

Wojciech SZCZEPAŃSKI

Commission of Balkan Studies PAS

woytasqu@o2.pl

SERBIA – AN OPPONENT OR AN ALLY OF INDEPENDENT MACEDONIA (1991-2013)?

ABSTRACT

The relations between Serbia and Macedonia in the period from the disintegration of SFR of Yugoslavia (1991) to 2013 became the subject of the proposed considerations. They are targeted at searching for an answer to the question in the title about the character of the attitude of Serbia towards its southern neighbour during the last twenty years. As an introduction the issues regarding the previous stage of the relations between Serbia and Macedonia, i.e. with the Yugoslavian period (since 1943), were briefly mentioned. Through decades, within the Yugoslavian order, the links between Serbia and Macedonia were so close that only the links that the biggest of the republics of former Yugoslavia had with its smallest member, i.e. Montenegro, seemed to be closer. The situation changed rapidly when in 1991 Macedonia decided to declare sovereignty and following the precursors of the defragmentation of SFRY – Slovenia and Croatia, it started to shape its political and economic being without ties to Yugoslavia, at that time cut and stuck in the chaos and on the verge of gory conflicts. Although, from the point of view of Belgrade, Macedonia was never officially considered an enemy, and the regime of Milosevic was mainly interested in those republics of the former SFRY, which territories were numerously inhabited by Serbs (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro), in the relations between Serbia and Macedonia cooled off and the Serbian radicals (the political camp of V. Šešelj) for some time called for “dealing with” Macedonia. On the threshold of the independence of Macedonia, it turned out that the main problems which this weak country will have to tackle in the relations with the outside world, will not be connected with Serbia but other neighbours (in the text the conflicted relations between Macedonia and Greece are mentioned, as well as the tensions between Macedonia and Albania inside Macedonia together with the background presence of the issue of Kosovo; the relation between

Macedonia and Bulgaria were skipped). In the 90s of the 20th century as well as in the first 13 years of the current century, the relations between Serbia and Macedonia underwent interesting transformations. They evolved from quite hostile to fairly friendly, although occasionally various political, economic and even religious problems put a shadow on them. Especially important moments, which squeezed stigma on the transforming relation between Yugoslavia/Serbia and Macedonia, were the events happening in Kosovo and northern and western Macedonia at the turn of the 21st century, the centre of which was the Albanians. The changes on top of authorities of both countries, happening during the 20 years of censorship in 1991-2011, were also of vital importance. The interpolitical transformations of both post-Yugoslavian countries contributed to the gradual development of their, at first frozen, relations (in the text they are analysed since the visit of Kiro Gligorov in Belgrade in 1995 and the official establishment of diplomatic relations by Macedonia and Yugoslavia, comprised of Serbia and Montenegro in 1996 to the elections in Serbia in 2011, when the president of Serbia became T. Nikolić and the prime minister I. Dačić – the first once connected with V. Šešelj, the latter with S. Milošević – who paradoxically turned out to be an advocate of the rapprochement between Serbia and Macedonia, which was expressed by inter-governmental connections in 2013). Another issue, pointed out in the article, is the presence in the bilateral relations between Macedonia and Serbia the problem of integration of both countries and the whole west Balkan macro region with the EU, significant since the democratization of Serbia (autumn 2000). The submitted sketch is closed with an optimistic evaluation of the present conditions and perspectives of the relations between Serbia and Macedonia. It is worth underlining that they did not deteriorate when the coalition of the nationalistic party (SNS) with the socialistic (SPS) came to power in Belgrade, although some analysts predicted – wrongly as it turned out – that this kind of reconfiguration of the political scene in Serbia would not provide the relation between Serbia and Macedonia with new, positive impulses, but only difficult challenges and trials, if not dramatic crises.

Key-words: Serbia, Macedonia, Macedonian-Serbian relations, disintegration of Yugoslavia, independence of Macedonia, Serbian minority in Macedonia, Albanians, Kosovo, Orthodox churches, regional and European integration

On the threshold of the last decade of the 20th century there was a collapse of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ); the close legal, political and economic connections, joining Serbia and Macedonia, were broken off.

Starting from, generally superficial, relations of some Macedonians or Serbs, frequently yugo-nostalgically oriented, as well as basing on the statements appearing here and there in the literature, one could come to the conclusion that in the era of the SFRJ's

existence, co-forming it Serbia and Macedonia were close to each other and in really good relations. Such an opinion, however, does not include not only various nuances, but also some essential issues. The intra-Yugoslavian relations between Macedonia and Serbia underwent a series of transformations, the result of which was their evolution from tense to almost trouble-free. In fact, at the time of the growing antagonisms between the nations and republics of SFRJ, destabilizing, and even disuniting this by all means specific relation of republics, Macedonia and Serbia were fairly co-operating, although absolutely not equalized by their potentials, segments of a federal state. Luckily, they did not get involved in any acute political conflict, which could carry the threat of armed confrontation.

