

# Macedonia at the Paris Peace Conference (1919)

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by **Alexandar Hristov** (*Macedonian Review*, 2/1981)

## Introduction

1. International law practice in Turkey during the last years of the 19th and the first decade of the 20th centuries shows that Turkey was more and more obliged to recognize de facto the existence of the Macedonian revolutionary organization that fought for separation of Macedonia and its becoming a new state on the Balkan.

Following its own political and governmental needs and interests, the Porte (Turkish government until 1923 - *translator's note*) in most cases tolerated the outside interference of the other Balkan governments. In some ways it also stimulated the infiltration of nationalistic detachments sent into Macedonia by these same countries to crack the National Liberation Movement of the Macedonian people. In order to prevent the spread of the Macedonian revolution, the governments of the great powers separately or all together in various ways urged the Porte to take measures for pacifying the country. They also did not want any territorial changes on the Balkan. As a result of these interventions Turkey made various international agreements in order to maintain status quo on the Balkan as well as to prevent the activities of the Macedonian revolutionary forces.

By accepting the interventions of these Balkan governments, Turkey was silently accepting the limitation of its own sovereignty. In fact, by tolerating the outside interventions in its inner social constitution, Turkey was trying to shelter itself from an even greater danger, the growing Macedonian revolutionary forces that threatened its social system and sovereignty. Turkey recognized that the Macedonian revolutionary forces had grown so strong that they seriously threatened the existence of Turkish rule over a very important part of its territory.

I think I have every reason to believe that this situation in international relations was created by the very existence of the Macedonian Inner Organization, which was never recognized by Turkey though it was present throughout the Turkish occupation of Macedonia.

From an international standpoint Macedonia did not enter into any direct relations with Turkey. Yet, the fact that at the insistence of some European countries Turkey reformed its governmental constitution in Macedonia shows that Turkey recognized the existence of the liberation movement of the Macedonian people. This movement tried to make Turkey accept the reality, and through its revolutionary activities tried to drive Turkish rule from the territory in which the Inner Organization was politically dominant.[1]

Contrary to the negotiations among the Balkan governments for creation of so-called "territorial interest zones" in Macedonia controlled by their own detachments which were to pave the way for their mutual division of Macedonia, the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization protected Macedonian territory from the attacks by the above-mentioned detachments and considered itself the sole representative body of the political sovereignty of Macedonia and its territory.[2] This shows that despite all the resistance it encountered, the liberation movement sought and usually found ways to acquire international recognition.

The road that the Macedonian Liberation Movement trod toward international recognition became wider and wider because the movement made great sacrifices and efforts on behalf of the fate of the Macedonian people. When setting up its aims it did its best to eliminate any outside intervention or interference. This ideological and political basis of the Macedonian Liberation Movement is best expressed by Dimo Hadzhidimov, who in one of his numerous articles says "... It (It stands for the Macedonian Inner Revolutionary Organization - A.H.) demands autonomy for its own existence and future, regardless of the aspirations and intentions of some other countries. This last demand was exactly the thing that did not go along with the Bulgarian official policy and its Macedonian collaborators and people who carried out its policy in practice..."[3]

The Inner Organization's program for giving autonomy to Macedonia overthrew the policy according to which Macedonia was to be divided into sections, annexed or occupied. Autonomy for Macedonia meant that Macedonia should be given the right to become a new national state. Accordingly, the Inner Organization laid the groundwork for establishing political interrelations with neighboring countries. The activities of the Organization to establish and determine foreign policy and attitudes towards the policy of certain Balkan states show that the Organization was also trying to attain its own place on an international level.

The governments of the other Balkan countries were strongly against Macedonia becoming a separate political unit, but their decisive resistance only shows that the Inner Organization more and more gently and elaborately established its relations with these same governments. The conditions and

circumstances under which they expressed and explained their demand that giving autonomy to Macedonia meant giving Macedonians the right for self-determination compelled the revolutionary forces to strengthen even more their political relations with the governments of the other countries.[4]

The Inner Organization program and the demands for establishing a Balkan Federation (to become an Eastern Federation later on) in which Macedonia would gain the status of a separate country forced the Organization to work for international recognition. Although the Inner Organization had to get its international recognition through armed struggle, it did achieve the right to participate in the negotiations with the other nations for creating the Federation.[5] But it was never recognized nor allowed to participate as an equal in the negotiations about the future of the Macedonian state. So the Inner Organization always remained outside all the negotiations held at international conferences which dealt directly with the future status of Macedonia as a state with its own jurisdiction.

Yet, as it will be proved later on in the text, the Inner Organization was present at these negotiations indirectly. This was particularly evident during the Paris Peace Conference held in 1919. There its request to participate in the talks concerning Macedonia was in vain although they concerned the most essential interests of the Macedonian nation.

However, all this proves that the other countries had always nourished the idea of recognizing the revolutionary struggle of the Macedonian people and supported its major aims. The very existence of this idea under revolutionary conditions and constant imperialistic threats to divide Macedonian territory is very important evidence that the Macedonians' struggle to gain national and social liberation and preserve its integrity was gaining recognition.

2. During the national liberation struggle, the Macedonian National Liberation Movement was negated by the other Balkan governments because they intended to annex certain Macedonian regions.[6] This is why recognition of the Macedonian revolutionaries' legal rights was of primary importance if their national liberation struggle was to succeed. For this purpose the leaders of the National Liberation Movement made special efforts to preserve the integrity of their struggle as well as to gain international recognition. Announcing its request for legal recognition in international affairs, the Macedonian Inner Revolutionary Organization (VMRO) established itself as the only organization on Macedonian territory with the legal right to lead the national liberation struggle of the Macedonian people. The Inner Organization's aims were to prevent the interventions of the other Balkan countries, to uncover their plan to infiltrate the National Liberation Movement, and to destroy their

intention to so weaken the movement that their imperialistic aims would be easier to accomplish.[7] The supreme right of the Inner Organization to lead and to choose the aims of the National Liberation Movement is directly connected with its request to represent the Macedonian nation in international relations.

In the history of Macedonia's National Liberation Movement these events raised very interesting legislative-theoretical questions about the legitimacy of a revolutionary movement whose purpose was to liberate the country and form a new state.

If legitimacy is understood in its more restricted sense, as an entity which represents the true aspirations of a nation in its struggle against foreign rule and slavery, then one cannot say that the National Liberation Movement led by the Inner Organization was the sole representative of revolutionary authority in Macedonia and the most vital interests of the Macedonian people. Thus, the Inner Organization, in the name of the enslaved nation, had the right to be the governing body and to represent certain legal rights of the whole nation. As a result of this, the National Liberation Movement rightfully denied the legal right of some other political organizations (especially the governments of the other Balkan countries) to represent the interests of the Macedonian people. Consequently the governments of the other Balkan countries lost the legal right to represent the Macedonian people in international affairs. Their intentions to usurp Macedonian territory turned them into aggressors instead of legal representatives of the Macedonian people. As a result of this, the Balkan countries refused to aid the rightful struggle of the Macedonian people. In fact, in specific historical situations they hindered Macedonia's revolutionary forces in their attempt to conclude successfully their struggle for liberation.

