

Institute of Balkan Studies and Alexander Fol Center of Thracology

Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

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**THE BULGARIANS IN SALONICA**

**FROM THE 1860s TO THE BALKAN WARS**

**Abstract**

thesis, degree DSc

Professional line 2.2. History and Archaeology

Sofia, 2019

The text was discussed and a procedure was started for its defense as thesis for earning the degree Doctor of Science, at a meeting with enlarged participation of the Modern Balkans section of the Institute of Balkan Studies and Center of Thracology of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences held on 8 October 2019.

The Scientific Council of the Institute, on 15 October 2019, voted in the following members of the jury:

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The thesis consists of three chapters, Conclusion and a list of sources, and contains 494 pages.

The materials for the procedure are available to all interested at the office of the Institute, 45 Moskovska Str., 1000 Sofia.

The city of Salonica was already a significant maritime and commercial center when it was taken by the Ottoman Turks in 1378. It became a leading commercial port in the European part of the Ottoman Empire, second only to the capital Constantinople, and the biggest trading hub of the province of Macedonia. Towards the end of the Ottoman period, it was of central importance for the road and rail infrastructure that connected the capital with Europe and smaller cities in the province. At that time Salonica was a vilayet capital, with the economic, communication, military, administrative, and political functions entailed. All that made Salonica a factor in the economic, national and political development of the Bulgarian population in the Salonica, Bitola and Skopje vilayets. During the researched period, Salonica's history forms an integral part of Bulgarian history and memory.

There were not so many big Balkan cities before WWI. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> c., the urban population of Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania did not even reach 20% of the whole population. The population of Sofia, the Bulgarian capital, had grown by 237% from 1878 to 1910, but numbered just a bit over 100 000. The other three bigger Bulgarian cities of Plovdiv, Varna and Russe had less than 50 000 inhabitants before WWI. This is a basis for regarding Salonica, with its 130 000 inhabitants in 1905, as one of the few Balkan megapolises at the period. Despite the fact that the Bulgarian community of Salonica was significantly smaller than the Jewish, Turkish and Greek communities, it is commensurate with the Bulgarian populations of several important towns in the Principality of Bulgaria. That is why the Bulgarian colony, of relatively small size within Salonica, occupies an important place among Bulgarian urban communities.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> c., Bulgarians were emotionally very engaged with Salonica, yet a hundred years since, Salonica is totally absent from the official narrative of Bulgarian history. This is due, predominantly, to the fact that it is the central issue in Bulgaro-Greek relations, which more than once have left tracks of blood in Balkan history. United under the conviction that good neighborly relations with Greece are fundamental for the Bulgarian Balkan policy, politicians and historians have elected to sidetrack in silence that subject matter. However, that "PC approach" cannot satisfy people with familial ties to that city and opens the field for the so-called "unofficial factors" in Bulgarian social and political life; and those factors are traditionally strong. Moreover, that self-imposed silence allows for abuse of Bulgarian history,

by our native nationalists on the one hand, and by real or fake specialists from abroad, who would deny that part of the population in the European vilayets of the Ottoman Empire had ever been Bulgarian.

Thus, the Bulgarian Salonica community, which reached its apex in the last three or four decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> c., has remained “invisible” for the contemporary science of history. I have produced this text, because I am convinced that Salonica is important for Bulgarian history and memory. Indeed, Salonica focuses all Bulgarian aspirations and losses to do with Macedonia in the Ottoman period. If the Bulgarian community in Salonica would be ignored, one would not be able to assess its role, and that would result in a faulty impression of historical processes in the late Ottoman period. One would remain ignorant of the part played by that community in the modernization of mentalities, as well as of the influences to which it had been subjected. Especially underrated has been the Bulgarian factor in the dissemination of nationalistic, anarchistic and socialist ideas, which led to serious political cataclysms, and in the final count, to the destruction of the Ottoman order.

