

PAMPHLET COLLECTION

CHAT

L5.1/52

YUGOSLAVIAN
MACEDONIA

BY
FRANCESCA M. WILSON

WITH FOREWORD
BY
G. P. GOOCH, D.Litt., F.B.A.

PUBLISHED BY THE
WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE
55, GOWER STREET
LONDON, W.C.

1930

PRICE 1/-

-L5.1

Hugh Rees

YUGOSLAVIAN MACEDONIA

CRATHAM
HOUSE
CANCELLED

BY
FRANCESCA M. WILSON

WITH FOREWORD
BY
G. P. GOOCH, D.Litt., F.B.A.

PUBLISHED BY THE
WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE
55, GOWER STREET
LONDON, W.C.
1930

PRICE - - - 1/-



LS. 1



FOREWORD.

The Balkans are to-day, as they were in 1914, the principal danger-zone of Europe, and Macedonia is the chief powder-barrel of the Balkans. It is therefore of the utmost importance that we should understand the problems which it presents, since we know from bitter experience how a vast conflagration may arise from a tiny flame. Though numberless books and articles have been written on this suffering province, there is still need for the first-hand and impartial survey of the present situation which Miss Wilson supplies. It is indeed a rare pleasure to read an account so lucid, so humane, so transparently sincere. She visited Macedonia last year, not to prove or disprove any thesis, but to see things as they are. She took with her what few travellers possess, a mastery of the Serbian language gained in war-work during the great struggle, and she rapidly picked up enough of the Macedonian dialect to converse with the peasants with whom she stayed.

Miss Wilson spends little time over the burning question : who are the Macedonians ? Serbs and Bulgars, as we all know, give different replies. The inhabitants, when asked, usually call themselves Macedonians ; but, like most other travellers, she believes that the majority of them would call themselves Bulgarians if they dared. This does not however mean that they all yearn to form part of the Bulgarian Kingdom, for their lot as depicted in these pages is nothing like so distressful as is often believed. Their life is primitive enough ; but in comparison with the miseries of Turkish rule there has been an immense advance. Practically every peasant owns a piece of land, and Miss Wilson was astonished to find such prosperity and well-being. Macedonia, she declares, is a potentially rich country ; and for the peasant himself—hard-working, honest, moral, averse to violence—she has nothing but praise.

Though the general effect of this account is encouraging, there is no attempt to conceal the shadows in the picture. The country is ruled from Belgrad; and though the Dictatorship appears to have introduced a rather better type of administrator, the rigid centralisation is a sore trial. Miss Wilson's emotions never run away with her, and she is studiously moderate in her demands. She asks, not for autonomy, but for decentralisation, so that a larger proportion of the posts may be filled by qualified Macedonians. The second grievance is the economic neglect of a province which cries aloud for the capital expenditure needed for transport, public health and the development of its resources. Conscription, unknown in the days of Turkish rule, is an obligation shared by the other portions of the Monarchy; but the taxation required to pay for the police is a heavy burden. The Comitadji, manned and organised by refugees, are not only a terror but an expensive nuisance. Even the Bulgarophil Macedonians, declares Miss Wilson, are tired of violence, and the cessation of terrorist methods would leave the Serb rulers no excuse for oppression. If this account is read as far afield as Belgrad and Monastir, its tactful criticism should encourage the Government to ameliorate the lot of a peasantry which has had more than its due share of suffering during the last thirty years.

G. P. GOOCH.

Yugoslavian Macedonia.

No country in Europe to-day has such a diversity of races, languages and religions as Yugoslavia. In this respect it is a miniature of the vanished Austrian Empire, and it is startling to reflect that the problems which face King Alexander are scarcely less complex than those which Great Britain has to tackle in India. The scale is smaller, but the complexity almost as great.

It is in the territories acquired since the war, especially in Macedonia, Croatia, Bosnia and Carniola that these multifarious groups of people are found—Old Serbia is homogeneous—and though my investigation is confined to one of them, it must be remembered that the others present problems which are, in some aspects, similar. Macedonia is not isolated and unique: it is part of the general tangle of Yugoslavia and the Balkans.

GEOGRAPHICAL LIMITS AND POPULATION.

Macedonia is now like Burgundy and Provence in France, only a historical name—it does not exist on a modern map. What was once Macedonia was in 1913 and again after the Great War divided up mainly between Serbia and Greece, a small portion only being given to Bulgaria. Bulgaria, as everyone knows, engaged in three wars in order to obtain Macedonia—the First and Second Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 and the Great War. In 1912 she helped Serbia and Greece to free Macedonia from the Turks, but finding that she was not to be allowed to retain the country which she had helped to liberate and which she regarded as her due she fell to fighting against her allies and emerged defeated. In 1915 the Germans won her to their side by the promise of the coveted land. Her armies entered into possession and remained in Macedonia until the débacle of 1918, when she was again forced to retire. The share of this country that fell for the second time into Yugoslavian hands after the Great War was divided into provinces, and in the autumn of this year has been merged into the Banovina of the Vardar, a district which in its Northern area contains many Serbs. Even the historical limits of Macedonia have been disputed, but the Serbs claim that the Northern line should be traced from Kriva Palanka on the East through Skoplje to Debar on the West. The frontiers of the East, South and

West which run along the borders of Bulgaria, Greece and Albania can be seen on any modern map. My investigation was confined to the Yugoslavian portion and Macedonia in this report must be taken to mean only the area that is now part of this Kingdom.

