

MACEDONIA: A COUNTRY IN QUOTATION MARKS

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"Macedonia," be it observed, is a conveniently elastic term."

M.E. Durham (1905:58).

"Are the Macedonians Serbs or Bulgars? The question is constantly asked and dogmatically answered in Belgrade and Sofia. But the lesson of history is that there is no answer at all. If there are answers, they are decided on purely political grounds."

H. Brailsford (1906:101)

Introduction:

Two members of the British Relief Fund, Edith Durham (1905) and Henry Brailsford (1906), published their travel memoirs soon after their services in the field were completed. Both books concentrated on regions of Macedonia which had been active in the Ilinden Uprising of August 1903, and which met with especially harsh reprisals from the Ottoman Turkish forces. The scenario is grimly familiar in 1992: burned villages, desperate refugees, and capricious executions. Brailsford's work centers on the towns of Florina (Lerin) and Kastoria (Kostur) in northern Greece (Aegean Macedonia). Durham's work is of particular interest for this present essay, because her base was Resen and its surrounding villages near Prespa Lake.

It is the same region which I have been studying, over a fifteen-year span, with a double focus on migration (pechalba) and ethnic pluralism. If devastation and violence brought Edith Durham to Prespa Lake, it was their opposites, development and civility, which drew me to the region again and again. With nine visits to the region since 1977, ranging from one week to seven weeks in length, the field work resembled the periodic returns and departures of the pechalbari.

My return to the Prespa Lake region in July and early August 1992 was of course affected by the current civil war. The route was different. This time I crossed the border from Greece, thus avoiding the battle-fields to the northwest, although the relations between the Greek state and the independent and unrecognized republic of Macedonia were by no means cordial.

"Macedonia" is a word that has been placed between quotation marks throughout the modern history of the

Balkan. Definitions of, as well as solutions to, the Macedonian problem seemed invariably suspended in the tentative space of quotation marks. Edith Durham put the matter in the following way. These admonitions in 1905, once again, sound an all-too-contemporary note in 1992 albeit for a neighboring part of the Balkan peninsula:

Theoretically, the plan to maintain order with a well-organized police force is admirable....As for the alternative plan...that of appointing a Christian European Governor to a State to be arbitrarily mapped out and called Macedonia--it might stave off for a time the partition of the territories that must ultimately take place, but as it would rest on no historical, geographical, or racial basis, it would do little more. For the crux of the whole matter is not Turk versus Christian any longer. The question now is, how much of the Turk's land shall be occupied by Serb, Bulgar, Greek and Albanian respectively. (Durham 1905:80).

The partitioning of Macedonia at the end of World War I into Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia accomplished much of what Edith Durham thought to be the essential task of a European Realpolitik for that part of the Balkan. The "historical, geographical, or racial basis" of Macedonia, however, was shunted to the side, only to emerge in our epoch as fundamental questions of "identity" and "existence". Representations of identity in our epoch inhere in the person's own voiced membership and affiliation (Smith, A.D. 1990:179). The achievement of selfhood is the social value par excellence at the end of our century, though politically that value is usually advocated as "human rights."

Durham's "Burden of the Balkans," like Kipling's "White Man's Burden," had the handicap of colonialist and evolutionist doctrine. As an adviser to Western diplomats, she proposed a benign form of ethnic cleansing: "The various races (are) so entwined and entangled, (that) anything that sorts them out will help in the end." (Durham, 1905: 65). Nevertheless, in her own observations of Prespa Lake villages, Durham noted: "In the villages that were half Mohammedan, there had, as a rule, been no fighting, and therefore little looting, and these were crowded with refugees." (Durham 1905:107).

At the local level villagers of different religions could keep a relatively peaceful co-existence. Durham was no spokeswoman for an ethnic mosaic. Her contemporary, Brailsford, on the other hand, was fascinated by the plurality of languages spoken at a market-place in Macedonia (Brailsford: 1906:85). He also noted that emigration from Macedonia was a method for the peasant population to solve its immediate problems: "Over three thousand peasants are said to have left Macedonia in the winter of 1903-04 for America (Brailsford: 1906:39). With their houses burned to the ground, the peasants could not borrow money to rebuild them. A peasant could go to America as a pechalbar; that was the only purpose for which he could borrow money. The intention was to return to family and village with earnings enough to pay his debts and rebuild the family home.

