

MACEDONIA

ITS PLACE IN
BALKAN POWER POLITICS

by
ELISABETH BARKER

1980 London, New York



GREENWOOD PRESS, PUBLISHERS
WESTPORT, CONNECTICUT



Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Burker, Elizabeth.

Macedonia, its place in Balkan power politics.

Reprint of the 1950 ed. published by the Royal
Institute of International Affairs, London, New York.

Includes bibliographical references.

1. Macedonian question. I. Title.

DR701.M4B3 1980 949.7 80-16769

ISBN 0-313-22587-7 (lib.bdg.)

The Royal Institute of International Affairs is an unofficial and non-political body, founded in 1920 to encourage and facilitate the scientific study of international questions. The Institute, as such, is precluded by the terms of its Royal Charter from expressing an opinion on any aspect of international affairs. Any opinions expressed in this publication are not, therefore, those of the Institute.

Reprinted with the permission of Royal Institute of International Affairs.

Reprinted in 1980 by Greenwood Press, a division of
Congressional Information Service, Inc.
88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

80 013110

CONTENTS

(I.) MACEDONIA BEFORE THE FIRST WORLD WAR	7
THE ORIGIN OF THE MACEDONIAN DISPUTE	7
MACEDONIA: THE COUNTRY AND THE PEOPLE	9
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE DISPUTE	12
II. MACEDONIA BETWEEN THE TWO WARS	21
BULGARIAN-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS	21
BULGARIAN-GREEK RELATIONS	29
SALONIKA	34
THE INTERNAL MACEDONIAN REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATION	36
THE COMMUNISTS AND MACEDONIA	45
III. MACEDONIA, 1941-9	78
THE AXIS OCCUPATION OF MACEDONIA, 1941-4	78
RELATIONS BETWEEN THE YUGOSLAV AND BULGARIAN COMMUNIST PARTIES	83
THE GREEK COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION, 1941-9	109
MAPS	
MACEDONIA—GEOGRAPHICAL	8
BALKAN FRONTIER CHANGES INVOLVING MACEDONIA	13
A. On the eve of the Russo-Turkish war	
B. Bulgarian frontier proposed by treaty of San Stefano, 1878	
C. Treaty of Berlin, 1878	
D. Line proposed for partition of Macedonia in Serbo- Bulgarian agreement of 1912	
E. Treaty of Bucharest, 1913, and treaty of Neuilly, 1920	
F. Boundary of Macedonian People's Republic set up within Yugoslavia after Second World War	
MACEDONIA'S POSITION IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE	22

I

MACEDONIA BEFORE THE FIRST WORLD WAR

THE ORIGIN OF THE MACEDONIAN DISPUTE

THE Macedonian question came into being when in 1870 Russia successfully pressed Turkey to allow the formation of a separate Bulgarian Orthodox Church, or Exarchate, with authority extending over parts of the Turkish province of Macedonia. This step quickly involved Bulgaria in strife both with Greece and with Serbia. The Greek Patriarch in Constantinople declared the new autocephalous Bulgarian Church to be schismatic, and the Greeks sharply contested the spread of Bulgarian ecclesiastical, cultural, and national influence in Macedonia. The Serbian Government complained of Turkey's decision through ecclesiastical as well as diplomatic channels, and, after an interruption caused by Serbia's war with Turkey in 1876, also tried to fight Bulgarian influence in Macedonia. So began the three-sided contest for Macedonia, waged first by priests and teachers, later by armed bands, and later still by armies, which has lasted with occasional lulls until today.

This was not the result planned by Russia in 1870. What Russia wanted was to extend her own influence in the Balkans through the Orthodox Church and through support of the oppressed or newly liberated Slav peoples. She had the choice of Bulgaria or Serbia as her chief instrument in this policy; Greece was of course non-Slav and so less suitable than either. Of the Slav nations, Bulgaria was geographically closer to Russia, and commanded the land approaches to Constantinople and the Aegean, and, through Macedonia, to Salonika. Also, Bulgaria was at that time not yet liberated from Turkey and so was more dependent on Russian aid and thus more biddable than Serbia. Serbia was more remote from Russia, and was then still far from access to the Adriatic; she had already declared her independence and was thus less docile than Bulgaria; and with her alternating

MACEDONIA



MACEDONIA—GEOGRAPHICAL

dynasties, she was liable at intervals to fall into the Austro-Hungarian sphere of influence. So Russia's choice naturally enough fell on Bulgaria. But this choice started, or revived, a bitter rivalry between the two Slav Balkan nations, which has ever since been a stumbling-block in the way of Russia's aspirations in the Balkans.

While the creation of the Bulgarian Exarchate is usually accepted as the origin of the Macedonian question, this, like almost everything else about Macedonia, is disputed. Some Serbian historians say that Bulgarian penetration of Macedonia had started some years earlier. Others find the root of the trouble in the San Stefano Treaty of 1878, by which Russia gave Bulgaria nearly all Slav Macedonia. Nationalist Bulgarians blame the Treaty of Berlin, in the same year, by which the great Powers

BEFORE THE FIRST WORLD WAR

took Macedonia away from Bulgaria. All these were clearly contributing factors in the Macedonian problem; but the fact remains that Russia's sponsorship of the Bulgarian Exarchate caused the first clash.

MACEDONIA: THE COUNTRY AND THE PEOPLE

Other disputed questions are the exact area of Macedonia and the national character of the Macedonians. There has been no Macedonian State since the days of the Kings of Macedon in the fourth century B.C. Between that time and 1912, Macedonia belonged successively to the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, the medieval Bulgarian and Serbian Empires, and the Ottoman Empire. Consequently its borders fluctuated. Some Serbian historians have therefore claimed that the Skoplje region, in the north west, is not part of Macedonia, but belongs to 'Old Serbia'. However, the usually accepted geographical area of Macedonia is the territory bounded, in the north, by the hills north of Skoplje and by the Shar Mountains; in the east, by the Rila and Rhodope Mountains; in the south, by the Aegean coast around Salonika, by Mount Olympus, and by the Pindus mountains; in the west, by Lakes Prespa and Ochrid. Its total area is about 67,000 square kilometres.

It is mainly a mountainous or hilly land, producing cereals, tobacco, opium poppies, and sheep; there are chrome mines, and some lead, pyrites, zinc, and copper in Yugoslav Macedonia. In Greek Macedonia the plain north west of Salonika is now a big wheat-producing area. Bulgarian Macedonia is rich in timber. But the main economic (and strategic) importance of Macedonia is that it controls the main north-south route from central Europe to Salonika and the Aegean down the Morava and Vardar Valleys, and also the lesser route down the Struma Valley. The far less valuable east-west route from Albania and the Adriatic to the Aegean and Istanbul also runs through Macedonia. But it is above all the Vardar route which has made possession of Macedonia—most of which is backward and poor even by Balkan standards—so much coveted by rival claimants.

By far the most important town of this territory, in fact its only wealthy city, is Salonika. The next most important, a long way behind, is Skoplje, capital of Yugoslav Macedonia. Other-

MACEDONIA

wise the towns of Macedonia, whatever their historical interest or beauty, are small country market towns, such as Florina, Kastoria, and Seres in Greece; Bitolj (Monastir), Veles, and Ochrid in Yugoslavia; Gorna Djumaja and Petrich in Bulgaria.

Until 1923, a bare majority of the population of Macedonia was Slav. This is now no longer true of Macedonia as a whole, because of the influx of Greek settlers into Greek Macedonia after the Greek-Turkish war. But in Yugoslav and Bulgarian Macedonia taken together, Slavs still form over three-quarters of the population. It is the national identity of these Slav Macedonians that has been the most violently contested aspect of the whole Macedonian dispute, and is still being contested today.

There is no doubt that they are southern Slavs; they have a language, or a group of varying dialects, that is grammatically akin to Bulgarian but phonetically in some respects akin to Serbian, and which has certain quite distinctive features of its own. The Slav Macedonians are said to have retained one custom which is usually regarded as typically Serbian—the Slava, or family celebration of the day on which the family ancestor was converted to Christianity. In regard to their own national feelings, all that can safely be said is that during the last eighty years many more Slav Macedonians seem to have considered themselves Bulgarian, or closely linked with Bulgaria, than have considered themselves Serbian, or closely linked with Serbia (or Yugoslavia). Only the people of the Skoplje region, in the north west, have ever shown much tendency to regard themselves as Serbs. The feeling of being Macedonians, and nothing but Macedonians, seems to be a sentiment of fairly recent growth, and even today is not very deep-rooted.

Their neighbours have, inevitably, had conflicting views about the Slav Macedonians. The Bulgarians have fluctuated between saying that all Slav Macedonians were Bulgarians and declaring that there was a separate Macedonian people, according to the needs or convenience of the moment. The official Serbian (or Yugoslav) policy up to 1941 was to say that all Slav Macedonians were Serbians, and to call Yugoslav Macedonia 'South Serbia'. However, between the two wars certain opposition politicians of

BEFORE THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Yugoslavia, such as Svetozar Pribicević, declared that the Macedonians were a separate people; and this theory is the basis of Marshal Tito's policy. The Greeks, in common speech, call their Slav Macedonian minority 'Bulgarians', but in official language 'Slavophone Greeks'. (When in September 1924, by the Kalfov-Politis Protocol, Greece prepared to recognize her Slav Macedonians as a 'Bulgarian' minority, she met with a strong protest from the Yugoslav Government and abandoned the idea.)¹

In addition to the Slavs, there are also in Macedonia Greeks (now about one-half of the total population of Macedonia as a whole), and lesser elements of Albanians, Turks, Jews, and the Vlachs, or Kutzo-Vlachs. (The Vlachs speak a form of Latin dialect akin to Roumanian, belong to the Orthodox Church, and are mainly shepherds living in western Macedonia. The Roumanian Government took a lively interest in them at the beginning of this century, but few of them have ever played a very active part in Macedonian affairs.)

The Turkish census of 1905 of the three vilayets roughly comprising the territory of Macedonia obviously gave a greatly exaggerated number of Moslems, which is omitted here, but it is of some interest for its estimate of the relative numbers of Greeks, Serbs, and Bulgarians, reckoned on a Church basis and not on a language basis²:

Greeks	.	.	.	.	.	648,962
Bulgars	.	.	.	.	.	557,734
Serbs	.	.	.	.	.	167,601

Perhaps one-half of the estimated number of 'Greeks' must at that period have been Slavs who had remained loyal to the Greek Patriarchate in spite of the wooing of the Bulgarian Exarchate and, to a lesser extent, of the Serbian Orthodox Church. What is significant is the preponderance of 'Bulgars' over 'Serbs': the Bulgarian Exarchate at that time had clearly kept the lead over the Serbian Church which it won in 1870.

In 1912, at the time of the Balkan Wars, a reliable estimate of

¹ A. A. Pallis, 'Macedonia and the Macedonians, a Historical Study' (mimeographed publication issued through the Greek Information Office, London, 15 April 1949).

² *ibid.*

the population, reckoned on a language basis, not a religious basis, was:

Slavs	1,150,000
Turks	400,000
Greeks	300,000
Vlachs	200,000
Albanians	120,000
Jews	100,000

The Greek-Turkish exchange of populations in the nineteen-twenties completely altered these proportions, because 348,000 Turks left and over 600,000 Greeks arrived in Macedonia. The 1928 Greek official census gave the following figures for Greek Macedonia.¹

Greeks	1,237,000
'Slavophones'	82,000
Others	93,000

A reliable estimate of the position just before the last war, in Macedonia as a whole, was:

Greeks	1,260,000
Slavs	1,090,000
Others (Albanians, Turks, Jews, and Vlachs)	440,000

According to this estimate, the Slavs were distributed as follows: 750,000 in Yugoslav Macedonia, 220,000 in Bulgarian Macedonia, 120,000 in Greek Macedonia.

If this estimate is accepted then, allowing for natural increase, the total population of Macedonia as a whole must now (1949) be close on 3 million. Of these about one-half are Greeks living in Greek Macedonia, and about two-fifths are Slavs living in Yugoslav and Bulgarian Macedonia and spilling over into the north-west corner of Greek Macedonia. The other elements live mainly in Yugoslav Macedonia.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE DISPUTE

The Slavs first came to Macedonia, where they found a mainly Greek-speaking population, in the sixth century A.D. Before then the inhabitants of Macedonia had been under Greek influence

¹ Pallis, *op. cit.*

BEFORE THE FIRST WORLD WAR



BALKAN FRONTIER CHANGES INVOLVING MACEDONIA

- A. On the eve of the Russo-Turkish war
- B. Bulgarian frontier proposed by treaty of San Stefano, 1878
- C. Treaty of Berlin, 1878
- D. Line proposed for partition of Macedonia in Serbo-Bulgarian agreement of 1912
- E. Treaty of Bucharest, 1913, and treaty of Neuilly, 1920
- F. Boundary of Macedonian People's Republic set up within Yugoslavia after Second World War

MACEDONIA

from the ninth century B.C. until the second century B.C.; then they were under Roman influence, and from the fourth century A.D. onwards under Byzantine influence.

In the seventh century A.D. the Bulgars followed the Slavs into the Balkans, and soon started their struggle against Byzantium. In the second half of the ninth century, the Bulgarian, Tsar Boris, overran part of Macedonia, and in the early part of the tenth century the Bulgarian, Tsar Simeon, gained possession of the whole of it, except the Aegean coast. In the latter part of the tenth century, after a brief return to Byzantium, Tsar Samuel—whom Serb historians claim as the first 'Macedonian' Tsar¹—won a far-reaching empire, including Macedonia; but it fell back into the hands of Byzantium. It was at this period that a Bulgarian Patriarchate was first established at Ochrid.

After that Macedonia, or parts of it, were alternately under Bulgarian or Byzantine rule until the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Then the country came under the Serbian Tsars, of whom the greatest was Stephan Dushan, who made Skoplje his capital. In 1346 the Archbishop of Serbia took the title of 'Patriarch of the Serbs and Greeks'. But on the death of Stephan Dushan the Serbian Empire broke up. The Turks invaded the Balkans; and in 1371 Macedonia came under Turkish suzerainty.

In 1459 the Turks suppressed the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate and placed the administration of the Church under the Bulgarian Archbishopric of Ochrid. But in practice the Archbishops were by that time Greeks. In 1557 the Serbian Patriarchate was restored with its seat at Ipek; but in 1766 it was again suppressed. In 1777 the Bulgarian Archbishopric of Ochrid ceased to be an autocephalous church, and the Turks placed the Greek Patriarchate in control of both Slav churches. Thus from this time until 1870 Greek clergy had spiritual control of the Orthodox population of Macedonia.

Nearly ten centuries of national-ecclesiastical wrangles, which the Turks had skilfully exploited, were the local background to the creation of the Bulgarian Exarchate in 1870. During the nineteenth century they had taken on an increasingly nationalist character, as the Serbs and Greeks achieved at least partial liberation from the Turks, and the Bulgarians experienced their national awakening in which individual Macedonians played a

¹ T. R. Georgevitch, *Macedonia* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1918), Chap. III.

BEFORE THE FIRST WORLD WAR

considerable part. At the same time the great Powers, fearing or hoping for the ultimate collapse of the Ottoman Empire, became intensely interested in the Balkans; and by 1870 Russia had chosen Bulgaria as the best channel for expansion of her influence. Thus the Macedonian dispute began.

It developed quickly. In 1872 the new Bulgarian Church acquired the 'eparchies' or additional ecclesiastical districts of Skoplje and Ochrid: this was in accordance with Article 10 of the Turkish decree of 1870 by which districts where two-thirds of the population wished to join the Exarchate might do so after proper investigation. In the same year the Greek Patriarchate declared the Bulgarian Exarchate schismatic. The Bulgarians, however, seized their chance to send Bulgarian priests, usually ardent nationalists, throughout Slav Macedonia, and to send Bulgarian teachers to set up Bulgarian schools. The Greeks, and later the Serbians, retaliated with the same methods. Serbia's effort was hampered by her war with Turkey in 1876 and by her subsequent marked unpopularity with the Turks; but she did her best.

Later the pioneer priests and teachers were backed up by armed bands, whom the Turks called 'komitadjis', or 'committee men'. These were unofficially sponsored by the Governments or War Offices of Sofia, Athens, and Belgrade. Although the bands were theoretically formed to struggle against the Turks, they more often—Bulgarians, Greeks, and Serbs—attacked each other, and sometimes betrayed each other to the Turkish authorities.

The Macedonian dispute was injected with a large dose of venom by the Treaty of San Stefano in 1878, which Russia imposed on Turkey after the Russo-Turkish war. This gave Bulgaria enormously inflated frontiers which have haunted Bulgarian nationalist dreams ever since—even, perhaps, the dreams of Bulgarian Communists. It awarded her nearly all Slav Macedonia, including Vranje, Skoplje, Tetovo, Gostivar, the Black Drin, Debar, and Lake Ochrid; a strip of what is now south east Albania, including Koritsa; and, in what is now Greek Macedonia, Kastoria, Florina, Ostrovo, and a small strip of the Aegean coast west of Salonika. It was a startlingly large gift to receive even at Russia's hands; but before the year was out it was taken away again by the other great Powers, who compelled Russia to aban-

MACEDONIA

don San Stefano and to negotiate the Treaty of Berlin, which restored Macedonia to Turkey once again.

The Treaty of Berlin, while it provided for guarantees of religious liberties in Macedonia and elsewhere, left Bulgaria with a burning grudge and undamped ambitions. After 1878 she even succeeded in adding several more bishoprics to the Exarchate. In 1895, Macedonian refugees in Sofia founded a 'Supreme Committee' to organize the struggle for the 'liberation' of Macedonia, which, to the Committee, meant its annexation to Bulgaria. This Committee soon became closely linked with the Bulgarian Government and Crown. Next year, however, a more genuinely Macedonian body was formed: the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, led by two Macedonians, both nationalist-minded school-teachers, Damian Gruev and Gotse Delchev.

From the early days of I.M.R.O. there were always two trends, or two wings, in the movement. The one tended towards closest collaboration with the Supreme Committee, and through it with the Bulgarian War Office and the Bulgarian Tsar. This wing only used talk of Macedonian autonomy or independence as a cloak for its real aim of Bulgarian annexation of Macedonia. In ideological terms, it later developed into the extreme nationalist right wing of the movement; and, apart from a brief deviation to the left in 1924, it became the bitter enemy not only of the Communists but also of the left-wing Bulgarian Agrarian movement.

The other trend in I.M.R.O. was towards genuine autonomy or independence for Macedonia. In the early days of the movement, this wing preached brotherhood of all the peoples of Macedonia, not only Slavs but also Turks, Albanians, and Greeks,¹ and it tried to preserve a certain independence of the Supreme Committee and the Bulgarian War Office. Nevertheless Bulgaria was its main source or channel for arms and money; so this independence was limited. Later this trend developed into the left wing of the movement: after the First World War many of its members either became 'Federalists', advocating an autonomous Macedonia within a South Slav Federation, or else Communists, and the name of I.M.R.O. was left to the pro-Bulgarian

¹ The first article of its rules and regulations was: 'Everyone who lives in European Turkey, regardless of sex, nationality, or personal beliefs, may become a member of I.M.R.O.'

BEFORE THE FIRST WORLD WAR

right wing. Yet even then there continued to be left-wing tendencies within the rump I.M.R.O.

I.M.R.O. at first worked in secret, organizing and arming the population of Macedonia and setting up a kind of shadow administration of its own. Then in August 1903 it came into the open in the 'Ilinden' (St Elijah's Day) rising against the Turkish garrisons and officials in Macedonia. According to some accounts, this rising was forced by the Bulgarian War Office (acting on Russian encouragement) on the hesitant leaders of I.M.R.O., who thought that the time was not yet ripe for open action. In any case, after initial successes the insurgents were ruthlessly crushed by the Turkish army. According to Bulgarian figures,¹ 9,830 houses were burned down and 60,953 people left homeless.

The rising at least succeeded in bringing about the somewhat ineffectual intervention of the great Powers in Macedonia. Russia and Austria-Hungary agreed in October 1903 on reforms for Macedonia, and got the other great Powers to consent to the creation of an international gendarmerie for the territory. Under this scheme, which led to considerable friction between the participants, all the great Powers except Germany took control of a gendarmerie zone in Macedonia.² In 1905 Britain tried to secure international supervision of tax collection in Macedonia, and this proposal was finally accepted, under heavy pressure, by Turkey. In the summer of 1908 Britain and Russia seemed on the verge of agreeing to a fresh scheme for reforms in Macedonia; but in July the Young Turk revolution broke out, and attempts of the great Powers to intervene in Macedonia were dropped on the grounds that the new rulers of Turkey were liberals. However, the Young Turks, after initial promises of progress, turned out to be extreme nationalists, and the lot of the Macedonians was somewhat worse than before the revolution.

In October 1908 King Ferdinand had, by agreement with Austria-Hungary, proclaimed the full independence of Bulgaria, while to the fury of Serbia, Austria had annexed Bosnia-Hercegovina. Great Power relations over the Balkans became extremely strained, but war was narrowly averted. The chief result of the

¹ G. Bazhdaroff, *The Macedonian Question* (Sofia, Macedonian National Committee in Bulgaria, 1926), p. 13.

² A. J. Grant and H. W. V. Temperley, *Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London, Longmans, 1939), p. 452.

MACEDONIA

crisis was to impel both Serbia and Bulgaria, for different reasons, into the arms of Russia.

Then in 1912 came a unique occurrence. The small Balkan Powers, Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria, sank their differences over Macedonia, and, together with Montenegro, formed an alliance, defied the great Powers who said they would permit no change in the *status quo*, and drove the Turks out of Macedonia.

The factors which had helped to bring about this alliance were, first, that Russia had succeeded in temporarily reconciling Bulgaria and Serbia,¹ and then that Greece had found in Venezelos an unusually enterprising and broad-minded Prime Minister. The shakiest aspect of the alliance was the Serbo-Bulgarian Agreement of 3 March 1912 on the partition of Macedonia. Under this agreement, Bulgaria was to get all territory east of the Rhodope Mountains and the River Struma; Serbia was to get everything west and north of the Shar Mountains. As for the disputed area between, the two parties agreed on a line running from south west to north east, starting from Lake Ochrid, and running, between Skoplje and Veles, to a point just north of Kustendil. Serbia undertook to make no claim south east of this line, while Bulgaria undertook to accept the line provided that the Russian Tsar arbitrated in its favour.

This line would perhaps have given the fairest settlement of Macedonia—based on partition and not autonomy—that has ever been proposed. The Bulgarians might have resented the loss of Skoplje to Serbia, but they would have received reasonable compensation in the south-east half of Slav Macedonia where the population was most nearly Bulgarian.

✓ The Greek-Bulgarian Treaty of May 1912 made no territorial arrangements, so that Greece's share of Macedonia was left undefined. It is interesting that none of the three Balkan States apparently ever thought that Macedonia, once liberated from the Turks, should be independent or autonomous. That may have been because after forty years of their three-sided cultural, ecclesiastical, and armed struggle for power in Macedonia, none of the three could imagine the existence of a genuinely independent Macedonia free from outside intervention.

The course of the fighting in the First Balkan War unfortunately wiped out the agreed Serb-Bulgarian south-west—north-

¹ Grant and Temperley, *op. cit.* p. 472.

BEFORE THE FIRST WORLD WAR

east line in Macedonia. While the Bulgarians were busy conquering Thrace, the Serbs advanced beyond the line and occupied the main part of the Vardar Valley; and the Greeks took southern Macedonia and Salonika. Because the great Powers decided that Serbia must abandon the northern Albanian territory which she had also occupied, Serbia demanded more than her agreed share of Macedonia as compensation. Bulgaria demanded her agreed share of Macedonia and also claimed that the Greeks had advanced too far. The Russian Tsar was not asked to arbitrate. After war-like preparations by all parties, Bulgaria launched an attack. Serbia and Greece counter-attacked by mutual agreement, and Turkey and Roumania also set upon Bulgaria. Bulgaria was badly defeated and, by the Treaty of Bucharest of August 1913, managed to retain, of Macedonia, only the middle Struma Valley, the upper Mesta Valley, and a westward-jutting salient in the Strumica Valley. Serbia kept all the territory she had occupied; this, except for the Strumica salient, was the same as Yugoslavia acquired after the First World War.

The Treaty of Bucharest was inevitably a bad blow not only to the Bulgarian Government and people but also to the Macedonian 'Supreme Committee' and to I.M.R.O., many of whose members had fought with the Bulgarian army. Bulgaria had lost all but a small corner of Macedonia; and Macedonia, though liberated from the Turks, was neither autonomous nor independent. Thus neither wing of I.M.R.O. had any satisfaction.

When the First World War broke out in 1914, it was clear that Bulgaria would eventually join the side which offered her the largest share of Macedonia. The Entente, which was allied with Serbia, found it difficult to make any handsome offer. In September 1915 they suggested that Bulgaria might be content with the territory east of the River Vardar, together with an exchange of populations. But this bid was not high enough and Bulgaria joined the central European Powers, who, according to some accounts, had already been working closely for some months with I.M.R.O.¹

Bulgaria occupied the whole of Serbian Macedonia and the eastern section of Greek Macedonia. Many Macedonians served in the Bulgarian Army and a number of I.M.R.O.'s leading

¹ J. Swire, *Bulgarian Conspiracy* (London, Hale, 1939), p. 133.

MACEDONIA

members (including Dimiter Vlahov, thirty years later a member of Marshal Tito's Government) became administrative officials in Macedonia. There was, apparently, no talk of Macedonian autonomy; it was generally assumed that Serbian Macedonia was simply annexed to Bulgaria. The Bulgarian authorities set to work 'Bulgarizing' the Slavs of Macedonia, and incidentally forcing them to change their surname suffixes to '-ov'.

In 1918 the situation was again reversed. The central Powers were defeated. A well-known I.M.R.O. leader, Protogerov, then Commandant of Sofia, prevented Bulgarian army deserters (led by the Bulgarian Agrarian, Stambulisky) from invading the capital. But I.M.R.O. could not prevent Stambulisky from becoming Prime Minister of a defeated Bulgaria, which had lost not only all Serbian Macedonia as defined by the Treaty of Bucharest, but also the Strumica salient, and 'Aegean Macedonia' as well.

Thus at the end of the First World War, Macedonia was partitioned into three. A resentful Bulgaria was left with only a small corner (6,798 square kilometres); while Yugoslavia, with 26,776 square kilometres, and Greece, with 34,600 square kilometres, each had a large share; and Greek Macedonia then still had a large Slav-speaking population. It was not surprising that in these circumstances Bulgaria became the base for Macedonian terrorist activities which poisoned her relations with the new Yugoslavia, and to a lesser extent with Greece, for the next quarter of a century.

II

MACEDONIA BETWEEN THE TWO WARS

BULGARIAN-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS

RELATIONS between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia between the two wars, which were largely, though by no means entirely determined by the Macedonian question, may be considered in three phases. From 1919 until 1923, while the Agrarian, Stambulisky, was in power in Bulgaria, a real effort was made to reconcile the two countries and to forget the Macedonian issue, or even to solve it through South Slav Federation. The second phase, from the murder of Stambulisky in 1923 until the Military League coup in Bulgaria in 1934, was a period of strained relations and sometimes of dangerous tension, mainly as a result of the Bulgarian authorities' toleration of I.M.R.O. From the suppression of I.M.R.O. in 1934 until early in 1941, relations were correct and at times even friendly, though the ghost of the Macedonian dispute still barred the way to full solidarity between the two Balkan Slav States.

Through most of the period between the two wars Italy, who wanted to weaken or disrupt Yugoslavia and so gain control of the Adriatic, tried with varying degrees of intensity to prevent any reconciliation between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. She encouraged Bulgarian revisionism and subsidized I.M.R.O. From the early thirties onwards Nazi Germany was interested in preventing Balkan solidarity except under German control, but does not seem to have exploited the Macedonian dispute until she handed over most of Yugoslav Macedonia to Bulgaria in April 1941.

France consistently backed Yugoslavia, whom she regarded as her protégé; and both France and Britain tried at intervals to reconcile Yugoslavia with Bulgaria, to restrain Bulgarian, or Macedonian, excesses, and later to promote a Balkan bloc, including Bulgaria, against German aggression. Soviet Russia had very little direct influence on Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations, but through the Comintern kept a close grip on the Communist

MACEDONIA



MACEDONIA'S POSITION IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE

Parties of both countries. At the same time, through the Comintern, Russia took an especial interest in the cause of Macedonian autonomy, because of its revolutionary potentialities, and in 1924 made an abortive attempt to capture I.M.R.O. The Bulgarian royal house, for dynastic reasons, was at first hostile, and later reserved, towards any close co-operation with Yugoslavia.

In spite or because of all these conflicting influences, Bulgaria in 1941 made exactly the same choice as in 1915: she sided with Germany to obtain Yugoslav Macedonia.

The new Yugoslavia's treatment of Yugoslav Macedonia, at least until 1929, was well calculated to play into the hands of Bulgarian revisionism and of I.M.R.O. The Yugoslav authorities eliminated the name 'Macedonia'. Yugoslav Macedonia became

BETWEEN THE TWO WARS

'South Serbia' or, after King Alexander's administrative reforms, the 'Vardarska Banovina'. All Slav Macedonians were declared to be Serbs, some of them perhaps regrettably and temporarily Bulgarianized. The Church came under the Serbian Patriarchate, and Serbian was the official language in administration and the schools. The Government sent settlers, mainly Serbs, to colonize land taken from Turkish landlords or under-developed areas; and the Serbian settlers caused great resentment among the Macedonian population. Most important of all, in the early years the Belgrade Government tended to send its least competent and honest officials from Serbia to Macedonia, where service was unpopular and pay was bad. Little money was invested in Macedonia except for a few showy buildings in Skoplje, the provincial capital.

Yugoslavia was bound by peace treaty obligations to respect the rights of her minorities; but since she denied that the Macedonians constituted a minority, repeated appeals to the League of Nations by genuine or alleged Macedonian representatives (often resident in Sofia) were fruitless.

I.M.R.O.'s organization of komitadji attacks over the frontier from Bulgaria, and of terrorist acts in Yugoslav Macedonia, inevitably provoked the Yugoslav authorities to repressive measures and reprisals against the local Macedonian population. These heightened the resentment of the people of Yugoslav Macedonia; but in the end they grew tired of I.M.R.O. and accepted arms from the Yugoslav authorities to protect their villages against komitadji attacks.

After King Alexander instituted his dictatorship in January 1929, he genuinely tried to introduce reforms in 'South Serbia' and to send a better type of official there, or even to employ local officials and teachers. The Macedonians began to settle down and to accept Yugoslav rule passively, if without enthusiasm. But pro-Bulgarian feelings lived on and made it easy for the Bulgarians to secure willing initial acceptance of the Bulgarian occupation in 1941, and difficult for Tito to win the Macedonians back for Yugoslavia.

Between the two wars the population of Yugoslav Macedonia was not allowed to form any Macedonian political organization. In the first post-war elections in 1920, when all over Yugoslavia the Communists had big successes, the Macedonians elected

MACEDONIA

seventeen Communist deputies. But this was a protest against their new Government rather than an expression of genuine Communist sympathy. Later, when the Yugoslav Communist Party had been banned, they usually voted, of necessity, for one or other of the Serbian political parties or, after 1929, for the official government list. There is no evidence that Communism was strong or well organized inside Yugoslav Macedonia between the wars; the local Communist organization was obviously very weak in 1941.

