

Greek-Macedonian Struggle: The Reasons for its Occurrence

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The idea for an organised armed action - coordinated and supported by the Greek Kingdom and aimed against the Macedonian revolutionary organisation emerged few years before the Ilinden Uprising.¹ During this period the Greek nationalistic circles in Greece and Ottoman Macedonia, primarily the official representatives of the Greek state and the Patriarchate of Constantinople, becoming aware about the threat against *Hellenism* repeatedly demanded changes in the policy concerning the Macedonian question, including for the Kingdom to send some armed groups.² On the other hand, after the defeat by the Ottoman Empire in 1897 and until the Ilinden Uprising, the officials in Athens led utterly cautious policy with a constant tendency of building good-neighbourly relations with the Ottoman Porte. The Greek governments during this period acted with no clear national policy and without defined foreign and domestic programme, while the whole activity of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was primarily oriented towards the problem of Crete.³ The Greek official policy strived for and hoped that the Ottoman civil and military authorities were going to protect their interests in Macedonia, a practice which was giving results to a certain extent.

¹ Христо Силјанов, Ослободителните борби на Македонија II, Скопје, 2004, стр. 151.

² In his first report to the Greek government at the beginning of 1901, the Metropolitan from Kastoria Karavangelis, after looking into the situation in his Eparchy he paid special attention to the need of sending Greek chetas to Macedonia. Германос Каравангелис, Македонската борба, Скопје, 2000, стр. 15.

³ Ο Μακεδονικός αγών και τα εις Θρακικήν γεγονότα, Γενικόν επιτελειον στρατου; Διευθυνσις ιστορίας στρατου, Αθηναί, 1979, σ. 123.

In any case, regardless of the negative attitude of the official Greek policy towards the idea of organising “armed defence of *Hellenism*” in Macedonia, certain nationalistic circles started the process on their own initiative.⁴ The Metropolitan from Kastoria, Germanos Karavangelis, was resolute to realise the plan for initiating organised armed struggle against MRO (later known as IMRO). According to his concept, the armed forces coming from Greece would have not been intended for the liberation of “the Greeks” from the Ottoman rule, and even less would have acted on the territory populated with Greeks. On the other hand MRO’s goal was not to induce terror and killing against the Greek population, but later on they did apply certain reciprocity. In spite of yet officially not approved plan by the Greek government or still not thinking in that direction the resoluteness of Karavangelis was due to the gained rights of the Greek propaganda in the Ottoman Empire, and above all due to the cooperation and assistance rendered by the local Ottoman authorities. In addition to recruiting of the local population - former bandits and renegades from MRO by means of financial compensation, just before the Ilinden Uprising an armed group of about 10 Cretans had arrived to south-western Macedonia.⁵ The prime objective of these groups was to oppose the chetas of the Macedonian Revolu-

⁴ The rapid development of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation at the beginning of 20th century caused fear among the Greek national factors about the future of their plans in Macedonia. The joining of a great number of Macedonians – patriarchists, to the Organisation and the fact that they started to lose control over that portion of the Macedonian population caused uneasiness and panic among the Greek academic-propaganda circles. The process of unification of the Macedonian population in the Kastoria district and the disappearance of the “clash between the Exarchists and Patriarchists” due to the MRO’s programme for fighting the Ottoman regime caused feelings of concern. The violation of the projected borders of “historical Greece” for the Greek propaganda factors meant a reason for initiating merciless war against the Macedonian revolutionary movement, with the metropolitan Germanos Karavangelis as one of the leading protagonists.

⁵ More on the activity of the ten Cretans see in: Димитар Љоровски Вамваковски, “Дејноста на десетминага критјани во југозападна Македонија”, Историја, бр. 1-2, Скопје, 2007, стр. 17 - 32; Весела Трајкова, “Наченки на андарското дело в Македонија – Каравангелис, Јон Драгумис и десетината Критјани”, Македонски научен институт, Преглед, Софија, г. XXIV, 2001, бр. 1, стр. 45-60.

tionary Organisation and to show that in the “contested” parts of Macedonia, *Hellenism* “did subsist”, but also to incite reaction in the Greek capital in order to motivate the government to become actively involved in the struggle that they had already started.

