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Keith Brown: The Past in Question

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

THIS BOOK EXAMINES the relationship between national history, identity, and politics in the disputed territory of Macedonia. It focuses on events in a town in the modern Republic of Macedonia, and on the different ways in which, at different points of the twentieth century, different communities described or analyzed those events. The goal of this book is to uncover the processes whereby contrasting world views take shape and can be embraced or rejected, emplaced or overturned. The narratives woven around this particular town demonstrate in a variety of ways the importance of volition and contingency in the making of the present. At the same time, they rely upon idioms of the taken-for-granted—the things one cannot help—for explanatory efficacy. Benedict Anderson's *bon mot* regarding the magic of nationalism—that it turns chance into destiny (1991:12)—is thus a central concern of the book, which seeks to explain how that alchemy was wrought in a spatially circumscribed and culturally specific context.

The immediate setting for much of the book is the town of Kruševo, in the southwest of the Republic of Macedonia. For most of the year, Kruševo presents itself as a provincial backwater. High in the hills, away from the major transit routes, and boasting no great industrial or agricultural resources, it has a population of around three thousand, including the Republic's largest concentration of Vlachs, a Romance-speaking minority. Yet every year since 1944, at the beginning of August, the town has shaken off its sleepy aura as political élites of the Macedonian government have journeyed to the town to deliver tributes and speeches. They have brought in their wake a host of ordinary citizens and the gaze of the Republic. Some have left more permanent traces on the town's landscape including new roads, public buildings, and monuments. Begun when the Republic of Macedonia was part of new Federal Yugoslavia, the annual national pilgrimage to Kruševo continued after the country declared its sovereignty in 1991.

The yearly prominence of Kruševo stems from the enduring symbolic significance attached to events there at the beginning of the twentieth century, when Ottoman Turkish rule extended west to the Adriatic coast and north to the border of Montenegro. In the course of a widespread anti-Ottoman uprising on St. Elijah's Day, or Ilinden, on 2 August 1903, Kruševo was the largest urban center held by the revolutionary movement. After the creation of a federal Yugoslavia in 1944, Ilinden 1903 came to be established as a

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pivotal moment in Macedonian history, and celebrated as a holiday each year. Its enduring significance was affirmed through a broad variety of official commemorative practices, including pension schemes and the construction of memorials. The town of Kruševo came to be marked as the uprising's symbolic epicenter, and its residents took pride in national recognition of their town's distinctive heritage.

Kruševo's history thus constituted a key symbolic resource in the establishment of Macedonian national identity in the twentieth century. The salience of this one town's past was heightened by the doubts, debates, and disputes that swirled around so much else to do with Macedonian distinctiveness. Today's members of the Macedonian people, or *narod*, speak a Slavic language codified only after 1944 with fewer than 2 million native-speakers and a slender body of literature. Macedonians are, for the most part, members of an Orthodox Church whose authority was established by a socialist political régime in 1968. Their kin-terms, household structures, marriage practices, and vernacular culture all closely resemble those of neighboring groups. They are descended from people who were called, and at times called themselves, Serbs or Bulgarians. Those who challenge the authenticity of Macedonian national identity—and as this book will show, there are many—use these facts to assert that its components are all newly minted, forged, borrowed, or even stolen from the Republic's neighbors. In such a hostile climate, the idea of a local uprising in 1903 gave adherents of the new national cause a welcome sense of historical depth and popular unity.

Kruševo was additionally celebrated for the activities of its defenders during the Ilinden Uprising. After driving out the Turkish garrison, they set up a provisional government in which townspeople and village representatives were to participate, and distributed a written proclamation of their peaceful state-building intentions. This short period of self-government has come to be known as the Kruševo Republic and the document its leaders distributed as the Kruševo Manifesto. It has come to stand as a unique piece of constructive and indigenous political activism in modern Macedonian history, prior to 1944. Before that, the last period in which a régime had its capital within the borders of the modern republic was the eleventh century, when King Samuil reigned in the lakeside town of Ohrid.¹ Kruševo's self-government, though, was short-lived: within two weeks, Ottoman forces converged on the town. A few determined rebels tried to stage a defense, most famously on a hill outside the town named Mečkin Kamen (Bear's Rock), but they were quickly overwhelmed by superior numbers. Then came the reprisals against civilians. After an extended bombardment, regular and irregular troops sacked the town. Houses were burned and looted, women raped, and a number of townspeople arrested and later imprisoned for their alleged involvement.

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These additional facets of Kruševo's role in the Ilinden Uprising of 1903 contribute further to a straightforward narrative, familiar from studies of modern nationalism. The town, which remained inhabited, stands as a vital link to a past time of collective liberation struggle, political vision, and self-sacrifice. It is a place where a glorious history is enshrined and where, now, the living descendants of those who fought, suffered, and died enjoy the redemption that is their legacy. It appears to constitute, then, a multi-faceted national "memory-space" of the generic type explored extensively in the volumes edited by Pierre Nora (Nora [ed.] 1997). For modern Macedonia, Kruševo 1903 combines something of the flavor of France's Bastille, England's Runnymede, and the United States' Alamo. Yet also important is the imperial reach of the enemy in the past, the image of glorious defeat still unavenged, and the continuing vulnerability of a small country in the present. In this regard, Macedonia's Kruševo, and especially the battle of Mečkin Kamen, can perhaps be yoked more closely to Greece's Messolonghi, Serbia's Kosovo field, or even Israel's Masada in its emotive power.²

For scholars of "straight" nationalism, then, Ilinden 1903 and Kruševo appear easy to read. But what I aim to do in this book is illuminate the twists in the tale as it has been told and re-told in the course of one hundred years since the Uprising, and to explore the other meanings and messages that Kruševo 1903 has been made to carry. Some of these fall easily into the discourse of competing nationalisms: in Bulgaria and Greece, for example, in part as a result of political interests, Kruševo's history not only differs from, but is fundamentally incompatible with, the core, national narrative outlined above. In both cases the alternative vision owes much to the influence of refugees or exiles from Kruševo, driven out at various points during the twentieth century and denied return by subsequent régimes. Historical accounts produced by displaced residents of the town have been mobilized as part of wider political disputes in the region, especially over borders and the existence of minority populations. They feed a zero-sum mentality with respect to historical interpretation, in which the truth-status of any one account is predicated on the falsehood of its rivals.

