

# THE MACEDONIAN SCIENTIFIC AND LITERARY SOCIETY IN ST. PETERSBURG, 1902-1917

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis concerns the formation of the Macedonian Scientific and Literary Society (MSLS) by a group of students at the University of St. Petersburg and its involvement in the resolution of the Macedonian Question. I argue that the emergence of the MSLS was inspired by ideas of a separate Macedonian Slav identity that the students sought to translate into a platform for a prospective independent Macedonian state. This state was initially imagined as an autonomous Ottoman protectorate with provisions for an officially recognized language, nationality and an autocephalous Orthodox Church. I trace the development and modification of this idea to accommodate local realities such as the Balkan Wars.

Contrary to what was believed at the time, I show that the movement of Macedonian students in St. Petersburg led by Dimitrija Čupovski was not an implement of the governments of Serbia, Bulgaria or Russia to further their own agendas. Through an examination of documents and publications produced by the MSLS as well as memoirs and letters, I demonstrate that this student organization developed an intricate national platform whose implementation in Macedonia was challenged by social and political circumstances.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the early 1900s, the territory associated with the geographic and ethnic notion of Macedonia was, to a large extent, still an integral part of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>1</sup> Following a number of territorial concessions to the emerging Balkan states, effectuated by a string of enfeebling treaties, the Ottoman presence in Europe eroded to a stretch of land clenched between the Ionian Sea in the west, Greece and the Aegean Sea in the south, the Bulgarian Principality in the east and Serbia and Montenegro in the north. Macedonia itself, as it was understood at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, lay as an indistinct fragment within this perimeter, sprawled across the vilayets of Kosovo, Bitola (Monastir) and Salonica (Selanik). As a veritable microcosm of Ottoman society, Macedonia at this time was characterized by diverse communities which saw ethnic and religious heterogeneity give impetus to the development of rival ideologies, often in the process of forming new identities and new self-understandings. The eventual prominence, therefore, of a Macedonian Question or the matter of a Macedonian people with a specific and distinguishable national peculiarity, has had a history that is as conflicted and divergent as the demographic features of the region where it originated.

While attempts at identifying and validating a Macedonian identity may be traced as early as the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with ecclesiastic efforts towards a codification of the vernacular Slavic dialects of the region, one can speak of Macedonian nationalism realistically in terms of the post-1850 period.<sup>2</sup> This was a period of significant ferment in the direction of a

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<sup>1</sup> On the shifting historical context of Macedonia's general location see H.R. Wilkinson, *Maps and Politics: A Review of the Ethnographic Cartography of Macedonia*, (Liverpool: University Press, 1951).

<sup>2</sup> The appearance of a literary language based on the vernacular may be framed largely in the struggle to supplant Old Church Slavonic as the language of liturgy and the high style of writing. See Horace Lunt, "Survey of Macedonian Literature" in *Harvard Slavic Studies* 1 (1953): 363-369.

national and political movement that found expression predominately in the activism of several groups whose aims and motivations differed as frequently as they overlapped. Most notably, the Internal Macedonian-Adrianopolitan Revolutionary Organization (IMARO) operated as a secret revolutionary society whose extensive organizational activities resulted in a wide and intricate network of committees across Macedonia. Arguably the most militant and enduring manifestation of the ideology of Macedonian political autonomy from the Ottoman Empire, IMARO suffered from an inability to formulate and deliver a clear cultural policy on nationalism and language in a post-Ottoman Macedonia. The culmination of IMARO's endeavors, the Ilinden Uprising of August 1903 and its subsequent failure, has been the subject of much analysis and controversial debate in the historical scholarship of both the modern Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the organization's intellectual contributions towards the construction of a national program for Macedonia have been overshadowed by a focus on its campaign of armed struggle as a means of securing “liberation.”<sup>4</sup>

The significance of studying IMARO as a movement that both caused and developed upon national upheaval cannot be neglected; however, for all its complexity and attraction, this organization was just a part of a greater landscape, one that consisted of networks of émigrés from the Macedonian lands organized in student associations, scholarly circles and literary societies. Expatriated by difficult living conditions due to economic hardship and political

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<sup>3</sup> The closest to an official history of IMARO in Bulgaria is the four-volume *Natzionalno-osvoboditelno dvizhenie na makedonskite i trakiyskite balgari* [National Liberation Movement of Macedonian and Thracian Bulgarians] Four Volumes, (Sofia: Macedonian Scientific Institute, Institute of History at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1994-2000). In Macedonia, the definitive history of IMARO is Ivan Katardzhiev, *Sto godini od formiranjeto na VMRO – sto godini revolucionerna tradicija* [One Hundred Years from the Formation of IMRO – One Hundred Years of Revolutionary Tradition], (Skopje: Kultura, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> For an objective narrative of the decade spanning the establishment of IMARO and the Ilinden Uprising see Duncan Perry, *The Politics of Terror: The Macedonian Liberation Movements, 1893-1903*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1988).

tribulations, intellectual activity arose in regional centers such as Belgrade and Sofia. Yet, it was in Romanov Russia that a group of twenty students at St. Petersburg University formed the *Macedonian Scientific and Literary Society (MSLS)*,<sup>5</sup> a scholarly clique that, during its existence from 1902 to 1917, would become the preeminent society representing the Macedonian cause abroad.

Initially founded by students from Macedonia at the University of St. Petersburg who applied themselves to the study of linguistics, philology, history, ethnography and international diplomacy in a way pertinent to the resolution of the Macedonian question, the MSLS drew on a fertile tradition of expatriate communities and principles. For instance, at various points in its lifespan, the politics and intellectual output of the MSLS were influenced by ideas such as pan-Slavism and Slavic solidarity, Balkan federalism, self-determination and exclusive Macedonian nationalism (i.e. representing the interests of Macedonian Slavs rather than the population of Macedonia). Such a confluence of concepts acting upon the preparation of a national program provides an abundance of avenues for reevaluating factors in shaping early 20<sup>th</sup> century Macedonian nationalism. In addition, many of its members were ardent supporters of language reform and standardization as an instrument for national concretization. This was a contributing factor to the publication of “Za makedonckite raboti” (On Macedonian Matters)<sup>6</sup> in 1903, a seminal book arguing for a Macedonian literary language, and has been described as a culmination of the development of nineteenth-century Macedonian nationalism, particularly from

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<sup>5</sup> The Macedonian Scientific and Literary Society has been called the *Macedonian Colony in St. Petersburg*, the *Slav-Macedonian Student Society*, the *Slav-Macedonian National Educational Society* “*Ss. Cyril and Methodius*” and variants thereof. For the sake of simplicity and the purposes of this thesis, I will be using either the acronym MSLS, the full title or simply the Macedonian Colony. This is also most widely used in Macedonian historiography.

<sup>6</sup> Author of “Za makedonckite raboti” is Krste P. Misirkov, a founding member of the MSLS and one of its chief activists. A comprehensive study on Misirkov’s life and times can be found in Blaže Ristovski, *Krste Misirkov, 1874-1926*, (Skopje: Misirkov, 1986).

the linguistic point of view.<sup>7</sup>

Undoubtedly, the apogee of the scholarly activity was substantiated with the publication of “Makedonskiy Golos” (Macedonian Voice), an eleven-issue periodical in Russian featuring contributions by both members and sympathizers with the cause of Macedonian statehood. Prompted by the conclusion of the Second Balkan War, the periodical was conceived as an implement by which a lobby for Macedonian territorial integrity could be articulated and a medium for supportive affiliates could be provided. While it was in circulation for little over eighteen months, the periodical is a crucial source of information not only concerning the notions espoused by the members, but also about the environment in which the MSLS functioned and the political circumstances that shaped its course. Indeed, in the confused aftermath of the 1913 Treaty of Bucharest that cast much of the domestic intelligentsia in disarray and, in many cases, across new borders, the MSLS, with its publications and foreign correspondence with the diplomats of the Great Powers assumed the unwitting role of a consulate for the nascent Macedonian movement.

With this in mind, the aim of this paper has several aspects. First, the intellectual and institutional predecessors of the Macedonian Scientific and Literary Society will be discussed as a bridge to understanding the ideological background to the emergence of this organization. The Macedonian Colony in St. Petersburg was a salient feature of the expatriate topography at the outset of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and had its roots in various clubs across the Balkans which supported a Macedonian state in one form or another. Moreover, the founding members, although assembling for a common purpose in the Russian capital, came from disparate backgrounds and occasionally

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<sup>7</sup> Victor A. Friedman, “Macedonian Language and Nationalism During the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries” in *Macedonian Review* XVI (1986): 287.



held dissenting views on the direction the Society was taking as well as the measure of external involvement in its agenda. Additionally, a reflection on the internal organizational dynamic with special attention to the charisma of the president of the MSLS, Dimitrija Čupovski, will be an apposite point of analysis. Second, through an investigation and interpretation of relevant documents concerning and produced by the MSLS, including the rhetoric of the eleven issues of its periodical “Makedonskiy golos”, a localization of its agenda will be conducted in terms of determining factors in their development from 1902 to 1917 and the sociopolitical implications of operating out of the Russian imperial capital during this period. Namely, several notable figures in Russian society were of import to the establishment and endurance of the Macedonian Scientific and Literary Society and their relationship will be scrutinized closely. Third, a connection will be made between the decisions in St. Petersburg and the real circumstances on the ground first in Ottoman Macedonia (from 1902 up to 1913) and then in post-Bucharest Macedonia (from 1913 to 1917-18). It will be illustrated that, despite several plans to penetrate Macedonia in order to distribute propaganda and educational material, a considerable ideological gulf existed between the authorities governing Macedonia at this time and the population calling the region home on one side, and the national project of the members of the MSLS on the other side. Fourth, it will be shown that, in circumstances of statelessness and a nonexistence of national academic institutions, the MSLS was primarily engaged in extracting and structuring the attributes of a Macedonian culture as a developing intellectual elite in self-imposed exile. In this sense, the work of the Macedonian intelligentsia in St. Petersburg, represented by the MSLS and centered on collecting, preserving, systematizing and disseminating the idiosyncrasies of the Slavic population in Macedonia, aided the conceptualization of a policy of cultural autonomy as

a prerequisite for constituting a prospective Macedonian state.

The aforementioned points will be expanded in one theoretical chapter and three core chapters. Attention will be paid to the conceptual underpinnings of key notions such as nationalism and the nation-state, ethnicity, imagined geographies and attendant identities, and others. The traditional discourses on these topics will be addressed with an overt emphasis on the most recent theoretical debate in this regard. The purpose will be to challenge existing frames of reference for the process of identity formation and to discuss the agency of intellectual elites in producing nationalist sentiment. Additionally, I will examine several authors who have put forward theories concerning the factors behind the emergence of a Macedonian identity in order to provide a scholarly framework for discussing the various meanings of the epithet “Macedonian”.

Chapter I will be devoted to the most significant groups that informed, inspired and aided the organized assembly of students at the University of St. Petersburg originating from Macedonia. I will discuss how each of the groups influenced the development of the MSLS and contextualize the St. Petersburg movement in order to demonstrate that it emerged out of a confluence of people and ideas rather than as a contrived, top-down project. Moreover, the involvement of both Great Power and Balkan politics in attracting the young minds of the region to their academic institutions will be analyzed with a view to tracing the background of the Society's members.

