

*Analysis of historical
events in Greek
occupied Macedonia
Part 2*



An interview with Risto Stefov

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INTERVIEWER – Risto, there was quite a response to the interview conducted earlier, which was mostly about the past, so I would like to ask you some more questions, concerning the present if possible. For example what is going on with the so-called name dispute and what is that all about? What can you tell us about the name dispute?

RISTO – Thank you. But since I published the first part of the interview I received a number of comments, all of them positive, a couple of which I would like to discuss with you before we continue with the interview.

One of the questions was about the Greek language and the other about the Slavs and the Macedonians.

One reader wanted to know if the so-called “Greek” language was around for thousands of years, as the modern Greeks claim, then how come “no country” outside of today’s Greece speaks it and even those Greeks who do speak it today have learned it in school?

Dear reader, this is a question for the Greeks. They should be the ones explaining why “Greek” is not their mother tongue or the mother tongue of their nation or any other nation for that matter. But, before giving us an explanation as to why this is, they need to first ask themselves: “If their so-called ‘Greek language’ existed for thousands of years, as some of them claim, then why is it spoken only in Greece and nowhere else?” Greece became a country in 1828 but before that it existed without borders for about 2,300 years. How was it that this ancient language was not spoken more widely and outside of modern Greece’s borders?

Unfortunately, the reason it was not spoken anywhere else or by more people is because the so-called “Greek language” was a dead language, just like the Latin language. It was used only by governments and Church institutions. On top of that it was not a mother tongue of the modern “Greek” people. It was adopted after Greece became a country and taught to the “Greek” people in school.

And the reason, if I may add, as to why the “Greek” language never caught on anywhere else in the world is because it was never a

common people's language. Even since Alexander's time, when the Koine (or so called Greek) language began its life, it has been a language of trade and commerce used in government institutions and later in the Christian Orthodox Church. This is how it survived. Then when Greece became a nation state for the first time in 1828, it adopted it as the language of its people and taught it to its people in school.

Why do you think the Greeks banned the Macedonian language in Greek occupied Macedonia? They banned it so that the Macedonian people could be taught Greek. This is an ongoing process that exists in Greece to this day. It's called Hellenization.

Just to be fair I would also like to say a few words about the Macedonian language but first I would like to take up the next question... the Slavs.

A friend from Slovenia sent me the following:

“Dear Risto,

In your interview you seem to avoid talking about the connection between the Slavs and the Macedonians. Why is that?

It wasn't too long ago when Slovenian warriors, fighting in the “Solun Front” during WW I, came into contact with local Macedonians and your Macedonians were very proud to say that they were not Greeks but Slavs.

Weren't the Slavs ubiquitous in (Greek occupied) Macedonia? These people who claimed to be Slavs were Macedonians from Greece, not from the Republic of Macedonia.

Also, I get the impression that you missed an important point in Curta's book, namely his economic analysis of the situation in the Byzantine Empire.

According to Curta, after the worldwide climatic crisis in 535 AD, caused by the eruption of the Krakatoa volcano, and towards 540 AD, more and more peasants were commandeered from the Balkans

which was followed by a drastic depopulation of the area. This depopulation was followed by the incursions of “Slavs”, who apparently were familiar with the situation in the region, affecting mainly the towns. These Slavs were coming into Macedonia from the north to plunder it and then were retreating back across the Danube, and not settling in Macedonia. Most of the time they were able to avoid the Byzantine military. But the citizens of Tsari Grad (Constantinople) and Solun soon realized that these Slavs were very similar to the “Slavs”, i.e. to the Macedonians who lived around these cities. No Slavs settled in the region until about 700 AD, which is the upper time limit in Curta’s book.

Following Curta’s presentation, mentioned above, it is my understanding that the intruding “Slavs” were in fact the Macedonians who had escaped and had fled north of the Danube over time. So you can say that there was an influx of Slavic Macedonians out of Macedonia and not foreign Slavs settling in Macedonia.

Good luck with your research.

Regards, your friend from Slovenia”

I would like to thank my dear Slovenian friend for that information and for all the helpful information he has given me over the years.

As for the Macedonian language, no doubt it is an ancient language which has taken root in prehistoric times and has evolved and exists to this day. To me it doesn’t matter where it began and how it got there but from what I have learned it is a language that is closely tied to nature and has all the elements to make it a very old language. That in itself and the fact that there are so many dialects attests to its old, old age.

The Macedonian language is truly a people’s language and the mother tongue of every Macedonian born in Macedonia. And, unlike other ancient languages, such as Latin and Koine, which were languages of institutions and which eventually died, the Macedonian language has survived and thrived, particularly through Christianity

when the word of God was in the process of being spread to the common people in the language they understood.

Traditionally the Macedonian language had been an oral language passed on from generation to generation along with the traditions necessary for living. This is why, I believe, there is very little of it recorded. Then, when the time came and the word of God needed to be delivered directly to the common people, the Macedonians were the first to step up to the forefront and create a written form. Since then the Old Macedonian language, known to the west as “Old Church Slavonic”, became the language of enlightenment. This was more than just a “mere” language, it was an international language created to serve everyone who understood it. This language has been used in every aspect on life in dozens of countries and for more than one millennium. That much we know for certain. Yet our enemies say “it does not exist”.

My response to that is “look around”, the Macedonian language not only exists but is one of the oldest people’s languages in existence today. It has survived everything that was thrown at it and is still thriving.

Now, if we are to examine the Greek explanation as to who the Slavs were and where they came from, as well as why they only “invaded” and settled in Macedonia and not Greece, we will find that there is not enough information to adequately explain the so-called “Slav Migration” supported by mainstream history. In fact, from my observations these Greeks don’t seem to care to explain the Slav migration theory other than to say that it “happened” and to quote authors who support their point of view. On top of that they use the word “Slav” in a derogatory manner to put down the Macedonians. They also seem to be silent on the question of why the Slavs stopped their migration in Macedonia and did not migrate into Greece, when in fact we know Slavs existed in Greece and they still exist to this day, as my Slovenian friend kindly pointed out to me. In fact there are people in the Peloponnesus villages who still speak Slavic to this day.

Here is what I found in the history books:

“Macedonian king Perseus was defeated at the Battle of Pydna in 167 BC. After that Macedonia was divided into four parts and put under Roman domination. Macedonia was deprived of external independence but was allowed to retain internal self governance. The four parts (meres, partes, regiones, T. Liv., XLV, 30, 2) were forbidden from mutual marriages, from trade and from mining the gold and silver mines. All prominent Macedonians older than 15 years old had to leave Macedonia ‘voluntarily’, under the threat of death, in order to prevent renewal of the country and rebellions from taking place against foreign dominance.”

It has also been said that a large segment of the Macedonian population fled Macedonia during the Roman-Macedonian wars, especially when Macedonia was defeated. These people went north. Of course there was no other direction to go because Macedonia, at that time, bordered the Mediterranean Sea to the south, the Adriatic Sea to the west, the Black Sea to the east and the Danube River to the north.

Taking the safest route out, the Macedonians escaping the horrors of wars fled north across the Danube River.

A lot of Macedonian people fled north! And where did they go? We are told they went north of the Danube River, where the Slavs were later found.

So, my first question is “What happened to these Macedonian people?” To these many Macedonian people who fled “north”?! Could they be the “Slavs” who later returned to Macedonia and found people there speaking the same language?

My second question is “How far north did these Macedonians go?” Did they go as far north as Siberia? If they did then that would explain why there are toponyms and people’s names in Russia that are exactly the same as the ones existing in Macedonia. Or is this a coincidence?

And most importantly: if these Slavs “from north of the Danube” and the Slavs from around Solun spoke a Slavic language then what does that tell us? It tells us that there was a linguistic relationship

between the Macedonians in Macedonia and the Slavs north of the Danube! Or is this too a coincidence?

Now we need to ask ourselves how did this “linguistic relationship” come about and did the Macedonians who fled Macedonia during the Roman-Macedonian wars speak a Slavic language or a “Greek” language as the Greeks would have us believe? If the Macedonians spoke “Greek” then why does “no one” north of the Danube River speak “Greek” today... or at any other time in recorded history? There is no trace of “Greek” anywhere north of the Danube.

If I was asked: “Did the Macedonians fleeing the Macedonian-Roman wars speak Greek?” I would have to say “no” because if they did there would be some “archeological traces” of Greek found somewhere north of the Danube. And there are none!

Many ancient authors have claimed that Alexander the Great and his Macedonians spoke another language outside of the Koine language and that language was not only unique to the Macedonians but also their mother tongue. So, is it not possible that the “mysterious” language the ancient Macedonians spoke could in fact be the Slavic language?!

INTERVIEWER – Are you implying that the ancient Macedonians spoke the Slavic language? Didn’t the Slavs come to Macedonia much later, during the 6th century AD?

RISTO – Yes, I am implying that it is more of a possibility that the Ancient Macedonians spoke the Slavic language than to conjecture that they spoke “Greek”. Remember “Greek” or the Koine language as it is properly called was the language of trade and commerce, and only the educated Macedonians spoke it. Also, the Koine language was not the mother tongue of the Ancient Macedonians. If the Macedonians from 2,200 years ago who fled north of the Danube River spoke Greek then where is the evidence? Who today speaks Greek north of the Danube River? The answer is NO ONE! Who speaks Slavic? The answer is EVERYONE!

And no, I don’t believe the “Slavs” came to the Balkans for the first time during the 6th century AD. I believe the Slavs have been in the

Balkans since the Stone Age and that most of the Slavs of the 6th century AD were in fact Macedonian refugees returning back to Macedonia after centuries of absence.

Look, all I am saying is that we know from history that the ancient Macedonians spoke an “unidentified” language and a little later in history we find the same Macedonians speaking a Slavic language. Doesn’t it make sense to connect the dots and bravely defy mainstream history and say that the “mysterious” language the ancient Macedonians spoke was in fact the Slavic language? There is plenty of indirect historic evidence that supports this. For example:

1. Many ancient Macedonians fled north, north of the Danube River, during and after the Macedonian-Roman wars, settled and remained there for centuries.
2. Many people, the vast majority of people in Eastern Europe today speak a Slavic language, slightly evolved but the same Slavic language spoken in Macedonia today.
3. There is no doubt that these languages have a common past. For example there are names of people and toponyms in the Ukraine and Russia that are identical to names in Macedonia. This cannot be a coincidence!

And yes, some Slavs “returned” to Macedonia during the 6th century AD and found a people with whom they shared not only a common language but also common customs and traits.

And let us not forget, and I can’t emphasize this more strongly, that Macedonia was a large country in those days, before the Romans conquered it. It extended from the Adriatic Sea in the west, to the Black Sea in the east, and from the Mediterranean Sea in the south to the Danube River in the north. The Danube River was its northern boundary.

Also, let’s be realistic here. Not only was the situation more complex in those days than we make it out to be but many groups of people, including elite fighters like the Goths, Huns, Bulgars, Avars,

etc., ventured into Macedonia but no one seems to be interested in talking about them. Why?

Because the “Slav phenomenon” is largely a political phenomenon with little historical significance. The reason all this is attributed to the Slavs as opposed to the Goths, Huns, Bulgars, Avars, etc., as being the culprits for the invasions and for the devastation of the Balkans is to explain the wide use of the Slav language. In other words, the “Slav phenomenon” is a modern 19th century creation designed to explain the prevalent use of the modern Slav languages.

It is most unfortunate, however, that modern scholars choose to ignore archeological evidence that links the 6th century Slavs to the ancient prehistoric Veneti. “Archeological research has already provided an enormous amount of evidence in support of the idea that the Veneti were Slavs.” (Page 13, Florin Curta, *The Making of the Slavs, History and Archaeology of the Lower Danube Region c. 500 – 700*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)

Accepting the hypothesis that the Veneti and the Slavs are connected not only provides linguistic continuity for the modern Macedonians to the ancient Macedonians but also identifies the so-called “elusive” Macedonian language of ancient times. With this in mind, we cannot ignore claims that the Slav language was most probably spoken by Alexander’s Macedonian soldiers and settlers and was spread throughout the vastness of the uncivilized regions of Eastern Europe and northern Asia. Also, it would not be far fetched to hypothesize that Alexander’s Macedonians colonized parts of European Russia, which would attest to the many common toponyms that Macedonia and European Russia share.

Let us also not forget that the Ancient Macedonians after Philip II’s time were a mixture of people that included Illyrians, Thracians, Paenionians, Phrygians and others and these people were NEVER Greeks. They eventually, over time, also became Macedonians. We also know for a fact that some of the toponyms in Macedonia from that time had Slavic names.

So it is easy for me to conclude that, based on its widespread use in Eastern Europe and on the evolution it has experienced, the Slavic

language must be a very old language which has probably existed from prehistoric times. This means that the Slavic language was spoken in Macedonia before the Attic and later Koine made their appearance.

INTERVIEWER – But isn't that in total contradiction of what mainstream history is saying?

RISTO – Yes. But I have no faith in mainstream history!

INTERVIEWER – Why?

RISTO – Would you have faith in a history that claims you don't exist? As far as I am concerned mainstream history has been “cooked” to fit the political agenda of the 19th century in support of the newly created Balkans states, Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and later Albania, created after the Ottoman Empire fell apart.

We the Macedonian people have existed as Macedonians throughout the Macedonian, Roman, Eastern Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman Empires from about 800 BC until the 19th century AD and then, suddenly after 1913, we completely disappeared. The Ottomans had no problem with us being Macedonians and neither did the western press while we were fighting the Ottomans for our independence and to create an independent Macedonian state.

I have hundreds of newspaper articles reporting on our 1903 Ilinden Uprising in which the western press calls us Macedonians. Then all that disappears after Macedonia was invaded, occupied, partitioned and annexed by Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria in 1912, 1913. After that we simply did not exist except in top secret diplomatic dispatches and reports.

Pick up a history book, any history book written by a western author and show me something said about the Macedonians, their existence, their contributions or their sacrifices. The majority of the fighters that held fascist Italy back at the Albanian front during WW II were Macedonian; half of the partisans who fought to expel the WW II occupiers from Greece and from Yugoslavia were Macedonians... Where is that mentioned in these history books?

NOWHERE! Why? Because apparently we don't seem to exist! But we do exist! And how do I know that?

I have looked at hundreds of declassified secret reports and diplomatic dispatches and I have seen many references where we are undeservedly mentioned as Macedonians. Since 1913 we have been referred to as Macedonians in the secret diplomatic world and yet we don't exist in the ordinary western world or in its history books!

And this is precisely why I have no faith in Mainstream history!

Only recently, after the Republic of Macedonia declared its independence, did we start hearing about Macedonians and about a Macedonian minority existing in Greece, Bulgaria and Albania and this is mainly from human rights organizations.

For years Mainstream history has neglected the Macedonians, like they never existed.

There was no western textbook published after 1913, by any reputable publishing house, where you could find Macedonians mentioned as an ethnic identity, particularly in Greek occupied Macedonia. Yet we Macedonians fought on the side of the allies during the Second World War and made many, many sacrifices to liberate us all from Fascism and Nazism, yet there is nothing written about our contributions in the Western history books. Many Macedonians fought against the Italian Fascists and died at the Albanian front and all our sacrifices have been attributed to the Greeks.

So for those reasons I don't trust mainstream history and I don't like how it has misrepresented the Ancient Macedonians, the Slavs and how it has completely neglected the modern Macedonians.

