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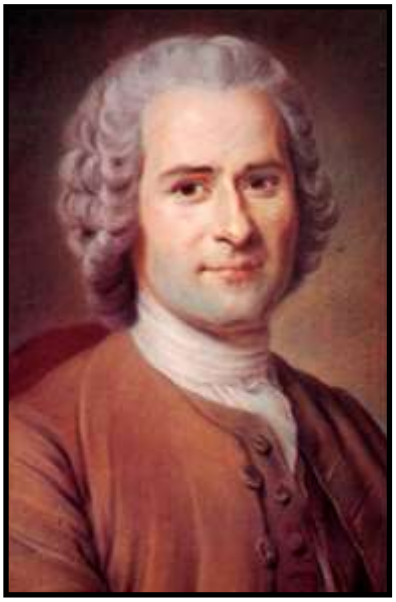
The Uses and Abuses of Reason

By Jim Thomev

David Hume



J.-J. Rousseau

Immanuel Kant

In the art and science of politics fraud and coercion are part and parcel of the territory. This has been the case from time immemorial but in modern times the refinements have become extraordinary thanks to the development of mass communication, globalization, and the free market ideology in the West which spreads a wide net. Power, prestige and authority are often abused to further goals that are detrimental to both democracy and justice or fair play and basic human rights. At its worst, war through the naked use of power is often waged; this brutal approach is often justified by hypocritical claims about wonderful goals like the improvement of a nation's society through the democratic values that the invader will make possible as in Iraq and Afghanistan for instance.

But the so-called liberal democracies, like Australia, which is touted as one of the best countries to live in, have serious flaws where their election outcomes can be influenced by powerful media monopolies and lives of "quiet desperation" may be the norm among many of its citizens. In all this, the use of advertising, propaganda, brainwashing, torture, sanctions, threats etc presents a bewildering array of techniques and methods by which power is exercised over others.

I want to explore some aspects of the abuse of politics and authority in our age of uncertainty by invoking some of the powerful ideas since the Age of Reason, as the eighteenth century in Europe has been somewhat grandiosely named. I will be mainly focusing examples still fresh in the reader's mind: on the recent Australian federal election (if the reader is an Australian citizen), and the name dispute over Macedonia between the shattered Hellenic Republic and the struggling Republic of Macedonia which has been an interminable, futile saga since Macedonia declared its independence over 20 years ago.

I will argue that the power of reason is a two edged sword-when used constructively human beings can get rid of plagues, cure illnesses, produce great thoughts and art work etc. But when used for ambitious aggrandisement of the individual ego or national ego it can be pernicious beyond the imagination.

Some ideas in history that shaped our modern era

In his celebrated essay, *What is enlightenment?,* the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1726-1806) saw the essence of freedom, indeed the whole point of being a human being, in the capacity of the individual to think independently. In other words, one has to think for oneself, to use one's reason and not merely submit to the authority of others without question.

And while 'reason' was the key slogan of the Enlightenment in general, a clear definition was rarely given by the thinkers. All one could safely assume about what 'reason' meant, was that it liberated the mind from its enslavement to authority and tradition-in that era the main sources of oppression were rightly perceived to be the crown and church. The spirit of the enlightenment, this new attitude of radically questioning the past, was summarised by Kant in two words

of scholarly Latin-*sapere aude*-"Dare to be wise" or "Dare to use your reason!"

The biggest attack was on the traditional authority of the Church. This institution was considered not only corrupt in its practices but its very doctrines and teachings were summed up by Voltaire as superstition. Voltaire's war cry was *Ecrasez l'infame* –literally, "Eradicate the infamy!" as he and his fellow publicists and propagandists against the traditional views of society and the world, best known as the *philosophes*, regarded the Church as having demeaned humanity with beliefs and behaviour unworthy of human dignity. (The term *philosophe* did not include original and profound thinkers like Kant, David Hume or J-J Rousseau who were the source of many of the radical and brilliant ideas, and were not even in agreement with each other except in regard to their condemnation of traditional views, which, according to them, had to be discarded.)

While the concern was to rid the age of the corruption and abuse of power by both the clergy and the crowned heads of Europe who were absolute monarchs, the *philosophes* taken as a whole were not that keen on democracy, which they thought would lead to mob rule worse than the traditional despotism they were concerned about. Their preference was to have wise or enlightened rulers, paradoxically, "enlightened despots".

Jean-Jacques Rousseau went against this general grain – he believed that the people should be enlightened and that all political rule should be an expression of their collective will. Rousseau was a tormented man full of contradictions who inevitably suffered from a persecution complex. He wrote radical, detailed theories about education and the raising of children, but put his own natural children in an orphanage. His highly influential writings on politics and education were interpreted by the Jacobins (led by Robespierre and Saint-Just) during the French Revolution to mean that both the church and crowned heads had to be destroyed literally with a hyperactive Madame Guillotine. They established a short-lived reign of terror in which thousands of clergy were executed; the divine right of kings was symbolically terminated by abridging the head of Citizen Louis Capet, the former Louis XVI and last despotic ruler of the regime that had been swept away by a revolution that was declared over when a young General Napoleon Bonaparte directed the cannons at the Parliament in its tenth year. The great adventure of spreading enlightenment ideas began as Napoleon began his conquest of reactionary Europe thus bringing to the world's attention that Caesar and Alexander had a worthy successor, as the astute Stendhal noted.

"No one can rule guiltlessly"

Antoine Saint-Just, Jacobin terrorist and lawyer

In his essay "What is Enlightenment?"Kant gives Frederick the Great of Prussia as an example of a crowned head who can still be very oppressive even if he is "enlightened". Frederick had told his subjects they could argue, chat freely, drink Chardonnay, but at the end of the day they had to obey. Voltaire and the other propagandists feared mob rule or democracy, so they hoped that at least the rulers could be persuaded to become wise, especially under their tutelage. (The prototype of the philosopher-king is elaborated by Socrates in Plato's Republic (4-5 century BCE). Frederick was lionised initially but he let everyone down; after carrying on about how terrible and unenlightened Machiavelli was when he advised his prince about the craft of politics in his own little booklet titled the Anti-Machiavel, Frederick followed Old Nick's advice to the very letter in his own ruthless practice. During his long reign (1740-86), the Prussian king spent most of the time embroiled in wars and battles he himself had started. Of course, in his spare time he did the right thing: he cultivated the arts, played the flute tolerably well and chatted to famous philosophes; he was even a great friend of Voltaire who had stayed at his court until they quarrelled. The consultations between the "enlightened despots" (Catherine the Great of Russia was another) were merely gestures towards the new ideas– both of the monarchs mentioned here were hard as nails despots; both were involved in the enactment of one of the bloodiest injustices of the eighteenth century – the tragic partition of Poland.

The strong belief in reason often blew out into zealotry: the perfectibility of human beings and society was considered achievable by submitting everything to the bar of reason.

When Kant was urging people to be daring and fearless, to seize democratic rights in particular, freedom of thought and speech in the public domain, there had been no real tradition of freedom or democracy thanks to the assumption by the traditional guardians that the answers had all been worked out since the coming of Christ. Christianity had done what both the *philosophes* and their 53th century utopian successors did-they interpreted both past and future history as a result of the advent Jesus Christ whom they believed to be the Messiah. Thus the *philosophes* with their humanist reason explained history in its light and wrote of the hopes of the future as a result of the elevation of human reason.

Where the *philosophes*, as well as some of the major philosophers, got it wrong, was in their naïve view that the exercise of reason would fix everything. When we consider what is going on in the world today one can wonder at such faith and optimism. I suppose it brings us back to the notion that if you believe everybody in the past was wrong, you have to reflect about

where you yourself may have it wrong. If anything, history demonstrates that human fallibility is universal. This is not to lapse into self-pity or despair – it means the challenge is as massive as ever and that there is no such thing as the perfect solution, or the perfect economic and political system, as some American scholars crowed when the Soviet system collapsed, but have had to eat their words of several volumes in recent years

SLOGANS

Led by Robespierre, the Jacobins of Paris in 1793 were similar to the Bolsheviks in Russia in 1917. The former had as their slogan, "liberty, fraternity, equality" whereas the latter, less abstractly, "peace, land, and bread". The Jacobins only ruled for about a year or less, but with their short reign of terror destroyed the notion of the divine right of kings and sent the church packing from its heavy political involvement in state matters once and for all. It is significant that both the French and Russian revolutions were bloody and involved the destruction of the royal families as well as rendering the Church powerless as they represented the old order of tradition and authority. And both revolutions led to formidable dictatorships.