In Bulgaria, Stambulisky seized power after defeat in the First World War with the reputation of being an advocate of South Slav union, of 'an integral, democratic, and pacific Yugoslavia from Mount Triglav to the Black Sea'. He is said to have sympathized with the Macedonian Federalists and the idea of an autonomous Macedonia; he is even reputed to have said that he would surrender Bulgarian Macedonia to an autonomous Macedonia.¹

Stambulisky was naturally hated by the I.M.R.O. leaders. In 1919 he even arrested the two chiefs, Todor Alexandrov and General Protogerov; but both escaped. The next year Alexandrov was busy reorganizing I.M.R.O. and instigating komitadji raids in Yugoslav Macedonia, and to a lesser extent in Greek Macedonia. Stambulisky, preoccupied with his own agrarian revolution at home, could do little to stop him.

By June 1922 things had reached such a pitch that the Yugoslav Government informed the Bulgarian Minister in Belgrade that they could not permit attacks by Bulgarian komitadjis in Yugoslav territory, that they would take no responsibility for the grave consequences that might ensue, and that they had drawn the attention of the Allied Governments and the League of Nations to the situation. On 14 June the Roumanian Foreign Minister, returning from a meeting in Belgrade with the Foreign Ministers of Yugoslavia and Greece, presented a collective note to the Bulgarian Minister in Bucharest accusing the Bulgarian Government of tolerating or even encouraging komitadji activities. Stambulisky's Government replied by sending a letter to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations, drawing the attention of the League Council to these circumstances 'as being likely to affect relations between Bulgaria and her neighbours',

¹ J. Swire, *Bulgarian Conspiracy* (London, Hale, 1939), p. 142.

BETWEEN THE TWO WARS

and proposing an International Commission of Inquiry. The Bulgarian Note added that Bulgaria had done all she could to provide for frontier security, but as she had only 10,716 troops, her forces were inadequate; and stated that Stambulisky had never encouraged the komitadji bands and had in fact tried to strengthen frontier control on Bulgaria's south-west frontier.

The matter was smoothed over by the League of Nations, since the Yugoslav, Greek, and Roumanian representatives took a moderate attitude. Perhaps they thought that Stambulisky's Government was more well-meaning than any alternative Bulgarian regime was likely to be, and that he should therefore not be pressed too hard. No Commission of Inquiry was sent to Macedonia.

In spite of this diplomatic affray, Stambulisky pursued his aim of reconciliation with Yugoslavia. After negotiations conducted by his Minister in Belgrade, the Agrarian, Kosta Todorov, he concluded the Nish Convention which came into force in May 1923. This provided that Yugoslavia and Bulgaria should institute joint measures of frontier control to prevent raids. For 100 metres on each side of the frontier all trees and undergrowth were to be cleared, and suspected sympathizers of the komitadjis were to be banned from the frontier zones, but farmers owning land on both sides of the frontiers were to have special passes.

The Nish Convention naturally produced a violent I.M.R.O. reaction. Stambulisky attempted to fulfil its spirit by carrying out arrests in the Petrich and Kustendil districts, the chief I.M.R.O. strongholds. The I.M.R.O. leaders conspired with a military group, the Officers' League (then led by Colonel Volkov) and with the former Socialist, Professor Alexander Tsankov (later Hitler's puppet). In June 1923 these allies carried out a *coup*: Stambulisky was brutally murdered and many of the other Agrarian leaders fled to Belgrade. Tsankov became Prime Minister with Volkov as his Minister of War. The first inter-war phase of Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations, the phase of attempted reconciliation, was over. And for the next decade I.M.R.O. had an invaluable ally, or perhaps master, in Volkov, who managed to retain control of the Bulgarian War Office through all vicissitudes.

Tsankov, however, started his period of office by declaring that he would respect the Nish Convention. In October 1923 a mixed Bulgarian-Yugoslav Commission, appointed under the

MACEDONIA

terms of the Convention, met in Sofia, and in November signed an agreement on extradition, medical aid, and compensation for requisitioning carried out by the Bulgarian occupation authorities in Serbian Macedonia during the past war. The Bulgarian Parliament ratified the agreement in January 1924; but nevertheless komitadji attacks and terrorist action in Yugoslav Macedonia continued. In 1926, after the Tsankov Government had begun to talk of closer relations with Yugoslavia, Tsankov was defeated in Parliament. His successor, Liapchev, was himself a Macedonian, and, with Volkov as his War Minister, gave I.M.R.O. full protection.

In June 1927 the League of Nations rejected one of the periodic appeals by Macedonian organizations against alleged Yugoslav misrule. Early in 1928 it was reported that the British Legation in Sofia had presented the Bulgarian Government with a list of members of I.M.R.O. suspected of intending to cross the Yugoslav frontier to commit acts of violence. In July 1928 two things happened: the I.M.R.O. leader, Protogerov, was assassinated on the order of the rival leader, Ivan Mihailov; and an I.M.R.O. would-be assassin attempted unsuccessfully to shoot the Chief of the Belgrade Police, Mr Zhika Lazich. Britain and France seized the chance to make a joint *démarche* to Liapchev's Bulgarian Government against an I.M.R.O. weakened by internal division. The *démarche* provoked a prolonged cabinet crisis in Sofia; the Foreign Minister, Atanas Burov, threatened to resign unless the pro-I.M.R.O. War Minister, General Volkov, were removed; but Tsar Boris supported Volkov, and Liapchev eventually formed a new Government with Volkov again as War Minister. So nothing was achieved.

The Italian Minister in Sofia had refused to join with his western colleagues in making this *démarche*, saying that his country did not wish to interfere in Bulgarian affairs on Yugoslavia's behalf.

In 1929 Yugoslavia made a definite attempt to conciliate Bulgaria. In January King Alexander instituted his dictatorship, and presumably decided that he must strengthen his somewhat shaky position by easing relations with Bulgaria. In February the Yugoslavs partially reopened the frontier, which about a year earlier they had attempted to seal hermetically with a barbed wire barrier and a system of blockhouses. Also in February, a Bul-

BETWEEN THE TWO WARS

garian-Yugoslav Mixed Commission met at Pirot and reached partial agreement on properties lying on both sides of the frontier, and on other lesser questions, but disagreed on the width of a proposed neutralized frontier zone from which all suspected Macedonian revolutionaries were to be banned. The Bulgarians insisted that 500 metres was sufficient, but the Yugoslavs wanted a much deeper zone.

In spite of this difference, a form of agreement was concluded at Pirot. But in April the Croat extremist, Ante Pavelić (later an accomplice in King Alexander's murder, and later still head of the puppet Croat State created in 1941) paid a public visit to Sofia, as the guest of the National Committee of Macedonian Refugees. He was enthusiastically acclaimed—obviously as an enemy of Yugoslavia—and was even received by the Government. This visit caused great excitement in Yugoslavia, and the Yugoslav Government protested in Sofia and postponed ratification of the Pirot Agreement. However, further meetings were held in Pirot in September, and a new agreement was concluded and came into force in November 1929, after which a Mixed Commission met in Sofia.

I.M.R.O. celebrated the Pirot Agreement by attacking the Orient Express between Tsaribrod and the Bulgarian frontier on 23 November. This provoked another Yugoslav protest. And, although I.M.R.O. was now devoting rather more energy to its internal blood-feuds than to terrorism in Yugoslavia, relations between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria remained strained until 1933.

King Alexander then made a fresh conciliatory gesture. When King Boris passed through Belgrade in September 1933, King Alexander greeted him at the station. It was the first time the two Kings had met since the First World War. Then at the beginning of October King Alexander visited Boris at his Black Sea home at Euxinograd. In December King Boris, with Queen Ioanna and the Bulgarian Prime Minister, Nikola Mushanov (who had taken office three months after Liapchev's defeat in 1931, but had carried on the policy of tolerance of I.M.R.O.), were welcomed in Belgrade. Yet when the Balkan Pact was initialled in Belgrade by Yugoslavia, Greece, Turkey, and Roumania in February 1934, Bulgaria stood apart. To have joined the Pact would have meant abandoning her Macedonian claim.

MACEDONIA

There were probably two motives behind Bulgaria's somewhat ambiguous foreign policy at this period. First, Italy was now pre-occupied with her Abyssinian dream of conquest, and so less concerned with making trouble for Yugoslavia. On the other hand Nazi Germany was now beginning to plan her penetration of the Balkans, and so had an interest in keeping the Balkan countries divided and preventing their consolidation in a bloc which might eventually be hostile to Germany. Thus although in the six years preceding the Second World War Bulgaria developed a friendly attitude towards Yugoslavia, she always kept aloof from the Balkan bloc. The growing prospect of a fresh European upheaval helped to deter her from renouncing her claim to Yugoslav Macedonia and also to an Aegean outlet.

In 1933 I.M.R.O. was naturally alarmed at Bulgarian-Yugoslav rapprochement; and in the Spring of 1934 there were rumours in Sofia that it would carry out a *coup* against the Mushanov Government. For this, and no doubt also other reasons, the Military League, a group of reserve officers headed by Colonel Damian Velchev and Kimon Georgiev, together with Zveno, a group of progressive but authoritarian-minded intellectuals, carried out their coup on 19 May 1934.

The coup was executed smoothly and efficiently and a new Government under Georgiev was formed with the reluctant consent of King Boris, who was powerless to resist. The new Government wanted friendship with Yugoslavia; and almost their first act was to order the disbandment of revolutionary organizations, including both I.M.R.O. and the followers of the late General Protogerov. They sent troops to clear up the Petrich Department (Bulgarian Macedonia), which had been I.M.R.O.'s base and stronghold. The operation was carried out with surprising ease. The I.M.R.O. leader, Ivan Mihailov, fled to Turkey, and other prominent Macedonians were interned or arrested. Inside Bulgaria I.M.R.O. virtually ceased to exist as an organization, so that it could no longer poison Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations.

The suppression of I.M.R.O. led to an immediate improvement in the relationship of the two countries. In September 1934 King Alexander and Queen Marie paid a ceremonial visit to Sofia. Though elaborate precautions had to be taken to protect the king from assassination, the visit passed off smoothly. But

BETWEEN THE TWO WARS

when a few days later, on 9 October, he drove through the streets of Marseilles, he was assassinated by Chernozemski, a member of I.M.R.O. who was in league with the Croat Ustashi and who had been preparing for the deed in Hungary. Italy protected Chernozemski's Croat confederates from punishment.

Since I.M.R.O. had been put down in Bulgaria five months earlier, the killing of King Alexander did not produce a crisis in Bulgarian-Yugoslav relations. When 6,000 Yugoslav Sokols (the patriotic gymnastic organization) visited Sofia in July 1935, they were welcomed with great enthusiasm. In spite of Bulgaria's aloofness from the Balkan Pact, in January 1937 she signed a Treaty of Perpetual Friendship with Yugoslavia—a development which caused considerable uneasiness to Yugoslavia's co-signatories of the Pact. Also in 1937 Italy signed a Treaty with Yugoslavia; and Germany, with her growing interest in economic exploitation of the Balkans, seems to have used her influence at this period to prevent Bulgarian-Yugoslav quarrelling over Macedonia. The Macedonian question dropped out of international politics for the next four years.

It seems likely that right up until March 1941 Germany hoped to drive Bulgaria and Yugoslavia in harness together in spite of the traditional Macedonian barrier between them. To achieve this, Germany was willing to offer Yugoslavia an Aegean outlet in Salonika rather than offer Yugoslav Macedonia to Bulgaria. But the Yugoslav *coup d'état* of 27 March 1941 upset Germany's plans, which had to be switched over rapidly to the invasion of Yugoslavia. In this Bulgaria was invited to participate, receiving in return the right to occupy Yugoslav Macedonia, except for a small area in the west which fell to Italian-occupied Albania, and the less welcome duty of occupying part of Serbia. Germany, however, did not allow Bulgaria formally to annex Macedonia, holding the card of Macedonian autonomy up her sleeve for future contingencies.

BULGARIAN-GREEK RELATIONS

Greek feelings towards Bulgaria at the end of the First World War were very bitter. The Bulgarian occupation authorities in Greek eastern Macedonia had behaved towards the Greek population with brutality singularly inappropriate in supposed libera-

MACEDONIA

tors. An Inter-Allied Commission in 1919 reported that ninety-four villages had been entirely demolished, that 30,000 people had died of hunger, blows, and disease during the occupation, that 42,000 had been deported to Bulgaria, and that 16,000 had fled to Greece.

The Allied Powers realized that early reconciliation was out of the question. Accordingly, in addition to the Treaty of Neuilly, a Greek-Bulgarian Convention was concluded on 27 November 1919 providing for a voluntary exchange of population, i.e. the Greeks of southern Bulgaria for the Bulgarian (or Slav Macedonian) minority of Greek Macedonia.

The Greeks had earlier proposed drafting a tripartite treaty for reciprocal emigration of racial minorities between Greece, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia. But on 8 November the Yugoslav delegate at Paris had declined, saying that his Government preferred bilateral negotiation.¹

Under the Greek-Bulgarian Convention, emigrants were to lose their old nationality and acquire the nationality of the country to which they had emigrated. They were to be allowed to keep their movable property and a League of Nations Mixed Commission was to liquidate immovable property.

Both countries, for different reasons, welcomed the Convention, but it was opposed by I.M.R.O., whose leaders presumably felt, rightly, that the exchange would seriously weaken Bulgaria's ethnographical claim to Greek Macedonia. I.M.R.O. forbade the Bulgarians (or Slav Macedonians) of Greece to take advantage of the Convention.² The Greeks of Bulgaria, threatened by Stambulisky's land reform, were more willing to move, but things progressed slowly. The Commission was set up in 1920 and only finished its work in 1932. By June 1923 only 197 Greek families and 166 Bulgarian families had filed declarations of emigration.³ Then the Greek Government, claiming military necessity arising from the Greek-Turkish war, deported several thousand Bulgarian families from Thrace, and put Greek refugees from Turkey in their place. This started up a migration of populations

¹ S. R. Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities: Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey* (New York, Harvard University and Radcliffe College Bureau of International Research, 1932), p. 36.

² C. A. Macartney, *National States and National Minorities* (London, Oxford University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1934), p. 439; Ladas, *op. cit.* p. 104.

³ Macartney, *op. cit.* p. 440.

BETWEEN THE TWO WARS

in very strained conditions in the years 1923-4. Finally, about 52,000 Bulgarians (or Slav Macedonians¹) of eastern Macedonia left Greece, and about 25,000 Greeks left Bulgaria.² The result was that Greek eastern Macedonia was virtually cleared of Slav Macedonians, while most of those living west of the Vardar chose to stay in Greece. There thus continued to be a 'Slavophone' minority in the region bordering on Yugoslavia, around Kastoria, Florina, Edessa, and other towns of the area.

In the Greek census of 1928, 81,984 persons registered as Slav-speaking. One Greek estimate of the present number is 'about 100,000'.³ (For an estimate suggesting a higher number, see above, p. 12.) On the whole the 'Slavophones', mostly small peasants living in remote villages, not in the towns, settled down fairly peacefully in Greece, at least until the Axis invasion of the Balkans in 1941, which revived old pro-Bulgarian or pro-Macedonian sympathies.

On 29 September 1924 Greece and Bulgaria signed a Protocol known as the Kalfov-Politis Agreement, placing the 'Bulgarian' minority in Greece under League of Nations protection. But the Yugoslav Government, which did not admit the existence of a Bulgarian or Macedonian minority in Yugoslavia and regarded the Greek precedent as dangerous, made strong representations and on 15 November denounced the Greek-Serbian Treaty of 1913, as a mark of displeasure.⁴ On 15 January 1925 the Greek Government announced that they did not intend to put the Protocol into operation.⁵ Thereafter the Greek Government treated the 'Slavophones' as Greeks without any special minority rights. Up till 1941, there was little indication that this policy caused resentment among the 'Slavophones' who, without the upheaval of the Axis invasion, might presumably in time have been peacefully assimilated.

The League of Nations Mixed Commission for the population exchange, in spite of great difficulties and delays, completed its task of liquidating immovable property. Ten per cent of the indemnities were paid in cash and the rest in State bonds. Both

¹ Macartney. *op. cit.* p. 530.

² A. A. Pallis, 'Macedonia and the Macedonians', p. 8.

³ Pallis, *op. cit.* p. 8.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 11, quoting P. Pipinelis, *History of Greek Foreign Policy 1923-41*.

⁵ A. J. Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs 1926* (London, Oxford University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1927), p. 165.

MACEDONIA

Greek and Bulgarian Governments complained of the burden laid upon them by the exchange.¹ What caused most indignation among Macedonians in Bulgaria was the Mixed Commission's decision in 1927 to liquidate the ecclesiastical and scholastic property of the Bulgarian communities in those villages of Greek Macedonia from which the majority of Bulgarians (Slav Macedonians) had emigrated, either voluntarily or compulsorily. However, the Bulgarian Foreign Minister of the time, Mr Burov, who was not sympathetic to the Macedonian cause, said that to maintain them would only be 'sentimental nonsense', and the Prime Minister, Mr Liapchev, despite his own Macedonian sympathies, supported Burov's stand. All the Macedonians of Bulgaria could do was to hold protest meetings.

In addition to the Greek-Bulgarian exchange, which was theoretically voluntary, there was the Greek-Turkish compulsory exchange of populations from 1923 onwards. This had an even more profound effect on the character of Greek Macedonia. Under the Lausanne Agreement between Greece and Turkey, 638,000 Greeks from Asia Minor were settled in Greek Macedonia. At the same time 348,000 Turks left Greek Macedonia. The newly-arrived Greeks were in general energetic and hard-working; they raised the productivity of eastern Macedonia and made it the main grain-producing area of Greece. Ethnographically, they made the population of Greek Macedonia, according to the 1928 Greek census, 88.1 per cent Greek.² Originally many of them showed sympathies with Communism, but these did not lead them in the direction of Macedonian autonomy. The Comintern had in 1922 come out strongly against the settlement of Greek refugees in Macedonia and Thrace, on the grounds that it would destroy the ethnological character of these areas; but the Comintern appears to have had very little influence in the matter.

In general the settlement of the Asia Minor refugees enormously strengthened Greece's hold on Greek Macedonia, and made the old idea of a greater united Macedonia stretching down to the Aegean seem, in the inter-war period, no more than an outworn fantasy.

Perhaps it was for this reason that relations between Greece

¹ Macartney, *op. cit.* p. 443.

² Pallis, *op. cit.* p. 9.

and Bulgaria, though very far from friendly, were seldom as tense as were Bulgarian-Yugoslav relations. To operate successfully in Greece, I.M.R.O. would have required a friendly Slav population close to Bulgaria's borders; but it could have no hope of gaining local support from Greeks. So although in the early years after the First World War I.M.R.O. tried to organize resistance in Greek Macedonia as well as in Yugoslav Macedonia, it soon concentrated on the latter.

In June 1922 Greece joined with Yugoslavia and Roumania in the joint representations made to the Stambulisky Government over komitadji raids.

A much more serious clash came in October 1925, when General Pangalos was dictator in Greece. After a frontier incident in which a Greek soldier was shot, Greek troops crossed the border at Kula and shelled the nearby Bulgarian town of Petrich. The local I.M.R.O. 'militia' mobilized, obtained arms from Bulgarian army depots, and resisted the Greeks. On 24 October, three days after the first clash, the League of Nations ordered the Greeks to suspend hostilities; after a little more firing the Greeks withdrew from Bulgarian soil five days later.¹ A League of Nations Commission of Inquiry found that Greece had violated the League Covenant and ordered her to pay £45,000 indemnity to Bulgaria. A scheme for neutral supervision of the Bulgarian-Greek frontier under Swedish officers was agreed.

In 1930, on the initiative of Venezelos, an attempt was made to draw Bulgaria into the orbit of talks which had then been proceeding for some time about the possibility of a Balkan Pact. A Balkan Conference of Albanian, Bulgarian, Greek, Yugoslav, Roumanian, and Turkish representatives met in Athens in October. The Macedonian problem was deliberately excluded from the agenda. However, outside the conference-room Venezelos told Bulgarian journalists, in an interview, that a settlement of the 'minorities problem' was one of the essential conditions for a Balkan Federation.² This unofficial half-promise was never followed up in practical terms; so that Bulgaria stayed outside the Balkan Pact when it was concluded four years later.

In the nineteen-thirties, attempts at rapprochement between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia almost inevitably caused nervousness in

¹ Swire, *Bulgarian Conspiracy*, p. 202.

² *Survey of International Affairs 1930*, p. 150.

MACEDONIA

Greece. The Greeks feared that the foundation of a South Slav bloc, or of a South Slav Federation, on her northern border would be a threat to her security. It might also pave the way for renewed demands on Greek Macedonia and a revival of the medieval Slav thrust to Salonika.

SALONIKA

The subject of Slav access to the Aegean at Salonika was one which Greece found particularly delicate. Following the Greek-Serbian Alliance at the time of the Second Balkan War in 1913, a Greek-Serbian Agreement was signed in the Spring of 1914, assigning a free zone in Salonika port to Serbian commerce. The First World War postponed ratification of this Agreement. After the war, in November 1922, M. Politis visited Belgrade, and Greece ratified the 1914 Agreement on 21 November. A month later, however, Yugoslavia refused to ratify it on the ground that it offered insufficient guarantees.

Fresh negotiations were started and on 10 May 1923 a new agreement was signed in Belgrade to regulate transit through Salonika. By this Greece was to cede to Yugoslavia for a term of fifty years an area to be called the 'Salonika Free Zone'. This was to be at Yugoslavia's disposal and under her customs administration, although it was to remain an integral part of Greek territory and under Greek sovereignty. The officials within the Zone were to be Yugoslavs.

Ratifications of this 1923 Agreement were exchanged on 30 May 1924, and the Zone was handed over to the Yugoslavs on 6 March 1925.

In 1923 Greece also made a similar offer to Bulgaria. Private talks between Greek and Bulgarian delegates had taken place at the time of the Lausanne peace conference which started in November 1922. As a result on 23 January 1923 Venezelos offered Bulgaria a Free Zone in the port of Salonika on the same terms as Greece was then offering to Yugoslavia. However, M. Stanciov, the Bulgarian delegate, said that the terms of the proposal were inadequate and that he did not wish to reopen discussion of the question. Negotiations then ceased.¹

In March 1926, during the session of the League of Nations,

¹ *Survey of International Affairs 1920-23*, pp. 340 ff.

the Greek and Bulgarian delegates again had talks. Fresh Greek offers of a Free Zone at Salonika were made. Bulgaria, however, preferred to insist on her claim to an Aegean outlet in Thrace.¹

→ Meanwhile a fresh disagreement had arisen between Greece and Yugoslavia over Salonika. The Yugoslavs considered the Greek freight rates on the railway from Djevdjelija, on the Greek-Yugoslav frontier, to Salonika too high and the existing transit facilities too slow and complex. At the beginning of 1925 the Greek Government therefore reduced the freight rates to about the same level as those in force on the Yugoslav side of the frontier. But when negotiations started in May 1925, the Yugoslavs made much more sweeping claims. They wanted the Greeks not only to enlarge the Salonika Free Zone but also to cede it definitively and without reserve. This would have meant that it would have become virtually Yugoslav territory. The Yugoslavs also asked that they should themselves administer the Djevdjelija-Salonika railway.

Relations between Greece and Yugoslavia had already been strained by Yugoslavia's denunciation of the 1913 Greek-Serbian Treaty of Alliance a few months earlier. Now Yugoslavia's claims on Salonika aroused alarm and indignation in the Greeks, who felt that they were a threat to the whole Greek position in Macedonia. They were unwilling to go beyond the grant of commercial facilities at Salonika and a provision for arbitration in case of dispute. On 1 June 1925 both parties decided to break off the negotiations; and the Greek press accused Yugoslavia of 'imperialistic designs'.

Early in 1926, however, relations became less strained; and in March, during the League Assembly meeting in Geneva, discussions were resumed between the Greek and Yugoslav delegates. On 17 August a Greek-Yugoslav Treaty and a Technical Convention were signed in Athens. The Convention was designed to last for fifty years. In principle, it extended the area of the Free Zone by 10,000 square metres. Agreement was reached on freight rates and customs facilities. Greece was to remain the owner of the Djevdjelija railway but the Yugoslavs could collaborate in the administration of the line.

However, Pangalos was overthrown and Greece failed to ratify the Treaty and the Convention. Greek fears of Yugoslav

¹ *Survey of International Affairs 1926*, p. 213.

MACEDONIA

'imperialism' revived, and in April 1927 Greece put forward objections to certain parts of the Convention. On 25 August 1926 the Greek Parliament decided against ratification.¹

It was not until Venezelos returned to power in 1928 that a fresh start could be made on improving relations. Then agreement was reached fairly rapidly; six Protocols on the Yugoslav Free Zone in Salonika were signed on 17 March 1929, and a Pact of Friendship, Conciliation, and Judicial Settlement was concluded ten days later.² The Yugoslavs, however, continued to make relatively little use of the Free Zone except for exports from the Trepca Mines; and they appeared to remain discontented.

In March 1941, when Hitler was completing his plans for the German invasion of Greece, he tried to bribe Yugoslavia by offering Salonika to the Tsvetković Government. But two days later, on 27 March, came the Yugoslav *coup d'état*. Tsvetković was overthrown and replaced by General Simović, who failed to denounce the Tripartite Pact but was regarded with such suspicion by the Germans that they decided to invade Yugoslavia. General Simović, in a broadcast from London later that year, claimed credit for refusing to be tempted by the promise of Salonika.³

It was thus possible for the Greek and Yugoslav Governments in exile to sign a fresh treaty, in January 1942, in the presence of Mr Eden. This treaty, however, aroused small enthusiasm in either country; and the Yugoslav war-time revolution under Marshal Tito made it a dead letter. The advent of Communists in power in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria in 1944 once again made the Greeks intensely apprehensive of Slav designs on Salonika.

THE INTERNAL MACEDONIAN REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATION

The only important revolutionary organization in Macedonia between the two wars was, as before, I.M.R.O. But I.M.R.O., once its struggle against the Turks was over and its main effort was directed against the Yugoslavs, quickly degenerated. It

¹ *Survey of International Affairs 1926*, p. 167 ff.

² *Survey of International Affairs 1930*, p. 148.

³ C. M. Woodhouse, *The Apple of Discord* (London, Hutchinson, 1948), p. 21.

BETWEEN THE TWO WARS

ceased to be genuinely revolutionary. In the nineteen-twenties it became more of a financial racket, selling its services to the highest bidder—the Bulgarian Government, the Italians, possibly for a brief period Soviet Russia. It also became an extortion racket, forcing the Macedonian emigrants in Bulgaria and the inhabitants of the Petrich Department (Bulgarian Macedonia) to buy immunity from economic blackmail and terrorization at a heavy price, through 'voluntary' patriotic subscriptions on 'taxes'. It also had its own considerable financial interests in the Petrich Department; the whole economic life of the area was in its hands. In the early nineteen-thirties it trafficked illegally in drugs; the League of Nations Opium Advisory Committee at one time reported that there were ten factories in the Petrich Department and Sofia manufacturing acetic anhydride.¹ When I.M.R.O. was formally suppressed in 1934, its property was estimated at 400 million leva.²

The chief basis of its existence was the large number of Macedonian emigrants in Bulgaria, estimated at well over half a million by Bulgarian propagandists, but probably in reality little over 100,000. Some had fled to Bulgaria from Macedonia to escape from Turkish oppression, some had left at the time of the Balkan Wars, the rest were the emigrants who left Greece under the 1919 Convention. While a few intellectuals made brilliant careers in Bulgaria in politics, business, or journalism, many were peasants who had hated being uprooted from their original homes and who were not easily assimilated in Bulgaria. The upheaval in their lives had often left them thriftless and discontented and turbulent, and they were not particularly popular with the ordinary Bulgarian. So they provided a reservoir of man-power on which I.M.R.O. could draw for its terrorist cadres and its unofficial militia; and, since they had lost their roots, they could easily be browbeaten into obedience to I.M.R.O.

In so far as I.M.R.O. retained its revolutionary aims in the inter-war period, it no longer used its earlier methods of political and military organization and education among the 'unliberated' Macedonian population. At best, in the early nineteen-twenties it organized armed raids by small bands mainly in Yugoslav Macedonia. But, as it lost more and more support among the

¹ Swire, *Bulgarian Conspiracy*, p. 50.

² *ibid.* p. 287. At that date there were 405-435 leva to the £ sterling.

MACEDONIA

population in the areas in which it wished to operate, it turned more and more to terrorist acts, assassinations, and bomb outrages. Its political strategy, in so far as it had one, was to keep Macedonia in such a state of unrest that news of it constantly appeared in the world press. By this means it presumably hoped that the great Powers would eventually be convinced that unless they re-drew the Balkan frontiers, Macedonia would be the starting-point for a fresh war.

It is true that the obvious legitimate channel for any Macedonian complaint, through the League of Nations, was blocked by Yugoslavia's refusal to admit the existence of a 'Bulgarian' or 'Macedonian' minority. But such appeals, even if heard, could never have been of profit to I.M.R.O.: if, through League of Nations intervention, the demands of the Macedonians of Yugoslavia and Greece had been satisfied, I.M.R.O. would have lost its reason for existence.

I.M.R.O.'s degeneration was above all due to the fact that though it was efficiently organized it lacked, in the inter-war period, any clear-cut political aims and had no serious economic or social ideas other than the catch-phrases of Macedonian revolution and liberation. So it had no very solid appeal to the Macedonian population; and it easily slipped into serving merely as a semi-official branch of the Bulgarian secret police. Above all, it suffered from a fatal ambiguity over the question whether it was aiming at Macedonian autonomy or at annexation to Bulgaria. All these factors facilitated its internal divisions and its self-destruction by gang warfare between rival groups. Its last leader, Ivan Mihailov, was in fact a killer and a gangster on a large scale, not a revolutionary.

These internal weaknesses meant that I.M.R.O., from 1918, or perhaps from 1913, till 1934, derived its strength far less from its own resources than from its outside backers. First, it was useful to Italy, who wished to prevent the consolidation of Yugoslavia; second, it was useful to King Boris of Bulgaria, who had a strong dynastic interest in preventing a South Slav union which would either have swept away both the Yugoslav and Bulgarian royal houses, or, less probably, would have left the Yugoslav King as the sole survivor. Finally, given the bitter internal feuds and divisions of Bulgarian political life, it was easy for I.M.R.O. to find support in one or other political party or pressure group. So

BETWEEN THE TWO WARS

I.M.R.O. was able to wield power quite disproportionate to its own real strength.

I.M.R.O. emerged from the First World War in a more or less disorganized condition, as a result of the partition of Macedonia in 1912-13 and of the later Bulgarian occupation of Macedonia. It had, however, a more or less undisputed leader in Todor Alexandrov. He was then thirty-eight years old, and had been a member of I.M.R.O.'s Central Committee since his youth. Associated with him in its leadership was the much older General Alexander Protogerov. Both had served in the Bulgarian Army in the occupation of Serbian Macedonia, and were regarded by the Yugoslavs as war criminals. Both, according to one account,¹ had been present at an important meeting between the German Kaiser and King Ferdinand of Bulgaria at Nish during the First World War. They thus had close ties with the Bulgarian army and monarchy. The third of the leading members of I.M.R.O. at this period was Peter Chaoulev, another veteran revolutionary who had been Police Commandant of Ochrid during the 1915-18 Bulgarian occupation.

