

# 13 Economics, Culture, Minorities (1944–1991)

Creation of the republic of Macedonia in the Communist Yugoslav federation in 1944 was a defining event in Macedonians' modern political history. It also launched a shift in their social and economic development, from an underdeveloped agrarian to a more modern, semi-industrial society. It was undoubtedly also the most historic occurrence in the evolution of their culture since the Slavic renaissance in medieval Macedonia. The existence of a state facilitated the rise and development of a national culture using the standardized Macedonian literary language—the official language of the republic and one of four of Yugoslavia. The relatively free milieu allowed for completion of the nation-building process that began in the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

This chapter examines these three facets of national life in Yugoslav Macedonia: the economy, especially industry and agriculture; culture, particularly language, education, and the arts; and treatment of national minorities.

## **The Economy: Agriculture and Industry**

During the interwar years, in the first, or royal Yugoslavia, Vardar Macedonia, or South Serbia, or the Vardar banovina (region) was probably

one of the most backward and underdeveloped, and certainly the most economically neglected, region. It was predominantly a rural society. Except for Skopje, its administrative center, it had few towns with a developed urban life. The communication system was primitive or non-existent. There were hardly any modern roads and few railway links. Most areas lacked electricity, running water, telephones, and so forth.

Agriculture dominated the economy. In 1946, after restoration of prewar economic activities, industry and mining made up 15 percent of the economy, and agriculture and animal husbandry, 58 percent. Most people depended on agriculture for their livelihood. The agrarian economy consisted principally of small, subsistence family farms. There were very few properties with either several tens of hectares of arable land or herds of several hundred sheep. The agrarian sector had a surplus of labor, primitive methods of cultivation, low productivity, and inadequate incomes.<sup>1</sup>

Industrialization began in Macedonia at the end of the nineteenth century, but it grew very slowly. In 1945, 140 factories could employ 8,873 workers but actually had jobs for only 3,391.<sup>2</sup> About half of these factories were “monopolies”—storage buildings for drying and fermenting purchased tobacco.

The new Communist regime, acting primarily in terms of ideological considerations, sought to create a modern, socialist, industry-based economy and society. According to Nikola Uzunov, the economic and social transformation between the mid-1940s and 1990 passed through six phases, which corresponded roughly to the federation’s political evolution.<sup>3</sup>

In the first, brief phase, 1946–47, the government aimed to restore all economic activities to prewar levels. Since Macedonia had not suffered enormous physical destruction during the war, it reached the targets in most areas: for example, commerce, transportation, trades, construction, industry, and farming. But in livestock breeding, numbers had fallen badly, and restoration took longer.

During the second phase, 1947–52, the regime introduced measures to establish the new, socialized economy. It “nationalized”—that is, expropriated—the privately owned means of production, including small trades, and formed larger, state-owned commercial and industrial enterprises. In the countryside, in addition to its postwar land redistribution, it now attempted, frequently by force, to collectivize family farms into village cooperatives. However, peasants’ widespread opposition and re-

sistance seriously hindered its efforts on that front. In the early 1950s, it decided to terminate the program and even allowed forced collectives to disband.

In this phase, the government also inaugurated rapid industrialization to ameliorate extreme underdevelopment. It directed all available investment capital to the building of factories, at the expense of other economic activities, particularly agrarian. Furthermore, it did away with the free market, took control of domestic and foreign trade, and introduced detailed planning for the entire economy and state administration and direction of all enterprises.

The one-party, centralized state used all its power to implement its policies, which aimed to establish socialism in Macedonia, as in all the other republics. The results were uneven, if not disappointing. Although industry, building, and construction expanded, farming production and crafts and trades declined sharply. And the overall standard of living dropped substantially.

The third phase, 1953–64, coincided with the first major reforms of the socialist economy: introduction of worker self-management in enterprises; formation of a market for goods and services; partial decentralization of planning; and introduction of legal protection for private property in agriculture, trades, and housing, despite strict limits on the scale of such operations.