Slogans, of course, are certainly not going out of style as every political party has one at election time, usually indicating its key idea or platform for which it seeks power. Thus the fascist parties of the 20th century, signalled that they wished to create a totalitarian society of the Right with one charismatic leader at the top, as was the case of the Nazis with the fuehrer as the basic organising principle: "one people, one nation, one fuehrer". Mussolini apart from having every child in school salute his photo or statue first thing in the day with the phrase "Mussolini ha sempre ragione!" (Mussolini is always right!) Also had a national slogan "Dio, patria, famiglia" (God, fatherland, family) similar to Franco's fascists who were more successful in Spain. All these dictatorships were created drawing on the gullibility and credulity of the masses which had been instilled by hundreds of years of abject submission to the powerful authority of the respective churches. Democracy, pride, independence of mind, are hard roads to travel and cannot be achieved overnight by rational thought alone.

When the Greek military took over in Greece in 1967, the dictators not only appealed to tradition with the usual fascist slogans about religion, nationalism and conservative family values, they also restored the artificial version of the standard Greek language Katharevousaa ("the pure one") and attempted to eliminate from official communications and newspapers the universally understood demotic.

And to bring the story to Australia, perhaps the most successful slogan to win an election was "It's time!" Gough Whitlam led the Australian Labor Party to victory in 1972. As for the hapless Kevin Rudd in 2013, his somewhat pale and fatigued "A new way", hardly got him or the party anywhere. Tony Abbot's unrelenting antagonism to the Labor Party with emotive macho slogans like "stop the boats", was probably not much of an influence in itself . No doubt having practically all the mainstream media on side was more effective, together with a Government with terrible internal conflicts. I think slogans and the usual advertiser techniques of the market economy in Australia can be very effective. Short sound bytes which denigrate the Government and the leadership in a toxic atmosphere where come backs and clear explanations are not possible, make it a different ball game altogether and reason or logical explanations may be powerless due to the basic disabling of dialogue and lack of serious coverage for a wide audience which may be bored by it all. As it happened...

The Australian federal election of 2013 and one or two things it told us

In Australia, there is concern about the erosion of democracy by what I would call the ascendancy of the managers and the manipulative techniques of the media and the advertiser. You can be as critical as you like, if you are the average consumer in a free market society you may still be quite slavish. Perhaps a free slave may be the best description, if we recall what Frederick the Great of Prussia told his subjects: argue and disagree as much as you like – and this is the all-important bottom line, but *obey*. One still feels that Australians can be very obedient conformists.

What? Don't we have freedom, of speech, of thought, forums at every nook and cranny of our suburbs, the media, the internet, public places etc?

There are loads of examples about how biased the mainstream mass media was in the federal election; the essential problem was the degree to which the techniques of the advertiser, appealing to deep-seated insecurity (invasion from the north), greed, fear, and overwhelming people's minds with numbers and figures that could not be verified. The distortions and spins on policies created uncertainty for which the only solution presented was a change of government. In this climate of confusion and uncertainty, no due consideration was given as to what the Opposition was offering in its place. The three word slogans such as "stop the boats", "no carbon tax" and "no mining tax" were not explained as to how all would be costed and done and how it would remedy the problems or what possible consequences would flow from these slogans.

The Opposition went on about the national debt which the Government had run up, the Government defended their position by claiming

they had to spend to maintain the economy robust and protect the country from the GFC and to keep Australians employed.

Either way, there was no vision or talk of values beyond vague utilitarian notions of keeping the nation secure and the economy healthy. I believe much of the present confusion and waste of time is due to the lack of clarity about the roles the government and opposition should be playing. And above all, the goal of being elected or re-elected needs so much dedication of time and resources and adversarial behaviour, that the real task of political governance – a fraught and difficult job at the best of times – gets relegated to secondary status. (I think a sympathetic case can be made for politicians and the difficulties they face. The answers to the question: 'who's to blame?' would be a moot point, of course.

The values which are pivotal to our social democracy in Australia like free speech, human rights, justice, education, health – to name a few, are at economic risk. It's all very well to think independently, critically, have an insight into the problems that are causing inequalities and so forth – as an approach of course that is indispensable in our social democracy. But what happens if the system of justice or human rights, to give two crucial examples, can only be accessed by those who have the money or resources to hire the lawyers?

To go back to Kant's exhortation to "dare to be wise": if you are under pressure at work to perform and to jump as high as you are told to, have a family to raise, face menacing rumblings about rising unemployment, high costs, volatile markets - how can you cultivate your critical faculties to a point where you can become aware about which politicians are putting what over you and why?

And supposing that you did get to the point of critical awareness that gives you a correct diagnosis of the situation, are there no more factors to consider relevant to the case? Can everybody achieve the requisite "enlightenment"? In practical terms most people, as long as their life or livelihood is not threatened, prefer to obey even without talking or arguing much or at all. Most people don't like rocking the boat and the best way to avoid doing that is not to think too much about "politics". It's the best way to avoid trouble, as the prudent peasants do, who bow the head when the king is passing in case he lops it off with his sabre. A delightful Macedonian proverb springs to mind here: Наведената гла ќе куртули од сабијата на кралот-*the bowed head will be spared the king's sword…*

The naming dispute between Macedonia and Greece

The EU has huge problems with finance and a cluster of particularly disastrous economies among a few of its major member-states. Greece is unique in that it is blamed for the substantial part of its woes in this crucial area of economic management. Jose Manuel Barroso, the European Commission President, very recently re-iterated that the governance of the Greece had left a lot to be desired and that the blame for the financial catastrophe is to be squarely laid on the shoulders of its politicians of recent decades.

Amazingly, given Barroso's frankness in this regard, he does not castigate Greece for its hopeless human rights record, its xenophobia, and its appalling intolerance and chauvinism, values which the EU sanctimoniously preaches.

Nor is Europe prepared to end the stupid farce of the name-dispute by telling Greece it should just pull its head in, recognise the Republic of Macedonia and the Macedonians by calling them by their rightful name instead of constantly insulting them and having on-going hostility between two close neighbouring states. It is appalling that no European politician seems willing to come clean and give an honest opinion on the matter officially, and telling Greece that what Macedonia calls itself or believes of itself in terms of its own history is the least of the problems in Europe or the Balkan region. It is especially the least of Greece's problems in the present crisis!

It is hard to credit that the Greeks who have been 'negotiating' the name of the sovereign nation neighbour with its various democratically elected leaders, for nearly 20 years, has not budged an inch on its ridiculous insistence that it is the Macedonians who are "intransigent' and who harbour irredentist claims on the whole of Macedonian territory, of which Greece had incorporated the lion's share after the Balkan Wars (1912-1913).

It does not require first-order diplomatic insight to recognise that the Greeks are insincere and the game of attrition they are playing is not something they will end until Macedonia gives in completely by renouncing their very name which the Greeks insist can only be considered Greek. (A bit like fetta I suppose, ho hum, yawn). It has not been enough for the Macedonians to have conceded by disposing of their self-chosen flag and to have altered the constitution of their legitimately formed sovereign nation so as not to refer to the Macedonian minority in Greece.

Recently, we have heard the news that the PM Mr Samaras is not interested in any solution that contains the word "Macedonia" in Macedonia's name. So the situation has not progressed from where it was at the outset: either the Greeks get it their way or they will continue to thwart Macedonia's international integration. Is this unfair and unscrupulous? Greece has used historical "arguments" that are not just contentious but hopelessly irrelevant, let alone flagrant abusive tactics aimed at violating the

sovereign rights of Macedonia. And in view of the obvious in the situation as to who the recalcitrant and oppressive side is, I find it laughable that an issue regarding "Greek sensitivities" should be raised.

It is surprising to hear Mr Samaras not having a ready solution for such a trifle as the renaming of Macedonia. After all, according to one Greek citizen interviewed by Macedonian television (in English) in an Athens street when the Greek PM recently met with President Barack Obama about the melancholy facts of the Greek economy, the dear lady being interviewed affirmed her faith that Mr Samaras had Greek genes and so he was certain to fix the economy.

Greece must deliver its citizens from the bleak future which is destroying its younger generations (65% unemployment among the 18-24 year olds). It can't remain in the imbecilic time-warp of nationalist politics; it has to work towards a new mind-set through its education system and other opinion forming agencies like its moribund, backward looking church if that institution is to serve some constructive purpose in the modern world. It is a betrayal of its citizenry to keep brainwashing it about Greek superiority with "Slav-eating" policies and an undemocratic approach to all Greece's minorities.

If the Greeks are serious about the Athens of today providing cultural continuity from the Athens of Socrates, why not take the lessons of that history as a guide to the modern world? In his own age, Socrates was condemned to death as an immoral and impious man by Athenian law. So the man who is now known throughout the world as the greatest teacher of morality and independent thinking was put to death as a criminal in a city-state made illustrious by many others like himself. If Socrates was a humanist like the *philosophes* of the 18th century, what's wrong with listening to him talk about justice and fair and equal treatment of others? What's good about feeling Greek and superior these days, claiming cultural (and even blood!!) lineage when no one believes you because you can't even get the finances in order?

Socrates said know yourself and think about all the important things in life that make it worthwhile like proper moral conduct – that can only come from the human mind or soul, not some text put together by goat herds in the hills of the middle east thousands of years ago, but by rational discussion of all the issues that impact on peace and productive co-existence.