In fact I am going to say that I believe the Slavs are the oldest stratum of people in Europe and that they have been grossly misrepresented by mainstream history.

I also want to thank my Slovenian friends who not only came in support of my beliefs but encouraged me to speak up about them and about our modern connection to the Ancient Macedonians.

INTERVIEWER – Wait a minute, wait a minute here. Are you serious about this? The entire world knows that the Slavs are newcomers to the Balkan Region and that they arrived in Macedonia sometime after the 6th century AD. Now you are telling us that the Slavs have been in the Balkans basically forever? Don't you think you will be ridiculed about this? What do you say to that?

RISTO – Well, what can I say? I have developed a thick skin over the years. I have been ridiculed about many things, many times, just google “Risto Stefov” on the internet and you will see for yourself.

But to your remark about the entire world knowing that the Slavs are newcomers to the Balkans, I say prove it! Just because the entire world knows that, it does not make it true... One time, not too long ago, the entire world “knew” for certain the earth was flat... Well, the entire world was wrong about that! It is fine with me to be ridiculed as long as I am not “burned at the stake”... I can live with being ridiculed.

Besides, who is going to ridicule me? The Greeks?! The Macedonians?! How can the Greeks ridicule me when their entire history is fiction! If they are going to ridicule me then they better look at themselves first... The Macedonians may ridicule me... and I don't care because I was one of those people who strongly believed in mainstream history and ridiculed others, calling them “crazy people”. I ridiculed true patriots because they had the courage to speak and tell the truth... like Professor Dr. Angelina Markus whom I mentioned earlier in the interview. We Macedonians need to push the envelope further and further... and no doubt we will be ridiculed for it.

We as Macedonians know that there is a connection between the “Slavs” and the Macedonians but lack the courage to speak about it. The first line of defense taken by our enemies is that we don't exist, “Macedonians do not exist” and that we the modern Macedonians are “Slavs”, the scourge of the earth. The second line of defense our

enemies have taken is that we are “only Macedonians” and not Slavs. Many Macedonians have bought into this. Yesterday we were “just Slavs” and today we are “just Macedonians”, why not both? After all, we are Macedonians, a Slav speaking tribe who rose up two thousand years ago and conquered the world and in doing so united and enlightened half the world! Can you imagine the implications of that? Macedonia in those days was like Britain was in the 20th century... It left its cultural and linguistic marks everywhere... And it did it again during the 9th and 10th century AD through Christianity...

INTERVIEWER – Okay, okay then, can we move on to my first question – the name dispute?

RISTO – Well, to a casual observer the so-called “name dispute” which Greece has concocted, may seem like something new... Like something that has just surfaced. This was a surprise not only to Macedonians in the Diaspora but also to many Macedonians in the Republic of Macedonia. It hit them like they were totally unaware of what the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia have been facing in Greek hands.

This was also a wakeup call for some diplomatic level Macedonians in the Republic of Macedonia who were caught with their guard down and who made mistakes in the process of handling the Greek initiated problem.

We, the Macedonians from Greek occupied Macedonia, have been warning the people in the Republic of Macedonia about what Greece was like but our warnings, it seems, were ignored. For many years we were seen as “complainers” and our complaints have often been ignored. One Macedonian once even said to me “...if I am to believe what you are saying...” when I was describing the abuse we were getting from Greece. “If he was to believe what I was saying...?! What does that even mean? That I was making things up?!”

I found his statement both sad and offensive... But then when Greece placed the crippling economic embargo on the Republic of Macedonia... and they got a real taste of what Greece was like... their tune changed fast...

Let's say that the "Name dispute" sounds like something new... like something that just surfaced... This is only because people are unfamiliar with the so-called "Macedonian Question" and what has been done to the Macedonian people in the last 200 years or so, particularly to the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia.

The Macedonian Question is an old issue which surfaced after the Eastern Crisis ended. The Eastern Crisis was basically a question of what to do with the remnants of a crumbling Ottoman Empire.

The Eastern Crisis ended after the Great Powers decided to create the new national Balkan states Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria out of the crumbling edges of the Ottoman Empire, while leaving Macedonia intact and in the hands of the Ottoman Empire.

And so the Eastern Crisis soon evolved into the "Macedonian Question", of basically what to do with Macedonia and the Macedonian people when the Ottoman Empire was completely driven out of the Balkans.

In the first part of the interview we dealt mostly with the problems that faced the Macedonian people from about early 1800 up to 1913 when Macedonia was annexed by Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria.

Basically, according to Great Power plans, the Macedonian question was to be solved by dividing Macedonia between Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria and assimilating the Macedonian people in those states.

And as it happened, with Great Power approval, Macedonia was invaded, occupied, partitioned and annexed by Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and later Albania and great attempts were made to turn the Macedonian people into Greeks, Serbians, Bulgarians and Albanians.

Unfortunately for the Great Powers and for Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and Albania, the Macedonian people refused to be assimilated and since then, as our history has shown, have resisted.

But that has not stopped or even slowed down the Great Powers, Greece and Bulgaria from continuing the assimilation process to this day.

Simply put, by continuing this assimilation process, the Great Powers are hoping to eventually turn every Macedonian person into a Greek, Serbian, Bulgarian, or Albanian and completely erase their existence as Macedonians. But again, unfortunately for them, the Macedonian people are refusing to be erased and to die forever.

The birth of the Republic of Macedonia as an independent state re-energized the Macedonian people's desire to continue with their struggle but at the same time forced the hand of the Great Powers, Greece, Bulgaria, Albania and even Serbia, to renew their measures and tactics against them.

The dispute between Macedonia and Greece over the name "Macedonia" is one of those tactics. But I can assure you that this issue has nothing to do with "the name". This is one more step in the 200 year-old journey that Greece and the Great Powers have undertaken to eliminate the Macedonian identity and everything that is Macedonian.

And why do I say this with such certainty?

Well, because for years Greece and its patrons have been trying to extinguish the name "Macedonia". The "M" word was a dirty word in Greece from 1913 up until the Republic of Macedonia was about to declare its independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, then the word "Macedonia" became the most precious word in the Greek vocabulary. Why?

Well, this is because at that very moment, given the political situation and world political correctness, Greece had nothing else to hold over Macedonia. That is, nothing else that was not controversial or that could backfire on Greece and its patrons.

In other words, Greece had to find an issue to pick bones with and that issue had to be risk free for Greece but devastating for Macedonia.

And precisely for that reason, Greece and its patrons chose to challenge Macedonia on its “name” claiming that the word “Macedonia” was Greek and so were a number of historic symbols which Greece claimed to also be exclusively Greek.

In other words, Greece and its patrons wanted to stop Macedonia in its tracks by accusing it of “historic theft” and entangle it in a legal tangle that would take years and years to get out of... and all of this for Greece to be risk free.

During our last interview I explained that Greece is a modern and artificial creation and none of the above, not the name “Macedonia” and not the Macedonians symbols, belong to Greece. But in spite of all that and while grasping at straws, Greece and its patrons have managed to not only make an issue out of a non issue but managed to make it look like Macedonia was entangled in an idiotic issue – a dispute over ancient history. And while Greece is telling the world that this is only a dispute about ancient history, it is holding the Macedonian people by the throat and choking them in full view of the entire world.

Let me say that, for the Macedonian people, this is not about “ancient history”; it’s about survival. The Macedonian people are fighting for their survival while Greece is calling it “a theft of ancient history” about which no one cares!

Macedonia is NOT disputing its own name. It is happy with it! Greece is objecting to Macedonia’s name! So this is not a dispute between Greece and Macedonia but an attempt by Greece to again derail the Macedonian people. The Macedonian people are nothing if they are not Macedonians... Neither do they care to be anything but Macedonians. If they did, by now they would all have been Greeks, Serbians, Bulgarians, or Albanians.

Like the many times it did before, this is yet another attempt on Greece’s part to put a stumbling block in front of the Macedonian people’s attempts at gaining recognition as a nation. It is an attempt, if not to stop them, to at least to slow them down from making any gains in their struggle for their human rights even in their own

Republic of Macedonia. If Greece and its patrons are doing this to a people in a sovereign and independent state outside of the Greek borders, then can you imagine what they are doing to the Macedonians inside Greece?

Greece wants to mire down and entangle the Macedonian people into a controversy focusing on ridiculous issues while the Macedonian people face a struggle of life and death.

Greece and its patrons have been leading the world into believing the “name dispute” is about something trivial like “ancient history” which, like I said earlier, no one cares about.

Greece and its patrons, on one hand, are telling the world that Macedonia is foolishly “arguing” over ancient symbols and on the other hand are trying to erase the Macedonian identity from the face of the earth.

Greece is leading the Macedonian people to a battleground of its own choice and forcing them to focus their energy on this nonsensical dispute while trying to keep them away from focusing on essential and critical issues such as the rights of the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia and the several genocides they have suffered at the hands of the Greeks and their patrons.

Greece has raised this issue and set the stage because it wants to control its outcome and, as I said earlier, make a trivial issue for the world and a risk free issue for itself. At the same time it wants to focus away from critical issues like the atrocities committed during the Greek Civil War, a staged and genocidal war, orchestrated to drive the Macedonian people out of their homeland. And as I have shown in the previous interview, with British and American approval and support.

The entire Greek argument that “Macedonia is Greek” and everything Macedonian is Greek and that the Macedonians are “Slavs” and have no claim to the Ancient Macedonian heritage, are baseless arguments that hold no water except to draw attention away from the real issues of today.

These are arguments that tell the world that the Macedonians are fighting for stupid things and that this is nothing more than an academic exercise in futility. A way to entangle everyone in endless nonsensical debates and arguments.

Unfortunately, not being aware of this trap, many Macedonians, including diplomats in the Republic of Macedonia, have taken the bait and have been drawn into something that they are finding hard to escape from.

Now, while the Macedonian people are truly fighting to survive, the world thinks they are fighting over something completely stupid.

Instead of us Macedonians challenging Greece on matters of importance to us, we have allowed Greece to lead us by the nose and challenge us on matters that make no sense, except to Greece. On matters like the “name” Macedonia which until yesterday Greece tried to erase from the world map.

Instead of us Macedonians proving evidence to the world of the atrocities committed against us by Greece and its patrons, we have accepted Greece’s challenge to negotiate our own name with them. And what does that really mean? We all knew that until yesterday Greece tried to bury that name. Even foreign academics were not allowed to say “Macedonia” while visiting “northern Greece”. This is how the term ‘the “M” word is a dirty word’ was coined. And now Greece claims “Macedonia” is a proprietary Greek word?

Does anyone see anything wrong with this picture? And yet here we are about to be erased from the face of the earth while negotiating with Greece about something Greece does not even want? What is the value of the “M” word for Greece? It has no value... It is worthless... Greece is only doing this to punish us for wanting to be Macedonians! Like it always has in the past. Ask yourselves, “How many people served lengthy sentences in Greek jails and concentration camps for speaking Macedonian?” Just for speaking the only language they knew! Greece cannot be underestimated on how far it will go to extinguish the Macedonian identity and what extreme as well as ridiculous means it will use!

Greece has set the parameters, controls this game and plans to win with our capitulation... with us committing suicide.

Greece has purposely concocted the so-called “name dispute” game because, no matter how stupid it sounds to the world, it has no consequences for Greece but spells doom for us Macedonians and only because we choose to play it. We CHOOSE to play it!

This is why it is important to know our history well... and understand the issues well... before we jump into any games, especially with Greece and its patrons.

I repeat, this whole “name dispute” was carefully concocted by Greece and its patrons. It was a trap set to trap the Macedonian people into a quagmire of nonsensical issues, debates and arguments from which there is no escape, except if we capitulate... Greece made the rules and controls the game and we Macedonians are playing it. A game we cannot possibly win! What more can I say?

But as I said before, Greece is not alone in this. Its powerful patrons are there, right behind it, stirring the pot and making life difficult for the Macedonian people.

And how do I know this?

Well, where do I begin?

First, allow me to say that nothing of importance, like border changes, new states emerging, prohibiting other states from choosing a name for themselves and so on, ever take place without Great Power approval. Smaller states, especially protectorates like Greece, need Great Power approval and backing in order to survive. So, nothing is done without Great Power knowledge or approval.

As I mentioned earlier, Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and Albania were created by the Great Powers and are protected by them. At the same time these states cannot do anything on their own without facing dire consequences and that is why they must consult with their patrons on important matters before taking measures that may have consequences for them. And to take measures against an

independent state, like the Republic of Macedonia, in order to prevent it from choosing its own name, which is legally allowed under international law, has grave consequences.

This means that Greece had to get permission from its patrons in order to act and its patrons must have approved.

But, as I said earlier, the so-called “name dispute” is only one of many Great Power attempts to “get rid” of the Macedonian identity.

There was the Treaty of San Stefano for example, which Russia signed with the Ottoman Empire on March 3, 1878. By this Treaty Russia gave most of Macedonia to Bulgaria without the Macedonian people’s consent and without Western Great Power approval. This Russian stunt unfortunately gave the Bulgarians the idea that Macedonia belongs to them. And like a sailing ship without a rudder, Bulgaria, ever since, has pursued the same course attempting again and again to possess Macedonia at all costs to itself and to the Macedonian people.

Then there was the Berlin Conference during which the Treaty of Berlin was signed in July 1878. The Conference was convened in order to revisit the San Stefano Treaty during which Macedonia was given back to the Ottoman Empire, not only without the Macedonian people’s consent but without any guarantees against Ottoman retribution against the Macedonian population. The Macedonian people were again left to the mercy of the Ottoman Empire.

“The essentials of this compromise were agreed upon between England and Russia before the meeting of the European Congress, which took place at Berlin under the chairmanship of Bismarck, and formally substituted the Treaty of Berlin for the terms of San Stefano” (Page 377, Trevelyan, British History in the 19th Century)

“To our (British) eyes the real objection to the San Stefano lies not in its alleged increase in Russian power, but in the sacrifice of the fair claims of Greeks and Serbians, who would not have remained long quiet under the arrangements which ignored their racial rights and gave all the points to Bulgaria. Lord Salisbury felt this strongly, especially on behalf of Greece.”

“Beaconsfield’s success, as he himself saw it, consisted in restoring the European power of Turkey. It was done by handing back Macedonia to the Port (Turks), without guarantees for better government. This was the essence of the Treaty of Berlin as distinct from the Treaty of San Stefano. ‘There is again a Turkey in Europe’ Bismarck said. He congratulated the British Prime Minister – ‘You have made a present to the Sultan of the richest province in the world; 4,000 square miles of the richest soil.’ Unfortunately for themselves, the inhabitants went with the soil. Since Beaconsfield decided, perhaps rightly, that Macedonia should not be Bulgarian, some arrangements ought to have been made for its proper administration under a Christian governor. Apart of all questions of massacres, the deadening character of the Turkish rule is well known. Lord Salisbury seems to have wished for a Christian governor, but nothing was done in that direction. A golden opportunity was thus let slip.” (Page 378, Trevelyan, British History in the 19th Century)

What else can I say? Macedonia and the Macedonian people were already promised to be given to Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria as early as July 1878. Lord Salisbury of England felt this strongly, especially on behalf of Greece. From then on forward it was only a matter of time.

The Macedonian people made a bid to obtain their own Church but were denied. Why? Russia was instrumental in helping the Bulgarians get their Church. Why did they deny the Macedonians?

