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Politics in Macedonia: A Discourse on Recent Events

By George Vlahov

Preamble

It is very easy to become emotional about politics, though it is commonly unproductive; it encourages one to place veracity on the periphery; to present puppets as idols and to expend energy on the production of elaborate symbolic gestures, which are revealed to be irrelevant, misplaced, or worse still, fraudulent, beneath the glamorous surface. It is abundantly more challenging to maintain a rational focus on the achievable, as it is typically tedious and distant from one's dreams.

The SDSM Romance - "The Criminals must go to Jail/**Криминалот у Затвор!**"

Over and over again, ad nauseum, from the SDSM hierarchy, pro SDSM media and SDSM supporters on social media: "the problems in Macedonia cannot be resolved, until the criminals have been caught and punished". Well, perhaps, but which criminals? Of course, *only* the VMRO-DPMNE "crooks" who have been governing Macedonia for the last ten years.

Unfortunately, the problem is much more complex than that, as Macedonia is a country in which politics is a major business opportunity, where nepotism, cronyism, bribery and other forms of corruption, are regularly in plain view, at public and private institutional levels. Thus "incarcerating the crooks", refers to thousands of people, not just politicians, but also party and state functionaries, business people, etc. Furthermore SDSM channels consistently ignore the role of VMRO-DPMNE's partners, throughout their ten

years in government, DUI. Understandably it is difficult to pose such questions in relation to DUI when one is intending to establish a coalition government with it, though that is far from principled behaviour!

Moreover, it is simply not believable, as SDSM and DUI spokespeople claim, that DUI failed to reach an agreement to form a coalition government with VMRO-DPMNE because DUI was adamant that the Special Public Prosecutor's (SPP) team investigating corruption at the highest government levels, should be permitted to continue their investigations. DUI was intimately entangled with VMRO-DPMNE in much of the alleged governmental chicanery during the last decade and all the indications from VMRO channels, right until the very end of the negotiations, were that both parties are very keen to continue their dubious partnership. What is more than likely, is that DUI, which suffered a devastating loss of ten seats at the conclusion of the most recent national elections, decided it is not politically viable to continue as a VMRO-DPMNE coalition partner.

It could also be that Washington, via its Embassy in Macedonia, which many commentators agree, exerts a powerful influence over DUI, decreed a coalition with VMRO-DPMNE, out of order. One might further speculate that Washington has done this for two reasons: firstly, as punishment for VMRO-DPMNE's 'flirtation' with Russia, and secondly, as a means of installing a government in Macedonia, i.e. a SDSM led government, which

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will presumably be more obedient.

There is further speculation that an obedient SDSM government might pave the way, for a change in the name of the Republic of Macedonia, in order to satisfy the racism emanating from Athens and thereby lead to Macedonia's formal NATO "integration". If that speculation is accurate, it is likely that Washington has made yet another foreign policy miscalculation, for, such an unprincipled "integration" is extremely unlikely to take place, as Macedonia would probably be engulfed by a highly destructive internal conflict, well before the ink has dried on a document declaring a change in the name of the country. The belief that the majority of Macedonians will peacefully accept a change in their country's name, just to please the racist elites in Athens, involves a level of ignorance and incompetence that is criminal. That said, it is important to underline that Zaev has stated that his policy is no different from Gruevski's - i.e. a referendum.

In conclusion, the "jailing of the criminals" is something that should have occurred a long time ago, during the 1990's when senior SDSM figures snatched state owned businesses for a song and later sold the same, for pots of gold to foreign capital. The short term memory of the typical SDSM member/supporter is beneath contempt. VMRO-DPMNE did not invent the politics of corruption in Macedonia, it simply carried on traditions that have existed in Macedonia, at least since Ottoman rule; traditions which SDSM maintained throughout the 1990s. Zoran Zaev, the current leader of SDSM, was himself pardoned of corruption charges in 2008, by the SDSM President of Macedonia, Crvenkovski, before he was even tried! For those who are interested, there is video evidence, freely available on social media, allegedly showing Zaev in the process of extracting a

bribe, in his role as the mayor of Strumica.

VMRO-DPMNE and the Tirana Platform

If Gruevski/VMRO-DPMNE were really seriously concerned about the Tirana Platform, which was released to the public on 7 January 2017, they would have immediately publicly rejected it. Instead, they accepted it as a legitimate negotiating tool and entered into official discussions with the ethnic-Albanian party, DUI. During the course of the latter, the Platform was rarely mentioned by VMRO-DPMNE sources.

The negotiations began on the 9th of January and according to the constitution, Gruevski had 20 days in which to form a coalition government. Thus, officially and unofficially the negotiations between Gruevski and DUI's leader Ahmeti, lasted until January 29. During that period, consistently, throughout the mainstream media in Macedonia, only two issues were stressed by Gruevski and others in the VMRO-DPMNE hierarchy. Namely that VMRO-DPMNE would refuse to countenance converting the Albanian language into an official state language, on an equal footing with Macedonian, as that would require a change to the constitution. Secondly and just as consistently, Gruevski/VMRO-DPMNE made it crystal clear that they would not under any circumstances consider extending the mandate of the Special Public Prosecutor.

Notably, Ahmeti/DUI, often publicly insisted on the very opposite. On a number of occasions Ahmeti unequivocally declared that the Platform of the Albanians and an extension of the SPP's mandate are "non-negotiable". As early as January 11, Ahmeti went so far as to assert that a rejection of the Platform, would result in "taking the country to new elections".

Given that, it is strange, to say the least, that senior VMRO-DPMNE figures were regularly quoted expressing nothing but optimism about the possi-

bility of a coalition with DUI. For example on January 22, Antonio Miloshoski made a widely reported and very confident statement that a coalition deal would be shortly completed.

Indeed it appears that an agreement in principle was reached, by the executives of both parties; this probably involved a further expansion of the official usage of the Albanian language, in a manner that does not involve any need to alter the constitution of the country, as the VMRO-DPMNE led government had previously agreed to do in 2012. However, as we indicated above, pressure from the lower orders in DUI and from the American embassy, seem to have led to a last minute veto of the agreement.

Whatever the case, the lack of concern exhibited by VMRO-DPMNE, specifically in regard to the Platform, is no better illustrated than by the *official* VMRO-DPMNE statement, issued at the end of January, in relation to the failure to establish a coalition government with DUI. We present that statement in full:

Dear all,

VMRO-DPMNE informs the public that a coalition agreement with DUI, was not reached.

VMRO-DPMNE together with the coalition For A Better Macedonia, as the victor which gained the most support from the citizens, the most votes and representatives, from the last elections, reckons that the formation of a government should serve the purpose of ending the political crisis, not deepening it and therefore we believe that the holding of new elections is a sensible solution for ending the crisis and placing reform priorities first. All other solutions will only lead to new conflicts and problems in an already divided society and will not serve the purpose of realising anybody's program.

It is obvious that somebody wants to ignore the will of the majority of citizens and to push Macedonia into a new phase of uncertainty in its development. VMRO-DPMNE stands by its principled positions in relation to strategic issues of state

and national interest and the declaration adopted on 17 December 2016.

Respectfully,

*Centre for Communications VMRO-DPMNE
30/1/2017.*

Not a single word about the Platform. It was a week or so after the negotiations broke down and SDSM began negotiations with the Albanians, that Gruevski/VMRO-DPMNE began earnestly demanding a rejection of the Platform, which VMRO-DPMNE channels quickly re-christened from simply a "Platform" or an "Albanian Platform", to a "Tirana Platform". Too late! In this context it is not possible to give credence to the argument that the VMRO/DUI negotiations broke down over the Platform, especially as those negotiations were entirely lacking in transparency. An examination of the more distant past, indicates the likely validity of the very different narrative reality, we suggested earlier.

While complaints, at present, that a further expansion of official state bi-lingualism would be a serious problem likely to fan separatist tendencies and create unnecessarily onerous difficulties for the state, are valid, one must highlight that, in the Macedonian media, most of the complainants are VMRO-DPMNE operatives and supporters who had little to say about it and the Platform in general, until a SDSM led coalition government became a serious possibility.

Moreover, many commentators, in both the mainstream and social media, do not seem to have been aware or were consciously ignoring the fact that in practice, official bi-lingualism was largely enacted in Macedonia, as long ago as 2008, by a VMRO-DPMNE government, led by Gruevski, as part of a secret deal ("The May Agreement") between VMRO-DPMNE and DUI - the content of which, is still kept hidden from the public.

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In August 2008 a law was passed in parliament, which clearly delineated the bi-lingual status of the Republic of Macedonia ("Law for the usage of a language spoken by not less than 20% of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia and also within local government units"). This legislation was passed only two months after early elections, in which VMRO-DPMNE secured an absolute majority of 63 representatives. The legislation was published in the official state herald, issue no.101 on the 13th of August 2008 and came into force eight days later, on August 21. As per the requirements of the new law, it was published in both Macedonian and Albanian. Both versions carry the signature of the parliamentary president and VMRO-DPMNE MP, Trajko Veljanovski.

The legislation contains 60 articles and explicitly guarantees the use of the Albanian language in all organs of the state and government, i.e. in the parliament, all the ministries, the courts, election procedures, by the Public Prosecutor, on all personal documents of the citizenry, including in the state archives; in the execution of police powers; in broadcasting; infrastructure projects & facilities, local government, finance, economy, education, science, culture and other areas and institutions. Subsequently official use of Albanian was again *expanded* by the VMRO-DPMNE led government in 2011/12.

According to these laws, can the President/ Speaker of the Parliament, utilize the Albanian language? Yes, Section II, Article 3, makes that perfectly clear. "Oh but we can't have a war criminal like Dzaferi as the speaker!" Indeed that should not happen, however it is difficult to take demands for interdictions like that, seriously, when they are made by supporters of a party, i.e. VMRO-DPMNE, who had nothing to say when their VMRO-DPMNE made that same Dzaferi, Min-

ster for Defence.

In spite of these facts, both in Macedonia and numerous Diaspora communities, there is a persistent and popular expression of a naive belief "that VMRO is better, more trustworthy", especially on issues of "national concern". Remarkably, such comments are commonly made in a context wherein it is admitted that the corruption allegations against VMRO-DPMNE are a legitimate concern, but ultimately, are to be regarded as of peripheral relevance at best, for "VMRO is patriotic". In response, one is often lost for words, as if the alleged misconduct, based as it is, on publicly available and serious evidence, can be ignored in the "national interest". It has been a stunningly successful VMRO-DPMNE propaganda campaign that appears to have convinced the majority of Macedonians, in Macedonia and the diaspora, that Gruevski's long hold on government is imbued with a patriotic legitimacy. The reality is that the alleged corruption has gone hand in hand with the maintenance of a government, which, over the course of the last decade has been guilty of steadily implementing policies designed to satisfy extreme nationalists from the ethnic Albanian political bloc in Macedonia. And the wider reality is that the executives of all political parties in Macedonia need to be replaced and that all the parties are in need of deep democratic reform.

Could Reforms be Driven by the Protests in Macedonia?