Thus, the institution of pechalba in the region combines a variety of motives and interests. To reduce the institution to pure economic interest and rationality, that is, to make the pechalbar into a peasant *homo economicus*, is to neglect the salient emotional, cultural, and political qualities of the long duration in Macedonia of pechalba.

This essay is a modest, and hopefully a form of applied anthropology that is consistent with several years of observations and interviews in the Prespa Lake region. The civil war in other multi-ethnic regions of former Yugoslavia makes urgent ethnographic reporting from regions that remain peaceful. The Prespa Lake region was ravaged after Ilinden, in the Balkan wars of 1912-13, during the Second World War, and during the Greek Civil War that followed. The menace of still another war is on everyone's mind. That dread informs this essay.

Pechalba and Apples:

Prespa Lake (750 meters above sea level) is in the southwest corner of Macedonia and borders on both Greece and Albania. The Lake district, with its municipal center, Resen, is the homeland for three speech communities: Albanian, Turkish, and Macedonian. The Turkish and Albanian groups are Moslem, the Macedonian majority is Christian Orthodox. There is also a settled Rom (Gypsy) group in Resen. They are Albanian-speaking and work in the blacksmith and wood-cutting trades.

Resen is a relatively small municipality with a population of about 25,000 persons, a third of whom live in the town itself. The majority, therefore, lives in the surrounding 40 villages that are situated on the lake shores and the rim of encircling mountains. Mt. Pelister on the eastern edge of

the lake is at 2400 meters, Macedonia's highest peak. It forms a ridge that has the affectionate name Baba, or Grandma.

A good resource for the Prespa Lake district is the water which runs down the mountain slopes and through the villages. The streams are channeled deftly through pastures, gardens, and fruit orchards, so that very little water seems to reach the lake. Cement aqueducts, constructed in the 1960's, provide water for areas that do not have direct access to streams. Irrigation to otherwise arid sections of the landscape encouraged orchard cultivation by the village households. The local agricultural development coincided with, and was contingent upon, emigration into the international labor market. Keeping the channels clear, and regulating the portions allowed to each orchard are major problems for intra- and inter-village negotiation. The right to water one's orchards and gardens on a certain night is negotiated, but several men have told me that it helps to keep watch at the main junction of the channel, to see that another man does not redirect the water towards his orchards. In 1982 I took part in two such surveillances during the night. Maintenance of ethnic affiliation and ethnic boundaries is surely a significant element in the culture and economy of the lake region, but there are until the present time enough common interests among the lake region's diverse ethnic communities to sustain a consensus and a civil concord.

Statistics obtained from a municipal officer in Resen estimate the two Moslem communities at 1/3 of the total, with the Albanian group being slightly larger than the Turkish. The Turkish community is centered in the town of Resen and in a few nearby villages, while the Albanian community is in several outlying villages, between 12 to 20 kilometers south of Resen. I surveyed three villages which are about half Macedonian and half Albanian: the very situation which Edith Durham described in 1903 as peaceable. Such is the case almost a century later. I have not noticed any village in the region whose population is all Turkish or all Albanian, but there are many villages whose inhabitants are all Macedonian.

Since the Yugoslav legislation of 1974, every speech community in Resen municipality has the opportunity for primary schooling in the family's mother tongue. The current economic and political crisis places strain upon the multi-cultural institutions of the Prespa Lake region, but thus far, they are intact and the atmosphere subdued.

In regions of Macedonia where the proportion of Albanians is higher, as in Tetovo, inter-ethnic conflicts are more intense. Tetovo's proximity to Kosova is no doubt a factor. Many young Albanians in recent decades have chosen Prishtina University for their higher education, and not the university in Skopje. I have not known any Albanian students from the Prespa Lake region who attended the university in Kosova. They have gone to the Albanian technical school in Struga or to the university in Skopje. There is discussion about making the Macedonian republic a bi- or trilingual society, with official notices to be in Macedonian, Turkish, and Albanian. The minority groups, via their political parties, are currently pressing for that goal. Albanians object to being referred to as a "minority," for the term has a pejorative meaning. In the Tetovo region, Albanians claim that they are indeed the majority. In any case, Resen's Turkish and Albanian communities are bi-lingual, speaking their mother tongues among themselves and Macedonian in inter-ethnic contexts.

The common economic activities of the Prespa Lake region are migration and apple-growing. Since the 1960's all three speech communities have sent members abroad and developed orchards at home. One of the additions to the town square of Resen, since my last visit in October 1990 is a monumental sculpture of a Red Delicious apple. It is a work in copper plate set high on a pedestal in front of the town hall. The apple symbolizes the Lake Region's recent prosperity and well-being. To make the region's symbolism complete, there also ought to have been placed a sculptured suitcase next to the apple.

