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Contents...

MHR Review #22 published in April 2015. Designed by Ljubica Durlovska and edited by George Vlahov

- 3 **Can Syriza Succeed Where All Others Have Failed?**
By Jorgos Papadakis

- 5 **Bans in the Service of National Purity**
By Dimitri Jovanov

- 6 **The Ilinden Uprising and the Kingdom of Greece: A Plan for the
Taking Over of the Uprising and/or Provoking of a “Civil War” in
Ottoman Macedonia**
By Dr. Dimitar Ljorovski Vamvakovski

- 9 **Macedonia**
A Speech Delivered in the House of Representatives of the Australian Parliament by Mr. Luke
Simpkins, the Member for Cowan on the 17/3/2015

- 11 **News in Brief**
Compiled and Summarized by Mitch Belichovski

- 14 **A Long, Dark and Suspense Filled Political Winter in Macedonia**
By Maja B. Talevska

- 17 **The Mass Surveillance Society**
By Tom Vangelovski

- 20 **The European Commission Fails to Fulfil Its Role as Guardian of the
EU Treaties**
Bulgaria Continues to Discriminate its Macedonian Minority

- 21 **Thoughts on Macedonia’s Phone Tapping Scandal**
This comment by Victor Bivell was broadcast by SBS Radio on 11 March 2015

- 23 **Annual Report on the Human Rights Situation of the Macedonians in
Bulgaria**
Prepared by OMO “Ilinden” Pirin

- 27 **The Early 19th Century Macedonian Enlightener, Kiril Pejchinovich**
By Dr. Michael Seraphinoff

- 31 **Muzikorama’s Australian Tour**



CAN SYRIZA SUCCEED WHERE ALL OTHERS FAILED?

By Jorgos Papadakis

We are very rapidly approaching the completion of the first 100 days of the SYRIZA-led coalition government in Greece. I will refrain from using the terminology “radical left” which is widely used in international media. A government which has engulfed a far-right, almost racist party like the “Independent Greeks” cannot be of course called anything else but a populist one.

This is actually why SYRIZA won the election in the first place. Neither because of its leftist agenda nor because of its alternative ideas to resolve the deep financial and social crisis. Reality has swiftly proved that such concrete ideas did not really exist. It was pure, unashamed populism that brought the party to an unprecedented success, supposedly bringing the “Left” to power for the first time in modern Greek history.

SYRIZA capitalized on the discontent of the citizenry after 5 years of austerity, by “fishing” in the muddy waters of traditional Greek anti-European and

anti-American sentiments, reviving enticements initially used by the populist Socialists of the PASOK party during the 1980’s and thus winning over a section of the electorate that used to vote for PASOK. It is no coincidence that SYRIZA managed to receive almost 36% of the total vote while the Socialists could barely reach 4.7%. Just 5 years ago, the percentages were exactly the opposite.

To get things straight from the beginning and despite my strong reservations about the new government, I sincerely hoped they would manage to succeed where all their predecessors had failed. Greece is on the verge of leaving the Eurozone and its banks are being kept alive only as a consequence of the fact that the European Central Bank still guarantees a minimal liquidity, the real economy is non-existent. The country has simply no more time nor will it get another chance.

I was hoping the same when it came to the question of the Macedonian

minority in Greece and relations with the Republic of Macedonia. But when friends and colleagues from Europe started to ask me about these issues and the position of the new Greek government, I realized that I could not really “feed” them with my wishful thinking but with sheer facts. And unfortunately, as is the case with the economy, these facts so far point out that SYRIZA has neither a plan nor the will to change anything for the better.

Let’s start with the Macedonians in Greece and a story most people do not know. It was back in early 2006 when Vinozhito filed a lawsuit for libel against a Greek diplomat called Yorgos Ayfantis who, during a parliamentary session of the Council of Europe in Paris, made the outrageous claim that the Macedonian activists in Aegean Macedonia are paid from “circles” inside the Republic of Macedonia and the American consulate in Solun/Thessaloniki (sic!).

The lawsuit reached the office of the

public prosecutor in Lerin, who as expected considered it “unfounded” and Ayfantis was never summoned to court so that he could prove his ridiculous allegations. On the contrary, a few years later when SYRIZA was on the verge of becoming the biggest opposition party and favorite to become the next ruling force in Greece, he was called by SYRIZA leader Alexis Tsipras to become his advisor on diplomatic matters. Out of all the thousands of active and pensioned diplomats he could find, Tsipras chose the only one ever in the history of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs who had the “privilege” to be sued for libel by a minority party. I think no further comments are necessary...

When SYRIZA was a party of 4%, meaning not so long ago, they posed a parliamentary question undersigned - among others - by today's Prime Minister Tsipras and the Minister of Development, Lafazanis. Namely, they were asking the George Papandreou PASOK government why it has not yet allowed the unconditional return of the Macedonian political refugees (Detsa Begaltsi) that fled Greece after the Civil War (1946-49). They did not use the word “Macedonian” of course but rather the more sophisticated “non-Greek by genus”. Nevertheless, the meaning was clear enough. Now, these people are in the government and one of the first things they promised to correct was the notorious Greek Citizenship Law which will be amended to allow 2nd generation immigrants to automatically receive Greek citizenship. Not a single word, though, about the unconditional return of the Detsa Begaltsi.

The motive for that might lie within the government itself. Independent Greeks (IG), the junior coalition partner, have repeatedly stated via their leader Panos Kammenos that they have given an unconditional “green light” to the SYRIZA leadership to negotiate with Greece's lenders in any way they see fit. On the other hand, IG has demanded that there should be

absolutely no change in the official Greek position when it comes to the so-called “issues of national interest”, one of them being of course the Macedonian minority in Greece.

Another is the absurd “name issue” dispute and the so-called Greek “red lines”. IG not only support the continuation of the Greek blockade towards the EU and NATO accession of the Republic of Macedonia but also want a tougher stance, i.e. a name that would not include the word “Macedonia” at all! To further support this kind of approach, Tsipras assigned the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the well-known hardliner Kotzias, friend of the Russian far-right extremists, who did not lose any time in making his position clear: “The real problem behind the name dispute is not the name itself but the irredentism it implies. We will only accept a common agreed solution with a compound name for internal and external use.”

Taking all of the above into consideration, it is unrealistic for one to expect any changes that would improve the situation of Macedonians in Greece, their relatives abroad nor any initiatives that could move the name issue away from the stalemate it has been for decades. The Macedonians in Greece have learned from the mistakes of the past, when they massively supported first the Greek Communist Party (KKE) and then - after the fall of the military dictatorship in 1974 - PASOK. Both these parties have promised things they never delivered while massively usurping Macedonian support. In this respect, SYRIZA tricks cannot fool anyone anymore and this is a very good opportunity for Vinozhito to finally become the party the majority of the Macedonians might embrace.

In the meantime, I still hope that someone in this government will find the “guts” to at least take one positive forward step. Something small that could mean a lot to the Macedonian populace, like for instance the re-

opening of the German (in Greece)-Markova Noga (RoM) border crossing in Prespa. Today, if someone wants to go from the village of German to the village of Brajcino on the Macedonian side (3,5km), s/he has to return to Lerin and then cross the border in Negochani-Medzitlija, drive to Bitola and then to Brajcino. The overall distance? More than 100km!

It would be a small leap forward that would boost enormously the local economy and would massively improve the “tourism product” of the whole region. Imagine if all these tourists who land in Ohrid could be offered a package that would include a hassle-free tour of the whole of Prespa. Most importantly, though, it would give a sign that the country is slowly advancing towards the right direction.

But will they do it?

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BANS IN THE SERVICE OF NATIONAL PURITY

By Dimitri Jovanov

Recently the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared that it would begin implementing various measures in an attempt to improve relations with the Republic of Macedonia. While waiting with bated breath for the first of these positive steps, we received the scandalous news that the Greek authorities banned the entry to Greece of a Macedonian diplomat.

During the previous Papandreou regime, we had become 'used to' entry bans for various citizens of Macedonia - lawyers, historians, retirees, etc - but this latest act was unexpected, as the newly elected government had raised hopes in the opposite direction.

On 21 March 2015, Doncho Tasev, a member of the diplomatic core in Macedonia's Foreign Ministry, attempted to enter Greece as a tourist, in order to attend a popular music concert. At the border the Greek authorities informed

him that there is an order forbidding his entrance to Greece, because he is "a threat to national security".

Tasev informed the authorities that he is a diplomat and in possession of a diplomatic passport and that there are multiple international agreements and conventions which entitle him to enter Greece. The Greek border authorities responded by saying that they are not clear on why such an order exists, but that the order came directly from Athens. Tasev was not given a concrete reason for the entry ban, neither verbally or on the official entry ban document. And so the new government is already carrying on from where the previous one left off..

Other entry bans have been imposed on citizens of the Republic of Macedonia because they have 'dared' to attend or perform at manifestations organised by Greece's Macedonian minority; entry

bans against citizens of Australia and Canada, simply because they openly declare their Macedonian ethnic identity; an entry ban against the Mayor of a town in Albania, because he is a member of a Macedonian political party; entry bans against citizens of Turkey, because of their origins in Western Thrace; against lawyers who were simply intending to represent clients in the Greek courts and against historians because they have written about the existence of Greece's Macedonian minority ... bans, bans, bans ... the myth about the 'Europeanisation of the cradle of democracy' dies hard!

Dimitri Jovanov (Ioannou) is the editor of Nova Zora and a member of Vinozhito.

THE ILINDEN UPRISING AND THE KINGDOM OF GREECE: A PLAN FOR THE TAKING OVER OF THE UPRISING AND/OR PROVOKING OF A “CIVIL WAR” IN OTTOMAN MACEDONIA

By Dimitar Ljorovski Vamvakovski



One of the main features of the science of history is its role in the creation of specific nations, national ideologies and myths. That is why it is often said that national historiographies, *inter alia*, are one of the tools at the disposal of the nation-state. In that context, one or more neighbouring states (of Macedonia) and historiographies have different views regarding specific events, persons and processes from the more distant or more recent past which mostly derive from the needs of the nation and the creation of their own national myths. In such cases, the history which is presented and offered to the public can be interpreted as existing somewhere between myth and reality.

