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Macedonia

Capsule Summary

Country Name: The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)

Location: Southwestern part of Balkan Peninsula (Southeastern Europe), bordering on Greece, Albania, Bulgaria, and rump Yugoslavia)

Total Population: 2,063,122 (July 2003)

Languages: Macedonian (70%), Albanian (21%), Turkish (3%), Serbo-Croatian (3%), other (3%)

Religions: Macedonian Orthodox (67%), Muslim (30%), other (3%)

The Republic of Macedonia (the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) is a parliamentary democracy whose borders are defined primarily by a series of mountain ranges separating it from Bulgaria, Greece, Albania, and FR Yugoslavia (Kosovo and Serbia). Its area is 9,925 square miles (15,973 sq.km). Macedonian is a Slavic language, most closely related to Bulgarian and Serbian.

History

The territory of the Republic of Macedonia has always been ethnically mixed and the population multilingual. From the end of the fourteenth century until the outbreak of the First Balkan War in 1912, it was part of the Ottoman Empire. In the Treaty of Bucharest, which ended the Second Balkan War in 1913, most of what is now the Republic of Macedonia was assigned to Serbia and subsequently became part of Yugoslavia. During World War II, most of the territory was annexed by Bulgaria and the westernmost region was part of an Albanian puppet state. Macedonia was declared a Peoples (later Socialist) Republic on August 2, 1944, with Macedonian as its official language, and it subsequently became a part of socialist Yugoslavia. The current border was finalized in 1948. As a result of the Yugoslav Wars of Succession, which began on June 26 1991, the Republic held a referendum for independence on September 8 1991 and adopted an independent constitution on November 17, 1991 (slightly amended on January 6, 1992).

Under the Ottomans, Turkish was the dominant urban language and Greek dominated the Church.

During the nineteenth century, Bulgarian, Serbian, and Greek propaganda competed for the loyalty of the Christian peasant majority, and a separate, modern Macedonian national consciousness also emerged. Between the two World Wars, Serbian was the only language of education available outside of religious institutions. During World War II, schooling was in either Bulgarian or Albanian, depending on who controlled the territory. While Macedonia was part of the SFR Yugoslavia, Serbo-Croatian was the language of the army, a compulsory subject in all schools, and the language of communication at the federal and inter-republic levels. Thus, while Macedonian was the official majority language at the republic level, it was a minority language in Yugoslavia. Within Macedonia, Albanian and Turkish had official minority status and were supported by public elementary and secondary schools as well as language and literature departments at the University of Skopje and separate tracks at the School of Education. These two languages were also used for publicly funded radio, television, theaters, and tri-weekly newspapers, as well as other activities. During the 1980s, some of this support was curtailed or eliminated, but tiny amounts of support for Romani and Vlah began. After independence, public funding for Albanian and Turkish was increased, and such support for Romani and Vlah was greatly expanded. At the same time, political changes made private print and non-print media possible. The rise of multi-party politics resulted in the politicization of ethnicity, and there are currently Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Serbian, and Romani political parties as well as multiethnic parties. Many local NGOs and most cultural organizations are also defined along ethnic lines.

In SFR Yugoslavia, the terms *nationality* and *ethnic group* (this latter only for Roms and Vlahs) had replaced *minority* by 1974. The 1991 Macedonian constitution used only *nationality*. Albanian leaders have objected to the use of the term *minority* in reference to Macedonia's Albanians, arguing that their numbers are too large to be referred to by a term that implies "small."

Ethnic, Linguistic, and Religious Structure

The following 1994 census figures cite *declared ethnicity; declared mother tongue; and declared religious affiliation* (in this order): Macedonian (1,295,964), Macedonian (1,332,983), Orthodox (1,283,689); Albanian (441,104), Albanian (431,363), Muslim (581,203); Turkish (78,019), Turkish (64,665), Christian (28,400); Romani (43,707), Romani (35,120), Catholic (7,405); Muslim (15,418), Serbian (33,315), Protestant (1,215); Serbian (40,228), Vlah (7,036), and Other (33,122). Ethnic populations included Macedonian 64.2 percent, Albanian 25.2 percent, Turkish 3.8 percent, Roma 2.7 percent, Serb 1.8 percent, and other 2.3 percent in 1994. Others included Croats, Bosnians, Bulgarians, Egyptians, Montenegrins, and Greeks.

A portion of the Albanians and Turks of the municipality of Debar boycotted the 1994 census, objecting that they would not be fairly counted. The figures for declared ethnicity include estimates for this population, whereas the figures for mother tongue and religion do not, hence the discrepancies in the totals. The majority of those declaring Macedonian, Vlah, Serbian, Bulgarian, and Montenegrin ethnicity are Orthodox Christians, most of those declaring Albanian, Turkish, Romani, Bosniac, Egyptian, and Muslim ethnicity profess Islam. The majority of those declaring themselves Catholic, Protestant, or Christian (without further sectarian specification) declared Macedonian ethnicity. Most other Catholics are ethnic Croats and Albanians. The majority of Egyptians (a non-Romani speaking group of Romani origin) declared Albanian as their mother tongue and most of the rest declared Macedonian. Most of those declaring Muslim ethnicity speak Macedonian or some variant of the former Serbo-Croatian. The category Vlah includes both Aromanian and Megleno-Romanian (two closely related Romance languages that are related to Romanian). There are no absolute one-to-one correspondences among the three categories of ethnicity, language, and religion. Thus, for example, a few people declaring Muslim ethnicity declared a Christian religious affiliation, and 20 declared themselves to be atheists.

