

MHR Review



MACEDONIAN HUMAN RIGHTS

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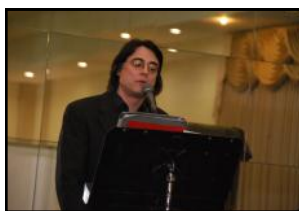
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Contents

MHR Review no. 10, published in March 2012 as a survey of December 2011 to February 2012

- 3 Editorial by George Vlahov
- 7 In Review: Tashko Georgievski's Black Seed by Dr. Michael Seraphinoff
- 9 MHRMI Response to National Post Letter "Canadian Greeks: Don't Rewrite Balkan History" by Bill Nicholov
- 11 Australian Government Announces Policy Shift and Recognises the Macedonian Community
- 12 Здружени да ја добиеме финалната битка за името од Игор Павловски
- 13 Chronology: How the "Slav Macedonian" Policy Came to an End Compiled by David Vitkov
- 16 Искрена Благодарност од Православната Заедница до АМКЧП од Игор Павловски
- 17 **Letters:**
- From: Dimitri Ioannou (Jovanov)
- From: Dr. Gjorgje Ivanov—President of the Republic of Macedonia
- To:/From Editor of Eurofile—Peter Sarbinov
- 21 In Review: Cilevics on Minority Protection in Europe by Vasko Nastevski
- 25 Show Your Support for Macedonian Human Rights
- 26 Interview with Johnny Tsigliev by Ljubica Durlavska
- 34 Intimate Nostalgias: Nine Poems by Jim Thomev
- 37 Morally and Ethically Bankrupt Journalistic Standards by David Vitkov
- 39 Дајте и' поддршка на борбата за човекови права на Македонците
- 40 A Retrospective on the Fight to (Re) Register OMO "Ilinden" Pirin and the Plight of the Macedonians in Bulgaria: Entering a Second Decade on the Eve of a Second Century Struggle by David Vitkov
- 44 Over and Above Carnivals by George Papadakis
- 46 U.N. Expert Recommends Bulgaria Recognise its Macedonian Minority
- 48 American Students Meet Macedonians in Greece by Dimitri Ioannou (Jovanov)
- 49 СРЕДБА НА АМЕРИКАНСКИ СТУДЕНТИ СО МАКЕДОНЦИ ВО ГРЦИЈА - Димитри Јованов
- 50 Австралиските власти го користат терминот „Македонци“



Editorial

About the Re-Naming of Australia's Macedonian Community

by George Vlahov



As part of a Ministerial Statement delivered by Senator Gareth Evans in the Australian parliament on the 14th March 1994, the Commonwealth government directed all Australian government departments and agencies to use the descriptor “Slav Macedonian” when referring to people who live in or originate from, the Republic of Macedonia.

However not all Macedonians residing within Australia, originated from the Republic of Macedonia. Thousands in fact came to Australia from the part of Macedonia located within the borders of Greece. But the government was ‘clever’ to the end. According to the “Guidelines” for the implementation of the new terminology, those groups or individuals that do not live in or originate from the Republic of Macedonia, but who do possess a Macedonian ethnic background, are to be described as “*organisations and individuals associated with Slav-Macedonians*” and thus, this group of Australian citizens was lowered to the status of mere “associates”. The “Guidelines” further stated that the “*...term ‘Slav-Macedonian’ is to be used as a geographic description where country of birth or nationality data is required by DIEA for program administration or service delivery purposes.*”

In a poor attempt to pre-emptively quash any objections based on the claim that this constitutes racial discrimination or an impingement upon the right to self-identification and

therefore a breach of the spirit of Australian multiculturalism, point four of the “Guidelines” state that this new descriptor “*...is not meant to be considered as an ethnic identifier. Nothing in the Commonwealth’s decision affects the right of individuals or organisations to call themselves whatever they wish.*”

A government, deciding to refer to an ethnic group in a manner different from the way the group chooses to identify, is clearly inconsistent with those tenets of multiculturalism that espouse respect for the right to self-identify, and more particularly, equality of treatment: there is an ethnic community in Australia, the name of which is “Macedonian,” however, the federal government states that it will no longer recognise it as “Macedonian”, but as “Slav-Macedonian”. Therefore the Macedonian ethnic community has become the “Slav Macedonian” *ethnic* community. Thus the word “Slav,” in this context, *is* ethnic. Macedonians, know themselves as “Macedonian”; this name is the basis of their identity and it is woven into the fabric of their culture in a thousand different and complex ways. By manipulating the Macedonian identity marker, the government objectively undermined the very essence of the cultural ground upon which Macedonians stand. A clear case of negative discrimination, as no other ethnic group in Australia was treated in this way.

To put this another way, all one

needs to do here, is imagine the reaction if a government, Australian or otherwise, decreed that all Australians shall from now on be officially recognised and referred to as “Anglo-Australians” or “Germano-Australians”? Would the terms *Anglo* or *Germano* accurately encapsulate what constitutes an Australian? Obviously not, and Macedonians are no different in this regard. The origins of modern day Macedonians are complex and varied – just like the origins of Australians and all other ethnic/national groups. Therefore the “Slav” prefix was not only an offence to the dignity of Macedonians, it was downright inaccurate.

When *our* government asserted, that its decision did not affect the ability of Macedonians to identify as they choose (as it is stated in the “Guidelines”); the government must have been aware that this is false in a very practical sense – for the “Guidelines” specifically state that the prefix is to be used for “*service delivery purposes*”. Thus in order to obtain certain *services*, one would have to accept the new label and indeed, this occurred on more than one occasion.

But governments in this country should have understood in a more fundamental sense, that the claim about the ability to continue to self-identify was a clumsy piece of deceit designed to divert attention from a very salient point. It is meaningless to claim Macedonians have the ability to freely express their identity, if

relevant others refuse to *respect* such expression. We are not here referring to some ignorant individual bigot. Disrespect from such sources may never disappear from our planet. No, we are talking about the Australian federal government, *our* government; we are talking about the responsible authorities; about the sacred relationship that is supposed to exist between the representative and the represented. We are talking about the basis of modern democracy, a basis upon which a modern western nation like Australia is meant to exist.

This profaning of the sacred relationship between the representative and the represented, by the representative, was intolerable. It made the relationship meaningless. Those who represented our community did not recognise its existence. This was hurtful for every Macedonian-Australian, whether they experienced the “Slav” prefix ‘directly’ or not. For it was, always and everywhere, *direct*. It was the official policy of Australia that Macedonians are not Macedonian. What made this doubly worse, was that none of the other communities that come together to form the Australian nation, were treated in this way.

Throughout the last 18 years, there were periods when governments used the prefix more or less; but this prefix *all* the time ‘hung’ over the whole Macedonian community in the form of multiple ‘swords of Damocles’. Every time one of these swords dropped (i.e. on every occasion that the prefix was actually implemented), the psychological damage was severe. And just as painfully irritating, was the fact that the government’s directive gave legitimacy to bigots in the wider community. That is in situations, where the government’s policy ‘technically’ should have had no influence whatsoever. But of course, it did – how could it not have!?

Trauma

Many Macedonians migrated to Australia in order to escape abuse con-

nected to their ethnic identity. For the Australian government to change the name/manipulate the identity of the Macedonian community at the behest of another community, is de-meaning enough on its own. To do it at the behest of certain fanatically intolerant members of the Greek community is extremely hurtful for those Macedonians who migrated to this country in order to escape Greek state persecution.

This extends to some Australian-born Macedonians, who have come to suffer what is known as *trans-generational trauma*. When the Australian government decreed that it would officially refer to Macedonians as “Slav Macedonians”, many Australian-born Macedonians found it very difficult to cope with what they perceived as disrespect for the trials and tribulations of their parents, grandparents and other fellow Macedonians. This is most certainly one of the reasons why the Macedonian demonstrations held during the 1990’s in protest against the government’s decision, were so well attended by younger Macedonians.

It is not just that migrant Macedonians from Aegean Macedonia have had to struggle immensely to preserve their culture and their identity in the face of continual assaults from the Greek state. And it is not just that *our government*, chose not to represent Macedonians and to not even consult them when it altered their identity at the behest of bigots from within the Greek world – a world which now has a century behind it of manipulating the identity of Macedonians and of persecuting them in various other ways. It is that the Australian government, i.e. the *Australian-Macedonian community’s government*, adopted the very symbol, “Slav”, which was and still is used by Greece to conceal and deny the existence of the Macedonian ethnic group. Moreover, as we have pointed out on other occasions, the word “slave” is derived from the word “Slav” within the Greek language. It was quite simply an extremely insensitive, un-

just and diabolical decision.

How the Directive Came into Existence

We shall begin by reiterating that the decision to rename the Macedonian community of Australia was announced on the 14th March 1994. A few days prior, a meeting was held in Canberra between the leaders of the Greek community and Foreign Affairs Minister, Senator Gareth Evans, Prime Minister Paul Keating and the Minister for Ethnic Affairs Senator Nick Bolkus. (Tony Wright, Sydney Morning Herald, 15/3/94, p. 1) *“The Greek side came with a list of demands, starting with the reversal of recognition.”* (Warren Osmond, Sydney Morning Herald, 26/3/94, p. 29) These “demands” were made by Greek community leaders in response to the news that the Australian government, in February 1994, recognised the independence of the Republic of Macedonia – albeit under the abominable (and again at Greek behest) name: “Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. *“Finally the Greek delegation proposed the government adopt the term “Slav-Macedonian”...”* *“Looking at the list ... we – the Prime Minister, Bolkus and I – had a quick chat in the PM’s office before we saw the delegation. We said NO, NO to the first demands, and as to this last item we decided that provided that we stick to the letter and explain, this one was do-able.”* ... *“We’ve known for ages that the Greeks wanted this and that the other side would dislike it, Senator Evans told the Herald.”* (Ibid)

Why would an Australian government accede to such a ‘demand’? We here have to come back to the issue of Australia’s recognition of the Republic of Macedonia. *“Senator Evans recalls that Senator Bolkus worried that recognition might damage the Keating government’s standing among Greek-Australian voters, a solid majority of whom vote Labor. The government says there are 500,000 Greek-Australians [a gross exaggeration! – GV] and only 75,000 Macedonian-Australians, Melbourne having the*

largest concentration of each. Most Greek-Australians live in very safe Labor seats, but Greeks in more affluent, marginal seats may be a decisive swing factor in a handful of Melbourne seats. Even rhetorical threats of Greek defections to the Coalition were serious issues for Labor leaders. Bolkus' position was that he saw the inevitability of recognition but he thought it too hard to sell politically until, and unless, the US changed its position, Senator Evans said this week. When the US announced (recognition) he said: "You've got me". To have stayed out on a limb would have been to concede that our foreign policy is driven by domestic ethnic considerations, Senator Evans told the Herald. On March 14, he told the Senate recognition had already been too long delayed. His February 15 recognition statement, highly qualified to meet Greece's objections, was criticised by Greek and Macedonian community leaders." (Ibid) Senator Evans could not have been more categorical; he made the decision to not recognise the Republic of Macedonia by its democratically chosen name in order to please bigots in the Greek-Australian lobby. This is also the context for understanding how the federal government could accede to a "demand" to change the name of Macedonians in Australia.

Was it any surprise that Senator Bolkus played a key role in this process? No! "The other key Minister, [consulted by Evans] and so far the most redescent in public was Senator Nick Bolkus. Australian-born of Greek decent he has kept close links throughout with what his staff call the communities – meaning the Greek communities." (Ibid) **Certainly the Macedonian community was never consulted until after the decision had been made!!**

"Late on the Friday afternoon (March 11), Macedonian community leaders were belatedly invited to a Canberra meeting the following Monday, the same day Senator Evans was to announce the Slav-Macedonian decision. The atmosphere was icy, and Senator Evans talked a lot. Evans

was in the hot seat, and he was losing his temper... Delegates say he called them hare-brained and thick-headed. ... Senator Bolkus said almost nothing, except to say (twice) that both communities should comply with multiculturalism. Mr Keating only said his main interest was to calm the situation ... Senator Evans said he was going to make his Senate statement later that day and asked what name they would suggest to replace Slav-Macedonian. We said Macedonian and he said, you're being unreasonable, I can't find a compromise if you're going to say that... The Macedonian community didn't get anything; it just got a lot of humiliation..." (Ibid)

This version of events was confirmed in most other mainstream media at the time. For example, Melbourne's Age newspaper reported: "...the Federal government bowed to Greek pressure to refer to residents of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as Slav-Macedonians. The government has agreed to 'instruct' all departments and to 'encourage' statutory bodies such as the ABC and SBS to apply the name 'Slav-Macedonians' to those with links to Macedonia. A letter from the Foreign Minister, Senator Evans, obtained by 'The Age', reveals details of the agreement between Greek community leaders and the Prime Minister, Mr Keating, Senator Evans, and the Immigration Minister, Senator Bolkus. The hour-long meeting in Canberra on Thursday with 18 Greek community leaders followed a rally by 60,000 in Melbourne to protest against Australia's recognition of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (Martin Daly, Age, 12/3/94, p. 1)

One would have liked to ask Senator Bolkus how the Macedonian community is not respecting multiculturalism!? For it was he, his government and certain Greek community leaders who were conspiring to publicly and officially disrespect the identity of an Australian community! We would also have asked Senator Evans if it would be "unreasonable" for him, as Warren Osmond of the Sydney Morning Her-

ald asked, to "decree that all Australians be called Anglos?" (15/3/94, p. 6). The Macedonian community made it clear that it did not in any way oppose Greek usage of the term Macedonian, yet this was not good enough – a policy of outright public humiliation was deemed necessary and the Macedonian community's identity would be officially denied.

Oh how 'reasonable' of you Mr. Gareth Evans; as I understand it Mr. Evans, these days you have the audacity to address academic conferences held in support of the notion of human rights...the organisers of these conferences obviously don't know your past – a past that exposes you as a charlatan; a charlatan who hurled abusive adjectives like "hare-brained" and "thick-headed" at people who were trying to protect their human rights....

The exact meaning of Senator Evans' usage of the word "compromise" was made clear in a later piece in the Sydney Morning Herald. "Dr Tamis [the Greek community's leading spokesperson on the 'Macedonian issue'] says this [the decision to rename] was a compromise by the Greek community many of whom wanted to call Macedonians Skopjans, the Greek government argot." (26/3/94, p. 29) A compromise between the Greek community and the Australian government! The Macedonian community itself was completely left out of the discussion! On the whole Greek community leaders were delighted and made it clear that they would begin lobbying all governments in Australia to adopt the prefix (Helen Signy, Sydney Morning Herald, 2/5/94, p. 6).

To summarise then: "Instead of maintaining the ethnic affairs status quo, Senator Evans has stripped one group of people who identify as Macedonians of their Australian ethnic identity and imposed the ethnic label suggested by their adversaries in the Australian-Greek community on the remainder. This needless contrivance can only antagonise the very 'Slav-Macedonian' Australians it so arro-

gantly patronises.” (Warren Osmond, Sydney Morning Herald, 15/3/94, p. 6)

Taking all of the reports above into account, the ‘reason’ for the renaming policy becomes quite manifest. Senator Evans made it clear that it was a decision based upon the Labor governments’ perceived need to cement Greek votes. It had nothing to do, as Senator Bolkus so deceitfully suggested, with the spirit of multiculturalism. Again, and obviously, the government made a decision to not recognise an ethnic community by its chosen name – something that flagrantly contradicts the essence of multiculturalism.

Conclusion

Attempts by governments and others to interfere with, disrespect and disregard the self-ascription of ethnic communities is a highly detestable form of abuse and a dangerous threat to all that is worthy within the notion of human rights in particular and western society in general. This is why the AM-HRC struggled for 18 years to bring about an end to this ethno-centric bigotry – something which, for those who are still unaware, we finally succeeded in officially achieving in January of this year.

In the conclusion of his well known book about the “*Macedonian Conflict*”, the Anthropologist, Loring Danforth, wrote: “At a collective level

the governments of Canada and Australia with their explicitly multicultural policies accept the principle of self-ascription and have recognised the existence of Macedonians as an ethnic group. Macedonian diaspora communities in these and other countries, therefore, are generally known as Macedonian communities, with only the Greek community raising its voice in protest. Greece, however, with its nationalist ideology of ethnic homogeneity and purity continues to deny the existence of a Macedonian minority within its borders, a position that will prove increasingly difficult to maintain...” (Danforth, 1995: 248).

All of this was in the main body of the text; however, Danforth discovered just prior to publication that he would have to add an embarrassing qualifying footnote to the above paragraph: “33. A significant exception to this generalisation has been the March 1993 [sic] decision of the Australian government to begin referring to Australia’s Macedonian community in all official contexts as “Slav-Macedonians” (Danforth, 1995: 248).

Australia allowed itself to be singled out as a stooge for the bigotry of another country, for 18 years. And the current Australian government continues to allow itself to be singled out in this manner as it is one of only a minority of states which continue to refuse to recognise the Republic of Macedonia by the name the inhabitants of that country democratically chose. We hope this soon changes

and among other things, Macedonians in Australia will need to become more active citizens, if this disrespectful policy is to be finally brought to an end.

