

National Consciousness in Medieval Bulgaria*)

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The introduction in the nineteenth century of Western scientific history into Balkan historiography had enormous positive effects. Arriving mainly through Central Europe and Russia, it brought to the subject superior methods, standards, and insights developed over many centuries which, by contrast, made local history writing in the conditions of the Ottoman rule appear very primitive indeed. Before the century was over, local historians had been academically trained in it and had begun to produce national history conforming to its methodology. Western-style history writing, however, also had strong negative effects. Its victory was too overwhelming, and it so overawed native historians with its products and perspectives that they lost the local perspective on the facts of Balkan history, including the development of the historical craft itself, and came to see their own history through the eyes of their teachers. Until recent decades, no one dared to point out, for example, that in the medieval period history writing in the Balkans, judging from what had survived the numberless invasions and devastations, was superior or at least as good as that in Western Europe, that it had absorbed much more of the classical heritage than its Western European counterpart had until the Renaissance, or that even in the eighteenth century Balkan history was not much inferior to that generally written in the Americas.

One of the deleterious effects was the transfer of hypotheses and interpretations of Western European medieval history to Balkan medieval history. Where they clashed with the imported schema the facts of local history were ignored or bent. In the crucial area of medieval social thought and ideology, Western European conditions were assumed to be Pan-European conditions, and since in Western

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Europe the universalist ideology of the Church prevailed until the Reformation and checked national self-expression, it was impossible to grasp the true meaning of essential facts of national self-expression and ideology in the Balkans and elsewhere in Eastern Europe during the Middle Ages. Speaking of the effects of the work of Cyril and Methodius in Czechoslovak and Balkan lands, Professor Roman Jakobson pointed out in 1945 that the assumption of a common European pattern for the rise and growth of the national idea is untenable and pleaded for respect of the local facts: "Such a Pan-European evolutionary scheme is a pure fiction, a hasty generalization. In Eastern Europe the Slavs were the first and the only ethnic unit to start a new national cultural language in the Middle Ages. In this respect the Slavic case is so peculiar and so different from the usual Occidental pattern of cultural history that it really merits a special, unprejudiced examination."¹)

The need in Western historiography of the Balkans to free the facts of Balkan history from superimposed Western hypotheses, interpretations, and periodization schemes is still acute in many areas. In Balkan historiography, the anti-Western frame of mind, which the Marxist regimes introduced after World War II in Albania, Bulgaria, Rumania, and Yugoslavia, has had the curious healthy effect of emancipating history writing in these countries from traditional Western patterns of interpretation and producing a new, local perspective. Although the Marxist school that became dominant is in essence another Western interpretation seeking to impose another set of foreign schemes on Balkan history, the evolution from schematicism to greater respect for the facts in recent years has made possible the deepening study of the facts of national history on their own merits and the emergence of a local perspective for their interpretation. This article will attempt to present the salient elements of what may be tentatively called a national ideology in the first Bulgarian state

¹) Roman Jakobson, *The Beginnings of National Self-Determination in Europe*. — *Review of Politics*, VII, No. 1 (January, 1945), pp. 29—42. Jakobson further pointed out that documents glorifying national letters among the Slavs and "the pivotal ideology of all Slavic medieval literature" have been ignored in the study of medieval ideology, because "foreign schemes were borrowed to interpret the Slavs' own past. If the facts of this past did not fit into the scheme, so much the worse for the facts; discordant facts often were kept in the shadow. Thus, in particular, the ninth century declaration of the rights of peoples contradicted sharply the conventional history of nationalism and was so treated."

in the Middle Ages and to place them in local, rather than Western European, perspective. It draws upon traditional historiography as well as the postwar works of Bulgarian and Soviet historians.²⁾

The modern Bulgarian nation, which traces its presence in the Balkan peninsula to the early Middle Ages, is the product of an amalgamation of many ethnic strains. A process that extended over centuries, its ethnogenesis is in the era of the great migrations which radically changed the ethnic complexion of the lands along the lower Danube and south of it to the Aegean and Adriatic seas. Beginning with the movements of the Goths, successive waves of tribes pressed on the Danubian border of the East Roman, later Byzantine, Empire and in most cases managed to spill over into the inviting lands south of the great river. Between the second and the seventh century A. D. untold numbers of migrating tribes—among them Goths, Huns, Avars, Slavs, Bulgars—settled among the native populations—Romanized Moesians, Thracians, Macedonians, Illyrians, Greeks—which the turbulent events had thinned out, and in time intermingled and intermarried with them. The newcomers destroyed much, but also partook of the culture of the natives—Graeco-Roman and Christian at least in the cities³⁾ — and left their own, more or less enduring, imprints.

Of the migrating tribes which settled on the lands labeled by subsequent history as Bulgarian, only the Slavs and the Bulgars had impact that has endured to the present time. In prolonged migrations during the sixth and seventh centuries, the Slavs flooded Moesia (the territory between the Danube and the Balkan Mountain range), Thrace, Macedonia, Illyricum, as well as much of Greece and Albania and became the prevalent countryside population surrounding

²⁾ Since terminology is of the essence, it should be borne in mind that the following English equivalents have been used in rendering the terms used by Bulgarian authors: *narod* — people; *narodnost* — nationality; *narodnosten* — national, ethnic; *rod* — clan, origin; *pleme* — tribe, race; *nacija* — nation; *nacionalizacija* — nationalization.

³⁾ The spread of Christianity to the Balkan peninsula dates from the missionary activities of *St. Paul* in Macedonia (Salonika), Illyricum, and Greece (Corinth). By the fifth century it was covered by a network of dioceses. Cf. Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, New York 1959, pp. 26—27; Adolf von Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten*, Leipzig 1924, Vol. II, pp. 786—798; I. Snegarov, *Bŭlgarska cŭrkovna istorija* [Bulgarian church history], Sofija 1947, pp. 80—90. Snegarov, a Macedonian from Okhrida, notes that Macedonians were the first in Europe to become Christians.

the Graeco-Roman cities.⁴⁾ Although they had to use Greek as the language of the imperial territories where they settled and as the "lingua franca" of the area, the Slavs preserved their own vernacular and even adapted, long before *Cyril* and *Methodius*, the Greek alphabet as a way of writing their tongue.⁵⁾ In their lands they absorbed linguistically and ethnically the indigenous populations and their language "emerged as the victor over the languages" these populations spoke, Thracian, Latin, and Greek.⁶⁾

Politically, however, the Slavs remained organized in clans and tribes and subjects of the Byzantine Empire. The largest measure of independence was enjoyed by the seven Slavic tribes in Moesia identified by contemporary Byzantine chroniclers. By the second half of the seventh century when the Bulgars crossed the Danube at its delta and entered Dobrudja and Moesia, the seven Moesian tribes may have maintained a loose tribal alliance and may have been on the verge of establishing a centralized state.⁷⁾ They seem to have been, however, strongly attached to clan and tribe and resistant to higher authority. Byzantine writers recorded that the Slavs were pastoral folk who loved freedom, did not practice slavery, worked and held their possessions collectively, and deliberated in assemblies open to all; in short, freedom, democracy, and collective patterns of life were essential elements in their outlook.⁸⁾ Until the Slavic alphabets

⁴⁾ The most recent study of the effect of the migrations and the "re-barbarization" of the peninsula is V. T ŭ p k o v a - Z a i m o v a's *Našestvija i etničeski promeni na Balkanskija poluostrvo prez VI—VII v.* [Invasions and ethnic changes in the Balkan Peninsula in the 6th and 7th centuries]. Sofija 1966, where the literature is cited.

⁵⁾ E. G e o r g i e v, *Razcvetŭt na bŭlgarskata literatura v IX—X v.* [The Flowering of Bulgarian literature in the 9th and 10th centuries]. Sofija 1962, pp. 30—31. Georgiev points out that the ultimate product of this adaptation, the Cyrillic alphabet, could have arisen only among the Slavs of the Bulgarian lands who were in closest contact with the Greeks.

⁶⁾ *Istorija na Bulgarija* [History of Bulgaria], Vol. I, Sofija 1961, p. 52. (A collective work by many Bulgarian historians, *Istorija na Bŭlgarija* was published in 1961—1964 in three volumes by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Its first edition in two volumes appeared in 1954—1955.)

⁷⁾ *Ibid.*, pp. 59—60; I. D u j č e v, *Obedinenieto na slavjanskite plemena v Mizija prez VII vek. — Izsledvanija v čest na Marin Drinov* [The unification of the Slavic tribes in Moesia in the 7th century. — Studies in honor of Marin Drinov.] Sofija 1960, pp. 417—428.

