

# Grabbing the Lion by the Tail: The Macedonians in the Greek Civil War, 1946-49<sup>i</sup>

James Horncastle, Simon Fraser University, Stavros Niarchos Foundation Centre for Hellenic Studies

Do No Cite Without the Permission of the Author

Paper Presented at the 2021 ASN World Convention, 5-8 May 2021

The 25 May 1948 edition of *Nova Makedonija* alarmed Kaloutsis, Greece's representative in Yugoslavia, more than usual. Kaloutsis and other diplomats in Yugoslavia usually took exception to Yugoslav pronouncements, but this was different.<sup>ii</sup> Yugoslav sympathizers had written previous pronouncements against the Greek government, but in this case a member of the National Liberation Front (NOF), acting as a representative for Keramidzhiev, wrote an article for the Macedonian public, stating:

*[The Greek government] is attacking Macedonians of Greece because they are Slavs and part of the heroic Macedonian people that won its national freedom in the fight for liberation, together with other Yugoslav peoples under the wise leadership of glorious Marshal Tito. [...] They are strengthened in their common struggle under the leadership of EAM. Under the direction of NOF, the Macedonians participate in the struggle arms in hand, as members of the invincible Democratic Army of Greece with General Markos, supreme leader and president of the provisional democratic government [...].<sup>iii</sup>*

By 1948 it was uncharacteristic for a Macedonian paper to print such a speech, even though the Macedonian press was typically more bombastic than the Belgrade media. The above quotation emphasized that Yugoslavia now supported the Greek communists in their insurgency, whereas just four years prior the Macedonian press had emphasized the failures of both the Greek communists and the Greek government. The excerpt also linked Aegean and Vardar Macedonia.

Given the Greek's sensibilities, the Yugoslavs could not have published a more provocative piece.

While scholars use the late 1946-June 1948 period as the basis for the Macedonian Question in the Greek Civil War, this time frame was in fact riddled with contradictions. During this period, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) increasingly transformed its ideological and political role amongst the Aegean Macedonians to the Greek Community Party (KKE). The KKE, with the CPY's tacit blessing, slowly subsumed the NOF within the DAG. The NOF, however, did not surrender its independence easily. In fact, the NOF leaders sought to play the KKE and CPY against one another to pursue the Macedonian nation-building exercise, but to also settle scores amongst themselves. Thus, instead of being a straightforward process of absorption, NOF managed to maintain a semblance of independence throughout much of this period.

The KKE and its armed wing, the Democratic Army of Greece (DAG), began 1947 with the policy aim of reconciling their manpower dependency on the Slavophone Macedonians.<sup>iv</sup> A 13 March 1947 report presented by the KKE's Regional Committee for Macedonia to the Politburo demonstrated the party's effort to emphasize the Slavophone Macedonian people's importance to its supporters. Now that open conflict had broken out, the KKE's Regional Committee for Macedonia realized it needed the Slavophone Macedonians' support and did everything possible to secure it. The Regional Committee concluded the report by noting: "We [are working to] establish unity amongst Slavomacedonian and Greek populations."<sup>v</sup> The committee's actions, however, speak to how seriously it took its task. In order to reconcile with the Slavophone Macedonians, it agreed to accept some individuals of NOF who had signed the declaration.<sup>vi</sup> This was a significant accommodation, especially given the KKE's past relations with the NOF.<sup>vii</sup> By 1947, the KKE fully embraced the fact that it had to assist the Slavophone Macedonians as much as possible.

Zachariadis' increased control over the party during this period was instrumental in the KKE's effort to capitalize on the Slavophone Macedonians' utility to the party. Upon his return, Zachariadis initially possessed a limited ability to centralize policy when he returned to the fragmented party. Throughout 1947, however, his overall control of the KKE increased. His

efforts included the elimination of rivals, such as Siantos, whom he marginalized within the party in late 1946/early 1947.<sup>viii</sup> Furthermore, the KKE Politburo's February 1947 decision to shift the DAG from an irregular to conventional army meant that he now exercised increased control over the military, since regular units require a centralized organization. This action also sidelined the DAG's commander Markos Vafiadis, a potential rival.<sup>ix</sup> The result of these purges/appointments was that groups within the KKE that had previously proved problematic, such as the Regional Committee for Macedonia, now adhered completely to the party line throughout 1947.

The outbreak of full-scale war further facilitated Zachariadis' centralization of the party apparatus. As Strachan and Barkawi note, war in itself is a creative force, and this was evident in the Regional Committee of Macedonia's increased integration within the KKE.<sup>x</sup> Wartime conditions meant that the Regional Committee for Macedonia continued its transition to viewing the Slavophone Macedonians as an asset, rather than a threat. Immediately before the aforementioned 13 March 1947 report, the Regional Committee for Macedonia had written another report to the KKE's Politburo. In that essay, it provided a detailed description of how NOF and KKE cooperation yielded positive dividends. Specifically, it noted that ever since the Central Committee of the NOF had merged with the DAG, amicable relations existed between the organizations.<sup>xi</sup> The Regional Committee of Macedonia went so far as to claim that it collaborated with the Slavophone Macedonians in a "twinning movement" in the villages.<sup>xii</sup> The KKE, as a result, embraced the NOF instead of representing it as an opposing organization, as it had done in 1945.

Consequently, the NOF, while previously a thorn in the Regional Committee for Macedonia's plans, was now a valuable ally. As a result, the KKE Regional Committee for Macedonia agreed to "an array of organizational issues that would enable it to strengthen the work of twinning the Greeks and Slavomacedonians."<sup>xiii</sup> One can argue that the KKE's embrace of the NOF only went so far, in that the former still referred to the latter using the ethnic designation: Slavomacedonians. Nevertheless, the Regional Committee's new approach represented a significant shift in policy, especially when compared with its position in 1945. It was one thing for the KKE's Central Committee to recognize the need for change, but all branches of the party now did so as well.