A radical turn in the policy of the Greek state regarding the Macedonian question happened after the Ilinden Uprising was crushed. The Greek government⁶ was no longer able to act indifferently towards the demands of the Greek propaganda representatives in Macedonia, since the Uprising clearly confirmed their constant warnings and urges that urgent action against MRO structures were necessary. Essentially, during the Ilinden Uprising Greece came to a conclusion that *Hellenism's* foundations in Macedonia were no longer sound and that the Greek state with the propaganda activities, at that time based primarily on peaceful actions, was not able to realise the programme of the *Megali idea*.⁷ What the Ottoman authorities and even less the Balkans authorities were unable to accept, was the fact that the Internal Organisation basically presented itself as a legitimate representative of the majority of the Macedonian Orthodox Christian population. In parallel to this tendency the leading national ideologists in the Greek kingdom, along with the propaganda of the other pretenders for Macedonia, rightfully started identifying MRO as one of the main obstacles in achieving their national programmes. The slogan “Autonomy for Macedonia”, which was confirmed also in the most important Organisation program document - the Constitution⁸ from 1897, clearly defined the political form of the future state. Furthermore, especially important was the organisation of most of the territory of Macedonia in revolutionary districts which “resulted from the specific needs that imposed themselves in the course of the practical function-

⁶ At that time there were frequent changes at the prime minister's position in the Greek government. Thus, between December 1902 and June 1903 Prime Minister was Teodoros Delianis; he was followed by Georgios Theotokis (June - July 1903); then came Dimitrios Ralis (July - December 1903); and then again the Greek government was headed by Theotokis (December 1903 - December 1904).

⁷ Крсте Битовски, Грчката “Македонска борба“, Скопје, 2001, стр. 90.

⁸ Article 1 of the 1897 Constitution, which defined the goal of Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation read: “to unify as a whole all dissatisfied elements from Macedonia and Edirne, regardless of their nationality, in order to achieve full political autonomy for these two regions by means of revolution”. Историја на македонскиот народ, том 3, Институт за национална историја, Скопје, 2003, стр. 187.

ing of TMORO on the ground”.⁹ In such a way the presented territorial sovereignty of the Macedonian revolutionary movement overlapped with some of the territorial plans of the *Megali idea*. The direct confrontation happened in the so called middle or “contested area” of Macedonia, according to the Greek views, where the intensity of the Ilinden Uprising was most strongly felt and where later on most of the Andart chetas would operate.

The massive participation of the Macedonian Orthodox Christian population from western Macedonia, being exarchial and patriarchate, in the Ilinden Uprising caused a surprise and anxiety in Greece and among the Greek representatives in the Ottoman Empire. The Secretary of the Greek Consulate in Bitola at the time, Ion Dragumis in a letter addressed to his father Stephanos dated 25 July 1903¹⁰ concluded: “we have a Slavic uprising in Macedonia... All the Slavophones listen to the Committee (MRO, author’s note) both Orthodox Christians and Schismatics (Exarchists, author’s note) and most of them voluntarily”.¹¹ What concerned them was the fact that the majority of that population “that did not have the necessary national consciousness and patriotism” to follow the policy of Greek propaganda, had shown surprising consciousness and patriotism in accepting and following the policy and the programme propagandised by a secret organisation which offered liberty and constitution of its own Macedonian state.¹² Another alarming moment, as one could notice, was the participation of a great percent of the Macedonian patriarchate population in the Uprising, which by the Greek policy was declared to be of Greek ethnic origin in the Ottoman Empire. In such a way the Greek state (with the exception of the small enclaves of Vlach and Albanian Orthodox Christian population that were also considered to be “Greek”), which before the Uprising based on the church affiliation of the population, presented and recognised domination of the Greek ethnic population in parts of the Macedonian territory, de facto during the Uprising was left without most its self-proclaimed ethnic element in Macedonia. This situation soon afterwards forced the Greek political

⁹ Марија Пандевска, Струмички револуционерен округ (1893-1903), книга I, Скопје, 2002, стр. 25.

¹⁰ The dates in the text from here onwards will be written in an old style (Julian calendar).

¹¹ Ιωνος Δραγουμις, Τα Τετράδια του Ιλίντεν, Γιωργος Πετσιβας, Αθηνα, 2000, σ. 195.