For six years after the end of the war, these three men stuck together, fighting their political enemies inside Bulgaria and their rivals in the Macedonian revolutionary movement, and organizing armed raids inside Yugoslav Macedonia.

On the first of these three fronts they won a decisive success in 1923, when together with the Bulgarian Officers' League and the politician Tsankov, they succeeded in overthrowing the Agrarian regime and killing its leader Stambulisky. Although Stambulisky's successor, Tsankov, pursued a half-hearted policy of reconciliation with Yugoslavia, in practice he left I.M.R.O. a fairly free hand inside Bulgaria. And I.M.R.O. was able to consolidate its administrative and economic grip on the Petrich Department, which became the territorial basis of its power.

On the second front, against rival Macedonian groups, I.M.R.O. was at first less successful. The most important of these was the Federalist group, which genuinely aimed at creating an autonomous Macedonia within a South Slav Federation. The Federalists thus represented the more truly 'Macedonian' tradition of the earlier I.M.R.O., in contrast with the 'Supremist' trend of the Alexandrov-Protogerov group. The leading members

¹ Stoyan Christowe, *Heroes and Assassins* (London, Gollancz, 1935), p. 126.

MACEDONIA

of the Federalists, who formed their own organization in 1921, were Philip Athanasov and Todor Panitza, both old I.M.R.O. men. Neither of them had ties with the Communists, though their Macedonian programme was not far removed from that of the Communists in the nineteen-twenties.

Another prominent Macedonian who soon came to be associated both with the Federalists and the Communists was Dimiter Vlahov. He also was a veteran member of I.M.R.O. In 1908 he, together with Panitza, Hadji Dimov, and other more noted Macedonian revolutionaries, had joined in forming a 'Popular Federal Party', which advocated the use of the Macedonian Slav dialect in schools, to contest the Turkish elections. During the First World War, however, Vlahov had served as District Governor of Prishtina under the Bulgarian occupation. In the first years after the war he seems to have maintained his ties with I.M.R.O.; but by 1924, as Bulgarian Consul-General in Vienna, he had formed close contacts with Soviet representatives there; and from this time on, if not also earlier, he worked with the Communists. It is not, however, clear at what point he actually joined the Communist Party.

Hadji Dimov, another representative of the Federalist trend within the earlier I.M.R.O., became a Communist soon after the end of the First World War. There was, therefore, a definite tendency towards Communism within the Federalist group; and this led to internal divisions and finally, after 1925, to an open split.

Meanwhile, in the early nineteen-twenties, the Federalists had some success in organizing small armed bands in Yugoslav Macedonia, to operate both against the Yugoslav authorities and where necessary against the bands of Alexandrov's I.M.R.O. They were thus at this period the hated rivals of the Alexandrov-Protogerov-Chaoulev group. But in 1924 there was a startling development: a momentary reconciliation between I.M.R.O., Federalists, and Communists, and the formation of a short-lived common Macedonian front against all the three Balkan Governments, including the Bulgarian, which had partitioned Macedonia.

It is not quite clear at what point the flirtation between I.M.R.O. and the Federalists, and the Comintern began. The I.M.R.O. newspaper, *Freedom or Death*, writing long after the

event in 1927, said that the I.M.R.O. leader, Alexandrov, had, in August 1923, sent Dimiter Vlahov to Moscow, where Athanasov, the Federalist, had already arrived. According to this account, Moscow was conciliatory in its attitude towards Alexandrov, but at the same time urged him to unite with the Federalists.¹

Whatever the truth of this story, it seems clear that the third member of the I.M.R.O. triumvirate, Peter Chaoulev, who spent much of his time abroad on I.M.R.O.'s business, had at about the same time made contacts with Communist representatives; and he may well have acted as intermediary.

However the first contacts may have been made, early in 1924 I.M.R.O. received a definite incentive to seek outside support in a fresh quarter. This was the Italian-Yugoslav Pact of Friendship, which meant at least a temporary decrease in Italian backing for I.M.R.O. Also, there may have been certain differences of opinion within the higher cadres of I.M.R.O. about the degree of I.M.R.O.'s dependence on the Bulgarian War Office.

Whatever their complex motives may have been, Alexandrov and Protogerov went to Vienna in March 1924. There they conferred with their associate, Chaoulev, who proceeded to negotiate with Vlahov, Athanasov, and Panitsa, and probably also with authorized Comintern representatives.

The result of the Vienna negotiations was that at the end of April or in early May agreement was reached on the creation of a common Macedonian Revolutionary Organization combining all groups, and on a declaration of I.M.R.O.'s 'new orientation'. This declaration had a strongly Communist flavour. It attacked not only the Yugoslav and Greek Governments as oppressors of the Macedonians, but also the Bulgarian Government, which it accused of secret negotiations with Yugoslavia aiming at I.M.R.O.'s destruction. (For a fuller account of this document, see below, pp. 54-7.)

Alexandrov, according to one version,² authorized his associates Protogerov and Chaoulev to sign the agreement on his behalf, while he himself left for a tour of western Europe. A pro-I.M.R.O. account³ says merely that 'it is difficult to say whether Alexandrov authorized his signature or not'. In any case, publication of the

¹ Swire, *Bulgarian Conspiracy*, p. 184.

² *ibid.* p. 185.

³ Christowe, *Heroes and Assassins*, p. 178.

MACEDONIA

declaration was withheld until July, after Alexandrov had returned to Sofia. It then appeared, possibly against Alexandrov's wishes, in the first issue of Dimiter Vlahov's new Vienna publication, *Fédération Balcanique*, which appeared on 15 July 1924.

The declaration, as published, bore the signatures of Alexandrov, Protogerov, and Chaoulev. Its appearance must inevitably have precipitated a crisis in relations between the I.M.R.O. leaders and the Bulgarian War Office, their traditional supporters. Probably Alexandrov and Protogerov received a stern warning, particularly from the War Minister, Volkov. In any case, they repudiated their signatures and declared that Vlahov and Chaoulev, who were still in Vienna, had acted without their authority.

That was the end of the flirtation between I.M.R.O. and the Federalists and Communists. An I.M.R.O. assassin killed Chaoulev in Milan at the end of 1924. Vlahov broke with Athanasov, who did not stand as far to the left; he stayed on in Vienna and formed a new 'United I.M.R.O.', advocating an autonomous Macedonia within a Federation of Balkan Socialist Republics (which was in fact the Comintern policy of this period). He continued to publish *Fédération Balcanique* to preach this aim and to flay the old I.M.R.O. His semi-Communist 'United I.M.R.O.' never seems, however, to have had any very large following in Macedonia itself. Probably in 1936, Vlahov went to live in Moscow. He re-emerged in 1943 as a prominent member of Marshal Tito's new regime in Yugoslavia.

I.M.R.O., meanwhile, returned to a closer alliance with the Bulgarian War Office than ever before. But it was rent by grave internal division. On 31 August 1924, the eve of I.M.R.O.'s first post-war congress, Alexandrov was murdered in the mountains of Bulgarian Macedonia. Three versions of the murder have been put forward: first, that it was instigated by the Communists and/or Federalists, in revenge for his repudiation of the Vienna Declaration; next (the version put out four years later by Ivan Mihailov), that his colleague Protogerov was responsible; finally, that Mihailov himself was responsible. According to this last version, Mihailov must have been instigated by the Bulgarian War Office, which could no longer trust Alexandrov after his flirtation with the Communists.

Whatever the true explanation, the murder gave I.M.R.O. the chance to assassinate a number of Federalists and Communists,

BETWEEN THE TWO WARS

including Hadji Dimov and Panitza. Panitza was dramatically shot during a performance of *Peer Gynt* at the Vienna Opera, on 8 May 1925, by the girl who afterwards became Ivan Mihailov's wife.

Protogerov succeeded Alexandrov as leader of I.M.R.O.; but the young Ivan Mihailov became a member of the I.M.R.O. Central Committee, and rapidly came to have more and more power in the Organization. His influence brought about the final degeneration of I.M.R.O. into a gangster organization.

During the four years that Protogerov and Mihailov nominally worked together, their association can never have been easy. Protogerov, with something of a military career behind him, and a reputation as a kindly if weak-willed man, was a very different type from the young, completely ruthless and completely unscrupulous Mihailov. However, Mihailov allowed Protogerov to survive until he had consolidated his own grip on I.M.R.O. He was helped by the replacement of the Tsankov Government by that of the Macedonian, Liapchev, who was remarkably tolerant of I.M.R.O. Mihailov also established close personal ties with Fascist Italy, whose interest in I.M.R.O. had now revived.

Thus by 1928 Mihailov was ready to grasp sole power. On 7 July Protogerov was shot dead in a Sofia street. The first rumour that went round was that he was the 'victim of Italian imperialism', because he had rejected a proposal by Mussolini for an Italian protectorate over Macedonia. But almost immediately three leading members of I.M.R.O. formed a pro-Protogerov group and publicly charged Mihailov with Protogerov's murder. On 21 July Mihailov himself issued a communiqué stating that Protogerov's assassination was an 'execution' ordered in conformity with the directive of the last I.M.R.O. Congress to punish all concerned in the murder of Alexandrov in 1924.

On 22 July the I.M.R.O. Congress met, without the pro-Protogerov group, and approved Mihailov's conduct of I.M.R.O.'s affairs. Mihailov was appointed to a new Central Committee from which the 'Protogerovists' were excluded. The 'Mihailovists' at once began assassinations of Protogerovists.

It was at this moment that Britain and France made their unsuccessful *démarche*, urging the Liapchev Government in effect to liquidate I.M.R.O. At one point in the prolonged cabinet crisis which followed, the Government promised to make drastic

MACEDONIA

changes in the administration of the Petrich Department (Bulgarian Macedonia). But in practice nothing effective was done, and Liapchev and Volkov, with King Boris's blessing, retained power.

As the Protogerovists began to fight back against the Mihailovists, gang warfare broke out between the two groups in the streets of Sofia and elsewhere in Bulgaria. Assassinations in broad daylight became frequent. Although this fratricidal war destroyed what remained of I.M.R.O.'s prestige as a genuine revolutionary movement, the Mihailovist I.M.R.O. remained very powerful inside Bulgaria, protected by the authorities and ultimately by the King. The Protogerovists received no such protection and sought allies among the surviving Federalists, the Bulgarian Agrarian exiles in Belgrade, and ultimately the Yugoslavs.

So things went on until 1933 when King Alexander made his first conciliatory gesture towards King Boris, which made the atmosphere less favourable for I.M.R.O. But King Boris was not yet prepared to abandon I.M.R.O. The blow came in May 1934. Following the Military League-Zveno *coup*, I.M.R.O. was suppressed, leaving remarkably little trace inside Bulgaria. Many of its members fled abroad—Mihailov to Turkey, others to the Croat Ustashi in Italy, others to terrorists' camps in Hungary such as Janka Puzsta. It was from these bases that the murder of King Alexander by one of I.M.R.O.'s most skilful assassins, Chernozemski, was organized in October 1934. After that little was heard of I.M.R.O.; the Macedonian revolutionary movement—terrorist, Federalist, or Communist—was quiescent until war broke out again in the Balkans.

In 1941 the Axis invasion of Yugoslavia theoretically opened up fresh opportunities for I.M.R.O. There seems, however, no definite evidence that former members of I.M.R.O. were employed by the Bulgarian occupation authorities in Yugoslav Macedonia. It was frequently rumoured that Ivan Mihailov was in Zagreb, where his old associate, Ante Pavelić, was now in power in the puppet 'Independent State of Croatia'. According to a story current in Yugoslav Communist circles, Hitler held him in reserve as possible Gauleiter of an Independent Macedonia, should the Bulgarian occupation authorities fail to hold Yugoslav Macedonia. By this account, Mihailov was actually

BETWEEN THE TWO WARS

sent by plane to Skoplje in the final phase of the war, but was forced by the Yugoslav Macedonian partisans to depart without setting foot on Macedonian soil. This story is, however, not substantiated.

Whether or not Mihailov outlived the war is still a mystery. But it seems clear that only the most scattered relics of I.M.R.O. can have survived the events of the fifteen years since 1934.

The quick collapse and disintegration of I.M.R.O. are perhaps to be explained by four factors. First, it would never come into the open over the question whether it really wanted Bulgarian annexation or Macedonian autonomy, and so created confusion and division among its followers. Secondly, after the First World War it had no constructive ideas of its own apart from the forcible overthrow of the existing political order in Macedonia. Thirdly, it failed to organize widespread popular support in Yugoslav Macedonia, its chief target, and relied increasingly on isolated terrorist action; once the terrorist cadres were broken up, little was left of the Organization. Fourthly, after the First World War I.M.R.O. relied far too heavily on outside support, especially from Fascist Italy; when this support was withdrawn or weakened, I.M.R.O. no longer had sufficient internal resources to make good the loss.

The collapse of I.M.R.O. in the nineteen-thirties left a vacuum which the Communists, who in the early nineteen-twenties had hoped to gain control of the Macedonian revolutionary movement, were surprisingly slow to fill.

THE COMMUNISTS AND MACEDONIA

The Bolshevik leaders, some years before the Russian Revolution, had taken an interest in the Balkans and Macedonia, partly, perhaps, because the region was a favourite target of Tsarist foreign policy, partly, no doubt, because of its revolutionary possibilities. Trotsky was a war correspondent in the Balkan wars.¹ Lenin at the same period wrote an article on 'the Social Significance of the Serb-Bulgarian Victories'. Lenin said that these victories meant the undermining of feudalism in Macedonia

¹ Leon Trotsky, *Ma Vie* (Paris, Reider, 1929), pp. 77-9. Characteristically, Trotsky denounced Bulgarian atrocities against wounded Turks and condemned the 'Conspiracy of Silence' in the Russian press on this subject.

MACEDONIA

and the creation of a more or less free class of peasants, and guaranteed the whole social development of the Balkan lands.¹

Another Russian who in the pre-revolutionary era counted himself an expert on the Macedonian question, and who was later associated with the Bolsheviks, was Professor Nikolai Derzhavin, of Petrograd University. His book, *Bulgaro-Serb Relations and the Macedonian Question*, which appeared during the First World War, took a strongly pro-Bulgarian line on the Macedonian issue, and called on the Serbs, who were then fighting with the Russians, to modify the results of the Balkan Wars. (The book was in fact reprinted in Leipzig under the auspices of the Royal Bulgarian Consul.) Derzhavin claimed that a new day was dawning in the life of the Slavs; and his peroration was:

May this great historic moment of the triumph of right and justice banish from the lives of our brothers of the South those accidental barriers which have made irreconcilable enemies of two brother peoples, rupturing their good neighbourly relations and breeding hatred. May the heroic Serb people at last find the necessary moral force—and they have it, it dwells within them—to recognize spontaneously what has long and unanimously been recognized by history, science, and the national sentiment of the Macedonian population itself, which sees in the Bulgarians its brothers in language and blood, and which has fought hand in hand with them for religion, life, and liberty. And recognizing this truth, may the Serb people, with as much courage as they are showing in their fight alongside the Russian people against the enemy of Slavism, face the solution of this grandiose Slav problem, which is being decided in this moment, and for which the best sons of the generous Russian people are shedding their precious blood with so much abnegation, in the name of the liberty and happiness of all the Slavs.²

The phrasing, if not the substance, of the closing passage is of course strongly reminiscent of some Soviet propaganda during the Second World War. That is perhaps not surprising: Derzhavin represented a type of semi-romantic pan-Slavism which, although it fell from favour after the Russian Revolution, was revived forcefully when Russia was drawn into the war in 1941. At this point also Derzhavin himself reappeared on the scene at the war-time All-Slav Congresses held in Moscow.

¹ Lazar Mojsov, *The Bulgarian Workers' Party (Communist) and the Macedonian National Question* (Belgrade, Borba, 1948).

² N. S. Derzhavin, *Bulgaro-Serb Relations and the Macedonian Question* (Lausanne, Librairie Centrale des Nationalités, 1918).

BETWEEN THE TWO WARS

In the first years following the Russian revolution the Bolshevik leaders, whatever may then have been their attitude to Derzhavin's pan-Slavism, seem, like him, to have tended towards a pro-Bulgarian attitude.

When the Communist Parties of Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Greece were formed shortly after the end of the First World War, the Bulgarian Party had the most solid foundations. It evolved in 1919 from the 'Narrow' wing of the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party, which already had considerable organizational experience and had such energetic and forceful leaders as Vasil Kolarov and Georgi Dimitrov. Perhaps for that reason, perhaps also because it had Soviet backing, it always took the lead among the Balkan Communist Parties, particularly over the Macedonian question.

The Yugoslav Communist Party was handicapped from the start by the complexities of Yugoslavia's nationalities problem, which produced organizational weaknesses within the Party and which brought down upon it stiff rebukes from the Comintern and from Stalin himself. The Greek Communist Party was by far the smallest of the three; its chief strongholds were in the north of Greece; but, from its early days, it found the Macedonian problem a millstone round its neck. Whatever its policy of the moment, it was always suspected of plotting to cede Greek Macedonia to the Slavs.

Early in 1920 the Bulgarian and Yugoslav Communist Parties each claimed to have 30,000 members. The Greek Communist Party, which bore the name of the 'Socialist Workers' Party', only claimed 1,300 members.¹ It had sections in several Macedonian centres, including Salonika, Seres, Kavalla, and Drama.

Each of the three Balkan Communist Parties was organized on the territorial basis of the three Balkan States as they emerged from the First World War (or the Balkan Wars). There was at this time no trace of any separate Macedonian Communist organization. In June 1920 a Macedonian, of Skopje, called Dasan Cekić was one of the signatories of a manifesto issued by the Central Party Council of the Yugoslav Communist Party. The manifesto took a fairly centralist line on the nationalities problem; the Party's attitude then was that the outside world was exaggerating the national differences within Yugoslavia; in reality the

¹ *Kommunismus* (periodical journal, Vienna), 27 March 1920.

MACEDONIA

only struggle was between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.¹

In this early stage, the Communist Parties in general kept to such innocuous slogans as 'The Balkans for the Balkan Peoples', without probing deeply into specific problems. The Bulgarians, however, showed an eager interest in promoting Balkan solidarity. In January 1920 the Bulgarian, Yugoslav, and Greek Communist Parties all sent delegates to Sofia, on Bulgarian initiative, to form the 'Balkan Communist Federation'. This was a group which during the nineteen-twenties under Bulgarian leadership came to have a certain standing in the Communist world: decisions taken at its periodic meetings (usually in Sofia) were sometimes formally endorsed and supported by the Comintern.

The Comintern, in those early years, seems to have had somewhat hazy ideas about the Macedonian question. Zinoviev, as President of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, sent a message of greeting to the Communist Parties of Bulgaria, Roumania, Serbia, and Turkey, early in 1920, which was rather a muddled document. It was sent in preparation for the Second Congress of the Third International, and tried with doubtful success to make the best, or worst, of all worlds. Zinoviev said:

While the Paris Supreme Council has abandoned to the Serbian military clique, the Roumanian big landowner class, and the corrupt Roumanian bureaucracy, millions of foreigners—Bulgarians, Albanians, Germans, Ukrainians, and Russians—for them to devour, it has given the five great Powers the right, if needful, to use the national minorities as a means of exercising pressure on Serbia, Roumania, and Greece, with the aim of obtaining every kind of economic and political advantage. . .

The capitalists of France and England . . . will not be in a position to help the Balkan countries. On the contrary, they will in future exploit these countries still more fully as sources of raw materials and as markets for unnecessary goods. . .

The new national divisions, created after the defeat of Austria-Hungary and the disruption of Bulgaria and Turkey, have intensified the nationalities problem to an extent greater even than before the war. Many more elements of foreign nationality have come under the rule of the victors. And the policy of national oppression, of insatiable militarism, gives rise to a yet more powerful drive towards freedom. And the struggle for freedom takes on a yet wider scope.

Against the rule of the Serbian bureaucratic and landowning oligarchy, there are rising up the Macedonian Bulgarians, the Albanians, the Montenegrins, the Croats, and the Bosnians. . . Against the

¹ *Kommunismus*, 1920.

BETWEEN THE TWO WARS

rule of the Greek trading, speculating, and profiteering bourgeoisie are fighting the Albanians of Epirus and the Turkish and Bulgarian peasants of Thrace.

A new period of embittered nationalist agitation, national hate, and national-bourgeois wars threatens the Balkan and Danube peoples. Only the Proletariat can, through its victory, avert a new catastrophe. . . Only the victory of the proletarian dictatorship can unite all the masses of the peoples in a Federation of Socialist Balkan (or Balkan and Danube) Soviet Republics, and save them both from landowning-capitalist exploitation by their own and by the foreign bourgeoisie, and also from colonial enslavement and national disputes. The Communist Party is called by existing circumstances to play an even bigger role in the Balkan Peninsula than in capitalist countries where there are no nationalities problems. . .

In the present phase of preparation for the Socialist Revolution, the Balkan Communist Parties must, parallel with their work inside their own countries, pay the greatest attention to a firm association and co-ordination of the activities of the individual Balkan Parties. Victory is impossible without the closest mutual association of all the Balkan Parties.¹

Zinoviev's message provided the ideological framework for Communist handling of the Macedonian question in the early nineteen-twenties. It did not, however, as yet make any attempt to define the question. But it is of interest that Zinoviev referred specifically to 'Macedonian Bulgarians' in Yugoslavia, and that, perhaps by chance, he omitted any reference to 'Macedonian Bulgarians' in Greece. Whether this vagueness was due to ignorance or design is not clear; but it is clear enough that the Comintern quickly took note of the revolutionary possibilities of the various nationalities and minorities problems of the Balkans, and hoped to exploit them to undermine the new 'bourgeois' Balkan Governments and to weaken the position of the western Powers in Balkan affairs.

The Comintern's attention was attracted to the Macedonian question, as such, by the influx of Greek refugees into Greek Macedonia and Thrace during and after the Greek-Turkish War. The Fourth Comintern Congress in 1922 decided to campaign against the refugee movement. The refugees, it said, must be convinced that they were the victims of Greek imperialism, and their settlement in Macedonia and Thrace was to be regarded as a capitalist attempt to destroy the ethnological character of the two regions.

¹ *Kommunismus*, 5 March 1920.

MACEDONIA

This question was again taken up at the meeting of the Balkan Communist Federation held in 1924.¹ It directed the Greek Communist Party to fight 'most bitterly' against the attempt to hellenize the new territories by the expulsion of Turks and Bulgarians. The Greeks were asked to agitate for the annulment of the Greek-Turkish Convention for the exchange of populations, and also for the non-fulfilment of the Greek-Bulgarian Convention. (On this last point the Communist directive coincided with the I.M.R.O. directive). The Greek Communist Party was told that its slogan must be the self-determination of the minorities.

The Greek Communist Party Central Committee raised objections to this directive, and was presumably reproved by the Comintern. At the Fifth Comintern Congress, in 1924, the Greek delegate, Maximos, said that his Party opposed the Greek-Turkish population exchange but added: 'the fact remains that there are 700,000 Greek refugees in Macedonia'. (See also below, pp. 61-2.)

The question of Macedonian autonomy, as such, first seems to have been raised formally in the Communist world at the Balkan Communist Federation conference in 1922. Vasil Kolarov, the Bulgarian, presided and called for discussion of the question. The Greek Communist Party representative, however, asked that discussion should be deferred until he had consulted the Greek Communist Party Central Committee.

In the following year, 1923, internal upheavals in Bulgaria put Macedonian autonomy temporarily in the background, though they had their Macedonian repercussions. In June came the overthrow of Stambulisky and the Agrarian regime by the Officers' League, Tsankov, and I.M.R.O.; the Bulgarian Communist Party remained neutral and failed to support the Agrarians. For this failure it was strongly criticized, after the event, by Moscow; the exiled Hungarian Communist, Matyas Rakosi, wrote a scathing article pointing out the Bulgarian Party's errors.²

The Comintern was also seriously worried at the part played by the Macedonians in the June *coup*. The Enlarged Executive of the Comintern declared in a special manifesto on Bulgaria³:

¹ *International Press Correspondence* (Communist periodical issued in English and other languages, hereinafter referred to as *I.P.C.*), 1 May 1924.

² *I.P.C.*, 26 July 1923.

³ *ibid.*, 23 July 1923.

BETWEEN THE TWO WARS

Peasants of Macedonia! Revolutionaries of Macedonia! You have allowed the Bulgarian counter-revolution to use you for the *coup d'état*, although your interests, as shown by your past, are most closely interwoven with the interests of the working people, with the interests of the revolution in the Balkans and throughout the world. The Stambulisky Government delivered Macedonia to the Serbian bourgeoisie in order to gain their support. It persecuted you in bloody fashion. But do not believe for a moment that the counter-revolutionary movement will be able to liberate the Macedonian people . . . Only a Workers' and Peasants' Government in Bulgaria . . . will blaze the path for the establishment of a Balkan Federation of Workers' and Peasants' Governments, which alone can bring about your deliverance . . . For the sake of your own national freedom, you must join hands with the Bulgarian Workers and Peasants.

This appears to have been the Comintern's first, still somewhat imprecise, formulation of its views on the Macedonian problem. Its appeal to the Macedonians to join hands with the Bulgarian Communists (without mention of the Yugoslav or Greek Communists), may betray a fundamental pro-Bulgarian bias; more probably, it sprang from the Comintern's conviction that Bulgaria, alone of the Balkan countries, was then ripe for revolution. Presumably plans were already in existence for the September Communist insurrection in Bulgaria, and the Comintern hoped to enlist Macedonian support for it.

The Comintern appears to have had some grounds for this hope. According to one source,¹ negotiations had already started in the Spring of 1923 between the representatives of Alexandrov, the I.M.R.O. leader, and Vasil Kolarov and other Bulgarian Communists. Aleko, the local I.M.R.O. chief in the Petrich Department, favoured co-operation with the Communists. The negotiations were interrupted by the overthrow of Stambulisky in June, but were resumed in July 1923. And according to the same account, Alexandrov probably sent Dimiter Vlahov to Moscow in August.²

But these negotiations—assuming that they took place—must have been abortive. I.M.R.O. bands helped Tsankov and Volkov to suppress the September rising, and were denounced for it in the Communist press. The Bulgarian Communists in exile launched a violent propaganda campaign, which lasted for many months, against the Tsankov regime. But the Comintern's

¹ Swire, *Bulgarian Conspiracy*, p. 183.

² *ibid.* p. 184.

MACEDONIA

attempt to drive a wedge between Tsankov and I.M.R.O. continued.

In March 1924 the Balkan Communist Federation, at its sixth congress, came into the open with a detailed Macedonian programme. It spoke flatteringly of the old I.M.R.O.; and it called for the setting up of a Republic of Macedonia within a 'voluntary Union of Independent Balkan Republics'. Some passages of this long document¹ are worth quoting fully:

The possession of Macedonia, by reason of the geographical position of the country, assures domination over the whole Balkan peninsula. That is why the country always roused the cupidity of the interested imperialist States, as well as of the neighbouring Balkan States. The varied ethnographical composition of its population has always served as a pretext for the interference of outsiders. All the nationalities which dominate in the neighbouring States are represented in Macedonia, but in such proportions that not one of them attains an absolute majority. Consequently the domination of any one of the Balkan States over Macedonia means national oppression of the majority of the Macedonian population and stirs up national struggles which are exploited by the other interested States for their schemes of conquest. . . The Serbian and Greek hegemony over this country, which was divided between them after the Balkan war, signifies national oppression for the majority of the population. . .

The Macedonian population has for years carried on a heroic and bitter struggle for national freedom. The rivalries stirred up by the bourgeoisie of the neighbouring States and the hatred between the various Macedonian nationalities have often led to mutually destructive wars . . . but have never been able to destroy the conviction among the Macedonian slaves [*sic*] that only an autonomous and united Macedonia could assure right and liberty to all its nationalities.

The Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, the real organizer and leader of the revolutionary struggle of the Macedonian slaves, regardless of nationality, is working to strengthen this conviction. . .

A united and autonomous Macedonia is now the slogan of the Macedonians in all corners of their Fatherland, which is covered with ruins. It is under this slogan that they are organizing and conducting the struggle.

The duped Bulgarian bourgeoisie, which has only received the very least share of the spoils of Macedonia, is trying afresh to take advantage of the Macedonian revolutionary movement, and to take it under its control. But in spite of all the efforts of its agents among the Macedonian revolutionary organizations, it has not succeeded in winning the sympathies of the working masses of the Macedonian regions, and causing them to deviate from an 'independent struggle'. The Mace-

¹ *I.P.C.*, 10 April 1924.

donian people have been so severely tried in the past that they no longer have any desire to submit to the influence of their 'friends' and 'patrons' either near or far. . .

A section of the Macedonian emigrants has been made use of by the Bulgarian counter-revolutionary movement, to repress the revolt of the Bulgarian workers and peasants. The conduct of the duped Macedonians, who, in the guise of Macedonian revolutionaries, became the mercenaries of the Bulgarian bourgeoisie and the executioners of the Bulgarian working people, is a deliberate attack against the very cause of Macedonian liberation itself. The Macedonian workers must emphatically condemn this attack. . .

The bourgeoisie of the Balkan countries knows of no other method for the solution of the Macedonian and Thracian problems than pillage, terror, exile, and violent denationalization. This was the method of the Bulgarian nationalists, while they were masters in Macedonia and Thrace. The Serbian and Greek bourgeoisie follow precisely the same way. The Serbian bourgeoisie maintains in Macedonia a cruel terrorist regime, destroys or forces into exile the conscious part of the Bulgarian, Turkish, and Albanian population and substitutes for it settlers from other parts of Yugoslavia; it oppresses all the non-Serb nationalities, closes their churches and their schools, prohibits their press and suppresses their languages. Every revolt, every protestation of the peoples, reduced to despair, is followed by bloody repression on the part of the Serbian Government. We witness the same spectacle in the other part of Macedonia and Thrace, subject to Greek domination. . .

The Communists do not at all repulse the national Macedonian and Thracian organizations which group the working population around them in the name of their national and cultural interests. On the contrary, they maintain the closest relations with them, exert themselves in their leadership and activity to insure to the working masses a predominant position which is energetically opposed to the big agrarian bourgeois and adventurous elements, which would make use of the organizations to serve their class interests and which are always ready to betray the interests of the great working masses. The tactics of the united front with these organizations and even of the participation of the Communists in the same will render easier this task of the Communist Parties. . .

In setting up the ideal of a workers' and peasants' government, the Communist Parties and the Communist Federation of the Balkans declare that the Federative Republic of the Balkans will assure peace, independence, and liberty of development of all the peoples of the Peninsula, that it will be a voluntary union of independent Balkan Republics, including the Republics of Macedonia and Thrace.

A number of conclusions may be drawn from this document. It was obviously drafted by someone who had a good knowledge

MACEDONIA

of the early history of I.M.R.O. and of its current opposing trends. It was designed to exploit the differences within I.M.R.O. and win over the anti-Supremist elements, including the Federalists, and to bring pressure from below to bear upon the I.M.R.O. leadership so as to force it into the arms of the Communists. It showed that the Communists considered that they would have little success if they attempted to set up a Macedonian Communist organization, and that for this reason they were aiming at infiltration of Communists into key posts in the existing Macedonian revolutionary organizations, both I.M.R.O. and the Federalists. And for the same reason their plan was to use the later famous 'united front' or 'popular front' strategy.

