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2013

The Empire's forgotten children:  
understanding the path from Ottomanism to  
Titoism in Muslim Macedonia, 1912-1953

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Gingeras, R. (2013). The Empire's Forgotten Children: Understanding the Path from Ottomanism to Titoism in Muslim Macedonia, 1912-1953. In: E. Ginio and K. Kaser eds. Ottoman Legacies in the Contemporary Mediterranean: The Balkans and the Middle East Compared. Jerusalem: The European Forum at the Hebrew University, 119-145.  
<http://hdl.handle.net/10945/56437>

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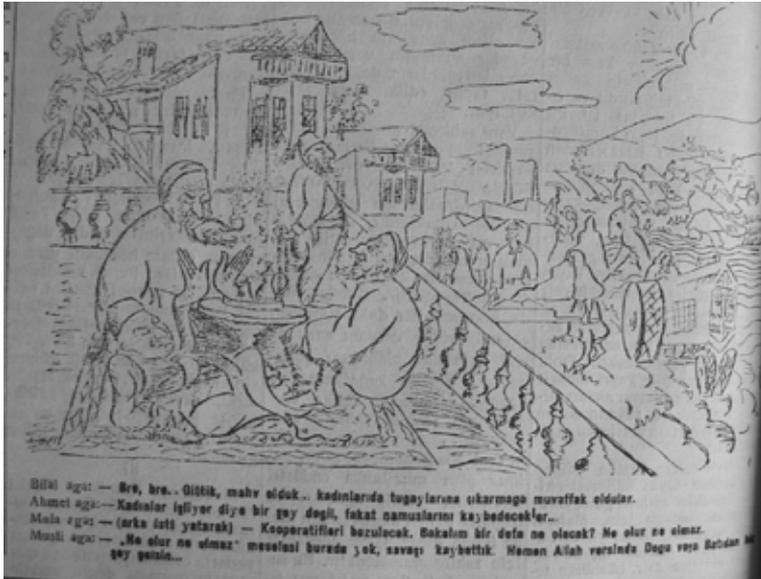
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# The Empire's Forgotten Children: Understanding the Path from Ottomanism to Titoism in Muslim Macedonia, 1912-1953

Ryan Gingeras



Bilal Ağa: Uh-huh. We're gone, we've perished. They're successful including women in their brigades.

Ahmet Ağa: It doesn't matter that the women are working, it's that they have lost their honour.

Mula Ağa (lying in the foreground): Their cooperatives will collapse. Shall we see at some point what will happen? Just in case.

Musli Ağa: There is no question of 'Just in case' here. We have lost the war. May God bring something from either the east or west.

Readers of the weekly newspaper *Birlik* (Unity) would have come across this cartoon on the week of 10 November 1949. As the sole Turkish-language newspaper servicing the newly created Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, *Birlik* fielded similar commentaries and predications week after week since its establishment in 1947. Cartoons and articles like this one attested to the fact that life and politics had indeed rapidly changed since Tito's ascendancy over a reconstituted Yugoslavia. Literacy programs, collectivization, popular elections, school openings, show trials and urban reconstruction were among the many life-altering happenings

shaping Macedonia's first steps down the road towards socialism. *Birlik's* mandate and purpose during this time was clear and concise: to inform, to convince and to celebrate Macedonia's Muslim population and to incorporate them into the workings of the new state that was emerging around them.

*Birlik's* readers could have understood or interpreted Musli Ağa's lament in a couple of ways. From their porch overlooking the field below, the four *ağas* (lords or landowners) fit the model of the owners and exploiters of the *ancien regime*. Communism's rise over the new Yugoslavia promised to reconfigure or destroy all political, economic and social institutions associated with the exploitation, oppression and backwardness of the past. Yet, in the case of Macedonia's Muslims, this did not simply mean the erasure of twenty-three years of rule under the Yugoslav monarchy. The *ağas*, with their fezzes, baggy trousers, turbans, beards and prayer beads, symbolized the living relics of the Ottoman Empire. God, despite Musli's invocation, would assuredly not save these old mummies from the establishment of a new, revolutionary Yugoslavia.

*Birlik's* significance, as both an institution and a body of commentary, should not be seen strictly in terms of its overall effect on the construction of socialism in Yugoslavia. If we approach this paper with a longer lens, *Birlik* instead provides us with a unique look at the challenges and the meaning of being Muslim in this central portion of South-Eastern Europe at the mid-twentieth century.

This paper provides an extended historiographical genealogy of the people who found their way into the pages of *Birlik* and attempts to explain the continuities and points of departure that marked the evolution of Muslim Macedonia between 1908 and 1953. Broadly speaking, it presents an effort to understand the evolution of identity and political participation among an ever shrinking and evolving set of Muslim leaders found in what once was, arguably, the heart of the Ottoman Empire.

## **Muslims and Ottoman Macedonia, 1908-1912**

As one peruses the master narratives set out by Leften Stavrianos or Peter Sugar, one gets the sense that the turn of the twentieth century was a time of rising expectations and national restoration for each of Macedonia's competing Orthodox Christian movements (be it Bulgarian, Serb, Greek or Macedonian). As one looks a bit closer at the 'national' histories of Andrew Rossos, Richard Crampton or Robert Clogg, revolution and nationalist revival assuredly did produce winners and losers among the region's Christians. The violent struggle for 'national liberation', which was topped off by the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, did produce great gains on the part of Greece and Serbia, mixed returns for Bulgaria and an almost total disaster from the perspective of Macedonian nationalists.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); R. J. Crampton, *A Short History of Modern Bulgaria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Andrew Rossos, *Macedonia and the Macedonians: A History* (Stanford: Hoover Institute Press, 2008);

Macedonia's Muslim population is rarely included within the commonly accepted narrative of the region's history. This omission appears all the more glaring when one considers the demographic realities of the turn of the twentieth century. Although census taking in Ottoman Macedonia should be understood as an often deeply politicized act of statist intervention (which tended to cross the border into propaganda),<sup>2</sup> various sources demonstrate that Muslims constituted sizable portions of Ottoman Macedonia's urban and rural landscape. Natural population growth and repeated waves of migration (largely as a result of war) amplified the Muslim presence in Macedonia between 1878 and 1912. Justin McCarthy points out, for example, that the Muslim population of the central province of Manastır [Bitola] tripled in size between 1876 and 1911.<sup>3</sup> If we look still closer at specific counties and districts embedded within the remaining provinces of Macedonia, the profundity of the Muslim presence in Macedonia appears even more conspicuous.<sup>4</sup>

Including Muslims in a revised history of Ottoman Macedonia does not begin and end with statistics. Naturally no 'Muslim state' emerges out the ashes of Ottoman Macedonia in the wake of the Balkan Wars. Instead, scholars have tended to emphasize that Muslims in the region did have nation-states to turn to following the collapse of imperial rule in old Rumeli: the Republic of Albania (established in 1912) and Anatolia (soon to be reconstituted as the Republic of Turkey in 1923). This understanding of the post-Balkan Wars settlement is implicitly based on the supposition that Macedonia's Muslim population could neatly be divided into two separate and clearly delineated ethnic groups: Albanians and Turks.<sup>5</sup> If one accepts this presumption without any reservation, then the integrity of the old narrative remains intact. Despite the bloodshed and carnage of the Balkan Wars, virtually everyone gets what they ultimately wanted; each 'nation' receives, in due course, a state.

Yet, if one looks closely at several developing trends within Ottoman historiography, such a conclusion is undermined by two fundamental misconceptions. The first concerns the correlation between language and ethnic identity. Ottoman Macedonia was among the most linguistically diverse portions of the empire. By 1900, the provinces of Macedonia contained several prosperous cities and towns located within a short distance from the imperial capital of

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Leften Stavrianos, *The Balkans from 1453* (New York: New York University Press, 2000); Peter Sugar and Ivo Lederer, eds., *Nationalism in Eastern Europe* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> İpek Yosmaoğlu, 'Counting Bodies, Shaping Souls: The 1903 Census and National Identity in Ottoman Macedonia', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38 (2006): 55-77.

<sup>3</sup> Justin McCarthy, 'Muslims in Ottoman Europe: Population from 1800 to 1912', *Nationalities Papers*, 28, 1 (2000): 36.

