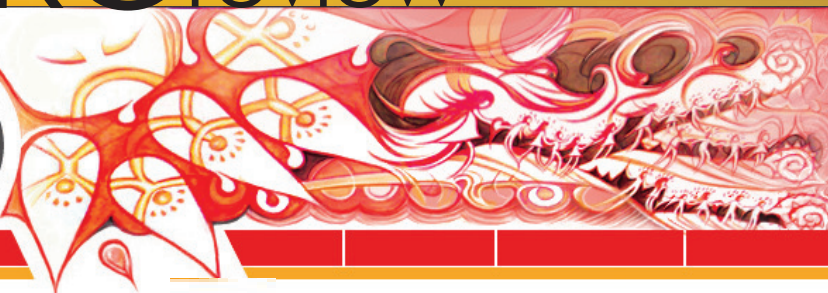


# AMHRCreview



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## Spring 2010

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## *The "Our Name is Macedonia Campaign" Continues but there are also other Issues*

The AMHRC and MHRMI have extended the billboard aspect of the campaign advocating an end to the name "negotiations" with Greece, to the towns of Tetovo and Bitola in Macedonia. In an important and very challenging article that appeared in the last issue of the AMHRC Review, written by MHRMI International Coordinator, Slavko Mangovski, it was metaphorically asserted by him that Macedonia is at "war" - thus emphasising the propaganda siege under which Macedonia finds itself. A siege led by external forces (primarily, but by no means only, Greece and Bulgaria) with the racist aim of destroying Macedonian identity. This metaphorical reference to "war", was notably soon echoed by numerous others in the Diaspora - which, combined with the massive Diaspora support that AMHRC/MHRMI have received for the "our name is Macedonia" campaign, indicates a high degree of unity of viewpoint (in regard to this issue) among Macedonians residing *outside* the borders of Macedonia.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about the Macedonians in Macedonia - indeed, if one could make a similar assertion about them, then it is unlikely that our campaign would have been deemed a relevant or useful venture. Macedonian society is obviously not entirely at ease with itself and the ongoing corruption issues, also touched upon in Slavko Mangovski's article, are a factor contributing to the malaise. In spite of the fact that polls indicate a majority of Macedonians implicitly reject the name talks - the numbers that don't fall into the rejection

camp are still substantial. Some in the latter camp have sold their hearts and minds to racist foreign interests. Though there are others in this latter camp that feel impotent and who argue that a "deal" with the name needs to be done in order for the country to be saved from itself, by external institutions like NATO and the EU. However, no amount of outside "aid" (in practice such "aid" often manifests itself as a new form of exploitation) is going to save a society at war with itself - ultimately, the society in question, needs to do this for itself.

There is the obvious point which has been made on numerous occasions that Macedonia is a small country surrounded by much larger states that have little respect for Macedonia. However, the ability of these neighbourhood bullies to tamper with the internal life of Macedonia would be considerably reduced, if rather more serious efforts were made to improve the functioning of Macedonian political, legal and economic structures and thereby, eventually delivering a trust in the social realm that leads to a higher level of internal unity. People in the Diaspora often express the view that it will be enough for a high proportion of Macedonians to *somehow* patriotically assemble/unite and agree that they will unreservedly protect Macedonia's integrity and then in general, things will be fine. But how can they reach such a general consensus, if they possess a deep level of distrust in their social structures; a distrust of the public realm full stop? It is too simplistic to view the issues of Macedonian identity and sovereignty in a vacuum; in isolation from all the other social factors at play in Macedonian society. Macedonians are members of a society that reproduces its existence

through, among other things, a modernistic bureaucratic state, judiciary and industrial capitalist economic structures. Yet there are serious problems with the functioning of these institutions and this breeds suspicion, distrust and outright disrespect throughout all areas of social/collective concern.

Therefore the argument is that Macedonians in Macedonia need to strive toward strengthening the reforms in connection with the legitimate functioning of legal, political and economic institutions. Easier said than done - the problems with endemic corruption etc. are, in the opinion of this writer, derived from a deep distrust in and lack of respect for, the public realm. Is this an irresolvable "catch 22"? (- the notion that the major social institutions are seriously flawed because of a general 'malaise' in the culture and the 'malaise' in the culture is perpetuated by the debased social structures, etc). Not quite, though a deep distrust of the social realm beyond the immediate family, has been a feature of Macedonian culture for generations - a feature that received plenty of 'nourishment' during the extremely dictatorial and nepotistically corrupt decades of Communist rule. However it would be inaccurate to say that civic concern is unknown in Macedonia; in fact Macedonians regularly make sarcastic jokes about the nature of "business" in Macedonia and this, if nothing else, at least indicates an acute awareness of the problem.

We do not expect this problem which is plaguing most of what used to be the Eastern Bloc, to be solved overnight (one might note here with irony that the malaise of

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# Introduction continued

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economic corruption and social distrust, is at the moment, probably worse in some EU countries that were never part of the Communist world – especially Greece – which illustrates the point that the EU is not going to be a remedy for a society that lacks trust in itself). Fundamental social change has been historically demonstrated to generally be a lengthy process, spanning across generations and here we are indeed claiming that a major cultural ‘sea-change’ is necessary; a re-organisation of cognition patterns. However, the first steps need to be taken and we call upon both ordinary citizens and authorities in Macedonia, to do more than just resist any further political capitulations to racist foreign pressure. We also call upon them to begin working more ardently on preparing the upcoming generation of Macedonians for the challenge of creating a higher level of trust in their society’s major social structures, or in other words, more trust in themselves. One way of beginning a process that leads in the long term, to a substantial cultural transformation, would be via a concentrated effort involving educational programs designed to equip the younger generations to improve ethical standards in *practice*, not just theory. The task is to create a citizenry that knows its rights *and* responsibilities and takes them seriously, so that it can improve upon its social inheritance.

This is a general observation made by an outsider – just how such programs are to be designed and implemented, is for those on the inside to work out: for they possess the intimate knowledge required to make such programs practically workable. One cannot assume for example that because something

works in Australia, it can be simply and straightforwardly transplanted to Macedonia – the cultural peculiarities of ‘the local’ need to be taken into account. Of course, outside technical assistance can be very useful, but it would need to be utilised in close collaboration with reliable locals.

To sum up, it is not enough to just focus on the internal politics of Macedonian identity and sovereignty (the disgraceful Interim Accord etc.) and attribute all failings to a lack of care or understanding of these matters. The *“lets quickly eliminate the traitors and all will be fine”* attitude is not in the long term, going to resolve the problems facing the Macedonian state and the challenges to the survival of Macedonian identity. A society that has little trust in its social realm will always produce a flawed leadership. By all means, effective pressure against those who would permit further deterioration, needs to be maintained (which is precisely one of the reasons why we launched the name campaign) – however, if one takes a ‘bird’s eye view’, it becomes apparent that the problem of loyalty to

‘Macedonianess’ in Macedonia is connected to the whole of society and the functioning of all of its major social structures: the reproduction of its existence. If one focuses on the politics of the identity issue alone (and I am not for a moment suggesting that this issue be in any way neglected), then one is ignoring serious problems inextricably linked to it. Moreover one would be grossly underestimating the breadth/depth of Macedonia’s problems and also overestimating the rapidity with which they could be properly dealt with.

Lastly, and this point might appear to some as very jejune, but at

times, the behaviour of certain sections of the Macedonian Diaspora suggests that it needs to be made explicit: nor should those external forces threatening/attempting to undermine Macedonia, be neglected. At every possible juncture, there is an obligation in the Diaspora to resist/combat the lies/racism of those seeking to change the name of the Macedonian state and wipe out Macedonian identity in general – for, among other points that could here be made, it is very unlikely that any Macedonians in Macedonia, would for example be considering a name change, if it wasn’t for the exertions of Macedonia’s neighbourhood bullies. Any easing of the external pressure applied to Macedonia, derived from successful efforts at combating Greek and Bulgarian state racism in the Diaspora, aids the survival and progress of Macedonian society. Such efforts weaken/demoralise the neighbourhood bullies; lead to an increase of social forces located outside Macedonia that are sympathetic to the Macedonian cause and improve morale within Macedonia.

## Back to the Our Name is Macedonia Campaign

Some people in Macedonia have complained that in their opinion, it is not appropriate for Macedonians who do not reside in Macedonia, like those in the AMHRC and MHRMI, to voice their objections to the continuing name “negotiations” with Greece. Firstly, our concern is not only the hideous fact of the name negotiations alone; it is that certain sections of Macedonian society are beginning to view them as a “normal” part of life. Of course they are not! By their existence

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they denote a fundamental breach of a people's right to maintain control over a domain that is nobody else's business – the right to name oneself.

We felt that it was necessary to begin to positively encourage people to challenge the "normalness" of the "negotiations" and leave what has for many of them, become a 'comfort zone'. A 'comfort zone', in which one acts as if something that is obviously unacceptable, is somehow permissible.

"Strangers" to a society (in this case, non-residents who are both inside and outside at the same time – physically outside but with a strong cultural connection to the inside), precisely because of their distance from it, can sometimes make objective observations that those within might tend to have a blindness for; although we should not exaggerate this point – most anthropologists, with the experience of fieldwork within, argue that to obtain an intricate understanding of a society's culture, one needs to reside within it.

Thus, in a sense, we are contributing to a process of serious cross cultural communication. And while we do not reside in Macedonia this does not preclude us from offering advice and from pointing out pertinent facts that encourage Macedonians to become pro-active citizens – especially as we have been delivering our message in close cooperation with competent and *respected* citizens based in Macedonia.

Secondly, decisions in Macedonia, made on this level, will indeed have an impact upon those of us not residing there, as the issue at stake is our identity. We non-residents of

Macedonia will be affected and indeed already *are* affected, by the very existence of the "negotiations".

Thirdly, many Macedonians in the Diaspora have relatives in Macedonia and are sincerely concerned about their welfare, their dignity and the protection of their rights in general.

Fourthly, is the very pertinent fact that was relayed to the public in Macedonia, via a conference organised by AMHRC/MHRMI in Skopje, that the Macedonian Diaspora is a critical contributor to the Macedonian economy (the figures can be debated, but the general point *can not*). Thus there is a direct financial connection between Macedonia and the Diaspora which cannot be easily dismissed or ignored by those in Macedonia who are opposed to the message, simply because it has been delivered from the Diaspora.

Finally, on an aspect perhaps not directly related, but still very relevant (considering the Anthropological point made earlier) - we feel that our message is not framed in a manner that talks down to people, or that is in some way abusive. We are not 'giving orders'. It is simply about firmly and yet, positively encouraging people to stand up for what is right. Some people will always take offence, no matter how a message is delivered. This cannot be helped. However, in general, the feedback we have received from Macedonia so far is that we were correct to have delivered the message in this positive manner. This concurs with our experience, derived from many of the other human rights activities we have undertaken over the years.

At times, the phrase "*the medium*

*is the message*" has been very popular in journalistic and academic circles and though we will certainly not claim universal applicability for such a dictum (we are not here to try to make cheap philosophy of the kind often seen in the mainstream media), it has in our experience, very often been true. In other words it is important that our message was framed in a respectful manner, for if it wasn't, it is likely to have been thoroughly ignored – in spite of all of its substantial/legitimate attributes. One may view the matter as involving two points to do with the "*medium*" in this instance. On the one hand there is the problem of the well known phenomenon of domestic populations rejecting as illegitimate interference, the advice of Diaspora communities. On other hand, we can say that the positive tone of the message, thus far seems to be making an impact, precisely because of its positive framing and in spite of the problem that the original source of the message is located outside the borders of Macedonia.

#### Also inside this issue of the AMHRC Review

There are some letters: three, by Angelkov, Popov and Vitkov, are in reference to what might be referred to as "*nutty professors*"; there is a positive response from the Mayor of Melbourne and Babusku advises nurses to focus on nursing and not politics. Language and etymological matters are themes running through pieces by Popov, Thomev, Seraphinoff, Hristovski et al, and there are some photographs highlighting positive community building exercises. Macedonians in Albania, Greece and Bulgaria report on their struggles and in spite of all the unjust

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# Introduction continued

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difficulties, some success was recently registered in Greece.

Lastly there is a vivid description of an encounter in Skopje between the AMHRC's International Coordinator, David Vitkov and the infamous Greek historian, Evangelos Kofos. As far as we can ascertain, Kofos launched his academic career in 1964, with the publication of

*"Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia"*. A book, among other things, containing a bigoted account devoted to undermining the legitimacy/existence of a distinct ethnic Macedonian identity – both prior and after WWII. Kofos has more or less continued in this vein right up to the present. His anti-Macedonian prejudice has led him at times, to take up some truly untenable positions. For example, Kofos attempted in an essay (*National Heritage and National Identity*), to utilise the title and aspects of the content of Benedict Anderson's classic text on modern nationalism: *Imagined Communities*, for the purpose of delegitimising Macedonian ethnic identity. The American anthropologist Loring Danforth has asserted that in this paper, Kofos argues that *"Macedonian national identity is only 'imagined', while Greek national identity is 'real' ... a clear misuse of Anderson's work to serve the goals of nationalist historiography"*. I agree that this in essence, is a crucial feature of Kofos' paper.

However, Kofos was not so crude/blunt in his exposition. The argument is implicitly elaborated with considerable subtlety. Its manner is certainly cunning enough to leave the uninitiated with the impression that they have read an objective scholarly account. Nevertheless we are obliged to affirm,

that with discriminate usage of the word *"imagined"*; of inverted commas and with the exclusion of vital historical details, Kofos aims to lead the reader to believe that Greek ethnic identity *has more real historical justification than* Macedonian ethnic identity; or that Macedonian ethnic identity *is more imagined/less legitimate* and that it did not even exist prior to the end of WWII.

The main point of Anderson's phrase, *"Imagined Communities"*, is that *all* modern nations are *imagined*. The argument is that one of the distinguishing features of modern ethnicities/nations is that they are mass societies inhabited by large numbers of individuals who possess a primary identity marker that unifies them in a manner akin to much smaller communities maintained on the basis of a trust, which was constructed via regular face to face interaction. Indeed, according to the sociological tradition (see for example the work of Toennies), which Anderson has obviously drawn from, that is exactly what defines a *"real"* community, or put another way, a *"real"* community is one that has been created on the basis of personal familiarity. Modern nations on the other hand, more or less involve the creation of a similar community-like comradeship among millions of people who have not met and never will. The feeling of affinity among these millions is *imagined*. *All* modern nations are *real* even though their mode of creation and maintenance involves a significant amount of *imagining*! And yes, the imagining does extend beyond the present, into the past and the future; however, it applies to Greeks as much as it does to Macedonians and all other ethnic/national groups.

