



A collage of various faces, some appearing distressed or in pain, is at the top. Below it is a decorative banner with a red and white pattern. The banner contains the following text:

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# AMHR review





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**Edvard Munch's** *Evening on Karl Johan Street* 1892; *The dance of life* (1899-1900); *The Scream* 1892;

**Honore Daumier's** *They Say the Parisians Are Hard to Please*, 1864 Lithograph; *A la Bourse*, Lithograph; and a 19th century image of *Mephisto*.

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# Public Intellectuals in Macedonia and the Names

George Vlahov

## Preamble

Located among the heights of conceit, one finds commentators of all kinds, though especially noticeable are certain academics and journalists, who present their interpretations, their prejudices, as facts; moreover, within some of them, actually, probably many of them, the desire to appear to be relevant to their milieu, which, understandably is the dream of many an intellectual, leads to an advocacy for policies that contradict not only their ideological persona, but even rudimentary standards of decency. Their expressions of knowledge are also, of course, warped by power, though they manage to perform as if the opposite is true; or to behave as if their knowledge of power is so intimate, that it permits them to insist that their perspective is an actuality which necessitates ignoring a fundamental injustice. In these cases, one is pardonably apprehensive about offering a rejoinder, as such attention is precisely what is craved. The likelihood is that direct engagement will merely lead to the further inflation of an ego that proffered personal preferences, as truth.

## Some of the Arguments

Therefore we are not going to name names, rather, we are going to focus on some of the arguments utilised by those unnamed personalities; i.e. their arguments in favour of surrendering the right to self-determination. We have resolved to address this matter once more, because, of late, the number of those who shall remain nameless, appears

to have risen, markedly. In essence, they are insisting that the Republic of Macedonia must change its name in order to satisfy a racist Greek version of history and thereby obtain membership of NATO and the EU. They, of course, would not put it that way.

This article is not about whether membership of the EU and NATO is desirable, though we will underline: if the notion of responsible citizenship was not something that is almost alien to the bulk of Macedonia's political elite, then it is very likely that membership would have been gained, without an altered appellation, years ago. The state would have been able to mobilise the necessary resources, to explain, in the relevant centres of power and in international judicial structures, that it is not possible to surrender what those centres, themselves, advertise as an inalienable right. Alas, Macedonia's leaders, have instead, consistently used the name issue as a weapon in the waging of party political power struggles.

Among the debris of the collateral damage engendered by those unscrupulous feuds, one can find the thinking of those thinkers who are asserting, that, it is imperative to alienate the inalienable: "my country is too weak to do anything about it". Too corrupt, actually. A serious, principled discussion about the names would also inevitably and usefully lead to a conversation about Macedonia's gravest problem - the widespread anomie in Macedonian society.

Remarkably, a number of our cerebral warriors, had been on record and on principle, unamenable to designing new designations

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during the Gruevski years; now that SDS has firmly put the issue back on the negotiating table, not that DPMNE ever really took it off, they have chosen to refute their former selves with zest, in order, one may suppose, to satisfy a misapprehension of how they might make themselves useful and avoid relevance deprivation.

The right to self-determination is important *but*, "well, actually, we are Slavs, Macedonians are a Slavic nation"; or "identity is a very deeply personal thing, nobody can take it away from you, even if names are changed"; or "we really don't have anything to do with Antiquity, so a name change reflecting that is in order"; "we need to compromise, only the crazy nationalists on our side are refusing"; or "we really are a *new* nation" etc, all kinds of nonsense, everything but the truth. *Their* truth is very simple, though it appears very few of them have the courage to utter it: "We are very aware this is *wrong*, but the Republic of Macedonia cannot survive or prosper without NATO and EU membership, so we have to do it". A very questionable "truth", but at least then the real debates could begin and most of the drivel could be left behind. Who knows, candid discussions like that might even expedite a consensus that leads to a coherent policy in pursuit of winning the very winnable right to self determination.

But that path is too prosaic, too jejune, for our great sages, many of them prefer to resort to history as fables that have been agreed upon, crackpot sociology, genericising, essentialising and the promotion of blatant double standards, the very things they criticise "crazy Macedonian nationalists" for. No doubt, this is partially caused by an inability to provide serious argumentation in favour of ignoring the fundamentals of international law and dispensing with the right to self determination. With others, there is an embarrassing ignorance that equates a defence of self-determination with hateful far right nationalism. They do not appear to be aware, like one particular dullard at *Balkan Insight*, that "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination" is a text that was not written

by a right wing nationalist, a fascist, but by a Marxist, a Bolshevik no less... Of course nationalism has long been a perplexing phenomenon for Marxists, but that is another discussion.

## Nationalisms

What is vital to understand here, is that nationalism is not monolithic, there are types and the disparities are consequential. In this discourse there is not nationalism, there are nationalisms. At a very basic level, saying "I am Australian", is an expression of nationalism. Though it might perhaps be deemed relatively benign, depending on the context. Then again, there is a substantial difference between aggressive and defensive nationalism and it is painfully obvious who the aggressor is, in this context. Or is it? Well, not for some of our savants. No, several of them have taken to using sarcasm to distort the truth, to the extent that they have begun to equate the racist nationalism prevailing in Greek society, which has led the bulk of that society to believe it has the right to revoke Macedonian society's right to self determination, with the activism of Macedonians, who at bottom, are doing nothing more than attempting to protect that right. Granted, there are Macedonians who are employing ludicrous nationalist arguments to do that, but a substantial difference remains, none-the-less.

It is too simplistic to enlist the argument that nationalism is exclusively harmful and must be eradicated, full stop. We live in a world of nations and they are not about to depart from the actual to mere historical. Moreover, humans create groups, if there were not national groups, there would be some other form, it seems to be part of human ontology. While the national form continues, constructive social activism should be about promoting respect between nations, not the mortification of one, a smaller, weaker one, for the benefit of a racist bully. If the bright sparks who are the focus of our discussion do not have any respect for the feelings and dignity of their fellow citizens, who consider the protection of their rights and their identity to be a serious matter, then at least they should have the sense to see they are not weakening nationalism by aiding a much more pow-

erful and racist form of it. One needs to take heed of the fact that the most recent poll in Greece revealed over 70% of Greeks do not even accept, that the Republic of Macedonia has the right to have the word 'Macedonia' in its proposed new name. It is time to put away childish things and stop pretending there are "many" Greeks who reject nationalism, that is a fantasy designed to assuage guilty consciences.

## Politics and Culture

There is another aspect to this refusal to deal with nationalism in a realistic manner. It relates to the political divide in Macedonia and it needs some explaining. In short, bluntly and without going into nuances, SDSM affiliates view themselves as intelligent, sophisticated, cosmopolitan, left of centre, progressive, modern Europeans and in general, they maintain a literal hate for VMRO-DPMNE supporters, who are deemed to be the opposite: excessively conservative, blinkered, dull, far right, out of date traditionalists and nationalists. The severe dislike is of course mutual as is the caricaturing, the DPMNE affiliates might, for example, refer to their rivals as childish, unrealistic, vegetarian dreamers and Yugomaniacs, communists no less.

In this context it is not surprising that the bulk of those public intellectuals who are now advocating for a name change, are more or less connected to SDSM. Among them there is a propensity to label anybody who advocates against name changes, as a "dumb VMROite nationalist". I have observed this numerous times on social media and to an extent it has been a successful tactic - it has led to embarrassed red faces that abruptly retreated from the temerity of having questioned the wisdom of surrendering basic human rights: "don't you see who is supporting you, who is standing behind you" ("не гледаш кој те поддржува, кој стои зад тебе") etc. Oh the horror of receiving likes on Facebook from DPMNE affiliates.... That is how a defence of human rights is converted into something to be ashamed of, into a hateful form of nationalism. Lamentably, that false conversion is aided by the fact that there is indeed a lunatic nationalist fringe among the DPMNE sup-

porters. Fortunately, there are left wing intellectuals in Macedonia who are not so easily shamed out of their principles, unfortunately, they appear to be dwindling in number.

## Conclusions

The Macedonian nation *is new* in the sense that *all* nations, as the word *nation* is presently understood in social theory, were created in modernity, i.e. during the course of the last 500 years. Yes, all nations are new, including yours, Greek nationalists. Attempting to revoke the right of a nation to self-determination, is obviously wrong, to attempt to justify it via a double standard, is doubly wrong.

That said, the Macedonian nation is not as new as the heroes of our story seem to think; it was not created ex nihilo by Tito, post 1945. The sociological basis of the Macedonian nation developed during the 19th and early 20th centuries, substantially, though not solely, as a response to the emotional and physical abuse of Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian nationalism. We are referring to the brutal, often murderous efforts of those nationalisms to impose their respective national identities, *their names*, on the bulk of the inhabitants of Macedonia, in order to justify annexing Macedonia. Over the course of decades, prior to and after the annexation and partition of Macedonia in 1913, an ever increasing number of Macedonia's inhabitants began to reject those divisive and hateful national impositions. In the process of that rejection, they augmented a form of social solidarity encapsulated by the name: *Macedonian*. "I am not Greek or Bulgarian or Serbian, I am Macedonian". Thus it is, by spurning a defence of Macedonia's right to name itself or the right of its inhabitants to name themselves and their language, one is practically supporting the maintenance of a violent nationalist tradition that is well over a hundred years old.