Targets in this phase were higher, and the accomplishments greater, than those in the previous two. The economic plan called for growth throughout the economy. Industry expanded through the addition of many sizeable enterprises in textiles, leather, and metalworking; greater generation of electrical power; and higher production in forestry, metallurgy, and chemical industries. A few large construction companies emerged, each with several thousand workers; and the state built a network of major highways and roads. In farming, production expanded in traditional crops—tobacco, rice, poppies, wheat, corn—in a new crop, sugar beets, and in sheep breeding.

However, productivity remained low, and the economy could hardly compete with outside suppliers. Nonetheless, overall expansion in production and economic activity, and growth in the workforce and its buying power, helped increase the standard of living.

Debates on decentralization and democratization turned the fourth phase, 1965–71, into a liberal interlude. The primary aim of the economic planners changed. They sought not further expansion of eco-

conomic capacity but rather reconstruction and modernization of existing capacity, higher productivity from labor, more-efficient production in all sectors, and greater specialization. Accompanying this new orientation were measures to liberalize foreign trade and give the banks greater autonomy.

The aim of all these undertakings was to make enterprises competitive with foreign firms. Some improvement undoubtedly occurred—probably as much as could have taken place under existing socialist self-management. Macedonia found it difficult to compete even with the more developed Croatia, Slovenia, and Vojvodina, let alone with Western economies. The best results came in agriculture, particularly in private family farms specializing in greens, vegetables, and fruits for the market.

During the fifth phase, in the 1970s, the government, without changing fundamentals, sought to secure economic growth through intensified investment in all sectors. It built large mining-industrial complexes, many food-processing plants, and a number of livestock farms, banks, tourist hotels and resorts, shopping centers, and so forth. The domestic economy, still developing and suffering from low productivity, could not generate enough capital for such expansion. The government had to depend on financial resources from the other, more economically developed regions, on the Federal Fund for the Accelerated Development of the Less Developed Regions, and on foreign investment. As a result, Macedonia accumulated a huge debt at a time of rising interest rates and of fuel costs skyrocketing because of the worldwide energy crisis.

This rise in investment went hand in hand with reforms aiming toward a “consensual economy.” The goal was to deregulate the economy and to permit self-managed enterprises to negotiate business deals among themselves. In actual practice, however, party and state hindered any local initiative, and so economic efficiency did not increase. Hence, any economic growth was the result primarily of borrowing.

A general, nationwide economic crisis dominated the sixth and final phase in the 1980s. Macedonia had a huge debt, lacked new investment, and experienced stagnant production, high and rising inflation, growing unemployment, and a declining standard of living. Macedonia, like many other small, developing economies, had borrowed very heavily to modernize and now could not meet payments on the accumulated debt. The world energy crisis of the 1970s compounded its problems. The sharp increase in the price of oil virtually crippled economies such as

Macedonia's that imported all their oil. However, the long-term weaknesses and shortcomings of the existing system did even more to bring about the crisis. The system offered ineffective direction; was not very productive; wasted much of the national income on unsustainable, politically motivated endeavors; replaced tried and proven economic regulators such as supply and demand with administrative measures; and interfered constantly in economic life.<sup>4</sup>

We cannot know how the republic of Macedonia would have fared under a different dispensation. However, despite the system's shortcomings and uneven development, and particularly from 1947 to 1980, it made remarkable economic advances. The improvements amounted to a minor industrial revolution and turned Macedonia into a semi-developed country. The gross national product was nine times higher in 1980 than in 1947, with average annual growth an impressive 6.5 percent.

Like Yugoslavia as a whole, the republic aimed at rapid and forced industrialization. As a result, by 1990 it had transformed the very structure of its economy. While in the late 1940s farming dominated the economy, by 1990 industry was predominant. Industry and mining grew from 15 percent of the economy in 1947 to 54 percent in 1990, and agriculture declined from 58 percent to 17 percent. Industrialization, however, occurred at the expense of agriculture, especially its private sector, which suffered neglect and remained premodern. As a result, while overall economic output grew by 5.7 times between 1953 and 1990, and industry and mining by 21.1 times, agriculture increased by only 2.5 times.<sup>5</sup>

At war's end, the rural economy had consisted largely of small, private family farms. Agriculturalists worked the land in traditional ways, and yields were very low. Basically villagers engaged in subsistence farming; there were too many people working on the land and too many mouths to feed. Between 1946 and 1948, agrarian reform brought confiscation of land above 25 hectares per household and nationalization of large herds of sheep. The state distributed some of the land and livestock among the poorest peasants to help ameliorate their economic situation. The reform, however, did not necessarily increase productivity or output.