However, bi-partisan political courage will also be needed from the major political parties - the courage that is, to stand up to a hubristically nationalist bully. In possessing a serious form of xenophobia that prevents it from recognising even the existence of non-Greek ethnic groups within the borders of the modern Greek state, Greek culture, is not unique, if one looks at Europe’s not too distant past. But today, Greece stands virtually alone. In other words, the time for the West in general and Australia in particular, to stop ignoring this serious problem, passed long ago. Those who truly believe in respecting *others* and take seriously the protection of human rights cannot be supportive of Greece’s substantial efforts to coerce the Macedonian state into changing its name. Thus it is very disturbing that no Australian government has manifested the decency to simply respect the democratically chosen name of the Republic of Macedonia.

George Vlahov

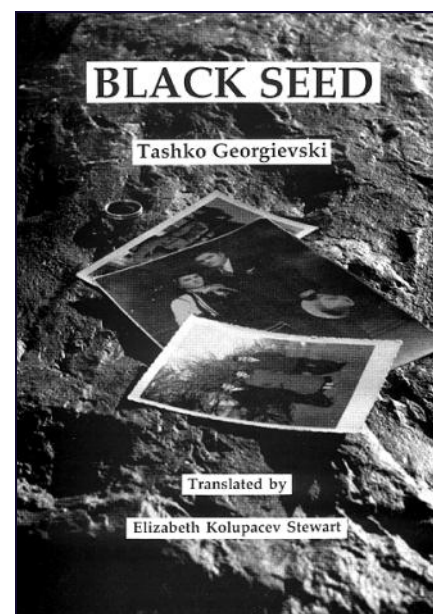


In Review

Tashko Georgievski's

Black Seed

by Dr. Michael Seraphinoff



The publisher, Pollitecon, introduces their publication of Tashko Georgievski's novel *Black Seed*, translated by Elizabeth Kolupacev Stewart, with the following:

"Black Seed is one of the great political novels of modern literature." It is one of the few books that examines life in the Greek prison camps during the Greek Civil War, providing a rare insight into a period when the State-sponsored persecution of political dissidents and ethnic minorities, particularly Macedonians, was at its most intense.

The main character, Doni, is an ethnic Macedonian from Aegean Macedonia (northern Greece). Conscripted into the Greek army, he is accused of being a communist and along with other political prisoners is taken to one of the concentration camps and forced to "confess" and pledge allegiance to Greece. But Doni has nothing to confess; his crime is simply to be a Macedonian.

Written in a direct and succinct style, *Black Seed* is a story of courage, compassion and truth which is universal in meaning. It will move everyone who reads it.

First published in 1966, *Black Seed* won the "13 November Award" from the City of Skopje. It has been made into a successful film and has been translated into a number of European languages. This is the first translation into English.

The author, Tashko Georgievski, was born in Voden in Aegean Macedonia in 1935 and left Greece as a refugee in 1946. He has published over 12 books and is one of Macedonia's most acclaimed contemporary authors.

The book also contains an article on Georgievski by Mateja Matevski, one of Macedonia's leading international poets. The article discusses the theme of "returning" which is common in Georgievski's books and which echoes the feelings of many thousands of Macedonians who, because of Greek government policy, are denied the right to return to their homes in Aegean Macedonia.

I would add that the novel's chief appeal is due to the main character's refusal to submit to unjust authority. He is tortured by his Greek captors simply in order to teach him to cringe and obey, and by extension, to secure the obedience of fellow Macedonians in Greece. He is made to understand,

from the very first interrogation following his arrest, that nothing other than complete and absolute submission will be acceptable to the authorities. Early on in the story this is clearly spelled out:

"What's your name?"
"Andonis Sovichanis, captain, sir!" muttered Doni.

"From which village?"

"From Sarakinovo, sir."

"From Sarakinovo?"

"Yes, captain, sir, from Sarakinovo, in the Voden region."

"Why are you here?" And he came and stood right in front of him, eye to eye; as if he wanted to smile at the conquest near at hand, but Doni answered him:

"I don't know, sir."

Slowly the Captain's smile faded.

"You don't know?"

"I don't know, sir, I'm a soldier, they said 'come on', they loaded me on and here I am." Silence enters the room. Nothing else remains. The Silence, Doni and the Captain. But they were not alone. In the corners there were soldiers with truncheons. The Captain circled around the table...

"The captain shoved a sheet of paper and a pen under his nose, two men grabbed him from behind by the

arms, a third tried to force the pen into Doni's hand, but Doni stretched his fingers and shouted:

"I don't know anything. I don't know anything. I don't know..."

"When they pushed him down the stairs he did not see how many more men were in the line..."

The theme of resistance to unjust authority is a universal one. History records instances from the time of Christ, the early Christian martyrs, right up to our own day and the brave resistance of the people of the Middle East, who have suffered and died this past year in what has become known as the Arab Spring. I have posted a free download at the website MacedonianLit.com of my translation into English of the memoir of a now deceased Macedonian professor of geography, Dr. Toma Batev, which is also quite instructive concerning the strength that some men and women demonstrate when faced by state-sponsored brutality. From that memoir readers can learn something about the brave resistance of Macedonians like Toma Batev to the unjust authority of the post World War II Yugoslav communist regime.

It is certainly noteworthy that Done, the hero of Tashko Georgievski's novel is tortured by unjust Greek authorities who continue to violate the rights of Macedonians in Greece to the present day. However, the challenge that Done must face is, in essence, the challenge we all must face at times.

While we certainly admire Done for his stubborn resistance to unjust authority, few of us are prepared to accept all of the consequences of a thoroughly principled stand. For example, a man with a family to feed may choose to bear the unfair treatment of an employer rather than cause his family to suffer, if he were to be fired from his job for challenging the boss. Politicians frequently compromise principles in order to achieve some incremental progress in instances where they deem the perfect to be the enemy of the good.

However, living in such an imperfect world takes a toll on the spirit. There is certainly a cathartic effect in bearing witness to the courageous endurance of a Done Sovichanov. Such a tale, in the hands of a skillful storyteller such as Georgievski, draws us in so that we can feel sympathetic emotions for someone like Done normally reserved only for those people who are close to

us. I regard it as a small victory for humanity whenever one of us manages to care about someone or something outside of our narrow self-interest. And make no mistake, no one achieves real freedom at the expense of others. That is a lesson that Greeks will also someday learn, that they will only be truly free to enjoy authentic self-hood when they extend that freedom to Macedonians and other oppressed minority peoples in their society.

Black Seed ('Crno Seme' in Macedonian) is available in Australia for \$15, which includes postage and handling. Overseas airmail is A\$20.

Black Seed, Paperback, 113 pages, Celloglazed cover, Published by Pollitecon Publications, 1996: <http://www.pollitecon.com/>



Dr Michael Seraphinoff



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MHRMI

Response to National Post Letter “Canadian Greeks: Don’t Rewrite Balkan History”

by Bill Nicholov

Why the National Post chose to be "objective" and let the Greek community have equal time in responding to the recent op-ed about Macedonia is beyond me. One should not give the oppressor the opportunity to justify its brutal actions against the oppressed.

The vast majority of readers, understandably, have no interest in hearing the long, drawn out version of Greece's romanticized history. Greece is the only country in the Western world to claim that it has no ethnic minorities and proudly proclaims its "ethnic purity". Dangerous statements coming from the self-proclaimed "birthplace of democracy".

In their Letters to the Editor, the Consul General of Greece and various Greek organizations referred to the Republic of Macedonia as "FYROM". (*"In sharp contrast to Greece's constructive efforts, FYROM Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski..."* and *"This is what Canadians should consider when they hear the complaints of the FYROM partisans..."*). No Macedonian introduces him or herself as being from "FYROM". These statements show readers what the official Greek position is: deny the very existence of a country and an ethnic group. They've taken their directive from the top. Former Greek Prime Minister Constantine Mitsotakis admitted in 1995 that Greece initiated the nonsensical "name dispute" to continue to deny the existence of its large, indigenous Macedonian minority. Before partisans from the FOCOg go into an uproar, I clearly meant to say "indigenous". It is a fact that Macedonia was divided in 1913 and Greece annexed 51% of its territory. They like to say "liberated" but one does not slaughter and expel people after a "liberation".

By the way, FOCOg stands for "Former Ottoman Colony of Greece" but, my

mistake, "Greece" did not exist during the Ottoman occupation of the Balkans or at any time in history. It was created by the West in the 1830s. Also, after Greece tried to eradicate Macedonia's existence, it only started to claim that it owned the name Macedonia in 1988. The region of Macedonia that it annexed was officially renamed as such in 1988. Before that, they referred to it as "Northern Greece".

Of course, Greece continues to deny the existence of Macedonian people - a very difficult task when one, or several million, are standing in front of you.

The fact remains, Macedonia has existed since antiquity and has always been called Macedonia. Case closed. Or should be.

Despite Greece's intense propaganda campaign, more than 130 countries (including Canada, the United States, Russia, China, and over two thirds of all UN members, including four of five permanent UN Security Council members) have recognized the Republic of Macedonia. Macedonia must stop negotiating its own name and the rest of the world must stop calling for a "solution" to the "name dispute". These countries should immediately denounce the name negotiations and stop allowing Greece to hold the rest of the world hostage because of its xenophobic policies.

Furthermore, Greece must be penalized for persecuting its ethnic minorities and for blatantly lying about its economic situation and begging, and getting, huge bailout money from the European Union. But since the EU is intent on handing out this money, how about doing so after Greece starts behaving like a democracy?

Bill Nicholov, President
Macedonian Human Rights
Movement International

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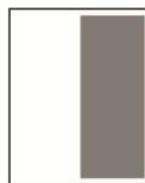
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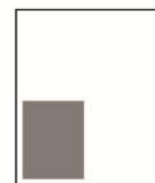
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Australian Government Announces Policy Shift and Recognises the Macedonian Community



The Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) is pleased to announce that after a sustained lobbying campaign, the Australian Government has finally withdrawn its discriminatory and racist “Slav Macedonian” Directive which renamed the Macedonian community in 1994.

In a letter dated 9 January 2012, the Acting Chief of Staff to the Minister for Foreign Affairs wrote:

“I can reaffirm that the ‘Slav Macedonian’ Administrative Circular is no longer operative in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). As is standard practice with inoperative Administrative Circulars, it has been cancelled and the document archived. Similarly, DFAT has advised me that the ‘Slav Macedonian Directive’ is not in use in other agencies, including the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and the Australian Bureau of Statistics.”

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship also confirmed this position in a subsequent letter to the AMHRC on 11 January 2012:

“As stated by...[the] acting Chief of Staff to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, I can confirm that this department does not actively use the term ‘Slav-Macedonian’. For example, the Translating and Interpreting Service National now only uses the term ‘Macedonian’. We

acknowledge the concerns of the Macedonian Australian community in relation to this matter.”

This victory marks the end of a significant and long-running campaign by the AMHRC to gain governmental acceptance of the Macedonian community’s right to self-identification. The campaign began in 1994, and saw hearings before the High Court of Australia, the Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission and the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade. Its culmination was recently reached after an intensive series of exchanges, involving meetings and correspondence, with senior Cabinet Ministers (including the Prime Minister), members of parliament from all political parties and various Government Departments.

The Australian Government’s announcement of the official end to its offensive nomenclature policy marks a return to the long successful policy of Multiculturalism, a position the AMHRC has long advocated. This is a victory that will be beneficial to the maintenance of the human rights of *all* Australians.

Whilst the AMHRC is pleased with the Australian Government’s current shift in policy toward the Macedonian Community, it now reiterates its call upon the Government to take the next logical step and recognise the Republic of Macedonia under its official and democratically chosen name.

13 February 2012

ЗДРУЖЕНИ ДА ЈА ДОБИЕМЕ ФИНАЛНАТА БИТКА ЗА ИМЕТО



Вечерта се подготвуваше испраќањето на добрата вест до членовите на здружението

Овој понеделник во хотел Новотел во Мелбурн, Австралиско Македонскиот комитет за човечки права (АМКЧП), ја објави извојуваната победа за сите Австралијанци.

Малкумина знаат дека од 1994 година владините служби за внатрешна употреба користеа термин "славо македонци" за сите Македонци од Републиката и за оние од соседните држави што се кажуваа како Македонци.

Полисата за ословување на Македонците како Слав-македонци, која беше донесена во 1994 година во времето на Пол Китинг од страна на министрите Гарет Еванс и Ник Болкус, беше во потајна употреба сè до јануари оваа година. Овој институционален расизам е погрешен и е сличен на полисата за "бела Австралија" кој денес сите знаат дека бил расистички и погрешен.

Со сменувањето на оваа одлука Австралија се враќа на полисата за мултикултура и почитување и за Македонците да имаат право да бидат почитувани за тоа што се.

За оваа победа АМКЧП работеше

долги 20 години.

Од ова решение и од дискриминацијата за која многумина не се ни свесни ќе имаат бенефиции сите луѓе во Австралија. Не се само нашите права со ова заштитени, туку и на сите други помали групи што биле угнетувани од поголемиот и посилниот.

Со ова се дава јасен пример дека се почитуваат правата, но по долги години лобирање, преписки и безброј средби со политичари кога им се укажуваше на непотребната дискриминација кон македонската заедница. Сега ќе бидеме третирано како и сите други државјани во Австралија.

Во минативе две децении имавме три работи кои ни беа оспорени како австралиски Македонци. Прво јазикот ни беше преименуван, етничката припадност и начинот на кој ни ја ословуваат земјата на нашето потекло со ФИРОМ.

Битката за јазикот беше добиена со судскиот процес против Џеф Кенет, која за жал потоа сакаше да ја продолжи и наредниот премиер Стив Бракс, кој имаше намера да се

жали на пресудата од Федералниот суд.

Сега добивме потврда дека полисата да не ословуваат како Слав македонци завршува во архивите и историјата. Значи добиени се две битки и сега треба да се здружиме за решавање на третиот и последен проблем. Да ги искористиме сите правни и лобирачки опции за да се добие едно јасно и гласно Република Македонија од Австралиската Влада.

Огромна работа е завршена но сега нема време за одмор – одиме на признавање на името.

Следното домино што треба да падне е погрешното заземање на страна во спорот со името, Грција тоа го злоупотребува велејќи: еве ја Австралија – демократија која е позната и признаена во светот – таа е на нивна страна од политиката. За нивна жал, тоа е надвор од реалноста САД, Канада, Русија, Индија, Кина се јасно изјаснети дека има само една Република Македонија.

Игор Павловски

Chronology: How the “Slav Macedonian” Policy Came to an End

Compiled by David Vitkov



Left to right from the Executive of the AMHRC: Dr. Chris Popov, Jason Kambovski, Vasko Nastevski and David Vitkov at the AMHRC Press Conference Announcing the end of the offensive Re-naming Policy

In February 1994, Australia recognised the Republic of Macedonia under the provisional reference “*the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*”.

In March 1994 the Australian Federal Government issued a *Directive* officially requiring all government agencies to re-name Macedonians residing in Australia, to “*Slav Macedonians*”. This applied to all those people whose ancestry was linked to the Republic of Macedonia. While all other members of the Macedonian ethnic community of Australia who had come to this country from the parts of Macedonia located outside the borders of the Republic of Macedonia (e.g.: in Greece) were required by the *Directive* to be referred to as “*individuals associated with Slav-Macedonians*”. The Australian government had effectively taken away their right to possess an ethnic identity.

In July 1994 sighting the Federal Government’s renaming of the Macedonian Community, a Directive was issued by the former Premier of Victoria, Mr Jeff Kennett. The “Language Directive” as it became known, required any official Victorian State Government reference to the Macedonian language to take the form of “Macedonian (Slavonic)”.

In response to the language directive, the AMHRC lodged a claim with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) which challenged the Victorian Government’s directive on the grounds that it was discriminatory and racially based. After subsequent hearings before the Federal Court, Full Federal Court and High Court of Australia, the matter returned to HREOC.

Commissioner Street of HREOC handed down his decision on 8 September 2000 declaring that the Victorian Government had engaged in conduct rendered unlawful by section 9 (1) of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth) by the act of issuing the directive in the terms of the memorandum dated 21 July 1994 which involved a ***distinction based on ethnic origin in re-naming the language Macedonian and had the effect of impairing the recognition on an equal footing of a human right in the cultural life of users of the Macedonian language*** and I declare that the Victorian Government not continue such unlawful conduct.

Despite repeated protests and objections by the AMHRC and other members of the Macedonian community, successive federal governments maintain the “*Slav Macedonian*” policy.

The Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) writes to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship seeking a formal withdrawal of the discriminatory and offensive “*Slav Macedonian*” policy.

1994

Macedonian Community in Australia Officially Renamed

1994-2000

Victorian Government Officially Renames Macedonian Language to “Macedonian (Slavonic)”

1995-2010

Implementation of Policy

February 2011

AMHRC Reiterates Demand for Official Withdrawal

11 May 2011

Minister Shifts
Responsibility

In return correspondence to the AMHRC, the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship claimed that, the *Directive* “is a matter that falls within the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Foreign Affairs”.