The ideological platform of the MSLS in St. Petersburg for a prospective Macedonian state will be the subject of Chapter II. This chapter will feature several pertinent documents and, aside from using the organization’s main publication *Makedonski Golos*, I will include an

analysis of earlier and later periodicals and pamphlets that saw contributions from MSLS-affiliated authors. By reviewing the available documents, I will demonstrate the evolution of the group's principles and goals, the modification of its platform in response to political developments concerning Macedonia and its reaction to regional turmoil from 1902 to 1917.

In Chapter III, I will examine the obstacles facing the MSLS in translating their platform to practical work “on the ground” in Macedonia. In particular, the relationship of the St. Petersburg diaspora with IMARO will be examined in terms of their respective visions and methods towards accomplishing Macedonian statehood. In addition, a comparison will be made between the political program of the Macedonian state as the MSLS perceived it and the sociopolitical realities in Ottoman and, subsequently, post-Bucharest Macedonia with an emphasis on competing designs on the region by neighboring states. Furthermore, an analysis of the disconnect between popular sentiments on the ground and the cultural policies envisioned for the territory of Macedonia will serve to challenge the historical narrative of the MSLS as a measurable force in the region during 1902-1917.

The written material created by the Macedonian Scientific and Literary Society was considerable despite the resources and facilities at their disposal. Most of the primary sources used in this paper may be assigned to three categories: published periodicals, personal correspondence and memoirs. Unfortunately, much of the educational material that the MSLS was preparing to disseminate across Macedonian schools, such as textbooks in a standardized Macedonian language and a Russian-Macedonian dictionary, as well as documents on the day-to-day affairs of the organization were lost to history following the devastation of Leningrad during the Second World War. Certainly, these documents would have proved an invaluable resource

and would have been the subject of much informative scholarship.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The archive of the MSLS in St. Petersburg has not been preserved. The archival material was destroyed in 1942 when a German incendiary bomb fell through the roof of Čupovski's house. Since it failed to ignite, Čupovski's son Rostislav pushed the bomb out of the window along with the rubble that contained the documents in order to save his home and family. Blaže Ristovski, *Dimitrija Čupovski (1878-1940) i Makedonskoto naučno-literaturno drugarstvo vo Petrograd [Dimitrija Čupovski and the Macedonian Scientific and Literary Society in Petrograd]*, (Skopje: Kultura, 1978), 245.

## THEORETICAL APPROACH

In the following chapter, I will discuss the theoretical underpinnings of several concepts that are associated with the subject of my research, the Macedonian Scientific and Literary Society, and I will attempt to encapsulate current debates in the relevant fields. Specifically, I will delve into an analysis of the object of national ideology – the nation – and I will identify a conceptual framework that will house the political and cultural program of the MSLS. In addition, I will look at some notions that will reinforce an apt presentation of the MSLS as a group and an institution with peculiar features.

The genesis and nature of the nation and nationalism have been critically examined by a plethora of social scientists from various aspects. Classical theories of nationalism insist on the modern nature of the phenomenon. In his 1976 *Peasants into Frenchmen*, Eugene Weber postulated that the putative bond of nationhood was forged by sweeping industrialization in the form of infrastructure, schools and conscription.<sup>9</sup> Although subject to much criticism since its publication, the book contributed to the initiation of a theoretical debate concerning the modern character of nations. Ernest Gellner took up the matter of industrialization as a prerequisite to successful nation-building by declaring that “agrarian civilisations do not engender nationalism, but industrial and industrial societies do.”<sup>10</sup> Continuing the trend, Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm wrote about an emergence of a standardized language as a constitutive trait of a nation and as contingent on “printing, mass literacy, and hence, mass schooling,” all of which ostensibly modern developments.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Eugene Weber, *Peasants Into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976).

<sup>10</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Culture, Identity, and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 18.

<sup>11</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge

Yet, for all their scholarly merit, these authors represent a tradition in theoretical debates on nationalism that has largely been surpassed as too essentialist and dependent on the modernity paradigm. For instance, Anthony Smith, Gellner's student, has opposed his mentor by referring to ethno-symbolism and saying that “nations and nationalisms are ... the products of preexisting traditions and heritages which have coalesced over the generations.”<sup>12</sup> Alternative viewpoints have since emerged seeking to recast the discussion in terms of culture, such as Benedict Anderson's understanding of the nation as having symbolic value for its members who are sharing, or “imagining”, a sense of belonging that runs a connective fiber across what is essentially a community of strangers.<sup>13</sup> Katherine Verdery echoed Anderson when she described the nation as a phenomenon, something that is perceived rather than fixed. Inviting closer scrutiny, Verdery writes that one “should treat nation as a symbol and any given nationalism as having multiple meanings, offered as alternatives and competed over by different groups maneuvering to capture the symbol's definition and its legitimizing effects.”<sup>14</sup>

Despite the value of previous scholarship in arriving at a universal hypothesis of nationalism, difficulties in constructing a sufficiently flexible and operational model have led to an effluence of typologies. This is why, at the start of the 1990s, scholars were likely to break up the monolithic concept into multiple nationalisms. One example is John Hall's incisive classification into five types: “the logic of the asocial society” (which calls for continual competition between states), “revolution from above” (spurred by ideals of social mobility),

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University Press, 1991), 10.

<sup>12</sup> Ernest Gellner and Anthony D. Smith. “The nation: real or imagined? The Warwick Debates on Nationalism.” *Nations and Nationalism* 2, no. 3, 1996. 357.

<sup>13</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

<sup>14</sup> Katherine Verdery, “Whither 'Nation' and 'Nationalism'” in *Daedalus*, Summer, 1993. 37.

“desire and fear blessed by opportunity” (characteristic of Latin American nationalism), “*risorgimento* nationalism” (stressing civic loyalty within a democratic regime), and “integral nationalism” (ethnicity taking over from civic obligation).<sup>15</sup> Miroslav Hroch, in turn, asserted that “[n]ation-building was never a mere project of ambitious or narcissistic intellectuals” and distinguished four types of national movements: a) national ferment under the old regime with mass character contingent on a nascent labor movement, b) national ferment under the old regime with mass character delayed after constitutional reform, c) mass character already under the old regime before a civil society or a constitutional order, and d) national ferment under constitutionalism in a developed capitalist setting.<sup>16</sup>

The intrinsic flaws of such systems, or any categorization that purports to structure a notion as disparately comprehended as the nation, lie in the enormous gray area that the typology does not cover. Indeed, nationalisms often blend features across categories and some are classes unto themselves, a tendency that makes for considerable fragmentation. Some have expressed support for the continuation of the typological practice albeit with reserve.<sup>17</sup>

In the context of Balkan nationalisms, the region has been frequently subject to the unfortunate dichotomy of civic and ethnic nationalisms, the latter being ascribed almost exclusively to the national ideologies of the Peninsula.<sup>18</sup> Rogers Brubaker has indicated the ambiguities of this model by decrying the “normatively loaded, one-sided” labeling of civic

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<sup>15</sup> John A. Hall, “Nationalisms: Classified and Explained,” *Daedalus*, Summer 1993.

<sup>16</sup> Miroslav Hroch, “From National Movement to the Fully-Formed Nation: The Nation-Building Process in Europe,” *New Left Review* 1 (98), 1993, 8.

<sup>17</sup> “[U]nified periodisations of nationalism have their *raison d’etre*, but only as periodisations of the interaction of particular nationalisms and of the process of establishing and reproducing a world-wide nationalist superdiscourse.” Alexei Miller, “Nationalism and Theorists,” *CEU History Department Yearbook*, 1996. 207-214.

<sup>18</sup> John Plamenatz, “Two Types of Nationalism,” in *Nationalism: The Nature and Evolution of an Idea*, edited by Eugene Kamenka (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1973).

nationalism as “liberal, voluntarist, universalist, and inclusive” and ethnic nationalism as “illiberal, ascriptive, particularist, and exclusive.”<sup>19</sup> His “modest alternative” draws a finer distinction in what he calls *state-framed* and *counter-state* understandings of nationhood. While in the former, the nation is congruent with the state, in the latter, it is different and possibly opposed to the “territorial and institutional frame” of the existent state.<sup>20</sup> The implications of this analysis are quite pertinent to the national ideology of the St. Petersburg group. Namely, the Scientific and Literary Society had defined a nation in cultural and ethnic terms – the Macedonian Slavs of a cartographically delimited territory – that had not been recognized as such by either the Ottoman state or any political entity of meaningful clout. As such, the “nationalism” of the Society's members may be couched in the idiom of “territory, historic provincial privileges, or the possession of a distinct political history prior to incorporation into a larger state.”<sup>21</sup>

Macedonia's historically protean perimeter has left it open to notional incorporation into the grand ideas of groups with varying monopolies of power. A helpful concept to consider the implications of such a perception of space is that of an *imaginative geography*. Coming out of the Orientalism discourse of Edward Said, the concept refers to a dramatization of distance and the individuation of space. In Chapter One of his book, Said uses a metaphor of a house to evoke the concretization of objective space. He writes that “space acquires emotional and even rational sense by a kind of poetic process, whereby the vacant or anonymous reaches of distance are converted into meaning for us here.”<sup>22</sup> While it is true that Said uses this term to develop ideas

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<sup>19</sup> Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 140-41.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 145

<sup>22</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Vintage Books, 1978), 55.



about Western experience of the Orient, the concept may be equally useful in describing the practices that constructed and intensified sense of national belonging and community among the members of the St. Petersburg Society. Indeed, this is important since most of the members, including the leaders, spent the largest part of their lives outside of Macedonia, formulating a cultural and political agenda informed by a territorially-removed perception of the social environment. Hence, as national elites, the Society's members were marked by “self-deception” that Gellner refers to in his *Nations and Nationalism*, regarding the perception of “nationalism [as] the general imposition of a high culture on society, where previously low cultures had taken up the lives of the majority, and in some cases the totality, of the population.”<sup>23</sup>

The gulf between realities in Macedonia and in the Russian capital characterized the relationship the Society had with the notion of a Macedonian people as a distinct ethnic entity. While the Society's agenda was directed towards Macedonian Slavs living in Macedonia, its rhetoric frequently conflated this designation with simply “Macedonian.” Ethnicity and identity are very problematic subjects in the geotemporal context of Ottoman Macedonia. Loring Danforth has theorized that the Slavs of Macedonia had “no clearly developed sense of national identity,” instead relying on the outcome of various antagonisms between the Bulgarian Exarchate and Greek Patriarchate, such as between the schools they established and the armed bandits they supported, for their self-identification.<sup>24</sup> Tchavdar Marinov has maintained that, by frequent accounts, the land itself was not a site of “any proper idea of ethnicity.”<sup>25</sup> Additionally,

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<sup>23</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 57.

<sup>24</sup> Loring Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict: Ethnic Nationalism in a Transnational World*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 59.