⁸⁾ I. S n e g a r o v, *Obštstvenata misŭl v pŭrvata bŭlgarska dŭrŭzava (680—1018)*. *Slavianska filologija; materialy za V meždunaroden kongres na slavistite*, Vol. V,

were devised in the ninth century, however, little else was recorded as to the political and social thought among the Balkan Slavs.

The Bulgars or proto-Bulgarians, on the other hand, came into the peninsula in smaller numbers⁹⁾ and, seizing Slavic lands in Dobrudja and Moesia, they compelled the Byzantine Empire in 680 by force (and in 681 by treaty) to recognize their authority there.¹⁰⁾ The Bulgars were a warlike people, disciplined and obedient to their khan; like the Osmanli Turks, they were a community of warriors, ready to fight at any time. Since in the subsequent years the empire was unable to conquer the Bulgars, a new independent political entity took root and shape on the edge of the empire in Europe. By the ninth century this Bulgarian state grew to the proportions of an empire itself by taking in most of Thrace, Macedonia, northern Greece, Albania, Serbia, and, north of the Danube, the ill-defined lands from Bessarabia and Wallachia to Charlemagne's empire in the west.¹¹⁾ This vigorous formation, born and shaped by the contact—belicose and peaceful—with the Byzantine Empire, was the first state to arise and survive among all Slavs, Southern, Western, and Eastern.

The racial roots of the Bulgars have been a matter of intense controversy ever since the great Göttingen historian of Eastern

[Social thought in the first Bulgarian state (680—1018). — Slavic philology; materials for the 5th International Congress of Slavists, Vol. V]. Sofija 1963, pp. 137—139. Snegarov cites the Byzantine sources.

⁹⁾ Since the Bulgars infiltrated south over a long period of time and firm data as to the size of these movements are lacking in the sources, most histories do not offer estimates. The Bulgars who went across the Danube in the second half of the seventh century may have been between 50,000 and 100,000, including women and children. Cf. P. M u t a f č i e v, *Istorija na bŭlgarskija narod* [History of the Bulgarian people]. Vol. I, Sofija 1948, p. 104; I. M i t e v, *Kratka istorija na bŭlgarskija narod* [Concise history of the Bulgarian people]. Sofija 1951, p. 26.

¹⁰⁾ This was the first barbarian state the Empire recognized in the Balkans. Whether the Bulgars came as conquerors or allies of the Slavs has been, in the absence of historical evidence, a matter for conjecture and hypothesis. *Istorija na Bŭlgarija* (Vol. I, p. 60) subscribes to the hypothesis of an alliance between the league of the seven Slavic tribes in Moesia and the Bulgars against the common enemy, the Byzantine Empire.

¹¹⁾ Steven R u n c i m a n, *A History of the First Bulgarian Empire*, London 1930, pp. 50—130 and map at the end of his volume. For other maps, see the *Atlas po bŭlgarska istorija* [Atlas of Bulgarian history] of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofija 1963, pp. 10—13.

Europe, August Ludwig von Schlözer, declared them in 1771 to be Turko-Tatars. Various theories arose in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, of which three have had the widest acceptance: that the proto-Bulgarians were of Turkic (Caucasoid), Hunnic (Mongoloid), or Slavic ethnic strain.¹²⁾ Geographically, the earliest mention of them in the fourth century places them in the Caucasus: when the Huns, coming from the borderlands of China, reached the area, some of the Bulgars submitted to them while others migrated south into Armenia. Under the Huns' sway the Bulgars went with them to the Danubian plains, but when the Hunnic empire in present-day Hungary collapsed in the fifth century, they returned to the lands north of the Caucasus. At the end of the sixth century they held sway over a vast territory, called "Great Bulgaria" by Byzantine chroniclers, which extended north of the Caucasus and west of the Volga. "Great Bulgaria" prospered under its ruler (khan) *Kubrat*, but upon his death in 642 it was broken up by *Kubrat's* five sons. His third son, *Asparuch* or *Isperich*, led some of the tribes westward to southern Bessarabia and the Danubian delta whence they penetrated into Dobrudja and Moesia and established "Bulgaria on the Danube", or the Bulgarian state in the Balkans. The remaining sons migrated in other directions or stayed in the Volga area. A "Bulgaria on the Volga" prospered until the thirteenth century when the Mongol (Tatar) hordes of *Jenghiz Khan* overran and devastated the area.¹³⁾

The earliest extant source reflecting the political, ethnic, and social ideas of the Bulgars is *Imennik na bŭlgarskite chanove* (Name

¹²⁾ For the historians involved in the controversy, see I. Pastuchov, *Bŭlgarska istorija* [Bulgarian history]. Sofija 1945, pp. 128—129. *Istorija na Bŭlgarija* (Vol. I, p. 53) regards the proto-Bulgarians as Turkic, but notes that they were part of the Hunnic empire. The greatest and most influential of the Bulgarian academic historians, Vasil N. Zlatarski, subscribed to the Hunnic theory and entitled the first part (dealing with the period to 852) of Vol. I of his massive *Istorija na bŭlgarskata dŭrŭava prez srednite vekove* [History of the Bulgarian state in the Middle Ages]. Sofija 1918, "Period of the Hunnic-Bulgar Supremacy." Zlatarski uses the term "nation" to characterize the ruling Bulgars and the term "tribe" for the Slavs, implying that the Bulgars were politically more advanced than the Slavs. Professor Mutafčiev (pp. 74—75) also adhered to the Hunnic theory.

¹³⁾ *Istorija na Bŭlgarija*, Vol. I, pp. 53—55; V. F. Gening and A. Kh. Khalikov, *Rannie bolgary na Volge* [The early Bulgars on the Volga]. Moscow 1964, pp. 100—176. See also Christian Gerard [pseudonym of G. Sergheraert], *Les Bulgares de la Volga et les Slaves du Danube*, Paris 1939.

list of the Bulgar khans), which has survived in a Slavic translation of the original, apparently written in Greek—with some proto-Bulgarian elements—in the eighth century.¹⁴⁾ The list is chronological (it reaches the year 766 according to the lunar chronology used by the proto-Bulgarians) and sets the khan of the Huns, *Attila*, as the forebear of the Bulgar khans. Although it contains chronological and factual inaccuracies, it is nonetheless a valuable document of the ethnic and political consciousness of the proto-Bulgarians as it had evolved by the eighth century.

The main purpose of the *Imennik* seems to be to prove the age, antiquity, and worth of the Bulgarian state, which the reference to *Attila* and his forebears made in the consciousness of the Bulgars approximately co-eval—and hence co-equal—with the Byzantine Empire.¹⁵⁾ Several important ideas are stressed or implied: ethnically the Bulgars were Huns; their state originated in *Attila's* state and continued the "Great Bulgaria" of *Khan Kubrat*; the aristocracy of the Bulgar clans was the pillar and directing force of the state; the Bulgars had their own, well-developed, cultural identity. Sharpened by the confrontations and contrasts with the challenging neighbor

¹⁴⁾ Zlatarski, op. cit., Vol. I, Part I, appendix 1 "Bŭlgarsko letobroenie", pp. 353—382. After coming to the Balkans, the Bulgars used Greek as official language, as their numerous inscriptions on stones and columns show. According to Zlatarski, the lapidary nature of the *Imennik* suggests that it, too, may have been first cut on palace columns. E. G e o r g i e v agrees; cf. his *Prabulgarskoto letopisanie. — Izsledvanija v čest na Marin Drinov* [The Proto-Bulgarian chronology. — Studies in honor of Marin Drinov]. Sofija 1960, pp. 369—380. See also Omelian P r i t s a k, *Die bulgarische Fürstenliste und die Sprache der Protobulgaren*. Wiesbaden 1955, pp. 11—48 and A. K a r a s i k, *Drevnejšaja bolgarskaja letopis* [The earliest Bulgarian chronicle]. — *Voprosy Istorij*, No. 5, 1950, pp. 114—118. Pritsak points out that the compilation of the list could not have been a private initiative and that it must have been ordered by the ruling khan. It may have been produced in the khan's chancery.

