

INTRODUCTION – STRATEGIC CONCEPT

Skopje is the capital and largest city in the Republic of Macedonia, with more than a quarter of the population of the country, as well as the political, cultural, economical and academic centre of the country. Today Skopje is a modern city with a range of cultural monuments, located on the Balkan Peninsula, outspread on the river Vardar.

Name

The name of the city in Macedonian is Skopje (Skopje), from Latin Skupi, the name of a pre-Greek people of the region who founded the city. The word Skupi which was the first name of the city means "hut" in Paeonian. During the Middle Ages, Skopje was often under the rule of the Bulgarian Empire; the Bulgarian rendition is Скопие (Skopie). The Turkish name of the city is Üsküb and it was known as Uskub or Uskup in most Western European languages during the period of Ottoman rule. The Serbian name for the city is Skoplje or Скопље; it was known as such in English during the time of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia

History

The city of Skopje for the first time has been mentioned by Klaudie Diolomej, under its ancient name "Skupi". In the III century B.C. Skupi was founded by the Dardanians, and later with the coming of the Romanians it came under their rule. In this period, the city experienced real bloom on several fields, it became a large religious centre with its own bishop. In the year of 518 the city was destroyed by a disastrous earthquake. Wonderful architectonic buildings, numerous public baths and the antic amphitheatre built in a roman style, large basilica with mosaic floors have completely disappeared from the earth's face. Since then Skupi is not mentioned any more. The Skopje valley got a new city centre called "Justinijana Prima". By the end of the VI century, in front of the ramparts of the city the Slavic people have showed up, which managed to occupy and to slavicize it for a period of only one century. This area was settled by the Slavic tribe Beregheziti and gives the city the new name Skopje. During the existence of the first Macedonian state and the Macedonian czar Samouil, the city becomes part of the Samouil's empire. In the later years a lot of conquerors have passed through the streets of the city, Bulgarians, Byzantiums, Serbians. In the year of 1392, the city falls under the Turkish rule. Up to 1453 Skopje was a throne of the Turkish sultans and later it developed in a significant craftsmen and commercial centre. A lot of authors who write about their travels have expressed their delight from the city. The Turkish writer Dilger Zede who has visited the city in the XVII century says, "I travelled for a

long time across that country of Rumelija and I saw a lot of beautiful cities and I was amazed from the Alah blessings, but not one has impressed and delighted me so much as the heavens city of Skopje across which passes the river Vardar". On 25th of October 1689 in front of the city gates, arrives the Austrian general Picolomini with its army. An event with an outstanding significance for Skopje. "I decided to burn the city in order not to leave the enemy something that could be of use to him. Although it is not easy, I decided to turn the city into ashes". From the hillsides of the Vodno mountain, Pikolomini was observing the fire: "I am sorry for the houses such as I have not seen at all in this war. The mosques are from the highest quality marble and porphyry, decorated with thousands lamps on a golden plated holders, which one would devote equal attention even in Rome. I feel sorry for the nice antiquities, gardens and places for entertainment."

▪ **Old Skopje officer's chamber on the main square (king Petar Square, at the time, 1920)**



The fire was raging for two days and except the massive stone buildings, the city was completely destroyed. Up until the half of the XIX century, the city could not recover back its previous appearance in front of which the numerous people who write about their travelling have stopped with a delight. In the XIX century, the city becomes an important traffic centre. Moving towards the countries from the middle east, Napoleon has found out the road through Skopje. A lot of merchants with their endless caravans loaded with various goods have been passing through the city. In this period the city reaches the biggest development of the handicrafts. Later, Skopje begins to change its appearance. After the First World War on the right side of the river Vardar a modern city

has been built. 26th of July 1963 is remembered as the longest day in the history of the city. Strong earthquake, of two severe and a few weaker shocks, turned the city into ruins. Numerous cultural monuments were seriously damaged or erased from the face of the earth. In today's conditions the city is experiencing its own renaissance for many times in its history.



• **City of Skopje engraving, Jakobus Harevin, 1594**

Geographical data

Skopje is located at 42°0'N, 21°26'E, on the upper course of the Vardar River and is located on a major north-south Balkan route between Central Europe and Athens. It has 506,926 inhabitants (2002 census). It is a major centre for the metal-processing, chemical, timber, textile, leather, and printing industries but has suffered many closures since 1991. Industrial development of the city has been accompanied by developments of the trade and banking sectors, as well as an emphasis on the fields of culture and sport.

The altitude above sea level at the centre of the city comes to 240m. Skopje spreads out on 1818 km² width, 9km (Vodno - Radishani) and length, 23km. (Drachevo - Gjorche Petrov). The central district occupies surface of 225km².

Climate in Skopje is characterized by average yearly temperatures of around 12,4°C. Summers are long, dry and hot and the winters are cold with lots of foggy days. Through Skopje flows river Vardar with its tributaries: Treska, Pchinja, Markova Reka, Lepenec and Kadina Reka. Skopje is surrounded by mountains such as: Vodno, Krardzica, Osoj, Zheden and Skopska Crna Gora.



TERITORIAL ORGANISATION OF SKOPJE

Territorial Organisation

City of Skopje has 10 communities: Aerodrom, Butel, Gazi Baba, Gjorche Petrov, Karposh, Kisela Voda, Saraj, Centar, Chair and Shuto Orizari. According to the number of inhabitants, largest of them all is Gazi Baba with approximately 72.617 inhabitants, and the smallest one is Shuto Orizari with about 20.800 inhabitants. According to its area, largest city community is Saraj with 229 km², and smallest, Chair with 3, 5 km².

Demographic

According to the new territorial organization (compounding the communities Saraj and Kondovo) city of Skopje has 506 926 inhabitants of which 66, 75% are Macedonian. However, about 15% of them represent the rural population, because of the number of villages joining community Saraj.

But, according to the previous division, city of Skopje has 467 275 inhabitants (71, 22% Macedonian) of which 94% live at the centre city district.

Of demographic flow point of view, Skopje has positive population image. Population in the city is constantly rising, mostly because of the numerical immigrations (mostly from towns and villages from inner Macedonia) and because of the birth rate.

It has to be mentioned that in Skopje and in Macedonia in general, the birth rate is significantly falling, but as biggest and most developed city in the country the birth rate is yet highest.

Immigrations to Skopje are in constant ascent and continuity from the Second World War and now on. People nowadays, move to Skopje because of the economic reasons or because of resuming their education.

After the earthquake, the city begun to built upon the example of the Kenzo Tange and Adolf Ciborovski's architectural projections. The old rail station today is the city Museum and a symbol of the great earthquake as well. The clock on the station's walls is forever held up on that fatal 17: 17 am.

Hospitals in Skopje

- Clinics of Medical Faculty
- City Hospital
- Military Hospital

Humanity and Aid

First aid for Skopje citizens came by army and habitants of the former Yugoslavian republics, back in 1963, just a few days after the dreadful earthquake. Precisely 87 nations from all around the world sent their saving teams in visit of saving thousands of trapped people beneath the fallen buildings.

All Those help units, made Skopje recover from his ashes and proudly carry the name of "City of Solidarity"