Soon after Gruevski publicly called for them, large scale demonstrations followed and have continued for 50 days. As with last year's SDSM controlled manifestations, one should exhibit caution in regard to accepting the "For a United Macedonia" demonstrations at face value, i.e. as an independent initiative led by concerned citizens. The main leaders/organisers, namely Achkovska, Damovski and Ilievski, are commonly and with jus-

tification, regarded as VMRO-DPMNE supporters/operatives. For example, Ilievski, under a pseudonym, has written countless commentaries in favour of VMRO-DPMNE and there are numerous photographs of him in the company of senior VMRO-DPMNE figures, circulating on social media.

It is clear that, as with last year's SDSM demonstrations, many serious and independently minded citizens are participating in the "For a United Macedonia" gatherings. And of course, one agrees with one of the main messages, namely: "no to the Tirana Platform". Though until the movement demonstrates that it is not simply and only about rejecting SDSM/Zaev, that it is also about rejecting the dubious executive presently in charge of VMRO-DPMNE, one can only assume, as was the case with last year's SDSM demonstrations, that it is largely operating within a party political context designed to force new early elections, which lead to the reinstallation of a VMRO-DPMNE government, with an unchanged executive; an executive that is substantially responsible - along with the SDSM executive - for creating the existential crisis Macedonia finds itself in. Such a result may lead to a short term amelioration of the crisis, but the long term consequences are likely to be extremely dire, as the same individuals who have taken Macedonia to the brink, will be left in control. Thus to argue that a way out of the crisis for Macedonia, is for the demonstrations to carry on as in the present format, is, at best, naive and at worst, despicable political opportunism.

We can be reasonably confident that VMRO-DPMNE would comfortably win new early elections, as it is simply annihilating SDSM in the propaganda war in the mainstream media and on social media. In that propaganda war, VMRO-DPMNE has successfully distanced itself from the Platform while totally enmeshing SDSM with that same Platform. The latter not without substantial

assistance from their political opponents. At various points during the last seven weeks of demonstrations, Zaev has attempted, in various interviews and statements, to convince the public "that there are no more platforms ... only the published government program" etc, but one has to remain sceptical, especially as MP's from the ethnic Albanian parties, i.e. his coalition partners, regularly contradict him.

President Ivanov

Over a period of weeks, I read numerous media reports and comments on social media praising President Ivanov for his supposed courage, in relation to his refusal to grant Zaev a mandate to govern, in defiance of immense international pressure, especially from various EU representatives. Though where was his courage when the Tirana Platform was first released? Why was he silent during the period of negotiations between VMRO-DPMNE and DUI? Perhaps he was busy using it for another purpose. More likely, Gruevski had and still has it, firmly in his grasp.

It is simply dishonest to profess that President Ivanov is above party politics. Macedonia has never had such a President, there has always been either a SDSM or VMRO-DPMNE President. Ivanov is a VMRO-DPMNE President and it is very reasonable to assume that he did not make the decision to withhold the governmental mandate from Zaev, of his own volition. It is also of critical importance to remember that in April last year, President Ivanov announced an unethical decision to amnesty all politicians, before the Special Public Prosecution team, charged with investigating alleged corruption at the highest executive levels of the Gruevski government, had completed its investigations. It was a decision that plunged Macedonia deeper into crisis and directly led to the current intensification of that same crisis.

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One cannot now help pointing out the inconsistent behaviour of VMRO-DPMNE members, supporters and apologists everywhere. Presently, from the latter, it is common to hear the argument that "first the country must be saved from the Tirana Platform via new elections and then the corruption can be dealt with." However, a year ago, there was no Tirana Platform and VMRO-DPMNE was in government and would have remained in government, even if the Special Public Prosecution team eventually found evidence demonstrating that Gruevski and or some of his closest cronies were guilty of corruption. Yet, at that time, even in those conditions, VMRO-DPMNE members and supporters, in Macedonia and the diaspora, simply would not hear of it and many of them literally applauded President Ivanov for "his" unethical decision, which, to repeat, led directly to the present worsening of the crisis in Macedonia. Somewhat later, President Ivanov cancelled the pardons, but it was too late, thousands were marching on the streets and Macedonian society became far more polarised.

Is withholding the mandate from Zaev, legal? I don't know, I am not a lawyer; nor is it a simple matter to find a legal opinion on this issue, that cannot be undermined by pointing to the political affiliations of the source in question. Though one thing is clear, if the formation of a coalition government on the basis of the Tirana Platform is unlawful, then the time to declare that was soon after the public release of the document and not after your party's negotiations for a coalition have failed and when your political opponents are on the verge of concluding a deal to form government.

In summary, believing that President Ivanov made the decisions referred to above, of his own volition, is naive and to present him as a figure of in-

tegrity, is obviously fallacious. One can reject the Tirana Platform and the executives of both SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE, without having to resort to the pretence of presenting President Ivanov as heroic and principled.

To an extent, it is understandable that many have acted out such a pretence, as without it, one is literally left with an awful truth, namely: that there do not appear to be any senior figures among Macedonia's political class, that are to be regarded as trustworthy or as responsible enough to navigate a principled way out of the current calamity. None-the-less, we in the AMHRC make no apology for not involving our organisation, a human rights NGO, with social gatherings or written declarations produced in support of either President Ivanov or the "For a United Macedonia" demonstrations. To have done so, would have meant sacrificing the philosophy of human rights underpinning the AMHRC's *raison d'être*, for unprincipled political partisanship.

New Elections and a Census?

Over a year ago, in this Review, our stated desire, was to see disaffected MP's from both of the major parties, begin communicating with each other, open up forums for constructive dialogue and decide to reject the corrupt politicking of their respective executives and then form a new voting bloc. Such a bloc could be very powerful and could tip the balance in favour of a positive resolution of the current crisis, even if it does not have the 67 parliamentary votes necessary to form a government. Such a bloc could control the balance of power.

It is important to underline that too many discussions in regard to politics in Macedonia, are based on a false dichotomy, i.e. that SDSM is essentially made up of "traitors" and that the opposite is true of VMRO-DPMNE. That is too simplistic and there are decent and indecent people on both sides, as

our short discussion about VMRO-DPMNE's decade in government above, demonstrates. It is blatantly obvious that the executives of both the major parties have proven themselves to be criminally incompetent. They are largely responsible for the crisis. So is it realistic to expect that new elections will resolve much, if the leadership teams remain as they are? Possibly in the short term, but certainly not in the long term.

That a census is needed, is obvious and one really has to hold VMRO-DPMNE responsible for the fact that there has not been one since 2002. Though it is also to be questioned whether it is realistic to think that an objective census could be held in the current highly polarised social climate. An accurate census result depends on the objective work of at least hundreds of administrators at both national and local levels. In the present circumstances, we cannot see that happening. In any case, there is no need for a census in order to justify rejecting the Albanian platform, it is an undemocratic document. That aside, we reiterate that the only course of action likely to lead to a fundamental change in the bread and circuses reality of Macedonian politics, is a mobilisation of responsible people from both of the major parties and from the wider citizenry, leading to the removal of the incompetent executives and the establishment of a unity government. It may be unrealistic (unfortunately there have been no signs indicating that MP's are willing to break ranks), but it is no more unrealistic than the other options, and it is the most principled way forward. It is very disappointing to observe that, so far, party loyalty has proven to be more important to Macedonia's MP's, than loyalty to the state and society they are supposed to be serving.

18/4/2017

P.S.

Well after the completion of the article above, a

number of dramatic events took place. On April 27, a substantial number of the "For a United Macedonia" demonstrators, invaded the national parliament in Skopje and physically assaulted several MP's, including Zoran Zaev. Notably though, not one MP from DUI was injured, in fact, at the time of the melee, most DUI MP's were mysteriously absent.

Upon reading about the absence of DUI MP's, I could not help re-calling some sentences I had scribbled down around two weeks prior, in relation to a different context:

The danger which kept us awake, was a dream, our insomnia derived from our embrace of nefarious charlatans - purveyors of patriotic reveries.

We purchased their fabrications by permitting ourselves to be mobilised for a struggle against dissemblers standing at the head of others; as it turned out, our charlatans and their dissemblers, were colluding against all, not proficiently, but definitely, from the beginning.

There were a few among us, who cautioned us to think first; but in our miserable and or mundane stations, we were more than ready to be entranced by the energy emanating from the most immature in our circles, those who have a tendency to gain pleasure from malice, like spitting on or at a symbol of cultural difference. We were mesmerised by those who like standing before a crowd, no matter how large or small, whether for reason or for myth, and in our unfortunate case, it was myth.

On reflection, it is impossible to say with any certainty, whether such a reaction is justified. It is simply how I felt at that moment. That aside, the invasion of the parliament led to a drastic momentum shift in favour of Zoran Zaev and SDSM. Soon after, enormous Western political pressure, with plenty of moral rhetoric in relation to the storming of the parliament, was applied to Ivanov

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and he began indicating that if Zaev is willing to sign a declaration containing certain promises, then he would be willing to grant Zaev a mandate to form government. Zaev eventually agreed and put his name to the following:

First, we ensure protection of the unity, sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and multiethnic Macedonia. We guarantee protection of the constitutional order and territorial integrity of the Republic of Macedonia. We guarantee protection of national interests and improve the lives of all citizens, regardless of ethnic religious and linguistic affiliation. We guarantee that the process of decision making for the citizens of Macedonia will be in accordance to the basic democratic principles and the rule of law, without prejudice to the Republic of Macedonia in a position of subordination or dependence in relation to another country. Not a single document, a platform, declaration, act or action that would be contrary to the above views can be a condition or basis for the formation and or practice of the government of the Republic of Macedonia.

Thus Zaev was granted a mandate to form a government on May 10. Since then, the "For a United Macedonia" demonstrations have virtually come to an end. Notably, one of the leaders, Damovski, was recently reported on social media to have made a disparaging remark about the Macedonian diaspora. To paraphrase, the essence of the comment was that the Macedonian diaspora barks a lot but has no bite. This infuriated numerous members of organisations that had given an abundant amount of virtually unqualified support to Damovski and his co-demonstrators, though one finds it difficult to deny the veracity of the comment. The ultimate aim in politics is not just to act, but to act with *effect*; and the Macedonian diaspora, at present, does not appear to have the

ability to influence socio-political developments in Macedonia, in any serious or meaningful way.

As for the new Zaev led government, it has not shown anything that would lead one to believe that the rule of law or principled governance in general, are going to prevail in Macedonia. Before the mandate had even been granted, Dzaferi was unconstitutionally made Speaker of the Parliament. Moreover, there are strong indications that the new government is intending to sidestep Zaev's promise in relation to the Tirana Platform by finding a way to further expand the official use of Albanian, without contravening the constitution, as VMRO-DPMNE has also done in the past.

What else have we seen from Zaev and his new government? Instead of the development of a program designed to ensure the operational objectivity of the police, judiciary and state bureaucracy, we regularly observe the new government issuing threats against particular members of those institutions, i.e. those deemed to be political opponents, that they will be jailed for "corruption" etc. Ironically, SDSM politicians are issuing those threats while maintaining a coalition government with DUI MP's, that until recently, the SDSM hierarchy were condemning for participation in the same said corruption.

