

# AMHRC REVIEW



Autumn 2010

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# AMHRC/MHRMI TO LAUNCH CAMPAIGN FOR LEGAL ACTION AGAINST THE GREEK STATE TO RESTORE CITIZENSHIP AND PROPERTY RIGHTS TO MACEDONIANS FROM GREECE

The Australian-Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC), Macedonian Human Rights Movement International (MHRMI), the Association of the Refugee Children from Aegean Macedonia of Melbourne and Victoria, the Association of Refugee Children from Aegean Macedonia (ARCAM) in Canada and Macedonian refugee associations in the Republic of Macedonia have decided to launch a campaign for legal action against the Greek state to restore citizenship and property rights to Macedonians from Greece.

## What is the aim of the action?

The aim of this action is to achieve the return of Greek citizenship and property to former Greek citizens who identify as Macedonians. The general strategy shall be to process individual applications for the return of citizenship and property through the Greek judicial system. In the event of a negative outcome, recourse will then be sought from the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR).

## Why is this action important?

The AMHRC and MHRMI believe that this action is of vital importance because it is one more way to highlight the existence of Macedonians from Greece, and the time has come for Greece and Europe to recognise the atrocities of the past. There are a number of possible gains to be had from this action among which are return of unjustly revoked citizenship rights, with which will also be gained the right to return to visit one's birthplace and the right to vote in Greek and European elections. Also important is the return of confiscated property or financial compensation for such property or for the loss of citizenship. It is important to note that in the recent past there have been similar applicants from other mistreated groups where the financial compensation was very large. However it must be emphasised that there is no guarantee of success in such proceedings.

## Will applicants have to surrender their Australian or Canadian citizenship?

No. If applicants regain their Greek citizenship, they will not need to surrender their Australian/Canadian citizenship. Greek, Australian and Canadian law all permit dual-citizenship.

## What is the role of AMHRC and MHRMI in this action?

The role of the AMHRC and MHRMI in this action is to coordinate relations between the applicants and the legal team and to assist in the gathering of the necessary documentation.

## How will this action be carried out?

A legal team comprised of experienced lawyers and human

**Individuals in Melbourne who believe they will be able to participate in this action and have a desire to do so are invited to contact us at:**

*Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee*  
Tel: +61 3 9329 8960 or  
email: [macedonian\\_rights@hotmail.com](mailto:macedonian_rights@hotmail.com)

*Individuals in Canada/North America are advised to contact the Macedonian Human Rights Movement International*  
Tel: +1 416-850-7125 or email: [info@mhrmi.org](mailto:info@mhrmi.org)

rights experts from Greece has agreed to take up the cases. Once the action begins, the applicants will be required to sign documents and agreements with the lawyers. It should also be pointed out that there will be legal costs associated with this action which the applicants will have to pay.

## How long is the action anticipated to last?

Regarding a timeframe, in a best case scenario, if a Greek court rules in favour of the applicant, the entire matter could be over in a year or so. However, the likely scenario is that Greek courts will rule against the applicants in which case recourse will be sought from the ECtHR. If this is the case, it will take about 7 years before we have a final outcome (5 years within Greece – the maximum legal time for the exhaustion of domestic remedies and about 2 years before there is a decision from Strasbourg).

## What documentation do applicants need to provide

- (1) Completed Questionnaire (document to be provided by the lawyers).
- (2) Copy of Australian/Canadian citizenship certificate or copy of passport.
- (3) Signed Power of Attorney document (to be provided by the lawyers).
- (4) Signed contract with the legal team (to be provided by the lawyers).
- (5) Any documents which prove the link between an applicant's Greek legal name and their current legal name (if different) e.g. Deed Poll document, etc. For persons who arrived in Australia or Canada with a Macedonian surname, the lawyers will obtain two sworn statements from their village in Greece certifying that, for example, "Petre Nikolov" and "Petros Nikolas" is the same person.
- (6) Any official Greek documents that an applicant may have in their possession relating to Greek citizenship, Greek passports or identity cards, loss of Greek citizenship, property deeds, etc.



## АМКЧП/ММДЧП КЕ ОТПОЧНАТ СО КАМПАЊА ЗА ПОДНЕСУВАЊЕ НА ТУЖБИ ПРОТИВ ГРЦИЈА ЗА ПОВРАТОК НА ОДЗЕМЕНИТЕ ДРЖАВЈАНСТВА И ИМОТИ НА МАКЕДОНЦИТЕ ОД ГРЦИЈА

Австралиско-македонскиот комитет за човекови права (АМКЧП) и Меѓународното македонско движење за човекови права (ММДЧП) од Канада, во соработка со Здружението на децата бегалци од Егејска Македонија од Мелбурн и Викторија, Здружението на децата бегалци од Егејска Македонија од Канада и македонските бегалски здруженија во Република Македонија, ќе отпочнат со кампања за поднесување на тужби против Грција за повраток на одземените државјанства и имоти на Македонците од Грција.

### Која е целта на акцијата?

Целта на оваа акција е да се постигне враќање на грчкото државјанство и имотот на поранешните грчки државјани коишто се идентификуваат како Македонци. Општата стратегија ќе биде најпрво да се покренат постапки со индивидуални барања за враќање на државјанството и имотот преку грчкиот правосуден систем. Во случај на негативен исход, потоа предметот ќе биде упатен до Европскиот суд за човекови права (ЕСЧП).

### Зошто ова е важно?

Австралиско-македонскиот комитет за човекови права (АМКЧП) и Меѓународното македонско движење за човекови права (ММДЧП) од Канада, Здружението на децата бегалци од Егејска Македонија од Мелбурн и Викторија, Здружението на децата бегалци од Егејска Македонија од Канада и македонските бегалски здруженија во Република Македонија, сметаат дека ова е исклучителна важна акција, бидејќи ова е уште еден начин да се потенцира постоењето на Македонци од Грција и конечно да се дојде до признавањето на злосторствата од минатото од страна на Грција и Европа. Има повеќе можни придобивки од оваа акција, меѓу кои најважните се враќање на неправно одземеното државјанство со што апликантот ќе го добие правото непречено да го посетува родното место и правото да гласа на грчките и европските избори. Исто така апликантот може да си го поврати сопствениот конфискуван имот или да добие финансиска оштета за одзементиот имот и државјанство. Важно е да се забележи дека

во минатото имаше слични апликанти од други малтретираните групи каде што финансиската оштета беше голема. Но мора да се потенцира дека во вакви судски постапи нема гаранции дека ќе се случи истото со нашите случаи.

### Дали треба апликантите да се откажат од австралиско/канадско државјанство?

Не. Во случај на враќање на грчкото државјанството, барателите нема да се откажат од своето австралиско или канадско државјанството. Грчките, австралиските и канадските закони дозволуваат поседување на двојно државјанство.

### Како ќе се спроведе акцијата?

Правен тим, составен од искусни адвокати и експерти за човекови права од Грција, е согласен да ги преземе случаите. Откако ќе почне акцијата, барателите ќе мораат да потпишат документи/договори со нив. Исто така мора да се знае, дека има адвокатски трошоци што апликантот ќе мора да плати.

### Која е улогата на Австралиско-македонскиот комитет за човекови права (АМКЧП) и Меѓународното македонско движење за човекови права (ММДЧП) од Канада?

Улогата на нашите организации во оваа акција е да ги кординира односите помеѓу барателите и адвокатите, и да помогне во прибирање на потребната документација.

### Колку време ќе трае судската процедура?

Во врска со временската рамка, во најдобриот случај ако грчките судови донесат одлука во корист на барателите, целата постапка може да трае околу една година. Меѓутоа, најверојатниот исход е дека грчките судови нема да донесат одлука во корист на барателите и во тој случај предметите ќе бидат упатени до ЕСЧП. Ако се разгледуваат предметите во рамките на ЕСЧП, целата постапка би траела околу седум години пред да се дојде до конечна одлука (значи пет години во Грција – максималниот рок дозволен од грчките закони за исцрпување на можните правни лекови и околу две години пред да се добие одлука од Стразбур).

### Кои документи треба да достават апликантите?

- (1) Пополнет прашалник (овој документ ќе биде обезбеден од адвокатите)
- (2) Копија од уверението за австралиско/канадско државјанство или пасош.
- (3) Полномошно за адвокатите потпишано од барателот (документот ќе биде обезбеден од страна на адвокатите).
- (4) Договор потпишан помеѓу барателот и адвокатите (овој документ ќе биде обезбеден од адвокатите).
- (5) Секоја документација која ја докажува врската помеѓу грчкото име и презиме на барателот и неговото сегашно име и презиме (ако се разликува од грчкото). На пример, документ како уверение за промена на неговото име кај австралиските власти или документите доставени од лицето при пристигнувањето во Австралија/Канада. За лицата кои пристигнале во Австралија/Канада со македонско име и презиме, адвокатите ќе обезбедат две свечено дадени изјави (заклетви) од лица во нивното село во Грција со кои ќе се потврди дека на пример „Петре Николов“ и „Петрос Николас“ се истата личност.
- (6) Било кои официјални грчки документи кои барателот ги поседува во врска со грчкото државјанството, грчките пасоши или лични карти, одземање на грчкото државјанството, тапии (имоти листови).