In this text we will focus on the views produced by Greek historiography regarding the Ilinden Uprising, but also on certain of its aspects which are glossed over, distorted or redirected by Greek historians, which, nevertheless, can be found in Greek source materials. Greek historiography, in relation to not only this event, but also the overall situation

in Ottoman Macedonia at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, is based on official Greek church, military and state archival sources, the memoirs of the inhabitants of south-eastern Macedonia who cooperated with the Greek propaganda machine, as well as on those of Greek officials and individuals who formed part of the Greek “Macedonian Struggle” (1904-1908).

The policies of the Kingdom of Greece, but also the later policies of the Greek state (after 1913) regarding the assimilation of ethnic Macedonians in connection with the “Macedonian Question” were clear. In keeping with the doctrines of the Megali Idea, plans were made for the annexation of the whole or larger part of Macedonia. However, if those plans were not able to be attained, it was preferred that Macedonia should remain part of the Ottoman Empire. Everyone who did not agree with this view was proclaimed to be “an enemy of Hellenism and a merciless struggle was waged against him”. For that reason and in the

interests of official Greek policy and the propaganda war which had already broken out between Greece and the Kingdom of Bulgaria, the Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (MRO) was proclaimed to be the extended arm of the Bulgarian court in Ottoman Macedonia. In essence, for Athens the easiest approach was to portray the revolutionary movement as just another Bulgarian propaganda organisation which would from the outset lead to its reputation being blackened. In that way, Greek policies then and later Greek historiography

tion enjoyed authentic support from the masses or that it originated from some sort of local activism was unimaginable" (Brown: 2014, 48).

Nevertheless, there were cases of persons who held opposing views, such as for example the contemporary observer at the time of those events, namely, the Hellenised Vlach from Bitola, Georgios Modis, who later became a Greek historian. In his works, he wrote with evident admiration and idealism the following about the organisation: "When I was small I

whole of Macedonia's inhabitants; "its slogan was "Macedonia for the Macedonians" and they indefatigably waved that flag... All of them were brothers in both their suffering and expected salvationAll those who were tortured and were suffering could participate in its activities, with the same rights and duties." (Μοδης: 2007, 143, 144).

In any event, the Greek state and the Greek propaganda machine in Ottoman Macedonia undertook many activities during the course of the Il-



proclaimed the Uprising to be a "pseudo uprising" or rather the work of "Bulgarian committees fighting against Hellenism in Macedonia". According to the British anthropologist Keith Brown, "for Greek historians who are obsessed with the Byzantine and Christian heritage of the region and Greek national identity which allegedly formed the basis of its population, the idea that the organisa-

thought that something magical was happening and I asked ...what does it represent [meaning the Committee as the author called the MRO, our note] ... I considered them to be demigods... the impression remained that we could expect a lot of them." In examining the Organisation's genuine aims, he speaks of there being a place in it for all enslaved Christians and that its struggle was dedicated to the

den Uprising. These ranged from actions on the ground with a view to minimising the significance of the Uprising, efforts aimed at its suppression, for which they offered and provided total support to the Ottoman authorities, to a negative media campaign in Greece and Europe designed to completely blacken the cause of the Macedonian rebels. The Greek state was concerned due to the participation

of the Macedonian Patriarchist population in the Uprising which Greek propaganda had proclaimed to be Greek on the basis of the millet system. On the basis of information received by the Greek government from Macedonia, the Greek authorities realised that they had to take immediate measures if they wanted to continue to "stress" their right to claim Macedonia.

In the course of the Uprising, the Greek government proposed that a Greek militia be formed in Hellenophone (Greek-speaking) villages. The primary goal of this armed formation would be to fight against the rebels and to show both the European public and diplomatic circles that the Greek population in Macedonia was opposed to this course of events. Ion Dragoumis even proposed that "our people come and that there be a civil war between the Christians in those regions where the uprising was taking place" (Δραγουμης: 2000, 45). Of course there was no basis for realising both of the abovementioned demands. Firstly, if a Greek militia had been formed, it would have been formed and operated only in the most southerly regions of Ottoman Macedonia where Greek, Greckified and Vlach populations lived, but where there were no rebel operations. Secondly, a civil war was not possible, as Greek mercenaries and renegades, such as Kotta from Rulja and Vangel from Strebeno were very small in number, had been neutralised and were powerless to oppose the well-organised rebel forces. On the other hand, the Macedonian speaking Patriarchist population which, as we mentioned, was considered by the Greek state to be Greek, actively participated in the rebel armed actions, a fact attested to by Ion Dragoumis himself in a letter to his father Stefanos to whom he indicated just a few days after the beginning of the Uprising that "we have a Slavic Uprising in Macedonia.... All Slavophones follow the Committee, both orthodox and schismatics, and a

large part of them do so voluntarily" (Δραγουμης: 2000, 195). In addition, a civil war could not have broken out with imported fighters from another state; in such an event it would have been more a matter of aggression by a neighbouring country on another.

The opinion of Greek historian Vassilios Gounaris on the situation in south-eastern Macedonia during the Uprising and the eventual possibility of sending in Greek armed detachments was as follows: "the concealment of foreigners [meaning individuals and groups sent from the Kingdom of Greece to fight against the Macedonian rebels, our note] in the small world of the western Macedonian villages... was completely impossible... the Organization had established good relations with the local defence units, as well as a network which achieved positive results in disseminating information" (Γουναρης; 1993, 12).

The abovementioned Ion Dragoumis, in one of his analyses of the situation in Ottoman Macedonia dated February 1903, amongst other things, proposed three possible options for Greek operations in the event that an "uprising of the Macedonians" were to break out. His first proposal was as follows: "to either state that we do not accept the uprising and to fight against it with all possible means," however in such a case he predicted that by taking such a step we "will lose all influence over the Slavophone villages [Macedonian Patriarchists, our note]. They will neither obey us, nor will they understand us and will publicly side with those who spur them on". In conclusion, he stated "what interest does Hellenism hold for them. We, in all our nakedness, will end up with a lesser number of them". The second possibility was as follows: "for us to remain neutral and let them do what they want", however in that case as well he was convinced that the Macedonian Patriarchist "villages would side with those who spur them on and that we will remain alone and isolated". The third and last proposal,

according to him, was that in the event that an uprising broke out "we will create an uprising of our own people (Greeks, Grecovlachs, Grecoalbanians and Slavophone Orthodox believers) in Macedonia and Epirus and will fight for their freedom". At the end of this analysis Dragoumis concluded that: "we should recognise the movement, appropriate it, broaden it and give it a character which suits our purposes. So the third option remains in force, if we are sure that an uprising will occur, that is" (Δραγουμης: 2000, 21, 23). In any case, the uprising broke out, however the plans for it to be taken over remained an unrealisable wish. Greek propaganda could not appropriate or take over a course of action which had been in preparation for 10 years, had an indigenous basis and possessed its own program and clear goals. An uprising cannot be declared on the basis of a decision taken overnight. It requires that the population be systematically prepared and, most importantly, an organisation which will carry it out and lead it.

Dr Dimitar Ljorovski Vamvakovski. Translated from Macedonian by Dr. Chris Popov of the AM-HRC.



MACEDONIA

A speech delivered in the
House of Representatives of the
Australian Parliament by
Mr. Luke Simpkins, the
Member for Cowan on the
17/3/2015

Tonight I wish to raise a matter of great importance to many of my constituents and in fact many people around the country. It is rare that I take exception to our government's foreign policy because I think that on all the big issues the Foreign Minister and the executive as a whole have gotten the calls right.

The issue I speak of, is that of the failure of successive Federal governments to call the Republic of Macedonia by its constitutional name. On every occasion that the 'name issue' comes up with those Australians of Macedonian heritage, and there are more than 100,000, they feel insulted by this country's continued use of the term, 'Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia'. Yugoslavia itself ceased to exist some 20 years ago and our country continues to be locked in the past.

The question then becomes why? There is no doubt that both sides of politics are ultimately fearful that this one issue will somehow galvanise the Australian Greek community into a block vote against whoever makes this change to recognise the Republic of Macedonia. Both sides are wrong. Those of Greek heritage are pretty much like every other ethnic community of second generation or more heritage in this country. They are not locked into some false and paranoid belief that somehow Australia officially uttering the words 'Republic of Macedonia' will somehow lose territory of the Hellenic Republic. Australians of Greek heritage have bigger issues in their lives than this and they vote like any Australians on issues that really affect them, such as the economy and opportunities for them and their families. Of course there are a handful of Australians of Greek heritage that do contact MPs talking about how many votes would be lost by whoever made such a change, but it remains a handful and despite the talking, there are not enough people that would vote only on this issue to affect the result in a single electorate. It is tragic that literally a handful of nationalists can exert such power as to control the foreign policy of this nation.

Of course that is not the reason given why Australia is against doing the right thing on the name issue. Officially our biased position is to stand with a very small group of nations, a group that does not include our traditional allies of the United States, the United Kingdom or Canada. This small group excuses their biased pro-Greek position, by talking about the need to remain committed to the UN-sponsored process that aims to achieve a mutually accepted agreement over the name issue. This is of course a smoke screen that is good for hiding behind for a perceived domestic political advantage.

Our position is wrong on many counts. Firstly, that stated objective can be achieved by maintaining the reference to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia at the UN and in multilateral fora. Secondly it does not take any

notice of the outcomes over the last almost 20 years. Those outcomes have been minimal and despite very big concessions on the Macedonian side regarding borders and even changing their flag, the Greek side insists that the name Macedonia cannot be in the name of the country at all. Former Greek Prime Minister Samaras said in the past that all they have to do is to ensure there is no agreement at these UN sponsored talks and Albanian nationalism and other economic instability resulting from economic problems will see Macedonia fall apart. I would remind the Parliament that in vetoing Macedonia's entry to the EU and NATO, the International Court of Justice found against Greece in 2011. The ICJ said that Greece, in vetoing Macedonia had broken the original agreement to not bar the way for their neighbour. I find it disappointing that DFAT does not acknowledge this and

overall provides advice that is biased.

As I have said before in my report from a visit to Greece and the Republic of Macedonia in 2011, I believe that there is a real reason why Greece bars the economic future of the Republic of Macedonia by locking them out of the EU and NATO. That reason is because if they were allowed into the EU, then EU laws would allow those who lost houses and land, after the civil war in the 1940s, to claim restitution and the cost would be highly challenging for Greece to bear.


Our Prime Minister said late last year that the Macedonia request for bilateral name recognition, was "fair enough". Yes, it is fair enough that Australia should do the right thing and recognise the Republic of Macedonia by its constitutional name. This would actually help the UN sponsored process by increasing pressure to end the intransigence and get real negotia-

tion happening. Our duty should be to change to an unbiased position by providing bilateral recognition and increasing pressure to end the economic siege provided by the vetoing of entry to the EU. Bureaucrats who excuse our biased position by talking about freedom of the press and independence of the judiciary should know that Macedonia has met the standards for entry to the EU already.

