

UDC 930.85(4-12)

ISSN 0350-7653

SERBIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ARTS
INSTITUTE FOR BALKAN STUDIES

BALCANICA

XLVI

ANNUAL OF THE INSTITUTE FOR BALKAN STUDIES

Editor-in-Chief

DUŠAN T. BATAKOVIĆ

Director of the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA

Editorial Board

JEAN-PAUL BLED (Paris), LJUBOMIR MAKSIMOVIĆ,
ZORAN MILUTINOVIĆ (London), DANICA POPOVIĆ, BILJANA SIKIMIĆ,
SPIRIDON SFETAS (Thessaloniki), GABRIELLA SCHUBERT (Jena),
NIKOLA TASIĆ, SVETLANA M. TOLSTAJA (Moscow)

BELGRADE
2015



SPYRIDON SFETAS, *Η ΔΙΑΜΟΡΦΩΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΣΛΑΒΟΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΙΚΗΣ ΤΑΥΤΟΤΗΤΑΣ. ΜΙΑ ΕΠΩΔΥΝΗ ΔΙΑΔΙΚΑΣΙΑ* [THE CONFIGURATION OF SLAVOMACEDONIAN IDENTITY. A PAINFUL EVOLUTION]. THESSALONIKI: VANIAS, 2003.

Reviewed by Athanasios Loupas*

The monograph titled *The Configuration of Slavomacedonian Identity. A Painful Evolution* by Spyridon Sfetis, Associate Professor of Modern and Contemporary History, Folklore and Social Anthropology at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki deals with a complex and controversial topic which has caused considerable disagreement among scholars. The study is divided into six chapters.

The first chapter is devoted to the Slavic awakening and the Serbo-Bulgarian infiltration into Macedonia until the Eastern Crisis in 1875–78. As the author indicates, Macedonia did not constitute a separate historical entity but a part of Bulgarian and Greek national claims. The Slavic awakening expressed as Bulgarian was carried out by young intellectuals such as Dimitar and Konstantin Miladinov, Grigor Parlicev and Kuzman Sapkarev, who graduated from Greek schools, were knowledgeable in the Greek language and inspired by Pan Slavist ideas. The dispute over the codification of a Bulgarian literary language between scholars from north-eastern Bulgaria and those originating from Macedonia was purely academic. Slavomacedonian dialect was left out of that process as unworthy, but the most important fact is that it was labelled as Bulgarian. The language dispute, however, gave the opportunity to the Serbs to contest the leading role of Bulgarian propaganda in Macedonia. The Ministry of Education, despite Stojan Novakovic's objections, financed the publication of a trilingual dictionary (*S. Makedonski, Arbanaski, Turski*) compiled by a self-taught seasonal worker, Georgi Pulevski, who was aware of local particularities in

Macedonia. The ambiguity of the term *S. Makedonski*, which could stand for either "Serbo-Macedonian" or "Slavo-Macedonian", was working to the advantage of Serbian policy which was trying to deal with the propagation of the Bulgarian Exarchate.

The second chapter discusses the Serbo-Bulgarian antagonism during the identity-building process in Macedonia from the Congress of Berlin to the First World War and the emergence of Slavomacedonian separatism. The author points out the different approach adopted by the Bulgarian Exarchate and the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (IMRO) which was founded in 1893 in Thessaloniki. While the Exarchate and the pro-Austrian Bulgarian government of Stevan Stambulov launched an ecclesiastical and educational campaign in order to create Bulgarian consciousness among the Slavic-speaking population of Macedonia, IMRO was propagating revolution, aiming at the establishment of an autonomous regime as the first step to unification with Bulgaria. On the other hand, Serbian policy attached major importance to the linguistic factor with the view to creating Slavomacedonian literary language in order to alienate Slav populations from Bulgaria and turn them towards Serbia. Stojan Novakovic, the architect of Serbian policy in the late nineteenth century, did not believe that Slavomacedonianism had the inherent strength to evolve into a significant Slavomacedonian identity and on account of this it could prove to be quite

* Aristotle University, Thessaloniki

useful to the Serbian cause. In an attempt to counterbalance Bulgarian and Serbian propaganda and taking into consideration the neutral policy of Russia and the risk of territorial partition, a young group of intellectuals (Krstev Misirkov, Stefan Dedov, Diamandi Misajkov and Dimitrija Cupovski) introduced Slavomacedonian separatism and sought for the foundation of a Slavomacedonian *millet*. However, as Sfetas argues, the political conditions at the beginning of the twentieth century were not favourable to the advocacy of Slavomacedonianism as a new collective ethnic identity and this is demonstrated by the fact that the impact its early proponents had upon the masses was negligible.