Then, what were the reasons for the choice made by most of the Macedonian citizens in an independent referendum on 8th September 1991, the result of which was the announcement of the country's independence in Parliament on 17th November 1991 and accepting the new constitution,¹ which entailed breaking the relations with Serbia and Montenegro, being still ready to form the Yugoslavian federation, as well as with Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIH), whose fate was uncertain then (the independence of BIH was proclaimed on 5th April 1992)? Various considerations spoke for this. Among them, there were those connected to the remembrance of the past and those realized in connection with the current political situation, the assessment of the security formulated on the spot and the strategic calculations derived from the contemporary analyses. The steps of Slovenia and Croatia towards independence, first armed struggles of the parties trying to inhibit the disintegration of SFRJ with the armed formations created by the republics which decided to leave the federation, and finally – the failure of the trials to conclude agreements aiming at transforming and keeping SFRJ (including the failure of the project which can be named as *the Izetbegović-Gligorov platform*)² created

¹ In the referendum, boycotted by the vast majority of the Macedonian Albanians and Serbs, approx. 95% of votes were for the independence (the turnout was 71%). Earlier, the independence of Macedonia (without the declaration of leaving SFRJ, but with a clearly formulated assumption of cooperation with the other republics) was announced by the Parliament of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia (25th January 1991) – however, it was not a proper act proclaiming sovereignty, as only holding a valid popular referendum could allow to accept it. As cited in: M. Korzeniewska-Wiszniewska, 'Stanowisko serbskie wobec procesu tworzenia państwa macedońskiego w 1991 r.' in I. Stawowy-Kawka, M. Kawka (eds.), *Macedoński dyskurs niepodległościowy. Historia, kultura, literatura, język, media*, Kraków 2011, p. 227; E. Bujwid-Kurek, 'Pluralne spektrum macedońskiej sceny politycznej po 1990 roku' in M. Kawka, I. Stawowy-Kawka (eds.), *Tożsamość narodowa w społeczeństwie multietnicznym Macedonii. Historia, kultura, literatura, język, media*, Kraków 2008, p. 255; W. Czaplinski, 'Rozpad Jugosławii i powstanie nowych państw na Bałkanach w świetle prawa międzynarodowego' in B. Zieliński (ed.), *Wokół Macedonii: siła kultury – kultura siły*, Poznań 2002 (*Filologia Słowiańska UAM*, 8), p. 19. About the Macedonian constitution from 1991 (and the amendments from 2001) see: P. Olszewski, *Macedonia. Historia i współczesność*, Radom 2010, pp. 102-111.

² It was a proposal of changing the SFRJ system to a mixed system, called in the primary Polish synthesis of the Macedonian history as "the union of sovereign republics", submitted by Alija Izetbegović and Kiro Gligorov (3rd May 1917 – 1 I 2012) in the spring of 1991. I. Stawowy-Kawka, *Historia Macedonii*, Wrocław 2000, p. 282. It is worth mentioning that the confederate proposal was formulated based on the first of such concepts, which was presented by A. Izetbegović himself at the beginning of 1991, when it was not accepted by K. Gligorov.

a situation where Macedonia or BIH together with Serbia and Montenegro safeguarding the Yugoslavian project, being then turned into ashes, which was perceived as totally hopeless or even doomed to disaster. Due to the above, better perspectives were received by, until recently not easy to imagine, national independence. Then, Macedonia did not announce independence to cut off from Serbia, dominating in the disintegrating Yugoslavia, or any of the Yugoslavian republics. For Macedonia, the disintegration was an action that was too complicated and risky in regard to the fragility of its own economy and the inevitable losses bound to leading it out of a bigger system and also due to few possibilities of providing the military security for the Macedonian state.³

Macedonia, gaining independence in some measure as a result of “the domino principle”⁴, entered its independent existence, which again cared for re-managing the relation with Serbia, with a defined baggage of experience taken from the times of the existence of SFRJ, and with the memory, appropriately shaped in the Macedonian society, of the Macedonian and Serbian relations developed within this community. Hence, before the considerations are limited to the issue of shaping the Macedonian and Serbian relations in the years 1991-2013, a few of the most important questions and facts related to the Macedonian and Serbian co-existence in the era of SFRJ should be pointed out:

- the role of *Declaration* formulated by the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) in the Bosnian place Jajce on 29th November 1943 (recognizing the Macedonians as an equal nation of Yugoslavia and also referring to Macedonia in further decisions of the above-mentioned Council as the Yugoslavian republic, legally equal with the others,⁵ which constituted moving away from the tradition of administrative connecting the lands by the Vardar with Serbia;
- regulating in the years 1945-1948 the conflicts between the Serbs and the Macedonians about demarcating the Macedonian and Serbs republics in Yugoslavia in a way fundamentally favourable to Serbia, but not causing insurmountable disputes, which could antagonize bigger groups of Macedonians and Serbs and the communist leaders of Macedonia and Serbia, and in consequence negatively influence the Macedonian and Serbian relations;
- recognizing the Macedonian language as a separate and legally equal with other Yugoslavian languages, which was not only an absolutely unprecedented declaration, but also – as it was to turn out – extremely important in its meaning for the final stage of shaping the separate Macedonian national identity⁶, which can be only weighed against the meaning of separating the Macedonian church from

³ Remarks on the initial economic situation of independent Macedonia: P. Olszewski, *Macedonia...*, p. 180-181; I. Stawowy-Kawka, *Historia Macedonii*, pp. 303-304. On the military weakness of Macedonia at the time of SFRJ disintegration: *ibid.*, pp. 309-310.

