

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: SALVATION ABROAD: MACEDONIAN
MIGRATION TO NORTH AMERICA AND
THE MAKING OF MODERN MACEDONIA,
1870-1970

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This dissertation explores the establishment of Macedonian diaspora communities in North America, and the concurrent development of Macedonian national identity, between 1870 and 1970. Taking a transnational approach to cultural history, it ultimately finds a reciprocal relationship between Macedonian migration and identity by focusing on key nationalist leaders and organizations, as well as the crucial points of transformation in the evolution of Macedonian national identity. By blurring the boundary between Canada and the United States – as did many migrants from Macedonia who saw the two countries as “Upper” and “Lower” America – this study emphasizes migration rather than settlement in order to unveil nationalism’s religious, cultural and political components. The dissertation, therefore, is grounded not in the cement of a single national narrative, but in the cultural products that result from passages – physical, spiritual, and social – among nations.

As the nineteenth century ended, a climate of deprivation and violence compelled tens of thousands of men from the Macedonian region to depart their troubled corner of the

Balkans and find economic salvation abroad. Like their fellow villagers, most of the migrants considered themselves to be geographically Macedonian but culturally Bulgarian. Almost none identified with a nationality in the modern sense. This study argues, however, that more than simply fulfilling an economic mission abroad, the migrant men, and later their families, capitalized on the freedoms North America offered to forge a broader “salvation” that fundamentally changed their national and ethnic worldview. Put another way, migration catalyzed a process in which the migrants became, simply, “Macedonians.”

Far from leaving behind the political and cultural battles of their homeland, the migrant communities formed political, cultural, and religious organizations that sought to influence the policies of both their host and home countries. But defining the new Macedonian nation proved a contentious issue. As the migrant communities cleaved into left- and right-leaning factions during the middle and latter years of the twentieth century, the nature of Macedonian identity, which, I argue, was intimately connected to notions of Macedonian cultural history, became a fiercely contested subject, and remains so today.

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AND THE MAKING OF MODERN MACEDONIA, 1870-1970

By

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Chapter 1: Diasporic Dilemma: A Case Study in Modern Macedonian Nationalism

The tenth annual ethnic festival at Sts. Cyril and Methody Macedonian Orthodox Church near Buffalo, New York, mostly resembled the previous nine. A lively atmosphere prevailed over three days of eating, drinking, and Macedonian folk dancing during the summer of 2000. Under the tents, middle-age men discussed politics and the sluggish Western New York economy - specifically the auto industry and, especially, Ford Motors, where many Macedonians worked. Some who read the Macedonian newspapers or expatriate journals, or who recently had visited Macedonia, debated current events in *stari kraj*, or the Old Country: Greek protests over use of the Macedonian name, the recent elections for president and prime minister, and controversial efforts by Macedonia's ethnic Albanian population to build an Albanian-language university. Others talked about sports and ignored politics altogether. Affiliating with the Macedonian Church, or being a friend or family member of someone who did, brought most people to the festival; the traditional barbecue, packaged to-go for under ten dollars, brought many of the rest.¹

At the festival, elderly men generally sat with their sons and other men. Women, especially those born abroad, typically segregated themselves from men in social settings. The food preparation was segregated by sex as well. In the church hall's newly-

¹ Members of the Buffalo Macedonian community, like all Macedonian Orthodox Church communities, regard Macedonians to be a distinct ethnic group with its roots in the Macedonian region that today extends into the Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo, Greece, and Bulgaria. Most, but not all, consider Macedonians to be descendants of the Slavic tribes that arrived in the Balkans in the sixth century. While not numerous in Buffalo, others who define themselves as Macedonians - but who consider themselves to be ethnically Greek - reject the right of the first group to use the appellation "Macedonian." I discuss the development of these, and other, Macedonian identities in coming chapters.

renovated kitchen, a dozen Macedonian and Macedonian-American women peeled potatoes, boiled rice, and prepared salads. Outside, an equal number of men tended to the homemade aluminum rotisseries turning lamb, chicken and pork. *Biser*, a four-man Macedonian folk band from Hamilton, Ontario, alternated playing “women’s” and “men’s” songs, mixing in an occasional number suitable for both. As *Biser* played, a chartered bus arrived with fifty parishioners from St. Clement Macedonian Orthodox Church in Toronto, Ontario, all women.

However, not everything was as I remembered. As an observer who had not attended the festival in several years, I noticed distinct differences among the younger, second generation Macedonian-Americans. For years, the contrast between the first and second generations within the Buffalo Macedonian community was striking. The younger generation – born in the U.S. or Canada, reared in the suburbs, and schooled in English – had displayed less desire to “act Macedonian” and more to fit in with their American-born peers. No members of this second generation sought leadership posts on the graying church board. Even among those born in North America to two Macedonian-born parents who spoke Macedonian at home, English was the *lingua franca* once the young people were outside parental reach. At Macedonian ethnic dances in the church hall, parents implored their children to dance to the songs from their own youth, but from personal recollection, the parents’ efforts rarely succeeded.

At this festival, though, members of the second generation (in this community, roughly age 16 to 35) were more numerous, more vocal, and more energized by Macedonian folk culture. Unlike five or ten years earlier, their cohort included virtually no American-born non-Macedonians. The crowd of young attendees was larger than in

the past, and from a wider number of cities such as Hamilton and Toronto; Rochester and Syracuse, New York; and Columbus, Ohio. At least a dozen Macedonian-American and Macedonian-Canadian young people were displaying a more robust sense of national pride. They spoke more, and more fluent, Macedonian, and discussed Macedonian events. They taunted Greeks, especially those who called themselves “Macedonians” but who felt they were ethnically Greek. I wondered whether it was Macedonian independence from Yugoslavia (declared in 1991), or perhaps more local phenomena, that had caused the change.

Eventually, a different explanation became evident. Among the dozen young people I recalled most vividly, ethnic pride had taken on a political charge. This was most evident through symbols. For instance, emblazoned across the arms of several of the more vocal young men were tattoos of Macedonian images, including images used by VMRO-DMPNE, the right-leaning Macedonian political party that rode a surge of Macedonian nationalism to power in 1999. One of the tattoos portrayed a lion on its hind legs, a traditional Macedonian symbol. Another featured the “Vergina sun,” a 16-point sunburst design, below the word “*Makedonija*” in dark, Cyrillic block letters. The tattoo’s permanence showed the willingness of its owner, Jimmy Jovanovski, to claim the star – a fiercely contested symbol in the Balkans – as Macedonian cultural property.²

² The Vergina sun image was first found adorning the tomb of Philip II of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, when it was unearthed in an archeological dig in northern Greece in the 1970s. It has since become a pivotal issue in the Greek and Macedonian struggle over history and culture as it pertains to “ownership” of the contested Macedonian legacy. Slavic Macedonians adopted the sun for its national flag shortly after its discovery, an unsubtle claim that linked the Macedonian nation to the ancient Kingdom of Alexander. Greece simmered at what they perceived to be not only a nationalist symbol, but a statement of Slavic Macedonian irredentism for the region of northern Greece also called Macedonia. Greece eventually compelled the newly-independent Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to strike the image from its national flag, which it reluctantly did.



Figure 1. Symbol of Macedonian political party VMRO-DPMNE, from <http://www.vmro-dpmne.org.mk/english/>



Figure 2. Macedonian flag in use from 1992-1995 featuring 16-point Vergina sun, from <http://flagspot.net/flags/mk-1992.html>

But to many Greeks, the use of the Vergina sun by Macedonians was a prevarication, the theft of a symbol which, they felt, belonged in the Hellenic world. To a vocal minority of Greeks, the use of the Vergina image is so indicative of Macedonian territorial aspirations at the expense of Greece that it is a virtual declaration of war. Jovanovski's tattoo, and the appearance of the Vergina star in countless other Macedonian publications and public displays at the festival, can be read as a refusal to relinquish a cherished symbol under pressure from Greeks, a group that many Macedonians saw as an oppressor.

The most intriguing aspect of the Macedonian nationalism on display at the festival was that it germinated and grew within the context of the United States and Canada. The young men who possessed the tattoos had lived their entire lives in North America, only occasionally, perhaps, traveling to Macedonia. In this instance, the national passion of this segment of the diaspora was intense enough that no geographic connection to Macedonia was necessary for it to flourish. The heightened sense of ethnic identity grew without the benefit of significant physical contact with the Old Country. Yet it was no less passionate for its distance from what is traditionally regarded as Macedonian nationalism's source. Having spent time in Macedonia myself, their feelings seemed *more* passionate than those of many Macedonians. These second generation immigrants clearly associated with the Macedonian Republic, followed its political parties, listened to its latest music, and even repeated common slurs against Greeks and Albanians. Though it had not matured into any coherent political action on behalf of Macedonia, the young people's nationalism already had adopted the iconography, language, folk culture, and prejudices of modern Macedonian nationalism. In so doing, this new generation of Macedonian-American partisans was embracing – and adapting – a version of Macedonian history that itself was only several decades in the making. And the embrace occurred in a middle-class North American milieu that was both multicultural and multiracial.

The episode at the festival strengthened my belief that the existing literature on Macedonian migration and national development was insufficient. Too much of it came from the pens of nationalists themselves. And much of that which did not neglected the role the diaspora played in shaping modern Macedonian nationalism. There were

exceptions, notably anthropologist Loring Danforth's excellent monograph, *The Macedonian Conflict: Ethnic Nationalism in a Transnational World* (1995), but no single study that assessed Macedonian migration to both the U.S. and Canada across the twentieth century, or which took into account the role of the diaspora in the making of modern Macedonia.³

The festival's images remained with me as I began my research in Toronto later that summer. Several questions arose: Would any of these young people have displayed their nationalism so prominently had they grown up in Macedonia and not in the United States? If national feelings could be so strong during a time of relative quietude in Macedonia, how did the process of migration affect the identities of earlier generations of Macedonian immigrants who fled war, poverty, and social violence? And what effect, if any, did the migrants' national or ethnic views have upon the views of Macedonians who remained in the Balkans?

I decided that providing a sufficient answer required looking to the nineteenth century roots of Macedonian nationalism, and therefore analyzing a century's worth of migration, political organizing, and intellectual debate, as well as the cultural products the migrants themselves created.⁴ Further, it necessitated grounding these individuals, and their efforts, in the broader economic, political, and demographic climates in which they lived and worked. I felt that only by historicizing the development of Macedonian identity – in essence taking away some of the historiographical authority from the

³ Loring M. Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict: Ethnic Nationalism in a Transnational World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

⁴ My research, conducted at libraries and archives in the U.S., Canada, and Macedonia, focused on primary sources created by migrants themselves, augmented by documents by American, Canadian, Macedonian and other international officials.

nationalists themselves – could I begin to understand how such a powerful affinity for a foreign land could develop.

My research and conclusions therefore sit at the cross-section of three bodies of established literature: those of the Balkans, immigration, and the development of national identity. More recently, several writers have begun the process of treating these literatures as interrelated (and not as discrete entities), grouping the work of these writers under the rubric of “transnational studies.” I came to feel that only by drawing more explicit connections between area-specific studies, immigration studies, and nationalism studies – by reading transnationally – could I begin to appreciate the interconnectedness of the phenomena being studied, and therefore gain an understanding of the development of Macedonian nationalism. By first assessing the strengths and weaknesses of these literatures, and the ways in which they connect or fail to connect with one another, I hope to make a case for exploring an intriguing example of the interplay between migration and national identity.

On Macedonia and Macedonian Nationalism

In 1905, British Relief Fund employee Edith Durham offered what is, in retrospect, a prescient insight: “Macedonia, be it observed, is a conveniently elastic term.”⁵ Though the proper noun, “Macedonia,” today denotes a sovereign nation and a finite geographic entity, it also connotes an array of places, identities, histories and mythologies that multiple geographic, political, ethnic, and religious groups have possessed over time. In the last years of the nineteenth century, Macedonia generally

⁵ M.E. Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans* (London: 1905), 58, quoted in Jonathan Schwartz, “Macedonia: A Country in Quotation Marks,” *Anthropology of East Europe Review*, vol. 11, nos. 1-2, Autumn 1993.

meant a geographic space: a portion of Southeastern Europe, a plot in the middle of the Balkan Peninsula. Three newly independent states, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece, bounded and occupied parts of Macedonia on the north, east, and south, respectively. Though geographically cut off from the Ottoman Empire by Bulgaria and Thrace, Macedonia remained part of the Ottoman possessions, the only part not in the Middle East. Therefore, in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire's 500-year existence, many outside the Balkans called Macedonia "Turkey in Europe."⁶

Since the nineteenth century, the nations surrounding Macedonia have periodically clashed because of their fiercely held nationalist and territorial ambitions. While people living in the territory known as Macedonia initially were either indifferent to these clashes, or drawn to the side of one or more of the nations involved, groups among them began to articulate a new national identity that called itself Macedonian. The actions of men and women who voyaged from the Balkans to find economic salvation abroad contributed to this developing nationalism, and fought over what it meant. They, in turn, helped realize a different sort of "salvation" in the form of political independence and a recognized Macedonian national and ethnic identity.

Emigrants from Macedonia remained active in the political and cultural struggles at home, and occasionally influenced their outcomes. Their actions, witting and

⁶ For a useful overview of late-nineteenth century Macedonian from an economic point of view, see Fikret Adanir, "The Macedonians in the Ottoman Empire, 1878-1912," in *The Formation of National Elites: Comparative Studies on Governments and Non-Dominant Ethnic Groups in Europe, 1850-1940*, ed. Andreas Kappeler, vol. vi. (New York: New York University Press, 1992); Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans: Volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 329-347. Significant portions of the Macedonian region, especially the rugged northwest, are inhospitable to large-scale agriculture, with only small plots of arable land. Rippled with mountains, landlocked, and with few navigable waterways, much of the Macedonian countryside had evolved as a collection of remote villages and a handful of larger towns like Skopje, Bitola, Lerin, and Ohrid. Despite the difficult topography, family farms formed the basis of the regional economy, and small-scale agricultural pursuits, like tobacco and vegetable farming, beekeeping, and animal husbandry had flourished for centuries.

unwitting, contributed to the multiple variations of Macedonian nationalism that emerged, flourished, and changed shape across the twentieth century. The very dispersion of Macedonians abroad, their interplay with their native land, and the return voyages of money, ideas, and human energy to the homeland, then, shaped modern Macedonia and the identities it has spawned. Yet the literature on Macedonians scarcely reflects this reality. The past decade has seen an explosion of interest in the Balkans across a variety of disciplines. Propelled in large part by the collapse of Yugoslavia in 1991, and the Phoenix-like rise of nationalism across the Balkan Peninsula in the late twentieth century, scholars of European History and international affairs have refocused their attention on the “powder keg” of Europe.⁷ Only recently, however, have scholars re-engaged the question of how the Macedonian “concept” fits into the broader story of the Balkans.⁸

One reason is that a significant taxonomic dilemma remains. If an outsider today asked a number of Macedonians, Serbs, Greeks, and Bulgarians the question, “When did Macedonians begin to express their own culture?” the answers would likely include 400 B.C., the ninth century A.D., the fifteenth century, the mid-nineteenth century, the early-twentieth century, the WWII years, and the 1990s. And these answers presume those questioned would even be willing to acknowledge that such a thing as Macedonian

⁷ The demise of Yugoslavia also coincided with that of the Soviet Union, offering students of nationalism a virtual laboratory in which to study the construction and destruction of the two most important multiethnic European states of the Twentieth Century. On Yugoslavia see, John Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice There Was a Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Susan Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1995); Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia: The Third Balkan War* (New York: Penguin, revised edition, 1996).

⁸ For example, the 1973 geographical study, *Yugoslav Migrations to America* does not even address Macedonian migration at all despite Macedonia’s republic status within the Yugoslav federation. Macedonians remain subsumed in the Serbian-Montenegrin-Bulgarian category as they often were by the U.S. Census figures for the first part of the century. Branko Mita Colakovic, *Yugoslav Migrations to America* (San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1973).

culture exists at all. A significant percentage of respondents from a survey taken in this fashion might not. One realizes that to answer what has been called the “Macedonian Question” requires beginning with a basic query – i.e., “when you say Macedonian nationalism, what do you actually mean?” One also must address the question of what threshold is necessary for one to observe Macedonian culture in existence. For instance, does it exist when the second iteration of Yugoslavia came into being during WWII and Macedonia became a socialist republic? Or when poets in the Macedonian region began to say they were writing as Macedonians in the 1850s? Or perhaps when Alexander the Great, the “King of Macedon,” built his vast pre-Christian empire around the Mediterranean Sea?⁹

Despite the disagreement over the contours of Macedonian history (or perhaps because of it) there has been no lack of contemporary academic attention to the Macedonians through the prism of the Balkans. Macedonia itself is the subject of at least half a dozen recent historical, political, and anthropological studies. Keith Brown’s *The Past In Question: Modern Macedonia and the Uncertainties of Nation* (2003) is particularly notable for its cultural exploration of national myth-making about the 1903 *Illinden* uprising that launched the modern Macedonian national movement. Other works focus on the Greek-Macedonian tensions that have dominated the past two decades, while often neglecting a perhaps more telling set of connections: those between Macedonians and Bulgarians, who have shared a common religion, language, and a strong affinity for

⁹ Perhaps one way to visualize the myriad answers to the question of the origins of Macedonian culture and society is to picture a three-dimensional matrix with three axes along which a variety of answers to the question lie. The three axes in one logical version of the matrix would be time frame, definition of “Macedonian,” and threshold. It is needless to say that with so many possible combinations of answers to the question that the opportunities for common ground, for consensus building, for coalitions and cooperation are hard to come by if they are not fatally undermined from the start.

independence from Ottoman rule. The emergence of the Macedonian national movement during a period of Bulgarian cultural renaissance after 1870, arguably, is a more important event for understanding Macedonia than the history of Greek-Macedonian relations.¹⁰

Yet surprisingly, little recent work examines the strong cultural ties that linked Macedonians and Bulgarians before World War II, or the political and cultural factors that led to their ethnic separation thereafter. Thus while the earliest generations of migrants and their offspring retain their dualistic identities, scholars have downplayed the crucial divergence of identities and the migration factors that created the Macedonian nationalism in the first place. On the one hand, a desire to repress the memory of Bulgaria's heavy-handed occupation of Macedonia during the Second World War and, on the other, the effort by Marshall Josef Tito's government to nurture Macedonian nationality help explain why pro-Macedonian nationalistic literature omits this connection. Studies by non-nationalist scholars, however, tend toward one of two extreme views on Macedonian national history. The first holds that Macedonians knew who they were by the late nineteenth century and thus possessed confident national identities when they began emigrating early in the twentieth. The second posits that Macedonians only came to regard themselves as such once Tito's Yugoslavia "told" them

¹⁰ Until the mid-twentieth century, Macedonians and Bulgarians in the diaspora more often than not celebrated common cause. Even after Tito pulled Yugoslavia out of the Soviet bloc in 1948, Macedonia and Bulgaria's similar economies, demographics, and ideological commitments to socialism left them in nearly identical form in 1991. Keith Brown, *The Past In Question: Modern Macedonia and the Uncertainties of Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Hugh Poulton, *Who Are The Macedonians?* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Evangelos Kofos, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia: Civil Conflict, Politics of Mutation, National Identity* (New Rochelle: Caratzas, 1993).

who they were. Both explanations hint at elements in the history of Macedonian national development, but, by themselves, neither is particularly accurate.¹¹

The strongest scholarly work on Macedonians in the Balkans has been that of a handful of anthropologists, linguists and historians who have used the prisms of nationalism, transnationalism, identity, and minority rights to place Macedonia within the larger context of Eastern European history. The anthropologist Loring Danforth uses the Slavic Macedonian and Greek Macedonian communities in Australia (and to a lesser extent Canada) to illustrate the intense passions over use of the term “Macedonian.”¹² Another anthropologist, Anastasia Karakasidou, highlights the extent to which the mere discussion of the well-known Slav minority in Northern Greece as “Macedonian” can elicit bitter feelings of resentment among even moderate Greeks.¹³ Her recent study of the Greek town of Assiros, as well as the work by Keith Brown on the Krushevo region (a hotbed of Macedonian rebellion against the Ottomans) reveals how the creation and maintenance of ethnic identity, against great odds, can be connected to religion, language, and memory.¹⁴

¹¹ For works in the first vein, see Lillian Petroff, *Sojourners and Settlers: The Macedonian Community in Toronto to 1940* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1995), esp. ch 1 & 2. For works in the second vein, see Nikolay G. Altankov, *The Bulgarian-Americans* (Palo Alto: Ragusan Press, 1979); Stephen E. Palmer and Robert R. King, *Yugoslav Communism and the Macedonian Question*, 134-173; Suzanne Gwen Hruby, Leslie Lazlo and Stevan K. Pawlowitch, “The Macedonian Orthodox Church,” in Pedro Ramet ed., *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1988), 242-243, 338-347.

¹² Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict*, ch. 4 and 7.

¹³ Anastasia Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood: Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia, 1870-1990*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Keith Brown, *Of Meanings and Memories: The National Imagination in Macedonia (Krushevo, Identity, Commemoration)*. Unpub. Ph.D. diss. (University of Chicago, 1995).

¹⁴ The historian Duncan Perry hones in on the root of Macedonian national pride in his study of the 1903 *Illinden* uprising, in which armed bands of Macedonian guerrillas mounted a dogged offense against the ruling Ottomans. University of Toronto historian Andrew Rossos has shown that fighting and intellectual debate between Macedonian and Greek Communists, on one hand, and Greek Royalist forces during the

The work of linguist Victor Friedman, however, places the genesis of the Macedonian nationalistic fervor not within the cauldron of battle against the Ottoman or European occupiers, but in the classroom and by the inkwell. Friedman also persuasively moves the emergence of a distinctly Macedonian Slav-minded intelligentsia into the mid-nineteenth century by using as his indicator of nationalism not popular self-identification, but the publication of textbooks in a language the authors thought to be Macedonian. In a series of articles on the emergence of a Macedonian language distinct from the Bulgarian, Friedman points to a handful of school teachers and midnight poets, all claiming to write in Macedonian for the glory and edification of the Macedonian people, as the fathers of the Macedonian national movement.¹⁵

Together, these authors sketch a Macedonian nationalism that has its origins among a small sliver of elites in the mid-nineteenth century, and which then gathers force through the later years of the century, culminating in the failed 1903 *Illinden* uprising against Ottoman rule. According to this group's interpretation, Macedonian nationalism then lay dormant until the 1940s when Josef Broz Tito and his wartime Communist allies

Greek Civil War of 1946-1949 contributed significantly to the post-WWII development of Macedonian identity within the context of the Communist Yugoslavia. Duncan Perry, *The Politics of Terror: The Macedonian Liberation Movements, 1893-1903* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1988); Andrew Rossos, "Incompatible Allies: Greek Communism and Macedonian Nationalism in the Civil War in Greece, 1943-1949," *The Journal of Modern History*. vol. 69, no. 1.; Andrew Rossos, "The Macedonians of Aegean Macedonia: A British Officer's Report, 1944," *Slavonic and East European Review*, 69, 1988; Andrew Rossos, "The British Foreign Office and Macedonian National Identity, 1918-1941," *Slavic Review*. no. 53, 1994.

¹⁵ Though this elite represented a mere sliver of Christian Slavs living in Macedonia, Friedman's attention to language as a key source of national feeling broadens the debate considerably. A century later, the codification of the Macedonian literary language was one of the first official acts to take place within the newly "independent" Macedonian republic in Yugoslavia. See Victor Friedman, "Macedonian Language and Nationalism During the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries" in Kenneth E. Naylor ed. *Balkanistica: Occasional Papers In Southeast European Studies*. vol. 2 (Cambridge: Slavica Publishers, 1975); Victor Friedman, "The First Philological Conference For The Establishment of the Macedonian Alphabet and the Macedonian Literary Language: Its Precedents and Consequences," in Joshua Fishman ed. *The Earliest Stage Of Language Planning: The "First Congress" Phenomenon* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1993).

in Greece rekindled it as a means of defeating the Greek Royalist army and maintaining stability in the new Yugoslavia. What these works neglect to fully explore, however, are the ways in which the Macedonian and Bulgarian identities remained linked well into the twentieth century. Nor do they examine the actions of several tens of thousands of Macedonians and Bulgarians in dozens of communities in North America who grappled with issues of politics, religion, and identity. Most migrants initially intended to return home and therefore remained intensely interested and engaged in the issues that affected their homelands. To date, the literature on Macedonian identity and migration has largely ignored or downplayed this phenomenon.

The literature on Macedonians in the United States and Canada is even less developed than the Europe-centered work. Of the two studies on the migration of Bulgarians to the United States, for instance, one is written for young audiences and the other is nearly three decades old. Since the latter's publication, a new Macedonian Orthodox Church has expanded into two dozen American and Canadian cities where recently-immigrated Macedonians had either worshipped in the Bulgarian church or no church at all. Furthermore, neither work analyzes the reality that fully three-quarters of the Bulgarian immigrants to the U.S. were from the Macedonian region, and were often conflicted about their identities as Bulgarians.¹⁶ Neither work mentions the community's transnational connections to Canada and the Balkans, nor do they explore the central role that migration to the United States and Canada played both in the creation of a unique Macedonian ethnic and national consciousness, and in the perpetuation of political and

¹⁶ Altankov, *The Bulgarian-Americans*; Claudia Carlson and David Allen, *The Bulgarian Americans* (New York: Chelsea House, 1990).

cultural values abroad. (To some migrants, the two nations were but “Upper” and “Lower” America, both offering the liberties and opportunities the migrants sought.) With the exception of the brief, reliable entries on Macedonians in the *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, and in George Prpič’s survey of South Slavs in America, the narrative history of Macedonians in the United States is nearly a blank slate.¹⁷

The presence of such a large number of Macedonians in Toronto (alternately between 80,000 and 150,000) has drawn several scholars’ attention to what is, by far, the largest community in the Macedonian diaspora. In the later half of the century, as the Macedonian and Bulgarian ethnic communities in North America diverged into two related but divided groups, the epicenter of Macedonian cultural and religious life shifted from Midwestern states such as Ohio, Illinois, and Michigan, and toward the Toronto metro area.

Consequently, several excellent studies have appeared that explore the range of political and social clubs that formed and the ways they interacted with the city’s remarkably civic-minded neighborhoods.¹⁸ Most useful to this dissertation is the community study, *Sojourners and Settlers*, by Lillian Petroff, an ethnic history of Toronto’s Macedonians before World War II. Though she does little to connect

¹⁷ Anonymous, “Macedonians,” in *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, ed. Stephen Thernstrom (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980); George Prpič, *South Slavic Immigration In America* (Boston: Twayne, 1978).

¹⁸ Peter Vasiliades’ *Whose Are You?* poses the question in its title as a means of exploring the “roots” question that had long been a hallmark of the Toronto Macedonian-Bulgarian community. Vasiliades’ contention is that the question, “whose are you?” is not meant to gain an understanding of one’s parentage, but rather one’s village affiliation. Once the questioner knows from where a person (or the person’s family) came, they are able to associate that person with a sub-set of political and cultural beliefs, and, in the extreme, to gauge their *bona fides* as Macedonians. Peter Vasiliadis, *Whose Are You?: Identity and Ethnicity Among The Toronto Macedonians* (New York: AMS Press, 1989).

Macedonian and Bulgarian migrations, and attributes a confident, almost essentialized, ethnic identity to the Toronto Macedonians, Petroff succeeds in other areas.¹⁹ More than any other work, Petroff spotlights the internal debates among new Toronto migrants over issues such as petitioning for new priests, building new meeting facilities, and expressing Canadian civic virtues. As evident from its title, the book's central theme is the transition from the early sojourner to settlers within the communities in which hard work, temporary living situations, and short-term decision making marked a people intent on returning home.

Some of the richest portraits of Macedonian and Bulgarians at work in the U.S. and Canada come by way of memoirs. Stoyan Christowe, who began his life in America cleaning railroad cars in St. Louis, earned a degree from Valparaiso State University, and went on to a long career in writing and teaching. His five autobiographical memoirs of his life as both a Macedonian immigrant and a proud American serve as a roadmap of the first generations of Macedonian life in North America. Foto Tomev, who settled in Toronto, also spent considerable time chronicling his own life. He seemed more confident, however, in his Macedonian identity than Christowe, while describing a similar litany of hurdles Macedonians faced working in North America and adjusting to the unexpected permanence of their community.²⁰

¹⁹ Petroff, *Sojourners and Settlers*.

²⁰ Coming initially as a sojourner following other men from his native village of Konomladi, Christowe saw himself, alternately, as both Macedonian and Bulgarian, a common phenomenon among early-century migrants. His passage from discombobulated newcomer, to hyphenated-American, to articulate chronicler of the migrant's experience, offers an exquisite primary source that changes over the thirty years of his writing. See Stoyan Christowe, *My American Pilgrimage* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1947); Stoyan Christowe, *The Eagle and the Stork* (New York: Harper's Magazine Press, 1976); Foto Tomev, *Memoirs*, Lillian Petroff, ed. (Toronto: Multicultural Historical Society of Ontario, n.d).

On Nationalists and Transnationalists

While the literature on Macedonian migration and nationalism suffers from substantial gaps, scholarship on national identity and transnationalism has achieved a higher degree of depth. I define nationalism here as individual and collective allegiance to a national and/or sovereign political entity. Through such nationalist feelings, individuals of similar inclination imagine themselves to constitute a definable national community. These national communities often draw upon a sense of perceived similarities among adherents construed in terms of ethnicities, races, tribes, and other forms of collective identification. Nationalism also embraces the processes of inventing and reinventing, remembering and forgetting, and emphasizing versions of events and myths that support the notion of the state (or as was the case with Macedonians, the stateless nation). The process of nation-building perpetually – often flagrantly – mines the past for elements useful in creating a narrative.

Elites often have lead the cultural process of building the nation, deemphasizing, denying, and even eradicating those elements that work to the detriment of the ideal of the state or nation. Yet the development of national identity and nationalism cannot be defined simply as a “top-down” or “bottom-up” process. The creation of a stable national identity inevitably results from the interplay of elites and non-elites alike.²¹ Numerous academics have focused in recent decades on the ways that modern nationalists use the

²¹ Although the study of the “great men” who united their nations has dominated the field of political history, a major accomplishment of immigration and labor historians in recent decades has been uncovering the ways in which working men and women contributed to the invention and reinvention of communal identities. Following the pioneering work of Herbert Gutman, these scholars have shown that despite discrimination working men and women found ways to exercise a degree of agency over their lives. See Herbert Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Working-class and Social History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977; Herbert G. Gutman, *Power and Class: Essays on the American Working Class* (New York: The New Press, 1987).

past to create, and promote, a compelling narrative for the state. Notably, a number of sociologists and anthropologists have grappled with the subject of national identity in order to understand its origins. Fredrik Barth and Clifford Geertz, beginning in the 1960s and 1970s respectively, began testing the early-century notions that race and national identity were static, biologically-based attributes. Geertz argued that nations arose because of certain “primordial attachments” such as belief in a shared lineage, though he was primarily interested in nationality as one component of a society’s broader culture. Barth focused more narrowly on the way individuals of a given community defined themselves and others.²² In the 1980s, a new breed of historians and social scientists articulated even more detailed theories about the “socially constructed” nature of national identity. In doing so, they gave considerable agency to individuals to align themselves with a particular nation as they saw fit.²³

With respect to the rise of nationalism in the Balkans, the description by Anthony Smith of the nationalist as a “political archeologist rediscovering and reinterpreting the communal past to regenerate the community,” seems particularly helpful. The idea that nationalism is the product of both new *and* old, where the latter-day “political archeologist” uncovers antiquated myths and memories, is not entirely satisfactory, however; it begs the question of whether the antiquated feelings were themselves the

²² Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), esp. 234-254; Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1969).

²³ Benedict Anderson described the nation as “an imagined national community,” while Gellner argued that “two men are of the same nation if and only if they *recognize* each other as belonging to the same nation.” Hobsbawm and co-author Terence Ranger believed that traditions, both old and new, were in fact “invented” for discernable reasons at certain points in time. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983); Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

work of a yet earlier “archeologist.” Yet if one accepts, as many of Smith’s peers do, that modern nationalism arose in Europe in the eighteenth century, then we can at least use Smith’s construct to look at the various nationalists who, between the late 1700s and early 1900s, intensified the myths and memories of the past in order to create the modern Balkan states.²⁴

As the grip of the Ottoman Empire loosened in the early nineteenth century, nationalists in Greece, Serbia, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, and eventually Macedonia, conducted the “political archeology” Smith described. They “uncovered” evidence of national “greatness” from pre-Ottoman times, and amplified and exaggerated the evidence to argue that, but for Ottoman rule, their once-glorious people would rule again. In assessing this phenomenon, in Europe and on other continents, contemporary scholars of nationalism have focused their debate over precisely how “new” nations and nationalism are. While difficult and sometimes indecisive, Smith stakes out a middle ground in the debate, arguing that the origins of nationalism are more modern than the “primordialists” (such as Clifford Geertz) believe, while more rooted in the myths and memories of the past than the “modernists” (such as Benedict Anderson) are willing to admit.

In the last two decades, the Smithian view that nations emerge because of the relatively-recent actions of nationalists, but with roots in an earlier era, has become more accepted among scholars (though certainly not among nationalists themselves). This work has implications for this study because of Macedonian nationalism’s late arrival on

²⁴ Anthony D. Smith, “Gastronomy or Geology? The Role of Nationalism in the Reconstruction of Nations,” *Nations and Nationalism* 1, no. 1 (1994), 18-19; Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), ch. 1 and 2.

the national scene, and the fiercely contested nature of its origins. The critical period for the emergence of a popular Macedonian national identity – roughly from 1870 through 1950 – falls several decades after that of Macedonia’s geographical neighbors. To students of modern nationalism, this is of no great import: historical circumstances simply did not allow for Macedonian nationalism to flourish earlier. For Macedonia’s neighbors, however, Macedonia’s tardiness on the national scene is evidence that Macedonian identity was the product of twentieth century Communist manipulation, and not of the “authentic” moment of Balkan cultural renaissance during the early-nineteenth century.

Both approaches, however, suffer from a facile assumption that it is only the actions of nationalists and ordinary villagers *in situ* who determine the success or failure of a nation-building project. Though Smith’s approach is the more useful in explaining the rise of all Balkan nationalisms, he devotes little energy to understanding the transnationalism of migrants who, once ensconced in foreign lands, reflect on their homelands and identities from afar. What has been lacking until recently is a way to capture this reflection, or the “diasporic imagination” - to link the scholarship on nationalism to the work on migration in a way that benefits our understanding of how the latter informs the former.²⁵

We have seen the start of such an academic movement in recent years. A diverse group of scholars has begun to integrate ethnic and nationalism studies with immigration history in fascinating ways.²⁶ Some have termed this hybrid approach “transnational” or

²⁵ Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish, and Jewish Immigrants in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995).

²⁶ Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*; Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000); Linda Basch, Nina

“diasporic” studies, though the subjects vary widely from scholar to scholar.²⁷ Critical to the work of the transnational” academics is an understanding that patriotism, money, radicalism, and nationalism itself are all transnational phenomena. Further, these scholars argue that academics have devoted far more attention to understanding the assimilation of immigrants into their host countries than to the political and cultural ties the immigrants may maintain with their homelands. Finally, they tend to believe that the political feelings of these immigrants have import for the cultures, and even foreign policies, of their home countries.²⁸

One reason to be hopeful is that since World War II, no period has seen as much research and debate on the subject of migration as the 1990s and 2000s. Owing as much

Glick Schiller, and Cristina Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States* (Gordon and Breach Publishers, 1994); Yossi Shain, *Marketing the American Creed Abroad: Diasporas in the U.S. and Their Homelands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). For a fascinating journalistic study of the impact of the Kosovar Albanian diaspora on the 1999 NATO air war over Serbia see Stacy Sullivan, *Be Not Afraid, For You Have Sons in America* (New York: St. Martin’s, 2004).

²⁷ A range of writers such as Edward Said, Maria Todorova, and Homi Bhabha have built upon the concept of socially-constructed nationhood by extending the metaphor into the areas of Middle Eastern Studies, the Balkans, and subaltern studies, respectively. Edward Said, *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage, 1979; Maria Todorova, *Imagining The Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994). Liah Greenfield has provided a controversial theory that describes nationalism largely as a product of social and economic development in Western culture – America, Britain, France, Germany and Russia. See Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

²⁸ For instance, Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, and Cristina Szanton Blanc have laid out an essentially Marxist scheme in which to analyze the subjects. The problem with the Marxist prism, however, is twofold. First, it does not seem to acknowledge that the “transmigrants” of the “old immigration” also were responding to a globalizing world economy. Scholars such as Dirk Hoerder, Bruno Ramirez, and others have been writing about the participation of migrants in the Atlantic economy for two decades. Their work mirrors a movement that has placed phenomena such as slavery, piracy, and trade into the larger context of the “Atlantic littoral.” Second, by highlighting the force of the global economy on migrants’ lives, the Basch, Schiller, and Blanc formulation overlooks the forms of coercion that Gary Gerstle has outlined as fundamental in American early-Twentieth Century nation building, such as anti-immigrant measures and forced Americanization drives. See, Dirk Hoerder, *Labor Migration in the Atlantic Economies: The European and North American working classes During the Period of Industrialization* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985); Bruno Ramirez, *On the Move: French-Canadian and Italian Migrants in the North Atlantic Economy, 1860-1914* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991); Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-*

to more than a decade of high immigration to the U.S., Canada, and much of Western Europe as to the global hotspots that have spawned refugee crises, the recent literature has stirred the pot of migration studies. The new migration has created a new set of concerns and has policymakers around the world grasping for answers to questions about illegal immigration, terrorism, dual citizenship, and other issues. Many members of today's ethnic groups on the move indeed fit the new description of the "transmigrant" - not permanently settled, politically active on behalf of his group in both host and home country, and pluralist in his beliefs.

The new work that grew in response to these changes retired the antiquated notion of migration as a perpetually one-way phenomenon.²⁹ But in theorizing a new approach to these realities, immigration scholars have not simply taken the contemporary research and read it back onto past migrant streams. Upon inspecting a different range of primary sources, contemporary historians of immigration and ethnicity have revealed how numerous past immigration narratives bear a close resemblance to the perceptions of the new streams. Others, who echo the anti-immigrant voices from the early-twentieth century, represent a newly-energized "restrictionist" camp that uses evidence of the vast

1750 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Gary Gerstle, "Liberty, Coercion, and the Making of Americans," *Journal of American History*, 84 (September 1997), 535-553.

²⁹ In the first half of the century, scholars of immigration often relegated immigrants' political ardor and engagement with their homeland to a background position in favor of an analysis of their eventual assimilation and acculturation. Historian Oscar Handlin challenged this orthodoxy with his Pulitzer Prize-winning 1951 study, *The Uprooted*. Handlin chronicled the flight of generic Central European émigrés from abject poverty and discrimination at home to a life of almost overwhelming disorientation in the United States. When a new breed of ethnic and labor studies appeared in the 1960s, the immigrant's political activities were moved closer to the front of the narrative, yet insofar as he was in America now, and working toward a local, group, or national politics within the American context. Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted*, 2nd ed. enl. (Boston: Little, Brown: 1973).

movement of the poor and the persecuted into Western democracies to call for an end, or at least a drastic reduction, to immigration.³⁰

This is not to suggest that historians have only just latched on to the notion that immigration is not a one way phenomenon.³¹ Nor have scholars suggested that, once here, immigrants simply leave behind their prior concerns for a purely American or Canadian political perspective. Rather, the new literature has helped, and challenged, historians to move beyond what Donna Gabaccia refers to as the “tyranny of the national.” By doing so, scholars de-emphasize the settlement in the United States in favor of viewing the global dispersion of a particular group, and the resulting impact on the group’s national and ethnic identity.³² One of the pitfalls of studying diasporas is that at a certain point, studying groups and individuals “everywhere” threatens to leave you “nowhere” in particular. Gary Gerstle has further problematized the writing of transnational history by noting that it tends to focus on periods of high immigration to the host countries, but is less useful analyzing what happens to sojourners when they become settlers during periods of low immigration. As Gerstle has noted in his own retrospective

³⁰ See, for example, “Migrant Workers Make More Passages of Hope,” *Washington Post*, March 7, 2000, E1; Saskia Sassen, *Guests and Aliens* (New York: The New Press, 1999); Tamar Jacoby, ed., *Reinventing the Melting Pot: The New Immigrants and What It Means To Be American* (New York: Basic Books, 2004); Roberta Cohen and Francis M. Deng, *Masses in Flight: The Global Crisis of Internal Displacement* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 1998). For restrictionist literature, see, for instance, Peter Brimelow, *Alien Nation: Common Sense About America's Immigration Disaster* (New York: Random House, 1995). See also publications on illegal immigration from the more moderate Center on Immigration Studies, <http://www.cis.org/topics/illegalimmigration.html#Publications> (Accessed November 2004).

³¹ It has been nearly four decades since Theodore Saloutos commented on the preference of many Greek sojourners to return home after a stint in America. And Frank Thistlethwaite noted the cultural traits British laborers brought with them to America, as well as the high remigration rates among European migrants, as early as 1960. See, Theodore Saloutos, *Greeks In The United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964); Frank Thistlethwaite, "Migration from Europe Overseas in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in Rudolph Vecoli and Suzanne Sinke, eds., *A Century of European Migrations, 1830-1930* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 17-49.

on American immigration historiography, arguing that migrants are free both to wander endlessly and invent freely discounts the crucial role that coercion plays in nation building. In the U.S. context, strong Americanizing forces such as public schools, mass culture, conscription during wartime, and subjugation of minority rights, for instance, have had a coercive effect on the abilities of ethnic groups to maintain their cultural traditions in the manner they see best.³³

This new crop of studies has added considerable detail to our understanding not only of particular ethnic groups, but of the limitations to their acceptance in the United States and Canada.³⁴ What few of the new generation of immigration scholars did, however, was draw connections between the concurrent periods of high immigration to the United States and Canada in the early years of the twentieth century.³⁵ In the case of Macedonian and Bulgarian migration to North America, relying on the traditional model of departure/arrival/settlement obscures a deeper understanding of the multiple motives

³² Donna R. Gabaccia, "Is Everywhere Nowhere? Nomads, Nations, and the Immigrant Paradigm of United States History," *Journal of American History*, 86 (December 1999), 1115. Gabaccia is referring to the book of the same name by Gerard Noiriel.

³³ Gerstle, "Liberty, Coercion, and the Making of Americans," 524-558.

³⁴ These scholars disagreed over the extent to which immigrants to North America were free to define themselves and achieve financial stability in a culture that often treated them harshly. They also clashed over the success, and even the value, of immigrants' efforts to assimilate into mainstream Anglo culture. See John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Pandaemonium: Ethnicity in International Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Nathan Glazer, *Beyond the Melting Pot; The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1970); Gary Gerstle, *Working-Class Americanism: The Politics of Labor In a Textile City, 1914-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Ramirez, *On The Move*; Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, *Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1998); Michael H. Frisch, *Town Into City: Springfield, Massachusetts, and the Meaning of Community, 1840-1880* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973); Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (Boston: Little, Brown: 1993).

³⁵ Though Gerstle, Ramirez, and Frisch, for instance, explored the heavy influx of Canadian immigrants to the Northeastern U.S., studies of immigration to the U.S. and to Canada have generally remained in separate literatures.

for emigration, and the political action the migrants soon embraced. In reality, Macedonians and Bulgarians were both pushed by lack of productive land, fear of violence and conscription into the Ottoman army, and pulled by the allure of financial gain. That the regeneration of their identity happened abroad and at home was a phenomenon that occurred unwittingly and after the fact. But it was a phenomenon, I believe, that required an overseas contingent of men and women to define the terms of struggle in new ways.

Framing the Question: Migration and Macedonian Identity

I have construed this study as a work of cultural history. Working off a definition of culture offered by Clifford Geertz (who himself looked to sociologist Max Weber), wherein society's output in the form of writing, emotions, customs, aspirations, political activities, etc., create webs of meaning and significance that we understand as culture, I will focus on several groups of nationalists and a handful of key turning points, both of which are crucial to understanding the creation and recreation of Macedonian nationality across the century.³⁶ While I will consider individual Macedonian communities that were most vital to the diaspora, this study will not undertake a community by-community approach to Macedonians in North America. Nor will it dwell for long on the issues that typically interest social historians such as economics, mobility, and class. That is not to suggest that such factors are unimportant in the context of understanding ethnic settlements in North America.

³⁶ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 4-5.

Migrants, I believe, are never entirely the same for having migrated. Lurking somewhere between the host communities and the sending countries are the intangible bonds that link the two locales, powered by the “diasporic imagination” of migrants who, upon leaving their homes, will never again fully be in one place or another. Migration, even if temporary, forces a different set of choices upon the migrants than they would have otherwise faced. It also brings migrants into a different social milieu which, inevitably, observes rules and biases that are at least somewhat alien to the migrant. Given the complexity of these changes it is, perhaps, foolish to think that an historical study can settle this issue; my conclusions likely will not suit any nationally-invested party. Rather, I hope to explore the element of migration in the creation of transnational communities and national identity.³⁷

One assumption of this study is that nation-building is ever a two-way cultural process of ethnic and national invention and reinvention, and that if a diaspora forms, the men and women who connect the two worlds – the “transmigrants” – play an important role in this nation-building process.³⁸ For sure, the process of nation-building does not always rely on migrants. Neither is the process unique to Macedonians. Macedonian nationalism belongs to a family of nationalisms that were as much a creation of the diasporas as the home countries. Irish and Israeli nationalism, for instance, would belong in this family, though not all nationalisms would; English and French nationalism largely developed at home despite their sizable diaspora populations.

³⁷ Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*.

³⁸ The term “nation building” today has become synonymous with the physical and social reconstruction of post-conflict zones. Here I use the term to mean the cultural process by which a critical mass of individuals begin to perceive themselves as having similar traits, values, and views, and then choose to capture that sense of shared identity within the confines of an ethnic identity.

Though the domestic politics of immigrant communities has been of interest to ethnic and immigration scholars, the migrants' feelings of national identification with respect to their homeland, and the ways in which such feelings grow, have received far less attention. Likewise, the politics of the national diaspora has played a regrettably small role in the literature on the origins of nationalism. By treating the concept of Macedonian nationalism in a transnational fashion, I hope to begin to bridge the gap between the rich literatures on immigrants' lives in North America and national identity in Southeastern Europe. Hopefully, the connections I draw will extend beyond those continents to inform dialogue on international migration, diasporas, and ethnic relations, while also serving as a useful case-study of the process by which nationalities are invented, reinvented, recollected, and suppressed by those with an interest in the outcome.

Therefore, the essential question behind this inquiry asks: Given that Macedonian national identity is a relative newcomer to the scene, and that Macedonians scattered themselves globally during the period of its development, can we relate the processes of national and diasporic development? A follow-on question asks how we account for the remarkably protean character of Macedonian nationalism across the twentieth century. Nationalism by its nature derives from a multiplicity of factors, both from within and without the nation being studied. In the case of Macedonian nationalism, I believe the formation, and later reformations, of national identity were bound together with the fortunes of migrants from the Macedonian region. It is an historical process, in the Macedonian case, with roots in the nineteenth century, and which continues today. The

Macedonian quest for a homeland is no minor matter. The “Macedonian Question” was the driving force behind the two brutal Balkan Wars of 1912-13, as well as much human suffering before and after them. It helped shape the two-time construction and destruction of the Yugoslav state. As foolish an endeavor as it might seem to use the tools of the cultural historian to disentangle such tenuously woven historical threads, the Macedonian case, it seems, begs for such an approach.³⁹

³⁹ Recent events in the region have shown that Macedonia, disproportionate to its size and wealth, serves as a crucial link in the stability of Southeastern Europe. For example, as the vicious war in Bosnia ground down in 1993, Macedonia became the first site where the United Nations stationed troops as a hedge against the spread of hostilities toward Greece and Turkey. As the future of multilateral groups such as NATO, the United Nations, and the European Union is debated, achieving and maintaining stability in the Balkans is a paramount concern for each. The future of Macedonia is an important component of that stability. While this study focuses its attention on migration, the centrality of nationalism to the formation of diasporic communities (and vice versa) suggests that an eye be kept on the relationship between these two powerful forces. The recent phenomenon of Croats, Serbs and Kosovars in the diaspora returning from the relative comfort of the United States and Canada to fight in the latest Balkan wars suggests as much.

Chapter 2: The Birth of Macedonia, 1870-1903

One popular view of the late-nineteenth century Balkans describes a region clinging to the fringes of Europe, cut off from the advances in communications, economics, industry, and transportation that remade the rest of the continent and North America. The multiplicity of ethnicities and religions in the Balkans, governed by an Ottoman Sultan for nearly half a millennium, rendered the mountainous lands inscrutable to the Western eye. Violence, it was thought, was endemic, even natural, forestalling the emergence of liberal democracy and cultural modernism. If the source of the region's feuds could not be divined, it was assumed that the conflicts would be settled by the letting of blood. Nationalist impulses were not so much political movements with their own historical trajectories as they were expressions of tribal enmities and propensities to violence that were age old. Even though much of Europe had warred for centuries, the complexity of the Balkans seemingly gave it special status. For many, the killing of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914 by a young Bosnian Serb – which led in short order to the outbreak of World War I – only solidified these views.

Contemporary writers and politicians often have carried these stereotypes forward to the present, creating the circular logic that argues, “today the Balkans are un-modern and wracked by violence because the Balkans are un-modern and violent.” For example, at a White House briefing in August 1992, President George H.W. Bush described the war then raging in Bosnia as “a complex, convoluted conflict that grows out of age-old animosities [and] century-old feuds.” The following year author Robert D. Kaplan

stated, “Twentieth-century history *came* from the Balkans. [emphasis added] Here men have been isolated by poverty and ethnic rivalry, dooming them to hate. . . . Among the flophouses of Vienna, a breeding ground of ethnic resentments close to the southern Slavic world, Hitler learned how to hate so infectiously.” Other writers used the fresh Balkan wars of the 1990s to depict an unbroken historical line of mistrust and retribution in which the past explains the present. A 1996 *National Geographic* article, for instance, claimed “the blood feud of the Balkans flames on.” By this reckoning, tribes living in close quarters could only be *expected* to continually clash with one another.¹

Though geographically connected to the lands of the Hapsburgs, Bourbons, and Romanovs, many modern writers treat the Balkans more like the portal to “the Orient” - the Mohammedan lands where hundreds of years earlier Christian armies earned great victories against the enemies of the Cross.² Even as the “modern world” approached the twentieth century, the Balkans remained home to the oddly named “European Turkey,” the last remaining presence in the Balkans of the Ottoman Empire after Greece and Bulgaria gained their independence in 1829 and 1878, respectively. In the heart of European Turkey lay “Macedonia,” an ethnically and religiously diverse region whose

¹ George H.W. Bush, White House briefing, Federal News Service, August 6, 1992, quoted in Samantha Power, “*A Problem From Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2003), 282; Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History* (New York: Vintage, 1996), xxvi; Priit J. Vesilind, “Macedonia: Caught In The Middle,” *National Geographic*, vol. 189, no. 3, March 1996, 121. Much recent, excellent scholarship has largely, but by no means completely, diminished these popularly held views. Beyond the more extensive treatment of the subject in the introductory historiographical essay, see especially Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History* (New York: The Modern Library, 2000), xxv-xliii; Misha Glenny, *The Balkans: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers 1809-1999* (New York: Penguin, 2000); Maria Todorova, *Imagining The Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

² This oversimplification and misrepresentation of the “East” or the “Orient” by the collective cultural entity known as the “West” is the subject of much recent work by scholars working in the postmodern and poststructural linguistic and cultural traditions. The classic study is Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979). See also Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge: London and New York, 1994); Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

boundaries and ethnic composition were, and still are, a matter of dispute.³ Macedonia had long served as a crossroads for traders and invaders making their way between Europe and the Near East. Then the very term “Macedonian” tended to be more evocative than determinate. Qualifiers often are needed but seldom provided.



Figure 3. “[Changes in Turkey in Europe 1856 to 1878](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/history_balkans.html)” from *Literary and Historical Atlas of Europe*, by J.G. Bartholomew, 1912, available at http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/history_balkans.html.

Because the Macedonian region was so politically and demographically complex, many thought that no distinct nationality would emerge there. One finds no stories about

³ I use the term “Macedonia” here, and hereafter until otherwise noted, to refer to the Macedonian region of the nineteenth century, and not an independent state or coherent political entity. Though the exact borders are disputed, Macedonia generally encompassed the territory from the Shar Mountains that border Kosovo, on the north, to the swath of modern Greece, which includes Salonika and Florina on the south. The western border extends south along the Drin River to the Ohrid and Prespa lakes, and then eastward past the border of modern Bulgaria into what, at the time, was called Thrace. Until the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, at least part of Macedonia remained under the control of the Ottoman Empire. Macedonia did not exist as a recognized political entity until 1944 when it became one of six republics of the newly formed Yugoslavia. Having gained its independence in 1991, it exists today as an internationally recognized nation under the provisional name Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) owing to Greek objections to the use of the Macedonian name, which Greece considers to be Greek cultural property.

Alexander the Great, the ancient “King of Macedon,” in nineteenth century nationalist literature, and virtually no one then spoke of a Macedonian “people.” In fact, the more “mature” Bulgarian, Greek, and Serbian nations each saw elements in the Macedonian landscape that they believed would bolster their own nationalistic movements. As dramatic political and cultural changes swept the Balkans in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, however, a distinct Macedonian national movement took root. Four interrelated phenomena – economic crisis, the presence of foreign diplomats and missionaries, ethnic and religious nationalism, and “Great Power” influence – brought this fledgling Macedonian nationalism to life. The degree to which these changes impacted upon the emergence of a common Macedonian national identity is the starting point for the study of a group’s ethnic birth.⁴

A New Age of Nationalism: Macedonia at a Turning Point

The poverty and beauty of Macedonia had interested outsiders for much of the nineteenth century. Herman Melville and *New York Herald* founder James Gordon Bennet chronicled life there in the 1850s. Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx wrote a series of articles in the *New York Daily Tribune* between 1853 and 1856 describing Macedonia

⁴ Scholars generally agree that that the early- and mid-Nineteenth Century marked the highpoint of nationalist feelings among Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs, and other Balkan and Eastern European groups. The timing of the emergence of a Slavic Macedonian national identity, however, is a hotly contested subject in both nationalist and more objective scholarship. On the emergence of Balkan nationalisms, see Glenny, *The Balkans: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers 1809-1999*; Gale Stokes, ed., *Nationalism in the Balkans: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York, 1984); Loring M. Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict: Ethnic Nationalism in a Transnational World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Basil Gounaris, “Social Cleavages and National ‘Awakening’ in Ottoman Macedonia,” *East European Quarterly*, 29 (1995); Marin V. Pundeff, “Bulgarian Nationalism,” Peter F. Sugar and Ivo J. Lederer, eds, *Nationalism in Eastern Europe* (London: 1971), 98-110; Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History* (New York: NYU Press, 1998).

and the Balkans to American readers.⁵ The popular view was that Macedonia was a backwards place ruled by treachery and outside manipulation of the local politics. In 1905, one commentator wrote,

Macedonia is racked by political intrigue without, and within by turbulent, ambitious, mischief-making factions, which are neither of the people, nor voice their legitimate aspirations. It is the saddest part of Macedonia's unhappy lot that its worst enemies are those who professions of friendship are loudest."⁶

Several years later, the British travel essayist Henry Noel Brailsford provided firsthand insight into village life and the roiling politics of Greek, Bulgarian, Serbian, and now Macedonian nationalism.

[Students] leave the schools to plunge [back] into the middle ages. There is no scope for their energy in their native village. . . . It is this stagnation, tempered by anarchy and varied by famine, which is the real fact behind Macedonian revolts.

Pigs tumble against your legs, the only creatures that seem quite free, since no Moslem marauder will touch them. . . . The houses are of mud, or in a hilly country of rough undressed stone. The roofs are carelessly thatched and everything speaks of squalor, but it is none the less a disorder which brilliant sunshine and balmy air may render picturesque.⁷

There is little doubt about the economic privations that villagers in the Macedonian region faced, made the worse by a broader economic regression that had begun in Southeastern Europe in the 1870s.⁸ Nations across Western Europe and North America were urbanizing rapidly, and inventions like electricity, indoor plumbing, and

⁵ Herman Melville, *Journal of a Visit to Europe and the Levant: October 11, 1856 – May 6, 1857*, H.C. Horsford, ed., (Princeton, 1955); Hristo Andonov Polyanski, *Attitudes of the U.S.A. Towards Macedonia* (Skopje: Macedonian Review Editions, 1983), 21.

⁶ Evidence of the Christian Schools, *The Population of Macedonia* (London: Ede, Allom and Townsend, 1905), quoted in Anastasia Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood: Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia, 1870-1990* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 81-82.

⁷ Henry Noel Brailsford, *Macedonia: Its Races and Their Future* (London: Methuen & Co., 1906, reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1971), 42-43.

⁸ Institute of National History, Skopje, *A History of the Macedonian People* (Skopje: Macedonian Review Editions, 1979), 132-133.

mass transit were remaking the landscapes of “Western” cities like New York City, Chicago, Toronto, London, and Vienna.⁹ But modern amenities were relatively slow to come to southeastern Europe, and for most, daily life remained overwhelmingly rural and agricultural. With the exception of the railroads that connected the key Balkan cities of Salonica, Skopje, Sofia, and Plovdiv in the 1860s, little modern technology entered the region, and in many hamlets the routines of peasant life had remained largely unchanged for over a century.

To assume, however, that the stereotype of a Balkans frozen in time was correct would be to miss profound shifts in the social and economic foundations of Macedonia beginning in the late-nineteenth century. Though Ottoman policies had muted cleavages of ethnicity, language, and religion for over a century, ethnic nationalism in the geographical orbit around Macedonia had shattered this status quo. For example, in 1876 and 1878, amidst a cultural and political renaissance in Bulgaria that extended into the Macedonian region, violent insurgencies took place in Macedonia in response to Ottoman indifference to local Slavic Christian needs. Diverse nationalisms sprung up and matured as broad changes swept over the European lands the Ottomans once controlled, and glimpses of the once-great Byzantine world re-emerged where Europe met the Near East.¹⁰ The Macedonian region also had ties to the global economy: demand for Macedonian cotton rose dramatically when traders eager to supply the U.S. government during the Civil War looked to the Balkans and North Africa for surplus product. Cotton

⁹ The debate over what exactly constitutes “the West” is a serious one and not one that I treat at length here. In using “the West” and “Western” in this study I refer to two elements, one political and one cultural: the liberal democracies of Europe – Britain and France – and the North American democracies of the United States and Canada, and also to the culture of modernity in technology, freedom of religion, transparent government, and verbal and artistic expression.

¹⁰ Slavko Milosavljević, *Facts About the Republic of Macedonia* (Skopje: Zumpres, 1997), 7.

from Macedonia temporarily became a global export commodity. The question that remained was whether the prevailing political trends would come to Macedonia as had the economic ones.¹¹

Macedonians were the last of the Balkan groups to begin to see themselves as a distinct ethnic-based nationality.¹² The Macedonian region included portions of what is today Greece, Bulgaria, Albania, and the Republic of Macedonia. In the late nineteenth century, it offered only Skopje, Bitola, and Salonica as cities large enough to serve as centers of regional commerce and culture. Of the approximately two million people in the Macedonian region, the overwhelming number lived in small towns or villages. Most spoke a Slavic language that is known today as Macedonian, but which at the time was considered a dialect of Bulgarian.¹³ (Villagers generally thought they spoke the “local language.”) Day-to-day life ebbed and flowed with the planting and harvest seasons, and few people identified themselves in national terms. Language and religion were the most important determinants of an individual’s station and self-identification. Residents maintained a strong sense of localism that was bounded by their village, their church, and their neighbors. Stoyan Christowe, who was born in the Macedonian village of

¹¹ A further indication of how interdependent world markets had become by the 1860s – and how much more connected to financial currents of the West the Balkans became – is that Macedonian farmers were actually growing a strain known as “New Orleans” cotton from seeds and methods to which they had been introduced a few years earlier. Polyanski, *Attitudes of the U.S.A. Towards Macedonia*, 26-27.

¹² There is a strong case to be made that “ethnicity” and “nationality” have distinct enough meanings to not be used interchangeably. However, because national identity has hewed so closely to ethnic identity in the period under consideration, in the case of Macedonians I generally use these terms to mean the same thing unless otherwise noted.

¹³ Not all who spoke a Slavic language were Slavs. European Turkey was home to a diverse population that included Ladino-speaking Jews, as well as Vlachs, Albanians, Serbs, and Gypsies (Roma).

Konomladi in 1898, remembered a childhood trip to the town of Lerin, 20-30 kilometers away from home, as the highpoint of his young life.¹⁴

For most villagers, life centered on small family plots that included gardens with peppers, tomatoes, tobacco, and some cotton. Most homesteads kept a number of sheep and goats that supplied wool, milk, and meat. Members of the *zadruga*, or extended family, lived in close quarters and played critical roles in the functioning of the domestic economy. Clothes for men and women were of homespun wool and cotton. Women were almost always in long skirts, thick wool socks, blouses, and vests, with an ever-present *baboushka*, or kerchief, covering their heads. Men typically wore baggy pantaloons and wool socks with stiff shirts and vests, and often a broad sash or short skirt over their pants. Red, white, and black dominated, and any dyeing that had to be done to achieve those colors was almost certainly done at home or else purchased locally. For both sexes, handmade leather *opintsi*, moccasin style shoes with pointed toes, were common.¹⁵

Nationalistic movements initially made little headway in Macedonia. Macedonian villages were too insular and religious identity, rather than ethnic identity, was more important in the lives of Christians. Nevertheless, Macedonian and Bulgarian elites, and a larger corps of Western missionaries, writers, and diplomats, began to break down this Macedonian insularity and open the region to nationalist ferment. The nineteenth century decline of the Ottoman Empire already had opened the door to Balkan

¹⁴ Stoyan Christowe, *My American Pilgrimage* (New York: Little, Brown & Co., 1947), 10.

¹⁵ For a useful overview of Macedonian folk culture, see *Macedonia: A Collection of Articles About The History and Culture of Macedonia* (Toronto: Selyani Macedonian Folklore Group, 1982).

nationalisms.¹⁶ Greece and Serbia wrested their autonomy away from the Empire in the middle of the nineteenth century, and seized the opportunity to strengthen the hand of their respective Churches in the territories they administered.¹⁷

By the late-nineteenth century Greek and Serbian clerics and intellectuals also began their own periods of “Renaissance,” in which they rekindled a public interest in their national literatures, and stoked feelings of irredentism - a desire to expand the nation’s borders to the greatest extent achieved during their pre-Ottoman existence. The ardor of these nationalists stoked a similar kind of affection among Macedonians. During the height of this nationalist literature, a number of writers and educators (whose work I examine in coming pages) began to explore the notion that uniqueness of the Slavic dialect spoken in many Macedonian villages, and the reluctance of many villagers to identify themselves with any of the existing nationalities, might indicate the birth of a new ethnicity. Before examining this phenomenon, however, we must first look at the cultural, political, and economic circumstances that gave rise to it.

¹⁶ Scholars of the Ottoman Empire debate when the empire’s decline began, with some dating it back to the eighteenth century. More plausible is that the Greek, Serbian, and Bulgarian nationalist movements of the nineteenth century began a period of Ottoman geographic contraction that, by the twentieth century, left only the Macedonian region remaining as the empire’s European holdings. There is little doubt but that ordinary villagers were faced with frequent challenges to their basic survival over the last half of the nineteenth century. See Justin McCarthy, *The Ottoman Turks: An Introductory History to 1923* (London: Longman, 1997), chs. 9,10; Maria Todorova, “The Ottoman Legacy in the Balkans,” in L. Carl Brown, ed., *Imperial legacy: The Ottoman Imprint on the Balkans and the Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 45-77.

¹⁷ Even a cursory glance at a map of Europe, and a basic sense of the nationalistic movements underway in France and Italy, for instance, indicated that conflict with the Ottoman leadership over their Balkan holdings was likely. Maria Todorova has pointed to contributing factors that allowed these new Balkan states to break free of Ottoman control and remain independent, such as the lack of longstanding landed nobility, the small size of the middle class, and the relative freedom of the peasants in contrast to the feudalism that had been common throughout much of Western Europe. Todorova’s broader point was that once these states had elements of sufficiently developed nationalist movements – such as an independent church and a recognized language – a number of contributing social and economic factors actually helped along their split from the empire. See Todorova, “The Ottoman Legacy in the Balkans,” 61.

Glimpse of the New World: The West Brings Politics and Religion East

European Turkey was by no means *terra incognita* to Western Europeans and North Americans in the nineteenth century, and many residents of the Macedonian region had at least some contact with outsiders. A British consulate had existed in the Aegean port city of Salonica almost continually since 1715. It was later moved to two other key cities in the Macedonian region - Bitola, and then after a respite, to Skopje in March 1899.¹⁸ Because of diplomats and travel writers like Henry Brailsford, educated readers from Britain probably understood the Balkans better than any other Western Europeans. But it was arguably evangelicals, and not diplomats, who played the larger role in introducing Western political and religious attitudes to the Macedonian region itself. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the Macedonian region became a “burned-over district” as American Protestant missionaries, as well as Greek and Bulgarian Orthodox clerics, competed for the allegiance of local Christians.

The Macedonian region was by no means entirely Christian; though Christians represented a majority in most areas, the region as a whole was known for its almost dizzying heterogeneity, with Turkish and Albanian Moslems, Jews and Gypsies, as well as Christians from a variety of ethnic groups, including Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs, Romanians, and Vlachs living there.¹⁹ The fact that the non-Moslem clerics could pursue

¹⁸ The Aegean port city of Salonica, which Greeks often call Thessaloniki and Macedonians call Solun, was considered the de facto regional capital of the Macedonian region. National Archives of Macedonia, *Dokumenti - Britanskite Konsuli vo Makedonia, 1797-1915* (Skopje, 2002), 16-17.

