

# Defining the Macedonians

## Western Perspectives on the Macedonian Identity in the Early 20th Century



THE MACEDONIAN.

**Victor Sinadinovski**

Cover picture, with caption, is from *The Balkan Trail*, by Frederick Moore, published in 1906.

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## Introduction

Throughout the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Macedonia's chaotic backdrop and reputation as a land teeming with danger enticed many curious and adventurous Westerners. For several centuries prior, however, the West had overlooked this ancient land. The term *Macedonia* served only as a relic of the past, as a representation of the land where Alexander the Great initiated his quest for world domination and Saint Paul preached Christianity. The history of the land afterwards, according to the West, was not a Macedonian story, but rather a tale of Roman, Slavic, Byzantine and Turkish conquest and misery. The land, of course, did not vanish; but the name had slipped into oblivion, obscured by modern and geographically broader terminology, such as *Turkey in Europe*, *Rumelia*, the *Near East*, and the *Balkans*. Thus, in the West's collective consciousness, Macedonia no longer existed. Logically, it followed that the Macedonians also no longer existed.

The crumbling of the Ottoman Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, cast a new light on the Balkan peoples and the terminologies used to describe them. One by one, the Balkan peoples began

liberating themselves from their Turkish rulers and establishing their own nations and governments. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the European map was littered with freshly revived ancient and medieval entities, such as Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria, which had unshackled themselves (with varying degrees of foreign assistance) from their Ottoman chains. Moreover, the Christians of these liberated territories could no longer only be adequately identified by their religious allegiances: they were now to be divided into separate national camps. As the Balkan peoples awakened from their centuries-long Turkish slumber, so did the West's understanding of Balkan linguistic, cultural, and ethnic diversity.

It was not long before journalists stationed in the Balkans began reporting that the Ottoman Empire's remaining European districts, such as those constituting Macedonia, Albania, Armenia and Thrace, were engulfed in revolution. The Christian Macedonians in particular had amassed a formidable force that could not be readily quelled. Inquisitive Western minds asked: Who are these Macedonians? What do they look like? What language do they speak? What are their customs and traditions? How do they live? Who are their allies? What do they want?

Westerners subsequently flocked into Macedonia, accepting the anxieties and uncertainties fashioned by a merciless fusion of insurrection,

brigandage, poverty and disease. Some visitors were mere vacationers or wanderers who had money and time to explore exotic destinations; others were missionaries and aid workers fulfilling their Christian calling. Quite a few more were scholars or diplomats on official business, whether to study this rediscovered land and people or to ascertain the political situation in order to advance their governments' interests. A handful even joined revolutionary bands and the dogged struggle between Christianity and Islam.

This is not to say that all Westerners were ignorant to Balkan geography and politics. The Ottoman Empire had been one of the largest empires of its time and European kingdoms and governments had traded and fought with the Turks for centuries. Many knew of Salonika, located in the southern portion of Macedonia and one of Turkey's largest cities. However, Salonika was rarely referred to in provincial or broader geographical terms; it was a cosmopolitan city that had never truly been dominated by any one people since the ancient times. Yes, in its administration it was a Turkish city, but its religious and cultural diversity and strategic location on the shores of the Aegean Sea rendered it a worldly destination. Still, most Westerners acquired no incentive to venture into other parts of Macedonia.

However, with Macedonia's conditions bursting into a riveting chaos, Westerners launched into the Macedonian interior. Many zealously kept extensive journals detailing their observations of the land and interactions with the townspeople and peasants. Upon their return home, these voyagers published their adventures and experiences, and then saturated libraries and bookstores with true tales about Macedonia. By the end of the Great War, scores of books in the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy and other countries had already been published that primarily or extensively dealt with Macedonian affairs. Macedonia had made the leap from nonexistence to one of the most coveted European destinations, which was not to the dismay of the Macedonian revolutionaries.

In detailing their experiences, many writers dedicated several pages to explaining and defining the Macedonians. In particular, they endeavored to enlighten readers to the racial, national, political, linguistic and religious affiliations of the Macedonian people. These authors fashioned varying descriptions and arrived at numerous conclusions. How and why these descriptions and conclusions varied will be detailed later; however, for now, it will suffice to note that these revelations were exploited by those with ulterior motives to make a case as to why Macedonia should belong to Bulgaria, Greece, or Serbia.



While Macedonia was a relatively new playground for Western spirits, Macedonia's Balkan neighbors had already been executing propaganda campaigns there for several decades. As one of the few unfree Balkan Christian peoples, the Macedonians tenaciously clung to their aspirations for freedom. Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia vied with one another to secure the fidelity of the Macedonians to their respective causes by injecting priests, educators, armed bands and bribes to convince the people that they were really Bulgarian, Greek, or Serbian. These young Balkan states hoped they could sculpt Macedonians into their respective national identities in order to make acquisition of Macedonian territory easier once the Ottoman Empire was ejected from Europe.

At first, the Macedonians were either apathetic or ignorant of their neighbors' grand schemes: the Macedonians joined with any party that would help secure their liberty. Just as the Macedonians fought alongside Serbs, Greeks and Bulgarians during those peoples' liberation wars, they did not hesitate to accept those peoples' assistance. For most Macedonian serfs, national loyalties were a distant thought, if a thought at all: freedom was the driving ambition.

Eventually, however, some Macedonians unraveled these Balkan schemes and realized the peasants were being manipulated for political gain.

These nations did not really care about Macedonian life or freedom; they only cared about expanding their frontiers. As a result, several Macedonian intellectuals formed an internal revolutionary movement that promoted a “Macedonia for the Macedonians,” and this organization battled both the Ottoman army and the Balkan propagandists.

Despite this, the existence of a separate Macedonian people (as distinguished from the free Balkan peoples that already possessed their own churches, governments and schools) was not obvious or satisfactory for some of Macedonia’s Western guests. To them, a nation required certain organization, understandings and commonalities of a land’s people, and the Macedonians did not yet fit that mold. Moreover, even some Macedonians themselves were uttering that they were Bulgarian, Greek or Serbian. By the time Westerners had arrived in Macedonia, the Balkan propagandists had already spent decades convincing the people that they belonged to a particular nation, and this is how the propagandists legitimized their claims on a global scale. Western visitors would report on what they observed in Macedonia and what some Macedonians declared themselves to be, and then the Balkan propagandists would proclaim: “See, even these objective Western minds agree with us. The Macedonians really are Bulgarians!”<sup>1</sup> The irony is that

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<sup>1</sup> Or Serbians or Greeks, depending on the author and propagandist.

each “objective” author had his own description and interpretation of the Macedonians’ affinities, which often conflicted with other authors’ interpretations.

Modern propagandists, especially in the Bulgarian camp, still cite many of these Western authors and their writings as justification for their contemporary chauvinistic views. As of this writing, for example, Bulgaria’s official stance is to obstruct Macedonia’s entrance into the European Union unless Macedonians accept and declare that their identity, history and language is Bulgarian. Some of their proofs include Western writings reviewed and analyzed in this book. Yet, these propagandists (both past and present) neglect obvious facts and truths within these authors’ publications that ultimately discredit and refute their claims.

First, a vast majority of these authors acknowledged that the Macedonians’ national loyalties were shaped by neighboring Balkan countries’ propagandistic endeavors; and moreover, these authors’ earnestly argued that the Macedonians’ national and racial convictions were fluid political declarations rather than fixed positions about their ancestry or ethnicity. Second, despite the manner in which some authors classified the people of Macedonia, such as by sometimes labeling them as Bulgarian, Greek or Serbian, they habitually distinguished the Macedonians from the peoples of neighboring countries. For example, most authors

who termed Macedonians as Bulgarians differentiated between *Macedonia's* Bulgarians and *Bulgaria's* Bulgarians. Third, many Western authors were themselves subject to varying propaganda and biases by Bulgarian, Greek or Serbian officials, educators, priests and armed fighters *before* entering into Macedonia and *while in* Macedonia. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, these authors incessantly used one term for the Macedonian people, even if it was occasionally accompanied by other labels: *Macedonian*. The propagandists, however, conveniently dismiss this reality by suggesting that it was merely used as a geographical designation and contained no significance in determining the Macedonians' identity.

Keeping that in mind, then, this study seeks to examine these Western writings for how they compare to the propagandists' general claims and interpretations about them. The paramount objective is to demonstrate how Western authors *truly* defined the Macedonians. In particular, this analysis focuses on Westerners who published books in English during the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> Another objective is to explain *how* and

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<sup>2</sup> I focus on English works by Westerners (the United States and Western Europe) for a few reasons: one, my primary audience is English speaking and they can verify information in these sources without the need for translation; and two, any publication by any Balkan writer (whether Macedonian, Bulgarian, Greek, or Serbian) is immediately subject to accusations of bias and propaganda by other Balkan peoples; and three (and maybe most importantly), these Western sources are often the most cited authorities by today's propagandists and by today's scholars, so it is critical to ensure that both propagandists and serious, objective scholars are given a perspective and interpretation of these works that is fully informed and

why these authors arrived at their conclusions. For example, who and what informed their opinions? Did their reasoning contain contradictions, gaps or errors? Did they have undeclared motives or obvious biases? (For example, in *With the Victorious Bulgarians* by Hermenegild Wagner, the book's introduction by a Bulgarian politician underscores a personal connection that indicates Wagner's primary influences and sympathies.) Thirdly, but not unimportantly, this review counters the Balkan propagandists' incorrect or incomplete assessments with a more comprehensive and meticulous approach that is supported by an entire work and not just isolated fragments of a work. In addition to looking at an author's entire publication, this study finds parallels and contradictions between works while furnishing a fair and generalized stance gleaned from the entire body of literature.

A major focus of this study is to dismember propagandist claims that Macedonians were and are Bulgarians. Of course, it does not ignore the omnipresent claims that Macedonians are Greeks or Serbs; but the prevailing modern threat against the Macedonians' uniqueness and the *Macedonian* character of their ethnicity, language and history

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placed in context after over a century has passed since their publication. I also only focus on books written in the first quarter of the century because this is when the most books were published and because it was one of the most turbulent and contested times in Macedonia. It is also a time period before the accusations by propagandists that the Communist Party invented or created the Macedonian ethnicity.

resides in Bulgaria. Whereas Greece's contemporary propagandists generally insist that Macedonians can be whatever they want so long as it is not labeled *Macedonian*, which is the principal reason for Greece's three-decade dispute with Macedonia over the latter's name,<sup>3</sup> Bulgaria is using its European Union member status to bully Macedonia into accepting that its history, ethnicity and language are actually *Bulgarian* and thus inseparable from the Bulgarian nation.

I ultimately expect to convince readers of the untenable nature of the claim that early 20<sup>th</sup> century Western authors denied the existence of a separate people called *Macedonians*. The Balkan propagandists are deceiving themselves and others when they rely on Western authors for proof that the Macedonians are not really *Macedonian*. The most frequently employed term by these authors (as well as by the many sources cited in their writings) to define the people of Macedonia was the term *Macedonian*. Yet, to the Balkan propagandists of the past and present, a separate Macedonian people

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<sup>3</sup>It is much more complex than this and there isn't unity in Greek academic or political circles. Greece primarily argues that the term Macedonia is wrongly ascribed to the Macedonian people and land, and that today's ethnic Macedonians are not related to ancient Macedonians. Most are indifferent to what Macedonians call themselves, so long as it is not *Macedonian*, and so as not to imply a connection to ancient Macedonia. This is not to minimize Greece's chauvinism and irresponsibility: they have held Macedonia hostage over its name - ignoring universal principles of equal treatment, self-determination and self-identification - by placing embargos and by blocking its membership into international organizations. Greece used its European Union status to bully Macedonia into a compromise on its name.

could not have existed because there existed no formally recognized church, school or government styled as *Macedonian*. Still, despite this flagrant attempt to absorb the Macedonians into the Bulgarian, Greek or Serbian national parties by employing priests, teachers and militias, even the propagandists were using one distinctive and deciding term for the people of Macedonia: *Macedonian*. The mode was to refer to the people of Macedonia as *Macedonian*, and it really matters not if some authors or propagandists held that this term was only a political or geographical designation. In the eyes of the West, these burdened peasants were Macedonians, to say nothing about how the Macedonians styled themselves.

# I

When one opens a copy of *Macedonia: Its Races and Their Future* by Henry Brailsford, he will notice a typical table of contents with chapter titles and the titles of several sections within those chapters. Some of these headings include names of the various races in Macedonia. There are chapters dedicated to Bulgarians, Vlachs, Greeks, and Albanians, and sections within other chapters highlighting Jews and Gypsies.<sup>4</sup> Absent, however, is a chapter or section dedicated to the *Macedonian* race. “Aha,” exclaim Balkan propagandists, “here is proof that the Macedonians were not a separate people!” And without even so much the pretense of providing an analysis of Brailsford’s 340-page discourse on early 20<sup>th</sup> century Macedonia, the propagandists add another tool in their arsenal to buffer their claim that the Macedonians are an artificial people created in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and who have wrongly imputed the term *Macedonian* to themselves.

This type of negligent and shallow analysis and the conclusions drawn from it are utilized and

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<sup>4</sup> Brailsford used the term Gypsies to denote the Roma people, as they are known and refer to themselves today. When referencing peoples directly from authors, I use the exact terminology that those authors used.



promoted by both scholars and politicians. The propagandist applies this unscholarly approach to the Macedonian identity to nearly every work on Macedonia and the Macedonian people. These anti-Macedonian apologists scan such works only for passages that they can fashion into support for their chauvinistic claims; meanwhile, they reject or ignore anything that could harm their arguments. [My alternative is to accept that their analyses are shockingly inept. I suspect, however, that the propagandists are too detail-oriented to overlook facts, but clever enough to ignore truths.]

Yet, Brailsford expressly stated his conclusion on the Macedonian identity well before the table of contents. In his preface, he wrote that the Macedonian peasants were “originally neither Greek nor Bulgarian nor Servian”<sup>5</sup> but had instead been “bribed or persuaded or terrorised into joining one of these national parties.”<sup>6</sup> In this way, Brailsford established the scene in Macedonia while cautioning readers on how to interpret the labels ascribed to the Macedonians, both by himself and other authors. First, he openly admitted that the Macedonians were actually not Bulgarians, Greeks or Serbs. The development of *becoming* Bulgarian, Greek or Serbian was an ongoing process that had commenced relatively recently. Second, this *change*

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<sup>5</sup> Before the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, many Western writers referred to Serbians as Servians.

<sup>6</sup> Brailsford, Henry, *Macedonia: Its Races and Their Future*, London: 1906, Methuen, Pg. x, xi

*into something else* arose only after the people were forced or bribed into declaring that they were something else. This does not necessarily mean that their declarations corresponded with their true feelings and beliefs. Third, Brailsford was careful to not brand these Balkan groups as nations, but rather as national *parties*. In this context, the term *party* signifies that these nations were not based on fixed biological attributes or certain cultural qualities; instead, a Macedonian's membership into a nation was a loose, political affiliation.

Brailsford published *Macedonia* in 1906 after two separate journeys to Macedonia. His second visit transpired over the winter of 1903-1904 and lasted five months. He spent significant time in the Monastir province – particularly in the vicinities of Ohrid, Bitola, and Prespa – which corresponds to today's southwestern portions of the Republic of Macedonia and northwestern portions of Greece.<sup>7</sup> One of his cohorts included Mary Edith Durham, who also published a book on her experience in Macedonia that winter. The two Samaritans ventured into Macedonia on behalf of the British Relief Fund, which had been established to distribute food, clothing, medicine and other provisions after the failed Macedonian insurrection and the subsequent

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<sup>7</sup> Greece's acquired its share of Macedonia in 1913 and it constitutes about 50% of geographical Macedonia. Ethnic Macedonians refer to it as Aegean Macedonia.

Turkish atrocities.<sup>8</sup> The two endured Macedonia in the same conditions and at the same time, so comparing and contrasting their observations, interpretations and conclusions proves particularly insightful.

The two authors possessed slightly varying takes on the Macedonians' identity, but they held more in common on the subject than not. The noteworthy differences stemmed from their assessments of the Macedonians' innate character. Durham, for example, called the Macedonians "the lowest and least intelligent of all the folk I know in the Balkan Peninsula or elsewhere."<sup>9</sup> She continued:

**They are truly pitiable examples of the human race. Less capable than the other peoples, they have fallen undermost of all in the struggle for existence, though in many districts they are numerically superior. Some attribute their degraded condition entirely to oppression. This I believe to be only partially true. They have probably suffered the most because they are the unfittest.<sup>10</sup>**

The English observer also called the "Macedonian...a chronic dyspeptic, and the hardest drinker I know...too much accustomed to drink to get honestly drunk...soaked and saddened with alcohol so that he

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<sup>8</sup> Brailsford, *Macedonia*, Pg. xii

<sup>9</sup> M. Edith Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans*, London: 1905, Edward Arnold, Pg. 61

<sup>10</sup> Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans*, Pg. 61

cannot do without it.”<sup>11</sup> Durham plainly viewed the Macedonians as an inherently backwards people.

While Durham held a condescending view of the Macedonian peasants and believed their current condition ultimately stemmed from some innate inadequacies, Brailsford recognized that their conditions propelled perceptions about them and therefore refused to judge them. For example, he noted the following about the Macedonians:<sup>12</sup>

**You find him dull, reserved, and unfriendly, for experience has taught him to see in every member of an alien race a probable enemy. He lacks the plausibility, the grace, the quick intelligence of the Greek. He has nothing of the dignified courtesy, the defiant independence, the mediaeval chivalry of the Albanian. ... He has no sense for externals, no instinct for display. If he is wealthy he hoards his wealth. If he is poor he lives in squalor and in dirt. His national costumes are rarely picturesque, his national dances monotonous, his national songs unmusical. ...**

**You may learn to view these faults in a true historical perspective. You may bring yourself to think of them rather as the shameful evidence of the conqueror's wrongdoing than any proof of original depravity in the conquered. The more you learn the more you will incline to a kindly pity, but at the first you are hardly likely to admire this stolid and unprepossessing race. Time and**

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<sup>11</sup> Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans*, Pg. 117

<sup>12</sup> Brailsford refers to the Macedonians in this instance as Bulgarians of Macedonia. This terminology is to be explored later.

accident alone bring the clue to a different reading of its character.<sup>13</sup>

Brailsford ultimately believed the Macedonians could change, meaning their status was not a result of biological inferiorities. He insisted that one should not judge the Macedonians by their morals or relative lack of civilization, “but by their courage and their determination for better things.” He found that the Macedonians sacrificed morality and civilization to hold onto “the virtues of a martyr.”<sup>14</sup> He concluded by stating the following:

**The reality behind the whole muddle of racial conflicts, beyond the Chauvinism of the Balkan peoples and the calculations of the greater Powers, is the unregarded figure of the Macedonian peasant, harried, exploited, enslaved, careless of national programmes, and anxious only for a day when he may keep his warm sheepskin coat upon his back, give his daughter in marriage without dishonor, and eat in peace the bread of his own unceasing labour.<sup>15</sup>**

Brailsford’s assessment of the Macedonians’ character and position was much kinder and more thoughtful than Durham’s.

Despite Durham’s assault on the Macedonians’ character, she and Brailsford shared similar views

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<sup>13</sup> Brailsford, *Macedonia*, Pg. 111, 112

<sup>14</sup> Brailsford, *Macedonia*, Pg. 170, 171

<sup>15</sup> Brailsford, *Macedonia*, Pg. 57

concerning the Macedonians' ethnicity.<sup>16</sup> True, Durham often placed the term *Macedonian* in parentheses to communicate that it was a broad term and no unified definition or understanding of the Macedonians existed.<sup>17</sup> However, when she was not straining to classify the Macedonian people as something other or more than *Macedonian*, her instinctive and unconstrained feelings emerged. For example, while judging the Macedonians for their inherent deficiencies, she inadvertently classified them as their own nation. "Were it not for the fat lands that they inhabit," wrote Durham, "it is doubtful whether the *other nations* [emphasis added] would hasten to claim kindred with them."<sup>18</sup> By mentioning *other nations*, Durham expressly referred to all non-Macedonians as members of some other nations and indirectly classified Macedonians as their own nation. This is no small revelation, both about the author's own contradictory attitudes and the propagandists' ignorance of this passing remark.

As it happens, both Durham and Brailsford detailed the rivalries of the competing races and nations in Macedonia; but they also highlighted the distinctiveness of the Macedonians. On several occasions Brailsford asserted that the Macedonians

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<sup>16</sup> In this period and context, *nationality* and *race* represent our modern notion of ethnicity.

<sup>17</sup> For example, Durham writes, "If he be interested in the affairs of Turkey-in-Europe at all, he almost always believes in a spot inhabited by Turks (all Moslems and bad) and 'Macedonians' (all Christians and virtuous)." *The Burden of the Balkans*, Pg. vii

<sup>18</sup> Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans*, Pg. 61

were not Bulgarian, Greek nor Serbian and detailed how they ended up in their predicament. He began by dismantling what he viewed as the most outlandish Balkan claim: ancient Macedonia was Greek and therefore modern Macedonia and its Macedonians were also Greek. But Brailsford declared that “Macedonia never was Greek.” While he recognized that, at one point in time, the Macedonians may have possessed some sort of Hellenic civilization, those Hellenic sympathies or attributes were “ruined long before the coming of the Turks, and long before the rise of the Serbian and Bulgarian Empires.”<sup>19</sup> He also clarified that the Greek assertion of Alexander the Great being Greek was merely a “legend.”<sup>20</sup>

Brailsford understood, however, that the “legend that Macedonia is a Greek province ... is firmly planted in the European, and especially in the English mind.”<sup>21</sup> He specified that Greeks disregard facts and instead focused on *rights*. Brailsford elaborated:

**The Greek takes higher ground. His mind moves among abstractions. He talks not of Greeks, but of Hellenism, not of fact, but of right. That Hellenism has a right to Macedonia is his thesis, and he is never at a loss for an argument. He begins of course with Alexander. It does**

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<sup>19</sup> Brailsford, *Macedonia*, Pg. 94

<sup>20</sup> Brailsford, *Macedonia*, Pg. 103

<sup>21</sup> Brailsford, *Macedonia*, Pg. 106

not trouble him that in classical times the Greeks possessed only a few isolated colonies on the Macedonian coast. He waves aside the objection that for the ancients, Alexander and his Macedonians were no better than barbarians.<sup>22</sup>

Brailsford recognized that the Greeks' historical claims were second to a coveting they deemed noble and just.