<sup>4</sup> See Vasil Kunchev, *Makedoniya: Etnografiya i Statistika* [Macedonia: Ethnography and Statics] (Sofia: Durzhaven Pechatnica, 1900), 140-142, 153, 249.

<sup>5</sup> See for example Kazim Nami Duru, *Arnavutluk ve Makedonya Hatıralarım* [My Memories: Albania and Macedonia] (Istanbul: Sucuoğlu Matbaası, 1959).

Istanbul, including Salonika, Üsküp, Manastır, Prizren, Drama, Siroz (Seres) and Ohri (Ohrid).<sup>6</sup> As the Ottoman state became increasingly centralized during the turn of the century, towns and cities such as these became the harbingers of Ottoman modernity. The Muslim elites of these towns were by and large educated in schools established by the state or by foreign agencies and adapted themselves to the tastes and manners of the capital. Although the political allegiance of these Muslim urban-dwellers (*şehirli*) to the Ottoman state may have ultimately diverged, Burcu Akan Ellis asserts that Ottoman Turkish remained their *lingua franca*.<sup>7</sup> In looking at the history of urban Muslim emigration from Macedonia in the twentieth century, she considers that *şehirli* identity was an amalgamation of these shared linguistic (Turkish) and socio-economic (elite, i.e. merchant, professional, administrator) traits. To be *şehirli* did not necessarily mean to be 'Turkish' in an ethno-linguistic sense, despite the fact that non-Muslims and villagers often referred to them as 'Turks'.<sup>8</sup> The flow of migrants into these Balkan cities during the nineteenth century created an urban population that was inherently multilingual. Nevertheless, according to Akan Ellis, the elite notion of being an urban-dweller sublimated the fact that one could also speak Albanian, Macedonian, Bulgarian or even Romani. In short, the allure of living in town required one to integrate and adopt Turkish as the language of day-to-day expression and assume the dress and demeanour of the imperial upwardly mobile.<sup>9</sup>

Life beyond the city limits of these urban Ottoman centres differed dramatically. If to live in a city carried with it the cachet of being educated and affluent, the characteristics of a villager (*köylü*) were ignorance, coarseness (bordering on inherent criminality) and provincialism. In this environment where state education and influence were less present, local languages, as opposed to the state language, Turkish, were more dominant. In the case of Kosova and to a large degree Macedonia, the dominant language among rural Muslim communities was Albanian.<sup>10</sup> This did not mean, as in the case of urban Muslim society, that all Muslims living in the countryside were Albanians. Rather, in this multilingual environment, Albanian served as a *lingua franca* for Muslims who may have also spoken Turkish, Romani, Greek or a Slavic language. Dress, customs and other day-to-day social practices were also affected by the pervasiveness of Albanian-

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<sup>6</sup> Fikret Adanır, 'The Macedonians in the Ottoman Empire, 1878-1912', in *The Formation of National Elites*, vol. 4, ed. Andreas Kappeler (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 162-164.

<sup>7</sup> Burcu Akan Ellis, *Shadow Genealogies: Memories and Identity among Urban Muslims in Macedonia* (Boulder, CO: Eastern European Monographs, 2003), 28.

<sup>8</sup> Eran Fraenkel, 'Urban Muslim Identity in Macedonia: The Interplay between Ottomanism and Multilingual Nationalism', in Eran Fraenkel and Christina Kramer, eds., *Language Contact, Language Conflict*, (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 32.

<sup>9</sup> Akan Ellis, *Shadow Genealogies*, 30-32.

<sup>10</sup> One noted exception to this rule in Macedonia is the presence of large numbers of rural Turkish speakers in the south-eastern portions of Macedonia (such as around Strumica). This population has often been described as the collective descendants of Yörük or nomadic Turkic peoples.

speakers.<sup>11</sup> Yet it was possible that both urban and rural families may have even been divided as to what language or customs predominated within the household.<sup>12</sup>

Situations such as these dilute the notion that there is a pure Albanian of native stock or an individual of pure Anatolian Turkish descent. A similar set of blurred lines that separated Ottoman 'Albanians' and 'Turks' cut across Orthodox Christian families and communities in Macedonia. Provincial Christians, who often spoke multiple languages themselves, bedevilled nationalist activists, guerrillas, Westerners and Ottoman administrators with their ability to bend to either the Serb, Bulgarian or Greek national persuasion.

The second misconception involves the development of competing and irreconcilable brands of nationalism among Macedonian Muslims. In keeping with the sort of nationalist clashes documented among and between Bulgarians, Greeks, Serbs and Macedonians, scholars have tended to emphasize that a similar evolution defined and divided Albanians and Turks in Macedonia. Of the two, Albanians appeared to have grasped the power and potential of nationalism first. Albanian nationalist orthodoxy dictates that despite the influence held by many Albanians within Ottoman Empire, Albanian resistance to Ottoman rule had been the norm since the fifteenth century. Fear of the empire's collapse and the threat of partition by Serbia, Greece and the Great Powers of Europe gave greater urgency to this resistance and instilled the need for an independent Albanian state.<sup>13</sup> A lockstep alliance of Albanian politicians and intellectuals inside and outside the empire advanced the cause of Albanian independence. Istanbul meanwhile responded to Albanian calls for independence with violence and oppression. A partial victory came only after a period of mass rebellion and war between 1910 and 1912, a period that resulted in the establishment of the Republic of Albania and the Serb partition of Albanian-inhabited lands in Macedonia.<sup>14</sup>

Turkish nationalism, as many would have it, arrived much later and set more shallow roots in Ottoman Macedonia. While the politics of Albanian identity grew more articulate, most Turks remained woefully attached to the doomed Ottoman state and failed to conjure an ethno-national vision of themselves until it was too late.<sup>15</sup> That is not to say, however, that Macedonia and Macedonian politics

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<sup>11</sup> Akan Ellis, *Shadow Genealogies*, 31.

<sup>12</sup> Fraenkel, 'Urban Muslim Identity', 33.

<sup>13</sup> Aleks Buda et al., *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar: Vëllimi i Dytë, Rilindja Kombëtare* [History of the Albanian Peoples, vol. 2, National Movement] (Tirana: Toena, 2000), 17-31; T. Zavallani, 'Albanian Nationalism', in Peter F. Sugar and Ivo Lederer, eds., *Nationalism in Eastern Europe* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), 62-76.

<sup>14</sup> See Nuray Bozboru, *Osmanlı Yönetiminde Arnavutluk ve Arnavut Ulusçuluğunun Gelişimi* [Albania under Ottoman Administration and the development of the Albanian National Movement] (Istanbul: Boyut Kitapları, 1997); George Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle: Ottoman Rule, Islam and the Albanians, 1871-1913* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006).

<sup>15</sup> See Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 174.

played no role in the development of Turkish nationalism. When the concept of Anatolian Turkishness did finally materialize, it would do so in the context of the Macedonian port city of Salonika. Successive generations of historians have noted with great irony that Salonika equally served as both the physical birthplace of Mustafa Kemal, founder of the Turkish Republic, and the intellectual cradle of Ziya Gökalp, the so-called father of Turkish nationalism.<sup>16</sup>

While one cannot dispute the emergence and eventual exclusivity of Albanian or Turkish nationalist tendencies, a new wave of scholarship complicates our understanding of the origins and points of departure of these two ideologies. Several recent studies of the late Ottoman state have tended to focus on the unifying efforts undertaken by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). Many of the core members of the CUP were born and raised in Macedonia. Many of these same individuals spoke both Turkish and Albanian and possessed close connections to Muslim urban and rural notables. Şükrü Hanioglu, Erik Jan Zürcher and others have convincingly demonstrated that the CUP movement, from its local conception in 1906, mobilized support across a broad swath of Muslim interests in Macedonia.<sup>17</sup> In order to save the Ottoman state from collapse and partition, Young Turk activists championed the construction of a 'modern', centralizing administration. The key to reform, in the minds of Young Turks, was incorporating all segments of the population (both Muslim and non-Muslim, as well as rural and urban citizens) into the workings of the state. Heavy emphasis was placed on expanding public education, a reformed judiciary, public disarmament and mass conscription as a means to both develop a more 'modern' society and promote a shared sense of Ottoman belonging. 'Fraternity' and 'Unity' were the watchwords of this era.