The goal of this research is to present and analyze the existing information on the Bulgarian community in Salonica during the late Ottoman period. That community began to build its institutions in the 1860s: the Bulgarian community’s Congregation became organized and a regular primary school attached to it started to function. That is the reason why the 1860s decade has been chosen as the lower chronological limit of my thesis. Institution building was an important stage in the process of gradual formation of a separate Bulgarian national community. Compared to other places in the Empire, in Salonica that process was somewhat retarded, but otherwise followed the general pattern. The upper limit comes naturally with the Balkan wars, during which the institutions of the Salonica Bulgarian community were destroyed. However, its history did not end in 1913, nor was it confined to the refugee files and diplomatic correspondence of the time: it continued in Bulgarian collective memory. This leads to surpassing the announced time span and once again points to the fact that chronological limits in history are a matter of convention.

The text is organized thematically, and the separate themes are treated chronologically as far as possible. Chapter 1 deals mainly with the demographics of the Bulgarian Salonica community, its organizing and its social life. Section 1 presents data on the community’s formation, its slow and trying national emancipation, the establishment of a Congregation as a ruling body and its first public appearances. Special attention is paid to the role of the Zograf monastery, the Bulgarian Exarchate and the Bulgarian philanthropic societies of Constantinople. The political and economic causes for the enhancement of migration processes that increased significantly the number of Bulgarians in that port town are analyzed, predominantly based on primary sources.

Salonica was one of the most vibrant Ottoman market towns and important for trade with the hinterland. In the late Ottoman period, it was through Salonica that Macedonian agricultural produce went to Europe, and European industrial and luxury articles entered the Empire. Initially, Bulgarian exporters from the inner vilayet traded through Greek, Jewish and Turkish intermediaries. Gradually, however, they started to establish their own firms in Salonica, and based on their ties with the country were able to organize their own network and to function independently. It is that group of merchants, enriched by their new business, which spearheaded all Bulgarian initiatives in Salonica in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. Among the Bulgarian aldermen, donors and economic initiators we see family names such as Hadzhimishev, Shavkulov, Vessov, Kondov, Rizov, Popstefanov and Kyulyumov. The success of these pathfinders encouraged their less prosperous compatriots to seek in Salonica security and sustainment.

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> c., the Bulgarian colony in Salonica had grown significantly; however, it was still smaller than the Jewish, Muslim and Greek groups. Immediately before the Balkan wars the Exarchic community numbered just above 4 000, or about 3,4 % of the total population; together with the Bulgarian Uniates, Bulgarian Protestants and Bulgarians directly under the Ecumenical Patriarch, the Bulgarian group formed 7% of the total population. Of the fraction under the Patriarch around 2 000 had cognizance of their Bulgarian nationality, but would not declare it for economic reasons, fear, or other personal considerations. When the city became part of modern Greece, those Bulgarians that opted to remain, adopted a Greek nationality.

In the rural areas of Ottoman Macedonia Bulgarians were the dominant group; in the towns, and Salonica in particular, they were engaged in all main economic activities. The migrant origin of the Exarchate community is revealed when we examine the occupations listed. There is a huge variety of trades, often practiced by just a few persons, which is characteristic of individual or familial migration from the vilayets. The only distinguishable sub-groups among the economically active are those of the trade commissioners, merchants, publicans and innkeepers. There were successful Bulgarian firms, trading within and outside the Empire, though they could not compete with Jewish and Greek establishments in wealth or influence. Bulgarian merchant families would often intermarry, thus becoming stronger economically and socially.

Besides stabilizing economic positions, ties between families and countrymen also enhanced the national consciousness among Bulgarians in the city and the region. In this respect instrumental was the urban Bulgarian intelligentsia: teachers, clerics, bookshop keepers, doctors, chemists and newspapermen. Facts show unequivocally that at the time there was a middle class Bulgarian group, occupied in trade,

crafts and various services. That group formed the core of the Exarchate community, which also included workers, migrant or resident. Their children filled the Bulgarian schools, participated in social events and aided their parents in realizing Bulgarian initiatives in Salonica.

The Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878 dealt a blow to the Bulgarian Congregation, which had been recognized only in 1875. Its Chairman, Father Peter, was banished from the city at the bidding of the patriarchal Metropolitan Yoakim and the Congregation stopped its activities provisionally. In the following years, as Kuzman Shapkarev accurately observed, “not a single good, laudable word about the Bulgarian was to be heard”. However, on June 9, 1880 the Congregation was restored, albeit without being recognized by the authorities. Only in 1899, thanks to the effort of the Bulgarian commercial agent Atanas Shopov, the Congregation was allowed to have two *muhtars* (mayors), while the merchant Sazdo Vessov became a member of the vilayet *mejlis*. In 1904, there were already three Bulgarian *muhtars*, and in 1909, an Exarchate bishop headed the Congregation.

The semi-legal status of the Congregation made it vulnerable to the authorities and strengthened its dependency on foreign centers. For a long time it did not have the authority of an officially recognized institution and was not effective in defense of the interests of the Bulgarian community. There was constant infighting among the more prominent Bulgarians, due to differences between the traditional community representatives and an emergent economic and social elite. Besides, the Bulgarian Salonica Congregation had no common background, but was formed by individuals of diverse origin, geographic and social, with various and often opposing interests. Even on the eve of the Balkan wars, the Congregation lacked solidarity, it was “torn apart”, and its members did not feel as “fellow citizens with common tasks”. Comparatively, the Bulgarian community remained small and economically weak, with a rather volatile composition, in complicated relations with the authorities, and in disagreement as to its goals and tasks. On the other hand, the mixed system of government established by the Exarchate, with a cleric as head of the Congregation and a Board consisting of teachers and prominent citizens, proved effective.

All that has a bearing on the difficulties that the Bulgarian community experienced with acquiring and maintaining public buildings (dealt with in the last part of Chapter 1). That problem focuses the community’s hopes, fights, victories and defeats. The semi-legal status of the Congregation made it hard to procure building permits, and induced Board members to devise complicated schemes in order to build a church or a school. Lack of funds accounts for the fact that the Bulgarian public buildings in the city compare so unfavorably in numbers, magnitude and opulence to Ottoman, Jewish or Greek buildings. The situation was further complicated by the Greek nationalists, who forbade local Greeks to sell or lease real estate to Bulgarians under a threat of death.

Despite all that, in the pre-Balkan wars period, the Bulgarian Congregation acquired four churches, two cemetery lots, a Metropolitan seat facility and eight school buildings. According to Ottoman law, all of them were registered as individual private property; thus, they later fell under the provisions of the Mollov-Kafandaris treaty. In the list of Exarchate estates in Salonica, drawn by Christo Dalchev, the Bulgarian representative in the joint commission, there are 13 items valued at 130 170 pounds sterling. The central Bulgarian cemetery with its St. Paul Chapel was not listed, probably due to lost documents. The house of the Bulgarian Consulate is missing also, possibly because despite the fact that it had been registered as property of Atanas Shopov, it de facto belonged to the Bulgarian government.

It is hard to establish exactly what part of that estate was appropriated with moneys allocated by state and public organizations from the Bulgarian Principality, and what part came from individual donations. In any case, it can be posited that the appropriation of at least one third of the Bulgarian diocese's estate in Salonica had been covered by non-governmental funding. Among the biggest donors were the Zograf monastery of Mount Athos and Mr. Atanas (Naste) Stoyanov. The stately buildings of the Girls' Gymnasium and the exemplary Primary School were bought thanks to donations by the merchants Evloghi Gheorghiev and Gheorghii Shopov. However, there are no material vestiges today of the endeavors of generations of Bulgarians in Salonica. Only a memorial tablet put in 2014 in the place where the Bulgarian Boys' Gymnasium stood, reminds one of the struggles of the Bulgarians in Ottoman Salonica for consolidation and recognition of their community.

Education was an important aspect of this struggle, and Chapter 2 of the thesis is devoted to it. It deals with education in the Bulgarian primary and high schools, as well as with the participation of Bulgarians in non-Bulgarian educatory establishments. This chapter's goal is to compare problems faced by the different levels of schooling and place them in the context of the main educational tendencies in Ottoman Salonica and the Bulgarian state.