Since 1977, a Resen-based cooperative, "Agriplod," has managed apple production on a large scale. It has developed a relatively flat tract of land south of Resen towards the lake shore, on which an estimated 1/3 of the region's apples are grown. In 1984 the cooperative opened an apple-pressing plant near the orchard. Agriplod is by far the largest employer in the Prespa region. The definite preference for the inhabitants is, however, to work for oneself, to be "privat". Two or three households, of the same kin and ethnic group, pool their resources for an apple business. They share the costs, the labor, and the cash income. Members of the family who lived abroad contribute towards the enterprise by remittances and/or with their labor when they are back home.

Until 1992 most of the apples were trucked north to the big urban markets of Yugoslavia. Exporting apples out of Yugoslavia was a rarity, especially due to restrictions by the European Common Market. This is one reason why

Prespa residents urgently await Macedonia's recognition and acceptance into the European Community.

Pechalba, under its modern title, "temporary economic migration," was revived by the Tito government in 1965. New legislation permitted and encouraged widespread emigration to the labor-importing countries of Australia, Canada, U.S.A., and Western Europe. Resen and its surrounding villages had one of the highest rates of emigration in Macedonia which was very high for Yugoslavia as a whole. In 1981 8,270 (roughly 30%) of Resen's population was living abroad (Savezni zavod za statistiku 1239. 1981:22 and for a survey, Baucic, I. 1977).

The rate for *pechalba* was highest in the villages, and according to Resen's municipal authorities, 70% of the families had at least one member living abroad. My interviews with members of the three ethnic groups (1982) indicated that a typical strategy was that half the siblings were in *pechalba*. For example, in one Macedonian family with seven children, two brothers were in Sweden, one brother and one sister in Canada, while one brother and two sisters remained in Macedonia. During the 1920's the father of those seven children had worked in Detroit on a railroad crew, returning to his village during the Depression with enough money to build a home and start a farm. A similar account came from a man whose father had worked during the 1920's on the construction of the tunnel under the Detroit River. He had likewise saved enough money over a six- year period to build a house in his native village.

In an Albanian family from a nearby village, there were six children: one son in Canada, another in Australia (he later moved to Canada) and one son at home (he had returned from Australia). One daughter was in Chicago, and two were elsewhere in Macedonia. House-building and investment in family-owned orchards, professional training for the young, and expenses for air travel and weddings were the large items in the family budgets. The ethnic boundaries of the region were clearly drawn. Marriages were usually endogamous, but always within the religious group.

There is a variety of migration strategies, but they share the common goal of keeping a stable base at home. Twenty years ago Lockwood summed up the extensive functions of *pechalba* for Yugoslavia, and his observations still apply in the Lake Prespa region:

The existence of *pechalba* also meant the incorporation of the peasantry into a cash economy and into the national,

and even international labor market, while at the same time the workers maintained their primary social bonds within a village setting. (Lockwood 1973:92).

Pechalba movements ought to be given the "thick description" they deserve. To "unpack" migration is beyond the scope of this essay (See, Halpern J. 1975, and Schwartz 1989), but surely any discussion of the breaking up of Yugoslavia should also refer to the roles of emigrant communities in Western Europe, North America, and Australia. Especially pertinent for this paper is the ideological conflict between Greek and Macedonian organizations over the name and identity of "Macedonia." (Thernstrom 1980 and Danforth 1990, Schwartz 1992).

The civil war to the north and the renewed antagonism of the Greek government to the south have already had their influence on the Prespa Lake communities. Independence from Belgrade means that ethno-national loyalties can take center stage in politics. The irredentist Macedonian party (VMRO) takes its name from the 1903 Ilinden Revolt against the Ottoman Empire. Today the Party harbors animosity to the two Moslem communities in Macedonia.

The conflict with Greece is prominent among all the Macedonians I spoke with. There is less significance in this issue for the Albanian and Turkish communities. Of common concern to the entire region, however, is the fate of the apple harvest, in which all the ethnic groups have invested their labor and capital. As with William Lockwood's region in Bosnia, "Peasants of all three ethnic groups practice almost identical economy (Lockwood 1975:83).