There have been Jews in Macedonia since pre-Christian times, but on the eve of World War II, most Macedonian Jews spoke Judezmo, a language related to Spanish and brought to the Balkans by Jews expelled from Spain in 1492. On 11 March 1943, the Nazis and their collaborators deported 7,200 of the 7,400 Jews

living in what became the Republic to the Treblinka death camp. Most survivors went to Israel, and today there are about 150 Jews in Macedonia.

Legal Status of Minority Languages and Religions

The preamble of the Macedonian constitution contains the following phrase:

“...Macedonia is established as a national state of the Macedonian people, in which full equality as citizens and permanent co-existence with the Macedonian people is provided for Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Roms and other nationalities living in the Republic of Macedonia...”

The proposed amended preamble makes no reference to nations or nationalities but only to “citizens of the Republic of Macedonia.” Article 7 of the Constitution establishes Macedonian as the official language of the Republic and specifies that in units of local self-government with a majority or “considerable number” belonging to a nationality (*i.e.*, ethnic minority), their language is also official. Article 35 of the 1994 Census Law provided for the census to be conducted in Albanian, Turkish, Romani, Vlah, and Serbian in addition to Macedonian. Article 88 of the 1996 Law on Local Self-Government defined *considerable number* as 20 percent. The proposed amended constitutional Article 7 begins like the old one but adds that “[a]ny other language spoken by at least 20 percent of the population is also an official language” followed by specifications concerning usage and concluding: “With respect to languages spoken by less than 20 percent of the population of a unit of local self-government, the local authorities shall decide on their use in public bodies.”

Albanian is the only minority language spoken by more than 20 percent of the population. Article 19 of the Constitution guarantees religious freedom but also names the Macedonian Orthodox Church “and other religious communities and groups.” The proposed amended Article 19 specifies separation of state and religious institutions (in addition to guaranteeing religious freedom) and names “[t]he Macedonian Orthodox Church, the Islamic Religious Community in Macedonia, the Catholic Church, and other religious communities and groups.”

Higher education has become a focus of dispute among other conflicts among Macedonians and Albanians. In 1995 a group of Albanians opened an Albanian-language university in the suburbs of

Tetovo, and it was declared illegal by the Macedonian government, who accused the University of being a separatist political project rather than an educational institution. In an attempt to resolve the issue, the international community has sponsored the founding of Southeast European University in Tetovo, where the languages of instruction will be Albanian, English, and Macedonian. SEEU is scheduled to open in October 2001, but faculty and students of Tetovo University are opposed to the project. Another dispute has involved Macedonian-speaking Muslim parents in western Macedonia demanding Turkish (in the Debar region) or Albanian (in the Kichevo region) elementary schools for their children. Human rights advocates argue that parents have the right to choose their children's schooling, while the Macedonian government argues that it is not required to provide schooling in a language that is not the children's mother tongue.

At the time of independence in November 1991, Macedonia was the least developed of the Yugoslav republics, and suffered from the lack of infrastructure and various UN sanctions on Yugoslavia, the new republic's largest market. Macedonia's commitments to economic reform and free trade—which were on the increase—were subsequently undermined by ethnic Albanian insurgencies in 2001. One-third of the workforce (estimated 1.1 million) is unemployed, and the per capita GDP in 2002 was US\$5,100. Moreover, money laundering is a problem on a local level due to organized crime activities.

VICTOR FRIEDMAN

See also **Macedonians; Yugoslavs (Southern Slavs)**

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Macedonians

Capsule Summary

Location: Southwestern part of Balkan Peninsula (Southeastern Europe, mainly in the Republic of Macedonia and neighbor states, republics of former Yugoslavia, and émigrés in Canada, Australia, United States and Western Europe)

Total Population: approximately 1.6–2 million

Language: Macedonian

Religion: Eastern Orthodox Christian, with few Muslims

The Macedonians are an ethnic group in the Southwestern Balkans, forming the main population of the

Republic of Macedonia (about 65–67 percent). Currently they number approximately 1.6 million in the Republic of Macedonia itself, claiming more than a million settled in other countries (about 500,000–550,000 in neighbor ones, and about 500 thousand overseas). Separate Macedonian identity was almost never mentioned before the end of nineteenth century either by locals, or by foreign travelers or diplomats. It was first appreciated internationally among Communist circles in the 1930s and was included as a sixth main nation within