In short, it seems clear that the structures of the state will continue functioning as party political tools. On the international front, there is an agreement for "good neighbourly relations" with Bulgaria, the content of which has been negotiated in secret. So much for democratic consultation and transparency in government. In relation to the latter, there is a plan to celebrate Ilinden, jointly with racist Bulgarian politicians who openly deny the existence of Macedonian ethnic identity, the Macedonian nation and the Macedonian language. Unprincipled politicking in return for some vague promise that Bulgaria will assist Macedonia in its efforts to join NATO and the EU. Lastly, the

new Foreign Minister, Dimitrov, is indicating that the new government is willing to change the name of the country in order to satisfy a racist Greek nationalist view of history; again unprincipled politicking in relation to Macedonia's EU and NATO membership applications. Just how the country's name can be changed while maintaining the integrity of the constitution, as Zaev promised prior to receiving the mandate to govern, has not been explained.

25/7/2017

P.S.

Just before going to press with this issue of the MHR Review, the Macedonian government decided to finally release the content of the proposed agreement for "good neighbourly relations" with Bulgaria. One can deem much of the text to be standard and inoffensive.

However, that should not blind one to the fact that several points in the agreement are *not* acceptable. For example Article 11.5, reads as follows:

The Republic of Macedonia confirms that nothing in its Constitution can be, nor should it be interpreted as representing or will ever constitute grounds for interference in the internal affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria in order to protect the status and rights of persons who are not nationals of the Republic of Macedonia.

In other words, this requires the Republic of Macedonia to renounce the right to advocate on behalf of Bulgaria's Macedonian minority in relation to their human/identity rights, the most basic of which are denied, as Bulgaria refuses to acknowledge the existence of Macedonians in Bulgaria. Furthermore, there is no clause obliging Bulgaria to do the same in regard to any ethnic Bulgarians in Macedonia. The double standard could hardly be more blatant.

Connected to the latter, is Article 11.4:

Each of the Contracting Parties shall have the right to protect the rights and interests of its nationals on the territory of the other Contracting Party in accordance with international law.

This clause was probably insisted on by Bulgaria, as it will permit Bulgaria to act in a manner, that would normally be regarded as an intolerable level of "interference in the internal affairs" of Macedonia. The special circumstances that will enable Bulgaria to do that, derive from the fact that tens of thousands of Macedonian citizens have obtained Bulgarian citizenship, in order to gain EU access for reasons of employment etc.

Notably, it appears that Article 11.5, is inconsistent with the requirements of Article 1, which states:

The two Contracting Parties shall develop a comprehensive relationship among themselves in accordance with the fundamental principles of international law and good neighbourly relations.

Renouncing the right to advocate on behalf of an oppressed minority, cannot be deemed to be a "fundamental principle of international law". Another interesting issue arises in Article 8.3:

The two Contracting Parties, with mutual agreement will organize joint celebrations of common historical events and personalities, aimed at strengthening good-neighbourly relations in the spirit of European values.

In the "spirit of European values" presumably means that one should not have to participate in such festivities with a Bulgarian government or representatives of a Bulgarian government, that are so bigoted that they do not even accept the existence of a Macedonian nation, etc. Be that as it may, it is obvious that the agreement, as it presently stands, should not be ratified.

27/7/2017

George Vlahov.

19th June 2017

Nikola Dimitrov

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia

Boulevard “Philip II of Macedon” Nr. 7

1000 Skopje

Republic of Macedonia



Dear Minister Dimitrov,

Firstly, on behalf of the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC), we would like to congratulate you on your recent appointment as Macedonia’s foreign minister. We trust that in fulfilling your role you will work in Macedonia’s national interests at this critical time for the country.

We would like to take this opportunity to outline some issues of paramount concern to our organisation and indeed the wider Macedonian community in Australia:

1. Name discussions with Greece

Minister, the issue of the name of the Republic of Macedonia is a topic that has been speculated on in the media in recent days and therefore we would like to convey to you the AMHRC’s position on this matter.

It is quite evident that Greece’s very substantial efforts to coerce Macedonia into changing its name and its campaign to prevent the country’s international recognition is a chauvinistic attempt to deny a sovereign nation-state the right to name itself. It is also part of a long standing racist policy of denying the existence of a distinct Macedonian ethnic identity, language and culture.

As you may be aware, in 2010, the AMHRC together with Macedonian Human Rights International launched a public campaign in the Republic of Macedonia calling upon the Macedonian government to end the name discussions. The campaign was not about embracing or rejecting NATO and EU membership, but rather putting an end to the nonsensical “name negotiations”. The focus should never have been on Macedonia to compromise its own name and identity. Rather, the focus should be on NATO, the EU, and its member-states upholding their principles, by supporting and recognising Macedonia.

This view is also echoed by the first UN mediator in the name dispute, Robin O’Neil, who has prudently pointed out that, “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.”

Moreover, the dangers associated with continuing to negotiate should not be underestimated and in our opinion it is naive to conclude that there could be ‘compromises’ involving ‘composite names’ that do not impact on Macedonian identity. So-called ‘geographic qualifiers’ are inherently fraught with such dangers and therefore should be rejected. For example, name proposals such as “North Macedonia” or “Upper Macedonia” will in turn impact on Macedonian ethnic identity and the name of the Macedonian language, (e.g. “North Macedonia” = “Northern Macedonians” and “Northern Macedonian language or “Language of North Macedonia”). Similarly, a name such as “Vardar Macedonia” would also lead to further changes (e.g.: “Vardar Macedonia” = “Vardar Macedonians”).



Tampering with Macedonian identity and the Macedonian language is an obvious red line for the Republic of Macedonia and ethnic Macedonians. Given these inherent threats to Macedonian identity, the only way to truly safeguard against such violations is for the Government of the Republic of Macedonia to withdraw from the farcical name discussions with Greece. Seeing as Greece has already been found guilty of violating the Interim Accord, by the International Court of Justice, there is no reason for Macedonia to continue honouring an agreement which should never have been entered into, in the first place.

2. Australian recognition of the Republic of Macedonia

Minister, despite the fact almost 130 countries have recognised the Republic of Macedonia under its constitutional name, regrettably and disgracefully, Australia is not one of them. Indeed, all of Australia's major allies have recognised the "Republic of Macedonia" (i.e. USA, UK, Canada etc) as have other powers such as Russia, China and India. We believe that there is no legitimate reason why Australia cannot do the same. Over the last 25 years the AMHRC along with other Macedonian community organisations have lobbied successive Australian governments to adopt a change in policy. We will continue in our endeavours, and we feel the task may be aided by further high-level engagement by the Macedonian government, especially at the Ministerial and Prime Ministerial level.

3. Status of the Macedonian minorities in Greece, Bulgaria and Albania

Minister, since its formation the AMHRC has been actively engaged in the struggle for human rights for the respective Macedonian minorities in Greece, Bulgaria and Albania. No doubt you are familiar with the difficulties that ethnic Macedonians face in these countries, in particular in Greece and Bulgaria where their existence is officially and actively denied. We expect that the Macedonian government will follow standard European principles by highlighting the human rights abuses ethnic Macedonians endure in these countries with a view to improving their status and achieving full recognition as entitled under international law. What are the new Macedonian government's plans in this regard?

We trust that you will give serious consideration to the important matters we have raised and look forward to engaging with you further in the near future.

Yours sincerely,

Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee Inc.

CC: Mr Zoran Zaev, Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia





OMO "ILINDEN" - PIRIN

Member of the European Free Alliance - EFA



OMO "ILINDEN" PIRIN:

In Response to the Meeting between the
Premiers of Macedonia and Bulgaria and
their Declaration about an *Agreement
for Good Neighbourly Relations*

1. OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN has always sincerely supported the development of good relations between Macedonia and Bulgaria, on the basis of a principled mutual respect. We are convinced that for the new agreement to be lasting and successful, the agreement must deal with the issues of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria and the Bulgarian minority in Macedonia. The rights of those two groups must be regulated by international standards, i.e. the Framework Convention for the protection of national minorities. In that way, rather than being a reason for mistrust and conflicts, those minority groups will become a bridge to friendship. The signed agreement must take the minorities into account!

2. We welcome the support Bulgaria has promised to give Macedonia. We believe that such support should govern relations between neighbours and moreover, would represent a return of the favour given to Bulgaria by Macedonia, when the latter unconditionally supported Bulgaria's candidature for membership in the EU. Thus the support from Bulgaria should also be unconditional.

3. Unfortunately, the history of the Balkans constantly serves as a cause for quarrelsome divisions. The statement by the Bulgarian Premier, Borisov, that history should be left to the historians, sounds promising; at present how-

ever, there is little evidence that Bulgaria intends to govern its attitude towards Macedonia and Macedonians, in such a manner. All the more so, seeing as that slogan has been regularly used by all Bulgarian governments since Todor Zivkov, who actually began the policy of negating Bulgaria's Macedonian minority and the Macedonian nation. Over the course of decades, that slogan has been used to conceal a Bulgarian state inspired and funded campaign to negate the existence of the Macedonian nation. We hope that now, there is a sincere desire to change this situation and to truly leave history to historians.

4. The histories of all nations in the Balkans are intertwined in one way or another and in this sense, general celebrations of certain dates are not, in principle, a bad idea. However, in a context where there is a continued open negation of the Macedonian nation and minority by the Republic of Bulgaria, joint celebrations will not be beneficial, nor will they serve to bring about closer ties, rather, they would deepen divisions. Impositions by means of superior force, conditioning Macedonia's EU integration, will not last, nor will they have any positive effect. If it wants real rapprochement, Bulgaria should start thinking about a new strategy that will revoke the current politics of negation, which is the true (not to say the only) reason for the

(Continued on page 16)

(Continued from page 15)

misunderstandings between the two countries.

We think that if the efforts for the commencement of joint celebrations are sincere, and not a new way of negating Macedonian identity, by the Republic of Bulgaria, then Bulgaria should also seek joint celebrations with the rest of its neighbors, not only with Macedonia. Similarly we believe that if a Macedonian government is perceived to be compelled, for one reason or another, to accept such celebrations with Bulgaria, then that perception should be assuaged by the inclusion of other countries or by organising joint celebrations with other neighbours. If the Bulgarian Prime Minister participates in the Krushevo celebration then the Turkish premier should also be there.

5. We understand the desire of the government of the Republic of Macedonia to send "positive signals" to its neighbours and although we are attempting to interpret the statements about a "common history" in such a way, we wish to point out that they are not perceived in that sense. Rather, those statements are serving to encourage the most virulent anti-Macedonian circles within Macedonia's neighbours and will only increase the appetites of those seeking even more concessions from Macedonia. Thus, contrary to the expectations of the Macedonian government, this will increase the difficulties in the process of the Euro-integration of the country.

Presidency of OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN
Blagoevgrad, 21/6/17

Translated from Macedonian by George Vlahov.