¹² Крсте Бигоски, “Некои аспекти на илинденските националноослободителни борби“, Историја, год. XXXIX, број 1-2, Скопје, 2003, стр. 17.

leadership to adopt strategic and political solutions regarding the Macedonian question, which, with small exceptions, had ignored the Macedonian reality on the ground.¹³ Such a move was the equalisation of the Macedonian revolutionary movement with the Bulgarian propaganda institutions, which in essence made it easier for the Greek state in confronting the structures of MRO. This tendency was supported by the policy and propaganda of the Bulgarian government, which was trying to present the Macedonian revolutionary movement as a work of the “Macedonian Bulgarians”. The identification was aimed at justifying the Greek armed intervention, which allegedly was provoked by the “Bulgarian movement, which was against the Greek nation and the Ecumenical Patriarchate”.¹⁴ On the other hand the Greek propaganda by presenting the Organisation as an armed phase of Bulgarian propaganda demanded an appropriate reaction by the Greek side. In that sense the Greek Consul in Thessaloniki, N. Evgeniadis, at the beginning of 1904 advised the General Administrator Hilmi Pasha that “Bulgarian chetas could be destroyed by creating Greek ones, which would also establish order”. The Consul also requested from Hilmi Pasha a guarantee that their chetas “would not be persecuted by the Ottoman authorities”.¹⁵ This proposal was decisively refused by the General Administrator. Still, the ideologists of that policy, despite the official position of the Greek propaganda, were familiar with the goals and the programme of MRO and its autochthonous Macedonian character, which on the other hand cannot be claimed for the majority of the Greek public and political elite. In February 1903, the abovementioned Ion Dragmus concluded: “So the majority of the Macedonian people will foment an uprising.. What do they care about Hellenism? We shall remain a minority in being stripped ... I pity them, they want neither Bulgaria nor Greece, but they want their own freedom, the freedom that attracted them and made them fanatics”.¹⁶ Furthermore, in a letter to Pavlos Mellas dated 27 February 1903 Dragumis wrote: “the chetas and the committees are infiltrated

¹³ Димитрис Литоксоу, *Грчката антимакедонска борба I; Од Илинден до Загоричани (1903-1905)*, Скопје, 2004, стр. 39.

¹⁴ *Εταιρεία Μακεδονικών σπουδών, Ιδρυμα μελετών χερσονήσου του αιμού, Περικλεους Αλεξ. Αργυροπουλου, Ο μακεδονικός αγών (απομνημονευματα), Θεσσαλονίκη, 1957, σ. 4.*

¹⁵ Report by the Royal Greek Consulate in Thessaloniki, No. 3, 4 January 1904. The author has a copy of the original.

¹⁶ I. Δραγουμης, *Τα Τετραδια...*, σ. 21.

everywhere and have no intention to give in to the demands of the Russians and the Great Powers, who had been advising for peace. On the contrary, they had worked even more aggressively than before... they claim... that they are not fighting to make Macedonia Bulgarian, but to create an autonomous state (Macedonia to the Macedonians)".¹⁷ The contemporary of the Ilinden Uprising period and a later on Greek historian, Gregorios Modis (born in Bitola with Vlach origin), with a kind of respect and admiration wrote about MRO, which "assumed the liberation monopoly" and "with great supra-Christian soul gave an opportunity to all Christians, righteous and unrighteous to participate".¹⁸ Elaborating on the objectives of the "Internal Organisation", Modis noted: "it declared itself and fought for the entire Macedonian population, regardless of the national and religious feelings of the different elements. The Organisation was counting on every individual who did not give in to the Ottoman tyranny and wanted to dedicate all its energy to general liberation deeds... Their slogan was 'Macedonia to the Macedonians' and they tirelessly waved the flag".¹⁹

The role of the Great Powers and their interests during the Ottoman domination always had crucial significance for the situation in the Balkan Peninsula. In the last quarter of the 19th century the relations between the Ottoman Empire and the European powers were under the influence of the new protagonists, the newly-formed Balkan states and their efforts to realise their national programmes that were primarily oriented towards the Ottoman territories, but also in mutual competition for attracting the Christian population and conquering the territory of Ottoman Macedonia. The Great Powers tried to take advantage of the newly created Balkan nationalism imposing themselves on Turkey and one of the Balkan states in order to protect their own interest in the region. The Great Powers in their attempt to maintain the integrity of the Ottoman Empire frequently intervened with the excuse of reforms in favour of the Christian population in Macedonia, but with prime objective was to maintain the situation status-quo.²⁰ In this direction were the Mürzsteg reforms²¹ of

¹⁷ Ναταλία Μελα, Παυλος Μελας, Αθηνα, 1926, σ. 172.