The KKE/DAG consciously sought to improve the image of the Slavophone Macedonians in the eyes of their core constituency. In a 3 March 1947 letter to Georgios Protopapas-Kikicas, the DAG's commander for Central and Western Macedonia, Markos Vafiadis explained that Panos Kapetanios, a local commander, had an incorrect attitude towards the Slavophone Macedonian combatants. Vafiadis stated that Protopapas-Kikicas should "consider [Panos' actions against the Slavophone Macedonians] and correct them."<sup>xiv</sup> While Vafiadis later acknowledged that some of Panos' complaints might have been valid, he urged Protopapas-Kikicas to deal with them in a very careful manner, particularly if they involved arming Slavophone Macedonians.<sup>xv</sup> This action speaks to both the DAG's distrust of the Slavophone Macedonians and to the fact that it needed them. Vafiadis, however, only called for the immediate disarming of Slavophone Macedonians if they had performed criminal activities.<sup>xvi</sup> This approach was largely a continuation of a strategy he first put forward in a 4 February 1947 letter to Protopapas-Kikicas. In this earlier letter, Vafiadis also seemingly granted liberty to the Slavophone Macedonians, while restricting serious policy matters to his control—in this instance, policies that opposed potential Bulgarian machinations.<sup>xvii</sup> In short, Vafiadis recognized that the army's effectiveness relied on granting considerable tactical leeway to local commanders, while he simultaneously preserved overall strategic control. One of his most critical strategic tasks was to maintain control of local party commanders and ensure that they did not sabotage the DAG's efforts to reconcile with the Slavophone Macedonians.

Vafiadis was even more bombastic in his praise for the Slavophone Macedonians in public. In March 1947, he explained the DAG's policy on the Macedonian Question to a journalist from *L'Humanite*, the French Communist Party's daily newspaper. He noted:

*We demand full equality of the Macedonians and others [...]. The first do not remember anything else other than duties, persecution, torture and murder. The Greek government sought to denationalize, not recognizing their most basic rights, even the right to speak mother tongue ...*<sup>xviii</sup>

The difference between this comment and his letter to Protopapas-Kikicas speaks to the KKE/DAG's strategy in the period. Vafiadis largely stuck to the KKE's line in public addresses, using Marxist dogma and emphasizing the excesses of the Greek government against the Slavophone Macedonians. Although Vafiadis recognized that there were internal problems with

integrating the Slavophone Macedonians, he needed to gloss them over to maintain the party's strength in the north. The DAG did not reach the 50,000 soldiers that its leadership set as a goal before the civil war. Yet, the Slavophones offered the best chance for the achievement of this target, provided that it could integrate them without alienating the KKE's supporters as well as the majority of Greek citizens.

Although the KKE sought to accommodate the Slavophone Macedonians in 1947, this did not mean that its newfound camaraderie with them was without tension. The strain was evident in a 30 May 1947 letter that Atanasios Jogas, the secretary of the KKE's Departmental Committee for Kastoria, wrote to Todoros Evtimiadis, the secretary of the KKE's Departmental Committee for Florina. In that letter, Jogas complained about certain NOF cadres. He noted: "I think those [Slavophone Macedonian] comrades can cause for us many ills, if we are not vigilant."<sup>xix</sup> Jogas extended his complaints to individuals in the highest ranks of the organization. He argued that Pando Keramidzhiev "is involved [with the seditious activities] and has connections with Goce."<sup>xx</sup> In connecting Pando to the reviled Goce, Jogas spoke to the gravity of his suspicions regarding the NOF's alleged treasonous activities. While Jogas' comments certainly expressed an extreme concern about the NOF amongst the KKE, it was not the first time that members of the KKE voiced such anxieties. KKE officials frequently complained about NOF provocations throughout this period. In October 1947, the NOF's Second Secretary in Voden, Fidan, reported to NOF HQ that "Comrade Stathis [the KKE's second secretary for Voden] attacked [us over] the escape of the Macedonian battalion on Yugoslav territory." Fidan further claimed that the Macedonian battalion's retreat was a deliberate provocation in response to the KKE's suspension of Goce that same day.<sup>xxi</sup> The veracity of both Stathis and Fidan's statements are debatable, although Goce's dismissal is confirmed. The most important element of Fidan's account was its demonstration that this period of KKE-NOF relations—which individuals, such as Kofos, neglect as a result of the NOF's subservience to the KKE—was fraught with tension.<sup>xxii</sup>

There were two reasons that the KKE appeased the Slavophone Macedonian population as they fought the Greek government. The first and most obvious reason was the Slavophone Macedonians' role in the KKE-CPY's political dynamic. Although the CPY had officially transferred the NOF to the KKE, it still maintained a stake in the Macedonian Question in

Greece. Vlahov's activities on the Macedonian Question in 1947 meant that either the CPY continued to employ him in this capacity or that it could not completely stop him once he had been so employed (the latter being the more likely possibility).<sup>xxiii</sup> The NOF likewise still viewed the CPY as its patron and maintained communications with the party during this period.<sup>xxiv</sup> Given the CPY's interest in Slavophone Macedonian affairs, the KKE had to appease the group, even if they were its nominal superiors.

The second reason that the KKE needed the Slavophone Macedonians' support during the war was their numeric superiority in the DAG. As Vafiadis noted, the DAG faced an acute manpower shortage as the war progressed. Vafiadis noted that by mid-1947, approximately only 10% of the DAG's forces consisted of willing volunteers.<sup>xxv</sup> Given this manpower shortage, the DAG turned towards the one group of individuals who were also highly motivated to resist the Greek government than the average Greek citizen and whose lives had become increasingly regimented under the KKE and NOF: the Slavophone Macedonians. Furthermore, as Shrader notes, after the DAG had transformed to a conventional force, it quickly exhausted the supplies the KKE had stashed away after the Varkiza Agreement. Consequently, the KKE's dependency upon Yugoslavia for material support increased.<sup>xxvi</sup> Although the KKE embraced the Slavophone Macedonians out of necessity, the ramifications extended beyond even the KKE's fears concerning that population.