Поединци во Мелбурн кои мислат дека ќе можат да учествуваат во оваа акција се поканети да не контактираат на:

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# AMHRC/MHRMI WELCOME THE LAUNCHING OF THE "NOVA ZORA" NEWSPAPER IN GREECE

The Australian-Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) and Macedonian Human Rights Movement International (MHRMI) welcome the launching of Nova Zora (New Dawn), a bilingual newspaper in Macedonian and Greek dedicated to issues concerning the Macedonian minority in Aegean Macedonia, Greece.

The first edition of the 16-page newspaper was launched yester-

donians born in Greece were educated. The Greek state still refuses to allow the possibility of learning the Macedonian language within the state education system.

Nova Zora will include articles on news and current affairs in Greece and beyond; a feature interview; opinion pieces and letters to the editor. The newspaper will also cater to its Macedonian audience with regular the-



Florina Prefecture and news on the latest activities of the Macedonian Rainbow Party/Vinozhito.

Nova Zora will be circulated for free in villages and towns in Northern Greece with an initial circulation of 20,000 copies. The

**If you would like a copy of "Nova Zora" please contact the AMHRC or MHRMI**

day and will initially be published once a month. The editorial team aspires to eventually produce a bi-monthly edition.

The newspaper's Editor-in-Chief, Dimiti Ioannou said *"Today is a historic day for the Macedonian movement and for all Greek citizens who want a truly European and democratic Greece. Today the first mass-circulation newspaper in Greece to include articles and commentary in the Macedonian language will begin to operate."*

Many articles will be published in Greek, due to the fact that this is the language in which Mace-

donian articles on important Macedonian historical figures; special focuses on Macedonian villages in Aegean Macedonia – Greece and a section devoted to Macedonian women. Notably there will be a regular column designed to teach the readership an understanding of the Macedonian language.

The first edition of the newspaper featured an article on the Macedonian revolutionary figure, Goce Delcev, in light of the 107th anniversary of his death on May 4, 1903. Other articles included a report on the Macedonian speaking village of Neret/Polypotamos in the Lerin/

newspaper is also available for free online at [www.novazora.gr](http://www.novazora.gr).

While the AMHRC and MHRMI welcome the exciting initiative, both organisations continue to call on the international community to demand that the Greek government recognise the Macedonian language and provide for Macedonian language broadcasts on public television and radio in accordance with well established international standards.

For all those who are interested in contributing support to the Macedonian human rights movement in Greece, please contact the AMHRC or MHRMI.

## STATEMENT OF EFA-RAINBOW, AMHRC AND MHRMI ON THE 2010 STATE DEPARTMENT REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES IN GREECE

The European Free Alliance – Rainbow, the political party of the Macedonian minority of Greece, the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) and Macedonian Human Rights Movement International (MHRMI) call upon the international community to demand that the Greek government take action to end its human rights violations in light of the US State Department's annual report on human rights practices in Greece.

Yet again, the denial of the rights of the Macedonian minority featured in this year's report. In respect of freedom of association, the State Department noted that the "government continued to refuse to allow the registration of the group Home of Macedonian Culture as an association in accordance with the provisions of the civil code" and that "[d]uring the year international organizations and NGOs expressed concern that this practice violated freedom of association." A similar problem also existed in relation to Turkish cultural associations.

The report also observed that "at least a dozen unidentified men violently disrupted a presentation of a new Greek-Macedonian dictionary and a speech by a Western linguist and academic at the Foreign Press Association in Athens. The reports alleged that the men damaged banners and video equipment and injured at least one reporter. Allegedly, they were members of the ultra-nationalist group Golden Dawn." This neo-Nazi group is tolerated by the state and fully participates in the political life of Greece.

Also noteworthy was the US State Department's acknowledgment of the report issued in March 2009 by the UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues, Ms Gay McDougall, in which she "urged the government to withdraw from the dispute over whether there is a Macedonian or a Turkish ethnic minority in the country and focus instead on protecting the rights to self-identification, freedom of expression, and freedom of association of those communities and complying fully with the rulings of the ECHR that associations should be allowed to use the words "Macedonian" and "Turkish" in their names and to express their ethnic identities freely. The independent expert found that those identifying themselves as ethnic Macedonians still

reported discrimination and harassment. Representatives of this minority claimed that they were denied the right to freedom of association, citing unsuccessful efforts since 1990 to register the organization "Home of Macedonian Culture" in Florina."

Although EFA-Rainbow, the AMHRC and MHRMI welcome the inclusion of the aforementioned information in the report, there were some notable omissions which could have strengthened the report and thus given a better picture of the human rights situation in Greece. For example, the report makes no mention of the Macedonian political refugees who were driven out of Greece during the Civil War in Greece and are prevented from returning to Greece to reclaim citizenship and property rights due to fundamentally discriminatory laws enacted in 1982 and 1985 respectively which only afford such rights to "Greeks by genus". In 2009 this discrimination was noted by the UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and most recently again in a report authored by Boris Cilevics of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). In the section on religious freedom, the State Department failed to mention the continual persecution of Father Nikodim Tsarknias and the denial of church services in the Macedonian language.

Furthermore, a number of inaccuracies in the State Department report must also be pointed out. Firstly the Macedonian language is not just spoken in the "northwestern area of the country" i.e. in the Region of Western Macedonia as the report suggests, but also in the north-central part of the country, namely in the Region of Central Macedonia i.e. around the towns of Edessa/Voden, Naoussa/Negush etc. Secondly, in relation to the statement that "a small number of Slavic speakers insisted on identifying themselves as "Macedonian" we wish to state it is unacceptable (and inaccurate) to declare that the number of persons in Northern Greece that identify as Macedonian by ethnicity and the number of people that speak the Macedonian language is "small". Given the fact that in Greece no data on questions of ethnic and linguistic identity are collected in the census, it is most inappropriate for the State Department (and indeed the Greek government) to speculate on the numbers. EFA-Rainbow, AMHRC and

MHRMI strongly urge the international community to require the Greek government, under international supervision, to collect data on ethnic and linguistic diversity at the next national census in 2011.

In relation to the report's claims that "Government officials and the courts denied requests by Slavic groups to identify themselves using the term "Macedonian," stating that approximately 2.2 million ethnically (and linguistically) Greek citizens also use the term "Macedonian" to identify themselves", we would like to state, as indeed we have in the past, that this is a poor attempt on the part of the Greek government to manipulate matters. Ethnic Greek citizens who might identify as "Macedonian" do so in a regional/geographic sense (and many also identify as Pontians, Refugees, etc in light of the fact that a considerable number of them settled in Greece from Asia Minor after 1923), while other Greek citizens identify as Macedonian in an ethno-cultural sense. The claim that some ethnic Greeks add a geographical/regional qualifier to their main ethnic identity marker ("Greek") cannot serve as a justification for denying Macedonians their right to an ethnic identity. The right to self-identification is of crucial existential significance and must be respected. These points should have been acknowledged by the State Department in its report and the Greek response should not have been presented in the manner that it was, which seemed to be attempting to provide a 'justification' for the discriminatory policies of the Greek state.

Finally, EFA-Rainbow, AMHRC and MHRMI this year must once again strongly condemn the State Department's use of the terms "Slavic dialect" and "Slavic groups". These are not terms of self-identification and it would be appropriate that in issuing a human rights report, the State Department would indeed respect the principle of self-identification and refer to this group and their language simply as Macedonian. These terms have long been in pejorative use in Greece and have been utilised in conjunction with attempts to violently assimilate and even exterminate Macedonians. We trust that this error will be corrected in next year's report.

The report on Greece can be located at: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/eur/136034.htm>

Dimitri Jovanov, Bill Nicholov, David Vitkov, George Vlahov, Pavle Voskopoulous





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An ideal way that businesses and organisations can support the AMHRC and contribute to its activities is by becoming an advertiser in the *AMHRC Review*, the official publication of the AMHRC.

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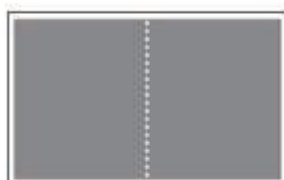
The *AMHRC Review* is a full-colour A4 quarterly publication containing a mix of news, interviews and feature articles from local and international correspondents. Distributed in both print and electronic formats via email and the AMHRC website, the combined distribution/readership of the *AMHRC Review* runs into the thousands both within Australia and internationally.

There is no better way to promote your business, products and services to the Australian-Macedonian community whilst playing a significant role in defending the human rights of all Macedonians, than by advertising in the *AMHRC Review*.



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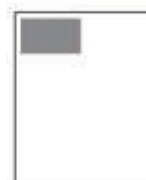
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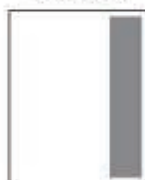
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## Letter to Ms Ghitis

**Dear Ms Ghitis**

I read with interest your article entitled "Macedonia Tries to Part the Clouds on its Horizons" of 13 May 2010 which appeared in the World Politics Review. However, I must take issue with your description of my people, the Macedonians, as "Slavic majority" and "Macedonian Slavs" in your article, especially when in the same article you speak of the Albanian minority which you have correctly described as Albanian and not deconstructed into the component parts of the contemporary Albanian identity.

