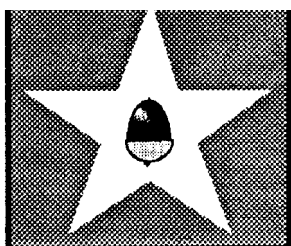


Conflict Studies Research Centre

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**Former Yugoslav Macedonia
- The Shades Of Night?**

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Former Yugoslav Macedonia - The Shades Of Night?

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This paper examines the recent historical background to the crisis in former Yugoslav Macedonia, the role of the UNPREDEP force 1993 - 1999 and consider how far post-communist institutional reform has taken place. It outlines the structural crisis in the government and society and inter-ethnic relations and analyses the position and motivations of the main military and political actors.

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Introduction

Among all the Republics of the second Yugoslavia, FYROM was generally praised by the international community for many years as an example of a fairly successful multiethnic and multicultural state that managed its exit from socialist Yugoslavia without significant violence. It seemed to be a beacon of hope in a difficult region. The Yugoslav Federal Army left the Socialist Republic of Macedonia by voluntary agreement, peacefully, although virtually all equipment was also removed, leaving the new state without any defence force.

Under its elderly President, Kiro Gligorov, FYROM had achieved independence in a national referendum from FRY by a large majority in September 1991, and was able to survive the difficult period of the Greek economic boycott that followed and also the serious pressures resulting from United Nations economic sanctions in the 1993 to 1995 period against FRY. Although the sanctions were not universally effective within FYROM, they did nevertheless fundamentally affect trading patterns, a serious matter, as in the old Yugoslavia about two-thirds of FYROM exports were sold in FRY. President Kiro Gligorov survived an assassination attempt in October 1995. In the same year some of the outstanding difficulties with Greece were resolved by the so-called 'small package' agreement. In the recent period, since 1998, there has been progress in FYROM on standard post-communist transition period economic reforms, such as the completion of land privatisation, after slow progress between 1991 and 1997. Foreign investment, principally from Greece, improved in the last two years, and the fiscal balances appeared to be improving, although unemployment remained very high indeed, and there was evidence of a deterioration in community relations after 1997.¹ An Association Agreement with the European Union was signed in June 1996, and FYROM was offered full future membership negotiations by the EU in March 2001. The first major military exercise arising from FYROM's Partnership for Peace relationship with NATO had taken place in 1998.

The violent conflict that has developed in the spring and summer of 2001 has thus come as a major surprise to many sections of the international community, and in this context part of the purpose of this paper is to elucidate some of the main elements in the background to the conflict, and to describe the principal motives of the political and military actors. In order to understand these motives and ambitions, it is necessary to set out various important trends and underlying patterns in the history of FYROM since independence, as well as to situate the political and economic and military struggles in modern FYROM against very longstanding elements in the Macedonian Question as it has evolved over the last hundred years.²

Historical Background

As in all Balkan wars, history plays a leading role in the psychology of the conflict, but the Macedonian Question is unique in that the evaluation of ancient history is central to the modern conflict. In essence, the Macedonian Question would not exist without the belief among most Macedonians and all virtually all Greeks that there was in some sense a linear continuity between the world of Alexander the Great, from about 320BC, and the modern world. It should be emphasized that this view is

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not an abstract intellectual construct, but is a living reality in the minds of many who are active in the current crisis.

In classical antiquity and the early Byzantine world, Macedonia was in essence entirely Greek, although Slav scholars have disputed the nature of Greek claims about the nature of ancient society in the region, believing that the Greek kingdom established by Alexander the Great and his successors was an elite domination over a majority of Slav peasants. Recent archaeological discoveries at Dion, Vergina and elsewhere in northern Greece have tended to reinforce Greek arguments, and have been an important intellectual prop to the growth of modern Greek nationalism in this phase of the Macedonian Question in the last twenty years. Archaeologists such as Manolis Andronicus, the discoverer of Vergina, have become popular heroes in modern Greece.

During the decline of the ancient world, Macedonia, as elsewhere in the Balkans, was affected by the invasions of Slav barbarians, and most urban civilization ceased after the time of Justinian, except in the fortress city of Thessaloniki. Large parts of northern and central Macedonia were incorporated into the medieval Bulgarian and Serbian empires in different periods, and the link between Thessaloniki, Athos and the south Serbian monasteries led to the emergence of Sveti Sava (Saint Sava) and the foundation of the national Serbian identity.

Throughout the five hundred year long domination of the Balkan peninsula by the Ottoman Turks, the territory of Macedonia was part of what was generally known as 'Turkey-in-Europe', a very large territory that stretched from the Aegean in the south to the Hemus mountains in Bulgaria in the north east, then across to what is now south Serbia and into Albania. The Greek language continued as the language of the Church in the south, and among educated people, and often as the language of commerce, but a Slav-language church dominated the lives of the peasants. Under the Second Bulgarian Empire many of the eastern and northern lands became Bulgarian. Some administrative divisions established then continued into the regional world after the Ottoman conquest. Turkey-in-Europe was divided, in the Imperial system, into several large *vilayets*, including those of Monastir (modern Bitola), Kosova, centred on Uskub (modern Skopje) and Prizren, and Kyustendil in Bulgaria (ancient Pautania).³ Ethnic Turks dominated some towns, such as Elbasan in Albania, Prizren in Kosovo, and Haskovo in Bulgaria. The mountains were host to large Vlach communities, speaking a language descended from classical Latin.

During the process of collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century, some sections of this land began to be included in the formation of the new independent nation states. All the nation states had ambitions on what is now Macedonia, for it was one of the most economically and socially progressive parts of the Ottoman world. The south opened a sea route to the Aegean to states such as Serbia and Bulgaria. Long famous for the production of food and raw materials such as leather and wool for the Ottoman army, the industrial revolution that began in the Balkans in the late 19th Century saw the construction of roads and railways across Macedonia and the opening up of very valuable mineral resources in Kosovo, and in the Sar and Hemus and Crna Gora mountains.⁴

The Imperial system was notoriously inefficient, and law and order in Macedonia were regarded as more or less non-existent outside the main towns. Bandit gangs had ruled the mountains since time immemorial and their talents for irregular

warfare were a continual thorn in the side of the Ottoman rulers. By the late 19th Century regular tax collection was impossible outside the main urban centres.⁵

It is generally accepted that throughout the Ottoman period, the population was very mixed ethnically, and by religion. There are no reliable data on this subject until the late 19th Century, when the involvement of the Great Powers in the destiny of the region after the Congress of Berlin in 1878 led to the development of ethnographic mapping of some areas, particularly in what is now the Macedonian part of northern Greece. A central point that has remained important in contemporary controversies is how far a significant minority – or majority – of the Slav section of the population saw themselves as ‘Macedonian’, or whether they were possessors of other identities, ie primarily as ‘Bulgarians’.⁶ Within the borders of contemporary Bulgaria, a large number of citizens in the west and in Sofia have elements of a ‘Macedonian’ identity, and in the Pirin region wholly so.

