



# AMHRC. review summer 2010



Sigurjon Einarsson: a name is a name

## From the editor

Welcome to the second issue of the AMHRC Review. We are pleased to once again be able to bring to you this quarterly production.

This summer the AMHRC has been in full swing. Events such as SA Premier Mike Rann's speech accusing Macedonia of stealing Greek culture has spurred us into action. For details on this story, turn to page 8.

We have also been busy bringing you great events such as the screening of A Name is a Name at the Forum Melbourne. The turnout was great, and those who attended enjoyed the film and were pleased at being able to meet both the producer and director for a Q&A.

This quarter, we are also proud to announce that we have a few new faces around the office. Igor Zvezdakovski is our new online manager and Nick Partaloski is in charge of special events.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the Review.

Cheers!

Ljubica Durlovska



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# AMHRC official visit to Canberra

Last week, on 1-2 February 2010, a delegation from the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee visited Canberra for a number of important meetings with Federal MPs and the Ambassador of the Republic of Macedonia to Australia. The visit was the first in a series of visits planned for 2010 and carries on from several meetings held in Canberra in 2009.

The delegation, led by Jason Kambovski and David Vitkov, met individually with members of the Australia-Macedonia Parliamentary Friendship Group, the Honourable Member for Corangamite, Mr Darren Cheeseman, and the Honourable Member for Cowan, Mr Luke Simpkins.

**A number of important issues pertaining to Australian-Macedonian relations were discussed, including a future visit by the Friendship Group to the Republic of Macedonia.**

The idea of the visit, likely to take place after the next federal election, was well received by both MPs who said that they looked forward to being part of the delegation.

Mr Cheeseman and Mr Simpkins also welcomed the initiative of the AMHRC to host a National Political Conference on 20 March 2010 in Melbourne. The conference, to be attended by representatives from various states and territories in Australia, will discuss ways and means to unify and improve the Macedonian community's advocacy work across the country in relation to state and federal MPs. The conference will not just be about gaining support for the recognition of the Republic of Macedonia, but also for the purpose of gaining for our community respect and equitable treatment in general. The MPs noted that the event would be an important step for the Macedonian community in Australia and offered their assistance in making the event a success.

The AMHRC delegation also visited the Embassy of the Republic of Macedonia and met with the Ambassador, His Excellency, Mr Pero Stojanovski. A number of important community issues of mutual interest were discussed and the Ambassador was briefed on the AMHRC's upcoming initiatives. Mr Stojanovski also confirmed his strong support for the National Political Conference.



## Detsa Begaltsi

A stylised depiction of the saddened Macedonian sun at the loss of its children. DETSA BEGALTSI ( Child refugees), illustrates the story of the thousands of Macedonian children that were displaced and ushered into strange foreign lands during the Greek Civil War (1946-1949) - symbolised by the rows of figures and three barbed wire swirls on the right. John Tsiglev, a Melbourne based Artist, was inspired by the true account of Tase 'Andy' Filipov ( a child refugee, now in his 70's and also residing in Melbourne ). The communication blips on the figures in the sun rays and above the children reinforce the message that no matter how far the Macedonian children go, they are always inherently connected with their homeland. Acrylic on canvas. 1840x610mm.



# MHRMI and AMHRC condemn Greece's continued blacklisting of ethnic Macedonians

Greece continues to blacklist Macedonians who are active in human rights organizations abroad or who are political refugees\*. The latest reported incident occurred on December 19, 2009, when Macedonian citizen, Nikola Kosturski, a member of the Association of Child Refugees (Detsa Begaltsi) in Bitola, was denied entry because he *"is a person for whom an alert has been issued for the purposes of refusing entry"* and is *"in the national register"*.

Greece's blacklisting of ethnic Macedonians affects citizens of Canada, Australia, the United States, and many Western European countries.

MHRMI and AMHRC ask the governments of these countries, among others, to protect the rights of their citizens and demand from Greece that this practice be ceased immediately or face repercussions. Furthermore, we ask that Greece be forced to provide a reason why certain individuals are refused entry and why Greece's blacklist contains only members of ethnic minorities.

MHRMI and AMHRC call on Macedonians abroad to contact our organizations if they have been denied entry into Greece, or have experienced discrimination by Greek Consulates or Embassies worldwide.

\*This year marks the 61st anniversary of the evacuation by the International Red Cross of 28,000 Macedonian children (Detsa Begaltsi), aged 2-14, during the Greek Civil War. They were subsequently stripped of their Greek citizenship and have been consistently denied entry into Greece simply because they assert their Macedonian ethnic identity. They were excluded from the 1982 law that allowed the free return of political refugees who were "Greek by genus".



Established in 1984 the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) is a non governmental organisation that informs and advocates to governments, international institutions and broader communities about combating discrimination and promoting basic human rights. Our aspiration is to ensure that Macedonian communities and other excluded groups throughout the world are recognised, respected and afforded equitable treatment.

For more information please visit us at [www.macedonianhr.org.au](http://www.macedonianhr.org.au) or email AMHRC at [macedonian\\_rights@hotmail.com](mailto:macedonian_rights@hotmail.com) or contact us via phone on +61 3 93298960.

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**AUSTRALIAN MACEDONIAN  
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE**

Mailing Address:  
Level 1, Suite 106  
55 Flemington Rd  
North Melbourne VIC 3051  
Australia

Phone: 03 9329 8960  
E-mail: [macedonian\\_rights@hotmail.com](mailto:macedonian_rights@hotmail.com)  
Website: [www.macedonianhr.org.au](http://www.macedonianhr.org.au)

# Друцас новиот националист

Florina/Lerin

17 Dekemvri 2009

Одговор на ЕСА-Виножито до Заменикот Министер за Надворешни Работи на Грција  
Димитрис Друцас во врска со неговите изјави од 14 декември 2009 во грчкиот  
парламент околу "Македонскиот Идентитет"

Во врска со македонското прашање и политиката на Грција со соседната Република  
Македонија, г.Друцас одговори на прашање од страна на пратеници на партијата ЛАОС, на  
14.12.2009, во Грчкиот парламент:

«Македонскиот идентитет е дел од идентитетот на секој Грк. Не преговараме за него. Со  
него(македонски идентитет) се раѓаме, со него умираме и тоа е добро да го слушнаат не само  
во Скопје туку и во Њујорк и каде тоа е потребно. Утврдување на конечното име према сите со  
промена на Уставот на Скопје».

Изјавите на заменикот Министер за Надворешни Работи не упатуваат кон тоталитарни  
идеологии од периодот на 1930те во нацистичката Германија. Оваа тоталитарна идеологија  
споменува целосно и суштинско потекло на луѓето, „Арииски потекла од самото раѓање,, во  
врска со идентитетот на граѓаните на една држава. Е познато дека Хитлер „стана маж,, во  
Австриско тогаш опкружување.

Познавајќи дека г.Друцас студираше и работеше во 90те во Австрија, „служеше,, во  
канцеларијата на Австриската Канцеларија (1998), се запрашуваме дали наместо да стане дел  
од тогашната и денешната Австриска Демократија, се приближи или / и ги присвои одвратните  
идеологии на Хајндер (поранешен лидер на неонацистите) и следбеник на Хитлер? Дали  
поставија господата Хајндер и Друцас исти маршрути-идеологии паралелн и во истиот период?

Исто така нека земиме предвид дека г.Друцас е роден во Никозија-Кипар во 1968год. Една  
година порано (1967) во Грција е донесена диктатура. Макариос го собори „диктатурски,,  
Уставот на Кипар и започна тероризирањето на Турските Кипарци со помош на Грива и на  
Грците. Познаваме дека неговите родители „слушаа,, во Кипар имајќи идеологија блиска до  
диктатурската. И така размислуваме (така не тера Министерот после неговиот одговор во  
Парламентот) за како „се раѓа и умира,, еден човек? (кој во меѓувреме расте и се воспитува  
„соодветно,,)? Се запрашуваме дали г.Друцас „цицаше,, од „млекото,, отров-национализам во  
следните негови тинејџерски години во рамките на фамилијарната-диктатурско кипарска  
околина од тоа време?

Дали преку официјалниот одговор во Грчкиот парламент на прашањето од страна на  
националистичките-неонацистите „Караџаферови,, во нашата земја се докажува дека еден  
Министер после „националистичкото млеко,, во Кипар и „неонацистичкото докторирање,, во  
Австрија, се „наградува,, во парламентот? Можеби „Караџаферовците,, и неговите  
истомисленици во Грција, после одговорот на заменикот Министер за Надворешни работи  
извикаа „Хајл Друцер...!!!!,, .

Канцеларијата за Печат

P.S.1. Значи членовите на националното Македонско малцинство во Грција, кое број многу  
повеќе од 1500 души на Грчкото малцинство во Истанбул, како беа родени и како ќе умрат?  
Имаат ли право според Друцас да „се родат и да умрат,, Македонци?

P.S.2. Премиерот Георгиос Папандреу се роди од мајка Американка и баба Полјакиња. Ќе  
праша, согласно неговата „логика,, Министерот, зошто и како беше роден неговиот  
претпоставен?

P.S.3. На староалбански јазик (арнаутски), коренот на презимето Друцас е „Дру,, и значи дрво.  
Исто така „џа,, на арнаутски-албански значи „некој,, или „мал,, итн.  
Според „логиката,, за потеклото, согласно Друцас, дали е информиран Министерот дека е  
„роден,, арнаут, значи современ Албанец?

# On the difficulties facing Vinozhito

There are a number of social structural reasons for why it is unlikely that a mass 'outing' of Macedonianism in Greece will happen any time soon. A key reason is that Mainstream Greek culture, in other words its hegemonic aspects, are often revolted by the idea of ethno-cultural difference. Certainly Greece is not historically unique in this regard, however in today's Europe - it does stand out, as possessing a rather virulent fear of the other.

This makes it extraordinarily difficult for a voice like Vinozhito's to be properly heard inside Greece. Often, Vinozhito is reduced to threatening European court action just to ensure that its mail is delivered and that its advertising is published. It is very catch - 22 like, Vinozhito exists because of the fear of difference and yet it finds it very difficult to make progress, precisely because of the cultural factor that ensured it would come into being - the fear of difference.

However we shall continue our support of Vino' as our actions are guided by the principle that structures can eventually be changed - that there is in the last analysis an element of human agency involved in the construction of social structures and that these are therefore subject to the possibility of alteration.

## Difficulties in Detail

1. To begin with, Vinozhito has over the years participated in local, national and European elections. Most people do not take time to consider what it means to participate in an election campaign - especially for a small volunteer party representing the interests of a very negatively stigmatised minority.

Just to give itself half a chance of achieving a decent result, we are talking about 20 to 40,000 Euros minimum. Add to that the work of letter drops, door knocking, preparation of advertising materials, scrutineers, etc. It takes an enormous effort. The people in Vinozhito are volunteers with family, work and other responsibilities - they don't always have the time and resources to run in an election campaign.

2. Added to these difficulties, is the fact that Vinozhito operates in a society that has a pathological fear of the other. Vinozhito's post doesn't get delivered; they receive unlawful media bans; people are employed to spread lies about them - such as that they are "separatists"; that they are really Greeks posing as Macedonians etc. etc. A whole state apparatus is employed to make sure Vinozhito does not make progress. We can add that in the last European elections held last year, even the Bulgarian secret police worked against Vinozhito by unlawfully confiscating thousands of Vinozhito advertising dvd's.