<sup>25</sup> Tchavdar Marinov, “We, the Macedonians’: The Paths of Macedonian Supra-Nationalism (1878-1912),” in *We, the People: Politics of National Peculiarity in Southeastern Europe*, edited by Diana Mishkova (Budapest: CEU Press, 2009). 108.

he has asserted the potential for interpreting “a lack of national identity as a kind of identity,” adding that “it is not by chance that the thesis of the 'floating mass' of Macedonian Slavs is often used by the Macedonian national historiography in order to assert a distinct 'ethnic character.’”<sup>26</sup> Reflecting on a common trope in regional historiography that is yet to be overcome, Ulf Brunnbauer has characterized this portrayal of Macedonians as an inchoate mass of people in terms of victimization myths of a beleaguered and defenseless people.<sup>27</sup>

Nonetheless, the amorphous character of the Slav population of Macedonia does not necessarily lend credibility to identifying strong leanings towards neighboring identities. It has been recognized that linguistic similarities have represented a criterion for Bulgarian claims to Macedonia during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>28</sup> In this sense, the general challenges encountered in scholarship on nationalism and ethnicity translate to the Macedonian case as a symptom of the broader Balkan condition. Feroze Yasamee captures the pitfalls and ambiguities implicit in attempting to tackle problems of national identity in the Balkans by advancing three points: a) Balkan states suffer from “cultural provincialism” that renders their cultures non-exportable and the states themselves reliant upon external patrons, b) group identity is more complex than standard nationalist accounts and is the result of an interplay of factors, among which a progressive dissolution of religious identities and absorption of local identities into a larger, linguistic nation, c) history in the Balkan states has a tradition of being used to foster a sense of past achievement, and to legitimize the present.<sup>29</sup> Thus, it is worth considering how

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>27</sup> Ulf Brunnbauer, “Historiography, Myths and the Nation in the Republic of Macedonia,” in *(Re)Writing History. Historiography in Southeast Europe after Socialism*, (Munster: Lit-Verlag, 2004), 186.

<sup>28</sup> Fikret Adanir, “The Macedonians in the Ottoman Empire, 1878-1912,” in *The Formation of National Elites*, edited by Andreas Kappeler et al. (Aldershot, Hants: Dartmouth / New York: New York University Press, 1992), 161-91.

<sup>29</sup> Feroze A. K. Yasamee, “Nationality in the Balkans: the Case of Macedonians,” in *Balkans: A Mirror of the New*

eagerly general theories on nationalism and nation-building should be applied to this local context, in view of idiosyncrasies that eschew the conceptual treatment of conventional categorization.

## CHAPTER ONE: FORMATIVE INFLUENCES

The Macedonian Scientific and Literary Society undoubtedly emerged on the basis of concepts espoused by various associations, committees and groups in Macedonia and among the émigré community in Bulgaria and Serbia as well as across the European continent during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>30</sup> This chapter will discuss the organizations that were essential to the establishment of the MSLS. By doing so, I will demonstrate that a substantial intellectual legacy of activism informed the organized activity of the Macedonian Colony in St. Petersburg rather than it being a product of “sons of Serbomans from Macedonia ... inspired by hatred for everything Bulgarian.”<sup>31</sup> I will present a picture of the networked character of societies seeking to promote the cause for Macedonian statehood and how the MSLS drew on these experiences. Finally, I will use the discussion regarding the émigré topography to arrive at a functional summary of the platform of the MSLS.

### 1.1 THE MACEDONIAN CLUB IN BELGRADE

While the process leading up to the establishment of the MSLS in St. Petersburg was a complex sequence of similar intellectual outpourings, it was not until a group of students at the Great School of Belgrade<sup>32</sup> assembled for the purpose of reading and circulating separatist literature that the future Macedonian Colony in St. Petersburg would receive empirical underpinnings. This largely student organization came to be called the *Macedonian Club* and had

<sup>30</sup> Some of these are the *Slav-Macedonian Literary Circle* (1888) and the *Young Macedonian Literary Circle* (1891), both based in Sofia, as well as the *Student Society “Vardar”* in Belgrade (1893). See Aleksandar Aleksiev, *Osnovopoložnici na makedonskata literatura [Founders of Macedonian Literature]*, (Skopje: Misla, 1972).

<sup>31</sup> Hristo Šaldev, *Memoari [Memoirs]*, (Adelaide: Macedonian Patriotic Organization “TA”, 1993), 15. Available at <http://promacedonia.org/en/gphillip/hs/index.html>

<sup>32</sup> Until 1905, the University of Belgrade was known as the *Great School (Velika škola)* and comprised the Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Philosophy and Faculty of Law. Most of the members of the Macedonian Club were law students.

a dozen members at the time of its founding in 1901. It was led by law students Stefan Jakimov Dedov<sup>33</sup> and Dijamandija Trpkov Mišajkov<sup>34</sup> who already had experience in organizing similar groups in their respective hometowns in Macedonia. Both of them would later sign their names on the constitutive document of the Macedonian Scientific and Literary Society in St. Petersburg.

The most significant accomplishment of the Macedonian Club was the periodical “Balkanski glasnik” (Balkan Gazette), a publication that ran for 8 issues during the summer of 1902, in French and Serbian. It was a seminal publication because it was intended by its editors as a space for promoting a new Macedonian movement for national individuation. Specifically, “Balkanski glasnik” was the first platform where the goals of a rising national intelligentsia regarding a prospective Macedonian state were presented and elaborated in a discursive manner with a linguistic national element making a first appearance. For instance, an article in the fourth issue concludes with the message that “[i]t is hoped that in the interest of Slavdom in the Balkans everyone will endeavor towards providing Macedonia with autonomy and recognizing its Slavic Macedonian dialect.”<sup>35</sup> In another issue, the resolution to the Macedonian Question is seen in securing “autonomy, a Slavic local language-dialect, neutrality, Turkish vassalage and free trade

<sup>33</sup> Dedov may be rightly considered one of the core members of MSLS as his publishing and organizational activities were particularly fruitful. He was successful at initiating many publishing activities. After coordinating the St. Petersburg Colony, Dedov moved to Sofia where he helped Misirkov print and publish his book “On Macedonian Matters” and establish a branch of the MSLS. He also published a second periodical, “Balkan”, which managed to reach twelve issues, and contributed heavily to “Avtonomna Makedonija” where he published articles in a Macedonian dialect. He was assassinated in Sofia in September of 1914 by a Bulgarian sympathizer, allegedly because of his Serbian affiliations. Ristovski, *Dimitrija Čupovski*, 172-176.

<sup>34</sup> In the aftermath of the Serbian government’s crackdown on nationalist institutions, Mišajkov left for St. Petersburg where there was already significant intellectual ferment inspired by experiences from the Balkans. As a founding member and first president of the MSLS, he was active in developing a program for publicizing the Macedonian Question among the Russian capital’s Slavophile circles. His return to Macedonia in 1903 was prompted by a perceived necessity by the MSLS, specifically Čupovski and Misirkov, to investigate the potential for opening Macedonian schools in the Bitola region as well as writing textbooks. Ibid., 157-163.

<sup>35</sup> *Balkanski glasnik [Balkan Gazette]*, I, 4, (Belgrade, 28.07.1902), 2.

with Serbia as well as Bulgaria.”<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, the Club identified Russia as a deciding factor in the future of a Macedonian state by declaring that:

“...the hopes of [every country] in the Balkans are directed towards . . . Russia without which they would not exist or progress. If this is so, why not . . . entrust the resolution of both the Macedonian Question and other issues that are contentious among Balkan nations to the Russian government and its politicians?”<sup>37</sup>

From this, it may be gathered that the national ideology of the Macedonian Club envisioned a prospective Macedonian state nominally within the framework of the Ottoman Empire as an autonomous entity whose language, territorial integrity and regional security would be brokered by a Great Power such as Russia. These ideas tied directly into the initial program of the MSLS in St. Petersburg.

While in principle the Macedonian Club in Belgrade did not rule out armed struggle as a means to forming an independent Macedonian state, the articles in “Balkanski glasnik” indicate that its primary concern was curbing what was perceived as deleterious propaganda by neighboring governments. Preserving Macedonia within the borders of the Ottoman Empire was seen as a better alternative to revolutionary struggle in the long run due to the opportunistic political climate in the region. It is likely that this was the reason why Macedonians in Belgrade attempted to pitch their national project as a gravely needed regional stabilizing force, discussing for the first time the benefits of an intact Macedonia within a Balkan federation. An anonymous author (probably Dedov) writes in the penultimate issue of the periodical:

“...if an autonomous Macedonia were to be formed and incorporated in a neutral Balkan federation, there would be no reason to fear Macedonians wandering across other free and fraternal states inciting revolutions, or that Serbia, Bulgaria and Montenegro would seek territorial aggrandizement; rather, all provinces [federal units] would commit themselves to their peaceful cultural, economic and financial interests.”<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> *Balkanski glasnik [Balkan Gazette]*, I, 5, (Belgrade, 05.08.1902), 3.

<sup>37</sup> *Balkanski glasnik [Balkan Gazette]*, I, 7, (Belgrade, 18.08.1902), 1.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

Such ideas did not sit well with the Serbian government considering that its official policy concerning Macedonia still carried the hallmarks of Garašanin's *Načertanije*.<sup>39</sup> The political situation in the kingdom as well as its foreign relations put additional pressure on dissident organizations that sought to further their national projects. Namely, King Alexander's popularity had been wavering for some time due to his marriage with Draga Mašin and a seemingly arbitrary sequence of coups and dismissals. His good relations with Russia, reinforced by a new consulate in Mitrovica and a Russian-brokered assignment of a Serbian bishop in Skopje, were dealt a severe blow after it was revealed that the Queen was lying about her pregnancy. This particularly angered Tsar Nicholas II, who agreed to be the principal witness at the wedding in a time when Alexander's choice of spouse was coming under increasing attack from every facet of Serbian society. Alexander, thus, looked for an alternative ally in Austria-Hungary, offering to yield Serbian railroads, create a customs and military union and proposing a relationship with the Habsburg monarchy of the kind that Bavaria and Saxony had with the German Empire. In turn, Austria-Hungary would assist Serbia in obtaining Old Serbia (Kosovo and Metohija) and northern Macedonia.<sup>40</sup> While Alexander's diplomatic maneuverings were ultimately unsuccessful, Russia's Foreign Minister Vladimir Nikolayevich Lamsdorf was nonetheless informed during his 1902 tour of the region that Austria-Hungary will annex Serbia itself if

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<sup>39</sup> The *Načertanije (Draft)* was a secret document drafted in 1844 by Serbia's Minister of Interior Ilija Garašanin that influenced Serbian foreign policy with varying intensity up to the start of the Second World War. It justified Serbian claims to lands that were inhabited by Bulgarians, Macedonians, Albanians, Montenegrins, Bosnians, Croats and Hungarians on the basis of the view that South Slavs were Serbs who spoke various Serbian dialects. The integral text of the document was first featured in Dragoslav Stranjaković, "Kako je postalo Garašaninovo 'Načertanije'" ["How Was Garašanin's 'Načertanije' Created"], *Spomenik SKA*, XCI (Belgrade, 1939), 76-102. For a critical perspective and historical background of the document see Paul N. Hehn. "The Origins of Modern Pan-Serbism: The 1844 Načertanije of Ilija Garašanin: An Analysis and Translation." *East European Quarterly* 9, no. 2 (1975). 153-71.

<sup>40</sup> Vladimir Ćorović, *Istorija srpskog naroda [History of the Serbian People]*, (Belgrade: Janus, 2001), 450.

Russia ever decided to become involved in the Macedonian turmoil.<sup>41</sup>

After Nicholas II refused to receive the Serbian King and Queen at his court, Alexander dissolved Parliament and instituted a new, conservative government populated by hardline military figures and led by a general. It was in the immediate aftermath of this November coup that the termination of the Macedonian Club and the expulsion of its organizers were being increasingly demanded in the Belgrade printed media.<sup>42</sup> Following a public outcry, “Balkanski glasnik” was banned and the Macedonian Club was disbanded. The immediacy with which the periodical was extinguished (two months after its first issue) suggests that it may have reached a substantial readership base in the Serbian capital or at least received exposure among figures in power. Stefan Dedov and Dijamandija Mišajkov found their residency in Belgrade increasingly unsustainable due to mounting pressure not only from the Serbian government but also from the Faculty of Law administration. Anticipating formal expulsion from Serbia, both left for St. Petersburg in October 1902.<sup>43</sup>

## 1.2 THE SECRET MACEDONIAN-ADRIANOPOLITAN CIRCLE IN ST. PETERSBURG

Although the initial stirrings of Macedonian nationalists in Russia may be traced to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the earliest organized activity of the Macedonian community in St. Petersburg took place in 1900. Towards the end of that year, a dozen students formed the Secret Macedonian-

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 450.

