

MHR REVIEW



MACEDONIAN HUMAN RIGHTS

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**2016
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featuring three
documentary films



contents...

MHR Review #25 published in June 2016.
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- 
- 3 A Call for Responsible Citizenship
AMHRC
- 5 The Crisis Continues
George Vlahov
- 8 An Interview with Jorgos Papadakis
David Vitkov
- 12 EFA Condemns Golden Dawn Racists
- 14 **'The Macedonian' in the EU Parliament**
EFA
- 16 GHM on Freedom of Association in Greece
Panayote Dimitras
- 20 News in Brief
Mitch Belichovski
- 24 Australian Census Information
AMHRC
- 28 Australia Should Recognise Macedonia
Dr. Chris Popov
- 30 **London's Mayor & the Name Dispute**
Bill Nicholov
- 32 MHRMI Press Releases
- 34 Author and Poet Igor Isakovski
Dr. Michael Seraphinoff
- 36 An Interview with Michael Bakrnčev
Johnny Tsiglev
- 42 32nd Annual *AMHRC* Dinner Photos
Diane Kitanoski
- 50 *AMHRC* Host Melbourne Screening of 'The Macedonian'
- 55 Annual Human Rights Report on Bulgaria
OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN



AMHRC Calls for Responsible Citizenship in Macedonia



photo: Protests in Skopje

Melbourne 14/4/2016 - The Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) cannot regard as ethical the decision by the President of the Republic of Macedonia to amnesty all politicians before the special prosecution team, charged with investigating corruption, has even completed its investigations.

Citizens of the Republic of Macedonia have rightly begun protesting against the decision in substantial numbers. There have been some manifestations of unnecessary violence from both Macedonian police and protestors. The AMHRC unequivocally condemns all of those involved.

(Continued on page 4)

AP

The democratic legitimacy crisis which has gripped Macedonia for more than 12 months now has revealed that both of the major political parties, the governing VMRO-DPMNE and the main opposition SDSM, cannot at present be viewed as servants of democracy. The same applies to DUI a minor party which regularly participates in governing coalitions. Therefore it is no surprise that the current situation in Macedonia is tense and volatile.

The AMHRC calls on responsible citizens to be both vigorously active and circumspect. We hope that their efforts will succeed in developing a new, credible and viable democratic government, which will eventually lead Macedonia out of the current destructive stalemate.



THE CRISIS CONTINUES...



photo: Protests in Skopje

By George Vlahov

Since the above issued AMHRC press release, the scheduled June 5 elections were predictably cancelled and recently, on June 6, President Ivanov annulled all the amnesties which sparked the protests leading to a deepening of the political legitimacy crisis in Macedonia. The President's decision has not had the effect of quelling the severity of the protests. Paint continues to be thrown at public buildings/monuments and the protestors are often successfully blocking various roads in Skopje, causing major disruptions.

This is not surprising. The amnesties were simply icing on a lack of legitimacy cake that had been baked considerably earlier. There are however, at least two major problems for the protest movement. Firstly, as with last year's protests, the movement remains too closely linked to SDSM, which is composed of a leadership that is no more credible than the leadership of VMRO-DPMNE. Both parties operate with the

(Continued on page 6)

THE CRISIS CONTINUES...

(Continued from page 5)

same lack of intra-party democracy and possess executives tainted by corruption scandals. There is little doubt that a SDSM government would maintain the same type of absolutist executive control which presently sullies the functioning of the state, the parliament, the mainstream media, the economy and the judiciary.

It does not appear to be too late yet, though if the protest movement again fails to develop a credible, formal, alternative democratic political force, then it will soon lose its vitality, eventually opening the door for a resolution of the crisis via the implementation of some half measures by the executives of the major parties. In seeking allies to aid in the construction of a serious alternative, there is no question that the protest movement should be reaching out to non-executive, disaffected members of the major political parties, both inside and outside of the parliament, as well as to various local government forces. In doing that, there might even develop a possibility of forming a unity government which by-passes the destructively self obsessed 'gate-keepers' of both parties.


The second problem facing the protest movement, is that it has so far failed to win the *trust* of the majority of the citizens. This is especially connected to one particular aspect of the protests, the paint vandalism. According to recent survey results published in the Macedonian me-

dia, it is not meeting with much approval from the wavering, uncommitted majority of Macedonia's citizens. This is more important than it might seem at first glance.

A legitimacy crisis, is, a crisis in trust. It is an obvious truism that trust is important in the maintenance of any community or society. In modern societies made up of millions of people, the maintenance of trust, by political and other leaders, is an even more delicate and difficult chore. For, at bottom, it is about those millions of people feeling comfortable about depending on each other, even though they are mostly not familiar with each other, *even though*, in other words, they are strangers to each other. Once that trust is deeply shaken, it is not only difficult to restore, it could conceivably lead to the disintegration of a society.

In the vacuum of unfamiliarity, symbols become very important. The paint vandalism of the protest movement, is not sending forth a message of responsible citizenship designed to lead to the restoration of proper democratic governance. Rather, it is being interpreted as a sign of further chaos, of instability and most importantly, as the herald for a type of governance, should it reach that point, that would be dominated or perhaps contaminated is a better word, by a spirit of revenge and hate, rather than by objective law and democracy.

If the socio-political problems in Macedonia could be reduced to a simple formulation, it



would contain the words "lack of responsible citizenship". That is what is eroding trust in everything, not just state institutions. It is an erosion that might be best conveyed by images of the almost total disdain with which many of the inhabitants of Macedonia treat public spaces in their country. It is also affirmed by surveys, conducted, among others, by Societas Civilis, which not only demonstrate that all levels of society are involved in some form of corruption, especially cronyism and nepotism, but also that a substantial number of those involved, are not even aware that they are participating in corruption. To say that the protest movement needs to change tack and begin recalibrating its message, is an understatement.

There has been too much focus on the pigmentation of statues and not enough, for example, has been said about the horrific condition of some of Macedonia's hospitals. The state of the latter can testify far more eloquently about the ethically questionable governmental financial practice, of prioritising the creation of tokens celebrating the dead, over concern for the health of the currently existent.

To be sure, one can arguably blame Macedonia's political and economic elites for increasing the levels of irresponsible citizenship over the course of the last 20 years, though that makes it all the more imperative to create an alternative political factor that is led and characterised, in literally everything it physically practices and symboli-

cally exudes, by an absolute concern for proper process, for responsible citizenship. I will add that those populist romantics in Macedonia and the Diaspora for that matter, who believe that there is some grander national cause at play here, which overrides what they seem to perceive as a mundane and trivial call for democratic reform, are missing the point; not least, because a continuation of the present state of affairs, might eventually put into question, the very existence of the nation they appear to hold so very dear.

George Vlahov 12 June 2016





photo: Jorgos Papadakis

Interview with JORGOS PAPADAKIS

HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS,
EUROPEAN FREE ALLIANCE-
EUROPEAN POLITICAL PARTY, BRUSSELS

By David Vitkov

1. Jorgos, to start on a personal note, how have you found your role as Head of Communications at EFA? What are some of the challenges you face in this position?

Well, I must say that this is a very challenging role for me. Being the first ever holder of such a position at EFA made me extremely proud but also gave me a great sense of responsibility, since my main task is to promote what EFA and its members are doing to create an EU that will finally respect the essential human right to self-determination. I was lucky since the Scottish and Catalan independence movements brought the issue into the European mainstream and therefore EFA had (and still has) an excellent opportunity to capitalize on that. On the other hand, I am also responsible for the internal communication between EFA and its 46 member parties, its 12 MEPs in the European Parliament as well as the Greens/EFA Group. Having a constant flow of internal information is vital for the effort we make to make our cases heard and force the decision making bodies of the EU to deal with them finally.

2. Recently, EFA organised a screening of Petro Aleksowski's 'The Macedonian' in the European Parliament. Tell us about the event and how the film was received?

First of all, I am really glad that EFA and its MEPs have once more become the voice of the

Macedonian political refugees of the Greek Civil War. It is a shameful issue, a thorn in the **side of today's EU, that these** people who were forcibly evacuated from their homes when they were children, are still deprived from the right to repatriation. We wanted to highlight that Greece, an EU member state, continues to behave in a totally inhumane and unacceptable manner, implementing an anti-Macedonian apartheid in the 21st century. It is also regrettable that the EU has not yet intervened to stop this disgrace. The human story recorded in the movie, gave us an excellent chance to bring the issue on the spotlight again. I was very satisfied by the attendance and must admit that I even saw people who have nothing to do with the issue, being deeply touched and even crying during the screening. The symbolism of having the event inside the European Parliament with a representative of our member, Vinozhito, should not be underestimated either.

3. Tell us about some of EFA's other recent activities.

EFA is the only European Political Party putting self-determination at the top of its agenda. We are experiencing very challenging but also exciting times in Europe recently. The Scottish and Catalan independence processes, the recent victory of the pro-independence forces in Corsica, the informal consultations on independence held just a few days ago in the Basque Country are only a hand-

ful of examples where EFA was and remains actively involved. At the same time, one should not forget that many EFA member parties come from unrecognized minorities throughout Europe such as the Macedonians in Greece and Bulgaria, the Hungarians in Romania or the Sile-sians and the Kashubians in Poland. We therefore try constantly to assist these members so that they can change public perceptions in their respective EU member states and ultimately make them accept modern European and international reality. Such examples of recent active EFA involvement include the joint EFA-OMO Ilinden Pirin Commemoration of Jane Sandanski's death in May or an international conference on minority media and stateless nations that will be held next month in Poland. The list of EFA activities in Brussels, Strasburg and throughout the EU is getting bigger each year and this is a great challenge for all of us.

4. On the issue of freedom of association i.e. the right of ethnic Macedonians in Greece and others to register cultural associations, last year the European Court of Human Rights found for a second time that Greece violated the European Convention on Human Rights in relation to the case of the 'Home of Macedonian Culture.' What do you think are the prospects of the 'Home' finally being registered and what can or should be done to compel the Greek

(Continued on page 10)

state to respect freedom of association?

I must admit I am not at all optimistic when it comes to this issue. I am sure you have seen what happened in March inside the European Parliament, when the 3 MEPs of the Greek fascist party, Golden Dawn, disrupted a debate exactly on the freedom of association issue in the modern Greek state. This action coming from Golden Dawn was not really such a surprise to me but I must say that people in the EP were shocked. And it was even more shocking that the Greek political parties found no words to condemn this outrageous behaviour but remained silent, when at the same time they were extremely vocal about trying to prevent the **screening of the "Macedonian"** movie. You realise that there is no real ground for hope that this attitude could eventually change and that HMC would be eventually registered. Greece **has developed a "tradition" of** disrespecting the rulings of the ECHR and I fear that it will continue to do so.

5. After 25 years, the name "issue" continues to define relations between the Republic of Macedonia and Greece. What are your thoughts on the prospects for a resolution of this dispute and can you ever envisage a time when Greece (and certain actors in the international community) will acknowledge and respect the

right of the Republic of Macedonia to choose its own name?

You know very well, even better than myself, that the reason Greece so stubbornly objects to the constitutional name of the Republic of Macedonia is of course not the name as such but its unwillingness to accept reality and recognize a distinct, non-Greek, Macedonian ethnic identity, primarily inside but also outside its territory. For as long as the Greek attitude on the issue remains idle, there is no real hope for a resolution of this absurd, unprecedented dispute. The EU could and should have played here a vital role but unfortunately it continues to make one mistake after another. Instead of forcing Greece to finally accept the EU founding treaties and thus allow the Republic of Macedonia to be called with the name its citizens chose democratically, it turned the issue into a European problem. The results are unfortunately visible. Macedonia is an EU candidate member since 2005 and awaits to start accession negotiations since 2009. This has happened due to the Greek blockade, tolerated by Brussels, and subsequently it led to a political crisis in Macedonia, together with a loss of trust of the Macedonians towards the EU.

6. The issue of migration has been a controversial issue in Europe over the last year. The human catastrophe on the border between Greece and the Republic of Macedonia has featured prominently in the news

recently. What is EFA's position on the current situation?

EFA Vice President Ana Miranda found herself in the Idomeni/Sehovo improvised camp a few weeks ago, just before the Greek authorities started the evacuation process. It is a situation totally unworthy of the European Union we at EFA want to build. The EU was the greatest peace project in the world after WWII and is now in danger because Europe cannot find common solutions to tackle the crisis. In addition, it is extremely unfair to transfer the burden to countries like the Republic of Macedonia or Serbia, simply because Brussels has decided to close the so-called **"Balkan corridor"** and these countries happened to be in the middle. EFA believes that the migrant crisis cannot be dealt with unilateral decisions and should be tackled in the countries of origin of the refugees and not by creating prison camps for human souls on EU soil.

7. The turbulent political situation in the Republic of Macedonia and the continuing economic crisis in Greece continues to dominate headlines in both countries. Would you care to comment on the situation in both countries?

As I mentioned earlier, we are amidst a deep political crisis in the Republic of Macedonia, partly created by the incapability of the EU to facilitate the **country's European path without setbacks**. It is clear now to

us in Brussels that maybe the only way to break the deadlock in Skopje is the withdrawal of all major political actors from active political life. And I mean the current president and the leaders of all 4 major political parties who signed but never implemented the Przino agreement. The country needs to have functional institutions once again and I sincerely hope that all those who broke the law and committed illegal acts will be brought to face justice, with no exceptions.

On the other hand, the situation

in Greece remains discouraging in all fields. After almost 7 years of crisis and austerity, there is no sign of recovery yet and the SIRIZA government has, as expected, failed to pursue any significant reforms. It is astonishing also that even in such tough times for the country, its state and political leaders continue to use terminology and practices of the 19th century, when they are faced with the truth. Vulgar attacks and insults against the Republic of Macedonia and the Macedonian people, the same goes for Albania which dared to raise the Cham Albanian issue

some days ago, a completely non-constructive approach towards Turco-Greek relations, disrespect and threats against the "Muslim" minority in W. Thrace... unfortunately nothing has changed in this respect after 18 months of SIRIZA government, despite what many have hoped for. And I am afraid that the situation won't change soon, even if SIRIZA is replaced by a ND-led government.

Interview conducted by David Vitkov 6 June 2016.

Jorgos Papadakis is a long standing member of the leadership of the Macedonian minority rights party in Greece, Rainbow/Vinozhito/**Виножито**.

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Brussels, 2 March 2016.

To the President of the European Parliament,
Dear Mr. Schulz,

Concerning: behaviour of MEP's and assistants of Golden Dawn in the EP.

With this official letter I wish to complain about unacceptable, aggressive and threatening behaviour of 3 Golden Dawn MEP's General Eleftherios Synadinos, Mr. Lampros Fountoulis and General Georgios Epitideios and some of their assistants in a meeting organised by MEP Csaba Sogor under the title **Freedom of Association in Greece: A loophole in European Minority rights standards.**

This event organised today from 15-17h in Room ASP 5E3 of the European Parliament was premeditatedly and deliberately interrupted at the start by the mentioned MEP's and assistants by shouting and threatening the organiser and the public among them 3 members of the EFA staff.