¹⁸ Γ. Χ. Μοδη, Μακεδονικος αγων και μακεδονικες αρχηγοι, Θεσσαλονικη, 1950, σ. 32, 33.

¹⁹ Γ. Χ. Μοδη, Μακεδονικος αγων και..., σ. 32.

²⁰ Μιραντα Παξιμαδοπουλου - Σταυρινου, Η διπλωματια των Δυναμεων και οι μεταρρυθμισεις στη Μακεδονια (1903-1908), Αθηνα, 2009, σ. 405.

²¹ The Mürzsteg reforms were named according to the place Mürzsteg, where the Russ-

2 October 1903, directly caused by the Ilinden Uprising and the violent intervention by the Ottoman armed forces in putting it down. One should also mention one of the factors that incited the armed intervention of the Greek state in Macedonia, and that is Article 3 of the reform programme from Mürzsteg. It prescribed "After the pacification of the country, the imperial government should be requested to make certain changes in the territorial division of the administrative units in order to properly group the different nationalities".²² This formulation of the article by the Balkan pretenders was interpreted as a possibility to present and win over the majority of the Christian population, in order to group them artificially and more compactly i.e. to divide the "nationalities" based on the new territorial division. The first one who realised the "threat for the *Hellenism*" was Ion Dragumis, at the time an official at the Greek consulate in Serres, who in his report to the Greek Foreign Ministry dated 4 December 1903 warned that "those threats refer to the spheres of influence on the Macedonian territory by the Balkan nationalists for characterising the population in Macedonia as Greeks, Vlachs, Serbs, Albanians, Turks or Bulgarians, depending on the districts".²³ Dragumis also noted that for the Greek interests "in the Greek territories with purely Greek population", referring to the southern Hellenophone area of Macedonia, "there were no threat, but such a danger did exist on the territories with mixed population, especially those with Bulgarophones, Schismatics or Orthodox Christians".²⁴ The battle continued with even greater intensity, primarily between the Greek and Bulgarian propagandas, but the Serbian and the Romanian ones did not fall behind when it came to attracting individuals or entire settlements to their own church organisations, thus presenting their church affiliation as a part of their ethnic group in Ottoman Macedonia. The attracting of believers soon turned into a violent i.e. armed and fierce conflict, to which MRO was drawn into. On the other hand, the requirement that was incorporated in the above mentioned article of the reforms, "after the pacification of the country", was totally in favour of the Ottoman authorities, which

ian Tsar Nikolai II and the Austro-Hungarian Emperor Joseph I met. The programme was later approved by other powers that participated in the Berlin Congress. The reforms had 9 articles that envisaged reforms in the administration, the economy, the police and justice.

²² X. Силјанов, *Ослободителните борби...*, стр. 54.

²³ I. Δραγούμης, *Τα Τετραδία...*, σ. 622 - 634.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 622 - 634.

not only had not undertaken proper measures for preventing the armed conflict, but on the contrary, in many cases they incited it or acted indifferently towards certain developments.

Transfers of individuals or entire villages from one to another church organisation (Patriarchate or Exarchate) started much before the Ilinden Uprising. The beginnings of that process dated from the time when the Exarchate was founded in 1870, especially with Article 10 of the Ottoman firman, which prescribed two thirds plebiscitary support by the Christian population in order to join a certain church organisation.²⁵ MRO's policy on this issue during this period was clear. Its agitation was oriented towards the entire Macedonian population. In the course of it they explained the objectives of the Organisation regardless whether the Macedonian population was under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate or the Exarchate and no pressure was exerted on the population to transfer from one church to another. However, at the end of 1902 one could notice enhanced agitation by MRO in the region of Kastoria aimed at convincing the Macedonian population to leave the Patriarchate and to go over to the Exarchate. The frequent practicing of this was characteristic for the entire following year. The decision of the Kastoria committee was reached as a result of the negative influence that the Kastoria Metropolitan Germanos Karavangelis spread among the Macedonian patriarchate population, his enhanced agitation and activity against the Macedonian revolutionary movement.²⁶ Such moves by the Macedonian Revolutionary Movement leaders in Kastoria, according to the Greek publicist Georgios Pecivas was due to the 1902 decision according to which, "the Patriarchate ordered for the patriarchists to stop cooperating on the preparation of the Uprising".²⁷ In any case, the situation started to change in final phase of the Ilinden Uprising when the Greek Patriarchate metropolitans as allies to the Ottoman authorities, profiting on the utterly difficult and hope-

²⁵ Историја на македонскиот..., стр. 40.