6 June 2011

Foreign Affairs
Department Avoids
Answering Questions
on Policy

In correspondence to the AMHRC on behalf of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Director of the Southern Europe branch of the Department of Foreign Affairs affirms the maintenance of the Government’s “*Slav Macedonian*” policy, but claims that he is “*unaware of the extent and nature of its use across Commonwealth agencies.*”

23 June 2011

AMHRC Makes
Freedom of
Information (FOI)
Request for
Documents

Frustrated by the lack of government transparency on this issue, the AMHRC submits a Freedom of Information Request under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* to demand documents evidencing the implementation of the “*Slav Macedonian*” *Directive*. Upon obtaining such documentation the intention of the AMHRC was to launch a legal racial discrimination claim against the government, as it had already successfully done against the Victorian government for renaming the Macedonian language.

10 July 2011

Foreign Affairs
Minister Shifts
Responsibility

In response to previous correspondence from a fellow government Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs claims that, “the 1994 “*Slav Macedonian directive*” was issued by then then-Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs and that accordingly, we may wish to contact his colleague, the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, on this matter.

12 July 2011

Immigration
Department Shifts
Responsibility...Again

A Government Minister receives correspondence from the Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs shifting responsibility for the *Directive* back to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade by claiming that, “*The 1994 Directive in relation to the term ‘Slav-Macedonian’ cannot be rescinded, as it is subordinate to the Australian Government’s foreign policy relating to the country name.*”

18 August 2011

AMHRC Appears
Before Parliamentary
Sub-Committee

Representatives of the AMHRC appear before the Joint Parliamentary Sub-Committee on Human Rights in Parliament House Canberra, discussing a range of human rights issues including the “*Slav Macedonian*” *Directive*.



Under the Freedom of Information Act, dozens of documents are released to the AMHRC. While parts of the released documents were redacted, what was disclosed was quite revealing. For example, according to the Department's own advice, "[a]lthough the 1994 directive has not been suspended, in practice Commonwealth agencies have moved away from using the term 'Slav-Macedonian' (Ministerial Submission 09-1054, 26/05/2009).

The Department noted that "[because] it is not being implemented consistently and because it causes offence to the Macedonian community there is a case for reviewing the directive" (Ministerial Submission 09-1054, 26/05/2009). DFAT officials also concede that "Slav Macedonian" is a "horrible piece of terminology" and that it "could easily be incorrect (and consequently considered offensive)" (email from Southern Europe Section 10/01/2006).

Furthermore the documents revealed that in addition to the Macedonian ethnic group, the directive is also offensive to other ethnic groups from the Republic of Macedonia. In fact the advice noted that "[b]eyond taking offence, these other groups would consider it inaccurate to be called 'Slav-Macedonian' for nationality purposes" (Ministerial Submission 09-1054, 26/05/2009).

On several occasions the Government has claimed that "the term 'Slav Macedonian' is in no way meant to be considered an ethnic identifier". However in 2006, a DFAT official from the Southern Europe Section admitted that the "term 'Slav Macedonian' is essentially an ethnic indicator" (Attachment B – Email from Southern Europe Section 10/01/2006).

The AMHRC writes to the Prime Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship presenting the evidence from the Freedom of Information Request and demands a formal withdrawal of the "Slav Macedonian" Directive and an acceptance of the right to self-identification of the Macedonian Community in Australia.

Representatives of the AMHRC continue their lobbying efforts and meet with the Prime Minister of Australia and other government Ministers in the context of the Community Cabinet day held in Werribee, Melbourne.

On behalf of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Acting Chief of Staff to the Minister for Foreign Affairs wrote to the AMHRC:

"I can reaffirm that the 'Slav Macedonian' Administrative Circular is no longer operative in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). As is standard practice with inoperative Administrative Circulars, it has been cancelled and the document archived. Similarly, DFAT has advised me that the 'Slav Macedonian Directive' is not in use in other agencies, including the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and the Australian Bureau of Statistics."

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship also confirmed the above position in a subsequent letter to the AMHRC:

"As stated by...[the] acting Chief of Staff to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, I can confirm that this department does not actively use the term 'Slav-Macedonian'. For example, the Translating and Interpreting Service National now only uses the term 'Macedonian'. We acknowledge the concerns of the Macedonian Australian community in relation to this matter."

22 September 2011

FOI Request Outcome
Exposes Government's
Policy

6 October 2011

AMHRC Demands
Official Withdrawal of
Policy

9 November 2011

AMHRC Meets With Prime
Minister and Government
Ministers

9 January 2012

Australian Government
Finally Announces
Withdrawal "Slav
Macedonian Policy"

11 January 2012

Government Confirms
Official Use of
"Macedonian" for the
Macedonian Community in
Australia

ИСКРЕНА БЛАГОДАРНОСТ ОД ПРАВОСЛАВНАТА ЗАЕДНИЦА ДО АМКЧП

Македонската православна заедница за Мелбурн и Викторија му честита на Австралиско Македонскиот комитет за човекови права (АМКЧП) за успешното лобирање кај австралиската Влада за укинување на навредливата директива "славо-македонци" при описот на нашата етничка припадност.

Претседателот на Општината за Мелбурн и Викторија и црквата "Св Георги и Пресвета Богородица" Кон Крстов му се заблагодари на управниот одбор на АМКЧП за непрегорната постојана работа со организирање пригоден

човекови права за самоопределување на сите со македонско потекло во Австралија, без разлика дали се нови мигранти или поколенија на претходните мигранти.

Од поништувањето на директивата сите ќе имаат корист во Австралија. Не само нашите права туку и на сите други помали етнички заедници ќе им се гарантира правото на достоин живот и правото да се изјаснат како што се чувствува.

АМКЧП е една од најистакнатите организации во Заедницата, со долга историја во одбрана на пра-



На пригодиот коктел: Давид Витков, Џејсон Камбовски, Крис Попов, Ѓорги Влахов, Васко Настевски и Тасе Филипов од Управата на АМКЧП



Присутните беа емотивни и сакаа да се заблагодарат за ова историско дело

коктел во чест на големата победа што ѝ го врати сјајот на нашата гордост..

Директивата, како што ексклузивно објавивме на 14 февруари, била во сила од далечната 1994 година, кога Гарет Еванс и Ник Болкус во Владата на Пол Китинг ја применија божем за интерна употреба во сите владини оддели.

Во изминативе 18 години АМКЧП активно лобираше во институциите за да се поништи оваа расистичка политика. На 9ти јануари оваа 2012 година тие во тоа конечно и успеаја.

Инаку, оваа директива ги прекршуваше основните

вата на Македонците во Австралија и во странство, активно лобира за признавање на Македонија и за човечките права и во Вашингтон, Отава, Канбера, Брисел, како и во повеќе други места на Балканот.

Да потсетиме дека Македонската православна заедница за Мелбурн и Викторија е основана во далечната 1959 година или неколку години пред прогласувањето на независноста на МПЦ од Српската црква и од самиот почеток е донатор и поткрепител на АМКЧП.

и.п.



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Letters



Политичка партија на Македонското малцинство во Грција
Член на Европската Слободна Алијанса – Европска Политичка Партија (EFA-EPP)
Член на Федералната Унија на Европските Националности (FUEN)
Ст. Драгуми 11 Флорина/Лерин - П.К. 53100 П.С. 51 - Тел/fax: +30 23850 46548
Www.vinozito.gr e-mail: rainbow@vinozito.org

Почитувани членови на
Австралискиот Македонскиот Комитет за Човекови Права – AMHRC,

Со голема радост и гордост ја добивме веста околу вашата победа, во обидот да ја натерате Австралиската Влада да ги признае повторно Македонците во Австралија како Македонци, без придавки или додавки. Секоја Ви чест.

Тоа покажа дека ако траеме на нашите обиди и цели, ќе дојде време што ќе имаме позитивни резултати. Потребно е секогаш тоа што вие го примените. Соработка, координираност и трпение.

Се надеваме дека за такви успеси ќе слушаме и во иднина.

Оваа значајна вест ќе биде презентирана како една од главните вести во нашиот весник Нова Зора, во мартовскиот број.

Од името на Претседателството на Виножито
Од сите негови членови
И од моето име
Ве поздравуваме срдечно

Димитри Иоанну (Јованов)

**Претседателот Иванов му честита на
Австралиско-македонски комитет за човекови
права за бришењето на „славо-македонци“**

TIME.MK

13. февруари 2012

Претседателот на Република Македонија Ѓорге Иванов денеска упати писмо до Австралиско-македонски комитет за човекови права по донесената одлука од Австралиската влада за повлекување на т.н. славо-македонска директива со која македонската заедница беше преименувана во 1994 година.





РЕПУБЛИКА МАКЕДОНИЈА Претседател

Скопје, 13 февруари 2012 година

Почитувани,

Со особено задоволство го примив вашето писмо по повод повлекувањето на дискриминаторската директива на австралиската Влада од 1994 година, со која што македонската заедница беше преименувана во „Славо-македонска“. Писмата што ги добивте од министерството за надворешни работи на Австралија и од министерството за имиграција и државјанство со кои се потврдува дека во иднина ќе го употребуваат терминот „македонски“ претставуваат голем успех за што искрено ви честитам.

Во оваа прилика сакам да ја искажам мојата почит за активностите, посветеноста и заложбите на Австралиско-македонскиот комитет за човекови права, за признавање и подобрување на положбата на Македонците во Австралија, како и за афирмација на македонскиот етнички, јазичен и културен идентитет. Горди сме на нашите сонародници во Австралија и благодарни за се она што го прават во негувањето и афирмацијата на македонскиот идентитет и традиции. Како и досега, така и во иднина, ја имате мојата целосна поддршка. Пријателските односи и соработката меѓу Република Македонија и Австралија ќе продолжат да се развиваат и унапредуваат во сите сфери од заемен интерес, а големата македонска заедница во Австралија е мостот што секогаш ќе не поврзува.

Со најискрени желби за натамошна успешна работа, до сите членови на Австралиско-македонскиот комитет за човекови права ги упатувам изразите на моето високо почитување.

д-р Горге Иванов

Австралиско-македонски комитет за човекови права

МЕЛБУРН

Letters

February 15, 2012

To Editor,

RE: EUROFILE News Vol 28 issue5 2011, pg e4

In reference to your EuroFile News article titled EU funds for Slovenia road study, in the 2nd last paragraph it was stated that *“the motorway section is part of the Graz-Zagreb-Belgrade-Skopje-Saloniki axis on the TEN-T network and connects Central Europe and Croatia with Slovenia, and, further to the south, with Greece, Serbia and Montenegro.”*

Is not Skopje the capital city of the Republic of Macedonia? I'm very surprised that a high quality engineering magazine would omit such a beautiful country AND especially when mentioning all the countries along the TEN-N network.

As a civil road designer in Australia, I look forward to a copy of your magazine but am disappointed that you could make such a mistake especially with the ludicrous politics of bankrupt Greece against the Republic of Macedonia.

I hope this was just an oversight by your Euro reporter

Regards

Peter Sarbinov

February 17, 2012

Peter

It was an oversight that Macedonia was missed from the article. I'm sure you'll be rather more impressed with the Jan/Feb issue of the magazine, which is at the printer at the moment. This has a key project report on Macedonia's neighbour, Kosovo, and the new Route 7 highway being built to connect its capital Pristina with the Albanian border. The article makes multiple references to Macedonia, particularly the Route 6 highway planned to connect Pristina to its border with Macedonia. While I haven't been to Macedonia, I did visit Kosovo and also Albania while gathering information for this report and both countries are very scenic.

Yours

Mike Woof

Editor

World Highways

"WHO GAVE YOU THE RIGHT TO NEGOTIATE MY NAME?"

Do not be deceived by the terms 'international, bilateral, constitutional'

- Change it once, even bilaterally, and it will be changed *everywhere*
- Do you want to be called '*Northern Macedonian*'; '*Vardarian*'; '*Skopjan*' or simply '*Macedonian*'?
- We applaud the Macedonian government for saying "*We will not change our name*", but by negotiating we are telling the world "*We will change our name*"
- **No dual-name.** Greece is the only country that objects to our name. It is not our problem. No bilateral or international "solution" is needed
- Countries that have recognized Macedonia have said "*If a bilateral solution is reached, we will abide by that decision and use the new name for Macedonia*"
- **Any change to our name is unacceptable**, even 'qualifiers' like '*Democratic*' or '*Northern*' in front of '*Republic of Macedonia*'. **We would be known everywhere as '*Northern Macedonia*' and '*Northern Macedonians*', who speak '*Northern Macedonian*'**

WE ARE WINNING. 127 COUNTRIES HAVE RECOGNIZED MACEDONIA, INCLUDING 4/5 UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL MEMBERS. WE HAVE THE POWER TO END THIS. STOP NEGOTIATING OUR OWN NAME.

Prior to 1988, Greece's policy was that Macedonia did not exist. Then it renamed 'Northern Greece' to 'Macedonia'. Now suddenly Macedonia is Greek?

As former Greek Prime Minister Constantine Mitsotakis admitted in 1995, the reason Greece objects to our name is to deny the existence and persecution of its large Macedonian minority

- Macedonians in the Balkans are fighting for their human rights as Macedonians, nothing else

REMEMBER: IT IS A LIE THAT A COMPROMISE WILL SOLVE OUR PROBLEMS WITH GREECE. IT WILL JUST STRENGTHEN GREECE'S POSITION TOWARDS ITS FINAL GOAL: TO ERASE MACEDONIANS FROM HISTORY, THE PRESENT AND FUTURE.

We are Macedonian! Do you want to go down in history as the people who changed our name and identity?

What gives the EU and NATO the right to ask you to sell out your identity?

- The EU and NATO are violating their own principles and laws by asking us to change our name
- Do not give in to scare tactics from Greece and media reports that Macedonia will 'collapse' without EU & NATO membership
- Look at the current economic crisis in Greece
- *Scare-mongering is being used to get Macedonia to change its name*

Greece is holding the EU and NATO hostage

- Despite overwhelming support for Macedonia's NATO membership, Greece was permitted to use its veto power against Macedonia
- Greece lied about its economic situation, and now the rest of the EU is being forced to bail them out

The European Union cannot allow its member-states to be handcuffed by Greece's xenophobic policies. Recognize Macedonia.

- If the EU and NATO insist on a name change, what other concessions will they ask for?
- By continuing the negotiations, we are telling the world "we will change our name"
- *Stop negotiating our own name*

Common sense. Would any other country negotiate its own name?

- Should the US state of Georgia demand that the *Republic of Georgia* change its name?
- Should the Belgian province of Luxembourg demand that *Luxembourg* change its name?

THE MOST BASIC HUMAN RIGHT IS SELF-IDENTIFICATION.

THE MACEDONIAN PEOPLE MUST TELL THEIR GOVERNMENT TO STOP NEGOTIATING OUR NAME.

DEMAND AN END TO 'FYROM' REFERENCE.

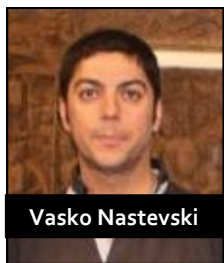
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OUR NAME IS MACEDONIA



In Review: Cilevics on Minority Protection in Europe By Vasko Nastevski

Introduction

On 20 January 2010, Boriss Cilevics, the Rapporteur assigned by the Council of Europe Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights issued a Report titled *'Minority protection in Europe: best practices and deficiencies in implementation of common standards'*. As Cilevics himself articulates, the aim of the Report is to determine, through particular case studies, *"the most crucial and potentially controversial areas of political decision-making affecting the implementation of the standards of minority protection"* (Borris Cilevics, *Minority protection in Europe: best practices and deficiencies in implementation of common standards*, Council of Europe, Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, Doc. 12109, 20 January 2010, para. 11). One such case study involves Greece and is cast against the minority rights standards contained in the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Framework Convention).

The Report seems to have gone largely unnoticed. This is perhaps due to the fact that Greece is now regularly excoriated by a range of human rights monitoring bodies for its consistent violation of international and European human rights standards. Nevertheless, the Cilevics Report is an important document in the context of the human rights struggle for Macedonians in Greece. It delivers quite a clinical expose of the failings of the Greek state to protect and respect its Macedonian minority and will undoubtedly form the basis upon which future scrutiny (and hopefully enforcement efforts) will be launched against a known human rights violator.

The Framework Convention and Minorities

The Framework Convention was adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 10 November 1994. It is a document borne of the many upheavals of European history and a clear acknowl-

edgement of the falsehood that homogeneous states exist given how ethnicities overlap and interweave through state boundaries. The policy logic behind the Framework Convention is therefore both obvious and explicit, it is there to protect and respect national minorities as a contribution to peace, stability and democratic security.

