

# **Dr. James F. Clarke's Speech**

**Guest-Speaker 58th MPO Convention**

**Macedonia from S. S. Cyril and Methodius to  
Horace Lunt and Blazhe Koneski:**

**Language and Nationality**

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**MACEDONIAN TRIBUNE**

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Horace Lunt and Blazhe Koneski: Language and Nationality**

Among Americans increasing interest in Macedonian subjects is to be noted in academic circles. Few society meetings occur without Macedonia appearing on the program, usually in a linguistic form, but lacking historical perspective. Occasionally an article appears in a scholarly journal such as one by Prof. Stephen Fischer—Galati on "IMRO" in the *East European Quarterly*, edited by him, but without first-hand knowledge of the subject. Perhaps more interesting is a book published in 1977 by the University of

Pittsburgh Press, *Reading the Ashes, An Anthology of the Poetry of Modern Mecedonia*. Basically a product of Skopje, the Introduction by the American editor is riddled with errors. It required 32 "translators" to translate the 26 poets. As is to be expected, it ignores, or is ignorant of, Bulgarian Macedonian history and literature, substituting instead myth and misinformation. It is my purpose here to describe how the myth of a Macedonian literary language got started.

There have been two so-called Ma-

cedonian literary languages separated by 1081 years. That of Cyril and Methodius was the first Slavic literary language, with the first Slavic alphabet — the Glagolitic, later transformed into the Cyrillic. This was adopted by all the Slavs and became a world language, the first language and alphabet in Europe with a religious basis. The other, as now practiced in Yugoslav Macedonia, is the latest, the smallest (except for Lusatian Sorbian) and we may presume, the last Slavic literary language. Cyril's Old Bulgarian, or Old Church Slavonic, was originally spoken by the Slav inhabitants of what is now Greek (or Aegean) Macedonia (Lunt, *Old Church Slavonic*, p. 2). New Macedonian is made up of dialects from the Center of Yugoslav (Vardar) Macedonia.

My title would seem to put Horace Lunt in the position of *isapostolos*, or a latter-day Saint; "disciple" would be more appropriate. Like St. Cyril, he is a distinguished multilingualist. Since 1959 professor of Slavic at Harvard, he has worked both ends of the long Macedonian street. His first major work, written at the Biblical age of 33, was a *Grammar of the Macedonian Literary Language*, (Skopje, 1952), the first linguistic description and analysis in any language. Lunt's is the only grammar listed in Koneski's *Istorija na Makedonskiot Jazik*, (Skopje, 1965), aside from his own. Only three years later (1974)

came his *Old Church Slavonic Grammar* (6th edition, rev.), described as "the first to be written in English" and for many years a standard work (J. O. Ferrell, *Language*, vol. 33, p. 450-53). A thousand years of spoken Macedonian separate these two grammars.

By-product of Lunt's work on the Macedonian language was his "Survey of Macedonian Literature" in the first volume of *Harvard Slavic Studies* (1954) of which he was editor. This also was a pioneer work (and remains the only English source — other than an English translation of one of Koneski's works. *Towards the Macedonian Renaissance*, Skopje, 1961). He has also published a few shorter pieces. Of special interest is an article, "The Creation of Standard Macedonian." (*Antropological Linguistics*, May, 1959.)

Lunt himself tells us how he discovered Macedonia in the Preface to *Grammar of the Macedonian Literary Language*, p. 1. While in the U. S. Army in 1944, he stumbled on some partisan underground publications in a Macedonian dialect. After the war he attended lectures on Macedonian in Prague, and in 1950 at Bled, given by the leading Skopje authority, Blažhe Koneski, and sponsored by the Yugoslav Council for Science and Culture. In 1951, fresh from a Columbia Ph. D. (1950), he spent three months in Skopje with financial aid from the Yugoslav Council and the Macedonian Ministry of Education,

Science, and Culture. There he had the guidance and assistance of Prof. Koneski and associates at the University of Skopje. Thus, Koneski's Slavic Seminar acted as judge and jury in determining what was to be standard. Lunt's *Grammar of the Macedonian Literary Language* was printed in Belgrad and published by the Macedonian State Press in Skopje in August 1952. It might, therefore, be considered official.