On the other hand, the Inner Organization in its liberation program announced new national values and requests designed to encourage the whole nation to take part in the struggle for liberation of the country. Announcing its request for creation of a new state on the Balkan which would serve as a foundation for broader federate relations among the Balkan states, the Inner Organization assembled all the social costs in the Macedonian social system at the time as well as all the nationalities that lived in Macedonia. It showed them the road towards solving the numerous economic, cultural, religious, social and political questions that existed among all of Macedonia's social classes.

The Inner Organization continuously strengthened and secured its legitimacy in the liberation movement through its revolutionary activities and unyielding struggle to preserve its integrity.[8] It fought, in particular, to overthrow Bulgaria's request for cooperation, because Bulgaria's obvious intention was to conquer Macedonia. It strengthened the cohesion among all the social classes in

Macedonian society. It worked to improve the economic conditions of the Macedonian peasants and tried to free them from exploitation and the high taxes imposed by the Turkish Beys. It could see the need to educate the masses in Macedonia and worked to secure unhindered operation of schools and other educational and cul-tural institutions. In the struggle against the spread of national intolerance kindled by the governments of the other Balkan countries (they even tried to infiltrate the National Liberation Movement itself) the Inner Organization undertook nationwide operations to uncover this foreign propaganda. In order to attain and preserve unity within the National Liberation Movement, the Inner Organization applied sanctions to those who abandoned the principal ideas of the revolutionary movement and supported the conquering aspirations of the other Balkan governments. In this context the Inner Organization's struggle against the activities of the Vrhovist's Organization in Sofia should be especially emphasized because the Vrhovists wanted to use the liberation struggle of the Macedonian people as a means for fulfilling Bulgarian aspirations toward Macedonia.[9]

In its decisions reached at various congresses and public meetings, the Inner Organization now very frequently and more openly claimed that it would not allow the Balkan states to annex Macedonia. In particular, it would not let the idea for creation of "Great Bulgaria" to infiltrate its own movement [10] because that would mean wiping Macedonia off the face of the earth. Thus the Balkan countries and their governments were losing their direct influence on the leadership of the Inner Organization. Increasing numbers of its members stuck to the original her ideas of the revolutionary movements.

These circumstances caused the other Balkan countries to intervene even more obviously in Macedonia's liberation movement. These interventions aimed to usurp the legitimate rights to represent the interests of the Macedonian nation as well as to overthrow the Inner Organization's influence over the course of events, especially those dealing with the future status of Macedonia as a state. They were simultaneously carried out via various institutions which insisted on their "historic rights" to participate in solving the Macedonian question, always following the nationalistic and conquering aspirations of their own countries.[11]

Under those conditions the Balkan interventions acquired characteristics of ideological and military aggression. So the resistance that those interventions had to face also acquired broader character and importance because it fought to preserve the essential interests of the Macedonian people.

3. According to international law, Balkan intervention in the National Liberation Movement in Macedonia did not qualify as interference in its

internal affairs. Thus, the demand of the Macedonian revolutionaries to prohibit these interventions requires a more detailed and profound analysis from the standpoint of international law.

It is a well-known fact that the Balkan interference in Macedonia's Liberation movement were deliberately aimed against the Macedonian people and their right to self-determination. Namely, all these governments, either separately or all together, intended to prevent the construction of a new Macedonian state in order to annex Macedonia and so enlarge their countries. (This the Balkan states set up in Turkey to function as their legal offices. For this purpose they also used the church chiefs, the commercial agencies, their diplomatic representatives, the political parties of the citizens and armed detachments. All these institutions was an alternative because none of these countries by itself could occupy, i.e. annex, the whole Macedonian territory).

For these reasons it was especially important to discover the essential characteristics not so much of the interventions of Balkan countries in Macedonia's liberation movement but of the resistance with which the Macedonian revolutionaries met these interventions. This question had importance and complexity that exceeded the definitions and terms created and accepted as doctrine in international law practice.

To be specific, in this case prohibiting intervention did not refer to interference of other countries in the interior state affairs of a country that had been already created and recognized as such. in this case there were no such countries, The revolutionary forces at this moment were struggling to separate Macedonia from the Turkish empire and make it a new state.

Balkan intervention, the purpose of which was to obstruct the birth of a new Macedonian state and thus deprive Macedonia of self-determination, was in fact a direct attack on the Macedonian liberation struggle and the fulfillment of the ultimate goal of the Macedonian people. The other Balkan countries' governments intensified their interference in the Macedonian Liberation Movement. This activity would prompt the Macedonian revolutionaries to demand that international law protect their right to self-determination as well as the territorial integrity of their land although Macedonia had not yet become a state. The Balkan countries were denied the right to interfere in the National Liberation Movement of the Macedonian people. The Macedonian revolutionary forces also deprived them of the legal right to represent Macedonia in international affairs by claiming their right to international

recognition as the country's legal representative body. The right of the Macedonian nation to self-determination guaranteed, to some extent, legal recognition of its National Liberation Movement; thus, it established itself as a real revolutionary force in world affairs.

Having acquired legal status as a representative body, the National Liberation Movement claimed, during the Ilinden Uprising, the right to wage a national liberation struggle and asked the great powers to regard the rebels as a military force. Therefore, in their Disciplinary Constitution the Macedonia rebels introduced fighting regulations that complied with the international civilian and military codes, particularly as regards the protection of Turkish civilians and foreign statesmen. [12]

The Inner Organization's determination to obtain the necessary legal authority in international affairs was very clearly expressed in its request to participate in all the international conferences which dealt with Macedonia's future status as a state.

According to its legal rights the Macedonian Inner Revolutionary Organization asked to participate in the signing of the Bucharest Peace Agreement. It rightfully deserved this right because it participated in the fight against the Turkish empire and played an important part in its withdrawal from Macedonia.[13]

## **I. The Basis in International Law for Presentation of Macedonia at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919**

In the international negotiations at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 the Macedonian Inner Revolutionary Organization played a very important role for the protection and recognition of the right of the Macedonian people to be internationally accepted. Other progressive Macedonian political groups from abroad contributed to this purpose, particularly the communities of the Macedonian students in Switzerland.[14]

As we said in the beginning, the reason for the requests of the Macedonian people for international recognition was their desire to form a sovereign state. The most important prerequisite in this matter was the struggle to acquire the right of self-determination and to found a state. Therefore, the Macedonian



progressive revolutionary organizations and movements during this period claimed that Macedonia had the right (despite the fact that this right was given only to a state) to enter into international law relations and to lead independent diplomatic negotiations, that is, to sign the international agreements at the Paris Peace Conference.

On the basis of these opinions the Inner Revolutionary Organization and the other progressive Macedonian groups raised, during the peace conference in Paris, two principal requests of special importance from an international law point of view.