In this matter, Kofos revealed himself to be well short of scholarly. Moreover, even though Kofos is generally subtle, his prejudice can at times be crude, as is revealed in an article by David Vitkov in this issue of the AMHRC Review. For now, we shall leave Mr. Kofos with a sentence written in 1918 by Edmond Bouchie de Belle, a French Doctor of Law who spent a significant amount of time in Macedonia during WWI and used some of it to find out about the *ethnic* sympathies of the local population: *"You may ask a peasant from the surroundings of Ostrovo or Bitola, what he feels himself to be and in nine instances out of ten, he will answer you – Macedonian!"* (See the 1992 Macedonian translation of Bouchie de Belle's 1922 French original: *Macedonia and the Macedonians* published by Makedonska Kniga.)

I hope you enjoy this issue of the *AMHRC Review*,

George Vlahov

PS I would like here to send a very special thank you to the administrators and members of the Macedonian Truth Organisation (MTO) internet forum, for their tremendous efforts in support of the *"Our name is Macedonia"* campaign. Thank you MTO! <http://www.macedoniantruth.org/forum/index.php>

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

*I think that the stance on the name issue is well known. NATO was clear at the summit in Bucharest and at last year's summit in Strasbourg and Kehl. The stances and the expectations are that Macedonia will receive an invitation for NATO membership as soon as name issue is solved. I hope that will happen soon,"* stated US Ambassador Philip Reeker.

On April 28, he said *"The [name] issue must be solved, because if not, a question mark is put on Macedonia's future."* He added, *"The clock is ticking, it needs to be done right now, and we encourage both Macedonia and Greece to do this."*

The United States views itself as a leader in spreading democracy and human rights throughout the world. So how does it justify asking a country to change its own name?

In her address on September 8, 2010 marking Macedonia's Independence Day, US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said, *"The United States is committed to promoting Macedonia's membership in NATO and the European Union..."*

However, this comes with the stipulation that Macedonia

changes its name. The United States has already recognized Macedonia, yet it calls for a name change. The hypocrisy is astounding.

Western Europe is being handcuffed by Greece, yet it continues to support Greece in the ludicrous "name dispute", while also bailing it out of its current economic collapse. Every NATO member-state supported Macedonia's membership, yet Greece was permitted to veto it. Greece is being rewarded for its racist and xenophobic policies.

Every Macedonian government has continued the nonsensical name negotiations solely to satisfy American and Western European pressure to find a "compromise" with Greece. Instead of capitulating to countries that demand a change to Macedonia's name and identity, the Macedonian government must immediately end the name negotiations and demand support from these countries.

129 countries, including 4/5 UN Security Council members, have recognized Macedonia. On Sept.24, 2010, Syria joined the growing list. As we stated in our campaign demanding an end to name negotiations, *"We are winning. We have the power to end this. Stop negotiating our own name"*.

According to former US Secretary of State, Lawrence Eagleburger, *"The name dispute is*



Photo sourced from [www.topnews.in](http://www.topnews.in)

*unnecessary and unfounded, since Macedonia was called the same in the time of former Yugoslavia and this did not cause any problems then". He added, "Is there anything more immature and more foolish than 'blackmailing' a nation by denying its membership in international organizations, which goal is to preserve the peace and protect their members from aggression of non-members."*

The first UN mediator for the name dispute, Robin O'Neil, said that *"Macedonia must not and will not change its name in order to appease Greece. If Macedonia succumbs to pressures and changes its name, such events will only give more firepower to Greece until it reaches its final goal - Macedonia to vanish from the map."*

MHRMI and AMHRC call on Macedonians, in the Republic of Macedonia and abroad, to join our call for Macedonia to immediately cease name negotiations and demand international recognition.



# "WHO GAVE YOU THE RIGHT TO NEGOTIATE MY NAME?"

**Do not be deceived by the terms 'international, bilateral, constitutional'**

- Change it once, even bilaterally, and it will be changed **everywhere**
- Do you want to be called '**Northern Macedonian**', '**Vardarian**', '**Skopjan**' or simply **Macedonian**?
- We applaud the Macedonian government for saying "**We will not change our name**", but by negotiating we are telling the world "**We will change our name**"
- **No dual-name.** Greece is the only country that objects to our name. It is not our problem. No bilateral or international "solution" is needed
- Countries that have recognized Macedonia have said "**If a bilateral solution is reached, we will abide by that decision and use the new name for Macedonia**"
- **Any change to our name is unacceptable**, even 'qualifiers' like '**Democratic**' or '**Northern**' in front of '**Republic of Macedonia**'. **We would be known everywhere as 'Northern Macedonia' and 'Northern Macedonians', who speak 'Northern Macedonian'**

**WE ARE WINNING. 127 COUNTRIES HAVE RECOGNIZED MACEDONIA, INCLUDING 4/5 UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL MEMBERS. WE HAVE THE POWER TO END THIS. STOP NEGOTIATING OUR OWN NAME.**

**Prior to 1988, Greece's policy was that Macedonia did not exist. Then it renamed 'Northern Greece' to 'Macedonia'. Now suddenly Macedonia is Greek?**

**As former Greek Prime Minister Constantine Mitsotakis admitted in 1995, the reason Greece objects to our name is to deny the existence and persecution of its large Macedonian minority**

- Macedonians in the Balkans are fighting for their human rights as Macedonians, nothing else

**REMEMBER: IT IS A LIE THAT A COMPROMISE WILL SOLVE OUR PROBLEMS WITH GREECE. IT WILL JUST STRENGTHEN GREECE'S POSITION TOWARDS ITS FINAL GOAL: TO ERASE MACEDONIANS FROM HISTORY, THE PRESENT AND FUTURE.**

**We are Macedonian! Do you want to go down in history as the people who changed our name and identity?**

**What gives the EU and NATO the right to ask you to sell out your identity?**

- The EU and NATO are violating their own principles and laws by asking us to change our name
- Do not give in to scare tactics from Greece and media reports that Macedonia will 'collapse' without EU & NATO membership
- Look at the current economic crisis in Greece
- **Scare-mongering is being used to get Macedonia to change its name**

**Greece is holding the EU and NATO hostage**

- Despite overwhelming support for Macedonia's NATO membership, Greece was permitted to use its veto power against Macedonia
- Greece lied about its economic situation, and now the rest of the EU is being forced to bail them out

**The European Union cannot allow its member-states to be handcuffed by Greece's xenophobic policies. Recognize Macedonia.**

- If the EU and NATO insist on a name change, what other concessions will they ask for?
- By continuing the negotiations, we are telling the world "we will change our name"
- **Stop negotiating our own name**

**Common sense. Would any other country negotiate its own name?**

- Should the US state of Georgia demand that the *Republic of Georgia* change its name?
- Should the Belgian province of Luxembourg demand that *Luxembourg* change its name?

**THE MOST BASIC HUMAN RIGHT IS SELF-IDENTIFICATION.**

**THE MACEDONIAN PEOPLE MUST TELL THEIR GOVERNMENT TO STOP NEGOTIATING OUR NAME.**

**DEMAND AN END TO 'FYROM' REFERENCE.**

**DEMAND IMMEDIATE INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION.**

**MHRMI**  
MACEDONIAN HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT INTERNATIONAL  
[www.mhrmi.org](http://www.mhrmi.org)

**AMHRC**  
AUSTRALIAN MACEDONIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE INC.  
[www.macedonianhr.org.au](http://www.macedonianhr.org.au)

and other Macedonian organizations - [www.mhrmi.org/our\\_name\\_is\\_macedonia](http://www.mhrmi.org/our_name_is_macedonia)

# OUR NAME IS MACEDONIA



In October of this year we saw the second annual Macedonian Film Festival. A successful event in all regards, the 2010 Macedonian Film Festival was held at the Hoyts Melbourne Central and Hoyts Northland Cinema's, over 4 days between the 21st - 24th October.

Following on from the success of the inaugural Macedonian Film Festival in 2009, this year saw a substantial increase in attendance across the two venues, with a total of 12 films screened from across various genres. If the substantial positive feedback can be considered an indicator, the 2010 Macedonian Film Festival will be remembered as a huge success among the Macedonian community in Melbourne and among the many film lovers from the mainstream Australian public who attended the four-day event.

The Macedonian Film Festival began with an opening night cocktail party for sponsors and various guests from among the Macedonian community in Victoria, as well as some from NSW, which was held immediately prior to the official opening of the Macedonian Film Festival. The Festival itself was officially opened by His Excellency Pero Stojanovski, Ambassador of the Republic of Macedonia to the Commonwealth of Australia and



the Honourable Savo Sibinovski, General Consul of the Republic of Macedonia to the Commonwealth of Australia, who were also thanked for their contributions to the success of the event and their continued support for the Macedonian Film Festival. Much appreciation however, must also go out to the young Macedonian dancers from MKUD 'Tanec' who ensured a truly enjoyable and colourful Macedonian atmosphere, wearing their traditional Macedonian folk

costumes.

A special note of appreciation also goes out to each sponsor of the Macedonian Film Festival, without whom the festival would not be possible, including and especially to the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Macedonia, the Cinematheque of Macedonia and the Film Fund of the Republic of Macedonia, for their support and for the provision of all the films.

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# Macedonian Film Festival Continued

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The Macedonian Film Festival has set as its' goal to educate and increase public awareness and understanding of Macedonian art and culture, by presenting the work of all Macedonian Directors, Actors, Screenwriters and Producers from the Republic of Macedonia and its' Diaspora. Now, with two successful years under its belt, the Macedonian Film Festival is proving itself to be a wonderful contributor to the cultural mosaic of Australia and a valuable promoter of

Macedonian culture through cinematography.

Plans and discussions for an even more successful Macedonian Film Festival in 2011 are already underway by the eager team of volunteers, though invitations are open to all who would like to contribute to organising the 2011 Macedonian Film Festival, and those interested in sponsoring the 2011 Macedonian Film Festival; please register your interest by sending an email to [info@macedonianfilmfestival.com.au](mailto:info@macedonianfilmfestival.com.au)





Toronto, Canada and Melbourne, Australia (December 23, 2010)

Macedonians are showing overwhelming support for the Our Name is Macedonia campaign, which demands that Macedonia end all negotiations with Greece over its name.

Billboards went up today in Tetovo and Bitola, and will appear in every major city throughout Macedonia. The first billboards appeared in Skopje in August and the campaign includes ads in

print and online editions of major newspapers, television commercials, press conferences, radio interviews and the distribution of hundreds of thousands of flyers throughout the country.

This is the most crucial issue facing Macedonia and Macedonians. How can you help?

\*Contact Macedonian government officials and demand an immediate end to the negotiations. MHRMI and AMHRC will provide contact information on the Our Name is Macedonia

webpage.

\*Sign on to the campaign, as an individual or organization, by visiting [www.mhrmi.org/our\\_name\\_is\\_macedonia](http://www.mhrmi.org/our_name_is_macedonia)

\*Every Macedonian website should have an Our Name is Macedonia banner - [www.mhrmi.org/our\\_name\\_is\\_macedonia/web](http://www.mhrmi.org/our_name_is_macedonia/web)

\*Promote the campaign in Macedonian communities worldwide. For ad campaign posters or more information, please contact us.

\*Demand support from the international community. We will provide contact information for government officials and media.

\*Make a donation. Join the MHRMI Human Rights Fund ([www.mhrmi.org/donation.asp](http://www.mhrmi.org/donation.asp)) or the AMHRC Minorities Support Fund ([www.macedonianhr.org.au/03getinvolved](http://www.macedonianhr.org.au/03getinvolved))

Silence is not an option. Our Name is Macedonia.

## Реплика на „репликата“ на Бечев

By David Vitkov

Младиот бугарски научник Димитар Бечев се накутува со името „Оксфорд“ каде што има завршено факултет, но за жал неговите аргументи во врска со спорот за името не се држат до стандардите за кој е познат овој реномиран британски универзитет.

Неговата статија објавена во саботното издание на Дневник (30/10/2010) може слободно да се опишува како една „реплика“ (копија) на познатите тези на долгогодишниот грчки пропагандист Е. Кофос. Во врска со обвинението за т.н. „монополизација“ врз името „Македонија“ и нејзините изведеници, тоа што Бечев (и Кофос) не можат (или намерно не сакаат) да сватат е дека Р. Македонија и Македонците по етничка припадност, НЕ ГО ОСПОРУВАТ правото на Р. Грција и нејзините граѓани (или други) на само-идентификување. Значи тврдењата за некаква „монополизација“ се сосема неосновани.

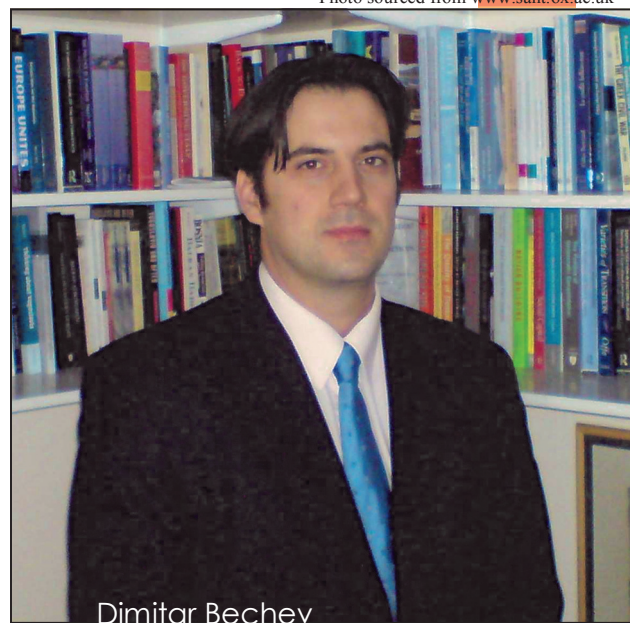
Бечев треба да свати дека спорот за името (и општо

македонското прашање) ќе се реши само кога Грција и неговата родна Бугарија ќе престанат да бидат во еден континуиран „state of denial“. Тоа значи да престанат да бидат држави што го негираат постоењето на посебен македонски народ внатре и надвор од своите граници, и дека овој народ има право да си го избере својот идентитет како што другите го уживат ова право.

Но суштинската работа што Бечев и Кофос секогаш „забораваат“ да ја објаснат е дека кога еден Грк или еден Бугарин вели дека е „Македонец“ станува збор за изразување на еден додатен географски или културен идентитет ВО РАМКИТЕ на грчката и бугарската етно-културна нација. Во овој случај основниот етнички бележник на ваков „Македонец“ е ГРК или БУГАРИН.