Conclusion

Fortunately, like the commodities in the modern supermarket chains of our own "free" market society, all totalitarian states or bad regimes have a use-by date, if the past is anything to go by.

Kant was too optimistic in proclaiming that the Enlightenment was the time when "mankind grew out of its self-inflicted immaturity". The *philosophes* themselves exhibited much of this immaturity in dismissing the whole of Europe's past as negative, a mere succession of misdeeds perpetrated by a corrupt clergy. The *philosophes* were as simplistic about the developments in history as they were about human nature i.e. the use of reason would perfect it. This basic belief that progress through the use of reason would eventually lead to Utopia was given the lie by the totalitarian horrors of both the right and the left in the 20th century.

And here we are getting to the crux of the matter: any view of history that ignores the complex realities is irresponsible and ultimately harmful. For at any point in time it is human beings like ourselves who are trying to come to terms with what it is to be alive, with what it is to be a historical creature conscious of a past and a future, that has to make sense of a world in a struggle with its rigours. It is an intellectual crime against humanity to interpret history for manipulative purposes or the promotion of aggressive ideologies and to present the whole past of humanity in a hostile light. I suggest any history should be studied with a view to understanding and to discover as near as possible the truth about the society or civilisation. To cherry-pick history for propaganda purposes is an act of bad faith.

The Enlightenment was far from being a negative phenomenon. The attacks on the dogmas and corruption of the churches were appropriate. If reason had anything to do with it every religion which claims it has the answers to everything in every sphere of human life, would be regarded as an attitude that can only bring harm and poison the world.

What I do not find persuasive about many of the *philosophes* was the belief that all the history of the human family during the ascendancy of the Christians was hopeless and worthless. They clearly overstated their case, or rather did not consider all the relevant factors when making historical judgements. The achievements in literature and the arts and sciences are hardly to be ignored over the Christian centuries. Of course, the price in human suffering has been considerable. But then when has achievement and progress not been costly? If the past were all as bad as the *philosophes* and Marxists of the following century claimed, human beings would have given up the fight for survival or existence well before the Age of Reason brought the new spirit and attitude to the world and society. I realise reformers need "to slay the priest in the sacred wood" in order to take over from them and therefore appear to be more provocative than they may intend.

Independent critical and creative thinkers, on Kant's criteria, will always be in a minority. But reason, thought, creative ideas will need to be always in the stocks. Political

and economic life need not be essentially about the ascendancy of the power-hungry and the money-grubbers. Indeed, the power-hungry money-grubbers that are the bane of our societies and civilisation will always be with us it seems, but they too are also in minority.

I do not believe they are ever going to be the majority because it is in the nature of any coherent society that you can't ever have the bad guys outnumber the good guys – or rather, if you don't like that simple melodramatic formulation drawn from the thrilling cowboy movies I used to watch at the same time as every other kid in the West including George W Bush – I think we can safely generalise that most people usually value self-respect, decency, prefer truth to bullshit in most instances, are law abiding, prefer to give a sucker an even break, and are not overwhelmingly either selfish or altruistic. But we can never be perfect. We have to just make sure our imperfections don't destroy us or the planet. So, *sapere aude*!

How rational can a reading of Kant make you? According to a news item from the Associated Press in Moscow, (16 September) An argument in southern Russia over philosopher Immanuel Kant, the author of "Critique of Pure Reason," devolved into pure mayhem when one debater shot the other. According to the police, the two men, both in their 20s, were discussing Kant while lining up to buy beer when things degenerated and punches were thrown. One of the men pulled out a small gun and fired repeatedly at his interlocutor who was hospitalised. He was later reported not to have sustained life-threatening injuries. No one found out which of Kant's ideas had led to the violence.

The Irredentism of The Clowns

By George N. Papadakis

A few days ago, quite by accident, the program of the so-called "*11th World Conference of the Pan-Macedonian Unions*" fell into my hands. The conference will be staged from the 13th to the 15th of July, in three different locations: Lerin (Florina in Greek), the village Rosen (located in the vicinity of Lerin) and in the town of Bitola, located in the Republic of Macedonia. Upon reading the program and list of participants, my initial reaction was a lengthy smirk. Once I had settled down, I decided to give the program a more attentive viewing and then I began to treat the matter with much more gravity. The gathering of this quaint group of people is taking place under the "patronage" of the Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace, the Prefecture of Western Macedonia and the Municipal Council of Lerin (dear Mr. Mayor, what on earth is going on here? Is this how you intend to convince those surreptitiously governing the land to stop harassing you?). However, it is not entirely certain that these various departments will be covering the costs (if it is the case, it of course means that we citizens will be the ones paying), but it is clear that the departments have given full support to the conference agenda.

So let us examine what this means. There will be a warm welcome from the Minister for Macedonia and Thrace, the well known Mr. Karaoglou, and from both the Prefect and the Mayor of Lerin (will you really be giving your blessing to such a gathering Mr. Voskopoulos??) and the rest of the herd of dignitaries invited to participate. After which, the *propaganda* begins. First there is former Ambassador Karayanis, who will tell us that there never was a 'whole' Macedonia which was subsequently divided. After which a certain Mr. Nistazopoulou-Pelekidou (we really do have a special talent for surnames, don't we?) will "demonstrate" for us that the current Republic of Macedonia has usurped a sacred Greek name, as it has no significant geographic connection to ancient Macedonia.

The "good work" will continue after lunch in the village of Rosen where the conference speakers and dignitaries will attend a Pan-Macedonian Assembly, which has been organized by the local hand of the para-state …. ah oops … I mean to say the local cultural association "Nei Orizentes". I am informed that in Rosen, among a variety of activities, that "Makethonia Ksakusti" (a misappropriated war song) will be sung and then the "Pushtenoto", *without the singing of any lyrics*, will be danced…
Never-the-less the program for the following two days will exceed all expectations. There will be a presentation of various proposals and actions undertaken "*by representatives of cultural associations belonging to Macedonian Greeks who originate from the true Macedonia located beyond Greece* [sic!] *(inhabitants of Bitola, Strumitsa and Melnik etc) and Greeks who live in FYROM – Slavophones, Vlachophones, Sarakachans – descendents of 1946 – 1949 child refugees.*"
Upon the completion of that presentation, everyone will cross the border into the Republic of Macedonia, tour Bitola, visit the church of St. Dimitri and do some sightseeing focused on the old architecture of the town. As is noted in the program guide "*all the icons and frescoes in the church are written in the Greek language*." From this, one can immediately gather that the Macedonians did not possess a cleric of the caliber of the Greek Kandiotis, who organized the destruction of the Macedonian churches in the regions of Lerin and Prespa etc, today located in Greece, to destroy the churches with Greek inscriptions in the Republic of Macedonia.

This three day 'party' which various clowns have contributed to organising, raises some serious questions. Firstly, seeing as the events are organized with the support of the neo-Greek (para) state, one must express concern about the usage of phrases like "*the true Macedonia located outside of Greece*" and "*Greeks in FYROM*" etc. It is plainly obvious that that sort of language is implicitly irredentist. As is well known Greece deceitfully attacks the Republic of Macedonia in regard to "irredentism" as a means of supporting its ridiculous desire to force the country to change its name. The hypocrisy is immense and the examples of it are extremely wide – from southern Albania to Asia Minor, Macedonia and Pontus.

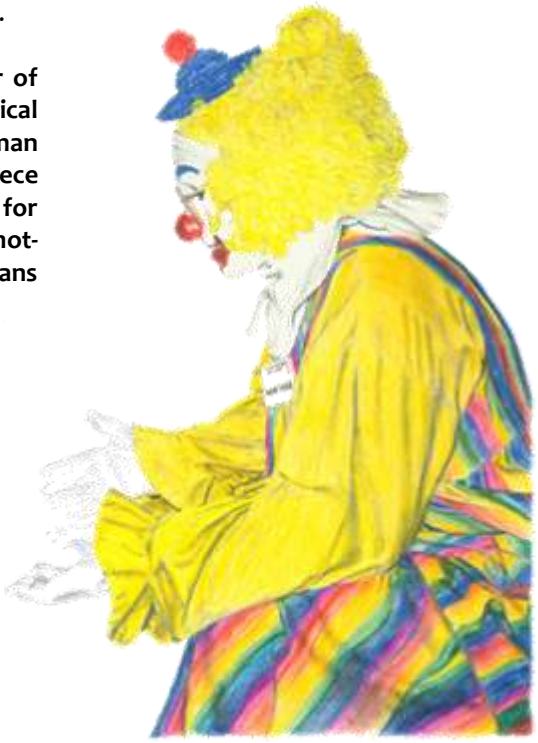
Secondly, among the various participants, the organizers are flying in from overseas, child refugees and the descendents of child refugees from the "Greek Civil War". Taking into account that political refugees who are "*Greek by birth*" were given the green light to return to Greece in 1982, what are we to say about the ethnicity of these people that the "Pan-Macedonians" are bringing to the conference?? If they are ethnic Greeks, why haven't they already returned to Greece?? May be so that they can be used as and when needed by the para-state!? On the other hand, if they are not ethnic Greeks, then what have they got to do with the clowns propagating that "Macedonia is Greek"!?
Thirdly, the whole event could not have been realized by the (para) state, if it did not succeed in obtaining a modicum of assistance from

