

*Elżbieta Znamierowska-Rakk*

## THE GENESIS OF THE IDEA OF A BULGARIAN-YUGOSLAV FEDERATION AND ITS FALL AFTER WORLD WAR II

The idea of a federation of southern Slavs, which in a substantial, if not decisive, degree determined Bulgarian-Yugoslav relations during the final phase of World War II and in the first years after its conclusion, was not a concept devoid of historical context in the Balkans. It had deep historical roots which went back to the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th, when the Balkan nations, experiencing a spiritual and political rebirth, realised that they should jointly wage a national liberation struggle against the rule of Ottoman Turkey. The unity of political aims, close vicinity as well as ethnic or religious kinship were factors which in a natural way brought the Serbs, Greeks and Bulgarians closer together, and this created favourable conditions for the establishment of good neighbourly relations in the future, once the yoke of Turkish rule was thrown off. In these conditions the elites in the Balkans (and also outside that area) put forward various ideas, some of them mature, others less so, of how to unify the Balkan nations, ideas which propagated the establishment of joint state and political structures.

The most ardent promoters of these unification plans were Greeks and Serbs, representatives of nations which were the first Balkan nations to achieve statehood (first half of the 19th century), restricted though it still was. Let us stress that this fact generated a feeling of intellectual and cultural superiority among the Greeks and Serbs, and made each of these nations convinced that it was peerless on the battlefield and in diplomatic negotiations. These idealised national stereotypes naturally clashed with reality, leading to divisions and tensions in Serbian-Greek relations. The Serbs and Greeks did their best to demonstrate their superiority over the Bulgarians, who for many reasons were

lagging behind in the struggle for independence. The conflicting “Great Serbian” (*Načertanie*) and Pan-Hellenic (“Megali idea”) nationalistic, expansionist political programmes openly proclaimed the right of Serbia and Greece to annex the still non-liberated territories inhabited by many Balkan nationalities, including the Bulgarians<sup>1</sup>. At the same time the Serbs as well as the Greeks proclaimed they were the natural unifiers of the nations in the Balkans, for in their view they were predestined to win hegemony in this region of Europe after the expulsion of the Turks.

At the end of the 19th century the Bulgarians joined in the Greek-Serbian rivalry for primacy among the Balkan nations. After regaining partial independence in the form of the Bulgarian Duchy, set up by virtue of the Berlin Treaty of 1878, the Bulgarians put forward a “Great Bulgaria” programme for a San Stefano Bulgaria, which was to stretch from the Black Sea to the Aegean<sup>2</sup>. This means that the ruling circles in Bulgaria aspired to territories inhabited by a heterogeneous population. In this situation the federative concepts or plans could not yield any results for no agreement was possible as long as each of the three nations emphasised its predominance.

The leaders of the national liberation movement in Macedonia and Thrace, which were still part of the Ottoman Empire, tried to settle controversial territorial and national problems in the Balkans by a federation or confederation, but this concept also turned out to be illusory. The differences between the leading centres of the movement and the interference of Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria, which were competing for supremacy, ruled out this variant of a Balkan union<sup>3</sup>. The result was that the idea of a federation in the Balkans, launched at the end of the 18th century, failed to assume a concrete shape and remained but an idealistic utopia. Nevertheless it was frequently recalled in the following years. It was referred to even though during and after

---

<sup>1</sup> K. Manchev, *Natsionalnityat vypros na Balkanite*, Sofiya 1999, pp. 34 ff., 56–65; J. Skowronek, M. Tanty, T. Wasilewski, *Historia Słowian południowych i zachodnich (A History of Southern and Western Slavs)*, Warszawa 1988, pp. 251–252, 258–269.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. Khristov, *Osvobozhdenieto na Bylgariya i politikata na zapadnite dyrzhavt 1876–1878*, Sofiya 1968, pp. 154–158, 187–190, 223–224.

<sup>3</sup> J. Rychlik, M. Kouba, *Dejiny Makedonie*, Praha 2003, pp. 115 ff.; I. Stawowy-Kawka, *Historia Macedonii (A History of Macedonia)*, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 2000, pp. 124–126, 130–143.

the Balkan wars (1912–1913), owing to increasing differences over Macedonia between Bulgaria on the one hand and Serbia and Greece on the other, the idea of a federation was disavowed and replaced by the concept of dividing the territories under dispute. It is worth adding that the idea to set up a large Slav state under Bulgarian aegis in the Balkans, with access to an open sea (the Aegean sea), was consistently torpedoed by the great powers which were competing with Russia for influence in the Balkans. This constituted an additional, external obstacle to the implementation of the “Great Bulgaria” expansionist programme<sup>4</sup>.

Generally speaking, from the end of the 18th century to the conclusion of the First World War the Balkan federative concepts always suffered a defeat in every contest with the national idea. This was undoubtedly due to the Balkan nations’ irresistible aspiration to gain state sovereignty and enjoy it without any restrictions after many centuries of foreign oppression. This is why federalism was rarely conceived as the main strategic aim in these concepts. It was usually treated instrumentally as a tactical means that would make it possible to throw off the Ottoman or Hapsburg yoke and establish the hegemony of a Balkan state.

It can be said that during the inter-war period the Balkan integration and unification concepts followed two different paths. One path was represented by ideas aimed at preserving the post-war territorial and nationality order in the region through the creation of various political and state structures which would secure peace and stability, solve mutual conflicts and lay the foundations for inner Balkan cooperation. The other path was represented by ideas aimed at a change of the existing *status quo* either through a revision of the peace treaties or through modifications of the political system. These modifications were to be achieved either through a democratic abolition of the institution of monarchy in the Balkan states and the establishment of republics (or peasant republics)<sup>5</sup> which would then unite in a federation, or through a revolutionary overthrow of the existing state structures and the creation on their ruin of Balkan Soviet

<sup>4</sup> Ch. Khristov, *op. cit.*, pp. 159–174; cf. M. D. Stojanović, *The Great Powers and the Balkans*, Cambridge Mass. 1939.

<sup>5</sup> Z. Hemmerling, *Ruch ludowy w Polsce, Bułgarii i Czechosłowacji (The Peasant Movement in Poland, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia)* Warszawa 1987, pp. 415 ff.; J. D. Bell, *Peasants in Power*, Princeton, New Jersey 1977, pp. 192–193.

worker-peasant republics united in a federation. An important *novum* in the latter concept was that in the planned union the territories under dispute (above all Macedonia, but also Thrace and Dobruja) were to be given the status of independent state units. They were to become links uniting the individual members of a future united structure. The main advocates of these concepts were leaders of leftist movements and parties, especially the Balkan communist parties and the Third International, which was subordinated to the Kremlin. But this compromise variant was also abandoned, for federative solutions were still hampered by the conflicting nationalistic programmes of the Balkan states. The result was that under the pressure of Yugoslav and Greek communists and because of the radical change in Moscow's policy in the 1930s, the Comintern revised the idea of a Balkan federation and adopted the view that Macedonia, Thrace and Dobruja had not been and were not parts of Bulgaria but were separate countries inhabited by the Macedonian, Thracian and Dobrujan nations<sup>6</sup>. Whereas the Macedonians could rightfully be regarded as a nation since the beginning of the 20th century, the other two nations were products of an ethnic alchemy applied by the Kremlin decision makers.

