MHR REVIEW

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Some Reflections on our Current Status

By George Vlahov

The MHR Review is now into its fifth year of existence and in reading through the articles of this issue, I couldn't help reflecting on the obvious, which is that many of the themes that were prevalent in the very first issue are still occupying the pages of our journal. While reading the articles for this issue, I also gained the feeling that it is a particularly reflective collection. There is a lot of looking back and concern about what may lay ahead, though there is always going to be a decent proportion of that anyway – members of social movements will 'naturally' feel a need to attempt to measure whether they are indeed *moving*, be that forwards *or* backwards.

There also seems to be a notion floating at the edges of our circles about the present as beginning to appear to be a permanent present, which again, is indicated by the similarity of themes in the first issue. One cannot help, at times, feeling engulfed by a sense that one is cemented, that one isn't going anywhere and that one has become pigeon holed; or worse still, that one is going backwards, that one is losing the battle. I am going to begin to reflect a little on this, by reversing the emphasis and slightly altering the lexicon of a quote from the Simpsons cartoon show: *Sartre may be smartre, but Camus can do* (on the show, the quote went "*Camus can do, but Sartre is smartre*").

So in accordance with that, I shall begin by noting that in *Being and Nothingness* Sartre discusses some of the problems associated with life in modern society. His discussion is wide ranging and there is not space here to do it justice. I am merely going to seize upon an aspect of it and try to connect it back, via Camus, to the concerns mentioned in the paragraph above. Sartre describes a waiter in a café whose "*… movement is quick and forward, a little too precise, a little too rapid. He comes towards patrons with a step a little too quick. He bends forward a little too eagerly; his voice, his eyes express an interest a little too solicitous for the order of the customer. Finally there he returns, trying to imitate in his walk the inflexible stiffness of some kind of automaton*". Sartre then adds that he, the waiter, is playing, "*playing at being a waiter in a café… This obligation is not different to that which is imposed on all tradesmen. Their condition is wholly one of ceremony. The public demands of them that they realize it as a ceremony; there is the dance of the grocer, of the tailor…*" etc.

Sartre's complaint is that society demands of the grocer that "*he limit himself to his function as a grocer*" and thereby, requires that the grocer act in what Sartre often referred to as "bad faith". He acts as if he is something which he is not; societal pressures have reduced him, to a meaningless, for him, highly limited, repetitious set of motions.

One could launch discussions of various sorts from here. For example, I have often heard the claim that individuals inhabiting modern society need to be liberated from their societal masks so that their real selves might be permitted to become manifest. Such simplistically put assertions can be rejected after only a little reflection – there is simply no self beyond society or community; selves inhabiting a particular society are created via the social interaction of that society.

On the other hand, it might, quite legitimately be complained that the numerous sides of a particular individual's real, i.e. socially created self, are suffocated as a result of the imposition of limits resulting from a society's uneven dispersal of power, or restrictive hegemonic cultural forms and because of the often inequitable, or even iniquitous nature of economic/market forces.

We have commented in an earlier issue that this can undoubtedly be a problem for many; though it can be exaggerated and sometimes is, by people willing to claim the rights afforded to them by society, but not the responsibilities attached to the maintenance of those very rights. There is also of course the argument that one's attitude towards one's occupational role is important; but there is no point in making generalized claims which ignore specific contexts – all one can say is that for *some* people, the advice of "be positive", "make the best of it", "do something about it", *might* be of *some* use.

It is a piece of advice one can draw from Albert Camus's ruminations in "The Myth of Sisyphus". As some of you will know, Sisyphus was a man condemned by the gods to roll a large rock up a hill, only to observe it roll back down to the bottom of the hill again and then to keep repeating the chore again and again for eternity. Sisyphus is a labourer who might be viewed as an "absurd hero", given, as Camus wrote: "*that unspeakable penalty in which the whole being is exerted toward accomplishing nothing*." This is an extreme version of the "bad faith" holding pattern alluded to at the beginning of this essay, which may be causing some members of the Macedonian human rights movement to wonder whether they might be able to exert themselves more productively in some other field.

Camus concluded that if the Sisyphus "*myth is tragic, that is because it here is conscious*." And undoubtedly, from a certain perspective, as Sartre also suggested, the "*workman of today works every day in his life at the same tasks, and his fate is no less absurd*." A higher level of self-awareness is undoubtedly something that distinguishes humanity from animals and the repetitive nature of certain work activities, more in some fields than others, can make one feel demeaned or downgraded to the level of an animal condemned to an endless replication of cycles of excruciatingly boring actions. On the other hand in the

field of repetitive and for the most part physical labours, there are pleasures of the flesh to be gained and if humanity is to endure, it must not forget this essential side of existence.

Moreover, consciousness of a never ending and thereby for some, of a degrading repetitiveness, might be avoided by losing oneself in the role, by becoming the role, by immersing oneself in "bad faith" and thus defying the contempt of those in positions of power, seemingly possessing more liberty of movement, more freedom to express their creative sides. Again this is not to be taken as a generalization; it is just something which might apply to certain people in some scenarios.

Perhaps more importantly, in the context of the Macedonian human rights movement, by reminding ourselves that our labours, unlike those of Sisyphus, still possess the possibility of transcending what momentarily appears to be a forever present, we might still remain positive, if not entirely happy. This can be reinforced by bearing in mind that our efforts are directly linked to the way many of us feel we need to exist as a result of the cultural context we have inherited. Others who sneer at the Macedonian human rights movement, because they view it as something which is not related to "real material" issues like the inequalities created by various economic and political structures, would do well to grasp that ethnic or any other kind of identity, is also a material matter. Such identities are an essential aspect of the human condition. They are indeed social constructions, but so are economies and political systems; they are tied together in that they all involve embodied, very real, life experiences and to demand of an identity group that it surrender its name or pretend to itself that it doesn't exist, is the same as asking it to agree to put itself through a highly traumatic self-emasculation.

Camus remarked that "*Happiness and the absurd are two sons of the same earth*" and we can agree that much pleasure can be gained by some of us at least, from existence in modern society, by embracing what for others is an unworkable paradox. Camus concluded on Sisyphus by reminding us that "*his rock is his thing*" and that: "*The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy.*" For better or worse, being Macedonian is *our thing* and even if we feel at times as if we are not progressing, that we are locked up in a Sisyphustic cage, we would do well at those points to remind ourselves that we are striving to affirm our embodied reality; that for many of us, there is no other reality which can satisfactorily transcend the particular "societal mask" we have inherited. In other words, our inheritance is not a mask veiling the real, it is reality.

Lastly, many of us would do well to observe that while our bigoted opponents possess more power and seem to have more freedom of movement, they are currently in a state which can be deemed even more Sisyphustic than ours – as is demonstrated by the mocking laughter they often induce against themselves for the chronic utterance of deceit, like Sisyphus himself, who was banished to his rock by the gods, for similar behavior. I am referring to declarations of the kind which insist that an embodied reality, plainly visible to much of the world, does not exist. Camus can indeed do for at least some of us; or more accurately, can assist some of us to keep doing.

George Vlahov

P.S. Our production designer and assistant editor, Ljubica Durlovska, was not available for this issue and so John Tsiglev from the AMHRC stepped in for her. Thanks John! We also welcome to our team, Ljupco Stefanovski and Mitch Belichovski.

The poetry of Mihail Rendzhov

By Dr. Michael Seraphinoff

Mihail Rendzhov

According to the biography posted at the on-line Macedonian literary journal Blesok's website, "Mihail Rendzhov is a poet, translator. Born 25th August 1936 in Štip. Finished secondary education in his native town. Graduated from the Faculty of Law, at the University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" in Skopje. Works at the National Library "St.Kliment Ohridski" in Skopje as a librarian counsellor. Member of the Macedonian P.E.N. Centre and a member of the Macedonian Writers' Association since 1965.

Works: *A migrant of fire* (poetry, 1965), *Growing of the word during the night* (poetry, 1967), *Where from this side* (poetry, 1968), *On the brink of the dream* (poetry, 1972), *Fear* (poetry, 1976), *Midnight* (poetry, 1979), *Nerezi* (poetry, 1982), *Autodafe* (poetry, 1985), *Phoenix* (poetry sonnets, 1987), *Earth Flood* (poetry, 1991), *Dreaming travelling* (book for children, 1991), *Him* (lyrical poem, 1993), *Deck of cards 33* (poetry, 1994), *The eternal, the endless one* (poetry, 1996), *I, the oxymoron* (poetry, 1998), *Angela is dreaming* (poetry for children, 1998), *Psalms* (poetry, 2000), *Apocalypse* (poetic drama, 2002), *Tales about Zaharij* (short stories, 2004)

He is the author of many translations/renditions, including *Gilgamesh*, the Assyrian - Babylonian epic (three editions: 1994, 1997, 2000).

Awards include: The award of the Struga Poetry Evenings for unpublished poem (1964), "The November award of the city of Štip" for his poetry book *A migrant of fire* (1965), "11th October" and "Miladinov brothers" for his poetry book *Nerezi* (1982), "Grigor Prličev" for rendition of the book *Tyranny of the Dream* by Carolina Ilika, "Prličev wreath" for the lyrical poem *Him* (1993), "Grand prix international" for his entire work, Romania (1997), "Zlatno pero" for rendition of the book *Wisdom and Bitterness* by Dritero Agoli (1998), "Aco Šopov" for his poetry book *I, the oxymoron* (1999), Macedonian nomination for the "Balkanika" award (2000), "Racin Award" for his short-stories collection *Tales about Zaharij* (2004)."

I have sometimes heard the complaint that Macedonians have far too many writers for such a small population of speakers. There is the hint here that perhaps many of them are promoted simply to promote the national language, because, unfortunately, it is deemed necessary since Macedonian is regarded with such hostility and contempt, for blatantly racist or political reasons, by the ruling circles in neighboring Bulgaria and Greece.

However, a review of the work of a writer such as Mihail Rendzhov will readily dispel any notion of a writer who has been promoted for anything other than the merit of his intellectual artistic work. In fact, the fine work of hundreds of Macedonian artists, writers of belle lettres and works for stage and screen, musicians, composers, artisans, and the like, testify to the Macedonian right to share the world stage with all other acclaimed creative people of diverse cultures. It is a rather easy task to work for the preservation and come to the defense of works of art that delight us with their beauty and truth. And one of my chief purposes in writing these reviews of Macedonian literature is to show readers just how much there is to delight in Macedonian literature.

The poetry of Mihail Rendzhov is unique in Macedonian literature. There is often a deliberate harking back to poetic sacred texts of the Judeo-Christian

tradition. In fact, the title of his popular work, *Psalmi*, both takes the name and imitates much of the style of the book of Psalms in the Bible. The colorful decoration of the text of that book (*Psalmi*, Tabernakul, Skopje, 2000) also harks back to the decoration of medieval manuscripts and an earlier age of printed books, especially those considered holy or sacred to readers.

There is a deceptive simplicity to much of Rendzhov's poetry. I am most readily reminded of the deceptively simple poetry of the acclaimed 19th century American poet, Emily Dickinson, who also drew much inspiration from and often imitated the style of church songs. Listen, for example, to the short Dickinson poem, *Chartless*, and tell me, after you have read the works of Mihail Rendzhov below, if it doesn't remind you of his works:

I never saw a moor,
I never saw the sea;
Yet I know how the heather looks,
And what a wave must be.

I never spoke with God,
Nor visited in heaven;
Yet certain am I of the spot
As if the chart were given.