some local or indigenous Macedonians, who have found it profitable to play along. Some time prior to the current economic crisis, with the aid of business leader types who found the "Megali Idea" (Grand Idea) attractive, like Prodromos Emfidzoglou, the ethnic consciousness of locals was literally purchased and thus local cultural associations were created. The task of these groups was to undermine, from within, the Macedonian consciousness of the inhabitants. They did not have much success and eventually the associations began to disappear from Macedonian villages like Rakovo and Ovchareni, as the sponsors entered a period of fiscal difficulties. Thus during the crisis, the (para)state has had to find new ways to 'influence' the Macedonians and by making some insignificant promises, a few naïve people were found. This is how "Nei Orizondes" was founded in Rosen; how Nikolopoulou in Gornichevo gained an award and how some local government authorities were 'elected'. A few of the latter now feel obliged to return the favour. All the same, their end has been fore written as we know from previous experience that without external support, these cultural associations and local 'aristocrats' will not last longer than a few years.

If we factor in the bankruptcy of the state, it is quite possible that the upcoming "Pan-Macedonian" event will be the last of its kind. Those of you located nearby the places where the event will be staged, might well use the opportunity to attend, as entry is free and good comedic performances are understandably difficult to find in our disastrous economic climate.

George Papadakis is a member of Vinozhito – a Macedonian political party struggling for the human rights of Macedonians in Greece and a journalist who writes for Nova Zora, a newspaper promoting the concerns of Macedonians in Greece.

Translated from Macedonian by George Vlahov of the AMHRC.



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An Exclusive Interview With Pando Ashlakov, The President (Maylor) of Ovchareni

By David Vitkov

DV: *A few months ago we heard about your initiative for the introduction of classes for learning the Macedonian language in the Greek state school system. Could you tell our readers a little about this initiative and its results?*

PA: In the month of March 2013, after a decision had been made in this regard by the Secretariat of Vinozhito [– *'Rainbow', a political party struggling for the human rights of Macedonians in Greece*], as the President of the village of Ovchareni [*Meliti in Greek*], I, together with other members of Vinozhito, prepared a letter in which we requested the teaching of our native language, Macedonian, and the posting of bilingual (i.e. Macedonian and Greek) signs throughout Ovchareni. We sent the letter to the Mayor of Lerin [*Florina in Greek*], the Prefect of Western Macedonia and to Greece's Minister of Education. We also printed the letter in *Nova Zora* [*a newspaper which 'voices' the concerns of Greece's Macedonian minority, distributed in print and via the internet, throughout Greece*] so that people in Greece and beyond, could learn about the details of our initiative. To this day we have not received a response from any of the responsible authorities. Presently we are analyzing the situation in order to come to a decision about our next step and we will in all likelihood pursue the matter via European institutions and if necessary, through the courts.

The letter caused quite a stir throughout the region around Lerin [*Florina in Greek*] and beyond, everybody was talking about it. It was even discussed in the Greek Parliament. As a result, it seems that a number of our people came to believe that there is no need to fear the consequences of pursuing their rights.

DV: *Did you have support from the inhabitants of Ovchareni and the wider region?*

PA: We had more support than we initially thought we would be given. Even though there is still a general fear among the populace, in relation to public declarations in support of pursuing their rights, which makes it very difficult to convince them to sign a petition that lists their personal details, the number of people who did give us their public support, was more than enough to make the initiative worthwhile. This support extended to other villages near Ovchareni, like Zabrdeni, Banitsa and Setina. These villages had previously been part of the same local Council, with Ovchareni. In the future we plan to prepare a similar initiative to include numerous other villages.

DV: *What other plans for the future do you have?*

PA: Even though we have tried in various ways to save the Macedonian language, especially in the regions of Lerin and Voden [*Edessa in Greek*], where the language is still widely spoken, if certain actions are not immediately undertaken, then the language may one day disappear; which will be a great pity! This is why we are planning to introduce our own educational initiatives to try to maintain the language as best we can until the Greek state does the right thing and introduces Macedonian language classes to the state school system. We plan to establish some private schools for the purpose. We will finance these ourselves, though we are hoping that the Macedonian diaspora will also contribute. In this way, at least the children of those among our people who are not fearful will be able to undertake Macedonian language courses. Unfortunately, at the moment, there is no other available solution to this serious problem.

DV: *What can you tell us about the general situation of Macedonians in Greece?*

PA: For Macedonians in Greece, the situation is very difficult. The socio-economic crisis is of course having a negative impact on everyone in Greece, but it is particularly harsh on many Macedonians, as they, as a group, are located among the poorest. On the other hand Macedonians do possess a strong work ethic and the habit of home self-sufficiency, which is aiding them to withstand the worst aspects of the crisis. It's also important to emphasize that Greek bankers rarely gave out substantial loans to Macedonians and this of course means that comparatively few Macedonians have serious debts to pay off. Generally speaking, this is undoubtedly an enviable position to occupy in present day Greece.

DV: *How is the economic crisis impacting on the Macedonian human rights movement?*

PA: There have been both negative and positive aspects to the impact of the crisis on the movement. On the negative side, upon encouraging Macedonians to join the movement, we have commonly received responses like: "we barely have enough food to eat and you want us to find the time to worry about other rights!?" Also on the negative side there are Macedonians who have become timid as a result of the renewed rise of fascism in Greece; they fear a return of the very abusive times of the past and so they are keeping their distance

from the Macedonian human rights movement. On the other hand a not insignificant number of Macedonians have taken a different attitude and have to come to view Greece as not so powerful, responsible and important a state as they had once thought or had been taught to believe. As a result of this they have joined the ranks of Vinozhito.

In other words, there was quite a transformation in the personal values of these Macedonians, especially as they watched, with discomfort, their children set off for overseas to seek employment which Greece cannot offer. Thus more and more of these people are beginning to feel free to publicly declare their Macedonian identity. This is especially the case with younger Macedonians who have no direct experience of the harsher measures undertaken by the Greek state against Macedonians in the more distant past. Hopefully, this is a good sign for the future.

DV: *Nova Zora is into its fourth year of existence. What is your view on the newspaper and its significance for Macedonians in Greece?*

PA: Nova Zora has already become something that is of major importance to Macedonians and other citizens of Greece. The newspaper is aiding the creation of a counter culture which is opposed to the racist politicking of mainstream Greece. I personally like the newspaper very much, as it is obviously one of the most meaningful products we have spawned as a movement in recent years and it is very pleasing to observe that an ever growing number of people are seeking out and reading it. The younger generation is manifesting a very strong desire to learn about its ethnic background, its roots, culture and language and the newspaper's editor, Dimitri Jovanov (Ioannou), along with a team of cultured and educated Macedonians, is doing a good job of serving the younger generation's desire for knowledge. Consequently, a transformation is slowly taking place before our eyes. Macedonians are no longer the uninformed, fearful and easily manipulated people they once were and it is not as easy as it once was, for the Greek authorities to deceive and frighten them. The times are changing and little by little, we are raising our voice. We must all support Nova Zora and ensure that it continues to be printed and distributed. Various members of my family and I personally, do all that we can to keep Nova Zora going and I would like to see more Macedonians, wherever they may live, do the same!

DV: *The local elections will be held next year in Greece. Do you plan to re-nominate yourself as a candidate?*

PA: As you know, some time ago, the Greek authorities changed the laws in relation to local government. All villages are now units belonging to a particular city centre. On account of that, a village president has very limited powers and does not even possess an official seal for the approval of decisions. Thus the hands of a village president are often tied. All the same, I think I will re-nominate because it strengthens the appeal of Vinozhito and although the position has limited powers, it does still allow us to aid Macedonians on some social matters that are of importance. Ultimately the issue of my re-nomination will be decided by the Secretariat of Vinozhito, that's not just in relation to whether I nominate, but also in regard to the manner of the nomination – as an independent or in coalition with others etc.

DV: *Well Mr. Ashlakov, thank you very much for your time and for your frank responses.*

PA: You're welcome and my sincerest regards to your readers. I hope to again visit Australia soon and interact with your members, as I did a few years ago now.

DV: *I'm sure we can arrange that, thank you once more.*

Interview conducted on 20/9/2013 and translated from Macedonian by George Vlahov of the AMHRC.