How highly Bulgarian educators valued Salonica as educational hub for Bulgarians of the region transpires from the way they spoke of it. In the 1880s Kuzman Shapkarev propagated the image of Salonica as a "Macedonian beacon" and "Jerusalem of enlightenment", which would become a "place of light" for all Slavs, for it had been the birthplace of the Slavic "enlighteners", the Saints Cyril and Methodius. However, the Congregation did not have enough money for the primary schools. Moreover, the primary schools were not easy to govern, as they were financed jointly by the Congregation and the Exarchate. That mixed system of financing and authority created administrative obstacles and personal problems. However, the greatest difficulties arose from the simple fact that most pupils were very poor.

The number of pupils grew with the influx of Bulgarians of rather low social strata; therefore, already at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> c. a support fund for poor pupils was established. The charity organization *Milosardie (Charitable hearts)*, initiated by Evtim Sprostranov outlived all other Bulgarian charities in Salonica, and was the most effective. In the period 1905-1909, it managed to marshal for the cause of the poor pupils teachers, students, the Congregation, Bulgarian state institutions, clerics and simply public-minded individuals from Salonica and Bulgaria. One should note the multitude of small donations for various charitable causes, showing that there existed among Bulgarian Salonicans a culture of public charity. Apparently, charity was cultivated in the schools. There was also the case of the charitable fraternity (also called *Milosardie*), which existed between 1897 and 1899 and was initiated by the commercial agent Atanas Shopov with the specific goal of countering the Serbian propaganda among Bulgarians in Salonica. Despite these troubles, there were some positive tendencies in primary education in Salonica. Firstly, due to immigrating Bulgarian families, the number of pupils was rising constantly. Simultaneously, numbers also rose because new schools were opened, even in remote neighborhoods.

At the time of its establishment, the Bulgarian SS Cyril and Methodius Boys' Gymnasium was the only Bulgarian institution in the Ottoman Empire to offer that kind of higher education; it has aptly been called "a source of light". In the Edirne Bulgarian School, the first higher education class was started only in 1855/1886, and in Bitola, in 1897/1898. The Salonica gymnasium also offered pedagogical courses (1887-1896) and commercial courses that developed into a commercial department, which became the basis of a Commercial Gymnasium. One may confidently contend that the SS Cyril and Methodius high school was the bulwark of Exarchate education in Macedonia. Like all Bulgarian high schools, it was financed by the Bulgarian state, which covered teachers' salaries, student grants and the maintenance of facilities. Due to the fact that the Gymnasium was on Ottoman territory, it was financed and governed via the Bulgarian Exarchate.

Planned to be a showcase Exarchate educational establishment, the Salonica Gymnasium concentrated the best teachers. Appointment policy followed the political conjecture, viz. until the mid-1880s teachers educated in Russia dominated, then graduates of Central and West European universities, and from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. it was mostly graduates of the Sofia High School. These teachers were unquestionably the best cadres of Bulgarian education of the period, colorful personalities of presence in public and political life, following diverse ideologies and not inclined to obey authorities. That could possibly explain the numerous conflicts among the faculty, and the many and various revolutionary groups emerging in that gymnasium. The revolutionary spirit was also fed by the fact that Salonica was not only a target of the nationalistic and religious propaganda of the young Balkan nations, but also of the Great Powers. Of all cities in the Ottoman Empire, Salonica was the place where European influence was the

strongest, while the Ottoman authorities were the most liberal. That was a prerequisite for pro-freedom activities of the Bulgarian youths. The Boys' Gymnasium became a revolutionary center, which gave birth to and never lost contact with the Internal Macedono-Adrianople Revolutionary Organization (IMARO; in literature in English the simplified abbreviation IMRO, for Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization is usually used). IMARO became the most influential freedom-fighter Bulgarian organization during that period.