The Congress of Berlin had awarded a large part of modern FYROM and substantial territories that are now Greek, including parts of the Aegean coast near modern Kavala, to Bulgaria. This was countermanded by the Treaty of San Stefano, in 1878, when the Powers decided that a Russian-influenced Bulgaria would not become the dominant power in the region.⁷ Bulgaria did not receive these promised new territories, which appeared to be a rational decision at the time, but the decision of the Powers laid the foundation for modern Bulgarian territorial grievances, and the foundation of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (IMRO) in Salonika in 1893. IMRO sought to recover the ‘lost’ Bulgarian territories, but from its foundation has been divided between those who see Macedonians as intrinsically Bulgarian, and those who see the Macedonians as having an independent and distinct identity. This distinction is important in FYROM today, with the governing VMRO-DPMNE party belonging to some degree to the former tradition, whereas the ex-Gligorov party, the Social Democrats, have a more independent concept of the Macedonian identity.⁸ IMRO has generally been seen as the first modern terrorist organization, and fear of the revival of IMRO seems to have played a significant part in generally uncritical Western support for the anti-IMRO Gligorov government in the early 1990s. IMRO was seen as pro-Bulgarian, and in Cold War terms, Bulgaria was seen as Russia’s friend and surrogate in the Macedonian Question. The manifold complexities in the political evolution of IMRO post-1945 were unknown in western capitals.⁹

Bulgarian communism had a very harmful effect on the IMRO political tradition in Bulgaria itself¹⁰. But in Western eyes, adherence to the IMRO political tradition in Skopje represents a pro-Bulgarian, and to a very limited extent, a pro-Russian orientation, while adherence to the Social Democratic party of Gligorov represents a pro-Serb tradition rooted in communism.¹¹ As Serbia was dominant in a Yugoslavia that was seen as a friend of the West, it received support in the early 1990s. Thus the Western backing given to Gligorov in that period was of major assistance to the Milosevic regime in Serbia, particularly as it enabled Serbia to keep open an easy channel to the south for UN sanctions-busting activities. Key export commodities like Bor copper were exported to FYROM and ‘rebranded’ as local production before being exported.¹² In the case of some governments, such as the British Conservative government in the mid-1990s, this policy seems to have been part of a conscious effort to try to keep open the option of a return of FYROM to a future Yugoslavia, even if this meant supporting communist state structures and political traditions.

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Apart from IMRO, other important historical factors dating from the nineteenth century that affect the current controversy include the foundation of the Bulgarian exarchate, an independent Bulgarian Orthodox Church, in 1878, which became a magnet for Bulgarian inclined peasants in Macedonia. Over the next twenty years, Macedonia often descended into chaos, with the Illinden Rising in 1903 a notable landmark in IMRO's capacity to mobilize the peasant masses against the Ottomans. The territory became a byword for violence, with different gangs of Serbs, Greeks, Bulgarians and Macedonians competing for influence among the peasants. Most commerce was controlled by Greek and Jewish merchants in the towns. In modern Greek history this is seen as a heroic period, that of the 'Macedonian Struggle', when Greece laid claim to long lost territories in the north, under the leadership of famed guerrilla leaders such as Pavlos Mellas, and opened the way to the subsequent recapture of Thessaloniki during the First World War.¹³

The Young Turk revolution in 1908 in Constantinople had a great influence in Macedonia, with vigorous support particularly from hitherto somewhat inactive ethnic groups such as the northern Albanian clans.¹⁴ This period culminated in the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, when Macedonia fell under joint Serb-Greek control. The Serb advance was accompanied by massive ethnic cleansing of the Moslem inhabitants, culminating in the savagery of the Battle of Kumanovo in 1913.¹⁵ The dominance of Serbia over the northern Macedonian region was reinforced when modern FYROM territory became known as 'South Serbia', a new component part of the first Yugoslavia, the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes that was set up under the Versailles Treaty. The main administrative unit then was known as the 'Vardarska banovina'. In the period after 1918, the political and military gains of the previous years for Serbia were transformed into cultural and economic dominance with Yugoslavia firmly allied as a client state of the British and French Empires. British money and expertise was central to the development of the mining industry in Macedonia and Kosovo.¹⁶ In the interwar period about 100,000 Serb colonists moved into 'South Serbia', transforming the hitherto mainly Moslem and Albanian/Turkish character of towns like Tetovo.¹⁷

During the Second World War, the western mountains were included in an Axis-administered 'Greater Albanian' statelet, while the east was ruled by a pro-Axis Bulgarian puppet regime. The latter also included some parts of south Kosovo, such as Kacanik. After the Second World War, Macedonian Albanians distanced themselves from the Skopje communist regime, and Macedonian communism based on Skopje was almost entirely a Slav regime. The communists had assaulted many Islamic cultural and religious institutions after 1945, and had destroyed all Islamic libraries.¹⁸ As in Kosovo, thousands of ethnic Albanians went into exile, mainly to Turkey. The Islamic communities of western Macedonia remained a target for Tito's feared security chief, Alexander Rankovic, and some repressive measures such as those taken in the late 1960s against Albanian education in Macedonia pioneered techniques that were later used by Milosevic in Kosovo.¹⁹ What was the basis of this apparently irrational Slavocommunist violence?²⁰

The modern FYROM state finds its origins in the communist world, with its need for a 'Macedonian' state to be established directly in the interests of Yugoslav communism. The definition of the Macedonian identity (considered by Bulgarians to be a Serb-communist invention) took place at the Jajce Conference of the Yugoslav League of Communists in 1942, and the definition received Stalin's personal endorsement in December 1943.²¹ Greek historians and British authorities on the Greek Civil war such as CM Woodhouse and Nigel Clive²² consider this definition

was approved as an aid to Stalin's plans for spreading communism in Greece. An acute phase of the Macedonian Question developed in the latter stages of the Greek Civil War (1946-1949) when pro-Titoist elements in the Greek Communist party attempted to set up an independent 'Macedonian' state in northern Greece. The defence of Greek democracy in this period has also led to long standing antipathy among the Greek public for the pretensions of the post-1991 Skopje based new state.²³

Macedonian History Since 1991 – The Fourth Phase Of The Macedonian Question

Under President Kiro Gligorov the new state avoided involvement in the wars of the Yugoslav succession, and this brought considerable international approbation to FYROM, but a price was paid that was largely unseen by the international community, and rarely understood. A great degree of institutional conservatism developed in Skopje, and the long-standing and complex political issues, particularly minority problems, remained unaddressed. Neo-communist Slav-dominated political culture was allowed to continue in the interests of 'stability'.

Apart from the 30% Albanian minority, FYROM also contained significant numbers of Turks, Serbs and Vlachs, and a very large Roma minority, perhaps as much as 10% of the population of Skopje. Non-Muslim minorities also have major human rights grievances, such as the state prohibition on the existence or activity of the Serbian Orthodox church in FYROM. Significant numbers of citizens have a Greek element in their background, such as Vasil Turpurkovski, a close associate of Gligorov in these years and the last Macedonian member of the rotating presidency of the old Yugoslavia. His father was a communist commander in the Democratic Army in the 'Third Round' of the Greek Civil War 1946-49 who went into exile in FYROM after 1950. But the Greek Orthodox church is also banned in FYROM.²⁴

A central problem for FYROM has always been that as few as half the citizens of the state actually adhere to, and in many cases do not even possess, subjectively, the main elements of the defined national identity established by Tito, and continued by Gligorov. As a result, elements in the post-communist political culture of FYROM have been highly coercive. Under the new post-1991 Constitution, a dogmatic version of the 'Macedonian' identity was promulgated, and minorities lost rights in terms of guaranteed representation by quota on public bodies, language rights, and rights to fly national flags on specific public occasions that they had enjoyed under communism. This affected mainly the ethnic Albanians. In the original 1991 version of the new post-communist Constitution, it was stated that an objective of the state was the reunification of all Macedonians, a rhetorically expansionist claim that alarmed Greece, with its large number of citizens in the northern Macedonian region, many of whom either have Slav blood, or close cultural links with Bulgaria and/or FYROM citizens. Many FYROM citizens have unresolved land claims in northern Greece relating to lost property from the Civil War period, and there is considerable discrimination against the Slav language and culture in contemporary Greece, although the situation has improved in the last three years.

In the key field of FYROM education, minority provision has declined since 1991. The numbers of teachers working in minority languages fell very rapidly after 1992.²⁵ The roots of modern ethnic Albanian cultural radicalism in FYROM can be found in this process during these key years. A major problem for the Slav-

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Macedonians has been the very low birth-rate of the Slavs, and high emigration to traditional diaspora centres such as Canada and Australia. Although the Albanian birth-rate is higher anyway, it is nothing like as high as frequently claimed, well below that of Kosovo Albanians. The Skopje government's own research shows that the Slav-Macedonian community is not maintaining itself and would be a minority within about 10-15 years, even if other factors did not exist.²⁶

The structure of government itself under Gligorov was highly conservative, with most ministries remaining completely unreformed and most real power remaining in the Ministry of the Interior, as in classic communist patterns of government. Foreign officials sought to control policy through the role of the President, and the unique authority of Kiro Gligorov enabled this to be carried out successfully for most of the time. FYROM came to be seen as a very successful example of 'stabilisation' by many in Western diplomatic circles where a strong presidency and a weak parliament enabled authoritarian forms of social control to be maintained by 'progressive' reformist ex-communists and their large Skopje bureaucracy. The FYROM 'model' may well have been an important background influence on Western support for President Sali Berisha in Albania in the 1992-1996 period.

