

SKOPLJE BUOYED BY A NEW SPIRIT

Quake Contributes to Sense of Macedonian Nationhood

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SKOPLJE, Yugoslavia — For all the damage done by the Skoplje earthquake of July 26, 1963—80 per cent of the dwellings smashed and 1,070 citizens killed—it is now becoming clear that the disaster also contributed to a growing sense of Macedonian nationhood.

Help poured in from all sides, not just from outlying Macedonian communities and former jealous neighbors—Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia, a constituent republic of Yugoslavia — but from all over the world.

Prof. Dimitar Mitrev of Skoplje University said recently: "The earthquake had a positive effect on the national consciousness." Prof. Blaze Koneski, his colleague, added: "A kind of solidarity developed here."

For Skoplje, international aid in the form of prefabricated houses, hospitals, schools and loans constituted a kind of recognition of the Macedonian capital and the Macedonian people.

The city council is busily planning a "new and better Skoplje" with a projected population of 800,000. Though the city was growing swiftly before the earthquake, the new plan is drawn on a scale more splendid than had ever been dreamed.

The "internationalization" of Skoplje extends beyond permanent buildings to cultural life. About 150 Skoplje students and 65 professors received grants to study and teach abroad after the quake.

Buttressing the sense of national identity is a growing industrial base.

Macedonia's secretary of industry, Vasil Tudzarov, minces no words about the backwardness of the republic, which still derives the bulk of its income from tobacco. He also acknowledges dependence on financial aid from the Yugoslav federal Government.

In 1947, industry accounted for 19 per cent of the republic's output, Mr. Tudzarov said, while in 1963 it contributed 35 per cent.

Eventually, Mr. Tudzarov and his colleagues hope to achieve a level of production comparable to Yugoslavia's northern republics and raise pay accordingly. At present the average wage in Macedonia is well below the national average.

Violation of Rights Charged

Is there a "Macedonian problem" today?

The intellectual leaders of Skoplje say no, as far as the republic is concerned. However, they are unanimous in picturing a "problem" in the situation of "brother-Macedonians" across the borders in western Bulgarian and northern Greece.

There, they say, the minority rights of the 40,000 Slavic speaking people in Greece and the 187,000 Macedonians in Bulgaria's Pirin district are ignored.

"There is only one Macedonia," said Prof. Dimce Koco, an art historian, "and it was divided up in 1912."

"We do not talk about territory now," Professor Mitrev said, "but we do insist on the right of these people to say they are Macedonians, to go to Macedonian schools and to read Macedonian newspapers."

A Bulgarian physician who professes no special sentiments on the subject recently visited the tobacco center of Prilep and came away with the following impression:

"There are some Macedonians who hate Serbs and there are some Macedonians who hate Bulgarians, but there are no Macedonians who hate no one."