Normally the growers picked the apples in October, crated and stored them until December and January, when they had the highest prices in Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Zagreb. Several families combined in the trucking and marketing work. The civil war has eliminated the possibility for marketing the apple crop. There are now problems at the Serbian border and gasoline is difficult, if not impossible, to procure. The Greek border is now closed.

Thus, with the promise of one of the best harvests ever, thanks to ample rain and sunshine during the summer months, the Prespa apple-farmers are threatened with the likelihood that they will not be able to sell their apples. The European Common Market, pressed by the Greek delegation, has not recognized Macedonia, and therefore, cannot offer dispensation from its import restrictions. The economic problems of Macedonia are enormous, but

further exacerbated by lack of international recognition. Thus Macedonia cannot borrow from the World Bank.

Remittances from family members abroad have also slackened in the past decade. The labor-importing countries of the 1960's developed high rates of unemployment in the 1980's. *Pechalbari* returning from Denmark, nevertheless, had the chance to further develop their homes and orchards. Two Turkish brothers and residents of Resen, returned to their town in 1982 after 13 years in Copenhagen. They had been demoralized after experiencing two years of sustained unemployment in Denmark. With their savings they had built two adjoining houses, and had purchased a truck for marketing apples. They then remained in Resen and cultivated the orchards. Even with the inflationary crisis of the 1980's the returned *pechalbari* were able to make a satisfactory living. The price of apples generally kept up with the rate of inflation. The best-laid plans of *pechalbari*, however, could not include the contingency of the civil war in Yugoslavia.

As a last resort, the apple-growers in and around Resen can take their harvest to the apple juice factory in one of the villages. Built in the 1980's, the factory offers the lowest prices per kilo, one eighth of what the good markets bring. In 1987 there was severe drought in the region, so some farmers knocked the unripened apples from the trees and took them to this plant. For poor crops and windblown apples, the factory is definitely a help to the local growers.

A good price for apples in Belgrade (1984) was about 1 dollar per kilo. With about 400 trees as an average, the crop could amount to 40,000 kilos. When I helped with picking (1979, 1984, 1987, 1990), we harvested four to six crates per tree, each crate had 20 kilos. Typically, a farmer in these villages would have three or four plots of land for orchard use.

Spraying the trees with insecticides and fungicides was one of the largest cash expenses, followed by trucking. Many farmers cut down on their spraying, hearing of its hazards and aware of the costs. A good annual net return for this crop was about 25,000 dollars. Adding remittances from a family member abroad, which from Denmark amounted to on the average 2,000 dollars per year, a household in the village could enjoy a relative prosperity in the Yugoslavian Republic with one of the lowest per capita incomes. With gardens, a few chickens, a cow and calf, the families in the villages made few shopping trips to the town markets. Thus it was possible for apples and *pechalba* to combine in the culture and

economy of this Lake Prespa region during the last two decades.

Many of the houses have the initials of the owner and dates of completion under the front eaves. The building boom reached its peak in the late 1970's. It seemed to take four or five years for a house to be completed. Even when finished, its owners might still be living in a small apartment in Copenhagen. The ground floors of new, unoccupied houses were used for storing apple crates.

This summer, walking through the villages, I and my wife noticed at least one thing that was very new. There were single, white-washed stones dotting the countryside and on nearly every wall in the villages. Well up the mountain slopes we could see those white stones. We asked what they were for. In March 1992 aerial photos of Macedonia were made for this country's first map of their own. The villagers were required to whitewash the boundary stones that marked their property. There apparently was no opposition to the idea. On the contrary, it looked like the job was done with enthusiasm. To paraphrase Frost's famous line: "Good maps make good neighbors!"

In my several visits to the region, I always tried to get a good, detailed topographic map. It was not possible, and was told by the town officials, "We are too close to the border."

Friends and Informants:

The independence of the Macedonian Republic since September 1991 has given the border problem with Greece a renewed significance for the Prespa Lake region. The eastern lake shore prior to 1918 was an open border. There was much contact between the villages via the lake shore or by trails over the Baba mountain ridge.

When the border was drawn after World War 1, a Hellenizing policy gathered force on the Greek side. During and after the Greek Civil War, 1947-49, this campaign was again pursued with renewed vigor. Macedonians supported the Greek Communists, who promised cultural and ethnic freedoms if they won the war and assumed power in Greece.