The CUP's dedication to 'Brotherhood and Unity', however, came with one condition: the necessity of promoting Ottoman Turkish as the sole language of local administration. Rather than as an expression of a nascent Turkish nationalism, it is clear that this position was meant as a tool to regularize Ottoman governance and to tie the empire's incredibly diverse population more closely to Istanbul. Contrary to the more traditionalist interpretations of Ottoman history, more recent studies have shown that 'Turkist' sentiments found limited and often fair-weather appeal among CUP officials in the years leading up to the Balkan Wars.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ziya Gökalp, *The Principles of Turkism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), 8-9.

<sup>17</sup> Şükrü Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 221-242; Erik Jan Zürcher, 'Young Turks, Ottoman Muslims and Turkish Nationalists: Identity Politics 1908-1938', in Kemal Karpat, ed., *Ottoman Past and Today's Turkey* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000), 150-179.

<sup>18</sup> Howard Eissenstat, 'The Limits of Imagination: Debating the Nation and Constructing the State in Early Turkish Nationalism', (PhD diss., UCLA, 2007), 11-66; Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley: University of California, 1997), 113; Zürcher, 'Young Turks', 172-173.

Despite the euphoria following the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, tensions between supporters of the Young Turks and members of the provincial elite in Macedonia gradually intensified with the establishment of a CUP-led government. While few would question the unity and integrity of the empire, many dissidents questioned the extent to which CUP-inspired reforms intended to bring about a more consolidated state. In addition to issues surrounding disarmament and the Ottoman court system (which intruded on the long-held autonomy of rural communities), concerns were raised over the right for provincial administrators and educators to develop and use the Albanian language as the local *lingua franca*. Albanians, noted advocates argued, were a consolidated, integral population that deserved the right to determine what language (and in certain cases what laws) should be enforced at a local level. A similar 'decentralizing' tendency also manifested itself among Arab notables in Ottoman Syria, who also demanded the right to use Arabic, instead of Ottoman Turkish, as the main idiom of the administration.

The rebellions that did sweep through portions of Albanian-speaking regions of Macedonia (as well as Kosova and the Albanian highlands) between 1910 and 1912 had little to do with these technical debates concerning identity and local sovereignty. Rather than as uprisings that manifested Albanian national discontent, rebellion among provincial Albanians during this period should be seen as stemming from both the hardships of conscription and mass disarmament and the fear of large landowners threatened with the loss of local autonomy.

In short, we should not think of the evolution of Muslim identity and politics in late Ottoman Macedonia as a bifurcating process that neatly divided communities along preset ethnic lines. Most Muslims in Macedonia lived in a world where the boundaries between 'being Albanian' and 'being Turkish' were traversable. Nationalism and ethnic self-discovery were instead issues that concerned small segments of the Ottoman elite. Even if one looks at the insistence with which certain Macedonian political leaders advocated the use of Albanian as the local idiom of governance as an expression of nationalism and self-determination, such steps were undertaken with the intent to renegotiate the contours of citizenship and belonging of a reformed Ottoman Empire. Save for the outbreak of rural rebellion and war with the neighbouring Balkan states, Albanian independence was not fated to happen.

### **Macedonian Muslims and royal Yugoslavia, 1912-1945**

The year 1912 definitively marks the final fragmenting of Macedonian history. With the tripartite partition of the *vilayets* of Üsküp, Manastır and Selânik into the regions of Pirin (Bulgaria), Aegean (Greece) and Vardar (Serbia) Macedonia, an unprecedented era of nationalist hegemony was imposed on the land. Yet the Balkan Wars did not result in an equal sharing of Ottoman Rumeli or a mutual realization of each of the irredentist or nationalist designs of the pre-war political

factions. A second Balkan war waged solely against Bulgaria followed the first. For decades to come, self-styled Bulgarian and Macedonian militants would viciously contest the borders drawn by both conflicts. Other serious forms of resistance were displayed at local levels. The new administrators of occupied Macedonia confronted provincial populations that did not speak or refused to speak the 'national language'. A great many new citizens in Macedonia did not profess or practice the Orthodox rites endorsed by the state. Belgrade, Sofia and Athens responded to acts of local resistance with mass re-education and policing efforts tailored to forcibly teach these new citizens to be Serbs, Bulgarians or Greeks.<sup>19</sup>

No centrally devised plan appeared to have guided Serb, Greek and Bulgarian violence towards Muslims during the First Balkan War. Combatants and non-combatants were slaughtered with equal ferocity throughout the region. As tens of thousands of Muslim civilians fled for their lives, members of the provincial Ottoman administration followed in tow. According to statistics compiled after the war, over four hundred thousand Muslims abandoned their homes and took up residence in what remained of the Ottoman Empire. Most would never return.<sup>20</sup>

While the Ottoman administration may have finally been 'banished' from Europe in 1912, Muslim life in Macedonia did not completely come to an end. As brutal as the Balkan Wars would prove, conditions grew worse over the next decade. Serbia's defeat at the hands of the Austrians in 1915 transformed Macedonia into a battlefield yet again as British and French expeditionary troops came to the aid of the retreating Serbs. Apart from a few desperate efforts waged by the Ottoman clandestine service (Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa or the Special Organization), Istanbul would abandon any hope of regaining the empire's severed territories. Of the three regions, Muslims in Bulgaria's portion of Macedonia would fare the best through the war and the immediately ensuing years. Since many of the region's Muslims were counted as Bulgarian-speakers (or Pomaks), most were spared deportation or threats of violence.<sup>21</sup> Muslims in Greece and the newly constituted

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<sup>19</sup> James Frusetta, 'Bulgaria's Macedonia: Nation-Building and State Building, Centralization and Autonomy in Pirin Macedonia, 1903-1952' (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 2006); Anastasia N. Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood: Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia, 1870-1990* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1997); Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History* (New York: Modern Library, 2000), 117; Rossos, *Macedonia*, 131-153.

<sup>20</sup> BCA 272.14.75.24.6.21, September 1920; 'Der Muhamedanische Exodus aus Makedonien [The Mohammedan Exodus from Macedonia]', *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 29 March 1914; 'Die Auswanderung aus Makedonien [The Outmigration from Macedonia]', *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 29 March 1914; *The Other Balkan Wars: A 1913 Carnegie Endowment Inquiry in Retrospect with a New Introduction and Reflections on the Present Conflict by George F. Kennan* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1993).

<sup>21</sup> Frusetta, 'Bulgaria's Macedonia', 190. According to Bilal Şimşir, 43 percent of Nevrokop's population was Muslim in 1920. See Bilal Şimşir, 'The Turkish Minority in Bulgaria: History and Culture', in Kemal Karpat, ed., *The Turks of Bulgaria: The History, Culture and Political Fate of a Minority* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1990), 161.

Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes did not manage as well.

Greece acquired hundreds of thousands of Albanian, Turkish, Slavic and Greek-speaking Muslims in the aftermath of the Balkan Wars. From virtually the outset of Athens's conquest of Macedonia, Greek and Ottoman representatives actively contemplated deportation as a means of resolving the region's demographic heterogeneity.<sup>22</sup> Although the outbreak of world war negated attempts to negotiate an initial 'exchange of populations' between Greece and the Ottomans, CUP officials remained committed to the idea even after their defeat was assured in 1918. Per the parameters of the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923, Orthodox Christians native to Anatolia were sent to Greece in exchange for 'Turks' living in Macedonia and the Epirus. Negotiators from Ankara explicitly requested and expected to receive Turkish-speaking Muslims in the agreement. To their disappointment, Greece also delivered thousands of Albanian-speaking Muslims (and perhaps Christians) in their stead. For all intensive purposes, though, the exchanges would extinguish Islam from the Aegean portion of Macedonia.<sup>23</sup>

A more complex array of challenges and complications confronted Muslims living in South Serbia (as Vardar Macedonia and Kosova became known during the interwar period). From its conception in 1918, the inherently 'multinational' Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was compelled to reckon with a Muslim population of several shades. Bosnia-Herzegovina's inclusion into royal Yugoslavia, with its large number of Slavic-speaking Muslims, had a particularly tempering effect on the way Belgrade would approach Islam and its adherents. In spite of successive waves of violence and forced migration, a shared fear of Serb aggrandizement in Bosnia allowed noted Bosnian Muslims to forge alliances with powerful Croat blocks at local and national levels. The common threat posed by an ascendant Serb voice in Yugoslav politics best served the Yugoslav Muslim Organization (*Jugoslavenska Muslimanska Organizacija* or JMO), the largest Bosnian Muslim party, which held a king-making position within the Yugoslav parliament for much of the 1920s.<sup>24</sup>

The JMO's ability to reconcile the tenuous status occupied by Bosnian Muslims within the teetering realities of Yugoslav political life provided an initial standard for members of South Serbia's Muslim elite. In 1918 a consortium of larger landowners, urban notables and religious scholars formed the *İslam Muhafaza-yı Hukuk Cemiyeti* (the Committee of the Right of Islamic Defence or more commonly known as *Cemiyet*). The central principles of the party were

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<sup>22</sup> Yannis G. Mourellos, 'The 1914 Persecutions and the First Attempt at an Exchange of Minorities between Greece and Turkey', *Balkan Studies* 26, 2 (1985): 389-413.