²⁶ In his diary, one of the heads of Kastoria committee, Vasil Cakalarov noted that at the "General Assembly" in the village of Bapcor, held on 29 August 1902, beside the other organisational issues they also discussed "the behaviour of the bishop and the Greeks who did things out of malice and imprisoned our people" and the people "admitted that the Greeks were our devils and agreed to renounce the bishop". Дневникот на војводата Васил Чакаларов, Скопје, 2007, стр. 153.

²⁷ Ιωαννου Καρβιτη, Ομακεδονικος Αγων, Απομνημονευματα, Τομος Α', Εισαγωγή, Επιμελεια, Σχολια Γιωργος Πετσιβας, Αθηνα, 1994, σ. 17.

less situation of the population, forced the Macedonian Exarchate population to go over to the Patriarchate. On the other hand, the population the only way out and the protection from the retribution of the Ottoman authorities could see in their return under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Such was the case in the Kastoria district where about 5,000 peasants were forced by the Kastoria metropolitan to return to the patriarchate's side i.e. according to the beliefs at the time to become "Greeks".²⁸ But, very soon, immediately after the end of the Uprising, and especially in the first half of 1904 as a reaction to the negative attitude of the Greek propaganda institutions towards the Uprising, especially their cooperation with the local Ottoman authorities against the population, one could notice massive transfers of many families, and later on entire villages to the Exarchate church.²⁹ On the other hand, undoubted impact on this course of events also had the activity of the Bulgarian (Exarchate) propaganda institutions and the initiative of the Bitola district committee "for the patriarchate villages to be turned over into exarchate ones".³⁰ In his memoirs, Gjorce Petrov confirmed the district committee's decision, which goal was "to resist the manifested tendencies of the Greek bishops and consuls to benefit from the disaster in favour of the Greek propaganda".³¹ However, the reaction by some in the Organisation to the spontaneous leaving of the Patriarchate by the peasants in the entire area of the insurrection was not expected to be different i.e. to take an opposite stand, "since it suffered significantly from the con-

²⁸ Димитар Љоровски Вамваковски, "Германос Каравангелис и...", стр. 30.

²⁹ There are many documents confirming the passing of the Macedonian population from the Patriarchate over to the Exarchate. For instance, the Greek Consul in Bitola D. Kalergis informed the Greek Minister of the Foreign Affairs, A. Romanos in his report dated 26 February 1904 that 65 villages passed over to the Exarchate. Μουσείομακεδονικουαγωνα, Οιαπαρχεστου Μακεδονικουαγωνα (1903-1904); 100 εγγραφα απο το Αρχειο του Υπουργειου των Εξωτερικων της Ελλάδος, Θεσσαλονικη, 1996, σ. 136 - 139; In a report under the ref. No. 333, from the Bulgarian trade agency in Bitola addressed to the Prime Minister Racho Petrov on 3 May 1904 it was reported that 15 villages from the Kastoria district passed from the Patriarchate over to the Exarchate. Величко Георгиев, Стайко Трифонов, Гръцката и сръбската пропаганди в Македония; краят на XIX - началото на XX век, София, 1995, стр. 35 - 36.

³⁰ Ванчо Ѓорѓиев, Подземната република; Дамјан Груев и македонското револуционерно движење, Скопје, 2010, стр. 353.

³¹ Спомени на Ѓорче Петров, Скопје, 1950, стр. 154.

duct by Greek clergy during the Uprising”. But, besides that, “the Greek bishops, open allies of the Ottoman authorities, with even greater eagerness than before encouraged their priests and teachers... to betrayal and spying”.³² On the other hand, as to the regions in the south-western Macedonia, particularly the region of Kastoria, from the memoirs of Georgi Pop Hristov who came to that region in mid 1904, we learned about almost complete passiveness on the part of the Organisation in this region as well as about complete disconnection from the District Committee in Bitola.³³ Hence, we can conclude that the possibility for MRO’s structures in Kastoria to act in that direction was meagre, especially since after the arrival of Pop Hristov there was full reorganisation of the district, and the leadership for the first time was introduced to the rule book and the draft Constitution of the District Committee of the Bitola Revolutionary District.

