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Editorial:

Notes on European Union Hypocrisy – Centres and Peripheries

By George Vlahov



There is an admirable form of universalism expressed in the *EU Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy*. Despite the opposition of some Postmodernists, it needs to be said that certain forms of universalism are useful in promoting a healthy affinity for humanity in general; and to completely abandon all such notions, is fraught with peril. Before discussing this further we will begin by extracting some sentences from the *Framework* **in order to demonstrate the EU's strong theoretical commitment to human rights:**

"Human rights are universally applicable legal norms. Democracy is a universal aspiration. Throughout the world, women and men demand to live lives of liberty, dignity and security in open and democratic societies underpinned by human rights and the rule of law. Sustainable peace, development and prosperity are possible only when grounded upon respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Yet respect for human rights and democracy cannot be taken for granted. Their universal nature is questioned on grounds of cultural differences. Modern information and communications technologies, while facilitating the free exchange of information between individuals, have also massively increased the coercive power of authoritarian states.

The EU is aware of these challenges and determined to strengthen its efforts to ensure that human rights are realised for all. The EU will continue to throw its full weight behind advocates of liberty, democracy and human rights throughout the world.

The EU reaffirms its commitment to the promotion and protection of all human rights, whether civil and political, or economic, social and cultural. The EU calls on all States to implement the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to ratify and implement the key international human rights treaties, including core labour rights conventions, as well as regional human rights instruments. The EU will speak

out against any attempt to undermine respect for universality of human rights."

The postmodernist concern is hinted at in the paragraph which raises the issue of cultural *difference*. There is authenticity in the postmodern claim that modernity has been and still is possessed of a number of *centres*, like Washington and Brussels, which often employ their power to enforce an exclusionary and exploitative conformism on the periphery – universalism in the service of disparaging and suppressing difference. The practice of setting *normative* standards in relation to so called paths of *development*, especially economic, which have provided **'justification' for the implementation of horrendous** forms of abuse, particularly in parts of Africa, Asia and the Middle East, over the course of the last five hundred years.

Though it does need to be remembered that the periphery/centre dialectic is more complex than this - that there are peripheries even within the centres themselves and vice versa, and that one can find a good deal of matter to be ambivalent about in the story of Western dominated modernization. A constant one sided underscoring of the negatives denotes a significant amount of myopia.

Moreover, some streams of postmodernism have elevated the concern for difference to the level of an absolute principle, rejecting all forms of universalism as inherently exclusionary and destructive. Thus their project involves an endless deconstruction of all attempts to generalize, via the magnification of that lack of certainty which will always be present in the management of human affairs.

There can be no doubt that the proponents of postmodernism, **since the 1960's, have contributed to toning down Western** arrogance. However the extreme version of the postmodernist project, if fulfilled, would not be productive. The complete fragmentation of all grand narratives, like the EU human rights *Framework* or the UN *Universal Declaration* would leave

centres of power, Western or otherwise, a freer hand to implement policies that are from benign – as any postmodernist would indeed have to accept.

We can go as far as agreeing with the deconstructionist that **much of what passes under the name 'knowledge' is socially created**; that it belongs to particular conjunctures or contexts and therefore, has no claim to permanence or absolute validity. We can also agree that epistemologies are often devised by elites to suit their purposes. But there are generous portions of essentiality contained within the declarations under discussion, both contextual and permanent.

These texts provide a means for action by those who are concerned about challenging the abuses of the powers that be. They are not perfect and they contain aspects which can be misused or that might be irrelevant in certain quarters – but the general categories do permit multiple sub variations which encourage the protection of peripheral difference and dignity.

The Latest Word on EU Human Rights *Practice*

The insolence and incompetence with which the economic and **bureaucratic elites in Brussels continue to manage the EU's affairs is making it exceedingly difficult to maintain the EU's emblematic raison d'être as a project striving towards the construction of a nation state which is more inclusive than the traditional national boundaries that have delineated Europe.**

The smug rudeness is no better illustrated than by the recently announced appointment of an EU foreign affairs human rights envoy, empowered to travel the world making judgments about the management of human rights in non-EU countries at the same time as foundation members of the EU have yet to ratify essential human rights instruments; not to mention the growing inability of Brussels to maintain popular democratic support for its initiatives - its increased flouting of the **citizenry's will. Something that is evidenced by the results of the various EU referendums held within the boundaries of individual member states.**

During the press conference announcing the appointment the new EU human rights envoy, a Macedonian journalist asked **the 'responsible' officials about the wisdom of assigning to the post, a recent former Foreign Minister of Greece, Stavros Lambrinidis - in the context of Greece's consistent human rights violations and its refusal to ratify what are supposed to be foundational EU human rights conventions – his question was simply ignored.** The same journalist also aptly posed a question about the operational parameters of the new human rights representative; would the envoy be empowered to evaluate EU countries?

The 'responsible' official gave a less than honest ambiguous answer in which he chose not to explain that the new position is completely focused on 'assessing' non EU countries. Perhaps

this was a small sign of humility!? Be that as it may, what a *gift* for Lambrinidis – a bigot who denies the existence of the Macedonian minority in Greece and who is also quite devoted to denying the Republic of Macedonia the human right to maintain its self-chosen name:

"Mr. Gruevski has dug in with his intolerance and is holding his country's European future hostage. The moment has come for him to understand that it is time to write history for his country and not to re-write our [Greece's] history. All countries want this. We want a solution with a geographic prefix for everyone. Greece is prepared to continue, although we don't see any positive signs in the current phase, we hope that our neighbours will change their mentality."

These words were spoken by Lambrinidis before the media while he was Greece's Foreign Minister. The Republic of Macedonia, in wishing to preserve its right to name itself, is "intolerant"; its desire to maintain its dignity is somehow 'malevolent'. Without a shred of justification, black is made white and the universalism of the EU Framework is dispensed with, made redundant by the representative of a centre *within the periphery*. What other 'pearls of wisdom' came from the mouth of Foreign Minister Lambrinidis?

"Albania understands very well that violating its obligations affects its European future and interests. The growing nationalism in our neighbouring country is a reasonable cause for concern. The condition of the Greek minority is like a barometer for our relations and we have made that clear."

For those who are unfamiliar with the facts, this may seem like a reasonable comment. There are indeed some problems **with the Albanian state's treatment of ethnic minority groups**; but it does recognise their existence and does permit them to preserve aspects of their culture, especially language. In Greece, the preservation of minority culture is a question that simply does not arise, the Greek state refuses even to acknowledge the existence of any ethnic minorities. Lambrinidis' usage of the word *obligations*, really stands out – Greece, in numerous ways, has no such *obligations* because it has refused to ratify the relevant EU Conventions.

Oh and what about the gift, the grand gratuity rhetorically implied some paragraphs earlier? Lambrinidis now has a job **which requires him to 'assess' human rights practices in countries like Macedonia, Albania and Turkey, but not Greece –** how extraordinarily convenient!

Thus the world is turned upside down by a destructive *little* centre – Athens, which possesses membership of the *main* centre; and in response, the latter does little more than nothing. The perversion of the EU Framework by Lambrinidis reached a high point when he expressed malicious delight, in the Greek parliament, at a lack of mainstream interest in an effort to preserve peripheral/minority difference:

"It needs to be noted that the presentation of the "dictionary" and the press conference which followed it, at which the representative of Vinozhito, Pavlos Voskopoulos spoke, attracted a small number of interested parties and that, only sympathizers of the organizers, not more than 40 people at the presentation and around 15 at the press conference, including the journalists of FYROM [sic] and one journalist from ET3. Within the confines of the media in the neighbouring country as within the confines of the European Parliament, the event was nearly unnoticed."

In human rights declarations, the concern for difference is about protecting and preserving minority cultures; it is about permitting, encouraging and *aiding* them, to maintain their existence with dignity, while adhering to universal requirements. The Greek to Macedonian Dictionary launched by Vinozhito in Brussels is an attempt by the Macedonians of Greece to save the Macedonian language from extinction, an extinction which the Greek state has been striving to achieve for a hundred years.

In the same parliamentary statement, Lambrinidis, the ignoramus, went on to claim that the language spoken by some people in the part of Macedonia in Greece, is not even related to the Macedonian language, as it is spoken in the Repub-

lic of Macedonia. It is just staggering; this delusional anti-Macedonian neurotic is Brussels' choice to represent it as the face of human rights on the world stage.

The EU, via Brussels central has responded to the challenge of combining respect for cultural difference with universalism, by perverting the intended meaning of words and accepting **Greece's difference**; the high level of intolerance for ethno-cultural variation in the mainstream of Greek national culture is to be 'respected' – **Greece doesn't need to ratify the Copenhagen Convention, it doesn't need to adhere to human rights universalism** and yes, irrespective of that, one of its favored sons has been chosen to promote said universalism on behalf Brussels, to the non-EU world.

Note well that the myriad of well remunerated EU publicists operating out of Brussels saw to it that none of this information found space in the mainstream media of the West. Instead **the focus was on Lambrinidis' tertiary qualifications as a demonstration of the 'appropriateness' of his appointment.** This is the power of a centre; the power to present itself as a paragon of virtue, even while actually functioning in a manner that is acutely lacking in principle.

George Vlahov



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Caesar's Wife, the EU and Lambrinidis

By George N Papadakis

It's a well known 'secret' that the European Union, in its current form, has every chance of developing into a club whose members are only very vaguely related and who do not even possess a common currency (that is if it doesn't soon altogether collapse), rather than becoming the often touted "United States of Europe". It is not my aim to here give a general analysis of the reasons for this, rather, I just want to point out that the *dubious* workings of a few people in Brussels, are leading to the death of the dream of millions of Europeans – a political, social and economic union of citizens, irrespective of their cultural, linguistic and religious origins.

Truly *dubious* is the manner in which people without any legitimacy are deciding on the future of the EU. People like the European 'Commissars' and their President, Barroso, who receive enormous salaries to produce absolutely nothing or, worse still, to employ non-entities for various important positions. Don't tell me that you are inspired by the likes of Van Rompuy or Catherine Ashton, the EU's "Minister of Foreign Affairs", who in turn, employ other 'celebrities' in positions like the recently created EU "Representative for Human Rights". Who did they choose? Stavros Lambrinidis, a former EU parliamentarian and Greece's Foreign Minister for a period of six months in the government of George Papandreou.

Though let's examine matters from their source. What, at bottom, does this role of human rights representative, involve? To quote from the official EU website: "...the role of the representative is to maximize the efficiency...of the EU in the sphere of human rights as a representative of the Union on the world

stage...."

In other words this person will be the voice and the face of the EU in an extremely sensitive realm of international relations. Thereby, he will travel to all points on the globe where there is evidence of human rights violations in order to elaborate on the success of the EU in protecting such rights.

And out of around 550 million EU citizens, Ms Ashton chose a former Foreign Minister of Greece! Can we really accept that someone more suitable could not be found!? But, I hear you ask, why does this appointment need to be immediately regarded as a failure? The first European Ombudsman was a **Greek, wasn't he (Professor Dyamandouros)? That was relatively successful?** Perhaps, however, these two roles are incomparable.

Simply put, the serious problems facing Greece in the field of human rights and its total failure to deal with them properly, means that the appointment of a Greek should have been **ruled out right from the beginning. Caesar's wife needs both, to actually be and be perceived to be above suspicion...**

For example, Lambrinidis, the former Greek politician and now EU representative, may soon have to meet with the Chinese in order to raise the issue of Peking's treatment of the Tibetans. The Chinese might respond with some questions of their own, for instance, about how Greece conducts itself towards the Macedonians and Turks inhabiting Greece? How will Lambrinidis answer when they remind him about the

'camps' and barriers Greece erects in order to "solve" its immigration issues? How will he justify the force which new-Greek society applies against every manifestation of difference?

We of course know that he will not be able to answer these questions satisfactorily. Via the embarrassment of Lambrinidis, **the EU's human rights credibility, will suffer irreparable damage. Ashton obviously wasn't thinking, when she insolently (may be stupidly?) stated that she considers the human rights sector to be of vital importance. After which she even added that "his [Lambrinidis'] wealth of experience and talent will be of great value for us." Just unbelievable....**

Let us take a look at this **"wealth of experience"** possessed by the new human rights representative. Around 10 months ago, **while he was still Greece's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Stavros Lambrinidis** answered a parliamentary question posed to him by the well known ultra right winger Karaoglu (who recently advanced his career by becoming a minister), in relation to the presentation of the new Macedonian to Greek Dictionary in Brussels. His written response, which was highly offensive to the European Parliament, to all minority groups (not only those who are Greek citizens), and to our intelligence, ended with the following remarks:

"...in Greece there does not exist, nor has there ever existed, a Macedonian minority. There do exist a small number of people

in villages in Macedonia and mainly in the vicinity of Florina [Lerin in Macedonian] who, apart from the Greek language, speak a Slavic linguistic idiom. Published works and studies demonstrate that the Slavic idiom which is spoken in these regions, has no connection to the official language of the ... Republic of Macedonia..."

Lambrinidis definitely has a *wealth of experience* in manipulating the truth and in negating the basic right to self-identification — individually and collectively. Apart from that, this new EU Human Rights Representative has a unique ability for conscious and unrestrained deceit. As there is not EVEN ONE study, carried out by a serious academic that **would give credence to Lambrinidis' views and moreover,** there are dozens of studies which cogently expose his lies. And just as salient in revealing his deceit, are the thousands of Macedonians from Greece who regularly visit Bitola and other towns in the Republic of Macedonia. No doubt to the disgust of the **'talented' Mr. Lambrinidis, this "small number" of people, easily communicates with their 'opposites', for their language is the same.**

The turpitude of the new-Greeks is well on its way to afflicting the EU, which has decided to place a wolf to guard the sheep and thereby has de facto annulled what is supposed to be one of its most fundamental principles. And because I cannot believe that Ms. Ashton, however little she may be known for



her intelligence, was/is not aware about whom she actually appointed, this becomes further confirmation that Brussels has consciously decided to continue discounting human rights.

