichment and intensification of the neo-Macedonian doctrine at the EU's door appeared in Skopje. An ideological and propaganda reality which was immediately filed also to the EC in Brussels.

In terms of content, the text of the Open letter, sent to Brussels by the *intellectuals* in Brussels and the ensuing supporting publications show nothing completely new in the essence of the ideological construct: an extreme, worn out, pro-communist Macedonian ideology from the Yugoslav era.

However, since these documents have been written by the *intellectuals* in the RNM, and the basic one of them was sent to the European Commission in Brussels, they deserve special attention. Above all because of the fact that despite the signed agreements between the governments of two neighboring countries, the aggressive neo-Macedonian ideology knows and sings the same old song, composed way back by Stoyan Novakovic. Yet practically performed under the dictates of the communist party of Yugoslavia and J.B. Tito after 1944.³ His extreme supporters fail to take into consideration the European values – avoiding the unnecessary tension between the member states. Even on the eve of launching the negotiations for the RNM's EU accession! No account is taken of the objectivity of the historical research based on indisputable first-source information. Despite the available official agreements reflected in high-ranking documents – interstate agreements. These *intellectuals* profess their theories imposed by force by the communist party of Yugoslavia and J.B. Tito after 1944 – but now as a means to exert pressure and impact on the EU's governing bodies.

³ The terms *Macedonian* (as a person) and *Macedonian* (attribute) are used in the Bulgarian language traditionally up to the mid-20th century as a device to emphasize the regional belonging of the people it refers to. Therefore the two concepts have a meaning equal to the content implied in the term *Dobrudzhan* (person) and *Dobrudzhanian* (attribute), *Thracian* (as a person) and *Thracian* (attribute), *Moesian* (as a person) and *Moesian* (attribute) etc. They also mark the regional origin of the respective community of Bulgarians. The sense is the same: the respective people from Macedonia, Dobrudzha, Thrace, Moesia etc. Until 1944 no other ethno-demographic and national sense is implied in these concepts, apart from them referring to Bulgarians from Macedonia, Dobrudzha, Thrace, Moesia etc. While the term neo-Macedonianism is a political concept, which reflects the anti-Bulgarian essence of the ideology, developed by the Serbian politician Stoyan Novakovic during the 80's of the 20th century. It was practically implemented by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in the post-WWII period in FPR Macedonia, when it is already part of Yugoslavia. Then by coercive means the Bulgarian national consciousness of the Slav population in FPR Macedonia is replaced and the formation of a new *Macedonian nation* starts.

Main headings

In the expose of the discussed materials that appeared in Skopje after October 2019, the first issues that are tackled are the ones related to the Middle Ages. According to the historian Zoran Georgiev, for instance, those who have always been “important to the Bulgarians were Kubrat, Asparuh, Krum, Boris-Mihail, Kaloyan and the Shishmans-Nemanichi (!?) and the others among them and after them as late as Chervenkov and Zhivkov. However for the Macedonian they are a foreign history”. Because he – the Macedonian did not feel “a spiritual impulse do identify himself with them”. Why did he not feel such an impulse? Because “a native Macedonian population” had been living in Macedonia from time immemorial. However, the Slavs flooded Macedonia “precisely 99 years before Asparuh stepped on the Danube Ongal” and made a Slavization of the local *native Macedonian population*. Despite that 200 more years after this process, the Slavicized *native population* of Macedonia had “nothing in common with the so-called proto-Bulgarians”. After the Christianization of the Bulgarians, however, the *Roman emperor (such an emperor no longer existed in the mid-9th century – author’s note)* gave Macedonia as an additional award to Bulgaria because of the “accepted in a defeatist manner forced baptism of the Bulgarians (*by Byzantium – author’s note*). Thus the Macedonian population, not by choice and overnight, became subordinate to the First Bulgarian Kingdom”, according to the aforementioned scholar from Skopje! It was then that the label Bulgarians was attached to them. Until now the scholars in Bulgaria *ride on this label*, the Skopje *intellectual* cries out provocatively! This is how this part of the texts that appeared after the declaration of the Bulgarian Parliament, which explain when, why and how Macedonia was included in the borders of Middle-Age Bulgaria, end. (Hristova, 2019).

