

THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

*There it is that simple land of seizures and expectations / That
taught the stars to whisper in Macedonian / But nobody knows it!*
Ante Popovski

Abstract

In the second half of the XIX century on the Balkan political stage the Macedonian question was separated as a special phase from the great Eastern question. Without the serious support by the Western powers and without Macedonian millet in the borders of the Empire, this question became a real Gordian knot in which, until the present times, will entangle and leave their impact the irredentist aspirations for domination over Macedonia and its population by the Balkan countries – Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia. The consequence of the Balkan wars and the World War I was the territorial dividing of ethnic Macedonia. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the territory of Macedonia was divided among Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria, an act of the Balkan countries which, instead of being sanctioned has received an approval, with the confirmation of their legitimacy made with the treaties introduced by the Versailles world order. Divided with the state borders, after 1919 the Macedonian nation was submitted to a severe economic exploitation, political deprivation, national non-recognition and oppression, with a final goal - to be ethnically liquidated. In essence, the Macedonian question was not recognized as an ethnic problem because the conditions from the past and the powerful propaganda machines of the three neighboring countries - Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria, made the efforts to make the impression before the world public that the Macedonian ethnicity did not exist, while Macedonia was mainly treated as a geographical term, and the ethnic origin of the population on the Macedonian territory was considered exclusively as a “lost herd”, i.e. as a nation which is either Serbian, Greek or Bulgarian. On the account of this situation during the entire period between the wars, the Serbs, Greeks and the Bulgarians were unified around the position through which they denied the existence of the separate Macedonian identity. Serbia named the Macedonians in the Vardar part “South Serbs”, Bulgaria claimed that the Macedonians were nothing else but purely Bulgarian people, and Greece entitled the Macedonians to be “Slavophonic Greeks”, before finally giving them the name “Bulgarians”. The Macedonian question fell under the shadow of the oblivion by the great European powers which were the creators and signers of the aforementioned international treaties. In this condition, the Macedonian question patiently waited for the next chance to be re-actualized, until the ASNOM held on 2nd of August 1944. It was exactly then where the statesmanship vision, which the Macedonian people carried throughout all the changes and destiny’s temptations, got its expressive form with the creation of federal Macedonia within the borders of the AVNOJ Yugoslavia.

In the second half of the XIX century on the Balkan political stage the Macedonian question was separated as a special phase from the great Eastern question. Although this question alone seemed minor compared to the Eastern question, it was signified by the

* Ivanka Valisevska, PhD, Associate Professor, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Iustinianus Primus Law Faculty

specific structure of the population, the geographical connections, the development of the trade and the historical cultural heritage. Since its beginning this national question was met by the territorial aspirations of the Balkan neighbors, as well as by the position of the Great powers aiming to maintain the status quo within the Ottoman Empire. For these reasons, the Macedonian question since its emergence, undoubtedly it was largely related to the Turkish question. In the following historical decades to the present days it evolved, transformed and at certain moments disappeared and emerged again, always under the lucid monitoring of the Balkan state entities which were formed during the XIX century. Without the serious support by the western powers and without Macedonian millet in the borders of the Empire, this question became a real Gordian knot in which, until the present times, will entangle and leave their impact the irredentist aspirations for domination over Macedonia and its population by the Balkan countries – Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia. Therefore, knowing the historical development upon which the Balkan national states were created during the XIX century and at the beginning of the XX century, we can freely conclude that on the Balkan Peninsula, the states were created first and the nations afterwards.¹

In a general overview, it is nearly impossible to give a complete chronological review of the Macedonian question. Therefore, the overall picture for the opening of this question can be explained from several different aspects.

First of all, within the administrative arrangement of the Ottoman Empire, Macedonia did not exist as a separate administrative unit. The geographical territorial unit Macedonia in essence included the Vilayets of Kosovo, Skopje, Manastir and Salonika. This geographical unit which belonged to the European part of the great Ottoman Empire led directly to the Straits and, thankfully to the Vardar Valley, through the Peninsula's backside exited directly to the Mediterranean Sea.

The term Macedonia in the XIX century was used solely as a geographical region. The people who lived in this region were equated with the Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians and Albanians. During the Conference in Constantinople in 1876 and on the Berlin Congress in 1878, the representatives of the Great powers considered that the region had very mixed ethnic composition in which the Bulgarians dominated. It was believed that the second main pretender is Greece, while Serbia held the weak third place. Since the beginning of the state's establishment of Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia, the Macedonian question in the national agendas on the Balkan Peninsula represented an actual apple of discord. Firstly, they were calling upon the Orthodox element which dominated among the population in Macedonia and through it they defined the population's identity. The initializing of the term Macedonian salad – *une salade Macedoine*, demonstrates how the history and the identity were intertwined with the activities of the Orthodox church, which through the influences of their

¹ (n.) In this sense, it is interesting to note the opinion of Jovan Donev, who in the foreword of the Macedonian edition of the collection of texts "Macedonian Culture, Historiography, Politics", edited by Viktor Rudometof, states: "The thousand years of influence of the Byzantine commonwealth combined with the nearly five century rule of the Ottoman Empire, created such a mixture of languages, cultures and religions, which not even the most objective distinction could create an ethnically compact country. Even more, the great powers, whose influence was final in the drawing of the borders, did not pay enough attention to the ethnic principle. Therefore, for the new elites, one of the strongest instruments for stabilization of the internal relations in the newly created countries was the historiography. Through its tireless use was created and reinforced the national consciousness of the population. The need to get separated from their neighbors, the primordial Orthodox tendency to establish an unbreakable bond between the living and the bones of the dead, contributed to the scientific verification of the different stories and myths... Slowly but certainly, the habit, the domestic upbringing, the basic principle of the craftsmen organizations – to live in tolerance, in peace with the neighbor and to respect his culture and tradition – begun to erode..." Рудометоф, Виктор, *Македонското прашање*, Евро Балкан Пресс, Скопје, 2003. p. IX.

own centers incited the interests of the local population, entangling them all together with the issues of the ethnic background and the national identity.

The second very important feature which conditioned the Macedonian question at the beginning of its opening can be found in the determination of the structure of the population in the region Macedonia within the Ottoman Empire, as well as by the activities which occupied this population at the time. In the XIX century and at the beginning of the XX century the structure of the population of Macedonia was in the biggest amount rural. Eighty percent of the population was tied to the agrarian relations and therefore the main concern of this population was regarding the bare existence. Connected to the structure of the population, the next important factor was the question of the church. Until 1870 the main pretender also on the national plan for the Macedonian population was Greece, led by the Patriarchate of Constantinople. With the forming of the Bulgarian Exarchate in 1870 was also carried out the division of the same population on the confessional plan. With the emergence of the Serbian², and a bit later of the Romanian propaganda, the propaganda battles of the Balkan monarchies for supremacy over the territory of the Ottoman possession in this territory generally had crashed over the varieties of the ethnic, religious, political and ideological rainbows of the population in Macedonia.

