THE NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT
AT THE END OF THE NINETEENTH AND THE BEGINNING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURIES

By virtue of the Berlin Treaty in 1878, Macedonia (parts of which were included in the Thessaloniki, Bitola, and the Kosovo or Skopje vilayets) and Adrianople Thrace or the Andrianople region (the Adrianople—Edirne—vilayet) with a numerous Bulgarian population remained within the confines of the Ottoman Empire under the direct rule of the sultan. The centuries-old foreign oppression and all negative aspects of the Turkish feudal system were preserved in these regions. Since the goals of the national revolution there stayed unsolved, revolutionary struggles burst out with fresh impetus and acquired unusually large dimensions. Village workers, craftsmen, and the people’s intelligentsia, as well as certain strata of the bourgeoisie, took the liveliest part in them. The Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising of 1903 marked the peak of the national revolutionary movement in Macedonia and the Adrianople region. It was prepared and headed by the Internal Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary Organization (IMRO).

A considerable amount of literature has accumulated on the history of revolutionary struggles in Macedonia and the Adrianople region toward the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. A series of research works have been published, as well as interesting memoirs by various revolutionaries. Valuable collections of documents have also appeared.

1. See A. Tomov and G. Bazhdarov, Revoliutsionnata borba v Makedoniia (Skopje, 1917); Hr. Silianov, Osvoboditelnite borbi na Makedoniia, 2 vols. (Sofia: Izdanie na Ilindenska organizatsiia, 1933 and 1943), etc. The authors of the above-mentioned works took an active part in the Bulgarian national liberation movement at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries.

2. Among the memoirs of workers of the liberation movement in Macedonia and the Adrianople region, published in different magazines and newspapers, a particularly important space should be given to the series of memoirs edited by Professor I. Miletich. In this series place has been given to the memoirs of such prominent leaders of the Internal Organization as Damian Gruev, Georgi Petrov, Iane Sandanski, Boris Safarov, Ivan Garvanov and Dr. Hristo Tatarchev among others. See Materiali za istoriata na makedonskoto osvoboditelno dvizhenie, 11 vols. (Sofia: Makedonski nauchen institut, 1925-31).

3. Recently, the following collections have been published in Bulgaria: Macedonia, Documents and Materials (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1978); Osvoboditelnite borbi na balgariite v Makedoniia i Odrinsko. Diplomacheski dokumenti (Sofia: Nauka i iskustvo, 1978); Gotsi Delchev, Spomeni, dokumenti, materiali (Sofia: Nauka i iskustvo, 1978).
New archive documents are being sought and used in the scientific development of these problems.

The national liberation movement in Macedonia and the Adrianople region is also the object of studies in foreign historiographies. The interest in this movement is growing; but unfortunately, on numerous occasions the diverse publications are distinguished by a certain degree of bias arising from the requirements of the political situation. Even the Bulgarian national character of the movement is the subject of distortions, although it is recognized unanimously by both the people engaged in the movement itself and its adversaries. Note is also taken of the Bulgarian nature of the movement by the diplomatic representatives of many states.

Taking into account the fact that many questions of the history of revolutionary struggles in Macedonia and the Adrianople region still have not been sufficiently studied and should be elucidated further, an attempt is made here to give a very concise generalized picture of the Bulgarian national liberation movement towards the end of the past century and the beginning of the current one. To this end, earlier studies and publications of documents and material have been used as well as data from the archive documentation to throw further light on certain questions of scientific interest.

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1. The indignation with which the Bulgarian people learned of the decisions of the Berlin Congress was natural. The resistance against those decision embraced wide strata of the population in Macedonia and the Adrianople region, and it received the energetic support of their freed compatriots and found expression in the Kresna-Razlog Uprising (1878). The armed struggle met with defeat; but with this, the question about the future of the Bulgarian population in the European vilayets of the Empire stayed on the historical scene.4

The complicated situation under which the Bulgarian people lived after the Liberation was unable to destroy the awareness of a national unity, confirmed in the period of the Bulgarian National Revival. Even at the Constituent Assembly of the Principality of Bulgaria, the deep disappointment about the decisions of the Berlin Congress was given vent. Not only representatives of the Principality, but also delegates from the other Bulgarian regions took part in its work. They came from Eastern Rumelia, Macedonia, and Adrianople