<sup>42</sup> “Mačedonija”, “Srbin”, “Srbobran”, “Delo”, “Liberal” were some of the representative jingoist periodicals that responded to the articles in “Balkanski glasnik”. Of these, “Srbin” was the most vocal, asserting in a counter-article that “Macedonians are either Serbs or Bulgarians. If they are Serbs – we will not let anyone have them. If they are not – we will still not let them because we need them.” Ristovski, *Dimitrija Čupovski*, 123.

<sup>43</sup> Writing about his supporter and close friend, Misirkov summarized the circumstances as follows: “The publication of that newspaper could not have appealed to Serbian chauvinists which is why the Serbian press created such a commotion against publishing ‘Balkanski glasnik’, accusing its editor of being a sympathizer of Macedonian committees and expelling him from Serbia.” Misirkov, *Za makedonckite raboti*, 90-91.



Adrianopolitan Circle (SMAC), effectively a branch of IMARO in Russia, whose primary goal was “to provide material aid to the Macedonian cause and . . . observe its progress.”<sup>44</sup> It was an underground organization that grew to a membership base of 25-30 activists and had the primary goal of sending aid to Macedonia through clothes drives, donations, charity concerts and lotteries. Its role, however, was altered with the intensification of preparations for a pan-Macedonian uprising against the Ottoman Empire into a network enabling the movement of volunteers for the armed struggle in Macedonia.

At the time of the demise of the Macedonian Club in Belgrade, Dimitrija Čupovski, the initiator of the MSLS, had already been pursuing theology studies at St. Petersburg University for two years and was acquainted with the main actors having a stake in resolving the Macedonian Question. It is uncertain whether Čupovski was a member of SMAC as many members joined under pseudonyms. Furthermore, there is no mention of any ties with this organization in his autobiography. However, it may be plausibly maintained that he had at least an awareness of the new organization since he had been a member of IMARO as early as 1895 and had been promoting views in Macedonia foreshadowing those of his MSLS.<sup>45</sup> In addition, a dozen members of SMAC, some of them studying at the same theological school as Čupovski, later went on to sign the petition for constituting the MSLS, a fact that certainly contributes to the understanding that he had personal ties with all of them. Nonetheless, there ceases to be any doubt about his knowledge of the operation of the SMAC by 1902 as Krste Misirkov became the

<sup>44</sup> Document № 13, *Protocol Book of the Archive of SMAC in St. Petersburg*, Archival Section of the National History Institute of the Republic of Macedonia.

<sup>45</sup> An impassioned letter from a certain Trimčevski from Kruševo, a reader of “Makedonski Glas”, reflected on Čupovski’s activities in Macedonia: “When I found out that you were publishing a Macedonian periodical in St. Petersburg, I recalled how in 1901 you were fervently defending the idea [of an autonomous Macedonia] from Bulgarophiles, Serbophiles and Grecophiles, the culprits of our misfortune, while we eagerly listened to your words.” *Makedonskiy Golos*, II, no. 9, (St. Petersburg, 1914), 16.

organization's president in the wake of the Gorna Ćumaja crisis.<sup>46</sup>

The work of SMAC in St. Petersburg gave an important impetus to the establishment and structuring of the MSLS mainly as an organizational role model and as a source of experience. SMAC's intricate ties with revolutionary actors in Macedonia could be used to preserve a supply and information channel while seeking support among the Russian intelligentsia. Due to the clandestine nature of the circle, however, SMAC lacked a network of contacts and sympathizers in the Russian capital itself that the future student society could call upon for support as well as promotion. The Gorna Ćumaja debacle and the failed Ilinden Uprising caused logistical difficulties and challenged allegiances within the ranks of SMAC, a problem that saw the organization lose its coherence and, consequently, its significance in the local community of expatriate societies.<sup>47</sup>

A departure from an overtly political and secret form of assembly was necessary and this was certainly recognized by Ćupovski and his associates. Failure to maintain effective communication with IMARO in times of internecine strife, inability to establish support networks among Russian Slavophiles and a dependence on directives from home were features of the SMAC that the MSLS consciously attempted to avoid. In addition, By advancing a scholarly image of the MSLS and inserting elements of ethnographic, linguistic and folkloric inquiry into its agenda, Ćupovski sought to develop a community of intellectuals that would attract relevant Russian figures with an interest in the region and promote among them the

<sup>46</sup> A failed armed uprising organized by the Supreme Macedonian Committee in eastern Macedonia, it was supported by Ferdinand I of Bulgaria. Vanĉo Gjorgjiev, *Sloboda ili smrt: Makedonskoto nacionalno dviženje vo Solunskiot vilaet 1893 – 1903* [*Freedom or Death: The Macedonian National Movement in the Vilayet of Salonica 1893 – 1903*], (Skopje: Tabernakul, 2003), 256.

<sup>47</sup> A session of SMAC chaired by Misirkov in October 1902 displayed the level of disarray within the group. After failure to receive official replies by IMARO representatives in Macedonia to correspondence regarding coordination and response to the uprising, SMAC decided to direct all messages and aid to the Central Committee in Salonica. Ristovski, *Krste P. Misirkov*, 170.

understanding of Macedonia as a territory inhabited by a culturally and ethnically distinct Slav people.

### 1.3 THE ST. PETERSBURG SLAVIC BENEVOLENT SOCIETY

Plans to form a new student society were already underway during the erosion of the Secret Macedonian-Adrianopolitan Circle. Since the intention was to create an “official” group along the lines of what the Czech and Bulgarian diaspora had, some legitimating factor was necessary in order to sanction the emergence of a Macedonian element among the Balkan lobbies in the Russian capital. For this purpose, the Slavic Benevolent Society (SBS) in St. Petersburg was identified as an institution whose approval would “consecrate” the activities of the Macedonian diaspora in St. Petersburg.

The Slavic Benevolent Society in St. Petersburg was founded in 1868 as a branch of the Moscow Committee established a decade earlier. As a learned society seeking to provide material and moral support to the Slavs of Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire, the St. Petersburg branch built on the practices of Moscow and studied Slavic culture, wrote dictionaries and published educational literature through its commission. The exigencies of the Russo-Turkish War caused the SBS to reinvent itself as a charitable group that provided aid to Slavs immigrating to St. Petersburg. As the Moscow Society gradually lost its importance, the SBS in the capital grew to several thousand members in the 1870s after which it entered a steady decline.<sup>48</sup> At the turn of the century, the SBS numbered 600 members and “it included a fairly representative cross-section of Russian society, from a couple of Grand Dukes at the top, several

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<sup>48</sup> Sergei Aleksandrovich Nikitin, *Slavianskie komitety v Rossii v 1858–1876 godakh [Slavic Committees in Russia during 1858-1876]*, (Moscow, 1960).

ministers and highest government officials, to priests and students at the bottom.”<sup>49</sup>

The involvement of the SBS in the emergence and course of the MSLS was important for two reasons. First, by inspecting the rapport between the members of the MSLS and figures in the SBS, it is possible to understand the role pan-Slavism and notions of Slavic solidarity had in rallying support for a new state of Slavs in the Balkans. Considering that by 1902, the founding year of the MSLS, the SBS was in a state of decline,<sup>50</sup> it is interesting to see why and how Čupovski’s project managed to be endorsed by prominent Russian Slavophiles. Second, since the SBS may be effectively considered a political tool of the Russian Empire and its selection of causes to sponsor a reflection of Imperial policy, further insight may be received into the motives for Russia’s continued involvement in the Balkans after the diplomatic failure at the Congress of Berlin (1878) and subsequently with the Treaty of San Stefano (1878).<sup>51</sup> Specifically, it is plausible to suggest that the Russian attitude towards the Macedonian Question may be perceived through the interaction between the MSLS and the SBS.

On October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1902 Dedov and Mišajkov submitted a petition signed by 19 students (among them Misirkov and Čupovski) to the vice-president of the SBS, Aleksandr Alekseevich Narishkin, asking to be permitted to assemble in its hall “on the same basis that the Czech, Bulgarian and Serbian youth studying in St. Petersburg assemble.”<sup>52</sup> Four days later, the request

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<sup>49</sup> A study by Zdenko Zlatar providing an exceptionally detailed quantitative analysis of the SBS’s structure around 1913 reveals dwindling numbers: “In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the St. Petersburg Slavic Benevolent Society was much smaller in regular membership than during its initial phase in the seventies and eighties of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.” Zdenko Zlatar, “‘For the Sake of Slavdom’: St. Petersburg Slavic Benevolent Society – A Collective Portrait of 1913” in *East European Quarterly*, XXXVIII, no. 3, (September 2004), 263.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 264.

<sup>51</sup> “After an initial period of fairly autonomous development (1868-1878) it became more increasingly scrutinized by the Imperial government, and finally after 1900 its presidents-elect had to be approved by the government. This meant that in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the St. Petersburg Slavic Benevolent Society was at best an organization pliant to the views and wishes of the government, at worst a semi-official body of the government.” Ibid., 264.

<sup>52</sup> Ljuben Lape, “Dokumenti za formiranje na Slavjano-Makedonskoto naučno-literaturno drugarstvo i negoviot

was granted and the formally constituted Macedonian Scientific and Literary Society held its first meeting towards the end of the month. During the meeting, the members discussed the borders of Macedonia, the particularity of the Macedonian language and it was decided to notify the Bulgarian, Czech and Serbian societies of the newly-founded MSLS.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, as part of a promotional campaign for the MSLS, Dedov and Mišajkov visit noted Slavophiles and sympathizers with the Macedonian cause. They established contacts with Vladimir Karlovich Sabler, the Ober-Procurator of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, and were admitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where they presented a memorandum to the minister Lamsdorf.

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ustav” [Documents for the Formation of the Slav-Macedonian Scientific-Literary Society and its Constitution] in *Makedonski jazik [Macedonian Language]*, 193.

<sup>53</sup> Ristovski, *Krste P. Misirkov*, 229-230.

## CHAPTER TWO: DEVELOPING A PLATFORM

After successfully accomplishing legitimation, there was a push towards consolidative activities within the Macedonian Scientific and Literary Society in St. Petersburg. In tracing the development of this consolidation, it is possible to identify several milestones in the history of the MSLS. This chapter will, therefore, inspect several documents and publications created during 1902-1917 that are important to discerning the national platform of the MSLS and the course of its transformation. I will show that the principles contained in the Macedonian Colony's political program for Macedonian statehood were frequently a response to the circumstances in which the program was created.

### 2.1 THE "CONSTITUTION" OF THE MACEDONIAN SCIENTIFIC AND LITERARY SOCIETY (1903)

Almost a year after the first session of the MSLS, in December 1903, the group re-petitioned the SBS for sponsorship and submitted its so-called Constitution for review. On this occasion, the MSLS had a new configuration and sought to consolidate its structure by introducing a formal document intended to regulate various aspects of the society's operation. However, by referring to the document as a "constitution", the MSLS merely aimed at emphasizing its statutory character and did not intend for the document to become the basis for determining the fundamental political principles of a prospective state. Its document, which was approved by the SBS along with expanded requests for financial support and sponsorship, mainly prescribed standards for conduct, established the administrative hierarchy of the organization and provided regulations regarding financial affairs and archival procedure. Nonetheless, of the 21 articles in the Constitution, several give important insights into the understanding the MSLS had of the label "Macedonian" and what it was attempting to achieve.