Attention to other readings of Kruševo's past, and the traces they have left, yields evidence of more complex interactions between different visions. From 1944 until 1991, for example, when the Republic of Macedonia was part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), events of the past were not only commemorated for their national quality, they also represented steps in a process that led toward a socialist present and future. Historians, politicians, and artists re-cast the heroes of Ilinden as forebears of the pan-Yugoslav Partisan movement of 1941–44: the Kruševo Republic was thus celebrated as not only Macedonian, but as socialist and Yugoslav; and the egalitarian ideals of its leaders were highlighted. One product of this synthetic process was the memorial built in the town in 1974 and depicted in

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Figure 1: The Ilinden *Spomenik* in Kruševo, designed by Jordan and Iskra Grabul. Opened 1974.

figure 1. Designed by a husband and wife team who considered themselves socialist and humanist in outlook, its futuristic style aspired to validate an idea of the Macedonian past and present as a part of the new and forward-looking Yugoslavia.

At the local level, the narrative of Macedonian national activism is further complicated by the unique demographic composition of Kruševo. As noted earlier, the town is home to a sizeable community of Vlachs, a group distinguished primarily by their Romance language, known as Vlah or Arumanian, which is akin to Romanian. Among minority groups in the Republic of Macedonia as a whole, those identifying themselves as Vlachs are outnumbered by Serbs, Roms, Turks, and Albanians. Kruševo is known, first and foremost, as a Vlah town, as it has been since the peak of its prosperity in the nineteenth century. Even after the upheavals of 1903, the Balkan Wars of 1912–13, and the First World War, which displaced populations and redrew

frontiers, Kruševo's community retained its distinctiveness. Unlike their rural Albanian- and Slav-speaking neighbors, who were generally agriculturalists or manual laborers, Vlah townspeople mostly earned their livelihood from commerce, stock-keeping, and artisan trades. Until the mid-twentieth century, they mostly married within their own community; it was only with the state's collectivization project and the confiscation of property from wealthier townsfolk that these patterns changed.

Even in the 1990s some older residents preferred to speak Vlah rather than Macedonian: most had grown up in households where Vlah was the first language. They and many others recalled the linguistic virtuosity of fathers and grandfathers who had known Turkish, Albanian, Arabic, and Greek, and spoke with nostalgia of ways of life swept away by the Yugoslav revolution. Across the generations, people often emphasized their families' mercantile activities and business connections, in which all these languages came into play. They also insisted that Kruševo's former wealth had worked against the town after World War II, when they had suffered disproportionately from the requisitions made by Tito's partisans in the alleged interest of "brotherhood and unity," and when some of the town's old mansions were bulldozed and replaced by ugly, functionalist modern buildings.

In the Yugoslav era, then, some segments of the town community could be taken as opponents—if not by passionate conviction then at least in their everyday practices—of the socialist ideals that were so insistently declared as motivating those who founded the Republic of Kruševo and proclaimed the Kruševo Manifesto in 1903. The oral record poses its own challenge to the simple linkage of the town's history with the forward march of the Macedonian nation or the Yugoslav project. A more tangible measure of civic dissatisfaction with the state-sponsored mode of historical recall was a construction project undertaken by townspeople and completed in 1983. In response to the abstract 1974 monument, they commissioned their own figurative memorial to speak more directly to events of 1903. The alternative memory-space thus produced on the battlefield of Mečkin Kamen has at its center a single bronze statue of a young man hurling a rock, depicted in figure 2.

These alternative tales of Kruševo's past might be labeled the "socialist" and the "localist" versions. They are of interest in themselves, but most compelling to me is the interaction that they have with one another, and with the nationalist narrative with which I began. Much of the literature on twentieth-century Macedonia emphasizes the adversarial mode in which its history is recounted, as Greek, Bulgarian, Serbian, and (more recently) Macedonian and Albanian perspectives on the Macedonian Question laid claim to exclusive authority. The disputes over the history of Macedonia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries could be said to fit Deborah Tannen's model of an "argument culture," whereby it is taken for granted that attacking other



Figure 2: The memorial statue on Mečkin Kamen, designed by Dimo Todorovski. Unveiled 1983.

points of view—often after first simplifying them almost beyond recognition—is the best way to pursue truth (Tannen 1998). The overriding impression is of a chaotic and cacophonous mix of aggressive voices, each seeking to shout down its rivals, in the hope of having the last word.

Around 1903 Kruševo, though, that image does not do justice to the ways in which the story of the past has been told. A more apt parallel might be an ongoing conversation of the type described by Kenneth Burke (1957:55–56), and re-employed to illustrate processual analysis by Renato Rosaldo

(1993:104). Burke imagines a heated parlor conversation that has gone on longer than any of its individual participants. Newcomers try to grasp the general drift and then take up the debate: they might bring new insights, repeat points already familiar to some listeners, or revive arguments that appeared to have ended long ago. When they enter this conversation, perhaps, they may have strongly distinctive and individual voices, and insist on being heard at all times. Over time, though, participants may realize that there is greater texture and richness in reciprocal exchange than in dogged pursuit of individual agendas.