The downgrading began when it failed to impose the Copenhagen resolutions in relation to minority group protections on the so-called older member states (France and Greece). The process continued when Bulgaria was permitted to join the EU in 2007 and has now reached a new 'height' with this recent human rights appointment. The Lambrinidis appointment, apart from breaking the European Parliament's own preconditions for such decisions, gives an indication of the great zeal with which the grave diggers of the EU are working. There is now not much more for them to do.

Lost Fatherlands or Lost Minds?

The Dajchevs (or Danchev according to some) were a Macedonian family loyal to the Patriarchate (Greek Orthodox Church) in Gevgelija, as were many of the families in that town, somewhat prior to the Macedonian Ilinden Uprising against Ottoman rule in 1903. The majority of the Gevgelijan Macedonians remained loyal to the Patriarchate, unlike the inhabitants of nearly all the surrounding villages, who were members of the Exarchate (Bulgarian Orthodox Church). Thus at that time, Greek state nationalist propagandists focused their efforts on gaining the support of the Patriarchist families of Gevgelija, as this region and most other parts of Macedonia, possessed very few or no speakers of the Greek language.

After the partition of Macedonia in 1912/13, numerous families from Gevgelija, fearing a reaction from the Exarchists and from Bulgaria, on account of the massacres carried out by the Greek army in Kukush and surrounding areas, fled south and settled in Salonika – which, after the retreat of Taksim Pasha's Ottoman military forces, fell under Greek military control. Therefore Salonika became an ideal setting for a quick and total assimilation of the Gevgelija refugees.

So it was that the Dajchev family became the Dajtsis family, which is the original surname of the former Minister for Sport and New Democracy MP, Yanis Ioannidis. During the course of his illustrious sporting career as a Basketball player and coach, Ioannidis would often make indirect references to his Macedonian origins. *"I have a Bulgarian head and I did well"*, he told journalists in 1991 after the Aris team's second failed attempt to win the European Cup in Munich.

However, we all know, that despite his origins, Ioannidis has been one of the most unrelenting Greek politicians on the issue

of the Republic of Macedonia's name – only a name without the word 'Macedonia', is acceptable to him. He falls in other words, in line with those other "big Greeks" from Solun: Anthimos, Papathemelis and Psomiadis etc.

Recently, during a program on the state channel, NET, Ioannidis attacked the SIRIZA party on account of the positions held by some of that party's members, in relation to some national issues, complaining that they *"recognize the Skopje Republic by its constitutional name, that is, Macedonia. We have fought on this issue. I am Macedonian [by which he means "Greek-Macedonian"]". An original Macedonian. My fatherland, Gevgelija, still has not been freed...*

Oh really now, that's how it is? Actually, no real surprise to hear him make such claims, we know the man and the ideas he is possessed of. All the same, some matters continue to bother me and I feel obliged to write about them.

Firstly, Dajtsis-Ioannidis is not some anonymous ordinary citizen; rather, he is a sporting idol, a former government Minister and an MP for the past 8 years. It is precisely such individuals who are obligated to take extreme care over their choice of language in public – so that they don't disgrace that which they represent.

Secondly, the whole Greek political establishment, since 1991, has been continuously accusing the Republic of Macedonia of "irredentism". These baseless accusations have been made on account of the name the country chose (as if such a thing is possible!); because of the content of school books and even because the term "Aegean Macedonia" is commonly used in reference to the part of Macedonia which falls within the borders of Greece. With these and many other ridiculous "arguments", for 21 years, Greece has been attempting to sabotage the Macedonian state's international integration/membership of various organizations. Recently, Greek representatives even officially presented some of these "arguments" at the International Court in The Hague, in order to defend the policy of destabilizing Macedonia. Of course the Court did not accept any of this nonsense and Greece was found guilty of breaking the 1995 agreement with Macedonia. Never-the-less, it has not stopped Greece from carrying on in the same fashion.

And now we have an official representative of the new-Greek state who has made claims on state television, about un-liberated "lost" fatherlands. Is that not irredentism? I will not deal in detail with Ioannidis' comments as they are beneath contempt. Suffice to say, it is lucky for Gevgelija that it did not experience "liberation" by the Greek army and its paramilitary formations, which did "liberate" the villages in the vicinity of Lerin, Kostur, Kukush, Sersko, Drama, Meglen, Voden, Kaj-

lar, Negush and other parts of Macedonia. Gevgelija is lucky **that it didn't have to endure the horrors of Greek governance** endured by Macedonians in Greece over the last hundred years.

Thirdly and for me, most importantly, where were the official or at least, unofficial reactions to these unacceptable statements by Ioannidis?? Well and good, we can assume New Democracy officially holds such positions, but what about the others? A SIRIZA journalist was present throughout the interview, how is it that he swallowed his tongue?

But really, what am I looking for? It would be easier to find a needle in a haystack than principled politicking in this country. A country which has Orthodox Metropolitans like Anthimos and Amvrosios; **which elects confirmed NAZI's; which denies the existence of Macedonians and Turks and which blames Merkel and other "bad" foreigners for an economic crisis of its own making** – I suppose Dajtsis and the other **"Big Greeks"**, merely 'round out the whole'.

George N. Papadakis is a member of Vinozhito (a Macedonian political party struggling for the rights of Macedonians in Greece) and a journalist who writes for Nova Zora –

a newspaper voicing the concerns of Macedonians in Greece: <http://novazora.gr/>

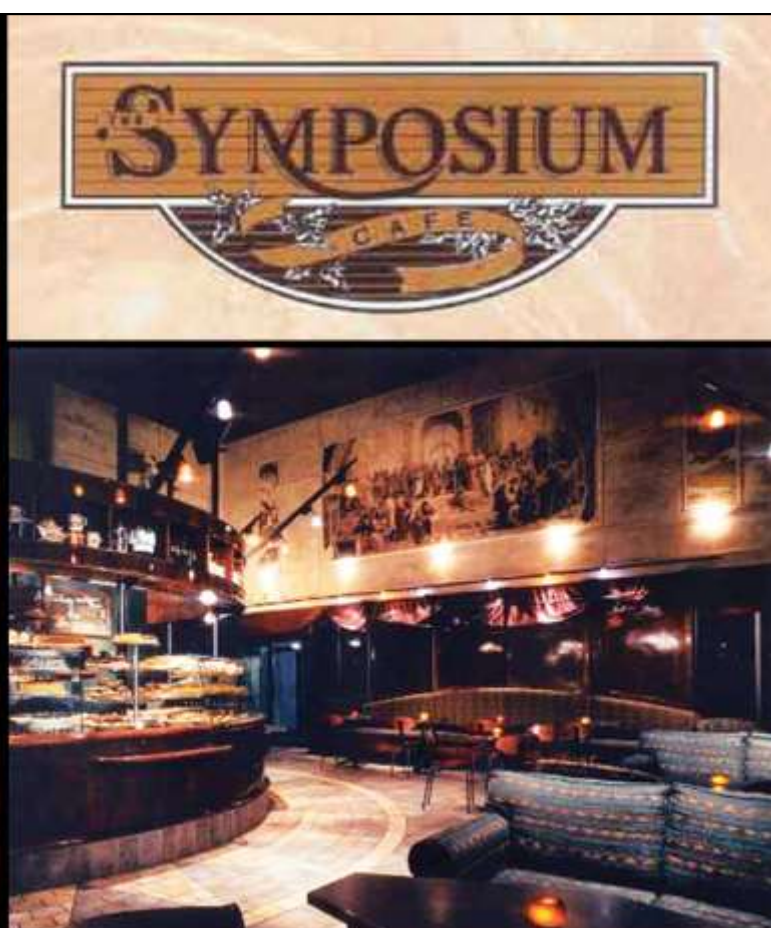
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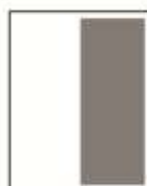
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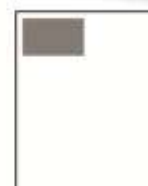
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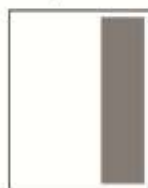
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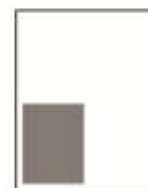
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AMHRC/MHRMI/ VINOZHITO Doubly Question the Appointment of a 'Crusading' EU Special Representative for Human Rights



Melbourne, Toronto & Lerin
26 July 2012

The Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC), Macedonian Human Rights Movement International (MHRMI) and the European Free Alliance – Rainbow/Vinozhito, a political party of the Macedonian minority of Greece, question the wisdom of a Special Representative for Human Rights to focus on non-EU states and are deeply concerned about the appointee.

On 25 June 2012, the EU High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, announced that former PASOK Foreign Minister of Greece, Stavros Lambrinidis will be the inaugural Special Representative.

The appointment of a Special Representative for Human Rights follows the EU's adoption in June of the Strategic Framework and the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy for the purpose of dealing with the EU's external relations i.e. with third countries.

In principle, any initiative addressing the promotion of human rights

and democracy should be welcomed. However the limited scope of this plan is disappointing. Regrettably, it appears that the Special Representative **won't** possess a mandate to address human rights violations and concerns within EU Member States. This is a missed opportunity to strengthen human rights protection within the Union, especially in relation to persistent human rights violators such as Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary.

As Mark Dawson, Professor of Law at the Hertie School of Governance, has observed:

"These violations can only be tackled, however, if an EU envoy is given the necessary powers. Existing EU human rights bodies—such as the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights—have struggled to live up to expectations precisely because they have been given a highly limited mandate, able to provide "information" but not to critically and independently assess the conformity of national and EU institutions with human rights standards. The new special representative's ability to make a

*difference will depend on going further: this representative should not just be an external voice for human rights but should be given internal powers too, for example the ability to scrutinize legislation or even recommend legal measures against states who persistently act in violation of the EU Charter. To be a credible **"external" actor, the EU must also be credible in terms of its own human rights commitments.**"*

In the programmatic statement of the EU Framework for the Promotion of Human Rights and Democracy, it is asserted that the EU will: **"intensify the promotion of ratification and effective implementation of key international human rights treaties"**. Yet it is the Greece of Mr. Lambrinidis, which is not a **"third country"**, but a foundation member of the **'crusading' EU**, that has refused to ratify essential human rights instruments.

The appointment of Mr Lambrinidis to this post has tarnished the office of the Special Representative even before work has commenced. Mr Lambrinidis is a former Foreign Minister of Greece and diplomat in the Greek Ministry of Foreign

Affairs. Under his leadership the Greek Foreign Ministry continued to vehemently deny the existence of Macedonian, Turkish, Vlach and other minorities within Greece. The treatment of these minority groups has been heavily criticised by the **United Nations' Independent Expert** on Minority Issues, various bodies of the Council of Europe and by domestic and international human rights organisations.

Prior to becoming Foreign Minister, from 2004-2011 Mr Lambrinidis was a member of the European Parliament elected from the ranks of the PASOK party. He remained silent on the issue of minorities in Greece and in particular, in concert with fellow Greek MEPs, continued to deny the existence of Macedonian minorities in the Balkans.

Mr Lambrinidis' profile and record demonstrate that he is unfit for the position of EU Special Representa-

tive of Human Rights, even if the position has an international (non-EU) focus. There are a number of very fine human rights advocates in Greece; however, Mr. Lambrinidis cannot be counted as one of them.

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

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

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

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AMHRC Welcomes Visit of Stephen Jones MP to Macedonia



photo courtesy of www.theaustralian.com.au

The Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) welcomes the visit to the Republic of Macedonia of Mr Stephen Jones MP, the Chairperson of the Australia-Macedonian Parliamentary Friendship Group.

During his visit to Macedonia's capital city, Skopje, Mr Jones met with the President of the Republic of Macedonia, Mr Gjorge Ivanov; the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Nikola Poposki; the President of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, Mr Trajko Veljanovski; and representatives of the opposition. He also attended the Ilinden Macedonian national day celebrations in Krushevo, as an official guest of the Macedonian government.

Mr Jones also met with representatives of the Macedonian minority of Greece, including members of the European Free Alliance – Rainbow, a political party of the Macedonian minority in Greece.

Stephen Jones, of the Australian Labor Party, is the Federal Member for the Division of Throsby, an electorate where many Macedonians reside. He has been a vocal supporter of the Macedonian community on a range of issues including advocating for a change in Australian government policy to recognise the official name of the Republic of Macedonia.

The AMHRC was pleased to have assisted in the preparation of Mr Jones' visit to Macedonia. Last year, Mr Luke Simpkins MP of the Liberal Party and Federal

Member for Cowan, visited Macedonia and met with a wide range of MPs and government officials. The AMHRC will continue to encourage more Australian MPs from all political parties to visit the Republic of Macedonia, as the bilateral relationship between Australia and Macedonia continues to prosper.

The AMHRC once again calls upon the Australian government to recognise the Republic of Macedonia under its official and democratically chosen name and would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr Jones, Mr Simpkins and others for the continued support on this important issue to the Macedonian community.



Stephen Jones MP with the leadership of EFA Rainbow (Vinozhito), the political party of the Macedonian minority of Greece

Australian MP Stephen Jones Meets with Vinozhito

By Dimitri Jovanov

On August 1 in the town of Ohrid in the Republic of Macedonia, **members of Vinozhito's (a political party struggling for the human rights of Macedonians in Greece) Presidency** held an important and interesting meeting with Stephen Jones, an MP from the Australian Federal Parliament. Jones is co-chair of the Australian-Macedonian parliamentary friendship group and he was accompanied by Australian Macedonian community representative Mr. Ljupco Stefanovski. Present at the meeting from Vinozhito were Pando Ashlakov, Pavle Filipov, Dimitri Jovanov, Petse Dimchev and Krste Ashlakov and they held a lengthy discussion with Mr. Jones and Mr. Stefanovski about the problems facing Macedonians in Greece.