The Constitution was a further step towards acquiring the legitimacy the MSLS had pursued since its formation and this document is consistent with its identification of the SBS as the preeminent agent imparting credibility to a society of such a character. Accordingly, the writers of the Constitution do not fail to mention in the beginning of the document that the MSLS is under the sponsorship of the SBS. The following is a selection of the most relevant articles that contain the fundamental principles of the MSLS:

“Article 1

(a) to develop national consciousness among the Macedonian Colony in St. Petersburg; (b) to study the language, songs, customs and history of Macedonia from an ethnographic and geographic perspective; (c) to reconcile and unite all Macedonians regardless of their education and conviction, in the name of their common origin and the integrity of their country; and (d) to spread the aforementioned among Macedonians in Macedonia and outside its borders.

Article 2

The activities of the Society are: (a) meetings and lectures; (b) reading essays, stories, poems etc.; (c) collecting folklore and historical objects concerning Macedonia; (d) spiritual support of our countrymen, especially during their first arrival to Russia, and (e) developing mutual relations with other Slavic societies and circles as well as separate Slavic figures.

Article 3

Eligible members of the Society are Macedonian men [Makedonci] and Macedonian women [Makedonjanki] living in St. Petersburg (Slav Macedonians, Vlachs, Greeks and Albanians).

Article 12

Conversations in the Society will be held in the Macedonian language (Slav Macedonian); essays and protocols will be written in this language as well.

Article 13

In order to disseminate the idea of solidarity and spiritual unity of all Slavs, regardless of religion and nationality (Russians, Poles, Czechs, Bulgarians etc.), the Society allows the former to read essays and conduct discussions during its meetings only in Russian - the pan-Slavic language.”<sup>54</sup>

Composed just months after the failed Ilinden Uprising, these articles show that Čupovski, Misirkov and the other members designed their goals in such a way that they would

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<sup>54</sup> Lape, “Dokumenti”, 198-202.

eventually reflect the operation of an institution rather than a mere group of expatriates. With an ambition to conduct ethnographic research, organize inter-institutional symposiums and providing guidance to recent émigrés (in emulation of their sponsor, the SBS), the MSLS had a view to develop its network of affiliates and assume the standing of an official representative organ of people wishing to identify themselves as Macedonians. In addition, this document is the first that introduces Macedonian as an official language in any context.

The distinction between “Macedonian” and “Slav Macedonian” is peculiar. Evidently, the MSLS treated Albanians, Vlachs and Greeks (with a noticeable absence of Serbs and Bulgarians) living in Macedonia as Macedonian while emphasizing the Slav character of the ethnic group it was concerned with. Therefore, it is possible to surmise that, for the MSLS, there was a general understanding of “Macedonian” as a geographical marker that was gradually conflated with the Slav population of the same region. This convention was used to a consistent degree in further publications of the MSLS.

Finally, it must be added that this Constitution resurfaced in a revised and expanded form in 1912 when the MSLS attempted to register under the name *Slav-Macedonian National Educational Society “Ss. Cyril and Methodius”*. The major additions to this version included an increased scope of objectives such as opening schools and restoring demolished Orthodox churches and monasteries in Macedonia as well as providing scholarships for Macedonian orphans.

## 2.2 MAKEDONSKIY GOLOS (1913)

By 1913, the ambition of the Macedonian Scientific and Literary Society to publish a periodical that would constitute an official medium for the “supporters of an independent



Macedonia” was coming closer to being realized. In March 1913, the MSLS announced “Makedonskiy golos” (Macedonian Voice), a periodical dedicated exclusively to the Macedonian Question. The material for the first issue was ready by May and began its circulation on June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1913. The magazine was a way to raise awareness concerning the Macedonian question through the publication of various memoranda, resolutions and letters of protest.

In the course of a year and a half, eleven issues were edited by an editorial board and published by Čupovski himself.<sup>55</sup> Spanning more than 200 pages, 42 authors (30 Macedonians, 10 Russians, a Serb and a Bulgarian) participated in publishing 211 articles and 33 pictures. It is interesting that over 50 of the featured articles were authored by the editor and publisher himself, Dimitrija Čupovski. Additionally, most of the articles in the periodical were either signed with initials or under a pseudonym.

The character of “Makedonskiy golos” warrants a comparison with an earlier periodical “Vardar”, published and edited by Krste Misirkov during his activities in Odessa on behalf of the MSLS.<sup>56</sup> While “Vardar” attempts to offer a rational argumentation for “a national separatism of Macedonians” in the post-Ilinden period, “Makedonskiy golos” is a reflection of the circumstances of its emergence in that its articles stress the “moral” imperative of salvaging the perceived integrity of Macedonia. Both are similar in their purported aims – namely, to initiate a public discussion concerning the implications of a Macedonian state. However, Misirkov’s

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<sup>55</sup> In the registration certificate granted to “Dimitriy Dimitrievich Pavlechupovskiy” [Dimitrija Čupovski], the Mayor of St. Petersburg approves the publication of *Makedonskiy Golos* [Macedonian Voice] whose program is described as follows: “(1) articles dealing with foreign politics, history, science, art and literature, (2) chronicles, (3) feuilletons, (4) short stories and verse, (5) review of Russian and foreign press, (6) bibliography, (7) drawings and portraits, (8) informative section, and (9) advertisements.” See K. L. Strukova, “K voprosu o deyatelnosti makedonskoy intelligentsiy v Rossii v nachale XX v.” [The Activities of the Macedonian Intelligentsia in Russia in the Beginning of the XX c.] in *Slavyanski arhiv* [Slavic Archive], (Moscow, 1963), 184.

<sup>56</sup> “Vardar” is considered the first scientific, literary and political publication in Macedonian. Krste P. Misirkov, *Vardar*, Odessa, September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1905.

“Vardar” is a much smaller collection of pamphlets that was written with a view to provide a carefully conceived argumentation for national separatism of Macedonian Slavs in the post-Ilinden period.<sup>57</sup> In comparison, “Makedonskiy golos” featured articles about the history of Macedonia and the Macedonian people (both Slav and non-Slav), responses to criticism leveled at the MSLS in Russian publications, letters from readers, maps, photographs and illustrations.

Two documents of import were created during the summer of 1913. During this period, Čupovski toured Paris and, more importantly, London where he authored several articles concerned with the outcome of the Balkan Wars in the Macedonian context and compiled the so-called “Memorandum of the Macedonians”. Its purpose was to familiarize the governments of the Great Powers with the national preferences of the Macedonian people as expressed through the MSLS’s national program. The Memorandum was delivered to the delegates of the London Peace Conference as it was hoped, ideally, that some considerations towards the preservation of Macedonia's territorial integrity would be effected. An excerpt from the Memorandum states:

“...the Macedonian Colony in St. Petersburg, fulfilling its responsibility and debt to its native land and knowingly supporting the slogan “Macedonia to Macedonians”, protests and cannot remain indifferent while neighboring Balkan states (Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece) – our brothers in blood and faith – are conspiring to dismember our country... One cannot observe the demise of one's unfortunate Fatherland [*sic*] without feeling pain over the funeral and destruction of the political and spiritual life of an entire nation. The separation of Macedonians by its brothers is the most unjust act in the history of nations, the trampling of human rights and a shame to all of Slavdom.”<sup>58</sup>

“The Macedonian people need:

1. Macedonia to remain a united, indivisible and independent Balkan state in its geographical, ethnographic, historical and cultural and economic borders.
2. A Macedonian national parliament to be constituted in Salonica, by popular vote, to further elaborate its internal organization and to determine its relations to neighboring states.”<sup>59</sup>

The Memorandum received a lot of exposure after it was published in “Makedonskiy golos”

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>58</sup> Dimitrija Čupovski, “Memorandum,” [Memorandum] in *Makedonskiy golos* [Macedonian Voice], no.1. St. Petersburg, June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1913, 22.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 23.

especially due to its separatist rhetoric. The idea of constituting a Macedonian state with a capital in Salonica which was by that time within Greek-conquered territory was not taken seriously by its intended recipients although it did meet with sympathy by Russian Slavophiles. The second document is another Memorandum, issued on June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1913, and intended for neighboring Balkan states in anticipation of the Second Balkan War.

“In the name of justice, in the name of history, in the name of sheer practical integrity we ask you, brothers, to consider the following:

1. Macedonia is inhabited by similar Slavic tribes, each having their own history, genesis, statehood, ideologies as well as the right to self-determination.
2. Macedonia should be in its ethnographic, geographic and cultural-historical borders, an independent state represented by a national parliament.
3. The Macedonian state should constitute a distinct and equal entity in a Balkan federation within its general borders.
4. In ecclesiastical matters, it is necessary to restore the ancient Archbishopric of Ohrid and incorporate it in a canonical coexistence with related Orthodox churches – the Greek, the Russian, the Bulgarian, the Serbian, the Romanian and the Syrian-Arab.
5. It is necessary to elect a national assembly in the city of Salonica at the earliest opportunity, under the auspices of the state and by means of popular vote, with the purpose of further elaborating the internal organization of the Macedonian state.

Brothers, allies-liberators! We hope that our words will find their way to your hearts and minds and that you, in the example of munificent Russia and in the interest of your future, will pursue the creation of an independent Macedonian state and will create peace and concord among yourselves. The sooner the better for all of us. Such a solution stems from the materialization of the great idea for Slav-Hellenic unity in the Balkans which is why it is needed of you to cultivate interest in preserving justice in the world.”<sup>60</sup>

Čupovski reiterates many of the demands featured in the first Memorandum. The latter one is, however, interesting for including Greece in an imagined Balkan Federation and referring to a “great idea” of Slav-Hellenic unity – a topic that had not surfaced in any of the previous writings of the MSLS. The appeal to the Balkan states as “allies” and “liberators” is characteristically contrived as the MSLS had traditionally identified Macedonia’s neighbors as the true threat to its integrity rather than the Ottoman Empire. Both of these letters were featured in the first issue of “Makedonskiy golos” that was characteristic for having some resonance in contemporary

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<sup>60</sup> Dimitrija Čupovski, “Memorandum Makedoncev,” [Memorandum of Macedonians] in *Makedonskiy golos* [Macedonian Voice], no.1. St Petersburg, June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1913, 19-20.

Russian press as well.<sup>61</sup>

The periodical frequently commented on articles written about Macedonia in the foreign press which suggested a concern both with inciting interest in foreign media and reinforcing the integrity of the publication. An article in the fifth issue of “Makedonskiy golos” makes the case for Macedonia being a “Poland of the Balkans” in that “only the Polish people are able to grasp the ungrateful intrigues of conquering neighbor-states directed against a brave but unfortunate country.”<sup>62</sup> The article was a response to writings in Polish media concerning the chaos of the Balkan Wars and the plight of Macedonia. It goes on to conclude that “while the Poles have a freedom of their national culture, language, and customs, Macedonians are not recognized neither in nationality, language, customs let alone culture.”<sup>63</sup> In addition, “Makedonskiy golos” reflected on Serbian and Bulgarian press as well. The publication most eagerly quotes the Serbian Social Democrat Party newspaper “Radničke novine” while other publications such as “Štampa”, “Srpske novine”, “Beogradske novine” and “Srpsko kolo” are also featured.<sup>64</sup>

The intellectuals of the Society transformed culture into an instrument for projecting the domestic situation on a wider plane and made it a veritable “political phenomenon” in the sense that making it known to the international public would appeal to sensibilities of cultural preservation. Moreover, national romanticism is conspicuously absent from the writings of the Society's leading figures which serves to reassert the sober attitude and dedicated ideology of the organization. For instance, Krste Misirkov wrote in 1925 that “the Macedonian will seek out sufficient tact, foresight and selflessness to attain a common good in the Balkans for which it

<sup>61</sup> Blaže Ristovski remarks that the Memoranda were reprinted in “Rech”, “Novoe vremya”, “Slavyanin”, “Den”, “Russkaya molva” and other newspapers. See Ristovski, *Dimitrija Čupovski*, 167.