Starting from the period of the Eastern crisis (1875-1878) until the formation of the Macedonian liberation movement in 1893, the Macedonian question has received a greater actualization. The Eastern question certainly pointed out to the Macedonian question as well, which especially after the outbreak of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian uprising from 1875 got its unique kind of expression. Mainly, this can be observed through the Razlovtsi insurrection in 1876, whose main platform was consisted in: the struggle against the Turkish authority, the connecting with the resistance of the other Balkan peoples and most directly to the Bosnian-Herzegovinian uprising and the liberation of Macedonia.³ Further on, the same can be seen also through the main goals of the Macedonian (Kresna) uprising from 1878. Their goals were to eradicate the feudal Ottoman system, demanding equality for all the citizens before the laws of the liberated Macedonian country, regardless of the nationality and religion, the collaboration and mutual activities with the neighboring Balkan countries, as well as to collaborate with the Albanian revolutionary movement.⁴ Despite these unsuccessful attempts, their influence had reflected not only on the perception of the local Ottoman authorities, but also on the diplomatic correspondence of the great European powers, which noted it and started to follow the centrifugally smothered local uprisings in Macedonia. As a result to the strong pressure by the Great powers over the Ottoman Empire, in the spring 1880 the Empire started to prepare a constitution (project) to reform the vilayets in the European part of the Ottoman Empire. This reformation undertaking resulted from the Article 23 of the Berlin Treaty and was supposed to reflect the liberal tendencies for inclusion of the non-Muslim population within the local administration. Considering the favorable conditions and the

² The Serbian propaganda in Macedonia dates since 1868.

*"During the government of Stojan Novaković begun a real political, diplomatic, cultural and educational offensive of Serbia towards Turkey, i.e. Macedonia. Novaković was vindicator for the rapprochement with Turkey and in that sense he believed that through the maintaining of good relations with Turkey they could be able to realize the Serbian interests in Macedonia and in Old Serbia, which understood the building of a bigger number of Serbian churches and schools." - Војводић, М., *Србија, српско питање и Турска крајем XIX и почетком XX века*, Међународни научни скуп "Ислам, Балкан и Велике силе", Историјски институт САНУ, Београд, 1997. p. 377.

³ Поповски, Владо, *Државотворниот карактер на востанијата и превирањата во Македонија во Источната криза 1875-1881*, Гласник 40 2 1996. p. 7 - 26.

⁴ Regarding the Albanian revolutionary movement, see more in: Бартл, Петер, *Албанци*, Clio, 2001. p. 94 – 141.

attention of the Great powers towards the reformation processes in the Empire, at the same time two institutions addressed them in the name of the Macedonian movement, demanding political and national autonomy of Macedonia. Those were the Macedonian league and the National Assembly of Macedonia “Edinstvo” (Unity).⁵ The genesis of the Macedonian national revolutionary movement represents the era which officially started on 23rd of October 1893. This historic act distinguishes and compiles two turning points of the Macedonian revolutionary history which had an essential influence over the development of the Macedonian question and at the same time over the entire Balkan diplomatic behavior between the two world wars. The several decades of the Macedonian national revolutionary movement’s struggle, had the idea to establish an autonomous, independent and sovereign country Macedonia as its final goal.

With the emergence of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (MRO) in 1893 in Salonica, its foundational goals were set mainly towards the struggle for gaining autonomy for Macedonia under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire.⁶ Under the motto “Macedonia to the Macedonians”, the Internal Revolutionary Organization within the period of one decade succeeded to gain an exceptional significance for the entire Macedonian population. Its political platform did not take in its regard the aspirations of the Balkan neighbors, nor the geostrategic interests of the Great powers, thus challenged everyone altogether around the future of the Macedonian question, which above all, did not favor the interests of its neighbors. All this later appeared to be fatal not only for the Organization, but also for the destiny of Macedonia. “The emergence and the eventual success of the ‘political separatism’ for the Balkan monarchies meant losing the possibility to appear before the European opinion as ‘the only protector of their compatriots in the Ottoman Empire’, and along with that, was the inability for them to realize their own conquering intentions. Exactly for those reasons all of them, but not together, on one way or another, wanted to destroy the Macedonian revolutionary movement. In this sense, Bulgaria worked the most.”⁷

Bulgaria, calling upon the historical background, felt most challenged regarding the resolving of the Macedonian question. This country was constantly adopting the Macedonian question as it was its own and equated it with the Bulgarian question. Developing a platform for liberation of its Bulgarian brothers, by the end of the 1894 the country’s mechanisms successfully infiltrated and changed the appearance of the autochthonous Macedonian revolutionary movement. The instrument which served for this intention was the Supreme Macedonian Committee in Sofia, which was created by the Macedonian revolutionary activists, but soon it was brought under the control of the Bulgarian military circles. Through

⁵ More on the topic in: Димевски, Поповски, Шкарик, Апостолски, *Македонската Лига и уставот за државно уредување на Македонија од 1880*, Мисла, Скопје, 1985.

⁶ “The main initiator for realization of the idea of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization was Damjan Gruev. On his initiative, on 23rd of October/4th of November 1893 in Salonica was held the founding meeting of MRO. On it were present: Dame Gruev (from the village Smilevo, Bitola region), Peter Pop Arsov (from v. Bogomila, Veles region), Hristo Tatarčev (Resen), Ivan Haji Nikolov (Kukush), Andon Dimitrov (v. Ajvatovo, Salonica region) and Hristo Batandjiev (Gumenje). According to the birth pace, three of the founders of MRO origin from the territory of the today’s Republic of Macedonia, and the other three from the part of Macedonia which today is in the composition of Greece. On the founding meeting the six of them, since they stated that in the Ottoman Empire there are no conditions for improvement of the position of the Christian population in a legal manner, unanimously accepted the idea to constitute a revolutionary organization.” - Поповски, В, Ѓоргиев, В, Тодоровски, Ачкоска, В, *Создавањето на современата македонска држава*, Македонска реч, Скопје, 2014, p. 49.

⁷ Донеv, Јован, *Меѓународните политички аспекти на британско - руската програма за реформа на Македонија 1907 – 1908*, Универзитет „Св. Кирил и Методиј“ – Скопје, Правен факултет, 1992. p. 66.

it, Bulgaria aimed to repress the Macedonian movement and to take over the entire administration over the Macedonian revolutionary activities. Such dualism and the struggle for supremacy between the two centers apparently complicated the organization of the Ilinden uprising, which despite the other factors, and especially after the assassination of Goce Delcev, started in 1903 and for a very short period of time was cruelly crushed by the Ottoman military forces.