The only thing worse than exhibiting ethno-cultural difference in a country like Greece, is being labelled a

"separatist". If this is the prevailing mood at a particular moment in time, then it is a waste for Vinozhito to consider using up resources and energy at such points. So Vinozhito has to choose its time for participating very carefully - it is simply impossible for them to stand in every election considering all these difficulties. For example in 2002, when they did succeed in negotiating some mainstream political co-operation, the result was that a Vinozhito candidate was elected to the Lerin prefecture.

3. Of late, Vinozhito has favoured participation in European elections as opposed to purely Greek ones for other practical reasons too. Those people in Aegean Macedonia who consider themselves to be ethnic Macedonians are like voters everywhere. Some don't care about politics; some are fearful of voting for Vinozhito because they have employment /business issues attached to their support of the major Greek parties. Officially, the elections are carried out via secret ballot in Greece; however we can safely assert that everyone quickly discovers who voted for whom in an election - especially in Macedonian villages.

European parliamentary elections are considered unimportant in Greece and more people feel comfortable about voting for a party like Vinozhito in them. It may be that Vinozhito will decide to take a break from participating in elections for a while - that is to wait until more suitable conditions appear again; or until they have succeeded in eliminating some of the fear that exists, about voting for a party like theirs, through their other activities. Though that is something that they will decide, not we in the diaspora - it is easy to complain in the diaspora, we don't live in fear of being prosecuted for "treason"; of losing our jobs; of being shunned by mainstream society etc.etc.

That such fear is to an extent justified, is well illustrated by pointing to the widely mentioned recent example of a Papandreou advisor who was sacked within 24 hours of asserting that Greece does possess a Macedonian minority and that Greece should recognise it.

Because Vinozhito unavoidably sometimes 'skips' participation in elections, does not mean that it has ceased working. Vinozhito has a number of branches in Aegean Macedonia based around a number of counties. Some of them are "underground", while others are public knowledge. Now this goes to the question about methods. Vinozhito does not believe in any one method - it uses a variety. For example some Vinozhito branch people in Aegean Macedonia are carrying out language classes and cultural work etc. Vinozhito uses different means for different people and this is justified by the fact that those who consider themselves ethnic Macedonian in Greece, are like people everywhere - varied. There are the fearless and the fearful; the fence sitters and ambivalent ones etc. etc. In one way or another Vinozhito is trying to reach out to all of them. With the fearful, one must use the



softly, softly approach, and this is what various Vinozhito networks are doing – they are working on a number levels utilising a number of means.

4. The issue of Vinozhito participating in elections is also the subject of much confusion in the diaspora for another reason – unrealistic expectations. As a result of Greek state policy over the last hundred years, Aegean Macedonia possesses a vast majority of people who consider themselves to be ethnic Greeks. The reasons for this are at least as horrible as the reasons for the fact that the majority of people in Australia today have white skin. We all know this and so Vinozhito is not about winning large numbers of seats – it simply cannot. The purpose of participating in the elections is to demonstrate, contrary to what the Greek authorities assert that Greece is inhabited by a Macedonian minority. Why? So that Greece finally recognises this group and implements what is required of it by international law and convention. This is so that this minority will be saved from total destruction.

Vinozhito's election results have over 15 years consistently demonstrated that not only is there a Macedonian minority, but that it is anything from twice to five times the size of the Greek minority that Turkey officially recognises as inhabiting Istanbul! Moreover, as a result of Vinozhito's more public and fearless methods, almost every single Major Western institution and NGO (COE, ECRI, U.N., OSCE, EU, Human Rights Watch etc. – not to mention numerous western academics), has recognised Greece's Macedonian minority and found Greece guilty of human rights violations against it. This has been a wonderful achievement of Vinozhito's.

It is not Vinozhito's fault that they inhabit a society that has a pathological fear of the other or that responsible Western authorities have not attempted to compel Greece to abide by the treaties it is a signatory to.

Vinozhito's aim, and ours for that matter, is not to harm Greece, but to make it better for everyone who lives there – by trying to defeat ethnocentric bigotry; by trying to increase the level of democratic diversity. It is our opinion that Greece possesses a mainstream culture that is pathologically repressed. What would happen if Vinozhito and others in Aegean Macedonia were to get their way? Nothing major from a Western perspective – Macedonians would be destigmatised; a process of reconciliation would begin; Macedonians would receive aid for the maintenance of their culture and the Macedonian Language would be introduced to the state education system as an elective subject (this is a crucial aim to be achieved according to Vinozhito's manifesto) for those who wish to learn it. In Australia and other Western countries this is all considered

quite normal – the fact that in Greece at present, the mainstream considers such things horrible, is the crux of the problem. Some argue that our position and Vinozhito's for that matter, is Western ethnocentric. In the present context that is a very flawed argument because Greece has for decades been receiving all the benefits (especially economic and military) of membership in Western society. It is unacceptable to obtain such benefits and claim to be the “cradle of democracy” and at the same time ignore the responsibilities that come with such benefits; it is unacceptable to sign treaties only for the purpose of receiving money and with no intention of satisfying the obligations that accompany such benefits!

Vinozhito is the product of a cultural-structural situation that makes it very difficult for it to progress, for this structure creates both the conditions for its existence and the serious problems that stand in its way. We shall however continue our support of Vinozhito, because we believe in democratic diversity and because we believe that cultural structures can be subject to human agency and therefore to alteration. We reject the notion of static primordialism.

For those interested in supporting the courageous efforts of Vinozhito and OMO Ilinden Pirin for that matter too – please visit the websites of the AMHRC or MHRMI. Moreover, we would like to add with some forgivable pride (at least we hope that is how you will view it) that the AMHRC has been a leader for over a quarter of a century in political and legal advocacy work on behalf of the Macedonian community in Australia. We have at present a committee that is eminently qualified for such work – four postgraduate academics from the Humanities/Social Sciences and four lawyers; not to mention the C.P.A. that does our books! The contributions that we receive are also used to maintain our efforts in Australia.

George Vlahov.



# Open letter to Mike Rann

## **Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee Inc.**

Suite 106, Level 1, 55 Flemington Road, North Melbourne, Victoria, Australia 3051

Hon Mike Rann MP  
Premier of South Australia  
GPO Box 2343  
Adelaide SA 5001

Mr. Rann,

### **Inflammatory Comments against Macedonians**

We have been made aware of your attendance last year at the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual "Dimitria Greek Festival" (29/11/09) in South Australia. Upon listening to the speech you delivered to the Greek community at this event, we came to the conclusion that it was inflammatory, bigoted and offensive.

To begin with, you referred to the current President of the Republic of Macedonia as someone who is "stirring up trouble in the most dangerous way". Your justification for this is that he and the Macedonian government are utilising the symbol of Alexander the Great, in a variety of public projects. We very much doubt that any objectively minded person could agree that this is a 'dangerous stirring up of trouble'.

However, this was not enough for you Mr. Premier; you then moved on to raise the level of vilification against Macedonians by making the following assertion to your ethnic Greek audience at the festival: "People sometimes say to me, but why is this important? It is important because no one is entitled to steal another nation's history or culture; that's why it's important". Premier, you have implied that Macedonians are thieves and thereby you have provided succour to bigots by vilifying Macedonians in general.

We shall make use of relevant legislation to ensure that you are held to account for spreading this type of hatred.

Sincerely yours,

George Vlahov  
President  
Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee Inc.  
Tel/Fax: +61 3 9329 8960  
Email: macedonian\_rights@hotmail.com  
Website: www.macedonianhr.org.au

CC: Australian Human Rights Commission  
Senator the Hon Chris Evans MP, Minister for Immigration and Citizenship (Cth)  
Hon Michael Atkinson MP, Minister for Multicultural Affairs (SA)  
South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission  
Equal Opportunity Commission South Australia  
Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)  
Special Broadcasting Corporation (SBS)



# Premier Rann under investigation by Australian Human Rights Commission



Mike Rann Premier of South Australia. Photo sourced from Wikipedia Commons.

The Australian Human Rights Commission ("the Commission") has acted on the complaint lodged by the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee ("AMHRC") against the Premier of South Australia, Mike Rann. Mr Rann is at present the subject of an investigation by the Commission for an alleged discriminatory slur against Macedonians. At the 31st Annual "Dimitria Greek Festival" (29/11/09) in South Australia, Mr Rann made the following statement in reference to Macedonians: *"People sometimes say to me, but why is this important? It is important because no one is entitled to steal another nation's history or culture; that's why it's important"*.

Furious, at being labelled historical and cultural thieves, the AMHRC lodged a complaint with the Commission. The Commission has asked Mr Rann to confirm and explain his statement, with a requirement to respond by 10th March 2010. To date, the current South Australian Premier has refused to publically respond to the charge of engaging in offensive behaviour based on race, nationality or ethnicity and in so doing spreading hatred. Mr George Vlahov, President of the AMHRC stated that:

History and culture are created via selective valuing and relatively; they cannot be 'stolen' in the manner suggested by Mr. Rann. There can be no justification for such a vile attack against Macedonians.

## International Ramifications

The Australian Embassy of the Republic of Macedonia is yet to receive a satisfactory response to the letter of complaint it sent on the 9th February 2010, to the Australian Government in regard to Mr Rann's comments. It is feared that this has cost Australia a crucial vote in favour of its bid to join as a non-permanent member of the U.N. Security Council. "We hope that other Australian politicians learn from Premier Rann's indiscretion. Fuelling ethnic hatred is no way to govern" remarked Mr. Vlahov.



UN Security Council. Photo sourced from un.org

# Unsatisfactory Response from Rann

Yesterday, Premier Rann's office released to the media a response to the complaint lodged by the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) against the Premier at the Australian Human Rights Commission (the Commission), for discriminatory statements in reference to Macedonians. We consider Mr. Rann's response to be unsatisfactory. He claims that his criticisms were directed at the "incumbent President" of the Republic of Macedonia. However, this is not borne out by a reading of the transcript of his comments that he himself provided, nor, in any case, is it a valid defence.

His criticism of the President of the Republic of Macedonia was in reference to the utilisation of the symbol of Alexander the Great in a number of public projects. We do not agree with this as a valid criticism. The Premier must be aware that history and culture are selectively and abstractly constructed. Therefore he could not truly believe that the modern usage of Alexander the Great could in any way have constituted a "dangerous stirring up of trouble" as Premier Rann asserted. Comments like these could not have been delivered "in good faith" as Premier Rann claimed in his response. Moreover, to place the naming of a highway, "Alexander the Great" in the same context as apartheid in South Africa as Mr. Rann does in his response, is ridiculously offensive – not just to the President or government of the Republic of Macedonia, but to all those Macedonians who elected the current administration. Some of these individuals are also Australian citizens.