Defence & Security Implications Post-1991

Institutional development and post-communist democratization were deeply retarded in what more critical observers saw as a complacent and ossified government system. Most of the important parts of the economy remained state controlled and closely linked to Yugoslavia. Basic free market reforms like land privatisation were long delayed. An important fact relevant to the present conflict is to note how this distorted defence policy and capacity. The departure of the Yugoslav People's Army (the JNA) had left the new nation with no army at all, until in 1993 some officers began to transfer from the JNA back to Macedonia. The only coherent state force was in the hands of the Ministry of the Interior.

In the second Yugoslavia, Skopje had been the headquarters of the 60,000 strong forces of the 3rd military district of the JNA, of which about 20,000 men were deployed directly in what is now FYROM. From the end of 1991 onwards, withdrawal began, and gathered pace after February 1992. An agreement signed by FYROM President Kiro Gligorov and acting Yugoslav Defence Minister Blagoje Adzic in April 1992 regularised the arrangements. All equipment was supposed to be put under joint JNA-Macedonian control, but in practice the JNA left almost nothing behind them. Much equipment and many facilities were also removed or destroyed that were the property of the old Macedonian Territorial Defence Force under the two-tier system of the second Yugoslavia.²⁷

Utopian thinking about defence was common in the early days of the FYROM state, when in an understandable and healthy reaction to the militarism and xenophobia that was current elsewhere in ex-Yugoslavia, the IMRO dominated parliament in 1992 proposed at one point to abolish the armed forces completely. This did not happen, but only a token force existed for some time, with a large number of ex-JNA officers commanding a chaotic and muddled army, and in turn that officer corps was regularly purged on political grounds, depending on whether pro-Serb figures or more Bulgarian inclined people were dominant in the government.²⁸ Equipment and training levels were minimal. In theory, the force had about 20,000 men, with 100,000 reservists, but in the summer of 1991, only about 10,000 were in uniform,

about 7,500 of them largely untrained conscripts. The special police units of the Interior Ministry held the only air capability. Financial constraints and post-communist reforms had some effect on the Interior Ministry paramilitaries, so the size and importance of this force dwindled as time went on. President Gligorov had a difficult relationship with many military figures, and in March 1993 he sacked General Mitre Arsovski from the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Macedonian Armed Forces. Those who have been taken by surprise by the operational incapacity of the FYROM army in the current conflict need to bear this difficult background in mind.

As elsewhere in FYROM life, ethnic issues caused difficulty in the army. Although owing to the age structure of the population, ethnic Albanian conscripts were disproportionately highly represented in the army, up to 35% according to some estimates, the number of non-Slav officers was very small indeed, often about 4% of the total, and the same situation prevailed in the senior ranks of the police and Interior Ministry.²⁹ Some ethnic groups, such as the 40,000 strong FYROM Serb community centred on Kumanovo had notable enthusiasm for the military career, so that the small army which has developed since 1994 has not been in any way representative of the population as a whole, and has always been subject to intense politicisation and fragmented identity and leadership.

A pro-Belgrade political and military underground has always existed in Skopje³⁰. Serb paramilitary groups, including Arkan, were active in FYROM throughout the wartime period in ex-Yugoslavia³¹, and had many links with the official armed forces. In many ways, the new FYROM force has reproduced some of the traditional characteristics and limitations of the JNA/VJ where Slavs, in this case Serbs and Serb-inclined Macedonians, play a dominant leadership role with a strong political ethos, and Albanians and other minor ethnic groups do not rise to leadership positions in any numbers. As a result, a small minority of ambitious FYROM Albanians with military skills began to associate themselves with the development of the Kosova Liberation Army, and this link has carried over into elements of the leadership of the National Liberation Army (NLA) in the current crisis.

The official forces always suffered from equipment shortages. During the 1992 to 1995 period the country was affected by the UN arms embargo on Yugoslavia. The ending of the embargo and the onset of the Kosovo crisis encouraged new purchases, but military budgets were very limited, and instead there were quite large donations of mostly poor quality equipment from Bulgaria, such as 190 T-55 battle tanks, and other heavy armoured vehicles. Gifts were the main method of supply of other equipment, such as armoured personnel vehicles from Germany, although there are two state-owned military factories producing small arms and an explosives factory at Makedonski Brod. The conflict has so far revealed serious ammunition shortages, particularly for mortars and tanks after the activity in the first six weeks of the campaign in the western mountains.

The Deployment of UNPREDEP

Despite the surface tranquillity, some in the international community were fearful of violence spreading to FYROM, in particular an attempt by Milosevic's Yugoslavia to recapture the territory. 1993 was a key year. It is widely believed that discussions took place in 1992 and 1993 between the Yugoslav and Greek foreign ministers on a possible territorial division of FYROM³². This possibility was regarded with horror

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in most European capitals and the US, who saw the fledgling FYROM State as the best way of preventing the re-emergence of the Macedonian Question on the international stage. At the same time President Gligorov appealed for help from France and Britain to secure stability, and intelligence resources were deployed from both countries to FYROM to strengthen the Interior Ministry, but not the armed forces³³. Although presumably an unintentional consequence of this action, the specifically communist and authoritarian features of the Interior Ministry state apparatus were thus strengthened, and the possible emergence of a democratic and functional army was hindered.

A period of instability in 1993 culminated that November, in the so-called 'arms plot', when ethnic Albanian ministers were alleged to be preparing an armed uprising to set up an Albanian state in the west of FYROM³⁴. A number of important Albanian leaders were jailed, although their sentences were later quashed under international pressure. Others went into exile, such as Dr Imer Imeri, who took over the leadership of a major Albanian party in 1999, and is closely involved in the current crisis. He fled first to Albania, then Switzerland.

The arms plot was the key event in recent FYROM history that has determined the character of ethnic Albanian politics in FYROM ever since, as it discredited the small number of ex-nomenclatura ethnic Albanian politicians who were prepared to work with the Gligorov system in the eyes of much of the Albanian minority population, and brought to the fore new leaders with Kosovo connections such as Arben Xhaferi and Menduh Thaci who were never involved in the communist political set-up, and combined free-market ideology and Albanian nationalism in their outlook³⁵. It is generally believed that the secret intelligence service in Albania (SHIK) played a part in the arms plot, although there had been some open build up of weapons in all FYROM communities, Slav and Albanian, as a product of Serb invasion fears that year³⁶.

In 1992, the United Nations had taken the decision to deploy a border protection force in FYROM, and by 1993 it was fully deployed. It never, though, had any mandate to involve itself in the internal affairs of FYROM, and when internal trouble occurred, it was largely ineffective³⁷. Hostile forces never tested its competence as a border protection force. Various claims have since been made about the efficacy of UNPREDEP as a conflict prevention force, and this subject is bound to attract vigorous debate in the future. At the moment it can only be said with confidence that the current conflict has discredited claims made by the more extreme of UNPREDEP's admirers, to the effect that it represented a method by which conflict in FYROM could be permanently 'managed', as it is clear that the internal problems in FYROM that have caused the present crisis were never removed by the existence of UNPREDEP on the borders.

It is also arguable how far Serbia really represented an invasion threat to FYROM in 1992-93. It is perhaps more likely that Milosevic had what he wanted in terms of political orientation from Gligorov, and was content to let him carry on as a satrap-level, basically pro-Serb regional ruler. UNPREDEP did, though, represent a serious commitment to stability in FYROM by the international community, whatever its limitations, and by bringing US troops as peacekeepers within the force in June 1993, established an important precedent for later US commitments as UNPREDEP was the first internationally-commanded use of US ground troops in a peacekeeping force in the Balkans³⁸. On the negative side, it is arguable that UNPREDEP's

presence enabled the FYROM government to avoid facing basic issues of national defence for too long, and thus indirectly contributed to the present crisis.

