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## BULGARIAN-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS AND THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION (1948–1963)

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### ABSTRACT

*The article deals with the Bulgarian-Yugoslav relations in the light of the Macedonian question. It is based on the relevant scientific literature and archival sources from the Bulgarian archives. The destalinization after Stalin's death had a great impact on the development of the relations between the two states. In the middle of the 1950s, the Bulgarian party and state leaders took a step towards self-criticism of wrong position concerning the Macedonian question and came out with open attitude towards this question. The culmination in the giving a new meaning to Bulgarian policy towards the Macedonian question occurred during the March Plenum in 1963.*

**Key words:** Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, foreign policy, Macedonian question, Soviet Union, South Slav federation

## LE RELAZIONI BULGARO-JUGOSLAVE E LA QUESTIONE MACEDONE (1948–1963)

### SINTESI

*L'articolo tratta le relazioni bulgaro-jugoslave alla luce della questione macedone. Esso si basa sulla letteratura scientifica e su fonti provenienti dagli archivi bulgari. Dopo la morte di Stalin, la destalinizzazione ebbe un grosso impatto sullo sviluppo delle relazioni tra i due Paesi. A metà degli anni Cinquanta, le autorità del partito e dello Stato bulgaro fecero l'autocritica ovvero la critica della precedente linea politica in relazione alla questione macedone. Lo sviluppo della nuova politica bulgara su questo tema ebbe il proprio culmine con il plenum di marzo del 1963.*

**Parole chiave:** Bulgaria, Jugoslavia, politica estera, questione macedone, Unione Sovietica, Federazione degli Slavi del Sud

The Balkans is the region in which sparks of tension are constantly smoldering between the people living there and the ripening conflicts are ready to blow up the relations at any given moment. Located at important crossroads that connect the civilizations of the East and the West, the Balkan Peninsula is a mosaic of peoples with different religions, languages, culture and traditions, united by their common destiny to live together.

The major question that will continue to exist in the future of the Balkans is the national issue, regardless of the vicissitudes and the impact of various external factors that exert strong influence. One of these controversial national issues which brought to a clash of the interests of Bulgaria and Yugoslavia is the Macedonian question. It has its origins in the Berlin Congress of 1878.

In the aftermath of World War II, this issue was again placed in the foreground – a challenge for the relations between the two neighboring Balkan states and their foreign policy. The attempt to find its solution in the creation of a South Slav federation between one of the state-winners in World War II – Tito's Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, which fell firmly into the Soviet sphere of influence failed. By the summer of 1948 Yugoslavia also accepted the Stalinist model of socialism, but after the Stalin–Tito split, it took its own path of development. Also as a result of the struggle for leadership in the “communist camp” which had come to the fore, Tito was no longer inclined to follow the “Stalinist” type of building socialism (Daskalov, 1989; Lalkov, 1994; Mičev, 1994; Nešović, 1973).

The strive to build a new consciousness of the people in Vardar Macedonia (People's Republic of Macedonia) as one of the six republics included in the new Yugoslavia and in the Pirin region of Bulgaria in the summer of 1946 was supported by Stalin. On this occasion, the Soviet leader advised the Bulgarian communists: “Cultural autonomy should be given to Pirin Macedonia within the territory of Bulgaria. The autonomy will be the first step towards the accession of Macedonia. The fact that there is no developed Macedonian consciousness among the population does not mean anything yet ...” (Angelov, 1997, 97).

The numerous extremes and concessions on the Macedonian issue made by the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) up to 1948 were a result also of the hard situation Bulgaria found itself as a defeated country. A possible confrontation and conflict with Stalin and Tito could bring to its isolation at the Paris Peace Conference in 1947. However, after the rupture in the relations between Yugoslavia and the USSR, sanctioned by the decision of Cominform of June 28, 1948, the People's Republic of Bulgaria (PRB) felt free to embark on a new policy related to the protection of the Bulgarian national identity of the population in the Pirin region and protection of the truth about the history of the population in Vardar Macedonia, which was at the time within the borders of the Macedonian republic making part of the Yugoslav Federation.

The first step of the Bulgarian party leadership to correct the mistakes was associated with the expulsion from the Pirin region of the Macedonian teachers and propagators of the “Macedonian language and Macedonian national consciousness” among the population.

In the period 1949–1953 the Bulgarian state and party leadership was seized by the fever in the USSR and in the socialist bloc to condemn Tito. In the PR of Bulgaria the process was felt most strongly in the Blagoevgrad district, where “imperialist Yugoslavia and the U.S. tool Tito” was a constant topic in the local party organ *Pirinsko delo*. In these years the Yugoslav leaders, in their turn, followed a policy of estrangement of the majority population in the PR of Macedonia from its Bulgarian roots and the implementation of the new “artificial” language and the “Macedonian” national consciousness.

