

**Ph.D. VASIL TUPURKOVSKI, whose study on Alexander the Great is due to come out soon as part of his edition *The History of Macedonia* "It is my ambition, also, to point out the non-productivity of the debate on the exclusivity of history. In a developmental, educational and cultural sense, we cannot profit if we exist in a wider civilizational community. Exclusivity is equal to closing up, which, on its part, builds a harmful distance between civilizational progress and the need of every nation and every environment to identify with it. Philip II and Alexander the Great understood this problem more than well, which is proven by their strong resolution, in their own political and geo-strategic philosophy, to create a global society whose foundations were to be the integral in integrating the interests and needs of all nations."**

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## **ARGUMENTS FOR THE UNDYING SAGA OF ANCIENT MACEDONIA**

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*Q. The title of your edition is indicative: "The History of Macedonia." In the first book of the edition, "From Ancient Times to the Death of Alexander the Great," which was published in 1993. You even underlined that it would be "the history of the Macedonians, which means all the Macedonians through the course of time." Did I understand you well: The history only of the Ancient Macedonians and their time, or all the Macedonians, from Perdiccas I up to present times?*

**A:** Who would not wish to be the author of a comprehensive history of his people? And, of course, - Who would not be prejudiced if he sets himself such a task.. I, therefore, do not claim I can write down the entire history of the Macedonia. My purpose remains the history of Ancient Macedonia. I feel that in this sense, on our part, far from enough has been done. On the other hand, the same can be said for historiography on a world scale - all the possible interpretations of the historical processes relevant to Ancient Macedonia have not been depleted. What is fascinating when one reaches the truths about the historical processes in which Ancient Macedonia was involved, is its ability to valorize its own role in them in a most striking way. For Macedonia, that meant an enormous, complex and comprehensive transformation from a consumer and subject of historical tendencies to their creative subject. The attractiveness of one such social, political and economic project is indubitable for every society, for every civilization and every nation. The fact that one of the central civilizational projects, in this sense, was implemented precisely in the area we live in today, evokes some primordial inspirations in me and a certain understanding of the phenomenon of continuity of historical development.

*Q: This is a capital project. What should it reveal to the Macedonian reader?*

**A:** - What I would like my "History of Macedonia" to achieve as a revelation, of course, is in the sphere of my personal attitude toward my personal work. The question that is immediately posed is how realistic is that what we wish for. In any event, it is completely clear to me that in the context of the influence and effects of this History, or better said, its role will be objectively be enabled by the circumstances of our wider social, cultural and scientific life. Otherwise, as an author, I would like to help define a couple of important questions from the domain of historiography. Finally, although it may sound as taking things too far, I have no ill intentions in saying that, also, I would like to help define our own attitude, i.e. the attitude

of our environment precisely toward those important questions of the science of history.

In this sense, first of all, I would like the phenomenology of the continuity in historical development to be understood. The historical process is the exclusive result of continuity. It is never the product of discontinuity in social development, as it does not exist in the historical context.

Furthermore, my History inevitably affirms the region as a *sine qua non* of every historical tendency. Historical development is not an abstract category. It is always specific in its manifestations and is constantly connected with the appropriate area. It is quite clear to me that marginal areas do not exist. The fact that, on the other hand, the area can be local, regional or planetary, is of an irrelevant nature as a question of principle.

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Q: In the preface to the book "From Ancient..." you said that you did not agree with the concept that "we should fight with whomever in order to prove our specificity or to negate someone else's position." I admit, I like this view, however of the three volumes (beside "From Ancient....," "Philip II" and "From the Death of Alexander the Great to the Macedonian -Roman Wars," were also published), it is quite clear that, precisely because you are on the side of the truth, you most directly represent the view about the ethnic specificity of the Ancient Macedonians, the specificity of their state and, eventually, Macedonia's original contribution to the ancient civilization and culture. This does not correspond with the school-book truth imposed since the time of the German historian Droisen, in the first decades of last century, that, in fact, we are talking about Hellenic history?

A:- If one remains in the sphere of historical sources, when it comes to historiographical explications, one is on the acceptable turf of scientific methodology. Everything else is either historical romanticism or immoderate flexibility in the interpretation of the historical structure. Remaining devoted, even in a relatively conservative manner, to the scientific methodology, I came across serious problems in accepting Droisen's interpretation, as well as that of a number of other authors, who ignore the autochthonous nature of Ancient Macedonia, as a subject of the discussed historical processes. Hammond, for instance, does not have any deviations in his scientific methodology, whereby the facts and events are registered correctly, but the conclusions about the relevant historical tendencies are pointed in a desired direction, rather than an objective one.