The first request demanded that the conference accept the VMRO as having legitimate interests in solving the so-called Macedonian question and signing the international agreements regarding Macedonia. Their second request insisted that the Bulgarian representatives at the Peace Conference should not be allowed to represent Macedonia nor assume Macedonia's international law obligations.[\[15\]](#)

The request that the Macedonian nation must be represented at the Peace Conference by only the Macedonian Inner Revolutionary Organization was based on ".. the historical truth that only this organization is a loyal representative of all Macedonia (regardless of the different languages and different religions) and that the Organization is neither under Bulgarian nor any other political influence..." These words come from a document sent to the Peace Conference. Below is the full text:

"To his Excellency, Mr. Clemanceau, the President of the Council - Paris.  
I have the honor to express my loyalty as a delegate of the Macedonian Committee at the High Peace Conference and to protest against the speculations of certain persons who pretend to be talk-ing in the name of Macedonia. These persons are representatives of the so-called Executive Committee of the Macedonian Organizations. It will suffice to point out to Your Revered Excellency that Macedonian emigration into Bulgaria managed in 30 years to assemble a small group of bulgarized Macedonians who did not completely dedicate their efforts to the interests of their native country, but to Bulgaria instead. These people, who by the way are subject to suspicion in both countries are, as we like to call them, undecided. They suggested that delegates to the Conference should be Todor Aleksandrov and Alexandar Protogerov, both sworn friends of the Kaiser and Ferdinand and organizers of the Nish Massacre!

Of course, their corruption does its best to discredit once and forever the



state of affairs concerning Macedonian autonomy in front of the victor's.

I have the honor to inform you that the Macedonian Revolutionary Committees assembled in the 'Macedonian Inner Revolutionary Organization' founded in 1893 are the only Macedonian organizations free from Bulgarian or any other political influence and that only they loyally represent all of Macedonia, regardless of its different languages and religions.[16] That is why I have the honor to beg Your Excellency to receive me, in the name of neither Bulgaria nor the Bulgarians, that I may acquaint you with the wishes of the Macedonian people." [17]

## **II. The Committee for New Countries and its Role in Determining the Jurisdictional Position of Macedonia in International Relations**

The Committee for New Countries played an important role in the preparations for the international agreements. At the meetings it held, the Committee discussed questions concerning the future status of Macedonia as a legal state. It also developed two major opinions which were sent on later to the Peace Conference for perusal and final acceptance. According to the first opinion Macedonia was to be given autonomy within the Kingdom of SHS (Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenians - *translator's note*) According to the second opinion the so-called Macedonian question was to be handled together with the question of protecting the minorities (ethnic groups - *translator's note*) and the stipulations of which would guarantee the Macedonian population freedom and protection.

The committee also formulated a third and special opinion which suggested that the League of Nations introduce a special control in Macedonia "in order to protect the borders against oppression..."

The first opinion was introduced at the Peace Conference by the Italian delegation. The second was supported by the French delegation, which strongly protested against the idea of giving autonomy to Macedonia. The third opinion, which was meant to reconcile the previous two was expressed in the suggestions put forward by the English delegation.[18] Let us discuss more closely each of these opinions put forward by certain delegations to the Committee for New Countries and Protection of the Minorities.

For the very first time the question concerning the jurisdictional position of Macedonia was discussed by the Committee for New States during its meeting held on 10 June 1919.[19] At this meeting the Italian delegation suggested that a request to introduce a Special Administrative System in Macedonia should be put forward. The French delegation opposed this proposal. So it was agreed that

if the Italian delegation insisted on its suggestion, then it was to come up with a more definite proposal at the next meeting.[20]

At one of its later meetings the Committee thoroughly discussed the Italian proposal, which suggested that Macedonia be given autonomy within the framework of Yugoslavia; in other words, the Serbian government should allow Macedonia some kind of self-management.[21] The proposal asked Yugoslavia to allow the Macedonian territory, within the borders fixed by the Allied Forces and their followers, to become an autonomous unit within Yugoslavia, and to be given the right of self-management in accordance with Yugoslav unity.

Further on the proposal suggested that Macedonia should have its own assembly with responsibilities and duties regulated and fixed by the constitutional laws of the Yugoslav state. The governor of Macedonia was to be appointed by the Yugoslav government, but the governor was called to account by the autonomous Macedonian assembly.

The proposal also suggested that Yugoslavia should allow the Macedonian representatives to be selected from the population living on Macedonian territory, and that the Yugoslavian government should guarantee Macedonia equal representation in the legislative assembly of the Yugoslav state. Macedonia had its representatives in the assembly who were selected in accordance with the constitution of Yugoslavia. The representatives had no right to vote for those questions which were under the jurisdiction of Macedonia.[22]

But at the following meeting of the Committee, the Italian delegation put forward a new and modified proposal about the determination of the jurisdictional status of Macedonia as an autonomous region within Yugoslavia. Unlike the proposal put forward earlier, the new proposal suggested that Macedonia be given only local autonomy.[23]

The major characteristics and the jurisdictional status of this autonomy were more elaborately explained by the Italian delegation at one of the following meetings of the Committee. The Italian delegation also put forward a supplement to the proposal listing specific suggestions for designing the Macedonian local autonomy. The new proposal abandoned the previous request that Macedonia become a self-managed region enjoying all the possible privileges. It suggested religious and cultural autonomy as well as autonomy for the local administration, while the previous proposal contained elements for a political autonomy, of the internal self-governed region (with an independent

assembly) as well as of the central government (both having equal representation in the Yugoslavian assembly). The new proposal suggested introducing administrative self-management in Macedonia.

This so-called administrative autonomy was to be constituted as follows: first, the whole Macedonian territory would be divided into administrative units - regions governed by an administrative council; second, one central (general) council would be established, with its headquarters in Bitola, its rights and competence to be determined in the form of laws enacted by the Kingdom SHS; [24] third, every administrative region would have a supervisor appointed by the government of the SHS Kingdom and selected according to the size, and social status, nationality and religious conviction of the population.[25]

At one of its meetings during the debate concerning the future jurisdictional status of Macedonia as a state, the English representative in the Committee for New Countries put forward a proposal which suggested that the League of Nations send representatives to Macedonia "...to protect the border against oppression..."[26] This proposal was put forward to the Committee in opposition to the Italian proposal for defining the autonomous status of Macedonia.

The American and Japanese delegations voted for the English proposal with slight modification, so on the basis of the English proposal the jurisdictional status of Macedonia was more elaborately defined in a special supplement formulated during the Committee's meeting on 4 August. [27] This supplement suggested that the government of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenians should be compelled to appeal to the League of Nations to appoint proxies who would control its application of the general clauses for protecting the minorities in Macedonia.

According to the proposal, the proxy and his associates would have the status of diplomatic representatives and enjoy all diplomatic privileges. Even the government of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenians would be obliged to give him any necessary assistance in performing his duties. The mandate of the proxy of the League of Nations was to last for five years. when the mandate expired it could be extended by the council of the League of Nations, if the majority of its members voted for it.

As has been already said, three basic variants concerning the determination of the jurisdictional status of Macedonia as a state were put forward during the meeting of the Committee for New States. In the previous pages of this article we discussed the variant introduced by the English delegation and later accepted by the delegations from the United States of America and Japan. The French delegation refused to accept either the first or the second variant.