Stalin's death on March 5, 1953 opened the door for a new policy in the socialist camp towards Yugoslavia and allowed for the building of new relations between the two neighboring countries on the basis of good neighborliness and understanding (Panaiotov, Palešutski, Mičev, 1994, 120).

Gradually the Bulgarian initiative to normalize relations with its neighbors in the summer of 1953 started to acquire real dimensions. Yugoslav response was to come shortly by taking steps to remove the restriction on the movement of Bulgarian diplomats. Arrangements were made allowing for their travel throughout the entire territory of Yugoslavia, except for the PR of Macedonia (CDA, f. 1b, op. 6, a. e. 2192, 140).

This indicates that the Yugoslavs were reluctant to take actions that ran contrary to their established strategy on the internal problems and in this particular case they did not make steps that could jeopardize the fragile national issue in the newly-built Yugoslavia. They feared that the admission of Bulgarian diplomats on the territory related to the disputed issue between the two countries might lead to violation of the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia. That did not prevent the Yugoslav state from spreading propaganda materials with anti-Bulgarian content and sending Yugoslav intelligence agents on the territory of Blagoevgrad district.

The specially designed materials for the population of the Pirin region of Macedonia were signed by “a group of communists and patriots from the Pirin region” and “a group of Macedonian patriots from the Pirin region” (CDA, f. 1b, op. 24, a. e. 126, 4–5).

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Bulgarian state and party leadership under the influence of its internationalist beliefs brought to the fore not the national but the social objectives. Even when it criticized the policy of Belgrade and Skopje, which took a nationally biased position consistent with the Yugoslav interests, the Bulgarian leadership tried to use more politicized and ideological terms. All that prevented it to justify what was the real situation and the essence of the Macedonian question.

With the signing of the Belgrade Declaration of June 2, 1955 between the governments of the USSR and the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY), the Soviet leadership recognized the right of Yugoslavia to follow its own road to socialism and the territorial integrity of its republics, including the PR of Macedonia.

Before his return to the Soviet Union, on June 3 N. S. Khrushchev made an unofficial visit to Sofia. The Soviet leader informed the Politburo of the Central Committee (CC) of the BCP about his talks with the Yugoslavs. A few days later, on June 9 at a specially convened plenum of the CC the governing Communist elite in Bulgaria was acquainted with them.

It is worth mentioning that in spite of the repeated discussions on the problems of the Bulgarian and Yugoslav development in the following months, the conflict point in the bilateral relations, namely the Macedonian question was not discussed.

The Bulgarian party leadership again had to accept Moscow's recommendations that were aimed at improving the relations with the FPRY, without taking into account the actually existent conflict issues between the two neighboring countries.

During the official visit of the Yugoslav parliamentary delegation led by Moše Pijade in April 1956 both sides stated that there were no conflict issues between them.

However at an informal level, initiative was taken the Bulgarian leadership to come out with a clear position on one of the most important issues – the Macedonian one (Baev, 1994, 94–107).

Thus, in 1955–1958, the senior leadership of the BCP and the Bulgarian government received several informal public proposals for clarifying the Bulgarian position on this sore point for a large part of the Bulgarian nation. It is worth mentioning the views of several Bulgarian public figures.

Pressing calls come mostly from activists of the Union of the Macedonian Cultural and Educational Communities in Bulgaria, which through different channels received information about the situation of the population in Vardar Macedonia and the sentiments in Bulgaria, especially in the Pirin region.

In the letter of the former chairman of the Union Hristo Kalaidjiev to the Politburo member Dimitar Ganev from August 27, 1956 emphasis was laid on coming up with a clear statement on the Macedonian issue, as hitherto there was only Yugoslav activity to establish the PR of Macedonia as a unifier of all Macedonians, while the Bulgarian side kept silent. He realized the effects that could be fatal for the population in Pirin Macedonia and its national consciousness. Regardless of that he continued to be influenced by ideological formulations and the international concepts on the national question. In his view Macedonian unity was impossible without some form of unity between the PR of Bulgaria and the FPRY. This required a unified position on the Macedonian question. It was possible, first, on the basis of a

Macedonian nation and country, while cutting short all the perversions in the historical development of the language, and secondly, by giving the Macedonian nation the opportunity for natural development without any violence (Baev, 1994, 107–108, 110).