The Macedonian people pleaded with Russia to help them liberate themselves from the Ottomans during the earlier Uprisings (Kreshna and Razlovtsi). There too they were denied.

No Great Power offered assistance to the Macedonian people before, during or after the 1903 Ilinden Uprising. Ten years later, the same Great Powers sanctioned Macedonia’s partition between Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and Albania by signing the 1913 Treaty of Bucharest.

This proves beyond any shadow of a doubt that not only did the Great Powers remain blind and deaf to the Macedonian people's pleas for help, but they were instrumental in allowing Macedonia to be brutally invaded, occupied, fought over, partitioned and annexed by Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and Albania. They later allowed these states, under dreadful conditions, to assimilate the Macedonian people and turn them into Greeks, Serbians, Bulgarians and Albanians and to completely wipe out their identity. I have given you proof of that during our first interview. In Greece, for example, the Macedonian language was banned, people's names were changed and even the Macedonian toponyms, which existed for many centuries, were also eliminated.

And then, during World War II, when the British discovered that Macedonians were still living in Greek occupied Macedonia, Britain and the United States took extraordinary measures to get rid of them by concocting the so-called Greek Civil War. And with Yugoslav help, as I have shown you in our previous interview.

Unfortunately this Great Power effort to bring demise to the Macedonian identity has not stopped. It is alive and well to this day. Proof of this is the "name dispute". Greece could not have possibly "pulled off" the so-called name dispute without British, French and American help.

If the Macedonian people ever decide to change their country's name then it will be a fast slide down the slippery slope...

INTERVIEWER – So, is it your understanding that the name dispute has reached a stalemate? And no progress can be made beyond this point?

RISTO – Yes. Given that we are in discussion with Greece or "negotiating" our name with Greece as it is called, given that Greece has nothing to lose if these so-called negotiations go on forever, and given that Greece is encouraged by the Great Powers to continue these name negotiations, then yes we have reached a stalemate.

INTERVIEWER – What proof do you have that the Great Powers, the United States for example, are supporting Greece in this?

RISTO – First, let me say that no Great Power, not even the United States will do anything that does not support its current or future interests.

Second, Greece alone could not have influenced the United Nations to refuse Macedonia's entry into the UN by the name "Macedonia". This was done at a level of which Greece had absolutely no control. Only a super power like the United States could have convinced the United Nations Security Council to deny Macedonia its entry into the UN. This was done to a point where the United Nations broke its own rules, the coveted December 10, 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees people their human rights including the right to choose a name for their country. This rule was broken when the UN refused to register Macedonia under its chosen name. Do you think Greece alone has that kind of power?

You can't simply say that "Greece objected to Macedonia's use of the name Macedonia" and that the majority of state representatives in the UN Security Council simply blindly acted on Greece's objection. If the US, Britain and France wanted Macedonia to enter the UN as "Macedonia" then they would have challenged Greece, carefully examined its objection and would have found it to be trivial and downright "stupid".

Look, when the conflict in Kosovo turned into a full scale war there were fears, especially from Serbia, that Kosovo was going to separate. But the United States reassured the world that "no borders would change in the Balkans" because the region was much too volatile. Then, about six months later, the United States was the first country in the world to declare Kosovo independent! Do you think Serbia did not object to that? Serbia certainly did! Why then didn't the United States act on the Serbian objection? Serbia objected all right... and was severely punished for it.

Kosovo was created because it was done in the interests of the United States. Greece's objection to Macedonia joining the UN by its proper name, which gave birth to the so-called "name dispute", was also done in the interests of the United States. That is why it was fully supported by the United States.

INTERVIEWER – So what do you think needs to be done to break the stalemate in the name dispute?

RISTO – Well, let us have a look at the possibilities. Two things are possible. One, any one of the two states, Macedonia or Greece, can exit the talks or two, the talks can continue indefinitely until one of the states gives in to the demands of the other, which is not likely to happen.

Greece is not likely to “exit” the talks because it believes it has Macedonia in a good stranglehold and there are no better options available to it at the moment.

Macedonia “cannot” exit the talks because it will have to admit that it made mistakes by entering the talks in the first place which can be unforgiving. So, if Macedonia cannot exit the talks, it means that under this option, the “name negotiations” will continue indefinitely or until something drastic happens.

Another important thing to mention here is that Macedonia has no better prospects if it exits the talks. If it leaves the talks then what choices does it have? Stand alone in the world? Apply again to the United Nations?

If it stays neutral and alone Macedonia opens itself to attacks from basically all its neighbours. It will be 1913 all over again. The Bulgarians are ready to make claims on Macedonia on account that they feel the Macedonian people and the Macedonian language are Bulgarian. The Albanians, through the 2001 war, have already made bids to claim Macedonian territory with American blessings. Greece has already declared that Macedonia is Greek and will not hesitate to gain more Macedonian territory. And Serbia, Serbia is still hanging onto the Macedonian Church claiming that it belongs to Serbia. So, the vultures are circling and waiting for such an opportunity.

If, on the other hand, Macedonia exits the talks and goes back to the UN with the same proposition, it will again not only be rejected but punished for leaving the so-called “UN sponsored name negotiations”. The United States will make sure that happens.

So, even though a lot of Macedonians are calling on Macedonia to exit the “name negotiations”, including many Diaspora organizations, they have not thought this through very carefully.

If Macedonia exits the talks it will face an unpredictable outcome which could be worse than the current predicament it is in. But by continuing the “name negotiations”, Macedonia, at least in principle, has some control over its destiny and is familiar with what is at stake. All it has to do is endure. It’s the Macedonian thing after all... If it exits then its future becomes grey and unpredictable because the Great Powers still have a “thing” for us Macedonians.

Allow me at this point to summarize Macedonia’s options and possible outcomes with the “name negotiations”. Macedonia basically has three options:

1. Change its name. End result Macedonia commits suicide.
2. Macedonia exits talks. End result Macedonia becomes isolated and open to unpredictable outcomes, possibly occupation and further partition.
3. Macedonia continues with talks. End result status quo, talks continue forever with no results. Macedonia is kept out of world institutions.

All three outcomes are bad for Macedonia and good for Greece and its patrons.

INTERVIEWER – In your second option, Macedonia leaving the talks, you said Macedonia will become isolated and open to unpredictable outcomes. That’s kind of a vague explanation; can you elaborate for us what you mean by that?

RISTO – I should have explained myself better because this is very important for Macedonia’s future. There are several factors at play here. One, if Macedonia leaves the talks then what are its options? Macedonia has no options because those who control the talks also control its options. Let’s face it, Macedonia is not allowed to join

the UN by its proper name because its patrons and Greece, as the front man, don't want it to join. If, for example, one of those patrons is the United States, a powerful UN member and a member of the Security Council, then it has control over all of Macedonia's options and no matter what Macedonia attempts to join it will be rejected, for one reason or another, with demands to change its name first. If it leaves the talks Macedonia will be isolated.

Two, if Macedonia leaves the talks voluntarily it will be told: "First you wanted to talk, we decided to help you, now you changed your mind and you don't want to talk... If you don't want to talk then you are on your own...solve your problem on your own..." And how is Macedonia going to solve this "problem" on its own when this "problem" was specifically created from the outside to "paralyze" Macedonia? It can't. Being on its own with no International help Macedonia will become vulnerable. Greece or perhaps Bulgaria, Serbia, or Albania, or all of them, might decide to invade Macedonia if such an opportunity arose, and no one is going to help it because Macedonia chose to solve its "problem" on its own.

But as long as the "name talks" are ongoing they are ongoing under UN auspices and no one from the outside can touch Macedonia. And this is exactly how Greece and its patrons want it. They want the situation to continue this way until Macedonia is destabilized from the inside. They know Macedonia will not change its name and they know they have it cornered. The 2001 War was not a coincidence and neither were events like postponing and missing elections, not having done a proper census and so on. And have you noticed all these 'negative' events taking place lately? They have occurred with outside interference, mainly from the United States. That is why we must move forward cautiously and with our eyes fully open.

The one thing that the Macedonian people can do, however, which they have not done well so far, is to sway world public opinion. Macedonians need to make their side of the story well known and public knowledge worldwide.

There are many things done to Macedonia and to the Macedonian people over the years which the world public is not aware of and at this point in time Macedonia must close that gap. Macedonia must

tell the world its side of the story. It must tell the world what the so-called “name dispute” is truly about. This will definitely influence public opinion and level the playing field.

Greece had access to the world for two hundred years and has filled the halls of public opinion with its lies and treachery... and that with the blessing of the Great Powers.

Now that we have been cornered in a blind alley and are fighting for our survival, we Macedonians can no longer remain silent and must stand up and tell the world our side of the story. Tell the world everything... and spare nothing. That’s what I believe should be our next step in our struggle as a Macedonian people.

Greece should be publicly challenged, not at the diplomatic level, but in the public forum. It has to be challenged about what it has done to the Macedonian people. Macedonians need to emphasize that Greece has prohibited Macedonians from speaking the Macedonian language; Greece has fined people and sent them to prison for speaking Macedonian, the only language they knew!

Think about this very carefully and tell me how you would feel if your government one day told you “you can’t speak English any more”! It is illegal for you to speak English, the only language you know!”

It is mind blowing isn’t it?! Yet we Macedonians have lived through that and still have chosen to be silent!

My father was sent to jail in the Greek concentration camps for five years and Greece never had the decency to tell him why. He had done nothing wrong! Many Macedonians, by the thousands, were sent to the Greek concentration camps for having done nothing wrong. And yet I have not seen a single complaint about this anywhere. Didn’t the Americans, the British and the French politicians and diplomats know about all this? Of course they knew! And what did they do stop it? NOTHING!

And if we Macedonians don’t speak up about the atrocities committed against us who will? The Americans? Which Americans?

The American government? The American government, in large part, was responsible for the genocide committed against us during the Greek Civil War. They were the ones who tried to destroy us.

The American public? The American public doesn't even know where Macedonia is, never mind what has been done to the Macedonian people!? And whose fault is that? Ours, of course, because we failed to inform them. We have failed to inform the entire world public.

Now I hope you can appreciate why I am advocating for pushing this interview and for "telling the world our side of the story"!

INTERVIEWER – What else can the Macedonian people do to advance the Macedonian cause and make all these problems known to the world?

RISTO – Well, the Macedonian people need to learn their own history first before they can tell it to others. But how can they? Up until 1991, before the Republic of Macedonia became an independent state, we were under the influence of foreign powers. Someone else taught us our history, someone else, whose interests were anti-Macedonian, told us who we were and what kind of people we are. And I can tell you it wasn't a pretty picture.

Do you know how many times I have been told that "Macedonians don't exist" and that I am nothing more than a "dirty Slav"?

But I have accepted not only who I am but also the demonic force that is behind this campaign to destroy my identity. I have learned as much as I can about my history, about who I am, and what is happening to our people... and I am ready for the challenge!

I would never be caught dead debating with a Greek because I know the cards are stacked against me and because, to this day, I have never found a single reasonable Greek who is willing to hear my side of the story.

Here is what Vladimir Ivanovski, a Macedonian language Professor, had to say about the Greeks:

“...many shocking testimonies of suffering, horror and repression have surfaced which speak about the Macedonian people in the hands of the Greeks. With their omnipotent low malevolent experiments, procedures and organized acts in continuity, the Greeks with the same intensity in all periods, have a single aim: to assimilate and destroy everything that is Macedonian, with the pronounced sustainability of Greek Phanariot dramatism, egoistic-racist attacks on everything that is not Greek. The Greeks employ Machiavellian aggressive aspirations towards everything foreign like it is automatically and deservingly theirs. For generations the persistent Greek gene has been coded with trends for counterfeiting, lying, stealing, hypocrisy and pretense. One time, the famous first century Roman, Juvenal said that the deceptive Greece is capable of forging its own history...”

The only way to win against Greeks is to NOT let them lead you! Macedonians must choose their own battlegrounds and not allow the Greeks to draw them into nonsensical debates like “ancient history”. The Greeks must be drawn out and made accountable for what they have done to the Macedonian people, not because of insinuations that the Macedonian people might be “Slavs”, or not because of insinuations that the Macedonian people might exist or not, but because the Macedonian people are people first and Macedonians second. The Macedonian people have been violated as a people regardless of what ethnicity or nationality they are. The December 10, 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees people their human rights, is very clear on that.

Did the Greek state prohibit the Macedonian people from speaking the Macedonian language or not? If they did, and we all know they did, then the Greeks are guilty of having violated the December 10, 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and for that they must be publicly and loudly exposed! The Greeks must be held accountable for what they did and it is up to us to bring them to justice.

This is only one example of the many kinds of measures the Macedonian people must undertake while the so-called “name dispute” is still ongoing. The people of the world must be told what we are struggling for and, at the same time, what Greece is doing to stop us. That’s the least we can do for ourselves.

The Macedonian people need to clearly inform the world that their human rights have been violated and that the so-called “name dispute” is yet another violation. They must tell the world that the “name dispute” has a different meaning for the Macedonian people than it has for Greece. The world needs to know that by negotiating with Greece over our name, the Macedonian people are in fact fighting for their survival. Then perhaps this “Greek tragedy” will take a different turn.

Without a clear understanding of what the underlying issues are we sound like barking dogs, barking away at every little thing. That is why it is important for the world to understand that our problems are real.

Greece over the years, with its lies and deceit, has made us out to be the villains and itself the victim, when clearly we are the victims and it is the villain. Unfortunately the world doesn’t know that... yet.

Given the circumstances in which we find ourselves in the world today, we don’t have much to offer in terms of resistance, especially since “public opinion” is against us because Greece has made sure that public opinion is against us, so the least we can do is sway public opinion to our side. The truth is on our side.

Public opinion can be a powerful tool. Just take a look at what the Jews have done with it and the success they had in promoting their genocide. We can do the same.

INTERVIEWER – And how do you propose to go about “exposing” Greece for what it has done to the Macedonian people?

RISTO – We must do what every good lawyer does. Prepare our case carefully and comprehensively, but not to take Greece to a court of law but to take Greece to the court of public opinion. There

are volumes and volumes of information that detail our tragic narrative. All we have to do is organize it in a comprehensive way and present it in a summary. The best way to present it today is through the internet and social media.

I am doing as much as I can to inform the English speaking Macedonians so they too can learn about our tragedies. The Macedonian people in the Diaspora are our ambassadors to the outside world and must be engaged in this.

Every opportunity must be exploited to present our case. Every time the media makes an incorrect reference to our identity we need to jump on it, inform the medium and give its people a lesson as to why we object. Greece does this every day by using lies and deceit, why can't we do it using the truth?

We can do television ads, purchase editorials in newspapers and so on. The possibilities are endless if we can muster the will and the resources. Let the Greeks attack us and let's see how far they will get with their racist ways!

Is Greece going to deny, for example, that it outlawed the Macedonian language? How is Greece going to explain what it did without looking racist and chauvinistic? And who is going to side with Greece?

This is precisely what needs to be done for every single wrong that Greece has committed against the Macedonian people. We can start with a few issues, the ones that relate to the so-called "name dispute" and prove to the world that this is not a "dispute over the name" but an attempt to rob the Macedonian people of their right to exist as Macedonians.

Explain to the world the risks that the Macedonian people are taking while they are negotiating their own name with Greece and the consequences that may befall them if they pull out of the negotiations.

Prove to the world that Greece does not care about the name and is only interested in "extinguishing" the Macedonian identity.