The members of the French delegation opposed giving autonomy to Macedonia (the proposal of the Italian delegation) they believed that it would create new difficulties in the country because the minorities (ethnic groups) would be exposed to various intrigues, making pacification of the country difficult. This attitude of the French delegates was based on the fact that they believed "... Macedonia had no clearly distinct nationality and that the population was grouped into parties which changed their disposition according to the circumstances...[28]" The French delegation objected to the English proposal on the grounds that it violated the sovereignty of the countries belonging to the SHS Kingdom.[29]

In their proposal the French delegation stated that the general clauses contained in the other agreements with the new countries for protecting the rights of the minorities satisfied the Macedonian interests. Therefore it was not necessary ("there's no reason") to create special clauses (the insertion of special clauses in the agreement with SHS Kingdom was in question - A.H.).[30]

Despite the fact that the so-called Macedonian question was present throughout the work of the Committee for New Countries, i.e. the Peace Conference, it was not carried beyond the discussion concerning the rights for protecting the minorities. This idea was dominant in all the documents brought to the meetings of the Committee for New Countries. It would finally become a starting point in the jurisdictional status of Macedonia and in the international agreements concerning the Macedonian territories annexed by Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece. All these agreements contain the same clause with only slight modifications about which we will talk later on.

On the basis of this attitude toward the jurisdictional position of Macedonia, the Conference refused to deal with the idea for uniting all Macedonian territories into a geopolitical and economic unit. In other words, when debating the position of Macedonia, the Conference recognized the division of the Macedonian territories among the other Balkan countries as being a historic truth, as being something which had been agreed to at the meetings of the Balkan countries. Therefore, the Conference did not want to use the unification of Macedonian territories as a starting point in determining the jurisdictional status of Macedonia in the aftermath of World War I.

The Italian proposal for local autonomy in Macedonia within the framework of the newly created Yugoslavian state was nothing but *via facti* acceptance of the division of Macedonia and its territory. With this proposal the Italian delegation recognized and accepted the attitude of the Balkan countries, who claimed that if the question concerning the unification of Macedonia was put on

the program and discussed during the Peace Conference it would violate their sovereignty.[31]

Special clauses concerning Macedonia suggested in the English delegation's proposal and inserted into the peace agreements could not radically change the state of affairs nor hide the Balkan countries' intentions to divide Macedonia and its territories among themselves. The special clauses referring to the League of Nations representative, who was to make sure that the SHS Kingdom performed its obligation toward Macedonia, were suggested by the English delegation as a result of the pressure of public opinion throughout the world, particularly from the well-known English public workers who insisted that the solution of the Macedonian question must be grounded in the right to self-determination.

As a result of all this we can say that the Peace Conference did not solve the Macedonian question. On the contrary, the question was treated in a manner that made it even more difficult to throw light on all of its characteristics - historical, ethnic and national - from an international jurisdictional point of view.

By allowing some parts of Macedonian territory to be annexed by neighboring countries, the Peace Conference did not answer the Macedonian question, and it continued to cause a great many disagreements and conflicts on the Balkan peninsula. The previously performed division of Macedonia and its territory by the Balkan allies had an imperceptibly bad effect on the economic, national, cultural and educational progress of Macedonia. The Macedonian people could never accept the division of Macedonia into three parts, so nobody asked for its opinion nor its consent to the international agreements calling for its division.[32]

The Italian proposal for an autonomous Macedonia was inappropriate because it neglected the most essential interests of the Macedonian nation. The English proposal for protecting the rights of the minorities in Macedonia contained many errors, unclear points and inconsistencies, and was thus inadequate.

The request for giving autonomy to Macedonia was inconsistent because it was sent only to the government of the SHS Kingdom and not to the Bulgarian or Greek governments. This indicates that the proposal for an autonomous Macedonia within the framework of the new Yugoslavian state did not follow the principle of self-determination for every nation. On the contrary, it followed certain (ad hoc) and clearly defined interests of this or that country which could influence the course of the negotiations at the international conference. As a result of this, the Italian delegation very quickly abandoned their request for giving complete autonomy to Macedonia and replaced it with another request

for local administration, that is, local autonomy, in Macedonia.

The English proposal for introducing special clauses concerning the protection of the rights of the minorities in Macedonia is inconsistent because it does not specify which minority is in question. The international negotiations at the Peace Conference concerning the protection of the rights of the minorities began to sound as if the Bulgarian minority was in question. (In fact, it was the Macedonian population that was in question, but the other nationalities who lived in Macedonia should have been included, as well).

This attitude toward the question concerning the protection of the rights of the minorities suited Bulgarian ends. Bulgaria made efforts to have the Macedonian question treated similarly in the international negotiations. This resulted in the emergence of a new irredentism toward the Macedonian people and represented a permanent threat to the peace in this part of the world.[33]

During the international negotiations at the Peace Conference the Macedonian question was identified and treated under the formula for protecting the rights of the minorities.[34] So the Peace Conference reduced the Macedonian question to those points of the agreement which concerned the right of option (the right of emigrating as for example between Bulgaria and Greece), the right of migrating, the question of reparation and reciprocal stimulations.[35] The Bulgarian diplomats at the Paris Peace Conference (as on many other occasions) tried to justify their old belief that Macedonia was part of the Bulgarian territory populated by Bulgarians. On the basis of this, Bulgaria claimed its right to interfere in the negotiations concerning Macedonia. The actual reason was Bulgaria's wish to annex either all of Macedonia or certain Macedonian regions.

But Bulgaria's big ideas for creating a Great Bulgaria couldn't penetrate the negotiations at the Peace Conference because Bulgaria had been a member of the Central Forces; in other words, it was on the side of the defeated coalition. As a result of this, Bulgarian diplomacy in the course of the negotiations used other ideas to justify the main theory that Macedonia was part of Bulgaria. Namely, Bulgarian diplomacy demanded that the population living in those parts of Macedonia that were to be annexed to Greece and SHS Kingdom should be treated as a Bulgarian minority.

At the Peace Conference Bulgaria tried to explain and justify this demand before the Committee for New Countries when the question concerning the protection of the minorities was on the program. On that occasion Bulgaria put forth its hypothesis that it was Bulgaria's moral right and obligation to support and protect the interests of its fellow citizens living outside its borders.

Thus the Bulgarian delegation expressed and explained their opinion



concerning the protection of the minorities in a written document that reads as follows: "... If the territorial decision (that is, the decision to allow Bulgaria to annex Macedonia) for which Bulgaria claims to have an indisputable right is not accepted, then the Bulgarian delegation is convinced that the protection of the minorities living in provinces annexed to neighboring countries would not slacken the emigration to Bulgaria. It can be decreased as Bulgaria proposes if the emigrants are guaranteed the right of option within three years to return to their homes.[36] The Macedonians could accept neither of the Bulgarian proposals put forward at the Peace Conference because they prevented the fulfillment of their legitimate national interests.

### **III. The Macedonian Revolutionary Movement's Resistance Against the Decisions of the Peace Conference**

The Bulgarian activities at the Peace Conference in Paris could not but meet with opposition from the Macedonian revolutionary organization since their purpose was to thwart the interests of the Macedonian nation. The Macedonian revolutionary organization expressed this resistance in its request forbidding the Bulgarian delegation to represent the interests of the Macedonian nation at the Peace Conference.