During the visit of the Bulgarian delegation in late September – early October 1956 in Belgrade, this problem continued to be avoided, with the perspective of a better solution in the future.

The fact that the views of the Bulgarian state and party leadership have remained unchanged is evident from the census made in the PR of Bulgaria at the end of 1956. In the section under number IV, "Population by nationality" among other nationalities (Gypsies, Jews, Armenians), the "Macedonians" also had their column.

Overall the ratio only between Bulgarians and Macedonians was as follows: of the total population of Bulgaria of 7.613.709 people the Bulgarians were 7.506.541 people, of whom "Macedonians" made a total of 187.789 people.

In Blagoevgrad district, of the total population 281.015 people (with all nationalities) Bulgarians were 93.671 and "Macedonians" 178.062 people, which made it clear that the "Macedonians" substantially exceeded the Bulgarian element in the Pirin region.

That gave new impulses of Yugoslavia in its effort to give pure "Macedonian" consciousness of the population in the Pirin region, and over time to join it to the PR of Macedonia within federal Yugoslavia.

Another quite interesting and curious moment was the fact that in almost all districts in the PR of Bulgaria in this census there were people recorded as "Macedonians" (Angelov, 1996, 105–106).

It turned out that for Bulgarian party leadership it was very difficult to break with Moscow's line, which after the Belgrade and Moscow declarations and the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) was directed exclusively towards improving the relations with the Yugoslav leadership. This Soviet plan included taking into account Yugoslav interests and desires on the part of the CPSU, and hence the compromise with all its satellite Eastern European parties, including the BCP.

Thus, in its effort not to enter in conflict with the Soviet Union the Bulgarian leadership was forced in one form or another to subject to the mutual interests of Moscow and Belgrade, thus ignoring the Bulgarian national cause. As a result of that it could not come up with a clear position on the most contentious issues.

Meanwhile, in both official censuses of the nationalities in Yugoslavia made in 1953 and 1961, it was apparent the lack of a separate column for nationality "Bulgarians" and they were included in the column "other" (King, 1973, 272).

By the summer of 1957 the Macedonian question was not put forward for discussion by the senior party leadership in Bulgaria. In 1957 Bulgarian Marxist histo-

riography, in the person of Dimitar Koshev with his article “The development of historical science in Bulgaria after the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution” and of Petar Georgiev and his article “How history is falsified” made the first tentative steps to speak about some wrong positions on the national question.

All that, along with the insistence from below forced Politburo with a decision № 198 of July 13, 1957 to make its first open steps by assigning the CC members Enčo Staikov and Dimitar Ganev the task, together with the Blagoevgrad District Party Committee, within three months to make a draft for position of the BCP on the Macedonian question (CDA, f. 1b, op. 6, a. e. 3324, 1).

Gradually Bulgarian party leadership gained psychological confidence and determination in fighting the Yugoslav defamations on the Macedonian question. An example of that was the decision of Politburo of the Bulgarian Communist Party taken on August 3, 1957 on the occasion of defamatory articles in *Glasnik* (edition of the Institute of National History in Skopje). This decision set three main tasks:

First, the Foreign Minister Carlo Lukanov was assigned to summon the Yugoslav ambassador and to call his attention to the fact that in the magazine *Glasnik* was published a defamatory article by Dančo Zografski which contained false statements regarding the BCP. To underline that the party, government and academia in Bulgaria were deeply outraged by the behavior of this author, his unscrupulousness and the fact that such slanderous article was allowed to be published in a supposedly scientific Yugoslav journal;

Second, to propose through the Minister of Interior Georgi Cankov and the Minister of Education and Culture Valko Červenkov to stop the access of Yugoslav researchers in Bulgarian state archives until a proper satisfaction for the insults and defamatory statements in the Skopje *Glasnik* was given;

Third, the newspaper *Rabotničesko delo* and the Bulletin of the Institute of History of the Bulgarian Communist Party to publish the necessary responses to this article (CDA, f. 1b, op. 6, a. e. 3341, 1–2).

Meanwhile, was held the first Moscow meeting of 64 Communist and Workers parties, including the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY). The rupture of the Yugoslav party with the other Eastern European communist parties at the ideological level resulted in the isolation of Yugoslavia from the “socialist camp” once again. For Bulgaria this meant an end and a beginning of a “new – old” policy towards Yugoslavia.

While in the period 1955 – end of 1957 the Macedonian question existed, but was not put that openly both from Bulgaria and the FPRY, 1958 marked the beginning of a new approach for action for both interested countries.