It is important to highlight that the establishment of the Macedonian revolutionary movement, from the beginning of the preparations for its formation during the year 1892 until the activities and goals set by the revolutionary organization, for the history of the Macedonian people represents the moving force and the genesis in which were accumulated the wishes of the Macedonians for realization of the political participation in the Balkan processes. Even more important is that with this act the Macedonian revolutionary movement gained organizational and meaningful nature which in the following historical phases will lead the movement throughout numerous dramatic temptations, polarizations and internal clashes. These occasions in the following periods of the development of the Macedonian revolutionary movement unavoidably will lead to differentiating regarding the basic program goals and with the foundational principles in the Organization, and will reflect into its setup as well as into its structure. In fact, due to all these processes have been created, according to the many essential characteristics, the two diametrically opposed physiognomies of the internal Macedonian revolutionary organization. These two parallels are representing the movement from the formation of the Macedonian revolutionary organization, throughout the period of the Ilinden uprising, as well as the two years after this uprising, until the Balkan wars in 1912/13 (TMORO/IMORO) and the movement before the beginning of the Balkan wars, until the period of the beginning of the World War II.

The National Revolutionary Movement (MRO), defining the goals and values of its striving as we already mentioned previously, since the beginning of its establishment, has put on its agenda the resolving of the Macedonian national question, through formation of the Macedonian state. This meant that the struggle started with the preparations to attain the sovereignty on the territory of ethnic Macedonia. This struggle essentially conditioned the existence of MRO, to be defended from the external breaches into the sovereign principles of the Organization, as well as from the internal streams which could serve in favor of the foreign intentions and influences. Or, with other words, the demand for political autonomy within the Ottoman Empire was meant to be a transitional phase on the road to the establishing of the Macedonian state. This imperative was most explicitly expressed by the great revolutionary activist Goce Delcev, who said: *...Whoever wishes to merge (Macedonia) to Bulgaria or Greece, can be considered as a good Bulgarian or Greek, but not a good Macedonian.*⁸

After the determination of the fundamental aims of the Organization in 1893⁹ and 1894¹⁰ and after the establishment of the Central Macedonian Revolutionary Committee¹¹,

⁸ Андонов – Полјански, Христо, *Гоце, Делчев, Препуска*, том II, Култура, Скопје, 1972, p. 10.

⁹ The created organization, according to the claim of Dr. Hristo Tatarchev, was called Macedonian Revolutionary Organization... On the following two meetings, by the end of 1893, was observed the position in Macedonia and were discussed the measures which were supposed to be taken for acceleration of the process of organizing and of the organizational activities of MRO. It was also discussed about the inclusion of the Odrin region, which at the beginning was not taken into account. Was taken the position that the revolutionary activity should be also spread in the region with Slavic Orthodox population and the same “to be included in the autonomous Macedonia. More on the topic in: д-р Христо Татарчев, *Спомени, документи, материјали*. Ц. Билярски, Софија, 1989. p. 27.

¹⁰ When the new constitution of the organization was adopted, prepared by Petar Pop Arsov.

¹¹ As first president was elected Dr. Hristo Tatarchev, and as a Secretary-treasurer Damjan Gruev.

the revolutionary wave gradually spread itself among the Macedonian people, therefore pointing out to the necessity of convocation of a second congress of MRO in Salonica, on which the character of the revolutionary fight was set to be determined along with its strategic goals, as well as to find solutions for the questions regarding the organization, ideology and program. On the Congress in Salonica in 1896 was determined that the name of the Organization will be Secret Macedonian-Odrin Revolutionary Organization (TMORO) and important decisions were made which directed the road ahead for the Macedonian revolutionary movement.

With the making of the decision to form the Emigrant representative office of TMORO in Sofia, the foundation was laid for diplomatic activities of the Organization; however, this action in fact will bring the destiny of the revolutionary movement into the hands of the Bulgarian irredentist politics, which intended, with the use of the Macedonian emigration in Bulgaria, to infiltrate into the revolutionary circles and to displace the base of the Macedonian national liberation movement. The second very important moment in the history of MRO was the starting of the Ilinden uprising in 1903. Although the uprising started in exceptionally unfavorable conditions in organizational sense, it is an exceptional historical moment in the history of the Macedonian people. The Ilinden uprising became a strong inspiration among the people regarding the essence of the struggle for creating a national statesmanship.

With the beginning of the revolutionary activities of the uprising, the Central Committee of IMORO through the Emigrant representative office of the Organization, sent a Declaration to the European capitals with which, among the other things, called on them to advocate before the Supreme Porte in Constantinople for giving autonomy to Macedonia, according to the Article 23 from the Berlin Peace Treaty.

The demands were:

1. Autonomy for Macedonia with a general governor, independent from the government of the Ottoman Empire in the performing of the function;
2. International protectorate for autonomous Macedonia;
3. Collective international control with broadest rights for use of sanctions as a secured guarantee for efficient protection.¹²

Despite the several months of battling, the Ilinden uprising was stifled in blood by the Ottoman military forces. Because of the great losses which suffered the Organization, on 10th of December 1903 it officially announced the cessation of the revolutionary fire. The meaning of the Ilinden uprising for the history of the Macedonian people is invaluable. It signified the Macedonian national need to form its own state, but also showed the layout of the forces within the Organization itself, in which could be powerfully felt the signs and the influence of the Bulgarian irredentist conspiracy. Therefore, after the stifling of the uprising, the members of the Organization begun again with new efforts in the process of renewing of the vital organs of the Organization. However, in this period will also come to deep internal discrepancies regarding the essential questions of the liberation movement, wherein two streams were clearly distinguished. One of them stood for acceptance of a more democratic structure and methods of the functioning of the Organization, the troops of the Organization to be brought in a defensive position and to preserve the people and the activists from the brutal repressions. The other stream considered that the exactly opposite should be done: to revise the decisions from the Rila Congress from 1905 and to disband the organs of IMRO elected at that time, to inspire the activities of the troops and, which is in the most direct

¹² *Документи за борбата на македонскиот народ за самостојност и за национална држава, том први, Скопје, 1982. (Declaration of the internal organization to the governments of the Great Powers, August 1903).* Документ 274, p. 399 - 400.

opposition to the decision from the Rila Congress, the tasks of the Organization to be equalized to the tasks of the Exarchate of the Bulgarian country. This second stream succeeded to impose itself into the Macedonian revolutionary movement, and after a certain period of time caused the movement to fall under the complete Vrhovist influence of Todor Alexandrov.¹³

As a result to the fierce response by the Ottoman government to the Ilinden uprising, under the pressure of the British public and with an intention to reinforce its place on the Balkan, Great Britain in September 1903 started to perform an intense pressure over the Ottoman Empire to improve the life of the local population in Macedonia.¹⁴ For this goal was developed the Mürzsteg reform program from 21st of September 1903. With the Mürzsteg Agreement the Russian tsar Nicholas II and the Austro-Hungarian emperor Francis Joseph driven by their interests in the Balkan and aiming to maintain the status quo regarding the Ottoman Empire, tried to improve the situation in Macedonia. The Mürzsteg program of reforms was composed of nine articles in which, among the other things, it has been specified that the civil agents of Austria and Russia, along with the general inspector Hilmi-Pasha, will be taking accounts for the needs of the Christians, will perform surveillance to the implementation of the reforms and will point out to if the local authorities do not respect the law. It was also projected the introduction of a gendarmerie which would be consisted by a foreign general and officers. The Ottoman Empire had to start with re-arranging of the administration and judicial system, which at the same time was supposed to be opened for admission of the Christians. After the situation in Macedonia calms down, the Empire was obliged to change the borders of the administrative units in order to regroup them on ethnic bases.¹⁵