On the basis of Macedonia's indisputable right to self-determination, the true followers of the revolutionary movement led by the original organization VMRO (Inner Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) sent a memoir to the Bulgarian authorities denying the Bulgarian delegation the right to represent the Macedonian nation at the Peace Conference. The introduction to this document refers to the situation in Macedonia after the war. It reads- "In these crucial days Macedonia has the right to lift its voice for liberation, for its freedom. Macedonia lifts its voice before the whole world and before the Bulgarian people and their authorities."

The document stated that Macedonia should become an independent state within its original geographic borders in order to protect its people from a new type of political oppression. Furthermore, all the nationalities living on Macedonian soil, no matter how numerous, should be given equal rights, and the neutrality of Macedonia should be protected by the League of Nations. It also stated that the countries that signed this document did everything they could to inform the public opinion throughout the world about the unification of all Macedonian territories.



This was done just before the beginning of the Peace Conference in Paris. The countries that signed the document claimed that these ideas would prevail at the Peace Conference because they were supported by genuine arguments, unless "... the idea about human rights is crossed out at the Peace Conference and crude force wins, resulting in the introduction of rule by force..."

The document stated that in establishing the future status of Macedonia one must not apply the right of force; that is, one must not follow the right of the winner and must not use crude force because the idea about an independent Macedonia had been working its way for a long time bringing peace and understanding among the nations living on the Balkan peninsula.

This document also accused the Bulgarian authorities of not giving their support to this idea, of taking a different road toward solving the so-called Macedonian question. "... That road (the road followed by the Bulgarian authorities) very clearly and distinctly leads toward the erasing of the very name of Macedonia as a historic fact as well as toward the destruction of the Macedonian political union and its future existence..." The countries that signed the document believed that they would successfully resist and oppose both the Serbian and Greek aspirations toward certain Macedonian regions because they were convinced that "in spite of the crude force at the Peace Conference, justice, to a certain degree, would also dominate." "But for successful resistance against these aspirations it was necessary that the Bulgarian government change its attitude concerning the solution of the problems that pertain to Macedonia." This is said in the document.

In the document are also given the reasons for sending this appeal to the Bulgarian government and the Bulgarian general public. At the same time the document explains why this appeal had not been sent earlier. It states that the "Temporary Representative Body of VMRO" feared that their appeal might have appeared to interfere in both the internal affairs of Bulgaria as well as in its foreign policy. It also said that the Temporary Representative Government of VMRO believed that "... Bulgaria was in the process of turning away from its earlier policies which had not only plunged it into catastrophe but had brought total collapse of Macedonia as a state and nation."

The Temporary Representative Government of VMRO openly attacks, in the document, the Bulgarian government and its attitude toward the Macedonian question. The Bulgarian government strongly opposed the idea for independent Macedonia. "With such an attitude," the document states, "the Bulgarian government aids the obvious Serbian and Greek intention to reinforce and strengthen their rule over foreign territories and foreign nations." At the same time the Temporary Representative Government of VMRO raised the question:

"why does the Bulgarian government not want to accept the idea for giving autonomy to Macedonia, for it is obliged to give this concept its frank and unreserved support."

In order to support this policy, the Temporary Representative Government (Body) of VMRO insisted that the Bulgarian government should make a solemn promise at the Peace Conference and to the whole world that Bulgarian nationalistic aspirations would be fulfilled if a separate political unit were created on the Balkan and guaranteed international protection against future territorial encroachments from outside.

The document also states that the Macedonian people could not understand why the Bulgarian government persistently considered the Macedonian question from the aspect of some kind of "national unity" because this Bulgarian attitude did not lead to any national unity at all. On the contrary, it contributed to the weakening of the moral aspect of the idea for an independent Macedonia.

Pointing out that in this way the Bulgarian government was continuing its old policy of dividing Macedonian territory and destroying the unity of the Macedonian people, the memoir emphasized that the Bulgarian government, as a government which fought for "nationalism, unity and for the freedom and integrity of the Bulgarian tribe," threw the Macedonian people into slavery and disgrace because it wanted to occupy a part of Macedonia. So the Bulgarian government was against the idea of giving Macedonia status as an independent, sovereign state.

In the conclusion of the memoir, the Temporary Representative Government of VMRO warns the Bulgarian government that it will strongly oppose Bulgaria's intention to represent the Macedonian nation at the Peace Conference. At the same time, by doing this the Temporary Representative Government of VMRO states that it will work for the creation of an independent Macedonia and for the protection of its territorial integrity.[\[37\]](#)

**2.** The Seres Revolutionary Branch of VMRO, which strongly supported the original VMRO organization's aspirations for an independent Macedonia and its request for a Peace Conference immediately after the end of the First World War, published a declaration of the fundamentals for the constitution of the new Macedonian state.

The starting point in the declaration was the request for giving Macedonia

complete territorial integrity and for making it a republic much like the Swiss Federative Republic. The declaration claims that in this way "... the Balkan countries, motivated by their imperialistic interests, will not be able to conquer foreign territories nor impose their authority on other nations..."

Emphasizing the nation's right of self-determination and giving its support to the idea for constitution of a Macedonian state within its natural, ethnographic and geopolitical borders, the declaration very determinedly opposes the idea for dividing Macedonia because "the division of Macedonia will create a precedent for every Balkan state to occupy foreign territories, to enlarge, geographically and economically, their own territories and states."

The declaration points out that "the very act of dividing Macedonian land, an act which is not and can never be in accord either with the national principle or with the real state of affairs from a geographic point of view, will represent a first sign of infidelity in their relations (the relations between the Balkan states - A.H.). As a result of it the Balkan countries will not give each other a helping hand unless they outlive their blood shedding conflicts and rivalries. This can be done only with the triumph of the republican democracy."

Following the particular interests of the Macedonian people for the constitution of a Macedonian state, the declaration claims that "neither the Bulgarian, Serbian nor Greek state policies have anything to do with the Macedonian question because Macedonians, being a separate nation, have their own right to take care of their country and their own fate..." In this way the authors of the declaration increasingly emphasized the need for protecting Macedonia's particular national interests from the conquering aspirations of the other Balkan countries.

The declaration carefully exposes the conquering plans of the Balkan countries toward Macedonia. It reveals their nationalistic policies that prevented Macedonia from attaining its own right of self-determination. Thus, the declaration states that "... these ideas (the ideas of political nationalism and national unity - A.H.) of the Balkan countries went beyond their original purpose as well as their purpose for national self-determination and unity, and now they actually expressed the Balkan countries' aspirations for occupying foreign countries regardless of the nationalities that inhabited these countries." "Furthermore, this nationalistic goal of the Balkan countries to attain political and economic hegemony on the Balkans plunged them into deep antagonism and conflicts that always end in nothing but war."