In 1948, the KPJ dramatically altered its agrarian policy. It introduced forced collectivization and establishment of rural cooperatives or collectives as large agricultural enterprises. The KPM carried out collec-

tivization in Macedonia with particular vengeance. However, it immediately became obvious that collectivization in the republic would be a failure. The large collectives possessed no modern machinery and had to work the land in the traditional, primitive ways with hand implements and harnessed animals. More important, however, peasants rejected the new organization of labor and the new administration and distribution of output and income.

Thus, instead of improving the situation, forced collectivization created a crisis: it dislocated the farming economy and slashed productivity and overall output. In 1953, Belgrade acknowledged that the policy had been a mistake, abandoned it, allowed the co-ops to dissolve, and returned the land to its former owners. In Macedonia, only a few voluntary co-ops with small properties continued.<sup>6</sup>

However, Macedonia's postwar socially owned agricultural sector, which slightly antedated forced collectivization, proved much more successful and survived past 1990. Such enterprises had begun in 1946 on lands that the state confiscated. After that, they expanded through purchases from private owners, acquisition of uncultivated lands, or rehabilitation of marshlands. They became large enterprises cultivating hundreds of hectares or even several thousand and with hundreds or thousands of livestock. "In 1990 there were 147 such enterprises in Macedonia with a total of 144,000 hectares of cultivated land, 21,200 employees, 3,438 tractors, 27,500 heads of cattle, 160,000 sheep, etc."<sup>7</sup>

From the very beginning, the state favored these establishments. It equipped them with modern machinery and implements, professional administrators and agricultural specialists, and employees who worked on the same basis and under the same conditions as people in other sectors; these enterprises produced more than individual household farms. In time, they expanded, set up industrial plants to process their products, and became agricultural-industrial complexes. Throughout the Communist period, they helped modernize farming production in Macedonia.

Nevertheless, individual peasant households dominated Macedonian farming. They lacked up-to-date machinery and know-how, and their productivity was low, but they were responsible for the largest part of the republic's agricultural output. About 1990, they owned 70 percent of the cultivated land and 85 percent of the livestock and produced 61 percent of the agricultural output.<sup>8</sup>

Industrialization and the consequent decline of farming continued

throughout the Yugoslav period. The great demographic changes reflected that shift. The proportion of agriculturalists was 63 percent in 1953, 57 percent in 1961, 40 percent in 1971, 22 percent in 1981, and 15 percent in 1991. Migration to the cities was one cause, but so were nonagricultural jobs. Over time, more rural inhabitants found these without having to leave the countryside. By 1980, more than half of the rural population had such positions. Further, many village households became mixed, with some members in agriculture and others working in other sectors.<sup>9</sup>

All in all, the Macedonian republic underwent a major economic and social transformation. It followed a zigzag pattern, and various sectors performed unevenly. However, a solid basis emerged for the further, less wasteful, and more economically rational modernization that became possible after 1990 under pluralist democracy and a free market.

### **Culture: Language, Education, and the Arts**

The cultural situation in Vardar Macedonia up to 1941 was even drearier than the economic one. Since the Macedonians had no national recognition and it was illegal to use their language in educational and cultural institutions and in public life, their culture virtually stagnated. In interwar Yugoslav Macedonia, the official culture was that of the Serbian minority—colonists, officials, teachers, security personnel, and so on—and of some educated and assimilated Macedonians. The handful of Serbian-educated, nationally conscious Macedonian intellectuals partook of the Serbian culture but did not consider it their own and did not identify with it. Macedonian-language culture existed only in the form of the rich folk/popular culture and in illegal or semi-legal publications. Consequently, in this cultural sphere, the new Macedonian republic had virtually to start from scratch.

The growth and development of a national culture depend on many factors. A people's determination to ground it in its 'mother tongue' is indispensable. But external factors are also essential: a free and tolerant environment and supportive institutional infrastructure. In Macedonia's case, such external supports were totally absent from the start of the nineteenth-century national awakening. Ottoman authority and competing Balkan nationalisms prevented any domestic cultural initiatives up to 1912; from then until 1940, Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia/Yugoslavia blocked such efforts.