¹⁵⁾ V. B e š e v l i e v, *Die Anfänge der bulgarischen Literatur*. — *International Journal of Slavic Linguistics and Poetics*, No. 4, 1961, pp. 116—145. Beševliev is of the opinion that the list was compiled during the reign of *Tsar Simeon* (893—927) and was "a sort of answer to those who denied the Bulgarian state the right to exist or wanted to belittle its importance" and that it may have served as justification of the imperial ambitions of the Bulgarian ruler. According to Beševliev, its author was thus "motivated by ideas similar to those which moved the writer Chernorizets Chrabur to write his apology 'Concerning the Alphabet'" in the ninth or tenth century; see below.

and enemy, the Byzantine Empire, the sense of identity broadened to include other elements and was expressed in a cult of the state evidenced in the numerous inscriptions the Bulgar khans cut until the ninth century.¹⁶⁾

In these Bulgar sources and in Byzantine histories the Bulgars emerge as conscious of being a distinct people, having their own distinct history, time-reckoning, and culture, and seeing themselves as the political and military equal of the Byzantine Empire. They began their time-reckoning from the establishment of their state, in contrast to the Byzantine time-reckoning which was Biblical and universal and began from the creation of the world. The chronology and inscriptions of the proto-Bulgarians evidence a consciously maintained cult of the Bulgar state in Moesia and the parts of Thrace and Macedonia which they also conquered from the empire. The early Byzantine practice of referring to their lands as "Bulgaria" (Βουλγαρία) further reinforced their sense of identity and ethnic worth.¹⁷⁾

The strength and size which the Bulgar state amassed by the beginning of the ninth century made its continued existence a grave danger to the Byzantine Empire. In 811 Emperor *Nicephorus* resolved to dispose of it once and for all and headed with a large army for its capital Pliska in Moesia. The Bulgar khan, *Krum*, at first yielded ground, including Pliska which was pillaged and burned by the Byzantine army, but on July 26, 811, he ambushed the enemy and slew *Nicephorus* and most of his troops. For the first time since 378 when *Valens* perished at the hands of the Goths at Adrianople, an emperor had fallen in battle with the barbarians. The disaster was "a stupendous blow to the Imperial prestige—to the legend of the Emperor's sacrosanctity, so carefully fostered to impress the barbarians."¹⁸⁾ The Bulgar khan and his nobles celebrated the momentous victory by

¹⁶⁾ V. Beševliev, *Die protobulgarischen Inschriften*. Berlin 1963, the best collection of these inscriptions, includes 92. Beševliev regards the *Imennik* and the inscriptions as the beginnings of the Bulgarian literature since they provided historical material to the later writers. Inscriptions surrounding the famous relief, the Madara Horseman, carved on a rock in northeast Bulgaria also date from this period. When the relief itself was carved is still uncertain. Cf. *Istorija na Bŭlgarija*, Vol. I, p. 85.

¹⁷⁾ S n e g a r o v, *Obšttestvenata mišul v pŭrvata bŭlgarska dŭrŭava*, pp. 140—141; *Zlata rski*, op. cit., Vol. I, Part 1, p. 147.

¹⁸⁾ R u n c i m a n, op. cit., pp. 55—57.

drinking toasts from a silver goblet fashioned from the skull of the emperor.¹⁹⁾

Krum's son, *Omurtag* (816—831), was in his domestic activity a great builder who rebuilt Pliska, erected impressive palaces and fortresses, and ordered numerous inscriptions cut in Greek²⁰⁾ to glorify the khan, extoll military commanders who had fallen in battle faithful to the central authority, and immortalize the accomplishments of the reign. In front of one of his palaces he placed copper statues of lions to symbolize the superiority of the Bulgar khan over the Byzantine ruler. These and other activities reveal his purpose as being the creation of a prestigious autocratic and centralized monarchy better suited to the needs of the empire Bulgaria had now become than the tribal monarchy of the early Bulgar state. Toward this end he sought to create a cult of the khan's person as sacrosanct and of his office as divinely ordained. For the first time, in *Omurtag's* reign the khan was officially called "great" and was depicted as divine (ὁ ἐκ θεοῦ ἄρχων).²¹⁾

By the middle of the ninth century the process of amalgamation of the two main ethnic components of the Bulgar state, the proto-Bulgarians and the Slavs, had advanced to the point that the numerically small Bulgar element was disappearing in the Slavic mass. The ruling Bulgar aristocracy, however, still preserved its identity and dominant position in the state. Its separateness was emphasized by the fact that, while the Slavic aristocracy and masses had become preponderantly Christian, the Bulgars continued to adhere to their pagan religion.²²⁾ *Khan Boris* (ruling from 852 to 889), motivated by a va-

¹⁹⁾ Ibid.; Zlatarski, op. cit., Vol. I, Part 1, pp. 259—260. See also V. Beševliev, Čaši ot čerepi u prabŭlgarite [Goblets from skulls among the Proto-Bulgarians]. — Godišnik na Sofijskija universitet, istoriko-filologičeski fakultet, Vol. XXII, 1926, pp. 1—23.

²⁰⁾ Greek was still the only language in Eastern Europe which had an alphabet and remained as the official language of the Bulgar khan's chancery until the end of the ninth century; see below.

²¹⁾ Snegarov, Obšttestvenata misŭl v pŭrvata bŭlgarska dŭrŭava, pp. 143—144. The use of the Byzantine imperial formula does not imply the acceptance of the Christian God by *Omurtag*, who persecuted the Christians.

²²⁾ Zlatarski, "Predgovor", Vol. I, Part 1. Zlatarski saw the end of the ethnic dualism and the fusion of the two elements primarily as the result of the spread of Christianity among the Slavs: "Christianity was the most powerful weapon of the Slavs in their struggle with the Bulgars for political and social equality in the state; through it the Slavs sought to obtain access to the khan's court and the

riety of considerations—to amalgamate the ethnic elements and strengthen the state; to attain full equality with his Christian neighbors, the Byzantine Emperor and the German king; to elevate his international status from being a barbarian ruler to becoming a member of the medieval family of Christian monarchs; and to include his country in the sphere of the Christian civilization—adopted Christianity under Byzantine auspices as state religion in 865.²³⁾ Despite some resistance to the conversion, the amalgamation of the population and the Slavicization of the state were in essence complete by the tenth century. A Bulgarian nationality, uniform in religion, ethnic consciousness, and language, began to emerge, "a necessary prerequisite for the subsequent formation of the Bulgarian nation."²⁴⁾

The adoption of Christianity had a momentous — in Marxist terminology "progressive" — impact on all aspects of Bulgarian life throughout its subsequent history.²⁵⁾ A faith as well as a system of

highest levels of government... the Bulgar rulers sacrificed heir ethnic group in order to secure and retain the power in their hands, while the Slavs, even though they attained ethnic superiority in the state and political superiority in the government, were compelled to sacrifice their democratic organization and accept the monarchism introduced and consolidated by the Bulgars." See also his study *Obrazuvane na bŭlgarskata narodnost* [The formation of the Bulgarian nationality]. — *Bŭlgarska istoričeska biblioteka*, Vol. I (1928), No. 1, pp. 74—112; an English translation, not always reliable, of the first three parts of this study appeared as "The Making of the Bulgarian Nation" in *Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. IV (1925—26), pp. 362—383.

²³⁾ Godfather of *Boris* was the emperor himself, *Michael III*; a bishop represented him by proxy. *Boris* assumed the emperor's name in the rite. For a view that this occurred in 864, see *P. Petrov*, *Za godinata na nalagane christijanstvoto v Bŭlgarija* [Concerning the year of the imposition of Christianity in Bulgaria]. — *Izvestija na Instituta za Bŭlgarska Istorija*, Vol. 14—15, Sofija 1964, pp. 569—590. The new Soviet *Istorija Vizantii* [History of Byzantium] accepts 864 (Vol. 2, Moscow 1967, p. 198).

²⁴⁾ *Istorija na Bŭlgarija*, Vol. I, p. 96. Yielding to the Slavic vernacular, the language of the Bulgars disappeared. Its only traces in modern Bulgarian are the national name and about fifteen words.

²⁵⁾ *Ibid.*, pp. 96—97. Viewing historical events through the categorical polarity of "progressive" (advancing the historical process) and "reactionary" (impeding it), Bulgarian Marxist historians see the adoption of Christianity as having "a major progressive significance for the time". Cf. *E. Georgiev*, *Po vŭprosa za christijaniziraneto na srednovekovna Bŭlgarija*. (Protiv dogmatizma i schematizma v našata istoričeska nauka [Concerning the question of the Christianization of medieval Bulgaria (Against the dogmatism and schematicism in our historical science)]. — *Istoričeski Pregled*, No. 5, 1954, pp. 82—104.

thought and institutions that was far more advanced than any pagan culture in Europe at the time, Christianity brought to Bulgarians the fullness of Byzantine civilization: its classical heritage, art, religious organization, political and legal concepts. Using the conceptual system of the Byzantine civilization of the Greeks, the best-defined "nation" in contemporary Europe, Bulgarians developed a much more elaborate consciousness of the elements of national identity—ethnic, linguistic, political, and religious—than they had before. Hitherto confined to the khan's court and a few feudal lords, public consciousness spread, through the new opportunities for education and communication, to an expanding intelligentsia and, through the dynamic hierarchy and the parish churches of the new state religion, to widening circles of the people at large.

