

INTRODUCTION

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*We confront one another armored in identities
whose likenesses we ignore or disown
and whose differences we distort or invent
to emphasize our own superior worth.*

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EVERY BOOK is a product of its time, at the same time enclosing a ‘history’ – its own story. These traits are even more pronounced in a book on history, as its chief –although not always explicit– aim is to rouse historical consciousness. *Clio in the Balkans* is the fruit of a two-year collective endeavour to make an in-depth, sober assessment of historical education in the Balkans. A fundamental condition in this teamwork study was that all countries in the region, from Slovenia to Cyprus, would have equal parts, while all participants had expressed the determination to be sincere and self-critical. The subjects selected for the seven workshops constitute sensitive regional questions arising from current controversies and having an impact on the interpretation of the past and on the teaching of history.

In the last decade, the concept of a new Balkan community emerged as a counterweight to new aggressive and defensive nationalisms. The consequent idea to promote a common history of the region was also launched in political and intellectual environments. However, this new history should not be a new construction which would replace the national histories. It would rather be a new interpretation of the national pasts based on a common Balkan cultural and institutional heritage. And it implies the introduction in history teaching of supra-national elements as a counterweight to ethnocentric or even nationalistic historical narratives.

The success of this endeavour is not sufficiently reflected in this vol-

¹ D. Lowenthal, «Identity, Heritage, and History», in J. R. Gillis, *Commemorations. The Politics of National Identity*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996 (2nd ed.), p. 41.

ume. This is necessarily a selective presentation of papers delivered and discussions conducted as part of seven very vigorous workshops². Specifically, this edition comprises four kinds of texts: (a) general information on educational systems in the Balkan countries, the system of textbook authorisation and production and the position of history in the syllabus – teaching hours, the subject matter taught in each grade, the proportions of national, Balkan, European and international history, the subject's compulsory or optional status (Appendix); (b) papers analysing history textbooks on the basis of a standard questionnaire for each workshop, or presenting other aspects of national historiography, identity formation and the role of education; (c) reports on each workshop, with the discussions and conclusions arrived at by the participants, and (d) responses to specific questions in the questionnaires, from a comparative viewpoint (i.e. answers given to the same question in different countries). The selection criterion was representativeness, with the aim of forming an overview of the situation in all countries and providing a comprehensive picture of all issues discussed in the workshops. It is also obvious that the selection was necessary for practical reasons: if we were to publish the entire content of these workshops we would need at least seven volumes.

Yet the most difficult aspect to render in print and capture in a book is the experience of communication. More than merely an academic meeting, this was a venue for inter-Balkan communication and the formation of friendships. Getting to know the 'other' was as important as the scientific discourse recorded in this book. It was demonstrated that the dynamic of human contact is much more powerful than scientific findings, and any changes in the teaching of history will come from motivated individuals rather than impersonal institutions. This became more evident in the second

² Workshop I (Budapest, 17-18 December 1999): «Hungarian Legacy in Southeast Europe»; Workshop II (Pyla, Cyprus, 28-29 February 2000): «Teaching Cyprus: in search of tolerance and understanding»; Workshop III (Skopje, 16-18 April 2000): «The Macedonian Identity: complementarities, conflicts, denials»; Workshop IV (Athens, 15-16 June 2000): «Albanians and their Neighbours»; Workshop V (Istanbul, 20-23 September 2000): Part A, «Greeks and Turks: the Janus of a Common History,» and Part B, «The Balkan Empires: common heritage, different heirs»; Workshop VI (Ljubljana, 2-5 November 2000): «Yugoslavia: a look in the broken mirror – Who is the 'Other'»; Workshop VII (Thessaloniki, 10-12 March 2001): «Religious Education and the view of the 'Others'».

cycle of workshops for the training of history teachers³, to be completed by February 2002. The enthusiastic participation of history teachers in primary and secondary education attested to the existence in the Balkans today of a critical mass of people with shared concerns and visions who, for all their linguistic differences, can speak the same 'language'. Although there are different opinions, there does exist a Balkan *koine*: the scientific language of history.

In the following pages I shall attempt to discuss the parameters of the ongoing revision of history in the Balkan countries, the ways in which a 'new' history of the Balkans fits into European history, the possibilities and the difficulties of writing such a history and, finally, the educational strategy which should be followed by the individual histories of the Balkan national states as well as by a common history of the Balkans. This general overview will be followed by a synopsis of the contributions to this volume, whose specific conclusions illustrate the individual aspects of history teaching, the traditions of history writing, the formation of national, religious and cultural identities and the use of history in contemporary problems and conflicts.

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The return of the Balkans

Following the dramatic changes of the last decade in Eastern and South-eastern Europe, many people talked of a 'return' of the Balkans to Europe. Forty years of cold war had isolated most of the Balkans from the geo-cultural domain of Western Europe and led to a different political, social and economic course determined by the Soviet model. According to F. Braudel's *Grammar of civilisations* of 1963 the Balkans were not a distinct 'world' but a mixture of two worlds – Western and Soviet⁴. In the

³ The teachers' training workshops are the following: 1) «The Balkan Wars» 14-17 December 2000, Thessaloniki, 2) «The First World War and the Creation of Yugoslavia», 26-29 January 2001, Thessaloniki, Greece, 3) «The Second World War. Collaboration and Resistance», 8-10 March 2001, Thessaloniki, 4) «The Balkan Wars and the Creation of the Albanian State» 11-13 May 2001, Tirana, 5) «The Ottoman Empire and the Creation of Nation-States», 1-3 June 2001, Bucharest, 6) «The Balkan Wars», 14-15 December 2001, Skopje, 7) «The Republic of Cyprus: investigating a common history», London, February 2002.

⁴ F. Braudel, *Grammaire des civilisations*, tr. in Greek by A. Alexakis, Athens

eyes of Westerners the ‘iron curtain’ confirmed a cultural difference of Eastern Europe –often defined in terms of ‘backwardness’– which was being constructed since the age of the Enlightenment⁵. The collapse of the ‘curtain’ automatically opened the way for a psychological return to the European cultural realm; to the union –or reunion, to most people– with a shared European past. This homecoming of the Balkans was, in fact, at the expense of their own common historical past. Ethnocentric or overtly nationalistic histories were developed as parts of the overall European aggregate, fragmenting and subverting the history of the region. Each national Balkan history was thus connected directly to European history, without any regional stages in between. So the return of the Balkans to their European ‘home’ did not lead to the reinforcement of their unity, although its prerequisite was the elimination of their internal political division (between the Communist northern Balkans and the NATO countries of Greece and Turkey). On the contrary, the Balkan peoples embarked on an extraordinary competition as to their degree of ‘Europeanness’ and their consequent cultural prestige.

Similarly, Europe also ‘returned’ to the Balkans, both literally and metaphorically. The institutions of Western parliamentary democracy as well as Western corporations, cultural products, non-governmental organisations and armies entered the Balkans with different objectives, actions and results. The European presence, sometimes uninvited, was not always welcome by the local populations who had been trained for decades to mistrust the West and reject its political and economic system. Although they had come to reject their own social model and were trying to align their future course with Western culture and the Western standards of development, they displayed an ambivalent attitude towards Western Europe.

At the same time the concept of European identity –hitherto clearly Western-oriented– gradually expanded to include the Eastern and South-eastern parts of the continent. This psychological return of Europe to the Balkans was difficult and required new constructs for Europe’s cultural borders to meet the physical ones; for history to coincide with geography.

2001. Braudel distinguishes six ‘worlds’: Western, Soviet, Far eastern, SE Asian and Black African (p. 23). Greece is described as «Aegean civilisation, from Thrace to Crete» rather than a civilisation of the Balkans (p. 32).

⁵ Cf. Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994.

What had been established, after many generalisations and simplifications, as the ingredients of Europeanness –Christianity, rationalism, liberalism– now had to be relativised to accommodate cultural ‘otherness’– the Eastern version of Christianity and Islam, the Byzantine and Ottoman political and economic systems. This meant, in fact, the coexistence of opposite pairs: West and East, Europe and Asia. For the expansion of Europeanness up to the geographical borders of Europe would include Russia, with a powerful and extensive Asian section, and Turkey, which saw central Asia as its cradle and Anatolia as its backbone.