Also, the Ottoman Empire had to compensate the damages caused in the process of stifling of the uprising to the Christian refugees, to build new houses and to release the villagers whose villagers were burnt from paying the one-year tax. In the package of reforms was also set the obligation for forming of one mixed commission created on a parity principle to be consisted of Christians and Muslims, whose task was to research all the caused crimes caused during the uprising and in the later disarrays. These draft-reforms were also supported by the British government which proposed them to the Turkish sultan, who on 24th of November 1903 generally accepted the plan, holding on to his right to negotiate regarding the conduction of the program in details. It was envisioned: 1. Keeping Husein Hilmi-Pasha as a main inspector of the three vilayets. For maintaining of the public peace he had the right without a permission by the central government, to engage the army; 2. The Valijas (governors) were obliged to respect the instructions of the general inspector; 3. Was also planned a reorganization of the police and the gendarmerie with foreign instructors. In the gendarmerie was planned to be included the Christians as well; 4. In the Christian villages as padars were supposed to be appointed Christians; 5. Was given a general amnesty for all the political prisoners; 6. For the establishing of a normal function of the local administration and the institutions of the system, it was envisioned to be formed a separate budget for every

¹³ For more on this topic see: *Зборник 100 години од основањето на ВМРО и 90 години од Илинденското востание*, МАХУ, Скопје, 1994. p. 10.

¹⁴ “The most important role in the affirmation of the Macedonian question in Great Britain played the Balkan committee (p.n. formed in London, 1903, by the liberal emissary Noel Baxton, as a group for pressure over the British government to decrease the danger of war on the Near East), whose platform for activism was published in the proclamation ‘Our Duty to Macedonia’. In this manifest was expressed the hope that Great Britain will play an important role to resolve the Macedonian problem.” See: Полјански, Андонов, Христо, *Одгласот на Илинденското востание во Америка и Европа, Историја, IV*, 1, Скопје, 1968, p.45.

¹⁵ See Article 3 from the *Mürzsteg reform program*.

vilayet respectively, under the control of the Ottoman bank; and 7. Was planned the exchange of the tithe with the land tax. The implementation of the reforms started at the beginning of 1904, when in Salonica arrived Nikolay Demerik and Heinrich Ritter Miller von Rogai in a function of civil agents of the general inspector. The contradictions and the different interests of the Great powers started to show during the division of the gendarmerie sectors. The implementation of some of the regulations of the reforms was delayed for a long time. Thus the question for the financial reforms was not intensified until the end of 1905 after the military-navy demonstration of the European powers in the Ottoman territorial waters, and its final unraveling happened in 1907. Similar was the destiny of the question for the reforms in the judicial sphere.¹⁶

In this sense, especially significant for the following military clashes on this territory was the Article 3 from the reform program, in which was projected a new administration division on ethnic ground (i.e. millet), with which on the basis of the religious statistical affiliation, for a short time, the neighboring Balkan countries would be inspired and motivated for the drawing of the ethnographic maps over which by the end of the first decade of the XX century will start to be discussed their own spheres of influence. For these reasons Mürzsteg program in fact did not give any results, mainly because of the wrong approach of the Great powers in the process of resolving of the Macedonian question, and therefore the appetites of the Balkan countries increased even more in their aspirations for rearrangement of the last Ottoman province on the Balkan Peninsula. This also caused these countries to develop a stronger chetnik activity, in order to rearrange their own spheres of interests.¹⁷

The last serious attempt for the resolving of the Macedonian question happened in June 1908, when Great Britain made a radical turnover in its external policy with its efforts for giving autonomy to Macedonia. During the meeting between the British king Edward and the Russian tsar Nicholas II in Reval on 9th and 10th of June 1908, the British side offered a new solution for Macedonia, which meant for this region to gain autonomous administration management. Also, a detailed plan was presented for its pacification. However, the outbreak of the Young Turks Revolution stopped the realization of this project. Besides, the realization of this plan encountered the resistance by Austro-Hungary and Germany. On the English-Russian meeting in Reval, in 1908 was discussed the giving of the autonomy to the last Turkish province on the Balkan, i.e. to Macedonia. This secret meeting of the Russian tsar with the English king has set in motion the reactionary streams in the Ottoman Empire, which several months later in Salonica started the Young Turks riot.¹⁸

This historical moment will cause the crack between MRO and the Supreme committee to become even deeper. Therefore, after the failed attempt to integrate the Organization in the negotiations with the Young Turks, the Macedonian revolutionary Jane

¹⁶ Ѓорѓиев, Ванчо, *Реформи за мир или одлагање на конфликтот*, 100 години од Балканските војни, прилози од научниот собир одржан на 3-4 декември 2012 година, Македонска академија на науки и уметности, Скопје, 2013, p. 116.

¹⁷ (AM) M 233 – *crimes bulgares contre les grecs orthodoxes dans les vilayets macedoniens*.

¹⁸ “The British-Russian discussions in Reval caused serious concern in Constantinople. Beside the fact that no program was published, still in the capital city of the Ottoman Empire quickly were spread the rumors that the both powers soon will suggest autonomy for Macedonia and with that through the isolation of Albania will be reached a final withdrawal of the Ottoman Empire from Europe. This possibility did not disturb only the conservative circles, but also the reformation powers. The real result of their concerns, as well as of the accelerated adjustment of the positions of the Great powers regarding the proposed reform scheme, was the start of the Young Turks revolution in Macedonia and its spreading towards Constantinople.” - Донеv, Јован, *Македонија во британско-руските односи 1907 – 1908*, Архив на Македонија, Скопје, 1994, p. 152.

Sandanski will form the National Federative Party, which was set in the concept of forming of the Macedonian country within a South Slavic or Eastern federation.¹⁹

Already in the following year of 1909, all the reformation activities of the Great powers on the terrain of ethnic Macedonia perished completely. In fact, on the stage stepped the Balkan countries which started the preparations for the expulsion of the Ottoman Empire and for redistribution of the Ottoman properties among themselves. With that the Macedonian question was again suppressed in favor of the ambitions of the Balkan neighbors for expansion and territorial extension of their own state borders. We already concluded that with the Bucharest peace treaty was performed the dividing of the territory of ethnic Macedonia between the Balkan neighbors - Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia. The results of this Treaty contributed to the maneuvers of the positions of the Balkan countries before the beginning of the World War I, with which they built their own interest for connecting with the side which would enable the best chances for them to satisfy their national ambitions.