Given that context, one is able to grasp why it is too simplistic to say that Macedonians were created as a "Slavic nation". That sort of description involves a genericisation that undermines the meaning of an identity or worse still, an untenable essentialism, that

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the average Greek nationalist simply adores: "yes, you are uncultured, inferior, 6th century intruders". Linguists do use the term "Slavic languages" or "Slavic speaking nations" but as a convenient generic shorthand, not as a means to undercut the specificity of a culture, by permanently affixing the Slav label as a suffix or prefix to an identity marker. And in any case, the basis for suggesting such a name change is on principle, unacceptable, again, it is most definitely about surrendering one's right to name oneself in order to please racists, whose racism involves aspects of both cultural and biological racism. And the same of course applies to all other suggestions, northern, upper and etc.

And no, identity is not locked away deep inside the individual, away from and cut off from everyone else; identity is constructed socially, in relation to *others*, in interaction with *others*, without *others*, there is no identity and therefore it matters very much, how *others* treat you, how they refer to you. This is sociology 101.

We shall end by admitting it is fanciful to believe we will succeed in moving many or even any of our nameless colleagues, who apparently do not care much about names, to reflect on the way they are treating their fellow citizens; or succeed in convincing them to find the courage to agree on what *should* be generally agreeable, even with rank and file affiliates of the opposing political party. Nor are we likely to succeed in convincing them to at least be more forthcoming, more earnest, about their motivations. You might say that a more diplomatic approach is needed. That might be the case, though we decided the hour is too late for mincing words and while we may fail abysmally in relation to those who are the main focus of our attention, we might succeed in causing some of their devotees, to doubt them.

**George Vlahov**

**Melbourne 10/2/2018**

**P.S.** Interestingly, the latest news from Macedonia indicates that the leaderships of SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE are more and more in agreement on changing names, it just might be, that the rival party executives, have more, *much more*, in common with each other, than what is popularly thought.

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# ZAEV'S MEDIA BRIEFING on the NAME ISSUE:

## Some additional questions the PRIME MINISTER needs to answer

**David Vitkov**

On 8th February 2018, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia, Zoran Zaev held a briefing with the editors of major media outlets in Macedonia. Subsequently, outlets like Maktel, published Zaev's briefing in full, without much analysis. The statements made by Zaev raised more questions than answers. Here are some of the questions we believe that all responsible journalists should pose to the Prime Minister:

***Zaev: Negotiations with Greece next week enter the photo finish, the government hopes and wants a solution in March, meaning in less than two months.***

Prime Minister, while details of the current discussions between the Republic of Macedonia and Greece have not been made public, based on multiple reports coming out of Greece, it seems that the current name being discussed is "Republic of Upper Macedonia". Moreover, Greek media are reporting that Greece is insisting that the Macedonian language version of the name ("Slavic" as they report it), be the official name of the country i.e. "Gorna Makedonija" and that it not be translatable into other languages.

Some media outlets have even reported that Greece's desire is for it to be one word i.e. "Gornamakedonija", with corresponding references to "citizens of Gornamakedonija" and a change of the country code from "MK" to "GO" or "GM". Given that such absurd proposals are obviously going to be unacceptable, is the March timeframe realistic? In fact, with such proposals, how can there be any room for positivity? (Of course, the March deadline, has since been shown to have been thoroughly fanciful.)

***Zaev: The government is considering a referendum to be held, but to delay it until EU accession, in order to prevent Greece from setting new demands for Macedonia's entry into the EU.***

EU accession is many years away, this means that you are practically intending to change the name without a referendum. Has it not long been your stated policy that a name change will have to be approved by a referendum? And in relation to the referendum, will it be a straight forward formulation of the question such as: "Do you agree

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with changing the name of the Republic of Macedonia to [New Name]?”. In other words, will you avoid manipulative formulations like: “Do you agree to change the name of the country for the purposes of entering NATO and the European Union?”

**Zaev: The Government thinks that Tsipras intends to solve the problem, sees it as a potential benefit for Greece and for its SYRIZA party.**

It seems you have a lot of faith in Tsipras. He and SYRIZA, present themselves as progressive European leftists, who care about social justice; yet his government continues to violate the Interim Accord and not only continues to demand that Macedonia relinquish its right to self-determination, but is also now making even more racist demands in relation to Macedonian identity and the Macedonian language. How is it, that you trust someone like that, a politician, who preaches one thing and practices another?

SYRIZA’s current official policy is to continue to deny the existence of an ethnic Macedonian identity and to deny minority rights to Macedonians in Greece, is this in accord with EU values? These policies are perfectly in accord with the tenets fascism, are they not?

**Zaev: The government is still optimistic about the solution to the problem, but a bit surprised by the positions of the opposition and church, we did not expect such radical views regarding the negotiations on our name.**

Given the litany of racist statements over the years from both organisations (especially the church), in relation to Macedonians and the Macedonian language etc, how is it that you find this “surprising”?

**Zaev: At the meeting in Davos, Tsipras informed Zaev about his positions, and vice versa, they talked about 2 hours. Tsipras told Zaev that his parents are**

**from Kavala and therefore he is concerned about Macedonians from Greece. But he also stated that there is no Macedonian language in Greece, there is only Greek, and according to Zaev, Tsipras himself acknowledged that there is no dispute over the Macedonian language. Tsipras asked Zaev whether he feels like a Slav-Macedonian, to which the Prime Minister replied that he considered himself a Macedonian.**

Obviously, when an ethnic Greek from one of the three administrative regions of Greece, using the name Macedonia, declares himself to be “Macedonian”, he is describing himself in a regional-cultural sense, ultimately, he remains an ethnic Greek. On the other hand, when ethnic Macedonians in Greece (or indeed elsewhere) use the term “Macedonian” to describe their ethnic identity, they do so, in order to, among other things, distinguish themselves from ethnic Greeks. The ethnic Macedonians in Mr Tsipras’ country have a distinct culture and speak a distinct language called Macedonian, thus forming a distinct linguistic and ethnic minority. This has been documented by numerous reputable human rights NGO’s, like Helsinki Watch and Amnesty International. Prime Minister, don’t you think it is important to point out such facts to Mr Tsipras and other Greek government representatives?

On the topic of the Macedonian language, Prime Minister, it is incorrect to say that there is no Macedonian language in Greece. The language is spoken by ethnic Macedonians residing in Northern Greece. Moreover and ironically, one of the most unequivocal pieces of evidence proving the existence of a language called ‘Macedonian’ comes not from the academic world but from the Greek state itself. In the Greek national census of 1920, the Macedonian language (not “Slav-Macedonian”, not “Slavic” language, and not “Slavic” idiom) was listed as a language spoken by some of the population in Greece. We are talking about official census results that were published and therefore accepted, by the Greek state. Prime Minister, do you not think it is impor-



tant to inform yourself better about the history of Macedonians in Greece, so that you can point out such facts to Mr Tsipras and other Greek government representatives?

***Zaev: Dimitrov's statement on the red lines for Macedonian identity at the press event with Nimetz was a previously agreed move by Zaev and Dimitrov, to give Greeks the knowledge that the Macedonian government does not intend to be subordinate in the negotiations and will not play everything or nothing, rather, we also have red lines and that is the identity of the people.***

Prime Minister, can you confirm that it is the position of the Macedonian government that the nationality (citizenship) of the citizens of the country will remain "Macedonian" as currently recorded on Macedonian passports and identity cards, etc?

Given that you have declared the identity of Macedonian citizens and the Macedonian people in general, to be a red line and given Greece's continued opposition to these terms, what is the point of continuing the name discussions? Is there a point where your government will finally say enough is enough?

***Zaev: The Government considers that there is no need to change the constitution to reach a solution to the name issue.***

Prime Minister, the Greek government has indicated on multiple occasions that changes to the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia are a precondition for any deal to be done on the name issue. Again, given the diametrically opposed views on this issue, what is the point of continuing the name discussions?

***Zaev: The government has a plan B if no solution is reached with Greece this year, which is to start negotiations with the EU and to begin the implementation of the EU accession chapters and to resume negotiations with Greece, and to***

***seek association NATO membership, but this scenario is not desirable for Macedonia.***

Prime Minister, is this really a viable "Plan B"? How do you expect to begin accession talks with the EU and association NATO membership when Greece would presumably have to agree to such arrangements according to the rules and procedures of both organisations?

Is it not time for the Macedonian government to consider other options, such as seeking an implementation of the 2011 judgment of the International Court of Justice, or better yet, ending these increasingly farcical name discussions and exploring judicial remedies to achieve the full international recognition of the Republic of Macedonia as the Republic of Macedonia? Isn't that what a self-proclaimed, progressive, pro EU values government like yours, should do?

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# self-delusion / self.dɪˈluː.ʒən

## the action of deluding oneself; failure to recognize reality

### *Dr. Tom Vangelovski*

Twenty-seven years ago Macedonia declared its independence from Yugoslavia. This was not an act of national liberation or one of defiance against foreign oppression. In 1991 the Macedonian people were divided on the issue and many, perhaps even a majority, were comfortable with remaining in the Yugoslav federation. For months after Yugoslavia had already collapsed, the Macedonian leadership attempted to resuscitate it in some form.

Finally, a referendum was hastily held on 8 September 1991 asking Macedonians the convoluted question of whether they supported independence with the option of joining a future Yugoslav union should the opportunity arise.<sup>1</sup> Kiro Gligorov had read the mood well. Fearful of fighting in Croatia and Bosnia for their Serb overlords, but also wanting to re-join Belgrade at a future (and much safer) date, Macedonians raised their fists and voted yes. The government adopted a declaration of independence two and a half weeks later, formalising what already existed. Macedonia had tripped and fallen out of Yugoslavia on its way down.