It is simply unacceptable that in the house of democracy this para-military tactics are deployed in order to scare off people, in order to paralyse debates and in order to keep a status quo in Greece when it comes to minorities and the right for them to organise themselves.

There are plenty cases where the European Court of Human rights in Strasbourg condemned Greece for this and one of the members of our European Political foundation CMC, the Home of Macedonian culture, is not allowed in Greece to register because of the used denomination "Macedonian" in their name.

We have two member parties in Greece representing the Macedonian and Turkish minority in Greece, Vinozhito-Rainbow and the Friendship, Equality and Peace party (DEB).

Notwithstanding these facts, the mentioned MEP's started shouting, denying any minority exists in Greece, calling the event a disgrace. The letter of complaint they presented on the spot states that the event in the EP is "a blatant violation of International law." They end their letter asking for an apology while we in name of democracy should be asking them to apologise for such behaviour.

We ask you to consider to take the appropriate measures that are at your disposal to discipline the mentioned members.

With respect,



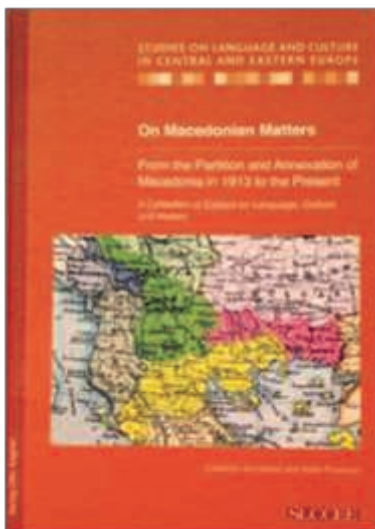
François Alfonsi
President of EFA

On Macedonian Matters

Verlag Otto Sagner, Berlin & Washington, 2015

On Macedonian Matters is the title of a new book edited by Professor Victor Friedman (University of Chicago) and Dr. Jim Hlavac (Monash University) that was recently released (2015) by the international academic publishing house: Verlag Otto Sagner. The book contains 15 chapters written by various scholars from a variety of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. These texts emerged from discussions at an international scholarly conference which was facilitated by the Australian Macedonian Human Rights (AMHRC) at Monash University in 2013.

The focus is on modern Macedonian history, as the subtitle of the book indicates: From the Partition and Annexation of Macedonia in 1913 to the Present. From the publisher's blurb, we learn that a common theme running through the book is a concern about the subjection of the Republic of Macedonia to "blockade politics" and an "absence of respect and recognition for Macedonian language, nationality and ethnicity".

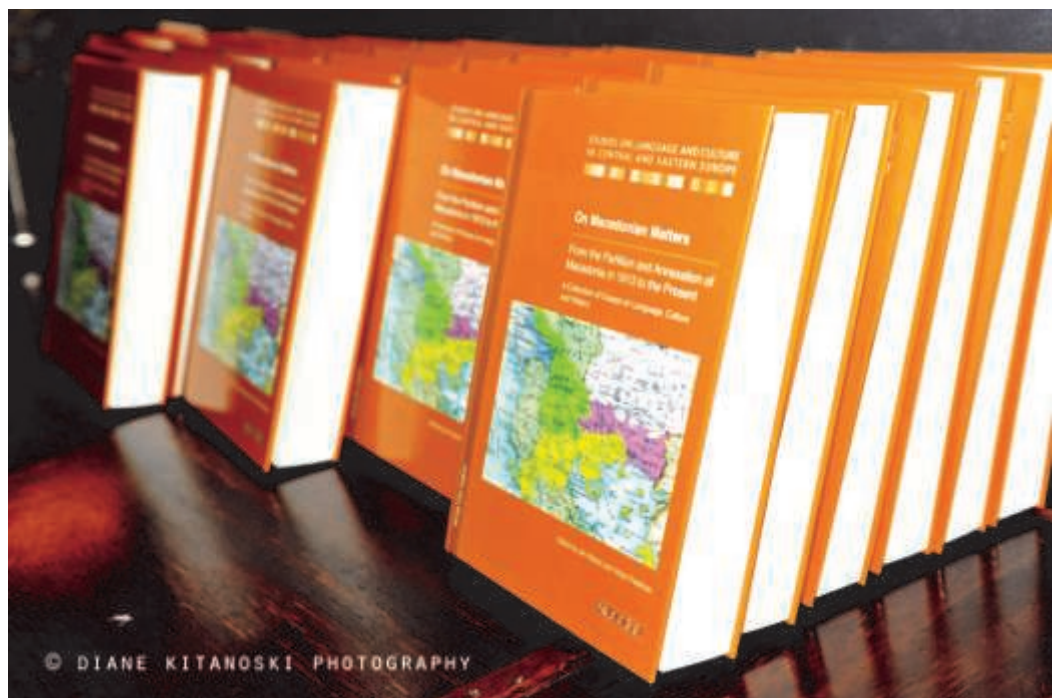
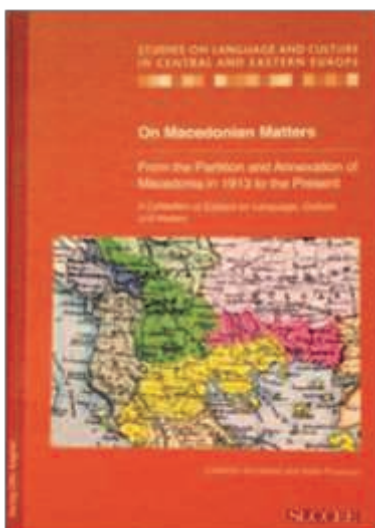


Copies of the book may be purchased from the AMHRC website here:

<http://macedonianhr.org.au/contents/111>

Or directly from the publisher's website, here:

<http://www.kubon-sagner.com/opac.html?record=6027>



MEP MAREK **PLURA**
MEP JOSEP **MARIA TERRICABRAS**

06.04.16

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FILM SCREENING & DEBATE

WITH THE DIRECTOR
PETRO ALEKSOWSKI

MACEDOŃCZYK
THE MACEDONIAN

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"The worst people can suffer is being ignored as if they don't exist."

SCREENING & DEBATE

about the **MACEDONIANS** in GREECE
and the **SILESIA**NS in POLAND



European
Free Alliance
7/4/2016 -
EFA together
with its MEP
Josep Maria
Terricabras
and Silesian
MEP Marek

Plura (EPP) organized in the European Parliament the screening of the movie "Macedonian", directed by Polish-Macedonian director Petro Aleksowski. It is the story of a little Macedonian child who is forced to flee the Greek Civil War, gets separated from his parents and finds refuge in Silesia. The false promise that he will be back home soon never materializes, since Greece introduces a series of racist measures prohibiting him and thousands of other Macedonians to return to their birth places. Now, at 77, his only wish is to see his village even for a day. Will Greece allow him that? "The worst ever people can suffer is being ignored as if they don't exist. This is the sad truth about the Macedonians in Greece and the Silesians in Poland", said EFA MEP Jordi Sebastia who urged the 2 EU member states to fi-

nally behave as such.

Silesian MEP Marek Plura highlighted the need of the all EU countries to respect human rights. "The sad stories we saw in the film are unfortunately not the only ones in the EU but with events like this one we can change this" said Plura and thanked EFA for its ongoing support to recognized and unrecognized minorities all over Europe.

Representatives of EFA member parties EFA Rainbow (Macedonians in Greece) and Ruch Autonomii Slaska (Silesians in Poland) expressed their concern about the ongoing denial of their states to face reality and subsequently end discriminating policies that last for many decades.





photo: Panayote Dimitras

GREEK HELSINKI MONITOR (GHM)

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“Freedom of Association in Greece: A Loophole in European Minority Rights Standards”

Panel discussion at the European Parliament on 2 March 2016

United Nations and Council of Europe perspectives on the systemic violation of minorities’ freedom of association in Greece

Panayote Dimitras (Spokesperson of Greek Helsinki Monitor)

Greece is notorious for systematically failing to execute **UN Human Rights Committee** views and **European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR)** judgments, including those concerning the violation of the freedom of association of the Turkish and the Macedonian minorities.

In July 2015, the **ECtHR** found, for the second time, a violation of freedom of association by Greece for the refusal since 1990 to register the **Home of Macedonian Civilization**: the first **ECtHR** judgment in July 1998 had been ignored by Greece.

Similar judgments were issued in the past for the refusal to register the **Department of Evros Minority Youth Association** (October 2007) and the **Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Region of Rodopi** (March 2008), as well as for the dissolution of the **Turkish Association of Xanthi** (March 2008) –an association first established in 1927. In December 2014, the **ECtHR** communicated to Greece the second applications of all three Turkish minority associations which continue to be banned despite these **ECtHR** judgments which again Greece chose to ignore.

In December 2015, the **ECtHR** issued its decision to reject as inadmissible the applications of the **Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Region of Rodopi** and the **Turkish Association of Xanthi**. Implicitly, the **ECtHR** ruled as admissible the application of the **Department of Evros Minority Youth Association**, for which a judgment will be issued. The two associations whose applications were ruled as inadmissible had not tried to register anew after the 2008 judgements but had applied to the Greek courts seeking the revocation of their previous judgments. Such procedure however does not exist in the Greek **Code of Civil Procedure**. Since, therefore, there were no new elements concerning the merits of the procedure to register one of them and contest the dissolution of the other, while at the same time the execution of the three 2007-2008 judgments continues to be under review by the **Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers**, the **ECtHR** concluded that it had no competence to review the merits of those two applications.

On the other hand, the **Department of Evros Minority Youth Association** had not sought before the domestic courts the revocation of their previous judgments but had launched a new registration procedure, although they invoked the corresponding **ECtHR** judgment in it. The registration was rejected by the Greek courts on the basis of their previous judgments with the addition that the **ECtHR** judgments cannot infiltrate domestic law and result in the automatic removal of the state acts that violated the Convention. Hence, the Greek courts effectively ruled that the **Department of Evros Minority Youth Association** cannot ever register! This is probably why the **ECtHR** considered that this is a new element that the **ECtHR** will review and issue a judgment in this case, expected to find a new violation of freedom of association by Greece. The latter prediction is based on **Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM)**'s experience with the second judgment in the case of the **Home of Macedonian Civilization** which had also launched a registration procedure anew after the first **ECtHR** judgment rather than having sought the revocation of the domestic judgments. The rejection of its second registration effort led to the finding of a second violation by Greece. The **Home of Macedonian Civilization** is now launching a third registration procedure.

In the meantime, **GHM** included the problem of systematic failure to execute the **ECtHR** judgments on the freedom of association of these Turkish and Macedonian minority associations in its 2015 reports to two **UN Committees** ahead of Greece's review by them. **GHM** stressed that the persistence in the effective ban of those associations reflects the State's refusal to acknowledge the existence of an ethnic Turkish and an ethnic Macedonian minority identities among tens of thousands of its citizens. The two Committees issued the following comprehensive recommendations that Greece is again refusing to implement, as there are no real consequences except the repeated naming and shaming by the intergovernmental bodies. It is noteworthy that these recommendations as well as the **ECtHR** judgments remain largely unknown in Greece as they are almost never reported by Greek media. They are not even invoked by the –now four- Turkish minority MPs that belong to the mainstream political parties which all oppose the acknowledgment of the existence of the Turkish and Macedonian minorities!

(Continued on page 18)

Recommendations of intergovernmental organizations on minorities in Greece

UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Greece (9/10/2015) ¹

(...) Non-Discrimination

9. The Committee notes with concern that the State party only recognizes the Muslim Religious Minority in Western Thrace as a minority. The Committee further notes the lack of statistics on the composition of the population in the State party. The Committee is also concerned at the persistent discrimination against persons with immigrant backgrounds and Roma in the State party, particularly in the fields of employment, education, health care and housing (art. 2, para. 2).

10. The Committee recommends that the State party collect statistical data on the composition of the population, on the basis of voluntary self-identification with a view to formulating, implementing and monitoring targeted and coordinated programmes and policies at the national and regional levels aimed at improving their enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights. In this regard, the Committee, referring to its general recommendation No. 20 (2009) on non-discrimination in economic, social and cultural rights, encourages the State party to revisit its narrow interpretation of “minorities” and recommends the State party to take effective measures for the recognition of all minorities in order to fully protect their rights, including their language, religion, culture and identity.

UN Human Rights Committee Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Greece (5/11/2015) ²

(...) Freedom of association

39. While the Committee notes the State party’s expressed intention to proceed with the registration of associations of groups claiming a minority group status, in accordance with the European Court of Human Rights decisions of 2008 and 2015, the Committee expresses concern over the pace of implementation of these decisions (art. 22).

40. The State party should expedite its measures to register associations of distinct communities, including those claiming a minority group status, in accordance with article 22 of the Covenant.

(...) Recognition of minorities and statistics

¹ http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CESCR/Shared%20Documents/GRC/E_C-12_GRC_CO_2_21942_E.doc -

μετάφραση στα ελληνικά από ΕΠΣΕ

² http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CCPR/Shared%20Documents/GRC/CCPR_C_GRC_CO_2_22220_E.docx -

μετάφραση στα ελληνικά από ΕΠΣΕ

43. While welcoming the statement by the State party that the lack of official recognition of minorities other than the Muslim minority in Thrace within its territory does not prevent the adoption of appropriate policies aimed at preserving and promoting cultural diversity and does not hinder the right of individuals to freely self-identify, the Committee is concerned at insufficient guarantees for the equal and effective enjoyment of culture, profession and practice of religion and use of language by all persons,

including those claiming to belong to ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities. The Committee also expresses its concern over the lack of statistical data demonstrating the ethnic and cultural composition of the State party, the use of mother tongues and languages commonly spoken (arts. 26 and 27).

44. The State party should ensure that all persons are effectively protected against any form of discrimination, and can fully enjoy their rights under the Covenant, including under article 27.

[Article 27. In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.]

In view of the fact that Greek authorities often claim that only half of the members of the “Muslim” minority in Thrace have a “Turkish origin” it is important to recall that the Greek census does not measure language or religion or ethnic identity. Hence the survey results included in the EU’s **Euromosaic Report** are the only authoritative estimate and indicate that some 80% of the minority members report a subjective Turkish identity.

**European Union – Euromosaic Report
Turkish in Greece (27/8/1997) ³**

TABLE 29: SUBJECTIVE IDENTITY

	YES		NO		NA
Local	69,00	19%	294,00	81%	1,00
Turkish	291,00	80%	71,00	20%	2,00
Greek	36,00	10%	323,00	90%	5,00
European	34,00	10%	324,00	91%	6,00
Other	27,00	9%	279,00	91%	58,00

Conclusion

The UN and the Council of Europe have therefore extensively and systematically recorded the systemic violations of minorities’ freedom of association in Greece but have no means to enforce the respect of those rights on the reluctant country. The EU which certainly has such means has yet to do its part: it is thus high time the EC and the EP take action if common European values are something more than empty declarations!