Now listen to these two examples, with their simple beauty, of Mihail Rendzhov's poetic work. These are among my favorite poems from the book *Psalmi.*

Psalm 22

Низ мојата чешма
Твоја вода тече,
Над моето небо
Твој гулаб лета,
Низ моите дрвја
Твој ветер игра,
Од мојот облак
Твој дожд роси,
Во мојата градина
Твоја птица пее.

Song 22

Through my fountain
Your water flows,
Up in my sky
Your dove flies,
Through my woods
Your wind plays,
From my cloud
Your rain drizzles down,
In my garden
Your bird sings.

Psalm 28

Сполај Ти за убавото:
Убавото што го кажувам,
Убавото што го пеам,
Убавото што го немеам,
Убавото што ме сонува,
Убавото што ме прогонува,
Убавото што го гледам,
Убавото што го следам,
Убавото што го боледувам,
Убавото: Страдањето,
Најубавото: вознесувањето.

Song 28

Thank you for the beauty:
The beauty that I speak,
The beauty that I sing,
The beauty to which I am numb,
The beauty that dreams me,
The beauty that banishes me,
The beauty that I gaze upon,
The beauty that I follow,
The beauty that tortures me,
And the beauty that suffers,
And most beautiful of all,
The beauty transcendant.

A review by Dr. Michael Seraphinoff, January, 2014.

(founded 1984)

By Jim Thomev

The following paper was presented at a workshop I was invited to run at a conference on Arts policy for a multicultural Australia in March 1988 in Adelaide. The proceedings of that conference sub-titled -"Towards a cultural democracy", were published by the Australia Council, the sponsors of the conference, and my finished article can be found in full on pp.107-111. My workshop was listed under the rubric of "Ways of Affirming Identity" and the title of the paper was: The struggle for Relevance and Community participation Through Drama-A Macedonian perspective. I would like to thank the Australia Council for the wonderful support it gave to the Arts in Australia and special thanks must go to the wholly admirable Alexandra Sada, a member of the board.

Readers of the Review should find this period piece of interest as it focuses on the formation and background of the Australian-Macedonian Drama Group which had a decade long life (1984-1994). When the workshop was held in March 1988 the drama group had been in existence for four years, since its first performance at Preston Town Hall in May 1984. It is with some misgivings that I revive this piece before the public as I am only too aware of its inadequate coverage of both the changes in the Macedonian community in Australia and the special atmosphere in the general multicultural Australian society that made this possible. Whilst I can plead that the occasional nature of the task made it difficult to think through many relevant issues I do not have an excuse for some of the omissions. In particular I want to pay tribute to the Macedonian Women's Choir of Melbourne which had a magnificent career in the general Australian community, singing beautiful traditional Macedonian songs in the most visible national forums. It deserves to be remembered as it was extremely successful and popular among music circles, ably led and conducted by the very talented Margarita Vasileva,

In 1986 I had given a talk in the Rotunda at Monash University on similar themes, the Macedonian language, aspects of Macedonian history and the formation of the drama group. My host for the talk was Professor Michael Clyne to whom I had introduced myself after hearing one of his ground breaking lectures on multilingual Australia at a Melbourne University conference on multicultural themes held earlier that year.

I want to acknowledge and pay special tribute to the late Professor Michael Clyne, not only for his distinguished work on Australia's languages, but his support of the Macedonian language in particular. He was the key witness at the hearings when the Macedonians took action against the appalling Jeff Kennett directive to change the way in which the Macedonian language was referred to in all Victorian services. This unprecedented and discriminatory reclassification was a wasteful act of small-minded cruelty based on a lie done at the behest of the shameless local Greek lobby as a misguided political vote-catching exercise.

I should put on record something else I did not give enough attention to at the time: the remarkable audience response of so many people. The sheer jubilation that the Macedonian colloquial language, ordinarily restricted to the home, was used for entertainment and artistic purposes on a public stage. It gave many people an immense sense that the language had been validated as a legitimate vehicle for communication and it was thriving in a country where it wasn't stigmatised as worthless or inferior as it was in Greece.

Note: Nevertheless, for the sake of its historical accuracy, the only changes I have made are minor – some typos, the odd bit of shaky grammar, a factual omission about Macedonians in Albania and the names of the directors have been given. Times were tough in 1988; I was editing a bilingual newspaper at the time, had been heavily involved with the historical demonstration against the aggressive La Trobe University conference, and the (European) Communist world was already rumbling towards collapse.

WORKSHOP: WAYS OF AFFIRMING IDENTITY (1988)

Title of paper:

The struggle for relevance and community participation through drama – a Macedonian perspective

Introduction

Let us avoid making this an exercise where we reduce identity to a few socio-economic concepts or learned quotes from Erik Erikson because I merely intend to tell you a few stories. I hope they do a better job than the philosophising about identity which tempts us with questions such as - *Who am I? What is real?* And so forth… My intention is to demonstrate a few ideas through talking about their concrete enactment, namely:

a. Ethnicity is one factor amongst many which shape one's identity.

b. In choosing activities we reveal our fundamental sense of what is valuable and relevant.

c. That ethnicity can be used positively for self-affirmation, the expression of one's talent.

Ethnicity is nevertheless merely a springboard for a fuller participation in the human community.

A Preamble

About five years ago (1983) I responded to my wife Fay's challenge to translate J M Synge's "Playboy of the Western World" into my own brand of folkloric Macedonian dialect. I knew the colour would be there, the earthy concrete reality, and the words and rhythms that have emerged out of a long tradition from the profound lives of simple folk. I knew instinctively that the lives of people who had played out their lives in villages which had not changed for hundreds of years inevitably had a good deal in common regardless of whether they were found in Macedonia or Ireland.

Noticing that my Macedonian was holding its own and doing justice to Synge's vivid and picturesque verbal music, I was inspired to write an original play based on my own experience that would reflect the lives of the Macedonian people in Melbourne. Like all Macedonian families that had emigrated after the Second World War and the Civil War in Greece, my social situation was one where we were a group that

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stuck together using the Macedonian dialect we had brought with us as the main social and familial code. *Zborvavfne po nashe bez pismo*. ("We spoke in our language without a written form".)

Within a few months, I wrote one full length play which was too challenging to produce once I read it to a number of interested Macedonians. I therefore embarked on writing four one act plays about the lives of Macedonians and together with one other play co-authored by Lupcho Temelkovski and Stefo Stojanovski (both secondary school teachers like myself), we soon had a big group forming, comprising of teachers, students and workers. The Australian Macedonian Drama Group of Melbourne was formed giving its first performance on 24 May 1984 at Preston Town Hall.

A historical digression

It is important to give a brief historical digression: the Macedoni-

ans in Australia.

Macedonia has been a divided land since 1913 and today it falls within the borders of Greece (51%), Bulgaria (10%), Albania (2%) and Yugoslavia (37%) where there is a Socialist Republic of Macedonia where Macedonians are recognised, i.e. have full national, cultural and linguistic rights (since 1944). Greece and Bulgaria are the only countries in the world where a specific and unique Macedonian culture and language are not recognised.

The emigration of Macedonians has been two fold. The Macedonians from Greece, many of whom were political refugees, started coming to Australia in the 1930s and their numbers boomed in the post-war decades, especially in the 1950s. The Macedonians from the Republic of Macedonia in Yugoslavia mainly came in the late 60s through the 70s and continue to emigrate. The time factor is significant in putting a wedge between these Macedonians locally but worse has been the "partition mentality" since 1913. This manifests itself in the way people from the same linguistic region may regard themselves as different ethnic groups because of an arbitrary border that was placed between them. Thus although most of the Macedonians in Melbourne for instance are from the Lerin-Bitola region which belongs to the central dialects on the territorial linguistic map, these groups have been divided by such artificial labels as Yugoslav-Macedonian and Greek-Macedonian, many of whom use the labels themselves.

The Australian Macedonian Drama Group draws most of its membership from the Lerin-Bitola region and most of the barriers of the "partition mentality" have been broken.

Drama: A way of relating to the world

The Australian Macedonian Drama Group has had many successes since its first production of five comic one-act plays in May 1984. They have captured a sizeable audience of Macedonians in Melbourne, have given many people an outlet for their talents in writing, acting, designing, developing organisational skills and above all giving a sense of purpose with a worthwhile and highly appreciated community activity.

Curiously enough, for the majority of the members of the Australian Macedonian Drama Group, English is the dominant language, and for most, Macedonian is a domestic patois. One of the distinguishing features of the plays is the tough and sinewy language of the dramatic pieces which is drawn from the spoken linguistic heritage of the Macedonians in Australia. The language is understood by all Macedonians who speak any variant of the language because whilst it is in a colloquial form with regional characteristics, its vocabulary is central to the spoken tradition.

A notable departure from the colloquial language has been the work of Tom Petsinis who has written his originals in English and then translated them into a hybrid of the standard Macedonian language and his regional dialect, thus getting the best of both worlds – the broader range and precision of the literary language with the concreteness and expressive power of the dialect.

So it is obvious from a brief reflection on the language situation of the drama group that they are not affirming any simple idea of 'a Macedonian identity'. The complex process of the interrelation between an upbringing in Melbourne with all the incursions and influences of the host culture in a Macedonian household cannot be viewed simply as an either/or situation where you have one intact culture vying for mastery with another in the individual psyche. Most of us are composite identities, who are always in the process of coming to terms with ongoing experiences. So what identity do we affirm? I suggest that the drama group is a manifestation of a sui generis group. Put simply, the group is a unique produce of the experiences of Australians of Macedonian origin who have pooled their resources and talents, in order to develop what is positive in their heritage. "To develop" is a key verb because most cultures imported into Australia by immigrants need to progress, to make adjustments. This is a natural inevitable process made less traumatic in Australia thanks to its enlightened approach to minority ethnic groups.

Let us as an illustration of the complexity as to what identity or image is being affirmed by Macedonians through drama by looking briefly at one of the longer dramas "*Blood is Thicker than Water*".

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I will tell the story allowing you to make up your own mind about the value orientation and the aspects of identity being explored in this play:

In Act 1, Risto, a middle-aged factory worker, rages against his eldest son, Giorgi, who he refuses to allow inside his house. Giorgi is not only living 'in sin' with a girl, but she has become pregnant. She happens not to be Macedonian – Silvanna is Italian. Risto's immediate family, his wife, his parents (Dedo Kosta and Baba Kostoitsa) as well as Giorgi's younger brother Kosta are continually opposing Risto's irrelevant sense of shame and disgrace. The conflict takes on a new dimension when Risto learns that his younger brother Ilo has sent his children to a Macedonian ethnic school which Risto believes to be run by communists.

In Act 2, Ilo insists on the reasonableness of his action but Risto is implacable because of his ignorance of historical realities and his misconceptions about his own identity. The situation appears even more irrevocable when Giorgi and Silvanna decide to get married three months after the baby is born, and for reasons of economy, want to hold their marriage and the christening of the baby on the same day. The uncles approve, the grandparents are delighted.

In Act 3, the grandparents' benign and tolerant attitude is explained when Baba Ristoitsa reveals to the women in the family that she and Dedo Kosta had eloped when young because of their grand passion and that their eldest son Risto, was born three months after the wedding!

In Act 4, the baby has just been born and the proud parents, Giorgi and Silvanna, in compliance with tradition, name him – Risto. Risto, the more than reluctant grandfather, is outraged. However, in spite of his intransigence, he breaks under the pressure from the whole family. The onslaught on his 'mistaken' notions of morality and his absurd adherence to a very narrow concept of ethnic identity, which his family believes to be irrelevant in multicultural Australia, finally reconciles him to the situation.