During the Second World War, when victory over the Third Reich was already taken for granted, the need to create a common state organism that would ensure lasting peace in the Balkans provided a powerful stimulus to Balkan federative concepts. These concepts were the work mainly of politicians from Bulgarian ruling circles in exile and other emigré circles in the West. The common denominator of these ideas was that the expected socio-political order in the planned federal organisms would be a continuation of the pre-war *status quo*. It is worth adding that the British ruling circles with the prime minister Winston Churchill were involved in the Balkan unification plans. Great Britain was interested in securing its influence in the Balkans after the war, for the region bordered on the Eastern Mediterranean, an area of key importance for London's imperial interests. Thanks to British inspiration and support, a Greek-Yugoslav pact was signed in London at the beginning of 1942. It was to lay the

<sup>6</sup> K. Paleshutski, *Yugoslavskata komunisticheska partiya i makedonskiyat voprois 1919-1945*, Sofiya 1985, pp. 190-222 ff; K. Manchev, *Yugoslaviya i mezhdunarodnite otnosheniya an Balkanite (1933-1939)*, Sofiya 1989, pp. 272-283.

foundation for a future Balkan confederation, just as the Polish-Czechoslovak agreement was to be the foundation of a central European confederation. The British government also tried to gain the Balkan peasant politicians' support for its Balkan unification plans but the peasant politicians promoted federative plans which did not fully harmonise with the British vision.

Owing mainly to an unfavourable international situation, especially to the opposition of the Soviet Union and the restraint of the United States, Great Britain abandoned its federative plans and after a short time had to agree to the establishment of a zone of Soviet domination in the Balkans (with the exception of Greece and Turkey) and in East-Central Europe. Let us add that the fiasco of the Balkan unification concepts which had been considered and prepared outside the Balkans during the years of World War II was also due to the differences and animosities between the individual Balkan states interested in a federation. The result was that the idea of federalism had no realistic prospects<sup>7</sup>.

Completely different were the political conditions in which the federative plans of the leading circles of the Balkan communist parties developed at that time. I have in mind mainly the leader of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ), Josip Broz Tito, who in his ambitious political programme sought to establish a communist Yugoslav federation on the ruins of the pre-war Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The resolutions adopted by the second session of the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ), held in the town of Jajce, in the liberated area of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in November 1943, meant that the first important stage of this programme was successfully implemented. Several factors favoured Tito's plans and made it possible to proclaim a communist federal structure while the war was still going on. Of decisive importance were the successes achieved by the Yugoslav partisans under the command of the KPJ chief, who in a relatively short time managed to raise a large army capable of liberating vast Yugoslav territories occupied by Germany and their allies. Owing to the spectacular successes of

<sup>7</sup> For more details see E. Znamierowska-Rak, *Próby sfederowania Bałkanów przy udziale Wielkiej Brytanii w latach II wojny światowej (The Attempts to Federalise the Balkans with the Assistance of Great Britain during World War II)*, in: *Państwa europejskie na drodze do niepodległości (w drugiej połowie XIX i XX wieku)*, Kraków 2003, pp. 93-106.

Tito's guerrilla army, the Anglo-Saxon powers began to view it as a useful instrument in their strategic aim of containing Nazi forces in the Balkans so as to ensure the Allied forces' victory in the operations against the Third Reich in Italy. In this situation Great Britain, and to a lesser degree also the United States, decided to confine military assistance in Yugoslavia to Tito's partisans. Let us add that the arms potential of Tito's guerrillas increased considerably when in September 1943 after the capitulation of Italy they took over the weapons left by Italian soldiers who had been occupying Yugoslavia<sup>8</sup>.

The Anglo-Saxon supplies of arms, ammunition and other equipment to the Yugoslav guerrilla army seemed to ensure its quicker victory over the occupiers, and strengthened Tito's prestige in the country. This exerted an influence on the Yugoslav communists' position in the struggle waged against conservative political forces (above all against Dragoljub Mikhailovich's Chetniks) for power in Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav marshal's prestige and fame increased still further on the international stage when at the Teheran conference held at the end of that year the Three Great Powers recognised Tito's partisans as an allied army<sup>9</sup>. All this contributed to the success of Tito's military and political plans. But it also fanned his expansionist ambitions. The establishment of a federal communist Yugoslavia within the frontiers of the pre-war kingdom was no longer enough for him; he wanted to expand it territorially, as was proved by the Yugoslav leaders' territorial claims against Austria and Italy, put forward as early as September 1943, and by their earlier appetite for Macedonian territories belonging to Bulgaria and Greece<sup>10</sup>. Proclaiming the necessity of unifying the Macedonian nation, the Yugoslavs wanted to incorporate these territories in Vardar Macedonia which in the future was to become the People's Republic of Macedonia (LRM) within the Yugoslav federation. It can be said that in this respect the KPJ continued the old Serbian territorial aspirations, changing only their justification in the party's programme proclaimed on the eve of World War II<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> M. J. Zacharias, *Jugosławia w polityce Wielkiej Brytanii 1940-1945 (Yugoslavia in Great Britain's Policy 1940-1945)*, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk-Łódź 1985, pp. 328-332.

<sup>9</sup> D. Riddi, *Tito*, Sofiya 1995, pp. 249 ff.

<sup>10</sup> K. Manchev, *Istoriya na balkanskite narodi (1918-1945)*, Sofiya 2000, p. 327.

<sup>11</sup> K. Palshutski, *op. cit.*, pp. 275-278.

Without losing sight of Pirin Macedonia (which belonged to Bulgaria) the *KPJ* leadership was at first planning to annex Aegean Macedonia (which belonged to Greece), in view of the fact that in 1943–1944 the Communist Party of Greece (*KPG*) played the dominant role in *ELAS–EAM*, the Greek resistance movement which managed to liberate vast areas of the country (including Aegean Macedonia) from Nazi occupation. Tito and his acolytes hoped that their plan would gain the support of Stalin who during World War II seemed to be well-disposed towards the Yugoslav communist leaders, while the Greek communist leaders were seeking Soviet help and backing. But the situation in Greece was volatile. In the autumn of 1944 a civil war broke out in that country and after Britain's military intervention the Greek Left lost its previous important position in the country's political life. This dealt a blow to Tito's plans to annex Greek Macedonia. But as regards the incorporation of Aegean Macedonia into the *LRM*, the most important fact was that the Greek communists had never expressed unequivocal support for the unification of Aegean Macedonia with Vardar Macedonia in a federal Yugoslavia. They realised that consent to the incorporation of the Greek part of Macedonia into a neighbouring state, putting aside its communist character, would be regarded in Greece as an act of national treason and inadmissible territorial disintegration. It would have discredited the *KPG* in the eyes of Greek society. The *KPJ* leaders' plans to annex the northern territories of Greece were also followed with anxiety and disapproval by London. The British made it clear to Tito that any post-war change of frontiers in the Balkans, especially Greek frontiers, was out of the question<sup>12</sup>.