Historical claims and rights, however, formed one half of the Greek propaganda equation, and Brailsford believed the other half was just as misinformed as the first. The Greek commoner made an ill-informed error by assuming that most Macedonians were Greek: because most Greeks were townspeople and rarely interacted with the agricultural peasants, who were the overwhelming majority in Macedonia, they had little reason to suspect that these Macedonians spoke, behaved and identified differently than them.<sup>23</sup> Beyond this, though, Brailsford emphasized that even the educated Greek "who admits frankly that the Macedonians are Slavs," believed Hellenizing the Macedonians was necessary to civilize them.<sup>24</sup> Yet, despite this Hellenizing mission by Greece, Brailsford stressed that Greeks could not avoid the fact that "every Slav child learned his own despised

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<sup>22</sup> Brailsford, *Macedonia*, Pg. 194

<sup>23</sup> Surely, statistical "evidence" presented by Greek propagandists as to the ethnic character of Macedonia also played a role in shaping the average Greek's beliefs about the Macedonians.

<sup>24</sup> Brailsford, *Macedonia*, Pg. 201



tongue at his mother's knee.”<sup>25</sup> For Brailsford, then, the Greekness attributed to many Macedonians was either forced or artificially inseminated.

Durham, for her part, did not dissect that Greek claims in so much detail, but she did highlight Greek reliance on the glory of Alexander the Great, which Greece felt entitled it to Macedonian territory. She observed how both Greeks and Albanians “enthusiastically” claimed Alexander the Great and “his Macedonian lands” as their own.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, she insisted that Macedonia’s original inhabitants were not Greek. According to her understanding of history, Macedonia and much of the Balkans had formerly been inhabited “by Thracians, Macedonians, and Illyrians—wild folk, not Greek[.]” “Philip of Macedon,” wrote Durham, “welded the wild tribes into a power, and Thracians, Macedonians, and Illyrians formed the foundation of Alexander the Great's all-conquering armies.”<sup>27</sup> Brailsford and Durham thus acknowledged that Greece’s claim to ancient Macedonia was misinformed, at best.

The Greeks’ claim to the Macedonians was based on myth, according to Brailsford and Durham, and little explanation was needed to prove that point. The claims by Bulgaria and Serbia, conversely,

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<sup>25</sup> Brailsford, *Macedonia*, Pg. 107

<sup>26</sup> Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans*, Pg. 6

<sup>27</sup> Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans*, Pg. 5

demanded much more scrutiny. First, the Macedonians spoke a Slavic dialect similar to certain Slavic dialects spoken in both Bulgaria and Serbia, which, if using language to determine a people's identity, complicated efforts to categorize the Macedonians into an officially recognized group. Second, the Macedonians shared certain traditions and physical features with both Serbs and Bulgarians, and some Macedonian regions shared more similarities with one group over the other. Thus, the line between Macedonians and Serbians or Bulgarians was blurrier than the line between Macedonians and Greeks, for example.

With regards to the Macedonians' language, both Durham and Brailsford left little room for negotiation as to where they believed the Macedonian language stood on the South Slavic dialect continuum. Durham sporadically referred to the Macedonians as "Slav-speaking peasants."<sup>28</sup> For instance, she referenced a priest who "spoke the local Slav dialect"<sup>29</sup> and a fellow named Georgie who "spoke a Slav dialect,"<sup>30</sup> and she sometimes denoted the peasants as "Slavonic,"<sup>31</sup> a synonym for *Slav-speaking*. In another case, Durham affirmed that "the bulk of these peasants speak a Slav dialect" which

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<sup>28</sup> Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans*, Pg. 61

<sup>29</sup> Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans*, Pg. 115

<sup>30</sup> Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans*, Pg. 6, 7

<sup>31</sup> See Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans*, Pg. 121, where she states: "Sometimes I found traces of the old Slavonic family communities[;]" and Pg. 59, "The Christian peasantry is mainly Slavonic[.]"

was “not the Servian of Belgrade” nor the “Bulgarian of Sofia.”<sup>32</sup> The Macedonians’ language, she continued, contained a greater amount of Albanian, Greek and Turkish words than either standard Bulgarian or Serbian. With respect to the Macedonians’ grammar, Durham discovered greater disparities. For example, the Macedonians in the Monastir district contained an ending for the third person singular of the present indicative that was not found in literary Bulgarian or Serbian, but that was used by some Serbians in Serbia. On the other hand, she noted how the Macedonians placed the definite article after a noun, which was shared with Bulgarian, Romanian and Albanian and not with Serbian (although this was not a uniform occurrence in Macedonia). Durham further observed that while the Macedonians inflected their nouns as in Serbian, the adjective was not compared by inflection as in Serbian, “but by prefixing ‘more’ and ‘very,’ as in Bulgarian and Albanian.” After some more examples, Durham concluded that “the dialect of the Macedonian Slav is neither Serbian nor Bulgarian, but ‘betwixt and between,’ as he is himself[.]”<sup>33</sup> She drew this conclusion only after spending several months in Macedonia. It was a much more methodical and persuasive approach to deciphering the linguistic character of Macedonians compared to

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<sup>32</sup> Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans*, Pg. 59

<sup>33</sup> Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans*, Pg. 59, 60

her initial observation upon arriving in southwest Macedonia, which was to exclaim that the language sounded like “Servian all gone wrong[.]”<sup>34</sup>

Perhaps unremarkably, Brailsford’s assessment of the Macedonians’ speech was in line with Durham’s. He, too, expressed that the Macedonians spoke ‘Slav’ or ‘Slavic’, such as when he mentioned children learning Slavic from their mothers and religious services being held in “ancient Slav.”<sup>35</sup> Brailsford understood that different factors had influenced the development and status of the Macedonians’ language; he felt that designating it as either Serbian or Bulgarian was inappropriate and inaccurate. He gave his justification as follows:

**If it is a northern centre, for example Uskub, the peasant women who handle the raw wool and hawk their own homespun, may use two Slavonic dialects, which vary slightly but still appreciably. The women who come from the hilly country to the north are clad in white dresses embroidered in black and green in the most decorative ancient designs. The Slav they speak shows Servian influence. Mingling with them are the women from the villages of the plain, whose taste is usually for red embroidery, and their Slav speech, if it must be classed, tends rather to Bulgarian than to Servian.**<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans*, Pg. 93

<sup>35</sup> Brailsford, *Macedonia*, Pg. 103

<sup>36</sup> Brailsford, *Macedonia*, Pg. 86

While he suggested that not many considerable differences existed between standard Bulgarian and literary Serbian, he unquestionably considered that the “Macedonian dialect is neither one nor the other[.]” As mentioned, he subscribed to the idea that the Macedonian, Serbian and Bulgarian languages were comprised of several dialects that constituted part of the South Slavic dialect continuum.<sup>37</sup> The Macedonians’ language – whatever one wanted to call it – was unique.

As we have seen, Brailsford and Durham both concluded that the Macedonian language resided somewhere between standard Serbian and Bulgarian. Both authors also advocated a similar approach to describing and classifying the Macedonian people. Durham, for example, assessed the Macedonian Christians to be “mainly Slavonic,” but mixed with Albanian, Bulgarian and Greek blood.<sup>38</sup> In describing a Macedonian who both claimed to be Bulgarian and a descendent of Alexander the Great, Durham said the young man “was possibly a mixture of all the races that have ever ruled the peninsula, and all he had gained was a Mauser ball through his right hand in the name of Alexander the Great.”<sup>39</sup>

Brailsford, too, discussed this admixture of blood, suggesting that the Macedonians could not be

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<sup>37</sup> Brailsford, *Macedonia*, Pg. 102, 103

<sup>38</sup> Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans*, Pg. 59

<sup>39</sup> Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans*, Pg. 6, 7

classified as Serbs because they likely had Bulgarian and other non-Aryan blood in them; but the Macedonians also could not be classified as Bulgarians because there had been several Serbian migrations into, and conquests of, Macedonia. Brailsford concluded that the Macedonians “are probably very much what they were before either a Bulgarian or a Servian Empire existed—a Slav people derived from rather various stocks, who invaded the peninsula at different periods.”<sup>40</sup>

How both writers defined the Macedonians and their language does not support theories concocted by Balkan indoctrination campaigns; however, both writers maintained that propaganda emanating from Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia veiled the true ethnic mosaic, or absence thereof, in Macedonia. To certain degrees, they both understood that the Macedonians would have not been viewed as Bulgarian, Greek or Serb by outsiders had it not been for the assiduous propaganda crusades. Durham, for her part, suspected that all published statistics and ethnographical maps were “compiled for party politics” and thus deemed them untrustworthy. She alleged that had an outsider even been able to conduct an impartial census with accurate representations of how the people viewed themselves, many of them would have swapped

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<sup>40</sup> Brailsford, *Macedonia*, Pg. 101, 102

allegiances before the census was printed.<sup>41</sup> Durham pinned the origins of Balkan propaganda to the year of 1870, when the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate (Bulgarian Orthodox Church) created an avenue for Bulgaria to compete with the Greek Orthodox Church for Macedonian sympathies.<sup>42</sup> Before the Bulgarian Church's inception, the Greek Church held sway over all Christian inhabitants in Macedonia, and Macedonians were referred to as Greeks because they belonged to the *Greek Church*. But, wrote Brailsford, the Macedonians "are no more Greeks than the Orthodox Russians are."<sup>43</sup>

These British authors were cognizant of the Balkan shenanigans polluting Macedonia, and much of their knowledge derived from conversations with its inhabitants. In one case, Brailsford asked a peasant if his village was Greek or Bulgarian. The man answered that it was presently Bulgarian, but that a few years prior it had been Greek. Brailsford pressed the peasant. The man explained that his village once had a Greek teacher, but the Greek Church would not furnish the village with its own priest. "The Bulgarians heard of this," continued the man, "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 who we need pay nothing.

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<sup>41</sup> Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans*, Pg. 58

<sup>42</sup> Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans*, Pg. 66

<sup>43</sup> Brailsford, *Macedonia*, Pg. 107

Well, sir, ours is a poor village, and so of course we became Bulgarians.”<sup>44</sup> In addition to demonstrating how Macedonian peasants *became* members of one national camp over another, this example also emphasizes how this peasant understanding of nationality did not (and does not) correspond to Western definitions. Then, Macedonians counted themselves Bulgarian, Greek or Serbian if their teachers and priests were Bulgarian, Greek, or Serbian, respectively; however, nationality as we know it today (and how many Westerners viewed it then) means either “a people having a common origin, tradition, and language and capable of forming or actually constituting a nation-state” or “an ethnic group constituting one element of a larger unit.”<sup>45</sup> Therefore, it is disingenuous to consider late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Macedonian declarations of nationality that are based on changing church allegiances, as an actual or true demonstration of nationality as we know it today and as Western authors knew it then.

It was also evident to Brailsford that the Macedonians were often *forced* to accept one church’s supremacy over another. Increased church membership was used to demonstrate the Balkan propagandists’ rights and claims to the people of

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<sup>44</sup> Brailsford, *Macedonia*, Pg. 103, 104

<sup>45</sup> Merriam-Webster, Definition of Nationality, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nationalities>. Last accessed 10/23/2020.



Macedonia. “Persecution there is in plenty,” wrote Brailsford, “but it cannot properly be called religious persecution. Villages are ‘converted’ by force, by threats, or by persuasion from one ‘Church’ to another, but the process means no more than a transference of allegiance from one political propaganda to its rival.”<sup>46</sup> Hence, for Brailsford, declaring oneself Bulgarian or Greek was a political allegiance based on the needs of the village, and not some sort of statement about ideology, ancestry or cultural affinities.

Durham likewise noted the fluidity of the Macedonians’ fidelities as many shrewdly capitalized from this Balkan political showdown. She described one Macedonian man as “liberal-minded” because he raised one son as a Serbian and another as a Bulgarian, while marrying his daughter “to some other nationality.”<sup>47</sup> Brailsford corroborated Durham’s observations, maintaining that it was “not uncommon” for a father to raise one child as Greek, the second as Bulgarian, the third as Serbian, and the fourth as a Vlach. The self-governing Balkan states provided free schooling for Macedonian children, which was a tactic that increased their appeal to the Macedonians as they competed for pupils to indoctrinate. Because many Macedonian parents desired an education for their children in order to lift

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<sup>46</sup> Brailsford, *Macedonia*, Pg. 71, 72

<sup>47</sup> Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans*, Pg. 110

them out of poverty, and because they viewed school choice as an opportunity for advancement and not as a declaration of identity, accepting free schooling from one “nation” over another was no meaningful sacrifice.<sup>48</sup> Only in a world where nationality and race are determined by propaganda and party politics, and not by biological relations, can a father raise his sons as two or more different nationalities.

Of course, as previously mentioned, education was only one of several ways to sway the Macedonians’ loyalties. Durham, for example, mentioned a Macedonian who had for years been a priest in the Bulgarian Church until he “discovered that he [was] really a Vlah” because the Vlach propagandists paid a significantly higher salary.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, by the turn of the century, the Bulgarian camp had won over more Macedonians than the competing nationalities. Durham attributed this result to Bulgaria having pumped in exorbitant amounts of money and resources into Macedonia. She remarked that a Macedonian “would have risen as willingly for Servia or Greece had they been able to finance the matter as liberally.”<sup>50</sup> Brailsford agreed. He supposed that “any Slav race” belonging to the Orthodox faith “might have won Macedonia” if they had enough tact and funds. “The Macedonians

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<sup>48</sup> Brailsford, *Macedonia*, Pg. 103, 104

<sup>49</sup> Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans*, Pg. 138

<sup>50</sup> Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans*, Pg. 166, 167

are Bulgars today,” wrote Brailsford, “because a free and progressive Bulgaria has known how to attract them.”<sup>51</sup> The Macedonians would align themselves with anyone who could help them win their freedom, according to Brailsford. Bulgaria outmaneuvered Serbia and Greece, said Brailsford, because it towed the line of “autonomy of Macedonia” while the latter two aimed “only at its annexation.” The Bulgarians stirred “local Macedonian patriotism” and in doing so found a way to convince the Macedonians to feel closer to Bulgaria than to the other Balkan aggravators.<sup>52</sup>

Despite Bulgaria’s significant inroads, both Durham and Brailsford stressed that the “Bulgarian consciousness” of these Macedonians was superficial, at best. Durham described an interaction where the locals in Prespa and Ohrid had no knowledge about “the Great Bulgarian Empire” from the past. She further claimed to not have encountered any true Bulgarian patriots because the Macedonians harbored no knowledge of Bulgarian history.<sup>53</sup> Brailsford’s interactions confirmed Durham’s evaluation. He told of one particular noteworthy interaction with Macedonian children:

**I questioned some boys from a remote mountain village near Ochrida which had neither teacher nor resident**

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<sup>51</sup> Brailsford, *Macedonia*, Pg. 104, 105

<sup>52</sup> Brailsford, *Macedonia*, Pg. 105, 106

<sup>53</sup> Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans*, Pg. 114, 115

priest, and where not a single inhabitant was able to read, in order to discover what amount of traditional knowledge they possessed. I took them up to the ruins of the Bulgarian Tsar's<sup>54</sup> fortress which dominates the lake and the plain from the summit of an abrupt and curiously rounded hill.

"Who built this place?" I asked them.

The answer was significant—"The Free Men."

"And who were they?"

"Our grandfathers."

"Yes, but were they Serbs or Bulgarians or Greeks or Turks?"

"They weren't Turks, they were Christians."<sup>55</sup>

Brailsford ascertained that most Macedonians did not view themselves in the same light as how the Balkan propagandists aspired them to be viewed, but rather by two broader yet more relevant terms: "free men" and "Christians". The Macedonian peasants had no need to ascribe contemporary labels to century-old events; and moreover, the absence of Balkan education and priests prevented the Macedonians from attaining a Bulgarian, Greek or

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<sup>54</sup> Brailsford is referring to Tsar Samuel, a medieval ruler. Here, he calls Tsar Samuel a Bulgarian, but on page 96, he states that his empire "was thus definitely a Macedonian state[.]"

<sup>55</sup> Brailsford, *Macedonia*, Pg. 99

Serbian view of their own history. This is no small revelation.

However, Durham did not fully subscribe to the notion that the Macedonians were a separate people called *Macedonians*. Hence, she often decorated the term *Macedonian* in quotations and downplayed the suggestion of a separate Macedonian people. For instance, she stated: “I have even met people who believe there is a special race which they call 'Macedonian,' ... [but] there are people of six races.”<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, her book is littered with contradictory examples and competing conclusions; she devoted much of her book to explaining how the Macedonian people and their language were not akin to the other Balkan races or languages. Moreover, she acknowledged that propaganda steered the Macedonians into those camps, and then claimed Macedonians were not their own people and that there was no *Macedonian* race, all the while still dubbing them as Macedonians.

Brailsford was more consistent in how he described the Macedonians and indisputably advocated that the Macedonians were uniquely their own people. For example, he described the Macedonian revolutionary movement as “a genuine Macedonian movement, prepared by Macedonians, led by Macedonians, and assisted by the passionate sympathy of the vast majority of the Slav

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<sup>56</sup> Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans*, Pg. 58

population.”<sup>57</sup> He emphasized that “the genuine Macedonian character of the movement” had never been compromised. “It is led not by Bulgarians,” he wrote, “but by Macedonians.”<sup>58</sup>

In addition, he explained Bulgaria’s role in the Macedonian revolutionary movement as that of being an apparent benefactor of the Macedonian cause rather than an architect, as so many Bulgarian propagandists wish to assert. Brailsford noted the following:

**It is true that without the friendly refuge of Bulgaria the Macedonian patriots could have achieved little. But the fact that their bands are often equipped in Bulgaria, and sometimes led by Macedonians long resident in Bulgaria, in no way robs the Committee of its local character.**

Brailsford concluded that these Macedonians were reckoned as members of the Bulgarian race only because of an extensive and malicious propaganda effort. He recognized, though, that such declarations were merely political convenience. As he alleged, the Macedonians enjoyed “no highly-developed consciousness of race,” and any which they did possess was of “recent growth.” He stated that the Macedonians’ “passion is not for their race but for their country. ... Their ballads of revolt, in which the

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<sup>57</sup> Brailsford, *Macedonia*, Pg. 113

<sup>58</sup> Brailsford, *Macedonia*, Pg. 120-122

word ‘Macedonia’ recurs in every chorus, proves that they have already a fatherland.”<sup>59</sup> Finally, Brailsford’s most telling description of a Macedonian was also the simplest: “The layman was an ardent Macedonian nationalist, rather distrustful of Bulgaria, and profoundly hostile to Russia. The description was good and accurate.”<sup>60</sup> In essence, one cannot be a Macedonian nationalist and belong to a nation other than the Macedonian nation. Despite the Bulgarian or Greek labels given to the Macedonians and as cited by modern propagandists, Brailsford’s true understanding of the Macedonians was that they were uniquely Macedonian.

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<sup>59</sup> Brailsford, *Macedonia*, Pg. 120-122

<sup>60</sup> Brailsford, *Macedonia*, Pg. 18, 19

## II

During the ascent of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) and the acceleration of rival Balkan propagandas vying to assimilate the Macedonians into certain political camps, dozens of Westerners tangoed in the Macedonian tangle. While Brailsford and Durham experienced the wretched land just after the defeat of the Macedonian uprising while confining themselves to one district, others wrote about their Macedonian encounters prior to the failed revolution.

Right before the turn of the century, William Miller released a book about his travels to the Balkans, entitled *Travels and Politics in the Near East*. This was his second book; his first, in 1896, outlined the general history of the Balkans,<sup>61</sup> while his second detailed present conditions in the Balkans during four separate visits between 1894 and 1898.<sup>62</sup> While Miller only dedicated a fragment of *Travels and Politics* to the Macedonian situation, his insights were not superficial. He directly positioned the

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<sup>61</sup> Miller, William, *The Balkans: Roumania, Bulgaria, Servia, and Montenegro*, New York: 1896, G. P. Putnam's Sons

<sup>62</sup> Miller, William, *Travels and Politics in the Near East*, New York: 1899, Frederick A. Stokes, Pg. ix



blame for racial and national confusion in Macedonia on Bulgarian, Greek and Serbian aspirations. To these nations, noted Miller, Macedonia was “the promised land.” They exploited both history and geography to stake their claims, and those claims habitually intersected and overlapped. He even recognized much earlier than his contemporaries that Vlach and Albanian propaganda only served to further blurry the Macedonian picture.<sup>63</sup>

Like Durham, Miller underscored that the establishment of the Bulgarian Church escalated Bulgarian propaganda in Macedonia. Before that event, prominent Bulgarian writers such as Petko Slaveykov had used the Greek alphabet to communicate with the Macedonians, who had lost nearly all knowledge of the Cyrillic alphabet.<sup>64</sup> After the establishment of the Bulgarian Church, however, Bulgaria had procured ample means to awaken Macedonians to a Bulgarian viewpoint of history and identity. Bulgaria’s motivations were not necessarily the result of some mass Bulgarian push by commoners to acquire Macedonian territory. Rather, as we repeatedly find throughout history, the principal agitators constituted the top brass of society.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Miller, *Travels and Politics in the Near East*, Pg. 372

<sup>64</sup> Miller, *Travels and Politics in the Near East*, Pg. 374

<sup>65</sup> Miller, *Travels and Politics in the Near East*, Pg. 375

For example, Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria, an Austrian-born German prince, was installed as Bulgaria's ruler in the late 1880s, and he sorely desired the chronicles of European history to remember him as "the Macedonian." Yet, before he could sit cozy on his throne, Bulgaria's biggest backer, Russia, had disavowed Bulgaria's efforts in Macedonia because the newly autonomous monarchy refused to become a Russian satellite. Ferdinand's Bulgaria then concocted a new strategy, – the Bulgarians threatened and pestered the Turkish Sultan until the Bulgarian Church had equal rights and access in Macedonia as the Greek Church, which had the effect of leveling the playing field.<sup>66</sup> Even in his 1923 work, *The Ottoman Empire and Its Successors, 1801-1922*, Miller emphasized how Stefan Stambolov, the prime minister of Bulgaria during Ferdinand's early years, "saw clearly that it was the interest of Bulgaria to establish friendly relations with Turkey ... to secure Turkish support against Russian schemes and to establish Bulgarian schools and bishoprics as the nucleus of a Bulgarian propaganda against the Greeks and Serbs in Macedonia."<sup>67</sup> Unsurprisingly, then, we find that Bulgarian state actors schemed to acquire Macedonia using education and religion. For Miller, however,

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<sup>66</sup> Miller, *Travels and Politics in the Near East*, Pg. 375

<sup>67</sup> Miller, William, *The Ottoman Empire and Its Successors, 1901-1922*, Cambridge: 1923, The University Press, Pg. 449

the adherents of these churches were simply “rival parties” that “took their titles from the Greek Patriarch and the Bulgarian Exarch.”<sup>68</sup>

Meanwhile, Serbia, after having been temporarily thwarted from westward expansion to the Adriatic Sea, shifted its efforts southward to the Aegean Sea. Unfortunately for the Macedonians, Macedonia separated this crucial Mediterranean trade route from Serbia. Therefore, as Miller observed, the Serbians sought to neutralize Bulgarian efforts in Macedonia beginning in the 1880s in order to realize the grandiose ambition of acquiring access to a sea.<sup>69</sup> The problem, according to Miller, was that true Serbians could only be found in any substantial number north of the Shar mountain range (which today divides Macedonia from Kosovo).<sup>70</sup> Only in Kumanovo (a region bordering present day Serbia) did Miller suspect that Serbia held potential advantages over Bulgaria. In other Macedonian districts, Serbian propaganda arrived late and struggled to even force minor delays in the Bulgarian agenda. Still, like Brailsford, Miller described the results of these efforts as political in nature:

**Unhappily, these educational rivalries lead occasionally to violence, as when last autumn there was an attempt by Bulgarians to kill the director of the Servian school at**

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<sup>68</sup> Miller, *The Ottoman Empire and Its Successors*, Pg. 447

<sup>69</sup> Miller, *Travels and Politics in the Near East*, Pg. 377

<sup>70</sup> Miller, *Travels and Politics in the Near East*, Pg. 379

**Prilep and his daughter. Thus, in "the promised land," religion and education are a mere cloak for political agitation, and an additional bishop or a new school is regarded as one more point in the game of rival races.<sup>71</sup>**

Even in his first book, published in 1896, Miller characterized the consequences of Serbia's injection into the scene as having created "mutual jealousies of Bulgarian and Serb [and a] struggle of various races for supremacy in Macedonia."<sup>72</sup> The Serbian presence in Macedonia merely intensified and complicated the race to convince enough Macedonians that they belonged to (or should belong to) a particular racial or national camp.