¹⁹ Reliable demographic numbers for Macedonia are difficult to reconcile because of the lack of agreed-upon borders. Yet Ottoman numbers are generally better than those that came from the independent successor states. Macedonia was a polyglot region in the nineteenth century and remains one today. One count, taken in 1831, put the percentage of Christians in Rumelia (the Macedonian district with Manastir (Bitola) as its capital) at 67%, with Muslims comprising 29%. Another count for 1878 put the Muslim population of the entire Balkan region at only 14.7%, though this is almost surely an undercount. A more accurate account reported a 30% Muslim population in the Balkans in 1876 as compared to 45% Christian, which includes Bulgarians, Greeks, Serbs, Romanians, and smaller numbers of Russians and Armenians.

souls in lands under Moslem Turkish control owed to the lenient policy of religious toleration practiced by the Ottomans. Though Macedonia did not, by modern standards, enjoy true freedom of religion – and in fact experienced religious violence and coercion – the Sultan’s toleration of multiple religions in European Turkey made for a more liberal policy than in other parts of Europe.²⁰ The constant presence of outsiders reinforced notions that the “Great Powers” in America and Western Europe had a sustained self-interest in local Balkan politics. Of particular interest here is how the relative pluralism and confessional competition in Macedonia allowed foreign missionaries to penetrate the region, while at the same time the degeneration of the Ottoman Empire made political independence for the region’s Slavic populations seem like a plausible goal.²¹

Despite the presence of diplomats, journalists, and religious leaders campaigning for greater influence throughout the Balkans, the average villager likely came into contact only with Western missionaries, probably American Protestants. The American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions (hereafter, ABCFM), the main American evangelical group active in the Balkans, began their Middle Eastern work in Malta in 1822.²²

See Kemal H. Karpat, *Ottoman Population 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 16-46.

²⁰ While Christians in European Turkey were not generally forced to convert to Islam, and gained more latitude to worship in their native tongue after the formation of the Exarchate in 1870, treatment of non-Moslems by the Ottoman authorities was not necessarily equal. Specifically, the Christian boys were often subject to the Ottoman *devşirme*, a process by which non-Moslems were culled for a lifetime of mandatory service in the Ottoman military. See McCarthy, *The Ottoman Turks*, 108-109.

²¹ McCarthy, *The Ottoman Turks*, 127-132. For purposes of definition, I take “Slavic” to mean those largely Christian villagers in the Macedonian region who spoke a “Slavonic” or “Slavic” language like Bulgarian or Serbian. Though some linguists, like Victory Friedman, have traced the origins of a separate Macedonian language back to the early nineteenth century, few Macedonian nationalists regarded it as such until later in the century. I have chosen to focus on this group primarily because it is among this cohort that various strains of Macedonian nationalism began developing in the late nineteenth century.

²² Such an early date suggests that the missionary impulse was less related to the upsurge of Balkan nationalisms in the nineteenth century, or to a perceived threat from Islam, than to an upsurge in American evangelical fervor in the United States.

Missionaries from the ABCFM spread themselves around the world, but in the second half of the nineteenth century, they dispatched their largest contingent - some 1353 career and associate missionaries - to what the organization termed the “Near East.”²³ Given the roughly 2000 Orthodox Christian parishes in Macedonia at the time, the presence of so many missionaries meant that a significant plurality of the clerics at work in Macedonia were likely foreigners, laboring on behalf of a branch of Christianity largely unknown in the Balkans.²⁴ They labored to “save” a population through religion and works that would ultimately seek to save itself economically by venturing abroad. The level of interaction noted in the records of the ABCFM leaves little doubt that the missionaries’ presence had an impact on many villagers’ lives, and perhaps provided the villagers with a glimpse of life in a freer, prosperous society.²⁵

The half-century experiment in religious conversion had mixed results.

Missionaries plied their trade in Bulgaria – and independent nation since 1878 – as well as Macedonia, and assembled and disseminated grammar books, created a monthly magazine, and published books, all in the Bulgarian language. They helped translate the

²³ This catch-all category extended beyond the Levant and covered Turkey, European Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Albania, Greece, and Bulgaria. Because the Macedonian region extended into Turkey and European Turkey, Albania, Greece, and Bulgaria, it is likely that many of these missionaries - and perhaps half or more - served somewhere in Macedonia.

²⁴ William E. Strong, *The Story of the American Board: An Account of the First Hundred Years of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions* (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1910), 2.

²⁵ Much of the primary and secondary source material for this section draws from the Records of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions at the Congregational Library in Boston, MA. Between a handful, and more than a dozen, missionaries were posted to such Macedonian villages as Bitola (often called by the older name, Manastir), Vodena, Prilep, Salonica and Strumiča. Personnel issues, as well as problems with supplies and transportation through the rugged terrain, were common topics of discussion among those posted there, as was the general deprivation in Macedonia during this period. Records of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions, Congregational Library, Boston, MA, (hereafter ABCFM Records), Reel #506, The Near East, Unit 5, Vol. 7; William Webster Hall, *Puritans in the Balkans: The American Board Mission in Bulgaria, 1878-1918, A Study In Purpose and Practice* (Sofia, 1938), ch. 2,3.

New Testament into Bulgarian, thus giving an impetus to read to many who previously had been illiterate. Most villages maintained their Orthodoxy despite the presence of the missionaries, but not all. For instance, in the 1880s, a count revealed only a handful of converts to Protestantism in the Macedonian villages of Dabilya and Dragomirovo. Yet Protestants numbered in the hundreds in larger towns like Strumiča and Bansko in southeastern Macedonia. In the Ražlog region, nearly a third of the population had converted. Towns that took on a Protestant cast often stayed that way.²⁶ In Bulgaria, missionaries spread the printed word, encouraged cultural renaissance movements, and in that way, stimulated the subsequent displays of political nationalism. Prince Ferdinand of Montenegro remarked at the time, with obvious hyperbole but perhaps a grain of truth, “had there been no American missionaries, there would have been no Bulgaria.”²⁷ And the rise of Bulgarian nationalism would set the stage for the penetration of nationalist sentiment in Macedonia.

A Contest for Spirits and Minds: The Rise of Bulgarian Orthodoxy

If the influx of Protestant missionaries introduced a broader view of the religious world to Macedonia after 1850, the subsequent Bulgarian Orthodox religious and cultural renaissance would build dramatically upon this first breach of the status quo. Over the last decades of the nineteenth century this renaissance drew upon the same degree of Ottoman religious toleration that permitted the missionaries’ work, and set in motion

²⁶ Polyanski, *Attitudes of the U.S. Towards Macedonia*, 37. For example, Boris Trajkovski, the President of the Republic of Macedonia who died in a plane crash in 2004, was a lay minister from Strumiča from a family that converted to Protestantism.

²⁷ Edward B. Haskell, *American Influence in Bulgaria* (New York: The Missionary Review of the World, 1919), 3, quoted in Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood*, 83.

significant changes in the lives of villagers throughout the Macedonian region. By bringing into high relief two important markers of identity in the Ottoman Empire – religion and language – the renaissance also outlined the contours of the emerging debate over Macedonian national identity. And by resorting to violence and coercion to achieve the goals that emerged from that debate, the men who took up the chore of liberating Macedonia from Ottoman rule contributed to the bloodshed that has marked efforts to settle the “Macedonian Question” ever since.

The re-creation of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, or “Exarchate” as it was then known, allowed many Slavs in Macedonia to worship in their own language. This event preceded, and accelerated, the formation of a Macedonian intellectual elite, members of which posited the notion of a Macedonian linguistic and national identity separate from the Bulgarian one. Both movements drew upon such well-documented historical moments as the Enlightenment, and the American and French Revolutions; claims to freedoms of religion and of assembly would become critical pieces of the Macedonian nationalist movement. The myths of noble men fighting against long odds invoked in reference to those earlier movements are reflected in the Balkan movements as well. Even more central to both was the campaign to free Bulgarians and Macedonians from the “tyranny” or “slavery” of Ottoman rule.²⁸ While the initial impact of the movements was contained locally, the spiritual and intellectual changes they unleashed had significant implications for the formation of the Bulgarian and Macedonian diasporas in the twentieth century.

²⁸ Duncan Perry, *The Politics of Terror: The Macedonian Liberation Movements, 1893-1903* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1988), 31-45.

The national liberation movement in Bulgaria began in earnest around 1870 as its advocates called on their countrymen to gain their independence from Ottoman control much as nationalist movements in Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, and Romania had done four decades earlier. The Bulgarian liberation movement did not begin with a display of military might. Rather, the first step was widespread agitation among villagers for greater religious autonomy from the Greek Orthodox Church for Orthodox Slavic Christians in Bulgaria and Macedonia. This desire for greater autonomy arose among a few million villagers who spoke Bulgarian, or a closely related Slavonic dialect.

An independent Bulgarian Orthodox Church had once existed for centuries, but had been eliminated in the 1760s because of the dominance of the Greek Orthodox Church. Additionally, the Ottoman leadership in 1767 abolished the “autocephalous” – or independent – Orthodox Archbishopric in the Macedonian town of Ohrid, a fount of Eastern Orthodoxy since the ninth century that predated the modern Orthodox Churches.²⁹ After doing away with the early Bulgarian and Ohrid Churches, the Greek Orthodox leadership, or “Patriarchate,” had gained control over the entire bureaucratic structure of European Christians in European Turkey. In the argot of the Ottoman bureaucracy, which divided the population by religion into *millets*, this cohort was the *rum millet*, probably after the term *Rumelia*, sometimes used to describe the region.

²⁹ Because the Ohrid archbishopric was once autocephalous, was never in Greece or Bulgaria, and was the base for the most important early saints in the Orthodox Church, it later became an important building block for the Macedonian national movement.



Figure 4. Icon of St. Naum of Ohrid, from St. Naum monastery in Ohrid, c. 14th C., Council for Research into South-Eastern Europe of the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Skopje, Macedonia, 1993, available at <http://faq.macedonia.org/religion/ohrid.archbishopric.html> (Accessed November 2004).

As a result, Christians in hundreds of villages within the *rum millet* who did not even speak Greek had to attend Greek-language schools and religious services for lack of other options.³⁰ The imposition of the Greek language became a source of irritation for Slavic Christian villagers in Macedonia, which was the geographic center of the *rum millet*. Villagers who spoke Bulgarian (or another Slavic variant) their entire lives often were expected to welcome the Greek language as their own. Greeks were not considered Slavs, and Greek teachers and officials changed families' Slavic names to Greek ones. Foto Tomev recalled that even as he began his schooling in his village of Zhelevo just after the turn of the twentieth century, the assimilationist policies continued:

I was five or six years of age when my father took me to be registered in the Greek school. Greek was taught in our schools. It was a foreign language

³⁰ Bulgarian, like Russian and Serbo-Croatian, is a language based on the ninth century Cyrillic alphabet. The alphabet was first inscribed by the Christian monks Cyril and Methodius, and was put into wider use by their students, Clement and Naum. The Greek language, derived from the much older Greek alphabet, bears little similarity to the Cyrillic-based languages, and it is unlikely many villagers would have been fluent in both.

imposed on us. . . . No one in our village knew how to speak Greek except for those who went to Greece to work despite the massive effort of Greek propaganda. This was true of all the villages in Macedonia. . . . There were three priests in Zhelevo who served under Greek Patriarchal jurisdiction including: Father Vasil, Father Andon and Father Elia. These three men had little education. They read the Bible in Greek but they understood little of what they read.³¹

For decades prior to 1870, Bulgarian clerical and intellectual elites chafed under the Patriarch's leadership. They claimed to suffer under a "double yoke" of Ottoman and Patriarchate domination. In that year, much to the disappointment of the Greek Patriarchate, the Ottoman Porte relented and permitted the re-creation of an independent Bulgarian Church. Soon after, the Patriarchate excommunicated members of the Bulgarian Church. According to Anastasia Karakasidou, the formation of the Bulgarian Orthodox "Exarchate" served as the seminal moment for the Bulgarian liberation movement, providing Bulgarian elites with "a strong organizational foundation from which to construct their nation and their political state."³²

The formation of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in 1870 began a quarter-century propaganda war between the Greek and Bulgarian Churches to influence the Slavic population of Macedonia. Both sides, and the militias that supported their views, employed coercion, treachery, physical threats, and retributive violence in a village-by-

³¹ Foto S. Tomev, *Memoirs*, Lillian Petroff, ed. (Toronto: Multicultural Historical Society of Ontario, no date), 3,4,6.

³² It is common to read Slavic Christians complain of the "Ottoman yoke" during these years. Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood*, 78, 86. Behind the putative reality of religious toleration in the Ottoman State, the establishment of the new Bulgarian Church set off a tense struggle between the Greek Orthodox Christian leadership in Constantinople and Slavic Christians in Bulgaria and Macedonia. Within the hierarchy of the empire few positions were more important than the patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church. Even though he was the spiritual and administrative head of what in the empire was essentially a minority group, his influence both on the Ottoman "Porte," or supreme leadership, and on the Greek Orthodox congregations, and their priests, was enormous. Brailsford, *Macedonia: Its Races and Their Future*, 102.

village contest to achieve ecclesiastical dominion over the local Christian population.³³ The competition was ruthless, but not without rules: Ottoman officials mandated that a Bulgarian priest be installed only if two thirds of the local parishioners chose the Exarchate to be their church. To a large extent, both sides followed the rule. Yet this did little to stop the competition from proceeding where there was confusion over local inclinations, or where sympathies that could be swayed with cash or more coercive measures.³⁴ In the decades after 1870, the spread of the Exarch to hundreds of largely Slavic-speaking villages represented an enormous success for the Bulgarian national movement. According to Duncan Perry, between 1870 and 1900 the Exarchate won over 1,232 out of a total of 1,854 churches in Macedonia's 15 dioceses.³⁵

The Ottoman willingness to allow local parishes to choose their own orientation was groundbreaking. By basing the establishment of Bulgarian Orthodox parishes on choice, districts (and by extension, the hundreds of villages within them) were given a significant degree of religious agency over their lives.³⁶ The notion of Bulgarian political autonomy followed close behind its movement toward religious autonomy. In 1878 the Bulgarian portion of the Ottoman Empire demanded independence, and war broke out between Russia and Bulgarian forces, on one side, and the Ottoman Empire on their other. Russia saw an affinity with Bulgaria as another ethnically Slavic nationality and

³³ Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood*, 77-95.

³⁴ Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans: Volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 335-348, Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood*, 78-82.

³⁵ Perry, *The Politics of Terror*, 17.

³⁶ Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, 344. Ethnic Greeks from villages north of Greece's border – prior to the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 – who emigrated likely retained their Greek ethnic identity when joining a parish abroad. Yet among Slavic-speaking Bulgarians and Macedonians, I have encountered no instance where an emigrant joined a Greek parish in the pre-WWI years of migration.

decided to support it as a way to capitalize on a weakened Ottoman state. Russia devastated the Ottomans in battle, and under the Treaty of San Stefano of 1878, forced the empire to cede all of European Turkey to Bulgaria. This new “Greater Bulgaria” dramatically shifted the power balance in the region and thus threatened the Greeks and the European Great Powers, who demanded that Bulgaria’s gains be curtailed. With the Treaty of Berlin, signed in July 1878, Macedonia was taken back from Bulgaria and returned to the Ottomans; European Turkey had briefly disappeared and now reemerged. But an independent Bulgaria remained.³⁷

Though tactically a smart move for all parties, save Bulgaria, the geographic “corrections” to San Stefano made at Berlin gave rise to two contradictory impulses which ultimately had dire consequences for the inhabitants of Macedonia – the Bulgarian desire to recapture what it had lost at Berlin, and the Greek and Serbian desire to grab what Bulgaria had gained at San Stefano. At the nexus of these competing interests was born the “Macedonian Question.” All the Christian nations of Europe sought to chase the Moslem Ottoman Empire from Europe. They bitterly disagreed, however, over who deserved to rule the Macedonian region. In 1878, only a few powerless individuals suggested it should be a “people” known as “Macedonians.”³⁸

To a certain degree, the vexed nature of the “Macedonian Question” is explained by the geographical reality that Macedonia was, and has been, at the heart of the expansionist tendencies of each of her neighbors. Anastasia Karakasidou noted the region’s “in-between” status just before the Macedonian national movement was to

³⁷ Richard J. Crampton, *Bulgaria 1878-1918: A History* (Boulder and New York: East European Monographs and Columbia University Press), 14-23.

³⁸ Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia* (New York: Viking, 1941. rpt. New York: Penguin Books, 1994), 576-577.

begin. “Caught between two emerging nation-states [Bulgaria and Greece] struggling for control over them,” Karakasidou said, “the Slavic-speaking population of the area lacked either a national consciousness of their own or sufficient resources to consolidate themselves independently of both Greek and Bulgarian dominance.” Therefore, after 1878, Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia lusted after Macedonia, finding in the Macedonian region fulfillment of their own nationalist myths and territorial aspirations.³⁹

For Greece, Macedonia held the appeal of the pre-Christian kingdom of Alexander the Great. The very name, “Macedonia,” they felt, argued for the remarkable pedigree of the Hellenic world. Possessing Macedonia would also bolster Greece’s claim to have been the center of the pre-Ottoman Byzantine Empire.⁴⁰ For Serbia, Macedonian Slavs represented a Christian population that could potentially be brought into the same ethno-linguistic fold and historic narrative that dated back five centuries to Tsar Dušan’s medieval Serb Kingdom. Bulgaria, thinking back to the height of its own power in the pre-Ottoman years, too hoped to make Macedonia part of its return to national greatness.

³⁹ Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood: Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia, 1870-1990*, 81. The decades following the French Revolution of 1789 were fertile ones for ideas of nationalism across Europe: Polish, Belgian, and Italian nation-building efforts all began in the early-nineteenth century, for instance. Balkan nationalist movements were just as common, and a number of individuals emerged from the period to assume larger-than-life profiles among the masses of their respective countries. In Bulgaria in the late 1700s, Father Paisesi’s hagiography of Bulgarian national history prepared the grounds for numerous *chitalishte*, or reading groups, and *esnafi*, or guild-like groups of merchants, that propelled the late nineteenth century *vozdazdenie*, or cultural awakening, which harked back to Bulgaria’s Byzantine and pre-Byzantine role as a cradle of Balkan Slavic culture. In Serbia, Ilija Garašinin, a powerful minister under two nineteenth century Serb leaders wrote a famous memo in 1844, the *Načertanje*, calling for restoration of the glory of pre-1389 Serbia of Tsar Stephen Dušan. Because the notion of Pan-Slavism was a key part of Serbian nationalism, it came into conflict with a pivotal figure in Croatian nationalism, Josip Strossmeyer. Strossmeyer was also in favor of Pan-Slavism, but with Croatia, and not Serbia, as the head any potential union of Slav peoples.

⁴⁰ In the nineteenth century, Greece offered their citizens a vision of a return to their former cultural and territorial greatness and termed it the *Meghali Idea*, or Great Idea. The *Meghali Idea* was a product of the Philhellene movement, which, with help from foreigners like the British and French, celebrated the cultural achievements of two millennia of Greek history. Nationalist writers like Adamantios Korais sought to restore the glory of ancient Greek culture. He published a 17 volume *Library of Greek Literature* and was

Bulgarian nationalists were drawn to Macedonia, too, because even if the majority of Christians in Macedonia did not see themselves as Bulgarians, the language and cultural outlook of the people there resembled Bulgarian more than they did Greek or Serbian.⁴¹

Multiple and Malleable: Identities in the Macedonian Region

The rise of Bulgaria in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was not purely a religious or military phenomenon. In fact, the successes of those two related ventures actually rode the crest of a cultural renaissance that was almost a century in the making. Despite the fact that the Bulgarian renaissance post-dated those of Bulgaria's neighbors by several decades, glimmers of it were on the horizon as early as 1762 when Father Paisii, a Bulgarian monk, completed the first written history of Bulgaria.⁴² Equally important was the publication of the New Testament in Bulgarian in 1840 by Neofit Rilski. Rilski's accomplishment was encouraged, and even supported, by missionaries from the ABCFM, as well as by the British and Foreign Bible Society, and the Russian Bible Society.⁴³

The publication of historical, religious, and literary works in the Bulgarian language popularized, at least among the literate sliver of the population, the notion that

instrumental in the invention of a short-lived version of the Greek language, *Katheravousa*, which would take the place of vernacular Greek.

⁴¹ Robert D. Kaplan, the contemporary chronicler of the Balkans, has summed up this tension tersely. Calling the hunger for land in an already crowded neighborhood the "principal illness of the Balkans," Kaplan criticized the desire of each nation to expect that its borders should "revert to where they were at the exact time when its own empire reached its zenith of ancient medieval expansion." Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts*, 57. See also John Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice There Was a Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), ch. 2, and Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, 235-237, 298-299, 329-331.

⁴² Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, 337.

⁴³ Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 5-10; James F. Clarke, *Bible Societies: American Missionaries and the National Revival of Bulgaria* (New York: Arno Press, 1971), 225, 270.

Bulgaria, too, had a proud past. Sounding what would become a familiar claim for Macedonian nationalists several decades later, Father Paisii wrote that “the Bulgarians were the most glorious of all the Slavic nations, they were the first to have tsars, they were the first to have a patriarch, they were the first to be Christianized, they ruled over the greatest area.” Future writers could therefore try to leverage this past to argue for a restoration of “Bulgarian greatness.”⁴⁴

The movement toward a broader expression of Macedonian national identity grew out of this Bulgarian national movement. The Macedonian movement began slowly and quietly with a handful of intellectuals, teachers, and poets. In the late-nineteenth century, more writers and educators began using the term “Macedonian” to refer to what they saw as a unique language or people, and not just a geographic region. The word “Macedonian” itself entered a period of flux and contest over its meaning. This fluidity lent the culture of the region a feeling of malleability, and opened the region to the claims of competing nationalist groups. Henry Brailsford identified this fluidity during travels to the Macedonian village of Manastir (now Bitola), marveling at the manner in which a peasant from a smaller, nearby village responded to questions about his identity:

“Is your village Greek,” I asked him, “or Bulgarian?” “Well,” he answered, “it is Bulgarian now, but four years ago it was Greek.” The answer seemed to him entirely natural and commonplace. “How,” I asked in some bewilderment, “did that miracle come about?” “Why,” said he, “we are all poor men, but we want to have our own school and a priest who will look after us properly. We used to have a Greek teacher. We paid him £5 a year plus his bread, while the Greek consul paid him another £5; but we had no priest of our own. We shared a priest

⁴⁴ Quoted in Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, 178. In the 1860s, for instance, Bulgarian revolutionary writers Vasil Levski and Khristo Botev expounded notions of a general peasant uprising against the Ottomans. Both men had jettisoned the idea of “Pan-Slavism,” which favored a cultural, if not quite national, union of the various Slavic peoples, then popular among many Bulgarian and Russian radicals. Though plans for such a Slavic union were common for decades to come, and became reality in 1918, Levski and Botev were focused only on the glory of an independent Bulgarian state. Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, 346.

with several other villages but he was always very unpunctual and remiss. We went to the Greek Bishop to complain, but he refused to do anything for us. The Bulgarians heard of this and they came and made us an offer. They said they would give us a priest who would live in the village and a teacher to whom we need pay nothing. Well, sir, ours is poor village, and so of course we became Bulgarians.”⁴⁵

The answer Brailsford’s queries elicited indicate that even as a handful of intellectuals began articulating the case for elements of Macedonian cultural uniqueness, the vast majority of Christians in Macedonia remained detached from national movements. Villagers in the Macedonian region still remained largely indifferent to Macedonian, and even Greek and Bulgarian, nationalisms unless a particular ideology offered them concrete benefits, such as a priest who spoke the local vernacular and a school where the teacher and the students could understand one another.⁴⁶

Brailsford was quick to understand the important role that religion played in shaping not only individual, but also familial, village, and even regional identity in Macedonia. Toleration of Christianity had been a feature of the Ottoman state for several hundred years. After the Bulgarian Orthodox Church became independent again in 1870, Orthodox Christians in the Balkans faced a challenge to identify themselves not only as such, but also as *Bulgarian Orthodox* or *Greek Orthodox* Christians. By extension, one’s choice of religious denomination went a long way toward defining his own national

⁴⁵ Brailsford, *Macedonia: Its Races and Their Future*, 102. While Brailsford’s relating of this interview from the Bulgarian seems a bit facile, the extent of his travels in the Balkans over several years, and the high level of detail he provides, suggests an editorial massaging of translated passages rather than any wholesale fabrications.

⁴⁶ In subsequent chapters I refer to the development of a “modern,” Macedonian national identity. By this I mean an identity that rejects the notion that an individual can be of two national identities, such as Bulgarian *and* Macedonian. I only claim that a majority of self-described Macedonians reached this threshold, not that all Macedonians, Bulgarians, or adherents of any other national identity feel this way. Individuals with compound or multiple identities remained – and still exist today – in various cultures and regions.

affiliation as well. Brailsford noted the way that religious affiliation transcended boundaries in European Turkey:

It is not so much the religious instincts of the Balkan peasant as his political conditions which explain his passionate attachment to his church. . . . His fidelity to his church has been through five centuries one continuous martyrdom. . . . It is the only free and communal life which the Turks permit him. It is essentially a national organisation.⁴⁷

However, Brailsford makes too much of the coincidence of religion and nationality in Macedonia. While the two often correlated during this period, they were not necessarily one and the same. Many individuals changed religions - either by choice or not - during the Ottoman period, just as they changed nationalities. Sometimes these changes took place simultaneously, but not always.⁴⁸ Given the prominent role that biological determination played in much of his writing on ethnicity, Brailsford might not have believed that an individual could be both Greek *and* Bulgarian. And even if he would not support the notion that Greeks and Bulgarians were objectively different by blood, he was at least willing to attribute generalizable traits to the different groups that, he argued, transcended village and family. More accurately though, he understood that religion had become a telling marker of national identity during this age.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Brailsford, *Macedonia*, 61.

⁴⁸ Villagers often chose their method of self identification based on a number of factors, such as the ability to educate their children and worship in a familiar language, and not necessarily because of political beliefs. The Macedonian community that accepted the Bulgarian priest began to imagine itself as Bulgarians at a point in time, but this choice by no means precluded them from making a different choice as political, economic, and cultural events warranted.

⁴⁹ Like many writers of his time, Brailsford used culturally essentialist language describing various Balkan groups. For instance he describes the Moslem Turks - his foil throughout the narrative - as "the Mohamadan with his easy, incompetent nature, his indifference to abstractions, his aloofness to the busy ugliness of the modern world." Additionally, Brailsford describes Turks as "unkempt," "shabby," and, incongruously, "dignified." Brailsford, *Macedonia*, 55-61.

Articulating Ethnicity: Describing an Emergent Nationality

The Slavic-language speaking Christians living in Macedonia practiced the same Orthodox faith as Greeks and Bulgarians, but resembled the Bulgarians more closely because of the strong similarities of their languages. It is arguable that by this time, Christian villagers living in the western reaches of the Macedonian region around the towns of Bitola, Ohrid, Lerin, and Kostur, spoke a Slavic idiom sufficiently different from literary Bulgarian enough to be considered a separate language altogether. From village to village along a northwest line from Ohrid in western Macedonia through Skopje and Sofia, to Plovdiv in Eastern Rumelia (which was annexed to Bulgaria in 1885) peasant life looked, and sounded, remarkably similar. Villages which had chosen the Bulgarian Exarch Church after 1870 used the same liturgy on Sundays, delivered in largely the same Church Slavonic language that could be understood across the linguistic expanse. Christian members of the *rum millet* struggled with the same Ottoman tax burdens and the increasing social violence in the region.

Within the same millet, however, language became an important marker of group identity. Since Greeks, Bulgarians, and Serbs acted similarly from a liturgical standpoint, it was their different languages that allowed an outsider to readily discern among them. By the nineteenth century, the Church Slavonic language that had been in use since the ninth century had splintered into several Macedonian dialects and at least two recognized languages used locally - Bulgarian and Serbian. (A literary Macedonian language did not exist as a recognized language, and was not widely accepted until the mid-twentieth century.) Villagers themselves typically reported speaking the “local” language though

most never had any occasion to define that language using modern descriptors.⁵⁰ Yet by the early decades of the nineteenth century Macedonian dialects had emerged around the city of Tetovo in northern Macedonia. The dialect differed from Bulgarian in significant ways. Local writers like Gorgi Pulevski and Grigor Prlichev began using this dialect and therefore an early Macedonian linguistic identity. In the process, they differentiated their cultures from that of the Greeks and Bulgarians.⁵¹

Where some writers and educators saw the Macedonian dialects as a means toward cooperation with their Bulgarian colleagues against the Greek Patriarchate, others viewed the differences between the Bulgarian language and the Macedonian variations as evidence of a process of ethnogenesis. In a culture where the language a person spoke was so closely related to the ethnic group to which he or she belonged, the proclamation of a new language resonated far beyond the academic world. Rightly or wrongly, it was seen as a political act, and perhaps even a demand for territorial recognition or sovereignty.⁵²

A diverse group of educators, poets, and linguists claiming to write in the Macedonian language cohered after 1870; they were, in effect, the elite pioneers of Macedonian nationalism. For instance, in his 1875 *Dictionary of Three Languages* (referring to Macedonian, Albanian, and Turkish), Gorgi Pulevski wrote, “a nation is the term for a people who have the same origin, who speak the same language, . . . and who

⁵⁰ Tomev, *Memoirs*, 10-120.

⁵¹ Victor Friedman, “Macedonian Language and Nationalism During the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries” in

Kenneth E. Naylor ed. *Balkanistica: Occasional Papers In Southeast European Studies*. vol 2 (Cambridge: Slavica Publishers, 1975), 83-85.

⁵² Friedman, “Macedonian Language Nationalism,” 84-86.

have the same customs, songs, and festivals. . . . Thus the Macedonians are a nation, and Macedonia is their fatherland.”⁵³ Two other writers, Konstantin and Dimitar Miladinov, gained notoriety as “heroes of the Macedonian renaissance” for their publication of Macedonian folksongs. Their profession of a Macedonian culture so challenged the authority of Turkish and Bulgarian rule that they were detained, and died together while jailed in Constantinople.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, Ottoman and Bulgarian leaders suppressed Pulevski’s and Prlichev’s writings.

Krste Misirkov, one of the most important early Slavic writers authors and educators, picked up on this freedom-from-tyranny metaphor in drawing a parallel, at least rhetorically, between Macedonia and the American and Canadian independence movements. He also foreshadowed the rhetoric of ethnic homogeneity that surfaced during the Balkan Wars and “ethnic cleansing” of the 1990s when he wrote in 1903,

We should attempt to create a state of affairs in Macedonia in which there are no Serbian, Greek, or Bulgarian interests because there are no Serbs, Greeks, or Bulgarians in Macedonia. . . . if Canada now wishes to break free from England and defend her own state interests because she understands them best, why should Macedonia not anger Bulgaria when Bulgarians not only cannot protect Macedonian interests but even exploit them?⁵⁵

To Misirkov’s thinking, the Greek Orthodox Church, or “Patriarchate,” and the Ottoman rulers were tyrants. Further, as a Macedonian ethnic identity emerged at the

⁵³ Gorgi Pulevski quoted in Loring M. Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict: Ethnic Nationalism in a Transnational World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 50.

⁵⁴ Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict*, 49-50. Prior to the better-known political work of Macedonian writers of the late nineteenth century, monastic writers, especially Kiril Pejchinovich, used the idiom of religious literature to express the notion of a unique Macedonian dialect. See Michael John Seraphinoff, “The Works of Kiril Pejchinovich in the 19th Century Macedonian Awakening,” unpublished dissertation, University of Washington, 1993.

⁵⁵ Krste Misirkov, *On Macedonian Matters* (Sofia: 1903, reprint, Skopje: Macedonian Review Editions, 1974), 145. It is unclear whether Misirkov was referring to Canada pulling out of the British Commonwealth. Canada already was sovereign at this time.

elite level, Bulgarian cultural hegemony over the Macedonian “people” became yet another tyranny.⁵⁶ In 1903, Krste P. Misirkov, articulated the case for the existence of a Macedonian nationality more explicitly in a passionate, sometimes excessive polemic, *Za Makedonskite Raboti*, or *On Macedonian Matters*. In it, Misirkov displayed a modern and nuanced understanding of the historical development of national identity. For instance, by arguing that Bulgarian, Greek, and Serbian national identities had themselves emerged in historical time, and under certain circumstances – rather than existing as *a priori* entities – Misirkov argued essentially that the development of Macedonian identity made sense if seen as simply another, albeit later, awakening on the Balkan scene. Not completely free of the language of ethnic essentialism, Misirkov felt that ethnicities “awoke” and came into their own when the time was right. By equating the expression of national identity with an awakening, Misirkov used a metaphor – the emergence from slumber – that was becoming a common part of nationalist historiographies across the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

⁵⁶ On European nationalism, see Eugen J. Weber, *Peasants Into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976); Peter Browning, *Revolutions and Nationalities: Europe, 1825-90* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Albert Russell Ascoli and Krystyna Von Henneberg, eds., *Making and Remaking Italy: The Cultivation of National Identity Around the Risorgimento* (New York: Berg, 2001); and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983).



Figure 5. Krste Misirkov, 1874-1926, from <http://www.misirkov.com.mk/>. (Accessed January 2005)

Early Macedonian writings had generally taken the form of school primers, poems, and dictionaries. Until Misirkov crystallized these literary nationalistic tendencies by writing a political manifesto, works written by Macedonian authors remained scarce and obscure.⁵⁷ Misirkov's novelty was his willingness to declare a Macedonian national identity to the exclusion of a Bulgarian one. By doing so he rejected the idea that Macedonians were simply ethnic Bulgarians who happened to be living in Macedonia. In an oft-quoted passage, he declared:

. . . our fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers have always been called Bulgarians. . . [and] in the past we have even called ourselves Bulgarians. . . . [Yet the] emergence of the Macedonian as a separate Slav people . . . [is a] perfectly normal historical process which is quite in keeping with the process by which the Bulgarian, Croatian and Serbian peoples emerged from the South Slav group.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ At the time, *On Macedonian Matters* was notable for having been suppressed by Bulgarian authorities. Though the work did not become well-known until several decades later, it provided strong evidence that development of a "modern" Macedonian identity, which I define as a unitary ethnicity that excludes all others, was underway by the late nineteenth century.

⁵⁸ Misirkov, *On Macedonian Matters*, 27, 150, quoted in Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict*, 63.

Rather than describe what Macedonians were not, i.e., Bulgarians, Misirkov described what he believed Macedonians to be – an independent people. In doing so, he went beyond the taxonomic exercise of simply naming a new group, and offered a rationale for what he saw as the emergence of a new nation. Using parameters that resonate strongly in contemporary Macedonian notions of ethnic identity, Misirkov described Macedonians as a distinct, Christian, Slavic people closely related to Serbs and Bulgarians, but possessing their own language, a religious history dating back to the medieval monastery in Ohrid, and an unfortunate legacy of domination by stronger, better organized, and more “awakened” national neighbors. Macedonians, according to this view, were a long-suffering people who were perpetually buffeted by forces beyond their control. Yet they were unique and were willing to forgive their tormentors if they were granted freedom and independence.⁵⁹

Misirkov himself was unlike the Slavic Christian villagers for whom he presumed to speak. Highly literate, he earned a graduate degree in Russia, and spent much of his life as a student and teacher in various Balkan countries.⁶⁰ Thus, Misirkov did not develop and articulate his sense of national “whatness” in the bivouacs of Macedonian guerrilla bands but as an itinerant intellectual who seemed perpetually to test his perceptions of historical and literary reality against the ever-changing circumstances of his social and national milieu. He rejected the pan-Slavism that was fashionable in leftist

⁵⁹ Variants on the phrase, “struggle for freedom,” are common throughout much recent Macedonian political writing, many examples of which describe Macedonia as a peaceful nation perpetually under the thumb of others. See, for instance, Milosavlevski, *Facts About the Republic of Macedonia*, 7; Institute of National History, Skopje, *A History of the Macedonian People*, 123-142, 315-383.

⁶⁰ Previously, the noted Serbian ethnographer Jovan Cvijić expressed the notion that linguistic, cultural, and historical differences made the Slavic Christians of Macedonia something other than Greek, Serbian, or Bulgarian. Misirkov, though, went far beyond Cvijić by describing the process by which all ethnicities

Russian academic circles. And while he thrived in the intellectual salons of czarist Russia, his writings have none of the anti-capitalist or social utopian qualities of the Marxism and Russian nihilism that was popular at the time. Misirkov's sense of his "Macedonianess" grew not only because of his time in Macedonia – only a few years at most because of his long stays in Russia – but because of his immersion in other nationalisms that he could not accept as his own. He was therefore an early example of a Macedonian émigré who reflects on his national differences only outside of his homeland, who, in essence, finds his national "salvation" at considerable distance from the homeland.

Misirkov did not like his isolation and he worked hard to spark a Macedonian uprising against the Ottomans in the late 1890s. When armed rebellion against the Ottomans happened in 1903, the same year as the publication of *On Macedonian Matters*, Misirkov was there to write about the fighting and bring reports back to Petrograd, Russia, where he was president of the secretive Macedonian Odrin Circle, and a member of two other Macedonian groups: the Macedonian National Scientific Society and the *Sveti Kliment* Literary Society. For the next quarter-century until his death in Sofia in 1926, Misirkov continued to proclaim the existence of a distinct Macedonian nation. During this period he taught in a number of academies in Russia, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Macedonia, and wrote about the Balkan Wars.⁶¹

Perhaps because Misirkov never made the transition from intellectual to fighter, as did his contemporaries like the educators-turned-revolutionaries Goče Delchev and

emerge in historical time and space. See Jovan Cvijić, *La Peninsule Balkanique Geographie Humaine* (Paris: 1918); Duncan Perry, *The Politics of Terror*, 20.

⁶¹ Misirkov, *On Macedonian Matters*, 17-22.

Dame Gruev, his name doesn't conjure the same respect as others in the pantheon of Macedonian heroes. Because *On Macedonian Matters* was seized and destroyed by Bulgarian authorities upon its publication in Sofia in 1903, it did not receive wide notice beyond elite circles until after WWII. Then, this first "modern" Macedonian nationalist became a favorite among Macedonian officials of the Communist Yugoslav state since his ethnic proclamations gave credence to the notion that Macedonian identity had its roots not in the twentieth century but in the nineteenth. The publication of his manifesto in English in 1974 broadened its appeal and provided the Socialist Republic of Macedonia with a useful communications tool in its effort to deepen and broaden the idea of the Macedonian nation among the masses of the Republic and the diaspora.⁶²

Marginal in his own time, Misirkov foreshadowed the change that would take place throughout Macedonia in the first half of the twentieth century. His sense that Macedonia's close cultural affinity for Bulgaria did not necessarily imply ethnic or political union with it began to gain popular support as Macedonia found itself freed from Ottoman rule in 1913, only to be dominated by its Bulgarian, Greek, and Serbian neighbors for the next three decades. By 1944, with the Axis powers all but defeated in the Balkans, Misirkov's notion of Macedonian separateness swelled in the popular consciousness, and provided an important piece of the foundation for nation-building efforts during the Yugoslav era.

⁶² This was not a monopoly view, however. By the later twentieth century, a countervailing, more radical version of Macedonian national identity gained currency that placed its origins not in the nineteenth or even ninth century, but in the pre-Christian world of Alexander the Great.

Revolutionary Nationalism: Intellectuals Taking Up Arms

Macedonia at the turn of the century was a place of considerable social violence. Reflecting back on the legacy of violence in Macedonia years later, University of Chicago historian Ferdinand Schevill described the region as “the foremost victim of the discredited policy of might.”⁶³ Increasingly, the countryside was crisscrossed by armed bandits, or *haiduks*, for whom extortion, theft, and even murder were common pursuits. As a further burden, Constantinople posted a sizable army in Macedonia after losing the Russo-Turkish War in 1878, and continued its policy of drafting future *janissaries*, or Ottoman infantrymen, from the Christian population under its rule. The feeling among the villagers in European Turkey was that the tax burden owed the Ottoman Porte was exorbitant, the presence of the Ottoman Macedonian army insulting, and the resulting economic conditions intolerable. The added insecurity brought on by the *haiduks* pushed many to the breaking point.⁶⁴

By the 1890s, the continuing presence of the Ottomans in Europe had become a sore subject both among Bulgarians and Macedonians and to the outside world. These factors alone, however, were not sufficient to spark a broader revolt. What finally pushed the situation toward the tipping point was the anger gathering toward Ottoman and

⁶³ Ferdinand Schevill, *The Balkan Problem: Its Difficulties and Their Solution* (Chicago: Macedonian Independence Association of Chicago, 1931), 13.

⁶⁴ By the 1930s, the British writer Rebecca West had traveled extensively through the Balkans. In her remarkable 1941 book *Black Lamb And Grey Falcon*, Rebecca West described the danger and difficulty of early-twentieth century Macedonian life. Through her portrait of a Christian woman at worship, West outlined the daily struggles of a person who, like her forbears, “has faced the prospect of violent death at least once in his or her life.” Editorializing about the “Turkish maladministration” of Macedonia, West commented that if the woman’s “own village had not been murdered, she had certainly heard of many that had, and never had any guarantee that hers would not some day share the same fate.” West summed up the qualities that permitted the woman’s survival: “. . . she had two possessions which any Western woman might envy. She had strength, the terrible stony strength of Macedonia. . . . And cupped in her destitution as in the hollow of a boulder there are the last drops of the Byzantine tradition.” West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, 637-638.

Bulgarian officials among a small group of Macedonian intellectuals. An initial group of six men convened in Salonica in November 1893 to discuss their frustration with Ottoman domination of Macedonia, and with Serbian propagandizing in Macedonian villages. They saw European Turkey as an abomination, and more or less agreed with Misirkov's emphasis on the linguistic, cultural, and historical specialness of Macedonians.⁶⁵

Most of these men had cut their teeth in the Exarchate's struggle against the hegemony of the Greek Patriarchate and they now planned to organize against continuing Ottoman control of Macedonia. They were essentially Bulgarian-Macedonians dedicated to driving the Ottomans out of Macedonia. The men's own ethnic orientation and future plans for Macedonia remained unclear. They did, however, display a keen sense of the various other nationalisms that swirled around them; patterning their rhetoric on the earlier Bulgarian revolutionaries Vasil Levski and Hristo Botev, the group chose for their motto "*Sloboda ili Smrt*" - "Freedom or death." And some members who were schooled outside of Macedonia spoke fondly about the radicalism of the French Revolution and the Italian revolutionaries Giuseppe Mazzini and Giuseppe Garibaldi. Rather than adopt the non-violent approach taken by the early Macedonian poets and authors, the group instead embraced the model of the guerrilla army. This, they felt, would allow them to protect Macedonian villagers from violence, and also to fight if needed. Their emblem would be a pistol and a dagger crossed at the middle.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Again, it is important to stress that to the extent that these individuals considered themselves Macedonians, it was largely in a regional or cultural sense, and not an ethnic one. While Krste Misirkov and several other nineteenth century intellectuals believed in a separate Macedonian identity, the men who began meeting in 1893 were more ambiguous on the subject.

⁶⁶ Institute of National History, Skopje, *A History of the Macedonian People*, 148.

The group named itself the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, or IMRO.⁶⁷ Over the next decade they would become the public face of Macedonian nationalism, taking as their central cause the liberation of Macedonia.⁶⁸ Goče Delchev, Jane Sandanski, and Dame Gruev were the leaders of the movement. For his part, Delchev was a student not only of Balkan politics, but of America's revolutionary past. Delchev, for example, encouraged his friends to read James Fenimore Cooper's Revolutionary War tale, *The Spy*, to help fortify their commitment to Macedonian independence. And he was keenly aware that his group's actions would appear in papers around the world. When he was killed in an ambush just months before IMRO's long-planned uprising, his death was widely reported throughout Europe.⁶⁹



Figure 6. Goče Delchev, 1872-1903



Figure 7. IMRO symbol from 1896 - "Freedom or Death"

Contemporaneous to IMRO, a similar organization, calling itself the Supreme Macedonian Committee, formed with a similar revolutionary agenda to IMRO. The Supreme Committee, or "Supremists," saw a future for Macedonia as part of a larger

⁶⁷ IMRO is sometimes referred to simply as "MRO" or using the Macedonian transliteration, "VMRO"

⁶⁸ Perry, *The Politics of Terror*, 35-51.

⁶⁹ Today, both Macedonians and occasionally Bulgarians claim his legacy. Bulgaria even kept Delchev's remains until eventually turning them over to the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 1946. *Reality Macedonia* collection on Goče Delchev available at <http://faq.macedonia.org/history/goce.html>.

Bulgaria. IMRO leaders were more vague on the subject and spoke more of freedom for Macedonia than what such a free state might look like. Though leaders of both groups generally thought Macedonian Christians to be ethnically Bulgarian, their cleavages kept them apart and allowed Bulgarian officials the opportunity to manipulate the groups for their own needs. Ultimately, both groups failed in their stated missions. Within a few years, the various splits in their organizations and political views slowed their efficacy. Still, they played an important role in spreading support for their ultimate goal: ending Ottoman control of Macedonia.⁷⁰

After the initial meetings in 1893, IMRO founders Damian Gruev and Goče Delchev spread their revolutionary message into the Macedonian hinterlands where they directed the formation of committees charged with organizing local villagers in opposition to Ottoman officials and military. Once the group became public, Ottoman officials outlawed it, adding to its allure among Macedonian villagers. Delchev would eventually become the quintessential hero of Macedonian lore – the brave intellectual who took up arms against the oppressor of his people. Inconvenient for both modern Macedonian and Bulgarian nationalists was Delchev’s ambiguity about his own ethnicity. To the extent that Delchev, and his comrades, considered themselves to be Macedonian revolutionaries, it was because they were campaigning for Macedonia’s freedom from the Ottomans, not because they necessarily felt that a distinct Macedonian ethnicity deserved its own state. This reality sits uncomfortably with the modern view that Delchev and his

⁷⁰ Perry, *The Politics of Terror*, 183-184. The “Supremists” are typically considered a faction of the IMRO rather than a separate group. For that reason I will use the IMRO designation to refer collectively to both group’s efforts.

compatriots were Macedonian patriots devoted to an independent Macedonian nation-state; the truth was more complex.⁷¹

The IMRO gradually gathered a stream of disaffected male recruits from the villages along what is today the mountainous northern border of Greece. Local IMRO leaders also formed *chetas*, or armed bands. With their long mustaches, bandoliers, and muskets, they differed little in appearance from the bandits that also roamed the Balkan hills and valleys. Individual members of the *chetas* were known as *comitadjis*, partisans or heroes to those who supported their cause, and criminals to those who did not. As the group grew beyond its initial founders the leaders became less intellectual and more practical. IMRO practiced grassroots organizing and guerrilla tactics hoping that a shrewd combination of propaganda and raids would provoke a reaction by the Turks and compel the Great Powers to aid their cause.⁷²

A second prong of IMRO's plan was to create, in essence, an underground government that would be responsive to the needs of Slavic villagers in Macedonia. IMRO members paid visits to Macedonian shepherds working in the fields to tell them about their ideas and ask about any Ottoman abuses. The guerrillas also arranged for trials for those accused of wrongdoing, as well as levied dues on villagers to support the IMRO fighters.⁷³ Photographs from the time show groups of men resting against hillocks, seemingly staying one step ahead of the *hajduks* and Ottoman regulars who would do them harm. What resulted was a Macedonian para-state featuring an *ad hoc*

⁷¹ See Milosavljević, *Facts About the Republic of Macedonia*, 8.

⁷² IMRO's self-identification as Bulgarians makes them a transitional phenomenon in the narrative of the Macedonian independence movement. Within a few years, IMRO members began to speak of an independent Macedonia that would not be connected to Bulgaria.

⁷³ Tomev, *Memoirs*, 10.

law enforcement and judiciary system, to go with the added sense of security that IMRO fighters brought to Macedonian villages. IMRO members, who probably numbered a few thousand, served as a police force that offered protection to Macedonians from bandits while enforcing a strict moral and ethical code at the same time.

By acting as a Macedonian para-government the early IMRO brigades served an important nation-building organization among Macedonian villagers. Though their movement never gained the complete support of the peasants, the IMRO provided the first opportunity to share the message of Macedonian liberation with a larger constituency. Foto Tomev, who was born in the village of Zhelevo in 1899, recounted in a memoir published in 1971 the importance of IMRO fighters to his village. Commenting on his fellow villager's lack of ethnic identity before IMRO's visits, Tomev said that if one of the villagers were asked their nationality, their answer would likely be, "Christian." Because of IMRO's advocacy, however, more villagers called themselves Macedonian. Tomev added:

Thanks to the Internal Revolutionary Organization our people awoke and began to understand these things. . . . Our village was in a deep slumber during the five-hundred year slavery of Turkish rule. . . . The constant visits by the people of the Organization to the various shepherds' huts greatly helped the people awake from their slumber and provided courage.⁷⁴

The IMRO *chetas* operated under difficult circumstances because of their covert status. Perpetually short of cash, they frequently resorted to extortion to achieve their goals. They mounted a hapless campaign to kidnap Ottoman notables in order to gain ransoms and increase international sympathy and support. Still, they made the world

⁷⁴ Ibid., 6, 10.

aware of Macedonia's plight. In January 1897, just months before his death, former British Prime Minister William Gladstone declared:

Next to the Ottoman Government nothing can be more deplorable and blameworthy than jealousies between Greek and Slav, and plans by the states already existing for appropriating other territory. Why not Macedonia for the Macedonians, as Bulgaria for Bulgarians and Servia for Servians?⁷⁵

One written account provides a glimpse into the way in which the paths and interests of guerrillas and bandits crossed. At the turn of the century, the travel writer Albert Sonnichsen traveled the Macedonian backcountry with a group of Macedonian men.⁷⁶ Complete with photos of the bands of Macedonian men meeting, cooking and even dancing together, Sonnichsen's *Confessions of a Macedonian Bandit* reads like a picaresque work of war journalism. The slim volume highlights the leadership of Apostol, a *voivod*, or local leader, who earned the enmity of the hated Ottoman ruler, Sultan Abdülhamit. Sonnichsen describes Apostol as "Macedonia's Robin Hood," and "one of those picturesque brigands who have appeared among oppressed peoples during all the semi-barbaric periods of history." Later, traveling with a Macedonian *cheta* fighter named Luka, the two came upon a burned-out hut:

Here we disembarked to eat a supper of bread and cheese. . . . Our destination was now so near that nobody spoke above a whisper. Luka gave out the final instructions; the passwords were "Macedonia" and "Freedom;" who did not answer the second word to the first in the dark was an enemy.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ William Gladstone in *The Times* (London), January 6, 1897, 12, quoted in Keith Brown, "Of Meanings and Memories: The National Imagination in Macedonia," unpublished dissertation, University of Chicago, 1995, 83.

⁷⁶ There often was a fine line between revolutionaries and bandits at this time and place. The fighters who many Macedonians today see as early national heroes appear as villains or even terrorists to others. Doubtless, there were violent and destructive members of the Macedonian and Bulgarian *cheta* bands, but the groups that began agitating for an end to Ottoman Turkish rule in the 1890s were, for the most part, motivated by a strong sense of anger at the treatment of villagers under the Ottoman regime. See Duncan Perry, *The Politics of Terror*, 160-165.

⁷⁷ Albert Sonnichsen, *Confessions of a Macedonian Bandit* (New York: Duffield & Company, 1909), 35, 61.

As part of their strategy of violence, IMRO planned and executed a number of high-profile kidnappings and assassinations. In 1901, Hristo Chernopeev and Jane Sandanski, two *cheta* leaders, kidnapped Ellen Stone, an elderly Protestant missionary from Massachusetts. The guerrillas saw her presence in the Balkans as important enough that Americans would be willing to pay to free her from her kidnappers. American officials felt that public capitulation would only encourage more kidnappings. Both the guerrillas and Western officials worked with a set of expectations about the other that were not completely incorrect. IMRO's demand for 25,000 Turkish lira (or about \$118,000 in 1901 U.S. dollars) brought immediate attention from the Ottomans, Europeans and the world press. Though the U.S. State Department disavowed any responsibility for the ransom, a smaller sum of 14,000 lira (about \$66,000) was paid by the American Missionary Board, and Stone was released, having been secreted around the Macedonian countryside for six months on horseback.⁷⁸

A more radical IMRO faction, the *Gemidzhii*, or sailors, resorted to bombing banks and other public buildings in Salonica to force the issue of Macedonian independence. Their actions killed at least five people and injured many more. The Ottoman responses to IMRO's guerrilla tactics were typically swift and even more brutal. Dozens of suspects were killed, and hundreds rounded up in response to IMRO subterfuge. Innocent civilians often found themselves, and their villages, swept into the violence. Significant numbers of Macedonians lauded IMRO's revolutionary spirit and

⁷⁸ "The Kidnapping of Miss Stone: Arrest of Members of Macedonian Committee Reported," *New York Times*, 30 September 1901, 3. For a full account of Stone's kidnapping see Laura Beth Sherman, *Fires on the Mountain: The Macedonian Revolutionary Movement and the Kidnapping of Ellen Stone* (Boulder and New York: East European Monographs and Columbia University Press, 1980) and Perry, *The Politics of Terror*, 103-104.

the administration of their villages. Many others, however, came to regard them as a terror organization and looked with concern at the mounting instability in the Macedonian region.⁷⁹ English speaking readers, gripped by the story of Ellen Stone and the Macedonian *comitadjis*, did not lack for literature about the Macedonian conflict; adventure writer Arthur D. Howden Smith, for instance, penned illustrated stories like *Fighting the Turk in the Balkans* and *An Attack on the Bashi-Bazouks*, Macedonia for eager audiences.⁸⁰

Forced above ground by their tactics, IMRO hastily planned for its *pièce de résistance*, a massive uprising against their Ottoman overlords set for the summer of 1903. After years of local organizing and propagandizing, IMRO expected that the initial rebellion would gain popularity with Macedonians and Bulgarians who would rise up together and expel the Ottoman forces. According to Duncan Perry's study of the Macedonian revolutionary groups, approximately 26,000 IMRO supporters joined in the rebellion when it began in the mountains outside the city of Prilep on August 2, 1903- St. Elijah's Day, or "*Illinden*." The IMRO guerrillas quickly seized the mountainous village of Krushevo, and declared the short-lived "Krushevo Republic." Over the next several months primarily Macedonians, Bulgarians and Turks fought some 239 battles and skirmishes across Macedonia in what became known as the *Illinden* uprising.⁸¹

⁷⁹ "Balkan Question Serious: The Powers and Turkey May Clash in the Coming Spring," *New York Times*, 30 January 1903, 6.

⁸⁰ *Bashi-Bazouks* were Turkish irregulars or foot soldiers. See Arthur D. Howden Smith, *Fighting the Turk in the Balkans: An American's Adventures with the Macedonian Revolutionaries*, (London and New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1908); Arthur D. Howden-Smith, "An Attack on the Bashi-Bazouks, Macedonia, 1907," in Eva March Tappan, ed., *The World's Story: A History of the World in Story, Song and Art*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914), Vol. VI: *Russia, Austria-Hungary, The Balkan States, and Turkey*, pp. 421-435.

⁸¹ Duncan Perry notes in his study the difficulty of using demographic data from the Balkans during the nineteenth century or earlier as much of it is both speculative and politicized. However he drew his

As Perry notes, “Brutality was a hallmark” of the *Illinden* uprising. Calculations from his archival research indicates that 4,694 Christian noncombatants were killed, 201 villages were burned, 3,122 women and girls were raped by Ottoman soldiers, 12,440 homes were damaged or destroyed, and approximately 70,000 people were left homeless. *Chetas* with the IMRO too were indiscriminate in their violence and failed to live up to a previous pledge to spare the lives of Muslim noncombatants. After IMRO proclaimed the establishment of the Krushevo Republic the Ottoman army crushed the Macedonian militants. The aspiration for Macedonia to become a free land – “Macedonia for the Macedonians” – did not materialize.⁸² The IMRO’s violent tactics limited the amount of outside sympathy for their cause and drew only modest support from the people they claimed to represent. According to Perry only about one percent of the total population fought against the Ottoman army. Even counting the support of others who assisted in a tangential way, perhaps only three to five percent of the Macedonian population was active in the revolt. Psychologically, however, the revolt proved to have a far greater impact.⁸³

Conclusion: Internationalizing the Macedonian Moment

In the years between the war for Bulgarian independence in 1878 and the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, the European Great Powers, as well as the United States and Canada,

statistics on the numbers of fighters and those killed by the *Illinden* fighting from several sources in Macedonia and Bulgaria that are considered to be accurate representations of the violence of 1903. Perry, *The Politics of Terror*, 19; National Archives of Macedonia, *Dokumenti - Britanskite Konsuli vo Makedonia, 1797-1915* (Skopje, 2002), 315-316.

⁸² What became the Republic of Macedonia in 1944 was not the entire Macedonian region, but the smaller portion that Serbia gained with the Balkan Wars of 1912-13.

⁸³ Perry, *The Politics of Terror*, 139-140.

became increasingly concerned about the fate of the Christian population in the Macedonian region. The continued existence of European Turkey was seen as out of step with the rest of Europe, and progressive-minded journalists, diplomats, and missionaries began to view the plight of the Christian population with pity and anger. Though he was a reformer, Macedonians and Bulgarians viewed Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamit as one of the major roadblocks on their path to greater independence. Further, Ottoman practices, such as the *devşirme*, in which Christian males were culled for a lifetime of military service, seemed akin to slavery and gave credence to the claim of Macedonians that they were living under an “Ottoman yoke.”

The 1903 insurrection, however, did little to lift the “yoke.” Despite Macedonian hopes for a decisive victory, the *Illinden* uprising was a major source of chaos in Macedonia, and pragmatically, an ambiguous moment in Macedonian affairs. If life in many Macedonian villages was tenuous before August 1903, it became unbearable after the violence and destruction the uprising sowed. Even after a round of modest reforms that the European powers foisted on the Ottoman administration in Macedonia, most villagers saw little demonstrable improvement in their lives. The Ottomans remained in control of European Turkey for almost another decade. The IMRO did not disband and eventually became even more fanatically violent in an effort to bring about an independent Macedonian state. For many, Macedonia still remained “unredeemed.”

Yet the revolt, if unsuccessful as a military engagement, paid dividends by casting the *Illinden* fighters as noble martyrs, and by identifying the uprising as the formal start of the Macedonian independence movement. Over time, *Illinden* came to be seen by Macedonians worldwide as the inaugural event in their “struggle” for freedom, a sort of

revolutionary manifestation of the literary nationalism that began in the nineteenth century. The pre-*Illinden* agitation had garnered some favorable press, and even support from groups in Europe and the United States. By the turn of the century, the growing revolutionary fervor in Macedonia was not lost on the American press, which had been printing dispatches by Slavs who were bitter about conditions in the Balkans. Well before *Illinden*, the *New York Times* was following the desperate conditions in Macedonia, and in mid-August 1903 reported on its front page, “Slaughter in Macedonia: Ruthless Massacres by Both Sides Reported; All the Turks in Krusevo Slain – Mussulmans [Moslems] Said to Have Killed Nearly All Christians in Kitshevo.”⁸⁴

Only a handful of migrants from Macedonia had departed for North America by 1903, but some of those that did were determined to have an impact on events in their homeland. In September 1903, Vladimir Andreieff Tsanoff, an educated Macedonian-Bulgarian immigrant who headed a new group, the Macedonian Committee of America, wrote in the *Boston Evening Transcript*, “Reading day after day of the desperate struggle for freedom which the Christians in Macedonia are making against terrible odds, and of the ruthlessness with which, by massacre after massacre, the Turks are endeavoring to crush this heroic struggle, the American reader cannot fail to sympathize ardently with the side which champions the Cross.”⁸⁵ The European and American press did not follow

⁸⁴ “Slaughter in Macedonia,” *New York Times*, 15 August 1903, 1.

⁸⁵ Vladimir Andreieff Tsanoff, “Our Interests in Turkey,” *Boston Evening Transcript*, September 2, 1903, in records of American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions (hereafter ABCFM), Congregational Library, Boston, Massachusetts, reel #505: Vol. 6. “Facts About Macedonians,” letter to the editor, *New York Times*, 16 August 1903, 9. Notably, Tsanoff’s article sought to appeal to Christians to appreciate the plight of their religious brethren abroad who were the victims of the depredations of a fairly obvious religious “other” – the Moslems. He chose not to identify the Macedonians as such (as others had begun to do by this point) or even as Bulgarians, which would have been the more common approach. Rather he painted his appeal in the form of a crusade against the infidel who would dare to both revile the Cross and resort to killing to protect his prerogative. Since many Balkan migrants were men whose families stayed behind, strong ties to the Old Country remained.

the Macedonian story with such interest simply because of concern for the well-being of Macedonian villagers. There was little improvement for villagers: three years after *Illinden*, conditions were still so poor that in just one day in March 1906, 600 migrants from Macedonia left for the United States. Rather, much of the press coverage indicated a strong antipathy to the Moslem Ottomans, depicting them as bloodthirsty heathens occupying a Christian land. Macedonia was what it had been for centuries – a way station between the East and West where two cultures met uncomfortably.⁸⁶

The *Illinden* movement internationalized the nascent Macedonian national movement. Three of the first migrants from Macedonia to the United States, Marko Kaludov, Hristo Nedialkov, and S. Shumkov, began raising funds for the uprising in 1902. And IMRO reportedly had sent an agent to the United States to help raise funds and educate sympathetic emigrants about the plight in their homeland. Other sources of support sprung up in Lausanne (Switzerland), Belgium, New York, and Pennsylvania. That financial support for the movement came from such diverse outposts at a time when the Bulgarian and Macedonian diaspora was in such a state of infancy is early evidence of the transnationalism that would become a hallmark of the Macedonian national movement.⁸⁷

It is possible to argue that the “heroes” of *Illinden*, just like early Macedonian writers such as Konstantin and Dimitar Miladinov and Krste Misirkov, were more important in death than in life. The revolutionary zeal of the early IMRO leaders has become an article of faith among modern-day Macedonians if the graven images of Goče

⁸⁶ “600 Macedonians Coming: Emigrating to America – Atrocities Still Going on in Turkey,” *New York Times*, 19 March 1906, 2.

⁸⁷ Nikolay G. Altankov, *The Bulgarian-Americans* (Palo Alto: Ragusan Press, 1979), 56; *The Attitudes of the U.S.A. Towards Macedonia*, 74.

Delchev that adorn many Macedonian social halls are any indication. Today, the modern Macedonian national anthem, for instance, refers to Delchev, Gruev, Sandanski, and Pitu Guli - another early IMRO leader.⁸⁸ In his study of IMRO, the contemporary Macedonian nationalist author Michael Radin, claimed that the group,

left an inheritance to the Macedonian people of inestimable value. The grandeur, and romantic vision of liberty, unity and common good embroiled in the *Illinden* generation means a great deal . . . and provides an ideal for those who choose to believe that history provides us with an opportunity to judge our own character.⁸⁹

The bloody late-summer months of 1903 have taken on for Macedonians a symbolism not unlike that of the Revolutionary War for Americans. Today, throughout the Macedonian diaspora, *Illinden* is celebrated on the first Sunday in August, often with politically charged picnics and dances.⁹⁰

Yet there was no guarantee that Macedonian nationalism would spread the way that previous Balkan national movements had. Significant barriers to such a widespread identity remained for several more decades, and the violence of *Illinden* failed to attract any Great Power military support. But it did draw greater attention to the “Macedonian Question.” It also accelerated dramatically demographic changes already underway. In Macedonia, able men of all dispositions – idle, angry, ambitious – saw the opportunity for long distance labor migration in a new light. The pioneer class of migrants who had made the ocean voyage slowly had begun reporting back with letters and money.

⁸⁸ Milosavljevski, *Facts About the Republic of Macedonia*, inside cover.

⁸⁹ A. Michael Radin, *IMRO and the Macedonian Question* (Skopje: Kultura, 1993), 259.

⁹⁰ Indeed, in recent decades, Macedonians have looked back to IMRO’s early days as a glorious period for the Macedonian national movement. In fact, the mythology and iconography of the *Illinden* uprising and the Krushevo Republic became pillars of the Macedonian nation-building efforts during the Yugoslav era of the later twentieth century. For a further exploration of the Macedonian national mythology, see Keith Brown, “Of Meanings and Memories: The National Imagination in Macedonia,” unpublished dissertation, University of Chicago, 1995, esp. ch. 2 and 7.

Chances for work in the booming metropolises of the United States and Canada seemed more real, and within months of *Illinden* the slow trickle of emigration abroad became a stream. For a mass of men confronted by the desperation of their families seeking salvation abroad now seemed more palatable, their aversion to risk obliterated by violence and want at home. Accelerating for decades, economic and social change now came to the Balkans every bit as rapidly as it did to the West.

Chapter 3: Sojourning in “Upper and “Lower” America, 1903-1918

In the three decades before 1914, the United States and Canada saw their social, political, cultural, and religious landscapes remade by millions of immigrants who were arriving at the highest rates either country had ever seen. These immigrants fueled the countries’ industrial economies and accelerated the urbanization that was shifting more people into cities and factories. The rapid expansion of the steel, coal, oil, automobile, railroad, and meatpacking industries provided an engine of economic growth that could only be sustained with the willing participation of foreign labor. Foreigners poured into the key ports of New York City and San Francisco, as well as those of Halifax (Nova Scotia), New Orleans, and Galveston (Texas) at a rate of well over one million per year. Immigration officials struggled to keep pace with the array of cultures crowding the ports; in 1910, American census enumerators received a list of 42 “Principal Foreign Languages” to look for as they gathered data. At the 1920 census, updated instructions required census takers to look out for 62 languages, a 50 percent increase in just one decade.¹

¹ United States Census Bureau, 1910 and 1920 Census Bureau Instructions to Enumerators, available from University of Minnesota IPUMS at <http://www.ipums.umn.edu/~pipums/voliii/tEnumInstr.html>. For general treatments of early-twentieth century immigration to the United States see, Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration in American Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990); John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); Alan Kraut, *Huddled Masses: The Immigrant in American Society, 1880-1921* (Arlington Heights, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 1982). For general treatments of Canadian immigration, see Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); Harold Troper, “History of Immigration to Toronto Since the Second World War: From Toronto ‘the Good’ to Toronto ‘the World in a City,’” Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, CERIS Working Paper 12 (2000), available at <http://ceris.metropolis.net/Virtual%20Library/other/troper1.html>; Shiva S. Halli and Leo Driedger eds, *Immigrant Canada: Demographic, Economic and Social Challenges* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press,

Tens of thousands of Macedonian and Bulgarian men (and very few women) joined this human exodus following the upheavals of the *Illinden* uprising in 1903. Though Balkan men had migrated for work for decades, this new, larger movement significant a significant break with the status quo, and paved the way for the formation of a Macedonian-Bulgarian diaspora in North America. Few of these migrants chose the U.S. over Canada, or vice versa. Their primary considerations were seeking out family members or fellow villagers, and finding paying work. In fact, Macedonian and Bulgarian migrants found the two countries so similar that they regarded them informally as “Upper” and “Lower” America to distinguish them, just barely, from one another. Though an international border and distinct histories separated the two countries, distinctions between the American and Canadian peoples seemed trivial to the new migrants. Both countries offered liberal immigration policies and economic opportunities.²

Nor did the migrants make much of the fact that they viewed themselves both as Macedonians *and* Bulgarians. Most still viewed themselves as Macedonians, in a regional or cultural sense, who were closely related to Bulgarians. Despite the nationalist ferment of the nineteenth century and the IMRO’s independence-minded agenda, most of the men were not passionately nationalistic. Economic sustenance drove them, not

1991); Bruno Ramirez, *On The Move: French-Canadian and Italian Migrants in the North Atlantic Economy, 1860-1914* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991).