There is no question that in the new geopolitical reality in Southeastern Europe the Balkans represent the new frontier of Europe and European civilisation⁶. Yet after the fall of Eastern European regimes the very concept of frontier, as perceived by W. Europe, seems to have changed: the impermeability of a dark curtain as symbolised by the Berlin Wall has been superseded by the fluid, osmotic borderline of cultural exchange, even within a single State. Western societies themselves, at a time of crisis for the concept of the national state, have come to realise their multiculturalism as a result of economic immigration and the end of colonialism. Thus the Balkans –with their multicultural past and present of different religious, linguistic and cultural traditions, an interface of the Slavic, Islamic, Mediterranean and central-European worlds– stand as a most eloquent delineation of the new Europeanness.

This is why I think we had better use the term ‘Balkans’, for all its fluid, contradictory and controversial content. It is one of those geographical designations which point to geopolitical and cultural divisions. Indeed, ‘Southeastern Europe’⁷ does not indicate a subdivision of ‘Europe’, since the latter has long had a meaning of cultural entity and conscious identity in addition to its original geographic sense, whereas the former is an exclusively geographical term. This is not the case with ‘Balkans’, which stands as the corresponding term to ‘Europe’. It should be reminded that during the Cold War the northern Balkans were never described as ‘Southeastern

⁶ About the ‘liminality’ of the Balkans see also K. E. Fleming, «*Orientalism, the Balkans, and Balkan Historiography*», *American Historical Review* 105/4, 2000, pp. 1231-2.

⁷ About the term «*Südosteuropa Halbinsel*» which failed to prevail as more ‘neutral’ during the first half of the 20th century, see Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 27.

Europe', being mostly considered as part of Eastern Europe.

A widespread preference for the term Southeastern Europe is due to the fact that it is more 'neutral' than Balkans and, perhaps subconsciously, facilitates the region's incorporation into Europe from a linguistic point of view⁸. Yet one cannot fight negative stereotypes by suppressing them. The choice of the negatively charged term 'Balkans' constitutes a challenge against this kind of 'orientalism' imposed on the region from inside as well as outside, albeit on different grounds and for different ends. On the one hand, there is the negative view of the Balkans, widely held in W. Europe, which presents the picture of a region where violence is almost endemic. On the other hand, an internal discourse is propagated on the 'special case' of the Balkans; this may reflect either the adoption of the rhetoric of Balkanism, which means self-stigmatisation⁹, or the instrumentalisation of Balkanness (centred around Orthodox Christianity, for example) for political ends¹⁰.

Maria Todorova has analysed in a definitive book the 'discovery' of the Balkans and the development of 'Balkanism' – the West's hegemonic rhetoric about its Eastern *alter ego*. In this rhetoric, initiated by Western travellers since the late 18th century, the Balkans are plainly 'different', in the sense of either exotic or 'uncivilised' and 'barbarian'. Although the term 'Balkan' partly overlaps with 'oriental', there are differences as to the traits attributed to each of them. Whereas the Orient is usually equated with passivity and superstition, the Balkans are further characterised by 'cruelty, boorishness, instability, and unpredictability'¹¹. This stereotype, which led to the derogatory term 'Balkanisation' in the early 20th century (Balkan Wars and World War I), was revived and reinforced in the last decade as a result of the war in Yugoslavia. Once again, this was used as a pretext for translating the essentialised cultural differences into political

⁸ Irimi Lagani, «Balkan Federation: the History of an Idea», in *Ἡ ἀνακάλυψη τῆς Βαλκανίας* (Balkans yesterday-today), Athens: Etaireia Spoudon Neollinikou Politismou kai Genikis Paideias, 2000, pp. 77-78 (in Greek).

⁹ Maria Todorova, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

¹⁰ Milica Bakic-Hayden and Robert M. Hayden, «Orientalist Variations on the Theme 'Balkans': Symbolic Geography in Recent Yugoslav Cultural Politics», *Slavic Review* 51 (Spring 1992), pp. 1-15.

¹¹ Maria Todorova, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

messages¹².

Nevertheless, despite the obviously reductive, simplistic and Manichaestic aspects of this hegemonic, Western-oriented rhetoric, there is no doubt that the Balkan peninsula is criss-crossed by many more internal boundaries than the rest of Europe: cultural, ethnic, religious as well as political/territorial boundaries. Indeed, the current trend is to keep adding miles to state borders. At the same time, the memories of war had remained alive in the minds of people and were revived in the last decade. War images were rapidly communicated by the modern media and imprinted on the minds of people who were not first-hand witnesses. The experience from war extended a lot further than the event itself. The relations with neighbouring peoples were seen as hostile even in peace, the most prominent example being the time of peace termed 'cold war'. The traumatic memories of uprooting and emigration, armed conflicts, the loss of beloved persons and property, of all kinds of violence were fused into a history of friction whose authors are always the victims and the only ones to fight for a just cause.

The return of History

The many ruptures and changes that took place in the Balkans over the last decade –and whose dynamic seems still to be active– changed the perceptions of the past and the ways of writing history. The major historical breach as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the communist regimes in Eastern and Central Europe had an inevitable effect on the societies' daily life and self-definitions. The ensuing economic crisis, the dramatic demographic changes due to migration and the feelings of uncertainty and insecurity were reflected in a rhetoric of nostalgia for bygone 'golden ages' and reappraisal of the collective past. History in the Balkans is rewritten, and the process is an open one.

On the other hand, this change –given its dependence on the wider historical rupture of 1989– cannot be seen in isolation from the overall European context or the international developments in the science of History. Moreover, the 1989 change could not leave Western historiography unaffected, either. In fact, this is a multiple return of History – a revision of historiography itself in opposing directions: from the post-modern question-

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 59.

ing of the validity of historical writing to the narcissistic confidence and dogmatism of nationalistic history.

The rewriting of Balkan history –and the region’s national histories– should be seen first of all in the context of changes in the writing of European history. «Where is Europe heading to?» is the oft-asked question after the fall of communist regimes, the rekindling of nationalism and racism, the expansion of the European community, Maastricht and the war in Yugoslavia. It reflects a deep concern about the future of the continent, aggravated by the fact that Europe has long ceased to be the centre of the world and is increasingly delegated to the margin of economic and political developments. The American way of living, dressing, eating and entertainment is rapidly expanding as an international –and pan-European, in particular– phenomenon. Almost inevitably, this new reality reverses the original question about the future of Europe: «Where does Europe come from?»

The need to rewrite and re-teach European history sprang exactly from this new political juncture as a result of the collapsed East-West front within Europe. In fact, this front was historiographical as well as historical. The European histories of the West were clearly Western-oriented and sometimes anticommunist, meaning anti-Soviet. Similarly, history in the eastern countries was heavily politicised and historiography legitimised their regime, which was defined in contrast to the capitalist West. Nineteen eighty-nine may have marked the end of Europe’s historical but not historiographical division. Characteristically, the work of J.-B. Duroselle was widely criticised¹³ for focusing historical analysis on Western Europe, excluding or depreciating other regions (Balkans, Scandinavia, etc.) or ignoring historical periods such as Byzantium.

The views of Duroselle –and other historians– as to the content of European history and the various reactions to them are, in fact, parts of the problem itself: How is Europe defined – under geographical, cultural or other criteria? Is there a European identity – and how does it link to individual national identities? What is the content of European history, and what are the objectives of teaching history to European students? These questions reflect, of course, the current juncture, and history –always ‘contemporary’– is called upon to answer the questions posed by the present. For

¹³ Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *Europe. A History of its Peoples*, translated by Richard Mayne, London: Viking, 1990. Reactions were particularly vivid in Greece because Byzantium was left outside Europe.

centuries people in Europe had lived without a shared historical consciousness, while in the last two centuries their national identities were clearly more important, as evidenced by the various wars, local or global. Yet over the last decade the European continent tends to be perceived as a single 'community' while all individual countries, particularly Eastern ones, wish to acquire the veneer of European-ness and join the new community on an equal basis. Besides, the new community demands its own legitimising past, its own mythology. The history of New Europe should no longer be the sum of national histories but the history of «a nation consisting of nations»¹⁴.