The Australian politician surprised the members of Vinozhito with the high level of his knowledge about Macedonian issues – including the refusal of Greece to recognize the existence of Macedonians and the horrors Macedonians in Greece have endured over the course of generations. He was also aware of the **Greek state's refusal to ratify multiple European Conventions and legal standards with the aim of maintaining the "purity" of the nation.** Jones stated that he is disturbed and annoyed by the fact that an EU member is permitted to carry on implementing what is essentially an anti-European politicking with serious failings in the sphere of human rights and shady anachronistic practices.

The discussion continued with a focus on how matters reached their current point via a re-telling of important events from the 20th century. Mr. Jones then enquired about the current social and economic crisis in Greece and we informed him about the current dangerous rise of fascistic nationalism and accompanying criminal acts in Greece. Visibly shocked, he then mentioned that he is aware of Greek entry bans imposed on Australian citizens of Macedonian descent and he asserted that he will not let the matter rest and that he would work towards a resolution of the problem.

The topic of the Republic of Macedonia's name was also discussed and Jones agreed that the whole question is quite unique in modern politics – with one nation attempting, via blackmail and threats, to become another nations 'godfather'. Mr. Jones assented to the view that the Greek position is untenable and ridiculous, not to mention in contravention of international conventions and laws.

The discussion ended with Jones informing the members of Vinozhito that he will do his best to help Macedonians and that he takes a keen interest in Macedonian matters because there are tens of thousands of Australian citizens who originated from Mac-





edonian villages in both Greece and the Republic of Macedonia. Mr. Jones also accepted an invitation from Vinozhito, to shortly visit the Macedonians in Greece, in the company of a delegation consisting of numerous Australian MP's.

There we have it, politicians from far away Australia recognize and express concern about the Macedonians in Greece, yet the politicians of Greece continue to assert that **Macedonians don't exist and still expect** to be taken seriously when they declare that democracy in Greece is practiced at the highest level.

A Summer Brimming with Macedonian Songs and Dances

Ovchareni 19th and 20th July 2012 – Those **who "don't exist", were in celebration mode.** They celebrated Ilinden literally in tens of thousands and from most parts of Aegean Macedonia. The atmosphere was amazing and truly, there are not words to describe it. This is despite the efforts of the Greek authorities to spread disinformation about the event through a variety of media and also

despite their attempt to organize a "similar" event in the village of Rosen.

Authentic Macedonian music and dance was the order of the day in Ovchareni. Apart from the multiple dance groups from Ovchareni itself, performances were also given by the group from the village of Vladovo, Voden County and by the group belonging to the Cultural Association of the town of Demir Hisar in the Republic of Macedonia. The general dance held on the 20th, involving all present, developed into a tremendous symbol of respect for Macedonian culture and identity, as literally thousands participated.

Authentic Macedonian culture was also celebrated in numerous other locations: July 20 Aposkep, Kostur County; July 13 Popozhani, Lerin; July 14 – 15 Tsarmarinovo, Negush; June 1 – 4 Zhupanishte, Kostur; June 16 Todortsi, Meglen; July 7 – 8 Vladovo, Voden; July 25 – 26 Setoma, Kostur – this was so successful that it caused the local authorities to react with consternation; August 3 – 4 Banitsa, Lerin; August 5 Krpeshina, Lerin; August 15 Neret, Lerin; August 15 Dolno Kotori, Lerin; Zbrdeni, Lerin; Visheni,

Kostur; Mokreni, Kajlar; Setina, Lerin....

The cultural events held on August 14 on the town of Ber, also created great interest, as it was organized by the Vlach Society of Ber – songs were sung in the Vlach language and much of the advertising for the event, was written in Vlach.

Delegations from Vinozhito and Nova Zora, attended all these events – interacting with the locals to promote the Macedonian human rights cause and distributing literature and other relevant materials.

Dimitri Jovanov, editor of *Nova Zora* a monthly pro-Macedonian newspaper distributed throughout Aegean Macedonia and beyond: <http://novazora.gr/>

Translated from Macedonian to English by George Vlahov of the AMHRC

INFORMATION FOR MACEDONIANS TRAVELLING TO GREECE

OVERVIEW

The Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC), Macedonian Human Rights Movement International (MHRMI) and the Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM) have jointly prepared the following information for ethnic Macedonians (travelling on any passport) wishing to enter Greece.

In past instances, Greek border authorities have denied some Macedonians entry into the country on discriminatory and highly dubious grounds. Therefore the purpose of this brochure is to provide Macedonians travelling on Australian, Canadian, US, Macedonian and other passports with information on the general requirements for entering Greece and what to do in the event that they are denied entry into the country.

This leaflet is *not* intended to discourage individuals from visiting Greece. On the contrary, we encourage people to visit their family and friends in Aegean Macedonia (Greece) and wish to facilitate greater trans-frontier contacts and cultural exchanges amongst Macedonians and others.

While every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this leaflet is accurate and up-to-date, it remains the responsibility of each individual to check the requirements for entering Greece as they relate to their personal situation.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR ENTERING GREECE?

Australian, Canadian, US, and all EU passport holders do not require visas to enter Greece for tourist purposes and may stay for up to 90 days in the country without a visa.

Macedonian citizens also do not require a visa to enter Greece for stays of up to 90 days, however there are special arrangements in place at the border i.e. the Greek police issue a special document to such passport holders.

WHO HAS BEEN DENIED ENTRY INTO GREECE IN THE PAST?

Technically, each state has the right to grant or deny a person entry into their territory. Despite holding a valid visa or not being required to hold a visa for entry, there is no automatic right to entry. However, Greece is using this as an excuse to deny Macedoni-

ans entry based solely on their ethnicity. The overwhelming majority of visitors to Greece do not face problems entering the country. This is also true for most Macedonians, however there have been cases in the past where entry has been denied to some Macedonians travelling on foreign passports. Here are some examples and categories of people who have been affected:

* Macedonians born in Greece

This is the most common category of people who are denied entry into Greece. Under normal circumstances such persons should be allowed to return to their country of birth, however there have been cases where Australian, Canadian and Macedonian citizens have been denied entry for a variety of reasons including:

- *Having their place of birth recorded in their foreign passport under the Macedonian or traditional name and not the Greek or current name of the place, eg: "Lerin" instead of "Florina". This is one of the most common reasons that Macedonians born in Greece are denied entry into the country.*
- *Being declared a "security threat" and/or being placed on the National Registrar of Undesired Persons (black list). Although they are not told of the reason for their inclusion in the registrar, it is usually related to their pro-Macedonian orientation or activism in the country where they now reside. This is uncommon and will not affect most people. However persons who have been prominent human rights activists in the past could fall into this category.*

* Macedonians born elsewhere

In the past, Macedonians who were not born in Greece have been denied entry on the grounds of being a "security threat" and/or being placed on the National Registrar of Undesired Persons (black-list). Although they are not told of the reason for their inclusion in the registrar, it is usually related to their Macedonian activism in the country where they now reside. This especially might apply to prominent human rights activists in the past, especially descendant of Macedonians born in Aegean Macedonia (Greece).

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU ARE DENIED ENTRY INTO GREECE?

1. Ensure that the Greek border officials issue you a "Refusal of Entry at the Border"

document. This is an official document stating the reason that you have been denied entry. The document is issued in English and Greek, and you will be required to sign it before it is given to you. It is very important that you obtain this document, as it is evidence that you were denied entry and contains details of how you can appeal the decision.

2. Immediately contact the AMHRC, MHRMI or GHM. We can assist you in lodging an official complaint with the relevant Greek authorities. Remember, you DO have a right to appeal the decision and we strongly recommend that you exercise this right. We have been successful in getting some of the entry bans removed and also getting various foreign governments to confront Greece about this discriminatory practice.

AMHRC

Tel: +61 3 9329 8960

Email: info@macedonianhr.org.au

MHRMI

Tel: +1 416 850 7125,

Email: info@mhmi.org

GHM

Tel: +30 210 347 2259

Email: helsinki@otenet.gr

3. **Contact your country's embassy in Greece.** It is important that you register an official complaint and ask the embassy staff to take action on your behalf and raise the matter with Greek authorities.

Australian Embassy in Athens

Tel: +30 210 870 4000

Email: ae.athens@dfat.gov.au

Canadian Embassy in Athens

Tel: +30 210 727 3400

Email: athns@international.gc.ca

US Embassy in Athens

Tel: +30 210 721 2951

E-mail: AthensAmEmb@state.gov

All other countries

Contact information can be found here:

<http://www.mfa.gr/en/foreign-missions-in-greece.html>



From the Detsa Begaltsi Files: *Sofia's Story*

By Ivan Hristovski

Many Macedonians have heard stories about the Detsa Begaltsi. Each story is unique and different and yet similar because of the contours of the context and the nature of humanity. As the Greek Civil War was coming to a close children were evacuated from the Macedonian lands under Greek rule. 10 year old Sofia Kostovska would go on a sad and difficult journey from her village Grazhdano in the Lerin region to Nivitsi in Prespa to a temporary holding camp in what used to be Czechoslovakia and to Tashkent. But her journey didn't stop in Tashkent. She would eventually join her family in Skopje and move to Toronto where she would be married and have two daughters becoming an educator and making a fateful return back to her village Grazhdano. While giving this interview I expected Sofia to breakdown and cry as she told me of the exodus of children from their birthplace. But she was strong and her character shines through in the words below.

Ivan: Where did you and your family come from?

Sofia: We were from the Lerin area from the village Grazhdano. We all worked and helped in the fields from sunrise to sunset. There were my parents, grandparents, my younger brother and sister, aunts, uncles, cousins....everyone we knew and loved were here. This was way before and during the civil war.

Ivan: What did your parents and grandparents tell you about the Greeks in Macedonia?

Sofia: I remember them telling me that before I was born the Greeks gave everyone in the village a difficult time. There were no Greeks in Lerin before Macedonia was partitioned. So when they occupied Macedonia they set out to make Macedonians into Greeks. The Greeks were viewed as foreigners. They built Greek churches and Greek schools and began to systematically erase any evidence of a Macedonian society. I

was told that they forcefully Hellenized Macedonians by ruthlessly imposing language restrictions. Something I would later experience myself. Anyone caught speaking the Macedonian language would be punished.

Ivan: What sort of punishment did they hand out?

Sofia: I heard stories from many of the villagers where Greeks would roam around the fields they worked listening to people speak. If they heard anyone speaking Macedonian they would beat them and tell them to only speak Greek. Sometimes they would even steal whatever was gathered from the fields literally taking someone's daily bread.

Ivan: You lived under the Metaxas regime. Tell us what it was like and what other Macedonians felt at that time?

Sofia: Metaxas was not liked by any real Macedonian. He forced the non-Greeks to speak Greek. Whether you were

Macedonian, Turkish, Vlach, etc. you were to never speak your mother tongue. He wanted to purge anything non-Greek from Macedonia and so he began to Hellenize the names of villages, towns, lakes, mountains and anything Macedonian. Language laws he imposed on the population were extremely strict. I went to school with Macedonians and the teacher would scold and punish us if we spoke Macedonian. At school we were taught Greek. You were beaten with a stick and called a Bulgarian if you spoke Macedonian. For many in my generation Greek was a foreign language. To me Metaxas could be compared to Hitler. He set up a system to eliminate Macedonian writing anywhere in Macedonia. The destruction and removal of headstones in cemeteries started before Met-

axas. During his reign Macedonian cemeteries were continually disturbed. He wanted to show the world that Greece was a pure nation and forced Hellenization was the only way for him to make Macedonians into Greeks.

Quan: What can you tell us about the other minorities in Greece? What stories did you hear about them? And were there any non-Macedonians in your village?

Sofia: There was a Christian Turk village we passed through with my family sometimes that was between our village Gra-zhdano and Prespa. These were the refugees from Istanbul. **They were not Greeks. As far as I knew they didn't speak**



Greek. But they were Christians and so they would be forced **to learn Greek and to forget their mother tongue. We didn't like them and they didn't like us. Some of the older Macedonians told us that they were left all over the country to make it more Greek. So we didn't like them but their feelings towards us were mutual.** Both sides viewed each other with suspicion. They were really the minority of Macedonia. They came from Turkey. We Macedonians were always there, generation after generation. Today we have descendants of these refugees claiming to be Macedonian for thousands of years and the true Macedonians have become the unrecognized minority of their own land occupied for the 99 years by foreigners from Athens.

Quan: You and your siblings were forced to leave your vil-

lage during the Greek civil war. You were one of the Detsa Begaltsi forced to relocate to different countries. Tell us about your experience.

Sofia: That was a very sad time for me and my family. For everyone in Gra-zhdano. The war was slowly coming to an end and much of Lerinsko was part of the communist movement. Things were getting **worse. People were dying and every child's parent had to make an upsetting decision.** So they began to remove children away from the war zone. In my opinion they saved our lives from the war. We were three kids, I was the oldest, then my brother, and my sister was the youngest. She was very upset **and would hold on to my mother crying that she didn't want to leave Gra-zhdano and she didn't want to be separated from**



our parents. My mother didn't want us to go but my grandfather said that it had to be so. They were able to convince her to go eventually. I think it was every child between the ages of 2 and 14. Our first destination was the village Nivitsi in Prespa. From there the youngest of us were taken on boats across the lake into the Socialist Republic of Macedonia which was part of Yugoslavia. The older children, like me, had to walk there. It rained very hard that first day, making our journey harder. But we made it and before long we were gathered onto rail cars headed to Czechoslovakia.

Juan: With your arrival to what was then Czechoslovakia what was it like being in a foreign country away from your parents?