This was quite noticeable after the Seventh Congress of the LCY, when opposition to the Eastern camp became apparent. The Yugoslav party and state leadership

focused exclusively on the Macedonian question, which came to the fore in his strategy as one of the ways to attenuate the difficulties in its internal development and diversion from the ideological disputes with the Soviet Union.

The first public statement of the Bulgarian party leadership on the Macedonian question after the forum in Moscow was the speech of Enčo Staikov on March 3, 1958 on the occasion of the celebrations for the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman rule. It introduced new accents and corrections of the past erroneous positions of the party. Staikov's report was immediately attacked by the “horn” of anti-Bulgarian propaganda – the newspaper *Nova Makedonija*, which in two articles – from March 3 “On the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman rule” and from March 23 “Aside from history” claimed that Bulgaria deliberately concealed the existence of a Macedonian nationality and pursued a policy of non-recognition of the Macedonians as a separate nation from the Bulgarians. The newspaper used its pages to protect the Macedonian people, which had already earned its national freedom and statehood. The Skopje newspaper tried to find arguments for these views in the statements of Bulgarian leaders from the recent history on the Macedonian question. As an example was pointed Georgi Dimitrov, who in December 1945 in a speech before the National Assembly said: “Not a division of Macedonia, not a power struggle over it, but respect for the will of the Macedonians, whose main part received their national freedom and national equality in the new Yugoslavia” (SD XXVI ONS, 1946, 42). At the end of December 1948 Dimitrov expressed also the following opinion at the Fifth Party Congress: “The BCP stands firmly on the position that Macedonia belongs to the Macedonians. I am convinced that the Macedonian people will accomplish its national unity” (Dimitrov, 1951, 108).

Almost simultaneously in April 1958 saw the light of day the project on the Macedonian question of Enčo Staikov and Dimitar Ganev and the “Theses on the Macedonian question” of the Blagoevgrad Regional Party Committee.

The project on the Macedonian question focused on several key points in the current policy of the BCP on the disputed issue and recommendations for the future:

1. The BCP pursues consistently a policy of rapprochement and understanding with the FPR of Yugoslavia;
2. After the victory of the people's democratic revolution in Yugoslavia was established the PR of Macedonia, which Bulgarian leadership welcomed as a positive development, but not the appropriation of the right to refer to the complex Macedonian question as an internal Yugoslav problem;
3. The population of Pirin Macedonia under the leadership of the Bulgarian Communist Party took an

- active part in the struggle against the fascist dictatorship together with the Bulgarian people;
4. Bulgarian leadership cannot but take into account the actual situation that Macedonia is divided between three Balkan countries;
  5. Given the radically changed conditions in the Balkans, the party leadership deems inappropriate, even harmful the slogans for Balkan Federation and Federation of the South Slavs that were raised after World War II;
  6. Politburo considers it inconceivable the separation of the Pirin region from Bulgaria and its accession to Yugoslavia;
  7. It is necessary to carry out a greater cultural exchange between the FPRY and the PR of Bulgaria on the basis of equality and while rejecting any nationalist tendencies, and especially anti-Bulgarian sentiments in the PR of Macedonia;
  8. It is necessary to strengthen cultural, political, explanatory and educational activity among the population in Blagoevgrad district, and “correct Leninist elucidation” on the Macedonian question;
  9. To pay attention to the attitude of the BCP towards the Macedonian emigration;
  10. For the economic development of the Pirin region (Baev, 1994, 113–116).

Both the project and the theses were strongly attacked in the specially sent for those purpose two letters of Prof. Todor Pavlov, from May 26 and from July 14, 1958 to senior members of the party leadership (CDA, f. 1b, op. 7, a. e. 1784, 1–4).

The main thread in the statement of Todor Pavlov, which outlined his overall position, was that “the national question in the Balkans is a function of the general social and especially socialist question”.

Regardless of his biased position to defend social rather than national ideas in the development of postwar socialist Bulgaria, he was fully convinced in one thing: “We ourselves will cut the branch on which we sit, if with inaccurate, unclear and contradictory notions and assertions bring mess into the concepts – Macedonian people, Macedonian language and culture, contrasting them with the Bulgarian people, language and culture.” Pavlov recommended putting this issue openly so far as it did not bring to a rupture and exacerbation of the state, economic and cultural relations with the Yugoslav state and people.

For this purpose, Pavlov suggested to further discuss the essence of the issue in all of its aspects. In his view, the attempts of Belgrade and Skopje to distort and falsify the past of the Bulgarian people had to be denounced and there should be a clear and convincing response was the Macedonian nation born and how it would develop further.

As a result of his recommendations the project was not approved but was subjected to further discussion and clarification of the positions.