⁴ J. Wojnicki, *Przeobrażenia ustrojowe państw postjugosłowiańskich (1990-2003)*, Pułtusk 2003, pp. 56-59.

⁵ I. Stawowy-Kawka, *Historia Macedonii*, p. 241.

⁶ S. Kiselinovski, ‘Makedonskoto dviženje i makedonskiot jazik (1913-1945)’ in M. Kawka, I. Stawowy-Kawka (eds.), *Tożsamość narodowa...*, pp. 165-167; B. Dziewiałowski-Gintowt, ‘Język jako argument

the Serbian church that happened as a result of a tense process⁷ lasting for more than two decades (1945-1967);

- creating for the Macedonians, within the framework of the Yugoslavian People's Republic of Macedonia proclaimed on 2nd August 1944 by the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Macedonia (ASNOM), good conditions for the development of education and culture, not influenced by strangers and also free from the Serbian domination, and also for the political and economic development (despite the economic stagnation of the SFRJ in the 1980s) and providing the society with the feeling of security.⁸

In the period of transforming the old Yugoslavian order into a completely new one (initially – disorder or possibly inertness), the relations between Macedonia and Serbia were first put to an exceptional test involving the re-acceptance of the border, set over forty years ago, by both parties (or rather by Serbia, which could have been expected to make some claims).

As early as in January 1991, the committee of Robert Badinter (a French diplomat) recommended the Macedonian borders, inherited from the Yugoslavian times, as the only ones which meet the international requirements in reference to international borders.⁹ The thesis of Badinter's committee constituted a prerequisite for initiating a pro-

w dyskusji wokół kwestii macedońskiej w XX w.' in I. Stawowy-Kawka (ed.), *Miejsce Macedonii na Bałkanach. Historia, polityka, kultura, nauka*, Kraków 2005, pp. 137-142.

⁷ Z. Vučković, 'Relacje macedońsko-serbskie w świetle sporu między Kościołami narodowymi' in I. Stawowy-Kawka, M. Kawka (eds.), *Macedoński dyskurs niepodległościowy...*, pp. 251-261. Cf.: J. Trojanczuk, *Czynnik eklezjalny w relacjach serbsko-macedońskich*, Warszawa 2013 (MA thesis written under the supervision of M. Raś, PhD at the Faculty of Journalism and Political Sciences in the University of Warsaw; information about it containing the note by the examiner, UW Prof. S. Bielań, PhD, at <<https://apd.uw.edu.pl/pl/diplomas/bsc-msc/107392/>>, 7 June 2013); 'Macedońska i serbska Cerkiew prawosławna w konflikcie', *Kościół.pl*, 29 November 2003, at <<http://www.kosciol.pl/article.php/20031129132407477>>, 3 June 2013.

⁸ Macedonia developing within the Yugoslavian federation gained a certain form of statehood, but it could not lead its own, fully independent politics. However, it gained so much economically and in the terms of security, that surely we can talk about creating conditions and a real civilization promotion of the republic and its citizens, and also about its economic development, being impossible without the links with the rest of the Yugoslavian system (and through it – with the external world). More about the development of the limited Macedonian statehood in the federal structure a/o in: V. Ačkovska, *Makedonija vo jugoslovenskata federacija 29.11.1943-8.9.1991 (bronologija)*, Skopje 2001; N. Veljanovski, 'Státoprávní vývoj Republiky Makedonie 1944-1991', *Slovanské historické studie*, No. 26 (2000), pp. 153-163; J. Rychlík in: J. Rychlík, M. Kouba, *Dějiny Makedonie*, Praha 2003, pp. 205-244; I. Stawowy-Kawka, *Historia Macedonii*, pp. 248-293; T. Čepreganov, 'Patot do nezavisnosta' in I. Stawowy-Kawka (ed.), *Miejsce Macedonii...*, pp. 9-20; B. Dziewiałtowski-Gintowt, *Kształtowanie państwowości macedońskiej w jugosłowiańskim systemie federacyjnym w latach 1944-1991*, Poznań 2010 (unpublished PhD thesis written in the Faculty of History of the University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań, under the supervision of UAM Prof. W. Szulc, PhD). Cf. the remarks in: M. Hroch, *Male narody Europy. Perspektywa historyczna*, trans. by G. Pańko, Wrocław 2003, p. 50 (*Zrozumieć Europę*).

⁹ P. Sokołowska, 'Rola RFN w próbach pokojowego zażegnania konfliktu w Macedonii w latach 1991-2002', *Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis. Niemieznawstwo*, No. 14 (2006), p. 89; A. Orzelska, *Wpływ konfliktu w byłej Jugosławii na stosunki między Stanami Zjednoczonymi a Unią Europejską 1990-1995*, Warszawa 2004, p. 80.

cedure of international confirmation of the borders of this furthest south-lying post-Yugoslavian republic. However, it was not obvious which standpoint in this crucial issue of accepting the independence of Macedonia within such and not other borders will be taken by their particular neighbours, including the northern one, Yugoslavia (*de facto* from half of 1991 reduced to Serbia and Montenegro and temporarily formally left in the structures of BIH).