The Macedonian revolutionary movement after the failing of the Reval project will find itself inside the whirlwind of the two Balkan Wars and the World War I. In this period, especially after the enactment of the Bucharest peace in 1913, the autochthonous Macedonian revolutionary movement will suffer a great defeat, its protagonists will pay with their lives because of their dedication to the struggle for creation of the Macedonian national state, or they will be completely passivized because of the heavy psychological traumas which they will suffer as a result to the outcome from the events of the Balkan wars. Because all of that, MRO in this period will disappear almost completely. On the other side, its place will be taken and filled by a completely changed version of the revolutionary organization, also known as Alexandrovist IMRO, which in this period will act in accordance to the needs of the Bulgarian court.

1. The Macedonian Question at the Versailles system 1919.

The Versailles system, besides the signing of the peace pacts with the defeated countries, focused its work also to the setting of the relations in the newly created countries. It was necessary to be given guarantees for the basic human freedoms and rights of the ethnic groups which with the new geostrategic rearrangement fell within the new territorial borders.

The general prevention required that a part of the main participants on the Conference to advocate in favor the minority issues. In addition to that, the British delegation by the end of April 1919 submitted a memorandum which accented the necessity of the newly formed countries to protect the minorities on their states' territories. Therefore, on 1st of May 1919, the Council of the five brought the decision to form a Committee in which entered the representatives of USA, Great Britain and France. The task of this Committee was to discuss the international obligations of the new countries and to protect the rights of the minorities. After a series of negotiations between the allied countries, the High council brought the decision to form the Committee for new countries and protection of the minorities, or *Commission des Nouveaux Etats et des minorities*.

The Committee started its work at the beginning of May 1919, and already on 5th of May the same year was brought the decision with which the questions for protection of the minorities now covered the already formed national countries. From the aspect of the Balkan events, except for the Kingdom of SCS which was a newly founded country, the already formed national countries Bulgaria and Greece were obliged to respect the protection of the minorities on their state territories.

¹⁹Историја на македонскиот народ, ИНИ, Скопје, 2003, Book III, p. 433.

With this the problem of protection of the minorities gained an international character. Under the same form was also included the discussion of the Macedonian question, and for it to be placed on the agenda of the Conference was exceptionally a merit of the British delegation.²⁰

As Miller witnessed to the Committee for new countries discussed about the ethnic minorities which as a result of the Balkan wars and the World War I found themselves within territorial borders of the Kingdom of SCS and the Kingdom of Greece. On the 31st Session of the Committee which was held on 7th of July 1919 in the Ministry of foreign affairs - Quai d'Orsay, in the presence of the delegates of France, USA, Great Britain, Italy and Japan, was discussed the treaty with the Kingdom of SCS. On this occasion, according to Miller's statement, was agreed only to be discussed about those minorities for which it was possible to suggest that they have a necessity of a special treatment. On this session was also discussed about the Macedonian question. In favor to it pleaded the Italian delegation, which suggested that it would be desirable to be asked for introduction of a special administration system in Vardar part of Macedonia. To this proposition decisively opposed France, which was known to be a big supporter to the Serbian interests.

On the 33rd Session of the Committee for new countries held on 15th of July 1919 in the Ministry of foreign affairs of France, beside the observation of the treaty with the Kingdom of SCS, again was discussed the Italian proposition for granting of an autonomous status of Vardar Macedonia.²¹ With this the Italian delegate has pointed out to the importance of securing the necessary guarantees for protection of the inhabitants of Macedonia, and "*especially for the Slavic population which is not Serbian*".²² After the strategic tactics of the French delegate regarding this question, it was decided that a written notice will be sent to the delegation of SCS, along with the copy from the minority clauses from the treaty with Poland, with a short explanation that they are an indication for the nature of the general clause with which the Serbian delegation was supposed to agree. On the same session was agreed that a letter with the same content will be sent to the Greek delegates on the Conference as well.

Already on the 35th Session with which presided the Committee for new countries on 18th of July 1919, from the preamble of the Treaty with the Kingdom of SCS the Macedonian people were omitted. Regarding the territory which belonged in the state's jurisdiction of the Kingdom of SCS was pointed out in the Annex (A), which Berthelot, as a president of the Committee for new countries and protection of the minorities, sent to the president of the Yugoslav delegation, Nikola Pasić, on 19th of July 1919, that: *without a doubt it is necessary to be observed certain provisions which are referring to the rest of the ethnic minorities (such as the Albanians, Macedonians, and in a general sense, the Muslim population which exists in the state of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes). Regarding this, the Committee would like to know the positions of the Yugoslav delegation regarding those minorities and their organization, as well as regarding the provisions which already exist or*

²⁰ "On the Paris Peace Conference for the Macedonian question was discussed exceptionally within the Committee for new states and for protection of minorities, which started its work in May 1919. During the resolving of this question were observed several propositions which can be seen in the Records of the Committee." See more in: Полјански – Андонов, Христо, *Велика Британија и македонското прашање на Париската мировна конференција во 1919 година*, Архив на Македонија, Скопје, 1973. p. 40.

²¹ In addition to the interest of this Italian proposition, we recommend the Annex (A), with the Draft of the provisions for Macedonia, in: *Документи за Македонија*, edited by Dr. Gelev Dimitar, Book I, Skopje, 2008. p. 244 – 245.

²² Ibid. p. 243.

which are in the process of observing by the Serb-Croat-Slovene government, with which it is supposed to be secured the necessary freedom and protection of those minorities.²³

In the Annex (B) brought on the 35th Session from 18th of July 1919, which Berthelot sent to the president of the Greek delegation in Paris, the Kingdom of Greece was obliged to prepare a draft-treaty which was necessary to be signed between the Entente and Greece regarding the rights of the minorities in Greece.²⁴ Regarding Greece, the Committee did not recognize a Macedonian minority within the Greek country; therefore the Macedonian ethnic population was not counted among the minority groups for which it was obliged to pay attention with the Annex.

At the same time with the events within the Committee, by the Macedonian movement translated in the temporary representative office of the former United Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, to the conference was sent the archimandrite Paul Hristov, the general Vicar of Thrace, who had a task to stand for opening of the Macedonian question.²⁵ Pol Hristov on 10th of April 1919 sent the Memorandum for autonomy of Macedonia to Georges Clemenceau and to Lloyd George. At the same time, he asked from these high representatives to be heard aiming “*personally, in the name of Macedonia and the Macedonian people, to submit his demands*”.²⁶ However, these efforts remained unfulfilled, because of the lack of interest by the side of the high representatives to hear out the Macedonian representative.