On 24 October 1947, Ioannidis—the KKE member most responsible for the northern affairs of the party, including its relationship with Yugoslavia—lectured the KKE cadres on the significance of the Macedonian Question. Ioannidis began by noting that “The 3rd Plenum of the Central Committee of the KKE paid special attention to the issue of the Slavomacedonians.”<sup>xxvii</sup> The points that followed in the lecture were KKE policy and not open for debate. Ioannidis elaborated that “almost all of them participated in the fight [and should] not be underestimated. [The KKE] will need to raise more [Slavomacedonian] cadres.”<sup>xxviii</sup> This underscored that the Slavophone Macedonians were becoming a core element of the DAG and that the KKE could not ignore them. Indeed, they should in fact raise their numbers even further. Furthermore, as Ioannidis stated: “Slavomacedonians represent 3/4 of the armed forces [...] for Central and Western Macedonia. They represent the foundation. Any understatement of them is a crime.”<sup>xxix</sup> In determining its war strategy, the KKE could not ignore the fact that three-fourths of the DAG

in Central and Western Macedonia were Slavophone Macedonians. Ioannidis, speaking at what was ostensibly a private meeting, had no reason to lie about this number. In addition, Yugoslav sources later confirmed it.<sup>xxx</sup>

The Limnes Plan, formalized by the KKE in late 1947, enhanced the role of the Slavophone Macedonians, even if the KKE did not directly say so. The plan outlined that “the Democratic Army must transform guerrilla tactics into conventional warfare and establish free areas not only in the mountains but also in areas that are essential from the political as well as the military perspective.”<sup>xxxii</sup> For the DAG to transform into a conventional army and seize and hold territory, two things were vital. The first was obviously manpower. As stated earlier, the Slavophone Macedonians’ predominance within the DAG and potential to expand made them vital to the success of Limnes, even though it later failed.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Furthermore, the fact that the Limnes Plan called for the seizure of Northern Greece meant that the KKE focused its efforts on the precise area where the Slavophone Macedonians comprised seventy-five percent of the armed forces.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

By the end of 1947, the level of control that the KKE had over the Macedonian Question was evident in its decision to establish the Provisional Democratic Government of Free Greece (PDGFG) on 24 December. The PDGFG did not deal with the Macedonian Question specifically in its initial proclamation, but instead focused on the general themes of “monarcho-fascist” and Greek government terror.<sup>xxxiv</sup> The EAM’s Departmental Committee of Edessa acknowledged the KKE’s success at centralizing authority and maintaining message integrity on 30 December 1947, when it responded to PDGFG’s formation by arguing for Greeks and Slavophone Macedonians to unify under its banner because national harmony “was the most decisive factor for final victory.”<sup>xxxv</sup> Through its subsidiary organization, the KKE managed to phrase the call for unification in a way that appealed to the Slavophone Macedonians without alienating the Greek base. Considering the nationalist atmosphere in post-war Greece, this was not an easy task. Nonetheless and contrary to its portrayal in both Greek and Macedonian literature, the NOF was not wholly servile to its new Greek masters. As a result, the KKE could not completely avoid antagonizing nationalist sentiment in Greece.

While the KKE risked antagonizing Greek nationalists by the beginning of 1948 Yugoslavia was finally able to pursue its interests in Greece with minimal domestic interference from the Macedonian nationalists in its country. In part, this was because Yugoslavia could accomplish the goal of redirecting Macedonian nationalist sentiment towards Bulgaria. Yugoslav officials, however, also appreciated the problems that the Slavophone Macedonians brought with them regarding their nationalizing policies. A 24 February 1948 internal Yugoslav report assessed that there were two rival camps within the NOF: one centred on Mitrovski and the other on Keramidzhiev.<sup>xxxvi</sup> The report noted that Keramidzhiev's faction primarily consisted of the "chauvinistic" elements and expressed considerable frustration about the factionalism but did not offer any constructive suggestions.<sup>xxxvii</sup> The report noted that there were certain favourable elements within the NOF, most notably Rokovski and Čolakov, but also added that overall, the current "[...] state of the NOF and certain procedures of the Greek comrades [...] encourage local chauvinism, not only amongst the heads of NOF, AFZ, [but also] with the Macedonian village."<sup>xxxviii</sup> While KKE policies did not help matters, the CPY report clearly assigned blame to the NOF's factionalism. The divisions within the NOF provided a further disincentive for the CPY to play the Macedonian nationalist card in Greece. After all, the CPY witnessed how such a policy could backfire in 1944 and 1945. Instead, Yugoslavia pursued a more communist than minority-driven policy while it consolidated control of Vardar Macedonia.

Unbeknownst to the CPY, its benevolence on the Macedonian Question and its genuine and newfound support for the KKE helped lead the Yugoslavs into the Tito-Stalin split. The importance of the Tito-Stalin split to the Greek Civil War is one of the few elements of the political struggle not underestimated in the literature.<sup>xxxix</sup> However, the literature attributes the Tito-Stalin split's significance to its effect on the outcome of the Greek Civil War. The contribution that Yugoslavia's activities in Greece made to the split has only begun to emerge in the contemporary literature, and this has occurred largely within Yugoslav studies, not in accounts of the Greek Civil War.<sup>xl</sup> That Yugoslavia's involvement in the Greek Civil War was a significant cause of the Tito-Stalin split can be understood from Milovan Djilas and Edvard Kardelj's accounts of a meeting between Stalin and key members of the CPY in early February 1948. At the meeting, Stalin told the CPY leaders that the "The uprising in Greece will have to fold up" and that the Greek communists "have no prospect for success at all."<sup>xli</sup> Kardelj



confirmed that in this meeting, Stalin pressured Yugoslavia over its involvement in the Greek Civil War.<sup>xlii</sup> The Yugoslavs saw this as only a minor factor in the declining relations between the two parties. As Mastny observes, however, the Soviet Union saw Yugoslavia's activism as one of the principal problems in its dealings with their lesser counterpart.<sup>xliii</sup> The CPY's perspective that its policy on the Macedonian Question did not affect its relationship with the USSR benefited the KKE in its struggle against the Greek government as it continued to provide supplies. Nevertheless, it was one of the several factors that facilitated the break between the Yugoslav and Soviet governments in the summer of 1948.