Pando Ashlakov, President (Mayor) of Ovchareni

Dr. Srdjan Kerim:
Erroneous Assumptions Regarding the Name Dispute

By Dr. Chris Popov

Dr Srdjan Kerim is a well known Macedonian diplomat, economist, scholar and businessman. In his long diplomatic career he has represented Macedonia as an ambassador in Germany, Switzerland and Liechtenstein and in 2000-2001 he was Macedonia's foreign minister. From 2001-2003 he was Macedonia's ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations. From September 2007 to September 2008, Dr Kerim was President of the 62nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly. Throughout his distinguished career Dr. Kerim appears to have accumulated vast experience in international political and economic affairs.

On 25 July 2013 Dr Kerim delivered one of the keynote speeches at the opening of the United Macedonian Diaspora's 4th Global Conference which was held in Skopje.

In that speech he made the following statements regarding the dispute over Macedonia's name and matters related to Macedonia's efforts to join NATO and the EU. The most notable of these statements as reported by the Macedonian daily "Utrinski Vesnik" on 25 July 2013 were the following:

> "*Where do we belong? There. Macedonia will be a part of NATO and the EU, this is what I assert. There is a matter which must be solved, which must be solved and is solvable. In diplomacy there is no "it's not possible", stated Kerim, pointing to the example of Serbia and Kosovo which no one believed would sit at the same table and negotiate*"

Furthermore, he continued…

> "*We together with Greece can and will be able to reach a mutual understanding in order to resolve that dispute because it is beginning to slowly frustrate us, which is understandable, as time is passing and we are still stuck in the same spot" stated Kerim. Further on, he also made statements on other matters-that in Macedonia we have created divisions on all basic matters, that we do not debate, but attack each other instead, that we should not be frustrated when Ali Ahmeti travels abroad and speaks about the name, as he has that right and that right cannot be disputed, however what can be disputed is who bears the responsibility for that which has or has not been achieved. That in the past twenty years there have been so many wars in the region and yet not one border has been changed, that Macedonia has 25 % of the Gross Domestic Product of the EU, that there is huge unemployment in Macedonia and yet still a lack of skilled workers*" ("Дијаспората се подели за да се обедини" http://www.utrinski.mk/default-mk.asp?ItemID=D965ED32E2D17F42AAC570902EA4DF43)

If one were to cast an uncritical eye on these statements and allow oneself to be impressed by Dr Kerim's diplomatic, political and academic career, the above observations could be interpreted as eminently rational and well-founded. However, closer examination reveals an inability on the part of Dr Kerim to grasp the gravity of the dispute over Macedonia's name and the consequences of acquiescence to Greek (and increasingly Bulgarian) demands.

Dr Kerim believes that Macedonia and Greece can reach a "*mutual understanding*" regarding the name of the Republic of Macedonia and he mentions the example of Serbia and Kosovo reaching an agreement over the normalisation of relations earlier this year as an example of diplomacy bringing together states involved in a seemingly intractable dispute.

It is wrong to compare the Serbia-Kosovo dispute to the Greek-Macedonian dispute over Macedonia's name or to use it as a template for the possible solution of the name issue. Firstly, while the agreement on the normalisation of relations between Kosovo and Serbia in April 2013 would have seemed very unlikely just one year ago, it is of an entirely different character. It is true that the conclusion of such an agreement was a precondition for considering whether to open negotiations on Serbia becoming a possible EU member and a possible Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) between Kosovo and the EU, however neither the EU or any other European country made the opening of such negotiations contingent on forcing Serbia to recognise the independence of Kosovo, something that the Serbian state would consider unthinkable given the central place that Kosovo occupies in Serbia's history and national mythology.

In the case of the EU and NATO's insistence that Macedonia "solve" the name dispute with Greece, while simultaneously meeting the requirement to establish good neighbourly relations with both Greece and Bulgaria, Macedonia is being coerced into relinquishing its name, something no other nation in the world has been asked to do. Moreover, the Greek demand that the new name be used *erga omnes* (for all purposes, including internally) is part of a strategy designed to parlay the new name of the state into a renaming of the Macedonian people and language and eventually

erase the bases of Macedonian identity. A "bilateral solution" is one that Greece, the Republic of Macedonia's most implacable enemy, will have to agree to and one which, if achieved in the context of EU and NATO sympathy for the Greek position, if not outright support, will lead to the destabilisation of the Republic of Macedonia and the erosion of Macedonians' distinct ethnic identity, as it will be predicated on the strategy of denying the existence of Macedonians in Greece, which is one of the issues which has led to Greece's irrational crusade against the Republic of Macedonia. Therefore, one cannot compare a dispute over borders and diplomatic recognition, as in the case of Serbia and Kosovo, with the Greek-Macedonia dispute which involves the complete negation of a people's and nation's right to self-determination and self-identification.

In the above mentioned speech Dr Kerim commented that *"that we should not be frustrated when Ali Ahmeti travels abroad and speaks about the name, as he has that right and that right cannot be disputed…… "*.

It is true that no one can prevent Ahmeti, as the leader of the Albanian party which forms part of the ruling coalition from travelling abroad and discussing the name issue. However, one must examine the nature and intention of Ahmeti's discussions abroad before passing judgement on whether we should or should not be frustrated with his actions. On this basis, it is strange indeed that Dr Kerim should be defending the right of Ali Ahmeti to advocate possible "solutions" to the name dispute during his visits to Washington, Brussels, Athens and Sofia, when it is well-known that he and the party he leads, the DUI, have consistently stated that they would accept any name that the Republic of Macedonia agrees to with Greece, as long as that name does not contain the name "Slav" or derivatives of it, in order to speed up Macedonia's acceptance as a member of NATO and the EU. Apart from the fact that Ahmeti was involved in an armed a rebellion against the legitimate Macedonian government in 2001, he cannot in any shape or form be considered someone who has Macedonia's best interests at heart, as those interests are intimately connected to a resolute defence of its name and territorial integrity.

In fact, it could be argued that Ahmeti's DUI and the DPA led by Menduh Thaci have been working on an agenda which sees the federalization of Macedonia as the first stage of a process leading to the division of Macedonia and the eventual incorporation of western Macedonia and areas within and around Skopje into a Greater Albania, despite their protestations that this is not the case. It also appears that Ahmeti's interventions abroad on this issue have not been previously agreed with Premier Gruevski or the largest Macedonian party in the governing coalition, VMRO-DPMNE and seem to be at variance with official policy on the name issue. This is somewhat akin to Australia's National Party leader, Warren Truss, making pronouncements on

Dr. Srdjan Kerim

foreign policy issues while abroad which are in opposition to the joint policy of the governing Liberal National Coalition.

It is apparent that Ali Ahmeti cares little about defending Macedonia's name or the feelings of the country's Macedonian majority and may, moreover, see a name change as something which further destabilises the Republic of Macedonia in pursuit of his hidden agenda, rather than as a necessary step designed to facilitate Macedonia's acceptance into NATO and the EU. Given this, it is highly inappropriate for Dr Kerim to have somehow tried to paint Ahmeti's meddling in the name dispute as something about which we *"should not be frustrated"*.

Finally, and perhaps most surprisingly, Dr Kerim asserts in his speech that *"… in the past twenty years there have been so many wars in the region and yet not one border has been changed…"*.

As a senior, experienced diplomat Dr Kerim would not be able to ignore the fact that the military clashes on the territory of the former Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia resulted in the collapse of the Yugoslav state and the formation of 6 successor states. If, perhaps, he was referring to the fact that the boundaries of the successor states (Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina) were unchanged when they gained independence, he is forgetting the fact that the Serbian autonomous region of Kosovo unilaterally declared its independence in February 2008 and that its territory is no longer under the control of the central Serbian government. One might also add here that while the external boundaries of Bosnia-Herzegovina have remained unchanged, internally the country has been divided into two distinct autonomous entities- Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina- whereby the central authorities in Sarajevo have very little say in the affairs of Republika Srpska in what is increasingly a federal constitutional arrangement.

Taken together the remarks made by Dr Kerim in the abovementioned speech represent an attempt to present Macedonia's reluctance to change its name as a problem which can and should be solved in the "higher interest" of joining NATO and the EU, rather than the most vital issue confronting the nation and its continued existence as the only state in the world state where the Macedonian people – note, the Macedonian people and not the "Northern, Upper or Democratic Macedonian" people- can develop their culture, language and identity. The implication is that Macedonia should relinquish its "outdated nationalism", as evidenced by its desire to retains its name and identity- something that Dr Kerim, I am sure, would never require of "first tier" states such as France, Germany, Italy or the UK- and adopt a more "European" approach which stresses modern "civic" values which will ensure economic and social progress. In short, Dr Kerim suggests that Macedonia should jettison rights which other peoples and nations consider fundamental (and which the international community, at least declaratively, upholds) in order to share in the, at best, illusory benefits offered by membership of NATO and the EU. One could be forgiven for having expected a more principled stance in defence of basic human rights and decency from a man of his talent and experience who, frankly, should know better.