So far Australia has taken a biased position and through our unwillingness to seek progress, we are helping to hurt the economy of a small nation in Europe. The Greek Government wants instability in the region and our support of one side aids them. Over the terms of successive government's Australia has held back the homeland of some 100,000 immigrants to our country and it is no surprise that they are not happy about it. The time to do the right thing has come.



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NEWS IN BRIEF

Compiled and Summarized by Mitch Belichovski

On January 11 Macedonian journalists joined the call of the SSNM (Independent Trade Union of Journalists of Macedonia) and European journalists' Associations whose reporters at 3pm marched in honour of murdered journalists "Charlie Hebdo" – a weekly French magazine and other victims in the massacre. The procession organised at the French cultural centre in Paris where a book of mourning in which everyone can sign was opened.

January 14 it was reported that Macedonian Foreign Affairs Minister Nikola Poposki said that he is certain that the newly appointed European Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn will urge Greece to remove its blockade. Hahn is expected to visit Macedonia during January and to discuss the EU prospects of the country.

On January 18: the leading Macedonian visual effects company FX3X has worked on two Academy Award nominated films. The FX3X team cooperated with Method Studios and Scanline on the making of "Guardians of the Galaxy" and "Captain America: The Winter Soldier."

January 21: it was reported that Macedonia's Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz held talks on Wednesday in Skopje on the bilateral political relations, possibilities for co-operation and bolstering the trade exchange, as well as Macedonia's EU integration process. He extended gratitude for Austria's support of Macedonia's aspirations to join the EU and NATO, which is one of the Government's top priorities.

On January 22 it was reported that Wizz Air will introduce six new routes to Europe. According to the agreement signed a week ago, Wizz Air will launch direct flights to Barcelona, Oslo, Nuremberg, Hamburg and Friedrichshafen from Alexander the Great Airport twice a week. Another direct line from Ohrid's St Paul the Apostle Airport Basel will transit twice a week.

January 26: there were reports that Tetovo is among the most polluted towns in the world. Last year, the town observed 315 days where the concentration of PM 10 particles was beyond the allowed level, often up to 20 times. Tetovo, the town in the foothills of the proud Shara Mountain, rich with healthy air, has become fifth

in the world rankings of air pollution.

On January 27 it was reported that the new Greek Government could harden its position on the name dispute with Macedonia. The New Greek ruling coalition, that brings together the supposedly far left Syriza party and the nationalist Independent Greeks (IG) party as a junior partner will not make a move on solving the name issue which Greece has kept open with Macedonia for over 20 years. The basis of the agreement between Syriza and IG provides that the latter party accepts Syriza's economic program of more spending and asking for debt forgiveness, but Syriza will listen to IG on its pet nationalist issues.

On January 28 it was reported that Hungary remains Macedonia's strategic partner and supporter. Hungarian Ambassador to Macedonia Jozef Benche, speaking at the ceremony set to mark 20 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, said that Hungary will continue to support Macedonia and other countries in the region in their EU integration.

January 31: the party of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria will send a letter to the Macedonian Foreign Min-

istry with a demand to the Government not to sign the agreement on "good neighbourly relations". OMO Ilinden says that the deal is harmful and will directly affect their rights. "With its signing, Macedonia will in fact confirm that there is no Macedonian minority in Bulgaria. That would imply a failure of the "two-decade-long struggle for our rights," says Stojan Gjorgiev, member of OMO Ilinden.

On February 1 Independent MK reported that due to floods the Minister of Transport and Communications and Crisis HQ chair Mile Janakieski, called for the emergency evacuation of the population living along river Bregalnica in municipalities Kocani, Cusinovo-Oblesevo and Stip. The evacuations involve about 20 populated areas. Moreover, reservoir Kalimanci is also flooding the area.

On February 2 it was reported that the European Union once again commented on Saturday's arrest of four people, including opposition leader Zoran Zaev, who are suspected of espionage and undermining the constitutional order of Macedonia by allegedly planning to overthrow the Government. On Monday, on behalf of Brussels, Maja Kocijancic voiced concerns about the political situation in Macedonia.

On February 4 it was reported that the Red Cross of Macedonia, in cooperation with relevant institutions, has launched a humanitarian fundraising campaign for flood-hit regions across Macedonia. In less than 24 hours a total of MKD 620,000 (EUR 10,000) was collected via the opened phone lines. Minister of Labour and Social policy Dime Spasov expressed satisfaction with the response of citizens and companies to the appeal for donations. He and Red Cross Secretary General Sait Saiti once again called on citizens, private companies and Macedonians living abroad to join the humanitarian campaign.

February 8: the Macedonian Citizens'

Movement of Defence, represented by some twenty intellectuals, today appealed for preventing destabilisation of Macedonia, its renaming and abolishment. Historian Prof. Ph.D. Violeta Acovska said "by renaming, rechristening, all these happenings will be a step forward towards abolishment of the state, meaning someone else's interests will definitely win in Macedonia, and our country will become history." Acovska has joined the movement solely in the capacity of a historian who has fought for more than 20 years, for Macedonia's name to be preserved inside and outside of the country.

February 8: President Ivanov accompanied by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikola Popovski participated at the 51st Munich Security Conference. He pointed out that "Macedonia has been blocked for a long period of time due to disrespect of the international law by our neighbour and that positive experiences we have in our region for parallel EU accession negotiation process should apply for us."

On February it was reported that about 1,000 state-owned business offices, located in 19 cities across Macedonia, will be offered for sale via online public bidding at an announcement set to be issued tomorrow. The premises covering an area of 7,253 square meters have an initial estimated value of over MKD 300 million. The announcement scheduled to run 30 days, launches a procedure for selling a total of 1,000 state-owned business offices following a decision reached by the government upon a request by the business community.

February 15: last Sunday, the opposition SDSM revealed another five wiretapped phone conversations of ministers and other individuals connected with the judiciary. These conversations present a direct government judiciary link, SDSM leader, Zaev said. According to Zaev, the records show that Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and Director of the Admin-

istration for Security and Counterintelligence (UBK) Saso Mijalkov, along with the government coalition partner DUI, were involved in court, prosecution decisions, election and dismissal of judges, court presidents and career advancing for pro-governmental judges.

On February 18 it was reported that Russia is trying to deepen its ties with the pro-Russian government of Alexis Tsipras in Greece. At the same time, Russia is hoping for a continued blocking of Macedonia's accession to NATO, hoping it will thereby succeed in placing the country under its influence, warns the American analyst and expert on the Balkans, Janusz Bugajski. Bugajski estimates that the new Greek government will continue to defy Macedonia's acceptance to NATO, from the current nationalistic positions, and from the new, far left position. According to the American expert, Moscow is trying to get closer to Macedonia, particularly after the charge filed against SDSM leader, Zoran Zaev, in the police operation dubbed "Coup."

On Feb 19 BIRN reported that their office in Macedonia held a reception for the ninth annual Balkan Fellowship of Journalistic Excellence. Experienced journalists from the Balkan nations are invited to send story proposals by February 25 based on the theme of "Values." "The Fellowship is an opportunity to learn from some of the best journalists and editors out there and for your stories to be published in such renowned world media outlets as the New York Times, The Atlantic, The Guardian and others" said BIRN Macedonia Director Ana Petrusheva.

February 22: the Albanian Parliament Speaker promised support to ethnic Macedonian municipality Pustec. Speaker Ilir Meta promised he will work for urgent repair of the high school building and to provide Macedonian language school books. The speaker added that Albania will work

to fully integrate its Macedonian community. "I have great respect for the Macedonian community, its hard working and peaceful people who represent our best values," Speaker Meta said during the meeting.

On February 23 it was reported that the new Draft Resolution of the European Parliament regarding the last report of the European Commission about Macedonia has been introduced today by Ivo Vejgl before the European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs AFET. It comprises a request from the European Council for an urgent commencement of Macedonia's EU accession talks, restoring of the adjective "Macedonian" and use of its constitutional name. It also voices concern over the political crises in the country and offers mediation for its resolution.

February 24: it was reported that Macedonian Employment Service Agency reports that there are currently 5,000 job openings available across the country, about half of them in the capital. Demand for workers is still dwarfed by the unemployment level. There were 100,147 active job seekers in 2014.

February 25: Macedonia was named this year as one of the NY Times "Fifty Places to Visit in 2015." With picturesque villages, a wine region, modest mountains, lovely lakeside resorts, Macedonia is rich in history, gorgeous scenery, a favourable exchange rate and welcoming people. Rejuvenated after a devastating 1963 earthquake, the capital city Skopje is a charming, cosmopolitan jumping off point.

On February 26 it was reported that Macedonia has launched an initiative on organizing joint government sessions with Albania and Kosovo and is expecting both sides in the coming months to send a response, said Foreign Minister Nikola Poposki at a Q & A session in Parliament on Thursday. "It would be an additional push in terms of bilateral cooperation and

we would also send a positive signal in the region," he said.

March 1: Professor Nenovski calls early IMF debt settlement "wonderful news." Not only millions are saved and public debt is reduced with this move, but also Macedonia is sending a clear message to investors about its economic stability, which also affects the country's ratings, according to University professor Tome Nenovski. According to him, following this move, foreign investors will have a more positive opinion about Macedonia allowing them to make decisions for investing in Macedonia more easily.

On March 5 it was reported by Independent MK that near Veles, police arrested a group of 60 illegal emigrants from Syria and Afghanistan, including whole families and children. The group has been arrested this morning on the train travelling from Gevgelija to Skopje. There the Syrian woman was interviewed by Telegraf and said she worked as a physician in the city of Aleppo in Syria, but decided to leave because the life there was unbearable because of the conflicts.

On March 8 it was reported that violence against women in Macedonia continues to rise. In 83% of the domestic violence cases, a woman is the victim. According to the National Council for Gender Equality, the free SOS line for domestic violence prevention is highly important and every call counts. Their line is available for all Macedonian citizens 24/7.

On March 9 it was reported that a two day event dubbed "Canadian Days" is taking place in Skopje. Improving trade exchange, economic cooperation and investments from Canada into Macedonia and vice versa as well as bringing Canada closer to Macedonian companies is the focal point of the event. Canada houses a large Macedonian Diaspora, however business and educational cooperation between the two countries is relatively low, according to Macedonia 2025.