However, the European dimension has yet to gain a significant place in school history, even in member-states of the European Community. As demonstrated by two studies conducted by Falk Pingel at the Georg-Eckert Institute (Braunschweig, Germany)¹⁵, for all the differences in the school textbooks of the various countries there are some common traits in all cases: there is no clear definition of Europe; national identity prevails as a way of self-definition; (Western) Europe is only shown as a unified whole during the Middle Ages, while its picture is fragmented in modern and contemporary times to form the histories of national states; references to Europe are mainly confined to Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia or the USSR for as long as she was considered to be a European power.

The return of History to the Balkans is reflected mainly in the national histories, and only at a second level in the connection with European history. In Communist countries before 1989 the prevailing combination was

¹⁴ The ex officio agent of a European perception of history, since its inception in 1949, has been the Council of Europe. According to the various «directives» (recommendations) on history teaching the Council has issued from time to time, a European perception of history does not entail a sense of superiority or contempt for non-European nations nor is it an end in itself; it is meant as a stage between an exclusively national perception of history and a universal approach. Moreover, since the 1980s the Council's publications have associated the role of history with the promotion of intercultural understanding and democratic citizenship. Students are therefore called upon to understand and accept cultural diversity.

¹⁵ Falk Pingel (ed.), *L'immagine dell'Europa nei manuali scolastici di Germania, Francia, Spagna, Gran Bretagna e Italia*, Turin 1994 and German edition: *Macht Europa Schule? Die Darstellung Europas in Schulbüchern der Europäischen Gemeinschaft*, Frankfurt/Main, 1995; idem (ed.), *The European home: representations of 20th century Europe in history textbooks*, Council of Europe Publishing, 2000.

one of a Marxian analysis of the overall historical development with the emphasis on political and military history, and national themes¹⁶. In Turkey the official history adopted the «history theses» established by Kemalism in the 1930s, enriched in the 1970s with the so-called «Turkish-Islamic synthesis» which incorporated Islam into the definition of the nation. Greece saw a renewal of its historiography in the 1970s, after the fall of the colonels' dictatorship which had imposed an acutely nationalistic and anticommunist discourse. The 'new' Greek historiography of the 1970s and 1980s followed the French *Annales* School, focusing its research mainly on economic and social history and the history of mentalities. The rewriting of history in Greece had an ideological as well as a scientific dimension. The new historians wished to cleanse historical writing from the ideological constructs and political exploitation by the dominant socio-political groups after the civil war¹⁷.

The collapse of communism in the northern Balkans took with it the Marxist historiography which had determined for decades the accounts and interpretations of the past. Yet this official historiography, produced by state institutions (universities and research institutes) and taught in the schools as the dominant scientific discourse was not in line with social memory and the perception of the past as they were communicated through the family. Written and oral history would often encounter and contradict each other. The existence of parallel narratives meant that the change of the dominant narrative did not take place in vacuum nor without strong resistance. So the 'old' official history gave way to a 'new' history. What were the features of this new history? How much of a break and how much of a sequel to the 'old' history was it? To what extent could whole generations of historians and teachers, trained under one way of thinking, write and teach a truly 'new' history?

Indeed, a revision of history requires a political and intellectual élite

¹⁶ Angeliki Konstantakopoulou, «Balkan Historiography yesterday-today» in *η αληθινή ιστορία της Βαλκανικής, op. cit.*, p. 115 (in Greek).

¹⁷ The communists' defeat in the Greek civil war (1946-1949) led to the formation of an authoritarian, heavily nationalistic and anticommunist State. Moreover, the official version of history excluded those defeated in the Civil War, who preserved their own version of the events through oral tradition. The Left's version of World War II, the Resistance and the Civil War was expressed in historiography after the socialist party (PASOK) came into power in 1981.

ready, adequate and willing to undertake such a task, and has to be accompanied by a series of other changes upon collective memory. The institutional, normative memory of the 'new' past, which codifies and homogenises collective memory, is achieved through historical monuments, museums, national feasts, epic poetry and the national 'canon' of literature, the invention and dissemination of myths, the worship of heroes and, of course, through the national historiography as epitomised also in textbooks.

Besides, during this transitional period when the collective past was revised, the old myths were replaced either by new or by older ones from the time when the Balkan national states were established. At the same time, the mythology about the past was broadcast and converted into political tool. The dominance of myths in the way the past was described and perceived served as the foundation for ethnocentrism and the lack of tolerance. The power of myths lies in the fact that, contrary to science, they furnish global and categorical interpretations and address the emotions. Yet can a society exist without myths? Who controls myths and their uses? Can we fight myths by science? Can rationalism compete against the mythicised, mystical rhetoric of nationalism?

The Balkan experience does not leave much room for optimistic answers. Although the topoi of national imagination differ from one country to the next (for instance, it is a battle in Serbia, a series of political events in Romania, an emblematic figure for Turkey and the classical past for Greece), many structural components of the national narratives are the same. The worship of memory but also the oblivion of painful events, the exaltation as well as the victimisation of the nation, the particular projection of the past onto the mirrors of the present and the future are features common in most Balkan countries. In ex-communist countries in particular, the rewriting of history after 1989 follows multiple and contradictory paths, from historical relativism to the anatomy of the national stigma. In former Yugoslavia, the elements which united its peoples are now suppressed in favour of their conflicts and dissent, under a logic of dissolution. Contemporary conflicts are projected onto the past to appear as constant and unchanging throughout history. Thus they are perceived as inevitable, 'endemic' and therefore meant to resurface *ad infinitum*.

Which Balkan History?

The divisive historical discourse propounded by antagonistic nationalisms, usually in pairs, certainly does not promote a supranational history – in this

case, Balkan history. Memory also plays a divisive role in a region of wars and uprooting. Peter Burke claims that history is forgotten by the victors but not by the vanquished, citing the example of the English «structural amnesia» and the Irish hypertrophied memory. He also observes that uprooted peoples, such as the Polish, seem «obsessed by their past»¹⁸. Both points apply to the Balkans. The southeastern end of Europe is only inhabited by vanquished and uprooted people. This is reflected in the national historiography of all Balkan states and confirmed by the weighty shadow of History on the public life of Balkan societies.

Yet the duty of remembering, in the way it is defined, is not entirely honest. Memory –selective, by definition– is accompanied by the parallel process of oblivion which often assumes the form of an official censorship of embarrassing memories. It is what Paul Connerton calls «organised oblivion»¹⁹. Of course, censorship is a feature of both individual and collective memory (in the way individuals compose their autobiography, or in cases of deliberate, unofficial suppression, such as Germany after WWII and France after Vichy). In such cases social memory does not repudiate the official history; on the contrary, their silences complement each other and society learns to ‘remember’ its past in a particular way.

Under similar processes the Balkan societies of the post-communist era gradually ‘remembered’ their ‘new’, unforeseen past²⁰. The communist period went into a parenthesis of oblivion or rejection, and the new course was called «de-ideologisation» of history. Symbols and monuments were torn down in cathartic violence and theatrical rituals, and new topoi of memory were (re)discovered. Some countries, like Romania, changed all national symbols – flag, national anthem, national emblem, national holidays. This change of national holidays was observed in all countries, and demonstrates in the most patent way the new way of self-definition selected by each national state²¹. In any case the anniversaries were chosen carefully

¹⁸ P. Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997, pp. 53-54.

¹⁹ P. Connerton, *How societies remember*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

²⁰ «The future is certain, the past is unpredictable». Cited by Angeliki Konstantakopoulou, *op.cit.*

²¹ On the occasion of the Greek national day of March 25, the *Vima* newspaper published a special feature on the national holidays in the Balkans, written by

to serve as stimuli of national unity and social cohesion rather than pretexts for new internal divisions. The negative side of this revision of national holidays is that most Balkan states now commemorate conflicts with their neighbours, especially the Turks.

The fact that the Turk is the ‘favourite enemy’ of Balkan peoples is neither new nor unexpected. The Balkan nationalisms which led to the formation of national states in the region were developed against the crumbling Ottoman empire and in opposition to everything the Turks stood for in the Western mind. The Ottoman Empire, associated with the Orient and all its negative connotations, constituted a negative example and was held to be the main cause for the ‘backwardness’ of the other Balkan peoples²². Although the Turks remained in the Balkans for half a millennium, they were always considered as outsiders and their presence was seen as temporary²³.