At first, however, Christianization threatened to produce a Byzantine cultural conquest of Bulgaria and, with it, an effective instrument for its political subordination to the Empire. To counter this threat and to acquire the symbol of equality with the Empire indispensable in the new situation — an independent patriarch and church — *Boris* undertook prolonged negotiations with the Ecumenical Patriarch, *Photius*, concerning the organization of the church in Bulgaria. One of the most learned men of his time and a skillful diplomat, *Photius*, however, evaded the question since both he and the emperor wished to keep Bulgaria under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.²⁶⁾

In 866 *Boris* resolved to exploit the rivalry between the patriarchate and the papacy and dispatched a mission to *Pope Nicholas I* to ask him a long series of questions (115) concerning the new faith, including the question of the status of the Bulgarian church. In his 106 "Responsa" dated November 13, 866, *Nicholas I* replied that, rather than to think of a patriarch, it was more proper for *Boris* to have a bishop and, after the new religion had spread and other bishoprics were formed, an archbishop.²⁷⁾ Two papal legates went to

²⁶⁾ Matthew Spinka, *A History of Christianity in the Balkans: A Study in the Spread of Byzantine Culture among the Slavs*. Chicago 1933, pp. 37—38.

²⁷⁾ The text of the "Responsa" is in *Izvori za bŭlgarskata istorija*, Vol. VII (Latinski izvori za bŭlgarskata istorija, Vol. II) [Sources for Bulgarian history, Vol. VII (Latin sources for Bulgarian history, Vol. II)]. Sofija 1960, pp. 65—125. Since *Boris* also wanted to know who appointed a patriarch, how many were the true patriarchs, and who ranked second after the pope, *Nicholas I* elaborated that a patriarch could be elevated by superior ecclesiastical authority, that true patriarchates were only

Bulgaria with the emissaries of *Boris* to rebaptize the Bulgarians into Latin Christianity and bring Bulgaria into the ecclesiastical domain of Rome.

The papal answers to his shrewd and penetrating questions and his experience with the Latin clergy in Bulgaria convinced *Boris* that ultimate religious independence and establishment of a national church ranking with the existing patriarchates — his main objective — would be impossible under the auspices of Rome.²⁸⁾ The absolute rule on the use of Latin in religious service and education made Christianity incomprehensible in a country where Slavic was the prevalent language and Greek was widely known and, being an effective means of papal control, the Latin language barred the way to the nationalization of the church in Bulgaria. *Boris* was undoubtedly aware of the liberal practice of the eastern patriarchates in regard to the use of the languages of pagans for their Christianization. The great missionary work of *Ulphilas*, the fourth-century "Apostle of the Goths" who translated the Scriptures into Gothic by means of a new script based on the Greek alphabet with Latin and Runic characters, may have been known to *Boris*. By the ninth century this practice had resulted in the emergence of Armenian, Coptic, and Syriac churches, each using the language of the local people and having its own alphabet and literature.²⁹⁾

In fact, at this very time the well-known effort was underway to establish a Slavic church in Moravia (present-day Czechoslovakia) on the basis of a distinct alphabet and translations of Scriptures into the Slavic vernacular. Threatened with massive penetration of his lands by the German clergy, the Moravian prince, *Rostislav*, had

those founded by Apostles, namely those at Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch, and that second in rank was the Patriarch of Alexandria; the Patriarch of Constantinople was a creation of the emperors and had no rank among the apostolic sees.

²⁸⁾ The seventy-third of the "Responsa" implied that eventually *Boris* could have an archbishop ranking with those of *Gallia* and *Germania*. This was as far as the papacy could go to bring the ancient Illyricum (and with it „Vulgarorum patriam quae in Illyrico constituta est“) back to the jurisdiction of Rome without encouraging nationalist or particularist tendencies.

²⁹⁾ *Walker*, *A History of the Christian Church*, pp. 144—145. The emergence of ethnically identified churches in the East was in large measure due to doctrinal controversies. In any case, by the time *Boris* embraced Christianity the East was characterized by a pluralism, which allowed room for maneuvering toward religious independence, whereas the papal monism in the West allowed none.

requested Constantinople to send him Byzantine missionaries to spread Christianity in Slavic and thus counteract the German threat. *Patriarch Photius* summoned for the task two brothers, *Cyril* and *Methodius* who, being born in Salonika, apparently knew Slavic as their mother tongue³⁰⁾ and had experience in missionary work. The younger of the brothers, *Constantine* or *Cyril*, was a brilliant church intellectual educated at the Magnaura Palace school for the children of the imperial family; an accomplished linguist and philosopher, he was for a period a professor of philosophy at the school and librarian of the patriarchal church St. Sophia. Before going to Moravia in 863, the two "Apostles of the Slavs" devised, probably from an existing Slavic adaptation of the Greek script, an alphabet based on Greek characters but fitted to the peculiarities of the Slavic tongue. The new script, known as the Glagolitic alphabet, was used to translate the necessary religious texts with which to begin the missionary work in Moravia.³¹⁾

³⁰⁾ The ethnic background of the two brothers has been a matter of well-known controversies. While the earliest sources state that their father was a high administrative official in Salonika, they leave room for conjectures that he may have been a Hellenized Slav and that their mother may have been a Slav from the area. Later Bulgarian medieval sources state flatly that they were Bulgarians (see below). The best arguments that they were Slavs are, in the view of Bulgarian scholars, that they exhibit a perfect knowledge of the Slavic tongue in their translations and writings, and that they were not mere missionaries, but dedicated fighters — to the point of self-sacrifice — for Slavic liturgy and culture. Cf. *Istorija na bŭlgarskata literatura*. 1. *Starobŭlgarska literatura* [History of Bulgarian literature. 1. Old Bulgarian literature]. Sofija 1962, p. 32. (*Istorija na bŭlgarskata literatura* is being published in four volumes by the Institute for Literature of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.)

³¹⁾ D. A n g e l o v, *Kiril i Metodii i vizantijskata kultura i politika, Chiljada i sto godini slavjanska pismenost, 863—1963; sbornik v čest na Kiril i Metodii* [Cyril and Methodius and Byzantine culture and policy, Eleven Hundred Years of Slavic Letters, 863—1963, a collection in honor of Cyril and Methodius]. Sofija 1963, pp. 51—57; V. A. I s t r i n, *1100 let slavjanskoj azbuki* [1100 Years of the Slavic alphabet]. Moscow 1963, pp. 7—43. The literature on the work of *Cyril* and *Methodius*, which had an impact on all Slavs, is enormous. The most comprehensive bibliographies are G. A. I l ' i n s k i j, *Opyt sistematičeskoj Kirillo-Metod'evskoj bibliografii* [Preliminary systematic bibliography of Cyrillo-Methodiana]. Sofija 1934 and M. P o p r u ŝ e n k o and S. R o m a n s k i, *Kirilometodievaska bibliografija za 1934—1940 god* [Bibliography of Cyrillo-Methodiana for 1934—1940]. Sofija 1942. The Bulgarian publications for 1944—1962 are listed in *Chiljada i sto godini slavjanska pismenost*, pp. 515—541.

Cyril and *Methodius* took along a number of younger men, undoubtedly Slavs from their home area in Macedonia, to help in establishing the mission and translating additional religious texts. The appearance of the Byzantine mission in Moravia and its effective work through the use of the Slavic vernacular riled the German clergy, who regarded Moravia as their missionary field, and a conflict — in essence a new manifestation of the basic conflict between the nationalities, Slavs and Germans, in the area — was joined.³²⁾ The issue reached *Pope Nicholas I* and, concerned over the ambitions and power of the Bavarian bishops as well as over the encroachments of Constantinople, he invited the two brothers to come to Rome. On their way they passed through Venice where, drawn into a dispute with Venetian clergymen, *Cyril* formulated a brilliant defense of the use of Slavic in the liturgy and learning. The Venetian clergy, like Christian clergy elsewhere, adhered to the doctrine of the three holy languages of Christendom, according to which liturgy and learning could be conducted only in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Proceeding from the doctrine of the equality of all Christians (and hence of their languages) stated in *St. Paul's* first epistle to the Corinthians³³⁾, *Cyril* pointed out that all men shared equally the God-given rain, sunshine, and air, that the trilingual doctrine would make all other peoples and tribes forever blind and deaf, and that many peoples — Armenians, Goths, Copts, Syrians, and others — already had books and worshipped Christ in their own language.³⁴⁾ In Rome, where *Cyril* died on February 14, 869, the pope approved what the two brothers had done and allowed *Methodius* to continue the work as bishop of Pannonia and later as archbishop of "Great Moravia".