In this situation the Yugoslav marshal turned his eyes towards Pirin Macedonia, whose incorporation into the *LRM* might have seemed much more realistic in view of the political revolution carried out in Bulgaria on September 9, 1944 and the key tasks facing the new authorities in that country. The fact that the rule exercised by political circles responsible for the country's alliance with the Third Reich was overthrown and that under the protection of the Red Army power was taken over by the communist-dominated Fatherland Front (*FO*) was due to the anti-Nazi coalition's growing supremacy over the Axis and also to the Anglo-Saxon powers' conciliatory policy towards the Soviet

<sup>12</sup> K. Manchev, *Natsionalniyat vypros*, p. 307.

Union's aspirations in Bulgaria. But in order to get the country out of its disastrous international situation and gain the trust of its own society and foreign states, the *FO* government had not only to break off relations with Germany but also to order the Bulgarian armed forces to join in the war operations against the Nazi forces as quickly as possible. The *FO* leaders regarded the Bulgarians' military effort in the final phase of the war as a most urgent task. They believed that if this effort was made at once this would improve Bulgaria's image on the international stage. In their view this would put an end to Bulgaria's ostracism in the Balkans and Europe and relieve it of the odium of the Third Reich's satellite which had occupied Yugoslav (and Greek) lands. Sofia hoped that in consequence Bulgaria might get easier terms in a future peace treaty and the *FO* would gain political capital as a successful defender of Bulgarian national interests<sup>13</sup>.

This is why the *FO* government was willing to take up the challenge at once. However, the Yugoslav leadership had to agree to Bulgarian forces starting operations in Vardar Macedonia and southern Serbia where they had so far been occupiers. But Tito and his closest collaborators (including the *LRM* leaders) were interested in the quickest possible withdrawal of Bulgarian forces from the territory of Yugoslavia. First, because they doubted whether the previous occupiers who had been implementing the "Great Bulgaria" political programme with the help of the Third Reich would now, under the banner of an independent Bulgaria which declared "friendship" and "good neighbourly relations with the new Yugoslavia", be really able to abandon its pro-German political orientation overnight and, taking up a pro-Allied line, liberate the Macedonian and Serbian populations from Nazi oppression. Secondly, the ruling circles in Yugoslavia were afraid that the mere presence of Bulgarian soldiers in Vardar Macedonia might destabilise the area's shaky socio-political equilibrium, for two currents were in conflict there, the pro-Bulgarian current and the pro-Macedonian current subservient to the Communist Party of Yugoslavia<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> J. Jackowicz, *Traktat pokojowy z Bułgarią 1947 r. (The Peace Treaty with Bulgaria 1947)*, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk-Łódź 1981, pp. 15–19, 21–22.

<sup>14</sup> For more details see E. Znamierowska-Rakk, *Sprawa bułgarsko-jugosłowiańskiej współpracy wojskowej po przewrocie w Bułgarii 9 września 1944 (The Question of Bulgarian-Yugoslav Military Cooperation after the Bulgarian Revolution of September 9, 1944)*, "Mazowieckie Studia Humanistyczne", 2002, N<sup>o</sup> 1, pp. 13–30.



Let us point out that the fears of the *KPJ* leaders were not groundless for soon after the establishment of the Bulgarian occupation regime in the Yugoslav part of Macedonia in the spring of 1941, a controversy over Macedonia arose between Bulgarian and Yugoslav communists. The Bulgarian communists held the view that since that territory had been incorporated into Bulgaria (they disregarded the fact that this was an illegal annexation), the Bulgarian Workers' Party (communists) [*BPR(k)*] should have authority over the local party organisation. Consequently, the Bulgarian comrades, taking advantage of pro-Bulgarian sentiments among Macedonian communist leaders, tried to subordinate the local *KPJ* structure to themselves. Their attempts failed, for the *KPJ* leadership strongly protested against their efforts and with the help of Comintern forced the *BPR(k)* to give up its plan. Nevertheless, the new authorities of the Macedonian communist organisation, appointed by the *KPJ* headquarters, were still under the pressure of Bulgarian party emissaries who kept visiting Vardar Macedonia. This displeased Tito and his collaborators, who were becoming ever more certain that even though the Bulgarian comrades had formally complied with the Comintern authorities' decision that the party organisation in Skoplje should be subordinated only to the *KPJ* leadership, they had not yet freed themselves of the wish to turn Vardar Macedonia into a zone of their influence. Moreover, it was not clear whether the *BPR(k)* leaders were thinking of a future Balkan federation in which a united Macedonia would be one of the main parts, or simply of a direct incorporation of the land on the Vardar into Bulgaria. Anyhow, soon after Hitler's invasion of Yugoslavia in 1941, a clear incoherence could be noticed in the Bulgarian communist leaders' opinions on Macedonia. Although they subordinated themselves verbally to the Comintern doctrine of the 1930s which recognised the existence of a separate Macedonian nation living in Aegean Macedonia and Pirin Macedonia, and constituting a majority of the population in Yugoslavia's Vardar Macedonia, in practice, throughout the whole period of World War II, they were unable unequivocally to accept Tito's aspiration to make the *LRM* a republic within a federal communist Yugoslavia and turn it into a Piedmont that would unite "Aegean" and "Pirin" Macedonians. It is not surprising therefore that the Bulgarian comrades did not favour a quick construction of a resistance movement and

were unwilling to conduct large-scale guerrilla operations in Vardar Macedonia under the command of the *KPJ*. They were also against setting up a Balkan Military Staff which, according to the Yugoslav leaders' plans, was to be a *KPJ*-subordinated centre coordinating the leftist guerrilla's operations in Macedonian territories. Finally, at the end of 1943, when the plan to set up the People's Republic of Macedonia (comprising Vardar Macedonia and possibly also the other two parts) as a component of federal Yugoslavia was announced in Jajce, the *FO*, which at that time was still a structure of the resistance movement, issued a declaration proclaiming the slogan "Macedonia for Macedonians". This meant that the *BPR(k)* (which dominated in the *FO*), propagated the idea of a united Macedonia as part of a Balkan federation and not of a Yugoslav federation as the *KPJ* leaders wanted to have it<sup>15</sup>. But this did not prevent Tito and his adherents from forcing through their own federal variant. They could count not only on a favourable international situation, on the support of the Anglo-Saxon powers, but also on the goodwill of Stalin and Dimitrov. For Dimitrov, a functionary of the Bolshevik party, submissiveness to the Kremlin and obedience to the Soviet dictator were more important than defence of the position of the *BPR(k)*, of which he was chief. He told the national leaders of the party that the "separation of Vardar Macedonia from the new Yugoslavia was out of the question"<sup>16</sup>. He acted in accordance with the attitude of Kremlin rulers, who declared in April 1944 that "when settling the Macedonian question after the war they will show the greatest consideration for Yugoslavia's territorial aspirations". This stance was of course due to concrete political and military circumstances important to the Soviet Union<sup>17</sup>.