March 12: a high representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, publicly apologised because she used "Macedonia" when referring to the country. The apology came after the dramatic reactions of Greek parliamentary representatives and media.

On March 18 it was reported that the Greek Government led by Alexis Tsipras decided to stop the excavations at the Amphipolis site where it was believed that the tomb of Alexander the Great was located. Some renowned Greek archaeologists have attacked the authorities on the basis that the excavations in Amphipolis are used for political goals instead of scientific ones, i.e. to continue the row regarding the name issue with Macedonia. They believe that Samaras and now Tsipras are attempting to divert attention from the real problems in the country and prove the "exclusivity" Greece has over the antique past.

March 24: Skopje's airport Alexander the Great, which is managed by TAV Macedonia, has secured its position among the 10 airports offering high quality services in Eastern Europe, at the presentation of the World Airport Awards, Skytrax 2015. The research covered 550 airports in the world and it assessed the passengers' experiences in relation to waiting time, arrivals, transfers, shopping opportunities, safety and other service-related segments.

Unless otherwise stated, the reports have been extracted from Independent MK.

A LONG, DARK AND SUSPENSE FILLED POLITICAL WINTER IN MACEDONIA

By Maja B. Talevska

As the long and cold winter draws to a close, Macedonia continues to face arguably the deepest political crisis since gaining independence in 1991.

There is a profound segregation in every aspect of society which looks like a dangerous abyss that threatens to swallow everything which has been built and developed in the last two decades in respect of basic democratic values, human rights, rule of law and social progress. Moreover the crisis threatens to diminish the hope that a better life is possible in this small, post-communist country.

The depth of the problems in Macedonia started to become obvious with the discovery of a supposedly massive and illegal wiretapping operation revealed by the main opposition party, the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM) which described the content of the taped conversations as “bombs”.

February 9th was the date when the leader of the opposition Zoran Zaev ‘threw’ the first “bomb”, claiming a vast abuse

of power by the ruling party, VMRO-DPMNE over the last few years. Namely, the main Macedonian opposition leader claimed that the country’s intelligence services have been illegally wiretapping more than 20,000 citizens on the order of conservative Prime Minister, Nikola Gruevski and his government.

The leaked tapes seem to suggest that over a four-year period, a number of high profile government employees, opposition members, journalists, editors, and foreign diplomatic representatives in the country had their telephones tapped.

Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and his ruling party VMRO-DPMNE denied all accusations. Just one week before the tapes were revealed, the Public Prosecutor charged Zaev and others with conspiring with a “foreign intelligence service” to “overthrow” the government.

However the “illegal surveillance of over 20,000 Macedonian citizens” is not the only accusation that was brought to the public against the ruling party VMRO-DPMNE and its



leader Gruevski. The first “bomb” was followed by a dozen more, each of them broadcast by Zaev at separate press conferences that were held each week over the last two months.

Based on the content of the leaked tapes, SDSM pointed its finger at VMRO-DPMNE alleging unprecedented corruption, a violation of constitution and laws, election fraud and a number of human rights violations conducted over several past years.

The leaked tapes seem to incriminate the highest member of the government, including Prime Minister Niko-

nounced an external investigation about the wiretapping.

International Reverberation

The international community, including the EU representative in Macedonia, ambassadors of the USA, Great Britain, Sweden, and Netherlands, have expressed a deep concern about the prolonged political disturbances that seem to have reached an impasse.

The former EU representative in Macedonia Erwan Fouere commented on the scandal by saying that, “shocking details of how the laws and democrat-

of a foreign intelligence service, but underlined the importance of the freedom of press and allowing the opposition to operate in good working conditions. He called for an independent and thorough investigation of the allegations which have been put forward, and for those who were responsible to be held accountable.

More recently a statement from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights noted that:

“We are particularly disturbed by the contents of recently published taped conversations that would seem to in-



la Gruevski himself, his cousin and Director of the Security and Counter-intelligence Agency, Sasho Mijalkov, Interior Minister Gordana Jankulovska, Transport Minister Mile Janakievski and the former Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister Martin Protopjer.

The Hungarian Telecommunication Company, a dominant shareholder of Macedonian Telecom, the company that is allegedly involved in this mass wiretapping scandal has already an-

tic standards have been violated or simply ignored by government ministers and senior officials highlight the impunity and cavalier behaviour of a regime with none of the system of accountability one would expect in normal democratic society.”

NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg visited Macedonia in March, and had a joint press conference with Prime Minister Gruevski. Stoltenberg declined to comment on the allegations about the possible involvement

criminate senior officials in a number of apparent human rights violations, including election fraud, harassment of civil society and opposition members, interference with the judiciary and the mass media, as well as mass surveillance.

We are also concerned about espionage accusations directed against the head of the largest opposition party. We call upon the authorities to launch a prompt, independent, thorough and impartial investigation into all allega-



tions of wrongdoing, regardless of their source, and to ensure that the results are made public. We also urge the authorities to ensure accountability for any breach of the rule of law or human rights violation revealed by such an investigation. This would help reinforce public confidence in State institutions.”

Is There Any Way Out?

To make matters even worse, public confidence in Macedonian institutions and the capacity of these institutions to resolve this problem is insufficient and not very promising.

This flows from the fact that the leaked tapes simply confirmed what many had assumed for a long time; that the executive branch of the government has an unacceptably deep influence and control over the judiciary in Macedonia.

According to a public opinion poll on this issue recently conducted by the Institute for Democracy “Societas Civilis” - Skopje (IDSCS), only 46% of Macedonian citizens believe that the current political crisis can be solved via the country’s judicial institutions.

Furthermore, over the half of the population of Macedonia see the way out of this unbearable situation in taking other measures such as: seeking assistance from the International community (13%), establishing a multi-party interim government (16%), organising early parliamentary elections (15%), and reshuffling the current government (12%).

The former EU representative in Macedonia, Erwan Fouere recently declared that it is a:

“...critical time for Macedonia. Either it continues to sink further into the abyss under the current regime, or it take a courageous step in breaking with the current system and works towards restoring basic democratic values and standards. It is for Macedonian people to decide, in an environment free from deceit, dishonesty, intimidation and fear that have marked the past years. The international community, in particular the EU and OSCE, must be there to offer help and assistance.”

There has at least been one recent substantial social development indicating that Macedonians can be responsible and active citizens. Last December

there were student protests in which more than 15,000 people opposed the government’s new Law on Education. After two months of protests, in the middle of February, Macedonian students created and maintained a free zone at all the universities around the country. After a few attempts to negotiate with the students’ plenum representatives, the government withdrew the law. This appears to be the first case in the nine years of Gruevski’s rule, of his stepping back from any of his political plans or actions. Some have interpreted that as a first sign of Gruevski’s political weakness and possible loosening of his grip on power. Ultimately, it seems that Macedonia’s citizens in general, will need to follow the example set by the students, if a worsening of the crisis in Macedonia, is to be avoided.

Maja B.Talevska

THE MASS SURVEILLANCE SOCIETY

By Tom Vangelovski

In one form or another, Macedonians have lived in societies permeated by mass surveillance for at least the past century. Speaking out against the governing authorities or the prevailing ideology of the day has for many resulted in imprisonment, exile or death. Recently, Macedonians have once again been reminded of this stark reality.

In February 2015, Macedonian Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski informed the public that a coup d'état, allegedly orchestrated by the SDSM leader Zoran Zaev, had been averted. Gruevski claimed that Zaev had obtained falsified information detailing the government's corruption from foreign intelligence services and attempted to blackmail him into forming a caretaker government until elections could be held. That same day, Zaev and five others were arrested or charged with 'espionage and violence against top state officials'.¹ Two months later, Zaev (who is the Mayor of Strumica) was also accused of accepting bribes related to a number of large property developments.² The SDSM has subsequently filed for the prosecution of a number of senior officials, including the Prime Minister, on the grounds that they illegally ordered wiretapping without the required court orders.

For his part, Zaev began releasing copies of wiretaps he alleges were made by the Macedonian Directorate for Security and Counterintelligence (referred to locally as the UBK, Uprava za Bezbednost i Kontrarazuznuvanje) on the orders of its Director, Sašo Mijalkov and his cousin, Prime Minister Gruevski. Zaev alleges that up to 20,000 people have been under surveillance for at least the past five years, including journalists, academics, political opponents, judges, activists, religious leaders, Gruevski's own cabinet ministers and the Macedonian President. If true, this number would surpass the estimated 14,000 that came under surveillance during the previous four or five decades of communist rule.³ Zaev has stated that the recordings were provided to him by a whistle-blower within the UBK.

At first, the Macedonian Government was cautious in its response to the content of the recordings. It stated that "some of the material is true, some is half-true and some is false", without elaborating in any detail.⁴ Instead, Gruevski's Government focused on how the material was obtained by accusing Zaev of working for foreign interests that are seeking to undermine the country. Yet, even if the surveillance was undertaken by a foreign intelli-



Gordana Jankulovska



Stojanche Angelov



Martin Protugier

gence service, the content of those recordings, if true, is damning regardless of how it was obtained. More recently, VMRO-DPMNE claimed that the recordings provided by Zaev were either fake or doctored and that the allegations against it are untrue.⁵

The other five alleged coup co-conspirators that were arrested or charged include former UBK Director Zoran Veruševski, his wife, an unnamed official within the municipal office in Strumica, a current employee of the Interior Ministry identified only as 'Z. K.', and a former Interior Ministry employee identified only as 'Gj. L.'. Little is known about the arrests, other than a few details provided in the media about Zoran Veruševski, his wife and Z.K. Veruševski is accused of collecting secret data on the Macedonian Government with the intention of providing them to a foreign country, while his wife is accused of assisting him by translating this material into English.⁶ According to local media reports, Z. K. has already been sentenced to three years in prison for his part in the espionage and unauthorised wiretapping after accepting a secret plea bargain.⁷ However, because of the secrecy surrounding his case, it is not possible to confirm whether Z. K.'s legal rights were respected, what evidence was held against him, whether he provided a confession or whether he even actually exists and this is not simply a diversionary tactic from the Macedonian Government.

Outside of VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM, few voices have been heard in this affair. Most have been independent journalists outraged at having their suspicions confirmed. The only political actor to actively become involved is Stojance Angelov, leader of Dostoinstvo. According to Angelov, he was so appalled by the revelations that he immediately returned to Macedonia from the Horn of Africa, where he was providing private security to ships in fear of Somali pirates. Through social media, and in particular his personal Facebook account, Angelov has managed to gain a growing following of daily protests outside of the Makedonska Radio Televizija (MRT) building, which has to-date refused to air any of the recordings that diminish the government's reputation.