## International Consequences

Mr. Rann claims in his response that he has long held an interest in international affairs, yet somehow he has always been strangely quiet when it comes to Greece's well documented human rights abuses against its Macedonian minority. Premier Rann claims that his views are "consistent with the criticisms also made by other European Union countries and the United Nations". Of course what he does not make clear is that the reference to "European Union countries" includes Greece. Why is this important? Because Greece has been a consistent human rights violator. For example, at the end of 2009, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, a European independent human rights monitoring body that specialises in questions relating to racism and intolerance, after excoriating Greece on its abysmal record in relation to human rights recommended that:

*"... the Greek authorities take measures to recognize the rights of the members of the different groups living in Greece [including Macedonians], including to freedom of association, in full compliance with the relevant judgements of the European Court of Human Rights ... [Moreover],*

*ECRI also strongly recommends that the Greek authorities take steps to recognize the right to self identification of these groups [ie: Macedonians]".* (See European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, Fourth Report on Greece, Adopted on 2 April 2009, CRI (2009) 31, Strasbourg, 15 September 2009, para. 115 and 117.)

As to Premier Rann's reference to the United Nations, it is apt to here cite from the UN independent expert on minority issues, Gay McDougall, who also reported on Greece's aberrant human rights behaviour. For example, she states that:

*"Successive governments have pursued a policy of denial of the ethnic Macedonian community and the Macedonian language ... The response of earlier Greek governments was to suppress any use of the Macedonian language and cultural activities. In recent times the harsh tactics have ceased but those identifying as ethnic Macedonian still report discrimination and harassment. They consider it of crucial importance for their continued existence that their ethnic identity and distinctiveness is respected. The Macedonian language is not recognized, taught, or a language of tuition in schools".* (Promotion and Protection of all Human Rights, Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, including the right to Development', Report of the independent expert on minority issues, Gay McDougall, Addendum Mission to Greece, (8-16 September 2008), A/HRC/10/11/Add.3, 18 February 2009, para. 41.)

Somewhat ironically given the Premier's comments, Ms McDougall even notes the symbolic ethnic cleansing of ethnic Macedonians by the Greek state in the early half of the 20th Century: *"In the 1920s and 30s laws required the replacement of non-Greek names of towns, villages, rivers and mountains with Greek names. The family names of the Macedonian speaking population were also required to be changed to Greek names. Individuals seeking to re-instate Macedonian family names have had their petitions refused by authorities on administrative grounds. Community representatives note that traditional names continue to be in common usage and call for reinstatement and the official usage of a dual nomenclature e.g. Florina/Lerin".* (See para. 42.)

Indeed, Premier Rann would do well to read what the UN independent expert on minority rights recommends:

*"The government should retreat from the dispute over whether there is a Macedonian minority or a Turkish minority and place its full focus on protecting the rights to self-identification, freedom of expression and freedom of association of those*

*communities. The Greek government should comply with the judgments of the European Court on Human Rights that associations should be allowed to use the words Macedonian or Turkish in their names and to freely express their ethnic identities. Those associations denied in the past must be given official registration promptly. Their further rights to minority protections must be respected as elaborated in the Declaration on Minorities and the core international human rights treaties". (See para. 90.)*

We reiterate it is strange that Premier Rann, the self-described champion of human rights and multiculturalism has never once mentioned the consistent human rights violations of Greece. In any case, the last time we checked, he is not the Foreign Minister of Australia and as a result of his offensive comments, it appears that Australia has lost what might turn out to be a crucial vote from the Republic of Macedonia in favour of membership of the U.N. Security Council. The consequences of fuelling ethnic tensions are probably going to be severe on this occasion.

Moreover, his comments against the President of the Republic of Macedonia, Georgi Ivanov, seem disingenuous, because the powers of the President of the Republic of Macedonia, in accordance with the Macedonian Constitution, are mainly ceremonial and he has very little influence on governmental decisions and the day-to day running of the country. He most certainly has no authority to change the names of airports or any other public institutions. Premier Rann's assertions in this regard are just absurd. They are akin to somebody condemning the Governor General for decisions to rename Australian highways, or airports for that matter.



Georgi Ivanov. Photo sourced from [turkeymacedonia.wordpress.com](http://turkeymacedonia.wordpress.com)

## Crux of the Complaint

However, this is not the most pertinent part of our complaint. This derives from comments after the Premier had moved on from discussing the President of the Republic of Macedonia and the public projects. Here, he made the following remarks (as his own transcript reveals): *"People sometimes say to me, but why is this important? It is important because no one is entitled to steal another nation's history or culture; that's why it's important"*.

In the lead up to this offensive assertion, Premier Rann, implicitly though nevertheless clearly, explained that he was aiming those remarks at Macedonians; an ethnic group that does not consider itself Greek and again we quote:

*"Some people you know interestingly just a few months ago in May, a whole group of very distinguished Greek scholars came out and had written to the new President of the United States, President Barack Obama and have said to him, told him the real history of Macedonia. Told him about the fact that the Greek Macedonians were there centuries and centuries before, the history of Phillip of Macedon, the history of Alexander the Great & Hellenism. And that's why this centre is so important. It's important for you but it's also important for the rest of us. To have a centre that celebrates the great Hellenic tradition, the Greek tradition of Makethonia. And so I promise you that we will remain firm and unswerving in our support for your cause."*

*People sometimes say to me 'but why is this important?' It is important because no one is entitled to steal another nation's history or culture. That is why it's important."*

What is the "Greek cause" that Mr. Rann is referring to? It is the desire to force Macedonians to change their identity and name. This is a cause that aims to subvert the human right to self-identify. The whole paragraph makes it clear that if anyone, not just the current President of the Republic of Macedonia, regards him or herself as a Macedonian in a distinct non-Greek ethnic sense; or if they do not consider Alexander the Great to have been an ethnic Greek, then they are "Slavs" (a generic racial label used in reference to the Republic of Macedonia earlier by the Premier in his speech; a label that ignores national specificity - see the earlier part of the transcript) who are trying to "steal another nation's history or culture".

In other words, the Premier's comments were implicitly, but clearly based on ethnicity and/or nationality, and indeed he utilised the generic racial label "Slavic" in reference to the Republic of Macedonia. Moreover, the Premier appears to be claiming that his comments, which seem to be denying the ethnic identity of one group of people, the Macedonians, are his "genuine beliefs". This seems a somewhat extraordinary thing to maintain. However, not content with that, he goes on to claim that these views "represent fair comment on a matter of very real international public interest". Premier, it is not "fair comment" to deny the existence of a people, and the very real international public interest lies in the protection and promotion of human rights, such as the right to self identification, not the other way around.

We repeat that we are not historical and cultural thieves and we demand that the Premier take responsibility for his actions and apologise for the discriminatory slur against Macedonians.



## Review by Michael Seraphinoff

Macedonian literature has a number of works with child narrators that are worthy of note. These include *Makedoncheto* (The Macedonian Boy) by Petros G. Vocis, whose childhood memoir is written in the child narrator's voice of five year old Petros, who recounts his life in the lost world of his family's ancestral home village of Setina in northern



Greece, Aegean Macedonia. The book is a memoir of a year when the Greek Civil War raged in his home village. The author recounts the tragedy of a family and a community torn apart by the events of that war.

In the schoolyard or in the rougher neighborhoods, strength matters. If you're smaller and weaker you get pushed around, unless you develop survival skills, learn to use creativity and cunning to survive. One of the roughest neighborhoods on earth is the Balkan Peninsula. Small and weak nations frequently get preyed upon by stronger neighbors. Macedonians, with one of the smaller national territories and populations in the region, know this all too well. Tragic stories of Macedonian oppression at the hands of more powerful neighbors abound in the national literature. Mere survival of a distinct Macedonian ethnic identity has often hung in the balance during times of foreign occupation, and over time there has been a steady erosion of the land base in ethnic Macedonian hands as each subsequent war has led to the further displacement of Macedonians by more numerous and aggressive neighboring peoples.

In response to this loss of homes and fields, the uprooting of whole communities, this dispersion of the people, often in foreign lands where their children become assimilated and lose all memory of a lost homeland, a lost language and culture, way of life and identity, Macedonian writers have fought back with the pen. If they could not defend their homes and identity from invaders, at least they could raise their voices in protest, regain a certain amount of dignity and self-respect through the power of literature, of memory mixed with dreams committed to the printed page.

One of the more clever ways that certain Macedonian writers have chosen to raise their voices against the bullies in their neighborhood is to voice their protest through a child narrator. As we all know, bullies rarely react kindly to complaints from their victims, so the clever person looks for ways to avoid retaliation for their protests. A child narrator can, among other things, create a degree of distance

between the adult author and his or her message that serves to lessen hostility to that message. Readers tend to be more accepting of a child rather than an adult who gives voice to certain uncomfortable or controversial truths, because, after all, as American talk show host Art Linkletter, who made a career out of publicizing their utterances would say: "Kids say the darndest things".

Petros Vocis, could have been intimidated into silence by the prevailing Greek public opinion and policy that there is no Macedonian language, people, or nation, past or present, inside or outside the borders of Greece. Something as simple as his use of words from non-Greek (Macedonian) language that he and his fellow villagers spoke, or the use of the old name of their village rather than the more recent Greek name given to that village by the Greek authorities, could have led to serious consequences for the author. He could have received death threats or his publisher could have been threatened if they dared to publish his book, as happened several years back when Cambridge University Press was considering publishing a book on the separate and distinct minority Macedonian language and culture in northern Greece. Or his book, upon publication, could have been withheld from distribution or destroyed before it ever reached the public, such as happened to Krste P. Misirkov's *On Macedonian Matters*, in 1903 in Bulgaria or to the ABCEDAR intended for the Macedonian population in Greece in the 1920's.

The fact that Vocis's book did not meet such a fate is not so much a result of some change in relations among Balkan neighbors as it is the result of creative use of a child narrator to avoid a hostile reaction. If the same author had chosen to simply interview older family and friends to document his village and people's experience in the Greek Civil War in 1947, there might have been a firestorm of opposition to his book in Greece, where it was first published in Greek before it came out in a Macedonian language edition in the Republic of Macedonia. But his five year old narrator evokes a different response from readers, tapping universal wells of sympathy for the child-like and innocent.

This crafting of a sympathetic child main character begins on the opening page of the book. At the same time, readers get a taste of the factual, documentary account of a village caught up in the tragic events of the civil war. Discerning readers will understand that the five year old narrator is a figure of literary invention, that his narration is the literary product of the adult researcher, organizer and arranger of this story, masterfully crafted so that readers will fall under the spell of the stream of consciousness immediacy of the five year old boy's narration:

*This book is dedicated to all of my fellow villagers and particularly to those who were not allowed to return to their native land, even in death. To my first cousins Itso and Lazo who perished in their early twenties...*

## Chapter One

“How can I ever recall those memories without sorrow.”

Now if I can just get my mother to lift me up in her arms, so that I'm even with her head. This time I'm sure that I'll grab it - so I'm always begging her to pick me up.

But I always have to watch out that there aren't any other kids around, or they'll laugh at me and call me a little baby, which isn't fair, since I'm not little! I'm especially afraid to when Grandma Dala is there, since she told me that I was a little donkey who didn't need to be carried by his mother anymore. As if I didn't already know that I'm a big boy, since I'm going to be five years old soon, and don't I have my own dog and a lamb, I can ride on a donkey, and Uncle even made me a staff, with a handle and told me it was mine.