The Soviet dictator could not, of course, be blind to the fact that the guerrilla war waged under the command of Marshal Tito was playing a key role in the armed struggle against the Axis not only in occupied Yugoslavia but in the whole area of the Balkans, all the more so as after Germany's attack on the Soviet Union, in

<sup>15</sup> For more details see E. Znamierowska-Rakk, *Kontrowersje wśród bałkańskich komunistów wokół Macedonii (wiosna 1941–lato 1944) (Controversies among Balkan Communists over Macedonia, spring 1941–summer 1944)*, "Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej", 2002, vol. XXXVII, pp. 73–115.

<sup>16</sup> *Centralen Dyrzhaven Archiw na Republika Bylgariya, Centralen Partien Archiv* (henceforward referred to as *CDA na RB, CPA*), f. 146, op. 2, a. e. 68, l. 19–20.

<sup>17</sup> G. Dimitrov, *Dnevnik (9 mart 1933–6 fevruari 1949)*, Sofiya 1997, p. 432.

the summer of 1941, the *KPJ* called on the Yugoslav nations to manifest "international solidarity in the fight against the fascists who have invaded the fatherland of the international proletariat"<sup>18</sup>. In this situation Tito held a more favourable position in Stalin's eyes than the leaders of other communist parties. Moreover, the Kremlin rulers must have been aware of the fact that from a party which before the war had no more than ca 10,000 members, a party riven by inner conflicts, a party noted mainly for subversive and spying activities, the *KPJ*, thanks to the leadership talents of Tito and his collaborators and to the favourable external situation, was from month to month becoming the strongest political grouping in the Yugoslav territories and the most energetic party in the Balkans. Stalin certainly knew that contrary to the passivity of the Yugoslav monarch and the emigré government or the politicians who had ruled the country before the war, the *KPJ* was regarded in Yugoslavia as the only force capable of driving the occupiers out. By using patriotic slogans as a cover for their real strategic aim, *i.e.* the seizure of power in Yugoslavia, the *KPJ* leaders managed to enlist many voluntaries into their guerrilla units, to eliminate ideological adversaries and competitors for power, and successfully play on national antagonisms (especially between Serbia and Croatia). In their endeavours to monopolise the political scene in the country by the elimination of rivals, the Yugoslav communists did not even shrink from attempts to come to an agreement with the command of German occupation forces. It is worth stressing that some of the Anglo-Saxon military supplies were used by Tito's partisans in combat operations against Mikhailovich's Chetniks and other units opposed to the communists<sup>19</sup>. All these circumstances naturally had a bearing on the special status enjoyed by the *KPJ* and its leader in the Kremlin and in the hierarchy of the world communist movement. Moreover, not without significance for the position of the Yugoslav marshal was his international fame and the fact that the great powers of the anti-Nazi coalition accorded the rank of an allied army to his guerrilla forces. This consolidated the sense

<sup>18</sup> *Komunistička partija Jugoslavije 1918–1941. Izabrani dokumenti*, Zagreb 1959, pp. 254–258.

<sup>19</sup> M. J. Zacharias, *Komunizm. Federacija. Nacionalizmy. System władzy w Jugosławii 1943–1991. Powstanie, przekształcenia, rozkład (Communism. Federation. Nationalisms. The System of Power in Yugoslavia 1943–1991. Its Birth, Transformations, Disintegration)*, Warszawa 2004, pp. 42–57; W. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović and the Allies 1941–1945*, New York 1973, pp. 107–110.

of superiority felt by Tito and his collaborators and strengthened their domination over the “brotherly” Bulgarian party.

In this situation the leadership of the *KPJ* set to intensify the liberation fight in Vardar Macedonia occupied by Bulgarian troops and to increase propaganda activity aimed at winning the local Macedonians over to the Yugoslav federal formula. In order to achieve the latter aim the Yugoslavs had to eliminate the Vardar Macedonians’ serious objections to the idea. First and foremost they had to overcome the Vardar Macedonians’ strong resentment to everything connected with Yugoslavia, which was identified with the national and social oppression practised by the authorities of the pre-war kingdom. Having the worst possible recollections of Serbian tyranny, the Macedonians did not want to hear about the restitution of any Yugoslav state<sup>20</sup>. The pro-Bulgarian sentiments present in many milieux in Vardar Macedonia (especially among the older generation) despite the disenchantment caused by the brutal Bulgarianisation of Vardar Macedonians by the Bulgarian occupation authorities was another obstacle<sup>21</sup>. The third and probably the greatest obstacle to the plans of the *KPJ* leaders was the Macedonians’ aspiration to autonomy, which grew in strength as a result of the disappointment felt by the Macedonian supporters of the pro-Bulgarian option. The illusoriness of this orientation and its complete bankruptcy when the defeat of the Axis was coming nearer and nearer made the aspiration to Macedonia’s autonomy within a Balkan federation (a larger structure than a Yugoslav federation for it would also include other Balkan states) the most attractive programme for many circles in Vardar Macedonia<sup>22</sup>.

Quite apart from the fact that the international situation was favourable, it was certainly a great success of the *KPJ* leaders that, thanks to their propaganda and manipulation, they managed to overcome all the above-mentioned obstacles and radically transform the orientation of the Vardar Macedonians’ political élites in less than 3.5 years. It was certainly no mean success to persuade the leaders of the main political forces in Vardar

<sup>20</sup> For more details see K. Paleshutski, *Makedonskiyat vypros v burzhoazna Yugoslaviya 1918–1941*, Sofiya 1983.

<sup>21</sup> D. Michev, *Makedonskiyat vypros i bylgaro-yugoslavskite otnosheniya — 9 septemvri 1944–1949*, Sofiya 1994, pp. 76–100.

<sup>22</sup> I. Stawowy-Kawka, *Macedonia w polityce państw bałkańskich w XX wieku (Macedonia in the Balkan States’ Policy in the 20th Century)*, Kraków 1993, pp. 86 ff.