Moreover, the intention behind the Framework Convention goes beyond just rhetorical promises, it is meant to formulate specific legal standards relating to the protection of national minorities and to be legally binding on States party to it. Indeed, Cilevics asserts that the Framework Convention is the *"main legal yardstick in Europe"* when it comes to minority rights and that most countries *"recognise the positive contribution of national minorities to their societies and the value of the Framework Convention as an objective legal standard and a tool for countering extremist positions"* (Cilevics, paras. 8). Of course, most states does not mean *all* states. Some States have chosen not to ratify the Framework Convention, the corollary being that they can remain comfortably outside its ambit. The essence of this ambit is made clear in Convention's Preamble:

"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." (Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and Explanatory Report, H(195)010, Doc. 12109, Strasbourg, February 1995).

Notably, Greece is one of the states that have refused to ratify the Framework Convention. Nevertheless, this in itself does not excuse them completely from their responsibility in the protection and respect

of national minorities. As Cilevics states:

"the Framework Convention is not without relevance for these states since they participate, within the Committee of Ministers, in the convention's monitoring mechanism. Furthermore, the relevance of the Framework Convention for these states is discernible in that they are also bound by political commitments on minority standards of the OSCE, notably the Copenhagen Document of 1990. It is important because the latter constituted the basis for drafting the Framework Convention" (Cilevics, paras. 76).

But given Greece's non-ratification, one must immediately question what aspects of the Framework Convention Greece finds objectionable enough to remain a recalcitrant in the field of minority rights. The starting point is the often repeated assertion that there are no minorities in Greece, especially a Macedonian minority and that the only obligation that Greece has in this area relates to a non-defined Muslim religious minority stemming from a 1920's Peace Treaty between Greece and Turkey. However, this is a spurious and absurd position that has been consistently refuted and derided by various international human rights organisations and by a number of anthropological studies. But let's try to identify what Greece is so afraid of.

Firstly, there is no generally recognised legally defined term relating to what constitutes a 'national minority' under international law, however, there is an abundance of literature that addresses the concept. One of the more widely accepted definitions comes from a United Nations Report by Francesco Capotorti, which includes the following:

"a group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a state, in

a non-dominant position, whose members – being nationals of the state – possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics different from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language.” (Francesco Capotorti, *Study on the Rights of Persons Belonging to Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities*, UN, New York, 1991, UN Sales No. E. 91, XIV.2, para 568).

Indeed, Article 3 of the Framework Convention provides that “every person belonging to a national minority shall have the right freely to choose to be treated or not to be treated as such and no disadvantage shall result from this choice or from the exercise of the rights which are connected to that choice”. As the Explanatory Report to the Framework Convention elaborates, it is up to every such person to decide themselves whether or not they wish to “come under the protection flowing from the principles of the Framework Convention” (Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and Explanatory Report, p.15). Indeed, Cilevics himself makes clear that this question is one that “must be exercised in accordance with ... the fundamental principles set out in Article 3 of the Framework Convention ... [and] that the implementation of the Framework Convention should not be a source of arbitrary or unjustified distinctions” (Borris Cilevics, para. 62). Moreover, State parties do not have “an unconditional right to decide which groups within their territory qualify as national minorities in the sense of the Framework Convention” (Borris Cilevics, para. 63).

Is Greece afraid that by ratifying the Framework Convention it would constitute tacit acceptance that national minorities do in fact exist in Greece?, or more specifically, that such a decision would then be taken out of its hands? One can see the perverted logic in this proposition. The attitude in Greece that denies the existence of national minorities is deeply entrenched. Therefore Greece’s obstinacy on this issue has been both persistent and callous.

Given that there is a significant population within Greece that identifies as Macedoni-

an; that is, people that possess characteristics that are different from those of the majority Greek population and quite openly proclaim a sense of solidarity directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion and language, otherwise to be recognised as being a Macedonian minority, it is worth detailing a couple of the provisions within the Framework Convention that Greece does its best to escape scrutiny from. Notably, the provisions that are dealt with in the Cilevics Report are representative of a wider set of human rights standards to be found in a range of other European and international instruments.

Right to Self-Identification

The main body of the Framework Convention is a catalogue of specific principles that impose obligations on the State parties, such as an undertaking to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to use freely and without interference his or her minority language (Article 10); the right to use his or her surname (Article 11); the right to learn his or her minority language (Article 14); and an undertaking not to interfere with the right of persons belonging to national minorities to establish and maintain free and peaceful contacts across frontiers (Article 17). All of which have direct relevance to the Macedonian minority living within the Greek state borders. But for the purposes of this paper, let us subject only two of the main principles to closer scrutiny, the first example being Article 5, which requires that:

“1 ... Parties undertake to promote the conditions necessary for persons belonging to national minorities to maintain and develop their culture, and to preserve the essential elements of their identity, namely their religion, language, traditions and cultural heritage.

2 Without prejudice to measures taken in pursuance of their general integration policy, the Parties shall refrain from policies or practices aimed at assimilation of persons belonging to national minorities against their will and shall protect these persons from any action aimed at such assimilation.”

A major facet of this particular Article is

that it effectively provides minorities with the right to self-identification. It does so by outlining the four essential elements of the identity of a national minority – religion, language, tradition and cultural heritage and obligates States to promote the necessary conditions in this respect. The second paragraph is further aimed at the protection of a national minority’s identity by forewarning States from pursuing forced assimilation of minorities. Whilst the Framework Convention does not preclude States from pursuing general integration policy measures, it categorically rejects practices that would seek to assimilate minorities against their will. In doing so, it acknowledges both the importance of social cohesion but also views “cultural diversity a source and a factor, not of division, but of enrichment to each society” (Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and Explanatory Report, p.17).

Indeed, Cilevics himself makes clear in his report that “cultural diversity should be perceived not as a threat but as a source of enrichment, and any attempt to impose an identity on a person or group of persons is unacceptable” (Borris Cilevics, para. 97). Moreover, in relation to Greece, Cilevics reminds us that this is not a new issue and that other human rights bodies such as the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the United Nations Human Rights Committee have previously expressed their own concerns about Greece’s failure to recognise the right of self-identification of minorities living within Greek state borders. In doing so, Cilevics emphatically agrees with the position that “freedom of ethnic self-identification is a major principle in which democratic pluralistic societies should be grounded and should be effectively applied to all minority groups, be they national, religious or linguistic” (Borris Cilevics, para. 98). This statement also forms part of the formal conclusions in the Cilevics’ Report (Borris Cilevics, para. 122).

To make sure that there is no doubt where his statements are targeted, Cilevics recalls injustices perpetrated against the Macedonian minority in Greece by proposing that the “Greek authorities should also closely examine allegations of discrimination and intolerant acts against those who



Boriss Cilevičs

claim to have a Macedonian identity and take appropriate measures to punish any such acts” (Borris Cilevics, para. 100). Again, this is not a statement that is made in a vacuum, but is one based on years of evidence and findings by various international human rights monitors that condemn Greece for violating the right of self-identification of its Macedonian minority.

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, Association and Expression

The second principle within the Framework Convention to be briefly considered is Article 7, which provides that:

“The Parties shall ensure respect for the right of every person belonging to a national minority to freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of association, freedom of expression, and freedom of thought, conscience and religion.”

The right to the freedoms enunciated within this Article are freedoms of a universal nature, in that they apply to all persons, whether they belong to a minority or not. However, they do have particular resonance for national minorities (Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and Explanatory Report, p.18). It is of course States themselves that usually deny persons these freedoms, as it is they that are perhaps the most capable of such transgression. The persons they seek to deny these freedoms usually belong to a

national minority, the very existence of which may be seen as a threat to the States’ narrative of its own ‘national’ interest. Article 7 of the Framework Convention corresponds closely to Article 9 (Freedom of thought, conscience and religion), Article 10 (Freedom of expression) and Article 11 (Freedom of assembly and association) of the European Convention on Human Rights (European Convention). These are also subject to judicial scrutiny by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

This is important to note as Cilevics himself raises the ECHR case of *Sidiropoulos and others v Greece*, in which Greece was found to have violated the right of freedom of association to a number of Greek citizens who identify themselves as belonging to an ethnic Macedonian minority. In this case, the group of Macedonian individuals wanted to register a cultural-specific entity known as *‘The Home of Macedonian Civilisation’*. The Greek authorities refused to register such an entity claiming that “the promotion of the idea that there is a Macedonian minority in Greece ... is contrary to the country’s national interest and consequently contrary to law” (*Sidiropoulos and others Greece*, 10 July 1998, Application No. 26695/95, para. 41). In one sentence denying the right to self-identification, with the consequence that the right to freedom of association is also denied.

It is worth quoting here from the judgment of the ECHR in this matter:

“... territorial integrity, national security and public order were not threatened by the activities of an association whose aim was to promote a region’s culture, even supposing that it also aimed partly to promote the culture of a minority; the existence of minorities and different cultures in a country was a historical fact that a ‘democratic society’ had to tolerate and even protect and support according to the principles of international law” (Sidiropoulos and others Greece, para. 41).

The ECHR concludes that the refusal to register *‘The Home of Macedonian Civilisation’* was an act that was clearly disproportionate to the objective of the maintenance of national security and the prevention of disorder as to be in violation of Arti-

cle 11 of the European Convention (*Sidiropoulos and others Greece*, para. 47). Cilevics’ assessment is as piercing as it is obvious: “Greece should comply fully with the judgment of the Court” (Borris Cilevics, para. 87). An attempt to have *‘The Home of Macedonian Civilisation’* recognised in the aftermath of the ECHR judgement was again rejected by the Greek Courts in a decision dated 11 June 2009, an outcome that Cilevics condemns directly and asserts it “should be deplored” (Borris Cilevics, para. 90). Unfortunately, this appears to exhaust the legal avenues of redress in Greece itself, meaning that the matter will have to return to the ECHR for any further orders.

But why is the right to freedom of association for individuals, who belong to a national minority important? A consistent explanation provided by the ECHR and one that has been adopted by various human rights advocates includes the following:

“... the right to freedom of association is one of the fundamental prerequisites for the harmonious functioning of European democratic societies which are characterised by inherent pluralism that, in turn, should always be accompanied by tolerance and broadmindedness” (Commissioner for Human Rights, REPORT by Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe Following his visit to Greece on 8-10 December 2008, Strasbourg, 19 February 2009, para. 53).

Given the abject failure of Greece to ensure that such rights and freedoms are available in that State, puts into serious question what sort of *functioning European democratic society* it actually accommodates? On the evidence available to date, it would be a straightforward exercise to demonstrate that Greece neither embraces such democratic credentials nor shows any signs of respecting them.

Conclusion

The Cilevics Report on minority protection in Europe seems to have attracted little attention upon its initial release. But contained within it is quite a devastating exposition of one country’s deficiencies in the implementation of common human rights standards. The Reports’ case study on

Greece firstly provides an illustration of that country's inability to come to terms with the human rights values that inhabit the contemporary democratic world and secondly, entrenches Greece's record as a human rights violator. Whilst the Greek States' persistence in denying people that live within its borders the right to self identification and the right to freedom of association is increasingly embarrassing, unhappily it seems that any prospects for enforcement under the Framework Convention are remote, not least of all because Greece has refused to ratify the instrument.

Even so, it should also be recognised that the Framework Convention was not made subject to any judicial oversight, such as the ECHR, meaning that there is no 'hard' enforcement mechanism in place whereby individuals are able to seek recourse against member States that breach the standards contained within the Framework Convention in a judicial setting. In the alternative, the Framework Convention operates on a system where cyclical reporting of a country's commitment to, and observance of, the rights within the Framework Convention are assessed by an Advisory Committee, which seems to "function under the political control of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers" (Marc

Weller, *The Rights of Minorities in Europe: A Commentary on the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005, p.vii), itself being an inherently politicised group, given that it consists of the foreign ministers of the countries that make up the Council of Europe.

For the Macedonian minority in Greece, whilst the Cilevics Report is yet another clear articulation of their plight, it seems that for any effective enforcement of the many human rights standards that Greece violates may have to wait. This raises the obvious question as to when Europe, which is unmatched in its declamatory style espousing its admiration for human rights standards and values, will take more seriously the practical step of compelling States to abide by such norms. As the case study on Greece demonstrates, the need for a new and more effective mechanism to deal with human rights violators is manifest.

Vasko Nasteovski – Executive member of the AMHRC

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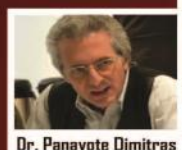
Sidiropoulos and others Greece, 10 July 1998, Application No. 26695/95.



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- The funding of pro-Macedonian newspapers and publications in Aegean Macedonia, Pirin Macedonia and Mala Prespa;
- The landmark European Court of Human Rights judgments against Bulgaria and Greece for violating Macedonian human rights;

- The operation of human rights offices for Macedonians in Bulgaria, Greece and Albania;
- The crucial Our Name is Macedonia campaign, which demands that Macedonia end all negotiations over its name; and
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- Meetings with Foreign Affairs officials from Canada, Australia, the US State Department, Council of Europe, among many others;
- Attendance at United Nations, OSCE and other international human rights conferences and
- Meetings with UN Ambassador Nimetz to reiterate our demand that the international community support the end to the "name negotiations".

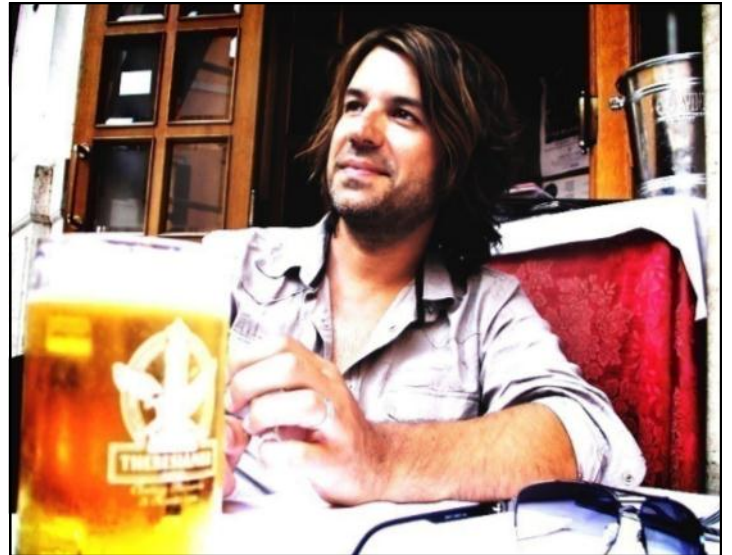
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Thank you in advance.

Show Your Support For Macedonian Human Rights

Interview with Johnny Tsiglev

It's an inside job, as our own Review Production Designer/Assistant Editor Ljubica Durlavska puts another AMHRC resident in the hot seat. The tables are turned on Johnny Tsiglev, as he gets his very own interview treatment!



Ljubica Hello Johnny. How are you?

Johnny Hey Lou-Jou-Bi-Ka! Long time no speak!

Ljubica (Johnny makes fun of my name pronouncing it as non-Macedonians do). Yes, it's been a while.

Johnny Haven't heard your accent for some time.... Canadian eyy?

Ljubica Ha ha ha.

Johnny I still have a soft spot for Toronto.

Ljubica Why is that?

Johnny Well, back in 1980 (you probably weren't even born?) at the end of a 6-7 month world family holiday, we spent two and half months in Toronto. My parents thought it would be a good idea for my brother and I to go to school with our cousins so that we can familiarize ourselves with the English language again. We were mainly speaking Macedonian for the past 4 months, so we were slotted into the local primary school. They put me a year level up because I was so intelligent! Ha ha ha..... Nah not really. It was to be in the same class as my cousin Angelo...

Ljubica Wow! So you're part Canadian!

Johnny What people in Australia (who haven't spent a winter in the northern hemisphere) don't realize is dealing with the snowy, icy winters as you go about in your normal day. You know, the stuff like running and sliding on the ice in the school yard, tobogganing down hills at the local parks after school and licking icy steel poles and getting your tongue stuck because your cousins tell you it's a cool thing to do! All that and the clas-

sic Toronto kid thing to do; saying 'puck' (as in ice-hockey puck) while stretching the sides of your mouth with your fingers!

Ljubica Yeah, I sure miss the warm winters of Australia. So you haven't been back since?

Johnny I revisited in '99 on my honeymoon and retraced the steps I took there as a kid. I came close to going last year while I was in New York with my family, but ran out of time.

Ljubica I've realized that even though we were in the committee together when I was living in Melbourne, I don't actually know much about you! Tell me a little more info about yourself?eYes, it's been a while.

Johnny What would you like to hear?

Ljubica Whatever you feel like sharing with our readers.

Johnny Gee, where do I start?

Ljubica How about at the very beginning.

Johnny The beginning of what? I'm constantly re-inventing myself!

Ljubica Don't be smart. This can go on forever... How about I make it a little easier for you: when did you realize you wanted to be an artist?

Johnny I don't think I realized I wanted to 'become' an artist, I realized one day that I 'was' an artist. Deep down I believe I felt it at a young age, I just didn't have the means to express what I felt. Not in the monetary sense. Just that I didn't know any other artists and I didn't think it was possible. The outer northern suburbs of Melbourne weren't exactly a thriving arts

precinct in the late 80's! Also the fact that I lost my father when I was seven had a profound effect on the way I looked at the world and perceived this reality.