Along with these events, in the definitive draft-treaty with the Kingdom of SCS, the Committee for new countries presented an extensive report on 29th of August 1919. Regarding Macedonia, it was pointed out that no difference will be made between the old and the new provinces. Also in the same report it was stated that by the British and Japan delegation was given due importance of the statement within the documents with which the Kingdom of SCS in its Constitution would proclaim the giving of local autonomy to Macedonia, with which was specifically recommended that “*it is not desirable to be imposed a special regime*”, as it was demanded by the Italian delegation. Regarding this position, the French delegation was decisively against any kind of autonomous arrangement of Macedonia within the country of SCS, because it considered that this region is an object of the old dispute between the Bulgarians, Greeks and Serbs, and such an arrangement could inflict the old rivalries among the Balkan countries and grow into another military clash between the same subjects. France considered that in Macedonia a clearly defined nationality does not exist, and that the citizens were divided into parties according to which they changed their character as the new events came by.

According to the findings of Miller, the Committee for new countries on many occasions thought it was necessary to perform an investigation whether in certain cases the use of some special clauses was really necessary. The same necessity existed for the Macedonian people as well. Regarding this point, there was an agreement among all the members of the delegations, with an exception to the members of the French delegation.

Regarding Bulgaria, on the 36th Special session of the Committee for new countries, held on 22nd of July 1919, at the behest of the Council of Five, the Treaty with Bulgaria was prepared. In the main instruction given by the Council it was instructed: (quote) “*Il est decide qui la Commission des nouveaux Etats preparera pour insertion dans le Traite de Paix avec*

²³ Ibid. p. 265.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 266.

²⁵ “This organization was created through the merging of the Seres revolutionary organization, after the assassination of Jane Sandanski, and IMRO, at the beginning of 1919.”

²⁶ See more details in the letter of Pol Hristov to George Clemenceau, as well as in the letter with similar content to Loyd George, published in: Полјански, (q.w.), p. 92.

la Bulgarie des clauses relatives a la protection des minorities dans ce pays".²⁷ This recommendation was important because of the changes and additions made in the Articles 3 and 6 of the treaty. With them Bulgaria was obliged: *Bulgaria accepts and declares that as Bulgarian citizens ipso facto and without any formalities, will become all the people which on the day of entrance into force of this Treaty have a permanent residence on the Bulgarian territory, and which are not citizens of any other country.*²⁸ In addition to this also speak the decisions on the 56th Session of the Committee, where it was confirmed the decision of the Council of five that the pact with Bulgaria will not be signed unless it signs the Treaty for the minorities first.²⁹

The protection of the minorities in the Kingdom of Greece, the high Council also has assigned to compliance to the Committee of the new countries. As a response to the above mentioned letter which was sent to the Greek delegates, on 19th of July 1919 from the Greek representative Eleftherios Venizelos to the president of the Committee Philippe Berthelot, on 31st of July 1919 was sent the Memorandum for the rights of the minorities in Greece. In the submitted act to the Commission the Greek delegate Venizelos stated that the protection of the minorities was secured in the newly added territories as well, because of which he did not experience the necessity of an official guarantee by the winning powers. However, he initially accepted to be signed a general announcement with which Greece would be obliged to protect the minorities. Venizelos stressed out that: "Having in consideration the possibility in this Treaty to be inserted clauses regarding certain racial minorities which can be found in Greece... I submit to you the memorandum, whose reading I hope will assure your Committee that in Greece not only the ethnic minorities enjoy the same rights, freedoms and protection as the majority does, but also have a very privileged treatment in certain affairs, with special internal or international texts". In the same letter, Venizelos claimed that: "The Greek government is firmly determined to expand the same regime in favor of the minorities on the territories which are going to be annexed by Greece". For these reasons, Venizelos was assuring Philippe Berthelot that they would not have any problem to a formal obligation before the international representatives in Versailles regarding this question. However, also, he was convincing him that regarding the territories which with the Versailles decisions were included to the Kingdom of Greece: "there will be serious inconveniences if in the planned clauses of the Treaty are entered provisions analogous to those which are found in the Articles 8 and 9 from the Treaty signed with Poland". According to Venizelos, these clauses in fact would not contribute with anything special regarding to the rights which ethnic minorities in Greece "apparently" had and they would only regard to the: "endangerment of the loyalty of the ethnic minorities towards the Greek state". Therefore, Venizelos claimed that: "These communities, as the Albanian groups before the very doors of Athens, which today can use their own native language at home, while at the same time are adopting perfectly to the legal order and who do not feel any need to create their own churches and schools, if the corresponding clauses be entered in a public treaty, for certain they will be exposed to machinations of the foreign propaganda." Regarding the Macedonian ethnic presence, Venizelos wrote in the letter that: "The same reasons are used a fortiori to the Slavic communities in Macedonia, where the racial hatred is especially resurgent through the systematic propaganda organized and supported by the Bulgarians".³⁰ In addition, the Greek representative sent to the president of the Committee for new countries and rights of the

²⁷ (transl.) "It is decided in the Peace Treaty, by the Committee for New States to be entered provisions which are referring to the minorities in this country". Ibid. p. 268.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 269.

²⁹ See Annex (A) of the Fifty-sixth session, in: *Документи за Македонија*, Dr. Gelev Dimitar... (q.w.), p. 425.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 321 – 322.

minorities, Philippe Berthelot, a *Memorandum for the rights of the minorities in Greece*. In the Memorandum, which was structurally divided into four parts, Venizelos suggested the setting of the following contractual clauses referring to the minority issues in the Kingdom of Greece: 1. civilian and political equality; 2. religious freedom; 3. freedom of education, and 4. the mountain Athos. Regarding the first clause of the Memorandum, the Greeks stated that: “By the power of the Article 3 of the Constitution, ‘The Greeks are equal before the law’ and the same ‘can be elected for every public functions’”. This provision, as it was written, was exercised over all the Greek subjects, regardless of their race or religion. Further in the Memorandum was stated that: “The principle of complete civil and political equality, confirmed with the Constitution, finds its base in the conventional law of Greece: the London protocol from 3rd of February 1830 is referring to the different religions; the Treaty from 29th of March 1864, with which the Ionian islands are annexed to Greece envisions its use on these islands as well; the Treaty of Constantinople from 31st of May 1881 (Article 3), which is referring to the annex of Thessaly and the Treaty of Athens from 1st of November 1913 (Article 11 paragraph 2), which is referring to the annexation of Macedonia, Epirus and the Islands, formally provide that the citizens of the territories annexed by Greece ‘will enjoy complete civil and political rights, as well as the original inhabitants’”. As an example to this treatment of the minorities in the Kingdom of Greece, Venizelos in the Memorandum points out that: “Regarding the certain minorities, this principle was used on a very privileged way. That was the case with the Jews from Salonica, until the last war, which although completely enjoy all the civil and political rights, they were deprived of them, not by the force of a formal act, but simply by the demand of their supreme priest, from every kind of military service, and in the last war they were recruited in a very limited amount, and even then, only in the supporting services of the army.” Also in the Memorandum was stated that the same principle was used regarding the Muslims. Regarding the freedom of education, in the third part of the Memorandum for the rights of the minorities in Greece, was stated that the same principle was planned also in the Article 16 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Greece. Here it was highlighted that “the practicing of this freedom was enabled to all the citizens of the Kingdom, even to the foreigners, in the widest and most liberal sense”. After the listing which followed, in which were described the examples with the Jewish, Muslim, Catholic and Kucovlachos schools, at the end of this part, Venizelos pointed out that: “The Albanians also can open special schools, but they have never taken that possibility into consideration, because they have pure Hellenic feelings and they wish their children, even if they use the Albanian language at home, to have a pure Greek education. The same right is finally given to the Slavic communities in Macedonia, which also before the union of this province with Greece already had organized their own schools.”³¹

On 28th of August 1919 it was ordered to Greece to take care of the educational process on the local level in order to be implemented the language of the majority of the population. Venizelos made a sharp reaction against this, after which the Committee decisively demanded that this was necessary to be done by Greece. After several months of negotiations with the Greek delegation, with the decision of 3rd of November 1919 it was decided that the Treaty with the Kingdom of Greece will be confirmed.