#### INSTANT STANDARD LITERARY MACEDONIAN

On August 2, 1944, one of the first acts of the 122 delegates from Macedonia to the Anti-Fascist National Liberation Council, meeting clandestinely at the St. Prohor Pchinski Monastery in Serbia, was the following decree:

- 1 - In the Macedonian state as official language is adopted the People's Macedonian language;
- 2 - This decision enters into force immediately.

(*Dokumenti od sozdavanjeto i razviktokot na N. R. Makedonija*. Skopje, 1949, p. 22). This must be the quickest creation of a literary language in history. A Commission, including Blazhe Koneski, was appointed in December to spell out the new literary language. It came up with a new alphabet and orthography on May 3 and June 7, 1945.

After two centuries of Slavic scholarship, very little is known about

the origins and nature of Old Bulgaria in Macedonia. Many questions remain and some probably always will. Although the locale of the language seems established, the ethnic origin of the sainted brothers is still disputed. It is hard for Slavs to accept them as anything but Slavs. Prof. Lunt calls them "Greeks" (*Slavic Review*, June, 1964, p. 216), but also refers to Macedonian as "St. Cyril's native Salonika dialect." (Lunt, *Old Church Slavonic*, p. 3). Many questions would be answered should we discover that their mother, or at least their wet-nurse, was a "native." (I'm told by Konstantin Měchev, a Cyrillo-Methodian scholar of Sofia, that after 5 month's research in Moscow, he has conclusive evidence that they were Slavs; e. g. Bulgarians.) Even the traditional date for the language, 863, is disputed, especially by Russian and Bulgarian scholars, not all of whom are Marxists. Aside from such assertions that there must have been a couple of centuries of prior literary development (P. Dinakov, "Deloto", 1100 godini, p. 5) we find such statements as "the brothers finished their epoch-making work in 855." (N. Todorov, et al, *Bulgaria. Historical and Geographic Outline*, s. 1965, p. 28).

Considering the times and circumstances, it is inevitable that the great achievement of the two "Apostles to the Slavs" should still be shrouded in myths and legends. On the other hand, the second contemporary Macedonian

literary language was created in the full light of our day. Yet this too is obscured by a growing Macedonian Myth. To it Horace Lunt has contributed his share and set the pace for subsequent American linguists.

I am not here to quarrel with the current Macedonian literary language. No less an authority than Roman Jakobson years ago declared it the thirteenth Slavic literary language. Every man has the right to invent and write in his own language. Nor is the upgrading of a dialect into a literary language a heresy, though only in a totalitarian police state can this become standard overnight by decree.

To the 19th century the literary language used by Bulgarians in Macedonia was some form of Serb or Bulgarian variation of Russianized Church Slavic with degrees of spoken admixtures, as in the so-called Damaskini. In the first part of the 19th century Greek (or Slavic with Greek letters) was also used but increasingly the literary language was the same as that used elsewhere in Bulgaria with occasional use of Macedonian dialects. Between the wars in Yugoslavia, it was Serbian by compulsion, with Bulgarian proscribed. Now it is the new Macedonian, with Bulgarian proscribed, and with Serbo-Croatian as a second official language.

According to Prof. Lunt, Macedonian "came of age" with the 1951 publication of Koneski and Toshev's

little Macedonian Orthography. He rather prematurely declared at the time he compiled his Grammar that Macedonian "had achieved a degree of homogeneity comparable to that of the other Balkan languages" — this in the space of six precocious years! (*Grammar*, p. 6). The chief architect of the language has been Prof. Koneski, President of the Macedonia Academy of Arts and Sciences, whom Lunt considers one of the best Macedonian authors. The first part of his *Grammar* came on the heels of Lunt's; the second, in 1954. His *Dictionary*, in three volumes, was published in 1961, 1965, and 1966, with definitions in Serbian. The last two volumes were delayed by the great Skopje earthquake. A major work is his *History of the Macedonian Language* (1965).

I too am prepared to stipulate that a kind of Macedonian literary language is in use in Skopje, although its growing pains are still showing. But to claim as Koneski does (*The Macedonian Language in the Development of the Slavic Literary Language*, 1968), that Macedonian is comparable to the other Slavic languages is nonsense. What interests me here are the ideological and political rationalizations and the problems and myths thus created.