Macedonia that there was no realistic alternative to the incorporation of their territory in the Yugoslav federation and that only this variant could guarantee their population their own statehood and later also unification. However, the proclamation on August 1, 1944 of the People's Republic of Macedonia as a republic within the Yugoslav federation was mainly a declarative act for it did not enjoy the unequivocal, freely expressed support of all the inhabitants of Vardar Macedonia. The KPJ leaders and their appointees in the Macedonian communist organisation which controlled the internal situation in that territory realised that its socio-political situation was not yet clear and that should the circumstances change, the pro-Bulgarian trend might quickly revive and undermine the dominance of pro-Yugoslav moods, which had been imposed on the population of Vardar Macedonia with such great difficulty<sup>23</sup>. This was the main reason why after the political revolution which took place in Bulgaria on September 9, 1944, Tito and his collaborators were against the participation of Bulgarian forces in anti-German operations in Vardar Macedonia.

But finally Tito had to agree to the cooperation of Bulgarian units with Yugoslav and Macedonian forces fighting at the side of the Third Ukrainian Front in Yugoslavia because this was demanded by the Soviet Union. Despite his trump cards on the international and domestic political level, the Yugoslav leader could not yet, for ideological and political reasons, go so far as to demand an equal partnership in relations with the Soviet dictator. In the eyes of the KPJ leadership, Stalin headed a great power which enjoyed an unshakable authority in the world communist movement and which thanks to its enormous achievements in combating the armed forces of the Axis, also in Yugoslav territories, was an important member of the Big Three. However, though agreeing to what they regarded as an undesirable presence of Bulgarian troops on the territory of Vardar Macedonia, Tito and his acolytes tried to take advantage of Bulgaria's difficult international situation and force it to make concessions on the Macedonian question, which was closely connected with the federative plans in the Balkans. They were interested above all in the quickest possible incorporation of Pirin Macedonia, without waiting for the establishment of a Yugoslav-Bulgarian federation,

<sup>23</sup> For more details see V. Angelov, *Makedonskata kyrvava koleda. Syzdavane i utvyrzhdavane na Vardarska Makedoniya kato republika v yugoslavskata federatsiya (1943-1946)*, Sofiya 2003.

a plan which was discussed by Tito and Dimitrov in Stalin's presence during the war<sup>24</sup>.

In order to achieve this aim, as early as September 1944, that is soon after the *FO* seized power in Bulgaria, the ruling circles in Skoplje, undoubtedly acting under the inspiration and with the knowledge of Belgrade, launched military, propaganda and ideological activities to cut off the Pirin Land from the Bulgarian state. In response to these activities, the Bulgarian authorities, having to choose between the necessity of showing goodwill towards Yugoslavia and the need to preserve the state's territorial integrity to satisfy public opinion in the country, engaged in a specific game over Pirin Macedonia. For tactical reasons they agreed to the demands of the Yugoslav side but did their best to avoid fulfilling the commitments they had been forced to accept. Finally, owing to many factors, including Great Britain's opposition, the Yugoslav leadership failed to persuade Bulgaria to agree to the incorporation of the Pirin land in the *LRM* in the autumn of 1944. Seeing that it was not yet possible to include all Macedonian territories in the Yugoslav federation, Belgrade proposed the establishment of a Yugoslav-Bulgarian federation, that is a federation of southern Slavs, to Sofia<sup>25</sup>.

The Yugoslav-Bulgarian dialogue, started on Belgrade's initiative at the end of November 1944, concerned two main questions: the establishment of a federation of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, and conclusion of an alliance. What was specific about this dialogue was that it was being held under the watchful eye of Stalin, who was the highest arbiter in all controversial questions. The Soviet dictator seemed to be interested in a rapprochement of the two southern Slav states, for this would have consolidated them more effectively and facilitated the Soviet Union's expansion into the Balkans, in the region of the Black Sea straits and the eastern part of the Mediterranean. However, serious differences

<sup>24</sup> It was Stalin who in 1943 created the idea of a post-war Bulgarian-Yugoslav federation as a counterweight to the British proposal for a union of Yugoslavia and Greece. See B. Petranović, *Tito i Staljin (1944-1946)*, "Yugoslavensky istorijski chasopis", 1988, № 1-2, pp. 150-151; G. Dimitrov, *op. cit.*, pp. 419, 431 ff.

<sup>25</sup> E. Znamierowska-Rakk, *Bułgarsko-jugosłowiańska gra o Macedonię Piryńską jesienią 1944 (The Pirin Macedonia Game Played by Bulgaria and Yugoslavia in the Autumn of 1944)*, "Dzieje Najnowsze", 2002, № 4, p. 35; M. Lalkov, *Ot nadezhda kum razocharovante. Ideya na federatsiya v Yugoiztok*, Sofiya 1994, pp. 99, 136-137; K. Manchev, *Natsionalniyat vypros*, pp. 307-308.

over the character and structure of the planned union came to light at the very beginning of the Belgrade–Sofia negotiations. The Yugoslavs wanted to make Bulgaria a republic in the Yugoslav federation while the Bulgarians opted for a dualistic model of the future united state of southern Slavs. Belgrade was in favour of the 6x1 formula, which meant Bulgaria's accession to the already existing multinational state structure of Yugoslavia and a substantial restriction of Bulgaria's multifarious sovereignty, while Sofia wanted a union of two sovereign state organisms, that is the 1:1 formula, which would have guaranteed it equal partnership. In fact this was to be a confederation rather than a federation, for after the conclusion of the union both Bulgaria and Yugoslavia would, to a considerable extent, have preserved the prerogatives of self-determination. Another controversy in Bulgarian–Yugoslav negotiations was connected with the Macedonian question. Let us stress that this question, having been the subject of a protracted, decades-long Bulgarian–Serbian (Yugoslav) antagonism, was an integral part of the planned federation of southern Slavs. It is enough to recall that the conclusion of a union of southern Slav was to help solve the Macedonian question, a proverbial bone of contention in Bulgaria's relations with the Serbs (Yugoslavs), by a compromise. This is why the initial agreements reached by Tito and Dimitrov on the Macedonian question were a condition *sine qua non* for Bulgaria's federation with Yugoslavia. However, it turned out during the negotiations that, as was the case in the early autumn of 1944, Belgrade sought to incorporate the Bulgarian part of Macedonia into the LRM within the Yugoslav federation even before the establishment of a south Slavic federation. Sofia was willing to agree to the cession of the Bulgarian part of Macedonia under two conditions: if a Bulgarian–Yugoslav federal state was established at the same time and if as compensation for the loss of the Pirin land it received the western countries, purely Bulgarian territories which had been incorporated into Yugoslavia after World War I. It is worth adding that the Bulgarians had been deprived of these territories not for ethnic but for purely strategic reasons. A third important question over which the negotiators differed was when the agreement on federation should be signed. The Yugoslav side, taking advantage of Bulgaria's legally unregulated international situation and its dependence on Yugoslavia in the joint fights

conducted against Germany on Yugoslav territory, insisted on a quick incorporation of the Pirin land and possibly also on the establishment of the union, wishing to face the Anglo-Saxon powers with a *fait accompli* and to impose upon Bulgaria a federal structure favourable to itself<sup>26</sup>.