Despite Keramidzhiev's complaints about the KKE, by 1948 the NOF was clearly under their direct control. This point was evident at the First Congress of the NOF, which occurred on 13 January 1948. As Rossos notes, although the NOF had organized earlier meetings, the First Congress of the NOF was a seminal moment in the organization and Macedonian national movement's development.<sup>xliv</sup> It was at this conference that the KKE demonstrated its complete dominance of the NOF to the party faithful.

Two speeches given by Mihailo Keramidzhiev and Giannis Ioannidis at the First Congress provide a clear demonstration of the NOF's official submission to the KKE. Mihailo Keramidzhiev, the NOF's General Secretary, made his association with the KKE's policies evident when he identified the weaknesses of the party. One particular weakness he discussed was that many individuals within the cadres maintained an IMRO based identity.<sup>xlv</sup> As seen in Chapter 5, the KKE made the IMRO/autonomists its scapegoat for any fault in its policy on the Macedonian Question. In other words, Keramidzhiev helped justify the KKE's existing policy. The extent to which the KKE's accusations were based in reality is unclear, but given the factionalism within the NOF, having a convenient target on which to lay the blame for their shortcomings was useful for both parties. Keramidzhiev again made this association with the KKE when he identified another weakness: its lack of cooperation with "other anti-fascist organizations."<sup>xlvi</sup> This point was an implicit reference to NOF, although there were several other anti-fascist organizations. The faults of the KKE and the NOF, and the problems between them, were the result of the Slavophone Macedonian organization, and it was up to them to correct. Keramidzhiev's statement at the First Congress of the NOF contrasts with his earlier statements covered in Chapter 5, in which he blamed the KKE for the friction between it and the

Macedonian organization. The NOF's official subservience to the KKE, and the CPY's increasingly ambivalent position, made it imperative for the Macedonian party to align its policies with those of the Greek communists.

While Keramidzhiev was critical of his organization, Ioannidis avoided criticism and instead focused on more general matters. Importantly, Ioannidis chose Yugoslavia as the model for Greece to follow. Therein, he noted that Yugoslavia's success on the issue of minorities was "[...] something [one] does not come across anywhere in the capitalist countries. It is because the people there have taken power into their own hands."<sup>xlvii</sup> In one comment alone, Ioannidis managed to: appease the Slavophone Macedonians, who still looked to the People's Republic of Macedonia; appeal to the Yugoslavs, whom the KKE depended upon for material support; and discredit the Greek government, as its capitalist-based system (allegedly) would not allow for the equality of Macedonians. After this masterstroke, Ioannidis got to the heart of why the KKE supported the Slavophone Macedonians and their ambitions: their contribution to the armed forces.

Ioannidis' speech indicates the reasoning behind his appeal to the Slavophone Macedonians: their importance to the DAG. Ioannidis—the individual who in late 1947 had argued for the KKE's accommodation of the Slavophone Macedonians—took the opportunity to argue that the parties needed unity if they were to realize the equality he had mentioned earlier. Ioannidis stated that to make progress towards equality, "we need to fight [...] united and together."<sup>xlviii</sup> Furthermore, the only means by which the Greeks and Slavophone Macedonians were uniting was with a strong army.<sup>xlix</sup> The "need to strengthen the Democratic Army with new forces was critical to creating a strong army."<sup>1</sup> Given the forum to which Ioannidis spoke, the inference could not be clearer. The Slavophone Macedonians should contribute more soldiers and units to guarantee the success of the Provisional Government and therefore protect their new rights. Ioannidis had succeeded at getting Keramidzhiev to point out the NOF's failures with respect to the contribution of the Slavophone Macedonians, which stemmed from its lack of commitment to the KKE/DAG. Then, he gave the Slavophone Macedonians a valid reason for pursuing the new policy.

That the NOF now looked to the KKE to resolve internal disputes, rather than the CPY, further demonstrates the extent of the Greek communists' control of the Slavophone Macedonians. Evdokija Baleva-Nikolova, the leader of NOF's women's affiliate organization, the Antifascist Front of Women in Aegean Macedonia, in an internal report on 2 March 1948, complained about factionalism within the party.<sup>li</sup> Throughout April and May 1948, Mitrovski also sent several missives to Ioannidis in which he complained about the NOF's organization and more specifically, about Keramidzhiev's leadership.<sup>lii</sup> The majority of Mitrovski's letters, significantly, went to Ioannidis, whose role as the Provisional Democratic Government's Foreign Minister lent him considerable influence over the Macedonian Question. The leadership of the NOF, in other words, recognized that they had to tailor their message, both in content and form, to achieve their desired effect. Furthermore, Mitrovski, by addressing his complaints to the KKE when he had previously referred them to the CPY, demonstrated the former's increased role on the Macedonian Question as the Yugoslavs redirected their activities elsewhere.<sup>liii</sup>

While the NOF came steadily under the control of the KKE, some elements within its leadership sought to keep contacts with the CPY to counter pressure from the Greeks. For example, at the First Congress of the NOF on 13 January 1948, greetings were dispatched to the Women's Antifascist Fronts of both Yugoslavia and the People's Republic of Macedonia.<sup>liv</sup> The First Congress' letters followed a standard formula expected by the communist camp and provided a good indicator of relations between the parties.<sup>lv</sup> Even as late as the spring of 1948, the NOF's leaders (Mihailo Keramidzhiev, Vera Nikolovska, Pavle Rakovski, Ajanovski-Oče and Ilija Dimovski) sought the CPY's support in countering pressure from the KKE.<sup>lvi</sup> Although the KKE subsumed the NOF, its leaders still tried to use the tension that existed between the CPY and the KKE to pursue its agenda.