One could easily assume the play ends happily at the end of Act 4. However, the final act presents the image of the wedding and christening guests in which life, its vitality and exuberance, are presented in a display of verbal pyrotechnics, masquerades, jokes, drunkenness, and a serene song to reconcile all discord and all pain which tells of the tragedy of the Macedonian people and their eternal capacity for survival and refusal to accept defeat.

The writing of this play has an interesting background. I had initially conceived a tragedy which would depict the disintegration of a Macedonian family who had migrated to Australia from Greece. The essence of the tragedy was to present three brothers who were suffering from the "partition mentality" common to the Macedonians since the violent division of Macedonian in 1913. One brother would be pro-Greek, the other a Macedonian nationalist and the third would be Australian dominant culture assimilated, rejecting any reference to his background as 'politics'. After two acts, I knew the play would not be written. From its sepulchre, the 5 act comedy described above emerged that still availed itself of the same basic theme of the "partition mentality" only the tone and emphasis was comic, prompting a happy ending.

The challenge of the tragic approach has been taken up by Tom Petsinis in his drama "The Drought". This is an audaciously imaginative performance where the writer uses a chanting chorus of women dressed in black to punctuate the action which explores a conflict over patrimony terminating in fratricide.

"The Drought" is a sombre piece which reaches into the deepest terrors of the Macedonian audience, many of whom could identify with the misunderstandings and torment resulting from struggles over property inheritance. The main burden of the plot is to show how the brother who comes back from Australia to the old country has his intentions misunderstood by his older brother who has stayed in the village with his old folks and wife. At the Lady-Macbeth like egging on by his wife, he kills his brother. The gravity of the miscuing has the dimensions of classical tragedy. The blindness of the human soul and its lack of charity lead to catastrophe.

Due to a minimum of local or specific reference the action could have occurred anywhere in the

world. The fundamental concern is with the play of universal elemental passions which motivate human beings.

The play is written in a mode which assumes a good knowledge of literature in the West, as there are many biblical allusions and other points of reference with aspects of the European tradition. The reception of the play, due to its weighty seriousness was mixed. The audience had been inclined to expect much lighter fare which the other writers had supplied with satires, send-ups, situation comedies etc. An indication or gauge of the kind of interest that many of the audience brought to this theatre was the degree of popularity of a send up of "Perfect Match", a silly program where a young man and woman are matched for a date. One explanation for this, proffered by the writer of this piece, Stefo Stojanovski, one of the founders of the group in 1984, was that it dealt with one of the central preoccupations of mainstream Macedonian culture in Australia (or traditionally in village life); this is, "who and when to marry". This is certainly one of the dominant theses between the generations and one of the emotionally explosive areas.

The themes explored by the writers are diverse regardless of the mode of treatment; they are inevitably related to the experience of the audience.

The Australian Macedonian Drama Group is quite unusual in the fact that, for all the modesty of its financial resources and the fact that the traditional patriarchy who hold power in the Macedonian community organisation see them as a threat and have therefore been reluctant to back them morally or financially, they have managed six successful productions and attracted government funding. Everyone worked on a voluntary basis and there were many people who contributed their skills in acting, costume design etc which has made the experience for everyone involved exhilarating.

There are six writers who have already contributed substantially

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and many scripts are available from other writers. This is an unusual situation where all material is written by members of the group who have all experienced the Australian multicultural society. We are yet to have a director who speaks Macedonian; the very first director was a Polish-speaker, Maciej Stankowicz, and the others were highly talented local drama teachers and practitioners like Michael Cathcart (now an ABC Arts broadcaster), John Jacobs and Russell Walsh. Their voluntary services were invaluable.

Conclusion

The Australian Macedonian Drama Group does more than affirm the simple fact that Macedonians have a vital culture which they have selectively retained and presented in Australia. It also marks a development of the heritage insofar as many of their audiences did not have a tradition of theatre in the sense that it has been presented to them by the Macedonians growing up in Australia who are critical of traditional culture.

Beyond the Macedonian identity many links with the broader community have been formed. The four directors of the six productions have all been non-Macedonians who did not speak the language of the plays but worked with translations. This heightened the sense of a communal adventure because the director could not be an absolute tyrant in all matters. Two of Tom Petsinis' plays were chosen for a play reading by the Anthill Theatre Group which is an alternative English language drama centre.

Most significant of all in this cultural enterprise is the whole process which involves participation from the moment the scripts are chosen by the committee till the last curtain call. Stated broadly, the drama group is saying to the world "Here we are and we are Macedonians in Australia". But the deeper meanings, the more significant events that culminate in such an epiphany are the arduous processes of "plays/that have to be set up in fifty ways". At the final curtain there is a collection of individuals on the stage who have all told us something about themselves: singers, dancers, writers, directors, actors, musicians, production crew and others important to the drama have collectively made a human statement that people create culture to be shared and to add to the human spirit.

Jim Thomev

March 1988

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Good Neighbourliness a la Bulgare

By Dr Chris Popov

Bulgaria's Foreign Minister - Kristian Vigenin

Some Historical Background

A constant of Bulgarian state doctrine, foreign policy and historiography since the 19th century has been the idea that Macedonia is a quintessential Bulgarian land inhabited primarily by ethnic Bulgarians. Bulgarian historians and politicians have often rapturously described Macedonia as representing the "most romantic part of Bulgarian history". This obsession with Macedonia in Bulgaria has its roots in the second part of the 19th century when the nascent Bulgarian state was developing an arsenal of highly dubious historical, cultural and linguistic theories to justify its claim to Macedonian territory vis-à-vis its main Balkan contenders, Serbia and Greece, in the context of the demise of the Ottoman Empire in Europe.

The Eastern Crisis of 1875 to 1878 saw Ottoman Turkey vanquished by Russia, which witnessed as a direct result the brief liberation of Ottoman held territories in Europe. The Crisis was ultimately resolved at the Berlin Congress in June 1878 in a meeting of the European powers, whereby Macedonia was returned to Ottoman control after having been temporarily included – under the terms of the San Stefano Treaty of March 1878- in a Greater Bulgaria. The Treaty of Berlin revision drove Bulgaria to side with Central Powers and the Axis in World War One and Two re-

spectively, in an attempt to include most of ethnographic Macedonia within its borders. Except for a brief period from 1947-48 when the Macedonians in Pirin Macedonia were granted recognition as a distinct ethnic group and cultural autonomy, the consistent policy of the Bulgarian state has been to continue to forcibly assimilate the Macedonians in Bulgaria and to refuse to acknowledge the Macedonians in the Republic of Macedonia as Macedonians.

While some more moderate Bulgarian nationalists may acknowledge that since 1944 a "new Macedonian identity" has formed in the Republic of Macedonia, albeit with "historical Bulgarian roots", more strident Bulgarian nationalist propaganda stresses that Macedonians in the Republic of Macedonia are "Bulgarians who have been forcibly 'Macedonianized' as a result of a deliberate campaign of Serbification designed to split the Bulgarian nation". In sum, at the core of Bulgaria's denial of its sizeable ethnic Macedonian population and its refusal to acknowledge the ethnicity of the Macedonian majority of the Republic of Macedonia- as well as supporting the chauvinist Greek campaign to change the Republic of Macedonia's name-, is the desire to ideologically buttress its annexation of Macedonian territory pursuant to the Treaty of Bucharest and to remove what it irrationally sees as an 'irredentist threat' from the Republic of Macedonia.

Clauses which Sacrifice the Rights of Others

It is against this historical, political and ideological background that one must evaluate Bulgaria's insistence on Macedonia signing a Treaty of Good Neighbourly Relations as a precondition for Bulgaria not vetoing Macedonia's accession to NATO and the EU.

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In February 1999 the governments of Macedonia and Bulgaria signed a Joint Declaration to regulate cooperation between the two countries in the areas of trade, economic development, tourism, movement of goods and capital, culture, education, healthcare, social welfare, sport etc. Most of the clauses dealing with these matters are standard and non-controversial. However, clause 11- the most political and contentious in the whole declaration- contains formulations which highlighted not only Bulgaria's intention to continue its non-recognition of Macedonians throughout the Balkans, but also the strong pro -Bulgarian sympathies of then Macedonian Prime Minister Ljupco Georgievski who signed the declaration of behalf of Macedonia.

Namely, clause 11 states as follows:

> *"11. Neither of the two countries shall undertake, instigate*
>
> *or support any actions of a hostile nature directed against the other*
>
> *country.*
>
> *Neither of the two countries shall allow its territory to be used*
>
> *against the other by any organisations or groups which make it their*
>
> *object to carry out subversive, separatist or other actions threatening*
>
> *the peace and security of the other country.*
>
> *The two countries do not have, and will not lay, any territorial*
>
> *claims to each other.*
>
> *The Republic of Macedonia hereby declares that nothing in*
>
> *its Constitution can or should be interpreted as constituting, now or*
>
> *whenever in the future, a basis for interference in the internal affairs*
>
> *of the Republic of Bulgaria for the purpose of*
>
> *defending the status*
>
> *and the rights of persons who are not citizens of the Republic of*
>
> *Macedonia.*
>
> *The two countries shall undertake effective measures for*
>
> *preventing ill-intentioned propaganda by institutions and agencies*
>
> *and shall not allow activities by private individuals aimed at instigating*
>
> *violence, hatred or other such actions which might harm relations*
>
> *between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia."*

(http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bulgarian_Policies_on_the_Republic_of_Macedonia,

Bulgarian Policies on the

Republic of Macedonia (2008)

Lyubomir Ivanov et al.)

The concession made to Bulgaria that Macedonia would not interpret article 49 of the then Macedonian Constitution to defend the rights of the Macedonians in Bulgaria- in direct contravention of the constitution, as a joint intergovernmental declaration cannot override a nation's major legal document from which all governmental authority stems- caused great controversy in Macedonia, as it effectively abandoned Macedonians in Bulgaria to the whims of the Bulgarian state. It must be stated that up until this point the Republic of Macedonia had taken very few concrete measures to defend Macedonians in Bulgaria (and still does not do so today); nevertheless, this official commitment to not "defend *the status and rights of persons who are not citizens of the Republic of Macedonia"* in essence conceded that Bulgaria could continue to deny and forcibly assimilate Macedonians in that country.

Tellingly, the concluding paragraph of the Declaration contains the following formulation:

> *"Signed on 22 February 1999 in Sofia, in two originals, each*
>
> *in the official languages of the two countries*

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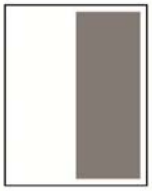

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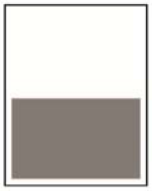

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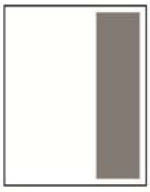

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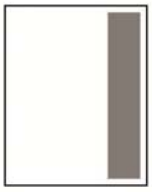

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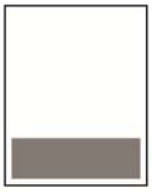

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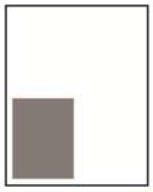

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- in Bulgarian language,

according to the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, and in

Macedonian language, according to the Constitution of the Republic of

Macedonia, both texts being equally authentic."

