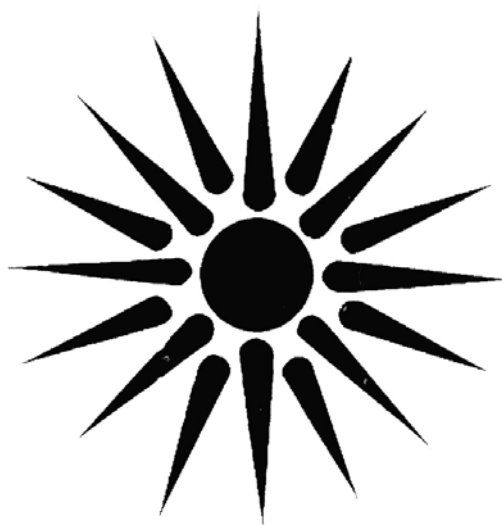


**Very Short History
of the
Macedonian People
From
Prehistory to the Present**



**By
Risto Stefov**

Very Short History of the Macedonian People
From
Pre-History to the Present

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Introduction

Macedonia is an ancient land with a history that stretches back a thousand years before Christ. Best known of Macedonia is King Philip II who expanded Macedonia's territory, unified the various tribes he conquered and made great political, economic and military strides transforming Macedonia from an ordinary state into a super power. Then his son Alexander the Great made Macedonia into a great empire spanning from Eastern Europe to the western borders of China.

Macedonia is also a land overrun by conquerors, adventurers and colonists including the Romans, Byzantines and Ottomans who dominated it for many centuries but could not erase its autochthonous name which has survived to this day.

Ever since Macedonia fell into Roman hands the Macedonian people have struggled to free themselves but never harder than in 1903 when the entire Macedonian nation rose against the Ottoman occupier in a glorious but disastrous fight. Failing to gain their independence Macedonians fell prey to their ambitious neighbours, the Greeks, Serbians and Bulgarians who in 1912 under the guise of liberation sent their armies to invade Macedonia. Then with the help of the Macedonian people they expelled the Ottomans but instead of liberating Macedonia they occupied it and fought one another for a greater piece of it.

The war between Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria ended with the 1913 Treaty of Bucharest. In spite of protests from the Macedonian people the three partitioned Macedonia into three pieces and annexed it for themselves.

Accordingly Greece took the lion's share of: 35.169 sq. kilometers (51%); the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes retained 25.774 sq. kilometers (39%); and Bulgaria was allowed to take, after minor revision, 6.798 sq. kilometers (10%).

During World War II (1941-1945) the Macedonian people in the entire geographical region of Macedonia took part in the anti-fascist coalition under the promise from the Atlantic charter that "all nations who take part in the struggle against fascism shall choose their own form of government and shall be afforded means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all people in all lands may live out their lives in freedom".

Only Yugoslavia kept its promise and allowed the creation of a Macedonian Republic within the framework of the Federal People's

Republic of Yugoslavia. Greece and Bulgaria ignored their promises and after the conflict they resumed their claims that Macedonians don't exist and as such refused to recognize the ethnic Macedonian minorities living in their respective states.

With the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the late 1980's, the Republic of Macedonia through a referendum declared its independence and in 1991 became a sovereign and independent state. The Macedonians in Greece and Bulgaria, on the other hand, are still not recognized and no rights have been afforded to them, not even the most basic human rights which are due to them in accordance with international norms to which Greece and Bulgaria are signatories and are obliged to uphold.

Since the Republic of Macedonia declared its independence in 1991, Greece has waged propaganda campaigns against the Macedonian people and has insisted that Macedonians not use the name "Macedonia" because the name "Macedonia" exclusively belongs to Greece. Without any shred of proof Greece is using this excuse to block the Republic of Macedonia from joining international institutions.

There is no justification or precedence for what Greece is doing because Macedonia historically never belonged to Greece.

Since the name "Macedonia" is tied to the Macedonian ethnic identity no one but the Macedonians have the right to decide what to call themselves.

Macedonia is a biblical land and has been known as Macedonia for three-thousand years since the beginning of the first millennium BC. Even though Macedonia today is divided between Greece, Bulgaria, the Republic of Macedonia and Albania, the indigenous ethnic Macedonians whose ancestors were born in Macedonia still see Macedonia, not Greece, Bulgaria or Serbia, as their homeland. All ethnic Macedonians living in Greece, Bulgaria, Albania, the Republic of Macedonia, the United States, Canada, Australia and the world over who have roots in Macedonia feel they belong to Macedonia and have the right to choose what to call their birthplace which ties them to their historic past. In other words, not Greece, not Bulgaria, not Albania, not even the Republic of Macedonia has the right to choose a name for the ethnic Macedonian people's homeland. Only the ethnic Macedonians themselves, as a whole, have that right.

Pre-Historic Macedonia

It is unknown exactly how far back Macedonia extends and who were its first rulers. Mainstream history places the birth of Aegae and the Argead Macedonian Royal House to around the start of the 7th century BC, with Perdiccas I as its first ruler.

There is evidence however that places a small group of people who identified themselves as Macedonians back to the 10th century BC. These people lived in the region between present day Kostur and Lerin with their center located at modern day Rupishcha also referred to as Argos Orestikon by classical historians.

Current theory is that the prehistoric Macedonians came from a mixture of people from the Pelasgian, Illyrian, Thracian and Phrygian tribes which lived in that region around the beginning of the first millennium BC.

One thousand BC seems to be a crucial period in the development of the first Macedonian kingdom. While still in its tribal stages, the small Macedonian kingdom by then began to gain military strength and political influence in the region. Legend has it that the first ruler to establish the Argead house in Rupishcha was king Karan (Caranus) who is believed to have been the first king to rule the Macedonian kingdom from approximately 808 to 778 BC.

As the Phrygian tribes began to leave western Macedonia and retreated to Anatolia a power vacuum was left behind which in time was filled by the Macedonians who slowly advanced eastward and occupied the abandoned fertile lands. It took the Macedonian people about a century to migrate eastward but by the 9th century BC they made their presence felt in Central Macedonia.

Over the years as the Macedonian kingdom expanded, its center was moved to Aegae near present day Voden.

We know from Herodotus that Perdiccas and his brothers moved the Macedonian center but no date was given. “Herodotus (8.183) wrote that ‘[Perdiccas] came to another part of Macedonia and settled near the gardens named after Midas, son of Gordias...above the garden rises the mountain called Bermion, unassailable in winter’.” (Page 65, Eugene Borza, *In the Shadow of Olympus The Emergence of Macedon*)

Aegae was established near Voden during the 7th century BC and became the second Macedonian capital. Hammond estimates that

Perdiccas came to the throne in 650 BC. (Page 11, Hammond, The Miracle that was Macedonia)

Herodotus continues, “From the Perdiccas of whom we have here spoken, Alexander was descended in the following way Alexander was the son of Amyntas, Amyntas of Alcetas; the father of Alcetas was Aeropus; of Aeropus, Philip; of Philip, Argaeus; of Argaeus, Perdiccas, the first sovereign.” In other words, the known kings of Macedonia before Herodotus’s time reigned as follows: Caranus, Coinus, Chyrimasus Perdiccas I, Argaeus, Philip I, Aeropus I, Alcetas, Amyntas I and Alexander I.

Ancient Macedonia

Alexander I (498-454 BC) expanded the Macedonian territory and by the 5th century BC the Macedonians had forged a unified kingdom. Alexander was a Persian ally in the City State-Persian Wars. By City States I mean the cities south of Mt. Olympus such as Athens, Thebes, Sparta, Corinth and others, which at the time existed as independent States. As Macedonia appeared on the international scene its first coins were minted affirming the king's name. Alexander's son Perdiccas II (453 - 413 BC) ruled Macedonia during the Peloponnesian Wars and took sides with both Sparta and Athens while looking after Macedonia's interests and at the same time made sure the balance of power was maintained.

