

The Greek Language of Cultural Genocide

By Victor Bivell

While most people understand what genocide is, cultural genocide is rarely discussed in public so it can be a much less familiar concept. Acts of genocide are relatively easy to identify as they require targeted deaths and sometimes leave large numbers of dead bodies. While acts of cultural genocide can be overt, such as cultural destruction, they can also be covert such as cultural suppression, cultural appropriation, language manipulation, and lack of recognition and respect. So cultural genocide is sometimes subtle and hard to see. A disturbingly full range of the techniques of cultural genocide can be identified in the way Greek governments have treated ethnic Macedonians for well over a hundred years. Let's look at these techniques.

They begin with the breaking of the very first right of every individual and every society; a right that is also the very first article of the United Nations' International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. That right is self-determination. The UN Covenant says:

“PART I,
Article 1,

1. All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.”

So peoples and the individuals who comprise them determine for themselves who they are and what their own culture is. If a people, let's say the Macedonian people, call themselves Macedonians, they have the right to call themselves Macedonians. If they have a Macedonian culture, they have the right to have a Macedonian culture. If they have a Macedonian language, they have the right to have a Macedonian language. If they have a Macedonian religion, they have the right to have a Macedonian religion. If they have a Macedonian identity, they have the right to have a Macedonian identity. And so on.

For most people, this is not a problem. But for other people, life is not that simple. Why would one group of people want to eradicate or appropriate the culture of another group of people? It may be revenge or hatred, but in many cases it is greed. The oppressed group has something that the oppressor wants.

We can see this clearly in the case of Greece and the Macedonians.

Well before 1912 when the border of modern day Greece stopped at Thessaly, Greek prime minister Harilaos Trikoupi was credited as saying “When the great war comes, Macedonia will become Greek or Bulgarian, according to who wins. If it is taken by the Bulgarians, they will make the population Slavs. If we take it, we will make all of them Greeks.”

Trikoupi was prime minister seven times between 1875 and 1895 and he was very clear - Greece wanted the land. And as part of taking the land it would turn the native population into Greeks. This was the motive - to win up to around 67,000 square kilometres of prime land in

then Ottoman Macedonia.

But note also that Trikoupis does not refer to the people of Macedonia as Macedonians, nor as the native population or native inhabitants. Greece had had its covetous eyes on Macedonia for a long time before Trikoupis, and it knew that to say that it was going to take Macedonia from the Macedonians was to admit theft. So to hide the reality of its intentions it renamed the people with the generic label “population”. This label is itself an act of cultural genocide as it denies the identity and identities of the people of Macedonia. The implication is that it is acceptable to invade Macedonia as there are no Macedonians. Note also the double standard as the statement preserves the identity of the “Bulgarians” and the “Greeks”.

This sly use of language is an early example of the crucial role of language in the Greek techniques of cultural genocide. But the approaching “great war” and break up of Ottoman Macedonia were not the start of Greek acts of cultural genocide in Macedonia. Macedonians had already suffered many years and many acts of overt and covert cultural oppression.

Two of these were book burning, and in 1767 the closure of the Ohrid Archbishopric. The Ohrid Archbishopric had began in the 10th century as the autocephalous Ohrid Archdiocese, and its successor is the modern day Macedonian Orthodox Church.

The closure of the Ohrid Archbishopric was done by the Turkish Sultan at the urging of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Nick Anastasovski in his book *The Contest for Macedonian Identity 1870-1912* writes “Following the abolition of the Archbishopric of Ohrid, the Macedonian church was annexed to the Patriarchate of Constantinople, which took ecclesiastical control of Macedonia and, in place of native Bishops of one interest with the people, Greeks were sent from Constantinople. Greek bishops and metropolitans reinforced Greek religious domination in Macedonia by attempting to wipe out traces of the Macedonian character of the Archbishopric of Ohrid. They set upon destroying centuries-old books, records and religious texts and often replaced Macedonian church inscriptions with Greek. In monasteries on the Holy Mountain of Sveta Gora, ‘the Greek clergy acted drastically’, throwing old Macedonian parchments into the sea or burning them in furnaces, and at the Monastery of Saint Naum on Lake Ohrid, the Greek prior Dionysius burned the manuscripts. In Prilep there was a burning of the religious books, whilst the books stored at Veles were destroyed in a bonfire in the marketplace under the orders of the Greek bishop. As much as 300 kilograms of parchments and religious books belonging to the Ohrid Archbishopric were lost forever.”