Furthermore, these letters indicate that the NOF played a double-game with the KKE to advance Slavophone Macedonian rights within the country. Those who signed the letters included individuals the KKE identified as serving their cause, such as Mihail Keramidzhiev and Paskal Mitrovski, as well as those whom the KKE identified as autonomists/IMROists, such as Ilija Dimovski. Keramidzhiev publically acceded to KKE pressure in denouncing autonomists like Dimovski (Goce). Nevertheless, the NOF still emphasized its connection with Dimovski in

its interactions with the Yugoslavs, having wrongly assumed that the CPY regarded him in a positive light. The NOF's leadership, in other words, still pursued its agenda.

The NOF members could not directly challenge KKE officials, but they used the power structure of the KKE-CPY alliance to further their objectives. Nonetheless, there were limitations to the NOF's double game. These challenges were apparent in a letter from Dinko Delevski, a soldier in the DAG, to Vangel Ajanovski-Oče on 18 June 1948, just before the Tito-Stalin split. NOF officials had previously raised the issue that the Slavophone Macedonians were in a position of inferiority to Greeks within the DAG.<sup>lvii</sup> In the eyes of the Slavophone Macedonians, this state of affairs persisted. Delevski noted that the status of NOF officials within the DAG was less than those of "assistant cooks."<sup>lviii</sup> Delevski had complained about this same issue in 1947 and noted that both Goce and the Central Committee of the NOF had largely echoed that earlier complaint.<sup>lix</sup> In effect, the Slavomacedonians were no longer masters of their own destiny. NOF propaganda materials captured by the Greek government in May 1948 underscores this point. It was addressed to "Slavomacedonians and Greeks."<sup>lx</sup> The political context of 1948 made it impossible for the NOF to differentiate itself from the KKE by embracing groups other than the Slavophone Macedonians and Greeks, which it had done in 1945. The NOF's placement under the KKE was originally an expedient measure implemented by the CPY to limit the pernicious influence of the Slavophone Macedonians. Yet, the NOF was able to exploit its subservience, which increasingly resulted in the marginalization of Slavophone Macedonians. As Ioannidis and the Yugoslavs noted, the Slavophones' loss of power occurred at the very same time that an increase in their numbers was becoming critical to the DAG's fortunes.

Thus, while the well-known argument during this period—that the KKE consolidated its control over NOF—has some merit, but the reality of the situation was considerably more muddled. The NOF officially acceded to the demands of the KKE, but this was only what appeared on the surface. Analyzing high politics alone ignores the considerable tensions that characterized KKE-NOF relations and existed within the Macedonian organization itself. Both parties had to address these tensions to avoid damaging their relationship.<sup>lxi</sup> Furthermore, there were tensions within the NOF regarding its ultimate purpose. While NOF officials deferred debates regarding those concerns with the KKE, in most instances, individuals within the party exploited them to advance their interests. In other words, the KKE found itself entangled in NOF

politics even as it sought to control the Slavophone Macedonians. The fact that Dimovski remained prominent within the NOF, despite the KKE's aversion to him, spoke to the fact that the NOF retained a degree of autonomy in its actions during the period. This autonomy would only remain, however, so long as the NOF could play the KKE and CPY against one another.

The Macedonian Question was an important factor for all the parties involved in the Greek Civil War between late 1946 to mid-1948. It continued to affect the actions of the parties involved in subtle yet significant ways. For the CPY, increased control of the Macedonian Question in Yugoslavia and having an outlet in Bulgaria as a result of the Bled Agreement meant that it was able to mitigate and redirect the CPM's concerns in order to adequately supply the KKE. Even when the NOF attempted to entangle the CPY in its internal power struggle, the Yugoslavs refused to intervene and encouraged the NOF to work with the KKE. Although the CPY did not completely renounce the Slavophone Macedonians, the party leadership made it clear that the interests of that population were now of secondary importance to its other policies.

The KKE recognized the CPY's newfound ambivalence concerning the Slavophone Macedonians and worked to place the NOF under its control. The KKE largely succeeded in this task. NOF officials recognized they were now at a disadvantage, but this did not completely hamper their ability to advance their objectives. In fact, the NOF tried—with varying success—to use the divisions between the CPY and KKE to promote its interests. The fact that the NOF officials were able to do so provides further proof of the need to examine the role of the Macedonian Question in the conflict.

Finally, Greece's success at exploiting the Yugoslav propaganda on the Macedonian Question to create the impression of a Slavocommunist conspiracy with the Slavophone Macedonians proved effective in drawing the United States into the conflict. The Greek authorities were able to cite specific instances of virulent Yugoslav rhetoric to construct the image of a Slavocommunist plot to dismember and take over Greece that was orchestrated by the Soviet Union. Although there was no such plot, there is a lack of evidence supporting the view that the Greek government fabricated it for purely strategic reasons. Instead, it appears that the Greek governments during this time believed that a Slavocommunist-Soviet linkage existed and simply sought to convey these fears to the United States. The United States readily accepted the

Greece's perception of a Slavocommunist threat because of its rising fears about the Soviet Union. They did so since their primary concern was preventing the incorporation of northern Greece into a Greater Macedonian state. In fact, the United States overlooked the fact that the Greece's involvement in the persecution of the Slavophone Macedonians had played a pivotal role in creating the domestic unrest. Yugoslavia's domestic imperatives and Cold War politics, however, resulted in the United States viewing Greece through a proto-Cold War gaze.