On wider issues, the document showed a certain pro-Bulgarian trend, though negatively rather than positively. But to avert serious trouble between the Bulgarian, Yugoslav, and Greek Communist Parties, and presumably also on ideological principle, it plumped for Macedonian autonomy—a slogan which also fitted in with the anti-Supremist trend within I.M.R.O. And it skilfully side-stepped the question whether or not there was such a thing as a separate Slav Macedonian nation; though it is significant that it charged the 'Serbian bourgeoisie' with oppression of the 'Bulgarian', not the 'Macedonian' population. To sum up, it seems fair to conclude that the document was drawn up by a Bulgarian, or Bulgarian Macedonian, Communist, probably without prior consultation of the Yugoslavs or Greeks.

In any case, neither the Yugoslavs nor the Greeks received it with enthusiasm; the Greek Communist Party even refused to publish the document, and sent in a 'reasoned protest' against its issue by the Executive Committee of the Balkan Communist Federation. (See Manuilsky's statement below, p. 60.)

The document had, however, some initial success in its main objective, to win over I.M.R.O. The Vienna negotiations in the spring of 1924 led to the agreement with the three I.M.R.O. leaders, Alexandrov, Protogerov, and the pro-Communist Chaoulev. They, or at least certain of them, signed the declaration on 'The New Orientation of the Macedonian Revolutionary Movement', dated 6 May 1924, which caused so much trouble. And this document bore many marked likenesses to the resolution of the Balkan Communist Federation, quoted above.

The declaration, purporting to issue from the Central Com-

BETWEEN THE TWO WARS

mittee of I.M.R.O., took the form of a 'manifesto to the Macedonian people, to the Macedonian population organized in the Revolution, to Macedonian revolutionaries'.¹ The manifesto said:

Macedonia, in its natural geographical frontiers between the Mesta, the Shar mountains, Rila, the Rhodope range, the Drin, Lake Ochrid, Mount Grammos, the Bistritsa, and the Aegean Sea, covering an area of about 65,000 square kilometres, watered by the Mesta, the Struma, the Vardar, the Drin, and the Bistritsa; endowed with the most varied natural riches and a favourable climate; with its ethnically diverse population of upwards of 2,302,000 persons; with a strategic and economic position, in the middle of the Balkans between the Danube basin, the Aegean Sea, and the Adriatic, has all the rights and conditions necessary for an independent political existence, forming an independent and self-governing State. . .

The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization for thirty years waged an energetic revolutionary struggle for the freedom of Macedonia. This struggle, depending on the one hand on factors of international and Balkan politics, and on the other hand on the ethnic element preponderating in the Organization, has had to face differing tactical problems and has employed diverse methods.

The manifesto recounted the failure of I.M.R.O.'s attempts to invoke the intervention, first of the great Powers, and then of the Balkan States, to secure Macedonia's liberation. It went on:

As long as these States are administered by governments which support the conquering and imperialist policy of the treaties, or in other words so long as these States are not directed by governments who base their internal and foreign policy on the right of the self-determination of the peoples, the Macedonian people cannot expect from them any aid in its liberation.

Deeply aware of this historic fact, I.M.R.O. arrives at the firm and decisive conclusion that in its revolutionary fight for the freedom of Macedonia, *it can only count on the extreme progressive and revolutionary movements of Europe*, fighting against the imperialist policy of their Governments, against the existing peace treaties, for the right of self-determination for their own people and for other peoples.

That is why I.M.R.O. declares that, in the interests of Macedonian liberty, it will give all its support to all those in the Balkans who are fighting against the European policy of conquest and imperialism, realized either openly or through the intermediary of the Balkan Governments. . .

None of the Balkan Governments thinks of the liberation and reunion of the divided parts of Macedonia; none of them thinks or acts on behalf of the right of self-disposal of the Macedonian people in an independent political unit. . . For these reasons I.M.R.O. finds itself

¹ Published in *Fédération Balcanique* (Vienna), 13 July 1924.

MACEDONIA

forced to declare that the policy of all the present Balkan Governments is hostile to the political independent existence of Macedonia. The Organization will fight energetically, by all the methods permitted by the revolution, against the conquering policy of these governments towards Macedonia and the Macedonian people.

To avoid all obscurities and misunderstandings, I.M.R.O. also declares that it cannot disinterest itself in the foreign and internal policy of the Balkan States, especially of Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria, which dominate considerable parts of the Macedonian territory and people.

As regards Greece, I.M.R.O. will fight against every effort for the restoration of the monarchy . . . and against every Government which supports the present partition of Macedonia, denationalizes the population of Greek Macedonia, and forcibly changes the ethnographical character of the area by evicting the indigenous population in order to replace it by settlers from Asia Minor and Thrace.

As regards Yugoslavia, I.M.R.O. will fight determinedly against all the Belgrade Governments, without distinction of party, which support the present Serb policy of arbitrary centralism, the denationalization and oppression not only of the Macedonian people but also of the people of Croatia, Bosnia-Hercegovina, Montenegro, Kossovo, Voivodina, Slovenia, and Dalmatia. . . I.M.R.O. declares that it will stand resolutely, in the internal national struggles of Yugoslavia, at the side of all the oppressed people who are fighting against the Belgrade Governments for a democratic decentralization and for the federal reorganization of Yugoslavia.

As regards Bulgaria, I.M.R.O. declares that in spite of all the sacrifices which the Bulgarian people has made and is ready to make for the independence of Macedonia, the present Bulgarian Government of Tsankov is following, contrary to the interests of its own people, an openly anti-Macedonian and anti-Bulgarian policy, an openly Serbophil policy which not only perpetuates the partition of Macedonia but is also preparing fresh territorial changes at the expense of Macedonia. The Organization warns the peoples of Macedonia, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Thrace that the Belgrade Government, relying on agreements with certain European States for the partition of Croatia, Albania, and Greece, is preparing to extend its conquering policy towards Scutari and Salonika, urging the Sofia Government towards Kavalla and threatening it, in case of opposition, with the occupation of the Bulgarian districts of Pernik and Kustendil.

And it seems that the Tsankov Government has been allured by these imperialist plans, whispered by the sirens of Belgrade. It is seeking to destroy I.M.R.O. and the Macedonian revolutionary movement, which are the most serious obstacles to the realization of its criminal intentions. . .

I.M.R.O. proclaims that the policy of the Tsankov Government is hostile to the Macedonian and Bulgarian peoples and calls on all Macedonians and Bulgarians to start an energetic struggle against this

BETWEEN THE TWO WARS

Government. They should only give their support to a Bulgarian Government which, basing itself on the working masses of town and village, will have no need to use terror . . . and which will be able to give the people the means of fighting the policy of conquest of the neighbouring States without fearing to see these means turned against itself. It is only in the establishment of such a Bulgarian Government that I.M.R.O. sees the necessary guarantee both for the future development of the revolutionary struggle and for the political independence of the Balkan peoples. . .

I.M.R.O. declares that it is fighting and will fight with all the means permitted by the revolution:

(1) For the liberation and the reunion of the separated parts of Macedonia in a fully autonomous and independent political unit, within its natural geographical and ethnic frontiers:

(2) For the democratization of the States bordering on Macedonia and for their union in a Balkan Federation which alone can guarantee the political existence of an independent Macedonia and the independence of the other Balkan peoples. . .

A new Balkan and European war or an international revolutionary civil war for the liberation and the right of free self-determination of the peoples is inevitable. . . I.M.R.O. draws the attention of all Macedonian and Balkan revolutionaries to the fact that, in the fast-approaching struggle, the Balkans can play a still bigger and more decisive role if the revolutionary efforts of all the oppressed Balkan peoples are united and allied under the flag of Macedonian liberty and independence, under the flag of their own liberty and independence, and finally, under the flag of the Balkan Federation. . .

Desiring to give proof that it is directing its activity along this path, I.M.R.O. solemnly declares that it is putting a stop to all actions, all executive measures and all orders against detached Macedonian combatants, groups, organizations, and trends, provided that these base themselves sincerely on the true revolutionary struggle in the spirit of the present manifesto and that they stretch forth their hands to wage the common struggle under the flag of free and independent Macedonia, under the flag of the Balkan Federation. . .

This manifesto was clearly in line with the Balkan Communist Federation's resolution of the previous March, and might well have been drafted by a Communist. As such, it represented a triumph for the Communist attempt to set up a 'united front' with the Macedonian revolutionary organizations. And it was in the flush of this triumph that the Comintern, meeting in the early summer (March-June) of 1924, endorsed and praised the Balkan Communist Federation's resolution.

It was in this sense that the Fifth Comintern Congress passed its resolution on Macedonia and Thrace, which read:

MACEDONIA

1. The Macedonian and Thracian questions have for many decades been the cause of unending bloody conflicts between Turkey, Bulgaria, Greece, and Yugoslavia, and an instrument of imperialist policy in the Balkans. The last imperialist war of 1914-18 in the Balkans, bringing with it economic ruin, political-national enslavement, and a new partition of Macedonia and Thrace between Yugoslavia, Turkey, Greece, and Bulgaria, has made the national question in the Balkans much more acute and deepened national disagreements and hatreds. The partition of Macedonia between Yugoslavia, Greece, and Bulgaria has deepened the desire of the Macedonian people in all parts of their shattered homeland for unification and for the creation of a united independent Macedonia. The same desire for a united and independent Thrace unites the Thracian people, divided into three parts among Greece, Turkey, and Bulgaria.

2. This situation makes the Macedonian and Thracian questions a single and basic revolutionary-national knot, the untying of which can and must be directed by the Balkan Federation of Communist Parties into the channel of proletarian revolutionary development in the Balkans. The Congress notes with satisfaction that the Sixth Conference of the Balkan Communist Federation by and large gave a correct answer to this most important question.

3. The Congress considers the slogans formulated by the Sixth Balkan Communist Federation Conference—'United Independent Macedonia' and 'United Independent Thrace'—wholly correct and truly revolutionary. The slogan of autonomy for the separate parts of Macedonia and Thrace within the frontiers of one or another of the bourgeois States artificially created by the Sèvres and other treaties, must be rejected as opportunist and as promoting agreement between the wealthy sections of the Macedonian and Thracian population and the ruling classes of the respective States, and the further social and national enslavement of the Macedonian and Thracian poor.

4. The Congress at the same time underlines that the revolutionary struggle of the Macedonian and Thracian peoples for their national and social emancipation can be successful only if it is conducted jointly with the revolutionary workers and peasants of each separate Balkan country.

5. The Communist Parties and the Balkan Federation must support to the utmost the national-revolutionary movement of the oppressed nationalities of Macedonia and Thrace for the creation of independent republics.

6. The Balkan Communist Federation is entrusted with the unification of leadership of the activities of the Communist Parties of the separate Balkan countries in regard to national questions, and particularly the Macedonian and Thracian questions.¹

¹ *Piaty Vsemirny Kongress Kominterny*, Stenogr. Otchet, Chast 11 (Prilozhenia), Moscow, Gosizdat, 1925.

This Comintern resolution not only gave its approval to the Balkan Communist Federation's general solution of the Macedonian problem—and thereby indirectly to the I.M.R.O. manifesto—but also, in point 5, approved the Balkan Communist Federation's strategy of the 'united front' with the 'national-revolutionary movement', which could only mean I.M.R.O.

At the same time the Comintern found it necessary to reprove both the Yugoslav and Greek Communist Parties for their recalcitrance in accepting higher ruling on the nationalities question. The Comintern's resolution on Yugoslavia, though it does not specifically mention Macedonia and may have been more concerned with the Croat question, is obviously relevant to the Macedonian question. The resolution of the Fifth Plenum said:

The Yugoslav Communist Party must conduct a resolute and consistent struggle for the right of the oppressed nationalities to self-determination, up to political secession. This means, in the first place, that Communists must fight hard in all areas against the oppression of these nationalities by the Serbian masters. . . . The Communist Party can and must support the various oppressed peoples in their demand for their own local self-administration, their own schools and independent courts, autonomy of provincial administration, etc. At the same time the Party must unfailingly emphasize that these are half-measures and try to extend each separate demand. The basic slogan must be the demand for the formation of a Balkan Federation of Workers' and Peasants' Republics. . . .

The task of the Yugoslav Communist Party is to conduct an independent proletarian policy in the national question and to do so with such energy as to attract the Yugoslav peasant masses into becoming allies of the proletarian revolution. . . . The opinion of Milioković, that the Communist Party must fight equally hard against any nationalism whatever, is not only opportunist, but objectively plays into the hands of Great Serb bourgeois nationalist policy. In their fight Communists must always bear in mind the difference between oppressing and oppressed nationalities. . . .¹

Manuilsky, in a long speech to the Comintern on the national question on 30 June 1924 directly reproved both the Yugoslavs and the Greeks for their attitude over the Macedonian question. He said:

The many mistakes made by the various sections of the Comintern in connexion with this question are due to the fact that many of our

¹ 10 let Kominternu v reshenniakh i tsifrakh, ed. by A. Tivel and M. Kheimo (Moscow, Gosizdat, 1929), p. 201.

MACEDONIA

comrades are not yet rid of social democratic ideology. These mistakes can be said to be of four fundamental types, all of which are survivals of the attitude of some Yugoslav comrades, especially of Comrades Marković and Milioković, who are now in prison. . . He [Comrade Milioković] asserts that in Yugoslavia there are no nations, but only linguistic differentiations. In his pamphlet, *National Question in the Light of Marxism*, and in a number of articles published in the organ of the Yugoslav Communist Party, *Radnik*, Comrade Marković brings forward, as a practical slogan for the Communist Party, the fight for the revision of the constitution, that is to say, he placed the whole question of national self-determination on a constitutional basis.

Very characteristic is Comrade Marković's attitude towards the Macedonian question. You know that Macedonia plays at present, after its partition between Serbs, Greeks, and Bulgarians, the very same role in the Balkans that the Balkans play in Europe. A fierce fight is being waged around Macedonia, and especially around the question of an outlet into the Aegean Sea and the fight for the port of Salonika between the small robbers in the Balkans.

At the same time there is in Macedonia a strong national movement for the re-establishment of an independent State. What is Comrade Marković's attitude to this national movement? In his articles he expressed the opinion that the Macedonian question is not by any means a Balkan but a European problem, which cannot therefore be finally solved before a victory of the European proletariat over the bourgeoisie has been achieved. If the question is put in this way, what will be the result? Only a passive attitude of the Communist Party to one of the most burning questions which is agitating the various Balkan nationalities at present. A careful study of the situation will show you that the origin of this kind of view is to be sought in the Second International. Marković holds the view that the proletariat must accept the bourgeois State such as it has been created by a series of wars and violations. . .

Similar mistakes are made by our Greek comrades in connexion with the Macedonian question. A few months ago, when an armed conflict seemed imminent in the Balkans, the Executive Committee of the Balkan Federation issued a manifesto which called upon the proletariat of the Balkan countries to stand up for Macedonian independence. The Greek Communist Party not only did not publish this manifesto, but even sent a reasoned protest against the issue of such a document by the Executive Committee of the Balkan Federation. . .

I know that in the commission on the national question that will be formed at this Fifth Congress we shall be able to find those practical solutions that will stimulate the national movements in different countries and impart to them a revolutionary character. The time for declarations of a general character has passed; we have now a period for creative revolutionary work in the colonies and among national minorities. If we fulfil these tasks we will have created half the chances

BETWEEN THE TWO WARS

for the success of the international revolution to which we are devoted and which is guarded for the workers of the world by the Communist International.¹

Thus the Bulgarian Communist Party was the only one of the three Balkan Communist Parties directly interested in Macedonia which escaped Comintern displeasure. It is hard not to conclude from this that the Balkan Communist Federation's resolution of March 1924 was in fact Bulgarian-inspired, and that the Bulgarian Communist Party had failed to secure its acceptance by important elements in both the Yugoslav and Greek Parties. In pushing its Macedonian solution, the Bulgarian Communist Party may have had two motives. First, it may have wished to secure I.M.R.O. as an ally for the purposes of its own internal political activities inside Bulgaria, or at least to neutralize one of its most dangerous political opponents. Second, it may well have been infected, perhaps unconsciously, by the Bulgarian nationalist attitude on the Macedonian question.

The Comintern's motives in backing up what was almost certainly the Bulgarian viewpoint against the Yugoslav and Greek Parties can equally be only surmised. But it is clear that the Bulgarian solution of the Macedonian problem fitted in well with the Comintern's overall policy on the nationalities question at that time. And the Comintern may equally have been influenced by the belief, which apparently survived the failure of the rising of September 1923, that the Bulgarian Communist Party was the most efficient and most revolutionary of the three Balkan Communist Parties.

Nevertheless the Yugoslav and Greek Communist Parties did not swallow the Comintern ruling on the Macedonian question easily. The Greek representative, Maximos, answered Manuilsky's strictures on 1 July 1924. He said:

The position of the Greek Party on the Macedonian question is not what Manuilsky says it is. Every national minority finds a defender in us, since the struggle of the national minorities is at the same time a struggle against the dominant class. In Bulgaria the Communists, under the leadership of Blagoev, defended the rights of the Greek minorities. . . For us the Macedonian question exists until the workers and peasants become their own masters. It is true that we sent a letter to the Balkan Federation protesting that in issuing the slogan of Macedonian autonomy it failed to take into consideration the condi-

¹ *I.P.C.*, 4 August 1924.

MACEDONIA

tions of its application to Greece. After the Treaty of Lausanne, all the Turkish inhabitants of Macedonia were obliged to leave, and the Greek bourgeoisie installed 700,000 refugees in their place. The Greek Communist Party opposed and will continue to oppose this violation of the Treaty of Lausanne. We would be glad if the Turkish comrades did so also. But the fact remains that there are 700,000 Greek refugees in Macedonia. The workers and peasants of Greece were therefore not prepared to accept the slogan of the autonomy of Macedonia.¹

Reinforced by the backing of the Comintern, the Balkan Federation, or perhaps one should say its Bulgarian promoters, reasserted its authority at its seventh conference, held very shortly afterwards in Moscow (presumably in July 1924). Georgi Dimitrov, reporting its work, said:

The Conference declared that the position in the Balkans is not only revolutionary, but that the revolutionary crisis is reaching its acutest stage; that Bulgaria stands immediately before a fresh civil war; . . . that the struggle in Croatia, Slavonia, Bosnia, and Macedonia, and especially the fight of the Croatian peasant masses against the hegemony of the Serbian bourgeoisie and against Serbian militarism is developing in the direction of an armed rising; that the national movement of the Macedonian people is again reviving and assuming the form of an armed struggle. . .

The Conference pledged the Communist Parties of the Balkans to co-ordinate their actions and struggle, to render the fullest support to the national revolutionary movements, and to sever them finally from the influence of dependence upon the bourgeoisie and of the imperialists, and to unite them with the general struggle of the working masses against capitalism and imperialism for the rule of the workers and peasants, while at the same time they have to hinder in every possible way all counter-revolutionary intervention against any armed revolts in Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, and anywhere else in the Balkans. . .

The Communist Balkan Conference has also discussed very thoroughly the inner situation and the activity of the individual Communist Parties of the Balkan countries. It condemned in a most decided manner the right and liquidatory deviation of many leaders and groups in these parties, and especially the opportunist standpoint of Comrades Sima Marković and J. Milanović in the Yugoslav Communist Party regarding the national question, which they regard merely as an ordinary constitutional question. The Conference condemned the attempt of the Comrades who had resigned from the Communist Party of Greece to form another Communist Party and

¹ Fifth Comintern Congress, Abridged Report (published by the Communist Party of Great Britain), p. 205.

directed an appeal to all sincere revolutionary elements in Greece to rally to the ranks of the Communist Party of Greece.

The Conference adopted a number of decisions regarding the organizatory and political consolidation of the Communist Parties of the Balkan countries, as well as regarding the practical carrying out of the decisions of the Fifth World Congress of the Comintern in the Balkans.¹

The Balkan Communist Federation therefore not only re-asserted its policy of attempting to win over I.M.R.O., but also repeated in much stronger terms the Comintern's strictures on the Yugoslav and Greek Communist Parties. Yet it must have been within a few days of its seventh conference that Alexandrov and Protogerov repudiated their signatures of the Vienna Manifesto, published on 15 July, and the whole structure of attempted collaboration with I.M.R.O. came tumbling to the ground.

This was of course a very serious blow to the Macedonian policy of the Balkan Communist Federation and the Comintern, who were thrust back on to the defensive. The I.M.R.O. leadership was lost to the Communists; so all that was left to them was to try to drive a wedge between the I.M.R.O. leadership and the 'Macedonian masses', and also between the Tsankov Government and the 'masses'.

Already in August 1924, the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party issued a declaration attacking Tsankov on the Macedonian issue, as well as on other counts. Tsankov, it said, 'is carrying on the old nationalist and conquering policy of the Bulgarian bourgeoisie against Macedonia and Thrace, and thereby forces the people into new and bloody conflicts with neighbouring States, and in particular with Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey'. It did not, however, as yet attack the I.M.R.O. leaders directly.²

But on 30 August Alexandrov was murdered; and his murder was the signal for the assassination of a number of Macedonian Communists and Federalists, at first inside Bulgaria and later abroad. The number included Aleko, local I.M.R.O. chief of the Petrich Department, who had approved the Vienna manifesto, and the Communist, Hadji Dimov. The Communists were therefore forced into an open campaign against the I.M.R.O. leaders whom they had been wooing only four months before.

¹ *I.P.C.*, 7 August 1924.

² *I.P.C.*, August 1924.

MACEDONIA

At the beginning of October 1924, a Communist writer attacked the 'treacherous policy' of Alexandrov and Protogerov. Dissatisfaction with their leadership, the writer said, had forced them to adopt a new policy and sign the Vienna Manifesto; but Tsankov in turn had forced them to repudiate it. The Tsankov Government was instigating conflicts within the Macedonian movement; and the Bulgarian bourgeoisie had always exploited the movement, as for example, through Alexandrov and Protogerov. The writer took no clear stand over Alexandrov's murder, but lamented the fate of Aleko and Hadji Dimov.¹

The Communists were now also careful to clear themselves of any possible connexion with I.M.R.O.'s activities. A statement issued by Kolarov and Dimitrov from Moscow in March 1925 said that the Bulgarian Communist Party was not responsible for the raids carried out by armed bands on the Yugoslav frontier.² They continued to attack the I.M.R.O. leadership and Tsankov for the repeated assassinations: Dimitrov, in Moscow, accused Protogerov of serving the Tsankov Government in carrying out death sentences on Macedonians abroad, for example, on Peter Chaoulev³; a Communist writer accused Tsankov of complicity both in the assassination of Chaoulev and also in that of Panitsa in Vienna.⁴

The failure of the Communist attempt to capture I.M.R.O. did not relieve the Greek Communist Party of the embarrassing dilemma in which it had been placed by the Macedonian ruling of the Comintern and the Balkan Communist Federation. Nor did it exempt the Yugoslav Communist Party from further re-proofs in the Comintern and the Balkan Communist Federation in regard to its nationalities policy.

The Greek Party leaders accepted the ruling on Macedonian autonomy, supported it in their press, and risked their members' lives in its cause. A later review of *Fifteen Years of the Communist Party of Greece* said of this period: 'As a result of the fight waged by the Party for the right of self-determination of the Macedonian and Thracian minorities up to their separation from Greece, hundreds of Party members were imprisoned and exiled or

¹ *J.P.C.*, 2 October 1924.

² *ibid.* 9 March 1925.

³ *ibid.* 12 March 1925. For Chaoulev's earlier career, see pp. 39, 41, 42.

⁴ *ibid.* 14 May 1925. For Panitsa's earlier career, see pp. 40, 41, 43.

prosecuted.¹ But this policy was only put through at the cost of a Party split.

Pouliopoulos, who had become secretary to the Party Central Committee in 1922, continued to oppose Macedonian autonomy in spite of the Comintern ruling. He broke away and started his own newspaper, *The New Course*. (It was presumably he whom the Balkan Communist Federation condemned in its declaration of July 1924.) In the spring of 1927, at the third Congress of the Greek Party, Pouliopoulos was, 'with the aid of the Comintern', subjected to severe criticism. This was intended to 'isolate him within the Party, but by no means to bar his way back to Leninist principles or to activity in their midst'.

Pouliopoulos, however, chose to go his own way. The Communists continued to remember against him two, in particular, of his sayings. One was: 'In my opinion our national policy was quite particularly mistaken; the principle of "united independent Thrace and Macedonia" has been catastrophic for the Greek Labour movement.' The other was: 'It is inadmissible that any international commando should autocratically decree that other Communist Parties should promulgate principles incompatible with the objective conditions of their countries.'²

How many Greek Communists at that time followed Pouliopoulos is not known. But it is certain that then, as since, the 'Macedonian autonomy' ruling must have caused considerable disquiet even among those who remained loyal to the Party leadership.

Meanwhile the Yugoslav Communist Party's attitude on the nationalities question, including the Macedonian issue, had been referred by the Comintern in 1924 to a special Yugoslav Commission. Comrade Semić³ was the Yugoslav representative on the Commission. Stalin, addressing the Commission on 30 March 1925, made a pronouncement which sixteen years later may well have served as the ideological basis for Marshal Tito's handling of the Macedonian question.

As the starting point of the national programme, we must postulate a Soviet revolution in Yugoslavia [Stalin said]. We must postulate that

¹ *I.P.C.*, 15 December 1933.

² *I.P.C.*, 20 October 1927.

³ 'Semić' appears to have been the cover-name of the Yugoslav Communist, Sima Marković, denounced by the Balkan Communist Federation for 'opportunism' in the summer of 1924. See p. 62.

MACEDONIA

without the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the victory of the revolution the national problem cannot be solved at all satisfactorily. . . Further, it is imperative to include in the national programme a special point on the right of nations to self-determination, including the right to secession. . . Finally, the programme should include a special point providing for national territorial autonomy for those nationalities in Yugoslavia which do not find it necessary to secede from that country. Those who think that such a contingency must be excluded are wrong. That is a mistake. Under certain circumstances, as a result of the victory of the Soviet revolution in Yugoslavia, it may well be that on the analogy of what occurred in Russia certain nationalities will not desire to secede. . .

Thus the right of secession must be provided for those nationalities that desire secession, and the right of autonomy for those nationalities that prefer to remain within the Yugoslav State.

To avoid all misunderstanding, I must say that the *right* to secession must not be understood as an *obligation*, as a duty to secede. A nationality may take advantage of this right and secede, but it may also forego the right, and if it does not wish to exercise this right, that is its business, and we cannot but take cognisance of the fact. . . We must not confuse a right with an obligation.¹

During the ensuing discussion of the Yugoslav Commission's report in the Enlarged Executive of the Comintern in April 1925 Kolarov, the Bulgarian, was one of the chief critics of the Yugoslav Party's nationalities policy. Although the Yugoslav representatives seem to have accepted the criticisms, one, Popović, held out.²

Stalin, two months later, returned once again to the subject of 'Semić's' attitude in the Yugoslav Commission. He had been guilty of making the Yugoslav nationalities problem a 'constitutional' problem, that is, of accepting the frontiers of the 'bourgeois' State of Yugoslavia. Stalin, writing in *The Bolshevik* on 30 June 1925, said: 'Comrade Semić is divorcing the national question from the question of the general international situation, and, in consequence, the question of the right of self-determination, that is, of changing the frontiers of Yugoslavia, is virtually for him not a question of actual moment but an academic question'.³

In the light of the later development of Marshal Tito's Macedonian policy, it seems doubtful whether, during the inter-war

¹ J. Stalin, *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question* (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1936), p. 204.

² *I.P.C.*, 28 April 1925.

³ Stalin, *op. cit.* p. 228.

years, the Yugoslav Communist Party ever fully and sincerely accepted Macedonian autonomy in the sense of an independent Macedonia outside Yugoslavia's frontiers. Stalin, in his *Bolshevik* article, seemed decidedly opposed to Yugoslavia's existing frontiers; nevertheless his earlier pronouncement before the Yugoslav Commission, quoted above, gave the Yugoslav Communists an invaluable escape clause. They could recognize that the Macedonians had a *right*, but not a *duty* to secede, from Yugoslavia. When, after the Axis invasion of Yugoslavia in 1941, a fresh crisis arose over Macedonia, they could claim that the Macedonians chose not to exercise this right. And they could quote Stalin in their war-time dispute over Macedonia with the Bulgarian Communists.

After the fiasco of the Vienna Manifesto, the next positive move in the Macedonian struggle was left to Dimiter Vlahov,¹ who had remained in Vienna. Vlahov's exact relations with the Communists at that time were still obscure. Either he was still no more than a benevolent well-wisher; or, more probably, he was already a Party member but had been allotted the role of appearing as a non-member.

In his *Fédération Balcanique*, on 15 July 1925, he went out of his way, in an editorial article headed 'A Manoeuvre', to disclaim any Bolshevik connexion. He set out to answer the question, where did *Fédération Balcanique* get its funds? He replied that, at the time of the agreement with Alexandrov and Protogerov, both I.M.R.O. and the Federalists had subscribed 'important sums' to the journal, which had constituted a 'fund'. This had been supplemented by aid from 'partisans and friends' in Macedonia and also by Macedonian emigrants in the United States.

So why this charge of Bolshevism against us? [Vlahov asked]. Is it because we support the idea of a Balkan Federation? But is this a Bolshevik programme? Is it not a solution recognized by simple democrats? Or is it because in fighting for Balkan Federation, we do not attack the Russia of the Soviets in order to show that we do not envisage a Soviet Federation? This would be a strange demand, and we shall not, in order to please the Balkan satraps, belabour a Power which has solved, in its own country, in a rational and admirable fashion, the question of the minorities . . . and which for this very reason enjoys all our sympathies.

¹ For Vlahov's earlier career, see pp. 40, 41, 42.

MACEDONIA

In the following year, on 1 April 1926, Vlahov struck out and proclaimed the foundation of his 'United I.M.R.O.'. The statutes of the new Organization, and its initial Declaration, were published on that date in the *Fédération Balcanique*. The statutes were:

Article 1. United I.M.R.O. has the task of conquering the liberty and independence of Macedonia in its geographical and economic frontiers and of forming of it an autonomous political unit belonging, as a member with equal rights, to the future Balkan Federation.

Article 2. The free and independent Macedonian State will be established on the basis of the entire equality of national, political, civil, and cultural rights for all the nationalities which inhabit it.

Article 3. To attain this end, United I.M.R.O. will work for:

(a) the formation of an organization of the revolutionary masses embracing the popular masses of the three parts of Macedonia, divided between Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria, and also all the Macedonian emigrants now outside Macedonia's frontiers, and the preparation of these masses for a general popular insurrection.

(b) To unite all the Macedonian popular forces by attracting to its ranks all the groups, organizations, and persons of all social classes without distinction of nationality, citizenship, religion, or sex, who sincerely accept the aim, principles, ideas, and methods of action of United I.M.R.O.

(c) To enter in close relations with all organizations and all national-revolutionary and social-revolutionary parties in the Balkans which support the principle of the self-determination of the peoples and which are ready to collaborate in action for the creation of an independent Macedonian political unit.