Archelaus I (413-399 BC) made Macedonia a significant economic power by selling Athens' lumber. He also expanded Macedonia's infrastructure and defenses by building roads and fortresses and reorganized the Macedonian army (Thucyd.II.100). He also moved the Macedonian capital from Aegae to Pella and founded the Macedonian Olympic Games in Dion, the holy city of the Macedonians. (Her.V.22)

Archelaus I was accidentally shot during a hunt in 399 BC and died of his wounds. His premature death cast the Argaed house into chaos for almost six years after which Amyntas III surfaced as the leading figure who would rule Macedonia next. Amyntas III was the great grandson of Alexander I.

Having left his kingdom's affairs unsettled, Amyntas III died in 370 BC leaving his throne to his eldest son Alexander II. "The decade of the 360s plunged the kingdom of Macedon into a new dynastic crisis, intensified by continuing external threats. Early in his reign, Alexander was forced to buy off the Illyrians, although it is problematic whether he also gave his younger brother, Philip (the future Philip II), over as a hostage." (Page 189, Eugene Borza, *In the Shadow of Olympus The Emergence of Macedon*)

Amyntas III reigned from 393 to 370 BC and led a policy of exhausting and weakening the City States. His two sons, Alexander II and Perdiccas III, reigned later but only briefly. Alexander II had an expansionist policy and invaded the region south of Olympus. In Thessaly he left Macedonian garrisons in the cities and refused to evacuate them. Thebes which at the time was the most militarily powerful City State intervened and forced the garrisons out, taking Alexander II's youngest brother Philip as hostage to ensure Macedonia's obedience. After

Alexander II's death, his brother Perdiccas III took the throne. Unfortunately Perdiccas III was killed in a battle along with 4,000 of his Macedonian soldiers while fighting the Illyrians. Amyntas's third son, Philip II became the next Macedonian king.

Philip II (359-336 BC) was one of the greatest men of Europe (Theop.F.GR.H. f, 27) who was credited for expanding and unifying Macedonia and turning it into the first European State and Power in the modern sense of the word - an organized nation with a common national ideal.

Philip II subdued all of Macedonia's neighbours including the Illyrians, Thracians and City States, and made Macedonia the most powerful kingdom in the Balkans. He was especially brutal towards the City State occupied territories at the edge of Macedonia where he drove the colonists out and razed all their developments to the ground.

In 338 BC a City State coalition was put together and an army was raised to try and stop Philip from penetrating south into the Peloponnesus but the Macedonians defeated the coalition in the battle at Chaeronea. Philip became hegemon to the City States.

Philip had aims to also conquer the Persian Empire but was unfortunately assassinated before he had a chance to put his plans into action. Tragically he was assassinated during the wedding celebrations of his daughter Cleopatra.

Philip II's son Alexander III the Great (356-323 BC) succeeded his father at age 20 and immediately put down all rebellions sparked by Thracians, Illyrians and City States which revolted upon hearing of Philip's death. In an attempt to enforce his father's policies and to show that he did not tolerate revolts from his subjugated people, Alexander razed Thebes to the ground after slaughtering 6,000 and selling 30,000 of its inhabitants into slavery.

As the head of the Macedonian military and allied forces Alexander invaded Persia and after his victories in three great battles at Granicus, Issus, and Gaugamela subdued the Persian Empire and replaced it with a Macedonian Empire that stretched from Europe to Egypt and to India. From then on to the arrival of Rome, Macedonians shaped events in this vast space for almost three centuries.

Alexander III was given the title "Great" by the Romans after the realization of his great accomplishments in such a short time. Every general since then has studied his tactics and tried to match them, without success.

Besides not losing a single battle in combat in his entire career, Alexander is credited for; the creation of at least eighteen cities, some very prominent like Alexandria in Egypt, opening trade routes between east and west that extended from Europe to Africa and to the far reaches of India. Had he lived longer, Alexander would have conquered the west, starting with Carthage and today the world would have been a different place.

If Alexander is to be judged for his deeds let it be for all his deeds and not just for his conquests and military genius. Alexander was a seasoned politician with a vision of uniting all the world's nations together as equals in a democratic system (in the modern sense). Besides his political qualities, Alexander also had a great interest in culture and the natural sciences. Wherever he went he built cities, libraries, cultural centers, museums and many other wonders. He listened to poetry and comedy and took part in debates. He met many people with varying interests and the people whose accomplishments he admired most, he sent to Macedonia for the Macedonians to enjoy. He had his natural scientists study and document the flora, fauna and mineral wealth of this new world.

Techniques and knowledge learned then still apply today. He adorned all the gardens of Macedonia, including those in Pella, with plants bearing the best fruits and flowers that Asia had to offer. Wherever he went he taught the local people culture, artistic skills and natural medicine. As Michael Wood found out, "In the footsteps of Alexander the Great", these gifts that Alexander gave the Asian people are still remembered to this day. As he proceeded to free the Asian people from Persian dominion, Alexander was greeted with enthusiasm and celebrated as a liberator.

It is interesting to note that City State soldiers did not participate in any of Alexander's battles because they served more as hostages for peace and guarantees for the safety of the Macedonian occupation forces in the City States than they did as fighters. Not only did they not have an important role in any of the major battles but there were no City State commanders either, since Macedonians commanded their ranks.

Alexander's unexpected death brought the Macedonian Empire into turmoil starting with rebellions from the City States where 23,000 City State mercenaries were put down in Asia (Diodorus, 18.7.3-9) and the bloody end of the Lamian War in which the City State coalition failed yet again to win freedom from the Macedonians. (Diodorus, 18.10.1-3, 11, 12, 15, 17.5)

Failing to find an heir to rule the vast Macedonian Empire, Alexander's leading generals got into a terrible conflict which lasted for

years. By 300 BC the Macedonian Empire was carved up between the dynasties of Antigonus I who took Macedonia and the City States, Ptolemy I who took Egypt and Seleucus I who took Asia.

While ruled by Antigonus II (276 - 239BC), the grandson of Antigonus I, Macedonia achieved a stable monarchy and strengthened its occupation of the City States. His grandson Philip V (222 - 179 BC) clashed with Rome, which at the time was expanding eastwards, and fought two wars. After the Roman army defeated Philip V in Thessaly, Macedonia lost the City States and was reduced to its original borders. In the third war Rome finally defeated Macedonia, which at the time was ruled by Philip V's son, Perseus (179-168 BC). At the Battle of Pydna 20,000 Macedonian soldiers lost their lives defending their homeland and Perseus became a Roman prisoner. Perseus later died in Italy and the Macedonian kingdom ceased to exist. By 146 BC Macedonia became a Roman province.

Eighty or so years later, in 65 BC, Rome conquered the Seleucid Macedonian kingdom in Asia which at the time was ruled by the Macedonian king Antiochus VII. Last to fall to Rome was the Ptolemaic kingdom in 30 BC, which at the time was ruled by Macedonian queen Cleopatra VII. The fall of the Ptolemaic dynasty meant an end to the Macedonian descendants in Egypt and with it the last remnants of the mighty Macedonian Empire.

Roman Macedonia

After the last rebellion against the Romans in 142 BC, Macedonia continued to exist until antiquity as part of the Roman domain. During this five-century long period Macedonia's boundaries were changed several times. The northern frontier was most vulnerable and prone to invasions. At one point, after an attack against a barbarian tribe, the northern boundary was extended to the Danube River. In 27 BC Augustus declared Macedonia a Senatorial province and had its territory significantly reduced. With time, in the decades that followed, Macedonia was partitioned into territories. After Diocletian's reforms Macedonia became part of the Diocese of Moisia and at the time of Constantine it became part of the Illyrian Prefecture. At the end of the 4th century AD Macedonia was split into two provinces, Macedonia Prima with Solun (Salonika) as its capital and Macedonia Salutaris. Later during the 5th and 6th centuries another name appeared: Macedonia Secunda with Stobi as its capital.