Sofia: It was difficult to adjust but being the oldest I had to make the transitions for my sister easy to deal with. My brother was separated from us since they kept boys and girls in separate areas. This is what the Czechoslovakians were strict on. It was hard not knowing what was going on with my brother. He was by himself. We were brought to a camp to get haircuts, a bath, and a new change of clothes. My aunt accompanied the girls but we ended up being separated for a while. The women who had cut my hair helped me locate my sister who was in complete tears. When we found my aunt we went out to locate the rest of the Kostovski children. My brother we found eventually on the boys side. The emotional stress on the children was great indeed. Being together would have made it a little less painful I guess.

Juan: Were there Greeks that were brought in with the Macedonians?

Sofia: The tiny camp we settled was full of Macedonian children from Kostur and Lerin. Once we were all settled some Greek children were brought to stay with us. I think they intended to mix us up but they were fewer in number.

Juan: Did they pose any problems to the Macedonians?

Sofia: Not really. Probably because they were fewer in numbers. But some of the Greek adults tried telling the Czechoslovakian authorities that we were Greeks. But they knew better and just went about their business. Once the Greeks told us that we were to be happy and united and tried to teach us Greek songs and dances. Being older than the other kids we would refuse outright and would tell the younger kids to run away when the Greeks tried teaching them these things.

Juan: What did your passport say?

Sofia: I didn't have a passport at the time. We were given numbers which is how we were identified. But at the school there, for some reason the Greek name that was forced on us and our true Macedonian names appeared on our certificates together. When we left Czechoslovakia to go to Tashkent in the Soviet Union we were identified by number. Upon arrival to the border we transferred to a different railroad and were called by our Macedonian names only. From here on the Greek name was never used again and never ever mentioned.

Juan: What happened in Tashkent?

Sofia: We were re-united with our parents who were given a job at some factory. This factory they worked for supplied them with an apartment. There were Greeks in Tashkent but we were only around Macedonians. There were Macedonians who mingled with the Greeks, and these Macedonians would learn Greek and keep their forced Greek names. What became of them you can only imagine. We were in Tashkent for two years before re-uniting with my grandparents. Those two years were hard. We talked about our village and told stories of happier times. We never wanted to leave our homes. That experience changed all of our lives forever. What belonged to us in Grazhdano was now someone else's. It was very heartbreaking to leave the land of my family.

Juan: What happened after Tashkent?

Sofia: We moved to Skopje and settled down there. We were free to be Macedonian in the Soviet Union but it wasn't Macedonia. We were one of the first waves of Macedonians to leave Tashkent for the Socialist Republic of Macedonia. My father found work immediately and life for us would normalize again.

Juan: During your stay in Skopje did you ever try to set foot on Aegean Macedonia?

Sofia: Somehow in 1964 I was able to travel to Solun with the company I worked for. In Solun they were speaking to us in Macedonian which was a very big surprise for me. I even saw them advertise in Macedonian in the hotel that I stayed in.

Ivan: So you eventually married another Macedonian and moved to Canada to begin a new life. You earned a Master's degree in Slavic languages at the University of British Columbia. You have two daughters, became an educator, and you were involved with what was then the United Macedonians.

Sofia: Well teaching is my life's passion. I opened my own education centers in Toronto. Before that we had moved to Vancouver and I earned my Masters degree in Slavic Languages. I was involved with the Macedonian community. We opened up a Macedonian school, we had churches, we had our own people and we are many here. For a short time I was involved with the United Macedonians. Shortly thereafter I taught Macedonian night courses in the University of Toronto. It wasn't easy but I liked doing it.

Ivan: What about the Grkoman's in Toronto?

Sofia: I never mixed company with these sort of people. They once were Macedonians who are now Greek. They have their own churches and schools and that is that.

Ivan: Have you ever been back to your village in Lerin?

Sofia: Yes in 1987. Me and my cousin brought my daughters and nephew with us to show them where we were from. At the border between what would become the Republic of Macedonia and Greece I had presented the border guards with my Canadian passport which had my place of birth as "Grazhdano, Macedonia". They looked at us and started asking questions. I was very nervous and the children were confused. My cousin spoke Greek with the border guards and one of them seemed to take a liking to my oldest daughter. They allowed us to pass after some time. I was very surprised we were allowed to go through; but very delighted as well, since it was such a long time since I was home. But I came to find out it wasn't home at all. We managed to get a cab and the driver was suspicious of us and asked questions in Greek and broken English and I spoke to him in Macedonian. He kept insisting "No Makedonets, No Makedonets". A thunder storm came and it rained pretty hard scaring the children but the cabbie finally got comfortable enough to speak some Macedonian but he would revert back to Greek. He told us something that haunts me to this day. He said "when you children left it rained like this. Now that you've returned you brought the rain back."

Once we reached Grazhdano I recognized many of the buildings but something was definitely different. I pointed to where my home once stood and asked the driver to please wait for us since it was raining. He agreed. My daughter wanted to take some pictures of the village. But there was no house to take a picture of. What remained of my family's home was a pile of rubble. My daughter took some pictures and I think this started upsetting some people there. People were coming out of their houses asking us who we were in

Greek and they said no more pictures. The cab driver told them that we were only passing through and wanted some pictures. But the people were upset. I didn't care. Me and the children started gathering stones and rubble from what was once our house and put them in our bags. These would become heartbreaking gifts for my parents and siblings when we returned to Skopje. The villagers were telling us to leave. We heard dogs barking and I looked up to see some dogs running towards us. Rocks were thrown at us and the cab driver told us to get in the car. We got away just in time. Everyone was very upset.

Ivan: Were these people Macedonians? Or were they Grkoman?

Sofia: The cab driver said that those who approached us were Vlachs that were settled in the village after the war. He said the government put a lot of these people in evacuated villages.

Ivan: What else happened while you were over the border?

Sofia: Well I didn't mention this part because it's disturbing. Before we stopped by where the house once stood we pulled over by the church. The doors were locked though and so we continued onward further into the village. The cab driver mentioned the priest of the village was having a house built on a plot of land not far from there. They stopped all work when they dug up a mass grave and found bones everywhere.

Ivan: Were these murdered Macedonians from the war?

Sofia: He wouldn't say. And I didn't press him further.

Ivan: The Macedonians in Greece today are still denied basic human rights. They remain unrecognized. They are denied their own history, culture, and language under the Greeks. If you could talk to these Macedonians what would you tell them?

Sofia: I would tell them to fight for their rights. If you are a Macedonian you must fight and continue to fight. Those Macedonians who have lost their language or have doubts due to Greek propaganda should read more about their history. Education is key. If you're willing to learn then you will learn why we are Macedonian and nothing else.

Interview conducted in September 2012 by the AMHRC's New York representative, Ivan Hristovski.



silence is not an option.

MHRMI and AMHRC call on Macedonians throughout the world to show their support for human rights for Macedonians throughout the Balkans.

MHRMI and AMHRC finance and organize all Macedonian human rights activities and work directly with every Macedonian human rights organization including Vinozhito, OMO Ilinden PIRIN, MAEI, Nova Zora, Narodna Volja, Ilinden Tirana, the Home of Macedonian Culture, and all others.

By supporting us, you are directly supporting the cause of human rights for all Macedonians.

Among our many initiatives are:

- Macedonian language classes in Aegean Macedonia and Albania, including the opening of another new kindergarten class in Korca, Albania;
- In addition to the MHRMI/AMHRC-purchased and financed radio station in Lerin, we recently opened a TV station in Korca;
- The historic Detsa Begaltsi lawsuit against Greece for the return of confiscated property, citizenship and financial compensation;
- The funding of pro-Macedonian newspapers and publications in Aegean Macedonia, Pirin Macedonia and Mala Prespa;
- The landmark European Court of Human Rights judgments against Bulgaria and Greece for violating Macedonian human rights;
- The operation of human rights

offices for Macedonians in Bulgaria, Greece and Albania;

- The crucial Our Name is Macedonia campaign, which demands that Macedonia end all negotiations over its name; and
- Funding successful election campaigns for Macedonian candidates in Bulgaria, Greece and Albania.

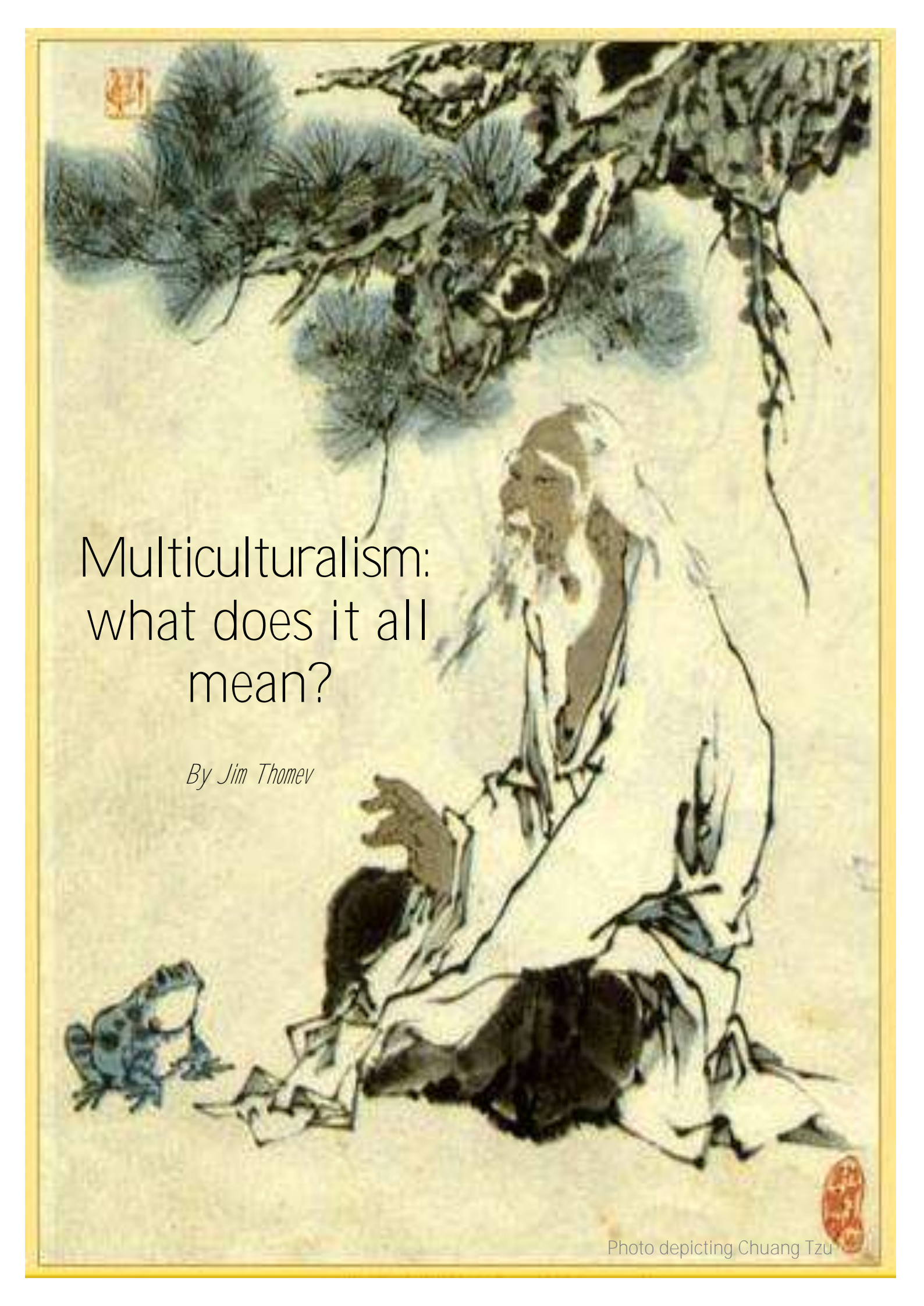
We also lobby strongly for recognition of Macedonia and Macedonian human rights in Washington, Ottawa, Canberra, Brussels and throughout the world, specifically:

- Meetings with Canadian, American, Australian and European heads of state and parliamentarians;
- Meetings with Foreign Affairs officials from Canada, Australia, the US State Department, Council of Europe, among many others;
- Attendance at United Nations, OSCE and other international human rights conferences and
- Meetings with UN Ambassador Nimetz to reiterate our demand that the international community support the end to the "name negotiations".

Macedonians are organized, energized and determined to pursue their struggle for universal human rights. The biggest challenge we face is a financial one. Please show your support by joining the MHRMI Human Rights Fund or the AMHRC's Macedonian Minorities Support Fund.

Thank you in advance.

Show Your Support For Macedonian Human Rights



Multiculturalism: what does it all mean?

By Jim Thomev

Photo depicting Chuang Tzu

Herodotus ('father' of history and/or 'father' of lies¹) in his opening lines of his wonderful *The Histories* proclaims his general purpose thus:

Herodotus of Halicarnassus² here presents his research so that human events do not fade with time. May the great and wonderful deeds – some brought forth by the Hellenes, others by the barbarians – not go unsung; as well as the causes that led them to make war on each other.³

The relevance of Herodotus to the title of my article is simple: he is the first writer of prose, historical prose, if you will, who can rightly be credited with having announced, described, uncovered, or discovered the multicultural nature of the world. Incidentally the world was multicultural in the 5th Century BCE, multicultural in 2012 CE, and will remain so till kingdom come...