(d) In the existing conditions of complete national, political, and economic oppression to which the Macedonian people is today subjected, United I.M.R.O. takes it as its essential task to fight for the conquest of liberty of language and cultural instruction for all the nationalities in Macedonia, for the conquest of political liberties and equality of rights, and to give land to the peasants and broad support to the economically weak classes.

Article 4. The Organization declares itself, given these aims and this task, to be revolutionary in character. It acts conspiratorially. But it does not exclude the legal struggle in all its possible manifestations, according to place and circumstances. The legal struggle will contribute to the broad development of the propaganda and organizational activity of United I.M.R.O., and will strengthen and deepen its ties with the popular masses.

Thus, whatever Vlahov's exact relations with the Communists at that time, the Statute of United I.M.R.O. corresponded closely with the resolution of the Balkan Communist Federation of March 1924.

BETWEEN THE TWO WARS

Vlahov's accompanying 'declaration' recalled that Alexandrov and Protogerov had signed the Manifesto of 6 May 1924, but said they had been forced by the Tsankov Government to repudiate their signatures; and it accused the Tsankov Government, together with Protogerov, of responsibility for the murder of Alexandrov, 'whom they could no longer trust'. The Macedonian masses, however, had accepted the principles of the Vienna Manifesto as a new creed, and the new United I.M.R.O. was based on these principles. United I.M.R.O., the declaration said, would fight against the Governments of Sofia, Belgrade, and Athens, and also against

the leaders of the Bulgaro-Macedonian Fascist organization, Protogerov, Mihailov, Bazhdarov, and Parlichev.

We turn to those Macedonians who continue to lend their moral and material support to the Organization of Protogerov and Mihailov, and say to them: the support which you give this Organization is support given, not to liberate Macedonia, but to enchain it still more. . .

In spite of this appeal, there is no evidence that United I.M.R.O. had any real success in winning over the Macedonian 'popular masses'; and it remained to the end little more than a small *émigré* group based on Vienna, whose chief activity was to propagandize its views in Vlahov's *Fédération Balcanique*. This lack of success must in large measure have been due to the widespread belief, not eradicated by Vlahov's disclaimers, that he was in fact a Communist agent. It was apparently for this reason that he lost the support even of old Federalists such as Philip Athanasov.

At the same time the Balkan Communist Federation was slow to give open support to United I.M.R.O., in spite of the identity of its aims with the Federation's 1924 resolution. In November 1926 when the Enlarged Committee of the Comintern next met, there was only passing mention of the Macedonian question. Kolarov, in a very general speech, merely said: 'Look at the names of a number of Balkan provinces: Albania, Macedonia, eastern and western Thrace, Bessarabia, the Dobrudja, etc. These provinces are certain to be talked of in connexion with the coming World War.' The Yugoslav delegate, Nikolajević, criticized various aspects of Kolarov's speech and pointed out differences between conditions in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, but

MACEDONIA

did not specifically mention Macedonia.¹ It seems probable that the Comintern, aware of the relative ineffectiveness of the nationalities policy which it had proclaimed in 1924, had decided to soft-pedal the subject.

An article on Balkan federation by Georgi Dimitrov, which appeared on 1 December 1927, again omitted specific mention of Macedonia. Dimitrov said:

In the Balkans, just as in Russia, the very complicated national question can only be solved, territorial feuds settled, imperialist pressure overcome, and real peace among the Balkan peoples ensured, by the creation of a federation of Balkan peoples, after their liberation from capitalism. That is why the Balkan proletariat . . . is carrying on its fight for the Balkan Federation, for the Federation of the Balkan Workers' and Peasants' Republics. . .²

(Twenty-one years later Dimitrov was, of course, sternly reproved by the Moscow *Pravda* for advocating Balkan Federation).

It was not until 1929 that the Balkan Communist Federation recovered sufficiently from the 1924 setback over I.M.R.O. to tackle the Macedonian issue again. Then, in the spring, it passed a long resolution developing further the main themes of its 1924 resolution. The 1929 resolution said:

The national revolutionary movement in the Balkans remains one of the main streams of the general revolutionary movement. The Communist Parties of the Balkans stand for the right of self-determination for the oppressed nations up to their separation into independent States. Simultaneously with this they raise the slogan of a Balkan Federation as an alliance of the Workers' and Peasants' Republics of all Balkan countries, including the subjugated territories. With regard to Macedonia, which is divided between Yugoslavia, Greece, and Bulgaria, the Communist Parties raise the slogan of 'independent and united Macedonia'. . .

The Balkan Communist Federation must formulate concretely for the Communist Parties of the Balkans appropriate slogans for the national self-determination of all oppressed nations in the Balkans and connect them with the general slogan of the Balkan Federation of Workers' and Peasants' Republics. These slogans, however, will remain simply words if the Communist Parties of the Balkans do not accord real support to the oppressed nations. . .

The Communists are in duty bound to work in the national revolutionary organizations. Their task in these organizations is to fight against the endeavours of the imperialist States and the Balkan Govern-

¹ *I.P.C.*, 24 November 1926.

² *ibid.* 1 December 1927.

ments to subjugate the national revolutionary movement and convert the national revolutionary organizations into instruments of their policy of conquest. . . The Balkan Communist Federation has the special task of co-ordinating the activity of the Communist Parties of the Balkans in the sphere of the national revolutionary movement, of securing the connexion and co-operation of the Communist Parties of the Balkans with the national revolutionary organizations which, as the Macedonian I.M.R.O., the Dobrudjan revolutionary organization, the Thracian revolutionary organization, the Bessarabian League of Revolutionary Peasants, etc., stand for the co-operation of the oppressed nations with the revolutionary proletariat. . .

Imperialist war will create in the Balkans favourable conditions for unchaining the national revolution in the rear of the ruling bourgeoisie. For the purpose of preventing and rapidly crushing the national revolution, the Balkan Governments will resort to extraordinary measures, of which the most important are: the mobilization of the whole of the enlightened and active part of the oppressed population which is capable of fighting, and its dispersal among the various groups of the army in the whole country, as well as the occupation of the enslaved districts by reliable troops. The inhabitants of many districts (Macedonia, Montenegro, Thrace, Bessarabia, Dobrudja, and others) who have already taken part in a number of national insurrections and have experience in armed struggle, will in the event of mobilization desert in masses and take up the armed fight for their national emancipation, favoured by the mountains which cover the greater part of their districts.

The Communist Parties of the Balkans must take this into consideration and issue at the right time the slogan of partisan fights in the above-mentioned districts in order to unchain national revolutionary insurrections; they must do everything necessary in order to unify the national struggle in the various districts and to link it up and co-ordinate it with the revolutionary struggle of the workers and peasants of all the Balkan countries. The Balkan Communist Federation is faced with the task of establishing connexion and co-operation of the various really revolutionary organizations among themselves as well as between them and the Balkan Communist Parties, under the leadership of the latter and of the Balkan Communist Federation.¹

This resolution is interesting for its early formulation of the theory of partisan warfare on the basis of the 'national revolutionary' struggle. It is also noteworthy that it did not mention Vlahov's United I.M.R.O. by name—though it may have been covered by the phrase 'really revolutionary organizations'—and that it did not attack the existing I.M.R.O. leadership.

Very shortly afterwards, however, at the end of April 1929,

¹ *I.P.C.*, 10 May 1929.

MACEDONIA

the Balkan Communist Federation repaired both these omissions. Incensed by Pavelić's¹ visit to Sofia, on I.M.R.O.'s invitation, the Federation issued a declaration on the 'Croatian-Macedonian Alliance' which strongly denounced the 'Fascist Macedonian organization of Ivan Mihailov' and mildly boosted United I.M.R.O. The declaration said:

The Fascist Macedonian organization in Bulgaria which, on account of its terrible crimes against the fight for freedom of the Macedonian people, is now bankrupt and distracted, hopes through this 'agreement' to raise itself to a certain degree in the eyes of, and to mislead, the disappointed and dissatisfied Macedonian masses, who are tending more in the direction of the real national-revolutionary movement, with the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (United) at its head. . .

It is quite clear that the Macedonian Fascists who keep the Macedonian population of Bulgarian Macedonia under the most cruel of regimes, who have bestially murdered the best Macedonian revolutionaries, who are a tool of the Bulgarian bourgeoisie for the capture of Macedonia and act like bands of murderers against the workers and peasants who fight so heroically against the Fascist dictatorship in Bulgaria; it is clear that they cannot take the lead in the fight for the liberation of the Macedonians and Croats from the yoke of the pan-Servian military-Fascist dictatorship.

The Balkan Communist Federation calls upon the Communists of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, as also of the whole Balkans, who are in the front ranks of the fight against national suppression, against the military-Fascist dictatorship in Bulgaria . . . who are fighting for the national freedom of the Macedonians, Croats, Slovenes, Montenegrins, Albanians, Dobrudjans, Thracians, and for their unification—with the other Balkan peoples—in the Balkan Federation of Workers' and Peasants' Republics, to be on their guard and not to permit the national-revolutionary movement to be misused for foreign imperialist and fascist purposes.²

At this point the link between Vlahov and the Communists thus became open and unconcealed. Five years later Vlahov was writing in Communist publications as a leading spokesman not only on Macedonian questions but also on wider Balkan issues. In June 1934 he commented on the Georgiev-Velchev coup in Bulgaria, which placed him in something of a dilemma. On the one hand he attacked the Georgiev Government as a 'Military-Fascist Dictatorship', which had 'dissolved all political parties,

¹ For Pavelić and his relations with Mihailov, see also pp. 27 and 44.

² *I.P.C.*, 24 May 1929.

organizations, and associations'. On the other hand he admitted that its measures against the 'Macedonian Fascists' under Mihailov, who were 'the tools of Italian imperialism', had 'aroused great discontent in Italian-German Fascist circles'.¹

On the occasion of King Alexander's murder, Vlahov also strongly attacked Ivan Mihailov, and said:

The overwhelming majority of the Macedonian people is convinced that its freedom can only be won in mass action in concert with the other victims of oppression and exploitation in Yugoslavia, Greece, and Bulgaria, the three countries which oppress Macedonia, and with the victims of exploitation and oppression all over the world. The masses in Macedonia are therefore rallying more and more round their real organization, United I.M.R.O., which is working for the overthrow of oppression by means of a mass insurrection, for the right of self-determination for the Macedonian people, for the secession of Macedonia, and for the establishment of an independent republic of the working people.²

At the same time, Vlahov naturally had to condemn the rapprochement between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia brought about by the Georgiev Government. 'The working masses of Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and the other Balkan countries', Vlahov wrote, 'can expect from this rapprochement as well as from the Balkan Entente only a closer tightening of their chains. Only the victory of the revolution can free the Balkan peoples.'³

The Balkan Communist Parties had in fact consistently opposed all attempts at collaboration between the Balkan 'bourgeois' Governments, presumably because they tended to perpetuate the *status quo* and the existing frontiers. The Greek Communist Party denounced the Greek-Yugoslav Pact of 17 March 1929 and the Greek-Turkish Convention of January 1931. When the Balkan Pact was concluded in February 1934, the Central Committees of the Communist Parties of Roumania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey issued a joint declaration attacking it:

The 'Balkan Pact' is in reality one of the episodes in the feverish re-grouping of imperialist forces throughout the capitalist world, re-groupings which mark the increased preparation for military clashes. . .

The Balkan Pact, in trying to make permanent the Versailles [*sic*]

¹ *I.P.C.*, 29 June 1934.

² *ibid.* 3 November 1934.

³ *ibid.* 17 November 1934.

MACEDONIA

frontiers in the Balkans, though they had torn into pieces the living bodies of a number of nations, violently forcing them into the artificial boundaries of the imperialist Balkan States, submitting them to a regime of fierce national oppression and increased exploitation, is a challenge to all these nationalities which are struggling for freedom. Dobrudja, Bukovina, Transylvania, Croatia, and Slovenia, Macedonia and Thrace, which remained in the hands of their oppressors, have become the victims of the false peace, the preservation of which is solemnly promised by the Balkan Pact.¹

Thus up till 1934, Communist policy in the Balkans, and over the Macedonian question, was strongly revisionist. There are negative indications that by the following year, in view of the rise of Nazi Germany as the great revisionist Power, and also as the great anti-Communist Power, this policy was quietly placed in cold storage. As regards Macedonia, little was heard of Vlahov after 1934.

It is also interesting that there was little trace of the Balkan Communist Federation itself after 1930, when it issued an appeal for funds to the 'Working Emigrants from the Balkans in Europe, America, and Australia'. (Although there are a good many Macedonian emigrants in the United States, the appeal made no mention of Macedonia).²

At its 1929 conference, the Federation had made what was perhaps a last attempt to enforce discipline, through the Comintern, on the member parties—that is, probably, the Greek and Yugoslav Parties. It declared that the decisions of the Executive Bureau of the Balkan Communist Federation on Balkan questions were binding on all the Communist Parties of the Balkans. In case of differences between the Executive Bureau and the individual Communist Parties, the Enlarged Committee of the Comintern was to decide the matter.³ This was, of course, the type of procedure used in August 1941 to settle the dispute between the Yugoslav and Bulgarian Communist Parties over Macedonia, when the Comintern was called in to arbitrate. There seems no available evidence that it was used in the years following 1929; and it seems likely that the influence of the Balkan Communist Federation was then already waning, and that the Federation itself ceased to function sometime between 1930 and 1935.

¹ *J.P.C.*, 4 May 1934.

² *ibid.* 23 January 1930.

³ *ibid.* 17 May 1929.

BETWEEN THE TWO WARS

When the seventh World Congress of the Comintern met in the late summer of 1935 it was no longer, as in 1924, concerned with the revolutionary possibilities of the nationalities question, including Macedonia. It was preoccupied with the rise of Nazi Germany. Its leading spirit was Dimitrov who appeared, not in the role of a Balkan revolutionary, but as the hero of the Reichstag Fire Trial and the promoter of the strategy of the 'United Front' between the Communists and Social Democrats, or, in eastern Europe, between the Communists and the peasant parties, against German or other forms of Fascism. The emphasis of the Congress was on anti-Fascism and the preservation of world peace, not on social or national revolution. There is no evidence that the Macedonian problem, as such, was raised.

An indication of this change of emphasis was given by the Bulgarian delegate, Iskrov, who said:

The Communist Party of Bulgaria has stated and still declares that the Neuilly Treaty which was forced upon Bulgaria and which destroyed the national independence of Macedonia, Thrace, and Dobrudja, the burden of which the bourgeoisie placed upon the shoulders of the toiling masses, must be absolutely and completely destroyed. The Communist Party of Bulgaria, however, determinedly rejects war as a means of liquidating the Neuilly Treaty . . . Not war but peace—the struggle against Fascism and war, the struggle for equal rights and national self-determination including the secession of all the enslaved nationalities in the Balkan countries . . . that is the path to the complete liquidation of the Neuilly Treaty and all the consequences of the World War, the path to averting a new Balkan and world imperialist war. . .¹

The Greek Communist Party was quick to take advantage of this shift in Comintern policy. At its sixth Party Congress, at the end of 1935, it declared the policy of a common front with the Agrarian groups in Greece, and also 'laid down new lines for the national policy'. The Party declared:

At the time of the enforced dismemberment of Macedonia and Thrace, the main slogan of the Communist Parties of the Balkans was for a 'united and indivisible Macedonia and Thrace', but since the defeat of Greece in Asia Minor, and since the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey, the Greek bourgeoisie has settled Greeks in Macedonia, and now the Greek population predominates there. In accordance with the principle of the Marxist-Leninist nationalities policy, and with the decision of the Seventh World Congress of the

¹ *I.P.C.*, 11 January 1936.

MACEDONIA

Comintern, the Party Congress therefore established that the slogan of a 'united and indivisible Macedonia and Thrace' no longer corresponds with the accomplishment of the aim of winning over the masses of the Greek people and of the national minorities. The Party Congress emphasized that the ultimate aim of the Party is the right of self-determination of the oppressed peoples, an aim which will be attained with the establishment of the Soviet power in the Balkans; under the present circumstances the Party must fight for the 'complete equality of rights of the national minorities'.¹

The Greek Communist Party therefore managed to free itself of the Macedonian millstone for about eight years, until the rise of the Macedonian Liberation Front in northern Greece in the Second World War. When it was again faced with the Macedonian problem in an acute form, at the beginning of 1949, it took refuge in a policy very similar to that of the 1935 declaration.

The real attitude of the Yugoslav Communist Party on the Macedonian question in the nineteen-thirties is not clear. But it seems likely enough that Tito² was already working out his solution of the Yugoslav nationalities problem on the basis of a federation of six republics, including Macedonia—a federation which would be within Yugoslavia's existing frontiers but which might be extended to a South Slav union embracing Bulgaria. Presumably at one time Tito must have accepted the Comintern-Vlahov solution of an 'independent Macedonia' in a Balkan Federation³; but by 1941 he had certainly moved far away from it, and in fact by the end of 1943 he had secured Vlahov's adherence to his own views.

Thus the Axis invasion of the Balkans in 1941 found Communist policy on the Macedonian question unsettled. The Greeks, and probably also the Yugoslavs, had remained unreconciled to the 'Independent Macedonia' formula; and the Bulgarian Communists were not sufficiently clear in their attitude to resist

¹ I.P.C., 25 January 1936.

² He became Secretary-General of the Yugoslav Communist Party in 1937.

³ It is just possible that Tito himself may have contributed to the first issue of Vlahov's *Fédération Balcanique*, issued on 15 July 1924. This contained an article entitled 'The Salvation of the Balkans Lies in Federation', signed 'M. Walter'. It is known that one of Tito's earlier *noms de guerre* was Walter or Valter, so he may conceivably have been the writer. The article discussed various forms of federation, including the United States, the U.S.S.R., and Switzerland, and envisaged a Balkan Federation including 'Turkey, Bulgaria, Serbia and Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Greece, Albania, etc. . .'. The ascription of this article to Tito is, however, purely a matter of speculation.

the temptation of exploiting the Bulgarian occupation of Macedonia.

The great weakness of Communist policy on Macedonia between 1920 and 1935 seems to have been that it was based on an abstract theory—wedded, in 1924, with unsuccessful opportunism—rather than on hard facts. In theory, the Bulgarian and Moscow Communists, at least, believed that the 'Independent Macedonia' formula had the greatest revolutionary possibilities of any. But they were not strong enough in Macedonia itself to act on their own; and so they became involved in the fiasco of their attempt to work through I.M.R.O., from which they never really recovered.

There was also a serious contradiction between their theory and their organization. They opposed the Balkan frontiers created by the 1920 Peace Treaties; but the Balkan Communist Parties were created, and continued to be organized, on the territorial basis of these frontiers. No attempt seems to have been made to create an independent Macedonian Communist organization to fight for Independent Macedonia—unless Vlahov's United I.M.R.O. is to be regarded as an unsuccessful substitute.

When, on the rise of Nazi Germany as an aggressive revisionist Power, Russia switched to opposition to revisionism, this contradiction temporarily ceased to matter. But when the Axis invasion wiped out existing Balkan frontiers in 1941, it led to confusion and conflict between the Balkan Communist Parties. And this conflict rapidly revived the old suspicion, which the Greeks and Yugoslavs had clearly harboured in the nineteen-twenties, that the 'Independent Macedonia' solution was a cloak for latent nationalist aspirations within the Bulgarian Communist Party—aspirations which in the twenties had received the backing of Moscow.

III

MACEDONIA, 1941-9

THE AXIS OCCUPATION OF MACEDONIA, 1941-4

WHEN the Axis Powers invaded Yugoslavia in April 1941, Macedonia was cut off by German columns operating from Bulgarian bases, and occupied within a few days. Bulgarian troops occupied the whole of Yugoslav Macedonia except the Upper Vardar above Skoplje, and except the north-western district round Tetovo, Gostivar, and Kicevo, which was allotted to Italian-occupied Albania, together with the Kossovo-Metohija area. On the conquest of Greece a few weeks later, the Bulgarians occupied Greek eastern Macedonia, except for the Salonika area, and a small part of western Macedonia. The rest of Greek western Macedonia came under Italian occupation until Italy's collapse in 1943. The Salonika area was occupied by the Germans and later became the headquarters of General Loehr, the German Commander South-East.

The Germans did not allow the Bulgarians formally to annex the parts of Macedonia which they had occupied. The German paper, *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, on 16 January 1943, said: 'Although the Aegean provinces and northern Macedonia (which since 1913 has belonged to Yugoslavia) were placed under Bulgarian administration . . . any definitive ruling was left for the future.' The Bulgarian Government, however, appeared to act on the assumption that Yugoslav Macedonia was now part of Bulgaria; and they sent Bulgarian settlers to Greek Macedonia to replace Greeks who had been deported. They also—or so they claimed after the war—expended money on public works in Greek Macedonia, including the southerly extension of the railway from Sofia to the old frontier at Kula, which presumably they would not have done if they had not regarded their possession as lasting.

In 1943 there were minor changes in the north-western limits of Bulgaria's occupation of Macedonia. Under an Italian-Bulgarian agreement of 30 March 1943, the village of Pestani, south of Ochrid, was transferred from Italian to Bulgarian

occupation. On the collapse of Italy in September 1943, the Bulgarians also occupied the southern tip of the Ochrid district, while German troops occupied Gostivar and Kicevo.¹ At the same time the Germans took over Greek western Macedonia from the defaulting Italians.

Yugoslav Macedonia was divided by the Bulgarian occupiers into the Skoplje and Bitolj provinces. Bulgarian officials were sent in to administer these provinces, but aroused discontent: the Bulgarian press even criticized their tactlessness, and the Ministry of the Interior issued a warning that those who behaved as though they were in a foreign country would be punished.

Bulgarian elementary and secondary schools were set up, seventeen in the first year of the occupation, and by the end eight hundred. Six hundred teachers were trained at special courses in Bulgaria. Teachers were obliged to do at least one year's service in the 'New Lands', while Bulgarian priests had to spend at least four months in 'liberated territory'. A national theatre, library and museum were opened in Skoplje, and in December 1943 a 'King Boris University' was instituted there.

In July 1942 a law of citizenship was passed, by which all inhabitants were held to have acquired Bulgarian nationality on the occupation, except, theoretically, those who chose to opt for their former nationality. If they chose the latter, they had to emigrate. Many Serbs in fact fled to Serbia.

In September 1943 the Bulgarian Government detached certain eastern areas of the new 'Skoplje Province', including Carevo, Selo and Berovo, and united them with three districts of Sofia Province and two districts of Plovdiv Province to form a new province with its centre at Gorna Djumaja—one of the chief towns of Bulgarian Macedonia.²

In November 1943 the Bulgarian Minister of Justice, Dr Konstantin Partov, was appointed 'Commissioner for the New Lands'. He had the task of bringing the administrative system in the New Lands into line with that of Bulgaria proper as quickly as possible. In March 1944 Partov announced that elections would be held in Macedonia for the Bulgarian Parliament; but this was never in fact carried out.³

¹ *Review of the Foreign Press*, No. 218, 29 August 1944.

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

MACEDONIA

The population of Yugoslav Macedonia at first put up no resistance to the Bulgarian occupation, and many probably welcomed it. In return, the Bulgarian occupation authorities adopted a relatively mild policy. But the population seems gradually to have become disillusioned with Bulgarian occupation, perhaps because of the overbearing nationalism of the average Bulgarian officer or official.

From the end of 1943 onwards the Macedonian partisans, under Marshal Tito's authority, started serious armed activity; the Bulgarian occupation forces therefore began to take reprisals and harsh retaliatory measures, including the gutting of villages suspected of aiding the partisans. But in 1944 Bulgarian troops began to desert to the partisans, and the Hristo Botev partisan battalion was formed largely of deserters. When in September 1944 Bulgaria changed sides and the Bulgarian army, under Marshal Tolbukhin's supreme command, received the order to evict the Germans from Macedonia, or at least to speed their withdrawal northwards from Greece, it was possible for them to work with the Macedonian partisans without disastrous friction. There was, however, a good deal of mistrust and rivalry between the two forces, as was shown by the wide discrepancies and conflicting claims of successes in the Bulgarian and Yugoslav communiqués in the early weeks of the joint effort.

In so far as it is possible to generalize, it seems that the Bulgarian occupation of 1941-4 was sufficiently unpleasant to disillusion most of the population of Yugoslav Macedonia about the advantages of belonging to Bulgaria, but that it still left a large enough sediment of pro-Bulgarian or anti-Yugoslav feeling to make difficulties for Marshal Tito in the post-war Federal Yugoslavia.

With the Greeks, the story was different. The Italian occupation of western Macedonia, which was probably very thinly spread, was quickly forgotten. The German occupation of Salonika was remembered chiefly by the Jews: nearly all the large Jewish population was deported to concentration camps in Germany, where only those who were lucky enough to be able to claim the possession of Spanish passports survived to return home. But the Bulgarian occupation strengthened and embittered the old Greek hatred of the Bulgars.

The Bulgarian occupation forces undoubtedly behaved much

more ruthlessly in Greek eastern Macedonia, where there was only a very small Slav population, than in Yugoslav Macedonia. One British observer states that in the early months of the occupation, 'the Bulgars were exterminating the Greek population of the north-east provinces'¹; and that at the end of 1942 they were 'consolidating the Bulgarization of eastern Macedonia and western Thrace by confiscating the land of those Greeks who fled, and conscripting or deporting as hostages those who stayed'.² The Greeks also claimed later with justification that the Bulgarians wrought great material destruction before their withdrawal in 1944. The Fatherland Front Bulgarian Government, after Bulgaria's change of sides in 1944, denied these charges.

After the Italian collapse in 1943, the Germans allowed the Bulgarians to intervene to a limited extent in Greek western Macedonia, which until then had been outside their sphere of activity. Bulgarian officers attached to German Headquarters in Salonika had the job of trying to organize the Macedonian Slav villagers into local home-guard units, usually called *Ochrana*, to defend their villages against the Greek Communist-led partisans (E.L.A.S.) and the Macedonian Slav partisans, organized in the 'Slav National Liberation Front' (S.N.O.F.) and allied with the Greek partisans. The Germans also seem to have permitted a certain amount of pro-Bulgarian propaganda in western Macedonia, presumably to draw the sympathies of the Macedonian Slavs away from Marshal Tito's National Liberation movement over the border in Yugoslavia; but these efforts seem to have had little success.

Greek suspicion and anger were particularly aroused by the close links believed to exist between the Bulgarian occupation authorities, the Greek Communist Party or E.L.A.S., and the Bulgarian Communist partisans operating over the border in Greek territory. A man named Radev or Rhodhopoulos, said to be 'a Greek by birth, a Bulgar by naturalization, and an international Communist by persuasion', was believed to act as liaison between the three.³ Radev, it is said, appeared as a partisan Commissar one day and a Bulgarian regular army colonel the next, and so when Bulgaria changed sides in September 1944, facilitated

¹ C. M. Woodhouse, *The Apple of Discord* (London, Hutchinson, 1948), p. 123.

² *ibid.* p. 129.

³ *ibid.* p. 91.

MACEDONIA

the change of sides of the Bulgarian forces in Greek territory and their rapid absorption of the Bulgarian Communist partisans.¹

The Greeks also believed that the Greek Communists had made an agreement with the Bulgarian occupation authorities by which the administration of Macedonia was to be left in the hands of E.A.M. and S.N.O.F. when the Bulgarians and Germans withdrew, and that in return the Greek Communists agreed to Macedonian autonomy within a Slav federation. This agreement was supposed to have been embodied in a document signed by a Greek Communist and a Bulgarian regular officer on Mount Kaimaxillar in January 1944. The document is, however, of doubtful authenticity.²

The only Greek nationalist resistance group in Greek eastern Macedonia was led by Andon Tsaous, who aimed to preserve it, and also Thrace, for Greece and so was opposed to Bulgarians, Germans, and Greek Communists alike. He started action towards the end of 1943, and was supported by the British.³

When, at the beginning of September 1944, Bulgaria changed sides and the Communist-led Fatherland Front came to power, the situation in Greek eastern Macedonia was extremely confused. The Bulgarians wanted their forces to remain there to fight the Germans on their retreat northwards, or at least to defend the line of the River Struma against any German attempt to penetrate to the east of it. They could claim that Andon Tsaous was not strong enough to achieve this alone. The new Bulgarian War Minister, the non-Communist Damian Velchev,⁴ invited a representative of the Anglo-American Military Mission in Greece to go to Sofia. It was agreed that the Bulgarians should support Andon Tsaous with heavy weapons. The Greek Communists confined themselves to attacking both the Allied Military Mission and Andon Tsaous—rather surprisingly, in view of their own earlier attitude—for collaborating with the Bulgarians. But by the end of October the Germans had withdrawn and an E.L.A.S. army corps had occupied Salonika.⁵

The main aim of the British Government had all along been

¹ Woodhouse, *op. cit.* p. 208.

² *ibid.* p. 297.

³ *ibid.* p. 91.

⁴ See pp. 28, 72. Kimon Georgiev was Prime Minister in the first Fatherland Front Government formed on 9 September 1944.

⁵ Woodhouse, *op. cit.* p. 208.

to secure the withdrawal of the Bulgarians from Greek territory, and they refused to conclude an armistice until this had been achieved. Russia also brought pressure to bear on Bulgaria, and the last Bulgarian troops left on 25 October. Radev went to Sofia.¹ The Bulgarian armistice was signed on 28 October. By the end of December 1944, E.L.A.S. had eliminated the remains of Andon Tsaous's forces.²

Although the Greeks were relieved by the belated Bulgarian withdrawal, they were left with an overpowering hatred of all Bulgars, whether pro-German or Communist. In fact the average Greek probably detested and feared the Bulgarian Communists, who represented the great Red Slav menace to Greece from the north, even more than he had hated their predecessors.

The Bulgarian occupation of part of Greek Macedonia therefore left the Greek population more violently opposed than before to the idea of a 'United Macedonia'; and the Bulgarians had lost their influence over the Slavs of Greek western Macedonia to the Yugoslavs.

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE YUGOSLAV AND BULGARIAN COMMUNIST PARTIES

From early 1941 onwards the Yugoslav and Bulgarian Communist Parties were at loggerheads over Macedonia, apart from a few months of uneasy agreement following the Bled Agreement of August 1947. The Yugoslav Party started on the defensive and gradually moved over to the offensive. The Bulgarian Party started on the offensive and was gradually pushed back on to the defensive. Tito's minimum objective was to retain Yugoslav Macedonia within the frontiers of Yugoslavia. His maximum objective was to bring about the union of Bulgarian Macedonia, and possibly also part of Greek Macedonia, with Yugoslav Macedonia, under his own aegis. The Bulgarian Communist Party's maximum objective was to create an independent Greater Macedonia closely linked with Bulgaria or, perhaps, quite simply to annex Yugoslav Macedonia. Its minimum objective was to keep Bulgarian Macedonia out of Tito's hands, and inside Bulgarian frontiers.

¹ Woodhouse, *op. cit.* p. 209.

² *ibid.* p. 219.

MACEDONIA

There was also a parallel war-time dispute between the two Parties over methods of resistance to the Axis. It was chiefly Tito's whole-hearted adoption of the policy of armed resistance and partisan warfare that won him Moscow's support on the Macedonian question. This support seems to have been maintained fairly consistently until the break between Tito and the Cominform in June 1948. At that point Moscow appears to have reverted to its more traditional policy of support for Bulgaria.