² United States Census Bureau, *Historical Statistics of the United States*, Series C (Washington: GPO, 1976), 116, 181-194; Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy*, 112. According to Lillian Petroff, the terms “Upper America” and “Lower America” were commonly used by migrants from Macedonia who arrived in cities near the US – Canadian border such as Toronto, Windsor, ON, Detroit, Hamilton, ON, and Buffalo, NY. By no means did all Macedonian and Bulgarian migrants regard the two countries thusly. See Lillian Petroff, *Sojourners and Settlers: The Macedonian Community in Toronto to 1940* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1995), 1-2; Harold Troper, “History of Immigration to Toronto Since the Second World War: From Toronto ‘the Good’ to Toronto ‘the World in a City.’”

politics. Most possessed little or no knowledge of the nationalist authors who for five decades had sought to scissor an independent Macedonian nation out of the intricate ethnic fabric of the Balkans.

But North America forced new hardships and questions upon the men. Many migrants experienced alienation, dislocation, and discrimination in this new land. Further, with little education, money, or relevant job skills, they suffered the sting of hard economic times and difficult physical industrial labor. In clustering together with others from their region or village, these men saved for a quick return home, but also began to clarify their identities in opposition to the array of cultures and ethnicities they experienced. Finally, they began to create cultural, political, and, eventually, religious organizations to lessen their sense of dislocation and provide a firm basis for future migrants. By the time war broke out in the Balkans in 1912 – and then throughout Europe two years later – Macedonians and Bulgarians had not yet completely differentiated themselves from one another. But they had taken critical steps in the formation of a diaspora. As they adjusted to North America, they began to grapple with crucial questions of state and nation.

The *Pečalbari*: Migrant Disorientation in the New World

During bad economic times, Balkan families turned to a time-honored strategy: men of working age left their homes for work a distance away. This labor often entailed logging and hauling in Anatolia, Bulgaria, Romania, Egypt, and Asia Minor. Anastas Petroff recalled that when he was a young boy his father worked in Romania nearly year-round to support the family, plowing and harvesting in the summer and fall, and working

as a cook in winter.³ In Macedonia, labor migration was known as *pečalbarstvo*, and the migrant himself, as a *pečalba*. The *pečalbari*, as they were collectively known, were almost exclusively male. While *pečalbarstvo* had existed for several generations, the increased tax burdens of the late Ottoman period, the rising social violence and banditry, and the reduction of agricultural output for each family brought on by the dividing of land over successive generations made the imperative for labor migration greater.⁴ *Illinden* heightened the sense of crisis and made migrating abroad seem less risky.⁵

Despite the nearly impossible living conditions in Macedonian following *Illinden*, making the choice to migrate to North America was not necessarily easy. Though it made economic sense to seek salvation from the deprivation at home, the calculus of migration was not based on a simple cost-benefit analysis of migrating-versus-not-migrating. Families had to weigh the risks associated with giving up a father or son, and perhaps not seeing remittances for months. Some families decided against sending a family member to a land they heard was materialistic and hedonistic - where women had the temerity to go about in public with their heads uncovered by a kerchief. Families

³ Anastas Petroff interview with Lillian Petroff, December 6, 1975, Macedonian collection, Multicultural Historical Society of Ontario, University of Toronto.

⁴ Even though small-plot agriculture remained the basis of the regional economy, commercial production and sale of crafts, cotton, and tobacco was increasing. Merchants attended local trade fairs and sold their wares at larger markets in Europe. By the mid-nineteenth century, a small but successful business class, exhibiting capitalist tendencies, existed throughout the Macedonian region. Institute of National History, *A History of the Macedonian People*, 109-111

⁵ The “safety-first” principle of peasant survival, and its relation to uprisings and violence, has been articulated by James Scott, notably in his *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976). In fact, the dire economic conditions in many Macedonian villages may help explain their slowness to participate in the various national movements surrounding them; families threatened by starvation might have been less likely to join movements offering them political freedom than bread. One source suggested that in the last decades of the nineteenth century, 70,000 – 100,000 men went in search of work annually to other parts of the Ottoman Empire or Europe. See Institute of National History, *A History of the Macedonian People*, 132-134; Grace Abbott, “The Bulgarians Of Chicago,” *Charities and the Commons*, vol. 21, October 1908-April 1909, 654-655.

whose men did not migrate sometimes regarded families whose men did as different, perhaps thinking themselves better than the rest. At times of economic crisis, war widows and women with no financial support resented the *Amerikanči* - women with husbands providing financial support from North America.⁶

At the village level, migration was an ambiguous phenomenon as well. Departure inevitably strained the strong bonds of family and village solidarity that served as the bedrock of Balkan life. Since many families traced their roots in the village back for centuries, division and separation of the family unit, even if temporary, was not taken lightly. Migration sent ripples through the societal fabric and threatened the unity of the extended family structure, or *zadruga*, in which multiple generations inhabited the same home. Suddenly, women with family abroad relied on male relatives for help with business dealings, or else confronted such duties out of necessity.⁷

The experience of migrating caused the men to think of their homelands in different terms, referring to the “*tatkovina*,” or fatherland, and “*roden kraj*,” or land of birth. The terms became more common during the twentieth century as a greater number of migrants sought economic salvation abroad.⁸ The archetype of Macedonian men as “birds of passage” who were forced to work away from home because of forces beyond

⁶ Nicholas Gage, *Eleni* (New York: Random House, 1983), 189-190; Fikret Adanir, “The Macedonians in the Ottoman Empire, 1878-1912,” in *The Formation of National Elites*, Andreas Kappeler ed. (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 165.

⁷ Atanas Bliznakov, *Spomeni za Nacionalnata, Politchkata, y Kulturata Dejnost na Makedoncite vo CAD y Kanada* (Skopje: Kultura, 1987), 12-13; Peter Demetroff Yankoff, *Peter Menikoff: The Story of a Bulgarian Boy in the Great American Melting Pot* (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1928).

⁸ Bliznakov, *Spomeni za Nacionalnata, Politchkata, y Kulturata Dejnost na Makedoncite vo CAD y Kanada*, 12-13; Kathleen Neils Conzen, David Gerber, et al, “The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.,” *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Fall 1992, 22-24. For an extended study of the concept of the Macedonian “fatherland,” see Loring M. Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict: Ethnic Nationalism in a Transnational World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 82-84.

their control suffused Macedonian folk music and lyric poetry.⁹ And images of a mother or wife who had lost a husband or son either to violence or a life of work elsewhere appeared in poems by the writers Konstantin and Dimitar Miladinov in the second half of the nineteenth century. Lyric passages show that by the early twentieth century, labor voyages were growing farther and longer. One recent ethnological study of the songs and dances that migrants from Macedonia brought with them to North America calculated that out of 400 songs surveyed, at least a fifth were about “labor,” with dozens of others about “revolution,” “family,” and social violence.¹⁰ In one song, probably from the turn of the century, a husband prepares his wife for his journey:

I will go to alien lands, my soul,
To alien lands to work
And stay there whole years there
I will send you a paper white
a paper white, a letter sad –
for you to read and weep.
I will send you a necklace fine
for you to wear and weep, my girl!

The response from the young wife indicates her anxiety:

Go not away, my lad, this summer
go not to wretched alien lands!
Money, my lad, we can always earn
But our wretched youth we cannot earn!
Flowers smell sweet while the dew lies on them,
A girl is for loving while she is yet young!¹¹

⁹ Anastas Petroff interview with Lillian Petroff, December 6, 1975, MHSO; Foto S. Tomev, *Macedonian Folktales*, Lillian Petroff, ed., Occasional Papers in Ethnic and Immigration Studies, Multicultural Historical Society of Ontario, 1980.

¹⁰ See Kathy Christine Dimitrievski, *Informal Education Across Generations: An Historical and Cultural Analysis of Macedonian Folk Songs and New Compositions*, Ph.D. dissertation, State University of New York, University at Buffalo, 2001; Tatjana Kaličanin, *Pesnite na Makedonskite Iceleničite vo Kanada I CAD* (Skopje: Institute na Folklore Marko Cerenkov, 1998), 270-271.

¹¹ Lazo Karovski, “Macedonian Folk Poetry of Economic Migration,” *Macedonian Review*, vol. 4, no. 3, 1974, 296.

Once made, however, the decision of the migrant to accept the enticement of good pay abroad generally paid dividends for families at home, and for the villages in which they lived. Macedonian and Bulgarian migrants spent virtually nothing beyond the basic necessities of life while away from home. A two-year stay in Toronto, for instance, if spent in a thrifty manner, yielded roughly \$400 dollars in savings in then-current dollars, a vast sum when compared to rates of savings in Macedonia.¹² In the Macedonian village of Konomladi, money sent by labor migrants allowed parishioners to raze their decrepit wooden chapel and replace it with a granite-walled edifice with a new bell and tower.¹³

To help lessen the confusion Macedonians and Bulgarians faced in North America, an educated migrant and representative of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church synod, D.G. Malincheff (who later become the Reverend J. Theophilact) wrote *The First Bulgarian English Pocket Dictionary*, copies of which made their way around the Great Lakes cities. The book contained hundreds of translations of common phrases like, “Do you need more laborers?,” “How much do you pay per hour for work?,” “What is the fare from Toronto to Chicago?,” and “When does the next train leave?” One page bore a symbol of the U.S. government with the inscription, “*E Pluribus Unum.*”¹⁴ The dictionary helped migrants exploit the ease of movement between the U.S. and Canada, which in turn helped alleviate a bit of the frustration and anxiety of the discrimination they experienced; while their treatment may have been no better in a new locale, their

¹² Petroff, *Sojourners and Settlers*, 15.

¹³ Stoyan Christowe, *The Eagle and the Stork* (New York: Harper’s Magazine Press, 1976), 22. See also Yossi Shain, *Marketing the American Creed Abroad: Diasporas in the U.S. and Their Homelands* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), passim.

¹⁴ D.G. Malincheff – J. Theophilact, *The First Bulgarian English Pocket Dictionary* (Toronto: D.G. Malincheff & N.D. Velcoff, Co., 1913).

mobility in an expanding economy at least gave them a chance to improve their lot.¹⁵

Dozens of Macedonians and Bulgarians who disdained urban work worked seasonal spells on the railroads and in the forests of Montana, the Dakotas, and northern Ontario.¹⁶

Bill Steffoff, who migrated to Canada in 1906, recalled thinking there was “no distinction” between the two countries upon his arrival. Nick Temelcoff remembered thinking of Canada in the same way that many migrants described the United States.

“People before me came to Canada and they spoke well of the country. Its [sic] a free country. There is work in the factories, industries. Then I was dreaming of coming to this country.”¹⁷ Methody Sarbinoff was one such peripatetic migrant who worked a

variety of jobs in Detroit and Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Mansfield, Ohio, before settling in Toronto, his original destination, and later Hamilton, Ontario.¹⁸

¹⁵ Policymakers on both sides of the border took note of the Macedonians’ travels. Migration between the U.S. and Canada was important enough that U.S. officials included two chapters on the phenomena in the landmark *Reports of the Immigration Commission*. United States Immigration Commission, *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol 40, ch 1, 28; United States Immigration Commission, *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol 40, ch 1, 37. At the behest of the U.S. Congress, a team of researchers set about constructing an exhaustive study of immigrant life in America. The resulting 41-volume *Report of the Immigration Commission*, commonly termed the Dillingham Commission report after the U.S. senator William P. Dillingham of Vermont who chaired the commission, appeared in 1911.

¹⁶ Christowe, *My American Pilgrimage*, 168-175; Petroff, *Sojourners and Settlers*, 38-42. This section of Christowe’s memoir is especially poignant. His father succumbs to an illness incurred while the two are working on the rail lines in Montana. With few options, Christowe chooses to bury his father alongside the newly-laid rails and continue his labors.

¹⁷ According to the U.S. Commissioner-General of Immigration, 334 Bulgarians, Serbians, and Montenegrins moved from the U.S. to Canada in 1909-1910. Many more crossed the border for temporary stays on the other side. About 1500 migrants from these groups moved in the opposite direction to the United States. Bill Steffoff, interview with Lillian Petroff, December 17, 1975, MHSO; Nick Temelcoff, interview with Lillian Petroff, July 8, 1975, MHSO.

¹⁸ Petroff, *Sojourners and Settlers*, 39.

The First “Americanauts” – Portraits of Foto Tomev and Stoyan Christowe

After 1900 inexpensive steamship passages from ports within a train’s journey from the central Balkans made opportunities to work in the U.S. and Canada more practical and profitable.¹⁹ For hundreds of thousands of southeast European men, including tens of thousands from Macedonia, labor migration to North America century essentially became a transoceanic commute.²⁰ Two intimate portraits of labor migrants – Foto Tomev and Stoyan Christowe – making their way from Macedonia to, respectively, Canada and the United States reveal some of the choices migrants made, and had made for them, as they began their sojourns to North America. The portraits also reveal the new social, racial, and economic realities the migrants encountered, and the ways the new environments challenged the migrants to define an ethnic identity.²¹

¹⁹ Though the United States and Canada often are contrasted because of the disparities in their size their demographic development during these years bears similarities. By 1911, for instance, almost 50% of Canadians lived in cities of 1000 or more people, which roughly approximated the finding of the 1920 U.S. Census that over half of Americans lived in urban areas of at least 2500 people. Harold Troper, “History of Immigration to Toronto Since the Second World War: From Toronto ‘the Good’ to Toronto ‘the World in a City,’”

²⁰ For a useful overview of labor migration from a Greek Perspective, see Nicholas Gage, *Eleni* (New York: Random House, 1983), 27-45. Fikret Adanir, “The Macedonians in the Ottoman Empire, 1878-1912,” in *The Formation of National Elites*, Andreas Kappeler ed. (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 165. Searches of passenger records from Ellis Island of common Macedonian names like Veleff and Yovan show Macedonians arriving on ships like the *Hudson*, the *Zeeland*, the *Vaterland*, and the *Carmania* from European ports in France, Netherlands, Greece, and Britain. Available at www.ellisland.org.

²¹ Attitudes about the desirability of what sort of immigrants should be welcomed, and from which countries, varied across the decades, and these attitudes often bore enough political support to be translated into laws that sought to keep out groups based on ethnicity, race, or country of birth. The history of those efforts to exclude certain peoples from the populace marked some of the most naked violations of American and Canadian claims to the equality of all men. See Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), ch. 1-3. See also John Higham, *Strangers In The Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, NJ: 1955); Matthew Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000).

Foto Tomev – Canada Bound

Foto Tomev's voyage to the New World began in the Macedonian village of Pisoderi in the summer of 1915. Pisoderi, and the surrounding villages in the Lerin and Kostur provinces, had become part of Greece two years earlier at the conclusion of the Second Balkan War. The village was physically and psychologically scarred from this latest war. Misery and want were everywhere. For centuries this part of the broader Macedonian region had been home to Slavic-speaking villagers who, now, found themselves living under an imperative to adopt the Greek language and customs.²² At the age of 25 Tomev already had lived through the *Illinden* period, which he vaguely remembered. Having survived this latest period of warfare, he saw labor migration all around him. Tomev's father already had left Pisoderi for Canada and, one after another, Tomev's friends too began leaving to find work in Toronto. Some already were calling Canada "Upper America" and the U.S. "Lower America." When a family friend urged Tomev's mother to buy her son's passage to Canada as soon as possible, the rest of the family understood their task. They would pay what they had to in order for Foto to get the necessary papers and join his father and the other men from Pisoderi in Toronto.²³

Tomev spent the summer before his departure working for a clay tile manufacturer in Pisoderi. By his own estimation, he was paid one *drachma* per day, or 25 cents Canadian. On the day he left Pisoderi, Tomev took a horse carriage to the much

²² As in Chapter One, I use the geographic term "Macedonia" here to indicate not a nation-state but the majority Christian-Slav region that remained under Ottoman control until the Balkans Wars of 1912-1913. After the Macedonian region was trisected by Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia in 1913, many who hailed from the region continued to use the appellation, "Macedonia," in a similar manner as Poles referred to Poland even after its multiple partitions. Until noted, I therefore use the term, "Macedonian" in that same way. Foto S. Tomev, *Macedonian Folktales*, Lillian Petroff, ed., Occasional Papers in Ethnic and Immigration Studies, Multicultural Historical Society of Ontario, 1980, 37-42.

larger city of Lerin where he awaited the train to Salonica. It was the first train he had ever seen. In bustling Salonica, Tomev now joined a small group of men who spent as little time as possible in the bullet-riddled city before departing by boat for the Greek port city of Pireaus. Laid up in Pireaus while awaiting the next steamship to New York City, Tomev suffered swelling in his legs from the Greek summer heat that often rose well above 100 degrees Fahrenheit.²⁴

The crew of the *Boania*, the steamer that arrived to take its cargo to New York, was more concerned with loads of raisins and figs than with paying passengers. Several Greeks who had bought tickets to New York City had to protest before the stevedores agreed to stop loading dried fruit and allow the overstuffed boat to depart. For the nineteen-day journey Tomev and his new traveling companions slept in bunks above the engines. Another labor migrant, who was from the Macedonian town of Bitola – and whom Tomev described as a “Macedonian” – spoke Greek as well as the Slavic Macedonian language, and spent most of the trip arguing with Greek passengers.

In May 1915 German torpedoes had sunk the British luxury liner, *Lusitania*, heightening tensions between the United States and Germany. The *Boania* was stopped and searched by a German U-boat looking for war materiel. Shortly afterward, word reached the ship that Bulgaria had entered the war as a German ally. As a result, several thousand migrants who were en route, or already were in North America, and who had listed “Bulgarian” or “Macedonian” as their ethnicity, or Bulgaria as their point of origin before departing, were now viewed by the United States and Canada as potential

²³ Foto S. Tomev, *Memoirs*, Lillian Petroff, ed. (Toronto: Multicultural Historical Society of Ontario, no date), 40.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

enemies. Though the United States officially remained neutral for two more years, pressure mounted in North America against foreign nationals, and especially Germans, Austrians, and Bulgarians, as well as others from the Triple Alliance or their allies.²⁵

Foto Tomev was bound for Toronto and therefore went to a queue for a Canadian immigration official upon his arrival in New York Harbor. Upon first seeing Americans, Tomev recalled his shock that so few men wore moustaches. He remembered that immigrant relief workers (likely representing Protestant religious aid groups) gave immigrants heading north food and copies of the New Testament, both in English and in their native language. The lunch bag that he carried onto the train contained sandwiches and some bananas, which were the first he had ever seen. Unsure what to do with the strange fruits, Tomev threw them away.²⁶ Tomev located his father shortly after arriving in Toronto. Father and son now would share space in a three-bedroom house at 680 Wellington Street, along with fourteen other migrants from Macedonia.



Figure 8. *Macedonian Boarding House*, 1917, painting by Foto Tomev, permanent collection of the Multicultural Historical Society of Ontario, Toronto.

²⁵ Ibid., 40-41.

²⁶ Ibid., 43.

Many other recent arrivals from Macedonia lived near the Tomevs on or near St. Clair Avenue. These “Macedonian immigrants,” as Tomev called them, clustered in the city’s East End because of the proximity to the abattoirs and tanneries where many found employment.²⁷ For roughly a decade Macedonians had been arriving to these same neighborhoods, creating a “Macedonian effect” in sections of the city where they lived and in the firms for which they worked. For example, two Macedonians who during these years worked at Toronto’s Kemp Manufacturing Company, producing metal and tin goods, recruited others until three-quarters of the plant’s labor force was Macedonian.²⁸

In his mid-twenties, Foto had not seen his father for six years. As the stays of Macedonian men in North America grew longer, it became common for sons to see their fathers only sporadically before suddenly being thrust into an intimate living situation in the U.S. or Canada with a patriarchal figure they scarcely knew. The elder Tomev was angry when Foto arrived in Toronto in 1915. Tomev’s father and his generation of migrants saw themselves engaging in temporary labor spells abroad to be followed by a return home. Sons began following fathers before the fathers even knew about the sons’

²⁷ In his writings Tomev did not discuss his feelings about his ethnicity, though his propensity for the term “Macedonian” was shared by many in Toronto, and perhaps less so in several American cities. This failure to discuss ethnicity, even after decades of reflection, was not unusual, but became less common in the more political climate of the post-War years.

²⁸ Lillian Petroff, “Macedonians in Toronto: Industry and Enterprise, 1903-1940,” *Polyphony*, vol 6, no 1, 38-43. Though the terms “Macedonian” and “Bulgarian” are used frequently in this study, there are difficulties associated with applying either term during the period under consideration in this chapter. Prior to the mid-twentieth century there often were not clear distinctions between Macedonians and Bulgarians in North America. Many migrants from the Macedonian region referred to themselves as both, while others saw themselves as either Macedonian or Bulgarian. For the this reason I will generally refer to migrants from Macedonia as Macedonians and Bulgarians, unless it is clear from the primary source that the person or persons described either were considered, or considered themselves, to be one or the other.

decisions. The arrival of sons, moreover, made the fathers admit that their presence in North America had become more permanent.²⁹

Stoyan Christowe – America Bound

As a young boy in Konomladi, near Lake Prespa and the modern Greece-Macedonia border, Stoyan Christowe had heard stories about Michael Gurkin, an itinerant local sawyer. After the *Illinden* uprising, Gurkin left for the forests of Romania to escape the chaos of the Macedonian villages. There, labor agents, who were paid by American companies seeking foreign labor, recruited him with the promise of riches to be earned abroad. The agents worked in close coordination with steamship firms seeking to fill berths on ocean-going vessels. In 1911 Gurkin became the first person from the village to decide to travel across the Atlantic.³⁰

Before long, word of his success, and the effect that “*Amerika*” had upon migrants, reached Gurkin’s neighbors in Konomladi.³¹ When Gurkin returned to Konomladi for the first time, villagers crowded into his family’s house to observe the exotic traveler. “They saw a new different Gurkin. A splendor radiated from the once shy withdrawn sawyer,” wrote Christowe decades later. Christowe called Gurkin an

²⁹ Foto Tomev, *Memoirs*, 43. Canadian immigration agents worked in nearly every U.S. state and were paid for every native-born American or recent immigrant they convinced to move north to Canada. In 1909, some 59,926 people did so. Historian Marcus Hansen addressed this connection between the two immigration magnets in his 1940 study, *The Mingling of the Canadian and American Peoples*. And more recently, Bruno Ramirez has pointed out that Anglo-Canadian migration to America actually outnumbered French-Canadian migration roughly two-to-one between 1840 and 1940. Both accounts, however, miss the importance of the “transnational ethnic” who had not yet become an American or a Canadian, and who felt free to cross the border time and again without thinking of it as a political, or even migratory act. Marcus Lee Hansen, *The Mingling of the Canadian and American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940, reprint New York: Arno Press, 1970); Bruno Ramirez, *Crossing the 49th Parallel: Migration from Canada to the United States, 1900-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), ix-xi.

³⁰ Christowe, *The Eagle and the Stork*, 4-6.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 4-8.

“Americanaut,” a term meant to associate Gurkin with the ancient Greek Argonauts (and perhaps the courage and prestige of the astronauts who had so captured the popular imagination of America in the 1970s, the time when Christowe wrote his book). For Konomladi, it was as if Gurkin had returned from a place as distant as space. “These were new men . . . [In] striped double-breasted jackets, cuffed pantaloons, silk shirts and flowery neckties.”³² But for the villagers in Konomladi, the changes America imparted to Gurkin were deeper than surface appearance. Gurkin and the others “had undergone a change, externally, and they were new men. *Amerikantzi!* The aura of America was upon them.”³³ The return of Gurkin triggered a rise in the number of men seeking work in Upper or Lower America. By 1911, there “were more men folk in America than in the village,” Christowe remembered. In that same year, a 17 year old Christowe began his own journey abroad.³⁴

As with Foto Tomev, Christowe’s father had preceded him in looking for work in America, and was angry when his son appeared in St. Louis in 1911. The father’s fear that young Stoyan’s interest in American culture and language might jeopardize the temporary nature of the father’s economic mission began almost from the start. Working in the sprawling train yards along the Mississippi River – just south of where city planners would put Eero Saarinen’s famed Gateway Arch in 1966 – Stoyan complained to his father about the single-mindedness of their work. “Twelve hours a day, with no Sundays or holidays off. When am I going to learn English?” he asked. His father shot back sharply,

³² Ibid., 75.

³³ Ibid., 75.

³⁴ Ibid., 88.

Who'll pay you money for English? We didn't come here to learn English. We're here to work and save and go back home to live like human beings. . . . [W]e don't belong here. . . . We are something like gypsies in our own country. It'll be coal shoveling, [and] engine wiping for us. . . . You'll always be a stranger here.³⁵

Christowe heeded his father for a time and applied himself at the train yards. Christowe's father tried vainly to instill the necessary thrift in his son in order to maximize their savings. To Stoyan's pleas to visit the Balkan café where men discussed politics, the elder admonished, "Live like a miser in America so that you might live like a *vizier* in your own country."³⁶ Eventually, though, his desire to stay and learn English prevailed and Stoyan attended college at Valparaiso State University in Indiana and came to see himself as a proud and patriotic American without ever losing his Bulgarian-Macedonian identity. During his decades-long love affair with America, he worked, among other things, as a train car cleaner, a rail worker, a journalist, an analyst and author, and a politician. Between 1911 and his death in Vermont in 1992, he authored at least three volumes of autobiographical memoirs, an historical monograph, an historical novel, and numerous newspaper and journal articles.³⁷

³⁵ Stoyan Christowe, *My American Pilgrimage* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1947), 6-9.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 10. A *vizier* was the Turkish term for a minister of state in the Ottoman Empire.

³⁷ Christowe, *My American Pilgrimage*; Christowe, *The Eagle and the Stork*. For another useful memoir in this vein see Peter Demetroff Yankoff, *Peter Menikoff: The Story of a Bulgarian Boy in the Great American Melting Pot* (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1928). Christowe returned to Macedonia during WWII to write about conditions there. He and his wife spent their elderly years in Vermont where Christowe served as a state legislator there for a number of years. According to correspondence of at least one person who knew him, Christowe also served in the O.S.S. during WWII. E-mail from Mary Lou Raymo to Heather Muir, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota, 5 February 2001, in author's possession.

Counting Macedonians and Bulgarians in Upper and Lower America

After the *Illinden* violence, the manner in which hundreds of Eastern European men such as Foto Tomev and Stoyan Christowe were arriving aroused the suspicion of immigration officials. In March 1904 the *New York Times* noted that supporters of the Macedonian cause – including several Protestant and Catholic clerics and politicians who were sympathetic to the plight of Christians in European Turkey – met in Orange, New Jersey, to hear from Macedonian migrants about their plans to raise money and build a militia to fight the Turks. At the meeting, a representative from the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Army (IMRO), the rebel band that launched the *Illinden* uprising, joined recently-migrated Macedonian-Bulgarians to ask church and political officials for financial help. They claimed already to have the support of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the Archbishop of Canterbury in England, and Georges Clemenceau in France. The *Times* reported that the Macedonians had a “plan to equip 50,000 men,” but the small immigrant population and post-*Illinden* chaos proved far too great for the plan to proceed.³⁸

A more realistic concern was the large number of poor, illiterate migrants who were arriving daily in American and Canadian ports. One of the few existing restrictions on immigration to America outlawed contract labor, and, as officials noticed the economic status of the peasants arriving from Macedonia, they became concerned that a term of work awaited the migrants in North America.³⁹ A U.S. Bureau of Naturalization

³⁸ “Macedonian Junta To Be Formed Here,” *New York Times*, 23 March 1904, 16.

³⁹ Report by John Gruenberg to Hon. Daniel J. Keefe, Commissioner-General of Immigration, December 18, 1908, Department of Commerce and Labor, Immigration Service, National Archives and Records Administration, RG 85, entry 9, box 79, 3-4. Though the report’s author refers to the migrants as “Bulgarians” here, he uses the term “Macedonians” elsewhere in the report to describe the same group.

and Immigration report from 1909 commented on the push- and pull-factors behind the increased migration stream: a climate “bordering on anarchy,” aggressive recruitment by labor agents, and ready jobs in North America.⁴⁰ Chicago, Illinois, social reformer Grace Abbott and sociologist Emily Greene Balch were among the first to recognize the market’s effect on the newly-arrived. Abbott arranged for Ivan Doseff – an immigrant from Macedonia and a graduate of the newly-chartered University of Chicago – to poll Macedonians and Bulgarians on their economic status. His survey of 100 Macedonian and Bulgarian men in Chicago found that three-quarters of them had been peasant farmers back home. Doseff reported that, prior to immigration 71% lived on the equivalent of less than \$60 a year in 1903 U.S. dollars, and almost half of these had “just enough to live on.”⁴¹

Canada feared foreigners less. Unlike the United States, Canadian immigration officials welcomed contract labor as a way of ensuring that immigrants would not rely on charity, and would help populate its vast western reaches. Canadian officials even paid bonuses to labor agents abroad and recruited immigrants from the United States. Dincho Ralley, whose family began migrating to Toronto in 1907 from the Macedonian village of Zigorichen, recalled an English-speaking labor agent in the Macedonian city of Lerin

The commission estimated that 90 percent of the Macedonians and Bulgarians were from Macedonia, not Bulgaria.

⁴⁰ Some officials though the immigration problem would only grow worse; in 1916 Frederic C. Howe, U.S. Commissioner of Immigration, fretted that “Large parts of Asia Minor and Macedonia have been completely devastated. There will be a hegrira from that near Eastern congeries of nations.” Richard Barry, “Will Immigration Rise After the War?,” *New York Times*, 16 July 1916, sm12.

⁴¹ Grace Abbott, “The Bulgarians of Chicago,” *Charities and the Commons*, vol. 21, October 1908 – April 1909, 654. Additionally, he found four who had been blacksmiths, as well as four shoemakers, three furriers, two tanners, and two mechanics. Not more than a few of the men were grocers, cooks, or bakers – as many later would be in North America. Though rates of land ownership among peasants from European Turkey were somewhat higher than in other parts of Europe, more than half the men reported owning no land prior to emigrating.

who arranged for several men from Ralley's village to emigrate. Within a few years, most of them had railroad or factory jobs near Toronto's heavily-industrial Eastern Avenue.⁴²

It is difficult to know how many migrants like Tomev, Christowe, and Ralley had actually settled in North America in the early years of the century. Macedonians and Bulgarians were a peripatetic group, traveling frequently for temporary jobs, and often spending significant periods of time away from home. They departed Europe from any number of ports, reporting an equal number of places as their point of origin. Lacking a state of their own and a confident ethnic identity, they were likely to assume a variety of national identities as they crossed borders. Thus, migrants who may have considered themselves Macedonian often registered themselves (or were registered by immigration officials) as Greek, Serbian, Bulgarian, Albanian, or Turkish.⁴³

By the early-twentieth century, the Canadian and American governments had begun classifying newcomers by "races" or "peoples," and not by countries of origin.⁴⁴ The United States Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization recognized 39 distinct ethnic or racial groups between 1901 and 1909 and listed them in the census taken in 1910. Eight groups, or groupings, were considered to be "Slavic": Poles; Slovaks; Croatians; Slovenians; Ruthenians or Russniaks; Bohemians or Moravians; Bulgarians,

⁴² United States Immigration Commission, *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol 40, 5, 57-58; Dincho Ralley, interview with Lillian Petroff, July 4, 1975, MHSO.

⁴³ United States Census Bureau, *Historical Statistics of the United States*, Series C (Washington: GPO, 1976), 116, 181-194; United States Census Bureau, 1910 and 1920 Census Bureau Instructions to Enumerators.

⁴⁴ This system of taxonomy produced a distorted picture of the Balkans and its ethnic complexity. For example, Bulgarians and Serbians, two widely-recognized ethnic groups who nobody in Europe suggested were the same, were grouped together in the U.S. Census because of their religious and linguistic similarities. Emily Greene Balch, *Our Slavic Fellow Citizens* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 247.

Servians, or Moravians; Russians; and Dalmatians, Bosnians, and Hercegovians.

Additionally, the non-Slavic classifications from the Balkans included Albanians, Greeks, and Turks. Census officials issued instructions that if individuals declared their native language to be Macedonian, census enumerators were “not to write ‘Macedonian,’ but write *Bulgarian, Turkish, Greek, Servian, or Roumanian*, as the case may be.” Only languages “in the proper sense of the word” were to be counted. Therefore, a self-declared “Macedonian” could not be registered as such and instead was listed by the country of his or her birth or departure. The Bureau did not recognize Macedonians as a separate ethnic or national group until at least 1920, when it began to record “Macedonian” as a spoken language.⁴⁵

We do know that migrants who considered themselves either Macedonian or Bulgarian rarely came from Bulgaria-proper. By various estimates, between 70 and 90 percent of “Bulgars” who traveled to the New World were not from Bulgaria, but rather the Macedonian region, specifically the cities of Bitola, Kostur, and Lerin. Because many sojourners from Macedonia felt a cultural affinity with Bulgarians from Bulgaria-proper, the fact that these men were generally classified upon their arrival as Bulgarians made sense within a naming system that emphasized peoples and not places. Few migrants objected to being called Bulgarian, and since they spoke a language similar to Bulgarian, their lack of recognition as “Macedonians” as they entered North America did not cause much of a stir.⁴⁶

Nor were their numbers inconsequential. In her landmark 1910 study of Slavs in

⁴⁵ Instructions to Enumerators, U.S. Census, 1910; *Historical Statistics of the United States*, Series C (Washington: GPO, 1976), 181-194, p 116.

⁴⁶ United States Immigration Commission, *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol 9, ch 8, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911), 47.

America, Emily Greene Balch reported that “the general estimate is that between forty and fifty thousand Bulgars (from Bulgaria and Macedonia) have come to this country, including those in Canada.”⁴⁷ This estimate roughly comports with estimates offered by other contemporaneous sources. John Gruenberg, an inspector with the U.S. Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization who tracked reports about contract labor violations, furnished a figure of 59,000 by 1907.⁴⁸ Many of these immigrants came illegally as contract laborers. In exchange for a deeply discounted passage to North America, the men were instructed on how to convince border agents that they were not contracted to come to America. Once in the United States, they were required to work off their debt to their *zaraf*, or money lender, out of their wages over a period of three to six months.⁴⁹ The otherwise penniless men were a good risk to participate in the credit system, the *zarafs* believed, because of their sincere desire to return to their village, likely with the same steamship firm.⁵⁰ Of the roughly 50,000 Macedonians and Bulgarians in Canada in

⁴⁷ Lillian Petroff, *Sojourners and Settlers* 270-276. Interestingly, Sonnichsen offered a combined total for the number of immigrants in Canada and the United States. Balch’s book stuck assiduously to analyses of Slavic immigrants to America, and virtually none of the pro- or anti-immigration literature drew comparisons between the two neighbors. The two nations kept independent immigration records, and did not coordinate their immigration policies in any formal sense. Yet there was a sense in Sonnichsen’s mind that this was a population that straddled the border, and he clearly had given some thought as to the Macedonian and Bulgarian population with the two countries in mind.

⁴⁸ Report of John Gruenberg to Daniel J. Keefe, December 18, 1908, Department of Commerce and Labor, Immigration Service, Record Group 85, Entry 9, Box 79, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, 2.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* Gruenberg’s figure for the number of Macedonians who had migrated to America is significantly higher than the number provided by Census Bureau officials as residing in America. According to the 1910 census, 32,230 individuals whose place of birth was recorded as “Turkey in Europe” were recorded as living in the United States. A small percentage of this number were not Macedonians or Bulgarians but rather were from one of the various minority groups from the region, including Jews, Albanians, and Turks. Yet these groups were not migrating abroad at the same rate as Macedonians and so it is likely that Macedonian and Bulgarian Slavs comprised a large majority of this population.

⁵⁰ There is no precision to the estimates of the percentage of Macedonians and Bulgarians who returned to the Balkans after a labor spell abroad. Research by scholars like Theodore Saloutos, Dirk Hoerder, and Francis Kraljic respectively on Greeks and Croatians suggest that somewhere between a third and two-thirds of men from those countries returned home. The percentage of Croatians who returned home at least

the first decade of the century most lived in the United States, usually in an industrial center in the Midwest. Migrants to Canada concentrated largely in Toronto. Over half of these were from the Kostur area of Macedonia with the vast majority of the remainder coming from Lerin, Prespa, Ohrid, and Bitola. Of the 1090 Macedonians in Toronto in 1910, only 8 men had children with them. One third, or 340, were bachelors, and 377 men were married, though almost all wives remained in Macedonia.⁵¹

Migration and National Identity: Finding Salvation, Facing New Questions

“When your father came [to Canada in 1906], did he come for the express purpose of making money and returning home?” - Lillian Petroff

“Maybe it had some essence in it but they ran away from the Turkish oppressor, and they look for salvation some place.” - Dincho Ralley⁵²

While still a graduate student in the mid-1970s, the historian Lillian Petroff interviewed members of the Toronto Macedonian community.⁵³ She questioned them about the circumstances of their departure from Macedonia and the general course of their lives in Canada in the decades since. The answer that Dincho Ralley gave to Petroff’s question about his father’s reason for migrating from Macedonia to Canada in 1906 offers a common rationale for emigration – flight from oppression. Both Foto

once approached half. Among Greeks, this was almost certainly higher. See Theodore Saloutos, *Greeks In The United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964) and Francis Kraljic, “Round Trip Croatia,” in *Labor Migration in the Atlantic Economies: The European and North American Working Classes During the Period of Industrialization*, Dirk Hoerder, ed. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985), 400.

⁵¹ 50th Anniversary Jubilee Almanac, *Sts. Cyril and Methody Macedono-Orthodox Cathedral, 1910-1960*, MHSO, 35.

⁵² Dincho Ralley, interview with Lillian Petroff, July 4, 1975, Macedonian collection, Multicultural Historical Society of Ontario (MHSO).

⁵³ By this point, all of those interviewed identified themselves as only as Macedonians.

Tomev and Stoyan Christowe also spoke of the chaos of their villages. Political oppression was indeed one cause for Macedonian and Bulgarian migration, but not necessarily the most prominent one. As Ralley added later in the interview, making money abroad to provide for a better life back home – in essence, “economic salvation” – was another explanation for his father’s inclination to venture overseas.⁵⁴

“Immigration has usually been traced to three causes: religious, political or economic oppression,” reported Grace Abbott in 1908. “With certain qualifications Bulgarian immigration is due to the last named cause.”⁵⁵ But by using the term “salvation” to refer to an escape from the “Turkish oppressor,” Dincho Ralley wittingly or not identified a trope that has gained credence among self-described Macedonians: that Macedonians “saved” themselves from their Ottoman overlords by fighting or migrating, and in doing so, “found” themselves as a people. By the early-twentieth century, many Balkan men believed that “salvation” went beyond release from hated Ottoman rule, and necessitated freedom from the forced assimilations into Greek churches and schools that was common at the time.⁵⁶ With the rise of political manifestos like Krste Misirkov’s *On Macedonians Matters* (1903), and the growth of guerrilla brigades preaching liberationist doctrines, the use of metaphors like “national liberation,” “renaissance,” and “awakening” became more common. It is hard to know, however, how quickly these metaphors shaped the discussion and aspirations of the North American migrants.

⁵⁴ Dincho Ralley, interview with Lillian Petroff, July 4, 1975, MHSO.

⁵⁵ Grace Abbott, “The Bulgarians of Chicago,” 654.

⁵⁶ Surely, the feelings Lillian Petroff’s subjects reflected on in the 1970s may have changed over time. Their description of economic desperation comports with surveys taken in the early years of the century. But their sense of nationality and ethnic pride, however, seems to have been cultivated over the decades.

Immigrants arriving from Macedonia in Canada and the United States in the early years could not have anticipated how their new environment would challenge their sense of ethnicity. To immigration officials, native-born Americans or Canadians, and other immigrants, migrants from Macedonia seemed confused, even conflicted, about precisely who they were. They came from a handful of faraway countries, none of them named “Macedonia,” and they referred to themselves by any number of names. Employers and immigration officials began asking these immigrants who they were, what nation they came from and what language they spoke. Answers to these questions had been clear in the Balkans, where varieties of dress or diction, or a knowing nod in the right direction, spoke volumes about who a person was. Speaking Greek, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Turkish, or Ladino in the Balkans revealed enough to make some presumptions about one’s religion, and therefore one’s place in the Ottoman social order. In the polyglot metropolises of North America, however, answers to identity and national origins questions were not as evident to the new migrants themselves.

In his consultations with Emily Greene Balch about Bulgarians and Macedonians in North America, Albert Sonnichsen offered an aside that indicated the uncertainty about Macedonian ethnic identity, which Balch printed verbatim⁵⁷:

I hope you’re not making any racial distinctions between Bulgarians and Macedonians. I believe the Bulgarians who have come from Macedonia are registered on Ellis Island as Macedonians, which is confusing and inaccurate . . . The distinctions between Bulgars from Bulgaria and those from Macedonia is purely political.”⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Albert Sonnichsen was the same author who had traveled with Macedonian guerrilla bands several years earlier and published *Confessions of a Macedonian Bandit*.

⁵⁸ Lillian Petroff, *Sojourners and Settlers*, 275. His statement that Macedonians were registered as such at Ellis Island was largely incorrect. Some Macedonians and Bulgarians were listed as departing from “Macedonia” but ultimately were recorded as something other in the immigration rolls.

Sonnichsen understood that *Illinden* had sparked a movement for political independence in Macedonia. But he could not imagine that this political movement would also lead to the creation of a new people or race. Sonnichsen relayed a story to Balch in which a Bulgarian railroad supervisor in the U.S. purported to be able to discern “racial” differences between Bulgarians and Macedonians by picking “pure” Bulgarians out of a labor gang because they are “darker, bigger, stronger” than Macedonians. Yet when Sonnichsen interviewed the men picked out of the gang by the supervisor they were, to a man, from Macedonia and not Bulgaria.

And yet Sonnichsen admitted that “to one who knows the language there is no mistake distinguishing,” those from Macedonia and those from Bulgaria. Contradicting his previous claim about the near sameness of the two, he claimed: “There is as much difference in speech and intonation as between Missouri and County Clare.”⁵⁹ The Immigration Commission report, too, reflected the reality that Macedonian and Bulgarian workers commonly used both labels to describe themselves, even as its authors pointed to moments when the differences between the groups came into sharp relief. That Bulgarians and Macedonians could be seen as the same *and* different reflected the fluidity of this historical moment.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Emily Greene Balch, *Our Slavic Fellow Citizens*, 275-276. Sonnichsen’s insights about Macedonians have had an outsized impact on public perceptions of Macedonian and Bulgarian life in America for decades. At an early stage in the migration of this new group, Sonnichsen spoke with authority and expertise. His impressions remained largely unchallenged for decades, and were in fact amplified by subsequent authors such as Grace Abbott, Joseph Roucek, and Nikolay Altankov. Each of these authors picked up on Sonnichsen’s view of Bulgarian “essentialism” – the belief that Bulgarians possessed certain intrinsic national qualities.

⁶⁰ The bulk of statistical information about working conditions in America (and, to a lesser extent, Canada) included data on “Bulgarians.” But data tables on conditions in an East Coast steelmaking community in western Pennsylvania, for instance, referred to “Macedonians” without referring to Bulgarians at all. That the researchers used “Macedonian” in place of, and not in addition to, “Bulgarian” suggests that the terms were still used to refer largely to the same population. United States Immigration Commission, *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol. 8, 650-655. Had the Commission felt that the two groups merited

Race and Class in Upper and Lower America

One of the most difficult and confusing aspects of migration to North America was the emphasis the new culture placed on race.⁶¹ In turn-of-the-century America and Canada, race was a powerful yet elusive force with its own complex and malleable rules. In both countries, immigrants from a variety of backgrounds and African Americans were subjected to various forms of discrimination based on their perceived ethnic and racial differences from those who wielded power over them. Whites and Anglos in both countries often perceived non-Northern European immigrants to be racial “others,” doubting the “whiteness” of Slavs and other Central and Eastern Europeans. Because Macedonians and Bulgarians typically entered the North American labor market at the lowest rungs, they frequently worked with black laborers, and often displaced them from jobs. And because they began arriving at a time of intense immigration to the U.S. and Canada, they encountered a fierce national debate about the effects these immigrants were having on “traditional” Anglo culture in those countries.⁶²

inclusion as separate ethnicities, they likely would have included both and attempted to discern which appellation more accurately fit each worker.

⁶¹ I use the term “race” here, and throughout the chapter unless noted, to describe not a biological or physical quality, but rather to describe the contemporaneous perceptions of biological and physical states of being. While skin color was the most common marker of racial “otherness,” the scientific and pseudoscientific obsession of the day with “proving” racial characteristics meant that other qualities, such as intelligence, cranial size and shape, facial features, and even theoretical differences in blood makeup, were thought to determine one’s racial profile, and to a large extent, their legal and social standing in North American society. On the science of early-twentieth century race see Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

⁶² Over the past decade a considerable body of historical literature has appeared documenting the socially constructed nature of “whiteness” in Western culture. While an extended discussion of the formation of whiteness among Southeastern European immigrants is beyond the scope of this work, several scholars have made compelling cases for the importance of studying immigrant culture, and especially labor, within the context of the racialized climate they encountered in North America. See Matthew Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues*; David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

In Canada, the nativist muckraking journal *Jack Canuck* echoed the sentiments of the growing anti-immigrant contingent in the United States. In an article attacking the Canadian industrialist A.E. Kemp for employing so many Macedonians at his Toronto plant – while also disparaging Macedonia as a degraded place whose migrants were unworthy of jobs in Canada – the magazine demanded access to the plant’s payroll, “where so many natives of that turbulent, throat-cutting country of Macedonia are employed.”⁶³ Grace Abbott argued that one of the primary causes of the anti-immigrant feelings was the prevalence of poverty among the earliest Macedonian and Bulgarian settlers and the fear of the native-born that the men either would become criminals or public charges. In April, 1910, newspapers reported that “six hundred unemployed and starving Bulgarians . . . marched on city hall demanding work.”⁶⁴ Low pay and a recession in 1907 stung recent immigrants, and working class Americans and Canadians. In the Granite City, Illinois, and St. Louis areas, Bulgarians on the Illinois side of the Mississippi River joined other immigrants in appealing to Gov. Charles S. Deneen for unemployment relief.⁶⁵

Employers may have treated Slavic immigrants marginally better than black workers, but did not give them the respect they gave to more skilled and assimilated groups like Germans, Swedes, Dutch, and English. Some native-born Americans and Canadians derided Macedonians and Bulgarians as “Hunkies” and subjected them to

⁶³ Petroff, *Sojourners and Settlers*, 42-43.

⁶⁴ The workers’ appeals to Chicago’s city hall and Springfield’s statehouse had no direct impact on the fortunes of the men who demanded work. Their activism did, however, indicate that several thousand Macedonians and Bulgarians who had been in the country no more than a year or two understood that the democratic state - as exemplified by the mayor and governor had at its disposal tools and remedies to help them.

⁶⁵ Abbott, “The Bulgarians of Chicago,” 653, 660.

discrimination and abuse.⁶⁶ Because popular perception depicted Southeastern and Central Europeans as less than fully white, few of them could claim the additional “wage” that often accompanied “whiteness” in the American and Canadian labor forces. Having lived their lives in an Ottoman culture in which religion was the most important marker of social identity, the adjustment of migrants from Macedonia to racism in the U.S. and Canada compounded their sense of dislocation and isolation.

It, therefore, was not easy for Macedonians, Bulgarians, Greeks, Italians, and other Southeast Europeans who entered this racialized miasma to find their way or understand the hostility they encountered. Toronto resident Nick Temelcoff, from the village of Zhelevo, recalled having “no contact with Anglo-Saxon people except in the [Toronto] factories.” Bill Steffoff, from the village of Tersie, was repeatedly told that, “you guys aren’t white,” when he enrolled in school in Canada in the 1920s.⁶⁷ In such ways did the more assimilated Northern Europeans discriminate against Macedonians and Bulgarians, as they did against others from Eastern and Central Europe. Prejudice was every bit as evident in the work place; in the Midwestern United States an Immigration Commission researcher described the “considerable friction between the Irish, Austrians, and Magyars, on the one hand, and the Macedonians, Bulgarians, Romanians, and other south eastern European and Oriental races, on the other hand,” under a heading, “*Relations Between The Races.*”⁶⁸

⁶⁶ The epithet “hunky” was a play on “Hun” and was commonly used against Hungarians, often termed Magyars by immigration officials, and other Central and Eastern European immigrants.

⁶⁷ Nick Temelcoff, interview with Lillian Petroff, July 8, 1975, MHSO; Bill Steffoff, interview with Lillian Petroff, December 17, 1975, MHSO.

⁶⁸ United States Immigration Commission, *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol 9, 66.

Scholars of multiple disciplines found explanations for the allegedly inferior behavior of Macedonians and Bulgarians in their local traits. One such academic, New York University Professor of Psychology Paul R. Radosavljevich, himself of Slavic descent, titled a monograph, *Who Are the Slavs? A Contribution to Race Psychology*. His profiles of the Slavic groups were full of the language of biological and cultural certitude, racially-based assumptions, and historical conjecture.

The character of the Bulgar presents a striking contrast to that of his neighbors – less prone to idealism than the Serb, less apt to assimilate the externals of civilization than the Rumanian, less quick-witted than the Greek. Industrious and thrifty as no other Slav people, cold-blooded and calculating, the Bulgar has been justly called the “Slav Japanese” or the “Balkan Prussian,” pursuing his goal with all the characteristic Bulgarian tenacity and ruthless, silent persistence that is positively Asiatic.⁶⁹

Immigration Commission researchers struck a similar note:

One of the remarkable facts brought to light is that Macedonians who remained in the country seem to have succeeded better in laying by some small savings during the depression [of 1907] than almost any other race. This was in spite of the fact that as a race they are not regarded as desirable employees by some departments of the steel company . . . Their ability to save seems to be due to their low standard of living, their extreme frugality, and their temperance.⁷⁰

Many of the new immigrants were confused and angered by the racial stereotyping they encountered. For their part, researchers felt that close observation of the Slavic groups would yield concrete insights into the supposed differences among them.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Paul R. Radosavljevich, *Who Are the Slavs? A Contribution to Race Psychology*, vol. 1 (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1919), 105. (Emphasis in original.)

⁷⁰ United States Immigration Commission, *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol 8, 600.

⁷¹ United States Immigration Commission, *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol 9, 66.

Men at Work: Migration and Gender in the New World

Surveys of Macedonian migrants to the United States and Canada in the pre-WWI years revealed the contours of the male-dominated work culture of Macedonians and Bulgarians. The percentage of males in the early Macedonian and Bulgarian communities in North America varied, but the ratio of men to women before World War I was generally not less than 10 to 1. For example, among the relatively small number of Macedonians and Bulgarians who settled in the American South near the steel mills of Birmingham, Alabama, by 1910, only 2.4 percent of men had wives with them. A pre-war survey of Bulgarians in the Midwest found only six women out of 517 migrants.⁷²

Several factors contributed to the overwhelmingly male nature of early Macedonian and Bulgarian migration. Most obvious was the longstanding tradition of male labor migration in the Balkans. Another factor was the strict sexual division of labor and a gender code that delineated virtually every conceivable role and function that was permissible to men and women. A strong sense of sexual propriety enveloped Macedonian and Bulgarian migrant communities and the Orthodox Christian faith helped to undergird traditional conceptions of male and female behavior. Women found a small measure of agency and creative space by practicing their religion in a hybrid fashion that blended Christian faith with witchcraft and superstition. But Macedonian society cast men in a dominant role with regards to financial, political, and sexual decisions.⁷³

The vast majority of migrants, at least initially, had little sense that they would be

⁷² Ibid., 140 and ch. 1, 40. Interviews with members of the Toronto Macedonian community, by Lillian Petroff, 1974-1975, Macedonian collection, MHSO.

⁷³ In the archives consulted for this research, a vast majority of the correspondence, memoirs, documents, etc., I read were produced by men, often for a largely male reading audience. Several recent oral histories of women published by the Euro-Balkan Institute in Skopje, which provided me a teaching grant in 2002, shed light on the stories of women, as do the interviews Lillian Petroff conducted in Toronto in the 1970s.

staying long and, therefore, little desire to expose their families to the perils of an inscrutable new world. Migrants therefore found themselves in the company of other men from the same region in virtually every aspect of their lives and often through large parts of the day and night. This gender homogeneity extended to their work lives, their scant leisure time, and in their living situations. It was not unusual for recently-arrived Macedonians and Bulgarians to intersect with women only in tangential ways for months, or even years, at a time. While away from home, they interacted with their wives and families through the terse, imprecise medium of occasional letters, as valued for the funds they bore as for the emotions they conveyed.

Macedonian and Bulgarian men who left for a spell in North America entered a culture that displayed a broader and more liberal range of options for native-born and immigrant women. The mere fact that a woman could be seen in public with her hair not covered by a kerchief came as a shock to Balkan men. In the Balkans, a woman's reputation for chastity was critical to her chances of marrying well. Throughout Southeastern Europe the site of an unmarried woman speaking to an unrelated man was enough to ruin her reputation for marriage. In the bustling atmosphere of American and Canadian cities, the temptations and opportunities for woman to go astray seemed far greater than at home. Recalling his father's fear of bringing his family to Worcester, Massachusetts, from northern Greece, the writer Nicholas Gage summarized the fear of many male labor migrants. "In the village, wives and daughters knew exactly how to conduct themselves; the strict ethos provided no lapses, but America was full of fallen women."⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Nicholas Gage, *Eleni* (New York: Random House, 1983), 44.

Throughout the Balkans, labor agents had recruited many of the migrants for Canadian and American firms. And the home country, more often than not, permitted – and even welcomed – the actions of the recruiters.⁷⁵ Once in North America, the men generally clustered near the plants where they worked, living almost exclusively with other men who shared a similar background. In the Balkans, those men who were unable to support their families turned toward alternate strategies such as selling grapes and tobacco on the cash market, and hiding livestock from tax collectors. In the urban boarding houses of Upper and Lower America, different methods of austerity were necessary – taking difficult work, sharing beds, staggering work shifts, pooling resources for room and board, and self-denial of even the most basic of luxuries.⁷⁶

Helen Petroff, whose family settled in Toronto, recalled her father's first spell away from the village of Armensko in 1905. New to Canada, he accepted one of the most difficult jobs in the noxious confines of an early-century abattoir. He was responsible for pulling the large furs and animal hides into the dyeing area immediately after the animals' slaughter, and then maneuvering them into and out of the steaming multicolored vats of dye in an unheated section of the plant. The harsh dyes and fresh skins left his body raw and parched. The dyes remained in his pores and an indelible odor clung to him through repeated attempts to wash it away. His body was exposed simultaneously to the temperature extremes of the dye vats and the frigid Toronto winters, and the ubiquitous steam increased the risk of getting the "consumption," or tuberculosis, that accompanied the trades where breathing moist, polluted air was part of

⁷⁵ Kraljic, "Round Trip Croatia," 400-408

⁷⁶ United States Immigration Commission, *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol 9 ch 8, 46-49; Fikret Adanir, "The Macedonians in the Ottoman Empire, 1878-1912," in *The Formation of National Elites*, Andreas Kappeler ed. (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 165.

the bargain. For his labor, Helen's father earned between five and six dollars a week.⁷⁷

The elder Petroff lived on King Street with a number of other Macedonian bachelors, and after a couple of years he saved roughly \$500 and returned to Armensko to take as his bride a fifteen year old girl who had been orphaned at a young age. According to Petroff, his own thrift – he often lived on little more than a banana and several pieces of bread per day – helped him achieve his financial goal. Shortly after his marriage in Macedonia he returned to Toronto to earn money for his family's passage. He left behind a young wife and an unborn child, both of whom he wouldn't see again until he purchased their passage to Canada several years later. (Macedonian children with fathers abroad often met them for the first time upon their arrival with their mothers in the New World. Little more than a photograph or stories of a fathers' financial success preceded the actual introduction.)⁷⁸

The Boarding House

Nowhere was the male dominion of the early Macedonian diaspora more in force than in the urban boarding houses where most Macedonian and Bulgarian men lived upon their arrival in North America. The boarding house was an exercise in function over form; costs were kept to a bare minimum so that savings and remittances could be maximized. If women were present at all, it was likely to do chores for a fee. At least a dozen men inhabited the typical boarding house, and virtually never left it unoccupied; at any given time one third to one half of the residents would be asleep while awaiting their

⁷⁷ Helen Petroff, interview with Lillian Petroff, July 17, 1975, MHSO. For a fictional account of the Toronto abattoirs based on Petroff's interviews see Michael Ondaatje, *In The Skin Of A Lion* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987)

⁷⁸ Helen Petroff, interview with Lillian Petroff, July 17, 1975, MHSO.

shift. Steelmaking, for instance, drew a large number of Macedonians, and plants generally ran three eight-hour or two 12-hour shifts per day, six or seven days a week. Depending on which shift a boarder worked, he generally returned home to take up a cot recently vacated by another boarder on his way to the plant.⁷⁹ The cycle repeated two or three times a day as a new round of men awoke, fed and washed themselves, and left for work just as a tired crew headed home to rest. A typical two-floor house on Front Street in Toronto had only two or three rooms per floor, one of which on the ground floor served as a communal kitchen. Every bit of extra space was used to fit more boarders into the house. For instance, though there were six beds in the Toronto boarding house where Dono Evans and his father lived, at least twice that many men actually resided there.⁸⁰

Rooms in a typical boarding house generally were about 12 by 15 feet with thin plaster walls. Prior to WWI, none of the Macedonian and Bulgarian houses in the immigrant ghetto of Granite City, Illinois, had indoor baths or water closets, and inspectors found many of the dwellings to be “highly insanitary.” The survey showed the average rent paid by Bulgarians was \$3.09 per room, per month. In one Bulgarian boarding house in Granite City, the men paid \$8 a month each for living expenses exclusive of rent. Investigators from the Immigration Commission found that 12 out of 16 men were married, though none had their wives present. Only one of them spoke any English and all planned to return home. None had taken steps toward naturalization.⁸¹

⁷⁹ David Brody, *Steelworkers in America: The Nonunion Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960; reprint New York: Harper, 1969), 35-40.

⁸⁰ Dono Evans, interview with Lillian Petroff, August 2, 1975, MHSO; United States Immigration Commission, *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol 8, 660-664.

⁸¹ United States Immigration Commission, *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol 9, ch 1, 94.



Figure 9. Macedonian migrants in a Toronto boarding house, 1911, City of Toronto Archives, DPW32-11

Sons often bunked with fathers who had preceded them to North America and tensions were sometimes high between the generations sharing space in cramped quarters. The Wellington Street house that sheltered the Tomevs was even more crowded than the house where Dono Evans and his father lived. In that house, fifteen men crowded into three bedrooms. Small coal-burning stoves in the kitchen and common room provided heat only until bedtime, at which point only an extra layer of clothing had to protect boarders from the frigid Great Lakes winter. Foto Tomev routinely slept with his work suit on beneath an overcoat, the tails of which would freeze to the window pane when he had to share a bed with a more senior resident who merited the inside berth.⁸²

In the dense collection of wood houses along the Mississippi River on the south side of St. Louis, and in nearby cities of Granite City and Madison, Illinois, Macedonians and Bulgarians settled into immigrant communities similar to Toronto's East End and West Junction neighborhoods. Stoyan Christowe arrived in St. Louis in 1911 to join a

⁸² Ibid.

group of men seeking industrial work. St. Louis's role as the gateway to America's West meant that a confluence of trains - rivaled only by the Chicago rail nexus three hundred miles to the north - ferried passengers, as well as raw and finished products, from around the country through the city. This level of industrial intensity demanded cheap and willing labor for the difficult tasks of shoveling, cleaning, laying rails, cleaning and moving cars.

As soon as he joined the boarding house in St. Louis where his father already had established himself, Christowe took on a contributing role in the efficiently-run household business. Twelve men shared the two-bedroom flat and duties were regimented so that each person contributed something to the group's commonweal. "To make up for the daytimers cooking our supper, we nighttimers did the housework," recalled Christowe. "We swept the yard, washed the stew pot and did other minor chores." Those who worked the two trainyard shifts never even saw each other at the home they shared, only at work. Christowe rarely saw his father even though they shared a bed, "he occupying it in the daytime and I at night."⁸³ Seldom did the daily rations vary from bread and coffee for breakfast, egg sandwiches for lunch, and stew, cheese, and more bread for dinner. Residents took turns cooking for the group and fetching beer for the big evening meal. One typical evening, the elder men dispatched a newcomer to the German tavern for beer. "Kosta took five beer buckets from a shelf and started out for Fritz's saloon on the corner . . . [He] returned with the beer and immediately everyone

⁸³ Christowe, *My American Pilgrimage*, 35.

took his place at the table. Six spoons commenced journeys from [dinner] bowl to mouth.”⁸⁴

Coarse, dense bread was the staple of the migrants’ diet, which the boarders supplemented with potatoes, vegetables, and meat in quantities which varied with the week’s budget. An Immigration Commission researcher noted that in the “Hungry Hollow” section of Granite City bread consumed over a third of the men’s food budget for the month. “[A]lmost all of this good bread is furnished by a Macedonian bakery on the West Side.”⁸⁵ This was a not a surprising finding because Macedonians shared a strong connection to the baking business in North America. Though the majority of men worked in heavy manual labor, Macedonian and Bulgarian-owned businesses soon dotted many immigrant neighborhoods. In *In the Skin of the Lion*, his 1991 historical novel about early-century Toronto immigrants, the Sri Lankan-Canadian writer Michael Ondaatje portrayed the real-life Nick Temelcoff as a baker whose arms and aprons were perpetually covered in flour.⁸⁶

A Macedonian-Bulgarian Ghetto – “Hungry Hollow”

Some of the harshest living conditions for migrants existed in Hungry Hollow, an immigrant ghetto in the heart of Granite City. The contours of what had been an Italian-American neighborhood changed rapidly as thousands of men from the Balkans poured in to take up jobs in the steel mills, train yards, and manufacturing plants. Business and

⁸⁴ Ibid., 35.

⁸⁵ United States Immigration Commission, *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol 8, ch 5, 653.

⁸⁶ Michael Ondaatje, *In The Skin Of A Lion*, 139; United States Immigration Commission, *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol 8, 660-664.

civic leaders were surprised that an immigrant influx more than tripled Granite's City's population between 1900 and 1910, and they quickly decried both the conditions there and the new residents themselves. Soon, the poverty among those from Macedonia in the St. Louis edge city approximated that of area blacks, who also depended on manual labor positions at local plants and mills. An official at one of these plants remarked, "It is true that the district is an eyesore to Granite City, yet Hungry Hollow is necessary to the success of the large plants and the conditions are no different than with foreign communities of a like class in other cities. The large plants require common labor and Americans will not accept these positions."⁸⁷

Exploitation of Macedonians and Bulgarians by the agents who financed their passage was common in the heavily-Slavic precincts of North America's industrial cities. Two older migrants from Macedonia who settled in Michigan worked for a month and a half and were paid only about 75 cents per day at the end of the stint. A nineteen-year-old migrant worked for a construction gang for forty days, only to be paid three dollars upon finishing.⁸⁸ Daily, the community of men from Macedonia who lived on the banks of the Mississippi River walked to jobs at the Karo Syrup refining plant, or the Commonwealth Steel Company, which had adopted eight-hour shifts because the superintendent found it more economical.⁸⁹

A similar work environment prevailed in immigrant sections of Toronto where the majority of Macedonian men took low-skill, low-paying work in the city's abattoirs and

⁸⁷ The author likely was likely referring to white, American born laborers given the typically segregated job tasks in plants. Graham Romeyn Taylor, *Satellite Cities: A St. Louis East Side Suburb*, February 1, 1913 (publisher unknown), 592.

⁸⁸ Abbott, "The Bulgarians of Chicago," 660.