But every time I reach my hands up to try and grab the sky - even when I'm in my mother's arms - they come back empty. It doesn't make sense when I can see that the sky starts at her head, that I can't grab it. It appears to be a little higher. Maybe if my older cousin Itso picked me up, he's really tall, when his head hits the sky, I can grab it. I've got to finish this business, because I've got so much else to do. So I've got to tell Itso the next time I see him. But he's always sleeping whenever he comes home. He sets down his rifle, a really big gun, we call it a blaster, he washes up, eats and then sleeps so that nobody can wake him. Cousin Itso eats a lot, he eats as much as everybody else together. When we make a pot of stew, he'll eat a whole pot all by himself, what everybody else eats combined. His mother, Grandma Dimana, and his wife, Auntie Ordana, gather up his clothes, as soon as he undresses and they boil them, as if we were going to eat them.

“That's the only way to kill the lice and their eggs. That's what Grandma Dimana says, and then she repeats it every time when he comes. But, why is he so tired, when his work is to make war, while how many hours do I play at war and I never get tired?

They say that he is fighting against the monarcho-fascists. I don't know them, and I've never seen them. Maybe they're from other villages. It seems that they're different than us, but definitely bad and that is why they fight against them. But when they get so tired too, why doesn't he just kill them with his blaster, which is the real thing. Is he too tired from fighting to pull the trigger? I'll have to remember to ask him when he comes. But I'll beg him to help me, since his gun is heavy, it's not possible to move it, even my brother Kolche can barely lift it. But if I really try and put my weight into it, maybe I can do it. When he comes another time, I'll try that. ...

Excerpt from the book by Petros G. Vocis, *Makedoncheto*, 1999. translation of the excerpt by Michael Seraphinoff

# AMHRC hosted the Melbourne premiere of A Name is a Name

The AMHRC is proud to have hosted a sold out screening of the Melbourne premiere of A Name is a Name at the Forum Theatre on March 4. In attendance were Macedonians and non-Macedonians alike, as well as some Victorian parliamentarians.

This documentary surveyed a very wide cross-section of Macedonian society on the issue of Macedonia's name. The interviewees depicted all gave different reasons for why Macedonia's name should not be changed. These explanations and justifications ranged from the political, historical, cultural and legal. Their depiction in the documentary demonstrated that the Macedonian identity marker is complexly and deeply interwoven in Macedonian society and that there is no question of accepting a name change.

Following the film, audiences got the distinct privilege of being part of a Q & A with producer Jason Miko and director Sigurjon Einarsson. At the evenings end, the general feeling in the packed theatre was very positive.



Photo's (including front cover) courtesy of  
Stefan Avtarovski from Glamorous Photography  
Phone: (02) 9599 5539  
Email: [studio@glamorous.com.au](mailto:studio@glamorous.com.au)  
Postal Address: P.O. Box 774  
Rockdale, NSW 2216





a film by Sigurjon Einarsson  
**a name is a name**  
 a film about a nation held hostage because of its name

# Every Premier has his price, and some go real cheap

It all gets a bit much to be constantly finding fault with our fellow human beings. Even more upsetting and tiresome is to have to complain about Australian politicians who consider any excuse is a good excuse for vote grabbing. Mike Rann, Premier of SA, about to face the music with the impending state election, is in the well-worn political tradition of acting in bad faith. He has shamelessly slandered the Macedonian people calling them robbers of the so-called Hellenic heritage of the modern Greeks who lay claim to Macedonia both ancient and modern.

The official Greek nationalist ideology of modern times has been centred on the following fictions: 1) "We were here first" (primacy) 2) "We have been here for the last 4,000 years" (continuity) 3) "We have always owned it" (ownership) 4) "We are great, important because the Greeks invented democracy, philosophy, science etc" (the world's greatest over-achievers). These are the crucial elements of the fairy tale. A corollary of this is that non-Greeks are inferior or barbaric.

However, everyone who reflects on the matter will perceive that the only thing that does not change in history is the inexorable process of change itself. Even a casual glance at a map of the Balkans, let alone a rough idea of the comings and goings of different peoples in the region over the centuries, will give a prima facie indication that

to claim Macedonia has been "Greek" for the last four thousand years is not merely an unsophisticated and unhistorical view, but a mad fantasy.

It is as ridiculous as to claim that the people, language and culture of the existing Hellenic Republic has been around that long - every history book on Greece will tell you that it assumed its present borders in the second decade of the 20th century.

Apart from serving as a catch-cry to bolster Greek national significance and self-importance, the nationalist fairy tale has guided official Greek policies on its ethnic minorities.

But here, I want to bring the reader back to the real subject of this commentary. How on earth does one jump from these bizarre nationalist myths, to the accusation that the Macedonians are robbers of the Greek cultural heritage in self-identifying as Macedonians and who speak a language that is universally known as the Macedonian language and have a sovereign and independent nation state recognised by 130 nations, including the major powers?

Of course, Mike Rann is a politician and we all know that most, if not all, politicians are opportunists. Politicians anywhere are usually opportunists after their own fashion and what they can get away with determines their style.

Is Mr Rann, interested in "whatever it takes" to be re-elected? Indubitably, or why else would he go around saying appalling things about the Macedonians and think himself virtuous and rational with a right to his "opinion". He has told the media he won't apologise, even though his views are offensive and give further fuel to hatred of the Macedonians by the Greeks. He has been praised by former Labor Senator Nick Bolkus, a fund raising mate of his, who thinks everyone is entitled to their own opinion. So given this very broad criteria of what an acceptable "opinion" is implicit in the views expressed about the Macedonians, he would have to admit he is committed to the tolerating the intolerable, racists, fascists, neo-Nazis and all criminal ideologies.

Like Jeff Kennett when he was Premier of Victoria in the 90's, Mike Rann has not been particularly interested in the history or the real nature of the dispute between the Macedonians and the Greeks. What he has really been interested in, amounts to no more than the following: the loud and pushy lot are more numerous than the group they despise. Why not give the Greeks what they want as they would be more useful for his re-election to the highest office in the state? This is another example of the routine banality of politics, which is the source of much evil in the world.

When Jeff Kennett was at the peak of his power in Victoria in 1994, he was prepared to do anything to show what a great pal he was to the Greek community. He told one gathering of Greeks that it was absurd for Slavs to claim Macedonia because the Greeks were there 4,000 years BC (or BCE). Now, one of the books Mr Kennett was given as a gift, among many gifts, to enlighten him on the glorious Greek history of Macedonia, had "4,000 years" on its glossy cover title. Presumably, Mr Kennett was so enthralled by this figure (2,000 BC + 2,000 AD = 4,000 years) that he decided to trump the ingenious symmetrically-minded Greek scholars by saying that the Greeks were actually in Macedonia 4,000 before the Lord Jesus went around preaching love and hope in his Roman-occupied homeland. Thanks to Mr Kennett's largesse, this erudite contribution would suggest the Greeks have been loitering in Macedonia for 6,000 years.

Even if Zeus from Mount Olympus were to send the world tablets outlining the full criteria of evidence that would support the Greek fairy tale as Absolutely True, I would still see a problem.



The problem is that the ethnic minorities in modern Greece do not have their human rights respected. All fair-minded people and modern institutions like the United Nations would agree that a nation's view of its past can never justify racism and discrimination against any other ethnic group(s).

The real problems facing a modern nation like Greece can only be solved with proper governance, offering all its citizens, regardless of their ethnicity, a normal, peaceful and meaningful life with just laws and employment. When puff and bluff are the very substance of political life as they have been in Greece to date, the encroaching national calamity due to bankruptcy means a radical revolution in national policies will need to take place.

To mitigate the dire consequences of the financial and political failures, co-operation and peaceful coexistence must be fostered with all Balkan nations and especially the Republic of Macedonia. There would be so much to gain with harmony, avoiding the incredible waste of resources that are being used for undermining Macedonia by Greece.

One of the most urgent transformations will need to be the eradication of the endemic racism and all-consuming intolerance within Greece of other cultures and ethnic groups. This racism, like the financial catastrophe, has been inflicting pain on too many innocent people and continues to do so. And it has been and remains utterly gratuitous.

In repeating the formulas of Greek national fictions, Jeff Kennett before him and Mike Rann in recent months, have endorsed on-going discrimination and cultural genocide – an untenable situation by any moral yardstick. I don't think either of them could really claim to have been innocent about what the effects of mouthing Greek chauvinist mantras might be. And I would be further surprised if anyone needs to have explained why such behaviour from Australian politicians is fundamentally ignoble and irresponsible. I remind the reader, Jeff Kennett's directive to change the way in which the Macedonian language was officially referred to in Victoria, was in breach of Australian law.

Jim Thomev



Former Premier of Victoria Jeff Kennett was prepared to do anything to show what a great pal he was to the Greek community.  
Photo sourced from abc.net.au



## ЕКСКЛУЗИВНО ЗА ДЕНЕС СО ИЗВРШНИОТ ОДБОР НА АВСТРАЛИСКО - МАКЕДОНСКИОТ КОМИТЕТ ЗА ЧОВЕКОВИ ПРАВА:

# СЕКОГАШ ВО ОДБРАНА НА НЕОТУЃИВИТЕ ПРАВА



**Како што повеќето читатели можеби знаат, на 20 март Комитетот ќе ја одржи 26тата по ред вечеринка во Гранд Нерет Рецепсионс во Епинг. Специјални гости на овој настан ќе бидат Димитри Јованов, член на македонската политичка партија од Грција, Виножито и Професор Виктор Фридман од Универзитетот во Чикаго.**

**Ќе сакате ли да ги издвоите најзначајните успеси на Македонскиот комитет за човекови права во Австралија досега?**

Австралиско-македонскиот комитет за човекови права постои уште од 1984 год. што значи дека е активен повеќе од 25 години. Поголемите успеси во последните три децении се победата на Комитетот заедно со Македонското учителско друштво на Викторија против Викторијата влада во врска со преименувањето на македонскиот јазик и акцијата против викторискиот министер Пандзапоулоус кога расистички тој ја нарече македонската заедница "Скопјанска" и Македонскиот јазик "Скопјански". Нашата акција доведе до разрешување на министерот.

На надворешен план, Комитетот има одиграно клучна улога во поддршката на партијата на Македонците во Грција "Виножито" и партијата на македонското малцинство во Бугарија ОМО "Илинден" ПИРИН. Поради нашата директна поддршка (заедно со МХРМИ во Торонто) овие битни македонски организации имат функционални канцеларии во Лерин и Благоевград. Овие успеси не се мали, и ние сме горди на нив. Се надеваме на уште поголема

поддршка од македонската заедница во Австралија за да можеме да го зголемиме успехот во иднина.

Имаше многу акции во кои бевме инволвирани во изминатата декада во Австралија (исто така бевме и активни преку океанот помагајќи ги нашите партиски организации во Грција, Бугарија и Албанија, да не ги споменуваме и многуте известувања и предлози што ги имаме направено на форумите како Светскиот Конгрес за Рацизмот на ОН, Репортот на ECRI 2004, Советот на ЕУ, соборот на ОБСЕ секоја година, на Европската Комисија за Човечки Права за односот на Грција и Бугарија и нивните прекршувања на човечките права и многу други...). Некои од активностите во кои бевме инволвирани, овде и во странство можете да ги најдете на нашата интернет страница кога ќе одите низ годините кои таму се одбележани. Додека некои нема да ги најдете на интернет, како на пример бројните представувања направени пред Австралиската Влада за недозволувањето на Австралиски државјани да влезат во Грција или дека се злоставувани на граница; исто така имаме преземено и други акции во име на луѓето што се дис-

криминирани бидејќи се "Македонци" (некогаш помагајќи им пред Комисијата за Еднакви Права), потоа за дискриминацијата што се случува во болниците, имиграциони предмети, дискриминацијата во добивање на разни државни услуги и услуги – како бирото за вработување, образованието, преведувачките услуги, пензионерските услуги. Одговарајќи на телевизиските и радио програми што дозволуваат понижувачко пренесување во врска со Македонската заедница, известувањето во весниците, ги помагаваме Македонски поддржаните фудбалски клубови во разни акции, го поддржуваме и создавањето на Македонски јазични гранки во главните политички партии (!!) низ разни активности, дури сме помагање и за луѓе што биле дискриминирани од приватни компании.