The majority of the people living in this district speak the Macedonian dialect. There are about 300,000 of them. In the same area are many thousands of Albanians, Turks, Kouzo-Vlachs, some Greeks and Gipsies, and about 70,000 pure Serbs, apart from officials and gendarmes.

MY JOURNEY IN MACEDONIA.

I had many and varied experiences travelling about Macedonia last spring and summer. It was the first time that I had been in this part of the Balkans. My war-work with the Serbs had familiarised me with their language, history and traditions, with a great part of Old Serbia and with the Montenegrin and Albanian districts round Petch (Ipek), but the Macedonians themselves and their country were new to me and it was with great interest that I undertook the investigation of their problems. I stayed with peasants, with school-teachers and lawyers, and at all sorts of primitive little inns, talking with everyone I met from the lowest to the highest. I have notes of conversations with boot-blacks, farmers, merchants, Turkish hodjas, soldiers, young "intellectuals," school-girls, priests, doctors, Chiefs of Police and Governor-Generals. Later I went into Bulgaria, and got into touch with the Macedonian refugees there and heard their side of the question. From the confusion of impressions gained, certain ones emerge clearly, and I will put them down as honestly and impartially as I can.

THE ETHNOLOGICAL QUESTION. WHAT ARE THE MACEDONIANS? SHOULD THEY BE CONSIDERED A MINORITY?

Are they Bulgars, as they are marked on German ethnographical maps and as they are called by the local Turks and Albanians? Are they Serbs or are they a race distinct? This question is so passionately disputed that it is difficult to give the various sides of it in a balanced and succinct manner, but I will make the attempt.

To the Bulgars it is simple—all Macedonians, who are not Kouzo-Vlachs, Albanians or Greeks, are pure Bulgars, and that is an end of it. They point to the fact that it is not just lately that they have been given this name, but that they are so called by a geographer of the 17th century, by various travellers

of the 19th century, and also in the Sultan's Firman of 1870 which granted the Exarchate Church. They emphasize above all the present pro-Bulgar inclinations of the people.

The Serbs aver that the Macedonians are the oldest Slav race of the Balkans, that their dialect was once wide-spread and was spoken in Belgrade, and that it is similar to the ancient language of the Church and of the ballads. They admit that this dialect is nearer now to Bulgarian than it is to modern Serb, but as the difference from their own language is not great and they can pick it up in a month this does not seem to them important. (Personally I can attest that, though I found pure Macedonian difficult to follow, it was easy to detect that the majority of the words have the same roots as Serbian and only differ in vowel sounds and endings.) They declare, moreover, that they are united to this people by being akin not only in race and language, but in religion, history, tradition and custom. They lay great stress on the fact that the Macedonians have the typically Serb custom of the Slava (a special way of celebrating the family Saint's Day which is unknown to the Bulgars), and also that their hero, Marko Kraljevitch, sung in all their ballads, was a Macedonian. They say that it is only since the seventies that the name Bulgar became general and that this was because of the Bulgarian propaganda in the country.

Such being briefly the rival claims of the two nations it may well be asked what the Macedonians themselves have to say on the subject. To this there is no uniform answer. When I asked the people of the country what they were they usually replied "Macedonians" and refused to define themselves further, but some said that they were Serbs, and the refugees in Sofia were very firm that they were Bulgars.

These ethnological problems are not merely of academic interest, as the question of Minority Rights depends on the answer to them. I do not believe that anyone seriously considers giving Macedonians these rights as Macedonians. It would be absurd to insist on schools where only their dialect should be taught, because it has no written grammar, varies from village to village, and has no modern literature. It would be as logical to insist on Minority Rights for Highlanders or Yorkshiremen. The Bulgarians, on the other hand, and many of the exiles would like Minority Rights for them as Bulgarians—Bulgar schools, Exarchate Church and so on.

Let me state briefly the conclusions I have come to on the various points mentioned above. First let me say that, knowing as I do from personal experience how sacred the name of Marko Kraljevitch is to every Serb high and low, it was impressive to me to see in Easter week thousands of Macedonian peasants

camping near his ancient capital, Markograd, a mile from Prilep, the heart of Macedonia, and to have his monument on the top of the mountain pointed out with pride. The prevalence of the Slava seems to me also really significant. At the same time I did find not all but a majority of Macedonians pro-Bulgar in sympathy, and I believe that they would call themselves Bulgar if they dared. This I explain very largely from the missionary work, or what the Serbs bitterly call the propaganda, done by Bulgarians in the country while it was still under Turkey, during a period lasting more than forty years from 1870 till 1912. They certainly worked with great energy and, according to their lights, with great devotion, and claim to have built 981 schools and 1,139 churches, and to have sent over a thousand teachers and priests to Macedonia during this period. If at the same time they taught the people to feel and call themselves Bulgarian it is little wonder. They came as their saviours from a hated tyrant. The Serbs maintain, with much show of justice, that if they had sent their missionaries to work among Macedonians at this time, they would all be now good Yugoslavs. Certainly this theory is borne out in certain villages where the Serbs managed to erect schools before their rivals had done so. In such villages I found the natives calling themselves Serbs, and it was quite obvious from their tone that they did this genuinely and honestly and not through fear. I believe the fact to be that in Turkish times they were not clear as to their nationality. Baerlein relates that when asked what they were they usually replied that they were Orthodox. Of this one thing they were certain, and for the rest they would call themselves Bulgars or Serbs as seemed convenient at the moment. There was no enmity between these two races then, so that it was not important. For this reason I do not think that the name given them by travellers is really significant. An old priest put the matter in a nutshell to the Bishop of Bitolj. "It is your own fault," he said, "if we love the Bulgars more than you. In the seventies we sent a deputation up to Belgrade to ask for teachers and priests for our people, and we were told to go with our request to Sofia. The Bulgars built schools and churches in our villages. They were the first people to take an interest in our miserable condition and to rouse us to work for the liberation of our country. I was like an animal—the Bulgars gave me a soul: I cannot now change my allegiance."