Someone also needs to have a frank talk with the United States and find out why it is targeting Macedonia and the Macedonian people. What have the Macedonian people done to upset the United States? It would not hurt to know what the United States has to say. Perhaps there is something we can do as a people to alleviate American concerns without losing our sovereignty.

INTERVIEWER – This all sounds good but who is going to do it, the Macedonian government?

RISTO – We all have to play a role in it. Everyone who is interested in Macedonia’s survival must take part, including the Macedonian government. The first step before doing anything, however, is to become informed. Become familiar and understand the problem. We all need to learn and understand the real issues associated with this so-called “name dispute”. Nothing can be taken for granted no matter how silly or preposterous it might sound. Greece and its patrons had 200 years to prepare for this. Did you know that the United States has a 100 year plan? It does!

INTERVIEWER – Earlier you mentioned that “the name” is not the real issue between Greece and Macedonia. In your opinion then what is the real issue and can you define it for us? How does it all work?

RISTO – It’s easy for me to define the “issue” because I am familiar with Greece, what Greece is doing and how Greece operates in general. And nothing about Greece is as it seems. This is why it is very important to know both Macedonian and Greek history. It is important to know who the Greeks are, what they want and how they have gone about to get it.

You must also appreciate the fact that the Greeks will not come out and tell you the truth as to what they really want and how they will try and get it. This is because the methods they use are unacceptable in today’s societies around the world.

First, let me say that Greece is an artificially created state, created to serve Great Power interests. There is no doubt about that.

“Canning (a British politician, 1812-1862) had planned to head off Russia’s advance, not by direct opposition, but by associating her with England and France in a policy of emancipation, aimed at erecting national States out of the component parts of the Turkish Empire. Such States could be relied upon to withstand Russian encroachment on their independence, if once they were set free from the Turk. The creation of the Kingdom of Greece was the immediate outcome of Canning’s policy.” (Page 372, Trevelyan, British History in the 19th Century)

Second, Greece has two histories, a mythology created by outsiders to serve its existence as a Greek nation-state and a real history of its people as former Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Macedonians and other ethnic people who lived on the soil of today’s Greece and who were assimilated over the years. And let me say that the Greeks are not who they say they are. They are not a direct extension from the so-called Ancient Greeks. Also, the so-called “Ancient Greeks” were neither pure nor Greeks at all but have been lumped together as Greeks to conveniently support the existence of the Modern Greek nation state. So, in summary the Modern Greeks are not who they say they are and the “Ancient Greeks” are not properly represented in today’s mainstream history. It is important to understand that!

So, what is modern Greece then, and who are the Modern Greeks?

Like I said before, Greece and the Greeks are an artificial creation created by assimilating the local ethnicities such as the Vlachs, Albanians, Turks, Macedonians, Roma and every other ethnic group that lived in the geographical region of today’s Greece. Since the Greeks did not exist before their state was created in 1828 there could be no Greek history before that. So, their history before that is an artificial creation, just like their identity. The people who lived in today’s Greece were told by outsiders they are now Greeks. They were assimilated into the new Greek nation, some forcefully, as was the case in Macedonia.

So then “How could the name Macedonia belong to Greece” when Greece did not exist before 1828 AD?

This is why one cannot believe Greek claims to history before Greece's 1828 creation, because all these claims are false. These people that we today call Greeks were not Greeks at all until 1828... before that they were Vlachs, Albanians, Turks, Macedonians, etc.

Now let us have a look at who the Macedonians are. The Macedonians, until the People's Republic of Macedonia was created on August 2, 1944, were an ethnic nation without a state. They have a history and a culture that extends back many centuries and lived in ethnic Macedonia and beyond, as was defined before it was partitioned in 1913.

The Macedonian people fought in many uprisings including in the Ilinden 1903 National Uprising, in an attempt to free themselves from the Ottoman Empire and to create their own independent Macedonian national state. Unfortunately the Great Powers did not want that and allowed the newly created Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria to invade Macedonia, occupy it and in 1913 partition it and assimilate the Macedonian people into the Greek, Serbian, Bulgarian and later Albanian fold. The assimilation process was forceful and brutal and not all Macedonians were assimilated.

Macedonia and the Macedonians occupied by Serbia in 1913, as I mentioned earlier, created their own state in 1944 under the Yugoslav federation. Then in 1991 they broke away from Yugoslavia and declared their independence initiating the Republic of Macedonia.

So as an independent state the Republic of Macedonia now had the potential of exposing many things about Greece and about its patrons. For example;

1. That Greece is an artificial creation and has nothing to do with the ancient Greeks and most of those so-called ancient Greeks were actually Ancient Macedonians with their own unique identity and culture and they never belonged to the Ancient City States from whom the Modern Greeks claim ancestry.

2. Macedonia might potentially inform the world of how Greece acquired part of Macedonia and how it has brutally treated the Macedonian people in its quest to become homogeneous.
3. Macedonia might demand that Greece recognize the Macedonian people living in Greece and compensate them for the damages Greece has caused them.
4. Macedonia might prove to the world that Greece acquired Macedonian territories by war and by imperial means from a people who did not want to be occupied, which could lead to grave consequences for Greece and for the Great Powers who awarded the Macedonian territories and people to Greece.
5. Macedonia might prove to the world that Greece mistreated the Macedonian people it acquired and forcibly tried to assimilate them causing several genocides in the process, which might lead to many lawsuits against Greece.
6. Macedonia might demand of Greece to restore illegally acquired properties confiscated from the exiled Macedonians, which could also lead to huge reparations for Greece.

These are only a small sample of what might happen if Macedonia is recognized internationally and allowed to join the International Community.

So, Greece and its patrons had to think of something fast to stop Macedonia in its tracks.

I believe Greece and its patrons were not prepared for Macedonia's separation from Yugoslavia because they believed Yugoslavia would not allow it. They also believed that the Macedonian people were incapable of living independently without Serbian support.

So here is the "real" issue. Macedonia wants to become an independent state. It wants to join the other independent states in the world. But because of fears, as I have shown above, Greece and its patrons don't want an independent Macedonia.

INTERVIEWER – And who are Greece’s patrons today?

RISTO – The United States of America, Britain and France; the very same states which today dominate the United Nations Security Council and tackle international issues including the so-called “name negotiations”, Macedonia’s entry into the United Nations, Macedonia’s entry into the European Union, NATO and so on. In other words, they decide if Macedonia can enter these international organizations or not... and they decide whether Greece’s “objections” are reasonable or not.

As I said earlier, Greece and its patrons had to think of something fast that was not only devastating for Macedonia but risk free for themselves. This is why they “concocted” the so-called “name dispute” and stopped Macedonia in its tracks.

I hope I have answered your question.

INTERVIEWER – You have. But the more I hear about this the more I believe that you are right. You really need to understand not only the issues but also the entire history. The Greeks and their patrons, as you call them, had taken measures in this to protect themselves and their interests. Do you think you can win?

RISTO – Yes, we can win but we need to challenge Greece and its patrons in the public forum and expose what they are doing. The truth is a powerful weapon... and, should we choose to use it we can stop them and we can win... or be obliterated. I always go back to the example of the “flat earth” theory when the entire world believed the earth was flat until a few people pointed to the truth... Now no one believes the earth is flat...

INTERVIEWER – On several occasions you have mentioned that the Macedonians were “assimilated” by Greece and made into Greeks. How does that work?

RISTO – Well, I have to take you back in history and show you what was done that may be considered “assimilation”, but first let’s define what we mean by that.

According to the Oxford English dictionary the word “assimilate” means “absorb or be absorbed, people into larger group, make alike, become similar to next...”

But in the case of Greece assimilating the Macedonian people, the process was applied by completely stripping away the Macedonian consciousness from the Macedonian people and then replacing it with an artificial Greek consciousness. In other words the Greeks “prohibited” the Macedonians from being Macedonian and “forced” them to be Greeks.

Well, historically the Greeks first attempted to convince the Macedonians that they were Greeks by using propaganda in the Greek educational system. This was just before and after a part of Macedonia was annexed by Greece in 1913. When that did not work the Greek state erased their names and gave them Greek names. It also erased all Macedonian toponyms, hydronyms and every Macedonian landmark in existence that would remind them that they were Macedonians and replaced them with Greek ones. This was done during and after the 1920s. When that failed, the Greek authorities banned the Macedonian language and made it illegal to be spoken. This was done in the 1930s. When that failed the Greeks punished the Macedonians with castor oil, salty fish, beatings, jail sentences, evictions and death. This was done during the Metaxas dictatorship. When that failed the Greeks perpetrated genocide in order to exterminate and exile the Macedonian people en masse. This was done during the Greek Civil War.

Today the Greeks and their patrons are attempting to stop the Republic of Macedonia from joining the International community. And if they succeed, that is if the Macedonian side makes a mistake to either exit the so-called “name negotiations” or to change Macedonia’s name, then the Republic of Macedonia will again become a victim of imperial aspirations just like Macedonia did in 1912, 1913. And no one is more ready and ravenous to take advantage of that situation than its own neighbours the Greeks, Serbians, Bulgarians and Albanians, to name a few.

Those Macedonians who chose to become assimilated not only had to forger their Macedonian identity but also had to accept a foreign,

alien and fictitious identity. They became Greeks, descendants of the ancient Greeks with a glorious historic past that extended back five thousand years. Unfortunately it was all fake!

Bizarre isn't it?

INTERVIEWER – What does it mean to you to be Macedonian? Given what has been done to the Macedonian people why would you still want to be Macedonian? Why not Greek?

RISTO – It is a curse to be Macedonian isn't it? What else can I be? I am Macedonian, that's what I am. I am not going to lie to myself, to my friends, to my family, to my children, to my grandchildren and tell them that I am not Macedonian when that's what I am. What kind of a person would I be if I did that? Would you do that? And why should I do it... to please a nation that itself does not know what it is? No, I would not want to be anything other than what I am and I am Macedonian. That was ingrained in me since I was very young and that's what I am.

I share with my fellow Macedonians a common past, a common history, a common culture, a common language, common customs, common beliefs and all the torment and pain that the Macedonian people have endured...

What could I possibly share with the Greeks? Their dead language?! Their glorious artificial Ancient Greek heritage? Their mythical history? How can I do that when I know it's all fake?!

Let me tell you a little story that made me think about why I am Macedonian and why I am proud to be Macedonian. A few years back a new batch of five Macedonian army officers arrived in Base Borden, here in Canada for a four and a half month course to learn English.

The day after they arrived I went to see them. I had never met any of them before. After I welcomed them and had a bit of a discussion with them, a younger officer, a lieutenant, said to me "Uncle Risto", he called me "uncle" out of respect, "I have just met you and only knew you for twenty minutes but I feel like I have known you all my

life...” I looked at him and did not know what to say. He made such an impression on me that I still think of his words to this day. I came from Greek occupied Macedonia and basically grew up in Canada. He was born in Prilep and had never been out of Macedonia all his life, and yet here we were in Canada sharing something sacred. This is what it means to be Macedonian! Can I do that with a Greek? I don't think so! A Greek will loath me and look down on me and, given a chance, will insult me by saying “you are a worthless Slav”! And no matter how hard I try to be a Greek I can never measure up because I will always be a “filthy Slav” to them; to be loathed... Even the most staunch Greko-phils have experienced this.

INTERVIEWER – Interesting! But I want to get back to the name dispute and I want to ask you if what happened in 2001 with the Albanians... if that is somehow connected to the name dispute? I have read somewhere in your articles that you think there is a connection. Is there one?

RISTO – Yes. But to understand what it is you have to look at the big picture; that the Great Powers still want the Macedonian identity to disappear.

Let us look at the “problem” from a higher point of view. I will make it simple. Ask yourself: “Is the United States for or against Macedonia?”

If you say it is “for” Macedonia, like many people believe, then why did it instigate and allow the 2001 war to take place and why did it aid and protect the Albanian side? And why did it do everything in its diplomatic power to humiliate Macedonia?

Let me say that the United States did everything in its power to assist the Albanians because it wanted to partner with them for something. Let's say for now that I don't know what that something is, but it did partner with the Albanians to the detriment of the Macedonians.

The United States has made absolutely no effort to “help” Macedonia get out of this so-called “name dispute” but, on the other hand, it has made every effort to keep Macedonia from moving

forward by insisting that Macedonia negotiate its own name as a pre-condition...

Yes, I would say all these problems Macedonia is experiencing are due to the mixed signals coming out of Washington and Brussels. In other words, the Republic of Macedonia is on its own and the vultures are circling, waiting for it to make a mistake and its 1913 all over again. In other words, nothing has changed in the last 200 years and its still up to us to shape our own destiny. And if we make a mistake, like we did in 1903 and in 1946, we will suffer another devastating setback! Are we going to quit trying? I don't think so!

The name dispute with Greece, the Church dispute with Serbia, the Macedonian language and identity dispute with Bulgaria and the territorial dispute with Albania are part and parcel of the same dispute; someone high up wants us to disappear as Macedonians! Why? I don't know.

INTERVIEWER – So, do you think it will be the end of the Macedonian identity if the Macedonian people decide to change the name of your country?

RISTO – Yes! But only for the short term... Macedonians will never give up being Macedonians and, as we have seen, they can't be forced to. There is no one in the world who tried as hard as Greece to change us, or I should say extinguish us, yet we are still here... So, now the powers to be are trying to squeeze us to voluntarily commit suicide. But that's not going to work either. Eventually the winds of fortune will favour us and we will get back on track. All we have to do is endure... And as I learned from my elders, enduring is the Macedonian way.

INTERVIEWER – Why do you think you are so staunch and stubborn?

RISTO – Do you think we are? And here I thought we were not stubborn enough and not firm enough and that is why we are being pushed around by basically everyone in the world... and so openly.

You are right. We are stubborn but also pliable... Flexible to bend but not to break... This is what has kept us alive for many centuries. If you examine our history you will find that we needed to be flexible to survive because each time we came out firm and strong we were cut down and beaten to pulp. We are like the water pulled down by gravity. We go around hard objects and wear them down over time. We have been doing this for so long it has become part of our genetic makeup. And I believe this is our strength... it has allowed us to survive... to endure and to never lose hope...

INTERVIEWER – Do you think your personal work has helped your cause?

RISTO – I see myself as part of our struggle but I cannot compare my contribution to the sacrifices so many Macedonians made, including giving their lives, to keep our struggle going. I am doing what I can under the circumstances. I am doing what I believe is right under today's conditions and that is to educate the Macedonian people on their past so that they can be more prepared to face the future. The first step to doing anything is "knowing" how to do it. I have also been trying hard to warn the Macedonian people of the historic traps we have fallen into in the past in hopes that we can avoid them in the future. In fact this entire interview is about that.

INTERVIEWER – Many times you have mentioned that there is some sort of conspiracy on the part of the Great Powers, as you call them, to get rid of the Macedonian identity. I know you explained your historic experiences with them but you have not explained why the Great Powers want you gone?

RISTO – That is the million dollar question I cannot answer, about which I can only speculate.

I can tell you that the Romans divided Macedonia into four parts because they were afraid of the Macedonian people rising up against them.

“In June 197 BC, at Cynoscephalae in Thessaly, the unbeaten Macedonian army came face to face with the Roman legions. With a massed charge the Macedonian phalanx gave the Romans a

terrifying battle which they would never forget. During the first charge the Macedonians were successful and won. It was a horrific spectacle for the battle-hardened Romans, who for the first time had made serious contact with the Macedonian phalanx.