Nor was that the start. A Russian academic says there is evidence that all old Macedonian religious books before the end of the twelfth century have been destroyed. In a 2008 interview with Balkananalysis.com, the world leading Balkan linguist, professor Victor Friedman, said “John Fine in his book *The Early Medieval Balkans* (p. 220) cites Vladimir Moshin, who published an article in 1963 in a Russian academic journal in which he made the argument that the reason there are no Slavic language manuscripts from this region prior to 1180 is owing to their deliberate destruction by the Greeks/Byzantines. Up until his article, people had been saying it was the Turks who destroyed everything. But there are Greek-language manuscripts from this period that survived in this region, whereas Slavic ones did not. And it is not as if the latter were not being composed in an organized way; the Ohrid literary school which began in the late 9th century is just one place where manuscripts were being written in large

numbers. Which means that Greeks have been trying to destroy Slavic culture and literacy for a very long time.”

The major acts of genocide itself were committed in the “great war” foreseen by Trikoupis. When it came, there were two wars, which we know as the First Balkan War of 1912 and the Second Balkan War of 1913.

The Balkan Wars were not just a series of battles between the invading armies of Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro against the defending army of Turkey; they were also a systematic war by the attacking armies against the civilian people of Macedonia. Many hundreds of villages were destroyed or burned, including Macedonian, Turkish, Bulgarian and Greek villages. In his book *Death & Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821-1922*, Justin McCarthy says the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 saw 632,408 people killed and 812,771 people were made refugees. Richard C. Hall in the *International Encyclopedia of the First World War* puts total military deaths at 238,500. So it is likely that the majority of the slain were civilians, on these numbers about 400,000.

The Carnegie Report into the Balkan Wars makes it clear that along with the Bulgarian and Serbian armies, the Greek army was committing acts of genocide on the civilian population. One example: “... the object of these armed conflicts, overt or covert, clearly conceived or vaguely felt, but always and everywhere the same, was the complete extermination of an alien population. In some cases this object expressed itself in the form of an implacable and categorical “order” to kill the whole male population of the occupied regions. We are in possession of some letters from Greek soldiers, of unimpeachable authenticity. These documents, though written in our own day, throw back to the time of the Assyrian conquest. “We have taken a small number of prisoners and them we have killed, such being the orders received * * * in order that the dirty Bulgarian race may not spring up again” * * * “We are” – such is the order, – “to burn the villages, massacre the young, and spare none but the old people, children and minors.” Here the intention is clearly to spare none but those no longer capable of carrying on the race and those still young enough to lose their nationality by receiving a Greek education.”

Note also that the Greek army personnel are told that the civilians are “Bulgarians”, not Macedonians, and this associates them with the rival Bulgarian army and Bulgarian church, making it more acceptable for the Greek soldiers to commit acts of genocide upon them.

Perhaps the name Balkan Wars is itself a misnomer and an attempt to hide the real war. The great majority of the war occurred in Macedonia, and several hundred thousand civilians were deliberately killed. Perhaps the Balkan Wars should be more widely known as the Macedonian Genocide, as many Macedonians call it. As Macedonia had always been a multicultural land, the Macedonian Genocide included ethnic Macedonians, ethnic Turks and converted Muslims as well as Bulgarians, Greeks, Serbs and other groups who were in the path of the wrong army.

After the Macedonian Genocide/ Balkan Wars, and along with about 34,600 square kilometres of newly acquired Macedonian land, Greece gained over a million new people of different ethnicities. As most were not Greek, it now more earnestly than ever set about as Trikoupis had foreshadowed to “make all of them Greeks”.

It implemented policies of cultural oppression and assimilation, and used a wide variety of techniques across every aspect of life. These included the widespread use of renaming – giving ‘problematic’ people, places and everything else new names that deny or hide the original cultural name and its history and associations.

The Macedonians among the newly acquired peoples were not called Macedonians; they were called Bulgarians, Slavs, Slavic Speakers, Slavophones, Macedonian Slavs and other names. Over the coming years the Greek government changed people’s Macedonian names to Greek names; it changed the Macedonian names of the towns, villages and geographic features to Greek names; it forbade the use of the Macedonian language; and what little education it gave to villagers and village children it gave only in the Greek language. It forbade Macedonian cultural expression through song and dance and other artistic means.