When Macedonia came under Roman rule the number of Italian colonists increased and a variety of barbarian tribes penetrated the region. As a Roman province Macedonia was heavily exploited and the population was plundered by heavy taxes. The support of the Roman administration, garrisons and military campaigns fell upon the shoulders of the local population. Macedonia, in addition to being enslaved, was also obliged to provide large numbers of soldiers for the Roman auxiliary brigades.

Urban life in Macedonia, during Roman rule, existed under three distinct settings, the free cities, the colonies and the municipalities. Included among the free cities were Aegeae, Pella, Beroea, Philippi, Heraclea, Salonika, Heraclea Lyncaestis and Stobi. During the Roman period both Heraclea Lyncaestis and Stobi were large, important centers situated on well-traveled roads.

Another important fact is that most major stormy events in the history of the Roman period had their echoes in Macedonia. The Roman civil wars, the struggle between Caesar and Pompey and the war between Brutus and Cassius all took place on Macedonian soil. Similarly the 3rd and 4th century Roman Empire crisis, colonial relations with Christianity and barbarian penetrations also had their roots in Macedonia.

As mentioned earlier, after Perseus's defeat at Pydna in 168 BC Macedonia was partitioned into four regions and became Roman territory. It was particularly during this period that Macedonia was robbed of its cultural treasures including the many monuments of art located in Solun,

Pella and other culturally rich cities. Macedonia's treasures were transferred to Rome and paraded on Roman streets as trophies of Roman victories during triumph festivals. After 148 BC the four regions of Macedonia were united again but made into a Roman province with Solun as its capital. What is also interesting is that all city states and jurisdictions south of Macedonia, including Athens and Sparta, were also annexed and added to this large Roman province called Macedonia. This merger lasted for about one hundred and twenty years until 27 BC. In 27 BC Augustus separated the region to form the province of Macedonia and the province of Achaia. For one hundred and twenty years Solun, not Athens, was the capital or "mother city" of this vast province called Macedonia.

The Macedonians in India and Pakistan

After conquering new lands, Alexander III built cities and populated them with settlers brought from Macedonia. The purpose of each city, in the short term, was to provide economic support and sustain local Macedonian military efforts. In the long term these cities would fuel all military demands including the provision of soldiers for the war effort.

Alexander III built a number of cities north of the Hindu Kush in Bactria and Sogdiana, which after breaking away from the Seleucid dynasty became the nucleus of a Macedonian civilization that lasted well into the Christian era and some to this day.

Of the Macedonian military and general population that ventured deep into India, traces can be found in the furthest points in southern India. Some, including women, were recruited by the Tamil rajas. Macedonian women served as bodyguards within the palaces while the men served outdoors as guards.

The first century BC brought profound change in the political structure of power from northern India to Egypt. It also brought the extinction of the centuries old Macedonian ruling dynasties. The end of Macedonian rule did not facilitate the end of Macedonian culture in these regions. Far from it, once established the Macedonians continued to live on among the native populations permanently naturalizing their customs and culture. In India at least, a great deal of the original political and administrative structures established during ancient times were adopted by the Indians and some remain unchanged to this day.

The Macedonian civilization exercised immense prestige not only in Asia and India but in Rome as well. Rome itself was very much infatuated with Macedonian art, architecture, sculpture, etc. that in time it too developed a Macedonian culture.

Rise of Christianity

It cannot be said that Apostle Paul created Gentile Christianity but he was responsible for giving it impetus. Paul became an important factor in the spread of Christianity to Macedonia when he had a vision of a man, a Macedonian, urging him to “come to Macedonia and help us”. Paul interpreted this vision as God’s will to take the “Good News” of Jesus into Macedonia. “And when they had come opposite My’sia, they attempted to go into Bithyn’ia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; so, passing by My’sia, they went down to Tro’as. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedo’nia was standing beseeching him and saying, ‘Come over to Macedo’nia and help us.’ And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedo’nia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.” (Page 1044, The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version, Holman, Philadelphia, 1952)

There are some who believe that the man in Paul’s vision was the Apostle Luke. Luke was a Macedonian, a physician by trade, who Paul met for the first time in Troas. Luke may have had some connection to Philippi to have Paul sent there. It is unknown whether Luke was a Christian or not before he met Paul but he was certainly one afterwards. Luke was a great writer and composer of one of the gospels.

It was around 50 AD when Paul set foot on European soil for the first time. That was in the Macedonian towns of Philippi, Solun (Thessalonica) and Berroea where he preached the word of Jesus (Acta apos., XVI, id. XVII). Around 52 and 53 AD he sent epistles to the people of Solun (Epist. Thess); then in 57 AD he came back to Macedonia to follow up on his progress. In 63 AD he again sent epistles to Macedonia but this time to the people of Philippi. (Epist. Philipp)

Even before Paul went to Macedonia, legend has it that Macedonia was visited by Jesus’ mother Mary. “The Blessed Virgin excluded all other women from Holy Mountain, when she claimed it as ‘Her Garden’ after she was driven ashore by storms near the site of the present monastery of ‘Iviron’ USPENIE.” (Page 41, Vasil Bogov, Macedonian Revelation, Historical Documents Rock and Shatter Modern Political Ideology, Western Australia, 1998) Holy Mountain, or Sveta Gora as it is known in Macedonia, is the holiest place in Europe and one of the greatest monastic centers of Christendom.

Paul’s first mission to Macedonia took him to Philippi where he met a woman named Lydia, a fabric dealer. Lydia was a widow who sold cloth

and textiles and was a rare example of a free woman who lived and worked in Macedonia. For some time Lydia was exposed to Jewish religious practices which she had observed at a colony of Jews who had settled near her home in Thyatira. Lydia, along with her household, is believed to be the first Christian in Macedonia to be baptized by Paul. After Philippi, Paul's missionary journey took him to the beautiful Macedonian city of Solun where, in 50 AD, he established what later came to be known as the "Golden Gate" church, the first Christian church in Europe.

The start of the new millennium witnessed the death of the Roman Republic and the birth of Imperial Rome. The Augustan emperors may have brought peace to the empire but with it they also brought neglect, decline and decay. As mentioned earlier, by 180 AD there were unmistakable signs of decay. Besides the agricultural and economic declines, the empire opened its doors to anarchy when the adoptive system of choosing emperors was abandoned in favour of personal appointments.

Byzantine Macedonia

During the year 313 AD, from the great imperial city of Milan, Emperor Constantine, together with his co-Emperor Licinius, dispatched a series of letters informing all provincial governors to stop persecuting the Christians, thus revoking all previous anti-Christian decrees. All properties, including Christian places of worship, seized from them in the past were to be restored. This so called “Edict of Milan”, by which the Roman Empire reversed its policy of hostility towards Christians, was one of the most decisive events in human history.

What brought on this sudden reversal?

Rational thinkers believed that Constantine had the foresight to realize that Christianity was a growing power and could be harnessed to work for the good of the empire. Christianity was a result of changing times and harnessing its power was of far greater benefit than following the current policy of attempting to destroy it.

On November 8th, 324 AD Constantine formally laid out the boundaries of his new city, roughly quadrupling the territory of old Byzantium. While his architects were designing his new city Constantine and his army, numbering about 120,000 troops, were established in Solun. Even before moving to Solun in 324 AD, Constantine had the old Solun harbour renovated and expanded to fit his fleet of 200 triakondores galleons and about 2,000 merchant ships.