The 1941 collapse of the old order in Greece and Yugoslavia and the rise of powerful Communist-led resistance transformed conditions in Aegean and Vardar Macedonia. In the liberated territories of Aegean Macedonia under EAM-ELAS, that group allowed use of the language, and its Macedonian organizations encouraged and directed Macedonian cultural activities.

This freedom ended after EAM-ELAS capitulated at Varkiza in February 1945 and remained nonexistent during the white terror and reaction that followed. It emerged again, more widespread and organized, in the heavily Macedonian areas that the Communist-led left controlled during the Greek Civil War (1947–1949).<sup>10</sup> The Communist defeat in 1949 ended Macedonians' cultural aspirations in Greece. Ever since, Athens has refused to recognize Macedonian identity, people, language, and so forth anywhere and has treated any Macedonianism in Greece as treason.

In Yugoslavia and hence in Vardar Macedonia, the victory of the Communist-led National Liberation Movement laid the groundwork for development of Macedonian national culture. As we saw above, the second session of AVNOJ (November 1943) recognized Macedonia as an equal partner in a Yugoslav federation and Macedonian as one of the state's four official languages. In Vardar Macedonia, the national liberation movement used Macedonian and made it the official language for education and cultural expression in the areas under its rule. The first session of ASNOM (2 August 1944) proclaimed Macedonian the literary and official language of the new republic.

Generations of patriots and nationalists had dreamed of a Macedonian-language national culture. However, such an aspiration was also critical for Communist leaders in both Macedonia and federal Yugoslavia. It would represent and symbolize the existence of the Macedonian ethnic national identity. And this in turn would counter and discredit the persistent Greek and, after 1948, Bulgarian negation of that identity and those countries' claims and aspirations in Macedonia.

Consequently, while the new republic, like the other partners in the federation, had limited sovereignty, its inhabitants enjoyed far more cultural freedom. As long as they did not question Titoist doctrine and Macedonia's status, they were free and could help develop a national culture. And quite quickly exactly that emerged and flourished. Its re-

markable successes surprised even its most ardent champions—to say nothing of its traditional Balkan detractors.

The Macedonian government sought first to standardize and codify the language. Between late November 1944 and early May 1945, three official Commissions on the Macedonian Language and Orthography, with some overlapping membership, dealt with the issue. The basis was to be the so-called central Macedonian dialects, which were along the lines of Veles-Prilep-Bitola. These dialects were equally distinct from Bulgarian and Serbian and most free of their usages. Krste P. Misirkov had chosen them in 1903 as the ground for his proposed Macedonian literary language. Furthermore, Kočo Racin and Venko Markovski used them in their poetry and prose of the 1930s and wartime.

However, the alphabet proved divisive. Some people sought a Cyrillic alphabet with its own characteristics or peculiarities distinct from and equidistant between the Bulgarian and the Serbian (Vuk Karadžić's). Others, for practical and political reasons, advocated Karadžić's Serbian alphabet.

The first commission, which consisted of intellectuals, decided on a Macedonian alphabet on 4 December 1944. Where the presidium of ASNOM considered the proposal, it expressed satisfaction with the body's work but did not announce its decision. Instead, on 15 February 1945 it formed another commission, which added representatives of other interested parties. This second group split badly but recommended the Serbian alphabet. This situation and delays in resolving the question threatened the country's political stability, and even the central committee of the KPJ called for speedy agreement.

A third commission, again with politicians and intellectuals, adopted the Serbian Cyrillic. It submitted the proposal on 3 May 1945, and the government approved the idea the same day. Standardization was complete within a month. On 2 June, the commission recommended a Macedonian orthography, and on 7 June the government approved it. The first grammar of the newly codified Macedonian literary language and the first schoolbooks in that language soon appeared.<sup>11</sup>

The standardization and codification were a historic achievement, representing national affirmation and laying a solid foundation for education and growth of a national culture.

The speedy creation of a Macedonian-language educational system was essential to the new regime. Education spread national conscious-

ness, Communist ideology, and know-how for economic modernization. Consequently, support for it remained strong in federal Macedonia.