The Yugoslav Communist leaders were suspicious of the Bulgarian Party's intentions even before the Axis invasion of Yugoslavia.¹ They believed that when the Soviet representative, Sobolev, visited Sofia at the end of 1940 to propose a mutual aid pact, the Bulgarian Communist Party had conducted a campaign for the pact, promising that Bulgaria would thereby gain an outlet to the Aegean at Kavalla, and thus part of Greek Macedonia.² In the Spring of 1941 a leading Bulgarian Communist, Todor Pavlov (from 1944-6 Regent of Bulgaria), had written an open letter denying that there was a Macedonian nation and saying that the Macedonians throughout their history had always felt themselves Bulgarians. The reply to this letter, made by another leading Bulgarian Communist, Traicho Kostov, was regarded by the Yugoslavs as unsatisfactory.³

The Axis invasion also found the Yugoslav Communist Party's regional organization in Macedonia in an unsatisfactory state. The central leaders mistrusted the local leader, Sharlo Shatorov. He was obviously of Bulgarian Macedonian origin. He is said to have come to Yugoslav Macedonia just before the war, to have taken up the pose of an old and experienced revolutionary, assumed a strongly anti-Serb attitude, and refused to accept the directives of the Central Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party. When the Yugoslav Party held its fifth Regional Conference in Zagreb in October 1940, Sharlo asked the Party to

¹ The chief source for the dispute between the Yugoslav and Bulgarian parties is a book published in Belgrade in 1948, after the Cominform dispute, by Lazar Mojsov, *The Bulgarian Workers Party (Communist) and the Macedonian National Question* (Belgrade, Borba, 1948), hereinafter referred to as Mojsov. Other Yugoslav sources are speeches made after the Cominform dispute by Tito, Vukmanović (Tempo), Ranković, Nesković, and Pijade. Bulgarian sources are considerably fewer and consist mainly of speeches by Dimitrov, Madolev, and Delev. The following account is thus inevitably written mainly from the Yugoslav viewpoint.

² Mojsov, p. 58.

³ *ibid.* p. 72.

back his demand that all Serb colonists should be evicted from Macedonia and took what was described as a 'national-chauvinist stand', which was strongly criticized. In revenge, Sharlo is said to have sabotaged the Conference's decisions on the local strengthening of the Party organization. When, on the eve of the Axis invasion, the Party called for demonstrations against the Tsvetković Government's adherence to the Tripartite Pact, Sharlo sabotaged this appeal. Demonstrations were, however, organized in Skoplje.¹

When the Axis forces invaded Yugoslavia on 6 April 1941, the Yugoslav Communist Party issued an appeal calling on the peoples of Yugoslavia to prepare for armed struggle against the occupier and to maintain brotherhood and unity. The Party refused to recognize the dismemberment of Yugoslavia. Sharlo ignored this appeal. More important, the Bulgarian Communist Party decided to grasp the opportunity offered by the Bulgarian occupation of most of Yugoslav Macedonia. It set up a 'Commission for the unification of the Party organization in Vardar Macedonia', under Mitko Zaphirovski; and Anton Jugov, member of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Party, tried to establish contact with the Macedonian Regional Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party. The Bulgarian Party also worked out the convenient theory of 'one territory—one party', meaning that since Yugoslav Macedonia had come under Bulgarian occupation, the Bulgarian Communist Party had the right to take over the local Party organization as well.²

Sharlo played right into the hands of the Bulgarian Party. At the end of April he went to Sofia, partly for the personal purpose of obtaining an amnesty and 'legitimizing' himself. (He was presumably under sentence by a Bulgarian court.) Before leaving Yugoslav Macedonia Sharlo, as Secretary, had already dissolved the existing Regional Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party.³ On arrival in Sofia, he proclaimed his adherence to the Bulgarian Communist Party.⁴ He appears to have been welcomed. The Bulgarian Party, in a letter to the Yugoslav Party's Central Committee (possibly at a slightly later date) justified its attitude by the 'practical reason' that leadership was easier from Sofia,

¹ Mojsov, p. 92.

² *ibid.* pp. 76-7.

³ Lazar Kolishevski, speech in Skoplje, 21 December 1948.

⁴ *ibid.*

MACEDONIA

since Macedonia had become a component part of Bulgaria.¹

The Yugoslav Party was not prepared to accept this situation, or to let any part of its regional organization secede. At a meeting of the Central Committee in Belgrade in May 1941, it declared its determination to maintain the unity of the working classes of all the peoples of Yugoslavia and the unity of the Party. All party organizations throughout Yugoslavia, 'independently of the barriers and barbed wire set up by the occupiers between the different parts of Yugoslavia', were to keep uninterrupted contact with the Central Committee and obey its decisions.² Sharlo, in spite of repeated summons, refused to attend this meeting.³

At this stage the Yugoslav Party was chiefly concerned with getting people all over the country to conceal their arms from the occupying authorities. Sharlo returned to Skoplje, presumably with the mandate of the Bulgarian Party, some time in May. He refused to adopt the Yugoslav policy on the arms question, on the grounds that concealment would be a provocation to the occupier. Three months later, in August 1941, the Yugoslav Party's Central Committee sent a letter to Party members in Macedonia saying: 'He (Sharlo) gave a directive to surrender arms to the enemy, thus leaving the people empty-handed and betraying their interests. Why have you no arms today? Because you surrendered them instead of keeping them and waging the struggle, like all the peoples of Yugoslavia, against the hated oppressor'.⁴

At the end of May the Yugoslav Party made a positive move to save the situation. The Central Committee sent Lazar Koliševski, a young Yugoslav Macedonian, to Skoplje, to expose Sharlo and prepare for a 'national uprising'. Koliševski took with him the appeal issued by the Central Committee after its Belgrade meeting earlier in the same month, calling on the peoples of Yugoslavia to 'prepare for the struggle for freedom'. Sharlo refused to disseminate the appeal in Macedonia.⁵ For the moment, there was deadlock.

On 22 June Germany attacked Soviet Russia. Tito acted im-

¹ Svetozar Vukmanović, speech to Fifth Congress of Yugoslav Communist Party, 23 July 1948.

² Mojsov, p. 56.

³ *ibid.* p. 96.

⁴ *ibid.* p. 96.

⁵ *ibid.* p. 97.

mediately. The Yugoslav Party's Central Committee at once addressed a letter to the 'enslaved peoples of Yugoslavia': 'Now the hour has struck for the struggle for your liberation from the Fascist oppressor. . . The struggle of the Soviet Union is your struggle. . . Your struggle is in the fighting ranks of the working class.'¹ Three days later, Tito, in the name of the Central Committee, sent a special letter to the Macedonian Regional Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party (which Sharlo had nominally dissolved), denouncing Sharlo. The letter said: 'The behaviour of the old Bulgar [i.e. Sharlo] . . . is not only anti-Party, but also counter-revolutionary.' After enumerating his sins, the letter said that the Yugoslav Party's Central Committee relieved him of his duties as member of the Regional Committee for Macedonia and excluded him from the Party. Finally, the letter called on the Macedonians to carry out universal sabotage and immediately to start organizing partisan detachments, 'because the struggle of the U.S.S.R. is our struggle'.²

Sharlo refused to take this lying down. On 2 July he issued his own leaflet, headed 'To the Macedonian people, on guard'. In this he declared that the Macedonians must give nothing to the German and the Bulgarian Fascists. 'Full boycott! There must be no war against the Red Army; you must surrender and go over to the side of the Red Army! Long live the great and glorious U.S.S.R.! Long live free Soviet Macedonia!' The leaflet was signed 'The Regional Committee of the Workers Party of Macedonia'.³ Thus Sharlo omitted any reference to the Yugoslav Party, and adopted the term 'Workers' Party' which was used by the Bulgarian Communist Party.

This leaflet was anathema to the Yugoslav leaders for two reasons. First, it did not call for armed struggle, but only 'boycott' and surrender to the Red Army. Next, it used the slogan 'free Soviet Macedonia', a conception presumably unrelated to Yugoslavia and akin to the old Comintern line of 1924.

Tito took the bull by the horns. Some time in July, he sent a letter to the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Party, complaining strongly of its attempt to get control of the Party organization in Yugoslav Macedonia and of its support of Sharlo,

¹ Mojsov, p. 99.

² *ibid.* p. 105.

³ *ibid.* pp. 101, 103.

MACEDONIA

particularly following his refusal to attend the Belgrade meeting in May.¹ It may have been in reply to this that the Bulgarian Central Committee sent a letter saying that in Bulgaria, and therefore also in Yugoslav Macedonia, conditions for an armed struggle did not exist, since the old State apparatus was not broken, as in Yugoslavia, and since the Germans had come as allies, not as occupiers.² In any case, the Bulgarian Party obviously refused to discard Sharlo.

At this point, one or other Party, more probably the Yugoslav, assuming that they had means of access, appealed to the Comintern for a ruling. In August 1941, the Comintern replied, condemning (according to the Yugoslav account) the attempts of the Bulgarian Party to bring the Party organization in Macedonia under its own leadership. The Comintern decision was that the fundamental task was the armed struggle and that the chief method of the struggle was the partisan movement. 'This movement', it said, 'is now developing on Yugoslav territory under the leadership of the Yugoslav Communist Party'. It added that it was particularly important that the uprising of the popular masses should develop in Macedonia to the greatest possible extent. It was therefore obvious, said the Comintern, that for this end the Yugoslav and Bulgarian Communist Parties must have a clear attitude on the self-determination of the Macedonian people, and that the Bulgarian Party must help the development of the national liberation struggle of Yugoslavia.³

Although the Comintern ruling was by no means unequivocal on the long-term question of Macedonia, it did give Tito the first round, won because he had adopted the Stalinist policy of the partisan war. The Bulgarian Party declared that it accepted the ruling 'without reserves'. This, however, meant only that, as it stated in a letter to the Yugoslav Central Committee, it would send a plenipotentiary to the Party Regional Committee for Macedonia (instead of trying to assimilate the Yugoslav Macedonian organization). It continued to defend Sharlo. Its letter said: 'We agree that Comrade "Old" (Sharlo) committed gross political and organizational errors, for which we condemn him and for which he deserves punishment. But we consider, recogniz-

¹ Mojsov, p. 83.

² Vukmanović, speech to Yugoslav Communist Party Fifth Congress.

³ Mojsov, p. 84.

ing his devoted work in Bulgaria, that it is rash to characterize him as a class enemy and a counter-revolutionary element. We intercede for milder punishment'.¹ According to the Yugoslav account, the Bulgarian Party subsequently rehabilitated Sharlo. On other issues also the Bulgarian Party maintained its earlier attitude.

Following the Comintern ruling, the Yugoslav Party sent its open letter to the Macedonian Party members again denouncing Sharlo and calling for the armed struggle. On 25 August, a new Regional Committee was appointed, under Kolishevski.² The new Committee set to work to fulfil the Yugoslav Party's directive to start the armed struggle and organize partisan detachments. But it was hampered by the Bulgarian Party's continued intervention in Yugoslav Macedonia, and also by the very genuine difficulties of local conditions and feeling. Vukmanović (Tempo) in a letter of 2 February 1943, referring to this period, said: 'Everywhere the party organizations felt the unhealthy consequences of the fractionalist work of Sharlo's leadership.'³ According to another Yugoslav account, there were 'opportunist and liquidationist elements' in the Party organization, who considered that conditions did not exist for partisan warfare.⁴ In other words, Tito might have won the Comintern's support, but he had not yet won the support of the majority of Macedonian Communists, let alone the mass of the people.

The first representative sent to Skoplje by the Bulgarian Party, Peter Bogdanov,⁵ is said to have brought with him a resolution that Kolishevski should be excluded from the Party, that is, presumably, from the Macedonian regional organization—hardly a conciliatory gesture. He maintained the view that conditions were wrong for partisan warfare, and defended Sharlo's 'free Soviet Macedonia' slogan. At the same time Sharlo is said to have started a 'slander campaign' against Tito, declaring him to be an Anglophil. After Bogdanov, in October 1941, came the Bulgarian Party's second representative, Bojan Balgaranov,⁶ to continue the same policy.

By this time, the first Macedonian partisan detachments, at Kumanovo and Prilep, had been formed under the leadership of

¹ Mojsov, p. 113.

² *ibid.* p. 114; Kolishevski's speech, 20 December 1948.

³ Quoted by Mojsov, p. 115.

⁴ *ibid.* p. 115. ⁵ *ibid.* p. 108.

⁶ *ibid.* p. 119.

MACEDONIA

Kolishevski's committee. On 11 October the detachments first clashed with the occupation forces—the date is now regarded by Yugoslav Communists as a 'historic turning-point' in Macedonian history. The results were, however, disastrous. The Kumanovo detachment was destroyed, reprisals and punitive expeditions followed, and those who opposed partisan warfare were strengthened.¹ However, the Macedonian Regional Committee of the Yugoslav Party met in Skoplje in November and decided that new partisan detachments should immediately be formed.² Nevertheless they sagely proposed that the 'base of the national rising' should be moved to western Macedonia, which was under Italian, and therefore less rigorous, occupation. But immediately after the meeting Kolishevski and other members of the Regional Committee fell into the hands of the police,³ and were imprisoned. Balgaranov immediately came forward and took control of the relics of the Regional Committee, which reverted to the Sharlo line.⁴

So at the end of the second round, the Bulgarian Party was left in sole, if illegal and temporary, possession of the field. The Yugoslav Party had suffered a very severe setback, from which it did not begin to recover until February 1943. The rump Regional Committee, under Balgaranov's influence, decided in December 1941 to disperse the surviving Prilep partisan detachment and to suspend work on the creation of fresh detachments.⁵ At the beginning of 1942 something of a crisis arose over the Bulgarian Government's decision to carry out mobilization to recruit troops for the occupied territories. The Macedonian Regional Committee, in a letter to the Bulgarian Party Central Committee, at first called for sabotage of the mobilization and for 'flight to the woods', that is, to the partisans. But it was reproved by the Bulgarian Party for its 'incorrect attitude', and in January 1942 accepted the Bulgarian Party's line that Communists should if necessary enter the army, in order to 'maintain contact with the masses'.⁶

In his political pronouncements, Balgaranov continued to use the slogan 'Free Macedonia', presumably meaning a Macedonia independent of Yugoslavia. He signed his leaflets merely 'The

¹ Mojsov, p. 115.

² *ibid.* p. 118.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.* p. 119.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *ibid.* p. 134; Vukmanović's speech to Yugoslav Communist Party's Fifth Congress, 20 December 1938.

Regional Committee of the Communist Party', without any reference to the Yugoslav Party. When, in the course of 1942, there was a renewed move for the creation of partisan units, he revised the earlier Bulgarian line to a certain extent, but said that the units should be limited to ten or fifteen men, should concern themselves mainly with political work among the people and preparations for a general rising, and should avoid provoking counter-action by the occupying forces.¹ These limitations were of course quite contrary to Tito's general policy, and were close to the Bulgarian Party's current directive. They were, however, if anything in advance of Bulgarian policy: in August 1942 a circular letter of the Bulgarian Party still called primarily for 'mobilization of the Party forces', sabotage, and prevention of delivery of supplies to the Germans.²

It was not until the beginning of 1943 that Tito again tried to retrieve the position in Macedonia. On 16 January he sent a letter to the Macedonian Regional Committee. He said:

It must be clear to you that the national liberation struggle is the significant form through which will be decided the question of the existence, freedom, and independence of all the peoples, and equally of the Macedonian people. . . The question of the securing of the unhampered development after the war of all the peoples, and equally of the Macedonian people, and the securing of future peace, is inconceivable without the brotherhood and equality of the peoples. Only under these conditions can the question of self-determination have real meaning.³

Tito went on to reprove 'an outworn and liberal attitude towards autonomist tendencies of a national character' (an obvious reference to the traditional pro-Bulgarian 'autonomist' solution). 'The posing of the question of "autonomy" or alleged specific Macedonian conditions falls outside the framework of our standpoint', he added. He stressed the leading role of the Yugoslav Communist Party in the 'united struggle for the liberation of all our peoples', and said: 'You must not be afraid to emphasize openly the cause of our Party.'⁴

This somewhat abstract message was obviously meant to convey that Tito was prepared to grant 'self-determination' to Mace-

¹ Vukmanović, loc. cit.

² Mojsov, p. 145. It is interesting to view this dispute over the mobilization problem in the light of the attitude to it taken in the 1929 resolution of the Balkan Communist Federation (see p. 71, above).

³ Mojsov, p. 150.

⁴ *ibid.* pp. 168, 173.

MACEDONIA

donia, provided that it remained within the framework of his new Yugoslavia. He did not make it clear whether the frontiers of his new Yugoslavia could be extended to embrace the other two parts of Macedonia. The message paved the way for the arrival, at the end of February 1943, of Svetozar Vukmanović, known in the partisan movement as Tempo. This was the real turning-point in Macedonia. Tempo was a Montenegrin, not a Macedonian; but he was energetic, a good organizer, adventurous, and apparently tactful. He spoke some Macedonian, and had worked underground in Skoplje before the Axis invasion.¹ As the special emissary of the Yugoslav Party's Central Committee and of the General Staff of the National Liberation Army, he had considerable prestige. He immediately addressed a letter to Macedonian Party members calling for the creation of partisan detachments and of the 'National Liberation Army of Macedonia, which shoulder to shoulder with the National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia and the whole Balkans will fight for the full national freedom of the Macedonian people'.²

It seems likely that Tempo let it be known that Tito would at least not object to the unification of all three parts of Macedonia within the framework of Yugoslavia. At any rate, in a letter which he addressed to the Central Committee of the Yugoslav Party on 8 August 1943, he gave advice on which he may well already have acted, at least in private conversation: 'Because the National Liberation movement has developed most strongly in Macedonia on the territory of Yugoslavia, and because this movement is the centre of the gathering of the whole Macedonian people, it is necessary that we should issue the slogan of the liberation and unification of the Macedonian people in brotherly unity with all the Yugoslav peoples'.³

After Tempo's arrival, a series of partisan detachments were formed, especially in the Debar, Tikvesh, and Kumanovo districts. Tempo also established liaison with the Greek and Albanian Communist-led partisans, before returning to Tito's headquarters, and so strengthened the position of the Macedonian partisan movement.⁴ Of greater practical help was the collapse of Italy in September 1943. A number of Italian units were dis-

¹ Stephen Clissold, *Whirlwind* (London, Cresset Press, 1949), p. 135.

² Mojsov, p. 152.

³ *ibid.* p. 178.

⁴ Clissold, *op. cit.* pp. 143-4.

armed in western Macedonia, where the partisans acquired a considerable area of 'liberated territory'. Soon after, demoralization began to set in among the Bulgarian occupation troops; the first deserters came over to the Macedonian partisan detachments. The Hristo Botev battalion, and later other Bulgarian partisan units, were formed in Macedonia and subsequently handed over to Bulgarian command.

The era of Bulgarian Communist Party influence ended soon after Tempo's arrival. Balgaranov and Sharlo left the scene. (Later the Fatherland Front Government of Bulgaria was to make the former a Lieutenant-General and the latter a Colonel.¹) Tito had at last won political control of Yugoslav Macedonia.

On Ilinden, 2 August 1943, the 'Central Committee of the Communist Party of Macedonia' (promoted from the former 'Regional Committee for Macedonia of the Yugoslav Communist Party') met in the Prespa district. It drew up a programme for the creation of a 'National Liberation Front', such as already existed in the other Yugoslav lands, and started preparations for calling the first 'Anti-Fascist Assembly of National Liberation of Macedonia'.² Early in October, the newly formed 'General Staff of the National Liberation Army and Partisan Detachments of Macedonia' met at Tsrvena Voda and issued a stirring 'Manifesto to the Macedonian People'. This said: 'For the first time in our glorious history we have today our own young People's Army. . . The decisive hour has struck. . . The coming days will decide your fate. . .' It declared that the Macedonian people had all the conditions for winning their freedom and independence, for gaining, on the basis of the right of self-determination, its true equality, and for building up its statehood in brotherly unity with the Yugoslav peoples, in the new Tito Yugoslavia. It added that within the framework of this unity, the Macedonian people had 'all the conditions for realizing their age-long dream, unification'.³

Thus the Macedonian General Staff was expressing in much more explicit form the somewhat ambiguous implications of Tito's letter of 16 January and Tempo's letter of February 1943, and was using the slogan proposed in Tempo's letter of August

¹ Mojsov, p. 154.

² *ibid.* p. 158.

³ *ibid.* pp. 160-1.

1943. But this theme was not developed when the Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia met at Jajce on 29 November 1943. Although the Council for the first time formally defined Macedonia's future status in Yugoslavia, it gave no hint of the enlargement of Macedonia.

Both then and later, it was difficult to tell which was Tito's real policy—the retention of Yugoslav Macedonia, or the pursuit of a new enlarged Macedonia. The first was the line he followed in pronouncements addressed principally to the outside world, particularly the western Powers, as were the Jajce decisions. The second was the line he followed in pronouncements addressed more specifically to Macedonians. The two were not necessarily inconsistent: the former could represent his minimum, short-term, policy, the latter his maximum, long-term, policy. On one thing he was quite clear: if there were to be a greater Macedonia, it was to be based on Yugoslav Macedonia, not on either of the other parts of Macedonia. Never at any time after 1941 was there the slightest hint that the Yugoslav Communists were prepared, in practical terms, to grant the Yugoslav Macedonians the Stalinist right of 'secession'.

The Jajce 'Decision of the Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia on the Federative Organization of Yugoslavia' said:

On the basis of the right of all nations to self-determination, including the union with or secession from other nations, and in accordance with the true will of all the nations of Yugoslavia, tested during three years of common national struggle for liberation which has cemented the indissoluble fraternity of all the people of Yugoslavia, the Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia passes the following decisions:

1. The peoples of Yugoslavia do not recognize and never have recognized the partition of Yugoslavia by Fascist imperialists, but have proved in the common armed struggle their firm will to remain united in Yugoslavia.

2. In order to carry out the principles of sovereignty of the nations of Yugoslavia and in order that Yugoslavia may be the true home of all its people, and no longer an arena for the machinations of reactionary influences, Yugoslavia is being built up on a federal principle which will ensure full equality for the nations of Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia, and Hercegovina.

3. In accordance with this federal organization of Yugoslavia, which is based on the fullest democratic rights, it is accorded that already,

during the national liberation war, organs of the people's authority have been established in the different lands of Yugoslavia in the form of National Liberation Committees and Provincial Anti-Fascist Councils of National Liberation. The Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia as a Central Body of National Liberation of Yugoslavia is the Supreme Legislative and Executive Representative Organ and the Supreme Representative of the sovereignty of the nations of Yugoslavia as a whole. . .¹

Thus Macedonia obtained equal status with the five other federal units of the new Yugoslavia. But it received no wider autonomy than, for example, Bosnia-Hercegovina. In certain respects, Macedonia was still behind some of the other federal units: for instance, it only had a Central National Liberation Committee, while others already had full-blown Anti-Fascist Councils of National Liberation; and it was thinly represented on the central bodies of the Federal Yugoslavia. There was no Macedonian on the supreme executive body, or provisional government, called simply the 'National Liberation Committee', which had seventeen members. Of the five vice-presidents of the Praesidium of the central Anti-Fascist Council, one was a Macedonian: Dimiter Vlahov who, after several years in Moscow and several appearances as a Macedonian representative at the war-time All Slav Congresses in Moscow, had abandoned his old theory of 'Independent Macedonia within a Balkan Federation', and adopted Tito's Macedonian solution. Of the fifty-six ordinary members of the central Anti-Fascist Council, only three were Macedonians. These were Mihajlo Apostolski, a former Major of the General Staff of the old Yugoslav army, who had by this time become Chief of Staff of the National Liberation army of Macedonia; Vladimir Poptomov,² described as a 'journalist'; and

¹ *The Second Session of the Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia* (Izdanje Avnoj-a, 1943).

² At the time of writing it seems beyond doubt that this is the same as the Vladimir Poptomov who became Bulgarian Foreign Minister in August 1949. If so, it would explain why Tito attacked the Foreign Minister so bitterly in his speech of 2 August 1949: from Tito's point of view, he was worse than an enemy—he was a renegade. However, the Foreign Minister was a Bulgarian Macedonian by origin, who became a Communist after the First World War and directed the Bulgarian Communist rising in the Razlog district of Bulgarian Macedonia, after which he fled to Yugoslavia. Later he became a close follower of Georgi Dimitrov in Moscow. Thus his association with the Yugoslav Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation could only represent a Yugoslav concession to the Bulgarian Communist Party—or to Moscow. In any case by September 1944 Poptomov appeared on the Bulgarian side of the fence: see p. 99 below.

MACEDONIA

Metodije Antonov-Tsento,¹ a former politician, who had become a member of the Headquarters staff for Macedonia. Kolishevski was presumably not included because he was still interned by the occupation authorities.

The Jajce decisions were publicly approved by Moscow. A statement by the Soviet Information Bureau of the Peoples' Commissariat of Foreign Affairs said that the establishment of the federal principle of the organization of Yugoslavia was 'regarded by the Government of the U.S.S.R. as a positive fact contributing to the further successful struggle of the peoples of Yugoslavia against Hitlerite Germany'. It added: 'It also speaks of the major successes of the new leader of Yugoslavia in uniting all the national forces of Yugoslavia.' It announced the Soviet Government's intention to send a military mission to Yugoslavia.

The Jajce decisions therefore brought Tito a notable diplomatic success, including, it could be assumed, Soviet backing for his (minimum) solution of the Macedonian problem. But this solution was not accepted passively by the Bulgarian Fatherland Front—the coalition of resistance groups in which the Bulgarian Communist Party played a leading, though at that time not a dominant, role. The public pronouncements of the Fatherland Front and its spokesmen had always been unacceptable to the Yugoslav Communists. When the Front broadcast its programme on 17 July 1942, it called for the withdrawal of Bulgarian occupation units from Serbia, but made no mention of Macedonia. Broadcasts to Bulgaria from the Soviet-sponsored 'Hristo Botev' station, which boosted the Fatherland Front, took the same line.

When the Macedonian General Staff issued its manifesto in October 1943, a group of Skoplje intellectuals, calling themselves the 'National Liberation Action Committee', who obviously had strong Bulgarian connexions, replied with a letter denying the General Staff's right to make any pronouncement on Macedonian self-determination. It said that the Macedonian question could not be decided within the framework of Yugoslavia, but only after consultation of all three parts of Macedonia, and that the aim must be Balkan Federation.

¹ Antonov-Tsento was arrested and imprisoned in Skoplje by the Government of the Macedonian People's Republic in the summer of 1946. See p. 101.

Then came the Jajce decisions. In the following month, December 1943, a document was issued called 'The Fatherland Front on the Macedonian Question'. This declared:

Macedonia is an apple of discord. Rivers of blood have been shed for it. . . It is the cradle of the Bulgarian renaissance. . . To avoid new historic mistakes and to give Macedonia lasting pacification, the Fatherland Front proclaims the watchword 'Macedonia for the Macedonians'. By this watchword, an end will be made to the rivalry between the Balkan States. Neither a change in the present cleavage of Macedonia by its enemies, nor its full annexation to any one of the Balkan States. The only saving solution is an integral, free, and independent Macedonia. Only thus can it cease to be an apple of discord and become a healthy unifying link between all the Balkan peoples. . . Citizens of all the Balkan lands . . . through the Fatherland Front the Bulgarian people calls on all its neighbours to unite around this single saving watchword.¹

This document provoked the wrath of the Yugoslav Communists. It completely ignored the Jajce decisions: by opposing Macedonia's 'annexation to any one of the Balkan States' it implied rejection of Tito's Macedonian solution. It was in fact a return to the old Vlahov-Comintern line of the mid-nineteen-twenties. Bulgarian Communists later claimed that the Party had been compelled to agree to it to preserve the unity of the Fatherland Front; but this apology was not accepted by the Yugoslavs.

Reinforced by the Jajce decisions, the partisan movement in Macedonia won fresh successes in the spring and summer of 1944. The work of political organization was also carried forward. On Ilinden, 2 August 1944, the Anti-Fascist Assembly of National Liberation of Macedonia met for the first time. (For Assembly, it used the word 'Sobranje', identical with the Bulgarian word, instead of the word 'Vece', or Council, used in the other Yugoslav lands.) The formation of a Macedonian People's Republic, within Federal Yugoslavia, was proclaimed. Yugoslav Communist Party representatives attended the meeting; and Tito sent a telegram: 'By its own heroic struggle and through the brotherly fighting help of all the peoples of Yugoslavia, the Macedonian people has laid the indestructible foundations of its freedom and equality. This is yet another testimony that the new Yugoslavia

¹ Mojsov, p. 195; Vukmanović's speech to the Fifth Congress, 20 December 1948.

MACEDONIA

remains true to the principle of the full equality of all its peoples'.¹ Thus the Yugoslav connexion was formally endorsed by a body claiming to represent the Macedonian people.

In the same month, the first Macedonian divisions of the National Liberation army were formed; and in the following month, the first Macedonian Corps. As Bulgaria's collapse approached, the Macedonians were able to disarm a number of Bulgarian army units. By this time they had also stimulated the Pirin Macedonians, in Bulgaria, to action, and several Pirin Macedonian partisan units had been formed, working in close liaison with the Yugoslav Macedonian units.

This was the situation when, on 9 September, the Fatherland Front seized power in Bulgaria, and the Bulgarian army changed sides and was ordered to join with the Yugoslav partisans in attacking the Germans, then retreating from Greece. Many of the Yugoslav Macedonians apparently thought that the moment had already come for the immediate incorporation of Pirin Macedonia in their own newly formed political unit. Their first step was to try to incorporate the Pirin Macedonians militarily. The Pirin Macedonians seem to have responded readily: they disarmed the sentries of a Bulgarian army divisional depot, seized weapons, and formed a 'Macedonian Brigade'.²

The Fatherland Front and the Bulgarian Communist Party were evidently seriously alarmed. They were not prepared to let Pirin Macedonia go by default, which would have been a disastrous blow to their prestige in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian radio, in the name of the Fatherland Front Government, proclaimed the Macedonian people's right to self-determination, but made no reference to the Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation of Macedonia or to Yugoslavia. As *Tempo* said later: 'It appeared to us that the leaders of the Bulgarian Communist Party closed their eyes to the facts and yearned for some change of the decision taken at the first session of A.S.N.O.M. proclaiming a Macedonian People's Republic within the Yugoslav Federation'.³

Tito himself was apparently opposed to moving too fast over Pirin Macedonia. Soon after 9 September he met Dobri Terpešev, the new Bulgarian Commander-in-Chief, and discussed

¹ Mojsov, p. 197.

² Speech by Georgi Madolev, Pirin Macedonian delegate to Bulgarian Communist Party's Fifth Congress, 21 December 1948.