Ние исто така имаме контрибуирано во разни мултикултурни полиси низ Австралија преку давање сугестии и презентации, за поинаквиот консултативен процес за човечки права што се случува, во повеќето "про боно" законски објекти, ние со преговори го вклучивме "Македонски" (наспроти "Славо-Македонски", што беше вистинска опасност додека не интервениравме) во постојното во минатите два Австралиски пописи (во извештаите), учествувавме во разни интелектуални форуми преку конференциски презентации итн... Вистина, не можете да си замислите колку има да се работи.

Но, можеби само да потенцирам неколку актуелни работи што доаѓаат на ум, моментално преговараме со NAATI, што е федерално тело што ги

**Интервјуто е водено со членовите на извршниот одбор: Горги Влахов, Џејсон Камбовски, Васко Настевски, Др. Крис Попов и Давид Витков.**

надгледува акредитациите за преведување и преведувачки сервиси во Австралија. Неправедно, тие престанаа со тестирање (а со тоа и со акредитирање) на Македонскиот јазик и интерпретирачки сервиси, иако нивните податоци кажуваат дека ова е дел со голема побарувачка. Во изминатите шест месеци имавме доста детални преговори со нив и мислиме, се надеваме, дека тие ќе продолжат со тестирањето на Македонски во новата финансиска година. (Откако овој одговор беше даден, потврдено е дека Македонскиот програм ќе биде обновен – можете да го видите на вебсајтот [www.macedonianhr.org.au](http://www.macedonianhr.org.au)).

Исто така подрачјето во кое сме фокусирани во моментот е помагање на "децата бегалци" кои се граѓани на Австралија, во легалната акција што се води против Владата на Грција. Им помагаме да подготват докази, барање итн...

Се разбира некои работи не можеме да ги објавуваме сè уште во јавноста од различни причини.

Ние сме отворени за соработка со сите што се заинтересирани во човечките права, дали тие се под закана во Австралија или во странство.

**Како ја оценувате соработката со пошироката македонска заедница?**

Соработката со пошироката македонска заедница е добра и конструктивна. На 20 март 2010 Австралиско-македонскиот комитет за човекови права има иницирано национална политичка конференција во Мелбурн. Преставници

од главните македонски организации од цела Австралија ќе присуствуваат и ќе учествува на овој важен настан за нашата заедница. Намерата е да се постават темелите за една здрава и систематизирана соработка во врска со лобирањето на политичарите на Австралија, бидејќи нашата заедница тука сè уште доживува разни форми на дискриминација и заради тоа што австралиската влада не го признава уставното име на Република Македонија.

**Поконкретно, какви активности сте покренале во разрешувањето на авторитетите во Австралија кои толку лесноверно му подлегнаа на грчкиот притисок за именување на македонската држава со навредлива референца?**

Досега нашиот комитет има покренато низа активности за убедување на Австралија да ја признае Република Македонија под нејзиното уставно име. Сметаме дека бројни средби со претставници на Австралиското Министерство за Надворешни Работи, со претставници и пратеници на Друштвото за Пријателство со Република Македонија кое постои во Федералниот Парламент, објавивме бројни статии во македонскиот печат и на Интернет во кои што ги објаснуваме аргументите за признавање на РМ под уставното име. Очекуваме наскоро да се сретнеме со Министерот за Надворешни Работи. Но морам да истакнам дека најбитен фактор за признавање на РМ под нејзиното уставно име од страна на Австра-

лија е притисокот што треба да се изврши од нашата заедница врз федералната влада и пратениците кои што ги претставуваат тие избирачки единици каде што Македонците живеат во голем број.

#### Со кои македонски асоцијации и здруженија во светот најквалитетно соработувате?

Австралискиот македонски комитет за човекови права е дел на една меѓународна мрежа што работи преку Австралија, Северна Америка и Европа. Нашите партнери, со кои што заедно се бориме за правата и интегритетот на македонскиот народ низ цел свет се следните организации:

#### European Free Alliance – Rainbow

Address Stephanou Dragoumi 11  
PO Box 51  
53100 Florina / Lerin  
Greece  
Telephone +30 23850 46548  
E-mail vinozito@otenet.gr or rainbow@vinozito.gr  
Website www.vinozito.gr

#### OMO "Ilinden" Pirin

Address Bulgaria  
Blagoevgrad 2700  
zk "Elenovo" bl 6 v. B ap. 6  
p.k. Mechkarovi  
Email  
omo\_ilinden\_pirin@yahoo.com  
Website  
www.omoilindenpirin.org

#### Macedonian Human Rights Movement International

Address 157 Adelaide St.  
West, Suite 434  
Toronto, Canada M5H 4E7  
Telephone 1-416-850-7125  
Email info@mhirmi.org  
Website www.mhirmi.org

Во исто време, нашиот Комитет соработува со сите македонски организации што имат слични ставови и гледишта.

#### Во колкава мера сте оптимист за побрзо решавање на спорот меѓу

#### ТОРБЕШИТЕ ВО СТРУГА СЕ ЖАЛАТ НА АЛБАНИЗАЦИЈА

#### Учат на албански јазик, а не го разбираат

Десет деца од струшкото село Подгорци учат на албански јазик, а не го разбираат. Воведувањето на наставата на албански јазик во основното училиште "Гоце Делчев" се случило среде школска година. Во првото полугодие децата учеле на македонски јазик.

Членовите на Училишниот одбор тврдат дека целата работа е извртена и наметната од градоначалникот на Струга Рамиз Мерко кој, според нивните сознанија, вршел притисок врз торбешите во селото да ги пуштат децата во албанска паралелка.

"Ова е удурма на градоначалникот на Струга Рамиз Мерко и претставува албанизација на голема врата. Децата воопшто не го познаваат јазикот и не знаат како ќе следат настава на албански. Несовесни



Австралиско Македонскиот Комитет за Човекови Права со гостите од "Виножито" и "ОМО Илинден Пирин" во Мелбурн

#### Македонија и Грција?

Со оглед на националистичката реторика со која што настапува новата влада на Папандреу и заострувањето на грчката позиција во врска со името не очекувам брзо решавање на спорот околу името. Грција има интерес да го одолговлекува спорот за да ја дестабилизира Македонија, за тоа Македонија би требало да бара решение во рамките на Обединетите Нации согласно со една нова правна стратегија.

На крајот на краиштата, ние мислиме дека владата на Република Македонија мора интензивно да работи сосема да се повлече од овие луди разговори околу името.

#### Според вас каков треба да биде компромисот што треба да го постигнат двете независни држави за да си ги регулираат меѓусосетските односи?

Нормализирањето на меѓусосетските односи меѓу Република Македонија и Грција може многу лесно да се случи со договор за взаемно почитување на правото на постоење на двете држави како и правото на само-идентификување на тие држави. Но да се постигне ваков вид на договор Грција треба да отстапи од нејзините тврди и недемократски позиции што се спротивни на меѓународното право и еднаш засекогаш да го признае името на Република Македонија

и на македонскиот народ. Не гледаме можност за друг вид на договор или "компромис".

#### Ќе сакате ли да ги запознаете читателите на "Today - Денес" со програмата на Комитетот за оваа година?

Во 2010 Австралиско-македонскиот комитет за човекови права има планирано широк спектар на активности. Како што повеќето читатели можеби знаат, на 20 март Комитетот ќе ја одржи 26тата по ред вечеринка во Grand Noret Receptions во Епинг. Специјални гости на овој настан ќе бидат Димитри Јованов, член на македонската политичка партија од Грција, Виножито и професор Viktor Friedman од Универзитетот во Чикаго. Интересот за гостите е огромен, посебно за професорот Фридман, кој има напишано значителен број статии за македонското прашање и македонскиот јазик, и течно зборува македонски. Но, професорот во последно време е поз-

нат по неговиот настап на неодамнешната промоцијата на грчко-македонскиот речник во Атина која беше упадната од грчки фашисти. Јованов и Фридман ќе ни бидат гости во Мелбурн една недела и сметаме дека ќе биде незаборавна посета, особено бидејќи ќе се организираат почесни предавања на неколку прочуени факултети во Мелбурн.

Исто така Комитетот има планирано други активности за 2010, вклучувајќи и неколку проекти поврзани со правната кампања против Грција на децата бегалци; основање на стипендиски фонд за студенти и припреми за следниот попис во Австралија што ќе се одржи наредната година. Се разбира дека како и секоја година, Комитетот ќе продолжи со тесната соработка со Виножито, ОМО Илинден ПИРИН и МХРМИ во Торонто, со кои се планирани нови иницијативи. Но за тие ќе ви информираме во блиска иднина.

Игор Павловски

#### Училишниот одбор во основното училиште "Гоце Делчев" тврди дека паралелката на албански јазик е отворена под притисок на градоначалникот Мерко иако торбешите во селото не го знаат албанскиот јазик



родители ги жртвуваат своите деца за ситни интереси", вели Мехмед Џемаилоски, претставник на Владата во Училишниот одбор.

Во школата е формирана една паралелка во прво отделение каде што учат четири деца и друга во второ со шест ученици. Останатите деца следат настава на македонски јазик.

Училишниот одбор бара Министерството за образование да ја преиспита одлуката за отворање на паралелки на албански настапен јазик во училиштето во Подгорци зашто училишниот одбор воопшто не е консултиран и нема дадено позитивно мислење.

("Вест")

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# MHRMI and United Macedonians contribute to Canadian Museum for Human Rights

Toronto, Canada \_ 17 December 2009

Macedonian Human Rights Movement International (MHRMI) and the United Macedonians Organization of Canada (UM) participated at the December 1, 2009 roundtable discussion organized by the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. The goal of this meeting was to help develop content and exhibits for the new Museum, due to open in Winnipeg in 2012.

MHRMI and UM contributed numerous examples of oppression against Macedonians, both past and present. A focus was put on current human rights abuses against ethnic Macedonians by Greece and Bulgaria, in an attempt to raise international attention and, according to the Museum's mandate, inspire a commitment to "taking action against hate and oppression".



Artists impression of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. Photo sourced from [blog.unionstayshyn.com](http://blog.unionstayshyn.com)

## MHRMI and UM specifically asked that:

1. Current and lesser known human rights abuses be highlighted;
2. So-called "Western nations" be exposed for abusing their minorities' rights;
3. Countries who are signatories to international human rights treaties be forced to abide by them.

To contribute your story to the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, to donate or become a member of our organizations, please see our contact information below.