This view, although the dominant one, has its opposite. A historiographical trend of Turkish origin claims that the Ottoman Empire was a ‘golden age’ for the Balkans – a heaven of religious tolerance and harmonious coexistence of the peoples. According to this view, the emergence of Balkan nationalisms was a sign of ingratitude towards the Ottomans which destroyed the conditions of order and peace in the region and triggered a period of disorder and war. In fact, this revisionary historiography of the Ottoman period has fed in part the new trends for a shared Balkan history which would attempt to promote the uniting elements of Balkan peoples as the heritage of a common past. In such a history the Ottoman Empire would have to have a leading role – and of course this would not be accepted only by those who idealise the Balkan experience of the Ottomans.

Indeed, although not considered a Balkan people the Turks are the main *sine qua non* of the Balkan-ness²⁴. The Balkan peoples may have rejected their Ottoman heritage in the context of their Western orientation,

Christina Koulouri, Etienne Copeaux, Valery Kolev, Mirela-Luminita Murgescu, Nikola Jordanovski, Bozo Repe, and Dubravka Stojanovic: *To Vima*, Sunday 25 March 2001, pp. A53-56.

²² Interestingly, even the Turkish nationalism was based on the rejection of the Ottoman past.

²³ Cf. Elli Skopetea, «Turks and the Balkans», in *?a ?a?????a ?te?-s?ue?a*, op. cit., p. 144 (in Greek).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

but they carry this heritage in their everyday life. In fact, in many aspects – such as cuisine – this heritage has been assimilated so fully as to be perceived and projected as a special national feature.

The example of Turkish coffee is indicative of how an element of the shared culture of the Ottoman Balkans was appropriated as a national symbol. In Greece, for instance, this coffee had long been called after its origin (Turkish) with no particular problems. Yet in the last twenty years its ‘Greekness’ has been increasingly promoted, as evidenced in advertising («We call it Greek» was the characteristic slogan of a major coffee firm). The beverage is so completely renamed that waiters in coffee-shops would correct anyone who would inadvertently order «Turkish coffee». What used to be part of a Balkan and oriental koine – and where *baclava*, *dolmades* and *kefte* would also have a place – has now acquired a national character (not only in Greece). Shared experiences are thus felt to be exclusive, and the multiple is perceived as unique. This ‘we’ does not include others and does not share anything²⁵.

Thus the tendency to fragment and distort shared memories is present even in areas of everyday life on which a common Balkan history could surely be founded. Yet food and language, «two privileged areas of daily life [...] on the one hand overturn the master-slave relations which remain intact in other aspects of the Ottoman presence, on the other hand they suggest specific fields of communication among Balkan peoples – a communication established originally via the Turks and embarrassingly surviving their departure»²⁶.

So how could one go about writing a common Balkan history? Is there an imagined Balkan community to which this history would relate? If not, is there one being formed now? Can it be instrumentalised – and to what end? Who will determine the content of this new common history? And how can it be incorporated in an educational strategy which would help «decode and understand»²⁷ the Balkan world of today?

Scepticism about the feasibility of – and the need for – a supranational history has been expressed already in the case of a common European history, based on the efforts made so far. Doubts can be summarised in the following questions: Can we really speak of continuity in European history?

²⁵ Christina Koulouri, ‘This coffee is ours’, *To Vima*, 3 June 2001, p. B64.

²⁶ Elli Skopetea, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

²⁷ F. Braudel, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

Is there *one* European history which could be contained within *one* book? Would the writing of this history be based on the model of national histories? Might it be that we are witnessing a process of constructing Europe in the same way national states were formed?

Similarly, in the case of the Balkans, the writing of *one* history would require that each ethno-cultural community in the region acknowledge a minimum proportion of Balkanness as element of its *identity*, and also that there is both temporal and spatial *continuity*. Given that identity normally involves some territoriality, a definition of the Balkan territory is as important as the compilation of a Balkan history. The new holistic perception of Balkan history cannot but correspond to a new holistic perception of Balkan territory: to the acceptance of the relative and fluid character of frontiers and a description of the territorial structure in new terms. Yet in a region of constantly changing borderlines such an aspiration would seem at least utopian at this time.

The region's complex geography is largely due to the criss-cross of physical, political and cultural borders without a clear pattern²⁸. It is also due to the multiple layers of place names – irrefutable evidence of internal mobility and intermingling. The geographical limits of the Balkans are vague, shifting from time to time to include or exclude certain states. This is due to the reluctance of Balkan states to be included in the Balkan geo-cultural group. The 'Balkans' are usually the others, the neighbours. Hence the limits of the peninsula are mental rather than physical. The Balkan case is one more proof that symbolic geography is more powerful than actual geography.

So the inner borders of the Balkans multiply while the external ones are vague. The recent increase of states in the Balkans does necessarily reflect a corresponding number of cultural entities. Taking into account the reservations we discussed about the delineation of the Balkans, we could consider Balkan history as unfolding in a continuum of space defined by physical and cultural borders. Moreover, the existence of overlaps in the area, as attested to by name-places and the minorities within national states, is in itself indicative of some aspects of the shared history. Macedonia and Constantinople/Istanbul, for example, could serve as *topoi* –literal and

²⁸ For a geopolitical study of the Balkans, see G.-S. N. Prevelakis, *The Balkans: Cultures and Geopolitics*, transl. in Greek by Maro Prevelaki, Athens, Libro, 2001.

metaphorical– of the shared Balkan history.

If we were to use the concept of cultural borders in writing the Balkan history, we should accept a priori that cultural borders are never closed or impermeable. This means that the geographical area where a culture is established may be fixed, but it is not sealed²⁹. In this way we can understand the endless interaction and mutual penetration among the different national/cultural entities which lead to new patterns.

As we saw, a shared Balkan history presupposes spatial continuity –a cultural continuum– but also, more importantly, temporal continuity. Indeed, the Balkans have experienced three different shared pasts: Byzantine, Ottoman and Communist. Of course, these historical experiences were neither exclusively Balkan nor evenly distributed throughout the region. Nevertheless, they left behind them an important heritage, such as Orthodoxy, Islam and elements of material culture. Even the communist period, for all its denigration by the post-communist Balkan societies, is still a shared historical experience whose vestiges are visible to an external observer.

These common historical pasts should be perceived as fields of cultural exchange and interaction rather than one-way influence of the dominant national/ cultural group in each case. The highest barrier for a shared Balkan history is to accept as equal the various cultural contributions and relativise the uniqueness of the nation. Each Balkan nation sees itself as unique, incomparable and superior, and employs history to prove it. Yet *supremacy has no history*, it is a-historical for all its disguise as historical. Qualifying uniqueness means making cross-cultural comparisons to highlight the common, unifying elements. In this respect, too, the trend is different: neighbouring nations vie for the exclusive use of national symbols and figures which are seen as essential to their own identity.

Despite widespread scepticism as to the feasibility of a shared regional history for the Balkans, there is an increasing number of those who believe in the expediency of a unifying teaching to promote a common historical consciousness, mutual understanding and tolerance among Balkan peoples and, ultimately, peace. Balkan history is thus seen in the context of a new educational approach rather than a novel method of historiography.

The role of education

The basic idea is that a change in the teaching methods of history may have

²⁹ F. Braudel, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

a long-term effect on the way neighbouring peoples see one another. Specifically, E. Kofos suggests that an improvement of school textbooks may function as a long duration Confidence Building Measure³⁰ – a tool for reconciliation. Of course, this intervention would be preceded by an evaluation of Balkan textbooks currently in use so as to identify any problematic points.

In recent years there has been increasing interest in schoolbooks, both as research objects and political tools. The two aspects are not unconnected, since in most cases the study of textbooks aims to demonstrate – and denounce – their political use. There is no doubt that once an educational system is established in a national state its resources are subject to political use. However, this is not to say that schoolbooks are invariably means of propaganda used deliberately and systematically by all central powers irrespective of political system. It is true that totalitarian and authoritarian regimes have attempted to control the education of the young, hence also schoolbooks; but it is also true that much more than effective means of propaganda and conscience manipulation, schoolbooks are a mirror of the society that produces them. They rarely contain stereotypes and values unacceptable to society. Therefore their content may be a good guide as to a society's values; history books, in particular, may reflect the image a human society has of its past and, indirectly, the way it imagines its future.