That Macedonia would be worse off materially if it were under Bulgarian rule is no doubt true, as Bulgaria is a much poorer State than Yugoslavia and has not the cultured elements of the Old Austrian Empire to draw upon to aid it in the work of administration. But such considerations have never weighed

with peoples desiring to free themselves from an unwelcome rule. The question to be considered is to what degree is this rule unwelcome and why? What are the grievances and are they irremediable under the present régime?

A COUNTRY RICH IN POSSIBILITIES.

Before dealing with these questions I want to make some remarks on the country in general. I had read before going to Yugoslavia many news-sheets written by Macedonian emigrés describing the awful misery of their country under its present government, and was therefore not a little astonished by its air of prosperity and well-being. On the plains there are great varieties of crops, wheat, maize and barley and in certain areas tobacco, opium and rice. Round the cottages there are fruit-trees and vegetable-gardens. On the hillsides there are forests and vines and the lakes abound in fish (the trout and eels of Ochrid are excellent). On the plateaux and in the mountains there are herds of sheep, cows and goats. Galitchnik, a village above Debar, possesses between three and four hundred thousand sheep, single individuals owning up to five and even ten thousand. This is of course exceptional. That there is poverty in Macedonia is undeniable. Most of the peasants live extremely simply, eating bread with paprika and onions on ordinary days and fish and meat only on Sundays and holidays; their houses are usually small, without beds, dirty and with no sanitation. But theirs is not the despairing poverty that we know in England. Practically every peasant owns a piece of land—he is his own master and works for no lord. Seventeen years ago he was practically a slave. Turkish aghas and beys owned most of his country and he worked for them. Of his own produce he had to give up a tenth and more to the ravenous tax-gatherers. After the liberation of Macedonia in 1912-1913 the peasants began to come into possession of the land, not because the Turks were forcibly expropriated, but because the majority of them voluntarily sold their estates. Too idle and too grand themselves for agricultural work, prevented by custom from drawing on their women folk for aid, unable to obtain hired labour from a people no longer under their control, they could not get their land cultivated and were obliged to sell it. So in Macedonia as in the rest of Serbia most peasants are in a greater or less degree landed proprietors, and, though they may be poor, they are not entirely without substance. On Sundays and fête-days the riches and splendour of their costumes are unsurpassed in the Balkans. Everything has been woven and embroidered at home, and the brilliance and variety of the colours and patterns are admirable. Many of the women

wear chains of gold coins round their necks and the male dress is just as elaborate as the female. I saw in Easter week many thousands of peasants dancing their kolas on village greens or on pilgrimage to some monastery in the hills, and was dazzled by their grandeur. At such a time there are no rags to be seen, except in the towns or the notoriously poor districts in the mountains. In Albania or Greece you can find peasants who are ragged, barefoot, gaunt and half-starved, but not in Yugoslavian Macedonia. At the same time its possibilities are very largely unexploited. Agricultural methods are extremely primitive, railway communication inadequate; everywhere one finds traces of the long Turkish night: ignorance, inertia, wasted opportunity. If in spite of these defects the countryside wears an air of prosperity, what might it be if they were remedied? Apart from everything else, Macedonia has some of the most beautiful scenery of the Balkans and by far the loveliest lakes, and might become a haunt of tourists—certainly it is a land with a future.

MACEDONIAN GRIEVANCES.

I have tried to show that in Macedonia the Serbs have acquired not only a rich country but a people of the same religion and of similar language and tradition. Why, it may well be asked, is their rule unpopular—what are the causes of discontent? The Serbs would reply that it is due to the continuation of Bulgarian “propaganda” now lavishly supported by Italian money. Macedonians (especially those who have had a High School education, the “intellectuals”) will tell you that it is because they are badly governed by corrupt Serb officials, treated with contempt and disfavour, burdened with heavy taxation, government monopolies, military service, and a large gendarmerie. In the news-sheets published by the emigrés one reads that the last ten years have been “dix années de calvaire,” that hundreds of people have been massacred and put to death and thousands imprisoned for their political views. With these pamphlets I will deal later. At present I will examine the complaints which I heard within the country.

(A) ADMINISTRATION.

The most bitter grievance expressed by Macedonian intellectuals is that they have no share in their own administration, but are governed by Serbs from Old Serbia. This is true for the most part, though the statement is exaggerated. The mayors of villages, for instance, are often local men. Moreover, there

is an increasing number of officials, especially doctors, health-workers and teachers, from the districts beyond the Danube, of old Austria-Hungary, the Banat, Croatia and Slavonia. These are many of them people of real culture, and partly because of this and partly because of their own separatist inclinations more welcome to Macedonians than Serbs of Old Serbia. There are doctors in Skoplje and Bitolj, in connection with the new Bacteriological Institute, who are doing splendid pioneer work. “We feel ourselves,” they told me, “fanatics and apostles in a country where nothing has as yet been done and all is yet to do and, in spite of all difficulties, we wouldn’t change our work or try to be transferred to more comfortable districts.” But the fact remains that the highest officials and the majority of the others are Serbs. The reasons given by the Government for this are:

- (1) Their belief in a strong centralisation.
- (2) The backwardness and lack of education of the Macedonian.