At the Seventh Congress of the BCP, which de facto and de jure became a platform for the anti-Yugoslav sentiments among Bulgarian party activists in the person of Bojan Balgaranov, Dimitar Ganev, Enčo Staikov, Boris Taskov, Georgi Cankov, Valko Červenkov was leveled criticism against Yugoslav revisionism. Another major problem was their position on the Macedonian question (SK BKP, 1958, 189–247). Belgrade qualified the formally established at the Seventh Congress rejection of the “Macedonian nationality” as a new orientation of Bulgarian state policy.

The accusations of Belgrade were based on the statements of three responsible Bulgarian functionaries: the Secretary of the Blagoevgrad Regional Committee of the BCP Boris Vapcarov, the Secretary of the Petrich District Committee Goran Angelov and the Politburo member Dimitar Ganev. In his speech at the Congress the first of them emphasized the erroneous bourgeois-nationalist positions of the LCY on the Macedonian issue. He denied the existence of this issue in Bulgaria, because the Macedonians were related to the Bulgarian people through historical destiny, origin and history. In the same vein Goran Angelov pointed the belonging of the population of Pirin Macedonia to the Bulgarian nation by origin, history, mentality, customs, traditions and language. In the end Dimitar Ganev’s call is quite telling: “Skopje historians should be given a deserved response” (DAMVnR, 1/100/80).

Curiously enough, in view of the struggle of the two countries on the disputed issue, the issue was presented at a broader and nationally heterogeneous environment which was not directly related to its solution. That happened at the Forth Congress of Slavists held at the beginning of September 1958 in Moscow. As a reaction to the falsifications on the part of Yugoslavia related to the language and literature of the population in what was then Macedonia, Academician Emil Georgiev openly expressed the view that there was no Macedonian language and Macedonian literature, but they were an integral part of the Bulgarian language and literature. Yugoslav officials immediately tried to counter the Bulgarian delegate pointing to his past of one of the organizers during the war of the Bulgarian “occupation” University in Skopje, i.e. equating him with the pan-Bulgarian and fascist beliefs of that period (DAMVnR, 1/100/80).

The degree of tension on the complex Macedonian question was raised significantly in the fall and winter of 1958, when the two countries organized celebrations for several important anniversaries in their history.

For Yugoslavia such an important celebration was the 40th anniversary of the breakthrough on the Salonika Front in September 1958. The direct result on the Bulgarian state was the subsequent flooding of the Yugoslav and in particular the Skopje press with anti-Bulgarian articles and sharp statements by senior officials in federal Yugoslavia. The response of the Bulgarian state and party leadership was the handing of a memo

to the government of the FPRY on September 20, 1958, whose main aim was to put an end to the “unfriendly and hostile” campaign directed against the Bulgarian Communist Party, the Bulgarian government and the Bulgarian people (Narodna mladež, 20. 11. 1958, 4). The campaign did not stop but even intensified after the public speech of Dimitar Ganev delivered on September 21, 1958 in Razlog on the occasion of the 35th anniversary of the “September Uprising”. In his speech Ganev convincingly talked about the Macedonian language as an artificial, Serbianised and incomprehensible to the population in Vardar Macedonia, and even more so in the Pirin region of the PR of Bulgaria. The other, more important part of his speech was related to the denial of national individuality of the Macedonian people. This speech strongly affected the sensitivity of the Yugoslav side which subjected him to crossfire and “hitting back”.

In the article “On chauvinistic positions” published in *Nova Makedonija* on September 23, its author V. Kocев accused D. Ganev for his speech in *Razlog*, in which he made a comparison between the situation of the Macedonians in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. The article emphasized Ganev’s allegations that in Bulgaria nobody interfered with the individual citizen to say how he felt, whether Macedonian or Bulgarian, and that no one forced the Macedonians to speak an artificial and distorted language.

This theme was continued also by the Belgrade newspaper *Borba*. On September 24, in the article “On beaten tracks” the newspaper criticized the “chauvinistic” speech of Ganev, which denied both Macedonian individuality and Macedonian language. Yugoslavia sought an explanation why when this language was defined as a dialect of the Bulgarian, Radio Sofia and Radio Moscow gave regular emissions on it (DAMVnR, 1/100/80/19).

Another interested neighboring country – Greece, at that time was watching closely the relations between the FPRY and the PR of Bulgaria on the Macedonian issue. Its policy towards the population living in its northern territories had long taken the position of disregard and denial of its national rights, language and culture. The Greek state leadership defined that population as “slavophonic”, thus opposing to the Yugoslav and Bulgarian claims for its nationality.