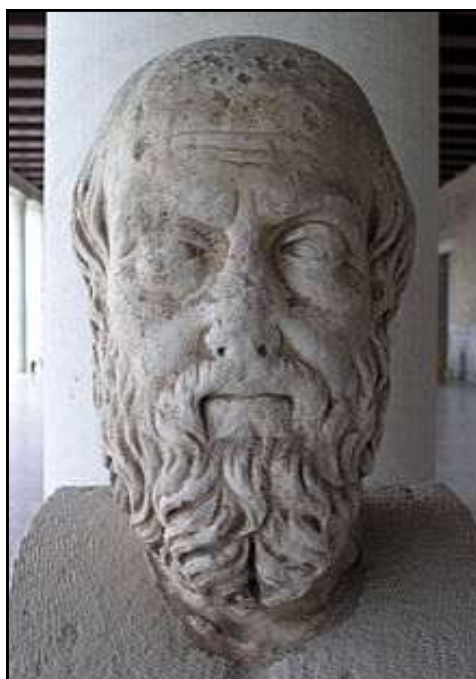
There are translations of the same opening which offer "Greeks" for "Hellenes" and "non-Greeks" for "barbarians". What does it matter, given that all names are arbitrary and as Chuang Tzu the 4th century BCE Chinese sage said **there is no reason why "cats" should not be referred to by the sound or written symbol "dogs"** – names are just an arbitrary convention, a product of human will, or a mental construct as the sociologists tell us these days. Thus if one were to express astonishment or offer a prayer publicly by crying out "My God!", if linguistic convention had been different and one yelled "My Dog!" for either purpose, according to Chuang Tzu, it would be no skin off anyone's nose, or be considered a sign of dyslexia or blasphemy.

We all get the idea. More importantly perhaps, for the father of history (and/or lies) is that his general purpose is to be fair to everybody as he acknowledges, from the very outset of his account of his remarkable travels and stories, that other cultures, those that were non-Greek, had achieved "great and wonderful deeds".

So we are plunged immediately in a world of a writer who speaks with authority; a writer, who will "display" (the

literal meaning of the Greek word he uses, here translated as "presents"⁴) his "enquiries" (or "investigations") with an attempt to minimise bias, prejudice and partisanship as far as humanly possible. In other words, he will not be telling us how terrific the Greeks are in comparison to what crap the "barbarians" are. His performance does not disappoint...

However, he does tell us that the Athenians played a bigger role in keeping the Persians from subjugating Hellas, and no doubt this would have annoyed the Spartans who certainly had a different



Herodotus

view especially with all those heroics at Thermopylae. There are no perfect historians – or human beings for that matter, as anyone bothering to read this article (or this Review for that matter) will already be aware.

We should immediately jump on this issue concerning the problems in the writing of history books (or journalism – Herodotus combines the two and more) so **let's hear it from one of the wittiest comic writers from the ancient world.**

The following is how Lucian of Samosata, describes the ideal historian: He (or she) must be "*fearless, incorruptible and free; outspoken and a friend to truth, calling a spade a spade; uninfluenced by likes and dislikes or any sort of emotional consideration; a fair and impartial judge who will*

never give to one side more than its due; a man [or woman], so far as his[her] writings are concerned, belonging to no country and owing allegiance to no master; king over him[her]self, determined to state not what will please the reader of his[her] choice, but the plain facts only."

(Lucian, "On How to Write History"⁵)

Anyone taking this passage at its face value needs to be reminded that Lucian was an Assyrian who wrote blistering satires in the Greek (Attic) language of the time in the 2nd Century CE. (He was born in Samosata, in eastern Turkey these days and identified as an Assyrian i.e. barbarian; he is alleged to have been born before 125 and to have died after 180 CE or AD-he therefore may still be around).

Lucian clearly outlines an ideal that can never be realised - it is a psychological impossibility to find a human being with such qualities, so it is most likely he was having a joke. Of course once you get the lowdown on Lucian and the times he lived in, what he found interesting about them and what he got up to, and how he saw human beings he could scarcely have been serious: he was a first-rate scoffer who no more believed the above ideal as feasible than he believed that the all-powerful god Zeus went around having sex with lovely young women disguised as a bull or a swan. He was a **мајтапџија**, *par excellence*, an infidel, and as one very pious early Christian thinker wrote, "**he [Lucian] was such a blasphemer and atheist, that the filthy wretch deserved his fate when he was torn to pieces by savage dogs and sent to everlasting torments in the other world**". Perhaps Lucian would have been very disappointed by this uncharitable account of his death, but the hopes of the holy man for his eternal punishment would no doubt have made him smile, as it is a clear demonstration that his efforts to improve the minds of his contemporaries by ridiculing their nonsense were not appreciated by everybody. But Lucian would also have been moved by the pleasure his pious assailant got in repeating the hearsay about the death of such an arch-sinner as himself.

It is obvious (I almost said "fact") that matters of opinion or judgement can never be above partiality as there is no one who could free him/herself of that bundle of dispositions, passions, prejudices, bias and beliefs. These components go into making up what we take to be **personality, or temper. So let's not waste time over the strange (bogus) distinction between "objective" and "subjective"** when it is a question of reportage - accounts of history or current affairs. It may be essentially a matter of degrees of distortion or spin or misrepresentation.⁶

So the love of truth is not the paramount pursuit for those pushing a particular ideology or religion or view of the world that promotes sectional or sectarian interests.

None-the-less the blatant nationalist non-recognition of other cultures and ethnic groups that has characterised the modern Hellenic Republic is an anomaly, not to say absurdity given the pretensions

and nationalist ideology of its contemporary inhabitants. Europeans generally of course have the problem of still looking down on the rest of the world. It was this habit that led to the colonisation of as much of the rest of the world (full of **"barbarians" and "backward peoples"**) they could lay their armies and religion on.

A very serious peculiarity, indeed, of Modern Greek nationalism, is the paradox at the centre of its world outlook: that for all the claims to a lineage culturally (even more crazily, blood heritage) there is barely any significant resemblance to any of the ancient cultures on the Balkan peninsula that has been loosely referred to as Hellas by Herodotus. Thus, there are no continuities like the religions of the time, dress codes, beliefs about society, or the nature of the universe – the earth, as in the Bible was believed to be flat. Least of all, do the universal lessons that the writers and poets of the classical period taught the

world have any traction; lessons like cosmopolitanism, humanism, respect and an attempt to understand other ways of life (Herodotus especially and famously Aeschylus in his tragedy, *The Persians*). How can one claim lineage of any sort if the **most basic lessons haven't been taken on board?** (Even if one could prove blood or establish cultural lineage, I would still say: so what? But some other time for this appeal to history for cultural and territorial pretensions and such-like nasty power-politics.)

The Modern Greeks have completely **ignored Herodotus' view that the so-called barbarians (or non-Greeks) not only did not merely make incomprehensible sounds like "barbaros", (or gibberish and warbles), but had remarkable achievements of their own (geometry, religions, engineering, commerce, alphabets etc) that they picked up on themselves.** And according to our famous reporter and thinker, Herodotus, the non-Greeks had an even longer history by a



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huge number of more generations. His appreciation of the contribution of the Egyptians is a crucial case in point.

Thus to the question: where did “we”, (i.e. “we Greeks”) get our gods, Herodotus, in defiance of the general arrogant turning up of the noses of the time at other cultures, answered, “the Egyptians were the first people in the world to hold general festive assemblies, and religious processions and parades, and the Greeks learnt from the Egyptians.”

This is quite radical. He elaborates further, *“In fact Heracles is a very ancient Egyptian god; as they themselves say, it was seventeen thousand years before the reign of King Amasis when the Twelve Gods descended from the Eight Gods, and they regard Heracles as one of the Twelve.”*

The important point in all this is not so much who thought of which god first; of extreme significance is the intellectual honesty (or humility) implicit in acknowledging of the uniqueness, distinctness, or difference of the others without condemning them as inferior in order to **cheer oneself up by asserting one’s own superiority**. This is a fundamental attitude difference that betokens an enlightened mind. Herodotus strongly suggests common humanity binds us and makes it possible to coexist on friendly terms. The

analogy with the best of multicultural values in Australia will not be lost on those of us who can see past the imperfections of clumsy government policies that may come and go. A genuine appreciation of the real strengths of the Australian political scene is a must for the fair-minded.

My own stake in the matter of minority rights is hardly surprising given that I was born in the part of Macedonia that was incorporated by the Greek state after a brutal series of wars earlier in the twentieth century. Not only that: I grew up as a member of a minority in a prosperous Australia which experienced tremendous social changes due to immigration, boom and bust economic cycles, and fast-moving revolutionary technological developments.

On the issue of Macedonian ethnicity and the injustices against the Macedonian people and nation, especially the risible and lamentable name dispute **since the Republic of Macedonia’s declaration of independence in 1991**, I will invoke the authority of the Chinese philosopher Chuang Tzu. Unusual for a philosopher who influenced a major religion in China, (Daoism or Taoism) he is often smiling ironically and even laughing about the vanities of this world through many of the sparkling fragments at-

tributed to him, thus: *“Speech is meant to convey something but what that is has not being fully determined. Is there really something like speech, or is there nothing at all like it? Can one see it as distinct from the warbling of birds or not?”*

Such interrogations would be invaluable at any forum where judgement and fairness and veracity are called for – whether it is in the sublime heights of any congresses, conferences, parliaments, or **“merely” the farcical round the table mediated “discussions” about a sovereign nation’s constitutional name**. By the same token, some vigorous moral and ethical self-interrogations by political leaders would not be remiss, I warrant.

I have often recommended that any session on mediation on the name dispute between the Macedonians and the Greeks should be whiled away by the participants in laughing at each other. **Or if that’s too much to ask, to at least have a go at an ancient practice of the proto-Goths, who were very serious about democratic discussions and law-making**. Apparently in their parliamentary gatherings, these ancestors of the modern Germans, would have a completely sober session issuing in serious decision-making; then there would be a repetition of the same discussion in a session where all the participants were com



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Jim Thomev

pletely drunk; if the decisions made in both sessions were identical, they were declared valid and therefore worthy of being ratified. The story may be apocryphal, but it is worth telling in this context. I believe, if this proposal were taken seriously and insisted upon by the UN mediation authorities, we would all be waiting with bated breath for the next installment, instead of having the glaze descend over our eyes as we hear the usual dismal rubbish repeated.

In any case, I think I would be on firmer ground with our more earnest readers if I strongly recommend the singular classics

left us by Herodotus and Chuang Tzu as antidotes to modern insanities. From both you will get a liberating sense of modesty and decency as an approach to the world in all its variety, excitement and horror. In my opinion, they make far more interesting reading than the vast majority (if not all) of our newspapers that seem to do little more than add to our quota of daily annoyances.

Jim Thomev

Bibliography

¹ No less an authority than the rigorous classical historian M I Finley considers "Father of Lies" for Europe's first historian as a serious and accurate epithet – historiography is full of controversies – just like its subject matter. My view is that you can't beat a well-told story and it's hard to beat *The Histories*, with their magnificent blend of the entertaining and the instructive.

² Herodotus grew up in Halicarnassus a city in Asia Minor (the Aegean Sea coast of Turkey today). In his later years Herodotus lived in Thurii on the southern most of the Italian peninsula.

³ *The Landmark Herodotus, The Histories*, ed. Robert B. Strassler, trans. Andrea L. Purvis, 2008, Quercus, London.

⁴ Let us remember that the targeted audience of these accounts of his travels and reports about other cultures were still mostly in the preliterate stage. Herodotus was clearly performing or reading aloud his "histories" – a kind of half-way house between the oral and the literate cultures.

⁵ Cited in Aubrey De Selincourt, *The World of Herodotus*, Secker & Warburg, London, 1962.

⁶ Read any of the books about human deception and prevarication currently in vogue with titles such as *The Post-Truth Era*, or *The ABC of Lying*, or *On Bullshit* and so forth.

⁷ No doubt the Twitter sites on the internet could be also referred to by other verbs that designate bird sounds.

AMHRC Condemns the Presence of “Neo-Nazis” at Local Community Event



The Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee is deeply concerned about the presence of members of a racist “neo-Nazi” organisation at a recent Greek community event in Melbourne.

On Sunday 25 March 2012, the Australian Greek community organised a “Greek Independence Day Parade” at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne. According to the Greek Australian newspaper, Neos Kosmos, the event was attended by a number of Greek community groups, as well as the Premier of the State of Victoria, the Hon. Ted Baillieu, members of the Victorian and Federal Parliaments and representatives from Victoria Police and the Australian Defence Forces.

However what Neos Kosmos failed to report was the fact that the event was attended by members of a Melbourne branch of the so-called “Chrysi Avgi” (Golden Dawn) organisation. Nevertheless, their presence at the parade was ‘proudly’ displayed on the organisation’s official website:

<http://xryshaygh.wordpress.com/2012/03/25/%CF%87%CF%81%CF%85%CF%83%CE%B7-%CE%B1%CF%85%CE%B3%CE%B7-%CF%80%CE%B1%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%BF%CF%85-%CE%B1%CF%85%CF%83%CF%84%CF%81%CE%B1%CE%BB%CE%B9%CE%B1-25%CE%B7-%CE%BC%CE%B1%CF%81%CF%84%CE%AF%CE%BF%CF%85/>

According to a report submitted by the Greek Helsinki Monitor (an Athens based human rights organisation) to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racism and Discrimination (UN CERD), Golden Dawn is “**openly neo-Nazi, anti-Semitic, racist and white supremacist and have been involved in many violent incidents against migrants, Macedonians ... as well as in desecration of Jewish monuments.**”

See full GHM submission here:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/cerds75.htm>

In 2009, on the basis of the report of the Greek Helsinki Monitor, UN CERD officially recommended that Greece ban such

groups, calling upon the authorities to “**take effective measures to penalize organizations and media outlets that are guilty of such acts. It further recommends that the State party concretely ban Neo-Nazi groups from its territory and take more effective measures to promote tolerance towards persons of different ethnic origins.**”

See full UN CERD report here:

<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G09/448/55/PDF/G0944855.pdf?OpenElement>