In view of these differences, Sofia tried to slow down the negotiations and conclude an alliance with Yugoslavia before the establishment of a federation of southern Slavs. The Bulgarian authorities believed that time would work in their favour and that as their international position improved, they would be able to secure better conditions for Bulgaria in a united structure with Yugoslavia. The 1:1 confederative formula which Sofia was forcing through seemed to have been favoured by Stalin who, noticing Tito's tendencies towards hegemony, preferred a model which would curb Belgrade's supremacy in a future Bulgarian-Yugoslav union. But for the time being the Soviet dictator had to take into account the categorical opposition of both London and Washington to the creation of a great Slav state which might endanger Greece and Turkey and the balance of international influence in the Balkans, where especially the British had important interests. At that time Stalin had no intention of jeopardising the allied solidarity of the Big Three. Moreover, Stalin may have regarded the Anglo-Saxon opposition to a south Slavic union as a convenient argument justifying the necessity of interrupting the Bulgarian-Yugoslav negotiations. At the end of 1944 and the beginning of 1945 the Kremlin rulers undoubtedly realised that Tito was clearly seeking to be independent, especially in the Balkans, and this conflicted with the Soviet Union's hegemony and expansionism in the whole of East-Central Europe. In this situation in the spring of 1945 Moscow gave the signal to suspend the Sofia-Belgrade dialogue on a federation and later also to suspend the conclusion of a treaty between the two south Slavic states until a peace treaty with Bulgaria<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> For more details see E. Znamierowska-Rakk, *Pertraktacje na linii Belgrad-Sofia w kwestii federacji i sojuszu (jesień 1944-wiosna 1945)* (*Negotiations Conducted by Belgrade and Sofia on the Question of Federation and Alliance, autumn 1944-spring 1945*), in: *Historia i polityka. Studia i rozprawy dedykowane profesorowi Adamowi Koseskiemu w 65. rocznicę urodzin*, Pułtusk 2004, pp. 709-730.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 728-730.



Stalin's support for the dualistic option proposed by the Bulgarians during their negotiations with the Yugoslavs did not mean that the Soviet leader would take a pro-Bulgarian stand on other points over which there was a controversy between the Bulgarians and the Yugoslavs. On the contrary, as regards the Macedonian question, an integral part of the planned federation of southern Slavs, Stalin decidedly agreed with the Yugoslav stand, which was harmful to Bulgaria's national interests. This could be seen at a meeting in the Kremlin in June 1946, when Stalin in the presence of the Yugoslav delegation headed by Tito ordered Dimitrov to accord national and cultural autonomy to the inhabitants of the Pirin Land as quickly as possible. This was to be a transitional stage preparing the population of that territory for incorporation into the People's Republic of Macedonia as part of the Yugoslav federation<sup>28</sup>.

In the first decade of August 1946, the Central Committee of the *BPR(k)*, obediently following Stalin's pro-Yugoslav instructions, adopted a special resolution concerning the Macedonian question during its tenth plenary meeting. This was an act which for the first time clearly expressed the highest party organs' binding stance. It recognised that the Macedonians were a separate nation "the basic part of which organised its state and national existence as *LRM* within the framework of the People's Republic of Yugoslavia". It was stated in the act that "the unification of the remaining parts of the nation should be done on the basis of this republic, within the frontiers of the Yugoslav federation". The resolution made it the duty of the Bulgarian central and local authorities to Macedonise without delay the Pirin country, the major part of which was inhabited by a population which identified itself with the Bulgarians. The adoption of such a document by Bulgaria's party leadership was a partial but real crowning of the pressure which Belgrade and Skoplje had for almost two years exerted on Sofia in order to incorporate Bulgarian Macedonia in the *LRM*. Though the Bulgarians reacted positively to this pressure verbally, they did their best to dodge it. It was becoming increasingly clear that contrary to the stance of the Bulgarians, who wanted the fusion of the two Slavonic parts of Macedonia to be considered jointly with the question of estab-

<sup>28</sup> *BKP, Kominternyt i makedonskiyat vypros (1917-1946)*, vol. II, Sofiya 1999, pp. 1268-1271, *CDA na RB*, f. 16, op. 5, a.e. 6, l. 131-136.

lishing a federation of southern Slavs, the Yugoslav side seemed to separate the two questions. The Yugoslavs treated the incorporation of Pirin Macedonia into the *LRM* as a priority question, leaving the question of a union of southern Slavs on the margin of the common political plans of Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. In this situation Sofia began to procrastinate. Its dilatory attitude was facilitated by the strong protest of Great Britain and the United States against Yugoslavia's planned territorial modifications in the Balkans and by the fact that as regards this question the Soviet Union had to respect the will of the Anglo-Saxon powers. As a result the Yugoslav leadership had to forbear forcing through a direct incorporation of the Pirin land. Having however no intention of giving up this aim, the Yugoslavs decided to strive first for a national and cultural autonomy of that territory, assuming that this would be the first step towards the planned fusion of the two Slav parts of Macedonia in the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, a step which will lead to a process whereby the inhabitants of the Pirin land will exchange their Bulgarian national identity for Macedonian identity<sup>29</sup>. At the same time Belgrade was striving to submit Macedonian emigrants in various parts of Bulgaria to this process, for they exerted strong influence on the attitude of Pirin Macedonians<sup>30</sup>. Although Belgrade's demands for a quick initiation of this process aroused some resistance and doubts in Bulgarian ruling circles, which were afraid that this would be condemned by society and the democratic opposition, Sofia capitulated finally. Bulgaria's submissiveness, categorically and explicitly confirmed in the resolution of the 10th plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the *BPR(k)*, showed that the country was fully subordinated to the Kremlin. The fact that the status of the Bulgarian state, a former satellite of the Third Reich, was still unregulated on the international stage put Sofia in the position of a petitioner seeking Belgrade's support, for in the summer of 1946 an intensive struggle for the final shape of a peace treaty with Bulgaria was going on at the Paris conference. A friendly attitude of Yugoslavia, a distinguished member of the anti-Nazi coalition, a country which suffered serious losses during the war through the occu-

<sup>29</sup> *BKP, Kominternyt i makedonskiyat vypros*, pp. 1283–1284; *CDA na RB, CPA*, f. 146, op. 5, a. e. 24, l. 6; *CDA na RB*, f. 16, op. 5, a. e. 7, l. 1b–2.