This is the mentality with which Macedonians approach their political freedom to this

very day. It is without resolve or commitment, and unconvinced of concepts such as self-determination and democratic governance. It is with fear and confusion, and a complete unwillingness to even voice their opposition to blatant violations of their rights.

Now Zoran Zaev, the current Prime Minister, has promised to finally ease the pain of the Macedonian experiment by agreeing to a new name. There will still be a state with a nation legally bound to it by citizenship, but it will not be a *Macedonian* one. It will be something else. Importantly, it will be devoid of the necessities of nationhood – identity, history, and cultural inheritance. It will leave many disillusioned and without a place in a world largely defined by nationhood. Nonetheless, it will have many willing participants and many passionate apologists.

The question that is inevitably raised is, „what causes these people to persist in negotiating their identity (their very personhood, dignity and autonomy – both individually and collectively) with a foreign government that simply wants to destroy them? The reasons are shockingly misguided.

In his 1848 manifesto, Karl Marx called on the „workers of the world“ to unite. This slo-



gan summarised his worldview. Marx rejected the very idea of national identity, arguing that the concept was a bourgeois invention used to oppress and subordinate the working class. He saw the world divided among classes rather than nations, and for him class identity was internationalist – meaning that workers around the world belong to one class, or a nation of workers, who have the same interests. As far as he was concerned, national identity was an impediment to the worldwide unification of the working class and the establishment of international communism.

Today, the anti-national ideas of Karl Marx are alive and well in the hearts and minds of Zaev and his supporters. They do not believe in the nation and the nation-state. For them, the world is (or should be) internationalist and cosmopolitan. The Social Democratic party platform reflects this quite clearly:

...we will support programs that, together with educational, social and cultural development policies, will *free young people from the chains of ethnicity [emphasis added].2*

In essence, what the Social Democrats aim to do is indoctrinate Macedonian children into thinking that their culture and ethno-national identity are irrelevant in this modern world so that they can create a multicultural melting pot that fuses existing cultures and identities into something new, cosmopolitan and internationalist. They want the Macedonian to fade away into a sea of Europeans, or at least a conglomeration of the current ethnic mix.

But the man and the party are enabled by a much wider problem – the Macedonian people themselves. Many of them believe that the European Union and NATO are their only hope for „a normal existence“. And for Macedonians it seems that „normal“ largely

revolves around the financial aspects of life. Again, the Social Democratic platform boldly proclaims:

Membership of NATO and the EU are strategic priorities. These [organisations] mean a better standard [of living], modern laws, higher salaries, security for the state, confidence among its citizens, new investments and freedom of movement. It also means that private property, individual freedom, and legal and economic security will be guaranteed.<sup>3</sup>

Many have accepted such promises as self-evident outcomes of membership in these two organisations. But what exactly is self-evident about them? None of these goals can be achieved through external intervention. In fact, they mostly rely on domestic capability and the will to achieve them. These goals are based on principles that need to become embedded in the mindset of the people and then put into practice. Take for example the promise of modern laws, or guarantees for private property and individual freedom. No one needs European expert advice to secure these. If they want „modern laws“ (whatever that even means), then they need to decide what they are within the Macedonian context and legislate them. If they want legal protections for private property, then they need to legislate these protections and then ensure that they are enforced. It really is that simple.

Neither will a better standard of living, higher salaries and new investments be achieved by membership of the European Union and NATO. Bulgaria, Romania and Greece are cases in point. What each Macedonian needs to do is develop a healthy respect for the rule of law, eliminate corruption and build a strong work ethic. A practi-

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cal example of this is not taking or offering bribes. I know, it's a difficult concept to grasp. But this is what will ultimately attract foreign investment and help create a better standard of living.

Unfortunately, it seems that Macedonians are not interested in actually doing anything. They simply want an army of foreign bureaucrats to come in, turn the country into Germany overnight, and hand out Swedish-style unemployment benefits to everyone. This will not happen. Nobody has the time, money or inclination to resolve the problems of others. Macedonians will remain poor and miserable until they finally grasp that they, and they alone, are responsible for themselves. Let me repeat this again, because this is important.

*“Macedonians will remain poor and miserable until they finally grasp that they, and they alone, are responsible for themselves”*

The combination of Social Democratic internationalism and the unrealistic economic expectations of the general public have come to full fruition. Internationalists within Macedonian society play on the fears of the broader public to further their own anti-national agenda. They have portrayed EU and NATO membership as the *only* course that Macedonia should follow and have denigrated anyone who seeks to protect Macedonian interests and fundamental rights as a dirty nationalist that craves war, starvation and unimaginable suffering.

Yet, as the editorial of this issue notes, protecting your rights is not the moral or practi-

cal equivalent of being a warmonger bent on self-destruction. Rights are important because they provide justice. And without justice there cannot be peace (or prosperity for that matter). Nor is nationalism a dirty little concept. At a fundamental level, nationalism is about loyalty. Loyalty to your people and country. Loyalty to your family, friends and neighbours. And loyalty is a virtue, not a vice.

For now, there is an obsession with the EU and NATO, and membership is being sought at all costs, including changing our name and relinquishing all claims to our identity, history and cultural heritage. Why? For an egregious self-delusion.

### P.S.

VMRO-DPMNE has avoided scrutiny from the author for its part in this catastrophic situation simply because it is currently in opposition and the final stroke has been delivered by SDSM. History shows that politicians of all stripes bear the burden of guilt for where we are now and what we have lost.

### Tom Vangelovski

<sup>1</sup> The referendum question was as follows: “Are you in favour of a sovereign and independent state of Macedonia, with the right to enter into a future union of sovereign Yugoslav states?”

<sup>2</sup> Socijaldemokratski sojuz na Makedonija, *Programa za rabota na vladata: 2017-2020*, p. 17,

<http://www.sdsm.org.mk/Gis/Upload/PDF/Predlog%20Programa%20za%20rabota%20na%20Vladata%202017-2020.pdf> [translated from original].

<sup>3</sup> Socijaldemokratski sojuz na Makedonija, *Programa za rabota na vladata: 2017-2020*, p. 11,

<http://www.sdsm.org.mk/Gis/Upload/PDF/Predlog%20Programa%20za%20rabota%20na%20Vladata%202017-2020.pdf> [translated from original].



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# ОТВОРЕНО ПИСМО ДО ПОЛИТИЧКИТЕ ЛИДЕРИ НА РЕПУБЛИКА МАКЕДОНИЈА: ШЧО НАПРАИФТЕ И ШЧО ТРЕБИТ ДА ПРАИМЕ ЗА ОДНАПРЕД?

Длабоко загрижени и вознемирени од начинот на кој Владата на Република Македонија го води процесот на разговори со Република Грција околу нашето уставно име и национален идентитет, чувствуваме историска одговорност да не молчиме и да ѝ се обратиме на целата македонска и светска јавност, во духот на мислата на Мисирков, нашиот духовен татко. За нас особено вознемирувачко е инсистирањето на брзо и нетранспарентно „решавање“ на спор, кој ни е наметнат, или поточно кој ниту е спор, ниту е решлив. Апелираме пред да се продолжи во оваа насока, сите одговорни политичари и граѓани да си го постават прашањето: шчо напраифме и шчо требит да праиме за однапред?

Преземените чекори и сторените грешки од изминатите 25 години, вклучително и денешната какофонијата на претставниците на Владата, коалиционите партнери, но и опозицијата, јасно покажуваат дека се создава подготвеност за потези кои можат да доведат до огромна и непоправлива штета на историските и националните интереси на Република Македонија, на нејзините граѓани и на

Македонците како народ. Не помалку важно е што „решавањето“ на непостоечки спор може да доведе до загрозување на мирот и безбедноста во земјата и регионот. Патот до пеколот е поплочен со добри намери, напиша одамна Данте, а мирисот на сулфур денес допира сè поголем број граѓани, и во земјата и надвор од неа. Она што за политичарите претставува позитивна атмосфера и национален консензус, од наша перспектива е симулакрум со опасни последици. Од тие причини, чувствуваме граѓанска должност да укажеме, опоменеме и апелираме:

Прво, Република Македонија е мирољубив член на меѓународната заедница, и нема ниту еден активен спор со ниту една држава членка на ОН. Нашето право на самоопределување и самоидентификација не потекнуваат од 1991 година, туку се резултат на историски процес на самоафирмација и борба за сопствена држава која симболично започна со првиот Илинден, а беше крунисана со вториот - со заседанието на АСНОМ од 1944 година! Третиот Илинден од 8 Септември беше само чин на континуитет, легитимиран со наодите на Извештајот на Бадинтеровата

комисија и со пресудата на Меѓународниот суд на правдата од 2011 година. Престанете да се однесувате како Република Македонија да е виновна за тоа што постои - и во најмала рака, да ја изедначувате позицијата и однесувањето на државата на чие чело стоите со однесувањето на Република Грција, која го наметна спорот не само од националистички, туку и од многу прагматични причини! „Политиката на шарм“, непоткрепена собарем елементарна стратегија и политичка изградена позиција, лажно се претставува како национален консензус! Власта не само што не е отворена за консултации со научните и стручни кругови, туку и ги игнорира оние кои со внимателност и мудрост се обидуваат да помогнат, укажувајќи им на сите Сцили и Харибди низ кои така беневоолентно минуваат последните месеци. Запрепастени сме што премиерот на Република Македонија на „тајна вечера“ ги советува новинарите како да известуваат за процесот на преговарање, додека сопствените граѓани се држат во незнаење и темнина! Тоа е срам не само за Владата, туку и за новинарите! Притоа, со неверојатна леснотија на постоењето молкум и насмеани гледате како иредентисти нè обвинуваат за иредентизам, наивно верувајќи дека е тоа конструктивност. За разлика од премиерот на Република Македонија, грчкиот премиер пред парламентот ги обзнанува црвените линии: промена на уставот и промена на името за севкупна употреба (*erga omnes*, што значи и кон надвор и кон внатре). Македонските граѓани кои мирно и достоинствено очекуваат елементарно почитување на Повелбата на ОН и на нивите меѓународно загарантирани права, во вашите божем дипломатски изјави, ги

поистоветувате со националисти! Каде е Вашиот национален и граѓански корен, Вашата „македонска жичка“, господине Премиер? Како премиер Вам Ви е должност да ги браните интересите на македонските граѓани!