This reasoning has been the basis for the recent spate of research projects and publications in the Balkan region. The underlying assumption behind this activity is that there is some connection – more or less direct – between the content of textbooks and the escalation of nationalism, whose extreme manifestation is armed conflict. Of course, already in the 1920s and 1930s schoolbooks had been judged and largely found 'guilty' of the wars in the 20th century. It was deemed necessary to revise them to eradicate negative stereotypes and prejudice against other peoples, and many efforts were made to this end in Europe (e.g. between France and Germany, Germany and Poland, etc.). The results are visible in Western Euro-

³⁰ Evangelos Kofos, «Long Duration CBMs in the Balkans: Re-assessment of the Role of History and Geography School Textbooks», in *Culture and Reconciliation in Southeastern Europe* (International Conference, Thessaloniki, Greece, June 26-29, 1997), Association for Democracy in the Balkans, Thessaloniki: Paratiritis, pp. 85-97.

pean books, although ethnocentrism often seems hard to overcome.

Despite the shared European past as to the ideological use of history –school history, in particular– Balkan textbooks seem to be thought of as more ‘guilty’ of stereotypes and nationalism, judging from the results, one would say. The upsurge of violence and nationalism has rekindled in the last decade the old Western stereotype of the Balkans’ cultural singularity, which was thought to be reflected in schoolbooks³¹. Of course, the comment about the Western-oriented way of treating Balkan textbooks does not alter the fact: Balkan textbooks on history (as well as geography books and readers) still contain ethnocentric accounts of the collective past and occasionally regress to nationalistic expressions and negative stereotypes about the neighbouring peoples³².

Nevertheless, Balkan schoolbooks cannot be treated as a uniform set. As in all similar cases, we can discern both common traits and deviations. Thus, although ethnocentrism appears prominent in the historical narrative it does not always assume the form of nationalism. Historical methods also differ as each country has its own tradition of history and historiography.

So for all the attempts to analyse –or sometimes over-analyse– school textbooks in the Balkans, the next step remains undecided: the method of reformation. There are, of course, many and diverse hazards: firstly, the quest for a ‘neutral’ history without prejudice and stereotypes may result either in silences and omissions or in a sterile, dull account of facts with no interpretation; secondly, we may come to the naïve conclusion that textbooks are a panacea and their revision alone can change the prevailing perceptions of other peoples. These «naïve expectations» arise from faith in the potential of «sound education» to intervene decisively and mould

³¹ The title of a relatively recent publication of the Georg-Eckert Institute of Braunschweig seems to corroborate this view, although this was not the editor’s intention: Wolfgang Höpken (ed.), *Oil on Fire? Textbooks, Ethnic Stereotypes and Violence in South-Eastern Europe* (Hannover 1996).

³² This was highlighted in a study by the Balkan Colleges Foundation, Sofia: *The image of the Other. Analysis of the high-school textbooks in History from the Balkan countries* (1998). This study corroborated what we knew or suspected on the basis of our everyday experience: events in Balkan history have two opposite facets, one for each of the parties involved. Thus one side’s ‘liberators’ are the other side’s ‘conquerors’, ‘invasion’ becomes ‘liberation’, ‘victory’ becomes ‘devastation’, and so on.

characters³³.

Essentially, however, schoolbooks merely reflect the prevalent ideology –not necessarily the ‘official’ one– as it is diffused through the media, the family and other social institutions. If a ‘cold war’ is currently going on among textbooks in the Balkans, it is because there are strong feelings in society that also nurture another ‘cold war’ among the media, which reflect and shape mentalities as much as the school.

Yet the language of television hype, publicity, the violence of armed conflicts and the trauma of uprooting can be countered by the language of science and sobriety. And here lies the responsibility of historians – academics, researchers, textbook authors and schoolteachers. In the Balkans, scientific discourse on nationalism, the past, national identities and so on cannot have a strictly academic character. As A. Smith writes, without referring to the specific region, «in a world of competing states and would-be nations, these are no mere academic issues»³⁴. Historians’ views may be deliberately enlisted to support claims with ‘scientific’ arguments, or exploited by others for political ends.

Therefore the responsibility of historians is a political one. Historical discourse cannot be used to justify past or present regimes; it must develop critical spirits and free citizens. Critical thinking acquired through learning history is, after all, the future citizens’ only protection against distortions, simplification and manipulation. This critical historical discourse is by definition ironic, since irony is «inherently self-critical, inherently dialectic», and promotes self-knowledge by liberating us from our illusions³⁵.

So if history is rewritten in the Balkans, it cannot feign ignorance or innocence. Besides, the political developments in the Balkans and the revision of the past coincide with international developments in historiography: the re-evaluation of historical ‘canons’ and grand-narratives, the questioning of ‘objective’ historical knowledge, the emphasis on the subjective, the particular and the personal, the examination of the ‘margins’ and the ‘discovery’ of history’s ‘obscure’ protagonists.

³³ Wolfgang Höpken, «Culture and Reconciliation in Southeastern Europe», in *Culture and Reconciliation in Southeastern Europe...*, op. cit., p. 67.

³⁴ A. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, London: Blackwell, 1996, p. 1 (first published 1986).

³⁵ Hayden White, «Interview. The Ironic Poetics of late Modernity», *Histoirein* 2 (2000), pp. 191-193.

The new trends in academic history and the venture of compiling a Balkan history come together in school history. Indeed, the need for a supranational history calls for a renewal of content, methods and objectives of school histories in the Balkans. The new educational approach to Balkan history is summarised in the application of a comparative, multiperspective method, the focus on economic, social and cultural history and the development of students' analytical and interpretative skills to enable them to evaluate the information they receive³⁶. Comparative history aims to acquaint students with both differences and similarities and abolish the dogmatic teaching of the 'objective' history of the one and only 'truth'. The move away from political and military history towards economic, social and cultural history is meant to teach historical experiences which are more familiar and interesting to children and de-emphasise war as an element of historical evolution, especially in terms of the relations with neighbouring states. It also aims at teaching conflicts from a new perspective, in terms of both content and method. Finally, the development of critical thinking is the main purpose of historical teaching, so that future citizens will be immune to attempts to manipulate them³⁷.

The ultimate goal of this concept of writing and teaching history is to promote mutual tolerance and understanding. Yet which kind of history would promote tolerance? A history that emphasises 'similarities' in the abstract, or one which does not conceal the differences? We usually think that tolerance towards the 'Other', the different, must come from the acknowledgement of our similarities. Sylviane Agacinski, however, puts forward a different view:

«It is the norm that we hold in high esteem the 'universal' humanistic value as expressed in the famous saying, *I reckon nothing human alien to me*. We are wrong, though: tolerance would be better founded on the opposite principle of accepting that the human is very often and very deeply alien. If we acknowledged that the human is alien most of the time yet we

³⁶ See R. Stradling, *Teaching 20th-century European history*, Council of Europe, 2001, p. 88. This book is a useful guide for history teachers in all European countries.

³⁷ The findings from the analysis of Balkan textbooks in the workshops organised by the History Education Committee of the CDRSEE were first summarised in *Teaching the History of Southeastern Europe*, Thessaloniki 2001; see mainly pp. 22-23.

have to respect it and live with it in peace, we would all be better prepared to deal with sexism and racism. *Living together is founded on our ability to compromise, not on the hypothetical principle of a natural harmony*»³⁸.

* * *

In the seven workshops organised by CDRSEE we discussed the terms of our present and future coexistence in terms of history: the overlaps, actual or wished-for, and common heritage, experiences and memories. The first chapter, «Common Past, Shared History», refers to these common pasts which can form the basis of a shared history. It includes papers delivered in three workshops, namely workshop I on «Hungarian legacy in Southeastern Europe»; workshop V titled «The Balkan empires: common heritage, different heirs», part of which was workshop Va «Greeks and Turks: the Janus of a common history»; and workshop VI titled «Yugoslavia: A Look in the Broken Mirror. Who is the ‘other’?».