За разлика од нив, кога еден етнички Македонец вели дека е „Македонец“ го користи името како неговиот основен етнички бележник. Во овој случај тој припаѓа на македонската етно-културна нација.

Ситуацијата е сосема јасна и за



Dimitar Bechev

тој што сака да разбере нема никаква конфузија или потреба од прифаќање на било какви префикси или додавки што во суштина го попречуваат правото на само-идентификација. Колку побрзо угледните интелектуалци Бечев и Кофос ги запознат своите држави за овие „туѓи вистини“, толку подобро!

**David Vitkov – AMHRC International Coordinator**

Photo sourced from [www.sant.ox.ac.uk](http://www.sant.ox.ac.uk)

# St. George Holds Benefit Dinner for the AMHRC

On Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> of October 2010 at Heritage Receptions in Epping, a dinner was organised and hosted by the St. George Macedonian Community for the benefit of the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC).

The Secretary of the St. George Committee, Mr. Con Christov, has informed us that this event for the benefit of the AMHRC will from now on, be held annually. Mr. Christov emphasised that the aim will not just be to make financial contributions to the AMHRC, *"...but also to familiarise the younger generation at St. George, with the critical work carried out by this most important organisation in the Macedonian struggle for just treatment."*

From the AMHRC team, many thanks to

everyone at St. George for the very remarkable support they have shown for our endeavours. We look forward to even more fruitful collaboration in

the future. Thanks also to Igor Pavlovski, the editor of Denes/Today, for his coverage of the event.

## ЗАДРУЖЕНО ВО ПОДДРШКА ЗА ЧОВЕЧКИТЕ ПРАВА



Васко и Лидија Ангеловски од радио 3ZZZ и подмладокот во МПЦО "Св. Горги" Питер и Мери Алтин, Кон и Роза Крстов, Љубица Талевска, Нада и Крсте Наумовски, Ацо Талевски, отец Лука и Лидија Атанасовски, Вита и претседателот на МПЦО "Св. Горги", Сем Ристевски



Крис Попов, Георги Влахов, Васко Настевски, Стив Крстов, Џејсон Камбровски од Австралиско-Македонскиот Комитет за Човечки Права

Лидија и отец Лука Атанасовски со Силвија Константинову

Во саботата во Херитиџ Ресепшон во Епинг се одржа вечеринка од која целокупниот приход беше наменет како помош за Австралиско-Македонскиот Комитет за Човечки Права (АМКЧП).

Од секретарот на општината "Св. Горги" Кон Крстов добивме информација дека оваа вечеринка е со план да стане редовна и секоја година во иднина да се собираат средства за АМКЧП, а



Вечерта имаше забава и за најмладите

со тоа и да се запознаваат и помладите генерации со важната улога на оваа орга-

низација која се бори за рамноправност на сите Македонци.



# "НИКОЈ НЕМА ПРАВО ДА ПРЕГОВАРА ЗА МОЕТО ИМЕ!"

Немојте да бидете измамани од термините 'меѓународно, билатерално, уставно'.

- Ако се промени еднаш, дури и билатерално, насекаде ќе биде променето
- Дали сакате да бидеме нарекувани 'Северномакедонци', 'Скопјанци', 'Вардарци' или само **Македонци**?
- Ние и честите на македонската влада за ставот "Ние нема да го промениме нашето име", меѓутоа со самиот факт дека преговараме, му кажуваме на светот дека "Ние ќе го промениме нашето име"
- Земјите кои што ја признале Македонија велат дека "ако се постигне билатерално решение, тие тогаш тоа решение ќе го прифатат и ќе го користат новото договорено име за Македонија"
- Било која промена на нашето име е неприфатлива, влучувајќи и одредници како 'Демократска', 'Вардарска' или 'Северна' пред името 'Република Македонија'. На пример со една таква промена ние би биле основувани насекаде како 'Северна Македонија' и 'Северномакедонци' кои зборуваат 'Северномакедонски' јазик.

**НИЕ ПОБЕДУВАМЕ. ВЕЌЕ 127 ЗЕМЈИ ЈА ПРИЗНАА МАКЕДОНИЈА ПОД ИМЕТО РЕПУБЛИКА МАКЕДОНИЈА, ВКЛУЧУВАЈЌИ И 4 ОД 5-ТЕ ПОСТОЈАНИ ЗЕМЈИ ЧЛЕНКИ НА СОВЕТОТ ЗА БЕЗБЕДНОСТ НА ОБЕДИНЕТИТЕ НАЦИИ. НИЕ ИМАМЕ СИЛА ДА СТАВИМЕ КРАЈ НА СЕТО ОВА. ДА ПРЕСТАНЕМА ДА ПРЕГОВАРАМЕ ЗА НАШЕТО СОПСТВЕНО ИМЕ.**

Пред 1988 год., Грција тврдеше дека Македонија не постои. Тогаш ја преименува 'Северна Грција' во 'Македонија'. Сега одеднаш Македонија е грчка?

Во 1995 год., поранешниот грчки премиер Мицотакис призна дека причината поради која Грција се спротивставува на нашето име е за да може да го негира постоењето на бројното македонско малцинство и да продолжи да го прогонува. Сите знаеме дека проблемот на Грција е македонскиот идентитет и јазик.

- Македонците на Балканот се борат за своите човекови права како Македонци и ништо друго

**ЗАПОМНЕТЕ, ЛАГА Е ДЕКА БИЛО КАКОВ КОМПРОМИС ЌЕ ДОНЕСЕ РЕШЕНИЕ НА ПРОБЛЕМИТЕ СО ГРЦИЈА. ТОЈ САМО ЌЕ ГИ ЗАСИЛИ ПОЗИЦИИТЕ НА ГРЦИЈА ДО НЕЈЗИНАТА КРАЈНА ЦЕЛ - ДА ГИ ИЗБРИШЕ МАКЕДОНЦИТЕ ОД ИСТОРИЈАТА, СЕГАШНОСТА И ИДНИНАТА.**

Ние сме Македонци! Дали сакате да влеземе во историјата како луѓе кои го променија нашето име?

**Кој им дава право на ЕУ и НАТО да бараат да го промениме нашиот идентитет?**

- ЕУ и НАТО ги прекршуваат своите сопствени принципи и начела со тоа што бараат ние да си го промениме името.
- Да не се предаваме на заплашувањата од страна на Грција и медиумските предупредувања дека Македонија ќе 'пропадне' без влез на земјата во ЕУ и НАТО
- Видете ја сегашната економска криза во Грција
- **Кампања заснована на заплашување се користи за да ја натера Република Македонија да си го промени името**

**ЕУ и НАТО се заложници на Грција**

- Грција лажеше за економската состојба во својата земја и сега останатите земји членки на ЕУ се принудени да и помагаат за да се справи со кризата

**ЕУ не смее да дозволи ксенофобичната политика на Грција да ги врзи рацете на нејзините земји членки. Признајте ја Македонија!**

- Ако ЕУ и НАТО настојуваат да се промени името, какви ли други отстапки ќе побараат тие и Грција подоцна?
- Со продолжување на преговорите ние праќаме јасна порака дека ќе го промениме името
- **Мораме да престанеме да преговараме за нашето сопствено име!**

**Здравиот разум порачува: Дали некоја друга земја би преговарала за своето сопствено име?**

- Дали би требало американската сојузна држава Грузија (на англиски *Џорџија*) да побара од Република Грузија да си го промени името?
- Дали би требало белгиската провинција Луксембург да побара државата Луксембург да си го промени името?

**НАЈОСНОВНОТО ЧОВЕКОВО ПРАВО Е ПРАВОТО НА САМОИДЕНТИФИКАЦИЈА.**

МАКЕДОНСКИОТ НАРОД МОРА ДА И КАЖЕ НА ВЛАДАТА ДА ПРЕСТАНЕ ДА ПРЕГОВАРА ЗА НАШЕТО ИМЕ. ДА ПОБАРАМЕ КРАЈ НА СРАМНАТА РЕФЕРЕНЦА 'ФИРОМ'. ДА ПОБАРАМЕ ВЕДНАШ МЕЃУНАРОДНО ПРИЗНАВАЊЕ ПОД ИМЕТО **РЕПУБЛИКА МАКЕДОНИЈА**.

**ММДЧП**  
МАКЕДОНСКО МЕЃУНАРОДНО ДВИЖЕЊЕ ЗА ЧОВЕКОВИ ПРАВА  
[www.mhrmi.org](http://www.mhrmi.org)

**АМКЧП**  
АВСТАЛИСКО-МАКЕДОНСКИОТ КОМИТЕТ ЗА ЧОВЕКОВИ ПРАВА  
[www.macedonianhr.org.au](http://www.macedonianhr.org.au)

и други македонски организации - [www.mhrmi.org/our\\_name\\_is\\_macedonia](http://www.mhrmi.org/our_name_is_macedonia)

# НАШЕТО ИМЕ Е МАКЕДОНИЈА



# Letter to the Lord Mayor



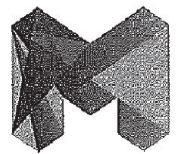
Dear Lord Mayor

On 18 May this year I wrote to you about the vandalism of the glass panel on Sandridge Bridge tracing the history of the immigration of Macedonians to Australia. I have attached a copy of this letter.

A week or so after my letter to you we received a reply from Professor Rob Adams of your council indicating that the panel would be replaced with a new one. I note that to date no new Macedonian panel has been installed and that the spot allocated to it remains boarded up.

Could you please advise our committee when the new Macedonian panel will be installed and why a delay of nearly six months has occurred?

Regards  
Dr Chris Popov  
Media spokesperson



CITY OF MELBOURNE

12 November 2010

Dr Chris Popov  
Media Spokesperson  
Australian-Macedonian Human Rights Committee Inc  
Suite 106, Level 1  
55 Flemington Rd  
NORTH MELBOURNE VIC 3051

GPO Box 1603  
Melbourne VIC 3001

Phone 61 3 9658 9658  
Fax 61 3 9654 4854  
[www.melbourne.vic.gov.au](http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au)

DX210487  
ABN 55 370 219 287

Dear Mr Popov

## MACEDONIAN GLASS PANEL ON SANDRIDGE BRIDGE

Thank-you for your email in regards to the broken glass panel on Sandridge Bridge. The glass panel will be replaced by the 26<sup>th</sup> November 2010.

It has been a difficult process to manufacture and supply this unique panel and we are now re-evaluating this process so in future it doesn't take as long.

Apologies for this delay.

Yours sincerely

Prof. Rob Adams  
Director City Design



## Macedonian Community Council of W.A.

Sovet na Makedonska Zaednica od Zapadna Avstralija

PO Box 271 Mirrabooka WA 6941 Email: [mccwa@hotmail.com](mailto:mccwa@hotmail.com)

7 December 2010

Professor Alan Robson  
Vice Chancellor of University of Western Australia  
35 Stirling Highway Crawley WA 6009.

Dear Sir,

As Chairman of the Macedonian Community Council of WA I would like to express the very serious concerns of all our member organizations and their thousands of constituents who have been deeply insulted by the ignorant and callous comments of Associate Professor John Melville-Jones in a lecture given in Melbourne on the 28<sup>th</sup> of November 2010 as a guest of the Australian Macedonian Advisory Council where he has stereotyped our community as being "uneducated" and as "not in a position to question the distorted view of history that is the basis of their nation."

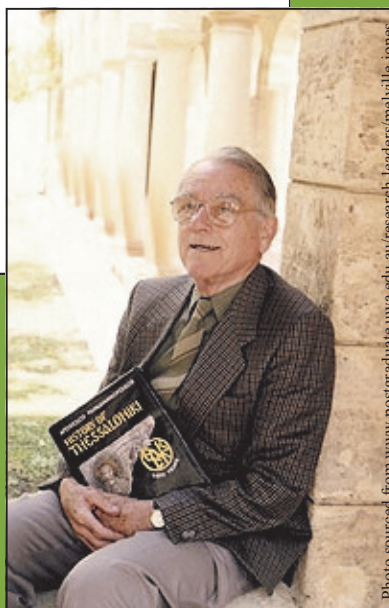
In Perth, the Macedonian Community numbers some 15,000 people and many of these people have achieved great personal, professional and business milestones. Many are in fact alumni of the highly respected University of Western Australia including six current members of the Macedonian Community of Western Australia's (Inc) Executive Committee. We are abhorred by the thought that one of your current senior staff member's knowledge of European history is so poor that he resorts to the denigration and undermining of a whole nation of people in an attempt to appease the racist and xenophobic appetite of a small group of people who have mischievously set up this "Australian Macedonian Advisory Council" without one member of that organization being an ethnic Macedonian.

I have attached a transcript of the presentation which illustrates the many biases, demeaning tone and ill-informed dialogue. Even his title: *"The Importance of Historical Truth ..."*, a subject of much conjecture among philosophers, indicates a superior or all-knowing stance taken on the part of John Melville-Jones. It is evident that he has been courted and aggrandized by Greek authorities as indicated by various honours and awards received during his visitations to Greece. His paper is cluttered with erroneous generalizations and propositions that are not befitting of a member of your highly respected institution. However, the most tragic, disappointing and offensive aspect of his ill-informed rendition is the denigration and denial of an entire nation of people and their ancestors.

We seek an unconditional apology from Associate Professor Melville-Jones and ask that the University of Western Australia distances itself completely from the unfounded and insulting comments made by him in relation to this matter.

Yours faithfully,

Chris Angelkov  
MCCWA Chairman  
MBA BCom (UWA) CPA



Professor John Melville-Jones

*"I would like to express the very serious concerns of all our member organizations and their thousands of constituents who have been deeply insulted by the ignorant and callous comments of Associate Professor John Melville-Jones in a lecture given in Melbourne ..."*



**NURSE-ON-CALL**  
**1300 60 60 24**

24 HOUR HEALTH ADVICE FOR ALL VICTORIANS

Sourced from [www.health.vic.gov.au](http://www.health.vic.gov.au)

***“Nurse-on-Call  
is another great  
initiative of the  
Victorian  
Government...  
However, two  
days ago, a  
friend of mine  
mentioned to  
me that she  
experienced  
some  
unexpected  
problems  
receiving  
service.”***

Nurse on Call  
Primary Health Branch  
Department of Human Services

Nurse-on-Call is another great initiative of the Victorian government. To date I have only heard good feedback about this great service available to all Victorians. However, two days ago, a friend of mine mentioned to me that she experienced some unexpected problems in receiving service from Nurse-on-call.

Namely in the early hours on Sunday July 4 2010 my friend had to call this service to obtain advice on the health of her younger son.