The deployment of UNPREDEP was terminated in 1999, in crisis circumstances, when NATO was already deployed in FYROM in anticipation of the Kosovo intervention, and when FYROM recognised Taiwan. Communist China promptly broke off diplomatic relations with Skopje, and vetoed the extension of UNPREDEP's mandate in the UN Security Council³⁹.

The Seeds of the Current Conflict

Over the last ten years, there have been regular incidents of ethnic violence in Macedonia, but the fact that violence remained localised and was sometimes not reported in the international press reinforced the image of state stability. The most important recent incident was the fighting in Gostivar in July 1997, which resulted in several ethnic Albanian fatalities, and led to the jailing of the Mayors of Tetovo and Gostivar, both then prominent members of Xhaferi's PDPSH party⁴⁰. The right to fly national flags was a major element in the Gostivar confrontation then, just as it is a central issue in the current crisis negotiations.

Until 1998, the majority-party ethnic Albanian politicians were not included in the government, and there was no prospect of any significant reforms, in particular on the major issues of language equality, education and the existence of the Albanian-language university in Tetovo. Before this, there had been a tokenistic presence in non-controversial minor ministries, such as pensions, but often the ethnic Albanian official had no staff, or in some cases not even an office. After 1998/9 the involvement of the Xhaferi party in government seemed to promise rapid reforms, but little change was forthcoming, even after the replacement of President Gligorov by the ex-Deputy Foreign Minister Boris Trajkovski, in 1999. A situation was created, however unintentionally, where a classic conflict scenario has unfolded, where the promise of reform after a long period of repression has not been met, and as a result more radical leaders, in this case Mr Ali Ahmeti and the NLA, have begun to replace constitutionalist leadership. The poor health of Mr A Xhaferi, the favoured leader of the West, has also contributed to the current political crisis.

The Kosovo crisis has also contributed significantly to the radicalization of ethnic Albanian politics in FYROM and the involvement of members of Tetovo region families in the leadership of the Kosova Liberation Army set in process other political changes that have also contributed to the current crisis⁴¹.

In the period since the overthrow of the Milosevic regime in Serbia in October 2000, the more or less exclusive focus of international attention on Belgrade and over-optimism about the possibilities of the Kostunica government there led to indifference by the international community to the problems of FYROM, and a feeling in the Albanian community that an alliance of 'moderate' Slavs (Kostunica is personally close to the FYROM President Trajkovski, who once worked for him) was being organized against the legitimate concerns of the Albanians, and that the 'International Community' (IC) was seeking to restore communist-period patterns of centralized political authority in the Balkans based on Belgrade hegemony. At first sight this may appear an irrational and extreme view, but it is wise never to underestimate the degree of sentimental nostalgia for Titoist Yugoslavia widespread among older and more senior members of the diplomatic and security communities

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in the West, something the Kostunica regime has exploited very intelligently. Equally, it should be borne in mind that the leaders of the FYROM Albanians have, for the historical reasons outlined above, always seen communism and then FYROM as a Slavocommunist imposition on the Albanian minority. A problem for the West here is that the indifference shown towards the genuine human rights problems of the Albanians in the interests of support for Titoism and then the neo-Titoist FYROM of Gligorov has reduced effective leverage over the Albanians now.

Events Since March 2001

The possibility of the spread of war from Kosovo to FYROM had been discussed in security and intelligence circles during 2000, particularly after the violent incidents in Arcahinovo (Haracine in Albanian), an ethnic Albanian area north-east of Skopje in January 2000⁴². It had been claimed that a new Albanian military force was involved, the so-called 'National Army'. At first this was seen as doubtful, and that the name was thought to be probably only a cover for criminal activities. But evidence accumulated that a small new force was undergoing military training, and by the late winter of 2000-2001, small groups of armed men were operating in the hills north of Skopje. At this stage the new force only amounted to about 200 armed men, in the opinion of most analysts.

The subsequent course of events is well known, with the violence at Tanusevci village in late February developing into a full-scale rebellion. The Tanusevci road route between FYROM and Kosovo was an important smuggling route for hundreds of years, having been developed in Ottoman times as a packhorse route to avoid the large Turkish garrison and customs posts along the Vardar valley. In the first and second Yugoslavias, up to 1991, there was no international border at all here. The border between FRY and FYROM had never had an agreed delineation under the Milosevic regime either. The agreement between the FYROM and 'Yugoslav' governments over the border delineation between the two states was an important catalyst for the rebellion, led by the Ushtrise Clirimitare Kombetare, the National Liberation Army⁴³.

It is generally believed in intelligence circles that the war started earlier than expected, with late-May 2001 often the forecast date. An imposition by the international community of a new Balkan border played a major role in a series of random and fast-moving events in late February that led to the opening of hostilities. It is frequently remarked in the international community that Balkan borders should not change in order to preserve stability, an argument that is often used against Albanian independence aspirations for Kosovo. The IC did not follow its own recommended policy at this time in FYROM and the FRY-FYROM border was ratified without local consultation. It divided existing Albanian communities which had long standing family, cultural and economic links, and so provided a favourable environment for the NLA fighters to begin operations against the FYROM army. The IC decision, combined with random local factors, played a major part in the timing of the onset of the conflict.

The political spokesman of the new force is Ali Ahmeti, a long standing militant over language use issues in western FYROM, and there are a number of close links with ex-Kosova Liberation Army leaders in both Tetovo and Kosovo. The degree of operational and logistics importance of Kosovo to the new force is very debatable. It was definitely very important in the first few weeks of the conflict, in February-

March 2001, with the recruitment in Kosovo of ex-KLA fighters to the new force. But it is doubtful if this is the case now. The FYROM government has maintained throughout the emergency that the war could be stopped and the Albanians defeated if the KFOR force in Kosovo could clamp down sufficiently vigorously on their operations. This must be questionable. The NLA leadership has been building up small arms capacity in FYROM for some time, and part of the original equipment also probably consisted of ex-Kosovo war materials. But there are numerous non-Kosovan supply routes, which can be used into FYROM, by land from Greece, Albania, Serbia and Bulgaria, and by air from many other places. On matters such as logistics and arms supply, the NLA is in a substantially better position to maintain a long campaign than the old KLA in Milosevic's Kosovo. The borders of FYROM are much longer, in many places with more remote terrain than Kosovo, and there are a plethora of responsible nations and authorities, few of them with much record of efficiency or operational coordination. By comparison with the 1998-99 period, a much broader range of support in the Albanian diaspora is available, so, for instance, given the cultural and family links of the Macedonian Albanians it is possible that Turkey plays some part in the NLA's operations, and it was noticeable in June 2001 that a Turkish spokesman for the new organisation was an early appointment. It is not possible for the FYROM army to operate without much constraint for human rights, unlike Milosevic's forces. Clumsy treatment of the Western media by the FYROM authorities, the army in particular, has led to a much better climate of opinion for the Albanian rebellion than its leaders probably expected.

In Prishtina KFOR and UNMIK have taken a number of practical and administrative measures against various ex-KLA figures in Kosovo that would appear to be based on a similar and now possibly outdated evaluation of the importance of Kosovo logistics to the war. The US has echoed this action with a travel prohibition on a number of ex-KLA figures⁴⁴. There are substantial risks for the IC and the KFOR/UNMIK Kosovo authorities in the future with this strategy, in that if the Albanians are at all successful in their campaign, KFOR may end up by being blamed for alleged operational failures in an area where the responsibility lies elsewhere and quite outside their control, ie in the often corrupt culture of the FYROM, Greek, Albanian and Bulgarian customs services, the intractable problems of policing the remote mountainous border areas, problems with KFOR rules of engagement linked to force protection issues, lack of worthwhile intelligence from the local population, the considerable financial resources available to the NLA from the wider non-Kosovo diaspora, and so on.

At a political level, the NLA only claims to be campaigning for human rights reforms in FYROM to bring the 30% ethnic Albanian minority equal rights in the state⁴⁵. The majority of fighters are believed to be adherents of the Right Wing nationalist wing of the Albanian political scene, with some of them ex-members of Dr Ibrahim Rugova's Kosova Democratic League party, although there are other fighters from other political backgrounds.