The Macedonian Question continued to play a pivotal role in the Greek Civil War during this phase of the conflict, even though historians consider it to be characterized by inactivity. The Slavophone Macedonians continued to influence the actions of the major participants in the Greek Civil War. While the parties in the Greek Civil War often defined their activities solely in terms of realpolitik, the Slavophone Macedonians and the Macedonian Question were ever-present factors in their calculations.

---

<sup>i</sup> Paper was derived from my manuscript *The Macedonian Slavs in the Greek Civil War, 1944-1949*.

<sup>ii</sup> Diplomatic and Historic Archive, 50898 22-9-48 Α/Γ1; Diplomatic and Historic Archives, 52014 30-7-48 Αυτ Μακ.; Diplomatic and Historic Archive, 38664 19-6-48 Αυτ. Μακ.; Diplomatic and Historic Archive, 44991/29-10-47/Εσωτ. Κου; Diplomatic and Historic Archive, 42316 3-10-47 Εσωτ. Κατα.

<sup>iii</sup> Diplomatic and Historical Archive, 28253 30/5/47 Α/Γτου; *ibid*.

<sup>iv</sup> For an analysis of how the Macedonians were criminalized in the aftermath of the Second World War, see: Mark Mazower, "Three Forms of Political Justice: Greece, 1944-1945," in *After the War Was Over: Reconstructing the Family, Nation, and State in Greece, 1943-1960*, ed. Mark Mazower (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2000), 24-41.

<sup>v</sup> Macedonian Committee of the KKE, "Rapport du Comite Regional du PCG Pour la Macedoine au Bureau Politique du CC du PCG Relatif a la Situation en Macedoine, aux Liaisons et a la Collaboration Avec des Macedoniens, Etc.," in *Documents Relatifs a l'Attitude du Parti Communiste Grec Envers la Question Nationale Macedonienne*, ed. Risto Kirjazovski (Skopje: Les Archives de Macedoine, 1947), 409.

<sup>vi</sup> *Ibid*. Although the exact nature of the declaration is left unclear in the source material, given the Greek government's policy of getting individuals to sign declarations renouncing their support of communism, it is likely of this nature.

<sup>vii</sup> Aris Velouchiotis, arguably the most successful leader of ELAS, was officially condemned for signing a letter of renouncement. For a sympathetic account of Velouchiotis, see: Dominique Eudes, *The Kapetanios: Partisans and Civil War in Greece, 1943-1949* (New York: Monthly Review Press Classics, 1972 (2009)) 9, 238-40. More recently, Dionysis Charitopoulos' account

---

is increasingly challenging Eudes' account as the standard in the field. See: Charitopoulos, *Aris, Lord of the Mountains Passim*.

<sup>viii</sup> Although the party greatly mourned Siantos' passing on 20 May 1947, Zachariadis subsequently denounced him in 1950 to justify their failure in the Greek Civil War. See: Richter, *British Intervention in Greece: From Varkiza to Civil War, February 1945 to August 1946* 494.

<sup>ix</sup> The process, however, took a considerable amount of time. In part, this was due to the nature of converting an irregular force into a conventional one. It was also due to the time it took for Zachariadis to centralize his control. For a description of this shift, see: Shrader, *The Withered Vine: Logistics and the Communist Insurgency in Greece, 1945-1949*, 216-18.

<sup>x</sup> Often neglected in the emerging fields of conflict and security studies is that war, in itself, can serve a creative purpose. In this instance, the wartime conditions assisted Zachariadis in centralizing his control of the party by creating conditions conducive to this shift. For an exploration of this issue, see: Tarak Barkawi, "From War to Security: Security Studies, the Wider Agenda and the Fate of the Study of War," *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 39, no. 3 (2011); Hew Strachan, *The Direction of War: Contemporary Strategy in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013) 10-25.

<sup>xi</sup> KKE, "Extrait du Rapport du Comite Regional du PCG Pour la Macedoine Envoye au Bureau Politique du PCG, Relatif a son Activite Parmi les Macedoniens, Etc.," 405.

<sup>xii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xiii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xiv</sup> Markos Vafiadis, "La Lettre du General Markos Vafiadis, Commandant de l'ADG, a Georgios Protopapas-Kikicas, Commandant de l'ADG en Macedoine Centrale et Occidentale, Relative a l'Attitude de Panos Kapetanios Envers les Combattants Macedoniens.," in *Documents Relatifs a la Participation du Peuple Macedonien de la Macedoine Egee a la Guerre Civile en Grece, 1947*, ed. Risto Kirjazovski (Skopje: Les Archives de la Macedoine, 1947), 48.

<sup>xv</sup> Ibid. Unfortunately, Vafiadis does not go into detail about which of Panos' complaints were valid.

<sup>xvi</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xvii</sup> "La Lettre du General Markos Vafjadis, Commandant de l'ADG, a Georgios Protopapas-Kikicas, Commandant de l'ADG en Macedoine Centrale et Occidentale, Relative a Quelques Questions Sur les Cadres et Autres dans l'ADG," in *Documents Relatifs a la Participation du Peuple Macedonien de la Macedoine Egee a la Guerre Civile en Grece, 1947*, ed. Risto Kirjazovski (Skopje: Les Archives de la Macedoine, 1947), 41-43.

<sup>xviii</sup> "Extrait de la Declaration du Commandant General Markos, Relative aux Macedoniens, qu'il a Donne au Correspondant de "l'Humanite"," in *Documents Relatifs a l'Attitude du Parti Communiste Grec Envers la Question Nationale Macedonienne*, ed. Risto Kirjazovski (Skopje: Les Archives de Macedoine, 1947), 414.

<sup>xix</sup> Atanasios Jogas, "Lettre D'atanasios Jogas, Secretaire du Comite Departemental du PCG Pour la Region de Kastoria, a Todoros Evtimiadis, Secretaire du Comite Departemental du PCG pour Ga (Sic) Region de Florina, dans Laquelle il Exprime ses Suspects Envers Quelques Cadres du FLN," *ibid.*, 414.