While such a formulation would appear unremarkable to those not conversant with Macedonian-Bulgarian relations, it is striking that rather than stating "…. *in two originals, each in the official languages of the two countries – Bulgarian and Macedonian….",* it was deemed necessary by Bulgaria to insist on the qualifying phrases "……*according to the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, and… according to the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia…".* The reason for this was that it allowed Bulgaria to continue to refuse to recognize the Macedonian language, by in effect being able to state that the language used in the Declaration is Macedonian according only to the Macedonians (or should that be "wayward Bulgarians"?) and their constitution, but not in Bulgarian eyes; all in keeping with their traditional doctrine that Macedonian is merely a Western Bulgarian dialect.

Good Neighbourliness as Abuse

As we have pointed out above, Bulgaria has for the past 3 to 4 years insisted on Macedonia signing a Treaty of Good Neighbourly Relations as a precondition for it not vetoing Macedonia's accession to NATO and the EU. In so insisting, it mirrors and supports the Greek tactic of abusing its right of veto by demanding that the proposed treaty contain clauses which directly undermine Macedonian identity, language and history, so as to advance the myth that the territory of the Republic of Macedonia is a historically Bulgarian region inhabited predominantly by ethnic Bulgarians. As previously stated, such demands, at their core are designed to justify its annexation of Pirin Macedonia and to perpetuate the nationally unifying dream of Treaty of San Stefano Bulgaria.

Bulgarian Foreign Minister Vigenin recently stated that three contentious matters about which there is still no agreement with Macedonia have delayed progress on drafting a treaty acceptable to both countries; not surprisingly, many of the same issues were included in the aforementioned 1999 Joint Declaration.

The Macedonian newspaper *Vecer* on 14 December 2013 commented as follows on these issues:

"*…Official Sofia seeks guarantees from Macedonia that Article 49 of the Constitution does not constitute a basis for interference by the Republic of Macedonia in Bulgaria's internal affairs. According to Article 11 of the Declaration on Good Neighbourliness of 1999 signed by the then prime ministers of both countries, Lubco Georgievski and Ivan Kostov, which the Bulgarians now wish to see develop into a Treaty on Good Neighbourliness, Macedonia, in effect, has assumed a series of obligations without those same obligations being assumed by the other party. The Eastern neighbour demands that Macedonia sign on to the obligation that it will give up its right to defend the rights and the status of the Macedonians living in Bulgaria, which directly damages Macedonia's national interests. Skopje and Sofia are also unable to agree on what language the document should appear in. According to Vigenin, that is a technical issue and it would be possible to use the formulation which has been used up till now, that is, the agreements could be drafted in the Macedonian language, in accordance with the Macedonian Constitution and in Bulgarian, in accordance with the Bulgarian Constitution. The third contentious matter is the most sensitive as well-that connected with historical issues. Vigenin stated that the two parties have specific views about how to resolve this conflict and to bring about a climate whereby history ceases to be a cause of division, but rather one creating unity. Vigenin also stressed that because of the unresolved issues with Bulgaria and Greece, at the upcoming EU Summit Macedonia would not be granted a date for beginning negotiations with the EU.*

The talks between Bulgaria and Macedonia for the conclusion of an agreement on good

neighbourliness and cooperation are continuing. We are creating the necessary political climate so that they can be successfully concluded, however we have still not reached the stage where it can be signed. Efforts to harmonise our views are continuing, which is the most important thing at present. There is a desire on the part of both parties to make the necessary compromises,

*stated Vigenin" (***http://www.vecer.com.mk/default.asp?ItemID=AD74BCCE25FC054493D8AF13E3BDCF84** ,Софија бара гаранција дека Македонија нема да ги штити правата на Македонците во Бугарија**!** , *Vecer,* 14 December 2013*)*

Despite the diplomatic speak employed by foreign minister Vigenin, it is clear that the Bulgarian position has remained essentially unchanged since Macedonia attained its independence in 1991 and since the Joint Declaration of 1999. Bulgaria demands that Macedonia formally renounce its constitutional obligation to defend the status and rights of the Macedonians in pursuit of its strategic political goal of "proving" that those persons with a Macedonian ethnic consciousness in Bulgaria (and ultimately in the Republic of Macedonia) are Bulgarians. It is pertinent and interesting to point out here that Macedonians in Bulgaria are not explicitly mentioned in Article 49 of the current version of the Macedonian Constitution, nor are the Macedonians in Greece. Article 49 states as follows:

> "*The Republic cares for the status and rights of those persons belonging to the Macedonian people in neighbouring countries, as well as Macedonian expatriates, assists their cultural development and promotes links with them. The Republic cares for the cultural, economic and social rights of the citizens of the Republic abroad."*
>
> (Устав на Република Македонија {Пречистен текст со Амандмани од 4-18}, Агенција за иселеништво на Република Македонија, Скопје, Февруари 2002.)

By insisting that the 1999 formulation continue to be used to describe the Macedonian language, it effectively withholds formal recognition of the Macedonian language as a separate, distinct language from Bulgarian and permits Sofia to continue propagating the linguistically unsustainable position that the literary Macedonian language is merely a "Serbianized Western Bulgarian dialect", again in support of the argument that Macedonians are Bulgarians.

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The attempted Imposition of a Monolithic History and Present

In insisting that Macedonia and Bulgaria "*bring about a climate whereby history ceases to be a cause of division, but rather one creating unity",* Vigenin is in effect demanding that important historical events which have played a key role in forming Macedonians' unique ethnic identity in the recent past, such as Ilinden, the birth and death of revolutionary leaders

Yane Sandanski

such as Goce Delchev, Nikola Karev and Jane Sandanski and the founding of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO/VMRO) , be celebrated in a manner which denies the possibility of interpreting these events as relating to distinctly Macedonian political manifestations and, as a corollary, Vigenin is also seeking to advance the argument that the major actors and protagonists of these events were purely ethnic Bulgarians. This, of course, assists in historically buttressing the Bulgarian contention that contemporary Macedonians in Bulgaria, the Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Greece and Serbia are essentially "Bulgarians with an undeveloped or diluted Bulgarian identity".

It is therefore quite apparent that like its ally Greece, Bulgaria will continue to use its privileged position as a member of NATO and the EU to continue to blackmail the Republic of Macedonia into accepting its demands in order to advance morally bereft internal and external political and foreign policy goals whose realization will paradoxically only contribute to further destabilization in the Balkan region. Given this blatant abuse of the right of veto by Bulgaria, one must of necessity pose the question; does good neighbourliness, when exercised from a position of power and privilege, mean that any demand, however unreasonable and irrational, may be made in the name of good neighbourly relations in order to advance corrupt and pernicious political and foreign policy goals?

Given the open support lent by the EU and NATO to the political blackmail being practised by Greece and Bulgaria against the Republic of Macedonia, it is more than clear that good neighbourliness a la Bulgare, as well as a la Greque, has been accepted as a legitimate political tool which "members of the club" can employ against those who seek to enter the "exclusive realm" inhabited by these privileged members. Sadly, tolerance of such means and methods demeans not only NATO and the EU, but also the principles which they loudly proclaim as their foundation stones.

Dr. Chris Popov is an Executive Member of the AMHRC.

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** Please note that Dimitri Jovanov & Pando Ashlakov will not be in attendance at this event.*

The Only Solution

By George N Papadakis

Early last November I finally succeeded, after nearly a year, in visiting a place in the region of Lerin [Florina in Greek], which, for various reasons, I very much like. Above everything else, I like the people because some of my very best friends live there. Apart from that, this small magical piece of earth offers a retreat into nature which is very relaxing. It was quite amazing, for two whole days I experienced total enjoyment – beginning with the beautiful Macedonian pastries in Domna, then onto Lazheni and finally reaching the peaks of the southern part of Mount Pelister (Bela Voda, Kribi Kamen, Kichevo etc). Because I am a fanatical devotee of the mountain, I took an opportunity to make a second sojourn from Rakovo and via a 17 kilometer forest track, reached the village of German in the Prespa region. From the peaks, the views of Prespa, Mount Vicho, the Pelagonian plain and Mount Kajmakchalan, are simply breath taking. This unique mountain is so 'sweet' and its flora and fauna offer such a friendly sanctuary that I truly did find it very difficult to work up enough desire to eventually leave.

It was the perfect 'tonic' for my disposition, which was not the best. Prior to beginning my ascent on the mountains, I took a short stroll through the market area of Lerin. It was early on Saturday morning and the scene was quite disappointing, depressing even; very few people were on the streets and many of the shops were empty or shut. I spoke to some of the shopkeepers, acquaintances of mine: "*Don't you see? There is nothing to say. Lerin is gone, dead. Nobody shows any concern for us, though what is worst is that we don't show concern for ourselves.*"

I thought much about those words and about what I had just seen in Lerin as I climbed the 2,182 meters from Rakovo to the peak of Krivi Kamen. Upon leaving the path which only a four wheel drive can manage, I began my ascent alone and at this point it occurred to me that only the Alps can be said to possess a similarly beautiful landscape. But I was troubled by the thought that this is where the similarities end; why? Isn't it possible to develop these 17 kilometres of bushy mountain road, which at some points reaches and exceeds a height of 2,000 metres? Why couldn't this road become our Hochalpenstrasse? What have the Austrians, Swiss, Germans, Italians and French done, that hasn't been done here? Quite simply, they saw and took a unique opportunity to promote the wonderful tourist potential of the Alps and they used all possible means. Apperceiving the value of mountain roads, they

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created and maintained new ones, even in national parks – all in order to create easy access to places of surreal beauty, like the glaciers located in the Alps.

I will give you two examples and then you can draw your own conclusions. The Grossglockner National Park in the Austrian Alps and the mountain road which leads to it, annually admits almost two million visitors. The toll is 23 Euros for cars and 17 for motorbikes, which not only covers the cost of maintaining the road (don't forget that we are talking about a height of over 2,000 feet) but also the conservation of the whole national park. If this seems excessive, then it needs to be understood that it is an especially beautiful location in the heart of the Alps and that apart from the glaciers, visitors can observe rare forms of fauna and unique flora. This direct revenue of Grossglockner, which reflects a large number of visitors over the course of only 7 months (during the remaining 5 months the Hochalpenstrasse remains closed on account of winter) has created enormous associated industries – restaurants, accommodation, sporting activities and the sale of various types of tourist paraphernalia – in the surrounding areas, with an annual turnover, wait for it, of over four billion Euros.

All the same, this example may appear incomparable to our circumstances, so I will make mention of a second case. The Alpine Jaufenpass/Passo Giovo is located in the autonomous Southern Tyrol at a height of 2,094 meters like "our" mountain pass Rakovo-German. It is open all year round, conditions permitting during winter and it may be viewed as an alternative route to the town of Meran from the Brenner Pass on the Italo-Austrian border. Even though it doesn't have a toll, which is the case with most of the mountain roads of the Alps, the local government ensures that the road is well maintained. So on account of that and its indescribable natural beauty, the road annually attracts over 250,000 visitors and their needs are catered for by dozens of restaurants and hotels located along its 22 kilometer stretch. This mountain pass is also used by cycling teams from all over Europe during the summer months as a training center and according to the German driver's union (BVDM), it is the 6th most popular Alpine destination for bicyclists.

I think you will agree with me that our friends in the Southern Tyrol, with the aid and support of the Italian government, have created something that others can emulate. They have simply made good use of something which nature's wealth had in essence already given them. Why can't we do the same in the region of Lerin? Why don't we also organize a request to convert Mt. Pelister/Baba into a national park, as has already been done in the Republic of Macedonia? Even if the central government rejects the idea, couldn't the local Lerin Council carry out a plan to reconstruct the forest track leading from Rakovo to German, so that it matches the standards of Hochalpenstrasse or the Jaufenpass? Moreover there are European funding programs available for such measures.