However, the republic suffered from high rates of illiteracy, a lack of books in Macedonian, and shortages of teachers and of schools. According to one source, 75 percent of its inhabitants were illiterate in 1939.<sup>12</sup> Another claimed that in 1946 illiteracy among people ten years of age or older stood at 67.5 percent.<sup>13</sup> Since use of Macedonian had been illegal in all three partitions before the war, there were no school-books, textbooks, or any other educational aids in the language, and very few literary works used it. Furthermore, there were no instructors who could teach in Macedonian. In December 1944, just after liberation, the republic had only 337 trained teachers for primary schools and 140 for high schools, and many of them were active in the liberation movement or public service. Estimates for the 1944/45 school year suggested the need for 3,000 primary and 450 high school teachers.<sup>14</sup> And facilities were totally inadequate. In the late 1930s, there had not been enough schools, and during the war 18 percent of primary-school buildings had become barracks for military, police, or other security forces.<sup>15</sup>

The first Macedonian primary schools opened for 1944/45 in the liberated territories. The network expanded rapidly, along with courses in libraries and special reading rooms for the many illiterate adults. By December 1944, nine academic high schools (gymnasias) were operating in larger towns, as well as more specialized music, fine-arts, and teacher-training schools in Skopje, the capital.

To ease the shortage of teachers, the authorities engaged young people who had at least some high school education and started intensive training in large cities, paying special attention to the teaching of Macedonian language, geography, and history. During the first half of the 1944/45 school year, some two thousand individuals completed those courses and immediately received teaching positions.<sup>16</sup>

After the difficult launch, the educational system continued to expand on all levels. According to one authority, Macedonia underwent a veritable educational "boom," or "explosion."<sup>17</sup> Illiteracy, rampant under the old Serbian regime, virtually disappeared, declining from 75 percent of the population in 1939 to 35.7 percent in 1953, 26.5 percent in 1961, 18.1 percent in 1971, and 10.9 percent in 1981. The 1994 census found only 5 percent of people illiterate, most of them seventy years of age or older and belonging to particular ethnic groups. This

decline was largely the result of effective adult education, which also provided training and qualifications for work.

The school system grew dramatically in facilities and enrollment. In 1939, there were only 39 kindergartens; by 1987 there were 627, with 41,217 pupils. In 1939, 817 primary schools enrolled 100,000 pupils; in 1951, 1,591 schools had 167,000. By 1993, 261,127 children were attending primary schools. Between 1951 and 1966, the number of high schools increased from 112 to 163, and enrollment from 19,836 students to 52,697. By sometime in the 1970s, 80 percent of those who had completed primary education went on to secondary school.

Postsecondary education saw even greater growth. Before the war, Yugoslav Macedonia had no university. The Philosophical Faculty in Skopje, a branch of the University of Belgrade, reopened at the end of 1946 with Macedonian-language instruction and 199 students. The first Macedonian university, SS Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, began in 1949 with 1,092 students; by 1974, it had enrolled 37,449. In 1979, a second university opened in Bitola.

In addition to training and graduating thousands of students every year, these institutions also established postgraduate programs and awarded many master's and doctoral degrees in all academic disciplines.<sup>18</sup> Creation of academic infrastructure culminated on 23 February 1967 with the founding of the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts (MANU) as the nation's highest institution of learning and culture.

The emergence of a Macedonian state, and its codification of the language and granting of official status to it, accelerated cultural development. For the first time in their modern history, Macedonians could freely develop their own culture, as the other “new” nations of central and eastern Europe had done. With Skopje's support and encouragement, and Belgrade's, Macedonians sought to catch up culturally with the other Yugoslav peoples and, even more important, with neighbors such as the Bulgarians and the Greeks, whose governments continued to deny their national existence.

The rich traditional folk culture—music, songs, dances, crafts, and so on—continued to flourish; but governments focused on contemporary arts: music, fine arts, literature. Before the war, some struggling artists trained elsewhere and partook in Yugoslavia's cultural life, but at home there was little organized activity, let alone of the Macedonian variety. After 1945, the state founded schools, professional societies, and

associations to enhance Macedonian music, performing arts, visual arts, theater, cinema, and especially literature.

