



Declaration

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the outbreak of the war which was to terminate 500 years of Ottoman Turkish rule in Macedonia and to inaugurate peace in the Balkans.

With due regard for this significant historical event, the Macedonian Patriotic Organization of the United States and Canada considers it essential to set forth a number of facts and to dwell upon the unremitting tragedy resulting to Macedonia from the peace treaties of the Balkan Wars of 1912-13.

PROLOGUE

In order to understand the genesis of "The Macedonian Question," a brief review must be made of late 19th century East European history.

The medieval Bulgarian kingdoms included that land which today is commonly known as Macedonia. During the period of these kingdoms, Bulgarian culture, religion and ethnicity flourished in the Macedonian lands.

The Turkish domination, which lasted for over 500 years, subjected all Bulgarians including those of Macedonia to the control of Turkish civil administration (the Porte) and Greek ecclesiastical administration of the Patriarch of Constantinople (the Phanariot). While the inhabitants of Macedonia continued to speak the Bulgarian vernacular, they

were subjected to oppressive measures of Hellenization.

In 1762, Father Paisii, a Bulgarian Monk from Bansko, Macedonia, issued a clarion call to national and religious awakening. "The Bulgarian Question" appeared in modern history in connection with the struggle for an independent Bulgarian national church. This struggle culminated with the issuance of the Firman of March 11, 1870. That decree issued by the Sultan outlined the territorial extent of the Bulgarian lands in European Turkey. European Turkey was that part of Turkey west of Constantinople which included most of the Balkan lands. By this Firman, Macedonia was included in the spiritual unity of the Bulgarian people. According to the Firman the inhabitants of Macedonia were allowed to vote as to whether or not they wanted to belong to the Bulgarian Exarchate or to the Greek Church.

An overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of Macedonia, recognizing their Bulgarian ethnicity, chose to affiliate with the Bulgarian Exarchate, but they continued to press for political freedom from the five-century old Turkish regime.

In April, 1876, the Bulgarians began an insurrection against Turkey. Slowly, Western Europe, through information received from American missionaries in Bulgaria, began to learn of the atrocities committed against the Bulgarian people.

The major American observer of the Turkish atrocities against the Bulgarians was a journalist from New Lexington, Ohio. He was sent to Bulgaria to report on behalf of the London Daily News. This journalist, Januarius A. MacGahan, was quickly befriended by the Bulgarians and has earned the epitaph "the liberator of Bulgaria."

The Turkish atrocities provoked demonstrations in many major European cities. Under pressure from public opinion, the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Derby, invited the Great European Powers to attend a special conference in Constantinople.

At the conference which started in December, 1876, the British delegate, Lord Salisbury, and his French colleague, Count Chaudorby, on behalf of all European representatives, presented to the Turkish Foreign Minister, Savfet Pasha, the joint proposal for the creation of two autonomous Bulgarian provinces under Ottoman rule. Macedonia was included in the Western Bulgarian Province with Sofia as its capitol.

The Turkish government rejected the proposal. In April, 1877, representatives of the Great Powers met in London and signed a protocol pressing the Turkish Government to implement the reforms. This protocol was rejected by the Turkish government. With the failure of those diplomatic activities, Russia succeeded to win public support and the neutrality of the

European powers. In April, 1877, Russia declared war on Turkey. Turkey was ultimately defeated and a treaty was signed in 1878 at San Stefano, a little town about 10 miles west of Constantinople.

The Treaty of San Stefano created an autonomous Bulgarian state. This state included northern and southern Bulgaria, Thrace and almost the whole of Macedonia. This was almost the same territory defined by the Conference of Constantinople which took place in December, 1876. That treaty also granted complete independence to the principalities of Serbia, Montenegro, and Romania. Professor Oscar Browning, in his work "A History of the Modern World", London, 1912, states that the Treaty of San Stefano was the wisest measure ever proposed for the pacification of the Balkan Peninsula.