1. CENTRALISATION.—For this they have learnt a lesson, they say, from their own history. Serbia’s greatest moment was in the 14th century under Stefan Dushan. His Empire was strongly centralised. When, after his death, decentralisation crept in, the country went to pieces and was soon conquered by the Turks. To us the 14th century seems a far-cry, but it must be remembered that Serb history for the succeeding five hundred years is a blank, and also that they feel their kingdom not much less threatened by Italians now than it was in the old days by the Turk. Of the grounds for these fears I will deal later. Assuming for the moment that they are well founded, the fact still remains that centralisation does not necessarily make a country strong against its enemies. A wise decentralisation may make for more contented and loyal subjects, as the English have found in South Africa; and to paraphrase the rather pompous 19th century saying, “The breasts of a contented people are the best bulwarks against the foe.”

2. IS THE MACEDONIAN FIT FOR OFFICE?—The Serbs contend that Macedonia is the most backward part of Yugoslavia and has the fewest educated people. At first sight this seems plausible and I was inclined to take the statement on trust, not so much because the peasants are very primitive (they are so all over the Balkans) as because Macedonians of education are extremely hard to find. Everywhere the doctors and school-teachers and lawyers and officials are Serb. One has only to come to Bulgaria to find the explanation of this. The educated class is almost all in exile. This is incontestable and speaks badly for the Serb régime. The fact is they have,

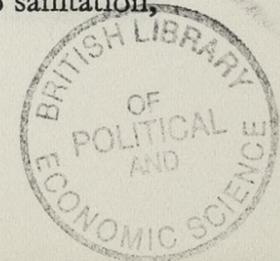
up till now at any rate, made life very difficult for the Macedonian "intellectual." I spoke in Sofia with a woman doctor who had qualified in France and had then returned to practise in X—, where, through the influence of some friends, she received government employment. She said that this was taken away from her last year without reason given, and the hospital closed to her; this year she could no longer bear it and came away. She had, as a child, attended the Bulgarian lycée in Salonika, and Serbs are frankly afraid of Macedonians who have received a Bulgarian education. They see in them an obstacle to their attempt to "serbize" the people.

That there is a surprisingly large educated class amongst them is due first of all to the fact that the Macedonians are the Scotsmen of the Balkans, thirsty for knowledge, hard-working, full of enterprise. In the old days they took advantage of schools not only in Salonika, but even in Constantinople and other cities of Europe. Moreover, the Bulgars, as has been mentioned before, established more than 1,000 schools in their country, and if their boast is true there were in 1894 three times the number of children being taught in Veles as there were in Belgrade. The large number of Macedonian exiles who have become Cabinet Ministers and University Professors, and who crowd out the other professions in Bulgaria, bears witness to their capacity of profiting by education.

If the Serb is suspicious of the Macedonian intellectual, his attitude towards the peasant is different. All Serbs who live in Macedonia speak with warmth and something that I can only call respect of the peasant. This may not be true of the Serbs of the North. I am told that they despise the Macedonian because he is not a soldier—they were not admitted into the Turkish army, and their military experience dates only from the War—but it is true of those who know them best. All say that they are remarkably honest, unusually averse to violence, amenable to discipline, pious and hard-working. I heard from Chiefs of Police, judges and lawyers that there is unusually little crime amongst them, and I noticed that peasants frequently leave their doors open all night. The Serbian Bishop of Ochrid, who is devoted to the people, remarked that there is more crime at any street-corner of Chicago than in the whole of his diocese. Even the doctors and health-workers, who have the most uphill work and the least good to say of a people deplorably ignorant of the most elementary laws of health and hygiene, even they find one word of praise: they extol the morality of the Macedonian peasant, and emphasize the small number of prostitutes among them. These are practically all from the Levant or countries north of the Danube.

To return to the subject with which I started, it is a grave mistake to refuse to admit Macedonians into the administration of their own country. Decentralisation, an unwritten autonomy such as exists, so I am told, among the Slovenes, might make Macedonia a contented country and loyal to Serbia. She throws the educated class into the arms of Bulgaria by treating them with disfavour and thus loses an element which she can ill afford to spare.

As to their present officials, it is a little difficult to say anything for certain, because they are all new since the Dictatorship and new brooms sweep clean in this case as in others. But everywhere I heard people say that the changes made were for the better, that the new officials were not so oppressive as the old, and above all not so corrupt, as politics are no longer a factor. I was told by a prominent Serb lawyer of Belgrade (himself an ardent patriot) that the misgovernment of Macedonia, up till this present year, was proverbial, because Serbia could only get her worst men to go into such exile; and that the inefficiency and corruption of these people are responsible for a great deal of the present discontent. That there is a real amelioration since the Dictatorship, he said, was not merely due to the clean sweep of all officials and to the elimination of politics, but also because the position and pay of many of the offices have been improved, and it is possible to attract better men. I was favourably impressed by several of the new officials. Some of them are very youthful—it seems to be the intention of the Government to send young men there for a period, to make Macedonia a stage in the career of the civil servant—and though younger men may do ill-considered things they are not the worst among administrators; they have a certain energy, enthusiasm and ambition to make good that older men lack. One finds young *Sous-Préfets* collecting funds for *Maisons de Culture* (a sort of Club-house for library, lectures and sports), ardently cleaning up the villages under them, helping the doctors to fight against malaria and for better sanitary conditions, and making valiant efforts to keep their roads in repair. Much energy is being put into organizing a health service throughout Macedonia. All children are now medically examined, and in many villages they are forced to take regular baths and some education in hygiene is even attempted. Courses of lectures are given to women for two or three months of the summer on cooking and nursing and health and even boys are sent for a course of hygiene to Skoplje or some such centre. It must be remembered that in Turkish times there were no doctors at all in most parts of Macedonia, that plagues were frequent and used to carry away the people by the thousand (for not only was there no sanitation,



but no system of preventing the spread of infection) and that if people were ill they died without hope of remedy. In ten years the Serbs have really done something, and, as I said before, they have the assistance of some excellent doctors.