Yet, despite his acknowledgment of the propaganda wars playing out in Macedonia, Miller resisted classifying the Macedonians as a separate nationality. This, however, was undoubtedly partially caused by the injection of Balkan distortions into Macedonia. For had Miller truly thought Macedonians belonged to one particular nationality over another as a matter of biological and cultural fact, he would have not agreed with British Prime Minister William Gladstone's idea of a "Macedonia to the Macedonians" (which was articulated on the same grounds as the notion of Serbia for the Serbians and Bulgaria for the Bulgarians). Miller considered an autonomous Macedonia ruled by Macedonians to

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<sup>71</sup> Miller, *Travels and Politics in the Near East*, Pg. 380, 381

<sup>72</sup> Miller, *The Balkans*, Pg. vii

be a respectable idea, but he supposed that existing Balkan ambitions in Macedonia would render the notion an impossibility.

To Miller, Macedonia had become “a medley of conflicting nationalities, which have nothing in common.”<sup>73</sup> “In Macedonia,” continued Miller, “all these races are hopelessly intermixed. Unfortunately, too, almost every race of the Peninsula has at some distant period held more or less brief sway over some part or other of Macedonia, and these historical reminiscences, which may seem of purely antiquarian importance to the ‘practical’ statesmen of Western Europe, for whom history begins with the Berlin Treaty, are considered vital in the Balkans.”<sup>74</sup> In *The Ottoman Empire and Its Successors*, he revealed the outlandishness of these entrenched, historical claims:

**Macedonia was the land of conflicting races and overlapping claims ... and while no Englishman would found a claim to large portions of France upon the conquests of Edward III, Serbs speak of his contemporary, Stephen Dushan, as if his coronations as Tsar at Uskub had been but yesterday, and Greeks of Alexander the Great is if the centuries that have elapsed since his death were a watch in the night.**<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Miller, *Travels and Politics in the Near East*, Pg. 388

<sup>74</sup> Miller, *Travels and Politics in the Near East*, Pg. 370, 371

<sup>75</sup> Miller, *The Ottoman Empire and Its Successors*, Pg. 441, 442

Each Balkan state had formulated some claim to Macedonia rooted in past events, which fueled the conversion of these Macedonians into one nationality or another, and Miller concluded that none of “the Macedonian races were powerful enough to subdue all the others[.]” He suggested that Austria-Hungary should simply occupy Macedonia and sort out its affairs.<sup>76</sup> Miller deemed the Macedonian scene too convoluted and divisive for any one Balkan state to successfully govern.

Do Miller’s assertions serve as proof that the Macedonians were not their own separate ethnic or national group? Not quite – one would be making leaps in logic to arrive at that position, even if one was solely depending on Miller’s works. Miller observed Macedonia at a time when propaganda had already stamped its mark on the Macedonian people. As he carefully asserted, the Macedonian racial camps were not revelations about biological or cultural realities, but rather they were political statements that rendered the unification of the Macedonian people under one common cause a seemingly impossible mission.

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<sup>76</sup> Miller, *Travels and Politics in the Near East*, Pg. 388

### III

Miller had spent enough time in Macedonia before the turn of the century to begin sketching a reasonable blueprint for understanding the Macedonian situation. Untangling Balkan history and the need to decipher the true nature of the political scene motivated his academic pursuits. Of course, others who explored Macedonia right after the turn of the century and before the failed Macedonian uprising in the summer of 1903 formed opinions that contrasted or expanded on some of Miller's observations and conclusions. Two reputable Western journalists in particular published works during and after their exploration of Macedonia: Stephen Bonsal and George Frederick Abbott.

Bonsal spent several years in the Balkans while working as a correspondent for the *New York Herald*, and he covered the Serbo-Bulgarian War of 1885, as well as the Macedonian revolutionary movement.<sup>77</sup> For the most part, Bonsal was not sure how to classify the Macedonian people. In his 1903 essay, "The Gordian Knot in Macedonia," he dared not

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<sup>77</sup> Leonard, John William et al., *Who's Who in America: A Biographical Dictionary of Notable Living Men and Women of the United States, Volume 4*, Chicago: 1906, A.N. Marquis & Co., Pg. 177

draw a conclusion about the true national or racial affiliations of the Macedonians. "I would not venture to say," wrote Bonsal, "where the Slavs or the Greeks or the Roumeliotes<sup>78</sup> or the Albanians are in the majority, or to answer the moot question whether the Slavs who are met with belong to the Bulgarian or to the Servian family of that race[.]"<sup>79</sup> As Bonsal hinted, it was quite irrelevant how to classify the Macedonian Slavs. George Abbott expanded on Bonsal's views by stating that one's national identity in Macedonia only indicated to which church one belonged. An example of this can be found in his book *A Tale of a Tour in Macedonia*, where he initially refers to two men as "Greek" and "Slav," but then corrects himself by stating, "I ought to have said, one orthodox and the other schismatic" (with the "orthodox" belonging to the Greek Church and the "schismatic" belonging to the Bulgarian church).<sup>80</sup> Bonsal stated it was difficult to designate a nationality or race to the Macedonian people, and Abbott explained why.

Bonsal initially felt that most Macedonians looked like Bulgarians and declared themselves as Bulgarians.<sup>81</sup> Still, he referred to the different camps of Slavic-speaking peoples in Macedonia as "Bulgaro-

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<sup>78</sup> Some authors used the term "Roumeliotes" for the Aromanians or Vlachs.

<sup>79</sup> Bonsal, Stephen, "The Gordian Knot in Macedonia," *The North American Review*, Volume 177, No. 563, October 1903, 495-505, Pg. 497

<sup>80</sup> Abbot, G.F., *A Tale of a Tour in Macedonia*, London: 1903, Edward Arnold, Pg. 61.

<sup>81</sup> Bonsal, "The Gordian Knot in Macedonia," Pg. 500



Slavs” or “Serbo-Slavs” to indicate the leanings of these Slavic peoples.<sup>82</sup> Later on, however, his thinking evolved: in 1908, he suggested that the Macedonian Christians were of “Greek, Bulgarian, Serb, or Roumanian origin;”<sup>83</sup> by 1912, he was labeling the Macedonian people predominantly as “Macedonian Slavs.”<sup>84</sup> For Abbott, these Slavic-speaking Macedonians could not be successfully categorized as either Bulgarian or Serbian. The only thing he could say with certainty was that the Macedonians spoke a Slavonic language, which was “purer in the north” of Macedonia but “more mixed with Greek” the further south one travelled. With regards to whether their language was Bulgarian or Serbian, he found it impossible to decide. “A Macedonian Slav is equally intelligible, or unintelligible,” wrote Abbott, “to the Servian and to the Bulgarian. In some districts the resemblance is closer to one idiom; in others, closer to the other. But this resemblance does not always correspond with the vicinity of the one State or the other.”

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<sup>82</sup> Bonsal, “The Gordian Knot in Macedonia,” Pg. 499, 500

<sup>83</sup> Bonsal, Stephen, “Christendom’s Champions in Macedonia,” *The New York Times*, 23 February 1908, Pg. 31

<sup>84</sup> See Bonsal, Stephen, “The Balkan Powder Mine Explodes,” in Collier’s, *The National Weekly*, Vol. 50, No. 11, November, 1912, Pg. 13, 14 Bonsal writes: “The division of Macedonia, that salad of odds and ends of races and mosaic of religious creeds, is not worked out in detail, and apparently that considerable party of Macedonian Slavs under Sandansky and the late Boris Sarafoff, the kidnapper of Miss Stone, who have strenuously opposed the annexation of their tormented country to Bulgaria for some years past, are not given any consideration whatever in the settlement.”

Hence, language could not determine a Macedonian's nationality.<sup>85</sup>

Language could not determine one's identity, and neither could physical attributes. While Bonsal insisted these Macedonians looked more like Bulgarians, Abbott felt it was impossible to determine their national or racial categorization based on physical appearances. He wrote:

**But the various races are so hopelessly entangled and intermingled in these midland districts, that it would not be safe or scientific to draw any positive deductions from appearances. ... [We] can only remark in general terms that the tiller of the soil, as often as not, is a peasant who, though he may call himself Greek, or Bulgarian, or Servian, according as sentiment or perchance interest, or the state of the political barometer, may prompt him, bears in his countenance the impress of a non-Hellenic origin. The farther north one moves, the more pronounced these characteristics become.**<sup>86</sup>

With regards to physical features, then, Abbott was only confident in his assertion that Macedonian peasants possessed more Greek-like features in the southern portions of Macedonia that neighbored the Greek kingdom, which is expected based on geographical proximity.

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<sup>85</sup> Abbot, *A Tale of a Tour in Macedonia*, Pg. 80

<sup>86</sup> Abbot, *A Tale of a Tour in Macedonia*, Pg. 110

Bonsal, however, ruled out the Greekness of most Macedonians, stating that those who were Greeks were mostly situated in the towns,<sup>87</sup> such as in Skopje and Bitola,<sup>88</sup> which is the general consensus of most authors during this time. Abbott also noted the same about the Greeks' geographical distribution, for example, by emphasizing that the town of Melnik was "mainly Greek"<sup>89</sup> and by declaring that the Greek language "holds sway in the towns." Abbott cautioned, though, that language was not a true indicator of one's nationality; and contrary to other authors, he suggested that those who spoke a Slavic tongue were more likely to be Greek than vice versa.<sup>90</sup> He even declared that IMRO's assertion that Alexander the Great and Aristotle were not Greek was merely "Bulgarian propaganda" and politicization of history.<sup>91</sup>

Bonsal ultimately attributed this confusion and inconsistency on racial or national labels to Balkan propaganda and the cursory observation of the Macedonian situation. He firmly believed that descriptions published about the Macedonians since at least the 1880s were "campaign document[s]" or "superficial" characterizations by Western visitors.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Bonsal, "The Gordian Knot in Macedonia," Pg. 498

<sup>88</sup> Bonsal, Stephen, "The Sultan's Surrender and What it Means," *Chattanooga Daily Times*, 17 August 1908, Pg. 3

<sup>89</sup> Abbot, *A Tale of a Tour in Macedonia*, Pg. 120

<sup>90</sup> Abbot, *A Tale of a Tour in Macedonia*, Pg. 110

<sup>91</sup> Abbot, *A Tale of a Tour in Macedonia*, Pg. 277, 278

<sup>92</sup> Bonsal, "The Gordian Knot in Macedonia," Pg. 496, 497

In this way, Bonsal identified another element for the chaotic scene of identification in Macedonia: mischaracterizations resulting from shallow research and shoddy analysis. Of course, much of this was undoubtedly due to the fact that one could hear ten different languages spoken in a ten mile radius, said Bonsal.<sup>93</sup> Trying to categorize a whole people whose country was a mosaic of so many different languages was no easy task, for the scholar and the propagandist just as much as for the aimless visitor.

Abbott supplemented Bonsal's observations with his own anecdotes. He believed that descriptions of Macedonians depended entirely on those answering the questions. A Turkish train attendant referred to them as Greeks because, for the Turks, Macedonians were simply Greek Church adherents. However, a European train conductor suggested that they were Bulgarians because he believed their language to be most similar to Bulgarian. Based on these and other observations, Abbott concluded that the Macedonians were "Christians speaking a Slavonic idiom," and that was "as far as the cautious student [could] go with a clear conscience."<sup>94</sup>

Still, in a book he published alongside *A Tale of a Tour*, called *Macedonian Folklore*, Abbott pulled a Durham and indirectly referred to the Macedonians as constituting their own race. In describing how

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<sup>93</sup> Bonsal, "The Gordian Knot in Macedonia," Pg. 497

<sup>94</sup> Abbot, *A Tale of a Tour in Macedonia*, Pg. 60

Macedonians foreshadowed death, he wrote that “the doleful nature of these sounds explains the meaning attached to them by the Macedonians as well as by *other races* [emphasis added].”<sup>95</sup> He repeated the claim again when he said that “...the shadow is by the Macedonians, as by so many *other races* [emphasis added].”<sup>96</sup> Of course, he muddled his own conscience, as he hoped not to do in *A Tale of a Tour*, and he contradicted himself in *Macedonian Folklore* when, on separate occasions, he referred to the Macedonians as Greeks, such as by writing “the Macedonians and the rest of the Greeks”<sup>97</sup> and “among the Macedonians, as well as other members of the Greek race.”<sup>98</sup> Abbott’s attempt to make sense of the national or racial situation in Macedonia tripped him up, despite how careful he was in repeatedly emphasizing the impossibility of the task.

Bonsal described the origins of this Western confusion using anecdotes about the persistent propaganda efforts. In one instance, he illustrated the efforts of a Serbian educator, sent from Belgrade, to convince the peasants in the vicinities of Skopje that they were truly Serbians. The Serbian loyalist asked a peasant what his nationality was, and the man replied in his native dialect, “I am a Bulgarian.” The propagandist spent a mere 30 minutes with the

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<sup>95</sup> Abbott, G.F., *Macedonian Folklore*, Cambridge: 1903, University Press, Pg. 107

<sup>96</sup> Abbott, *Macedonian Folklore*, Pg. 257, Note 1.

<sup>97</sup> Abbott, *Macedonian Folklore*, Pg. 190

<sup>98</sup> Abbott, *Macedonian Folklore*, Pg. 187

man convincing him that based on the way he spoke, he could not possibly be Bulgarian, and that he and his ancestors must be Serbian. By the end of his tirade, the peasant happily believed that he was Serbian and not Bulgarian.<sup>99</sup> A populace that could so easily and readily accept that they belonged to one group rather than another could not have possibly possessed an understanding of what underlies our modern definition of what it means to belong to a nation, race or ethnic group.

As Bonsal further noted, one could mold the Macedonians into anything he wanted so long as they were “caught young.”<sup>100</sup> Abbot confirmed this with a strikingly similar assessment:

**If they are caught young by the Bulgarian propaganda, and reared in its schools, they are imbued with the idea that they are Bulgarians. If the Servians are first in the field, they become Servians. The race is to the swift and to the rich.**<sup>101</sup>

Abbott further confirmed the effect this had on Macedonian families, as did Brailsford and Durham. “In one and the same household,” he wrote, “one will occasionally find representatives of all the branches of the human family; the father claiming for himself a Servian descent, the son swearing that nothing but

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<sup>99</sup> Bonsal, “The Gordian Knot in Macedonia,” Pg. 500

<sup>100</sup> Bonsal, “The Gordian Knot in Macedonia,” Pg. 500

<sup>101</sup> Abbot, *A Tale of a Tour in Macedonia*, Pg. 80, 81

Bulgarian blood flows in his veins, while the daughters, if they are allowed a voice in the matter, will be equally positive that Helen of Troy or Catherine of Russia or the Aphrodite of Melos was their ancestress. The old mother is generally content to embody her national convictions in the declaration that she is a Christian.”<sup>102</sup> Hence, indoctrination of the youth was the Balkan propagandists’ strongest weapon in their arsenal; and in a way, they were responsible for the cosmopolitan outlook of this small Macedonian population that was ironically clad as a backward people.

As mentioned, Bonsal staunchly believed that the chaos he had witnessed in Macedonia was primarily a result of propaganda. For him, the Bulgarians, Greeks and Serbians for at least a decade had been “engaged with all their energies in coddling a national revival or a tribal renaissance[.]” This is how, wrote Bonsal, the visiting foreign scholar is bombarded with varying color maps and statistics of population estimates and language-speakers.<sup>103</sup> Bonsal best labeled these belligerents as “ambitious aspirants.”<sup>104</sup> Abbott agreed. He noted that Balkan “agents are all scrambling for the appropriation of these erring spirits, while learned professors at St. Petersburg and Bucharest, Belgrade and Sofia, are

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<sup>102</sup> Abbot, *A Tale of a Tour in Macedonia*, Pg. 81

<sup>103</sup> Bonsal, “The Gordian Knot in Macedonia,” Pg. 499, 500

<sup>104</sup> Bonsal, Stephen, “The Sultan’s Surrender and What it Means,” *Chattanooga Daily Times*, 17 August 1908, Pg. 3

busy manufacturing genealogical trees and national appellations.”<sup>105</sup> Furthermore, said Abbott, the Bulgarian propaganda machine had succeeded in convincing over three-fourths of the Macedonian population that they were Bulgarian by two other main methods: money and threats. Bulgaria generally paid their propagandists (including teachers and priests) more money than the others. They also bribed Macedonians into joining their party; and if that did not work, they threatened to kill them. “The Bulgarian propaganda spares no effort,” stated Abbott, and it had thus far succeeded “[by] a judicious combination of these two methods.”<sup>106</sup>

But Abbott was partial to the Greek cause in Macedonia. In his book *Turkey in Transition*, published in 1909, he stressed that while Greece operated with “militant agitation in Macedonia,” its aim was “self-preservation rather than conquest.” Greece was merely defending “the Greek and Grecophil populations” in Macedonia. The Bulgarians, on the other hand, only managed to terrorize the peasants, while the Serbians “never advanced much further than the stage of a pious aspiration[.]”<sup>107</sup> Yet, this did not stop Abbott from acknowledging that “Hellenic” propaganda existed in

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<sup>105</sup> Abbot, *A Tale of a Tour in Macedonia*, Pg. 81

<sup>106</sup> Abbot, *A Tale of a Tour in Macedonia*, Pg. 156-158

<sup>107</sup> Abbott, G.F., *Turkey in Transition*, London: 1909, E. Arnold, Pg. 78, 79



Macedonia, even if it was not as extensive as Bulgarian propaganda.<sup>108</sup>

Many visitors and scholars were deceived by such bombardment of propaganda. Bonsal concluded, however, that these Balkan efforts were nothing but misleading embellishments and exaggerations. Prior to the invasion of Balkan propaganda into Macedonia, the Macedonians had no such affinities. Bonsal wrote:

**It is quite probable that, up to the Russian war for the liberation of the Southern Slavs,<sup>109</sup> the people of Macedonia lost no sleep in wondering to what division or subdivision of the great Slav family they belonged. Now, however, they think and talk of but little else. Certainly, in the songs and sagas that are handed down in Macedonia from father to son and from mother to daughter, there survives perhaps an exaggerated idea of the glory and power of the ancient Slav empire, but these memories were formerly cultivated as sentiments, rather than as a platform or a political force. Until the awakening suggestion came from the northern Slavs, who were in the enjoyment of comparative freedom and more or less liberal institutions, it is probable that the Slavs of Macedonia had but little appreciation of how unfortunate their lot was, politically.<sup>110</sup>**

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<sup>108</sup> Abbott, *Turkey in Transition*, Pg. 321. Abbott wrote: "The Greek bands have proved more than a match for the Bulgarian bands. The one respect in which the Bulgarian propaganda had the advantage over the Hellenic was the support of the Bulgarian army, upon which it could rely as a last resource."

<sup>109</sup> Russia fought several wars against Turkey; the author is referring to the war fought in 1877-78.

<sup>110</sup> Bonsal, "The Gordian Knot in Macedonia," Pg. 501

For Bonsal, the Macedonians' affiliations were political declarations and not ethnic or national truths. For Abbott, the assessment was accurate, even though he phrased it more crudely: "The Macedonian peasants themselves ... can hardly be said to possess any national soul, or, for that matter, any soul at all."<sup>111</sup> Both of these authors distinguished the Macedonians from their Balkan neighbors and, to certain degrees in varying contexts, referred to the Macedonians as a unique people known simply as Macedonians.

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<sup>111</sup> Abbot, *A Tale of a Tour in Macedonia*, Pg. 80

## IV

The race for these Macedonian souls accelerated after the failed Macedonian insurrection. All three surrounding free Balkan nations – Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia – capitalized on a weakening and disoriented Macedonian revolutionary movement. Between 1904 and 1908, these Balkan states revamped their efforts: not only did they continue injecting educators, priests, and bribers into Macedonia, they created and financed armed bands to violently and expediently convince the Macedonians of their loyalties. Several authors published books in 1904, right after the failed uprising and at the beginning stages of this enhanced race rivalry, and presented observations and assessments based on this evolving scene.

Three authors in particular wrote relatively popular works that broached the issue of the Macedonians and their identity, even though their books' primary focus was not on Macedonia. Herbert Vivian's *The Servian Tragedy, With Some Impressions of Macedonia*, Reginald Wyon's *The Balkans from Within*, and Sir Thomas Comyn-Platt's *The Turk in the Balkans*, provide accounts about the Balkans from different perspectives, giving us a fuller picture

of the Macedonian setting as Turkish rule over Macedonia entered its final phase. Of varying persuasions, these men braved the Balkans with different objectives. Vivian, a British journalist, had a fanatical interest in Serbia and in 1897 had published a book about that land; Comyn-Platt was a conservative British politician on official government business; and Wyon journeyed through the Balkans with an interest for those “on the threshold of the civilized world,”<sup>112</sup> and had even published a book on his travels through Montenegro the year before.<sup>113</sup>

With such different intentions and lenses, one would expect their descriptions of Macedonians to also vary meaningfully. However, all three authors recognized the same core problems afflicting the Macedonians. The whole Macedonian dilemma, argued Vivian, stemmed from control of the churches in Macedonia. During an earlier era of Ottoman occupation, the Greeks had “persuaded” the Turks to bequeath them the right to oversee all Orthodox churches on Ottoman territory, effectively designating all Balkan Christians as members of “the Greek church.” As a byproduct, all Macedonian Christians “were commonly supposed throughout Europe to be Greeks.”<sup>114</sup> Wyon verified this assertion

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<sup>112</sup> Wyon, Reginald, *The Balkans from Within*, London: 1904, James Finch & Co., Pg. ix

<sup>113</sup> See Wyon, Reginald and Prance, Gerald, *The Land of the Black Mountain: The Adventures of Two Englishmen in Montenegro*, London: 1903, Methuen & Co.