Cultural appropriation can also be done by adding a linguistic descriptor or prefix. So after the Balkan Wars, the southern half of Macedonia became “Greek Macedonia”. This is the same technique as Orthodox Easter being renamed “Greek Easter”, Turkish coffee being renamed “Greek coffee”, Mediterranean salad being renamed “Greek salad”, Balkan yoghurt being renamed “Greek yoghurt” and so on. The modern day Greeks do a lot of renaming.

The acts of cultural destruction and people-appropriation included gravestones. In many villages in what became in 1912 Greek Macedonia it is impossible to find gravestones of people buried before 1912. This is because they were written in the Cyrillic or other alphabet. These gravestones were evidence that the people were not Greek and contradicted the Greek propaganda that “Macedonia’s population was Greek” and that “Macedonia has always been Greek”.

This form of cultural oppression continues to exist. The gravestones written after 1912 are all in Greek. Local Macedonians have long reported that Greek is the only language in which they are allowed to have gravestones. In the same oppressive way, babies must be given a name that is Greek rather than a name that belongs to another ethnic group such as Macedonian. For many older people who were born before 1912 or soon after, it resulted in the cruel irony that they lived their lives never having spoken or read Greek yet for ever they must have a Greek tombstone.

There was also ethnic cleansing through persecution, lack of economic development and economic opportunities, and a refusal of the right to return to their homeland in Greece for many thousands of Macedonians who were seen as politically suspect or dangerous.

Large scale colonization was also used. Following the Greek invasion of western Turkey between 1919 to 1922 – a war which Greece lost – there was a massive population exchange between Greece and Turkey and over a million Christian Turks were settled in Greece, with over 600,000 of them settled in the newly acquired territory of “Greek Macedonia”. This made the indigenous inhabitants a minority in their own land and their lives and the natural expression of their culture became much harder.

It also adds understanding to why Greece refuses to call the indigenous people Macedonians and insists on calling them by a range of other names such as Slavic speakers, Slavophones, or Slavic Macedonians. The intent is to take the Macedonian identity from these people and

give it to the colonizing Christian Turks, who it now freely calls both Greeks and Macedonians. Note again the double standard. Macedonians who have lived in Macedonia for centuries and some for millennia (as shown by genetic testing) are not recognized as Macedonians yet people who have lived in Turkey for centuries and millennia and have never previously lived in Macedonia are recognized by the Greek government as Macedonians.

These numerous examples show that the role of language has always been crucial, and is still crucial, in the Greek techniques of cultural genocide. Language and much more are destroyed when books and gravestones are destroyed. Language can be used to hide people's origins and ethnicity when their personal names are changed. Language can be used to hide history when place names are changed. Language can be used to hide and change identities, as when self-determined identities are forbidden and unwanted identities are forced upon the oppressed. Language can be used to perform theft when stolen identities are given to people who previously had other identities. And language is a tool of oppression and cultural genocide when the learning and use of a language is deliberately suppressed.

With much of Greece's destruction and appropriation of Macedonian culture done through the manipulation of language, over the past 150 or so years Greece has developed a substantial vocabulary of alternative names for people and things Macedonian that it sees as problematic. They are problematic as they contradict its narrative, its propaganda, about Macedonia and its right to the land and people.

The table accompanying this article is a list of that Greek vocabulary. It is not exhaustive, but many of the terms will be familiar to those who follow international politics. The Greek vocabulary is placed alongside the Macedonian words that were freely developed and inherited by Macedonians exercising their self-determination.

To illustrate the way in which the Greek words operate to deny culture and commit cultural genocide, I have included two other lists. One applies the language of cultural genocide to Greece and Greek culture - how another country or authority could do to Greece and the Greeks what Greece does to the Macedonians. The other list applies the same language of cultural genocide to England and Britain and to the English and British people to show how their culture could also be denied.

For example, the Greek technique of renaming the Republic of Macedonia as Skopje takes away its Macedonian character; in the same way that renaming Greece to say Athens or Pseudo Greece dilutes its Greek character; and renaming Britain to New Germany or Germanic Britain dilutes its British or English character.