The British government flatly refused to recognize the Treaty of San Stefano. Therefore, in order to avoid a possible confrontation among the Great Powers, Bismarck offered himself as a peace mediator. He issued invitations for a congress to be held in Berlin to discuss the contents of the Treaty of San Stefano. The Treaty of Berlin of 1878 was signed, and the partition of the Bulgarian lands was accomplished. The Treaty of Berlin divided Bulgaria into five sections. One part went to Serbia, another to Romania. One constituted the autonomous province of East Rumelia. The fourth part constituted the

principality of Bulgaria. Macedonia was returned to Turkish control. However, the Bulgarian people of Macedonia continued to be spiritually united with Bulgaria through the Firman of 1870 which created the national Bulgarian Church.

Until 1878 all lands inhabited by Bulgarians were part of the "Bulgarian Question." The Treaty of Berlin created the "Macedonian Question," the "Tracian Question," and the "Timok and Morava Question."

Article XXIII of the Treaty of Berlin of 1878 provided that the European possessions of Turkey should be under the control of an organization similar to the one worked out for the island of Crete in 1868. But the Article was never put into effect.

Disappointed at the Turkish denial of these freedoms and frustrated in their efforts to achieve these demands, the Bulgarians of Macedonia organized in 1893 a Macedonian Revolutionary Organization as a vehicle for insurrection and freedom.

Article I of the Constitution states that the purpose of the Macedonia Revolutionary Committee is to gain complete political autonomy for Macedonia and the region of Adrianople (Odrinsko). Later the organization was known as Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO). Its membership was opened to everyone living in European Turkey and the region of Adrianople, regardless of

sex, nationality, religion, or personal belief.

The decision to create a free and independent Macedonia was later to have been recognized as a wise decision by Lord Salisbury, who helped defeat the Treaty of San Stefano of 1878 at the Congress of Berlin.

The Bulgarians of Macedonia quickly learned that their industry was useless and that life itself was precarious under the Turkish administration. Therefore, on the 1903 Feast Day of the Prophet Ilia, the Bulgarians of Macedonia with the participation of many Aroumanians began the Ilinden Insurrection. The insurrection was brutally crushed.

In the meantime at the beginning of September, 1903, Vienna was visited by the English King and the German Kaiser. Shortly thereafter, the English foreign minister in a telegram to his ambassador in Vienna outlined the reforms which had to be introduced in Macedonia.

During the same period, the Russian Tsar and his foreign minister arrived in Vienna. A meeting between the Russian and the Austro-Hungarian emperors and their foreign ministers was held in Murzsteg, Austria. As a result, identical telegrams were sent to their respective ambassadors in Constantinople, and in October, 1903, the text of the proposed reforms was handed to the Turkish government.

According to the terms of the

Murzsteg Program, nine points of reform concerning Macedonia were urged upon the Turkish government. However, the Turkish government never followed through.

Consequently, in June, 1908, the British King and the Russian Tsar met at Reval, Estonia, and virtually gave autonomy to Macedonia. However, in 1908 the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress (OCUP) composed of Turks dissatisfied with the administration of the Sultan commenced the Young Turk's revolt of July, 1908. As a result of that successful revolt, the Hurriyet (liberty) was proclaimed. According to this Hurriyet, political equality was to be enjoyed by all the subject races in the empire. The principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity were to be the foundation of a new Hurriyet in European Turkey. As a result of this Hurriyet, the Great Powers' call for the reforms, to guarantee liberty for the inhabitants of Macedonia, were dropped. Macedonia was left in the hands of the new regime.

Because the chief exponents of the OCUP declared an era of freedom, equality, and brotherhood, IMRO was asked to disband and to form constitutional clubs. For a time the inhabitants of Macedonia were allowed to send representatives to the Turkish National Assembly. However, the nationalistic aspirations of the Turks were too strong and in 1909 the National Assembly passed a law against the

national organization of non-Turkish groups. The constitutional clubs were, therefore, forcibly disbanded. A strong effort was made by OCUP to assimilate and Ottomanize the inhabitants of Macedonia. Hope for freedom for the people of Macedonia was now dashed.