After the catastrophic battle at Cynoscephalae, Philip V rebuilt his military and replenished his losses but Perseus was still unwilling to go to war. From 171 to 168 BC he remained on the defensive and committed only to minor engagements, all the while hoping that a peaceful settlement could be reached.

The four year war (Third Macedonian War) came to a climax on June 22nd, 168 BC when the Romans marched en masse northward and met the Macedonian army at Pydna in southern Macedonia.

In the style of his predecessors, Perseus struck first by unleashing the full might of the Macedonian phalanx. This was not the usual phalanx. It was reinforced with spears all round like a hedgehog, especially at the flanks. ‘Aemilius Paullus, a veteran commander, declared afterwards that this advance was the most terrifying thing he had ever witnessed’ ...” (Page 430, Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium The Historical Evolution of the Hellenistic Age*)

According to Livy, Macedonia was divided into four regions, each with its own Roman council, and was forced to pay half the tribute to Rome.

All I can tell you now is that Macedonia was again divided in 1913... but I don't know why. I don't believe it was an “historic” coincidence... I believe the Macedonian people hold the key to many things about which an entire encyclopedia can be written... most of which have been attributed to the so-called “Ancient Greeks” and “medieval Bulgarians”, including the knowledge built up in Alexandria in Egypt and on Mount Athos (Sveta Gora), Christianity being introduced to Eastern Europe, the Cyrillic Script, the Slavic language and many, many other things. I believe some people want these things to be forgotten forever. And they will be if Macedonia is prevented from rising again. I believe it is Macedonia's destiny to rise up again and take its place among the nations in this world. And it is only a matter of time. I also believe

all these wrongly attributed things will eventually be revealed and correctly attributed to the Macedonian people.

INTERVIEWER – But before Macedonia “rises up again” as you put it, it has to overcome its current problems. Is that even possible?

RISTO – The Macedonian people were looking forward to possibly re-uniting Macedonia culturally through the opening of the European borders, through the Republic of Macedonia joining the European Union and sharing open borders with Greece, Bulgaria and eventually Albania when it joined the European Union. But, as we have seen, it seems someone, very powerful, doesn’t want Macedonia to join any international institutions. That someone, it seems, wants Macedonia to stay isolated. But until when? Until Macedonia is destabilized from the inside?

We Macedonians have a lot of historic baggage that needs to be unpacked and sorted out before anything can happen. I believe this baggage to some extent is holding us back. We need to define what this baggage is at the outset and up front. For example the Macedonian people were wronged many times by several countries over the years. These countries don’t know what we are going to do once we join the international world but they need to know if we expect them to support us... or not.

Today they are not prepared to deal with us under the current circumstances. And unless we clearly define what we expect from them in the future, they will not deal with us and will try to suppress us. Are we going to sue Greece, for example, for damages? If we are then we had better define up front what these damages are. If we are not then we had better let Greece know up front.

We need to take the first step and clearly state our conditions. What do we expect from them? List these conditions so that these countries, against which we have conditions, can be informed up front. This will serve a couple of purposes. One, let these countries know what our intentions are and two, let the world know that we have grievances against them.

Also, let us not be naïve and assume they are going to let us in without us making many compromises. But last time we walked in without any pre-defined conditions they defined the conditions for us. Every country will do everything it can to protect its own interests. And since we walked in with nothing they basically asked for our “unconditional surrender” and so we fell into that trap.

I am sure most countries in the world, outside the United States, Britain, France, Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Albania, would have looked at our situation differently had we publicly offered our side of the story up front and made our conditions for joining the UN, for example, very clear before submitting our application for membership. But we didn't do that. Why? Because we were threatened by the Greek Embargo, for example, which made us feel insecure and from fear that the Yugoslav army might return. We rushed to the UN unprepared and were caught off guard.

What I am saying may sound ridiculous - Macedonians making demands on countries we expect to help us join the UN for example, knowing full well that they won't, but these countries are not the only countries in the world that we need to convince. It is to our advantage to be up front with our intentions and let the world know who we are, what was done to us and what we expect.

The United States, Britain, France, Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Albania for example will not help us no matter what we do, so we need to stop trying to convince them and carry on with our long-term plans by going around them and making our story known to everyone else.

The United States, Britain, France, Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Albania for example want us where we are today. They know we won't change our name and they have got us where they want us, in a never ending limbo negotiating our name; something that is non-negotiable. And they will have no problem doing this until they destabilize us from the inside, which is taking place as we speak.

We haven't even sat down as Macedonians to decide what we want to do. The Jews did this after World War II. Before launching a lawsuit against Germany they sat down and discussed their problems

in an open forum. The Israeli government invited every single Jewish organization and individual, worldwide, to register its complaints and when all that information was compiled the lawsuit was launched and it was very successful.

On top of that we need to ask ourselves, for example, how important is it for us to join all these international organizations and how much are we willing to sacrifice for joining them. Once we do that then we basically have a measure and a basis for “negotiating” with the UN for example. Right now we have nothing. We have not defined our limits, or “red lines” as the Greeks like to call them, or any conditions, yet here we are “negotiating”. Negotiating what? Our demise?

Worse than that is the fact that our politicians are not even given any guidelines acceptable to the people on how far they are allowed to maneuver. And every time these “name negotiations” come up, we all sit on pins and needles praying that our politicians will not make any more compromises and, God forbid, any more mistakes.

Our politicians have already made enough mistakes, big mistakes, especially when they blindly entered the never ending “name negotiations” and put the Macedonian people in jeopardy and in a lose-lose situation.

Right now they (the United States, Britain, France, Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Albania) are asking us to “voluntarily change our name” knowing that we will never do that! So, where does that leave us?

In limbo and most of the world does not even know why, this is because of our failure to inform it, to come up with our demands... with our narrative.

And if we do change the name of our country then what happens? That too is undefined and very dangerous with grave consequences. First off we will be erasing the Republic of Macedonia off the map. That part of Macedonia will become an “undefined” entity and separate from the rest of Macedonia. The next thing that will happen is that the same people who demanded that we change our name will

demand that we change our identity. They will argue that we cannot possibly be Macedonians if our country is not Macedonia. If you think this is “ridiculous” then is this more ridiculous than saying “you can’t use the name Macedonian because the word ‘Macedonia’ is Greek?” Nothing is ridiculous and nothing can be discounted!

And if we are not Macedonians how then can we make any claims to what is Macedonian? We can’t!

So, it is very important right now to make our move and register our wishes, complaints, grievances, demands, etc., with the United Nations and let the world know what we intend to do in the future and against whom we have grievances. But before we do that we need to first bring every single Macedonian on board with all this so that we have a united and common front for moving forward. We need to move forward, we can’t wait for things to happen on their own. Let us go to plan B if plan A is not working.

We need to make a comprehensive list of grievances that need to be addressed regardless of whether they are viable or not, regardless of whether they are acceptable or not. All they need to be is factual. Once we do that then we have a definition of our starting point for negotiations.

Unfortunately we missed our opportunity to do this before and now we are stuck in limbo negotiating our name. But it is not too late...

Once we compile our list of demands we can add it as an addendum to the so-called “name negotiations” and at the same time start a worldwide information campaign telling the world our story and the problems we are facing, both historical and current, as well as the diplomatic infractions committed against us as we speak, and let the world be our judge and the judge of those who put us in this predicament.

The only thing we need is “willpower” and to be brave enough to do it. That is my opinion on this matter.

INTERVIEWER – In other words, you are proposing that the Macedonian people initiate a public campaign to air out their

grievances. Is that correct? What makes you think the world cares about you?

RISTO – Yes, I am proposing that we start a public campaign to let the world know what has been done to us. We need to do this in order to move forward. And yes, you are correct that no one might care but it is better than doing nothing. That is why it is important to properly prepare such a campaign and make our plight public knowledge regardless of whether the general public cares or not. The general public can't do anything for us directly anyway but Greece and its patrons may have to act in a proactive manner in order to save their own images from being tarnished. I am sure people in this world, neutral countries in particular, will react differently towards us once they find out what has been done to us. They may even see our struggle with the so-called name dispute in a different light...

INTERVIEWER – So, basically, from what you are saying, you have two options available to you to continue from here on forward. Is that correct?

RISTO - Yes, but none of them are viable for us. We can quit the so-called “name negotiations”, or we can continue with them... Thus far those have been our options.

Quitting the name negotiations, something that I had been asking for in the past... that is before I thought about it carefully, will bring us nowhere closer to where we want to be. In fact it will tell the world that perhaps we were wrong...? And if we were wrong about that then how many other things were we wrong about? Also, if we quit the name negotiations the UN, US and other powers will wash their hands of us and say you are on your own now. And without “involvement” from the International Community we can't be sure what will happen to us in the future. Will we be open to intrigue from our neighbours? Most likely!

But, while negotiating our “name” with Greece under the current conditions, embracing as it may be, at least we know where we stand... at least we know we have some control over our destiny.

At the same time, if we continue to go in this direction we may never achieve what we want. That is why I believe it's important for us to take a step sideways and basically tell the world our story why we are where we are and take our chances that more countries will side with us...

Even Greece may take a softer approach if our predicament is made public and known throughout the world... Greece then will have nothing to hide and may take a softer approach...

I just want to mention at this point that problems cannot be "solved" by force or by repression. Force and repression will delay problems but will not make them go away. Problems can only be solved through discussion, understanding and compromise. This is another reason why we need to speak up and tell our side of the story.

Another thing I can tell you is that blackmailing Macedonia to "change its name" will not work in the long term. If the people are not happy with something they will try and change it. If Macedonia's name is changed today, sometime in the future when conditions are right the Macedonian people will change it back. So in essence the so-called "name negotiations" are nothing more than a stall tactic. But in no way do I support a "name change"... The name should never be touched by anyone... at any cost!

INTERVIEWER – What about the Macedonians in Greece? What should their role be in all this?

RISTO – Unfortunately the Macedonian people living in Greek occupied Macedonia are in worse shape than we can imagine. They have faced and are still facing the full brunt of "Greek fury" which has left them in a vulnerable position. The expulsions, the changing of names, the banning of their language, the mass expulsions, the stigmatization, the genocides, the assimilation... all these factors have negatively influenced the people.

Those Macedonians who were assimilated over the years and chose to call themselves "Greeks" are caught between a rock and a hard place. The non-Macedonian Greeks (Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, etc) from the south and the Christian Turks, brought to Greek occupied

Macedonia from Asia Minor in the 1920s, don't trust them and to this day resist their advancements in society and in positions of responsibility.

Those Macedonians, on the other hand, who have remained true to their Macedonian consciousness loathe these “neo-Greeks” and see them as “sell outs” and “traitors” to their own identity. They call them “Grkomani” or “Greko-philes” and see them as something they are not.

The Macedonians who “feel Macedonian” still have to hide their sentiments because they are afraid that they will be “stigmatized” and “persecuted” not only by the state but also by their Greek neighbours. So they feel like they have been trapped...

The Macedonians in Greece are also experiencing something that we in the west are not familiar with; xenophobia and mistrust of strangers. In addition to fearing one another, these Macedonians fear and distrust strangers. This has been ingrained in them since Ottoman times and has remained with them to this day. This is because every time someone spoke to a stranger something bad happened to them. So from young they were taught to not trust strangers because nothing good comes out of them.

You can say that it has become part of their every day lives. This is the norm for them. I experienced this myself first-hand when I lived there and was reminded of it when I returned back in 2015 for a short visit.

INTERVIEWER – Considering what has been done to your people, if you were given a chance what would you say to the Greeks?

RISTO – To be honest with you, to this day, I have not found common ground with any Greek. It's like we are from different worlds in constant conflict. When you mention Macedonia or Macedonians to a Greek they see red like a raging bull. The only thing they want to do at that point is attack. How can you expect to find common ground with people like that?

What has happened to us and what is still happening to us to this day is so bizarre... it blows the mind. Just recently I was talking to a Canadian woman who is married to a Macedonian man. She works for the school board in Toronto with a Greek woman. One day they got into a conversation and, after finding out this other woman was Greek, the Canadian woman mentioned to her that her husband was Macedonian. To her surprise the Greek woman freaked out and told her in a loud voice that “there was no such thing as a Macedonian”...

The Canadian woman was stunned by the reaction and did not know what to say... she did not want to upset the Greek woman any further.

One day, when we met again, the Canadian woman asked me why the Greek woman reacted this way and what had she done to make this Greek woman so angry?

Well, this very well explains the Greek mentality and their attitude towards us Macedonians. We are victims of every kind of perpetration and yet in the public eye we are treated like we have done something wrong. You can see why it is so important to have our side of the story told. I gave the Canadian woman a few of my books to read and she promised me she would read them. Whether that was enough or not to explain our problem, I don't know. It was better than doing nothing...

The problem with the Macedonians in Greek occupied Macedonia is so severe that it is unbelievable. I have faced many people, including Macedonians from other parts of Macedonia and from the Diaspora, who refuse to believe that a civilized and democratic Greece, which gave the world “everything” can behave in this manner. So, how does one defend themselves against this? Certainly not by keeping quiet; and this is what we have been doing since 1913 when Greece occupied and annexed part of our country.

I mentioned earlier that I went back to Greece in 2015, for the first time in 50 years since I left for Canada. I wish I had never gone back! I was so disappointed with what I saw. I was pretty sure the border guards would not allow me to go back but, just to humour my

relative who wanted to take me via the Greek-Macedonian border, or as some Macedonians call it the artificial Macedonian-Macedonian border, I went along. My relative asked me to stay in the car while he took my Canadian passport and presented it to the Greek border guard who looked bored sitting inside his booth. To my surprise the border guard just stamped the passport, without even looking at it, and tossed them back at my relative. “We are in...” he said and off we went. “They don’t care much about who comes in any more,” my relative said, “as long as they spend their money in Greece.”

So, I still don’t know if I am allowed to legally enter Greece or not...

The first thing I noticed after crossing the artificial border was the flat Macedonian plain that for so many years was the breadbasket of Greece, was almost all fallow... looking like it was abandoned. From the exterior the villages we passed looked identical to the villages in the Republic of Macedonia. Except the villages in Greek occupied Macedonia were almost empty and devoid of people. When we arrived in Lerin we saw not the city I knew, but an empty village, also devoid of people. When we asked where the people were, we were told “gone”. Gone where? “Gone!”

After that we took the road over Bigla towards Kostur and stopped in a of couple villages. The only people we found that were willing to speak to us were a couple of men who had lived in Toronto. I knew one of them.

We took a trip to my mother’s village and went to a café, which 50 years later looked exactly the same. I decided to take a picture to show my mother. A man sitting some distance in front of me put his hand over his face. I know what it is like to have your picture taken by a stranger and felt terrible for doing that to the man. But I wasn’t taking his picture. I was taking a picture of the café. When I got enough courage I got up, went over and asked the man if he understood Macedonian. He said yes and so I explained to him why I was taking the picture. My explanation made no difference; the man just shook his head and continued drinking his coffee and quietly conversing with his friend. It was too far away for me to tell what language they were speaking, as they were speaking quietly.

After that we went to my village where I was born, which I had not seen for 50 years. It was in ruins, I could not recognize it. I was so disappointed. We saw a total of 3 new houses existing throughout the ruins. A Macedonian family lived in one of those houses. I don't know what kind of people lived in the other two.