There soon appeared the first Macedonian symphonic compositions, operas, and ballets. Macedonian painters and sculptors were exhibiting at home and in leading galleries and museums in Yugoslavia and abroad. By the 1970s, talented directors were making feature films that attracted attention beyond Yugoslavia and the Balkans; Milčo Mančevski's *Before the Rain* (1993) won international acclaim. All in all, the achievements of Yugoslav Macedonians in all these areas of cultural endeavor were striking—comparable to those of the other Balkan peoples, whose state-sponsored cultural development began a century or more earlier.

Even more notable, however, were Macedonian accomplishments in poetry, prose, and drama. In the Balkans and, indeed, in central and eastern Europe as a whole, ethnic or linguistic nationalism prevailed. There, with few exceptions, the so-called mother tongue defined people. The nation and its language were inseparable: one could not exist without the other; literature in that language was the most recognizable and undeniable proof that both existed.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, for Macedonians, the rapid flowering of their literature—poetry, prose, drama—was probably the defining cultural accomplishment, and the most notable writers have traditionally enjoyed national recognition and prestige.

The poets led the way. They found inspiration in the rich oral tradition of carefully collected and compiled Macedonian folk songs and verse. Modern Macedonian poetry started before standardization of the language at war's end. During the 1930s and the fight for national liberation, poets such as Kočo Racin, Kole Nedelkovski, and Venko Markovski were already writing in Macedonian. Joining Markovski after the war were younger colleagues such as Blaže Koneski, Aco Šopov, and Slavko Janevski, who used standardized Macedonian.

From this modest beginning, Macedonian poetry grew in quantity and quality. By the late 1960s and the 1970s, its practitioners were attaining world standards through the "middle generation" of poets such as Matej Matevksi, Gane Todorovski, Vlado Urušević, and Cane Andreevski. Their younger contemporaries, such as Bogomil Ćuzel, Mihail Rendžov, Dušica Todorovska, and Radovan Cvetkovski, showed even greater artistic and thematic originality. Translations of their work were appearing elsewhere in Yugoslavia and central and eastern Europe but also in the major world languages.<sup>20</sup>

There was no tradition of fiction in Macedonian before standardiza-

tion. No short stories or novels appeared in the language before 1945. In the first issue of the journal *Nov Den*, in 1945, Blaže Koneski, the new republic's leading linguist, writer, and intellectual, lamented this gap. "Macedonian literature is represented today almost exclusively by poetry," he wrote. "Only in that field we have good results and proven names such as Kočo Racin, Venko Markovski, Kole Nedelkovski. On the other side, our short story, our prose, finds itself still in its very beginning. It would appear that we have taken to writing poems and searching for rhymes and have forgotten prose writing or even set it aside, in the face of the triumph of the poetic words."<sup>21</sup>

However, the first generation of Macedonian prose writers—Vlado Maleski, Slavko Janevski, Jovan Boškovski, Kole Čašule, and Giorgi Abadžiev—soon began to publish fiction. The first collection of short stories, *Rastrel*, by Jovan Boškovski, appeared in 1947; the first novella, Slavko Janevski's *Ulica*, in 1950; and the first full-length novel, Janevski's *Selo za Sedumte Jeseni*, in 1952. By the 1970s, fiction claimed equality with other forms of literary creativity and was the most popular literary genre; prose writers were achieving recognition in the other lands of Yugoslavia and on the wider world stage. Anthologies of Macedonian prose, short stories, and novels appeared in other countries; translations of the best works of Slavko Janevski, Stale Popov, Dimitar Solev, Živko Čingo, Kole Čašule, Simon Drakul, Božin Pavlovski, Taško Georgievski, and others were published in Yugoslavia, other parts of Europe, and beyond.<sup>22</sup>