The detachment of Macedonia from SFRJ happened “in a calm manner and without shedding blood”.¹⁰ After dismissing the Macedonian deputies from the federal *Skupština* and the Presidium of SFRJ, and also after summoning in Skopje the Yugoslavian diplomats representing SFRJ outside, the Macedonian government on 14th February 1992 guaranteed to itself taking control over the military objects located in the area of the Republic, which the Yugoslavian forces were forced to leave.¹¹ Their withdrawal (to the end of February 1992), which in fact was an outflow of thousands of the Yugoslavian soldiers from the area of Macedonia, combined with the evacuation of about 90% of armament and technical equipment used by the military units of the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) located in the area of Macedonia, meant, however, that despite the quick formation of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia and taking over the military infrastructure and border posts by it, the young country would stay almost defenseless for some.¹²

There were worries that this may be used by the nationalistic political factors from Belgrade, who would be trying to play the card of the protection of the rights of Serbs living outside Serbia and Montenegro, being reluctant towards gaining independence by the particular Yugoslavian republics. The situation in Macedonia, however, was a unique one. Differently than in BIH or Croatia, this country was inhabited only by a small group of Serbs. The Serbian minority in the independent Macedonia was estimated at the beginning of the 90s of the 20th century only for 2% of the population.¹³ Its presence was more distinctive only in the neighbourhood of Kumanovo and its closest vicinity (even at the beginning of the 21st century 6,67% of Kumanovo

¹⁰ J. Wojnicki, *Przeobrażenia ustrojowe...*, p. 56.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 57; I. Stawowy-Kawka, *Historia Macedonii*, pp. 309-310 (date of 14 February 1992 after the publication of I. Stawowy-Kawka; in J. Wojnicki: 15 April 1992).

¹² J. Wojnicki, *Przeobrażenia ustrojowe...* (both works cit. in footnote 11); cf., mainly based on the cit. synthesis of I. Stawowy-Kawka, fragments of an article: M. Korzeniewska-Wiszniewska, ‘Stanowisko serbskie...’, pp. 228-229.

¹³ According to a Macedonian register from 1996 (printed on behalf of the Macedonian government in Slovenian Kranj) in the record from 20 June 1994, 39 260 citizens declared being Serbs, which constituted about 2% of its population (while there was supposed to be 22,9% of Albanians in Macedonia then). *Facts about The Republic of Macedonia*, Skopje 1996, p. 54. On the other hand, the register from 2002, published in 2005 and including the administrative division of the country from 2004 indicated 35 939 of Serbs, which was only about 1,8% of the country’s citizens (with 25,2% of Albanians). ‘Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Macedonia, 2002’, State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia, Skopje, May 2005, at <<http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/knigaXIII.pdf>>, 11 June 2013.

dwellers¹⁴ admitted to their Serbian identity). Thus, it was not a significant force, capable of playing an important role in the country or its prospective destabilization. Belgrade, which a few years after the factual disintegration of the socialist Yugoslavia refused to accept the independence of Macedonia (it only happened in April 1996), did not decide to attack Macedonia either in 1991, when JNA were still stationing in the republic, or in 1992, after its withdrawal. Only relatively trivial incidents were happening. However, the conspicuous maneuvers, performed close to the border on the Serbian side, were taking place more frequently.¹⁵ Sometimes, both in 1991 and later, in Belgrade were formulated accusations towards Macedonia and the leading Macedonian party VMRO-DPMNE, which, together with Croatia and the Ustashas, were supposed to be held responsible for the collapse of Yugoslavia.¹⁶ Against the above background, a prior event, taking place on 2nd July 1990, appeared as a more ominous and deeper destroying the mutual relations of the Macedonians and Serbs. It was attacking the Macedonian participants of the festive celebration of the anniversary of ASNOM meeting in St. Prohor Pčinjski (2 August 1944) monastery, when the freedom of Macedonia was proclaimed. The followers of the radically nationalistic Serbian politician, Vojislav Šešelj, “showed off” aggression; next, they removed from the walls of the monastery the slabs commemorating the above-mentioned, important for the Macedonians, event from the Second World War.¹⁷ At the beginning of the 1990s, the above-mentioned V. Šešelj was the most ardent critic of the independence of Macedonia. He claimed that the northern part of Macedonia should belong to Serbia and provoked the tensions in the Serbian and Macedonian relations. Also Vuk Drašković – the leader of the Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO), a more moderate party than the contemporary V. Šešelj’s Serbian Radical Party (SRS) did not hide from the public view his opinions supporting the idea of creating either the Great Serbia or – in a more sublime variation – new common (post-)Yugoslavian country that according to him should include the territories of: Serbia (naturally with Kosovo), Montenegro, Macedonia and a part of BiH.¹⁸

However, the real threat for Macedonia could be Slobodan Milošević exclusively. The most important Serbian political leader in the period when Yugoslavia collapsed, in the summer of 1992 tried to discount the reluctance presented by Greece – traditionally supporting Serbia – towards the perspectives of accepting Macedonia. The complex dispute of Greece and Macedonia (about the name of the post-Yugoslavian country, Macedonian symbols, the interpretation of history, etc.), whose consequence

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 34.