It is not even worth arguing with the provided primitive and fully non-scientific allegations of the *intellectuals* from Skopje! Especially if we are talking about a continuous and profound scientific debate! Because apparently these scholars do not know that all old populations of the Balkans (this refers to the Macedonians, the Dardani in the region of Nis and Kosovo, to the Illyrians in Serbia and to the Dacians in Romania etc.) were strongly Romanized and integrated or even absorbed both by the Roman and the Byzantine Empire. Both along the line of the military service, and through marriages and via slavery. Therefore the Slav wave that flooded the Balkans in the 6th century brought a completely new, moreover a lasting ethnic profile of the lands located south of the Danube river. As a result of this development, what was characteristic to an equal degree of the demographic picture of Moesia, Thrace and Macedonia up to the 6th century, was already the peculiarities of the South Slavs. They have a similar way of life, culture and language – from Dobrudzha, through Moesia and Thrace, to the Aegean

Sea to the south and Macedonia to the west. And as far as the ancient Bulgarians are concerned, they also appear in the Balkans way back in the 5th century. Constantin Manasses' Chronicle clearly states: "During Tsar Anastasyi's time, the Bulgarians started conquering this land, and passed through Badin. **And before that they started conquering the lower, Ohrid land and after that the whole of this land**". Practically this means that the Bulgarians conquered the low Ohrid land about the year 475. Moreover, the two communities, Bulgarians and Slavs, frequently took actions jointly in their raids against Byzantium. And when the ancient Bulgarians permanently settled down in this part of Southeastern Europe in the 7th century, this did not happen only in the Ongal. One of Khan Kubrat's five sons – Khan Kuber settled down to permanently live with his part of the people in the Bitolya field. And it is located in the center of contemporary Republic of North Macedonia! (Popov, 2019, pp. 47-71). Therefore, there as well as in Moesia, the ethnic profile of the lands after the 7th century was already determined by the unity of action of the Slavs and Bulgarians!

As a result, a new ethnic reality is present in Moesia, Thrace and Macedonia during the 7th century, which is of the same essence, related to the population's demographic composition. It was formed by the co-existence of the Slavs and the ancient Bulgarians. This fact is the basis of formulating that foreign policy by the Bulgarian rulers in the capital Pliska, which aims to integrate all Slavs and Bulgarians by Byzantium's power. To integrate them within the borders of the Bulgarian state. This policy was successfully pursued for about half a century. Khan Krum set the beginning. In 809 he finally won back from Byzantium the Sofia district and the lands along the reaches of the Struma river. The deed was continued by Krum's grandson – Khan Presian (836 – 852). In 837 the Slav tribes in the Rhodopi district and South Macedonia staged an uprising against the Byzantine rule. Then the Bulgarian army, whose commander was Kavkhan Izbul, was the ally of those fighting for freedom and utterly defeated the Byzantines at the Philippi fortress. Thus the population of the southeastern Balkan lands is completely included and absolutely voluntarily in the borders of the Bulgarian state, which assists in its liberation from the Byzantine power. The territory inhabited by these people in Macedonia receives a new Bulgarian administrative name – **Kutmichevitsa**. In terms of sense it means "**the newly joined land**". Thus on the basis of this natural historical process the unification of all Slavs and Bulgarians is achieved, those populating Moesia, Thrace and Macedonia within the borders of a common Bulgarian state. (Fol, Gyuzelev, 1983, pp. 37-50). As a result, when prince Boris-Mihail ascends the throne, he rules an already permanently established state, the borders of which range from Ongal to Ohrid.

This is the only way we can explain the fact that the Bulgarian ruler spends enormous funds, sacrifices time and power to build fortresses, roads and a devel-

oped network of the Bulgarian Orthodox and educational system in Macedonia. In its structure the first big center of the Bulgarian civilization will flourish later – the Ohrid literary school, led by St. Kliment, sent by Boris there. (In this case we can speak of a school, because its activists spread Christianity among the population, translated books from Greek into Bulgarian, wrote some of the most valuable early new, original literary works in Bulgaria, a powerful educational system was created, which offered education to 3,500 students for a couple of decades etc.) Would prince Boris exhaust the Bulgarian state treasury to establish such a civilizational reality if he had arranged an accidental, just received (in a night!?) *present* from Byzantium? If the population there was not similar to the one inhabiting the rest of Bulgaria's lands? The Emperor would have tried to take back this *present* at the first provided opportunity, right? Given that within its territory representatives of the forming Bulgarian nationality did not live! Moreover was there any sense in developing the Ohrid literary school at all by the Bulgarian state, if the local population in Macedonia could not understand what Kliment and St. Naum preached? However, Macedonia is the farthest located land from the capital Pliska. Therefore the influence of the Bulgarian power there had to be stabilized not only politically, but also in terms of the unitary spiritual life. Basically this is the historical truth related to Macedonia's inclusion in the Bulgarian state. This process has as its basis the community between the Slav-Bulgarian ethnic mass that inhabited Moesia, Thrace and Macedonia in the 8th and 9th centuries. **And something particularly important: within the course of the discussed here whole and permanent integration of Macedonia within the borders of the Bulgarian kingdom not a single fact is known about offered resistance or struggle for independence made by some Macedoni regarding Bulgaria and the Bulgarians!** Neither during Macedonia's liberation from Byzantine power, nor after that – within the borders of the Bulgarian Kingdom. Why? Indeed if the local population had offered such resistance against the policy of the rulers in Pliska, the Macedonian historians in Skopje would use them as *the most convincing facts* illustrating the anti-Bulgarian struggle of the Macedonians way back in the 9th century. However, such facts do not exist and therefore these people say nothing on the topic!