The Holy Evangel Bulgarian Girls' Gymnasium has not been so far a subject of research, though information re its history obtains in the publications on the Bulgarian educational establishments in Salonica. It was the only Exarchate full course girls' high school in the Ottoman Empire, and drew students from the mixed three-grade schools in Kukush, Doyran and Strumitsa and the five-grade girls' schools in Skopje and Bitola. By special decision of the Exarchate, it was proclaimed as pedagogical, for at that time the teacher's profession was the highest possible professional realization for Bulgarian girls in the Ottoman Empire. The Exarchate stressed the importance of the Salonica girls' gymnasium for the formation of teachers, public activists and mothers, as well as "for the awakening and strengthening of the spirit of the population". That is why pedagogical subjects were given serious attention in the curriculum, and after graduation grant, students were obliged to work as Exarchate teachers and disseminate their acquired knowledge.

The Girls' high school, unlike the Boy's, progressed at a moderate rate, but steadily. That was due to the strict order and discipline reigning there, under the pedantic eyes of the school authority and the citizens. Simultaneously, one should not underestimate the high motivation of the girl students. Most of them came from very poor families, and their goal was to graduate quickly, get a teacher's job and start helping their families materially. The low social status of the majority of the girls was the Gymnasium's most serious problem. The girls would often fall ill, for they were underclothed, underfed and worried about their future. That, together with the insufficient Exarchic subsidy, hindered the development of girls' education in Salonica. The support from the Exarchate could not even cover the bare necessities of the students, and that made charity a must.

Salonica was of course an educational center not only for the Bulgarians of the region. The city's importance and the opportunities it offered were perceived as well by other nationalities, which would run their own schools. The educational boom in Salonica began in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> c., and in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> c., 86 schools of all grades were functioning, belonging to 13 ethnic and national communities. Children of Bulgarian origin attended some of them, and that fact, along with the general

level of education in that central city of Ottoman Macedonia, formed the context of the development of Bulgarian education in Salonica.

Salonica was a multinational merchant city, so different approaches to education met there, competing and borrowing from one another. Prioritized was the acquisition of practical knowledge and expertise, which would account for the boom of commercial and professional high schools. Simultaneously, each nationality would regard its educational establishments as its major image-producer for the others, hence would aspire to have schools of the highest quality. There was a struggle to attract children to the different religious schools, even among the Christian communities. Mostly it was based on economic stimuli, such as establishment of subsidized boarding houses and refectories, student grants, etc. In that context, Bulgarian education was quite competitive, in terms of number of students and qualification of teachers, variety of school levels and quality of education.

Chapter 3 deals with the Bulgarian participation in the public and political life of the city. Bulgarian activities and events are treated in comparison to those of other national groups. Participation of Bulgarians in the public life of Salonica became visible quite some time after the Congregation was already in existence. Due to the ordering of city life in the Ottoman Empire, according to which communities lived next to one another, but not together, Bulgarians for a long period lived strongly encapsulated. That should account for the lack of evidence re their participation in the modernization of Ottoman Salonica during the Tanzimat epoch. The Bulgarian urge for public presence would be limited by the Ottoman authorities, and also handicapped by the rules of the Exarchate (which was dependent on the authorities too), aimed at keeping the church and school cause maximally safe. As if petrified by the authorities' repressions and restrictions, deep in their conservatism and survival struggles, the individual citizens and the Congregation's Board would look with suspicion upon any initiative that might cause complications. An exacerbating factor, of course, was the poverty and insufficient culture of most of the Bulgarian population, which, even when literate, in 1907 had no newspaper in Bulgarian, no reading-house and no library. Only the activities of teachers, as well as texts by them, published by Kone Samardjiev, endeavored to widen the horizon and open the minds of community members.