Angelov argues that as a publically owned broadcaster, it has the responsibility to report accurately on current affairs, rather than protect the interests of the Gruevski Government. What started as daily protests against MRT has now grown into a call for the removal of the government itself. Now Angelov is calling on the Public Prosecutor's Office to arrest Gruevski and investigate all allegations of corruption. However, even with his wide network of support and his leadership of Dostoinstvo, Angelov has only managed to attract a few hundred protestors at most. Whether this movement will gain momentum and whether Angelov will gain any political capital from it remains an unknown and may yet change the dynamics of the current situation.

In relation to the recordings themselves, most of the conversations that have been released are out of context, it is not always clear who the voices belong to and at times the subject matter is vague. However, there are many that indicate widespread corruption at the highest levels, financial crime, electoral fraud, executive interference in the judiciary, state control over the media and intimidation of the government's opponents among many other serious breaches of the law.

Conversations relating to electoral fraud, for example, are a reoccurring theme. In one of them, the Interior Minister Gordana Jankulovska discusses how VMRO-DPMNE bussed in Macedonians from Mala Prespa, issued them with identity cards and placed them in temporary accommodation until Election Day, when they were escorted to the polls to vote for the ruling party.⁸ In another conversation, Transport Minister Mile Janakieski can be heard discussing how people from Sveti Nikole were brought in to vote in the Skopje municipality of Gazi Baba.⁹ Yet another has Martin Protugjer, Gruevski's Chief of Staff, threatening to kill the head of the Macedonian Football Federation, along with his wife and children if free tickets to a football match are not provided to VMRO-DPMNE to assist it with its election campaign.¹⁰

One oddity does stand out in all of this and that is the fact that there are numerous recordings of both Gruevski and Mijalkov themselves. For example, one recording has Jankulovska asking Mijalkov to ensure that the Interior Ministry loses a court case that for various reasons it was unable to withdraw but was no longer in its interest to win. Mijalkov simply asks for the case number and assures her that the matter will be dealt with.¹¹ This raises the question – if Mijalkov was responsible for the surveillance, why would he allow himself to be implicated in such damning criminal actions? Alternatively, if a foreign intelligence service was responsible for the surveillance, among many other questions that would arise, is the fact that the UBK is a monumental failure. Its core responsibility is to prevent foreign states and/or other actors from obtaining intelligence on the Macedonian state and its citizens.

Another important point to note is VMRO-DPMNE's question as to why the SDSM, if it indeed has been under surveillance as it claims, has not released any of its own recorded conversations.¹² The obvious, though, is that such recordings would probably be just as damning as the ones already publicised about VMRO-DPMNE. On the other hand, they simply may not exist and these recordings indeed are a fabrication.

This raises the question of verification of the wiretaps and their content. Until an independent party is able to confirm their authenticity, it will be impossible to ascertain who is responsible for the surveillance, whether the voices in those recordings actually belong to the alleged and whether any

of them have been doctored from their original form. In the end, however, verification is unlikely. Similar material has surfaced in the past (though not to this extent) and it has generally been ignored by both the government and the public. Even if independent verification were provided one way or the other, conspiracy theories have a tendency to surface among the Macedonian public, dispelling the validity of any independent verdict and confusing the casual observer even further.

In the final analysis, the most troubling aspect of this whole affair has been the public response, which as usual is distinguished only by its apathy. Certainly, most Macedonians are not surprised with the revelation that mass surveillance has been undertaken by its government, and in support of its own corrupt political and financial interests. This has been an open secret for decades, stemming back to the earliest days of communism. This is not news to the ordinary Macedonian. It is business as usual. And, in all fairness, mass surveillance is not necessarily surprising or news to citizens of any country. But that does not mean that governments spying on their citizens should become a normative practice or morally acceptable.

More broadly, Macedonian apathy is a symptom of a much deeper problem. While all countries suffer from democratic deficiencies, Macedonian politics suffers from both that and a complete lack of moral compass. While Gruevski and his party still command a great deal of support among the electorate, with dyed-in-the-wool supporters dismissing all and any accusations of wrongdoing as some sort of treasonous western-backed, SDSM plot to discredit the ruling regime (conflating the regime with the nation state), to even the casual observer, Gruevski's authoritarianism has been evident for many years. However, none of what has come to light makes the pseudo democrats in the SDSM shine any brighter than their counterparts in the VMRO-DPMNE. The SDSM under Kiro Gligorov and Branko Crvenkovski ruled the country in the same authoritarian manner and were perhaps even more brutal in their grip on power. And while it is all good and well that Zaev has released these recordings (assuming they are authentic), his claim to offer a just and democratic alternative cannot be taken seriously.

Democracy, a very misunderstood concept, in Macedonia seemingly has come to mean elections (whether they are free or fair is of no consequence) once every four years and absolute rule in between. Civic participation, public consultation and open debate over laws and government policies are alien concepts to most Macedonians and completely ignored and discouraged by Macedonian politicians. In Macedonia, it is normative practice for a small circle within the ruling party to determine public policy and laws. They will necessarily consult with their Albanian coalition partners and occasionally have policy rubber-stamped by par-

liament into law. Once decisions have been implemented, they are finally announced to the public. The public is then expected to submit to the wisdom of its ruling elite, which it generally does, believing that this is the full extent of the democratic ideal.

Unfortunately, and contrary to popular opinion, Macedonia is best described as an authoritarian state in which its governing elite retains power through clientelism aimed at tight-knit familial networks across the myriad of villages outside of Skopje and powerful friends within the Capital. It also dabbles in electoral fraud, for which there is much documented and anecdotal evidence. Finally, Gruevski has the added advantage of being revered as a 'patriot' and is often described by his followers as the best Prime Minister in Macedonian history. How much longer he will be afforded popular support and what he will do should he lose it, remain to be seen.

Tom Vangelovski

¹ E. Stavreska, 'Casino Macedonia: of spies, traitors and patriots', Open Democracy, 13 February 2015.

² Independent.mk, Ministry of Internal Affairs: Zaev Suspected of Accepting 200,000 Euro Bribe, 10 March 2015.

³ D. Nolan, 'Macedonia is Edging Towards Tipping Point Thanks to an Intelligence File Called The Bomb', VICE News, 25 February 2015.

⁴ A. MacDowall, 'Fears for Macedonia's fragile democracy amid coup and wiretap claims', The Guardian, 28 February 2015.

⁵ VMRO-DPMNE, Soopštenie do javnosta – reakcija nap res konferencijata na Panče Orcev, Press Release, 18 March 2015.

⁶ Independent.mk, One of the Accused in the Coup Case Sentenced to 3 Years in Prison, 25 February 2015.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ S. Marusič, Macedonia Tapes Reveal Blatant Election Trickery, Balkan Insight, 6 March 2015.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ AION.mk, Sto i da e, govedo da e, Makedonic e, ranet vo vojната, 19 March 2015.

¹² VMRO-DPMNE, Soopštenie do javnosta – reakcija na izjavata na Stevo Pendarovski, Press Release, 5 March 2015.

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION FAILS TO FULFIL ITS ROLE AS GUARDIAN OF THE EU TREATIES

Bulgaria Continues to Discriminate its Macedonian Minority



Brussels 31/3/2015 - For 15 years now Bulgaria, an EU Member State, refuses to register EFA member *OMO Ilinden Pirin* as a legal political party, simply because it denies its Macedonian minority the right of self-determination. Bulgaria not only defied the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights which convicted the country for discrimination but also continuously violates Article 2 of the EU Treaty as well as Articles 21 and 22 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights that safeguard the right to self-determination and the protection of minorities.

EFA and its MEP Jordi Sebastia have brought the issue once again into the European Parliament in late 2014, asking the European Commission to take measures and discontinue Bulgaria's discriminatory policy. In her initial reply Commissioner Jourova, who is responsible for Gender Equali-

ty and Justice, indirectly admitted that Bulgaria violates basic EU principles but stated that the EC has no competence to intervene.

In a follow-up question, EFA and Jordi Sebastia noted the very evident. That the Commission by not intervening when a Member State contravenes the EU founding Treaty and Charter of Fundamental Rights, is not really complying with its obligations as the 'guardian' of these documents.

Unfortunately, in its 2nd reply, Commissioner Jourova not only repeated the same disappointing story but also tried to waive any responsibility and wrong-doing by falsely claiming that the Commission ensures that all Member States respect fundamental rights. A closer look to what is happening in Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, France, Romania and other EU Members of course, is more than sufficient

to prove how unfounded this claim is.

It is obvious that the Commission is not doing almost anything to safeguard the EU Founding Treaties. It is even more disappointing that there is no Commissioner responsible for national minorities and minority languages and that President Juncker-unlike his predecessors- has rejected the request of EFA President Francois Alfonsi for a meeting.

EFA believes that the future of Europe cannot be built on these grounds. The EU needs a deep structural reform that will put Peoples and not Member States in the epicentre. For EFA this is not a matter of choice but simply a matter of time.

EFA Media Office



THOUGHTS ON MACEDONIA'S PHONE TAPPING SCANDAL

*This comment by Victor Bivell was broadcast
by SBS Radio on 11 March 2015*

There are many elements to Macedonia's phone tapping scandal, particularly around the legality and extent of the phone tapping and around some of the apparently corrupt contents. At the political level, for me four issues stand out.

The first one is how much Macedonia could benefit from the strong independence of the investigative and anti-corruption institutions that exist in other democracies. If the phone tapping scandal had occurred in Australia, for example, there are several ways for the many claims and counterclaims to be investigated: a Royal Commission, a Parliamentary or Senate Inquiry, the Federal Police, and at the NSW State level the Independent Commission Against Corruption and its equivalents in other states.

A Royal Commission, for example, has the power to summon witnesses, and to compel them to testify under oath and to present documents and evidence. Such powers are essential to get to the truth of what happened in Macedonia.

Among the questions are: was prime minister Nikola Gruevski behind the phone tapping of 20,000 citizens or was it a foreign power, did Opposition leader Zoran Zaev try to blackmail prime minister Gruevski into sharing power, did Zaev work with another country to achieve power or to bring on an election, have Gruevski or his government colleagues interfered with the independence of the judiciary, have Gruevski or his government influenced or directed the media, did Gruevski or his party cheat in the last election, and so on.