³²⁾ Jakobson, *The Beginnings of National Self-Determination in Europe*, p. 30. Jakobson emphasizes that this conflict produced "the first formulation of the national idea in Czechoslovak and in all Slavic history."

³³⁾ *Ibid.*, pp. 32—33. Referring to *Cyril's* "exalted eulogy glorifying national letters", Jakobson states that there is no "similar work in Western medieval literatures" and that it contains "in brief the pivotal ideology of all Slavic medieval literature. In this movement initiated by the Moravian Apostles, equal right to the highest of values, namely the Divine Word, was claimed for every nation and for all people. Thus the *national* trend here is bound up with a *democratic* trend."

³⁴⁾ See the excerpt from the "Life of Cyril" (believed to be the work of *Methodius*) in A. Burmov and P. Petrov, *Christomatija po istorija na Bŭlgarija. I. Ot naj-stari vremena do sredata na XVIII vek* [Readings on Bulgarian history. I. From ancient times to the middle of the 18th century]. Sofija 1964, pp. 129—133.

Although direct evidence is lacking, *Boris* must have been fully aware of the developments in Moravia and the possibilities they presented for the church in Bulgaria; his relations with the neighboring Moravian prince were intensive, and traffic between Constantinople and Moravia passed through his lands.³⁵⁾ By 869, pursuing his objective of an independent Bulgarian church, he again turned to Constantinople where the unyielding *Photius* had been replaced by a new patriarch. In the light of the events that followed, it appears that *Boris* agreed to end the connection with Rome in return for the appointment of a Bulgarian archbishop of his choice by the patriarch and ratification of this act by the church council which was about to convene to deal with territorial and other issues between Rome and Constantinople.³⁶⁾

In any case, at its final meeting (March 4, 870, held in St. Sophia) the council received the emissaries sent by *Boris* and questioned them closely. When they were asked which clergy — Greek or Latin — their forefathers had encountered when they seized the territories forming their homeland, the Bulgarian emissaries replied that they had “conquered their fatherland by force of arms from the Greeks and had found there not Latin but Greek priests”.³⁷⁾ The pre-arranged answer resolved the issue at the council and Bulgaria returned to the jurisdiction of Constantinople. The council instructed the patriarch to appoint an archbishop for Bulgaria with extensive powers of autonomy. A Bulgarian bishop, *Iosif* (apparently a nominee of *Boris*), received the office and returned to Bulgaria, accompanied by ten Greek bishops and other clergy, to displace the Latin clergy and set up a hierarchy in the country.

Boris did not see his goal of an independent Bulgarian patriarchate attained in his lifetime. His decision to abandon the tie with Rome, however, had much greater historical consequences than his pursuit of independence for the Bulgarian church. It placed Bulgaria in the sphere of Byzantine civilization and its successor, the civilization

³⁵⁾ Zlatarski, *Istorija na bŭlgarskata dŭrŭava prez srednite vekove*, Vol. I, Part 2, Sofija 1927, pp. 203—204. Bulgaria and Moravia had common frontier north of Belgrade which was then within Bulgaria. For maps, see Francis Dvornik, *The Slavs: Their Early History and Civilizations*, Boston 1956, pp. 99, 129; and *Atlas po bŭlgarska istorija*, pp. 10—12.

³⁶⁾ Zlatarski, *Istorija . . .*, Vol. I, Part 2, p. 130.

³⁷⁾ *Ibid.*, pp. 133—135; *Istorija na Bŭlgarija*, Vol. I, p. 98. Zlatarski provides a detailed account of what happened at the council.

of the Ottoman Empire, and thus beyond the reach of the great developments in the Roman Catholic West like the Renaissance and the Reformation. In terms of the formation and preservation of the Bulgarian nation, the decision of *Boris* to side with Constantinople made possible the development of a national culture and identity, based on the Slavic vernacular, much earlier than such a development occurred anywhere in the West.³⁸⁾

What *Boris* did to obtain clergy capable to teach the new religion in the language of the people — whether he sought such clergy from Moravia or Constantinople — is not known, but the sources say that he “longed for such men”.³⁹⁾ The opportunity to solve the problem of creating a Slavic hierarchy and ridding Bulgaria of the Greek clergy came with the collapse of the Moravian mission when *Methodius* died in 885. The German clergy took advantage of the passing of the great Slavic apostle to dismantle the mission and disperse the disciples of the two brothers. Some of them, undoubtedly aware of the problems and policies of *Boris* and of the opportunities for work in his Slavic land, headed for Bulgaria. *Boris* received them with great joy and worked out with them a plan for the dissemination of the liturgy and learning in the Slavic vernacular in his country. He was particularly interested in strengthening his hold on the Macedonian lands recently wrested from the Byzantine Empire and sent there *Kliment* (St. Clemens, in Latin sources, ca. 840—916), who appears to have been the best disciple of *Cyril* and *Methodius*.

Kliment, made bishop of the region in 893, centered his activities at Okhrida and the surrounding area where he built several churches and monasteries and laid the foundations of the Slavic cultural presence in Macedonia.⁴⁰⁾ The first bishop of the emerging Slavic national church of Bulgaria, he also became the first educator in the

³⁸⁾ *Istorija na Bŭlgarija*, Vol. I, pp. 98—99.

³⁹⁾ *Zlatarski*, *Istorija . . .*, Vol. I, Part 2, pp. 219—222. The principal source is the “*Vita St. Clementis*”, also known as “*Legenda Bulgarica*”. Cf. A. Milev, *Grŭckite ŷitija na Kliment Ochridski. Uvod, tekst, prevod i objasnitelni beleŷki*, [The Greek biographies of Kliment of Ochrida; introduction, text, translation, and explanatory notes]. Sofija 1966.

⁴⁰⁾ The dominant Bulgarian view as to the Slavic vernacular of the earliest translations and original works is that it was the Salonika dialect which, by its characteristics, falls in the Bulgarian linguistic domain and should therefore be called “Old Bulgarian”. Soviet scholars, for their own reasons, favor the term “Old Slavic” (*staroslavjanskij*), which is also favored, along with “Old Church Slavonic”, by some Western scholars; see *Istorija na bŭlgarskata literatura*, Vol. I, pp. 22, 66.

new learning. His medieval biographer and successor in the see, *Archbishop Theophylactus of Okhrida* (1090—1109), and other sources relate that during his thirty years at Okhrida (886—916) *Kliment* educated 3,500 persons who spread as priests and church intelligentsia throughout Macedonia, and that he “devised for greater clarity letters different from those devised by the wise Cyril”.⁴¹⁾ This passage has given rise to the view, disputed among scholars, that *Kliment* devised the Cyrillic alphabet which, by its simplicity, soon displaced the Glagolitic. In 893, after he was made bishop, he was joined by *Naum*, another disciple of *Cyril* and *Methodius* at the Moravian mission, who had remained in the Bulgarian capital.⁴²⁾ The two men and the bookmen around them in Okhrida left behind a great body of writings (sermons, original works, and translations of religious texts from Greek) which laid the foundations of the new national culture in the Slavic vernacular. There is evidence that in recognition *Kliment* was made a saint of the Bulgarian church as early as 919, only three years after his death.⁴³⁾ Later sources praised him for teaching in a way comprehensible to “even the simplest Bulgarian” and becoming “the new Paul for the new Corinthians, the Bulgarians”.⁴⁴⁾

Although the initial work of the “Okhrida school” is better documented, another focal point of Slavic liturgy and learning located at the opposite end of the Bulgarian realm also blossomed forth. Centering at the capital, it became known as the “Preslav school” due to the fact that the new ruler, *Simeon* (893—927), chose to transfer the capital in 893 from the Bulgar Pliska to the Slavic Preslav. The moving spirit of the school at the capital was *Simeon* himself. The third son of *Boris*, and the first Bulgarian prince to be baptized Christian at birth, he had been carefully groomed as eventual head of the Bulgarian church.⁴⁵⁾ *Boris* sent him to study in Constantinople at the Magnaura Palace school, where he excelled

⁴¹⁾ *Istrin*, 1100 let slavjanskoj azbuki, p. 132; *M. Kusseff*, St. Clement of Ochrida. — Slavonic and East European Review, Vol. XXVII, No. 68 (December, 1948), pp. 193—215; *V. Kiselkov*, Bŭlgarskata knižnina prez Simeonovija vek [Bulgarian literature in the age of Simeon]. Sofija 1928, pp. 9—17.