<sup>62</sup> *Makedonskiy golos*, I, 5, 5.IX.1913, 95.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> *Makedonskiy golos*, I, 7, 4.XI.1913, 124-125.

would be enough to plainly guarantee a national and personal dignity.”<sup>65</sup> If “the nascent East European intelligentsia was inspired by two of the most powerful instincts of humankind: pride and emulation”, in the context of the Macedonian Scientific and Literary Society it is immediately evident that a pragmatist spirit prevailed amidst its ranks, casting aside all idle indignation and any claims to historical prerogative.<sup>66</sup>

It is crucial to emphasize that these expatriate intellectuals were not insensitive to the political climate in Macedonia due to their isolation from the “homeland”. Creating information networks by means of constant agitation and circulation of people and information to and from Macedonia were informal projects that boosted the member base of the Society and other similar academic circles across Europe. It is easy to dismiss the energy invested by the St. Petersburg colony in promoting the Macedonian plight as insufficiently involved and ineffectual, being removed from the territory both physically and ideologically. The hands-on methods of IMARO frequently receive greater veneration among historiographers since the outcome of militant nationalism figures more prominently in the chronology of any “liberation” movement. Nonetheless, while IMARO served to actuate an ideology of liberation and autonomy at all costs, the MSLS, influenced by liberal ideas of a commonwealth of nations looked favorably on a projected Balkan Federation rooted in pan-Slavism yet unconventionally forward-thinking in its prospective inclusion of Turkey. This ideological stream found particular acceptance during the Bucharest talks which saw the disintegration of Macedonian ethnic and territorial unity. Ultimately, the project was a failure although it represented an important aspect of the Macedonian Colony’s perspective on a future Macedonian state.

<sup>65</sup> Krste Misirkov, “Makedonski nacionalizam” (Macedonian Nationalism) in *Mir*, XXXI, 7417 (Sofia, 1925), 1.

<sup>66</sup> Robin Okey, *Eastern Europe 1740-1985: Feudalism to Communism*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 76.

In a way, the intellectuals of the St. Petersburg colony were attempting to create a nation as much as they were attempting to resolve the ambiguities of the “endemic” revolutionary movement. The MSLS advanced the notion of a particular Macedonian identity with a distinct cultural legacy as a means to securing political unity in the new state. The members of this organization unwittingly benefited from their previously mentioned distance from the tumultuous developments in Macedonia by working in an environment that did not disturb the cultivation of their ideas. In “Makedonskiy golos”, and the accompanying ethnic map of Macedonia, the history of the Macedonian people was discussed in a formal framework for the first time. The St. Petersburg scholars vehemently engaged in giving structure to Macedonian culture and firmly believed in the rectitude of their motives as well as in the eagerness of the people of Macedonia to embrace autonomy. As mentioned, the responsiveness of the general populace living in Macedonia around 1913 was overestimated by the MSLS as institutions of higher learning were limited to the church schools of the Exarchate and Patriarchate. The nation was idealized and taken for granted by Čupovski and his fellow scholars who gave no indication that substantial work needed to be done on instilling national sentiments in a peasant society with a fledgling urban middle class.

The precarious political climate leading up to World War I paralyzed the activity of the Macedonian Scientific and Literary Society since Russia's increasing support of Serbia meant that the Macedonian cause gradually went out of favor with Russian elites. On the ground, the population in ethnic Macedonia was subject to mobilization for the coming conflict by three Balkan armies further complicating the Society's project of national individuation by means of establishing Macedonian schools. Čupovski and Misirkov delivered another memorandum to the

Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a desperate attempt to garner support and bring the Macedonian question to the attention of relevant institutions. However, the international situation had been complicated beyond repair. In the spring of 1916, Čupovski unsuccessfully tried to return to Macedonia via Romania. His plans were thwarted by the developing regional hostility due to which he turned back, never to visit Macedonia again.

### 2.3 THE MACEDONIAN REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE AND THE PROGRAM FOR A BALKAN FEDERATION (1917)

The final incarnation of the Society was the *Macedonian Revolutionary Committee* established on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 1917 that saw its program featured in various publications of Russian social democrats. The title of the program was “Balkan Federal Democratic Republic” with the motto “The Balkans to All Balkan Peoples. Full Rights to Self-Determination of Each Nation.” The bottom of this document had a triple signature denoting the Macedonian Revolutionary Committee, the Macedonian Fellowship “Ss. Cyril and Methodius”, and the Board of Editors of “Makedonskiy golos”.<sup>67</sup> This is, in fact, the last known public activity of the Macedonian Scientific and Literary Society in St. Petersburg.

By this time, Čupovski is already an ardent supporter of the Bolsheviks and expresses this accordingly in his Autobiography.<sup>68</sup> The content of the Program is interesting because it suggests a political system that shares many similarities with the Yugoslav Federation (SFRY) after the Second World War. For instance, the Program called for the union of all Balkan countries (excluding Romania and Turkey) whereby federal republics with mixed populations

<sup>67</sup> Blaze Ristovski, “Programata na Makedonskiot revolucioneren komitet vo Petrograd od 1917 godina za Balkanskata Federativna Demokratska Republika” [The Program of the Macedonian Revolutionary Committee in Petrograd from 1917 regarding the Balkan Federal Democratic Republic] in *Istorija* [History], VII, 1, 1971, 103-117.

<sup>68</sup> Ristovski, *Dimitrija Čupovski*, 104.

would have full rights to self-determination and self-government with provisions for autonomous provinces.<sup>69</sup>

The publication of this Program allegedly criminalized the presence of its signatories in the Balkans. Čupovski would later write in his Autobiography that “as a testimony to our revolutionary activity and our protests against the looting and violence of the imperialists, the Imperial governments of the Balkans pronounced us to be ‘outside the law.’”<sup>70</sup> In what is a departure from the ideology and rhetoric of Čupovski’s former projects, the Program calls for a violent deposition of Balkan monarchies providing the reason for being identified as a threat by Balkan governments.

After the October Revolution, in which most of the Society's members take part, new circumstances arise for the development of Macedonian national agenda by the intellectuals in St. Petersburg. From 1917 onward, there is a greater decentralization of activities as Čupovski frequently travels to Kiev, Odessa and Moscow and begins outputting works of an ethnographic and lexicographic character. Nonetheless, St. Petersburg will remain a hub of expatriate Macedonians on account of the firmly established publishing tradition and structures set in place by Čupovski well up to his death in 1940.

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<sup>69</sup> Ristovski, “Programata”, 106.

<sup>70</sup> Čupovski, 104-105.



## CHAPTER THREE: BARRIERS TO ENTRY

In the previous chapter it was shown that the Macedonian Colony in St. Petersburg led by Dimitrija Čupovski placed a significant emphasis on forming a comprehensive national platform for a prospective Macedonian nation-state. Regardless of their frequent physical removal from events in the Balkans, many of its members kept strong ties with developments in Macedonia throughout their involvement with the MSLS. In this chapter, I will discuss the cause for the MSLS's failure to gain traction in Macedonia during their existence from 1902 to 1917. As one of their main reasons for coming together was an eventual translation of policies developed in St. Petersburg into practice in Macedonia, I will identify and discuss the causes for their relative obscurity and inability to effect lasting changes in the social consciousness of the population in Macedonia. My findings point to a combination of three factors: the shifting nature of the relationship between the MSLS and IMARO, the character of the population in Macedonia and the competing irredentisms of neighboring states.

### 3.1 THE RIFT BETWEEN THE MSLS AND IMARO

Until the outbreak of the Ilinden Uprising in 1903, the MSLS maintained close ties and good relations with IMARO as represented by their main organ in St. Petersburg, the Secret Macedonian-Adrianopolitan Circle (SMAC). As it was mentioned in Chapter One, a majority of the signatories of the MSLS's constitutive petition were members of SMAC and, by extension, of IMARO as well. Krste Misirkov himself, as founding member and one-time President of SMAC, was an essential link between the Macedonian student community across the Russian Empire and IMARO in Macedonia as he frequently travelled between Russia, Bulgaria and Macedonia.

After the failure of the Ilinden Uprising, however, IMARO experienced a massive crisis of

identity that had been years in the making. The organization was in complete chaos due to the loss of many leading figures. Since IMARO was heavily reliant on the charisma of its leaders in order to function, the network of committees and local chapters began to crumble in the wake of their demise. With the likelihood of factionalism increasing, it was desperately trying to consolidate itself and reconcile diverging opinions on issues such as internal structural reforms, decentralization and the ultimate goal of IMARO – Macedonian autonomy or political independence within a Balkan federation.<sup>71</sup>

The initial signs of tension between the MSLS and IMARO were not manifested directly but were rather seen in a contrived conflict between Dimitrija Čupovski and his colleague at the Theological Academy, Hristo Šaldev.<sup>72</sup> In November 1903, Šaldev was elected President of SMAC and effectively became the leader of the only legitimate delegacy of IMARO in St. Petersburg.<sup>73</sup> By the following year, Šaldev had developed an extensive correspondence with the Central Committee (CC) of IMARO in Salonica and the Bulgarian Exarch Joseph I. At the Exarch's request, he monitored the activities of Čupovski and his associates and reported to Istanbul. For instance, in one letter he gratefully acknowledges the Exarch's interest in "Bulgarian students from Macedonia living in Petrograd" and his encouragement "to persevere

<sup>71</sup> Hristo Silyanov, *Osvoboditelnite borbi na Makedoniya [Macedonia's Liberation Struggles]*, (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na Ilindenskata organizacija, 1943), 58-61.

<sup>72</sup> Born in Gumenice, Šaldev completed his education in Salonica and the Bulgarian seminary in Istanbul as well as the Seminary in Poltava. His arrival in the Russian capital in 1901 was on the occasion of his admittance to the Theological Academy. After becoming a member and secretary of SMAC and following his participation in the Ilinden Uprising, he was elected president of this important IMARO outpost in Russia. Initially a founding member of MSLS, Šaldev would go on to become one of its most ardent opponents. Concerning this, Blaže Ristovski writes that "seen from the perspective of the national program of MSLS, Hr. Šaldev undoubtedly has played one of the most negative roles in recent Macedonian history ... by succeeding in opposing IMARO against MSLS at the request of the Bulgarian Exarch." Ristovski, *Dimitrija Čupovski*, 143.