While Macedonians undoubtedly speak a Slavonic language, as do many nations and ethnic groups in Europe, we are not of Slavic ethnicity. Our ethnicity-our conscious self-identification of ourselves- is Macedonian and that is how we describe it, without qualifiers, adjectives or prefixes. While the Slavonic tribes have had an influence on the formation of the Macedonian ethnic group-although some modern historians such as Florin Curta have begun to question when and in what numbers the Slavs settled in the Balkans and thus point more to "Slavic" cultural influence rather than a mass Slav migration displacing or amalgamating pre-existing local peoples-Macedonians' ethnicity and identity is based on the experiences of all peoples who have settled in Macedonia in the last 2500 years ranging from the Ancient Macedonians, Romans, Celts, Tatars, Slavs, Turks and various peoples brought in during the 500 year plus Ottoman reign. It is a distinct ethnic identity and does not need a "Slavic" component to be constantly mentioned in the same breath for it to be given legitimacy. Macedonian ethnicity has arisen in much the same way as that of all the other ethnic groups in Europe and especially those in the Balkans. I do not subscribe to the theory that Macedonians are direct descendants of the Ancient Macedonians or that Greeks are the direct descendants of the Ancient Greeks. Modern Macedonian ethnicity and identity, like the Greek, Bulgarian, Serbian etc, are the result of processes which occurred in the period following the French Revolution, in the age of nationalism.

It never ceases to amaze me how my people are constantly linked with the "Slav" epithet, whereas other nations which speak a Slavic language, such as Serbs, Bulgarians, Croats, Slovenians, Czechs, Slovak, Russians, Poles are never described as "Slav Serbs" etc, but are described by their correct ethnic identifier, one that they have chosen for themselves. This identification of Macedonians with Slavs is a direct product of Greek attempts to denationalize the Macedonian people in pursuit of their internal and foreign policy goals, by denying the reality of the existence of a distinct Macedonian ethnic group not only in the Republic of Macedonia, but also within Greece, which has a sizeable Macedonian minority. Herein, by the way, lies the crux of Greece's objections to Macedonia's name- the Macedonian minority in Greece. I should mention that I am an ethnic Macedonian from Aegean Macedonia in Greece. It is ironic that Greeks themselves could be described as "Slav Greeks" given that the Slavs reached as far as the Peloponnese in the 8th century and remained in that area for several centuries as the majority population. In fact if we were to use the same logic used in describing the Macedonian people, we could perhaps deconstruct the ethnic Greeks of today and rename them Arvanite (Albanian)-Roman-Vlah-Slav-Turk Greeks or the English as Celtic-Roman-Anglo-Saxon-Jute-Viking-Norman English.

I would therefore ask that in future when writing on Macedonia, you describe the Macedonians as just that without qualifiers such as "Slav" which we frankly consider insulting and demeaning.

Yours sincerely

Dr Chris Popov  
Media Spokesperson  
Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee



# Letter to the Lord mayor re: Sandridge Bridge

25 May 2010

Dr Chris Popov  
Media Spokesperson  
Australian-Macedonian Human Rights Committee Inc  
Suite 106, Level 1 55 Flemington Road  
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Dear Dr Popov

## MACEDONIAN PANEL - SANDRIDGE BRIDGE

Thank you for your letter to the Lord Mayor dated 18 May 2010. In your letter you have noted that the Macedonian glass panel on the Sandridge Bridge is currently boarded up as the result of a deliberate act of vandalism. You also request that the panel be repaired and restored to its original condition and that security measures on the bridge be tightened so that such an act of vandalism does not occur again.

The City of Melbourne has boarded up the current location as a temporary measure pending replacement of the damaged panel with a new panel. Unfortunately, the panel was damaged beyond repair and a new panel has had to be ordered. Replacement panels require specific manufacture with a significant lead time. The new panel was ordered some weeks ago and is due to arrive on site in mid-June, at which time it will replace the boarded up panel on the bridge. Security measures on the bridge have been upgraded in recent months, including upgrading cameras and installation of sensors that activate the alarms, when triggered off. Unfortunately it is almost impossible to prevent vandalism in all situations.

The glass panels and what they represent are very important to the City of Melbourne and we will continue to be vigilant in protecting this fine record of our immigrating history.

Yours sincerely

**Prof Rob Adams AM**

Director City Design

Telephone (03) 9658 8617

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E-mail Rob.Adams@melbourne.vic.gov.au

Website www.melbourne.vic.gov.au

Customer reference SRP1280422

CoM reference DM45810936v2

Copy Michael Norton, Eddie Butler-Bowden, Veronica Farmer-Tison

Dear Lord Mayor

It has come to the attention of our committee that the glass panel which traces the history of the immigration of Macedonians to Australia on Sandridge Bridge is currently boarded up.

It appears that the Macedonian glass panel is the only one that is currently boarded up and that it was targeted in a deliberate act of vandalism which according to our information occurred about one month ago.

Our committee would like to request that the Macedonian glass panel be repaired and restored to its original condition and that security measures on the bridge be tightened so that such an act of vandalism does not occur again.

Yours sincerely

Dr Chris Popov  
Media Spokesperson  
Australian-Macedonian  
Human Rights Committee Inc



# Amhrc 2010 dinner

*Over 400 people attended the 26th annual AMHRC dinner, held at Neret receptions on Saturday 20th March 2010. The world famous professor of linguistics from the University of Chicago, Victor Friedman and Dimitri Jovanov, the editor of Nova Zora, entertained a very appreciative audience.*







From left to right: Michael Radin, Aco Talevski, Chris Angelkov, George Vlahov, Dr Chris Popov and Jason Kambovski. Messrs Radin, Talevski, Angelkov and Popov were awarded certificates of honorary life membership in the AMHRC in recognition of their excellent service to the organisation.



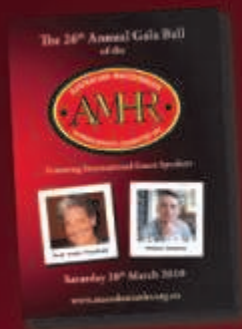




# 2010 Gala Ball DVD Now Available



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## AMHRC/ MHRMI CONDEMN BULGARIAN FOREIGN MINISTER'S statement that no Macedonian minority exists in Bulgaria

On 6 May 2010 the Bulgarian Foreign Minister, Nikolay Mladenov, during an official visit to the Republic of Macedonia, stated as follows in reply to a journalist's question about the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria:

*"There is no Macedonian minority in Bulgaria. In Bulgaria there are no minorities of any sort, however there are people who have human rights and our constitution is based on the individual rights of people and not collective rights".*

Foreign Minister's Mladenov statement is not only factually incorrect, but disturbing as it comes from an eminent representative of a country which claims that it

is committed to basic human rights principles such as freedom of speech, assembly and association as well as the right to self-identification.

It is well known that the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria lives compactly in the Pirin region and ethnic Macedonians are found in significant numbers in other regions of Bulgaria. From 1944-1948 the distinct ethnicity of the Macedonians in the Pirin region and Macedonian immigrants in other parts of Bulgaria was officially recognised. In 1947 the Bled Agreement between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria was signed regarding cultural cooperation between the then People's Republic of Macedonia and the Pirin region within Bulgaria. This agreement in effect granted cultural

autonomy to the Macedonians in Pirin and ushered in a period of cultural renaissance during which the Macedonian language and history were widely taught.

This period of cultural autonomy was brought abruptly to a halt in June 1948. From then on the Bulgarian state reverted to its pre-September 1944 position whereby Macedonian history, language and culture were misappropriated and presented as an integral part of Bulgarian national and historical development. This policy of denial and forced assimilation of the Macedonians in Bulgaria has continued to the present day and as a result the number of those willing to declare as Macedonians has significantly reduced or been

*(Continued on page 13)*



(Continued from page 12)  
deliberately underreported.

From 1956 onwards the Macedonian nationality all but disappeared from Bulgarian public life, official documents and census figures. In 1950 Hristo Kalaydzhiiev reported to the Conference of Cultural and Educational Societies that the number of Macedonians in Bulgaria was about 500,000. The official census of 1956 established that 178, 862 Macedonians (or 63.7% of the total population of the Pirin region) live in the Pirin region. However, the 1968 census only registered 7-8,000 Macedonians in all of Bulgaria at a time when emigration was severely restricted under the Communist regime. At the last census held in 2001, 5071 persons declared that they were of Macedonian ethnicity; however the Bulgarian Prime Minister at that time, Simeon Sax-coburgski, indicated that such persons were Bulgarians with a Macedonian regional identity.

The ability of Macedonians in Bulgaria to enjoy their basic human rights is severely limited. Even though they are not subjected to the brutal treatment meted out to them under the Stalinist Zhivkov regime, Macedonians in Bulgaria are subject to significant official and societal discrimination and harassment when they attempt to assert their rights. Macedonian political parties such as OMO-Ilinden-PIRIN and OMO Ilinden remain unregistered. Those who assert a Macedonian ethnic identity encounter discrimination in employment, education and cultural life. The Macedonian language is not taught at any level in the education system. Macedonian human rights activists are subjected to official harassment when attempting to legally and peacefully carry out their activities.

Given the widespread human rights violations to which Macedonians in Bulgaria are subjected, it is disingenuous in the extreme for Foreign Minister Mladenov to assert that Bulgarian citizens-including those who identify as ethnic Macedonians- are accorded full enjoyment of their human rights.

