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Raymond Detrez, *Macedonië. Land in de wachtkamer* [Macedonia. Country in the waiting room]. Antwerpen, Amsterdam: Houtekiet, 2002. 287 pp. Maps, index, bibliography.

Twenty years ago, when most of us thought that the Macedonian question was dead and buried, the Yugoslavian and Greek authorities did not appear so sanguine. Both governments maintained entire armies of spies and lobbyists in Australia, apparently believing that the future of their respective states might be decided here. For most of us it came as a great surprise when, in the 1990s, and again in 2001, Macedonia burst on to the front pages of the world press. Many books have appeared, aiming to provide background information for politicians and journalists grappling with yet another crisis. The latest is by Raymond Detrez, lecturer in Eastern-European and Balkan history at the Universities of Gent and Leuven. He has previously published studies on the recent Balkan wars and the war in Kosovo, as well as a *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Bulgaria* (1997).

In the present work Detrez sets out to provide a complete and balanced picture of the Macedonian question for a discerning public in Belgium and the Netherlands after the crisis of 2001. The book is very thorough, in places providing more detail than most readers will be able to absorb, and extensively researched, with references to scholarly studies in English, French, Russian, and the relevant Balkan languages, as well as press and internet sources. Detrez traces the history of Macedonia from ancient times to the year 2002, supplementing his earlier books on nationalism and crises in the Balkans. In his introduction Detrez points out that conflicts between majorities and minorities are not restricted to the Balkans — Belgium has seen plenty of them — but that they are a relatively new phenomenon, resulting as they do from the idea of the ‘nation state’, which is only about 200 years old. This problem did not become virulent in the Balkans until the 20th century, but the legacy of distrust or even hostility lives on in the 21st. Ironically, the ‘Balkanisms’ that linguists have described, and which appear

to have had their origin in the Prespa area, where the modern-day states of Albania, Greece and Macedonia meet, point to an earlier period when the Balkan peoples lived in more or less peaceful symbiosis. Factors such as trade and inter-ethnic marriages led to widespread multilingualism and a common 'Balkan culture' (cf. Hill 1976). On the other hand, 'Balkanism' in Maria Todorova's terminology is related to 'Balkanization' and the 'centuries-old conflicts' so beloved of western politicians and second-rate journalists. Balkan nationalism, a western import of the 18th and 19th centuries, was manipulated by the western powers for their own ends, and the 'centuries-old conflicts' provided a useful fig leaf for great-power intervention. In his introduction Detrez criticizes both Balkan and western writers that take nations as simply given, rather than as contingent factors in history. Detrez even questions whether there can be any generally agreed truths on such contentious issues, even without the deliberate falsifications characteristic of many Balkan historians, of which he gives examples in the course of this book, such as the evaluation of the Kresna-Razlog uprising of 1878.

Albanian, Greek and Arumanian (Vlach) are autochthonous 'Macedonian' languages, while the Slavs arrived in the 6th and 7th centuries, but Detrez stresses that there is no necessary connection between language and ethnicity — the ancient Macedonians adopted Greek as their written language, but that did not make them ethnically Greek, and in any case many of them would later have shifted to Latin. All modern Balkan nations undoubtedly have polyethnic origins, they are products of the 19th and 20th centuries and attempts to project them back one thousand years or more into the past are as misplaced as are attempts by nationalists elsewhere to postulate the primordial existence of their community. Tsar Samuel (997–1014) is claimed by both Bulgarian and Macedonian historians, but terms such as 'Bulgarian' and 'Macedonian' had a quite different meaning in that distant era. Even the 19th-century conflicts over language and church did not begin as national conflicts. Voluntary Hellenization meant upward social mobility and Paisij's 1762 call to use Bulgarian instead of Greek initially fell on deaf ears. Greek was also, incidentally, one of the vehicles through which nationalism penetrated the Balkans. The 'nationalization' of the towns was a result of peasants moving into the towns. The peasants were used to hearing Church Slavonic in their village churches and wanted the same in their new environment. Demands for 'Bulgarian'

schools were based on practical considerations: it was easier for the children to begin their schooling in a language that they could understand. The conflict between the newcomers and the Hellenized establishment in the towns was initially social, only later did it become ethnic. The Macedonians joined the struggle for an autocephalous Bulgarian church, which gradually took on a national flavour.