Her expectation was that she would get the advice without any lengthy delays of a bureaucratic nature. Understandably she was asked some initial questions by your customer service representative and that is where an obstacle appeared. The customer service representative was unable to find the country of origin of the caller - the Republic of Macedonia.

Unfortunately, instead of focusing on examining the health issues of a 5 year old boy, the customer service representative advised my friend that she is unable to proceed with the call until they select from the list the country of origin of the caller (N.B. our friends are Australian citizens). The search went on for a considerable period, until finally the customer service representative found the country listed under the temporary name "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia".

You are probably unaware that this name was imposed upon the Macedonia only for use in the United Nations Organisation and its bodies. The Victorian government is not part of the UN nor is this noble Nurse-on-call service part of the UN. Furthermore, you are probably unaware that this "FYROM" name is very offensive to all Macedonians around the world.

Instead of interfering in international politics, I am asking you to replace this derogatory name with the correct name: Macedonia or the Republic of Macedonia - the names all Macedonians living in Australia are familiar with. By doing this, you will be able to improve the quality of the generally excellent service your organisation provides.

Looking forward to your reply,

Goran Babusku  
BSc. E.Eng  
Ivanhoe VIC



Professor Alan Robson  
The University of Western Australia (M464)  
35 Stirling Highway  
CRAWLEY WA 6009  
Australia

2 December 2010

Dear Vice Chancellor

The Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee writes to you in relation to an article entitled "The Importance of Historical Truth and the Macedonian Issue" by John Richard Melville-Jones, Winthrop Professor at the Department of Classics and Ancient History, University of Western Australia, which appeared in the Spring newsletter of the ethnic Greek organization, "AMAC" ( see link: <http://www.macedonians.com.au/images/AMAC%20Newsletter%20Spring%202010.pdf>).

In this article Professor Melville-Jones makes a number of claims regarding Macedonians which are not only highly derogatory, offensive and historically inaccurate, but also racist in that they call into question the ability of Macedonians to think rationally and determine for themselves matters of their ethnicity and identity. The basic premise of his article is that Macedonians have no right to call themselves Macedonians as they are cultural thieves who have stolen a national identity which "rightfully belongs to the Greek nation" or as he states : *"But if you are naked, that does not give you the right to steal someone else's garments"* . He also, in his article, proceeds to offer "solutions" to the dispute over the Republic of Macedonia's name, (a dispute which was initiated by Greece for the purpose of denying the ethnicity and identity of Macedonians), by stating : *"The best option, as I see it, is to get the 'Fyromians' to agree to their country being called 'North Macedonia' ( 'Upper Macedonia' and 'Macedonia-Skopje' are less satisfactory, and it is too late to put forward my own suggestion, which would have been 'Vardaria' )" .* Such offensive views, whereby he cannot even bring himself to call Macedonians by their freely chosen national name, but instead uses the derogatory term "Fyromians" , which has been lifted directly from the Greek lexicon of negation and forced assimilation, are not opinions that one would expect to hear from an academic ostensibly dedicated to promoting tolerance and mutual respect in Australia's multicultural society.

However, such views from Professor Melville-Jones do not surprise us as he is a signatory to a letter to President Barack Obama, written by American Professor Stephen Miller, dated 18 May 2009, which called on President Obama to reverse the USA's recognition of the Republic of Macedonia on the basis that Macedonia had no right to that name as it was "stealing a name and heritage which rightfully belongs to Greece alone" (see link <http://macedonia-evidence.org/about.html> under Addenda). It must be pointed out in this regard that the Republic of Macedonia is recognised as such by 129 countries around the world, including UN Security Council members, USA, China, Russia and the UK and to refer to its Macedonian majority as "Fyromians" is considered by Macedonians as extremely derogatory and insulting.

However, that which clearly displays the contempt in which Professor Melville-Jones holds not only the Macedonian community in Western Australia, but in the whole of Australia and throughout the world, is his arrogant comment on the Macedonian community in Perth and his questioning of their ability to freely articulate and determine their ethnic identity. He states as follows: *"I have met a number of 'Fyromians' in Perth. They are good citizens, working hard to establish themselves, and to look after their families. However, as they were often not well educated, they have generally not been in a position to question the distorted view of history that is the basis of their nation, and is without historical basis, which has been thrust upon them."*

Professor Melville-Jones makes sweeping generalisations about Macedonians' freely-chosen self-identity based on his meeting "a number of "Fyromians" in Perth" whom he describes as "often not well edu-

(Continued on page 18)

# Letters to Vice Chancellor Robson Continued

(Continued from page 17)

cated" and who "have generally not been in a position to question the distorted view of history that is the basis of their nation". Presumably, Professor Melville-Jones would consider "educated Fyromians" more accepting of insulting appellations such as "Fyromians and Slavs". The Macedonian community in Perth which numbers in excess of 15,000 is one of Australia's most long-established Macedonian communities and is made up equally of Macedonians from both the Republic of Macedonia and Greece. Those members of the community from Greece left Greece in large part in order to escape forced as-

similation, denationalisation and mistreatment at the hands of successive Greek regimes since that part of Macedonia was annexed by the Greek state in 1913. Those Macedonians who came to Australia from Greece, were the founders of the Macedonian community in Perth in the 1930s and 40s-before the establishment of the Macedonian republic within the framework of Socialist Yugoslavia- and they and their children are well-established members of the local community who have made their mark in the social, cultural, academic, political and business life of Western Australia, as are those from the Republic of Macedonia. It is more than certain that those Macedonian community founding fathers from Greece, who freely identify as Macedonians, while being subjected to forced Hellenization in Greece, were not subjected to the "distorted view of history" that Professor Melville-Jones erroneously and mischievously claims has been thrust upon Macedonians from the Republic of Macedonia. The distinctly ethnic Macedonian identity is older than the establishment of the Republic of Macedonia, it has been freely chosen by Macedonians and the formation of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia in both 1944 and the Republic of Macedonia in 1991 was in fact a response to the objective reality of the existence of a strong Macedonian identity and consciousness.



Photograph sourced from <http://www.watoday.com.au>

Vice Chancellor Alan Robson

questioning their fundamental right to freely self-identify, calling them "Fyromians" and "Slavs" and postulating that this is due to their low level of education and inability to counter the "distorted view of history..... which has been thrust upon them". As such these views have no place in an open and enlightened multicultural society or in an esteemed institution of higher learning such as the UWA. We therefore demand that Professor Melville-Jones apologise to the Macedonian community of Western Australia and Australia in general and that the University of Western Australia publicly disassociates itself from his views. We also seek an assurance that Professor Melville-Jones will be counselled that Macedonians do not appreciate being referred to by offensive and demeaning names/terms such as "Fyromians", "Slavs", "Serbs" and "Bulgarians" and that he cannot impose on us descriptors that we consider to be completely unacceptable and humiliating.

On behalf of the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee,  
Dr Chris Popov



The negative attitude the government in Sofia manifests towards its minorities, especially the Macedonians, appears to be symptomatic of a xenophobia permeating Bulgarian society in general: from the average citizen to the highest official state levels. Bulgaria has persistently refused to recognize the existence of Macedonians within its borders. This is in line with a popular view held by all segments of Bulgarian society; namely that there is no such thing as a Macedonian nation, and that those who call themselves Macedonians (in an ethnic sense, including the Macedonians in the Macedonian republic) are nothing other than 'lost' members of the Bulgarian nation, inhabiting a territory that was unlawfully taken from Bulgaria in 1878, via the Treaty of Berlin (Engstrom, 2009: 80). In order to begin to develop an understanding of why Bulgaria has a chauvinist policy towards Macedonians and the Macedonian state, it would be useful to examine aspects of the cultural history of what became Bulgaria in 1878, prior to its independence.

## Myths, Terminologies and Interpretations

Bulgarians pride themselves on the idea that their national "revival" began not with a gun but with a book. The book that is seen in Bulgarian nationalist mythology as the fountainhead of that process, is a medieval Bulgarian history written in 1762 by Father Paisii (*Slavo-Bulgarian History of the Bulgarian Peoples*), a monk in the Hilendar monastery in Mount Athos, one of the centres of Eastern Orthodoxy (Dimitrov, 2001: 8). But Father Paisii's work only began to be disseminated in

the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and it should also be noted that illiteracy, at this time, was extremely high in the regions of the Ottoman Empire that were eventually to constitute Bulgaria. Thus, to describe Father Paisii as "the father of Bulgarian nationalism" is to engage in myth-making (Karpas, 2002: 467).

It could be argued that this is hardly a malevolent myth; however there are more serious problems connected to the Father Paisii myth as presented by the modern Bulgarian nationalist interpretation of his writing. Bulgarian academics and numerous others seem to accept without question that Paisii wrote an ethno-nationalistic Bulgarian his-

Photo sourced from [www.investbulgaria.com](http://www.investbulgaria.com)



Paisii Hilendarski

tory book to counter the supposed de-nationalising of Bulgaria, via Hellenistic nationalism. But as Detrez explains, it is actually not possible to accept this claim at face value:

*"According to Paissi the Greeks are 'wise and sophisticated' but also 'sly and proud', they 'take away from the simple people and appropriate unfairly'. Moreover they treat the Bulgarians with contempt considering them 'simple and stupid' .... Paissi characterizes the Bulgarians as 'hospitable and charitable'; they are 'simple diggers, ploughmen, shepherds, and simple artisans'. To substantiate this*

*claim, he refers to God who 'loves the simple and harmless ploughman and shepherds more'. The two groups Paissi opposes to each other are not necessarily ethnic communities, but seem to be social classes and even professional groups in the first place: the Greeks were merchants and city-dwellers (both categories were often called 'Greek' in Bulgarian popular speech), while the Bulgarians are peasants."* (Detrez, 2008: 41-42)

In the light of Detrez's observations, one must acknowledge that the social phenomena in question had more to do with socio-economic status, rather than the modern ethnic/national realm.

Another aspect of the national mythology propagated in Bulgaria today is the belief that throughout the Ottoman era there was a systematic process of "ethnic Greek" clerics converting "ethnic Bulgarians" into "ethnic Greeks". However, these attempts made by the Orthodox Greek speaking Patriarchate church to spread Greek literacy to the illiterate masses, were not generally about creating ethnic Greeks – rather, they were about attempting to advance Orthodoxy via a semi-Westernised education (Detrez, 2008: 42).

Moreover, many people make the assumption that the terms "Bulgarian", "Greek", "Turk", "Vlach" etc. possessed the same meaning during the time of the Ottoman Empire as they do today. However, at the time in question, these present day ethno-national labels were socio-economic/cultural catego-

(Continued on page 20)



# Bulgarian National Myths Continued

(Continued from page 19)

ries, that numerous anthropologists and sociologists like Loring Danforth have described as a "cultural division of labour" (Danforth, 1995: 59). Many scholars agree that during much of the Ottoman Era a "Greek" was a merchant, a city-dweller, or someone well to do (Roudometof, 2001: 48). A "Turk" was someone who may have been a government official (Brown, 2003: 59). A "Vlach" might denote someone who is a shepherd (Detrez, 2003: 43) and a "Bulgarian" might be someone who is a peasant or labourer (Mackridge, 2009: 56), or a villager (Detrez, 2003: 43). This is how Paisii perceived people in his time.

Even more revealing is the substantial incidence of "Bulgarian" peasants actually pursuing "Greekness", because this would signify an advance in their class status and wealth. If a "Bulgarian" managed to rise above his occupational peasant-farmer class status and become a wealthy city dweller, it was not unusual for him to then begin referring to himself as a "Greek" and to send his children to a Greek speaking school for the purpose of giving them the literacy/education he never possessed. What took place was not a change of ethno-national status, but of class (see for example, Amfiteatrov, 1990: 51-52).

Sociologically grounded etymological investigations like these outline a picture of life in the Balkans, very different to the one presented by ultra-nationalistic Balkan historians. For our present purposes, it is worth singling out Bulgarian historians for utilising centuries old traveller's chronicles with references to inhabitants of various parts of

the Balkans, including Macedonia, as "Bulgarians"; in a manner that deliberately ignores the socio-economic contextual meaning of the usage of the term "Bulgarian" and instead, reprehensibly ascribes to it, modern ethno-national connotations. Such misinterpretations serve to provide support in Bulgaria, for the fictional notion that Bulgarians possess an unbroken ethno-national identity continuity, extending back from the present to early Medieval times. Moreover, these distortions are also enlisted in aid of the myth that Macedonians have consistently been an integral part of the Bulgarian ethnos (Balikci, 2008: 178). This helps to illustrate that *"historiography in Bulgaria is constituted within the context of a broad national agenda."* (Elenkov & Koleva, 2003-4: 183) Or in our words, Bulgarian historiography has been imbued with a serious dose of fiction in the service of sinister political ambitions and at the expense of genuine scholarship.

The complexity of the terminological issues we have been discussing is increased when we note that the terms under investigation were also to become entangled with rival religious denominations later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the formation in 1870 of the Bulgarian speaking/literate Orthodox Exarchate church as an opponent within the Ottoman empire, to the long standing Greek speaking/literate Orthodox Patriarchate church. Furthermore religion was often used to identify people in a manner differently from and in some contradiction to the socio-economic/cultural categories we have been outlining. Throughout the Ottoman period a "Turk", in the context of a discussion with someone possessing a

religious outlook on life (and such were very numerous within the Ottoman Empire, for reasons soon to be given), referred to anyone who was a Muslim (Detrez, 2003: 43) and a "Greek" or "Rum" could mean someone who was an Orthodox Christian regardless of their language or class (Danforth, 1995: 59). The historian R.W. Seton-Watson wrote of *"the ignorant Bulgar peasant, when questioned as to his nationality, would answer with the misleading confession that he was a 'Greek.'" (Seton-Watson, 1918: 78)* Again, the deceptive nature of the "confession" is understood only when it is pointed out that the ethno-national meaning that is today associated with the label "Greek", did not generally apply for much of the duration of the Ottoman Empire. As we have been arguing, generalised primary identity markers appear to have been mostly underpinned by class and religion. It is not surprising that the "Bulgarian" peasant (Bulgarian in a socio-economic occupational/class sense or perhaps one could describe him as a Bulgarian speaking peasant, but not as an ethnic Bulgarian in the modern sense – it seems clear enough that such a notion was not present in his mind and that is what matters) replied that he was "Greek" – for, by this he meant that he was an Orthodox Christian and it is a perfectly understandable attitude for a resident of an empire that placed Muslims above Christians in numerous practical ways. In addition, the Ottoman authorities usually officially referred to all Christians as "Rum" or "Greeks". Moreover, it is this attitude which explains the failure

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of some uninformed 19<sup>th</sup> century travel writers to detect the presence of "Bulgarians" in regions that later became an integral part of the Bulgarian state. Thus the writings of western tourist authors need to be used with a considerable amount of care – something that Bulgarian and Balkan historians in general, appear to consistently lack (Seton-Watson, 1918: 78). Notably, Seton-Watson also condemns the fact that *"In the West there grew up the highly inaccurate habit of referring to all branches of the Orthodox or Eastern Church as 'the Greek Church,' and more than one distinguished historian and traveller was guilty of the most ludicrous errors."* (Seton-Watson, 1918: 22)

We are now in a position to better understand that it is not really possible to speak of the *Hellenization of Bulgarians* in an ethnic/national sense. During much of the Ottoman period, the labels in question were mostly underpinned by class and religion. The modern ethno-national project, among other things, has in the Balkans, generally been about taking some of these pre-Modern identity markers and converting them into ethno-national markers – which entails the creation of a state inhabited by an entire population that is unified in a manner that more or less *transcends* the limits of class and religion; a mass social grouping which feels it possesses a very strong identity, in spite of its very high division of labour. These are disturbing

revelations for ultra-nationalistic Bulgarian (see Pilbrow, 2005: 129) and other proponents of myths asserting an ancient to modern essentialised ethno-cultural identity continuity.