The military leader is Gezim Ostreni, who was born in Diber, in west of FYROM, and is an experienced middle aged soldier with an ex-JNA background who until April 2001 was a deputy commander in the Kosovo Protection Corps. He is also a military historian, and his book on the history of the Albanian Partisan movement in World War II in western Macedonia is a revealing exposition of his political and military doctrine.⁴⁶ Some of the fighters are believed to be adherents of the Levizjes Popullore te Kosoves (LPK), the umbrella organisation that is the main political

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inheritor of the right-wing Balli Kombetar nationalist tradition, with offices in Kosovo and in all main diaspora centres⁴⁷. It is difficult to judge the exact number of fighters currently in the field, but numbers of around 4,000 are often quoted, although some of these people may only be armed local civilians in NLA-controlled areas.

By comparison with the first KLA in Kosovo in the 1997-1999 wartime period, it is a fairly well organised and disciplined force, and the pattern of partisan warfare adopted has been cautious, without the impulsive and irrational attempts of the original KLA to try to take objectives beyond their military capacity. There is believed to be a substantial underground organisation in northern Skopje itself, and forces in urban centres such as Struga and Debar which have not yet taken part in military action⁴⁸. A good deal of the NLA administrative and organizational backup is in Switzerland, among the large Albanian diaspora community, particularly in Geneva. Funds are being raised to support the new conflict in all main Albanian diaspora centres, such as Germany, Canada, the USA, Italy, and in Albania itself, using the effective informal networks that were set up in the 1998-99 Kosovo war period. Given the diversity of people involved in fundraising, and the difficulty the IC has in restricting 'humanitarian aid' to NLA areas, there is little prospect of a successful crackdown on the NLA from this direction. The NLA does not have a political programme that is significantly different from any other Albanian party, with a focus on human rights and state reform issues, and all changes are envisaged within the current FYROM state.

Effects Of The Rebellion On Internal FYROM Albanian Political Life

In general, political life in FYROM Albanian communities had been contained within the post-communist framework successfully until 1993. The story of the post-arms plot years is a process of steady radicalization, with the end of the old Party for Democratic Prosperity nomenclatura elite, and a new coalition developing around the Xhaferi-Thaci leadership, so that the old PDP had stopped standing against the PDPSH in most elections after 1997. The gerrymandering of parliamentary constituencies after the 1994 election had led to marked underrepresentation of ethnic Albanians in Parliament, and over-representation of Slavs, so that, for instance, in some parts of Tetovo it takes over 25,000 votes to elect an Albanian MP, while 5,000 votes can elect a Slav Macedonian in many parts of the east of FYROM⁴⁹.

As a result a large number of politically active Albanians who in a democratic state might have put their energies into parliament or civil society activities have had time and energy to spare for extraparliamentary activity, and the general status of parliament is not high in the FYROM Albanian communities. Under the over-centralised and statist Skopje system, civil society and NGO development has also been very limited compared to many Balkan countries. Local government has few powers or budgets in FYROM and that avenue is seen as a non-starter for political activity by most Albanians (and many FYROM citizens in general). In the same way the large and effective support network for the KLA in western Macedonia in the Kosovo war period owes much to the considerable number of politically committed people who were used to work in the 'grey economy' or in criminal smuggling operations and the political underground in FYROM, in the absence of a representative place for them in mainstream FYROM political and economic life.

The rebellion was widely anticipated in private by most ethnic Albanian leaders in FYROM, and they had plenty of time to prepare their political strategies. In general, these had been for a strategy based on trying to raise human and civil rights among the Albanians up to European and US standards, which in general has been a sensible and successful policy. Whatever the outcome of the current conflict, in a certain sense the Albanians have already won substantial gains, as it would appear to be impossible for the previous system based on tacit Western support for Slav cultural and political hegemony to survive, or ever be restored, at least as it was pre-February 2001.

Effects Of The Rebellion On Internal Slav-Macedonian Political Life

The Slav-Macedonians have been concerned about the role of the ethnic Albanian minority in FYROM for many years, and some would argue that it has been the main determinant of their political life since 1991. The Gligorov regime took considerable trouble to boost the position of other minority groups, such as the Turks, partly as a balance to the Albanians, and partly as an anti-Greek factor in external policy. And a pro-Yugoslav political constituency always remained in FYROM, among the Skopje bureaucracy and the military in particular. Career opportunities for these people were much wider under Titoism than they became under FYROM. Although the September 1991 referendum saw a vote for independence carried by a large majority, it should be borne in mind that the form of the independence question on the ballot paper also kept open the possibility of the return of FYROM to a new Yugoslav Federation. It can be argued that the entire Gligorov political project, perhaps even the stability of FYROM itself, depended on the maintenance of this ambiguity. Some Slav-Macedonians have always felt that it would be a safer option for them within a Yugoslavia, where their Slav cultural dominance could be more easily maintained, and traditional FYROM-FRY economic links through the state industries kept up. In essence, this understandable nostalgia is not simply for Titoism, but echoes as well the period of untrammelled Serb cultural and economic dominance under Royalist 'South Serbia', pre-1939, which may well appear a bygone era but is actually well within the lifetime and cultural formation of many older Slav Macedonians. In some cases, but not all, these were people either of pre-World War II Serb settler origins, or with strong communist or Partisan backgrounds, such as the Crvenkovski political clan, where the older generation were among the founding fathers of Macedonian communism, and the younger generation has included the Prime Minister between 1995 and 1998, and numerous high officials and ambassadors⁵⁰.

A major problem for the IC has been to develop post-communist democratization plans for FYROM that through the inexorable mechanisms of free markets would break up the economic basis of this elite, while there were strong reasons for trying to keep the old elite intact for the benefit of short term political stabilisation. The attempt was finally abandoned in 1998/9, with the departure of Gligorov and the end of ex-communist Social Democratic Party dominated government. The Albanians in FYROM have a strong small business culture and a large and wealthy diaspora, unlike the Macedonian Slavs, and are capable of rapid capital formation and accumulation. In FYROM, a much higher percentage of Slavs occupy badly paid state jobs than the Albanians, and are basic wage and salary earners who cannot easily accumulate capital. The characteristic form of Slav-Macedonian capitalism that has evolved since 1991 has been closely tied to the FYROM state industries. In

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the majority of cases, apart from some parts of the textile, construction and food and drinks industries, these have been failing businesses that have never recovered from the loss of captive markets in the old Yugoslavia, and from the effects of the ex-Yugoslav wars and the Greek economic blockade in the early 1990s. The privatization process has tended to produce a tiny very rich elite on the Slav side, often managers of old state industries who have worked with foreign buyers (often Greek), and have large shareholdings in the new companies. Many people in the old skilled worker and lower middle class administrative strata, who were relatively privileged under communism if they were Slavs, have now been plunged into unemployment and poverty⁵¹. One of the many reasons for the often dominant strain of xenophobia among many poorer Slav Macedonians is that capitalism is seen as a foreign-imposed system, with very unevenly spread benefits, and the new elite are openly tied to countries (again, particularly Greece) which they were always told until 1991 were the main enemies of their country⁵². It remains to be seen what the reaction of many of these people will be to the possibility of a significant Greek component in any NATO-led intervention force.

This erosion of the economic basis of the old system has had traumatic political effects. In the last four years, while the Albanian polity has been undergoing integration under the Xhaferi-Thaci axis, with a strengthening economic base, the Slav-Macedonian elite has been increasingly fragmented and fractious. Important minor parties such as the Democratic Alliance of Vasil Turpurkovski, which draws most of its support from ex-Greek civil war families, have veered erratically between support for the IMRO government and the opposition, while the Social Democrats have had their support eroded by the strong opposition of the IC to Milosevic's Serbia⁵³. It has in practice been impossible in the last three years for a government to function without Albanian consent, a highly unpalatable fact for many traditionalist Slav Macedonians.