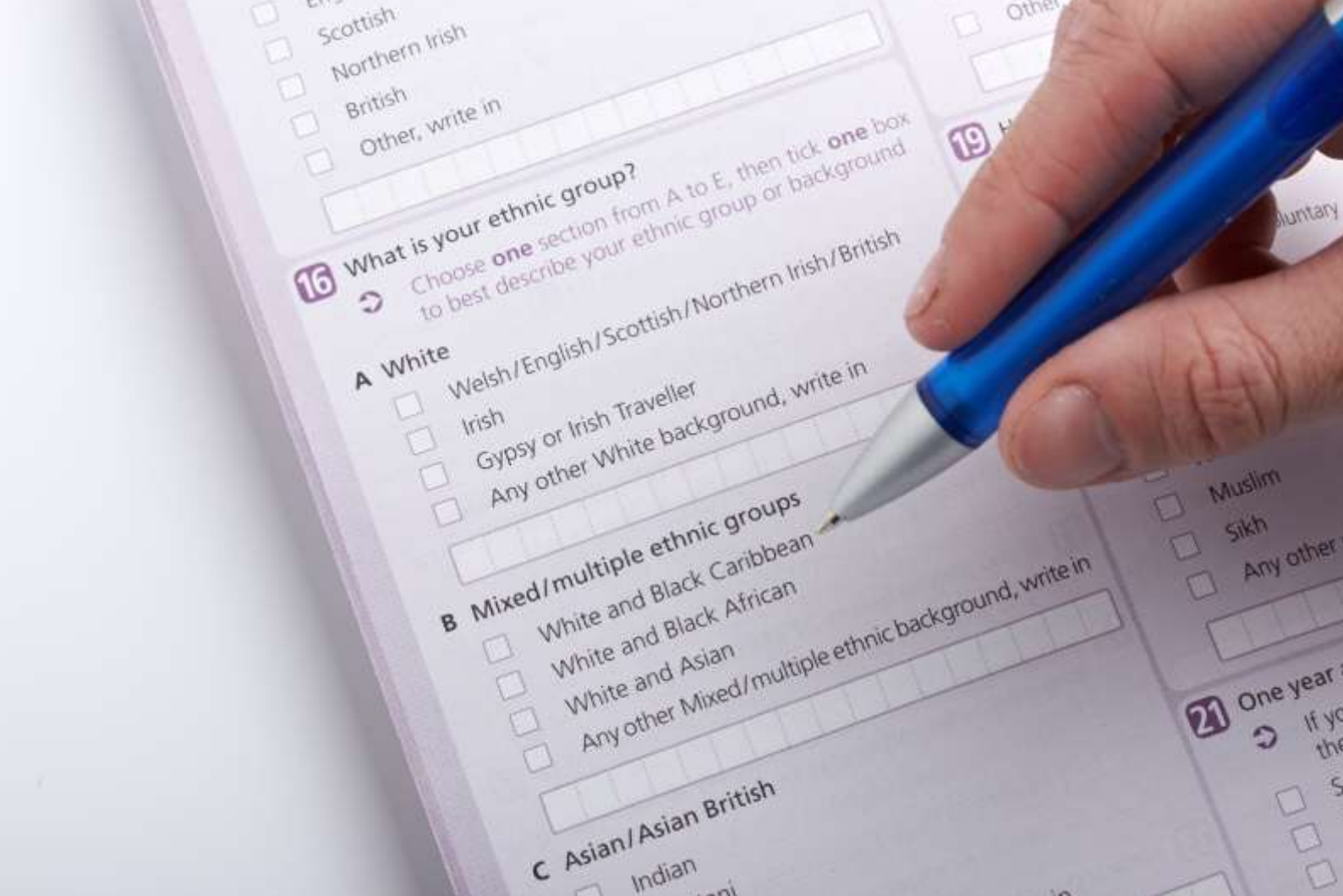
While the Australian Macedonian Rights Committee recognises the right of all ethnic communities to organise peaceful national day celebrations and cultural events, the open and unimpeded presence of members of racist groups at such events is totally unacceptable.

Given the fact that members of the “Golden Dawn” group were wearing distinct black coloured clothing with the words “Golden Dawn” in Greek on the back of their attire, they were clearly visible and easily identifiable to all those present including the event organisers. As such, the neo-Nazi group should have been asked to leave the grounds of the Shrine immediately. Regrettably, they were permitted to stay.

In future, Australian political leaders need to take heed of who exactly they are addressing so as to avoid such embarrassing situations. The fact that the Premier of Victoria, the Hon. Ted Baillieu, flanked to the right by his Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Mr Nicholas Kotsiras, addressed a gathering in the presence of a neo-Nazi group, at the Shrine of Remembrance of all places, is very disturbing.

The Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee calls upon community leaders to condemn this incident and ensure the exclusion of racist groups from future community events.

Manifestations of racism and intolerance have no place in Australian society.



2011 AUSTRALIAN CENSUS DATA: Almost 100,000 Macedonians in Australia

In the six months prior to the 2011 Australian census held on Tuesday 9 August 2011, the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) prepared instructional leaflets in both English and Macedonian, for the benefit of the Macedonian community. The material related to the questions on ancestry, language, country of birth and religion.

Today, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) made a first data release in relation to the 2011 Census and the following statistical data is of particular relevance to the Macedonian community:

• Ancestry

The data on the question of ancestry showed that there were 93,570 persons of Macedonian ancestry in Australia (compared to 83,978 at the 2006 census).

• Language spoken at home

The data on the question of language spoken at home showed that at the 2011 census there were a total of 68,849

persons in Australia who spoke the Macedonian language at home (compared to 67,833 the 2006 census).

• Country of Birth

The data on the question of country of birth showed that at the 2011 census there were a total of 40,222 persons born in the Republic of Macedonia (compared to 40,656 at the 2006 census).

The AMHRC has requested more detailed data from the ABS on the number of persons born in Greece who declared their ancestry to be Macedonian (the 2006 census recorded 2,856 persons).

The Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee would like to thank the many thousands of Macedonians who participated in the census and a special thanks to all those in our community who contributed to this successful campaign by making the leaflets widely available.

We look forward to continuing our cooperation at the next census in 2016!

Some of the Issues for Diaspora Macedonians in relation to Investing in Macedonia

By Mirco Angelovski



When Macedonia declared independence from the former Federation of Yugoslavia in 1991, it fulfilled a strong desire of many of its citizens for a free and independent state; equally though, many of them did not foresee the enormous difficulties which lay ahead.

What haven't they endured over these 21 years: embargoes, sanctions, a very difficult and unfair privatisation program; the unrestrained exploitation of labour; shockingly high levels of unemployment; compromised syndicalism; the emergence of an oligarchy that has destroyed the middle class; the flourishing of organized crime and the inability of the state institutions to cope; corrupt politicking, compromised elections and parliaments lacking responsible opposition; Albanian paramilitaries and the seriously flawed Ohrid Framework Agreement; the Interim Accord; a parallel referendum for the formation of "Ilirida"; presidential assassination attempts; trade and political blockades implicitly supported by the EU; a decision to change the state flag at the behest of foreign state racism and the denial of Macedonian ethnic/national identity....

As a result, Macedonia is currently politically and economically fragile, divided along ethnic and party lines and pressed externally to change its official name. Besides seeming general agreement on the desirability of joining the EU and NATO, the politicians do not have a common approach when it comes to the national interests of the country. Moreover, much remains to be done in Macedonia to reduce corruption and other obstructions to economic stability, including improving the technical quality of governance.

All the same, given the current global financial situation, **Macedonia, a small Balkan country with a 'developing' economy, is** proving to be economically viable. To its credit, the current government has taken *some* active steps in a bid to attract foreign investment by attempting to ensure equality for *some* foreign investors in collaboration with domestic counterparts, and has also taken other initiatives to provide numerous incentives to attract such investment. There are a number of large and smaller foreign companies setting up businesses in Macedonia, jobs have been created and also there is an improvement in the design of its infrastructure.

So it would be unfair to ignore these efforts and to not note that in the World Bank's "Doing Business 2012" report, Macedonia moved up to 22nd from 34th place in the rankings on the ease of doing business, out of 183 countries ranked. Also in the same report, it is ranked as the third best reforming country in the world. Furthermore, the government's economic team led by Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, has carried out an extensive promotional campaign through international media outlets and high level government road shows.

The Australian Macedonian Community's Relationship with Macedonia

During a recent visit to a Macedonian Diaspora community, in one of his speeches Mr. Gruevski stated the following:

"On the eve of the 21st birthday of the independence of the Republic of Macedonia, I want to send a message of unity, solidarity and defiance before the challenges we face. Stakes are high - a stable, developed and a prosperous Macedonia. It is a legacy that our ancestors have left us and it is our duty to put fully available all the resources, all experience, knowledge and potential that we have, in order to build a strong and a respected state. It is a unique way of winning the battle over the negators of the Macedonian people and the Macedonian church. Stay strong, stay united, and do not divide amongst yourselves in the diaspora. We need you united and only that way will you help Macedonia"

Although the above statements sound encouraging and might stir patriotic emotions, in reality they ignore the actualities of the **current state of the Australian Macedonian Community's structural relationship with Macedonia**. The stated ideals have not been supported with appropriate strategies and action plans by Macedonian governments thus far.

The activities and efforts of Macedonian Diplomats are also not helping Macedonia attract investors, in particular within the Macedonian community. Instead of reaching out and offering objective services which would build bridges between Australian Macedonians and the Republic of Macedonia on a universal level, there have often been displays of support for only a selected number of organisations, who in return serve the interests of party politics.

Through these actions and by failing to treat all Macedonians on

a reasonably equal footing, Macedonian officials appear to have contributed to a lack of trust in representatives of the Macedonian government and state, especially among Macedonians who do not originate from the Republic of Macedonia. Such actions and processes are not unique to Macedonian diplomats, but some of these actions are manifested too regularly to be viewed as 'normal'.

When the government of the Republic of Macedonia announced its decision to permit the election of three parliamentarians to represent the interests of the Macedonians in the diaspora, the existing difficult situation of the Macedonian community and its needs were not thoroughly analyzed or efficiently acted upon. Instead of implementing a long term strategy that would serve the benefits of the state and the communities abroad, the diaspora was deliberately not allowed to nominate and elect its own independent candidates. The ruling government drove its party interests, enhancing the already existing division within the Macedonian community and further lowering the bonds of trust – something which is crucial for the development of business ties.

Business Delegations and Business Practices in Macedonia

The Macedonian Community of Australia has hosted several visiting municipal delegations from Macedonia in the last couple of years. These visitations were strongly promoted throughout the media with the aim of highlighting the existing business opportunities in their regions and their newly created industrial zones. I personally had the opportunity to attend one of these presentations. Besides listening to some reasonably well thought out speeches by the delegates and the showing of an attractive video of breathtaking regional landscapes and a handout of glossy colored tourist brochures, there were no facts or figures presented. One would expect to be briefed with actual statistics and presented with facts based on scientific research, highlighting existing industry segments supported with data on competition, demand and the opportunities for the same. Such statistics would aid in stimulating the minds and capturing the imaginations of potential investors.

From a strict business perspective, one expects and needs a more serious approach. One also hopes that the accountability standards of such delegations are going to be raised in the

future.

In line with the context we have presented in this article, there are a very small number of diaspora Macedonian businessmen who are considering or willing to invest in the Republic of Macedonia. There are other reasons for this and while some of them **are concerned with the 'tyranny of distance', the majority are connected to a strict business professional, point of view.**

Diaspora Macedonians have become accustomed to business practices in their current environments and these are based on Western systems of legislative regulations, guaranteeing definite standard investment protections. Furthermore, although there are no laws, policies, or legal regulations that formally prevent foreign investment in Macedonia; certain bureaucratic practices in all segments of government administration still pose some unacceptable difficulties. These practices provide opportunities for corruption and intolerable delays in administrative processing. **This is the reality, despite the findings of the "Doing Business" report cited above.**

It does not create a sense of confidence for the Macedonians from the diaspora to invest their hard earned capital in a business of their chosen field. Although Macedonia has harmonized most of its legislation with the EU, in its determination to become an EU member, *implementation* of the same, remains weak. Potentially, there are high numbers of capable, highly educated and very experienced Macedonian businessmen in the diaspora, who are passionate enough to assist in the prosperity of their former homeland; but there needs to be a sustained educational effort in order to begin to transform the practice of business culture in Macedonia.

The process of fundamental change may take a generation, but perhaps the introduction of some rigorous external technical assistance/training, from reputable sources, for the relevant Macedonian officials, might make a significant difference, even in the short term.

Mirco Angelovski is an Australian Macedonian with many years of experience in the corporate management sphere of the hotel and tourism industries of Australia and other countries.



Triple "A" Cheese





AMHRC Advocates Club gathering in June

On a very cold wintry Thursday evening last **June**, the **AMHRC's Advocates** club members gathered in the function room of 'the local' located a few doors away from the AMHRC office, in order to hear the latest on the study of the Macedonian language in Australia, carried out jointly by the

AMHRC and Dr. Jim Hlavac of Monash University. They were also informed about some exciting new scholarly publications with contributions from members of the **AMHRC's board of management**. These will soon be released to the general public, just watch this **space...**





Bulgarian Anti-Macedonian Bigotry from an EU MP

Blagoevgrad/Gorna Dzumaja, Melbourne and Toronto, 14/8/2012 - A statement denying the existence of minorities in Bulgaria was made last week to the Macedonian media by an MP of the European Parliament, Andrej Kovachev - a member of the ruling party in Bulgaria (GERB). Similar views **have also been recently expressed by Bulgaria's Foreign Minister, Mladenov.** Such an attitude raises the question of how sincere Bulgaria was in ratifying the Framework Convention for National Minorities and aids in explaining its practical non-application in Bulgaria.

The claim that there are no minorities in Bulgaria can be considered to be an expression of fascism, a yearning for a **"pure nation"**, something which the European Union should condemn as scandalous and unacceptable. Moreover the specific denial by Mr. Kovachev of the existence of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria is not only a flagrant lie but also a severe act of discrimination.

We, of course, support the right of every individual to freely determine her/his identity and we condemn any sort of discrimination on that basis wherever it may occur. This also applies to Bulgarians in the Republic of Macedonia. However, the artificial conversion by Mr. Kovachev, of cases to do with criminal conduct in Macedonia, into cases of **"ethnic discrimination"** cannot be described as anything other than a conscious and deliberate policy of provocation - a childish attempt to vilify Macedonians and to poison relations between Bulgaria and Macedonia. It also serves as a hindrance to European stability and cooperation in general.