*Panayote Dimitras is the founder and Spokesperson of **Greek Helsinki Monitor** (GHM), a member of the Secretariat of the **Humanist Union of Greece** (H.U.G.), a member of the Executive Board of the **European Humanist Federation** and a member of the Assembly of Delegates of the **World Organization against Torture** (OMCT). He holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from **Harvard University** and is an international expert on minority rights, particularly outspoken about Turks, Macedonians, Roma and other minorities in Greece.*

³ <http://web.archive.org/web/20091227121353/http://www.uoc.es/euromosaic/web/document/turc/an/e1/e1.html>



NEWS IN BRIEF

Compiled and Summarised by Mitch Belichovski

Covering April 12-June 7 Refugees: On April 11 it was reported that 'activists' had incited migrants to cause incidents following an attempt at an illegal entrance of Macedonia. Different reports say that the violent attempt of the migrants to cross the Greek-Macedonian border, was supported and organized by certain Non-Government Organisation (NGO) activists. Authorities underlined the existence of flyers with false information that as soon as migrants cross the Greek-Macedonian border using violence, "they can continue their journey uninterruptedly toward the EU countries," the release read.

Politics: On April 12 it was reported that Macedonian President Gjorge Ivanov abolished all criminal procedures against the governing and opposition parties. The decision followed several months of scandals and accusations between the two parties. He said that he was convinced that by making this decision he is taking a huge step for mutual reconciliation.

Protests: On April 14 it was reported that following the protests that turned violent on Wednesday evening in Skopje, which took place in front of the president's office, 12 persons were detained by police, while one reporter was severely injured. The protesters demolished the People's Office of President Gjorge Ivanov, located in downtown Skopje. The windows and the furniture were broken, while the building housing the Justice Ministry was also subjected to violent outburst.

Tourism: On April 18 it was reported that Norwegian tourists find Macedonian Culture very attractive. Prominent names in the tourism industry in Norway, this weekend visited Macedonia and met with the representatives of 30 companies from the private sector. Additionally, the potential for development of the tourist offer is strengthened by the recently opened direct flight from Skopje to Norwegian capitol Oslo with the company "Wizz-Air".

Economy: On April 19 it was reported that Macedonia's economy is currently stable, says National Bank of the Republic of Macedonia (NBRM) Governor Dimitar Bogov. "Regarding Macedonia's economy, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) projected a 3.6--percent GDP growth in 2016, which confirms their view over the sound potential for development. However, they voiced concern that the latest political developments and uncertainty in Macedonia could pose a threat to this potential economic growth".

Media: On April 20 it was reported that the Council on Media Ethics has addressed media not to abuse their role and not to serve as a platform for fuelling and increasing tensions in society. The council pointed that the media must act in such way that makes them different from regular information leakers, and that they need to apply their role as pacifiers of the tensions in society, especially in cases when they inform of possible escalation of the situation.

Politics: On April 21 it was reported that a meeting in Vienna between political leaders **was cancelled over Zoran Zaev's demands for an unconstitutional delay in the** holding of elections. Without further detail, it was said that the meeting was cancelled. European Commissioner Johannes Hahn, along with the three MEPs Eduard Kukan, Richard Howitt, and Ivo Vajgl, were supposed to host the four Macedonian political leaders, Nikola Gruevski, Zoran Zaev, Menduh Thaci, and Ali Ahmeti, for a new round of negotiations to resolve the political crisis in the country.

Health: **On April 24 it was reported Activities that are part of the campaign "Protect, Prevent, Vaccinate!" are taking place at the Skopje Zoo on Sunday, organized by the** Healthcare Ministry and the Skopje-based and national Public Health Institutes, in the aim of marking the European Immunization Week. The event is organized in cooperation with the office of the World Health Organization in Macedonia. The Healthcare Ministry has said it has been paying particular attention to children's health and is continuously working on updating the immunization calendar.

Elections: On April 26 it was reported that a delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, headed by Stefan Schennach, will come to Macedonia on Tuesday for a pre-electoral mission. With this move, it is becoming clearer that the international factor has no dilemma that elections will be held on the set date or June 5. The OSCE and ODIHR missions have also said that they are ready to monitor the elections. Citizens will be able to check if their name is in the Electoral Roll, which is available both online on the State Election Commission's website and in 34 of the Commission's regional units.

Education: On April 27 it was reported Schools from across the country took part in programs meant to bring students from different ethnic backgrounds together. "Our goal was to have the kids from Gostivar visit the Isar fortress, the springs and the historic Novo Selo part of Stip, where VMRO founder Goce Delcev worked as teacher", said Vesna Niceva, principal of "Vanco Prke". Mersel Sadiku from "Edinstvo" added that children from Stip will pay a return visit to Gostivar next month. Most of the children from Gostivar are ethnic Albanians, while in Stip, ethnic Macedonians.

Media: On May 5 it was reported that The European Union delegation in Skopje is to promote Thursday the three-year project dubbed 'Network of Journalists for Freedom in Media', **financially supported with EUR 200,000. The project's aim is to enhance** and develop a favourable environment regarding the rights of journalists and im-

(Continued on page 22)

provement of reporting in line with professional and ethical standards.

Community: On May 8 it was reported that an association of single-parent family communities named **"Edna Moze!" ("One can!")** was officially formed in Skopje, advocating for achieving comprehensive social care and treatment of single mothers and the realization of their economic, social, humanitarian, health, educational and cultural rights. "Edna Moze" in Sunday's press release to the media states that it is a voluntary, non-profit, non-governmental and non-partisan association of female citizens.

Politics: On May 9 it was reported on the anniversary of the armed terrorist attack on Kumanovo, the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM) issued a press release saying that the public will be informed about the truth regarding the Kumanovo shootings and all those involved will bear responsibility. SDSM leader Zoran Zaev has alleged in the past that the attack was a staged attempt to divert attention from the wiretapping affair, as it came at a time when his party was organizing protests against the Government fuelled by a cache of intercepted phone conversations the party was releasing in the public.

Protest: On May 10 it was reported several hundred Albanians from Kosovo have arrived in Skopje on Monday to take part in the protest staged in front of the Macedonian government building, held on the occasion of the first anniversary of the Kumanovo armed incident. Albin Kurti, a former Kosovo Liberation Army commander and now leader of the Self-Determination Movement in Kosovo, announced via social networks that he will attend the protest. Participants demand halting the legal proceedings against the terrorist group believed to have carried out the attacks in Kumanovo on May 9-10 last year, and which infiltrated Macedonian territory from Kosovo. Eight Macedonian police officers were killed in the fatal clashes.

Politics: On May 17 it was reported the European Commission still has not clearly stated whether the Przino Agreement is dead, after 3 out of 4 parties signatories refused to take part in elections on June 5. Maja Kocijancic, spokesperson of EU enlargement commissioner stated. The Przino Agreement was signed under mediation by the EU and the US so that the political crisis in Macedonia can be resolved. The agreement encompassed holding elections on April 24, but upon a request by the EU, elections were postponed to June 5.

Elections Delayed: On May 18 it was reported that Wednesday's agenda of the 101st parliament session that Speaker Trajko Veljanoski scheduled following the Constitutional Court decision includes changes to the Electoral Code which included deleting the legal articles that prescribe holding early parliamentary elections on June 5. A new date for elections is not foreseen.

Judicial Administration Strike: On May 19 it was reported that Macedonian courts are only taking urgent cases due to an administration workers strike. The strike of the court administration employees has continued on Thursday and it will last until all the demands regarding payment of 35% salary bonuses are met, said the concerned trade union president, Pece Grujovski.

Politics & Constitutional Court: On May 25 it was reported that the ruling of the Constitutional Court of Macedonia to annul the decision for the Macedonian Parliament's dissolution in January 2016, and the decision for changes to the decision for the Macedonian Parliament's dissolution of February 2016, does not match VRMO-DPMNE's viewpoints. **However, the party announced "We will respect the Constitutional Court's ruling. We believe that does not match the party's viewpoints, but the Constitutional Court is an insti-**

tution that must be respected in the country, and we will respect it as such."

EU Failure: On May 29 it was reported that the Macedonian President Gjorge Ivanov blasted the failure of NATO and EU to expand in the Balkan region at the Summit 100, held as part of the **Brdo-Brioni process conference in Sarajevo**. **"Macedonia is a textbook example of the failure of EU and NATO, a textbook example of how NATO or EU should not treat a candidate country. No other country, no other army, have been tested more times than Macedonia. We have seven recommendations to open EU accession talks a no movement", said the President.**

Security: On May 30 it was reported that Over 90 experts in the field of crime prevention and organization of security services from Macedonia, the region and beyond have taken part in the annual conference organized by the Security Faculty in Ohrid. "Macedonia needs to be seen together with all the other events in the region, where large numbers of fighters from Bosnia, Kosovo, Albania, and a smaller group of Macedonia, have returned **after fighting in the Middle East**", said professor Tome Batkovski, at the opening of the conference.

Kumanovo Court Case: On May 31 it was reported that strong police security and helicopters circling around the building housing the Supreme Court were seen as the trial of the persons indicted for terrorism under the 'Diva Naselba' case where the total of 29 people were charged for terrorism and participation in a terrorist organization, in line with Articles 394-a and 394-b of the Criminal Code. After a series of postponements, the trial on the events that took place in Kumanovo last year in May will start, which was merged with the 'Thunderbolt' case which involves 8 people charged for providing assistance to the armed group that clashed with Macedonian security forces in Kumanovo.

Infrastructure: On June 5 it was reported that EUR 6 million is the sum of the investment to rebuild 31 km long regional road Kocani--Makedonska Kamenica--Delcevo. The road rebuilding will last 18 months. Firstly the landslide which hinders the traffic on this road will be repaired and three bridges will be expanded as well as the installation of new asphalt and road signs, Misajlovski said, Director of the Public Enterprise for State Roads.

President Annuls Amnesties: On June 6 it was reported that President Gjorge Ivanov said he had decided to annul the remaining decisions for abolition which were adopted on 12 April. "Ten days have passed since the annulment of the decisions to pardon. Since then, the other individuals, according to the legal changes had the opportunity to submit personal requests for annulment of their decisions to pardon. However, despite the declarative announcements of some of them in the public to do so, so far none of those pardoned have filed a request for the annulment of the decision to pardon", Ivanov said in a written statement.



Australian Census Information



For a brighter future

2016 Australian Census

Information for the **Macedonian** Community



This leaflet was prepared by:
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Disclaimer: The information and suggestions provided in this leaflet are the suggestions of the Australian-Macedonian Human Rights Committee Inc. Individuals are free to answer any question as they wish.

Australia's 17th national Census of Population and Housing will be held on **Tuesday 9th August 2016**.

Its objective is to accurately measure the number and certain key characteristics of people in Australia on Census night, and the dwelling in which they live. The census collects information relating to each person and household in the country but it is not concerned with information about individuals as such.

The public expects that the information they provide will be kept confidential and this protection is given by provisions in the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*. All employees of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) are legally bound to secrecy and to never release identifiable personal information to any person or organisation outside the ABS. Should a person breach this secrecy requirement they face a fine and/or imprisonment.

In order to ensure that the Macedonian Community in Australia is accurately identified, it is essential that each and every person takes care in the manner in which they answer the questions in Census 2016.

The Australian-Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) after consultation with the relevant government authorities has identified the four questions featured in this leaflet to be of particular relevance to the Macedonian Community.

If you are completing the census online you will need to type your answers in the relevant fields. If you are completing the census by paper forms you will need to write your answers.

QUESTION 12: COUNTRY OF BIRTH

If you were born in what is now the Republic of Macedonia, you should:

In the space below the category "*Other – Please specify*" write/type: "**MACEDONIA**" or "**REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**".

Important Information!

Even though you may have been born in the Republic of Macedonia during the period that it was a part of Yugoslavia, it is very important that you do not respond to this question with an answer of "Yugoslavia", as a separate category exists for this answer and you will therefore NOT be counted as originating from the Republic of Macedonia.

The following information for Question 12 (Country of Birth) only applies to those individuals born in Aegean Macedonia or Pirin Macedonia

In order to highlight the existence of ethnic Macedonians outside the borders of the Republic of Macedonia, you must respond accurately.

If you were born in "Aegean Macedonia" you may answer this question by writing/typing: "**Aegean Macedonia**" OR by writing/typing "**Greece**". Answering either way will result in you being counted as having being born in Greece.

If you were born in "Pirin Macedonia" you may answer this question by writing/typing "**Pirin Macedonia**" or "**Bulgaria**". Answering either way will result in you being counted as having being born in Bulgaria.

Important! Please note that by declaring your country of birth to be Greece or Bulgaria, you are NOT declaring your ethnic identity to be "Greek" or "Bulgarian". A separate question exists for ancestry (Question 18) where you can declare your ancestry Macedonian.

QUESTION 16: LANGUAGE

If you speak Macedonian, regardless of how fluently, you should in the space below the category "*Other – please specify*", write/type: "**MACEDONIAN**"

QUESTION 18: ANCESTRY

Regardless of where you were born (Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Australia or elsewhere) your ancestry (heritage/background) is Macedonian.

For this question, you may count back three generations (parents, grandparents, great-grandparents).

In the space below the category "*Other – please specify*" write/type: "**MACEDONIAN**"

QUESTION 19: RELIGION

If you identify as belonging to the Macedonian Orthodox religion you should:

In the space below the category "*Other – please specify*" write/type: "**MACEDONIAN ORTHODOX**"

Please note that if you respond simply "Orthodox", a separate category exists for this and you will not be counted as "Macedonian Orthodox".

Also, if you have a different religion (eg: Methodist, Islam, Jehovah's Witness) or have no religious affiliation, you should answer this question accordingly.

Australian Census Information



For a brighter future

Австралиски попис 2016

Информација за македонската заедница



Брошурава беше подготвена од:
**Австралиско-македонскиот комитет за
човекови права**
GPO Box 2800
Melbourne VIC 3001
info@macedonianhr.org.au
<http://www.macedonianhr.org.au>

Забелешка: Одговорите наведени во брошурава се предлози на Австралиско-македонскиот комитет за човекови права. Вие сте слободни да одговорите на прашањата како што сакате.

17-иот Национален попис на населението и домаќинствата на Австралија ќе се одржи во **вторник, 16ти август 2016 г.**

Целта на овој попис е точно да се изброи населението и да се добијат информации за некои главни карактеристики на жителите на Австралија и условите во кои живеат во моментот на пописот. Со пописот се собираат информации кои се однесуваат за секој член, од секое семејство во државата, но не се земаат во предвид приватните податоци на поединци.

Јавноста очекува дека информациите што ќе бидат дадени со овој попис, ќе се чуваат доверливо и тоа е обезбедено преку Законот за попис и статистика донесен во 1905 г. Сите вработени во Бирото за статистика се законски обврзани на доверливо делување и никогаш не смеат да идентификуваат лични податоци на поединци или организации надвор од Бирото за статистика. Доколку некој службеник го прекрши овој Закон, може да добие парична казна или затвор.

За да можеме да обезбедиме точна идентификација на македонската заедница, потребно е секој човек внимателно да одговори на сите прашања во прашалникот во 2016 г.

Австралиско-македонскиот комитет за човекови права со претходно консултирање на претставници од соодветни државни институции, ги има идентификувано следните четири прашања што се важни за македонската заедница.