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FUEN

Resolution 2017-01

Macedonian Association “Ilinden” -Tirana

The Delegates of the Member Organisations of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) adopted the following resolution at their Assembly of Delegates in Cluj-Napoca / Kolozsvár / Klausenburg, Romania, on 20 May 2017. By request of the Macedonian Association "Ilinden" -Tirana, the FUEN Assembly of Delegates asks for:

- 1.The Government of Albania to sign and ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.
- 2.The Recognition of the Macedonian national

minorities living in Golo Brdo, Gora and across the entire territory of the Republic of Albania.

- 3.The state television (TVSH) to start broadcasting in the Macedonian language.

- 4.Education in the Macedonian language in public schools in Golo Brdo and Gora and across the entire territory of Republic of Albania where there is a significant number of persons belonging to the Macedonian national minority.

- 5.The Government of the Republic of Albania to reinstall at least one joint municipality in Golo Brdo and Gora. The Macedonian minority in the

Republic of Albania considers the administrative reform implemented in 2015 a setback for the rights of the Macedonian minority in the regions of Golo Brdo and Gora. Before the administrative reform was implemented the government of the Republic of Albania assured that the municipalities where the Macedonian minority lives will not be dissolved. Since the year 1913 the regions of Golo Brdo and Gora had been in separate administrative units. The administrative reform implemented in 2015 did not meet any of the criteria set by the government of the Republic of Albania, thus ignoring the demographic, geographic, economic and cultural factors in these two regions where the Macedonian minority lives. The closure of the municipalities in the region of Golo Brdo complicates life for residents of the regions of Golo Brdo and Gora because they have to travel nearly two hours even for a simple administrative document.

6.The Government to guarantee the right to use the mother tongue of the Macedonian national minority in Albania, meaning that Macedonian could be used besides the official language (Albanian) in all municipalities with more than 20% of the population part of the Macedonian national minority.

7.Financial support from the Ministry of Culture for cultural activities and education for the Macedonian national minority in Albania.

Federal Union of European Nationalities Flensburg / Flensburg · Berlin · Brussel / Bruxelles
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2016 AUSTRALIAN CENSUS DATA:

By David Vitkov

Melbourne 27/6/2017

In the months prior to the **2016** Australian census the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (**AMHRC**) prepared instructional leaflets in both English and Macedonian, for the benefit of the Macedonian community. The material related to the questions on ancestry, language, country of birth and religion.

Today, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) today made a first data release in relation to the 2016 Census and the following statistical data is of particular relevance to the Macedonian community:

• **Ancestry**

The data on the question of ancestry showed that there were **98,441** persons of Macedonian ancestry in Australia (compared to 93,570 at the 2011 census).

• **Language spoken at home**

The data on the question of language spoken at home showed that at the 2016 census there were a total of 66,019 persons in Australia who spoke the Macedonian language at home (compared to 68,849 the 2011 census).

• **Country of Birth**

The data on the question of country of birth showed that at the 2016 census there were a total of 38,985 persons born in the Republic of Macedonia (compared to 40,222 at the 2011 census).

The **AMHRC** will request more detailed data from the ABS on the number of persons born in Greece who declared their ancestry to be Macedonian.

• **Religion**

Data on the number of persons who declared their religion to be Macedonian Orthodox is not yet available. A general category of “Eastern Orthodox” showed a total 502,801 persons belonging to this category and this figure would include Macedonian Orthodox. The **AMHRC** will request a more detailed breakdown from the ABS.

We thank all the Macedonians in Australia who participated in the census and a special thanks to all those in our community who contributed to this successful campaign by making the leaflets widely available.

We look forward to continuing our cooperation at the next census in 2021!

ALMOST 100,000 MACEDONIANS IN AUSTRALIA



Established in 1984, the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) is a non-governmental organisation that informs and advocates before international institutions, governments and broader communities about combating racism and promoting human rights. Our aspiration is to ensure that Macedonian communities and other excluded groups throughout the world, are recognised, respected and afforded equitable treatment. For more information please visit www.macedonianhr.org.au or email info@macedonianhr.org.au.



A Focus on the Struggles of Macedonian Women

‘When a girl is born even the eaves cry’

By Stefani Taskova

Narratives relating to Macedonian struggles for self-determination, independence and human rights, often neglect to discuss the struggles of women, for the same. From the Balkan Wars (1912-13) to the Greek Civil War (1946-1949) and into the 21st century, Macedonian women have been oppressed and deprived of their human rights, in more ways than men. From a feminist perspective, this has to an extent been a result of the patriarchy, in which, traditional and religious norms have viewed and mostly compelled women, primarily, to be housewives and caretakers. Though in the context of the Balkans and Macedonia, there have been some notable exceptions to the standard. Researchers such as Milenko S. Filipovik have highlighted that women at times did engage in atypical male professions, such as village chief, village attendant or clerk.

This article, because of space limitations, will obviously not fully explore the struggles and hardships of Macedonian women. My aim is simply to begin a dialogue and to focus attention on forms of oppression that are often neglected in discussions about Macedonian human rights.

As indicated above, in patriarchy, women are expected to remain in private and submissive roles, while also abiding by a moral code laden with double standards which benefit men. These constraints amount to a systematic form of oppression, notwithstanding the exceptions mentioned. Even today, in Macedonian culture and indeed any culture, certain traditional constraints and discriminatory expectations have been maintained.

During the brutalities of the Balkan Wars (1912/13), when so many Macedonian men were forced into military service, the effect upon the women left behind was devastating. Suddenly Macedonian women needed to work in the fields, take care of the house and fend for their children, all without the assistance of their partners. Petre M. Andreevski illustrates the struggles of Macedonian women in his book *Pirey, via Velika*. This character’s experiences ultimately represent the day-to-day hardships endured by women, while awaiting the return of their husbands. Velika had to persist through the death of her five children and when her husband finally returned from the war, he was no longer the man she knew, but rather, an abusive alcoholic. Andreevski further highlights the violence endured by women, with vivid descriptions of cases of physical attack, rape and domestic violence: ‘You’re cursed if you’re born a woman,’ (p.271).



Similar experiences can be recounted from the Greek Civil War (1946-49). My baba (grandmother) and her two older sisters, along with their mother, were part of the **Deca Begalci ("Refugee Children") who were forced out of their homes and their homeland, never to return.** Unlike others, who were separated from their families and sent to other countries, they were lucky enough to stay together when **fleeing to the Republic of Macedonia.** As my baba's father had been taken prisoner of war, my great-grandmother was compelled to go from house to house in various towns and villages, asking for bread, to feed her three daughters. I recall my baba explaining to me that sometimes people would be kind enough to give them some food and water; though on numerous occasions, she was threatened and **scolded. This is just one side of one mother's story, without a doubt, there are thousands of other women who experienced enormous hardships during the exodus from Aegean Macedonia.** The strength of those women needs to be recognised and their neglected histories need to be told.

The same applies to feminist movements like the **Antifascist Women's Front of Macedonia, which was closely affiliated with the Macedonian National Liberation Front.** It **was the first women's organisation, founded by women in Macedonia** and was very active in advocating for equal rights and freedoms, for all Macedonians. It's long past time for a shift in narrative focus that will enable us to understand the truth in the old Macedonian saying: *"koga zensko se rajga i streata plache"* (when a girl is born even the eaves cry).

Stefani Taskova

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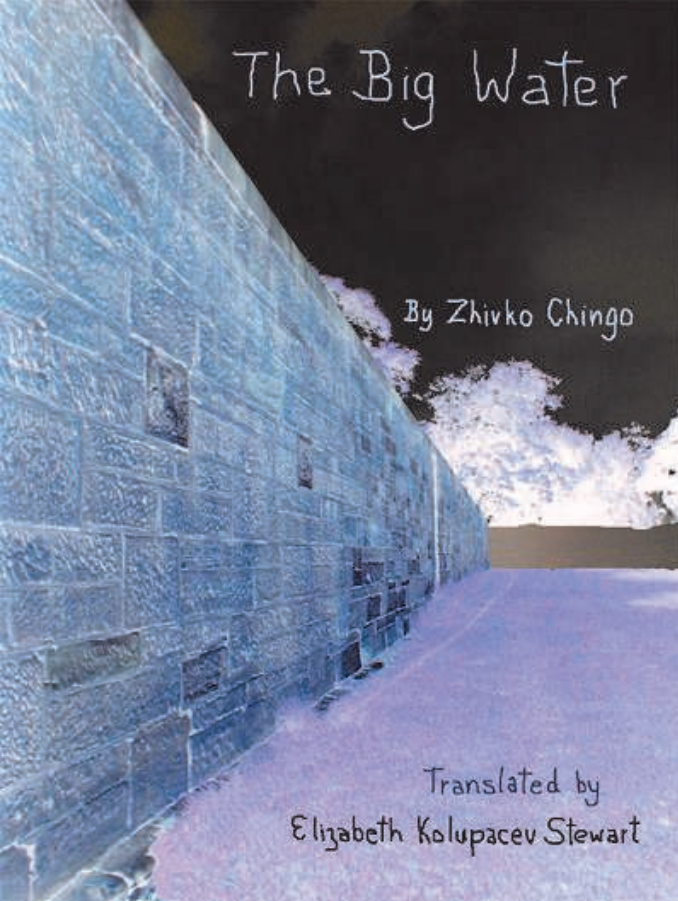
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The spirit of Macedonian literature

By Dr. Michael Seraphinoff

In our world with its diverse languages, societies and cultures there is something to be admired and celebrated in the literature produced by them all, including our own Macedonian. There is the skillful crafting of language and masterful storytelling, and themes that explore concerns that affect us all.

In my opinion, Zhivko Chingo's novel *Golemata Voda (The Big Water)*, and Petre M. Andreevski's novel *Pirej* represent the highest achievement yet in Macedonian literature. Other works of note include Tashko Georgievski's novel *Crno Seme, (Black Seed)* and Stale Popov's novel *Krpen Zhivot (Beggars' Life)*, Slavko Janevski's novel *Selol zad tri jasenj (Village Behind Three Aspens)*. Any such list must also include short stories of Blazhe Koneski, Petre M. Andreevski and Jadranka Vladova, and poetry of Gane Todorovski, Atso Shopov, Igor Isakovski, Radovan Pavlovski, Petre M. Andreevski and Blazhe Koneski, and dramas of

Goran Stefanovski, Risto Krle and Dejan Dukovski. There are certainly other works worthy of note, but this is my own "short list."

All societies, languages and cultures share some universal values, but each is also unique in some ways, just as we are all unique individuals who also share some common traits with others. In the case of Macedonian literature I can think of a number of distinct qualities that distinguish it from most other literatures.

Macedonians live in a region where a number of competing societies, tribes and clans have contested one another's territories and boundaries for millennia. They have pressed each other over land and resources whenever and wherever they have sensed weakness. They have constantly formed and broken alliances, if and when it aided them in this, and they have succumbed at times to the greater power of Roman, Byzantine, Serbian, Bulgarian or Ottoman Empires.

