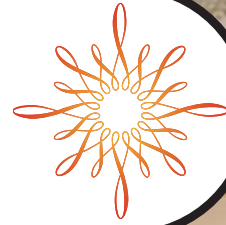


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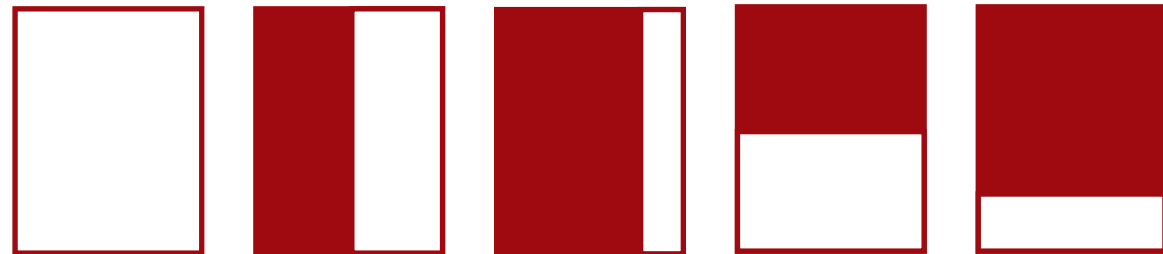


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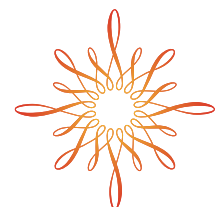
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**UNITED
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ОБЕДИНЕТА МАКЕДОНСКА ДИЈАСПОРА

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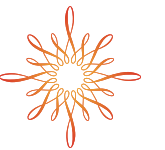
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Founded in 2004, United Macedonian Diaspora (UMD) is an international non-governmental organization addressing the interests and needs of Macedonians and Macedonian communities throughout the world.

With headquarters in Washington, D.C., UMD has representatives serving Macedonian communities around the world, including Berlin, Brussels, Canberra, London, Los Angeles, Melbourne, New York, Paris, Stuttgart, Sydney, Toronto, and Vienna.

UMD is a 501 (c) (3) charitable organization.

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Letter from the President



Dear Reader:

This year, UMD has reason to be proud. Together, we organized and hosted the first UMD Global Conference in Washington, DC. The experience was extremely rewarding. A new tradition for the Macedonian cause emerged when US legislators, Macedonian government officials, and representatives from 13 different countries met to invest the First Global Conference with the significance and stature that Macedonia and Macedonians deserve. The conference was unprecedented. Visibly moved

attendees were delighted with the outcome and afterwards many commented, “We don’t know how you will improve on the next one; this one was perfect!” Well, my friends, we are determined that our conferences will only get better. Stay tuned for details on the next conference...

The Way Ahead – The Global Macedonian, United, We Can Make a Difference was our conference theme. It outlined the future of our cause. European integration, human rights, cultural preservation, revisiting our history were all discussed at our thought-provoking and informative panels. You will read about these panel discussions in this issue. In addition, we have included several other interesting articles, such as the inauguration of the new President of Macedonia, the 50th Anniversary of Little Caesars, an article on Bitola, a special interview with Maria Kubaiska, and much more. All of this would not have been possible without the hard work and energy of our Editor, Mark Branov, and our Development Director, Stojan Nikolov. These two and their team of dedicated volunteers have put together another wonderful issue of UMD Voice. Thank you!

At a recent meeting in Toronto, I talked about the purpose of UMD Voice. The goal of UMD Voice is to become the premier publication for the Macedonian Diaspora; to be the most read and most informative journal that speaks on behalf of Macedonians and Macedonia. In this issue, we include an article in Macedonian to diversify; however, it is important that UMD continue to use English as the main language in which it communicates, to reach out to our non-Macedonian friends.

Many of you may have heard that, as of July 13th, I began working full-time for UMD. I would, however like to say a few words of gratitude and appreciation here. I am proud to work for the Macedonian cause. Our community has needed a dedicated and committed professional to work on its behalf for many years. In just five years, UMD has accomplished this. To be able to employ a professional activist to work full time for our collective good is an accomplishment that UMD and all Macedonians should be proud of. Many challenges lie before us, but, with patience, persistence, professionalism, and your support and cooperation, we will prevail. I promise to work to the utmost of my ability, and I look forward to cooperating with all our communities in our common effort to unite in the interest of all Macedonians. Our homeland depends on a united Diaspora, and we will work tirelessly to ensure this comes about. It will not be easy, but united and determined, we can achieve anything!

We at UMD wish you a most pleasant summer. Starting in September, UMD will unveil many new projects, and we will update all of you on a regular basis.

Enjoy this issue of UMD Voice!

Yours sincerely,

Metodija A. Koloski
President

Editorial

The Name Dispute and Human Rights in Greece Are Not Separate Issues
By Mark Branov

Macedonian history is fraught with division. Perhaps, the most profound division of all was the Treaty of Bucharest in 1913, when Austro-Hungary, Russia, and the rest of the Great Powers carved up Macedonia into regions, desperate to rid Europe of the Ottomans. With the stroke of a pen, a united Macedonia under Sultan Mehmed V would vanish from history. According to the treaty, the Balkan Wars would end, and three new “Macedonias” would be born in its place: Aegean Macedonia would go to King Constantine I of Greece, Vardar Macedonia to Czar Ferdinand I of Bulgaria, and Pirin Macedonia to Czar Ferdinand I of Bulgaria, with a very small portion to Albania, as well.

Fast forward to 2009, and the Treaty of Bucharest has stood the test of time. Southeast Europe’s current borders are very similar to those finalized on August 10, 1913 in the Romanian capital. One exception: what was once Serbia’s prize has become the independent homeland of the Macedonian nation, and recognized internationally as the Republic of Macedonia, with a few notable exceptions.

Thus, ethnic Macedonian people are sometimes categorized as Vardarci, from the Republic of Macedonia, Egejci, from the region that became Greece in 1913, or Pirinci, from the region that became Bulgaria in 1913. And yet, Vardarci, Egejci, and Pirinci still feel as one about their identity to this day; three parts of the same Macedonian ethnicity and culture, alongside a fourth part, the Macedonian Diaspora.

Sadly, in the post-1991 era, a small minority of Macedonians in the Republic has begun to feel ambivalence towards the plight of their ethnic compatriots in Greece and Bulgaria. They argue that the Republic of Macedonia has its own serious socio-economic problems, and its very existence is in danger. Therefore, this is more important than justice for the ethnic Macedonians in places like Kostur (Kastoria), Lerin (Florina), Voden (Edhessa), Solun (Thessaloniki), and Gorna Dzumaja (Blagoevgrad). NATO and EU membership is paramount, they say, so Macedonia must sacrifice whatever is necessary to achieve it – even its constitutional name – and may God help the Egejci and Pirinci.

This desperate attitude is based on a flawed assumption: that making concessions to the Greek government will appease their hostility towards Macedonian people in general. This is false.

Let’s examine the evidence. The government in Athens has not backed down one iota from the original stance that it took in 1988 for the first time, which is that Macedonia actually does exist (something previously denied outright!), but that it is of uniquely Greek character, and that Greece, “Ellas”, and Macedonia are three names belonging to Greece alone. There are also conspiracy theories about the Macedonian ethnicity being some sort of Communist plot. They argue that the Macedonian identity must be negated, lest the tiny Republic of Macedonia prepare a future kamikaze invasion of Greek territory. In short, the Greek position is a paranoid fantasy.

Yet, this tactic has produced impressive results for

Greece. Not only was Macedonia forced to partially accept the “temporary” name FYROM to gain UN membership, not only did it have to alter its constitution, not only did it have to replace its national flag, but few Macedonian leaders have dared to mention human rights for the Aegean Macedonians openly, in fear that it would only infuriate Greece further.

Despite Macedonia’s repeated compromises, the Greek vendetta against the Republic has continued, including the recent illegal veto of Macedonia’s NATO ascension, contrary to the 1995 treaty that Greece had previously signed. Human rights abuses against ethnic Macedonians in Greece have also continued.

The key to understanding the name dispute is recognizing that it is largely a domestic issue within Greece, except it is also being fought externally on the world stage. The “official” target of Greece’s venom is the Republic, but the real target is actually Greece’s own ethnic Macedonian minority.

Since the Greek struggle for independence from the Ottomans in the 1820s, the government in Athens has falsely claimed that Greece is an ethnically homogeneous state, where all citizens can trace direct ancestry back 4000 years to the ancient Hellenes. This myth has long been useful to the political elite in Athens, who use it to whip the population into a nationalistic frenzy and silence minority dissent. So, even when Greece practically doubled in size - with the Treaty of Bucharest and the annexation of Aegean Macedonia in 1913 - the political establishment has preserved the original founding myth of modern Greece. What followed was a bloody 20th century, thousands of Aegean Macedonians forced into exile, and a culture of state terror against any Greek citizens who do not conform to official propaganda of a homogeneous state.

Nowadays, when parties in the Republic of Macedonia publicly toy with the idea of yet another concession to Greek demands, be it the name “Republic of Northern Macedonia” or some other compromise, it would seem they have not been paying attention. The Greek government is not interested in “solving the name issue”; it is interested in “solving” the minority issue in modern-day northern Greece. It plans to achieve this by domestically and internationally negating the Macedonian ethnicity, by Hellenizing the younger generation of Egejci through the denial of linguistic, cultural and religious freedom, and by brutalizing those who are brave enough to speak out, such as Nikodim Tsarknias, Risto Sideropoulos, or members of the ethnic Macedonian political party in Greece, Vinozhito. The farcical Greek claim that tiny Macedonia has “territorial ambitions” against Greece cannot be justified.

But the world will never understand this, nor will they understand the root cause of the name dispute, as long as some of the politicians in Skopje treat the dignity and freedom of the Egejci as a political bargaining chip. The Republic’s relations with Greece will never normalize through appeasement. If that were going to work, it would have worked by now. Any negotiated agreement between Skopje and Athens must include full recognition of the Macedonian ethnicity, and full human rights for all Greek citizens of Macedonian ethnicity. If Athens takes either of these items off the table, then Macedonia must seek alternatives to a negotiated agreement.



The Future of the Macedonian Language

By **Ordan Andreevski**, UMD Director of Australian Operations



On June 20, 2009, the Macedonian Community Council of Victoria held a seminar entitled: “The Future of Macedonian Language Studies.” A key fact that emerged was that many smaller, ethnic languages were under threat, and the best way to overcome this is for all stakeholders to work together toward a common strategy of making the language more relevant to students and employers.

The event attracted a great line up of speakers, including: teachers, students, policymakers and diplomats from the Macedonian Consulate General in Melbourne. Mr. Stefan Romaniw, Chairman of the Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organizations, reminded the audience that no matter how good language teachers are, or how many there are, at the end of the day it comes down to a choice that students will make when deciding which subjects they will study. This choice is influenced by many factors, especially how relevant the second language will be to them and/or their future employment options.

The earlier students start to learn a second language, the easier it seems to be to get them interested in continuing their studies. Social factors, such as peer group pressure, and the poor availability of classes, can be major obstacles deterring students from studying Macedonian as a second language.

For most second generation Australian youth, studying a second language is not a high priority. The statistics show that only 20% of students chose to study a second language as part of their Victoria diploma (VCE), and this drops to 12% in New South Wales and 6% in Queensland. Enrolment in Macedonian at VCE level has dropped off slightly in the last two years whereas enrolment from primary and junior secondary are on the increase.

There are many reasons why a language such as Macedonian may be attractive and relevant to youth and people who are fluent in languages other than English can be more competitive in the job market. They are well placed to pursue innovative, creative and well-paid careers in government, international trade, not-for-profit management, journalism and other areas.

The key to making Macedonian more attractive to students and employers is to build upon the latest evidence published in leading research publications in the fields of Psychology, Marketing and Education. The latest literature should be used for developing a marketing and communication strategy based on scientific market research at the state, national and international level.

One of the sessions at the recent United Macedonian Diaspora Global Conference in Washington, DC was devoted to the future of the Macedonian language, and how to ensure that it thrives in the 21st century against the pressures of globalization. The Macedonian Diaspora organizations must work in partnership with education departments in their home countries, and especially with youth and employers, in finding solutions to the pressing challenges facing Macedonian as a Second Language education. They must invest in the future of Macedonian.

It is time to conduct a rigorous market research study to gauge the attitudes of Australian Macedonian students and employers towards the state of MSL. With this data, we can develop evidence-based solutions to improve the standard of MSL across Australia. Also, special fundraising effort is required to preserve the important Macedonian Language and Culture Studies program at Macquarie University. ✨

Goran Mickovski: MK hero of the London Marathon

By **Mark Branov**

On April 26, 2009, Goran Mickovski ran the London Marathon in 3hrs 19mins 27secs and as such he finished in the top 5%. He was running for the charity called Spinal Injuries Association of UK and collected nearly £2000 pounds for them. Part of the funds raised were donated to a Macedonian orphanage.

As the only Macedonian to run the London marathon, Mickovski wore a t-shirt with the message “Macedonia Has Only One Name”. He was well received by the large London crowds, who were often heard cheering “Go Macedonia” as he ran by.

The London marathon was very well organized, though the warm weather caused many runners to experience problems with exhaustion.