⁸⁹ Graham Taylor, *Satellite Cities: A St. Louis East Side Suburb*, 590-591.

manufacturing plants. The prevailing wage of 40-50 cents an hour allowed men to profit only if they were willing to maintain lifestyles of extreme austerity. Discrimination against Eastern and Central European immigrants severely limited the neighborhoods where Macedonians and Bulgarian could live, work, and spend their free time. Dono Evans and Dincho Ralley both recalled Toronto's King Street as a northern border: an ethnic and racial "red line" not to be traversed by Macedonians. Struck by a rotten tomato on his way to work in St. Louis one morning, Stoyan Christowe asked his co-worker Lambo why he was singled out. "Because you're a dago, that's why!" "But we're Macedonians," answered Christowe. "It's all the same," said his friend. Lambo surely realized that Macedonians and Italians were not the same. What he did seem to feel was that the fear and loathing of foreigners felt by others – some of them recent immigrants themselves – was a powerful and diffuse force.⁹⁰

Ethnic Self-Reliance: The Mercantile House

The poverty that accompanied unemployment in Hungry Hollow and other heavily-immigrant sections of North American cities was not a permanent condition among Macedonians and Bulgarians. Because of their willingness to accept the most difficult work, and, in fact, their lack of qualifications for more-skilled, higher-paying jobs, unemployment rarely lasted more than a few weeks or months. Those who were not employed in trades or manufacturing often found assistance through an insular feature of the Macedonian and Bulgarian immigrant economy that grew in North American cities. Described by officials as "mercantile houses," the enterprises were, essentially,

⁹⁰Dincho Ralley interview with Lillian Petroff, July 4, 1975, MHSO, 5; Dono Evans interview with Lillian Petroff, August 2, 1975, MHSO, 14; Christowe, *My American Pilgrimage*, 21.

horizontally- and vertically-integrated small businesses that provided goods and services to a largely Macedonian and Bulgarian clientele. The goods and services included groceries, bread, clothing, banking services, steamship tickets, and social events such as dances and billiards. Because the immigrants found so many of these things off limits to them in Anglo neighborhoods, or felt more comfortable turning to native speakers when conducting financial business, the mercantile houses filled a niche and flourished.⁹¹

Several mercantile houses in Hungry Hollow actually began as Macedonian bakeries or groceries that expanded into larger, more complex institutions. The houses, often extending over several connected or adjacent buildings, eventually served as a parallel economic universe for the immigrants who were excluded from Anglo-American and Anglo-Canadian institutions. Serbians, Hungarians, and a handful of others from Eastern Europe frequented the houses, but the largest part of their customer base drew on those seeking to do business in the Bulgarian language. Though they employed perhaps only a handful of individuals, the mercantile houses expanded to include many of the services needed by the local immigrant population, who already spent much of its working and free time with those of its own group, and who likely had no facility with the English language.⁹²

Language barriers, customs, and discrimination cut off most Macedonian from mainstream banks. Mercantile houses, and a number of ethnic banks, expanded into banking and financial services to meet the growing need. One such bank in the Midwest routinely carried \$25,000 in deposits, with a larger amount of customer deposits in a larger, non-immigrant bank. Even the adding machines and typewriters used to process

⁹¹ Graham Taylor, *Satellite Cities: A St. Louis East Side Suburb*, 592-595.

the accounts of the bank's customers had Bulgarian letters on them.⁹³ A bank run by a Bulgarian immigrant in Kansas City in 1910 also doubled as a steamship ticket office, a labor agency, and a pool hall. Bulgarians, Croatians, Russians, and Serbians all used the banker's services because of the relative ease of communications among the various Slavic languages. Immigration Commission researchers described the startling array of services the lone Bulgarian banker provided his clients:

The bank has no capital, is unincorporated and without legal authorization, and is subject to no supervision or examination. No branches are maintained. The nature of the business is indicated by signs and posters on the front of the establishment. The pool room is a general loafing place. The proprietor forwards letters and extends other accommodations to men sent out to work. He has some medical knowledge and is of assistance to his patrons in the purchase of drugs and other commodities.⁹⁴

In Toronto, the "Macedonian Bank" was directly across from the Ohrida Lake restaurant at 18 Eastern Avenue, named for the lake in Western Macedonia. Nick Temelcoff, who was helping construct the nearby Bloor Street viaduct completed in 1919, was able to walk to work, the restaurant, and the bank, saving money that would otherwise be spent on transit fare.⁹⁵

⁹² United States Immigration Commission, *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol 9, ch 8, 107-109.

⁹³ The Immigration Commission looked into the reasons immigrants did not use American banks. They concluded "The causes for his failure to do this are threefold: (1) The ignorance and suspicion of the immigrant, (2) the fact that American institutions have not developed the peculiar [language] facilities necessary in the handling of immigrant business, (3) the ability and willingness of the immigrant proprietor to perform for his countrymen necessary services that it would be impossible for them to obtain otherwise." United States Immigration Commission, *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol 37, 214; United States Immigration Commission, *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol 9, ch 8, 107-109.

⁹⁴ United States Immigration Commission, *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol 37, 292-293.

⁹⁵ Nick Temelcoff, interview with Lillian Petroff, July 8, 1975, MHSO. Though it's a work of historically minded fiction, Michael Ondaatje's *In The Skin of a Lion* contains several descriptive passages about Macedonians men and their contributions to the construction projects in Toronto. Ondaatje conducted extensive research for these portions of the book in the Macedonian collection at the Multicultural Historical Society of Ontario.

One Macedonian mercantile house helped 47 men from the Macedonian city of Bitola who had arrived in Dayton, Ohio, to resettle in 1905 in Hungry Hollow. Within a short time, the house found work for 16 of the men. By the following year, there were 1500 Macedonians in Granite City, and by 1907 the community reached a peak of 8000. The migrants had such a demographic impact on the section of the city that they drove out the native born residents from the neighborhood in which they settled. Prosperous owners of the mercantile houses bought up other buildings and lots to use as boarding houses; one researcher described the area as similar to “a prosperous town in European Turkey, the houses being brick and cement stuccoed, with broad open front windows.”⁹⁶ This clannishness drew the attention of the outsiders. Remarking on cafes in Hungry Hollow, the Immigration Commission noted that “they tend to retard Americanization by segregating the alien population, and preventing contact with Americans and American habits, and in preserving Old World customs and institutions.”⁹⁷

Work and the Politics of Labor

Many of those who did not work for one of the mercantile houses in some capacity worked on the lower rungs in the local iron, steel, and railroad industries. Very few Macedonians achieved the higher rates of pay that came with plant jobs such as clerks, draftsmen, foremen, foundrymen, carpenters, blacksmiths and electricians; native-

⁹⁶ Missouri Historical Society, *Where We Live: Granite City, Illinois*, 1994, 3; United States Immigration Commission, *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol 9, ch 1, 45.

⁹⁷ Graham Taylor, *Satellite Cities: A St. Louis East Side Suburb*, 592; United States Immigration Commission, *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol 9, ch 8, 108. While the Commission took a dim view of the mass immigration that was underway (and motivated numerous politicians to embrace anti-immigrant political stances) their research on the Slavic communities in Hungry Hollow seemed more resigned to the immigrants presence in the United States and elicited more concern for their social conditions and chances for assimilation into the American mainstream.

born Americans, and German and Irish first and second-generation immigrants typically held these positions. The Immigration Commission found that in the steel and iron plants' finishing departments, as in most departments, "Macedonians, Bulgarians, Turks, Roumanians, and Negroes [took] the positions requiring only unskilled labor."⁹⁸ One survey of 159 Macedonians in 1911 found that only 11 percent could speak English, compared with 40 percent for Hungarians, 47 percent for Russians, and 98 percent for Swedes.⁹⁹

In a survey of 507 Bulgarians in the St. Louis/Granite City area, three quarters reported working in iron and steel manufacturing. They were among the lowest paid employees. In one survey of an Eastern steel mill in which individuals from fifteen different racial and ethnic backgrounds worked, Macedonians were, by far, the lowest-paid employees, with 92 percent of them making less than \$1.50 a day. By comparison, only 40 percent of blacks, 20 percent of white, native-born Americans, 65 percent of Croatians, and 70 percent of Poles made so little. In another early-twentieth century survey, Macedonians and Bulgarians were, per capita, the highest recipients of aid in New York City and surrounding areas among ethnic groups residing there.¹⁰⁰

Despite the poor conditions and low pay, however, few Macedonians or Bulgarians became active in labor politics or joined unions during these the early years of settlement. Most persisted in their "safety first" approach, which seemed most practicable to them given their perilous financial standing and intentions for a quick

⁹⁸ United States Immigration Commission, *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol 9, ch 1, 60.

⁹⁹ Graham Taylor, *Satellite Cities: A St. Louis East Side Suburb*, 592; United States Immigration Commission, *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol 9, ch 1, 40.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, vol 8, ch v, 653.

return home. Time lost striking, or job loss because of association with labor agitators, meant an extension of their stay in North America. Moreover, loss of steady income would have jeopardized the position of men among the labor and steamship agents who financed their passage from Europe. And given the recentness of their arrivals, the Macedonians' and Bulgarians' lack of familiarity with the English language served as a further impediment to their successful organizations within labor unions.¹⁰¹

The reluctance of Macedonian and Bulgarian men to participate in organized labor ran contrary to the general trend toward greater Slavic participation in organized labor in the early twentieth century. From the start, immigrants had been crucial to the development of the American and Canadian economies, and therefore their labor forces. By the 1890s, Slavs were well-represented in the unionization efforts in the coal and steel industries. They were present in considerable numbers during the violent clashes between labor and management at Carnegie Steel's Homestead, Pennsylvania, plant in 1892, the Pullman strike of 1894 near Chicago, and the Lattimer Mines, Pennsylvania, massacre of 1897, as well as at violent incidents in the Chicago stockyards in the first years of the new century. In one exceptional example of Macedonians and Bulgarians participating in clashes with management, a number of men returning from the Balkan wars took up mining work in Ludlow, Colorado, in 1913, and joined miners from several nations in a strike against owners of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company. When National Guard troops arrived in October 1913, they reported finding Balkan men, "in strange costume of the Greek, Montenegrin, Servian and Bulgarian armies [who were] veterans of the Balkan Wars." By the following spring company efforts to end the strike

¹⁰¹ Victor Greene, *The Slavic Community on Strike: Immigrant Labor in Pennsylvania Anthracite* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), 207-215.

turned violent and by some estimates several dozen men, women, and children were killed in fights with the guardsmen.¹⁰²

However Macedonians and Bulgarians appear to have been less involved than other Slavs in organized labor or labor radicalism. Of 395 Macedonians and Bulgarians surveyed in Midwestern steel mills between roughly 1908 and 1911 only one belonged to a trade union. This was due largely to the unskilled nature of the work Macedonians and Bulgarians performed. When unskilled workers struck a steel plant near Granite City in 1904, Bulgarian workers willfully crossed the line and accepted \$1.25 - \$1.35 per day for the same work previously done by the strikers for \$2 – \$2.50 per day. While Macedonian and Bulgarian participation in socialist political organizations was common before WWI, it never became widespread. In 1910, there were at least half a dozen Bulgarian socialist groups in Illinois, Missouri, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Indiana, but they had a cumulative membership of barely 100 individuals. It was not until the late 1920s and 1930s that socialist political and labor organizations made significant gains among Macedonians.¹⁰³

Another possible explanation for the phenomenon points to the industries where labor organizing and violence were most prevalent. With the exception of the Steelton community in western Pennsylvania, Macedonians and Bulgarians worked overwhelmingly in the steel, railroad, and manufacturing trades, but were not as strongly represented in the coal industry as other Slavic migrants. Even in Western Pennsylvania's coal country, Macedonians were not at the front of unionization efforts.

¹⁰² George Prpič, *South Slavic Immigration In America* (Boston: Twayne, 1978), 222-223; Alan R. Sunseri, "The Ludlow Massacre," *American Chronicle*, vol. 1, no. 1, January 1972.

¹⁰³ United States Immigration Commission, *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol 9, 68; Nikolay Altankov, *The Bulgarian Americans* (Palo Alto: Ragusan Press, 1979), 59.

Historian Victor Greene's contention that immigrant and Slavic solidarity, often decried as nonexistent, deserves credit for several labor victories therefore needs to be adjusted to take into account variation across Slavic groups. As some of the last Slavic and Eastern European immigrants to arrive in North America, Macedonians and Bulgarians do not fit as neatly into the established labor history narrative as is suggested by their "Slavicness."¹⁰⁴

Sojourning and Settling: Building Social and Religious Organizations in the New World

The reluctance of Macedonians and Bulgarians to engage in organized labor and socialist politics before WWI hardly meant that they were reluctant to organize socially or politically. They merely did so in a way that suggests that, in the first years of settlement, cultural affiliation was more important than class affiliation. As early as 1902, Bulgarian migrants Marko Kaludov, Hristo Nedialkov, and S. Shumkov used the occasion of their arrival in New York City to begin raising money for the *Illinden* uprising against the Turks. Migrating largely for personal and economic reasons, the trio quickly turned to supporting a political cause in a land to which they planned to return. Many of those who followed in succeeding years were *pečalbari* – migrants on temporary, pragmatic missions – who then founded mutual aid groups, benevolent societies, athletic clubs, and even church parishes, in just a handful of years, laying the foundation for more permanent communities. Both raising money for an armed insurgency in Macedonia and forming cultural and religious institutions in the New

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 207-215. See also Gary Gerstle, *Working-Class Americanism: The Politics of Labor In a Textile City, 1914-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Herbert Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Working-class and Social History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977).

World indicate a fundamental willingness by migrants to maintain political and social ties to their cultures and place of birth.

Macedonian settlers therefore acted both like temporary visitors *and* like permanent immigrants enthusiastic about building social and religious institutions in their new, pluralistic societies. Though many Macedonians saw themselves as sojourners – simple peasants saving for better days ahead – some of them, including many who did actually return home, also acted like settlers intent on putting down roots in their adopted land. For some, creating new institutions in the diaspora was a means of coping with the dislocation of life far from home; for others it was recognition of the greater freedoms allowed them in North America. For all, the social and religious organizations served as a buffer between them and a North American population that often was hostile or resentful of their presence.

Macedonian and Bulgarian mutual aid societies existed in New York City by 1903 and multiplied steadily thereafter. Until formal Orthodox Church parishes began to assemble a few years later, these mutual aid societies served as the primary mechanism for social cohesion among Macedonians and Bulgarians in North America. One Western Pennsylvania benevolent society, the Christo Taleff Bulgarian Society, had 125 members by 1907. Dues were \$6 per year and benefits consisted of \$5 per week sick pay and insurance for loss of life and funeral expenses. Similar groups sprang up in Toronto, Detroit, and the St. Louis/Granite City area. The societies bore some of the same cleavages that slowed the pace of Macedonian national integration at home as villagers formed associations with others from the same village. Had migrants from Macedonia felt a sense of permanency upon their arrival in North America, as did many Eastern

European Jews, for instance, and were there more established communities, as with twentieth century Irish settlements, they might have been more likely to associate with a broader coalition of their group rather than village-based associations.¹⁰⁵

Associating with others from the same village or region was common among new immigrants to North America. Often these were informal associations to raise money for a cause or plan social events like dances, banquets, and picnics. Among the first formal groups to form was Toronto's Oshchima Benefit Society, named after the village in Western Macedonia. The group chose Oshchima native Bozin C. Temof as its first president on October 26, 1907. Dues were set at three dollars a year, and members received a variety of benefits such as help with funeral and burial costs and sick pay for time off work. Also in Toronto, three-dozen men and women from the village of Banitza joined together on July 6, 1911, to share their interests, and on that date convened the Banitza Benevolent Society. Hadzi Dimitar Petrov guided the organization through five meetings in its first year of existence. As with its Oshchima predecessor, dues were set at three dollars, and over the next half dozen years membership was extended to those from villages nearby Banitza, but whose numbers could not justify forming their own societies. To others from the Balkans, members of the Banitza Society saw themselves, and many still do, as *Baničeni*, a village affiliation that set them apart from others of Macedonian descent.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ United States Immigration Commission, *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol 8, community C, ch v, 710; Jubilee Almanac, 27-29. The notion of cleavages playing an important role in the Balkans, especially interwar Greece, is found in George Th. Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic: Social Coalitions and Party Strategies in Greece, 1922-1936* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 1-20.

¹⁰⁶ *Constitution of the Benefit Society "Oshchima,"* 1907, revised 1969, MHSO; *Benefit Society Oshchima: 75th Anniversary, 1907-1982*, MHSO; *75th Jubilee Banitza, 1911-1986*, Banitza Benevolent Society, 1986, 12, MHSO.

Religious Communities

The establishment of at least four Orthodox Church parishes by Macedonians and Bulgarians in North America in the years before World War I was an even more profound expression of Macedonian and Bulgarian cultural identity than the numerous social and cultural groups. Unlike the social clubs, which were easier to initiate and could be established with little or no capital, the formation of a parish required a significant degree of fundraising, organization, permission and support from the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. In the early years, the fledgling parishes were perhaps the strongest indicator that even if individual Macedonians and Bulgarians planned to return home to the Balkans, others would stay on and be joined by fresh migrants from abroad. The planting of churches among this migrant group was therefore based on an assumption that even if individual migrants were not long for the North American world, the migratory endeavor itself was long-term, and the spiritual and social needs of future migrants would need to be met.¹⁰⁷

The first Macedonian and Bulgarian communities to build Orthodox Church parishes benefited from the considerable force of personality of the same Reverend Theophilact who was the author the *The First Bulgarian English Pocket Dictionary*. In Granite City (1907), Steelton, Pennsylvania, (1908), Detroit (1910), and Toronto (1910), Theophilact brought together the Macedonian-Bulgarian migrants in campaigns to build national churches. Using persuasion, personal charisma, and a mandate from the Bulgarian Orthodox synod, Theophilact convinced those who were willing to help that

¹⁰⁷ *50th Anniversary Almanac, Sts. Cyril and Methody Macedono-Bulgarian Orthodox Cathedral, 1910-1960*, 8-29, MHSO.

fundraising was a critical first step. Dedo Kone, a self-described Macedonian living in Steelton headed an effort to organize Macedonians and Bulgarians in this Western Pennsylvania industrial enclave. “I was appointed to collect donations for the building of the church. I was not literate, however, I took a cloth, tied the four corners together and went from person to person and everybody dropped money in the cloth,” Kone said. “Receipts were not given, since no one knew how to issue them.”¹⁰⁸

Following a similar fundraising campaign, the Toronto parish elected its first board on March 11, 1911 with Kuzo Temelkoff as president and the Reverend Theophilact as pastor. The board appointed 20 management committee members, nearly all of them between 28 and 35 years of age. That May, the new congregation consecrated a small building at the corner of Trinity and Eastern Avenues that they had purchased the previous year for \$5,000 and converted for its new purpose. The first floor became a church and the second floor a social hall for gatherings of groups like *Balkanski Unak*, a Bulgarian-Macedonian social and athletic society. Three Russian Orthodox prelates attended the ceremony, including one from New York City, as did approximately 150 Macedonian and Bulgarian migrants from the Toronto community. Because of the tensions between the Bulgarian and Greek Orthodox Churches in the Balkans, the Russian clerics were likely the closest religious celebrants who would attend.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 28.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 8-29.

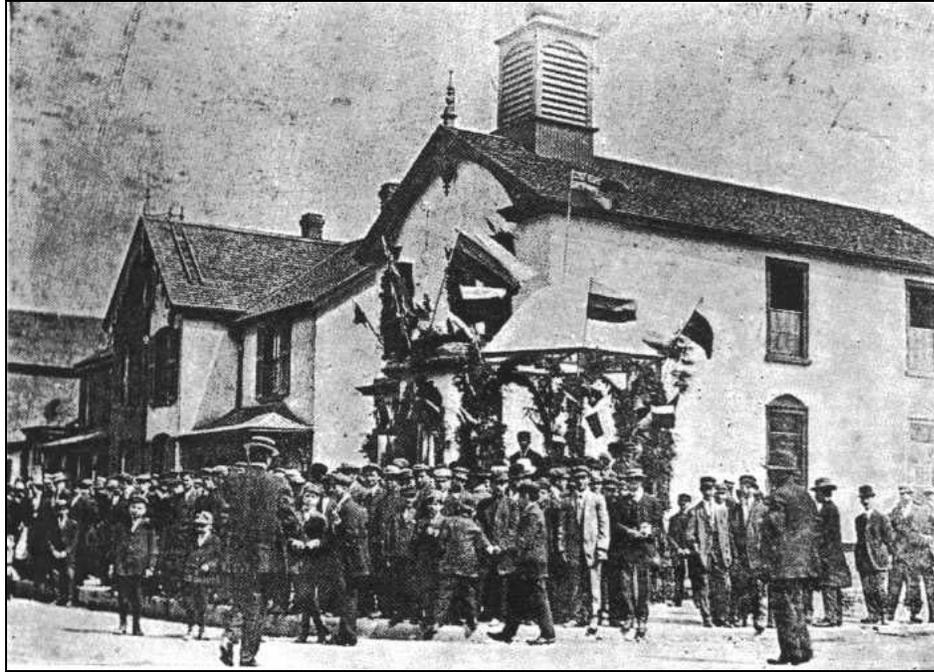


Figure 10. Consecration of St. Cyril and Methody Macedono-Bulgarian Orthodox Church, May 24, 1911, Corner of Trinity and Eastern Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, *50th Anniversary Jubilee Almanac, Sts. Cyril and Methody Macedono-Orthodox Cathedral, 1910-1960*, MHSO, 29.

According to Lillian Petroff, “The decision to set up a national church stemmed from the villagers’ growing New World sense of themselves as Macedonians.”¹¹⁰ Yet the opposite may have, in fact, been true. Self-proclaimed Macedonians and Bulgarians did not see the need for separate churches. The Toronto community may have contained a higher ratio of self-described Macedonians than American Macedonian-Bulgarian communities, but “Macedonianism” was far from a unanimous view. And the formation of the parishes was due more to the efforts of Reverend Theophilact, and the pragmatic organization of the migrant community rather than a statement of ethnic solidarity; until the 1920s, the co-existence of self-proclaimed Macedonians and Bulgarians within the same Bulgarian Orthodox church worked relatively well. Even though factions

¹¹⁰ Petroff, *Sojourners and Settlers*, 51.

developed in each community, and a number of Macedonian Protestants abstained from Orthodox Church life, the need of Macedonian and Bulgarian migrants to have a place to worship in a familiar language proved stronger than the divisions. Many self-described “Macedonians” were content to attend a church they called “Macedono-Bulgarian,” and which came under the auspices of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. More important was to create an institution that, like the Bulgarian Orthodox “Exarchate” in Bulgaria and Macedonia, was free of Greek influence.¹¹¹

Conclusion - Settlement, Migration, and Identity

Labor migration to the United States and Canada before WWI was an economically sensible but culturally complex process for Macedonians and Bulgarians. The departure of perhaps 50,000 – 100,000 men from the Macedonian region strained the social fabric of dozens of mountain villages. And the arrival of the men in the industrial centers of the Great Lakes and Mississippi Valley regions brought them into contact with the harsh realities of factory work, racial and ethnic discrimination, and cultural dislocation. Many of these migrants succeeded at their mission of returning to the Balkans with money to help their families survive. But enough stayed in North America, or else returned after some time at home, to build the foundation of a Macedonian diaspora abroad. These sojourners-turned-settlers formed social and religious organizations, occasionally petitioned the government for redress, and began to explore new definitions of self-identification.

¹¹¹ Even those who had begun to think of themselves as Macedonian rather than Bulgarian, largely conversed in the Bulgarian language, or more likely, a variant from the village or *vilayet* from which they hailed. It would be several decades before the political and linguistic consensus existed to codify they variants into a formal Macedonian language. Lillian Petroff, *Sojourners and Settlers*, 56-57.

As a way of better articulating who they were, these migrants sought alliances with others from similar cultural backgrounds. They drew lines of division between themselves and others, and slowly they began doing a better job of describing themselves in a way that made sense to others. Others, in turn, began to perceive the same differences between Macedonians and their Balkan neighbors that Krste Misirkov did in *On Macedonian Matters* in 1903. Paul Radosavljevich, the Slavic-American psychologist who contributed to the body of academic writing that ascribed race-based traits to Balkan groups, described an emerging consensus in the literature that “Macedonians as a whole are a Slavic people, and are for many generations behind the Bulgars and the Serbs in its national consciousness as well as in its language development.”¹¹²

One of the first indications that the new immigrants in North America were declaring their own ethnic label came when the Macedonian language gained credibility among immigration policymakers in Washington. In 1910 census enumerators were instructed, “not to write ‘Macedonian,’ [for language] but write Bulgarian, Turkish, Greek, or Roumanian as the case may be.”¹¹³ Yet a decade later in 1920, the Macedonian language – which was not recognized internationally – was added to the list of “Principal Foreign Languages” spoken in the U.S., and kept there likely because so many recent settlers began claiming it as their native tongue.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Radosavljevich, *Who Are the Slavs? A Contribution to Race Psychology*, 284-285.

¹¹³ United States Census Bureau, 1910 and 1920 Census Bureau Instructions to Enumerators. Because the enumerators were asking individuals about their native language, and not their ethnicity, the ranges of languages offered as alternatives to Macedonian reflect a degree of confusion – few immigrants from the Macedonian region would have been able to speak Romanian or Serbian.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

For the brief moment, the realization by many migrants that they were Macedonians did not preclude participation in social, political, and religious institutions with those who regarded themselves as Bulgarians. But within a decade, more migrants would begin to feel that being both Macedonian and Bulgarian did not make as much sense as it once had. Events in the homeland, like the *Illinden* uprising of 1903, and the experiences of migration abroad, which forced men to clarify their identities to a new audience, pushed the migrants toward a more singular, unitary national identity. The next step – joining organizations that broke down along those national lines – seemed more and more plausible.

Chapter 4: Diasporic Visions of a Conservative Macedonia, 1918-1930

The International Meets the National: Global Politics and the New Macedonian Moment

By the second decade of the new century, Macedonians and Bulgarians had formed substantial communities of a few thousand individuals in at least a dozen American and Canadian cities. Yet they were far from being a unified population. In addition to their lack of a clear ethnic or national identity, three factors – high mobility, geographical dispersion, and lack of coherent political orientation – meant that efforts of would-be nation builders faced significant obstacles. Macedonians and Bulgarians lacked a niche in the political and civil service systems like Irish-Americans had developed, or a network akin to the *padrone* system that bound Italian settlers in large cities to a labor-political superstructure. They relied instead on a loose affiliation of charismatic religious men, local political activists, and propagandists willing to draw upon American and Canadian iconography and freedoms to make the case for Macedonian unity.

As late as 1921, *Naroden Glas (Voice of the People)*, the dominant Bulgarian newspaper in the United States, did not even mention Macedonians, even though some three-quarters of those speaking the Bulgarian language in America were from the Macedonian region, not Bulgaria-proper, and many of them openly referred to themselves as Macedonians. Within a few years, however, the status quo had changed dramatically. Between the start of the Balkan Wars in 1912 and the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 the Macedonian region experienced eight years of near-constant

war. The Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 (the first, between the Ottoman army and a combined Greek/Serb/Bulgarian force, and the second, between the Bulgarians and a combined Greek/Serbian army) unleashed brutal violence in the region. They culminated in a period of Great Power politics and map-making – and the territorial trisection of the Macedonian region – that had long-ranging effects on Eastern Europe’s future. Then, already ravaged by the Balkan Wars, the region witnessed closely the horrors of WWI, which remade the domestic and foreign politics of Europe and North America.

The peace signed in 1919 by the victorious Allies and defeated Germany brought a temporary reprieve from the violence, but also brought wholesale political change as the powers still standing hastily redrew, and then just as quickly cemented, borders that imposed nations upon people in places where no such borders had existed. The Ottoman Empire, “European Turkey,” and the Austro-Hungarian “dual monarchy” disappeared.¹ Unbound from these empires, the most powerful Balkan nations moved quickly to solidify control over their territory. But sizable minority populations lived in nearly every corner of the Balkans, meaning that the end of empire by no means meant self-rule for all the peninsula’s many national and ethnic groups.²

¹ Events in the Balkans were responsible for igniting World War I when the Bosnian-Serb teenager Gavrilo Prinčip killed the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914. See John Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice There Was a Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 94.

² The Ottoman presence was the more important one as far as Macedonia was concerned. After having straddled Europe, the Middle East, and Asia for five hundred years, the empire lost Macedonia just years before its own demise. The presence of “Turkey in Europe” had long been a sore spot for London, Moscow, Paris, and Washington. England, especially, celebrated the Ottoman dissolution because it permitted the Crown to extend its empire into the present-day Middle East. But the end of Turkey in Europe meant that the nationalist battles that had been simmering for decades were now laid at Europe’s doorstep without the strong hand of Constantinople to mitigate. For a discussion of the concept of the Ottoman “legacy,” see Maria Todorova, “The Ottoman Legacy in the Balkans,” in *The Imperial Legacy: The Ottoman Imprint on the Balkans and the Middle East*, L. Carl Brown, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996). Todorova overstates the Ottoman role and disregards the cultural legacy of the Byzantine and pre-Byzantine Christian era with her claim that it is, “preposterous to look for an Ottoman legacy in the Balkans. The Balkans are the Ottoman legacy” (46). Yet she is correct in highlighting the

But it was the anger of the Macedonian and Bulgarian communities in North America, and later Australia, that was most consequential for the future of Macedonian identity. The Versailles Treaty sanctioned the division of Macedonia and sparked a sharp reply from the diaspora; the treaty became a Macedonian Golgotha. The aftermath of Versailles marked a resurgence in the movement for Macedonian independence in the Balkans and abroad, and accelerated the process by which self-described Macedonians began to display a more confident national identity. Far fewer migrants were content now to see themselves both as Macedonian *and* Bulgarian. The watershed events forced a new set of political and national questions upon Macedonians in the diaspora: What did the wars take away? Whose side were you on? Why? Finally, the postwar period drove migrants to re-engage with events in the politics of their homeland in ways that would have important consequences for their self-identification.³

Specifically, Macedonian leaders in North America formed a vocal political organization they felt would represent Macedonian national interests, and fight what they termed the “monstrous inequity” of the Versailles settlement. This organization, the Macedonian Political Organization, or MPO, never became a monolith. But by the late

degree to which Ottoman policies of religious toleration, land ownership, and multi-nationalism left their mark on the Macedonian region.

³ For a discussion of the political and social climate in Macedonia in the early twentieth century see, Loring Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict: Ethnic Nationalism In A Transnational World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 50-55; Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History* (New York: The Modern Library), 115-143. In this chapter, I increasingly refer to migrants from Macedonia simply as “Macedonians.” This reflects the changing political climate in which more migrants were referred to as, and referred to themselves as, Macedonians. They did this for a number of reasons, not necessarily because they had come to see themselves as a distinct ethnic group. I have tried scrupulously to avoid imposing a label on a particular group of migrants, and therefore use the terminology of the primary sources and the migrants themselves. When there is confusion I have continued to refer to groups as Macedonians *and* Bulgarians.

1930s, it constituted a critical mass of Macedonians who took as their primary aim the redemption of *roden kraj* or “land of birth.” By aligning with the growing number of Bulgarian Orthodox Churches in North America, the MPO succeeded in creating, for the first time, a sustained international Macedonian political movement. It also staked out a position on the American and Canadian political right that set the stage for fierce political clashes with left-leaning Macedonian groups.⁴

The Balkan Wars: “Appalling things are going on here”

Despite the revolutionary politics that permeated elite thinking in Macedonia at the end of the nineteenth century, no truly popular Macedonian nationalist movement had emerged. Contrary to contemporary Macedonian mythology, only a small percentage of peasants and intellectuals joined in the *Illinden* uprising against Ottoman rule in 1903. And in the decade following *Illinden*, perhaps five-to-ten percent of the Slavic men from Macedonia sought salvation abroad. But for the overwhelming majority of these migrants, financial stability for their families, and not political independence, was the priority. Thus, during the first decade of Macedonian and Bulgarian settlement abroad, there was little appetite for another bloody campaign for independence. Few new charismatic leaders in the Balkans emerged, radical elements like the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Army (IMRO) were marginalized, and the fledgling diaspora was largely focused on economic ends. To the extent that there had been a “Macedonian

⁴ *Bulgarian-American Almanac for 1921* (Granite City, IL: *Naroden Glas*, 1921), cover, passim. “Macedonia,” “Our Program,” *Macedonia*, vol. 1, no. 1., January 1932, 1. Unless otherwise noted, I use the terms “right” and “left” to indicate the political affiliation of a particular individual or group relative to the political climate of the time.

movement” in the late nineteenth century, despite the *Illinden* uprising of 1903, it had largely dissipated by 1910.⁵

The Balkan Wars, however, recast completely the Macedonian independence movement, both in Europe and abroad. By 1912, demographic and financial pressures from within and without had so weakened the Ottoman state that Bulgaria, Serbia, and Greece – emboldened by international disapproval of the treatment of Christians in European Turkey – felt free to strike. With the tacit approval of Russia and Western Europe, they attacked the Ottoman forces in Macedonia with far more force than the IMRO rebels had mustered in 1903. Fighting together, Greek, Serbian, and Bulgarian forces routed the Sultan’s “Macedonian army” and moved to claim the spoils. Bulgaria’s moves were the most provocative: in an attempt to gain sovereignty over the Slavic-speaking Christians of Macedonia (who probably had the most in common with Bulgarians) Bulgaria claimed the lion’s share of Macedonia. Greece and Serbia were infuriated by Bulgaria’s audacious gambit, and Western Europe’s powers immediately grew alarmed. The three former allies quickly became enemies, and Greece and Serbia struck back at Bulgaria in what became the Second Balkan War. By war’s end in 1913,

⁵ Modern Macedonian nationalism, largely shaped since the recreation of Yugoslavia in 1944, rejects this analysis, arguing that the *Illinden* uprising marked the start of a popular movement in which ordinary villagers from Macedonia came to regard themselves as ethnic Macedonians, and to identify with the freedom-loving guerrilla fighters who mounted the insurgency against Ottoman rule. For instance, a government-sponsored “official” history of Macedonia published in 1979 said that the *Illinden* uprising “led to the truth about the Macedonian people, their struggle and aspirations, finding its way to the world public. The *Illinden* uprising left behind it a heritage of lasting ideals and revolutionary traditions which penetrated deep into the Macedonian people’s consciousness regarding their future struggles for the freedom and independence of their country.” See Institute of National History, *A History of the Macedonian People* (Skopje: Macedonian Review Editions, 1979), 180-181.

Serbia and Greece had taken back much of Macedonia, splitting it between them, and leaving Bulgaria with only a minor extension of her western flank.⁶

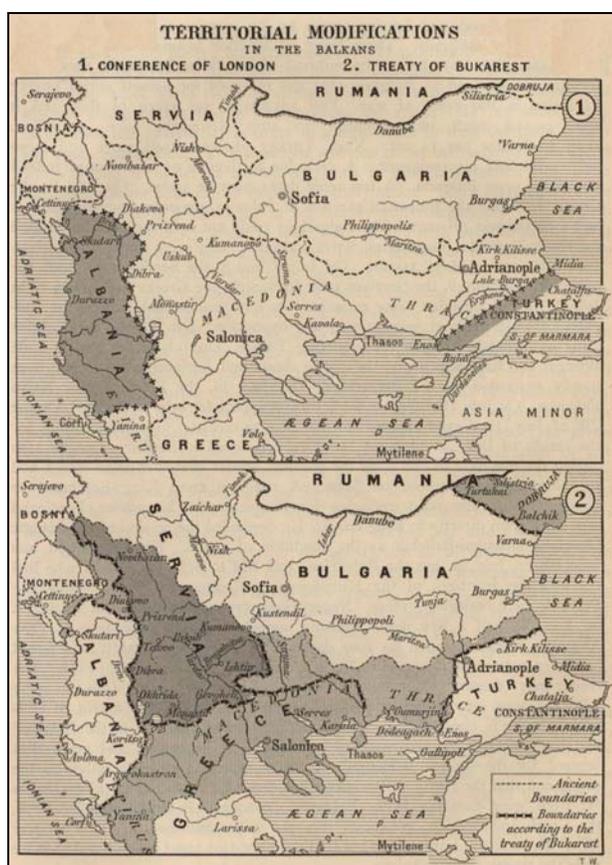


Figure 11. The upper map depicts the Macedonian region before the Balkan Wars, while the lower map illustrates the territorial trisection of the Macedonian region. Available at www.reisenett.no/map_collection/historical/Balkan_modifications_1914.jpg (Accessed November 2004).

Residing since birth as subjects of the Sultan, the two million inhabitants of the mountainous Macedonian ranges and the Vardar River valley now answered to a new set of rulers in states only recently resurrected from the memories of their own medieval predecessors.⁷ Though largely out of the public eye in Western Europe, the Balkan Wars

⁶ Justin McCarthy, *The Ottoman Turks: An Introductory History to 1923* (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1997), 347-354; *Report of the International Commission to Inquire Into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment, 1914), 140-150.

⁷ See Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict: Ethnic Nationalism in a Transnational World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 39; Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice There Was a Country*, 89-98.

opened a wound in the Balkans, and inflicted gruesome violence against military and civilian personnel alike. The Serbian army alone lost 61,000 men in just two years in the fight for Macedonia.⁸ A Serbian soldier told a friend of the war's atrocities in a letter published in *Radnitchke Novine*, a Serbian socialist paper.

It is horrible. I have no time to write you at length, but I can tell you appalling things are going on here . . . [the Albanian village] Liouma no longer exists. There is nothing but corpses, dust and ashes. There are villages of 100, 150, 200 houses, where there is no longer a single man literally *not one*. We collect them in bodies of forty to fifty, and then we pierce them with our bayonets to the last man.⁹

Some 200,000 Turkish refugees were forced to flee Macedonia ahead of the Greek, Serbian, and Bulgarian armies. Tens of thousands of men, women, and children were killed in indiscriminate raids by soldiers on all sides. The armies forced civilians to billet troops in their homes. Foto Tomev recalled that while Turkish soldiers did not kill anyone in his village of Zhelevo, they did ransack gardens and kitchens for food as the 75,000-man Ottoman army passed through.¹⁰ The stereotype of the “war-torn Balkans” has since become a well-worn metaphor that essentializes a place far too complex to be summed up only by its violence. It also ignores the long histories of oppression and violence that had afflicted other areas of Europe as well.¹¹ But whether or not the

⁸ Between 1914 and 1916, the Serbian army, which included thousands of draftees from Macedonia, lost 100,000 men, nearly a quarter of its number. Losses by the Bulgarian and Greek armies, and among civilians, were nearly as great. See Mazower, *The Balkans*, 107; Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, 94.

⁹ *Report of the International Commission to Inquire Into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars*, 149.

¹⁰ Foto Tomev, *Memoirs*, Lillian Petroff, ed. (Toronto: Multicultural Historical Society of Ontario, n.d.), 20-23.

¹¹ The modern use of the adjective, “Balkanized,” to describe a hopelessly divided and complex situation is just one modern example of public perception of the Balkans. The persistence of violence and political turmoil in Southeastern Europe in the past decade has only strengthened the perception of the Balkans as violent place that cannot be redeemed. This perception has led to a tendency among political commentators and leaders to see the Balkans as a place of “age old hatreds” that simply cannot be mollified. It is presumed that such feelings on the part of American and European leaders, for instance, were behind the slow and meager Western response to the Yugoslav wars of succession in the early 1990s. See David A.

Balkans deserved the reputation, the scorched-earth guerrilla warfare made the West take notice. In an attempt to make sense of the carnage, the newly established Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, DC, dispatched a team of experts to study the conditions that led to war over Macedonia. The *International Commission to Inquire Into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars* published its lengthy findings in 1914. In a chapter entitled, “The Moral and Social Consequences of the Wars and the Outlook for the Future of Macedonia,” the authors wrote, “From the first to the last, in both wars, the fighting was as desperate as though extermination were the end sought.”¹²

The Treaty of Bucharest ended the Second Balkan War in 1913 and established boundaries that split the Macedonian region among Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece. Those opposed to the treaty began speaking of a new construct, a three-part “Macedonia” that left the impression that an intact, independent Macedonian state was its chronological antecedent. “Vardar Macedonia” (the part under Serbian control, which the Serbs now called “Southern Serbia”), “Pirin Macedonia” (the part under Bulgarian control), and “Aegean Macedonia (the part under Greek control), came to serve as the vivisected fatherland of all Macedonians worldwide. Those who stayed were under the sovereignty of new rulers. Those who had left already now had little sense of where or how to return.¹³

Chaos ensued when the three victorious states began a campaign to integrate forcibly the new populations into their educational, religious and economic systems.

Norris, *In The Wake of the Balkan Myth: Questions of Identity and Modernity* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1999), 1-4, 32-37.

¹² *Report of the International Commission to Inquire Into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars*, 265.

Greece's initiative to assimilate the Slavic Macedonian population was the most socially coercive of the three nations' efforts, in large part because of the language barrier between Slavic-speakers and Greeks.¹⁴ Greece had gained the largest part of Macedonia in 1913 and therefore claimed sovereignty over hundreds of the villages that had chosen the Bulgarian Orthodox Church after 1870 instead of the Greek Church, and which thus had adopted the Bulgarian language for daily use and the liturgy.¹⁵ Greece's policy of forced assimilation mandated the use of the modern Greek language in all public and private affairs, including in the home. Police and local officials fined, beat, and jailed resisters. The forced switch back to the Greek language and rite took place within the lifetimes of many who remembered the sense of comfort that accompanied the arrival of the Bulgarian Orthodox synod to their church.¹⁶

¹³ *Macedonians in North America* (Macedonian Political Organization: Ft. Wayne, Ind., no date), 5. This document and several others used in this chapter are drawn from the Macedonian and Bulgarian collections at the Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota.

¹⁴ Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Denying Ethnic Identity: The Macedonians of Greece* (New York, 1994), 4-10. Each state was guilty of assuming that the relative lack of national identity among the residents of Macedonia meant that assimilation into their cultures would be a smooth process. The assumption proved facile, and the assimilation campaigns were long, painful, and disruptive and never completely successful. Even today, minority communities of self-proclaimed Macedonians exist in Bulgaria and Greece, and particularly resist the claims of the Greek state that theirs is an ethnically pure Greek nation state. While less known, Macedonians in the Pirin region of Bulgaria, also alleged discrimination, and refused to accept the ethnicity of the state that took control over their villages in 1913. See Vladimir Ortakovski, *Minorities in the Balkans* (Ardsley, N.Y.: 2000), ch. 1 and 2.

¹⁵ The presence of self-described Slavic Macedonians in present-day Greece and Bulgaria is a complex and contentious issue, which will be treated at greater length in subsequent chapters. See also Peter Mackridge and Eleni Yannakakis, eds., *Ourselves and Others: The Development of a Greek Macedonia Identity Since 1912* (New York: Berg, 1997); *Denying Ethnic Identity: The Macedonian of Greece* (Human Rights Watch: New York, 1994).

¹⁶ Tomev, *Memoirs*, 20-30. This policy reached a zenith under the right-wing military regime of Ioannis Metaxas in the 1930s when minority rights of Slavs were most forcibly proscribed. Slavs in possession of non-Greek names were forced to change them to Greek analogues, a process that already had taken place with village names. The effort continued well past World War II and was largely successful, but never completely so. Macedonians from northern Greece, termed simply "Macedonia" by Greece, and "Aegean Macedonia" by most Macedonians elsewhere, would comprise a significant percentage of post-World War II immigrants to the diaspora, many of whom were refugees of the Greek Civil War. For this reason Greeks and Macedonians to this day often use different names for the same village. The use of the Greek name by a Macedonian, or vice versa, whether intended or not, often indicates sympathy for the other side.

The Great War and Its Aftermath

If the state of the Macedonian and Bulgarian diaspora seemed in flux in 1913, things would become no clearer for some time. When Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria drove the Ottomans back into Asia Minor in 1912, the balance of power in Europe became even more fragile than before. Serbian anger against the encroachments of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and Bulgarian anger at the loss of most of the Macedonian territory to Greece and Serbia provided the subtext for a broader war that would pull in all of Europe's powers, forcing its more minor players to choose sides or risk being left aside in the aftermath. The continent-wide disputes seemed outsized for an immigrant class that sought salvation from a narrower set of problems: poverty and social violence complicated by a Macedonian nationalist guerrilla movement and the decay of Ottoman rule. Abroad, there was only confusion as the temporary economic missions of tens of thousands of *pečalbari* were cast into doubt, and the issue of ethnic loyalties returned to the fore as all the nations in which they ever lived made hasty plans to tear each other apart.

Following the assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914 – and the subsequent declarations of war by Europe's powers – the first volleys of World War I landed on Belgrade, the picturesque capital of Serbia. Over the next four years the war had an enormous impact on the Balkans. Seeking to recoup its loss of Macedonian territory from the Second Balkan War, Bulgaria sided with Germany and

A Macedonian, for instance, who refers to Florina, instead of the Macedonian name Lerin, would likely be branded a *Grkoman*, or Greek-leaning person. See Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict*, 69-78; Evangelos Kofos, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia: Civil Conflict, Politics of Mutation, National Identity* (New Rochelle: Caratzas, 1993).

Austria-Hungary. (By war's end, roughly forty percent of Bulgarian men were in uniform against Serbia, which had sided with the Triple Entente of Britain, France and Russia.) Misha Glenny has argued that the Balkan states joined the war not so much to help one side or another, but to settle their own scores. It was, in Glenny's view, a "Third Balkan War."¹⁷ During the war, an ever-changing "Macedonian" or "Salonica Front" saw Bulgarian and Austro-Hungarian troops fighting Serbians coming from the north, as well as French and British soldiers coming up from Salonica in the south. Macedonian villages like Banitza were left scarred and pillaged by the crossing armies. For civilians, only chaos reigned over the next several years. Thousands perished from shelling, disease, hunger, and cold.¹⁸

Though not as perilous as conditions in the Balkans, life for Macedonians abroad highlighted the difficulties associated with being a foreign-born ethnic at a time of national unrest. Like many immigrants in the United States and Canada, those from Macedonia saw their loyalties questioned by outsiders who were not confident of where these foreigners stood on questions of war and peace, and loyalty to the nations in which they resided.¹⁹ The war also disrupted patterns of chain migration, kept families incommunicado for long periods of time, and resulted in the death of loved ones both as civilians and as soldiers. Some Macedonians and Bulgarians in the United States and Canada were recruited into their host country's armies in 1917 and 1918. Others returned

¹⁷ By this thinking, the fight between Serbia and Bulgaria during WWI pitted the Bulgarian desire to regain the Macedonian territory they lost in the Second Balkan War against the Serbian determination to retain that territory for itself.

¹⁸ Banitza Benevolent Society, Toronto, *Brief History of the Village Banitza and Its People* (Toronto, 1986), 5; Misha Glenny, *The Balkans: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers, 1804-1999* (New York: Penguin, 1999), 332-353; Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, 99-119.

¹⁹ Nicholas Temelcoff, interview with Lillian Petroff, July 8, 1975, 5; Foto Tomev, *A Short History of Zhelevo Village, Macedonia* (Toronto: Zhelevo Brotherhood, 1971), 79.

home to fight, often on the side of the Bulgarian army, which was seen as more sympathetic than the Serbian side to Macedonian and Bulgarian interests. Still others worked as laborers on the North American home front. Bill Steffoff, who lived in Toronto, found work in a Canadian munitions factory producing war materiel.²⁰ Steffoff's father, however, returned to fight for the Bulgarian army in 1912, and word soon got back to Toronto that others who had returned to fight for Bulgaria had been drafted into the Greek army. The draftees were therefore likely to be put in the awkward position of fighting against the side they had chosen in the Second Balkan War in 1913.²¹

As they often did, Canada and the U.S. moved to a similar set of political and cultural rhythms during and after the War. In the U.S., anti-immigration members of Congress became increasingly vocal in the postwar period.²² Many felt that Europe still

²⁰ Nick Temelcoff made a distinction between his own family, which he identified as Macedonian, and, "people who were Bulgarian," who were considered potential enemy aliens and therefore subject to the scrutiny of Canadian authorities. Bill Steffoff, interview with Lillian Petroff, December 17, 1975, 6; Nicholas Temelcoff, interview with Lillian Petroff, July 8, 1975, 5.

²¹ Bill Steffoff, interview with Lillian Petroff, MHSO; Nick Temelcoff, interview with Lillian Petroff, July 8, 1975 (MHSO), 5; Lillian Petroff, *Sojourners and Settlers: The Macedonian Community in Toronto to 1940* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1995), 69. Because of Bulgaria's support for the Axis powers, many Macedonians and Bulgarians were seen as suspect, and a number of Toronto Macedonians were required to report to the Office of the Registrar for Enemy Aliens. A number of Macedonians and Bulgarians who either wrote about their immigration experiences, or who gave interviews several decades later, reflected back on the nature of their national identity in their early years. While the general tendency is to take their views of themselves at face value, it must be noted that some of them may well be "reading back" a sense of identity that had either changed or not yet formed. Even though the recollections of the migrants are some of the best primary sources available, they must, when possible, be juxtaposed with other contemporaneous sources to gauge their accuracy, given the fluidity of feelings of national identity.

²² The Red Scare of 1919 and the climate of hostility toward immigrants after the war was hardly the first instance of anti-immigrant feelings among the populace. Cycles of anti-immigrant activism coursed through both countries, often at times of national tension when stark questions of national identity in the truest sense were before the country. Now, new groups came forward to iterate a latent, but not uncommonly held belief that white Protestants were the true heirs to the American and Canadian heritages. Toronto's slums, like those in New York and Chicago were brimming with foreigners. Harold Troper sees three primary fears among Canada's native-born Protestants, which were shared by many American leaders, with respect to immigrants – municipal blight, political corruption, and racial miscegenation. Eastern Europeans, who lived in squalid boarding houses, were susceptible to radical politics, and were seen as a racial other that was, perhaps, not quite white, therefore failed on all three fronts. Christowe, *My American Pilgrimage*, 21; John Higham, *Strangers In The Land*, ch. 9; Harold Troper, "History of

harbored the inequalities that America fought to extinguish by declaring its independence a century and a half earlier. By extension, the sons and daughters of that European culture, despite their hopes of succeeding in the openness afforded abroad, might themselves be suspect as well. Their predilection, it was argued, would always tend either toward radical politics or Godless, anti-democratic urges of their homelands.²³

Rep. Charles R. Crisp of Georgia summed up the feelings of many who saw immigrant ghettos like Hungry Hollow in Granite City, Illinois, as the pathway to socialism and Communism: “Little Bohemia, Little Italy, Little Russia, Little Germany, Little Poland, Little China ... are the breeding grounds for un-American thoughts and deeds.”²⁴

Canadian policymakers too questioned the desirability of their country remaining a magnet for Europeans. Only twenty years earlier those same foreigners that now seemed a threat to Canada’s cultural heritage, if not its stability, were viewed as the leading edge of the country’s economic future.²⁵

Immigration to Toronto Since the Second World War: From Toronto “the Good” to Toronto “the World in a City,” 6.

²³ The fear of the ills immigrants could bring to American society was emboldened in the 1920s Sacco-Vanzetti case. The two self-proclaimed anarchists were ultimately executed for a murder in Brockton, MA, but it was the sense of public outrage over their act and the show trial quality to their justice that indicated the degree to which Southeastern European immigrants were associated with anti-American beliefs like anarchism, Communism, and syndicalism. See Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 102-103. To be sure, the anti-radicalism of the postwar years, when combined with a tide of Congressional restrictionism contributed to the anti-immigrant climate in America. At a metaphysical level, however, it was the national experience of the war itself that served as a catalyst for the restrictionist movement. The war mandated one hundred percent Americanism which, according to John Higham, “practically destroyed what the travail of previous decades had already fatally weakened: the historic confidence in the capacity of American society to assimilate all men automatically. John Higham, *Strangers In The Land*, 301

²⁴ *Congressional Record*, May 25, 1920, 7607, quoted in Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 100.

²⁵ Clifford Sifton, the aggressive Minister of the Interior responsible for the recruitment of immigrants in the early 20th century made this plain in 1902: “Here, then, we have the situation in a nutshell – a vast and productive territory becoming quickly occupied by a throng of people who will be called upon to take up the duties of citizenship almost at once, whose successful pursuit of agriculture will make them financially independent, and who in short time will constitute a most potent factor in the national life of Canada.” Clifford Sifton cited in Kelley and Trebilcock, *Making of the Mosaic*, 118.

Gone was the sense of optimism that central, southern and eastern European immigrants would assimilate as easily as those from northern Europe. It was within this climate that the U.S. Congress passed several restrictive immigration measures in 1921 and 1924.²⁶ The cuts, by design, fell foursquare on Eastern and Southern Europeans, including Greeks, Macedonians, Bulgarians, Serbians, Albanians, Italians, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Russians, Ukrainians, and Jews from many countries. The postwar legislation had wide ranging effects on Macedonians in North America. Prior to the restrictions, travel between the growing Toronto metropolis and American cities like Buffalo and Cleveland was as common as it was easy. Now, Macedonians who had not, could not, or would not become citizens of their new country found it difficult to cross Buffalo's Peace Bridge or Detroit's Ambassador Bridge by car or bus, or the various train bridges. Some turned to illegal crossing points. The U.S. – Canadian border, which to many was meaningless, or at worst a nuisance, was suddenly a more formidable barrier.²⁷

Alecso Yovan, for instance, first arrived in Buffalo from the Macedonian village of Orovo in 1921, but after a return to Orovo in the late 1920s he instead alighted in Halifax, Nova Scotia, during a return trip to Buffalo. Like many migrants who lacked proper papers, he snuck back into New York State through Ontario to resume his

²⁶The new law pegged quotas for Europeans at three percent of a given population's numbers in the United States as of 1910. The Immigration Act of 1924 enacted even deeper cuts – until 1927 only two percent of a group's 1890 population would be allowed in a given year Harold Troper, "History of Immigration to Toronto Since the Second World War: From Toronto "the Good" to Toronto "the World in a City," 6; Matthew Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples At Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000).

²⁷ The quotas were rigged so as to allow in a disproportionate number of Northeastern Europeans, as well as Canadians and Mexicans. America joined Canada in virtually ending legal immigration from Asia altogether. Notably, the corporate community, which had been vocal in its support of open borders in the decades before the war, sat out 1924 immigration debates. It no longer resonated with a broad swath of North American society that the country's future industrial would be built on the backs of immigrants from Asia and Europe. Gerstle, *The American Crucible*, 95-107

stateside career. For a group of inveterate border-crossers, Macedonians now dealt with the reality that returning to the Balkans might mean difficulty returning again to North America because of the lack of an American or Canadian passport. The general effect was the solidification of the Macedonian community abroad. Physical transatlanticism did not come to an end, but it was severely curtailed, and forced those with a political agenda for the homeland to seek other avenues for influencing events in the old country.²⁸

Not surprisingly, Macedonian communities were torn from within with respect to their loyalties. Showing any allegiance for Greece, a somewhat slow and reluctant Western Ally, or for Bulgaria, which sided with the Axis powers, put them at odds with the patriotic zeitgeist in their North American communities. Immigrants, who were already treated skeptically as hyphenated-Americans and -Canadians, now were regarded as potential fifth column threats in the two nations.²⁹ Yet displays of affection, and even patriotism, toward America and Canada were, in fact, common, and indicate the degree to which Macedonians had come to a delicate accommodation with their new homes.³⁰ Fanche Nicoloff, for one, was proud to be able to perform traditional Macedonian dances for a mixed native-born Canadian and immigrant audience at the Canadian National

²⁸ Conversations with George Michaelidis, Spiro Michaelides, Spring 2000 – Summer 2001. Audiotape transcripts in author's possession.

²⁹ Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 95-114; John Higham, *Strangers In The Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, NJ: 1955), ch. 8 and 9.

³⁰ The ability for individuals to act in both a transnational and a national fashion calls into question the traditional paradigm of assimilation that held that immigrants begin to shed their former loyalties for new American or Canadian ones. More recent work by Matthew Jacobson, Donna Gabaccia, and Yossi Shain, for instance, has detailed the multiple ways immigrants groups in the United States, and elsewhere, maintain a layered, and ultimately pragmatic approach, to national identity.

Exposition in Toronto in 1927. Dono Evans recalled his early love for Canada as one of the “best countries” because of the freedom of speech he found there.³¹

Framing the Political Debate: The Post-Versailles Response

The end of WWI left many Macedonians, at home and abroad, hoping that the victory of the Triple Entente would at least bring a measure of justice and stability to their homeland. Compounding their anxiety about the anti-immigrant climate in North America, Macedonians also expressed concern for the land they left behind. But who would head the effort to address these concerns? Macedonian agitators in the United States, such as Vangel Sugareff, wrote to newspapers to argue that for the “hundreds of us who donned the khaki to defend the honor of the United States,” Macedonia deserved to be protected as neutral space similar to Switzerland. But by 1919 many self-declared Macedonians who had participated in the *Illinden* uprising of 1903 were aged or dead, and relatively little support for independence had accrued among the peasants of Macedonia during the war years.³² In the Macedonian region the single remaining revolutionary voice from the 1903 *Illinden* uprising was the IMRO, which had become an internally divided, unstable terror organization under the leadership of Ivan Mihailoff. To some in the diaspora, Mihailoff was a hero for his radicalism and rejection of Bolshevism. But he was hardly in a position to claim a mandate among self-declared Macedonians, or affect the decisions of Europe’s victorious powers.³³

³¹ Fanche Nicoloff, interview with Lillian Petroff, August 15, 1975, MHSO; Dono Evans, interview with Lillian Petroff, August 2, 1975, MHSO; N.S. Temelcoff, interview with Lillian Petroff, July 8, 1975, MHSO; Christowe, *My American Pilgrimage*, passim.

³² V.K. Sugareff, “A Free Macedonia,” *New York Times*, letter to the editor, 27 April 1919, 38.

³³ See Ivan Mihailoff, *Macedonia: A Switzerland of the Balkans* (Indianapolis: MPO, no date).

Realistically, the IMRO lacked political credibility and therefore could do little to aid the quest for a Macedonian homeland. In fact, perhaps the clearest voices advocating for Macedonian independence in 1918 and 1919 were from outside the Macedonian region. Macedonians in Russia claimed (incorrectly) that Versailles divided an actual Macedonian *narod*, or people, rather than a heterogeneous Macedonian region. Another voice came from Chicago where, in 1918, a Macedonian “congress” assembled to discuss the peace conference taking place at Versailles, France. The congress issued a decree calling for a fair reconciliation of the Macedonian situation (even as the notion of Macedonian independence alongside the other Balkan nations was met with ridicule by the Paris conferees).³⁴ While these émigrés could do little at the time, they did represent the diasporic stirrings of a Macedonian national movement, stirrings that would gather strength as the communities of Macedonian migrants in North America grappled with the aftermath of the war in Macedonia.³⁵

³⁴ The organizers of the congress, the Reverend Theophilact, Zheko Baneff, and Marko Kaludoff, had high hopes for sustaining the congress’ momentum so as to create a permanent Macedono-Bulgarian advocacy organization in the diaspora, but the group withered during WWI. Macedonian Patriotic Organization, “Macedonians in North America,” (MPO: Indianapolis, no date), 5-6.

³⁵ Fritz-Konrad Kruger, “The Macedonian Question at the Paris Peace Conference,” *Macedonia*, vol. 1, no. 4, April 1932, 56.

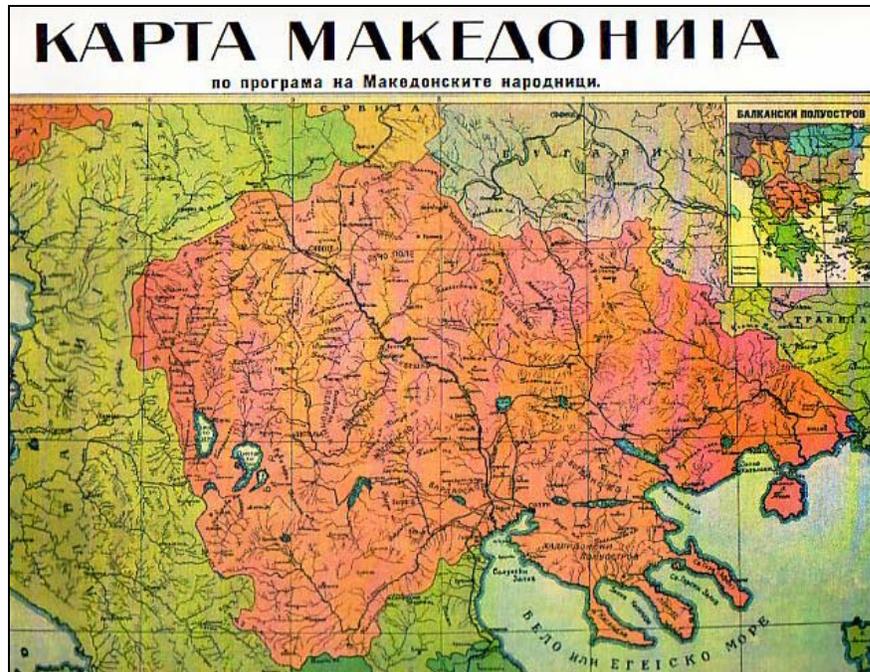


Figure 12. A map produced by Macedonian expatriates in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1918 that depicts, in red, an exaggerated view of the extent of Macedonian-speaking Slavic Christians. Available at <http://www.historyofmacedonia.org/ConciseMacedonia/map.html> (Accessed November 2004).

Specifically, what had given Macedonians hope were the 11th and 12th of President Wilson’s Fourteen Points. The points stated, in essence, that the former Ottoman possessions in Europe deserved self-determination over their future affairs, and they impelled many European and Middle Eastern ethnic and national groups to seek their own campaigns for territorial independence.³⁶ But Wilson’s idealistic plan for healing Europe proved to be no match for the Triple Entente’s desire for recrimination against Germany. Despite the Macedonian diaspora’s call for an independent,

³⁶ J.M. Roberts, *Twentieth Century: History of the World, 1901-2000* (New York: Viking, 1999), 271-274. An interesting case could be made that the Macedonians have at times had much in common with the Palestinians, another “stateless nation,” and their own campaign for a homeland. Both groups are seen as having achieved a sense of national identity that emerged from similar nearby groups, in the Palestinian case the Jordanians. Both groups have made an historical appeal for lands they claim in the name of their ancestors, and both have laid blame for their historical plight on their more powerful and nationally-advanced neighbors. In that version of the narrative, Israeli Jews play the role of spoiler for the Palestinians in much the same way Greeks, Serbs, and to a lesser extent Bulgarians do for the Macedonians. “Great Power” politics, of course, play a pivotal role in both national narratives.

multiethnic Macedonian state, the conferees bowed to Greek and Serbian demands to keep the 1913 borders that divided Macedonia.³⁷ Wilson's promise of self-determination for Europe's peoples now seemed like a charade to Macedonian nationalists. For many, the resolution of Versailles was a particularly bitter event, recalled today as the moment when the world's powers granted their imprimatur to the permanent division of Macedonia. The cementing of the 1913 borders turned President Wilson's image from that of potential savior for Macedonians to that of traitor.³⁸

While Versailles allowed some European peoples to become free and self-governing, it also left some 20 million Eastern and Central Europeans were left as minorities in countries not of their own making. Most notable for migrants from Macedonia, President Wilson assented to the creation of a pan-Slavic super-state in the Balkans. The creation in 1919 of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, or simply "Yugoslavia" – country of the South Slavs – as it became known a decade later, was a bold, fragile experiment in nation building. The super-state was created by combining ethnic-based semi-autonomous republics in a part of Europe where for almost 500 years an empire held sway that used religion as the primary means of organizing populations. Several hundred thousand Macedonians and Bulgarians suddenly became citizens of this first Yugoslavia by dint of the fact that they lived in the portion of the Macedonian region won by Serbia in 1913, now called South Serbia.³⁹ Foto Tomev later

³⁷ Greece and Serbia were allies of the Triple Entente and protested vocally against proposals that would have produced an independent or semi-autonomous Macedonian state. See Fritz-Konrad Kruger, "The Macedonian Question at the Paris Peace Conference," 56.

³⁸ Roberts, *Twentieth Century*, 272-275; Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, 110-111.

³⁹ The Versailles conference created or recreated nine new states in 1919, including Poland and Czechoslovakia. According to one estimate, 60 million Europeans suddenly were living in states of their own choosing. Full-text of Wilson's Fourteen Point is available at the Internet Modern History Sourcebook, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1918wilson.html>, originally cited in Congressional

wrote, “Macedonia was left in worse bondage than before because the new enslavers forbade them to write and speak in their mother tongue. This forced the [Macedonian] American immigrants to bring their families [to North America]. Almost all the men from Zhelevo brought their families to their adopted country, Canada.”⁴⁰

What could not be known during the summer months of 1919 was that the bitterness of Versailles would offer those who saw themselves as Macedonians an overarching political rationale for rekindling the Macedonian national movement – the need to reclaim their homeland.⁴¹ One politically-active Macedonian in the United States, Assen Avromoff, said, “resolutions, memorandums and claims by the thousands of Macedonian immigrants in the United States [were never] given any attention by the peace conference. The destinies of nations have been signed almost at the point of a gun, and the Balkan boundaries drafted under the spell of madness.” There were, it seemed, enough Macedonians abroad who would try to assure that such madness never be imposed on Macedonia again.⁴²

Record, 65th Congress, 2nd session, 1918, 680-681. See also, Frank Ninkovich, *The Wilsonian Century: U.S. Foreign Policy Since 1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 48-72.

⁴⁰ Foto Tomev, *A Short History of Zhelevo Village, Macedonia* (Toronto: Zhelevo Brotherhood, 1971), 79.

⁴¹ It is difficult to ascertain what percentage of migrants from Macedonia ultimately decided to align themselves with the Macedonian community versus the Bulgarian or Greek communities. The fact that more than a dozen church parishes around the U.S. and Canada came to call themselves Bulgarian Orthodox – without any reference to Macedonia – and that a number of these parishes exist today indicates that a significant percentage of the 50,000 settlers did make some sort of choice. But the choice was neither permanent, nor absolutist in nature, and many immigrant families chose to straddle the identity issue well into the post-World War II period. Conversations with numerous Macedonian-Americans and Macedonian-Canadians reveal the existence of families that contained pro-Macedonian, pro-Bulgarian siblings who did not even agree on their own family’s heritage.

⁴² *Macedonia*, vol. 1 no. 2 (Indianapolis: Macedonian Political Organization, 1932), 29-30. See also Albert Howe Lybyer, “Macedonia and the Paris Peace Conference,” (Indianapolis: Macedonian Political Organization, 1944?). Avramoff’s comment about Macedonia’s boundaries being imposed by gunpoint has since become a common refrain among Macedonian nationalists. When a violent insurrection by radical Albanian guerrillas in 2001 was settled by an accord pushed by Europe and the United States, members of IMRO (the contemporary nationalistic political party) argued that Macedonia was again being forced at gunpoint to concede its sovereignty.

