

## Part 2 – After the Russo-Turkish War

After the liberation of Bulgaria by the Russians in 1878, the Exarchate continued to carry on a particularly useful national activity in Macedonia and Thrace, which had remained under Ottoman domination (in spite of their historic and ethnical adherence to Bulgaria) due to the unjust Berlin Treaty. The Bulgarian enlightenment and schooling in these purely Bulgarian regions had become extremely difficult. Everything which the Exarchate had succeeded to achieve previously, had gone to wreck and ruin. The Bulgarians in these two regions remained without churches and schools. The Exarchate continued to exist in Constantinople only theoretically. The Turkish government refused to recognize it. It considered that Sultan Abdul Aziz had committed an irreparable error, when he permitted its establishment.

Taking advantage of this situation, the Constantinople Patriarchy proclaimed itself, once again, sole protector of the Orthodox population in the Empire. On its demand the Sublime Porte decreed that no Bulgarian teacher could be appointed in these two regions without the authorization of the local Greek bishop. As a result of this almost all Bulgarian schools there were closed, as teachers declared by the Greek bishops as not trustworthy could not find employment and were constrained to flee to the liberated territories of Bulgaria. According to false accusations and calumnies on the part of the Greek clergy, a great number of Bulgarian teachers from Macedonia and Thrace were sent into exile in Asia Minor, for anti-state activity. In 1887, the Exarchate informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Sofia, that a great many Bulgarian teachers were rotting in the Asiatic dungeons, due to the intrigues and machinations of the Greeks and the Greek bishops, for the sole reason that they were Bulgarian teachers and had had the courage to teach in regions, in which the Grecophiles were strong.

A particularly hard blow was inflicted on Bulgarian enlightenment and educational activity in the Seres *sandjak* (district), where almost all of the Bulgarian teachers were brought to trial by military tribunals and were thrown in jail, accused that they wanted to open Bulgarian schools in the district. The situation, however, did not last long. The Bulgarian communities gradually pulled themselves together and waged a lawful struggle against the arbitrary actions of the Constantinople Patriarchy. They sent petitions to the Exarchate, the Ottoman government and to the International European Commission in

Constantinople. According to the stipulations of the Berlin Treaty, the Commission had to carry out reforms for the improvement of the situation of the Christian population in the European confines of the Ottoman Empire. With these pleas the Bulgarians petitioned to be given the right, once again, to have their own Bulgarian schools, under the supervision of the Exarchate. The unquenchable urge of the Bulgarian population to teach their children in their native tongue gave moral strength to the newly ordained Exarch Yossif I to continue the struggle for the rightful organization of the schools and the education of the Bulgarian inhabitants in Macedonia and Thrace. This joint struggle of the people and the Exarchate was followed with lively interest by the foreign consuls in the various "*vilayets*" (provinces) and by the diplomatic representatives in Constantinople. The Russian consuls were greatly concerned about the schools of the Bulgarian population. Filled with indignation by the conduct of the Greek bishops, they dispatched reports to the Russian government and to the Russian Ambassador in Constantinople, in which they stressed that it was inconceivable for the Bulgarian schools and teachers to remain under the control and "protection" of the Constantinople Patriarchy. The Russian vice-consul in Bitola (Macedonia) reported that the Bulgarian schools in Macedonia "so very necessary for the maintaining of the Bulgarian nationality," were in deplorable situation. Due to the unsettled position of the Exarchate, he proposed the care of the schools to be taken up by the Bulgarian communities, under the direct control of the Russian consulate.

The Sublime Porte could not reject the fair and just demands of the Bulgarians in these provinces. However, it solved the problem in a manner which no one expected. Instead of giving privileges of running the Bulgarian schools to the Exarchate, as was the case before the liberation of Bulgaria in 1881, the Sublime Porte transformed these schools from public into private schools and placed them under the subordination of the so-called educational commissions ("*moarif komisionlar*"), in accordance with the law of 1869. The members of these commissions were primarily Turks: this actually was a new variant of Midhat Pasha's idea towards the Ottomanization of the Bulgarian schools. In spite of the fact that even under the new situation a number of restrictive measures continued to exist, Bulgarian schools were reopened in many towns and villages. The Educational Commissions, alone, could issue permits for the opening up of schools; they issued the rights to the teachers to teach at the

observance of certain conditions; they sanctioned the school plans and programs; had the right of censorship over the text books, etc.