Born and raised in Macedonia, Mickovski’s family later immigrated to Melbourne, Australia. He eventually moved to the UK in 2000, where he is a successful finance lawyer by vocation and an amateur marathon runner. He has set himself the goal of completing the top 5 major marathon races in support of Macedonia and its constitutional name.

Goran Mickovski cooperates with UMD on European projects and has attended some events as a UMD representative. He has been very supportive of UMD and its mission. UMD president Meto Koloski, on behalf of UMD, contributed to his latest London Marathon fundraising effort.

The next marathon on Mickovski’s agenda will be the New York marathon on November 1, 2009. We wish him all the best... Go Goran! Go Macedonia! ✨



Goran Mickovski proudly displays his Macedonia shirt after the marathon

Photo courtesy of: UMD

Canadian Opposition Leader Pledges Support For Macedonia

By **Mark Branov**

Photos courtesy of: Wikipedia

Since the Conservative government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper recognized the Republic of Macedonia under its constitutional name, support for the Tories in Canada’s Macedonian community has been high. While some previous Liberal Party administrations showed what was perceived as only lukewarm support for Macedonia, the fact remains that they are the party of Lui Temelkovski, who was Canada’s first MP of Macedonian descent, and who is a prominent and well-respected member of the community. Also, the Liberal Party has a new leader, which the community hopes will bode well for the Liberal stance on Macedonian issues in the future.

Hon. Michael Ignatieff, Liberal leader of the Opposition and MP for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, has an illustrious resume that includes: historian, professor, author, journalist, filmmaker and politician. He was also the director of Harvard University’s Carr Center for Human Rights. His book and documentary film called “Blood and Belonging” was an in-depth exposé into the disintegration of Yugoslavia, and he has spent considerable time in Macedonia and throughout the Balkans.

Bill Yancoff caught up with the Liberal leader at a conference of the Canadian Ethnic Media Association in June, and Ignatieff’s comments were broadcast on the TV show Macedonian Heritage.

“I have very friendly relations



Michael Ignatieff

with the Bitove family, who are a wonderful Canadian family of entrepreneurs,” Ignatieff said, “and I have a very personal friendship with Lui Temelkovski, who until recently was our Member of Parliament for Oak Ridges. He won his re-nomination there, and I’m very confident he will win his seat again. But my connection to Macedonia goes back to 1999 and the war in Kosovo, when I spent about four weeks in Skopje as a journalist. I lived with a wonderful Macedonian family whom I’d met through Macedonian television, and they put me up in their house. I formed a close relationship

with that family and many Macedonian political personalities of that period. I’ve always had a strong affection for Macedonia, a strong desire to defend its sovereignty and its independence, and to see it have a happy place in the community of nations.”

Yancoff then asked: “I must say, the Harper government did recognize Macedonia’s constitutional name, and Macedonians were very supportive of that. Would you continue that support for Macedonia?”

Ignatieff responded: “I certainly would. It’s a very successful community, it’s a good community, and it’s a community that doesn’t have problems. The issue, of course, is maintaining good relations with the Greek community. Greek Canadians are just as valuable as members of (Canada). It’s important for Macedonians and Greeks to come together. They do as a matter of practice. In

my caucus, for example, Lui always got on well with the Greek members of my caucus. It was a good example of Canadian multiculturalism working well.”

He continued: “Canada respects the territorial integrity of both countries. Macedonia respects the territorial integrity of Greece. Greece respects the territorial integrity of Macedonia... I think that Canadians of Macedonian and Greek origin can (make) a useful contribution. So, I’m optimistic on that question, and I see no reason why this should be the source of conflict or difficulty.” ✨

An Interview with Maria Kubaiska

By Mark Branov

Maria Kubaiska, prolific author, university professor, ethical philosopher, and political visionary, is also a dear friend to UMD. She was interviewed for the UMD Voice after the UMD Global Conference.

MB: Please tell us about yourself and your family background.

MK: I am the grateful heiress of the Kukubajski family, one of the oldest houses in the historic town of Shtip, Macedonia. The Kukubajski family has long been known for its patriotism and its piety. In our 150-year-old house in Novo Selo, Shtip, we had a chapel with murals, frescoes in leather, and relics from the Holy Land. There, we would pray daily. The Sveta Bogorodica church and school where Goce Delchev taught is walking distance from that big house, right by the Bregalnica river. Right next to that is the famous



Emilia Kubaiska near her Nazarene University, Point Loma, CA, with her "best friend", mama, 1999.

bridge where the Bulgarians and Serbs clashed in WWI. My grandfather died in 1927, after enduring three years of torture by the Serb occupiers at that time. The Ottomans had sentenced his grandfather to death in 1903, for organizing 200 IMRO revolutionaries at our Ribnik estate. I was raised in the spirit of a loving family, with devotion to God and country, and stressing the universal need to respect other cultures and creeds. I was raised and educated in different countries. With grants and a Fulbright scholarship, I studied and worked in Germany, the United States, Libya, and Malta. I have been privileged by God to be the mother of a unique young leader in cultural, moral and health advocacy, both in America and Macedonia, Emilia Kubaiska (1979-2006). She is an unpublished author who fought Lupus Nephritis with utmost dignity. My destiny is to continue her legacy, to honor my family, to help the country of my ancestors, and to serve God.

MB: And what attracted you to UMD?

MK: I believe that concern for equality among peoples and their wellbeing derives from the inalienable human right to open societies and private enterprise. My faith in freedom and justice also gives me confidence in UMD, which is working hard to support Macedonian sovereignty, unity and identity. As a conservative Republican, I am grateful that at the recent UMD conference in Washington, we heard leaders with diverse perspectives on Macedonian issues. I was particularly happy to hear Senator Lugar nobly express the necessity to overcome left-right partisanship for the sake of prosperity and peaceful development. UMD understands this, and, as an organization, it has begun to benefit from its growing access to key figures in Washington's policy-making establishment. I pray to God that Macedonia's political divisiveness keeps transforming into a healthy discourse, that strengthens the unity

of a prosperous, peaceful and free Macedonia. Divisions only help Macedonia's enemies. With a youthful, engaged UMD taking the lead, it is now easier than ever for Macedonian patriots to invest their expertise and resources in defending and promoting Macedonia's interests, both as a modern sovereign state and an ancient culture.

MB: You are the president of EMARI Inc. What is the mission of your organization, EMARI?

MK: EMARI stands for "Education on Morals, Academic research and Istoria of Culture." Co-founded by my daughter Emilia and I, EMARI promotes hope and love, as well as traditional ethical and family values, which are critically "polluted" among mankind today. EMARI was inspired by the excellence in character and conduct of my daughter, who serves as a splendid role model of intellectual and spiritual beauty. EMARI is also dedicated to protecting the moral integrity of Macedonia's future leaders. I am grateful to those who volunteer, research, organize and diffuse our organization's core values in Macedonia and abroad. I deeply appreciate all readers and writers in Macedonia, America, Canada and Australia, who contributed with their reactions to the book "Emi: Versed in the Universe". Their writings are included in the "Collection from the International Literary Competition Emilia Kubaiska" (in Macedonian).

MB: You organized the Macedonian Art Exhibit at the UMD conference in Washington. What can you tell us about that?

MK: As a member of the UMD planning committee, I suggested that an art exhibit evoking the ideas and inspiration of the Macedonian people be included as a cultural segment of the Conference. I arranged for the artworks to be collected in Macedonia, and my coordinator Nada Nakova, in Macedonia, and Jasminka Naneva

Photos courtesy of: Maria Kubaiska



At a humanitarian concert, Emilia Kubaiska and Toshe Proevsi, discussing a kidney transplant fund raising concert, 2001 Skopje.

Dombrovska in Washington, did an extraordinary job. The Macedonian historian, Aleksandar Donski, director of the EMARI publishing division, edited the catalog. The result was a world-class display of 24 artists. It was like a museum of the Macedonian heart, rich with a diversity of styles, and a variety of imagery: from realism, honoring our heritage with ethnic still-life, to Macedonian landscapes that tap into the nostalgia for the countryside, to classic scenes of Ohrid's unique architecture, to contemporary studies of the human condition. We were all very proud of the inspired artists who took part. These 24 Macedonian artists are citizens of the global world, who



The bridge at the river Bregalnica, a well-known landmark from the WWI battle between Serbian and Bulgarian troops, 2004.

love Macedonia, and also America, although they may not have visited the US personally. Through their work, they have demonstrated their noble pursuit of communication with the world, extending a friendly hand to another culture, sharing the passion of their hearts and minds. Through this exhibit, the Macedonian artists reminded us that they innately "understand the world as a field for cultural competition among nations". This was Goce Delchev's famous aphorism, and it illustrates the cosmopolitan spirit of Macedonia to this day. Through the exhibit catalog "The Ecology of the Soul" the art and poetry texts brought an interdisciplinary approach to cultural and ethical changes in the world.

MB: What do you see as the main challenges facing Macedonians, now and in the near future?

MK: Without individual transformation, no beneficial change can be achieved for a society or its culture. Value systems based on integrity and moral principles that have survived for thousands of years are the foundation for a stable individual, and for a safe, prosperous nation. We must first believe in Macedonia, its sovereignty and national identity, while also working on integration into the EU, NATO and

other international institutions. As you know, the threat of identity theft is a common problem nowadays. A peculiar aspect of this is national identity theft, about which we, Macedonians, need to be extremely cautious. Unfortunately, even now in 2009, there are those who would put Macedonia's identity on trial. It is urgent that each of us does whatever we can to guide Macedonia through this dangerous period. Macedonia's claim to its language, church, territorial integrity and its very name have been challenged. Like our forefathers, it is our solemn duty to deliver a Macedonia free, independent and intact to future generations. It is additionally our duty to ensure that there is a Macedonia for all from the Diaspora to return to, to build a modern nation, from home and from afar. I believe that Macedonia will use its talented, democratically-elected leaders to engage the Americans in a regime of "fair play" in the region, in order to achieve what every free country aspires to, prosperity for its people. I also believe in UMD's young and impressively competent leader Meto Koloski, his dedicated board, and its many other passionate members -- "my children" as I love to call them.

MB: What new initiatives do you have on the horizon?



Emilia and Maria Kubaiska with Congresswoman Marsha Blackburn at the Heritage Foundation, 2005.

MK: In support of Macedonian-American educational exchange, and in honor of the 30th birthday and the 3rd year since my child's passing, I am announcing two charitable initiatives. One is the establishment of an international award sponsored by the EMARI Institute. The "Emilia-Maria Kubaiski Award" will be given to the winner of an essay contest, in the context of Christian-based family values, and the guiding principles of the Heritage Foundation. The contest rules will be announced in March and the results will be known in May 2010, with prizes of \$1000. The other initiative is to donate 50% of all EMARI book sales realized through the UMD website, with proceeds going to fund UMD and also to help children with Lupus Nephritis in Macedonia.



The family Kukubajski in the home of Maria and Emilia Kubaiski (left and right). Aleksandar, Duna and son Todor, Hollywood, CA, 1993.

The Aleksandar & Duna Kukubajski Bequest: A Touching Gesture of Philanthropy

By Mark Branov

As a volunteer organization, UMD depends on donations to survive. It is with a deep sense of gratitude that we have accepted the Aleksandar & Duna Kukubajski Bequest from Mr. Michael Braxton and Ms. Maria Kubaiska (Kukubajska), of four timeshares valued at over USD 50,000.

Here is an excerpt of Mr. Braxton's letter, which accompanied this generous gift:

"The United Macedonian Diaspora is a bond among Macedonian communities in America and around the world. It has distinguished itself by connecting Macedonians from outside the Republic of Macedonia with their kinsmen at home.

"Aleksandar and Duna Kukubajski made it possible for their two dear children and grandchild to travel to America, and to use their amazing talents to prosper and to make their lives there. It is a great honor for me, Michael Braxton, to transfer in the name of Mr. and Mrs. Kukubajski these timeshares at the Massanutten Resort to the United Macedonian Diaspora.

"This gesture commemorates all those Macedonian mothers and fathers, like those two ideal parents, Aleksandar and Duna, who made it possible... to join together the Macedonian and the American dream.

"Ultimately, we are the proof that their sacrifice paid off. We are those children, and we are honored if our lives represent the future that they wanted us to have. With this gesture, we reflect on all that our parents did to make our prosperity possible."



Left to right: Michael Braxton, Maria Kubaiska, and Metodija A. Koloski



Left to right: Zvonko Veskov, Maria Kubaiska, Slavko Madzarov, and Metodija A. Koloski

Madzarov Honored as Humanitarian of the Year by Catholic Charities in New Jersey

By Mark Branov

Well-known Macedonian philanthropist Slavco Madzarov was honored as Humanitarian of the Year by Catholic Charities at a May 6th gala in Newark. A construction industry magnate, Mr. Madzarov has distinguished himself as a very generous donor in the community of Newark and beyond. At the ceremony, Mr. Madzrov presented a check in the amount of \$100,000.

Spokesman Dr. Frese said: "We are proud to honor Slavco Madzarov as the Humanitarian of the Year. Success has not gone to his head, but to his heart. Catholic Charities expresses its gratitude for Slavco's gracious gift."