The heritage from the two Balkan empires, Byzantine and Ottoman, was divided among different heirs each of whom lays exclusive claim to some part of it. The main antagonism is between Turks and Greeks; between a ‘Greek’ Byzantium and a ‘Turkish’ Ottoman Empire. This discord goes beyond the temporal limits of the two empires. Greek and Turkish history represent the two faces of Janus: a shared history based on opposite myths. Each national history ascribes its own truth to the same historical events – a truth entirely different from that of the neighbour’s.

Yasemin Soysal and Lilian Antoniou demonstrate this dipole as regards the definition of national evolution by Greeks and Turks, respectively. They examine the textbooks of lower secondary schools in Britain, Greece and Turkey to show that Turkish identity is a state identity with the main focus on national territory, while Greek identity is a cultural identity with the main focus on national time. The two national histories’ relation to Europe is equally different: «Greece inside but outside, Turkey outside but inside».

³⁸ Sylviane Agacinski, *Politique des sexes*, transl. into Greek by Mary Philip-pakopoulou, Athens: Polis, 2000, p.180. The author reminds us that we do not need a mythicised or beautified version of reality to instil tolerance towards the different. Similarly, P. Burke assigns to historians the ‘loathsome’ task of reminding people «of what they would have liked to forget»; P. Burke, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

The irresolute European character of the Byzantium and the Ottoman Empire's clear identification with the Orient is also reflected in British school-books which represent the viewpoint of an 'external' observer –Western Europe– as to the history of the eastern part of the continent.

According to Penelope Stathi, this kind of stereotype which is usual in school textbooks could easily be avoided if their authors sought original historical sources, and cites numerous examples from Greek chronicles of the 17th and 18th centuries where the Ottomans are not portrayed with disdain but characterised under non national, moral criteria.

However, the situation is very different when it comes to the 20th century, an era of conflicting nationalisms and historiographical interpretations. Vangelis Kechriotis uses the example of the Young Turks Revolution to show how a 'controversial' issue has been dealt with by both the protagonists themselves and Greek historians since the seventies. Through a systematic deconstruction of the historiographical discourse, he concludes that the *leitmotiv* of a 'well-organised fraud' and the initial 'witch-hunting' have been replaced in contemporary Greek historiography by 'self-reflection' and an analysis of issues of language and terminology.

Sia Anagnostopoulou offers an example of such an approach analysing the use of the term 'Ottoman tyranny' by the representatives of the Enlightenment on the one hand and Greek national historiography on the other hand. She points out that 'Ottoman tyranny' in the historical context of the era after the French Revolution implied an absolutist regime in political terms. However, later on, national historiography used this term to describe a discontinuity in Greek history represented by the Ottoman 'yoke' and the subsequent 'slavery' of the Greek nation. This case of shift of meanings may help us reflect upon the necessity to historicise terms which have been de-historicised by national historiographies.

This need is confirmed by the analysis of contemporary history textbooks in different Balkan countries which reinforces the picture of an ethnocentric approach to the past, where anachronisms prevail. Characteristically, in the textbooks of the FYR Macedonia, Byzantine rule is presented in the frame of national antagonisms and emphasis is put on the 'slavisation' of the Balkan Peninsula in the Middle Ages. Furthermore, the Ottoman Empire is depicted as a 'de-personalised anti-hero' fighting against legitimate claims of 'positive' national movements. Nikola Jordanovski highlights different aspects of these -common to all Balkan peoples- 'dubious theories about ethnogenetic lines and national struggles transferred on to the Middle

Ages’.

In Bulgarian school textbooks, which show a gradual shift of focus towards economic and cultural history, the Byzantine and Ottoman empires are also evaluated by the criteria of the national ‘grand narrative’. According to the analysis of Alexei Kalionski and Valery Kolev, Bulgaria is shown to have had a leading role in the ‘Slavonic-Byzantine civilisation’. Given also that Orthodoxy is an ingredient of Bulgarian national identity, the Ottoman empire is negatively evaluated as ‘non-European’ and ‘Oriental’.

Similar circumstances are found in Romania. In her study of Romanian schoolbooks Codruta Matei finds that the Byzantine heritage, being identified with Orthodoxy, is seen as very important to Romanian history while the Ottoman empire is presented as an ‘extraneous’ element, although it is a major factor in national history. The textbooks place particular emphasis on the Romanian principalities’ relations with the Ottoman Empire, especially on the special administrative status of the principalities and Romanian resistance against the Ottomans. Matei also reports the classroom experience of her pupils as to their picture of the Ottoman Empire, and discovers stereotypes which are not found either in the books or in the teaching.

This useful finding leads us to seek and study other centres where historical consciousness is formed. One such source is the academic history produced in universities and research institutions. The relation between academic and school history may be more or less close, but it undoubtedly exists: on the one hand, academic history supplies historical knowledge as the raw material for school history; on the other hand, many academic historians are themselves authors of school textbooks or members of the committees which draft curricula or approve textbooks.

In the area of Byzantine and Ottoman studies each Balkan country follows its own tradition of historiography, which is not dictated by purely scientific criteria but is usually connected with political conditions. In the case of Romania, Bogdan Murgescu explains that the growth of Byzantine and Ottoman studies in the 1960s and 1970s –after the tradition created by N. Iorga and later by Mihai Maxim– functioned as an ‘escape’ from that time’s heavily politicised history. However, he points out that today there is considerably less interest as young people are not particularly attracted by an academic career, especially in fields which –in their eyes– do not seem to produce ‘socially significant’ knowledge.

The Hungarian heritage appears to be less important for Balkan

schoolbooks. As Mirela-Luminita Murgescu explains, the world history taught in SE European countries is clearly Western-oriented and the history of SE Europe is presented through 'bipartite' relations with neighbouring countries rather than a unified whole. As one would expect, because of these very bilateral historical relations the Hungarians figure much more in Romanian, Serbian, Croatian or even Slovenian textbooks than other peoples of SE Europe. Of course, Hungary appears under the prism of each national history, and Hungarians figure in schoolbooks only inasmuch as they come into contact with the author's own nation. Snjezana Koren confirms this hypothesis in her analysis of Croatian textbooks. In a historical narrative made up almost exclusively of wars and political events, there are elements of Hungarian history from the Middle Ages to 1918, always under the prism of Croato-Hungarian relations. There are references to Hungarian 'domination' and efforts to 'hungarianise' the Croatian population as well as negative connotations about the periods of the early Middle ages and the 19th century. However, in recent textbooks Koren finds an attempt at higher 'objectivity' as well as some positive views, e.g. in the way the books present Hungarian resistance to Hapsburg despotism and Soviet dominance.

Yet if despite the different interpretations the Austro-Hungarian, Byzantine and Ottoman empires are recognised as constituting a common historical past for SE Europe, this is not the case with former Yugoslavia. Paradoxically, the same thing seems to be happening here as with the Ottoman Empire shortly after its collapse: the national states which succeeded it, even Turkey itself, renounced its heritage and held it responsible for their own 'underdevelopment'. In the 'broken mirror' of former Yugoslavia the other's face is hard to discern. Sometimes it appears as part of the self; at other times it is multiplied on every shard of glass.

The memory gaps brought about by the war in Yugoslavia correspond to ruptures in history. The common Yugoslavian history, which was taught until 1990 and comprised units on general history, national history and the history of individual nations, was replaced by rival ethnocentric histories. In most countries national history takes up about half of the content; the other half, general history, is clearly Western-oriented. In her report on workshop VI Snjezana Koren concludes that «de-ideologisation», i.e. the removal of a Marxist approach, is not advancing at the same pace in all countries, and despite the improvements in aspect and quality there are often problems remaining with the content. In some books the description of interethnic

violence is strongly emotional, with even some too graphic accounts of the crimes committed. The greatest part of shared history has been removed from the textbooks, and its evaluation is negative. The first Yugoslavia (1918) is described as a «prison of nations», in yet another interesting analogy with the description of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the time of its demise. The second Yugoslavia, although presented in a more positive light, is also seen to have functioned as a context of ‘injustice’ for each democracy compared to the rest.