Доколку го пополнувате формуларот електронски (на интернет) ќе мора одговорите да ги впишете (куцате на компјутерска тастатура) во соодветните полиња. Ако го пополнувате формуларот во писмена форма ќе мора да ги напишете одговорите рачно во соодветните полиња.

ПРАШАЊЕ БРОЈ 12: РОДНА ЗЕМЈА

Ако сте родени во денешната македонска држава, треба во местото каде е специфицирано „Other – please specify“ да одговорите: „MACEDONIA“ или „REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA“

Важна информација!

Иако сте биле родени во времето кога македонската држава беше дел од Југославија, многу е важно да НЕ одговорите на ова прашање со одговор „Југославија“. Постои посебна категорија за ова прашање и со ваков одговор вашата родна земја НЕМА да биде забележана како „Македонија“.

Следната информација на прашањето број 12 се однесува за оние што се родени во Егејска Македонија или Пиринска Македонија.

За да се истакне дека постојат Македонци надвор од границите на македонската држава, мора да одговорите точно.

Значи, доколку сте родени во Егејска Македонија, можете да одговорите на ова прашање со „Aegean Macedonia“ или „Greece“. Кој било од овие два одговори ќе резултира со вашето вбројување меѓу родените во државата Грција.

Ако сте родени во Пиринска Македонија, можете да одговорите на ова прашање со „Pirin Macedonia“ или „Bulgaria“. Кој било од овие два одговори ќе резултира со вашето вбројување меѓу родените во државата Бугарија.

Важна информација! Со тоа што за родната земја одговорите „Грција“ или „Бугарија“ НЕ ЗНАЧИ дека имате декларирано грчко или бугарско етничко потекло. Има посебно прашање за етничко потекло каде што ќе можете да напишете „македонско.“

ПРАШАЊЕ БРОЈ 16: ЈАЗИК

Ако зборувате македонски, без разлика колку добро, во местото што е специфицирано „Other – please specify“ треба да одговорите „MACEDONIAN“.

ПРАШАЊЕ БРОЈ 18: ПОТЕКЛО

Без разлика каде сте родени (Македонија, Грција, Австралија или било каде) вашето етничко потекло е **македонско**.

За ова прашање се брои до три генерации наназад (родители, баби и дедовци, или прабаби и прадедовци).

Во местото обележано „Other – please specify“ одговорите „MACEDONIAN“

ПРАШАЊЕ БРОЈ 19: РЕЛИГИЈА

Ако се идентификувате со македонската православна религија, тогаш во местото обележано како „Other – please specify“ треба да одговорите на ова прашање: „MACEDONIAN ORTHODOX“

Ве молиме да забележите дека ако одговорите само „Orthodox“, постои посебна категорија за ова прашање и НЕМА да бидете забележани како верник на македонската православна религија.

Исто така ако се идентификувате со друга религија (на пример: методистичка, исламска, итн) или ако немате религија тогаш ќе треба да дадете соодветен одговор.



Re: Recognition of the Republic of Macedonia

13 May 2016

Dear ...

I write in reference to an issue of paramount importance to Australian Macedonians as they prepare to cast their votes in the upcoming Federal Election; the recognition of the Republic of Macedonia by the Australian Government.

As you are no doubt aware the Australian Macedonian community is aggrieved that the Australian Government has since 15 February 1994 recognised the Republic of Macedonia under the provisional reference employed by the United Nations, "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" rather than its freely chosen official name, Republic of Macedonia. The Australian Macedonian community believes that the time has come for Australia to utilise the country's democratically chosen name i.e. the Republic of Macedonia, as have more than 140 countries around the world.

We believe that there is a compelling case for a review of the government's policy. We believe that it is time for Australia to update its current policy and engage with the Republic of Macedonia under its democratically chosen name. Here are the principal reasons why:

1. Changed international conditions since 1994

- In 1994, Australia joined only a handful of international states in recognising the independence of Macedonia. At the time, there were even fewer States that utilised the country's official name, Republic of Macedonia, in bilateral relations. However, since then, the Republic of Macedonia has entered into diplomatic relations with about 170 States. Around 80% of countries that have established diplomatic relations with Macedonia (about 140 states) have done so under the official and constitutional name of the country i.e. the Republic of Macedonia.
- Australia is now in an ever-decreasing minority of countries (about 20%) which continue to stubbornly use the "provisional reference" when referring to and engaging with the Republic of Macedonia.

2. The provisional reference and Australia's so-called "UN practice" argument

- Australia's policy stems from the so-called "provisional reference" found in United Nations Security Council Resolution 817 which recommended that Macedonia be admitted to the United Nations under this reference. This offensive and racist descriptor-racist because it denies ethnic Macedonians their identity, culture and language- was adopted by the UN-and only the UN-as a temporary reference for administrative purposes under Greek pressure in April 1993 and it is not incumbent on any country or institution to use it when referring to the Republic of Macedonia, either at the UN or in their bilateral relations.
- This is demonstrated by the fact that more than 140 countries do not use the so-called "provisional reference" in bilateral engagement with the Republic of Macedonia. In fact, these countries recognise the state simply as the Republic of Macedonia. We are not aware of any compelling reasons why Australia could not follow suit.

3. Australia's current policy is NOT reflective of a "neutral position" or approach

- In the past, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFAT) has claimed that Australia's policy is the "fairest" and most "neutral" approach to take. However this simply is not true. Australian policy on Macedonia's name is entirely in line with the Greek government's position. A neutral approach would take into ac-

count all of the relevant facts and give due consideration to all points of view.

- Firstly and foremost, the official name of Macedonia is the Republic of Macedonia. It is the name democratically chosen by the people of the country and is enshrined in the country's constitution. The right to self-determination is a fundamental aspect of international law.
- Internationally, more than 140 countries have now recognised or engage with Macedonia under the name 'Republic of Macedonia' in bilateral relations. Meanwhile, only a handful of other countries, including Australia and Greece use the UN provisional reference in bilateral relations, as well as within the UN itself- where it was initially intended to be used for *internal* purposes only.
- Australia should adopt a policy which takes into consideration all of the above facts. Namely, Australia should now move to utilise the name Republic of Macedonia in direct bilateral and official communication with the country.

4. Australia should adopt a position which is consistent with its major allies

- All of Australia's major allies (the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, India) have recognised the Republic of Macedonia in bilateral relations. As has traditionally been the position in other foreign policy matters, Australia should take the lead of its allies.

5. Change of policy in bilateral relations is not without precedence

- The majority of the 170 states which with the Republic of Macedonia has entered into diplomatic relations did so from the outset under this name.
- A smaller group of countries (most notably, the UK, USA, Canada) did so under the provisional reference but then modified their policy and now recognise and/or utilise the constitutional name. There is no reason why Australia could not follow this trend and also join the other 140 or so states which utilise the official name in bilateral relations.

6. Recognition of the Republic of Macedonia would not interfere with the UN discussions

- We are seeking a bilateral recognition i.e. in relations between Australia and Macedonia. The UN discussions are an entirely separate matter and Australia is not bound by any UN terminology or process.
- When the US and Canada changed their policy and recognised the official name of the Republic of Macedonia in bilateral relations, they still encouraged Athens and Skopje to work towards resolving the bilateral dispute. Australia could well do the same.

We would appreciate being informed of your views on this matter and whether you will commit to reviewing the nomenclature in relation to the Republic of Macedonia.

Yours sincerely

Dr Chris Popov
Executive Member
Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee.

This letter was sent to the leaders and other members of all the major political parties in Australia. Negative responses were received from the Labor and Liberal Political Parties

London's Mayor & the Name Dispute

Bill Nicholov

Apply London Mayor's Anti-EU, US Arguments to Macedonia Name Dispute and It Would Be Over

Re: Boris Johnson: Americans would never accept EU restrictions – so why should we?

www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newsttopics/eureferendum/12192893/Americans-would-never-accept-EU-restrictions-so-why-should-we.html

In anticipation of Barack Obama's upcoming visit to the United Kingdom, in which he will implore the UK to stay in the European Union, London mayor, Boris Johnson, said that "...coming from Uncle Sam, it is a piece of outrageous and exorbitant hypocrisy." True. No nation has the right to tell another how to run its internal affairs.

The perfectly glib sarcasm by Johnson continues, "The British people will be told to be good to themselves, to do the right thing. We will be informed by our most important ally that it is in our interests to stay in the EU, no matter how flawed we may feel that organisation to be. Never mind the loss of sovereignty; never mind the expense and the bureaucracy and the uncontrolled immigration."

The "loss of sovereignty". Johnson hits the nail on the head. Apply any of his arguments to the US and EU demanding that Macedonia change its name to appease Greece. Just ask fellow Brit Robin O'Neil, the first UN mediator for the Macedonia-Greece name dispute, "Macedonia must not and will not change its name in order to appease Greece. If Macedonia succumbs to pressures and changes its name, such events will only give more firepower to Greece until it reaches its final goal - Macedonia to vanish from the map."

As Boris Johnson says, "There is no country in the world that defends its own sovereignty with such hysterical vigilance as the United States of America." So why is it acceptable for the US to threaten Macedonia's sovereignty by demanding a name change? Back to Johnson's hypocrisy point. The US, much like the UK and the vast majority of the world, have already recognized Macedonia using its proper name. Yet, one can only explain the United States' actions as foolishly believing that it knows best, and that it

has the right to interfere in foreign affairs as it sees fit.

The Macedonia name issue comes down to common sense. No nation has the right to name another. Macedonia's name has always been Macedonia. Greece denied its very existence until 1988 and, as admitted by former Greek PM Constantine Mitsotakis, initiated the name dispute as an excuse to keep denying the existence, and persecution, of its large Macedonian minority. The West partitioned Macedonia in 1913 among Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia (a portion later went to Albania) and Macedonians have endured over 100 years of various governments trying to eradicate or forcibly assimilate them.

A part of Macedonia declared independence in 1991, and now the West, led by the US, as usual, and epitomized by the farcical UN-sponsored name negotiations, is demanding that Macedonia "compromise" on its own name. In the "interim" (over two decades), the UN refers to Macedonia as "FYROM" (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). How fun it must be for Macedonian athletes to walk in Olympic opening ceremonies behind the letter "F". How would it go over if the US was called "FBCOA" (Former British Colony of America). They would declare war before accepting any negotiation of its name and invade a country that has nothing to do with it.

One would imagine that if any of Boris Johnson's points were applied to Macedonia's situation, we wouldn't be in this mess today. Let's see if the UK can teach its American younger brother some good judgement and denounce the Macedonia name negotiations as an attack on human rights and common sense.

Bill Nicholov, President

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Canada Can, and Must, End the Macedonia/Greece Name Dispute

It just takes one Western country to stand up for common sense and denounce the nonsensical name negotiations between Macedonia and Greece as an attack on human rights and a country's basic right to self-determination. The Greek-manufactured dispute based on its blatant xenophobia would instantly be over. Now which country will it be? For that matter, an international human rights organization would carry a lot of weight too. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, you've had twenty-plus years, what are you waiting for?

Let's take the current Canadian election campaign. Macedonian-Canadians, like many other ethnic groups, are being wooed by all political parties and, in exchange for votes and countless hours of volunteering time helping local candidates, are being promised something that will surely not be delivered once the campaign is over. Well, let's try something different this campaign. Deliver in advance. Political parties would show that they could actually be trusted, and they would win over a lot of dedicated supporters.

Consider the debacle that is the Macedonia and Greece name dispute. Canada joined the majority of the world in 2007 by recognizing the Republic of Macedonia using its proper name, and, in doing so, secured the Macedonian-Canadian vote. Stephen Harper remembers well the hero's welcome that he received when attending a Macedonian-Canadian event in Toronto in 2009. Many were still loyal to the Conservatives for this reason alone. However, since then, the Conservatives haven't taken the next logical step and denounced the ludicrous name negotiations. But not only has Conservative Party inaction on this issue concerned Macedonian-Canadians, their transparent attempt at trying to regain the Greek-Canadian vote has made the situation worse. For example, before Costas Menegakis became a Conservative MP, he had organized an anti-Conservative/anti-Macedonian rally after recognition of the Republic of Macedonia. Mr. Menegakis claimed that no Greek-Canadian would ever vote Conservative. Apparently, Conservatives saw this as a green light to woo him, and he's now running in his second election as a Conservative. The Liberal Party though, took it to the extreme and pandered to the Greek-Canadian community by denouncing recognition of Macedonia at that time and allowing their MP, Jim Karygiannis, to make public racist comments against Macedonian-Canadians on several occasions. Mr. Karygiannis was even caught on video praising a lecture which glorified Greece's bombing of Macedonian civilians during Greece's

Civil War. Maybe their stance has changed, or gotten worse. Well, Liberal Party, which is it? So far, the NDP and Green Party have remained silent. Not a great foreign policy strategy.

Greece initiated the name dispute in order to block recognition of the newly independent Republic of Macedonia in 1991 and as an excuse to keep denying the existence and persecution of its large Macedonian minority. It claims that Macedonia is trying to usurp an "historically Greek" name, but until 1988, Greece's well-documented policy was that Macedonia never existed. After annexing half of Macedonia's territory in 1913 it tried to eradicate its very existence, a policy which continues today. According to the first **UN mediator for the name dispute, Robin O'Neil**, "Macedonia must not and will not change its name in order to appease Greece. If Macedonia succumbs to pressures and changes its name, such events will only give more fire-power to Greece until it reaches its final goal - Macedonia to vanish from the map." It is, in fact, Greece that is trying to usurp Macedonia's name.

Considering this, one might, rightfully so, wonder why Macedonia is negotiating its own name. The short answer is that it fears the wrath of the United States, which has threatened that if Macedonia withdraws from the name negotiations, the U.S. would pull economic and military support and claims that a civil war would erupt with Macedonia's Albanian minority. Ironical, considering that the United States recognized Macedonia in 2004. A new low for the United States' foreign policy hypocrisy.

This is where Canada, and all four major political parties, come in. They can show the rest of the world that we still stand up for traditional Canadian values and human rights. Canada has a chance to end this ridiculous debate, and it should take it.

Bill Nicholov, President
Macedonian Human Rights Movement International

###

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: www.mhrmi.org, twitter.com/mhrmi, [facebook/mhrmi](https://facebook.com/mhrmi), info@mhrmi.org, 1-416-850-7125.

MHRMI *Press Releases*

Macedonian Minority Newspaper in Bulgaria Thanks MHRMI and AMHRC for Crucial Support

"Your regular financial assistance gives us the momentum and strength to continue, with dignity, our just struggle for the Macedonian national cause. We recognize that if it weren't for your huge patriotic support, our newspaper would cease to be published. You are the saviors of the newspaper and we are very grateful for this patriotic act," proudly declared Gjorgi Hristov, editor of Narodna Volja.

Macedonian Human Rights Movement International and the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee are grateful for all the Macedonians who stand up, in the face of oppression, to Bulgaria, Greece, Albania and other Balkan countries, and proudly proclaim their Macedonian heritage. As MHRMI and AMHRC tell them - it is our duty to help you.