Most often preferring their own local leaders, they have resisted foreign colonial rule whenever there was an opportunity to win their freedom. Frequent military conflict **has often led to warfare's constant companions, hunger, disease and death. The longing for freedom from these "horsemen" has been a constant theme in Macedonian literature.**

Even today Macedonia is statistically among the poorest regions of Europe. The instability caused by primitive, and at times, violent rivalries has stunted economic, social and cultural development and perverted political life. The virulent ethnic hatred of the neighboring Greek society has denied Macedonia entry into NATO and the EU, further stunting development. Today, just as in past centuries, hundreds of thousands of young Macedonians have sought escape from this Balkan curse through emigration to more promising foreign lands.

Macedonian society and, therefore, Macedonian literature have been essentially defined by several major concerns. War and poverty and the desire to be master of one's own destiny certainly top this list. They are closely related, the one always feeding on the other. An examination of the premier works of Macedonian literature readily illustrates this.

The novel *Pirej*, for example, tells the story of a young Macedonian village couple. Through their combined hard work, energy, faith and love they establish a family and a thriving farmstead. But their happiness is shattered by the wars that wracked Macedonian society at the beginning of the twentieth century. The wife, Velika, tries to maintain their home while her husband, Jon, is away at the wars.

When Jon eventually returns, broken and embittered, he receives one final blow when he learns that all of his children have died from the poverty and disease that accompanied the war years in their land. From then on, the novel depicts him as a mean drunk and an abusive husband, whose only worthwhile act after the war is to provide Velika with one last child to raise into adulthood. This fulfills the theme alluded to in the title, *Pirej*, the weed that persists despite almost every attempt to eradicate it.

Macedonians appreciate the novel for a number of rea-

sons. It is, above all, a masterful telling of an essentially Macedonian story of a society so often defined by war and poverty and the great effort required to simply survive, to endure it all. But it is also a novel of the eternal longing to be the master of one's own destiny. Tashko Georgievski, in his novel *Crno seme*, and Zhivko Chingo in his novel *Golemata voda*, also explore the theme of freedom to choose **one's own way in life. In the case of Georgievski's novel, it is the right to one's own ideas and identity. In Chingo's novel the emphasis is on even a child's right to respect and human dignity.** All of these novels remind us of the centuries old Macedonian struggle to resist unjust authority.

Just as no language, literature or society stands still, frozen in time, Macedonian literature has continued to change and evolve over time. Despite Yugoslav denunciations of dogmatic socialist realism as early as 1952, works of **Macedonian literature of the 1950's and into the 60's continued** to be influenced by the socialist realism of the communist world. With the passage of time writers such as Zhivko Chingo resisted the tendency to create overly positive images of socialist revolution, and Macedonian literature of even more recent times has continued this process.

Few figures in Macedonian history or literature have been as idealized and glorified at times as the antifascist partisan of World War Two and the Greek Civil War. The following short story, no doubt, will be somewhat disturbing and challenging for Macedonians who were raised in socialist Yugoslavia. However, I offer it here because it offers readers a window into the inner life of a *partizanka* in the Greek Civil who does not represent the usual stereotype. This story, recently translated from the Macedonian by Risto Stefov, is set during the final months of the war when the Greek forces finally defeat the communist insurgency on the slopes of Mt. Gramos with the aid of American and British planes and bombs. While the story refers to a particular time and place, its antiwar theme is more universal. There is something essentially Macedonian about this story as well:

New Year in the trenches of Gramos – A short story

By Stoyan Kochov

Translated and edited by Risto Stefov

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(Continued from page 25)

It was early morning and light outside but it was still dark inside the trench. The tiny rays of light that filtered through the roof could be seen as dots shining inside on the trench walls.

One more time I looked at the military objects in the trench.

It was like being among a number of nameless objects; alone, without words, without defense... they sat there motionless... all around me asking for nothing. The trench was like a place that deprived you of life. It was war time and I was involved in it... not knowing why. It was man's work... I was included in it by those who violently ripped me away from home... from my mom. I know that a woman is not born to kill. But now I am with these people who gave me a rifle but I don't know how to handle it. They all submitted to fate courageously. Everyone wants to

avoid death; everything is done on the orders of the commissar and everyone is loyal. The commissar is the person who portions everything equally and fairly; food, rest, sleep, water and even the sun.

Everyone in the trench was turning their sight away from me, so that the commissar would not notice them looking at me. He was a harsh man, even more than the military code required. One time I noticed that Partena became golden brown from the large fireplace and when her hips gracefully swung the Vlach Vioreli's eyes hung onto her. He was beaten on the shoulders like a village pillow but he was always with a cheerful protracted Vlach song on his lips which, more often than not, ended unfinished. They said that the Vlach songs lacked endings. Who knows, maybe I was left with such an impression. Kolakidis also sang similar songs. His family played the fiddle with a single string. "This is how we used to sing in Pondia (Turkey) ..." Partena used to say.

God, we have all kinds of people here in this trench. A variety of people...

Through the shaft I could see the whiteness of the hanging branches laden with snow. We patiently waited for spring and for the sun to strike the white load. We could hear the crackle of the trees in the silence as the snow weighed them down. But as much as the trees wanted to resist, once in a while there was a loud crack caused by the weight of the snow and by the bitter cold. I spent my nights looking up through the shaft. My grandmother introduced me to the stars and ever since then I had been looking at them and following their paths. I was certainly not afraid of the stupid fantasies that surfaced in my head. And maybe my grandmother was guilty of leaving me the legacy: "Do this and when you are in trouble, and when you are still not tied to a man... but a woman must be bound to a man, that is why she was created..." she used to say. "And when you are tied to a man that you want, then you must stick to the oath of allegiance..."

In my dreams I often pass out from bad luck. I feel overwhelmed being witness to all the pain in the world. I don't want to believe that I will one day be bound by the oath of allegiance to one of these men. My rifle was beside me and it was as cold as a snake.

I touch it but I am afraid to aim it at a person. I know that in such moments only a dog will look you in the eyes... when you are pointing a rifle barrel at its head... a human cannot... The commissar said: "You should know that your opponent is doing the same thing to you..."

The shaft towards the exit of the machine gun barrel is narrower. This is how all shafts are made... designed and perfected during the major wars. Sometimes we call our trench a "Russian house". The Bolshevik Red Army lived in trenches like this.

The only place light came into the trench was through the shaft. But this was not ordinary light like the kind that enters through a window in the morning. This light entered cautiously through the shaft and abruptly lost its intensity as it hit the rough earthen walls, looking like thick, reddish meat. The dampness and humidity was lifted by the heat of the burning logs and deposited as a thin layer of ice on the cold picks and shovels. There were cut pine tree roots sticking out of the walls excreting sap, like tears flowing from the eyes of a tired person, seeming like the wounded trees were weeping. I spend almost the entire day lying down on the dry fern bed with my body boiling in lice. It varied how the lice behaved from time to time. They become most aggressive when it was time for them to lay their eggs in the hairy parts on a person. After that they were hungry and sucked our blood. They loved to attack a clean body. They made me very angry to a point of going mad. I don't know why but Partena lacked basic sensitivity. When we were alone close to the fire she would sometimes do inappropriate things. She would place her hand on her crotch between her thighs, grab at her hairy part, pull out her clenched fist and angrily mumble: "It's a louse... a male louse!" It has been biting me for a long time, looking for a place to make a nest..." She then would toss the louse and the hairs she had pulled out into the fire. When the lice wanted to lay eggs they rushed around angrily climbing on a person's hairs. Every one of us knew that. Partena was an intelligent woman and sometimes wanted fulfillment out of her life. She often combed and washed herself. She wanted to spray herself with some frankincense or pine oil, which she did not have so most of the time she used scented soap, the kind they gave the women here... only the women.

There was no draft of air in the trench because there were no windows or doors with cracks. There was only a single hole serving as a door. This hole was well covered with

thick layers of fern, which did not allow the cold air to snake into our trench. And oh, my God, in no time at all I began to call it "my" or "our" trench. Sometimes I thought that all of us here were sick with some kind of madness but I have not been able, among all these people here, to spot any kind of threat, malice or twitching of eyes or lips, or any desire in the people to want to kill. Man is inherently good or evil. Oh, it's best I keep quiet. Our female mystery is indeed strange. I noticed a long time ago that when Aleksandar entered the trench he smiled at me but would not look at me for fear of being discovered.

I am weak and lonely. My dream will not leave me. I think about it, I try to get into the psychology of war and of man who eventually becomes a silent warrior, but I can't. One day I looked in the distance and watched the troops on the other side. Both sides used big megaphones to curse and swear at one another in the name of our convictions. Partena's voice reverberated through the tall pine trees. One of them from the other side responded to her and said:

"You are a whore, that's why you are with partisans. Real and decent armies have no women soldiers..." There was silence. I wanted to jump in and defend her but then I thought about it and said to myself, "Let the men do it."

It was cold even in bed. I lay there and thought about the various embarrassing things that could happen to me. I saw a new civilization. I slowly thought of all my troubles lying there in twilight and the cold. I had not a single document with me.

No one asked for a birth certificate, I simply had only my name Melina. In the Commissar's book I was Melina Papadimou from Patra. Six months had passed and I had not died, on the contrary I began to live in the war... with the war... and this war like every other war had its own most beautiful unsung song.

This is how I greeted 1949. For the New Year's reception we received food consisting of powdered milk and baked potatoes. We were all filled with the most peculiar will to live life in our trench underground, under the winds of Gramos. We all celebrated the New Year cheering for a

(Continued on page 28)

BLACK SEED

Tashko Georgievski

Translated by

Elizabeth Kolupacev Stewart

front of the fireplace as if he wanted to hug the fire. He then gracefully removed his long overcoat from his tall body, warmed it on the fire and sat it on the beech wood stump.

He moved around looking at the sleeping bodies. When he came towards me he lingered for a moment and stared at my fragile but prominent hips. I kept the same rhythm of breathing and kept peeking under the sleeve of my long overcoat.

He had shiny buttons on his officer's uniform, which shone like the eyes of a hungry cat in the dark. I don't know what came over me, over my female lunatic mind, but at that very moment I wanted to get up and, like a good housekeeper, stoke the fire so that he could warm up faster, but then I thought: What am I, a half-wit? When he finished eating his portion of food he stretched out his body like a typical male. Maybe it was the pleasure of the heat that made him do that? I continued to secretly watch him. He lifted his knee slightly... I admired his thick, lush and slightly messed up hair with strands hanging loose over his forehead. He looked very attractive to me. He attracted me like a magnet, pulling on me with some kind of magic erotica.

(Continued from page 27)

comfortable victory. It was war and perhaps we may never see each other together like this again.

Lying there in the cold, dark and damp trench night after night I learned some things...

Those who snore the most sleep the best... One night I decided to wait for Aleksandar. He was out with the scouts from another trench. I wanted to congratulate him for the New Year.

His portion of food was intact. Partena was clinging to me, the cold kept her awake.

I kept quiet and listened to Aleksandar's footsteps as he approached the trench. He then carefully lifted the rain screen from the door. I felt a sharp gust of wind enter the trench. The first thing he did was stretch his long arms in

Gently and calmly Aleksandar prepared to go to bed. I watched him, following his every move. I then continued to watch him through a secret peep hole that allowed me to see through the screen of stacked ferns separating the women's sleeping quarters from those of the men's. But I could not stand there for more than a few seconds before being noticed. When I saw that he had closed his eyes, I slowly slipped my hand over the barrier and I touched his warm lips; a "Happy New Year" gift from me to him.