However, this situation was used and presented another strong argument among the representatives of the Greek propaganda institutions to influence the Greek government to change its position in order to start considering military intervention in some parts of Macedonia. Firstly, those were the consular officers of the Greek state as well as the clergy of the Constantinople Patriarchate who were constantly reporting of the “catastrophic state of *Hellenism*” and the need of armed intervention, but not against the Ottoman regime, but against the forces of MRO. The Greek Consul in Bitola, D. Kalgeris, in that sense tendentiously in his report to the Greek Foreign Ministry presented the “unbearable” situation of the Macedonian peasants who “were coming to the Consulate from everywhere to let us know that the committee (MRO, author’s note) members at night surround their villages and threat the village elders to sign statements saying that the entire village is willing to belong to the Bulgarian Exarchate”.³⁴ Kalgeris’ goal, regardless of the actual situation on the ground was to blame MRO and for the Greek authorities to confront it with arms. In the same report the Consul openly confirmed their cooperation with the local Ottoman authorities, “which after receiving the order from Constantinople”, as

³² X Силјанов, Ослободителните борби..., стр. 134.

³³ Георги Попхристов, Революционата борба во битолскиот округ, Софија, 1933, стр. 54.

³⁴ Report by D. Kalgeris to the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs A. Romanos, Bitola, 6 February 1904. Μουσείο μακεδονικού αγώνα, Οιαπαρχές του Μακεδονικού αγώνα (1903-1904); 100 εγγράφα..., σ. 134.

well as after the advice by the Greek Metropolitan, “decided to send an army to protect villages that were threatened by the Bulgarians”.³⁵ Such, in favour of the Greek propaganda, was also the decision of the General Administrator of Macedonia, Hilmi Pasha, who in January 1904, gave an order for status-quo, according to which, the villages should stay under the same church rule as before the Uprising i.e. he deprived the people of the right to transfer from one church organisation to another.³⁶ This order, pursuant to the decision of the Mürzsteg reforms was completely in favour of the Greek propaganda, which at this time massively, something that was not typical for the period before the Ilinden Uprising, started to lose its self-proclaimed Greek ethnic population in Macedonia.

In the abovementioned report of Ion Dragumis dated 4 December 1903 two measures were suggested to keep the Macedonian patriarchate population within the Constantinople Patriarchate. First of all peaceful propaganda “preaching... for the Bulgarophones to stick to tradition, but also... violence is necessary”, which essentially was the second measure proposed by him. According to Dragumis, the Macedonian patriarchists, “if it wasn’t for the committee, would have been for ever peaceful, subordinated and devoted to the faith they inherited from their forefathers and most probably they wouldn’t have needed the preaching”, but because, according to him, the Organisation acted violently in order “for our preaching and encouragement to bring results”, it was necessary “either to destroy the committee or to oppose the violence with violence”. He actually imagined “a Greek state outside the borders of the Greek state, organised inside the Turkish state by means of coordination of the Greek municipalities”.³⁷ Dragumis as someone who was well familiar with the situation in Ottoman Macedonia, proposed establishing a Greek “Internal Organisation” similar to the Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation, which unlike the MRO that had autochthonous character, this one should have been a product of the Greek propaganda institutions in Macedonia. The reaction of the Kastoria Metropolitan Karavangelis was similar. On 11 May 1904 he wrote: “The situation is already disappointing, there is no protection of our interests and the panic that has spread throughout villages with everyday killings and compulsion have destroyed the eparchy, which suffers from these murderers, who had

³⁵ Ibid., σ. 135.

³⁶ X. Силјанов, Ослободителните борби..., стр. 135.