MHRMI and AMHRC are calling on Macedonians worldwide to join us and help achieve human rights for oppressed Macedonians. We are all proud when we attend a Macedonian event and hear a patriotic song. We passionately defend ourselves when someone questions our ethnicity or origin. We demand that our country be called Macedonia and not "FYROM".

MHRMI and AMHRC want Macedonians to take this pride to the next level. Connect with us on social media and help spread our message demanding human rights. Get involved. Volunteer. Donate. MHRMI and AMHRC fund all human rights projects for oppressed Macedonians in the Balkans. Contribute to the project of your choice by joining the MHRMI Human Rights Fund or AMHRC Macedonian Minorities Support Fund. Our time is now.

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Established in 1984 the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) is a non governmental organisation that advocates before 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 www.macedonianhr.org.au, email info@macedonianhr.org.au or via +61 3 9329 8960.





MHRMI Responds to Toronto Star's Pro-Greek Revisionist History

* We call on Macedonians to demand an apology from the Toronto Star and author Cody Punter @TorontoStar - @bordersnbetween - letterstoed@thestar.ca

* Retweet/share MHRMI's letter @mhrmi - facebook.com/mhrmi - www.mhrmi.org

Re: Macedonia's building program aims to make Skopje an attractive tourist destination
<http://www.thestar.com/>

In Cody Punter's January 26, 2016 article, he states that "Skopje, Macedonia, has been transformed into a majestic Hellenistic Disneyland in recent years, thanks to a neo-classical building program".

Is Mr. Punter not aware of the serious issues between Macedonia and Greece that have dominated the region since 1991? The infamous, nonsensical name dispute, initiated by Greece in its attempts to eradicate Macedonia's exis-

tence would not be celebrated by the Republic of Macedonia by erecting statues of non-existent "Greek" heroes. This was either a deliberate attempt by Mr. Punter at reviving a pro-Greek view of history or complete ignorance of an issue that he has no business writing about.

Instead of perpetuating a romanticized version of Greek history, Mr. Punter should discuss how Macedonia is celebrating its rich history and culture, which has endured despite Greece's past and present attempts to wipe it off the map. Greece's superiority complex, aided in part by the West, has resulted in severe repression of Macedonians and other minorities in Greece. Thankfully, in recent years, the dangerous myth of Greek ethnic continuity has been exposed, and it is rare to find such an inaccurate view of history. After apologizing for this travesty of an article, Mr. Punter and the Toronto Star would do well in exposing the truth about Greece.

Bill Nicholov, President
Macedonian Human Rights Movement International

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The Author and Poet

Igor Isakovski

It is said that “the good die young.” Whether true or not, it is arguably true in the case of Macedonian writer Igor Isakovski, who only blessed us with his gift for 44 years. I actually see plenty of evidence that genius typically burns hot and bright for less than the biblical promise of 70 years of life, although I have little doubt that Igor Isakovski would have blessed us with new literary treasures if he had lived longer. And yet, we were fortunate to have him for much of his adult, fully mature life, unlike that treasure, Toshe Proeski, lost to us to at far too early death. To get a sense of just how productive Igor Isakovski was, one should read the impressive biographical note posted at the Blesok website:

“IGOR ISAKOVSKI (1970 – 2014), poet, prose writer, translator, editor. BA in World and Comparative Literature, Sts. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, Macedonia. MA in Gender and Culture, CEU, Budapest, Hungary. He was the founder and director of the Cultural Institution Blesok where he worked as the editor-in-chief from 1998 until 2014.

Published books: Letters (1991, novel), Black Sun (1992, poetry), Explosions, Pregnant Moon, Eruptions... (1993, short stories), Vulcan – Earth – (1995, poetry), – Sky (1996, 2000, poetry), Engravings, Blues Phone Booth (2001, prose etchings), Sandglass (2002, short stories), Way Down in the Hole (poetry, 2004), Swimming in the Dust (2005, 2010, novel, award *Prose Masters* 2005), Blues Phone Booth II (2006, prose etchings, awarded *2007 annual prize for best visual-graphic design of a printed book*), Interning for a Saint (poetry, 2008), The Night Is Darkest Before the Dawn (poetry, 2009, *unique award winner of the 4th Belgrade Poetry and Book Festival in 2010*), Vulcano – Earth – Sky (poetry, 2010), Love Poem (poetry, 2011), Death Has Seaweed Hair (poetry, 2013) So

Yes (poetry, 2015).

Selections and translations in other languages: – Sky (poetry in English, 1996, 2000), Sejanje smehta (*Sowing of Laughter*, selected poetry in Serbian and Macedonian, 2003), I & Tom Waits (selected poetry in English and Macedonian, 2003), Sandglass (short stories in English, 2003), I to **je život** (*That's Life Too*, new and selected poetry, published in Montenegro, 2007), Iz bliskov in ognja (*From Glitters and Fire*, new and selected poetry in Slovenian, 2011), **Pjesčani sat** (*Sandglass*, short stories in Croatian, 2012), **Dlanovi puni srče / Дланки полни срча** (new and selected poetry in Serbian and Macedonian, 2013), **Светлината ве чека на рецепција / The Light Awaits You at Reception** (selected and new poetry in Macedonian and English, 2013).

Isakovski edited four anthologies (the latest is the bilingual *Six Macedonian Poets*, published by ARC publications, UK, 2011) and two CD-ROMs.

Translated poetry, prose, and essays from and into Macedonian, English, Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, Montenegrin, and from Slovenian into Macedonian. There are more than 60 published books in his translation into Macedonian.

His poetry and prose works were translated into sixteen languages and published in about twenty countries. He was included in a vast number of selections and anthologies in Macedonia and abroad.”

And now let's enjoy a little of that genius first hand. Here is a sample of his poetry from the Blesok (Issue 100) website:



photo: Igor Isakovski

I'LL SLEEP

(I LOVE IT THAT THE NIGHT IS A WOMAN)

I'll sleep in my bed.
 while snowflakes howl outside
 and my hand quivers with indecisiveness.
 I'll sleep in my bed. to spite
 all those premonitions: about my
 death, wars, disasters, everything
 that would go this or that way. I'll sleep
 in my bed. through the high windows
 I'll watch the snow piling up. I'll
 tuck in my own warmth. I'll be
 quiet and gentle, warm to the cold
 of the world. I'm worth more than that.
 I'll sleep with a scent in my nostrils,
 full of love, full of peace. I'll sleep
 in my bed, calm and warm.
 I won't think of moving tonight:
 this is such a beautiful and strong night,
 that at times I wonder
 how on earth did I deserve it.

ЌЕ СПИЈАМ

(САКАМ ШТО НОЌТА Е ЖЕНА)

Ќе спијам во мојот кревет.
 додека надвор завиваат снегулки
 и раката нерешително ми трепери.
 Ќе спијам во мојот кревет. за инает
 на сите тие претскажувања: за мојата
 смрт, за војни, за катаклизми, за сè
 што би тргнало наваму–натаму. Ќе спијам
 во мојот кревет. низ високите окна
 Ќе гледам како навева снегот. Ќе се
 туткам во својата топлина, Ќе бидам
 тивок и нежен, топол наспроти студот
 на светот. вредам повеќе од тоа.
 Ќе спијам со мирис во носниците,
 полн љубов, полн мир. Ќе спијам
 во мојот кревет, спокоен и на топло.
 вечерва нема да мислам на селењето:
 ова е толку убава и силна ноќ,
 што повремено се прашувам
 како ли сум ја заслужил.

May the earth be a soft bed for your sleep, dear poet.

Dr. Michael Seraphinoff



‘Interview with Michael Bakrnčev’

By Johnny Tsiglev

It’s music, sweet music back in the hot seat.. I love interviewing Musicians. Maybe because I secretly wanted to be a Musician?... Hey, didn’t we all?? But it’s music of a different kind.

I might be an Artist with a fine appreciation of the aural Arts, but I must admit that I’m slightly out of my depths here. I’m not too well versed on Classical Music or Orchestral Compositions. I’m sure this interview will be as much a lesson in Composing and Classical Music for me as it will be for many of our readers out there. So on with the show..... or I should say, ‘lesson’!

JT> Hi Michael. Thanks for taking the time out to ‘Conduct’ this interview with me for the MHR Review. I’m personally happy to ‘Compose’ this interview.... Ok, Ok... enough of that.. It must be my nerves as I’m slightly out of my depths here. I thought I’d introduce a bit of humour into the interview! Maybe I’ll stick to my night job. So thanks again and I’ll endeavour to formulate informed questions, as the Classical music

scene is not really my thing... I was going to say: “It’s not really my bag”... but man, that sounds so old!

MB> ... You're welcome, and it's my pleasure.

JT> Hey, I just noticed your initials, ‘MB’, and then a whole bunch of Musicians and Actors with the same ‘MB’ initials sprung to mind- Michael Bolton, Marlon

Brando, Mel Brooks, Matthew Broderick, Michael Bublé.... and Milton Bradley, but he doesn't really count I guess?

This might sound like a slightly left-of-centre question, but from the above mentioned fellow 'MB' initial-lites, who best sums you up??

I'd personally guess Michael Bublé?, but I might be completely off kilter?

MB> ... Although I do enjoy Bublé's music and the whole croon revival thing, if I could pick one person in your list that I would like to think would best sum me up, it would have to be Mel Brooks. His work has made me laugh so much over the years, and laughter is one of the best things humans can experience. I try to make people laugh, I'm nowhere near as funny as my younger brother, so that is why I try to steal his best jokes.

JT> Ahh, so my introduction of humour early on was not so incongruous after all! J

JT> **You're a Composer who lives** here in Melbourne and have won awards for your Compositions, which are performed by Orchestras.

Can you please explain for our readers (and myself!) what you do and some of your highlights?

MB> ... As a composer, I am paid a commission to write a new piece of music for an individual or group of people. The instruments I write for can be varied, for ex-

ample I wrote a piece for saxophones, clarinets and iPhone's once. On another occasion I arranged "Se Nevali Shar Planina" for Andrijana Janevska and the Macedonian Philharmonic Orchestra. At the moment, I am working on a flute concerto for an Australian flute player by the name of Maddi Goodwin who is based in Belgium. During the week, my time is spent studying and researching, working for my family's business and writing music. Some of the highlights of my career have been writing for the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, the Macedonian Philharmonic and winning the Australian New Works Award for my Piano Trio which was based on the "Janino" oro. The work went on to be performed by three ensembles from around the world. It's always a good feeling when the Macedonian nature of my music reaches such a large audience.

JT> Thanks for clarifying all that. You have already achieved some great work for your young age. A be bravo be!

JT> **It's interesting because the** previous Musician I interviewed, George Sevinis (Sarbinov) hailed from Selo Bouf, and I noticed on your website <https://michaelbakrncev.com/> that you mentioned that you can't seem to move beyond the Bufsko Pushteno. You quote that it still has some sort of mystical hold over you. I can understand where you're coming from as I personally love *Zaiko Kookaraiko* and its rhyming folksy flow. It was my favourite Macedonian song as a kid because it felt like it just optimized so much about our culture.

I too believe *Zaiko Kookaraiko*

had some sort of mystical hold over me, but can you please elaborate on why the Bufsko Pushteno does this for you?

MB> ... Ahh the Bufsko Pushteno. Now that is a magical oro, and a brilliant recording too. I use the word 'brilliant' specifically, because I don't think there is another word that so wonderfully captures the essence of this marvellous dance. The off kilter phrasing of the melody as well as the additive time signature of 17/16 threw me off for years. This, along with the fact that many of your readers won't know what I'm talking about, yet, are able to 'understand' the oro and dance to it with so much natural ease and grace, is again one of the brilliant facets of Macedonian folk dance. It ultimately comes back to the people.

JT> Yeah, an innate sense of rhythm which can't be truly explained....but you explained so well.

JT> Like many cultures, as we become homogenized into western society, I feel we're losing that essential purity of where these songs emanated from? Do you feel the same way, or am I being a little bit too nostalgic?

MB> ... I can't speak for those who choose to listen to Macedonian folk music, but as for me, it is a huge part of my musical thinking and I feel that it will remain that way for the rest of my life. As a result, you can bet that my children will be educated in Macedonian music too.

(Continued on page 38)

(Continued from page 37)

JT> *That's great to hear.*

JT> I've interviewed and talked to many other Macedonian musicians who don't necessarily play Macedonian music, but they all without fail have a deep appreciation for the heart wrenching folk classics.. Why do you think this is?

MB> ... **So maki sum se rodila** is an excellent example as the lyrics,

well as the modality which is often melancholic sounding by nature. Coupled with the storytelling nature of the songs and 'lessons to be learnt', it spreads its way very comfortably across generations, right around the world.

JT> *Yeah exactly. My Macedonian muso friends always talks about 'The Blues' nature of so many traditional Macedonian songs.*

JT> What has been your greatest achievement to date and where

lis New Music Series in Melbourne this year. The future holds many exciting things. I am collaborating with the Macedonian Women's Choir of Melbourne, author Fay Thomev and am planning on writing my first symphony which I hope to include Gajda, Kaval, Tapan, Zurli, choir and orchestra – it'll be huge. At some stage, I would like to seriously consider putting on a community musical, which would incorporate the highly talented Macedonian musicians, singers and dancers in Melbourne. Geographically speaking, my music has been performed twice in NYC, in Germany a few times, but



photo: Bakrnčev Conducts The Zelman Symphony Orchestra

melody and harmony perfectly sum up the characteristics of Macedonian vocal music (in a more or less traditional sense). It was described to me as 'the blues' by Australian composer, Robert Davidson. And I think that is a great summation of our vocal music. There is a lot of soul, depth and real human and emotional experiences conveyed in the lyrics. There is much to be said about the structure of such songs too, including the drone aspect as

do you see your Musical career heading in the future?

In other words; how far do you want to take your talents to? New York? Berlin? Selo Bouf?

MB> ... **My greatest musical achievement** so far has been having my music selected to be performed by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra in a competition, and having it performed in the final closing of their Metropo-

never in Bouf – it's a nice thought.

JT> *I'll have to arrange some introductions at some stage in our busy lives... The Selo Bouf experience will be an absolute sellout!*

JT> Being Macedonian, have you felt any sort of discrimination in Australia (or abroad) relating to your music? Or quite the oppo-

site, where 'they', being your audience, view you as somewhat exotic?

MB> ... I used to take things extremely personally, but not so much these days. There was one occasion where a lady asked me what nationality I was, after the premiere of my (ancient Greek themed work – The Death of Pythagoras at Metapontum) and after I told her I was Macedonian she said 'oh' with a disgruntled look, and that was the end of the

make sure the conversation 'doesn't' end there and challenge them on why the 'oh'? But I'm the AMHRC.....it's my duty I guess ;)

JT> What part of Macedonia do you hail from, and do you think it played a part in your choice to become a full-time Musician?

MB> ... I was born and raised here in Australia (Melbourne), and haven't had the good fortune of visiting Macedonia just yet, but

JT> After reading a quick bio on you, you sound like you have an appreciation or interest in a broad range of music styles and genres.