⁴²⁾ *M. Kusseff*, St. Nahum. — Slavonic and East European Review, Vol. XXIX, No. 72 (December, 1950), pp. 139—152.

⁴³⁾ *Georgiev*, Razcvetŭt na bŭlgarskata literatura, p. 154.

⁴⁴⁾ Quoted in *Istorija na bŭlgarskata literatura*, Vol. I, p. 104.

⁴⁵⁾ *Zlatarski*, Istorija . . . , Vol. I, Part 2, pp. 278—280.

in contemporary and classical studies. Known for his "love of books", *Simeon* became one of the best educated men in his time, as both Balkan and Western sources attest.⁴⁶⁾ Upon his return from Constantinople he became a monk and entered a monastery near the capital where *Naum* and others from the Moravian mission were forming a great center of Slavic learning.

Because of the apostasy of his older brother, *Vladimir*, in 893 *Simeon* was proclaimed ruler by *Boris* at an assembly of the realm ("convocato omni regno") in Preslav. His first act was to carry out the reform "so purposefully and insistently prepared by his father over twenty-three years, the nationalization of the Bulgarian church and state."⁴⁷⁾ Greek was officially replaced by Slavic as the language of the church and the state, the Byzantine church hierarchy, in Bulgaria since 870, was replaced by national clergy trained in the schools at the capital and Okhrida, the Greek religious texts and manuals were supplanted by Bulgarian translations, and the Glagolitic manuscripts were transliterated into Cyrillic which became the national alphabet.⁴⁸⁾ Strong protests from Constantinople against these developments in Bulgaria revived the trilingual doctrine that Slavic, not being one of the three holy languages of Christianity, could not be used in religious service. The conflict between imperial interests and national assertion, between Bulgarians and Greeks, clearly entered a new phase under *Simeon*.

Among other reactions, the conflict produced in Bulgaria a remarkable written defense of the national cause. Addressing himself to the burning issue of the time, a monk (*chernorizets*) named *Chrabur* of the Preslav School⁴⁹⁾ wrote a brief but fiery tract "Concerning

⁴⁶⁾ According to *Liutprand*, bishop of Cremona and emissary of *Otto the Great* to Constantinople in 968, *Simeon* had left behind such a reputation of learning that the Greeks called him "emiargon, id est semigrecum".

⁴⁷⁾ *Zlatarski*, *Istorija...*, Vol. I, Part 2, p. 282; see also his address as rector of the University of Sofia at the celebration of the patron saint of the university, *Kliment of Okhrida*, in 1924 entitled: *Nacionalizacija na bŭlgarskata dŭrŭava i cŭrkva prez IX vek* [The nationalization of the Bulgarian state and church in the 9th century]. — *Godišnik na Sofijskija universitet, istoriko-filologiĉeski fakultet*, Vol. XXII (1926), pp. 3—32.

⁴⁸⁾ *Ibid.*, pp. 257—258; *Georgiev*, *Razcvetŭt na bŭlgarskata literatura*, p. 73.

⁴⁹⁾ No biographical data on *Chernorizets Chrabur* have been uncovered. It is possible that this is a pseudonym used by someone close to the court; *Zlatarski* suggested that *Simeon* himself wrote this learned statement of the national case.

the Alphabet" (о писменехъ) in which, using medieval apology as form and history as argument, he constructed a brilliant case for the right of the Bulgarians to have their own alphabet and books. In his own words:

The Slavs at first had no books but, being pagans, they read and divined by means of lines and notches. When they became Christians they had to write the Slavic tongue with unadapted Roman and Greek letters. But how can one write well with Greek letters Богъ оу животъ оу сѣло оу црѣкы . . . And so it was for many years.

Then, God who loves man and who takes care of everything and does not leave mankind senseless but leads all to reason and salvation, took mercy upon the Slavic race and sent it St. Constantine the Philosopher, called Cyril . . . He devised for them 38 letters, some modeled on the Greek letters, others to fit the Slavic speech. He started from the Greek alphabet: they say "alpha" and he says "az". Both alphabets thus begin with "a". Just as the Greeks made their letters imitating the Jewish, he modeled his on the Greek . . .

Some say: "Why did he devise 38 letters when fewer would be enough, just as the Greeks write with 24 letters?" However, they do not know how many letters the Greeks use. They have indeed 24 letters, but there are also 11 diphthongs and 3 for the numbers 6, 90, and 900. They add up to 38. Similarly and in the same manner St. Cyril devised 38 letters.

Then others say: "Why should there be Slavic books? They have not been created by God or by the angels, and they are not original like the Jewish, Latin, and Greek books which go back to the beginning and are accepted by God?" Still others think that God himself created the letters. They do not know, wretched souls, what they are talking about, and they think that God has ordered books to be written in three languages because it is written in the Gospel: "And there was a board with writing in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek." Since the Slavic language was not there, the Slavic books are not God-given. What can we say to that and what can we reply to such fools? Let us answer as we have been taught from the holy texts, that all comes in its turn from God and from no one else. God did not first create the Hebrew or the Greek language, but the Syrian which Adam spoke and was spoken from Adam to the Deluge, and from the Deluge to God's creation of the languages in the Tower of Babel, or the "Confusion of Tongues", as it is written.

Cf. I. S n e g a r o v, Černorizec Chrabŭr. — Čiljada i sto godini slavjanska pis-menost, pp. 305—319; André M a z o n, Le Moine Chrabr et Cyrille. — Sbornik v čest na V. N. Zlatarski, Sofija 1925, pp. 112—122; M. G e n o v, Černorizec Chrabŭr: Borba za kulturna nezavisimost na Bŭlgarija prez IX—X v. [Chernorizets Chrabur; the struggle for cultural independence of Bulgaria in the 9th and 10th centuries]. Sofija 1942; and D. P e t k a n o v a, Černorizec Chrabŭr. — Beležiti Bŭlgari [Illustrious Bulgarians]. Vol. I, 681—1396, Sofija 1967, pp. 411—423. The most comprehensive study, primarily paleographic in its concerns, is Černorizec Chrabŭr, by K. M. K u e v, Sofija 1967. Kuev examines 73 copies of "Concerning the Alphabet" found in various Balkan lands and Russia.

Before then the Greeks had no alphabet of their own but wrote their speech with Phoenician letters. And so it was for many years. Then came Palamides who started with alpha and beta and devised only 16 letters for the Greeks. Cadmos of Miletus added 3 letters . . . Thus many men over many years barely managed to assemble 38 letters. Then, after many years, by God's will 70 men were found to translate [the Old Testament] from Hebrew into Greek. The Slavic books, however, were translated, and the letters were invented, by Cyril alone in a few years, whereas many men — seven — invented over many years the Greek letters and seventy made the translation. For this reason the Slavic letters are holier and more respectable because they were devised by a saint whereas the Greek letters were devised by pagan Greeks.

If you ask the Greek bookmen, "Who invented your letters and translated the books and when", few of them know. If you ask, however, the Slavic bookmen, "Who invented your letters and translated the books", they all know and will reply, "St. Constantine the Philosopher; he and his brother, Methodius, invented our letters and translated the books", because there are still men alive who saw them. And if you ask them at what time, they know and will say that it was in the time of the Byzantine Emperor Michael and the Bulgarian Prince Boris . . . There are other answers which we will give elsewhere, for there is no time now. Thus, brothers, God has enlightened the Slavs . . .⁵⁰⁾

A striking statement for its time, "Concerning the Alphabet" is the most eloquent and succinct defense of Bulgarian cultural independence to come from the reign of *Simeon* and a document unique in all of contemporary Europe. *Chrabur*, a learned cleric, was undoubtedly familiar with the debate in Venice where *Cyril* had invoked the doctrine of equality of peoples and languages and self-determination of nations. Demonstrating a clear continuity of ideas, he asserted again that the national culture was equal to that of the national antagonists, the Greeks, and added new elements to the emerging national ideology: that *Cyril* was a saint sent with his brother by God to give the Slavs — meaning in this context more narrowly the Bulgarians — the tools for Christian enlightenment, namely, an alphabet and books of their own; that he was the maker of the Cyrillic alphabet; that the Bulgarian letters and books, being the work of a Christian saint, were in fact superior to those of the Greeks which had originated in the pagan past. Although he stayed in the religious context, *Chrabur* was obviously motivated by political and cultural patriotism of an intensity reminiscent of the patriotism of another Bulgarian monk, *Paisii*, some nine centuries later. The first publicist in medieval Bulgaria, *Chrabur* gave direc-

⁵⁰⁾ The text, in modern Bulgarian, is in P. Dinekov, ed., *Proslava na Kiril i Metodi* [The glorification of Cyril and Methodius]. Sofija 1963, pp. 95—97.