<sup>xx</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxi</sup> Fidan, "La Declaration de Fidan, Second Secretaire du Comite Departemental d'EPON Pour la Region De Voden, Relative a Quelques Evaluations du Second Secretaire du PCG Pour la Ville de Voden, en ce qui Concerne le FLN et la Question Macedonienne," in *Documents Relatifs a la*

---

*Participation du Peuple Macedonien de la Macedoine Egee a la Guerre Civile en Grece, 1947*, ed. Risto Kirjazovski (Skopje: Les Archives de Macedoine, 1947), 360.

<sup>xxii</sup> Kofos, "The Impact of the Macedonian Question on Civil Conflict in Greece," 300-01.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Vlahov, *Govori I Stati, 1945-1947* 158-225; Diplomatic and Historical Archives, 1947.80.7.1 Μεθοριος

<sup>xxiv</sup> "La Lettre d'un Groupe de Dirigeants du FLN de la Partie Egeenne de la Macedoine au Comite Central du Parti Communiste Yougoslave a Belgrade. Ils Demandent le Secours Pour Normaliser les Rapports Entre le PCG et le FLN," in *Documents Relatifs a La Participation Du Peuple Macedonien De La Macedoine Egee a La Guerre Civile En Grece 1948*, ed. Risto Kirjazovski (Skopje: Les Archives de la Macedoine, 1948), 199-203. Archive of Yugoslavia, AJ, 507/IX,33/V-29

<sup>xxv</sup> Vaphiadis, cited in Marantzidis, *Democratic Army of Greece (1946–1949)* 137.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Shrader, *The Withered Vine: Logistics and the Communist Insurgency in Greece, 1945-1949*, 122.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Giannis Ioannidis, "Une Partie de la Discussion de Ianis Ioanidis Devant les Membres du PC - Cadres Militaires et Politiques - de la Macedoine Occidentale et Orientale le 24 Octobre 1947," in *Documents Relatifs a l'Attitude du Parti Communiste Grec Envers la Question Nationale Macedonienne*, ed. Risto Kirjazovski (Skopje: Les Archives de Macedoine, 1947), 418.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxix</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxx</sup> Archives of Yugoslavia, AJ, CKJ, 507/IX,33/V-45

<sup>xxxi</sup> Cited in: John O. Iatrides, "George F. Kennan and the Birth of Containment: The Greek Test Case," *World Policy Journal* 22, no. 3 (2005) 139.

<sup>xxxii</sup> The Limnes Plan largely failed due to the fact that while the DAG was transitioning to a conventional force, it was still inferior to the National Army of Greece in set-piece battles.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Iatrides, "George F. Kennan and the Birth of Containment: The Greek Test Case,"

<sup>xxxiv</sup> "La Proclamation du Gouvernement Democratique Temporaire de la Grece a l'Occasion de sa Nomination," in *Documents Relatifs a la Participation du Peuple Macedonien de la Macedoine Egee a la Guerre Civile en Grece, 1947*, ed. Risto Kirjazovski (Skopje: Les Archives de la Macedoine, 1947), 413-15.

<sup>xxxv</sup> "La Proclamation du Comite Departemental d'EAM Pour la Region de Voden, aux Habitants Grecs et Macedoniens, par Laquelle on les Invite de se Reunir sous le Drapeau du Gouvernement Democratique Temporaire, Pour Acquerir la Liberte et la Democratie," in *Documents Relatifs a la Participation du Peuple Macedonien de la Macedoine Egee a la Guerre Civile en Grece, 1947*, ed. Risto Kirjazovski (Skopje: Les Archives de la Macedoine, 1947), 426.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Archives of Yugoslavia, AJ, CKJ, 507/IX,33/V-45.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London: Penguin, 2005) 140-45; Evanthis Hatzivassiliou, "From Adversity to Alliance: Greece, Yugoslavia and Balkan Strategy, 1944-1959," *Balkan Studies* 45, no. 1 (2004) 126; Jože Pirjevic, "The Tito-Stalin Split and the End of the Civil War in Greece," in *Studies in the History of the Greek Civil War, 1945-1949*, ed. John O. Iatrides Lars Bærentzen, Ole L. Smith (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1987), 309-16.

<sup>xl</sup> Two recent articles, in particular, demonstrate the importance of the Greek Civil War to the Tito-Stalin split. See: Perović, "The Tito-Stalin Split: A Reassessment in Light of New Evidence," 32-



---

63, Rajak, "The Cold War in the Balkans, 1945-1953," 198-220; Vojtech Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity: The Stalin Years* (New York: Oxford UP, 1996) Kindle Edition.

<sup>xli</sup> Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin* 140-41.

<sup>xlii</sup> Kardelj, *Reminiscences: The Struggle for Recognition and Independence: The New Yugoslavia, 1944-1957* 107.

<sup>xliii</sup> Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity: The Stalin Years* Kindle Edition.

<sup>xliv</sup> Rossos, *Macedonia and the Macedonians: A History* Kindle Edition.

<sup>xlv</sup> Mihailo Keramitčiev, "La Rapport Politique et d'organisation, Presente au Premier Congres du FLN par le Secetaire du Comite Principal du FLN Mihailo Keramitčiev," in *Documents Relatifs a la Participation du Peuple Macedonien de la Macedoine Egee a la Guerre Civile en Grece, 1948*, ed. Risto Kirjazovski (Skopje: Les Archives de la Macedoine, 1948), 25.

<sup>xlvi</sup> *Ibid.* 25.

<sup>xlvii</sup> Giannis Ioannidis, "Extrait du Discours de Ioanis Ioanidis, Vice-President Du Gouvernement Provisoire Grec et Membre du Bureau Politique du CC du PCG a l'Occasion du Ileme Congres du FLN," in *Documents Relatifs a l'Attitude du Parti Communiste Grec Envers la Question Nationale Macedonienne*, ed. Risto Kirjazovski (Skopje: Les Archives de Macedoine, 1948), 423.