Refugees from the Macedonian villages in Greece near Florina (Lerin) and Kastoria (Kostur) escaped into Yugoslavia and subsequently were also settled in other Soviet bloc countries. Several thousand *Detca Belgaci* (literally "runaway children") received immigrant visas to Canada and Australia during the 1950's. Cold War politics in the United States restricted the immigration of children

with a red stigma. Toronto and Melbourne are therefore the two major centers of the Macedonian human rights movement, whose leaders are Detca Begalci. In Toronto, the Detca Begalci connected with early *pechalbari*, who themselves had been refugees during the Ilinden period. The Aegi-Makedonci have what might be called "charter group" status among the Macedonian Canadians. The Vardar Macedonians, many of whom come from the Prespa Lake region, are the "new arrivals" from the 1960's and 1970's.

There is an understandable envy for the Vardar group, because its members could fly to their homeland without any serious political problems. The Aegean Macedonians, on the other hand, could be refused entry to Greece, if their names had Slavic endings, or if they appeared in a listing of former Partisans. Many of the Aegean Macedonians, holding Canadian passports, have been turned away at the Yugoslavian border or denied entry at the airport in Athens. Thus even after the fall of the Communist state in Macedonia, the stigma of "Skopje" Communism remains cemented in Greek policy.

Related is the fact that the Greek government has been intensifying a campaign with the slogan: "Macedonia is Greek!" in order to prevent the Macedonian Republic from using the name. When crossing the border from Greece to Macedonia, I filled out an exit form that required my printing the word "Yugoslavia," instead of "Macedonia."

Macedonian friends and informants discuss their feelings towards Greece and Serbia more than any other topics. Heady with their long-awaited independence from Belgrade, Orthodox Macedonians are perhaps more willing to endure current economic hardships than are the two Moslem communities. The latter have a reserved, wait-and-see attitude, hoping for an expansion of their ethnic and cultural freedom. Identity politics is at the top of every group's agenda. Turkish ethnics generally keep a low political profile in Macedonia; with a past as the ruling elite, they do not celebrate their history in the region. Turkish families in Resen have organized relief for Moslem refugees from Bosnia, who are housed in the town's vacant apartments.

Albanians have taken a much more outspoken political position in the independent Macedonia. Their attention is often directed towards the fate of their community in Kosova. Some Albanians suspect that Macedonian nationalists will ally themselves with Serbians should a war break out in Kosova. Thus, for the two large ethnic

minorities in Macedonia, the name "Macedonian" is also in quotation marks. One misses in the current crisis of the country a sense that the different communities speak with one another about their interests and hopes. Dialogue, across ethnic boundaries, is an essential requirement for the independent Macedonia, essential, that is, for removing its tentative and hypothetical status.

There are probably very few secrets about how the groups feel toward each other, but interviewing has, nevertheless, a quasi-secretive quality, especially if it is conflicts that are being talked about. Interviews in inter-ethnic contexts, seem to take for granted an intra-ethnic confidence. The researcher carries around the "hidden" feelings of the informants, thus repressing a constant situation of irony. Minimal peace-keeping apparently requires maximal secret-keeping. The interviewer is also tempted to tell those "secrets," because they are just as often based upon common interests and common fears, as on mutual suspicions. Perhaps a task for applied anthropology is simply to mediate, not just the conflicts, but the bases for agreement. The current danger is that a centrifugal tempest may ruin the ethnic boundaries which have developed and functioned since in the region since World War II. Robert Frost's defense of fences/maps again comes to mind.

I was not completely surprised when one of my old Albanian friends and informants told me this summer that the police had previously come by his house and inquired about my visits. "Why does he come here?" the police used to ask him. "He's my friend" was the answer. The same thing happened to some of my Turkish friends in Resen. Macedonians whom I know have apparently never been contacted by the police after I had been in their villages and homes. Surveillance of researchers was keener when the researcher listened to members of the minority groups. The Albanian was quite sure that now, after independence, the police would not ask about my visit. A loosening up of restrictions has occurred and is experienced as such by members of the minority communities. This is an example of what sort of information can be gathered and communicated by visiting anthropologists in the interest of peace-keeping.

Now an active member of the Albanian Progressive Party for Democracy, my friend has a few concrete, workable proposals for Macedonia: there ought to be tri-lingual passports and other official documents. Albanian and Turkish broadcasting time on radio and television ought to be expanded. His party, and a Turkish party that is being organized, would like to form a coalition

government with the Macedonian Social Democrats and ex-Communists, and in that way keep the nationalist VMRO relatively isolated in Macedonian politics. The more sensitive to human rights the Skopje government is, the more likely it will win recognition from the European Community. That recognition is essential for alleviating the economic crisis. There is, I think, a wide base of support for a cosmopolitan, "open borders," politics in Macedonia. *Pechalbari*, regardless of their ethnic affiliations, appreciate the value of open borders and open markets.