Why shouldn't the region be developed as tourist destination, not only for the inhabitants of Greece, but also of Bitola, which is only 20 kilometers away? Even if we don't succeed at first in attracting large numbers of English and German tourists to the Lerin region, then we can hope to share it with our neighbours in the Republic of Macedonia. When it finally be understood the linguistic and ethnic distinctiveness of the Lerin region can be used as a tool to create growth, rather than be regarded as something to be forever condemned. The example of the Southern Tyrol perfectly illustrates the possible benefits. However in order to obtain such benefits, one must make an effort. One needs a local government which has the vision to develop a concrete plan and the courage to move on that plan, even if it means ignoring the directives of the central government. We already know about the negligence of those who have been in government until now – about the miserable state of all the regions inhabited by Macedonians. The local elections are nearing and if the situation is not changed, now that we have

reached the bottom, then my shopkeeper friend in Lerin will most definitely be proven right – *we don't even care about ourselves*.

P.S. During the course of my journey from Rakovo to German, I met a total, on a Saturday, of 6 souls: one shepherd dog, which quickly became my best friend after I shared my pastry with it and five people. We did not speak even one word in Greek – even the dog had been trained in Macedonian. I leave you to draw your own conclusions.

Always Behind

Theoretically and because it is my first article in the New Year, I *should* try to find something optimistic to write about, just for a change. I thought about it for days, it was quite difficult. Then Davutoglu [Turkey's Foreign Minister] visited Athens and made a call to Greeks born in Turkey, who for various reasons no longer live there, to return. He even encouraged them to reclaim their citizenship and property rights. Then I became depressed when I thought about how far behind Greece is, on the issue of minority rights. After that I renewed my search to find something positive and finally some news from Serbia, grabbed my attention.

Even though the news cannot be viewed as optimistic for Greece, I decided to share it with you in the hope that some people will learn something from it. So what happened in Serbia? Something similar to what we heard from Turkey's Foreign Minister. With the encouragement of the local authorities in the autonomous province of Vojvodina, member of the ethnic German minority who lived there until the end of WWII and were forcefully removed upon the end of the war, have begun reclaiming their property rights. We need to explain the order of events here.

The German community in Vojvodina (a territory, on which today, 24 ethnic groups are officially recognised!) at the beginning of 1939, numbered nearly half a million; with the commencement of the war and the NAZI invasion of Yugoslavia, it was obvious that they would be useful to Germany's occupation authorities. Several thousand Germans from Vojvodina presented themselves – not always voluntarily – for service before the Wehrmacht and participated in operations on the Eastern Front. In 1945 after the defeat of the Axis, the reprisals made by the new communist regime of Yugoslavia, were severe. The so-called Volksdeutsche (= "Germanfolk", paraphrased in Serbo-Croatian as "Folksdojsteri") were officially declared "enemies of the state"; their villages and towns were forcibly emptied and

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those who did not manage to escape to Germany or Austria, were arrested. Many ended in camps in Serbia or were taken by train to Siberian gulags, where the majority of them died. Thus it is no surprise that the census of 1958 recorded only 32,000 Germans in Vojvodina and today, the number is no more than 5,000.

All those members of the German community which managed to survive by fleeing from Vojvodina lost their Yugoslav citizenship and properties. Much of latter were occupied by settlers from other parts of Yugoslavia. After the collapse of the Yugoslav federation, the Serbian authorities, for reasons of their own, began to unofficially encourage former members of Vojvodina's German minority to return and reclaim their citizenship and property. Around three years ago this measure gained an official character via the establishment of the Secretariat for the Return of Property Titles. More recently, the Union of Germans in Vojvodina, based in Subotitsa, publicized the details of the first claims to be made by the Volksdeutsche for the restoration of property titles. The number of claims so far made, amounts to 312; 199 from Germans in Serbia; 70 from Austria and 43 from Germany. It is expected that the number will significantly rise as the existence of the Secretariat is not yet widely known, especially outside the borders of Serbia.

A single perusal of the Secretariat's website is enough throw us, the citizens of Greece, into depression. The site has the ability to inform any visitor in 8 languages (Serbian, German, English, Hungarian, Slovakian, Romanian, Turkish and Hebrew) about the process by which property claims can be made and even a choice is offered in regard to when any claimant wishes to lodge the relevant documents.

And we here in Greece are still trying to convince ourselves and others that we inhabit a European state which respects the law. Officially anyone who wants

to make a claim for the return of property is free to go before the courts, which will make the final decision. We sell this dubious form of "justice" to international organizations which question us about human rights violations. This worthless "argument" was used some years ago by the then premier, Kostas Karamanlis, when the Macedonian premier first raised with him, in written form, the issues of the rights of the Macedonian minority, the return of Macedonian political refugees and their properties, which had been confiscated by the neo-Greek state.

But *modern European states* are not supposed be in the business of so cheaply avoiding their responsibilities. Moreover, that which Turkey is planning to do and which Serbia is already doing (and yet both states are obviously something less than 'modern') is something we aren't even considering. And how could we, when we have a premier who wants Father Christmas to give him the present of making Macedonians disappear? With the neo-Nazi's of "Golden Dawn" holding firm at nearly 15% in the polls and the shenanigans of the para-state? Such conditions do not allow for it.

They signify a cultural problem to which the only solution may be via the regular embarrassment of the average neo-Greek citizen. It may be that we need to continually highlight to the citizenry, the backward nature of the state in which they live and in that way change their thinking patterns. At present the average citizen is satisfied with the regime and full of pride for the basketball team. It is time to change these attitudes so that when, for example, the Chief of Police in Athens declares that his ambition is to make the life of immigrants difficult, the citizenry reacts by demanding the removal of such stupid racists.

This will be the basis of my activity in the New Year. Therefore prepare yourselves for the highlighting of more embarrassing neo-Greek phenomena. I hope that by the end of another year, I will have something more optimistic to write about.

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.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

International Human Rights Day

and the "Celebrations" of the Council of Europe

Lerin (Florina)/Gorna Dzumaja (Blagoevgrad)/Pustec/Toronto/Melbourne - December 10/2013

Press Release - Vinozhito, OMO Ilinden PIRIN, MAEI, MHRMI and AMHRC

The Council of Europe held an event on November 25, 2013 to *"celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Framework Convention (for the Protection of National Minorities)"*.

It would have been more appropriate to revisit the failures of the implementation of the Framework Convention. A perfect opportunity would have been the Advisory Committee's third visit to Bulgaria, which took place from November 11-15, 2013. Bulgaria has ratified the agreement but is free to continue denying the existence of its Macedonian minority, execute state-sponsored discrimination and ignore various European Court of Human Rights rulings in favour of the Macedonian minority. Greece, which has never ratified the agreement (was this fact really "celebrated" by the CoE?), is, of course, free to do the same.

According to the Council of Europe, the Framework Convention's goals are *"to protect within their respective territories the existence of national minorities"* which has been an absolute failure, yet the CoE has the impudence to include the following, albeit well-intentioned but obviously unattainable (for the CoE) goal *"Considering that a pluralist and genuinely democratic society should not only respect the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of each person belonging to a national minority, but also create appropriate conditions enabling them to express, preserve and develop this identity."*

Considering that the CoE cannot get Greece, one of its own member-states, to even admit the existence of any ethnic minorities on its territory, how does it expect to enforce the creation of *"…appropriate conditions enabling them (minorities) to express, preserve and develop this identity."* ? One also has to wonder why a Greek representative was even permitted to attend the CoE "celebrations".

The Council of Europe would be well-advised to explain what methods they have in enforcing these principles and why, to date, they haven't been used.

Furthermore, does the CoE not see the irony in referring to the Republic of Macedonia as "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (quotes included) in its list of member-states while it claims to be defending and promoting human rights? As *"… the continent's leading human rights organisation"*, one would think that the CoE would understand the concept of self-identification.

The **European Free Alliance – Rainbow/Vinozhito** is a political party of the Macedonian minority in Greece. The party has offices in Florina/Lerin and Edessa/Voden. For more information please visit www.vinozito.gr, or by email: vinozito@otenet.gr or on +30 23850 46548.

OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN is a political party supporting the rights of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria. It has been banned since 2000, despite a 2005 European Court of Human Rights Judgement ruling that the decision was a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights. For more information please visit www.omoilindenpirin.org.

The **Macedonian Alliance for European Integration (MAEI)** is a political party of the Macedonian minority in Albania advocating human rights for Macedonians throughout Albania. For more information please visit www.macedoniansinalbania.org.

Macedonian Human Rights Movement International (MHRMI) has been active on human and national rights issues for Macedonians and other oppressed peoples since 1986. For more information: www.mhrmi.org, www.twitter.com/mhrmi, www.facebook.com/mhrmi, info@mhrmi.org, +1 416-850-7125.

Established in 1984, the **Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC)** is a non-governmental organisation that informs and advocates before international institutions, governments and broader communities about combating racism and promoting human rights. Our aspiration is to ensure that Macedonian communities and other excluded groups throughout the world, are recognised, respected and afforded equitable treatment. For more information please visit www.macedonianhr.org.au, email info@macedonianhr.org.au or via +61 3 9329 8960

The United Nations-

Spreading Hypocrisy Throughout the World

The United Nations General Assembly must realize the irony in recently electing, as it refers to it, the "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" as a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council for 2014-2016. In Macedonia, the UNHRC is getting a member-state that is incapable of defending its own most basic human right, that of self-identification, by continuing to participate in the ludicrous UN-sponsored name negotiations.

As a member of the UNHRC, Macedonia will be expected to aid in *"…strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe…"* while, of course, simultaneously giving in to immense pressure by many UN member-states who demand that Macedonia end the so-called "name dispute" with Greece by changing its name. The hypocrisy abounds.

The UN has made a mess of this situation since Macedonia declared independence in 1991. Because it succumbed to pressure from Greece, the UN would only allow Macedonia entry if it changed its flag and accepted the so-called "temporary reference" of "FYROM" or "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". While this measure was supposedly to be used only within the UN, it cascaded to almost every other organization and international body imaginable. The excuse being that any agreement in the United Nations takes precedence.

The International Olympic Committee, for example, has Macedonian athletes marching between Finland and France, behind the "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" sign and waving bastardized versions of the Macedonian flag as to not offend Greece, the country that is trying to wipe it off the map. It must be every Macedonian athlete's dream to, one day, walk in the Olympic Opening Ceremonies under "F" and represent the great country of "FYROM".

Now who is more to blame? The UN and its member-states for pressuring Macedonia to change its name, even though the vast majority of them, including four of the five permanent UN Security Council members, have recognized Macedonia using its proper name? Or Macedonia, for agreeing to negotiate its own name? Common sense dictates that a major reason that the West is calling for Macedonia to "compromise" and change its name is because it continues to negotiate it. The mere participation of Macedonia in the negotiations indicates that it is willing to compromise.

Macedonia would have been well-advised to take the offensive with the name dispute, but instead, chose to continuously defend itself against Greece's ridiculous claims. The prevalent argument is that Macedonia wants to appear diplomatic and "fit in" with the West. Well, name another country that is willing to negotiate its name based on xenophobic stupidity.

Greece claims that it objects to Macedonia's name because of "confusion" between the Republic of Macedonia and the Province of Macedonia (which Greece annexed after the partition of Macedonia in 1913). If this were true, the Belgian province of Luxembourg would demand that Luxembourg change its name, and the US state of Georgia would declare war on the Republic of Georgia.