A Burkean conversation over events in Kruševo in 1903 has been going on for a century, with some additional features. In the weaving together of “nationalist,” “socialist,” and “localist” versions of the past exiles, residents, historians, ideologues, and creative artists have all played their part. They have not, though, entered the debate as equals. Some have worn badges of authority or brought with them intimidating entourage. Some have said their piece and left quickly, entertaining no reply; others have bided their time, waiting perhaps for a rival to leave before speaking. Some have listened intently to others, learning what is important to them and then using this knowledge to flatter, cajole, or persuade; others, so anxious not to forget their own points, or particularly struck by someone else’s, have continuously repeated them under their breath, and thus missed much of the talk going on around them. Some have taken steps to make their contributions more enduring, by leaving behind texts or other objects, so that the room is now cluttered with them.

Taking this image as its starting point, this book attempts to analyze the nature of nationalism, socialism, and localism as they marched together, if not in step, through the twentieth-century history of Kruševo. It thus offers, at one level, a record of the conversation where alternative stories have been generated, and influenced one another. That record is, of course, partial. I have chosen to emphasize those moments and phases where apparent contradictions emerge, and the ways in which those contradictions are resolved so that the conversation can continue. Two such moments were the creation and the destruction of socialist Yugoslavia, in the 1940s and the 1990s respectively.

As citizens of the new People’s Republic of Macedonia in 1944, Kruševo’s Vlah residents, with their memories of wealth built on private enterprise, were neither straightforwardly “Macedonian” nor wholeheartedly “socialist.” Yet their town steered its way to a central place in the new national history, as the Ilinden Uprising and the Kruševo Manifesto were invested with socialist and Yugoslav significance. In 1991, when the Republic of Macedonia declared its sovereignty and renounced the socialist and Yugoslav path, Kruševo maintained its leading role in the country’s commemorative practices. The Kruševo Manifesto and the 1974 Kruševo monu-

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ment, both crafted as repositories of socialist meaning, were swiftly re-branded as national treasures. At both moments, it appears that Kruševo's residents successfully jettisoned an inappropriate past, and renegotiated relationships between their town, Macedonia, Yugoslavia, and the wider world. How they did so, and how issues of memory, politics, and identity were implicated at each turn, are two questions driving this book's line of inquiry.

A final word should be added regarding the full implications of taking the discussion of Macedonia's past as a Burkean conversation. Not only have today's participants in the conversation forgotten when it began; they have no idea how it will end. And so attempts to stand outside the debate, trace its contours, and reach firm conclusions are exercises in futility. The conversation continues and, willy-nilly, the would-be overview is subsumed by it and transformed into nothing more or less than one more contribution. From that point, the fate of any contribution is uncertain.

The so-called Macedonian Question, discussed in chapter 2, is of long standing and has taken dramatic turns in recent years. In the 1990s, when a neighboring country used its political and economic weight against the new Republic, the question's Greek dimensions were prominent; in 2001, when the Republic was challenged by an armed insurgency on its territory, the issue of Albanian self-determination rose to the top of the agenda. Such rapid and substantial shifts in the topics of conversation, driven by the use of force in the world, would appear to make this study, focused on the Vlah town of Kruševo and its past, irrelevant. But one hundred years ago, Kruševo was in flames. Ten years later residents were still taking revenge against their neighbors, and ten years after that people were still fleeing to avoid state repression. Since then, the town's community has worked to make of a violent, fractious past a richly textured sense of historical identity. I offer this study, then, in the hope that in some conversation, somewhere, people may still care to see how it was done.

METHODS AND SOURCES: THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF HISTORY

The foregoing introduction makes clear, I hope, the agenda of this book. The focus on the conversation over the past represents an attempt to come to terms with the particular challenges posed by studying Kruševo. It is a Macedonian town and a Vlah town, but its present inhabitants do not necessarily agree on what those terms mean. It used to be a Greek town and a Bulgarian town, and the written traces left from that time indicate that those claims too were vigorously debated. In this regard, the town could be said to resemble many communities in the southern Balkans where broader disputes over territory and identity get translated into local idioms. While living in the town in 1993, I heard a Vlah in his thirties criticize "Vlah extremists" for creating

potential friction by insisting on using Vlah in mixed company. An old man, sweeping cigarette butts in a church courtyard, blamed incomers from the villages—whom he called Macedonian, not Vlah—for polluting the town. Such comments, I am sure, are still being made today.

What further distinguishes Kruševo is the bewildering amount of attention its past has already received from people outside the town, especially since 1944. The events of 1903 in the town, in particular, have already generated millions of words, mostly in Macedonian and Bulgarian, but also in Ottoman and modern Turkish, Greek, Vlah, Romanian, Serbo-Croatian, French, German, Russian, and English. Some were written as events were in progress, others within days or months, others generations later. People wrote to try to evoke or to explain, to compare with other events or to correct misleading analogies, to inspire or to appease, to fulfill expectations or to gain advantage. Journalists, politicians, scholars, poets, playwrights, novelists, bureaucrats, pension-seekers, students, and schoolchildren at various distances from the town and the time have all told the story of Kruševo in 1903.