By 328 AD the walls of Tsari Grad (Constantinople) were completed and the new city was formally dedicated in May 330 AD. Soon after the city was opened Constantine ordered the construction of two major churches, Sveta Sophia (Holy Wisdom) and Sveta Eirena (Holy Peace) and began laying the foundation of a third church, the Church of the Holy Apostles.

Before they were known as the Byzantines or were called the Eastern Orthodox and even before they were barely a separate empire, they were known to the Macedonians as the Pravoslavs (upright and glorious); an ancient people unified by a common (Eastern Christian) faith which has survived to this day and carries a strong meaning for the faithful.

By 500 AD Christianity had become the standard religion in Macedonia and the Macedonian language and culture re-emerged with it.

Christianity’s humble beginnings may have begun with the Koine language but in order for Jesus’ message to be understood by the masses it had to be spoken in the language of the masses. It is well known today that

the language of Christianity in Macedonia was the Macedonian language, the very same language spoken by Macedonians today. The Macedonian language was widely spread as the language of Christianity by Kiril and Methodi.

Kiril and Metodi

It was during the reign of the Byzantine emperor Michael III (842-867) that Solun had definitely established itself as the religious and philosophical center of the empire. This was the time when Kiril (Cyril) and Metodi (Methodius) set off on a series of missions to spread the doctrines of Christianity to various places in Eastern Europe and Asia.

By the eighth century AD the Macedonian eparchy was controlled by a Macedonian Archbishopric with its center located in Solun and bishoprics existed in eighteen towns including Lerin, Kostur, Voden and Serres.

The brothers Kiril and Metodi were Macedonians, natives of Solun, who were acclaimed as the apostles responsible for spreading the Macedonian language and culture to Eastern European countries. They were acclaimed to be the fathers of the Macedonian literary culture. Kiril, the younger, was given the name Constantine when he was baptized. It was much later that he received the name Kiril.

The careers of the Solun brothers took a turn for the better in 862 AD when, Rostislav, the prince of Moravia, sent his ambassador to Tsari Grad (Constantinople) seeking missionaries capable of teaching his people to read and write in their own language. Rostislav, fearful of his powerful German neighbours, sought the opportunity to strengthen his alliance with the Byzantines to counterbalance the German missionary influence in his kingdom. Rostislav preferred the ecclesiastical politics of Photius, now patriarch of Tsari Grad, over those of his western counterpart.

When word came that Emperor Michael was looking for capable missionaries, Photius decided that Kiril and Metodi were the most suitable candidates for the job. The Solun brothers, being Macedonians themselves, knew the Solunian dialect of the Macedonian language well and accepted the task.

The old-Macedonian language was well understood by all the Eastern European countries. Unfortunately teaching the illiterate to read and write was easier said than done. Even though these people had a written form of language described as “lines and incisions”, it was not an easy language to learn.

Kiril was familiar with the Glagolic script but that was also too complex a language for illiterate people to grasp quickly. According to Tsarnorizets Hrabar, an advocate of Macedonian literacy, Kiril and Metodi first tried to use the Koine and then Latin alphabets, but proper pronunciation could not be achieved. Macedonian speech was far too

complex to record with just Koine or Latin letters. Kiril was an intelligent man and solved the problem by constructing a new alphabet based on old Macedonian traditions. The pattern and some letters he based on the Koine alphabet but he enriched it by adding new letters. He borrowed some from the Glagolic script and some he fashioned from ancient Macedonian symbols that had traditional Macedonian meaning. “Peter Hill argues that Old Church [Macedonian]... was more than merely a written dialect. It is naïve to imagine that this construction of a written language was possible without established tradition. Therefore it can safely be assumed that there was at least some tradition on which Cyril and Methodius could build. Presumably their familiarity with this tradition derived from the fact that they were [Macedonians]... themselves.” (Page 198, John Shea, Macedonia and Greece The Struggle to Define a New Balkan Nation)

When it was completed Kiril’s alphabet consisted of 38 letters, each accurately and exactly representing a unique sound in Macedonian speech. The phonetic nature of Kiril’s language made spelling words very simple. One only needed to learn the alphabet to have the ability to read and write. The same is true to this day.

Following in the footsteps of Kiril and Metodi, their disciples Kliment and Naum of Ohrid established the first Macedonian University, the Ohrid Literary School. Thirty-five hundred teachers, clergy, writers and other literary figures emerged from this Ohrid Literary School. Their activities were crowned with the laying of the foundations of a Macedonian cultural, educational and ecclesiastical organization, where the Macedonian alphabet was used and the Old Macedonian language was introduced in religious services. The establishment of the first Macedonian Orthodox bishopric, later to become the Ohrid Archbishopric (during Tsar Samoil’s (Samuel) reign), marked the beginning of the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

Medieval Macedonia

In the first half of the 10th century the Bogomil teaching appeared in Macedonia establishing the Bogomil popular movements which spread through the Balkans and Europe. The 10th century also marked the beginning of Tsar Samoil's (976-1014) Macedonian Medieval Kingdom. Towards the end of the 10th century AD, as the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) Empire weakened and as the first Bulgarian Empire fell apart due to conflict with Russia, Tsar Samoil was able to create a large and powerful Macedonian medieval kingdom with its center at Ohrid. Samoil conquered parts of today's modern Greece, Epirus, a large part of today's modern Bulgaria, Albania, Serbia, Bosnia, Montenegro and Dalmacia.

Samoil was defeated in 1014 by the Byzantine Emperor Basil II at the battle of Mount Belasitsa. Fifteen thousand of his soldiers were captured and blinded, except for one in every one hundred who was left with one eye to lead the rest back to Samoil who himself had escaped death at Belasitsa. At the site of his blind army Samoil suffered a stroke and died two days later on October 6, 1014.

For four centuries after the fall of the Macedonian Medieval Kingdom, rebellions and frequent changes in rule disrupted Macedonia's development. In the 11th century there were two major uprisings against Byzantine rule, one led by Petar Deljan, Samoil's grandson, in 1040 and the other led by Gjorgji Vojteh in 1072. The 12th century saw the rise of the Macedonian feudal lords Dobromir Hrs in 1201 and Strez in 1211.

Ottoman Macedonia

Despite the many rebellions and the short-lived Serbian and Bulgarian Empire occupations in the 13th and 14th centuries, Macedonia remained in the hands of the Byzantine until the Ottomans conquered it in 1389. The Ottomans firmly established themselves not only in Macedonia but in all of the southern Balkans and lasted for five centuries. The first significant resistance movements against Ottoman occupation were the Mariovo-Prilep Rebellion (1564 - 1565) and the Karposh Uprising in 1689. In the 18th century the powerful Ohrid Archbishopric was active right up to the year 1767 when it was abolished by the Ottoman Sultan Mustafa III under pressure from the Patriarch in Tsari Grad (Istanbul).

During the 19th century Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria, with help from the Great Powers, were freed from the Ottoman yoke and actively began to conspire against the Macedonian people, displaying territorial aspirations. As soon as they were freed these three states became instruments for the aspirations of the European Great Powers and with their help acquired Macedonian territories.

Before the formation of the Bulgarian state, Greece viewed all Orthodox Christians as “Greeks” because they were affiliated with the Patriarch Church. But after Bulgaria became a country in 1878 and established the Exarchate Church it challenged the Greek view.

With the establishment of foreign Churches (Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian) inside Macedonia and in the absence of a Macedonian Church, the three competing states began to divide the Macedonian people by church affiliation claiming that parishioners faithful to the Greek Church were actually Greeks, those faithful to the Bulgarian Church were actually Bulgarian and so on.

It was by this method that the demographic in Macedonia was established and published into various statistics in the late 19th and early 20th century.