The second extremely conflicting, neo-Macedonian *theory* that the Skopje intellectuals advanced in their writings sent to the EC in Brussels vis-à-vis the Declaration of the Bulgarian Parliament of 10 October 2019, is related to the ***Macedonian language***. It is defined as a “historical reality – a fact, an official language in the country, used by more than 3 million people” (!?) Allegedly it is “genealogically a Slavic language, while typologically a Balkan language”. (No matter what this unclear and twisted attempt at providing a definition by the Macedonians might mean!?) Therefore it was considered “the most Balkan

language in the Balkan language union”!? The world Slavic studies allegedly accepted “The Macedonian theory ... as the basis of the Old Church Slavonic language”. The names of Vatroslav Oblak and Vatroslav Yagic were considered to be experts on these issues. Therefore the great specialists in the sphere of Slavic studies unanimously thought that “the first Slavic written literary language is based on the Macedonian language from the area of Thessaloniki”. Hence, according to the Skopje *intellectuals*, neither did a *common history* exist between the peoples of Bulgaria and the RNM, nor was there anything similar in their oral and written language and cultural practices!?! (Kirov, 2019).

Here the falsification once again is more than obvious! Because *the Skopje intellectuals* fail to explain what is most important, in their efforts to *educate* the EU top administration. And it can be formulated as a question in the following way: **Why then did St. Kliment and St. Naum not arrive directly in Ohrid after being expelled from Great Moravia?** This would be logical if their roots are from there! What are the reasons for their first settling down in the Bulgarian capital Pliska, where they spent a couple of years!?! Does such a fact not prove who was ruling Macedonia then? It is not crystal clear on who depends what was about to happen in this Balkan province under the leadership of Cyril and Methodius' followers? Because it is a well-known fact that no one else apart from the Bulgarian ruler and the first teachers of the Bulgarian people worked out a strategy for laying the foundations of the Bulgarian literary civilization not anywhere else but in Pliska! Would prince Boris (what would have made him do so) have allocated huge funds from his treasury to finance the whole activity that St. Kliment carried out during his lifetime regarding the reformation of the alphabet in the Cyrillic alphabet version? Unless this activity was carried out in Bulgarian? Unless it was done among Bulgarians! Because it is a well-known fact that apart from prince Boris no one else sponsored the establishment and development of the Ohrid literary center! Why do the Skopje *intellectuals* fail to provide a single fact on this issue which would prove the existence of other sources of material funds (of financial resources) of implementing St. Kliment's deed?

Would the creation of this famous civilizational heritage left by the Ohrid literary school have been possible at all unless its creators were supported by a strong state power? Are there any other places in the world where facts are known of an ordinary, uneducated local population (even if it were *a prodigy as the Macedonians*) alone, depending on its own strengths, would ensure the resources for the creation of such achievements of the civilization? Especially in Europe! However, these truths mean nothing to neo-Macedonianism in its opuses sent to the EC in Brussels. Apparently hoping that the top European officials do not know in detail the treated subject matter and could yield the neo-Macedonian ideological brainwashing.

The third component provided in the structure of the intensified extremely conflicting neo-Macedonian sermon before the EU's door, concerns the spiritual life of the Macedonian population during the era of the Ottoman Empire. Allegedly in the 15th – 16th century on Macedonian land *a rich written activity* was carried out. It was based on the achievements of the Ohrid literary tradition, but was further developed by the Kratov-Lesnov literary school. (Kirov, 2019) In the 19th century the rich, original spiritual life of Macedonia continued. However, this was already the time of *the renaissance and the national revival* in Macedonia. Within its framework “important literary names such as: Konstantin and Dimitar Miladinovi, Raiko Zhinzifov, Grigor Parlichev, Georgia Pulevski and others” appeared. And at the beginning of the 20th century Kraste Misirkov wrote *A small book* in which he substantiated the uniqueness of the Macedonian nation and the Macedonian language! On this basis the Skopje *intellectuals* blame the eastern neighbor – that is, Bulgaria for “trying to conquer the whole 19th century.” Allegedly the Bulgarian science was “attempting to obliterate these essential attributes” of the Macedonian identity (Kirov, 2019).