Ultimately though, why did you gravitate to classical/opera music?

MB> ... I enjoy the rush of writing music for classical musicians, it is very enjoyable for me. I also feel that there is a huge palette of sounds that I can work with in

this idiom, and one where I can freely explore my Macedonian roots in a supportive and relevant way.

JT> Well, that explains a lot actually. I've never looked at it that way.

JT> I don't know you personally and have never met you, however, again, after briefly reading a bit about you,

you seem to maintain a strong 'Macedonian consciousness'. There are many other Australian born Macedonians I know who have lost this beautiful, valuable, intrinsic connection to their heritage and homeland. I find this quite sad and the people who have lost this connection are actually a little bit lost themselves.

What was the driving force in

(Continued on page 40)



photo: Bakrnčev and Maestro Fritszch

conversation. Generally speaking, the Australian public really enjoy the Macedonian aspect to my music and what different colours and rhythms it brings to their concert programs. It is definitely exotic and I think brings something different and unique to the proverbial table.

JT> I'm sure we've all experienced that 'oh' and 'disgruntled' look at some stage.. I normally

my family comes from Neret and Negochani. The music from Aegean Macedonia is starting to interest me a little more these days – it seems to be different to other regions of Macedonia, and I would like to do a little further exploration into that.

JT> Yet another Macedonian muso hailing from Neret!!..... Maikata..... What is it with you Neretsi George (Vlahov)!!

(Continued from page 39)

your upbringing that maintained this for/in you?

MB> ... For me, ultimately it is the music. It is rich, beautiful and exciting, and there always seems to be some really interesting thing that I haven't discovered yet that inspires me to write my next piece, or next ten pieces!

JT> *Beautiful, mystical, hurt Macedonia...How can it not inspire one to create?*

JT> The inevitable question for a muso: Who is/was your most influential Musician, and how did they inspire you to become who you are today?

MB> ... Tricky. If I had to choose right on the spot, at this point in time I would say the Bufsko Pushteno (as an inspiring song), and my teacher Elliott Gyger who I learnt from during my time as a Masters student at Melbourne University. The Bufsko Pushteno for reasons already discussed, and my teacher Elliott for his professionalism, clarity and dedication to his work.

JT> *It's always great to acknowledge those who shape your Art. But I'd love to introduce you to some truly inspiring Macedonian musicians one day. They may not be 'recognised', but I'm sure you'll 'recognise' why they aren't 'recognised'. There's something very sacred and special some extremely talented Macedonian Artists I know don't want the rest of the world to know! If you know*

what I mean?

JT> I think I repeat this story every time I interview a Macedonian muso, but for me the greatest Macedonian Musical performance I've seen (a close second to being a guest of Kiril Dzajkovski, and watching him do an underground DJ set in Bitola, yes, literally not metaphorically, as the nightclub was underground) was when I was in Ohrid during Ilinden and the Macedonian Philharmonic Orchestra was playing a live, moving Orchestral piece to a stage drama. It was up the top of the hill near Tsar Samuel's Fortress, in the old Amphitheatre, and it was simply magical. I was watching it drinking Tik-

first time after their 10 year break. It was magical for me, and even the waiters talking over the top of them during their performance couldn't hinder my experience. (I told them to be quiet, and one of them told me to be quiet – concert etiquette classes in the future perhaps?).

JT> *Ha ha ha...Yeah, the waiters would have been Macedonian I assume?*

JT> How do you feel about some of the 'Anglo' musicians who have a large following playing Macedonian/Balkan/Folk/Gypsy style music to a largely 'Anglo' crowd? Do you think it's a case of 'cultural appropriation' (cultural miss-



Photos this page and right:
Bakrnčev accepting the Australian New Works Award from Julian Burnside QC

ves Vranec from my balcony and I felt as though I was transported to Ancient Rome!

What has been your most memorable Macedonian based performance that you have seen?

MB> ... Seeing the Macedonian Women's Choir perform for the

appropriation?) where it's stripping minority cultures of their identity, or just a homage to the cultures that the sound and style derives from?

MB> ... There tends to be a particular style of 'Macedonian' music that is performed in Australia, and I don't think it best repre-

sents Macedonian music at all. The style I'm talking about is the Roma brass band style that is popular in Macedonia. I suppose it's easier to grasp and crowds love it, but they generalize it and will call it 'Balkan night' or something like that and it just isn't that inspiring to me. The Sydney based clarinettist, Bobby Dimitrievski is a very inspiring player to me, it would be so great to collaborate with him one day.

JT> *Ha... yeah... the 'Balkan night'... That's exactly what I meant... Easy on the ears and easy to bop to, but not really deep to listen too.*

JT> Thanks again for your time **Mr Bakrnčev, and be sure to check out this <http://macedonianhr.org.au/tickets>.**

Should be an amazing night and you can hear the moving original film score by another Macedonian musician I interviewed, Anton Klimev, in the short film I produced with Director Anton Blajer.

MB> ... You are welcome, and it was wonderful to be acknowledged by the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee.

JT> *It was my pleasure, and I must make a point here. I was*



JT> Have I forgotten anything important to ask you? If I have, again, it must be the nerves of going into this without much knowledge!

(not really J)

MB> ... Please do.

JT> *When I do, I'll let you know ;)*

struggling for time with this interview and Michael fired away his answers within a few hours of me sending my questions to him!! What an absolute champion!! Future interviewees take note!



Photo: Melbourne Prize for Music publicity shot 2013



32nd Annual AMHRC Dinner Dance

Photos by Diane Kitanoski



AUSTRALIAN MACEDONIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

presents

32nd Annual Dinner Dance

SATURDAY 12TH MARCH 2016

7:00PM

**GRAND NERET RECEPTIONS
19 SALICKI AVENUE, EPPING**

Includes 3-course meal, alcoholic & non-alcoholic beverages

FEATURING



**LIVE MACEDONIAN BAND "EKSPRES"
GUEST SINGER "MICHAEL DIMOVSKI"**



**&
SPECIAL GUESTS:**

**Professor Victor Friedman (University of Chicago)
and Dr. Jim Hlavac (Monash University)**

Both will speak about the publication of the book: *On Macedonian Matters* which was recently published to mark the passing of 100 years since the partition of Macedonia. The book was the result of a scholarly conference organised by the AMHRC at Monash University in 2013. Professor Friedman will also talk about the conference on Macedonian matters that was organised by the AMHRC, last July in Lerin, Aegean Macedonia.

COPIES OF THE BOOK WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE ON THE NIGHT.



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Tase Filipov - 0431 056 353





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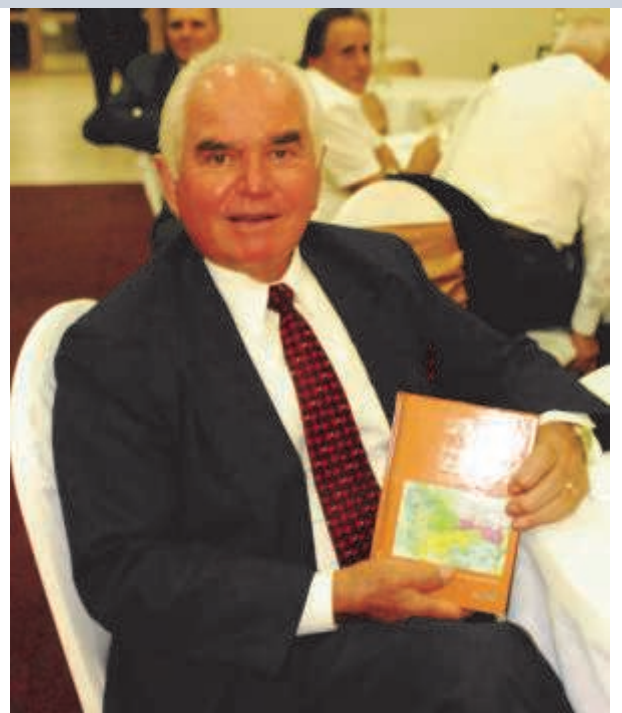
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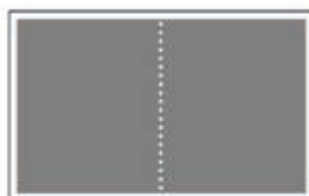
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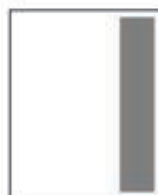
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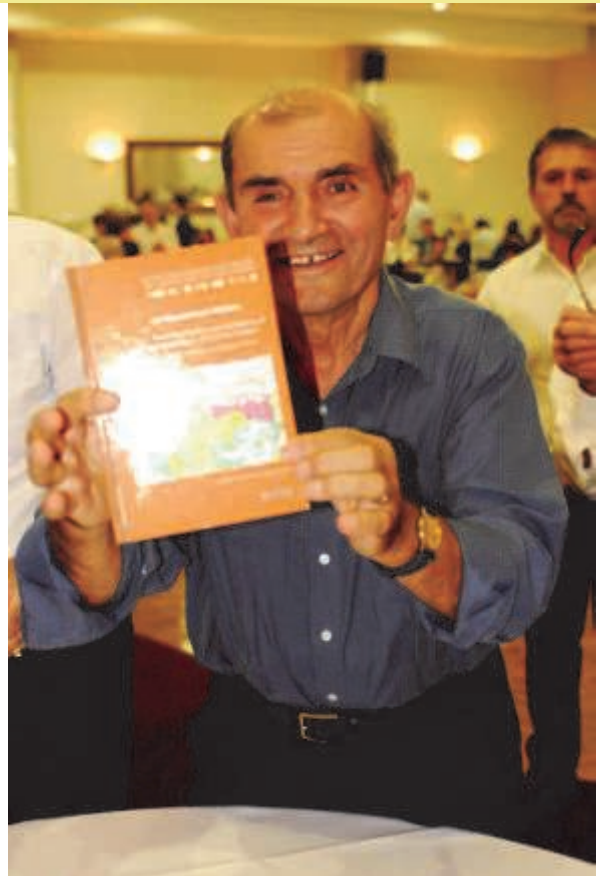
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AMHRC Host Melbourne Screening of **'The Macedonian'**

A sell out event, which saw 400 people in attendance watch three independent films of equal truths.

The feature, **'The Macedonian'** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xt4tDCYAULI> Directed by Petro Aleksowski, 2013. Running time: 47 mins, is a poignant documentary in which Petro Aleksowski traces the footsteps of his father Mito, one of 1,700 Macedonian children evacuated to Poland during the Greek Civil War. Today, Mito, who still lives in Poland, is without citizenship and feels like a stranger wherever he goes.

'People without a Country' or 'Lugje bez Zemja', 2011. Running time: 65 mins. Directed by Marko Gjokovic/ **Марко Ѓоковиќ**. A powerful documentary, about the trials of Macedonians in Greece related to the civil war there, throughout the 1940's, with a special focus on Vera Foteva.

'Begalci' A short film Directed by award winning filmmaker Anton Blajer and Produced by the AMHRC's very own Johnny Tsiglev, hears the accounts of 'Detsa Begaltsi' Tase Filipov and Lazo Christov as they relive their harrowing childhoods when they were forced to leave their homeland in the promise of an eminent return.



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The Macedonian

In this poignant documentary, Petro Aleksowski traces the footsteps of his father, Mito, who was one of over 1700 Macedonian children evacuated to Poland during the Civil War in Greece. Today, Mito, who still lives in Poland, is without a citizenship and he feels like a stranger everywhere.

* English subtitles available

PLUS...the documentary short "**Begalci**" by Anton Blajer and John Tsiglev

People Without a Country (Lugje bez zemja)

* English subtitles available

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VENUE: Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre
Corner of Bell Street & St Georges Road, Preston, Victoria 3072
TICKETS: \$25 per person

Please arrive on time to avoid disruption and disappointment as there will be NO admittance to the theatre once either film has started.

PROGRAMME:

7:45pm	Doors open
8:00pm	"People Without a Country" (Lugje bez zemja)
9:00pm	Break
9:20pm	"Begaltsi" (short film directed by Anton Blajer and produced by John Tsiglev)
9:30pm	Main Feature: "The Macedonian"

PURCHASE TICKETS ONLINE:

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AMHRC Host Melbourne Screening of
‘The Macedonian’







AMHRC is truly thankful for the support of all those who attended this emotional night.

OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN:

Annual Report on the Human Rights Situation of the Macedonians in Bulgaria 2015

Introduction

The fundamental problems affecting the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria remain unchanged this year as well; namely:

- 1. Denial of the existence of a Macedonian minority;*
- 2. The failure to grant to Macedonians those rights specified in the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities;*
- 3. The refusal of the authorities to enter into dialogue with representatives of the Macedonian minority;*
- 4. The refusal to register Macedonian organizations;*
- 5. Hate speech directed against Macedonians;*
- 6. Discrimination on ethnic grounds;*

The only positive news that could be pointed to this year were the meetings held for the first time between a Macedonian organisation and two state bodies and the assurances received from these bodies regarding proposed changes to the Law on Registration of Non-Government Organisations which could eventually, given good will, lead to the removal of the institutional blockade regarding the registration of Macedonian organisations in Bulgaria. All that, however, continues to be something to be hoped for and in reality there is still no dialogue, nor have any organisations been registered (see below).

Denial of the Existence of the Macedonian Minority, Nation and Identity

This year official denials of the existence of a Macedonian minority by state institutions were not observed. That however does not indicate the presence of a change in the official policies of the state. It is a fact that not one statement was made indicating the existence of a Macedonian minority, nor was there even a hint that such denial would stop. Given that in reality all official state bodies (courts at all levels, the Government, Parliament, President) have officially and on numerous occasions from 1963 to the present (the last official statement in that regard was from 2014)¹, denied the existence of a Macedonian minority and the fact that not even one statement to the contrary was made, one can not speak of any concrete change in this regard. That silence was due to the lack of political interest in the matter of the Macedonian minority throughout the year and the circumstance that such similar statements of denial in the international arena have in the past resulted in pressure from outside for the removal of discrimination, which has led to the authorities being more careful in their pronouncements.

Discrimination continued unchanged as state institutions preferred to base such discrimination on motives generally considered "more acceptable". However, the end result was the same-

(Continued on page 56)

¹ Decision No 2768 of 30/6/2014 made by judge Nadia Uzunova, Regional Court-Blagoevgrad which related to the application for registration of OMO "Ilinden", Decision No 4022 of 26/9/2014 made by judge Nadia Uzunova, Regional Court-Blagoevgrad relating to the Association of Repressed Macedonians in Bulgaria.

this year as well there was no recognition of the minority and not one registration of a Macedonian organization.