Under the Young Turk's domestic policy the plight of the inhabitants of Macedonia deteriorated. The Young Turks launched a policy to make Turkey a nation of Turks. The process of assimilation or Turkification was forced by every form of outrage and persecution.

Local Turkish bands fostered by their government began to kill the Bulgarian-Macedonian Freedom Fighters. The leaders of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization who had loyally and earnestly assisted the young Turks in their effort to overthrow the Sultan, had now become subjected to extermination.

In addition, Moslem colonists brought from Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Turkish government to force the Bulgarian peasants of Macedonia from their lands, created a situation which forced the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization once more to begin its revolutionary work.

The excessive Turkish terror after 1908 created the atmosphere for the Balkan Alliance and the Wars of 1912-1913.

The Balkan League

In early March, 1912, Serbia and Bulgaria concluded an alliance. A secret agreement allowed for the creation of an autonomous Macedonia. The signatories agreed under certain circumstances to divide the territory according to boundaries they had predetermined. In spite of a possible partition of Macedonia, the Serbian government acknowledged the primacy of the Bulgarian ethnic element in Macedonia and the need to unite it with Bulgaria. Only the northern area of Macedonia was declared as a "contested zone." This area included the cities of Skopje, Kumanovo, Tetovo, Gostivar, Debur, Kichevo, and Struga. Their future would be settled at the conclusion of the war through an arbitrary decision reached by the Russian Tsar Nicholas II.

In May, 1912, Greece and Bulgaria signed a defense alliance. In it they guaranteed the ethnic rights of the Bulgarians and the Greeks in the various areas of Macedonia. This guarantee was based on Article XXIII of the Treaty of Berlin of 1878.

Montenegro, Bulgaria and Serbia reached a verbal understanding and concluded similar alliances in late September and early October 1912.

The War Against Turkey

In October, 1912, the three allied Balkan powers, Bulgaria,

Serbia, and Greece, presented an ultimatum to Turkey. The ultimatum demanded that full administrative autonomy be granted to all the areas of European Turkey. The ultimatum was also based on Article XXIII of the Treaty of Berlin of 1878.

Turkey rejected the ultimatum and broke off diplomatic relations with Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece. In early October, Turkey declared war on Bulgaria and Serbia. Within a few days, Greece and Bulgaria declared war on Turkey. Montenegro had already been at war with Turkey since September, 1912. In October, 1912, Serbia declared war on Turkey. By mid October, 1912, major military operations had begun.

In six months the Balkan allies defeated the Ottoman Turkish army. In May, 1913, the combatants, with the participation of the Great Powers, concluded the Treaty of London. That peace treaty, however, badly delineated which lands were to be recovered from Turkey without full consideration being given to its distribution among the victors.

At the most critical moment in the war, Bulgaria participated with an army of 600,000, Serbia with 150,000, Greece with 120,000, and Montenegro with 40,000. Thus, the Bulgarian army bore the major burden because it had to cope with the main body of the Turkish forces.

While the Bulgarian army was concentrating its forces in eastern Thrace, the Serbian and Greek troops succeeded in overrunning the larger part of Macedonia and almost immediately began to persecute the Bulgarian population in those occupied zones.

The Beginning of the Balkan Alliance's Demise

At the beginning of February, 1913, when the Bulgarian army was engaged in one of its fiercest battles with Turkish troops in eastern Thrace, the Serbian government requested a revision of its alliance with Bulgaria because it was now laying claims to a larger part of Macedonia. The Bulgarian government rejected this request.

In southern Macedonia clashes between Greek and Bulgarian troops were taking place in the area of the Angista River. The Greek government had already laid its claims to southern Macedonia and parts of Thrace before Bulgarian representatives.

Even though the war with Turkey had not concluded, Serbia and Greece began negotiations for a secret military pact against Bulgaria. The negotiators signed the secret document two days after the signing of the Treaty of London. In the alliance between Serbia and Greece, both states agreed on a common frontier in the area west of the Vardar River and, in general, prepared for a possible war with Bulgaria.