When I arrived in Skopje in April 1992 to undertake field research on Kruševo's place in Macedonian national history, I had little sense of the mass of words that had already accumulated. My hosts at the Institute for National History, professional historians all, sent me to the library, insisting that there was little point in visiting Kruševo itself until I had mastered the literature. Anxious to maintain rapport, I obeyed. Surely, I thought, knowledge of previous work will be invaluable, and for several months I spent my days filling index cards with references. Outside working hours I socialized with Macedonians my own age and dealt with the day-to-day business of living in a state of uncertainty regarding the future. Many of the people I met considered my interest in Kruševo absurd and antiquated, and urged me to devote my energy to investigating both the everyday life of Macedonians and the political games being played at the international level. The present, they said, was a time of historical significance.

Wading through the turgid prose of Yugoslav-trained historians, I began to see the merits of this suggestion. I was rescued by the intervention of a community with a different perspective on gaining access to the past: the archivists. I was already waiting for permission to access the papers of Jordan Grabul, the designer of the first Ilinden monument. Now a friendly archivist reminded my mentor of the existence of the Ilinden dossier, a fund of more than two thousand pension applications from a program implemented in the years between 1948 and 1953. Each folder included a short autobiography written by applicants to support their case. There, he said, rather than in the stale and ideologically inflected works of the socialist period, I would find the kind of local voices and unworked material that I could use. I was persuaded, and permission swiftly granted. For three months in 1993 and then during a shorter return visit in 2000, I entered a

different world. In the dimly lit reading room, where my companions were often people looking for evidence to support their claims to property that was now to be restored to its pre-Yugoslav owners, I followed old men and women, most of whom had long since died, down the paths of memory to the Ottoman period.

Still, the voices of friends and acquaintances in Skopje nagged at me to pay attention to what was happening around me. One event that helped me to decide my direction was the establishment of a new Macedonian currency, the *denar*, and the issue of new temporary banknotes, or *bonovi*, on 27 April 1992. Kruševo's Ilinden monument was depicted on notes of every denomination, from ten *denari* up to ten thousand. When the *bonovi* were replaced by new notes in 1993, the monument's image was used for the watermark of authenticity, to distinguish real Macedonian banknotes from forgeries. In the crucial period of transition, a little piece of Kruševo was distributed throughout the Republic, passing through many hands every day within a newly circumscribed national territory. Surely, I thought, and said to those who scoffed at my interest in the town, this meant something?

Even as I felt comforted every time I paid for anything, I had the sense that back at the University of Chicago, my disciplinary elders would not consider an image on banknotes as sufficient evidence of the relevance of Kruševo's past in modern Macedonia. And so to the mild disapproval of historians, archivists, and friends in Skopje, I finally moved to Kruševo early in 1993. After some initial reserve—prompted in part by fears that I had adopted Skopjean ways and attitudes—I found my project embraced by a community with a strong sense of connection to the past and of the vagaries of history. I was taken by children and adults to meet parents and grandparents who remained close to their families, living or sometimes still working in neighborhoods they had known and played a part in maintaining over half a century or more. In small workshops around the town center and in a variety of homes, some small and simply furnished, others offering glimpses of faded grandeur, a generation of old men and women shared stories of their lives in Kruševo. They spoke of courtship and marriage, working conditions, leisure pursuits, and class and ethnic relations, and their different accounts painted an image of a community where the memory-traces of events of 1903 were far more diverse and divisive than any national narrative might suggest.

My stay in Kruševo culminated in my observation of and participation in preparations for the festivities of Ilinden 1993 when the Republic's President, Kiro Gligorov, made his way to the town to pay homage to the town's place in history. His speech, wide coverage in the Macedonian media, and an academic symposium added to the store of words on the events of Kruševo 1903. I made my own first contribution, in a co-authored paper that brashly treated the legacy of Ilinden as an example of the "invention of tradition" made famous by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983). The paper was published in

a weekly news magazine, and sparked angry or disappointed responses from professional historians and some residents of Kruševo. Gently or ungently, they suggested that I should undertake further research.

This book combines that research—historical, archival, and ethnographic—from before and after August 1993. As I have read, listened, and reflected further, I have grown less certain of the course and meaning of the events of 1903, and more aware of the great, unmasterable mountain of data that exists. Its contours change each day: even as another pensioner passes away in Kruševo, someone somewhere is adding another chapter to the town's history. The changing political and economic circumstances of the Republic of Macedonia only compound the problem, as concerns over the future drive people to trawl the past for proofs of status, or lessons that suit their needs in the present.

In this context, to attempt a single, synthetic narrative of what happened in Kruševo in 1903 would mislead the reader as to the book's agenda. I remain passionately interested in the details of town life in Ottoman Macedonia as the world of empires came to an end, and people learned to negotiate the demands of nation-states as best they could. I also find compelling the architecture and appeal of a revolutionary movement that inspired more than 20,000 men and women to work in concert for a cause. Writing an account of either, or ideally of both, remains a goal for the future, but one that I feel ill-prepared to undertake: I feel I don't know enough. This feeling leads me to try to learn more, by reading what others wrote at the time or have written since, and by trying to draw on whatever oral tradition remains. This in turn brings me up against broader questions about how individuals and communities create and communicate knowledge about the past. These are the broader questions that this book seeks to address.

By way of an introduction to events in Kruševo in 1903, then, I present here a sample of the sources on which the book draws. They provide three accounts of events in Kruševo written for different audiences, at different times, and uncovered in the course of different phases of research. I have selected these three for two principal reasons. First, they are products of three different "textual communities," as discussed in chapter 3. Each reveals something of the priorities that guided members of these communities in their writing, priorities that are explored more closely elsewhere in this book. Second, and more importantly, each account was produced wholly independently of the others. They therefore neither offer contradictory interpretations, as is the case where two interpretive communities are in close contact but disagree over key points of fact, nor are they simple repetitions of one another, as is the case where one community closely succeeds or overlaps with another. Instead they reveal different points of emphasis, and each adds something to the reader's understanding of events and their multiple meanings.