The new President, Boris Trajkovski, while generally seen as an honest and principled politician, does not have the political experience or international links of Kiro Gligorov, and has never established a clear pattern of internal authority in relation to the Prime Minister and IMRO leader Lupjo Georgievski⁵⁴. Within VMRO-DPMNE, considerable power has been exercised by the Interior Minister Dosta Dimovska, who is generally as seen as being on the most nationalist wing of the governing party⁵⁵. She has a definite pro-Bulgarian orientation, as have many 'hardline' defenders of the status quo. These rivalries have made the task of conflict management for diplomats and negotiators much more difficult, in that the advantages of the 'personality politics' followed by the IC in the Gligorov era have become marked disadvantages once the cohesiveness of the old FYROM elite began to decline. Among its other aspects, the FYROM crisis is yet another example in recent Balkan history of the weakness of Western policy and capacity to influence events if it is over-focussed on a single President (ie Tudjman, Milosevic, Berisha, Gligorov) to the detriment of democratic institution building in the nations involved.

At the time of writing it is unclear what reforms will actually be agreed between the two communities, but it is hard to see how after recent events the Slav-Macedonian polity can be easily reconciled to work together with Albanians in common institutions at a local level, even if deals are reached between the political elite. There is a long history in post-1991 FYROM of deals on political reform agreed between the government and international representatives, which have never been put into practice, or have failed to pass the Skopje parliament. Given the built-in

Slav Macedonian majority, it is hard to see how the current negotiations will not encounter the same problems.

It is as yet unclear whether the IC has recognized the institutional limitations of the current FYROM State, and the profound crisis of Slav Macedonian political identity that have been set in train by the recent conflict. It seems likely that in the short term the struggle between the different tendencies in IMRO will determine the future. The outcome of this struggle is bound to be influenced, in turn, by neighbouring states, principally Greece and Bulgaria. Greece has good relations with the 'anti-Vrachovists' ⁵⁶, principally Georgievski, while Bulgaria has more influence over Dosta Dimovska and her wing of the party. In the defence and armed services world, 'Vrachovists' often predominate, a fact that existed at the beginning of the crisis but has now no doubt been reinforced by the importance of the value of Bulgaria as a source of military supply.

A difficult issue for the IC will be to decide policy on the forthcoming elections, which at the time of writing are envisaged for November 2001. If they are held under the existing electoral roll and gerrymandered boundaries, and without an internationally supervised census, they are likely to be boycotted by the Albanians and other minorities, and there is every likelihood of the resumption of the armed struggle on the Albanian side. In any event, it is hard not to see a parallel tendency towards political extremism on the Slav side, as many people blame the VMRO policy of collaboration with the Albanians for the current crisis. But a Social Democrat dominated government with a pro-Belgrade orientation would find it difficult to use open repression on pre-crisis political lines against the Albanians now that the IC has given support to a major reform programme, and as the Albanians have built up local community defence resources in their communities that are certain not to be surrendered in full (or perhaps even in part) to any NATO arms collection operation.

The central weakness of current planning for an intervention force is that some foreign states do not appear to recognize the depth of the structural crisis in FYROM, or the many dissimilarities from the Kosovo and Presheve issues, the infinite complexity of the Macedonian Question, and the problems that are likely to be associated with a political settlement that has substance over any sustained period of time.

Options For The IC

There are obviously many possible scenarios in which the international community may choose to act, or not to act, in this complex situation.

These include a straightforward NATO intervention to disarm the NLA, after a political agreement, where it is likely that the NLA would comply superficially but with a large number of weapons left in the Albanian communities, and with no disarmament at all of the Slav Macedonian population. Unless the political agreement was remarkably successful, and inter-ethnic harmony restored, this would risk exposing NATO to charges of incompetence and the risk that a much larger operation would be needed once the conflict had reignited, as a peace enforcement exercise. There would be substantial risks of 'mission creep' as extremists on both sides would have every motive to impede NATO's activities, and

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it might be difficult to withdraw the force once it was deployed. It is not clear how FYROM government authority could be restored in ethnic Albanian areas.

Another main option would be to recognize as a fact of life the degree of ethnic change that has already taken place and to have a token NATO force deployed until an international conference was held to determine the future of the country. In practice this force would mark a type of 'Green Line' probably running along the Tetovo to Struga road (at the time of writing) where all land to the west was regarded as under ethnic Albanian control, as will soon be the case, and all land to the east was Slav-dominated. Skopje would need a separate demarcation line. In practice, this is the 'soft canton' solution, and is probably the policy closest to realities as they exist on the ground. Some may object in principle, quoting the difficulties in Bosnia, but it should be noted that FYROM differs profoundly from Bosnia in the evenness and consistency of population distribution, something that has increased since the beginning of the violence this year.

The third major option is to do nothing, and hope that the war will burn itself out once each side has secured its main objectives. On the Albanian side, this is possibly to have under effective ethnic control all the traditional Albanian majority lands, on the Slav side, to remove Albanians from the east and centre of the country, and as far as possible from Skopje itself. The main danger of this policy is that it could mean the IC presiding over a long and difficult civil war, where there would be bound to be media-generated pressure for a big NATO-led intervention, and with the very strong possibility of NATO ending up as the de facto government of the country. There would be large internally displaced persons and refugee movements, which could risk involving and destabilizing neighbours, particularly Kosovo, Albania and Bulgaria. Such movements to the south could risk reintroducing a large Slav-speaking minority into northern Greece, and so reopening the Macedonian Question in Greece itself.

ENDNOTES

¹ The best source of general economic information about FYROM post -1991 is the website of the World Bank, <http://www.World.Bank.org>, and the publications of the International Monetary Fund. Local data are often very speculative and inaccurate.

² For a general analysis of the current phase of the Macedonian Question, see *The New Macedonian Question* ed James Pettifer, Palgrave, London and New York, 2001. For a pro-Skopje view of the early years after independence, see *Macedonia and Greece, The Struggle to define a New Balkan Nation* by John Shea, McFarland, North Carolina, 1997. Pre-2001, the International Crisis Group published some valuable reports on Macedonia, but recent work has been disappointing. See <http://www.crisisweb.org>.

³ These divisions are not simply of academic or historical interest now. For instance, it is of considerable symbolic significance that the communists fixed on Prishtina as the capital of Kosovo oblast, rather than Prizren, with its Ottoman associations, and Skopje, Ottoman Uskub, was removed from Kosovo altogether to form the capital of the first Titoist Macedonian state unit, the People's Republic of Macedonia.

⁴ See *The Turkish Labyrinth* by James Pettifer, Penguin, London, 1997, p.171 ff.

⁵ There are many descriptions of the difficulties of travel and life in general in the region in this period. See *Researches in the Highlands of Turkey* by HF Tozer, London, 1859, and *The Tale of a Tour in Macedonia* by GM Abbott, Arnold, London, 1903. To all intents and purposes Ottoman forces only had control of rural areas within a few miles of Salonika. Central Macedonia was completely dominated by bandit groups. See also *Austro-Hungarian documents on the Macedonian Question, 1896-1912*, ed FR Bridge, Thessaloniki, 1977.

⁶ See Hugh Poulton, *Minorities in the Balkans*, Minority Rights Group, London 1994.

⁷ See *The Eastern Question – A Study in European Diplomacy* by JAR Marriot, Oxford, 1934; *The Great Powers and the Balkans 1875-1878* by MD Stojanovic, Cambridge, 1939; *The Congress of Berlin and After* by WN Medlicott, Cass, London, 1963 for accounts of the complex issues.