<sup>23</sup> Dimitris Michalopoulos, 'The Moslems of the Chamuria and the Exchange of Populations between Greece and Turkey', *Balkan Studies*, 26, 2 (1985), 303; Rıza Nur, *Hayat ve Hatıratım* [My Recollections and Life], vol. 3 (Istanbul: Atundağ Yayınevi, 1968), 1097; PRO/FO 286/869, 31 December 1923.

<sup>24</sup> Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 368-377.

limited but significant: preservation of Muslim autonomy in matters of worship, civil matters and religious endowments (*vakıfs*); the free use of 'respective mother tongues' in schools; and the conservation of landowning rights.<sup>25</sup> Upon closer analysis, Cemiyet, as an elite party concerned largely with the preservation of local political and cultural autonomy, mirrored the decentralist organizations of the late Ottoman period. The willingness of Cemiyet's leadership to enter politics and collaborate with Belgrade was coupled with finite limits that, when pressed, could and did lead to outright opposition.

Many of the historical continuities and contradictions that defined Cemiyet's brief existence can be found in the life of its founder, Necip Draga. Necip Draga was among the founding members of the Committee of Union and Progress and served in the restored Ottoman parliament of 1908.<sup>26</sup> His ability to straddle the urban-rural divide in large measure was at the heart of the political authority he garnered both locally and nationally. As the head of a family with extensive landholdings in northern Kosova, Necip possessed deep connections to the Albanian-speaking provincial establishment. Yet he was also a man in possession of a 'modern' education (he spoke French and German) who maintained a residence in the provincial capital of Skopje (or Üsküp in Turkish).<sup>27</sup>

With the outbreak of strife in Kosova over conscription and disarmament, Necip and several other erstwhile supporters of the CUP turned their backs on Istanbul and supported the rebels. His support for the rural, primarily Albanian-speaking rebels violently intersected with the outbreak of the Balkans Wars, the end of Ottoman rule in Macedonia and the declaration of Albanian independence. Unlike many administrators and Muslim men of means, Necip did not flee to Ottoman Anatolia and was arrested by advancing Serb forces.<sup>28</sup> In his brother's absence, Ferhat Draga refocused the energies of rebels in Kosova and northern Macedonia towards Serb troops (going as far as raising men in support of the Austro-Hungarian offensive during the First World War).<sup>29</sup> When a restored peace affirmed South Serbia's place in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the elder Draga and his brother resorted to party politics in order to maintain an active voice in local affairs.

On 25 February 1919, almost three months after the establishment of the kingdom, the Yugoslav government formally abolished the Ottoman system of landholding.<sup>30</sup> As an act that allowed local administrators the right to break up

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 377; Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 270; 'Ifade-i Meram', *Hak*, 23 February 1920; Aleksandar Apostolov, *Kolonizatzija na Makedonija vo Stara Jugoslavija* [Colonization of Macedonia in Old Yugoslavia] (Skopje: Mislja, 1980), 174-180.

<sup>26</sup> Hanioglu, *Preparation*, 230.

<sup>27</sup> Gawrych, *The Crescent*, 162.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 199.

<sup>29</sup> Malcolm, *Kosovo*, 260.

<sup>30</sup> Ramiz Abdyli, 'The Expropriation of the Albanian Population and Attempts for Colonisation of Albanian Territories (1918-1941)', *The Kosova Issue: A Historical and Current Problem* (Tirana: Institute of

large estates throughout South Serbia (most of which were owned by Muslims), most land would be distributed to Orthodox (largely Serb) families and settlers.<sup>31</sup> The prospect of 'land reform', which naturally stood to deeply injure wealthy Muslims in both Macedonia and Kosova, in turn served as Cemiyet's first major rallying issue. Cemiyet's efforts to stymie or reverse the break-up of estates ironically found a willing ally in the ruling Radical Party of Serbia. At the price of their cooperation in passing a constitution which granted Belgrade greater control over the new state, Draga won greater indemnities for land targeted for redistribution. Cooperation between nationalist Serbs and Cemiyet extended through three separate parliamentary elections between 1920 and 1923, leading to mixed candidate lists in such Muslim-populated areas as Tetovo and southern Kosova.<sup>32</sup>

Such acts of accommodation between these two camps should not be seen as a sign of Belgrade's willingness to include Muslims in South Serbia in a shared future. 'Land redistribution' comprised only one facet of a much larger policy to decimate the sheer physical presence of Muslims in the region. Attempts at colonizing the countryside were accompanied by mass police actions targeting South Serbia's largely Albanian-speaking rural population. Ad hoc attacks on villages and towns in Kosova and Vardar Macedonia gave way in the early 1930s to a government-backed program to forcibly remove all rural Albanians from South Serbia. Negotiators from the Republic of Turkey, which included Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, were willing to play a collaborative role in this mass cleansing of Muslims from the Macedonian countryside, agreeing in June 1938 to accept forty thousand families for resettlement in Anatolia over the next six years. The refusal of the Turkish Grand National Assembly to sign the treaty, followed by the outbreak of the Second World War, prevented the immediate implementation of the plan. Ironically, at this point in Belgrade's evolving program of undermining the presence of Macedonia's Muslim population, urban Muslims (i.e. areas most associated with Turkish-speakers) were excluded from the deportation orders.<sup>33</sup>

Cemiyet initially did not serve as the main focal point of resistance to the violence and oppression levied by Belgrade. Instead, an armed response to Serbia's genocidal policies fell to a variety of militant factions rooted in the countryside. The leaders of the so-called *kaçak* ('illegal' or 'renegade' in Turkish) resistance, ironically, came out of a similar Ottoman milieu as Necip and Ferhat

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History, 1996), 9; Millovan Obradović, 'Kolonizimi dhe Reforma Agrare në Funksion të Spastrimit Etnik të Shqiptarëve [Colonization and Agrarian Reform as Function of Ethnic Cleansing of Albanians]', in Hivzi Islami, ed., *Spastrimet Etnike: Politika Gjenocidale Serbe Ndaj Shqiptarëve* [Ethnic Cleansing: Serbian Genocidal Politics towards Albanians] (Pejë: Botoi Dukagjini, 2003), 175-188.

<sup>31</sup> Malcolm, *Kosovo*, 280.

<sup>32</sup> The Serb politician who later assassinated the Croat leader Stjepan Radić in 1928 was in fact an allied Radical candidate from Tetevo. See Banac, *National Question*, 377-378.

<sup>33</sup> See Ryan Gingeras, *Sorrowful Shores: Violence, Ethnicity and the End of the Ottoman Empire, 1912-1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 162-163.