The gala was attended by various dignitaries, including: New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine, Governor Richard Codey, US Senator Frank Lautenberg, US Congressman Bill Pascrell, US Congressman Herb Klein,

Macedonian Ambassador Zoran Jolevski, Macedonian Representative to the United Nations, Slobodan Taskovski, President of the United Macedonian Diaspora, Metodija A. Koloski, Father Slobodan Petkovski from Macedonian Orthodox Church Sts. Kiril and Metodij of Cedar Grove, Father Marjan Dimitrievski from St. Nikola Macedonian Orthodox Church of Totowa, prominent businessman Zvonko Veskov, and Petar Kolundzievski from Macedonian Human Rights New Jersey/New York, among many others.

As one of New Jersey's oldest and largest charitable agencies, Catholic Charities serves approximately 69,000 individuals and families each year who need assistance. Catholic Charities is committed to ease suffering and bring social justice and hope to all, without regard to religion, race or culture.



Left to right: Kamenka Madzarov, Slavco Madzarov, New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine, Ambassador Zoran Jolevski, Mrs. Suzana Jolevska, and Archbishop John J. Myers

UMD Global Conference Panels: A Wealth Of Information About All Things Macedonian

Written by Mark Branov, Stojan Nikolov, Metodija A. Koloski, Aleksandar Mitreski, Boban Jovanovski, Aleksandar Popovski, Aleksandra Trpkovska, Vladimir Atseff and Ivona Grimberg

UMD works to educate and inform the Macedonian Diaspora, the general public, government officials, academics and the media about Macedonian issues; the varied roster of educational panels held on June 12 and 13 did just that.

Conference participants could learn and share knowledge about vital topics such as Macedonian human rights, ancient and modern Macedonian history, the Macedonian language, Macedonia's role in world politics and business, the important leadership roles of Macedonian women, and the future of charitable projects in the Republic and in the Diaspora.

As we present the following notes on panel proceedings, we would also like to thank each and every panelist for their kind participation. These educational panels were an essential contribution to the Conference's overall success.

Macedonian Minorities in Southeast Europe Awards Ceremony

- Mr. Athanasios Parisis, Vinozhito, Greece
- Mr. Stoyan Georgiev, OMO Ilinden PIRIN, Bulgaria
- Mr. Atanas Odzaklieski, Macedonian community of Croatia
- Ms. Liana Dumitrescu, Macedonian community of Romania
- Mr. Mark Opashinov, Macedonian Human Rights Movement Intl.
- Mr. Aleksandar Mitreski, UMD Vice President (Moderator)

In his opening remarks, UMD Vice President Aleksandar Mitreski said: "We could not have found more passionate, concerned or dedicated individuals than the activists honored today, who have worked to promote human rights in organizations such as Vinozhito in Greece, OMO Ilinden PIRIN in Bulgaria, and the Macedonian Alliance for European Integration in Albania. These dedicated activists have not only put their time on the line, but also their livelihoods and their personal safety, in the pursuit of justice and equality."

The first recipient of UMD's Human Rights Award was Vinozhito, a political party in Greece advocating for the rights of the Macedonian minority.

"Following the Balkan Wars, it is possible that the Greeks were not aware of the feeling in our hearts," Mr. Parisis said. "But from 1920, when the census results arrived in Athens, the Greek government was definitely aware that a Macedonian nationality exists. These documents were subsequently hidden from the eyes of international bodies. Instead, the Greek Government advanced the idea that this new northern state was not Macedonia at all! This is where the theories of Macedonia's "non-existence" began, with the nationalists of Greece."

He continued: "In 1925, the ABECEDAR (an elementary school primer in Macedonian) was issued by the Greek Ministry of Education, though it was later hidden... this primer is yet another unquestionable proof that the Macedonian language pre-dates the

era of Tito's Yugoslavia. Vinozhito has re-published this document, as evidence of the first and last time that Greece showed proper respect for its Macedonian minority."

"Greece has not ratified any of the human rights documents it has signed," Mr. Parisis said, "even though it is a member of the EU and the UN. And they got away with this. For many years, this game was played in Greece alone... Greece was considered the only democracy in the region at the time, and they took advantage of the situation to try to convince the world that Macedonians do not exist." He continued: "From 1974, the Greek people became more left-oriented, and democracy began to function as it had not in the past. So, Greece was invited to join the EU and NATO without fulfilling the international norms of human rights."

Mr. Parisis went on to talk about the current situation in Greece for Macedonian people: "The new generation is revisiting its heritage and exposing the huge hole in the official Greek history that they have been taught all their lives. Slowly, we are destroying the myth that Greece is a nation without minorities. Ever since the 1980s, Macedonian culture has started to thrive once again... our culture, our language, our music, and this eventually was manifested into the political party Vinozhito."

He went on: "We started from positive principles... and we went straight to the EU to apply for formal recognition (as they did in Bulgaria). We needed to strike out into the world, to protect ourselves in our own countries. We are now regularly participating in elections, despite numerous cruel tactics on the part of the Greek government to oppress our movement."

Mr. Parisis described the gag order in Greece against parliamentarians: "We have also had open debates on Greek TV with three parliamentarians, and one of them actually refused to engage with me. He said he couldn't speak with me, because his party had made an agreement with other Greek parties to not speak to us, and thereby recognize our party's legality."

In conclusion, Mr. Parisis spoke to loud applause from the crowd: "I have a message to the Greek fascists: there will be new surprises for you to come, and a new stronger fight from the Macedonians. A fight for our rights."

Another UMD Human Rights Award was given to OMO Ilinden PIRIN, and the recipient was a living hero in the international



Photos courtesy of: Emil Ivanovski

struggle for the rights of Macedonians, Stoyan Georgiev. In 1956, he formed a Macedonian group, and later that year, he was arrested. The next year, he was arrested again, and held captive for over 100 days. Eventually, he was sentenced to four years in prison. In 1973, he was again arrested and sentenced to another four years. In 1990, he co-founded OMO Ilinden PIRIN, and was elected its first president.

At times overcome with emotion from the thunderous applause of the packed banquet hall, Georgiev kept his comments brief, and said: "I believe UMD has an enormous capacity to bring about change. Our fight will continue. And yes, we will win this war for our freedom. I also just wanted to say that, with all the young, intelligent people working for Macedonia today, it gives me great hope."

Following the awards presentation, Joseph K. Grieboski, Founder and President of the Institute on Religion and Public Policy, gave a keynote address. Having received two nominations for the Nobel Peace Prize, the Institute on Religion and Public Policy is one of the world's most effective and well-respected advocates for the freedom of religion. An international, inter-religious non-profit organization, the Institute is dedicated to ensuring freedom of religion as the foundation for security, stability, and democracy.

In his remarks, Mr. Grieboski stated: "Our fundamental philosophy is freedom of religion, and we believe it is the foundation of all other rights. Nowhere is this more evident than when one examines the status of Macedonian minorities in the Balkans. Greece has no concept of freedom of religion; there is the Greek Orthodox Church, and that is about it. Serbia is not much better, and in Bulgaria they have passed laws of a similar nature."

Mr. Grieboski called for action: "We watch all of this – more often than not – silently. But, how dare we sit back when you cannot call yourself by your own name, when (you have no right) to the restitution of your property, and when you have no religious freedom? ... When the Greeks tell me about their being the 'birthplace of democracy', I tell them about you," he said, "...and then I rarely get a call back!"

Mr. Grieboski also mentioned other incidents of blatant disregard for minority rights in Greece, such as an official recognition process for churches that requires the approval of a Greek Orthodox bishop! He also mentioned a recent government tourist pamphlet, which shockingly promoted a local festival called "The Burning of the Jew." He concluded: "This is not religious freedom, ladies and gentlemen. But thanks to UMD, you have a voice in Washington, now. You also have friends, and I ask you to call on us."

Another panelist was Atanas Odzaklieski, an active leader for Macedonian human rights in Croatia. Mr. Odzaklieski gave a detailed account of the historic struggle for Macedonians in Croatia, and how recent changes in the Croatian constitution that he initiated have allowed Macedonians to be represented in the Croatian parliament.

Liana Dumitrescu, the charismatic parliamentarian and leader of Macedonians in Romania, also addressed the attendees. Besides her many other accomplishments, she initiated Macedonian language instruction in state-run Romanian schools. "I was elected to the Romanian parliament... but I have a Macedonian heart inside," she said, "... Together, it's possible to build something special for all Macedonians ... we need more people like my [Macedonian] brothers in Bulgaria and Greece. We need people of action!"

Mark Opashinov, representing Macedonian Human Rights Movement International, based in Toronto, Canada, spoke about recent legal victories that Macedonia has won in international courts. Mr. Opashinov gave special attention to the 2009 UN report authored by special envoy Gay McDougall: "(This report) clearly states that the Greek government should retreat from the dispute of whether there is a Macedonian or Turkish minority in Greece. That's a fundamental finding from the UN, and it's an important step forward

in rebuking the Greek myth of ethnic homogeneity. The UN (is now acknowledging) the hysteria of the Greek government's position on this issue."

Father Nikodim Tsarknias of S'botsko, the Macedonian Orthodox priest from Aegean Macedonia (Greece), and an activist from the Macedonian Alliance Party of Albania, were also to be honored on this day, but unfortunately they were not able to attend.

The moderator Mr. Mitreski ended the panel with the following quotation from Tibet's Dalai Lama: "All human beings, whatever their cultural or historical background, suffer when they are intimidated, imprisoned or tortured . . . We must, therefore, insist on a global consensus, not only on the need to respect human rights worldwide, but also on the definition of these rights . . . for it is the inherent nature of all human beings to yearn for freedom, equality and dignity, and they have an equal right to achieve that."

Macedonian History and Identity

Prof. Loring Danforth, Professor of Anthropology, Bates College
Prof. Michael Dimitri, Professor of History, Ball State University
Mr. Steve Pliakes, President, Canadian Macedonian Olympic Club
Dr. Ernest Damianopoulos, Research Scientist, VA Medical Center
Mr. Stojan Nikolov, UMD Board of Directors (Moderator)

Mr. Nikolov started off the panel by giving the opening remarks: "We (Macedonians) have a very long and rich history, a history for which many people envy us. Nietzsche once said that 'only strong personalities can endure history, the weak ones are extinguished by it'. We are a perfect example of the effort it takes to endure history. Frankly, history and those writing it have not been fair to us. For hundreds of years, others have tried to deny us the right to be what we are and who we are, and have tried to shape and write our history for us, to suit their interests. But clearly they have failed, for we are still here today. Our courage and our strong character have given us the ability to persevere."

Mr. Nikolov concluded by saying that: "In recent years, we have made huge strides in educating ourselves and others



about our history and our identity. We need to continue that. After hundreds of years of propaganda from our opponents, even many of our own people are ignorant or ambivalent about our identity and history. Knowing our history and learning from it will not only make us better prepared to deal with our current problems, but it will also make our future brighter."

Professor Michael Dimitri focused his presentation on continuity of the Macedonian identity. Prof. Dimitri explained that for most of his career he has been studying evidence of a continuous Macedonian identity, not only within the confines

of the traditional Classical World, but beyond that into regions like Pakistan. One of the largest areas of evidence is in visual history: how ancient and modern Macedonians are depicted in art and iconography. In addition to this theme, Prof. Dimitri presented other supporting evidence in mythology, religion, and paleontology. He emphasized that throughout the historical record, there has always been a culture in the geographic region of Macedonia that identified itself uniquely as Macedonian.

The second panelist, Mr. Steve Pliakes, focused his presentation on a trip that he undertook to the Himalayas, following in the footsteps of Alexander the Great's army. He spoke of the discoveries he made there; people, artifacts, flags, words and names that are found in distant regions of Alexander's empire and in today's Macedonia as well. In his presentation, he also touched on Emperor Constantine of the Byzantine Empire, who had Macedonian roots.



Professor Loring Danforth was the third panelist to address the audience. His presentation focused on a book manuscript he had just finished entitled Children of the Greek Civil War. The book details one of the most controversial episodes of that war, when tens of thousands of children were evacuated from the war-torn villages of Aegean Macedonia / Northern Greece to the countries of Eastern Europe, creating a generation of refugees known to Macedonians as the Deca Begalci ("Runaway Children").

Contrary to commonly held opinion, Prof. Danforth asserts that these refugee children included ethnic Greeks and ethnic Macedonians, as well as children whose families supported the Partisans, and also children whose parents supported the Greek government. In his presentation, Prof. Danforth explained that his book contains life history narratives of individual refugee children that collectively demonstrate the inadequacy of the current "master narratives" being used by historians which, in his opinion, fail to express the complexity of these tragic historical events.

Dr. Ernest Damianopoulos focused on a book that he is currently working on, in which he examines the Macedonian ethnic identity. First, Dr. Damianopoulos presented historical, anthropological and socio-cultural evidence of a distinct ancient Macedonian identity. He then examined the non-Slavic socio-cultural features expressed in ethnic Macedonia's national dress, warrior dances, traditions in the home, and formulaic first and last name systems.

Dr. Damianopoulos concluded by describing "a unique, non-exclusionary, non-Slavic Macedonian identity linked to the ancient Macedonians by sparse but critical remains from the past." He also detailed the evidence that the ancient Macedonians were distinct from ancient Hellenes, which is supported by Curta's conclusion that the 6th century AD Slav migration to the Balkans "is a politically motivated invention of 19th Century European historians." Finally, he stressed recent genetic testing by the Swiss firm iGenea, which corroborate both the above hypothesis and Curta's findings, as well.