However, in the interests of fairness it must be said that Dr Kerim has recently modified the views expressed above, in the wake of Greece's rejection of UN mediator's Matthew Nimetz's proposal that Macedonia be renamed Upper Republic of Macedonia for international purposes. As reported by the Macedonian daily Dnevnik on 14 September 2013, Dr Kerim commented as follows on Greece's maximalist demands:

> "I *haven't heard of the existence of such diplomatic negotiations that would set a precedent in international practice. Here we have Serbia and Kosovo negotiating via the mediation of the EU and I've never observed or seen Catherine Ashton unconditionally accepting the views of only one party. Which means that, even were the Greeks to hope or think that all that they had envisaged would come to pass, I personally don't believe that it will play out like that- explains Kerim*".

Further on he adds in relation to Greek attempts to open up the issue of Macedonian identity:

> *"I don't believe that that can happen, nor will it happen. Not only because we here will be principled and consistent to the end as negotiators, but also because that does not form part of Matthew Nimetz's mandate. He himself said that and in that he will be supported by other international power brokers, which I believe will get involved if they see that one of the parties is intransigent to the point of leading the negotiations into a dead end – states Kerim and adds that this time Nimetz put Greece in the position of having to give its opinion on his proposal*" ("КЕРИМ: НИ СЕ БРЗА СО СПОРОТ, НО НЕ ПО СЕКОЈА ЦЕН http://www.dnevnik.mk/?itemID=A5D5D1244781D94D94BB47B9A7128849&arc=1).

While there are still problems with his views on this matter- namely, his faith that the negotiations will bear fruit with the assistance of the international community, that Macedonian identity will not be a subject of the negotiations when it is clear that the negation of identity is what has motivated Greece all along and, indeed, that negotiations are still necessary-one hopes that his evolution towards a more principled stance will continue and culminate in the understanding that changing Macedonia's name is too high a price to pay in order to satisfy the irrational demands of Greece and its allies.

AMHRC and Macedonian Community Delegation Meets with Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Opposition MP

Sydney, Australia - 5 July 2013

Today, a Macedonian community delegation* led by the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee and the Macedonian community of Wollongong met with the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the Hon. Bob Carr. The meeting was organised as part of ongoing consultations between the Macedonian community and the Federal Government. A range of important issues of concern were discussed, including possible Australian government recognition of the Republic of Macedonia under its official and democratically chosen name.

This is the second meeting in less than a year between an AMHRC and Macedonian community of Wollongong led delegation and Senator Carr. On 16 November 2012, the Minister visited the Macedonian Orthodox Community of Wollongong St Dimitrija Solunski. During his address to the gathering at Wollongong Senator Carr described the case for the recognition of Macedonia's official name, presented by the AMHRC, as *"powerful and persuasive"*. The Minister added, ¦*We hear you, we understand the arguments, and we'll get there."*

In a separate meeting also held today, the AMHRC-led delegation also met with Luke Simpkins MP, from the opposition Liberal Party. The delegation thanked Mr Simpkins, the Vice-Chairperson of the Australia-Macedonia Parliamentary Friendship Group for his continued support of the Macedonian community and for his repeated and open call for Australia to recognise the Republic of Macedonia under its official name.

The AMHRC continues to encourage Australian-Macedonians to contact their local federal MPs and ask them to support a change in Australian government policy, based on the

following principles:

The official name of Macedonia, which has been democratically chosen by the people of the country and is enshrined in the country's constitution, is the Republic of Macedonia. The freely chosen name is consistent with the right to self-determination; a fundamental aspect of international law.

Since 1994, when Australia first considered its approach to the Republic of Macedonia, there were only a handful of states which recognised the independence of the Republic of Macedonia, even fewer which recognised its official name. However, since then, in the following 18 years, the Republic of Macedonia has entered into diplomatic relations with about 160 states and over 130 of these states (i.e. 80%), do so under its official name the "Republic of Macedonia."

All of Australia's major allies (including the United States, Canada, the UK and India) have recognised the Republic of Macedonia under that name in bilateral relations. There is no reason why Australia could not follow this trend.

Future Australian recognition of the Republic of Macedonia would have NOTHING to do with the current UN discussions between the Republic of Macedonia and Greece. The UN process is an entirely separate matter and Australia is not bound by any UN terminology or process. There is nothing in UNSC Resolution 817 or indeed in any other UN resolution or document that prevents states from recognising the Republic of Macedonia under its official name. UNSC Resolution 817 does not bind other parties or indeed member states in their dealings with the Republic of Macedonia.

The AMHRC will continue to lobby the Australian government for a change in policy and further meetings with government ministers are expected in the near future.

*** The delegation represented the following Macedonian community organisations: The Association of Macedonian Communities in Australia Inc; The Macedonian Community of WA Inc, The Macedonian Community of Adelaide & South Australia Inc; The Macedonian Orthodox Community of Melbourne & Victoria Inc; The Macedonian Orthodox Community of Geelong Inc; The Macedonian Orthodox Community of St Mary, St Albans, Victoria, The Macedonian Orthodox Community of Sts Kiril & Metodi, Roseberry; The Macedonian Orthodox Community of St Nikola, Cabramatta; The Macedonian Orthodox Community of St Petka, Rockdale, Sydney; The Macedonian Orthodox Community of Wollongong, St Dimitrija Solunski; The Macedonian Orthodox Community of Queanbeyan, St Ilija; The Macedonian Orthodox Community of Canberra, St Kliment; The Macedonian Orthodox Community of Newcastle, St Mary; The Macedonian Orthodox Community of Brisbane Inc., St Mary.**

Update on the Greek Anti-Macedonian Struggle Book

19 June 2013

The Australian-Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) is pleased to announce a second print run of the English edition of **Dimitris Lithoxou's *The Greek Anti-Macedonian Struggle, Part 1: From St. Ilija's Day to Zagorichani (1903-1905)***, which was translated to English by Executive Members of the AMHRC.

The book was launched earlier this year by the AMHRC and has been so popular, that a second print run has become a necessity. We are also pleased to announce that the book has been accepted into the collections of many libraries including the National Library of Australia, the Library of Congress (USA), the State Library of Victoria, the University of New South Wales, the University of Sydney, La Trobe University, Deakin University and the University of Adelaide.

With the second print run, the AMHRC will be expanding the list of public and university libraries to which the book will be offered, including many of the leading universities in North America and the United Kingdom.

Copies of Salient Publishing's English translation of the book can be purchased from the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) via the following link:

http://www.macedonianhr.org.au/wip/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=111:amhrc-shop&catid=34:-amhrccat&Itemid=50

In ***The Greek Anti-Macedonian Struggle, Part 1: From St. Ilija's Day to Zagorichani (1903-1905)***, Lithoxou uses ***primary Greek sources*** to reconstruct a number of important historical events. Here is an excerpt from an incident from 25 March 1905:

> "The Greeks slaughtered, lit fires and plundered for about three hours. They only stopped after receiving information from the guards about the appearance of a small Ottoman police detachment from the neighbouring village of Kumanichovo [Kumanichevo]. Immediately after that, the heroic slaughterers of civilians rushed up into the mountains, taking 27 prisoners with them. They left behind them a village in flames with streets full of corpses.
>
> *I remember that when we passed through the streets of the village in order to escape, we saw 8-10 corpses on each of the streets and women and children were mourning them,* said Iliyas Kapetanakis.
>
> In the mountains, they savagely slaughtered the prisoners. Pavlos Patros took the initiative. *Patros was holding both the knife and the bayonet. Then, he put the bayonet on the shotgun and started stabbing the prisoners who were lined up.*

The massacre is described with the precision of diplomatic language, in a document from the Austrian Consulate in Bitola, dated 12.4.1905:

The Greek band razed the village to the ground on the morning of the seventh day of the current month [new calendar]*, after it attacked the village at dawn, simultaneously from all sides [...]. When the inhabitants heard the bugles, they thought that an army detachment had arrived in the village and they even went out to greet them, but were immediately shot. The Greeks pulled out as many people as they could from the houses, including women and children and killed them in barbarous fashion. Those houses which they were unable to occupy, they blew into the air with dynamite or set on fire. Apart from that, 20 men were taken into the mountains where they were slaughtered. At the same time, they plundered and committed violence in search of money. The band conducted itself in this way for a whole three hours and there is no doubt that many more people would have been killed, if the Second Lieutenant of the police, Nezir-Effendi and 40 of his men, had not arrived from the neighbouring village of Komanichevo, after which the Greeks retreated into the mountains.*

In order to reduce the level of horror which the massacre had provoked in Europe, Greek historiography claims that there was a Bulgarian detachment stationed in the village and that the Greeks attacked it. This is yet another lie...

A mass slaughter of innocent Macedonians and the plunder of their property, by Greek officers and their robber mercenaries. That is what happened in Zagorichani and in dozens of other Macedonian villages. That was the essence of the anti-Macedonian struggle, which Greek historians, in performing their regular duty, present as a struggle for the liberation of Macedonia."

Quoted from Dimitris Lithoxou, The Greek Anti-Macedonian Struggle, Part 1: From St. Ilija's Day to Zagorichani (1903-1905), pp. 137-144).