The point that I had a small epiphany, in the artistic sense, was probably in year 12 art class. All the girls in the class would crowd around a painting I'd just completed telling me that I should pursue it further. That and the fact that I never really fitted the mold of that group/sports mentality. Spending my spare time rubbing up with sweaty blokes in a locker room was never my thing :)

Ljubica Hmmm, I won't go there! How would you describe 'your style'?

Johnny It's difficult to answer that properly because it is

just that; 'my style'. I can probably best describe my work as a cross between Street Art, Pop Art, Surrealism and Futurism all combined in a swirling dreamscape style. When you're young and starting out in art you look at different artists and think, "gee, why can't I draw anatomy like that?", or, "why can't I draw animals like that?"..etc. It got to a point for me where my style was naturally transpiring and I was fighting it. I was replicating art and prints to photo-realistic brilliance. But I just knew that I had to change and develop my own style if I was to take it seriously, and that's what I did.

Ljubica Have you sold any of your art and if so, did you find it hard to depart with it?

Johnny It's a good question because it's something an artist always has to deal with. Have you ever tried giving away



something you truly love? It's not easy. Yes, I have sold my art. The first sale was at my Graduation/end of Art School Exhibition. I sold a tiny hyper-realistic painting for what was at the time a great price. But it was difficult to part with as I was very young and inexperienced. I still miss the piece and I have even contemplated looking up the buyer to buy it back, some 20 years later! Fortunately for me I had it digitally replicated. I also had offers for most of my pieces but refused to sell them. I'm glad I didn't because I personally gave one of them to Bono (from U2). I managed to meet him (another story in itself!) in 2006. Everyone around me was saying, "get it signed, "get it signed"... but I thought nah, I'll just give it to him instead. He loved it. He was high fiving me, thanking me. I gave away something I loved, but it was a great moment.

Ljubica That's awesome. Not something that happens every day. What have you been working on lately?

Johnny I recently (just before Christmas) finished an amazing commissioned piece for a lovely couple for their new home. They wanted 3 murals, each 4 meters long, to sit above their pool in their rear garden. It would have been a nightmare to set up scaffolding and me painting directly on the walls, so I digital-

ly painted an original piece titled "The Secret Wish of The Big Fat Fish" and had my artwork reproduced in a large scale to exactly fit the existing blank walls. The end result was amazing!

Ljubica Do you have any favorite artists or inspirational paintings?

Johnny Not really a favorite painter at the moment. There are thousands of great artists of all styles everywhere. I'm personally focusing all my energies on making 'myself' my favorite artist. It might sound like I'm audacious, but it's not. It's just a way for me to become the best artist I can be without having the interference or influence of referring to any other style. I do have a favorite sculptor though. A Czech sculptor named 'Aleš Veselý'. When I was in Prague in 2006 I was in absolute awe of his hauntingly dark, towering sculpture in the middle of a piazza. It was called 'Kaddish' (a prayer for the dead) and it was in honor of two students who burnt themselves to death in protest of the invading Soviet armies. It was the inspiration behind one of my t-shirt designs.

As far as inspirational artists from the past, I can definitely say 'Umberto Boccioni' struck a chord with me when I was in art

college. His futurist style really opened my eyes to capturing energy in paint and realizing that you don't have to conform to norm to make it. My art history teacher was going through all these slides of various Masters when, bam!, there they were, 'La Città Che Sale', 'The Street Enters The House', 'Visioni Simultanee'.

Ljubica So how did you make a professional career out of it all?

Johnny After a couple of years of Art school, I was in a sense 'poached' to come in for an interview with a computer games company. A fellow student set me up for an interview with (at that time) a glamorous and exciting games company. They loved my folio and use of colour, so I was in. I learnt the technical side of it on the job. In 1992 it was pretty damn rare to be working in the games industry. It was cool back then. Half the staff were either punks, edgy artists or temperamental programmers. There was no defined 'gamer' like we have now. It was irreverent to be working there. No set hours. Lots of coffee breaks. Lots of pub crawls, pub lunches, lots of good times in general, and that was when the bosses were around! These days, it's all game nerd graduates who come straight out of game based schooling. The industry has become very corporate and PC. As an artist, I believe that environment chokes you. You suffocate being a full-time commercial art monkey. It's all at the detriment of personal development. I was dishonest with myself. Only took me 15 years and over 30 titles (games) to realize I needed to get out!

Ljubica I recall in our meetings you were always scribbling all sorts of swirly little things. Can you explain why?

Johnny Sure. I find it hard to just sit in a meeting and not do some sort of sketch or doodle. Many of my best designs come from those situations. I used to do it at school, I used to do it at work, and I still do it now. An idea will just intrinsically evolve from a little swirl. It's something I never suppress if I feel it coming on. I've designed prints for t-shirts, paintings, architecture, future transport, products etc all from simple little doodles! It's amazing how a few simple lines can lead to a beautiful finished artwork.

Ljubica When I was in Melbourne, I remember seeing you wear a different cool t-shirt to every meeting we had. How is your label going?

Johnny Good good. Still going. We've intentionally put the brakes on a little just to survive the market downturn. Literally, over 30 stores we used to supply have closed their doors! So it's a bit difficult trying to find new independent boutiques all the time. We still get a lot of calls and emails from people asking to see our new stuff. It's all designed and ready to go, we just have to play a bit



'TATE'

Johnny Tsiglev
acrylic on canvas 2006

A very personal piece. 'TATE' (dad in Macedonian) shows a figure in a 'womb-like' position. Womb like to illustrate two things: Loss and also 'New Beginning. Loss: about the hurt, pain and grieving suffered when my 'TATE' passed away when I was seven years old. And New Beginning: about the birth of my son Limche. A dichotomy of art, hurt and elation at the same time. Death and Rebirth. The return of my Tate....



'Detsa Begaltsi'

Johnny Tsiglev
acrylic on canvas 2007

A stylised depiction of the saddened Macedonian Sun at the loss of its children. **'DETSA BEGALTSI'** (Child Refugees), illustrates the story of the tens of thousands of Macedonian children that were displaced and ushered into strange foreign lands during the Greek Civil War (1946-1949) - symbolised by the rows of figures and three barbed wire swirls on the right. Inspired by the true account of Tase 'Andy' Filipov (a child refugee now in his late 60's). The communication blips in the sun rays and above the children reinforce the message that no matter how far the Macedonian children go, they are always inherently connected with their homeland and retain their Macedonian consciousness.

of a calculated waiting game.

Ljubica Can you buy online?

Johnny Yeah, we have certain pieces, excess stock, however, we don't have an online store yet as the cost associated with 'pre-making' all our ranges to send out immediately is huge. So we just sell what's left over. Guys can just visit our website (gratuitous plug time) www.tsig.com.au, see what they like and just forward us an email.

Ljubica Great! I'll see if there's anything my partner would like. So how and why did you get into fashion?

Johnny Being an avid (or maybe even compulsive) doodler as you know, I also used to draw on my t-shirts and jumpers in the aim of wearing original clothing. Even from early high school I would dye my own jackets and I also took advantage of my mother-in-law's seamstress skills to alter all my clothing. I just hated looking like everybody else. I took it one step further when I started printing designs and doing iron-on transfers of my designs onto my tops. I was so concerned that the washing machine was going to strip the tops of their prints that I refused to wash them! It got to a point where Meri (my wife) just sabotaged them and threatened to wash them if didn't do it properly! Ha ha ha... I remember all the times she would say "You're a smrdn (stinky person in Macedonian), if you don't do something with the designs, I'm chucking the whole lot in the wash"! Not a bad motivator I'd say. That and all the years of Baba Vana's alteration skills, many of which Meri herself naturally inherited, were the ingredients which formed our label 'TSIG'... which in reverse is 'GIST'....hence our tagline "DO YOU GET THE GIST".

Ljubica So how is Meri? The last time I saw her was when we collected names of guests at the entry to our Advocates

Club Nights.

Johnny Yeah, the friendly female hired help in a male dominated environment. Definitely breaks the monotony of seeing just 'fat-headed Maco blokes'... he he (Johnny struggles to contain his laughter!). She's well. Holding up the business, holding up our lives, making sure things run smoothly.... it was a Eurhythmics song wasn't it? "Behind every 'mediocre' man, there has to be a great woman" J. The beauty of Meri is her appearance.... He he.... Nah, it's not just skin deep. She understands my art, she understands me, and without that support, I'd struggle to get things going. I believe it's true of all people in the Arts. If you don't have that support of family, partners, etc., it's a constant uphill battle of self-doubt, questioning, waiting for the next (paid!) art job to come along. It's not easy being an artist, especially in a sport-centric society. I've probably repeated this in some other interview, but if you're not digging holes or wearing a tie to work, you're perceived as not doing anything. So I truly feel for my fellow artists who don't have that support.

Ljubica And how is your son, Limche? Did having a child change your art in any way?

Johnny Yes, definitely changed my art. Limi, Limche, Lazoguss, Liam. He's fantastic. Growing, becoming his own little man. I think you can go either way after you have a kid. You can either become egocentric or altruistic to the outside world. Personally, I felt a heightened sense of zeal to create, not only art, but to create a better existence for the world around us in general. There was a real fear of the unknown before he was born, a false perception created by some negative attitudes around me at the time. The old bullshit "now you'll know how 'hard' life is" type of thing. Couldn't be further from the truth. Now I know how 'beautiful' life is!

Ljubica Unlike myself being born in Macedonia, you were

born in an English speaking country. When did you realize you were 'Macedonian'?

Johnny Well I think you get a fairly strong clarification of identity when you see your 'tate' (dad in Macedonian) being held back by 10 dudes at a Macedonian picnic because someone started playing Greek songs! Can you believe that was in the late 70's! Le le maiko!

Also, I remember these pro-Multicultural Australian television commercials at the time (still late 70's I believe?) with a jingle; "I'm as Greek as a souvlaki, I'm as Irish as a stew, I'm Italian as spaghetti"....etc..etc... where my dad would get upset every time it came on TV and yell in Macedonian; "Hey, why don't they sing I'm as Macedonian as a piperka?"

Ljubica Ha ha..... yeah I guess that'll do it. I've used your amazing artwork of the Detsa Begaltsi as the header of our review, tell me more about it.

Johnny Well many Macedonians know about the Begaltsi, however, hardly any non-Macedonians have heard of them. It all started when I sat down one day with Andy (Tase Filipov, the AMHRC's treasurer, but I'll get to the Andy thing later) and he personally told me his story. I tell you honestly, I was struggling to hold back the tears. My God what these people went through as kids. I have a young son myself and I couldn't fathom him being taken away. It's heartbreaking. So as Tase was reflecting back, I immediately painted a picture of his story in my mind and sketched it as soon as I got home. The finished result is what you see.

Ljubica So why Andy?

Johnny Many people would know Tase, and Tase knows many people! Growing up in Melbourne's North, as an outlet from the mundane banality of suburbia, groups of us kids would 'wag' (skip for Canadians?) school and visit 'Top Rooms'. A pinball arcade/billiards hall above a set of shops in Lalor (Melbourne suburb). The first time I went was daunting as you walked up a set of concrete stairs to a mysterious place of flashing lights and a jumble of sounds (bleeps, music, pinball machines, billiard balls clonking, the sounds of 1942, Double Dragon). It almost became a safe haven. An escape from the norm where the owner of this place was open minded and welcomed all. There were kids, bodgies, sharpies, bikers, wogs, yobs and a fat nosed ex war vet regular who would tell the kids his stories of survival. Only later did I remember the place was called 'Andy's Top Room'.... Who would've thought, 25 years later, I'd be painting the story of Andy..and all the other Begaltsi!

Ljubica What are you planning to do with the artwork? I recall some talk of an exciting exhibition.

Johnny Oh no, you're not going to get me started. Yep big plans. I've already exhibited the painting, along with some other artworks at an exhibition organized by the MCC. It was all



'Energy Release'

Johnny Tsiglev
acrylic on board 2004

An explosive piece. Also called 'Energy Explosion'. **'ENERGY RELEASE'** shows a series of 'wing-like' figures emanating from a crumbling base. Painted with vigor yet highly textured in detail under close inspection. With no reference to any particular subject matter or event, the painting has a spooky similarity to the melted metal structures of the world changing twin towers collapse. Coincidence or a channelling of Energy from another place?

last minute and under the radar, but I can't blame them for trying. However, my plans are for a large scale exhibition solely focused on and dedicated to the 30,000 Detsa Begaltsi, with 8 -10 large scale artworks to fill a room. I hope to exhibit it in various countries/cities throughout this little bubble of air we live in.

Ljubica Oh, wonderful, are you planning to take it to Toronto?

Johnny was planning cities like Berlin, San Francisco, New York, and initially I said no to cities with large Macedonian populations like Toronto and Melbourne. I didn't want to be preaching to the choir, however, of late I've changed my tune and would like to make a real event of it..... choir and all!

Ljubica Great to hear. I'll be there, that's for certain! You said you want to make an event of it all. What do you mean by that?

Johnny Just that I don't want it to be a staid, boring old art exhibition. I want it to be a celebration, to have music, to be a visual and aural feast with some Begaltsi there telling their story and then to carry on to the wee hours. Not just about Art, but about who they are and who we are as a people and highlighting what these people went through. Most of the world knows of the 'Stolen Generation' of Australian Aboriginal children, why doesn't anyone know about our stolen generation?

Ljubica It sounds like you have a large task on your hands, how do you plan to get it off the ground?

Johnny Yes it is a massive task, although I have every confidence in myself to get it done. I visited the above mentioned cities last year and established great contacts in each city. As far as the art side is concerned, no problem. I have already sketched out the continuous journey which I hope to exhibit, so all I need to do is render the final artwork. The sticky point is support. Not from family or friends, but from organizations. I'm



'Love Tied to a Street Pole'

Johnny Tsiglev
acrylic on canvas 2008

A freedom of brushstrokes and paint drips, 'Love Tied to a Street Pole' was also originally titled 'The Sad Heart of God'. A painting in two parts. Part 1: On the left, An image of a man thinking of an image of a sad/crying face encased in a swirl of figures of conscientiousness all flying up or striving for something of which they do not know? What is it? MONEY? FAME? or simply ACCEPTANCE? Are the figures in the man's mind, or are we in God's mind? The sad heart of God at the loss of his children to the material world. Part 2: A simple yet powerful image of a dog tied to a street pole. Blown by the wind and howling "WOOF", sometimes all that some people have and love in life is their pet dog, yet they choose to tie it to a pole when they go out and have a coffee or do their shopping. The idea of tying all your love to a pole conjures up an amazing image of how some people value LOVE!



'The Secret Wish'

Johnny Tsiglev
digital print on boards 2011

Three large pieces (4000mm x 1000mm each) depicting 'The Secret Wish of the Big Fat Fish' in a continuous journey of an over and under-sea extravaganza. A dreamscape of hidden imagery, the digitally hand drawn artwork tells the story of a snorkeler/scuba diver who unwittingly dives into the big fat fish's mouth. Loosely based on a personal snorkelling experience, the fish who devours everything in its path is simply protecting its habitat from the strange intruders. The journey continues through an elaborate almost tribal-like series of adventures and encounters with strange creatures and ends with a 'Waterslide Ride to get to the Other Side'. The other side being an Eden-like oasis into a verdant Atlantis.

sure the AMHRC would love to support it if had we had the funding.... Let me digress for a second... Do you know how many super rich Macedonian business people and individuals there are out there, yet we (AMHRC) struggle to get a few measly bucks out of them. You know, I'm in awe of the work the AMHRC does. Not what I do, I'm just an observer, an artist sitting in a classroom full of professors. It's the tireless (unpaid) work of George, Jason, Vasko, Chris and David (to name a few) that I refer to.

Ljubica Yeah. We have the similar struggles with funding here in Canada too

Johnny Life is not all about the money. It's about community. In Lerin, my cousins have a bar. The three brothers and one sister all work together and are close-nit as a family. In Australia (and I'm guessing in Canada too?) all we talk about is how big our houses are, how new our SUV's are and how we can't go out because we have to work the next day. It irks me!

Ljubica So what would you suggest to a young artist today?

Johnny If it's what you love doing and you're any good, go for it. Go with your heart. Go with your gut instinct, visceral instead of cerebral and do what you love. Don't wait too long to do it or build a career in something safe just to fall back on because as an artist, if you do have an alternative to fall back on, you'll end up doing it for the money, and then you end up just doing it full stop. It will define you, and it will also own you.

Ljubica readers?

So what parting wisdom can you leave with our

Johnny Don't know if I'd call it wisdom, but I can just explain my story from my experiences. I don't want to sound pious, bias or any other ius! We all (as humans) have our own opinions, thoughts, feelings, hurt, etc. I'm thankful for being alive, being here in this time and place. I think we all should make the most of where we are. I have certain personal beliefs based on experiences which are a little esoteric, but I won't impart them on our poor readers. Every choice we make can either have an adverse or positive effect on our lives. So I'll just say (still keeping it a little cryptic), if you feel it's right, it usually is. If something is NQR (not quite right), most times it is. Many of us have become ultra conservative and scared of everything. That to me is not living. It's all based on fear, most times unjustified. So come on all ye people, live a little. Rock 'n' Roll till we physically can't rock or roll ;)

Ljubica Thanks Johnny. See you in Toronto.