Preserving and Advancing the Macedonian Language

Professor Elena Petroska, Sv. Kiril i Metodij Univ. Skopje, and Indiana Univ. Ms. Aleksandra Trpkovska, UMD Board (Moderator)

Prof. Petroska presented her research and conclusions from a study of Macedonian heritage speakers in the United States. This study was based on a survey of young people (university, high school, and middle school students) in six US communities with the greatest density of Macedonian speakers, and it was part of an American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) project. The goal of the study was to establish a profile of US Macedonian heritage language speakers, and to develop course materials that would best facilitate the heritage learners' transition into being fully bilingual adults.

According to Prof. Petroska, Macedonian heritage speakers grow up in a culturally rich environment where the language is learned aurally: therefore, the cultural environment supports dialect over standard. Actually, there are only two locations in the entire US that have some organized instruction in Macedonian language for children in the community.

Students recognize the need to improve their reading ability. Among the problems they encounter is lack of knowledge of the Cyrillic alphabet. This gap, which is easily remedied, is seen in their writing samples. Only 30% of the university students wrote in Cyrillic for the paragraph about themselves. Of that 30%, some mixed Latin and Cyrillic. It is important to note that there was a correlation between the student's ability to write in Cyrillic and their reported rate of reading. Of those that wrote in Cyrillic, most considered themselves to be average or above, while among those who used the Latin alphabet, most described themselves as average or below. When asked what is most difficult or challenging for them in learning Macedonian, the most common answers were: the Cyrillic alphabet, vocabulary, and grammar.

One conclusion of the study was that Macedonian language is learned much faster when the Latin alphabet is the base of learning, rather than the Cyrillic. However, that makes learners less fluent in reading Macedonian texts. Findings also pointed to the need for materials geared towards children. Dictionaries in Macedonian and English exist, but consumers are not well informed.

Another issue that was raised by the audience was the need to speak Macedonian in Macedonian circles. A few audience members suggested the UMD Global Conference be held in Macedonian language, rather than English. UMD Global Conference Co-Chair Aleksandra Trpkovska responded that the goal of the conference was not only to unite Macedonians, but also present Macedonian issues to the US and international diplomatic and public policy community as well as the international press and the general public. Additionally, she pointed to the bilingual magazine at www.NaseDetePublishing.com that she is developing, which provides a fun way for kids to start learning Macedonian.

US-Macedonian Relations: Priorities and Outlook

*H.E. Ivica Bocevski, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia
The Hon. Phillip T. Reeker, US Ambassador to the Republic of Macedonia
Dr. Srgjan Kerim, fmr pres. of the UN General Assembly
Dr. Zoran Jolevski, Macedonian Ambassador to the US
Maj. Gen Michael Dubie, Adjutant General of the Vermont National Guard
Mr. Metodija A. Koloski, UMD President (Moderator)*

UMD President Metodija A. Koloski opened the luncheon by pointing out that one of UMD's priorities is to strengthen US-Macedonian relations. "Since 2004, UMD has been at the forefront of developing these relations, and serving as a bridge between the Macedonian-American community and Macedonia. UMD views the relationship between the United States and Macedonia as one of great strategic importance, and the United States has been a true friend to Macedonia over the years."

Speakers at the luncheon addressed many aspects of the positive relations between the US and Macedonia. Deputy Prime Minister Bocevski stressed the pivotal role of the US influence in Macedonia's NATO accession. He elaborated on Macedonia's long-term aspirations, and expressed Macedonia's appreciation to the US for its moral and material assistance in reaching these goals.

Ambassador Jolevski echoed some of Mr. Bocevski's remarks, and added that a more united and politically active Diaspora would raise the profile of Macedonia in Washington, DC, and enrich US-Macedonian relations.

Adjutant General Dubie praised the courage and skills of the Macedonian soldiers serving in Iraq. He noted that the Macedonian units were well organized, highly competent, and resolute in the line of fire. Albeit a small group, the alliance commanders coveted these soldiers' presence in their combat units. As an outward sign of friendship between the two countries, Adjutant General Dubie presented Ambassador Jolevski with a declaration passed in the Vermont General Assembly that commends the excellence of Macedonian soldiers.

Ambassador Reeker summarized the economic, diplomatic, and military relationship between the US and Macedonia since 1991. He mentioned Macedonia's hospitality towards thousands of refugees during the Bosnia and Kosovo conflicts. He acknowledged the Macedonian troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. He also talked about direct US aid to Macedonia, the new embassy complex in Skopje, and the staunch US support for Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic integration. Despite its sensitive geo-political position, Ambassador Reeker characterized Macedonia as "one of the world's net security providers."

During the luncheon, UMD presented its UMD Macedonian Heritage Public Service Award to Dr. Srgjan Kerim. The Macedonian Heritage Public Service Award is given to leaders who have worked tirelessly to improve the quality of life in Macedonia and for Macedonians throughout the world. "As one of Macedonia's longest serving and most respected public servants, Dr. Kerim's unwavering determination to improve the lives of Macedonians is self-evident. His leadership has been instrumental in helping to guide Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic integration and creating opportunities for Macedonians. Moreover, Dr. Kerim is a champion of justice and human rights for all people," noted Koloski.

In his acceptance speech, Dr. Kerim highlighted the importance of public service to the health of Macedonia's emerging democracy. For Dr. Kerim, public service is a true

calling, an arena for the expression of his talents, and a way to advance the interests of his country with honor. Although his term as president of the UN General Assembly has ended, Dr. Kerim continues his tenure at the UN as a member of a handpicked action team on climate change.

Closing the luncheon, Koloski stated that: "the United Macedonian Diaspora and Macedonians throughout the world were ecstatic when they learned on November 4, 2004 that the US recognized Macedonia by her constitutional name. For our people who have struggled for the right to their existence and identity, the US recognition was instrumental and motivating to our community to continue the century-long struggle. We are very pleased that President Obama has continued this policy of referring to Macedonia as Macedonia and hope President Obama's administration will continue supporting Macedonia."

Prospects of Euro-Atlantic Integration for Macedonia

*H.E. Ivica Bocevski, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia
Mr. Boban Ilik, Secretary-General, RDWG in Southeast Europe
Mr. Daniel P. Serwer, Vice President, Center for Post-Conflict Peace, USIP
Mr. Michael L. Braxton, UMD Member, Retired US FSO (Moderator)*

Mr. Serwer presented a succinct, sincere, and rather ominous description of the current geopolitical position of Macedonia, and the challenges that this poses to its sovereignty. He discussed the volatile situation in Kosovo, the secessionist tendencies of Republika Srpska, and he highlighted the rhetoric of some radical political elements within Macedonia itself. He emphasized however, that a redrawing of borders is unlikely, because the US fully supports the territorial integrity of Macedonia.

Deputy Prime Minister Bocevski focused on the Macedonia's bid for admission into NATO and the EU and the difficulties that Greece's objections are currently posing, by blocking Macedonia's efforts to enter both organizations. He reassured the audience that the Macedonian government is unwavering in its pursuit of solutions to these problems. He maintained that the only way for Macedonia to survive and prosper is through integration in the Euro-Atlantic security and economic structures. Likening the struggle for integration to the dreams of the Ilinden generation, he asserted that "there is no contingency plan" – the only way forward is through NATO and the EU.

Boban Ilik offered a sobering perspective on the impact of nationalism on the well-being of Balkan farmers. Although separated by borders and language, farmers are united in their



dependence on the land for sustenance and economic survival. The ambitions of nationalistic political entrepreneurs in the area have clouded our understanding of one indisputable fact: we must manage our natural resources effectively in order to survive. Mr. Ilik illustrated this point with examples of successful international programs for rural development.

Questions from the audience focused on the name issue negotiations. While refusing to divulge any details, Deputy Prime Minister Bocevski stressed his confidence in a timely and satisfactory resolution of the name dispute. Mr. Serwer added that Macedonia should exploit its competitive advantage in relation to Kosovo and continue to promote exchanges that not only will strengthen its overall balance of trade but also increase stability on the northern border.

Young Leadership - A New Generation of Philanthropy

Mr. Emil Hristov, President, EMSA Construction, New Jersey
Mr. Aleksander Kirkovski, President, YMCA Macedonia
Mr. Kristopher Maslardzievski, Actor, Founder of Splash of Hope
Ms. Jeanne Whitney Smith, President, Friends of Macedonia
Ms. Aleksandra Trpkovska, UMD Board and Director, UMD FMC
Mr. Vladimir Atseff, Sponsor, The Macedonia Mission

Mr. Hristov described his activities as a young entrepreneur managing and directing the construction of public and private projects in New Jersey. He discussed how he started a construction company, how he adjusted to the current economic recession, and how he managed to continue growing his company. During college, Mr. Hristov interned for several members of Congress, including Senator Frank Lautenberg of New Jersey.

Mr. Kirkovski summarized 10 years of YMCA activities in Macedonia, promoting a stronger multi-ethnic society for young men and women, improving family life, and building stable and strong communities. Mr. Kirkovski has relied on the philanthropic community, like the Somerset Hills YMCA in New Jersey, to help fund his organization, but he acknowledged the need for renewed and continued support, if YMCA Macedonia is to survive.

Mr. Maslardzievski has worked with UMD to help The Fund for Macedonian Children. He has also helped coordinate the Macedonian Film Festival in Toronto, Canada. His artistic talents have been a very important contribution to a variety of Macedonian projects.

As President of Friends of Macedonia, Ms. Whitney Smith has been a bridge between Macedonians and Americans by providing valuable information and services. Her organization is mainly composed of non-Macedonians who were previously Peace Corps volunteers in the Republic of Macedonia. Their accomplishments include supporting Macedonian college students, distributing wheelchairs to the disabled throughout the country, promoting artistic performances, and helping elementary and secondary school children.

Ms. Trpkovska, UMD Board member and Director for the Fund for Macedonian Children, has spearheaded various humanitarian programs to benefit Macedonia's young people. The Fund's most significant project, Building a Future Today, fosters positive development for children and young people in Macedonia. The Fund has provided educational supplies, scholarships, clothing and other humanitarian assistance to the children of Macedonia.

Vladimir Atseff and his wife Stephanie have sponsored The Macedonia Mission, an NGO dedicated to providing

educational material to elementary school children and donating medical equipment and instruments to a children's hospital.

The discussion was lively and cordial. Ms. Trpkovska will contact panel members in the near future to coordinate their humanitarian efforts in Macedonia.

Macedonian Women Making A Difference

Mrs. Stephanie Atseff, UMD member and philanthropist
Ms. Liana Dumitrescu, Romanian Member of Parliament
Ms. Virginia Evans, Macedonian community leader (Canada)
Ms. Sonja Magdevski, Journalist and Scholar
Ms. Aleksandra Trpkovska, UMD Board (Moderator)

In her opening remarks, Ms. Trpkovska expressed her great pleasure to be in the company of such great women leaders. She thanked each one of the panelists personally for agreeing to share their life stories with the audience, and commended them for the high standards they have set for Macedonian women around the world and for their dedication to their professional careers and the Macedonian cause.

The first panelist was Ms. Liana Dumitrescu, a Member of Parliament in Romania and a representative of the Macedonian minority in Romania to Parliament. Ms. Dumitrescu called attention to the need of women to support women, not just women asking for the support of men. Through personal anecdotes, she explained that it always amazes her how competitive women can be to each other, instead of supporting each other. The audience, of which a majority were women, agreed with this sentiment.

The next panelist, Ms. Virginia Evans, gave a lively presentation on her life and achievements. Her path led through many administrative roles where she was able to use her organizing skills, as well as develop her love for theater. She is an organizer of the annual Macedonian Film Festival in Toronto, Canada, where the films illustrate Macedonia from various perspectives, and spark discussion among the many Macedonian and non-Macedonian guests in multicultural Toronto. Ms. Evans called on the need for collaboration between Macedonian men and women in order to support projects which present Macedonia in a better light outside of the Macedonian community.

Also contributing to the discussion were panelists Sonja Magdevski, a journalist by training and former Fulbright Scholar to Macedonia, and Mrs. Stephanie Atseff, who, with her husband Vladimir, are well-known philanthropists. Both shared their significant insight into Macedonian women and Macedonian culture.



Marketing: Best Practice for the Positive Branding of Macedonia

Mr. Bruce Bertman, CEO of Networld Online, Inc., Florida
Ms. Jill Kovalich, Mktg Director for Konowitz, Kahn, & Company, Connecticut
Ms. Dana Klein, Hon. Consul General for Florida, Pres. DKMC, Inc. (Moderator)

Ms. Klein presented various examples to demonstrate that although image is important, it must be based on and connected to "the overall package." Reaching out to the end user and developing a relationship is extremely important and will determine the level of success in branding and imaging. The key is to get the message out to the target audience in the manner in which it was intended.

Ms. Kovalich noted that you also brand your image efficiently and effectively by keeping your messages consistent. Everyone in the company or program must know the message and express it in presentation, communication, and action. The message online should be the same message when the customer comes to the door and everyone and everything in the company should represent that image for optimal branding. Ms. Kovalich also presented trends in hospitality and travel as opportunities for marketing Macedonia.