The Greeks, Bulgarians and Serbians employed many weapons in their anti-Macedonian conflict including the opening of schools in an attempt to instill a particular linguistic and confessional identity, the control of the ecclesiastical office, influence over the course of railway building, diplomatic attempts to secure the ear of the Ottoman Sultan and so on. The three states also employed armed bands in Macedonia to instill terror and “convince” the population that it was better to be living “Greeks”, “Serbians, or “Bulgarians” than dead Macedonians.

At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century Macedonians strove to develop their own national identity as they began to organize and fight to expel the Ottomans. Unfortunately they found it difficult since they had no support from any of the Great Powers, Royal families or an intelligensia operating abroad. It was a period of growing national awareness for the Macedonian people and a quest for a free and independent Macedonia. Thanks to the Macedonian folklore and oral history people knew that they were Macedonians, descendants of Aleksandar the Great and the ancient Macedonians. Stories about Aleksandar were told and retold from generation to generation.

The Independence Movement

Towards the second half of the 19th century, literacy and education flourished in Macedonia laying the foundations for modern Macedonian literature. Literacy activists like Kiril Pejčinovich, Joakim Krčovski, Parteniya Zografski, Georgija Puleski, Jordan Hadzi Konstantinov - Dzinot, Dimitar and Konstantin Miladinov, Grigor Prlicev, Kuzman Sapkarev, Krste Misirkov, Nikola Vapcharov and others began to lead a literacy movement.

The nineteenth century was also marked by the beginning of the national revolutionary struggle for the liberation of Macedonia. The Negush Uprising in 1822, the Razlovtsi Uprising in 1876 and the Kreshna Uprising in 1878 respectively, had a strong influence on the growth of Macedonian national awareness. Bishop Theodosius of Skopje started a campaign for an independent Macedonian Orthodox Church and tried to restore the Ohrid Archbishopric, which had been abolished since 1767. Unfortunately Bulgarian interference effectively destroyed that idea.

By 1890 another rebellion started to organize and gain momentum. The students were the first to take action. Student revolutionary organizations were formed in Switzerland and Bulgaria. Both used various tactics to combat anti-Macedonian chauvinist Balkan propaganda. Organized in 1891, the group in Bulgaria allied itself with the organization of Macedonian emigrant workers (Pechalbari) in Sofia and had much success. In time more organizations sprang up in Russia, Britain and Greece but none could match the achievements of the Sofia based "Young Macedonian Literary Society" under the tutelage of Petar Pop Arsov. This Society of young Macedonians formulated its own constitution and managed the revolutionary publication "Loza" (Vine). The first issue of Loza came out in January 1892 followed by six more publications before the Society was denounced by the Greek and Serbian press and claimed as "its own" by the Bulgarian press. According to official Bulgarian State policy, "Macedonians were Bulgarians" and any worthwhile Macedonian creation belonged to Bulgaria.

While émigré Macedonian students were fighting Greek and Bulgarian propaganda and shoring up western support outside, an historic moment took place inside Macedonia. On October 23rd, 1893 in Solun two high school teachers, Damjan Gruev and Anton Dimitrov, together with Petar Pop Arsov, a former editor of Loza and Hristo Tatarchev, a doctor, got together in bookshop owner Ivan Nikolov's house for an informal meeting

to discuss the plight of the Macedonian people and what to do about it. As word got around a committee was formed, more Macedonians got involved and a second (formal) meeting was held on February 9th, 1894, which resulted in the formation of a revolutionary organization known as the Vnatrezhna (Internal) Makedonska (Macedonian) Revolutsionerna (Revolutionary) Organizatsia (Organization), VMRO (IMRO).

To rally the masses the charismatic Gotse Delchev, a man of vision matched by only a few, dubbed as the father of the Macedonian Revolution and the soul of the movement, was chosen to lead the revolution.

By 1896 IMRO was able to exert influence to a point where it acted like a state within a state, taking over administrative positions from the Ottomans, leading boycotts against Ottoman institutions and offering isolated villages protection from Greek and Bulgarian sponsored brigands. In time IMRO operatives were able to penetrate Ottoman economic, educational and even judicial functions.

IMRO demonstrated great leadership by its ability to organize Macedonia into seven revolutionary districts (Solun, Serres, Strumitsa, Shtip, Skopje, Bitola and Endrene {Dardanelles}). It also demonstrated its weaknesses. Having allied itself with the poor village peasants and striving to refrain from obligations and debts, IMRO found itself strapped for finances.

The lack of funds to purchase sufficient arms brought home the realization that this "uprising" was going to be a long one. Delchev knew what was at stake but tragically the Ottomans killed him on May 4th, 1903 before he had a chance to put his plans into action. In Delchev's absence Gruev took charge of the organization and preparations for the uprising began. In due time plans were made, a military strategy prepared, weapons, medical supplies and food-stuffs were requisitioned and stock piled. Cheti (fighter units) were organized and training drills were performed. On July 26th, 1903, by a dispatch to the Great Powers via the British vice-consul in Bitola, the General Staff formally announced the uprising. Then on July 28th, 1903 IMRO dispatched mounted couriers to all the sub-districts with the message "let the uprising begin". On the same day the General Staff informed the Ottoman Director of Railways to warn travelers to choose a different mode of transportation in order to avoid being hurt.

Following Damjan Gruev's orders from Smilevo, the village Cheti combined forces to form the following: the Smilevo and Gjavato Region

Cheta (650), the Krushovo Region Cheta (400), the Kichevo Region Cheta (350), the Bitola Region Cheta (250), the Ohrid Region Cheta (880), the Resna Region Cheta (450), the Demir-Hisar Region Cheta (420), the Prespa Region Cheta (300), the Kostur Region Cheta (700) and the Lerin Region Cheta (450).

The Cheti, under the command of capable leaders such as Damjan Gruev, Vasil Chakalarov, Petar Pop Arsov, Pitu Guli and others, fared well and enjoyed considerable success in the few weeks before the Ottoman militia began to amass. The local villagers also joined the movement giving moral support to the fighters. Even men from other regions that had not yet risen left their homes and came to fight. All in all the Macedonian people possessed the will to fight but lacked the rifles and ammunition with which to do it.

As battles raged on throughout western Macedonia, the Cheti put down most of the local Ottoman garrisons. They destroyed bridges, railway lines and communications centers, captured most chifliks and briefly liberated some regions such as Kichevo, Demir-Hisar, Kostur, Lerin, Klisoura and Neveska. The cities of Kostur and Lerin themselves were not liberated. The most successful and highly celebrated of all battles was the storming of the town of Krushevo. Nikola Karev led the Cheti in the attack and defeated the local Ottoman garrison with ease. The Macedonians quickly took over the most strategic points like the Post Office, Town Hall and local Police Station and declared Krushevo liberated. True to their democratic commitments, the leaders of the liberating force constituted the Krushevo assembly which appointed a committee of sixty members, twenty from each of the community's Macedonian, Vlach and Albanian populations. The Krushevo Manifesto was drafted which basically recognized each ethnicity as an equal partner in the struggle and declared Krushevo a multiethnic community. The committee in turn elected an executive body of six delegates, two from each community, which operated as a provisional government. The government in turn established a financial, judiciary and police force. "At Krushevo, under the rays of temporary liberty, fraternity and equality, national hatreds were dispelled and peace and concord reigned. For eleven whole days Krushevo lived as a little independent state, and although in miniature, clothed with flesh and blood that idea which spurred Macedonians to fight, against tyranny up to the Ilinden rising." (Page 193, Vasil Bogov, Macedonian Revelation, Historical Documents Rock and Shatter Modern Political Ideology)

The "Krushevo Republic" unfortunately, only lasted two weeks but it was a glorious Republic that will forever remind the Macedonian people of their eternal struggle for independence and thirst for freedom. The liberation of Krushevo imprinted on the new Macedonian generations the legacy of a timeless and irreversible march towards self-determination.