The first account is taken from a book published in 1906 by Frederick

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Moore. Age twenty-nine in 1903, he was, as far as I know, the only European journalist to have visited Kruševo soon after the Uprising. His work and attitude are treated in chapter 3; the following description appears in chapter XIV of *The Balkan Trail*, entitled “On the Trail of the Turk” (1906:265–71):

This is the story of Kruševo:

Just after midnight on the morning of August 2, 1903 (this was the day that the general rising was proclaimed), a rattle of rifles and a prolonged hurraing broke the quiet of the peaceful mountain town. Some three hundred insurgents under “Peto-the-Vlach” [Pitu Guli] and four other leaders had taken the town by surprise. In the little rock-built caserne were fifteen Turkish soldiers, and in the Konak [government building] and private houses were ten or twelve Turkish officials and their families and a few soldiers. The inhabitants of the town were Christians, Wallachians (or Vlachs) in the majority, and a colony of Bulgarians. The soldiers were able to grab their rifles and escape from the caserne, killing eight or more insurgents as they fled. The night was black, and a steep, rocky slope behind the building lent an easy exit. The Turkish telegraph clerk likewise escaped; but the Government officials who were in the town died to a man. The kaimakam [governor] was absent on a visit to Monastir [modern Bitola].

After surrounding the Government buildings to prevent the escape of the Turks, the insurgents broke into the shops and appropriated all the petroleum they could find. This they pumped on the Konak, the caserne, and the telegraph offices with the municipal fire-pump, and applied the torch. From fifteen to twenty Turkish soldiers and officials were shot down as they emerged from the flames; but the women and children were given safe escort to a Vlach house, with the exception of one woman and a girl who fell as they came out. Whether they were shot by accident or intention on the part of a committaji [member of revolutionary organization] is not known.

The flames spread, and a dozen private houses and stores were burned with the Turkish buildings. Some, I believe, were set afire to light the Konak and make certain the death of the Turks.

In the morning the insurgents placed red flags about the town and formed a provisional Government, appointing a commission of the inhabitants, consisting of two Bulgarians and three Wallachians, ‘to provide for the needs of the day and current affairs.’ Without instruction all the inhabitants discarded the fez.

Three chiefs of bands were appointed, a military commission, whose duties were drastic. Their first act was to condemn to death two ardent Patriarchists who had spied for the Turks on the organization and preparations of the local committee for insurrection in the district. The men were made prisoners, taken into the woods, and slain.

On the first day the insurgents made a house-to-house visitation and requested donations of food, and later required any lead that could be molded into rifle

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balls. More bands arrived and a number of Bulgarians and Wallachs of the town joined the insurgent ranks, altogether augmenting the number to over six hundred. They began at once to raise fortifications, and made two wooden cannon such as had been used in the Bulgarian revolt of the 'seventies. The cannon were worthless, and were left to the Turks, who brought one of them into Monastir.

On the second day the men of the town who possessed wealth were summoned to appear before the military commission. A list had been made (the information given by members of the organization whose homes were in Krushevo) of the standing and approximate wealth of each "notable" in the community. As these headmen appeared before the triumvirate a sum in proportion to his means was demanded from each. No protests and no pleading affected the commission, and in every instance the money was forthcoming within the time limit. More than 1,000 l. [lira, Turkish pounds] was collected in this way, and in exchange was given printed paper money, redeemable at the liberation of Macedonia.

On the following Sunday the priests of both the Greek and the Bulgarian churches were ordered to hold a requiem for the repose of the souls of the committajis who had fallen in the capture of Krushevo. Detachments of insurgents were present, in arms, and gave the service a strange military tone. Open-air meetings were held on the same day, and the people were addressed by the leaders of the bands.

During the ten days of the insurgent occupation sentinels and patrols saw to the order and tranquility of the town, and no cruelties were committed. Business, however, was paralyzed. The market place was closed and provisions diminished; and attempts to introduce flour failed, the emissaries to the neighboring village being stopped by Turkish soldiers and bashi-bazouks [irregular troops], who were gathering about the town.

The news of the capture of Krushevo reached Monastir August 3, but not until nine days later was an attempt made to retake the place. By that time three thousand soldiers, with eighteen cannon, had been assembled. About the town, also, were three or four thousand bashi-bazouks [irregulars or paramilitaries] from Turkish villages in the neighborhood.

When the guns were in position on favorable heights above town, Bakhtiar Pasha, the commander of the troops, sent down a written message asking the insurgents to surrender. The insurgents refused, and an artillery fire was begun. Most of the insurgents then escaped through a thick wood which appeared to have been left open for them, but some took up favorable positions on the mountain roads leading into the town, others occupied barricaded buildings in the outskirts, and resisted the Turks for a while. Two of the leaders, Peto and Ivanoff, died fighting.

Peto-the-Vlach was a picturesque character. He was thirty-five years of age, a native of Krushevo. He had been fighting the Turks for seventeen years. He was

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made prisoner in 1886 and exiled to Asia Minor. But benefiting by one of the frequent general amnesties he returned to Macedonia, rejoined the insurrectionary movement, and led the organization of Krushevo and the neighboring district.

At a conference of the leaders immediately prior to the Turkish attack, Peto declared that he would never surrender his town back to the oppressor; the others could escape if they would, the Turks could not again enter Krushevo except over his dead body. With eighteen men who elected to die with him, he took up a position by the main road and held it for five hours. It is said that he shot himself with his last cartridge, rather than fall into the hands of the Turks.