As former Greek Prime Minister Constantine Mitsotakis admitted in 1995, Greece initiated the "name dispute" as an excuse to keep denying the existence, and persecution, of its large Macedonian minority and the Macedonian people as a whole. It has been stringing the world along in the claim that Macedonia is trying to usurp an "historically Greek" name. Ironic that Greece now claims that "Macedonia is Greek", but it was not until 1988, when Greece realized that independence for the Republic of Macedonia was imminent, that it renamed "Northern Greece" to "Macedonia." Prior to this, Greece's policy was that Macedonia did not exist.

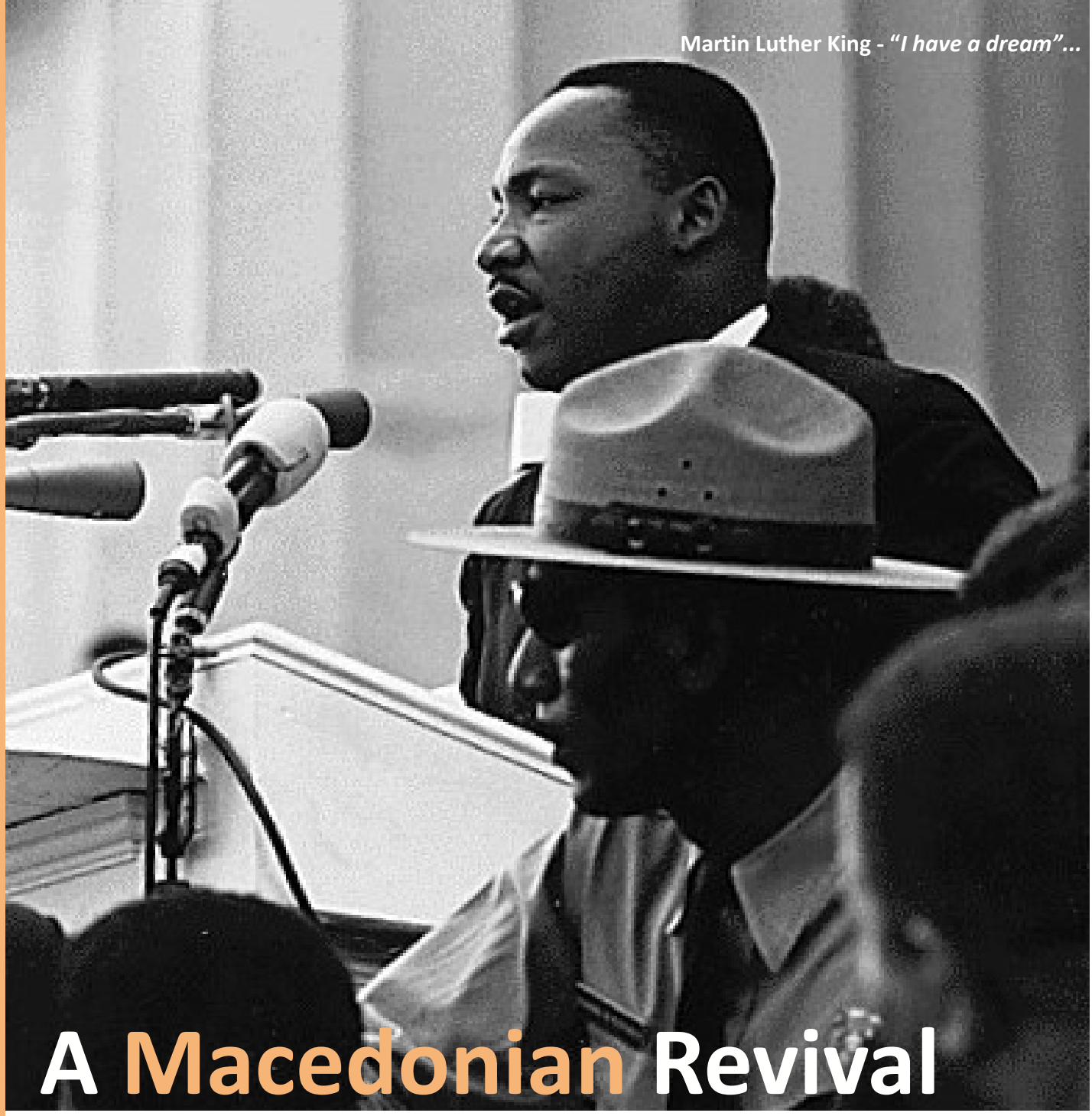
Instead of investing more time in trying to mediate a solution to an unsolvable problem, the UN, and current UN mediator for the name dispute Matthew Nimetz, should take the lead of the first UN mediator, Robin O'Neil, and denounce the name negotiations. According to Mr. O'Neil, "*Macedonia must not and will not change its name in order to appease Greece. If Macedonia succumbs to pressures and changes its name, such events will only give more firepower to Greece until it reaches its final goal - Macedonia to vanish from the map.*"

Of course, Macedonia should not hold its breath waiting for the UN to act. It must live up to the UN's self-proclaimed ideals, and immediately withdraw from the senseless name negotiations.

Bill Nicholov, President
Macedonian Human Rights Movement International

MHRMI
MACEDONIAN HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT INTERNATIONAL

Macedonian Human Rights Movement International (MHRMI) has been active on human and national rights issues for Macedonians and other oppressed peoples since 1986. For more information: www.mhrmi.org, www.twitter.com/mhrmi, www.facebook.com/mhrmi, info@mhrmi.org, +1 416-850-7125.



Martin Luther King - *"I have a dream"...*

A Macedonian Revival

By Tom Vangelovski

Political and social decay among the Macedonian people has been present for a long time. In large part, this has been sustained by a peculiar mindset which has developed over centuries of oppression. Our oppressors have trained the Macedonian attitude to conform, accept its conditions and remain subservient for fear of greater turmoil should we attempt to resist. This mindset has subjected many to lead lives governed by fear, to feelings of inferiority and the need to rely on the 'benevolence' of outsiders for self-worth and subsistence. This mindset has permeated all spheres of Macedonian life and, in particular, political life.

The most pronounced example of this is the capitulation surrounding the Interim Accord with Greece and our complete disregard for our inalienable rights and freedom. The Interim Accord has led us to voluntarily, and unnecessarily, negotiate our very identity and partially transfer national sovereignty to Athens with regard to the constitution and national symbols. It also allowed Athens, rather than scientific evidence, to determine historical facts. The fact that Macedonians even contemplated such ideas defies belief. The fact that it has been ongoing for over 20 years is undeniable evidence that Macedonians suffer from a mindset that is self-destructive and, quite frankly, unacceptable adult behaviour.

Goce Delcev diagnosed this condition over a century ago and considered its resolution as our greatest duty. In a nutshell, it was his definition of the Macedonian cause:

> Моралната револуција – **револуција во умот, срцето и душата на еден ропски народ**, е најголемата задача (The moral revolution - the **revolution of the mind, heart and soul of an enslaved people**, is our greatest task).

Delcev understood that real freedom from oppression begins in the hearts and minds of the oppressed and that a change in mindset needed to happen among each and every Macedonian. As a student of revolutionary history more broadly and the American Revolution specifically, it's likely that the summation provided by John Adams more than a century earlier may have influenced him:

> The Revolution was in the **minds and hearts of the people**; a change in their religious sentiments, of their duties and obligations...This radical change in the **principles, opinions, sentiments, and affections of the people** was the real American Revolution.

Over a century after Delcev's attempt to rid our people of this mindset, we may have formal independence in the form of a Macedonian republic, but this freedom is superficial at best, with the majority of Macedonians and their leaders clearly unable or unwilling to freely determine their own affairs and exercise their inalienable rights.

This article is not an attempt to explain in detail the phenomena of this peculiar mindset. Nor is the question whether we require a moral revolution (as Delcev termed it), or a national revival in more modern terms. The focus of this article is about where such a revival needs to come from – within Macedonia or the outside, namely the diaspora?

While there are many examples across history, two prominent ones stand out from the 20th century. Though the contextual details differ to the Macedonian situation, both examples are similar in respect to the need to overcome an embedded and self-destructive mindset among the larger part of the population. The first is that of the American civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King Jr. African Americans had suffered for centuries under slavery and even after its formal abolition they were severely persecuted. As a result, African Americans suffered from what is sometimes referred to as a 'slave mindset', very similar to the peculiar mindset of our own people. Even though they had been formally freed, many African Americans continued to believe they were inferior and believed that rather than having rights inherent to all human beings, they only had privileges that were bestowed upon them by the white majority.

In the African American experience, their revival came internally. It was led by a small but dedicated group of people who began with a strategy of public education, legislative lobbying, and litigation, and then broadened their strategy to direct action including boycotts, sit-ins, Freedom Rides, marches and similar tactics that relied on mass mobilization, nonviolent resistance and civil disobedience. These community leaders mobilised volunteers to participate in broad-based actions through churches, local grassroots organisations, fraternal societies, and African American-owned businesses. The risks undertaken by these grassroots leaders accomplished an immense societal transformation not only among the African American community, but across the entire nation. They were able to uproot the self-destructive mindset and turn their community into one with purpose.

The second example is that of the Jewish holocaust and the creation of the Israeli state. One wonders whether six million Jews could have been murdered by the Nazi regime had they organised a large-scale resistance movement. Pre-eminent Holocaust scholar, Raul Hilberg, notes that "on a European-wide scale the Jews had no resistance organization, no blueprint for armed action, no plan even for psychological warfare".[1] He claims this compliant attitude was a result of centuries of Jewish persecution: "as had been the case so many times before down through the centuries, simply appealing to their oppressors, and complying with orders, would hopefully avoid inflaming the situation and so mitigate the

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damage done to the Jews until the onslaught abated".[2]

Common to the Macedonian situation, the few Jewish organisations that tried to resist the Nazi regime understood the problem they faced. Their analysis of the Jewish mindset was unforgiving, using the following statement in attempt to reverse the mass inertia: "Do not be led like sheep to slaughter".[3] Unfortunately, it took a catastrophe on an unimaginable scale to undo a mindset of compliance and appeasement. In this instance, it was the Jewish diaspora, out of the horrors of the holocaust, which uncompromisingly led the revival movement and the creation of an Israeli state in which Jews could live free of persecution. The diaspora took direct action, using its financial resources and political influence in 'host' countries and organised mass Jewish migration to Israel itself to achieve its goals.

The question remains of how a change in mindset can be accomplished among the Macedonian people – that we have inalienable rights and why it's important to exercise them. Can it be achieved internally within Macedonia or does the diaspora need to lead this process? Both options are fraught with difficult challenges. At a grassroots level, Macedonians living in Macedonia are indifferent to political life and their rights. Concepts such as inalienable rights and democratic, accountable and transparent governance and institutions are both alien and meaningless. Values such as individual responsibility and obligations to community and country are almost non-existent and rarely taken seriously as the mantra of self-interest dominates.

Self-serving leaders in politics, academia, media and many community organisations are generally unaccountable, corrupt and obsessed with convincing the general public to continue its subservient attitude to foreign dictates for the supposed greater good. Macedonia does not currently have committed leaders who are dedicated to the inalienable rights of its people such as Martin Luther King Jr. It is difficult to see how Delcev's moral revolution would come from within Macedonia.