The debate on the reasons for such views on the history of Ancient Macedonia would indeed be a long one. I, believe me, did not write my History to contradict certain, I must admit, important segments of the existing historiographical thought about the ancient era, but to affirm those non-alternative realizations about Ancient Macedonia and the Ancient Macedonians, that can be based on the historical sources. In other words, I offered arguments for the further debate on the undying saga for Ancient Macedonia. It would be pointless, regardless of the side it could come from, to try to push me into the shallow debate that always has the colors of political euphoria or conjecture, as to who actually possesses the history of the Ancient Macedonians.

Q: For a couple of years now, you have been intensively studying the classical period in the Congressional Library in Washington where, it seems reasonable to say, all human knowledge is concentrated, i.e. an enormous number of materials and data on the history of the human civilization are stored. Therefore I allow myself the liberty to ask you: What do you think about the efforts of some contemporary historians (for instance, Professor Pierre Brian from Toulouse) to contradict the ruling concept imposed by their Ancient Greek and Latin colleagues, and subsequently supported by the romantically oriented history, that Alexander in fact is the carrier of the Hellenic culture?

A: - Several important moments, which can be analyzed comparatively, give a specific answer to your question. First, with the formation of its own statehood and in the stabilization of its territorial integrity,

Macedonia was oriented towards the inside of the Balkans. The Greek cities-states were permanently oriented towards the sea and the wider regional area of the Aegean, i.e., the Mediterranean coast. Such a difference is of a conceptual nature, in a historical sense, as well as in its geostrategic essence; it does not bring closer, but distances Macedonia, on one side, from the Greek subjects on the other. Secondly, Macedonia was developing as a centralized state, whereas, the Greek cities-states had a diffuse state organization, and showed no essential ability of uniting in order to confront Macedonia. Thirdly, while in Macedonia, as an expression of the political philosophy of Philip II, i.e. Alexander the Great, the monumental idea was born to globalize the international community, that is to say, all its known segments, the Greek political idea did not occupy itself with exporting the Hellenic culture, but mostly with the banishment of Persia from the area of the Mediterranean Sea. As you can see, there is a lot of room to open up a serious debate over the imposed axiom that Alexander the Great, in effect, spread Hellenism as a cultural concept, that is, as away of life.

Q: I would like to add something to my previous question: The great English radical historian, Eric Hobsbaum, in his interview for daily "Elefterotipia" a couple of years ago, spoke with resentment about the "unstoppable continuity of 3, 000 years of the Greek nation," claiming that it is only "a fabrication of myths." He was cynical in his statement that "the argument that a wider Macedonia belongs exclusively to the Greek national state because Philip conquered Greece, seems to me equally convincing as the claim that France has a right to Italy only because Julius Caesar conquered Gaul?"

A: - These problems, nonetheless, are not a part of the field of science. Certainly not a part of the historical science. Eventually, you could find a place for them in political science, where the concepts of political manipulation for fulfillment of interests are studied, which mostly, in the political nomenclature, are valued as states, national or historical. Such attributes are designed to play a double role -on one side, to strengthen our position when we lack enough arguments, and on the other, to prevent a dialogue and a constructive debate precisely on the basis of arguments. It is my deep conviction that the democratization of the overall social relations in Europe, its inclination toward integration and continentalization of the special interests, will create possibilities for unblocking the taboo topics in the scientific and cultural sphere, and perhaps most of all, precisely in the political sphere. I do not view politics as a constantly present and aggressive reducer of the wealth of interests and vocations which, whether we would like to accept it or not, still, more than anything else, will characterize the circumstances of our life in the new millennium.

In those "new" circumstances, the need for obsolete and absolute truths, as to whether the history of Ancient Macedonia is ours or theirs, will become superfluous. Political manipulation will be understood in its destructiveness. It will be enough to make the scientific methodologies objective. Such a historiography will represent a true cultural act, in essence, such as each discovery and novelty produces.

Q: Obviously, a new history is emerging in the world (also taking into account the interview with the prominent American historian, Eugene Borza, for the TV network "Galaxy," which corresponds with the theories of Brian and Hobsbaum), which is drawing more and more attention, about the alleged Hellenization of the Orient by Alexander the Great. Am I right?