After the Young Turks' coup of 1908, the situation changed significantly. There was a multitude of public initiatives, and now they were readily announced in the Bulgarian newspapers and journals published in Salonica. Despite the fact that these print media basically reflected the political views of their publishers, they were good for the public, urging it to support modern initiatives. The number of these media is commensurate with the media of other national and religious groups in the city, if seen in proportion to the number of the group members. However, it should be noted that a large part of the

Bulgarian newspapers were short-lived. That fact reflects the fragmentation of the Bulgarian intelligentsia and explains why its media would deal almost exclusively with the problems of Bulgarians, i.e. its own problems, without devoting any serious attention to other communities in the city. It is characteristic for Ottoman Salonica that there was almost no communication among the different communities, nor any basis for cooperation.

The modernization of Bulgarian mentality and new ideas penetrated the community mostly via the high school teachers. Not a few of them were of foreign origin, and there were Bulgarians that had received their education outside the Empire, namely in Austria-Hungary, Russia, Switzerland, Germany and Bulgaria. There they would come in contact with ideologies modern at the time, such as nationalism, anarchism, socialism – and successfully pass them on to their Salonican students.

The struggle of the Bulgarians for national liberation was the task that would mobilize the population much more effectively than any other ideology. That is why IMARO and the legal political parties, created by it after the Young Turks' coup, namely the *Union of Bulgarian constitutional clubs* and the *People's federative party* were the most important Bulgarian political organizations in Salonica. Some anarchist and socialist groups gravitated around them, acting independently or on occasion jointly with the IMARO. Among them special attention is due to the *Gemidjii* (Turkish for "boat people"), who wrote a page of blood in the history of the city with their terrorist attacks in 1903. The effect on the Bulgarian community of the activities and affairs of IMARO, and the activities opposing the Greek nationalist organization and Serbian politics is central to the narrative.

Atanas Shopov, representing the Bulgarian government, did all in his power to defend the Bulgarian interests in Salonica. As diplomatic agent, he was first a mediator between the local population, the Bulgarian government, the Exarchate, the Ottoman authorities and the foreign consuls. However, he outgrew his middleman's role and established himself as an active factor in Bulgarian city politics. He would advise merchants, plead before donors, help committees, pay spies, corrupt editors, yet without ever compromising his institution in scandal. His main goal was the creation and strengthening of Bulgarian national consciousness and enhancement of the standing of the Bulgarian community in the city. Therefore, his activities fought foreign influence, mainly Greek and Serbian, and upheld the Bulgarian national cause. His informal diplomacy yielded excellent results: foreign consuls would consult him on all issues, the Bulgarian community became stronger, its schools and churches proliferated, rich Bulgarian merchants headed charities and public initiatives.

The Balkan wars put an end to the Bulgarian presence in Salonica, but not to the Bulgarian imagination relative to the city. Almost until the end of the period in question, Ottoman Salonica used to

be a bigger, richer and more modern city than the Bulgarian capital. It evoked much feeling and interest among Bulgarians, who saw in it many economic, political and cultural opportunities. Salonica would capture imaginations with its sea, its luxurious hotels, restaurants and coffee houses, its cultural life and its colorful population. For Bulgarians, however, it was primarily linked with their freedom fighting, so its image is dominated by themes of death and self-sacrifice, timidity and bravery, prisons and concentration camps. It is simultaneously a city of prisons and city of light, of youth and nostalgia, enlightenment and pogroms, economic opportunities and lost labors.

The *Conclusion* sums up the thesis. The most important finding is that although the schism, imposed on the Bulgarian Exarchate by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, did put a brake to the progress of Bulgarian national consciousness in Salonica, even before the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878 there was established in the city and recognized by the authorities a Bulgarian Congregation. It was strengthened in the subsequent period by the enhanced influx of Bulgarian population, looking in that vilayet center for security, defense by the European consuls and economic prosperity.

The families to settle first lived in downtown Salonica, where the two Bulgarian gymnasiums, the exemplary primary school and the "SS Cyril and Methodius" church were located. Later immigrants would mostly go to the new neighborhoods: the *Vardarska mahala* and *Kukush mahala* to the West and *Pirghi* and *Transvaal* to the East. In these peripheral neighborhoods were the two cemetery lots, the St. Pavel Chapel, the St. Dimitar church with the primary school attached to it, the St. Gheorghii church, which was not consecrated until the Balkan wars, and three more school buildings. In the 20<sup>th</sup> c. the Bulgarian state, acting through fronts, managed to buy a facility for its diplomatic mission, while in the period between the wars it took care of its part of the Bulgarian-German military cemetery.