Draga. Like Necip, Hasan Prishtina, one of the more prominent *kaçak* leaders, was also a well-educated former CUP member and Ottoman parliamentarian with strong connections to both urban and rural political factions.<sup>34</sup> Organized into small bands, the *kaçaks* staged attacks on the Yugoslav military and gendarmerie throughout the Vardar region. According to statistics gathered by the Committee for the National Defence of Kosova, an organization led by Albanian nationalists who supported the *kaçak* movement, 12,371 people had been killed and 22,110 were imprisoned within the first three years of resistance.<sup>35</sup> Eventually the weight of the violence forced Cemiyet's leadership to abandon its collaboration with the pro-nationalist Radicals. Ferhat Draga, who assumed control over the party after his brother's passing in 1921, finally broke with the Radicals by the end of 1923, an act which resulted in Draga's imprisonment for twenty years.<sup>36</sup>

Yugoslavia's fall after the Nazi Blitzkrieg of April 1941 further complicated Muslim acts of defiance and collaboration in the region. Vardar Macedonia was again subdivided, this time between Bulgarian and Italian occupation forces. Bulgarian occupation brought with it a concerted agenda of 'Bulgarification' of the Orthodox population and a general regime of exploitation, cruelty and indifference towards non-Christians.<sup>37</sup> The Italian zone, which encompassed Kosova and Macedonia's western highlands, was attached to occupied Albania. Neither the Italians nor the Germans were ultimately successful in maintaining order without appealing, ironically, to Albanian nationalist and separatist sentiments in the region. With promises not to resist, local notables were able to secure provincial autonomy for their communities under the official aegis of a 'greater Albania'.<sup>38</sup> As inter-communal violence between royalists, collaborators and communists intensified throughout the war, many colonists who had received land from the Yugoslav government were attacked or driven off.<sup>39</sup> These reversals of the anti-

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<sup>34</sup> Gawrych, *The Crescent*, 162.

<sup>35</sup> Gingeras, *Sorrowful Shores*, 161-162.

<sup>36</sup> Banac, *National Question*, 378; Malcolm, *Kosovo*, 271. After his imprisonment, Ferhat fled to Italian-occupied Albania. See 'Subject: Transmitting the Second Instalment of a WHO'S WHO IN YUGOSLAVIA', 3 April 1943, Yugoslavia, US Embassy, Belgrade, Istanbul General Consul Yugoslavia Dispatches, Record Group 84; National Archives Building II, Silver Spring, MD.

<sup>37</sup> Rossos, *Macedonia*, 183-186. According to Mahmud Amid, a relative of one of the founding members of Cemiyet who was interviewed by US intelligence personnel in Istanbul in 1943, Muslims in Skopje fared poorly under Bulgarian occupation. In addition to exorbitantly high taxes, the theft of their property and the imposition of *corvée* duties by the Bulgarians, Muslims also confronted tensions with native Macedonians who sided with the occupation. Most Muslims, according to Mahmud Amid feared that they would be 'wiped out' should South Serbia be annexed to Bulgaria. As a result, he claimed, many favoured a return to the old Yugoslav system and the protection afforded to them by the Serbs. See 'Subject: Information from Skopje according to a Moslem Traveler', 24 December 1943, Yugoslavia, US Embassy, Belgrade, Istanbul General Consul Yugoslavia Dispatches, Record Group 84; National Archives Building II, Silver Spring, MD.

<sup>38</sup> Malcolm, *Kosovo*, 290-297.

<sup>39</sup> One of the casualties of this conflict was Ferhat Daga's son, Selahettin, who was murdered in Belgrade in 1944. See Owen Pearson, *Albania in Occupation and War: From Fascism to Communism, 1940-1945*

Albanian policies of the interwar period proved short-lived. Nazi Germany's defeat, together with the reconsolidation of Yugoslavia under the Communist Party, transformed various acts of collaboration among rural Muslims into a stain that besmirched Albanians throughout Macedonia and Kosova well after the war concluded.<sup>40</sup>

As one traces the evolution of Macedonia through the interwar period, one cannot lose sight of the fact that Muslims in South Serbia or northern Greece did not stand alone in confronting the post-Ottoman era. Partition and occupation were traumas and challenges of no less severity for those who found themselves in the Mandate states of Iraq, Syria and Palestine. While surely there were those who did support the creation of a unified Arab state (such as the officers and notables who joined the Arab Revolt of 1916), most Muslims and Christians residing in the Arab lands remained loyal to Istanbul to the very end (with some maintaining their loyalty even after the war was over).<sup>41</sup> When partition and occupation appeared inevitable, rebellion erupted in Egypt, Syria and Iraq. It was only with great difficulty, bloodshed and some compromise that the British and French suppressed these revolts.

Once the dust had settled from these rebellions, post-Ottoman politics in the Arab Middle East shifted increasingly towards a begrudging pattern of accommodation with the new order. French officials turned to old urban notables to help them administer Mandate Syria.<sup>42</sup> Former officers, men who had previously been loyal to the Ottoman state and the CUP, came to embrace the Iraqi state and military service under the British-imposed monarchy.<sup>43</sup> A public school curriculum forged by Sati al-Husri embraced and legitimized an Iraqi Arab nationalism within the confines of the Mandate's borders.<sup>44</sup> This cumulative picture of accommodation and cooperation in the post-Ottoman Middle East is made further complex by Zachary Lockman's research into the activities of Jewish and Arab labour organizers during the 1930s.<sup>45</sup> If juxtaposed with these examples from the Arab lands, Cemiyet and other attempts by Macedonian Muslims to collaborate with the political order of South Serbia appear rather moderate and sparing.

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(London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 367-368.

<sup>40</sup> Malcolm, *Kosovo*, 312-313.

<sup>41</sup> Kayali, *Arabs*, 203-205.

<sup>42</sup> Philip Khoury, 'Continuity and Change in Syrian Political Life: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', *American Historical Review* 96, 5 (December 1991): 1374-1395.

<sup>43</sup> Reeve Simon, 'The Education of an Iraqi Ottoman Army Officer', in Rashid Khalidi et al., eds., *The Origins of Arab Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 151-166.

<sup>44</sup> Sati al-Husri, it should be noted, served in Macedonia and Jannina early in his career as an Ottoman educator and administrator. William L. Cleveland, *The Making of an Arab Nationalist: Ottomanism and Arabism in the Life and Thought of Sati al-Husri* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 19.

<sup>45</sup> Zachary Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906-1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

As one further compares patterns of conflict and cooperation in Macedonia with the evolution of the former Ottoman Arab lands, certain major differences cannot be ignored. One must hesitate in drawing too direct a comparison between the *modus vivendi* of British and French Mandate authorities and Serb (or Greek or Bulgarian) administrators in Macedonia. London made no historical claim of ownership over Iraq and ultimately sought to exercise a limited degree of influence in Mesopotamia after 1920. A fairly recently defined set of geo-strategic priorities (and, in the case of France, some supposed cultural ties) linked London and Paris with their Mandate territories.<sup>46</sup>

We also see some differences in how the French and British handled the demographic nature of their newly claimed territories in the Middle East. No Mandate power denied the existence of the Arab and Muslim majorities or non-Muslim, non-Arabic-speaking minorities. British diplomats at Lausanne, for example, were forthright in their assertions that the Kurds of northern Iraq formed a distinct population set apart from the Turks of Anatolia.<sup>47</sup> In the cases of Syria's Alawites or Iraq's Sunni population, both the French and British were willing to empower regional minorities as a means of maintaining order and the permanence of the Mandate regime.<sup>48</sup>

If there is one point of contrast that most divides the experience of Muslims in Macedonia from their counterparts living elsewhere in the former Ottoman world, it would be in the realm of violence. The sheer sustained ferocity of the police actions and deportations that plagued Muslims throughout Macedonia is perhaps best comparable to the events and policies that culminated in the Palestinian *nakba* of 1948. One can draw a clear and consistent line of nationalization and ethnic cleansing from the establishment of kibbutz cooperatives to Plan Dalet implemented in April-May 1948; in the anticipation of the invasion of Arab armies to the fledgling Jewish state, many facets of Palestinian space were to be made Jewish while Muslim and Christian natives were compelled, one way or another, to vanish.<sup>49</sup> A similar vigour and aggression governed the policies of the Republic of Turkey towards the lands of eastern Anatolia. Despite comparable patterns of denial, nationalization and violence, there is an important distinction

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<sup>46</sup> See Patricia Lorcin, 'Rome and France in Africa: Recovering Colonial Algeria's Latin Past', *French Historical Studies* 25, 2 (Spring 2002): 295-329. In the case of Algeria, French archaeologists and administrators saw themselves as reviving Algeria's Roman past.

<sup>47</sup> See *Lausanne Conference on Near Eastern Affairs, 1922-1923: Records of Proceedings and Draft Terms of Peace* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1923), 356-357.