## Conclusion

At this point, some would no doubt like to assert that all social groups possess, need and maintain foundation myths. There appears to be some truth to this claim and be that as it may, it is *not* acceptable to maintain narratives with aspects which breed arrogance, hatred and the negation of others – especially minorities. Of the themes specifically mentioned in Bulgarian history textbooks today, the *"national unification of the Bulgarian areas"* (meaning Macedonia and adjacent land) remains a dominant theme. For example, in the 1992 textbooks it was mentioned seventy times versus only thirty for the 1991 textbooks. Other themes include *"Greece's denationalization policy,"* mentioned twenty-four times in 1991 and twenty times in 1992 etc. (Roudometof, 2002: 14). All of this is directly linked to the often intentional misinterpretation of the pre-Modern identity marker, "Bulgarian" .

The result is a perpetuation of Bulgarian chauvinism towards Macedonians which manifests itself by constant declarations asserting the Macedonian language to be a "Bulgarian dialect" ; by consistent references to Macedonian history as "Bulgarian history" and to

Macedonia as chiefly a "Bulgarian land" . Moreover, Bulgaria, an EU member country (and this tells us much about the EU!), does not recognize the existence of its Macedonian minority and inflicts upon it, a variety of other human rights abuses. Members and supporters of OMO "Ilinden" - PIRIN (a Macedonian political party and human rights organization operating in Bulgaria – which the Bulgarian state unlawfully refuses to register) have been harassed, beaten, fined and even imprisoned simply for asserting their Macedonian identity. This has to stop and ultimately, only an educational/cultural 'sea-change' , facilitated by the Bulgarian state and academics, is going to ensure a relatively prompt end to the ethnic chauvinism and the development of a lasting reconciliation.

By Ivan Hristovski and George Vlahov

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***"Bulgaria, an EU member country, does not recognize the existence of its Macedonian minority and inflicts upon it, a variety of other human rights abuses. "***

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The AMHRC and MHRMI have written to the United Nations demanding that the official language of Macedonia in its official list of member countries be referred to as Macedonian.

Dear UNTERM

It has come to our attention that the UNTERM entry in all of your official languages for the Republic of Macedonia does not contain a designation for the official language of the country, which is of course Macedonian. Until recently, the UN indicated that this language is Macedonian. It has also been pointed out to us that this is not the first time that this has occurred. Could you please explain why the language column for Macedonia has been deliberately left blank and who authorised this insulting and discriminatory act? The official and most widely-spoken language in Macedonia is Macedonian and we demand that its designation as such in the language column of the UNTERM entry for Macedonia be restored immediately.

The AMHRC and MHRMI call on all Macedonians world wide to protest this discriminatory act by the United Nations by writing to UNTERM, the United Nations Multilingual Terminology Database, at the following link: <http://unterm.un.org/dgaacs/unterm.nsf/Comment?OpenForm>

### As It Happened

At some point during the week leading to November 15<sup>th</sup> on the website of the United Nations Multilingual Database, the term *Macedonian* in reference to the name of the Macedonian language was removed and for some days the field was left blank. We believe that this was a result of racist Greek state pressure/interference (though we have so far been unable to officially confirm our suspicion) – Greece of course follows an official policy of denying the existence of the Macedonian language.

After large scale protests from the Macedonian Diaspora and the Macedonian government, the “error” was corrected and the Macedonian language was restored to the UN website.

However, it would not hurt to here re-iterate some facts. We shall begin with the obvious; the Macedonian language exists and is spoken both inside and

outside the borders of the Republic of Macedonia, namely in Greece, Bulgaria, Albania, Serbia as well as Australia, Canada, the United States of America and many other countries. The *Macedonian* language is recognised by all of above-mentioned states with the exception of Greece and Bulgaria.

Greece in particular has come under heavy criticism from international human rights bodies for suppressing the Macedonian language. In 2009, the United Nations Independent Expert on Minority Issues Ms Gay McDougall found that “*Successive governments have pursued a policy of denial of the ethnic Macedonian community and the Macedonian language [and] the response of earlier Greek governments was to suppress any use of the Macedonian language and cultural activities.*” (Report of the Independent Expert on Minority Issues, Mission to Greece, 8-16 September 2008, p. 41). McDougall’s findings in relation to the *Macedonian* language in *Greece* make the “error” on the UN website, quite absurd.

It is ironic that Greece insists on denying the existence of the Macedonian language given the fact that one of the strongest pieces of evidence for the long existence of *the Macedonian* language comes from the Greek state itself. In the Greek census of 1920, the **Macedonian** language (without any prefixes or suffixes) was listed as a language spoken by some of the population in Greece. Parts of the official census results were published and therefore recognised by the Greek state. They can be found in the General Archives of the Greek state and a copy is provided below.

|                            |  |                     |
|----------------------------|--|---------------------|
| Μακεδονική<br>Macédonienne | Εγγράμματοι.....                           | Άρρενες — Hommes..  |
|                            | Sachant lire et écrire...                  | Θήλειες — Femmes... |
|                            |  | Σύνολον—Total       |
|                            | Αγράμματοι.....                            | Άρρενες — Hommes..  |
|                            | Illétrés.....                              | Θήλειες — Femmes... |
|                            |  | Σύνολον—Total       |
|                            | Μη δηλωθείσα.....                          | Άρρενες — Hommes..  |
|                            | Non déclarée.....                          | Θήλειες — Femmes... |
|                            |  | Σύνολον—Total       |
|                            | Σύνολον—Total .....                        | Άρρενες — Hommes..  |
|                            |  | Θήλειες — Femmes... |
|                            |  | Σύνολον—Total       |
|                            | Έξ ὧν γνωρίζουσι καὶ<br>τὴν Ἑλληνικὴν..... | Άρρενες — Hommes..  |
|                            | Don't sachant le Grec.....                 | Θήλειες — Femmes... |
|                            |  | Σύνολον—Total       |

Therefore given that Greece in 1920 officially referred to the Macedonian language as Macedonian, any attempt by the same state almost a century later to “pressure” organisations such as the UN to modify the name of the language (and the people and culture connected to it) must logically be rejected.





# Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC)

## Membership Application Form

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

The AMHRC has been involved in the struggle for human rights of the Macedonian people both in Australia and internationally for over 25 years, either directly or through our partner organisations. In addition to taking various politicians to task over their comments and actions concerning the Macedonian people, challenging government policy, defending and promoting the community's interests, the AMHRC has also continued to support our Macedonian minorities in Greece, Bulgaria and Albania through direct funding and other means.

With the issue over the right of the Republic of Macedonia to use its real name reaching a critical phase, there has never been a better time to be engaged or re-engage with the struggle of the Macedonian community for equality and respect. Show your support and become a member of the AMHRC.

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| Suburb:     |  | State:  |  | Postcode:      |                               |                                 |
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| Email:      |  |         |  | Date of Birth: |                               |                                 |
| Occupation: |  |         |  |                |                               |                                 |

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|---|--|--|---|
| Membership Fee:                                     | \$500 <input type="checkbox"/> Advocate  | \$120 <input type="checkbox"/> Full Member | \$60 <input type="checkbox"/> Student/Pensioner |
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| Credit Card details:<br>(please tick if applicable) | <input type="checkbox"/> Visa <input type="checkbox"/> Mastercard  |  |   |
| Credit Card number:                                 |  |  | Expiry Date: ____/____/____                     |
| 3-digit security code (on back of your card):       |  |  |   |
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***"There is no Macedonian minority in Bulgaria and there cannot be"*** - this statement marked the beginning of the official campaign of denial of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria after two decades of partial recognition. These were the words of the dictator Todor Zhivkov.

On the eve of Bulgaria's acceptance into the European Union in November 2006, the same words were literally repeated by Bulgarian European parliamentarians. The motive for this was the demand of the parliamentary group of the EFA (European Free Alliance) that the matter of the recognition of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria and the registration of OMO "ILINDEN" - PIRIN be included in the final report on Bulgaria. The motto, ***"there is no Macedonian minority in Bulgaria and there cannot be"***, is the leitmotiv of the policy with which the Macedonians in Bulgaria are confronted. In the course of decades of totalitarian rule and 16 years of "democracy", the Bulgarian position towards the Macedonian minority has not taken one step forward in a positive direction. On the contrary, in some aspects it has become even more extreme and categorical.

How similar is this position to that of Greece?

The Macedonians in Bulgaria and Greece have a very difficult struggle before them as the whole system in their countries is opposed to them. Bulgaria and Greece are "democratic" countries more in a formal, theatrical sense, as the fashion of the times demands that states clothe themselves in such a way. However, their fundamental ideology is not based on democracy, but on a virulent form of ethnic nationalism.

Macedonian minorities in these two countries by their very existence have the misfortune of tearing down the founding myth of the true state ideology. It is for this reason that Macedonians are looked upon in the same way that the In-

quisition looked upon heretics or as a democratic country would view terrorists. In these two countries there is very little attention paid to anti-democratic assaults, corruption, organized crime and abuse of power, however there is an extreme sensitivity to the democratic activities and demands of the Macedonians. For this reason alone, the movements for Macedonian rights are preordained to be on the side of democracy and as they are opposed to the destructive ethnic nationalisms in the countries in which they live. They have no option but to be fully democratic, positive and progressive.

The general problem from which all others spring, is the denial of a distinct Macedonian identity which as a result gives rise to the denial of the Macedonian minorities.

The denial of the very existence of a Macedonian minority in the past two decades of supposed democracy in Bulgaria has been carried out at the most official of levels- in Parliament (by means of an official declaration), by the Government (by the foreign minister and two presidents), the Constitutional Court, the main court in the capital and by Bulgarian members of the European Parliament .... This position is undemocratic and indefensible on an international level. This is why the official Bulgarian position on this issue, when subjected to pressure from European human rights bodies, has displayed the highest levels of insincerity and duplicity in declaring successively that minorities do not have to be recognised, that particular recognition was not necessary and that it's enough that the existence of Macedonians in the censuses has been recorded.

By balancing between the positions of denial and the lack of need for recognition, the Bulgarian authorities have the goal of distracting the Europeans, so that they cease taking an interest in and asking questions about the situation of the Macedonians in Bulgaria and thereby hand over this responsibility to Bulgaria. In so insist-

ing, the Bulgarian authorities come up with the strangest about faces and sophisms. On the one hand, they maintain that there is no need for recognition, but on the other hand they deny the very existence of Macedonians; they maintain that the published results of the censuses are sufficient in place of recognition; they maintain that the fact that thousands of Bulgarian citizens have self-identified as Macedonians does not mean that that they make up some sort of minority. The right to self-determination is recognized only to the extent that that it accords with the "historical truth" - of course, Bulgarian historical truth. The right to self-determination is recognized only to the extent that it is based on "objective criteria" - of course, Bulgarian objective criteria. The right to self-determination is recognized, but not self-determination as a Macedonian. The existence of people who self-identify as Macedonians is recognized, however their right to enjoy the rights stipulated in the Framework Convention on National Minorities is not. Positions are changed as needed and as the situation demands. However what does not change is the determination not to in any way recognize the minority and accord it rights. Internally, Macedonians and their self-determination as such are treated as acts of treason or hostility and a show of ignorance and lack of culture.

At times our right to claim that we are Macedonians is not directly contested, however we can only do so far away from society, without being able to fight for our rights and without pretending that our will is any thing more than an act of stupidity and a whim. This is why in Bulgaria Macedonian organizations are not registered - so that Macedonians will remain isolated, far away from society, politics and government. In order to achieve this goal, support is given to the creation of an unhealthy atmosphere of fear, through various media, by threats from politicians, by the police calling in members of

(Continued on page 26)



# The Macedonians in Bulgaria Continued

(Continued from page 25)

OMO "ILINDEN" - PIRIN for "talks", through the dissemination of all sorts of rumours and threats.

In Bulgaria there is strong opposition to the rights of minorities. Under strong pressure and as a condition for its European integration, Bulgaria signed and ratified the Framework Convention; however, she has never implemented it in practice. From the time when it was signed until its entry into the European Union, in Bulgaria there was lively debate as to whether existing minorities in Bulgaria were national minorities. Having entered the European Union, in Bulgaria it is already being debated (or more accurately it is being postulated) that minorities do not exist at all.

What is the essence of these irrational debates in Bulgaria, which to an external observer look like the debates of medieval scholastics about how many devils can be gathered on the point of a needle? The essence is how to formally accept European directives, while not according rights to minorities as well as not implementing the Framework Convention on National Minorities.

*"There is no definition as to what constitutes a national minority"* - this statement is where Bulgarian politicians found their salvation and this is why there was a debate as to what a national minority is and whether such a minority exists in our country. From the position of there are minorities, but they are not national, to that of there are no minorities, but only citizens - this is not what can be described precisely as the "evolution" of the Bulgarian position, as much as a return to the original positions of Bulgarian politics which are characterised by a strong undemocratic attitude towards minorities. The short period of relaxation during the period when it was a candidate for membership of the European Union is over. Bulgaria, now a member of the European club, can allow it-

self to follow the Greek example and do what it wants.

This in short is an expression of the whole Bulgarian political attitude toward Europe - ostensible acceptance of the criteria and formal meeting of the conditions, but only when it has no other option. The issue was how to become a member of the EU without meeting the conditions set out - it was as if this was the motto of the whole Bulgarian political scene in the last decade.