³ Mojsov, pp. 220-1; Vukmanović, loc. cit.

general military collaboration against the Germans. He may also have discussed the Macedonian question. In mid-September, Kolishevski (now at liberty again¹) and Tempo attended a meeting of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Party in Sofia, to straighten out the Macedonian tangle. Kolishevski and Tempo made a number of accusations about the Bulgarian Party's war-time activities, and demanded that it should 'correct its attitude'. But they agreed to postpone the union of Pirin Macedonia with the new Macedonian People's Republic. The Bulgarian leaders on their side agreed to give Pirin Macedonia administrative autonomy, not only cultural autonomy, and to work to develop national consciousness among the Macedonian people and thus to prepare for the final union of Pirin and Vardar Macedonia 'when conditions were right for it'.² At the same time the Pirin Macedonians were warned by the Bulgarian Communist leaders against Yugoslav aspirations: at a Party Regional Conference in Sofia, also in September 1944, the Bulgarian Macedonian Communist, Poptomov, gave 'a serious warning concerning the intention to incorporate Pirin Macedonia in the People's Republic of Macedonia and Yugoslavia'. Lyubcho Arsov, a member of the Central Committee of the (Yugoslav) Macedonian Communist Party, who was present at the meeting, protested.³

The situation was thus temporarily stabilized by means of an uneasy compromise between the Yugoslav and Bulgarian Communist Parties. Perhaps neither side meant seriously to maintain it. In any case, the Bulgarian Party did little to fulfil its promises. Pirin Macedonia was not granted administrative autonomy; and until the end of 1947 there was little sign of any cultural autonomy. Early in October 1944 the first district conference of the Bulgarian Communist Party was held at Gorna Djumaja, chief town of Pirin Macedonia: according to the Yugoslav account, none of the Central Committee's promises was communicated to the conference.⁴ But at the same time the Bulgarian leaders continued to try to soothe the suspicions of the Yugoslav leaders. Traicho Kostov, one of the most prominent younger Communists, wrote a letter to Tito in November 1944 in which he spoke hope-

¹ See p. 90 above.

² Vukmanović, speech to First Congress of Communist Party of Macedonia, 21 December 1948.

³ Madolev, loc. cit.; regarding Poptomov, see p. 95 above.

⁴ Mojsov, p. 251.

MACEDONIA

fully of 'the brotherly union between the Bulgarian and Yugoslav peoples and the union of the Macedonian people on the basis of the People's Republic of Macedonia within the framework of Yugoslavia'.¹

The two Parties then made a fresh attempt to solve the problem within the wider framework of Yugoslav-Bulgarian federation. The initiative came from the Yugoslav side. In November 1944 the Central Committee of the Yugoslav Party drew up a proposal for federation which was sent to Sofia. In December Edvard Kardelj, Tito's chief foreign policy adviser, went to Sofia to negotiate. He soon found out that the Bulgarians, notably Traicho Kostov, would prefer an alliance or mutual aid pact to federation. They obviously feared that, since Tito was at the height of his international prestige, federation would mean the engulfment of Bulgaria in Tito's Yugoslavia. In the negotiations the Yugoslavs proposed that Bulgaria should form the seventh federal unit of Federal Yugoslavia, and so should be merely on a level with Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, and the rest. A 'Commission of South Slav Union', they said, should be set up in Belgrade, on which the six existing Yugoslav federal units and Bulgaria were to be represented, to draft a constitution for the United Federative State.

The Bulgarians, on the other hand, wanted a federation between Yugoslavia, as one unit, and Bulgaria, as another unit, so that Bulgaria would retain a more independent status than the existing Yugoslav federal units. The federation was to be realized through a 'temporary council of the South Slav Union' with its seat in Belgrade, on which the two Governments were to be represented, 'on the principle of parity'.²

In this deadlock, an appeal was made to Stalin. At first Stalin inclined to the Bulgarian thesis, in view of Bulgaria's 'traditions as a separate State'. But finally (according to the Yugoslav account) he accepted the Yugoslav point of view.³

Nevertheless, the federation negotiations came to nothing. Even a treaty of alliance which was drafted as a substitute, omitting any reference to federation or customs union, was laid aside—

¹ Pijade, article in Belgrade newspaper, *Borba*, 6 March 1949.

² *ibid.*

³ Aleksander Ranković, speech to Serbian Communist Party Congress, 19 January 1949.

according to the Communist account, owing to Anglo-American intervention.¹

Thus by the end of January 1945 the attempt to solve the Macedonian problem through federation had broken down. Although superficially there was now the closest friendship between the new Yugoslavia and the new Bulgaria, both parties remained suspicious and unsatisfied.

For the next year and a half, however, the Yugoslav leaders had sufficient Macedonian problems of their own to leave the Pirin Macedonian question alone. The young Macedonian People's Republic was extremely short of experienced politicians and administrators. Many of its more prominent men were probably still tainted, from the Yugoslav point of view, with pro-Bulgarian 'autonomist' leanings. In the early summer of 1946, a latent crisis within the People's Republic came to a head. Antonov-Tsento, who in 1943 had been elected a member of the central Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia, and who in August 1944 had become President of the new Anti-Fascist Assembly of National Liberation of Macedonia, resigned from the Macedonian Government. He was alleged to have been a former member of I.M.R.O., and was now accused of working for a 'completely independent Macedonia'. In July it was reported that he had been captured when trying to cross the frontier into Greece, with the aim of laying his plan for Macedonia before the Paris Peace Conference. His arrest may well have been followed by a number of other arrests in the People's Republic of those suspected of favouring a 'completely independent' Macedonia. In November 1946 Antonov-Tsento was tried and sentenced to eleven years' hard labour.

Meanwhile the leaders of the Macedonian People's Republic, having cleared up their internal crisis, had returned to the attack on the subject of Pirin Macedonia. On 2 August 1946 the First Congress of the People's Front of Macedonia was held in Skopje. Kulishevski told the Congress:

The strivings of our people from Pirin Macedonia for union with the Macedonian People's Republic are a clear fact, and from day to day show themselves more clearly. We are convinced that the responsible factors see this fact, and that they will make it possible for our people

¹ Pijade, loc. cit.

MACEDONIA

in Pirin Macedonia to have those conditions for free national development which the Bulgarian national minority enjoys in Federal Yugoslavia. We hope that the Fatherland Front Government will introduce the teaching of the Macedonian language and history, and that it will prevent the placing of obstacles in the way of the free development of a Macedonian national anti-Fascist democratic organization within the framework of the Fatherland Front.

Kolishevski said that the Macedonian question must not be regarded as a 'world question' to be decided by the great Powers: Communists were in power both in Federal Yugoslavia and in Bulgaria, and they, following Marxist-Leninist teaching on the national question, would decide it in the spirit of mutual agreement without any referendum, plebiscite, or the like, because for Communists the most just plebiscite was that which occurred when the popular masses, through their struggle, through their everyday actions, clearly demonstrated their wishes.

In connexion with the question of the union of Pirin Macedonia [Kolishevski said] we consider that this must not be decided by any third party. It is above all a question for the Macedonian people itself and for friendly agreement between Federal Yugoslavia and Fatherland Front Bulgaria. To raise the question of the union of Macedonia outside the borders of Yugoslavia means common provocation, and is against the independence and interests of the Macedonian people.¹

This was, of course, intended as a criticism of the Bulgarian Government's failure to grant autonomy to Pirin Macedonia, as the Bulgarian Party had promised in 1944. It also suggested that the Yugoslav Macedonians suspected the Bulgarians of reverting to the old idea of an independent Macedonia, not attached to any Balkan State. Other Yugoslav Macedonian speakers at the Congress criticized the Bulgarian Communist Party more openly. A number of delegates from Pirin Macedonia was present.

The Bulgarian Communist Party, possibly under strong Yugoslav pressure, promised to reform its ways. The Tenth Plenum of the Party, held on 6 August 1946, passed a resolution on the Macedonian question which almost satisfied Yugoslav wishes. The resolution said that the Bulgarian Party considered that the fundamental part of the Macedonian people was organized as a State, within the framework of Federal Yugoslavia, in the Macedonian People's Republic; the unification of the remaining parts

¹ Mojsov, p. 262.

of the Macedonian people was to be fulfilled on the basis of the Macedonian People's Republic within the framework of Yugoslavia. The Party considered that the preparation of the essential conditions for the unification of Pirin Macedonia with the Macedonian People's Republic was the affair of the Macedonians themselves and the united task of Fatherland Front Bulgaria and Federal Yugoslavia. In the period before union, there must be systematic work for the cultural rapprochement of the Macedonian population of the Pirin with the population of the Macedonian People's Republic. Unification must be achieved on the basis of a Treaty of Alliance between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria defining the exact frontiers of the Pirin region. The resolution, however, contained two points less satisfactory to the Yugoslavs: inhabitants of Pirin Macedonia were to be allowed to opt for Bulgarian citizenship; and no customs barrier or other frontier should exist between Bulgaria and Macedonia.¹ The resolution also failed to promise administrative autonomy to Pirin Macedonia in the interim period.

However, this resolution, an obvious concession to the Yugoslavs, was never published, and does not appear to have been communicated to the ranks of the Bulgarian Party. The Bulgarian Party leaders still could not face the blow to their own prestige in Bulgaria which any abandonment of Pirin Macedonia would deal. No change was made in Pirin Macedonia for another year.

Then, in August 1947, the Yugoslav and Bulgarian Communist leaders met in Bled. The published terms of the Bled Agreement provided for virtual abolition of formalities on the Yugoslav-Bulgarian frontier, elimination of entry and exit visas, and arrangements for ownership of joint properties along the frontier. There was also to be preparation for a later Customs Union. Behind the scenes, a fresh attempt was made to solve the Macedonian question. The Yugoslavs again demanded self-determination for the Pirin Macedonians—or, in other words, their union with the Macedonian People's Republic. But the Bulgarians again opposed immediate union: union, they said, must be postponed until Yugoslav-Bulgarian federation had been realized. Tito (obviously reluctantly) had to agree. He insisted however that 'the Macedonian people in Pirin Macedonia should have all

¹ Mojsov, p. 267.

MACEDONIA

rights for full cultural development, as in Vardar Macedonia, and that they should be spiritually united with their brothers in Vardar Macedonia'.¹ The Bulgarian leaders finally agreed.²

Three months later, in November, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria signed a Treaty of Friendship; Tito visited Sofia and was enthusiastically received. During his visit, Tito said: 'We shall establish co-operation so general and so close that federation will be a mere formality'.

In pursuance of the Bled Agreement, the Government of the Macedonian People's Republic, with the blessing of the Bulgarian Government, sent ninety-three teachers to Pirin Macedonia 'to assist in the correct teaching of the Macedonian literary language and Macedonian history'. The teachers, however, did not confine themselves to this task. They gave courses for illiterates and courses for adults in Macedonian language and history. They gave lectures on life in the Macedonian People's Republic. They founded a Macedonian National Theatre at Gorna Djumaja, to present Macedonian plays. They established a publishing concern called the 'Macedonian Book', which in a few months issued over 80,000 copies of books, brochures, and journals. Macedonian booksellers disseminated the Skoplje newspaper, *Nova Makedonia*. A special paper for Pirin Macedonia, *Pirinski Vesnik*, was established. Youths from Pirin Macedonia went to serve in youth brigades on building projects in the Macedonian People's Republic. The Government of the Macedonian People's Republic gave 149 scholarships for students from Pirin Macedonia, and established teachers' courses attended by 135 teachers from Pirin Macedonia.³

All this intensive cultural activity was, in spite of the Bled Agreement, intensely irritating to the Bulgarians, including the Communists. Even the Communists in their heart of hearts probably felt, like all Bulgarians, that the Macedonians were really Bulgarians, that Macedonian was only a dialect of Bulgarian, and that the written language of the Macedonians had traditionally been Bulgarian. The written language which had now been established in the Macedonian People's Republic had originally been based on the spoken tongue of northern Macedonia, and so

¹ Tito, speech in Skoplje on fifth anniversary of foundation of Macedonian People's Republic, 2 August 1949 (Tanjug, Yugoslav Telegraph Agency).

² Tito, loc. cit.

³ Mojsov, p. 271.

had contained some 'Serbisms' (although the Macedonian leaders later decided that the dialects of the Bitolj-Veles area were a better basis, so that their literary language became more akin to Bulgarian). In any case, the Bulgarian leaders felt that there was something artificial and 'invented' about this Macedonian cultural drive.

At the same time, it is most unlikely that the teachers and booksellers from the Macedonian People's Republic confined themselves to strictly cultural work. They would have been less than human, or less than Macedonian, if they had not seized a golden opportunity for eulogizing life in the People's Republic and Tito's Yugoslavia. Moreover, their propaganda seems to have had a good deal of success among the Pirin Macedonians.

The Bulgarian Communists' feelings about the teachers and booksellers were not publicly disclosed until after the break between Yugoslavia and the Cominform. Then they were expressed in forcible terms. Georgi Dimitrov, addressing the Fifth Congress of the Bulgarian Party on 19 December 1948, accused the Yugoslavs of attempting to incorporate the Pirin region in advance of South Slav federation, and said:

Our country, in good faith, allowed a great number of Macedonian teachers and booksellers to come to the Pirin region. Soon, however, it became evident that we had been betrayed, for the teachers and booksellers turned into Tito agents, and under the pretence of fighting 'Greater Bulgarian' chauvinism, and with the aid of the State apparatus and all the political and cultural organizations, they began a systematic campaign against everything Bulgarian, against the Bulgarian people, their culture, the people's democracy, and our Communist Party. In the Macedonian Republic no Bulgarian newspaper was allowed, not even *Rabotnichesko Delo*, the organ of the Bulgarian Communist Party. The family names of the population were altered so as to have no resemblance to Bulgarian names. For instance, Kulishev, Uzonov, and Cherkov, became Kolishevski, Uzonovski, and Cherkovski. . .

Ivan Delev, a Pirin Macedonian delegate to the same congress, said that 'Tito's emissaries' had torn Bulgarian revolutionary pictures from the walls of Bulgarian schools and administration buildings and replaced them by pictures of Tito and Kolishevski. He claimed that they had ordered the Communist Party organizations to take an oath of loyalty to Tito.

Georgi Madolev, another Pirin Macedonian delegate who had

MACEDONIA

obviously earlier taken a pro-Tito line, also attacked the 'Skoplje leaders' for trying to introduce their Macedonian language. 'Instead of using a language which could be understood by everybody, they are imposing in Macedonia an artificial language which they also wanted to introduce in the Pirin region,' he said. 'I must declare before the Party that our population speaks Bulgarian very well; it is the language which is most dear to them . . .'

Madolev, however, in confessing the 'serious mistakes committed by the Party in the Pirin Region', gave a strong indication of the initial success of the Macedonian cultural drive. He quoted the following errors:

(1) Our attitude towards the Skoplje Communists was uncritical, thus allowing them to do what they wanted in the Pirin region, with the result that the Pirin region became a State within a State. (2) We were carried away by the nationalistic ideas of the Skoplje leaders, as a result of which we applied forcible measures for the study of the Macedonian language. (3) We did not take into consideration the will of the masses of the Party and the population of the Pirin region. Thus we tried to solve the Macedonian question *à la* Kolishevski. . . (4) We actually assisted the Skoplje traitors in their aim of incorporating the Pirin region in the Macedonian Republic. . . My own mistakes are especially grave. . . I had doubts whether the Central Committee (of the Bulgarian Party) was capable of solving correctly the Macedonian question. Finally I wrote a letter to the Central Committee in which I openly expressed my disagreement with the Central Committee's policy on the Macedonian question. . .¹

The Yugoslav point of view was expressed, after the Cominform split, by Blagoje Neskovic. He said:

Soon after the Bled Agreement it became obvious that the old policy towards Macedonians in the Pirin region was being continued in Bulgaria. It was shown clearly that some responsible Party and State leaders in Bulgaria did not recognize the Pirin Macedonians as a separate national group. Moreover, there was increasing proof that many responsible leaders in Bulgaria did not even recognize the nationality of Macedonians in the Macedonian People's Republic. . .²

In this atmosphere of mutual suspicion and hostility, it was not surprising that the First Congress of the Fatherland Front, at the beginning of February 1948, carefully avoided the question

¹ Madolev, speech to Fifth Congress of Bulgarian Communist Party, 22 December 1948.

² Blagoje Nesković, member of Politburo of Yugoslav Communist Party, speech to First Congress of Communist Party of Macedonia on 19 Dec. 1948.

of Pirin Macedonia. At a Communist Party conference of Pirin Macedonians held on 25 April 1948, the prominent Bulgarian Macedonian Communist, Vladimir Poptomov, is reported to have attacked the teachers from the Macedonian People's Republic and opposed the dissemination of Macedonian newspapers. Shortly after, the visits of Pirin Macedonian delegations to the Macedonian People's Republic were suspended.¹

Then, at the end of June 1948, came the open break between Tito and the Cominform. The Bulgarian Communist leaders could heave a sigh of relief and denounce the Bled Agreement on Pirin Macedonia. Very soon after the break, the sixteenth Plenum of the Bulgarian Party passed a resolution saying that all question of South Slav federation must be deferred.

In view of the newly created situation in Federal Yugoslavia, it must be stressed that the federation of the South Slavs and the eventual union of the Pirin region with the Macedonian People's Republic are only possible in relation to a Yugoslavia which will remain loyal to the common socialist and democratic international front [the resolution said]. Because of the policy of the Yugoslav leaders and the leaders of the Macedonian Communist Party, there was in practice created in the Pirin region the intolerable situation of a State within a State because various secret emissaries of the Macedonian People's Republic were permitted, without control, to rule in the Pirin region and to disseminate hostility towards the Bulgarian people, the Bulgarian State, and the Bulgarian Communist Party.

The resolution went on to say that the policy of the cultural autonomy of the Pirin Macedonians would be maintained; instruction in the Macedonian literary language 'by local Macedonian teachers' was, however, to be voluntary (instead of compulsory, as under the Bled Agreement). The resolution finally carried the war into the enemy's camp by accusing Kolishevski of denying national rights to 'the Bulgarian element in the Macedonian People's Republic'.²

Within a few weeks of the Cominform resolution, the Macedonian teachers and booksellers were evicted from Bulgaria at twenty-four hours' notice. The Bulgarian and Yugoslav Parties started a campaign of accusations and counter-accusations. The Bulgarian leaders accused the Yugoslavs of trying to incorporate Pirin Macedonia in advance of South Slav federation³; the Yugo-

¹ Mojsov, pp. 284-5.

² *ibid.* p. 284 ff.

³ e.g. Georgi Dimitrov to Fifth Congress of Bulgarian Communist Party, 19 December 1948.

MACEDONIA

slavs accused the Bulgarians of breaking their promise to grant autonomy to Pirin Macedonia.¹

In Pirin Macedonia itself, there was no sign that the pledge of cultural autonomy given by the Sixteenth Plenum of the Bulgarian Party had been put into effect. Georgi Dimitrov told the Fifth Congress of the Party in December 1948 that the population of Pirin Macedonia felt it had close political, economic, and cultural ties with the Bulgarian people, and had not hitherto felt the need for administrative autonomy.²

By spring of 1949 there were signs that both sides were starting political warfare directed at each other's Macedonian population. The Yugoslav leaders saw a Bulgarian-inspired threat to Yugoslav Macedonia in the proclamation by N.O.F., the Slav Macedonian Communist organization of Greece, of 'the union of the Macedonian people in a single uniform independent Macedonian State in the framework of a Federation of Balkan People's Republics'.³ The Yugoslavs also saw Bulgaria's hand in the establishment, in the early summer of 1949, of a 'Communist Organization of Aegean Macedonia', which they believed to be directed ultimately against Yugoslav Macedonia. At the end of June 1949, a number of Bulgarians were tried at Skoplje on charges of sabotage; one was alleged to have crossed into Yugoslavia as the member of a clandestine 'Macedonian organization'.⁴

Tito himself, speaking in Skoplje on 2 August 1949, accused the Bulgarians of 'starting a dangerous game' by setting up 'a certain new Macedonian League which is very much like the former Macedonian terrorists who were in the service of King Boris', for oppressing not only Pirin Macedonians but also progressive Bulgarians. The principal role in this League, Tito said, was played by Poptomov, 'today the main standard-bearer of the struggle against the Macedonian People's Republic and Macedonia as a whole'.

The Yugoslavs, on their side, sponsored a 'Cultural Club of Macedonians from Pirin Macedonia', based on Skoplje, which

¹ e.g. Blagoje Nesković to First Congress of Macedonian Communist Party, 19 December 1948.

² Sofia newspaper *Novini*, quoted by Bulgarian Telegraph Agency, 17 January 1949.

³ Pijade, article in *Borba*, 6 March 1949. See also below, p. 121.

⁴ Belgrade radio, 30 June 1949.

agitated against Bulgarian oppression of the Pirin Macedonians. In the summer of 1949 Skoplje radio was broadcasting a daily quarter-hour programme addressed to the Pirin Macedonians. The Yugoslavs produced their own newspaper, *Pirinski Glas*, for propaganda to the Pirin Macedonians.¹

Tito, on Ilinden, 2 August 1949, took up the tale. In Pirin Macedonia, he said, all Macedonian bookshops had been closed, books in the Macedonian language confiscated, and all cultural life for the Macedonian people made impossible. 'Nothing', he said, 'can prevent the Macedonians from fully realizing their great idea: to build their country as a real socialist republic in alliance with the other people's republics of Yugoslavia and to work tirelessly in order that the Macedonian people may be united at some future date.'

Thus in the summer of 1949 relations between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria over the Macedonian question were as acrid as they had ever been, even if there was considerably less open violence than in the earlier days of komitadji warfare. The arrival of Communists in power in both countries had not solved the question.

The reasons for this failure are several. First, neither Communist Party was prepared to risk its own position and prestige in its own country by abandoning national territory. Second, it is likely that neither the Yugoslav nor the Bulgarian leaders had really freed themselves from the nationalism which had obsessed their non-Communist predecessors in power. Third, Moscow never seems to have given a precise ruling on the final settlement of Macedonia. Thus both the Yugoslav and the Bulgarian Communist leaders had latitude to interpret the rare and somewhat sphinx-like pronouncements of Moscow as they chose. The final touch to the confusion was added when Moscow, in June 1948, abandoned the tactical support which she had given Yugoslavia over the Macedonian question in August 1941, and over South Slav Union in January 1945.

THE GREEK COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION, 1941-9

The Greek Communist Party, which had partly freed itself from the Macedonian burden in 1935, managed to avoid resum-

¹Tanjug, 20 July 1949.

ing it until the summer of 1943. Nevertheless, memories of the Party's earlier support of Macedonian autonomy seriously hampered its work in the first two years of the Axis occupation. When the Party, through E.A.M.-E.L.A.S., tried to organize resistance in Greek Macedonia, it met with prolonged resistance from nationalist-minded Greeks. Its chief opponent was Y.V.E., or the 'Protectors of Northern Greece', a nationalist organization which sought to protect the integrity of Greece, and which later re-christened itself P.A.O., the 'Panhellenic Liberation Organization'. However, E.A.M. accused this potentially dangerous rival of collaboration with the Germans, attacked its armed bands, and by the end of October 1943, had eliminated it.¹ E.A.M. also speedily eliminated lesser rivals in Greek Macedonia, whom it accused with more justice of collaboration.

In the early summer of 1943, however, the Greek Communists had to face a more serious problem: their attitude towards the Slavo-Macedonian minority of Greek Macedonia. Hitherto the only activity of these Slavo-Macedonians had been to let themselves be organized, under Bulgarian sponsorship, in home defence units, mainly to protect their villages against the Greek Communist-led partisans, E.L.A.S. These units had, however, caused E.L.A.S. relatively little trouble.²

Then Tempo, Tito's special emissary, having reorganized the partisan movement in Yugoslav Macedonia and made contact with Enver Hoxha's Albanian partisans, crossed the frontier and made contact with the Greek Communists.³ His object was to get the Greeks to recognize the potentialities of the Slavo-Macedonians and to organize them in partisan units under Communist leadership. The Greek Communists, probably reluctantly, agreed, and S.N.O.F., the Slav National Liberation Front, was formed, although its name was not publicly heard until many months afterwards.⁴ Either then or later, a Macedonian called Gochev⁵ or Gotsi became military leader of the S.N.O.F. units; and a Greek Communist of Macedonian origin, Andreas Tsimas,

¹ Woodhouse, *Apple of Discord*, pp. 92-3.

² *ibid.* p. 94; see also p. 81, above.

³ Clissold, *Whirlwind*, pp. 143-4.

⁴ Woodhouse, *Apple of Discord*, p. 64.

⁵ The *New York Herald Tribune* (European edition) on 20 August 1949 published a dispatch from its correspondent Gaston Coblentz giving the following account of Gochev's career, said to be based on 'non-communist intelligence files': Gochev, now aged about forty-five, was born Elias Dimachis

seems to have acted as chief liaison officer between S.N.O.F. and the Yugoslav partisan movement. It is not yet clear what part, if any, the Bulgarian Communists played in the formation of S.N.O.F.

From the first, the exact degree of subordination of S.N.O.F. to the E.L.A.S. command seems to have been questionable. The Yugoslav Communists, with a weather eye on the possible eventual southerly extension of Yugoslav Macedonia, obviously took a keen interest in S.N.O.F. It is said that as early as November 1943 Tito's radio, Free Yugoslavia, broadcast a message of adherence from a south Macedonian leader.¹ When, however, Marshal Tito himself addressed the second session of the Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia at Jajce on 29 November 1943, he used terms which could not give offence to the Greek Communists. After speaking of partisan successes in Yugoslav Macedonia, Tito said: 'The partisan movement in Macedonia is closely linked with the partisan movement in Albania and Greece and at the same time is giving considerable support to the development of the partisan movement in Bulgaria itself.'

The existence of S.N.O.F., together with wider differences over the strategy of resistance, presumably explain why war-time relations between the Yugoslav and Greek Communist leaders were difficult. When Greek Communist emissaries arrived at Tito's headquarters, they were treated without any great respect; Yugoslav partisan representatives, when speaking in confidence, were apt to be critical of the methods by which the Greek partisans conducted resistance. The Greek Communists, on their side, must always have been suspicious of Tito's presumed aspirations to Greek Macedonia and Salonika.

By the spring of 1944, when Greece was approaching libera-

in a village near Florina in Greek western Macedonia. In September 1944 he was in charge of a Slavo-Macedonian battalion of E.L.A.S., which was reinforced clandestinely by Bulgarian security police who switched over from occupation duty in western Macedonia. On 4 October 1944, several battalions of S.N.O.F., headed by Gochev, proclaimed the independence of western Macedonia. The proclamation was disowned by the Greek Communist Party and Gochev, with 800 men, crossed into Yugoslavia. He returned to Greece with augmented forces to take part with E.L.A.S. in the Greek civil war in December 1944, but went back to Yugoslavia when the revolution failed. In Yugoslavia his force grew to 4-5,000 men, and was called the 'Brigade of Aegean Macedonia'.

¹ Woodhouse, *Apple of Discord*, p. 64.

MACEDONIA

tion, relations between S.N.O.F. and the Greek Communist Party had become severely strained. Emissaries from Yugoslav Macedonia had by this time become active in the work of both political and military organization among the Slavo-Macedonians of Greece. The leaders of S.N.O.F. looked over the frontier to the Macedonian Communist Party in Yugoslavia, rather than to the Greek Communist Party, for leadership. In fact, in the summer of 1944 the S.N.O.F. formations commanded by Gochev clashed with E.L.A.S. on at least three occasions.¹

The proclamation of the Macedonian People's Republic on 2 August 1944 made the Yugoslav power of attraction doubly strong. On the other hand the Greek Communist Party, which by then was participating in the internationally recognized Greek Government and had hopes of winning power in a liberated Greece, was obviously unwilling to ruin its chances by ceding Macedonian territory to Yugoslavia or even by sponsoring Macedonian autonomy inside Greece. Tito at this time seems to have decided that it was more important that the Greek Communists should win the whole of Greece than that he himself should win Greek Macedonia. When the liberation of Greece began in September 1944, Tito must have restrained his enthusiasts in the Macedonian Communist Party, just as he restrained them over Pirin Macedonia. Gochev and his S.N.O.F. battalions broke with the Greek Communist Party and crossed into Yugoslav Macedonia. Gochev himself went to Skoplje; his units were disbanded and later enrolled in the Yugoslav army.

Little of these difficulties between the Yugoslav and Greek Communist leaders came into the open until the break between Tito and the Cominform had led to a break between Tito and the Greek Communists. Speaking just after the break with the Cominform, but a year before the open break with the Greek Communists, Tempo still gave a rosy if somewhat one-sided view of war-time relations between Yugoslavs and Greeks. Addressing the Yugoslav Communist Party's Fifth Congress in July 1948, Tempo said:

The Yugoslav Central Committee pursued a policy of brotherly co-operation with the heroic Communist Party of Greece throughout the liberation war. . . Macedonian partisan detachments very often crossed to the territory of Aegean Macedonia and developed lively

¹ Woodhouse, *Apple of Discord*, p. 64.

political work among the local population. Thanks to the correct political work of our partisan detachments, the Macedonian masses in Aegean Macedonia realized that the liberation struggle of the Greek people was at the same time their own struggle, that not only the freedom of the Greek people, but also the freedom of the Macedonian people depended on the success of that struggle. . . . Our Party activists during the liberation war acquainted their Greek comrades with the experiences of our Party in organizing a regular army. . . . They acquainted their Greek comrades with their experience in organizing the people's revolutionary authority on the ruins of the old State apparatus. . . . Our Party activists conveyed to their Greek comrades their experience in the struggle against the imperialist tendencies of the western allies. . . . Military and political co-operation between our national liberation army and units of the Greek Army was exemplary throughout the national liberation war. Macedonian units always met with great hospitality whenever they had to withdraw to Greek territory before enemy offensives. . . .¹

Tempo's account does of course unwittingly betray two inevitable causes of war-time irritation to the Greek Communists. The first was the somewhat superior and patronizing attitude of the Yugoslavs, which must have been nearly unbearable to Greeks, even if they were Communists. The second was that the Yugoslav Macedonians considered themselves entitled to conduct 'political work' on the Greek side of the frontier. Although there is no evidence that this implied a definite pledge by the Greek Communist Party to cede Aegean Macedonia to the Macedonian People's Republic, it was a fact which, if widely known, would inevitably cause serious damage to the Greek Party's prestige inside Greece.

Greek Communist resentment was, however, not allowed to find an open vent until Tito had decided to close the Yugoslav-Greek frontier in July 1949. Then Nikos Zahariades, Secretary General of the Greek Communist Party, wrote an article in the issue of 1 August of the Cominform journal, *For a Lasting Peace, for a People's Democracy*, in which he bitterly attacked the Yugoslav Communists' war-time policy. Zahariades had himself not been in Greece during the occupation, since he was in a German concentration camp. Much of his article consisted of fantastically exaggerated charges against Tito designed to fit in with the general Cominform campaign against him; nevertheless it pro-

¹ Vukmanović, speech to Fifth Congress, reported by Tanjug, 23 July 1948.

bably expressed a good deal of the long-suppressed war-time fears and antagonisms of the Greek Communists. He said:

The people's democratic movement of our country has never, since the times of the first occupation, known such a cunning and foul enemy as the Tito clique. The Great Serbian chauvinism of the Tito-ites in relation to the resistance movement in Greece was evident as far back as 1943, when the leadership of the Yugoslav Communist Party declared that the people of Aegean Macedonia could only win their liberation with the framework of Yugoslavia. The corollary of this was that it was the prime duty of all Macedonian patriots to fight against the Communist Party of Greece and E.A.M. and instead to collaborate with the Tito agents.

This [Zahariades continued] was the directive followed by Tito's man in Aegean Macedonia, Tempo (Vukmanović). This was the directive applied in practice by their chief agent, Gochev. . . During all these years the Tito clique sent thousands of its agents into the Communist Party of Greece and into E.A.M. with the job of undermining the Communist Party of Greece and splitting the unity of the people's liberation movement.