³⁷ I. Δραγουμης, Τα Τετραδια..., σ. 622 - 634.

changed their faith”.³⁸ Karavangelis disappointed by the attitude of the official Greek policy even submitted his resignation from the position as Kastoria Metropolitan, which of course was rejected.³⁹

It can be clearly seen not only from Dragumis or Karavangelis’ contemplations, but also from the rest of the Greek propaganda representatives that the greatest “enemy of *Hellenism*” in Macedonia was MRO’s activity, which as an entity completely disturbed the Greek positions they used to have and for which it was necessary to undertake suitable measures. Furthermore, unfounded were the attacks of the Greek propaganda representatives aimed at getting a reaction from Athens, to the alleged violent behaviour and pressure against the Macedonian population to go over to the Exarchate. In the activity of MRO at the time no such action was noticed i.e. compulsion by means of terror even though we have come to a conclusion that there were some recommendations and decisions in that sense, but always as a result of the negative consequences from the Greek actions. On the other hand, after the end of the Ilinden Uprising, the Organisation became passive to a great extent, especially in the regions which suffered the most from the Ottoman reaction. For instance in the Kastoria and Florina regions the only remaining were Mitre Vlaseto and few other local voivodes who were forced to think more about finding shelter for themselves and “they were not able, even if they wanted, to organise – especially by means of terror – a massive counter patriarchate activity.”⁴⁰

“The right” to proclaim the Orthodox Christian population as part of its own ethnic group in the Ottoman Empire, the official Greek policy founded on the *millet* system, which essentially meant a *religious group*. The equalisation of the terms *millet* and *nation* happened under the west-European influence, where the word *millet* was literary linked to the word *nation* i.e. equality in the concept of the French model of nation. The consideration of these two terms as equal

³⁸ Αναστασιος Ιορδανογλου, “Η κατασταση στη Μακεδονια με βαση τα εκδεδομενα πατριαρχικα εγγραφα, 1903 - 1908“, Ο μακεδονικος αγωνας; Συμποσιο, Θεσσαλονικη - Φλωρινα - Καστορια - Εδεσσα, 28 οκτωμβριου - 2 νοεμβριου 1984, Θεσσαλονικη, 1987, σ. 131.

³⁹ Μητροπολιτης Αυστριας κ. Μιχαήλ Σταΐκος, “Η συμβολή του μητροπολίτη Καστοριάς Γερμανού Καρβαγγέλη στον Μακεδονικό Αγώνα“, Εταιρεια μακεδονικων σπουδων, Επιστημονικο συνεδριο, Μακεδονικος αγων 100 χρονια απο τον θανατο του Παυλου Μελα, Θεσσαλονικη, 12 - 13 νοεμβριου 2004, σ. 44.

⁴⁰ X.Силјанов, Ослободителните борби..., стр. 133, 134.

was in favour of the small Balkan states and it strongly encouraged nationalism in recognising their own “holy” right to seek, to find, to count, to recount or to convert their “national compatriots” in Ottoman Macedonia. In the late Ottoman pre-national millet system in which there were no conditions for a modern nation and national awareness to develop, the Balkan nations-states saw a possibility to create their own “national tissue” using the church, the schools and later on the armed violence. In that sense, the starting point of this policy was tendentious identification of church affiliation with the recognition of “one’s own nation” in the Ottoman Empire or, as the Greek historian Dimitris Livanios concludes the “identity” seems could not be a matter of choice; it “existed” independently from what the individual had thought.⁴¹

In any case, this situation was rather opposite to the factual reality which has been confirmed by numerous testimonies that were also known to the official representatives of the Greek state in the Empire. For instance, Ion Dragumis noted that “for most of the Slavophones the word Orthodoxy has no meaning”, referring to the non-identification of the church affiliation with the Greek nation, “because the schismatic priests (exarchists, author’s note) apart from the use of the Slavic language, are no different in any other aspect from the Orthodox ones”.⁴² Furthermore, about the conversion from one church organisation to another or according to the national understandings at the time – becoming a “Greek” or a “Bulgarian” over night or even vice versa, Dragumis wrote: “It seems that the peasants have never understood that they had become schismatics (Bulgarians, author’s note) nor that they continued to be schismatics, nor that they returned to Orthodoxy (*Hellenism*, author’s note)... Let alone the [existence of Greek] national consciousness”.⁴³ Namely, according to the historian Andrew Rossos, their proto-national consciousness was in great extent a response to factors such as: language, folklore, customs, traditions and local interests – symbols that they identified with Macedonia and which made them different from their neighbours.⁴⁴ In 1908 the English politician and lawyer Alan Upward described a Macedonian peasant as follows: “Antoni Stankoff (from the village)

⁴¹ Dimitris Livanios, “Conquering the Souls: Nationalism and Greek Guerilla Warfare in Ottoman Macedonia, 1904-1908”, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 23, 1999, p. 199.