So serious are these accusations that they call for investigation by the highest independent authority in the state. But does Macedonia have such a body, and is its independence credible? So far accusations against Zaev have been referred to the State Prosecutor, but this deals only with one of the issues. All of the issues need to be investigated and in due course any illegal acts by anyone referred to the State Prosecutor.

The second political issue

exposed by the scandal is whether Gruevski, now in his ninth year of office, has been in power for too long? Politicians new to office generally have a positive agenda. And so did Gruevski. But with time politicians can get hooked on power and become unwilling to give it up or to suffer checks and balances. The American system where presidents get a maximum of two four year terms is wise as it solves this problem. In Australia, John Howard was in power for 11 years but this was too long as some of his worst decisions came late in his term as he clung to power, and this is one of the reasons the Budget is structurally unbalanced. In Turkey president Erdogan has been in power, first as prime minister then president, for 12 years. He is criticized among other things for growing authoritarianism and what is said to be a 1,000 room palace that looks big enough to be better used as a state museum or art gallery. In Russia Putin was president for 8 years then played the system and came back, in the process lengthening each

presidential term from four to six years. More lately he is seen to be behind the troubles in Ukraine where 6,000 people have died.

The question for Macedonia is whether Gruevski has passed his best and is on the road to keeping power for the benefit of himself and his associates rather than using power for the benefit of the people? The image that the phone tapping scandal presents is of a prime minister who starts the day reading phone taps rather than economic or social reports. The decline of media freedom in Macedonia is not a good sign. Nor are accusations of influencing the judiciary, cheating at elections, and wide-spread phone tapping. Gruevski needs to have these accusations independently investigated.

That is the only way to clear the air about himself and his government. But it will take guts to do it. The third political issue is the judgement of Opposition leader Zaev. Boycotting parliament is always a silly and counter-productive move. It hasn't worked be-

fore and it hurts Macedonia most of all. If Zaev has evidence of electoral fraud, a better strategy would have been to use Parliament to investigate the evidence and to use Parliament to put the evidence before the public. He could also have used parliament to strengthen the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption and the State Ombudsman.

If the accusation is correct that Zaev used the phone tapping to try to get Gruevski to share power, then that would also be a serious error of judgement. If he has evidence of illegal phone tapping and government corruption, the first and best place for that evi-

dence is parliament, the public, the media and the investigative bodies of state. If instead Zaev used the phone tapping to surreptitiously achieve power, he would be unfit to be prime minister.

This brings us to the fourth key issue. Leadership. To be fair to Macedonia, the quality of leadership is an issue around the world. I would go so far as to say it is one of the key issues facing our species. All countries want good leaders. All countries need good leaders. But outstanding leaders are rare, and even good leaders are not common, even though there are good people everywhere.

Good leadership is about good people with good policies. It is not about power for power's sake. For Macedonia, the good policies are the (relatively) easy part - grow the economy, solve social issues, find and investigate corruption, ensure the independence of the judiciary and the media, develop international relations, guard Macedonia's name and good reputation, strengthen contacts with the diaspora, and so on. It's not rocket science.

The hard part can be finding good people to implement these policies. But that is what Macedonia needs. I hope both VMRO-DMPNE and SDSM have

succession plans and suitable leadership candidates in place as they may need them. For the Macedonian public, now is the time to encourage a new batch of potential leaders into politics. Whether they are young and talented or middle aged with worldly success or experience, now is the time to encourage them to step onto the leadership ladder.

I'm Victor Bivell. Thank you for listening.

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ANNUAL REPORT ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION OF THE MACEDONIANS IN BULGARIA

2014

Introduction

In 2014 the fundamental problems relating to the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria remained the same as they had been in previous years; namely:

1. Refusal to acknowledge the existence of a Macedonian minority.
2. The failure to grant to Macedonians those rights specified in the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.
3. The refusal of the authorities to enter into dialogue with the Macedonian minority.
4. The refusal to register Macedonian organizations.
5. Hate speech directed against Macedonians.¹

Refusal to Acknowledge the Existence of the Macedonian Nation and a Macedonian Minority

Even though there were no new official statements of denial of the existence of Macedonians in Bulgaria, the insistence of Bulgaria for there to be a clause in the proposed Agreement on Good Neighborliness with Macedonia which prohibits Macedonia from making representations regarding the

right of Bulgarian citizens with a non-Bulgarian consciousness (it is noteworthy that an explicit effort has been made to avoid the mention of a Macedonian minority in the agreement), together with the absence of any kind of statement acknowledging the existence of such a minority, confirm that the policy of denial continued to form part of Bulgaria's official policy this year as well. Additional proof of this is the fact that this year as well there is no Macedonian representative on the National Committee for Cooperation on Ethnic Affairs and Social Integration within the Ministerial Committee.

This same denial often occurs in the media and is not understood to be something which needs to be censured or declared to be hate speech, but rather a perfectly normal defence of the historical truth and a display of patriotism.² No state institution has reacted or made any sort of statement of condemnation in relation to similar denials and negations.

Absence of Positive Measures by the State to Improve the Situation of the Macedonian Minority

During 2014 the state did not take any measures to improve the situation of the

Macedonians in Bulgaria, nor did it make any effort to stop or sanction hate speech and discrimination (see below).

The state has not taken adequate action to implement the decisions of the European Court for Human Rights which led to it being subjected to criticism at the meeting of the Committee of Ministers held on 2-4 December 2014 (in the Committee's decisions on this matter, that was diplomatically referred to as "not being sufficient").³ The reason as to why such measures have not been implemented is not due to the lack of time and resources on the part of the state, but to a lack of desire to do so. Proof of that is the fact that all initiatives emanating from Macedonian parties and organizations have been rejected.

Even when changes have occurred, which in some way appear to be positive for the Macedonian minority, Macedonians have neither been the direct objects of such changes, nor has any improvement in the situation regarding their rights been one of the major goals of such action, but has rather come about as a by-product. For example, this year as a result of strong outside pressure the discriminatory ban which did not permit those

Bulgarian citizens who hold a second non-European citizenship from standing as candidates in elections was revoked. Until now, such persons did not have the right to stand as candidates or occupy elected positions ranging from that of municipal councillor to president.

The victims of such a ban were persons belonging to the Turkish and Macedonian minorities. Even though such a reform was positive, it unfortunately is not evidence of a change in state policy towards the Macedonian minority.

No other concrete positive developments relating to the rights of persons with a Macedonian consciousness, even as a by-product, were noted during the year.

Refusal to Engage in Dialogue

During 2014 OMO "Ilinden"-PIRIN submitted requests for meetings to a number of Bulgarian offices and institutions: those of the Prime Minister, the Ministries of Justice and Education, the Secretariat of the National Committee for Cooperation on Ethnic Affairs and Social Integration within the Committee of Ministers and the Commission for the Fight against Discrimination.

Replies were received from three of these institutions: on 25 September 2014 (No 1737/13) from the Cabinet of the Prime Minister, advising that the request had been received and a letter from the Ministry of Education (№ 94-13321 of 03/11/2014) in which it was stated that a wide-ranging public debate regarding educational policies would take place in the future. The last reply avoided addressing the matter of a request for a meeting, but informed the party about the measures which had been taken by the state to implement the decisions brought down by ECHR regarding the registration of Macedonian organizations. Namely, it indicated that at that time three such organizations had submitted applications for registration at the Blagoevgrad Regional Court. In fact two of the organizations in question had already received rejections, while the third one received it on the day that the letter was written. The common denominator in the answers received was that the requests for meetings and discussions were avoided. No answers were received at all from the Commission for Minorities and the Commission for the Fight against Discrimination, which in and of itself represents a tacit refusal. This shows that state institutions continue to ignore Macedonian organizations in Bulgaria and refuse to engage in any dialogue with them.

Violation of the Right to Freedom of Assembly

Despite the fact that Bulgaria has been convicted five times due to its refusal to register Macedonian organizations and parties, this practice also remained unchanged in 2014. On 14 January 2014 the Secretariat of the Committee of Ministers prepared a revised plan concerning the continuing practice of not registering Macedonian organizations in Bulgaria which was sent to Bulgaria with the aim of "preventing of further refusals of registration of the applicant association or other similar associations".⁴ This year (2014) six organizations applied for registration, three of which were refused, while the remaining are still waiting for a response. The following organizations have been refused registration: OMO „Ilinden“, the

Association of Repressed Macedonians in Bulgaria, victims of communist terror, and the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights "Tolerance". The first organization was refused registration, even though Bulgaria had already been found guilty twice in this same matter. The second organization was already making a second unsuccessful attempt to be registered.

In their decisions refusing registration the courts employed arguments which had already been rejected several times by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg and the Committee of Ministers⁵, namely:

- Accusations of separatism;
- Interpreting the mention of a Macedonian minority as a threat to national security and the unity of the nation;
- Speculating on the use the concept "political aims"⁶;
- The use of general claims unsupported by any evidence;
- The inordinate dragging out of cases and seeking out formal reasons for refusal of registration and the like.

Political Aims

Often one of the motives for refusing registration is the claim that the organizations have "political aims" which according to the law can only be expressed by political parties.⁷ In this case there has been an abuse of the fact that the term "political aims" is not defined in Bulgarian legislation, which allows a court significant room to speculate on the meaning of this term to the detriment of Macedonians.⁸

Activities Directed Against the Unity of the Nation

The claim that Macedonian organizations have goals which are directed against the unity of the Bulgarian nation is often used as a ground for refusal of registration.⁹ In this instance the unity of the nation is interpreted as ethnic and racial unity, as a result of which the claim that a Macedonian minority exists

is viewed as an attempt to divide the nation. Such an interpretation of constitutional norms lacks a legal basis and is contrary to a series of interpretations issued by the Constitutional Court. Despite all this, similar nationalistic interpretations of the Constitution are regularly used to deny the registration of Macedonian organizations, while the civil interpretations issued by the Constitutional Court are employed solely in order to justify the respective provisions of the law to outside observers.

Quotes from court decisions which highlight this type of interpretation:

Decision № 2768 of 30.06.2014 by Nadia Uzunova, Regional Court of Blagoevgrad regarding the application for the registration of OMO "Ilinden".