Macedonia is also fortunate in two at least of its Bishops (of the others I cannot speak, as I did not meet them). Father Nicolai Velimirovitch of Ochrid is a man of European culture and is well-known in England. He is an enthusiast, saintly, ascetic and devoted. Father Josip of Bitolj is a man of a different type: he is gaiety and charity personified—to know him is to believe that the most essential characteristic of the Orthodox faith is joy. Like Father Nicolai he spends himself for his religion and for his people, to whom he talks in their own dialect. He has a racy tongue and a kind of wit that smacks of the soil and is very bracing. The Macedonians love him; if all Serbs would work amongst them in his spirit, or some reflection of it, the bitterness against their new masters would rapidly disappear.

This leads me to say a word about the religion of the country. This is now under the Patriarch of Belgrade. The churches, which the Bulgars built while Macedonia was under Turkey, were Exarchate and under the Patriarch of Sofia. After their defeat these were converted into Serb national churches. The difference is mainly that they are under different Patriarchs; both are branches of the Orthodox Faith. The Bulgars feel that it is a great grievance that these churches have been taken away, but I doubt whether the peasants care much or want actively to be transferred back to the Exarchate, though no doubt it is the wish of some members of the older generation who remember with affection the Bulgarian priests who laboured for them. The churches are, as in Russia, the home of the people, the services always crowded not only with peasants but with townfolk. People pass hours in them: the atmosphere is familiar and happy as at a festival, with nothing of the strained remote piety often found in Catholic churches, still less the cold indifference of Protestant places of worship. Here church ceremonies are as sacred but not much more so than food and drink and the other things of daily life. I passed hours at services watching groups of women holding their parastos (the feast for the dead) in some outer court or gallery, children bringing flowers to be blessed, old men embracing ikons, young girls lighting their candles, while in the background priests chanted and performed their mysterious rites, and it was with a certain incredulity that I remembered that I had heard it said that the Macedonians were not allowed to have their own churches nor practise their own religion.

(B) ECONOMIC GRIEVANCES.

These are legion, but the most serious are (1) the lack of capital and the difficulty of obtaining loans from the State. The people feel that this is part of a considered policy for keeping them poor. They say that any gipsy can obtain a loan from the National Bank in Skoplje, but not a Macedonian, that people in business are constantly failing because they cannot get the capital to tide them over a crisis, and that the peasant cannot make improvements for the same reason. It is to be hoped that the Agricultural Bank that has just been created will benefit the peasant in Macedonia as much as the peasant in other parts of Yugoslavia, and that they will be taught to organise themselves into Co-operatives (loans are only to be made to Co-operatives).

(2) A great deal of economic disturbance has been caused by territorial readjustment and new frontiers. Bitolj was for instance a great commercial centre under the old Turkish Empire, and now has greatly declined in importance, as it is on two frontiers, the Albanian and the Greek. Similarly the people of Debar find existence almost impossible because they are on the Albanian border. They complain bitterly of what they call their crisis (there is even a crisis in smuggling during the last year or two as the Gendarmerie has become so much more efficient!). Commercial treaties might help in this situation, but as long as Protection exists in these countries not much can be done. Bad as the old Turkish Empire was, it did, at least, maintain Free Trade from the Adriatic to the Black Sea, and from the Danube to the Persian Gulf, and the lack of this is bound to be felt. Bitolj was also in the old days, as it is now, an important military centre, but with this difference, that the Turks because of the lack of transport, great distance of Bitolj from Constantinople and so forth, used to buy clothes and provisions for the army from local people, whereas Serbia makes its Army purchases centrally.

(3) The method of paying the tobacco growers causes great discontent. Tobacco is a State monopoly, and in the days of Parliament there was a great deal of corruption in connection with it. One peasant would be paid at a much higher rate than his neighbour for the same quality of tobacco, because he had been able to get at his Deputy. The old assessment still holds good, but I was assured by a high official in the Monopol in Belgrade that this was going to be altered, that tobacco growers are going to be organised into Co-operatives and all paid on the same basis.

(4) That taxation is heavy is a cry universal in Europe and not less loud in Macedonia. At the same time, if you talk

to some honest fellow who farmed under the old régime he will say to you: "You talk of taxes? They are nothing now to what they were. Before, if I had fifty sheep, the Agha claimed ten of them and often more—to-day they are all mine. I was not allowed to begin harvesting until he permitted it and could claim his portion. You ask why there are no fruit trees round my cottage. I had them once, but in the spring the Agha would look at their blossom and order so many loads of pears and peaches or whatever it was from them, so that far from planting more I destroyed those I had."

Here I may add that I asked several peasants, when they were telling me their grievances, if they were better off under the Turks, and they all laughed at the idea. The educated classes were perhaps, but not the peasants. It is something one hears said by the exiles in Bulgaria but not in the country itself.

(C) BURDEN OF MILITARY SERVICE AND THE POLICE.