⁸ There is no really satisfactory modern history of IMRO, and many accounts are highly partisan and need to be read very critically. British official opinion in the pre-1939 period was heavily influenced by *Bulgarian Conspiracy* by J Swire, Robert Hale, London, 1934, and *Terror in the Balkans* by Albert Londres, London, 1935. IMRO was always portrayed as a pro-Bulgarian invention, working to destabilise democratic and pro-British Yugoslavia. This remained the case even when Royalist Yugoslavia became a dictatorship after 1928. The 'Macedonian' content in IMRO was not understood, and was ideologically inconvenient. The late-1930s intelligence reports of SIS (MI6) resident David Footman which argued for a degree of recognition of a Slav-Macedonian identity were not popular with the predominantly Classically educated elite in the British foreign policy orbit. The genuine popular basis – such as it was – of Titoism in Macedonia rested on exploiting previous Great Power indifference to those who saw themselves as 'Macedonians' first and foremost. See also *The Macedonian Question, 1893-1908* by Nadine Lange-Akhund, New York, 1998 for a clear account of the key Ilinden period. *Freedom or Death* by Mercia MacDermott is a scholarly and very learned (but Marxist and pro-Bulgarian) account of the life of Gotse Delchev. The most influential volume for many years was Duncan Perry's *The Politics of Terror*, Duke, North Carolina, 1988, which puts the main emphasis on IMRO as the first modern terrorist organisation. From the point of view of the perceptions of the British military, it is worth bearing in mind that 'Macedonia' already had a very bad image as a result of the difficulties of the British army on the Macedonian front in World War I. See a representative volume such as *The Story of the Salonika Army* by G Ward Price, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1918.

⁹ See paper by Ivanka Nedeva and Naoum Katchev, in *The New Macedonian Question*, op cit p167 ff.

¹⁰ See *Les Confins Occidentaux des Terres Bulgares* by A Ischirkov, Sofia, 1910, and *Le Macedoine et le Renaissance Bulgares au XiX Siecle* by Simeon Radeff, Sofia, 1918 for traditional Bulgarian views of the territory and identity questions. For more modern views from Sofia, see *Macedonia: Documents and Material*, Sofia, 1974.

¹¹ The history of the Second World War period is intensely controversial. The Yugoslav position is to be found in a book by Tito's Macedonian emissary Svetozar Vukmanovic (General Tempo), *Struggle for the Balkans*, Merlin Press, London, 1990. His account is strongly disputed by Bulgarian and Albanian historians: see the NLA leader Gezim Ostreni's volume (note 46 below), also the memoirs of Tsola Dragicheva, Pobedita, Sofia, 1979. Her book was exploited for nationalist purposes in Bulgaria by the Zhivkov regime.

¹² There has been very little Western discussion of the key UN-sanctions period smuggling issues outside FYROM. Many of the old Slav elite were more or less openly involved in sanctions busting. In the early Gligorov years, the most important commercial concern involved in this activity in FYROM was Technometalvardar, an old Yugoslav metal trading company. In FYROM, post-1991, it was generally believed to be controlled by the Serbian secret police. It also had offices in a number of important foreign locations, including London. The first post-1991 referendum diplomatic representation of FYROM in London was actually based in the Technometalvardar offices in Holborn. In a series of scandals after 1997, Technometalvardar was closed down, partly because of revelations of money laundering and commercial malpractice, and partly because of allegations of corruption highlighted by 'Fokus' newsmagazine in Skopje. Technometalvardar was also believed to be working with other organisations in Skopje to import arms for Serbia via FYROM during the Bosnian war period, and had close links with the Karic banking and trading organisation, one of the main financial backers of the Milosevic regime. The Karic bank in Skopje collapsed in 1994, causing thousands of FYROM depositors to lose all their savings. Open investigation of the role of Technometalvardar in FYROM is unlikely, as it could well show collaboration between the secret police apparatus controlled by Milosevic and some western governments.

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¹³ There are numerous books in Greece about this period, although most of them are written with strongly nationalist assumptions. The atmosphere has strongly affected Greek perceptions of the disputes about Macedonian history in this period – see *The Falsification of Macedonian History* by Nicholas K Martis, Athens, 1984, as a representative polemical volume.

¹⁴ See the books of Edith Durham, the contemporary English Albanologist, especially *The Struggle for Scutari*.

¹⁵ The interpretation of the battle of Kumanovo has always been a key issue for 20th Century pro-Yugoslav historiography. The ethnic cleansing of Moslems from Nis in 1878 could be done without much diplomatic or press interest or knowledge. By 1913 this was no longer the case.

¹⁶ The main event was the modernisation of the Trepce mines in Kosovo by the British Selection Trust company. See *Yugoslavia* by Grace Ellison, John Lane, London, 1933. There was a close link between these foreign, mostly British investors and the Serbian Royal family.

¹⁷ A very good account (with excellent old photographs) of the Serb-dominated interwar colonial world of Tetovo is to be found in *Tetovo Spomenar 1919-1941* by Bratislav Svetozarevski, Tetovo, 1999.

¹⁸ The records of the Tetovo Bektashi tekke are the best guide to this subject.

¹⁹ See P Prifti, *Confrontation in Kosovo*, New York, 1999, Chapter Two, 'The Albanians in Yugoslavia'. Rankovic seems to have believed that foreign enemies of Yugoslavia were trying to use Islam in western Macedonia against the government in Belgrade, although no evidence has ever been produced to support this view.

²⁰ A central problem that the Titoists faced in the People's Republic of Macedonia was the tiny number of active collaborators with communism found in Albanian communities in western FYROM, after the period of communist state terror between 1944 and 1948, compared to Kosovo, where in some periods the Yugoslav League of Communists was quite well supported. For the FYROM Albanians, there is no equivalent to the relative progress under communism of the autonomy period of Kosovo history, post the 1974 Yugoslav constitution. The power and wealth of some of the FYROM Albanian diaspora dates from this fact, in that unlike Kosovo, there was no university for them under Titoism and life in exile was more or less automatic for the more intelligent. In Switzerland and the USA some of the longest established and wealthiest Albanian businessmen often regarded as 'Kosovar' are actually from Macedonia. An important political strength of the Xhaferi/Thaci axis in modern FYROM has been the fact that it was easy for them to defeat the very small numbers of FYROM collaborators of communism after the Arms Plot period in 1993, whereas it took the Kosovo Liberation Army much longer to do the same thing in Kosovo, particularly given the number of ex-communists and Belgrade agents in Rugova's Kosovo Democratic League (LDK). The only part of FYROM where there was any significant popular ethnic Albanian support for communism, linked to the events of the Second World War period, was in the Crna Gora mountains and among the Albanian minority in Kumanovo. These areas were partly outside the boundaries of the 'Great Albania' Puppet State. There were several ethnic Albanian leaders among the communist Partisans here, and it is possible to see elements of the Partisan warfare tradition in the current military methods of the NLA. This region was also the last stronghold of the old Party for Democratic Prosperity; the ex-nomenclatura dominated ethnic Albanian party in FYROM founded in 1991.

²¹ See *Yugoslav Communism and the Macedonian Question* by Stephen E Palmer and Robert King, Connecticut, 1971. Both authors were ex-State Department officials and their analyses of the history have been influential in Washington for many years. The US analysis of Tito's Macedonian policy has usually been different in emphasis from the British position, which has tended to accept more of the preferred identity of the Macedonians put forward by the Titoists.

²² See *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia* by E Kofos, Thessaloniki, 1964, and works by Clive and Woodhouse. Woodhouse appears to have changed his views over the years, often in keeping with British Foreign Office conventional wisdom, and the dictates of fighting the Cold War. In general, Clive is a more objective commentator, although his main wartime activity was in Epirus, not Macedonia. See *A Greek Experience 1943-48* by Nigel

Clive, Michael Russell, London 1985. The main British liaison officer in the key pro-Communist area of east Macedonia was the late Nicholas Hammond, who after his military service became a distinguished ancient historian. His endorsement of ultra-nationalist Greek definitions of the Macedonian identity have been influential in British and US academia post-1991, and in Greece itself.

²³ See Martis, op cit, and numerous other polemical works of the 1993-1995 period.

²⁴ See *Our Holy Orthodoxy: A Short History of the Macedonian Orthodox Church* by Archbishop Mihail, Skopje, 1996. The Macedonian Orthodox Church is unique in Christian and world history in that it is the only Christian church ever to have been set up by a communist party. The Greek and Bulgarian Orthodox churches have always regarded it as a schismatic and faked political creation, but in recent years relationships have improved and some members of the Skopje hierarchy have visited Mount Athos. See also Stella Alexander, *Church and State in Yugoslavia since 1945*, Cambridge, 1979.