The initial success of the rebellion was a surprise to the Ottomans especially since Ottoman forces were numerically superior to those of the rebels. The Cheti, however, demonstrated their abilities in battle and more than matched the numbers with will. The Ottomans, unfortunately, were determined to put down the rebellion and amassed additional forces, deploying a total of 167,000 infantry, 3,700 cavalry and 440 pieces of artillery (all cannons). Krushevo alone was surrounded by 20,000 Ottoman troops with 18 cannons against an encircled force of no more than 1,200 rebel fighters. The battle to retake Krushevo began on August 12th with the Macedonians crying out "Sloboda eli Smrt" (liberty or death) against the onslaught of Ottoman cannon fire. Pitu Guli and his men fought gallantly. They provided stiff opposition to the Ottoman advance but were no match for the Ottoman General Baktiar Pasha. Baktiar was a skilled war veteran who overwhelmed the Cheti by attacking the entire region simultaneously. The region was surrounded by soldiers, encircled by cannon fire and every Macedonian stronghold within was attacked simultaneously, cutting off all reinforcements and outside support.

Once Krushevo fell, one by one other IMRO strongholds began to yield, winding down the ten-week-old rebellion. In Krushevo, Baktiar Pasha allowed his troops to kill, pillage and rape for three days. The town was permanently devastated with 117 civilians murdered, 150 women raped and 159 houses burned.

In the Ilinden aftermath, according to Radin, in total 4,694 civilians were murdered, 3,122 women raped, 12,440 houses burned, 201 villages razed, 75,835 people left homeless and about 30,000 people left the country for good, becoming permanent refugees. (Page 105, IMRO and the Macedonian Question) Besides the atrocities committed against the civilian population in Macedonia, the most significant impact of the uprising was the loss of so many great IMRO leaders.

During 1903 Krste Misirkov from Pella (Postol), one of the most outstanding names in the history of Macedonian culture and the founder of the modern Macedonian literary language and orthography, published his "On Macedonian Matters" in which he projected the principles for standardization of the Macedonian literary language.

In 1908 Macedonia's hopes for a better future were again raised with the start of the Young Turk revolution. The Young Turk movement, led by the Young Turk Committee, aimed to reform the last remnants of the Ottoman Empire by making social and political reforms in Macedonia. Many Macedonians including Yane Sandanski supported the Young Turk ideals. The Macedonian revolutionary organization, through Yane Sandanski and the newly formed national federal party, actively took part in the Young Turk movement with aims at achieving autonomy for Macedonia. Unfortunately that movement too ended in disaster which paved the way for Macedonia's partition by its neighbours.

Partitioned Macedonia

In 1912 Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria joined forces, invaded Macedonia under the pretext of liberating it and with the help of the Macedonian people ejected the Ottoman army in what came to be known as the first Balkan War. But when the war ended, instead of leaving and rewarding the Macedonian people for their participation in ejecting the Ottomans the invading armies remained in Macedonia and continued to occupy it. The first Balkan War was concluded with the signing of the May 1913 Treaty of London but left the three states dissatisfied with their Macedonian territorial gains. This prompted the second Balkan War in which Macedonians were drafted and forced to fight each other in support of their occupiers. Bulgaria's attempts to enforce a new partition failed and the 1913 Treaty of Bucharest confirmed a pattern of boundaries that, with minor changes, have remained in force to this day.

Having failed to achieve independence in 1903, the Macedonians, now divided, were left to the fate of their new masters. Greece took 51% of Macedonia (Aegean Macedonia) and renamed it "Northern Greece"; Bulgaria annexed 10% (the Pirin region) and abolished the Macedonian name and Serbia took over 39% (the Vardar region) and renamed it "South Serbia". N. Pasich of Serbia and E. Venizelos of Greece agreed on the newly formed Greek-Serbian border so that there would be "only Serbs to the North and only Greeks to the South" and no "Macedonians" on either side. By this agreement began the destruction of Macedonia's geographic, natural and ethnic unity. An intensive denationalization campaign was carried out in all three parts of Macedonia in order to impose foreign identities upon the Macedonian population, the kind that suited the interests of the controlling states. In Vardar Macedonia the Serbs labeled the Macedonians "South Serbs", in Aegean Macedonia the Greeks labeled them "Slavophone Greeks", while in Pirin Macedonia were simply called Bulgarians.

World War I

When World War I erupted in 1914, Bulgaria sided with the Central powers and by 1915 it occupied the Serbian held part of Macedonia. But the defeat of the Central powers and the end of World War I in 1918 saw the 1913 partition reconfirmed and Macedonia was again left divided. At the Paris Peace Conference Macedonians demanded an independent and united Macedonia but their demands were ignored. Vardar Macedonia was re-incorporated with the rest of Serbia and into the new Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes which was later renamed Yugoslavia. Macedonians were again drafted by the occupiers and once again forced to fight and lose lives in other people's wars.

Between the Great Wars

Since 1913 consecutive Greek governments introduced denationalization policies in Greek held Macedonia to eradicate everything Macedonian including the names of native Macedonian villages, towns, cities, rivers and lakes. For example, a little stream that appeared on maps before 1913 as Crna Reka (Black River) at Mount Olympus flowing into the Aegean Sea was renamed Mavroneri (black water) on Greek maps by Greek cartographers after 1913. Kutlesh was renamed Vergina and Kukush became Kilkis. Over the years this was done for every toponym and hydronym in existence. Macedonian families were also forced to renounce their native family names and use only new "Greek-sounding" names.

During Metaxa's dictatorship Macedonians were exposed to brutal oppression. People were not allowed to speak the only language they knew, were given hefty fines and forced to drink castor oil as punishment for speaking it. The Macedonian language was made illegal and forbidden, despite the fact that in 1924 under the supervision of the League of Nations Greece had recognized its existence as a distinct language when it published the "Abecedar", the Macedonian language primer, for the needs of the Macedonian children.

The period between the two world wars was also filled with constant endeavors to change the situation in Macedonia and find a way to annul its division. In 1925 IMRO (United) was formed in Vienna under the leadership of Dimitar Vlahov, Pavel Satev, Georgi Zankov, Rizo Rizov, Vladimir Pop Timov and Hristo Jankov. Their aim was to free Macedonia within its geographical and economic borders and create an independent political unit that would become an equal member in a future Balkan Federation. In 1935 a Macedonian National Movement was founded in Serbian held Vardar Macedonia and in 1938 the first collection of poems by Venko Markovski entitled "Fire" ("Ogin") was published in Macedonian. In 1939 a collection of poems by the first modern Macedonian poet, Kocho Ratsin entitled "White Dawns" ("Beli Mugri"), were published in the Macedonian language. In 1940 a democratic group of Macedonians proposed a political program for the national and social liberation of Macedonia.

World War II and the Macedonians in Yugoslavia

In April 1941 Germany invaded Yugoslavia and opened the door for fascist ally Bulgaria to occupy almost all of geographical Macedonia.

On October 11, 1941 the Macedonian people launched a war of liberation against the Bulgarian occupation and by 1943 anti-fascist sentiments gave support to a growing communist movement which later established the Communist Party of Macedonia. During the same year a number of governing and liberation movements as well as the first Macedonian military units were established over the entire geographical region of Macedonia. The Headquarters of the National Liberation Army published a manifesto of its goals for the liberation of Macedonia. The first session of the Anti-Fascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Macedonia (ASNOM) was held on August 2nd, 1944 at the St. Prohor Pchinski Monastery. Forty-one years after the 1903 Ilinden uprising representatives from all parts of Macedonia gathered together for this occasion and decided on a constitution for the modern Macedonian State which they named "Peoples Republic of Macedonia". The ASNOM presidium was formed with Metodija Andonov Cento as its first President and a decision was made to constitute a modern Macedonian State that would become part of the new Federal Yugoslavia. In April 1945 the first Macedonian government was established with Lazar Kolisevski as its first President. In 1958 the Ohrid Archbishopric was restored and in 1967 its autocephaly was declared. The Macedonian people, at least in one part of Macedonia, were finally free to govern themselves.