This resolve, in turn, accelerated for Slavic, Christian residents of Macedonia, as well as for those residing in the North American diaspora, the same process of national and ethnic self-inquiry that Greeks, Bulgarians, and Serbs undertook roughly a century earlier. For instance, members of Sts. Cyril and Methody Macedono-Bulgarian Orthodox Church in Toronto later wrote that the division of the Macedonian region after 1913, “brought the greatest ill effects on the liberation movement in Macedonia. . . This, in short, is the unfortunate fate of our people in Macedonia and, constitutes one of the primary reasons for the formation of the Church Community in Toronto.” The mythic “loss” of “Macedonia” would therefore lead a group of Macedonian nationalists – not as much in the Balkans as in the United States and Canada – to seek to “restore” an entity which had never even existed – a unified Macedonian state.⁴³

Put another way, Macedonian nationalists began to see the potential for a united homeland more clearly after the partition of the Macedonian region made it a more distant reality.⁴⁴ Since their arrival in the diaspora over the previous two decades few, if any, Macedonian migrants were as politically radical as the revolutionaries in Macedonia who had sought to throw off Ottoman rule had been in 1903. Though there were a few early radicals who raised money for activities by the IMRO, the number of politically

⁴³ *50th Anniversary Jubilee Almanac, Sts. Cyril and Methody Macedono-Orthodox Cathedral, 1910-1960*, MHSO, 9.

⁴⁴ The physical partition of Macedonia intensified the notion among some migrants that something beloved had been taken away. In one sense this fits well with the modern political view that regards the imagining of a nation by those who feel an affinity for it as a crucial component of that nation. Additionally, it recalls the strong feelings of Poles in the diaspora whose own sense of history included the various divisions of Poland, and who endured the further divisions and occupations of the twentieth century. Macedonians around the world, witting or not, achieved a fuller measure of status as a nation when they began looking back upon what they saw as the ruins of their homeland and envisioned a paradise lost at the hands of their political nemeses. Macedonia had never existed as a coherent political entity, and its borders had not been established with the input of any Macedonians leaders. It only took on the veneer of having been cohesive only upon its sundering.

active Macedonians was small, and their energies were devoted largely to economic concerns. But Macedonians found in President Wilson's rhetoric a belief that the future would bring a chance for self-rule by the formerly ruled; President Wilson's idealism and the ultimate collapse of the vision set out at the Versailles conference shattered this assumption.

Seeking Order From Chaos: The Macedonian Political Organization

According to Nikolay Altankov, Macedonians and Bulgarians sympathetic to Macedonia were scattered across several hundred communities in North America.⁴⁵ Numerous voices, clamoring for status as a sort of parliament in exile, took up the mantle of independence for Macedonia after 1919. The organization that would prove the most effective formed in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, in 1922. Calling itself the Macedonian Political Organization, or MPO, it set its primary goal as the unification and independence of Macedonia. The group's first president, Anastas Stephanoff, had come to Ft. Wayne in 1910 or 1911 and became a successful merchant before gathering roughly 20 male colleagues together to organize on behalf of "Macedonia."

Stephanoff himself does not deserve full credit for the MPO's formation. Following the creation of the League of Nations in 1919, the IMRO sent several members to Geneva, Switzerland, and to New York City to advocate on behalf of the Macedonian independence movement. The New York emissaries, Jordan Chkatroff and Srebren Poppetrov, proved more successful than their peers in Europe. Both men realized that several informal Macedonian councils and organizations had formed in the U.S. and

⁴⁵ Altankov, *The Bulgarian-Americans*, 20-23.

Canada since 1919, but that no structure existed to link their efforts together. Poppetrov visited 30 cities in the U.S. and Canada and gave speeches about Macedonia in 16 of them. The men's efforts helped coalesce diaspora Macedonians, and with the leadership of Anastas Stefanoff and others, create the MPO.⁴⁶

To further its irredentist aim, the group chose as their motto "Macedonia for the Macedonians," a phrase invented by William Gladstone, and used by the IMRO leaders. MPO officials placed the phrase on the masthead of the Bulgarian-language newspaper they founded in 1927, the *Makedonska Tribuna* (*Macedonian Tribune*) and the phrase remains there still. The motto claimed an overly broad mandate in that it gathered all migrants from the Macedonian region under a single rubric regardless of whether the migrants chose to identify themselves in that same fashion. The MPO furthermore refused to define Macedonians in ethno-cultural terms. The first of its bylaws, written in 1922 and adopted in its final version in 1927, welcomed all descendants of the Macedonian region, "regardless of nationality, religion, sex, or convictions," into the MPO.⁴⁷ As late as 1956, when the MPO issued new bylaws, it still included a note that read, "The terms 'Macedonians' and 'Macedonian immigrants' used in this by-laws [sic] pertain equally to all nationality groups in Macedonia – Bulgarians, Arumanians, Turks, Albanians and others." Thus, the MPO members sought to distinguish themselves from Bulgarians just enough to call themselves Macedonian, but not so much as to renounce

⁴⁶ Z. Mičeva, "Formation of the Union of Macedonian Political Organizations in the USA and Canada and Some Aspects of Its Relations with the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization," *Bulgarian Historical Review*, 21, 1993, 4, 56-59; "Macedonians Here Appeal to League," *New York Times*, 8 March 1925, E16; Dr. George Phillipou, "The MPO Story: a 75 Year Campaign for an Independent Macedonia," MAK-NEWS listserv, April 18, 1993.

⁴⁷ Bylaws available at <http://macedonia.org/mpo/mpo-index.html>; Christo N. Nizamoff, "Atanas Stephanoff Elected as First MPO President," *Macedonian Tribune*, June 21, 1984.

altogether what they saw as their Bulgarian cultural heritage. Perhaps it is a unique quality to Macedonian nationalism that a quarter century after its founding, the most significant Macedonian organization in the diaspora did not even consider Macedonians to be a distinct ethnicity.⁴⁸

Within a few years of its founding, the MPO had tapped into a vein of Macedonian anger towards the situation in their homeland. In addition to seeing itself as a political movement, the MPO became both a social and religious force in the Macedonian North American diaspora. The MPO headquarters in Ft. Wayne supported the creation of “locals” where sizable Macedonian communities existed. These locals typically formed where Macedonian-Bulgarian migrants already had started a Bulgarian Orthodox Church parish. MPO acolytes in more than a dozen American and Canadian cities formed such locals in the first decade of the group’s existence. The organization, and its locals, concerned themselves with migrants who came from the Macedonian region, not Bulgaria-proper, and who were therefore inclined to see themselves as Macedonians in some sense. The MPO locals did not refer to Macedonians as “Bulgarians” as the main Bulgarian newspaper, *Naroden Glas*, commonly did. By continually reiterating the desire for reunification of Macedonia, the MPO began a process of “Macedonianizing” both the crisis in the Balkans, and the members of the diaspora who sought its end.

By carrying this message across the Canada-U.S. border, the group also began stitching together the North American communities in a transnational fashion. On the

⁴⁸ By-Laws of the Macedonian Patriotic Organization of the United States and Canada, Indianapolis, IN, 1956, MHSO.

occasion of the MPO convention in Indianapolis in 1937, the Toronto delegation sent a message to the central committee noting this cross-border solidarity:

Macedonians! We, your countrymen in Toronto, organized into the powerful MPO [local] “Justice” send you our greetings and salutations. Let us work in unison for the attainment of a free and independent Macedonia which has been the goal of our fathers and benefactors. We wish you all a successful convention. Let us hope that the next one is held in the capital of our country – Salonica – on the Aegean Sea. Long Live Macedonia!⁴⁹

The Toronto delegation’s use of “countrymen,” and “our country,” indicate the degree to which collective notions of a Macedonian nation had begun to gain currency among MPO members by the 1930s; previously it was less common to hear such terms. Several thousand Macedonians from the U.S. and Canada began convening annually for the MPO’s convention. Today, if one describes their Macedonian ancestors as having arrived during the first half of the century, it is common to clarify by saying, “you know, during the *MPO* period.”

In several ways, the MPO was a conservative organization. Bulgarian and Macedonian migrants, for instance, were not active participants in leftist union or labor politics.⁵⁰ Also, having gained an economic toehold in the U.S. and Canada, MPO leaders saw themselves as church, community, and business leaders, not as radicals seeking to overthrow capitalism. Finally, the MPO took as its inspiration the IMRO, which had begun resisting the encroachment of Marxist ideology into the southern Balkans. MPO hoped that together with the IMRO, it would build a transnational

⁴⁹ *16th Annual Convention of the Macedonian Political Organization of the U.S.A. and Canada*, convention program (MHSO collection). The reference to the “capital of our country – Salonica” indicates the feelings among many Macedonians that the Aegean port city of Salonica, or Thessaloniki in Greek, was the true capital of the Macedonian region prior to its dissolution in 1913. Salonica has held a strong symbolic role as the unofficial capital of the Greek region also known as Macedonia, and was well-known for its multi-ethnic makeup, including a large Jewish population, which was almost entirely lost to the Holocaust during World War II.

movement that would become powerful enough to reunite the divided Macedonia into a sovereign state that would maintain close cultural and political ties to neighboring Bulgaria. While the MPO had no plans for leading an armed struggle, it was comfortable aligning itself with the IMRO, which did.

From the start, the international political objective of the MPO was farfetched. To achieve the physical unification of Macedonia would have meant coercing three sovereign Balkan states to relinquish hard-won land. Given the relative lack of Macedonian political or economic clout in North America, and the reluctance of the Allies to undertake any further redrawing any of Europe's borders, the likelihood of the MPO succeeding was negligible. The MPO's stated goal even sounded implausible to some of its members. Louis Mladen, an early member of Toronto's MPO "*Pravda*" ("Justice") chapter, recalled years later, "for us to think we could free Macedonia, we were kidding ourselves. If the Great Powers don't want it, it's not going to be."⁵¹

Yet the social effects of the MPO's work were substantial. Because the MPO leaders grew out of communities with a strong Bulgarian Orthodox Church parish, the MPO became closely associated with the dominant religious organization in the diaspora among Macedonians and Bulgarians. In several cities MPO locals became, in essence, the political arm of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in North America. Many Macedonians regarded the Bulgarian Orthodox Church favorably because its reformation in the Balkans in 1870 had allowed Slavic Christians in Macedonian villages to worship in a familiar language. This informal alliance gave the MPO an advantage in

⁵⁰ Recruiting of Macedonians and Bulgarians by leftist organizers is treated more fully in the next chapter.

⁵¹ Louis Mladen, interview with Lillian Petroff, October 24, 1976, MHSO.

recruiting members over various fledgling socialist organizations, which generally resisted the authority of the Bulgarian synod over Macedonians and Bulgarians.

For some, association with the MPO helped firm up their sense of national identity. Recalling the social mission that came with the Orthodox Church in Toronto, and the MPO presence within the Church, Louis Mladen noted, “[because] I started associating with our own [people] I realized that I was a Macedonian.”⁵² His comments underscore how fluid identity remained for Macedonians and Bulgarians. Even if the MPO’s political aspirations could not be reasonably attained, there was an important psychological benefit to be gained by repeatedly articulating them. MPO publications were indefatigable in attending to the plight of Macedonians in Europe and their anger at Versailles. And while the MPO envisaged itself as more than simply a lobby for Macedonians, the message it consistently disseminated painted the organization as a single-issue advocacy group.⁵³

In addition to its publishing and political activism, the MPO, through its locals, engaged in a wide variety of cultural events that celebrated Macedonian cultural heritage. Elements of Macedonian material culture, such as traditional dress, folk music and embroidery, were an important part of this effort. Most locals formed a *zhenska seksia* – or ladies auxiliary – with Toronto’s MPO-Pravda organizing the first in 1927. The women’s efforts were seen as important for the community’s social life (and generally not for its political life.) The women’s groups arranged folk dances, wedding showers, teas, and maintained their own dues and leadership structure. A scan through several

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ *50th Anniversary Jubilee Almanac, Sts. Cyril and Methody Macedono-Orthodox Cathedral, 1910-1960*, MHSO.

decades of the MPO almanacs, as well as publications of various church parishes in North America, however, reveals only photos of men in leadership positions. The separate spheres of the Old Country, in which public affairs belonged to men, held in the New World even after decades of settlement and gradual assimilation.

The MPO also staged Macedonian musical, dance, and theatrical productions. Even before the MPO's founding in 1922, Macedonian and Bulgarian immigrants had organized banquets, picnics, and recitals featuring music, poems, and dances from their villages.⁵⁴ But not all displays were as parochial – migrants occasionally staged productions of the turn-of-the-century play *Makedonska Krvava Svadba*, or *Macedonian Bloody Wedding*, a stereotypical set piece in which blood-thirsty Turks attack a Macedonian wedding. Before the 1930s male amateur actors typically played both male and female parts in a show that was calculated to serve as a stimulus to Macedonian national feelings among the audience.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ The insularity of many Macedonian villages meant that particular songs or dance steps common in one village may have been unknown to neighboring villages. Songs, like *Boufsko Oro* from the village of Bouf, elicited village pride among migrants from the village.

⁵⁵ *50th Anniversary Jubilee Almanac, Sts. Cyril and Methody Macedono-Orthodox Cathedral, 1910-1960*, MHSO, 42, 66, passim; Tatjana Kaličanin, *Pesnite na Makedonskite Iceleničite vo Kanada I CAD (Songs of the Macedonian Emigrants From Canada and the US)* (Skopje: Institute na Folklore Marko Cerenkov, 1998), 270-271. The play *Makedonska Krvava Svadba* premiered in Sofia, Bulgaria in 1900. Playwright Vojdan Pop Georgiev-Chernodrinski, the play's author, is associated with the nascent Macedonian theater movement of the late nineteenth century.



Figure 13. Volunteer actors in a Toronto production of “Macedonian Bloody Wedding” with men playing women’s parts, circa 1917, *50th Anniversary Jubilee Almanac, Sts. Cyril and Methody Macedono-Orthodox Cathedral, 1910-1960, MHSO, 41.*

Macedonian and Bulgarian settlers often feared that their children would lose interest in Old World culture and language. Prior to 1919 parents from Macedonia typically were suspicious, if not hostile, to the younger generation’s desire to gain English-language education. The fear was three-fold: education was time not spent working and earning. It also was a pathway away from the original migratory mission. Finally, education in American and Canadian schools held out the potential to make the deepest fears of Macedonian women back at home come true – losing one’s family to “Upper” and “Lower” America for good. In Toronto, for instance, a Macedonian migrant burned his brother’s English textbook in the fire so that he would not violate his pledge to return home. In St. Louis Stoyan Christowe’s father grew irate at his son when he indicated a desire to take night classes in English.⁵⁶ In response, by the 1930s Macedonians had started about a dozen “evening schools” in many cities with nearby

⁵⁶ Petroff, *Sojourners and Settlers*, 65; Christowe, *The Eagle and the Stork*, 235-237.

MPO chapters including Steelton, Granite City, Lorain (Ohio), Lackawanna (New York), Toledo, Johnson City and Homestead (Pennsylvania), Indianapolis, and Battle Creek (Michigan), where children learned the Bulgarian language and Macedonian history. Toronto settlers opened their Bulgarian-language school in 1915 in collaboration with the existing Bulgaro-Macedonian Orthodox parish, appointing Kuzo Temelcoff, a teacher in Macedonia, as the new school's first instructor.⁵⁷

The MPO also cultivated outsiders as friends of Macedonia. A handful of Macedonian and non-Macedonian professors and other "experts" willingly wrote for, and on behalf of, the MPO and its publications. All of them supported the concept of a sovereign Macedonia, and were quick to blame Macedonian sufferings on the enemies of Macedonians. "The systematic devastation of that unfortunate land can mainly be attributed to no other cause than the malevolent machination of the Austro-Hungary and Russia," wrote a Macedonian Professor Vangel Sugareff.⁵⁸ Professor Fritz-Konrad Kruger of Wittenberg College in Ohio declared that "I.M.R.O., [and] the demonstrations of thousands of Macedonians abroad . . . are sufficient proof of their desire for the establishment of a Macedonian state."⁵⁹ Stoyan Christowe, who by this time was an author and journalist, singled out Serbia's "blind" nationalism as the "source of Macedonia's agony."⁶⁰ Commentator Krusto Velianoff described Macedonia existing under a "Greek yoke," drawing upon the yoke-as-slavery metaphor common during the

⁵⁷ Joseph Roucek, *The American Bulgarians*, 10; *50th Anniversary Jubilee Almanac, Sts. Cyril and Methody Macedono-Orthodox Cathedral, 1910-1960*, MHSO, 42.

⁵⁸ Vangel Sugareff, *Macedonia*, vol 1 no 1, January 1932, 6.

⁵⁹ Fritz-Konrad Kruger, "Is Macedonia Qualified for Statehood?," *Macedonia*, vol. 1, no. 1, January 1932, 5.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

nineteenth century. And John Bakeless, author of a comparison between Macedonia and Switzerland, and an instructor at Harvard and New York Universities, gave the keynote address at the 11th annual MPO convention in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1932.⁶¹

Defining Success: The MPO's Strengths and Weaknesses

As an irredentist group, the MPO was a failure. The borders established in 1913, and sanctioned in 1919, splitting the Macedonian territory among the three victors of the Balkan wars (Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia), remained intact until the Serbian portion became the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 1944. Greece and Bulgaria still retain their territorial gains from 1913 today. Thus, if measured against the yardstick of a unified Macedonia, the MPO's success was minimal.⁶² Nor did the MPO achieve the loyalty of all Macedonians. The boldness of the MPO's self-declared mandate papered over the reality that the body of 50,000 Macedonian migrants in North America was riven by cleavages and factions. Those who felt an affinity for Greece or Bulgaria because of their heritage would have rejected inclusion in a group that did not seem to fit their interests, or that even referred to them as Macedonians.

By the 1930s, too, the MPO had to compete with a number of socialist labor organizations such as the International Worker's Order (IWO). Spero Bassil, for one, instead joined the fledgling Macedonian Canadian People's League, a socialist group that

⁶¹ *Macedonia*, vol 1, no 10, December, 1932, 168.

⁶² Today, with the MPO holding out for the goal of reunification, hard-line elements within Greece and Bulgaria blame what they see as the territorial aspirations of all Macedonians for the hostility surrounding Macedonia's departure from Yugoslavia in 1991. The lines demarcating Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Albania, and the present Republic of Macedonia are recognized by each of those nations, by the United Nations and by NATO, who in recent years have taken on the role of guarantor of peace in the Balkans. In short, the likelihood of Macedonians realizing the unification of the "Greater Macedonia" still featured in the map on the masthead of the *Macedonian Tribune* is virtually nil.

embraced the pan-Slavic model of transnational ethnic brotherhood. He resisted MPO politics, and also the charismatic leader, Demetrius Mallin, author of the 1913 Bulgarian-English Dictionary, (formerly the Reverend Theophilact of the city's Sts. Cyril and Methodius Orthodox Church).⁶³ Still others looked to Macedonian organizations not for politics but for culture. The Macedonian-Bulgarian Orthodox parishes that came into being by the 1930s, for example, provided an important religious and social outlet for those who refused a political agenda. Mutual aid societies, like Toronto's Zhelevo Brotherhood, meanwhile, continued to help Macedonians get loans, start a business, purchase homes, and manage debt.⁶⁴

Yet the MPO was successful as an organizer of the diasporic energies of thousands of Macedonians who previously affiliated with no organized group. On the first page of the journal, *Macedonia*, their English-language monthly, in January 1932, the group declared that it would "enlighten the public regarding the Macedonians, their sufferings and their aspirations, the events in the Balkans and Europe, which are the direct outcome of the unjust division and subjection of Macedonia." Borrowing from English historian Lord Acton's dictum, "Exile is the nursery of nationality," the MPO hoped to make North America the "nursery" of Macedonian nationality. MPO leaders saw their "people" in North America both as exiles and as the cradle of an emerging Macedonian nationalist movement. The statement went on to declare that this work

⁶³ Spero Bassil interview, with Lillian Petroff, November 19, 1975, MHSO.

⁶⁴ Some, like the parents and grandparents of Marvin Moehle, a second-generation Macedonian-American folklorist from Granite City, IL, remained apolitical so as not to alienate any customers of their grocery store. Others could get their news with less politics from *Naroden Glas* or the American or Canadian English-language papers. See George Prpić, *South Slavic Immigration In America* (Boston: Twayne, 1978), 225-227; Anonymous, "Macedonians," in *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, ed. Stephen Thernstrom (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 692.

would be done in the spirit of the “progressive and democratic forces which labor for the triumph of human rights . . . thereby aiding in the realization of the great principles proclaimed in the Fourteen Points of President Wilson.”⁶⁵

The MPO staked out a position on the center-right of the political mainstream and stayed there. It used the sentiments and iconography of American history to legitimate its own national aspirations. Whenever possible, the group expressed the intellectual debt the Macedonian independence movement owed to the American political tradition. In February 1932, the second issue of the MPO journal *Macedonia* featured on its cover a portrait of George Washington and a full-page essay about his contributions to America’s national development. The issue lauded Washington as a man “wholly devoted to the task of promoting the unity, aggrandizement, and welfare of his fatherland,” remarking that Washington could serve as a role model for Macedonians in search of their own heroes and founding myths. The essay, signed simply, “Macedonia,” continued,

this genuine spirit of democracy . . . attracts so many thousands of Macedonian political refugees, who otherwise might have gone to other countries . . . And when their aspirations have been realized, George Washington will be rightly honored as their greatest teacher and inspirer of liberty and self-determination.⁶⁶

Though the patriotic appeal to American history reads like a common-enough entreaty by ethnic groups in the U.S. and Canada, the reference by the MPO to “thousands of political refugees” from Macedonia was a significant interpretive statement, and also a substantial distortion of the largely-economic origins of the Macedonian diaspora. There were indeed Macedonians who had fled the dangerous political climates after the crises of 1903 and 1912-1918. Yet it was economic forces

⁶⁵ Lord Acton quoted Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict*, 81; *Macedonia* (Macedonian Political Organization: Indianapolis, vol. 1 no. 1 Jan 1932), 1.

and, to a lesser extent, the pull of family unification, that overwhelmingly fueled migration in the early years.

But treating Macedonians in North America merely as economic migrants would have undercut the MPO's cause. Assen Avramoff, General Secretary of the MPO, claimed that the desire of American and Canadian Macedonians to see an independent Macedonia inextricably linked the immigrants to the politics of the Balkans. Though the Macedonians in North America were "far from the fatherland, [they] followed closely the change of events in their country. They organized themselves and immediately proceeded to enlighten the free and democratic American people." Avramoff credited the spirit of the French Revolution, and the passion for national self-determination unleashed by Woodrow Wilson, for inspiring the strong sense of Macedonian patriotism the MPO claimed to represent. Despite the disappointment of Versailles, Avramoff argued, Macedonians should direct their anger toward the Greek and Serbian "oppressor" and not the American leadership (who, in less public moments, they blamed as well.) For Avramoff, the period before the "criminal partition of Macedonia" was one in which Macedonians abroad were "entertaining the hope that soon their fatherland would be free, and they could return to their native land."⁶⁷ Adding overheated rhetoric to a mixed metaphor, he added, "The Macedonians endured even this ordeal; they drained another bitter cup, but their faith in the future of their fatherland never abated: their patriotic fire survived smoldering in the depths of their hearts, ready to flame up anew into an indomitable Macedonian movement."⁶⁸

⁶⁶ *Macedonia*, vol. 1 no. 2, Feb. 1932, 1.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, vol 2 no. 1, Feb. 1932, 28-29.

⁶⁸ Avramoff, *Macedonia*, vol. 1 no 2, Feb. 1932, 30

Ink By The Barrel: The MPO and the Power of the Press

The difficult conditions Macedonians in the Balkans faced after 1913, and their lack of a single home country, meant that the various Macedonian nationalist organizations in the United States and Canada were limited in what they could do on behalf of the diaspora. By necessity Macedonian groups turned to international organizations to press their case for greater freedom for Macedonians, and also to promote their version of Macedonian identity and historical narrative. Macedonians abroad, for instance, had hoped that the League of Nations might provide them with protection following WWI. (Macedonian and Bulgarian socialists would eventually look to the umbrella provided by the Soviet Comintern as a way of taking their case for international respect to a wider audience.) And following WWII, the MPO repeatedly asked the United Nations to seek a remedy for the division of the Macedonian territory.⁶⁹

To make the strongest case for their point of view, and attract the attention of international organizations and policymakers, Macedonians and Bulgarians capitalized on the freedom of the press in their adopted countries. The early years of Macedonian activism witnessed the emergence of a number of newspapers printed in Bulgarian that communicated to the community the news at home and abroad. As they did in organizing Macedonians, the MPO also took the lead in publishing materials supporting their views on Macedonian issues. Few Macedonians and Bulgarians could read in English, but literacy in Bulgarian and Macedonian was high among men (and distinctly lower among women). The variety and number of early publications is impressive. According to

⁶⁹ Macedonian Patriotic Organization, "Macedonians in North America," (MPO: Indianapolis, n.d.), 15; Altankov, *The Bulgarian-Americans*, 63-65.

Joseph Roucek, an early historian of Bulgarians and Macedonians in America, twenty-eight Bulgarian language newspapers had appeared in America by 1927. Most lasted only a few months or years. Roucek attributed this high rate of attrition to factionalism among Macedonian and Bulgarian communities and an eventual waning of interest in reading in the Bulgarian language, though the small readership likely played a role as well.⁷⁰

Two periodicals that succeeded over the long term, both in their longevity and influence on Macedonian and Bulgarian political life, were *Naroden Glas*, which began publishing in 1908, and *Makedonska Tribuna*, or *Macedonian Tribune*, which the MPO started publishing in 1927.⁷¹ *Naroden Glas* largely eschewed political posturing, opting instead for U.S. and international news, and a focus on Bulgarian-American businessmen. The *Macedonian Tribune*, like the MPO itself, was overtly political, taking consistently patriotic pro-Macedonian, pro-American, and pro-Canadian positions. The advent of the *Macedonian Tribune* was important because it was the first widely circulated paper

⁷⁰ Roucek, *The American Bulgarians*, 10

⁷¹ Both papers found a ready audience among Macedonians and Bulgarians with pro-American, pro-Canadian, and pro-free market views. Additionally, when *Naroden Glas* began publishing in 1908 pro-Bulgarian feelings of immigrants from Macedonia were strong. Prior to the Balkan Wars, for instance, the Macedonians of the Granite City-Madison-St. Louis areas did not vigorously debate whether they were Bulgarians or Macedonians. For his part, Stoyan Christowe alternately referred to himself and his friends as both Macedonian and Bulgarian through his memoirs, and has since been “claimed” as a notable Macedonian-American and Bulgarian-American by both modern communities. *Naroden Glas* published in the standard Bulgarian language, scrupulously avoided being seen a mouthpiece for any single political or social group, and reported on general news of interest to Bulgarian speakers. This included reporting on current events and the achievements of notable Macedonian and Bulgarian business and political leaders, as well as dispatches from the Balkans. In conversations with Granite City folklorist Marvin Moehle, he suggested that the St. Louis-area communities were the locus of particularly pro-Bulgarian feelings in the early years of settlement. This assertion is supported by Christowe’s memoirs that do not indicate that the differences, if any, between Macedonians and Bulgarians were debated before the existence of the MPO in the 1920s. See Roucek, *The American Bulgarians*, 10

devoted to the Macedonian cause, and which relied on a subscription system that drew on the strength of local organizations in the U.S. and Canada.⁷²

Within a few years of the *Tribune's* founding, fascist regimes had come to power in Germany, Italy, Japan, and Spain. The IMRO represented the political far-right in Macedonia, but it did not become a fascist movement. The MPO never embraced fascist wing of rightist European politics either (choosing instead to resist socialism, the Soviet Union, and pan-Slavic ideology), but it did openly embrace the IMRO. This left the MPO, and the *Tribune*, open to a certain guilt by association as the IMRO continued to rely on violence to achieve Macedonian independence. MPO detractors unfairly called the MPO a pro-fascist group in the 1930s and 1940s. While they failed to make the charges stick, they helped craft an image of the MPO as a right-wing fringe group unconcerned about American and Canadian working people.⁷³

The MPO rejected the labor-based approach of leftist journals like the *New Republic* and *Partisan Review*; MPO publications focused on the reunification of the Macedonian homeland, not on support for the working classes. The *Macedonian Tribune* offered a variety of features to its readers, such as news, sports, and social announcements of births, deaths, weddings and Christenings. Pictures of world leaders graced the same pages as beauty queens and shopkeepers. Headlines from around the world – “Mexican Prime Minister Assassinated” – complemented a larger number

⁷² Unlike the anti-establishment tone of the Macedonians and Bulgarians on the left, *Naroden Glas* was pro-American and pro-capitalist. As more Balkan sojourners successfully became merchants, the paper took note of their success, and as established first- and second-generation Macedonian and Bulgarian business owners notched their place in the middle class, they often advertised their success in the paper's ad pages and almanacs.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 11; George Pirinsky, *Slavic Americans in the Fight For Victory and Peace* (New York, American Slav Congress, 1946). I explore the rise of various socialist and other leftist groups in the following chapter.

dispatches that reported on life and politics in the Balkans. Owing to the MPO's affinity for Bulgarian culture and history, the paper set a generally positive tone toward Sofia. Curiously, the *Tribune* wrote less about Greece, even though many Macedonians were from villages that became Greek territory after the Balkan Wars. Serbia attracted the most, and the most negative, attention in the *Tribune* pages as it was viewed as the most flagrant "occupier" of the former Macedonian territory.⁷⁴

It was not just the news that gave the *Tribune*, and other MPO publications, standing among immigrants from Macedonia after 1927. In a similar fashion to other dominant ethnic papers, like the socialist *Jewish Daily Forward* in New York and *Zgoda* and *Dziennik* among Chicago Polish-Americans, the *Tribune* reflected a national or ethnic, and therefore political, worldview among its readers. It became a shaping force for how a growing portion of North American Macedonian communities came to see their homeland, and by extension themselves. For instance, by dint of its consistent and sustained use of the term "Macedonian," rather than Bulgarian or Bulgarian-Macedonian, to describe its readership, the *Tribune* helped shift the migrant communities away from a worldview where it was common and acceptable to refer to oneself by more than a single ethnic or national moniker.⁷⁵ In a weekly broadsheet format, the *Tribune* accomplished this balancing act by focusing on the plight of Macedonians back home. A July 1928 feature story entitled, "Macedonians and Croatians in Toronto Against Yugoslav Regime," detailed grievances against the Belgrade-dominated "Kingdom of the Serbs,

⁷⁴ *Macedonian Tribune*, July 19, 1928, 1.

⁷⁵ Roucek, *The American Bulgarians*, 12.

Croats, and Slovenes.”⁷⁶ An adjacent story about the abusive treatment of Macedonians in Serbia began with a headline about the hated Serb police chief Zhika Lazich, referring to him as a “Macedonian bloodsucker.”⁷⁷

An article from the previous summer described a rally in Sofia, Bulgaria, at which, “500,000 Macedonians in Bulgaria demonstrate[d] their will to fight to the end for a free Macedonia.” Notwithstanding grossly overestimating the number of demonstrators present, the article attributed to the marchers virtually the same political goals that it sought through its own advocacy in the United States and Canada. The MPO ignored the fact that the insecure Bulgarian leadership in Sofia would never have allowed such a march on behalf of a minority population seeking independence and a portion of Bulgarian territory. By insisting to its readers that Macedonians in the United States and Canada were part of the same struggle as Macedonians abroad, the MPO helped fashion a transnational movement out of a diffuse and economically minded migrant population.⁷⁸

On a weekly basis the *Tribune* provided a steady diet of stories that were frequently slanted, exaggerated, and poorly sourced, but which clearly were intended to focus attention of diaspora Macedonians on the poor treatment of the Macedonian minorities in Serbia and Greece. By using advocacy journalism to support the general supposition that Macedonians were uniquely persecuted and continually denied their

⁷⁶ The Kingdom officially became known as Yugoslavia in 1929. Yugoslavia came to a *de facto* end with the start of World War II, and reconstituted itself again in 1944. In February 2003 the Yugoslav parliament voted the name Yugoslavia out of existence, replacing it with a loose union of the remaining two states, Serbia and Montenegro.

⁷⁷ *Macedonian Tribune*, July 19, 1928, 1.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, June 30, 1927, 1.

rights, the *Tribune* editors strengthened the sense of victimization felt by many Macedonians in North America.⁷⁹

The foreign news coverage in the *Macedonian Tribune*, and the other means by which immigrants received and communicated information about life in Macedonia, contributed to the formation of what Matthew Jacobson has termed the “diasporic imagination.”⁸⁰ The *Tribune*’s words assumed a gospel-like quality among readers whose own political views hewed close to the MPO’s.⁸¹ Authors writing for, or on behalf of, the MPO routinely savaged Serbia and Greece for their poor treatment of Macedonian Slavs within their borders. The interwar years were, in fact, dark ones for self-proclaimed Macedonians in both countries as Serbia and Greece conducted harsh campaigns of assimilation of minorities that included beating, jailing, and killing political radicals, many of whom in Serbia claimed, or were charged with, IMRO affiliation. The MPO highlighted the abuse in its journal, “Macedonia” in a regular section titled “The Macedonian Martyrdom.” One typical section included:

District of Scopie, Cratovo County

Savko Ivanoff, village Nejilovo, Kratovo, 42, beaten mercilessly on Sept 18, 1920
as a member of IMRO

Rade Miteff, Nejilovo, Kratovo, arrested and beaten, his house burned.

Kitan Arsoff, Kunevo 51, beaten to death on January 18, 1921

⁷⁹ Even the *New York Times* reacted to their publications, noting in 1926 the MPO’s publication of “[b]rochures Asserting a National Status,” for Macedonians. The *Times* did not mention that the MPO did not consider Macedonians deserving of unique ethnic status.

⁸⁰ Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, introduction, chapter 1.

⁸¹ “Macedonians Present Their Racial Claims,” *New York Times*, 7 August 1927, E7; Conversations with Marvin Moehle and Lillian Petroff, 2000-2002.

Mrs. Stoyanka Christova, Kunovo, 40, violated on May 7, 1922⁸²

Meanwhile, the MPO argued that Macedonians in the “Pirin” portion of Macedonia gained by Bulgaria in 1913 (known in Bulgaria as the Petrich District) were, by and large, happy and enjoyed broad rights. In reality, quality of life for most religious and ethnic minorities in the new Balkan states, including Bulgaria, was probably worse than under Ottoman rule. Bulgarian authorities had gone out of their way to undercut the efforts of IMRO to rally for Macedonian independence three decades earlier. It was therefore unlikely Bulgarian officials would support the efforts of the MPO, whose ultimate goal was to join “Pirin Macedonia” with “Vardar” and “Aegean Macedonia,” nor would they suffer gladly the activities of pro-Macedonia agitators.⁸³ Yet the MPO maintained its affinity for Bulgarians (at least until Bulgaria became a Soviet client state after WWII) both because they still viewed Macedonians as a subset of the Bulgarian

⁸² *Macedonia*, vol 1, no 4, April 1932, 69-71. As the MPO used events in the homeland for inspiration, members of the IMRO began looking across the ocean to an American Civil War-era song for motivation. Almost a quarter a century after launching the *Illinden* uprising, the underground IMRO fighters still patterned themselves after the rough-hewn bands who prowled the Balkan mountains in the nineteenth century. The December 18, 1927 *Buffalo Evening News* ran a story, “Macedonians Adopt US War Song, ‘John Brown’s Body Lies A-moulding in the Grave’ Stirs Comitadjis Fighting for Freedom.” The story goes on to describe in romantic tones the struggles for power within the IMRO and the passion that runs through the various leaders for a free Macedonia. It is difficult to conclude if the choice of a marching song celebrating a violent abolitionist indicated the Macedonian rebels associated with the Union Army. At least two other possibilities present themselves. On the surface, IMRO’s secessionist desires made them seem more like the breakaway Confederacy. As well, the IMRO’s frequent claim of Macedonia’s “slavery” to more powerful neighbors suggests they used the chant as their own “abolitionist” demand. What is more certain is that the image the story cultivates was in line with the way the IMRO *comitadjis* viewed themselves: as uncompromising patriots fighting an uphill battle for the freedom of their people. “Macedonians Adopt U.S. War Song,” *Buffalo Evening News*, December 17, 1928, Archive of the Republic of Macedonia, *Matiča na Iseleničite* collection.

⁸³ Mazower, *The Balkans*, 118-122.

narod and because Bulgaria had not gone to the lengths that Serbia and Greece did to eliminate feelings of Macedonianess among their minority populations.⁸⁴

A Mounting Macedonianism: The Pinnacle of MPO Influence

By 1940 the MPO boasted more than 39 locals, with two in Canada and three in Australia. By that same year, the group claimed to have sent 80,000 letters outlining its platform to politicians, journalists, academics, and others around the world. This was in addition to the virtual blizzard of journals, pamphlets, almanacs, and other paraphernalia distributed to all who would listen.⁸⁵ Those who joined one of the MPO locals often contributed significantly of their time to help along the disciplined committee and subcommittee organizational structure the group adopted. Foto Tomev remembered joining Sts. Cyril and Methody a few years after joining MPO-Pravda, Toronto's local. "I had less and less time for my career," Tomev said. "As a result of my work for these two organizations I have often said that I graduated from the College of Art and then completed my graduate studies at Trinity and Eastern Avenue, which was the location of the two organizations."⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Others from Macedonian and Bulgarian communities in North America, however, were not as motivated by the sense of ethnic solidarity or the politics of the MPO. For some, the possibilities of joining a prosperous multiethnic society in North America were more exhilarating than connecting politically or ethnically with men similar to themselves. Dincho Ralley recalled Toronto's polyglot cultural makeup: Bulgarians who had become Baptists, and who worshipped with other Protestants; the Jewish Theatre at Bay and Dundas Streets; and people of English descent drawn to the spicy, peppery dishes served at ubiquitous diners run by Balkan men and their wives. It would be a mistake to assume that because Macedonians as a group remained connected to the broader issues of identity and politics in their homeland that each individual harbored such strong feelings. The truth is that many likely did not. Dincho Ralley, interview with Lillian Petroff, July 4, 1975, MHSO.

⁸⁵ Altankov, *The Bulgarian-Americans*, 70.

⁸⁶ The historical legacy of the two ninth century saints, Cyril and Methodius, is a complex and intertwined one within the modern Macedonian, Bulgarian, and even Serbian narratives. All three narratives have claimed the saints as "theirs" and since the two began to preach Christianity throughout the Balkans a few hundred years after the Slavs reached the peninsula, each feels it has a strong claim. That the saints, and

The MPO used its annual convention to promote further passion for Macedonian independence. The MPO organizers moved the convention each year to a city where a local had been established. At the conventions, soaring political rhetoric was the norm:

“[It] is the sacred duty of every Macedonian to fight with all his power the tyranny of Belgrade and Athens. It should be remembered that in this struggle we are not alone. We have friends and supporters in many places . . . The Cause for which we are fighting will triumph, Macedonians will soon be in a free and independent country.”

The president of the MPO’s Central Committee opened the 11th annual convention in Cleveland in 1932 by reminding the attendees of their collective political responsibility. Nearly 2000 people turned out for the convention to eat, dance, and meet members from other locals from Detroit, Indianapolis, and Chicago. Attendees listened to four days of speeches by speakers whose anti-Greek and anti-Serbian rhetoric had changed little over the decade.⁸⁷ The Cleveland convention was a numerical success; perhaps five percent of all Macedonians in North America attended. Held every Labor Day weekend, the convention quickly became an annual ritual on par with the commemoration of *Illinden* on the first Sunday in August.⁸⁸

The MPO acted as a new center of gravity in a number of communities. As Lillian Petroff has noted, “If development of a church was the central ethnic manifestation of the community before the First World War, development of the MPO

their successors, Naum and Clement, lived in a pre-modern and pre-national era, matters less in these narratives than the geographic reality that the men lived and worked in territory that was under the control of all three states at one time or another. Tomev, *Memoirs*, 54, MHSO.

⁸⁷ *Macedonia*, vol.1 no. 8, October 1932, 126-127.

⁸⁸ The relationship between the Macedonian Church and the Macedonian settlers in America and Canada will be covered in greater length in Chapter 5. For Macedonians, the Labor Day weekend became so associated with the convention, and therefore so symbolic, that when the Macedonian Orthodox diocese in North America came into being in the late 1960s they attempted to supplant the MPO’s authority by scheduling a competing convention for the same weekend.

became the central effort of the 1920s and 1930s.”⁸⁹ The importance of the MPO and its local chapters varied from city to city, but was particularly strong in Toronto, Ft. Wayne, Indianapolis, Granite City, and Detroit. While it did not supplant the church as the primary physical locus of Macedonian cultural and religious life, it imbued the communities it entered with a political charge. Not all church leaders were MPO members, but most sympathized with the organization. By comparison, Macedonian and Bulgarian organizations on the left operated largely as fringe groups until at least the 1930s. One likely reason was that the ethnic nationalist appeal of the MPO was more in demand in the pre-Great Depression years than the message of the leftist groups, which emphasized solidarity among laboring classes rather than ethnic solidarity.

A Turning Point for the Macedonian Movement: Nonviolence or Insurrection?

There is little doubt that the “MPO version” of Macedonian national development became influential in the creation of an historical narrative of Macedonia and a Macedonian *narod*. The MPO spelled out many of the basic tenets of the new Macedonian narrative over the first two decades of its existence – that Macedonians were a subset of the Bulgarian people and a long-standing and freedom-loving group that had been denied their independence because occupation by stronger neighbors took on the status of received wisdom passed down from previous generations (though the MPO was less than a generation old itself). This version neglected to list Macedonians as Slavs, which was notable because Slavic unity was a key organizing principle of the socialist-left, an ideology the MPO rejected. These founding myths were perpetuated, and

⁸⁹ Petroff, *Sojourners and Settlers*, 141.

subsequently internalized, by thousands of Macedonians who viewed them as a sort of cultural shorthand for explaining who they were as a people, and how they got that way. Speaking with Macedonians today, both in the diaspora and in Macedonia, the refrain of “Macedonia-as-historical-victim” is heard time and again with subtle variations.⁹⁰

In promoting Macedonia as a “Switzerland of the Balkans,” leaders of the IMRO and the MPO indicated the unique historical role they sought to create for a mythic “Macedonia.” If successful, they believed that Macedonia would serve as a neutral, good faith partner in the region, and a bulwark against the kind of ethnic, religious, and colonial wars that had raged in the Balkans. The neatness of the MPO narrative resonated with the legacies of earlier Macedonian nationalists like Krste Misirkov who had argued half a century earlier that the Macedonians had emerged under unique circumstances.⁹¹ Many Macedonians who could return home, even temporarily, brought this vision home with them. In North America, the MPO adopted the use of the slogan “Switzerland of the Balkans” in its materials and still uses it today.⁹²

Yet those willing to accept this version of Macedonian identity, on both sides of the ocean, had to reconcile the image of Macedonians as a peaceful people, a Switzerland of the Balkans, with the violent heritage of IMRO, which included kidnappings, bombings and assassinations, and the ongoing influence of IMRO leader Ivan Mihailoff,

⁹⁰ I make this observation following several dozen discussions with Macedonian scholars, government and religious officials, and expatriates over a number of years, and over three trips to the region. See also Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict*; Hugh Poulton, *Who Are The Macedonians?* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Stoyan Pribichevich, *Macedonia: Its People and History* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1982).

⁹¹ Misirkov, however, was more radical in his belief that Macedonians constituted a distinct *ethnicity*, and not just a geographical distinction.

⁹² John Bakeless, “Macedonia – Switzerland of the Balkans,” *An American Symposium on the Macedonian Problem* (Indianapolis: MPO, 1944), 13-14. See also Ivan Mihailoff, *Macedonia: A Switzerland of the Balkans* (Indianapolis: MPO, no date).

who haunted the Macedonian mountains into the 1930s. Some were willing to rationalize IMRO's embrace of violent tactics as the unfortunate byproduct of a bygone era where guerrillas, janissaries and bandits were fighting for their respective sides. Others within, or close to, the MPO leadership felt that IMRO's violent insurgency was central to the Macedonian independence movement, the "mainspring of the whole cause," as Basil Balgor, a correspondent for the MPO, called it.⁹³

The MPO refused to distance itself from the violent tactics that had discredited the IMRO throughout Europe, and instead chose to embrace fully the liberationist mission of IMRO, seeing it as the forerunner to the work it now carried on abroad. "The Macedonian population," the MPO declared, "is engaged in an unabating struggle for the attainment of its national independence by making use of the press, speech and arms."⁹⁴ While the MPO was not itself a violent organization, its embrace of the IMRO likely marginalized its long-range political efficacy by making it impossible for the MPO to act as a moderate political actor that could voice the concerns of its constituency with a high degree of legitimacy to Greek, Bulgarian, and Serbian diaspora groups, and to the U.S., Canadian, and foreign governments.

Conclusion: An Emerging Popular Identity

The Balkan Wars, WWI, and Versailles inflicted a trauma on the lives and identities of Macedonians around the world. It challenged them to define their own identities more clearly, and join groups that supported their interests. In response to

⁹³ Basil Balgor, "The IMRO and Immigrant Macedonian Societies," *Macedonia*, vol. 1, no. 7, September 1932, 115.

⁹⁴ *Macedonia*, vol 1, no 1, 1931, 1.

Versailles, the MPO spearheaded a global Macedonian political movement that was based in North America in the 1920s and 1930s. But despite its attempts to unite Macedonians behind a vision of national solidarity, Macedonians on the eve of World War II remained divided and weak compared to other Southeast European immigrant groups. The divisions existed along a number of fault lines, including religion, ethnicity, and politics, frustrating attempts to create a movement for a unified homeland similar to the global Zionist movement that began at the turn of the century and culminated with the formation of Israel in 1948.

For instance, a small minority of Bulgarians and Macedonians converted to Protestantism either in the old country or upon settling in North America, and stood outside Orthodox Church life. A larger minority chose to align themselves with Greek and Serbian Orthodox Churches in Canada and the United States, favoring the immediate familiarity of an established organization over an uncertain future. Finally, divisions within Macedonian Slav communities in the diaspora hindered political organizing efforts. In Granite City, for example, some pro-Macedonia advocates denigrated those who thought of themselves as Bulgarian and not Macedonian by treating them as lower-class citizens. In Toronto, however, the opposite cultural phenomenon prevailed in a way that revealed the how cultural striations and order emerge as communities settle and grow; in his memoir, Foto Tomev recalled his colleagues regarding “Macedonians” as “illiterates.”⁹⁵

Despite the various divisions and weaknesses within the North American portion of the diaspora, the fact remained that communities of immigrants from the Macedonian

⁹⁵ Conversation with Marvin Moehle, June 2002; Tomev, *Memoirs*, 50-55.

region routinely called themselves “Macedonians,” spoke of “Macedonian” institutions, and talked of a “Macedonian” language. The freedoms granted to the immigrants in their adopted North American cities and towns permitted significant freedom of ethnic experimentation and promotion, and economic mobility sufficient to create a budding Macedonian business and educated classes. Both groups would be crucial to the emerging political debate over Macedonian history and identity. This did not necessarily mean that there were no feelings of Bulgarian affinity within the communities, or that all members viewed Macedonians as a distinct ethnicity. But to a far greater extent than in the divided Macedonian region in the Balkans, where Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria stifled public displays of Macedonian identity, the North American diaspora communities represented the vanguard of a new and growing Macedonian national movement.

By the late 1930s, Europe again faced the possibility of large-scale war, Macedonia remained divided, and a vast economic depression caused many to reconsider the plausibility of free market economies. Fascist and Communist movements *both* gained strength in Europe, and few had a sense of how the gathering storm would play out. In North America, the MPO had changed the landscape for Macedonians and Bulgarians considerably in just over a decade, but it was not the only competitor for the attention of settlers from Macedonia. Even though most of these settlers felt more comfortable calling themselves Macedonians, the question of what, exactly, that meant was far from resolved. Though the MPO managed to forge a rough consensus about the contours of Macedonian history, they still refused to consider Macedonians to be a separate ethnicity. Theirs would not be the last word on the subject.

Chapter 5: Imagining and Creating a Socialist Macedonia, 1919-1951

It would be hard to overestimate the effect that the political, and eventually military, battles between European governments on the left and right exerted on the Balkan nationalisms in the middle years of the twentieth century. When the various organizations, nation-states, and guerrilla groups took sides leading up to WWII it created legacies of bitterness – and cleavages within nationalities – that persist to this day. The effect was perhaps even more profound on Macedonians around the world who were just, at that very moment, dividing themselves into ethnic and national factions. In North America, the Macedonian Political Organization had been successful at winning at least a plurality of Macedonian and Bulgarian labor migrants over to its worldview that Macedonians were a cultural subset of the Bulgarian *narod*. By the late-1930s the MPO had become a powerful coalescing force for this particular brand of Macedonian nationalism by convincing migrants that it was in their best interest to band together and safeguard their own “people” against the injustices committed by Serbs and Greeks.

Yet the MPO was not a monolith and even in the Granite City, Indianapolis, Detroit, Steelton, Chicago, and Toronto communities where its influence was strongest, its membership likely never topped half of the Macedonian men in those cities. In other words, the Macedonian diaspora exhibited much of the political diversity seen in the mainstream culture that surrounded it. To be sure, some settlers remained apolitical, perhaps because of a lack of interest in politics or because their stay in Upper or Lower America was meant to be temporary. Others were turned off by the bourgeois and

patriotic tones of the MPO leaders, and instead were attracted to labor activism and socialism then percolating in industrialized American and Canadian cities. In relation to their numbers, Macedonians may not have been the most likely immigrants to organize or join strikes, but this did not mean that they rejected progressive politics altogether.

It was into this climate of political fluidity that George Pirinsky and other Marxist organizers in North America ventured in the 1930s. Pirinsky's goal was undeniably radical. He planned for nothing less than linking a rekindled Macedonian nationalism to the nationalisms of the other Slavic diasporas in order to create a force bigger than the sum of its parts: a pan-Slavic movement with the Soviet Union at the head that would serve as platform for spreading socialism around the world. Numerically, he found only modest success by the 1940s. His political beliefs ran so contrary to the developing American zeitgeist that he was deported only a few years later. But Pirinsky's conception of Macedonians as part of a Slavic brotherhood, close to – but distinct from – Bulgarians resonated with Macedonians in Macedonia who were now encouraged to exhibit “brotherhood and togetherness” in the new Yugoslav system that came about after 1944. Dogmatic and unlikable, Pirinsky was promoting a nationalism whose time was about to come.

Soon, events in Europe would help his brand of Macedonian nationalism take root in North America. Just as Pirinsky passed from the scene, Yugoslav and Macedonian officials began a coordinated process to capitalize on the latent Macedonian nationalism available in the region and the diaspora to inculcate a proud, loyal Macedonian constituency whose identity transcended village, religion, and Yugoslav republic. This project included one major caveat, which most Macedonians found amenable: accepting

this new Macedonian identity meant rejecting all others. It became untenable by the 1950s to align with the Pirinsky / pan-Slavic version of Macedonian identity and still consider oneself to be “Macedonian-Bulgarian” as so many migrants affiliated with the MPO had done. Critics of this process correctly pointed out that the emergence of a Macedonian republic might never have occurred had not the heavy hand of Yugoslav and Macedonian nation builders intervened. What these critics failed to grasp is that nations do not emerge naturally, and that such a process of forced ethnic maturation was not invented in Belgrade or Skopje in the 1940s, but had been a common practice for over a century in Paris, Rome, Istanbul, Athens, Moscow and Sofia.

The nation-building process took time. But by the latter third of the twentieth century – and for the first time ever – there existed a popular, and international, notion of Macedonian ethnic and national identity, along with several sub-national identities, each bearing its own definable characteristics. Both the Macedonian populations in the Yugoslav republic and in the diaspora contributed to the creations of these identities. And they did so not through consensus, but through struggles between leftists and rightists in Yugoslavia and North America. These struggles created a climate in which new conceptions of Macedonian identity were tested and adopted by a wide range of individuals, both in the “center” and in the “periphery” of Macedonian life. Though one side or the other may have taken the lead during a particular period of cultural creation, in the end Macedonian ethnic identity reflected the interplay between both.¹

¹ It should be noted that by not all conflicts in mid-century Macedonian diaspora communities break down along left-right political lines. The anthropologist Keith Brown has illustrated the bitterness between the more settled, successful Macedonians in Steelton, PA, and those who still expected to return to their birth villages. At a tense community meeting in April 1948, an argument erupted when several church members stepped across an informal line in the hall dividing more settled members of the community and those still expecting to return to Macedonia. In the melee that followed the argument, 51-year-old George Minoff shot and killed two church members, Kotche Atzeff, 25, and Boris Mioff, 38. According to court

By assessing the limitations of the MPO, and the nation-building work of the leftist organizers and ideologues who sought to eclipse it, we gain an understanding of how a modern, leftist view of Macedonian identity came to dominate in the decades after World War II.² First, though, it is necessary to explore the international political context in which the Macedonian phenomena occurred: a complex battle between left and right that ultimately brought the world back to war again in 1939. While the full scope of this struggle is far too vast for consideration here, we need to examine several key events within it.³

Elements of a Political Clash: Right Versus Left in Europe and North America

European politics in the 1930s brought issues of race, nationality, and lineage into high relief. Fascist regimes came to power in Germany, Italy, and Spain, while, in the Balkans, Communist groups proliferated with the purpose of turning back fascism's spread into the region. The clash between the two ideologies placed a new emphasis on national identity, as fascist governments sought to strengthen the state through appeals to racial and national purity, while leftists in the Balkans hoped to achieve their goal of a multi-ethnic, pan-Slavic state. This political tension added a new facet to the

Macedonian Question: should Macedonians become one of the ethnic "nations" that

documents, Minoff, who sided with the more settled faction, had perceived the encroachment of Atzeff and Mioff into his space as a threat to his conception of the Macedonian community in Steelton. The tensions in the Steelton community cut across political lines to include class, and cultural feelings about the role for migrants in the New World. See Keith Brown, "Shifty Nations and the Routes of Marginal Identity: A Macedonian Case Study," paper delivered at Association for the Study of Nationalities annual conference, Columbia University, April 1999, in author's possession.

² I use the term "modern" here to describe an identity that rejects other national identities, and which is therefore discrete and confident.

³ A useful, if dated, overview of the politics of interwar Yugoslavia is *Elisabeth Barker, Macedonia: Its Place in Balkan Power Politics* (London and New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1950).

comprised the Slavic “peoples?” The answer from the Marxist left was an emphatic “yes.” By the 1950s a majority clearly favored the view held by the left.⁴

The left-right debate that forged competing popular views of Macedonian national identity took shape in the 1920s. In June 1923 the left-leaning agrarian prime minister of Bulgaria, Aleksander Stamboliiski, was assassinated, ushering in the anti-Bolshevik regime of Aleksander Tsankov. The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) played a prominent role in plotting Stamboliiski’s killing because of his willingness to assent to Serbia’s attempt to assimilate forcibly its Macedonian population. The IMRO, which had launched the *Illinden* uprising in 1903 and had reconstituted itself in 1920, by this time resembled a right-wing nationalist terror group as much as a social aid organization. IMRO’s chief, the intellectual-turned-fighter Ivan Mihailoff, was a hero to many Macedonians abroad, but a traitor in the eyes of leftist Macedonians in Europe and the diaspora. In North America, the MPO circulated Mihailoff’s writings even as Macedonian leftists denounced him for steering the IMRO toward the political far-right.⁵

In one respect, Stamboliiski’s death was yet another political killing in a region where just such an event a decade before had led to the start of World War I. The poor conditions in which Macedonians lived in Serbia and Bulgaria did not improve after

⁴ For a useful overview of the Macedonian region at this time, see Misha Glenny, *The Balkans: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers, 1804-1999* (New York: Penguin, 1999), ch. 6 and 7. The role of the left in promoting Macedonian identity is discussed in greater length in this chapter. It is worth noting that the promotion of ethnicity within a Marxist social framework would seem to contradict the Marxist belief that in a true socialist state, ethnicity would recede in the progress toward a classless society. The reality in two of the largest multi-ethnic socialist national projects – the Soviet Union and the second incarnation of Yugoslavia – was obviously otherwise. On socialism and ethnic identity among Macedonians see, Andrew Rossos, “Macedonianism and Macedonian Nationalism on the Left,” *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe*, Ivo Banac and Katherine Verdery, eds. (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1995).

⁵ Ivan Mikhailov, *Macedonia: A Switzerland of the Balkans*, trans. Christ Anastasoff (St. Louis: Pearlstone Publishing, 1950); Institute of National History, *A History of the Macedonian People* (Skopje: Macedonian Review Editions, 1979), 293-294. Here I use the more common spelling of the surname, “Mihailoff.”

Tsankov's ascent to power in Sofia. But the psychological effects of Stamboliiski's killing had a profound effect on the struggle to define the outlines of the Macedonian nation. Within a few years, the MPO formed and became the most prominent Macedonian organization in North America. At the same time, fascist leaders in Europe began to consolidate their political gains in Germany, Italy, and Spain amid a continent-wide economic depression. That Bulgaria moved politically in the same direction as these fascist leaders became a concern to liberal Macedonians in the Balkans and abroad, who, since 1917, pegged their hopes to two different political trends: the aggregated power of peasants and working people, and the brotherhood that they felt would result from a union of the Slavic peoples.⁶

Macedonians in North America too felt the political strains. With the Ottoman Empire gone, and thus the Turks no longer the convenient foil for Macedonian aspirations, Macedonians living abroad sought ways to align their views about their ethnicity with the organizations that they felt respected their social and economic interests. Though most early-century Macedonian migrants belonged to the working classes, they were fitful participants in attempts by organized labor to improve working

⁶ See Glenny, *The Balkans, 190-192*; Lampe, *Yugoslavia: Twice There Was A Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 150-152. Nationalism, and a more virulent strain, "ultra-nationalism," existed on the political left and right. If the MPO's vision of Macedonian identity aligned more closely with centrist or conservative forces in North America, modern Macedonian nationalism, like other Balkan nationalisms during the Tito and post-Tito era, flourished on the political left. And in North America, the leftist views of Macedonian nationhood proved resilient enough to shed their support for radical labor politics without losing its character as more Macedonians moved into the middle class. Macedonian nationalist groups on both sides of the political spectrum took pains to assure authorities, and the communities in which they lived, that they were themselves patriotic Americans and Canadians. The post-WWII writings of Hannah Arendt, among others, opened a window on the similarities between nationalism and totalitarianism on the left and the right. The salient point here is that nationalist feelings can be, and have been, stoked by regimes from across the traditional political spectrum. See Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harvest Books, 1973).

conditions through collective action. While some migrants joined strikes and participated in clashes with police and strikebreakers, the overwhelming majority stuck with their original mission of *pečalba* - earning money abroad and returning home to increase the family larder. Thus, prior to the 1920s relatively few sojourners saw attacking the inequities of capitalism as in their own economic interest. But with the seismic effect of the Russian Revolution, the shift of these migrants from sojourners to settlers after WWI, and the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, labor activism, and the leftist politics that often accompanied it, began to hold allure. As grueling work and humiliating treatment began to look like a long-term prospect, fewer immigrant workers seemed willing to pay the price.⁷

Nor did the economic considerations of Macedonian immigrants exist in isolation from the broader question about Macedonian identity debated in the settler communities, or the political stirrings in Europe. The establishment of the Soviet Union following the Bolshevik rise to power in Russia in 1917 bolstered groups on the left who hoped to emulate Vladimir Lenin's model elsewhere. Additionally, the Soviet super-state, though multi-ethnic and officially secular, demonstrated the power of Slavic Russia. This proved tempting to various leftist Slavic groups, including Macedonians, who saw the potential that could come from stronger ties to Moscow. In the late-1920s and early-1930s, a number of socialist organizations, such as the Macedonian People's League, formed in

⁷ The concept of the sojourner-to-settler dialectic is common throughout the North American immigration literature of the early twentieth century. With the notable exception of East European Jews, who largely saw their migration as a one-way passage, return to the homeland has been one of the more extraordinary, and misunderstood, immigration phenomena. See Lillian Petroff, *Sojourners and Settlers: The Macedonian Community in Toronto to 1940* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1995); Theodore Saloutos, *Greeks In The United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964); Keith Brown, "Shifty Nations and the Routes of Marginal Identity: A Macedonian Case Study," paper delivered at Association for the Study of Nationalities Annual Conference, Columbia University, April 1999, in author's possession.

the U.S. and Canada.⁸ More significantly, a number of Macedonian and other Slavic Marxist intellectuals became committed to the ideals of pan-Slavic unity that helped create the first Yugoslavia after WWI. Identifying Macedonia as home to a distinct Slavic people was a key part of their platform. And a number of thinkers, such as George Pirinsky, a Macedonian activist in America, and Bulgarian Communist George Dimitrov, began to talk about a Slavic state for Macedonians within such a plan.⁹

Irreconcilable Differences: Two Routes to Macedonian Independence

It would be incorrect to suggest that the right wing version of Macedonian nationalism, exemplified by the IMRO in the Balkans and the MPO in North America, called for Macedonian independence while Macedonian leftists did not. In fact, one consistent theme across the temporal and political span of Macedonian nationalist historiography was the need for Macedonians to control a political entity of their own. The consensus broke down, however, over who should, and should not, be included within the ideal Macedonian state. These disputes may seem like the narcissism of small differences, but each dispute grew out of a tenacious struggle over such basic elements of nationality as language, region, economic, and geography.

The MPO and IMRO wanted to establish a Macedonian nation that would, at a minimum, reunite the portions of the Macedonian region that Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria gained at the end of the Balkan Wars in 1913. The final product would be a

⁸ See Andrew Rossos, "Macedonianism and Macedonian Nationalism on the Left," *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe*; George Pirinsky, *Slavic Americans in the Fight For Victory and Peace* (New York, American Slav Congress, 1946), 13.

⁹ The Soviet Union supported such a pan-Slavic strategy as a solution to the perennial weakness of the Balkan region. Their idea was recycled: intellectuals had been pushing for a sovereign pan-Slavic federation to replace the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires since the late nineteenth century.

ethnically-mixed nation where the majority group would call itself Macedonian, but maintain a Bulgarian ethnic identity. The Bulgarian language and Bulgarian Orthodox Church would predominate, and the latter organization would help resist Bolshevism, socialism, or any other brand of leftist ideology. Though officially a neutral “Switzerland of the Balkans,” the Macedonian state envisioned by the MPO and IMRO would be conservative and maintain close ties to Sofia, the Bulgarian capital. The main foreign policy goal of the state would be to ensure that Athens and Belgrade played no role in Macedonia’s affairs. Goče Delchev, the IMRO hero killed while planning the *Illinden* uprising, would be the national hero.

When leftists like George Pirinsky, George Dimitrov, and Metodi Andonov-Čento began to outline their Macedonian counter-narrative in the 1930s and 1940s, nearly every aspect of it horrified MPO and IMRO leaders. The left believed that the Bulgarian portion of the former Macedonian region, now under the sway of the IMRO “terrorists” and “fascists” posed the most significant barrier to Macedonian freedom. The leftists wanted to align a Macedonian state with her “natural” allies – the various Slavic Balkan states – under progressive leadership that would honor peasants and help propel the workingman’s revolution into the Balkans and beyond. Even though different states would cultivate different ethnic identities, these identities would remain secondary to a broader pan-Slavic identity. As part of a longer-term Communist dream, Macedonians in Greece and Bulgaria would eventually join with those currently in Serbia (who were presumably more familiar with Marxism). The rest of Greece and Bulgaria would, too, come under Marxist rule (though not as part of Yugoslavia) as the ideology spread. The Soviet Union would serve as the ideal for this grand project.

Until the 1930s, the MPO's version of Macedonian nationalism went largely unchallenged. The Macedonian Political Organization had played a critical role in organizing Macedonians across North America after its founding in 1922 by promoting itself as a patriotic, democratic, and anti-Communist organization devoted to the peaceful resolution of the Macedonian Question in the Balkans. The MPO also maintained its respect for the Bulgarian Orthodox Church (which allowed Bulgarians and Macedonians to worship in the Bulgarian language), and for the IMRO (which fought both Communism and Greek and Serbian mistreatment of Macedonians in their countries).

But the MPO's organizational superiority masked a serious limitation: as left-wing ideologies such as socialism and Pan-Slavism became more popular among Eastern European migrants in the U.S. and Canada, the MPO's embrace of the anti-Bolshevik IMRO fighters and its hostility to socialism and labor activism made it seem inflexible and anti-modern in the eyes of some Macedonians abroad. Even though both the left and right-wing factions of the Macedonian political world desired some form of Macedonian republic, the MPO's continued refusal to acknowledge a distinct Macedonian nationality, or even publish the *Macedonian Tribune* in a Macedonian regional dialect, and not standard Bulgarian, alienated an increasing number of migrants.¹⁰

The German occupation of the Balkans that began in 1941 intensified greatly the appeal of left-wing pan-Slavism among Macedonians around the world. Bulgaria and many within the IMRO supported the Axis because of their hatred for Bolshevism. Many Macedonians would never forgive the Bulgarians or IMRO for this. Several thousand Macedonian fighters from both sides of the Greece-Serbia border, as well as some who

¹⁰ James Saunders, interview with author, March 22, 2003.

had returned from North America, fought as *Partisan* guerrillas against the occupation, joining forces with Josef Broz Tito and the Serbian army. Their participation paid dividends once Germany was defeated and Tito had free reign in the western Balkans. Unlike the post-WWI period, when the portion of Macedonia that Serbia had gained after the Balkan Wars was renamed “South Serbia” and treated brutally, Macedonian assistance in defeating the Axis helped earn Macedonia a position as the sixth republic in the new Yugoslav federation when it was formed in 1944.¹¹

Shifting Left: George Pirinsky and the New Macedonian Ideal

If Stoyan Christowe’s life and work serve as a useful metaphor for the first two decades of Macedonian migration abroad, George Pirinsky serves this purpose for the interwar and WWII years. Though every bit Christowe’s equal as a chronicler of the Macedonian experience in the new world, Pirinsky harbored none of Christowe’s love for American capitalism. Pirinsky was hostile to the middle class values of his predecessor and instead sought to hitch a new vision of Macedonian nationalism to pan-Slavism and socialism, views that became more popular among Macedonians in the diaspora during Pirinsky’s time in America. While his ideal of Macedonian identity proved popular, even durable, his broader political views made him a pariah in an American political climate heading in a decidedly different direction.¹²

¹¹ See Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History* (New York: Modern Library, 2000), 120-123; Glenny, *The Balkans*, 483-495.

