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## **THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION**

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The Macedonian question has at last reached the public and the press. We say 'at last', because this question is not a new problem. We heard it from some people from Macedonia as long as about ten years ago. We first considered the words of those young patriots...[...] of our not so serious disputes. We had also thought so until a year or two ago, when new discussions with some Macedonians showed us that the problem was not only vain words, but an idea that many would like to put into practice. And we were sorry and it was difficult for us to hear such words, because the problem seemed to us a highly delicate one, especially in the conditions in which we found ourselves.

Now this question has been brought to public attention owing to the carelessness of one of our brothers and now, whether we would like to or not, we have to state our opinion. We should never have spoken out on this question if it had existed in the domain of the textbooks only, because we do not see any harm in the desire of some people to teach their children in their fathers' dialect; on the contrary, we see in this a sign of awareness. Elementary education is fruitful only when it is done in the mother tongue, which the children understand. But the mistake is not to choose a way that would not lead to the, separation of the dialects but to their union and agreement. However wrong it is to teach the little Macedonians in the dialect of the High Bulgarians, it is just as wrong to split the language in the schools into various dialects, everyone following their own dialect and paying no attention to the others. In this case each dialect should have a literature of its own and never attain the stage it should have as the literature of a whole nation. There are differences in the dialects among all the European peoples, even far greater than ours; but not one of those peoples has ever thought of dividing the literary language into many dialects and literature. They have chosen a middle road and have adopted one literary language only, the one which was most advanced among them. We should have done this, too. We should have chosen one middle dialect from all

the others, which should be understandable in all the regions, and should have taught our children in it. This would be both just, reasonable and useful, because it would preserve the unity of our people. The latter condition only is sufficient to protect us from splitting our poor literature and to make us rise against those who want such a split. But when there are other aims involved as well in the split, aims tending to dismember our still disunified people, then everybody has the right to oppose such evil. It is obvious that some of our Macedonian brothers have such aims, which they hide under the veil of the language and its dialects; that is why we are taking the liberty of saying something about the Macedonian question. We have many times heard from the Macedonists that they are not Bulgarians but Macedonians, descendants of the Ancient Macedonians, and have always waited to hear some proofs of this, but have never heard them. The Macedonists have never shown us the bases of their attitude. They insist on their Macedonian origin, which they cannot prove in any satisfactory way...

But in fact the descent of the Macedonians from the Ancient Macedonians is highly unreliable speculation. Their view today can only be defended by the region where they have lived, and this is the most important thing. If the Ancient Macedonians lived in this same region, why should not the present inhabitants be of Macedonian blood? They are real Macedonians, conclude the Macedonists, comforted by their great discovery... We have also heard other arguments. Some Macedonists distinguish themselves from the Bulgarians upon another basis -- they are pure Slavs, while the Bulgarians are Tartars and so on... In order to give credibility to their arbitrary view, the Macedonists point out the difference between the Macedonian and High Bulgarian dialects, of which the former is closer to the Slav language while the latter is mixed with Tartarisms, etc.

We would not have liked to believe in the seriousness of such attitudes, as the reader would not like to either, but we had to believe when we saw with what persistence this attitude was defended by the Macedonists. Our words that the difference in the dialects proves nothing, that it is a consequence of historical circumstances and not of a different origin, these words were not of any help. The Macedonists strictly adhered to their standpoints. In general, the views of the Macedonists have neither maturity nor reliability. It is desirable to see their doctrine arranged in general form so that we can fully assess its grounds and its consequences. While we are waiting for this, we shall take the liberty of stating here some of the consequences that would result for our people and the Macedonists by the separation... We are convinced that the desire of the Macedonists should have other bases as well, and that there is a confusion

about the small inequality between the High and the Macedonian Bulgarians in number and development. Perhaps the Macedonists think that the High Bulgarians will always be prevalent in public affairs as more numerous and, more aware, and the Macedonians will remain second-rate citizens. That is exactly what the following words by the Macedonists mean: we have set ourselves apart from the Greeks, should we now become subjected to others? One simple circumstance, i.e., that the High Bulgarians have up to now written in their dialect without paying any attention to the Macedonian one, is considered by the Macedonians to be a sign of the "highness" of the High Bulgarians and of their tendency to command. But the real problem is far from this suggestion; we write in our dialect because it is what we know, and not out of any lack of esteem for the Macedonian one. Once we strengthen language study in our country and understand the need for a general literary language, we shall write with the greatest gratitude in the Macedonian dialect, if we find it good and useful, or we shall take from it what is necessary as supplementation. As far as the fear of the number of the High Bulgarians and their quicker process of awakening is concerned, it is not even worth mentioning, just as the father should not make any difference between his children. If some brothers should have become aware an hour before the others, it does not follow that they should be privileged. Our conclusion is that there is no reason for separation and that we should not separate if we love our people and what is good for them.