Here as well the picture of the exposition is the same: what dominates is above all ungrounded, non-scientific and frequently silly allegations! Without providing a single serious and unquestionable and indisputable proof. However, we can address to the Skopje *intellectuals* a lot of simple questions related to this era, such as: Why did Dimitar Miladinov say in a detailed letter written on 20 August 1852 to Alexander Ekzarh in Tsarigrad how during his visit in Ohrid the Russian scholar in Slav studies “asked me to write a grammar of the Bulgarian language spoken today, which he expected to receive in Vienna”. Then what were the reasons for Dimitar Miladinov telling A. Ekzarh at the end of his letter the following: “I motivated the Greek teacher in Struga, my former student, and also priest Joan and they agreed to teach the students the Bulgarian language first” (Pismo ot Dimitar Miladinov, 1968, pp. 151-152). They fail to answer the following question either: what made the Konstantin and Dimitar Miladinovi brothers publish a collection of *Bulgarian folk songs* from Macedonia (as the title of the original of their book is called), not *Macedonian folk songs*? Why a special announcement, sent personally by the Miladinovi brothers to the *Danube swan* daily, published in issue 20 of 7 February 1861, explicitly states: “Six years ago we started collecting songs from all kinds of countries from West Bulgaria, that is from Macedonia, for instance from Ohrid, Struga, Prilep, Veles, Kostur, Strumitsa and other places, and further from East Bulgaria” (Dunavski lebed, 1861). Do they not know these facts or do they deliberately keep silent about them? If they do not these fact – this is bad, if they keep silent about them – much worse. Not in terms of anything else, but in terms of *the Skopje intellectuals' intellectual level!*

The discussed confused in their thinking group of people fails to answer the question: Why would Raiko Zhinzifov, analyzing the existence of only three newspapers written in Bulgarian in the Ottoman Empire, write: “A people, spread along the Danube, and along the Black Sea’s coast, to Vardar’s estuary, along the Aegean Sea’s coast, from Thessaly below up to Nis and around Vidin, etc., given its present necessities has only three newspapers...Bulgarians! What is this dreadful fate of our precious mother Bulgaria” (Bratski trud, 1862, pp. 3-4). In an article written in the Russian newspaper *Moskovski novosti* Zhinzifov also informs the Russian public that the repressions of the Sultan’s government aim at “suppressing in the Bulgarian tribe any thought about the free development of the Bulgarian nationality”. At the end of his article Zhinzifov announces in the Russian newspaper’s editor’s office: “in my second letter I will tell you important and curious details regarding both the newly-emerged and important to the Bulgarians school issue, and the Church issue”. And especially as far as the planned creation of state controlled mundane schools in the Ottoman Empire is concerned, Zhinzifov is adamant: “No Bulgarian will voluntarily send their children to study at these drafted and designed by the Turkish government schools” (Zhinzifov, 1866). Given these facts, the Skopje intellectuals fail to provide an answer at all to the question: why do these activists of the Bulgarian Revival, who worked in Macedonia, self-determine themselves as Bulgarians? Why do they pine for the Bulgarian national interests? Why do they speak nowhere about the presence of some *Macedonians* as an individual nation, which has its own different interests and has nothing in common with the Bulgarians? These questions do not concern at all the Skopje *intellectuals* in their writings sent to the EC in Brussels. They also act there as poorly educated propagandists of the aggressive neo-Macedonianism.

When the citizens of Skopje who self-determined themselves as *intellectuals* touch upon the *Macedonian* of the 20th century – Kraste Misirkov, they somewhat guiltily say nothing about the main thing related to his life: **why after he took his university degree in Russia, did this man not permanently come back to Macedonia? What are the reasons for this man to work during his whole conscious life as a teacher in liberated Bulgaria?** As a teacher, in what language did he teach the children in the Bulgarian towns? Would the Ministry of people’s education have kept them in the classrooms if they had spoken another language during the teaching process – not Bulgarian, but *Macedonian* language. And in class they had propagandized knowledge about the non-Bulgarian character of the history and culture of the Macedonian population? Particularly given the extreme sensitivity of the Bulgarian public towards the national problems in the post WWI period. The time when Macedonia was forcibly detached from Bulgaria and Misirkov teaches in its towns?

Why did this person voice his criticism more than once over what he had written in his enthusiasm when young? Why have the *intellectuals* from Skopje not made efforts to get acquainted with all of Kraste Misirkov's works? Then they would have established that in a lot more texts he had self-determined himself as *Bulgarian*, and the Slav population in Macedonia – as *Bulgarian*. As evidence I will quote here only one of his opinions: “Macedonia – the central area in the Balkan peninsula is for us to such a great extent an ethnic Bulgarian land, as much as Bulgaria was up till the country's liberation from the Ottoman rule. The Bulgarian national type in Macedonia is not less pure compared to Bulgaria. This is what everyone admitted until the last Russian-Turkish war” (Traykov, 2000, p. 57). Why did Kraste Misirkov ultimately succeed in receiving a pension not by anyone else, but by the Bulgarian state, thanks to which he managed to live through his old age until his death? And last but not least – what are his reasons for wanting to be buried not in Macedonia, but in the Central Sofia Cemetery Park, where his mortal remains are kept up till now? Etc., etc. These questions the Skopje *intellectuals* fail to answer either, although they have decided to educate the EU leaders in Brussels!