#### TITO'S MACEDONIA

Literary Macedonian owes its existence largely to Tito and the inclusion of Macedonia in his six-room

federal house. The new federal idea was laid in 1942 and publicly hatched at Jajce in 1943. The new "co-equal" Macedonian republic was launched in 1944 at the St. Prohor Pchinski Monastery. The motives behind its existence help explain much of its subsequent character: Macedonia's relations with Belgrad had been a running, bloody sore in the interbellum period; to head off Stalin opting for the Bulgarian Communist Party's claims, Macedonia and the partisan movement there had to be forcibly tied to the new Yugoslavia; and there was the possibility of using Vardar Macedonia as a magnet or springboard for the acquisition of Greek and Bulgarian Macedonia and a restoration of partitioned Macedonia.

The elevation of Macedonia into the ranks of the historically and ethnically based Yugoslav federal republics had to be rationalized; ideologically, politically, historically, and culturally. A separate Macedonia had to have a separate and different official literary language — different both from Bulgarian and Serbian. The obvious necessity to use an existing spoken language meant deciding which of the many dialects to use. The Western Macedonian was chosen, which in Vardar Macedonia — meant the central dialect group, removed as much as possible from both Bulgarian and Serbian contamination,

At the same time, a separate Macedonian alphabet was devised, made

unnecessarily different from the Bulgarian, including a few peculiarly Serbian letters, and containing some letters not found in any other Cyrillic alphabet, but it is still closer to Bulgarian than anything else.

In other ways, the makers of Modern Macedonian have tried to be different. A folk-based language of a relatively primitive people finds it both necessary and difficult suddenly to adapt to midtwentieth century conditions. In addition to finding or coining local folk substitutes for Bulgarian literary expressions, the Macedonian language legislators avoid taking ready-to-hand Bulgarian (or Russian or Serbian) technical and other ultra-modern expressions in favor of Western, including American, terms. The purpose is to make Macedonia as different as possible. The result is a barbarous jargon, literally a Macedonian Salad.

In contrast to the arbitrary severing of the Bulgarian literary umbilical cord, there is daily contact with Serbian via the school, press, radio, business, politics, and the army. For Macedonians, Serbian has to be a second, official language.

#### *A STATE IN SEARCH OF ITS HISTORY: THE MACEDONIAN MYTH*

Professor Lunt reminds us that a "language can be described and learned without the slightest knowledge of history" unfortunately true of some of our American linguists,

but also that the "elements of history are always present." (*Old Church Slavonic Grammar*, 2nd ed. 1959, p. x). The new Macedonian state and language in particular required historical rationalization to justify their separatism. But the discouraging fact was that there was virtually no Macedonian "state" history, as such. Consequently the Skopje scholars have found it necessary to rewrite Balkan history at least as far back as Cyril and Methodius to make room for Macedonia. As Lunt says, "Except for a brief period under Samuil at the end of the ninth (sic) century, Macedonia never had its own government." (*Grammar*, p. 3) Because the history of Macedonia has hitherto inevitably been written mostly in terms of Bulgaria, Macedonian historians are finding it necessary to deprive Bulgarians of some of their history, for example, St. Clement, chief disciple of Cyril and Methodius, whose anniversary in Ohrid in 1966 (with Professor Lunt as honored guest) was celebrated as a Macedonian affair. Another example is the Bogomils, whom the Macedonians have adopted as their very own national movement. On some of these points Macedonians have trouble convincing even their fellow Yugoslavs. But it is not my purpose here to reread Macedonian historiography and its catharsis of Bulgarian elements.

#### CONCLUSION

For Macedonians to deny their Bul-

garian heritage is like Peter denying Christ. But Peter repented! You are familiar, I am sure, with all the distortions and denials of Bulgarian history, literature, and culture, as related to Macedonia emanating from Skopje. But we here too have scholars seemingly ignorant of Bulgarian Macedonian history. Take Prof. Golab of Chicago who cites a work by Russian scholar Selishchev on *Polog and Its Bulgarian Inhabitants* as *Polog and Its Slav Inhabitants*. It was at Chicago that Koneski got an honorary doctorate as "father of the Macedonian Language." Actually Tito was the "father" and Koneski the "mother" with Horace Lunt as "mid-wife."

The kind of historical gymnastics and dialectical Macedonianism indulged in at Skopje puts the ideological cart before the historical horse: suddenly we had ultra-Macedonian Nationalism, a gift from Marx; then, came the establishment of a "state," then the official language, then back-up "history" and finally what? A Macedonian Consciousness?