Zahariades then told the following startling story to illustrate the alleged 'alliance' between Anglo-American imperialism and the Tito clique:

In October 1944, when the British landed in Greece, Tempo, at the head of the provocative movement directed against the Communist Party of Greece, informed the Communists of Aegean Macedonia that he had asked Tito for two divisions to occupy Salonika. This was before the December events¹; the British were not sure that they could hold Greece. Preferring to see Salonika occupied by Tito than in the hands of E.L.A.S. the British parachuted weapons on to the aerodrome at Grupitsa. These were sent on to Vapsori by Tito's agents—Tempo, Gochev, and Pios—to be used against E.L.A.S. . . In December 1944 Tito, who dreamed of snatching Salonika from the people's democratic Greece, did nothing to help us to fight the British, in spite of all his earlier pompous statements. . .

Zahariades declared that 'the Tito clique and its executive organ, the Gochev-Keramidjiev² gang' had, 'and still has', hundreds of Yugoslav intelligence men in Aegean Macedonia. Time and again, he said, the Greek Central Committee had drawn the attention of the Yugoslav Central Committee to the

¹ i.e. the Greek civil war of December 1944.

² Gochev was presumably the war-time leader: see p. 110 above. Keramidjiev had not received publicity until July 1949, when he was accused by 'Free Greece' radio of having served, first 'Bulgarian Fascism', and later O.Z.N.A., the Yugoslav secret police. See below, p. 126.

counter-revolutionary actions of these agents, 'proved by irrefutable documentary evidence', and had demanded that their activities should be stopped. The Yugoslav Central Committee, however, 'did not do a thing about these provocative actions.'¹

The point which Zahariades did not disclose was, of course, the extent to which the Greek Communist leaders had ever pledged their consent to these Yugoslav activities in Aegean Macedonia. There is in fact no evidence available about any formal war-time agreement between the two Communist Parties on the Macedonian question, although there was quite obviously a working agreement on war-time collaboration.

On war-time relations between the Greek and Bulgarian Communist Parties there is very little reliable evidence. A document was produced towards the end of the war, known as the 'Petrich Agreement'. This purported to be an agreement signed by Greek and Bulgarian Communists in July 1943, pledging the Greek Communist Party to co-operate in the establishment of an autonomous Macedonia.² The authenticity of this document was accepted by most non-Communist Greeks but denied by the Communists. On grounds of general probability, it seems unlikely that the Greek Communists would have ceded such a vital point to the Bulgarians at a period of the war when the Bulgarians had very little to offer in exchange, and when Moscow was presumably known to be backing the Yugoslavs, rather than the Bulgarians, in Macedonia.

Nationalist Greeks also accepted the authenticity of the supposed Mount Kaimaxillar Agreement, by which the Greek Communists were alleged to have agreed to Macedonian autonomy within a Slav federation.³

Finally, there is the curious character known as Rhodopoulos or Radev who, at the beginning of 1944, presented himself to the Allied Military Mission in Greece as liaison officer between the Mission and the Greek and Bulgarian Communists. In September 1944 he reappeared as a Colonel in the Bulgarian Army, and engineered the Bulgarian army's sudden change of front in Greek Macedonia.⁴

It seems a reasonable guess that although there were un-

¹ *For a Lasting Peace, For a People's Democracy*, 1 August 1949.

² C. M. Woodhouse, broadcast in B.B.C. European service, 14 March 1949.

³ See p. 82 above.

⁴ Woodhouse, loc. cit.; see also p. 82 above.

MACEDONIA

doubtedly war-time contacts between the Greek and Bulgarian Communist Parties, in the course of which the Macedonian question must inevitably have been raised, these contacts were of far less importance than Greek-Yugoslav Communist relations. It seems in fact probable that during the war the Greek Communist Party managed to avoid committing itself on the ultimate settlement of the Macedonian question. At the time of the liberation Professor Svolos, a non-Communist member of E.A.M., denied that E.A.M.-E.L.A.S. has any interest in Macedonian autonomy.¹ No statement was, however, officially made by the Greek Communist Party, as such.

The Greek civil war of December 1944 led to the flight of a number of Slavo-Macedonians, and also Greek Communists, to Yugoslav Macedonia. This gave the newspapers of Skopje and Belgrade the occasion for repeated outbursts, from 1945 onwards, about Greek 'monarcho-Fascist' persecution of the Slavo-Macedonians. A Soviet spokesman gave 30,000 as the total of Slavs who had fled from Greece at this period.

Zahariades, in his article of 1 August 1949, gave a strange interpretation of this flight: 'Tito organized the mass emigration of Macedonians to Yugoslavia, thus depriving Aegean Macedonia of its Macedonian population.' 'Incidentally', he added, 'the Greek monarcho-Fascists have been trying to do the same thing for many years, hoping to change the ethnical composition of Aegean Macedonia.' Zahariades added that the 'Tito-ites' tried to recruit agents from the refugees who, after the necessary training, were sent to Greece to operate against the Greek Communist Party.²

In March 1949, when relations between the Greek and Yugoslav Parties were nearing an open break, a delegation from 'free Greece' asked permission to visit these refugees and help them to return home. This, according to the Greek account,³ was refused; probably the Yugoslavs declared that the refugees did not wish to return.

The Greek Communist Party, for the first four years after the liberation, did its best to keep silent on Macedonia. In the early spring of 1946, Zahariades visited Prague and Belgrade, and must

¹ C. M. Woodhouse, broadcast in B.B.C. European service, 14 March 1949.

² *For a Lasting Peace, For a People's Democracy*, 1 August 1949.

³ Statement by Greek Communist Party Central Committee, 31 July 1949.

almost inevitably have discussed Macedonia with the Yugoslav Communist leaders. A few months earlier, on 11 October 1945, Tito had made an uncompromising statement in Skoplje: 'We have not denied the right of the Macedonian people to unite. We shall never deny that right. That is our principle. We do not lay down principles for some passing sympathy. We shall stand on this aim, that all Macedonians shall be united in their country.'¹ Nevertheless, it seems likely that Tito informed Zahariades that the first priority was that the Greek Communists should win Greece, and that only after that had been achieved need the Macedonian question be settled.

At all events Zahariades, when he returned to Athens, said in an interview to a British correspondent in May 1946: 'Territorial questions between Greece and Yugoslavia do not arise.' He added that the population of Greek Macedonia was 90 per cent Greek and only 10 per cent Slav, and that E.A.M. stood for the territorial integrity of Greece.² At that time there was at least no open change in the Greek Party's Macedonian policy.

However, the Greek Communist Party must then already have laid its plans for the new Greek civil war: these in fact may have been the main subject of Zahariades's talks in Belgrade. On 8 June 1946 the Greek Ministry of Public Order announced that 'roaming Communist bands had created a desperate situation in Macedonia'.³ By the end of the year the new guerrilla movement had started operations, led by the Moscow-trained Greek Communist and former Communist organizer in Macedonia, Markos Vafiades. (Markos was born in Asia Minor and came to Salonika in 1922; his natural sympathies would therefore be with the Greek 'patriotic' wing, rather than the Macedonian autonomist wing, of the Greek Communist Party.) On 24 December 1947 the formation of the 'Provisional Democratic Government', headed by Markos, was proclaimed. The Greek Government in Athens replied by outlawing the Greek Communist Party.

From the start, the Markos army had relied more heavily on Yugoslav support than on support from Albania or Bulgaria. Geographical conditions did not favour guerrilla action in the areas near the Bulgarian frontier. The mountains near both the

¹ Mojsov, p. 179.

² Elisabeth Barker, *Truce in the Balkans* (London, Marshall, 1948), p. 189.

³ Woodhouse, *Apple of Discord*, p. 268.

MACEDONIA

Yugoslav and Albanian frontiers gave good ground for guerrilla operations; but the Yugoslavs were more powerful allies than the Albanians. The area near the Yugoslav frontier was, apart from the towns, largely populated by Slavo-Macedonians; so that the Greek Communist leaders had to revive Slavo-Macedonian enthusiasm for their own Greek cause. From statements made after the open break between the Greek and Yugoslav Communist leaders in July 1949, it appears that Tito's price for his support for Markos must have been the Greek Communists' permission for a fresh influx of military and political organizers from the Yugoslav Macedonian People's Republic. Gochev himself seems to have been among them. Thus S.N.O.F. reappeared, under the slightly modified name of N.O.F., the 'National Liberation Front', operating at least nominally under the command of Markos, as early as 1947.

The close liaison between Markos and the Yugoslav Communists at first survived the Tito-Cominform break in June 1948. In Yugoslavia the Central Committee of the Macedonian Communist Party, on 12 July, passed a resolution strongly condemning the Bulgarian and Albanian Communist Parties, but making no mention of the Greek Party. The 'Free Greece' radio, propagating the news and views of the Markos movement, continued to operate from Yugoslav territory until early 1949, and so naturally did not attack Tito. Even if they did not receive more active support, the Greek guerrillas continued for some months to use Yugoslav territory for purposes of retreat and transit, and their wounded were cared for in Yugoslav Macedonia. On the Greek side, the rank and file of the guerrilla movement were taught to side with the Cominform against Tito; but the Greek Communist Party made no open official pronouncement against Tito.

Nevertheless the Tito-Cominform quarrel appears to have been one of the chief factors in the internal crisis within the Greek Communist Party which came to a head in January 1949. During the preceding six months, it seems likely that the wing of the Party which eventually triumphed had been working to create a new anti-Tito N.O.F., which would wean the Slavo-Macedonians from the Yugoslav connexion and would possibly be the spear-head of a Cominformist drive to wrest the Macedonian People's Republic from Tito. With the creation of such

an anti-Tito N.O.F., the Greek Communist Party could then achieve relative military independence of Tito and openly join the Cominform bloc against him. At the same time, probably, preparations were being made to transfer the 'Free Greece' radio from Yugoslavia to Cominform territory.

These, at least, seem the only hypotheses which will explain the decisions announced at the fifth plenary session of the Central Committee of the Greek Communist Party held on 30 and 31 January 1949. First, the Central Committee relieved Markos of 'all Party work', allegedly on grounds of ill health. This allegation was repeated in what purported to be an 'open letter' from Markos, broadcast by 'Free Greece' radio on 8 February, in which he laid down his premiership of the 'Provisional Democratic Government' and the command of the 'Democratic Army'. It seems highly probable, however, that Markos was really removed because he differed from the dominant wing of the party, led by Zahariades, both on the strategy of resistance and on the question of relations with Tito and on Macedonian tactics. Nothing was heard of Markos in the following months, except that in the summer of 1949 'Free Greece' radio alleged that he had protested against an article by the Yugoslav Communist, Djilas, who included him in a list of 'national deviationists'. Zahariades succeeded to undisputed control of the Greek guerrilla movement.

At the same time the Fifth Plenum of the Greek Central Committee proclaimed the following decision on the Macedonian question:

The Macedonian people are distinguishing themselves, and there must be no doubt that after the liberation, they will find their national restoration as they wish it. Various elements which are trying to break the unity between the Slav-Macedonian and Greek peoples should be guarded against. This unity should be presented as 'the pupil of the eye' and should be reinforced and strengthened firmly and continuously.¹

This was, of course, a deliberately vague statement. It did not specifically commit the Greek Party further than its 1935 declaration, when it abandoned the 'united Macedonia' slogan, but undertook while aiming ultimately at 'the self-determination of the oppressed peoples', to fight for 'the complete equality of

¹ 'Free Greece' radio, 6 February 1949.

MACEDONIA

rights of the national minorities'. (See p. 76 above.) On the other hand, the phrase 'national restoration' could equally be taken to imply an independent Macedonia.

On 1 March, however, 'Free Greece' broadcast a far more explicit resolution by N.O.F., passed by the Second Plenum of the N.O.F. Central Council on 2 February. This, it seems fair to suppose, represented a decision of the reorganized anti-Tito N.O.F. It said:

The N.O.F. must arouse still further the people of Macedonia. It should concentrate and mobilize all its available resources against the Monarcho-Fascists. With the object of enabling itself to face its difficult tasks the N.O.F. has decided to increase its three-man Secretariat with another two members. Comrades Pavlo Rakovski and Paskal Mitrovski are the two members who are to join the Secretariat. The N.O.F. also calls upon those officers who deviated and took the easy route to keep steadily on the right road because otherwise they will not be entitled to the rank of officer of the N.O.F. It also decides to call the Second Conference of the N.O.F. during March 1949.

The Second Conference of the N.O.F. will declare the wholesale participation of the Macedonian people together with the Greek people in the common struggle. The N.O.F. will mobilize all its available resources, social and human. The Second Conference will also declare the new programmatic principles of the N.O.F. It will declare the union of Macedonia into a complete, independent, and equal Macedonian nation within the Popular Democratic Federation of the Balkan peoples. This constitutes the justification of its prolonged and bloody struggles. The Second Conference of the N.O.F. will declare the complete rising of the Macedonian people and will call upon all the resources of the Slavo-Macedonians and will unite them around the N.O.F.

The Second Conference will appeal particularly to the Slavo-Macedonians in such Macedonian towns as Florina, Kastoria, Edessa, Giannitsa, Goumenitsa, and others. It will call upon the Slavo-Macedonians to join in a general uprising against Monarcho-Fascism and the Anglo-American occupiers with the purpose of liberating the Macedonian people and fighting for the People's Democracy of Macedonia.

This naturally seemed a fairly uncompromising statement in favour of an independent united Macedonia, which, since it was broadcast by 'Free Greece', could only be assumed to have been approved by the Greek Communist leadership. It immediately caused a strong reaction in Yugoslavia and alarm among the rank and file of the Greek Communist Party.

In Yugoslavia suspicion and resentment were expressed by Mosa Pijade, in his *Borba* article. Pijade linked the decisions of the Greek Party Central Committee of 30 January and of the N.O.F. Central Council of 2 February with the supposed Bulgarian extension of the idea of South Slav Federation to the idea of a Balkan Federation. Sofia, he said, was now preaching a Balkan Federation in which united Macedonia would be an equal and independent State. 'This would not be worthy of attention if it were not that somebody had succeeded in transferring the whole intrigue to democratic Greece. In this combination, made to harm Yugoslavia, grave dangers for the democratic liberation and anti-imperialists' movement of the Greeks and for the Macedonians themselves are concealed.'

At the same time Pijade distinguished clearly between the Greek Central Committee's resolution and the N.O.F. resolution. In the former, he said, the Greek Central Committee had 'adopted a correct point of view as regards the self-determination of the Macedonians'. He merely blamed the Bulgarians for trying to exploit this resolution for anti-Yugoslav purposes. It was the N.O.F. resolution which he castigated, hinting strongly that it had been directly inspired by the Bulgarians, who, since they had refused to grant autonomy to Pirin Macedonia, could not use it as the basis for a future United Macedonia, and who were therefore seeking to use Greek Macedonia for the purpose.

Today [he added], when the Aegean Macedonian people are struggling for their physical existence, when their first task is to struggle with the Greek people for the victory of the people's democracy in Greece, . . . there is no need to suggest to these people the making of a declaration which not only does not mobilize the forces of the Macedonian people but, on the contrary, can only provoke superfluous discussions and confusion in the united front of the Greek and Macedonian fighters.¹

Inside Greece, the Greek Central Committee was clearly seriously embarrassed by the reaction which its resolution had provoked, and tried to smooth things down by a series of mollifying statements, which, however, evaded the real issues. On 3 March Mr Rendis, Minister of Public Order in the Athens Government, had made a statement on the resolutions of the Greek Central Committee and N.O.F., and said: 'This is the

¹ *Borba*, 6 March 1949.

first time that the Greek Communist Party has clearly specified as an objective of its armed struggle the severance of Greek territories which are to be handed over to Bulgaria and other Balkan States.' On the following day, 'Free Greece' radio said that Rendis had lately been making various statements 'to justify the mass executions of Greek patriots'; 'but the Greek people, side by side with the Slav-Macedonian people, are struggling for freedom and democracy'. 'And', the radio added, 'when victory comes the national restoration of the Slavo-Macedonians will be completed as the Slavo-Macedonian people wish it.'

Five days later, 'Free Greece' quoted a denial by the Greek Communist Party of 'reports in Athens and London that the Party has agreed to the setting up of a Balkan Communist Federation and a Macedonian State'. The Party's view was that the two peoples, Greek and Macedonian, who were struggling for their liberty, should each decide freely, and without outside influence, on their future. After victory the Macedonian people would 'decide by itself the manner in which it wishes to live and the way it wants to be governed'.

On 10 March a much modified statement by N.O.F. itself was broadcast by 'Free Greece'. This denied 'allegations' that the Second N.O.F. Congress intended to proclaim the creation of a United Macedonian State which would be incorporated in Yugoslavia, Greece, Bulgaria, or the Balkan Communist Federation. 'Today', the N.O.F. statement said, 'the two peoples [Greek and Macedonian] hand in hand are pursuing a common struggle for their freedom. The result of victory will be that each people will decide in a free and sovereign way its future line.'

When finally the Second Congress of N.O.F. was held in the last week of March, almost the only news of it which reached the outer world was an apparently cautious speech made by the Greek Communist Karagiorgis, who spoke on behalf of the 'Provisional Democratic Government' of Greece. After recalling the persecution which in the past Greek Communists had suffered because of their sympathies with the Macedonian 'struggle for freedom', Karagiorgis said that the Greek Party had laid down 'its correct line on the national question' in the resolution of January 1949. The Slavo-Macedonian people, he said, had 'won the right to be free'; and a practical expression of 'the complete unity and fraternity which has been attained' would be the

'participation of N.O.F. itself in the G.H.Q. of the Greek Democratic Army'.

A few weeks later the Bulgarian press revealed a further, and probably more far-reaching, decision which had also been taken at the Second Congress of N.O.F. The Bulgarian Communist Party newspaper, *Rabotnichesko Delo*, on 19 May, reported that the Congress had 'decided to create its own Communist Organization, with organizational independence, as a part of the Greek Communist Party'. It had also elected an Organizational Committee of eight people who were to form and guide this new 'Communist Organization in Aegean Macedonia', pending the preparation of an all-Macedonian conference to elect the Party leaders. The Bulgarian paper added that this step was 'a decisive gain for the Macedonian Communists and the whole Macedonian people, who will rise decisively to solve all their social and national problems and press on in the struggle for national liberation, a people's republic and Communism'. The Bulgarian paper thus at least hinted that this 'Communist Organization in Aegean Macedonia' might be a stepping stone on the way to an independent Communist Macedonia (not, presumably, under Tito's aegis).

For the moment, however, N.O.F.'s object was yet closer collaboration with the Greek Communists. On 5 April, 'Free Greece' radio announced a reshuffle in the 'Provisional Democratic Government', by which Paskal Mitrovski, President of N.O.F., became Minister of Food, and Stavro Kotsev, of N.O.F., became Director for National Minorities in the Ministry of the Interior. On 16 May the radio reported two fairly mild speeches made by these two Ministers at the time of a visit by a 'Provisional Democratic Government' delegation to Grammos. Mitrovski said that thanks to their common successes with the Greek Democratic Army, the Macedonian people 'would consolidate their national rights, their own freedom, and their popular democratic future'. He added that the resolutions of the Greek Communist Party Fifth Plenum and of the N.O.F. Second Congress constituted 'a guarantee for the liberation conquests of the Macedonian people'. Kotsev said that the rights of the Slavo-Macedonian people had been 'recognized' by the 'Provisional Democratic Government'.

Thus for the moment the Greek Communist Party seemed to

MACEDONIA

have smoothed over its Macedonian troubles and to have established control of its reorganized anti-Tito N.O.F. There are at least two possible explanations of what had really happened between January and May 1949. Either the Greek Communist leaders, to win over the Slavo-Macedonians from Tito and comply with a Cominform directive for agitation against Tito over Macedonia, may really have committed themselves to the full 'united independent Macedonia' policy, later retreating hastily to the 'self-determination' formula of the 1935 resolution. Or alternatively, the Greek Communist leaders may merely have recommitted themselves to the 'self-determination' formula, but the reorganized N.O.F. may have interpreted this in its widest sense as permission for immediate Slavo-Macedonian agitation for a 'united independent Macedonia'. On this second theory, N.O.F. may have been brought hastily into line either by the Greek leaders, or even by Moscow itself, to prevent further damage to the Greek Communist cause.

Meanwhile, the Bulgarian Communist Party had been at pains to deny any interest in the matter. Vasil Kolarov, now Bulgarian Foreign Minister, had given an interview in Budapest on about 18 March in which he denied 'western press reports' that Bulgaria wanted to create a Balkan Federation and to lay hands on Macedonia. Kolarov added: 'We have many times declared and declare again that for us the slogan "Balkan Federation" does not exist. . .' He added that it had existed twenty years ago among 'the Social Democratic Parties of the separate Balkan States', but said 'but we have outgrown this'. (This was, of course, a curious reference to Kolarov's own role as leading member of the Balkan Communist Federation in the nineteen-twenties, when it had most ardently sponsored Balkan Federation.)

A few days later, on 31 March, the Bulgarian Communist Party newspaper, *Rabotnichesko Delo*, commenting on a recent debate in the House of Commons, said:

Mr McNeil and others spoke about a supposed plan to create a Macedonian Federation [*sic*] under Bulgarian leadership. Of course, such a project was invented in the diplomatic *couloirs* to justify intensified military intervention by the United States and Britain in Greece. Another aim was to build a bridge between the Tito-ites and the Greek monarcho-Fascists.

The Yugoslav Communists, however, obviously did not believe

Bulgarian disclaimers of interest in the slogan of an Independent Macedonia in a Balkan Federation. On 11 May Kolishevski told a congress in Skoplje that the leadership of the Bulgarian Communist Party had openly dropped the slogan 'only after it had been unmasked by the Yugoslav Communist Party'.

However [Kolishevski said], public renunciation of this slogan does not mean that it is not being exploited to create confusion among the Macedonian masses and to wreck Yugoslavia. The recent Sofia conference of certain Macedonians, presided over by the traitor Hadji Panzov, discussed this slogan of an independent Macedonia. This proved clearly that . . . the leaders of the Bulgarian Communist Party do not renounce this slogan.

The confusion of the 'Macedonian masses' at this moment must indeed have been extreme. It is not at all clear what either the Greek or the Bulgarian Communist Parties were aiming at in Macedonia, except that both were bitterly hostile to the Yugoslav Communists. Both also seemed afraid of the strength of pro-Tito feeling still surviving in their own sections of Macedonia.

This was the situation when it became clear that Tito had decided to cease supporting the Greek Communist guerrillas and to close the Greek-Yugoslav frontier. 'Free Greece' radio first denounced his 'treachery' on 6 July, although Tito himself did not openly indicate his intentions until his speech at Pola on 10 July. The 'Free Greece' denunciation was followed the next day, 7 July, by a long resolution by the Executive Committee of the newly-formed 'Communist Organization in Aegean Macedonia', signed by Mitrovski and Kotsev, attacking the 'subversive work' of 'Tito-ite agents' in Greek Macedonia, especially Gochev and Keramidjiev.

The Organization's resolution said that the 'Keramidjiev-Gochev clique' was attempting a new offensive against the Greek people's democratic struggle, with the aim of breaking the fighting unity of the Greek and Macedonian peoples. This subversive activity had begun before 1944, and had been organized by the Yugoslav Communist Party. Tito and his clique, aiming at the incorporation of Aegean Macedonia, had organized a 'huge, subversive, and slanderous campaign' against the Greek Communist Party, accusing it of having betrayed the revolution. It had created its own Party organizations in Aegean Macedonia,

had attempted to split the unity of the Greek Communist Party and of E.A.M. and had sent hundreds of agents 'with the object of implementing the aims of a greater Yugoslavia at the expense of our national liberation movement'.

Gochev, the resolution said, had never been a Communist; he had always been a nationalist 'who had put himself in the service of the Yugoslav chauvinists working for a greater Yugoslavia'. Keramidjiev, it added, had been an open collaborator with Bulgarian Fascism in Sofia in 1943, had become a Communist at a later date, and had served with O.Z.N.A. (the Yugoslav secret police). He had worked as an O.Z.N.A. agent inside N.O.F. and the Greek Communist Party. Both men had 'betrayed and deserted'.

The Communist Organization of Aegean Macedonia therefore appealed to all Macedonians 'to see their error and to sever all connexion with the treacherous Yugoslav Communist Party'.¹

A Yugoslav Communist spokesman, Dugonjic, speaking in Belgrade on 18 July, claimed that this resolution 'was in fact written far from Greece or Macedonia, and sent to all Cominform radio stations'. 'This', he added, 'is how documents are fabricated in the attempt to present Yugoslavia as having passed over to the imperialist camp.' He linked the resolution with the recent Soviet advocacy of free elections in Greece (an obvious reference to the Gromyko proposals of spring 1949) which, he said, meant that the popular uprising was threatened with liquidation. The Soviet Government, however, would not admit that this was its policy and preferred to throw the blame on Yugoslavia.²

The resolution of the Communist Organization in Aegean Macedonia was also strongly condemned, on 29 July, by a Skoplje conference of delegates from the 30,000 Aegean Macedonian refugees in the Macedonian People's Republic. The conference said that the resolution aimed at harnessing the Aegean Macedonians to the 'counter-revolutionary campaign against the new Yugoslavia', and would only lead to the shattering of the brotherhood and unity between the Macedonian and Greek peoples. The conference also declared that the refugees wished to remain in 'the free homeland of the Macedonian people, the Macedonian People's Republic', until 'conditions

¹ 'Free Greece' radio, 7 July 1949.

² Tanjug, 18 July 1949.

were created for their return to their country'.¹ A spokesman at the conference said that since 1945 the Yugoslav Government and the Government of the Macedonian People's Republic had granted 312,885,000 dinars to the refugees. A few days later Tito himself, together with Djilas, Kolishevski, and other prominent Communists, received representatives of the Aegean Macedonian refugees.² It seemed clear that Tito intended these refugees to play a special political role on the Macedonian front of his struggle with the Cominform.

On 2 August, in Skoplje, Tito made his Ilinden speech and for the first time openly attacked the Greek Communist leaders (while praising the rank and file) for their role in the Macedonian dispute. He also hinted darkly at mysterious forces at work behind the scenes—presumably, Moscow or the Cominform. 'Comrades', he said, 'I am so deeply concerned about the situation in Greece and the liberation struggle of the Greek people that I cannot speak about the background of all this, about what and who are exerting all their efforts to besmirch the new Yugoslavia as much as possible and to liquidate the Greek movement.' The Greek Communist leaders, he continued, should realize that it was only out of consideration for the Greek liberation movement that Yugoslavia could not publish things 'which would under no circumstances represent Zahariades and others in a good light'.

Towards the Aegean Macedonians, Tito said, the attitude of the Greek Communist leaders was similar to that of the Bulgarian Communist leaders towards the Pirin Macedonians, 'only it is worse, because we do not know on whose account the most progressive Macedonians are today paying with their lives for loyalty to their national convictions'. The Greek leaders had never had 'the correct attitude with regard to the Macedonian question'. Proof of this was the fact that in their army, 'the greater part of which was composed of Macedonians', Macedonians were unable to become senior officers. Today they were even expelling from N.O.F. those who really represented the aspirations of the Macedonians of Aegean Macedonia. Finally, there were no schools in the Macedonian language in liberated territory in Greece.³

¹ *ibid.* 29 July 1949.

² *ibid.* 4 August 1949.

³ *ibid.* 2 August 1949; see also p. 108 above.

Kolishevski followed up Tito's speech by referring to the Macedonian People's Republic as the Piedmont of the future Macedonia and declaring that 'the entire Macedonian people' saw in Tito's Macedonia the realization of its aspirations towards freedom. The Macedonian people looked forward to the moment when it would be possible to 'enjoy the same freedom'. 'Our brothers', Kolishevski said, 'are fighting together with the heroic Greek people against the monarcho-Fascists in order to win the right of self-determination.'¹

Thus the Yugoslav Communists still seemed committed to their maximum policy: that the three parts of Macedonia should be united under Tito's aegis. Bulgarian and Greek statements on Ilinden 1949 were much more obscure. The Bulgarian Government newspaper, *Otechestven Front*, in the course of a bitter attack on Tito's 'aggressive nationalist policy' towards Macedonia and his attempt to cut off the Macedonian Communists from any organizational connexion with the Bulgarian or Greek Communists, nostalgically recalled the old slogan of a Balkan Federation including Macedonia as an equal member. This in spite of Kolarov's renunciation of the slogan in the previous March. A Sofia radio broadcast on the same day also recalled the 'old ideal' of a Balkan Federation, but said that it had now developed into a stronger one—that of a world democratic front headed by the Soviet Union. This, the radio said, was the only way the nationalities problem in the area could be solved.²

It was, however, perhaps an indication that the Bulgarian Communist Party was planning a fresh forward Macedonian move that a few days later Vladimir Poptomov was appointed Foreign Minister in succession to Kolarov. Himself a Macedonian, he was regarded as one of the Bulgarian Party's leading Macedonian experts, and held by the Yugoslav Communists to be their chief enemy in the Yugoslav question. According to some accounts, he had earlier been associated with Vlahov's 'United I.M.R.O.'³

Greek pronouncements on Ilinden 1949 were evasive. An announcement made three days earlier by the Greek Communist Party Central Committee had merely attacked the 'Tito clique of

¹ Belgrade radio, 2 August 1949; *New York Herald Tribune*, 10 August 1949.

² Sofia radio, 2 August 1949.

³ See p. 95 above.

imperialist agents' for pursuing the 'old plan' for the annexation of Greek Macedonia and attempting to produce an atmosphere of hatred between the Greek and Macedonian peoples.¹ On Ilinden itself, the N.O.F. Central Committee issued a strongly pro-Greek message. The forty-sixth anniversary of Ilinden, it said, found the Macedonian people once again in the trenches side by side with the Greek people, who were fighting against monarcho-Fascism and Anglo-American imperialism for the establishment of peace 'in our troubled country', and for freedom and democracy. The impregnable castles of freedom over which fluttered the Greek Democratic army's flag were also shared by 'our people', to the eternal glory of Ilinden. The agents of international imperialism were trying to disrupt this unity, and were employing traitors to do so, just as had been done in 1903. But the Macedonian people would crush these enemies.² (These 'enemies' were presumably the surviving pro-Tito elements in Greek Macedonia.)

Thus the forty-sixth anniversary of the 1903 Macedonian rising found the Greek and Bulgarian Communist Parties waging a full-scale political war against the Yugoslav Communist Party, and in a curious kind of temporary alliance with each other. The Yugoslav Party was still propagating the long-term solution of a united Macedonia under Yugoslavia's aegis. It was quite obscure what long-term solution was envisaged by the Greek and Bulgarian Parties, though there were faint signs that the Bulgarians were reverting to the old 'Balkan Federation' solution of the nineteen-twenties. What Moscow envisaged was even more obscure. Possibly, as in the past, Moscow found itself in a dilemma over Macedonia: to promote an open campaign for an independent Macedonia might gravely weaken Tito, but would even more gravely weaken the Greek Communist Party's guerrilla movement. Thus unless or until the Greek guerrilla movement were demonstrably doomed, Moscow might think it advisable to hold its hand over Macedonia; and the Greek and Bulgarian Party leaders would presumably await a final word from Moscow before taking a positive stand.

¹ 'Free Greece' radio, 31 July 1949.

² 'Free Greece' radio, 2 August 1949.