The Skopje *intellectuals* also energetically roam through the Bulgarians' recent history in their texts, published vis-à-vis the Declaration of the Parliament in Sofia of 10 October 2019. They particularly stress the essence of the San Stefano Peace Treaty, signed on 3 March 1878 between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. This international legal act puts an end to the Russian-Turkish liberation war. It also outlines relatively fully the natural ethnographic borders of the Bulgarian nation (Doynov, Todorakova, 2000, pp. 339-340). The treaty is based on the results of the well-known referendum, conducted in the 1870's regarding the establishment of the Bulgarian exarchate. Then the greater majority of the population of the five Bulgarian eparchies in Macedonia demonstrate their Bulgarian national self-consciousness. Thus the majority of the population voluntarily joins the diocese of the Exarchate (Doynov, Todorakova, 2000, pp. 167-169). The process takes place without any pressure exerted by the Bulgarians due to the simple reason that they have no state administration of their own up till 1878 (only the Macedonian people's free statement of will solves the issue of joining the Exarchate). How did it happen that in 1875, when the respective referendum was held, empowered Bulgarian institutions that could exert pressure on the population did not exist yet, yet the population identified itself with the Exarchate!? Is that not an irrefutable proof that we are speaking only about the will of the Bulgarians in Macedonia. It is there that the basic reason lies for the two Great powers at war to outline the borders of San Stefano Bulgaria in such a way that they include almost the whole of Macedonia. Moreover, with the full consent of the rulers in the Ottoman Empire. Because the latter well knew the

will of the Great Powers as well, which was expressed in the decisions of the Constantinople conference in November-December 1876. The conference also provides for the creation of two self-governing Bulgarian districts in the Balkans, the centers of which were Sofia and Veliko Turnovo, yet with Macedonia included in them as well. Therefore the will of all Great Powers was based on the clearly expressed national self-consciousness of the Bulgarian population in Macedonia. Only three years before the war broke out. Moreover without any presence or impact whatsoever exerted by the Bulgarians from Moesia and Thrace as an independently acting political factor during the negotiations led by Earl N. Ignatiev in San Stefano. The San Stefano Peace Treaty comes into force immediately. By virtue of it there is a ceasefire between the Russian, Romanian and Serbian army, on the one hand, and the armed forces of the Ottoman Empire, on the other. The creation of the administration of the restored Bulgarian state also starts. The territory of the country is divided into 10 provinces. New governing bodies are their leaders – governors and governor's councils are elected. Mayors and municipal councilors are nominated in a democratic way in towns and villages – all of them Bulgarians. The Bulgarians from Macedonia send hundreds of expositions to Emperor Alexander II, which insist on the liberation of all parts of Macedonia which have not been included within the borders of San Stefano Bulgaria yet (Doynov, Todorakova, 2000, pp. 362-365)⁴. However, all these facts are either not known by the Skopje *intellectuals* (which is a pity for them because it is indicative of a lack of education), or are deliberately ignored.

The adherents of aggressive neo-Macedonianism in this sphere also fail to ask themselves extremely simple questions: would Russia have insisted that the bigger part of Macedonia should also be included within the borders of San Stefano Bulgaria, unless the power holders in Petersburg had been aware in advance of the dominating Bulgarian profile of the Christian population there? Why did Alexander II's government impose its will for Macedonia to be included within San Stefano Bulgaria – even at the risk of confrontation with King Milan, who during the last three months of the war became a *Russian ally*? Because Serbia enters the war as a Russian ally after Pleven was conquered in December 1877. However, despite the presence of some obligations towards their ally – Milan, the power holders in Petersburg impose their will for Macedonia to be included within San Stefano Bulgaria. Not within Serbia! Because the Russians were completely aware of the Bulgarian national identity of the Slavs in the area. Would the very Sultan of the Ottoman Empire have not objected to the signing of the San Stefano treaty unless in Tsarigrad they were completely aware of the

⁴ There is a lot of proof about that: the address of the Bulgarian from the Razlozhko region to N. Nikolaevic of 2 March 1878; the address of representatives of the Bulgarian church in Macedonia to N. Nikolaevic of 7 April 1878.

ethnic composition of Macedonia? Unless before that an international treaty had come into force, would the International diplomatic conference in Berlin held in June and July 1878, the aim of which was the treaty's revision, have been reached at all? Etc., etc.