I see no quick or easy solution for today's version of the age-old Macedonian Questions, invented at the Congress of Berlin (1878). My conviction, however, is that historical truth will prevail and our task is to see that these truths must not be forgotten. This is the least we should do.

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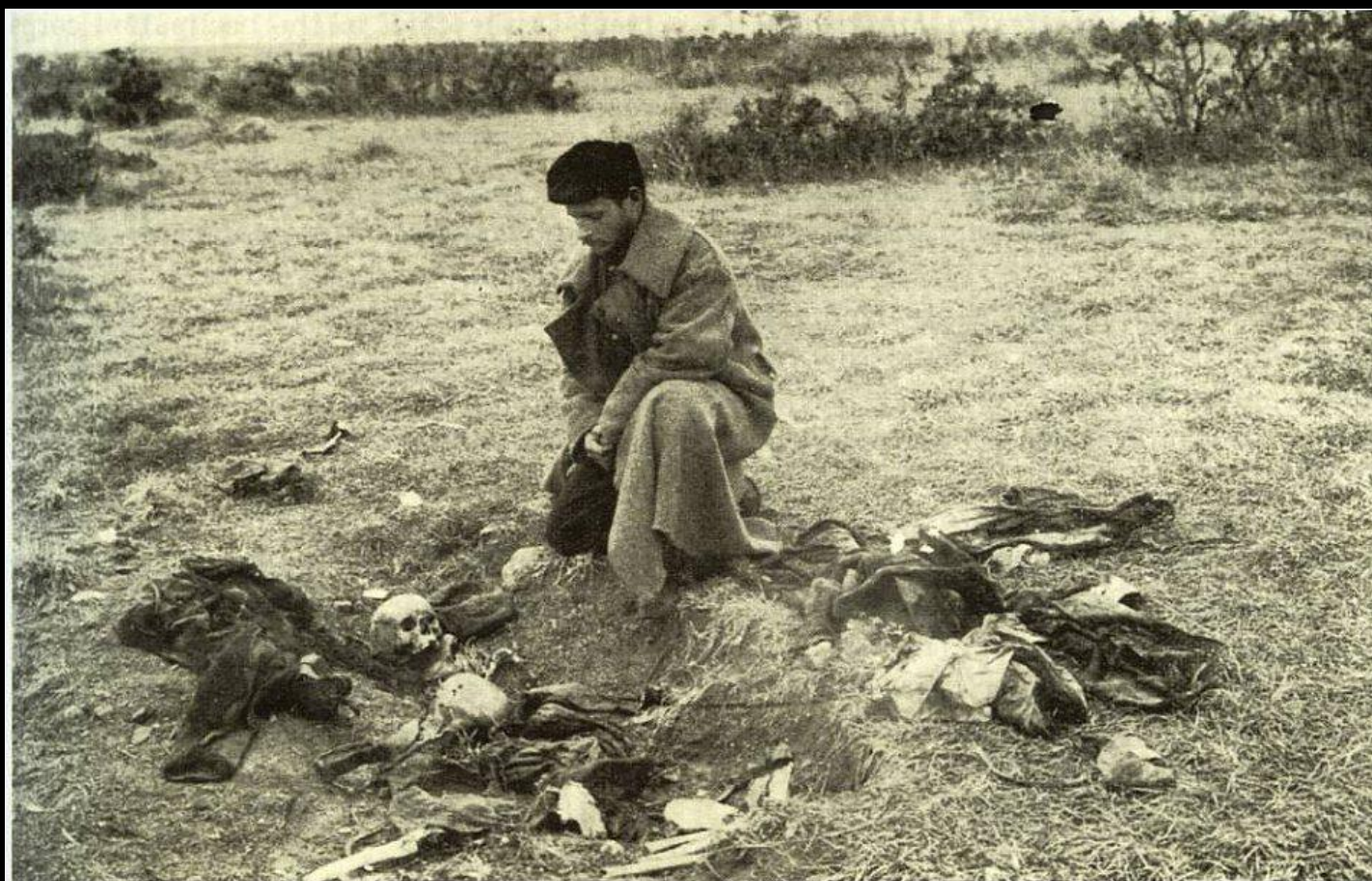
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*Voivode Dimiter Madjarov before the remains of two comrades in arms killed in the battle of Ferres*