As conscription is universal Macedonia is not worse off in this respect than the rest of Yugoslavia (except that it is new to them, while the Serbs have acquired the habit of it), but in no other part of the Kingdom is the burden of the Police (the Gendarmerie) so sensible. This is of course due to the disturbed condition of the country until the last year or so. Allusion has already been made to the activities of the Bulgarian Comitadji (the Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation). Their aim is to free Yugoslavian Macedonia and unite it to Bulgaria and their methods are terrorist. Not only do they pick out individuals and send their agents to murder them, but at times they have made serious raids. They usually take Albania for their base of operations, as they find many professional brigands (Katchaki) there ready to be of service to them. Protuegerov, their picturesque leader, was an Ochrid man and spent most of his time on the Albanian side of the lake. After his murder by the Mihailov faction last year, the Revolutionary Organisation became much weaker, and it is partly because of this and still more because of the energetic precautions taken by the Serbs that there has been practically no disturbance for over a year. All along the Albanian frontier there are Karauli or gendarme stations, everywhere one meets large quantities of gendarmes and no one can move about the countryside at all without a permit (*legitimatio*) which he has to show at frequent intervals. Until this year the Bulgarian frontier was closed, a thing which caused great bitterness. Apart from this, the people bear the

restrictions with a certain resignation. Themselves peaceable and averse to violence, they seemed to me to be tired of disturbance and to long for safety and quiet. In Bulgaria I heard it said that Macedonia is still full of the friends of the Comitadji, who are ready at any moment to help them, to feed and hide them and carry messages for them, but I am more inclined to believe the young Macedonian who, while speaking with respect of these men as of heroes who risk their lives for a cause, told me that the people were no longer ready to help them, that the danger was too great and the desire for peace too strong. That they have this now does the Government honour. In ancient days the first thing put to the credit of a strong ruler was that he cleared the land of brigands, and that in his time merchants travelled along the high-roads in safety. Nowadays there is no lack of merchants in Macedonia—the crowded market day of every little town is vivid proof of this—the roads too have improved immensely in the last three years and there are creditable communications by post-bus all through the country. Railways are few, but their extension is being planned and is only a matter of time.

But though brigandage has fallen on hard times the menace is not over, and it would doubtless start again if the Serbs slackened their precautions. The season for brigands begins at the end of May when the leaves are thick in the forest and the rivers low, and as it was just at this time I was travelling about the Albanian frontier I found great activity among the gendarmes. Many were sent to mount guard on the tops of inaccessible mountains and there was a great moving to and fro. It is interesting to note that several loyal Albanians are employed in the local gendarmerie, as they, as good ex-brigands, know the tricks of the trade and the secret haunts. The day I was at D—— the Sous-Préfet received a letter from a secret agent saying that a notorious leader of the Bulgarian Comitadji had arrived in Tirana and gathered together at a certain house a number of Albanian Katchakis, promising them 5 napoleons a month if they would attempt raids over the border. If nothing much was done it is doubtless because the mountains are alive with gendarmes.

From all this it is clear that the Comitadji do great, perhaps irreparable, harm to Macedonia. They say "We will continue our methods until Serbia stops oppressing our brothers," but Serbia, a young, very military people, will continue to fill the country with gendarmes and military and to restrict movement from village to village, *i.e.*, to oppress as long as they suspect conspiracy in their midst. The Macedonians in Bulgaria would be in a much stronger position if they would frankly

abandon terrorist methods: the Serbs would no longer have excuse for oppression. It must not be forgotten that all Serb Governors and police officials of the last ten years have gone in danger of their lives, and some of them have had extremely difficult and perilous situations to face. The exiles make much of Matkovitch's action in Gavran when twenty-three people were killed by his machine-guns, but the excuse he gives is that he was hunting brigands who had just murdered six soldiers, five gendarmes and one official, and that he believed this village to be hiding them.

The question of the imprisonment of Macedonians follows naturally on this question of brigandage. The émigrés state in the *Fédération Balkanique* that 25,000 Macedonians have been imprisoned for their political opinions in the last ten years. I believe that this number is exaggerated, but that there have been some thousands of imprisonments is undoubted. Many of these have been for short periods, a few days or weeks. The charges have usually been of carrying on propaganda for the Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation, or of supplying arms, food or clothing, or carrying messages for the Comitadji, and in many cases have doubtless not been without grounds. Of late these activities have much declined and the Chief of Police in Bitolj told me that there had only been one political imprisonment in his district for the last year and a half.

That the state of the prisons is bad is no doubt true, but it must be remembered that this is the same all over the Balkans. I was told by the relative of one of the fifteen students condemned at Skoplje for pro-Bulgar propaganda that these political prisoners are kept in chains and that during their trial they were frequently beaten. It is natural, of course, that Macedonians should feel strongly about such brutalities and to know that the Bulgars mete out the same treatment to their prisoners is little consolation.

Before concluding I want to consider three questions which have a more or less direct bearing on my subject. First, how the Serbs treat their accredited minorities, the Turks and Albanians; secondly, the Italian Menace; and thirdly, the effect of the Dictatorship.

TREATMENT OF TURKISH AND ALBANIAN MINORITIES.