Mr. Bertman discussed Internet marketing strategies to increase exposure and brand your image. The combination of high- and low-technology is the best way to reach and keep customers. Mr. Bertman emphasized the importance of reaching out to the customer, saying: "It is imperative to drive interested parties to a destination and it does not matter whether it is physical or virtual."

The question and answer period highlighted ways in which creative, simple, and low cost methods can provide the needed repetition and frequency to brand successfully. The use of blogs, links, online press releases, and "e-blasts" were emphasized as promising methods to create excitement, especially since they remain permanently on the Internet and drive traffic to your site and business. The audience was reminded not to hesitate to request referrals and for new business and to be aggressive about the business that they seek.

UMD Board of Director's Briefing - Global Macedonian Challenges Today

Mr. Vasil Naumov, Macedonian Agency for Emigration
Mr. Zlatko Nikolovski, UMD Vienna
Mr. Boris Kamchev, UMD St. Petersburg
Mr. Aleksandar Mitreski, UMD Vice President
Ms. Aleksandra Trpkovska, UMD Board
Mr. Boban Jovanovski, UMD Board
Mr. Metodija A. Koloski, UMD President (Moderator)

On the final day of UMD's first annual Global Conference, guests gathered to hear directly from the UMD leadership about the global challenges facing both Macedonia and UMD in upcoming years, along with Mr. Vasil Naumov representing the Republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Naumov discussed the nature of the conference, and his role as the government intermediary between the Macedonian Diaspora and the Macedonian government. Mr. Naumov described his duties, and also spoke to the concerns of the Macedonian Diaspora regarding such practical issues as dual citizenship, consular services and passports.

This presentation was followed by brief remarks from



several UMD Board Members, including Aleksandar Mitreski, Aleksandra Trpkovska, and Boban Jovanovski, who spoke about UMD human rights activities, charitable activities, UMD's scholarship and internship programs, and public outreach activities, respectively. During these speeches, UMD once again expressed its long-standing policy to reject any changes to the name of the Macedonian state or people.

UMD's representatives in Austria and Russia, Zlatko Nikolovski and Boris Kamchev also made presentations, providing important insight into these two well-established Macedonian Diaspora communities. Mr. Kamchev reminded the audience of the strong cultural and historic ties between the Macedonian and Russian peoples, including one of the most influential Macedonian Diaspora institutes: the Macedonian Scientific and Literary Society. For his part, Mr. Nikolovski described the current status of the Macedonian community in Austria, which has existed since Hapsburg times, and today enjoys considerable cultural freedom.

Macedonia's Economic Environment and Attractiveness to Foreign Investors

Mr. Viktor Mizo, CEO, InvestMacedonia
Mr. Iljanco Gagovski, General Manager, Microsoft Macedonia
Ms. Hilleary Smith, Trade Specialist, US Department of Commerce
Ms. Ivona Grimberg, UMD Member, IMG Consulting (Moderator)

The panel's main focus was discussion on various aspects of the economic climate in Macedonia, from the perspective of foreign investors.

Mr. Mizo gave a presentation that outlined various opportunities being supported and promoted by the Macedonian government, such as low corporate income taxes, a qualified work force, relatively cheap labor and improvements in the manufacturing processes in various Macedonian industries.

Mr. Gagovski's presentation focused on technological development in Macedonia. He discussed how other countries have used technology as a tool for economic development. He also elaborated on the training of leaders and managers in Macedonia.

Ms. Smith's presentation focused mainly on current investment trends in Macedonia and current statistics on the amount of foreign investment by US companies into Macedonia.

The presentations were followed by questions from the audience, which ranged from questions about specific industries, such as agriculture and tourism, to questions about the government's role in promoting free enterprise, and the initiatives being undertaken for the expansion of foreign investment into Macedonia. ✨

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CONFERENCE 2009

Macedonians Converge on Capitol Hill
for a Day of Advocacy

by Nicholas Kostoff, UMD Summer 2009 Intern



UMD President speaking before close to 200 guests in the Congressional Cannon Caucus Room for the US-Macedonia Friendship Awards Luncheon

On Thursday, June 11th, 2009, nearly one hundred Macedonians converged on the offices of their representatives on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, for a historic day of advocacy on behalf of Macedonia.

It began with breakfast in the US House of Representatives' Rayburn Building, where there was a presentation on advocacy strategy by UMD President Metodija A. Koloski and Board Member Aleksandra Trpkovska. Following the breakfast, 15 groups of 4-5 people dispersed to discuss US-Macedonian Relations with their representatives, explaining the need for increased US engagement in Southeast Europe.

The groups visited many Senators and Representatives throughout the day, including the office of Congressman James Moran, from the 8th District of Virginia. A group led by Koloski discussed Macedonia's contributions to peace in Southeast Europe with Congressman Moran, as well as Macedonia's military contributions to Iraq and Afghanistan and its record of granting all citizens democratic freedoms, regardless of ethnicity, national origin or religion.

UMD members Margarita Kurtevska, her family, UMD member Vladimir Atseff, and Mitre Kutanovski, all originally from Northwest Indiana, visited the office of Indiana Congressman Pete Visclosky. The Congressman expressed his long-standing strong support of Macedonia.

UMD Vice President Aleksandar Mitreski, and UMD Board Member Stojan Nikolov, both from Massachusetts, visited the office of Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman and Senator John Kerry, to discuss increasing US support for Macedonia.

UMD was pleased that several Macedonian organizations joined in UMD's educational advocacy efforts opposing H. Res. 486 and S. Res. 169, including the Macedonian American Friendship Association, Macedonia 2025, and the Macedonian Patriotic Organization, all represented by their presidents respectively.

Photos courtesy of: Emil Ivanovski

Other visits were made to the offices of:

- Senator George Voinovich,
- Senatr Sherrod Brown
- Senator Richard Lugar
- Senator Evan Bayh
- Senator Bob Corker
- Senator Benjamin Cardin
- Senator Jeanne Shaheen
- Senator Jim DeMint
- Senator Edward Kennedy
- Senator Richard Durbin
- Representative Peter Roskam
- Representative Steve LaTourette
- Representative Patrick Tiberi
- Representative Connie Mack
- Representative Mike Ross
- Representative Trent Franks
- Representative Mike McIntyre
- Representative J. Randy Forbes
- Representative Gerald Connolly
- Representative Charlie Wilson
- Representative Doris Matsui
- Representative Dan Boren
- Representative Jim Himes
- Representative. Joe Wilson
- Representative Artur Davis
- Representative Robert Brady
- Representative Bill Shuster
- Representative Ron Paul
- Representative Sue Myrick
- Representative Jeff Flake

Almost two hundred Macedonians and friends of Macedonia met in the Cannon Caucus Room for a gala lunch with speeches and award ceremonies. UMD's "US-Macedonia Friendship Awards" were given to five Members of the House of Representatives who have distinguished themselves with their strong allies of Macedonia.

Chris Antoniou presented the first award to Congressman Earl Pomeroy from North Dakota. Congressman Pomeroy recalled his visits to Macedonia and described the friendliness and hospitality of the Macedonian people during his stay.

Then, Vladimir Atseff presented Congressman Mark Souder from Indiana with another award. Congressman Souder described the many proud Macedonian-Americans

in his district in Indiana. He expressed his gratitude to his Macedonian constituents who, he said, had allowed him to learn a great deal about the Republic of Macedonia. He ended his remarks by advising UMD to remember that each step in the right direction is a big success for everyone involved, and he expressed the hope that the Conference would help raise further awareness about the Republic of Macedonia.

Koloski and Macedonian-American businessman Zvonko Veskov of New Jersey presented an award to New Jersey Congressman Bill Pascrell. Congressman Pascrell spoke warmly about UMD, and his Macedonian-American constituents in New Jersey. He stressed the value of appreciating different cultures in his own experience, and noted that there is no reason for Macedonia to stop fighting to protect its rightful name. He also urged NATO to welcome Macedonia into its ranks.

Sonja Magdevski presented the fourth award to Congresswoman Candice Miller from Michigan. Congresswoman Miller represents the state with the largest Macedonian population in the US. The Congresswoman noted that, as a state representative, she has seen the Macedonian population in Michigan grow and prosper into a united and politically effective community.

Honorary Consul of Macedonia to Florida Lou Vlasho presented an award to Congressman Harry Mitchell of Arizona. Congressman Mitchell expressed his pleasure that the Macedonian community remains united, assertive and passionate about its cause. He also noted that, even though there are relatively fewer Macedonians in his state, it does not mean that he is unaware of Macedonia's predicament. He thanked UMD for helping him understand those issues that concern Macedonia, and promised to do his utmost to help the Republic of Macedonia in Congress.

UMD's Congressional Luncheon proved to be a significant milestone in the Macedonian community's growing dialogue with US legislators. Dr. Zoran Jolevski, Macedonia's Ambassador to the United States, also attended, and he commended UMD's efforts to support the Republic of Macedonia in general and its NATO ascension in particular. He expressed his profound gratitude and appreciation for the principled positions of the five awardees at the luncheon.

All in all, the Day of Advocacy was a smashing success. It was a truly revolutionary idea to empower the conference participants - to take them out of a passive mode - and give them the chance to participate directly in the democratic process. ✨



Congressman Harry Mitchell



Congresswoman Candice Miller with Sonja Magdevski

UMD Global CONFERENCE 2009

Reception at Macedonian Embassy Sets the Tone

by Matthew Napoli, UMD International Policy and Diplomacy Fellow

A reception and awards ceremony at the Macedonian Embassy in Washington highlighted the first night of UMD's Global Conference. Ambassador Zoran Jolevski and Mrs. Jolevski hosted the reception at the beautiful embassy building, decorated with Macedonian art and photographs of the building prior to its conversion into an embassy. The venerable building on Washington's "Embassy Row" was completely renovated a few years previously. Over 250 guests flooded the embassy after Day of Advocacy activities on Capitol Hill. Among the distinguished guests were Senator Richard Lugar, ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Major General Michael D. Dubie, Adjutant General to the Vermont National Guard, Ivica Bocevski, then Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia, and Darko Angelov, Chief of Staff to the President of Macedonia.



Awardees Stephanie and Vlad Atseff and Senator Lugar proudly displaying their Awards



UMD President presenting Senator Lugar with UMD International Freedom Award

Macedonians from all over the Diaspora attended the reception, and each was personally greeted by the Ambassador. Attendees enjoyed the fine cuisine organized by Mrs. Jolevski and her team. This was followed by remarks from UMD President Metodija A. Koloski, who presented the UMD International Freedom Award to Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN). The International Freedom Award is one of UMD's highest honors and the recipient of this award is selected based on his or her positive impact on the Macedonian community, record of public service, and success in advancing universally accepted principles of justice, peace, democracy, individual freedom and economic opportunity. Over the past thirty years, Senator Lugar has risen to become one of America's most recognized public servants, tirelessly working for peace and cooperation in the world-at-large, and on behalf of Macedonia as well. Following Senator Lugar's gracious acceptance speech, Mr. Koloski presented a plaque to Vladimir and Stephanie Atseff, in recognition of their lifelong dedication to humanitarian work in Macedonia. In an emotional speech, the Atseffs thanked UMD for the honor. UMD is grateful to Ambassador Jolevski for hosting the beautiful reception. Many UMD members and guests commented that it was one of the highlights of the UMD Global Conference.

Photos courtesy of: Emil Ivanovski

UMD Global CONFERENCE 2009

UMD Gala Banquet and Reception: The Perfect Farewell

by Mark Branov

On the final day of the UMD Global Conference in Washington, no one could have imagined a more enjoyable send-off than the UMD Gala Banquet and Reception. In the halls, guests enjoyed artistic expressions from Macedonian artists, which were organized by Maria Kubaiska. It is a modern tradition in Macedonia to welcome guests with chocolate, so each setting at the beautiful Marriott Arlington Ballroom included a special chocolate with Macedonian pepper inside. Each table had Vertias wine from Macedonia, courtesy of prominent businessman Slavco Madzarov. The program began with the charming Mistress of Ceremonies Sonja Magdevski. She welcomed the packed hall of over 300 guests and introduced the renowned Sveta Zlata Meglenska women's choir to start off the evening with the American and Macedonian national anthems. Following the anthems, UMD Board member Aleksandra Trpkovska spoke about the success of the first ever UMD Global Conference. She thanked the numerous volunteers, and had them all stand up for a loud ovation from the guests. "Without the hard work put in by these wonderful volunteers, the 1st UMD Global Conference would not have been such a huge success," noted Trpkovska. Following these remarks the Honorary Chairman of the Global Conference, His Excellency Dr. Zoran Jolevski, the Ambassador of the Republic of Macedonia to the United States, greeted the attendees and stated how proud he was to be among such diverse Macedonians from throughout the world. In his remarks, the US Ambassador to Macedonia, Ambassador Philip T. Reeker urged Macedonia to continue consolidating its democracy. "Macedonian leaders appear committed



left to right: UMD Board Members Stojan Nikolov, Denis Manevski, Boban Jovanovski, Aleksandar Mitreski, Aleksandra Trpkovska, Michael Sarafin, and Metodija A. Koloski

to this and I applaud the progress Skopje has made thus far. Efforts to fight corruption have resulted in improvements in Macedonia's ranking on Transparency International's yearly Corruption Perceptions Index. The government's laudable efforts to fight trafficking in persons resulted in Macedonia being ranked as a Tier One country in the 2008 Trafficking in Persons Report. These are notable accomplishments, although more must be done to further consolidate institutions and rule of law in Macedonia. This is not a criticism; the Republic of Macedonia is only 18 years old. But swift progress will be met with invaluable rewards, such as greater investor confidence, more foreign direct investment, and a higher standard of living for all people in Macedonia," stated Ambassador Reeker. Mr. Darko Angelov, the Chief of Staff to the President of the Republic of Macedonia read a letter from President Ivanov, in which the President called UMD an informal ambassador for the country. UMD President Metodija A. Koloski's address began with a definition of being Macedonian: "Our name, language, land, family, faith, and culture are all vital elements of our Macedonian identity," he said, "(but) we are bound to each other not simply by what we have inherited, but rather by that which we give of ourselves to our nation, to our cause, and to our common future. Ultimately, being Macedonian is more about giving, and less about getting; less about expectations and entitlements, and more about taking responsibility for our shared destiny... That giving – of our time, toil, and treasure – is the price of our survival. We reinforce who we are by bearing the burdens and blessings of our generation, in order to



Aleksandrija Folk Dance Ensemble performing at the Gala Banquet

leave a better future for those who follow us. This was true at Ilinden, and it's true today. The battlefields are different, but the stakes are just as high."