The Greek Civil War and the Macedonians in Greece

After the December 1945 Varkisa agreement in Greece, use of the name "Macedonia" and the Macedonian language were once again prohibited. Greek authorities again began to apply terror tactics against the Macedonian population. According to statistics, in 1945-46 alone: 400 murders were registered; 440 women and girls were raped; 13,529 interned on the Greek islands; 8,145 imprisoned in the Greek prisons; 4,209 indicted; 3,215 sentenced to prison; 13 driven mad by torture in the prisons; 45 villages abandoned; 80 villages pillaged; 1,605 families plundered; and 1,943 families evicted.

During the Greek Civil War from 1946 to 1949 many Macedonians fought on the side of the Greek Communist Party (KKE) simply because it promised them human and national rights. Of the 35,000 soldiers enlisted in the Democratic Army of Greece (DAG, it was estimated that about half were Macedonians. During the conflict 87 Macedonian schools were opened, catering to about 100,000 students. There were also Macedonian newspapers such as "Nepokoren", "Zora", "Edinstvo" and "Borets" published and cultural and artistic associations formed.

Unfortunately after DAG's defeat all that was gained was lost and there were terrible consequences for the Macedonian people. The 28,000 Macedonian refugee children (Detsa Begaltsi) who were evacuated to Eastern European countries, to be saved from the conflict, were permanently separated from their families. Greece did not want them back so they became permanent refugees exiled in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

Fighters that fought on the side of the Partisans who managed to escape the Greek Royalist onslaught were expelled to the Soviet Union and other East European countries. Later most returned to the Republic of Macedonia or joined their families who immigrated to the USA, Canada and Australia.

Thousands of Macedonians lost their lives while fighting for the liberty of their people and a great number of Macedonian villages were burned to the ground by the Greek Royalists.

During the late 1950's inhabitants of several villages in the Florina (Lerin), Kastoria (Kostur) and Edessa (Voden) districts were forced to take oaths swearing loyalty to Greece and denouncing their Macedonian ethnicity and mother language.

This policy of denationalization continued to meet with resistance however, as the Macedonian people continued to feel Macedonian and speak their Macedonian language in secret.

With the imminent breakup of Yugoslavia, the oppressed Macedonians in Greece also began to feel the fervour and started to form their own movements which gave birth to such organizations as the Macedonian Movement for Balkan Prosperity and Vinozhito.

In regard to developments with the Macedonians in Greece, on September 8th, 1995 members of the ethnic Macedonian political party in Greece, the RAINBOW PARTY, also known as the "VINOZHITO PARTY" in Macedonian, opened an office in Lerin.

On January 19th, 1997 a Second Conference of the "RAINBOW" party was held in Lerin and was attended by 76 delegates of all local units. A Political Manifesto and Organizational Principles were adopted and a Central Council comprised of 19 members was elected.

The Central Council held its first session in Voden on January 26th, 1997 and elected a five-member Political Secretariat, an Economic Commission, an Editors' Council, etc.

In its Political Manifesto "RAINBOW" has aired its wish to cooperate with all democratic and anti-nationalist forces in the country in its struggle for peace and European integration.

The RAINBOW PARTY is a member of the European Free Alliance which has been standing up for the rights of stateless nations, peoples and regions for decades.

Other development with regard to the Macedonians in Greece includes the opening of the Greek branch of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages (EBLUL), an organization dedicated to the preservation of lesser used languages in Europe.

Across the European Union no fewer than forty million people speak languages in their everyday lives, which are different from the official language of the state in which they are living. At present this figure represents 10% of the total European population, but shortly, with the expansion of the Union, the number of people speaking a different language from the official language of their state will be much, much greater. Greece too is no exception however vigorously the state may deny it; the facts tell their own story. Much more than a negligible section of the Greek population is bilingual. It is not possible to provide precise figures since none of the censuses carried out to date has included a question on

language. The one exception was the census of 1920, yet the figures it yielded for the northern regions of the country were never published.

Moreover, the long-standing policy of marginalization and suppression has succeeded, naturally enough, in reducing the actual number of those speaking the non-official languages. This hostile treatment of multilinguals in Greece had its beginnings in the early days of the modern Greek state, 170 years ago. In those areas of the country where Arvanitika was prevalent, every effort was made to discourage its use. There was perhaps some justification for this in the desperate efforts being made to unite the regional populations into a single Greek state, using as a means to this end a policy of homogenization of the various populations.

Macedonians, such as Nase Parisi who is currently President of the Greek branch of EBLUL, are striving to introduce the Macedonian languages into the Greek educational system.

In 1995 Human Rights Watch - Helsinki condemned Greece for the oppression of its ethnic Macedonian minority, which Greece denies exists. Both Amnesty International and the European Parliament urged Greece to recognize the Macedonian language and to stop oppressing ethnic Macedonians living within its borders.

The Macedonians in Bulgaria

Political changes after the capitulation of fascist Bulgaria and the September 9th, 1944 coup d'etat positively influenced the Macedonians in Pirin. On August 9, 1946 the Communist Party of Bulgaria, under the leadership of Georgi Dimitrov, officially recognized the Macedonian nation and the right of the Bulgarian controlled part of Macedonia to attach itself to the People's Republic of Macedonia. After World War II the Macedonians in Bulgaria were recognized as a separate and distinct ethnicity. Demographic data from a free census in 1946 revealed that the majority of the population in Pirin Macedonia declared itself to be ethnic Macedonian. There was a period of cultural autonomy and affirmation of Macedonian national and cultural values. The Macedonian literary language and national history were introduced in the educational system and almost 32,000 students were taught Macedonian. In 1947 in Gorna Djumaja (Blagoevgrad) the first Macedonian bookstore, reading room and Regional Macedonian National Theater were opened. Macedonian newspapers such as "Pirinsko delo", "Nova Makedonija", "Mlad borec" etc. were also published. Literary, cultural and artistic associations were founded contributing to the spread of Macedonian culture.

In the 1956 census conducted by the Bulgarian government, 63.7% of the population living in Pirin Macedonia declared itself Macedonian. Since that census and after Tito broke relations with Russia and Bulgaria, Bulgaria changed its attitude and negated the existence of Macedonians thus forbidding the expression of the Macedonian ethnicity and language. Another census conducted in 1965 shows only 8,750 or less than 1% of the total population living in the district of Blagoevgrad to be Macedonians. This was a region with the highest percentage of Macedonians shown to live there by a previous census.

In 1989 a group of Macedonians formed the United Macedonian Organization - Ilinden (OMO Ilinden) with aims at gaining cultural and national autonomy for the Macedonians in Pirin. OMO Ilinden PIRIN was a political party of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria. It was registered as a political party in 1999 and participated in municipal elections in October 1999, where it elected five local officials. However on February 29, 2000 the Constitutional Court in Bulgaria declared OMO "Ilinden" - PIRIN unconstitutional. This was in direct violation of the right to freedom of association and the right to freedom from discrimination.

The Bulgarian government refuses to acknowledge the existence of the large Macedonian minority in Pirin Macedonia and continues to violate its basic human rights. Members and supporters of OMO Ilinden PIRIN (political party and human rights organization) and OMO Ilinden (human and minority rights organization) have been videotaped, harassed, beaten, fined, and even imprisoned simply for asserting their ethnic Macedonian identity.

The Macedonians in Albania – Recent Developments

At the local elections in Albania, held on February 18, 2007, a Macedonian from the party Macedonian Alliance for European Integration (MAEI) was, for the first time, elected as mayor. Edmond Temelko, a 36-year-old veterinarian turned politician, won the mayoral position in Prespa municipality making him the first Macedonian elected in Albania.