¹⁵ B. Dziewiałowski-Gintowt, ‘Macedonia’ in I. Czamańska, Z. Pentek (eds.), *Vademecum balkanisty. Lata 500-2007*, Poznań 2009, p. 172.

¹⁶ The author of the book devoted to the Yugoslavia of Milošević registers such a performance happening in the capital of Serbia/Yugoslavia on 31st May 1991: M. Korzeniewska-Wiszniewska, *Serbia pod rządami Slobodana Miloševića. Serbska polityka wobec rozpadu Jugosławii w latach dziewięćdziesiątych XX wieku*, Kraków 2008, p. 103.

¹⁷ I. Stawowy-Kawka, *Historia Macedonii*, pp. 302-303.

¹⁸ M. Korzeniewska-Wiszniewska, ‘Stanowisko serbskie...’, p. 226.

was, firstly, not accepting independent Macedonia by Greece, next, accepting it under the name of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), was carrying a risk for Macedonia, which although different in its character, in terms of rank can be compared to the complex of Albanian problems occurring in Macedonia itself and by its borders.¹⁹ At this point, however, one should look at the problem of tensions between Greece and Macedonia in the context of the trials by S. Milošević to make it an argument for Serbian (Yugoslavian) and Greece coordination of activities pointed at Macedonia, stuck between these countries, military weak and economically dilapidated. This coordination assumed, in its furthest variation, even the partition of Macedonia. Such a scenario, however, for many reasons, could not be accepted by the Greek cabinet of Konstantinos Mitsotakis.²⁰

On the other hand, after 1991 there were no serious tensions between Macedonians and their Serbian fellow-citizens in Macedonia itself. Only occasionally (in recent years, which is in the first dozen of years of the 21st century, really incidentally) happened some Serbian manifestations or some other kinds of disruptions initiated by the radical wing of the Democratic Party of Serbs in Macedonia (DPMS), having their members and followers mainly in Kumanovo and its vicinity. The Serbian minority, accepted in the Constitution from 1991 (since 2001 called the constitutional nation), represented in the Parliament of Macedonia, lost its position in the republican administrative apparatus from the Yugoslavian times (it was represented there), however, keeping the high indicators of education, it plays an indirect role in the country's social and cultural life.²¹ The number of radicals in DPMS started to decline, and the number of moderate activist, not Macedonia-oriented, to grow.

Since 1995-1996 the Macedonian and Serbian relations have been successfully improving.

In 1995, even before regulating the matters of BiH by the Dayton agreement, the president of Macedonia, Kiro Gligorov²² went to Belgrade. The visit of the head of

¹⁹ Cf.: B. Dziewiałowski-Gintowt, 'Macedonia – przykład walki o przetrwanie na dwóch frontach', *Biuletyn Baltii. Pismo Polskiej Korporacji Akademickiej Baltia*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (2009), pp. 13-20.

²⁰ M. Korzeniewska-Wiszniewska, 'Stanowisko serbskie...', p. 229. Due to the fact that neither the author presenting the following issue nor any other scholar, quote any document to illustrate it, the matter requires further research.

²¹ I. Stawowy-Kawka, 'Mniejszości narodowe w Republice Macedonii – współczesne problemy' in eadem (ed.), *Miejsce Macedonii...*, p. 106; eadem, *Historia Macedonii*, p. 303 (about the most well-known Serbian demonstration in Kumanovo, which happened in January 1993); D. Szafko, *Wielokulturowość Republiki Macedonii*, Poznań 2007, pp. 55-56 (MA thesis written in the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology of the Faculty of History at Adam Mickiewicz University, under the supervision of Prof. A. Posern-Zieliński, PhD).

²² M. Korzeniewska-Wiszniewska, 'Stanowisko serbskie...', s. 230. K. Gligorov, Macedonian statesman, follower of compromises and not escalated relations of the Republic of Macedonia with neighbours, sometimes criticised for his behaviour by his political opponents (especially by the rightist party VMRO-DPMNE), surely he can be considered "the father" of the international acceptance of Macedonia, which he tirelessly solicited for, reaching the agreement with Yugoslavia (resulting in the withdrawal of the military units of the dominated by Serbs JNA from the territory of Macedonia in 1992), admission to UN (9 April 1993, as FYROM – the solution regarding the name accepted as a result of the

Macedonian state in the Yugoslavian and Serbian double capital, resulted in the desideratum of mutual acceptance and establishing relations between the Republic of Macedonia and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It happened on 8 April 1996.²³ By this way, the new president of Macedonia (earlier its Prime Minister), Branko Crvenkovski, who visited Belgrade, told a Serbian journalist of *Danas* during an interview that the relations between the two countries are reaching a higher lever and can be satisfactory for both parties as well as set a good example for the whole Balkans. He also stressed that there are no vital arguments between Macedonia and Yugoslavia which could destroy the atmosphere of understanding and co-operation, including the countries' efforts to enter the EU.²⁴

In the next period of time (second half of the 90s of the 20th century, first few years of the current century), the relations between Macedonia and Yugoslavia/Serbia were developing without any hindrance, besides the situation from 1998-1999 when the conflict between Serbia and Albania was growing in Kosovo and the Macedonian authorities (the government of Ljupčo Georgievski), supporting the west and counting on a quick integration with NATO, supported the military actions of the "Treaty" towards the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The matter of arguments between two national orthodox churches – Serbian and Macedonian, which became especially intensive when the issue of Bishop Jovan Vraniškovski cropped up, can also be omitted at this point.