It is even more absurd for him to claim that there are no minorities in Bulgaria. Bulgaria has signed and ratified all major international human rights instruments and conventions and importantly on 7/5/1999, it ratified the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities which states at Article 3:

*1. 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. 2. Persons belonging to national minorities may exercise the rights and enjoy the freedoms flowing from the principles enshrined in the present framework Convention individually as well as in community with others".*  
"Article 3

In the light of this undertaking, it is absurd for Mladenov to firstly claim that there are no minorities in Bulgaria by referring to the fact that the Bulgarian Constitution does not recognise minorities' collective rights and secondly, by refusing to recognise the sizeable Macedonian, Turkish, Roma, Armenian and Pomak minorities which exist within Bulgaria's borders. The existence of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria is an objective reality which no amount of obfuscation by Sofia can conceal.

**Moreover we strongly urge that Foreign Minister Mladenov and the Bul-**

**garian state implement the recommendations made in the report on Bulgaria released by Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe on 9 February 2010. Namely, as indicated at paragraph 52 of the report:**

*"52. The Commissioner believes that domestic law potentially restricting freedom of association should be precise and its application proportionate to the aims pursued in the context of a democratic society. Regardless of the outcome of the new applications lodged with the Court, the Commissioner considers necessary the establishment by the authorities of an open, sincere and systematic dialogue with all minorities in Bulgaria, including the Macedonian one, in line with the Council of Europe standards. Furthermore, it would send a positive signal to all minority groups if the domestic law, including the Constitution, could be amended in such a way that the rights to freedom of association and assembly enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights were better safeguarded in practice for minorities."*

The Australian-Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) and Macedonian Human Rights Movement International (MHRMI) call on the international community to apply pressure on the Bulgarian government to observe its obligations towards all minorities that exist within its borders; to implement the recommendations of Commissioner Hammarberg in his most recent report and to cease its policy of denial and assimilation of its Macedonian minority in order to enhance regional stability and peace in the Balkans.

Dr Chris Popov

Bulgarian Foreign Minister Mladenov pictured below



© Снимка: БГНЕС : [http://www.bnr.bg/sites/default/files/Bulgaria\\_Popov.jpg](http://www.bnr.bg/sites/default/files/Bulgaria_Popov.jpg)



## INTERVIEW WITH DIMITRI IOANNOU (DIMITRI JOVANOV) EDITOR OF NOVA ZORA NEWSPAPER IN AEGEAN MACEDONIA



From left: Dimitri Jovanov and David Vitkov  
AMHRC International Coordinator

Q: In July 2010, Nova Zora released its 3rd issue. Tell us about the newspaper so far and the feedback you've been getting from readers.

*Well, we are very pleased with the success of the newspaper so far. There has been great interest in the newspaper in Macedonian populated villages, towns and even as far away as Athens! The really pleasing thing that we have noticed is that Nova Zora is being read by Macedonians of all ages. Indeed, this was one of our main goals, to especially stimulate the younger generation of Macedonians in Greece to become interested in Macedonian affairs, Macedonian culture, politics, music, folklore, etc.*

Q: What is the general aim of the newspaper?

*The main aim of Nova Zora is to cater to the Macedonian population in Greece by informing them about issues which matter to them. As the mainstream media in Greece is full of anti-Macedonian propaganda it is indeed difficult for Macedonians to have their interests promoted. The newspaper aims to fill this void by producing a monthly compilation of news, current affairs, opinions, regular thematic articles on Macedonian history, Macedonian culture, the Macedonian language, Macedonian music and folklore and much more.*

Q: How many copies are distributed each month and how are they distributed?

*Nova Zora has a circulation of about 20,000 hard copies each month. We have a dedicated network of distributors who distribute the newspaper free of charge throughout many villages/towns in the Lerin, Kostur, Kaljari, Kozani, Voden, S'botsko, Negush, Kukush, Seres and Solun regions in Aegean Macedonia, Greece. We estimate the readership to be in excess of 50,000 given that people take the newspaper home, share it with friends and family, read it in cafes, etc. Also it should not be forgotten that Nova Zora is available free of charge online at [www.novazora.gr](http://www.novazora.gr) and is getting thousands of hits each month.*

Q: Have you faced any problems/obstacles?

*We have faced some minor problems. In the first month the car of one of our distributors was vandalised and we continuously to receive hate mail and threats. However we will not be intimidated by such anonymous and cowardly attacks. The Nova Zora team remains focused on delivering a quality and informative monthly newspaper specialising in Macedonian issues.*

Q: How have you found your role as Editor of Nova Zora?

*Well as you can imagine it has been very demanding, especially in these first few months. There was a lot to organise from the style, content and design up to the distribution on the ground. I am really enjoying the role, it is very challenging but thankfully I have a wonderful team supporting me.*

Q: Some people in the diaspora have requested that all Nova Zora content be made available in Macedonian and English. Are there any such plans?

*It needs to be understood that Nova Zora is a newspaper aimed at the Macedonian population in Aegean Macedonia. Due to Greece's suppression of the Macedonian language, the majority of Macedonians in Greece do not read Macedonian. Therefore we must mainly use Greek so that readers are able to comprehend. Of course, we also include some material in the Macedonian language not only for those who can read Macedonian but also to challenge and encourage readers to learn the Macedonian literary language. As for articles in English, well unfortunately we do not have the resources to do this, however English speakers are able to use an online translating service such as "Google translate" which although is not always accurate, it does nevertheless give readers a basic translation of the article.*

Q: Can tell us something about the content of the current edition?

*Naturally the lead story in the July edition of Nova Zora is the Ilinden Uprising, which will be celebrated throughout Aegean Macedonia on 19 and 20 July according to the new calendar. Another feature story we have is an analysis on the name issue between Greece and the Republic of Macedonia. This issue is very current in light of the increased contacts between both sides in recent times and media reports of possible 'solution'. Our analysis focuses on the real reasons behind Greece's objection to the name of the Republic of Macedonia - the Macedonian minority of Greece. We also have a report on the village of Ovchareni, Lerinsko in light of the annual village festival held in memory of Ilinden. Of course all the regular sections like Macedonian language, "Makedonka", Music, Opinions, News and Current Affairs have many interesting articles.*

Q: Finally, how is the newspaper financed?

*Nova Zora is a non for profit publication distributed free of charge. Our expenses are mainly printing and distribution costs and this is covered on a monthly basis by voluntary donations from within Greece and from Macedonians originating from Greece but now living abroad in places such as Australia and Canada. We thank all those who have supported the newspaper so far and encourage them to keep it up. **A special thank you here must go out to the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee and the Macedonian Human Rights Movement International.** We also take this opportunity to encourage those who feel that they are in a position to help to do so. This is important so that the newspaper is able to expand, and continue to inform and serve the Macedonians of Aegean Macedonia.*

Interview conducted by the AMHRC's  
International Coordinator David  
Vitkov.  
2 July 2010





# Understanding the past: its importance for Macedonians

Understanding the past is crucial for making future choices. The Macedonian people have a long history of external powers defining who they are or what they should be, having their history misrepresented by hostile groups, and generally being treated as objects instead of agents who could speak their own truths and participate in the making of decisions that concerned their lives.

I offer the following generalization: that the central concern for all Macedonians (and possibly all human beings) is linked to liberation. We want to participate in a world of our own making, one in which we matter, a world in which we are not merely naïve spectators, passively being imposed upon by arrogant men who keep us in a state of paralysis with the idea that we are weak and hopelessly inferior. And that they, the directors, have the monopoly on power and intelligence. This surely is the explanation for the prolonged history of name-calling of the Macedonians by Greece culminating in the height of absurdity with “FYROM” and “Skopjans” as the most recent unpleasantness. Krste P. Misirkov in 1903 called the Greeks “megalomaniacs” as he noted their delusional pretensions about becoming everyone’s teachers and divine guides.

It should therefore not surprise anyone that, taken as a whole, the Macedonian people have had a negative self-image and have had enormous problems in orchestrating effective united action. The most significant Macedonian historical symbols can be easily manipulated by political opportunists to divide the Macedonians.

“...the central concern for all Macedonians (and possibly all human beings) is linked to liberation.”

It is painful to mention the name of the appalling Ljupco Georgievski given his mischievous use of the VMRO name and the course of his political career since Macedonia’s secession from Yugoslavia in 1991. It is with equal horror that we should view figures like Branko Crvenkovski, who openly call upon Macedonians to accept Greek proposals for a name change. This position is even more ludicrous (and treacherous) now that a national calamity has begun to demoralise Greek society, which from all reports, will only get worse in the years to come. The vulnerability the Republic of Macedonia has felt in the past surely no longer obtains.

Like the majority of people everywhere, Macedonians have endured poverty and oppression for most of their history. The most seriously troubled history of the Macedonians, or that which we know most about, has been its most recent. At its worst, if comparison can feature with suffering, the terror at the centre of Macedonian life was there for most of the twentieth century.

Various aspects of Macedonian psychology manifest the negatives of this heritage. Such, for example, is the obsession with identity which consumes so many; there is the nostalgia for the past focusing on heroic action and ancient history; the simplistic approach to problems (e.g. the idea that a strong leader will solve everything-‘*drug Gotse kje se rodi*’); the aping of Greek chauvinism with its appeals to a history of millennia; a tendency to strong emotional instead of reasoned response, combined with conspiratorial explanations of events; the poor grasp of relation to cause and effect, and the misunderstanding of the real sources of problems; an indiscriminating mistrust of less than perfect leadership, and worst of all, the all too frequent blaming of other Macedonians rather than the real oppressor; and consequently, there is low self-esteem and even self-hatred, with their corollary of poor estimation of every other Macedonian’s abilities.