<sup>48</sup> Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 43-80; Khoury, 'Continuity and Change', 1394.

<sup>49</sup> Benny Morris, 'Revisiting the Palestinian Exodus of 1948', in Eugene Rogan and Avi Shlaim, eds., *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 37-59; Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (London: Oneworld, 2007); Ted Swedenburg, *Memories of Revolt: The 1936-1939 Rebellion and the Palestinian National Past* (Little Rock: University of Arkansas Press, 2003).

to be made between Palestine, Turkey and Macedonia. Ankara could and did conceive of ways of 'turning' Kurds or Laz into Turks;<sup>50</sup> no one in the Jewish Agency or interwar Belgrade or Athens could have conceived of a formula that could bodily or philosophically reengineer native Sunni Muslims wholesale into nationally desirable citizens.

If we are to take the comparison further, the nationalizing policies of Israel, Turkey and Greece were not entirely coherent. Each of these states was prepared to afford a certain amount of protection and recognition to a few 'national' minorities. In the case of Yugoslavia, Belgrade's willingness to extend a modicum of recognition to urban Muslims during the interwar period did bear interesting fruit with the conclusion of the Axis occupation. Inclusion of Turcophone notables in the political process during the interwar period set a precedent that would be followed, and amplified, by the subsequent communist regime. For Muslims seeking rapprochement with Belgrade after 1945, two equally daunting questions had to be addressed: First, through what venues do Muslims integrate into Tito's Yugoslavia? Second, how do Muslims reconcile themselves with the 'new' Yugoslavia despite the violence and oppression of the old?

### **A New Wave of Brotherhood and Unity?: Macedonian Muslims and Titoism**

Macedonia's status as both a state and a national home loomed large as Tito's Partisans gathered strength throughout Yugoslavia. While a communist consensus towards the creation of a Macedonian state had been incubating since the interwar period, it took the Axis occupation to spur the Communist Party in Yugoslavia (KPJ) to press the issue to fruition. The path to Macedonian statehood progressed steadily through the Second World War from the organization of armed Partisan brigades to the announcement on 2 August 1944 of a sovereign Macedonian government in the former region of South Serbia.<sup>51</sup> Macedonian independence, however, would remain limited to the Vardar region; those who remained in either Pirin (Bulgaria) or Aegean Macedonia (Greece) saw no change in their political status.<sup>52</sup>

The creation of the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, above all, signified a cultural revolution long in the making. With the passage of the 1946 constitution, Belgrade recognized Macedonians as one of the five constituent national groups comprising Tito's Yugoslavia. A codified, officially recognized Macedonian language began to take shape within months of the August 1944 declaration. An emerging 'national' leadership soon endorsed the creation of a national university

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<sup>50</sup> Uğur Ümit Üngör, 'Seeing like a Nation-State: Young Turk Social Engineering in Eastern Turkey, 1913-1950', *Journal of Genocide Research* 10,1 (2008): 15-39.

<sup>51</sup> Rossos, *Macedonia*, 189-196.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 197-202.

in Skopje, sanctioned opening of a national theatre and elevated a select number of authors to the status of national poets.<sup>53</sup> This cultural turn towards a self-consciously cultivated Macedonian identity naturally entailed the rewriting of the region's history in favour of a long-suppressed and insurgent Macedonian nationalist tendency.

Belgrade's affirmation of an officially recognized Macedonian majority in former South Serbia did, however, come with certain corollaries. The passage of the 1946 federal constitution in the nascent republic made a point of identifying the presence of a select number of 'national minorities' within the confines of Macedonia. Serbs, Turks, Albanians and Vlachs were each identified as protected minorities who would have the right (one could even say the responsibility) of developing their own cultural institutions.<sup>54</sup> Such compromises with nationalism (be it with 'majority' or 'minority' populations) followed the Soviet model of crafting regional administrations. Under the umbrella of a federalized system of governance (with each federal unit corresponding to a specific dominant local majority), the ascendant Titoist government hoped national development among previously oppressed minorities would provide a gateway to acceptance and inclusion into the emerging socialist system. As past wrongs were addressed through various forms of national 'affirmative action' policies, it was hoped that these newly redeemed beneficiaries would gradually see the light of the non-national, secular socialist state. In other words, after ingesting their fill of their local national institutions, gradually Albanians, Bosnian Muslims, Turks and Croats would shed, like dead skin, their old national ties and traits in exchange for the more progressive and modern bonds of the socialist federation.<sup>55</sup>

This agenda to create or recreate national identities was documented on a week-to-week basis by *Birlik*, the Turcophone national weekly which would service the nascent Macedonian Republic on and off for over a half century.<sup>56</sup> What one sees in the years between 1947 (the first year of the publication) and 1953 (the year Yugoslavia and Turkey signed a mutual pact of friendship) is a collaborative effort on the part of Turkish-speaking and non-Turkish-speaking journalists, politicians, teachers, labour activists, housewives, poets and members of the *ulema* to define the role of Muslims in the Yugoslav state. The principal figures who acted as the representatives of Muslim Macedonians were by and large the children of professional families from *şehirli* backgrounds. Virtually all of the spokesmen and leaders who represented the Communist Party, individuals

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 249-256.

<sup>54</sup> 'Makedonya Halk Cumhuriyetinin Ana Yasa İlan Edildi [The Constitution of the People's Republic of Macedonia Declared]', *Birlik*, 10 January 1947.

<sup>55</sup> See Terry Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

<sup>56</sup> *Birlik* was first published in 1947. By the early 1990s it was infrequently published and came to end by 2001.

such as Kemal Seyfullah, Nazim Firtüz or Sedat Veli, were born well after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the First World War.<sup>57</sup> In 1950, *Birlik* took great pains to note that each of the 'Turks' elected to parliament were veterans of the Partisan struggle (though only a few were party members before the war).<sup>58</sup>

*Birlik's* editorial staff provided an echo chamber for the speeches delivered by the men and women tasked with leading Muslims into socialism. A general and amiable historical narrative of the previous forty years quickly coalesced over the course of the early issues. With the collapse of the 'Oriental', 'oppressive' and 'feudal' Ottoman regime, 'Greater Serb chauvinism' reigned.<sup>59</sup> Under Serb oppression, Turks and Albanians found common cause with Christian Macedonians. With the valiant 'war of independence (*kurtuluş savaşı*)' against the fascists and occupiers won and complete, no one could doubt the spirit of brotherhood and unity (*kardeşlik ve birlik*) among all the elements of Macedonia. Yes, grave atrocities were committed against Turks and Albanians and many were indeed forced to flee for Turkey. But now only nationalists or religious reactionaries would think of departing Macedonia for the 'imperialist' camp in Anatolia.<sup>60</sup>

Although officially advocating and proselytizing from the perspective of the 'Turkish minority' of Macedonia, *Birlik's* coverage of local and national affairs often emphasized the commonalities and shared interests of Muslims found throughout the region. The rhetorical dyad 'Turks and Albanians' appears with great regularity with many printings (for example, 'The Recruitment of Skopje Turk and Albanian [*Şiptar*] Minorities into the Peoples' War of Independence').<sup>61</sup> This common blending (and even blurring) of the lines between 'Turks' and 'Albanians' in *Birlik's* coverage (a trend which again dates back to the Ottoman period) is further notable for the fact that many of the individuals featured in stories and reports often bear no discernable Turkish or Albanian patronyms (for example, names ending with either 'oğlu', 'li' or 'i').

In addressing both Turks and Albanians, *Birlik's* editors and contributors frequently broached issues related to the practice and application of Islam within the confines of the new socialist order. In some sense *Birlik* ventured

<sup>57</sup> 'FHYC Millet Meclisine Gidecek Azınlıklara Mensup Namzetler [Candidates Belonging to Minorities Will Go to the SFRY National Assembly]', *Birlik*, 12 March 1950.

<sup>58</sup> 'Makedonya Halk Cumhuriyeti Millet Meclisine Mebus Namzetlerimiz-Türkler [Turks – Our Candidates to the National Assembly of the People's Republic of Macedonia]', *Birlik*, 29 November 1950.