On September 30, 1958 under the title “In Bulgaria rules hysteria on the Macedonian issue”, the Greek newspaper *Acropolis* presented the point of view of *The New York Times*, which was consistent with the position of Western policy on this issue for which it was extremely hard to come up with proper solution satisfying all the interested sides. According to *The New York Times* “the old ghost of the Macedonian question once again extended its shadow over the Balkans”. The strategy of the Greek side revolved around the idea to attack both Bulgaria and Yugoslavia when it was possible, with the

argument that it was associated with protection of the Greek territorial integrity.

The publications in the Yugoslav press seemed not to be enough for the higher Yugoslav party and state leadership. On October 14, 1958 the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Yugoslavia sent a verbal note to the Bulgarian government, which was directed particularly against the speech of E. Ganev, with the notion to criticize the Bulgarian cause and policy on the Macedonian issue. In Ganev’s speech the Yugoslavs saw danger of Bulgarian territorial aspirations towards the PR of Macedonia and the integrity of the FPRY, because of the promised “forthcoming liberation from the poverty and dead-end” where the then leaders of Yugoslavia had taken it. The note was supported on October 5 by the editorials of three main Yugoslav dailies *Borba*, *Politika* and *Nova Makedonija* directed against the intervention of the Bulgarian leadership in the internal affairs of Yugoslavia which threatened its territorial integrity.

At that time in Bulgaria were carried out the celebrations for the Kresna-Razlog Uprising. On October 15, 1958 Politburo convened to discuss and adopt a decision on the report of Todor Živkov “On the celebration of 80th anniversary of the Kresna Uprising and our attitude towards the chauvinistic and defamatory campaign against our party in Yugoslavia”. In the end was adopted decision № 250 of October 15: “The Macedonian question not to be raised and not to put emphasis on the Berlin Treaty, but to expose the chauvinistic campaign, which is carried out in Yugoslavia and the slander against our party” (CDA, f. 1b, op. 6, a. e. 3736, 1–2).

In order not to further exacerbate the relations between the two neighboring countries by the end of 1958 the Macedonian question was left in the background. The Bulgarian side did not seek its overall solution, but reconciled with protests and public outcry against aggressive Yugoslav actions backed by the speech of the leader of the Macedonian party Lazar Koliševski of November 2, 1958. In note-response of the Bulgarian government to the government of the FPRY of November 19 were rejected all charges on the part of Yugoslavia – for intervening in the internal affairs of the FPRY and the campaign in the PR of Bulgaria on the Macedonian issue. The BCP exposed its positions of a Marxist and international party, expressed in its desire for the existence of the PR of Macedonia and the Macedonian question to serve as a linkage for “merging” the interests of the FPRY and the PR of Bulgaria (Narodna mladež, 20. 11. 1958, 4).

The year 1959 followed the course of the preceding year. As regards the Macedonian question there was nothing new in the relationship between the two countries. The Yugoslav press continued with accusations against the aspirations of Sofia for violating the territorial integrity of Federal Yugoslavia, in particular the PR of Macedonia and denial of the existence of Macedonian population in the Pirin region of the PR of Bulgaria.

Bulgaria did not remain a passive observer of the Yugoslav charges. The newspaper *Pirinsko delo* on June 10 in an article entitled “On the slippery road of chauvinism and anti-communist hysteria”, qualified some government and political leaders in Yugoslavia and the PR of Macedonia respectively, in the following explicit way: “Such experienced chauvinists like Lazar Koliševski, Ljubčo Arsov, Strahil Gigov and Vera Aceva do not fail to vilify in their speeches the BCP and to accuse it of opportunism and bourgeois nationalism” (DAMVnR, 1/100/80/18/5).

At a meeting of the Politburo of the BCP held on October 20, 1960, on the second item of the agenda “On the resettlement in our country of Macedonians-political emigrants from the other socialist countries”, by decision № 224 was permitted their gradual migration to Bulgaria. During the discussions it was repeatedly pointed out that “almost all of them have a clear Bulgarian consciousness and consider Bulgaria their homeland” (CDA, f. 1b, op. 6, a. e. 4291, 1).

In the bilateral relations 1961 continued in the spirit of the previous years. Celebrations on the 20th anniversary since the beginning of the anti-fascist resistance in Macedonia were an occasion to increase anti-Bulgarian writings in the Yugoslav press. The “leading idea” in the speeches mostly of Skopje speakers at various meetings was that during the anti-Hitlerite armed struggle the BCP had stood on firm pan-Bulgarian and chauvinistic positions. A serious place in the campaign on this issue again had the Skopje newspaper *Nova Makedonija*, whose previous acts made the impression that it was assigned to lead systematic anti-Bulgarian campaign in the spirit of the “consistent Marxist-Leninist internationalism”.