The natives put on their fezzes again, and a delegation of notables bearing a white flag went out to the camp of Bakhtiar Pasha to surrender the town. On their way they were stopped by the soldiers and bashi-bazouks and made to empty their pockets. Further on more Turks, whose rapacity had been less satisfied, demanded the clothes and shoes they wore. Arriving at headquarters of the general, situated on an eminence from which there was a full view of the proceedings, the representative citizens, left with barely cloth to cover their loins, offered a protest along with the surrender. Bakhtiar had their clothes returned to them, and told them he could do nothing with “those bashi-bazouks”—though beside him sat Adam Aga, a notorious scoundrel of Prelep [Prilep], who had brought up the largest detachment of bashi-bazouks, and with whom, subsequently, Bakhtiar is said to have shared the proceeds of the loot.

The Turks entered the town in droves ready for their work, rushing, shouting, and shooting. The bashi-bazouks knew the town, its richest stores and wealthiest houses; they had dealt with the Vlachs on the market day for years. They knew that the Patriarchist church was the richest in Macedonia. The carving on the altar was particularly costly, and there were rich silk vestments and robes, silver candlesticks and Communion service, and fine bronze crosses. They went to this church first. Its doors were battered down in a mad rush, and in a few minutes it was stripped by the frenzied creatures to the very crucifixes. Then a barrel of oil was emptied into it and squirted upon its walls; the torch was applied and the first flames in the sack of Krushevo burst forth.

The Greek church was on the market place among the shops. The Turks who were not fortunate enough to get into the church went to work on the stores. Door after door was cut through with adzes, the shops rifled of their contents, and then ignited as the church had been. 203 shops and 366 private houses were pillaged and burned, and 600 others were simply rifled—because the petroleum gave out.

Some of the inhabitants escaped from their homes and fled into the woods. Turks outside the town met them and took from them any money or valuables they had, and good clothes were taken from their backs. A few pretty girls are said to have been carried off to the camps of the soldiers. But the Turks were mostly bent on loot. The people who remained in their homes were threatened

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with death unless they revealed where they had hidden their treasure. Infants were snatched from their mothers' breasts, held at arms length, and threatened with the sword.

The second account is that of Donka Budžakoska, and was submitted on 11 February 1952 as part of her application for an Ilinden pension. Aged twenty-three at the time of the Uprising and seventy-two when she applied for the pension, she gave the following account of her experience before and during 1903. She uses the old Orthodox calendar, in which Ilinden falls on 20 July rather than 2 August. Her account was typewritten, and is preserved in the National Archives, the Ilinden dossier, Box 5-B, Folder 52. The data from accounts such as these are used throughout the book, and explored in particular in chapter 6:

At the beginning of 1901 I entered the ranks of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, which worked for the liberation of Macedonia and the Macedonian people from Turkish enslavement. I took the oath of loyalty before Kosta Škodra, the teacher, Tirču Kare, the standard bearer, and Tome Nikle, all of Kruševo, and at first I was enrolled as a courier, to carry messages and weapons. I held that responsibility until the siege of Rakitnica in 1902, which stood for the liberation of the enslaved Macedonian people from the Turkish Ottoman Empire and Janissary violence.³ In that siege died twelve souls: the prominent were Velko Vojvod, a teacher, Tirču Kare, the standard bearer, and Dame Nonev, a teacher, along with nine others, whose names I do not recall.

After the siege of Rakitnica, I was given another duty; to gather together from the villages and the town of Kruševo cartridges, tin and lead, and metal containers, and collect them in my house. After a great quantity of material had been collected, it was decided by the headquarters of Pitu Gule, with Dimitrija the director from Ohrid, Metodija Stojčev, the painter, and others, to establish in my house a foundry for bullets, and to send the bullets out to the bands.

Early on 20 July, around 2 o'clock in the morning, the foundry in my house began to operate and produce bullets. This work was organized under Vele Kalinoski, the watchmaker, who also made the casts for the bullets, and I kept the list of the distribution of the munitions we made. Our work finished before noon on 31 July.

On the same day, in the afternoon, Todor the Officer of Veles came last of all to the house and gave me a bag full of books from the whole Revolutionary Organization, to hide somewhere in a safe place. I had just finished covering the foundry with earth, and he told me to take shelter as soon as possible, as the Turks had reached the town. I took the bag and buried it in a dung heap by the Proja fountain, and after ten days, when we'd all reassembled and returned home after the burning of Kruševo, I told Kosta Škodra, the teacher, about the bag and he went to get it, and I don't know what happened to it after that.

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After the Kruševo Uprising I got married and wasn't able to work for the Organization, and later on I moved to Bitola.

From the very beginning of 1901 until 31 July 1903, I worked tirelessly for the Popular Revolutionary Organization for liberation from the heavy yoke of the Turkish agrarian oppression, under which Macedonia and the Macedonian people had groaned for centuries. For that reason it was with a happy heart that I took the oath of loyalty. In the course of my activity, I lived through the first People's Republic, the famous Ilinden Republic of the Macedonian people, and their anger against centuries of oppression.

The third description of Kruševo 1903 is taken from an article by Gligor Todorovski in *Nova Makedonija*, Macedonia's newspaper of record. It was published on page 6 of issue 16711 in year 49 of publication, dated 31 July, 1 and 2 August 1993, under the title "The Ilinden events in Kruševo." The same edition included the reprinted text of the Kruševo Manifesto, articles on the wooden cannon of the insurgents mentioned by Moore and the international legal status of the Uprising, and an editorial entitled "From one Ilinden to another (1903–1993)." It represents, in broad terms, the "authorized" version of events which came to be shared in the Republic of Macedonia but which, as chapters 8 and 9 demonstrate, is challenged by local knowledge in Kruševo:

On the day of Ilinden, 2 August 1903, early in the morning hours, villagers, men and women, old and young, headed for the mountains at the call of the Uprising's leadership. Food had been stockpiled for the insurgents and the population: bakeries and kitchens were set up, as well as workshops to make munitions, and health centers. After the first assaults of the Uprising had driven out the Turkish government in various places, villagers returned to their homes and lived freely.