Although it grew stronger with time, the Bulgarian community in Salonica remained relatively weak and did not manage to play for the Macedonian dioceses the role, which the Bulgarian colony in Constantinople had played in the Bulgarian Revival. Largely that was due to the fact that after the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878 the Congregation was not recognized by the Ottoman authorities. What is more, the incessant affairs of IMARO, the uprisings, the paramilitaries plus the antibulgarian activities of the Greek community turned the Bulgarians into enemies of the state and laid the ground for a prolonged and cruel persecution. Simultaneously, inside the community continued the strong contradictions among immigrants coming from different places, between lay intelligentsia and the clerical chairman, among members with different economic interests and political persuasions. Last, but not least, comes the consideration that most of the Bulgarians in Salonica had low social status. They could hardly make the

ends meet and were not in a position to finance adequately the primary education of their children and community initiatives.

In the political situation, which changed radically after the Congress of Berlin, there was one advantage for Bulgarians that remained in the Ottoman vilayets: the presence of a free Bulgarian state, which would support their initiatives to the extent that it was able and provide shelter on its territory after affairs and uprisings. Its help was evident even in the matter of the primary schools in Salonica, which in theory were the concern of the Congregation. However, the Congregation would complain constantly of lack of funds, which compelled the Exarchate to shoulder periodically the larger part of primary school financing. The Exarchate funded in full the Bulgarian gymnasiums and gave financial support to employees in the Congregation's office. One could safely conclude that the role of the Principality of Bulgaria, which financed Bulgarian education in Salonica, was fundamental for its development. The results were impressive: along the Boys', Girls' and Commercial gymnasiums at the end of the period there were six primary schools, three of which had four grades plus kindergarten.

Findings corroborate the opinion in existing historiography that the Salonica Boys' gymnasium, with its well-appointed labs, highly qualified teachers, student choir and orchestra, gymnastics society and meteorological station was justly the pride of the Exarchate educational system. Its importance for the propagation of Bulgarian national ideology and other modern ideas, influences and tendencies throughout the European vilayets is beyond question. It was the pathfinder of Bulgarian education in the Empire, therefore the problems and mistakes in its management and development were natural, and the concomitant ideological debates were inescapable. Despite its hard moments, due to persecution from the authorities or to internal disagreements, it never ceased to function. It was the heart of Bulgarian education in Macedonia, pumping cadres to the Classical Gymnasium in Bitola, the Commercial Gymnasium in Salonica, etc.

The Bulgarian girls' education in Salonica began with the school of Slavka Dinkova, which functioned from 1866 to 1868. Educational goals did not change over time: girls were brought up to become mothers, housewives and spouses. Yet the Exarchate did not overlook the girls' teaching potential, and indeed the majority of graduates of the Holy Evangel gymnasium found realization as teachers. The major problems, along with high illness rate among the students and their low social status, came from inadequate Exarchate support, which did not allow girls' education in Salonica to actualize its big potential.

The juxtaposition of Bulgarian education and the educational effort of other national or religious groups shows that they were commensurate in terms of quality of education and quantity of schools, teachers and students in proportion to the numbers of each group. The schools of all groups propagated

knowledge and helped modernize mentalities, yet they were after different goals. The Catholic and Protestant schools one way or the other aimed at proselytization. The Turkish and Jewish schools aimed at forming cadres useful in administration and economic activities. Educational establishments of the Balkan nations aimed at making graduates fit for Ottoman administrative and economic life, simultaneously pushing their respective national ideas. Such were the goals of Exarchate education too, showcased in the Salonica gymnasiums. The Exarchate made a special effort to have highly qualified teachers, gave numerous stipends, disbursed moneys for boarding houses, facilities and uniforms, in order that Bulgarian education be on a par with Jewish, Greek, and Turkish education in the city.