Второ, приемот на Република Македонија во ОН беше извршен со флангантно кршење на Повелбата, при што на државата ѝ беа наметнати два дополнителни и згора нелегални услова - обврска во меѓународните односи да биде претставувана под референцата (бивша југословенска Република Македонија), како и да разговара/ преговара со Грција околу разликите во врска со името. Поради слабоста на државата, неспособната дипломатија и плашливото и субмисивно државно водство, „разговорите“ прераснаа во „преговори“, за конечно да бидеме исправени пред **ултиматум** кој оваа Влада заедно со опозицијата е подготвена да го прифати и да го промени уставното име на државата, која е наша заедничка политичка заедница. Прашуваме: зошто Владата не ги користи сите правни, политички и морални адути, кои се недвосмислено на страната на државата, Република Македонија? Зошто молчите во врска со Бадинтеровиот извештај? Зошто се однесувате како виновници-иредентисти кога в рака ја имате пресудата на Меѓународниот суд на ОН? Во неа експлицитно се аргументира дека ниту едно дејствие на нашата држава за кое сме обвинети, и што Вие го прифаќате како аргумент на грчката страна, е или било иредентистичко. Зошто непотребно создавате чувство на ургентност кога не е вистина дека проблемот мора да се реши за неколку месеци? Дали некому сте дале ветување со кое ние не сме



запознати?

Трето, мораме да ги потсетиме и политичарите и целата македонска јавност дека одлучувањето за вакво прашање излегува од рамките на со Устав регулираните надлежности на носителите на власта! Никој, вклучително и Владата, Собранието и Претседателот на Републиката нема уставно овластување да одлучува за промена на името, дури и ако е „само“ за меѓународна употреба! Вашето ветување дека народот ќе одлучи на референдум, исто така, не е засновано ниту на Устав ниту на закон, бидејќи не постои норма од позитивното право за распишување референдум, ниту консултативен, ниту задолжителен - бидејќи промената на името на државата, а особено одредбите за идентитетот, не се во надлежност на Собранието на Република Македонија! Скандалозно е пратеници на Собранието, односно членови на политички партии, да разговараат или преговараат со Метју Нимиц и за тоа да зборуваат во медиумите! Кој ги овластил да вршат ваква функција? Дали и ова прашање политичките елити ќе го „киднапираат“ и решаваат вонинституционално и вонуставно?

Вие, како Влада сте избрани од пратениците избрани на демократски избори, а врз основа на политички програми во кои не се обврзавте дека ќе го промените името на државата по секоја цена. Уште повеќе, ниту еден политичар нема ни морално право да го избрише фактот дека во изминатите 27 години, дури 137 држави не признаа под уставното име, а нашите официјални државни претставници во меѓународната комуникација го користат уставното име (the Republic of Macedonia, во англиската комуникација). Ние, интелектуалците,

културните работници, писатели, научници, уметници, лекари и професионалци од сите области, со своите меѓународни постигнувања успеавме да се избориме нашите колеги и партнери да не почитуваат и ословуваат на начин кој е вообичаен за сите други, државјани на трети земји. Ние сме тие кои секојдневно комуницираат со Европа, кои се третирани како Европејци, и кои постигнуваат врвни резултати именувани како Македонци/Македонки, па затоа никој нема право во наше име да го преименува нашето творештво и резултати.

Четврто, недозволиво е, и е израз на крајна политичка ароганција граѓаните да бидат третирани како поданици или како инфантилни, и од нив да се крие она за што преговарате без наша согласност! Ниту еден политичар не добил бланко дозвола од нас да избира „кумови“, дури и ако се тоа НАТО и ЕУ. Без политичка визија, храброст и доблест, Вие, политичарите и од власта и од опозицијата, се обидуваат да задушите секаква суштинска дебата и избегнете отчет пред граѓаните, за чиј идентитет преговарате. За да не замолчите се служите со недолични средства, нарекувајќи не - директно или индиректно - националисти, реакционерни елементи и анти-западно ориентирани кругови. Граѓаните имаат **ПРАВО да бидат информирани**, во најмала рака, како и граѓаните на соседна Грција, за она што го преговарате зад нашиот грб и без наша дозвола! Никакви причини на дипломатска тајновитост не можат да се користат како оправдание, бидејќи овде станува збор за права за кои се избориле нашите предци, а не Вашите гласачи! Успехот на процесот ќе зависи од Вашата отвореност и храброст да се соочите со својот народ и да ја побарате

неговата доверба, **СЕГА** и **ВЕДНАШ**, а не *post festum*, и преку *политика ка свршен чин*! Стоиме пред Вас единствени и решителни, правејќи последен обид да Ве предупредиме јавно и Вас, политичарите од власта и опозицијата, но и целата македонска јавност дека приближува мигот во кој Вие ќе преземете историска одговорност! Пред да го сторите тоа, должни сме како интелектуална совест на нацијата да Ви укажеме дека ја имате сета слобода на светот да извршите политичко самоубиство. Но, како избрани политички лидери на оваа држава немате право да спроведувате политика на национално самоукинување. Доколку постапите спротивно на природното право кое му припаѓа на секој поединец и на секој народ на светот, согласно актите на ОН, но и спротивно на Уставот на Република Македонија на кој сте се заколнале, должни сме да Ве предупредиме дека ќе извршите **национално**

**предавство**! Овој проглас го упатуваме и до најголемата опозициска партија, но и до сите други (замолчани) вонпарламентарни партии. Имаме чувство дека е создадена чудна спрега меѓу оние на врвот, кои се конфронтираат по најбанални работи, сега чудесно се обединија во „конструктивен дух“ да ја разградат Република Македонија. Ќе Ве сметаме за **соучесници**, без оглед на политичкиот исход.

Тргувајќи од фактот дека Република Македонија е сè што имаме, дека таа е нашата единствена политичка заедница, а политичка заедница нема без идентитет, без есенцијални вредности околу кои се создала и кои ги негува, и без демократија и заемно почитување, ние долупотпишаните одлучивме да

истапиме јавно во битката за нашите човекови права, достоинство и интегритет кои не се предмет ниту на преговори, ниту на пазарења за влез во меѓународни организации, како НАТО или ЕУ.

Сфатете го овој проглас и како предупредување дека со ваквото водење на дипломатската кампања не само што се отуѓувате од сопствениот народ и како влог го ставате сето она за што многу генерации гинеле со името „Македонија“ на устите во зандани и на бојно поле, но и ја граделе оваа држава и ја афирмирале надвор од нејзините граници. Инсистирајќи на „решавање на спор“ во кој ни Соломон не би се впуштил, Вие директно предизвикувате несигурност, страв и можен внатрешен конфликт. Наместо да ја сплотите нацијата и да создадете вистински национален консензус околу внатрешните приоритети и демократски вредности, Вие приоритет ѝ давате на надворешната политика која ја водите по надворешен диктат, воден од геополитички интереси. Се оглушувате од пулсот на својот народ, со насмевка трчајќи кон бездна! Вас ќе Ве прежалиме, но Република Македонија и идентитетот на македонскиот народ не се на продажба!

Подготвени да (оп)стоиме до крај, и да ги повикаме сите граѓани на Република Македонија, без оглед на политичка, социјална, верска или етничка припадност, да се придржат на иницијатива за прекинување на оваа дипломатска авантура. Бараме да престанете да вршите притисок врз јавноста дека е ова историски миг за влез во НАТО, бидејќи фактите зборуваат дека самит не е потребен доколку членките на НАТО одлучат да ја примат

земјата без учени, а согласно Времената спогодба и пресудата на Меѓународниот суд на правдата на ОН. Македонија ни е поважна од која било меѓународна организација! Наместо тоа, свртете се и погледнете го сопствениот двор, кој е затрупан од скршени ветувања и разочарувања. Ниту една меѓународна инстанца нема да може да го направи она што е наша домашна задача, а за што сте првенствено одговорни Вие! Бараме веднаш да почнете консултации околу предлогот за прекин на преговорите со посредство на Метју Нимиц и за обраќање до Генералното собрание на ОН како единствена меѓународна инстанца во која Република Македонија не е Давид наспроти моќниот Голијат, туку е рамноправна членка со сите држави кои нè признаваат под уставното име. Престанете со пропагандата дека преговорите се водат „само“ за промена на името на државата, бидејќи и на обичниот човек му е јасно дека станува збор за македонскиот идентитет, нашиот овде и оној на Македонците кои се малцинство не само во Република Грција, туку и во другите соседни земји. Доколку се оглушите на овие укажувања, сметајте на силен ненасилен отпор во целата држава, но подгответе се и да се соочите со сопствената **предавничка улога** по која ќе бидете запаметени од идните генерации Македонци.