<sup>114</sup> Vivian, Herbert, *The Servian Tragedy: With Some Impressions of Macedonia*, London: 1904, Grant Richards, Pg. 227, 228

and claimed the Greeks had originally forced out all “native priests” in Macedonia; Bulgaria only began curing this injustice once Turkey allowed the establishment of the Bulgarian Church in 1870.<sup>115</sup> Vivian noticed a similar correction by the Serbians, stating Serbia began unlocking Greece’s grip on the Macedonian peasants with “peaceful propaganda,” such as by opening Serbian churches and schools.<sup>116</sup>

Comyn-Platt, for his part, illustrated how the Turkish Sultan would play these Balkan states against another using these religious institutions. He wrote:

**For instance, the Patriarch and the Exarch – that is to say, the respective heads of the Greek and Bulgarian Communion – may apply for permission to build new churches. The request of the one is granted, that of the other refused; the schools of one denomination are allowed greater freedom than those of another ... [t]hus the Porte fans to white heat the rivalry, recrimination, and vindictiveness of the various Christian denominations, and in the process diverts attention from the iniquities of Turkish government.<sup>117</sup>**

The Sultan mastered the policy of “divide and conquer,” and Western observers of Macedonian affairs during this period rarely failed to stress this cunning political maneuver.

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<sup>115</sup> Wyon, *The Balkans from Within*, Pg. 165

<sup>116</sup> Vivian, *The Servian Tragedy*, Pg. 278, 279

<sup>117</sup> Comyn-Platt, Thomas, *The Turk in the Balkans*, London:1904, Alston Rivers, Pg. 35

Comingling religion with nationality was the foundation for these countries' claims to Macedonia, but that represented only the beginning stages of their annexation strategies. Comyn-Platt mentioned how Balkan politicians "inspired their followers with dreams of former greatness" to marshal support for the creation of future enlarged Balkan empires by any means necessary.<sup>118</sup> Vivian blamed the Bulgarian-backed Macedonian revolutionary organization for much of the ensuing violence, stating that "their bands came down like wolves upon the villages and extorted taxes for revolutionary object."<sup>119</sup> Wyon, in one instance, highlighted how Greek schools indoctrinated peasants who spoke "Bulgarian" and who he believed held a Bulgarian conscience into becoming Greeks. For instance, one Macedonian "declared that the privileges he thus obtained [from a Greek passport and education] outweighed his nationality."<sup>120</sup> These authors did not hesitate to shine the spotlight on conspicuous Balkan platforms.

Although they had analogous thinking about the Macedonian muddle, each author gathered different inputs, which in turn resulted in different conclusions about how to label the Macedonians. Vivian reasoned that most Macedonians must be Serbians because many Macedonian families lived in

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<sup>118</sup> Comyn-Platt, *The Turk in the Balkans*, Pg. 34

<sup>119</sup> Vivian, *The Servian Tragedy*, Pg. 278, 279

<sup>120</sup> Wyon, *The Balkans from Within*, Pg. 18, 19

*zadrugas*, households “consisting of some eighty or a hundred persons, arbitrarily governed by one man, having all things in common, unable to buy or sell or plant or reap or marry without first asking permission from the head of the family.” Up until his visit to Macedonia, he had only known of Serbians to live in such manner. Thus, having first experienced Serbian culture, Vivian assumed that the Serbians’ contested neighbors must also be Serbians due to these similarities.<sup>121</sup> By no means was this Vivian’s only motive for classifying the Macedonians as Serbians. He noted that they had a convincing “historical claim to...most of Macedonia” based on medieval Serbian conquests.<sup>122</sup> As we see with many authors, there is generally an underlying basis for casting the Macedonians into a certain camp – for Vivian, it was the existence of the *zadruga*.

Yet, perhaps Vivian’s intimate relationship with Serbia biased his perception of the Macedonians. For instance, Serbia had awarded him a knighthood in 1902 (two years before publishing his book); and several book reviewers were quick to call out his biased, superficial and unscholarly work. A review in *The Guardian*, for example, stated:

**[T]here is, unluckily, a perverseness and an irresponsibility in all his political writing which makes it**

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<sup>121</sup> Vivian, *The Servian Tragedy*, Pg. 246, 247

<sup>122</sup> Vivian, *The Servian Tragedy*, Pg. 278

nearly worthless. ... The latter half of the book, consisting of scattered records of travel in the interior of Serbia and of a brief excursion into Macedonia, is superficial without being particular fresh or amusing. It is rather startling to find that any traveler could make even the hastiest journey through European Turkey and place on record at its close the amazing conclusion that the Macedonian peasants have no grievances.<sup>123</sup>

A review in the London Daily News echoed *The Guardian's* review, noting that his book could “hardly be looked upon as an authoritative history.” The reviewer described that Vivian did “not quote his authorities” and was “too evidently willing to accept hearsay in place of evidence.”<sup>124</sup>

Serbian knighthood and unfavorable reviews do not, in of themselves, make Vivian wrong. However, they do highlight his biases and cast doubt on how he reached certain conclusions. Of course, he was not the only one. Wyon's biases resided with the Bulgarians. While he generally referred to the Macedonians simply as *Macedonian*, on occasion he would assign a Bulgarian character to the Macedonian people, such as when referring to the 1903 revolution as “the Bulgaro-Macedonian insurrection[.]”<sup>125</sup> Still, Wyon rarely ventured into a discourse about whether the Macedonians were Bulgarians or Serbians. Rather, he focused on his

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<sup>123</sup> *The Guardian* (London), 14 July 1904, Thursday, Page 5, Column 2

<sup>124</sup> “The Poor Man's Paradise,” *London Daily News*, 4 May 1904

<sup>125</sup> Wyon, *The Balkans from Within*, Pg. 18



disdain for the Greeks, such as by calling them a “deteriorated race” and “cowards.”<sup>126</sup> This attitude was likely shaped by Wyon’s influencers, with whom he made acquaintance in Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria. For example, many of his communications (or hopeful communications) were with the Macedonian revolutionary organization based in Sofia, and included well-known leaders such as General Tzontchev, Boris Sarafov, Atanas Jankov, Bozidar Tatarchev, and Professor Mihailovski.<sup>127</sup> These men were members of a Macedonian organization established in Bulgaria that regularly aimed to annex Macedonia for Bulgaria and that was often at odds with the IMRO, which was led by Macedonians in Macedonia with the aim of autonomy. Hence, Vivian’s Serbian influence meant a Serbian characterization of the Macedonians, while Wyon’s excursions in Bulgaria helped shape his vision of the Macedonian identity.

Comyn-Platt, however, held a view that paralleled Brailsford’s view. He said that “the word ‘race,’ as implied by such terms as Greek, Servian or Bulgarian, has little or no significance in speaking of a Macedonian.” He further remarked that individual Macedonians may have vague sympathies with the Bulgarians, Greeks, or Serbians, but that the average Macedonian had no “comprehension to which in

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<sup>126</sup> Wyon, *The Balkans from Within*, Pg. 18, 19

<sup>127</sup> Wyon, *The Balkans from Within*, Pg. 155

reality he is mostly closely affiliated.”<sup>128</sup> Comyn-Platt further acknowledged that the terms race, nationality and lineage had lost all meaning in the Macedonian context, given that the Macedonians were “ready to adopt any nationality.”<sup>129</sup> Finally, he concluded that the Macedonian was “an unknown quantity...in the sense that one speaks of a Russian or a German.”<sup>130</sup> In other words, one could not legitimately ascribe any other term to the Macedonians with any confidence; the Macedonian was still a Macedonian until propagandists, priests and politicians could resolve the matter.

These different conclusions about the Macedonians’ affinities, however, did not distract these foreigners from offering a generally positive assessment of the Macedonian character. Vivian found the Macedonians to be “courteous and hospitable;”<sup>131</sup> Wyon noted that if a Macedonian managed to escape his “miserable” conditions in Turkey, he acquired a “love of travelling in the interests of learning;”<sup>132</sup> and Comyn-Platt declared that the Macedonians had “all the good points common to their Moslem neighbours, and a great many more besides.” “Although the wolf is always near his door,” surmised Comyn-Platt, “the

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<sup>128</sup> Comyn-Platt, *The Turk in the Balkans*, Pg. 33

<sup>129</sup> Comyn-Platt, *The Turk in the Balkans*, Pg. 34

<sup>130</sup> Comyn-Platt, *The Turk in the Balkans*, Pg. 10

<sup>131</sup> Vivian, *The Servian Tragedy*, Pg. 295, 296

<sup>132</sup> Wyon, *The Balkans from Within*, Pg. 168

hospitality of the Macedonian peasant is not one whit inferior to that of the Turk.”<sup>133</sup>

Several wolves had surrounded Macedonia by this time and the Macedonians were ill-prepared to defend against the ensuing carnivorous rampage that would torment their land in the upcoming years. The howling gave way to feasting and the next generation of travelers to Macedonia agonized over making sense of the bloodshed. This violence only served to further dismantle preconceived notions about the Macedonians’ identity while confusing both the Macedonian masses and their Western visitors.

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<sup>133</sup> Comyn-Platt, *The Turk in the Balkans*, Pg. 20

## V

The previous authors visited and wrote about Macedonia just as the violent race rivalries kicked off. Other writers experienced Macedonia in the thick of its most violent and chaotic setting, one where the violence was no longer primarily between the Muslims and Christians, but between the different factions of Christians. Bulgarian, Greek and Serbian propaganda had transitioned into violence when peaceful tactics failed. This era also saw the escalation and triumph of the Young Turk movement, which aimed to replace the Sultan's monarchy with a constitutional government. This era thus included many different competitors with clashing ambitions vying for the Macedonians' fidelity.

Journalists and news correspondents stationed in the Balkans were usually first to witness the unfolding events. During the thick of this rivalry for Macedonia, three in particular wrote widely consumed books about the conditions in the Balkans. Frederick Moore published *The Balkan Trail* in 1906; John Fraser released *Pictures from the Balkans* in that same year; and Edward Knight wrote *Turkey: the Awakening of Turkey, the Turkish*

Revolution of 1908 in 1910. These newsmen's reporting on Macedonia portrayed a dark twist to the Macedonian drama.

As the Balkan states injected armed bands into Macedonia, these authors confirmed an increasingly confused racial situation. Moore pointed out that the Greek and Bulgarian bands, and to a lesser extent the Serbian bands, “work death and disaster among the Macedonian peasants ... commit[ing] upon communities of hostile politics atrocities less only in extent than the atrocities of the Turks.”<sup>134</sup> Knight supported this claim, stating that the “Christians of different sects there hate each other as no Turk hates a Christian and no Christian hates a Turk[,]” and that the rival religious parties in Macedonia “employ all methods of barbarism in their persecutions of each other.”<sup>135</sup> Knight blamed the Greeks, Bulgarians and Serbians equally for “burning villages and murdering women and children” to suit the “political intriguers in Athens, Sofia, and Belgrade[.]”<sup>136</sup> In particular, Knight noted that the Greeks were more superior and ruthless in their methods and “distinguished themselves by attacking unprotected villages and slaughtering unarmed peasants.”<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Moore, Frederick, *The Balkan Trail*, New York: 1906, The Macmillan Company, Pg. 155.

<sup>135</sup> Knight, E.F., *Turkey: The Awakening of Turkey, The Turkish Revolution of 1908, 1910*, J.B. Millet Co., Pg. 10

<sup>136</sup> Knight, *The Awakening of Turkey*, Pg. 18

<sup>137</sup> Knight, *The Awakening of Turkey*, Pg. 95, 96

Fraser illustrated this ludicrousness when asking a Macedonian innkeeper his nationality. The Macedonian responded: “I find it best to be a Greek.” He noted that an armed Greek band had been temporarily camping in the hills just outside the village, which undoubtedly persuaded the Macedonian’s choice of nationality.<sup>138</sup> Fraser was frank about the situation:

**The fact is the whole of the Balkans is infested with rival Christian “bands,” which terrorise villages and convert them from the Greek Church to the Bulgarian Church, or from the Bulgarian Church to the Greek Church, at the dagger’s point.<sup>139</sup>**

Fraser outlined how, after the establishment of the Bulgarian Church in Macedonia, Bulgarian bands swooped into villages to convert the peasants, by threat, into joining the Bulgarian Church.<sup>140</sup> In 1904, as Knight stated, Greek bands “led by officers of the Greek regular army” marched into Macedonia;<sup>141</sup> these Greek bands adopted the Bulgarians’ methods to “reconvert” the Macedonians and “cut a few throats and fired a few houses just to remind the peasants they must be Greeks or be killed,” according to Fraser. The Greek priests, too, supported this violence, advising that if a village was not

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<sup>138</sup> Fraser, John Foster, *Pictures from the Balkans*, London: 1906, Cassell & Co., Pg. 2, 3

<sup>139</sup> Fraser, *Pictures from the Balkans*, Pg. 2

<sup>140</sup> Fraser, *Pictures from the Balkans*, Pg. 10-12

<sup>141</sup> Knight, *The Awakening of Turkey*, Pg. 95, 96

reconverted, their homes must be razed to the ground.<sup>142</sup> The problem now had clearly transitioned from relatively peaceful propaganda to complete anarchy. Knight described the effect this had on many of the Macedonian peasants by saying that “the Christian population found the succor of their ferocious brethren somewhat irksome, and were ready to welcome the pacific programme of the Young Turks.”<sup>143</sup> The Young Turks were a more progressive organization that sought to undo a lot of the backwards policies of the Sultan: they essentially wanted to turn Turkey into a modern republic where all men were treated equally united under the Ottoman flag. For many Christian Macedonians, peace under Turkey appealed more than violence and oppression under the Christian Balkan states.

Nonetheless, peaceful methods were still pursued. While violence ensured an immediate and quick pledge of loyalty, education and religion could secure long-lasting and devout commitment. Those who became one nationality over another out of fear would convert again when someone more fearful from the other camp arrived knocking at their door; but those who truly believed they were Bulgarian, Greek or Serbian – and had facts to prove it – would not only remain reliable converts, but some would even become fierce advocates for their respective

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<sup>142</sup> Fraser, *Pictures from the Balkans*, Pg. 10-12

<sup>143</sup> Knight, *The Awakening of Turkey*, Pg. 94

causes. As Moore pointed out, however, this peaceful propaganda served as a symbiotic relationship while the violent methods were parasitic. With peaceful propaganda, the Macedonians had been given an education that had for centuries been refused to them by the Sultan. Not only were children educated with instruction from European professors, but they were “often supplied with clothes, boarded, and lodged without charge.”<sup>144</sup> Many Macedonians saw through these gestures and recognized them for what they were, but they nevertheless capitalized on them because education, they thought, was the only way to escape poverty and misery.

So, such propaganda continued alongside the violence. The Balkan mouthpieces increasingly relied on statistics to assure the world of the Macedonians’ affinities. Moore mentioned how Greek propagandists had endeavored tirelessly to convince him of the Macedonians’ Greekness by bringing him “documents to prove their contentions.” Some Greeks, he explained, showed that most of Macedonia was populated by Greeks and Greek-speakers. The more clever partisans, though, acknowledged that these people were Slavic or Vlach speakers, yet insisted on their Greek identity because their sympathies were undoubtedly Greek.<sup>145</sup> Fraser further elaborated on this by demonstrating how the

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<sup>144</sup> Moore, *The Balkan Trail*, 155-157

<sup>145</sup> Moore, *The Balkan Trail*, 156, 157



Greeks attempted to “prove numerical superiority over the hated Bulgarians” by counting all Macedonians not belonging to the Bulgarian Church as Greeks.<sup>146</sup> According to Greece, the numbers spoke for themselves. Knight, for his part, understood that this whole dilemma resulted from annexation aspirations by Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia.<sup>147</sup>

Still, these journalists recognized the stinging effect that the Macedonian autonomy movement had on the Balkan powers. Moore noted how Greece feared that an autonomous Macedonia would be easily annexed by Bulgaria.<sup>148</sup> It is true, said Fraser, that Bulgarians were working for “a Big Bulgaria” through its Macedonian committee.<sup>149</sup> But he noted that some leaders of the Macedonian revolution aimed to counter Bulgaria’s and Greece’s efforts. Fraser noted that there were two parties in Bulgaria following different schools of thoughts – “the Big Bulgaria party, and the Autonomous Macedonia party ... [and] there is bitter feeling between them.”<sup>150</sup> He described how one leader expressed his disdain for all parties that were against Macedonian independence. “We intend to make every village in Macedonia a center of revolution,” stated the revolutionary. “If there are any Greeks or Bulgarians

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<sup>146</sup> Fraser, *Pictures from the Balkans*, Pg. 80

<sup>147</sup> Knight, *The Awakening of Turkey*, Pg. 78, 79, 91

<sup>148</sup> Moore, *The Balkan Trail*, 156, 157

<sup>149</sup> Fraser, *Pictures from the Balkans*, Pg. 72

<sup>150</sup> Fraser, *Pictures from the Balkans*, Pg. 72, 73

who check us, they must be removed in the interests of Macedonian independence.” This Macedonian leader desired another Macedonian rebellion in order to incite a Turkish massacre, which he hoped would inspire Europe to intervene on behalf of the suffering Macedonians and liberate Macedonia.<sup>151</sup>

For his part, the Sultan understood that both the Macedonians and Bulgarians were outperforming the Serbians and Greeks, so he encouraged Greek infiltration into Macedonia. Fraser noted how Turkey aided Greece whenever it could, such as by concluding commercial and trade agreements and helping Greece with “wresting churches and schools from the [Bulgarians].”<sup>152</sup> Knight even mentioned that during the Macedonian uprising of 1903, the Greek party in Macedonia betrayed Macedonian rebels to Turkish officials in order to suppress Macedonian autonomy. This afforded Greece time and opportunity to continue Hellenizing the Macedonian people.<sup>153</sup> The Sultan’s “divide and conquer” policy did not evade these journalists’ pens.

With regards to the Macedonians’ identity, Fraser’s assessment paralleled Durham’s. On one hand, he said that it was “pointed out that there is no distinct race that can be called Macedonian.”<sup>154</sup> On the other hand, he wrote the Bulgarians, Turks,

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<sup>151</sup> Fraser, *Pictures from the Balkans*, Pg. 13, 14

<sup>152</sup> Fraser, *Pictures from the Balkans*, Pg. 180, 181

<sup>153</sup> Knight, *The Awakening of Turkey*, Pg. 94, 95

<sup>154</sup> Fraser, *Pictures from the Balkans*, Pg. 174

Greeks, Serbians, and Romanians (all of Macedonia) all called themselves Macedonians. “You will not,” he continued, “find a single Christian Macedonian who is not a Servian, a Bulgarian, a Greek, or a Roumanian.”<sup>155</sup> It is noteworthy, however, that all of these people viewed themselves as Macedonians, but due to propaganda – as acknowledged by all of these authors – they were compelled or educated to entertain labels beyond those that came natural to them.

As a matter of fact, Fraser understood that church affiliation essentially determined a Macedonian’s nationality. He wrote:

**Nationality is decided by the Church to which you belong. It is much as though a London-born Roman Catholic were called and counted an Irishman, or a Presbyterian in New York, though his ancestors came from Germany, were called and counted a Scotsman.**<sup>156</sup>

Fraser insisted that the animosity that existed amongst the Macedonians was “egged on by the priests in the name of Christianity,” which was the underlying reason why Europe found it difficult to unite and intervene against the Sultan.<sup>157</sup> Knight acknowledged this as well, stating that “religious fanaticism” was fanning the “racial rivalry” in

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<sup>155</sup> Fraser, *Pictures from the Balkans*, Pg. 5

<sup>156</sup> Fraser, *Pictures from the Balkans*, Pg. 11

<sup>157</sup> Fraser, *Pictures from the Balkans*, Pg. 6

Macedonia. He declared that “populations [were] reckoned according to creed” and that membership into the Greek Church automatically rendered someone as Greek.<sup>158</sup> Fraser’s approach, however, was to split the Christians roughly between Greek and Bulgarian, while noting that this approach was fairly subject to criticism and that the terms *Greek* and *Bulgarian* really represented political *parties*. He surmised the following:

**For there is nothing more difficult than to say any particular Macedonian village is Bulgarian or Greek. There are Bulgarians who speak Greek, Greeks who speak Bulgarian. There are Bulgarians who speak Bulgarian but belong to the Greek Orthodox Church and are counted Greek in nationality, and there are Greeks speaking Greek who belong to the Exarchist Church and thus are Bulgarian in nationality. Even with this confusion it might after a time be possible to say, “This village is Greek and that village Bulgarian.” But people who call themselves Greek this week will swear they are Bulgarians next week.**

**Nationality in Macedonia is a matter of fear, politics, and religion. Each has comparatively little to do with it. Language does not help you much, because most Macedonians are bilingual, and they change their tongue when they change their party. Again, you meet peasants with Hellenic or Bulgarian sentiments who can speak nothing but Turkish. So, while for convenience sake we say the Christian bitterness is between Bulgarians and**

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<sup>158</sup> Knight, *The Awakening of Turkey*, Pg. 91, 92

**Greeks—meaning the Bulgar and Hellenic races who receive support from Sofia and Athens—we must make the endeavour to remember, in examining the Macedonian mess, that the country is not so much divided into rival peoples as into hostile parties.<sup>159</sup>**

In this passage, Fraser properly phrases the Western understanding of the Macedonian situation: although inaccurate, it was convenient to describe the Macedonians as being part of rival races so the Western reader could understand the violence and anarchy gripping the land.

Fraser also distinguished between nationality and race, and insisted that race and language “count for nothing” when determining one’s nationality in Macedonia.<sup>160</sup> Today, Western scholars do not classify Bulgarians, Greeks, Macedonians, and Serbians as constituting separate races. When Fraser wrote his book, the term *race* was more in line with our modern understandings of ethnicity. His point, however, is not lost: biology and speech did not determine one’s nationality; religion, fear and politics did. Yet, Fraser dared to advocate the platform of the Macedonian autonomists. He opposed the Balkan States’ attempts to acquire Macedonia and declared that “Macedonia is a state unto itself.” He finished with hope that Macedonians

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<sup>159</sup> Fraser, *Pictures from the Balkans*, Pg. 175, 176

<sup>160</sup> Fraser, *Pictures from the Balkans*, Pg. 10, 11

would eventually view themselves as only Macedonians:

**I have some hope that in years to come the inhabitants will think less of their Turkish, Bulgarian, or Greek origin and a great deal more of the fact that they are all Macedonians.<sup>161</sup>**

In this way, Fraser pointed out that Macedonia's inhabitants had more in common as Macedonians than they did with the peoples of neighboring countries that were endeavoring to mold them into something else.