Pointing out the fact that in that "bloody and terrible war" Macedonia was oppressed and dominated, forced to make great sacrifices and to suffer, the authors of the declaration insist that the Balkan countries should accept the idea for creation of an independent Macedonian state because it is the only safe way to secure a permanent peace on the Balkan peninsula.[38]

3. The General Council of all the Macedonian Communities in Switzerland sent an appeal to the Peace Conference in which they insisted on allowing Macedonia to be represented at the Conference by its own delegates. And it also stated that the so-called right of the conqueror could not be applied to Macedonia (its application to the Macedonians was condemned by the Allied Forces themselves) because the Macedonians "gave holy and priceless examples of their heroism and love for freedom during the wars they fought against their enemies in the past. [39]

Thus, the telegram that the General Council of the Macedonian Communities sent on 23 February 1919 to the secretariat of the English delegation at the Paris Peace Conference said:

"Regarding the explanations given by the prime ministers, referring to the Serbian and Greek territorial requests, the General Council of all the Macedonian Communities in Switzerland once again takes the liberty to appeal to the esteemed Peace Conference to let the Macedonian nation determine and define its own future according to the principle that no nation will ever put up with foreign rule if it is harmful and unprofitable. We sincerely believe that the Paris Agreement signed in 1919 will be as just Macedonia as to the other nations.

The Macedonians, who have already given worthy evidence of their bravery and their love for freedom during past wars against their enemies, cannot be subjected to the right of the conqueror (occupier), a right condemned even by the Allied Forces themselves. If this second principle is not followed, the freedom fight will inevitably continue.

We believe that Their Excellencies Mr. Venizelos and Mr. Pashich, who willingly gave the nation the right of self-determination proclaimed and acknowledged by the Allied Forces, will, by no means, deny the Macedonian people their right to determine their own future existence. The errors in a few past agreements referring to Macedonia cost the Macedonian people many tears and much bloodshed.

So the Peace Conference is obliged to destroy the memories of those events and to prevent more tragedies by giving the Macedonian people what they want, that is, their holy right to decide their own future. Hoping that you will support our legitimate requests at the Peace Conference, we remain your most devoted and obedient servants."

The numerous demarches, appeals, memorandums and declarations put forward at the Peace Conference by the Macedonian communities in Switzerland have one thing in common: their starting point is their request for giving the Macedonian nation the right of self-determination.

In its memorandum sent on 11 January 1919 to Arthur Balfur, Great Britain's Foreign Secretary, the General Council of the Macedonian Communities in Switzerland insists on giving the Macedonian people their right of self-determination. It states:

"... First of all we talked about the difficulties and the suffer that the Macedonians had to put up with during their freedom fight, so is it not evident that the Macedonians deserve to be guaranteed the right to decide for themselves their fate? This privilege was guaranteed, for example, to the Croats, Dalmatians, Slovenians, Germans, Arabs and other nations. Why must Macedonians be treated as slaves by neighboring countries? We Macedonians believe that the great democratic ideals brought by the 20th century will help us in our fight for the right of self-determination.

We not only demand our right, but feel it also our most crucial duty to make sure that our voice is heard before they decide our future existence.

We, the General Council of the Macedonian Communities in Switzerland are fully convinced that a just and permanent solution to the Macedonian question can be reached only if the Macedonian nation is given the opportunity to declare freely its will concerning the future form of its constitutional system.

This can be attained by the following actions:

1. By the occupation of the country by the American, French, English and Italian forces;

2. By allowing all the Macedonian refugees, regardless of race or religion, to return in peace to their homes and to take part in organizing and managing the state affairs of the country;

3. By handing the local administration of Macedonia over to the local population, controlled by the occupying armies.

Strongly believing that the decisions of the next Peace Conference will be based on real facts, justice and impartiality, we are pleased to leave our fate in the hands of the Peace Conference members. We take this opportunity to express our hopes that the Peace Conference will succeed in its epochal project" [40]

The Macedonian revolutionaries connected their right to represent their country in international relations, particularly in the Peace Agreement negotiations in Paris, with their demand for forbidding the other countries to interfere in solving the so-called Macedonian question.

The other political groups and factions of Macedonian intellectuals from abroad carried out similar activities. They not only denied Bulgaria's right to represent the interests of Macedonia at the Peace Conference in Paris, but they also openly attacked Bulgaria because of its attitude toward protecting minorities. It wanted to turn the Macedonians into a weapon of the new irredentism, thus making the Macedonians a in the hands of imperialistic policy toward Macedonia.[41] Thus, in a demarche presented to the Peace Conference; the Macedonian students from Switzerland wrote:

"We do not want to become a weapon of Bulgarian irredentism in Macedonia, because Macedonia has never been a part of the present Bulgarian kingdom. The Bulgarian diplomats who are partly responsible for the tragedy of the Macedonian nation are neither competent nor rightful representatives of our interests. " [42]

In this same document the General Council of the Macedonian students also presented a new proposal concerning the future legal status of Macedonia as an independent state. Namely, in the document it insisted on giving Macedonia autonomy within the framework of Yugoslavia. It also protested as follows the decisions that sanctioned the division of Macedonia:

"We protest loudly against dividing our country, and we declare that we shall accept no solution to the Macedonian question that does not give Macedonia

the right to determine freely its own future. Macedonia seeks a solution that would allow it independent status, similar to Switzerland's under the protectorate of one of the impartial powers. By dividing Macedonia, the Peace Conference will be fully responsible for any new conflicts and wars that will erupt on the Balkan Peninsula.

Since 1912 Macedonians have suffered the terrible bondage imposed by the Bulgarian and Serbian authorities which successfully replaced one another. The Macedonian nation will no longer put up with this martyrdom which, it appears the Peace Conference would make everlasting. We are determined to continue our struggle for Macedonian independence using all available means. "[43]

Was the Peace Conference prepared to set a precedent and allow the real representatives of the Macedonian nation to take part in its work? On the basis of which international law could the Peace Conference turn down the Macedonian revolutionaries' request for allowing their delegates to demand Macedonia's right to self-determination and to put forward the request concerning the legal status of Macedonia as an independent state?

At the time of the Peace Conference, international law did not recognize the principle of self-determination as an approved and accepted right of every nation. At the peace conference it was recognized as being more or less a political principle and applied only in cases when it contributed to the interests of the major powers. As a result, international law neither accepted nor supported the idea that a nation at any given time could acquire a certain degree of recognition by international law and so enjoy certain privileges regardless of whether or not it was an independent state.

Until the Second World War, the opinion that a country's sovereignty was the basis for its other major rights, principles and obligations prevailed. After the Second World War the opinion that nations are recognized from an international law point of view became more prevalent. In other words, as some law theoreticians remarked, something new was happening in international law theory and practice. It is believed that the declaration contained elements that indicate this tendency in the development of international law because now not only countries but nations as well were under protection.

The international law theory also states the following:

"If the thesis is accepted which makes sovereignty the basis of the whole international law structure, then this sovereignty must be understood in a larger and more democratic sense than its classic label "state" conveys. In this case



sovereignty may cover some elements of a nation's right to self-determination, and the state and its nationalities are not to interfere in one another affairs."