The most important and yet the most difficult task is and remains the recognition of the Macedonian minority. All remaining tasks are subordinated to this. An official recognition which would wipe away all official denials. A recognition which will not be just an empty declaration, but which will provide Macedonians with an opportunity to make use of the rights contained in the Framework Convention for the Defence of National Minorities, which in Bulgaria is a useless piece of paper. This struggle is significant for all minorities in Bulgaria as well.

Faced with mass denial, satanization and isolation, the Macedonians in Bulgaria nevertheless have no intention of ending the fight for their rights. In the last five years, they have through OMO "ILINDEN" - PIRIN succeeded in obtaining the right to peaceful assembly which they had not had for decades. They will succeed in attaining their right to organise, to register their associations and parties, and to participate in the political life of the country.

It is well known that OMO "ILINDEN" - PIRIN was registered in February 1999 and banned in February 2000. These dates strangely coincided with the lodgement of Bulgaria's candidacy for the beginning of negotiations for accession to the European Union in February 1999 and the obtaining of the date being sought in February 2000. From then on OMO "ILINDEN" - PIRIN has not been able to obtain registration in

Bulgaria. Neither the verdict of the Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg of 2005 in OMO "ILINDEN" - PIRIN's favour has been of assistance in this regard, nor have the 4 attempts at registration or the satisfaction of the legal requirement to have 6000 members. The Bulgarian authorities responded with changes to the laws, an increase in the numbers necessary for registration and finally by the police calling in all 6000 members of the party and threatening and manipulating them during such "talks". Some of these members were called in up to three times during the period 2006-2008. To this very day, the Bulgarian authorities have refused to present the order which authorised this shameful act, as well revealing the results of this investigation in court. It is a consistent practice of the Bulgarian prosecutor's office and the courts to start investigations into Macedonian organizations, to announce in the mass media that they are occurring so that everyone knows what is happening, and then afterwards nothing happens. There is no investigation and no court process because there is no basis for prosecuting Macedonians. However, it is enough for it to be known that they are under investigation .....

Bulgaria has refused to register PIRIN, however as a result there are further cases before the court in Strasbourg which are awaiting a decision. Bulgaria will again be found guilty, however this time in contrast to the previous occasion, there will be a mechanism through which changes will be sought, as the verdict being appealed was not brought down by the Constitutional Court which citizens cannot

(Continued on page 27)



(Continued from page 26)

petition, but rather by the Supreme Court. I hope that this time there will be a clear determination made by the Court of Human Rights as to how the verdict should be implemented.

In such conditions the struggle of the Macedonians in Bulgaria takes on increasing significance, not only for them, but for the democratization of Bulgaria and indeed of Europe. However, they are not leading that struggle alone. They do so in close collaboration with Macedonian human rights associations throughout the world, led by the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee, the Macedonian Human Rights Movement International and other important organizations. Of special importance is our cooperation with organizations representing Macedonian minorities, in this case the most important being the close cooperation established with "VINOZHITO". There are many reasons which have brought about the close links of Macedonians in Bulgaria with the Macedonians in Greece. Firstly, there is a very similar policy of denial and repression of the Macedonian minorities in these states, repression which, as can be seen, develops into attempts at repression of the Macedonian state and identity in general. Secondly, here we also have the common ethnicity and consciousness. The origins from Aegean Macedonia of a large part of the Macedonians in Bulgaria are a further reason for the strengthening of these ties, which we see materializing in the close collaboration between OMO "ILINDEN" - PIRIN and "VINOZHITO" in almost all fields.

This collaboration has borne fruit with OMO "ILINDEN" - PIRIN's membership of the European parliamentary coalition, EFA, through which the questions relating to the treatment of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria have been posed; with the strong work that was done in the Council of Europe, where the problems encountered by the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria are already well known; in the collaboration with numerous international

human rights institutions, which bore fruit with the inclusion of the problems of the Macedonian minority in a series of authoritative reports, and by forcing the Bulgarian authorities to permit the Macedonians in Bulgaria to hold peaceful meetings etc.

The struggle against the refusal to register Macedonian organizations in Bulgaria continues, as does of course the struggle for the final and greatest goal - the recognition of the Macedonian minority (and by means of that recognition of the Macedonian nation), something that will greatly contribute to the stabilization of the region and the disappearance of the basic reason for the animosity between Macedonia and Bulgaria.

The task which is currently most topical is the upcoming census in Bulgaria at the beginning of 2011. After the fall of communism in Bulgaria in 1990 two censuses were held, however during both of them mass manipulation of people with a Macedonian consciousness occurred. This manifested itself in the absence of a column for Macedonians in the census forms, the fostering of an anti-Macedonian climate throughout society - a strong propaganda campaign and threats in the mass media against those who may have identified as Macedonians at the time of the censuses. It also included the initiation of publicly advertised investigations into Macedonian activists; the automatic listing of people as Bulgarians "by implication", not asking people about what they considered themselves to be ethnically; "convincing" people who insisted to be listed as Macedonians that that should not or could not be done; political pressure on administrative officers who had identified as Macedonians to change their ethnic identity in the census forms if they did not want to lose their jobs and entry of data on the forms in pencil. Finally, there was tampering with the results obtained in this way without there being any true monitoring of these results whatsoever.

By means of these and other

methods (such as administrative officials filling in census forms without seeking further information from the people concerned), the official results obtained at the censuses in 1992 and 2001 showed that 10,083 people identified as Macedonians in the first census and 5,071 at the second census.

It is rare for one to doubt that the Bulgarian state will attempt to eliminate the Macedonians numerically. It has already accumulated a great deal of experience in that regard. It is of even greater significance that at this census the manipulation not be allowed to continue.

A great deal could be said about Bulgaria's anti-Macedonian policy regarding the Macedonian minority; about its rapprochement with Greece on a "supra Macedonian" basis; about the collaboration of the Bulgarian and Greek secret services regarding the parties representing the rights of the Macedonians in Bulgaria and Greece; about the way in which the Bulgarian state moulds public opinion to accept the dirty policy against "ungrateful Macedonia", which allegedly "cruelly persecutes" Bulgarians in Macedonia and so on. However lack of space does not allow for this to be done at present.

It is enough for us to say that in Bulgaria there are powerful and influential forces which are determined to implement Greek-style policies towards Macedonia and which will use any means available to achieve their goals. The matter in dispute is in actual fact only one - that of Macedonian identity. Because for Bulgaria the Macedonian identity, unfortunately, bothers it as much, and even more, than it bothers Greece.

**Stojko Stojkov**

*This article was first published in the AMHRC Review: issue number 4, Winter 2010, in Macedonian. Special thanks to Dr. Chris Popov of the AMHRC for doing an excellent job in translating it to English.*



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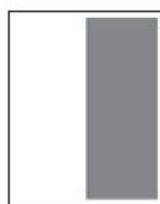
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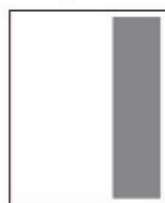
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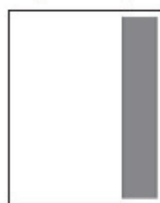
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The Macedonian language, in both its standard literary and rich dialectal forms, is a cultural attribute which has been crucial in defining and preserving Macedonian identity. Attempts at the forced assimilation of the Macedonian people in Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia before the Second World War, focused primarily on eradicating the use of the Macedonian language as the first step towards producing "Greeks", "Bulgarians" and "Serbians" in those parts of Macedonia which were forcibly incorporated into the Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian states after the Second Balkan War in 1913. It is for this reason that the description of the Macedonian language as precisely that, was erased from the United Nations country profile on Macedonia in mid-November 2010 (before being hastily restored after a world-wide protest by Macedonians and the Macedonian government), at the instigation of those who would seek to erase the Macedonian name and identity and subsequently described as a "technical error".

The diversity and richness of the Macedonian language is reflected in Australia where the Macedonian community is made up of large numbers of Macedonians from all

parts of both Aegean Macedonia and the Republic of Macedonia, with smaller numbers of Macedonians for the Pirin part of Macedonia in Bulgaria present as well. However, as with the languages of many ethnic groups in Australia, the Macedonian language and the way in which it is spoken has undergone certain structural, lexical and grammatical changes, under the influence of the dominant English language.

In order to document the extent to which Macedonian is spoken in Australia by the first and second generations and to trace the way in which its spoken form has changed in this country, the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) has decided to participate in a unique study being conducted into the Macedonian language by a leading Australian tertiary institution. The purpose of the documentation to be produced by the study is to provide records and materials both to the Macedonian community in Australia and to the broader Australian community relating to the use of the Macedonian language and the attitudes and motives of those who speak it. In doing so, the AMHRC also seeks to document and record the life stories and experiences of Macedonian migrants to Australia and those of their children.

The AMHRC will support this study into the speech of first and second-generation Macedonian speakers by providing researchers interviews on video of potential participants and to administer and fill out questionnaires seeking information on the use of the Macedonian language. The first interviews have already been conducted and the Macedonian community in Australia has shown by its enthusiastic participation that it recognizes the importance of investigating the factors which both assist and hinder the retention of the Macedonian language in this country. Some of the video results will eventually appear on our website: <http://macedonianhr.org.au/index.html>.

The AMHRC views this project as an opportunity to build on our existing documentation of the lives of Macedonians in Australia and strongly encourages the Macedonian community to support this significant academic initiative through its active participation. Those Macedonians who wish to find out more about this project or who wish to offer themselves as interviewees are welcome to contact the AMHRC directly. It is estimated that the study will be published in the second half of 2012.

Dr. Chris Popov



# The Season of Glad Tidings

## By Jim Thomev

Christmas should be a good enough excuse to feel kindly towards all. The 25<sup>th</sup> of December, for most Christians, is a day celebrated for the glad tidings it brings, or should bring. Not that many of us agree on what a "Christian" is, nor has there been any definitive agreement about what the word actually means since the man who died on the cross became the living God for European civilisation. It certainly is one of those words, like the word God itself which can mean many things to different people.



When I was a youth, I was impressed by the standard formula that spoke of the season that brought "*peace and good will towards all men*". In recent years, I noticed this phrase on a Protestant church notice board, with a significant change, as it read: "*peace and good will towards all*". Whether this was a sign of the changing times, or that, the Vicar was a gently assertive female person, or the word "men",

small as it is, could just not fit on the available space, it struck me, nonetheless, that serious progress had most decidedly been made, at any rate, in some quarters.

Clearly a single word, or its inflection, its nuances or interpretation, can make a phenomenal difference, just as a new perspective on the role and place of women in our society is implicit in the change to the Christmas message mentioned in the previous paragraph. Similarly, if one looks at the fate of the name of a territory, like Macedonia for instance, and all its cognates that denote the language or ethnicity of a people, can equally be subjected to variations of meaning depending on the knowledge or political motivation of the user.

A specific example of the blatant distortion of the meaning of the word "Macedonian" to challenge the right of the Macedonian people to use the word to describe their language occurred in 1994, when the Victorian Government was led by a very authoritarian Jeff Kennett. I won't dwell on the difference between the two ways of naming the Macedonian language that led to excruciating

law suits, in those appalling circumstances when the ill-will of the Greek anti-Macedonia lobby was given optimal support by the grossly irresponsible Kennett leadership.

The main point here is this: the true descriptor of the language of the Macedonians, is, *prosto recheno*, Macedonian; the Kennett ukase, "Macedonian (Slavonic)" was an open invitation to tension, confusion and conflict. How does one, wrongly used word, tacked on in parenthesis, bring to the surface such bitter conflict?

The use of the name by which they identify their nation language and ethnicity is important to the Macedonians because labelling in ethnic or nationalist terms became a huge issue in the past two centuries. I believe the Macedonians are insisting on their dignity, on their fundamental right to determine their own destiny both as a group and at an individual level. The games around the word "Macedonia" from all four antagonistic groups in the Balkans with their obsolete and appalling nationalistic propagandas, are a part of the arsenal of devices used to disenfranchise the victim from participating in history –

denying their past, their present and their future by focusing on a word and its definition: Macedonian.

There is a very simple reason for the absurd name-issue that has erupted like some spectre in a nightmare, as the Republic of Macedonia is still locking horns with its unfriendly neighbour Greece, which is making dreadful accusations and the most insolent of demands while systematically perpetrating human rights abuses. It may appear to be an insuperable obstacle to dislodge the structural injustices inherent in Greek society – but then this phenomenon is not news anywhere let alone in a Balkan nation. However, in sober and accurate language, the Greek position of demanding a name change of Macedonia in the face of the majority of the world's countries having given recognition to Macedonia makes the Greek position even more ludicrous. The present Greek government maintains policies that are breaches of international laws and human rights conventions to cover up the horrible behaviour of their nation in modern history towards ethnic minorities, most egregiously against the Macedonian

people.

My hope is in the next couple of generations of people on this planet, who are struggling for freedom and justice as preconditions for effective change in the world. Already the perspectives are shifting about the past century with its wars and fascist nationalisms as something that should remain in the history books. The same thing will have to happen with the new generations of Macedonians and Greeks, Palestinians and Israelis and I think there are about four hundred more similar situations of conflict around the globe of varying degrees of gravity that make peaceful co-existence with justice a serious difficulty.

How important are words for determining power relations or exhibiting them?

Lewis Carroll (pseudonym of Charles L Dodgson, 1832-98) was not only a brilliant mathematician, but also a very imaginative logician as his two Alice books demonstrate on every page. In the context of this discussion, the following exchange between the seven year old Alice and Humpty Dumpty is

worth reading:

"I don't know what you mean by 'glory,'" Alice said. Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. "Of course you don't—till I tell you. I meant 'there's a nice knock-down argument for you!'"

"But 'glory' doesn't mean 'a nice knock-down argument'," Alice objected.

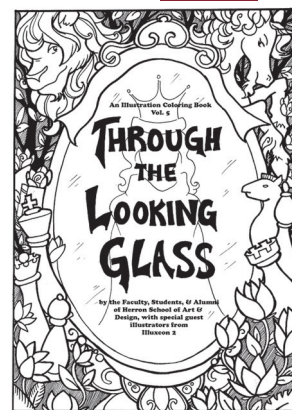
"When *I* use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, "*it means just what I choose it to mean—*neither more nor less."

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you *can* make words mean so many different things."

"*The question is,*" said Humpty Dumpty, "*which is to be master that's all!*" (my use of bold italics-JTh)

(from *Through the Looking Glass*, Chapter 6, the sequel to *Alice in Wonderland*).

This is absurd, of course, only because of the fantasy, but the reality it conveys is rock-solid:





# The Season of Glad Tidings Continued

those who name and define, have power over what they name and define.