The disparities among the national histories of the countries of former Yugoslavia become more evident in the way they present specific historical periods – specifically, World War II, ‘resistance’ and ‘collaboration’ with the Fascist forces, Socialist Yugoslavia, its collapse in 1991 and the wars of 1991-1995. The more ‘objective’ and sober account of Slovenian textbooks, as analysed by Dragan Potocnik and Jelka Razpotnik, contrasts with the ethnocentric and nationalistic approaches of Croatian and Serbian textbooks. As demonstrated by Dubravka Stojanovic, Serbian schoolbooks present the Serbs as the most active fighters of fascism, whereas the opposite is the case with Croatian textbooks, according to the analysis of Magdalena Najbar-Agicic. The Serbian Chetniks and the Croatian Ustashas are subject to the most contradictory interpretations in Serbian and Croatian textbooks, respectively, although the latter –possibly because of the variety made possible by the free market– contain diverse views and more aspects to their presentation. However, both Croatian and Serbian books emphasise religious differences; the latter, in particular, present them as the fundamental reason of war and use them as the key which oversimplifies and interprets all historical developments. Much closer to the writing of history in previous periods seem to be the textbooks used in the schools of the FYR Macedonia. As Nikola Jordanovski shows, both the vocabulary and the historiographical interpretation repeat a more or less Marxist analysis where the ‘bourgeoisie’, the Communist Party and the foreign ‘occupiers’ play an eminent role.

The picture of Europe as geographical and political entity and the position of SE Europe within it is inevitably informed by the ethnocentrism of the specific narratives in the textbooks of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Yugoslavia, Croatia and FYR Macedonia. Heike Karge demonstrates the complex relationship with the West which differs from one country to another, the perception of the ‘European-ness’ of the Balkans as well as the particular European and Balkan character of countries whose entry to the

European Union is not visible in the near future. Thus the slogan 'return to Europe' and the acceptance of market economy as the only model and norm coexist with the stereotypes of the 'uncivilised Balkans' and the 'guilty European superpowers'.

The variety of friction in the Balkans and the mutually exclusive narratives are outlined in the second chapter – «National and Religious Identities Co-existing or Conflicting?» This chapter comprises papers delivered in workshop III, «The Macedonian Identity: complementarities, conflicts, denials» and in workshop VII, «Religious Education and the view of the 'others'.» The example of Macedonia – a field of nationalist conflict in the early 20th century, as the Ottoman empire was falling– is probably the most divisive issue for the national histories of the countries which include (or used to include) some part of it. The term «Macedonia» itself is defined differently by the inhabitants of Greek Macedonia, FYR Macedonia and Bulgarian Macedonia. Similarly, the content of «Macedonian identity» is not definite, as it is exclusively claimed by different ethnic groups. Nikola Jordanovski analyses the elements of Macedonian nationalism (perception of the past, myths, historiography) and claims that the native Macedonian identity, «a modern product par excellence», is a clear case of «self-definition by exclusion»³⁹. In today's FYR Macedonia, «a territory of overlapping historical heritages», the name Macedonia itself is «the only really functional myth».

A confusion between Macedonians and Bulgarians is pointed out by Alexei Kalionski and Tzvetan Tzvetanski in their analysis of school textbooks and the attitudes of Bulgarian students in secondary education, respectively. Kalionski finds that until the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78, history textbooks present Macedonia as part of the Bulgarian ethnic, cultural and geographical territory, while some 'heroes' of the Bulgarian renaissance come from Macedonia. Even when reference is made to the multinational character of Macedonia (in the late 19th century), the region is still cited as Bulgarian ethnic and historical land. Finally, the emergence of a distinct contemporary Macedonian identity is mentioned sporadically, with-

³⁹ The terms «Macedonia» and «Macedonians» in the texts of N. Jordanovski, A. Kalionski, T. Tzvetanski, and B. Dimitrijevic refer to the contemporary Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the national group the Greek side calls «Slavo-Macedonians» to distinguish them from the Greeks in Greek Macedonia.

out constituting a central theme. This analysis of textbooks is confirmed by the findings of a sociological study conducted by T. Tzvetanski in 1997 with pupils in secondary education and first-year university students. A negative image was found to be held of all neighbours, but more notably of Greeks and Macedonians. As far as Macedonia is concerned, a contradictory attitude was noted: the respondents considered the Macedonians as Bulgarians, at the same time accepting the contemporary geopolitical reality of the existence of a distinct state of Macedonia.

Yet the Serbs also treat Macedonia as their own. According to Serbian schoolbooks, analysed by Bojan Dimitrijevic, Macedonia is seen as «Serbian historical land» against which only the Bulgarians are shown to have had aggressive and conquering intentions. Although the attitude towards Macedonians is not negative on the whole, they are negatively presented and seen as ‘others’ when they seek independence from Yugoslavia (during the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and in 1992).

Greek textbooks, analysed by Despina Karakatsani, display a similar attitude. The Macedonian Question is associated exclusively with the national integration of Greece, and the emphasis is on Greek Macedonians and their role in Greek national history. No reference is made to Slav-Macedonians, except in an optional textbook which has never been taught in any school. Other history textbooks, while making reference to the multinational character of the Greek part of Macedonia which became Greek territory after the Balkan wars, present the conflict over Macedonia as an exclusively Greco-Bulgarian affair. This is corroborated by the school celebrations held in Greek Macedonia, presented by Vlassis Vlassidis. The Macedonian Struggle, officially commemorated on October 30 each year, refers exclusively to the Greek victory over the Bulgarians, although there is a clear effort towards a more sober and balanced approach and against fostering feelings of enmity and intolerance.

At any rate, the case of Macedonia demonstrates the relative importance of religious differences in ethnic conflicts, as all parties are Orthodox Christians. The authority is thus repudiated of the oversimplified pattern which equates the conflict between nations or ‘cultures’ with religious clashes. Of course, this pattern was reinforced after the events of September 11, 2001 and was frequently translated, explicitly or implicitly, into a ‘conflict of civilisation versus barbarity’ where the West is, once again, synonym to civilisation and where religions are evaluated according to their ‘degree of civilisation’.

The Balkans had been subjected to the same arguments by Western observers at a much earlier stage. Thus the section on religious identities becomes doubly topical as it deals with issues of correlating religious differences with ethnic conflicts and religious education with tolerance. The paper of Mirela-Luminita Murgescu, which is also the report on workshop VII, presents all parameters of religious education in a multi-religious region such as SE Europe where the relation between national and religious identity is a central matter. Moreover, the identification of 'Europeanness' with Christianity at a time when the presence of Islam in Europe is increasingly prominent raises, in the Balkan region as well, more general issues about the mental barriers this kind of identification erects and their political consequences. Summarising the main points discussed in the workshop, Murgescu observes that the absence of official religious education does not preclude the abuse of religion, as demonstrated in the case of former Yugoslavia. On the other hand, however, the unchecked introduction of religion in the teaching of history – a 'fashionable' trend in ex-communist countries – entails many dangers.

Etienne Copeaux points out the dangers of dressing up national conflicts in a religious guise; when nationalism exploits religion. In his analysis of Turkish textbooks he finds that for all the secular character of the state, Turks are identified as Muslims and the Turkish identity connotes the Muslim religion. In the Turkish historical narrative Christians have the role of enemies, culminating in the time of the Crusades. In the case of Turkey the narration of the history of Islam is extremely complicated: as a non-Arabic country, it strives for a delicate balance between Muslim identity and Arab 'otherness'.

In Muslim Turkey religious classes have been obligatory since 1981. In Orthodox Serbia, on the other hand, a great public debate is currently on about the introduction of religious education in the school. Milan Vukomanovic presents the various arguments in relation with other European examples (as to the compulsory/optional teaching of religion) and considers the various prerequisites – educational, political/legal and psychological – for the introduction of religious classes.

In Romania the restitution of religion was quite dynamic, despite some Marxist stereotypes which have survived in school textbooks. As shown by Ecaterina Lung, Christianity is seen as a major constituent of Romanian national identity while the Christian religion and the Orthodox Church are advanced as the main supports of this identity against hostile neighbours –

Catholics (Hungarians, Poles) and Muslim (Ottomans). Indeed, the return of religion to education has two sides: the introduction of religious classes in the form of catechism, and religion as part of the teaching of history, where it is shown as a social and cultural phenomenon. Moreover, the historical investigation of the role of the Church is associated with the second of these aspects.