¹² See Stoyan Christowe, *My American Pilgrimage* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1947); Stoyan Christowe, *The Eagle and the Stork* (New York: Harper’s Magazine Press, 1976). On Pirinsky, see especially George Pirinsky, *Slavic Americans in the Fight For Victory and Peace*.

George Pirinsky arrived in the port of New York City on August 1, 1923, one day shy of the twentieth anniversary of the start of the *Ilinden* violence.¹³ Born in the town of Bansko Petrick in western Bulgaria, Pirinsky considered himself to be ethnically Macedonian, though at various points in his career he advertised his Bulgarian roots or his Slavic heritage when it strengthened the argument he was making at the time. He had just completed high school in Bulgaria when Prime Minister Aleksander Stamboliiski was assassinated in 1923, and was 21 when he arrived in New York City. As it was for many involved in the struggle for Macedonian rights, the prime minister's assassination was a decisive moment that prompted Pirinsky to reject the IMRO and its allies on the political right and embrace the socialist left.¹⁴ Pirinsky already had associated himself with Bulgarian populist and leftist intellectual circles and had denounced the right-leaning government in Bulgaria.¹⁵

Pirinsky soon married the Russian-born activist Mary Prihodoff, who took his surname and shared his radical politics. Following his arrival in New York, Pirinsky moved to the American Midwest, a hotbed of Slavic political activism, and spent over a decade working both as a laborer and labor organizer in various companies and cities with sizable Macedonian and Bulgarian populations: the American Car and Foundry

¹³ Various sources list a number of different dates for Pirinsky's entry into America, though the August 1, 1923 date seems most likely. Also, Pirinsky's last name often is spelled "Pirinski," though the more common spelling will be used here. Pirinsky himself used numerous aliases during his time in America.

¹⁴ Memo from C.E. McKillips, investigator, House Un-American Activities Committee, to Louis J. Russell, senior investigator, March 29, 1949, National Archives, Record Group 233, George Pirinsky file; Hearing Transcript, "Communist Activities Among Aliens and National Groups," U.S. Congress Subcommittee on Immigration and Naturalization, June 8, 1949, National Archives, Record Group 233, George Pirinsky file.

¹⁵ Around the time of his migration abroad, Pirinsky began using that particular surname to indicate his hailing from the "Pirin" region of Macedonia, which Bulgaria had annexed in 1913. George Pirinsky previously used the names George Nicoloff and George Bretloff. See Memo from C.E. McKillips, investigator, House Un-American Activities Committee, to Louis J. Russell, senior investigator, March 29, 1949, National Archives, Washington, DC, Record Group 233, George Pirinsky file.

Company in Madison, Illinois; the Messabi Mineral Association in Hibbing, Minnesota; and the public water department in Pontiac, Michigan. During this time, Pirinsky became aware of the growing size and influence of Slavs in the U.S. and Canada. By one estimate their numbers in the U.S. alone reached 15,000,000 in the 1940s. He also developed a reputation as being passionate, arrogant, and grandiose.¹⁶

In 1930 Pirinsky founded the Macedonian People's League, or MPL, (sometimes called the Macedonian-American People's League) while living in Pontiac. He became the group's first and only national secretary, a title he held until 1949. The organization produced relatively little in the way of literature but sometimes aired its views – essentially Pirinsky's views – in a Communist-influenced newspaper published in Detroit, Michigan, *Narodna Volya* (the *People's Will*). The MPL held a firm belief in the existence of a distinct Macedonian *narod*, or people. “The basic error,” Pirinsky wrote, “of all previous attempts to solve the Macedonian problem lies in the fact that the desire and struggle of the Macedonian people for freedom and national independence was completely ignored, with dire consequences for the peace of the Balkans.”¹⁷ Within a few years, Pirinsky began writing for socialist and Communist-influenced periodicals, including the *Daily Worker* and the *National Republic*. Additionally, he maintained extensive contacts abroad with members of the Soviet, Yugoslav, and Bulgarian Communist parties. Though various Macedonian leftist groups had formed in the U.S.

¹⁶ Russell memo; Russell March 9, 1949 memo; *The American-Slav*, vol. 5 no. 1, (American Slav Congress: New York), 3; Memo from J. Edgar Hoover to Jack D. Neal, Chief, State Department Division of Foreign Activity Correlation, August 24, 1948, National Archives, Record Group 233, George Pirinsky file.

¹⁷ George Pirinsky and Smeale Voydanoff, “Free Macedonia Will Strengthen Democracy in the Balkans: Memorandum on the Macedonian Question,” pamphlet, (Detroit: Macedonian People's League, n.d.).

and Canada over the years, none became popular or popularized the left-wing agenda in North American Macedonian or Slavic communities. Pirinsky sought to change that.¹⁸

The MPL never grew much beyond 500 members scattered across several Great Lakes Cities in the U.S. and Canada. The League established a Canadian chapter in Toronto, which gave it a measure of transnational credibility, yet the chapter never achieved the influence there that the MPO enjoyed.¹⁹ Still, the organization provided Pirinsky a platform from which he could make his pronouncements about Macedonia. The importance of Pirinsky's claim about Macedonian uniqueness was not lost on left-leaning Macedonians in the diaspora, and on many of the Yugoslav Macedonians who began hearing it from their own officials. If Macedonians were a Slavic people who were only now being "awakened," then the criticism that there never had been a Macedonian *narod* would carry less weight.



Figure 14. George Pirinsky, from a 1948 American Slav Congress brochure.

¹⁸ Hearing Transcript, "Communist Activities Among Aliens and National Groups," U.S. Congress Subcommittee on Immigration and Naturalization, June 8, 1949, National Archives, Record Group 233, George Pirinsky file, 184 and 187; Publications list prepared for Senate Hearing, National Archives, Record Group 233, George Pirinsky file.

¹⁹ Publications list prepared for Senate Hearing, National Archives, Record Group 233, George Pirinsky file.

The widest audience for George Pirinsky's views coalesced not through the Macedonian People's League, but via the American Slav Congress (ASC), an organization which he helped organize in the mid-1930s.²⁰ A loose coalition of Slavic membership, fraternal, mutual aid, and political organizations, the ASC held political rallies and banquets, sold low-cost life insurance, held unionization drives, and coordinated its work with the CPUSA.²¹ George Pirinsky played a key role in aligning both the American Slav Congress and the Macedonian People's League with the International Workers Order, and by extension, the Communist Party of the USA (CPUSA). There does not appear to have been a strong connection between Pirinsky and the large leftist coalition of unions, the Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO). Though some of the groups affiliated with the ASC were likely active with the CIO, Pirinsky's own rhetoric favored international politics over union politics.²²

As the ASC sharpened its anti-fascist, pro-Slav views, its ability to draw a crowd grew. Also, the pro-America patriotism espoused by the ASC and MPL grew after 1935 (a response to the Comintern's Popular Front policy). Its patriotism and hatred of

²⁰ The Macedonian People's League was actually one of several leftist Macedonian organizations to grow out of the Depression years. In 1934, the Macedonian-Canadian National Union formed with similar views to the Macedonian People's League on Macedonian independence and a disdain for the MPO's politics. Several years later a new socialist group, the Canadian-Macedonian Youth League formed to protest what they called the "bloody ideologies" and "criminal leaders" of the MPO. Canada remained a warmer climate for left-leaning thought throughout the 1940s and early years of the Cold War, but actually took a back seat to the U.S. as the hotbed of Macedonian socialist and Communist activity until at least the 1960s. Biographical material on Spero Vasileff-Tupurkovski; *The Macedonian Canadian*, Fall 1958, 6.

²¹ These organization included the International Workers Order (IWO) and often were affiliated with or fronts for, the Communist Party of the USA (CPUSA) or the Soviet Third International (or Comintern).

²² The American Slav Congress was affiliated with the International Workers Order (IWO), a communist organization that maintained "nationality bureaus" around the U.S under the leadership of Max Bedacht, a friend of Pirinsky's. Federal Bureau of Investigation, George Pirinsky Papers, File De 100-252, Report of August 15, 1943; Author's correspondence with Prof. Robert Szymczak, Pennsylvania State University, August 2002, in author's possession.

fascism even became a part of the Congress' founding myths. To wit, the ASC held a dinner at Detroit's Masonic Temple in December 1941, ostensibly to sell defense bonds. United States Attorney General Francis Biddle was the speaker and announced to the crowd of 1200 that, "a few hours earlier our country was attacked at Pearl Harbor." In response, the ASC decided retroactively to use Pearl Harbor Day as the symbolic date of its birth, though it had already been active for several years.²³

The ASC described its first national congress six months later as "an occasion loaded with destiny," in which congregants gathered under a banner reading, "American Slavs United for Victory."²⁴ The following year, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes addressed 7000 men and women of Slavic heritage in Pittsburgh at the Congress' second annual conference. That same year, Senator Claude Pepper spoke to an estimated 15,000 Chicago Slavs in Pilsen Park, named for the Czech brewing town.²⁵ Side by side in front of the podium, facing the speakers and not the crowd, were portraits of Josef Tito and President Franklin D. Roosevelt. At least until the start of the Cold War, the ASC

²³ In the mid-1930s, the CPUSA eschewed the class-struggle approach to politics, and instead adopted a more collaborative approach to convincing the "bourgeois" elements of society of the superiority of their views. As their membership soared, the so-called "Popular Front" strategy put pressure on a range of leftist labor and intellectual organizations to modulate their anti-Americanism in the face of a mounting fascist threat in Europe. See John Patrick Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1973), 172-174.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 6-8.

²⁵ Though the ASC drew crowds to public events, far fewer individuals participated in more intense ways. An FBI informant named Dr. Tsvetco Anastasoff told the Bureau that Pirinsky tried unsuccessfully to organize in Homestead and McKees Rocks, PA, both areas which were bastions of the early Macedonian-Bulgarian settlement. Likewise, Pirinsky found hard going in Buffalo, NY. An unnamed informant who was president of the Prespa Macedonian American Society told the FBI that the Macedonian People's League had been active in Buffalo and Lackawanna for several years but had "never been very strong numerically." And when Pirinsky went to Akron, OH, in the late 1930s, one informant recalled, "He and members of the Macedonian [People's League] attended by PIRINSKY [sic] brought in a load of Communists and negroes. [Name redacted] therefore 'spit in PIRISKY'S [sic] face and walked out.' A fight resulted and three radicals were arrested but PIRINSKY got away." Memo from J. Edgar Hoover to FBI SAC, Detroit, June 23, 1943.

was able to blend successfully its affection for Communism abroad with its professed support for American democracy at home.²⁶

The Left's Enemies: Countering Macedonian "Fascists"

Though he did not usually address the MPO by name, Pirinsky made it clear that its rise in power after 1924 was an affront to his notion of Macedonian national identity, and to Slavic unity and cooperation. He felt that the MPO's connection to IMRO in Bulgaria and Macedonia linked it to fascism in Europe.²⁷ Facing questions from a skeptical Congressional panel years later, Pirinsky addressed a question about the origins of the Macedonian People's League, which formed in 1922:

The main objective of that organization – it was founded in reaction against a situation that existed among Macedonian Americans here. Some Fascist leaders, Macedonians who were living in Bulgaria, came to this country and founded the Macedonian Political Organization, with headquarters in Indianapolis. These people were telling our Americans of Macedonian descent that Hitler will be the one to liberate Macedonia.

Though the MPO was, in fact, not a fascist organization, Pirinsky went on to argue why the MPO's views on Macedonian identity caused him to act on behalf of Macedonians with political views on the left:

[Fascist leaders] were carrying on assassinations of Macedonian progressive leaders. So our organization came into being as a reaction on the part of Macedonian Americans . . . We formed the Macedonian People's League to fight against this policy of fascism that was being injected in the minds of our people.²⁸

²⁶ Ibid., photo insert.

²⁷ In 1956 the MPO changed its name from the Macedonian Political Organization to the Macedonian Patriotic Organization.

²⁸ As the MPO often did, Pirinsky referred to Macedonians as "our people" in an attempt to distance Macedonians from those who claim authority over Macedonians but who do not have their best interests at heart.

Generally, we also support the fight of the Macedonian people for freedom. After the two Balkan wars, Macedonia remained oppressed. It was divided between the three Balkans countries and we felt that whatever moral support can be given here to encourage this people to continue to work for their national independence should be done by us.²⁹

Pirinsky was right to worry about the MPO's influence. IMRO had sent some of its most effective organizers to North America to raise funds and collaborate with top MPO leadership. Given how weak leftists were in Macedonian communities in the early 1930s, Pirinsky feared that the MPO-IMRO partnership would gain the hearts and minds of future Macedonian immigrants and doom the left's chances for realizing its socialist, pan-Slavic vision. Pirinsky first attacked the MPO in 1928 when he organized a committee of Macedonians to coordinate messages, and distribute a socialist newspaper, the *Macedonian Bulletin*, which criticized the MPO for its conservative politics and for opposing the establishment of a sovereign Macedonia.

The growing influence of Slavic organizations that strove for a middle-class niche also worried Slavic nationalists on the left. These "bourgeois" Slavs were in such a hurry to assimilate into mainstream North American culture, Pirinsky argued, they shortchanged the cause of their less fortunate Slavic brethren. It was not the material success *per se* that Pirinsky objected to, but rather the allegiance of the bourgeois Slavs to bourgeois American political and cultural values. Their greatest failure, thought Pirinsky, was in not being progressive at a time when fascism seemed like the most critical threat to the freedom of the world. The popularity in 1939 of a conservative monthly journal,

²⁹ Hearing Transcript, "Communist Activities Among Aliens and National Groups," U.S. Congress Subcommittee on Immigration and Naturalization, June 8, 1949, National Archives, Record Group 233, George Pirinsky file, 185-186. The MPO saw little common ground with the first- and second-generation immigrants the MPL and ASC sought to recruit, and therefore chose to counterattack, claiming that Pirinsky was no progressive idealist but rather a paid communist agent working with other Macedonians to confuse Slavic populations. Christo N. Nizamoff, "1940 Macedonian Almanac Was The Brainchild of Peter G. Atzeff," *Macedonian Tribune*, April 11, 1985.

The American Slav, only strengthened Pirinsky's views that the majority of Slavs were on the wrong side of history.³⁰

The American Slav, published in Pittsburgh, promised to be "100% in our loyalty to America, and 100% in our efforts to instill in the hearts of American Slavs a true pride in their Slavic ancestry." The magazine did not include Macedonians in its list of Slavic groups, and almost never mentioned Macedonians within its pages. Though self-identified Macedonians outnumbered Bulgarians in the U.S., notable Bulgarians received significantly more attention. Issues of *The American Slav* ran photographs of Abraham Lincoln, American GIs, and smiling Caucasian, middle-class couples enjoying the fruits of their success, as well as advertisements from Slavic-American business owners. It also ran a notice, "If you are of Slav origin, you are a member of the largest family of white people on earth. A family of over 225,000,000 Slavs," at least until 1945. Pirinsky regarded the racialized views of the *American Slav* as a weakness, not a strength, and he detested what he labeled as the MPO's bourgeois values.³¹

In his writings, George Pirinsky made clear that the MPL's and ASC's enemies included non-Slavic domestic forces that he saw as aligned with the same mission as European fascists. Arguing that racism was one of fascism's chief evils, Pirinsky railed

³⁰ *The American Slav*, American Slav Publishers, Pittsburgh, PA.

³¹ Pirinsky by this time was increasingly flouting his Communist affiliation by appearing in public with the African-American actor Paul Robeson. Additionally, Pirinsky's American Slav Congress was careful to pay heed to the necessities of American patriotism – especially after the start of Hitler's European advances in 1938 – and repeatedly referred to the American Slav Congress as an anti-fascist rather than a Communist organization. The Congress also took pains to praise President Roosevelt, especially after it became obvious that the U.S. would enter the war against the Axis powers. The Congress invited noted politicians to speak at its dinners, and even included the names of well-known figures like Eleanor Roosevelt and Aaron Copland among its supporters, alongside labor organizers like Max Bedacht and Sidney Hillman. See *The American Slav*, vol. 8 no 1, January 1939, 1, 3; Memo from FBI St. Louis Office, January 10, 1948, FBI George Pirinski file; American Slav Congress, dinner invitation for Leo Krzycki and Zlatko Balakovic, National Archives, Record Group 233, George Pirinsky file.

against the, “K.K.K gangs, the fascist followers of Father Coughlin and Gerald C.K. Smith, the Dies Committee, and the pro-fascist elements among the Slav groups – all were busy sowing distrust and hatred.” The later reference was a thinly veiled attack on the MPO as well as Slavic associations affiliated with the *American Slav* magazine. “The American Slav Congress by its very nature is averse to racial bigotry and prejudice,” Pirinsky declared, echoing not only contemporaneous civil rights leaders like A. Philip Randolph but also the Soviet rhetoric of racial equality, which it used to criticize America’s continued acceptance of racial segregation.³²

Pirinsky’s View of Macedonia’s Future

The MPL and ASC, in conjunction with other Marxist organizations in Europe, set out a vision of Macedonian identity that was notably different than the one expressed by the MPO. The MPO, together with the right-leaning faction of the IMRO, saw Macedonians as an ethnically Bulgarian sub-group who would pledge to support Bulgaria against any incursions by Bolsheviks or leftist intellectuals. Pirinsky’s groups, however, promoted Macedonians as a unique, Slavic nation whose future lay in a federation of Slavic states partially modeled on the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The MPO saw the governments of Serbia and Greece as the greatest immediate threats to Macedonian life. Pirinsky agreed that Greece posed a threat, and outlined it in some detail, but he believed that the Communist Party of Yugoslavia would help ensure Macedonia’s future, and that the rightward tilt of Bulgaria, and of the IMRO, posed the biggest threat to Macedonians.

³² Ibid, 16.

The Soviet Union and Comintern assisted Slavic activists in North America in their efforts to recruit Macedonians away from the MPO. Pirinsky himself maintained a public friendship and correspondence with George Dimitrov, the Bulgarian-born head of the Comintern. In a 1935 article for the *Daily Worker*, Pirinsky cited a letter from Dimitrov about the need for Slavic unity:

Only the united revolutionary struggle of the Macedonian people in close alliance with the workers and peasants of Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Greece can bring to victory the Macedonian revolution for liberation. Only the Soviet system, as the experiences of the great Soviet Union glaringly proved, can guarantee final national liberation and complete national unification.³³

Prior to 1948, when Yugoslavia officially broke with Moscow, both the MPL and ASC in North America, and a number of Communist-run groups in the Balkans such as *Makedonski Narodni Pokret*, or the Macedonian Popular Movement, operated under the direction of the Comintern. In 1934, the Comintern had declared Macedonians to be members of a distinct South Slavic ethnic people. Armed with this declaration, both Pirinsky and various Communist journalists in the Balkans began to decry the earlier assassinations of several leftist leaders like Dimo Hadzhi Dimov and Aleksander Stamboliiski.³⁴

In another sign of coordination between Macedonian leftists in the Balkans and in North America, Pirinsky and Communist officials in Yugoslavia harshly criticized both the MPO in America and the IMRO in Bulgaria. Macedonian Communists charged that the hated IMRO leader Ivan Mihailoff had abandoned Macedonians by taking IMRO to

³³ Investigation notes on George Pirinsky, National Archives, Record Group 233, George Pirinsky file.

³⁴ Institute of National History, *A History of the Macedonian People* (Skopje: Macedonian Review Editions, 1979), 383-388.

the political right, and had exported his right-wing ideology by dispatching one of his agents, Jordan Chkatroff, to the United States for the purposes of organizing the MPO.³⁵

The entry of the United States into WWII in 1941 had raised hopes among American Slavic leaders that the United States and the Soviet Union would soon be fighting together against fascism. They believed that a U.S.-Soviet partnership would benefit all Slavs in America, and popularize the notion of pan-Slav brotherhood. Most American Slav Congress members were anti-fascists and, following the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, supported the Allied assault on Germany and Japan. Until the end of the war, the ASC saw no conflict between its anti-fascist, pro-Soviet feelings and its support for U.S. foreign policy.³⁶ According to Pirinsky, Americans, Soviets, and other Slavs all suffered German bombings together: “Death from the skies has not discriminated between Poles, Russians, Byelorussians, Ukrainians, Carpatho-Ukrainians, Czechs, Slovaks, Croats, Serbs, Slovenes, Macedonians, Bulgarians, and others, nor between races, colors, or creeds. Irrespective of individuals, it grinds to bits all those with whom it comes in contact.”³⁷

The ASC’s pre-1945 vision was an idealistic tableau that mixed American-Soviet cooperation, Slavic unity, and sadness for those in the diaspora being cut off from suffering in the homeland. It was a potent mix that drew support during wartime, but which became less attractive as U.S.–Soviet relations soured after the war. For a time, the American patriotism had seemed genuine; the ASC held war bond drives to help

³⁵ Ibid., 260-297.

³⁶ This accommodationist brand of socialism is often associated with the “Popular Front” movement at this time. See Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left*, 172-173.

“buy” a bomber plane in New York and hold a Christening for a tank in Detroit. But the pro-America stance ended with the war; the ASC had become more critical of Roosevelt when his relations with Josef Stalin soured after 1944.³⁸ And when a wave of anti-Communist politics swept the country in 1946, and ushered in the Cold War, the ASC found itself an isolated target of the U.S. government.³⁹

Still, Pirinsky would not be silenced, turning his attention to the harsh treatment of Slavic Macedonians in Northern Greece during the Greek Civil War of 1945-1949. In a treatise, *Greek Terror in Aegean Macedonia*, Pirinsky charged that the Greek royalist government of King George II and Prime Minister Constantine Tsaldaris had systematically persecuted, tortured, and killed thousands of Macedonian-speaking Slavs during the civil war in Greece.⁴⁰ The factual basis for Pirinsky’s charge was valid, though his treatise was one-sided and did not address at all the often-brutal treatment of ordinary Greek and Macedonian villagers by the Greek Communist forces, *EAM-ELAS*. Nevertheless, by addressing the plight of Slavic Macedonians in Northern Greece, Pirinsky broadened the population that he and other leftists hoped to unite in an

³⁷ Greeting from the American Slav Congress to Marshal Joseph Stalin and the Soviet People, Decisions of the National Conference, January 21-22, 1944, Pittsburgh, PA, ASC papers, Tamiment Library, New York University.

³⁸ *Ibid.*; The Congress later stated that it supported Roosevelt’s policies as it began to come under fire from U.S. Congressional investigators.

³⁹ Investigation notes on George Pirinsky, National Archives, record Group 233, George Pirinsky file; Memo from C.E. McKillips, investigator, House Un-American Activities Committee, to Louis J. Russell, senior investigator, March 29, 1949, National Archives, Record Group 233, George Pirinsky file

⁴⁰ Macedonian People’s League, *Greek Terror in Aegean Macedonia: A Threat To World Peace and Security* (New York, 1947).

autonomous Macedonian nation. The MPO had been much slower to explicitly include the Aegean Macedonians as Slavic brothers.⁴¹

The Impact of a Leftist Macedonian Nationalism

What then was Pirinsky's, and by extension the MPL's and ASC's, contributions to the development of Macedonian national identity? The historical record paints a mixed picture of Pirinsky's influence. Even the federal officials who followed him disagreed.⁴² Near the end of Pirinsky's time in America, J. Edgar Hoover notified the State Department's Division of Foreign Activity Correlation, as well as the director of the CIA and the chief of intelligence for the U.S. Army, of Pirinsky's communist organizing. "Pirinsky stated he personally represented the Macedonians in the United States who are in accord with European Macedonia, that is, those under Bulgarian and Yugoslav flags," said the FBI. However an informant rejected the notion that Pirinsky ever gained such influence, claiming, "the largest portion of the Macedonian colony in the United States is certainly not in sympathy with Pirinsky. . . [They] are desirous of becoming disassociated

⁴¹ By no means did all of those migrants from northern Greece, or "Aegean Macedonia," align themselves with the existing Slavic Macedonian and Bulgarian communities in North America. The Pan-Macedonian Association of the U.S.A. and Canada, which formed in 1937, prided itself on hailing from the Macedonian region as an important component of their *Greek* heritage. In the post-WWII years, the Pan-Macedonian Association was perhaps the most forceful proponent in North America of the view that to be Macedonian is, *ipso facto*, to be Greek. The Pan-Macedonian Association is still active in North America, and represents a politically active factor in the Greek-American and Greek-Canadian population. See 25th *Anniversary Program*, Aliakmon Chapter, Pan-Macedonian Association of the U.S.A. and Canada, Macedonian collection, Balch Library, Philadelphia, PA.

⁴² A brief biographical sketch contradicts the notion that Pirinsky was wholly devoted to the socialist cause. An anonymous informant told the FBI Detroit Division in 1944 that, "PIRINSKY [sic] is well developed politically in Communism and has a good education in Bulgarian. He is essentially intellectual; is highly bureaucratic, a bit arrogantly nationalistic and Communistically fanatical. He is, like most Communist leaders, more interested in power and position rather than doing any real service for the cause. He is suspicious of everything American, Communist or non-Communist. He thinks that the Macedonians assisted perhaps by the Bulgarians will make a revolution," Federal Bureau of Investigation, File De 100-252, Report of August 15, 1943, George Pirinsky file.

from Yugoslav and Greek rule and desire to be more closely associated with a non-Communist Bulgarian nation.⁴³ The secondary sources that do mention him portray him as rather ineffectual: a radical provocateur fighting a rearguard battle against the “bourgeois” Slavic immigrants who read mainstream ethnic papers like *Naroden Glas* and *The American Slav*.⁴⁴

But while Pirinsky did not invent leftist Macedonian nationalism, his writings and organizations helped prepare the Macedonian diaspora for the ultimate success of a leftist vision of Macedonian national identity. Pirinsky blended various strains of Macedonian history, victimization, pan-Slavic ideology, and Communist dogma into a narrative that appealed to Macedonians and other Slavs who shared two qualities: hatred of European fascism, and frustration with American social inequality. And by explicitly including Aegean Macedonians in this vision, he anticipated the reality that these Macedonians, too, would be amenable to an anti-MPO, anti-Bulgarian, brand of Macedonianism. Pirinsky turned his trial and deportation in 1951 into a referendum on America’s, and the international community’s, willingness to sympathize with a long-suffering Macedonian nation. Perhaps one measure of Pirinsky’s success was that despite the sharply anti-Communist climate in the United States (and to a lesser extent Canada) in the late 1940s and 1950s, the view that Macedonians deserved inclusion in a federation of South Slavic states did not seem particularly radical or controversial by 1960. In this sense, Pirinsky’s views carried the day.

⁴³ Memo from J. Edgar Hoover to Jack D. Neal, Chief, State Department Division of Foreign Activity Correlation, August 24, 1948, National Archives, Record Group 233, George Pirinsky file.

⁴⁴ Nikolay Altankov, *The Bulgarian – Americans*, 62-70.

Additionally, several subsequent national histories of the Macedonian people credit Pirinsky for moving the diaspora toward what became the Yugoslav vision of Macedonian identity, and for fleshing out a progressive theory of that identity.⁴⁵ One such history, *Spomeni za Nacionalnata, Politichkata, y Kulturata Dejnost Na Makedončite vo CAD I Kanada* (*The National, Political, and Cultural Memories of the Macedonians in the U.S. and Canada*), a Macedonian-language memoir by Atanas Bliznakov, notes Pirinsky's accomplishments in North America and even reproduces an MPL pamphlet from the 1940s, *Free Macedonia Will Strengthen Democracy in the Balkans*.⁴⁶ More importantly, an official history of the Macedonians published by the government-run Institute for National History in Skopje in 1979 credits the Macedonian People's League with uncovering as early as 1934, a "Marxist basis for the thesis of the existence of a separate Macedonian nation." The MPL document in question, which Pirinsky almost certainly wrote, claimed Macedonians "are neither Serbs, Greeks nor Bulgarians but a separate Macedonian nation which is fighting for its national liberation and separation in to its own Macedonian state."⁴⁷

Yugoslav state historians, as well as authors published by state-controlled presses, in other words, have credited the work of a diaspora group – the Macedonian People's

⁴⁵ See, for instance, Atanas Bliznakov, *Spomeni za Nacionalnata, Politichkata, y Kulturata Dejnost Na Makedončite vo CAD I Kanada* (Skopje: Kultura, 1987), 113; Institute of National History, *A History of the Macedonian People*, 219-388. There are two likely causes of Pirinsky's absence from contemporary Macedonian literature. First, Pirinsky returned to Bulgaria after his deportation, a Soviet satellite out of favor with Yugoslavia after Yugoslavia's break with Moscow in 1948. Second, much of the Macedonian nationalist literature produced in Skopje after 1944 perpetuated the notion that feelings of Macedonian nationality were latent in the people of Macedonia, awaiting only the nurturing of a strong leader like Tito to bring them to the surface. As such, the role of the diapora received less exposure than it was due.

⁴⁶ Bliznakov, *Spomeni za Nacionalnata, Politichkata, y Kulturata Dejnost Na Makedončite vo CAD I Kanada*, 113.

⁴⁷ Institute of National History, *A History of the Macedonian People*, 296.

League headed by George Pirinsky – with helping delineate a rationale for the development of the Macedonian state and nation. Granting such credit is rare within a Macedonian national history text from the Yugoslav era, and testifies to the importance of the diaspora in modern Macedonia.⁴⁸ Pirinsky also paved the way for Macedonians in North America to support Yugoslavia after its formation in 1944. By the late 1940s, groups like the Macedonian People’s League and the American Slav Congress had strengthened pan-Slavic ideals among Macedonian emigrants. New organizations such as the United Committee of South Slavic Americans then began to encourage Macedonian immigrants to donate clothing, bedding, books, food, and money to alleviate the post-war suffering of their compatriots. As well, a medical clinic in the Macedonian capital of Skopje, often referred to as the “American hospital,” opened soon after the war because of support from the diaspora.⁴⁹ The United Committee of South-Slavic Americans referred to Macedonia as “the birthplace of Alexander the Great and of the brothers St. Cyril and Methodius, who gave the Slavs their own script.” The Committee blamed “fascists” in Serbia and Bulgaria and ultra-nationalists (often the same thing, they felt) for their ongoing attempts to lay claim to Macedonian land. The only answer, the Committee argued, was for Macedonia to become emancipated of its historical burden by the coming “people’s liberation struggle.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Statement by Sava Kosanovich, Yugoslav Ambassador to the United States to UN Security Council, December 10, 1946, quoted in Macedonian People’s League, *Greek Terror in Aegean Macedonia: A Threat To World Peace and Security* (New York, 1947), National Archives, Record Group 233, George Pirinsky file, 20-32; George Pirinsky, *Slavic Americans in the Fight for Victory and Peace* (New York: American Slav Congress, undated).

⁴⁹ Anonymous, “Macedonians,” *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, ed. Stephan Thernstrom (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 693.

⁵⁰ Sreten Z. Crni, “The Macedonian Problem,” in *The Bulletin of the United Committee of the South-Slavic Americans*, v2, n6, June 20, 1944, Macedonian collection, Balch Library, Philadelphia, PA.

Certainly, the FBI worried a great deal about Pirinsky's influence. Beginning in the late 1930s it began assembling a dossier on his activities that grew to over 1000 pages.⁵¹ Investigators from the House Un-American Activities Committee and the Senate Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Immigration and Naturalization also took up the case and began assembling biographical information on Pirinsky and a bibliography of his writings.⁵² The House and Senate investigators independently concluded that despite claims of patriotism, the American Slav Congress served as a front organization for the Soviet Communist Party.⁵³ In May 1948 U.S. Attorney General Tom C. Clark put the American Slav Congress on the list of organizations that the government found to be "totalitarian, fascist, communist or subversive." Four months later, officials moved against Pirinsky. On September 23, as he was preparing for the fourth conference of the American Slav Congress at Chicago's Stevens Hotel, federal officials arrested him, accusing him of having "affiliated with the Communist Party after his entry into this country, in violation of the immigration statutes."⁵⁴

⁵¹ Surveillance reports from the FBI referred to Pirinsky as one of the "highest figures in the Communist Party" and the "Chief Organizer for the [Communist] Party of the Macedonian and Bulgarian elements in this country." Federal Bureau of Investigation, File DE 100-252, Memo from J. Edgar Hoover to FBI SAC, Detroit, June 23, 1943. The American Slav Congress depicted itself as an apolitical organization, as did many political organizations at the time. One of its claims aspirations was uniting Slavic Americans and native-born Americans "to free to the world of neo-Fascist slavery." See American Slav Congress: United For Victory, Decisions of National Conference, New York, 1944, National Archives, records of the U.S. Congress, Record Group 233, George Pirinsky file.

⁵² The FBI dossier on George Pirinsky was declassified in 1987, but was released publicly only after a Freedom of Information Act request by the author in August 2002. The full file, with several pages and hundreds of personal names redacted for personal or security reasons, was released in April 2004 and is in author's possession.

⁵³ Additional materials about George Pirinsky cited in this chapter are from publicly available materials at the National Archives in Washington, DC, and the Tamiment Labor Library at New York University. Thanks are due to Robert Szymczyk of the University of Pennsylvania, Lancaster for his assistance in finding these materials and for recommending the Freedom of Information Act as a means of accessing the FBI files.

⁵⁴ Associated Press, "American Slav Secretary Held As Commie Alien," *Indianapolis Times Herald* (?), Nov 24, 1948, 5; "Arrest Slav Leader as Subversive Agent," *New York Times*, 24 September 1948, 28. It is

The arrest of George Pirinsky sent a ripple throughout the Slavic communities in the United States, and especially among Marxist groups under fire by American authorities. The Indianapolis *Times-Herald* carried the headline “American-Slav Secretary Held As Commie Alien,” and papers in New York, Detroit, Chicago, and Pittsburgh ran stories as well. The American Slav Congress distributed flyers bearing Pirinsky’s photograph and a heading, “Defend George Pirinsky, Stop Deportations!” Pirinsky was released on bond, but the government made clear that they intended to prosecute and deport him as an agent of a foreign government.⁵⁵ George Pirinsky made one last rhetorical stand for Macedonian nationality by claiming that his work for the Macedonian People’s League was intended to “fight against the Macedonian Nazi agents in the United States.”⁵⁶ (There was no evidence that the MPO was affiliated with Nazi party, which had been defeated in May 1945.) A fundraising appeal for Pirinsky’s defense went forth under the auspices of the American Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born.⁵⁷

difficult to say if there was a financial link between the Congress and the Soviets, as investigators suspected. Though for an organization of its size, the Congress carried little money on its official books. A financial statement from 1943 showed receipts of just \$1,476.23 and a balance of \$214.73. Financial Statement of the Secretary of the American Slav Congress from January 1, 1943 to December 31, 1943, Papers of the American Slav Congress, Tamiment Library, New York University.

⁵⁵ Several dozen others were facing the same fate for their radical political views in these years and deportation were common. Within the year, the stakes of the Cold War grew as China fell under Communist rule and the Soviet Union exploded an atomic device years before American intelligence though it could be done. With the U.S. Congress and the FBI, as well as private groups like the John Birch Society, aggressively seeking out – and sometimes imagining – Communist influence in American society the tide turned quickly against radical groups and individuals with Communist ties.

⁵⁶ The claim by Pirinsky that his political enemies in groups like the MPO and at the Slavic Publishing Company in Pittsburgh, PA, were part of a larger Fascist or Nazi movement was an example of the rhetorical overkill that punctuated many of Pirinsky’s public pronouncements. The MPO did favor the Macedonian writer-cum-guerrilla Ivan Mihailoff, who was associated with the right-leaning forces that killed Aleksandar Stamboliiski, but this affection was based far more on Mihailoff’s staunch Macedonian nationalism than on the political milieu in which he lived in the interwar years.

⁵⁷ Some American leaders within the national security establishment felt the government was not sufficiently committed to countering the presence of “Reds” in the U.S. While Pirinsky and others were

In 1949, still fighting deportation, Pirinsky was called to testify before the Senate Subcommittee on Immigration and Naturalization. Under questioning by Senator James O. Eastland of Mississippi about the Macedonian People's League, Pirinsky tried to deflect the notion that he was an agent of the Communist Yugoslav government:

Mr. Arens: What is the purpose or objective of that organization?⁵⁸

Mr. Pirinsky: . . . we support the fight of the Macedonian people for freedom.

Senator Eastland: That is the policy of the Tito government; is it not?

Mr. Pirinsky: That was a long time before we even knew of Tito.

Senator Eastland: Today it is to "liberate" Macedonians; is it not? Is that not the policy of the Russian Government and the policy of Tito?⁵⁹

With public opinion strongly in favor of Department of Justice efforts to remove individuals who they believed sought "the overthrow of the United States by force or violence," Pirinsky lost his appeal.⁶⁰ He was deported on August 2, 1951, probably to Bulgaria, fourteen years after his organizing first put him in contact with law enforcement officials. The officials who deported him almost certainly did not realize it was the anniversary of the *Illinden* uprising, the celebrated Macedonian military defeat at the

awaiting deportation, Senator Herbert O'Connor (D-MD) criticized Secretary of State Dean Acheson for being too lax in arresting and deporting suspected Communists. According to O'Connor, Pirinsky was "the guiding commissar of the American Slav Congress as well as a known member of the Communist party." Clayton Knowles, "Acheson Blamed In Influx of Reds," *New York Times*, 21 September 1949, 19.

⁵⁸ Richard Arens was staff director of the subcommittee.

⁵⁹ Hearing Transcript, "Communist Activities Among Aliens and National Groups," U.S. Congress Subcommittee on Immigration and Naturalization, June 8, 1949, National Archives, Record Group 233, George Pirinsky file, 181

⁶⁰ For a good overview of the political and cultural climate of the post-war United States, see James Gilbert, *Another Chance: Postwar America, 1945-1985* (Chicago: Dorsey Press, 1986), ch. 4, especially 82-83, 97.

hands of the Turks. Pirinsky went to Communist Bulgaria to write, and died there, probably in the 1960s or 1970s.⁶¹

The Yugoslav Project: (Re)Constructing a Macedonian Nation

The banishment of George Pirinsky from North America in 1951 took place as an aggressive program was underway in Yugoslavia to broaden and deepen national identity among residents of the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, as well as the diaspora. The program was nothing less than nation building from the ground up; upon the re-formation of Yugoslavia in 1944, and the establishment of the Macedonian Republic, federal authorities confronted the reality that there was no standardized Macedonian language, and only a latent sense among residents of the Republic that they were anything other than Bulgarians, Greeks, non-national Slavic-speaking Christians, Albanian-speaking Moslems, or one of any other number of minority ethnicities. Despite almost two decades of Communist advocacy for a Macedonian nation, there was only a scant sense that residents of the new Republic of Macedonia would, if pressed, rally behind the idea of themselves as ethnic Macedonians. And many of the most influential members of the Macedonian diaspora, such as those affiliated with the MPO, continued to deny there was a distinct Macedonian ethnicity. The work of pro-Macedonian advocates Pirinsky and Krste Misirkov still had not captured the imagination of the peasant masses inhabiting the broader Macedonian region.⁶²

⁶¹ Nikolay Altankov, *The Bulgarian – Americans* (Palo Alto, Ragusan Press, 1979, 67; Georgi Pirinski, *Kakvo Vidiakh I Prezhiviakh v Amerika: Spomeni 1923 – 1951* (Sofia, Bulgaria, 1970).

⁶² Today, Macedonian nationalists blame the lack of a popular Macedonian ethnic identity during these years to the division of Macedonia after the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, and the forced assimilation policies of the victor countries. Today's Republic of Macedonia conforms almost exactly to the Yugoslav republic of Macedonia. The Republic represents only about a third of the former size of the Macedonian region.

The promotion of a unique Slavic, Christian Macedonian national identity became an express goal of Josef Broz Tito's Belgrade-based socialist Yugoslav regime, and went hand in hand with support for development of a unique Macedonian literary language.⁶³ Tito feared that the center of his Slavic federation would not hold if any element within Yugoslavia grew too powerful – the Serbian Church, or Croatian or Albanian nationalists, for instance. The success with his multiethnic federation required the creation of a state in which all groups had a stake, in which dissent was dealt with quickly and often harshly, and in which interest groups each felt they had a connection to Tito and to his inner circle of hand-picked leaders. Granting Macedonia republic status would at least partially satisfy the long-held Macedonian nationalist goal of a Macedonian state, while retaining for Belgrade final say over Macedonian political matters.⁶⁴

One of Tito's accomplishments was keeping the Yugoslav state from factionalizing along ethnic and religious lines.⁶⁵ Rather than outlaw displays of nationalism or religion through police state tactics and mass relocations, like the Soviet Union had done, Tito encouraged both the cultivation and display of ethnicity as

⁶³ The literature on Tito is slim given the significant role he played in twentieth century European politics. See Richard West, *Tito and the Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1996); Milovan Djilas, *Tito: The Story from Inside* (London: Phoenix Press, 2001).

⁶⁴ Despite the relative openness of Tito's Yugoslavia when compared with Stalin's Soviet Union, repression and purges of dissidents were common. According to the MPO, Jordan Chkharoff, the IMRO official who helped organize the MPO in North America in the 1920s, was tortured to death by Tito's agents in 1946 in Macedonia. See Dr. George Phillipou, "The MPO Story: a 75 Year Campaign for an Independent Macedonia," MAK-NEWS listserv, April 18, 1993.

⁶⁵ Spanning the Balkan Peninsula, the super-state encompassed diverse peoples, beliefs and geographies ranging from Orthodox Christians in land-locked Macedonia to Catholic Croatians along the Austrian, Italian and Adriatic coasts. Itself an experiment in nation building, it was another in a series of multiethnic states (like the U.S.S.R., Iraq, and Indonesia) that were assembled by fiat and coercion so as to join multiple continuous groups into a single political unit.

fundamental component of Yugoslav social and political life.⁶⁶ Though the 1946 Yugoslav constitution was similar to the Soviet one in many respects, it differed significantly by sanctioning organized religion rather than driving it underground. Though the power of Orthodox and Catholic clerics was diminished (at least until a period of religious liberalization in Yugoslavia in the 1960s), public displays of faith remained common in Yugoslavia. The Belgrade-based government also encouraged feelings of ethnicity among residents of Yugoslavia's six republics, while still maintaining the public's allegiance to the Yugoslav state through iron-fisted central control. Even if many never came to see themselves as ethnically "Yugoslav," few were willing, or able, to reject the entity altogether.⁶⁷

Bureaucracy and Transnational Nation-Building

In the years after the Anti-fascist Council for the National Liberation of Macedonia (ASNOM), the conference that created the Macedonian Republic in

⁶⁶ A sign of the relative security of the Belgrade leadership was the latitude they permitted its citizens to travel throughout Yugoslavia, Europe and abroad. A stream of emigrants in the 1950 grew rapidly after restrictions were curtailed in 1960, and soon thousands were leaving for Europe, North America and Australia to join family who had left before the war or, increasingly, those who themselves had just entered the booming post-war economies of the Allied nations. In some ways it is tempting to see the post-war migration boom as simply the resumption of the intense migration that took place after 1903. And in fact, many émigrés did have relatives living abroad and it was not uncommon for new migrants to join with family members and branches of extended families from which they had been separated for decades. The re-establishment of those kinship ties help explain the growth of the Macedonian diaspora after 1960.

⁶⁷ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, 288; Glenny, *The Balkans*, ch 8. Tito was able to maintain this balance in large part by keeping a centralized power base in Belgrade and by stocking the various republics and communist party leadership posts with loyal bureaucrats. In Macedonia, those deemed pro-Bulgarian or anti-Belgrade were ruthlessly purged and even executed. Yugoslavia's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact in 1948 left it in preferable situation when compared to the other aligned Eastern Europe states. While still intellectually and politically sympathetic to Soviet-style central planning, after 1948 Yugoslavia had the freedom to experiment with greater openness with its foreign affairs and to permit greater freedoms for its citizens. Strongman Josip Broz Tito is generally credited for Yugoslavia's stability between 1944 and his death in 1980. Over three and a half decades, residents of Yugoslavia enjoyed greater economic mobility and freedom of movement beyond the state's borders than did citizens of the Warsaw Pact nations. It was a relative freedom, to be sure, superior to that enjoyed by Yugoslavia's eastern and central European neighbors, but not an absolute.

Yugoslavia in 1944, party leaders in Belgrade and in the Republic had to address the lack of administrative capacity in Skopje to manage the new Macedonian “nation.” Though some 200,000 people dwelled there, and trade routes dating to Roman times passed through it, Skopje never had been a significant capital city.⁶⁸ Given that Macedonia remained one of the poorer republics in Yugoslavia, money poured in to support the construction of apartments and administrative buildings to house the new ministries, colleges and universities, and legislature for the Republic. At Tito’s urging, the project sought to bring Macedonia up to the level of its Yugoslav counterparts. The costs were steep; according to one estimate, Macedonia was contributing just nine percent of Yugoslavia’s revenues but receiving 28% of its expenditures. By the early 1960s, the city bore the marks of larger European capitals with stone and marble neo-Victorian structures hugging the Vardar River. In the countryside modern hydroelectric plants soon sat alongside poor villages.⁶⁹

The Macedonian Republic needed more than architecture, though, to create an ethnic state. For Yugoslav and Macedonian officials, part of the task of nation-building meant constructing the cultural and intellectual institutions that were common in European capitals. New state-run publishers such as *Kniga* and *Nova Makedonija* created new journals, magazines, and newspapers that paraded a glossy, heroic version of

⁶⁸ During the Ottoman period it played a smaller role in the administrative affairs of Macedonians than did the towns of Bitola and Ohrid. It was, and still is, only a fraction the size of Salonica, the Greek port city on the Aegean, which is often considered the capital of the broader Macedonian region.

⁶⁹ “Tito Wins Macedonians to Regime By Moves To Improve Way of Life,” *New York Times*, 15 May 1953, 8. Tito also understood that he needed to keep Macedonians loyal to the broader Yugoslav project, and not allow their sympathies to be swayed by the Soviet Union, which also had been supportive of an independent Macedonian state.

Macedonian history and culture.⁷⁰ State officials sent copies of these publications to groups in the diaspora that then passed the publications around from person to person after church services and during picnics and dances. Macedonian officials also chartered the University of Sts. Cyril and Methody in Skopje in 1947, which became the training ground for a new generation of Macedonian-educated professionals. The university's doctoral programs began turning out economists, historians, sociologists, and political thinkers steeped in Macedonian literary and cultural traditions, and in the socialist politics practiced by the CPY. Even in naming the university, the new Macedonian state sought to strike a connection to the distant past by drawing on the Slavonic saints of the ninth century whose missionary work had brought them through the Macedonian lands. The government created the Macedonian Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1967 to strengthen the pedigree of its scholars, as well as the Republic Commission for International Cultural Relations.⁷¹

Macedonian and Yugoslav nation-builders lacked an organized means of communicating with the growing diaspora when they assumed power. An increasing number of Macedonians from the Republic began traveling to visit relatives abroad after 1945, sometimes staying permanently. Meanwhile, large numbers of migrant refugees from Aegean Macedonia (many of whom were treated as Communist traitors by the Greek Royalist government), began settling in Macedonia, North America, Eastern Europe, and Australia. Many felt a connection to the Macedonian Republic because of

⁷⁰ Government of the Republic of Macedonia, *The Facts About The Republic of Macedonia* (Skopje, 1997), 35-44; Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict*, ch 3.

⁷¹ Biographical material about Spero Vasileff-Turpukovski, personal collection of Spero Vasileff-Turpukovski, Archive of the Republic of Macedonia (hereafter, Turpukovski papers); On the growth of the Macedonian state, see Dragan Tashkovski, "The Macedonian Nation," *Macedonian Review*, vol. 8 no. 3, 1978, 275-295;

family and cultural connections to villages there.⁷² The government nurtured these connections between the Macedonian nation and the growing diaspora. Formed in the 1950s, the *Matiča na Iseleniците*, or “Queen Bee of the Immigrants,” became a conduit for communications between the Republic and the dozens of far-flung communities around the world where Macedonians had settled. For example, the *Matiča* arranged for charter flights to transport Macedonians from cities such as Detroit and Toronto to Skopje and back. And in 1964, the *Matiča* responded to a lack of books at the University of Sts. Cyril and Methody by coordinating a book collection drive among the migrant communities, which donated books to the library at the fledgling academic institution.⁷³

That the *Matiča* was created at all reflects two broad realities within Yugoslavia and the Macedonian state in the decades after WWII. First, the CPY had to take affirmative measures to encourage and actively support Macedonian identity to serve as a counterweight to Serbian and Croatian power within the state. Second, the diaspora of Macedonians was increasingly seen as a crucial financial, diplomatic, and political resource for the Republic. The CPY made the calculation that engaging the issue of emigration was preferable to simply outlawing or ignoring it. It was a decision that had implications for the Macedonian identity in the later half of the century. When the *Matiča* was formed, Macedonian officials could not have known how events in Yugoslavia and Greece would change the Macedonian diaspora in coming decades.⁷⁴

⁷² In Chapter 6 I explore further the influx of Aegean Macedonian migrants to the diaspora after 1949, and its significance for Macedonian nationalism.

⁷³ Letter from Mitko Zavirovski to *Matiča*, April 14, 1964, *Matiča* papers, Archive of the Republic of Macedonia; Biographical material about Spero Vasileff-Turpukovski, personal collection of Spero Vasileff-Turpukovski, Archive of the Republic of Macedonia, Turpukovski papers.

⁷⁴ A significant portion of the primary research for this chapter took place at the Archive of the Republic of Macedonia in their collection of *Matiča papers*. This observation is based on a review of papers, and on numerous conversations with Macedonian migrants to North America. For a useful, though pro-

Sanctioning the Macedonian Language

Language became a critical piece of the nation-building project. Of the various fault lines in the Balkans, language has long served as an important determinant of group identity. Across the temporal span of the Ottoman Empire, language typically correlated with religion. The Ottomans, as a result, used religion to organize populations into appropriate administrative jurisdictions.⁷⁵ While Yugoslav officials did not place the same importance on religion, they did recognize the power of language to the building the Macedonian republic. Without having an agreed-upon Macedonian literacy language, the Macedonian Republic remained vulnerable to charges that it was somehow “inauthentic.”⁷⁶ Therefore creating an accepted Macedonian literary language was one of the first tasks undertaken by the Anti-Fascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Macedonia in August 1944. The ASNOM participants, led by Macedonian leader Metodi

Macedonian, overview see Michael Radin, “Diaspora: The Tragic Exodus of the Refugee Children [sic] from Aegean Macedonia, 1948,” *Macedonian Review*, no 12, 1990, 68-76.

⁷⁵ Language was one of the motivations for the Ottoman Porte to permit the re-creation of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in 1870, before which time large majorities of Bulgarian speakers had little choice but to worship in Greek churches. Gaining the right to worship in their own language was an important early step that emboldened a small number of elites to exhibit a Macedonian worldview. Because of the re-introduction of the Bulgarian language into religious, and therefore public, affairs, the issue of the dizzying number of dialects within the Bulgarian-Macedonian language continuum came to the fore. Victor I. Friedman, “The First Philological Conference for the Establishment of the Macedonian Alphabet and the Macedonian Literary Language: Its Precedents and Consequences,” in *The Earliest Stage of Language Planning: The First Congress Phenomenon*, Joshua A. Fishman, ed. (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1993), 160-180.

⁷⁶ Critics like Evangelos Kofos argued that there had never been a Macedonian language, and that without commonly accepted historical precedents, attempts at proclaiming a new language would lack legitimacy. In this view, what the Macedonian nationalists and agitators called “Macedonian” was, in fact, a series of Bulgarian dialects from the Lerin, Bitola, and Ohrid regions. Between the westernmost reaches of Macedonia and eastern Bulgaria there existed strong linguistic similarities in grammar and sentence structure, though the alphabet, pronunciation, inflection and usage varied significantly from region to region, and in more mountainous areas, even from village to village. Victor I. Friedman, “The First Philological Conference for the Establishment of the Macedonian Alphabet and the Macedonian Literary Language: Its Precedents and Consequences,” 160-163.

Andonov-Čento, gathered information from intellectuals on the rules, grammar, and vocabulary for the official language.⁷⁷

According to linguist Victor Friedman, the debate over the existence of a Macedonian language separate from Bulgarian and Serbian predates the earliest discussion of Macedonian national identity. Texts written in Slavonic dialects unique to the Macedonian region first appeared in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In the three decades before the formation of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, Macedonian intellectuals such as Dimitar and Konstantin Miladinov published textbooks in what they considered to be a Macedonian language. More political publications followed, such as Krste Misirkov's *On Macedonian Matters* in 1903.⁷⁸ Despite the sense among educators and writers that a Macedonian language existed, little of the debate filtered down to villagers, or among *pečalbari* in North America and Europe, many of whom were illiterate. And these early literary efforts made little impression on ruling elites in Bulgaria, Greece, or Istanbul.

Even in the 1930s, as the MPO gained influence among Macedonians in Canada and the United States, its publications used the Bulgarian language and resisted the notion that a Macedonian language existed apart from it.⁷⁹ Put another way, over a century after the first expressions of a separate Macedonian language, most Macedonians in the

⁷⁷ Čento was purged by the CPY in 1946 for resisting centralized control in Belgrade. Popular outrage to this move signaled that Tito's centralization and plan for ridding Macedonia of pro-Bulgarian sentiments was not a smooth or peaceful process. See Stephen E. Palmer and Robert R. King, *Yugoslav Communism and the Macedonian Question* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1971), 137.

⁷⁸ Krste Misirkov, *On Macedonian Matters* (Sofia: 1903, rpt. Skopje: Macedonian Review Editions, 1974); Victor I. Friedman, "Macedonian Language and Nationalism During the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *Balkanistica: Occasional Papers in Southeast European Studies II*, Kenneth E. Naylor, ed., 1975, 83-98.

⁷⁹ See Horace G. Lunt, *Grammar of the Macedonian Language* (Skopje, 1952), v-xi, 1-8.

diaspora still regarded Bulgarian as their language. This situation persisted even after the Soviet Comintern announced in 1934 that a Macedonian literary language should be a component of a future Macedonian nation.⁸⁰ The lag in the widespread acceptance of the Macedonian language in the Balkans reflected both a lack of interest in it among the masses, and the weakness of Macedonian cultural and political leaders during the interwar years (a reality that gives credence to the dictum by anthropologist Manning Nash that “a language is but a dialect with an army and a navy”).⁸¹

With the establishment of the Macedonian Republic in 1944, interest in a Macedonian literary language soared. The state-controlled press and education system in Macedonia took up the new language quickly. Its widespread use accelerated with the distribution of *Nova Makedonija*, the socialist government daily newspaper that was largely responsible for shaping Macedonian public opinion until a free press emerged in the early 1990s.⁸² Correspondence between Macedonians abroad and the government and Church authorities in Macedonia soon reflected the change. Publications written in literary Macedonian soon were mailed to priests and officers in church communities abroad.⁸³

⁸⁰ Victor I. Friedman, “Macedonian Language and Nationalism During the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” 94.

⁸¹ Manning Nash, *The Cauldron of Ethnicity in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), quoted in Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict*, 67.

⁸² The so-called “first conference” at which these linguistic issues were settled took place after the Germans left Skopje in November 1944. Fourteen academics attended the conference, including the esteemed writer Blaze Koneški. Following a short deliberative process, the group published the outlines of an accepted literary language from which they had removed many Serbian, Bulgarian, and Turkish usages. Victor I. Friedman, “The First Philological Conference for the Establishment of the Macedonian Alphabet and the Macedonian Literary language: Its Precedents and Consequences,” 164-172.

⁸³ It was common in Macedonian parishes for men to gather after Sunday service to drink coffee, among other things, and discuss politics as they related to the latest issues of *Nova Makedonija*. In some ways the Sunday afternoon sessions were a continuation of the culture of the café and saloon where most political discussions of the *pečalba* took place before WWII.

Though similar to literary Bulgarian, the new standard Macedonian bore a slightly different alphabet and drew on the Macedonian variant spoken closer to Bitola and Lake Ohrid, which included hundreds of differences of vocabulary, pronunciation, and etymology. Older migrants, who had little if any schooling during the interwar and pre-WWI years, seldom had a strong grasp of literary Bulgarian or Macedonian, and the many changes in the newly accepted Macedonian language did not come easy to many. Efforts by Macedonian officials to get works into print languished at first because of logistical issues, but by the 1950s, Karl Marx's *Capital* and *Communist Manifesto*, along with other titles in the same vein, were published in Macedonian.⁸⁴

External support for the language also took time to coalesce. As officials in the Republic and in Belgrade increased the amount of state-produced literature about Macedonian culture, opposition to this new language by Greek and Bulgarian academics increased. Linguist Horace Lunt blunted the potency of the Bulgarian and Greek critics, however, by publishing in English in 1952 the *Grammar of the Macedonian Language*. Lunt was a professor of linguistics at Harvard University who had spent considerable time in the Balkans, especially in Macedonia. His study of the Macedonian dialects consciously avoided what Lunt termed the "polemic and hopelessly biased" existing literature on the subject, and concluded that the Macedonian language adopted in 1944 represented a singular language closely related to Bulgarian.⁸⁵

Lunt's *Grammar* book gave the language an imprimatur that Macedonian nationalists in Belgrade, Skopje, and around the world craved. The Macedonian

⁸⁴ United States Department of State, *Macedonian Nationalism and The Communist Party* (Washington, 1954), 118.

⁸⁵ Horace Lunt, *Grammar of the Macedonian Language*, vi-6. (Skopje, 1952)

education ministry began supplying schools with grammar textbooks written in the new language. New journals and newspapers such as *Makedonski Glasnik* (*Macedonian Voice*) in Toronto used the new alphabet, even as the MPO continued to use Bulgarian in printing the *Macedonian Tribune*. As Macedonian Orthodox Church parishes abroad began forming in the early 1960s, members read not only *Nova Makedonija*, but also other government literature, and realized that in the new Macedonia, Tito had made it safe and even respectable to show national pride.

Writing a New Macedonian History

The Communist Party of Yugoslavia's (CPY) efforts to instill a sense of Macedonian identity among the masses in the Republic of Macedonia were tumultuous and controversial but largely successful. In a sense, they represented a parallel effort to the one underway in North America in the last years of Pirinsky's presence there, although one that was better organized and funded. Within two decades, and for the first time, a Macedonian ethnic and national sensibility became a popularly shared idiom among the people of a defined Macedonian territory and in the diaspora. The CPY's efforts, however, drew a critical response from neighboring nations who regarded efforts to promote Macedonian national identity as "artificial" or "inauthentic." The Macedonian ethnicity resulted from what the Greek scholar Evangelos Kofos denigrated as the "politics of mutation," the implication being that the Macedonian ethnicity could never be pure, only a politically generated hybrid.

These critics from Greece, Bulgaria, and elsewhere argued that their own nations were authentic because of their long duration, the depths of their historical narratives, and

the relative consensus around these narratives. This rationale created a line of circular reasoning: authentic identities exist because they always have. By such reasoning Macedonian identity was not real because, until recently, it had not existed. Much of this criticism came from Greek critics and academics who were hostile to Communism and who felt that the Macedonian republic's population never thought of themselves as ethnically Macedonian until the Tito regime "told" them who they were. Kofos argued that few residents of the new Macedonian republic would have felt any Macedonian national affinity without outside manipulation. Kofos's work in particular found a sympathetic audience among Greeks stung by the presence of a republic with a name many Greeks felt to be their own.⁸⁶ These critics rightly pointed out that Tito's tactics were, at times, heavy handed and manipulative. Yet they also ignored the reality that a nascent Macedonian national movement had been in existence for nearly three-quarters of a century, and that manipulation of national feelings by the state was common elsewhere.⁸⁷

Yugoslav and Macedonian officials attempted to counter these criticisms. As Belgrade worked with bureaucrats, linguists, clerics, historians and others to deepen feelings of Macedonianism among the population, scholars on all sides, including Macedonians from the Republic and the diaspora, engaged in an effort to "prove" their own national-historical claims, while "disproving" those of their adversaries.⁸⁸ Their

⁸⁶ Evangelos Kofos, "The Politics of Mutation." *Balkan Studies* no 27, 1986; Evangelos Kofos, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia: Civil Conflict, Politics of Mutation, National Identity* (New Rochelle: Caratzas, 1993).

⁸⁷ Kofos, "The Politics of Mutation," 157-72; Kofos, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia*.

⁸⁸ Though some of this scholarship was of high quality, much of it suffered from a strong nationalistic bias, poor sourcing, and suspect methodology. The bulk of it fed the ironic comment by Evangelos Kofos that "Macedonia has suffered from too great a historiography." Evangelos Kofos, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia*, 226. Kofos became the most influential scholar to argue that Macedonian national identity

primary argument was that the origins of Macedonian national feelings could be traced back to the nineteenth century.

The claims and counterclaims about Macedonian national and linguistic authenticity were so difficult to reconcile that the U.S. Department of State conducted a departmental review of the literature on both sides of the debate. In 1954 they produced a lengthy internal white paper entitled *Macedonian Nationalism and The Communist Party*. The paper detailed dozens of instances in which CPY bureaucrats had manipulated the political and cultural process of creating a Macedonian state, and left little doubt that Yugoslavia was devoted to eliminating any hurdles to the creation of a loyal Macedonian republic within the Yugoslav federation. But the paper also refused to declare that the Macedonian republic or ethnicity was somehow counterfeit because of its origins or because of Greek protests. (The State Department work also ignored the presence of the sizable Macedonian diaspora and the intense interest it maintained in the resolution of the Macedonian Question.”)⁸⁹

To refute critics, Macedonian leaders also cultivated writers friendly to their nation-building project. One key ally in Macedonia’s historiographical project was the Italian journalist Giorgio Nurigiani, whose widely-distributed *Macedonia Yesterday and*

was essentially a construction of the CPY in Belgrade and Skopje. When the 1951 Greek census revealed 40,000 Slavic speakers living in Northern Greece, most of whom spoke Macedonian and/or Bulgarian, Kofos dismissed them as “speaking a peculiar Slavic idiom,” and arguing that Greece had no minority populations. His broader point was to discount the possibility that a separate Macedonian identity existed in Greece or anywhere else

⁸⁹ United States Department of State, *Macedonian Nationalism and The Communist Party* (Washington, 1954).

Today was less a serious history than a hagiographical travelogue of a country with which the author was clearly smitten⁹⁰:

Today Macedonia is bursting with vitality and solid cultural progress after so many conflicts and catastrophes, wars and ravages. In this movement toward wider spiritual horizons, towards a clearer conception of the world and things, the Macedonian people is overcoming every obstacle and is not afraid of any toil in preparing a better future.⁹¹

Others worried that nationalism could become an end in itself. Krste Črvenkovski, a Macedonian Communist Party official, warned against “national romanticism” in the creation of a new Macedonian national history, though he was supportive of the project nonetheless. He instructed scholars to “contribute to the national consciousness of our people freeing itself of nationalist deviations, to build respect for everything that is positive and common in the struggle of our neighbors and which is a component part of our own national history.”⁹²

⁹⁰ It is unclear whether Nurigiani was paid by Macedonia for his work, but the employment of historians in Eastern Europe by the state was common at the time. The Greek historian, Evangelos Kofos was employed by the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs and numerous Slavic Macedonian scholars were paid by the state as faculty members of the University of Sts. Cyril and Methody and the Macedonian Academy of Arts and Sciences. It also is difficult to tell whether Nurigiani’s attitudes helped set Macedonian attitudes about their own history or merely reflected extant feelings. He did address Macedonian audiences in the U.S. and Canada, encouraging them to take pride in a glorious heritage as part of an effort to mobilize the diaspora communities to political action. See Nurigiani, *Macedonia Yesterday and Today*, i; Loring Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict*, 96-97.

⁹¹ Even the title of Nurigiani’s work, which was published in Italian, English, and Macedonian, hints at the concept of historical trajectory and progress. Like other practitioners of positivistic history, Nurigiani advocated a view that historical stories unfold along a path toward greater justice and enlightenment for certain groups and peoples. Though this was a common technique in socialist and Communist historiography, Nurigiani also drew on the concept popularized by the Macedonian Political Organization in the U.S. and Canada in the 1930s: that Macedonia was a uniquely persecuted country determined to persevere. Still, for Nurigiani, Macedonia’s longevity as a concept gave it a sense of standing: “Every civilized people has its inner spiritual force, its historic destiny and its course to run. The Macedonian people, during the many centuries of its existence and its cultural rise, has lived through a series of dramatic moments of reproaches and insults, of great enthusiasm and bitter disappointments.” Nurigiani, *Macedonia Yesterday and Today*, 3.

⁹² Stephen E. Palmer and Robert R. King, *Yugoslav Communism and the Macedonian Question* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1971), 165.