²⁵ According to official Ministry of Education figures, in 1990 there were 2,518 secondary school teachers in the Albanian language in the old FRY Socialist Republic of Macedonia. By 1993, this number had dropped to 512.

²⁶ See *Macedonian Times*, Skopje, April 1999, article by Dr Kyril Demerdziev, 'The Demographic Candle is Burning at both Ends'.

²⁷ Even military hospitals and stores buildings were destroyed when the JNA withdrew.

²⁸ From *The Power Struggle in VMRO* by 'R', Skopje, written 1998. Document in archive of James Pettifer.

²⁹ See 'Macedonia has peace but prosperity proves elusive'; article in *Wall Street Journal* by James Pettifer, 1 February 1995.

³⁰ In pre-1939 'South Serbia', the terrorist 'Black Hand' organisation was a powerful force, and responsible for several assassinations, often of IMRO militants, particularly after the IMRO assassination of King Alexander of Yugoslavia in Marseilles in 1934. In recent years some Serbian politicians (eg Vuk Draskovic in 1997) called for the 'Black Hand' to be revived. The best contemporary volume is *Black Hand over Europe*, by Henry Pozzi, Mott, London, 1935.

³¹ 'Arkan' had several large Skopje investments, mostly in shopping, sport and retail activities. See *The Times*, London, 28 April 1998. Known war criminals moved to FYROM after the defeat of Serb forces in Kosovo in summer 1999.

³² The Gligorov government seemed well aware of this possibility. In July 1992 the then FYROM Deputy Prime Minister Blaze Ristovski said that 'The times when Greece and Belgrade can make decisions about Macedonia are past. Milosevic and Mitsotakis cannot possibly think of repeating Bucharest and Versailles', *Politika*, Beograd, July 17 1992.

³³ See R Tomlinson, *The Big Breach*, Edinburgh, 2001. The renegade MI6 officer provides an absorbing but very incomplete and egocentric view of events in Skopje leading up to the arms plot in November 1993. The main conclusion open minded readers are likely to draw is that Tomlinson knew a good deal more about these events than he has so far chosen to reveal. Nonetheless, British and French efforts to shore up the Gligorov government do not appear to have been based on any very clear understanding of what was actually happening in Skopje politics at the time. Tomlinson's view of the FYROM security apparatus is very uncomplimentary, although probably generally accurate. Nevertheless, the book gives a good atmospheric account of espionage in Skopje at an important time, and is likely to have some value for future historians as source material, particularly if Tomlinson's views are collaborated when he implies important parts of British Balkan policy were determined by essentially secret and unaccountable parts of the state apparatus, principally M16 in alliance with parts of the Special Forces in the military.

³⁴ See *The Economist*, London, 20 November 1993.

³⁵ Thaci was a young radical lawyer in Tetovo, while Xhaferi was from a Kosovo-Albanian/Turkish background. In effect, they have been a joint leadership since 1993. The Gligorov government was always aware that they were likely to be serious enemies of the status quo, and attempted to prevent their party from opening bank accounts, and from obtaining fair parliamentary representation.

³⁶ This is a very important issue in a much wider context, as it seems to show that the Tirana leadership had been trying to build up Kosovo militancy in the late 1980s, to a much

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greater degree than is generally realised (discussion between James Pettifer, Miranda Vickers and ex-Foreign Ministry and secret police officials, Tirana, September 1999.) It is also related to important issues in diaspora politics, eg the surprisingly positive reception given by US émigrés in New York in 1991 to Tirana communist leader Ramiz Alia. Alia had taken a much more active interest in the fate of Albanians in Yugoslavia than Enver Hoxha. See also *What the Kosovars Say and Demand*, Tirana, 8 Nentori, 1988. Although a hardline communist, he was born as a Shkodra Muslim, and Alia was likely to have had more antipathy to the intense repression of Islam under communism in western Macedonia than the southerner Hoxha.

³⁷ For an informative but rather rosy-tinted account of UNPREDEP, see *Preventing War – the United Nations and Macedonia*, by Abiodun Williams, Rowman and Littlefield, Maryland and Oxford, 2000. The book is strong on the UN and its internal activities, but often very inaccurate and misleading about FYROM political events.

³⁸ See *Janes Intelligence Review*, September 1993, article by James Gow and James Pettifer, Macedonia Handle with Care.

³⁹ The Skopje government leaders appear to have believed that the Taiwan government would bring in much needed foreign investment. But there was a widespread view in the region in 1998 that UNPREDEP had run its course and was being superseded by the NATO deployment in FYROM as part of the plans for Kosovo intervention. Some border posts were more or less unmanned long before the force was withdrawn, and most of the manpower was by then from obscure and minor nations.

⁴⁰ See report in *The Times*, London, 12 July 1997. The UNPREDEP troops fled into the countryside once violence broke out.

⁴¹ An important Tetovo KLA leader was Bardhyl Mahmuti (a pseudonym). His family come from Tetovo, and have a long record of anticommunist and Albanian nationalist activity. Mahmuti is currently a close associate of Kosovo PDK party leader and ex-KLA political spokesman Hashim Thaci.

⁴² See *The New Macedonian Question*, op cit p 19 ff.

⁴³ If you can read Albanian, the best guide to the new military force and its activities is on the Kosovapress website, <http://www.kosovapress.org>.

⁴⁴ It remains to be seen what effect this ban will have. It could be practically ineffective and locally counterproductive. Most of the people on the list may well be very unpopular with the international community but generally retain much local respect and often admiration among Kosovo Albanians. The crackdown prompted the resignation of the leader of the Kosovo Protection Corps, Agim Ceku, although it was not accepted by KFOR or UNMIK leaders. Some names seem to have been included in President Bush's list as a result of faulty intelligence: ie one prominent figure named has been in the employ of the US government for over two years.

⁴⁵ De facto unification of the Albanian political platform took place in the talks brokered by US diplomat Robert Frowick in June 2001 in Prizren.

⁴⁶ See *Shpresa dhe zhgenjimi I shqiptareve ne Maqedoni gjate dhe pas luftes se dyte boteror* by Gezim Ostreni, Prishtine, 2000. This book by the military commander of the NLA is dedicated to exploring the myth of Partisan/Slav democratic victory in World War II in Macedonia, and is heavily influenced by the work of British diplomat/historian Sir Reginald Hibbert, author of *Albania's National Liberation - The Bitter Victory*, Pinter, London, 1992. See also paper by Sir Reginald Hibbert in *The New Macedonian Question* op cit, 'Albania, Macedonia and the British Military Missions, 1943 and 1944'.

⁴⁷ See the LPK newspaper, *Zeri I Kosoves*, published in Switzerland and Kosovo.

⁴⁸ Discussions between James Pettifer and NLA members and supporters in FYROM, Albania, and USA, during spring/summer 2001.

⁴⁹ Report written by James Pettifer for EU/ECHO, 1995, Brussels.

⁵⁰ For general information on leading figures, see *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Macedonia*, ed Georgieva and Konechni, Maryland and London, 1988. For border issues, see *The Borders of the Republic of Macedonia* by Jove Dimitrija Talevski, Bitola, 1998. This book has valuable insights into the thinking of the FYROM army on border defence issues.

⁵¹ There are no verifiable data on this subject.

⁵² Greece was a priority target for the old Yugoslav secret police, KOS, and the southern border with Greece hosted various listening installations.

⁵³ Thus, the Social Democrat candidate in the 1999 presidential elections, Tito Petkovski, was a senior party official prior to 1991. His Christian name indicates the political orientation of his family.

⁵⁴ This subject attracted considerable attention in the May-June stage of the political crisis in 2001, when conflict between Trajkovski and Georgievski was often commented on by the international press and diplomats.

⁵⁵ These links had been remarked by her political opponents as far back as the 1994 general election.

⁵⁶ 'Vrachovism' is an important term in IMRO internal debate and historiography. In general it describes a kind of Macedonian nationalism fused with devout Orthodox Christianity, and stands in opposition to 'Mihkalovism', the secular wing of pre-war IMRO that merged with communism and the Comintern. See *The New Macedonian Question*, op cit, p 145 ff. In political terms, Vrachovism is always very anti-Greek in its internal implications.

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