<sup>xlviii</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>xlix</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>l</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>li</sup> Evdokija Baleva-Nikolova, "La Rapport d'Evdokija Baleva-Nikolova Relatif a la Reunion dans l'Etat-Major de l'ADG, Concernante les Rapports Malsains dans la Direction du FLN," in *Documents Relatifs a aa Participation du Peuple Macedonien de la Macedoine Egee a la Guerre Civile en Grece 1948*, ed. Risto Kirjazovski (Skopje: Les Archives de la Macedoine, 1948), 124-28.

<sup>lii</sup> Paskal Mitrovski, "La Lettre de Paskal Mitrovski a Joanis Joanidis, Secetaire du CC du PCG dans Laquelle il l'Informe des Reunions Relatives a la Mobilisation des Cadres du FLN Etc.," in *Documents Relatifs a la Participation du Peuple Macedonien de la Macedoine Egee a la Guerre Civile en Grece, 1948*, ed. Risto Kirjazovski (Skopje: Les Archives de la Macedoine, 1948), 182-83; "La Lettre de Paskal Mitrovski a Joanis Joanidis, Secetaire du CC du PCG, dans Laquelle il l'Informe de la Reorganisation du FLN Apres la Mobilisation des Cadres, Etc.," in *Documents Relatifs a la Participation du Peuple Macedonien de la Macedoine Egee a la Guerre Civile en Grece, 1948*, ed. Risto Kirjazovski (Skopje: Les Archives de la Macedoine, 1948), 187-88; "La Lettre de Paskal Mitrovski a Joanis Joanidis, Membre du Bureau Politique du Comite Central du PCG et Ministre du Gouvernement Democratique Provisoire, Relative aux Questions d'Organisation du FLN et Autres," in *Documents Relatifs a La Participation Du Peuple Macedonien De La Macedoine Egee a La Guerre Civile En Grece 1948*, ed. Risto Kirjazovski (Skopje: Les Archives de la Macedoine, 1948), 234-35; "Le Rapport de Paskal Mitrovski au Bureau Politique du CC du PCG sur l'Activite Militaire Des Cadres du FLN, sur les Relations Reciproques des Dirigeants du FLN, Etc.," *ibid.*, 244-48.

<sup>liii</sup> It was not just the NOF's inner circle that sought the KKE's assistance in resolving internal party disputes. Lazo Poplazarov, a member of the party leadership but not of its inner circle, likewise wrote the Politburo of the KKE on 23 April 1948 about the accusations regarding NOF officials Lazo Kamčev and Marika Velkova's involvement in the development and failures of the movement in Voden. See: "Le Declaration de Lazo Poplazarov au Bureau Politique du PCG, dans Laquelle il Nie les Acusations se Lazo Kamčev et Marika Velkova, Liees a la Situation en Department de Voden qu'il Explique," in *Documents Relatifs a la Participation du Peuple*

---

*Macedonien de la Macedoine Egee a la Guerre Civile en Grece, 1948*, ed. Risto Kirjazovski (Skopje: Les Archives de la Macedoine, 1948), 189-93.

<sup>liv</sup> "Le Telegramme der Salutation du Premier Congres du FLN-FAF a la Federation Mondiale des Femmes, au Front Antifascite des Femmes (FAF) de la Republique Populaire Federative de Yougoslavie et au Front Antifasciste des Femmes (FAF) de la Republique Populaire de Macedoine," in *Documents Relatifs a la Participation du Peuple Macedonien de la Macedoine Egee a la Guerre Civile en Grece, 1948*, ed. Risto Kirjazovski (Skopje: Les Archives de la Macedoine, 1948), 27.

<sup>lv</sup> For example, as the Tito-Stalin dispute began to emerge in the Spring of 1948, none of the Soviet leaders or their Eastern Party counterparts (with the exception of Dimitrov) sent Tito a congratulatory letter on his birthday, a normally formulaic response. See: Vladimir Dedijer, *The Battle Stalin Lost: Memoirs of Yugoslavia, 1948-1953* (Viking Press: New York, 1970) 190-91.

<sup>lvi</sup> "La Lettre d'un Groupe de Dirigeants du FLN de la Partie Egeenne de la Macedoine au Comite Central du Parti Communiste Yougoslave a Belgrade. Ils Demandent le Secours Pour Normaliser les Rapports Entre le PCG et le FLN," 199-203.

<sup>lvii</sup> Keramitčiev, "La Rapport de Mihailo Keramitčiev, Secretaire du Comite Principal du FLN, Relatif a la Situation Generale de l'Organisation du FLN et aux Relations avec le PCG," 348-60.

<sup>lviii</sup> Dinko Delevski, "La Lettre de Dinko Delevski a Vangel Ajanovski dans Laquelle il le Prie de l'Aider Pour Passer de l'ADG en FLN," in *Documents Relatifs a la Participation du Peuple Macedonien de la Macedoine Egee a la Guerre Civile en Grece, 1948*, ed. Risto Kirjazovski (Skopje: Les Archives de la Macedoine, 1948), 255.

<sup>lix</sup> Ibid. 255.

<sup>lx</sup> Diplomatic and Historic Archive, 37516 12-6-47 ΑΥΤ. ΜΑΚ.

<sup>lxi</sup> This is most evident in the propaganda from this period, as it mimicked the KKE's arguments. Kofos likely reached this assessment based on his extensive use of the Greek Diplomatic and Historic Archive, whose documents create this impression. See: *ibid.* Diplomatic and Historic Archive, 43145 24.7.48 ΑΥΤ. ΜΑΚ.; Diplomatic and Historic Archive, 43736 30-7-48 ΑΥΤ. ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΙΑ; Diplomatic and Historical Archive, 43737 20-7-48 ΑΥΤ. ΜΑΚ.