<sup>73</sup> While his name was among the petitioners to the Slavic Benevolent Society for the recognition of MSLS, Šaldev never had any personal conviction that the Slavs in Macedonia were anything but Bulgarian and that the revolutionary endeavors should strive towards autonomy as a means to eventual unification with the Bulgarian state.

in crushing the perverted attempts of some students to create some sort of Macedonian nationality.”<sup>74</sup> One learns that Šaldev and his affiliates from SMAC embarked on an espionage campaign directed against Čupovski and the MSLS in order to “seemingly approach their impossible ideas for a Macedonian nationality and kindly point out their absurdity.” In the conclusion of the letter he suggested that students from Macedonia “with a steadfast Bulgarian spirit” should be sent to the Theological Academy and infiltrated into the student society in order to “gradually assume control over it and bring it to the straight path.”<sup>75</sup>

As President of SMAC in St. Petersburg, Šaldev easily turned the circle against the MSLS and proceeded to do the same with the CC of IMARO in Salonica. A letter intercepted by a SMAC member in Moscow, sent by Čupovski to his colleague Nikola Ničota,<sup>76</sup> suggested that the MSLS was in collusion with the Ottoman embassy in Russia to secure Macedonian autonomy within the Empire’s borders. This letter was read by Šaldev at a SMAC meeting after which the attendants unanimously agreed to inform the CC of IMARO. Reporting to the Exarch on these “fiends of the Bulgarian people”, Šaldev wrote:

I learned from one of our men that the members of the Petrograd Scientific and Literary Society have unrestricted support and permission by the Turkish embassy to travel across Macedonia and spread the Macedonian national idea... These people contacted Professor N. N. Durnovo who, as you know, is employed by the Russian government to deal with the Macedonian question... He told Čupovski that the Russian government along with the Austro-Hungarian government is preparing a proposition to the Sublime Porte to grant ecclesiastical and cultural autonomy to Macedonia within the Turkish Empire, to reinstate the old Archbishopric of Ohrid headed by a Macedonian patriarch, to introduce the Macedonian language in schools and to assign a member

<sup>74</sup> Cited in Slavko Dimevski, “Dve pisma na Hristo Šaldev za Makedonskoto naučno-literaturno drugarstvo ‘Sv. Kliment’ vo Petrograd” [Two Letters by Hristo Šaldev Concerning the Macedonian Scientific-Literary Society “Sv. Kliment” in Petrograd] in *Razgledi*, X, 4, (Skopje, 1967), 515.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Nikola Steriov Ničota was born in 1880, a Vlach from Smederevo. He was raised and educated partly in Salonica and the Serbian gymnasium in Istanbul. In 1901, he enrolled in the Faculty of Law in Belgrade but had financial difficulties that prompted him to directly appeal to the Serbian king for sponsorship in studying diplomacy in Paris. The Serbian Ministry of Foreign Affairs denied his request. After the Macedonian Club in Belgrade was banned and “Balkanski Glasnik” ceased to be published, Ničota left Serbia for Russia and joined MSLS in 1902. Unable to secure funding for his studies, towards the end of 1903 he transferred to the University of Moscow where he was active in forming a branch of MSLS at the instruction of Čupovski. *Čupovski*, 150.

of some European royal dynasty as governor of the three Macedonian vilayets whose title would be *knez*.<sup>77</sup>

While Šaldev was certainly taking liberties in interpreting the exact nature of the MSLS's ties with the Ottoman embassy in St. Petersburg, it was nonetheless true that Čupovski visited the legation several times and secured special travel documents for two members (Filip Nikolovski and the aforementioned Ničota) that would guarantee undisturbed movement throughout Macedonia. Nikolovski and Ničota were tasked to make visits to villages in their home regions that have expressed interest in having schools in their dialects and arrange with local leaders for textbooks to be delivered.<sup>78</sup>

IMARO's response from Salonica was received a month after the Šaldev's communiqué, on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1904. A resounding success for Šaldev's intrigues, the letter constitutes an effective break between the MSLS and the strongest and most developed revolutionary network in Macedonia even in its post-Ilinden condition. The CC responded:

Your Slav-Macedonians seem to be genuine Turkish spies if they want to work with them to save the Empire. Be wary of them and observe them. Intercept as many letters as you can but be careful not to have any of yours intercepted. We will learn about the names of the two who are going to travel to Macedonia [Nikolovski and Ničota] from B., but write if you find out which towns they are going to visit, where they are going to be heading and where they were born. It is odd that the Slavophiles of St. Petersburg are sympathetic to them. On one hand, they are trying to separate Macedonians from Bulgarians and Serbians, as a distinct nation ... and on the other hand, they decry the Organization for wanting autonomy for the whole of Macedonia, not for Bulgaria, Serbia or others.<sup>79</sup>

While it is clear from the letter that IMARO is an uncompromising enemy to the idea of preserving the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans (and Šaldev cleverly uses Čupovski's ties to the

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<sup>77</sup> Dimevski, "Dve pisma", 516.

<sup>78</sup> Through Šaldev's later correspondence with the Exarch, one learns of the scope of this project. According to him, at one of the MSLS's meetings, it was decided that "1500 copies of a Slav-Macedonian primer would be printed out for 34 interested villages in the Skopje and Bitola (Monastir) Vilayet." For that purpose, a delegate was sent to the United States where the material was supposed to be printed. Slavko Dimevski, "Eden taen izveštaj za makedonističkata dejnost na Makedonskata studentska grupa in Petrograd" [A Secret Report on the Macedonist Activity of the Macedonian Student Group in Petrograd] in *Razgledi*, X, 3, (Skopje 1967), 411.

<sup>79</sup> Document № 112, *Letter from the Central Committee of IMARO to the SMAC*, Archival Section of the Institute for National History of the Republic of Macedonia (09.07.1904).

embassy to antagonize the CC), the MSLS was not attempting to work against its interests. Indeed, Čupovski must have recognized the potential for cooperation in terms of reciprocal utilization of networks. Misirkov was particularly concerned about this deterioration of ties that proceeded from a fundamental lack of communication and deliberate subversion aimed at misrepresenting the nature of the Macedonian Colony in St. Petersburg. In a letter to the CC, he attempted to clarify that:

“We [the MSLS] are not against IMRO. We are merely pointing out two of its weaknesses: (1) the ambiguous Macedonian national thought and (2) the untimely armed struggle that is nowadays equivalent to adventurism.”<sup>80</sup>

The MSLS was unsuccessful at establishing distribution channels for their materials in Macedonia and its break with IMARO was certainly an overwhelming factor. By the time of the rift (1904), IMARO had already developed an extensive network of schools and was itself founded by teachers. Despite plans to disseminate textbooks, found schools and set up local chapters, the MSLS was unable to construct a new system of contacts through which it would gain a foothold in Macedonia primarily due to problems in locating and maintaining a steady source of income that were exacerbated by an uncongenial IMARO.<sup>81</sup>

### 3.2 COMPETING NATIONAL PROJECTS

Antagonizing IMARO was not the only hindrance the MSLS faced in its plans to set up a substantial presence in Macedonia. There existed a more formidable tendency that intensified after the Ilinden Uprising exposed critical ruptures within the Ottoman hold on Macedonia.

<sup>80</sup> A letter by Krste Misirkov cited in Slavko Dimevski, “Obidite na Krste Misirkov i na Makedonskoto studentsko društvo vo Petrograd za izdejstvuvanje avtonomija na Makedonija vo ramkite na Turskata Imperija” [The Attempts of Krste Misirkov and the Macedonian Student Society in Petrograd to Achieve Autonomy for Macedonia in the Turkish Empire], *Paper presented at Krste Misirkov – Scholarly Assembly*, (Skopje 1967), 110.

<sup>81</sup> For instance, when in 1905 Čupovski tried to organize a pan-Macedonian conference in Veles, he was expelled from the town at gunpoint by Ivan Naumov Alyabaka, a local pro-Bulgarian chief of IMARO. Blaže Ristovski, *Stoletija na makedonskata svest [Centuries of Macedonian Consciousness]*, (Skopje: Kultura, 2001), 35.

Namely, Balkan states (largely Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria) commenced an aggressive pursuit of establishing a presence in Macedonia as a means to actualize their “historical” claim to Macedonian territories. As a rule, the territories these projects sought to incorporate frequently overlapped and as such were grounds for political conflict. Frequently, the projects disregarded the existence of ethnic diversity in the targeted domains, choosing instead to focus on matching spuriously designated “historical” demarcations. As the creative work of nationalist elites they were, ostensibly, top-down projects that sought to mobilize the population in the state and abroad towards setting the endeavor as a matter of national importance. Indeed, the foreign policy tactics of Balkan nations at this time may be seen as contingent on fulfilling their individual imagined geography projects.<sup>82</sup>

During the peak of activities by the Macedonian Colony in St. Petersburg (1902-1905), propaganda of various kinds, armed, religious, cultural and political clashed over the allegiances of the people inhabiting the territory of Macedonia. The internecine bloodshed within IMARO was accompanied with the escalation of the Macedonian Struggle and the incursion of Serbian *četniks* and Greek *andartes* into Macedonian territories.<sup>83</sup> Serbian bands were predominant in the

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<sup>82</sup> While each Balkan state competed over the hearts and minds of Macedonia’s checkered population, Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria were the key actors involved in the struggle. For instance, even after the humiliation of the Greco-Turkish War of 1897, the Greek government persisted in its national dream of becoming a “Greece of Two Continents and Five Seas”. Even the short-lived notion of an expansive Bulgaria as envisioned in the Treaty of San Stefano was sufficient to create a myth of “national catastrophe” and propel its fulfillment to a focal point of Bulgarian foreign policy. The rhetoric of restoring Tsar Dušan’s medieval empire also crept up in the agenda of Serbian policy for the region. On the topic of Greek irredentism and the Grand Idea see Michael Llewellyn Smith, *Ionian Vision : Greece in Asia Minor, 1919-1922*, (London: Allen Lane, 1973) and Michael Llewellyn Smith, “Venizelos’ Diplomacy, 1910-23: From Balkan Alliance to Greek-Turkish Settlement” in *Eleftherios Venizelos: The Trials of Statesmanship*, edited by Paschalis M. Kitromilides, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 134-193. For the Bulgarian case see Duncan M. Perry, *Stefan Stambolov and the Emergence of Modern Bulgaria, 1870-1895*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993). The evolution of the idea of Greater Serbia is covered in the edited volume *Greater Serbia: From Ideology to Aggression*, edited by Ante Beljo et al., (Zagreb: Croatian Information Centre, 1998).

<sup>83</sup> İpek Yosmaoglu, *The Priest’s Robe and the Rebel’s Rifle: Communal Conflict and the Construction of National Identity in Ottoman Macedonia 1878-1908*, unpublished PhD dissertation, (Princeton University, 2005), 56.

region of Kosovo and northwestern Macedonia whereas Greek bands operated around Kastoria, Salonica and Serres. The ideological split within IMARO between the Supremists of Boris Sarafov and the Leftists of Jane Sandanski manifested violently as well.<sup>84</sup>

Despite the undisciplined background of these armed bands, it was clear that their activities in Macedonia were supported by the governments of Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece, all of which had designs on the region and sought to incorporate various parts in fulfillment of their imagined geography projects. These national projects were in direct conflict not only with the fundamental principles of the MSLS, but also with each other, creating a complex topography of ambitions. Neighboring states enjoyed the benefits of an independent government, firmly grounded “national infrastructures”, international recognition and support as well as an aggressive, outwardly-directed political agenda campaigning for national interests with generous sponsorship by the apparatus of power.

Propaganda elements in Macedonia were twofold: penetration of civil and ecclesiastical organizations and the operation of armed bands. The Greek element was largely provoked by Bulgarian attempts to influence a region “that Greeks maintained they could lay at least as legitimate a claim.”<sup>85</sup> Organizations such as the Macedonian Society of Athens and the Society for the Dissemination of Greek Letters were aided by the Greek government and funded by individual sympathizers. The Greek Patriarchate itself was involved in creating networks of

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<sup>84</sup> The conflict reignited former rivalries that emerged out of the bitterness concerning the failed Ilinden Uprising. During the period of 1905-1907, the supporters of Jane Sandanski distanced themselves from the Bulgarian state and supported the idea of Macedonian independence within a Balkan Federation. As a result, Sarafov found himself under increasing scrutiny. At Sandanski’s order, he was assassinated along with Ivan Garvanov by Todor Panica in Sofia in 1907. Krum Blagov, *50-te nay-golemi atentata v b’lgarskata istoriya [The 50 Most Important Assassinations in Bulgarian History]*, (Sofia: Reporter, 2000), 25.