tion and tone of the national ideology which it retained until the nineteenth century.⁵¹⁾

Chrabur's tract is part of a body of writings on the lives and works of *Cyril* and *Methodius*, in part factual and in part legendary, which arose in Bulgaria in this period and later and which presented them as Bulgarians by birth and placed their activities solely among the Bulgarians. In addition to *Chrabur's* panegyric, the "Short Life" of *Cyril*, the so-called "Salonika Legend"⁵²⁾, and other writings expressed and fostered a cult of the two brothers as the "Apostles of the Bulgarians" and of the Bulgarian alphabet and books as having divine sanction. The cult was a central element in the Bulgarian medieval outlook and, after playing a key role in the Bulgarian national revival, has survived, in one form or another, to the present.⁵³⁾

The reign of *Simeon* was also a period in which Bulgaria made an unprecedented effort to oust the Byzantine Empire from the Balkan peninsula, take the imperial capital itself, and attain a corresponding recognition in the medieval family of Christian monarchs. In a series of wars *Simeon* wrested new areas of Macedonia, Albania, and Thrace from the empire, reached the environs of Salonika, and in 913 camped at the walls of Constantinople. Realizing, however, that the fortifications were beyond his ability to handle, he made peace with the regency for the boy emperor, *Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus*, and received an imperial crown from the hands of the

⁵¹⁾ P. D i n e k o v, Osobenosti na starobŭlgarskata publicistika prez IX—XII v. [Special features of the Bulgarian publicistic literature in the 9th—12th centuries]. — Slavjanska filologija, Vol. V, pp. 294—297; "Černorizec Chrabŭr", Istorija na bŭlgarskata literatura, Vol. I, pp. 141—153. M u t a f ĉ i e v observes (op. cit., p. 234) that "Paisii was not the first; his predecessor by an entire millennium and in an entirely different historical setting was the monk Chrabur".

⁵²⁾ Texts in I. I v a n o v, Bŭlgarski starini iz Makedonija [Bulgarian antiquities throughout Macedonia]. Sofija 1931, pp. 281—288. The "Short Life" speaks of *Cyril* as родом сѣи Блѣгаринѣ.

⁵³⁾ D. A n g e l o v, Kiril i Metodii v srednovekovnata bŭlgarska knižnina [Cyril and Methodius in Bulgarian medieval literature]. — Archeologija, Vol. V, No. 1 (1963), pp. 13—22; E. G e o r g i e v, Kiril i Metodii: Osnovopoložnici na slavjanskite literaturi [Cyril and Methodius: originators of the Slavic literatures]. Sofija 1956, pp. 279—290; George C. S o u l i s, The Legacy of Cyril and Methodius to the Southern Slavs. — *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, No. 16, 1965, pp. 21—43. For example, in 1963 the State Library in Sofia was named the Cyril and Methodius National Library.

patriarch and a promise that the young emperor would marry one of his daughters.⁵⁴⁾ The crowning probably meant that *Simeon* was elevated to βασιλεύς (emperor) of Bulgaria, not co-emperor of Byzantium. Nevertheless it brought him close to his goal: as basileus and father-in-law of the young emperor in possession of the Balkan hinterland and a large army, affairs in the Byzantine capital seemed within his power to control.⁵⁵⁾ Although the peace terms were cancelled by Constantinople the following year, 913 is the first time when a Bulgarian ruler rose from his previous status to that of an autocrat and *tsar*, the Bulgarian contraction of the imperial title "Caesar".⁵⁶⁾

It seems that after 913 *Simeon* „aimed at nothing less than becoming Emperor" of Byzantium.⁵⁷⁾ He vigorously enforced his new title "Tsar and Autocrat of all Bulgarians" (царь и самодръжыцъ въсьмъ Българомъ) wherever his power reached to drive home the idea of Bulgaria's full equality with the Byzantine Empire.⁵⁸⁾ Byzantine violation of the peace of 913 gave him the pretext to try to force his will on the empire as well, and a period of almost uninterrupted warmaking ensued. At a massive battle in 917 *Simeon* routed the imperial army in present-day southeast Bulgaria but, diverted by developments in Serbia, he did not march on Constantinople. After several campaigns he overpowered Serbia in 924, turned it into a Bulgarian province⁵⁹⁾, and reached the borders of Croatia. Pressing

⁵⁴⁾ G. O s t r o g o r s k y, Die Krönung Symeons von Bulgarien durch den Patriarchen Nikolaos Mystikos. — Izvestija na Bŭlgarskija archeologiĉeski institut, Vol. IX (1935), pp. 275—287; F. D ö l g e r, „Bulgarisches Zarentum und byzantinisches Kaisertum", in his: Byzanz und die europäische Staatenwelt. Speyer 1953, pp. 145—147.

⁵⁵⁾ G. O s t r o g o r s k i, History of the Byzantine State, Rutgers University Press 1957, pp. 232—233.

⁵⁶⁾ S. M l a d e n o v, Etimologiĉeski i pravopisen reĉnik na bŭlgarskija knižoven ezik [Etymological and orthographic dictionary of the Bulgarian literary language]. Sofija 1941, p. 674. R u n c i m a n (op. cit., p. 174, note 2) believes that *tsar* "probably came into use among the Slavs from the West when Caesar or Kaiser was the same as Emperor".

⁵⁷⁾ R u n c i m a n, A History of the First Bulgarian Empire, p. 157.

⁵⁸⁾ Z l a t a r s k i, Istorija . . . , Vol. I, Part 2, pp. 381, 399. The new title was an exact match of the imperial title. Cf. V. B e ŝ e v l i e v, Souveränitätsansprüche eines bulgarischen Herrschers im 9. Jahrhundert. — Byzantinische Zeitschrift, Vol. 55 (1962), pp. 11—20.

⁵⁹⁾ Istorija naroda Jugoslavije [History of the peoples of Yugoslavia]. Vol. I, Belgrade 1953, p. 235.

his assertive policy vis-à-vis the empire, in 925 he proclaimed himself emperor of the Greeks as well as of the Bulgarians (βασιλεὺς καὶ αὐτοκράτωρ τῶν Ῥωμαίων καὶ Βουλγάρων), a title which he invented "to glorify himself and insult his enemies".⁶⁰) The following year *Pope John X*, anxious to protect the Catholic Croats and deflect *Simeon* toward the empire and mindful of Rome's old interest in establishing its influence in Bulgaria, decided to mediate and appease *Simeon*. A papal legate went to Preslav, bearing Rome's recognition of *Simeon* as emperor. Late in the same year *Simeon*, determined to have an independent church as well, raised the Archbishop of Bulgaria, *Leontii of Preslav*, to the rank of patriarch.⁶¹) So far as titles went, his pretensions were complete. He now turned to preparations for a final assault of Constantinople to give them reality, but death suddenly overtook him (May 27, 927).

The surge toward full political and institutional equality with the Byzantine Empire and military mastery over the Balkans in *Simeon's* time was accompanied by an unprecedented flowering of culture. Centered at Preslav and Okhrida at the opposite ends of *Simeon's* empire, it was the work of a native intelligentsia which had arisen in large numbers since the arrival of the disciples of *Cyril* and *Methodius* in Bulgaria made possible education in the native tongue. From the fragments of the literary activity of its leading members — *Kliment*, *Konstantin*, *Ioan Exarch*, *Chrabur*, and *Simeon* himself — that have survived it is evident that, compared with cultural conditions before this period and after it, Bulgarian society experienced a literary flowering justifying by its proportions and originality the use of the term "Golden Age".⁶²)

The literature of the age — "an accurate barometer of public life and consciousness" —⁶³) evidences a tone and thrust that are in

⁶⁰) R u n c i m a n, op. cit., p. 173.

⁶¹) Ibid., pp. 173—174. According to Z l a t a r s k i, *Istoriija...*, Vol. I, Part 2, p. 401), *Leontii* became patriarch and then crowned *Simeon* "Tsar and Autocrat of All Bulgarians" in 918. See also G. S e r g h e r a e r t, *Symeon le Grand (893—927)*. Paris 1960, pp. 156—165.

⁶²) Since P. J. S a f a r i k first published his study: *Rozkvět slovanske literatury v Bulharsku* [The Flowering of Slavic literature in Bulgaria]. — *Časopis Českeho Museuma*, XXIII, 1848, historians have termed the period the "Golden Age of Bulgarians Letters". For a map of the cultural centers, see *Atlas po bulgarska istorija*, p. 14.