He looked timid but startled. My touch must have startled him. I leaned over the barrier and put my hand over his mouth and held it there. He opened his eyes and looked at me. I saw excitement on his face. His eyes were glued to mine.

"God, what's happening?" he whispered through my hand. When he saw that I was calm he hesitantly lifted his arm, shook my hand and whispered:

"Happy New Year to you too, Melina..."

I extended my arm out and he too excitedly did the same. He flourished with pride. He looked at me with wide open eyes and tight lips, looking like a petrified figure. But this was not enough for me. I wanted him to hug me, squeeze me and make my bones creak. I think men like to do that. With a smile on my face and with an open heart I wanted him to say: "I like you, Melina!" to which I would reply, "I know," and wait for him to say: "You know?"

But, looking like an eternally sad boy, he handed me a needle. I touched it and stabbed myself... It felt like I had been stabbed in my heart with a sharp dagger. Did he want to honour me as his future wife? I wanted to make my pledge with a kiss but the fern barrier was between us left me standing there with puckered lips. One of those sleeping made a noise. They probably wanted to turn over. I looked and saw a face with a sharp nose and pale cheeks without a smile.

It was Vasil Klechovski – Pobratimot. This is what Aleksandar calls him. I now call him that too. Sometimes Vasil and Aleksandar sat in front of the fireplace and sang beautiful Macedonian songs. I learned some of their songs and still remember them now.

"A beautiful girl with two needles, one with silver thread and the other with silk. She is knitting socks for me... I don't know if I should wear them or love them..."

They also used to sing the Russian song "Volga, Volga, Russian River, wide and deep..."

This is what they sang in the trench during the windy nights on Gramos. Pobratimot Vasil cleared his throat and went back to sleep.

There was only silence now.

Aleksandar was shaking like a young pine tree in the wind. He then sighed a strange sigh. The commissar began to snore loudly. I cautiously slid my view away, thinking that we had been exposed... perhaps it was court-martial for us...

Military laws are strange. I freed myself of my muscle stiffness. I just realized how tired I was... I too sighed a strange sigh and at the same time felt my body sliding over the layers of dry fern.

I stared at the fire a long time. "God, will I forget who brought me into this world?" I thought to myself. I miss my mother. If she was here she would say: "I see you have found yourself a young man! Do you love him?" My mother would have been very happy for me and would have told our entire family.

I finally retreated to my cold bed, peering through the peep hole at Aleksandar, who still stirred like a tormented tired bull. But as time passed he increasingly became part of my shattered shell of a life. That night I became an inaccessible wild flower for Aleksandar.

When I was trying to sleep all I saw were wonderful flowers opening before my closed eyes. Sometimes, while looking at my hands, I thought that day and night were mixed together. The trench walls were slimy and dingy and no one wanted to touch them. I existed for more than six months in that trench; trench number two, or as everyone else called it "Commissar Likourgos's trench". In the evening we all sat around the fire until we felt sleepy. The men were sprawled all over the place, they were used to doing that and one could see their manhood become noticeable from the heat of the fire...

My life became one strange heavy bracelet grasping at my neck, constricting my breathing. Perhaps that's what drove me to want to be protected. These people here lived simple lives doing the same thing day after day. They, in fact, were simple people and now I have become one of them. God, life will teach you to do anything including be all alone with your own bad thoughts. My dreams torture me the most; both good and bad dreams. They strip naked and tighten my soul inside this trench. During the long nights, probably because of my fear without reason that someone heard us, I take my canteen and drink it down my dry throat to the last drop. Drinking the water made me feel better and allowed me to melt away in the silence of the night.

(Continued on page 30)

Tragedy and Wrath

(In the shadows of exile)

A selection of Short Stories



By
Stoian Kochov

(Translated from Macedonian to English and edited by
Risto Stefov)

(Continued from page 29)

It was January 6th, Christmas Eve by the old calendar. It was early morning. The darkness outside was replaced by daylight and the airplanes were flying overhead in a cloudless sky.

They were majestic and calm. The sun reflected on their wings. The sky was filled with their noise, and the last burning coals in our trench were smouldering. The airplanes dropped a cluster of bombs and the snow rose up like ash from an erupting volcano. Everybody ran for the trees like hunted wild animals. I felt blood trickling down my body. I was afraid of my blood being spilled out. My fear petrified me and I fell down in the snow.

I awoke and felt like I was being lured by some kind of dream. I was wearing a long nightgown. By habit I extended my hand to my collar but I could not find the needle. "It was not there..." I began to sweat.

The strong excitement woke me up. I could smell blood and

medicine. I looked around, to my left, then to my right but I could not understand what was happening.

How could I have forgotten so many things? Oh my God, have I been captured by the enemy? And where did all these other women lying here come from? I lifted my head and turned slightly to look for my needle. My military clothes were gone. While I was struggling with the many messy thoughts that entered my mind, Partena appeared in front of me. She was standing there being supported by two roughly carved crutches. She looked beautiful, flamboyant, lustful and full of life. She smiled.

"Melina!" she screamed and fell on top of me, hugging me. But still I felt funny like I was in some desolate place in a field hospital located somewhere in a deep forest in the back of the front line, on the rugged slopes of Gramos.

When she told me that Aleksandar had carried me in his arms all the way to the shelter at headquarters I regained my composure. The nurses quickly returned my blood-soaked clothing and uniform. I only took the needle out and sent everything else back. Partena smiled and said: "You will get well soon."

Almost every day I pushed Partena to tell me more about what happened to us, how we were wounded and about our way to headquarters. God, sometimes I get some crazy thoughts in my head. I even thought of rearranging the trench for family life... When I thought of the words "I want us to have a son..." that Aleksandar had said to me, perhaps he was saying this to make me happy, I realized that women are not for war. "Oh my God," I said to myself, "I hope I am not crazy, why am I so preoccupied with having a child while the war is raging on..."

I tried to fall asleep but I couldn't. I then tested the tip of my needle on my finger and stabbed myself. It was a good but painful feeling which made me scream. Ah, those tiny stabs of hope; they occasionally poke me in my heart... This was how I spent more than four months. Spring was everywhere and I began to feel swelling in my chest, God how I wished for Aleksandar...

I remember one time... It was a windy and cold day and the clouds were moving fast. The tall trees were groaning and creaking under the strain of the wind as if they were trying

to tell me something. Most of the trenches were damaged and filled with water from the spring rains and, while walking through the trees, I met new people and often wondered what happened to our unit. Then from far away I saw Vasil Klechovski's face, or as we often called him "Pobratimot".

"Pobratime!" I screamed out loudly. Then I said to myself "Oh, thank God I found them".

I became slightly anxious and red in the face because I was thinking of Aleksandar and whether he was going to give me a kiss in front of all of them. Will we step out of our military discipline and do something crazy? I am a woman, what else should I be thinking about if not about my Aleksandar?

And so I adjusted my military uniform and ran towards Pobratimot. I noticed he was avoiding looking at me. He had grown old, his hair was grey and he walked with his head down. He put down his backpack and machine gun. There was silence... all the new soldiers were looking at me intensely.

I was boiling with pride and suspicion... then, suddenly I felt like I was hit by a machine gun burst. He was not looking at anyone, his eyes were full of tears and he let out a few painful sighs. He then turned his face towards me and with great sadness, unable even to muster the strength to utter the name Aleksandar, said to me: "Melina... Melina, take these binoculars and I will point you to see his grave..."

"Aleksandar," he said, "was badly wounded. He lost both legs and his left arm. His face was deformed and he was in terrible pain. I carried him on my shoulders for a long time. He never stopped begging me to shoot him... his pain was too great to endure. He kept cursing me and begging me to kill him because, as he said: 'I don't want Melina to see me this way... Please shoot me!'"

Being unable to control my emotions I yelled out very loud: "Shut up! Shut up! Shut up! It is not true... It can't be true... because I carry the truth about him in my womb..." with a voice that echoed through the rugged slopes of Gramos.

To summarize, as one reads the classics of Macedonian literature one imbibes a deeper, enduring message. Where there is life there is hope. And that hope is realized each time any Macedonian strives to match or surpass the good deeds of those who came before him or her. If these efforts do not always match up with Macedonian aspirations, thousands of people no longer perish from treatable diseases, and few people are so desperately poor that they must wonder where their next meal will come from. Many, if not most, have access to modern worldly goods, automobiles, cell phones, wide screen TV sets and the like. And those who desire it also have access to other useful goods, such as learning, both practical and theoretical, on a wide range of subjects including those of a spiritual, political, social or economic nature. And today they have the right to free association with others of like mind to form political parties, economic enterprises, religious, cultural or social organizations, and as the short story by Kochov suggests, to express themselves freely.

There is still an unpleasant scramble for limited opportunities for work and advancement in both the private and the public sectors of the economy. But it is not so unlike that which a great many other peoples and societies must face. The situation may grow better over time, or it may grow worse at times, but it is highly unlikely that Macedonians will ever experience anything like the bad old days depicted in *Pirej*, *Crno Seme*, *Golemata Voda*, or the short story of Stoyan Kochov. There will certainly be crises, some of them quite serious, no doubt, in the future. But as **Macedonia's best writers have often tried to remind us**, there is always hope. Their powerful message to us is essentially: Remember the past, but also remember that whatever you face today, just as in the past, this too shall pass. There is always hope and promise for a better future.

Dr. Michael Seraphinoff

A reminder: works of many, if not most, of the authors I mention are available in English translation through the Pollitecon publishing house:

<http://www.pollitecon.com/>



Lazar Kiselincev

The Arrest and Prosecution of "Komitadji" in Greece at the Beginning of the 20th Century

By Dr. Dimitar Ljorovski Vamvakovski

One June morning in the summer of 1902, Greek newspapers sensationally announced on front pages, perhaps the first major "anti-terrorist" action (as they themselves called it) in the Greek state. Athenian newspapers informed the public that, thanks to the vigilance of the security organs, the "Bulgarian committee" in the Greek capital was liquidated by arresting "in

the center of Athens, fanatical Macedonian and Bulgarian agents of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Committee" who "with other comrades, sent shipments of weapons to Macedonia".

The arrest of Macedonian immigrants in Greece, who were in some way connected with the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (MRO) and others

who had nothing to do with MRO, took place on May 20-22, 1902. However, at the request of the Greek Ministry of Interior and the Public Prosecutor's Office, this event was kept secret and at the beginning, no information was given to the media in order to avoid any negative effects on the process. This was until June 5, when an Athenian newspaper first published the information. The matter re-

mained topical in the Greek press until June 10, when the prosecutor's office banned any further reporting on it.