A:- Borza himself is experiencing a creative evolution. Toward the end of his life (he is nearly 80 years old), he comes into a situation in which he re-examines some of his former scientific views. For me, that represents a joy of creation and a chance for one's own catharsis, on the basis of the undying need of the author - scientist, to search for the truth.

Therefore, you would be right in saying that a growing number of historians are looking at the significant aspects of the classical period, especially when it comes to Macedonian -Greek relations in the past, as compared to a leading thought that ruled the scientific front over the past one hundred years.

Q: It is correct that the threat of primitivism, when one insists on exclusive ownership of the historical development, can inflict harm only to one's own historical and national development. Does that mean that we are against some phenomena, here and now as well as outside the borders of Macedonia, whereby a sign of equality is placed between the ancient and contemporary Macedonians?

A: - I am frightened only by absolute truths. In this sense, the moment you threaten someone else's right to think actively and creatively about the historical development of the area he exists in, you can be certain you have contributed to the onset of the process of degradation precisely of the absolute truths you wish to impose or defend. In this sense, I discard the absolutization of the aspects of the history of Ancient Macedonia. I would like to see it studied as an integral part of the history of the human civilization.

One must possess scientific and personal honor. In the name of these two attributes, I would have to express the following conclusion: The history of these regions belongs to all nations that exist precisely in them today! Its verification is a complex scientific process and can undergo a certain evolution. Therefore, valuable energy is spent proving what proportionally belongs to us, and what to the others with whom we share the common living area. All positive energy should be invested in the examination and affirmation of the scientific realizations about our history.

Q: I analyzed the rich bibliography in the three volumes of your edition published so far with great interest, and noticed what is easily noticeable: not one scientific name or scientific work from Macedonia! That could mean ignoring Macedonian historiography, but also that over the last fifty years it has literally not spent any time on the history of the Ancient Macedonians?

A: - Our bibliography is more than modest when it comes to the history of Ancient Macedonia. I would not like to ascribe to this occurrence the meaning of a handicap, but, on the contrary, a challenge. In this sense, I do not look upon my History as anything else but a work that should initiate a serious scientific debate on the phenomena of the historical development of Ancient Macedonia. I am also aware that one such debate would represent a certain process of education, science, a certain preparation and favorable climate. In our country, I am convinced, this process of maturing will take place in each of these abovementioned preconditions. That will indeed contribute to the wealth of our bibliography in the sphere of the history of Ancient Macedonia.

Q: The editorial board of "The Macedonian Times" and "Makedonsko Vieme" has just published the text that the SECI Initiative coincides both regionally and strategically with the influence of Philip II and his triumphs in the Balkan area. Can we learn something from the ancient wars, from the ancient diplomatic policies and the ancient state-national ideas?

A: - There is no doubt that many things can be learned from the historical process that was relevant for Ancient Macedonia. The geostrategic thought of Philip II holds a great deal of contemporary ideas and actuality. Particularly when it comes to the wider region of the Balkans, it is predominated by elements of a certain integration of that area as a Macedonian interest. In his time, the Balkans was the heart of the European area. The integrated Balkans, for Philip II, represented a realistic opportunity for an effective penetration towards the central world region of the time - Asia.

In the present day, as a region of cooperation, exchange and mutual tolerance, wouldn't the Balkans be in a position to implement the interests of the Balkan countries for more appropriate integration into the European structures and institutions with greater success, especially when it comes to the European Union? More than certainly, the answer is - yes! And it is more than certain that state-national ideas can also have certain legitimacy in the contemporary political and social moment.

Q: I must indulge my curiosity: What will the announced study on Alexander the Great bring?

A:- While with Philip II, my historiographical work was pointed in the direction of revitalization of his historical opus and his valuation as a work of first-class importance, my aim with Alexander the Great is to prove that his political contribution, in the sense of a more progressive development of the international community, is no greater than that to which many historians give precedence in his overall historical work - the role of Alexander the Great as an army leader.

The task which, as a scientific hypothesis, I have set myself in the conceptualization of the study on Alexander the Great, is not in the least simple, which does not mean it was unsolvable.

Q: We would be very pleased to publish excerpts from your latest book in two-three editions of our

newsmagazine.

A: Of course, it would give me greatest pleasure if you do so.

JOVAN PAVLOVSKI,  
MACEDONIAN TIMES APRIL 1997