One of the intriguing facts of the historiography of southeastern Europe is that efforts by the CPY, the Republic of Macedonia, and diaspora Macedonians to nurture a new historiography sympathetic to Macedonian claims mimicked the excesses of the national narratives it so strongly protested.⁹³ For instance, in North America, the MPL and ASC issued rhetoric about the longevity and greatness of Macedonia that was so complimentary it seemed less an attempt to describe accurately Macedonian national development than to out-do the MPO's own rhetoric. This broad effort lasted until the 1980s, but was most intense during the 1960s and 1970s when Macedonian authorities quickly produced history texts, translated them into English, and shipped copies to Macedonian émigrés, and to various libraries around the world. In Macedonia, *Nasha Kniga*, a state-supported publisher, produced works such as *The Macedonian Nation* by Dragan Tashkovski, which claimed that it was “difficult to find an example in the rich history of Europe of any people having undergone more hardship than has been the case with the Macedonian people.” The book was an ode to the Serbian and Macedonian

⁹³ The Macedonian project began just a decade after the fall of Germany's Third Reich, a period in which many academics were engaged in the production of intellectual work that furthered the myths of German racial, political, and cultural supremacy. Macedonians set to the task of creating their own narratives at a time when the Soviet Union had enlisted its own bureaucracy, often by coercion, in the process of rewriting the Soviet narrative. There were two major distinctions, however, between the Macedonian project and the much larger one underway in the Soviet Union. First, Macedonian scholars, and those non-Macedonians who supported the project, worked with somewhat greater academic freedom than their Soviet counterparts and those from the Warsaw Pact nations. Political prisoners were by no means a rarity in Yugoslavia, and one of the country's prominent socialist intellectuals, Milovan Djilas, languished in prison for years after publicly splitting with Tito. Yet most scholars experienced a climate more open than would be expected in a command economy, so long as their outward political beliefs comported with the institutional ones of their academy, and therefore the state. Secondly, Macedonian and other pro-Macedonian scholars did not create a body of work that conformed to a rigidly Marxist view of the world. See Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); Walter Lafeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-2002* (New York: McGraw-Hill, updates 2002); John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Cambridge: Oxford, rpt. 1988)

Communist leaders, who, under Tito, fought back “systematic denationalization” efforts by Greece and Bulgaria to awaken the Macedonian people.⁹⁴

One strain of the Macedonian historiographical project suggested that some form of Macedonian nation had been in existence for nearly a thousand years. Most often this claim argued that in the tenth century, Tsar Samuel ruled over a unified territory that included Macedonia and Bulgaria. It was, in the words of the new Committee for Information of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia, the “first state of the Macedonian Slavs.”⁹⁵ Others moved the origins of a Macedonian state back farther yet. During the push for an independent Macedonian Orthodox Church in the 1950s and 1960s, several documents began to connect the beginnings of the Macedonian nation with the missionary work of the four main ninth- and tenth-century saints in the Macedonian religious canon: Cyril, Methodius, Clement, and Naum.⁹⁶

With the discovery in the 1970s of the tomb of Philip II, father of Alexander the Great in Vergina, Greece, the foundation of the Macedonian historiographical narrative shifted again. A number of Macedonians in the Republic, and especially in Toronto and Australia, began displaying the 16-point sunburst design that adorned Philip’s tomb as a new symbol of the Macedonian people. In this case, nationalists in the diaspora took the

⁹⁴ Dragan Tashkovski, *The Macedonian Nation* (Skopje: Nasha Kniga, 1976), 3.

⁹⁵ The importance of Samuel’s early kingdom, which indeed existed, was that it gave Macedonian authorities a plausible link not only to the pre-Ottoman period, but to the pre-Byzantine period as well. As was often the case with literature addressing Macedonian history during the post-WWII period, scholars and the committees which often release their work, make enormous interpretive leaps in the form of an assumption that the “Slavic Macedonian” state ruled by Samuel saw itself as Macedonian in either an ethnic or a national sense. The almost certain case is that peasant villagers in Samuels’ kingdom did not. Committee for Information of the SR (Socialist Republic) Macedonia, undated pamphlet, *Macedonia*, (Skopje: Nova Makedonija), 2.

⁹⁶ These saints were collectively responsible for codifying a Slavonic language using the Glagolitic alphabet and for perpetuating its use throughout the Balkans.

lead. The message was clear: that the Macedonians represent a “people” with a past dating to the pre-Christian era. Despite bitter protests by Greeks, including many Greeks from the Macedonian region, the “Vergina star” gained widespread use among Macedonian Slavs. It also helped connected the Macedonian people around the world with Macedonians in Greece.⁹⁷

Conclusion

Though George Pirinsky hoped for it, he could not have predicted the influence that his brand of nationalism would have on the diaspora. Nor could he have anticipated the way that Yugoslavia’s effort to nurture the development of a Macedonian *narod* would support his own goals after his deportation in 1951. In fact, the popularity of the Pirinsky-Tito vision for Macedonia might seem like the main reason the MPO_IMRO vision lost influence. Yet it is important to note that it was also the *effect* of broader political and social change in the transatlantic world between the 1930s and 1950s. The upheaval of the Great Depression in North America (and its spread to Europe) and the cataclysm of WWII brought about the reassessment of many of the assumptions about societies’ abilities to govern themselves and provides for their populations. Macedonians around the world were, by no means, immune to this process, and the MPO did not lose influence simply because it became complacent. Bigger forces were at work.

⁹⁷ For a short time it adorned the Macedonian flag when the Republic gained independence in 1991. The use of the Vergina star took the elongation of the concept of the Macedonian nation to its extreme. By connecting the Macedonian “nation” of the late-twentieth century to the time of Alexander the Great, Macedonians began laying claim to a broad historical legacy that pre-dated not only the arrival of the Slavs in the sixth century, but of Christ and the Roman empire. The Vergina Flag was seen throughout immigrant communities and its use had not decreased since the government was forced to remove it from the official Macedonian flag.

When American political culture stigmatized leftist politics in the 1950s, Canada's more liberal politics and immigration laws provided Macedonian leftists with a more welcome environment. For its part, the MPO was forced to move to the political center and reconcile itself to the reality that IMRO, and its right-wing ideology, was now gone. After the war, Bulgaria came under the Soviet sphere of influence and, soon, had a dogmatic Marxist government. With the exception of Greece (which would retain its conservative, pro-American Royalist government with the help of massive U.S. aid) the various Balkan states were run by Marxist regimes. The MPO's foreign policy dreams dashed, the group could only hope to maintain the cultural allegiance of its locals, where many Macedonians viewed the leftward tilt in their community with distaste.

As the Macedonian intellectual elite in the North American diaspora shifted left during this period, Macedonian migration to North America remained low. Depression, war, and anti-immigrant legislation contributed to a long lull in migration from Europe and elsewhere during the middle years of the twentieth century. This meant that a relatively stable population of Macedonian migrants witnessed, and participated in, the competition for their allegiance by two sides presenting polar views of Macedonia's future. Because they were a small migrant group, many Macedonian emigrants were drawn to the leftist view that sought to connect Macedonians to other Slavs and make them feel like part of a larger "brotherhood." With the flood of new Macedonian-language publications from the Yugoslav Macedonian republic in the late 1940s and early 1950s, those migrants who never felt comfortable in the Bulgarian-Macedonian culture of the pre-WWII diaspora now started to find their place.

Yet the establishment of Yugoslavia did not necessary lead to dramatic changes in the daily lives of most diaspora Macedonians. For instance, few were as dogmatic in their leftist beliefs as the nationalist organizers who had sought their allegiance. Many migrants celebrated Yugoslav support of Macedonian nationality more because of what it did for their ethnic and national self esteem than for any great love for the Soviet system. This proved especially true in the United States where public opinion turned against any ideology that seemed remotely connected to the Soviet Union. Nor did many Macedonians in the diaspora – or even in Macedonia for that matter – trade their new Macedonian identity for a Yugoslav one. Though the U.S. and Canadian census began registering arrivals coming from Macedonia as “Yugoslavian,” few individuals actually defined themselves that way. Still, by the early 1950s, more Macedonians in North America, Europe, and Australia saw themselves as part of a discrete group. Though factionalism was far from gone, the factions were larger and better-defined than before. Soon, political liberalization in Yugoslavia and the aftermath of civil war in Greece would swell the size of the Macedonian brotherhood in North America, once again challenging the identities of the Macedonian *narod*.

Chapter 6: Macedonians United, Abroad and at Home, 1948-1970

This chapter focuses on the new migrants and nationalists who, between the 1950s and 1970s, rekindled Macedonian migration, and solidified the Macedonian diaspora's view of itself as part of a unique, Slavic *narod*. The fresh waves of migrants came from Northern Greece and the Yugoslav Macedonian republic. Both groups had suffered fascism in the Balkans, and, for reasons I explore in this chapter, were generally sympathetic to the leftist vision of Macedonian national identity.¹ Yet they had not experienced the earlier fights between the Macedonian Political Organization (MPO) and Pirinsky's leftists, but rather forged their identities during the decades of Serbian and Greek attempts to forcibly assimilate them, and from the ruins of the Greek Civil War.

While these new Macedonian arrivals in North America sometimes clashed among themselves, they were unified by their dislike of the MPO's political conservatism and refusal to recognize Macedonians a separate *narod*. Despite their divisions, the post-WWII migrants built new organizations such as the United Macedonians, and capitalized on Canada's liberal political culture by making Toronto the locus of Macedonian nationalism in North America. They strove to become patriotic Macedonian-Americans and Macedonian-Canadians to ensure their sympathies for Tito's Yugoslavia and their dislike for the MPO did not get them branded as Communists. Their work culminated in

¹ While many members of the modern Macedonian immigrant cohort sympathized with the left-wing version of Macedonian identity developed since the 1930s, it would not be accurate to suggest that the majority were, themselves, Communists, or even leftists in their political feelings. Macedonian diaspora communities, like many immigrant communities, took on some of the political characteristics of the societies in which they lived. Perhaps owing to a spirit of self-sufficiency, many Macedonians in the U.S., for instance, today consider themselves to be politically conservative.

1960s with the promotion and expansion of a new Macedonian Orthodox Church. The establishment of the Church provided a religious foundation for the Macedonian expatriates, and cemented the division between the post-WWII Macedonian migrants and members of the “MPO generation” who wanted little to do with the new Church.² Headquartered in Skopje, Macedonia, the new Church also created another strong link between the Macedonian state and the far-flung communities of Macedonians around the world. The contours of the “modern” Macedonian nationalism that the Church and its adherents shared resonate strongly in Macedonia and throughout the diaspora to this day.³

The Greek Civil War’s Dividends: Refugees, Migrants, and Nationalists

Between the division of the Macedonian region in 1913 and the start of WWII, Slavic Macedonians living in Northern Greece were, perhaps, the most isolated groups in the Macedonian diaspora. Macedonian nationalists in North America saw these Aegean Macedonians as their unredeemed countrymen, but the Aegean Macedonians themselves remained largely cut off from transatlantic Macedonian politics until the 1950s. This changed rapidly, though, as Greek and Yugoslav Communism reached its peak during and after WWII.⁴

As the guns fell silent across the rest of Europe in May 1945, Greek Communist forces in the north seized the opportunity to strike at the corrupt royalist government in

² Most MPO members and their families continued to affiliate with the “Macedono-Bulgarian” Churches built before WWII, and which were under the jurisdiction of Bulgarian Orthodox leadership in Bulgaria and New York City.

³ The Macedonian Political Organization (MPO) changed their name to the Macedonian Patriotic Organization in 1956.

⁴ Macedonian People’s League, *Greek Terror in Aegean Macedonia: A Threat To World Peace and Security* (New York, 1947); David C. Van Meter, “The Macedonian Question and the Guerrilla War in Northern Greece on the Eve of the Truman Doctrine,” *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora*, 21(1) 1995: 71-90.

Athens. The Communist Greek Popular Resistance Army, or *ELAS*, began assembling what Nicholas Gage has called a “vast resistance force,” and fought a three-year war against the regular Greek army.⁵ Several years of German occupation already had made starvation widespread in Northern Greece, where most of the civil war fighting took place. The burden of this war fell heavily on Slavic-speaking Macedonian villages ensconced there.⁶

Before 1945, pro-German Bulgarian forces and anti-German Yugoslav and Greek ones actively, and often forcefully, recruited Slavic Macedonians in Greece. In 1943, *ELAS* and its political arm, the National Liberation Front, or *EAM*, facilitated the creation of a new group for Macedonians willing to fight under their own name against royalist and fascist forces. Known as the Slav Macedonian National Liberation Front, or *SNOF*, the group became the center of the Slavic Macedonian left by nurturing Macedonian ethnic feelings on both sides of the Yugoslav-Greek border. A report by British Officer P.H. Evans of the British embassy in Athens hints at the success of the Greek Communists:

It is also important to emphasize that the inhabitants, just as they are not Greeks, are also not Bulgarians or Serbs or Croats. They are Macedonians. . . The [royalist] Greeks always call them Bulgars and damn them accordingly, except for EAM/ELAS, who for once in a way have shown some wisdom and who call these people ‘Slav-Macedonians.’⁷

⁵ It was not uncommon for families to have fathers and/or sons fighting against one another because of the drafting of males or because of political divisions between royalists and communists within families.

⁶ Nicholas Gage, *Eleni* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1983), 111-112; Loring Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict*, 73-78; Michael Radin, “Diaspora: The Tragic Exodus of the Refugee Children From Aegean Macedonia, 1948,” *Macedonian Review*, no. 42, 1988, 68-76.

⁷ Andrew Rossos, “The Macedonians of Aegean Macedonia: A British Officer’s Report, 1944,” *Slavonic and East European Review*, no 69, 1991, 294.

This, by no means, spared Macedonians from the guerrilla battles, coercion, and starvation of the civil war years. Historian Andrew Rossos has even argued that “Macedonians bore the brunt of the war.”⁸ As the war dragged on without a decisive conclusion, nearly \$400 million dollars of U.S. economic aid poured into Greece and Turkey as part of President Truman’s plan to ensure that these key states did not fall into the Communist orbit. This aid replenished the royalist forces and compelled the Communist army in the North to extract more from civilians in the region.⁹

In the United States, George Pirinsky the U.S. aid to Greece, telling the Senate Foreign Relations Committee,

As once [sic] of Macedonian origin, I told the Senators that to us Macedonian Americans the military aid which our government is now rendering the royalist regime in Greece would mean strengthening the hand of the murderers of our Macedonian brothers and sisters in Aegean Macedonia and the Greek anti-fascists. . . American arms are already in Greece, and right at this moment Greek anti-fascists and Macedonian fighters for national rights and liberties are being killed with American weapons. . . If Thomas Paine and Jefferson were alive today they would denounce the present policy-makers of the United States with the same righteous indignation as they did the British king and Tories in 1776.¹⁰

Despite his views, Truman’s plan for fighting Communism helped the Greek royalist government defeat *EAM-ELAS* in 1949. Pirinsky was soon deported and the MPL disintegrated.

⁸ Andrew Rossos, “Incompatible Allies: Greek Communism and Macedonian Nationalism in the Civil War in Greece, 1943-1949,” *Journal of Modern History*, vol 69 no 1, March 1997, 43.

⁹The main components of the Communist North were the *KKE*, or Greek Communists, headed by Nikos Zachariadis, the *NOF* (successor to the *SNOF*), and the Communist army under Gen. Markos Vafiadis. Ibid., 63-65; Nicholas Gage, *Eleni*, parts 3 and 4; Lidija Stojanovik – Lafazanovska and Ermis Lafazanovski, *The Exodus of the Macedonians from Greece: Women's narratives about WWII and their Exodus* (Skopje: Euro Balkan Institute, 2002).

¹⁰ George Pirinsky, “Keep America Free! Help Prevent A New War, report delivered at the National Committee Meeting, American Slav Congress, October 11, 1947, FBI George Pirinski file.

Gathering the Children: The Making of a Human Tragedy

With their military losses mounting, and with an inflated sense of their ability to rebound against the Greek royalists, the Greek Communist forces of Gen. Markos Vafiadis planned what he thought would be, according to Nicholas Gage, a “brilliant propaganda coup.”¹¹ Seeking to vilify the Greek royalists, gain international sympathy, and perhaps ensure future recruits to the communist cause, Vafiadis announced that children aged three through 14 would be taken from Communist-controlled areas and transported to Yugoslavia and other Stalinist “people’s democracies” of the Eastern Bloc to be spared the dangers of war. The program became known in Greece as the “*pedomasoma*,” Greek for “the gathering up of the children.” The “gathering” was meant to be voluntary at first, but shortly after Communist officials announced it publicly in March 1948, soldiers began giving villages notice to present their children and youth, or else have them taken. Across dozens of villages, soldiers – many of whom were known to the families they were about to disrupt – rounded up between 28,000 and 30,000 children in total, often forcibly separating the children from their mothers, whose husbands had died or migrated abroad. The children were then walked to the Yugoslav border in groups; those who did not remain in Yugoslavia were trans-shipped to gender-specific boarding schools in Albania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, and other countries.¹²

¹¹ Gage, *Eleni*, 245.

¹² Nicholas Gage’s own mother, Eleni Gatzoyiannis, was killed by Communist forces outside the village of Lia for trying to withhold her children from the *pedomasoma*. Gage himself came to the United States to join his father after leaving war-torn Greece as a refugee. In the 1980s he left his job as a correspondent for the *New York Times* and spent several years trying to piece together the clues to what led to his mother’s death. His work highlights the shifting nature of identity and loyalties during a time of war, and also the

Vafiadis' plan was an utter failure. Greek and international public opinion quickly turned on the Communist forces and their exhausted, unpopular insurgency folded the following year. Death and flight reduced the number of Slavic Macedonians in Northern Greece by more than half between 1943 and 1949. While the *pedomasoma* attracted attention as a humanitarian crisis, less attention has been given to the demographic reality that the Communists systematically removed half the Greek and Macedonian children from a wide swath of Northern Greece in just a matter of months.¹³ After the children had been taken, thousands of the fractured families of Aegean Macedonia fled their homes to join relatives in Yugoslavia, the rest of Europe, North America, and Australia. Entire Slavic Macedonian villages, like Orovo, where 80 families lived before the wars, soon became deserted, the stones from homes carried away for use elsewhere.

Nicholas Gage described the *pedomasoma* as a “Greek” phenomenon, but other sources describe the 1948-1949 resettlement as even more disruptive to Slavic Macedonians in Northern Greece. The children and adolescents separated from their families experienced an event that would have a galvanizing effect on their ethnic and national identity, and which therefore had a large impact on the life of the Macedonian and Greek diasporas. Because such a significant percentage of the married men in Northern Greece were already abroad, in uniform, or dead, the burden of the violence and

intense feelings that the refugee experience left upon those who left Greece at that time. Gage, *Eleni*, 245-246; John S. Koliopoulos, “The War Over Identity and Numbers of Greece’s Slav Macedonians,” in *Ourselves and Others: The Development of a Greek Macedonian Cultural Identity Since 1912*, Peter Mackridge and Eleni Yannakakis, ed. (Oxford: Berg, 1997), 33; Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict*, 42. See also Michael Radin, “Diaspora: The Tragic Exodus of the Refugee Children From Aegean Macedonia, 1948,” *Macedonian Review*, no. 42, 1988

¹³ Koliopoulos, “The War Over Identity and Numbers of Greece’s Slav Macedonians,” 53.

deprivation fell on women and their children. Even today, iconic representations of the “Children of 1948” typically feature a kerchiefed mother bearing her children through the chaos of war, or perhaps of an older sister guiding her younger brothers to safety.¹⁴



Figure 15. Refugees from the Greek Civil War near the Greece/Macedonia border, 1948. Available at <http://www.soros.org.mk/archive/G09/images/sg7203.jpg> (Accessed December 2004)



Figure 16. Statue of the *deča begalči* in Skopje, Macedonia.

¹⁴ Makedonija, journal of the *Matiča na Iselenicite*, 1988.

Slavic Macedonians did not use the Greek term *pedomasoma*, but rather referred to the *deča begalči*, or “child refugees.” More than just a “gathering” of children, Macedonians began to refer to it as an “exodus,” perhaps consciously using a term with strong resonance in the Old Testament narrative.¹⁵ As the children sought to reunite with their families it became apparent that the *deča begalči* were becoming a distinct subculture with the power to influence the broader set of Macedonian identities worldwide.¹⁶

New Settlement Patterns, New Tensions

In the 1950s, Macedonian communities in North America, Australia, and Europe swelled with tens of thousands of the refugee children and their families.¹⁷ Macedonians venturing to Australia rapidly coalesced in Perth, Melbourne, and Sydney, where sizable European immigrant communities already existed. In Europe, Macedonian expatriate communities in Switzerland, Germany, Sweden, and Britain added new arrivals, as did Central and Eastern European cities in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and the Soviet

¹⁵ For a powerful oral history from a first-rate research organization in Macedonia see Lidija Stojanovik – Lafazanovska and Ermis Lafazanovski, *The Exodus of the Macedonians from Greece: Women's narratives about WWII and their Exodus* (Skopje: Euro Balkan Institute, 2002).

¹⁶ It is perhaps indicative of the power of the group dynamic that these Macedonians, who were aware of the tensions that had developed since 1944 between Greeks, Bulgarians, and residents of Yugoslavia, chose to define themselves not as participants in an event – the *pedomasoma* – but rather as a discrete group – the *deča begalči*. Today, Aegean Macedonians who encounter other “*Egaets*,” as they are known, often do so with a sense of mutual pride for the travail they endured. See The Association of Refugee Children From Aegean Macedonia, *The Children of 1948* (Toronto, 1988).

¹⁷ This was due to Greece’s refusal to permit the refugees who left during the civil war to return unless they declared themselves to be Greek, renouncing any other ethnicity. This policy has been in effect until very recently. In 2003, Greece agreed to allow Slavic-Macedonians of Greek origin to return during a two week period. See Alexandra Ilievska, “Out of Exile,” *Transitions Online*, July 1, 2003, available at <http://knowledgenet.tol.cz/look/BRR/article.tpl?IdLanguage=1&IdPublication=9&NrIssue=1&NrSection=4&NrArticle=9956>.

Union. The dispersion of Macedonians had taken on a more global cast, though North America remained a primary settler locus.¹⁸

Transportation, political, and economic changes accelerated Macedonian emigration. By the early 1960s, regularly scheduled airline flights were available between major European capitals and the eastern U.S. and Canada. Though tickets were beyond the reach of most Macedonian villagers, many Macedonian migrants already in the U.S. and Canada were successful enough to purchase tickets and help with immigration paperwork for their family members living abroad.¹⁹ As well, the loosening of travel restrictions by Yugoslavia, Poland, and Czechoslovakia in the 1960s coincided with an industrial boom in the U.S. and Canada that lasted until 1973. Thousands of unskilled and semi-skilled Macedonian migrants who were sponsored by a parent or sibling quickly found themselves working in North American steel mills or auto plants, or as cooks, industrial painters, or general laborers.²⁰

By 1958 a few thousand Aegean Macedonians had settled in Australia, Toronto, and to a lesser extent, Gary (Indiana), Detroit, and a few other North American cities.²¹

¹⁸ While a number of studies of the Macedonian population in Australia have appeared in recent years, little exists on the smaller Macedonian communities in Europe. See Loring M. Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict: Ethnic Nationalism In A Transnational World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), ch. 12 and 13; Hugh Poulton, *Who Are The Macedonians?* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

¹⁹ In addition to the Republic of Macedonia, Bulgaria and Greece, a few dozen small villages in Albania housed perhaps a few thousand Macedonians. These Macedonians were generally more cut off from the economic and migratory trends of their ethnic peers because of the obsessively secretive regime of Albanian leader Enver Hoxja.

²⁰ For royalist political forces in Greece, the departure of the Macedonian and Greek refugees was a net plus as the new Royalist government sought to reestablish control over a broken country. For the Yugoslav Macedonian Republic, however, emigration was a double-edged sword. Emigration led to remittances and kept employment at home near the one-hundred percent goal of the socialist economic planning. Just the same, there was a risk that unchecked emigration could deplete entire regions, as it did before WWI in Macedonia, or deprive the startup Republic of some of its most industrious men and women.

²¹ As Aegean Macedonians began encountering migrants from the Republic in the 1960s and 1970s, they felt that their experience as refugees from the Greek Civil War were lost on the new arrivals whose

Unlike Australia, the U.S. and Canada each had Greek populations of more than 300,000, as well as roughly 50,000 Macedonians and Bulgarian-Macedonians.²² Until the late 1960s, when Yugoslavia loosened its emigration restrictions, Aegean Macedonians comprised the majority of new Macedonians arriving in North America.²³

Post-WWII Macedonian migrants, both from Northern Greece and the Macedonian republic, generally displayed a more fully-fledged sense of Macedonian national identity than had their pre-WWII predecessors. Those coming from the Republic had been exposed to Tito's effort to strengthen Macedonian identity there. Those from Northern Greece, the "Aegean Macedonians," had strengthened their Macedonian identity though decades of resisting Greek attempts to eliminate their Slavic language and customs. Both groups rejected any notion that they were culturally or ethnically Bulgarian. Nor did they have any affection for the right-leaning politics they

allegiance lay with the socialist Belgrade-based Yugoslav regime. On balance, however, the Aegean Macedonians and those from the Republic felt far more common cause with one another than either did with the Bulgaro-Macedonian "MPO generation." See United Macedonians, *United Macedonians and the Macedonian Question*, unpublished paper, 1960 (personal collection of James Saunders). Thanks are due to James Saunders for sharing with me his collection of papers from the Toronto Macedonian community in the 1960s and 1970s.

²² Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research. Study 00003: Historical Demographic, Economic, and Social Data: U.S., 1790-1970. Ann Arbor: ICPSR. Estimates put the population of Greek-Canadians at 350,000 today. See *A Brief History of the Greek Orthodox Church in Canada*, available at www.gocanada.org/ChurchInCa.htm. As they were early in the century, verifiable numbers indicating the size of the Macedonian diaspora communities are difficult to ascertain. According to the United Macedonians of Canada, 150,000-200,000 people of Macedonian origin live in Canada, though Canadian immigration officials believe the true number to be lower. The United Macedonians estimate is generally believed to cast the net broadly, counting individuals who have a connection to Macedonia by birth, use of language, or national identity.

²³ Steve Pliakes, interview with author, March 22, 2003. See also Vladimir Ortakovski, *Minorities in the Balkans* (Ardsey, N.Y.: 2000), ch. 7. Steve Pliakes emigrated to Toronto during these years and later attested to the unique position of the Aegean Macedonians in North America with his claim that they were treated as "guilty" by native-born Canadians and Americans because of their in-between ethnic status, and their arrival from Communist countries, or at least from the part of Greece that had temporarily been under Communist control. Like Pliakes, many of these migrants bore Greek names and were forced to make a decision either to join the Greek Church, change their family surname, or else repeatedly explain that they were indeed from Greece, but considered themselves to be of Slavic and/or Macedonian descent.

encountered in North America, and embraced by the MPO. Many of them had just left a part of Europe scarred by the German occupation, and therefore would not tolerate any connection to Bulgaria, which had supported Germany's occupation. Their hatred for fascism and the royalist Greek government made them, on the whole, more inclined towards the political left.²⁴

There were some similarities between the pre- and post-war migrant cohorts. Both groups sought to improve their economic situations during times of crisis in their homelands, and both groups forged chain migration networks as the first settlers earned enough to bring remaining family members over.²⁵ Yet relatively few of the post-war migrants intended their stays to be short labor spells as did the *pečalbari*, or labor migrants, of the earlier generation. Because many were refugees from war-torn Northern Greece, post-war Macedonians did not resemble the “birds of passage” that crisscrossed the Atlantic earlier in the century. By the 1960s, many of the *deča begalči* were in their thirties, and as they reunited with their families, they also were drawn by a strong economic pull factor, the economic expansion in North America, which created a positive job outlook for unskilled and semi-skilled workers.²⁶

²⁴ Though Bulgaria sided with the Axis Powers in WWII, one remarkable example of Bulgarian resistance to German occupation of the Balkan peninsula should be noted. Bulgaria shielded thousands of Jews within its borders, saving them from near-certain deportment to concentration camps. Such was not the case in Greece where nearly the entire pre-war population of 50,000 Jews in Salonica were sent to death camps by the German occupiers. Today, few Jews, perhaps less than one percent of the population, live in Macedonia, Greece and Bulgaria.

²⁵ See Gregory Michaelidis, “Macedonians,” *Encyclopedia of Chicago History* (Chicago: Newberry Library and University of Chicago Press, 2004); Anonymous, “Macedonians.” In *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, ed. Stephen Thernstrom (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980); Hugh Poulton, *Who Are The Macedonians?* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

²⁶ Reflecting back on this period of immigration, however, a number of Macedonian nationalists downplayed the economic incentives for immigration in favor of the more politically charged claim that, once again, Macedonians were being forced to flee their homeland by violence and political meddling not of their own making. This refrain, which essentially argued that Macedonians were “pushed” by forces beyond their control and not “pulled” by economic opportunity, would become a common trope in the

In North America, modern Macedonian settlements formed in several new parts of the country, while bolstering the numbers of Macedonians in a handful of established communities. Relatively few Macedonians who migrated to North America after 1950 chose the Steelton, Pennsylvania, and St. Louis, Missouri/Madison, Illinois/Granite City, Illinois, areas, two of the largest centers of early-century Macedonian and Bulgarian settlement. Instead, migrants clustered even more closely around the Great Lakes cities where the steel and auto industries flourished.²⁷ This was due not only to the strong economies of the Great Lakes metropolises but to a rejuvenated cycle of chain migration; communities that saw an early influx of migrants often raced ahead of those with slower initial inflows because of the multiplier effect of family members sponsoring their kin for immigration papers.²⁸

An unmistakable feature of the modern Macedonian communities was their tense relations with the extant pre-WWII Macedonian and Bulgarian communities. For instance, the early communities had come to describe themselves, and their churches, as “Bulgaro-Macedonian” and typically were aligned with the Bulgarian Orthodox synod based in Sofia, Bulgaria. Yet few of the post-WWII migrants possessed warm feelings for Bulgaria or the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. Interviews with a number of migrants

publications and speeches of the post-war nationalist organizations. James Saunders, interview with author, March 21, 2003. See also the special issue on the return of several thousand Aegean Macedonians to Yugoslavia and Greece in *Makedonija*, journal of the *Matiča na Iseleničite*, 1988.

²⁷ A complete listing of the 28 Macedonian Orthodox Church parishes in the North American diocese is found in the Macedonian Orthodox Calendar (Skopje: *Makedonska Pravoslavna Crkva*, 2004).

²⁸ On post-WWII chain migration to North America, see for instance Donna R. Gabaccia, “Is Everywhere Nowhere? Nomads, Nations, and the Immigrant Paradigm of United States History.” *Journal of American History* 86 (December 1999); George Prpic, *South Slavic Immigration In America* (Boston: Twayne, 1978); Theodore Saloutos, *Greeks In The United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964); Barry R. Chiswick, ed. *Immigration, Language, and Ethnicity: Canada and the United States* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1992).

from this period reveal a sense of distrust, if not hostility, among Macedonian migrants who migrated early in the century and those who arrived after WWII.²⁹

The new surnames the migrants brought with them also caused tension. Most Macedonians who migrated to North America before WWII had names that ended with the suffixes “-off” or “-eff,” as did many Bulgarians. Many of the post-war migrants, however, bore Greek surnames or Slavic Macedonian ones that, in some cases, had been modified by adding the suffix, “-ski.”³⁰ The variations in surnames meant that, in practice, migrants came to hasty, sometimes erroneous assumptions about one another’s political feelings based on name-only introductions. Those with surnames that did not fit the stereotype of their affiliation frequently were subject to abuse or discrimination by those who felt that they had abandoned the nation to which their name indicated they should have been loyal.³¹

²⁹ This observation stems from author interviews with two former leaders of the Toronto Macedonian community, Steve Pliakes and James Saunders in Toronto on March 22, 2003, and from several dozen informal conversations over the course of four years of research and writing. Post-WWII migrants often refer to their early-century predecessors as “from the MPO,” or “from the old generation.” Migrants from the early century, and sometimes their offspring, often refer to the recent migrants as “Yugoslav Macedonians” or “Aegean Macedonians,” a term that group also uses for itself.

³⁰ For a list of representative names, see *50th Anniversary Almanac, Sts. Cyril and Methody, 1910-1960*, Multicultural Historical Society of Ontario, Macedonian collection, 24; UM membership list, personal collection of James Saunders. My thanks to Marvin Moehle for sharing with me his memories of the tensions that names caused within the St. Louis and Granite City Bulgarian and Macedonian communities. On the variations of Macedonian linguistic dialects in the Republic and the diaspora see Viktoria Herson Finn, *What Is Naš? Toward a Theory of Ethnolect in The South Slavic Dialect Continuum*. Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State University, 1996; P. Hendriks, *The Radožda-Vevčani Dialect of Macedonian* (Lisse, Netherlands: Peter de Ridder Press, 1976).

³¹ In addition to the cleavage caused by surnames, language also problematized identity for post-WWII Macedonian migrants. Given the multiple dialects that exist across the Macedonian/Bulgarian language continuum, migrants already were challenged to agree upon a common set of words that would allow them to communicate. The variety of dialects within the Republic of Macedonia alone remains today a unique element of Balkan linguistic history. During my time researching and teaching in Skopje in 2002 I had difficult understanding “Skopski,” the local variant. Especially among the young, the language borrows liberally from its surrounding cultures, especially Turkish and Serbian. One of my students said that if she went to the villages near Ohrid only 80km away she would have a much harder time communicating with other Macedonians because of the dialect spoken there. See Victor Friedman, “Macedonian Language and

The *Matiča*: Connecting the “Old World” With the “New”

The job of managing the tension between the clans of fresh Macedonian migrants fell to the *Matiča na Iseleničite*, the agency in Macedonia responsible for relations with the diaspora communities. While neither overtly sponsoring, nor restricting, emigration, the *Matiča* sought to harness the energy of the diaspora, and also control the information flow between Macedonia and Belgrade and the Macedonian émigré communities.³² Succeeding at this venture was important for bureaucrats in Macedonia who viewed the diaspora as an important part of its nation-building project. As a bureaucracy that answered to Yugoslav and Macedonian political leaders, the *Matiča* was indirectly accountable to the CPY leadership in Belgrade. Information exchange often took place through Yugoslav embassies or consulates in Toronto, New York, Chicago, or San Francisco, and consequently often was slow and unreliable. Additionally, the *Matiča* promoted the Yugoslav motto, “*bratstvo y jedinstvo*,” or “brotherhood and togetherness,” which did not resonate with Aegean Macedonians, who had not experienced the socialism and pan-Slavism of Tito’s Yugoslavia.³³

Nationalism During the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries.” *Balkanistica: Occasional Papers In Southeast European Studies*, ed. Kenneth E. Naylor, vol. 2. (Cambridge: Slavica Publishers, 1975).

³² Milé Mihailov, “The Macedonian Association in the U.S.A. and Canada during the period from 1928 to 1935,” *Macedonian Review*, vol 12 no 1982, 161-165.

³³ Relations between Macedonian communities in North America and the *Matiča* were not always smooth, and the agency was an imperfect tool for a number of reasons. Toronto resident Steve Pliakes recalled that relations between his United Macedonians organization and the *Matiča* as being “up and down” over the years. Letter from Slavko Odic, General Counsel, Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Toronto, to *Matiča*, April 30, 1963, Archive of the Republic of Macedonia, *Matiča* papers; Letter from Nikola Krajinovic, General Counsel, Consulate general, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Chicago, to *Matiča*, August 11, 1965, *Matiča* papers; Steve Pliakes, interview with author, March 22, 2003.

Despite its flaws, the *Matiča* succeeded in its mission of coordinating the diaspora's contributions to the broader Macedonian nation-building project. Because Macedonians in Canada, and especially the U.S., sought to show their patriotism for their adopted countries, correspondence between immigrant communities and the *Matiča* focused on cultural matters and avoided sensitive political issues. A survey of their records indicates the type of events *Matiča* officials coordinated: a musical troupe from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh acknowledging an invitation to perform at a summer music festival in Skopje in 1963; several Detroit Macedonians requesting permission from the United States Embassy in Belgrade for the St. Sofia music group to perform at Detroit's Illinden picnic as part of a plan organized with the *Matiča*. Outside Buffalo, Peter Rambevski, president of the Macedonian Football Club in Lackawanna, reported on the progress of their all-Macedonian soccer team and bragged that his new uniforms featured Macedonian flags. In Toronto, Steve Stavro, president of the Toronto City Soccer Club, notified the *Matiča* of his intention to hire two new players for his professional team.³⁴

The *Matiča* served not only as a mechanism for socially active members of the diaspora to communicate back to the Macedonian "homeland," but for Macedonian officials to reinforce the importance of remembering such late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Macedonian military heroes. *Matiča* officials like Spero Vasileff-Turpukovski traveled throughout Macedonian communities speaking at conventions and *Illinden* picnics, all the while rhapsodizing about the Macedonian people's glorious past.

³⁴ Letter from Duquesne University Tambouritzans to Vančo Andonov, secretary of the *Matiča*, April 27, 1962, *Matiča* papers; Letter from John Christoff and Nick Chris to the American Embassy, Belgrade, June 19, 1969, *Matiča* papers; Letter from Peter Rambevski to *Matiča*, December 1, 1971, *Matiča* papers; Letter from Steve Stavro to Vardar Sportski Club, Skopje, April 25, 1964, *Matiča* papers.

Yugoslav and Macedonian officials like Macedonian president Lazar Koliševski realized the ability of such cultural events to stoke strong feelings and encouraged the celebration of two new holidays by Macedonians worldwide: August 2 to commemorate *Illinden*, and October 11 to commemorate the anniversary of the first Macedonian communist efforts against the German occupation in 1941.³⁵

The connections the *Matiča* facilitated were not all cultural, however. During the summer of 1963, Macedonians around the world responded to tragedy in the Republic, and the *Matiča* played a lead role in coordinating the response. Beginning on the morning of July 26, a series of earthquakes struck Skopje, killing nearly one thousand people – including a U.S. Army sergeant and his wife – and collapsing dozens of buildings. Macedonian premier Aleksandar Grlickov told reporters that 80% of Skopje was “shattered” by the quake. Some 170,000 city dwellers were left homeless, and Marshall Tito gave a widely heralded speech at the damaged train station (by coincidence, where the Americans had died) and pledged that Skopje would be rebuilt. The damage was so severe that much of the city’s Byzantine, Ottoman, and Neoclassical architecture had to be razed. As the city struggled to cope with the devastation, Macedonians in New York City, Toronto, Detroit, and other cities, coordinated relief committees to collect and distribute funds in Skopje. On behalf of the *Matiča*, Spero Vasileff-Turpukovski initiated several fundraising efforts among Macedonians in Canada and the U.S. that quickly raised \$25,000. The *Matiča* helped organize and facilitate

³⁵ Stephen E. Palmer and Robert R. King, *Yugoslav Communism and the Macedonian Question* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1971), 170-171. Biographical notes about Spero Vasileff-Turpukovski, personal collection of Spero Vasileff-Turpukovski, Archive of the Republic of Macedonia, Spero Vasileff Turpukovski papers.

numerous fundraising banquets and dances that continued for well over a year after the earthquakes, ultimately raising tens of thousands of additional dollars in donations.

As they had when Macedonia experienced severe flooding the previous year, early-century migrants and their families – who had since become settled Macedonian-Americans and Macedonian-Canadians – pitched in to help people whose claims to Macedonian identity they refused to even recognize.³⁶ A newly-formed Skopje Relief Committee began writing to Macedonians, Macedonian-Americans, and Macedonian-Canadians throughout North America asking for donations to send back to Skopje to assist those without food, clothing, and shelter. Relief agencies in Skopje received aid from nearly two dozen countries and the Skopje Relief Committee used this largesse to broaden their appeal and ask those of “South Slavic” descent to help alleviate the “tragedy of Skopje.” The Toronto community raised at least \$14,000. Some \$3,500 of this came in the form of donations from non-Macedonians who gave to a cause of which they had little or no immediate knowledge. Once the Canadian Red Cross took over the collection and administration of the funds, additional monies arrived until the total reached \$52,000. Additionally, the relief agency CARE contributed \$32,000 worth of

³⁶ David Binder, “20 Buried Alive in Skopje Debris Found Alive 3 Days After Quake,” *New York Times*, 30 July 1963, 5; Biographical material about Spero Vasileff-Turpukovski, Turpukovski papers; Letter to parishioners from Church Committee, Sts. Cyril and Methody Macedono-Bulgarian Orthodox Cathedral, February 25, 1963, Matiča papers. Reviews of the rebuilt Skopje, much of it designed by the architect Kenzo Tange, have generally been harsh. Typical is this passage by journalist Sam Vaknin: “Frozen at an early morning hour, the stony hands of the giant, cracked clock commemorate the horror. The earthquake that struck Skopje in 1963 has shattered not only its Byzantine decor, has demolished not merely the narrow passageways of its Ottoman past, has transformed not only its Habsburgian waterfront with its baroque National Theatre. The disastrous reconstruction, supervised by a Japanese architect, has robbed it of its soul. It has become a drab and sprawling socialist metropolis replete with monumentally vainglorious buildings, now falling into decrepitude and disrepair. *Skopje - Where Time Stood Still*, available at <http://samvak.tripod.com/pp57.html>. For a more positive assessment from the time, see David Binder, “The New Skopje: Balkan Suburbia,” *New York Times*, 31 January 1965, 13.

flour, milk, butter, blankets, sheets, and utensils.³⁷ In the decade following the quakes, Yugoslavia again poured millions of dollars into Skopje to build rebuild public buildings and construct housing for the swelling population that arrived from the hinterlands during the socialist collectivization underway under Tito.³⁸

Yet even as the appeal for aid drew in many Macedonian and non-Macedonians from many countries – a transnational response to a national crisis – Macedonian nationalists used the devastation to make a narrower, political argument about the deserving nature of the Macedonian people. In an appeal describing a long and glorious Macedonian history dating back to the Roman era, Skopje Relief Fund president Zhivko D. Angeluscheff employed nationalistic rhetoric in explaining to the diaspora the moral need to aid the afflicted in Skopje. His appeal is worth quoting at length:

This day of our gathering is a significant one. It witnesses the devotion of people lending a helping hand to their unfortunate brothers in Macedonia, stricken by the disaster of Skopje. The older ones of you remember the bitter days of being forced to leave the Homeland . . . From the bellies of the freighter they went straight into the belly of the coal mines of Pennsylvania, into the open plains of the West to build railroads, skyscrapers, tunnels, steel mills.

Their work was hard and cruel! They did not have time to remember the Songs and Dances of their youth.

Here they learned hard labor, the slums – life without shelters and heat, with little food and clothing; to be mutilated, and to be without a job! They know by their own experience what kind of life it is going to be for more than 200 thousand people in Skopje. Thrown outdoors, barely clothed, terrified by never-ending quakes.

³⁷ *Letter from Don S. Brandt, Executive Director of the Red Cross to Zorka Bassil, Treasurer, Macedonian Relief Committee*, December 5, 1963, *Matiča* papers; David Binder, “20 Buried Alive in Skoplje Debris Found Alive 3 Days After Quake,” *New York Times*, 30 July 1963, 5.

³⁸ Letter from Zhivko D. Angeluscheff, Skopje Relief Fund, April 19, 1964, *Matiča* papers; invitations to Skopje Relief Fund events, New York and New Jersey, 1964, *Matiča* papers.

To those who are sleeping in barracks and tents, exposed to the severity of the elements, the news of our gathering will warm their hearts . . . Their brothers and sisters everywhere in the world are with them!

Angeluscheff suggests that what connected the earliest Macedonian labor migrants to the then-residents of Skopje was a continuum of hard work and suffering. The natural disaster that now befell Macedonians therefore was of a piece with the slower economic hardship that Macedonians had endured for decades. Angeluscheff clearly hoped to increase support for Skopje by appealing to Macedonians on terms they would understand. Yet he also consciously drew upon the wrenching physical and psychological effects that labor migration had upon a mythical Macedonian nation: “They did not have time to remember the Songs and Dances of their youth.” In doing so, Angeluscheff echoed a common sentiment in immigration narratives in which immigrants undergo a highly disruptive transition from their native villages to a more chaotic, discriminatory, urban society. He also placed the Macedonian diaspora, and the ultimate sadness that there had to be one at all, at the center of his Macedonian narrative.³⁹

It is interesting to contrast the response of Marshall Josef Tito to the Skopje earthquake to the transnational responses of individuals like Tupurkovski and Angeluscheff. Tito spoke narrowly about the need for Macedonia – and Yugoslavia – to show the outside world that they could recover from the earthquake. The latter men’s roles as international go-betweens who served the needs of Macedonians abroad, however, encapsulated the transnationalism that served both the Republic and the

³⁹ Letter from Zhivko D. Angeluscheff, Skopje Relief Fund, April 19, 1964, *Matiča* papers. The origin of the concept described by Angeluscheff is the theory of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* by German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (1855-1936). See Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Society: Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, translated and edited by Charles P. Loomis (The Michigan State University Press, 1957); Gary Gerstle, “Liberty, Coercion, and the Making of Americans,” *Journal of American History*, September 1997, 529.

diaspora – and catalyzed a powerful surge of Macedonian nationalism – in the decades following WWII.⁴⁰

Competing Voices for the Macedonian Mantle

The *Matiča* was a foreign agency, and could not speak for, or to, all the various Macedonian factions in North America. The MPO maintained its existence, but would never again achieve the level of influence it enjoyed during the 1930s and 1940s. Several organizations blossomed because of the growing size of the Macedonian population and the subtle variations in their political and ethnic worldviews. Members of the Pan-Macedonian Association, for instance, considered themselves to be “American Hellenes of Macedonian ancestry,” and suffused their literature with American patriotism. Their overriding goal was to speak on behalf of descendants of “Macedonia” – who were by their definition, Greeks from Macedonia. A secondary goal was improving relations between Greece and America, and to a lesser extent Canada. Members of the Association took pains to refer to their place of birth as “Macedonia, Greece” and to insist that they were ethnically Greek.⁴¹

⁴⁰ The exact role played by Tupurkovski was complex and sometimes confusing. What was clear though was that he frequently traveled between the Republic and the migrant communities abroad to organize, communicate the policies put in place to build feelings of Macedonian national identity, and carry back financial support from the diaspora, more than \$25,000 alone after the 1963 quakes. He made his first trip to the U.S. as early as 1934. Biographical material about Spero Vasileff-Turpukovski, Tupurkovski papers, Archive of the Republic of Macedonia.

⁴¹ The Pan-Macedonian Association did not formally announce its attitude toward the Macedonian nationalist groups like the MPO and the Macedonian People’s League. Nor did they initially use a barrage of literature to make emotionally charged political and historical claims to Macedonian tradition as did the Slavic Macedonian groups. *25th Anniversary, 1937-1962*, Aliakmon Chapter, Pan-Macedonian Chapter of the U.S.A. and Canada, Emily Greene Balch Library, Philadelphia, PA, Macedonian Collection, unpublished pamphlet, 1962; *Constitution and By-Laws of the Pan-Macedonian Association, Inc., 1947*, Emily Greene Balch Library, Philadelphia, PA, Macedonian Collection.

Another group, a Canadian branch of the socialist Macedonian People's League, the Macedonian Canadian People's League, founded by George Pirinsky in the 1930s, lasted longer than Pirinsky's American-based group, which folded in 1949. The League attempted to heal the divisions in the Toronto Macedonian community by appealing for the cooperation with the MPO, but its embrace of "true Socialism and Democracy in Yugoslavia," and their claim that MPO leaders were "committing a great crime against the cause of freedom and independence for Macedonians," did little to bring the community together.⁴²

Other organizations sought to separate Bulgarians from Macedonians so as to promote Bulgarian nationalism and not Macedonian political pride. During World War II a number of these self-identified Bulgarians formed the American Bulgarian League to "promote understanding and friendship between the peoples of Bulgaria and North America." Emerging at a time of fierce rhetorical battles between pro- and anti-Communist political groups in the U.S., Canada, and Europe, the League took up the anti-Communist tone of the MPO, and mimicked its affection for the "democratic principles on which the United States and Canada were built and for which they stand."⁴³

Like the Pan-Macedonian Association, the American Bulgarian League ostensibly sought greater understanding between Bulgarians and Americans and Canadians, in a similar fashion to the way the Pan-Macedonian Association sought dialogue among Greek Macedonians, their host countries, and birth places. Yet both organizations had aims beyond improving dialogue. Each sought to represent the overlapping portions of

⁴² Macedonian Canadian People's League, *Our Position on the Macedonian Question*, Archive of the Republic of Macedonia, *Matiča* papers.

⁴³ Statement of the ABL Board of Directors, *American Bulgarian Review*, May 1960, 3-4.

the Greek, Bulgarian, and Macedonian émigré communities. Yet while successful as niche organizations, none of these groups was able to organize the thousands of new Macedonian migrants. That only occurred in the early 1960s when an organization calling itself the United Macedonians built a broad-based immigrant organization around the left-wing version of Macedonian identity that George Pirinsky had promoted three decades earlier.

The United Macedonians

By the 1950s Toronto had become the epicenter for organizational activity among post-WWII Macedonians in North America. A total of 20,000-30,000 Aegean Macedonians, including many of the *deča begalči*, or child refugees of the Greek civil war, settled in Toronto. Many among them were spoiling to attack the Greek government for its shabby treatment of the Aegean Macedonian refugees.⁴⁴ The relatively liberal Canada of Prime Ministers Lester Pearson and Pierre Trudeau provided fertile ground in which a left wing émigré organization could grow.⁴⁵

In 1959 a group of eight men met at the Bermuda Tavern on Yonge Street. The initial eight men became 12 when they met again at Zhelevo Hall, the social space owned

⁴⁴ By the 1980s the Macedonian population in Ontario, Canada had grown to an estimated 80,000 – 150,000 individuals of Macedonian descent. See “Macedonians: Ontario Ethnocultural Profile,” in *Macedonia: A Collection of Articles About The History and Culture of Macedonia* (Toronto: Selyani Macedonian Folklore Group, 1982). Because many traveled on a Canadian, Yugoslavian, Greek, or Bulgarian passport, and may not have identified themselves by their ethnicity but rather their religion or place of birth, official counts have generally been lower. Yet the size of the Canadian Macedonian population alone gave their opinions weight, both in their host and home countries. Though Canada took steps to limit immigration during the twentieth century, most notably the early-century legislation of racial and ethnic exclusion, its post-WWII allowances for immigrants from Eastern Europe remained far higher than in the U.S., where severe restrictions from the 1920s lasted until the 1960s.

⁴⁵ Macedonian-American People’s League of U.S.A., *Greek Terror in Aegean Macedonia: A Threat to World Peace and Security* (Detroit: MPL, no date).

by the Zhelevo Brotherhood, a mutual aid society founded by migrants from Zhelevo before WWII. Chairing both meetings was James Saunders, a Macedonian-Canadian who had migrated from Zhelevo to Toronto in 1938. Saunders' father, Spiro, was the owner of the Bermuda Tavern and had preceded his son in Canada by seven years. Spiro earned enough money in that time to bring the rest of his family to Canada. According to James Saunders, both of his grandfathers were "Macedonian revolutionaries" who had participated in the *Illinden* fighting. His father, too, was devoted to the "Macedonian cause." With a solid command of English, and a ready connection to Aegean Macedonians from Zhelevo and surrounding villages like Bouf, Armensko, and Oschima, the younger Saunders was a natural choice to lead the group.⁴⁶

On April 28, 1959, the group established itself as the United Macedonians of North America (hereafter referred to as "UM," as the group refers to itself) at a gathering at the city's King Edward Hotel. They agreed to welcome all Macedonians, "regardless of their religious beliefs, political opinions or affiliations." Yet it was clear from the outset that the group appealed largely to recently migrated Macedonians who rejected the view that Macedonians were ethnically or culturally Bulgarian. The UM decided to focus on education and cultural issues – "to promote unity and friendship among all Macedonians of this continent and elsewhere" – and not political issues. Though all the original founders were based in Toronto, the group's title and appeal to all Macedonians

⁴⁶ James Saunders, interview with author, March 22, 2003. United Macedonians, unpublished membership list, personal collection of James Saunders. Saunders took on that name after rejecting the Greek name Demiter Sandrini. It was not uncommon for Slavic Macedonians whose names had been changed after 1913 either to change back to their ancestors Slavic names, or to take on new names altogether after migrating abroad.

in North America and “elsewhere” indicated the close connection between Macedonian-Canadians and Macedonian-Americans.⁴⁷

Despite its pledge not to be a political organization, however, the UM took a political stand when it called “the achievement of national freedom in the People’s Republic of Macedonia to be of great significance to the rest of the Macedonian people everywhere. [sic]”⁴⁸ By supporting the Republic the UM publicly aligned itself with the Yugoslav-socialist view of Macedonian nationality espoused by Josef Tito and Macedonian leaders like Metodi Antonov-Čento and Lazar Koliševski. In doing so the group explicitly rejected the Bulgarian and Greek views on the subject, and more importantly, the long-held opinion of their chief competitor, the MPO, that Macedonians were ethnically Bulgarian.

By 1959 the MPO had acclimated to the reality that Bulgaria had become a Marxist state and a loyal Soviet satellite. The group consciously distanced itself from the leadership in Sofia and instead campaigned for greater rights for the self-declared Macedonian minority in western Bulgaria. But it refused to modulate its feelings toward Yugoslavia or Tito, whom it regarded as just another in a long line of occupiers of the Macedonian lands. That the UM now saw the Yugoslav leadership and the Macedonian Republic as the guarantors of Macedonian national rights – and not the usurpers of it – meant that significant cooperation between the two groups was nearly impossible. The

⁴⁷ *Preamble and purpose*, unpublished bylaws of the United Macedonians of North America, articles I and XII, April 28, 1959, (personal collection of James Saunders).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, article IV.

two groups reproduced the split that had existed between Macedonian People's League and the MPO in the 1930s and 1940s.⁴⁹

According to James Sanders, the MPO served as a foil for the UM. "All that time the MPO claimed the leadership of all the Macedonians in Toronto, and a lot of questions arose. During the [U.S. Sen. Joseph] McCarthy days this organization turned right wing, and they were not serving the interests of the Macedonian people," argued Sanders.⁵⁰

The UM chose to compete with the MPO using some of the same elements of Macedonian culture. Following the lead of Republic of Macedonia bureaucrats, the UM threw its initial momentum behind an annual Toronto picnic honoring the fighters of the *Illinden* uprising. Its first move was to call for a boycott of the MPO-Pravda picnic held in Toronto on the same day, the first Sunday in August, and to plan a competing event.

Sanders addressed the Macedonians who gathered for the first UM *Illinden* picnic in 1960:

Today there is another Elinden [sic] picnic of Macedonians, which is organized by the M.P.O. We should have been together but the leaders of the M.P.O. constantly and without let-up are insulting us by calling us Bulgarians. With all due respect to the Bulgarian people, we refuse to be called Bulgarians, neither do

⁴⁹ George Pirinsky, *Slavic Americans in the Fight for Victory and Peace* (New York: American Slav Congress, undated). Members of the UM were well aware of the tensions that existed between the older generation of migrants, many of whom still belonged to the MPO Pravda chapter in Toronto, and the post-WWII migrants. In more recent years the debate has not been about the gradations between Macedonians and Bulgarians so much as it was focused on Greece, and the relationship of Macedonians to that country as it related the civil war and its aftermath. Indeed, in conversations with numerous post-WWII migrants about Macedonian identity, mentions of Bulgaria or of the contest over Bulgarian and Macedonian identity often are dismissed as ancient history, as remnants of the old, "MPO generation," pro-Bulgarian, or even "pro-Fascist" Macedonians. To many, the conversation has been passé for decades. See interviews by author with James Saunders and Steve Pliakes, March 22, 2003. For contrast, see interviews by Lillian Petroff with pre-WWII migrants like Spero Bassil and Nicholas Temelcoff, Multicultural Historical Society of Ontario, Macedonian collection.

⁵⁰ James Sanders, *The Founding of the United Macedonians: An Historical Retrospective by James Sanders, The First President of the United Macedonians*, unpublished essay, collection of James Sanders.

we want to be called Greeks or Serbians. We are good old Macedonians – period.⁵¹

For their part, MPO officials charged that the recent migrants seeking new Macedonian Orthodox parishes were duped by a Communist attempt to indoctrinate them. At their 44th annual convention in Toronto in 1967, MPO leaders criticized the UM and Macedonian Orthodox leadership without mentioning the groups by name. Repeating a frequent criticism that the Macedonian Orthodox Church served a more political mission than a religious one, MPO president Christ Anastasoff claimed,

The Communists are unable to reach our people through politics so they use the church. . . They have no money to build churches in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, but in Toronto and Gary, Indiana, they build new churches. The churches are small, but each has a large hall where the people gather to read Communist propaganda.⁵²

Anastasoff further charged that Yugoslavia and Bulgaria were sending bishops like Bulgaria's Bishop Parteny to North America to sway Macedonians over to a Communist influenced view of Macedonian identity and history.⁵³ The fact that UM members in Toronto, Detroit, and other cities *did* meet in church basements to read Macedonian newspapers, and that some parishes chose to build meeting halls before actual churches, only fed the MPO's perception of the influence of Communism over their rivals.⁵⁴

The MPO understood that the German occupation of Macedonia during WWII and the decision of the Bulgarian regime to ally itself with the Nazis had turned many

⁵¹ James Sanders, text of speech Given by Mr. James Sanders and Mr. Vasil Dunda at the United Macedonians *Illinden* Picnic, 1960, unpublished, collection of James Sanders.

⁵² Macedonian Patriotic Organization, *Program of the 44th Annual Convention, 1967*, Multicultural Historical Society of Ontario, Macedonian collection.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ "Governments Send Communist Priests, Macedonians Charge," *Toronto Star*, September 4, 1967 (date uncertain).

Macedonians against Bulgaria. But as the largest organization representing Macedonians in North America, the MPO felt that it had achieved a certain pride of place in the diaspora. Most MPO members had been calling themselves Macedonians for decades and had survived earlier challenges to their legitimacy. They were going to fight on.⁵⁵ In November 1960 when the UM asked the leadership of Sts. Cyril and Methody Macedono-Bulgarian Church in Toronto to send their folk dance troupe to perform at a United Macedonians dance, the pro-MPO Church declined, arguing that, “the UM Canadian – Committee as an organization has been in existence a relatively short time and there still exists much vagueness in the character of the organization itself.”⁵⁶ In response, the UM said the snub did “a great wrong to the very Macedonian way of life. . . [and] that a good and cultured Macedonian is also a good Canadian.”⁵⁷

The United Macedonians listed over a hundred members by 1965. Many more non-members routinely attended UM dances and picnics. The list of members contained a large number of Greek surnames – Papadimitriou, Mangos, Sideris, Loukras – a clear indication of the influence of Aegean Macedonians in the group. Many of the new Macedonian arrivals had lived in villages where Greek officials had systematically rooted out the Slavic Macedonian customs they knew from birth. Many of these newcomers to

⁵⁵ Macedonian Patriotic Organization, “Peace, Freedom and Independence for Macedonia,” Address to the 43rd annual MPO convention, September 5-8, 1964, Detroit, MI, (Indianapolis: MPO, 1964), Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Macedonian collection.

⁵⁶ Letter from James Saunders to Cultural Committee, Sts. Cyril and Methody Macedono-Bulgarian Church, Toronto, November 8, 1960, personal collection of James Saunders; Letter from Peter Vassil and Carl H. Evans, Sts Cyril and Methody Macedono-Bulgarian Church to James Saunders, November 19, 1960, personal collection of James Saunders.

⁵⁷ Letter from James Saunders to Executive Committee, Sts. Cyril and Methody Macedono-Bulgarian Church, December 30, 1960, personal collection of James Saunders.

Toronto had been forced to change their family names sometime between 1913 and their departure from Europe as part of this Greek effort.⁵⁸

The UM's Political and National Vision

Though the UM often referred to as the United Macedonians of North America, the group's presence in the United States never achieved the size or momentum it did in Canada, with the possible exception of Detroit. A locus of leftist Macedonian activity since George Pirinsky's time, Detroit formed an active United Macedonians chapter in 1970, and the following year selected a "Miss Macedonia," Dobrila Jovanovska, who received a free trip to Skopje sponsored by JAT, the Yugoslav national air line. As in Toronto, much of the UM work in Detroit was cultural and educational, and brought together Macedonians from the greater Detroit and Windsor area for dances, picnics, and banquets. At a typical gathering a folk music group from Ontario crossed the border to perform at a UM dance in Detroit. Emblazoned across the invitation for the dance was the UM logo, which featured three torches representing the three parts of the pre-1913 Macedonian region the nationalists hoped to unite, Pirin, Vardar, and Aegean Macedonia.⁵⁹

The UM even drew upon one of the key historiographical figures of the earlier period, the Italian writer Giorgio Norigiani, who was a guest at the first convention, held

⁵⁸ United Macedonians, unpublished membership list, personal collection of James Saunders. Also cite human rights reports. Some changed their names after the Balkan Wars when Greece pressured administrators in Macedonian villages to eliminate vestiges of non-Greek minority cultures. Others who kept their Slavic names through the Greek civil war and, who then became refugees, were required to take on a Greek name before leaving European countries like Poland with which Greece had an agreement so as to keep track of emigrating refugees.

⁵⁹ United Macedonians - Detroit, dance invitation, May 1971, *Matiča* papers; The Association of the Refugee Children from Aegean Macedonia, *The Children of 1948*, (Toronto: *Dečata Begalči*, 1988)

by the United Macedonians in Toronto in 1970. The keynote address at the first convention was delivered by United Macedonians president Peter Kondoff, but was written by Spero Vasileff-Turpukovski, who spent considerable time in North America on behalf of the *Matiča*. The address drew upon several of the historical strains common in Nurigiani's writing – Macedonia's age-old history, its peaceful nature, its proud heritage. "The rich and humane traditions of the Macedonian people date back many, many centuries," said Kondoff. "This character of the Macedonian people saved our national identity throughout the ages."⁶⁰

In the speech Kondoff and Vasileff-Turpukovski reincarnate a key piece of the intellectual claim made by the Macedonian intellectual Krste Misirkov from a century earlier – that Macedonian identity was only dormant during the long Ottoman and Byzantine periods, and that a return to national vibrancy was now imminent. Kondoff's remarks honoring his Italian guest indicated the positive role he felt that such scholars could have in the arena of international opinion:

At this very Convention we are honored with Macedonian educators and historians who are authors of the Macedonian history written by Macedonians for the Macedonians. We no longer have to depend on people who are guided by personal and foreign interests to try and distort the history of Macedonia.⁶¹

⁶⁰ 1st UM Convention in Review, available at <http://www.unitedmacedonians.org/activities/1st.html>. By the 1990s, a new rift had opened among modern Macedonians with respect to their ethnic forebears. Some Macedonians in the diaspora and the home country began rejecting the label "Slavic Macedonians." One line of thinking held that calling them Slavic Macedonians cut them off from any of the achievements of pre-Slavic military and political leaders in the Balkans such as the fifteenth-century Tsar Samuel and the pre-Christian Alexander the Great. Another line of thinking looked less at the pre-Slavic leaders and instead argued that referring to Macedonians as Slavic Macedonians adds an unnecessary qualifier that makes the Macedonian nationality seem less authentic than those of its neighbors. See Steve Pliakes, interview with author, March 22, 2003; John S. Koliopoulos, "The War Over Identity and Numbers of Greece's Slav Macedonians," in *Ourselves and Others: The Development of a Greek Macedonian Cultural Identity Since 1912*, Peter Mackridge and Eleni Yannakakis, ed. (Oxford: Berg, 1997), 33.

⁶¹ Ibid. Kondoff's remarks were not meant to be ironic; he and his colleagues saw no contradiction confronting what they viewed as pro-Greek and pro-Bulgarian narratives with pro-Macedonian ones.

Within the broader transnational nation-building project, historical inquiry became not so much a means to greater understanding of the past, but a tool with which to engage in rhetorical skirmishes with groups beholden to opposing views.⁶²

Given that the political climate was more open in Canada than in the U.S. during the years of the Cold War, the UM found a welcome home in Toronto. UM member and future president Steve Pliakes suggested that Canadian law enforcement agencies like the Royal Canadian Mounted Police kept its eye on the group, though its members operated unmolested. In America, Senator Joseph McCarthy's moment had passed by the 1960s, but domestic surveillance by J. Edgar Hoover's FBI, and even the CIA's covert and illegal domestic operations, may have obstructed UM's growth. Because of its political affection for the socialist politics in Yugoslavia, the UM would have almost certainly come under greater scrutiny had they operated out of the United States.⁶³

Both the MPO and UM can be judged for their indifference to the excesses of the Bulgarian and Yugoslav governments, respectively. Despite their embrace of democracy and freedom, both groups supported governments that were, at times, abusive, tyrannical, and murderous.⁶⁴ Each concentrated its criticism on the "illegitimate" Macedonian

⁶² Given the lack of records, it is impossible to know whether Kondoff genuinely believed that the literature being put forth by academics and politicians in the Republic, and by groups like his, would sway the minds of non-Macedonians or whether it would merely contradict the existing ethnically-based work. Nor do we know whether Kondoff thought the work of Nurigiani and other contemporaneous Macedonian nationalists to be unbiased. As written history, much of this literature was suspect at best, and consisted largely of repeated myths and vignettes. Even Nurigiani's widely circulated book, *Macedonia Yesterday and Today*, was without footnotes or any pretense of synthesizing commonly accepted facts and reconciling them with research. In that regard, it bore the nationalistic fervor but none of the intellectual rigor of *On Macedonian Matters*, Krste Misirkov's work from more than half a century earlier.

⁶³ Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: The New Press, 2000)

⁶⁴ On political repression in Eastern Europe, including the Balkans, see John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice There Was a Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 229-260; Milovan Djilas, *Tito: The Story From Inside* (London: Phoenix Press, 1980)

polity. In a 1964 essay, *Peace, Freedom and Independence for Macedonia*, the MPO decried what it saw as “Belgrade Serbian chauvinism using new Communist methods . . . [and] Stalin’s blessings” to indoctrinate the population of the Republic. These Yugoslavs, according to the declaration, were guilty of “forcibly attempting to Serbianize the Macedonian Bulgarians under the guise of a non-existent Macedonian nationality.”

In fact, quite the opposite was happening; the Belgrade leadership was working to nurture Macedonian feelings in the Republic so as to neutralize the considerable affection toward Bulgaria and Bulgarian language and culture that still existed there. The MPO leaders, as well as Bulgarian officials in the capital of Sofia, strongly opposed this process, yet there was little they could do about it. That the conservative MPO remained committed to a Bulgarian state that had gone Communist left it with no future. Its membership was graying, and its goal of an independent, anti-Communist Macedonia with close ties to Bulgaria was now farther away than ever.⁶⁵

For its part, the UM criticized Yugoslavia’s neighbors for not being “fully independent and democratic,” contrasting them with the Macedonian Republic that was “free and equal” within Yugoslavia.⁶⁶ Criticizing the MPO for practicing “the old greater Bulgarian chauvinism,” the UM claimed that “the propaganda of the M.P.O. leaders confuse and complicate the solution of the Macedonian question.”⁶⁷ In October 1960,

⁶⁵ Macedonian Patriotic Organization, “Peace, Freedom and Independence for Macedonia,” address to the 43rd annual MPO convention, September 5-8, 1964, (Indianapolis: MPO, 1964), 1.