Before it places conditions on others, Bulgaria itself would do well to satisfy those same conditions. The recognition of and according of rights to minorities, including the Macedonian minority, as well as making serious efforts to end hate speech, are criteria which Bulgaria has still not satisfied.

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Dear Mr Muiznieks,

Re: Proposed new law on political parties in Bulgaria

Firstly, we would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your recent appointment to the position of Commissioner for Human Rights. We had the pleasure communicating closely with your predecessor, Mr Thomas Hammarberg, and we now look forward to expanding on this cooperation with your office for the advancement of human rights in Bulgaria and beyond.

In 2009 the Committee of Ministers closed the case relating to OMG "Glinden"-PIRIN (1) without our party being subsequently registered. It used the argument that Bulgaria had shown good will, a show of good will apparently supported by the reduction of the number of members necessary for registration of political parties from 5000 to 2500. This fact proved to be enough for the Committee, even though it was contradicted by everything else that was occurring on the ground, including the refusal to register Macedonian NGOs on grounds that had been condemned several times by the European Court of Human Rights. On that occasion we warned that there had been no change in the policies of the state and that the supposed "good will" did not in reality exist.

At the moment a proposal from the nationalist party ATAKA for the amendment of the Law on Political Parties, which is supported by 90% of the ruling party GERB, is being examined in the Bulgarian Parliament. These amendments contain the following points:

- an increase in the number of members necessary for registration from 2500 to 5000 once again.
- an increase in the number of founding members necessary for registration from 500 to 1000.
- a demand that parties have branches registered in half of the municipalities in the country.
- a demand that members of party leaderships cannot have dual citizenship (here we come up against one of the more serious forms of discrimination in Bulgaria- people with dual citizenship cannot be candidates for any type of elected state office and now cannot be candidates for leadership positions in political parties.
- a series of administrative and financial demands which smaller and regional parties will find very difficult to meet.
- a ban on regional parties participating in national elections (for the Parliament, European Parliament, President etc)
- Provision of greater opportunities and methods for banning political parties.

The proposed changes can be viewed on the following internet site: <http://www.parliament.bg/bg/bills/ID/14052/>

We do not claim that the proposed amendments are intended only for us, however, we cannot but note that a large part of them directly affect us and other minority parties.

The elimination of smaller regional and minority parties, the drastic tightening of procedures for the registration and continued operation of parties and the ease with which they can be banned, seriously threatens democracy in Bulgaria.

Apart from that we cannot but note that the changes in the Law on Political Parties in Bulgaria are closely related to the

separate stages of our struggle for registration.

1. *OMO "Ilinden"* - PIRIN was registered in February 1999 when Bulgaria submitted its application for the setting of a date for the commencement of accession talks with the European Union and banned in February 2000, two weeks that date was set.
2. The Law on Political Parties, which was not significantly amended from 1990 until the registration and banning of our party, was then amended and the number of members needed for registration was increased ten fold from 50 to 500.
3. In 2005, several months before the release of the decision of the European Court of Human Rights opposing the prohibition of our party, the law was once again amended and the number of members needed for registration raised another ten fold to 5000, a figure which strangely corresponded with the results of the then last held Census during which only 5071 Macedonians in Bulgaria were allowed to identify as such. In that regard, measures were taken so that the *party's registration could not be restored*.
4. The number required was reduced from 5000 to 2500 in 2009-the year in which Bulgaria was doing everything possible to bring to a close the monitoring of our case by the Committee of Ministers.
5. Three months after our battle finished in the European Court of Human Rights (March 2012) and it became clear that we did not have any alternative other than to try to register the party anew, this last proposal was made which apparently has the aim of making the registration of our and similar parties impossible.

The special attention which has been devoted to us in the modification of the Law on Political Parties is directly related to the attempts made by the state to prevent the affirmation and recognition of the Macedonian minority, which could be achieved through our free participation in the political life of the country.

We ask that you turn your attention to these dangerous tendencies in Bulgaria which relate to the curtailment of democracy, as well as to the discrimination against and denial of the existence of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria.

On behalf of the Presidency of OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN, we look forward to hearing from you and please do not hesitate to contact us for further information.

Yours sincerely,

STOYKO STOYKOV
Co-President



Stojko Stojkov

Interview with Diane Kitanoski

Time for the boys to have some quiet time as Johnny Tsiglev lets the women of our community get a word in. . . . And it's about time too!



diane kitanoski

Diane and I have never met before. After a few reciprocal failed email attempts, text message attempts and failed phone call attempts, which ended in conversations with our respective message banks, I finally manage to get a hold of the elusive Diane!

JOHNNY: Hi Diane. How are you?

DIANE: I'm really well.

JOHNNY: The way we we're going, it sounded like we were never going to speak to each other!

DIANE: I knew we'd get there eventually.

JOHNNY: Thanks for agreeing to be interviewed by me (and the MHR Review obviously).

DIANE: Thank you for the opportunity.

JOHNNY: It's my (and our) pleasure. I thought it would be a good idea to even up the sexes a little. Up until now it's been nothing but us 'fat headed Maco blokes' getting the grilling! J I'm happy to see some of our Maco females actively pursuing their artistic endeavors.

We'll hopefully get to cover all the various interests you're involved in, but for now I'd just like to know about the last project you were involved with?

DIANE: Most recently I showed my photographs in a group exhibition

for Ellipsis Productions called *Loss Lust & Longing* in Thornbury. *Loss, Lust & Longing* was a multi media collaboration showcasing the works of over twenty artists. The exhibition incorporated sound design, film, poetry, visual art, installation and roving performances responding to the three themes. Currently this exhibition is showing as part of the curated visual arts program in the Sydney Fringe Festival. I am adding some exciting new work to the Sydney exhibition.

JOHNNY: I'll have to check it out, although I have had a quick look at some of the other work you've

done and it seems to me like you've been very busy.... from dancing, to modeling, to acting, to painting.... which inevitably leads me to my next question and its something I always ask my interviewees....

As I too have dabbled in all sorts of artistic activities and have just retired to calling myself an 'Artist', what do you primarily see yourself as?

DIANE: Busy! I primarily see myself as a photographer. It's the medium I work most in and it's what others mostly know me as, even the painters. Photography is

also my passion. I studied and developed my skills first in traditional dark room photography but have been adventuring into the digital. We are offered more and more each day in the digital field, which just makes me even more curious and gifts a wider artistic playground.

JOHNNY: I got into digital (art), would you believe almost 20 years ago, and haven't looked back. So yep, definitely great things to come regarding digital photography.

I noticed that you grew up in Geelong and were introduced to the AMHRC through your fellow Geelongian, our very own wonder-boy and my personal candidate for President of all Australian Macedonians; Jason Kambovski. I guess the next question is not necessarily limited to Geelong. It could also relate to rural Australia and suburbia in general. You know, I lament about this all the time, but growing up in certain (sport centric) suburbs can really be a disadvantage to artists.... So the question for you is...

JOHNNY: Did you find growing up in Geelong a hindrance or an advantage to following your dreams?

DIANE: There are more artists per capita that come out of Geelong than anywhere else in Australia. I loved growing up in Geelong. People often make fun of it being a small town, but some great artistic people come out of the "village". One in particular was my drama teacher who you may know from a little Aussie movie called 'Muriel's Wedding', the talented Rachel Griffiths.

JOHNNY: Rachel Griffiths?? Hmmm?? Has she been in many films?? He he he J Wow.... Rachel Griffiths as your drama teacher.... Normally they say 'those that can't do, teach'...but obviously not in her case! It's funny you say the 'per capita' thing as many of my old digital art mates (when I was doing computer games) came from either Ballarat or Bendigo... They were extremely talented. I think they

too loved growing up there, but still felt a need to get out? Either that, or they were just limited with work choices!

Do you remember the exact moment you realized you had the art in you?

DIANE: I don't remember the exact moment I had art in me, that

was always a given. I started dancing when I was 2 years old and I was singing and performing for my family before I can even remember. I took my first photograph when I was 4 years old of my family whilst we were on a trip to Macedonia. I have it framed in my bedroom. My first photographic job was for Forte Magazine, a local street press

publication, and it was at that moment that I knew that if I really wanted to do something, all I had to do was give it a shot.

JOHNNY: A photographic 'shot' I guess!

As you briefly mentioned earlier, you've recently done some photography work for the Sydney Fringe. The style is called Cinema-



graph and you describe it as part cinema, part photograph, or in other words a moving photo. A bit like those vintage movies or as Joshua Cohen on the net describes it... **"Animated GIFs for Adults"**

Can you tell me a little bit more about it and also why you chose this type of media?

DIANE: Cinemagraphs are a new venture for me. They are a still photo with subtle motion. Like a dream. They originated in New York with the term and technique created and developed by the talented artists Jamie Beck and Kevin Burg. Ellipsis Productions approached me with the concept of cinemagraphs or automated **GIF's (these moving images)** to use in the Sydney Fringe Festival. I have teamed up with a Producer, Graphic Artist and Editor and the results are beautiful, and sometimes jarring, descriptive photographic narratives. My inspiration using and challenging both traditional and new media began however because of my Dad, he is a keen photographer and he was my inspiration and the reason I first got into photography. I always ask him for advice and we enjoy watching photography documentaries together. He is always critiquing my work even though I may have slightly surpassed his photographic knowledge now that we have entered a digital world. There is so much you can do digitally these days and everything is instantaneous.

JOHNNY: Ha ha ha, I love how parents always critique us, even regarding subjects they have no idea about! But, yeah, digital is amazing. The challenge these days I guess for genuine photographers is to try and stand out from all the upstarts who use iPhone photo Apps and Photoshop filters on their pics and think **they're professional photographers!** I compare those people to the ones who can open Photoshop, pick a completely superfluous font, apply it to a word and think **they're designers who've created a logo!**

JOHNNY: So in a real Helena Christensen-esque fashion, you've made a bit of a leap from **'photographed'** to **'photographer'**. Has the switch been a conscious decision to get out of modeling or something which has just naturally evolved?

DIANE: **It's funny you mention Helena Christensen, she is my favourite model! There's something about her that reminds me**

tures than words". I can wholeheartedly relate to that statement.

Does it describe your art or your life and you in general?

DIANE: It describes my life. I am a very visual person. Be it the way I explain things, the way I dress or the way I organize my desk. I like to think I add some flare to what I'm doing.



of my Mum, that's perhaps why I'm drawn to Helena's beauty. To be compared to her is flattering but let's just say I'm not a super-model, I'm more of a "model" citizen! I only dabbled in a little bit of modeling. I guess it just comes with the territory.

JOHNNY: **Oh, ok. You're a photographer from way back. I thought it was the other way around!**

You quote that you're "more pic-

JOHNNY: I guess you truly are **'more pictures than words'... tell everyone out there about the quirky way you write mail?**

DIANE: My daytime job is a very administrative role so I take any opportunity I can get to be creative. At present this artistic flow consists of writing the daily mail in **calligraphy...**

JOHNNY: He he he.... That's crazy! **Just can't get enough. It's like when I doodle on the side of**

an official document or form...! just can't help myself!

Having experienced both sides of the lens, do you feel there is a type of acquiescence of the soul being photographed?

DIANE: **Absolutely. I feel that it's easy for me to express myself in front of the camera, without words, similar to when I dance. Even as a singer it's not the words you are singing but the way you deliver them from the heart, from your soul. On the other side of the lens I like to capture a person's personality and evoke feelings that often many of them are too shy to show.**

JOHNNY: Yeah, I guess one of the toughest things about professionally photographing someone would be to get that true deep expression out of them, especially, **as you said, if they're shy!**

Looking at your bio, I'm impressed by some of the featured **roles you've had in various TVC's (television commercials).** I'm not really asking for myself, more for the readers out there who have never been in that type of environment **(it's funny because as I'm writing this I'm watching my better half acting as a barmaid on the Australian TV drama Winners and Losers!)**

JOHNNY: So for the uninitiated, do you find it nerve-racking being in front of the camera?

DIANE: **It's always a little nerve-racking because you want to do your best. And it's not you dancing around the living room or singing into your hairbrush, there is a team of people waiting for you to deliver and all eyes are on you.**

JT> **I've personally noticed that many artists, whether they're musos or painters get into TV work. Why do you think this is? Do you think we suffer from a slight sense of narcissism, or is it just a deep-seated need to express ourselves in as many ways as possible?**

DIANE: I believe it all goes hand in hand. If you sing, you need to

know how to dance. If you dance, you need to know how to **act. It's all about performing and showing emotion.** And sometimes **it's wonderful to be able to express your emotion or tell your story through a painting or a photograph and be able to sit back and soak it all in as the viewer as well as the artist.**

JOHNNY: Well said Diane.

You mentioned to me that you **'like to make things from scratch'.** **Apart from the proverbial 'love of it all', is there any other motivating factor for doing the art that you do?**

DIANE: I am the happiest when I am creating. With such crazy, hectic lives that we lead, I feel as **though I'm most myself when I am being artistic. It's the light inside me.**

JOHNNY: To quote a recent **quote by a great artist; "Well said Diane"**

You also seem to have a social awareness about you. Tell me more about the 100 km walk for Oxfam you completed and why you chose to participate in what seems to be a grueling fundraiser?

DIANE: I am always willing to help a charity if I can and I also believe we need to continually challenge ourselves. I was going through a bit of a hard time in my life and I thought if I could walk 100km then I could get through anything and I did.

JOHNNY: Bravo. And as we know, it can also be very **'challenging' to earn a decent living from being a full-time artist.** Are you trained in anything more traditional, and/or, do you have a bread and butter job to make ends meet?