The Court, aside from the formal grounds adduced, finds that the name of the organization may be confused with the name of the party OMO "Ilinden"-PIRIN which the Court had refused to register a several years before and determines that there is a danger that "society may be misled and deceived by the registration of an organization with political aims or an organization directed against the unity of the nation under the Law on Legal Entities with Non-Profit Goals"

It considers that the aims are directed against the unity of the nation by citing a series of provisions in the statute which clearly show that according to its authors there is a separate ethnic category of Macedonians in Bulgaria which has its own history and culture and who are subjected to discrimination. The application of OMO "Ilinden" in which it is stated that it will defend the Macedonian people against such discrimination is interpreted as seeking to inflame ethnic hostility.

Court decision No 4022 of 26.09.2014 by Judge Nadia Uzunova, Regional Court-Blagoevgrad.

"According to the Court the goals of the association indicate involvement in activities directed against the unity of the nation". This conclusion is arrived at as the association has proclaimed as a goal the promotion of Macedonian culture and the historical truth, plans to erect

monuments, defend the rights of the Macedonians, deliver lectures, write reports, organize rallies and meetings, celebrate historical dates and promote and preserve folklore.

All of that “comprises activities, which the court determines are directed against the unity of the Bulgarian nation.”

Deliberate Dragging Out of Cases

All Macedonian organizations which have submitted applications for registration face an inevitable dragging out of the case by the court which far exceeds the legal deadline of one month. A good example of this is the case of the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights “Tolerance” (CDHR), which had not received an answer from the court for nine months and only did so after it stated that it would submit a complaint against the judge, upon which it received a reply containing requests for certain corrections to be made. After these had been made, there was a further delay of two months and they were again forced to intervene in order to finally receive a decision.

At the time of the completion of this report several other Macedonian organizations were waiting for a response of their requests for registration at Blagoevgrad Regional Court-in all such cases the legal deadline for a response from the Court has been exceeded.

General Assertions Contained in Decisions Rather Than a Precise Indication of Reasons and Arguments

The courts openly seek ways to deny the registration of Macedonian organizations rather than satisfying legal requirements. Even in those cases when corrections to applications have been sought from Macedonian organizations, the aim is not to assist in their registration-the corrections sought are of a general nature and imprecise and even after such corrections are made the application is inevitably refused without any comment on those same corrections. (CDHR).

The refusals contain general assertions which lack specific details and justifica-

tions. For example in the decision regarding the CDHR, it is asserted in general terms that the requirements of the law have not been met (wherein reference is made to an article which contains all the requirements) and that the constitution of the organization does not meet the relevant legal requirements (without specifying exactly which requirements have not been met).¹⁰ In this concrete case the constitution was an adaptation of that of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee-a registered and respected human rights organization-the only difference, apart from the name of the organization, being that Macedonians and a Macedonian minority are mentioned in it.

The refusals were accompanied by a suggestion that the whole procedure be started all over again, which on the basis of the unlawfully taken decisions, the lack of any sort of concrete formulations and a failure to point out weaknesses in the application which need to be removed, can only be interpreted as a continuation of tactics designed to drag out cases relating to registration; the goal being to prevent them from being appealed at the European Court of Human Rights so that they continue to be examined within Bulgaria (as if in a magic circle) without any real prospect of this process leading to registration.

The decisions rejecting the registration of Macedonian organizations were the subject of discussions within the Committee of Ministers, which on 2-4 December 2014 decided to strengthen its monitoring of Bulgaria relating to this matter.¹¹

In reality in Bulgaria in 2014 as well there continued to be a tacit ban on the registration of Macedonian organizations.

The second and final part of this report shall be published in the next issue of the MHR Review.

¹ See for example the report adopted by the Committee of Ministers of 23 January 2014 in which the following is expressly stated in relation to the registration of Macedonian organizations in Bulgaria „recalls inter alia that the prohibition on associations from pursuing political goals should be

interpreted narrowly and that the expression of a given ethnic consciousness does not in itself justify the conclusion that the aims of the association in question are directed against the unity of the nation and the territorial integrity of the State.“<https://wcd.coe.int/com.instranet.InstraServlet?command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&InstranetImage=2610586&SecMode=1&DocId=2188990&Usage=2>, p. 6

² See below the statements in the media of influential figures such as Bozhidar Dimitrov.

³ Decision cases No. 5, 4 December 2014 & 1 <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=2267305&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=C3C3C3&BackColorIntranet=EDB021&BackColorLogged=F5D383>

⁴ <https://wcd.coe.int/com.instranet.InstraServlet?command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&InstranetImage=2441284&SecMode=1&DocId=2095294&Usage=2>

⁵ Decision cases No. 5 4 december 2014, & 1 <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=2267305&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=C3C3C3&BackColorIntranet=EDB021&BackColorLogged=F5D383>

⁶ See for example the report adopted by the Committee of Ministers of 23 January 2014 in which the following is expressly stated in relation to the registration of Macedonian organizations in Bulgaria: “recalls inter alia that the prohibition on associations from pursuing political goals should be interpreted narrowly and that the expression of a given ethnic consciousness does not in itself justify the conclusion that the aims of the association in question are directed against the unity of the nation and the territorial integrity of the State.“<https://wcd.coe.int/com.instranet.InstraServlet?command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&InstranetImage=2610586&SecMode=1&DocId=2188990&Usage=2>, p. 6

⁷ Attention needs to be paid to the fact that the same argument with the reverse intention was used against the registration of OMO “Ilinden”-PIRIN in October 2007 by the prosecutor’s office in the Supreme Appellate Court; namely, that the goals set out by the party were not political and were more appropriate to those of anon-government organization.

⁸ Decision № 2768 of 30.06.2014 by Nadia Uzunova, Regional Court of Blagoevgrad.

⁹ See Decision № 4022 of 26.09.2014 by Judge Nadia Uzunova, Regional Court of Blagoevgrad and Decision № 2768 of 30.06.2014 by Nadia Uzunova, Regional Court of Blagoevgrad in relation to the application for registration of OMO “Ilinden”.

¹⁰ Decision № 4440 of 22.10.2014 by Judge Lidiya Maseva, Regional Court of Blagoevgrad in relation to company case № 20131200800074 / 2013 г.

¹¹ Decision, Case No. 5, 4 December 2014.

"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.

DEMAND IMMEDIATE INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION.

MHRMI
MACEDONIAN HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT INTERNATIONAL
www.mhrmi.org

AMHRC
AUSTRALIAN MACEDONIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE INC.
www.macedoniansho.org.au

and other Macedonian organizations - www.mhrmi.org/our_name_is_macedonia

OUR NAME IS MACEDONIA



THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY MACEDONIAN ENLIGHTENER, KIRIL PEJCHINOVICH

By Dr. Michael Seraphinoff

I first heard of Father Kiril Pejčinovich in 1973 on my first visit to aunts and uncles and cousins in villages of Dolni Polog, in the Tetovo region of Macedonia. I was told that he is honored to the present day for his remarkable work on behalf of the Macedonian people of that region in the early 19th century. Today I know his life and works in great detail, and I can attest to the remarkable nature of both.

The priest monk Kiril Pejčinovich lived and worked for nearly his entire adult lifetime, during the first half of the 19th century, within the Orthodox monastic communities of Macedonia. Kiril Pejčinovich's special love for books and learning led him to devote a good deal of attention to the monastery libraries. In addition, he promoted education and literacy among the people of his native region through the operation of a school and through his public religious instruction. Over the course of his life he wrote three works for the spiritual enlightenment of the Orthodox speakers of dialects in Macedonia, which would later come to form part of the basis of the standard Macedonian language. Kiril Pejčinovich's literary works also include the

epitaph poem that he himself carved into his stone slab grave marker several years before his death.

His educational-enlightenment work appears similar in many respects to that of other church-based writers in neighboring Balkan lands at that time. He made aspects of the people's everyday lives the subject of religious and moral instruction in his writings, using familiar, mundane examples, and presenting them in the readily understandable language of their everyday speech. He introduced certain bases of rationalist thinking into the lives of the common people as he discouraged belief in superstition and myth. Kiril Pejčinovich also strengthened ethical and social values crucial to a Macedonian cultural renewal, the renewal of a society that had seriously declined under Turkish abuse of power which bred widespread lawlessness and exploitation.

Father Kiril's works have for nearly a century been recognized as a significant literary development for the Macedonian people. His use of a regional dialect of what has, in more recent times, been codified as the Macedoni-

an language, was acknowledged as both unusual for his time and noteworthy because a writer from one more corner of the Orthodox world had abandoned Church Slavic in favor of his native vernacular.

Perhaps the earliest recognition of his importance was S. Novakovic's 1889 study on "Makedonskim narodnim dijalektima," in which he declared Pejčinovich "the earliest author who wrote in a Macedonian speech-type" (15). More details about Kiril Pejčinovich came to light a year later, in 1890, when A. Shopov published biographical accounts by informants who had known Pejčinovich personally. His study also included a transcription of the poem Kiril Pejčinovich had composed for his epitaph. This poem again received attention four years later when A. Teodorov published a collection in 1894 of what he termed works of the first modern Bulgarian poets, which he entitled "Parvi stixotvorci." In 1894, Novakovic again turned his attention to Pejčinovich's work in a study entitled "S Morave na Vardar," which included extensive excerpts from Father Kiril's book Ogledalo (Mirror)

published in 1816.

Another valuable source of biographical information about Pejchinovich is L. Serafimov's book *Tetovo i dejcite po vazrazhdenieto mu*, published in Plovdiv in 1900. Serafimov's book contains both useful new biographical information about Pejchinovich and a description of the monastery he restored at Leshok.

Some additional information about Pejchinovich and his works appears in studies in the early 20th century. However, none of these writers contributed anything substantially new, and most of these works suffered the taint of the political competition of Serbia and Bulgaria for Macedonia and its people. One notable exception were the works of A.M. Selishchev (1915, 1929) who provides extensive biographical information about Pejchinovich and detailed examination of his literary works, drawing upon all of the above-mentioned sources to do this. However, even his work provides too condensed a summary of the essence of his works to be considered all-encompassing. He perhaps regarded Pejchinovich as too peripheral to the Bulgarian cultural revival of the 19th century to warrant more careful attention. Of course, Selishchev was not in a position to see the significance his works might have for an exclusively Macedonian language and literature that would not be fully realized until after his death.

Kiril Pejchinovich never explicitly declared his nationality. He took a Serbian patronymic for his last name. He called his language "Bulgarian of Lower Moesia" in his 1816 book, but by 1840 he calls the language of his second book only "the simple" or "common language." When he wants to refer to his people in his writing, he simply calls them "nashi." Perhaps it was as complicated in the early 19th century to declare yourself a Macedonian on the Balkan Peninsula as it is today. In any event, no one outside of

Macedonia showed the least interest in reading any of his books, and the people of Macedonia did greatly appreciate his printed sermons in language they could easily understand. Let's be clear about this. He is "nashi."