The Poetry of Blazhe Koneski

By Dr. Michael Seraphinoff

Blazhe Koneski was born in 1921 in the Macedonian village of Nebregovo near the town of Prilep. He was one of Macedonia's brightest and best scholars, and a noted teacher, translator and writer of fine prose fiction and poetry. He will, perhaps, be best remembered as a chief contributor to the codification of the modern Macedonian literary language.

Blazhe Koneski grew up in a Macedonian family that participated in the late 19th and early 20th century liberation struggles. His maternal uncle was a well-known leader of a an Ilinden-era rebel group from the Prilep region. That uncle's pro-Serbian sympathies eventually put him at odds with IMRO leadership, however, there were many factors that influenced individual, family and community loyalties as they wove their way through the minefield that was the contest over Macedonia and its people during the turbulent years of the Ilinden Uprising, the Balkan Wars and World War One. Most of us simply prefer to move on from those terrible days from the nation's past, and people like Blazhe Koneski and most other Macedonians came to firmly declare, as most of us do today, that ¦*we are not Slavs, Greeks, Serbs or Bulgarians, but Macedonians."*

Whether one believes that this Macedonian identity is a very old one or only relatively recently evolved (personally, I think that it is possible to accept this as an unresolvable contradiction to simply live with), Blazhe Koneski's life work certainly demonstrates his own lack of doubt about Macedonian identity.

In fact, by the time of his death in 1993 he was recognized as, perhaps, the premiere scholar of the modern Macedonian literary language. As importantly, to my mind, he demonstrated through his own creative writing that, not only was the literary language he promoted utilitarian, but it could soar with beauty as well. Here is one of my favorite poems by Blazhe Koneski. Its meter and end rhyme hark back to more traditional Macedonian verse and song. He composed the poem in tightly structured nine syllable lines with an end rhyme scheme of abba/ ccdee / ffdgg.

It is an expressive poem, evoking an all too familiar sorrow at the fading memory of an old lost love, and reminding readers of the history buried in the walls of the old Macedonian church of St. Sophia in Ohrid. The fresco of the angel on the wall of the church, which he refers to in the poem, was only revealed during restoration efforts. The medieval church walls that had been plastered over during the Ottoman Empire, when the church was converted into a mosque, still contained the old frescoes, waiting to be revealed under centuries of plaster and paint.

Ангелот на Света Софија
(„Песни“)

Ти којшто толку време мина
под малтерот на ѕидот мрачен,
пак слободен си в простор зрачен
— о сине тих на мисла сина —
со живот пак ти гори видот
и зори како небо ѕидот.
Но таа лика што се крие
под малтерот на мојте гради
и — утеха од дните млади —
по убост како сестра ти е,
не, нема мајстор да ја спаси,
со мојот живот ќе се згаси.

The Angel of St. Sofia

You for whom so much time passed
beneath the plaster of the blackened wall,
again you float radiantly through space, liberated.
Oh blue calm of blue conception-
once again your vision burns with life
and the wall dawns like heaven.
But that face that is hidden
under the plaster of my breast
also - a comfort since the days of my youth-
like your sister in beauty.
No, there is no master to save her.
She will perish with my life. (*Trans M. Seraphinoff)*

And what should readers make of this small poem, written in the later years of his life, that hints at his own sense of the history of the Macedonian struggle for identity and his own role in that struggle:

Forerunner

I go roundabout.
The one who will come after me
will go by a straight path.
I speak in generalities about the situation.
He will name the bearers of responsibility!
I hurl oaths,
he brandishes a sword
and castrates with a great sickle.
Yet, I am the one
who prepared the
words he will use!

Blazhe Koneski

Ilinden in Ovchareni — A Macedonian Event

By Dimitri Jovanov

The Greek "Pan-Macedonian" association decided to hold an event in the village of Rosen this year, on the model of the Macedonian festival in Ovchareni. However, hardly anybody attended and from all reports, the members of the "Pan-Macedonian" association, "celebrated" alone. At the same time, all the roads leading to Ovchareni were occupied by a multitude of policemen and Greek state secret service agents; a large number of entry bans were imposed on citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, so that they would be unable to attend the Ovchareni festival; threats were made by the police against the organizers of the Ovchareni festival, because they intended to host a famous singer from the Republic of Macedonia; rumors abounded that the Greek neo-Nazi political party, "Golden Dawn" intended to create 'incidents'; Greek Orthodox priests prayed that it would rain and thereby ruin the Ovchareni event; and 'coincidentally' on the two days of the Ovchareni festival, two concert performances by well known Greek musicians were organized in the town of Lerin; the aim of all this 'activity' is clear, to 'break' the attraction of the Macedonian festival in Ovchareni … to reduce attendance numbers, but it was all in vain.

What will the "guardians of the Greek nation" come up with next time? And who is the target of their activity? The people who, they keep telling everyone, both inside and outside of Greece, "don't exist"? They are spending vast sums of money in the middle of a catastrophic economic crisis to end manifestations organized by "ghosts". Or are these huge amounts spent on what they always insist, are but a "handful of agents paid by the Skopians" [= pejorative term commonly used by ethnic Greeks in reference to Macedonians from the Republic of Macedonia] – which is how they refer to the members of Vinozhito [= Rainbow, a political party in Greece devoted to the cause of human rights for Macedonians in Greece]? With unemployment approaching 30% in Greece, because of a cavernous fiscal malaise, like magic, there is always money to be found for the purpose of attempting to smash Macedonian culture.

It was however, all to no avail. The celebration of Ilinden in Ovachareni was again a huge success. It was extremely well attended and the celebrating extended until the next morning. Macedonians came from all over Aegean Macedonia, including the regions of Seres, Kukush, Salonika, Enidzhe, Meglen, Voden, Kostur, Kajlar and Negush. Many of them found accommodation in the area so that they could continue participating on the second day of this two day event. Many people shared their reflections, with pride, about how the Macedonian language is still surviving, despite all

the previous attempts of the Greek state, to wipe it out.

The event was held on the 19th and 20th of July and standout performances were given by the folklore dance groups from Banitsa, Zabrdeni, Ovchareni (Lerin region) and Tsarmarinovo (Negush region). The new young Bilbili group and the veterans from Tukashen Glas, both from the Lerin region, created a great deal of excitement with their performances of traditional Macedonian songs; the same can be said for the performances given by the Goche Delchev dance troupe and the singer Viki Srebrova – both from the Republic of Macedonia.

Throughout the festival, Nova Zora maintained a stall stocked with newspapers and Macedonian-Greek dictionaries etc and members of Vinozhito were at hand, to discuss issues with members of the general public.

Other successful Macedonian cultural events were also held in numerous other Macedonian villages: Vladovo, Nisije, Javorjani, Zhervi, Krontselevo (all Voden region), Embore, Mokreni (both Kajlar), Banitsa, Neret, Popozhani, Bitushe, Setina, Krpeshina (all Lerin), Lichishte, Konomladi, Tiolishte, Setoma (all Kostur), Tudortsi, Pozharsko (both Meglen), Krushare (Enidzhe), Kriva (Kukush), Patele, Ajtos (both Sorovich), Kopanovo (Negush) and numerous others.

It is worth singling out the Macedonian event held in the village of Tsarmarinovo in the region of Negush. It was organized by the village's cultural society and was held on the 14th and 15th of July. During the performance of the singer Suzana Spasovska, who hails from the Republic of Macedonia, the electricity cut out … it is not clear how or why this happened; however, Suzana was not in the least bothered and she continued singing without the aid of a microphone and then the audience, in solidarity, all began singing along with her. Over two thousand people, in unison, joined Suzana in singing the words of Makedonsko Devojche (Macedonian Girl) and created a very powerful, deeply emotive wall of sound and then, a few minutes later, the electricity, as if 'disappointed' by the result of its disappearance, 'decided' to return…..

Dimitri Jovanov. Translated from Macedonian by George Vlahov of the AMHRC.

Detsa Begaltsi… The Exhibition / The Event

6 September 2013

Friday night, September the 6th 2013 in typically fashionable Melbourne style, a crowd eagerly lined up in a hidden laneway to enter Johnny Tsiglev's **"SOLD OUT"** Detsa Begaltsi Multimedia Art showcase.

A very relaxed full-house enjoyed some Macedonian beverages and food until the house lights were suddenly shut down and in the darkness the crowd silently watched a deftly shot short film about the Detsa Begaltsi (Macedonian Child Refugees 'Deca Begalci' or 'Деца Бегалци'). The film which was premiered on this very special night was produced by Johnny Tsiglev, collaborating together with award winning director Anton Blajer (of God's Fool's fame) and renowned musician Anton Klimev (known, among other things, for writing a song for Tose Proeski) who composed an original musical score for the film.