A clear demonstration of the continuing official policy of denial of the existence of a Macedonian minority is the delay in the negotiations on the signing of the Treaty on Good Neighbourliness with Macedonia, in which Bulgaria insists there be a clause whereby Macedonia renounces its right to defend those persons with a Macedonian identity. Despite the opposition of Macedonia and the delay in the negotiations, Bulgaria has not dropped this anti-democratic demand and has instead converted it into a condition for entering into such a treaty and **Bulgarian agreement to not block Macedonia's integration into European structures. The way in which the Macedonian minority is described in the negotiations also serves as proof of its denial.**² A symptom of the continuation of the same policy of denial of the very Macedonian nation are the changes in the Law on Bulgarian Citizenship which have been made with the clear goal of granting Bulgarian citizenship to Macedonian citizens who are automatically considered to be Bulgarians. One of the chief ideologues of these changes, Bozhidar Dimitrov, openly states that the goal is for Macedonia to remain outside of the European Union (EU), but for Macedonians to be integrated into the EU on the condition that they declare themselves to be Bulgarians. In this way each Macedonian who refuses to identify as a Bulgarian will remain outside Europe with all the negative consequences that this entails.

This year as well there was no representative of the Macedonian minority on the National Council on Ethnic and Integration Issues which is part of the Ministerial Council. The public denial of the existence of a Macedonian minority or the use of hate speech did not on any occasion result in a reaction or investigation by any state body.

Bulgarian policy towards the Macedonians and Macedonia is generally expressed in the following way: 1. Non-recognition of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria and the non-granting of rights in accordance with the **Framework Convention**. 2. **Specific blocking of Macedonia's integration into European structures**. 3. **Blackmailing the Macedonian government into renouncing its right to advocate for the rights of the Macedonians in Bulgaria**. 4. Facilitated granting of Bulgarian citizenship to Macedonian citizens facing economic difficulties under the condition that they renounce their ethnic identity and declare themselves to be Bulgarians.

Outside the framework of state institutions the denial of the existence of the Macedonian minority and its very identity continues unchanged. This denial often occurs in the media and is not considered as hate speech or something that deserves censure, but rather as acceptable defence of the historical truth and a display of patriotism. **During the year this was carried out in mass media such as "24 Chasa" by persons with considerable influence in society such as the former Speaker of Parliament and ambassador to Macedonia, Aleksander Yordanov, and the former minister and director of the National Museum, Bozhidar Dimitrov.** The denials were directed not only at the Macedonian minority (which both have done on numerous occasions in the past), but also against the whole Macedonian nation and the very idea of a Macedonian identity.

² Bulgaria insists that the Treaty contain the non-binding declaration of 1999 which stipulated that Macedonia would not advocate on behalf of the rights of Bulgarian citizens with a non-Bulgarian consciousness.

The same views were expressed at various levels- in the media, on the Internet, in blogs and even in course work in the educational system.

A flagrant expression of such continuing denial is the use of the concepts "Macedonianism" and "Macedonists" to denote the idea of the existence of a Macedonian nation and the self-determination of an individual as a Macedonian, instead of "Macedonians, Macedonian nation, Macedonian minority" These concepts contain within themselves the idea that such a nation and minority do not exist, that they represent something artificial and are a form of (anti-Bulgarian) ideology.

Hate Speech

The very use of concepts such as “Macedonianism” and “Macedonists” occurs despite the express disagreement of Macedonians with the use of these concepts, which are taken by them to be offensive; and in essence represent not only a denial of the nation and minority, but also hate speech.. Those who use them also always imbue them with a negative content and interpret “Macedonianism” (that is, Macedonian self-determination) as an anti-Bulgarian phenomenon. Such incidences of hate speech are so numerous in the media and on the Internet that not all of them can be traced and described.

Typical of this practice this year were the attempts to use the Ukrainian crisis in order to draw an analogy with Macedonia and the Macedonians, however not in the sense of instability, but in the sense of the “artificiality” of both nations and their languages and cultures. On 9 February 2015 an article was published which was subsequently republished in a series of Internet media: “Ukrainianism is Macedonianism Squared”. In this article it was alleged that both are artificial and even anti-nations (anti-Bulgarian and anti-Russian) and in the text it was stated that “the soul of those “isms” is hatred”.⁴ On 12/2/2015 Bozhidar Dimitrov on “24 Chasa” stated that “Bulgaria borders everywhere with itself... the case of Macedonia is 100% analogous to the creation of Ukraine-invented nation, invented language...”⁵. On 14 May, in the newspaper “Zemlya”, he repeated this same view: Ukraine... is also an artificial product. It is the Russian Macedonia”.⁶

In the same interview Dimitrov stated: “The idea of the Macedonian state and nation is an artificial product dating from the end of the nineteenth century... the Macedonian idea was implemented as a state idea at the expense of an unheard of and permanent repression of the Bulgarian population in Macedonia... the false doctrine on which the state is based- Macedonianism. It is 100% invented and false and a nation can not live founded on a lie...The father of Macedonianism is the Comintern.”⁷

³ Mihail Gruev, Violence and Identity: Pirin Macedonia in the Ethnonationalist Policies of the Communist Regime in Bulgaria in: Violence, Politics and Memory’, The Communist Regime in Pirin Macedonia- Reflections of the Contemporary and the Researcher, Sofia 2011, p. 45.

⁴ <http://www.cross.bg/obama-rysiya-ryski-1451962.html#ixzz3t3teq481>

⁵ Professor Bozhidar Dimitrov; Macedonia is An Analogy to Ukraine-An Invented Nation, <http://www.24chasa.bg/Article.asp?ArticleId=4594342>

⁶ Ivan Gaydarov, Professor Bozhidar Dimitrov: The Quality of History Textbooks is Disgusting, <http://www.zemlya-news.bg/index.php/intervyu-2/30377>

⁷ Ibid.

On 25 May the former President of the People’s Assembly and Bulgarian ambassador in Skopje, Aleksander Yordanov, stated as follows for “24 Chasa”: “the birth place of the doctrine of Macedonianism is Moscow... the doctrine of Macedonianism, which is anti-Bulgarianism in perpetual motion.... Macedonianism is an ideology of separation and that makes it in and of itself anti-European ”⁸. In the same interview he suggested that the Macedonians in Macedonia are Bulgarians and made an obvious effort to exploit the anti-Russian disposition against Macedonians in the country.

That generally negative view of Macedonian identity is automatically conveyed to those who disseminate such views in Bulgaria.

On 12 May the newspaper “Svobodno Slovo” published material which affirmed the myth of “forced Macedonianisation” in Bulgaria in 1946.⁹ The goal of this completely officially-sanctioned myth was to explain away the existence of people with a Macedonian consciousness in Bulgaria in an extremely racist fashion; namely, that they are the product of a social experiment and not something natural. In doing so, one of the unpleasant facts for the deniers of Macedonian identity, namely, the declaration of 187,000 citizens as Macedonians at the only censuses at which that was able to be done freely (1946-56), was done away with. The repetition of that myth inculcates a negative disposition towards people with a Macedonian self-consciousness and leads to it being viewed as the product of an experiment, violence and even as a crime. That is also apparent from the way in which this topic was treated by other media. Traffic News (TNS) published material with the typical title “The violent Macedonianization of Pirin Macedonia- one of the biggest crimes in our history”, while the cultural autonomy which existed for less than a year in Pirin Macedonia was called “denationalization”¹⁰. The same “explanation” is used in regard to the appearance of the Macedonian nation in general and especially in regard to Macedonian self-determination on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia; the “crime which is Mace-

(Continued on page 58)

donia" gave birth to the ideology of Macedonianism and macedonianised Bulgarians by force.¹¹ Some persons, carried away by the extremely negative attitude towards "Macedonianism" went so far as to foresee the "demise of Macedonianism"¹²

8 Boryana Tsacheva, Alexander Yordanov " Whoever Wishes to Divide Macedonia Does Not Know History or the Present, 25May2015 <http://www.on-parliament.com/media/2015/05/25/%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%BA%D1%81%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B4%D1%8A%D1%80-%D0%B9%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B4%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B2-%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B9%D1%82%D0%BE-%D0%B8%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B0-%D0%B4%D0%B0-%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%BB/>

9 <http://www.svobodnoslovo.eu/2015/05/12/roerrrrrrrrsr-rrsr-2015/>

10 14:31, 09.08.2015, <http://trafficnews.bg/news.php?id=25030>

11 <https://www.facebook.com/ideyazabulgaria/posts/910820002292030../AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/Temporary Internet Files/Content.IE5/50D8DC3/Македонската Шашма 2015>

12 Macedonian Deception, , <http://www.svobodnoslovo.eu/2015/05/12/roerrrrrrrrsr-rrsr-2015/>

13 Topic of Course Work, Macedonianism-Appearance and Development [Македонизмът - възникване и развитие, http://argumenti-bg.com/39347/prof-bozhidar-dimitrov-kachestvoto-na-uchebnitsite-po-istoriya-e-otvratitelno/02.2015.17:57](http://argumenti-bg.com/39347/prof-bozhidar-dimitrov-kachestvoto-na-uchebnitsite-po-istoriya-e-otvratitelno/02.2015.17:57)

It is not known whether any institutions of the state investigated these and similar occurrences.

Hate Speech in the Educational System

This hate-generating mythology has also permeated the educational system which has become one of its main sources.

The Macedonian minority is not mentioned in history text books used in the Bulgarian educational system and everything Macedonia is presented as being Bulgarian.

This nationalist indoctrination through the educational system is reflected in the course work produced by students. A clear illustration of the above is the course work entitled "Macedonianism-Appearance and Development".¹³

Absence of Dialogue

The beginning of a dialogue by the Bulgarian authorities with Macedonian organizations is a frequent recommendation in the reports issued by international institutions such as the European Commission Against Racism and Discrimination, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, independent observers of the UN and the Commission on Human Rights.

The Bulgarian authorities, however, have to date not made any effort to establish a suitable relationship and begin of any sort of dialogue.

The numerous initiatives of Macedonian organizations for the beginning of dialogue were either rejected or remained unanswered. According to the information at our disposal, this year meetings were requested with the following Bulgarian institutions: Prime Minister Boyko Borisov, the Minister for Education, Todor Tanev, Minister for Justice, Hristo Ivanov, the Secretariat of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues within the Ministerial Council, the Commission for Protection from Discrimination. Due to the total lack of any reaction from the president's office in the past, this year no request was made for a meeting with the President. No answers were received from the Ministry for Education and the National Council on Ethnic Issues. The Prime Minister's office sent a note indicating that the letter had been received and added to previous requests for a meeting, however it did not address the concrete request for a meeting.

Surprisingly, this time two bodies replied affirmatively to the requests for meetings.

The Ministry of Justice agreed to a meeting with Deputy Minister Petko Petkov, while the Commission for the Protection from Discrimination organized a meeting with its Regional Coordinator for the Blagoevgrad District.

The above meetings were duly held. On 19 October two co-presidents of OMO "Ilinden"-PIRIN held a meeting with the district coordinator of the Commission for the Blagoevgrad District. At that meeting the following observations were made:

As far as the coordinator was aware, the Commission has to date not investigated any cases of discrimination against Macedonians; he was unaware of any case where the Commission had decided in favour of a Macedonian who had been discriminated against and the matter of problems related to discrimination against Macedonians had not been included in the annual reports and recommendations of the Commission. Our checks did not reveal anything which could refute the abovementioned observations and despite the fact that there were cases of complaints having been made to this Commission, not one of them had been decided positively (see below and our report for 2014). Given that there have been 8 verdicts brought down against the Republic of Bulgaria in Strasbourg and the numerous criticisms and recommendations contained in different international reports on the situation of the Macedonian minority, such conduct by the Commission poses serious questions regarding its activities and objectivity. Apart from that it turned out that the commission had avoided launching investigations not only in connection with the Macedonian minority, but on the basis of principle, which greatly hinders the struggle against discrimination in the country.

Many documents were handed over and a meeting was requested with the President of the Commission, however to date no response has been received in regard to this matter (see below).

The meeting with Deputy Minister Petkov was held on 26 October 2015. The Deputy Minister informed the **representatives of OMO "Ilinden"-PIRIN** about the imminent introduction into Parliament of a draft of the Law on Amending and Complementing the Law on Non-Profit Entities, by virtue of which the registration of Macedonian organisations would be facilitated so as to remove the intensified monitoring of the Republic of Bulgaria by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The Macedonian representatives, while welcoming this initiative and the proposed changes, as well as the fact that a meeting was held, expressed certain fears; namely, that the reasons for refusal of registration have to date not been spelled out in the law and remained grounded in a policy of discrimination and that the new procedure, in and of itself, would not guarantee resolution of the matter.

Even though the meetings held represented a positive step, it is still early to speak of the beginning of a dialogue. One of the meetings (with the Commission) was held at the lowest level and was not followed up on either in writing or through the organizing of further meetings. The other meeting, on the other hand, was merely a one-off informative meeting. Given the refusal of other state institutions to meet and the absence of any initiative for such meetings on the part of the authorities, together with their solitary nature, we are compelled for the present to conclude that real dialogue between the Bulgarian authorities and the Macedonians in Bulgaria still does not exist.

Violation of the Right of Association

During 2015 not one Macedonian organization obtained registration. During this year there were four cases awaiting registration before the courts. Two of these were refused and two have not received any reply.

Refused Registrations

OMO "Ilinden" and the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights "Tolerance/ Tolerantnost", which were denied registration by the Blagoevgrad Regional Court in 2014 (see our report for 2014), were also denied registration, after a one year delay, by the Sofia Appeals Court. A characteristic of these verdicts was that even though the court proceedings took place a long time ago- 2 December 2014 and 8 February 2015- official decisions were handed down only at the end of 2015.

A new feature of the verdicts of the Sofia Appeals Court was that this time the matter of the Macedonian minority was carefully circumvented, even though this matter was one of the main topics discussed during the proceedings, as can be seen from a comparison of the text of the decisions with the dissenting opinions issued regarding them. Even though the decisions were inspired by ethnic bias and were intended to limit the rights of people with a Macedonian consciousness, in contrast to earlier decisions, the Sofia Appeals Court avoided displaying these attitudes in its decisions. We believe that this was done deliberately, as the texts of previous decisions of the same court were used on several occasions in our reports to illustrate discrimination on an ethnic basis against the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria. Instead of an open admission of the real reasons, the court on this occasion employed formal statements or arguments which have been previously condemned by the

(Continued on page 60)

European Court of Human Rights (see *Stankov and others vs Bulgaria*).

Decision № 2272 of 18th November which denied the appeal of OMO "Ilinden".