⁶⁶ In an essay on the “Macedonian Question,” the UM leadership in the late 1960s offered an unusually direct political vision of their role as immigrants to Canada: “we as Canadian citizens have no rights to interfere and dictate policies to the Macedonian people overseas. . . . However this does not mean that we have no moral obligations as Canadians of Macedonian descent to support and help them to achieve their aspirations and realize their hopes and plans. *United Macedonians and the Macedonian Question*, unpublished paper (no date), personal collection of James Saunders (Toronto: United Macedonians)

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

another publication, the *Canadian Macedonian*, leveled a baseless charge that the MPO supported “Hitler nostalgia.”⁶⁸

On the key issue of Macedonian territorial unity, however, there was remarkable similarity between the two organizations’ aims. The logos of both the MPO and the UM indicate that unifying the Macedonian region that existed during the Ottoman era was their ultimate, if unrealistic, wish. Both looked to someday bring about a greater Macedonia that incorporated the Pirin, Aegean, and Vardar components that lay respectively in Bulgaria, Greece, and Yugoslavia (though the MPO version of this state would have been a Bulgarian satellite). Both groups had committed themselves to the same revanchist policy that put them decidedly out of the international mainstream and cost them support at the United Nations.⁶⁹



Figure 17. MPO logo with image of Salonica, Greece



Figure 18. UM Logo

The MPO and UM spent considerable effort communicating their agendas to officials in the U.S. State Department, the Canadian Foreign Ministry, and the United Nations. The MPO unveiled a provocative proposal at its 1964 convention. Calling on

⁶⁸ *Canadian Macedonian*, October 1960, 4.

⁶⁹ Macedonia became an independent state on September 8, 1991, and was accepted into the United Nations on April 8, 1993 under the provisional name “The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,” or FYROM. Discussions with Greece over final status of the name continue in 2004. When it became an independent state in 1991, Macedonia had to renounce any territorial aspirations towards Greece or Bulgaria to be accepted by the international community

“public opinion and the responsible world statesmen” to bring about a “just solution of the Macedonian question,” MPO officials called for the entire pre-1913 Macedonian territory to be placed under the control of the United Nations as a protectorate. They also asked that the UN oversee the development of an independent Macedonia with equal rights for all groups patterned after Switzerland, a comparatively homogeneous country. The politically far-fetched plan would make Macedonia the “Switzerland of the Balkans” that the MPO had long sought in its literature. The position was a non-starter and soon even the Communist Party of Canada had adopted the more conservative view that Greek, Bulgarian, and Yugoslav borders should remain intact and war avoided at all cost.

However, the crux of the debate between the MPO on one side, and the UM and Macedonian leaders in the Republic on the other, can be seen in the list of groups the MPO wanted protected should the UN step in – “Bulgarians, Arumanians, Greeks, Albanians, Jews, and others.” These groups, and, pointedly, not “Macedonians,” represented the Macedonian people, according to the MPO.⁷⁰ The MPO’s unwillingness to modify this view enraged UM leaders and precluded any hopes for reconciliation. In the UM’s view, which closely mirrored the Macedonian nationalism that emerged from the Yugoslav Macedonian Republic, for four centuries, Bulgarians, Greeks, Jews, Albanians, Turks and others in Macedonia were but a minority in a land dominated by Macedonian-speaking Slavs with a Macedonian national consciousness. Many within the

⁷⁰ Macedonian Patriotic Association, “Peace, Freedom and Independence for Macedonia,” address to the 43rd annual MPO convention, September 5-8, 1964, Detroit, MI, (Indianapolis: MPO, 1964), Macedonian collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 3; Central Executive Committee, Communist Party of Canada, “On the Macedonian Question,” February 27, 1975, *Matiča* papers.

UM now regarded the belief that Macedonians represented a distinct people with national rights to be something of a litmus test for membership in their organization.⁷¹

National Identity and the Macedonian Orthodox Church

For the new Macedonian migrants, and for Orthodox residents of the Macedonian republic, the nation-building project could not be complete without a national Church.⁷² In the later half of the twentieth century, Macedonians abroad were one of the driving forces behind the creation of a new church that would meet their spiritual and political needs, and would acknowledge their perceived ethnic differences from the earlier generation of migrants. Among the modern generation of Macedonian migrants, belonging to a Macedonian Orthodox church community became perhaps the most prominent marker of the migrants' identities as Macedonians. And the relationship of the diaspora to the formation of that church becomes a critical piece in understanding the re-creations of Macedonian identity across the century.⁷³

⁷¹ Soon, another division opened among modern Macedonians. While the consensus remained that modern Macedonians were descendants of the Slavic tribes that invaded the Balkans in the sixth century AD, numerous pre-Slavic and even pre-Christian archeological finds in Greece and Macedonia convinced some that their "true" ancestors were the inhabitants of Alexander the Great's kingdom. By this view, Macedonians were not Slavs. Rather Slavs essentially became Macedonians (and Bulgarians, Serbs, Russians, etc) when they encountered a well-established people. One strain of this argument ignores the rich legacy ancient Greek historiography, architecture, literature, philosophy and political theory by claiming that it is the Macedonians, and not the Greeks, who deserved credit for nothing less than inventing Western civilization. The UM's Steve Pliakes is an example of this strain of thought. For visitors he proudly displays a color mural he commissioned that depicts Alexander the Great ready for battle, with Pliakes himself painted in as a foot soldier. Steve Pliakes, interview with author, March 22, 2003

⁷² Churches reflecting the political identity of its adherents were common in the Balkans. The Greek Orthodox Church, for example, resisted moves in 1999 by Greek authorities to remove religious affiliation from state-issued identification cards. The step was necessary for Greece to be in compliance with European Union rules governing the separation of church and state. Religious officials, however, saw the elimination of the identification of religion as a diminution of what they considered an essential component of Greek citizenship – membership in the Greek Church. Helena Smith, "Greek Church Starts Holy War Over ID Cards," *London Observer*, May 28, 2000, 26.

⁷³ While the Macedonian state archive and the Macedonian Orthodox Church do not make records of the Church readily available, numerous documents pertaining to the expansion of the Church to the diaspora

Prior to the second half of the twentieth century, no Macedonian Orthodox Church existed as such. When it emerged as an independent entity in 1967, critics of Macedonian identity immediately claimed that the Church, officially the *Makedonska Pravoslavna Crkva*, or Macedonian Orthodox Church (hereafter by its Macedonian initials, MPC), was a political creation of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) and therefore lacked ecumenical and historical credibility. Yet the critics seldom, if ever, acknowledge that the MPC was not simply created anew. Macedonian clerics saw it as the re-establishments of the Archbishopric of Ohrid, a seat of Orthodox spirituality that had existed for centuries in the Macedonian region until Ottoman authorities abolished it in 1767.

Today, the MPC is one of the smallest Eastern Orthodox churches, with perhaps somewhat over two million members worldwide. It lacks formal recognition by the Serbian, Russian, Bulgarian, and Greek Orthodox Churches, or from the Eastern Orthodox “mother church” in Istanbul, Turkey.⁷⁴ There are only a few brief historical studies of the formation and recent history of the Church in any language other than Macedonian, and apart from the brief, anonymously-written narrative of the MPC in the entry on Macedonians in the *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, the few English-language sources on the Church describe it simply as a religious and political artifact of the post-war era.⁷⁵

appear in the records of the *Matiča na Iseleničite*. A number of sources in this section draw upon those records.

⁷⁴ Communication between the MPC does take place on an informal level with some of these prelates, and with authorities at the Vatican.

⁷⁵ Assembled by historian Stephan Thernstrom in the early 1980s, the *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* is regarded as the authoritative compilation on the subject. While all the chapters on ethnic groups and immigration-related themes are signed, the entry on Macedonians is credited only to “Anonymous.” There has been much speculation that the politically-sensitive nature of the article – and the

When the Church itself entered the debate over its origins by publishing the “Short History of the Macedonian Orthodox Church,” the narrative began not in post-war Skopje as do the others, but during St. Paul’s mission to the city of Filippi in the years 51-54 AD.⁷⁶ Therefore, the slim literature on the MPC alternately dates the formation of the Church to the years after WWII and the years just after the life of Christ, depending on which narrative one takes at face value, and what definition of the MPC one chooses. One must assume that, as with much in the Macedonian historical narrative, parties describing what seems like the same subject may not be defining it in the same way. Countering charges that the Macedonian religion, language, and history – in essence, Macedonian culture – are new or artificially created, and therefore inauthentic, Macedonian nationalists have pushed the timeline of their founding myths and historical antecedents farther and farther back into the past so as to “compete” on more even ground with their detractors.

The discrepancies between the competing narratives that result from this process are not necessarily due to outright fabrication. For instance, spiritual men from the early Christian era did inhabit the Macedonian region, and before them, Alexander the Great was considered to be “King of the Macedonians.” The question seldom asked by nationalists on any side, however, is this: What does the modifier “Macedonian” actually mean when used in these Christian and pre-Christian contexts? Further is it appropriate

very fact that a separate chapter on Macedonians even exists – meant that no named author could ever be fair enough with the task of writing about Macedonian ethnicity without drawing criticism of bias from one or more interested party.

⁷⁶ Stephen E. Palmer and Robert R. King, *Yugoslav Communism and the Macedonian Question*, 134-173; Suzanne Gwen Hruby, Leslie Lazlo and Stevan K. Pawlowitch, “The Macedonian Orthodox Church,” in Pedro Ramet ed., *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1988), 242-243, 338-347; *Makedonskata Pravoslavna Crkva, Short History of the Macedonian*

to include the actions of early historical predecessors who do not share the same religion, language, or ethnic and racial background in a nation's long-range narrative?⁷⁷

Greek, Bulgarian, and Serbian critics, and even the short account of the history of the MPC written by Serbian historian Steven Pavlowitch, depict the Church's formation as more of an political process than a theological one. Even today, more than three decades after the MPC split from the Serbian Church, the Serbian Archbishop Pavle continues to reject the legitimacy of the breakaway church: "[The] Needs of communists were clear. . . [t]o destroy the unity of the Church in former Yugoslavia so they could have bigger control on it. [sic] Through the [MPC] they wanted to control the Macedonian Diaspora which could not be controlled by any state instrument."⁷⁸ Yet modern Macedonian nationalists' claim to a long Slavic Orthodox tradition are stronger than their claims made on the basis of language or mass ethnic identity; the idea that Macedonians were a distinct ethnic group emerged only in the nineteenth century, but Christian villagers in the Macedonian region had been worshipping, when permitted, in Slavic Orthodox churches for more than a thousand years.

A Christian center of learning did exist in the ancient city of Ohrid at the time of the Great Schism that split the Eastern Church from the Papacy in 1056 AD. The ninth century Saints Cyril and Methodius passed through Ohrid. And their students, Clement

Orthodox Church: The Third National Church Assembly, available at <http://www.m-p-c.org/History/history.htm>.

⁷⁷ One phenomenon I encountered over the course of numerous discussions and interviewed with Macedonian nationalists, political, and religious officials was the unwillingness of Macedonians to engage in debate about Macedonian history, or even listen to my own findings or interpretations. In virtually every discussion, I was told the history of Macedonia and its people, often with a sense of urgency that I report it "accurately" and not from a pro-Greek, Serbian, or Bulgarian viewpoint. Many of these individuals seemed uncomfortable with the notion that there even could be such a thing as a pro-Macedonian viewpoint, and many insisted that their version represented "the truth" and "not anybody else's version."

⁷⁸ Macedonian Information and Liaison Service, MILS News, Skopje, January 6, 2004.

and Naum, resided and preached there.⁷⁹ Over the succeeding five centuries, Ohrid served as a headquarters for proselytization efforts that succeeded in converting large parts of the Balkans, southeastern Europe, and later Russia, to Orthodox Christianity. Today, several dozen splendid medieval and Byzantine monasteries ring Lake Ohrid, and recent archeological digs, some sponsored by the Macedonian government, have unearthed additional monasteries beneath the foundations of those still standing. Many in the Republic have even taken to calling Ohrid “Macedonia’s Jerusalem.” Dismissing as a purely political gesture the desire by Macedonians to erect a church with Macedonian-speaking priests therefore does not give credit to the tradition of Slavic villagers seeking to worship in a language that they understood, a tradition that helped sustain the Christian Orthodox faith and folkways during four centuries of Ottoman rule.⁸⁰

The narrative of the post-WWII development of the modern MPC is not as controversial. By the 1950s a ready audience for a Macedonian-speaking clergy had emerged in the Republic and among the thousands of Macedonians who had already left for the diaspora since the end of WWII. Serbian Orthodox clerics and CPY officials also realized that attempts by Serbia during the interwar years to “Serbianize” the local

⁷⁹ Saints Clement and Naum are credited with codifying the “Glagolitic” alphabet which became the basis for Slavic languages like Russian, Bulgarian, Serbian, and eventually Macedonian. The monastery of St. Clement of Ohrid, still exists in rebuilt form on the southern shore of Lake Ohrid and has in recent years become some of a pilgrimage site for Orthodox Christians tracing the roots of the Church. Boris Vishinski, “The Revival of the Ohrid Archbishopric,” *Macedonian Review*, 1979 9(1): 5-8.

⁸⁰ See, for instance, *Makedonskata Pravoslavna Crkva, Short History of the Macedonian Orthodox Church: The Third National Church Assembly*, available at <http://www.m-p-c.org/History/history.htm>; *Makedonski Glasnik* (Macedonian Herald), vol. 1 no. 1 (Toronto: United Macedonians, 1999). Serbian and Bulgarian Orthodox, and to a lesser extent, Greek Orthodox, histories also claim the legacy of the early saints and of the importance of Ohrid in retelling the stories of their development. The MPC, and histories published by the Republic, have rejected these rival claims and counter that the saints must be returned to their rightful place as the historical harbinger of the Macedonian Church

Macedonian population had failed, and that a long-term solution was needed if Macedonia was to remain a peaceful constituent republic within the Yugoslav state. In 1943 and 1944, bishops in the larger Macedonian towns began demanding greater freedom from the Belgrade-based Serbian synod. In 1945 Serbian clerics rejected the bishops' requests for greater autonomy. In response, the bishops formed the "Initiative Committee for the Establishment of the Macedonian Orthodox Church."⁸¹

In Belgrade, the CPY had a pragmatic as well as ideological reason to promote Macedonian nationalism. The CPY faced the challenge of countering any remaining Bulgarian national feelings among residents of the Macedonian Republic while still maintaining order among all the Yugoslav republics. Because the CPY encouraged a degree of Macedonian nationalism, it permitted the Macedonian bishops to press their case for a separate church. For the next decade the bishops reiterated their demands, and the CPY was forced to navigate between the staunch opposition of the Serbian clerics and the lingering resentment of many Macedonians toward Serbia for its oppressive occupation of Macedonia between 1913 and 1944. In 1958 two events pushed the debate over the creation of a separate Macedonian church closer to a flash point. That year, Serbian religious authorities demanded that Serbian bishops be seated in the Macedonian diocese. Additionally, Bulgaria, taking an increasingly more pro-Soviet line, decided on a hard line policy toward Yugoslavia that included publicly renouncing the existence of the Macedonian ethnic identity. Bulgaria was by now a loyal satellite of the Soviet Union, but had experienced generally positive relations with Yugoslavia despite the later

⁸¹ Stephen E. Palmer and Robert R. King, *Yugoslav Communism and the Macedonian Question*, 166. See, also, Michael B. Petrovich, "Yugoslavia: Religion and the Tensions of a Multi-National State," *East European Quarterly*, 1972 6(1): 118-135.

state's split from Moscow in 1948. This new policy prompted the CPY to speed up the process of finding a solution to the church issue.

Taking advantage of what they saw as an opening created by Bulgaria's moves and Yugoslavia's counter-moves, a number of the Macedonian bishops held a conference in Ohrid that year at which they announced the re-establishment of the Archbishopric of Ohrid, which had been abolished in 1767. Though the Archbishopric – in essence a Macedonian Church – became separate from the Serbian synod with the Macedonian bishops' move, the new entity was not completely self-ruling and still reported to the Serbian archbishop. Belgrade succeeded at coercing the Serbian church to acquiesce to the Macedonian move while permitting the Macedonian bishops only a half-measure of independence. Much as it had done since taking power in 1944, Josef Tito's ruling party managed to maintain control, retaining leverage over all parties involved.⁸²

This new arrangement lasted less than a decade. Pressure mounted from Macedonian communities in North America and Australia for an independent church. In May 1967, the Serbian synod rejected a request by the Macedonian bishops that would have granted their archbishopric complete independence, or "autocephaly." According to Steve Pliakes, Macedonians in Toronto played a prominent role in forcing the hand of the Macedonian bishops on the independence question. Canadian officials bent on administrative order demanded that Toronto Macedonians identify themselves with a recognized church before they would grant them a charter. Not wanting to belong to a Serbian or Bulgarian church, the leaders in turn pushed back on Skopje to move toward

⁸² Ibid., 169-170; *Short History of the Macedonian Orthodox Church: The Third National Church Assembly* (Skopje: Macedonian Orthodox Church, no date).

independence.⁸³ Squeezed by the growing size and assertiveness of the diaspora, which was demanding parishes that would use the modern Macedonian language - and with priests that would respect the settler's claims to their Macedonian identity - the Macedonian bishops simply declared the new Macedonian Orthodox Church to be autocephalous in July of that year.⁸⁴

Two hundred years after the abolition of the Ohrid see, a new Macedonian Church now existed. The Macedonian bishops already had created two new dioceses, one for the Debar-Kičevo region of Macedonia, and one for the Canadian, American, and Australian communities abroad. Very Reverend Dositej, the highest-ranking church official, presided over the “independence” conference and became the Church's first head. Another key Bishop, Kiril, became the head of the diocese that encompassed much of the diaspora. The distant Macedonian communities had developed so quickly in the post-war years that they became a driving force behind the expansion of the Church. Macedonians in Melbourne, Gary, and Toronto anticipated the Church's independence and had formed parishes prior to 1967. The creation of a diocese for the diaspora, and the appointment of Bishop Kiril – a champion of church expansion – to staff the new diocese, was a clear indication that the Church intended to grow outward with a supply of priests ordained by the new body.⁸⁵

⁸³ Steve Pliakes, interview with author, March 22, 2003.

⁸⁴ *Makedonska Pravoslavna Crkva vo Kanada*, report of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, 1962, Archives of the Republic of Macedonia, Records of the Committee for Religious Issues; *Short History of the Macedonian Orthodox Church: The Third National Church Assembly* (Skopje: Macedonian Orthodox Church, no date).

⁸⁵ *Short History of the Macedonian Orthodox Church*.

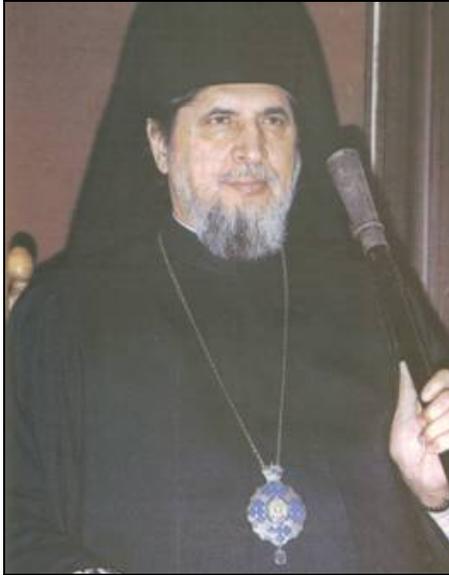


Figure 19. Bishop Kiril, the Macedonian Orthodox Church representative to the North American Diocese, in a recent photo.

Serbian clerics protested the MPCs declaration of independence but there was little they could do once Belgrade assented to the Macedonian bishops and the Ohrid conference. Since neither Greece nor Bulgaria recognized the Macedonian national identity, both nations refused to recognize the new church, and promptly declared it a political creation of Yugoslavia's unique brand of ethnic socialism.⁸⁶ The Eastern Orthodox capitol in Constantinople would not allow what it saw as political nationalism to be the primary force for the creation of a new branch of the Church, and therefore refused to sanction the Macedonian Church. This did not stop Macedonians in the Republic, and in the dozens of diaspora communities, from seeing the new Church as the protector of their own national and religious interests.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ In 1967 Greece came under the rule of a right-wing military junta. Not surprisingly, relations with Yugoslavia, and specifically the Macedonian Republic, suffered at a time when Macedonian nationalists sought to extend their franchise abroad.

⁸⁷ *Makedonska Pravoslavna Crkva vo Kanada*, report of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, 1962, Records of the Committee for Religious Issues; Suzanne Gwen Hruby, Leslie Lazlo and Stevan K. Pawlowitch, "The Macedonian Orthodox Church," 173, 342.

Extension of the Macedonian Orthodox Church to the Diaspora

There was immediate demand for Macedonian Orthodox Church parishes in the diaspora. The process of forming a new parish often began with several dozen men and women who felt the need for creating a central space for *nashi*, or countrymen, to gather, worship, and celebrate religious and cultural events. The church or social hall, once built, would replace the informal networks of coffee shops, saloons, and private homes where loose groups of the migrants previously had been meeting. The first step was the establishment of a building fund, followed by an appeal to the congress of Macedonian bishops in Skopje to send a priest to North America. It was the responsibility of a *Metropolitan*, or bishop, to balance the needs of the community with the considerable cost and time associated with training and ordaining a new Orthodox priest and then housing him abroad.⁸⁸

In tandem with the development of an autocephalous Macedonian Orthodox Church, diaspora communities pushed to establish parishes that conformed to their political and cultural outlook. The first effort toward building a Macedonian Church in the diaspora was not in North America but in Melbourne, Australia, and preceded even the declaration of the reconstituted Ohrid Archbishopric in 1957. A group of Macedonian immigrants rallied there on May 14, 1956, and declared, “The Macedonian

⁸⁸ The *Matiča* and the Macedonian Orthodox Church took an active interest in the plans made by Macedonian leaders for new parishes in the diaspora. From the records that the State Archive of Macedonia has now made available, it is evident that the two organizations documented much of the growth of the Macedonian communities in North America after 1967. *Makedonska Pravoslavna Crkva vo Kanada*, report of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, 1962, Records of the Committee for Religious Issues.; *Na Najtorzestven Nachin Beshe Odbelezon Patronet Praznik Na Makedonska Crkvna Opshtina Sv. Sv. Kiril I Metodi vo Lackawanna, N.Y.*, official report of Bishop Kiril’s visit, January 29, 1971, Records of the Committee for Religious Issues.

immigration in Melbourne, led by the ideas of the glorious *Illinden* fighters for national and church liberation . . . are forced to build our own church due to the numerous difficulties we are experiencing with foreign churches.” When the Church opened as St. George’s a few years later it became the first Macedonian Church in the diaspora to repudiate connections to existing Orthodox synods. In that same month the first new Macedonian Church in North America, Sts. Peter and Paul, opened in Gary, Indiana. Macedonians in Columbus, Ohio, formed a council in June 1963 to explore forming a church there as well.⁸⁹

The United Macedonians also played a key role in promoting the Macedonian Orthodox Church in North America. In Toronto, for instance, those who pushed for a new parish were leading figures during the formation of the United Macedonians as well. Leaders of the Macedonian Orthodox church took political considerations into account when deciding on new parishes in the diaspora, and even indicated so in their reports from the field.⁹⁰ The new Macedonian identity unapologetically mixed religion and politics. From the outset, groups like the UM understood the need to display its patriotism toward Canada and the U.S. and its nationalism for Macedonia. It relentlessly courted city, provincial, and national leaders to appear at the annual *Illinden* picnics. At picnics, Macedonian nationalists gave hours of speeches about the need for peace and

⁸⁹ Slave Nikolovski-Katin, *Makedonski vo CAD I Kanada* (Skopje: Iskra Publishers, 2002), 49. The location in Gary, IN, which was essentially the highly-industrial eastern edge of the Chicago metropolis, indicated the concentration of Macedonians who worked in the steel and auto trades around the Great Lakes cities

⁹⁰ In 1974, Macedonian Orthodox Church leaders in North America chose to hold their annual convocation on the American Labor Day weekend. The MPO too held its annual conference that weekend which ensured little crossover between the groups. According to Steve Pliakes, the UM frequently met in the basement meeting rooms of St. Clement of Ohrid Church in Toronto. Within the papers and publications of the *Matiča*, the MPO, and the UM one finds dozens of invitations and flyers for banquets, picnics, and dinners honoring Macedonian religious and civil holidays.

justice in Macedonia. Macedonian Orthodoxy mixed effortlessly with these political displays. Despite the criticism by other Orthodox churches that the push for an independent Macedonian church was connected to Yugoslavia's political agenda for Macedonia, Macedonian clerics did not see a sharp line between their religious mission and that nationalist zeal that the UM brought to St. Clement.⁹¹



Figure 20. An Illinden celebration in Toronto in 1968 with United Macedonians and Macedonian Orthodox Church representatives. Slave Nikolovski-Katin and Fidanka Tanackova, *Makedonski Vozneš: Makedonska Pravoslavna Crkva Sveti Kliment Ohridski – Toronto*, (Toronto: St. Clement of Ohrid, 1994), 97.

One way Macedonians began to regularly remember a unique Macedonian past was to celebrate holidays and memorials to religious saints and military heroes. This was strongly encouraged by emissaries from the *Matiča*. One photograph in particular from the UM *Illinden* picnic in Toronto in 1968 indicates the degree to which religion and politics became intertwined in the modern climate. In the photo, eight men stand behind a table bearing wine, candles, and a large *pogocha*, or egg bread used at religious

⁹¹ Slave Nikolovski-Katin and Fidanka Tanackova, *Makedonski Vozneš: Makedonska Pravoslavna Crkva Sveti Kliment Ohridski – Toronto*, (Toronto: St. Clement of Ohrid, 1994), 46-47.

ceremonies. Two priests and two altar boys were joined by four church members to honor “Macedonia’s fallen soldiers,” presumably a reference to the *Illinden*-era guerrillas who fought the Turks. Behind the men were photographs on a board of five early-century guerrilla fighters including, most prominently, Goče Delchev. Above the photos were signs reading, “Long Live Illinden! Long Live Canada,” and a Canadian flag. This tableau seemed represented the quintessence of modern Macedonian nationalism in Upper America – a reverence for the freedoms granted in Canada, a religious fervor mixed with politics, and an appeal to historic figures such as fighters from the late Ottoman period, all at a social event featuring music, dancing, and Macedonian food.⁹²

The *Matiča*, too, played a role in the expansion of the Macedonian Orthodox Church to the diaspora, working as an intermediary between the leaders of the local communities and officials in the formidable bureaucracies created in the new socialist state. In one possible failed effort, *Matiča* representatives and local officials tried to organize Macedonians in Pittsburgh by arranging a screening of a filmed version of *Makedonska Krvava Svadba*, (*Macedonian Bloody Wedding*) the anti-Turkish play that Macedonians had staged in Toronto as far back as 1915.⁹³ No Macedonian Orthodox parish ever opened in Pittsburgh, but *Matiča* officials were more successful in Toronto. In 1961 Spiro Saunders, a successful tavern owner, and father of UM leader James Saunders, met with *Matiča* representative, Tome Bouglevski in Skopje to discuss the creation of a Macedonian Orthodox church parish in Toronto. Bouglevski agreed to help set up a meeting with Saunders and Church officials. Given the growing Macedonian

⁹² Ibid., 97.

⁹³ Film invitation, *Matiča* papers, Archive of the Republic of Macedonia, box 12; *50th Anniversary Almanac, Ss. Cyril and Methody, 1910-1960*, 41.

population in the city and the opportunity to expand the Church to Canada, the Macedonian bishops agreed to send a delegation to conduct a feasibility study. The delegation stayed two months and included, among others, Bishop Kiril, the Church representative to the diaspora.⁹⁴

After the visit, the delegation approved the Toronto request and church services began immediately in interim spaces like the Zhelevo Brotherhood social hall. The Church representatives' report on the visit indicates several factors that supported their decision to approve a parish for Toronto. They cited a population of "nearly 50,000 Macedonians who manage nearly 1,200 restaurants." Like many Greek migrants – for whom the restaurant business was a strong draw – Macedonians took to running diners and restaurants so aggressively that a local quip claimed that it was hard to dine out in Toronto without eating in a Macedonian or Greek owned establishment. The report's broader point, however, was that by 1962 the city had a financially stable Macedonian community that could support a viable parish, and perhaps support causes in the homeland. Another primary reason was the existence of the two Bulgaro-Macedonian churches in the city, which the report dismissed simply as "Bulgarian churches." The issues here was not the existence of the churches themselves, but as the report noted, the close connection they had to the MPO. The report, therefore, notes that in addition to the spiritual needs of the Toronto community, the location of a parish there would help counter a political foe.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Dr. Alexander Georgievski, "Remembering a Founding Member of St. Clement's Macedonian Church," *Makedonija* (newspaper of the United Macedonians), January 15, 2003, personal collection of James Saunders, 4; *Makedonska Pravoslavna Crkva vo Kanada*, report of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, 1962, Records of the Committee for Religious Issues, 1.

⁹⁵ *Makedonska Pravoslavna Crkva vo Kanada*, report of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, 1962, Records of the Committee for Religious Issues, 1-2.

With the permission of the synod to move ahead, several of the Toronto Macedonians, including Spero and James Saunders, Koste Riste Andrews, Paul Bassil, Michael and Steve Neshivich, Van Petroff, Don Pappas, and Spiro Talevski, formed a building committee to raise funds. The Province of Ontario granted the group a charter for the “Macedonian Orthodox Church Congregation, St. Clement of Ohrid, Toronto, Canada,” on October 1, 1962. The founders laid the cornerstone of the third Macedonian Orthodox Church in the diaspora on April 5, 1964, a little less than five years after the restoration of the archbishopric of Ohrid. On April 15, 1965, St. Clement of Ohrid was dedicated. Unlike the first Macedonian and Bulgarian churches in North America half a century earlier, St. Clement was in a middle class neighborhood of brick homes near the Don Valley, away from the slaughterhouses and wooden row houses of the city’s Junction and West End neighborhoods. A Church delegation from Skopje traveled to Toronto to attend the dedication ceremony, with the Very Reverend Dositej, the highest-ranking Church official yet to visit the diaspora, presiding over the ceremonies.⁹⁶

From the start, Toronto’s St. Clement cathedral became something of a first-among-equals in the North American Macedonian communities. Its striking architecture, with its gold inlaid icon of St. Clement above the door and its gold-domed cupola four stories above it, earned it the *de facto* reputation as the “mother church” for Macedonians in North America. The close relationships between the founders of St. Clement and the leaders of the United Macedonians organization that formed roughly at the same time

⁹⁶ Dr. Alexander Georgievski, “Remembering a Founding Member of St. Clement’s Macedonian Church,” *Makedonija*, newspaper of the United Macedonians, January 15, 2003, personal collection of James Saunders, 4; Charter for St. Clement’s, Province of Ontario, October 1, 1962, personal collection of James Saunders; Slave Nikolovski Katin, *Makedonski vo CAD I Kanada*, 49; Slave Nikolovski-Katin and Fidanka Tanackova, *Makedonski Vozneš: Makedonska Pravoslavna Crkva Sveti Kliment Ohridski – Toronto* (Toronto: St. Clement of Ohrid, 1994), 61-63.

also put the Toronto Macedonian leaders in a position to be able to influence the political and cultural messages that circulated among other churches. And the growth of the parishes did not stop after the consecration of St. Clement. The success of the Gary and Toronto communities prompted the dozen or more localities with sizable Macedonian populations to fundraise and seek the synod's assent.⁹⁷

In Lackawanna, New York, the movement to organize the community and collect funds to establish a parish preceded an official visit by Metropolitan Kiril by two years. Lackawanna was a key industrial city just south of Buffalo, home to Bethlehem Steel and other large employers of immigrant labor. Western New York had been home to Macedonians for over fifty years and had boasted active chapters of the MPO and the socialist Macedonian People's League. Buffalo settlers also followed the activities of Macedonians in Toronto, which was only a two-hour drive away. As was the case with the Detroit/Windsor, Ontario, Macedonian immigrant communities, Macedonians in Buffalo, Hamilton, Ontario, and Toronto treated the U.S.–Canada border as a nuisance at best. They traversed it freely to attend dances, conduct business, and engage in *nevesta*, or match-making for eligible young men and women.

In the mid-1960s, a small number of recent migrants from the Republic who had settled in the Buffalo area began soliciting pledges for a building fund through a network of coffee shops, Slavic-owned restaurants, saloons, and workplaces like the local Bethlehem Steel, Ford, and General Motors plants. By 1969, approximately fifty heads of families had committed a little over \$5,000 to the building fund. While a handful of donors offered donations of five dollars, a group of 25 funders pledged between \$100 and

⁹⁷ Atanas Bliznakov, *Spomeni za Nacionalnata, Politichkata, y Kulturata Dejnost Na Makedončite vo CAD I Kanada* (Skopje: Kultura, 1987), 107-114.

\$500 each for the yet-to-be-named parish. The fundraising effort was not only of interest to the Buffalo and Lackawanna-based immigrants; it was a North American effort that drew on at least two dozen donors from other parishes. The building committee recorded donations from members of United Macedonians from Toronto and Hamilton, both by individual and by group name. The synod in Skopje took note of the broad support and approved the creation of a new parish in late 1970 or early 1971.⁹⁸

Official recognition came in 1971 when *Metropolitan* Kiril visited the Lackawanna group for an inaugural banquet at which G. Lubin Nechovski was introduced as the community's second president, succeeding Mirče Vassilov, who had been elected the previous year. The parish was given the name Sts. Cyril and Methody after the ninth century Slavonic saints. The banquet day included a visit by Metropolitan Kiril to several infirm Macedonians at Lackawanna's Our Lady of Victory hospital, and a greeting by Matthew Kubic of a nearby Polish Catholic church. There are no mentions of any interaction between the Macedonians and other Orthodox Church representatives in the records of Kiril's visit, even though Macedonians often attended other Orthodox churches before forming their own parish. The absence of any other Orthodox clerics, however, is not surprising given their opposition to the Macedonian Church. The banquet concluded with a round of speeches, including remarks from Aleksandar Condovski, secretary of St. Clement of Ohrid in Toronto, and a performance by a Macedonian folk troupe from Toronto.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ *Na Nashi Chlenovi I Nechlenovi Koi Dale Svoj pledge ili donation za nashiot building fund*, building fund register, 1969, Records of the Committee for Religious Issues.

⁹⁹ *Na Najtorzestven Nachin Beshe Odbelezon Patronet Praznik Na Makedonska Crkvna Opshtina Sv. Sv. Kiril I Metodi vo Lackawanna, N.Y.*, official report of Bishop Kiril's visit, January 29, 1971, Records of the Committee for Religious Issues.

In its report on the new parish, MPC officials referred to the new community as the “manifestation of the people’s emigration to Lackawanna and Buffalo.” The comment seemed to reflect the Church’s understanding that the growth of church communities in the diaspora was a central part of its growth strategy. As well, in using “the people’s emigration,” it also reinforced its view that Macedonians constituted a singular people, and echoed the popular socialist phraseology, “People’s Republic of Macedonia.” In 1974, the St. Cyril and Methody founders used the building fund to secure a mortgage on a social hall on Lake Avenue in the Buffalo suburb of Blasdell, New York. Rather than build a church first, as in Toronto, organizers chose a building where the Sunday service could be held on a stage that would also be used for folk dances, banquets, and fund-raisers. The diocese decided to divide the time of a single priest between the new Hamilton parish 70 miles away and the Lackawanna group, which would hold mass only once or twice per month until a permanent church was finally built adjacent to the hall in 1984.¹⁰⁰

The location of the church in Blasdell reflected similar demographic and economic patterns seen in the Toronto church. As they began to earn living wages in the industrial plants of the Great Lakes regions during the 1950s and 1960s, the new migrants quickly moved out of cheaper flats in heavily working-class areas like Lackawanna and South Buffalo and into single family homes in Buffalo suburbs like Blasdell, Hamburg, and West Seneca. Until it began cutting back employment in the early 1980s, Bethlehem Steel alone employed over 20,000 people at its plants along Lake Erie. Other employers, like Chenango Steel and the Ford and Chevrolet auto assembly plants, offered jobs with

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

living wages and benefits to several thousand East European immigrants in Western New York. This coincided with a period of rapid post-war suburbanization in the Buffalo area in which tens of thousands of German, Irish, Polish, and other European immigrant families left Buffalo and Lackawanna for single-family homes in nearby suburbs. Emulating the rapid progress of the “*Illinden* generation” from laborers to shopkeepers and small-business owners, many Macedonians had gained solid positions within the industrial, manufacturing, and restaurant trades, or had become painters, construction subcontractors, bakers, or grocery owners and managers. A few moved even more quickly into business success and financial comfort.¹⁰¹

The expansion of parishes that brought the Macedonian Orthodox Church to Columbus, Gary, Toronto, and Buffalo in the 1960s and 1970s has slowed but not stopped, and new church communities have since formed in Brooklyn, NY, Los Angeles, CA, and Markham, ON. About thirty parishes today service a total population of approximately 150,000-200,000 Macedonians in North America, many of them a good distance away from the Great Lakes cities that comprised the original settler communities. A trickle of immigrants from Macedonia continue to arrive each year, often in order to reunite with family in the U.S. and Canada, and each year an equivalent

¹⁰¹ *Na Najtorzestven Nachin Beshe Odbelezon Patronet Praznik Na Makedonska Crkvna Opshtina Sv. Sv. Kiril I Metodi vo Lackawanna, N.Y.*, official report of Bishop Kiril’s visit, January 29, 1971, Records of the Committee for Religious Issues; Mark Goldman, *High Hopes: The Rise and Decline of Buffalo New York* (Buffalo: SUNY Press, 1983); Milton Rogovin and Michael Frisch, *Portraits in Steel* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier, The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

number retire back in the region of their birth where a social security check from several decades of labor abroad provides a comfortable existence.¹⁰²

Conclusion

By the 1970s, a stable Macedonian national identity was shared by a significant portion of “modern” Macedonians, many affiliated in some way with a Macedonian Orthodox Church parish. This identity drew upon key figures and moments of historical change spanning the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Just as important as the nation-building scheme of Tito’s Yugoslavia and the advocacy of George Pirinsky were the political and cultural contributions of early writers like Krste Misirkov. The religious architecture and iconography present throughout Macedonia too has contributed to the creation of a narrative and to myths that support the modern Macedonian identity.

Yet those nationalists who claim that Macedonians have always “known” they were Macedonians going back hundreds, even thousands, of years, simply are not convincing. They merely are taking an ahistorical approach to an historical problem. In fact, the desire of these nationalists to read Macedonian identity back into antiquity is itself a factor in the creation, and re-creation, of Macedonian identity since about the 1870s. For the larger majority who argue that Macedonians “became Macedonians” one hundred years ago, or only after Tito told them so after 1944, both are right to a degree. And wrong. The development of the various Macedonian identities, just like the development of all ethnic, national, and religious identities, is an historical process that

¹⁰² Specific information about each parish can be found in the program for the Macedonian Orthodox Church, 29th American-Canadian Diocese Annual Convocation, August 29 – September 1, 2003, Markham, ON, in author’s possession.

takes place over time in the context of specific political, cultural, and economic circumstances. Put another way, before being imagined, all communities were “unimagined” at some point.

Recently, Macedonian history professor Nade Proeva told a journalist writing about Macedonia, “Whatever you write, understand that every nation here has its own truth. In the Balkans we only speak through myths. We can’t have an intellectual discussion when one nation’s war hero is another nation’s war criminal.”¹⁰³ Given the power of myth, Proeva’s quote does not offer scholars much hope that objective analysis can elicit a clearer picture of historical truth. It is true that a snapshot of the Macedonian diaspora reveals many of the cultural and political striations that have grown in preceding decades. The population remains small compared to other Southeastern European diasporas and retains a sense of national insecurity. Debates over relations Macedonia’s neighbors continue, though they are somewhat tempered by concern over the long-term viability of communities that are no longer experiencing the sort of migratory inflows of the post-war decades.

Across the ocean, where many family members remain, the Balkans still are more unsettled than the rest of Europe, and mentioning Macedonia’s place on the peninsula still evokes images of political and cultural clash. Feelings of victimization remain strong in the modern variant of Slavic Macedonian nationalism; a recent treatise by Macedonian writer Risto Stefov bears a title that many Macedonians would not dispute:

¹⁰³ Nade Proeva, Professor of History, University Sveti Kiril I Metodi, Skopje, 1995, quoted in Priit J. Vesilind, “Macedonia: Caught In The Middle,” *National Geographic*, vol. 189, no. 3, March 1996, 121.

*Macedonia: What Went Wrong in the Last 200 Years?*¹⁰⁴ In short, events, identities, and memories still are contested in Macedonian global culture, as they were during the formation and re-formation of that culture. The national still meets the transnational with notable frequency and considerable friction.

¹⁰⁴Risto Stefov, *Macedonia: What Went Wrong in the Last 200 Years?* (Skopje: Mak-News.com, 2002-2003).

Epilogue: Macedonian Identity in Many Forms

An Acknowledged Identity

By the last decades of the twentieth century, a fundamental shift had occurred in the most popular version of Macedonian identity. What had been missing for so long among the various factions of Macedonian immigrants – a broadly-held ethnic and national consciousness – had emerged. Post-WWII migrants came to outnumber those from the pre-WWII “MPO generation.” Though the MPO, and its organ, the *Macedonian Tribune*, continued, it increasingly addressed an older, smaller, and less politically dynamic population. Though the new dominant identity itself contained internal divisions and debates, it found consensus around the notion that Macedonians were ethnically Macedonian, regardless of when the ethnicity came about. Additionally, the Macedonian identity has achieved a degree of external legitimacy. It has been rare in recent decades, for instance, for Serbian, Bulgarian, or Greek political leaders to publicly refute the concept of Macedonian identity, even as they have voiced specific concerns about Macedonian appropriating cultural and historic symbols the leaders perceived as their own.

A crucial test of the Macedonian identity came just as the number of Macedonian Orthodox parishes in North America and Australia was growing. After a prolonged illness, Josef Broz Tito, the Yugoslav autocrat whose policies were so important to the development of Macedonian identity, died on May 4, 1980. Greek critics who argued that the Macedonian identity was a creation of Tito himself waited to see what would

happen now that Tito was gone. Tito had achieved near cult-like status in Yugoslavia and his funeral attracted dozens of world leaders. For more than thirty years, Tito successfully held together Yugoslavia's disparate parts, embracing both Stalinism and capitalism at various times, while never committing fully to either. Despite its official stance as a Communist nation, Yugoslavia had enjoyed relatively warm relations with the United States, from whom it received nearly \$4 billion in aid after Belgrade broke with Moscow in 1948.¹

But Tito's death did not prove to be especially challenging for a Macedonian diaspora that was increasingly concerned about the well-being of Slavic Macedonians who remained in Northern Greece. Toronto was the focal point of efforts by a new organization of Aegean Macedonians to pressure Greece to improve its poor treatment of the "refugee children," and to acknowledge the presence of a Slavic Macedonian minority in Greece. Known simply as *Dečata Begalči*, the organization had close ties to the United Macedonians, and to the political leadership of St. Clement and the other Macedonian Orthodox Churches in Ontario. The pinnacle of the organization's influence came in 1988 when it organized a worldwide reunion of nearly 3000 Aegean Macedonian refugee children in Skopje to mark the 40th anniversary of their forced departure from Greece. For many attendees it was the first time they had seen one another since childhood. Macedonian officials in the Republic welcomed the event as a way to

¹ American President Jimmy Carter actually drew sharp criticism from U.S. allies for his decision to skip the Tito burial. One explanation is that the U.S. was consumed with countering the recent Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

pressure Greece into better treatment of their minority population, and to tie together Macedonians from the diaspora and from the homeland.²



Figure 21. A map from MyMacedonia.net depicting what Macedonian nationalists view as the full extent of Macedonian territory.

Dozens of planes, including many charters bound from Toronto, New York, Melbourne, and Sydney, descended on the tiny Skopje airport in the summer 1988. An intense heat wave – even Balkans standards – hit the region during the gathering, killing dozens in Greece and Macedonia. Temperatures over 110F degrees only added to the drama; the Yugoslav and Macedonian press exploited the presence of the planeloads of Macedonians to the full extent. Several days of political events, speeches, dance performances, and tours of Skopje, Kruševo, Ohrid, and Bitola, and other historic Macedonian town and cities followed. Clerics from the Macedonian Orthodox Church were prominent at every event, and a new song in the Macedonian folk tradition, “*Kade Ste Makedončina*” (“*Where Are You, Macedonian Children?*”) debuted. The centerpiece of the reunion was an emotional outdoor reception along the banks of the Vardar River at which former refugee children were invited to the microphone to call out the names of

² The Association of the Refugee Children from Aegean Macedonia, *The Children of 1948* (Toronto: Dečata Begalči, 1988). See also the special issue on the return of several thousand Aegean Macedonians to Yugoslavia and Greece in *Makedonija*, journal of the *Matiča na Iselenicite*, 1988.

long-lost friends and family members. Numerous tear-filled exchanges followed as childhood relationships from war-torn northern Greece were reestablished in front of thousands of onlookers. At one intensely private and public moment in the life of the diaspora, it was, at the same time, the quintessence of the national and transnational meeting one another without it seeming strange at all.³

The reunion helped *Dečata Begalci* and numerous groups of refugee children living in Australia and the U.S. succeed in putting Greece on the defensive about their human rights record toward their Macedonian-speaking minority. The diasporic voice was arguably more potent than protests from Skopje because the diaspora groups had ready access to Western policymakers, press, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), all of whom could help amplify their message. Macedonian influence in Canada, for instance, was substantial enough for Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau to visit the Yugoslav Macedonian Republic in 1982.⁴

Greece would not be swayed so easily, though, on the issue of Macedonian identity. When several busloads of the former refugees, or *begaleč* – including many from the Toronto community – attempted to enter Greece in July 1998 to visit their birth villages, Greek officials turned them away at the border because they refused to identify themselves as Greek. Instead border officials insisted on treating the refugees as Greek nationals. Their visit was known in advance, and members of *Dečata Begalci* used the incident to publicize their views that Greece was in violation of the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the Helsinki Accords, whose provisions protect minority populations.

³*Matiča na Iseleničite, Makedonija, Ilustrano Spisanie na Matiča na Iseleničite od Makedonija*, 1988, in author's possession.

⁴“Trudeau Visiting Macedonia,” *New York Times*, 13 June 1982, 32.

The Macedonian argument gained credence with the publication in 1994 of a report by the non-governmental organization (NGO) Human Rights Watch, *Denying Ethnic Identity: The Macedonians of Greece*. The report concluded that, “the Greek government has denied the ethnic identity of the ethnic Macedonian minority in violation of international human rights laws . . . This is evidenced by open statements from Greek officials; by the government’s denial of the Macedonian language . . . and by the government’s refusal in the recent past to permit the performance of Macedonian songs and dances.”⁵ Several years later a reporter remarked that, “no one has paid more for the sins of their fathers than the children of Greece’s Slavonic-speaking Macedonians who fought with the communists during the 1946-49 war.”⁶

An Independent Entity

Upon Tito’s death it was by no means certain that Yugoslavia would collapse. But in just over a decade, the Cold War had ended, the Soviet Union ceased to be, and

⁵ The human rights of minority ethnic Macedonian populations remains of considerable interest today to diaspora organizations, foremost among them the Macedonian Human Rights Movement of Canada. See Human Rights Watch / Helsinki, *Denying Ethnic Identity: The Macedonians of Greece* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1994), Steve Pliakes, interview with author, March 22, 2003, Toronto, Canada. Vladimir Ortakovski, *Minorities in the Balkans* (Ardsley, N.Y.: 2000), ch. 5,8. According to Pliakes, the forced migration was part of a broader strategy by Macedonia’s historical adversaries to commit “genocide” against the Macedonian people and culture. While no scholar has made a serious charge of genocide against Greece, his comments are reflected by other Macedonian nationalists in recent years who accuse Greece of attempting to “steal” Macedonian history by claiming the mantle of all things Macedonian as part of the Greek and Hellenic tradition. For example, they point to the publication and free distribution of book like M.B. Sakellariou, *Macedonia: 4000 Years of Greek History and Civilization* (Caratzas, 1988) as an example of this effort. Greek nationalists argue that in fact the term “Macedonian” cannot refer to anything to other than a Greek historical, political, ethnic or cultural entity. Often, the argument takes place in cyberspace with pro-Slavic Macedonian websites like History of Macedonia at <http://www.historyofmacedonia.org/AncientMacedonia/GreekPropaganda.html> and pro-Greek websites like the Macedonian Press Agency, <http://www.mpa.gr/index.html?page=english> competing for viewers.

⁶ Helena Smith, “Bittersweet Reaction for Greek Civil War’s Lost Victims,” *London Guardian*, October 17, 2003. See also Loring Danforth, “The Macedonian Minority of Northern Greece,” *Cultural Quarterly*, 19 (2) Summer 1995, 64-70.

numerous ethnic nations sought to free themselves of the constraints of the erstwhile Communist “super-states.” While these events did not, of themselves, spell the demise of Yugoslavia, the rise of ultranationalist politicians capitalizing on the ethnic anxieties did.⁷ But in early 1991, as Yugoslavia crumbled around it, Macedonia seceded without anyone firing a shot. Though it was poor, and the departure of the Yugoslav army left it defenseless, Macedonia remained peaceful. The Balkan wars that would soon engulf Croatia and Bosnia did not spread south. Ultranationalists, like Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia and Franjo Tudjman in Croatia, did not rise to power. In a referendum on September 8th of that year residents of Macedonia – as well as diaspora Macedonians – voted overwhelmingly in favor of independence. Two months later a new Macedonian constitution came into force that established Macedonia as a parliamentary-style democracy, a “nation-state of the Macedonian people.” The independence of Macedonia marked the first time a sovereign nation by that name existed in more than two thousand years. More than a century after the *Illinden* uprising of 1903 that inaugurated the modern Macedonian national movement, Macedonians around the world celebrated the existence of an independent state, the *Republika Makedonija*.⁸

Today, however, many Macedonians feel disillusioned with their international standing. Since 1991 the country has experienced a long list of misfortunes, including an economic embargo by Greece, a painful transition to capitalism, a refugee crisis during

⁷ Dusko Doder, “Tito: Rebel Created Modern Yugoslavia,” *Washington Post*, May 5, 1980, A16.

⁸ Official recognition of Macedonia by the international community took place slowly and in piecemeal fashion owing to Greek objections to the use of the Macedonian name by the new republic. The United States decided to recognize the Republic of Macedonia by its constitutional name and not the provisional “Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” in November 2004. Slavko Milosavljević, *Facts About The Republic of Macedonia* (Skopje: Zumpres, 1997), 10. See also CIA World Factbook entry on Macedonia available at <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/mk.html> (Accessed October 2004).

the 1999 NATO-led war over Kosovo, and most recently, the death of President Boris Trajkovski in a plane crash in spring 2004. At the root of the discontent lies not only political and economic uncertainty, but a fear that the very notion of Macedonian national identity still is under attack. In spring 2001, a violent four month insurgency by ethnic Albanian guerrillas – some from Macedonia, others from neighboring Kosovo – brought Macedonia to the brink of civil war. Only a peace brokered by the European Union and the United States kept the guerrillas and the poorly trained Macedonian military and paramilitary forces from tearing the country apart. But the settlement, which offered greater political rights to the Albanian minority that constitutes about 25 percent of the population, deepened the suspicion among many Macedonians that the future for Macedonia as a nation-state for the Macedonian people was in jeopardy.⁹

In addition to the tense relationship between Macedonians and Albanians, Macedonia has experienced poor relations with its southern neighbor, Greece. Since 1991 Macedonia has been embroiled in a dispute with Greece over use of the Macedonian name. Macedonia believes that it has a right to use a name that represents the ethnic makeup of its state, and that recognition of Macedonia by Greece by its constitutional name is a *sine qua non* for improved relations. Greece, however, claims not only a right, but a monopoly, on the Macedonian name because it believes the name to be part of the ancient Hellenic tradition. The international community mostly has been unwilling to take sides, and since 1995 the dispute has resided in the jurisdiction of a

⁹ Specifically, Macedonians feel that ethnic Albanians who live in Macedonia do not display sufficient loyalty to Macedonia, and instead support only their Albanian ethnicity. Because of the instability in neighboring Kosovo and high Albanian birth rates, many Macedonians feel that the Albanian population will soon push either for secession or ethnic division of Macedonia. See Gregory Michaelidis, "A Workable Solution for Macedonia," *Boston Globe*, 9 June 2001, A15; International Crisis Group, *Macedonia: The Last Chance For Peace*, June 20, 2001, available at http://www.icg.org/library/documents/report_archive/A400318_20062001.pdf (Accessed October 2004).

United Nations committee. Despite the active engagement of neutral NGOs like the International Crisis Group, chances of a quick resolution to the dispute have diminished because of the active interest of both the Greek and Macedonian diasporas in the outcome.¹⁰

The name dispute between Macedonia and Greece took on a harsher tone in the mid-1990s as the Internet came into widespread use. In just a few years, dozens of pro-Greek and pro-Macedonian websites sprang up in Europe, North America, and Australia, each peddling widely divergent versions of the historical “truth.”¹¹ In 2002, chapters of a pro-Greek diaspora group, the Pan-Macedonian Association, which considers the Macedonian name to be part of Greek heritage, began lobbying U.S. state legislators to pass resolutions declaring "that the ancient Macedonians were Hellenes (or Greeks), and that the inhabitants of Macedonia today are their Hellenic descendants and part of the northern province of Greece, Macedonia." The resolutions passed in Missouri, California, Illinois, and other states with sizable Greek-American populations. Macedonian Ambassador to the U.S., Nikola Dimitrov, criticized the resolutions: "We don't just live on the land called Macedonia, we are Macedonians. . . We speak the Macedonian language. We feel proud to be Macedonians."¹²

¹⁰ Basil Gounaris, “Communist Landlords” and Political Refugees From Greek Macedonia, *Macedonian Heritage: An online review of Macedonian affairs, history and culture*. Available at http://www.macedonian-heritage.gr/Contributions/contr_Gounaris_2.html (Accessed October 2004); International Crisis Group, *Macedonia's name: Why the dispute matters and how to resolve it*, Balkans Report no 122, 10 December 2001; available at <http://www.crisisweb.org/home/index.cfm?id=1688&l=1>. (Accessed October 2004).

¹¹ For a pro-Macedonian site, see <http://www.realitymacedonia.org.mk/web/firstpage.asp>. (Accessed October 2004). For a pro-Greek site, see <http://www.hellas.org/macedonia/>. (Accessed October 2004).

¹² Jennifer Skalka, “Territorial Over an Ancient Name: Senate Joins Greeks’ Effort to Force Nation of Macedonia to Change Name,” *Concord Monitor*, 18 February 2003.

As the Macedonian name dispute played out in statehouses across America, a parallel war of words raged in the Balkans. Greek scholar and critic Evangelos Kofos said of the Macedonian name: “This is our cultural and historical identity and heritage the Skopje government is trying to steal. There is only one Macedonia. To be Macedonian is to be Greek.”¹³ Such sentiments angered Macedonians in the Republic and abroad who pointed to a century’s worth of efforts to carve out a distinct Macedonian state and nation. But the groups tend to speak past one another, and neither side has been willing to discuss the possibility that the Macedonian named could be shared by two states who affix very different definitions to it. Both sides’ fundamentalist approach to the issue of Macedonia’s “essence” precludes not only settlement of a thorny issue, but also a process of national exploration about the historical roots of national identity, and the power of myth in creating that identity. The hope by several generations of Macedonian nationalists that an independent Macedonia would be an accepted – even admired – state and nation proved overly hopeful.¹⁴

An Insecure Identity

In a sense, the nation-building project Macedonian and Yugoslav officials began in 1944, which itself drew upon sentiments expressed half a century before, seems to have come full circle. Macedonia has its recognition as an independent nation, its pantheon of heroes, and a politically engaged diaspora. But Macedonia also exhibits a

¹³ John Holland, “Macedonian Name Game Stirs Ancient Passions in Greece,” *The Times* (London), 15 June 1992.

¹⁴ In November 2004, the U.S. Department of State decided to address Macedonia by its constitutional name, angering Greece. The move was seen both as supporting Macedonian transition to a peaceful, multi-ethnic state, and as thanks for Macedonia’s support for the U.S. mission in Iraq.

sense of insecurity and victimhood that has its roots in the nineteenth-century origins of the Macedonian national movement; the Ottoman “slavery,” the “tragedy” of Versailles, the torment of the *deča begalči*, and other moments of oppression appear regularly in the Macedonian narrative, and contribute to the trope of the Macedonian “struggle.”

Macedonian officials, journalists, and diaspora leaders routinely overstate the threat posed by Macedonia’s neighbors, and overreach in embracing the tenuous links between the modern Macedonian nation and the ancient kingdom of Alexander the Great. They obsess over Washington’s attitudes towards Macedonian issues. And more than a decade after independence, Macedonian politicians have yet to master the skills of international diplomacy; Timothy Garton Ash, the British intellectual and Europe scholar, left Skopje in 2001 and wrote that he had “never encountered a more pigheaded, shortsighted political elite than the Slav Macedonian one.”¹⁵

This national insecurity is also evident in the flood of new Macedonian and English language publications that have emerged since independence. Though some of them treat the migration of Macedonians abroad, none acknowledge the ways in which the diaspora has engaged and shaped Macedonian history and identity. The political activity, the organizational capacity, even the mere presence of more than half-a-million self-described Macedonians abroad, rarely rates mention when nationalists based in Macedonia retell their version of the creation of the Macedonian nationality. The primary reason the role of the diaspora does not feature more prominently in the Republic’s own literature appears evident: acknowledging that outside forces deserve considerable credit for a national identity ostensibly based on a physical connection to a

¹⁵ Timothy Garton Ash, “Is There A Good Terrorist?,” *New York Review of Books*, 29 November 2001

contiguous space would have supported the long-standing critique of Macedonian identity as somehow not being *sui generis*, organic. The fatherland – *tatkovinata* – thus remains the locus of Macedonian history and identity in today’s literature.¹⁶

Occasionally, there are striking similarities between the rhetoric of yesterday and today that show the continuity of this insecurity. In 1903, for instance, Vladimir Tsankoff, then secretary of the fledgling Macedonian Committee of America, complained to the *New York Times* that their coverage of the Macedonian conflict was biased. “You were fascinated by the ‘whole, intricate, yet ever-fascinating situation.’ It did not occur to you that it is a most desperate struggle unto life and death between the Christians in Turkey and their cruel oppressors.”¹⁷ A little over a century later, Metodija Koloski, a Macedonian youth organizer from New Jersey, provided a similar analysis on the occasion of Macedonia’s thirteenth independence day:

My dear Macedonians, we have been through a lot in the past millenia, rape, assimilation, harassment, genocide, death, political oppression, poverty and wars. . . . The Macedonians are fighting a formidable enemy who maintains a significant stake in the world mass media, resulting in prejudicial media coverage of the events that are unfolding. The truth about the Macedonian people and their noble struggle to preserve Macedonia as a democratic and peaceful state has not only been overshadowed, but also blatantly misrepresented.¹⁸

This is not to suggest that there have not been dramatic changes in conceptions of Macedonian identity across the century. Yet the belief that Macedonians are ever victimized by more calculating and powerful nations has persisted in no small part because of the diaspora Macedonians. Those abroad generally have been more free to

¹⁶ See for instance Risto Stefov, *Macedonia: What Went Wrong in the Last 200 Years?* (Toronto: United Macedonians, 2002-2003), available at <http://www>.

¹⁷ Vladimir A. Tsanoff, “Facts About Macedonians,” *New York Times*, 16 August 1909, 9;

¹⁸ Metodija Koloski, “Happy 13 Months My Dear Macedonia,” e-mail to Republic of Macedonia Digest listserv and Macedonian Orthodox Youth Association of North America., September 8, 2004.

share their views to a broad audience, and for more than a century have used the freedoms of their adopted countries to the press the case for the perpetual underdog status of their people.

A Transnational Identity

On August 2, 2003, in dozens of events across the Republic of Macedonia, North America, Australia, and elsewhere in Europe, Macedonians celebrated the one-hundredth anniversary of the start of the *Illinden* uprising against Ottoman forces. Two logos had been circulating widely in the Macedonian press before the events. One read “100 Years Illinden” and another “2710 Years Macedonia,” alluding to the earliest-known uses of the Macedonian geographical name. In a speech, Macedonian President Boris Trajkovski (who died less than a year later) heralded the *Illinden* fighters’ short-lived victory in the town of Kruševo and described modern Macedonia as a peaceful, tolerant land for all its residents, regardless of ethnicity. He also highlighted three key events in the arc of Macedonia’s development as a nation: *Illinden*, the ASNOM conference of 1944 that established Macedonia as part of Yugoslavia, and the declaration of Macedonian independence in 1991. In a gathering in Washington, DC, Goče Georgievski, *charge d’affaires* at the Macedonian embassy, and Dr. Vasil Babamov, president of the Macedonian American Friendship Association of Columbus, Ohio, mentioned the same three events to an audience wearing lapel pins bearing the Macedonian and American flags. In Toronto, the United Macedonians prepared a special edition of their newspaper, *Makedonski Glasnik*, replete with photos and biographical sketches of Goče Delchev, the

Macedonian teacher-turned-revolutionary who did not even live to see the *Illinden* uprising he was instrumental in planning.¹⁹

As we see from the name dispute and the *Illinden* celebrations, Macedonian politics at the turn of the twenty-first century remain a transnational affair. Political parties in Macedonia today receive material and rhetorical support from prominent Macedonians abroad. And at least two Macedonian parties are actually based in the United States. George Atanasoski, head of the *Makedonska Alijanza* (Macedonian Alliance) party, lives not in Macedonia but Ormond Beach, FL, home to a growing Macedonian community. (Atanasoski ran unsuccessfully for president in Macedonia in 1994 before returning to Florida. According to some, he campaigned throughout parts of Macedonia in a limousine). Another party, POMNI, is based in Sterling Heights, Michigan. Its head, Dr. Stojadin Naumovski, argues that recent leadership in Macedonia has ignored the diaspora. Macedonians abroad, according to Naumovski, are not merely contributors to Macedonian politics and culture; they must be the *saviors* of that culture. The diaspora has “to appear like a new political entity that will support and organize the people and its potentialities with a common goal - to save Macedonia and the Macedonian national ideals and interests.”²⁰ Naumovski offers, in essence, a new rationale for Macedonians finding salvation abroad.

Macedonians living outside Macedonia arguably are as potent a political and economic force for Macedonian interests as ever. According to a 2003 estimate from

¹⁹ Macedonia Marks 100th Anniversary of Ilinden Uprising, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Balkan Report, 9 August 2003; *Makedonski Glasnik*, Toronto, August 2003.

²⁰ Dr Stojadin Naumovski, Interview with Sonja Trajkovska, Voice of America, 8 July 2002. Transcript available at http://popovashapka.com/voa_macedonian_diaspora_from_usa_english.htm. (Accessed October 2004).

Macedonia's ministry of emigration, approximately 700,000 self-declared Macedonians today live outside of the Republic of Macedonia. It is difficult to gauge the accuracy of the statistic, but if one takes the number at face value a reality emerges that roughly a third of those who consider themselves to be Macedonians do not live in Macedonia.²¹ Immigration to the diaspora continues to be consistent, and new Macedonian Orthodox Church parishes continue to open in the U.S., Canada, and Australia. A proliferation of Macedonian-language newspapers, journals, e-mail listservs, and websites have helped create a virtual Macedonian community that ignores geographical boundaries; Macedonians in the U.S. and Canada, for instance, routinely notify Skopje-based newspapers like *Vreme* and *Dnevnik* of events in North America so that others in the diaspora can read about them on the paper's websites. And racist anti-Albanian and anti-Gypsy epithets common Skopje are heard in the U.S. and Canada with disturbing regularity.

Postscript

In March 2004 the first commercially published travel guide to Macedonia appeared in bookstores. In its generally affectionate depiction of a country unknown to all but the most adventurous tourists, author Thammy Evans offered an outsider's perspective: "Talk to the people and you will find them a fount of knowledge on the region, happy to give you their version of events. What is written here is certainly not the

²¹ "Vo 140 Zemji Cvetoj Zhiveat 700 Iljadi Iceleničite od Makedonija," Macedonian Information Agency (MIA), 21 November 2003.

last word on the subject.”²² As perceptive as Evans’ observation sounds, it seems equally true about Macedonians abroad. For the past four years, I have been tempted to tell people that I am studying Macedonian “histories” and “nationalisms” because I am often attempting to reconcile so many divergent tales. The version told by the youth displaying the Macedonian nationalist tattoos in Buffalo in 2001, and that which states, “To be Macedonian is to be Greek,” are so seemingly contradictory that one must step back from the language of nationalism to untangle them. In the end, though, I still believe the effort is worth it. Doing so increases the chances for greater understanding of nationalism, and diminishes the need to elevate national myths to the level of mystical truth.

²² See online description of Thammy Evans, *Macedonia: The Bradt Travel Guide*, http://www.bradtguides.com/?page=shop/flypage&product_id=105&category_id=&ps_session=bdba3e1c8a5bfc024ed3e0fa992a23d5. (Accessed October 2004).

Abbreviations

ABCFM	American Board of Commissions of Foreign Missions
ASC	American Slav Congress
ASNOM	Anti-fascist Council for the National Liberation of Macedonia
CPUSA	Communist Party of U.S.A
CPY	Community Party of Yugoslavia
EAM-ELAS	Greek Communist forces during 1945-1949 civil war
FYROM	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
IMRO	Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Army (alternately VMRO)
IWO	International Workers Order
MHSO	Multicultural Historical Society of Ontario
MPC	<i>Makedonska Pravoslavna Crkva</i> (Macedonian Orthodox Church)
MPL	Macedonian People's League
MPO	Macedonian Political Organization (after 1956, Macedonian Patriotic Organization)
NOF	Successor to Slav Macedonian National Liberation Front
SNOF	Slav Macedonian National Liberation Front
VMRO-DPMNE	Macedonian political party formed in 1990s

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