After a standing ovation, the covered artworks were then revealed with a burst of light, glowing around the entire venue – 25 metres of continuous art. The audience circled the room analysing the grand scale of imagery, devoted to the journeys of a stolen generation of Macedonians: *"Akin to the indigenous of Australia, these children were, and still are, the Stolen Generation of Macedonia"* said Johnny Tsiglev.

A moving, emotionally charged speech further intrigued an audience of around 300. Johnny spoke about his sources of inspiration and reflected on a need for people to put themselves in the position of thousands of Detsa Begaltsi; for them to imagine the pain the Begaltsi endured and mentioned that he sprayed some of his own blood (after accidently cutting his finger, while hanging the art) on his first piece 'Exodus' ... Johnny then thanked the two Begaltsi (refugees) who featured in the film, Tase Filipov (who was the inspiration behind Johnny's original 'Detsa Begaltsi' Painting) and Lazo Christov – emotions ran high as they joined Johnny on the stage. Johnny then proceeded to call up and thank his filmmaking partners, director Anton Blajer and musician Anton Klimev and then thanked his wife Meri (who managed the entire event and who played the role of 'mother' in the film) and his young children Liam (who played the role of 'Begalche' in the film) and his recently born son Kirin.

The event doubling up as the AMHRC's official party for the scholarly international conference on the 100th anniversary of the fateful partition of Macedonia, saw some high-profile national and international guests in attendance, including Ms Beti Korunovska Consulate General of the Republic of Macedonia in Melbourne, many representatives from Australia's Macedonian Communities such as Chris Angelkov from Perth, Michael Radin from Adelaide and Con Christov, Zoran Zdravevski and Angelo Pateras from Melbourne and all the speakers from AMHRC's conference. There were also many prominent Australian artists, filmmakers and members of the press in attendance including Pobeda Piskacova from Macedonian television in Canada.

Coinciding with the 65th Anniversary of the plight of the Detsa Begaltsi and also being the AMHRC's official conference party, with spectacular artworks on display and a moving short film, this truly is a night that will be remembered.

Johnny Tsiglev is offering a limited amount of *individually signed* and *numbered* half-scale (150cm x 100cm) stretched canvas re-prints of the "Detsa Begaltsi" series. For all enquiries make contact via sales@tsig.com.au or by calling 0431 995 165.

Photos courtesy of Diane Kitanoski (watermarked) and Zoran Zdravevski.

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A Productive Scholarly Conference on the Partition of Macedonia

Melbourne, Australia - 9 September 2013

The Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee was honoured to host an international scholarly conference on the Partition of Macedonia and the Balkan Wars of 1912-13.

The conference was held at the Monash University Law Chambers from 4-7 September 2013.

The aim of the conference was to attempt a historical survey of the context and the effects, both short and long term, of the partition of Macedonia on the inhabitants of Macedonia, from a variety of perspectives, especially linguistic, sociological, anthropological and political.

The conference and subsequent post-conference dinner dance event attracted strong interest from the Macedonian community and beyond. The delivery of high quality papers resulted in stimulating discussions and scholarly debate.

Here is a brief summary of the papers/presentations:

Professor Andrew Rossos of the University of Toronto presented a paper on *The Balkan Wars and the Partition of Macedonia: A Historical Perspective.* In his paper Professor Rossos placed the partition of Macedonia in the context of the long history of the Macedonian question.

Professor Victor Friedman of the University of Chicago presented a paper titled *The Effects of the Treaty of Bucharest on the Languages Spoken in Macedonia*. His paper examined the fate of the languages spoken in Macedonia at the time of partition by the 1913 Treaty of Bucharest. Large segments of the population were bi or multilingual, as evidenced, among other things, by folklore as well as the grammatical and lexical commonalities that characterize the Balkan *Sprachbund*.

Professor Katerina Kolozova of the University American College-Skopje made a presentation titled *Living beyond identity* in which she examined how a name points to the narrative of how one identifies, explains, defines, and positions oneself in the world.

Dr. Michael Seraphinoff Discussed two Significant Works of Macedonian Literature that deal with the Balkan Wars and World War One.

Professor Keith Brown of the Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University, USA, presented a paper titled *How Trauma Travels*. His paper sought to understand some of the mechanisms at

work, focusing in particular on the transmission of trauma through history, memory and testimony.

George Vlahov of the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee presented a paper titled *A Survey of the 'Macedonian Question' in Dialogue with Greek Nationalism.* His paper surveyed the attempts of the Greek state and some of its supporters to provide historical justifications for preventing the international recognition of the Republic of Macedonia and for denying the right of present-day Macedonians to refer to themselves and their language as Macedonian.

Dr Vasko Nastevski also of the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee presented on *The Partition of Macedonia and International Law: from Clausewitz to McDougall*. His paper considered the different aspects of international law: from the legal and moral justifications to the preceding armed conflicts; the conduct of belligerents during those conflicts and the ultimate division of the geographical territory known as Macedonia and the legitimisation of the partition through international treaty.

Professor Loring Danforth of Bates College USA wrote a paper titled *The Scholar and the State: Evangelos Kofos on the International Recognition of the Republic of Macedonia*. His paper offered an anthropological critique of Evangelos Kofos' work on the Macedonian conflict, the "global cultural war" between Greeks and Macedonians over the name by which the Republic of Macedonia should be internationally recognized.

Professor Christina Kramer of the University of Toronto presented on *Partitioning Language Policy and Status Planning in Macedonia*. Her paper focused on how the partition of Macedonia in 1913 led to asymmetric developments in the Macedonian language and, more specifically, the use of Macedonian in a number of public and private domains.

Professor Peter Hill of University of Hamburg presented a paper titled *The codification and elaboration of the Macedonian standard language under the conditions of partition*. His paper fo-

cused on the codification of the Macedonian Standard Language. Like other European standard languages, the MSL contains both indigenous and borrowed elements.

Professor Grace Fielder of the University of Arizona presented a paper on *Partition, Linguistic Identity and Language Standardization*. Her paper focused on a specific problem of variation in a local linguistic practice in Sofia, Bulgaria, which cannot fully be accounted for nor fully understood without reference to the partition of Macedonia in 1913.

Dr Akis Gavriilidis of University of Macedonia, Salonika presented on the topic *Who was liberated in 1912? Parts, Wholes and States in partibus*. His paper drew on psychoanalysis but also from other theoretical traditions such as translation studies, linguistics and philosophy.

Pandora Petrovska of La Trobe University presented a paper titled *Recalibrating the past: using narrative and language education*. Her paper explored some of the ways in which Macedonians in the Diaspora have dealt with the consequences of the partition, namely the poverty which accompanied it, land dispossession and population exchanges. It also considered the refugee experience and the effects of forced migration.

Dr Jim Hlavac of Monash University presented a paper on *Partition without fragmentation: a cross-perspective analysis of Macedonian language maintenance in Australia*. His paper presented a study of Macedonian language maintenance across three generations of speakers. The study employed a multi-faceted analysis of a well-established speech community and draws on domain-focussed questionnaires, language attitude data, ethno-linguistic vitality questionnaires and video-taped narratives conducted in the minority language.

The conference papers will now be compiled into a book which is expected to be published in 2014.

The Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee

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would like to express its sincere gratitude to all the speakers and those who attended, as well as to the following sponsors of the conference: *Macedonian Orthodox Community of Melbourne and Victoria (St.George, Epping); Australian Macedonian Youth Association; Macedonian Community of Adelaide and South Australia; Macedonian Australian Orthodox Community of Melbourne (Uspenie na Presveta Bogorodica, Sydenham); Macedonian Community of Brisbane; Jim Thomev; and Macedon Publishers and Translators.*

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PARTITION OF MACEDONIA
AND THE BALKAN WARS
OF 1912-13

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ABOUT MHRMI & AMHRC

Macedonian Human Rights Movement International (MHRMI) has been active since 1986. The Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) has been active since 1984.

Both MHRMI and AMHRC are non-governmental organisations that inform and advocate about combating racism and promoting human rights. Our joint aspiration is to ensure that Macedonian communities and other excluded groups throughout the world, are recognised, respected and afforded equitable treatment.

RELATED ORGANIZATIONS

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

AUSTRALIAN MACEDONIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

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Telephone	+61 3 9329 8960
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Website	www.mhrmi.org

MACEDONIAN ALLIANCE FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION
The political party of the Macedonians in Albania

Website	www.macedoniansinalbania.org

EUROPEAN FREE ALLIANCE—RAINBOW

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Website	www.omoilindenpirin.org

MACEDONIAN SOCIETY "ILINDEN" TIRANA
A Macedonian cultural association in Tirana, Albania

Website	www.ilinden-tirana.com

NOVA ZORA
A pro-Macedoniannewspaper based in Aegean Macedonia, Greece, edited by Dimitri Jovanov and with a printed circulation of 20,000 copies per month

Website	novazora.gr

NARODNA VOLJA

A Pro-Macedonian newspaper based in Pirin Macedonia, Bulgaria, edited by Jan Pirinski and Stojko Stojkov. The first edition was published in 1980

Website	www.narodnavolja.com

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