Once the bands were assembled, the insurgents began their attacks on various small towns. Among the first to be captured was Smilevo, where on the night before Ilinden 150 insurgents attacked and destroyed a garrison of 100 Turkish soldiers, and freed the village. In Kruševo meanwhile, before the attack was launched, the head of the revolutionary district, Nikola Karev, sent a proclamation to his colleagues in other districts and to the people of the Kruševo organization.

Brothers!

We hasten to congratulate you. Today the entire district of Kruševo along with the whole of Macedonia has risen in revolt with the cry—"Down with tyranny! Long live freedom and brotherhood between the Macedonian nationalities! The church bells are ringing out everywhere, people have gathered under the banner of freedom with heady joy. Maidens and brides are garlanding the heads and rifles of our fighters. All

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the Turks found on the roads or the villages have been captured and are being held. Everywhere there is singing, joy and celebration. We are burning with impatience, waiting for nightfall so that we can capture Kruševo and then, together with the whole people, cry out a triumphant Macedonian hurrah! God and justice are with us! Long live Macedonia!

[Signed]

Nikola Karev

Tome Niklev

Todor Hristov

At the same time, the Kruševo headquarters gave orders to open fire as a sign that the battle had begun to free Kruševo, and to begin ringing the bells of the town churches. After these first steps were taken, the battle began to take Kruševo that same night, and it was achieved with good speed. The town of Kruševo found itself completely in the hands of the insurgents. Next day, August 4, the headquarters came into the town, eagerly welcomed by Kruševo's happy inhabitants. There Nikola Karev, the commander, gave a speech before the assembled people of Kruševo, and thus declared the Republic. A council was chosen and at the same time a temporary government was formed, with representatives of the nationalities that lived in the town—Macedonians, Vlachs and Albanians.⁴

The election of the government in Kruševo marked the great success of the Macedonian revolutionaries and insurgents, and the realization of the goals of the Macedonian revolution. It was the first Republican government in the history of the Balkan peninsula and demonstrated the democratic and participatory character of the movement. The government included individuals responsible for internal affairs, supplies, finance, building, health and so forth. Other special tasks included mobilizing and arming people for self-defense, digging trenches and preparing munitions.

With a mind now to protect the town from Turkish soldiers and from *bash-ibazouks*, and to neutralize and perhaps win over the Muslim population around the town, the well-known Kruševo manifesto was issued. This momentous act was another declaration of the revolutionary, democratic and republican ideals of brotherhood and unity between peoples. Again, it demonstrated the core logic and principles of the revolutionary struggle of Macedonian insurgents, in its call for a common struggle against tyranny.

The first impact of the insurgents' attacks had freed many mountain villages and small towns. The success was due to the element of surprise, and the high morale and daring of the insurgents, who numbered 20,000 against 150,000 Turkish troops. But the enemy was dispersed in small garrisons, which permitted the insurgents to mobilize people, especially in mountain villages, and then mount attacks on larger towns. There was a real possibility that they could have taken Bitola, the *vilayet* [province] capital, where only three battalions of troops

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were stationed. However the high command, because of its delaying tactics, lost the initiative and permitted the enemy to strike back. The Turks used the tactic of burning villages and destroying the harvest to demoralize the peasantry, who were the largest part of the insurgent force. This tactic was ultimately successful.

One of their first counter-attacks was against Kruševo, which was strategically significant because of its central location, and size. Under the command of Bahtiar Pasha, a Turkish army of 20,000 soldiers was thrown against the town. The valiant defense and death of the *voivod* [military chief] Pitu Guli at Mečkin Kamen with his heroes, and the fighters at Sliva, did not help to save Kruševo, for the Turkish forces were too strong. Turkish artillery indiscriminately bombarded the town, causing great destruction and fire. The high command ordered the greater part of the insurgent force to evacuate, and they left for the mountains, leaving ninety-one of their number dead. The shelling also killed twenty women and six children, and completely destroyed 159 houses. After the recapture of the town, the Turkish soldiers received license to plunder and do all that they desired.

The three accounts given here together make the perhaps self-evident point: that writers have access to different kinds of information and also have different interests in writing. Moore provides an overview which includes many of the details noted by eyewitnesses—the initial ruthlessness of the insurgents, their setting up a form of temporary government, the overwhelming military response from the Ottoman authorities, a last stand led by a man named Peto, and the brutal sack of the town. Donka Budžakoska, writing fifty years later, offers a more intimate level of detail, and provides a glimpse into the Revolutionary Organization of which she and so many others were a part, making reference to her oath-taking, chains of leadership, and the existence of written records. She also links her story of the past to the national present. The newspaper account from 1993 takes that impulse a step further, offering not just an account of events from the past but also an explanation of their historical significance. In putting the story of Kruševo into the broader national context, though, the author selects only those details that fit with the overall theme of the piece, and uses somewhat abstract language.