Similarly, the way many British and some other Western academics refer to the ancient Macedonian Empire as the "Hellenistic Period", literally "the Greekish Period", takes away from its Macedonian character. One can ask whether there is another conquering power in history that is referred to by the name of another power, let alone one that it conquered? To put the oppressive boot on the other foot and de-emphasize the Greekness of the ancient Greeks we could refer to the ancient Greek empire and Greece's dominant period in history as say the Egypto-Cretan-Assyrian-Phoenician-Judeo-Persian-Macedo-Roman Period or the Greco-Hybrid Period for short. Likewise, renaming the British Empire as the Germanistic Period achieves the same effect and takes away its British character. A key difference, of

course is that modern Greeks and modern Britons are here to defend their honor and history; ancient Macedonians are not.

By using the techniques of the Greek vocabulary for cultural genocide, it is possible to rewrite Greek history and British history into narratives that Greeks and Britons would find hard to recognize.

Let's start with an example for Greeks.

“The History of the Christian Greeks

“Under King Philip, Macedonia became the first centrally organized state in Europe, while the neighbouring land sometimes known as Greece did not become a country until over 2,100 years later in 1821. By then the widespread view was that the Greeks of antiquity had died out and there was great speculation about the identity of the people of the Former Ottoman Orthodox Christian Rum Millet or FOOCRM for short. The population was seen as a great mixture of Albanians, Turks, Macedonians, Vlachs, Bulgarians, Slavs and others. So a variety of names and identities for this new nation of people were possible. An all encompassing one was “Albano-Turko-Macedo-Vlacho-Bulgaro-Slavo-Greeks”. But while accurate, this was too long. As the leaders of the people wanted to be associated in some way with the real Greeks, as some of the people even had notions and pretensions of being descended from the real Greeks, and as some even pretended to be descended from the real Greeks, the terms Pretend-Greeks or Pseudo-Greeks were also suitable. The name Pseudo-Greeks also had the advantages of using a word (pseudo) from the real Greeks, it was thought accurate enough, and it was much shorter. Another advantage was that the country could then also be called the Pseudo-Hellenic Republic or Pseudo Greece for short. But there were issues in including the word Greek. While some Pseudo-Greeks claimed they could legitimately use the name Greek as they were continuing the cultural traditions of the real Greeks, this position was much disputed and not credible. For example, the Greeks believed in Zeus and the other Greek gods while the modern people of FOOCRM were mostly Christians. As the real Greeks were not Christian, it was not possible to be both Greek and Christian. So another compromise identity for the people of this new nation could have been Christian-worshippers, simply Christians, Greko-Christians or Christian-Greeks...”

This narrative diminishes the Greekness of modern day Greece and the modern day Greeks. It does it in the same way and using the same linguistic techniques that the modern Greek narrative and Greek vocabulary about Macedonians is calculated to diminish their Macedonianness. Greece has been doing this to the Macedonians for well over a hundred years and continues to do it today.

And here is an example for the English and British people.

“The Germanistic Period from King Henry VII to Queen Elizabeth II

“The Germanistic Period in history, also known as the Germanistic Empire, spanned almost 500 years from King Henry VII to Queen Elizabeth II. During that time, what began as a search for an Atlantic route to Asia resulted in the creation of the largest empire in history. At its peak, the Germanistic Empire accounted for 24 per cent of the Earth's land mass and 23

per cent of its population. A key feature of this empire was its many German characteristics – hence its name “Germanistic”. First there were the conquering people – who were of Germanic origin and were Germanic speakers. And just as Germanic tribes had invaded and conquered ancient Rome, the Germanic speakers of New Germany were invaders and conquerors. They were also imperialists and colonizers and gave Germanistic names to their many conquests. So it seems appropriate that the people who gave the world such names as New England, New Britain, New Hampshire, New South Wales, New Hebrides, New York, New London, and many hundreds of similar name should themselves come from New Germany. Another German feature of the Germanistic Period was the language. As it is part of the Germanic group of languages, for a time it was known as English (Germanic). However, many linguists argue that other names are more accurate. One school of thought argues that the predominant use of this language around the world is due to its usage in the United States and the pre-eminent role that the United States has played in world affairs. Perhaps more importantly, they rightly point out that the United States and other countries have been driving the growth and development of the language for well over a hundred years and the role of the Germanic speakers of New Germany is simply to keep up. So they say the name of the language should be American. Another school of thought argues that the original vocabulary of the language comprises only a very small percentage of the total vocabulary. The great majority of the words have been copied from numerous other languages or were created by people who are not from New Germany. These experts argue that a more appropriate and accurate name is New Esperanto...”

This example diminishes the Britishness of the British Empire, the Englishness of the English language and the Englishness and Britishness of the people. Yet it is what many British academics and some British media have been doing to the ancient Macedonians and to the modern Macedonians for a very long time.