Greece, despite the Treaty for the minorities, succeeded to impose before the High council its plan for reciprocal exchange of the population between itself and the Bulgarian Empire. To Greece the native Slavic population was a burden which the country did not identify as Macedonian, but it was in most numerous in the annexed region of Aegean Macedonia, ever since the time of the Bucharest peace treaty from 1913. Greece

³¹ See the integral text of the Memorandum for rights of the minorities in Greece, Ibid. p. 323 - 327.

accomplished its intention before the Committee to push its idea, through which the country considered that the compactness of the Macedonian ethnic population will be shattered, thusly paralyzing any possibility of a future annexation of the entire territory of ethnic Macedonia. In this regard, the Committee formed a special subcommittee which presided specially for this question. As a main clause in the preparations of this treaty for *voluntary exchange of population* was projected that the emigration of the population from the seaside part of Macedonia and Thrace in the Bulgarian Empire is to be performed by their own will and freely in a timeframe of four years from the day of entry into force of the Treaty. The Committee considered that the problem of the exchange of populations should be extended to all the Balkan countries. It was agreed that the same clauses will be written in the Treaty with Turkey as well, and the same also referred to the special treaties which were to be signed with Serbia and Greece. Thusly was found the legal foundation over which the inhabitants of Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey could declare their desire to emigrate into any of these countries. Also, it was guaranteed that it was allowed the choice of the country can be done by the will of the people.

These suggestions which were officially released by the Committee were accepted by the High council on 4th of September 1919. To them the Greek representative submitted a draft-treaty regulating the exchange, in which it was explicitly highlighted that the people who will emigrate will lose the citizenship of the country which they are leaving and become citizens of the country in which they arrive. On the 52nd session of the Committee for new countries held on 15th of September 1919 it was decided that all the problems regarding the ownership and nationality will be regulated with the Annex (C) and thusly the same will be implemented in the Article 56 from the Bulgarian treaty.

However, a problem emerged regarding the participation of the Kingdom of SCS in the Treaty, which brought into question the signing of the Treaty for voluntary exchange of populations between the Kingdom of Greece and the Bulgarian Empire as well. Because of that, the activity of the subcommittee got prolonged, up until the 61st session of the Committee on 17th of November 1919 when it was again discussed on the subject, after which a report was prepared to the High council asking for its proclamation regarding the offered solutions.

On 19th of November 1919 the High council declared positively regarding the Treaty and the same was sent to the delegations of Greece and Bulgaria, with an indication within 48 hours they should sign it between themselves. The ratification of this treaty by the winning powers was set to be done later.

The Bulgarian delegation made a remark regarding the citizenship status which offered the right of choice. It was stated that at the given moment inside the Bulgarian Empire there were more than 400.000 refugees from Macedonia which demanded their return in their native hearths. These citizens still had the status of Ottoman subjects. Therefore, Bulgaria demanded that the status of these people should be resolved before anything else. The Committee, regarding this question, stated that it was not recommended that a clause should be entered for these refugee groups within the general Treaty with the Bulgarian Empire, however, after the intervention of the British delegation it was suggested that these ethnic groups should also enter the composition of the jurisdiction of the Treaty for voluntary exchange of population.

About this issue it was again discussed on the 55th session of the Committee for new states on 28th of October 1919. It was questionable how to be resolved the issue regarding the subjects. Therefore, on the 59th session of the Committee held on 13th of November 1919, because of the rejection of the Kingdom of SCS to sign the Treaty for exchange of population, it was decided that the Treaty for voluntary exchange of population will be signed only between the Kingdom of Greece and the Bulgarian Empire

On the 62nd session of the Committee held on 24th of November 1919 was confirmed the signing of the Treaty for voluntary exchange of population between the Kingdom of Greece and the Bulgarian Empire. This act of the Balkan countries, along with the winning powers, meant that the legitimacy was given to the disunion, denationalization and assimilation of the Macedonian people. Through the treatment of the Macedonian question in the context of the national aspirations of the neighboring countries, it was de-legitimized the right of Macedonians for self-determination, which in fact was the basic proclamation which represented the Versailles system.

In 1919 it became clear that the resolving of the Macedonian question did not receive a serious unraveling in the frames of this international institution. The struggle for the creation of a Macedonian country was defeated by the selfish expansionism of its Balkan neighbors.³²

The consequence of the Balkan wars and the World War I was the territorial dividing of ethnic Macedonia. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the territory of Macedonia was divided among Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria, an act of the Balkan countries which, instead of being sanctioned has received an approval, with the confirmation of their legitimacy made with the treaties introduced by the Versailles world order. Divided with the state borders, after 1919 the Macedonian nation was submitted to a severe economic exploitation, political deprivation, national non-recognition and oppression, with a final goal - to be ethnically liquidated.

In essence, the Macedonian question was not recognized as an ethnic problem because the conditions from the past and the powerful propaganda machines of the three neighboring countries - Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria, made the efforts to make the impression before the world public that the Macedonian ethnicity did not exist, while Macedonia was mainly treated as a geographical term, and the ethnic origin of the population on the Macedonian territory was considered exclusively as a "lost herd", i.e. as a nation which is either Serbian, Greek or Bulgarian. On the account of this situation during the entire period between the wars, the Serbs, Greeks and the Bulgarians were unified around the position through which they denied the existence of the separate Macedonian identity. Serbia named the Macedonians in the Vardar part "South Serbs", Bulgaria claimed that the Macedonians were nothing else but purely Bulgarian people, and Greece entitled the Macedonians to be "Slavophonic Greeks", before finally giving them the name "Bulgarians".³³ These conditions, confirmed with the Versailles decisions as well, forced the Macedonians to leave behind their homes in the Aegean and Vardar part of Macedonia, and to head for Bulgaria and the other parts of the world, because with the Versailles system, for a second time within one decade, the Macedonian people were divided and disunited. The Macedonian question fell under the shadow of the oblivion by the great European powers which were the creators and signers of the aforementioned international treaties. The act of the signing of the Paris peace treaties for the Macedonian question had two fundamental meanings. The first meaning was consisted in the fact that with the Paris peace treaties, besides the other decisions, was performed the revision of the Bucharest peace treaty from 1913 and with their decisions were cemented on a