Among the arrested was Lazar Kiselinchev. On May 10, from Athens, he wrote to Gotse Delchev informing him that on April 28, a man with close ties to MRO had been arrested. He was brought to court on May 7, though, as no compromising material was found on him, he was freed. In his letter, Kiselinchev added that two other Macedonians had been arrested in Larissa, though he did not have information about their fate. The last letter Kiselinchev sent to Delchev, prior to his arrest, was on 19 May 1902, though he managed to send Delchev another letter on May 29, from prison in Palestron. From these letters we learn that the charges laid by the Greek state were: complicity in murders, robberies and violence against Greek citizens in various parts of Macedonia. The main goal of the Greek police was to undermine the structure of MRO in the kingdom, by closing channels for the transportation of arms and organizational fight-



Gotse Delchev

ers; as during the early years of the 20th century, MRO was regularly using a route via Greece to reach southwestern Ottoman Macedonia.

Kiselinchev's letter also highlights the high revolutionary morality and loyalty to the principles of the organization by the imprisoned. Kiselinchev wrote that "so far, nobody has revealed anything about our affairs". He also suggested to Delchev, that because there is still no information about these events in the Greek press, it would be useful to publish the news in the informative newsletters of the Organization and

to present the arrested group "as the most faithful of Greco-philos, in order to relieve us a little."

In June, the Greek government's field of action expanded from Athens to Thessaly, deep in the north. Namely, when an attempt was made by a group of MRO operatives to cross a river in Thessaly on their way to Kostur, there was an accident and four operatives drowned. In the boat, the Greek police found copies

of MRO regulations and the constitution. According to Kiselinchev's letter the constitution was translated and printed in a Greek newspaper. Considering the high value the organisation placed on covertness, this was naturally viewed as a powerful blow. Moreover, in the subsequent days, 11 members of the organisation were arrested in Thessaly, including Damjan Iliev, who had been sent by the MRO Foreign Bureau (FB) in Sofia, to be a new MRO commander in the Kostur region. In his letter of June 9, Kiselinchev asked the MRO FB

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(Continued from page 33)

for advice in regard to how he should carry himself before the judicial organs, as he feared that on account of the latest arrests in Thessaly, the investigative authorities would discover a substantial amount of information relating to MRO. Kiselinchev added that the FB should advise Lazar Pop Trajkov (an important MRO leader in the Kostur region) not to travel to Greece, as the Greek police had intercepted his letter.

Kiselinchev explained the course of the trial in a letter to the MRO's FB on June 22, 1902. Despite the pressure applied by the prosecution, the defendants refused to acknowledge committing the acts they were charged with or to confirm the existence of a branch of the MRO in the Greek kingdom. Kiselinchev believed that they would be acquitted, as the Greek authorities were already



Lazo Pop Trajkov

demanding a "bribe", a compelling indication that the indictment was going to fail. The situation of the imprisoned in Larissa (Thessaly) was especially difficult. Kiselinchev wrote that according to information he had received, "they were beaten terribly, the suffering meted out to those poor people by the civilized Greeks, is indescribable." He added that out of 28 who were arrested in Thessaly, most were released, while ten were indicted.

Obviously the entire process was designed by the Greek authorities with the aim of eradicating the MRO network in Greece. Due to a lack of rele-

vant evidence, the Greek judicial authorities decided to begin gradually releasing the Macedonian immigrants after several months of unjustified incarceration. Their release was conducted without any media coverage in order to avoid publicizing the failure of the Greek state authorities. First, during the month of November, the detainees in Thessaly were released, while on November 19, 1902, some of the detainees in Athens was released and shortly after that all of the remaining prisoners were freed.

Never-the-less, these types of arrests continued over the coming years. Parallel to that, a

large number of Macedonian immigrants who were in any way connected with the MRO, were closely monitored by the Greek security authorities. Moreover "preventive reprisals" were inflicted upon the latter in an attempt to control their actions via intimidation. Notably it was during the trial, on June 15, that the Prefect of Larissa, recommended to the Greek Prime Minister, that he create a special service for monitoring and eradicating the internal enemy in at least four prefectures located in Thessaly, Athens and Piraeus. He stressed "a need to establish a relevant police department, under separate central management and with its own operational rules, composed of young officers invited by the police, to work in an independent secret jurisdiction" and who "would consult, only with prefects (and if necessary, with prosecutors leading investigations)".

In closing, we will mention the "misunderstanding and unfortunate occurrence" in relation to one

of the collaborators of the Kostur Metropolitan Germanos Karavangelis, Pavle Kirov, from the village of Zhelevo, Kostur Region. Won over to the cause of working for Greek propaganda, Kirov, in the spring of 1902, with four companions, left for Greece to procure arms for the needs of the Greek cause. And Despite a recommendation from the Greek consul in Bitola, Kyuze Pezas, to the Greek authorities, that they treat Kirov well, he was arrested in Trikala along with his companions and accused of forming a criminal gang whose aim would be looting in Ottoman Macedonia. Despite the fierce reactions of Pezas and Karavangelis, Kirov remained in detention for five months and then was expelled back to Ottoman territory.

Dr. Dimitar Ljorovski
Vamvakovski.

Translated from Macedonian by George Vlahov.

THE MACEDONIAN RESURRECTION:

The Story of the **Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization**

By Victor Sinadinovski

In 1890, Stambolov discovered a concrete plot to kidnap and assassinate him along with Prince Ferdinand. The leaders of the plot were arrested, one of them being Kosta Panica, an army major with Macedonian ancestry.ⁱ Panica, who had a varied career in Bulgaria as an original member of the Eastern Rumelian Revolutionary Committee and as the Sofia Court Martial in the 1880s, gained the admiration of many Macedonians. He opposed **Prince Ferdinand's rule and lambasted Stambolov** as tyrannical, over-confident and authoritarian. Moreover, Stambolov believed in a gradual approach to acquiring Macedonia for Bulgaria while Panica believed that revolution against the Turks was the only option to free Macedonia. Panica managed to recruit many Macedonians in his campaign against Stambolov and Prince Ferdinand, who was not a native Bulgarian, which made him an enemy of the Pan Slavist movement raging through Eastern Europe.ⁱⁱ



Stefan Stambolov

Panica's original plan was to kidnap Prince Ferdinand in November of 1889 on his return trip to Sofia from a European tour. Panica had also wanted to capture several Bulgarian government ministers and execute them publicly. But because most ministers were absent at Prince Ferdinand's homecoming to Sofia, Panica postponed the assassination until February of the next year.ⁱⁱⁱ Stambolov, however, discovered the plot after intercepting Panica's mail, and one of Panica's personal attendants also leaked details of the assassination plot to him.^{iv} Stambolov then sent a police officer to inform Panica that he knew about the plot and offered to ignore his misdeeds if he abandoned the plot. This infuriated Panica, who was determined to fulfill his mission. Being that Panica's house had already become a hotbed for revolutionary activity, Stambolov thus decided to arrest Panica the day before the planned assassination.^v

Panica "was court-martialed and executed, further intensifying the anti-Stambolov feelings among Macedonian activists."^{vi} At trial, Panica proclaimed "he wished to secure Russian intervention in the favor of the



Kosta Panica

Macedonian liberation from the Turkish yoke[.]”^{vii} In a demonstration of power and wickedness, Stambolov ordered a squad of Panica’s Macedonians to carry out the execution.^{viii} However, in response and as a warning to the Bulgarian leaders, Macedonian nationalists placed a sign in the spot where Panica was executed, which read: “This is where Stambolov and Prince Ferdinand will be shot.”^{ix}

Panica’s Macedonians and others were determined to follow through with their threats. On the night of March 27, 1891, Stambolov had been chatting with the new Minister of Finance, Hristo Belchev, at a café in Sofia when Stambolov decided that they should walk and talk. The two men resembled each other, as they were of the same build and wore similar clothing; and while Stambolov was darker, the difference in complexion was not noticeable at night. As they were walking along the street, a pistol shot rang out and Stambolov fled, shouting for Belchev to follow him. He eventually made it to a guard house when he heard exclamations that “Stambolov [was] dead!” He returned to the scene with a handful of guards only to discover that Belchev, who decided upon hearing the first shot to run into a public garden and hide behind trees, lay dead with a bullet in his heart.^x

The Macedonian assassins planned the murder in Belgrade. Naum Tiufekchiev, from Resen, organized the group in Serbia, which included his two brothers, Nikola and Dimitar, Mihail Stavrev (also from Resen’s surroundings), Krsto Nozharov, and Dimitar Rizov, from Bitola.^{xi} Five assassins were involved in committing the

(Continued on page 38)

deed. The youngest of the Tiufekchiev brothers, eighteen-year-old Dimitri, died during a preliminary inquiry by officials, after being beaten and cruelly tortured. Stavrev was accidentally shot in the hand by Naum during the struggle with Belchev. The hole in his hand prevented him from leaving the country, so he stayed in the house of a friend for a month until his hand healed and he then fled to Serbia. The fourth accomplice was Nozharov, and the last was Georgi Velikov. At his trial, the court could not find sufficient proof to convict him of first degree murder; instead, he was sentenced to eighteen years of penal servitude. After the regime changed in 1895, Velikov was released and became part of the new government.^{xii}

Stambolov punished many more Macedonians and Macedonian sympathizers for the murder and attempt on his life. Arrests, trials, imprisonments and executions – deserved or not – followed. Trajko Kitanchev, from the village of Podmochani near Resen, for example, was sentenced to three years in prison simply because he was a central figure in the **Macedonian movement and had opposed Stambolov's platform on Macedonia.**^{xiii} Also arrested were Bulgarian political opponents to Stambolov, such as the former Prime Minister, Petko Karavelov, who had **contested Stambolov's warming attitude toward the Ottoman regime.**

Karavelov was accused of instigating the plot to instill a pro-Russian regime in Bulgaria and was almost executed for it.^{xiv}



Trajko Kitanchev



Naum Tiufekchiev

However, the Macedonian assassins did not let a failed assassination attempt foil their ambitions. In November of 1891, Stambolov intercepted a letter from Naum Tiufekchiev and his brother, Nikola, outlining their plans to kill Georgi Vulkovich, **who was Bulgaria's diplomatic agent in Istanbul, as well as a close friend to Stambolov.** Stambolov asked the Ottoman authorities to increase protection for Vulkovich and warned him that Macedonians were plotting to murder him. Vulkovich shrugged off the notion that such a thing could happen, thinking that no one would want to kill him.^{xv}

Meanwhile, in late December, Naum had boarded a ship in Odessa and traveled to Istanbul, accompanied by Hristo and Vladimir Shismanov, who were acting with government support from Russia, and Georgi Vulkov, a professional killer who went by the nick-name "**Merdzhan**". **On a crisp February evening, as Vulkovich was returning to the Bulgarian Diplomatic Agency in Istanbul, he turned around to footsteps rushing toward him and saw a man wielding a knife. He screamed for help, but it was too**

