

1947 UN Commission Established the Existence of the Macedonian Minority in Greece

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The modern Greek folly has always been its persistent but reckless denial of the existence of a Macedonian nationality. The hysteric intolerance against ethnic Macedonians has distorted the Greek collective consciousness so much that Greeks are no longer capable of differentiating between their wish that Macedonians were truly nonexistent and the actual Macedonian reality, which so defiantly confronts them.

As their Macedonian phobia continues to feed their schizophrenic psyches, rather than dealing with the Macedonian reality like rational people, they instead cry out for sympathy and comfort while hoping to be freed from their Macedonian nightmare, just like a small child who has awakened from a bad dream and cries out to his parents for comfort.

Such was the case in 1947 when the Greek government protested to the United Nations' Security Council regarding border violations by its northern neighbors. Greece demanded that Yugoslavia cease and desist overt military and logistical aid to the guerrillas fighting in the Greek Civil War, many of whom were ethnic Macedonians.

On December 19 1946, a Commission of Investigating was established by the United Nations pursuant to the resolution of the Security Council to examine alleged Greek frontier incidents. To the surprise and dismay of the Greek government, the Commission of Inquiry broadened its scope of investigation to include the treatment of minorities, tendentious misstatements of facts in press and radio, activities of foreign military and police missions in the four countries concerned and arraignments of free port or free zone facilities in Salonika.

Outraged by the Commission's expanded mission, Greece threatened the immediate execution of political prisoners and captured "bandits" unless the Commission narrowed its scope of investigating to the original request. However, after heavy arm-twisting by the United States the Greek government halted the executions and allowed the Commission to proceed without further impediment.

The United States was concerned that if Greece carried out the execution of the Macedonians world opinion would turn against Greece, which would give Yugoslavia, supported by the Soviets, a pretext to invade and detach Aegean Macedonia from Greece. In order to save face, and perhaps their country, Greek Ambassador, Dendramis, was instructed by the United States to inform the Security Council that Greece's protest was filed merely so there could be no grounds for misunderstanding regarding the interpretation of the terms of reference" (Telegram from Secretary of State to the US Embassy in Greece, February 8, 1947).

The United States understood that if Greece continued on its reckless political course it was only a matter of weeks before it fell to the Soviet bloc. Therefore, such a communist scenario for the future of Greece had to be prevented from becoming a reality.

Once the Commission began its work, the investigation of the Greek border incidents was downgraded as a minor issue. Such incidents, as the Commission contended, were regular occurrences in the Balkans for centuries and this issue in itself did not warrant an investigation at the United Nations level.

But the United States and Britain used this issue as a pretext to counterbalance Soviet expansion to the Balkans by preserving Greek territorial integrity. Britain and the United States were convinced that Yugoslavia wanted to detach the Aegean and Pirin parts of Macedonia from Greece and Bulgaria respectively and create an autonomous Macedonian state within the Yugoslav Federation.

Thus in the midst of this global political drama, the Macedonian issue again took center stage. But the ensuing colossal political battle between East and West instantly relegated Greece and Macedonia to the sidelines as spectators of their own destiny. The political drama was moved from the bloody foothills in Greece to the stately halls in Geneva. There, the ideological demarcation line between East and West was drawn alongside the Greek-Macedonian border, and as a result Greece and Macedonia continued their bitter rivalry on opposite sides of each other.

Nonetheless, the Commission's investigation was not interrupted and it was able to gather first hand information on the issues in question. However, before the findings were officially published, Commission representatives regularly communicated their findings to their respective governments for further evaluation and for instructions by their foreign affairs departments.

In one instance, the US Commission representative, Mark Ethridge, on May 8, 1947, sent a secret telegram to US Secretary of State, Marshall, informing him that "Greece itself by its own short sighted attitude and by its discriminatory and gangster-like methods was providing grist for the mill of political indoctrination and training in northern countries. It is noteworthy that a very large proportion of the refugees from Greece are Slavo-Macedonians who bore the brunt of discrimination. It seems clear to me that unless the discriminatory treatment stops flight to the mountains or across the borders will not stop. Thus this is the interrelation between nature and the causes and conclusion that Greece's discrimination has caused thousands to flee."

This short but revealing passage summarizes the entire political landscape in Aegean Macedonia and accurately depicts the state of the Macedonian minority in Greece. It is also evident that the American diplomat clearly acknowledges the existence of the Macedonian minority in Greece and he leaves no room for questioning which minority he is referring to. Additionally, he doesn't hide the fact that Greece's domestic policy is the root cause of the plight of refugees and the discrimination against the Macedonian minority.

