

The German Slavist Wolf Oschlies writes that in the 15th century the Germans did not know anything about Bosnia or Bulgaria, but were well informed about Macedonia, what kind of country it was and where it was situated.

IF EUROPE LOSES MACEDONIA?

The mid-century German authors did not make any distinction between ancient Macedonia and any other Macedonian country. As far as they were concerned, Macedonia has always existed as an entity. They acknowledged that Macedonia offered Europe the best examples of wisdom. Therefore, according to them, if Europe were to lose Macedonia it would soon be lost itself, says Wolf Oschlies.

Gorgi Pop-Atanasov rightly concludes in the issue no. 41 of the Macedonian Times: " Many things have been written about the ancient history of Macedonia." We might remark in passing that most of these were written in the first half of the last century by the German authors Dreussen, Mauler, Flatte and others, but in itself is not so very important. What is interesting, however, is that mid-century German authors did not make any distinction between ancient Macedonia and any other Macedonian country. As far as they were concerned, Macedonia had always existed. They acknowledged that Macedonia offered the best examples of wisdom to Europe. Therefore, if Europe were to lose Macedonia, it would soon lose itself!

This text could be a summary of the great compassion which was shown by the German writer Sebastian Brandt and was illustrated in his long poem The Ship of Fools published in 1494. Brandt was born in 1458 in Strasbourg (France) where he died in 1521. Although an orphan, he was carefully brought up and thoroughly educated from his early childhood. In 1475, he commenced his studies in law in Basel (Switzerland) and qualified to hold all the possible scholarly degrees of his time: baccalaureate (1477), licentiate (1484) and doctor (1489). Later on, he was known as a perfect lawyer (under the Latin name Titio) and was very famous as, for instance, "the advisor to the tzsr," the Emperor Maximilian. Brandt earned special respect and popularity, when he became the founder of satirical literature in the German- speaking world and this can be felt from the very title of his famous book Das Narrenschiff (The Ship of Fools). In this book, the boat is full of fools, or, to be more precise, every man is foolish since he does not want to respect the laws of the Lord. So, every single person will have a share of the responsibility should one day the world be destroyed! Without any moralizing, Brandt criticizes the flaws of his

time. His criticism is expressed through the powerful folk language. What kind of faults was Brandt writing about? Primarily, he was writing about the poor education and upbringing of children. He thought that those who were neglecting education should not be surprised if their child became another Cataline one day. Further on, the character of Cataline was explained to the reader -- he was the most notorious conspirator in ancient Rome. Could there be a better example in the author's opinion? The author knew, although he did not mention his name, that "Philip was searching throughout the whole of Greece to find the greatest teacher for his son. Thus, Aristotle came to the court of the greatest king."

The greatest king was, of course, Alexander the Macedonian. The Germans knew that without a doubt. Macedonia was a very popular subject among the Germans at the time. This was the 15th century--the time when the Turks occupied the Balkans. Most Germans did not know anything about Bosnia or Bulgaria, but they all knew Macedonia-- they knew what and where it was. The scholar Brandt knew all these countries by their classical names. Chapter 10 entitled About the Fall of Religion deals with the military campaign of the Turks in the Balkans. It is a kind of atlas drawn by Brandt as an expression of his sincere sympathy for the losses of Christian Europe: "How much has Europe lost in such a short time? Two empires, a great many kingdoms, powerful countries, cities, Constantinople and Trebazond, known all over the world, Thrace and Macedonia, Attica and both Mise. The Roman church had four sisters headed by patriarchs: Constantinople, Jerusalem and Antioch; now they are all lost. The doors of Europe are thrown open and the enemy is all around them." I would not bother the readers, but I think that such a work, like Brandt's literary poem, has contributed to the formation of the German sympathy towards the Macedonians. This sympathy still exists and is shown by the words of the German Foreign Minister, Klaus Kinkel who, during the visit of his Macedonian counterpart Blago Handziski to Bonn, said:" Macedonia is very much liked in Germany."

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