Serbia also sounded out Romania as a potential ally, and even approached a representative of Turkey in London, thereby paving the way for Romanian and Ottoman intervention, should such a move be needed.

The Second Balkan War

Under such tense circumstances, in June, 1913, the Bulgarian Tsar Ferdinand committed the tragic error of instructing units of the Bulgarian army to open hostilities with the Serbian and Greek troops in Macedonia. The Second Balkan War did not last long. Turkey and Romania intervened quickly. The war concluded with the signing of the Treaty of Bucharest of 1913. According to this treaty, Serbia and Greece incorporated close to eighty percent of Macedonia within their borders, and Bulgaria was left the remaining small portion.

Revolutionary activity by the Bulgarians of Macedonia followed the Treaty of Bucharest. Then came World War I. The Greek incursion during 1925 into the Macedonian territory of Bulgaria was followed by World War II and the Greek Civil War of 1947-49. These events with their accompanying bitterness, distrust, and passions continue to poison the atmosphere in the Balkans even today.

These events were the consequences of the "liberation" war against Turkey. They

resulted in a new oppression in Macedonia for the Bulgarian population. It is this oppression of unprecedented denationalization which exists today and denies basic Human Rights to the Bulgarians living in Yugoslavia and Greece.

After the Balkan Wars

The circumstances surrounding the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 received the attention of the civilized world. The Division of Intercourse and Education of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace appointed in July, 1913, an International Commission of Inquiry to study the causes and the conduct of the Balkan Wars. The Commission members visited the actual scene where fighting had taken place and the areas that had been devastated.

The President of the Commission was Baron d'Estournelles de Constant, a Senator of France. The other Commissioners included representatives from Austria, France, Germany, Great Britain, Russia, and the United States. The report of the Commission was published in several languages.

The English language report published in Washington, D.C., 1914, by the Carnegie Endowment under the title "Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars", on page 165 describes Serbian activity:

"We have seen the beginning of this work of assimilation through terror. It was not until the beginning of the Second Balkan War gave the signal for putting everything which still bore the Bulgarian name into the melting pot, that means where employed to carry out this objective which surpassed anything seen hitherto. Let us look first at the steps taken by the Servian government against the heads of the national church in Macedonia."

While on page 186 the Report continues with a description of Greek activity:

"But the data at its (Commission) disposal are sufficient to establish the conclusion that here too the same situation is repeated, down to the smallest detail, of the assimilation of the Bulgarian population in southern Macedonia (Vodena, Castoria, Florina). The procedure is quite analogous to that employed to assimilate the same population in the north."

In the Preface to the Commission's report, Baron d'Estournelles de Constant qualifies the new situation with the following words:

"Macedonia, no longer a tomb, has become a hell."

On page 157-158, the Report evaluates the Treaty of Bucharest:

"One cannot say as much, unfortunately, of the treaty of Bucharest. The lines of demarcation therein laid down

are far from being natural or consonant with the national tendencies of the peoples. The third treaty of Bucharest has sown a new seed of discord in its violation of the sentiment of nationality: it divides the Balkan territories on the principle on which the treaty of Vienna divided the national regions of Europe in 1815."

"What has become of Macedonia, so often the apple of discord, now that the work of concord appears to be completed? It displays nothing but violence, and suggest no hope of ultimate harmony."

The coercion exerted by the Serbian and Greek authorities in Macedonia began in the fall of 1912. It continued with severe bitterness after the war between the allies. Many thousands of Bulgarians were subjected to torture, thousands were beaten or imprisoned, tens of thousands were expelled, and the open and traditional use of the word Bulgarian was officially forbidden. Peoples' names were altered. The Greek rulers went so far as to bestow new names on towns and villages and on other topographical areas.