The logical reasoning of this kind, based on the indisputable facts, however, is also incomprehensible to the Skopje *intellectuals*, infected by neo-Macedonianism. Therefore they groundlessly argue that the San Stefano Treaty has never *come into force*!? Therefore 3rd of March should not be celebrated as Bulgaria's national day!? Why? Because on 13 June (!?) 1878 the San Stefano Peace Treaty was allegedly *liquidated* by the Treaty of Berlin. Following this logic, the Bulgarians had no grounds to mark 3 March as their national day!? Above all because the text of the San Stefano Treaty allegedly provided for including within the borders of Bulgaria *foreign lands and population*. While neglecting such facts expressed – neither more nor less – the nationalist and aggressive character of the Bulgarian national day!? Here we should first recall that the new state and political reality, called San Stefano Bulgaria, appeared in well-known foreign documents, which it is impossible to provide as evidence here because of the limited scope of the current exposition. However, the Skopje *intellectuals* should have been aware of them when they took up this topic. Because these facts are also an irrefutable proof that the rest Great Powers in Europe were completely aware that such a new state appeared in the Balkans. Thanks to this knowledge, England, Austria-Hungary and the other opponents of Russia organized the Congress of Berlin on dividing San Stefano Bulgaria!

Further in *the writings of the Skopje intellectuals* – a response to the Bulgarian parliamentary declaration, the issue of the notorious *Macedonian minority* in Bulgaria is tackled. It is a well-known fact that attempts to create such a reality in the Pirin region of our country were made only between 1944 and 1948. Moreover under the intolerable pressure exerted by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and J.B. Tito. At that time Bulgaria had just left WWII and the power holders in Belgrade took advantage of the unsettled international situation of the state to impose Macedonianism in Bulgaria as well. What is used as a cover is the idea for creating a big South-Slavic federative republic (Germanov, 2012, p. 25). However, the Bulgarians in the area offer a stubborn resistance against the coercive administrative measures against them to give up their Bulgarian national identity. This is the irrefutable historical truth! And it will become glaringly apparent at this moment when the power holders in Skopje finally decide to open the dossiers of the repressed by the communist authorities in Macedonia in the post-1944 period. Because all people brought to trial, killed or sent into exile are sanctioned only because they were Bulgarians in terms of national self-consciousness! Furthermore – because during the Bulgarian government in North Macedonia from

1941 till 1944, the Bulgarians there act as liberators. They restore the war damages of the German-Yugoslav war, open the university in Skopje, the community centers and the churches once again intensify their activity with the most active assistance namely of these Bulgarians in Macedonia who in the post-1944 period were subject to the inhuman genocide. Therefore when in 1948 the relations between the CPY, CPSS and BWP (communists) deteriorate, the pressure to artificially create a Macedonian minority in Bulgaria as well was put an end to. The Bulgarians in Pirin Macedonia resumed their traditional spiritual life and educational system. However, the aggressive Macedonianism of the Skopje *intellectuals* completely ignores also the truth about this well-known reality. The terror, imposed by CPY, the repressions against the Bulgarians in Macedonia and the thousands of killed Bulgarians there, and also the failure of the Comintern policy related to the national problems in the Balkans, do not exist for them. Therefore in their open letter to the EC in Brussels these people adamantly state that they expect “the EU institutions, and also its member states to principally respond to the open chauvinism of the Bulgarian Parliament” (Kirov, 2019).

To make their exposition full, the Skopje neo-Macedonians naturally do not fail to touch upon the problems related to the national unity of the Bulgarian people during the first half of the 40's of the 20th century. The events that unfolded in the Vardar region after April 1941 are assessed neither more, nor less as actions of *a Bulgarian fascist invader!* This assessment was allegedly based on “well-known irrefutable historical facts... from the WWII period”? Therefore they declared before the EC in Brussels that “the neighboring Republic of Bulgaria should apologize not only to the Macedonians, but also to the Macedonian Jews for crimes committed during the Bulgarian occupation of Macedonia during WWII” (Kirov, 2019). These are trivial ideologically-biased, openly communist theses that aggressive neo-Macedonianism has been repeating as a mantra for more than seven decades. However, the authors of this (and similar) writings say nothing in their exposition about the fact that Bulgaria is not the country that utterly defeated kingly Yugoslavia in 1941; that this happened during the two-week long war between Germany and Yugoslavia; the Bulgarian army and administration were literally invited to invade Macedonia around Easter 1941, after Yugoslavia had already capitulated under the strikes of the German divisions; the basic aim of Bulgaria's consent (to assume the governance of Vardar Macedonia) was to guarantee the life and the property of the population during the war; the intellectuals say nothing about the nation-wide joy with which the Bulgarians from the region welcome their liberators from the terrorist regime, imposed by the power holders in Belgrade in the post-1919 period; nothing is said about the role of the Bulgarian administration in restoring the war damages from the war between Germany and Yugoslavia during the first half of April 1941; nothing