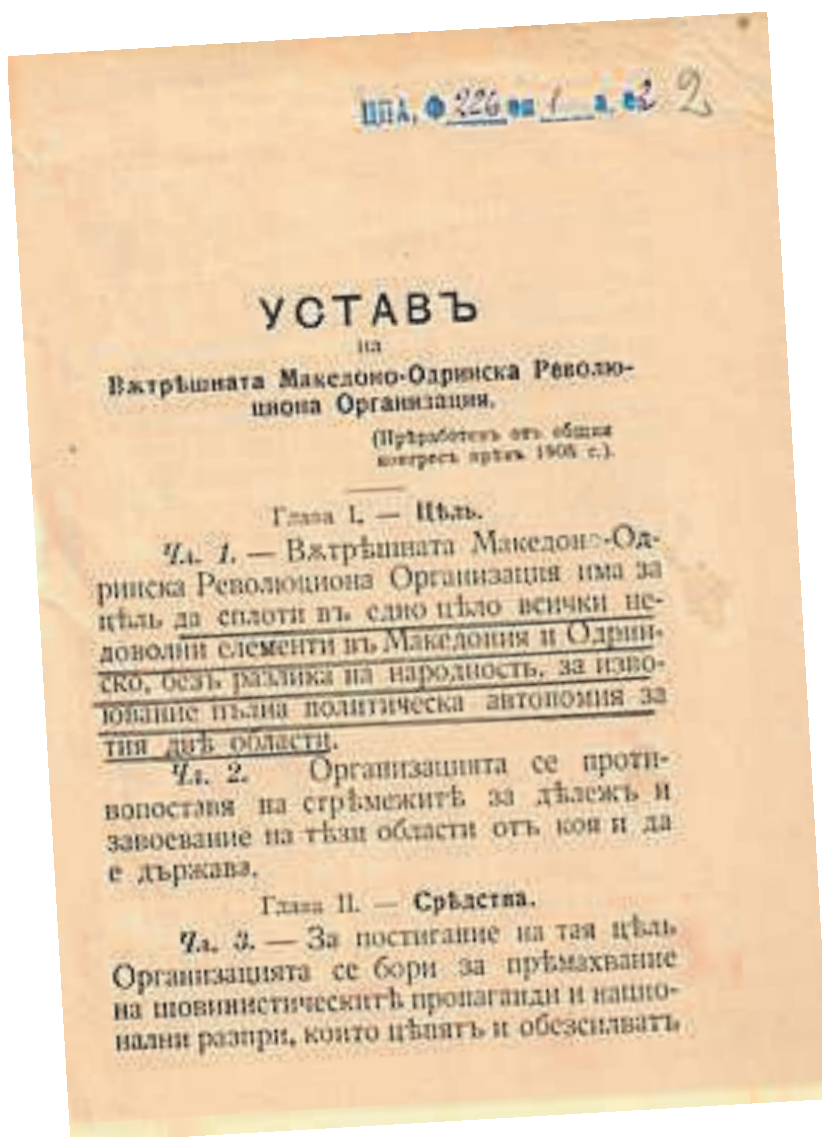
late – the next day he succumbed to several stab wounds. Another version of the murder suggest that he

was stalked by two men during a street carnival. Either way, he was dead.^{xvi}

Two men were arrested for the murder – Hristo Stefan Popeto from Resen and Georgi Vulkov-Merdzhan. The Shismanovs and Tiufekchievs managed to escape with the help of the Russian Embassy. While they were still on Turkish territory, Stambolov demanded from Ottoman authorities that they catch the Macedonians and extradite them to Bulgaria to face trial, but the Sultan did not want to anger Russia. The trial proceeded without several defendants present and all were found guilty. Popeto and Merdzhian were sentenced to death.^{xvii}

By 1895, in addition to losing two close friends, Stambolov had lost his position as Prime Minister due to circumstances in **Bulgaria's political arena**. In July, he wrote an article critical of Prince Ferdinand and the Macedonian agitation, and advocated for closer ties with the Ottoman leaders. The Macedonians residing in Bulgaria found this particularly traitorous.^{xviii} They unleashed their opposition to Stambolov and his policies by stabbing him to death in the streets of Sofia:

He was stabbed, shot, hacked and beaten **in a most terrible manner...Both of the ex-premier's hands were chopped; one wrist was almost severed from the arm; he was repeatedly stabbed about the body and shot in the head. After he fell the assassins continued stabbing and hacking him until compelled to run away.**^{xix}



Stambolov lived for two days after the attacks. The attackers' knives struck him 23 times on the face and head, and all unprotected parts of his body were slashed. For those two days, Stambolov waded in and out of consciousness, occasionally blaming Prince Ferdinand for the attack, as Prince Ferdinand had seemed to now be appeasing the Macedonian attitude for a Bulgarian-backed revolution as the only means for securing Macedonian freedom.^{xx}

The assassin who orchestrated and carried out the murder of Stambolov was the familiar Naum Tiufekchiev. Joining him were Stavrev, a Macedonian named Atzov and a Bulgarian named Boni Georgiev;^{xxi} and together with about a dozen other men, they had been quartering in a hotel owned by the Ivanov brothers (who were well-known gun merchants) plotting the crime.^{xxii} Atzov, being a coachman, drove Stambolov to the scene of the crime, while Tiufekchiev had been working for the ministry of public works as means to get close to his victim.^{xxiii} In the encounter, Stavrev was shot in the neck

by Stambolov's bodyguard. The few police officers present took the bodyguard into custody because he had fired a weapon. By the time they realized the facts, Stavrev had escaped into the woods.^{xxiv} During their trial (of which many, again, were not present), the prosecutors read a letter written by Stambolov, which suggested that he had been aware of the plots to assassinate him and that he knew Naum Tiufekchiev would be responsible.^{xxv}

After several small rebellions and a high-profile assassination, the Macedonians proved that they had the ability to organize and resist Turkish injustices and Balkan chauvinism. However, if the Macedonians were to have any real shot at success, they would need a movement that awakened and organized the peasant masses. This movement was already in its infancy by the time Stambolov was killed, but it would fester throughout the Balkan landscape for several decades. This book takes the reader on a journey from the inception of the notorious IMRO revolutionary struggle in the 1890s and 1900s and through the period of Macedonian gangsterdom that deepened the Macedonians' division and panicked Macedonia's neighbors in the 1920s and 1930s. This is the story of the Macedonian resurrection.

This article is an extract from a book written by Victor Sinadinovski: *The Macedonian Resurrection*. The **book can be purchased online from Amazon, all profits from the book will be donated to St. Mary's Macedonian Orthodox Church in Sterling Heights, Michigan.**

i Duncan Perry, *The Politics of Terror: The Macedonian Liberation Movements, 1893-1903*, (Duke University Press, U.S.A. 1988), 33, 34.

ii Duncan Perry, *Stefan Stambolov and the Emergence of Modern Bulgaria, 1870-1895*, (Duke University Press, USA, 1993) 160-168.

iii Perry, *Stefan Stambolov* 160-168.

iv Yosmaoglu, *Blood Ties* 26.

v Perry, *Stefan Stambolov* 160-168.

vi Perry, *The Politics of Terror* 33, 34.

vii Perry, *Stefan Stambolov* 160-168.

viii Yosmaoglu, *Blood Ties* 26. Note 30.

ix Perry, *Stefan Stambolov* 167.

x Beaman, *M. Stambuloff*, 171-174.

xi <http://www.krumblagov.com/fifty/32.php> , Accessed 12/12/2016.

xii Beaman, *M. Stambuloff*, 171-174.

xiii Perry, *Stefan Stambolov* 175.

xiv *История на България*, (1991) 261, 266, 438.

xv Perry, *Stefan Stambolov* 180, 181.

xvi Perry, *Stefan Stambolov* 180, 181.

xvii Perry, *Stefan Stambolov* 181.

xviii Perry, *Stefan Stambolov* 227, 228.

xix "For a Political Murder", *Sunday Morning Herald, Baltimore*, Dec. 23, 1986, 1.

xx Perry, *Stefan Stambolov*, 229.

xxi "For a Political Murder", 1.

xxii Perry, *Stefan Stambolov* 224.

xxiii "For a Political Murder", 1.

xxiv Gardev, Borislav, *Mihail Stavrev: Revolutionary and Assassin*, July 2014, <http://aferra.bg>. Accessed, 12/13/2016.

xxv "For a Political Murder", 1.

2017 AMHRC Dinner Dance and MUZIKORAMA'S Australian Tour

During March this year, the AMHRC, in cooperation with the Macedonian Community of Western Australia, the Macedonian Community of Adelaide and South Australia & the Macedonian Orthodox Community of Wollongong, organised an Australian tour for the musical group from Aegean Macedonia: Muzikorama.

The group performed in the cities of Perth, Adelaide, Wollongong and Melbourne.

The photographs below and over the following pages are from the Melbourne event hosted by the AMHRC.

It was attended by over 450 people.











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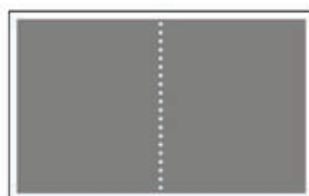
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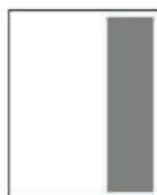
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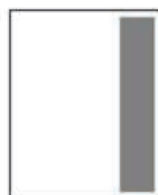
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1/3 Page (vertical)



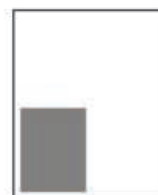
1/3 Page (horizontal)



1/4 Page (vertical)



1/4 Page (horizontal)



1/4 Page (corner)

Advertisement Size	Rate (\$) per issue
Front Cover Partner	Price on Application
Back Cover Full Page	\$700
Inside Front Cover Full Page	\$600
Inside Full Page (other)	\$500
Double Page Spread	\$800
1/2 Page (vertical / horizontal)	\$350
1/3 Page (vertical / horizontal)	\$275
1/4 Page (vertical / horizontal / corner)	\$200
Business Card	\$150
Inserts	Price on Application

MAKE A BOOKING



Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC)
Ph: +61 3 9329 8960 | Email: info@macedonianhr.org.au



Macedonian Human Rights Movement International (MHRMI)
Ph: 1-416-850-7125 | Email: info@mhrmi.org

And if you don't have any advertising material, we can make one up for you at no extra charge!

ABOUT AMHRC

The Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) has been active since 1984.

The AMHRC is a non-governmental organization that informs and advocates about combating racism and promoting human rights. Our aspiration is to ensure that Macedonian communities and other excluded groups throughout the world, are recognised, respected and afforded equitable treatment.

RELATED ORGANIZATIONS

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



AUSTRALIAN MACEDONIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

Address Suite 106, Level 1
55 Flemington Rd
North Melbourne, 3051
Telephone +61 3 9329 8960
Email info@macedonianhr.org.au
Website www.macedonianhr.org.au



MACEDONIAN HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT INTERNATIONAL

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



MACEDONIAN ALLIANCE FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

The political party of the Macedonians in Albania

Website www.macedoniansinalbania.org



EUROPEAN FREE ALLIANCE—RAINBOW

Address Stephanou Dragoumi 11
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Telephone +30 23850 46548
Email vinozito@otenet.gr or
rainbow@vinozito.gr
Website www.vinozito.gr



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Email omo_ilinden_pirin@yahoo.com
Website www.omolindenpirin.org



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

AMHRC TEAM MEMBERS

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