<sup>59</sup> 'Mustafa Said Sözünden [From Mustafa Said's Speech]', *Birlik*, 10 January 1947; 'Türklerin Halk İdaresine İştiraki ve Siyasi Faaliyetlei, [The Participation of Turks in the People's Administration and Their Political Activities]', *Birlik*, 31 July 1949; 'Bir Mais İştip Türk Festivalleri [A Turkish May Festival in Shtip]', *Birlik*, 10 May 1950.

<sup>60</sup> 'Milli Azınlıkları Sosyalist Camiamızdan Ayırmağa Çalışan Düşmanın her Teşebüsüne karşı Savaşa Önem Verilmeli [Urgency Bestowed on the War against the Enemy's Every Attempt to Separate the National Minorities from Our Mosques]', *Birlik*, 31 March 1954.

<sup>61</sup> 'Üsküplü Türk ve Şiptar Azınlıklarının Halk Kurtuluş Harbına İştiraki [Skopje's Turkish and Albanian Minorities Joining the National Liberation War]', *Birlik*, 1 October 1948.

into well-travelled territory when approaching Islam. Throughout the interwar period, debates raged in both South Serbia and Bosnia over the development of a 'modernized' and 'post-Ottoman' form of Islam.<sup>62</sup> When dealing directly with Islamic dogma, the paper often printed declarations and essays written by members of Skopje's Council of Islamic Clergy (*Ülema Meclisi*) or by İbrahim Fehiç (the national Reisül-Ulema). While certainly never denying or discouraging belief in the existence of God, *Birlik's* treatment of Islam above all emphasized the need to harmonize religion with modernity. In this regard, education was deemed key. Under socialism, all children, boys and girls, would be educated equally in the modern arts and sciences. The education of the mosques and *medreses* in turn would be abandoned (but not outlawed). As the editorial staff at *Birlik* would have it, students would naturally reject the dirty floors and windowless 'prisons' of older religious schools and gladly forgo having to spend hours memorizing the Koran in Arabic.<sup>63</sup>

At the heart of this reinvention of Islam and Muslim identity in Macedonia was the state's supreme emphasis on the 'elevation' of Turkish and Albanian women. This turn in Yugoslav communism was not unique in the Second World; like the endowment of rights and development of the folk cultures of 'national minorities', the edification and advancement of women was deemed critical throughout the Soviet Union and other socialist states.<sup>64</sup> Two specific programs particularly targeted the mothers, wives and daughters of Muslims in Yugoslav Macedonia: the expansion of literacy and educational opportunities for women and the casting off of the headscarf (*çarşaf* or *ferace*).

A subtle revolution in the Turkish language accompanied the ascendancy of Titoism in Yugoslavia. Up until 1945, Ottoman Turkish, written in the imperial script, remained the lingua franca of Turcophones in Macedonia. The publication of *Birlik* and the recognition of Turks as a national minority after 1946 ushered a new standardization of the language. First and foremost, Turkish was now to be written with a modified Latin alphabet. While the language appears quite similar to the Turkish used in the Turkish Republic, several important points of differentiation are noticeable. First and foremost, *Birlik* retained many elements of the Turkish language's imperial roots in terms of grammar and vocabulary. Like the Kemalist reforms, these 'reforms' were not simply meant to make acquisition

<sup>62</sup> Muhammed Aruçi, 'The Muslim Minority in Macedonia and Its Educational Institutions during the Inter-War Period', in Nathalie Clayer and Eric Germain, eds., *Islam in Inter-War Europe* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 344-361; Xavier Bougarel, 'Farewell to the Ottoman Legacy?: Islamic Reformism and Revivalism in Inter-War Bosnia-Herzegovina', in Nathalie Clayer and Eric Germain, eds., *Islam in Inter-War Europe* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 313-343.

<sup>63</sup> 'Analfabetizmaya karşı Savaşırken: Yeni Analfabetler Yetiştirmiyelim [Fighting against Alphabetism]', *Birlik*, 25 January 1947.

<sup>64</sup> See Dru Gladney, *Dislocating China: Muslims, Minorities, and Other Subaltern Subjects* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Douglas Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

of literacy easier for the largely illiterate masses. Rather, it was a direct attempt to distance the 'modern language' from its Islamic heritage.<sup>65</sup>

If one had to identify the most dominant theme of reporting that adorned the pages of *Birlik* during the late 1940s and early 1950s, it is clear that the state's efforts to expand literacy among both Turks and Albanians assumed the primary position. A spirit of urgency, optimism, diligence and procedure underscored each glowing story on the steps being taken to end illiteracy among Turks and Albanians (the two least literate groups in the country according to *Birlik*).<sup>66</sup> Statistics showing progress towards full literacy were constantly cited and revised as the weeks passed. The overwhelming majority of stories on state literacy programs enacted in both the towns and villages of Macedonia focused on women. In addition to highlighting the attendance numbers and success rates of peasant girls and urban mothers who attended literacy classes, *Birlik* presented its readers with testimonials of 'working women' and newly elected female representatives who touted the transformative experiences that accompanied learning to read and write. It was true that some men were attempting to keep their womenfolk at home and imprisoning them in ignorance. But the true enemies of women's literacy were religious reactionaries.

Beginning in 1947, *Birlik* began to inform its readers on a series of public meetings in both Kosova and Macedonia devoted to the question of veiling. The women who attended these gatherings, be they among the new political notables of the region or common villagers, unanimously agreed that the veil had to be discarded for the sake of progress and development.<sup>67</sup> As the years passed, *Birlik* relayed a steady stream of written declarations, eyewitness accounts and testimonials from women throughout the countryside. Peasant women, despite the disapproval of male chauvinists and religious reactionaries, were spontaneously gathering in village centres all over Macedonia to demonstrate their rejection of the headscarf.<sup>68</sup> A formal law banning the *çarşaf* would ultimately be passed in January 1951, an act *Birlik* triumphantly celebrated for several weeks.<sup>69</sup> Throughout its coverage of the headscarf issue, *Birlik* again emphasized that abandoning this long-held custom was not an attack on Islam. Sympathetic members of the *ulema*,

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<sup>65</sup> 'Analfabetizmaya karşı Savaşırken: Yeni Analfabetler Yetiştirmiyelim [Fighting against Alphabetism]', *Birlik*, 25 January 1947.

<sup>66</sup> 'Türk ve Arnavut Kadınının Gelişmesi: Onun Yazı Okuma Öğrenmesine Bağlıdı [Development of the Turkish and Albanian Woman: It Is Tied to Their Learning to Read and Write]', *Birlik*, 10 January 1947.

<sup>67</sup> 'Kosova ve Metohiya Kadınlarının Ferece Atma Faaliyetini [Activities of Kosova and Metohija Women Casting Off the Veil]', *Birlik*, 10 April 1947; 'Üskübün Türk ve Şiptar Kadınları Feraceyi Atmak için Kanun Arıyor [Skopje's Turkish and Albanian Women Seek a Law to Cast Off the Veil]', *Birlik*, 1 May 1947.

<sup>68</sup> 'Makedonyada Yaşıyan Şiptar ve Türk Emekçileri Feracenin Atılması Savaşında [Albanian and Turkish Labourers Living in Macedonia in the War for Casting Off the Veil]', *Birlik*, 22 August 1950.

<sup>69</sup> 'Peçe ve Feraceyi Yasak Eden Kanun Getirmekle [Bringing a Law Forbidding the Veil]', *Birlik*, 7 January 1951.

including İbrahim Fehiç, affirmed this formal party line.<sup>70</sup>

### **Towards a Conclusion: Trying to Find Harmony between Ottomanism, Titoism and the Evolution of the Post-Ottoman World**

*Birlik's* coverage of life and times in Macedonia reflected a general celebration of socialism's ascendancy in Yugoslavia. The overachievements of Turkish and Albanian 'Stakhanovite' (or *darbeci*) workers were frequently reported alongside the construction of new schools and farming cooperatives. In addition to poems and short stories emphasizing socialist values, brief historical accounts of the struggle that led to the creation of Yugoslavia (beginning with the supposed acts of Turkish-Macedonian cooperation during the Ilinden Uprising in 1903) were featured in the back pages.