For his part, Knight believed Macedonia was comprised of races that were intermingled "living side by side in the same village." This inseparable cohabitation resulted in competing and overlapping claims, and each of the Balkan states strived diligently to eliminate the others' claims. Their goal was simple: if their respective national party predominated in Macedonia, then they would come in possession of Macedonia after "the dismemberment of Turkey."<sup>162</sup> Knight did not delve into the Macedonians' identity, but only because he knew that the central Macedonian question was not *who* were the Macedonians, but rather what did the neighbors want with Macedonia and how would they achieve it.

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<sup>161</sup> Fraser, *Pictures from the Balkans*, Pg. 16, 17

<sup>162</sup> Knight, *The Awakening of Turkey*, Pg. 91, 92

Like Knight, Moore grasped the geopolitical nature of the Macedonian situation; but unlike Fraser, he did not bother to ascribe racial origins to the Macedonians' identity. Rather, he stated that Macedonians belonged to racial *parties* and could "not be defined as races[.]" He noted that, notwithstanding the competing national and racial labels assigned to the Macedonians, "the peasants were all the same people; the same blood coursed through their veins, and they spoke the same language[.]"<sup>163</sup> His assessment mirrored those of other authors (such as Brailsford) who insisted the Macedonians' were a people who fell into different political camps that propagandists falsely advertised as racial or national attributes. The Macedonians, therefore, were one people with one name, but hungry neighbors had split them into rival factions.

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<sup>163</sup> Moore, *The Balkan Trail*, 155

## VI

Adrian Fortescue and Allen Upward were two scholars that dipped their toes in the Macedonian mud during this racial rivalry period. The men produced relatively similar assessments. Fortescue's work on the Eastern Orthodox Church briefly touched on the state of Macedonia. With his focus being Orthodoxy, much of his views on the Macedonians were framed by religious issues. In particular, Fortescue focused on the struggle between the Greeks and the Romanians. Upward, on the other hand, engrossed himself in the political scene in Turkey and focused on the brewing unrest in Macedonia and the Young Turk movement.

According to Fortescue, the Romanian government had been using money from monasteries confiscated in Romania in 1864 to promote Romania's "national propaganda in Macedonia."<sup>164</sup> This propaganda, of course, focused on building Vlach schools and paying Vlach priests to advance the Romanian agenda. Macedonian Vlachs had been slowly awakening "to the fact that they were a separate race" and had been abandoning the Greek

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<sup>164</sup> Fortescue, Adrian, *The Orthodox Eastern Church*, London: 1908, Catholic Truth Society, Pg. 330,



Church in droves. Many sought national and political refuge with the Bulgarian Church even though the Vlachs did not view themselves as Bulgarian. However, Turkey, who categorized its people by church affiliation rather than by race or nationality, registered these Vlachs as Bulgarians and not as Vlachs or Romanians. In response, Vlach priests that had remained within these churches began holding ceremonies and liturgy in Romanian to emphasize their peoples' true affiliations.<sup>165</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Upward wrote about these religious issues, since national identity was a product of religious affiliation. To Upward, the Macedonians were primarily a religious (Christian) people and concepts of race and nationality meant little to them. However, although a Macedonian had “fanatical adherence” to his church, the church’s national overtones and education raised the Macedonian’s children into accepting the nationality represented by the particular church. Upward noted that the Greek Church “taught these Macedonian peasants that liberty, as it is understood at Sofia, is worse than slavery as it is understood at Stamboul.”<sup>166</sup> He wrote that Bulgarian priests talked about peace, harmony and freedom for the different races and religions, but they then supported the destruction of these people’s

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<sup>165</sup> Fortescue, *The Orthodox Eastern Church*, Pg. 331, 332

<sup>166</sup> Upward, Allen, *The East End of Europe: The Report of an Unofficial Mission to the Provinces of Turkey on the Eve of the Revolution*, London:1908, John Murray, Pg. 265

homes and property when they did not join the Bulgarian Church. In this way, the Macedonian peasants could not “be free in their own religion[.]”<sup>167</sup> A Bulgarian band would descend on a village, compel the villagers “to sign a paper declaring themselves Exarchists,” and thus convert the Macedonians into Bulgarians.<sup>168</sup> Macedonians belonging to the Greek Church observed how these Bulgarian members would be “wearing Bulgarian uniforms and bearing Bulgarian colours,”<sup>169</sup> indicating that the Bulgarian state was using its military and religious resources hand-in-hand to consume the Macedonian population.

Fortescue did not expend much effort in defining the Macedonians. Instead, he specifically focused on how Balkan scheming had persuaded Macedonians to forsake the Greek identity for that of the Vlach, Bulgarian or Serbian identities. In particular, he stated there were 500,000 Vlachs residing in Macedonia, which Greek statistics had claimed as Greeks, but who Fortescue determined really were “half-Hellenized Vlachs, men who talk Greek abroad, who sometimes even call themselves Greeks, but who around their own firesides always fall back into the beautiful Romance tongue of their fathers.”<sup>170</sup> (Upward, on the other hand, believed

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<sup>167</sup> Upward, *The East End of Europe*, Pg. 265

<sup>168</sup> Upward, *The East End of Europe*, Pg. 209

<sup>169</sup> Upward, *The East End of Europe*, Pg. 205

<sup>170</sup> Fortescue, *The Orthodox Eastern Church*, Pg. 329, 331

Romanian propaganda had resulted in the Vlach language becoming increasingly insignificant in Macedonia.<sup>171)</sup>

For Fortescue, there were only four relevant parties in Macedonia: Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbians, and Vlachs. His attitude about the Macedonian identity appeared briefly when he remarked that the Albanians were not a relevant factor in Macedonian politics because the Balkan states were not attempting to “Hellenize, or Bulgarize, or Serbianate, or Vlachize them.”<sup>172</sup> Thus, despite not specifically stating the Macedonians were their own people, Fortescue acknowledged that the Balkan powers strove to convert or awaken as many people to their cause as possible. In other words, the Macedonians were not Greeks, Bulgarians or Serbians until someone told them that they were one of those. Certainly, Fortescue held a bias toward the Romanians and Vlachs, most probably because he was a Catholic and his book was published by a Catholic society – most Romance-language speakers were Catholic, and the Vlachs traced their lineage to either the Roman Empire or Romania. Still, this bias did not obscure the political and religious issue plaguing Macedonia.

Upward’s views on the Macedonians leaned rather heavily on the Macedonians’ language. He

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<sup>171</sup> Upward, *The East End of Europe*, Pg. 202

<sup>172</sup> Fortescue, *The Orthodox Eastern Church*, Pg. 326

argued that just because an individual spoke a dialect classified by others as a certain language, it did not necessarily mean that the individual was a member of that corresponding nationality. (For example, someone who was labeled as speaking Bulgarian was not necessarily an ethnic Bulgarian.) Upward emphasized that there was “a large Irish population which speaks nothing but English” and that might even have had English blood in them, but that these Irishmen were some of the most “anti-English” people you could find.<sup>173</sup> He brought this point home with an experience he had at one Macedonian village. In this village, he asked a peasant what language he spoke, and Upward’s Greek interpreter said “Bulgarian.” However, the peasant had said “Makedonski.” The peasant elaborated that “he did not consider the rural dialect used in Macedonia the same as Bulgarian, and refused to call it by that name.” Makedonski was simply the Slavic form for the word *Macedonian*. Upward inferred that the villagers had “coined a new term” for their language to distinguish themselves from the Bulgarians.<sup>174</sup> Although Upward claimed this was a new term, in reality, it was simply the first time that he had heard the term on his trip. Still, it proved to Upward that the Macedonians did not view themselves as

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<sup>173</sup> Upward, *The East End of Europe*, Pg. 201

<sup>174</sup> Upward, *The East End of Europe*, Pg. 204, 205

Bulgarian and instead were combating Bulgarian propaganda.

Ultimately, Upward believed that the Macedonians were simply nothing but Macedonian and Christian. As he stated: "I do not reckon him a Greek. Neither of course is he a Bulgar. He is a Macedonian Christian and nothing more at present."<sup>175</sup> It is abundantly clear, then, that Upward and Fortescue both understood that the shaping of the Macedonians' identity as something other than Macedonian had been contrived by others. These others were the leaders and propagandists of the neighboring Balkan countries. The Macedonians would have just been Macedonians, for the most part, had it not been for this antagonistic behavior.

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<sup>175</sup> Upward, *The East End of Europe*, Pg. 265

## VII

During this period, most Westerners resisted travelling to Macedonia unless they were correspondents, businessmen or diplomats. The threat to Western lives was minimal – Macedonians were busy killing themselves or being killed by intruding bands from Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia, not to mention by the Sultan's cronies. Still, the constant reporting of chaos and murder left few positive impressions on visitors. It was best to vacation elsewhere.

However, some adventurers could not resist. William Le Queux was one of these leisurely visitors who stopped in Macedonia on a tour of the Balkans. Not strictly coming from an academic or political viewpoint, his observations were more casual. He initially stated that the Christian peoples inhabiting the different districts of Macedonia were a combination of Serbians, Bulgarians, Greeks and Vlachs.<sup>176</sup> Yet, as he delved deeper into the topic, he came to espouse the belief that a visitor to Macedonia could not definitively define a Macedonian and that the Macedonians should be

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<sup>176</sup>Le Queux, *The Near East: The Present Situation in Montenegro, Bosnia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Roumania, Turkey and Macedonia*, London:1907, Doubleday, Page and Company, Pg. 147

given time to “develop themselves” so an ethnographical assessment could be made. This was a view promoted by many Serbian propagandists, as well.<sup>177</sup> The Serbians advocated this position because, if accepted by the Powers before any decision was made about Macedonia’s status, it would have given Serbia more time to pump in priests, teachers and armed bands into Macedonia. In that way, they hoped to convince enough Macedonians that they were Serbians in order to gain the upper hand in Macedonia, especially because Bulgaria and Greece had outperformed Serbia throughout the 1880s and 1890s while Serbia was focused elsewhere.

But Le Queux did not spare any viewpoints in his observations. He discussed the stance of the Bulgarian prime minister, who had insisted that Bulgaria had “no intention of annexing Macedonia” and instead simply wanted to “better the positions of their compatriots.” In a speech observed by Le Queux, the prime minister referred to the Macedonians as “the Macedonian people” and implored Turkey “to reform Macedonia and to shake off all exterior influence.”<sup>178</sup> Le Queux then spoke with a Romanian politician (eventually Romania’s prime minister) who denied that Romania had an “ulterior motive in Macedonia save to protect [Romania’s] subjects there and to allow them their

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<sup>177</sup> Le Queux, *The Near East*, Pg. 20

<sup>178</sup> Le Queux, *The Near East*, Pg. 198, 199

own language, their own religion, their own education, and give them freedom to live as Roumnians.” He said it was “absurd” to suggest that Romania sought to annex Macedonia.<sup>179</sup> After listening to all of these viewpoints, including “well based” arguments by a Serbian professor, Le Queux decided that “the Macedonian population is really Bulgar.” He had found a Bulgarian professor’s viewpoints most convincing, which claimed that the Macedonians were not Slavs, but that “their whole history shows that they are Bulgars.”<sup>180</sup> Thus, Le Queux defined the Macedonians based on evidence presented by Balkan politicians and scholars aiming to absorb Macedonia into their orbit, and not based on the views of the revolutionaries and peasants.

On one hand, Le Queux accepted the Bulgarian identity of the Macedonians. On the other hand, he pulled a Durham and suggested that the Macedonians constituted their own race. For example, he wrote:

**The Balkans are torn by race hatreds, party strife, and the intrigues of the Powers. The Turk hates the Bulgar, the Serb hates the Austrian the Roumanian hates the Greek, the Albanian hates the Montenegrin, the Bosnian hates the Turk, while the Macedonian hates everybody all round.**<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Le Queux, *The Near East*, Pg. 247, 248

<sup>180</sup> Le Queux, *The Near East*, Pg. 288

<sup>181</sup> Le Queux, *The Near East*, Pg. 20



He further stated that “from all sides – from Turks, Greeks, Servians, and even Bulgarians, as well as from an interested diplomacy – the Macedonians are pressed, and their aspirations for the autonomy compromised.”<sup>182</sup> Le Queux counted Macedonians as their own race by including them in the types of races that hated one another, and then again referred to the people of Macedonia as *Macedonian* when distinguishing them from those other Balkan peoples that were seeking to acquire or assimilate them. Therefore, his claim that the Bulgarians had the best claim to the Macedonians was countered by his subliminal acknowledgement that the Macedonians were their own people.

Furthermore, he proposed that Macedonia should be administered and controlled by Europe for a while so that “the Macedonians would take their destiny in their own hands” and that the “different propagandas would not have such a propitious field for action[.]” “The way for a Balkan Federation,” he continued, “would then be cleared.” Such a federation would be like a Switzerland and the Balkans would be “a field for progress and civilization,” which were the true ideals and hopes of the Macedonians who “wrote upon their revolutionary banner the watchwords, ‘Macedonia

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<sup>182</sup> Le Queux, *The Near East*, Pg. 295

for the Macedonians.”<sup>183</sup> In essence, Le Queux threw aside his acceptance of a Bulgarian professor’s definition of the Macedonians for his own hopes for the Macedonians.

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<sup>183</sup> Le Queux, *The Near East*, Pg. 291, 292

## VIII

Some visitors redefined the meaning of leisure travel: they imbedded themselves in factions of the Macedonian revolutionary movement and even fought alongside them. They carried the same weapons, ate the same food, and slept in the same huts as the freedom-seeking rebels. Arthur Howden Smith joined with a band of the External Macedonian Organization in 1907 and published his experiences in *Fighting the Turk in the Balkans: An American's Adventures with the Macedonian Revolutionists*. Meanwhile, Albert Sonnichsen attached himself to units of the IMRO a year before Smith and published his experiences in *Confessions of a Macedonian Bandit*. Both men enlisted with different Macedonian bands and ideological factions, and thus they varied in their opinions on the political scene and how to define the Macedonians.

Smith, for example, was adamant that “there is no Macedonian race, as a distinct type.” He suggested that a “Macedonian Bulgar is just the same as a Bulgar of Bulgaria proper[.]” He stated that Macedonians talk, think and look the same as Bulgarians. The only difference, he noted, was that the “Macedonian Bulgars” were under the Turks for

longer, so they thus had “less culture and education than their northern brethren.”<sup>184</sup> Still, Smith felt that the Greek and Bulgarian races were so intermingled in Macedonia that it would be impossible to divide the country amicably between the warring factions. Smith suggested a solution (admittedly with faults) that called for the European powers to establish a provisional government in Macedonia in order to enable the Macedonians to govern themselves.<sup>185</sup> Although Smith believed that there was no separate Macedonian people distinct from the peoples inhabiting neighboring Balkan lands, he felt that autonomy or independence was Macedonia’s best option.

Sonnichsen, however, interpreted the Macedonian setting differently. While Smith claimed Macedonians spoke the same language as Bulgarians, Sonnichsen suggested otherwise. In one instance, he described a Macedonian trying to speak standard Bulgaria: “His attempt to converse in correct Bulgarian was as amusing as the speech of an Alabama country negro affecting white man’s diction.”<sup>186</sup> Regardless of the insensitive racial undertones here, Sonnichsen used this example to show that although the languages were related,

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<sup>184</sup> Smith, Arthur D. Howden, *Fighting the Turk in the Balkans: An American’s Adventures with the Macedonian Revolutionists*, New York: 1908, G.P. Putnam’s Sons, Pg. 3, 4

<sup>185</sup> Smith, *Fighting the Turk in the Balkans*, Pg. 365, 366

<sup>186</sup> Sonnichsen, Albert, *Confessions of a Macedonian Bandit*, New York: 1909, Duffield, Pg. 95,

Macedonian and Bulgarian were indeed different and almost incomprehensible. He furthermore repeatedly labeled the Macedonians as *Macedonians* and distinguished Macedonian history from Bulgarian history, such as when describing an event that would be “recorded in Macedonian history as one of the most serious of many such tragedies”<sup>187</sup> and the destruction of one village as “the most notorious incidents of recent Macedonian history[.]”<sup>188</sup> “The Macedonians record,” said Sonnichsen, these and other events “in those folk songs which are sometimes preserved for centuries[.]”<sup>189</sup> Had he felt that these events would become part of Bulgarian history, as well, he would have noted it.

Still, Sonnichsen bounces between calling the Macedonian people *Macedonians*, *Bulgars*, and *Slavs*. When comparing Macedonians to the Greeks he generally referred to them as Bulgars, such as when discussing how to “know who is Greek and who is Bulgar” in Macedonia.<sup>190</sup> However, in another instance, when describing peasants in nine villages and differentiating them from Greeks, he said that they were “of the Slavic race.”<sup>191</sup> Yet in another example, when being introduced to some Macedonian peasants, he described them as the

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<sup>187</sup> Sonnichsen, *Confessions of a Macedonian Bandit*, Pg. 93

<sup>188</sup> Sonnichsen, *Confessions of a Macedonian Bandit*, Pg. 234

<sup>189</sup> Sonnichsen, *Confessions of a Macedonian Bandit*, Pg. 71

<sup>190</sup> Sonnichsen, *Confessions of a Macedonian Bandit*, Pg. 15

<sup>191</sup> Sonnichsen, *Confessions of a Macedonian Bandit*, Pg. 53, 54

“dark blond, hazel-eyed, Slavic girls[.]”<sup>192</sup> In his book, therefore, Sonnichsen inconsistently applied certain terminology to the Macedonians.

So, how did these two men arrive at their conclusions? As mentioned previously, they had implanted themselves in different Macedonian factions that opposed one another. Smith was heavily influenced by the “external” Macedonians, those who primarily operated from their base in Sofia and whose leaders conspired with Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria. They generally favored annexation of Macedonia to Bulgaria. While many of these band members were Macedonians, they had either been born in Bulgaria or were educated in Bulgaria and influenced by Bulgarian politics, thus giving them a Bulgarian bias. For example, Smith commiserated with Ivan Garvanov,<sup>193</sup> who was eventually assassinated by Jane Sandanski’s pro-autonomous faction for propping up the Bulgarian cause in Macedonia. Other Macedonians with whom he conspired included Hristo Matov and Bozidar Tatarchev who,<sup>194</sup> if not directly controlled by the Bulgarian prince, certainly possessed a pro-Bulgarian attitude toward Macedonia and the Macedonians.

Sonnichsen, however, took an active stance against “their organization” and repeatedly phrased

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<sup>192</sup> Sonnichsen, *Confessions of a Macedonian Bandit*, Pg. 113

<sup>193</sup> See Smith’s book for several examples of “adventures” with Garvanov. Pg. 30, 31

<sup>194</sup> Smith, *Fighting the Turk in the Balkans*, Pg. 23, 24.

his autonomous Macedonia faction as “our revolutionary organ.” When he was in Macedonia, the External Organization was essentially controlled by Tsonchev, Sarafov, Garvanov, and Matov, men who rarely ventured into Macedonia for revolutionary activity after 1903. Because of this, Sonnichsen asserted that most Macedonians in Bulgaria knew not of the true state of affairs in Macedonia and the significant discord between the two Macedonian organizations. Macedonians in Bulgaria who had donated funds to the External Organization, for example, did not know that those funds were not being used to fund the internal struggle of a “Macedonia for the Macedonians,” but instead were being used for advancing Bulgaria’s plans for enlargement.<sup>195</sup> Sonnichsen frequently conversed and commiserated with the left-wing or socialist Macedonian leaders in Macedonia, who, according to him, “ended the last of Prince Ferdinand’s intrigues in Macedonia[.]” Sonnichsen listened intently to the words of Hristo Chernopeev, for example, and regretted missed opportunities to meet the faction’s leader, Sandanski.<sup>196</sup> Sonnichsen also emphasized that the External Organization was a “creature of Prince Ferdinand.” Moreover, once the IMRO realized “what a swine Prince Ferdinand” was,

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<sup>195</sup> Sonnichsen, *Confessions of a Macedonian Bandit*, Pg. 258

<sup>196</sup> Sonnichsen, *Confessions of a Macedonian Bandit*, Pg. 266, 267

it left him behind to continue fighting for the principle of “Macedonia for the Macedonians.”<sup>197</sup>

These were not Sonnichsen’s last words on the Macedonians. In 1910 he argued that immigration officials should list the Macedonians as Bulgarians instead of Macedonians so as to not confuse them with Greeks. He wrote:

**I hope you are not making any racial distinctions between Bulgars and Macedonians. I believe the Bulgarians who have come from Macedonia are registered on Ellis Island as Macedonians, which is bound to be confusing and inaccurate, for Macedonians may include Greeks, Vlachs and even Turks. The distinction between Bulgars from Bulgaria and those from Macedonia is purely political. Many of those who are registered as Greeks are so in church affiliation only, being Slavic by race and tongue.**<sup>198</sup>

Still, despite this, he again confuses his terminology, at one point suggesting that Bulgarians and Macedonians are not racially distinct (but that they are distinguishable from Greeks and Vlachs), and in another instance saying that the Macedonians are *Slavic* by race and tongue. Did Sonnichsen simply think that Macedonians were part of the Slavic race in the same way that Bulgarians were Slavic?

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<sup>197</sup> Sonnichsen, *Confessions of a Macedonian Bandit*, Pg. 44, 110

<sup>198</sup> Balch, Emily G., *Our Slavic Fellow Citizens*, (Charities Publication Committee: New York, 1910), Pg. 274, 275.



Further, Sonnichsen contradicts himself by stating that the only difference between Macedonians and Bulgarians is political. When observing Balkan railroad workers in America, he noted differences in their language: “There is as much difference in speech and intonation as between Missouri and County Clare [Ireland], though the Bulgarian of Bulgarian schools and Macedonian schools is the same.”<sup>199</sup> Clearly, politics was not the only difference between the Macedonians and Bulgarians. Sonnichsen’s views can be most accurately conveyed as acknowledging that the Macedonians were most similar to the Bulgarians but that they still were not quite alike.

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<sup>199</sup> Balch, Emily G., *Our Slavic Fellow Citizens*, (Charities Publication Committee: New York, 1910), Pg. 275, 276.

## IX

The propaganda, violence and chaos could have but one climax, which was a war to resolve the Macedonian question: which country would gain possession of Macedonia? Unfortunately for the suffering Macedonians, this climax lasted several years. The Balkans exploded in two regional wars when the free Balkan countries fought Turkey and then each other for the spoils. Then the Macedonians were vacuumed into the Great War after Bulgaria could not accept having only acquired a tiny portion of Macedonia after decades of propaganda, while Greece and Serbia expanded their territories by millions of hectares and people. Of course, Macedonia's rocketing violence and perplexing political and ethnic scene continued wooing many. A handful of Westerners visited the land and wrote books about the conditions that led up to these wars and the consequences of their outcomes.