⁶³) I. U. B u d o v n i c, *Obščestvenno-političeskaja mysl' drevnej Rusi (XI—XIV vv.)* [Socio-political thought in old Rus' (11th-14th centuries)]. Moscow 1960, p. 4.

essence nationalistic. Cast in the terminology and frame of reference of the dominant ideology of the time, the Christian religion, the Bulgarian literature of the age of *Simeon* is in spirit preeminently publicistic, conscious of itself as a unique phenomenon in the European part of the known world, and ready with an array of arguments to defend itself against its Greek and Latin enemies. Following the collapse of religious and literary activity in the Slavic vernacular in Moravia, the Bulgarian intelligentsia acquired a sense of being the heir of the achievements and traditions established by *Cyril* and *Methodius* and having the responsibility of keeping and enlarging them for the benefit of the Slavic race. It exhibited both an intense Bulgarian patriotism and a strong identification with the Slavic world and its essential ethnic and cultural unity vis-à-vis the Greek, Latin, and German worlds. Like the Russian medieval intelligentsia which was to develop later, its most remarkable characteristic is its patriotism.⁶⁴⁾ Unlike it, however, the Bulgarian intelligentsia of the ninth and tenth centuries shows from the very beginning a fully developed consciousness of its role as champion of the new culture of the Slavs and thus an early messianic tendency.⁶⁵⁾ For its literary accomplishments and patriotic and messianic messages it had a wide audience in the country, which the education in the vernacular created, and in the princely courts and educated circles of the other Slavic lands.

The century between the conversion under *Boris* in 865 and the death of *Simeon's* son and successor, *Petur*, in 969 is thus the time in which the process of the amalgamation — at first primarily Christian and cultural — of the Bulgar minority and Slavic mass was completed and the distinct Bulgarian nationality emerged, retaining the name of the Bulgars, which official usage in Bulgaria and abroad had firmly established, and having the ethnic, linguistic, and cultural identity of the Slavs.⁶⁶⁾ In the empire which the Bulgarian rulers had

⁶⁴⁾ Ibid. B u d o v n i c finds that "the most notable feature of the social thought of ancient Rus is its patriotism". Similarly, D. A n g e l o v finds that the outlook in medieval Bulgaria was "saturated" by patriotism; cf. his study: Svetogledüt na gospodstvuvaštata klasa v Srednovjekovna Bŭlgarija, otrazen v žitijnata literatura [The world view of the ruling class in medieval Bulgaria as reflected in the hagiographic literature]. — Izvestija na Instituta za Bŭlgarska Istorija, Vol. 14—15, Sofija 1964, pp. 263—294.

⁶⁵⁾ D i n e k o v, Osobenosti na starobŭlgarskata publicistika, p. 297.

⁶⁶⁾ The end of tribal particularism and the existence of a Bulgarian nationality are reflected in the terms used in contemporary writings. Byzantine authors dropped the earlier use of "Bulgaria" and "Sclavinia" in designating certain lands by the

put together this Bulgarian nationality inhabited core lands south of the Danube which came to be regarded as the national territory or "fatherland", as the exchange at the church council in 870 indicates.

The unique common bond, however, was the new culture in the national language disseminated by means of a distinctive script which the Bulgarian intelligentsia viewed as a native product and a national alphabet on the order of the Greek, Armenian, and other national alphabets. The use of the vernacular by means of a newly-devised national alphabet — a phenomenon unique in contemporary Europe — Slavicized and thus nationalized, in Zlatarski's term, the state and the church, that is, the political and religious culture of Bulgaria. From the confrontation with the proponents of the doctrine of the three holy languages arose a defense of the national alphabet and culture which by its themes, general acceptance, and durability through the centuries can best be described as a national ideology.

Nationalism — the ideology of the vigorous and assertive state — was an articulate and widespread frame of mind. That the court circles and the intelligentsia of the period were imbued with it is beyond question. As to the state of the popular mind, we know almost nothing about it until later periods from which apocryphal literature has survived. Undoubtedly, it was active and reacted to the issues of the time including the wars waged by *Simeon*. The fact that these wars were sustained over a long period of time may indicate that the popular masses understood in general what they were about and supported them.

ethnic element in them and adopted "Bulgaria" as a general term. Further, the plural form of *ἔθνοι* (tribes) gave way to the singular *ἔθνος* (people). *Istoriija na Bŭlgarija*, Vol. I, p. 121. Cf. Petŭr Chr. Petrov, *Kŭm vŭprosa za obrazuvaneto na pŭrvata Bŭlgarska dŭrŭava* [More on the question of the formation of the first Bulgarian state]. — *Slavjanska Filologija*, Vol. V, pp. 89—112. The whole process of the amalgamation and its reflection in the contemporary Byzantine terminology is examined by D. Angelov, *Bŭlgarskata narodnost i deloto na Kliment Ochridski. Kliment Ochridski; sbornik ot statij po slučaj 1050 godini ot smŭrtta mu* [Bulgarian nationhood and the work of Kliment of Okhrida. Kliment of Okhrida; a collection of articles on the occasion of the 1050th anniversary of his death]. *Sofija* 1966, pp. 7—24; English translation entitled: *Clement of Ochrida and Bulgarian Nationhood in Études Historiques*, Vol. III, *Sofija* 1966, pp. 61—78. According to Angelov, the amalgamation was expressed in the consistent use of the term "Bulgarian" for and "throughout the three parts of Bulgaria-Moesia, Thrace and Macedonia".

It is unquestionable that, more than any other factor, the continuous political confrontation and cultural meshing with the Byzantine world shaped all ideas and institutions in Bulgaria in this period. The embodiment of this process was *Simeon* himself. A product of Byzantine education in Constantinople, he sought to establish in his country what he had seen in the empire: imperial splendor, titles, and trappings, an autocratic monarchical institution at the head of a centralized state, a national church to match in status that of the Greeks, and a national culture patronized and fostered by the state to reach the level of the older Greek and Latin cultures.

Although military mastery over the empire and full institutional and cultural equality with it eluded him, by his policies *Simeon* reached an apex of national achievements and defined national aspirations which later generations would take as the yardstick of their own achievements and goals. Thus, in making peace with the empire in 927 after his father's death, *Petur* sought and obtained, at the price of territorial concessions, recognition of the titles introduced by *Simeon*. The Bulgarian rulers remained thereafter titled "Tsar of the Bulgarians" and, for the first time, the head of the Bulgarian church became a fully recognized patriarch.⁶⁷⁾ A full-fledged national church — the goal of *Boris* and *Simeon* — now complemented in the Byzantine caesaropapist pattern the centralized autocratic monarchy. Its national character was underlined by a growing tendency to venerate and canonize saints of its own beginning with *Cyril*, *Methodius*, *Kliment*, and *Naum*.

Having received much from the Byzantine world in the south, Bulgaria became in its turn the source of cultural influences upon its neighbors to the west, north, and northeast. Serbs, Rumanians, and Russians drew upon the flourishing Slavic culture in Bulgaria for their own needs, adopted the Cyrillic alphabet (in Rumania it remained in official use until the middle of the nineteenth century), and took over the translations of religious texts and laws as well as the original works which the Bulgarian centers were producing. From the point of view of historical consequences, most important was Bulgaria's influence upon Russia before, during, and after its

⁶⁷⁾ I. S n e g a r o v, Pŭrvata bŭlgarska patriaršija [The first Bulgarian Patriarchate]. — Godišnik na Sofijskata duchovna akademija "Sv. Kliment Ochridski", Vol. I (XXVII), 1950—51, pp. 3—25.

Christianization in the tenth century.⁶⁸) When later generations realized it, the role Bulgaria had played in the cultural development of the Russians, Serbs, and Rumanians became one of the deepest wellsprings of Bulgarian national pride.

⁶⁸) On the question of Bulgaria's influence upon the cultural development of Kievan Russia see, on the Russian side, M. N. T i c h o m i r o v, *Istoričeskie svjazi ruskogo naroda s iužnimi slavjanami s drevnejšich vremen do polovini XVII v. Slavjanskij Sbornik* [The historic ties of the Russian people with the Southern Slavs from ancient times to the middle of the 17th century, Slavic symposium]. Moscow 1947, pp. 143—165. The best Bulgarian works are V. N i k o l a e v, *Slavjanobŭlgarskijat faktor v christianizacijata na Kievaska Rusija* [The Slavic-Bulgarian factor in the Christianization of Kievan Russia]. Sofija 1949, and I. S n e g a r o v, *Duchovno-kulturni vrŭzki meždu Bŭlgarija i Rusija prez srednite vekove (X—XV v.)* [Religious and cultural ties between Bulgaria and Russia during the Middle Ages (10th—15th centuries)]. Sofija 1950.