

Preface

Macedonia is an ancient land in the central part, the heart, of the Balkan Peninsula. It controls the great north–south corridor route from central Europe to the Mediterranean along the Morava-Vardar valleys. It also possesses fertile agricultural lands in its many river valleys and plains, as well as the great port of Salonika (Thessaloniki). Both its strategic function and its economic value help account for its turbulent history.

Throughout the centuries, every power that aspired to dominate the Balkans, this crucial crossroads between Europe, Asia, and Africa, found it necessary and thus sought to control Macedonia. After the destruction of the remnants of the ancient Macedonian kingdom, successive invaders—Roman, Gothic, Hun, Slav, Ottoman—passed through or subjugated the area and incorporated it into their respective dynastic or territorial empires. The last, the Ottoman Turks, ruled Macedonia for over five hundred years, until the Balkan Wars of 1912–13.

More recently, in the age of imperialism and nationalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Macedonia became the peninsula's "bone of contention," its "apple of discord." After the Congress of Berlin in 1878, the so-called Macedonian question dominated Balkan politics, the central issue dividing the new and ambitious Bulgaria, Greece,

and Serbia and their respective patrons among the great European powers.

Balkan nationalists—Bulgarian, Greek, and Serbian—who had already achieved independent or autonomous statehood from the Ottoman empire with aid from one or more great powers, chose to deny the existence of a separate Macedonian identity; indeed, each group claimed Macedonia and the Macedonians as its own. They fought over the territory, which remained under Ottoman sovereignty, with propaganda and armed force and against each other and the nascent Macedonian nationalists. The prolonged struggle culminated in 1913 with the forceful partition of Macedonia and the Macedonians after the Second Balkan, or Inter-Allied War between Bulgaria and allied Greece and Serbia. However, even after partition, the Macedonian question remained, and it continued to dominate Balkan politics and peoples until the Second World War and its revolutionary aftermath—and even to the present day.

Although Macedonia figured prominently in history, it remained a little-known land, virtual *terra incognita*, until the nineteenth century. To be sure, the battles and conquests of Alexander the Great of Macedonia had become legendary, but after the Romans conquered the last parts of ancient Macedonia in 168 BC the Macedonian name disappeared from the historical stage and consciousness. It became merely a geographical expression describing a disputed territory of indeterminate boundaries, which passed under the sovereignty of ambitious medieval Balkan dynastic and territorial states—especially Bulgaria, Byzantium, and Serbia. Briefly in the early eleventh century, Macedonia became the center of the most dominant Balkan state. However, Tsar Samuil, the native ruler of this “Macedonian kingdom” (George Ostrogorsky’s label for it) and its ruling elite continued, for reasons of legitimacy, to call the state ‘Bulgaria.’ During centuries of Ottoman rule, authorities never used the Macedonian name even for administrative purposes.

A state took the appellation only in the mid-1940s, when Vardar (Serbian/Yugoslav) Macedonia—as the People’s Republic of Macedonia (and later the Socialist Republic of Macedonia)—became a constituent of the Communist Yugoslav federation. After the collapse of federal Yugoslavia in 1991, it declared its complete sovereignty and independence as the republic of Macedonia.

Moreover, even less known was Macedonia’s ethnically mixed population, especially its Slav-speakers or Slav Macedonians who, in the

age of nationalism, became simply Macedonians. For almost thirteen hundred years, until ethnic cleansing and forced ethnic-national assimilation began early in the twentieth century, they comprised the largest ethno-linguistic group and the majority of the population on the territory of Macedonia. About mid-nineteenth century, their spokesmen began to adopt the land's name as their national name and symbol and embarked on the daunting process of building a nation.

The struggle for Macedonia—an irreconcilable competition for Macedonians' "hearts and minds" by Bulgarian, Greek, and Serbian nationalisms—did not increase the knowledge about and understanding of the land and its people. It only made a bad situation worse: it transformed ignorance into confusion. By denying Macedonian identity or by claiming the Macedonians, the Bulgarians, Greeks, and Serbs created two false but lasting perceptions: first, that the Macedonians were Bulgarians or Greeks or Serbs and, second, that Macedonia was a hopeless ethnic mix, a *mélange*.

Undoubtedly, through the centuries the population of Macedonia was ethnically mixed. However, in the age of nationalism the Macedonian Slavs, the largest ethnic group, began forming a national identity on the basis of their own ethnic (linguistic, cultural, and historical) attributes, their mythology, and their political, social, and economic interests, just as the Bulgarians, Greeks, and Serbs had recently done. Once one accepts and factors in this historical reality—the existence of the Macedonian Slavs, the Macedonians—their land no longer appears a "hopeless" ethnic mixture, as the neighbors' irredentist propaganda has claimed. Indeed, other areas in the Balkans, eastern Europe more generally, and Europe as a whole were just as mixed ethnically as parts of Macedonia.

This volume surveys the history of Macedonia from antiquity to the present day. As the title implies, and without in the least questioning or denying the existence and identity of many other ethnic groups in Macedonia—Albanians, Greeks, Roma, Vlachs, Turks, Jews, and so on—it focuses on the Slav-speaking Macedonians. The latter comprised the largest ethno-cultural group, the only one to adopt the land's name as its own in the age of nationalism, and the only one to seek to build a Macedonian nation.

Macedonia since the mid-nineteenth century has consisted roughly of the three Ottoman *vilayets* of Salonika, Monastir (Bitola), and Ko-

sovo—approximately the ancient Macedonian kingdom. This has been the general geographic definition of Macedonia in Europe, in the Balkans, and among the spokesmen for the Macedonian national and revolutionary movements.

In accordance with the general aim of this Hoover Institution series on the histories of the peoples of east central Europe, my work stresses the modern era. As is evident from the table of contents, three-quarters of the volume relates to the age of nationalism and imperialism since about 1800.

This study represents a summation of my long-standing interest in Macedonia and the Macedonians. Their history, especially of the modern era, has preoccupied me for well over thirty years. During this lengthy period, I searched for sources in major research libraries in North America as well as in western and eastern Europe: the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford, California; the New York Public Library; the Library of Congress; the University of Toronto libraries; the British Museum Library; the V. I. Lenin Library and the Fundamental Library of the Social Sciences of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, both in Moscow; the Library of the Institute of National History, Skopje; the Library of the Institute for Balkan Studies, Salonika (Thessaloniki); the Slavonic Library, Prague; and the national and/or university libraries in Prague, Vienna, Belgrade, Sofia, Athens, Rome, and Skopje.

The largest relevant holdings are in various archives in Bulgaria and Greece. However, obtaining access there has been virtually impossible for scholars such as I who do not subscribe to the official Bulgarian and/or Greek position on Macedonian matters, which denies the formation and existence of the Macedonian national identity in all parts of Macedonia. Although I sought it, I did not obtain access to the archives in Greece. In the early 1980s, the Central Administration of the State Archives in Bulgaria gave me permission for research on the period before 1914 in the Manuscript Division of the National Library, the Archive of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, and the State (Diplomatic) Archives. Unfortunately, after my three weeks of strictly controlled research, it withdrew its consent—or, as a visibly embarrassed supervisor of the reading room in the State Archives informed me regretfully: “Your permission has been lifted.”

Fortunately, however, on many occasions and for prolonged periods I was able to work elsewhere freely and in congenial surroundings. I am

grateful to staff members at several institutions for generous assistance over the years: the Archive of Serbia and the Archive of Yugoslavia in Belgrade; the Archive of the Republic of Macedonia and the Archive of the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Skopje; the Public Records Office in London and Kew Gardens; the National Archive and Records Service in Washington, D.C.; and the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome.

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