Johnny No probs. See you there!

"НИКОЈ НЕМА ПРАВО ДА ПРЕГОВАРА ЗА МОЕТО ИМЕ!"

Немојте да бидете измамани 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 ПРЕСТАНЕМО 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 променија 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 *Џорџија*) 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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НАШЕТО ИМЕ Е МАКЕДОНИЈА

Intimate Nostalgias: Nine Poems *by Jim Thomev*



1 Sweet were the shadows....

A toddler in the time of civil war
I knew the terror of uncertainty.

Yet sweet to my mind were the shadows
cast by bold suns with their promises,
as sweet as the rich russet on the necks
of glossy blue-black summer swallows.

3 Origins

The story of my origins
Was a tale more terrible than any final farewell.

My folk granny* in the village had said:
"You came with the rapid flood of waters,
spring rain was cutting off the winter snows**;
I nabbed you as you floated in your little cradle,
in this gully by our house.
The great hand of God delivered you."

Looking at that gully in my mind's eye
I remember thinking of the impossible,
of what life might have been
in other times and places,
if my Grandmother had not snatched me from that flood.

*The word Baba (Баба) for both grandmother, mother-in-law and a respectful mode of address to any elderly woman is a strongly emotive word rich in associations. Before modernisation of the Macedonian village, the Baba used to have an important role as midwife, healer i.e. traditional medicine practitioner, keeper of the mysteries and in most parts of Macedonia sat alongside the priest and the godfather at the ceremonial table for all sacraments. I, too, a product of a scientific century, have invoked the powers of sorcery of a grandmother in order to foil an enemy who had repeatedly slandered me, but the details of that story will have to wait for the comic stage... (JTh)

**Macedonian folk name for February, Sechko (Сечко) -sechi, verb, to cut in Macedonian, hence the cut off point between winter and spring. There is no record of my actual date of birth-my mother always told me I was born in Sechko. (JTh)

2 Wheat fields

Through late summer leaves
of green gold-tinged elms,
I recall elegant white clouds,
drifting yet purposive like skeins of wild geese
across the azure arc
gateway of vastness.

My childhood valley suffused in dreams,
the wind swaying over the wheat field
conjured the figures of young Macedonian women,
keeney suppliants to the melody
of a solitary clarinet.

Poignant as any trauma or revel of manhood,
the sensations were the tears of joy
I rubbed and washed with glistening dew
that fell from wheat heads,
the enchanting rainbow never far away,
the spring rain, fallen, cleansing.

4 Orthodox funerals

How polished in their pain
and crisp in their coldness
seem modern coffins,
and how excruciating
the ordeals of an Orthodox funeral.

The pungent smoke of incense,
the smell of the burning wax candles,
(amber for the dead, angel white for the living),
induce the morbid agony of the crucifix.
All-pervasive odour of basil,
that sprinkles holy water
amidst a chorus of medieval chants,
intensifies the farewell kiss in the open coffin.

Visual myths on walls preside over the
most ancient drama,
and shatter the simple pattern of the visible,
where birth, growth, decay and death,
close in the graveyard
with the eating of boiled wheat by the mourners*.

*I suspect this folk custom is a pre-Christian remnant, a throwback to pagan fertility rituals that were to ensure successful grain harvests. Also to give strength to the mourners as wheat was often the basic cereal of subsistence.(JTh)



An only child

He did not over-lament
the crudities of the age.
With calm good grace
he received the dispensation
that all delight would emerge
out of a yearning
for personal happiness
and a just earth.

Neither indignant nor resigned,
he stood before the world
a stranger, an only child,
an orphan who had been surrendered
by evanescent parents,
amidst limitless wonders
of land sea and heaven,
his mind forming the fourth dimension
in ever-expanding explorations
daily illumined by the sun.



The hailstorm

I remember a spring storm in March*:
my sister, an adolescent, and I a child,
caught in a hailstorm
the tender tufts of corn fields to our side
the red roofed village behind.

As the chickpea hail fell,
my sister caught it in her palm
and placed it in my mouth
believing it would stop the storm destroying
the grain seedlings and plum blossoms,
and the orchard in full bloom,
where we hoped to pick apples that autumn.

Along the beaten dirt road,
a priest, phantom-like,
cantered along the dirt path
on a saddled black donkey;
Like my oldest nightmare
he sat aslant, like some highborn lady
Of by-gone times on her milk-white steed,
stove-pipe hat on his head
ostentatious gold cross on his breast
smug and lurid in his smiles,
crossing himself and taking all credit
for the ceasing of the storm
-God's hailstorm,

my sister and I had stopped with Granny wisdom.

*The month of March, was traditionally referred to as Tsutar (Lÿrap) by the Macedonians i.e. the month of blossoms. (JTh)



Memories in red

That was the time
I clasped each of the three hundred beauties
to my heart.

The glistening, moist cherries
I wore as earrings
in parody of my sisters
still revive the sweet memory of their girlish laughter.

The vivid crimson gash
left on my forehead
from the fall on a stone
when the donkey lurched,
smarts again as my life's favourite wound.

The wild strawberries
my uncle brought back from the mountains
larger than the tender fist of an infant
still smell of the radiant summer.

These memories vie
with the fragrance of red roses
and the warmth of dyed
eggs in the resurrected spring.

It was the time when blessings
were like the blood-red dawns
vast as human tenderness
the miracle of miracles.

8 Pechalbarot*

*In memory of my father, Tome Paterov**,
born Kabasnica 1918, died Melbourne 1980.*

With the decade of unimaginable carnage,
nearly over,
with the three hundred calamities
of a fratricidal war at its height
the former soldier in the Albanian alps
made his departure to the other end of the world.

Hunger and four small children
made him seek compassion
from employers in foreign lands.
Loneliness, illness, failure,
Enveloped him; the searing fear
of the anonymous grave,
“stood on my head” as he used to say
about the fate of many of his kindred.

With the taste of salt sweat in his mouth,
He sought solace in urban wastes
yearning for peace, balm for his nerves;
the gracious faces of dear ones
crowded the darkness of interminable nights
locked in the prison of his uncertainty;
the dreams of home, not always bad,
brought familiar village smells of earth and air,
of life pulsing throbbing aching
of lethargic afternoons in the summer sun,
the silence torn by the maddening cries of jackdaws.

At a time of youth and freshness
he exalted in manly vigour; It was a time of freedom,
(if that is the word), of justice,
when he never questioned the sacrifices,
or feared the inescapable pain of all purpose,
or even wondered why life was worth living.

*Pechalbarot-itinerant economic migrant, *Gastarbeiter* (German); one who sweats and suffers to eke out a living as a hired hand in a foreign land. There is a strong implication of a sense of disgrace that one had to leave the native land to seek substance to feed the family left behind. (pechal,(печал) originally a word rich in connotations meaning sorrow, longing and misery.)

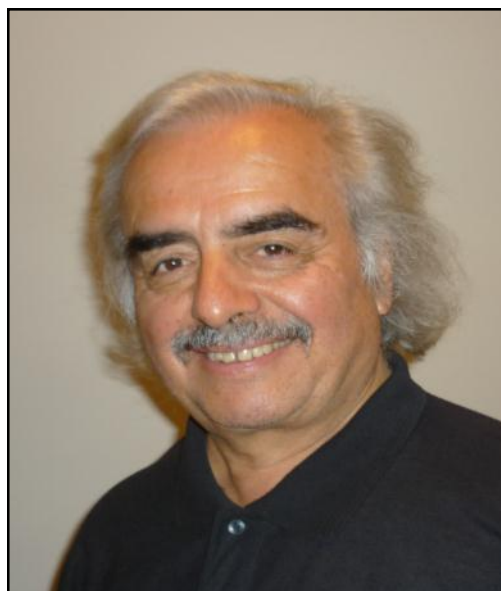
**Таткоми Томе, единствен син на Дедо Диме од Кабасница и Бабама Лена од Битуша, леринско, се роди шест недели по смртта на неговиот татко. Митре, син на Атанас, загина во големата епидемија на грипот што ја потресе Европа кон крајот на Првата светска војна. Далеку од дома умрел, близу до турската граница каде служеше во грчката коњица.

9 The idée fixe of the poet

Encumbered by ethnicity
denied and disparaged,
he found solace
in constant self-recreation,
like the sublime phoenix,
and the beautiful butterfly.

An outcast from a land of hunger
of dictators, war, fascism,
he remained a prisoner
of childhood memories:
of nettle stings, mingled with
aromas of rich spring roses,
with balm from the subtle depths
and richness of lilac in bloom,
and the gunfire of frenzied Orthodox resurrections.

He tried to lose the permanent ache
in the new land of ageless dreams,
an inhospitable, drab land,
rudely usurped by callous white men;
but he could not free himself
from the sweet birthplace
where he first knew the freshness
and the truth-giving gleams
of vast and exuberant dawns.



Jim Thomey

Morally and Ethically Bankrupt Journalistic Standards

By David Vitkov



The Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) is appalled by the biased and offensive articles that appeared in various editions of the Greek-Australian newspaper, *Neos Kosmos*. The articles represent a new low in journalistic standards of this Melbourne-based newspaper and as such the AMHRC feels an obligation to expose the misinformation and omissions contained in the articles.

On 13 February 2012, the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) announced that after a sustained lobbying campaign, the Australian Government confirmed the cancellation of the discriminatory and racist “Slav Macedonian Directive” which renamed the Macedonian community in 1994.

The Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) made the announcement at a press conference in Melbourne which was attended by members of the Macedonian community, the Macedonian media and a representative of *Neos Kosmos*. On the day, all those present were provided with a media release and a chronology of events which led to the government’s declaration of the end of its “Slav Macedonian” policy. Therefore given that *Neos Kosmos* had all of the relevant information in its possession, it is indeed difficult to fathom how the newspaper could misrepresent the issue to the extent that it failed to get the most basic of facts right.

On 16 February 2012, the Greek language edition of *Neos Kosmos* thought it proper to rename the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee, an organisation registered in Australia under this name, as the “Australian Slav-Macedonian Human Rights Committee” (“Σλαβομακεδονική Επιτροπή Ανθρωπίνων Δικαιωμάτων Αυστραλίας”). The article also referred to members of the Macedonian community in Australia as “Slav Macedonians” (“Σλαβομακεδόνες”). The Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee has on numerous occasions warned *Neos Kosmos* to cease and desist using such racist terminology. Following this latest example, the AMHRC has once again written to the newspaper demanding the publication issue a correction and apology. If one is not forthcoming, a complaint will be lodged with the Australian Press Council.

Following the initial article, two days later, on 18 February 2012, the English language edition of *Neos Kosmos* decided to ‘trump’ their Greek language colleagues, by publishing a completely distorted article on the announcement. The article, conspicuously written by an anonymous person (perhaps nobody wanted to put their name to the shameful claims made in the text) was titled, “*Claims on policy shift on FYROM [sic]: DFAT confirms business as usual*”. The basis for the erroneous headline was a statement provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade which allegedly told *Neos Kosmos* that the government is “mindful of the ensitivity and the depth of feeling in the community regarding the issue of name, but there has been no change in policy.” As such the announcement by the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) was described as nothing more than a “publicity stunt”.

Firstly, it should be made clear (as if it was not already) to anybody with a basic understanding of English, that the AMHRC’s announcement was in relation to the way in which the Australian Government refers to the MACEDONIAN COMMUNITY IN AUSTRALIA. It was not in relation to the way in which Australia recognises the Republic of Macedonia. Therefore to make reference two different issues (an international one i.e. the Republic of

Macedonia in the headline vs. a domestic one i.e. the name of the Macedonian community in Australia in the body of the article) is a total misrepresentation of the AMHRC's announcement.

The substance of the article itself was no different, containing factual errors and biased reporting. It is claimed that the "Slav Macedonian" Directive was about renaming *"the language spoken in the Former Yugoslav [sic] Republic of Macedonia as 'Slav Macedonian'[sic]."* Of course, the Directive had nothing to do with the Macedonian language, but rather with the name of the Macedonian community. The Directive officially required all government agencies to re-name Macedonians residing in Australia, to "Slav Macedonians". This applied to all those people whose ancestry was linked to the Republic of Macedonia, while all other members of the Macedonian ethnic community of Australia who had come to this country from the parts of Macedonia located outside the borders of the Republic of Macedonia (e.g.: in Greece, Bulgaria, Albania, etc) were required by the Directive to be referred to as "individuals associated with Slav-Macedonians". The Directive also actually declared that the term *Macedonian* would continue to be used for the Macedonian language.

The article then claimed that *"...DFAT confirmed with Neos Kosmos that 'the 'Slav Macedonian Administrative Circular' has not been operative in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for several years. As is standard practice for inoperative Administrative Circulars, the document was made non-current and archived on 28 October 2008."* However, the article failed to mention that even after the 28 October 2008 the Government was still confirming (and defending) the existence of the Directive. It was only after an intense lobbying campaign including a freedom of information request that the government finally admitted and declared **FOR THE FIRST TIME** to our organisation that indeed it had withdrawn the Directive. Therefore the claims that the AMHRC press release was merely a "publicity stunt" do not correspond with the facts.

The *Neos Kosmos* article also quoted several Greek community organisations which reacted to the issue in a typically misleading manner. A local organisation calling itself the "Australian Hellenic Council" (AHC) accused Macedonian and Turkish diplomats in Canberra of "open interference" in an Australian policy matter. The AHC claimed that *"it is unacceptable for the representatives of foreign governments to actively guide and participate in efforts to determine Australian domestic and foreign policy"*. Interestingly, Freedom of Information documents released to the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) reveal that in relation to Australian policy on the name issue, on 8 October 2008, the former Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Stephen Smith MP wrote to then Minister for Immigration, the Hon. Chris Evans MP, noting that, *"the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade frequently receives representations from the Embassy of the Republic of Greece asking that the Australian Government maintain its present approach"*. The Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) wonders whether the AHC and other Greek community organisations also condemn this "open interference" in Australia's domestic and foreign policy?

The AHC also asserted that it *"...respects the right of all sec-*

tions of Australian society to self-identification. This includes the right of Hellene or Greek Macedonians - those from the geographic region of Macedonia - to be identified distinctly from Slavomacedonians [sic]". This statement is a contradiction in itself as it declares the right of self-identification, yet it contains the term "Slavomacedonian" – which is NOT a term of self-identification and is completely REJECTED by the Macedonian community!

Members of the Macedonian ethnic community, whether they originate from the Republic of Macedonia or from other parts of the "geographic region of Macedonia" i.e. from Greece or Bulgaria, identify simply as Macedonians. In accordance with the principle of self-identification if others from this region wish to identify as "Hellene or Greek Macedonians" then they are at liberty to do so. In fact, such persons are not denied (and have never been denied) the right to identify as they wish. However what they cannot do is impose a name on another community i.e. the Macedonian community. This is the fundamental lesson that should be taken from the government's announcement that it will respect the right of self-identification of the Macedonian community in Australia.

The distortion of facts by *Neos Kosmos* and the fundamentally undemocratic nature of policies and positions advocated by certain Greek organisations is nothing new to the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) or the Macedonian community in general. However ultimately, such bigots will fail in their attempts to permanently impose their views on Australian society and beyond. Much like when a formal audit comes back to haunt the 'creativity' of a corrupt accountant, lies and misinformation of this nature will eventually catch up with those who propagate them. Therefore certain organisations and media outlets which purport to represent the interests of the Greek community in Australia would be better off speaking the truth rather than advocating the fundamentally racist policies of a morally (and now financially) bankrupt regime. Perhaps then, true self-identification and mutual respect may be achieved for all.

David Vitkov

Since this article was written, the AMHRC has sent letters of complaint to the Australian Press Council, the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria and to the Editor of *Neos Kosmos*.



David Vitkov



silence is not an option.

ММДЧП и АМКЧП ги повикуваат Македонците од целиот свет да и' дадат поддршка на борбата за човекови права на Македонците во балканските земји.

ММДЧП и АМКЧП ги финансираат и ги организираат сите активности за остварување на човековите права на Македонците и директно соработуваат со секоја македонска организација за човекови права, вклучувајќи ги: **Виножито, ОМО „Илинден“ - ПИРИН, МАЕИ, Нова Зора, Народна Волја, Илинден Тирана, Домот на македонската култура** и сите останати.

Подржувајќи не' нас, вие директно ја поддржувате борбата за остварување на човекови права за сите Македонци.