These seem to me to be some of the chief characteristics of the alienated who have never been free to choose their own destiny, those who were enslaved “objects”. The task of emancipation has to do with changing this mind-set, to exorcise the demons of the bitter heritage. Many groups have quarrels about who they are and their history among themselves. Apart from religion, which is one of the greatest sources of conflict in the world, there is much bigotry and waste of potential around so-called ethno-genesis. Apparently, Czechs have worried about whether they were a “Slavonic” or “Germanic” people, Lebanese over whether they were Arabs, or “unique” and “exceptional” descendents of the Phoenicians (just as the modern Greeks fancy a direct blood connection with the ancients); and no one needs to tell Macedonians anything about difficulties created on this front. I do not know of any Macedonian who ever used the word “Slav” in the offensive Greek sense of the term as an “ethnic” label i.e. to disparage and negate Macedonian ethnicity (and language and culture). This extremely important distinction needs to be grasped. Macedonian is the only term that denotes our ethnicity, and Macedonia is what every specialist and layperson calls our language.

I want to draw attention to two dates that should not be forgotten by any Macedonian. The first, August 2, 1903 marks the Ilinden uprising which ended so catastrophically for the Macedonian people as their hopes for an autonomous nation were crushed. To add insult to injury, Macedonia was violently partitioned in 1912-1913

between Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria after the Balkan Wars. What happened in the ensuing years we, today, who are survivors of attempted genocide, are still coming to terms with, as the opposition remains ongoing, ever trying to impede Macedonian progress and development.

The Macedonians are still being challenged and the movement toward civil and human rights, while it has become very strong, has an arduous struggle in the international justice game. Clearly, this bid for justice will gather even greater momentum as the negative self-image both collective and individual diminishes. As nothing succeeds like success, it is of crucial importance that any legal action in the international arena should be supported by Macedonians from everywhere both morally and financially.

Understanding the historical past may enable us to make better choices for the future as Macedonians. The debilitating legacy of fear, passivity and the poor sense of self-worth have to be tackled fearlessly. Advocates for the group may be discouraged when they realize how difficult it is to deal with people whose frustration often issues in anger and bitterness. Those who in the past have attended public meetings in Melbourne will have noted that some individuals often exhibit the worst symptoms of the oppressed mentality (*ropskiot mentalitet*) as defined above. It may call for patience, tolerance and broad sympathy, but sometimes the call gets a bit too tough.

People can become liberated, recoup their humanity and dignity, when they take part in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. Thus, for people in our society to really learn social and political responsibility they must experience them, just as taking possession of one’s democratic rights calls for promoting with democratic values. In their traditional homeland, the Macedonians

(Continued on page 16)

The AMHRC is proud to announce that it will soon be distributing Lupcho's Life in Australia and New Zealand. Reserve your copy by sending an e-mail to [rsvp@macedonianhr.org.au](mailto:rsvp@macedonianhr.org.au)

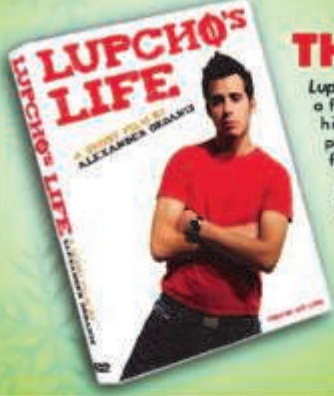
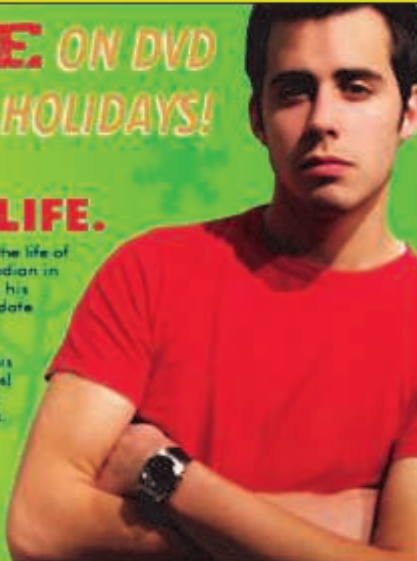
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(Continued from page 15)

have had very little democratic experience. Therefore, they need to have a say and participate in all the areas that concern them, or impinge on their lives, regardless of which country they live in. As individuals, they have to have influence in vital areas such as schools, unions, workplaces, clubs, associations, institutions and neighbourhoods. This is not utopian rhetoric, but plain common sense.

As I said in the previous paragraph, this requires raising awareness in difficult and often trying circumstances. No doubt, that is why Nikola Gruevski, the Prime Minister of the Republic, in his brief visit to Australia last year, exhorted the Macedonians locally to lift their skill level through education. I would also urge Macedonians to start really valuing and learning the Macedonian language, and note its distinctiveness and potential for beauty. It has often struck me that progress will be even greater as more and more people become genuinely bilingual or multilingual.

I have been keenly moved by the courage of the activists and supporters of the Macedonian human rights movements in the Balkans, with particular poignancy by the Macedonians in my own birthplace, the brutally usurped part of Macedonia by Greece in 1913, and which has been brutally maintained ever since then.



Félicien Rops, *L'ordre règne à Varsovie* (1863), lithography

anny worse than the Ottoman feudal masters since the 15<sup>th</sup> Century – indeed, it has been documented that the common people were worse off under the Phanariots with their grandiose imperial delusions. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, militarism, arrogant jingoism, racism, capitalist greed and bullying, have been the chief features of Greek fascism with a succession of coup d'états, constant misrule, and a greedy governing elite that from both ends of the political spectrum has remained dynastic into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In other words, a society in which the climate has always been uncongenial for most of the citizenry for most of the time and with never any respite for the unrecognised minorities, especially the Macedonians.

In 2010, the world has reached a crisis of uncertainty as Greece has imploded through recklessness and corruption. Europe is bleeding and in turmoil, and the future world order is anybody's guess. Those who take their responsibilities seriously as citizens of a rapidly changing world can only express their preferences, what they want to happen or not happen, and behave accordingly. Macedonians can play their role in the general pursuit for global justice by staying focused on their specific targets

and taking the big picture and all the changes that are taking place in consideration. It is one of the better ways of being more effective.

By: Jim Thomev

What, after all, has Greece been doing since its birth in the 19<sup>th</sup> century? It has been piling on tyr-

What is Hellenism? One answer is obtained by focusing on certain policies of Greek governments throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. These policies seem in significant proportion to have been given 'historical support' sourced from some German Romantics in the nineteenth century. An old propaganda campaign which has its roots not in Greece, but Prussia, began back when a German named Johan Gustav Droysen wrote a three volume work titled *Geschichte des Hellenismus (History of Hellenism)* between 1833 and 1843.

According to one of many scholars Droysen coined the term Hellenism (1) which was defined as an unbroken, unending, uninterrupted assimilatory culture that dated back from the ancient Hellenes to the present. The purpose of composing such a Romantic continuity myth was in significant part, undeniably political. The aim was to lay the foundations, on the basis of 'historical precedent', for a case in favour of the construction of a German national state via the sponsorship of the Prussian state-let. (2). Droysen offered an interpretation of ancient history in which he portrayed Hellenistic history as posing the problem of "freedom", in a form relevant to his own time. The solution, in Droysen's mind was clear, 're-unification' of Germany (3). How would this be achieved and what would be the justification? Droysen would later reveal in more direct terms, that the power of the Prussian war machine should serve the purpose of 're-unification'. The justification was found in a very romantic tracing back of German 'roots' to the 700's and Charlemagne.

Modern Greece became a recognized state in 1830 via the sponsorship of Europe's Great Powers (who for their own reasons were dismembering the Ottoman Empire) and the various elite groups controlling the state, began searching for the glue that could hold together the construction of a cohesive modern mass society. The convenience of Droysen's Hellenism was at first not apparent to the ethno-culturally diverse strata attempting to govern the new state. Indeed, Greece's chief historian at this time, Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, expressed the view that the ancient Macedonians were different from the ancient Hellenes (4).

Eventually however, myths of the 'Droysenian' variety came to be implemented through the state education system. One version presents an essentialist history and culture that in an uninterrupted form stretches back 4000 years (5). Another became a vehicle for the *Megali Idea* or the Great Idea. This *Megali Idea* was nothing more than an attempt to justify the expansion of the new state on basis of irredentist 'Droysenian' myths. It was publicly proposed by the Vlach Prime Minister of Greece Ioannis Kolettis in 1844. Kolettis would go on to state in a speech well known to Greek historiography, that:

*The Kingdom of Greece is not Greece. It constitutes only one part, the smallest and the feeblest. The name Hellenes describes not only those who live in this kingdom, but also those who live in Jamina, in Thessaloniki, in Serres, in Adrianople, in Constantinople, in Trebizond, in Crete, in Samos, and in any*

*territory associated with Hellenic history and the Hellenic race.....There are two prime cores of Hellenism: Athens, the capital of the Hellenic Kingdom, and the City (Constantinople), the vision and hope of all Hellenes.(6)*

A classic example of essentialist ethno-nationalistic romanticism, ignoring the ethnographic realities of the present and even baselessly dismissing historical perspectives that had been commonly held within Greece until the 1840's. This speech marked the beginning of territorial claims upon Macedonia. Macedonia had not before been seriously considered as land to be "re-claimed" by the intelligentsia in the new Greek state. Furthermore, between 1794 – 1841, at least fourteen Greek revivalist intellectuals expressed

## Hellenism and the Megali Idea



Johann Gustav Droysen

the opinion that the ancient Macedonians were not part of the Greek world and that they should in fact be viewed as conquerors of ancient Greece (7). Notably, this perspective found traction in an attempt to foster unity between warring factions during the Greek War for independence, when the philhellene Lord Cochrane quoted a famous passage to the Albanian Klepht (bandit) leader Kolokotronis from the first Philipic "in which Demosthenes exhorts the Athenians to lay aside their differences and unite against Philip of Macedonia." (8) Another intellectual/politician who would end up becoming president of the Athens Archaeological Society stated in a speech on 25 May 1841:

*.....And a battle in Chaironeia took place, in which Philip won, destroying the Hellenic freedom. But Philip committed something even more disastrous, he fathered Alexander!(9)*

Adamantios Korais, the chief protagonist for, and inventor of, *Katharevousa*, a language invented for

the purpose of filtering out Turkish, Albanian, Vlach, Arabic, and other foreign words 'unclean' for the neo-Hellenes, saw the period of Turkish rule as simply the lowest point in the downward path that the nation had followed ever since Greece had been conquered by the Macedonian king Philip II in the second half of the fourth century BCE(10).