Smail Balic deals with religious classes and their content in two countries, a European Islamic state –Bosnia– and a Catholic country with an immigrant Muslim community – Austria. In the case of Austria he finds religious teaching to be inadequate, and the existing programme may cause confusion among young pupils. Also inadequate is the presentation of another of the region's minority religions, Judaism, according to the analysis by Ivo Goldstein. An analysis of textbooks in post-communist states of central and eastern Europe reveals ignorance, errors, suppression and distortion as regards Jews, Judaism, Israel and the Holocaust.

So should religion be taught in the schools of a secular state? What should be the content of such teaching? In his article, C. Carras disputes the views that (a) there should be no religious teaching in a secular state, (b) the only form of religious teaching permissible today is teaching *about* religions, and (c) religious education is partly responsible for the conflicts in former Yugoslavia. He contends that an «open-ended type of religious education» is necessary to foster in children a «positive religious commitment» as a basis for tolerance. On his part Hanna Kassis, with a long academic experience of teaching religion, proposes a teaching method without catechism in secular institutions such as universities or schools. The study of religion within a school system must be, according to Kassis, the basis for reaching across and getting to know the 'other', the means «to build bridges over valleys of separation».

These «valleys» remain unbridged in many areas of SE Europe. The example of Cyprus seems to be the most traumatic. The third chapter, «The Past in the Mirror of the Present», deals with the two issues in SE Europe which remain open, at least at the time this Introduction was written. The articles in this chapter were presented in an initial form in workshop II, «Teaching Cyprus: in search of tolerance and understanding» and workshop IV «Albanians and their neighbours: the future's past».

In Cyprus the division of the island translates into a deep rupture in historical narrative and the attachment of the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot identities to those of Greece and Turkey, respectively. Nergis

Canefe confirms this breach on the part of the Turkish-Cypriot community where she finds a «crisis of citizenship». This crisis she associates with the fact that there was never a feeling of «common, civic Cypriot identity», either before independence (1955-1960) or during the Republic of Cyprus (1960-1974). The strange situation on northern Cyprus after 1974 –«a state of conditional independence and semi-colonisation»– most certainly affects the sense of belonging and the concept of citizenship. The induction of Turkish Cypriots into the Turkish nation is reflected in the Turkish school-books, studied by Etienne Copeaux. His minute analysis of the books' verbal, pictorial and mapping language demonstrates that N. Cyprus is represented as a Turkish province. Starting from this finding, he analyses the Turkish national narrative which is built on Greeks as the 'others' and employs a retrospective teleology to prove the Turkish nation's precedence and superiority.

If the Turkish-Cypriot community belongs to Mother Turkey, the Greek-Cypriot community belongs to Mother Greece. Indeed, as pointed out by L. Koullapis, the Greek-Cypriot community may be seen «as an imagined sub-community or as an imagined subset of the Greek nation». In addition to the entire model, content and schedule of history teaching being Greek, the textbooks used in Cypriot schools are actually Greek; only local history textbooks are printed in Cyprus, and they cover only part of the material. The history of the island is presented as part of Greek national history, while the terms «Greek» and «Cypriot» are used alternately or as synonyms. The historical narrative on the island's division is emotionally charged and places great emphasis on refugees.

In the Turkish-Cypriot community the commemoration of the island's division follows a similar path, albeit with a greater emphasis on a picture of violence. Neshe Yashin performs a semantic analysis of school rituals, photographs of atrocities, poetic discourse in the schools and the «Museum of Barbarity». She points to the use of those symbols which reinforce the Turkish-Cypriots' links with the Turkish nation (statue of Atatürk, flag) and the emphasis on Greek-Cypriot violence, with the aim of increasing emotional involvement and nurturing the model of conflict.

Thus both sides, whose frequent clashes culminated in 1974, emphasise the errors and the violence of the other side. Ulus Irkad demonstrates the way the events of 7-9 March 1964 in Paphos were described and distorted in subsequent books. Both sides suppressed and distorted the facts in order to describe and interpret the events in such a way as to put the blame

on the other side and present themselves as victims.

So there is a kind of dialectic relation between the two nationalisms if we consider their discursive strategies and the use of the past. Niyazi Kizilyurek presents the similarities in the ways national memory is built and instrumentalised by both sides, with examples from Turkish-Cypriot textbooks. The slogan *I won't forget*, common to both sides, points to a selective memory which remembers what happened to 'us' and forgets what happened to the 'others'.

The history of Cyprus is thus taught in a divisive way: the splitting of the island is retrospectively projected onto the past, on the turmoil of Greek-Turkish conflicts, while the picture of the future does not seem to provide a way out of this divisive model. The case of Albania and Albanian populations outside the national state is certainly different; yet analogies exist in the sense that there are recent traumatic memories – war, death, refugees. Moreover, it is another 'open' matter of national integration in the Balkans – as shown by events in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia – whose ultimate outcome we cannot predict. The fluid state of this issue, combined with the transitional phase in most countries in the region, is reflected in the way history is taught.

Ideological contradictions, a heritage of the dictatorship of the proletariat, are traced in Albanian schoolbooks in their account of recent history (World War II, Albanian «resistance», the role of Communists and Xoxha, etc.). Erind Pajo analyses the cosmology of Albanian textbooks in the context of the societal transformations currently taking place in the country. These transformations – in other words, the *subtext* – partly determine the meanings produced by the textbooks – the *text*. The Albanians' picture of the past and self-definition are therefore influenced by the transitional, fluid present and their will to adopt the Western model of development in the future. In the textbooks the cultivation of 'inferiority complexes' to the students is combined with the ranking of countries on the basis of economic power and the heavily politicised interpretation of the past.

In the current Greek schoolbooks the presence of Albanians and Albania is rather limited. This 'silence' – a common treatment of the history of other Balkan nations in the textbooks of each country in the region – becomes more eloquent when compared to the extensive references found in pre-1974 Greek textbooks. Despina Karakatsani examines the Greek textbooks on civic education of the 1950-1974 period, when the subject was an instrument of 'political indoctrination' in the prevailing anticommunist at-

mosphere of the time. Especially during the dictatorship (1967-1974), when civic education was clearly used as political propaganda, the failure to annex S. Albania (N. Epirus) in the Greek national state was presented as a problem of national integration (along with the issues of Cyprus and Macedonia). Of course, these irredentist claims of Greek textbooks have been abandoned for decades. At the same time, the entry of large numbers of economic immigrants from Albania to Greece over the last decade – a major proportion of whom came from the Greek minority in Albania – has changed relations between the two peoples, although this has yet to be reflected in the accounts of the past.

The relations between Albanians and Serbs are certainly more antagonistic. In summarising the discussions and presentations in the fourth workshop, the report of Dubravka Stojanovic points out many aspects of these relations, from history textbooks and the name used for Albanians (Shqiptar) to the education of the Albanian population in Kosovo. Yet the mutually negative image between Albanians and Serbs is not in any way a paradox: all workshops discovered similarities in the structure of national histories and the construction of identities.

The contrast of national narratives is therefore a typical trait in many ‘rival’ histories – for example, between the Greek and Turkish or the Serbian and Croatian national histories. Historical events and figures, political systems and religious doctrines make up two opposing views of the same history. It seems, therefore, that the generation of contrasting pairs of interpretations of the past is a common ‘malady’ of nationalism; and these pairs can proliferate according to the number of neighbours. Thus a national history can form antagonistic pairs with more than one bordering national histories.

No matter how different and mutually exclusive national histories may appear at first sight, they share the same structure, which is revealed by the use of common or equivalent conceptual tools, the same ends and a normative discourse. Their main common trait is that they are one-sided, dogmatic interpretations of history where the voice of the other has no place.

The texts included in this publication articulate many ideas and proposals of ways to do away with this dogmatic, ethnocentric narrative in the writing and teaching of history⁴⁰. Amidst a landscape of change and rup-

⁴⁰ For some initial conclusions and recommendations see *Teaching the History of Southeastern Europe*, op.cit..

tures we seek to understand the conflicts and identify the standard elements and the continuities. At the same time we put together this common 'language' which will allow us to converse with our past, recent or distant, as well as with one another.