Ever conspiring and manipulating, Greece could not admit to the world it could be guilty of the most notorious crimes against the Macedonian minority. Greece wanted the free and democratic world to believe that the existence of the Macedonian minority, the plight of the Macedonian

refugees and the execution of the Macedonian political prisoners were fallacious charges because Greece denied them. To further cover up their mess, Greece shifted the blame on Yugoslavia for stirring up trouble in Greece.

In their support, Greece offered to the Commission as evidence quotes from speeches of Yugoslav and Bulgarian statesmen from articles in the press, which to the Greeks meant unequivocal proof that Yugoslavia agitated a separate Macedonian state within the Yugoslav Federation and thus exploited the aspiration of Macedonians in Greece for an autonomous Macedonia. Thus it seems Greeks wanted to simultaneously claim both the non-existence of the Macedonian minority and blame Yugoslavia for fermenting dissatisfaction and disturbances among the Macedonians in Greece. This can't be true in any world, not even in a Venizelos' Greek-a-polis.

Based on its findings, the Commission's conclusions clearly and unequivocally put the blame on Greece for a policy of systematic discrimination and persecution of the Macedonian minority in that country. Even though Macedonians in Greece were not the primary goal of the Commission, some of its conclusions undeniably confirmed the existence of a Macedonian minority:

1) It was pointed out to the Commission and not disputed that after the Varkiza agreement over 20,000 Greek citizens had fled into Yugoslavia either directly or through Albania or Bulgaria and approximately 5,000 into Bulgaria, a substantial proportion in each case being of Slavo-Macedonian origin. Evidence was also presented in support of the charge that Greece has sanctioned persecution of its Slavo-Macedonian minorities. Furthermore, the Commission heard testimony that the Slavic dialect spoken by Slavo-Macedonians who were believed to comprise about 85,000 people was not taught in schools and that in certain areas, use of this dialect was prohibited." These findings by the Commission were so compelling in their condemnation of the Greek state that they left no room for doubt.

2) The Commission is of the opinion that as long as such discriminatory treatment continues, there will be unrest and discontent on the part of the Slavic minority in Greek Macedonia, which will provide fertile breeding ground for a separatist movement.

3) In connection with the present situation, the Greek Commission was presented with a body of evidence in support of the charges that responsibility for the situation lay with Greek domestic policy... This evidence was in effect that opposition political groups in Greece were persecuted by Greek gendarmerie and right-wing bandits, and that the civil rights of the Macedonian and Chamurriot minorities have been restricted

4) The Commission also received sufficient evidence to warrant a conclusion that immediately after the liberation of Greece, the small Slav speaking and Chamurriot minority in Greco-Macedonia and Epirus had been victims of retaliatory excesses, and Chamurriot minority had actually fled en masse from the country. As regards treatment of minorities, the Greek government asserted the acts in question were committed before it established control in the areas concerned, and that many members of these minority groups had collaborated with Axis occupying forces during war

Considering that these conclusions were unintended consequences, the findings of the Commission reveal disturbing and undeniable evidence of an official Greek policy of persecution and discrimination against the Macedonian minority. These accusations against the Greek state in 1947 were not "dreamed" up. They were findings by the United Nations Commission of Investigating and were consistent with the facts on the ground. These findings speak loudly and plainly to the world that the Greek denial of the Macedonian minority transcends all rationality. Indeed, this denial has become a Greek national blasphemy.

The Greek national obsession with the Macedonian issue continues to regenerate itself as a persistent and bloody hatred that is no longer capable of self-control. Greece has gone wrong on the Macedonian issue and Greek society cannot be expected to find a cure for its anti-Macedonian paranoia. It's time for the international community to call upon Greece and help this nation transcend the bounds of its delusional fascination with the Megale Idea.

The report of Commission of Investigation was signed at Geneva on May 23, 1947. The conclusions were subscribed by Australia, Belgium, Brazil, China, Columbia, Syria, United Kingdom and the United States. The delegations of Soviet Union and Poland did not approve the conclusions and the French delegation abstained. The United Nations has published the Commission's report in Official Records of the Security Council, Second Year, Special Supplement No. 2.

The information used to write this article was taken from the University of Wisconsin Digital Collection Library, United States Department of State Foreign relations of the United States, 1947. The Near East and Africa: Volume V (1947). The United States economic and military aid to Greece and Turkey: the Truman Doctrine, pp. 1 - 484.