No traveller in Macedonia can fail to be struck by the tolerant attitude of the people towards their sometime oppressors, the Turks. It is true that the Turk of the Balkans, unlike the Turk of Anatolia who is aggressive and arrogant, is a

rather likeable individual: he has a certain dignity which comes from the years in which he was lord, and from his religion. He is often cleaner and more gravely courteous than his neighbour. Doubtless he is somnolent and degenerate, not disagreeably alive like the subjects of Kemal Pasha, but in any case he is the representative of a tyranny that lasted for five and a half centuries and that was characterized by shocking outbursts of cruelty and atrocities, and for this reason the absence of resentment, the extreme toleration of the Serb towards him now is remarkable. Here at any rate there is no complaint possible about inadequate Minority Rights. The Turkish religion and customs are not interfered with in any way. There is no law forbidding polygamy, as there is in Albania and Turkey. The Turk goes to his own Muftia for judgment in all cases of marriage and divorce and inheritance, and Turkish Hodjas give religious instruction to all professing the faith of Islam. In some places, like Skoplje, the Mohammedans have this in the afternoons and attend Serb Schools in the morning. If they have to serve in the Serb army now it is for a period of 9 or at the most 18 months, and many remember how in their own army their service often lasted six years. There are frequent instances of Turks who have sold up everything and gone to Turkey, and then have come back to Macedonia. "Do with me what you like," they will say to the authorities, "but I cannot live in a country where I am forced to wear a hat and let my wife go unveiled, where there is no call to prayer [Kemal Pasha has discovered that this is disturbing to the sick] and where people are told they may play cards, drink wine and disobey the Prophet. This is the only land where I am free."

It is true that there is great misery among them now and that their position would be tragic if it were not for the Oriental fatalism with which they accept it, but their poverty is largely the result of their own incapacity for agricultural work. The towns of Macedonia are now crowded with Turks—Skoplje has 40,000 of them. Here they try to earn their living in a manner more gentlemanly than by manual labour, and you can see them in their tiny shops beating copper, making sandals, or embroidering waistcoats, or they may drive your taxi or black your boots.

The Albanians who are either Mohammedan or Catholic have similar religious privileges. It is true that they have more complaints than the Turks and that there are four or five thousand refugees in Albania that have horrible tales of Serb cruelty. But these come largely from the district round Petch and the Kossova Mitrovitza, which in 1920 I myself saw full of Albanian brigands who preferred the independent life of the

mountains to service in the army of their new masters. These people are no doubt safer in their own country. The Albanians who have remained are often cured of their discontent by a visit over the border, where they see material conditions far worse than in Yugoslavia. This leads directly to the next subject.

THE ITALIAN MENACE.

To most Albanians the transformation of their country into an Italian Colony is extremely distasteful, and they are aware rather of the burdens than of the benefits of the civilisation brought to them. Conscription is a new thing to this wild mountain people, taxes are crushing and, whereas three years ago Albania was the cheapest country of the Balkans, it is now the dearest. To give one instance of their new burdens: every man has to pay one napoleon a year for the roads or else give ten days' free labour to them.

That Yugoslavia watches Italian activities with extreme apprehension is inevitable. To hear of these activities is one thing and to see them another, and I confess I was startled on visiting the country to see how completely it was transformed, not so much into an Italian colony as into an Italian camping-ground. Everywhere there are Italian officers, Italian aeroplanes, Italian engineers, Italian guns, and Italian Banks. Swarms of school-children parade the streets of Kortcha singing the Fascist song and making the Fascist signal. What good is conscription to a little country that would be incapable of making war alone against anyone? It is rather a menace than a safeguard, and Albania's army of 15,000 is useless, unless it be to the Italians who have called it into being.

A journey from Tirana to Kortcha in the car is instructive. One passes Durazzo and sees the tremendous building operations that are on foot. At present a miserable place enough, it is being rapidly turned into a strongly fortified harbour, and it is natural that Yugoslavia should see in this the design to close the Adriatic and make it into an Italian lake. All along the road magnificent concrete bridges are replacing the old ones. All this is of course being done out of the two million pounds which they lent Ahmet Zogu and which the Government is obliged to spend as Italy dictates and which, as they will never be rich enough to pay it back, gives Italy an extraordinary hold over them.

It is well known that Bulgarian Comitadji have been on various occasions captured in Albania and after a short space of imprisonment have been set free and given Italian passports, and it is no legend that Italian money helps them to harm their neighbours.

All these are sinister facts, and it is impossible to understand the militarism of Yugoslavia or to condone the immense percentage of her budget spent on the Army if one does not grasp them. Italy has now gained in Albania not only a second mountain frontier from which to attack Yugoslavia, but also the power of closing the only sea to which she has free access. Moreover, she has an area of discontent to work from in Bulgaria. It is obviously to her advantage to fan flames in Macedonia, and as long as she is so active with her money and machinations the trouble there will scarcely die down. The Balkan States have little chance until the Great Powers leave them alone.

That Yugoslavia shows peaceable inclinations towards Italy at the moment is not through virtue but through necessity. She has everything to lose by being precipitated into war before she is really ready and has shown by the unpopular Treaty of Nettuno and other gestures that she desires peace with Italy.

THE DICTATORSHIP.

The Dictatorship has meant a definite amelioration in the Government of Macedonia and I found everywhere immense relief at the abolition of the Parliamentary system. A useless and insufferable complication has been removed from existence, and it seems as though everyone breathes more freely and goes about their work less harassed and hampered. Every peasant, every shopkeeper, every little official has tales to tell of the iniquities of the political system from which they have just escaped, of the daily injustices and irritations which it involved. Even a deputy's life, though profitable, can have been no easy one—he was bombarded on all sides: the school-master would threaten to work against him unless he promised to have him removed to a more attractive area, illiterate youths would refuse their votes unless given a job in the village opshtina, all the countryside beset him with their threats, their petitions and their bribes. Politics entered into every walk of life. Harassed Albanians, refused in their requests to carry arms or visit their own country, miserable Macedonian peasants, punished with unwarrantable severity for some transgression of the law, realized too late that they had not voted for the party that had come into power.