In the face of the mutual relations between Macedonia and Serbia, the specific mental and cultural intimacy of the two nations started to find its reflection. To a great extent it was funded by: the common previous fate, yugonostalgic sentiments, religious closeness (spiritual bond of two Orthodox nations used to and can still be noticed despite the structural and jurisdictional division and the tensions connected to it and in some measure against the ethnophiletic identities of both Orthodox church communities), and also sharing by Serbs and Macedonians the worries towards the separatist aspirations of the Albanians (in Kosovo, the southern part of proper Serbia and the northern and western Territory of the Republic of Macedonia), resulting in a way of solidarity of the Macedonian and Serbian societies, visible in the moments of se-

anti-Macedonian activities of Greece), access to OSCE and Partnership for Peace (1995), dislocating in Macedonia the UN preventive forces (UNPREDEP, 1 February 1996), or even, achieved at the latest time, certain relaxation or even normalization of the relations between official Skopje and Athens, which was possible to be introduced after the abolition, made by Greece on 15 September 1995, of the economic blockade of their northern neighbour. The blockade lasted constantly for 19 months. Cf.: *ibid.*, pp. 228-231; I. Stawowy-Kawka, 'Republika Macedonii i Macedończycy w greckiej po 1991 roku' in I. Stawowy-Kawka, M. Kawka (eds.), *Macedoński dyskurs niepodległościowy...*, pp. 205-209; J. Rychlík in: J. Rychlík, M. Kouba, *Dějiny...*, pp. 258-263 (especially p. 261). K. Gligorov's memories in an interesting way shed the light on his political activity: K. Gligorov, *Makedonija e sè što imame*, Skopje 2002 (pp. 726).

²³ M. Korzeniewska-Wiszniewska, 'Stanowisko serbskie...', p. 230; B. Dziewiałowski-Gintowt, 'Macedonia', p. 172.

²⁴ 'Naši odnosi su pozitivani primer celom regionu', Intervju – ekskluzivno: Branko Crvenkovski, predsednik Republike Makedonije Milovanu Jaukoviću, *Danas*, 5 April 2006.

rious crises involving the Albanians (the conflict in Kosovo in 1999, the conflict in Macedonia in 2001, from the beginning of 2008 to autumn 2009 delaying the acceptance of the independence of Kosovo by the authorities in Skopje).²⁵

For a description of the present state of the affairs – balanced and corresponding to reality – it should be noticed that as the tensions occurring in the relations between Macedonians and Albanians as well as in the relations between Serbs and Albanians have drawn Macedonians and Serbs together in recent years, the close and friendly relations between Serbs and Greek, contrasting to the ones of Macedonians and Greek, could constitute (and have temporarily constituted) a hindrance in the rapprochement of Macedonians and Serbs.²⁶

The adjacent Macedonia and Serbia, together being the neighbours for separated from Serbia Kosovo, possess rational political, economic, strategic and also cultural and social arguments for their engagement in creating neighbourly relations. Both organisms participating in them may benefit from such an engagement gaining, despite the most easily noticed and measurable profits (mutual economic advantages), also some harder to be measured, but equally important ones. This category should surely include forming the common cycle of experiments referring to such essential issues, demonstrating Macedonian and Serbian similarities, as multiculturalism or “Euro-integrative” aspirations and the activities for creating the internal security and integrating both countries into the international security system (their convergence provides new impulses in the relations between the neighbours – challengers to the membership in the European or Euro-Atlantic constellations).²⁷

²⁵ M. Korzeniewska-Wiszniewska, ‘Stanowisko serbskie...’, pp. 229-231. The remarks about Kosovo – the habitat of Albanian separatist tendencies, which could disturb the relations between Serbia and Macedonia: A.M. Polkowska, *Macedonia*, Wrocław 2000, p. 70; D. Gibas-Krzak, A. Krzak, *Południowosłowiańska mozaika. Charakterystyka geograficzno-polityczna państw postjugosłowiańskich*, Szczecin 2010, p. 148.

²⁶ M. Korzeniewska-Wiszniewska, ‘Stanowisko serbskie...’, pp. 230-231; I. Stawowy-Kawka, *Republika Macedonii i Macedończycy w greckiej polityce...*, pp. 205-209. As to the events from 1999 it should be stressed that the solidarity of Macedonians and Serbs, then noticed, was opposed to the official, generally anti-Yugoslavic/anti-Serbian, Macedonian political course (Macedonia supported the NATO action against Yugoslavia, which resulted in a significant deterioration of the mutual relations between Macedonia and Yugoslavia).