is said about the liberation from German captivity of thousands of Bulgarian soldiers from Macedonia, mobilized in the Yugoslav army, who after the defeat suffered from the Germans in April 1941, were locked down in captivity camps near Thessaloniki; nothing is said either about the economic aid Bulgaria offered to the population of Macedonia during the war; nothing is said about the opening of the University in Skopje, of the People's Museum there, as well as the restoration of the community centers and the Bulgarian divine service in the temples⁵. Neither do they say anything about the adherents of aggressive neo-Macedonianism and the casualties Bulgaria suffered during the first phase of the war against fascist Germany in the autumn of 1944. Then together with the death of the heroes at Stratsin, Strazhin and Kosovo Polje, thousands of young Bulgarians died to clean up Macedonia from German military formations that had invaded from the direction of Greece. On all this the Skopje *intellectuals* prefer to remain silent!/? Because it is not in line with the ideologeme of the extremely aggressive neo-Macedonianism. The one who during an awful war builds roads, railways, universities and community centers, which provides millions of books in Bulgarian, is not and cannot be an aggressor! On top of it all – the local population welcomes them with music and flowers!

The Skopje *intellectuals criticize* the Bulgarian scholars that study Macedonia's history for the fact that when they discussed the ethnic belonging of the Slav population in the region, they made reference to some expedient *proclamations* made by the local population, reflected in *documents from the past*. However, allegedly the historical documents should not be taken as grounds when analyzing the ethnic realities in Macedonia! Why? Because such *proclamations* of the Bulgarian national belonging were *made according to a specific model by the invader regimes*. To prove the authenticity of his thesis, the Macedonian author makes reference even to some family story: "Thus my great grandfather (the rebel) was Bulgarian because, this is how the exarch priest in the Ottoman state recorded him when he baptized him" (Hristova, 2019).

Once again mere talk, mere talk and again stupid mere talk! There is no serious analytical and fact-based basis of thinking. The Macedonian Bulgarians were allegedly the result of some *models*, imposed by *invader regimes*!/? The children of the orthodox population in Macedonia were allegedly declared Bulgarians only because this is how *the exarch priest in the Ottoman state recorded them*!/? In this case totally ignored are the official documents of the Ottoman Empire, in which when the population of Macedonia is mentioned, nowhere is the term *Macedonians* used (in the sense of a separate national community), only

⁵ A wide panorama view of an exposition on these topic is to be found in the collection of articles National unification of Bulgaria (1940 – 1944), S., 2012, edition of the Macedonian Scientific Institute.

Bulgarians is written. Even in the census conducted by the Serbian power holders in 1922 there is no information about the presence of Macedonians along Vardar. In the sense of a Slav population with their own, *Macedonian* national consciousness, speaking some individual, archaic language and having a non-Bulgarian national consciousness. They only mention Bulgarians in Macedonia! As a result of the Skopje *intellectuals'* position, it does not become clear at all how can contemporary science prove the truths related to the past if it does not make reference to historical documents? If a child was recorded as Bulgarian by the *exarch priest*, is it not more than logical to ask: why did its parents seek the service namely of that Bulgarian priest? Why did they not address for support some Macedonian, Greek or Serbian cleric? Or for the Bulgarians in Macedonia nothing was such a sacred sacrament as was baptism – that is the introduction of the infant to Orthodox faith!? So that it was possible for an interested factor to always dictate to them what to do. Even the national belonging of their infants!? Given that this part of the Bulgarian people waged a bitter liberation struggle against their foreign oppressors!

Despite the whole groundlessness and helplessness of the *intellectual* mode of thinking, demonstrated by the authors of the Open letter, and the ensuing repercussions in the Skopje print media, the Macedonians, with the boldness of experts of the highest instance, unambiguously declare before the EC in Brussels: “We, a group of Macedonian intellectuals, express in public our protest against the demands and ultimatums in the Declaration of the Parliament of the Republic of Bulgaria” (Kirov, 2019). That is, these authors insist that Brussels knows that the Macedonian intellectuals adopt a radically different position from what the historical science proves regarding the presence of a common history of the peoples of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia. Despite the fact that a mere two years before that, the respective truth was officially acknowledged by the government of the RNM in the text of a Treaty of friendship!? Which makes it necessary to organize joint celebrations of important historical dates.

Conclusion

The reader who is well-acquainted with the problems related to the neo-Macedonian propaganda analyzed above will have good reasons to say: Nothing new! For yet another time neo-Macedonianism professes the essence of its unscientific, primitive and emphatically anti-Bulgarian theses regarding the history and culture of the Slav population in the Republic of North Macedonia. Nothing more than poor, dull speculations, on a quite primitive propaganda level. In a certain sense this reader will be right. But not completely! Because if we have a close look at the situation related to the appearance of the analyzed here

Open letter and the texts accompanying it, it indicates the presence of a couple of important novelties. First, we should pay attention to the fact that the exposition we followed was written not by one individual author, but a multitude of people – by all *intellectuals* in Skopje!? That is, what they have said is an expression of a collective mode of thinking! However, the term *intellectuals* usually refers to an elite part of a given society. That part which is best aware of the essence of the national interest and bears responsibility for everything that is written and said before the external world. On the basis of facts, not on the basis of random fantasies. Therefore the discussed texts show an ambition to have reflected *the best* that the whole elite of the Republic of North Macedonia may formulate, with joint efforts, as an official position on the most important aspects of the Bulgarian-Macedonian relations.