He continued: "While the Republic of Macedonia is certainly an integral part of our nation, the Macedonian nation is not limited to that state, nor is it defined by that state's borders. Rather, our nation is comprised of Macedonian communities throughout the world, and the people and institutions that make up those communities, never forgetting that our common homeland is Macedonia."

UMD President Koloski warned about the challenges ahead: "We do not exist in a vacuum. UMD makes our nation strong, and gives voice to our collective cause. As such, it is being targeted and it is continuously under attack by those who wish to weaken, divide and destroy our nation's institutions," he said, "Over the past 18 years, the Greek government's plan to neutralize and dismantle the Macedonian nation has become increasingly well coordinated and funded and, if left unchecked, it represents a serious threat to our very existence as a viable and independent nation... However, as long as Macedonians remain committed, and understand the need for constant vigilance and sacrifice, we can and will win this fight. A century ago, the very existence of the Macedonian nation was in jeopardy. Through perseverance, unwavering faith, toil and sacrifice, our nation has survived and it is thriving today."

UMD President Koloski concluded with a call to action: "This opportunity has been afforded to us by our forbearers... It is incumbent on us to build on their sacrifices. Now, it is your turn. Invest in your nation's future by supporting and strengthening the United Macedonian Diaspora."

The cultural performances at this banquet were truly remarkable. First, the brilliant Sveta Zlata Meglenska Choir returned to perform several haunting ballads. Dressed in billowing white robes, the music these beautiful ladies produced was breathtaking. Led by director Letka Dimovska-Polizova, this group recently won first place awards at high profile international competitions in St. Louis, Missouri and southern California.

The crowd also delighted in dramatic performances by the New Jersey-based Goce Delcev and Aleksandrija Folk Dance Ensembles. These large dance troupes, consisting of energetic young men and women, as well as much younger boys and girls, danced in the traditional dance costumes of Macedonia. Their spirited performances were met by thunderous applause from the audience.

Finally, all the attendees got involved once Syracuse,



Goce Delchev Folk Dance Ensemble performing at Gala Banquet



President Ivanov's Letter to UMD being read by his Chief of Staff, Darko Angelov

NY-based folk band Merak took the stage. These skillful musicians performed all the traditional favorites that Macedonians around the world know and love. Attendees took part in an enormous "oro", both Macedonians and friends of Macedonia alike, and together they danced the night away. ❄️



Ambassadors Reeker and Jolevski shaking hands at Gala Banquet



Sveta Zlata Meglenska Women's Choir performing at Gala Banquet

Photos courtesy of: Emil Ivanovski

UMD Global CONFERENCE 2009

Letter From Governor Kaine



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Timothy M. Kaine
Governor

June 8, 2009

Mr. Metodija A. Koloski
1101 Pennsylvania Avenue Northwest, Floor 6
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Mr. Koloski:

On behalf of the Commonwealth of Virginia, I am pleased to extend warm greetings to everyone attending the 1st United Macedonian Diaspora Global Conference Gala Banquet.

Virginia is strengthened by the diversity of its residents and we are blessed to have a large and vibrant Macedonian Community in the Commonwealth. The economic and cultural outreach efforts Macedonian Virginians has enriched us all and helped to promote fairness and tolerance while maintaining pride in our own individual identities.

I also want to commend the organizers for their hard work and dedication to fostering unity among Macedonian people and advancing their interests through educational advocacy, charitable efforts, and social and cultural events. Remember to continue looking forward as you work to promote your historical, spiritual and cultural heritage. The Commonwealth is grateful for the opportunity to share in your rich culture.

Best wishes for a successful and enjoyable festival.

Sincerely,

Timothy M. Kaine

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www.governor.virginia.gov

UMD *Global*
CONFERENCE 2009

Letter From Senator Lugar

RICHARD G. LUGAR
UNITED STATES SENATOR
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

June 16, 2009

Metodija A. Koloski
President
United Macedonian Diaspora
1101 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
6th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20004


Dear President Koloski:

Thank you for inviting me to be a part of the United Macedonian Diaspora celebration in Washington, D.C. at a beautiful reception held in the Embassy of the Republic of Macedonia.

I thank you, additionally, for bestowing upon me the International Freedom Award, one of the United Macedonian Diaspora's highest honors in recognition of my work on behalf of Macedonia's independence and the support of Macedonia's accession to NATO.

We still have much work to do, but I appreciate the remarkable contribution the Republic of Macedonia is making in furtherance of world peace and in the constructive service of its citizens and the United Macedonian Diaspora.

It was an honor to celebrate with you on June 11, 2009, and I look forward to many more opportunities in the future.

Sincerely,

Richard G. Lugar
United States Senator

RGL/am

Not Post From a Government Office
Penalty for Falsification: \$300

UMD *Global*
CONFERENCE 2009

Letter From Representative Moran



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

JAMES P. MORAN
8TH DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA

June 11, 2009

United Macedonian Diaspora
1101 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, 6th floor
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Friends,

It is with great pleasure that I send my best wishes to the United Macedonian Diaspora for your Gala Banquet on June 13. I thank you for inviting me to take part in your celebration and regret that I had a previous engagement.

The United Macedonian Diaspora is to be commended for your efforts to strengthen U.S.-Macedonian relations and to highlight the many contributions of the Macedonian-American community to our national life. I know your June 11-13 Global Conference has been a great success, and it was a pleasure for me to meet with a delegation from the conference earlier today. It was a particular pleasure to meet leaders of UMD from northern Virginia, as well as from Croatia, Australia and California. I am impressed with your global partnership.

I strongly support the Obama Administration's policies of strengthening U.S.-Macedonian relations in the context of regional stability in Southeast Europe. Macedonia is to be strongly commended for its troop contributions to the multinational efforts in Afghanistan. Macedonia has proven that it belongs as a full member of NATO and other international bodies.

On behalf of the people of Virginia's 8th Congressional District, I thank you and offer best wishes to all the participants in your Gala Banquet.

Best wishes,


James P. Moran

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MacedoniaLovesYou.com: A Labor of Love

By Mark Branov



Photos courtesy of: Stanislaw Pigon

Have you ever written to a love letter? If so, was it addressed to a foreign country?

Mr. Stanislaw Pigon is an international economist and consultant from Warsaw, Poland, and he has done just that, except his medium of choice is not pen and paper, but rather the world-wide web.

Pigon's beautiful website MacedoniaLovesYou.com is a tribute to the beauty of Macedonia, and it honors the good friends and good memories he made while working there several years ago. Since 2007, the site has been viewed widely across the world, and it has started to develop a following of its own. It is full of information about Macedonian culture and traditional products, and it is adorned with high-quality photography, which documents every region of the country.

Pigon took some time from his busy schedule to answer some questions for UMD Voice:

MB: Please tell me a little about your background, and how you came to know about Macedonia.

SP: As an economist, business consultant, and investment expert, I have known Macedonia for years. Macedonian citizens regularly attend the workshops I do in Vienna for the UN. In October 2006, I started a 9-month business assignment in Macedonia. I would not call it the best professional experience in my career, as I truly believe Macedonia deserved more than that EU-funded project delivered, but it turned to be one of the most personally rewarding periods in my life: meeting new friends, discovering the beauty of Macedonia, basking in Macedonian hospitality, learning about the unique Macedonian culture and heritage... and drinking fine Macedonian wine, of course!

MB: It's rare to see a "love letter" to a nation in the form of a website. What was your inspiration for MacedoniaLovesYou.com?

SP: In one word: MACEDONIANS; talented, stylish,

honest, hard-working people. Though not a devotedly religious person, I do believe in God... not punishing people, but rewarding them sometimes with an idea, a spark, a stepping-stone into the future, if you will. One such rare moment happened to me in Macedonia, and I have always been grateful. Thus, the web page was born naturally, spontaneously .. almost mystically. Today, when the page is enjoyed in over 150 countries, I look back at so many developments over the last two years, and I still cannot precisely define how it grows. It is always spontaneous, inspired by talks with my friend Aleksandar Veliki, by new photos or contributions sent in by Macedonians, or by a taste of Vranec on a summer afternoon that stays in my memory.

MB: How did you come to know your talented site designer, Marek Mantuzyk?

SP: A friend introduced us. When we met for the first time, Marek was a little bit puzzled. Actually, he told me later that he did not understand why I wanted to go through with this personal project. It seemed to be out of this world, with no vested commercial or political interest. But Marek has always deeply admired nature, and therefore he fell in love with Macedonia instantly. His son Franek is only months old now, but Marek already has plans to explore Macedonia with his son and his lovely wife Iwona. He talks about creating an online encyclopedia about Macedonia, too. He is quite busy these days, but he says that Macedonia Loves You remains a project close to his heart. Our cooperation has been extremely fruitful, as both of us want the page to be enjoyable and ever-changing. Marek's design always matches my ideas perfectly. Normally, I write the "script", and Marek provides the vision.

MB: As someone who has traveled within the Republic, what can you say are your favorite places that travelers to the country should visit?

SP: I have not visited all the places, but my most favored definitely include: Galicnik, places around Lake Ohrid, Pelister (Malo and Golemo Ezero), Berovo, Kratovoand the famous monasteries Bigorski, Lesnovski, and Osogovski. I have visited some of them several times. I love to wake up early in the Sveti Naum hotel and look through a window... the feeling is overwhelming. The place that I hope to visit soon is Lazaropole, where the poets say: "even the stars have learned to speak Macedonian." It is important to share Macedonian heritage, nature, and cultural diversity with travelers. Just hike up to Mount Vodno from center of Skopje and look around from under the Millennium Cross. My heart is full of emotion and images come instantly: the ancient mosque that reflects in the modern glass façade of that building in Bitola, the morning fog over Lake Berovo, Skopje's Macedonia Square in the cool evening, where you can always drop in at the Nana Wine Bar for a glass. When I see that brilliant spring water that runs at the Bigorski Monastery, which Mr. Manchevski's vision changed into flames for his "Macedonia Timeless" TV spot, it makes me want to encourage everyone that Macedonia is well-worth a visit.

MB: What kinds of similarities or differences do you see between Polish and Macedonian culture?

SP: Macedonian, Polish and other East European cultures have one thing in common... a precious impulse that Europe and the world needs so badly in this time of crisis. We cherish our national identity and culture. Polish people also have a long history of defending their culture against hostile forces, without compromise and at whatever price was to be paid for it. And yet, the difference between being proudly patriotic versus being jingoist or nationalistic is clear, both in Poland and in Macedonia, and this is very important. The attitude, style, and desire of the younger generations of the two countries are the



same, evolving from a modern cultural openness. There are some religious differences, especially among the older generation, of course. One thing that worries me about Macedonian culture is a self-diminishing streak, summed up in the phrase: "But we are just a small country." Poles are much bolder when they speak up about corruption, including that which exists in Western cultures and societies. I want Macedonia to understand that freedom is a state of mind, and it has nothing to do with a country's size.

MB: How do you view Macedonia's international image in the world? How could it be improved, and how is it changing?

SP: Macedonia's image has changed a lot in recent years, although I still meet people who do not have any idea about what Macedonians are defending in the so-called "name dispute." But, objectively, if you look at it from an information perspective, Macedonia has a good image. I would encourage the people, especially young people, to openly speak up about Macedonian culture and heritage but also about Macedonian interests and ambitions. Take classical music for example: it is unbelievable, but there are

still people who are confused about Simon Trpceski's nationality! I remember explaining that he is Macedonian to a shop attendant in Vienna, with a smile. Now, that shop attendant knows, and he tells others: Macedonia is a country where stars are born.

MB: Any final message you'd like to send out to our readers?