The official stand by Greece on Macedonia surely amounts to no more than what Humpty has said to Alice: Greece wants to be boss and thereby impose its options, agenda, or will, on another nation.

This has needlessly impeded progress toward stability, peace and co-operation between the two nations. The whole business of obstructing and violating Macedonian autonomy, in the root meaning of the word – “to be a law-giver unto one’s self”, is obscene.

I repeat: This blank denial of the autonomy of the Macedonians both at an individual and national level has impeded the very important practical business of developing strong positive relations between Macedonia and Greece.

I would like to leave the reader with the following quote from the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights first ratified by the UN on 10 December 1948:

*Whereas recognition of the*

*inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.*

The phrase “inherent dignity” which I have highlighted is the most sacred of values without which life for any person or people would be both diminished and degraded, and in drastic situations, rendered devoid of all worth and meaning. The struggle for human rights is the struggle to protect one’s dignity; it is the struggle that makes life worth living. It is indispensable for the good and moral life, or genuine happiness or contentment.

Of course, grand documents like the UN declarations and the follow up Conventions, may be considered idealistic and very abstract statements which can lend themselves to controversial interpretations, among other things. In my view, Lewis Carroll’s superb nonsense, is both entertaining and makes sense of the world with great clarity. However, theoretical talk and declarations about autonomy and respect and dignity is supremely important, and a necessary precondition for planning, organising and clearing the ground for laws

that can be enforced by bodies such as the International Criminal Court.

Eleanor Roosevelt (FDR’s widow) handed over The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to Dr Herbert Vere Evatt, President of the General Assembly of the United Nations, on 10 December 1948. Dr Evatt was one of the best minds in Australian and world politics at that time. He was also the foreign affairs minister for this nation at the time, an Australia that had a population of seven million. Yet by a stroke of irony, these days, the serious public discussion of a statutory charter of human rights for Australia has been most lamentably stonewalled.

Perhaps as long as most people still have at least a bit of a moral struggle with temptations that may betray the truth, or the performance of a bad deed because no one is looking, there is still hope. That is why we should extend goodwill to all. Common-sense and humane good intentions can at least lead to a clear conscience. Life lived honourably is still essential for the dignified life.

Jim Thomev  
10 December 2010

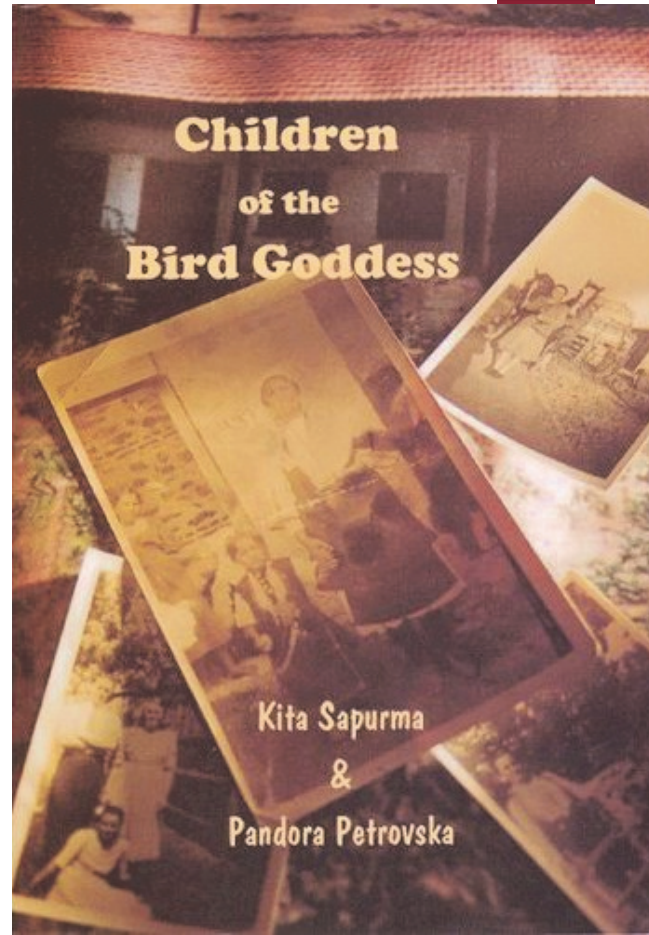
*Children of the Bird Goddess* is a book that will rightfully earn a lasting place in the literature of the Macedonian people. While there will always be a place for carefully researched documentary works, village and family histories, and, of course, more general histories of the Macedonian people, works that mainly inform our intellect, we also need works that aim directly at the heart and soul. *Children of the Bird Goddess* is such a book. Kita Sapurma's recounting of stories from her life in Aegean Macedonia and exile in Australia, and those of her grandmother, mother and daughters, is rendered into lyrical and beautiful English by her daughter Pandora Petrovska, who fills out the story with her own understanding as an Australian with a strong awareness of her Macedonian identity.

While it was important to the authors to give a voice to those whose voices have been tragically smothered, Aegean Macedonians, and particularly the women of that society, they specifically offer readers a window into the rich world of the women, whose lives were lived in close connection to their mother earth. Their stories of these women do not romanticize their lives, they dignify them. They honor their knowledge of practical things that allow for food, shelter and clothing from their own land and labor with little or no dependence on foreign industrial manufactures. They also honor their strength and their courage and

endurance as they struggle to hold their families together, provide for their needs, and resist the cruelty and prejudice of the Greek invaders and occupiers of their homeland.

If your heart has ever been moved by the sight of some vulnerable child ganged up on and made to feel worthless by the cruelty and ignorance of schoolyard bullies (teachers know this all too well), then you have some small hint of the fate of the Aegean Macedonian village people who have since 1913 endured the loss of their identity, their land, their history and even the evidence of that history in old churches, tombs and place names. The process has been one of swift and brutal repression when Macedonians have physically resisted, but it has also been a process of slow, continual harassment and humiliation through denial of opportunity to freely and openly be Macedonians right up to the present day.

However, there is one thing that bullies everywhere, Greek racists included, cannot endure. That is public exposure of their misdeeds. Just as no one could have foreseen the particular power of one elderly black woman named Rosa Parks, who merely refused to yield her seat to a white man on a bus in the American racist South and helped spark a national civil rights movement, no one can know the long-term effect of the publication of such works as that of Kita Sapurma and Pandora Petrovska on the conscience and consciousness of the world, and most particularly those in the Balkans who would



rather not know anything about the lives of those they have injured.

Despite all of their efforts to crush the spirits and erase all traces of such people from the face of the earth, the children of the bird goddess endure and are finding their voices. Although many were killed and far too many were bullied out of their identities, others such as Kita and Pandora were not. Pandora has connected her mother's Macedonian folk tales of Silyan the Stork and other myths, legends and customs to an even older tradition of ancient earth religions and goddesses, including the bird goddess from which the book takes its name, that never fully disappeared from collective memory

(Continued on page 34)



# Review of Children of the Bird Goddess Continued

(Continued from page 33)

over thousands of years of Macedonian village life. Astute observers of Macedonian language and culture, such as linguist Odyssey Belchevsky, are today demonstrating how so much of that rich history and lore is buried in plain sight within the words of the Macedonian language. For example, Odyssey, in his on-going exploration of the origins and meanings of specific Macedonian words has pointed out the following:

*The relationship of and concept of the woman as directly connected to procreation – offspring –existence and life propagation is most profoundly expressed in Macedonian and Old Slavonic as follows:*

zena ,zene,zeni, zeneti >gene> genesis>genetics

*Specifically in these languages there is the functional and phonetic/etymological root and word connection and relation between woman >wife >marriage > propagation of new life > living>existing.*

*The woman is the divine and only entity that bears new human life. This relationship sheds new light and reconfirms the meaning of life itself.*

*There is a very large group of related words in most of the Slavonic languages that are associated with **divos, divina, diviti se, divno , deva , devica, devojka ,devojce, divovi** (gods of nature).*

*Divos, divina have the meaning of all living things in the God created natural world, untouched by humans, from which originated the word divine. An unmarried virgin woman in Slavonic is deva, devica, devojka. She is the divine creation that propagates human life. (Supported by the Sanskrit 'deva' )*

*Zivos evolves into divos and has retained the meaning of all 'natural creation' . This is God. This includes everything in existence. Thus, God is the equivalent of life and all living. God=life*

*Divos has been found on inscriptions in the Balkans on ancient coins. This is inscribed as "qibos= Dibos=divos" This has very close affinity to the Greek word **qeos=qeios** which is today very significant for our society.*

*It is important to note here that the Greek and all other universal words associated with Theos> Deos> God, have very shallow etymological and functional root relationships in the Greek language, indicating that it evolved from a greater root concept related to **divos>dibos>qibos>qeios>qeos ziv, zive ive> Eve> biblical ive> life creator.***

*This Slavonic group is connected to the oldest Sanskrit words **Jiv =Ziv = living = life***

*According to the Bible Eve> Ive is the first woman/ life propagator on Earth. All the personal names with the base of Iva , Eva ,Ivan, have the fundamental*

*base of Ziva,Zive, Zivan Zivko Zivka.*

Pandora Petrovska devotes special attention in the book to the folk tale Silyan the Stork. The story of Silyan the Stork could easily have its roots in very ancient times. While each generation might embellish the story with some things from their own time, certain elements or symbols in the story are certainly archetypal, having Neolithic or possibly even Paleolithic origins. Stories of people magically taking on the forms of animals are ancient indeed, and one can easily imagine our nomadic Ice Age hunter/gatherer ancestors sitting around the fire in the evening reciting stories with such characters in them. One can also imagine our Neolithic farmer ancestors gathered around the hearth in the evening relating stories of young men who craved excitement and adventure eventually returning home to beg the forgiveness of their families after coming to the realization, like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, that there really is no place like home.

*Children of the Bird Goddess* by Kita Sapurma and Pandora Petrovska is available to readers through the book section of the Macedonian History Canada website and through the Australian publisher, Pollitecon Press.

Dr. Michael Seraphinoff  
[www.macedonianlit.com](http://www.macedonianlit.com)

Ние претставниците на здруженијата на националните малцинства македонски, србско – црногорски и роми, признаени од албанската држава, иницирани од идниот попис на населението кој ќе се одржи во Април 2010 година, во кој ќе се опфатат и прашањата за етничка, верска и јазичка припадност во Албанија, ве известуваме дека имаме формирано заедничка работна Група со претставници на здруженијата на нашите малцинства, која ќе го следи целиот процес на организирање и реализација на пописот на населението за прашања што им припаѓаат на малцинствата. Оваа група ќе биде овластена за комуникација со државните органи за предлозите што се однесуваат на малцинствата.

Работната група, разгледувајќи ја досегашната работа и процесот на подготовка на пописот на населението воочува неколку сериозни недоразбирања кои се констатираат во подготовките на Прашалникот и употреба на резултатите од овој попис, кои произлегуваат од овие прашања. Така, после состојанците со ИНСТАТ и Централната Комисија за општ попис на населението со здруженијата на малцинствата околу содржината на формуларот, се согласија сите предлози дадени од граѓанските здруженија ќе се земат во предвид за промена на првиот формулар.

Во истовреме констатираме дека е извршена радикална промена, без ниедна консултација со нас, на прашањата за етничката припадност во првиот формулар, ставајќи во Рубриката „Лицето,, во точка 9 од неа, со содржина „Која е етничката група на која вие и припаѓате,, само назив „албанец,, и „други,,. Со ова се тргнати називите на грчкото,

македонското, србско – црногорското, ромското и влашкото малцинство, признаени од албанската држава, кон сите меѓународни здруженија. Сметаме дека со ова е извршен прекршок на меѓународните и внатрешните норми против дискриминацијата, конкретно Законот против Дискриминација и Рамковната Конвенција на КЕ (советот на Европа) „За заштита на националните малцинства,,.

Имајќи за цел реализирање на еден помодерен попис и со целосна заштита на човековите и малцинските права и слобода, определени со националното законодавство и нормите на меѓународните конвенции ратификувани од албанската држава, ние здруженијата на малцинствата бараме:

1. Да се назначи еден член во Централната Комисија за Регистрација (Попис) на Населението од редовите на Државната Комисија за Малцинства или по предлог на новоформираната работна група на малцинските здруженија, гарантирајќи ефективно порамнување на нивното третирањето и учество во процесите на донесување одлуки на малцинствата во прашањата што му припаѓаат (Член 15 од Рамковната Конвенција за заштита на малцинствата).
2. Враќање на првата форма на формуларот за попис на населението со сите називи на признатите малцинствата.
3. Да се обезбеди учеството на учесниците на малцинствата во пребројувачките групи во областите каде што тие се повеќе сконцентрирани.
4. Да се обезбедат податоците за изјавување на етничката припадност на државјаните да се рефлектираат и регистарот на државјаните во матичните служби, во колоната

Националност. Ова доаѓа не само како потреба за составување на интегративната политика за лицата што му припаѓаат на малцинствата но и за нивно практично применување. Овие лица треба да имаат можност да докажат и формално тогаш кога се бара од нивна страна за добивање на правата и слободите кои му припаѓаат со закон, нивната етничка припадност која фигурира само во изводот на родените. Поради оваа цел, мислиме дека е потребна и промена на законот за „Матична Служба,, и ние изразуваме наша подготвеност да придонесеме со нашите предлози. Затоа, податоците за етничката припадност на државјаните ќе бидат неупотребливи во применувањето на образовната политика, културната, здравствената, политиката за сместување, јазичната и претставување во јавниот живот на земјата.

Нашите организации изразуваат решителност за залагање и гаранција на еден процес на правилен, точен, транспарентен и сеопфатен потис на населението. Овие го составуваат и главниот услов применување на човековите права и слободи кои им се загарантирани на малцинствата со Устав, меѓународни акти и законите во сила.

Друштво на србско – црногорското национално малцинство „Мораца – Розафа,,

Павло Јакоја

Друштво на македонското малцинство „ИЛИНДЕН,, – Тирана

Никола Ѓурѓај

Друштво на ромското малцинство „АМАРО ДРОМ,,

Скендер Велиу



# A Declaration to all Media Outlets on the Upcoming Albanian Census

We, the representatives of the associations of national minorities - Macedonian, Serbian and Montenegrin, and Roma - recognized by the Albanian state, initiated by the next census to be held in April 2010, which will include ethnic, religious and linguistic issues regarding Albania, are announcing that we have established a mutual working group with representatives of associations of our minorities, whom will monitor the whole process of organization and realization of the census questions belonging to minorities. This group will be authorized to communicate with state authorities on the proposals relating to minorities.