Macedonians in Albania are still unable to fully exercise their basic human rights such as obtain schooling in their mother tongue, using Macedonian national symbols and participation in state institutions.

Macedonians fought hard to register their political party, the Macedonian Alliance for European Integration with success which is a major accomplishment for Macedonians because they demonstrated maturity and voted for themselves. By doing so they showed the Albanian society that they are part of it and will take an active role in dealing with issues in the country.

The Prespa municipality has nine towns, inhabited mostly by ethnic Macedonians who speak their own language and foster their own cultural heritage. The Macedonian language will become the second official language and all Macedonian landmarks will be given their original names which were changed during Enver Hodza's regime.

Albania gained the Mala Prespa region from Greece in 1919 in exchange for some Albanian lands in Epirus.

The Republic of Macedonia

As federal Yugoslavia began to disintegrate in the late 1980's the Macedonians in the Peoples' Republic of Macedonia sought their chance to finally create their own state. On September 8, 1991, in a referendum, 95% of eligible voters approved a sovereign and independent Republic of Macedonia with Kiro Gligorov as its President.

The will of the people was confirmed on September 18, 1991 at the Macedonian Parliament with the declaration for acceptance of the results from the referendum.

The next important steps in strengthening the state were the adoption of the Constitution on November 17, 1991, which was supplemented after the 2001 conflict, and the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement.

The internationally legal subjectivity of the state was recognized on April 8, 1993 with an acclamation of the UN General Assembly. Macedonia was admitted as the 181st full-fledged member.

Fearing that it might lose its Macedonian occupied territories, Greece was first to object to the Republic of Macedonia's independence.

Although the European Community acknowledged that Macedonia had fulfilled the requirements for official recognition, due to the opposition of Greece which was already a member of the community, the EC decided to postpone the recognition. Greece, afraid that Macedonia might put forward a historical, cultural and linguistic claim over Aegean Macedonia, insisted that the new nation had no right to use of the name "Macedonia" and use the emblem of ancient Macedonia on its flag. In July of 1992 there were massive demonstrations by Macedonians in the capital Skopje over the failure to receive recognition. But despite Greek objections, Macedonia in 1993 was admitted to the United Nations under the temporary reference (not an official name) "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". Full diplomatic relations with a number of EC nations followed, while Russia, China, Turkey, Bulgaria and most nations ignored Greece's objections and recognized Macedonia under its constitutional name "Republic of Macedonia".

Greece, dissatisfied with the results, in February 1994 imposed a trade embargo on Macedonia in an attempt to force President Gligorov to make changes to his country's name, nation and language and amend the Constitution to remove Article 47 which stipulated that "the Republic of Macedonia cares for the statute and rights of those persons belonging to the Macedonian people in neighboring countries, as well as Macedonian

ex-parties, assists their cultural development and promotes links with them." Ironically Greece also has a similar article in its own Constitution, as is normal for any country in the world to care for its minorities in other countries.

Faced with an economic collapse and left without any support from the international community, Macedonia had no choice but to change its flag and constitution, after which Greece lifted the embargo.

Still reeling from the Greek embargo, from the internationally imposed embargo on Serbia, its traditional trading partner, and from unresolved issues with Greece, the Republic of Macedonia was faced with a new set of problems, a war at home.

Due to the conflict north of Macedonia and as a result of the NATO bombing of Serbia, an influx of war refugees numbering in the three hundred thousands entered Macedonia. This created economic as well as political strain on impoverished Macedonia which on one hand, had to cope with an overnight 15% population increase and on the other criticisms from various human rights groups for the ways it handled the refugees.

No sooner had that crisis ended when armed bands of Albanian fighters spilled over from the Serbian conflict began to infiltrate and stir up trouble in Macedonia. In 2001 these illegal bands, first branded as terrorists and later as "freedom fighters" began to occupy camps and later villages in western Macedonia. Initially these bands were seen as benign but as they started to assert themselves by restricting travel, kidnappings, torturing civilians and cutting off electricity and water supplies to various communities, the Macedonian police and military began to pursue them. There was an immediate backlash from the western media which, in spite of their violent acts, viewed the Albanian bands as human rights fighters and the Macedonian government and people as aggressors.

This war placed great strains on Macedonia's economy and created a long lasting divide between the Macedonian and Albanian communities inside Macedonia, communities that coexisted peacefully for centuries.

The war lasted approximately six months and officially ended with the signing of the Ohrid agreement on August 13, 2001.

"According to the Ohrid Peace Agreement, the international community was invited to support the challenging road of Macedonia from the brink of civil war in August 2001 to peace, stability and integration into Euro-Atlantic structures.

In response to a request for NATO assistance made by the Macedonian

President Boris Trajkovski on June 20, 2001, this military organization drew up the operational plan that was dedicated to the peace and stability of the Republic of Macedonia. However, NATO had imposed three conditions for its help in resolving the crisis: conclusion of political agreement between the various parties in the Republic of Macedonia, armistice linked with amnesty for the members of the so-called NLA and finally pledge of full demilitarization from the so-called NLA. Once the Macedonian political parties signed the Ohrid Peace Agreement, the way was opened for NATO's first mission in the Republic of Macedonia. The NATO military support to the Republic of Macedonia effectively commenced on August 27, 2001, with Operation Essential Harvest / Task Force Harvest (TFH). This UK-lead mission involved the rapid deployment of 4,600 Allied troops that were initiated to fulfill NATO's promise to assist the Macedonian people by collecting and destroying arms and ammunition on a voluntary basis from ethnic-Albanian extremists.

As a result of the greatly improved security in the country, authorities of the Republic of Macedonia and NATO finally decided to bring the mission to an end on December 15, 2002.”

(http://www.airserbia.com/magazin/bozinovski/eu-nato/eu-nato_in_macedonia.htm)

In spite of Greece's objection to the name, to date over 120 countries including the USA, Russia and China have recognized the Republic of Macedonia by its rightful name.

The Macedonians in the Diaspora

The Macedonians today living in Canada, the USA, Australia and the world over did not end up where they are just by accident. Almost every Macedonian found outside of Macedonia today is either a political or economic refugee who was driven out of his or her homeland by oppression, violence and economic strife.

The turn of the 20th Century was a milestone in the history of the Macedonian people. Hopelessly outnumbered, many fought for their freedom and independence in the great and stubborn National Ilinden Uprising in 1903 but lost to the Ottomans.

Canada, Australia and the United States were rarely visited and were virtually unknown to the Macedonians prior to 1903. Those who had ventured to these distant lands were mostly migrant workers looking to make some money and return home to invest it. No one at that time entertained the slightest notion of settling permanently in these lands. Unfortunately the failed 1903 rebellion brought catastrophic consequences to the Macedonian people and drove them to flee abroad to save themselves.

Unfortunately the Macedonian situation did not improve over the years and more and more Macedonians were driven out of Macedonia mostly during the Balkans Wars when Macedonia was invaded, occupied and partitioned by Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria and later during the 1st and 2nd World Wars and during the Greek Civil War.

Having left their homeland as war refugees the vast majority of Macedonians immigrated to Canada, the USA and Australia where they made their new homes. Even though they now live abroad most Macedonians keep an interest in their former home, always hoping for the situation in Macedonia, particularly in the Greek and Bulgarian part, to improve so that they can one day return and reclaim what once was theirs. This is particularly true with the Macedonian refugees from the Greek Civil War, especially the 28,000 Child Refugees who were driven out of Greece at the height of the Greek Civil War in 1948 and are still waiting to this day be taken back.

Even though these people now live outside of Macedonia they feel that they have a right to be attached to their birthplace and to have a say in what happens to their homes and properties.

Macedonia is home to all indigenous Macedonians no matter where they live and as such they have the right to determine their own destiny.

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