## Editorial Note:

**As of 3 March 2018, the number of Macedonia's citizens who signed this statement had risen to around 10,000.**

### ПОТПИСНИЦИ:

Билјана Ванковска, професор  
Гордана Силјановска Давкова, професор  
Солза Грчева, професор  
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Мишо Нетков, професор  
Мелпомени Корнети, уметник и амбасадор  
Наде Проева, професор во пензија





# BEFORE THE RAIN

*“a classic of Macedonian film art”*

The Macedonian nation, the Macedonian people, and the Macedonian culture all have their achievements. There are feats of courage and self-sacrifice, beautiful creations, individual and collective, deserving of admiration and respect. One worthy achievement in the genre of Macedonian film art is the feature film *Before the Rain*.

It is now a quarter century since this remarkable film was released. Both critics and the viewing public almost immediately recognized its special merit. The film was nominated for an academy award for Best Foreign Language Film in 1995, and it received awards at prestigious European film festivals.

So many things need to harmonize in order to achieve such a successful result. The script, the acting, the cinematography, sets, costumes, music, all must work together, blend harmoniously. If even one of these is off somehow, lapses into a degree of mediocrity, the whole film suffers.

We rarely see so many elements shine so brightly, synchronize so well, work so well together, as they do in this film. Per-

haps, most crucial to this success is the screen writer's compelling cautionary tale concerning the consequences of violence spiraling out of control in a march to war. All of this is depicted in vivid images with archetypal figures such as the wise holy man, the out of control village idiot and men caught up in violent tribal conflict.

*Before the Rain* was released at a time when the wars over the break up of Yugoslavia were at their height. Few people imagined that such barbarism could rear its ugly head in so-called modern Europe at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As they viewed that warfare with increasing horror and disbelief, people were looking for someone to shed light on the causes of the violence that was unfolding daily before the eyes of the entire world.

While Milcho Manchevski created a fictitious set of events in the southern Balkans for the purposes of his film art, it was a more plausible and believable one than viewers might even have imagined at the time. Within half a decade war would erupt between the Albanian and Macedonian rival



ethnic groups in Macedonia, people divided by religion and language and culture and socio-economic and political rivalry. Real bloodshed, not so unlike that portrayed in the film, did occur on the ground in Macedonia in the spring of the year 2001.

What made this film stand out in particular at the time, however, was a powerful and mostly successful use of archetypal images to help us understand the state of affairs in the Balkans. Symbols of love and symbols of hate met us at every turn in this film. The one so often inextricably entwined with the other. The music has deep roots in the folk tradition of the region, blending haunting voices and masterful instrumentation, accompanied by powerful images from Balkan life. There is a scene of black clad men in mourning rituals at a grave site, who invite the departed to join them in celebration of a wedding, contrasted with a scene of the bride perched on a white horse, in colorful, traditional folk dress, with the ancient sun symbol flag of Macedonia leading her wedding procession.

Most of these elemental symbols

swirled around the central theme of the film, the age-old truth that life inevitably requires suffering and sacrifice. The pleasures, the joys, the beauty in life all require a certain payment, a dues of sorts. The athlete, the artist, the soldier, the diplomat, or the physician often require exhausting training and dedicated work to achieve mastery of their art or craft or trade, or in order to make their particular contribution to human life. Great achievement often involves great risk and equally great sacrifice. The life and death of someone like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. comes to mind as an example. The sacrifice of Alexander in *Before the Rain*, his sacrifice of his own life to try to save another, culminating in the final unleashing of the life-giving rain that the heavens had been withholding until then, is the central archetypal image in the film.

Superb acting by so many in this film, delivering lines that so often feel convincing and authentic in the context of story, was a major contributor to the film's success. Vivid, powerful scenes follow one after an-

(Continued on page 20)



other in rapid succession. There is an English restaurant scene that delivers a powerful and unmistakable message. You “civilized” Western Europeans would rather that the barbaric violence unfolding daily in the Balkans remain there. But we are all more connected than not, and what happens in one place in our modern world has inevitable consequences elsewhere.

Another vivid, powerful moment in the film occurs when the young monk is exposed for his lying to the abbot and the brothers in the monastery. His spiritual father first lashes out in anger at him and then

so that she can take their cab.

The single most important element in the success of this film is the masterful performance of Rade Sherbedzhija as the central character, Alexander. He embraces a role that is reminiscent of the mythical Balkan hero of folklore, Krale Marko, as well as suggestive of more recent historical figures such as Gotse Delchev and Pitu Guli. He displays a physical charm and an intelligence and an energy that readily appeal to viewers. At the same time we are also forced to recognize the grave moral injury he has suffered as a result of his naïve and foolish injury of another in war as a photo-journalist.



embraces him. He recognizes that a moment of betrayal of his trust must be weighed against an enduring bond of love forged over years.

There are also a number of clever touches of comic relief in the film. One occurs when Alexander tries to take a timed group photo with friends, and he is the one who messes it up by swatting a fly at the crucial moment. Another such memorable moment is when Alexander and his English girl friend are making out in the back seat of a taxi and a stern, elderly English woman raps at the window to get them to move on

Sherbedzhija certainly has had a highly successful career, both prior to and since his role in *Before the Rain*, but few of these performances match that in Manchevski's film. He delivers a command performance as a larger than life figure, a positive archetypal figure personifying strength, courage and an emotional depth. His is the human heart that is central to the film. He conveys a certain elemental earthiness of the common village folk of the character's origins, while also embodying a certain modern sophistication and sensibility acquired in the larger world of his adult life



elsewhere.

All of the other major and minor characters in the film's story feed off of his commanding performance. And Katrin Cartlidge, Gregoire Colin, Labina Mitevska and others, certainly deliver fine performances that are crucial to the ultimate success of the film.

It is often the details that make the difference in the quality of the film. There are an endless number of small things that an attentive viewer will notice and appreciate for the subtle nuanced information they convey. For example, there is a scene in which an indifferent and lazy postal employee dismisses the English woman's phone search for Alexander. She curls up her nose and tells her co-workers that the woman was looking for no one of any importance. In another scene that touches so many of us who have worked for Macedonian recognition, a phone call to England ends with the words: "Macedonia calling." This is followed by a series of quintessential images of the Macedonian landscape, city, people and countryside that can stir the native's heart and bring tears to the Macedonian émigré.

In another scene Alexander visits the neighboring Albanian village and responds to the people there in Albanian. Most Macedonians show little interest in learning Albanian. Perhaps they don't need to do so, but it is a sign of respect, as well as a sign of practical intelligence, to make such an effort to speak one's neighbor's language.

The film transcends the Balkan world it portrays at 20<sup>th</sup> century's end. The struggle between forces of good and evil, lightness and dark, violence and hatred at war with love and peaceful ways, is universal and portrayed in the film with such skill that people everywhere readily grasp the message. The struggle is personified by such figures such as the wise church elder, the angry, vengeful, self-appointed partisan fighter, the out of control, violence-prone village idiot, and the Albanian village elder who behaves with dignity and respect.

There are so many memorable scenes that are hauntingly beautiful and touching, and others that are quite ugly and

disturbing. One vivid scene, for example, involves Alexander's visit to the neighboring Moslem Albanian village. We know that the story takes place in modern times, however, the film transports us back in time in a rather surreal, almost mythical manner here. In this case, the music and gestures are suggestive of Turkish colonial times, and there are hints of an old Macedonian folk song that relates the trials of a captive young woman in a Turkish harem.

I hesitate to try and compare this film with others I have seen. The Hollywood film, *Witness*, comes to mind because of its successful contrast of a violent, modern American gangster and gun loving society with a peaceful agrarian Amish farm society. However, *Before the Rain* is clearly a far more ambitious and complex film. And such ambition carries risk that the film cannot live up to its pretensions. *Before the Rain* does succeed in almost every respect, and I suspect that it might compare favorably over time with the engagement and respect that we afford many of the ancient classic tragedies.

Many of us marvel at the fact that the conflict in Macedonia in 2001 lasted only six months and took some 300 lives and displaced several thousand people, when it could have easily been far worse. It could have spun even more out of control, into a full-blown war, as did the conflicts in Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia several years before. Who knows for sure, but it is quite possible that the broad viewing of this cautionary tale by so many people in Macedonia, the Balkans, and in the world at large contributed to this better outcome. It is, no doubt, quite difficult to measure the real effect of any film, to quantify it, and give it some statistical value. But I remain a firm believer that the arts can and do enrich and inform our lives and our behavior, and at their very best do indeed make us better people.

**Dr. Michael Seraphinoff**

**March, 2018**

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# **BULGARIAN PRESIDENCY of EU COUNCIL: EFA asks for respect of EUROPEAN TREATIES in BULGARIA**

**EFA visits Member Party  
Omo Ilinden Pirin  
and pushes for dialogue on  
Macedonians in Bulgaria**



In the wake of the Bulgarian presidency of the EU Council, the respect of EU treaties and rights on Bulgarian territory must also be put into perspective. A delegation of the European Free Alliance (EFA), went to visit Bulgaria to investigate the situation of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria.

EFA was founded on the conviction that Europe's greatest treasure is the diversity of its peoples. In Bulgaria, diversity does not seem to be respected. EFA and their member party Omo Ilinden Pirin have repeatedly denounced the situation of Macedonians in Bulgaria to no avail.

With the EU Presidency in the hands of Bulgaria, it is time for the Bulgarian government to show that it stands for the three pillars of the EU: democracy, rule of law, and human rights. 10 years after their access to EU membership, Bulgaria is still in breach of EU rulings on minorities.

Minority rights are human rights - and the basis of democracy. EU States must recognise the diversity of the Peoples of Europe.