The working group's examination of past work and the process of preparation of the census of the population notes several serious misunderstandings which are made part of preparation of the questionnaire and use the results of this census, arising from these issues. Thus, after meetings with INSTAT and the Central Committee of general census of the population with the associations of minorities on the contents of the form, all proposals made by civil society organizations will be adopted to amend the first form.

At the same time we have come to the conclusion that radical changes were made without any consultation with us, regarding the issues of ethnicity in the first form, in paragraph 9 of the "Person" section, containing "What is the ethnic group to which you belong", where the only options are listed as "Albanian" and "other". This neglected to offer choices to Greek, Macedonian, Serbian,

Montenegrin, Roma and Vlach minorities, recognized by the Albanian state. We believe that this offense is committed in international and internal norms to combat discrimination, specifically anti-discrimination legislation and the Framework Convention will (Council of Europe) For the protection of national minorities".

Taking into consideration the realization of a modern census and the full protection of human and minority rights and freedom, determined by national legislation and norms of international conventions ratified by the Albanian state, we the associations of minorities request:

1. To appoint one member in the Central Committee of registration (census) of the population belonging to the State Commission for Minorities or proposals; of the newly formed working group of minority associations, effectively promoting equality and participation in decision-making on minority issues they belong to (Article 15 of the Framework Convention for the protection of minorities).
2. Return the first form in the form of a census of all names of recognized minorities.
3. To ensure the participation of minority participants in the counting groups in areas where they are more concentrated.
4. Provide data on the ethnicity of citizens and to be noted in national registry offices, under the column nationality. This comes not only as a need for making in-

tegrative policy for persons belonging to minorities, but also for their practical application. These people should be able to prove formally their ethnic affiliation at will according to the rights and freedoms they have under the law. For this purpose, we think we need to amend the law for "Birth Registry", while simultaneously we offer our readiness to contribute to our proposals.

Therefore, data regarding the ethnicity of citizens will be unusable in determining educational, cultural, health, or housing policies, as well as language and representation in public life.

Our organizations express commitment and determination to guarantee a process that will be correct, accurate, transparent and comprehensive.

These include the application of any human rights and freedoms that are guaranteed to minorities by the Constitution, international laws and the laws in force.

Association of Serbian and Montenegrin national minority  
"Moraca Rozafa"  
Pavlo Jakoja

Association of the Macedonian minority "Ilinden" – Tirana  
Nikola Djurdjaj

Association of the Roma minority, "Amar Movement"  
Skender Velu

On 20<sup>th</sup> October 2010 I had an encounter with the notorious "consultant" and "expert" on the Greek perspective on the "Macedonian question", Evangelos Kofos. He had been invited to speak at a conference in Skopje, the capital city of the Macedonian republic.

My initial reaction upon hearing that he would be in Skopje was one of sheer disbelief. Why, I asked myself, had he been invited? What was there to be gained? Do the organisers of the conference not know who he is and what he represents? I was furious! However as a keen follower of Macedonian affairs, I must admit that I was very curious about the latest thoughts of Greece's chief 'academic' propagandist of the last few decades. Thus, together with a few fellow enthusiasts, I attended the session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly's Rose-Roth Seminar where Kofos and others spoke.

During one of the coffee breaks we were presented with an opportunity to meet the "esteemed professor" from Greece. We contemplated whether we should approach him and argued amongst ourselves: "Is there any point to engaging with him?" "Well, he is an academic after all, isn't he?" "No he isn't, not really" "Maybe he'll listen to reason?" etc. In the end we came to a resolution: "Ajde, da vidime shto kje kazhe!" And so we approached him during one of the breaks, just as he was sipping on his coffee. Although the coffee was not the "Elliniko" that I imagine he is accustomed to, nevertheless, he seemed to be enjoying it. "Well, our conversation with him will soon fix that", someone in our group quipped. After the customary introductions we got down to business

and asked him some of the questions that he and indeed the Greek state have consistently refused to answer.

We presented him with a copy of the 1920 Greek census results in which the **Macedonian** language (not "Slav-Macedonian", not "Slavic" language, not "Slavic" idiom) is listed as a language spoken by some of the population in Greece. Parts of the official census results were published and therefore officially recognised by the Greek state. Kofos was clearly unsettled. He put on his reading glasses and said with a slight accent, "Let me have a look". After a very quick scan he paused and claimed, "I am unaware of this". We all smiled and chuckled ironically, knowing that he is indeed very aware of the existence of this 'explosive' document (in fact, in all likelihood he was one of first to have examined the document in the Greek archives decades ago). "OK", we said, "Well, here it is, you are now aware of it. Does this not render invalid all of your arguments about Tito 'inventing' the language in 1944 and the so-called 'non-existence' of the Macedonian language in Greece?" He quickly dismissed the contents of the document saying, much to our astonishment, "Well, you must understand, that at that time, any reference to Macedonian was geographic in nature." I smiled and responded, "Geographic? I beg your pardon. Mr Kofos we are talking about languages. That is the question on the census. Greek, Serbian and Bulgarian are listed as separate languages along side Macedonian on this document." Kofos stood there in silence, a tacit admission on his part, one might say. After a little more debate he did what Ms Gay McDougall, the UN Independent



Evangelos Kofos

Expert on Minority Issues, suggested Greece should do in relation to the debate over whether a Macedonian minority exists in Greece; he *withdrew* and simply walked away, for he had been defeated and his lies had been exposed.

Following our encounter, Kofos entered the conference hall and delivered his presentation and attempted to in his words, "define the various elements of



## Polite Yet Deceptive, Greek Yet “Macedonian”: Impressions of Evangelos Kofos in Skopje Continued

*the [Macedonian] problem* . He started out by saying that he was a “native of Macedonia” referring to the fact that he originates from the town of Voden (Edessa in Greek) and that he indeed identifies as a “Macedonian” as do others in the various parts of Macedonia in Greece. He claimed that this is “the key to enter the labyrinth of our name issue” . While he was straight to the point, articulate and very clear in his exposition, I doubt that Kofos convinced the audience (made up of Macedonians and an assortment of foreigners) to accept his position that because there are ethnic Greeks who add the word “Macedonian” as a “regional-cultural” qualifier to their primary ethno-national identity marker ( “Greek” ), somehow legitimises the attempts of the Greek state to take away the human right of Macedonians to self-identify. Indeed, following his speech a series of questions followed from the audience and at one point Kofos clearly forgot himself. In response to a question on the number of the “Macedonian speakers in Greece” , Kofos stated that “there is no statistical data available” (how could there be such data in a country so racist that it

refuses even to acknowledge the existence of any ethnic minorities!?) – none-the-less, this was an implicit admission that such a language does in fact exist in Greece and is of course quite contrary to his usual, and Greece’ s official, stance!

And so after a few more very pertinent and well put questions which he evaded answering in a satisfactory manner, a tired looking Kofos concluded his presentation. A feeling of ambivalence came over me after listening to Kofos and part of me began to think that his visit may have been of some use after all. He basically confirmed what many of us knew all along; Greece’ s “problem” with the name of the Macedonian state is only the tip of the iceberg. Just below the surface of the “official” name of the state “negotiations” , there is an intention to also interfere with the ethno-cultural identity of Macedonians. Notably, Kofos only mentioned the issue of the name of the state per se, very briefly. Put simply, Kofos and the Greek state, also want to redefine the Macedonian people and the Macedonian language. This has not gone unno-

ticed in Macedonia; it has created some anger and there is now little doubt in my mind, that Kofos’ last two visits to Macedonia, have actually contributed to an ever growing rejection by Macedonians of the “name negotiations” with Greece (recent polls implicitly indicate that a clear majority of Macedonians now want an end to them) - which explains my ambivalence about the usefulness of Kofos’ visits.

For those in Macedonia and abroad who claim that the ethno-cultural identity issue has been “invented” and that the sole issue at hand is the name of the state have been emphatically proven wrong. This may seem like an obvious point to many Macedonians in the Diaspora, however a significant number of Macedonians here in Macedonia still doubt that the ultimate aim of the Greek state is to wipe out the identity of Macedonians in every sphere and Kofos’ visits have contributed to dispelling this doubt.

*David Vitkov*

International Coordinator for the  
AMHRC.

## ЛОКАЛНИ И РЕГИОНАЛНИ ИЗБОРИ ВО ГРЦИЈА

*Виножито прес, среда 18 ноември 2010*

Во изборите за локална самоуправа, кои се реализираа во два круга, 7 и 14 Ноември, вистински победник на гласчката кутија се покажа главно партијата на „неизлезеност,, . Не е случајно дека се рефлектира „неможност,, за активно учество во политичките работи на еден голем дел од граѓаните на нашата земја.

„Помпезните зборови,, на

партиските лидерства на парламентарните партии, го повторуваат пренесувањето-продолжението на празните партиски расправи во текот на предизборниот период, во последниот политички предел со резултатите. Е природно продолжение на една ситуација каде што земјата и општеството се наоѓаат во политичка „кома,, поради политичкото „воспитување преку врски,, во текот на времето, на

почетокот на сериозната економска криза и на минималното информирање, разговор, дијалог во врска со новиот закон за локалната самоуправа „Каликратис,,.

Исто така победи „неизлезеност,, бидејќи не постоеше алтернативна политичка опција, со независни кандидатски листи далеку од парламентарните партии, во врска со самоуправувачки независни

логики и од страна на централната власт и од страна на партиското старателство, но главно бидејќи учествуваа кандидатски листи на режимските парламентарните партии.

Обично исклучоците го потврдуваат правилото и затоа не е случајно што на двете големи Општини на државата, Атина и Солун, „се наградија,, кандидатите Ѓорѓос Каминис и Иоаннис Бутарис, кои во текот на предизборниот период презентираа од една страна повеќе независни логики-ставови за разлика од режимските парламентарните партии и од друга страна главно поради позитивното политичко размислување и практика на овие кандидати во претходните години.

Е.С.А. – Виножито, не учествуваше во изборите за локална самоуправа како партија со свои кандидатски листи. Тука треба да се дообјасни дека во грција, согласно со законот за локални и регионални избори, кандидатите мора да бидат официјално независни од партиите. Повеќето кандидати имаат поддршка од одредена партија, или од повеќе партии (туку неофицијална), а сепак доста од ниб се сосема независни. Кандидатот за одредена општина треба да обезбеди група од 3 – 5 кандидати од неговата листа за секое населено место кое припаѓа на таа општина. Така еден кандидат за градоначалник на Лерин на пример, ќе треба за да може да учествува, да најде 3 – 5 луѓе во секое од 40тина села кои припаѓаат во леринската општина, плус 33 луѓе кои ќе ја сочинуваат официјалната кандидатска листа за самата општина. Тоа значи дека секој кандидат за лерин треба да обезбеди минимум 200 луѓе кое ќе се кандидатираат под неговата кандидатура. Тоа е многу скапа процедура и големо ограничување за независните кандидати или за кандидатите

кои ги подржуваат малите партии.

Но сепак Виножито се обиде во рамките кои се опишуваат во предизборното политичко објавување од 26.10.2010 да ги повика членовите и симпатизерите на партијата да

*«...гласат за луѓе-личности кои учествуваат во било која кандидатска листа врз основа на критериумите кои ги одредува политичката идеологија-позиција на Виножито сите овие години...Под овие рамки, од една страна е значајна моралната целост на било кој кандидат за да се гласа за него и да учествува во заедничките работи. Од друга страна, основен предуслов за да се гласа за кандидат е неговиот идеолошки јавен став околу правата на етничко Македонци во регионално и национално ниво во Грција».*

Освен успехот-изборот на доста кандидати кои беа избрани во северна Грција, во регионите каде живеат Македонци кои ја симпатизираат Е.С.А.-Виножито учествувајќи во разни листи, изборот како Претседател на истакнатиот член на раководството на Виножито Панаѓотис Анастасиадис – Панџо Ашлаков во селото Овчарани-Мелити, село со најголемиот број на население после Лерин-Флорина и Сорович-Аминтео во леринската околија, дава можност Виножито на учествува активно во политичките работи во регионот бидејќи...

*«...општо сметаме дека националното назначување на граѓани со македонска етничка свест дава можност за уште подобро-по корисно учество на било кој граѓанин во заедничките работи околу самоуправаачките политики».*

**ПОЛИТИЧКИОТ СЕКРЕТАРИЈАТ НА ВИНОЖИТО**







Local and regional elections were held in Greece over two rounds on 7<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> November 2010.

The results were overshadowed by a low voter turnout, thus reflecting the state of apathy prevailing in political affairs in the country. The low voter turnout can also be attributed to the fact that there were no viable alternatives, independent of the current major political parties. Also absent were policies addressing local needs which can be attributed to the fact that candidates were 'appointed' by the major parliamentary parties operating nationally in Greece.

Ordinarily the exceptions confirm the rule and thus it was no coincidence that the two largest municipalities in the country, Athens and Thessaloniki/Solun were 'rewarded' with the election of Georgos Kaminis and Ioannis Butaris respectively, both of whom throughout the election campaign presented somewhat independent policy ideas and proposals different from the parliamentary political parties.

– Rainbow (Vinozito), the political party of the Macedonian minority of Greece, did not participate in these elections with their own lists of candidates due to the fact that in Greece, by law, candidates for local and regional elections must officially be independent of political parties. Most candidates however have the unofficial support of a party or parties, although of course there were also some genuinely independent candidates. An electoral list in a given municipality (comprising of a group of villages, inhabited places etc) must secure three to five candidates for each inhabited place belonging to the municipality. For example, in the Municipality of Florina/Lerin, an electoral list must be comprised of three to five people from each of the 40 or so villages which belong to the municipality, plus 33 candidates for the municipal council itself. Therefore every electoral list must secure a minimum of 200 persons as candidates, thus making it a difficult and expensive task for independent and minor parties.

above mentioned circumstances, EFA-Rainbow did call upon its members and supporters to vote for candidates whose views are compatible with those of the party and of course who, as a basic precondition, recognise the rights of the Macedonian ethnic minority in Greece. In addition to the election of numerous candidates supporting the abovementioned condition throughout Northern Greece, one of the biggest victories was in the village of Meliti/Ovchareni where Panayotis Anastasiadis (Pando Ashlakov) was elected President. As is well known, Mr Anastasiadis (Ashlakov) is an active member of the leadership of the EFA-Rainbow.

All elected candidates will serve a five year term until the next local and regional elections in 2015.

**The Political Secretariat of  
Vinozhito/EFA Rainbow  
18/11/2010**

The European Free Alliance      Nevertheless, despite the

## About the AMHRC

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

## AMHRC Team Members

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## Special Thanks to

Con Christov for his technical assistance

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



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