In the same 1961 the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior prepared a report on the hostile and revisionist activities of the Yugoslav intelligence and propaganda, their campaign against Bulgaria and striving to stir up nationalist sentiments among the population in the Blagoevgrad District. It informed the CC of the BCP for the main purpose of the Yugoslavs – the inclusion of Blagoevgrad District in Vardar Macedonia. Information was given regarding the spread of revisionist literature, the brochure “The BCP and Pirin Macedonia”. In 1960 and 1961 were revealed four clandestine youth groups associated with the idea of joining Blagoevgrad district to Yugoslavia (CDA, f. 1b, op. 24, a. e. 272, 1–3).

It should be stated that in 1961 the Bulgarian party leadership showed the necessary initiative and took some important decisions on the complex Macedonian question. Such was also the decision to support the publishing of a newspaper of the Bulgarian-Macedonian emigration in Canada.

At the end of December 1961 aroused interest the report of Todor Pavlov, Chairman of the Committee for the celebration of Miladinovi brothers, which included some statements on the complex Macedonian question. He noted that on the issues related to “history and ideol-

ogy we have not made and will not make any concessions to Yugoslav revisionists”. In his view, no one could stop and prohibit the process of formation and further development of the new Macedonian culture and literature and the new Macedonian consciousness. His recommendations were in three major directions:

1. It should not be allowed to be falsified historical facts;
2. To prevent the crimes of Bulgarian chauvinists be attributed to the Bulgarian people, and
3. To emphasize always, especially at that particular time that the national question was a function of the social question, and not vice versa (Baev, 1994, 118–119).

It is evident that Pavlov continued to hold firmly to his views from three years before. This position on the national question was constantly present as a view in Bulgarian party leadership since the end of World War II on the basis of the Marxist-Leninist understanding of the construction of the social order in the PR of Bulgaria.

In the spirit of the new improvement of Soviet-Yugoslav relations in 1962, was prepared for publication *History of Yugoslavia* in two volumes, written in Moscow by Soviet historians. In this book there was a trend to protect the interests of the Yugoslav cause on the Macedonian issue. In this regard it is interesting to note the Politburo decision of August 23, 1962 to send a letter to the CC of the CPSU from authoritative Bulgarian historians with critical notes on Volume I and Volume II of that publication. Bulgarian historians expressed the opinion that the publishing of historical work on the development of the Macedonian population at that moment was not politically relevant and appropriate because that could cause additional difficulties in Bulgarian-Yugoslav relations. They supported that position with the arguments that the Yugoslavs and especially those in Skopje, proceeding from nationalist positions brutally falsified the history of the Macedonian people. According to them the facts showed that the solution of the national question in Vardar Macedonia at that point was made not on the basis of the Leninist principle of self-determination but was based on de-nationalizing policy. The purpose of the Yugoslav leadership was to resolve finally and fully the Macedonian issue in favor of one Balkan state – that of Yugoslavia.

Bulgarian historians were explicit: “We do not think that we will do the right and realistic thing, if we rise to the bait of the nationalists in Skopje and stir up endless quarrels on the Macedonian question.” That was so not only because at that point in the Balkans there were no actual conditions for the complete solution of this complex issue, but primarily because the main problem and goal in the Balkans was the strengthening of peaceful neighborly relations (Baev, 1994, 119–120).

In the survey report to the staff of the Embassy of the PR of Bulgaria in Belgrade on internal and foreign policies of Yugoslavia in 1962 the Ambassador in Belgrade Grudi Atanasov stated his views on the development of

Bulgarian-Yugoslav relations, in which he saw a substantial improvement. The Bulgarian Ambassador noted that of all Balkan issues for Yugoslavia most important was the Macedonian question, which many Yugoslavs considered to be mainly Yugoslav issue, as within the borders of Yugoslavia was created and existed to that day the PR of Macedonia. Proceeding from that notion, according to the Bulgarian ambassador the Yugoslavs assumed the right of defenders of the Macedonian population in Pirin and Aegean Macedonia and Macedonian emigrants in other countries.

“The improved atmosphere in the bilateral relations made some Yugoslavs start thinking again about a “Balkan Federation”. This thought was suggested by Edvard Kardelj and other Yugoslav leaders, to which the embassy opposed with the understanding that this issue has lost all relevance. The report also pointed out that the serious disruption in good neighborly relations in the course of the year again came from Skopje with unamiable materials against the PR of Bulgaria (CDA, f. 1b, op. 33, a. e. 1055, 5–7).