Macedonian Human Rights Movement International (MHRMI) has been active on human and national rights issues for Macedonians and other oppressed peoples since 1986. For more information, please visit [www.mhrmi.org](http://www.mhrmi.org) or contact MHRMI at 416-850-7125, or [info@mhrmi.org](mailto:info@mhrmi.org)

The United Macedonians Organization of Canada is the oldest and largest Macedonian national and cultural organization in the diaspora. Our mission is to promote national unity of Macedonians worldwide. For more information, please visit [www.unitedmacedonians.org](http://www.unitedmacedonians.org) or call 416-490-0181.

\*Please note: The United Macedonians Organization of Canada, founded in 1959, is not affiliated with the "United Macedonian Diaspora (UMD)" which was founded in 2004.



# Macedonia and Greece: What is the basis for a reconciliation?

A Greek blogger called Omadeon has written a critique of me, entitled 'Dr Hoare's Balkan excesses need... anti-nationalist critics'. Well, I don't admit to any excesses, but I do welcome anti-nationalist critics. Omadeon deserves credit for writing against Srebrenica-genocide denial and for his statement that 'I think Greece owes an apology to Bosnia, for the one-sided support of Serbia by most Greeks'. He deserves credit too for his rejection of some of the excesses of Greek nationalism.

Unfortunately, Omadeon nevertheless shares the Greek-nationalist blind-spot with regard to Macedonia. He refers to the Republic of Macedonia in a derogatory manner, as 'Slavo-Albanian Macedonia', and puts the words 'Macedonia' and 'Macedonian' in inverted commas when referring to the Republic of Macedonia and the Macedonian nation. He describes the Macedonian identity as a 'fiction'. He wrote a letter to the New York Times in April 2008 in which he condemned the newspaper for its criticism of Greek policy with regard to Macedonia, asserted the alleged Greekness of Alexander the Great and the ancient Macedonians, and demanded that the contemporary Macedonians change their name to 'Slav Macedonians'. Above all, he seems absolutely obsessed with telling the Macedonians that they should abandon the identity that they want to have and adopt the identity that he wants them to have, which is a 'Slavic' identity' ('A SANE attitude, on behalf of Slav-Macedonia, would be the simple RECOGNITION of their ESSENTIALLY SLAVIC national identity; something they have EVERY RIGHT to be PROUD of....'). But a given identity is something that people either feel for themselves, or they don't. It is not up to Omadeon and the Greeks to decide what sort of identity Macedonians should have.

Consequently, I am afraid that Omadeon, although he appears to be an honest and decent individual in most respects, is very far from being an 'anti-nationalist'. In fact, his writings on Macedonia highlight the erroneous way in which ethno-nationalists interpret modern national politics. This includes:

- 1) A belief that modern nations can be traced back, in unbroken continuity, to ancient or medieval peoples: the modern Greeks to ancient Greeks; the modern Macedonians to medieval Slavs; etc.
- 2) A consequent belief that one has, on the basis of one's own ethno-nationalist interpretation of ancient and medieval history, the right to accuse other nations of being 'invented' or having 'fictional' identities.
- 3) An inability to understand the difference between language and nationality.

In this case, Greek nationalists – on the basis of their erroneous understanding of ancient and medieval history, and of the meaning of modern nationhood – believe that they have the right to decide what the 'true' identity of Greece's northern neighbour should be. Since they erroneously believe that the majority population of the Republic of Macedonia is descended from Slavs who arrived in the area during the Middle Ages, and since they equally erroneously believe that modern Greeks are descended in unbroken continuity from ancient Greeks (among whom they include the ancient Macedonians), they believe they have the right to pronounce that the Macedonians are 'not really' Macedonians, that the Macedonian identity is a 'fiction', and that they – the Greek nationalists – on the basis of their 'objective' reading of ancient and medieval history have the right to pronounce what the Macedonians'

true name and identity should be.

From this, it follows – according to the Greek nationalist logic – that since their own interpretations of history and of the meaning of modern nationhood are the correct ones, then Macedonians who dispute this are 'nationalists', and those who support them in this rejection – such as myself – are supporting 'ultra-nationalism', which is what Omadeon accuses me of.

In this way, the Greek nationalists turn reality on its head. Macedonia is not threatening Greece or its national identity; the Macedonians are not saying that the Greek language and nation do not exist; or that Greece has to change its name. They are not trying to impose their own version of Greek identity on the Greeks. They are not even denying the right of the Greek inhabitants of Greek Macedonia to call themselves 'Macedonian'. Yet for the crime of rejecting the Greek-nationalist interpretation of history, and of asserting their own identity, then it is they who become the bad guys in Greek-nationalist eyes. And before you know it, the whole of NATO and the EU have to shape their policies around the Greek-nationalist misinterpretation of history. Such is the world we live in.

Nationalists do not appreciate the fact that, in a democratic world, everyone has to be free to define their identity as they wish; no nation or individual has the right to decide what the identity of another nation or individual should be. Nationalists do not appreciate that there is no one, single, 'objective' interpretation of history; historians, archaeologists and others must be free to put forward different interpretations about Antiquity, the Middle Ages and so forth. No group or nation can impose its own version of history on the rest of the world.

Nationalists also do not appreciate the fact that all modern European nations – all of them – have very mixed ethnic origins. The modern Macedonians – the majority population of the Republic of Macedonia – are descended from a mixture of ancient Macedonians, Slavs and others. And modern Greeks are likewise descended from a mixture of ancient Macedonians, ancient Greeks, Slavs,

origins, non-Slavic-speaking Greece and Albania are more Slavic in their origins than the modern Macedonians and Bulgarians; spoken language is a very poor guide to ethnic origins. But does this mean that the Greeks and Albanians are not really Greeks and Albanians? Of course not! Modern nationhood does not derive from ancient or medieval ethnicity, but from a shared sense of identity in the

descent. Black or brown Englishmen and women have as much right as white Anglo-Saxon Englishmen to lay claim to the heritage of English or British historical figures: the Celtic Boadicea; the Norman-French William the Conqueror; the Dutch William of Orange; the Irish Duke of Wellington; the half-American Winston Churchill. In the same way, Alexander the Great is part of the heritage of



Turkish-speaking Anatolians and others. Something similar applies for all European nations: English, Scots, French, Germans, Italians, Serbs, Croats, Albanians, Turks, etc.

There is no such modern ethnic group as the 'Slavs' – 'Slavs' do not exist as an ethnic group in the modern world, any more than do Angles, Saxons, Franks, Gauls, Visigoths or Vikings. 'Slavic' is a linguistic, not an ethnic category. The Macedonians speak a Slavic language, and in that sense they are 'Slavic', just as the English and Dutch are 'Germanic' and the Italians and French are 'Latin'. Greek nationalists demanding that the Macedonians call themselves 'Slavs' is like someone demanding that the English and Dutch call themselves 'Germanics' or that the Italians and French call themselves 'Latins'. It is up to the Macedonians alone whether they feel their identity to be 'Slavic' or not – nobody else has the right to impose such an identity on them.

Ironically, in terms of their genetic

present. Omadeon's describing of the Republic of Macedonia as 'Slavo-Albanian Macedonia' is equivalent to describing Greece as 'Slavo-Albanian-Turkish-Greek Greece', or England as 'Celtic-Anglo-Saxon-Viking-Norman England'. If the people of Greece feel themselves to be Greek; if the people of Macedonia feel themselves to be Macedonian – that is all that matters. Trying to deny the existence of a modern nation by pointing out its ethnically diverse roots, or by reducing it to a number of ethnic components, is the action of a chauvinist. We all have ethnically diverse roots. We should be proud of them.

In an age of globalisation and mass immigration, nations will become more, rather than less ethnically diverse. This, too, should be viewed positively. There are English people today whose grandparents were all born in Pakistan, or in Jamaica. They are no less 'English' than English people who claim 'pure' Anglo-Saxon

Greeks, Macedonians, Bulgarians and Albanians alike, and of all those nations which have arisen on the territory that he once ruled. Alexander the Great belongs to Iranians, Afghans and Pakistanis, too.

Omadeon accuses me of opposing reconciliation between Macedonia and Greece, and of not being even-handed in my treatment of Macedonian and Greek nationalism. I make no pretence at being even-handed: I am on the side of the victim (Macedonia) and against the aggressor (Greece), and will always encourage the national resistance of a victim against an aggressor. Siding with a victim against an aggressor is the only honourable position to take: it means siding with Cyprus against Turkey in 1974; with Croatia against Serbia in 1991; with Bosnia against both Serbia and Croatia in 1992-95; with Chechnya against Russia in 1994 and 1999; and with Georgia against Russia in 2008. There can be no 'even-handedness' in treating an

aggressor and a victim, or in treating their respective nationalisms. Greek nationalism is threatening Macedonia. Macedonian nationalism is not threatening Greece. The two are not equivalent.

As for the question of 'reconciliation', this can only rightfully be based on justice, not on the capitulation of the weaker side to the stronger. The only just compromise between Greece and Macedonia would be along the following lines:

1) The Macedonian nation and language, and the Greek nation and language, exist. Anyone who says they do not is an anti-Macedonian or anti-Greek chauvinist.

2) Macedonia and Greece both have the right to call themselves what they want, and to define their national identities as they wish.

3) The people of the Republic of Macedonia, Greek Macedonia and Bulgarian Macedonia have an equal right to call themselves 'Macedonian' and to lay claim to the heritage of Ancient Macedonia and of Alexander the Great, if that is what they wish.

4) Greeks and Macedonians alike are descended from a mixture of ancient Macedonians, Slavs and others. The common ethnic heritage of the two nations should be stressed, not denied, by those seeking reconciliation.

5) The symbol at the start of this post – the Star of Vergina – is dear to both Greeks and Macedonians and belongs to them both. Two nations that love the same symbols and revere the same ancient historical figures should naturally be friends.

Anyone who calls themselves an 'anti-nationalist', irrespective of whether they are Greek or Macedonian, should have no difficulty subscribing to these principles.

The original of this article appears at <http://greatersurbiton.wordpress.com/2009/08/29/macedonia-and-greece-what-is-the-basis-for-a-reconciliation>



Marko Hoare. Photo sourced from the-macedonian-tendency.blogspot.com

#### About the Author: Marko Hoare

Born in 1972, he has been studying the history of the former Yugoslavia since 1993, and is intimately acquainted with, and emotionally attached to, the lands and peoples of Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia. In the summer of 1995, as an act of solidarity in support of the Bosnian people, he was the translator for the aid convoy to the Bosnian town of Tuzla organised by Workers Aid. In 1998-2001 he lived and worked in Belgrade, Serbia, and was a resident there during the Kosovo War of 1999. As a journalist, he covered the fall of Milosevic in 2000. He worked as a Research Officer for the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in 2001, and participated in the drafting of the indictment of Slobodan Milosevic. He was a member of the Faculty of History of the University of Cambridge from 2001-2006, and is currently a Reader at Kingston University, London. He is Section Director for the European Neighbourhood of the Henry Jackson Society ([www.henryjacksonsociety.org](http://www.henryjacksonsociety.org)), a Cambridge-based think-tank that promotes democratic geopolitics. He lives in Surbiton in the UK.

He is the author of three books, *The History of Bosnia: From the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (London, Saqi, 2007), *Genocide and Resistance in Hitler's Bosnia: The Partisans and the Chetniks, 1941-1943* (London, Oxford University Press, 2006) and *How Bosnia Armed* (London, Saqi, 2004). He is currently working on a history of modern Serbia.