The different dimensions of these three accounts will be taken up again in the main body of the book, when the focus returns to Kruševo. Chapter 2, though, moves away from Kruševo to put the Macedonian Question in context, focusing especially on its renewed significance within the Republic of Macedonia as Yugoslavia broke apart in 1991–92. Chapter 3 maintains the focus on foreign interest in Macedonia, but looks primarily at international media and diplomatic sources from the beginning of the twentieth century that describe the turbulence within the Ottoman Empire. These accounts

have retained their authority for subsequent foreign commentary on the Balkans, ostensibly constituting a disinterested, accurate record against which to measure the truth-value of local claims over territory and population. Closer examination reveals the difficulties and preconceptions under which Western observers operated at the time, which compromised their own quest for objective accuracy in ways that continue to influence representations of the region and its people.

Chapter 4 offers an analysis of three accounts of events in Kruševo during Ilinden 1903, all written by eyewitnesses resident in the town; two were written by self-identified Greeks, the third by a self-identified Bulgarian. They reveal different interpretations of actions and motivations, and different approaches to understanding historical change. Since 1944, one has been largely overlooked, one championed in the Republic of Macedonia as objective and accurate, and one reprinted in Greece as a response to supposedly false Yugoslavian propaganda. The chapter seeks to move beyond the argument that national identity determines perspective to examine how and why these accounts differed originally, and have been used differently in subsequent debates over the past.

Chapter 5 examines how those who remained in Kruševo after Ilinden concerned themselves with the business of living under the rule of the first Yugoslavia, between the two world wars. Drawing primarily on oral historical material, it portrays a period in which the legacy of 1903 was divisive, serving as the basis of powerful economic and spatial fault-lines in the town's social fabric. The past played a particular role in the present, even as some residents sought to overcome its weight through the exercise of their personal and political will. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how this period was interpreted in retrospect, especially in socialist Yugoslavia, which promoted such different values.

Chapter 6 explores how the place of the past was defined in different channels of communication between Yugoslav Macedonian citizens and their new government in the 1950s. Pensions were offered to Ilinden veterans, while at the same village level agricultural collectives, called *zadrugas*, were set up. Collectivization served to reduce the status and economic power of precisely those old men and women who were the targets of the pension plan, for whom it thus became crucial to describe their past lives in such a way as to deserve a pension. This apparently economic transaction between state and the older generation was thus also symbolic: in rural communities throughout Macedonia, it focused people's attention on the events of 1903, and ultimately compelled applicants to narrate those events in such a way as to cast themselves as contributors to a distinctively Macedonian history.

Chapter 7 traces the debates and dilemmas involved in the late 1960s planning and construction process of the Ilinden monument in Kruševo which opened in 1974. Designed by architects with a modernist agenda and

an abstract vision, its construction was monitored by a committee whose members sought a far more figurative and specific reference to the Macedonian past. The narrative component of the monument, contained in a memorial crypt, reveals in its omissions and modifications the ongoing attempt to put the Macedonian character of Ilinden beyond question.

Chapter 8 examines reactions within Kruševo to this monument, given concrete form in the commission and erection by townspeople of the figurative statue in 1983. While some townspeople focus on the components of history that portray Pitu Guli and Nikola Karev, two leading figures in 1903, as rivals, others draw on the state-sponsored but locally inspired history of the Kruševo Manifesto to frame the events of 1903 as consistent with their own visions of Kruševo's present and future. Chapter 9 explores how similar sentiments shaped a broader reevaluation of the town's history in the immediate aftermath of Yugoslavia's breakup in 1992, while chapter 10 offers a conclusion to the argument.

As the above summary demonstrates, this book is concerned as much with the past as the present. The chapters are arranged in broadly chronological order to provide a history of the history of 1903 in Kruševo. But while the argument focuses on Kruševo, the book seeks to contribute more generally to discussions of national identity. Stories from a town where the meanings of Greek, Bulgarian, Vlah, Albanian, Turkish, Yugoslav, and Macedonian were all disputed in the course of the twentieth century can serve to remind us that history and ethnography are both genres that can be exploited in a struggle against nationalist thinking.

Each chapter mobilizes different sets of source materials to examine different modes of imagining Ilinden. But beyond the statement of the obvious, that different communities construct the past in different ways depending on their present, I hope that this exposition will demonstrate that these different imaginings do not exist in splendid isolation from one another, and that their form is not fixed. Each has its own constitutive logic, so that to argue that such "imaginings" can be contrasted with some "reality" is to miss the point. In each case, I have tied an imagining to a particular community at a particular conjuncture, on which the other imaginings may impinge, and I have tried to demonstrate their mutual implication.

The result may baffle the reader who wishes to know the answer to the question put baldly in the title of Hugh Poulton's 1995 book, *Who Are the Macedonians?* But I consider that question, ontologically loaded as it is, to be the wrong one. It is freighted with an implicit commitment to the zero-sum nature of historical interpretation mentioned earlier—not this, but that, is the case. It pushes the debate into a realm in which reality is contrasted with illusion, falsehood, or imagination. Framing the question in this way contributes to a misunderstanding of the concept of the "imagined community" introduced to the literature of national identity so fruitfully in the semi-

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nal work of Benedict Anderson (1983). Various scholars, Poulton among them, have distinguished real from imagined communities, but Anderson suggests in his introduction that this was not his intention. “In fact,” he writes there, “all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined” (1991:6).

My book is intended as a cultural study of a national history, in which the “state” plays a dynamic but not determining role. In emphasizing one event in one town, and its successive evocations, as a nexus at which different “imagining communities” interact, I have tried to apply the methods of anthropology to a study of “nationalism” without privileging the role of any state—many were involved—and without seeing states as monolithic. Macedonian history, then, is not just a resource contested by nation and state, or by nation-states. It has been made and re-made in the course of extended interaction between individuals, institutions, ideologies, and ideas, in which none have so far secured the power to pronounce the conversation over.