The mutual conflicts and the concessions that the delegations made to one another in order to fulfill their countries' imperialistic aspirations and create spheres of influence prevented the spirit of the principle of equality and the right of self-determination of these nations present at the Peace Conference. In fact, as far as Macedonia was concerned, "the spirit of conspiratorial silence prevailed. Refusing to hear the requests of the delegates who were the real representatives of the Macedonian nation, the Peace Conference could not bear to hear ..... the sound of weeping coming from this unhappy country.."[44]

#### **IV. The Right of the Minorities in Paris and other International Treaties**

One very important question concerning the status of the minorities and their rights in those countries that signed the Paris Peace Agreement was regulated by special international acts which were actually an annex to the question.[45] The winning armies and their allies such as Greece, Romania and Yugoslavia signed a peace agreement with the defeated countries of Bulgaria, Austria-Hungary and Turkey. This agreement regulated the status of the minorities. All international laws contained the same texts, as far as the rights of the minorities were concerned. Of all these international acts the St. Germain and Neilly treaties (September 10, 1919) are most interesting for us.[46]

These international acts contain the main principles regarding the status of the minorities living in those countries referred to. The countries that signed the agreement and guaranteed certain rights to the minorities were compelled to make sure that their constitutional laws, their political activities and their jurisdiction in general would not stand in opposition to the principles given in the above named international acts. According to these international acts, the countries that signed the agreements would not have any internal jurisdiction over the clauses which referred to the minorities.

The international acts concerning the rights of the minorities did not specify which minorities they referred to. They did not state which nationalities were in question nor in which country they lived. So the texts of these international acts indicate that every country was to formulate its own laws regarding nationalities on its territory, determine where they lived and what their ethnic identity was. If we interpret the clauses of these international acts referring to the rights of the minorities, we shall see that the conditions a population had to fulfill in order to be classified as a minority were very vague. It was all up to each country that signed the treaty to decide whether an ethnic group would be

so

classified.

The main principles found in these international agreements about the rights of the minorities can be classified into several major groups. To the first group belong the civil rights of the minorities, the rights that they enjoy as subjects of a particular country. Among these rights belong the right to protect life and freedom, the right to hold public office and the right to be self-employed. In other words, they were given all political and civil rights. The rights found in these international treaties refer to all subjects "...regardless of their origins, nationality, race, language or religious conviction..."

In the second group of rights belong those referring to the freedom of using the native language in publication, that is in the press, in professional communication and in public meetings. The international treaties (Neilly and St. Germain) state this right as follows: "There must be absolutely no prohibition of the use of any language spoken by the different nationalities living in SHS Kingdom." (Art. no.3 of St. Germain Treaty) The Neilly Treaty contains a similar paragraph.

The countries that signed these treaties pledged themselves to present no obstacles to the use of any language different from the official one. They were also obligated to help the minorities in using their own language, particularly in court.

The clauses of these international treaties also provided various exemptions, such as allowing the children of those citizens who spoke different language, different from the Serbo-Croat and Bulgarian to use their native language in school.

In the third group of rights concerning members of the minorities belong those rights which allow the citizens of ethnic, religious or language minorities to establish and manage, at their own expense, various charitable, religious and social institutions, schools and other institutions. According to these treaties the members of the minorities would have the right to use some public funds from the state budget and the district budgets to invest in education and other religious and charitable institutions.

These international treaties stated that the countries that signed the treaty were given certain obligations which could not be changed without approval of the majority of the League of Nations' Council. In effect, then, the rights of the minorities were guaranteed and protected by the League of Nations. The clauses in these treaties provided that every member of the League of Nations had the right to inform the Council if it discovered that these obligations were

not respected. The Council, in turn, had the power to undertake certain measures to protect these rights.[47]

On the basis of these international treaties, Macedonians had the right to request recognition as a minority and to enjoy the rights granted to minorities. The Macedonians had their own native language that differed from the official languages used in the SHS Kingdom, Greece and Bulgaria. Because of this fact, at this point two questions can be asked: whether any of the countries that signed these international acts recognized the Macedonians as a minority; and whether Macedonia and its annexed territories intended to use the main principles of these international acts in obtaining minority status.

Before trying to answer these questions, we should look at some regulations in the peace treaty between Greece and Bulgaria signed at Sev(?). This treaty contains two decrees which refer to the minorities covered by the St. Germain and Neilly treaties. It also contains decrees which regulate the right of option (emigration). "The Bulgarians" living in Macedonia, Western Thrace and Greece were given the opportunity to emigrate to Bulgaria "on a voluntary basis." [48]

## **V. First Attempts in Recognizing the Macedonian Minority**

The first campaigns aimed at recognizing and affirming the Macedonian minority appeared in Bulgaria, Greece, Albania and later on in the SHS Kingdom between the two world wars. These manifestations were most clearly expressed in the declaration issued by a group of Macedonian representatives from the part of Macedonia under Bulgarian authority (Pirin Macedonia).

The very act of constituting this group "... as being an independent Macedonian parliamentary group operating within the limits of a legal campaign..." indicates that this was not a formal act of constituting one common party in the parliamentary system of parties. The constitution of this party was proof of the search for special forms of activities aimed at attaining Macedonia's right to self-determination. Moreover, the constitution of this parliamentary group in the Assembly of Bulgaria, the sovereignty of which stretched over part of Macedonian territory, shows that there were elements that requested a special status for the Macedonian territory under Bulgarian authority.

That is why this declaration with which the parliamentary group appeared before the Bulgarian public proclaimed certain basic ideas concerning the future internal make-up of the Bulgarian state. At the same time it expressed the conditions under which this parliamentary group was prepared to cooperate with the Bulgarian government. Because of this the declaration itself contains

some very important elements for regulating future relations between Bulgaria and the part of Macedonia which was under Bulgarian authority.

In its declaration the Macedonian parliamentary group claimed that it would give a vote of confidence only to a Bulgarian government that supported the rights of the working class, both from the cities and villages, a government that could guarantee democratic privileges such as personal integrity, freedom of speech and press, the right to organize meetings and join various organizations, the right of political asylum for immigrants from the occupied countries and nations and so forth.

The Macedonian parliamentary group pointed out in particular that it would give its vote of confidence to "...the Bulgarian government that would break the chains of slavery created by the Paris Peace Treaty and introduce the right of national self-determination..."

In its declaration the Macedonian parliamentary group protested against the government's domestic policy "... which suspends the most elementary democratic principles such as the freedom of personal integrity, of speech, thought and conviction."

The group also protested the "unlawful imprisonment and internment of hundreds of Macedonians in Bulgaria as well as the ban placed on the Macedonian emigration press in Bulgaria." It concluded that "... these measures make the Bulgarian government an enemy to the Macedonian nation and its liberation movement."

The representatives of the Macedonian emigration and the Macedonian people who lived on Macedonian territory under Bulgarian authority were determined, through a legal campaign which would not collide with the existing constitutional law of Bulgaria, to obtain the legal right to represent the interests of the Macedonian nation. The declaration distinguished very distinctly the imperialistic Bulgarian interests from the interests of the Macedonian nation. It also gave details about the Bulgarian foreign policy and condemned it as being against the interests of the nation. It accused the Bulgarian government of making various treaties with the governments of the neighboring countries for dividing Macedonia, which would plunge the Macedonian nation into new hazards. The Macedonian Parliamentary Group also accused the Bulgarian government of refusing to establish diplomatic relations with Albania, Turkey, and Russia because it was against the creation of a Balkan Federation, which alone could fairly and safely resolve the so called Balkan question.