⁴² I. Δραγουμης, *Τα Τετραδια...*, σ. 622 - 634.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 622 - 634.

⁴⁴ Ендарју Росос, *Македонија и Македонците; историја, Скопје, 2010, стр. 109.*

Frangotchi (meaning the village of Ranci – the region of Kajlari district). Speaks no Greek. Is a Patriarchist. Does not know the difference between the Patriarchists and Exarchists. Suffers from the Turkish terror. Does not want any band in his village. Has no preference between Greek and Bulgarian, so long as the Turk goes. Would prefer even Austrian rule to Turkish”.⁴⁵ During his humanistic activities after the Ilinden Uprising in western Macedonia, the English journalist Henry Noel Brailsford in a discussion with several Macedonians in front of the remains of the fortress of Tsar Samoil in Ohrid, came to some interesting conclusions: “‘Who built this place?’, I asked them. Their reply was significant: - ‘The free people’. ‘And who were they?’ ‘Our ancestors’. ‘Ok, but were they Serbs or Bulgarians or Greeks or even Turks?’ ‘They were not Turks, but Christians.’”⁴⁶ Actually, those boys were asked to respond to questions that they could not understand. Brailsford asked them questions that belonged to the times of the nations, something they were not familiar with, and they simply still lived in the multicultural and religious Ottoman society.

However, at beginning of 1904 the Greek government headed by the Prime Minister Theotokis, pressured by the public opinion, started taking some more radical steps in regard to the Macedonian question.⁴⁷ This decision was due to the common view of the Greek state that was created as a result of constant panicky urging of the official Greek propaganda representatives in the Ottoman Empire and the nationalistic circles in the Greek state concerning the threats and the unbearable state of *Hellenism* in Macedonia.⁴⁸ The indecisiveness

⁴⁵ Allen Upward, *The East End of Europe*, London, 1908, p. 181 - 182.

⁴⁶ Хенри Ноел Брејлсфорд, *Македонија; нејзините народи и нејзината иднина*, Скопје, 2003, стр. 160.

⁴⁷ *Ιστοριαι του ελληνικου εθνους, νεωτεροελληνισμος απο 1881 ως 1913*, Τομος ΙΔ, Αθηνα, 1977, σ. 238.

⁴⁸ The Macedonian problem became an every day topic in the life of the Greek population; nationalism was stirred up by the Athens newspapers and various syllogoses that were constantly talking or writing about the terror and killings of their “compatriots” in the Ottoman Empire. For instance, the national feelings and solidarity to what had been happening in the north of the Greek state were stimulated with the alleged 700 killed “Greeks” in the period from 1897 until the beginning of 1904. Αποστολου Ε. Βακαλοπουλου, *Ο μακεδονικος αγωνας (1904-1908) ως κορυφαια φαση των αγωνων των Ελληνων για τη Μακεδονια*, Θεσσαλονικη, 1985, σ. 29. Professor Neoklis Kazazis, in the January issue of the magazine “Elinismos” described the indifference of the Greek authorities

and hesitation of the Greek Prime Minister Theotokis to start an armed intervention against MRO structures was due to the fear of involving Greece in an open conflict with the Ottoman Empire, similar to the one from 1897. At the beginning, the Greek government decided to carry out a broad survey of the situation in Macedonia in order to see whether there were favourable conditions for “an armed defence of Macedonian *Hellenism*”.⁴⁹

in the following way: “Greece, the free homeland, is forgetting its duties, continuing with its policy of indifference. The bells are alarming the approaching threat. Nobody is listening. The church bell will mark a disaster. Only then we shall rise. But, at the same time, the cry of the historical revenge will also be heard. It’s too late. I hope that this new year that has already started will waken us all up from the winter slumber, the young, the old, the official, the unofficial, I wish for nothing more...”. Σταθης Πελαγιδης, “Λιγο μετα το Ιλιντεν (20 ιουλιου 1903) στις περιοχες Καστοριας και Φλωρινας“, Ο μακεδονικος αγωνας; Συμποσιο, Θεσσαλονικη - Φλωρινα - Καστορια - Εδεσσα, 28 οκτωμβριου - 2 νοεμβριου 1984, Θεσσαλονικη, 1987, σ. 366, 367.

⁴⁹ Ο Μακεδονικος αγων και τα εις Θρακιην...,σ. 131.