He has been variously accused of being a neoconservative, Trotskyite and Croat nationalist and a supporter of Islamism and Western imperialism. Depending on how you define these terms, some or all of this may be accurate.

You can contact Mark: via email at [markohoare@hotmail.com](mailto:markohoare@hotmail.com)



# MHRMI and AMHRC condemn Albania's state-sponsored discrimination against Macedonians, announce funding for Macedonian language classes

Toronto, Canada and Melbourne, Australia (February 11, 2010)

Macedonian Human Rights Movement International (MHRMI) and the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) condemn the Albanian government's involvement in preventing Macedonian language classes from taking place in the Golo Brdo region.

The Director of the Educational Office in Bulqizë, Miranda Kurti, sent a letter to officials in Golo Brdo and the Albanian Intelligence Service stating,

*"We have contacted the local government and the principals in charge of these schools concerning the termination of these private courses. However we have to inform you that in the village Trebi\_te in the Municipality Trebi\_te and the village Pasinki in the Municipality Ostreni, there are still operating illegal private courses in Macedonian. Therefore we ask for your cooperation and intervention in the complete cessation of this activity..."* (see full text on the next page)

Albanian authorities in Golo Brdo have prevented around 200 students from attending private Macedonian language classes under the pretext that the teachers are not qualified and the classes are "illegal".

Some of the teachers have received death threats from the Albanian authorities if they do not stop teaching Macedonian.

According to Edmond Osmani, teacher and Vice President of the Macedonian Alliance for European Integration,

*"The Albanian principals and teachers beat Macedonian students, lower their grades, and mistreat their parents. Now the police have begun issuing all kinds of threats. I personally have been threatened that I would be physically eliminated. We are under permanent pressure to stop the teaching of Macedonian."*

We note that during the recent election campaign in Albania, the coalition led by current Prime Minister, Sali Berisha, had promised that Macedonian would be able to be freely studied and taught in the Golo Brdo region.

Today, the Albanian Minister of Education, Prof. Dr. Myqerem Tafaj, gave permission for the Macedonian classes to be taught in Golo Brdo.

MHRMI, AMHRC and the Macedonian Alliance for European Integration call on the international community, and specifically the European Union, to hold Albania accountable for its persecution of its Macedonian minority and force Albania to uphold its obligations regarding minority rights under international human rights law.

Further, MHRMI and AMHRC are pleased to announce funding for the school operated by the Korca Regional Committee of the Macedonian Alliance for European Integration, and will expand our funding of Macedonian language classes throughout Albania.

## The meaning of the term "Skopian" or "Skopjan" Could it be regarded as an example of synecdoche?

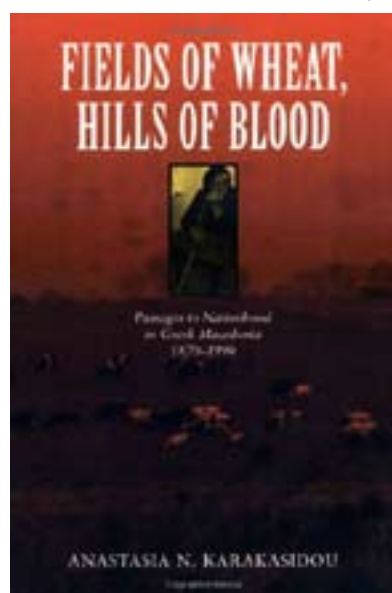
Synecdoche can be used to refer to countries i.e. Skopje for the Republic of Macedonia, Athens for Greece, Beijing for China, Washington for the USA, etc. However "Skopian", "Skopian community" or "Skopian people/nation" etc, is something very different. It is not commonly known that the term "Skopian" was specifically designed by bigoted elements for the purpose of denying the very existence of a Macedonian ethnicity or nation.

The highly offensive meaning that the term "Skopian" possesses at first sight then is revealed by its usage as a replacement word for the ethno-specific identity marker Macedonian and is of course derived from the name of the capital of the Republic of Macedonia. However it needs here to be emphasised that it has been infused by the users of the term, with further derogatory meanings. These involve the accusation that "Skopians", i.e. Macedonians, are people

or a “race of Slavs” who are trying to deceive themselves and others by adopting a fictitious ethno-specific identity, i.e. Macedonian, and beings that are culturally or “racially” inferior. It is used in ordinary communication, whether about political or non-political matters. For example, it is often used in conjunction with assertions that Macedonian culture “is not a real culture”, that we are “not real Macedonians”, that we are “plagiarists”, that we are “cultural thieves”, etc.

In order to demonstrate this argument, I shall cite expert literature on the subject that explains how the term is used, as well as quotations of its derogatory use. The latter are easily accessible on the internet; one merely needs to put in a search for the terms “Skopian” and “Skopian Gypsies”. I note, the term “Gypsies” in general Australian English usage carries at least a neutral, if not often romanticized connotation of the Romani people. In Europe, and people of European background, however, use the term as a derisive, pejorative adjective. It is unlawful because it is a term of vilification.

I shall begin by citing the Greek anthropologist Anastasia Karakasidou who in her study of cultural origins in the



geographic part of Macedonia today located within the political borders of Greece, found among other things that – “In 1996, many Greeks still refused to use the word ‘Macedonia’ in reference to the nation-state on their northern border. Instead, the terms ‘Skopia’ and ‘Skopians’, derived from the name of that country’s capital and principal city, Skopje, have been employed

in a demeaning and derogatory manner to refer to the FYROM, its government, and its population.” (Karakasidou, 1997:265)

I will next quote the American Professor of Anthropology Loring M. Danforth, who based most of his study on the Macedonian issue on fieldwork carried out in Australia. In a section of his book entitled *The Negation of Macedonian Identity in Greek Nationalist Ideology and History* (Danforth, 1995:30), Danforth explains that Greeks use the term “Republic of Skopje” as a means of denying that it is in any way Macedonian (Danforth, 1995:32). Those who claim to be Macedonian, Danforth points out “... are generally referred to by Greeks as ‘Skopians’, ‘so-called Macedonians’... ” (Danforth, 1995:32). Danforth goes on to highlight that in the early 1980s, a Minister of the Greek government visited Australia:

*“Papathemelis in a speech presented at a conference in Melbourne in February 1988 referred to them [Macedonians] as ‘a falsely named category of people who constitute the so-called ethnicity of Macedonians of the Skopian type.’”* (Danforth, 1995:33)

Thus “Skopians” are liars, are deceptive and have no right

to call themselves Macedonian etc. Therefore: “*The Greek position is that no such thing as a Macedonian nation exists. ... The Macedonian nation is described as a ‘false’ or ‘forged’ nation. It is an ‘artificial creation’, ‘fabrication’ or ‘invention’ of Tito, ... who in 1944 ‘baptized’ a ‘mosaic of nationalities’ (Albanians, Serbs, Turks, Vlachs, Greeks, and Gypsies) and with no justification at all gave them the name ‘Macedonians’. ... In more extreme nationalist rhetoric, the Macedonian nation is referred to as a ‘monstrosity’, ‘a malignant growth’ that Greece’s allies, the Serbs, should ‘remove’ from the Balkan scene. According to Greek nationalists, because the language spoken by the ancient Macedonians was Greek, the non-Greek Slavic language spoken in ‘Skopje’ today cannot be called ‘the Macedonian language’. It is generally referred to in Greek sources as the ‘linguistic idiom of Skopje’. What is more, MANY Greeks argue, this ‘linguistic idiom’ or ‘dialect’ is not really a language at all. ... The language used by the Slavic speakers of Macedonia was an ‘idiomatic form of Bulgarian ... with a very scanty vocabulary of no more than one to one thousand five hundred words’ many of which were CORRUPT borrowings from Greek, Turkish, Vlach, and Albanian.*” (Danforth, 1995:33)

The quotation in other words clearly demonstrates that the use of the term “Skopian” carries with it notions of ethno-cultural inferiority. “*In the words of Nicholas Martis, a former Conservative Minister of Northern Greece, the ‘linguistic idiom of Skopje’ was ‘a spoken collection of words, without syntax, without grammatical components, without spelling’. As one Greek linguist put it, this language ‘is linked so closely to both Bulgarian and Serbian that according to linguistic principles it cannot constitute a language in its own right’.*” (Danforth, 1995:34).

Just how a language that possesses ‘no syntax’ can be a language at all is not explained. Not only does the term “Skopians” denote beings that are culturally inferior, but they are “liars” and “thieves”. I again quote Danforth:

*“From the Greek nationalist perspective, the use of the name Macedonia by the ‘Slavs of Skopje’ constitutes a ‘felony’, an act of ‘plagiarism’ against the Greek people. By calling themselves ‘Macedonians’ these ‘Slavs of Skopje’ are ‘stealing’ or ‘hijacking’ a Greek name; they are ‘embezzling’ or ‘appropriating’ Greek culture and heritage; they are ‘falsifying’ Greek history.”* (Danforth, 1995:34) *“In response to the Greek nationalist argument that there is no Macedonian nation, language, or minority, and that ‘Slavs’ or ‘Skopians’ have no right to the Macedonian name, Macedonians accuse Greeks of trying to negate Macedonian identity by monopolizing the name ‘Macedonia’ and by misappropriating it to mean ‘Greek’. They reject the idea that Greeks hold a copyright on the name Macedonia.”* (Danforth, 1995:47)

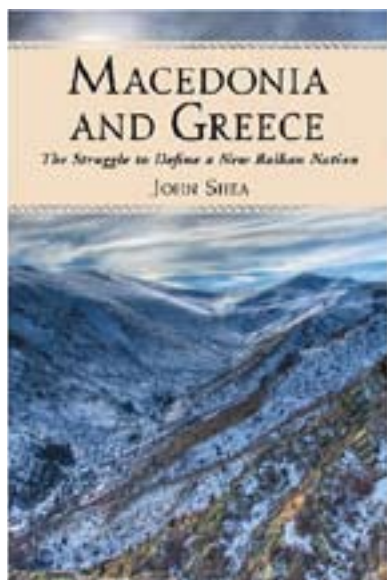
Danforth concludes his book by explaining that ethnic identity is created and constructed through social interaction and that therefore it is useless to refer to blood to try to resolve such disputes – identity is a matter of choice. (Danforth, 1995:231) An attempt to interfere with such self-ascription will be considered highly demeaning. I quote parts of Danforth’s conclusion:

*"From the Greek nationalist perspective of the author of this letter, 'Petros Sahinis' is really a Greek who has illegitimately adopted the Slavic name 'Pete Filipov'. In the same way, he argues, 'the Skopians' are really Slavs who are attempting to appropriate illegitimately the Greek name 'Macedonians'. While Pete Filipov may have succeeded, the Macedonians, he insists, will fail. ... At a collective level the governments of Canada and Australia with their explicitly multicultural policies accept the principle of self-ascription and have recognized the existence of Macedonians as an ethnic group. Macedonian diaspora communities in these and other countries, therefore, are generally known as Macedonian communities..."*