On the other hand, while diaspora Macedonians are largely in support of the Macedonian people determining their own affairs free from foreign interests; diaspora influence within Macedonia is limited. Many 'home' Macedonians disingenuously dismiss the diaspora as unaware of their struggles and hardships, and their principles as unachievable in Macedonia. However, fault also lies with the diaspora as many lack the zeal of other groups, such as the Jewish diaspora, to assist their brethren and bring about grassroots change.

In addition, there are obviously some diaspora organisations that represent the interests of Macedonian political elites rather than the Macedonian nation. These organisations create confusion and distort both the level of interest in the International Community and its capacity to change the lot of the Macedonian people who continue to believe that their 'salvation' lies in foreigners and in multilateral organisations that fail to respect their inalienable rights, and in some instances, actively work to suppress them.

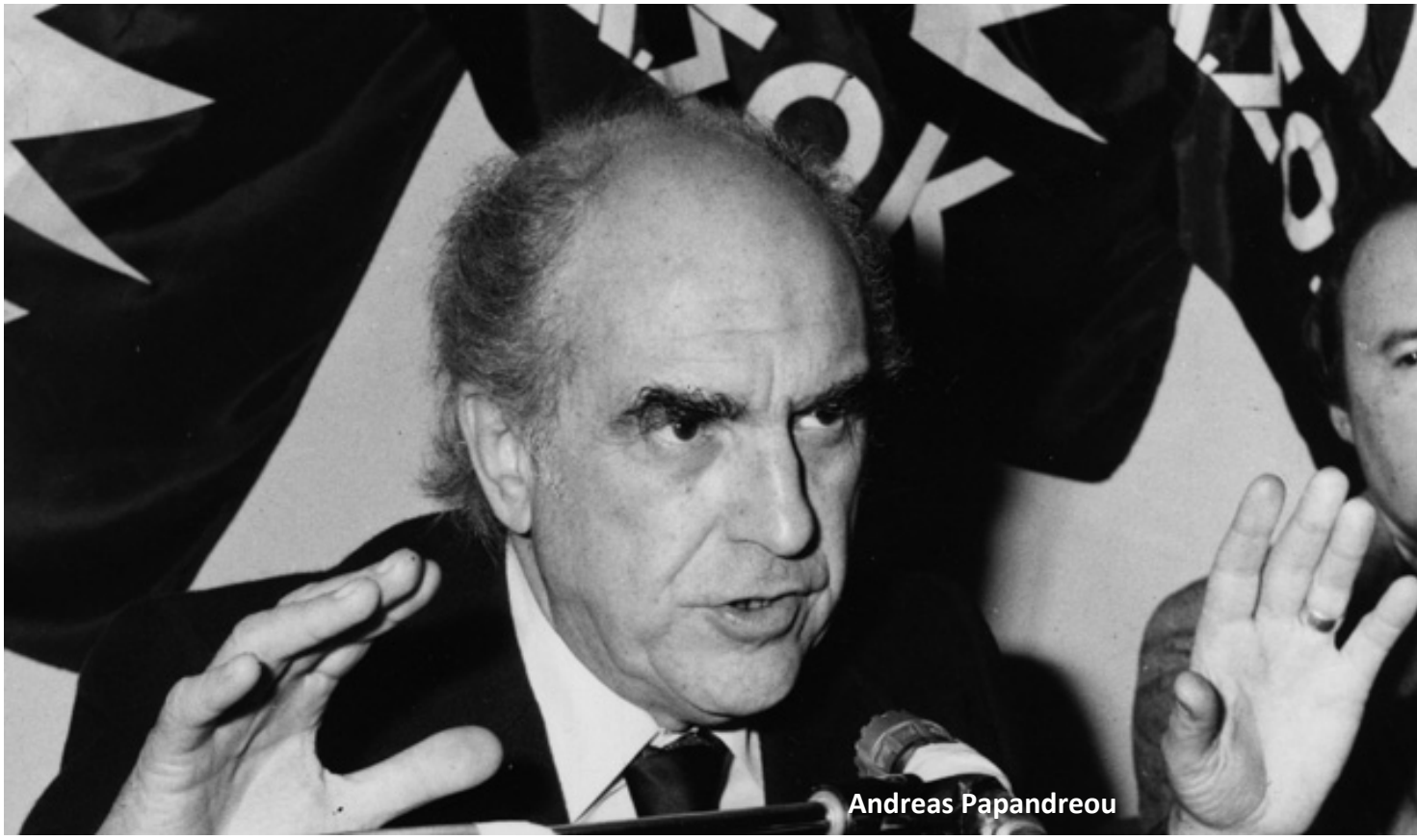
A change in mindset is a long and arduous process. In our case, the challenges are great and it remains to be seen when and where the process will begin. The man that we honour as one of our greatest predecessors reminds us of our condition, which is just as true today as it was then:

> "Овчка главо, запомни дека пред оние на кои им должиш можноста да го напишеш своето име човек, треба да стоиш без капа и кога ги псуеш" (You sheep, remember that you must stand before those to whom you owe the ability to call yourself a human being with your hat off, even when you are cursing them).
>
> *- Goce Delcev*

[1] Hilberg, R., 1961, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (3 volumes), Yale University Press, New Haven.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.

Greece during & after the Cold War in relation to the Rise and Development of the Current Macedonian Movement

By Dr. Dimitar Ljorovski Vamvakovski



Andreas Papandreou

The fall of communism in the Eastern Bloc and the collapse of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia at the beginning of the 1990's, was a moment in time when Greece could have established itself as a leader on the Balkan Peninsula. It was the only country in the region which was part of the European Union and NATO (Turkey was also a member of the latter and there are various perspectives about its possible role in the Balkans), it possessed the largest population, a growing economy, a strong military capacity and was well positioned, geopolitically, in the Eastern Mediterranean. Never-the-less, in hindsight, Greece let go of the possibility, and instead of becoming a force which propelled the Balkan states toward Euro-Atlantic institutional integration, for certain of its neighbours, it became the exact opposite. The reasons for this are numerous, in the main however, official Athens never succeeded in freeing itself from the shackles of the past; it did not make a serious effort to let go of nationalistic positions and accept certain historical realities – which required redefining state political traditions and the de-rooting of various stereotypes which were part of the Greek nationalist Myth.

The 1950's to 1980, Recuperating from the Civil War

The end of the civil war in Greece (1949) brought to a close a lengthy period of turbulence in modern Greek history, which had a dictatorship (1936-1940) and continuous military conflict from 1940-1949. After this, it was essential to renew representative institutions, especially parliamentary democracy; processes which developed very slowly and above all, depended on the politicking of right wing parties and leaders whose manner of governance was in essence a reaction to the civil war. Other determining factors in the post war period included the rise of the Cold War, American aid/intervention and the influence of the situation in Cyprus. This political context eventually led to a strengthening of a left wing view of the world distinguished by a pointedly anti-American attitude. Official state acquiescence to this trend brought forth a politico-military reaction which installed a military dictatorship or

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junta that governed Greece from 1967 to 1974. The end of the junta led to a return of Konstantinos Karamanlis to the political scene. He was re-called from overseas in the hope that he would lead the renewal of the democratic functioning of the state. Thus, one may note, that the Greece of the 1970's was in numerous ways, a copy of Greece of the 1950's.

konstantinos Karamanlis

In 1974, Cyprus was officially divided, with the Turks taking control of around two fifths of the island. At this time a new political party emerged on the political scene – the All Greek Socialist Movement (PASOK), which was led by Andreas Papandreou. By making good use of some key opportunities, PASOK was elected to government in 1981. Anti-Americanism and the strengthening of the left (the Greek Communist Party was again legalized) and of other more centrist parties, all benefitted Papandreou; there was also an economic downturn in the West in the 70's as a result of the oil crisis of 1973. If we add the continual worsening of relations with Turkey, including an endless verbal war over the Turkish minority in Thrace and the small Greek community in Istanbul, which along with Cyprus, created much mutual distrust and an arms race, one could foresee the approaching demise of Karamanlis's government.

The 1980's: an Opportunity to Reform is Missed

In 1981 there were two very significant occurrences which affected the Greek state. Firstly Greece was permitted to join the European Economic Community (ECC, which eventually became the EU) and this had obligated the country to re-join NATO, the previous year. Secondly, PASOK came to power, which was the first time a left wing party had formed a government in Greece. On one side Papandreou's government carried out certain modernistic reforms, like for example, the introduction of civil ceremony marriages and mutually agreed divorces. Likewise, official recognition was given to the communist led ELAS's role in the resistance movement during WWII; simultaneously members of the Greek Communist party, banished from Greece at the end of the civil war in 1949, were given permission to return to Greece from their Eastern Bloc exile.

On the other hand, the latter decision only applied to ethnic Greeks, Macedonians were excluded. As the years went by it slowly became clear that PASOK's politicking was to be characterized by a populism which promised much but delivered very little. This is why the beginning of governance by PASOK is regarded as one of the long term sources of the current economic crisis in Greece. In other words, during this period, parallel with the continuing worsening of relations with its eastern neighbor, which culminated in December 1986 with a border fire incident on the Maritsa river, in which one Greek and two Turkish soldiers were killed; the Greek state was facing an ever growing debt, which compelled the government to reduce expenditure and imports and raise taxes. So after successfully holding onto government for two terms, in 1989, the right wing New Democracy came to power in a coalition which included the Communist Party of Greece and the former liberal, Konstantinos Mitsotakis, became the new premier.

The end of the Cold War at the beginning of the 1990's suggested a course for Greek politicking directed toward dealing with the following issues: adaptation to the major transformation undergone by the former communist countries to the north; changes to the nature of the economy so that it could accommodate itself to European criteria and the negative relations with its neighbours, especially Turkey but also the Republic of Macedonia and Albania. Greece failed on all of the above, because during the 1980's, PASOK failed to behave in a fiscally responsible manner and it failed to even attempt to change negative nationalistic traditions. This can be further highlighted via a discussion of PASOK's treatment of Macedonians, during the 1980's.

Macedonians in Greece during the 1980's

The 1980's can be characterized by what has been called national healing or reconciliation, which was the course promoted by PASOK and the other left wing parties. In 1980 all these parties jointly proposed the introduction of a law for the free and all encompassing repatriation of political refugees. It was not accepted but it signified a major turning point – i.e. the beginning of the rise of a different perception of the civil war and its consequences. In Greek society modernization encouraged winds of change and the rise of democratically minded elements among Macedonians in Aegean Macedonia and Macedonians who had originally come from that part of Macedonia. Jointly they provided the spark for a movement hoping for change in the stubborn negative viewpoints of Greek soci-

ety in relation to the Macedonian question and the role played by Macedonians in the Greek Civil War.

At the same time, during the early 1980's in Greece there arose a tendency in favour of good neighbourly relations with Yugoslavia, even though at most meetings between the delegates, the question of the problematic status of Macedonians in Greece and those Macedonians who been compelled to leave Greece, was brought up. In the end, the great expectations of Macedonians who had remained in Greece and those exiled, remained unfulfilled. The law for the repatriation of
political refugees from the Greek Civil War came into effect on the 29th of December, 1982. However, the selective nature of that law would be the first thing to note about it. According to that law, only those willing to declare themselves as Greek by birth would gain the right to return.

The total number of political refugees from Greece (located in the Soviet Union, the Eastern Bloc countries and Yugoslavia) numbered around 55,000. The fact that 50,000 of them were Macedonian gives us a clear picture about the real intentions behind the so-called historical law for "national" reconciliation. It was simply a gesture for the benefit of the Greek Communist party and a continuation of the anti-Macedonian political tradition. The communist leadership very quickly forgot about their ideological comrades, together with whom they had fought and began to treat them as national enemies. The great return was only for ethnic Greeks. Even short term visas were conditioned by a requirement to a declaration of Greekness.