As with poetry, drama had a proud tradition in Macedonia that went back to Vojdan Černodrinski (1875–1951) and especially to the three interwar playwrights, Vasil Il'oski, Anton Panov, and Risto Krle. However, stage or radio performances of drama could strongly influence the masses, and so the Communist regime applied its rigorous ideological controls more stringently on plays and theater than on other literary endeavors. These crackdowns tended to stifle creativity and hinder the development of dramatic literature. The recovery did not begin until the mid-1950s, under the prolific Kole Čašule and Tome Arsovski. A flowering and achievement of European standards emerged in the numerous plays of the younger generation, especially those by Goran Stefanovski, Jordan Plevneš, Mitko Mandžukov, and Dejan Duklovski. Stefanovski and Plevneš have dominated for the past twenty years, with their plays in production continuously in the major cities of Europe, and they have achieved world renown.<sup>23</sup>

All in all, during the Yugoslav republic's four and a half decades, Macedonians enjoyed relative freedom and engineered a veritable cultural renaissance—the “Macedonian cultural miracle”<sup>24</sup>—to cap more than a century of national awakening. This development must have shocked those neighbors who denied Macedonians' existence and called their language “Tito's artificial creation.” This rapid flowering debunks all their claims and misconceptions and renders delusional their refusal to accept Macedonian identity, people, and nation.

### National Minorities

As I have stressed many times above, Macedonia has always been a multi-ethnic region. However, before the nineteenth century and the age of nationalism, religion and class tended to determine relations between the state and ethnic groups or among ethnic groups. During the era of nationalism, ethnicity became increasingly influential in those relations. Nevertheless, as long as foreign rule continued in Macedonia—Ottoman before 1912 and Bulgarian, Greek, or Serbian thereafter—the overlords largely shaped those relations.

A Macedonian state in Communist Yugoslavia created a completely new situation in what had been Vardar Macedonia. The Communist Party of Macedonia (KPM) came to power; throughout its history (1943–90), it was under the control of Macedonians, who made up most of the membership. Under the direction of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ), it regulated the new republic's relations with ethnic-national minorities and between them and the Macedonian majority.

According to the 1948 census, Macedonians comprised 68.5 percent of the republic's people (789,484 persons), Albanians 17.1 percent (197,389), and Turks 8.3 percent (95,940).<sup>25</sup> The more-detailed 1981 census gave the total population as 1,912,257: 1,281,195 Macedonians, 377,726 Albanians, 86,691 Turks, 47,223 Roma, 44,613 Serbs, 39,555 Muslims, and 7,190 Vlachs. The remainder belonged to other ethnic groups and included 1,984 Bulgarians.<sup>26</sup>

Unlike Bulgaria and Greece, which sought forcefully to assimilate their Macedonian minorities, and Albania, which was ambiguous and inconsistent, Communist Yugoslavia, including its Macedonian republic, recognized all national minorities. The successive Yugoslav and Macedonian constitutions designated three categories of national minorities:

nations, nationalities, and ethnic groups. The Torbeši—Macedonian-speaking Muslims—together with the Serbo-Croatian-speaking Muslims of Yugoslavia, became a nationality of Yugoslavia in 1961 and a separate Muslim nation of Yugoslavia in 1971. The Albanian and Turkish minorities were nationalities because their national “homes” were outside Yugoslavia. The Roma and the Vlach minorities were ethnic groups. After 1981, in theory at least, the Roma in Yugoslavia as a whole gained the status of nationality.

Within the limitations of a one-party system, the successive constitutions of Macedonia guaranteed to everyone—the Macedonian majority and the minorities—equality before the law and religious equality. The national minorities also had cultural rights: use of their national language, formation of cultural associations, organizations, clubs, publishing, and broadcasting in their languages, and so on. The “nationalities” possessed rights to primary and, where numbers warranted, secondary education in their languages.

In the 1944/45 school year, there were 60 primary schools with Albanian as the language of instruction, 37 with Turkish, and 2 with Serbo-Croatian. Attendance at the Albanian schools increased from 25,645 in 1952/53 to 54,801 in 1971/72 and to 72,121 in 1991/92. Turkish numbers stabilized at about 55,000 in 1959/60. Enrollment also grew in Albanian and Turkish secondary schools. To prepare teachers for these schools, the republic created in Skopje departments or institutes of Albanian and Turkish language and literature in the Philosophical Faculty at the SS Cyril and Methodius University and in the Pedagogical Academy. In 1980, there were 2,365 students of Albanian nationality in institutions of higher learning.<sup>27</sup>

The constitutional guarantees of equality and cultural and educational rights did not fully satisfy all members of these minorities or harmonize all relations between them and the majority. The roots of the problem were political and psychological. Like national majorities in multi-ethnic central and eastern European states, the Macedonians viewed their republic as a national state. They had long worked against overwhelming odds for national recognition and a “free Macedonia.” Statehood in at least part of Macedonia represented for them its culmination.