²⁷ Cf. the considerations on multiculturalism in Macedonia which, together with the elaboration referring to Serbia (generally causing a slightly higher international resonance) are worth studying from the Macedonian and Serbian comparative perspective: I. Dodovski (ed.), *Multiculturalism in Macedonia. An Emerging Model*, Skopje 2005 (especially the texts: I. Trajkovski, ‘Nationalism and Multiculturalism in Macedonia: Conditions and Prospective’, pp. 5-12; M. Dokmanovich, ‘Multiculturalism versus Biculturalism – A Macedonian Story’, pp. 26-37; I. Yusufi, ‘Multiculturalism and Security’, pp. 139-148); K. Bielenin-Lenczowska, K. Paczóska (eds.), *Sąsiedztwo w obliczu konfliktu. Relacje społeczne i etniczne w zachodniej Macedonii. Refleksje antropologiczne*, Warszawa 2009 (*Studia Ethnologica Instytutu Etnologii i Antropologii Kulturowej Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego*) (the view of Polish ethnologists on certain phenomena of Macedonian multiculturalism in every day life, which in Macedonian conditions is marked with the co-existence of different cultures); A. Parvanov, ‘Albanian Syndrome in the Republic of Macedonia’ in K. Mančev, Ž. Grigorova, B. Bobev (eds.), *National Problems in the Balkans. History and Contemporary Developments*, Sofija 1992, pp. 140-158; J. Mindak-Zawadzka,

The years 2011-2013 became the moment of particular strengthening of the neighbourly relations between Macedonia and Serbia.

In the middle of September 2011 the Ministers of Foreign Affairs – Nikola Poposki (Macedonian) and Vuk Jeremić (Serb) – formed a common statement of the convergence of objectives set to themselves by Macedonia and Serbia in the field of international politics (the development of democracy in the area of western Balkans, the integration of the region with the EU).²⁸ On the other hand, in December 2011 a bipartite economic forum of Macedonia and Serbia took place.²⁹

It was essential for the relations of both countries to confirm the will to develop the bilateral co-operation (also in the line of coordinating the efforts to become members of the EU) in the political conditions which happened after the alteration of the government system in Serbia (after the election from the middle of 2012, replacing the coalition of the post-Đinđić Democratic Party (DS) and post-Milošević Socialist Party (SPS) with the alliance of the Serbian Progressive Party (so-called *naprednjaci*, SNS) of Tomislav Nikolić (who became the new president of Serbia in the place of Boris Tadić, representing DS – a “Euro-enthusiast” and a follower of tightening the relations with Macedonia) with SPS and conferring the post of Prime Minister to the leader of socialists, Ivica Dačić.

The above-mentioned I. Dačić, after half a year of his reign, visited Macedonia at the end of January 2013, taking with him the Minister of Justice, Nikola Selaković, and the Minister for the Information Society – Ivo Ivanovski. Choosing such companions for the travel to Skopje was telling a lot about the priorities articulated in Serbia and Macedonia, in the context of the realised rapprochement of the two countries. These priorities include the international co-operation in terms of the enumerated depart-

‘Górska дума’, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 31 March – 1 April 2001, p. 14. About the “Euro-integrative” challenges, which one of the enumerated countries – Serbia (to be precise, its society, divided when as far as the integration with the EU is concerned and also ethnically heterogeneous) faced and about the securitological experiences of Macedonia and the relations with the EU, connected with the arduous stimulation, cf. accordingly: Z. Vučković, ‘Społeczeństwo serbskie wobec wyzwań Unii Europejskiej’ in I. Stawowy-Kawka (ed.), *Międzycywilizacyjny dialog w świecie słowiańskim w XX i XXI wieku. Historia, religia, kultura, polityka*, Kraków 2012, pp. 379-387 (*Societas*, 42); ‘Pokój czy papier’, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 14-15 August 2001, pp. 9-10; D. Warszawski [K. Gebert], ‘Uczniowie czarnoksiężnika’, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 14-15 August 2001, p. 9; H.J. Sokalski, *Odrobina prewencji. Dorobek dyplomacji prewencyjnej ONZ w Macedonii*, trans. by A. Kozłowski, Warszawa 2007 (genuine American publication: *An Ounce of Prevention. Macedonia and the UN Experiences in Preventive Diplomacy*, Washington 2003); R. Woźnica, ‘Rola Unii Europejskiej w realizacji postanowień porozumienia ochrydzkiego dotyczących policji’ in M. Kawka, I. Stawowy-Kawka (eds.), *Tożsamość narodowa...*, pp. 277-286; A. Słojewska, ‘Balkanizacja Unii Europejskiej. Macedonia: kolejny kandydat do członkostwa’, *Rzeczpospolita*, 10-11 November 2005, p. 8; ‘Unia zaprasza Macedonię, potępia prezydenta Iranu’, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 19 December 2005, p. 11; ‘Francuscy eksperci będą uczyć Macedończyków jak negocjować z UE’, *Balkanistyka.org*, 12 April 2013, at <<http://balkany.vdl.pl/francuscy-eksperci-beda-uczyc-macedonczykow-jak-negocjowac-z-ue/>>, 31 May 2013.