At the end of the Declaration it is emphasized that the Macedonian Parliamentary Group would cooperate with all the political parties in the

Parliament if doing so contributed to the "liberation of Macedonia."[\[49\]](#)

The Macedonian emigrants belonging to the Ilinden Organization sent the Bulgarian government in 1934 a memorandum protesting its decisions to ban the work of the Organization and the publication of its newspapers. In this memorandum the representatives of the Macedonian political emigrants in Bulgaria expressed their belief that this action destroyed the rights given to Macedonia by the international peace agreements. They also pointed out that their organization was legal and that their work did not conflict with the country's constitution.

Explaining and justifying their right to create an organization and to publish their own newspapers, the authors of this document pointed out in the introduction that the Bulgarian government bore the responsibility for solving the historic Macedonian question. The Macedonian emigrants of the Ilinden Organization further remarked that every Bulgarian government, along with the other Balkan governments, had always wanted to divide Macedonian territory into spheres of influence or annex certain parts of it. The document concludes that, as a result of this tendency, "... those governments whose activities are against the interests of the Macedonian nation have no right to act as if they were initiators in solving the Macedonian question."

The memorandum also draws another conclusion: "The Macedonian emigration, scattered in Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and America, cannot follow the political ideals of the country inhabited at the moment, although in many cases the Macedonian emigration was a united organization. On the contrary, it follows and propagates its own political ideals and protects them with every possible legal means."

Explaining the conditions in which the Macedonian emigration lived and worked in the given countries, the memorandum emphasized that "... once and for all it should be understood that the Macedonian emigration in Bulgaria, always working in accordance with the constitutional law of the country where it received hospitality, cannot follow the political ideals of the Bulgarian government and will not make any sacrifices for the Bulgarian interest if these sacrifices are used against the successful solution of the Macedonian question." The document continues: "Once and for all it should be understood that the Bulgarian patriotism with which, since 1890, the Bulgarian statesmen have ornamented themselves (they even do it at the present moment) are not only two completely different things, but they also stand in opposition..."

The authors of the memorandum opposed the Bulgarian government's claim that the Macedonian emigration, i.e., its organizations, were the "avante garde

of the Bulgarian state policy." They opposed its claim that "the Macedonian question and the activity of the Macedonian emigration be subordinate to the Bulgarian state interests." They expressed their determination to preserve the integrity and independence of their organization.

The Macedonian emigration's demand for its organizations and its newspapers to maintain Macedonian national identity and to express freely its sense of belonging to the Macedonian nation is based on the right to be recognized as a minority, a right provided by the international treaties.

This demand of the Macedonian emigration is expressed precisely in the following:

"We believe that it is our duty, in the name of the very ideals that we cannot sacrifice to your (Bulgarian state) interests, to state that we (the Macedonian emigration) should be finally treated not as part of the Bulgarian state but as an independent political element... In the name of this independence we have our independent rights as do such other guests in Bulgaria as the Turks, the Armenians, the Russians, the Greeks and other nationalities. As a result of it, we managed to protect and finally preserve our alphabet from the assaults on it by the former cabinet of the Bulgarian government. We want to protect ourselves from similar assaults by the present Bulgarian government on the Macedonian press and Macedonian social life, because of the Neilly Treaty guarantees these rights to our brothers in Serbia and in Greece, then how ironic it will be to be deprived of them here in Bulgaria."[\[50\]](#)

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1 For more information about the Inner Macedonian Revolutionary organization (VMRO) activities for overtaking governmental functions see: A. T. Hristov. Creation of the Macedonian State, Skopje, 1971.

2 Ibid.

3 Collection of documents concerning the creation of the Macedonian state (1893-1944). Selection, introductory remarks and edition by A. T. Hristov, Skopje, 1976. Particularly from page 145-151, number 38. In the later text read: Collection of Documents.

4 Collection of Documents; same.

5 Collection of Documents; same

6 P. Stoyanov, Macedonia during the Balkan Wars and the First World War (1912-1918), Skopje, 1969.

7 See A.T. Hristov, Creation of the Macedonian State, pp 75-82.

8 Ibid, M.D. Pandevski, The Ilinden Uprising in Macedonia, 1903, Skopje,

1978 (particularly from pages 443 -455.).

9. M.D. Pandevski, *The Ilinden Uprising in Macedonia, 1903*, pp. 19-30 and pp.109-124.

10 *Collection of Documents*, pp. 130-145 (Issue no. 35, 36, 37), no. 39, pp. 151-164, and no.46, 67, pp.172-173.

11 P Stoyanov, *Petar Pop Arsov in the National-Revolutionary Movement of the Macedonian Nation, 1868-1919*, Skopje, 1963.

12 *Collection of Documents*, no.23, 24, pp.88-89.

13 *Selected Texts about the History of the Macedonian Nation, 1800-1919*, edited by L. Lape, Skopje, 1976.

Particularly from page 807 to 812. In the later text read *Selected Texts*.)

14 *Collection of Documents*, from pages 309-325 (numbers 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91 and 92).

15 *Ibid.*

16 *Ibid.*

17 *Ibid.*

18 H. Andonov-Polyanski, *Great Britain and the Macedonian Question at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, with Selected Documents*, Skopje, 1973 (particularly no.26, pages 106-107). In the later text read *Andonov-Polyanski, Paris Peace (Annex A)*.

19 Andonov-Polyanski, *Paris Peace Conference*, no.23, page 103.

20 Andonov-Polyanski, *Paris Peace Conference*, no.24, pp. 10~104.

21 Andonov-Polyanski, *Paris Peace Conference*, no.25, pp.104 and 105.

22 Andonov-Polyanski, *Paris Peace Conference*, no. 26, pp. 105 and 106 (*Annex A*).

23 Andonov-Polyanski, *Paris Peace Conference*, no. 29, pp. 114 and 115.

24 Andonov-Polyanski, *Paris Peace Conference*, pp. 117 and 118 (*Annex B*).

25 *Ibid.*

26 Andonov-Polyanski,

27 Andonov-Polyanski,

28 Andonov-Polyanski,

29 *Ibid.*

30 *Ibid.*, p.124.

31 *Ibid.*, pp.123-124.

32 *Ibid.*, p.124.

33 In the period between the two world wars Bulgaria kept sending petitions to the League of Nations in which it claimed its right to protect the Bulgarian minority in Yugoslavia, and thus prevented the struggle of the Macedonian nation to be organized on the principle of self-determination.

34 See Andonov-Polyanski, *Paris Peace Conference*, p.124.

35 See Andonov-Polyanski.



- 36 Ibid., p.124.
- 37 Collection of Documents, numbers 80 and 81, pp. 281-299.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Ibid., pp.319-324 (numbers 92 and 93).
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Las droits des minorites bulgares et la Societe des Nations par un minoritaire bulgare (s.l. 1929).
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Collection of Documents, pp. 363-370, no. 101-102. See A.T. Hristov, "Creation of the Macedonian State", pp.262-264.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 Ibid.