Two visitors to Macedonia on diplomatic and political missions were Jacob Schurman and William Sloane. Both authors recognized that the Balkan propagandists' definitions of the Macedonians' identity were farcical. *In The Balkan Wars: 1912-1913*, Schurman pointed out that competing Macedonian

identities were able to be manufactured due to Turkey classifying people by religion and not by language or physical characteristics. Schurman's attitude toward race was that it should be determined primarily by physical characteristics and not by "something that rests on the human will," as was the case in Macedonia. He noted that one was a Greek if he belonged to the Greek Church and another a Bulgarian if he belonged to the Bulgarian Church. Whereas Schurman subscribed to the idea that race was fixed and unchangeable, "a Macedonian may be a Greek today, a Bulgarian tomorrow, and a Servian next day." According to Schurman, race in Macedonia was a "political party" that stood for a "national idea" that was being forced onto others.<sup>200</sup>

William Sloane offered a similar perspective. In *The Balkans: A Laboratory of History*, he claimed that with regards to the races of Europe, "no man knows at this hour what is a Greco-Roman, a Celt, a Teuton, or a Slav." He understood that languages and language groups could be determined and classified, "but no man of standing has ever dared assert that the use of a language proves the blood in the veins of its user." Sloane emphasized that it was an error to accept race as concrete and permanent; rather, as the concept spread eastward into less educated areas, the

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<sup>200</sup> Schurman, Jacob G., *The Balkan Wars: 1912-1913*, Princeton: 1914, Princeton University Press, Pg. 79, 80

notion of race created intellectual anarchy. As he stated:

To use among such men and women phrases which contain the words “nation,” “people,” “patriotism,” “history,” etc., is to sow the whirlwind. When we read that the Rumanians are Latins; that the Bulgarians and the Servians are Slavs of different nationality; that Macedonians are Bulgarians or Servians, according to the opinion of this or that writer, or that they are Greek, as Greece contends, we get the common coin of diplomatic exchange; but it is spurious and counterfeit if passed as historical truth.<sup>201</sup>

For Sloane, the commonly touted labels ascribed to the Macedonians’ identity were contrived inaccuracies. Both Sloane and Schurman highlighted how these varying Macedonian labels evolved.

During the peak of Ottoman rule in the Balkans, all Macedonians were branded as “Christians of the Byzantine type,” according to Sloane. Yes, linguistic and other differences distinguished between Vlachs and Slavs, said Sloane, but these people were all united in their hardships and belonged to one church, the Greek Church. Thus, they were all cast as Greeks.<sup>202</sup> According to Schurman, the Macedonians’ agenda eventually became a “Macedonia for the Macedonians,” but Bulgarian and Greek propaganda

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<sup>201</sup> Sloane, William M., *The Balkans: A Laboratory of History*, New York: 1914 (1920), The Abingdon Press, Pg. 36, 37

<sup>202</sup> Sloane, *The Balkans: A Laboratory of History*, Pg. 37

interfered with that program. He maintained that a primary motive for Greece's war with Turkey in 1897 was to gain ground over Bulgarian propaganda in Macedonia<sup>203</sup> by forcing Turkey to alter policies toward Greece with respect to its Macedonian agenda. Schurman also wrote that Serbian recognition of the Greek Church as the supreme Orthodox authority in Macedonia gave both Greece and Bulgaria ascendancy over Serbia, especially while Serbia was focused on making inroads in Bosnia and Hercegovina.<sup>204</sup>

Further, Schurman noted that Turkey had banned "public meetings for political purposes" and churches and schools became the common mechanisms for pacifically spreading propaganda.<sup>205</sup> What should have been characterized as political pandering was, in Macedonia, characterized as national religion and education. Hence, Macedonians came to associate ethnic or national identity with the political agendas of neighboring monarchs. Schurman submitted that "the more bishops, churches, and schools a nationality could show, the stronger its claim on the reversion of Macedonia when the Turk should be driven out of Europe!" He suggested that while these institutions did have the effect of fulfilling "the spiritual and

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<sup>203</sup> Schurman, *The Balkan Wars*, Pg. 32

<sup>204</sup> Schurman, *The Balkan Wars*, Pg. 82

<sup>205</sup> Schurman, *The Balkan Wars*, Pg. 81

intellectual needs” of the Macedonians, the main motive was always the “object of staking out claims[.]”<sup>206</sup> Sloane, on the other hand, greatly emphasized how violence was used to mold Macedonians into a specific nationality. He wrote that “the hideous compulsion” of the armed bands would cause a village to “be Greek one day and Bulgarian the next, or vice versa.” This conversion was the result of “shocking cruelties,” but also “shrewd bribery[.]”<sup>207</sup> Propaganda and violence, then, shaped the various hypotheses about the Macedonians’ identity.

Ultimately, Schurman acknowledged that defining the Macedonians was a difficult task. He posed a question to his contemporaries:

**How are we to determine the racial complexion of a country in which race is certified by religion, in which religion is measured by the number of bishops and churches and schools, in which bishops and churches and schools are created and maintained by a propaganda conducted by competing external powers, and in which the results of the propaganda are determined largely by money and men sent from Sofia, Athens, and Belgrade, subject always to the caprice and manipulation of the Sultan’s government at Constantinople?<sup>208</sup>**

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<sup>206</sup> Schurman, *The Balkan Wars*, Pg. 84

<sup>207</sup> Sloane, *The Balkans: A Laboratory of History*, Pg. 148

<sup>208</sup> Schurman, *The Balkan Wars*, Pg. 85, 86

Of course, he found a possible answer: Greeks exclusively occupied the areas south of Salonika's latitude; Bulgarians dominated the areas northeast of Salonica; and Serbians, Bulgarians, and Albanians were mixed in the areas northwest of Skopje,<sup>209</sup> with more Serbians in the north and Albanians mostly in the west. The Bulgarians had the advantage in the rest of Macedonia (essentially central and western Macedonia, or about three-fourths of Macedonia). Schurman said "the so-called Bulgarians" formed the majority in Bitola, for example, and that two-thirds of the Christians in Veles were "called Bulgarians" and the Christian population of Ohrid was "almost exclusively of the Bulgarian Church."<sup>210</sup> In essence, many readers assume, then, that Schurman believed the majority of Macedonians were Bulgarian.

That interpretation, however, is incorrect. Schurman emphasized that others *called* these Macedonians Bulgarian rather than calling them Bulgarian himself:

**It does not follow, however, that the people of Central Macedonia, even if Bulgarian churches are in the ascendant among them, are really connected by ties of blood and language with Bulgaria rather than with Servia. ... There is no fixed connection between the anthropological unit and the linguistic or political unit. Furthermore, while there are well-marked groups who**

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<sup>209</sup> Much of this area is not considered part of geographic Macedonia today.

<sup>210</sup> Schurman, *The Balkan Wars*, Pg. 86-88

call themselves Serbs or Bulgarians there is a larger population not so clearly differentiated by physique or language. Undoubtedly they are Slavs. But whether Serb or Bulgarian, or intermediate between the two, no one today can demonstrate.

Further, Schurman described how Macedonians possessed their own dialects that could have already developed into “a separate language” had political circumstances been different. He thus declared that “neither Greeks, Servians, nor Bulgarians have a right to claim Central Macedonia.”<sup>211</sup>

Moreover, according to Sloane, Macedonians comprised one of the elements of the “Slavic” peoples, which in addition to Macedonians, included Serbians, Illyrians, Croatians, Bosnians, Herzegovinians, Montenegrins, and Bulgarians. He believed the Macedonian population was more heterogeneous than the rest, with “some Macedonians tending toward Greece, some toward Servia, some toward Bulgaria.”<sup>212</sup> The use of the word *tending* does not mean that these Macedonians were not Macedonian. As Sloane pointed out, “their language is sufficiently unitary, yet agitators and propagandists note the slightest local differences as a basis for determining whether the communities be Serb or Bulgar or possibly Greek[.]” The Macedonians were “not very firmly anchored in what

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<sup>211</sup> Schurman, *The Balkan Wars*, Pg. 88-90

<sup>212</sup> Sloane, *The Balkans: A Laboratory of History*, Pg. 41



they call their nationalities,” said Sloane. A Bulgarian could easily become a Serbian or Greek.<sup>213</sup> Hence, Macedonians primarily *tended* in one direction because of propaganda campaigns.

For Schurman, the matter of the Macedonians’ identity was unresolved. Sloane, on the other hand, felt that a Macedonian nationality was emerging from the entire fiasco.<sup>214</sup> Still, despite their differences on how to define the Macedonians, both recognized that the Macedonians were not what Macedonia’s neighbors said they were. This common theme among Western visitors to Macedonia became more convincing as the years progressed.

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<sup>213</sup> Sloane, *The Balkans: A Laboratory of History*, Pg. 41, 42

<sup>214</sup> Sloane, *The Balkans: A Laboratory of History*, Pg. 152

## X

News correspondents during this period iterated the complexities outlined by the diplomats and politicians. Hermenegild Wagner and Arthur Moore published books that focused only scantily on Macedonia, but their works are useful for contrasting conclusions drawn by more partial and distant journalists with those conclusions by men who were imbedded in the Macedonian scene, such as Walter H. Crawford Price. Price wrote two books in which Macedonia and the Macedonian question predominated; and although he wrote other books as well, these back-to-back books most completely represented his thoughts on the Macedonian situation.

Price, who worked for the *London Daily Mail* and the *London Times* in the 1910s, resided in Macedonia (specifically in Salonika) during the onset of the Balkan Wars, and he was closely connected to the Liberal Party in Britain.<sup>215</sup> He published his first book, *The Balkan Cockpit: The Political and Military Story of the Balkan Wars in Macedonia*, in 1914. Here, he openly and immediately criticized the Bulgarians'

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<sup>215</sup> Comstock, Lyndon, *The English Secretary: Peggy Flexman in Turkey and Greece, 1909-1917*, 2014, Pg. 9

conduct in Macedonia during the wars, stating “that they have so long feasted upon praise and flattery” and that he “found it necessary to suggest that their actions have not always been in keeping with what one had been led to expect from Christian conquerors.”<sup>216</sup> The Balkan Wars, noted Price, resulted in a situation where most Macedonian Christians were living “under alien rule.”<sup>217</sup> In his follow-up book, *The Intervention of Bulgaria and the Central Macedonian Question*, published in 1915, Price contended that “Central Macedonia [had] long been the Mecca of Bulgarian ambition.”<sup>218</sup>

According to Price, the Bulgarians had hoped European intervention would result in Macedonian autonomy, which would allow Bulgaria to manipulate a free Macedonia and Bulgarianize the population.<sup>219</sup> The Bulgarian propaganda aimed to incite Turkish massacres and outrages against Macedonia’s Christians so Europe had no choice but to intervene.<sup>220</sup> After the Young Turk revolution failed to deliver necessary reforms for the Macedonians, Bulgaria reconstituted bands that swayed the population into rekindling armed activity. Yet, these Bulgarian leaders also took

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<sup>216</sup> Crawford Price, W.H., *The Balkan Cockpit: The Political and Military Story of the Balkan Wars in Macedonia*, London: 1914, T. Werner Laurie, Pg. vi

<sup>217</sup> Price, *The Balkan Cockpit*, Pg. vi

<sup>218</sup> Crawford Price, W.H., *Light on the Balkan Darkness*, London: 1915, Simpkin Marshall, Pg. 23-25

<sup>219</sup> Price, *The Balkan Cockpit*, Pg. 13

<sup>220</sup> Price, *The Balkan Cockpit*, Pg. 22

advantage of the people and profited from them, such as when “forcing the peasantry to buy rifles at prices vastly in excess of market value.”<sup>221</sup> At first, many peasants had no choice but to align with the Bulgarians because of their “bloody propaganda.” Meanwhile, the preoccupied and distracted Serbians arrived too late to make a rapid difference in the sentiments of central Macedonia’s inhabitants through propaganda alone.<sup>222</sup> Still, the Serbians replied to Bulgarian efforts with “a vigorous propaganda in Macedonia” of their own.”<sup>223</sup>

Like most other Western observers, Price knew that churches in Macedonia were “organs of political propaganda[.]” As he put it, the rivalry between Greece and Bulgaria through its churches “was destined to stain the soil of Macedonia red with the blood of victims of religious hate[.]”<sup>224</sup> As one’s nationality was “registered as a Greek or a Bulgar according to the school or church which he attended ... it many times happened that both Greeks and Bulgars were to be found among members of one and the same family.”<sup>225</sup> Price said that this propaganda explained, but did not excuse, “the bitter struggles for the Macedonian heritage.”<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Price, *The Balkan Cockpit*, Pg. 13

<sup>222</sup> Price, *Light on the Balkan Darkness*, Pg. 33

<sup>223</sup> Price, *Light on the Balkan Darkness*, Pg. 102

<sup>224</sup> Price, *The Balkan Cockpit*, Pg. 36

<sup>225</sup> Price, *Light on the Balkan Darkness*, Pg. 34

<sup>226</sup> Price, *Light on the Balkan Darkness*, Pg. 102

Price's interpretations of the Macedonians' identity varied. In a village northwest of Voden, he described the people as "the worst species of Macedo-Bulgars[.]" During the Balkan Wars, however, these "Macedo-Bulgars" rose with the village's Muslims in a complaint against a Bulgarian captain, and so they thus appealed to Greek authorities for protection. Greece sent Greek troops "to clear the village[.]"<sup>227</sup> Thus, how he described these peasants did not tend to correlate with the Macedonians' desires; actually, these descriptions mattered little to the Macedonians – what mattered was good governance, peace and security. Price even wrote that whether Macedonia should belong to one Balkan nation or another depended on the parameters one was judging by, such as geography, ethnology, and language.<sup>228</sup> Thus, it is not surprising that Price often simply called the Macedonians "a race of Slavs" or "Macedonian Slavs."<sup>229</sup> The Macedonians' nationality was "largely ignored" by the West, said Price, and "it is easier to call a Macedonian a Bulgar than to prove him one." The best argument for their Bulgarian character was that Bulgarian propaganda had created a "Bulgarian sentiment" among the population.<sup>230</sup> In this way, Price occasionally labeled the Macedonians as

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<sup>227</sup> Price, *The Balkan Cockpit*, Pg. 199, 200

<sup>228</sup> Price, *The Balkan Cockpit*, Pg. 232

<sup>229</sup> Price, *Light on the Balkan Darkness*, Pg. 23-25

<sup>230</sup> Price, *Light on the Balkan Darkness*, Pg. 25

Bulgarians or Macedo-Bulgars, but this label did not have a national or ethnic connotation.

The Balkan Wars changed how Macedonians were defined and perceived. Serbia acquired central Macedonia, and Serbia's methods disassembled Bulgaria's decades-long propaganda machine in that region. Price explained:

**The Macedonian Slav has affinities to both Serb and Bulgar. He is emphatically a man without any deep sense of nationality, and one who could have been assimilated by the Bulgarians, and who has been assimilated with unexpected rapidity by the Serbs. The few refugees who have fled across the Bulgarian frontier prove nothing. They are mainly peasants who, having hitherto enjoyed immunity from military service, flee from it now as they did when the Young-Turks introduced conscription. They are of no more consequence than the Germans who were wont to leave the Fatherland and drone out vile noises in our streets, or the Bulgarians who periodically cross over into Serbia rather than serve with the colours.**<sup>231</sup>

For many years, the outside world had referred to Macedonians as Bulgarians and Bulgarian propaganda even convinced many Macedonians of their supposed Bulgarian identity. However, with the introduction of Serbian rule in Macedonia, according to Price, that narrative had become discredited.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Price, *Light on the Balkan Darkness*, Pg. 26-27

<sup>232</sup> Price, *Light on the Balkan Darkness*, Pg. 28

Regardless of who controlled Macedonia, Price believed that the “Macedonian Slavs” were closer to the Serbs than to the Bulgarians.<sup>233</sup> “The plain truth of the matter,” he wrote, “is that the exclusive Bulgarian right to Central Macedonia cannot be substantiated. There is not an argument available in her cause which cannot be countered with overpowering effect from the Serbian side.”<sup>234</sup> He continued: “It is, in fact, agreed by impartial investigators that the Slavs of these regions are neither pure Serbs nor pure Bulgars. ... The Macedonian speaks a patois which is identical with the literary language of neither Serb nor Bulgar, but is mutually intelligible with both. When he is educated he learns either the one or the other literary language, and becomes, as the case may be, Serb or Bulgar.”<sup>235</sup> Thus, it was plainly obvious to Price that prior assigned racial or national labels for the Macedonians were the product of disinformation and misinformation.

As mentioned earlier, Wagner and Moore communicated different views biased by their Bulgarian influences. Wagner and Moore often attributed a Bulgarian character to the Macedonians. Wagner thought that Bulgarians were in the majority in Macedonia; he believed that Young Turk policy

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<sup>233</sup> Price, *Light on the Balkan Darkness*, Pg. 35

<sup>234</sup> Price, *Light on the Balkan Darkness*, Pg. 43

<sup>235</sup> Price, *Light on the Balkan Darkness*, Pg. 100, 101

would lead to the “Ottomanizing of the Bulgarians in Macedonia[.]”<sup>236</sup> He noted that the Macedonian rebels, based in Bulgaria, were waging “a terrible guerilla war in Macedonia against everything that is not Bulgarian.”<sup>237</sup> Arthur Moore, for his part, referred to the IMRO as the “Bulgarian Internal Organization”, which he insisted had wanted nothing to do with Jane Sandanski since 1908. The IMRO, according to Moore, consisted “of the Bulgar population in Macedonia[.]” He even referred to the elected Christian deputies as “Bulgar” and suggested that the “Bulgar language” should be used in local government.<sup>238</sup> He referred to the Christians in Resen and Ohrid as “predominantly Bulgar”<sup>239</sup>

However, Wagner rarely attempted to give an impartial analysis. For example, most of time Wagner lounged around in Sofia, mingling in the cafes with Bulgarian or Bulgarian-influenced professors, lawyers, politicians and businessmen.<sup>240</sup> He often ventured to the homes and strongholds of External Macedonian committeemen, such as when he visited the inn called “Lomski-Han”.<sup>241</sup> For his part, Moore traveled to Macedonia a few times, but his first trip in the summer of 1905 lasted just a

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<sup>236</sup> Wagner, Hermenegild, *With the Victorious Bulgarians*, Boston: 1913, Houghton Mifflin Company, Pg. 10

<sup>237</sup> Wagner, *With the Victorious Bulgarians*, Pg. 225

<sup>238</sup> Moore, Arthur, *The Orient Express*, London: 1914, Constable & Company, Pg. 195, 196

<sup>239</sup> Moore, *The Orient Express*, Pg. 181

<sup>240</sup> Wagner, *With the Victorious Bulgarians*, Pg. 32, 33

<sup>241</sup> Wagner, *With the Victorious Bulgarians*, Pg. 225



couple of weeks and was informed by his conversations with a senior Turkish official that accompanied him to villages. This greatly dampened his ability to converse with the locals about their loyalties and identities.

Still, both men found differences between the Macedonians and Bulgarians. Wagner for example, emphasized when he encountered people who were “Macedonians by birth” as opposed to being born in Bulgaria.<sup>242</sup> He wrote that Macedonians were more similar “in their way of thinking” to the people of northern and western Bulgaria compared to southern and eastern Bulgarians.<sup>243</sup> When he spoke to a Bulgarian bishop, Methodi Kussevich, who he referred to as Macedonian, Wagner noted that Kussevich contrasted the “Turks” from the “Slavs” and “Christian peoples” of Macedonia.<sup>244</sup> For his part, Moore sporadically referenced the “Christian Macedonians” and compared the “Christians and Turks” of Macedonia,<sup>245</sup> signaling that religious identity dominated local mindsets. Moore did not rush to overwhelm readers with only the Bulgarian label for the Macedonians. For example, he discussed the conditions of the “Macedonian peasant”<sup>246</sup> and often times switched back and forth from calling the

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<sup>242</sup> Wagner, *With the Victorious Bulgarians*, Pg. 32, 33

<sup>243</sup> Wagner, *With the Victorious Bulgarians*, Pg. 75

<sup>244</sup> Wagner, *With the Victorious Bulgarians*, Pg. 83, 84

<sup>245</sup> Moore, *The Orient Express*, Pg. 195, 196

<sup>246</sup> Moore, *The Orient Express*, Pg. 185

1903 uprising “Bulgar” and “Macedonian,” especially when he sought to distance the internal happenings of Macedonia from that of official Bulgaria.<sup>247</sup>

In the end, however, Wagner stated that according to all the Macedonians he had met – intellectuals educated in different Western European countries, partisans of certain political persuasions, and illiterate peasants – “they were all in the first place Macedonians[.]”<sup>248</sup> Despite the propaganda campaigns, the feeling of being Macedonian overrode all other national or racial feelings. Moore pinned these conflicting loyalties in Macedonia primarily on Greek Patriarchists and Bulgarian Exarchists, because of their “fierce and foolish chauvinism” and “the most astounding propaganda by means of murder that has ever been carried on in the name of Nationalism[.]”<sup>249</sup> As Moore wrote, in Macedonia “the Church is the outward symbol of nationality and a willing political instrument.”<sup>250</sup> Thus, despite Wagner and Moore’s tendency to have loosely labeled the Macedonians as Bulgarian, they offered reasons as to how the Macedonians became this way and frequently shared sentiments that these Macedonians were different from their neighbors.

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<sup>247</sup> See page 269, where Moore refers to “the ineffective Bulgar rising of 1903” and page 273, where Moore states that “the Bulgarian Government...avoided a declaration of war with Turkey during the Macedonian insurrection of 1903.”

<sup>248</sup> Wagner, *With the Victorious Bulgarians*, Pg. 227

<sup>249</sup> Moore, *The Orient Express*, Pg. 279, 280

<sup>250</sup> Moore, *The Orient Express*, Pg. 172

## XI

Of course, the scholars and professors who wrote about Macedonia during the Balkan Wars fashioned less subjective and more reasoned arguments on how to define the Macedonians. John MacDonald, who wrote a study on Ferdinand of Bulgaria and the Bulgarian people, claimed that in the Ottoman Empire, there had been no such thing as races, but only religions. He then suggested that all of the Christians, regardless of race, “were lumped up together[.]” While we have seen thus far that this assessment was nothing short of common knowledge, MacDonald specifically registered three types of Christians in Macedonia: “Bulgars, Serbs, [and] Macedonian Slavs.”<sup>251</sup> The inclusion of this third category demonstrated that the Macedonian identity was becoming a relevant and serious talking point. Nevill Forbes and his co-authors supported this position when, in their history of the Balkans, they noted that “the population of Macedonia was nowhere, except in the immediate vicinity of the borders of these three countries, either purely Bulgar or purely Greek or purely Serb[.]” Forbes conjectured

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<sup>251</sup> MacDonald, John, *Czar Ferdinand and His People*, London: 1913, TC and EC Jack, Pg. 2

that the Aegean coast was inhabited by Greeks and the interior of Macedonia was “mainly Slav.”<sup>252</sup> These Slavs were not defined as Bulgarians or Serbians, but as mixed into something else.