As we entered the village in my relative's car, we saw a couple of young ladies in two different houses doing laundry. The moment they saw the car approaching they disappeared inside.

We went to the house where the Macedonians lived and I knocked on the door. A long time later the young woman, who earlier was hanging clothes on the balcony, came out. I asked her if she could understand what I was saying in Macedonian. She said no!

I explained to her who we were and that we were originally from this village and were relatives of theirs. I asked to see her grandfather. She told me in Greek that he was not there. I don't know if he was there or not but I got the feeling that I was not welcome. We left disappointed.

We went to Kostur and on our way back we stopped off in a village to have a cup of coffee. The place was dead quiet and the only person we spoke with was the waitress... we spoke to her in English.

When we came back to the Republic of Macedonia I made a point of mentioning to my relative the differences in the attitude between the villagers in Greek occupied Macedonia and those in the Republic of Macedonia. Being a stranger in town, everyone in Greek occupied Macedonia was mindful of your presence and was careful of how they conducted themselves in your presence whereas in the Republic of Macedonia the people were open and would converse with one another without any care. And if they did notice you and found out you were visiting from abroad, they were likely to invite you to their home for coffee. And that was the difference between our people who have been brought up under different regimes.

Also, let us not forget the so-called Greek Civil War and what that did to our people in Greece, about which we talked about in our last interview. Even though in reality the Macedonian people were unwitting pawns in a massive plot to get rid of the Macedonian people from Greek occupied Macedonia, in the eyes of the Greeks they were made to look like traitors trying to “steal” Macedonia from Greece... which stigmatized them badly, a guilty feeling the Macedonian people carry to this day. The Greeks still see them as perpetrators of a crime... a crime they never committed. Greek occupied Macedonia is still in Greek hands, the Macedonian people were driven out of Greece and permanently exiled just like Greece and its patrons wanted, and yet in the eyes of the Greek people the Macedonians are still the guilty party... And that hurts.

Unfortunately the world public perception is that Greece is a civilized democratic country and the Republic of Macedonia is a poor and democratically impoverished and backwards country. Who would have ever thought...?

INTERVIEWER – Very interesting... If you had the opportunity how would you change the situation for the Macedonians in Greece?

RISTO – The only way you can save those people, the ones that want to be saved, is to show them that there are many ways a person can live their lives. We who have left Greece a long time ago have forgotten how it was... not to be able to trust anyone you did not know... not to be able to speak Macedonian without checking around to make sure no one was listening... not to be able to say I am Macedonian or I come from Macedonia... not to be able to call yourself what your mother had named you at birth and not what the Greek priest named you at your baptism. I cannot even begin to tell you the kinds of choking restriction our people in Greece live under.

Change in Greece has to come from the inside. The Greek government must take the first step and recognize the Macedonian identity in Greece with full rights and privileges. It then has to fight against the century-old stigma and general Greek chauvinistic attitude towards the Macedonians, which may take generations to reverse.

Unfortunately I don't see that happening in the near future unless there is tremendous pressure put on Greece from the outside. Greece must also, one, abandon the idea of "homogeneity" and two, its fear that its part of Macedonia is "somehow" going to be taken away from it by the "big bad Slavs".

The most important thing for the Macedonians in Greek occupied Macedonia today is to survive as Macedonians and in order for them to do that; they need to know who they are.

Greece has failed to assimilate the Macedonian people on its territory because of the restrictions it has placed on them. On the one hand it wants to assimilate them and turn them into Greeks and on the other it does not trust them and thus is turning them into a second and even into a third class Greek citizen. No one appreciates being treated that way, especially not the Macedonians who are willing to give up their own precious Macedonian identity to become Greeks. Let me be clear about that here. To many Macedonian people these "neo-Greeks" are still "traitors" but, even so, the Greeks still will not give them a break and treat them as equals.

Still, change in Greece must come from the inside and all we can do today is highlight and publicize our problems with Greece. This way Greece can no longer hide behind its façade of being a civilized and democratic country and once discovered for what it is, it will have no choice but do one of two things. Recognize the Macedonians in Greece or be stigmatized by the world for the tyrant that it is.

But I have to tell you... I am really disappointed with Greece. It has done nothing to develop Greek occupied Macedonia. The place where I visited looked devastated and devoid of life. The villages are in ruins and the forests have been cut down. There is no movement or sign of progress anywhere. It is worse than it was many years ago. Greece has done nothing to develop it. It is so disappointing and on top of that Greece will not allow the Macedonian people born there to go back... not even for a visit. What are the Greeks afraid of? That these people might find a paradise? Greece has devastated their homeland! Nothing makes sense when it comes to Greece...

INTERVIEWER – Earlier you mentioned the stigma of the Greek Civil War and the effects it had on your people. Can you tell us a little more about that?

RISTO – Yes, the Greek Civil War. For reasons I mentioned in our last interview I don't like to call it the "Greek Civil War" because first, it was not a "Civil War" and second it was not "Greek". It should be appropriately named "The Macedonian genocide in Greece". This was a "perpetrated" war to get rid of the Macedonians from Greek occupied Macedonia and it was done with outside help that involved Yugoslavia, Britain and the United States. But I am not going to talk about that here because enough was said, I believe, in our last interview. Here I am going to talk about what the war did to the Macedonian people inside and outside of Greece. To simplify the story I will speak only of the Macedonians living in Greece and the interactions between them.

As you know, mainstream history has completely neglected the Macedonian people. In fact, as you know, the Macedonian people, after Macedonia was invaded, occupied and partitioned in 1912, 1913 have been de-emphasized so much so that they "do not exist" for the Western world.

The Eastern world on the other hand, particularly Yugoslavia, has written its own version of the Macedonian people's history, tailor made to fit its own political agendas. So the Macedonian people, from Greek occupied Macedonia in particular, have been left out and have suffered in silence for many years.

What I am going to tell you here is little known and hardly spoken outside of Macedonian circles.

It is hardly a secret that the Macedonian people are divided but very few people are aware what this division is and what it has done to them.

Even before Macedonia was annexed by Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and Albania, the presence of foreign propaganda, propagated through the foreign schools and churches in Macedonia, created

divided loyalties among the Macedonian people which often came into collision.

After a part of Macedonia was annexed by Greece, some Macedonians accepted Greek dominion and became the “neo-Greeks”. Being Greeks, even “pretend” Greeks, they quickly gained advantages over their fellow Macedonians. This created friction between them.

These “neo-Greeks” were not some isolated groups existing somewhere far away; they were neighbours, a brother or a sister, or even a husband or a wife. They lived next door to one another or even inside one house.

The worst thing about these “assimilated” people was that they began to see themselves as “Greeks” and better than their Macedonian brethren. They began to look down on the Macedonians.

These neo-Greeks even began to lie to their children telling them that they were “Greeks, descendants from the Ancient Greeks” and that they had nothing to do with “natives” in this land. To avoid using the word “Macedonians” the Greeks and neo-Greeks called the Macedonian people “natives”. The Greek perception of these so-called “natives” was that somehow they were “foreigners”, “Slavs”, “Bulgarians”, “Gypsies”, and even agents of foreign powers that had somehow settled on ancient Greek lands.

The neo-Greeks were always in support of Greek governments and collaborated with the various Greek authoritative and repressive regimes. Many even acted as the eyes and ears for the police and other security services.

The degree of support for the Greek regime varied from mild to extreme. Those who were strongly dedicated to the Greek cause naturally were granted powers to act against the “natives”.

I need to mention here that these “neo-Greeks” or “Grkomani” (Greco-philes) as the Macedonians called them, were a very small number in proportion to the rest of the Macedonian population.

In conflict situations between individuals from the two groups, the Greek authorities always took the side of the neo-Greeks.

Greece over the years, up until WW II, was a very repressive state and consistently persecuted and abused the Macedonian people as well as the progressive elements in that country.

Then, after Nazi Germany invaded Greece, the Greek repressive regimes suddenly collapsed and before the occupiers had a chance to take control, a communist regime came into existence and leveled the playing field between the neo-Greek Macedonians and the “native” Macedonians.

The communists didn't do that because they “liked” the Macedonians, they only did it because they “hated” the repressive elements in Greece and because they wanted the Macedonian people on their side. Let me be clear on that.

But even though the persecuted Macedonians got the upper hand on their neo-Greek abusers, they never acted against them or attempted to pay them back for the abuses they received. They just left them alone.

Then, after WW II ended, the Great Powers, the USA, Britain and Russia, decided to place Greece under British influence which again brought back the repressive Greek regime. This, naturally, infuriated the Macedonians and pushed them en masse into the hands of the communists.

The Macedonians did not like the communists for their ideological standpoint but decided to join them because the communists allegedly offered them a better alternative. This, by the way, never materialized.

To attract them to the communist side, the communists offered the Macedonians what the Macedonians wanted: to form a united and independent Macedonian state. Basically they lied to the Macedonian people to get them committed to the war effort to drive

the occupiers out of Greece. The Macedonians took the bait and began to join the communist sponsored organizations en masse.

Then, somewhere down the line, the British found out that Macedonians existed in Greek occupied Macedonia. The Greeks had been telling the world that “Macedonians don’t exist” while British agents on the ground, during World War II, were reporting that Macedonians not only existed but were in large numbers in Lerin, Kostur and Voden Regions and that practically half of the anti-fascist fighting force in Greece was Macedonian. In other words, almost half of the ELAS (National Liberation Army of Greece) fighters in Greece were Macedonians.

The existence of Macedonians in Greece, coupled with the fact that they were armed and were being offered independence by the communists, caused quite a stir in Britain and, behind closed doors, the British decided that these Macedonians had to go. But go where? This was their home.

According to declassified documents they had to go outside of the current Greek borders, somewhere north. And soon after this decision was made a home was found for them in Yugoslavia. The Fascist government of Yugoslavia had offered to take them. But before this plan could be implemented, Tito’s communists took power in Yugoslavia and the plan was put on the back burner.

Britain was worried that Russia might intervene on behalf of these Macedonians and put Greece in jeopardy by calling for their recognition and offering them the option of choosing their own destiny in accordance with the Atlantic Charter. So the best choice for Britain was to “get rid of them” from Greece. But how, and send them where without raising suspicions? After all it was illegal to just uproot people from their homeland because they just didn’t fit with Britain’s political agenda and interests.

Just as World War II was winding down, Britain was faced with a couple of problems. It had to destroy the communists in Greece and get rid of the Macedonians.

I should mention here that even though ELAS was a communist force it was placed under British control and not under Russian control. So it was no problem for Britain to disarm ELAS and take control of Greece. And that is exactly what it did. Britain ordered ELAS to disarm and surrender its weapons and Britain installed a regime of its choosing as a Greek government.

To get rid of the Macedonians unfortunately was a more complicated matter because one, the war (WW II) was over and two, it needed outside support; someone to take them. It is easy to push people around during a war but impossible to do it during peace time. This is why the “Greek Civil War” was invented. Wars generate refugees and refugees flee over borders to save themselves.

I am not going to talk about the Greek Civil War here in detail because we covered it in our last interview but I do want to say that this War was invented and served as cover to get rid of the Macedonians from Greece. It was a controlled war, controlled by Zahariadis who was sent to Greece by the British to crush the communists and get rid of the Macedonians.

Since we are talking about divisions in the Macedonian people, I would like to say that outside of the polarization of the neo-Greek and Macedonian division, there were also other divisions forming. During the war the neo-Greeks supported the Greek government which stood on the political right. The Macedonians stood on the side of the Communist Party of Greece which stood on the political left. The left and right at the time were at war with each other. Then additional new divisions began to surface in the left block as a result of the various promises made and actions taken by the CPG.

The Macedonian people on the left side knew that they had been betrayed when the CPG agreed with Britain to install what the Macedonian people considered a “fascist” political party in Greece. They knew that the fascist Greeks would be back in power and would resume the torment. So when Britain ordered ELAS to disarm, some Macedonians units refused. This brought them onto a collision course with ELAS and a war between them was imminent. So to avoid this collision these units fled over the border into the Republic of Macedonia and came under Yugoslav control.

The expectation of the Macedonian people supporting the left side of the political spectrum was that the Macedonian units that left for Yugoslavia were specifically created to protect the Macedonian people from Greek aggression and from the neo-Greeks. But because these Macedonian fighters left for Yugoslavia, they were seen as traitors by some, leaving even their own families behind to be abused by the Greeks.

Then, as the Greek Civil War escalated, some of these fighters who left for Yugoslavia later returned but many stayed behind. And so the division between those who returned to fight in the Greek Civil War and those who remained in Yugoslavia began to widen. Those who left Yugoslavia accused those who remained behind of being “cowards”, of wanting to save their own skins at the cost of their own people, even at the cost of their own families. And those who remained behind in Yugoslavia were accusing those who left for Greece, of “treachery” and of “helping” the Greeks to protect Greece. The CPG also manipulated the situation and widened the division by accusing those who remained in Yugoslavia of being “deserters”.

The Macedonian division began to widen even more, and turned into an unbridgeable chasm, when Tito began to fight with Stalin and the Macedonian people were caught in the middle of their dispute. So, now we had a four-way Macedonian division.

1. Macedonians on the political left fighting against the Macedonian neo-Greeks on the political right.
2. Partisan Macedonians fighting against Macedonian soldiers in the Greek army.
3. Macedonians fighting in the Greek Civil War against Macedonians in Yugoslavia opposing the Greek Civil War.
4. Titoist Macedonians fighting against Stalinist Macedonians.

All of these divisions were deeply rooted and still exist in the Macedonian people to this day.

Unfortunately all of these divisions were due to external factors that tore apart the Macedonian fabric and pulled the Macedonian people in many directions. Some Macedonians accepted the idea that if you can't beat them, join them and decided to "assimilate" into the Greek fold. Others liked what the Greek communists were offering and decided to join them. Unfortunately what the Greek communists were offering became very confusing and changed over time. That is because the Greek communists were dishonest about what they were trying to do. They had hidden motives of wanting to get the Macedonian people involved in a "perpetrated" war so that they could "remove" them from Greece. So when the Greek communists wanted the Macedonians involved in the war they offered more of what the Macedonians wanted. When too many Macedonians became involved in the war the Greek communists scaled down on their offers. This was done so that they could control how many people joined the struggle, making sure it did not run away on them.

The purpose of the war, however, was a constant; to get rid of the Macedonian people from Greece by legal means. This is how Britain wanted it. So a plan was concocted to start a new war in Greece and to involve the Macedonian people en masse. The moment the Macedonian people picked up arms, Greece would then have no choice but to fight back and drive them out. Yugoslavia was also involved in this because it created NOF (National Liberation Front). NOF's purpose was to start a "revolution" in Greek occupied Macedonia. But when it arrived and began to agitate the people it found that the people did not want to fight. The Macedonian people did not want to fight another war, for them the war (WW II) was over and they were ready to enjoy peace.

Unable to motivate them to fight for a free Macedonia to be united with Yugoslavia, something new and something more drastic had to be done. "White terror" was introduced. The political right unleashed its fascist forces on the Macedonian population killing people, burning homes, raping women, beating and jailing people, and so on. This naturally frightened the Macedonian population and left it with two options "fight back" or "die". So, people began to flee to the mountains where they were organized and armed by NOF.

NOF was there to organize and assist them. This, however, was not a NOF initiative; the NOF leadership simply followed orders blindly and basically did what it was told.