The struggle against Hellenization has eclipsed the Albanian question in most accounts of Macedonian history. Albanian expansion is not a recent phenomenon, despite Serbian and Macedonian claims to the contrary. The Albanianization of parts of Macedonia was noted by travellers in the second half of the 19th century and caused anxiety and indignation among the Slavs.

Nationalism grew as the new neighbouring nation-states staked out their claims. Even Rumania sought to instrumentalize the Vlachs in Macedonia, and the League of Prizren represented the interests of the Albanian population, which were opposed to any autonomous or independent Macedonian state. Ironically, modernization (*Tanzimat*) in the Ottoman Empire also promoted the nationalism that it aimed to curtail. The Treaty of Berlin (1878) set the Macedonians on the road to their own nationalism, while frustrating Serbian, Bulgarian and Albanian national aspirations. It destroyed the Greater Bulgaria of San Stefano and by ceding Bosnia-Herzegovina to the Hapsburg monarchy it made the Serbs look to expanding to the sea via Salonika. The Albanians established their claims to a Greater Albanian state in 1878 by founding the League of Prizren and demanding an autonomous Albanian province to include the vilayets of Skopje, Scutari, Bitola (Manastir), and Yannina (Ioannina). Greek, Serbian, Bulgarian, and Albanian national aspirations all opposed independence for Macedonia.

Citing Friedman, among others, Detrez traces 'Macedonianism' back to the 1860s, which was reflected in Georgi Pulev's 1875 'Three-Language Dictionary' as well as polemical articles in the Bulgarian press in the 1870s and reports by travellers. Detrez believes that there was a distinct Macedonian national consciousness by the beginning of the 20th century. In the early 1900s some Macedonians called their language 'Macedonian' and some arrivals at Ellis Island registered as 'Macedonians'.

After the abortive Ilinden uprising of 1903, Greek, Serbian, and Albanian brigands terrorized the peasants, not to be outdone by the

'Inner-Macedonian Revolutionary Organization' and the Sofia-based 'Supreme Committee', whose rivalry also led at times to internecine strife. The Young Turk Revolution of 1908, initially greeted as 'liberation', proved a disappointment. It is not often mentioned in accounts of the Balkan Wars of 1912–13 that Macedonia was very largely 'ethnically cleansed' of its Turkish population, most of whom were driven out or massacred.

A Macedonian state was established within the Yugoslavian federation in 1944. With the collapse of Yugoslavia the Macedonian republic became independent willy-nilly, though the EU initially refused to recognize this independence due to Greek hostility — hence Kiro Gligorov's reference to his 'country in the waiting room'. Émigrés in Australia may well have exacerbated Greek fears of Macedonian irredentism. Pressure from the US and the EU, and from the Greek business community, eventually forced the Athens government to adopt a more conciliatory stance.

The next threat came from the republic's disaffected Albanian minority. Spontaneous population movements within the republic from the 1980s on had led to a situation where there was little communication between the two communities and mutual fear and even loathing grew, especially as more Macedonians became unemployed when the old state enterprises were forced to close. Moreover, the Albanians had been emboldened by the success of the UÇK in Kosovo. Now they demanded either political equality within the Republic of Macedonia or territorial autonomy, but the Macedonians wanted a unitary nation-state with a strong central government. When fighting broke out in 2001 the republic would almost certainly have disintegrated had the international community not intervened aggressively. After months of negotiations and many setbacks, the Macedonian government made substantial concessions to the Albanian minority in the Ohrid Framework Agreement. This saved the republic but, Detrez concludes, it has led to a 'deligitimization' of state authority, since vital decisions are now taken at the international level.

There are quite a few misprints in this book, which is otherwise well presented. It is perhaps a pity that such a detailed and well-researched study should appear in a language that relatively few people use outside Belgium and the Netherlands.