Eventually though, intellectuals like Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos would 'catch on' to 'political requirements' and begin to incorporate Droysen's concept of Hellenism. Paparrigopoulos ignored a wealth of contrary historical and extant ethnographic evidence in order to create a historical narrative supporting the "unification" of the Hellenic nation that Kolettis had expressed a desire for (11). The same period that saw the rehabilitation of Byzantium in the Greek national narrative (1830's to 1850's) also saw ancient Macedonia fitted into the discourse of Greek national continuity; this move went hand in hand with the desire to incorporate modern Macedonia within Greek national territory(12). The state's ideological machines were now ready to 'educate' the masses with a new worldview. Kolettis and his protégé Paparrigopoulos had begun the process of the *Megali Idea*. The implementation of this idea was destined to have costly consequences for the inhabitants of Macedonia.

Ivan Hristovski

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- 9 *The nation and its ruins; Antiquity, Archaeology, and National Imagination in Greece*, Yannis Hamilakis (2007; 112). The speech was given by none other than I. Rizos Neurolos.
- 10 See *Inventing Greece*, Peter Bien Journal of Modern Greek Studies - Volume 23, Number 2, October 2005, pp. 217-234. Bien further adds 'even katharevousa was produced not just for the Ottomanized Greeks, but also for Western philhellenes, as Korais reveals when he confesses that his notes, "written in our common tongue, were ready for the printers when some friends of mine - philhellenes expert in our ancient but not our modern language - eventually persuaded me to Hellenize [my notes] so that they might be understood . . . by the scholars of Europe, who are ignorant of Modern Greek" (Bien 1972:51, citing Korais 1833:41) and also see: *A language in the image of the nation: Modern Greek and some parallel cases*, Peter Mackridge - The Making of Modern Greece; Edited by Roderick Beaton and David Ricks (2009; 182).
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# Two Macedonian voices in the diaspora

by Dr. Michael Seraphinoff

Macedonian literature has always been enriched by the works of writers in its large diaspora, that population of many thousands dispersed in the world by poverty, war and injustice. As far back as the 1920's émigrés such as Stoyan Christowe, were creating literary works of enduring beauty and value, such as his fine historical narrative *The Lion of Yanina*. Two émigré writers whose works have enriched Macedonian literature in recent times are Dushan Ristevski of Sydney and Jim Thomev of Melbourne, Australia. Both of these writers have produced a number of works that nourish the life of the Macedonian communities of Australia. Both have also contributed their time and energy to projects that benefit those communities and, in turn, Macedonian interests worldwide. Dushan Ristevski has been a leading promoter of Macedonian literature in the diaspora through the Literary Society Grigor Prlichev, and Jim Thomev was editor of the Australian Macedonian Weekly journal. Both writers have an impressive, growing list of published works that include poetry, prose and drama.

Both writers have contributed in their own unique way to Macedonian literature and the cultural life of their communities through bilingual editions of works. These works advance recognition and appreciation of Macedonian literature in the wider world, but at the same time they also help to further bridge a divide between members of the Macedonian community who are accomplished masters of Macedonian or English, but not both languages, which is the vast majority of those in our communities in the diaspora. Their personal histories reflect the nearly inevitable division. Jim Thomev came to Australia from his native village of Kabasnitsa, Lerinsko Macedonia at the age of nine, and as a result, most of his formal education through university has been in the English language. Dushan Ristevski, born in Bitola, Republic of Macedonia, on the other hand, arrived in Australia at the age of nineteen. This accounts for the fact that Dushan is most comfortable composing his works in Macedonian, while Jim at times composes his works in English, and both writers rely on others to help create polished literary translations of their works. Jim Thomev recently helped in the translation of Dushan Ristevski's new play, *Fear and Shame*, that deals with issues of mental illness in the Australian Macedonian community. Such collaborations show how our diversity can be a source of strength at times.

In the poem "Confessions" from the book *Fragments*, first edition 1984, Macedonian Literary Association, Grigor Prlichev, Dushan Ristevski gives soulful, artistic expression to the immigrant's sense of loss of his native land. Jim Thomev, in "Icon 1: The Macedonian Peasant" from *Fragments of a History*, also published by the Association Grigor Prlichev in 1990, gives equally rich expression to the Macedonian love of a troubled homeland. Both writers express the common sorrow of a people in poetry that can ease the spirit by giving articulate voice to thoughts and feelings for which most cannot find the right words.

## "Confession" by Dushan Ristevski

I spoved

Where are they,  
where are they, your sons,  
motherland that failed to keep  
her children!

Times are truly bad,  
many of us have gone to the  
crossroads  
I know not what seed to scatter.

Shame on us!  
We hide our tears,  
we try to hide our heads on our  
bosoms.

But yet we are with you,  
our dreams are ardent,  
we don't forget the scents of our  
land.

Our eyes are lifted  
to your skies,  
we'll come again  
to shed our tears  
on your shoulders.  
(transl. R.G.A. DeBray)

Kade ti se,  
kade ti se si novi te  
krpeni ce – nedokrpeni cel

Zarem l o{ i se vremi wata  
mnogu po krstopati oti -  
dovme,  
ne znam { to da raseeme.

Za sramewe! -  
Sol zi te gi kri eme,  
gl avi te vo pazuvi gi svi t-  
kuvame.

No pak sme so tebe  
soni { tata ni se bujni ,  
mi ri sot tvoj ne go zabo-  
ravame.

O-i te ni se ustremeni  
kon tvoi te nebesa  
}e dojdeme pak  
na tvoi te ramewa  
da se i spl a-eme.

## "Icon 1: The Macedonian Peasant" by Jim Thomev

The circle of perfection  
his vision had described  
around the universe  
of village, forest and field,  
was the unuttered reason  
he never questioned the need to  
persist.

For the world was good,  
and the ways of invaders evil,  
incomprehensible and absurd.

Death divided the generations  
trapped in nature's perfection:  
the unrelenting mutability  
of dawn, noon and dusk  
in seasons cut cleanly by his Maker.

At the height of harvest time  
his heart bade him leave  
a mark of reverent gratitude  
an uncut patch in a wheat-field  
known to all as God's beard.

Men, animals, all nature's flesh  
was never severed from his soul  
which flowed like the rapid rush of  
streams  
and rendered a useless wonder  
the holy men's talk of sin and salva-  
tion.

But the sporadic intrusions  
of flashing knives  
broke the charm of his paradise.

Prva l kona:  
makedonski ot sel anec

Krugot na sovr{ enosta  
opl { uvan okol u svetot  
na negovi ot son,  
ostaven od sel o, { uma i ni vi  
be{ e nei ska ` anata pri -i na  
{ to ni koga{ ne se someva{ e  
za potreбата na ` i veeweto.

Svetot be{ e dobar  
no nastapi te na nap|a-i te zl obni  
nerazbi rl i vi i apsurdni .

Smrtta gi rascepuva{ e pokol eni -  
jata  
f ateni vo stapi cata na sovre-  
menata pri roda:  
nepopusti i vata promena  
na zora, pl adne i mrak  
vo godi { ni te vremi wa -i sto  
i se-eni  
od negovi ot Tvorec.

Vo vremeto na gol emata ` etva  
negovoto srce go potti kna da  
ostavi  
eden znak od dl abokopo-i tna  
bl agodarnost  
edno nese-eno par-e na ni vata od  
p-eni ca  
koe si te go znaeja za na gospod  
bradata.