## EFA in PIRIN



One of these peoples is the Macedonian people. EFA demands a dialogue on the subject. Not recognising the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria can not be an answer. EFA demands the Bulgarian authorities respect diversity and equality. We ask Bulgaria to abide by the Treaties and to comply with EHRC rulings.

A dialogue would be a good first step and would show that minority policies are a guarantee towards peace and stability. Good neighbourhood relations are also needed in order to protect minorities in the Balkans.

The issue of Macedonians in Bulgaria is not a question of number in their population – the respect of their identity and culture also falls within a wider context of minority rights in Europe. There are 350 national minorities in Europe, with approximately 50 million people belonging to national minority or a minority language community. On February 7<sup>th</sup>, the European Parliament voted in favour of a resolution on fighting discrimination of EU minorities. At the same time, a citizens'

initiative entitled the 'Minority Safepack' is currently ongoing, which aims to improve EU legislation on EU minorities. It has already collected 600.000 signatures.

Europe is now at a crossroads. Claims from nations like Scotland, Catalonia, Corsica or the Basque Country among others show that the EU must confront itself with the right to self-determination.

**EFA Statement 20/2/2018**

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# “Take Macedonia Away from the Historians”

## - a different view from **SOFIA**

8/8/2017

Professor Ivaylo Dichev, who teaches cultural anthropology at the Sofia University "Kliment Ohridski", is one of the few Bulgarian intellectuals who does not want historians to play a significant role in overcoming the open issues between the two countries [i.e. between Macedonia and Bulgaria].

In a Bulgarian text on the subject of the agreement between the two countries, published by Deutsche Welle, Dichev urges the Bulgarian authorities to not permit historians to interfere in relations with Macedonia, because both countries suffer from complexes that reduce history to heroes and pride.

He asserts that Bulgarian society needs to tone down its romantic expectations in relation to the recent good neighbourly agreement. He does not expect that a commission in which historians have the final word, will be able to find a common language on the disputed historical issues.

Professor Dichev, who also lectures at universities in the EU and the United States, argues that Macedonia has forged a mythical historical connection to the Ancients, but that the same has been done by the other countries, including Bulgaria. He further asserts that national identities were originally derived from a mosaic of social elements that were enmeshed in concrete historical moments.

According to Dichev, it is absurd to think that a commission of experts can tell you that you are not a Christian, but a Buddhist, which is similar to what Bulgaria did with its Turks and for Dichev, there is no doubt that Macedonians and Bulgarians are different peoples. He elaborates that there are only two periods when the two peoples were together, during the Russian occupation around 1878 and in the Second World War, for which Bulgaria should be ashamed, the professor stated.

"Modern Macedonians are different from us and the acceptance of certain historical facts, will not change that. First and foremost, identities need to be understood and respected/acknowledged" and Dichev believes it is time for Bulgarians to cease negating Macedonian identity as it is leading to severe forms of hatred.

Dichev asserts that the problem in the Balkans is that people have not learned to co-habit with different types of identities. Bulgarians and Macedonians should simply do it and historians should also just do it and not waste time on unimportant issues.

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# The **MACEDONIAN REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION**

## as a Catalyst for the Transformation of **GREEK PROPAGANDA** Policies in **OTTOMAN MACEDONIA**

*Dr. Dimitar Ljorovski*

*Vamvakovski*

In the second half of 1900 the Bitola regional committee of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (MRO) posted Marko Lerinski as the MRO commander for the region of Lerin. Lerinski quickly distinguished himself as a leader with exceptional organisational abilities and the representatives of Greek nationalist propaganda came to regard him as a serious threat. He became a major concern for the Greek Consulate in Bitola, as it was constantly receiving information about Lerinski's success in promoting the ideas of the MRO. One of the Greek Consulate's informants, a Macedonian-speaker from the town of Lerin, Lakis Pirzas, underlined that Lerinski was successfully propagating the idea, among the villagers, that they "should work for the liberation of Macedonia"(1). "The false words and promises", as Pirzas described the activity of Lerinski, were beginning to "gain traction"(2).

This was reiterated by Ion Dragoumis, one of the main ideologues of Greek irredentism towards Ottoman Macedonia. In February 1903, at which time Dragoumis was serving as a secretary in the Greek consulate in Bitola, he wrote: "The committee [MRO] showed them the image of freedom. The committee and the troops say 'Macedonia to the Macedonians', they do not force them (...) to become schismatics, nor to leave Greek schools (...) They do not seek Bulgarianism, but rather, autonomy (...) "(3). Thus we can conclude that the activity of the MRO, from the beginning of the 20th century, despite the conspiratorial nature of its activities, had become more evident in the eyes of the "other". With its establishment as a factor that was uniting various dissatisfied elements in the empire around the idea of a free and autonomous state, it had begun to undermine perceptions of Ottoman Macedonia, created by the power of the Sultan. Moreover, the increasing success of the MRO was becoming a major concern for the neighbouring Balkan contenders for the ter-

*(Continued on page 26)*

ritory and population of Macedonia.

Hence, the abandonment of traditional means used by the propaganda institutions of the Balkan irredentists became inevitable. During this period, the agitation by the MRO, for freedom and equality, avoided creating a boundary between the church divided population of Exarchists and Patriarchists.(4) The Balkan nationalists were deeply troubled by these developments, the MRO seemed to be transforming the nature of the relationship between the various Christian denominational groups in Macedonia; in particular, the growing unity among the Macedonian speaking population, meant losing, what they viewed, as members of their own respective nations.(5)

In other words there was a radical difference in viewpoints on the "Macedonian question" between the Balkan nationalist irredentists on one side and the programmatic aims of the Macedonian revolutionary movement on the other. While the Balkan nation-states desired to fulfill expansionist national appetites at the expense of Ottoman Macedonia, the MRO was governed by the concrete needs of Macedonia's inhabitants. This explains why Greek nationalism failed to win wide support in Macedonia, as the Greek historian Georgios Mihalopoulos put it, "Greek irredentism failed to inspire" and therefore "Greece was losing the war of ideas".(6)

Ignoring the interests and needs of the population, the Greek state and the Greek propaganda institutions in Ottoman Macedonia defended the status quo in the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the 20th century, promising Orthodox Christians an eventual and "vague prosperous life in [some sort of] Greater Greece".(7) On the other hand, the MRO stemmed from the

population itself and therefore understood and sympathized with its needs and desires. It was in this context, that academician Manol Pandevski argued that the Macedonian organized revolutionary movement did not appear accidentally or on an empty field of operations. That is, the appearance of the MRO denoted a heightening in the development of the liberation struggles of the Macedonian ethnic group.(8)

The MRO offered the hope of freedom to the Macedonian Orthodox population and in particular, the leaders of the MRO propagated and demanded a redistribution of land, equality before the law and changes in the taxation system. Consequently, the centuries-old tradition of obedience of Orthodox Christians to the Ottoman authorities and the church-propaganda institutions of the Balkan states, was seriously undermined. According to the English journalist, Henry Brailsford, who had been present in Ottoman Macedonia for some time, the MRO had set itself the task of propagating "an uprising, to engender in the youth, a passion for freedom and brave deeds (...)".(9) The perceptions and expectations held by the populace of Macedonia in relation to the MRO, were more or less accurately described by a Hellenised Vlach from Bitola, who eventually became a Greek Historian, Georgios Modis. In his writings there is an admiration and even an idealization of the MRO: "When I was small, I thought it was something magical and I asked (...) what it represented (...) I considered them demi-gods (...) There was an impression that many things should be expected of them ".(10)

Modis, with the stated goals of the MRO in his mind, espoused the view that in the organisation, there was a place for all enslaved Christians and that the organisation's struggle was dedicated to the benefit of eve-



In response, official and unofficial Greek representatives in Ottoman Macedonia, decided that Hellenism must implement a fierce resistance to the MRO in order to maintain an influence over Macedonia's Patriarchist population. These Greek irredentist nationalists began advocating for the beginning of a war against the MRO. In the context of an already extant and deep disdain for their Bulgarian colleagues, they decided it would be most convenient to present the Organization as an extended arm of the Principality of Bulgaria. Thus Greek irredentists began a propaganda campaign designed to degrade the activities of the MRO, both internationally and locally among the Patriarchists in Macedonia and official Athens would shortly follow suit.

**Translated from Macedonian  
by George Vlahov**

1. Παλос Παπαζηακαηε, „Ο οπιαρτεγος θαπεηαλ Λαθεο Πсρδαο“, *περ. Αριζηοηεληο*, ηεο. 20, Φιωρηλα, ααρηηοο-απρηηοο, 1960, 13.
2. Π. Παπαζηακαηε, „Ο οπιαρτεγος θαπεηαλ..., 13.
3. Ιωλοο Δραγοοκεο, *Та Тетрадия ηοο Ιλινηεν*, Γηωργοο Πεξηηβαο, Αζεια, 2000, 19.
4. In his memoirs, the Kostur region commander of MRO, Mihail Nikolov, states that "the organisation made no distinction between Exarchists and Patriarchists, it employed workers equally from both groups, the main concern was that they be honest". Материали изъ миналото на коотурско, *Революционното движение въ коотурско; спомена отъ М. Николовъ*, София, 1937, 34.
5. Кит Брун, *Верни до смрт: Довербата и теророт во револуционерна Македонија*, Скопје, 2014, 50.
6. Georgios Michalopoulos, *Political parties, irredentism and the Foreign Ministry: Greece and Macedonia: 1878-1910*, University of Oxford, 2013, 164.
7. G. Michalopoulos, *Political parties, irredentism and...*, 207.
8. Манол Пандевски, *Македонското ослободително дело во XIX и XX век: појави, релации ликови*, том петти, Скопје, 1986, 187.
9. Хенри Ноел Брејлсфорд, *Македонија, нејзините народи и нејзината иднина*, Скопје, 2003, 188.
10. Г. Х. Модеο, *Ο Μαкеδονικοο αγων και η νεωηερη μαкеδονικη ιζηορια*, Θεζειαιοληθε, 2007, 143–144.
11. Г. Х. Моде, *Македоникоο αγων και μαкеδονικεοο арτηηοι*, Θεζειαιοληθε, 1950, 33.
12. Г. Х. Моде, *Македоникоο αγων και μαкеδονικεοο...*, 36.
13. *Иоторија на македонскиот народ*, том 3, ИНИ, Скопје, 2003, 187.