The third chapter details the circumstances under which the issue of identity evolved during the interwar period, when the Communist International (CI) was promoting a United and Independent Macedonia within a Balkan Soviet Republic in an attempt to destabilize the Balkan states. Due to communist interference, a split of IMRO occurred in 1925 and IMRO (United) was founded in Vienna under the auspices of the CI. IMRO (Un.) accepted the slogan of "United and Independent Macedonia within a Balkan Soviet Republic" but the most important fact is that the new organisation identified all nationalities living in Macedonia as Macedonian people. What led, however, to the adoption of a different view by the CI in 1934 according to which the "Macedonian nation" was not a political but an ethnic category with exclusive reference to the Slavic group? Professor Sfetas explains that the key factor for this differentiation was Hitler's rise to power. As Ivan Mihajlov's pro-Bulgarian IMRO had adopted the position of "United and Independent Macedonia" as a second Bulgarian state, where the political label of "Macedonian" was compatible with Bulgarian national identity, the CI had concentrated its efforts on preventing the exploitation of the Macedonian Question by

Nazi Germany in favor of Bulgaria in the upcoming war. Although after its 7th and last Congress (1935) the CI had to abolish the slogan of an "Independent Macedonia" in an attempt to form a unified antifascist front along with the "bourgeois regimes" against the Nazis' advance, the decision on the existence of a "Macedonian nation" had already left its mark on the policy of the communist parties in Greece, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria.

The following chapter covers the period of the Second World War. The Bulgarian army was welcomed as liberator in Serbian Macedonia, but the initial enthusiasm gave way to discontent due to the arrogance and arbitrary rule of the Bulgarian administration. The exclusion of the local intelligentsia from any political activity, on the grounds that the locals could not speak the official language, in combination with the rapid foundation of Bulgarian educational institutions, alienated the young generations which had graduated from Serbian schools during the interwar period. What is more interesting, though, was the rivalry between the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) and the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP). The latter did not differ substantially from the official policy of the Bulgarian state, claiming that the organisational structures of Serbian Macedonia should fall upon the comrades of the BCP, who had not condemned, though, the region's unification with Bulgaria. Nevertheless, due to the fact that the main struggle had to be fought against the occupying forces, the CI decided to assign the political guidance of Serbian Macedonia to the CPY. The failure of the Bulgarian administration and the dynamics of Yugoslavian communism, which promoted the line of unification of Macedonia, gave the opportunity for the diffusion of Slavomacedonianism both in the Serbian and Greek parts, despite the fact that it lacked a clear-cut theoretical basis.

In June 1944 the First Antifascist Assembly of the National Liberation of Macedonia (ASNOM) proclaimed the foundation of the People's Republic of Macedonia (PRM), an event of paramount importance (chapter V). However, from the very beginning a saga for political power was obvious among ASNOM (Metodija Antonoc-Cento, Kiro Gligorov, Dimitar Vlahov) on one side and CPY as well as the Communist Party of Macedonia (CPM) (Tito, Tempo, Lazar Kolisevski) on the other. The first group was in favor of a unified Macedonia regardless of whether or not it would be part of Federalist Yugoslavia; they did not rule out cooperation with ex-IMRO supporters and opposed the communization imposed by Belgrade. The second group's priority was the unity of Socialist Yugoslavia. It was, therefore, an internal clash between a nationalistic and a pro-Yugoslav wing within the PRM, which ended in the prevalence of the latter. At the same time, a process of a Slavomacedonian ethnogenesis was embarked upon (codification of a Slavomacedonian literary language, changing family name endings from -ov and -ev to -ski, foundation of a Macedonian Orthodox Church and educational institutions, setting national anniversaries etc.). After the elimination of the nationalistic group, all questions at issue were resolved in the spirit of Serbo-Slavomacedonian reconciliation. As Sfetas notes, people with some grounding in Marxist theory had been charged with the task of documenting the "organic evolution of the Macedonian nation" at a scientific level. The cases of Vasil Ivanovski, an ex-member of the IMRO (Un.), and Kiril Nikolov are typical. According to them, the Slavomacedonian nation must be classified as a case of antithetical nationalism, since it was forged through a constant alienation and differentiation from the Bulgarian na-

tional idea. That is to say that the Slavic awakening in the nineteenth century took place as Bulgarian morphologically, but "Macedonian" in substance, and later managed to evolve autonomously by removing the Bulgarian label. In the same chapter, Sfetas also analyses the role that the concept of the "Macedonian nation" played in Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations, keeping in mind that the two countries were examining the possibility of a South Slav confederation, as well as the attempts of shaping a Slavomacedonian national identity in Greek Macedonia during the civil war in Greece.