Nation-making, however, demands a choice of symbols, an iconography for representing "the people" and its history. Here the irredentist movements have a head start on the cosmopolitans and the spokesmen for minorities. An etched portrait of Goce Delchev, the martyred hero of the Ilinden Rebellion, is replacing photos of Marshall Tito. Delchev was himself an advocate for an insurgent organization "open to all Macedonians regardless of nationality" (Banac, I. 1984:215).

The celebration of Ilinden took place on August 2, 1992. The municipality of Resen did not hold festivities in the town itself; it sponsored a festival in an all-Macedonian village near the Greek border, twenty kilometers from the town center. There were no Albanian or Turkish people present. I asked a Turkish friend the night before if he thought of going. "No, why should I? All they do is tell about how bad the Turks were. They should tell about now."

I had been fearful that the Ilinden Festival would be a rally for the VMRO; actually the rhetoric was moderate. There were many references in songs and in speeches to *pechalba*, that is, to the distant communities of migrants. That form of experience is familiar to all of the ethnic groups in the Prespa Lake region and in much of Macedonia. The celebration of Ilinden, however, is felt as exclusive, not intended for the Moslem populations.

The current discussion of a new Macedonian flag is framed with references to primordial Macedonian symbolism. There are three variants on the motif of Alexander the Great. The most explicit is the gold lion on a red field, Alexander's coat of arms. A second is derived from another Alexandrian symbol: a gold sun and sunbeams on a red field. The flag-designers draw their inspiration from the archeological museums, precisely those sources which contend with the Hellenist symbolic capital. A third proposal is an abstracted and slightly neutral variant: a gold sun on a red field. This would be a

flag that resemble the Japanese. In choosing red and gold as their colors, the Macedonians are both drawing upon the ancient symbolism of Alexander the Great and contrasting with the blue and white of Hellas.

There are indeed gaps in the Macedonian republic's symbolic vocabulary. The new currency for the republic, for example, has abandoned the term "Dinar" as its base but has not yet found a substitute. One Macedonian informant spoke amusingly of "Marks" and then went on to praise his country as "Makedeutschland."

Such wry humor is probably one of the saving graces for a country in quotation marks. A man from Skopje spoke of the hasty withdrawal of the Serbian army from Macedonia in November 1991. ("Serbian" and "Yugoslavian" were synonymous terms in 1992). The army took all the hardware it could, "even the electric wiring," my informant said. "Did you celebrate in the streets?" I asked. "No, we Macedonians are a relaxed people," he answered, and added: "But we didn't shout, 'Come back again!'".

Conclusion:

One of the central preoccupations of ethnographers is that they have tended to study communities in, what are for most people, "remote areas" (Ardener 1987). This remark pertains to the anthropology of Eastern Europe as well as to peoples of Africa and the Americas (Halpern and Kideckel 1983:378).

It was not so much a fascination with cultural otherness, but rather a commitment to social equality that inspired many of us to study villagers in the former Yugoslavia. That these villagers also lived more or less peaceably in an "ethnic mosaic" gave added meaning to their life histories and communities.

We respected ethnic identity; we even partially adopted some of our friends' and informants' affiliations, assuming perhaps naively that the ethnic mosaic would not turn into the powder keg. We were simply and modestly listening to what peasants, peasant-workers and migrants were telling us about their life-experiences and how they turned those into survival strategies.

Knowing the virulence of nationalist and fundamentalist demagogues and the accessibility of the printed word, where are our responsibilities when we report from the field of tensions? To what use is put our local knowledge? The myth of remoteness for ethnographic research is shattered forever. The ethnographic present merges with,

and even collides with, the actual present. We are today more dependent on journalists, whose coverage of the past two years has kept us in touch with our field sites. Nevertheless, we trust in the durability of own experience in the field, just as we trust in the judgments of our friends and informants. The perspective of ethnography differs sharply from that of journalism and much of policy science.

All the more reason for returning to the places which are still at peace. If representing conflicts and tensions can lead to dialogue and mutual understanding, then our reports from the field ought to be both open and reflective. As long as we are able, we can provide evidence that ethnic, linguistic, and religious plurality does not lead inexorably to civil war. In this essay I have wagered for hope and optimism in a corner of Macedonia that bears "the burden of the Balkans."

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