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# IT'S TIME TO KILL THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION

***Victor Sinadinoski***

Picture a dog tethered to a pole by a short metal chain struggling violently to free itself in order to reach that jar of peanut butter teasing it from the other side of the yard. With each whiff of peanut butter flowing into its nostrils, the dog bursts forward with voracious energy, but to no avail – the pole is anchored deep into the soil and the steel chain could not be noosed around the dog's neck any tighter without it croaking. Yet, the dog is not a quitter. It tries to shake off the chain, glances back at the pole, and then charges forward again when another blast of peanut butter bounces through the air, only for it to be once more cruelly snapped back by the indestructible shackle. The dog whimpers, paces in circles as it catches its breath, and once rejuvenated, replicates the previous pattern incessantly for several hours, expecting a different result from the same action.

If you can easily visualize this, then you should have little difficulty in understanding the Macedonian Question as it relates to the Macedonian people. The Macedonians resemble that poor dog, and their chain is the Macedonian Question, that timeless question mark associated with the Macedonian nation and identity that keeps the Macedonians tethered in the same, miserable pre-

dicament. The peanut butter across the yard is the economic, social and personal growth that the Macedonians strive to access for themselves, their families and nation. But the Macedonian Question detains them several bounds short of their aspirations. Sometimes the masters appear from their fortresses and lengthen the chain or move the peanut butter closer, but the chain is never removed. On several occasions, the Macedonian Question has nearly choked the Macedonians into complete submission, almost into the realm of nonexistence.

For Macedonia's neighbours, the Macedonian Question is a convenient distraction to fall back onto when attempts at economic and social progress within their own borders screech to a halt, or when they grow over-ambitious in realizing dreams of recapturing ancient glories and statuses. Sometimes the Macedonian Question acts like a disease that infects nearly everyone in their lands, and these people act like rabid mammals bent on spreading the chauvinism, suppression and discrimination that the Macedonian Question is rooted in. It is fair to say that politicians take advantage of national sentiments to manipulate peoples' fears and desires, but it would be a gross misunderstanding of these peoples' mindsets and attitudes toward Macedonians to pass off the citizenry as mere victims or pawns in

political games. These beliefs are entrenched deep into their culture, and it is these people that vote their manipulators into power, in no small part *because* of their attitudes toward Macedonia, not *despite* these attitudes.

Throughout modern history, especially during the last 15 decades, the Macedonian Question has surfaced and resurfaced under different guises: the Macedonian Problem, the Macedonian Syndrome, the Macedonian Issue, the Macedonian Dilemma, the Macedonian Crisis, the Macedonian Tragedy, the Macedonian Imbroglio, and the Macedonian Maze, among many others. Newspapers, magazines and books peppered these phrases all over their pages. Scores of books and essays, for example, have these expressions imbedded onto their title pages. (See *Table A* for a partial list.)

Beyond mere titles of books, most authors writing about the Balkans in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries – and many more during the following decades – could not furnish a completed work without mentioning or analysing the Macedonian Question. It was always the topic of the day. In 1886, J. George Minchin insisted that “if the Macedonian Question is to be treated ethnographically, few men in Europe are competent to deal with it.”<sup>i</sup> “But the Macedonian question,” wrote Trico Constantine in 1903, “is not merely a question of political import and national aspirations. It has become a question of economics.”<sup>ii</sup> “Mention Macedonia to any Balkan statesmen,” wrote William Le Queux in 1907, “and he raises his shoulder and shakes his head. It is a problem that nobody can solve.”<sup>iii</sup>

After World War I, the Macedonian Question was still a familiar concern. “The Macedonian Question, once the chief political problem of the Near East, has passed into an entirely new phase,” wrote Isaiah Bowman

in 1921.<sup>iv</sup> “Today it has reached the acutest stage in all its history,” wrote another in 1926.<sup>v</sup> In 1933, Vera M. Dean wrote that “political life in Bulgaria has always been complicated by the Macedonian question, which has not only long troubled Europe but constitutes a difficult domestic problem.”<sup>vi</sup>

World War II did not settle the question. “The world is aware that there exists a Macedonian question, that is, the question of Macedonia's liberation,” wrote Ivan Mikhailov in 1948.<sup>vii</sup> Palmer and King noted that “in the early 1950s the Macedonian question was not allowed to interfere with the signing of the Balkan pact.”<sup>viii</sup> And by the time Macedonians had declared independence from Yugoslavia, writers insisted that the Macedonian Question was still alive. The Greek Institute for Balkan Studies in 1992 wrote that “certain Yugoslav initiatives ... have elicited cryptic statements of the type „there is no Macedonian Question“.”<sup>ix</sup>

#### **TABLE A (Partial list of books about the ‘Macedonian Question’)**

*The Macedonian Question. With an Introduction by F.S. Stevenson, 1902*

*La Question Macédonienne et Le Haut Comité Macédo-Andrinopolitan, 1902*

*The Macedonian Problem and Its Proper Solution, by George Chakaloff and Stanislav Shoomkoff, 1904*

*La Question Macédonienne et les Réformes en Turquie, by I.F. Voinov, 1905*

*L’Intervention de L’Europe dans la Question Macédoine, by Antoine Rougier, 1906*

*The Near East: The Macedonian Problem and the Annexation of Bosnia, by George P. Gooch and Harold W.V. Temperley, 1918*

(Continued on page 30)



*The Macedonian Question, Yesterday and Today*, by Georgi Bazhdarov, 1926

*The Macedonian Question, 1903-1919*, by Lydia Hackman, 1927

*An American Symposium on the Macedonian Problem*, by the Central Committee of the Macedonian Patriotic Organization, 1941

*Stalin and the Macedonian Question*, by Christ Anastasoff and Ivan Mikhailov, 1948

*The Macedonian Controversy*, by George B. Zotiades, 1954

*The Macedonian National Question*, by Lazar Kolishevski, 1958  
*The Macedonian Question: The Struggle for Southern Serbia*, by Djoko M. Slijepchevich, 1958

*The "Macedonian Question" Never Dies: The San Stefano Trauma Again*, by Dennison I. Rusinow, 1968

*Yugoslav Communism and the Macedonian Question*, by Stephen E. Palmer and Robert R. King, 1971

*Great Britain and the Macedonian Question at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919*, 1973

*Aspects of the Macedonian Question*, by Lazar Kolishevski, 1980

*Macedonia and the Macedonian Question: A Brief Survey*, by Society for Macedonian Studies and Center of Macedonians Abroad, 1983

*The Macedonian Question: The Politics of Mutation*, by Institute for Balkan Studies, 1987

*The Macedonian Question and the Birth of the New Macedonian Question*, by I.K. Mazarakes Anian, 1992

*The Macedonian Question and the Origins of the Young Turk Revolution*, by Ahsene Gul Tokay, 1994

*The Macedonian Question in the Bulgarian-Yugoslav Relations*, by Dobrin Michev, 1994

*The Macedonian Question Revisited: Issues Relating to the Establishment of a Macedonian State in the 1990s*, by Nektarios Filippis, 1996

*The Macedonian Question, 1893-1908*, by Nadine Lange-Akhund, 1998

*The New Macedonian Question*, by J. Pettifer, 1999

*The Young Turk Revolution and the Macedonian Question, 1908-1912*, by Christopher Psilos, 2000

*The Macedonian Question: Culture, Historiography, Politics*, by Victor Roudometof, 2000

*Balkan States and the Macedonian Question*, by Antoni Giza, 2001

*The Communist Party of Greece and the Macedonian National Problem, 1918-1940*, by Ireneusz A. Slupkov, 2006

*The Macedonian Question: Britain and Southern Balkans, 1939-1949*, by Dimitris Livanios, 2008

Not surprisingly, the plague of the Macedonian Question has survived into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. "The Macedonian Question"s passionate reanimation," noted Jane Cowan and K.S. Brown in 2000, "occurs at the beginning of a new century in a radically different world from the one in which rival claims were first staked in the region."<sup>x</sup> In 2012, Ernest Damianopoulos acknowledged that "the central issue in writing about Macedonia is simple: Who are the Macedonians? It is an old issue and a component part of the „Macedonian Question“."<sup>xi</sup>

These colourful depictions of Macedonian affairs, despite the various topics and solutions discussed within the works, all communicated the same essential message:

„Macedonia is a complex and dangerous land; something needs to be done about it, and I have a solution.“ Such generalizations of the Macedonian Question beg for answers to many questions. What exactly is the Macedonian Question? Is it different today than it was a century ago? If it is, how so? Why does a Macedonian Question exist, but a Bulgarian or a Greek or a Serbian or an Albanian question not exist? What can Macedonians do to eliminate this question mark slobbered next to their name? Over a century of writing books and essays about the Macedonian Question by mostly non-Macedonians (usually by Western analysts or Balkan propagandists) has passed and the question persists because the Macedonians' Answer, or Response, or Solution, has been constantly rejected and the Macedonian voice has been persistently belittled. This is why there ever was a question mark associated with the Macedonian nation, land and identity in the first place, and why it has persevered for so long.