Initially the Communist Party of Yugoslavia was in control of events on the ground but then when Zahariadis was dispatched to Greece by Britain to take control of the Communist Party of Greece he took over control of NOF. After Zahariadis consolidated his power over the communists he took control of NOF and, through NOF, took control of the Macedonian people.

Please allow me at this point to summarize some of the points we discussed in the previous interview, about why at this time a war in Greece was not practical and why the promises made to the Macedonian people by the CPY and by the CPG were not achievable.

The purpose of the Greek Civil War, as we are being told by mainstream history, was to install a communist system in Greece. This, however, was not possible because Stalin of Russia who supported the political left in Greece and Churchill of Britain who supported the political right in Greece had already decided to place Greece under British influence and both leaders had agreed that “there will be no communist system in Greece”.

So, how then was Zahariadis going to create a communist system in Greece, as he promised, when he had no support from Greece’s patrons, the Great Powers? He wasn’t! His sole aim was not to create but to destroy the communists in Greece and to get rid of the Macedonians once and for all.

In order to motivate the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia to fight harder and in greater numbers, both the CPY and the CPG offered them independence and the choice of uniting Greek occupied Macedonia with the Republic of Macedonia under a Yugoslav federation. But this offer had a catch. This offer was only valid if the communists took power in Greece which, as I mentioned earlier, was not possible.

The truth is that an International border, the iron curtain, was running between Greek occupied Macedonia and the Republic of Macedonia, which was an impossible “barrier” to breach without Great Power cooperation. And the Great Powers at the time were not cooperating and have not cooperated since then to this day.

At the same time this was going on in Greece, the Greek people were told that the “Slavs” from the north and the “Slav speaking” Greeks were causing all these problems in their country. The Slavs assisted by the communists were attempting to break up Greece and give their Greek-Macedonia to Yugoslavia. While all this was going on, the rest of the world was led to believe that this was a “Greek Civil War” where the communists were attempting to “impose themselves” on Greece.

This was a great cover to not only cover up the fact that a genocide was being committed against the Macedonian people but to also make the Macedonian people think that they were fighting for their rights and that it was their fault for not only losing the war but for starting it in the first place. This also made the Greek people feel good thinking that they had fought against outside forces and won in their attempt to protect their country. As for the rest of the world, this War was all about politics and ideologies.

The conflict inside Greece was not recognized as a “Greek Civil War” until the 1970’s. Until then it was thought of as a “bandit” war. This is because the Greek people, during the war, were told that the war was being fought between the “treacherous Slav bandits” and the “patriotic Greeks”. How can it be a “Greek Civil War”? A generation or two had to pass before they could again pull the wool over their own people’s eyes.

When massive numbers of Macedonian refugees began to arrive in Poland, the Polish people thought they were Greeks fighting to install communism in Greece. Most ordinary people in the Eastern European countries, where many Macedonians ended up, had no idea that these people were Macedonians; they didn’t even know that Macedonians existed until they met them. They were told the refugees were Greeks.

The moment the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia picked up arms and fought back to defend themselves, the plan to exterminate them was put in motion and the Macedonian genocide became legal. What was Greece to do? It had to fight back to defend itself, insisting that the war was imported from the north. It even had a United Nations Commission investigate it to prove that it was provoked and supported by outsiders, mainly by Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania.

I mentioned earlier that the so-called “Greek Civil War” was a controlled war. At this point I would like to say a few words about that.

The many Macedonians with whom I have discussed this war have insisted that if we Macedonians had our own leaders and if we Macedonians were allowed to fight the way we wanted, we would have won the war. But what most Macedonians on the ground don’t understand is that the “architects” of this war did not want the Macedonians to “win”; they wanted them to “lose” that is why it had to be a controlled war.

If the Greek communists wanted the Macedonian people to gain their independence, like they were promising, they would have allowed them to conduct their own business; they would have allowed them to appoint their own leaders, choose the type and number of fighting units they wanted, choose their own battles, and so on. The Greek communists did not do any of those things because they wanted to control the Macedonian movement. But in order to control it the Greek communists had to impose themselves on the Macedonian people and restrict and control their activities. They especially had to control the Macedonian leaders in NOF and steer NOF in the direction they wanted it to go. Then when the CPY surrendered NOF to the CPG, Zahariadis took control of everything. After that he basically manipulated every outcome of the struggle. This was no coincidence; it was purposely planned this way from higher up. Even General Markos was dismissed because he refused to enter a “frontal” war with his opponent. Markos knew that if the partisans, who were successful in hit and run operations, were placed in a stationary position they would be demolished. But those above Zahariadis did not want this war to linger on and wanted the

partisans crushed as soon as possible and what better way to crush them than to put them up against a much superior enemy in a frontal war. Zahariadis dismissed Markos and took command of the partisans himself and ordered them to form front lines and fight in a front.

“...When Markos refused to step down, Zahariadis accused him of being a spy and sent him to Russia to be treated for a mental disorder. When the wheel of history turned, General Markos sent a letter to the KPSS Central Committee in which he accused Zahariadis of being a spy and an international traitor. According to Markos, the main reason for sending the letter was not to indict Zahariadis but to clear the air about himself. Markos wanted to dissociate himself from Zahariadis and from speculation and gossip that he too was an agent of British intelligence just like Zahariadis...” (Stoian Kochov).

Then when the Democratic Army of Greece (DAG) was destroyed by the Greek government forces, Zahariadis, to throw attention away from himself, accused the leaders of NOF of being responsible for the defeat because, according to Zahariadis, “they were working for Tito”, they were Tito’s agents. This was yet another cover up to throw attention “somewhere else”, away from himself, from being discovered that he not only destroyed the communists in Greece and exiled the Macedonians, but that he was a British agent.

A long time ago Stalin had ordered both Tito and Zahariadis to end the armed struggle in Greece, not only because it was futile but because it reflected badly on Stalin and on the agreement he had made with Churchill. On top of that Stalin was not sure how the United States was going to react if this armed conflict escalated or was prolonged. Stalin himself was worried that the United States might retaliate against the Soviet Union if, for some reason, it thought the Soviet Union was assisting the war effort in Greece. Stalin wanted no part of that. This is why he specifically ordered Tito to stop supplying the war effort and Zahariadis to scale the war down and end it.

But Tito decided to defy Stalin, perhaps, I am assuming, because he had made a secret deal with the British to assist in the “destruction”

of the Macedonians? In any case Tito's disobedience angered Stalin which resulted in Yugoslavia being thrown out of the Cominform in June, 1948. Tito was found guilty of disobedience and all Eastern European communist governments, under the influence of the Soviet Union, were ordered to break relations with the CPY.

After that Tito and Stalin became arch-enemies and Zahariadis always found it convenient to blame "everything" on Tito, including the continuation of the war, the defeat of the partisan army and the destruction of the communists in Greece. In other words, to hide his own actions and from being discovered that he himself was a British agent, Zahariadis basically told Stalin that it was Tito and NOF that continued the war and that he had nothing to do with it. This naturally further divided the Macedonian people because Zahariadis told them that the "culprits" of losing the war were the leaders of NOF who followed Tito's agenda, which had aims to sabotage their struggle. Many believed Zahariadis.

Unfortunately Stalin was in agreement with Zahariadis and exiled the Macedonian NOF leadership to serve a life sentence of hard labour in the Siberian prison camps. After Stalin died, having found no proof of wrong doing, the NOF leaders were freed and returned to Yugoslavia where most were welcome as "heroes" despite the fact that they were pawns in a game to destroy their own people.

Upon their return to the Republic of Macedonia, almost the entire NOF leadership was welcomed back with open arms, given homes and jobs in government positions and made responsible for welcoming the returning Macedonian refugees, including the fighters, who were scattered all throughout Eastern Europe and the USSR.

Now one can only imagine how the former fighters must have felt after they came back to find their former "traitor" leaders in charge of their destiny... again... Remember Zahariadis told the fighters that the reason they lost the war and were driven out of their homes and homeland was because these very same NOF leaders betrayed them.

I personally was witness to an argument between two Macedonians about this, only about a decade ago, when I heard a Zahariadis supporter yelling “Zahariadis was right”. These Macedonians, who fought under his command, believed Zahariadis was a “hero” and the NOF leaders were “traitors”. I guess no one, especially those who “adored” Zahariadis, was prepared to accept the fact that they were used by Zahariadis to commit a heinous crime against their own people. No one wants to believe that they were made fools of and that they sacrificed themselves to destroy something they believed they were fighting to protect and preserve. Even most of the NOF leadership believed and trusted Zahariadis... until they were betrayed by him in the end.

To make matters worse, the returning refugees including the former fighters were not welcomed as heroes when they returned to the Republic of Macedonia. The moment they arrived they were sent to Idrizovo Prison in Skopje for debriefing and treated like criminals by the interrogators. One woman with three little children was locked up in jail for two whole days until her turn came to be debriefed. She demanded to know what she had done to deserve this treatment. She received no answer...

And what did they ask during the debriefing? The most important question was “political allegiance”. “Are you with Tito or with Stalin!?” God help those who said “with Stalin” because they are probably still rotting in camps to this day. I asked about that and was told that only very few remained in the camps... those who were suffering from “mental illnesses”...

To make matters even worse, the Macedonians who had deserted the war and were labeled “traitors” and “deserters” by the Communist Party of Greece and by the DAG fighters were put in charge of providing “character references” for the returning fighters. This felt like grinding salt in their still open wounds.

Every effort was made to make life very difficult for the Macedonians from Greek occupied Macedonia, which in the end not only made them bitter but also made them feel like they were guilty of everything that went wrong in the war. It was their fault for not winning the war. It was their fault for being stupid to follow the

Greeks. It was their fault for being driven out of their homes and for abandoning their homeland. There was no end to their misery... and no one wanted to hear about it... And so they suffered in silence until Yugoslavia disintegrated and the Republic of Macedonia divorced itself from that nightmare in 1991.

People who ask me “why are we so divided?” have no clue what we have been through and what we are going through to this day.

INTERVIEWER – Earlier you said the returning Macedonians were questioned about their “political allegiance”. “Are you with Tito or with Stalin!?” What was that all about?

RISTO – Well, as I said earlier, at the time Tito and Stalin were involved in a verbal war and Stalin did many things to have Tito brought down, including assassination attempts. Among the many threats made, Stalin also threatened to “break up” Yugoslavia by creating an independent Republic of Macedonia. Stalin threatened to organize a Macedonian army and send it back to break away Tito’s part of Macedonia. That was the reason why Tito closed the Yugoslav border and refused to allow DAG fighters to enter Yugoslav territory armed. That was also the reason why Stalin took the Macedonian fighters to the USSR, to Tashkent. Stalin’s actions, however, pushed Tito even further towards the “Western camp” and if Stalin touched Tito he knew he would have WW III on his hands.

So, fearing that the returning Macedonian fighters might still be a threat, Tito had his people screen them as they entered the Republic of Macedonia and who was better equipped to screen them than those who knew them from the war, the deserters who Tito trusted.

This war is a mystery in itself which will take many years to unravel because nothing about it is what it seems. The 60 years of silence unfortunately did not help.

Let me say that the fact alone that Greece closed the border on the Macedonian civilian refugees, on the innocent people fleeing to save themselves from being killed, and prevented them from returning back to their homes, speaks volumes. This act by itself verifies that the Greeks had aims at permanently “exiling” the Macedonian

people. One does not need to know the whole story to figure out what went on in Greek occupied Macedonia during that war.

Also, the communists who started the Greek Civil War had no exit strategy in case the war went sideways... There was no negotiated settlement for ending the war... There was no negotiated settlement for returning the refugees including the 28,000 children who were evacuated in 1948... There were no safeguards put in place to protect the innocent... Every single Macedonian was told by Zahariadis and his cronies that “we are winning the war it’s only a matter of time before we defeat the enemy...” Even after what remained of DAG withdrew to Albania, Zahariadis still insisted that the war was not over and that they were re-grouping to go back and fight... There was no end to the lies and deceit...

INTERVIEWER – You said a person does not need to know the “whole story” to figure out what happened during the Greek Civil War? How do you figure that?

RISTO – It’s easy in hindsight. By process of elimination and by examining what was said and what was done.

For example every time Zahariadis needed more Macedonians to sacrifice he said “by joining this struggle en masse you Macedonians have earned the right to self-determination and to create your own country”. First of all who was this Zahariadis to make such promises, God? This was not possible without the consent of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece and Albania and without Great Power approval. So obviously Zahariadis was “lying” to the Macedonian people.

Zahariadis later said “by joining this struggle en masse you Macedonians have earned the right to be equal to the Greeks” but he could only guarantee these rights if the communists in Greece won the war. Did Zahariadis not know that one, Greece was under British influence and that the British would not allow the communists to win in Greece? Two, how were the Macedonians expected to win the war when the Greek communists controlled everything associated with that war? So obviously Zahariadis “lied” about that too.

So, how many lies must be told to discover that something isn't right?

Look at what the Macedonian people were offered and look at what they received. They were offered a country of their own and human rights and they received "genocide". Was this a coincidence? No! It was perpetrated! Everything that was said and done after the fact was to bury the evidence and let the guilty get away with murder.

Our "genocide" has never been reported or investigated. One should be able to see how this can make some people... even some countries, nervous. The surface of the so-called "Greek Civil War" is now being scratched and it stinks of "genocide" to high heaven. What more can I tell you?

INTERVIEWER – You said that Yugoslavia was involved in this too?

RISTO – Yes, I believe it was but only a few people in Yugoslavia knew about it. Think about it. Tito knew about all the things I mentioned earlier. The iron curtain, the sphere of influence Agreement between Stalin and Churchill, how the British felt about the communists in Greece... about the Macedonian presence in Greek occupied Macedonia... all of it. And as I mentioned earlier Tito even had a tiff with Stalin about supplying the war effort in Greece.

Also please note that NOF was formed on April 23, 1945 under Tito and Kolishevski's leadership and was dispatched to Greece by Kolishevski in the fall of the same year. The elections in Greece which initiated the Greek Civil War were scheduled to take place on March 31st, 1946. Why would Tito and Kolishevski prepare and dispatch NOF to Greek occupied Macedonia to start a new conflict even before the elections were decided unless Tito knew something beforehand?

Then, look at how Tito's cronies treated the Macedonian fighters when they were returning to their homeland. He treated them like "criminals"! Why? So that they wouldn't ask too many questions?

I don't believe the NOF leadership was involved in the conspiracy. I believe they were patriots in their hearts who allowed their hearts, instead of their minds, to guide them. They lacked the courage to ask "why" and just did what they were told.

So Yugoslavia was involved alright! Some of the top leaders were part of the conspiracy, the rest were too busy being loyal sycophants to notice anything. Survival in those days depended on who you knew and not on what you knew. Not many cared about what you knew. That's how it was for us Macedonians from Greek occupied Macedonia living under Yugoslav rule.

INTERVIEWER – Do similar divisions, the kind that existed in the Republic of Macedonia after the war, exist in the Diaspora?

RISTO – No. I have not observed such divisions here. But I will tell you a story of how I discovered them.

I had just published my book "Macedonians in Greece 1939-1949" when I visited the Republic of Macedonia for the first time and, naturally, with the subject still fresh in my mind, I was anxious to discuss the issues with our compatriots there. What happened was embarrassing. People there were talking about issues I had never heard of before. I just published a book on the subject and found I was completely in the dark. That's how bad the situation with us Macedonians from Greek occupied Macedonia is. The 60 years of silence were real. That information never made it out of the Republic of Macedonia. Why was that? Because no one cared about our problems. Yugoslavia was more concerned about "its good neighbourly relations" with Greece than about its own citizens.