Without denying the support of traditional allies and sympathizers—Vlachs and members of the Jewish, Turkish, and Roma minorities—Macedonians considered the victory their own. They controlled

the KPM/SKM, which led the struggle's final and decisive phase, and hence dominated every aspect of life in the one-party state. Until 1965, Macedonians held almost all offices of the government and party.

The republic's executive council—the government—included only one Albanian or Turk or at times one of each. The party's executive committee consisted only of Macedonians; its central committee, with as many as ninety-nine members, never included more than one Albanian and two Turks. As one observer concluded: "Although Serbian advisors and centralized party control limited an independent exercise of power, there was a feeling that Macedonians were governing their own republic."<sup>28</sup> And there is a great deal of truth in Poulton's statement: "The minorities of Macedonia were not keen to join the ruling L.C. [League of Communists] and it appears that the Socialist Republic of Macedonia was a state effectively run by Macedonians to a greater extent than their demographic position merited."<sup>29</sup>

After its fourth congress in 1965, the SKM sought to boost minority representation in the highest bodies of state and party; indeed, it moved toward proportional representation. Such an effort helped appease the smaller minorities or at least their leaders. The same happened vis-à-vis the Turks, whose numbers had declined by the 1960s. Many of them had left Macedonia after Yugoslavia and Turkey signed an emigration agreement in the early 1950s.

The Albanians—the largest minority nationality—constituted a special case and challenge. The Muslim Albanians were distinctive in language, religion, and culture. Moreover, unlike all other ethnic minorities, they had a nearby "national home": Albania. During the Second World War, Fascist Italy sponsored a "Great Albania" incorporating lands of prewar Yugoslavia, including northwestern Macedonia. Nationalist Albanians in Macedonia fought alongside the Italians against Yugoslav and Macedonian liberation; they would have preferred to be part of a Great Albania.

Although the Albanians of Macedonia were better off than their conationals in Kosovo or in Albania, many remained dissatisfied. After the fall of Ranković in 1966, growing Albanian nationalism in Yugoslavia came into the open. There were large-scale demonstrations in Kosovo in November 1968, and even longer, more widespread unrest and violence erupted in 1981. The Albanians of Kosovo called for republican status for their autonomous region. The unrest in Kosovo inspired simi-

lar, but smaller, Albanian nationalist outbreaks in the neighboring Tetovo region in Macedonia. Their leaders insisted that Albanian-inhabited areas of western Macedonia should join Kosovo as a seventh Yugoslav republic. Many people in the federation viewed such a change as the first step on the road toward separation and unification with Albania and thus creation of Great Albania.

Moreover, Albanian nationalists' demands posed a mortal danger to the Macedonian state. As Hugh Poulton pointed out: "The proposed seventh republic comprising the Albanian dominated areas of Western Macedonia would have severely truncated SR [Socialist Republic] Macedonia and almost certainly have revived Bulgarian (and even Serbian and Greek) claims to the rump. Thus the growth of Albanian nationalism in SR Macedonia was seen as possibly fatal, not only to the territorial integrity of the republic but even to the very existence of the Macedonian nation."<sup>30</sup>

Seeming Albanian disloyalty and Macedonia's severe suppression of Albanian unrest exacerbated mutual distrust, and the standoff persisted after 1991 in newly independent Macedonia.

The Titoist system shaped Macedonia's policies toward its national minorities, which were more tolerant and liberal than those of the Soviet-bloc countries. Macedonia, just like its partners in the federation, did not deny the existence of minorities as Greece did; nor did it claim to have resolved all the minorities' problems as members of the Soviet bloc did. When Yugoslavia collapsed in 1991, Macedonia avoided the bloody conflicts that engulfed the rest of the country. But how would the democratically elected leaders—Macedonian and non-Macedonian—of the independent republic deal with those intractable issues?