The Court was guided by an intention to not make its assessment solely on the basis of documents submitted, given that it had not accepted the declared goals, tasks and methods of the association as being its real and final ones. Throughout the whole document there is a constant repetition of the statement regarding the "real goals" that are being pursued, which differ from those that are publicly proclaimed, and which the Court claims to have discovered by also including in its assessment the activities of the founders of the association both before its founding and outside of it, as well as what it terms "commonly known matters". This, under Bulgarian conditions, means the use of traditional hate speech against Macedonians as a factual basis for denying the registration of a Macedonian association, given that the following matters are included under such "commonly known matters" in connection with the Macedonians in Bulgaria; namely, that they are traitors, apostates, agents of foreign intelligence agencies, separatists and anti-Bulgarians. These actions of the Court, which do not apply to any other associations, were justified on the basis that "the law needs to be applied equally to everyone" as well as to protect "the rights of all citizens and legal entities without exception". The Court in reality acted as a defender of the rights of "others" from the danger, which in their view is posed by the association. Consequently, the goals of the association's programme as indicated in its Statutes were not considered as its final goals and instead an attempt was made to discover "its general sense and reason, and in making such an assessment it follows completely that the revelation of the actual general will of the founders regarding the purposes and methods of the association, respectively be sought; that is – the presumed activities to be carried out as designated by its founders after its registration"; and "in opposition to the right to freedom of association claimed by the appellants there exists an obligation on the part of the state and, consequently the court, to maintain the necessary balance between the exercise of the individual rights of the applicants and the rights of other legal entities, together with the state's obligation to ensure the maintenance of public order, national security and the security of its citizens. " In rejecting registration, the Court based its decision on the following considerations: 1. The provocative statements and behaviour of the applicants vis-a-vis the state and people with differing views would lead to clashes and as "a consequence actual violations of public order." In reality, such violations were carried out against the founders of the association and this is the reason why they sued the state in the European Court of Human Rights (*Stankov and others*). 2. The declaration that everyone has the opportunity to become a member was said to be merely a formal statement and invalid (the argument used for this finding was that the association aims to defend the Macedonians and consequently people of another ethnicity would not be able to become members). 3. The Court justified its discrimination by even pointing out that Bulgaria is a member of the European Union and that the latter finds itself in a difficult situation due to the emigration crisis. Guided as it was by the above reasoning, the Court pointed to two reasons for denying registration:

1. The association may create social tension due to the heightened sensibility of the population. In the current international situation such a danger, deemed to be "hypothetical, yet according to the Court also actually existing at present" must be prevented through the refusal of registration.

2. The registration would violate the rights and legitimate interests of "the remaining Bulgarian citizens." This was the case as citizens have the right to believe that they are citizens of a European country in which the discriminatory practices which are claimed to occur by the association do not take place.

On the basis of these hypothetical problems that could arise in the future, the Court deemed that this association should not be granted any registration whatsoever, rather than subsequently facing the choice of having to withdraw registration, as provided for by the law, in the event that there were hypothetical and eventual violations which would have to be sanctioned. Non-registration according to the Court is a preventative measure to protect public order and the rights of the citizens of Bulgaria.

The Court circumvented the basic problem of the "Macedonian minority" by employing the typical argument that as there is no definition of the concept of national minority, there was no point at all in discussing whether such a Macedonian minority exists.

Decision No 1803 of 08 November 2015 of the Sofia Appellate Court Against The Committee for the Defence of Rights "Tolerance".

The Court found no serious motive for the ban. Consciously avoiding the true motive-the Macedonian minority (that it was a basic motive is clear from the dissenting opinion) it attempted to justify its decision by pointing to violations of a formal nature, but it managed to indicate only two, one of which is invalid, and the other without legal effect. Three of the individuals were identified not only by their names but also by their ID card numbers, yet as they had not submitted their Individual Citizen Numbers, the Court found that they could not be concretely identified, which is directly and objectively false, since it is by virtue of the number of the identity card that this can in the main be arrived at. Furthermore, part of an article (No 23) of the Statute did not meet lawful requirements. Although the same part appears to be legally null and void and would not lead to any legal or other consequences or violations and despite the fact that there are registered NGOs in whose statutes the same text appears, the court determined that it was sufficient reason for registration to be refused.

In regard to both objections the Court if it so wished could have requested that amendments be made, which was not done at either the court of first or second instance and the court of first instance did not in any case note the "violations" referred to by the court of second instance. However, both courts justified their decisions with one and the same general, formal and essentially false statements: namely, **"The Court shares the findings of the Trial Court that the objectives and tasks have not been outlined in a way so as to establish the socially beneficial nature of the activities of the association"**

The dubious nature of the reasoning adopted by the Court in both cases is evident from the fact that both decisions were adopted accompanied by a dissenting opinion. This opinion categorically rejected the reasoning of the other judicial colleagues and supported the view that the associations meet all the conditions set out and therefore should be registered. The refusal to register was deemed to be unjustified, disproportionate and unnecessary in a democratic society.¹⁴

Protraction of Cases

Two other organisations - "The Macedonian Club for Ethnic Tolerance and Preservation of Macedonian Folklore, Traditions and Customs" and "Makedon Suringrad - Association for the Preservation and Study of Cultural and Historical Heritage" which submitted applications for registration in 2014, have not received decisions for more than one year. They are being treated in the same way that the Committee for the Defence of Rights "Tolerance" was treated last year- they have been subjected to intentional delays, objections lacking in substance and the return of applications. According to the opinion of the lawyer for these two associations, Velichka Atanasova, from October 2015:

"To date we have not officially received a refusal, the documents are still being considered.... However, my monitoring of the refusals that have been received indicates that usually the refusal consists of some sort of formal reasoning such as, for example, that the goals indicated and the sphere of activities are not precisely and clearly formulated and as such the court was unable to arrive at a justified conclusion as to whether those activities and goals do not contradict the law and decent moral norms. It is precisely here at this point that one must turn one's attention to the fact that the reasons for refusals should be clearly and accurately set out with concrete arguments advanced. "

The lawyer has been summoned by the court four times and asked meaningless questions¹⁵ so that the Court could seek out a reason for refusing registration.

¹⁴ The two dissenting opinions belong to Judge Galina Ivanova-see the dissenting opinions attached to the cited judgement.

¹⁵ Such as whether the organization has an economic goal or not, despite the fact that this was clearly stated in the Statutes.

That is one of the most serious problems when attempts are made to register Macedonian organizations in Bulgaria. The Court does not treat them as it does other organisations-namely to verify whether they meet the requirements of the law, but rather examines applications with the express predetermined goal of refusing registration- and all remaining procedures relate to the seeking out of a motive and reason for refusing the applica-

(Continued on page 62)

tion. In that sense, any returns of applications for "corrections" are never intended to correct actually existing errors in order to allow registration, but represent an attempt to find a reason for delaying or rejecting an application. All attempts to register an organization to date have been characterised by such procedures.

Planned Changes to the Law in Order to Facilitate the Registration of Organizations

In 2015, amendments to the Law on Legal Entities with Non-Profit Goals, which provide for registration to occur on the same basis as companies and at the Agency for Registration instead of before the regional courts, were discussed in the public domain. In a conversation with representatives of OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN, Deputy Minister for Culture, Petko Petkov, stated that these changes were being made for all citizens, but particularly in connection with the enhanced monitoring that Bulgaria has been subjected to by the Committee of Ministers due to the non-registration of Macedonian organizations.

The draft law was approved by the Ministry on 14 November 2014¹⁶ and on 7 October 2015 was submitted to Parliament.¹⁷ By the end of 2015, the law had not yet been voted on in Parliament.

While it is commendable that some changes are being made, and especially that for the first time in half a century representatives of the Macedonian minority have been welcomed into a Bulgarian ministry, serious reservations still exist about the proposed solution.

The problem of non-registration of Macedonian organisations is not included in the existing law such that any change will not guarantee a solution. The problem lies in the violation of the existing law in relation to Macedonian organisations whereby the law itself is interpreted in a completely illegal, unconstitutional and discriminatory manner. The nationalistic treatment of the Macedonian minority as a threat to national security and the unity of the nation, as well as the practice of deliberate discrimination, rather than the law itself, is that which is preventing the registration of Macedonian organisations. Failure to register Macedonian organisations forms part of discrimination on ethnic grounds in Bulgaria against the Macedonians, rather than reflecting deficiencies in the law.

Given this situation, the amendment of the law is merely of a cosmetic nature as in the event of a refusal to register the decision is once again appealed against in Court, i.e. it reverts to the same starting point at which it is currently located.

¹⁶ http://bcnl.org/uploadfiles/documents/zakonoproekti/zulnc%202014/proekt_zid_zakon_635515736038883159.pdf, <http://www.strategy.bg/PublicConsultations/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=1521>, <http://www.strategy.bg/PublicConsultations/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=1703>

¹⁷ <http://www.parliament.bg/bg/bills/ID/15570>, text of the draft law <http://parliament.bg/bills/43/502-01-83.pdf>

However, there is some hope that the Republic of Bulgaria by means of this change is seeking a way to stop the violation of the right of association of the Macedonians, however without recognising that such violation was ethnically motivated. Blame is cast on the imperfections in the existing law and the state absolves itself of the charge of intentional and deliberate discrimination. The Macedonian organizations would not have anything against allowing the state to extract itself with honour from the discriminatory swamp in which it remains bogged down. Unfortunately, they do not believe that the state intends to stop such discrimination.

The dominant view among Macedonian activists in Bulgaria is that in this case traditional state policy towards Macedonians is being implemented; namely, cosmetic changes which aim to satisfy and eliminate the external pressure being applied without actually stopping discrimination against the Macedonians. Or in the case that the pressure continues and remains strong - to relent on the issue of the registration of Macedonian organizations, however without changing the general policy of denial of and discrimination against the minority.

Refusal by the Commission Against Discrimination to Protect Macedonians

The Commission Against Discrimination has not in recent years initiated an investigation into a single case of

discrimination against Macedonians in Bulgaria. To date it has not done so in either its annual reports or recommendations to the government and other institutions of the state. The Commission did not deal with discrimination against Macedonians, despite a series of judgments by the ECHR and the recommendations contained in various international reports.

To date, not only has it not initiated investigations into a single case of discrimination against Macedonians, but has rather refused to provide protection against discrimination, even in those cases where it had launched investigations in the past.

The Tapanska Case

On 4 August 2015 the Commission for Protection Against Discrimination rejected the appeals of Yanka Tapanska – who had been discriminated against in her workplace because of her ethnicity (Macedonian). The Commission refused to comment on the issue of denial of justice which Tapanska encountered at the hands of the **Prosecutor's Office and the court which examined her case. The Commission justified its action by referring to the supposed independence of the judiciary and considered this to be sufficient reason for not expressing a view regarding the particular verdicts, actions and inactions of the Court and Prosecution. Tapanska's appeal regarding discrimination in the workplace was again rejected because it had not been proven who had written the offensive notes in which she was called a "traitor" at her workplace in the Ministry for Internal Affairs and because she herself has not submitted proof. At the same time, the Commission rejected Tapanska's requests that action be taken to prove that the said discrimination occurred.** In its decision the Commission even used complete untruths such as that the employer removed the discriminatory note after he had been made aware of it,¹⁸ whereas he had in fact refused to pay any attention to the matter and Tapanska had removed the note herself. The employer only responded afterwards and insisted that she hand over proof of the note (there is more information about this case in the 2014 report). The commission used these grounds to discontinue proceedings in her case, did not examine one of the complaints and ignored the other. The Commission, on the other hand, established that in her case there had been no violation of the Law on Protection from Discrimination by her employer and colleagues.¹⁹

Tapanska appealed the decision but her appeal was dismissed pursuant to the decision taken on 15/10/2015 by the Administrative Court in Blagoevgrad presided over by Maria Todorova, by virtue of which it was deemed **that it was not clear whether her appeal referred to part or all of the Commission's decision.**

The decision of the Commission Against Discrimination represents yet another refusal by a Bulgarian institution to protect Yanka Tapanska who was not only insulted publicly in her workplace- a police institution-because of her Macedonian identity, but also fired shortly thereafter by the same institution despite being an invalid and the legal prohibition against the dismissal of such people.

Correspondence with the Commission

The only positive sign this year is the meeting which took place with the regional representative of the Commission in Blagoevgrad on 19 October 2015. At that meeting, numerous documents displaying the existence of discrimination on ethnic grounds against Macedonians in Bulgaria were handed over. So far, there has been no response in relation to the documentation submitted. A meeting has been requested with the President of the Commission, however to date no such meeting has been held, nor has there been a response in this regard, which can be interpreted as a tacit refusal to meet.

On 20 November 2015, more than a month after the Commission had not responded in relation to the documents submitted earlier, several Macedonian organizations²⁰ sent a note reminding the Commission about this omission. On 4th January 2016, the Commission replied that the reminder note had not fulfilled all the necessary conditions and that if it was not corrected within two weeks the proceedings initiated would be terminated. Therefore, instead of initiating an investigation of its own accord on the basis of the numerous documents submitted, the Commission sought a way to put an end to the proceedings. The note was resubmitted after all necessary and requested amendments had been made, however at the time that this report was finalised no response had been received.

(Continued on page 64)

CONCLUSION

¹⁸ Decision No 330, 4 August 2015, p.3.

¹⁹ Decision No 330, p 4.

²⁰ OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN, Macedonian Discussion Club and the Association of Repressed Macedonians in Bulgaria.

Yet again this year, discrimination against the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria continues on without any change in the situation. It continues to be denied, subjected to unpunished hate speech, deprived of the rights provided for in the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, and does not have the opportunity to exercise its right to peaceful assembly.

Discrimination against members of this minority is too organized, comprehensive, continuous and unprovoked for it to be explained away as due to a prevailing atmosphere of ethnic intolerance. It is the product of an organised, determined policy conducted by the state on many levels. The coordinated actions of the State Agency for National Security (SANS), certain social forces, institutions and the media show that we are being confronted by an organised policy. To date virtually all authorities in Bulgaria have spoken negatively of the minority. Long experience with discrimination against Macedonians has led all Macedonian activists, without exception, to form the general view that that the coordinating centre for such activities is located within SANS which is the direct successor of the Third Section of the Sixth Directorate of the totalitarian Agency for State Security, which dealt with combating "pro-Macedonian nationalism." This can be inferred from the continuity of personnel within this agency and the methods employed to organise the policy of discrimination, as well as the affiliation with such services of some of the main actors and exponents of this policy in the public domain, such as the leader of VMRO BND Krassimir Karakachanov, Bozhidar Dimitrov, Krassimir Uzunov (FOCUS News Agency) and others. Insofar as such a policy continues, it will be difficult to achieve serious progress in protecting the rights of Macedonians in Bulgaria.

Translated from Bulgarian by Dr Chris Popov and Ivelina Ilieva.



ABOUT MHRMI & AMHRC

Macedonian Human Rights Movement International (MHRMI) has been active since 1986. The Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) has been active since 1984.

Both MHRMI and AMHRC are non-governmental organisations that inform and advocate about combating racism and promoting human rights. Our joint aspiration is to ensure that Macedonian communities and other excluded groups throughout the world, are recognised, respected and afforded equitable treatment.

RELATED ORGANIZATIONS

The AMHRC and MHRMI are part of an international Macedonian network that spans Australia, North America and Europe, including:



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MACEDONIAN ALLIANCE FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

The political party of the Macedonians in Albania

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MACEDONIAN SOCIETY "ILINDEN" TIRANA

A Macedonian cultural association in Tirana, Albania

Website www.ilinden-tirana.com



NOVA ZORA

A pro-Macedonian newspaper based in Aegean Macedonia, Greece,
edited by Dimitri Jovanov and with a printed circulation of 20,000 copies per month

Website novazora.gr



NARODNA VOLJA

A Pro-Macedonian newspaper based in Pirin Macedonia, Bulgaria, edited
by Jan Pirinski and Stojko Stojkov. The first edition was published in 1980

Website www.narodnavolja.com

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