Ова се само неколку од многуте наши активности:

- Часови за Македонски јазик во Егејска Македонија и Албанија, вклучувајќи го и отворањето на нова градинка во Корча, Албанија;
- Покрај финансирањето на радио станицата во Лерин, неодамна се отвори и македонска телевизија во Корча;
- Поднесување на тужба против Грција за случајот „Деца бегалци“, за враќање на конфискуваните имоти, државјанства и финансиски надоместоци;
- Финансирање на про-македонските весници и издања во Егејска Македонија, Пиринска Македонија и Мала Преспа;
- Претставка до Европскиот суд за човекови права пресуди против Бугарија и Грција за кршење на човековите права на Македонците;

- Функционирање на канцеларии за човековите права на Македонците во Бугарија, Грција и Албанија;
- Организација на кампањата „Нашето име е Македонија“, со која се бара Македонија да ги прекине сите преговори околу името и
- Финансирање на успешните изборни кампањи на македонските кандидати во Бугарија, Грција и Албанија.

Исто така, силно лобираме за признавање на Македонија и македонските човекови права во Вашингтон, Отава, Канбера, Брисел и целиот свет, а особено:

- Средби со шефови на држави и пратеници од Канада, Америка, Австралија и европските држави;
- Средби со официјални лица за надворешни работи од Канада, Австралија, американскиот Стејт департмент, Советот на Европа и многу други;
- Присуство на конференции за меѓународни човекови права во организација на Обединетите нации, ОБСЕ и други и
- Средби со амбасадорот во ОН, Нимиц со истакнување на нашето барање за поддршка од меѓународната заедница за прекин на "преговорите за името".

Македонците се организирани, полни со енергија и решени да ја продолжат нивната борба за универзалните човекови права.

Најголемиот предизвик со кој се соочуваме се финансиските проблеми. Ве молиме дајте ни ја вашата поддршка со донација во [MHRMI Human Rights Fund](http://MHRMI.org) или во [AMHRC's Macedonian Minorities Support Fund](http://AMHRC.org).

Однапред ви благодариме.

**Дајте и'
поддршка на
борбата за
човекови
права на
Македонците**

A Retrospective on the Fight to (Re) Register OMO “Ilinden” Pirin and the Plight of the Macedonians in Bulgaria: *Entering a Second Decade on the Eve of a Second Century of Struggle*

By David Vitkov



Ms. Rita Izsák UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues

In a remarkable three week period in January 2012, no less than three reputable human rights bodies condemned Bulgaria for the treatment of its minorities, including the Macedonian ethnic minority residing in Bulgaria's Pirin region. This 'troika' comprised of the report of the *United Nations Independent Expert on Minority Issues*, Ms. Rita Izsák (published 3 January 2012), the second cycle Opinion of the Council of Europe's *Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* (released 23 January 2012) and a report sent to the Bulgarian government by the Council of Europe's *Commissioner for Human Rights*, Mr Thomas Hammarberg (dated 24 January 2012).

An ever present issue in relation to the Macedonian minority over the years and indeed again in the reports of the 'troika' concerns Bulgaria's refusal to re-register the political party struggling for the rights of the Macedonians in country: OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN. In many ways the difficulties that OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN has faced over the last decade is representative of the general struggle of the Macedonians of Pirin over the last one hundred years.

For example, parallels can be drawn between the short period of registration the party enjoyed and the brief time under communist rule when the Macedonians were recognised by the Bulgarian state. The persecution and interrogation of OMO party activists are a continuation of the repressive policies towards ethnic Macedonians in general over many decades. Also, the 'illegal' nature of the political party is reminiscent of past (and present) prohibitions on expressions of Macedonian culture, the recognition of the Macedonian language and identity.

The Bulgarian government has clearly understood the connection between the (re)registration of the political party OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN and the possible future ramifications on the recognition of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria. Indeed, this point was not overlooked by the 'troika' who made direct and explicit references to the relationship between freedom of association and the recognition of the right to freedom of expression as it relates to one's ethnic identity.

For example, the UN Independent Expert noted that:

"Bulgaria should comply fully with the judgements of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) relating to persons belonging to such communities and implement its rulings without further delay. Associations should be allowed to register and function without impediment, use their chosen names and express their ethnic identities freely. Associations that have been denied in the past should promptly be given official registration" (Appendix, paragraph 23).

Similarly, the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities urged Bulgaria to:

"... remove all the existing obstacles preventing the interested groups from exercising their right to peaceful assembly and association, guaranteed by the Framework Convention. Such obstacles are incompatible with the principles of Article 7 of the Framework Convention" (Recommendation No. 132, p. 29).

Meanwhile, Human Rights Commissioner, Hammarberg was more specific in his observations, noting that:

"...the Commissioner remains concerned about the difficulties associations of Macedonians continue to face when trying to register."

In order to understand and appreciate the nature of these "obstacles" and "difficulties" facing OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN, one must go back more than a decade ago and examine the period following the establishment of the party.

The founding of OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN and subsequent dissolution

The United Macedonian Organisation "Ilinden" PIRIN (also referred to as OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN) was a political party founded on 28 February 1998 and based in south-west Bulgaria, in the Pirin region. The political party OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN should not be confused with OMO Ilinden – a cultural association initially registered but then also banned.

Following the registration of the politi-

cal party OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN, the party participated in local elections, with some degree of success when one considers the short time it had been in existence. The party won several councilor positions in various municipalities in the Pirin region. However, soon after these elections, a group of MPs from the Bulgarian Parliament referred OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN to the Constitutional Court of Bulgaria requesting that the party be dissolved due to its alleged separatist ideology and activities.

On 29 February 2000 the Bulgarian Constitutional Court found that the party and the organisations which preceded it (in particular OMO Ilinden) had advocated separatist ideas and "imperil[ed] national security". The party was consequently declared unconstitutional and dissolved.

The judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in 2005

In 2000 the party filed a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) arguing that OMO "Ilinden" – PIRIN's dissolution by the Constitutional Court was not prescribed by law or necessary in a democratic society. They relied on Article 11 (freedom of association) of the European Convention on Human Rights.

On 20 October 2005, the ECtHR found that Bulgaria had violated Article 11 (freedom of association) of the Convention. The Court observed that:

"...the Bulgarian Constitutional Court, in ordering the applicant party's dissolution, did not find that any of the party's leaders or members had made any calls for the use of violence or for the rejection of democratic principles. Indeed, it conceded that the applicant party had not engaged in any concrete action which could effectively endanger the country's territorial integrity. It therefore appeared that the Constitutional Court's holding that the applicant party's activity truly "imperil[ed] [Bulgaria's] national security" was not based on an acceptable assessment of the relevant facts. Considering that there did not exist a pressing social need to order

the applicant party's dissolution and that the dissolution was therefore not necessary in a democratic society."

Despite the apparent success in the European court, an even bigger struggle was about to begin in Bulgaria as the party struggled to re-register itself following the judgement.

The first application (2006) for re-registration

Following the ECtHR judgment, the followers of the party took steps to have their rights to freedom of association fully restored and have their party registered. For this reason, they began a new procedure for registering the party, with the same name and explicitly indicating that this is procedure is an implementation of the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights. Reopening the old registration of the political party OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN, banned by the Constitutional Court, was not possible for a number of legal and technical reasons.

Under Bulgarian law it is not possible to re-open a case before the Constitutional Court and have it reconsider its judgment in light of the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights. And although under Bulgarian procedural laws, it is possible to request the reopening of a case with the regular courts on the basis of a judgment of the European Court of Human Rights, in the present case this was not an option.

Under the Bulgarian Constitution, the Constitution has precedence over norms of international law. Thus, faced with a case of conflict of international law and Bulgarian constitutional law, as in the present case, the Sofia City Court would be bound to follow the judgment of the Constitutional Court and not the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights. In addition, the party was banned in 2000, and case files are archived for a five year time period. This period had already expired.

On 20 September 2006 the applicants filed a request for the (re) registration of the party with the Sofia

City Court. The applicants presented all documents necessary to establish the constitution of the party, such as its bylaws, declaration for constitution, record of the constitutional assembly, certificate of uniqueness of its name, declarations of membership in the party by 530 founders of the party, the list of 5778 party members, and declarations by the leaders of the party, certified by a notary, confirming the authenticity of the lists.

On 30 October 2006 the Sofia City Court delivered its judgment on the applicants' request for registration of OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN. The court found a number of alleged "irregularities" in the registration documents submitted by the applicants. It accepted and credited as evidence, "expert opinion" provided by a prosecutor. It was alleged that some of the declarations of the founders were not handwritten by the persons who signed them. The court failed to accept the fact that even if the so-called "invalid" declarations were excluded from the total number of members, that number would still be above the required minimum. It was also claimed that the list of party members was incomplete and incorrect. In essence what the prosecution was alleging was fraud, which of course is a serious crime. However, to date, after more than five years, not a single member of OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN has been charged with having committed such an offence.

On 13 November 2006 the applicants filed an appeal against the judgment of the Sofia City Court, however on 14 February 2007 the Supreme Court of Cassation delivered its judgment, upholding the judgment of the lower court.

An application was then lodged with ECtHR claiming a violation of Article 11 (freedom of association).

The second application (2007) for re-registration following the ECtHR decision

Not surprisingly, the denial of the right to re-registration attracted much attention in the Council of Europe. In examining the execution of case of the *United Macedonian Organisation Ilinden* –

PIRIN and others v. Bulgaria (application No. 59489/00) – judgment of 20/10/2005, final on 20/01/2006, the Committee of Ministers adopted a decision on 5-6 June 2007, in which it “invited the Secretariat, in view of these particular problems, rapidly to examine, in co-operation with the Bulgarian authorities and the applicants, the avenues at the applicants’ disposal with a view to obtaining the registration of UMO Ilinden – Pirin.”

The Department for the Execution of Judgements of the European Court of Human Rights proceeded to consult with Bulgarian authorities on the best avenue available. On 26 June 2007, in Strasbourg, representatives of OMO “Ilinden” PIRIN met with representatives of the Department. At this meeting the Department proposed that OMO “Ilinden” PIRIN repeat certain aspects of the registration process and resubmit an application for registration to the Sofia City Court. The list of almost 6,000 members which was submitted in the previous registration application would be resubmitted to the court. The Bulgarian government agreed with this proposal and this is reflected in an official letter from the Department to the Bulgarian representation in Strasbourg. This proposal was acceptable to OMO “Ilinden” PIRIN and the party began to repeat the registration process.

On Sunday 15 July 2007 the party held a meeting on the grounds of the park “Popovi Livadi” located in the mountains in the Municipality of Gotse Delchev. The meeting was attended by 685 persons who personally filled in and signed a declaration form to join the party. On 27 July 2007 the applicants filed a request for formal re-registration with the Sofia City Court. The applicants presented all documents necessary to establish the constitution of the party, such as its bylaws, declaration for constitution, record of the constitutional assembly, certificate of uniqueness of its name, declarations of membership in the party by 685 founders of the party, list of the 685 founders, list of 5,778 members of the party (the same one submitted in

the previous application to the court), a declaration by the leaders of the party certified by a notary, confirming the authenticity of the lists.

On 21 August 2007 a session was held at the Sofia City Court regarding the new application for registration. The Court claimed that there is no evidence that the meeting of the “Initiative Committee” ever took place and that the required decisions at such a meeting according to the Law on Political Parties were not taken. However, the Law on Political Parties does not require “evidence” of such a meeting taking place; the “Founding Declarations” signed by all 76 individuals contained each individual name in full and their personal identification number is evidence that they made the necessary declaration; the declarations for individual membership were filled in personally by each individual with his/her own handwriting. In those declarations, the place and date where the declaration was made is clearly stated; as evidence of the meeting taking place, a photograph was taken on the day of all members gathered together.

The Sofia City Court denied registration and this decision was upheld by the Supreme Court of Cassation.

Another application was lodged with the ECtHR citing article 11 again.

The third application (2008) for re-registration following the ECtHR decision

In order to exhaust possible options under the law, the Presidency of OMO “Ilinden” PIRIN examined a number of avenues. In their opinion, the best and most rapid solution available to achieve (re) registration was by applying Article 4(1) of the Bulgarian Law on Political Parties, which states that “Registered political parties at the time of entry into force of this law have until 30 June 2006 to bring their statutes in line with the requirements of this law.” To explain, if OMO “Ilinden” PIRIN had not been deregistered by the Constitutional Court in 2000 (a decision subsequently found to be in violation

Thomas Hammarberg—Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner



of the ECHR) it would have relied on Article 4 to continue to be a registered party. In such a situation, the new and more severe criteria to establish a new party, including the requirement to have 5,000 members, would not have been applicable to OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN.

Therefore it was proposed that OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN make a submission to the Sofia City Court relying on Article 4 of the Law on Political Parties. A new assembly of 500 members was held and at this assembly, new elections were held to fill the positions within the various structures of the party. This would satisfy the Sofia City Court that a properly functioning legal entity is being established in which party officials are assuming legal responsibility.

On 23 October 2008 the documents were submitted to the Sofia City Court, however on 30 December 2008 the court rejected the application ruling that the requirements of the Law on Political Parties have not been fulfilled. The decision was subsequently upheld by the Supreme Court of Cassation.

Current status

Having exhausted all options domestically, OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN's only chance again rested abroad i.e. with the European Court of Human Rights.

However, in late 2011, the ECtHR found that Bulgaria did not violate the ECHR in subsequent cases – a decision which OMO strongly disagreed with and which might be the subject of a separate analysis.

An appeal to the Grand Chamber (a larger body of ECtHR judges) was immediately lodged by the party; however on 12 March 2012 the court denied the application.

Therefore OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN is back to square one and the road to (re) registration could well be a long one. Despite the previous positive judgment of the ECtHR in 2005, re-registration, as we have come to know, is by no means 'automatic'. It will now require a new registration procedure from start to finish i.e. from preparation of the statutes, to the collection of signatures (originally 50, then 5,000 and now 'reduced' to 2,500 following significant pressure on Bulgaria).

As OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN drags itself through a second decade of struggles, the Macedonians of Pirin Macedonia are about to enter a second century in a state which implements policies that repress and punish those who dare to express their distinctiveness and demand nothing more than rights and freedoms enjoyed by their fellow citizens. If one takes into account the tactics employed by the Bulgarian

state in the previous attempts for (re) registration, any future attempt by OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN (or any other pro-Macedonian group wanting to form a political party) will have to overcome the same "obstacles" and "difficulties" imposed by an uncompromising Bulgarian state apparatus. This will require a great deal of work and organisation from the party activists and the active support and participation on the ground from the Macedonians of Pirin will be essential.

On a positive note, we should be heartened by the fact that conditions in Bulgaria are different in 2012 than they were in 1912. The 'troika', along with many others in the international community, will be closely watching to see real tangible movement by Bulgarian governments in relation to their recommendations.

Therefore, for OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN and the Macedonian population in Pirin, the next decade or indeed next century need not be like previous one. Watch this space...

David Vitkov – International Coordinator of the AMHRC

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Over and Above Carnivals

By George Papadakis

Imagine the scene. At a carnival in Patras (if one can refer to it as a carnival), as part of the procession, there is a vehicle on which there is an enactment of a wild sexual orgy where Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy go at it hammer and tongs. Without knowing what the organisers are actually planning this year – I have never been much of a fan

of carnivals – I believe such a scene is a strong possibility, as in recent times, these two politicians have been seen as the very focus of evil in our country.

Hypothetically, the very next day after such an exhibition there will be air-brushed pictures of the carnival in Patras with lots of commentary arriving in Berlin

and Paris. It goes without saying, both the French and the German Foreign Affairs departments through their media outlets would condemn the revellers, carnivals in general, the Greeks and Greece itself and openly threaten if Athens does not suppress the people from Patras, that proceedings will begin to throw us out of not only the Eurozone,



but the EU itself.

What do you think? That such things are not done? Of course, as a rule, not one German or French government would ever fall so low as to send an official protest to the Greek Government about something that was part of a carnival, no matter how outrageous and insulting it had been. How many letters of protest have there been from the Americans who are ridiculed at every carnival held in Greece? Would they give a damn about

carnivals, when they did not even make a murmur of complaint when we bombarded their embassy?

Indeed, all this is absolutely logical and appropriate for normal nations and normal people. Not so for the theatre of irrationality known as Greece. In this nation which has been bankrupt for some time now, all its governments have never had as an aim the improvement of the living standards of their citizens, regardless of their background and ideology. Their

main concern is to bring ruin to the neighbouring Republic of Macedonia, its inhabitants, and their fellow Macedonians who live near the borders of Greece. In order to succeed in that goal, they use the most incredible diversionary tactics and use all possible resources to the maximum. Yet they had never gone to the laughable and absurd lengths of complaining and protesting officially to the Macedonian government about anything that had occurred at any carnival!

For those who know what happened a few days ago in Vevchani in the Republic of Macedonia, as part of the biggest carnival in that country in the presence of many European visitors, it was evident that the carnival organisers had ceremoniously put the boots into bankrupt Greece. They could not possibly ever imagine that a day later, the "redoubtable" Delavekuras from the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, would "inform them", (i.e. the amazed diplomatic circles), in the following outrageous manner:

"The ambassador of the Greek Office of Public Relations in Skopje will immediately lodge a formal written complaint with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of FYROM regarding the regrettable matter at the Carnival of Vevchani. This carnival which receives government funding and was officially opened by the Minister for Culture of FYROM, had as its theme the "Burial of Greece" where costumes were worn and a map presented with irredentist claims showing the sunburst of Vergina and where the Greek flag was burnt as well. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of FYROM, was not only told that it had not officially condemned these manifestations of the carnival, but on the contrary, the carnival was described by the Minister of Culture as "a diamond of our Macedonian tradition"... We are expecting a strong and immediate condemnation from the political leadership of FYROM of the unacceptable actions that were aimed at our nation and its national symbols as well as a response from

the people responsible, and an undertaking given to ensure that similar things will not take place in the future."