SP: I would like to share the idea, the spark, the stepping-stone into the future that the Almighty blessed me with while I was in Macedonia... the revelation that MACEDONIA LOVES YOU! Please keep telling it to the world, and please keep smiling! ✨

Photos courtesy of: Ivanov Campaign

Veljan Mitrovski: A Young Man With A Bright Future

By Aleksandra Trpkovska

When his family came to America in 2006, Veljan Mitrovski knew very little English. But in three short years, it seems the 12-year old has seized on various unique opportunities that American society provides – everything from the chance to watch NBA games, to the chance to experiment with new technologies, to getting an education in a bilingual academic environment (English and Spanish). A 7th grader at the Oyster-Adams Middle School in Washington, DC, Veljan recently won the 1st place in the Environmental Science category of the City Wide Science Fair.

I had the chance of chat with Veljan, to learn more about his accomplishments:

AT: What are your favorite classes at school?

VM: I like math and science, but I like everything, really. I also participate in math competitions and it's a really cool feeling to solve problems that I see for the first time. The question can be hard, but when you solve it and get the right answer, it feels great!

AT: I know what you mean because I love math too. We should try a few problems after the interview.

VM: (laughs) Let's do it! My mom will time us!

AT: (laughs) Deal! Now, let's talk about your 1st place win in the Washington, DC City Wide Science Fair.

VM: Well, last year, my teammate and I developed a project that showed how dirty the water is in the Potomac River which passes through Washington, DC. We got 2nd place last year. I knew we could do better if we worked on it a little more this year, so we started early.

AT: So, what was the project that you developed for this year's Science Fair?



VM: This year, my teammate and I made a project called “Comparing Generators” which focused on comparing two generators - a photovoltaic generator and a cranking generator. We tried to find out which one produces more power and is more energy efficient. So, we tested them by powering thirty one-volt lights. We proved that the cranking generator produces more power, in a shorter amount of time, but it takes more effort.

AT: That's really interesting! But, what did you do with that information?

VM: We did lots of extra research, including finding the 50 biggest solar power producing places in the world, and we were able to show that the District of Columbia would be able to save a lot of money and energy by placing solar panels on top of the traffic lights! I keep on hearing my parents and teachers talk about how it's a tough economy for everyone. So, I know it can't be bad to save some money.

AT: Saving money, while saving the environment – you should have gotten first place! Wait – you did! (laughs) I bet you guys were happy!

VM: (laughs) We really were. And it was fun to go back to school the following Monday and celebrate with the whole school! But, it was also fun hearing from my friends in Skopje that they read about me in the newspapers, or watched me on TV. It was definitely awesome!

AT: Oh I bet! It was a great idea and you guys worked hard to make it happen. You know - you really are very smart...

VM: (laughs) I am too young to earn money, so I have to be creative and do well in school. My parents promised me a laptop if I did well at the Science Fair, and I got it right after!

AT: I see you also like Facebook! Your map says you've visited 41 cities in 8 countries.

VM: I like going places – my whole family loves to travel too! We have a lot of fun! My sister and I also really like Facebook. There are lots of games we play with each other, but the thing I like best is that I can chat and play with my friends from Macedonia. We are going back to Macedonia next year, so I keep up with my friends online until I see them in person. We already talked about me presenting the Solar Project to them at school!

AT: I bet they will be happy to see you back! As a Macedonian, I am so happy to see you excel. I hope you bring a lot of what you've learned back to your friends.

VM: Oh, I will. Maybe, we'll do a similar solar project for Skopje or maybe we'll do an analysis on the Vardar River.

AT: Excellent! We, from UMD, wish you the best, and we'll be sure to check in with you in the future! ✨

Photos courtesy of: Veljan Mitrovski

President Gjorge Ivanov's Inauguration

By Mark Branov

On May 12, 2009 , H.E. President Gjorge Ivanov was inaugurated in the Macedonian capital. Ivanov had previously won a run-off election on April 5, where he beat his opponent Ljubomir Frckoski by a wide margin, garnering approximately 63% of the total votes.

In his inauguration speech, the President emphasized his responsibility to ensure human rights for all: “The President is ... responsible for the well-being of our country and citizens. This responsibility does not recognize political views, or ethnic, religious, cultural or local differences... “The President of the Republic... must remain defender of the ideals of humanity... Many of our heroes - the Enlighteners, the Ilinden insurgents, the ASNOM fathers of our nation, and our first President, the great democrat and patriot Metodija Andonov Cento, gave their lives for these ideals. Therefore, freedom and human rights are an intrinsic part of the national code of Macedonia and of Macedonian citizens.”

President Ivanov also touched on the positive achievements Macedonia has made: “For 18 years, the Republic of Macedonia has been living its dream of being a free, independent and democratic state... A state that has stood tall before weighty challenges, a state that has brought to reality the centuries-old dream of Macedonians, reaffirming our ethnic-national, cultural and linguistic identity. Macedonia remains the defender and guardian of the history, traditions, ideals and the sovereign will of the Macedonian nation.”

Ivanov also focused on the multicultural aspect of Macedonia's success: “The Republic of Macedonia (is) a bright example of an open and multicultural society... creating its own functional model, which unites the citizens and ensures a common and prosperous future... based on traditions and values shared by all Macedonian citizens -- Macedonians, Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Roma, Serbs, and Bosniaks... Hence, the unity and vitality of the Macedonian society do not rely on the rule of the stronger or of those exceeding in number, relying instead on the participation of all communities...”

He went on reaffirm the vital task of Euro-Atlantic integration: “My political agenda is clear and unequivocal – Macedonia: member of NATO and of the European Union, Macedonia: strong, respected and equal, with proud, prosperous and happy citizens... Macedonia is a reliable friend and ally, and therefore it has true friends and allies. The United States of America, the European Union member-states, Turkey, but also Russia, China, India and many other countries with which we are tied by sincere friendship. We will further work to strengthen this mutual trust and friendship, especially in the areas of economy and culture.”

As the Supreme Commander of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia, Ivanov tipped his hat to Macedonia's military contributions to NATO: “(Our commitment) has been confirmed in the peace missions of the ARM Missions in which, shoulder to shoulder with allies, our troops have... affirmed our dedication to peace and democracy worldwide... I would like to pay tribute to all they have done and are still doing under the flag of the Republic of Macedonia, in defense of the values of the free world.”

Inevitably, the President spoke of foreign relations in the Balkans, and the dispute with Greece: “Another facet of the Macedonian foreign policy (is based on) good-neighborly policy and



contribution to the stability and prosperity of the region... Without attaching lesser importance to our relations with other nations, I will devote special attention to the relations with the Hellenic Republic, with which we have always been and will always be neighbors. I will do my best in order that the relations between the two countries are developed in a spirit of mutual trust. We evidently share common European values, and we have the same European dream.”

Ivanov also sized up the profound domestic agenda: “Despite all efforts in our foreign policy, we must remember that respect from abroad is earned at home. We cannot achieve our European future if we do not invest in the institutions of our country... We must (make) serious and strategic investments in education and science, we must develop and apply advanced technologies, and we must encourage the competitive and entrepreneurial spirit of the younger generation. We must vigilantly and watchfully safeguard democracy. Democracy is hard to gain and easy to lose. In addition, through rule of law and support to anti-corruption measures, we must all contribute to the strengthening of our institutions, which are the only state mechanism to defend the interests of citizens.”

Ivanov concluded: “Today, as we are progressing towards our Euro-Atlantic future, supported by wide social and political consensus, there is no room for doubt. Macedonia sends a single message to the world: a message of optimism and success. It is not my intention to close my eyes before the great obstacles in our way, such as the unsettled differences with our southern neighbor or the global economic crisis. Deep crises carry great poverty, and we of all know that poverty is the only burden that gets heavier the more people carry it. Therefore, we must do everything in our power to decrease the number of people carrying that burden. But I have great faith in the spirit of Macedonian citizens. I believe in my nation that never gives up. I trust in my nation's dedication, industriousness and creativity. We have proven ourselves worthy of our freedom and of the freedom of Macedonia... As the President, I will work with you every day for a proud and prosperous Republic of Macedonia... promptly, fully and with dignity integrated in the world community of democratic nations. Long live the Republic of Macedonia!” ✨

Photos courtesy of: Cabinet of President Ivanov

Aegean Macedonian Activist Sideropoulos Visits Toronto Community

By Mark Branov

On March 20th, 2009, human rights activist Risto Sideropoulos attended a tribute dinner in his honor at Sveti Dimitrija Solunski in Markham, Canada, attended by over 200 supporters. The following week, he was also a guest on Bill Yancov's Macedonian Heritage TV show, along with UMD Director of Canadian Operations, Jimmy Daikov.

A forester from the town of Pateli, in Lerin (Florina), Greece, Sideropoulos has become a leader for the Human Rights Movement of Macedonians in Greece.

Over the years, his conflicts with the Greek authorities have been numerous. For example, in 1992, the Greek magazine Ena interviewed Sideropoulos, and he stated how he "feels Macedonian" and how the Aegean Macedonians deserve human rights. He was subsequently charged by the Greek government for "spreading false rumors", and sentenced to five months in prison, a conviction eventually dropped after intense international criticism. Sideropoulos has been constantly harassed, arrested, and wire-tapped by Greek authorities for his outspoken patriotism and support for the Macedonian cause.

In the TV interview with Sonja Lozanovska, Sideropoulos stated: "Human rights is an important concept, a heavy term, and one that we all must respect. Aegean Macedonians are a nation within Greece, where the government does not recognize our human rights at all. That's why we have to fight. Our goal is to have our own Macedonian church, cultural rights, and to be recognized at an international level, and part of that was the recent acknowledgement by the UN that Greece does indeed have ethnic Macedonians."

He was referring to the recent report by Gay McDougall, special envoy of the United Nations, which bluntly calls on Greece to withdraw from their dispute over Macedonia, and guarantee human rights for all of their minorities, including the Macedonians.

"(McDougall's report) was one of the most positive public proclamations from the international community. We've been waiting for this recognition for a long time, and it seems the truth has finally come out," Sideropoulos added.

When asked about whether the upcoming talks between Foreign Ministers Milososki and Bakoyannis would bring about a new era of cooperation, Sideropoulos responded: "I don't believe it. The Greek government doesn't want a resolution of the issue with the name because they know they will lose. From the Macedonian side, there are certain things that must hold firm, number one, that the name must not be changed, but (Athens) wants to make them change it, by force, and this has never happened anywhere in the world. So that means, we can't solve the problem this way. There can be no compromise. Our name is one, it's ours, and it must remain. Who are we to change the name? Or who is Milososki to do such a thing, or someone else in Milososki's position?"

He continued: "We Aegean Macedonians have paid the price always, before and now. In the future, no one knows. In



Risto Sideropoulos

the same way, the people of the Republic of Macedonia have been paying the price too. The Greek government abuses them at the border, denies them visas for no reason... (eventually) the international community will respond by saying: What are the authorities in Greece doing here?"

When asked about the recent legal victories in European courts by the Macedonian community of Greece, Sideropoulos said: "I believe in the (court process), and one day those people who abuse the Macedonians will be shamed

for what they have done. I don't think it will happen soon... I think it will take a long time, but it will come. Justice is on our side, and our story will be told. But this price that is being paid by our people... it will be returned to the sender."

Sideropoulos spoke of the construction of Sveta Zlata Meglenska, the Macedonian church in S'botsko (Aridea), led by another well-known human rights activist, Archimandrite Nikodim Tsarknias: "The church is being built right now in S'botsko. This year we will finish the roof, and then see how long it takes."

He also described the ongoing legal battles for a Macedonian Cultural Center in the town of Lerin (Florina): "Now, for the 2nd time, we've had to go to the international court in Strasbourg. We already gained the right to build it, the Greeks appealed the ruling, and now we keep going forward (and we will win again). In Strasbourg, the truth was revealed. (Progress has been made)... every year we hold events now, in all the town and villages... Macedonian songs are sung and dances are danced, but that (victory) is not enough. We don't look at this as freedom that they gave us, but as a freedom that we took for ourselves. We seek to be recognized by Greece as a nation, and this includes our history, language, and culture. This would allow us to develop ourselves as a distinct nation within the borders of Greece."

Asked to comment about the Republic of Macedonia's role, Sideropoulos stated: "As a mother country, the Republic of Macedonia has to care about Macedonians not only in Greece, not only for those in Bulgaria or Albania, but for all Macedonians around the world. That is their duty and honor to care for these people. We were pleasantly surprised (when) Nikola Gruevski, as leader of the Republic of Macedonia, raised the issue of Macedonians in Greece for the first time, and he did that at the highest level. There is also a new commission in the parliament that is taking care of the Decebalci (Macedonian child refugees of the Greek Civil War). So, I congratulate Nikola Gruevski. I see him as a brave politician. Previous Macedonian politicians may have wanted to raise this issue, but it was like a hot coal, so they were afraid to pick it up."

Though at the time of the Toronto interview, the elections had not been finalized, Sideropoulos foresaw an Ivanov victory: "George Ivanov has a large lead, and I can say that he is a very educated man, an intelligent and wise man, and that he will make Macedonia proud as president." ❄

Photo courtesy of: UMD

Photos courtesy of: Chris Deliso, Macedonian Orthodox Church

Bitola - Excitement in the Air

By Chris Deliso

Flanked by the lush mountain folds of Pelister National Park, Bitola is one of the most romantic and aesthetically pleasing towns in Macedonia. Well-known for having been the 'city of consuls' in late Ottoman times, thousands of Diaspora Macedonians - from Melbourne to Michigan - have their roots here.