²⁸ ‘Zajednička vizija regiona’, *Blic*, 14 September 2011, p. 3.

²⁹ ‘Lepsze fundamenty dla stosunków ekonomicznych Macedonii z Serbią’, *Balkanistyka.org*, 19 December 2011, at <<http://balkany.vdl.pl/lepsze-fundamenty-dla-stosunkow-ekonomicznych-macedonii-z-serbia/>>, 27 April 2013.

ments' competence – especially as far as the so-called e-management and European integration are concerned. The visit was also accompanied by important symbolic contents and important declarations. It was started by the Serbian Prime Minister on 27th January, which is the date of liturgical commemoration of St. Sava, the patron of Serbia and Serbian education. The socialist, I. Dačić, took part in the mass in the Orthodox church and stressed his satisfaction with the fact that the holiday is solemnly celebrated also in Macedonia, and the representatives of their local Serbian minority are guaranteed to have a day off to rest. Meeting the leader of the rightist VMRO-DPMNE – the Prime Minister of Macedonia, Nikola Gruevski, I. Dačić ensured that, although there are certain unsolved issues between Serbia and Macedonia (the independence of the Macedonian Orthodox Church and the problem of accepting Kosovo), the neighbourly relations of these two countries stand out with a unique understanding of their common problems. The Serbian Prime Minister also ensured “[...] that Belgrade has neither territorial nor cultural, nor any other claims towards Macedonia; on the contrary – it wants to be the Macedonian nation and country's best friend.”³⁰

A message identical to the talks between the Prime Ministers was conveyed during the meeting of the Serbian President of the Board of Ministers with the president of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, Trajko Veljanoski, who assisted I. Dačić in laying a wreath under the monument of the killed Macedonian heroes in Skopje. At the government level they also agreed about the organization in Belgrade in May 2013 of a common meeting of parts of the government in Macedonia and Serbia. Inter-departmental meetings and consultations are going to be organised periodically and take place alternately in Serbia and Macedonia. Furthermore, the chairmen of the Macedonian and Serbian governments talked about the “[...] realisation of infrastructural projects, modernization of facilities and salaries in the transport and energy sectors and ensuring the energetic stability in the region; also in the finalization of the activities preparing to the opening of the transportation channel no. 10, N. Gruevski stressed that the government of Macedonia would be supported in elaborating, analysis and preparation by Serbs the so-called Danube – Morava – Vardar – Thessaloniki project. As far as the European matters are concerned, [the prime Ministers] agreed that the continuation and continuity of the reforms is necessary and they hoped that both countries would determine the date of the beginning of [accession] negotiations.”³¹

Summing up the following considerations, it could be said that the actual good state of the relations between Macedonia and Serbia allows to optimistically look in the future of the countries, which are culturally close to and still important for each other in terms of politics and economy. There are difficult issues in the interstate relations between Macedonia and Serbia (the problem of Kosovo, balancing by Serbia between Macedonia and Greece in the issues which are disputable for Skopje and Athens), but luckily there is no ethnical conflict or other problems which could lead to an extraordi-

³⁰ ‘Daczić z oficjalną wizytą w Macedonii’, *Balkanistyka.org*, 29 January 2013, at <<http://balkany.vdl.pl/daczig-z-oficjalna-wizyta-w-macedonii/>>, 11 June 2013.

³¹ *Ibid.*

nary turn and the extrication of the strong antagonism between Macedonia and Serbia. Intellectual and political elites of the two countries, regardless of their ideological background, fundamentally incline to point out to the Macedonian and Serbian societies the need to look for common points, which is these what links, not to accentuate the differences which can divide Macedonians and Serbs.

Remembering about the episodic tensions from the beginning of the 90s of the 20th century, when some radical political environments from Serbia formulated different kinds of threats towards Macedonia, trying to convince the Serbian society to an alleged need of dissuading the Republic upon Vardar from the secession from the socialist Federation – bankrupted and embraced by the ravages of war, luckily is not able to detonate any dangerous explosion in this part of the Balkans. The process of gradual taking by Serbia of the role of an ally of, independent since 1991, Macedonia, was capped in recent years by not only symbolic gestures and declarations, but also actual mechanisms of mutual co-operation, initiated by virtue of intergovernmental agreements. Nowadays, ie. at the end of 2013, as an answer to the question put in the title of the following text one could state that Serbia became an ally of Macedonia. Successfully, the statement can be reversed and it can be stated that also Macedonia deserves to be called an ally of Serbia.

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Wojciech SZCZEPAŃSKI, PhD – born 1976 in Szczecin, finished historic studies at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, specializes in the history of South-East and Central Europe in XIX-XX centuries. His MA thesis is devoted to the Polish-Hungarian relations in 1936-1939 years (2000); PhD thesis: *Serbs towards Albanians in 1878-1918 years* (2005) – so far unpublished works. He published scientific papers and reviews in Poland, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Kosovo, Bulgaria, Turkey and New Zealand.