The Bulgarian Church tried to control education through the Chair of the Congregation and the appointments of school directors and staff, but a strong revolutionary tendency evolved in the Boys' gymnasium, aimed at overthrowing the Ottoman order. The reasons were multifarious: the exaltation following Bulgarian freedom, the teachers, educated in foreign academic places, which were swept by the revolutionary spirit of the epoch, the will to oppose the strengthened Serbian propaganda among Bulgarians, etc. The complicated mutual ties and contradictions between clerics and lay activists, between partisans of the Exarchic and the revolutionary line, between "leftists" and "rightists" in the revolutionary organization itself, between revolutionaries and anarchists, and also personal clashes, created too many divisions within the Bulgarian community, with a negative effect on school life, public initiatives and the public image of that community.

The educational, public and political activities of the Salonica Bulgarians were mainly influenced by the free Bulgarian state and to a much lesser degree by the other national or religious groups in the city. This corroborates the observation that the different communities in Ottoman cities cooperated very weakly among themselves. Sure, the richest citizens would have inter-group exchanges on everyday life level, they would keep open neighborly relations and socialize in their closed clubs, but the common people would remain enclosed in their religious and national group. That is why modernization among the Salonica Bulgarians would be "imported" through the Bulgarian-Turkish border by teachers, doctors, printers, etc., rather than come through contacts with their Jewish, Turkish, Greek and Levant immediate neighbors.

Only after the Young Turks' coup a public space was created, in which all nationals could be visibly present. At that point, intellectuals from Bulgaria trickled to revolutionary Salonica, bringing in socialist ideas. Though small in numbers, the Bulgarian community played an important role in the political and ideological turmoil in Salonica during the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. There were Bulgarians among the most prominent nationalists, anarchists and socialists in Salonica.

The Principality of Bulgaria supported the Exarchate education, but was counting on a political solution of the Macedonian question, and in consequence ignored the economic problems of the population. The commercial agent, later Consul and Consul General Atanas Shopov achieved a strengthening of Bulgarian consciousness and national interests in Salonica, but did not manage to have a bank institution opened, to credit Bulgarian merchants and businessmen. Economic weakness remained the biggest problem of the Bulgarian community throughout the period investigated. Despite incessant immigration waves and Bulgarian presence in all fields, the wealthy Bulgarian families were very few. Neither the Bulgarian character of the near hinterland, nor the concentration of Bulgarian intelligentsia could compensate for that weakness. It was, however, well understood and made use of by the Greek terrorist "Salonica organization", and later by the Greek authorities in the city. The few rich and prominent Bulgarian families were targeted, and chased out or murdered. Left without its leaders, the community quickly disintegrated. Part of the Salonica Bulgarians merged with the Greek element, and the other part took the road to exile.

### *Contributions*

- This thesis is the first comprehensive study of the participation of Bulgarians in the economic, political and public life of Ottoman Salonica. It is based on newfound sources and covers half a century.
- Besides traditional archive studies, plentiful information is analyzed, coming from personal collections, various fiction and films. This is a prerequisite for raising the issue of memory for the first time in Bulgarian historiography, on the basis of the largest city in Ottoman Macedonia.
- The dissertation clarifies the reasons why the Bulgarian community in Salonica remained relatively weak and did not manage to play for the Macedonian dioceses the role, which the Bulgarian colony in Constantinople played in the Bulgarian Revival.
- For the first time Bulgarian education is placed both in the context of educational tendencies in the Bulgarian state and Ottoman Salonica. The first (and so far, only) comprehensive study of the Bulgarian Holy Evangel Girls' gymnasium is made.
- The dissertation provides material grounds for the understanding that Salonica in the late Ottoman period was not just a cosmopolitan city, but also a center of the national idea in the Empire, which makes it significantly different from the cities in Asia Minor. The strong influence of the national

Balkan states, the predominantly Jewish population and the Bulgarian hinterland of the city are the characteristics of Salonica that made it unique and in the last resort determined its fate.

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