For many, visiting Bitola is a way of reconnecting with an ancestral home. Though timeless, the city is also enjoying a renaissance of sorts, with a new emphasis on culture, rural tourism and attractive investment opportunities.

During a five-week European honeymoon, young Australians Chris and Candice Ilievski were excited to visit Bitola, and Macedonia, for the first time. Chris' grandparents relocated to Australia for economic reasons in the 1960s, and their stories of old Macedonia fed his imagination.

It's another sunny summer day and the town is buzzing with life. Both Chris and Candice were pleasantly surprised by what they found in Bitola. "It's a beautiful city, with clean streets, and friendly people - very hassle free, and excellent value for money" says Chris, while strolling the city's famous, café-lined Sirok Sokak.

"Bitola's much better than I had expected," adds Candice.

It's clear that Bitola is buzzing with activities these days. The city has started paying more attention to developing its appearance and cultural life, and since

last year has opened a tourist information center, led by the helpful and friendly Elena Petrovska. "It's great to see how fast everything is developing with our city and rural tourism," she says. "Here you can enjoy great cultural life, outdoor activities year round, and authentic traditional Macedonian food." In the next five years, Elena believes, "...Bitola will become a competitive tourism destination, with much improved infrastructure and offerings."

One man who's keen on improving the infrastructure and general capacities of Bitola is Vladimir Talevski, who won re-election as city mayor in March. Mayor Talevski acknowledges that change is in the air. "Over the last few years, you can definitely feel that something's been set in motion in the city," he notes. With the decentralization process in Macedonia, the city has become "more capable, more interesting and more powerful."

What the mayor also highlights is that Bitola's industrial zone has been recognized as the best-organized and best-prepared in all Macedonia. And he wants to reach out to Macedonians abroad as potential investors. "The door is open for all foreign investors," he says, adding "...we will be very happy if our people abroad decide to invest in Bitola - and we can offer advantageous terms for these Macedonians."

Some interesting projects with potential include a new Pelister ski center in need of an investor, and Bitola's larger goal



Bitola

of becoming a filmmaking destination. "We have everything, from urban necessities and logistics to diverse natural attractions, all in a small area," says the mayor.

Chris Deliso (www.chrisdeliso.com) is an American author and travel writer who has been living in Macedonia since 2002. He is author of the travelogue Hidden Macedonia, about the lakes of Ohrid and Prespa, and author for the Macedonian section of the brand-new Lonely Planet guide to the Western Balkans.

For more information about Bitola or Bitola's filmmaking project, please visit: www.bitolatourist.info ❄

First New Macedonian Church in Germany

By Mark Branov

There's reason to celebrate in the Macedonian community of Germany, as for the first time, a new Macedonian church will be built there from the ground up. On September 26th, 2009, the foundation will be laid for Saint Nikola Macedonian Orthodox Church in the city of Mainz-Hechtsheim, not far from Frankfurt. Over 3,000 guests, including His Holiness Archbishop Stephan, the Macedonian Ambassador to Germany Dr. Gjorgiji Filipov, and church president Mr. Mirce Filipovski, will attend the opening ceremony.

According Goce Peroski, of the Korzo Cultural Forum in Stuttgart, the proposed budget for the church and adjoining buildings is set at approximately 1m Euro, which will be raised from approximately 700 families in the local area, and from donations of the Macedonian community in greater Frankfurt.

UMD will be represented at the event by its representative in Vienna, Austria, Zlatko Nikolovski. ❄

For more information, please visit: <http://www.sveti-nikola.de/>



Design of future Saint Nikola Macedonian Orthodox Church

Собир во чест на Јане Сандански

A Memorial Gathering In Honor of Jane Sandanski

By *Stojan Nikolov*

С о б и р о т н а
Македонците во Бугарија по повод смрта на Јане Сандански ова година не беше попречен од страна на Бугарските власти и полиција. Дали е ова сигнал дека Бугарија конечно ќе почне коректно да се однесува кон македонското малцинство во ова држава, или пак тоа беше само еден мал пропуст во нивните калкулации, или можеби почеток некоја друга политичка игра?

На 26 Април во паркот на град Мелник, претставници од неколку организации на Македонците во Бугарија, меѓу кој ОМО Илинден ПИРИН, ТМО-ВМРО (Независна) Илинден, Македонско Христијанско Братство Св. Пророк Илија, и Весникот Народна Волја, организираа семакедонски собир по повод 94 годишнината од смртта на големиот македонски револуционер Јане Сандански. Насобирот присуствуваа помеѓу 500 и 1000 луѓе од сите краишта на Пиринска Македонија и од внатрешнината на Република Бугарија, а имаше гости и од Егејска Македонија.

На собирот беа прочитани историски цитати за Јане Сандански и беа положени венци и цвеќе пред споменикот на Јане Сандански. По едно минутниот молк во почит на големиот македонски револуционер, на публиката им се обратија Отец Никодим Царкњас, Димитар Иванов, и Стојко Стојков, кој исто так прочита и писма кој што беа испратени до организаторите на собирот од Виножито, Македонската Алијанса, Македонската Заедница од Канада, и Обединетата Македонската Дијаспора.

За разлика од другу години во минатото, оваа година Бугарските власти и полиција не го попречија собирот на Македонците во Бугарија по повод одбележувањето на овој голем празник за сите Македонци ширум светот, за кој што македонците во Бугарија се бореа цели 20 години да можат да го прославуваат. Меѓутоа како што изгледа ова коректно однесување на Бугарските власти нема да трае долго бидејќи веќе се зборува дека тие работат на промени на законот за собири, кој што ако се усвојат, во иднина ќе го забранат овој и сите други слични собири на Македонците во Бугарија.



The gathering of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria was not obstructed by the government and the local police this year. Is this a sign that Bulgaria will finally start treating its Macedonian minority fairly, or was this a miscalculation on their part, or even perhaps the beginning of some new political game?

On April 26, in the park of the town of Melnik, representatives of Macedonian

organizations in Bulgaria organized a gathering to mark the 94th year since the death of the famous Macedonian revolutionary, Jane Sandanski (pronounced “ya-ne”). The meeting included ОМО Илинден ПИРИН, ТМО-ВМРО (Independent) Илинден, Macedonian Christian Brotherhood St. Ilija, and the publishers of the newspaper ‘Narodna Volja.’ In addition to the organizers, the gathering was attended by 500 to a 1000 other Macedonians from Pirin Macedonia and other parts of Bulgaria, and by guests from Aegean Macedonia (Greece).

Organizers read stories written about Jane Sandanski and his achievements, and laid flowers in front of his statue. After one minute of silence in honor of the fallen Macedonian hero, Father Tsarknias, the Macedonian priest from Aegean Macedonia (Greece), Dimitar Ivanov and Stojko Stojkov addressed the crowd. Stojkov also read letters from Vinozhito (Greece), the Macedonian Alliance (Albania), the Macedonian community in Canada, and the United Macedonian Diaspora.

Unlike years past, the Bulgarian government and local police did not obstruct the gathering to celebrate this important day for Macedonians across the globe. The Macedonian minority in Bulgaria fought the Bulgarian government and nationalists for the last 20 years to have the right to gather freely and openly on this day. However, it looks like Bulgaria’s non-interference will not last long because there are already rumors that they are working on changing the laws for public gatherings. If this happens, the new law will prohibit the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria from gathering freely in the future on this day, or any other day for that matter.



Photos courtesy of: ОМО Илинден ПИРИН

UMD Meets with Aides to Congressman Gary Peters

By *Nicholas Kostoff, UMD Summer Intern*

On May 8, 2009, UMD members met with two aides to Congressman Gary Peters, Hy Safran and Kush Shaqiri, at their office in Troy, Michigan.

UMD briefed both aids on the history of the Macedonian-American community in Michigan, which exceeds 100,000. For more than a century, the community has worked to unite its religious and cultural institutions throughout the state. Many Macedonian-Americans started in the auto industry, and continue to work there. Unfortunately, like others in Michigan, the Macedonian-Americans have been hard hit by the economic downturn.

Amanda Kostoff and Justin Vasilevski, who chair the Macedonian American Student Association at the University of Michigan, focused on their efforts to bring about greater awareness of Macedonia and its heritage on campus. They stressed the need for ethnic communities in Michigan to cooperate. The hope was expressed that Congressman Peters might be instrumental as a liaison among all the communities in his district. Mende Bezanovski briefed the aides on the development of business opportunities between Michigan and Macedonia, and he pointed out that Johnson Controls had recently opened an auto parts factory in Macedonia. Alexander Ballios discussed the civil rights struggles of Macedonians in Greece, and related the story of his mother, who was a child



UMD members with Hy Safran and Kush Shaqiri

refugee from the Greek Civil War.

UMD also discussed such issues as Macedonia’s constitutional name, NATO membership, US foreign assistance, and Greek-American efforts to withhold US aid from Macedonia. UMD urged Congressman Peters to support the rightful, constitutional name of Macedonia and Macedonian identity. ✨

UMD Attends Little Caesars 50th Anniversary and Pays Tribute to Michael and Marian Ilitch

By *Nicholas Kostoff, UMD Summer Intern*

On May 8, 2009, Detroit-based members of UMD joined UMD President Metodija A. Koloski at the 50th Anniversary of Little Caesars, and delivered a tribute to two great Macedonians, Michael and Marian Ilitch. The Consul General of the Republic of Macedonia in Detroit, Mr. Igor Dukovski, was also present to honor the people responsible turning this 1959 venture into an enormous success.

Little Caesars’ secret has always been the ability to think ahead and ensure that customers were given the best deal and the best taste available. This approach included using only the freshest ingredients and making pizzas from scratch. The



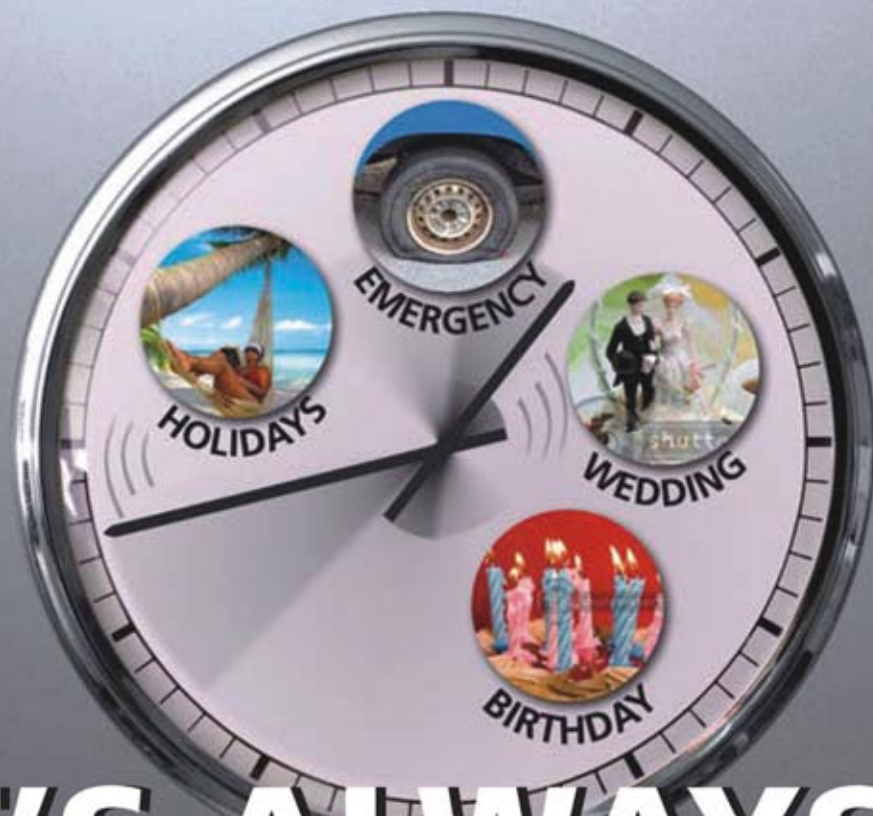
UMD with Mike and Marian Ilitch

signature spicy sauce that Marian’s father Sam Bayoff created has also been a large element of the franchise’s success. Also, Little Caesars’ five-dollar Hot-And-Ready pizza is the ideal choice for a working family in today’s tough economy.

The Ilitch family initially planned to open seven restaurants (one for each child in the family), but their success caused the franchise to grow nationwide. Today, there is at least one Little Caesars restaurant in all 50 states and in numerous countries throughout the world. Franchise opportunities are expanding this number rapidly.

Injury cut short Michael Ilitch’s dream to play professional baseball. This did not stop him for creating a business that is so successful that he was able to purchase both the Detroit Red Wings and the Detroit Tigers. The Ilitch family also owns several entertainment establishments, such as the Fox Theater and Olympia Entertainment. One of Detroit’s landmarks, the Fox was completely restored by the Ilitch family to its old grandeur. They routinely contribute to several organizations in Detroit, especially their church, St. Clement’s Orthodox Church in Dearborn, Michigan. Through Ilitch Charities for Children, the Ilitch family provides scholarships to deserving students in Michigan. As a result of his contributions to Detroit over the last 50 years, Michael Ilitch was recently named one of Detroit’s best sons.

UMD is proud of Macedonian-Americans like Michael and Marian Ilitch who contribute to the cultural mosaic of the United States, and improve the lives of Americans in Michigan. ✨



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