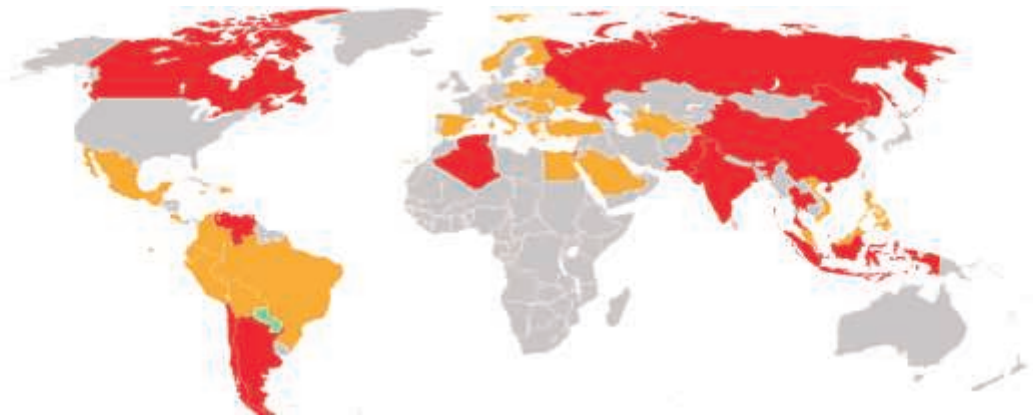
Lu|e, ` i votni , cel ata snaga na  
pri rodata  
ni koga{ ne be{ e otcepena od  
negovata du{ a  
koja te-e{ e kako brza re-na struja  
i go napravi zboruvaweto na sve  
{ teni ci te  
za greovi i spasen i nezn a-ajno.

No me-ovi te { to svetnuvaa  
eden po drug od napa|a-i te  
ja prekr{ uva omajnosta  
na negovi ot raj.



Dr Michael Seraphinoff

## A statement IN RESPONSE TO MISINFORMATION REGARDING THE SO-CALLED "DECISION" TO RETURN GREEK CITIZENSHIP TO MACEDONIANS FROM GREECE



The Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) and Macedonian Human Rights Movement International (MHRMI) are issuing this statement in order to answer some questions that have arisen as a result of what appears to be a misinformation campaign orchestrated by Greek sources. It has been alleged that the Greek government has made a decision to return citizenship to Macedonian exiles who originate from Greece.

These false reports stemmed from an exchange of letters between the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr Thomas Hammarberg and Greece's Deputy Minister of Interior, Decentralization and e-Governance, Ms Theodora Tzakri.

Following his 2009 visit to Greece, Mr Hammarberg wrote to Greek authorities asking:

*Moreover, I would welcome further information on the restoration of Greek nationality for those persons who lost it on the basis of former Article 19 of the Greek Nationality Code. As mentioned in our meeting, these include stateless persons living in Greece and abroad. I would be grateful for any updated information you could provide on the number of former Greek citizens presently living as stateless persons in Greece and abroad, the extent to which they have been able to have their citizenship restored and any measures envisaged to facilitate the process of restoration of their Greek nationality.*

In a response dated 13 April 2010, Ms Tzakri replied to Mr Hammarberg and wrote:

*Finally, in regards to Article 19 of the Greek Nationality Code it has ceased to exist. Based upon the new legislation of the Greek Nationality Code persons who lost their citizenship are entitled to reapply in order to restore their Greek citizenship. Currently the Greek Government is in the process of evaluating a number of applicants who based on former Article 19 lost their Greek Nationality. Therefore to*

*this extent the Greek Government has also been working to the direction of facilitating the process of persons wishing to reapply for citizenship based on the former Article 19.*

In relation to the above mentioned letter, it needs to be emphasised that **Macedonians did not lose their citizenship on the basis of the former Article 19.** The majority of victims of this former Article were ethnic Turks from Western Thrace. In any case, Tzakri's letter to the Human Rights Commissioner made a general point about facilitation and has **no commitment by the Greek government to actually restore citizenship.** The letter also fails to mention that the new Greek citizenship law has a "public security" clause, which could further complicate matters for this category of people. Finally, the new law specifies that refugees may have an application for citizenship considered if they lawfully reside in Greece and of course Macedonian exiles (especially those who are prevented from returning to their place of birth because of Greece's discriminatory 1982 laws which only permit the return of individuals that are ethnic Greeks) do not fulfill this requirement.

The AMHRC and MHRMI believe that the spreading of the misinformation is a deliberate attempt to dissuade Macedonians from taking action to restore their citizenship and property rights by giving them a false hope that the matter will soon be resolved by the Greek state. It is regrettable that these reports were naively 'applauded' by certain individuals and reported by some media outlets which failed to check their accuracy.

As was announced on 23 April 2010, AMHRC/MHRMI, in cooperation with the Association of the Refugee Children from Aegean Macedonia of Melbourne and Victoria, the Association of Refugee Children from Aegean Macedonia (ARCA) in Canada and Macedonian refugee associations in the Republic of Macedonia have decided to launch a campaign for legal action against the Greek state to restore citizenship and property rights to Macedonians from Greece. All these organisations appeal once more to Macedonians from Greece who lost their citizenship to join this important action.



# Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC)

## Membership Application Form

Formed in 1984 the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) is an Australian based non-government organisation that informs and advocates to governments, international institutions and broader communities about combating discrimination and promoting basic human rights. The aspiration is to ensure that Macedonian communities in Australia and throughout the world are recognised, respected and afforded equitable treatment.

The AMHRC has been involved in the struggle for human rights of the Macedonian people both in Australia and internationally for over 25 years, either directly or through our partner organisations. In addition to taking various politicians to task over their comments and actions concerning the Macedonian people, challenging government policy, defending and promoting the community's interests, the AMHRC has also continued to support our Macedonian minorities in Greece, Bulgaria and Albania through direct funding and other means.

With the issue over the right of the Republic of Macedonia to use its constitutional name reaching a critical phase, there has never been a better time to be engaged or re-engage with the struggle of the Macedonian community for equality and respect. Show your support and become a member of the AMHRC.

|   |  |   |  |  |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|--|--|---|--|
| Full Name:  |  |   |  | Gender:                                    |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female |  |
| Address:  |  |   |  |  |  |   |  |
| Suburb:   |  | State:  |  | Postcode:                                  |  |   |  |
| Phone:  |  | Mobile:   |  |  |  |   |  |
| Email:  |  |   |  | Date of Birth:                             |  |   |  |
| Occupation:   |  |   |  |  |  |   |  |
|   |  |   |  |  |  |   |  |
| Membership Fee:                                     |  | \$500 <input type="checkbox"/> Advocate   |  | \$120 <input type="checkbox"/> Full Member |  | \$60 <input type="checkbox"/> Student/Pensioner               |  |
| Payment Method:<br>(please tick)                    |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Cash<br><input type="checkbox"/> Cheque / Money Order (payable to the 'Macedonian Human Rights Committee of Melbourne and Victoria')<br><input type="checkbox"/> Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) – I have deposited my membership fee into the following Westpac bank account on this date ____ / ____ / 20____<br>Account Name: Macedonian Human Rights Committee of Melbourne and Victoria<br>BSB: 033365 Account No: 189484 |  |  |  |   |  |
| Credit Card details:<br>(please tick if applicable) |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Visa <input type="checkbox"/> Mastercard   |  |  |  |   |  |
| Credit Card number:                                 |  |   |  |  |  | Expiry Date: /  |  |
| 3-digit security code (on back of your card):       |  |   |  |  |  |   |  |
| Cardholder Name:                                    |  |   |  | Signature:                                 |  |   |  |

Please send completed membership application form with payment details to:  
Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee Inc  
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NORTH MELBOURNE, VIC 3051





# The Greek Anti-Macedonian Struggle 1903-1905 In Review: a Journey from Myth towards History

Nationalism is a word that is difficult to define. Perhaps the most sensible way to treat it is to accept that there are numerous varieties of it. There are for example, decent versions that are interested in defending cultural groups from exploitation and inequitable treatment. In direct opposition are those streams of nationalism with an inability to cope with difference and which tend towards attempts to exterminate it, both physically and symbolically. Of course all nationalist movements can possess sub streams that defy the dominant tendency within their group – social life is complex and often the neat categories devised by historians, journalists and others, fall far too short of presenting its discrepant intricacies.

Of course it is impossible to record history precisely, as if one could take a photograph of it and thereby illuminate every little detail. Actually, all good photographers realise that any type of lighting will always veil some aspects and also how readily, framing can serve to deceive. Historians need to begin from such a premise and then proceed with a desire to capture as honestly as possible all the contradictions that muddle up their prejudices and assumptions. For historians inhabiting a national milieu predominantly belonging to the more intolerant versions of nationalism, this can be a very difficult task to perform. In fact it is not unusual for such historians to be little more than hubristic self-serving myth makers. In their chronicles, to quote Orwell: “Material facts are suppressed, dates altered, quotations removed from their context and doctored so as to change their meaning. Events which, it is felt ought not to have happened are left unmentioned and ultimately denied” (Orwell, 1984: 314).

Historians emerging from a context obsessed with uniformity will need to make and consistently maintain a very high level of moral courage, if they earnestly desire to be loyal to the spirit of their vocation. For it is of course, in the nature of their social realm to punish the authors of prose that deviate from its essentialist canonical foundation yarns; which in actuality have been spun to conceal the existence and persecution of very real human beings. The punishments can of course vary, depending upon circumstances, from ostracism to exile, incarceration, or even death.

Most of us, even though we may reside in a more flexible culture, will have, at one time or another experienced at least a transient moment of painful alienation delivered by peers for the transgression of some minor norms. The scars of even such short lived episodes can never-the-less remain with some people, for very substantial periods. It is difficult then, for those of us inhabiting relatively more tolerant life-worlds, to imagine what it is like for individuals that are required by their avocation to place themselves in a situation where they become almost constantly ostracised by micro and macro social structures – from the family to the state. These are structures that we strangers observing the xenophobia from a safe distance, mostly take for granted. If they were to be suddenly taken away from us, the shock, regardless of the idiosyncrasies characteristic of our individual natures, would be significant, for these structures provide for our freedom and security – for our existence, as we know it.