Yet, at best, the stories and opinions exhibited in *Birlik* represented only a fraction of reality in Macedonia. Rather than an event generally celebrated by the grateful masses, the passage of the anti-veiling laws in fact posed a devastating and humiliating blow to tens of thousands of women. In a grand show trial in 1948, seventeen men suspected of being pro-Ankara Turkish agents and wreckers were indicted, leading many Muslims to identify themselves as Albanians in the national census that year.<sup>71</sup> The political winds shifted again in 1953 with the signing of a friendship accord between Turkey and Yugoslavia. Under the auspices of the agreement, 'ethnic Turks' were allowed to legally emigrate out of Yugoslavia. Within a few short years, a tidal wave of migrants made their way from Macedonia to Turkey. Driven by acts of discrimination and poverty, both Turkish and Albanian-speakers applied for exit visas with the intention of not returning. It is tempting, and seems warranted, to view this pattern of outmigration, which continues to this day, in direct continuity with the acts of ethnic cleansing of Macedonian Muslims that have occurred since 1912.<sup>72</sup>

Considering the amount of suffering that accompanied the establishment of Tito's Yugoslavia, how should we understand the people, stories and politics reflected in the pages of *Birlik*? Should one simply say that those who penned the reports, made the editorial decisions or agreed to collaborate with programs

<sup>70</sup> 'Ferace Taşmanın Dinle hiç bir Alakası Yoktur [There is No Religious Connection to Wearing the Veil]', *Birlik*, 15 May 1947; 'Feracenin Atılması hakkında Reis-ul-ulemanın Bayanâtı [Reisül-Ulema's Speech on Casting Off the Veil]', *Birlik*, 22 August 1950.

<sup>71</sup> Mehmed Ardıcı, *Yücelciler 1947* (Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 1991); Burcu Akan Ellis, 'Shadow Genealogies: Memory and Identity among Urban Muslims in Macedonia', PhD diss. American University, 2000, 97-99.

<sup>72</sup> See Nurcan Özgür-Baklacioğlu, 'Devletlerin Dış Politikaları Açısından Göç Olgusu: Balkanlar'dan Türkiye'ye Arnavut Göçleri (1920-1990) [The Phenomenon of Migration from the Perspective of Foreign Policies of States: Albanian Migration from the Balkans to Turkey (1920-1990)]', PhD diss., Istanbul University, 2003, *passim*.

featured in the various news cycles were petty quislings? If one assumes a wider lens, I believe a certain amount of forgiveness could be extended to those Muslims who profited from the imposition of socialism over their neighbours and kin in Macedonia.

A more nuanced understanding of the individuals and agendas put forth by *Birlik's* writers, editors and subjects can only be achieved if one takes into account the four decades that preceded the rebirth of Yugoslavia in 1945. The history of Muslims in Macedonia, including both the republic and the lands that are now portions of Greece and Bulgaria, is one overwhelmingly typified by terror, loss and flight. However, in what became the Republic of Macedonia, many Muslims, in both town and country, *did* stay on. Survival, cooperation and inclusion lay at the heart of the history of this segment of Macedonia's Muslim population. What one sees between the years 1908 and 1953 is a constant effort by members of the Muslim elite of the region (be they Turcophones or Albanian-speakers) to reinvent themselves and lend their voices to the unfolding political and social events.

In looking at the early Titoist era, we see several definitive breaks in continuity that had earlier spanned the formation of elite politics between the Ottoman and early Yugoslav periods. No member of the new Muslim leadership, individuals such as Mustafa Said, Nazim Firüz or Kemal and Kevser Seyfullah, possessed any living memory of life under the sultans or the CUP. Their young political and social lives were instead rooted in two concrete themes that marked the development of royal Yugoslavia. Each experienced and witnessed the possibility of political inclusion as representatives of the Muslim 'minority' in South Serbia. Perhaps more important, they shared, along with every other member of Macedonian society, a bitter history of total war and brutal occupation between 1941 and 1945. Tito's victory in 1945 reopened the possibility of political and social integration in a new political order. For those who accepted the confines and values of the new order (which many of these early Muslim leaders may have come to acquire in the years shortly before or during the Second World War), a place in the new Yugoslavia was possible.

A second point of discontinuity is the absence of a violent rural dissident movement during the early years of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia. According to all available sources, there was no rebirth of the *kaçak* movement nor any re-emergence of a political figure in the mould of Hasan Prishtina. The question of who precisely represented the rural segment of Muslim Macedonia becomes more complicated when one considers the fact that Muslims often registered or re-registered themselves during the national census periods as either Turks or Albanians. If one considers this temporal fluctuation in the actual size and definition of Turkish and Albanian population in Macedonia, it seems likely that a definitive set of rural (i.e. Albanian) political and social leaders remained amorphous during the early years of Tito's Yugoslavia. One could say that a clearly formed and articulate rural and Albanian militant opposition did not materialize until after 1997.

If one zooms out further still and thinks comparatively about the evolution of the post-Ottoman world by the 1950s, Macedonia's new Muslim elite appears rather distant from its counterparts in the Arab lands or Anatolia. *Birlik* drew no comparisons between the Muslims leaving Macedonia and the trials and tribulations of exiled Palestinians in Lebanon, Syria or Jordan. *Birlik* offered Gamal Abdel Nasser no fanfare and gave no attention or sympathy to the plight of those Iraqis or Algerians who violently confronted Western imperialism. No credence was given to Islamic revivalism advocated by the Muslim Brotherhood (although it has been argued that an underground following did emerge among Macedonian Muslims during the interwar period).<sup>73</sup> Up until 1953, *Birlik* made few allusions to life and politics in the Republic of Turkey either (those few stories that did refer to Turkey only emphasized its alliances with American imperialism or the oppression of workers and labour activists in the country).<sup>74</sup> It is only after 1953, with the signing of a friendship accord between Belgrade and Ankara, that pleasant stories about Turkish tourism and history graced the pages of the paper.<sup>75</sup>

This silence and distance apparent in Muslim Macedonia's relations with the former lands of the Ottoman Empire should not simply be seen as some reflection of the general lack of popular political expression found throughout the communist world. From the perspective of the elite at least, Tito's victory had at last severed the old imperial ties that bound Macedonia to Syria, Egypt or even Turkey. Like the four old, flabby *ağas* portrayed in the cartoon above, that aspect of the region's culture, politics and social makeup was rightly disappearing, if it had not already.

Although much of the political, economic and social constructs of what had been Ottoman Macedonia had vanished, we still see some retention of old imperial norms. *Birlik's* diction and approach towards Muslims underscored the fact that ethnic and linguistic borders remained somewhat blurry at the midpoint of the twentieth century. In addressing stories and political issues important to both 'Turks and Albanians' (be it veiling, literacy or education in general), *Birlik* reinforced the fact that Islam provided a common basis for identity and belonging for Turcophones and non-Turcophones. With its heavy emphasis on Skopje, Bitola and other major urban centres, one gets the sense that *Birlik* was more of a *şehirli* paper than a publication strictly catering to Turks.

Still, one cannot ignore the emphasis *Birlik* placed on identifying Macedonia's Muslim population as comprising both Albanians and Turks. Here we can also see

<sup>73</sup> Aruçi, 'Muslim Minority', 356.

<sup>74</sup> 'Amerika Ekspansionistleri Türkiyede [American Expansionists in Turkey]', *Birlik*, 1 April 1948; 'Hapışhanede Nazım Hikmet Grev Yapıyor [Nazım Hikmet Goes on Strike in Prison]', *Birlik*, 20 May 1950; 'Türkiyenin Kara Deniz vilayetlerinde işsizlik ve açlık [Unemployment and Hunger in Turkey's Black Sea Provinces]', *Birlik*, 20 May 1950.

<sup>75</sup> Şükrü Ramo, 'Ankara'da [In Ankara]', *Birlik*, 22 January 1953; 'Üsküp Türk-Şiptar Halk Tiyatrosunda Türkiye Gençleriyle bir Görüşme [A Meeting with Young People from Turkey in the Skopje Turkish-Albanian People's Theater]', *Birlik*, 18 April 1953.

a historical tangent rooted in the late Ottoman experience. Since at least 1908, one of the core demands put forward by the diverse elements of the Muslim elite was the legal right to use and develop Turkish and Albanian as official lingua francas. The Titoist state, like other communist systems, placated these demands under the auspices of socialist developmentalism. One could say that those Muslim leaders who rode Tito's coattails into power achieved a victory that the past two generations of political notables had failed to realize.

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