I thought I knew everything there was to know... but I was wrong. I thought no more books existed on the subject... but I was wrong.

There were literally hundreds of books written and available... all in Macedonian with no effort made by any government institution to have them exported to the Diaspora or translated into English.

I was very disappointed about this and complained as to why nothing was ever done to inform the rest of us, especially those Macedonians living in the Diaspora, like myself who couldn't speak or read Macedonian. Many of us in the Diaspora came directly from Greece and grew up in places like Canada, the US and Australia with very little opportunity to speak, never mind read and write Macedonian.

I was given a suitcase full of books from the various people I met there, and ever since then I have made it my mission to translate as many books as possible and make them available to our people for free. My first objective was to learn to speak and read Macedonian. Since then to this day (September 2016) I have translated 23 books and I am working on translating more. They are all available on the internet in both languages. Translating has become an obsession with me because I want our people to know more about ourselves... it has answered many questions for me and helped me see the "bigger picture" which I am sharing with you today.

There are no visible divisions "of that kind" in our people here in Canada because people don't know about them. There are divisions in the Macedonians in the Diaspora but they have to do more with "loyalties" and "obligations". We have the "Grkomani" (Greco-phils), "Bugaromani" (Bulgaro-phils", few "Serbomani" (Serbo-phils) and so far I have not met any "Albanomani" (Albano-phils). There is also a small division, perhaps too minor to worry about, almost racist, between the so-called "Egeitsi" Macedonians from Greek occupied Macedonia and "Vardartsi" Macedonians from the Republic of Macedonia. This is more like a class division than a political division mainly because of "sour grapes".

The Macedonian refugees who fled Greek occupied Macedonia during the Greek Civil War, including the refugee children, who ended up in Eastern European countries and in the Soviet Union were offered great opportunities to educate themselves. Almost every child and adult took the opportunity to advance themselves. They were encouraged and deeply believed that education was necessary for rebuilding their homeland back in Greek occupied Macedonia. They believed that when they returned they would be useful in rebuilding their country. Greece had never offered them

such an opportunity so they worked extra hard to succeed and they succeeded. Between themselves they were educated and skilled in practically every field.

When these people arrived in the Republic of Macedonia they found the country in desperate need of rebuilding. Their education opened many opportunities which were not available to the less educated local people who followed traditional methods of working on the farm. So, the so-called “newcomer Aegeans” were seen as people who came to the Republic of Macedonia to take jobs away from the local people. Much like us here in Canada who blame the immigrants for taking our jobs when clearly they work hard to earn them and we sit on our laurels feeling privileged because we are Canadians.

Unfortunately “Aegeans” are still seen as some sort of “culprits” even today, even here in Canada. By the way it is insulting to call people “Egeitsi” (Aegean) in the Republic of Macedonia but this word is freely used here in Canada by many Macedonians.

INTERVIEWER – You mentioned that other divisions exist in the Diaspora, are you going to talk about them?

RISTO – Yes. I believe it is important not only to talk about them but to also understand their fundamental causes. The most prevalent divisions in the Diaspora are those between the Macedonians and the Bugaromani (Bulgaro-phils) and Grkomani (Greco-phils). These groups, more or less, stay out of each others’ path but sometimes they come into contact in demonstrations and more often in donut shop discussions, where they exchange insults.

I have to admit that I have not been in contact with many because they (Bugaromani and Grkomani) despise me... I think for speaking out and for not giving them attention.

Let me say that there are no Grkomani in the Republic of Macedonia, at least not in the open. But I have heard that there are Bugaromani... maybe? But I have not met any. The Grkomani “phenomenon” exists only in Greece and in the Diaspora.

One might think that here in Canada we are free from the Greeks and we can freely choose our own destiny... But unfortunately it doesn't work like that. A long time ago I used to work with an elderly Macedonian woman from Lerin region. One time I asked her a question, I said: "I can understand why Macedonians from Greek occupied Macedonia behaved in the way they do back home because they have no choice, but what possible reasons could they have to behave this way here in Canada where they are free from the Greeks?" She looked at me with a strange look, giving me the impression that I must be naïve to be asking such a question. She then said: "Because some of them are criminals. They are criminals. They have committed crimes against our people and they need the Greeks to protect them. They are the ones pushing the Greek government to act against us. If the Greek government decides to recognize us and accept us... then what do you think will happen to them? If we want justice and we will want justice then these people will pay. They will be exposed and prosecuted... And they sure don't want that..."

I believe some Grkomani are criminals but not all. Some have interests back in Greece, some have relatives and friends back home who they want to protect... and so on... The Grkomani, even here in Canada, find themselves restricted by the same restrictions they were faced with back in Greece. Some even have interests here in Canada which they need to protect. But there are also those who have been brainwashed by Greek propaganda to think that somehow they are "different" and better than their Macedonian brethren and are following the Greek line... They called themselves "Greeks" but since the Republic of Macedonia declared its independence, they call themselves "Greek-Macedonians". They call their brethren Macedonians "Slavs".

Let me say that Greece has done a fantastic job in warping people's minds and turning brother against brother. It is not only shameful... it is sad. There is no reason for these divisions to exist and most of us don't know why we are divided. But this is how our enemies like us to be... and this is how we are. We just don't have the courage to break the spell and do something about it. And the reason for that is "loyalties"... If my parents were Grkomani do I disappoint them by accepting that I am Macedonian...?

Even families here in Canada have split up over this issue. Children in Grkomani families have been disowned by their parents because they embraced their true Macedonian identity...

INTERVIEWER – What are you doing to bridge this gap?

RISTO – Not much. Not until the entire truth is told. Once people know both sides of the story then, maybe, we can have our “reconciliation” with the Grkomani and Bugaromani. I personally want the truth to come out as soon as possible and when all the stories are told, the people can decide for themselves what they want to be. We Macedonians are a forgiving and accepting people... and there is nothing wrong with belonging to more than one culture as long as we are all included. Macedonians and Greeks can co-exist just like Macedonians and Vlachs and Macedonians and Albanians co-existed for centuries. Unfortunately the Greeks are not like that. With them there is no co-existence. And for that reason, the Macedonians have been put in an impossible position where they must fight in order to survive.

Greece has tormented the Macedonian people for more than a century. It has used every opportunity to erase them. This has been going on since 1878, when the Great Powers decided to partition Macedonia and give a piece of it to Greece.

I often refer to Greece as a ship without a rudder set off on a one way course without the ability to steer. Greece was created that way and continues to function that way to this day... Unfortunately Greece can't decide the “Macedonian Question” alone and on its own, and neither can it “stop” tormenting the Macedonian people without approval from its patrons. It would be naïve of me to think that Greece and Greece alone is doing this to the Macedonian people.

INTERVIEWER – Do you think others, outside of Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and Albania are involved?

RISTO – Yes. I explained earlier that Britain, France and Russia decided to erase Macedonia in 1878 by allowing it to be invaded,

occupied, partitioned and annexed by their protectorates Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria. Then, at the last minute, in 1912 Austro-Hungary stepped in and insisted on creating an Albanian state in order to block Serbia and Russia from reaching the Adriatic Sea. As I also explained, Greece was created by Britain to block Russia from reaching the Mediterranean Sea. These acts were committed by the Great Powers, who knew very well that they were destroying Macedonia. These very same Great Powers sanctioned Greece's draconian assimilation policies to eradicate everything that was Macedonian. Why would they do that if they "cared" about Macedonia and the Macedonian people?

Macedonia was partitioned by the Great Powers and can only be put back together by the Great Powers. No one expected the Republic of Macedonia to become an independent state. It was a complete surprise and a cause of problems for the Great Powers.

It was by no accident that the world was led to believe that Macedonians don't exist. Greece may have been the "front man" yelling no Macedonians exist but its patrons were right behind it, supporting it. This was done because the Great Powers do not want Macedonians to exist.

It was by no accident that "no one" investigated any of the "genocides", "atrocities" and "human rights" violations committed against the Macedonian people in Greece. And if any investigations were done, they were done for "other" reasons. I say this because "nothing" was ever done for the Macedonian people in Greece.

Find me a single book published by western authors after 1913 and before the Republic of Macedonia became independent, that show me a reference that says Macedonians exist in Greece. There isn't one. Is that because these Macedonians don't exist or is it because "someone" very powerful does not want them to exist?

Then, when the People's Republic of Macedonia became independent in 1945, it was immediately labeled an "artificial creation", created by Tito. And so was the Macedonian identity. Some western sources, quoting Greek sources, even claimed that Tito created the Macedonian identity so that he could lay claim to

“Greek-Macedonia” and that the Macedonians living in Macedonia were not Macedonians but “Slavs”. Do you think “denying the existence of Macedonians” was just a coincidence? No. These were perpetrated acts, perpetrated by the Great Powers and then propagated by Greece.

So, going back to our original question, how does one explain a people who allegedly did not exist yesterday suddenly exist today? Think of the implications this will have on history. History will have to be re-written to explain the “Macedonian phenomenon”. How is history going to explain this when, up until now, history tried to bury it? Naturally, any historian worth their salt knew the truth but chose to ignore it. This is true for western historians as well as for Macedonian historians who taught during the Yugoslav era. Now they are apologizing to their students for “lying” to them all those years.

What’s going to happen later, when the Macedonian people start to “look for justice” and would want those who abused them punished? What will happen when the genocides committed against them are investigated?

So I ask you. What path would you choose; choke the life out of Macedonia now, or allow it to live and face the consequences later? Which would you choose if you had the power to make this “problem” disappear now?

Now perhaps we can all understand why there is great “reluctance” on the part of the Great Powers to put Macedonia back on the map. Many countries, including those from the former Soviet block and from former Yugoslavia, even some which did not qualify, like Bosnia, were put on the map, but not Macedonia. Why?

Let me put the question to you another way. If the Great Powers wanted a Macedonia to surface wouldn’t they have made even the smallest effort to find a place for it in this world? Wouldn’t they have left some room in history for it? But they didn’t. They gave everything that was Macedonian to the Greeks and Bulgarians.

Now if the Macedonian people “take back” their heritage, the same heritage that was given to the Greeks and Bulgarians, what will be left for Greece and Bulgaria, particularly for Greece? Nothing!

Everything and I mean everything, the world values today has been attributed to the “Greeks”. “The Ancient Greeks did this for us and the ancient Greeks did that for us...” Where is this going to go when it turns out that the so-called “Ancient Greeks” are a 19th century concoction just like the “Modern Greeks”?

Every day in school, on television, you hear and learn of the many things the ancient Greeks “gave us” and did for us... So many things that can fill libraries... But one needs to ask “Where did this 2,500 year-old information come from?” From where was it obtained? From the “inscribed stones” in Athens? From the “goat skins” found in caves? Did the so-called “Ancient Greeks” from 2500 years ago leave us “that much” information on stones and skins? Or was this “somehow” concocted in some Western laboratory over the years just like “classical history”?

What will happen when the world discovers that Ancient Athens was just a “village” in comparison to Alexandria of Egypt with its grand library, schools and museum? What will happen when the world finds out Alexandria was a Macedonian and not a Greek city? What will happen when the world finds out that the Macedonians and not the Greeks translated the Bible from Hebrew to Koine, sponsored and paid for by the Ptolemais, a Macedonian royal family? Should I go on? There are thousands of such examples I can give you of things “wrongly” attributed to the Greeks, including the so-called “Greek gods”. Really? Even the gods were Greek?

I have just given you a small sample of what will happen if Macedonia comes into being. It will be a massive revolution that will shake up the academic world and not only expose its lies but will embarrass academia for turning a blind eye to this for so many years.

I am not denying that the ancient people in the Greek peninsula existed and made some contributions. All I am saying is that their story and contributions have been “greatly exaggerated”... at the

expense of the Macedonians who not only created a great empire but also greatly contributed to world civilization... much, much more than any Ancient Greeks have done. But like I said, the modern world leaders have given it all away to the Modern Greeks, a kind of people who would take away everything from you, toss you out of your home and make you feel guilty for being alive. A kind of people who don't care about anyone but themselves and who believe they are entitled to everything, even if it doesn't belong to them.

The Macedonian people also need to wake up to this and begin to understand what is happening to them and that it will take "a world revolution" to free themselves from this predicament.

INTERVIEWER – You sure paint a bleak picture for the Macedonian people, don't you?

RISTO – Yes. But I hope I am wrong. We all hope that this will "go away" one day on its own but then I am a realist. I am looking at the situation realistically. And like I said before, we can only move forward if we understand what's behind us. The things I am talking about here need to be understood by the Macedonian people. After they understand them it is mandatory that the rest of the world understands them too. This will basically level the playing field for us. Both the lies and the truth need to come out, to be told. The truth shattered the old belief that the earth was flat and the truth will shatter the Greek myth and set the Macedonian people free. I never said exposing the truth was going to be easy, but it needs to be done... and the sooner the better... our story needs to be told and heard now.

INTERVIEWER – This all sounds promising but how would you go about educating your people, never mind educating the world?

RISTO – It takes will, the will of the Macedonian people to do what is necessary... tell their story and learn about other people's stories. I have met many people who are more than willing to tell our story but are frustrated because they don't have the resources or a medium to turn to. Also, our enemies are prepared to refute anything we say and provide their own explanations. The Greeks, Bulgarians,

Serbian, Albanian and their patrons have made sure their stories have been well-publicized and it will take a revolution to undo that.

And because they have been beaten down for so long, the Macedonian people are unwilling to accept just anything, even the truth, without much convincing. So we need to do much more than what we have been doing so far to get our message out there.

We also need to go on the offensive and challenge those who deny our existence. We need to challenge them on factual matters and issues that matter to us. For example, Greece is obviously a modern creation created for the first time in 1828, so how can a new nation have historical rights that stretch beyond 1828? Once we make the point to our people to understand that Greece did not exist before 1828 then every argument and claim Greece makes can be easily challenged. We know the Greeks were created by assimilating the Vlachs, Albanians, Turks, Macedonians and other ethnicities that existed in that region before Greece became a country. So Greece's "real" history lies in the history of the Vlachs, Albanians, Turks, Macedonians and others. But according to history the Vlachs and Albanians arrived on the Greek peninsula sometime during the 11th to the 13th centuries AD. The Turks arrived much later, so where do the Greeks get the idea that Macedonia belongs to them and not to the Macedonian people?

It is arguments such as these that our people, especially our politicians, must know and employ, no matter how ridiculous they sound, in order to bring the Greeks back to reality. And the reason such arguments are not used is because our people either don't know "real" Greek history or don't have the courage to stand up to the Greeks. But problems such as these can easily be remedied... with time... and with much effort. I know arguments such as these may sound completely ridiculous in view of the modern image of Greece, but the truth is the truth. They are no more ridiculous than the Greeks telling the world they are the "descendants of the Ancient Greeks", and that Macedonia belongs to them because of that.

As for educating the world, like I said before, we need to take the initiative and tell "our story" the way it happened, the way we

experienced it, the way we see it, instead of reacting to Greek provocations and issues that are of no value to us.

INTERVIEWER – Thank you Risto for your time and for your thoughts.

RISTO – I also want to thank you for giving me this opportunity to share with you some of the issues that are near and dear to me.