During the 1980's, as in the period between the two world wars, the Macedonian language was the key marker of Macedonian distinctiveness. It was via their language that Aegean Macedonians managed to resist all forceful and subtle pressures applied by the Greek authorities, in order to 'assimilate' them. In general the Greek state did not baulk at using any material or human resources to eliminate Macedonianism.

In a 1982 report entitled "Conspiracy against Macedonia" prepared by the Greek security service, there is a recommended list of mechanisms to be used by the Greek state for the final 'assimilation' of Macedonians in the regions of Lerin [Florina in Greek] and Voden [Edessa in Greek]. The security service recommended that the state create a special institution to lead the battle against "Slavo-Macedonians" and among other things it suggested that this new institution should: provide for the settlement and employment of ethnic Greeks in Aegean Macedonia with the aim of watering down the homogeneity of the region; the formation of cultural associations designed to spread Greek culture, especially by financing the publication of books and brochures; the introduction of measures blocking access to study in Macedonian universities; the gathering up of information about all individuals who declare possession of a Macedonian ethnic consciousness; the encouragement of marriages between Greek military officers and Macedonian women; the internal re-settlement of leaders in the struggle for Macedonian human rights and the employment of Macedonians in public institutions which would serve to control their behavior in public.

Parallel with this, "scholarly" institutions were created in Australia and the US for the purpose of blocking the spread of the Macedonian language and culture among the refugees from Aegean Macedonia. The policy that the

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(Continued from page 39)

Macedonian language and nation do not exist is something that all Greek governments have held. Any change in the political regime merely indicated a modification in the arguments used to negate the Macedonian language and nation. This negation gained new facets and grew enormously in size, after the independence of the Republic of Macedonia, on the 8th of September 1991.

Macedonians in Greece begin to Organize Anew

In spite of the constant efforts of the Greek state to 'assimilate' Macedonians, the latter began to variously manifest some more or less active forms of resistance. Slowly and courageously during the 1980's, Macedonians in Greece began to lift their heads and to publicly manifest their difference. The distribution of various forms of literature, the singing of Macedonian songs, communication in the Macedonian language in public places, including agitation, were the first forms of active resistance to Greece's politics of 'assimilation'. Then in June 1990, Macedonian activists from Aegean Macedonia, including Hristos Sidiropoulos (Risto Sidov), Stavros Anastasiadis (Krste Ashlakov) and Andonis Siekris (Andon Shekrev), in the capital of Denmark, Copenhagen, called a press conference, during which they openly spoke in Macedonian and presented themselves as members of the Macedonian minority in Greece.

The fist organization created by Macedonians in Aegean Macedonia, i.e. after the Greek Civil War, was the "Secret Committee for Human Rights". It later grew into the public organization called "the Macedonian Movement for Balkan Prosperity" – MAKIVE. The foundation meeting of the organization took place in the village of S'botsko in the Meglen region. Among its principles and action items were the following: demands for free use of the Macedonian language, in both spoken and written forms; the study of Macedonian folklore and culture in general; the introduction of Macedonian language courses at primary and secondary education levels; a restoration Macedonian place and personal names on official documents; granting the right of Macedonian refugees to return; the annulment of anti-Macedonian laws and the freedom to study and speak freely about Macedonian history.

Even though the organization could not gain official status and often had to operate in secrecy, it made a significant contribution to raising the general level of resistance against the official anti-Macedonian policies of the Greek state. In response to a directive from the organization, in some areas, Macedonians began to openly and constantly speak Macedonian. Other activities included the formation of Macedonian music groups playing only Macedonian folk songs at public events; convincing Macedonians in some villages to pull down statues of Greek paramilitary leaders [from the Ottoman period] and the production of a journal, "Moglena".

ЕВРОПСКА СЛОБОДНА АЛИЈАНСА
ВИНОЖИТО

In 1994, with the aid of the Greek Helsinki Committee, MAKIVE sent a three member delegation on a visit to the European Parliament. This led to the beginning of the process of the transformation of MAKIVE into a different kind of organization – a political party. Upon the delegation's return, a meeting was organized in the town of Lerin and the political party commonly known as "Rainbow" (Vinozhito in Macedonian) was formed. The name of the party came about as a result of its cooperation with the European minority rights party also known by the name "Rainbow". The latter was formed by minorities from all over Europe – Catalonians, the Flemish, Basques and others.

The party is led by a Central Council for policy formulation and a Political Secretariat for the implementation of policy. As MAKIVE, Vinozhito has a collective presidency. This was done on account of a desire to avoid situations whereby the party's functioning might be hampered by the Greek state via the targeting of a single member of the party. In spite of the serious pressure applied by the state against the party – various diabolical provocations and very public mistreatment, including numerous bans on the party's political activity imposed by the High Court of Greece; Vinozhito managed for the first time to participate in the European parliamentary elections of 1994 and gained 7,236 votes.

Vinozhito makes serious efforts to advocate for the granting of human rights to Macedonians in Greece. In all of its activities, representatives of the party openly emphasise the distinctiveness of Macedonians in Greece and their right to equality, especially before conservative Greek society. An example of the party's openness is an action undertaken on the 6th of September 1995, when members of the party placed a sign on the outside wall of the party's head office in Lerin, which had the name of the party printed on it in both Greek *and* Macedonian. The reaction from the Greek authorities was immediate. The public prosecutor laid charges against some of the leaders of Vinozhito and ordered the confiscation of the sign, which was duly carried out – though the party stood its ground and eventually the actions of the public prosecutor came to nothing and the sign was restored to its rightful place on the outside wall of the party's headquarters.

The effectiveness of the efforts of Vinozhito's members

and other Macedonians in Greece, began to increase after the creation of a Macedonians Cultural House and its related activities in the form various cultural activities, such as the performance of Macedonian songs and the promotion of various Macedonian traditions.

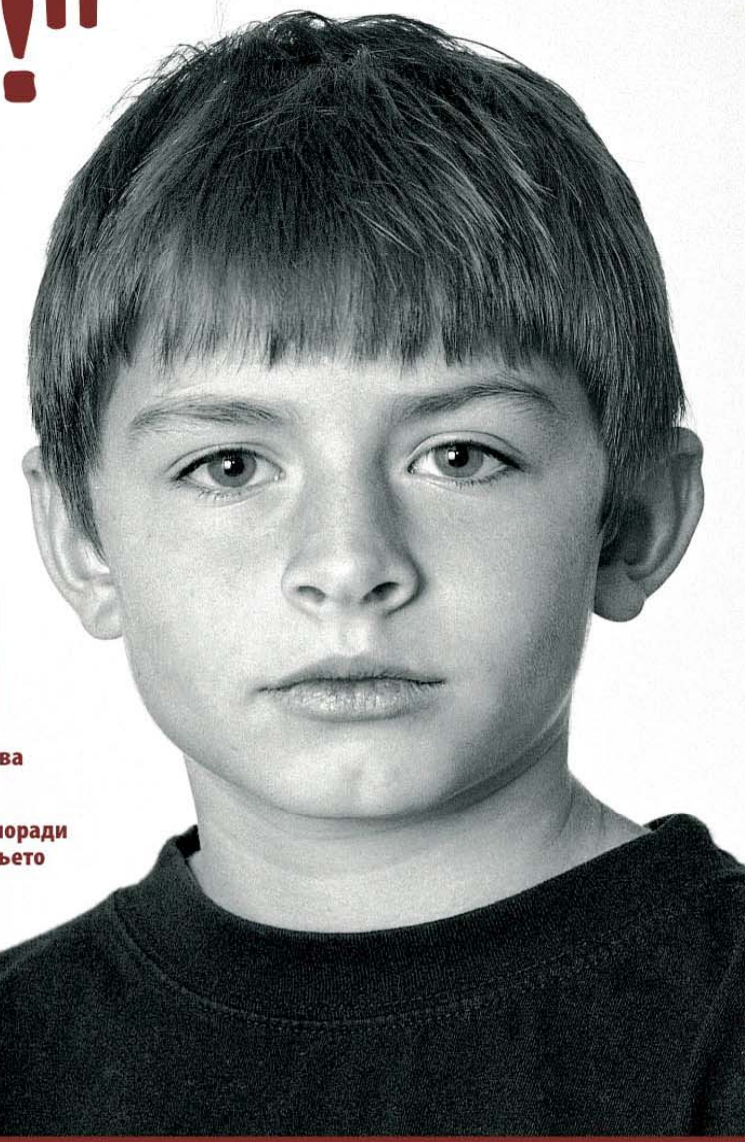
In 1997 Vinozhito held its first official members conference which elected a new leadership and created a concrete political program. From thence until 2000 the party operated under the name "Rainbow – European Movement". During the course of the 8th & 9th of April in 2000, in the spirit of seeking to cooperate with other European minority parties, Vinozhito joined a European wide democratic minority rights movement called the "European Free Alliance - Rainbow", which became Vinozhito's new name. In 2004 this movement became a European political party and Vinozhito was one of its founders.

For much of its existence, Vinozhito has maintained an organizational publication for the purpose of spreading its message, as well as covering various Macedonian cultural and historical themes. The party's first publication was an irregular leaflet called "Zora", which printed articles in both Greek and Macedonian. Later a more regular magazine style publication emerged and that was called "Nova Zora" and this was eventually replaced in May 2010, by the very widely and reliably distributed (by a team of 50 volunteers) monthly newspaper called "Nova Zora", which is edited by Dimitri Jovanov. Among other things, this very readable paper has a permanent section containing Macedonian language lessons.

Since its first stirrings around 1980, the Macedonian human rights movement in Greece has certainly come a long way; though much still remains to be done.

Dr. Dimitar Ljorovski Vamvakovski is a historian based in Skopje and wrote this retrospective, specifically for the MHR Review. Translated from Macedonian by George Vlahov of the AMHRC.

"НИКОЈ НЕМА ПРАВО ДА ПРЕГОВАРА ЗА МОЕТО ИМЕ!"



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ЕУ И НАТО се заложници на Грција

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

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

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

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

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

НАЈОСНОВНОТО ЧОВЕКОВО ПРАВО Е ПРАВОТО НА САМОИДЕНТИФИКАЦИЈА.

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

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МАКЕДОНСКО МЕЃУНАРОДНО ДВИЖЕЊЕ ЗА ЧОВЕКОВИ ПРАВА
www.mhrmi.org

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www.macedonianhr.org.au

и други македонски организации - www.mhrmi.org/our_name_is_macedonia

НАШЕТО ИМЕ Е МАКЕДОНИЈА

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

Address	Suite 106, Level 1 55 Flemington Rd North Melbourne, 3051
Telephone	+61 3 9329 8960
Email	info@macedonianhr.org.au
Website	www.macedonianhr.org.au

MACEDONIAN HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT INTERNATIONAL

Address	157 Adelaide St. West, Suite 434 Toronto, Canada M5H 4E7
Telephone	1 416 850 7125
Email	info@mhrmi.org
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

Address	Stephanou Dragoumi 11 PO Box 51, 53100 Florina/Lerin, Greece
Telephone	+30 23850 46548
Email	vinozito@otenet.gr or rainbow@vinozito.gr
Website	www.vinozito.gr

OMO ILINDEN PIRIN

Address	Bulgaria, Blagoevgrad 2700 Zk 'Elenovo' bl 6 v. Bar. 6 p.k. Mechkaroovi
Email	omo_ilinden_pirin@yahoo.com
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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