Greece is a country that has welded ethnicity to national citizenship. It is a nation-state that refuses to recognise even the existence of any non-Greek ethnic minorities within its borders – even though it is quite willing to complain about the treatment of Greek minorities within other countries. As the American Anthropologist Loring Danforth has explained, there is a “...fundamental incompatibility of the Greek nationalist conception of the ‘ethnos as an integrated entity embodied in the state’ and a philosophy of inalienable human rights” (Danforth, 1995: 130).

Dimitris Litoxou, a Greek author of historical prose, resides in Athens, the capital of Greece. Over two decades ago he decided that he would take historical discourse seriously and accept the moral challenge demanded by the field through which he has chosen to express himself. By all accounts, this has resulted in great personal hardship, for it led to a type of the social ostracism we briefly outlined above. His courage needs to be recognised and commended. Without individuals like Litoxou, who can serve as models for others to be guided by, hubris is not likely to be undermined.

In 1998 a book Litoxou had written in

Greek and entitled the “*Greek Anti-Macedonian Struggle 1903 - 1905*” was published in Greece. I had heard many good things about its contents though not being literate in Greek I was unable to see for myself until a Macedonian translation of the Greek original (by Vasko Karaja) was published in 2004. From the first pages, Litoxou makes it clear that it is his intention to deconstruct all the unquestioned fairy tales that Greek historiography had been propagating about the “Macedonian question” for decades.

*“I am characterising as the **Greek anti-Macedonian struggle** that which in Greek national history is recognised as the **Macedonian struggle**. A major chapter in recent Balkan history, which Greek historiography has presented in such a way that it makes historical truth unrecognisable; it has created a completely mythological story – structured upon various lies and the wiping out of historical occurrences”* (Litoxou, 2004: 7; the responsibility for the translations throughout this essay, from Macedonian to English is mine – GV).

Greek “historians” and politicians alike, as Litoxou demonstrates with numerous quotations, have attempted to present the **Macedonian struggle** “...as a heroic struggle by the Greeks from Macedonia in the period 1904 – 1908, for the preservation of their national identity and for their independence. That is, a battle which from a national aspect should be adjudged as the second fundamental point after the uprising of 1821” (Litoxou, 2004: 8).

By researching not only the published and unpublished memoirs of the participants in this struggle, but also the Greek state archives in Athens, Litoxou made discoveries that lead in the direction of a very different version of events: “*that heroic struggle exists only in the books of Greek historians. That which actually occurred, could only engulf the majority of present day Greek citizens, with feelings of shame and regret*” (Litoxou, 2004: 8). The problem for Litoxou and others like him is that the elites maintaining the dominant ideology, for utterly selfish reasons employ their power towards drowning out peripheral voices of reason. Never-the-less, we must admit the possibility of challenging and eventually altering hegemonic structures – for they are man made and therefore can be subjected to meaningful change. From this

(Continued on page 22)



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Even if  
you are not  
highly con-  
versant  
with Mace-  
donian, it  
is worth  
making the  
effort to  
accom-  
pany  
Dimitris  
Litoxou on  
a “journey  
from myth  
towards  
history”

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(Continued from page 21)

perspective, we must applaud Litoxou's efforts and consider them to be extremely significant.

The results of Litoxou's 'excavations' required him to characterise the "Greek Macedonian struggle" as in fact, *anti-Macedonian*; as a "...systematic effort implemented by the Greek state at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to inflict a blow upon the national – democratic autonomist movement of the Macedonians. In that struggle, the Greek state and the nationalistic Para-state became allies of the Ottoman establishment at that time. They had at their disposal, a high amount of cash and firearms for the formation and sending forth of guerrilla bands to Macedonian territories where Greeks did not reside, in order to terrorise the inhabitants and to stop the process of Macedonian national revival. The Greek mercenary bands, under the leadership of Greek officers, occupied themselves with violence, plunder and slaughter. They sowed horror and death throughout Macedonian villages and they unsuccessfully attempted to block the development of a Macedonian national ideology and of the democratic-autonomous struggle of the Macedonians" (Litoxou, 2004: 7 – 8). As already mentioned, Litoxou methodically utilises primary Greek sources to corroborate his assertions which he describes as a "...journey from myth towards history" (Litoxou, 2004: 8).

In 1903, Macedonians launched a famous uprising against Ottoman rule that became known as the "Ilinden Uprising" because it was launched on August 2<sup>nd</sup> – St. Elijah's day. Litoxou explains that the uprising was "...systematically prepared by the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (IMRO)...The participation of the village Christian peasantry, [Macedonia was at this time a mostly peasant farmers land – GV]...was general in the regions where the uprising broke out (especially in western Macedonia). Ilinden was hostilely met by the Greek state whose consular organs co-operated with the Ottomans for its suppression. The eruption of a revolutionary movement fighting for the creation of an independent Macedonian state, similarly frightened both the Turks and the Greeks. The former would lose the European part of their empire, while the latter would lose the inheritance of the great sick brother. The Ilinden Uprising was bloodily suppressed. The Patriarchate [Greek Orthodox Church – GV] and the spies of the Greek government placed themselves at the service of the Ottoman army and Bashibozuks [Muslim paramilitaries – GV]. The burning down of villages, the killing of innocent

women and children and the plunder of...everything was the response of the Ottoman state. The whole of Europe would come down on the side of the Macedonian rebels – except Greece, which would condemn them and slander them" (Litoxou, 2004: 9).

Moreover, as Litoxou underlines, Greek "historians", have consistently portrayed Ilinden as an insignificant event not widely supported by the local population that was exported to Macedonia by the Bulgarian state, for the purpose of trying to strengthen Bulgarian claims upon Macedonia (Litoxou, 2004: 9 – 10).

It is Litoxou's contention that in order to present to the public such formulations on Ilinden, Greek "historians" have permitted their prejudices and cultural baggage to determine the nature of their literary output. Indeed, Litoxou demonstrates that these Greek "historians" have regularly ignored and excluded mention of important primary Greek and non-Greek evidence. In connection with the Ilinden Uprising, the most striking example of ignoring evidence that Litoxou uncovered, are reports written in 1904 by a Greek official named G. Tsorbazoglou. He was sent to Macedonia by the Greek Foreign Ministry and his task was to systematically analyse the social conditions in Macedonia and in particular to find out more about the IMRO. He was in other words, charged with writing a series of ethnographic reports. Until Litoxou, the findings of these reports were simply excluded from the accounts given by Greek "historians" (Litoxou, 2004: 29 – 30). Why?

As Litoxou demonstrates with extensive quotations from Tsorbazoglou's reports, they absolutely shatter the official Greek "historical" stance on both the Ilinden Uprising and the IMRO. For example, after broad and regular tours of Macedonia in general and central Macedonia in particular, Tsorbazoglou concludes that the "...revolution in Macedonia is not Bulgarian..." (Litoxou, 2004: 31) and that the IMRO has been very successful in garnering support from the masses "...on account one single reason...that they have no aim other than to liberate the Macedonians, as Macedonians" (Litoxou, 2004: 32).

In the aftermath of Ilinden, the Greek state decided to try to take advantage of the weakened condition of IMRO by exporting Greek guerrilla bands to Macedonia for systematic proselytising among the Macedonian peasantry. What does Litoxou tell us about the celebrated, in Greek national mythology, Greek military officer Pavlos Melas? Melas led Greek

guerrilla bands mostly exported from Greece, through the county of Kostur (today located in Greece and called Kastoria) in Macedonia for a short period after the Ilinden uprising and Litoxou reveals more than enough to destroy numerous myths. For example, during his 'tours' Melas wrote to his wife complaining that in village after village the women cannot speak "even one word of Greek" (Litoxou, 2004: 43). What language *did* they speak? Melas' correspondence explains it was reported to him that in one Macedonian village, in order to lift the spirits of the Greek military officers, the local school teacher asked his students to sing a song – however, Melas wrote that he isn't sure about which language they sang in, "Macedonian [!]? or Greek" (Litoxou, 2004: 43). In an attempt to some extent overcome the communication problem and gain at least a little trust from the Macedonian villagers, Melas informed his wife that: "I have learnt some Macedonian words, which I use among the women and especially the mothers..." (Litoxou, 2004: 44).

Apart from the language barrier, Melas wrote to his wife about his fear of the locally born Macedonian revolutionary leader, Yankov. Melas complained that Yankov had "poisoned" the consciousness of Macedonians with the idea that they constitute a nation "independent...from all other nations" (Litoxou, 2004: 44). What a surprise; in Macedonia during the early 1900's there were people who considered themselves to be distinctly Macedonian and who spoke a language that they called and which Melas recognised as, "Macedonian"?! Well, probably more like a shock for those who have had the misfortune to only possess access to texts written by Greek "historians"!

At just over 100 pages Litoxou's "Greek Anti-Macedonian Struggle" is an excellent read that I could not put down and read from start to finish in one sitting. Even if you are not highly conversant with Macedonian, it is worth making the effort to accompany Dimitris Litoxou on a "journey from myth towards history".

George Vlahov

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## About the AMHRC

Established in 1984 the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee is a nongovernmental organization that informs and advocates to governments, international institutions and broader communities about combating discrimination and promoting human rights. Our aspiration is to ensure that Macedonian communities and other excluded groups throughout the world are recognised, respected and afforded equitable treatment.

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



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