*International organizations like the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which accept the principle of self-ascription, have...recognized the existence of a Macedonian minority in Greece. ... For in the last analysis it is only with tolerance and a respect for the self-ascribed nature of ethnic and national identities that we can avoid the destructive tendency inherent in all nationalist ideologies to impose definitions of national identity from above, from the outside, definitions that all too often conflict with those arrived at through a process of self-ascription. Local Macedonians live in many different places – the Republic of Macedonia, Bulgaria, Greece, Canada, and Australia. They define themselves in many different ways... 'Skopians', however, are not terms of self-ascription... Similarly people from Florina who identify themselves as Macedonians are not 'Skopians'; they are Macedonians.*

*It is also preferable to a solution that, in what could be called a kind of symbolic ethnic cleansing, simply denies the existence of a Macedonian nation and a Macedonian minority in Greece. For that solution is an expression of the same kind of ethnic nationalism that in times of economic chaos and political collapse can all too easily lead to a literal, not just a symbolic, form of ethnic cleansing, the kind of ethnic cleansing we have recently witnessed to our horror, in the former Yugoslavia and other parts of the world as well."* (Danforth, 1995:248-251)

Australian author John Shea in his study on Macedonia



and Greece, states the following about the term "Skopian":

*"Although this argument was not vigorously promoted by the Greek government till about 1988, when the province of Northern Greece was renamed Macedonia, the Greek nationalist perspective now says that the use of the name Macedonia by the 'Skopians' is like an act of*

*plagiarism against the Greek people. Some Greeks actually accuse the Macedonians of falsifying Greek history"* (Shea, 1994:156)

*"The official Greek position is that there is no Macedonian language and never has been. The Greeks claim that the Macedonian language was invented in 1944 at the same time as the nationality 'Macedonian' was created by Tito. They take the view that because the language spoken by the ancient Macedonians was Greek, the Slavic language spoken by the 'Skopians' cannot be called 'the Macedonian language.' Official Greek writings refer to Macedonian as 'the linguistic idiom of Skopje' and describe it as a corrupt and impoverished dialect of Bulgarian."* (Shea, 1994:192)

Furthermore, Panayote Elias Dimitras, an ethnic Greek from the Greek Branch of Helsinki Monitor (the leading European organisation on issues of minority rights, racism, etc.) and Minority Rights Group - Greece writes:

*"Likewise Serbs, Bulgarians and Greeks have never come to terms with the presence of culturally distinct Macedonians...the Macedonians have been considered as 'Southern Serbs' by the Serbs, 'Western Bulgarians' by the Bulgarians, and 'Slavophone Greeks' by the Greeks (Raufer & Haut, 1992:11), who have regularly demeaningly called in the 1990's the Republic of Macedonia 'Skopjan statelet' and its inhabitants 'Gypsy-Skopjans', 'Balkan Gypsies', 'Skopjan Vlachs' (Elefantis, 1992:39)." (Dimitras, 2000:51)*

In another piece, Dimitras comments on the Greek media's reporting of Macedonians during the early 1990's, citing various examples of highly offensive and contemptuous terminology used by journalists. Below is an excerpt from that article:

*"The nearly hysteric crowds at the rallies were displaying not a mere opposition to the choice of a name but a profound hatred against ethnic Macedonians. This was inevitable when the mainstream Greek media had been using systematic hate speech against Macedonians, or more precisely 'Skopjans.' Greek media referred to Macedonians as 'a non-viable sorrowful mix of fluid consciousness,'...'bare-footed,' 'professionals of servitude,' 'barbarian embezzlers of blood-stained territories of Greece,' 'Slav Gypsies,' 'a people of criminals,' 'thieves,' 'hungry,' 'wretched, ragged, desperate.'" (Dimitras, p.1)*

The award-winning Greek journalist and writer, Takis Michas reiterated the above when he noted that:

*"...the overwhelming majority of the Greek media and political class continue using the demeaning term 'Skopje' for Macedonia, 'Skopians' for its inhabitants..."*

Mariana Lenkova in a report also published by Greek Helsinki Monitor, entitled "Media Monitoring in Greece" wrote the following:

*"... [the concert constituted] a concrete*



*disapprobation of all the nationalistic hysteria which had led to the embargoes, the humiliating statements about 'Skopian gypsies' and to the development of enmity and hatred towards a neighboring people..."* (Lenkova, 1997:2)

In another example, Greek author George Nakratzas of the University of Thessaloniki was so dissatisfied at the demeaning nature of references towards ethnic Macedonians that he wrote a book about it. I quote a highly relevant paragraph located in the preface of the book:

*"As the overtones of the modern Greek nationalist mythology came into focus, culminating in such nationalist clichés as the assertion that 'the Greek nation has no kin', that the 'Skopjans' are 'Gypsies', or that the (Former Yugoslav) Republic of Macedonia is an 'ethnic hotchpotch', I was taken aback, and eventually got down to writing this..."* (Nakratzas, 1997:11)

Another leading Greek intellectual, Nikos Dimos expressed similar views in an essay entitled "The Apology of an Anti-Hellene":

*"Yet even today our intellectuals call the Greeks 'the aristocracy of nations.' Even today many (most) Greeks believe in their hearts that we are a chosen people. This is why we're always complaining about the way we're treated. Like spoiled children, we demand of everyone their unconditional support-even when we're wrong. And we insist on believing that we're always being cheated, ignoring the fact that we happen to be the only country in the region to have doubled its size in the last 150 years. We've woven endless conspiracy theories so as to absolve ourselves of responsibility, and to cast blame on others instead. Our belief in our superiority shows up clearly in our racist attitudes. What Greek doesn't consider himself better than the Turk, the Albanian, or the 'Gypsy-Skopjan?'"* (Dimou, 1997:5)

Moreover, Vinozhito/Rainbow, an ethnic Macedonian political party in Greece has explained that "Skopian" "is a vulgar Greek reference for Macedonian. Its use has been encouraged by authorities including government ministers and the clergy."



Graffiti found in Greece which read "Death to the Skopian Gypsies".

The term "Skopian", seems to have been used for the purpose of totally denying the existence of a Macedonian ethnicity and or nationality as early as the 1960's. It appears then that the term was first developed by some Greek academics. To cite one example I shall quote from the book *The Federative Republic of Skopje and its Language*, 1966, which was authored by Nicholas P. Andriotis and states the following: *"The Slavs have no right to the name 'Macedonian' which belongs to the Greeks; 'Macedonia' is exchanged by 'Republic of Skopje'."* More recently, another example of the highly derogatory manner in which the term "Skopian" is used can be found in a letter to the editor of the "Balkanfolk

2002" website. On this occasion, Mavros Kleitos objects to the use of the term Macedonian and writes: *"Can you take more care with your terminology on your web site, as it is incorrect. The correct term for the people in the group you mention is Skopjan Slav. Today's so-called Macedonians are not Macedonians. The only people that can lay claim to 'Macedonia' are the Ancient Greeks. Today's Skopjan Slavs are cultural thieves."*

More typical and everyday examples of the use of the term "Skopian" can also be found on Internet discussion sites such as "Macedonia is Greece" created at Network 54 (<http://www.network54.com>). Some of the vulgar and racist messages posted on this site include:

"...dirty skopians" (14/6/02, 7:09am)

"The Skopjans are clear gypsies" (24/9/02, 1:45am)

"Many pages of Gypsy Skopjans are found all over the web" (24/9/02, 1:45am)

"Skopjans are 100% Gypsies from Egypt" (24/9/02, 2:13am)

"The Skopjans must decide wh[a]t they are, Bulgarians or Gypsies?" (24/9/02, 8:46am)

"You are Skopjan Gypsies not [M]acedonians" (7/10/02, 9:32am)

No doubt the above remarks would be found to also be offensive, by Romani people.

In a publication entitled "The Macedonian Affair: a historical review of the attempts to create a counterfeit nation", the Institute of International and Strategic Studies in Athens demeaningly used terms such as:

*"Skopje Republic" (p.3), "Skopje's Theoretical Sleight of Hand" (p.11), "[t]he groundlessness of Skopje's contentions concerning the alleged existence of a nation of Macedonians" (p.12), "[t]he Pseudo-Macedonian Church of Skopje" (p.21), "Slav (Bulgarian) dialect which Skopje persists in calling the 'Macedonian language'..." (p.23). (Institute of International and Strategic Studies in Athens, 1995). Other examples of derogatory use of the term "Skopian" by Greek academics include "[t]he Skopian idiom is not a language" (Philippides) and "the Skopian pseudo state" (Papathanasis).*

Clearly, the term "Skopian" is a pejorative one and doubtless parallels can be drawn with terms like "nigger" and "boonger". It most definitely cannot be regarded as an example of synecdoche.

George Vlahov

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## About The AMHRC

Established in 1984 the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee is a nongovernmental organization that informs and advocates to governments, international institutions and broader communities about combating discrimination and promoting human rights. Our aspiration is to ensure that Macedonian communities and other excluded groups throughout the world are recognised, respected and afforded equitable treatment.

## AMHRC Team Members

Steve Christov	Business Manager
Ljubica Durlavska	Media Liaison Officer/Editor of AMHRC Review
Andy Filipov	Treasurer
Charles Galileos	Deputy Treasurer
Jason Kambovski	Vice President
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John Tsiglev	Members' Representative
David Vitkov	International Co-ordinator (Skopje office)
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Igor Zvezdakovski	Online Manager

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Formed in 1984, the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee is an Australian based non-government organisation that informs and advocates to governments, international institutions and broader communities about combating discrimination and promoting basic human rights. The aspiration is to ensure that Macedonian communities in Australia and throughout the world are recognised, respected and afforded equitable treatment.

**Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee Inc.**

Tel/Fax: +61 3 9329 8960 Email: [info@macedonianhr.org.au](mailto:info@macedonianhr.org.au) Website: [www.macedonianhr.org.au](http://www.macedonianhr.org.au)

The AMHRC Is part of an international Macedonian network, that spans Australasia, North America and Europe.

### Australian Macedonian Human Rights Inc.

Address Suite 106 , Level 1  
55 Flemington Rd  
North Melbourne, 3051  
Victoria, Australia  
Telephone +61 3 9329 8960  
E-mail [macedonian\\_rights@hotmail.com](mailto:macedonian_rights@hotmail.com)  
Website [www.macedonianhr.org.au](http://www.macedonianhr.org.au)

### European Free Alliance – Rainbow

Address Stephanou Dragoumi 11  
PO Box 51  
53100 Florina / Lerin  
Greece  
Telephone +30 23850 46548  
E-mail [vinozito@otenet.gr](mailto:vinozito@otenet.gr) or  
[rainbow@vinozito.gr](mailto:rainbow@vinozito.gr)  
Website [www.vinozito.gr](http://www.vinozito.gr)

### OMO “Ilinden” Pirin

Address Bulgaria  
Blagoevgrad 2700  
zk ‘Elenovo’ bl 6 v. B ap. 6  
p.k. Mechkarovi  
Email [omo\\_ilinden\\_pirin@yahoo.com](mailto:omo_ilinden_pirin@yahoo.com)  
Website [www.omoilindenpirin.org](http://www.omoilindenpirin.org)

### Macedonian Human Rights Movement International

Address 157 Adelaide St. West, Suite 434  
Toronto, Canada M5H 4E7  
Telephone 1-416-850-7125  
Email [info@mhrmi.org](mailto:info@mhrmi.org)  
Website [www.mhrmi.org](http://www.mhrmi.org)