Additional publication of studies of Pejchinovich's works during the inter-war period by B. Penev (1933), X. Polenakovik: (1936), D. Bacinski (1937), and M. Pavlovic (1940) did serve to make some of his works better known to the public, though they failed to yield anything substantially new. Polenakovik, for example, reproduced the entire sermon from the book, *Uteshenie Greshnim* (Consolation for Sinners), Father Kiril's other book length work, published in 1840.

It wasn't until the post-war establishment of the Macedonian Republic within the Yugoslav federation, however, that anyone other than Selishchev studied Pejchinovich's works in any depth. With the benefit of hindsight that Selishchev did not have, some attempted to review and redefine the significance of his works in light of the fact that the modern Macedonian language and literature appeared in direct descent from them. A number of fruitful studies resulted from this renewed interest. A 1973 symposium publication, *Kiril Pejcinovik i negovoto vreme*, was especially useful.

Polenakovik (1949, 1973a, 1973b, 1975) undoubtedly contributed the most to an understanding of isolated aspects of Pejchinovich's works. Over the course of several decades he wrote a number of studies. These include one on the history of the sketched portraits of Kiril by the monk Arsenie, another that attempts to provide a definitive transcription of the text of Pejchinovich's epitaph, and one that focuses on the letters that Prince Milosh and the Serbian church censor wrote to Kiril during the time one of his books was being considered for publication at the Serbian royal printery. He also published Pejchinovich's manuscripts of several versions of his "Troparion and



kontakion of Holy Father Nifont."

One of the best sources of bibliographic information on the scientific literature concerning Pejchinovich is contained in the MANU publication *Svecen sobir posveten na 130 godisnata od smrtta na Kiril Pejcinovik*. Blazhe Koneski, who had also done a number of careful studies of aspects of his works (1945, 1950, 1956, 1963, 1970, 1983, 1986), drew upon such source material to write a rather illuminating broad-ranging essay on the significance of Pejchinovich and his works for modern Macedonian litera-

jchinovich. The essence of my study was direct engagement with primary texts. I attempted to conduct readers on a careful tour of all portions of them and to draw attention to those details that engaged my own interest during readings. I had also concluded that there was no all-encompassing study of Pejchinovich's role in the transformation from the region's traditional Church Slavic literature to a modern Macedonian one.

My research was enhanced by visits to Father Kiril's homeland. I visited the monastery he restored at Leshok, the

The works of V. Ilie (1961-62), X. Parpev (1968), O. Jasar-Nasteva (1973), and R. Usikova (1973) helped establish that the language of Pejchinovich's writings contains several elements which functioned in particular ways. While based on his native Macedonian dialect, it also contains borrowings from the neighboring Serbs, Bulgarians, and Greeks, Russian from printed sources, Church Slavic literary language, and the Turkish language of the Ottoman Empire which ruled Macedonia for five centuries.

However, in my doctoral dissertation I



ture, culture and society, to serve as an introduction to a modern Macedonian reprint of *Ogledalo* (Pejcinovik 1968).

However, few people in the world beyond the borders of the Republic of Macedonia in 1991 seemed to have any idea that the modern Macedonian language and literature had roots, a cultural continuity that could be traced back hundreds of years. Macedonia's neighbors were determined to sell the world the story that ours was an artificial language and culture of a rootless, non-existent people. In part, to address that story, I embarked upon my doctoral dissertation on the life and works of Father Kiril. I, naturally, drew upon all of the previous literature on Pe-

Marko Monastery near Skopje, where he served as abbot for 20 years, and Mt. Athos, where he was first tonsured as a monk in his youth. I also examined original copies of his books and discussed them with scholars in Skopje and Sofia, and I had the opportunity to examine aging church service books and books of saints lives in Russian archives, books from which Pejchinovich borrowed and translated stories for his own works. This was made possible in part by a US National Resource Fellowship granted in the summer of 1989 and IREX travel grants in 1986 and 1991 during the period of my doctoral work at the University of Washington in Seattle, USA.

also point out the special role of Turkisms in his writings, the fact that he often carefully selected Turkisms to emphasize Macedonian Orthodox Slavic separateness from Islamic Turkish culture, and to emphasize, in a carefully veiled manner, the lawlessness and oppression associated with Turkish rule.

However, such excerpts as the following from the book *Ogledalo* suggest that his opposition to Turkish colonial rule was not always so carefully veiled:

Ако мие не исполниме закон Христов, не смо ни Христиани, пошто не смо Христиани; а заопшто сме; пошто не смо Христосови

људи при Христа во раиј не можемо да идемо, пошто што не ќе идемо оу царство небесное, а зашто се мучимо на овој век, зашто постимо, зашто се крштеаме, зашто се закупуемо, зашто за душа давамо, зашто от други вери мучени биднуемо, зашто от калдрма долу слезуемо, зашто зелено не носимо, зашто хубаво не носимо, зашто от Турци помало зборимо, зашто, каде не јахат и газат трпимо, зашто! Не ли за арта (Христа)? (Огледало стр. 61-62)

If we do not fulfill Christ's law, we are not Christians. If we are not Christians, then what are we? If we are not Christ's people, we cannot enter before Christ in paradise. since we will not go to the heavenly kingdom. Then, why do we suffer in this life, why do we fast, why are we baptized, why do we have Christian burials, why do we offer food for a departed person's soul, why do we endure the suffering inflicted upon us by other faiths, why do we step off the paved roads, why don't we wear the green of the Moslems, why don't we wear beautiful things, why do we speak less about the Turks, why when they ride over us and trample us down, why do we endure it, if not for Christ? (Ogledalo, pp. 61-62)

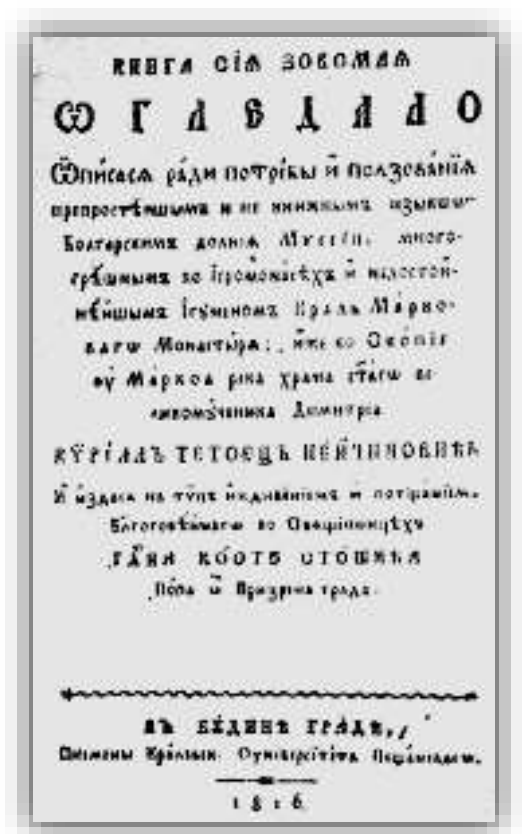
My study of Pejchinovich's works was eventually published by the University Press of America in 1997 under the title *The 19th Century Macedonian Awakening*. I know of several scholars from the Macedonian diaspora that have done something similar. Nick Anastasovski, for example, wrote an excellent doctoral dissertation through Victoria University, in Australia, later published as a book by Pollitecon Publishers under the title *The Contest for Macedonian Identity 1870-1912*.

I only hope that there are a dozen more young scholars of Macedonian origin in major academic institutions around the world today engaged in similar projects to shed new light on the process by which the Macedonian

people became increasingly aware of their shared religious, ethical, and cultural values, including their linguistic kinship. It is this awareness that has since grown into a Macedonian national identity which asserted itself fully in the latter half of the 20th century. And let me be clear, it was simply a historical necessity that so many 19th century sources were written in the Bulgarian language, and that authors or publishers grasping for some acceptable label for the times, often felt obliged to label something Bulgarian that was, in fact, Macedonian. This was long before the time that most Macedonian dared declare that "We are not Serbs, Greeks, Bulgarians or Slavs. We are Macedonians."

I am a firm believer that the truth eventually wins out in our world. The Greek and Bulgarian misinformation campaigns are doomed to failure in the long run. We can only hope that there is still a Macedonian state to receive its just place in the world when that day comes.

Dr. Michael Seraphinoff



MUZIKORAMA'S AUSTRALIAN TOUR

*Organised by the AMHRC in cooperation with
the Macedonian Community of Western Australia Inc,
the Macedonian Community of Adelaide and South Australia Inc
and the Macedonian Orthodox Community of Wollongong*



The very popular Macedonian band from the Lerin region of Aegean Macedonia, Muzikorama, toured Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth and Wollongong, during the course of last February. All the events were very well attended and the traditional Macedonian songs and dances performed by

Muzikorama were widely appreciated.

An added special guest at the AMHRC event in Melbourne, was Jorgos Papadakis of Vinozhito. Photos of the AMHRC event by Diane Kitanoski.







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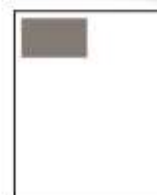
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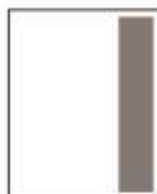
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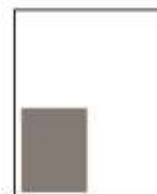
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MAKE A BOOKING



Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC)
Ph: +61 3 9329 8960 | Email: info@macedonianhr.org.au



Macedonian Human Rights Movement International (MHRMI)
Ph: 1-416-850-7125 | Email: info@mhrmi.org

And if you don't have any advertising material, we can make one up for you at no extra charge!

ABOUT MHRMI & AMHRC

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

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

RELATED ORGANIZATIONS

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



AUSTRALIAN MACEDONIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

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



MACEDONIAN HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT INTERNATIONAL

Address 157 Adelaide St. West, Suite 434
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Website www.mhrmi.org



MACEDONIAN ALLIANCE FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

The political party of the Macedonians in Albania

Website www.macedoniansinalbania.org



EUROPEAN FREE ALLIANCE—RAINBOW

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Website www.omoilindenpirin.org



MACEDONIAN SOCIETY "ILINDEN" TIRANA

A Macedonian cultural association in Tirana, Albania

Website www.ilinden-tirana.com



NOVA ZORA

A pro-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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