<sup>85</sup> Yosmaoglu, *The Priest’s Robe*, 56.

violence in contested region by attempting to organize paramilitary groups.<sup>86</sup> Serbia was involved in Macedonia through its St. Sava Society, an organization for cultural propaganda created in Belgrade in 1886.<sup>87</sup> The society specialized in establishing Serbian language schools for children and managed to gain influence through the lobbying activities of Serbian consular representatives in Macedonia. The importance of this organization to the Serbian government is evident in the fact that it was incorporated as a department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and received increasing amounts of state funding. As a result, the St. Sava Society was able to expand its operation not only in the Vilayet of Skopje but the Vilayet of Bitola (Monastir) as well.

Taking these factors into account, the MSLS looked to Great Power politics and their regional interests as a significant, if not decisive agent in determining the viability of a Macedonian state. The MSLS aptly recognized the agency of European powers in shaping Balkan borders and their lobbying activities in Russia testify to this awareness. In a memorandum to the Russian government from November 1902, Stefan Jakimov and Dijamandija Mišajkov discuss the “liberation of Macedonia in *political, national and ecclesiastical* terms” and the strategies of competing states in breaking up “the unity of the Slavic element in Macedonia.”<sup>88</sup> The memorandum further declares that “by national liberty we refer to the removal of national propagandas from Macedonia and introducing one of the Macedonian dialects as an official and general Macedonian literary language.”<sup>89</sup> Therefore, to the MSLS, the perceived intrusion of the neighboring element was a more immediate urgency than the “corrupt

<sup>86</sup> Douglas Dakin, *The Greek Struggle in Macedonia, 1897-1913*, (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1966), 120-124.

<sup>87</sup> The topic of propaganda activities in Macedonia at the turn of the century is analyzed in detail in Antoni Giza, “Makedonskite zemi v kraya na XIX c.” [Macedonian Lands at the End of XIX c.] in *Balkanskite d'ržavi i makedonskiya v'pros* [*Balkan States and the Macedonian Question*], (Sofia: Makedonski Naučen Institut, 2001).

<sup>88</sup> Document № 49, *Memorandum of the Student Society in St. Petersburg*, 12.11.1902, Archival Section of the National History Institute of the Republic of Macedonia.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.



Ottoman administration and mismanagement” that IMARO identified as the primary cause for pursuing Macedonian autonomy. However, figures that professed to endorse the cause of MSLS had broader interests whose intensity waxed and waned with the passage of time and the shifting of the policies of their government.<sup>90</sup>

The Balkan Wars may be seen as a staging ground where conflicting national ideologies clashed. The wars were a resounding success for Greece and Serbia. More than doubling their territory, both came within reach of fulfilling their national programs. The Bulgarian government, however, experienced the war in a particularly traumatic way. Known as the First National Catastrophe in Bulgaria, the outcome of the Second Balkan War would directly influence Bulgaria's decision to voluntarily join the Central Powers in World War I merely a year later. Finally, the idea of Macedonia as an independent nation or an equal, autonomous entity in a Balkan Federation as an alternative policy pursued by the MSLS in the war's aftermath was, for the moment, extinguished and would lay dormant in a political atmosphere that was likely more precarious than it had ever been for such a discussion.

### 3.3 FEATURES OF THE POPULATION IN MACEDONIA

In light of the efforts put into bringing the ideal of nationhood closer to reality, it must be remarked that the intended beneficiaries of this grand project, namely the population of Macedonia and more specifically Macedonian Slavs, were not necessarily identifying themselves in any conventional national terms. In the words of Robin Okey, it was “plain that the mass of the [Macedonian] population had little interest in the wheeler-dealing conducted in its name” and

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<sup>90</sup> Mišajkov and Trpkov received a reply by Professor Anton Semyonovich Budilovich, vice-president of the SBS, who, after consulting with Narishkin, expressed the reserved view that “we must agree that Macedonia should be created temporarily into an autonomous province without deciding the fate of national groups within it ... only then can the claims of neighboring Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece be neutralized.” Ristovski, *Dimitrija Čupovski*, 190.

still relied on age-old regional loyalties for identification.<sup>91</sup> This “wheeler-dealing” took the form of intensified activities on behalf of the Bulgarian Exarchate and the Greek Patriarchate with the purpose of reshaping the identity of the region and creating new categories of belonging. In the eyes of foreign spectators unfamiliar with the social dynamics of Macedonia as well as the Ottoman government whose interest lay in preserving the territory within the Empire by making alternate concessions to the two rivals, nuances in identity were irrelevant and grossly disregarded. Hence, “as Serbs, Greeks and Bulgars competed to build up national infrastructures in this Turkish province by capturing control of the Orthodox Church,” the MSLS was busily working towards bringing these processes to international attention.<sup>92</sup>

National identity in Macedonia was pliable and reflected local circumstances – a peasant society ravaged by war and perennial conflict. In such times of intense political turmoil, imperial disintegration and transformation of former subjects into potent actors, identity was frequently bought, coerced, bargained and conflated. Ipek Yosmaoglu gives a good representation of Macedonian society in 1903 by referring to it as “an organic system that preceded the modern notions and categories of collective identity.”<sup>93</sup> Indeed, the social reality of a national body was ostensibly designed and constructed as loyalties depended on the pressures of institutional elites and a culture of negotiation.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, since in many respects the emergence of national sentiments was contingent on the establishment of educational and cultural institutions and a communication infrastructure to disseminate the national identity narrative, Macedonia’s

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<sup>91</sup> Okey, *Eastern Europe*, 142.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>93</sup> Ipek Yosmaoglu. “Counting Bodies, Shaping Souls: The 1903 Census and National Identity in Ottoman Macedonia,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, v. 38, no. 1 (2006): 70.

<sup>94</sup> The “subtlety” of Yosmaoglu’s organic system included “gendarmes torturing villagers to make them accept their identity cards, local administrators relentlessly reporting protests to their superiors (some of whom did not know whether “Serb” was a religious or a national category), and peasants who kept insisting that they were simply Christians.” *Ibid.*

neighbors had a clear advantage over the MSLS in both proximity and resources to set up an elaborate network of institutions.

## CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have shown how a group of students at the University of St. Petersburg were involved in the resolution of the Macedonian Question. I have argued that the emergence of the Macedonian Scientific and Literary Society (MSLS) was inspired by ideas of a separate Macedonian Slav identity that they sought to translate into a platform for a prospective independent Macedonian state. This state was initially imagined as an autonomous Ottoman protectorate with provisions for an officially recognized language, nationality and an autocephalous Orthodox Church. I have traced the development and modification of this idea to accommodate local realities such as the Balkan Wars and suggest a Balkan Federation.

Contrary to what was believed at the time, I showed that the movement of Macedonian students in St. Petersburg led by Dimitrija Čupovski was not an implement of the governments of Serbia, Bulgaria and Russia to further their own agendas. The core members of the MSLS had received their education either in Bulgaria or Serbia prior to arriving in Russia and their activism for a Macedonian state was partially motivated by the aggressive propaganda they faced in these state institutions.

In Chapter I, I discussed the groups that had a meaningful influence on the establishment of the MSLS in St. Petersburg. The student society drew on the conceptual platform developed by Stefan Dedov and Dijamandija Mišajkov as part of the Macedonian Club in Belgrade. By referencing its important publication, “Balkanski glasnik”, I associated several ideas featured there with those of the official platform of the MSLS, thereby characterizing it as progressive movement with an identifiable background. Furthermore, I discussed how the Secret Macedonian-Adrianopolitan Circle (SMAC), as a functional IMARO embassy in Russia, supplied

a strong membership base and revolutionary impetus to the MSLS. However, with the entry of SMAC members into MSLS, the latter also exposed itself to instability as the SMAC was a reflection of IMARO's factionalism and unclear goals for autonomy. Finally, I have portrayed the role of the Slavic Benevolent Society as a legitimizing factor in the history of the MSLS whose venerated collection of Slavophiles was sought for approval and recognition by Čupovski and his associates.

Chapter II focused on the platform of the MSLS and its evolution from 1902 to 1917 as seen through its official documents and publications. I analyzed the Constitution of the MSLS in terms of an ideological platform and their most important publication "Makedonskiy golos" as a product of Balkan Wars exigencies. Concluding the chapter, I looked at the final incarnation of MSLS and their program for a Balkan Federation which simultaneously represented the last significant recorded activity of the Macedonian Colony in St. Petersburg before its informal dissolution.

In Chapter III, I determined why the MSLS experienced failure upon attempting to disseminate its program in Macedonia. I located the problem in the nature of the relationship the MSLS had with another group seeking to accomplish autonomy for Macedonia – the Internal Macedonian-Adrianopolitan Revolutionary Organization. While most of the members of the MSLS participated, in some form or another, in IMARO-related activities, there was a considerable ideological rift between the leadership of the two groups. I have demonstrated that the reason for this divergence had two sides – the disagreement between the MSLS and IMARO concerning the preservation of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans and the lack of regular communication between the two organizations that was made difficult by SMAC-MSLS

antagonism in the Russian capital. On a different level, I positioned the competing designs of neighboring states concerning Macedonia as an additional factor of complexity. I explained how Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria, emboldened by the exhibited frailty of the Ottoman Empire after the Ilinden Uprising, took the opportunity to further their irredentist aims using both violence and propaganda institutions. Finally, I discussed how the MSLS's concept of a Macedonian identity had several aspects that did not necessarily reflect realities "on the ground" in Macedonia itself.

Essentially, the Macedonian Scientific and Literary Society represented a departure from traditional narratives of championing the cause for Macedonian autonomy – either an armed uprising against "Turkish slavery" or the "liberating" incursions of neighboring states. Eventual statehood was consistently within the sights of its main ideologue, Dimitrija Čupovski, yet it was through means of diplomacy, intensive lobbying and work on indispensable cultural necessities of a people such as dictionaries, grammar books, lexicons as well as extensive publication that the MSLS intended to realize the goal of an independent Macedonia. However, as is the case with elites, they neglected to confront fundamental contemporary actualities despite the elevated quality of their intentions. The group failed to maintain a consistent policy with clear goals. Their initial advocacy of autonomy within the framework of the Ottoman Empire was supplanted by an agenda for a Balkan Federation yet their rhetoric rarely discussed the role of non-Macedonian Slav populations within the imagined state.

Modern Macedonian historiography has steadily rediscovered their work and contribution to the modern Macedonian state especially in the linguistic and ethnographic sphere. Characteristically, the eventual descent into obscurity was largely due to the regional political

developments of the day and shifting sponsorship. Further research into the influence of the St. Petersburg Colony's endeavors on the indigenous Macedonian national movement is sure to provide additional insight into the interaction between various groups pursuing separatism and independence. Accomplishing this, however, would require considerable effort in locating and consolidating disparate and frequently inaccessible sources written in several languages. Indeed, obtaining material that would provide a genuinely comprehensive insight into the nature of the MSLS would constitute a monumental undertaking requiring a research campaign across the archives of Russia, Ukraine, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, the Greek Patriarchy and Turkey.

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