<sup>30</sup> D. Michev, *op. cit.*, pp. 175–191.

pation of its territory by the Bulgarian army, was of great importance for Bulgaria's situation in the Balkans and on the world stage and for the legitimisation of the *FO* rule in the country<sup>31</sup>.

The Bulgarian leadership started to implement the above-mentioned resolution soon after its adoption. But the introduction of national and cultural autonomy in Pirin Macedonia turned out to be a laborious and ineffective process. The inhabitants of that territory, most of whom were Bulgarian at heart, opposed the attempts of the party authorities and the *FO* to force them to give up their Bulgarian national identity and adopt Macedonian identity which they regarded as alien, as something that was being forcibly imposed on them. Moreover, the Pirin Macedonians were afraid that a forcible, accelerated Macedonisation of the Upper Djumaj region (the administrative name of Pirin Macedonia) would soon cut this territory off from Bulgaria and lead to its incorporation in the People's Republic of Macedonia within the frontiers of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. This would have meant the subordination of the region to "Serbian hegemony" which they wanted to avoid. Thus, despite increased, many-sided efforts by Bulgarian party organs, actively supported by Belgrade and Skoplje, the attempts to Macedonise the Pirin Land did not yield the expected results. The teaching of a Serbianised Macedonian language and history as well as the campaign to popularise Macedonian press, literature, art and culture failed to arouse the interest of the inhabitants of that territory. School pupils and teachers protested against the forcible introduction of Macedonian subjects in schools and even went so far as to boycott such lessons. In the opinion of the Bulgarian supporters of Macedonisation, the only tangible achievements of this campaign were the results of the census carried out in Pirin Macedonia in December 1946. They showed that the majority of the inhabitants acknowledged that they were Macedonian, but the credibility of the results was doubtful in view of fraud and large-scale manipulations. Nevertheless, in their disputes with historians who maintain that in the 1940s the majority of the population of the Pirin Land was of Bulgarian nationality<sup>32</sup>, the

<sup>31</sup> J. Jackowicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 225–246; BKP, *Kominternyt i makedonskiyat vypros*, pp. 1269–1270, *CDA na RB CPA*, f. 1, op. 5, a.e. 6, l. 135.

<sup>32</sup> For more details see V. Angelov, *Khronika na edno natsionalno predatelstvo. Opitite za nastlstuveno denatsionalizirane na Pirinska Makedonija (1944–1949)*, Blagoevgrad 1999, *passim*.

promoters of Macedonism, who originate mainly from Serbia and the LRM (today's Republic of Macedonia), still take advantage of the fact that the predominance of the Macedonian element in the Bulgarian part of Macedonia was stated in black and white in the census, even though archival documents attribute the affirmation of Macedonian nationality by the inhabitants of the Pirin Land to corruption and intimidation, to their fear of losing their jobs or being evicted<sup>33</sup>.

The conclusion by the anti-Nazi coalition of the peace treaty with Bulgaria in February 1947 removed the legal obstacle and made it possible for Bulgaria and Yugoslavia to resume their dialogue on a federation of southern Slavs. The efforts made by Sofia and Belgrade to reach this aim can be divided into two stages. As has been mentioned above, the first stage began at the end of November 1944, when Yugoslavia, on its own initiative, started difficult negotiations with Bulgaria, which were attentively followed by Stalin. They concerned not only the establishment of a south Slavic union as a united state structure of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria but also other issues connected with this venture, such as a mutual alliance and the Macedonian question. However, the Bulgarian-Yugoslav talks were suspended in the spring of 1945 because Bulgaria's international position was not yet regulated. The agreements signed by Dimitrov and Tito in Bled on August 1, 1947 opened the second stage of efforts aimed at establishing a federation of southern Slavs. As regards their subject matter, the agreements referred to the dialogue which had been interrupted two and a half years before and contained provisions for a large-scale trade and economic cooperation, including preparations for a customs union. A secret annex concerning the Macedonian question was added to the agreements. Even though it confirmed that Bulgaria would exercise jurisdiction over Pirin Macedonia until the unification of this territory with the LRM — which was to be effected on the basis of a future Bulgarian-Yugoslav treaty of alliance and be accompanied by the restoration of the Western Borderlands to Bulgaria

<sup>33</sup> The results of this census are used by supporters of Macedonism, that is by Yugoslav and Macedonian historians who maintain that Macedonians constituted the majority of the population in Pirin Macedonia in the 1940s. Cf. B. Ri st o v s k i, *Istorija na makedonska natsija*, Skoplje 1999; N. V e l y a n o v s k i, *Makedonija vo jugoslovensko-bugarskite odnosi (1944–1953)*, Skoplje 1998; i d e m, *Makedonija 1945–1991. Drzhavnost i nezavisnost*, Skoplje 2002, pp. 107 ff.

— it favoured the interests of the Yugoslav side for it separated the cession of the Pirin Land to the LRM from the question of federation and made the conclusion of an alliance of the two south Slavic states the only condition for the cession. The fact that the Bled agreements obligated Bulgaria to continue and even intensify its efforts with a view to consolidating national and cultural autonomy in the Pirin Land, contrary to the will of its inhabitants, showed that efforts were made to meet the expectations of Belgrade, even at the cost of Bulgaria's national interests<sup>34</sup>. The treaty of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance concluded by Bulgaria and Yugoslavia in Evksinograd (near Varna) on November 27, 1947 confirmed the obligations which Bulgaria had accepted with regard to the Macedonian question in Bled. But of key importance in this treaty were the points which went far beyond the provisions of similar treaties of alliance signed by the states of the nascent Soviet bloc. The provisions concerning customs union, political and economic consultations as well as the commitment of both states to render each other military assistance in case of an attack by any other country seemed to testify that both signatories were determined to pursue a policy of close cooperation<sup>35</sup>.

The Bled agreements and the Evksinograd alliance may seem to have been the apogee of the rapprochement between two Slav neighbours in the Balkans, a rapprochement which started in September 1944. But in fact they only seemed to be the culmination of the "brotherhood and unity" solemnly declared by Dimitrov and Tito to the loud accompaniment of the media of the two states. It soon turned out that the hopes and expectations of the Bulgarian and Yugoslav leaders were hazy and illusory. What was real was the disappointment and grievances of both sides. While the Bulgarian side assumed that after the signing of the Bled agreements, and especially of the mutual alliance, the establishment of a south Slavic union was a question of the near future, the Yugoslav side preferred to put it off until some

<sup>34</sup> S. Nešović, *Bledski sporazumi Tito-Dimitrov (1947)*, Zagreb 1979, pp. 52–56, 62–85.