This forced altering extended to the churches and schools. Serbia, for example, closed 761 Bulgarian churches and converted them to Serbian use. Serbia also closed 641 Bulgarian schools and expelled or removed 833 Bulgarian priests, 1013 teachers, and six Metropolitans, who were in charge of the Bulgarian

Orthodox dioceses. Greek authorities responded by shutting down 341 Bulgarian schools and 378 churches, and then by exiling 750 Bulgarian-Macedonian teachers and 300 clergymen.

These churches and schools, were originally inaugurated by plebiscites held in accordance with the provisions in the Sultan's Firman of 1870. They had been maintained from the middle of the 19th century to 1912 by impoverished Bulgarian peasants and a small but significant group of Bulgarian merchants and intellectuals in Macedonia. The Ottoman Turkish government in response to these legal provisions and popular wishes, exhibited a degree of tolerance that the fellow-Orthodox Christians of the Bulgarian Macedonians seemed incapable of showing.

A Missed Opportunity: Peace in the Balkans Through an Independent Macedonia

The war against Ottoman Turkey began with the hope of autonomy for Macedonia. But, as negotiations progressed during and after the Balkan Wars, the word autonomy became prohibited. It was not even mentioned at the signing of the Treaty of Bucharest. The consequent missed opportunity for a just resolution of the Macedonian Question precipitated additional privation for the people of Macedonia and aggravated the already tense relations among the Balkan states. This situation has continued, in varying degrees, to the present.

An autonomous Macedonia created in 1913 with guaranteed liberties for all its citizens -- Bulgarians, Greeks, Albanians, Turks, Aroumanians, and Jews would have constituted a foundation for genuine peace and understanding in the Balkans.

As an appropriate reinforcement for the foregoing statement, attention is directed to the Report of the Carnegie Commission, page 38:

"The most natural solution of the Balkan imbroglio appeared to be the creation in Macedonia of a new autonomy or independent unity, side by side with the other unities realized in Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia and Montenegro, all of which countries had previously been liberated, thanks to Russian or European intervention. But this solution had become impossible, owing first to the incapacity of the Turkish government, and then the rival pretensions of the three neighboring states to this or that part of the Macedonian inheritance."

Epilogue

Peace, Human Rights and Liberties in Macedonia and the Balkans

After 75 years the situation in Macedonia and the Balkans has not improved. It has worsened. After the Second World War Communist authorities in Yugoslavia continued to impose an undisguised national and cultural genocide through an unprecedented falsification

of the past. The Macedonian Bulgarians are no longer Bulgarian but merely "Macedonian". The Yugoslav Communist philosophy of history, accordingly, has created a new and hitherto nonexistent nationality. Greece has also denied the presence of a Bulgarian nationality within her borders, and has therefore rejected any kind of rights for the Bulgarians of southern Macedonia. In Bulgarian Macedonia the population is subjected to the same political ordeal that the rest of Bulgaria is compelled to accept, a strict Marxist government which permits no political deviation or dissent.

Considering these events and errors of the past, and the lessons we learn from them, the delegates of the 66th Annual Convention of the Macedonian Patriotic Organization of the United States and Canada appeal to all citizens, institutions, and governmental bodies concerned with human rights and liberty to exert their influence for the granting of elementary human rights to the Bulgarians of Macedonia. Let the Bulgarians of Macedonia have the right to their own schools and churches, where they may study and speak in the language of their choice. Allow them to have their own newspapers and publications in their traditional literary language of pre-1912 Macedonia.

At the same time we, the delegates, emphasize once again that the most equitable and rational solution to the

Macedonian Question lies in the formation of an internationally guaranteed independent Macedonia, in which all the historical nationalities -- Bulgarians, Greeks, Aroumanians, Albanians, Turks, Jews, and Gypsies -- may have the opportunity to develop in peace, harmony, and brotherhood. Only in this manner will the bitterness and discord of the past gradually become amicably resolved. Otherwise, sooner or later, more destruction and war will ensue on this tragic peninsula threatening world peace once more.

THE MACEDONIAN PATRIOTIC
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