The direction (and idea) of the initiative undertaken by the Skopje *intellectuals* are also completely new. For the first time the adherents of communist neo-Macedonianism have made an attempt to exert direct and indirect impact on the EC in Brussels. Thus the well-known strategy of the Great Serbian chauvinism of the time of Ilija Garasanin and Nikola Pasic is revived. The neo-Macedonians are their disciples, who in the same manner bombard with false facts influential international factors. So that on the basis of false information they could receive support for the conducting a large-scale campaign against the Bulgarians and the Bulgarian state. Therefore what we are speaking about in this case is not an ordinary scientific or political debate. **Practically a serious, moreover large-scale initiative is launched, the aim of which is to mislead the EU leaders.** And after they have been misinformed with untruths, to pave the road along which neo-Macedonianism should pass and solemnly enter the EU building. While fully neglecting the historical truth and the Bulgarian national interests. Moreover – by humiliating the Republic of Bulgaria! Despite all this, Bulgaria is practically the state that has been providing the most tangible assistance for the survival and stabilization of its new southwest neighbor.

In no case should the cunning attempts of the Skopje *intellectuals* to play tricks be underestimated. In this respect they literally contribute to the neo-Macedonian doctrine: for instance, allegedly Macedonia was given *overnight* by the *Roman emperor* (!?) as a present to Bulgaria. Hence the presence of this Balkan province within the borders of the Bulgarian Kingdom is accidental, illogical and is not at all related to the ethnic profile of the population living in the area. The Bulgarians in Macedonia during the Ottoman rule were allegedly declared Bulgarians only because that is the way the priests recorded them when their children were born!? This allegation is also made without saying anything about the irrefutable information in the Byzantine sources, in the Ottoman official documentation, in the positions and the decisions of the Great Powers, voiced

during the Tsarigrad conference held at the end of 1876! The parents of more than 20 Bulgarian generations (because about 4 generations are born on average in a century) were allegedly a thoughtless and insensitive mass. Therefore they did not take any self-defending actions whatsoever against the abuse of the *priests* during the sacred act of any Christian family – the baptism of the infant!?! San Stefano Bulgaria allegedly never *existed as a reality!*? Because the treaty that lays its basis, has never come into force!?! Therefore Bulgaria's national day 3 March allegedly expressed nationalist and aggressive intentions on the part of the Bulgarians!?! Etc., etc.

No matter how we summarize such a mental matter, there is no way we cannot arrive at the basic conclusion: neo-Macedonianism is alive and is a very resilient political surrogate. Moreover – it continues to further develop and finds expression in some kind of most extreme forms! Given the new conditions, related to North Macedonia's future EU membership, this malformed political phenomenon is even visibly intensified. Therefore it is beyond doubt that behind the scenes in the Republic of North Macedonia an extreme anti-Bulgarian ideology exists. It is preparing to conquer new political spaces, grounding its propaganda only on lies and speculations. Its aim is already, neither less nor more, to make its way through lobbyist means into the European Union! Introducing communist neo-Macedonianism there, the Skopje *intellectuals* want to eliminate the necessity of real de-communization of the regime in the youngest Balkan republic. They will try to impose a monopoly also on the third written literary civilization in Europe – the Old Bulgarian. It will be declared only Macedonian!?! Thus Bulgaria's and the Bulgarians' greatest contribution to the whole evolution of the European Christian cultural reality will be eliminated: the creation of the third written and literary civilization (after the Greek and the Latin) – the Old Bulgarian. Therefore neither Bulgaria nor the EU should allow the launch of the negotiations on North Macedonia's EU membership until a real process of de-communization starts in Skopje. Until the dossiers are opened and the crimes are revealed, in the course of which Macedonianism itself is created.

Since all Macedonian ambitions and the possible consequences utterly clash with the Bulgarian national interests and with the letter of the Treaty for friendship, signed on 1 August 1917, the responsible factors in Bulgaria have one realistic line of conduct: never and under no circumstances to vote for the Republic of North Macedonia's EU accession, unless the conditions formulated in the treaty of 1917 and by the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria on 10 October 2019 are fulfilled. Otherwise the coming generation will condemn us! It will not forgive us if we allow the falsification of the truth, related to Bulgaria's and the Bulgarians' lasting national interests.

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