In the last chapter the author presents the thesis of the BCP after the Tito-Stalin split and Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Comintern. During the Fifth Congress of BCP, Dimitrov condemned the policy of "Macedonization" and the uprooting of Bulgarianism in Yugoslav Macedonia, while the Bulgarian historian Dino Kjosev accused the PRM of a falsification of Bulgarian history and suppression of Bulgarian tendencies, just like Serbs had done during the interwar period. At the same time the Communist Party of Greece also promoted the line of a "United and Independent Macedonia in a Balkan Confederation" in order to undermine Tito's sovereignty in Yugoslav Macedonia. Under these circumstances an anti-Bulgarian hysteria prevailed in the ranks of the Yugoslav communists in the PRM. As the writing of history from an anti-Bulgarian perspective was urgent, Slavomacedonianism prevailed as the ruling national ideology. The "Macedonian nation" was presented as a historical nation with a medieval past, which was awakened in nineteenth century, resisted foreign propagandas, was recognized by the progressive forces during the interwar period, grew up in the Second World War and was acknowledged in 1944. A few years ago a Yugoslav-style Slavomacedonianism prevailed and the new genera-

tions were moulding a Slavomacedonian identity along with a sense of Yugoslav solidarity.

In his epilogue, Sfetas briefly describes the challenges which the new independent state has been facing after the dissolution of Yugoslavia and concludes that, despite the fact that Slavomacedonian identity has been called into question, it has proved that it is still an "identity in evolution".

Having a strong theoretical grounding on the phenomenon of nationalism

(Hobsbawm, Hroch, Gellner, Anderson) and taking into consideration the Balkan particularities, professor Sfetas composes with remarkable sobriety a complex study on an extraordinarily thorny question – which still preoccupies public discourse – based on indisputable primary sources from the archives in Sofia, Belgrade and Skopje as well as an extensive literature, both Balkan and European. Although Sfetas's book was written in 2003, it remains the most analytical and enlightening study on the matter.

HÉRITAGES DE BYZANCE EN EUROPE DU SUD-EST À L'ÉPOQUE MODERNE ET CONTEMPORAINE,
EDS. OLIVIER DELOUIS, ANNE COUDERC & PETRE GURAN. ATHENS:
ÉCOLE FRANÇAISE D'ATHÈNES, 2013, 522 p.

Reviewed by Miloš Živković*

In 2013 *Ecole française d'Athènes* published a collection of papers entitled *Héritages de Byzance en Europe du Sud-Est à l'époque moderne et contemporaine*, as the fourth publication in the series *Mondes méditerranéens et balkaniques*. All contributions except three are based on the papers submitted at the scholarly conference *La présence de Byzance dans l'Europe du Sud-Est aux époques moderne et contemporaine* held in Athens in September 2008.

Even a cursory look at the contents of the volume reveals a remarkably broad chronological range and multidisciplinary breadth. In addition to an *Introduction* by the editors, O. Delouis, A. Couderc and P. Guran, the book contains as many as thirty contributions, mainly in political and ecclesiastical history, the history of ideas and ideologies, the history of the cult of saints and the history of art and architecture.

The volume opens with the eminent byzantologist Hélène Ahrweiler's appropriate and inspired article *Conférence inaugurale – La présence de Byzance*, specifying many of the originally Byzantine

phenomena in the national cultures of South-East Europe. It is followed by Jack Fairey's study *Failed Nations and Usable Pasts: Byzantium as Transcendence in the Political Writings of Iakovos Pitzipos Bey*, devoted to Iakovos Pitzipos Bey (1802–1869), the leader of the organisation called *Byzantine Union*. As the ideologist of this initially secret society of rather modest capacities and influence, Pitzipos left behind several writings on problems in the Ottoman Empire of his time. Fairey thoroughly studies the biography of this ambitious European traveller originating from Chios, as well as his writings, unusual in their ideological dynamics and contradictions, and somewhat utopian political views. A useful historical overview of the study of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the Ottoman Empire is given by Dan Ioan Mureşan. His *Revisiter la Grande Église: Gédéon, Iorga et Runciman sur le rôle du patriarcat œcuménique à l'époque ottoman* is devoted to three

* Institute for Byzantine Studies SASA