True, MacDonald sometimes referred to the Macedonians as Bulgarians, particularly because many belonged to the Bulgarian Church. But he highlighted differences between them and the inhabitants of Bulgaria, such as when noting that the inhabitants of Macedonia were different “in physique, in temperament, [and] in taste.” Citing history, he further stated that “the original Bulgarian element among the Slavs of the province was numerically weaker than in the lands on the other side of the Rhodope; and in the second place, from contiguity with Greece and intermarriage with its people.”<sup>253</sup> When he was in the Bulgarian capital, he said it was “easy to distinguish the Macedonian citizens of Sofia” because “their features were generally more regular, more European[.]”<sup>254</sup> He even differentiated their religious and political potential by mentioning that a former Bulgarian prime minister had denounced the “Macedonians” as “treacherous,”<sup>255</sup> and acknowledged that the Macedonians were better fitted for the monastic life

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<sup>252</sup> Forbes, Nevill, Hogarth, D.G., Mitrany, D., Toynbee, Arnold, *The Balkans: A History of Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, Rumania and Turkey*, Oxford: 1915, Clarenton Press, Pg. 65, 66

<sup>253</sup> MacDonald, *Czar Ferdinand and His People*, Pg. 18

<sup>254</sup> MacDonald, *Czar Ferdinand and His People*, Pg. 133

<sup>255</sup> MacDonald, *Czar Ferdinand and His People*, Pg. 71

and that “the majority of the monks [in the Bulgarian Church] have been Macedonians.”<sup>256</sup> Hence, for MacDonald, both culture and genetics played a significant role in separating the inhabitants of Macedonia from the inhabitants of Bulgaria.

Forbes acknowledged that many Macedonians were “Bulgarian in sentiment”<sup>257</sup> but were also largely “uneducated and ignorant” while possessing “no national consciousness.” For Forbes, the Macedonians were neither Serbian nor Bulgarian:

**It is the Slav population of Macedonia that has engendered so much heat and caused so much blood to be spilt. The dispute as to whether it is rather Serb or Bulgar has caused interminable and most bitter controversy. The truth is that it was neither the one nor the other, but that, the ethnological and linguistic missionaries of Bulgaria having been first in the field, a majority of the Macedonian Slavs had been so long and so persistently told that they were Bulgars, that after a few years Bulgaria could, with some truth, claim that this fact was so.<sup>258</sup>**

Forbes acknowledged that Bulgarian propaganda created Bulgarians in Macedonia, but also wrote that, historically, “the Macedonian Slavs” had been cut off from both the Bulgarians and Serbians during

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<sup>256</sup> MacDonald, *Czar Ferdinand and His People*, Pg. 275

<sup>257</sup> Forbes et. al., *The Balkans: A History of Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, Rumania and Turkey*, Pg. 10

<sup>258</sup> Forbes et. al., *The Balkans: A History of Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, Rumania and Turkey*, Pg. 67

Turkish rule. Forbes continued, saying “that ethnologically and linguistically they did not develop the characteristics of either of these two races ... but remained a primitive neutral Slav type.”<sup>259</sup> Further, during the Ottoman times, “neither Serb nor Bulgar had any influence in Macedonia, and the Macedonian Slavs, who had first of all been pure Slavs ...were left to themselves, and the process of differentiation between Serb and Bulgar in Macedonia, by which in time the Macedonian Slavs would have become either Serbs or Bulgars, ceased.”<sup>260</sup> Unquestionably, then, the Macedonians were being molded into something other than what they were.

For their part, scholars David and Harvey Jordan only grazed the surface of the Macedonian identity issue in their book *War's Aftermath: A Preliminary Study of the Eugenics of War*. They summed up the situation in Macedonia by simply noting that “the human harvest in Macedonia is bad.”<sup>261</sup> Yet, they accepted that there were Macedonians working for Macedonian independence while other Macedonians “being of Bulgarian origin” were striving for “union with Bulgaria.”<sup>262</sup> The Jordans also revealed that

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<sup>259</sup> Forbes et. al., *The Balkans: A History of Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, Rumania and Turkey*, Pg. 68

<sup>260</sup> Forbes et. al., *The Balkans: A History of Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, Rumania and Turkey*, Pg. 83, 84

<sup>261</sup> Jordan, David Starr, Jordan, Harvey Ernest, *War's Aftermath: A Preliminary Study of the Eugenics of War*, Boston: 1914, Houghton Mifflin Company

<sup>262</sup> Jordan, *War's Aftermath*, Pg. 85

Bulgaria's inhabitants exceedingly disliked the Macedonian refugees that had poured into Bulgaria. As the authors put it, the Bulgarian attitude was: "My brother is lying dead in Macedonia because of you, and now you come up here to live in my house, eat my bread, and take my job. Get out." In response, the authors wrote that the Macedonians said: "Who told you to come down to Macedonia and trample down our vineyards, eat our flocks, and then run off and leave our village to be burned? I don't care if your brother is dead in Macedonia, my brother is dead, too."<sup>263</sup> While the Jordans used the term Bulgarian to describe many Macedonians, this does not necessarily mean they viewed them as the same people as those of Bulgaria. The brothers noted several distinguishing characteristics; particularly, their political goals and desires to not be ruled by one another underscored these differences.

Another scholar, Will Monroe, considered many of the Macedonians to be Bulgarians. Monroe thought that Macedonia was comprised of several races, with half of the population being Bulgarian and the rest split between Turks, Greeks, Serbians, Vlachs, Albanians, Jews and Romani.<sup>264</sup> For evidence of his position, he cited several historical examples, such as the works of Stefan Verkovich, a Bosnian

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<sup>263</sup> Jordan, *War's Aftermath*, Pg. 88, 89

<sup>264</sup> Monroe, Will S., *Bulgaria and Her People: With an Account of the Balkan Wars, Macedonia, and the Macedonian Bulgars*, Boston: 1914, The Page Company, Pg. 88, 89

who compiled *Bulgarian* folk songs in Macedonia in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>265</sup> Monroe used this as support despite conceding that Verkovitch had “tarnished his fame by the fabrication of the *Veda Slovena*.”<sup>266</sup> Despite this, Monroe referenced the “Bulgarian population” of Macedonia<sup>267</sup> and made mention of the “Bulgarian intellectuals” who formed the IMRO (even though he occasionally spoke of the “Macedonian revolutionaries”).<sup>268</sup> Yet, he retreated from his claims that the Macedonians were truly the same as the Bulgarians when he acknowledged that ethnicity was a state of “consciousness” being rattled in the Macedonians’ minds, while the Turks did everything possible to check the growth of ethnic consciousness among the people.<sup>269</sup> Hence, as others had alluded to as well, the application of new Western concepts to old Balkan terminology in Macedonia was not a fair description of the actual state of affairs in Macedonia.

Although these Westerners approached the Macedonian question in a more scholarly and objective fashion than the journalists, biases managed to influence some of their works to certain degrees. For example, Monroe had spent much of his time in Bulgaria during the Balkan Wars, but very

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<sup>265</sup> Monroe, *Bulgaria and Her People*, Pg. 241

<sup>266</sup> Monroe, *Bulgaria and Her People*, Pg. 241

<sup>267</sup> Monroe, *Bulgaria and Her People*, Pg. 120

<sup>268</sup> Monroe, *Bulgaria and Her People*, Pg. 89-92

<sup>269</sup> Monroe, *Bulgaria and Her People*, Pg. 88, 89



little time, if any, in Greece or Serbia.<sup>270</sup> Therefore, being that he was informed primarily by one side and not the others, it is hard to conclude that even his scholarly work was not free from a complete and fair balance of all viewpoints concerning the Macedonians' ethnic position.

These Macedonians realized who they were only after being indoctrinated into a particular camp – propaganda had convinced Macedonians (and the Westerners who observed them) that the Macedonians were something other than just Macedonian. For his part, MacDonald stated that the peasants' cry of "Macedonia for the Macedonians ... astonished foreign residents familiar with the Turk and his neighbours" because the perceived race rivalries had taught Westerners that annexation to other lands were Macedonian parties' conflicting goals, not unity under one name and government.<sup>271</sup> According to Forbes, this race rivalry started when Bulgaria was denied Macedonian territory after the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. Since then, Bulgaria had "cast longing eyes on Macedonia" and viewed it as "unredeemed Bulgaria[.]" Bulgaria's Macedonian program accelerated when, in 1894, Turkey granted Bulgaria the right to two bishops in Macedonia.<sup>272</sup> Of course, as MacDonald noted, this propaganda

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<sup>270</sup> Monroe, *Bulgaria and Her People*, Pg. 139

<sup>271</sup> MacDonald, *Czar Ferdinand and His People*, Pg. 322

<sup>272</sup> Forbes et. al., *The Balkans: A History of Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, Rumania and Turkey*, Pg.

campaign stemmed not only from Bulgarian politicians and intellectuals, but also the foreign king of Bulgaria, who, according to MacDonald, wanted to be remembered in history as “Ferdinand the Macedonian.”<sup>273</sup> Thus, national expansion on the Bulgarian politicians’ part and narcissism on their foreign ruler’s behalf steered Bulgaria’s Macedonian agenda.

Forbes insisted that the only reason Macedonians had called themselves Bulgarians was because Bulgaria had been first with its propaganda, as other Westerners frequently acknowledged. Forbes noted that had the Serbs been first, “the Macedonian Slavs could just as easily have been made into Serbs[.]”<sup>274</sup> As a matter of fact, Serbia and Greece would likely never have become allies and partners in the Balkans had it not been for alarming success of Bulgarian propaganda.<sup>275</sup> For Forbes, “the Macedonian peasants had first of all to be enlightened as to who they were, or rather as to who they were told they had got to consider themselves[.]”<sup>276</sup> As with other authors, Forbes proposed that the Macedonians were really not Bulgarian, Serbian, or Greek, but rather that they

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<sup>273</sup> MacDonald, *Czar Ferdinand and His People*, Pg. 337

<sup>274</sup> Forbes et. al., *The Balkans: A History of Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, Rumania and Turkey*, Pg. 68

<sup>275</sup> Forbes et. al., *The Balkans: A History of Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, Rumania and Turkey*, Pg. 66, 67

<sup>276</sup> Forbes et. al., *The Balkans: A History of Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, Rumania and Turkey*, Pg. 66

were made into believing that they were Bulgarian, Serbian, or Greek.

Very few Western authors disagreed with the notion that the Macedonians were forced or tricked into believing or accepting that they were something other than just Macedonian. As the 1910s Balkan rumble lingered, Westerners would continue emphasizing this point. Its validity, however, fell on deaf ears.

## XII

When Macedonia's status resurfaced during and after the Great War, authors fashioned more perspectives on the cursed land. Durham, who originally ventured into the Balkans on a humanitarian mission, wrote a follow-up book on her Balkan experiences. The authors Goff and Fawcett wrote a book on their combined travels to Macedonia while accompanying the British military, and they endeavored to write their book from a "non-political and non-military standpoint."<sup>277</sup> George Logio was a professor in Britain who focused on Bulgarian issues and sympathized with the Bulgarian position. Finally, the Author of the Real Keiser, abbreviated here as ARK, was an anonymous author: we really do not know much about him other than he claimed "intimate relations with people in Germany,"<sup>278</sup> published his books in London, and detested Ferdinand of Bulgaria. These authors published four books based on markedly different experiences and with varied approaches;

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<sup>277</sup> Goff, A, Fawcett, Hugh A., *Macedonia: A Plea for the Primitive*, London: 1921, John Lane, Pg. vii

<sup>278</sup> See *The Real Kaiser*, London: 1914, Andrew Melrose

unsurprisingly, their definitions of the Macedonians drastically fluctuated.

Durham, especially, had an opportunity to reflect on her old remarks and incorporate her new experiences (and several years of contemplation) into how she phrased the Macedonian situation. She emphasized that the Greeks and Serbs had primarily organized armed bands and sent them into Macedonia in order to suppress the Macedonians in their struggles against the Turkish power. However, she blamed the Bulgarians as well because, as she noted, “Big Bulgaria was to be constructed at any price.” A Bulgarian bishop based in Macedonia even told her that he would rather have Macedonia remain under Turkey than any portion be consumed by Greece. When interviewing a Greek bishop, she observed a similar attitude: the Greek said that he would rather have Macedonia belong to Turkey than be given to Bulgaria. The Serbians, for their part, acknowledged that the key to winning Macedonia was ensuring that Macedonian children “realize they were Serbs.”<sup>279</sup> In this way, Durham did not give a new interpretation on the identity of the Macedonians and the history of how they came to be labeled as they were, other than to emphasize that propaganda and unfriendly Christian attitudes led to the continued suffering of the Macedonians.

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<sup>279</sup> Durham, M.E., *Twenty Years of Balkan Tangle*, London: 1920, G. Allen & Unwin, Pg. 94-96

ARK, for his part, offered familiar reasoning on the development of the Macedonians' identity. He wrote that "the average Macedonian peasant prefers to belong to the race which has the strongest band of murderers in the neighbourhood." For him, this fact made division of Macedonia on racial lines useless and impractical.<sup>280</sup> ARK also emphasized that Ferdinand's overall ambition was to become the master of Constantinople and the emperor of a large Slav kingdom. According to the anonymous author, this was the only reason Ferdinand had formed alliances with Serbia and Greece to help free the Christians in Macedonia and Thrace.<sup>281</sup>

Goff and Fawcett offered a more extensive analysis of the Macedonians' situation. They often referred to the Macedonians as just Macedonian. For example, they did this when describing the character and nature of the Macedonians, such as by saying "the Macedonian has developed a hardihood and a resignation to long-suffering,"<sup>282</sup> and "the native seems to have changed but little since Biblical days, so that it may almost be said that in observing the modern Macedonian one is studying the type amongst whom St. Paul preached and travelled."<sup>283</sup> They also distinguished between "the up-country

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<sup>280</sup> The Author of the Real Kaiser, *Ferdinand of Bulgaria: The Amazing Career of a Shoddy Czar*, London: 1916, Andrew Melrose, Pg. 220

<sup>281</sup> ARK, *Ferdinand of Bulgaria: The Amazing Career of a Shoddy Czar*, Pg. 149, 150, 197

<sup>282</sup> Goff, *Macedonia: A Plea for the Primitive*, Pg. x

<sup>283</sup> Goff, *Macedonia: A Plea for the Primitive*, Pg. xv

Macedonian and the mere town-dweller.”<sup>284</sup> The authors stated, however, that “there is no real Macedonian nationality and that the term is merely a convenient expression to describe the inhabitants.” Their ultimate description of the Macedonian identity was not tied to concepts of nationality and race: “The Macedonian native,” they wrote, “is merely a hewer of wood, a drawer of water, or to be more precise, a tiller of the soil.”<sup>285</sup>

Logio, on the other hand, especially when discussing the struggles of the Balkan States for Macedonia, labelled “the bulk of the Macedonians” as Bulgarians, and devoted an entire chapter to evidence for this claim (mostly taken from Bulgarian intellectuals and politicians).<sup>286</sup> In one instance, he insisted that “historical claims concerning Macedonia are utterly worthless” when disputing Serbian “rights” to Macedonia, and instead focused on the works of supposed unbiased explorers who explored Macedonia under Turkish rule.<sup>287</sup> In doing so, however, Logio ignored the whole history of how many Macedonians became Bulgarianized, as evidenced by the researches and analyses by most of the Western authors examined in this book. Logio further blasted certain Serbian claims that

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<sup>284</sup> Goff, *Macedonia: A Plea for the Primitive*, Pg. 6

<sup>285</sup> Goff, *Macedonia: A Plea for the Primitive*, Pg. 6

<sup>286</sup> Logio, George Clenton, *Bulgaria: Problems and Politics*, London: 1919, William Heinemann, Pg. 40, 41

<sup>287</sup> Logio, *Bulgaria: Problems and Politics*, Pg. 234, 235

Macedonians were “devoid of all national consciousness” and suggested that, because Macedonian refugees mostly fled to Bulgaria, it must have meant that they were akin to the Bulgarians and not the Serbians.<sup>288</sup> In this manner, Logio attempted to discredit Serbian propaganda about Macedonia and elevate Bulgarian talking points.<sup>289</sup>

Moreover, Logio highlighted how the Agrarian political party in Bulgaria blasted Serbia for imposing a “draconian administration” on the “Macedonian population.” At the same time, however, he acknowledged that this political party was not bothered that Serbia had acquired much of Macedonia. A Bulgarian politician told Logio that the Serbians “should try to conciliate the Macedonians by kindness, and they would endeavor to attract the bulk of the Macedonians in Bulgaria back to their country. Then all of us here in Bulgaria would feel inclined to put our own house in order rather than to think about Macedonia, whereas now these Macedonians with their endless complaints leave us no peace.”<sup>290</sup> In another instance, Logio cited a Bulgarian who complained about leftist Bulgarians that “do not even dare admit that Macedonia is a Bulgarian country: they want autonomy for Macedonia.”<sup>291</sup> Thus, even though major political

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<sup>288</sup> Logio, *Bulgaria: Problems and Politics*, Pg. 240, 241

<sup>289</sup> Logio, *Bulgaria: Problems and Politics*, See pages 249-262.

<sup>290</sup> Logio, *Bulgaria: Problems and Politics*, Pg. 72, 73

<sup>291</sup> Logio, *Bulgaria: Problems and Politics*, Pg. 182, 183



parties in Bulgaria viewed the Macedonians as separate from Bulgarians and even as a menace to Bulgaria, Logio did not adopt this strict division between Bulgarians and Macedonians. Yet, while Logio believed that the Macedonian dialects were closer to Bulgarian than to Serbian, he could not conclude that Macedonian dialects ought to be considered as part of the Bulgarian language.<sup>292</sup>

Goff's and Fawcett's study focused primarily on human nature and only secondarily on the racial situation in Macedonia. Speaking of the Macedonian, they wrote that "he is never obsessed by the ambition to give up work and enjoy a serene and comfortable old age ... his mind has never grasped the possibility of existence without hard work[.]"<sup>293</sup> They wrote that "the Macedonian is ... capable of prolonged endurance and sustained effort on very indifferent nourishment."<sup>294</sup> They further concluded the following:

**No one is above reproach, but a close examination of the Macedonian peasant reveals the fact that his shortcomings are the results of an antiquated system of tyranny and of oppression and that, in his indefatigable industry, in his simple tastes and in his singleness of mind, there is much to appreciate and applaud.<sup>295</sup> ...**

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<sup>292</sup> Logio, *Bulgaria: Problems and Politics*, Pg. 274, 275

<sup>293</sup> Goff, *Macedonia: A Plea for the Primitive*, Pg. 11

<sup>294</sup> Goff, *Macedonia: A Plea for the Primitive*, Pg. 13

<sup>295</sup> Goff, *Macedonia: A Plea for the Primitive*, Pg. 22

The Macedonian, though our contemporary, lives in a different era and, ignorant and primitive though he may be, is not so much to be pitied as envied. He is constantly en garde against Nature, humouring and adjusting himself to her moods, anticipating her anger, seizing her generous moments and finally giving his labour and devoting his life in order that she shall sustain him in return.<sup>296</sup>

Their favorable and optimistic view of the Macedonian condition was not much different than Brailsford's view. More telling, however, is that by describing the nature and character of the *Macedonians*, the two authors categorized the Macedonians as their own people.

Goff and Fawcett still recognized that many nationalities were represented in Macedonia,<sup>297</sup> but they made distinctions between the Greeks and Macedonians.<sup>298</sup> Essentially, the two authors considered the Macedonians to be "crossbred."<sup>299</sup> They discussed "the Slav type" of Macedonian, with "broad features and high cheek-bones [and] deep-set, dark brown eyes[.]"<sup>300</sup> Further, they suggested that those people who were considered Bulgarian or Greek in reality possessed the "very coarse features of the Slav type."<sup>301</sup> Logio, for his part, could not help

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<sup>296</sup> Goff, *Macedonia: A Plea for the Primitive*, Pg. 96

<sup>297</sup> Goff, *Macedonia: A Plea for the Primitive*, Pg. 7

<sup>298</sup> Goff, *Macedonia: A Plea for the Primitive*, Pg. 213, 214

<sup>299</sup> Goff, *Macedonia: A Plea for the Primitive*, Pg. 13

<sup>300</sup> Goff, *Macedonia: A Plea for the Primitive*, Pg. 15

<sup>301</sup> Goff, *Macedonia: A Plea for the Primitive*, Pg. 16

but emphasize differences between Macedonians and Bulgarians despite his pro-Bulgarian tendencies. He spoke of “Macedonian immigrants in Bulgaria” and the “danger of leaving the Macedonians in Bulgaria[.]”<sup>302</sup> He emphasized how the “Macedonian immigrants” were the most influential element in Bulgaria, holding high positions in the Bulgarian government, military and business arena.<sup>303</sup> Thus, even those authors who insisted that Macedonians were Bulgarians did not suppress non-Bulgarian attributes or characterizations of the Macedonians. Like others, Logio’s primary motive in describing the Macedonians as Bulgarians was to differentiate the Macedonians from Serbians or Greeks. With Serbian and Greeks removed from the picture, however, Logio turned to the differences between Macedonians and Bulgarians.

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<sup>302</sup> Logio, *Bulgaria: Problems and Politics*, Pg. vi, vii

<sup>303</sup> Logio, *Bulgaria: Problems and Politics*, Pg. 73

## XIII

R.W. Seton-Watson and Charles Vopicka visited Macedonia during the Great War as diplomats and authored books about their official and unofficial adventures in the Balkans. Meanwhile, John Reed journeyed across Eastern Europe as a journalist, reporting often on the Balkan theater. For his part, Seton-Watson considered Macedonia to be “peopled by a fluid population of Turks, Albanians, Jews, Greeks, Bulgars, Serbs and Vlachs[.]”<sup>304</sup> Although he did not label the Macedonians as a separate people, he recognized that the Macedonians were not a fixed nationality and would transition from one nationality to another depending on the circumstance. He asserted that it was this propaganda that caused the divisions amongst the Macedonians, and he specifically targeted schools and churches as institutions where “children became a valuable commodity.”<sup>305</sup>

More than that, however, Seton-Watson noted that “every Slav in Turkish territory who resented the pressure of the Greeks and was anxious to remain

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<sup>304</sup> Seton-Watson, R.W., *The Rise of Nationality in the Balkans*, New York: 1918, E.P. Dutton and Company, Pg. 128

<sup>305</sup> Seton-Watson, *The Rise of Nationality in the Balkans*, Pg. 129, 30

Slav saw his salvation, and his only salvation, in the Bulgarian Exarchate.” Accordingly, Slavic-speakers in Macedonia were being classified as Bulgarians because the Bulgarian Church was not Greek. It would be better to say, then, that the Macedonians of the Bulgarian Church were *not Greeks*, but not to say that they were *Bulgarians*. Meanwhile, Seton-Watson pointed out that Russia made no “distinction between Serb and Bulgar” in Macedonia. He said “numerous instances could be given of men who have changed their names from Vlach to Greek, from Greek to Bulgar and from Bulgar to Serb ; and many of these turncoats have doubtless during the past winter again replaced the Serbian terminal ‘itch’ by the Bulgarian ‘ov.’”<sup>306</sup> Thus, for Seton-Watson, the arguments put forth by the Bulgarians, Greeks and Serbians were not unshakable truths; they were masquerades.