Modern day Greeks and Britons would find such narratives offensive if they were practiced on a world wide scale, over a long period of time, and against their will. Yet they continue to do this to the ancient and modern Macedonians as if oblivious or uncaring to the disrespect they show and the suffering they create.

These examples illustrate that the Greek language of cultural genocide is hate speech. It is discriminatory and deeply hurtful to the Macedonians. Any acceptance of hate speech can see it become normalized and its usage spread more widely to the media, public figures and the general public. This of course is what the instigators and the oppressors want. But it is absolutely wrong, and good people need to be alert to its use.

My hope is that illustrating how this language and these linguistic techniques can be applied to the Greek people will make good Greeks more sensitive to the damage they do when they use the language of cultural genocide against the Macedonian people.

As English is a global language, my hope is that in illustrating how this language and these techniques can be applied to the British it will alert many more people around the world to its dangerous use. As many British and other academics are notorious for their use of the Greek language of cultural genocide when discussing Macedonia and Macedonians, I also hope to alert good academics to the damage they do when they use the language of cultural genocide in regard to the Macedonian people.

Meanwhile, the solution to cultural genocide is respect – respect for individuals and peoples, respect for the universal right to self-determination and self-identification, and respect for all cultural activities and creations. This is best done by and within multicultural societies. There needs to be an end to assimilation. Assimilation needs to be replaced with respect by everyone for everyone.

The Greek Vocabulary of Cultural Genocide

Macedonian Word	Greek Cultural Genocide Word	If Same Cultural Genocide Applied to Greece	If Same Cultural Genocide Applied to Britain
<i>Country</i>			
Macedonia	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Former Ottoman Province of Greece	Former Roman Province of Britannia
Republic of Macedonia	FYROM	FOPOG	FRPOB
	Skopje	Former Ottoman Orthodox Christian Rum Millet	London
	Republic of Skopje	FOOCRM	Anglo-Saxonia
	Vardarska	Achaea	New Germany
	Vardar Macedonia	Pseudo Hellenic Republic	United Kingdom of New Germany and Northern Ireland
	Upper Macedonia		
	New Macedonia	Pseudo Greece	UKNGNI
	Slav Macedonia	Hellass	Germanic Britain
	Slavic Macedonia		Teutonic Britain
	Macedonia-Skopje		
	North Macedonia		
<i>People</i>			
Macedonians	Slavs	Christians	Germanics
Macedonian	Slav Macedonians	Christian Greeks	Germano-Britons

Slavic speakers	Christian-worshippers	Germanic speakers
Slavophones	Indo-Euro-phones	Germanophones
Slavophone Greeks	Turkic-Christians	Anglo-Saxonians
Skopjans	Athenians	Londoners
Skopjan-Gypsies	New Greeks	New Germans
Macedo-Slavs	Albano-Turko- Macedo-Vlacho-	Celtic-Roman- Anglo-Saxon-
Bulgarians	Bulgaro-Slavo- Greeks	Viking-Norman- Caribbean-African- Asian-Britons
North Macedonians	ATMVBS-Greeks	
Associates of Slav-Macedonians	Pseudo-Greeks	CRASVNCAAians
FYROMians	Achaeans	
	Romans/ Rhomaioi	
	We Don't Worship Zeus Greeks	
	WDWZians	
	Greko-Christians	

Language

Macedonian	Macedonian (Slavonic)	Modern Greek (Indo European)	English (Germanic)
	Slav	Indo European	American
	Slavonic	Indo-Euro-Greek	New Esperanto
	The Idiom		

Modern History

The Macedonian Genocide	The Balkan Wars	The Pseudo-Greek War of Independence	The Battle of New Germany 1940
The Macedonian	The Greek Civil War		The Battle of

Freedom War in
Aegean Macedonia

The Greek Invasion
of Turkey 1919-22

UKNGNI 1940

Ancient Macedonia

Macedonia The Greek Kingdom
of Macedonia

Ancient Macedonia The Hellenistic
Period

The Macedonian
Empire

The Macedonian
Period

The Egypto-Cretan-
Assyrian-
Phoenician-Judeo-
Persian-Macedo-
Roman Period

ECAPJPMR Period

The Greco-Hybrid
Period

The Germanistic
Period

The Germanistic
Period from King
Henry VII to Queen
Elizabeth II

July 2020

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