³² "Starting from this insight, Gjorche Petrov concluded that 'Macedonia, during the times of freedom and independency, in its wholeness and with Salonica as its center, offers first of all, incomparable economic advantages before all the others, political resolutions of the Macedonian question, and especially before its dismemberment, which alone draws impossible political and economic borders in many different ways for Macedonia, and breaks the unbreakably connected regions in an economic regard.'" - Пандевски, Манол – Ст. *Ѓорче Петров за македонското прашање и Македонската држава во 1919 година*, Прилеп, 1974. p. 58

³³ Rossos, Andrew, *The British Foreign Office and Macedonian National Identity, 1918 – 1941*, Slavic Review, vol. 53, 2, 1994. p. 9.

long term the territorial gains of the Balkan countries, on the account of the creation of the Macedonian country. The second meaning was consisted in the fact according to which the formal-legal Macedonian national minority, with the decisions from Versailles, was not recognized. This was mainly due to the fact that the great powers did not take into consideration the creation of the Macedonian state, because of the territorial interests of the neighboring monarchies, i.e. Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and Albania. For those reasons, on the base of the Convention for exchange of populations between Greece and Bulgaria signed on 28th of November 1919, more than 35.000 ethnic Macedonians “voluntarily” were evicted from the region known as Aegean Macedonia into Bulgaria. With the Treaty from Lausanne from 24th of June 1923, around 45.000 Macedonians with Muslim confession, also from the Aegean part of Macedonia under the Greek authority, were forever moved out into Turkey. According to the statistical markers of the demographic picture of Aegean Macedonia, in 1939 around 320.000 people belonged to the Macedonian ethnicity.

Compared to the Greek emigrants, which especially after the adoption of the Acts for the agrarian reform which were adopted in the Bulgarian Empire in 1920/1921, unsatisfied by the new conditions, in the most of their number moved into Greece; the Macedonians, especially those who lived near the border with the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, decided not to move out. Although not very drastically, a change in the ethnic composition of the population in the Vardar part of Macedonia was attempted to be done by the Serbian government as well.³⁴ Its assimilatory treatment towards the Macedonian people in the Vardar part of Macedonia, this government performed with the conduction of a harsh repression over the Macedonians, as well as with the colonization of the Serbian migrants from different parts of the Kingdom of SCS.³⁵

The dividing of Macedonia led to a change into the Macedonian national revolutionary movement. This unnatural territorial dividing contributed to the separation in the ideological matrix of the autochthonous Macedonian movement and the same became layered into two opposed sides. The first melted into the ideological and political goals of the Bulgarian society, while the other remained to struggle for the primary idea in very unfavorable conditions.

In this condition, the Macedonian question patiently waited for the next chance to be re-actualized, until the ASNOM held on 2nd of August 1944. It was exactly then where the statesmanship vision, which the Macedonian people carried throughout all the changes and destiny’s temptations, got its expressive form with the creation of federal Macedonia within the borders of the AVNOJ Yugoslavia. During the entire period from the emergence of the Macedonian question and throughout all the processes which this question went through, during the social and political conditions within it existed and shaped itself, this question developed and struggled throughout a really wide specter of possibilities. Starting from the demands for autonomy, until the versions for federal or confederal constitutionalizing, all the attempts made for the solution of this question had their influence which led into the unifying into the one antifascist block during the World War II, in which the Macedonian people on the plenary session of ASNOM won its first great battle for statesmanship, therefore gaining a chance to finally start the process of resolving the Macedonian question.

This process lasts to the present day.

³⁴ “The Kingdom of Greece offered its plan for exchange of population also to the Kingdom of SCS because it wanted to get rid of the entire Slavic population as much as it was possible, however, SCS denied this proposition.” - Јовановиќ, М. Јован, *Дипломатска историја Нове Европе, 1918 – 1938*, I, Београд, 1938. p. 98.

³⁵ Around 70% of the total army and gendarmerie of the Kingdom of SCS, was set in Vardar Macedonia.

References:

1. Рудометоф, Виктор, *Македонското прашање*, Евро Балкан Пресс, Скопје, 2003.
2. Војводић, М., *Србија, српско питање и Турска крајем XIX и почетком XX века*, Меѓународни научни скуп “Ислам, Балкан и Велике силе“, Историјски институт САНУ, Београд, 1997.
3. Поповски, Владо, *Државотворниот карактер на востанијата и превирањата во Македонија во Источната криза 1875-1881*, Гласник 40 2 1996.
4. Бартл, Петер, *Албанци*, Слио, 2001.
5. Димевски, Поповски, Шкарик, Апостолски, *Македонската Лига и уставот за државно уредување на Македонија од 1880*, Мисла, Скопје, 1985.
6. Поповски, В, Ѓоргиев, В, Годоровски, Ачкоска, В, *Создавањето на современата македонска држава*, Македонска реч, Скопје, 2014.
7. Донеv, Јован, *Меѓународните политички аспекти на британско - руската програма за реформа на Македонија 1907 – 1908*, Универзитет „Св. Кирил и Методиј“ – Скопје, Правен факултет, 1992.
8. Андонов – Полјански, Христо, *Гоце, Делчев, Преписка*, том II, Култура, Скопје, 1972.
9. д-р Христо Татарчев, *Спомени, документи, материјали*. Ц. Билярски, Софија, 1989.
10. *Документи за борбата на македонскиот народ за самостојност и за национална држава, том први*, Скопје, 1982.
11. *Зборник 100 години од основањето на ВМРО и 90 години од Илинденското востание*, МАНУ, Скопје, 1994.
12. Полјански, Андонов, Христо, *Одгласот на Илинденското востание во Америка и Европа, Историја, IV*, 1, Скопје, 1968.
13. Ѓорѓиев, Ванчо, *Реформи за мир или одлагање на конфликтот*, 100 години од Балканските војни, прилози од научниот собир одржан на 3-4 декември 2012 година, Македонска академија на науки и уметности, Скопје, 2013.
14. (AM) M 233 – *crimes bulgares contre les grecs orthodoxes dans les vilayets macedoniens*.
15. Донеv, Јован, *Македонија во британско-руските односи 1907 – 1908*, Архив на Македонија, Скопје, 1994.
16. *Историја на македонскиот народ*, ИНИ, Скопје, 2003, Book III.
17. Полјански – Андонов, Христо, *Велика Британија и македонското прашање на Париската мировна конференција во 1919 година*, Архив на Македонија, Скопје, 1973.
18. *Документи за Македонија*, edited by Dr. Gelev Dimitar, Book I, Skopje, 2008.
19. Пандевски, Манол – Ст. Ѓорче Петров за македонското прашање и *Македонската држава во 1919 година*, Прилеп, 1974.
20. Rossos, Andrew, *The British Foreign Office and Macedonian National Identity, 1918 – 1941*, Slavic Review, vol. 53, 2, 1994.