I have heard from the lips of the Sous-Préfets (Chiefs of Police) themselves, that it is literally true that they favoured their own party, that it was expected of them, was part of the system from which even to the most well-intentioned escape seemed impossible.

Now not only is life simplified—there is only one set of officials for the people to run to instead of two—not only is it cheaper (deputies were expensive in more ways than one) but it is more peaceful; all the enmities and quarrels belonging to the old days of politics have in a magical manner disappeared. Neither did I anywhere hear it expressed as a grievance that the appointment of the mayor of the village is now made by the Government instead of by popular vote. On the contrary, I often heard it said “This man is a better one than the last and much more educated—how can the people know whom to choose?”

The Dictatorship started with a clean sweep of officials. All Governor-Generals and Chiefs of Police were either dismissed or moved from one district to another. This was a wise action as they were all charged with favouritism in their own district and in the new there is now no *prima facie* reason for lack of impartiality.

In Belgrade I was told by a prominent State official and by the lawyer quoted before that in the days of the Skupshtina the whole country was run by the deputies: not only were Ministers forced to do what they ordered but even the Governor-Generals of the provinces. Judges condemned people of whom the deputies disapproved and in short these three hundred and twenty men were like three hundred and twenty robber kings ruling and ravaging their wretched country with none to say them nay.

Doubtless these people and others, whose hopes for a career of such power are now dashed to the ground, are chagrined by the change, but apart from them the relief on the negative side at least has been very general.

As for the positive side of the Dictatorship I cannot say that I found it resented as military or oppressive, but certainly many of the new laws and taxes were arousing considerable criticism. The King has unified the law, which till this year has been different in different parts of Yugoslavia, and also made a uniform system of taxation. This causes great dissatisfaction in Macedonia. I will give a small instance of the working of the unified law. From May 1st of this year the silversmiths are all obliged to get their silver stamped with the Government stamp. This sounds reasonable, but the poor silversmith of Debar who has plied his work, which is famous in all the Balkans, for centuries unharassed, now has to send by post his rings and necklaces to Skoplje and wait for weeks, perhaps months, till they are returned. His customers too, he says, are in despair, for they are used to come in on market day, order their brides' rings and get them on the

following week. I discussed this and other similar laws with a prominent Serb who now lives in Macedonia. “The Government,” he said, “wants to preserve people from false silver, but do they preserve them from false milk, false wine, false materials? They are only teasing this people. We have now to notify the Police if we employ two or three men to build a fence round our gardens. Serbia takes its laws too much from industrial countries. This was the tendency in the days of the Parliament and is continuing under the Dictatorship. What good to Montenegro, for instance, are laws that apply to iron works and soap factories? Civilisation,” he added, “cannot be transplanted. It is the visible expression of something invisible and must grow from the hearts of the people. The King is at present trying to unify the law of the whole country, but laws suitable to Switzerland or Germany are not suitable to Belgrade, and laws that are feasible for Belgrade look ridiculous in the wilds of Macedonia.”

Criticisms of what I have called the positive or constructive side of the Dictatorship, as opposed to the merely destructive cutting away of the gangrenous Skupshtina, are of course likely to become more and not less general as time goes on. A friend in Belgrade puts the point of view of a certain class very clearly in a letter from which I take the liberty of quoting the following words: “I must say my sincere view is that people suffer in spirit from the Dictator system; while admitting its good points and its good work, I truly believe that they are tired of waking up daily to a new law on the front page of their papers, excellent and urgent as the new law always is. The spirit of freedom is injured in them, I am sure.”

CONCLUSION.

The last evening I was in Macedonia I spent with some Serb peasants listening to their stories of night-watch and battle and once more to the terrible epic of their retreat through Albania (in these countries the war is still in the foreground of memory—the entire nation was involved and suffered too much to forget or put it lightly aside), and my mind was forced back again to the days of Serbian defeat and exile. For two years I shared in that exile and knew something of its despair. Could I dream in those days that in a few years' time I should come back to the people I had known ruined and broken and find them the richest and most powerful State of the Balkans? That increased power has brought not only increased difficulties but a certain rashness and over-confidence in dealing with them,

that their recently acquired territories present problems of an intricacy and delicacy that would try the skill of a much maturer and more experienced Government—all this is obvious. That their efforts to deal with these problems should be looked on with a certain sympathy by the Great Powers of Europe should also be obvious, but unfortunately, as in the past, their internal difficulties and dissensions are on the contrary watched with pleasure and secretly augmented now by one of these Powers, now by another.

In conclusion let me state that I do not believe the Macedonian Question to be insoluble under the present régime, given two conditions: first, that unfriendly interference and wilful fanning of discontented flames by outside Powers cease; and secondly, that the Government make a drastic effort by a more conciliatory policy to recover the ground it has lost in the last ten years. Minority Rights I do not advocate, but decentralisation: the admission of educated Macedonians into the administration of their country—and economic reform. Here is a land that could one day be the richest, most prosperous and most contented in the whole Kingdom—but these two conditions are essential: Yugoslavia must have peace and her Government wisdom.

December, 1929.

EDGAR G. DUNSTAN & Co.,
11, Lincoln's Inn Fields,
London, W.C.2.