Quite extraordinary, isn't it? A Greek government for national salvation that has supposedly been formed with a technocrat [banker] at its head to salvage all that it is possible to salvage of the neo-Hellenic nation, is one that surpasses all previous governments in courage and protests about something that was done at...a carnival! They even demand from the Macedonian political leaders a condemnation of the carnival and all that took place in it. Incredible! If I were Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Republic of Macedonia, I would publicise it far and wide so that the whole planet would be able to see how horribly decadent the situation in Greece has become.

At this critical juncture, when Greece is a hair's breadth away from an official declaration of bankruptcy and Dimas, Delavekuras and all the well-paid gang of the Greek Foreign Affairs ministry should be focusing all their efforts in the international arena to at least salvage some credibility as it is some time since we have failed to save the economy. Instead, they are wasting time and energy on protests about clownish revels at carnivals and the display of the Macedonian phalanx at the monument in the central square of Skopje. This is the absolute Greek carnival, or charade, if you will. The only remaining question is whether we will totally eradicate carnivals or let them continue to disgrace us till the end of

time...

PS: Ordinarily, I would not have been in the least bothered about the latest public pronouncement from the metropolitan [orthodox archbishop] of Salonika who has brought to mind all that the Serbian dictator Milosevic had said about the Republic of Macedonia. We cannot be angry with a man like Antimos because it is obvious we have a personality who is a real basket case and who has totally lost the plot for some time. However, until such time as he is officially declared psychiatrically ill and mentally incompetent, charges need to be brought against him before the law. State officials, should have already done this after he made the threats against the radio station in Ovcharani, in the County of Lerin (Florina). He gives us material for the need for such an action virtually on a weekly basis. He has repeatedly called for violent action against the neighbouring country, in statements that recall those of a bloodthirsty dictator. In the "Greece of Western Europe", meaning France, just these statements would be sufficient to have him brought before the prosecutors. So why is he still being protected locally?

By George N. Papadakis of EFA Rainbow – Vinozhito, a Macedonian political party struggling for the human rights of Macedonians in Greece. Thanks to Jim Thomev of the AMHRC, for translating this article from Macedonian to English.

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UN Expert Recommends Bulgaria Recognise its Macedonian Minority

Blagoevgrad/Gorna Dzumaja (Bulgaria), Melbourne (Australia) and Toronto (Canada)

15 February 2012

OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN, the political party of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria, together with the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) and Macedonian Human Rights Movement International (MHRMI) welcome the recent release of the report of the United Nations Independent Expert on Minority Issues on the situation in Bulgaria.

The report was made public on 3 January 2012 by the newly appointed UN Independent Expert, Ms. Rita Izsák and follows the visit to Bulgaria in July 2011 of her predecessor, Ms Gay McDougall. During the visit to Bulgaria, the Independent Expert met with representatives of the Macedonian minority in the country. The delegation comprised of: Stojko Stojkov, Co-President of OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN and Stahil Tupalski, Central Council Member of OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN; Stojan Gerasimov from the Society of Repressed Macedonians; and Georgi Hristov, the Chief Editor of the pro-Macedonian newspaper, Narodna Volja. The meeting gave the Macedonian organisations the opportunity to provide the Independent Expert with a first hand, documented account of the problems facing the Macedonian population in Bulgaria.

The post-visit report made a number of observations in relation to the situation of minorities in Bulgaria. In paragraphs 66-67, devoted to the Macedonian minority, the Independent Expert noted that:

"66. Article 54 of the Bulgarian Constitution states that "everyone shall have the right to avail himself of the national and universal human cultural values and to develop his own culture in accordance with his ethnic self-identification, which shall be recognized and guaranteed by the law." However, the Government denies the existence of an ethnic Macedonian minority, and does not recognize the Pomaks (considered as Bulgarian-speaking Muslims by the Government) as a distinct minority – claiming that both groups are in fact ethnic Bulgarians. Representatives of those who self-identify as ethnic Macedonians and as Pomaks claim that their minority rights are consequently violated.

67. Ethnic Macedonians consider it of crucial importance that their ethnic identity and distinctiveness be officially recognized. Community representatives strongly dispute census findings reflecting very low and declining numbers of Macedonians, and claim that the true population is many times higher. The Macedonian lan-

guage is not recognized or taught in schools and Macedonians are not represented on the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues.

Most significantly though, the Independent Expert made a number of important recommendations in relation to the recognition of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria.

In relation to respect for self-identification the Independent Expert recommended that:

"93. In accordance with its Constitutional provisions to respect the right to ethnic self-identification, the Government should ensure and protect this right, as well as the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of association of members of the Macedonian and Pomak minorities.

94. Policies relating to the recognition and rights of minority groups must be assessed in relation to the State's obligations under international human rights law. Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that "in those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the

other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language." The question of the existence of minorities is addressed by the Human Rights Committee in its general comment No. 23 (1994) on the rights of minorities. Article 5.2 states that "the existence of an ethnic, religious or linguistic minority in a given State party does not depend upon a decision by that State party but requires to be established by objective criteria."

95. With regard to identification with a particular racial or ethnic group, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has established in its general recommendation No. 8 (1990) on article 1 of the Convention that "such identification shall, if no justification exists to the contrary, be based upon self-identification by the individual concerned." The right of individuals to freely identify as belonging to an ethnic, religious or linguistic group is therefore established in international law. Domestic law should recognize such rights and ensure that no individual or group suffers from any disadvantage or discriminatory treatment on the basis of their freely chosen identity as belonging (or not) to an ethnic, religious, linguistic or any other group.

On Bulgaria's refusal to abide by judgements of the European Court of Human Rights, the views of the Independent Expert were quite explicit:

96. Bulgaria should comply fully with the judgements of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) relating to persons belonging to such communities and implement its rulings without further delay. Associations should be allowed to register

and function without impediment, use their chosen names and express their ethnic identities freely. Associations that have been denied in the past should promptly be given official registration.

The Independent Expert also recommended the introduction of the Macedonian language to the Bulgarian education system:

"97. The Government's position not to allow the use of mother tongue languages as the language of instruction in schools, particularly in regions where minorities are a majority or constitute a large percentage of the population, is a concern for minorities, including the Roma, Turkish Muslims and Macedonians. Bilingual education commencing in the early years of schooling would enable children to become proficient in their mother tongue as well as in Bulgarian. Furthermore, it would enable them to maintain their ethnic and linguistic identity and help minority pupils to achieve positive educational outcomes. The Government is urged to consider introducing bilingual education and to ratify the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages"

OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN, the political party of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria, together with the **Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC)** and **Macedonian Human Rights Movement International (MHRMI)** demand that the Bulgarian Government takes note of the report of the UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues and implements, in full and without delay, each of the recommendations contained in the report.


The full report can be downloaded here:

http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/19session/A.HRC.19.56.Add.2_en.pdf

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.

Established in 1984 the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) is a non governmental organisation that advocates before governments, international institutions and broader communities about combating discrimination and promoting basic 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, or contact AMHRC by email info@macedonianhr.org.au or on +61 3 93298960.

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, twitter.com/mhrmi, facebook.com/mhrmi, info@mhrmi.org, +1 416-850-7125.



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American Students Meet Macedonians in Greece

By Dimitri Jovanov



Students at the Offices of Vinozhito

A very pleasant and productive meeting took place on the 13th of January 2012, in the Lerin (Aegean Macedonia in Greece) offices of Rainbow/Vinozhito – a Macedonian political party struggling for the rights of Macedonians in Greece. This was part of a tour throughout the regions of Lerin and Prespa in Aegean Macedonia by a group of 15 students who study social anthropology and politics at the University of Boston (USA). They met with many individuals and relevant groups and were led by the renowned anthropologist, Anastasia Karakasidou. The meeting between the students and members of Vinozhito was very constructive and many issues were discussed, especially in connection with the problem of human rights in Greece. Specific focus was given to Macedonian matters in general and particularly, the situation of Macedonians in Greece.

This educational tour began on January 5 and was completed on January 22. The students took the opportunity to visit many places in northern Greece inhabited by ethnic Macedonians. The purpose of the tour was to study the impact of social changes in recent history as reflected in the lives of inhabitants today. Dr. Karakasidou informed *Nova Zora* that this is not the end of

the project - more visits are planned and these will also include the Republic of Macedonia and Pirin Macedonia in Bulgaria.

In Lerin (Florina in Greek), a University of Balkan Studies was established many years ago. Yet it is strange that not one academic and not even one student from this institution has dared to visit or request a meeting with members of Vinozhito, to at least hear their thoughts on the serious issues that affect the region as a whole. Reputable and serious people from all over the world – academics, politicians, students, journalists etc have come to Lerin to meet with Vinozhito...to listen, to question, to debate and compare etc, but Greek intellectuals seem to choose to remain blind. As with the Greek economic catastrophe, they foolishly ignore realities in relation to other serious matters concerning the Greek state.

While intellectuals based on the other side of the world recognise the social value and importance for example, of learning about the impact of the “Greek Civil War” on the consciousness of the various ethnic groups in Greece at present, Greek authorities continue to pretend that there are no problems and indeed that there is no

such ethnic diversity. And when these minorities manage every now and then to demonstrate their existence, they are attacked with Medieval slander – “foreigners, foreign agents, propagandists” etc. This is the exact opposite of what one expects from a modern democratic society.

Dimitri Jovanov – Editor of the monthly pro-Macedonian newspaper, *Nova Zora*: <http://novazora.gr/>

Translated from Macedonian to English by George Vlahov of the AMHRC.



Anastasia Karakasidou

Една многу убава и корисна средба се случи на 13 Јануари 2012, во канцелариите на партијата Виножито во Лерин. Група од 15 студенти од Универзитетот на Бостон, САД, чии предмет на студии е поврзано со социјална антропологија и политика, го посетија Леринскиот регион и села на Преспа, каде што разговараа со луѓе и со надлежни органи, заедно со нивната позната извонредна професорка Анастасија Каракасиду. Се оствари една многу конструктивна средба, каде што беа разговарани многу теми, главно околу состојбата во Грција и нивото на човековите права. Членовите на Претседателството на Виножито имаа прилика да одговораат на прашањата на студентите во врска со Македонското Прашање и посебно во врска со етнички Македонци во Грција.

Оваа образовна посета траеше од 5 до 22 Јануари и групата на студентите имаше прилика да посети повеќе места на северна Грција каде што живеат етнички Македонци. Имајќи го Солун како појдовна точка, организираа дневни екскурзии и посетуваа места и надлежни органи со цел да простудираат и да се информираат во врска со историските и социополитичките промени кои се случија во минатото и како тоа денес се рефлектира во животот на жителите. Професорката Каракасиду изјави за Нова Зора дека овој проект не завршува тука и дека ќе продолжи и во следните години, со посети и во други места на географската Македонија, како во Република Македонија така и во регионот Пирин во Бугарија.

Чудното на целиот случај? Во Лерин функционира веќе со години Универзитет за Балкански студии. Замислете се, ниту еден професор, дури ниту еден студент не „се осмели“, да го посети Виножито или да побара средба за да го слушне барем мислењето на еден носител на сериозно прашање на поширокиот регион. Доаѓаат сериозни луѓе, професори, студенти, политичари, новинари, истражувачи итн. од „крајот на светот“, слушаат, прашуваат, споредуваат... Грците интелектуалци како и секогаш „слепи“, сакајќи или не. Како со години „јадеа глупава трева“, околу економијата и денес се наоѓаат во „кома“, така функционираат и во врска со сите останати сериозни прашања на државата, потурнувајќи ги во оваа катастрофа и незнаење и сите неинформирани граѓани на државата.

Со два збора, интелектуалци од другата страна на светот, доаѓаат и се интересираат за состојбата на регионот, последиците на Граѓанската војна кои сеуште се активни, свестата на граѓаните, етничката, јазичната, културната различност... Како и во сите развиени земји, овој факт го сметаат за богатство, извор на знаење и студии, постоечка човечка состојба. Спротивно од тоа, земјата на која граѓани се носителите на различноста, прави се за да ги скрие од очите на останатите и кога тие ќе успеат малку да се појават, ги презентира како агенти, дојденци од странство, пропагандисти... Со други зборови, Среден Век !

Димитри Јованов – уредникот на месечниот промакедонски весник во егејска македонија, *Нова Зора*: <http://novazora.gr/>



СРЕДБА НА АМЕРИКАНСКИ СТУДЕНТИ СО МАКЕДОНЦИ ВО ГРЦИЈА

Австралиските власти го користат терминот „Македонци“

Дојче Веле Интервју со Крис Попов, портпарол на „Австралиско-македонскиот комитет за човекови права“

Датум 13.02.2012



Dr. Chris Popov

Австралиските власти преку два дописа до македонската заедница во земјата известиле дека се менува одлуката во однос на именувањето на Македонците во Австралија. Се напушта праксата за користење на „Славомакедонци“.

Портпаролот на „Австралиско-македонскиот комитет за човекови права“ Крис Попов за Дојче веле објаснува дека шефот на кабинетот на министерот за надворешни работи, како и Министерството за имиграција и државјанство, на 9-ти и 11-ти јануари годинава испратиле писма до Комитетот со кои ставаат на знаење сека „славомакедонската директива не се употребува и во други служби, вклучувајќи го и Австралискиот завод за статистика“.

„Според нас, одлуката важи, односно стапи на сила на 9-ти јануари годинава. Со таа одлука се означува крајот на една долгогодишна борба што се водеше од страна на нашиот Комитет за промена на ставот на австралиската влада кон македонската заедница“, вели Попов за Дојче веле.

Следно – признавање на уставното име

Објавата на одлуката доаѓа по еден месец, бидејќи членовите на одборот

биле на одмор. Следна активност ќе биде „да се стави крај на еден период на македонската заедница во Австралија, кој останува мрачен, додека Македонија се нарекува Поранешна југословенска Република Македонија“, вели Попов.

Македонците очекуваат реакција на Грците во Австралија, но не и менување на одлуката на австралиските власти

„Ние очекуваме дека австралиската влада ќе постапува логично и ќе ја признае Република Македонија под нејзиното официјално и демократски избрано име. Мислам дека ако се признава оти заедницата е македонска, тогаш Македонци доаѓаат од Република Македонија, како и од другите делови на Македонија, кои се во соседните држави. Логично е Австралија да го смени ставот во однос на името на Република Македонија и конечно да се исфрли од употреба срамната референца – Поранешна југословенска Република Македонија. Тоа ни е следната задача и ние сега со полна пареа ќе работиме на тоа – да ја убедиме австралиската влада дека треба да се смени ставот во врска со името на Република Македонија“, вели Попов.

Реакции од грчката заедница засега нема, но од македонската не очекуваат

дека реакциите би го промениле ставот на владата.

„Се’ уште нема, ама очекуваме реакции од нив, бидејќи тие оваа одлука ќе ја гледаат како голема загуба за нив. Очекуваме да има реакции, ама не очекуваме владата да го преиспита својот став во однос на ова прашање и очекуваме владата да продолжи да не’ именува како ’македонска заедница’ и да не се враќа на стариот термин, кој беше многу навредлив“, забележува Попов.

До промената преку лобирање

Македонците во Австралија околу три години работеле на промена на одлуката на австралиските власти преку средби со владини министри и пратеници на владејачката партија. Постепено го зголемувале притисокот врз федералната влада со цел да ја принудат под „силата на аргументите да го преиспита ставот и да го врати терминот македонски“.

„Оваа победа покажува дека ако во една организација има координираност, посветеност, фокусираност на задачата и целта, ако се истрае во борбата и се користат сите расположливи правни, политички и лобирачки средства, а ние ги искористивме до максимум, тогаш ќе се постигне посакуваниот резултат“, вели портпаролот Попов.

Официјалните податоци покажуваат дека во Австралија има околу 83.000 Македонци, но од Комитетот сметаат дека ги има повеќе. Резултатите од минатогодишниот попис треба да се објават кон средината на оваа година. Во Комитетот очекуваат бројот на Македонци да се зголеми, бидејќи многумина послободно го изразуваат својот етнички идентитет, а исчезнала и појавата многумина да се попишуваат како Југословени.

„Очекуваме официјалната статистика да покаже од 100.000 до 110.000“, вели портпаролот на „Австралиско-македонскиот комитет за човекови права“ Крис Попов за Дојче веле.
<http://www.time.mk/read/e2585d94bb/948b33b6ee/index.html>

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ABOUT MHRMI & AMHRC

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

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

RELATED ORGANISATIONS

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
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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. Mechkarooi
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-Macedonian newspaper 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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