<sup>35</sup> K. Kořalkowa, *Dwustronne układy sojusznicze europejskich państw socjalistycznych (1943–1949) (Bilateral Treaties of Alliance Concluded by European Socialist Countries, 1943–1949)*, "Studia z najnowszych dziejów powszechnych" vol. 7, pp. 185–186; B. Petranović, *Balkanska Federatsiya 1943–1948*, Beograd 1991, pp. 179–186; S. Nešović, *op. cit.*, pp. 148–162.

undefined time. It can be assumed that at the end of 1947 the federative plans made the Yugoslav leadership ever more fearful and doubtful about the sense of establishing a state union with Bulgaria. It seems that the reason for Belgrade's reserve was not only the deteriorating international atmosphere caused by the sharp ideological and political dichotomy between East and West, which put up a real barrier to the construction of a strong united Slav state in the Balkans. An additional, if not the main reason for the Yugoslavs' reserve was that the policy pursued at that time by the Soviet Union aroused strong opposition to unification with Bulgaria.

Stalin seemed to continue to trust Tito and gave proof thereof by actively supporting the Yugoslav plan for incorporating the Pirin Land into the *LRM* or by verbally agreeing to the swallowing of Albania by Yugoslavia. The plans for a federation of southern Slavs were also at first regarded with favour by the Soviet dictator. He did tell Tito and Dimitrov to suspend negotiations on the union of the two states in the spring of 1945, but this may have seemed to have been done for the sake of international opinion, as a gesture of goodwill to his Western allies. But when Tito began to manifest increasingly clear annexationist aspirations against Albania, Bulgaria and Greece and at the same time imposed restrictions on the control activities carried out by Soviet advisers and experts in Yugoslavia, Stalin began to suspect that a strong, sovereign state organism headed by a leader who did not yield to the Kremlin's directives was springing up on the borders of the fledgling external Soviet empire. Since this leader was taking advantage of his international prestige, the support of his party, army and security forces and the feeling that Yugoslavia was independent of Moscow because it had embarked on the road to communism unaided, without any significant help from the Soviets, he could, in the Soviet dictator's eyes, be a serious rival for the top role in East-Central Europe. This was a situation which Stalin could not tolerate. This is why he was deeply upset when Dimitrov and Tito resumed negotiations in Bled without his blessing<sup>36</sup>. Although the deteriorating cold war climate made it

<sup>36</sup> Cf. A. B. Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence. Soviet Foreign Policy 1917-1973*, New York, Washington 1974, pp. 462-464; *idem*, *Titoism and the Cominform*, Cambridge Mass. 1952, pp. 69-95; G. Dimitrov, *op. cit.*, pp. 555-556; E. Kardaš, *Reminiscences. The Struggle for Recognition and Independence the New Yugoslavia 1944-1957*, London 1982, pp. 94-97.

necessary for the Kremlin ruler not to provoke the West by plans for a federation of southern Slavs, especially before the ratification of a peace treaty with Bulgaria, Stalin was much more irritated by the self-willed endeavours of Belgrade and Sofia to tighten their cooperation behind Moscow's back. This is why he wanted to discipline the leaders of the two south Slavic states as soon as possible. The occasion arose on January 17, 1948, when in connection with the planned south Slavonic union Dimitrov declared that the idea was fully realistic in a broader version, including not only Bulgaria and Yugoslavia but also other people's democracies and even Greece. Even though the Bulgarian prime minister stipulated that this was a plan for the future, his statement was received by Stalin as proof of impermissible far-advanced Bulgarian-Yugoslav preparations for building a state structure that would be independent of the Kremlin. The Soviet leader received this information almost at the same time as he learned of Tito's secret plan to send two Yugoslav divisions with a strong air force to Albania. In reply, on February 10, 1948, Stalin summoned Dimitrov and Tito to Moscow to rebuke them and subordinate them to Moscow by additional measures. One of those, which then materialized, was to force the two delegations to sign an agreement that Sofia and Belgrade would "consult" the Soviet leadership about important decisions referring to international questions. But the attempt to impose on the insubordinate leaders still one more instrument of a Soviet control through Bulgaria, *i.e.* the control to be exercised by the Bulgarian-Yugoslav federation ended in failure. For the Yugoslavs, afraid of being subordinated to the Soviet Union through the intermediary of Sofia which was completely submissive to Moscow, categorically rejected all federative variants, regarding them as a Trojan horse that threatened Yugoslavia's interests<sup>37</sup>.

The Yugoslav party and government authorities categorically and explicitly rejected the concept of a union with Bulgaria at the beginning of March 1948, when the conflict between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia intensified and ended in a break between

<sup>37</sup> For more details see G. Urban, *Stalinism. Its Impact on Russia and the World*, London 1982; E. Kardelj, *op. cit.*, pp. 103 ff.; M. Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin*, New York 1962, pp. 171 ff.; L. J. Gibyansky, *K istorii sovetsko-yugoslavskogo konflikta 1948-1953 gg. Sekretnaya sovetsko-yugoslavo-bolgarskaya ustrecha v Moskve 10 fevralya 1948 goda*, "Sovetskoye Slavyanovedeniye", 1991, N° 3, N° 4; 1992, N° 1, N° 3.

the two states. The ruling circles in Sofia, acting in accordance with Soviet directives, continued to stress the need for the unification of the two Slavs states but, as they asserted, "this will be possible only after Yugoslavia's return to the family of the people's democracies headed by the Soviet Union" or "after the sound forces in the KPJ have overthrown Tito's clique and established new Yugoslav authorities faithful to Moscow". At the same time Sofia continued the Macedonisation of the Pirin Land despite Yugoslavia's break with the Soviet bloc and the exclusion of the KPJ from the Cominform at the end of June 1948. It was no longer the People's Republic of Macedonia within the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia that was to be a Piedmont uniting the Macedonian nation but Pirin Macedonia, a part of the Bulgarian People's Republic. As the Soviet-Yugoslav conflict deteriorated, relations between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia also worsened and they were finally broken off at the end of 1948 (Sofia formally renounced the treaty of alliance with Yugoslavia a year later). This signified the definitive fall of the idea of a federation of southern Slavs<sup>38</sup>.

All this shows explicitly that a federation of southern Slavs was not a realistic concept after World War II, despite the efforts and attempts made by both interested sides. The main obstacle which made it impossible to unify the southern Slavs into one state organism and solve the protracted Macedonian conflict was the clash between the political interests of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. The implementation of a union of Bulgaria and Yugoslavia was also impeded by the East-West antagonism and the differences between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. But the main players in the game for a Bulgarian-Yugoslav federation were Tito and Stalin. Dimitrov remained in the shadow of either the Soviet dictator or the Yugoslav leader.

*(Translated by Janina Dorosz)*

<sup>38</sup> D. Michev, *op. cit.*, pp. 427-487.