At the same time, Tito’s statement in 1962 that “Yugoslavia has resolved its national problem” manifested the desire the united federal Yugoslavia nationalities (Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, Muslims and all others) to embrace sincerely the Yugoslav idea and official propaganda line – all of them lived in brotherly solidarity under the name of “Yugoslavs” (Ridli, 1995, 451).

Turning point in the reconsideration of the Bulgarian position on the Macedonian question was the discussion on this topic at a special plenum of the CC of the BCP held on March 12, 1963. At this plenum, Todor Živkov paid special attention to his official meeting with Tito in January 1963, where tacit agreement was achieved the conflict issues not to be discussed openly. Živkov noted that once again in the discussions with the Yugoslav representatives the attention was focused not on the issues “that divide us, but those that unite us”. Both sides underlined the need to strengthen economic and all-round cooperation, specialization and cooperation of the two economies.

In his brief statement on the Macedonian issue at the plenum, Živkov emphasized several key points, such as: whether or not there was a Macedonian nation and the categorical rejection of Skopje falsifications for the existence of a Macedonian nation in the Middle Ages; for the so-called Macedonian literary language that was created in Skopje and the view that in the Middle Ages, modern and contemporary history – Macedonia existed only as a territorial and political concept.

Todor Živkov raised two major questions, to which if a solution was found, all the obstacles in the bilateral relations would be overcome: first – regarding the Macedonian question – Bulgaria recognized the objective establishment of the PR of Macedonia within the FPRY and accepted the formation of Macedonian national consciousness, but she was against its formation on anti-Bulgarian basis and secondly – the Bulgarian side protested against the estimates in the Yugoslav press that during and after the war, the BCP had carried out nationalist policy towards the Macedonian people.

Ultimately, the conclusions made by Bulgarian party leadership were divided into the following three concepts:

First – the existence of the Macedonian nation and the formation of Macedonian national consciousness to be acknowledged publicly and objectively;

Second, the population of the Pirin region was part of Bulgaria;

Third, it would not be correct to renounce the history of our nation (CDA, f. 1b, op. 5, a. e. 567, 268–269, 283–286).

This plenum marked the end of a long and painful period full of contradictions and hesitant steps towards the gradual overcoming of the existing scholastic and false positions on the national question in Bulgaria. The period after 1963 was extremely intensive in carrying out the cooperation between the PR of Bulgaria and the FPRY. The conflict Macedonian question was entering a new phase, characterized by numerous contacts at different levels for finding a mutually acceptable solution for both states.



BOLGARSKO-JUGOSLOVANSKI ODNOSI IN MAKEDONSKO VPRAŠANJE  
(1948–1963)

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## POVZETEK

Razvoj bolgarsko-jugoslovanskih odnosov po koncu druge svetovne vojne je težko obravnavati brez makedonskega vprašanja. Neuspeli poskus oblikovanja južnoslovanske federacije med Bolgarijo in Jugoslavijo (1944–1948) je za seboj pustil nerešeno makedonsko vprašanje, ki se je razplamtelo zlasti po sporu z Informbirojem. Destalinizacija in izboljšanje sovjetsko-jugoslovanskih odnosov po Stalinovi smrti sta pomenila pozitiven premik tudi v bolgarsko-jugoslovanskih odnosih. V letih 1955 in 1956 sta bolgarska partija in vlada storili korak k omilitvi svoje politike do makedonskega vprašanja ter jo začeli ocenjevati kot napačno, po vnovičnem poslabšanju odnosov med Beogradom in Moskvo v začetku leta 1957 in besnem napadu na jugoslovanski revizionizem pa so bolgarske oblasti spet zaostriale svoj odnos do makedonskega vprašanja. Po ponovni otoplitvi odnosov med Sovjetsko zvezo in Jugoslavijo v začetku šestdesetih let je bilo na marčnem plenumu bolgarske komunistične partije leta 1963 znova poudarjeno, da bolgarska politika do makedonskega vprašanja ni bila pravilna in da so potrebne spremembe. Ta plenum je zaznamoval konec dolgega in mučnega obdobja sporov in obotavljivih korakov k njihovem preseganju. Čas po letu 1963 je bil z vidika izboljšanja bolgarsko-jugoslovanskih odnosov zelo intenziven, makedonsko vprašanje pa je vstopilo v novo obdobje iskanja rešitev, sprejemljivih za obe strani.

**Ključne besede:** Bolgarija, Jugoslavia, zunanja politika, makedonsko vprašanje, Sovjetska zveza, južnoslovanska federacija

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