The dependence of the Exarchate schools on the "*moarif*" commissions continued until 1894. Backed by the Bulgarian communities in Macedonia and Thrace, as well as by public opinion in the Principality, the persevering Exarch Yossif succeeded during that year to obtain from Turkish government almost the same privileges which the Constantinople Patriarchy enjoyed in respect to the Greek schools in the European confines of the Ottoman Empire. In accordance with the "*irade*" (decree), issued on April 13, 1894, by the Ottoman Ministry of justice and Religious Freedoms, the Bulgarian schools were once again turned into public institutions under the direct subordination of the Exarchate, while these schools were locally subordinated to the Bulgarian metropolitan bishops and to the church and school communal councils. According to this "*irade*," the Bulgarian metropolitan bishops were obliged to present to the local Directors of Education ("*moarif miidiiir*") a list of all the Bulgarian schools in this eparchy, the school programs, a list of the text books used in the curricula of the schools, the names of the teachers and their certificates authorizing them to carry on teaching activities. The teacher's certificates as well as the text books were to be authenticated with the Exarchic seal, accompanied by the words : "Inspected by the Exarchate." In localities in which there were no Bulgarian metropolitan bishops, these formalities were to be carried out by the presidents of the church councils. The programs, the lists of teachers and text books and all other materials were to be registered with the educational commissions, after the execution of which the respective permits were given for the opening of the school. The Exarch, the local metropolitan bishops and the presidents of the communal councils were responsible to the authorities for the activity of the schools and teachers.

The founding of a boys' gymnasium in Salonika in 1881, bearing the name of the Bulgarian enlighteners and founders of the Bulgarian and Slav alphabet, the brothers Sts. Cyril and Methodi, was of particular importance in the development of Bulgarian educational activities in the European territories of the Ottoman Empire. The idea for its creation was given by the distinguished cultural worker and folklorist Kouzman Shapkarev (born in Ochrid), who in 1880 submitted to the Ministry of Public Education in Sofia and to the Exarchate in Constantinople a detailed plan for the organization of the educational work in Macedonia and Thrace. His plan proposed the creation, at first, of a Bulgarian boys' gymnasium in Salonika (Solun) and a girls' gymnasium with a boarding school. The male gymnasium was founded with the active cooperation of the well-known public

figure and ardent fighter for the independence of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, the Prilep-born Archimandrite Methodi Koussevich, who later on became Metropolitan Bishop of Stara Zagora. Young men from all parts of Macedonia and Thrace studied at this gymnasium. Paying great importance towards the pedagogic training of Bulgarian teachers, the Exarchate wanted to create a pedagogical department with the gymnasium, which course was to train students after finishing the third or fourth class of the gymnasium. The Ministry of Public Education in Sofia declined this proposal of the Exarchate, believing, that the students, after graduating from the seventh class of the gymnasium (at present the 10th class), could teach without a special pedagogical training. But due to the insistence of the Exarch of the school trusteeship established with the Exarchate, (the president of which was Methodi Koussevich and members: Professor Stephan Panaretov, Petko Tapchileshtov, etc.), a pedagogical department was created during the 1887-1888 school year.

After graduation, a large number of the alumni of the Sts. Cyril and Methodi Gymnasium in Salonica took up the teacher's profession. Thus, until 1893, out of its 171 alumni, 88 had dedicated themselves to teaching, 15 of which had graduated from various universities in Europe. With few exceptions, all became teachers in Macedonia and Thrace.

The Salonika girls' primary school, founded by Slavka Dinkova (sister of the renowned Bulgarian Revival teacher Georgi Dinkata) was turned into a girl's gymnasium in 1882, under the name of the Saint Annunciation. Very soon afterwards a commercial gymnasium was opened in Salonika. A girl's and a boy's gymnasium were established in Bitolya, while pedagogical schools were founded in Seres and Skopje. Boarding accommodations were organized with these secondary schools to house pupils from more distant parts in Macedonia and Thrace. A Bulgarian book shop was also opened in Salonika.

*Materials used:*

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*2/ Патриарх Кирил Български, Екзарх Антим Първи, София, 1916, р. 673.*

*3/ Educational Work of the Bulgarian Exarchate, Dimiter Donchev, Balkanika, Volume VI, number 2, 1972*