We could use a local and hypothetical analogy to understand the process of how the Macedonian Question has been clung onto for so long. The pretentious Western world, and Macedonia's intrusive neighbours, are like township officials and concerned citizens deeply worried not only about the internal affairs of a particular household, but about whether the house itself should exist, or even more absurdly, whether it actually does exist. „That house is not really its own house,“ argues one pesky neighbour, „because it's made out of the same material as my house.“ Another neighbour speaks up: „Five hundred years ago, “he shouts, „one of my ancestors would graze his flock

of sheep on that land. His house is on my rightful land and I want him out!“ A third resident takes the podium: „Listen to me carefully,“ he says. „The last name of that homeowner is the same as the first name of one of my children. I know that as long as he has that surname, he will use it as pretext to steal my house, my children and my property. The house can stay but his name must change.“ Finally, a less intrusive neighbour, who is still a thorn, insists that several of the used goods inside the house were actually under his ownership before he sold them and he now wants them returned. The self-appointed council hears the testimony as the accused homeowner sits silently, patiently awaiting his turn to speak, and then the council adjourns the hearing to reconvene at another time. The homeowner has been dragged into an everlasting fight over his right to be there, and he must push aside all other matters in order to contend with these attacks while never being given the podium.

While the prolongation of the Macedonian Question is not as simple as this, it is definitely more absurd. And as much as the Macedonian Question has evolved throughout the last two centuries, it has essentially stayed the same. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the Macedonian Question was, „What is to become of the Macedonian territory in the Ottoman Empire: will it become independent or remain in Turkey?“ The European Powers disagreed on how to approach this question – each afraid of what a free Macedonia might mean for its economic and political position in Europe – and Macedonia thus remained under Ottoman subjugation. As Macedonia's neighbours became increasingly interested, the Question became, „Will Serbia, Bulgaria or Greece wrestle Ma-

*(Continued on page 32)*

cedonia from the Ottoman Empire or split Macedonia among themselves?" Along with that question came the inseparable question of nationality: „Were the Macedonians really Bulgarians, Serbians, Greeks, something in between, a concoction of all, none of the above, or just simply Macedonians?" These free Balkan nations used their respective churches and schools established in Ottoman-controlled Macedonia to spread their respective propaganda, and they eventually dispatched armed bands to force the Macedonians into joining their churches and nations. Wars were fought and the Macedonian territory was freed from Ottoman control, only to be divided between Macedonia's neighbours. Greece and Serbia obtained the largest portions; Bulgaria and Albania were dissatisfied with their share of the spoils.

The Macedonians themselves began to shake off the propaganda that had infected them and rallied around an independent and united Macedonia, as well as for the recognition of a distinct and equal Macedonian ethno-national group with its people connected to one another by common ancestral, cultural, historical and linguistic bonds. During World War II, the Macedonians resisted fascism and a Bulgarian takeover of their land. Once the Macedonians became a constituent republic of Yugoslavia in 1944, the Question retreated from a purely violent nature and began evolving into a diplomatic and academic exercise. The Macedonian minority in Greece was cruelly oppressed, expelled or assimilated into Greek culture for a while, until the Macedonians there were eventually forced into submission, especially after Yugoslavia refused to proceed with freeing those Macedonians due to political constraints.

Yugoslav authorities recognized Macedonia

as a republic within Yugoslavia and the Macedonians as an ethnic group, but they did not entertain the Macedonians' wishes for the unification of their people and lands, or to help protect Macedonians' rights in northern Greece. The new Bulgarian government retreated from recognizing Bulgaria's Macedonian minority and argued that the Macedonian language was truly Bulgarian and that the Macedonian people were actually Bulgarians who had been misled into believing they were something else. As poor as Macedonia was, Albanians began flocking into north-western Macedonian lands to escape poverty, corruption and backwardness in neighbouring Albania and Kosovo. The Serbians, under Yugoslavia, were forced to acknowledge the distinct Macedonian ethnicity, but refused to recognize the independence of the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Macedonian Diaspora organizations endured the fight for protecting Macedonian human and political rights in neighbouring Greece, Bulgaria and Albania. When Yugoslavia disintegrated and Macedonia achieved independence, Macedonians in neighbouring lands demanded equal rights and freedoms and to be recognized as Macedonians. Greece and Bulgaria applied a variety of methods to quell the Macedonians, with fluctuating degrees of success. Macedonia's neighbours now raised the stakes by resurfacing old questions about Macedonia and creatively adapted their arguments to modern conditions and concerns.

Fears grew in the Western world that Greece, Serbia, Albania and Bulgaria would duke it out in another war for Macedonia. That did not transpire, but Greece and Bulgaria insisted that a separate group of people called Macedonians did not exist. Greece asserted Macedonia should not be



called Macedonia and that these „so-called Macedonians“ were Slavic speaking Greeks, or Bulgarians, or Slavs, or Slavo-Macedonians, but they could not be called Macedonians because only Greeks could be Macedonians, because ancient Macedonia was 100% Greek. The Bulgarians, on the other hand, recognized the country and name of Macedonia, but swore that these people were really ethnic Bulgarians, speaking the Bulgarian language, and were part of the Bulgarian nation, with a culture indistinguishable from Bulgarians, but had been confused by decades of Serbian and Yugoslavian propaganda that convinced them otherwise. The Albanians, for their part, could have cared less about what the Macedonians called themselves, even though they referred to them as Slavs or Serbs who were occupying Albanian lands, and iterated that much of western Macedonia should be in Albanian control. The Serbs contested Macedonian control of the Orthodox churches in Macedonia and continued refusing to recognize the Macedonian Church's independence; and while having no problem calling these people Macedonians, they thought, in their deepest of hearts, that the Macedonians were really Serbs, or southern Serbs.

All of this would not matter much if it did not have real implications on Macedonian society. Macedonia, being a newly independent and poor country, was struggling to establish a stable government and society, which is an arduous task by itself. But the intrusion of Macedonia's neighbours presented Macedonia with extraordinary obstacles: Greece prevented Macedonia from joining the United Nations, and even imposed an embargo on Macedonia, until Macedonia changed its name and flag. Macedonia capitulated, and agreed to be admitted into the UN as „The former Yugoslav Republic of

Macedonia“ while „Macedonia“ was the name enshrined in its constitution. Albanians started an armed conflict in northwest Macedonia in 2001, which resulted in the Ohrid Framework Agreement, altering its constitution and government and paving the way for a potential federalization of Macedonia as a bi-national state of Macedonians and Albanians. Greece and Bulgaria blocked Macedonia's progress into the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, with Greece threatening to veto Macedonia's bid at every opportunity until Macedonia agreed to no longer call itself Macedonia. Meanwhile, Macedonians in Bulgaria, Albania and Greece continued to struggle to attain basic rights, as Macedonian political and cultural associations were continually denied the right to form there. The UN, EU and NATO, for their part, never stood up for the Macedonians and brushed aside Macedonia's concerns while simultaneously pushing them to become members of their respective organizations.

Today, Macedonia still lingers in the UN as „The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia“ and is not a member of NATO or the EU. Minority Macedonians face the same obstacles that have haunted them for decades. The Albanian minority in Macedonia wants equal power as the Macedonians and desire either separation from Macedonia or federalization of Macedonia, or even possibly to make Macedonia a third Albanian state in the Balkans. Bulgaria continues to deny that a Macedonian ethnic group and language exist. Greece continues to demand Macedonia change its name and stop appropriating supposed ancient Greek history. The Macedonians, for their part, are losing their elected officials to corruption and their youth to alluring Western lifestyles

*(Continued on page 34)*

as the economy falters and trust in public institutions erodes.

Thus, the Macedonian Question is just as complex and visible as it was at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The country and its people are both called into question, and these issues have rematerialized and amalgamated as the hot topic of the Balkans. „Who should control Macedonia and who are the Macedonians?“ is today`s Macedonian Question, and it is a question that has not changed from a century ago. It seems that everyone's opinion matters, except that of the Macedonians. It also seems as if democratic principles will not dictate the outcome of this question, as they have failed the Macedonians for over a century. Only power can save the Macedonians, and Macedonians must quickly obtain the necessary power if they want to control their own destiny.

It is time for the Macedonians to erase the question mark associated with our identity, nation, language, history, culture and name. It is time for Macedonians to assume a relevant, principled and stern seat as an equal and as a leader on the world stage. It is time for Macedonia to force her neighbours into recognizing Macedonia and the Macedonians. It is time for Macedonia to show that Macedonia can bite harder than her neighbours can bark. It is time we break the chains that have kept us submissive for much too long. It is time to kill the Macedonian Question.

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### **'ALEXANDER DREAMING'**

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(Tattoo version above) and Original on back cover

A very topical piece considering the grim situation in Macedonia, '**Alexander Dreaming**' shows a poignant, troubled face (subconsciously drawn to look like my Partisan Dedo Petse) reflecting back on the battles he won, lost, and whether or not he would've done things differently with the benefit of hindsight

Is he saddened by the lives lost? Or did he feel it was for the Greater Good?

A Hardened face of Anger, Victory, Regret and Loss all at the same time, NUSHYO, **ALEXANDER**

Let me know if you'd like a version of your own..... [johnnysig@iprimus.com.au](mailto:johnnysig@iprimus.com.au)





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**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.

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