In *Secrets of the Balkans*, Vopicka had made a point to discuss the Macedonian situation with a variety of interested parties. Still, he favored the Bulgarian viewpoint about the Macedonian identity. When speaking to the Serbian governor of Macedonia, he insisted that Serbia should cede over the three counties south of Skopje to Bulgaria. The Serbian governor and officers retorted that “those three counties are Serbian, not Bulgarian.” Vopicka claimed he had based his knowledge about the status

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<sup>306</sup> Seton-Watson, *The Rise of Nationality in the Balkans*, Pg. 129, 30

of the population on the advice of the American Sanitary Mission, from Veles, which indicated that those districts were “more Bulgarian than Serbian, Greek or Turkish.” Vopicka even offered a possible exchange where Serbia might concede Macedonia while gaining Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Serbian officials refused.<sup>307</sup> Vopicka later wrote that Bulgaria sought annexation of Macedonia to expand its territory and to “free the Bulgarians living there from the Turkish rule.”<sup>308</sup> Clearly, the Bulgarians had found an advocate in Vopicka.

As a news correspondent, Reed’s views were not hindered by national policies and objectives; rather, they were shaped by interactions with locals inside Macedonia and not just by those in high positions or who had made a living outside of Macedonia. For example, when interviewing a Macedonian with six brothers in America, the man discussed how Macedonia was grateful to Greek Prime Minister, Eleftherios Venizelos, for freeing the Macedonians from the Turks. Still, the man insisted that Macedonia did not want to partake in a war that Greece was waging with her neighbors. He claimed to be ignorant to Balkan politics, but when talking glowingly of America, he exclaimed: “We are Macedonians, we are children of Alexander the

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<sup>307</sup> Vopicka, Charles J., *Secrets of the Balkans*, Chicago: 1921, Rand McNally, Pg. 60, 61

<sup>308</sup> Vopicka, *Secrets of the Balkans*, Pg. 64

Great.”<sup>309</sup> Reed’s interviewees did not shy from their Macedonian identity.

Despite this assertion of self-identity, Reed insisted the Macedonians were “the most frightful mix-up of races ever imagined.” He said that “Turks, Albanians, Serbs, Rumanians, Greeks and Bulgarians live there side by side without mingling – and have so lived since the days of St. Paul.”<sup>310</sup> (This is incorrect if just for the fact that there exists no written record of the terms *Serbian* and *Bulgarian* in use during the time of St. Paul.) Reed guessed that “the vast majority of the population of Macedonia are Bulgars,” and he reasoned such because Bulgaria was the first “to found national schools there, and ... the Turks allowed them to establish bishoprics” in Macedonia before the Serbians. He noted that Serbia eventually followed Bulgaria’s lead, but that historically the Serbs never ventured south into Macedonia in any meaningful number, thus eliminating any rightful claim they had to Macedonia.<sup>311</sup> Reed pointed out that when Serbia and Greece divided much of Macedonia between themselves in 1913, they “went to work to Grecianize and Serbianize their new territories.” They forced the Macedonians to renounce their nationality “and proclaim themselves” Serbians or Greeks. Those who

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<sup>309</sup> Reed, John, *The War in Eastern Europe*, New York: 1916, Charles Scribner’s Sons, Pg. 13, 14

<sup>310</sup> Reed, *The War in Eastern Europe*, Pg. 316

<sup>311</sup> Reed, *The War in Eastern Europe*, Pg. 316, 317

had for several decades attended Bulgarian schools and churches were forced out of Macedonia when they refused to abandon them. The Greeks referred to Macedonians as “Bulgarophone Greeks”, he said, and the Serbs as “Macedonian Slavs.”<sup>312</sup>

For these three men, the Macedonian racial and national situation outlined and explained in previous books published before their journeys to Macedonia did not heavily influence their conclusions about the Macedonians. Only Reed had several meaningful and substantive conversations with Macedonian peasants, and he exchanged their self-identification proclamations for his own ideas about the Macedonian identity. While Macedonia was not the primary topic for their books, their approach begs more questions than answers, and are not overwhelmingly useful resources for studying the historical identity of the Macedonians.

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<sup>312</sup> Reed, *The War in Eastern Europe*, Pg. 318, 319



## XIV

In the past view chapters, this book has examined the works of Western visitors during and shortly after the First World War. Several of these authors were apt to claim the Macedonians as part of another nationality (or to suggest the Macedonians were void of nationality) compared many of the authors in the first 15 years of the century. Many of those early visitors managed to emphasize the uniqueness of the Macedonians. But anarchy and war had dominated Macedonia for decades, and with no potential end in sight, scholars did not lose interest in the political and anthropological situation in Macedonia. These scholars who tirelessly studied the situation did not succumb to the superficial analysis of the Western visitors who half-heartedly tried to jumble thoughts and observations together to fit a narrative that had repeatedly been forced onto the world by the clever propagandists. The works by these scholars demonstrate that those observers with a more thorough and objective approach acknowledged that the Macedonians' racial or national affiliations were political associations and that the Macedonians were indeed a separate and unique people.

In his popular work, *The History of the Balkan Peninsula: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, Ferdinand Schevill countered much of what we read in the previous few chapters by suggesting that “the Macedonian Slavs” were “long humiliated by the religious exploitation of the Greeks” and that they had only succumbed to the Bulgarian Church so they could receive the word of God and education in a language more closely related to the one they spoke at home.<sup>313</sup> Schevill then noted that the Serbians injected themselves into Macedonia only after the “Bulgarization of a large section of the Macedonian Slavs[.]” He understood, however, that the Macedonians of the Vardar Valley were under “Bulgar influence,” which had halted Serbian progress in the region. For Schevill, however, these Macedonian Slavs were not Bulgarians. He characterized the Macedonians as having “gone over to the Bulgar camp” as opposed to actually being Bulgarians.<sup>314</sup>

Still, said Schevill, “Bulgar propaganda” had the effect of “deliberately plunging Macedonia into anarchy[.]”<sup>315</sup> He staunchly believed that “the Macedonian Slavs had as late as the congress of Berlin exhibited no perceptible national consciousness of their own” and that “under

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<sup>313</sup> Schevill, Ferdinand, *The History of the Balkan Peninsula: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, New York: 1922, 1933, Harcourt, Brace and Company, Pg. 433

<sup>314</sup> Schevill, *The History of the Balkan Peninsula*, Pg. 433, 434

<sup>315</sup> Schevill, *The History of the Balkan Peninsula*, Pg. 435

favorable circumstances they might even develop their own particular Macedonian consciousness.” Moreover, he wrote:

**These Slavs may properly be considered as a special Macedonian group, but since they were closely related to both Bulgars and Serbs and had, moreover, in the past been usually incorporated in either the Bulgar or Serb state, they inevitably became the object of both Bulgar and Serb aspirations[.]**<sup>316</sup>

The Macedonians were their own people, according to Schevill, but their unified destiny was delayed due to the Balkan powers targeting them for incorporation into their own respective nations.

Archibald Reiss echoed Schevill’s assertions by stating that a Macedonian connection to the Bulgarian Church did not imply a Bulgarian identity. “This conversion to the schism,” he stated, “did not mean that the population regarded themselves as Bulgarians[.]” He instead referred to the Macedonians as a “Slavonic population.”<sup>317</sup> For him, the Christian Macedonians were essentially either Slavs or Greeks.<sup>318</sup> Sir Edwin Pears, who wrote a study of the Turkish sultan, agreed: Macedonia’s Christians were essentially split between Greeks and Slavs.<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> Schevill, *The History of the Balkan Peninsula*, Pg. 433

<sup>317</sup> Reiss, R.A., *The Comitadji Question in Southern Serbia*, London: 1924, Hazell, Watson & Vinery, Pg. 1.

<sup>318</sup> Reiss, *The Comitadji Question*, Pg. 1-3

<sup>319</sup> Pears, Sir Edwin, *Life of Abdul Hamid*, New York: 1917, Henry Hold & Co., Pg. 74

Further, while Pears noted that there were Bulgarian and Serbian elements in Macedonia,<sup>320</sup> he insisted that these categorizations should not be viewed as racial bloodlines. He explained how use of the term *Macedonian* had for many years been regulated by the Turkish authorities, such as when Turkey began censoring the term *Macedonia* in press communications to the outside world. Turkey feared that the term would unite the people around the ideal of a Macedonia for Macedonians; by banning the words *Macedonia* and *Macedonians*, then, Turkey was lengthening the Macedonians' slumber in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>321</sup>

For his part, Henry Baerlein stated that the Macedonian Slavs had been content with being called Serbian or Bulgarian prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century because, to them, both words had the same connotation: Slavic.<sup>322</sup> Baerlein dismissed all claims that the Macedonian language was really either Bulgarian or Serbian and said that "this questioned remains unanswered." He declared that even if the Macedonian language could be found to be closer to Bulgarian or Serbian, it would not necessarily mean that Macedonians were Bulgarians or Serbians.<sup>323</sup> It was "impossible to say" whether a Macedonian was a Serbian, Bulgarian, or some Serbo-Bulgar hybrid,

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<sup>320</sup> Pears, *Life of Abdul Hamid*, Pg. 270

<sup>321</sup> Pears, *Life of Abdul Hamid*, Pg. 195

<sup>322</sup> Baerlein, Henry, *The Birth of Yugoslavia*, London: 1922, Pg. 166.

<sup>323</sup> Baerlein, *The Birth of Yugoslavia*, Pg. 166, 167.

said Baerlein. “The Macedonians,” he wrote, “were for centuries at such a distance from the other Slavs and were so thoroughly neglected that they lost their national consciousness.” Baerlein ultimately subscribed to the theory that the Macedonian Slavs historically fell into three camps: “pure Slavs, Slavized Bulgars and pure Slavs influenced by Slavized Bulgars,” which had all been subjected to constant Greek, Turkish and Vlach influence.<sup>324</sup>

“A large proportion of the Macedonians have no knowledge of the race to which their ancestors belonged,” continued Baerlein. “[I]t is much wiser not to use for Macedonia the two words, Serb and Bulgar, but to say that these Slavs became either Exarchists (in which case they were commonly called Bulgars) or Patriarchists (who were called Serbs).”<sup>325</sup> He emphasized his claims with attestations from Macedonians peasants. One told him: “I used to be a Bulgar and now I am a Serb, and so long as I have work, I shall be perfectly contented.” In the end, Baerlein believed that the Macedonians who were split between Bulgarians and Serbians ought to have just called themselves Yugoslavs.<sup>326</sup> He said this with sincerity because he knew that the Macedonians had always abandoned one name for another, based on political circumstances, conquests, and other various

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<sup>324</sup> Baerlein, *The Birth of Yugoslavia*, Pg. 166-168

<sup>325</sup> Baerlein, *The Birth of Yugoslavia*, Pg. 166-168

<sup>326</sup> Baerlein, *The Birth of Yugoslavia*, Pg. 171

internal or external events.<sup>327</sup> For Baerlein, the Macedonians were molded into national-political camps by religious institutions; and in reality, the Macedonians were really intermediate between the Serbians and Bulgarians, and the differences between the Serbians and Bulgarians were not that great.<sup>328</sup>

Robert Laffan did not disagree. “The people whom one author classes as Serbs another counts as Bulgars,” wrote Laffan. He insisted that surnames, language, and historical arguments by the Serbians or the Bulgarians did not account for anything. “The Macedonian Slavs,” he said, “speak a dialect that is about equally akin to Serbian and Bulgarian[.]” On the other hand, he pointed out that “true Greeks” were only found on the coasts and in certain towns. For Laffan, the Macedonians would be “content in time to be either Serbs or Bulgars if they could be assured of a stable government.”<sup>329</sup> Thus, Laffan acknowledged that the Macedonians could become one or another nationality, given the appropriate amount of time, but that they were not any of those nationalities – at least not yet. For the time being, peace, freedom and stability mattered more to most Macedonians than national loyalties.

These scholars knew that propaganda was the root culprit. In addition to the indoctrination by the

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<sup>327</sup> Baerlein, *The Birth of Yugoslavia*, Pg. 177, 178

<sup>328</sup> Baerlein, *The Birth of Yugoslavia*, Pg. 139

<sup>329</sup> Laffan, R.G.D., *The Guardians of the Gate: Historical Lectures on the Serbs*, Oxford: 1918, Clarendon Press, Pg. 64

churches and schools, as noted by Schevill, Reiss highlighted how the Macedonian External Committee based in Bulgaria terrorized Macedonians and with “brute force [compelled] the people to submit” and essentially become Bulgarians.<sup>330</sup> But the original revolutionary committee, he noted, was comprised mainly of Macedonians who had “never become completely assimilated with the Bulgars of Bulgaria.” He considered the Macedonians to be “more intelligent” than “native Bulgars” and moved by altruistic means. Still, he wrote that by the 1920s, those Macedonians had “disappeared” from the Macedonian committees in Bulgaria, and the main committee had evolved into “a mask to cover extreme imperialism and commercial interests.”<sup>331</sup>

For his part, Laffan suggested that since 1870, Bulgaria had instituted “a continuous campaign by fair means or foul to prove that the inhabitants of Macedonia [were] Bulgars” even though “the people themselves did not know what they were.” Through churches, schools, terror and murder, the Bulgarians converted those into declaring they were “Exarchists.” The Serbians and Greeks then followed suit “to prevent the further spread of Bulgarization” and “the whole of Macedonia reeled with propaganda.” Yet, as he noted, the Bulgarians were

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<sup>330</sup> Reiss, *The Comitadji Question*, Pg. 1-2

<sup>331</sup> Reiss, *The Comitadji Question*, Pg. 3, 4

the best at it.<sup>332</sup> Not only were they the best at it, he said, but they “made a hell of Macedonia during the thirty years before the Balkan War of 1912.”<sup>333</sup>

This decades-long propaganda war did not the Macedonians *Bulgarians*, according Winifred Gordon’s book, *A Woman in The Balkans*. Gordon acknowledged that historians and travelers sometimes referred to Macedonians as Bulgarians, but she also noted the following:

**[T]his method of calling Macedonians Bulgarians is only a relic from the tenth century, when Macedonia was occupied by Bulgaria. Its inhabitants were Slavs, not then organized into a state with a national name, and only known by the name of the region they lived in, and were designated Bulgarians by the chroniclers of past times. But this term had only a political and not an ethnological significance. It was a term applied indiscriminately to all subjects of the ancient Bulgarian Empire, and in no way designated their real nationality.**<sup>334</sup>

Thus, Gordon held that the Macedonians were called Macedonians because that was what the land was called, and the term *Bulgarian* did not signify any ethnic meaning, just a political one for a short period of time. She recognized that some Bulgarians had

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<sup>332</sup> Laffan, *The Guardians of the Gate*, Pg. 60-63

<sup>333</sup> Laffan, *The Guardians of the Gate*, Pg. 59

<sup>334</sup> Gordon, Winifred, *A Woman in the Balkans*, New York: 1916, Dodd, Mead & Company, Pg. 103, 104



emigrated and settled in Macedonia,<sup>335</sup> but she insisted that more Serbians had settled Macedonia historically and had been there for much longer than the Bulgarians.<sup>336</sup> Yet, for Gordon and the others, this did not indicated any sort of non-Macedonian identity.

As Laffan surmised, if you had asked a Macedonian during the Great War what he was, he would not reply that he was Bulgarian, Greek or Serbian. “He will probably smile,” wrote Laffan, “and say that he is Makedonski, which is a wise answer and one that has not yet been improved upon by the professors and journalists who have studied the question.”<sup>337</sup> In essence, Laffan knew that the Macedonians already had a word to define themselves, but very few people (especially Macedonia’s neighbors) took them seriously when they used it. Self-identification and self-determination were thus ignored, even though they were the domineering principles of the peace negotiations during the First World War. These scholars recognized a Macedonian push for self-determination and identification as Macedonians, and there reasoning and evidence was convincing. Objectivity and impartiality led them to the only

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<sup>335</sup> Gordon, *A Woman in the Balkans*, Pg. 103

<sup>336</sup> Gordon, *A Woman in the Balkans*, Pg. 37, 56

<sup>337</sup> Laffan, *The Guardians of the Gate*, Pg. 65, 66

practical conclusion: the Macedonians were Macedonian.

## *Conclusion*

What is a nation and who determines when a people constitute a nation? The past and present Balkan chauvinists who deny the existence of a Macedonian nation prior to 1945 have argued for their interpretations of the Macedonian identity for many decades. These 20<sup>th</sup> century mouthpieces pushed their claims on the Macedonians by various means of propaganda and violence, and then bombarded Westerners with statistical data and historical arguments supporting their causes. These Western authors published books – based on some combination of this Balkan evidence and their own interactions with Macedonians in Macedonia – from which present day propagandists use out-of-context excerpts to further support their claims to the Macedonian identity. In this way, the Balkan propagandists conclude that others ultimately get to determine the identity of Macedonians.

Yes, this approach to defining a people ignores universally recognized principles of self-identification and self-determination. Many Macedonians during and prior to this era, especially those who were not captured by Balkan propaganda, contested this outside control of the Macedonian

narrative. For example, in his 1875 book, *Dictionary of Three Languages*, Georgi Pulevski wrote:

**A nation is called a people who are of one kind and who speak the same language and who live and associate with one another and who have the same customs and songs and celebrations – these people are called a nation, and the place in which they live is called the fatherland of that nation. So too the Macedonians are a nation, and this place of theirs is Macedonia.**

In 1888, Macedonian activist Temko Popov said the following to a Serbian activist in Macedonia:

**Don't fool yourself, Despot, the national spirit in Macedonia has attained such a state that Jesus Christ himself, if he were to descend from heaven, could not convince a Macedonian that he is a Bulgarian or a Serb, except for those Macedonians in whom Bulgarian propaganda has already taken root.**

Moreover, the Macedonian intellectual considered to be one of the most influential and important Macedonians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Krste Misirkov, analyzed the Macedonian identity and political situation in detail in his 1903 book *On Macedonian Matters*. He wrote:

**Thus, the terms Serb, Bulgarian, and Greek have served their time in Macedonia and there is no longer any place for them. It is time for them to be changed for a name**

**common to all Macedonian Slavs, the name Macedonian.**

**...**

**What is most essential for us is internal unity, mutual unity in Macedonia, we do not need Serbs, Bulgarians or Greeks, for we are none of these; we do not need Patriarchists, or Exarchists because we are only Orthodox Christians. ...**

**I am a Macedonian and this is how I see the position of my country: it is not Russia or Austria-Hungary that are the enemies of Macedonia, but Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia. Our country can be saved from ruin only by struggling fiercely against these states. ...**

It is evident, then, that the Macedonians had their own views of themselves which the Balkan chauvinists conveniently dismissed and ignored.

The Macedonian intellectuals of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries advocated for a separate and unique Macedonian ethnic identity. Even though this book is not about how Macedonian thinkers and writers described themselves, their words demonstrate that, at least among a handful of Macedonian men from a cross-section of Macedonian society, the Macedonians did not cast themselves in the same light as their Balkan neighbors.

As demonstrated in this book, the Balkan propagandists also failed to convincingly or correctly argue that objective, Western visitors to Macedonia

considered the Macedonians to be something *other* than Macedonian. Can we fairly summarize that *all* of these authors – some more impartial or informed than others – accepted the Macedonian people as ethnic Macedonians? No, we cannot. However, we also cannot conclude that these Westerners believed that the Macedonians were Bulgarians, Greeks or Serbians. The general consensus among these authors, though, is that the Macedonians had little knowledge or care for abstract ideas like nationality or race in the mid-to-late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Macedonians had primarily focused on attaining freedom, securing peace, improving their living conditions, and realizing justice for centuries of wrongdoings. It was only when Balkan propaganda entered the field do we find Macedonians beginning to be seriously called (by others or themselves) Bulgarians, Greeks or Serbians. Yet, despite these energized and widespread propaganda campaigns, most Western authors declared the Macedonians to not be legitimate members of the Bulgarian, Greek or Serbian nations, but instead a separate people, whether called Macedonians or Macedonian Slavs. The Macedonians were *like* their neighbors, sharing similar cultural, physical and linguistic traits, but they stood on their own. The Macedonians' future as a separate people and Macedonia's rightful seat as an autonomous land equal to other Balkan states was questionable because their neighbors had conspired

to consume and convert them. Still, Western authors observed a unique Macedonian identity despite the physical, emotional and mental chaos and violence unleashed against the Macedonian people. Against all odds, the Macedonians had, for the most part, not really become something else other than Macedonian.

Based on an analysis of nearly three dozen works by Western authors, the following can then be concluded about the general tone and viewpoints exuded by these Western visitors:

1) The various labels attributed to the Macedonians were a creation and by-product of propaganda campaigns primarily emanating from Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia;

2) These Balkan nations utilized priests, teachers, armed bands, and other state actors to spread their propaganda in Macedonia, while employing scholars and diplomats to educate and influence Westerners;

3) Bulgaria had the earliest and most effective propaganda campaign;

4) Most Western authors viewed Macedonians as a separate people from their Balkan neighbors or as a people with no national or ethnic consciousness;

5) Even authors who classified Macedonians as Bulgarians, Serbians or Greeks still noted differences between the Macedonians and their neighbors;

6) The term *Macedonian* was used by all authors to describe the Macedonian people, irrespective of its

national or racial qualities (*Macedonian Slav* was also commonly utilized, but not as frequently); and

7) Many authors noted that Macedonians considered themselves *Macedonian* and called their language *Macedonian*.

Modern-day Bulgarians, Greeks and Serbians use snippets from these works to uplift their denial of the Macedonian identity. In reality, however, taken in context and examined as a whole body, these writings paint another picture. The Macedonians were rarely viewed as being *actual* members of the Bulgarian, Serbian and Greek nations or races by most Westerners. The scholars who studied Macedonia and the visitors who observed and listened to the Macedonian peasants without letting Balkan propagandists influence their interpretations were the most relentless and fierce advocates of the Macedonians' uniqueness. The Macedonians were simply *Macedonian* and the terms *Bulgarian*, *Greek* and *Serbian* merely represented shifting results of a ruthless rivalry for possession of Macedonia.