DIANE: Bread and butter? You mean Leb i Sol? Yes, I think **they're a great band!**

Being creative as a life career is a hard but brave decision to be made. One important lesson I have learned in my life is that you need to be true to yourself. Ste-



loss

reotypically, we're taught to get a 'real' job that pays the bills, because life isn't easy. And it's true, life isn't easy, but as I've grown older I've learned to take the good with the bad. And there's a quote I love, "Life is like photography, you use the negatives to develop."

JOHNNY: Great quote! For a minute there I thought you were going to say something like...."Life is like photography, you take a risqué picture of someone and use the negatives to blackmail them!".... and no, I meant Leb i 'Salo'The greasy band!

N.B; Thank God I didn't do this interview in person. I would have had about as much luck as I did my last interview with Anton... too busy having a laugh to get the interview done!

JOHNNY: You're a dancer, an actress, a model, a painter, a photographer. What can you honestly say you get the biggest 'buzz' from?

DIANE: At present I am using my family as models for my current photographic project and I'm getting a real buzz out of it because I am making them do the most craziest things and they just go along with it. So we're having a lot of laughs. They also get a buzz out of being part of the whole production, stepping out of their comfort zones and seeing the final artwork.

JOHNNY: Free labour is always handy. Just make sure you keep them smiling so they don't get a wind of you using them!

Of all your pursuits and performances, what has been your most memorable gig to date?

DIANE: When I was at Uni, we had a formal dinner one evening along with a talent quest. One of the kids at my table said "Diane will sing" and so I got up on stage and with no music sang acapella. The room was silent. It was a great feeling because what started off as a joke turned into thunderous applause after just the 1st verse. I was so taken aback that I forgot the words to the rest of the

song. I think they were just surprised that I could sing.

JOHNNY: Wow! That's game.

I personally know many Macedonians, who in the past, whether they're in the spotlight or not, have Anglicised their names for fear of not fitting in or getting any work. I see you've proudly kept your family name. However, has it ever been a consideration for you, or have you been in a situation where you've thought, "Gee, if my name was Diane Kitson, I might have gotten that gig?"

DIANE: When I was born, as tradition goes, my godparents gave my parents 3 names to choose from. One of them was Diana. Having very traditional names themselves, my parents wanted me to have a more Anglo name and changed it to Diane. No one calls me Diana, not even in Macedonian. I am so proud of my heritage that I often thought that if I had a son I would name him Kitan or a daughter I would call her Kita, after my surname. We'll see what happens when that day comes.

JOHNNY: It's a nice thought... and also a bit Rock 'n' Roll at the same time....like the singer 'Cat Power', only yours would be Kitan (as in kitten) Power! Careful though, it might catch on.... I'm thinking of naming my next kid Tsigy Tsiglev!..... Damn, doesn't quite work?

JOHNNY: Apart from this interview right now, have you ever had any association with the Macedonian art world?

DIANE: Not really. I would like to see and be involved with giving art and artistic expression a bigger role and a higher profile in the Macedonian community. I like to lend my support and see the Macedonian drama group Boomerang, whenever they have shows. Apart from that there is really not much around.

JT> Yeah, you're right. There really isn't a whole lot around. My artist friend Robert Mihajlovski (who actually goes on a so-

jour every year or so to an art colony in Macedonia) and I always talk about forming a Macedonian art group or collective here in Melbourne. But hey, it's just another thing to do without getting paid!

JOHNNY: Do you feel as though you're under represented or somewhat a minority in our community with the type of art you do?

DIANE: People like to feel comfortable by sticking to what they know and because Art isn't very prevalent in the Macedonian community, people usually nod and smile and say "that's nice." I remember when younger, a mother in the community asked her daughter what I was studying at University. And she replied, "Diane is studying Art but I'm not sure what she's going to finish with because they don't even have exams!"

JOHNNY: Hmm, real nice. I always get the... "You don't work, you're just an artist. You're a bludger" Which is half true in the sense that doing my art doesn't feel like work, however, little do they know how involving it is and how much mind space it occupies! At the moment my Brain RAM needs a few more GIGABYTES...

JOHNNY: Are there any last comments you'd like to leave us all with which I might not have covered?

DIANE: I look forward to meeting many other artist Macedonians on my artistic journey and hope to work together in growing the Macedonian Art's Community

JOHNNY: Don Beri Gaile Diana. I'll make sure I introduce you to some great Macedonian artists I've had the privilege of becoming friends with, largely due to being in the AMHRC.

Thanks again for your time. I hope that through this interview you can be a positive role model to aspiring and talented young Macedonia women who otherwise might not think it's possible to be successful in the pursuit of their art.

DIANE: The beautiful Katherine Hepburn once said, "If you always do what interests you, at least one person is pleased", and if what you do pleases others, then that's just a bonus. Do what you love and then you'll love what you do.

JOHNNY: What a fantastic way to leave us! Te Blagodarum!



Johnny Tsiglev



Dr. Michael Seraphinoff

Macedonian Poet Konstantin Miladinov

By Dr. Michael Seraphinoff

While social, cultural, economic and political development were hindered and delayed by the long Ottoman rule over Macedonia, lasting until 1912, significant development did occur, particularly in the latter part of the 19th century. Macedonia, like other regions of the Balkans, experienced an upsurge in economic activity that was reflected in the growth of the towns and of the merchant and craftsman classes. Some of their new-found wealth began to be used to promote social and cultural activities, the building of schools, the restoration of churches, and the promotion of newspapers and books in the towns.

Literary activity grew and developed in conjunction with the profound political and economic changes occurring throughout the region. Changes such as the rise of an independent Serbian state to the north and increased contact with European societies such as Austria Hungary and Russia led to new opportunities for the publication of works by early 19th century Macedonian church writers and eventually led to the emergence of secular writers such as Konstantin Miladinov.

The influence of culturally advanced neighboring societies led to significant developments in the cultural life of Macedonians, while at the same time it served to complicate and confuse the orderly development of a native Macedonian language and literature. The early church writers had accepted the idea that there should be two literary languages, a Church Slavic high style and a vernacular lower style. Later writers would advocate a single literary language, but they could not agree on whether it should be a com-

promise literary language midway between Bulgarian and Macedonian or a separate Macedonian literary language.

Konstantin Miladinov, born in Struga in 1830, chose to employ his native Struga regional Macedonian dialect with elements of literary Bulgarian and even Russian, as well as certain borrowings from other South Slavic languages and Church Slavic. Stylistically he also drew heavily upon the Macedonian folk poetry tradition in his works.

Konstantin was the protege of his elder brother, Dimitar, who worked as a school teacher in the Macedonian towns of Ohrid, Bitola, Prilep and elsewhere, initially teaching in Greek, but after 1855 he became one of the leading advocates of education in his native language. Konstantin was encouraged to study Greek in Janina and later Athens, and after Dimitar's conversion to a pan-Slavism, particularly after visits to Serbia and Croatia in the mid 1850's, Konstantin was encouraged to spend time at the Zograph Monastery at Athos after completing his studies in Athens.

Not long after that stay at the monastery Konstantin began studies in Slavic philology in Russia, where he attempted to have the Macedonian folk songs collected by him and his brother published. That failure, in particular, influenced him in his decision to leave Russia and journey to Vienna and eventually Zagreb, where he found a much greater interest in the folk song collection among the Croatian intelligentsia and enthusiasm for his efforts to have them published.

Not long after the publication of the collection in Zagreb, Konstantin and his brother Dimitar died in a Turkish prison in Istanbul in 1862, victims of the bitter struggle between the Greek and Slavic communities of the Ottoman Empire. The folk song collection of some 600 songs, all but 200 of which originated in Macedonia, was published under the title *Bulgarian Folk Songs*. The title aside, this was one of the most significant public exposures of the Macedonian folk literary tradition since Vuk Karadjich's inclusion of 28 Macedonian songs in his 1815 collection of folk literature.

Konstantin Miladinov's significant contribution to Macedonian letters also includes 15 original poetic compositions. The poem, "T'ga za jug" or "Longing for the South" is undoubtedly the most popular of these poems. It is a passionate expression of his homesickness while studying in Moscow. It employs vivid imagery and metaphorical devices familiar from Macedonian folk poetry, and it also uses literary devices in original ways more characteristic of the literature of the Romantic era.

The poem has been translated into several dozen languages over the years, and it is the work that opens the annual Struga Poetry Festival. Graham Reid probably wrote the best known English translation of the poem, but there are a number of versions currently popular on the world wide web. The poem is as popular today as at anytime in its 150 year history, and it is likely to remain so, given the fact that so many Macedonians continue to leave their homeland in search of work, and inevitably long for their faraway homeland.

If I had an eagle's wings
I would rise and fly on them
To our shores, to our own parts,
To see Stambol, to see Kukus,
And to watch the sunrise: is it
dim there too, as it is here?

If the sun still rises dimly,
If it meets me there as here,
I'll prepare for further travels,
I shall flee to other shores
Where the sunrise greets me brightly
And the sky is sewn with the stars.

It is dark here, dark surrounds me,
Dark covers all the earth,
Here are frost and snow and ashes,
Blizzards and harsh winds abound,
Fogs all around, the earth is ice,
And in the breast are cold, dark thoughts.

No, I cannot stay here, no;
I cannot sit upon this frost.
Give me wings and I will don them;
I will fly to our own shores,
Go once more to our own places,
Go to Ohrid and to Struga.

There the sunrise warms the soul,
The sun gets bright in mountain woods:
Yonder gifts in great profusion
Richly spread by nature's power.
See the clear lake stretching white-
Or blue, darkened by the wind,
Look at the plains or mountains:
Beauty everywhere divine.

To pipe there to my heart's content.
Ah! Let the sun set, let me die.

Т'га за југ

Орелски крилја как да си метнех и в наши ст'рни да си прелетнех!

На наши места ја да си идам, да видам Стамбол, Кукуш да видам, Да видам дали с'нцето и тамо мрачно угревјат, како и вамо.

Ако како овде с'нцето ме стретит, ако пак мрачно с'нцето светит: На п'т далечни ја ке се стегнам, и в други ст'рни ке си побегнам, каде с'нцето светло угревјат, каде небото свезди посеvјат.

Овде је мрачно и мрак м' обвива и темна м'гла земја покрива: мразој и снегој, и пепелници, силни ветришта и вијулици, Околу м'гли и мразој земни, а в'гради студој, и мисли темни.

Не, ја не можам овде да седам! Не, ја не можам мразој да гледам! Дајте ми крилја ја да си метнам и в наши ст'рни да си прелетнам: на наши места ја да си идам, да видам Охрид, Струга да видам.

Тамо зората греит душата и с'нце светло зајдвит в гората. Тамо дарбите природна сила со с'та раскош ги растурила: Бистро езеро, гледаш, белеит или од ветар синотемнеит: поле погледниш, или планина -сегде Божева је хубавина.

Тамо по с'рце в кавал да свирам, с'нце да зајдвит, ја да умирам!



Konstantin Miladinov



Would the United States Ever Entertain the Idea of Changing its Name?

By Bill Nicholov

Would the United States ever entertain the idea of changing its name? Why then, is it asking Macedonia to do so? Apparently, for the "privilege" of joining NATO. Of course, at the NATO summit in May, Macedonia wasn't even on the agenda.

It should have been painfully obvious that Macedonia wouldn't be invited to join NATO until it solves the so-called "name dispute" with Greece. In 2008, every member-state wanted to extend an invitation to Macedonia, but Greece was permitted to use its veto power to prevent it. To make it "official", point 26 of the Chicago Summit Declaration states,

"We reiterate the agreement at our 2008 Bucharest Summit, as we did at subsequent Summits, to extend an invitation to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to join the Alliance as soon as a mutually acceptable solution to the name issue has been reached within the framework of the UN, and strongly urge intensified efforts towards that end."

What's worse, that Macedonia continues to negotiate its own name and identity in order to "play with the big boys" or that NATO and the European Union are allowing Greece to hold the rest of the NATO and EU member-states hostage? Of course, Macedonia has also been shamelessly begging for entry into the European Union but, with Greece as a long time member, that won't happen.

Why is Macedonia so desperate to join two organizations that offer no obvious benefits?

Not only are NATO and the EU allowing Greece to dictate their membership based on its own racist and xenophobic policies, but the European Union also bailed Greece out after it blatantly lied about its economic situation, which has subsequently wreaked havoc with global markets.

The EU also allows Greece to violate its

minorities' rights and ignore European Court of Human Rights rulings against it without fear of retribution. All of this while Greece proclaims, and is celebrated as the "birthplace of democracy".

As if it was proving how far it could go, Greek citizens voted in 21 members of the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn in the country's May elections.

Macedonia's desperation to join NATO and the EU can only be described as pathetic. Macedonia is one of the highest per-capita contributors to NATO missions, even though it is not a member. The Macedonian government decided years ago to sacrifice its own citizens for the sake of joining an organization that doesn't have the guts to stand up to Greece and extend it an invitation. How sad that NATO can't even stand up to its weakest member.

After the NATO Summit in Chicago, Macedonian Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski expressed disgust at the lack of an invitation, criticized the West and ultimately blamed Greece. Makes sense, but he forgot to include Macedonia's involvement in this mess. By negotiating its own name, Macedonia is telling the world that it is willing to change it. The simple, and only, solution is that Macedonia should immediately end the name negotiations and never should have started them in the first place.

Greece claims that it objects to the Republic of Macedonia's name because it creates **"confusion" with the province of Macedonia**, that it annexed after the partition of Macedonia's entire territory in 1913. However, former Greek Prime Minister Constantine Mitsotakis admitted in 1995 that Greece initiated the nonsensical name dispute to continue to deny the existence of its large, indigenous Macedonian minority.

Ironically, Greece now claims that **"Macedonia is Greek", but it was not until**

1988, when Greece realized that independence for the Republic of Macedonia **was imminent, that it renamed "Northern Greece" to "Macedonia."** Prior to this, **Greece's policy was that Macedonia did not exist.**

Despite the intense Greek propaganda, over 130 countries have recognized Macedonia, including four of the five permanent UN Security Council members. So this begs the question, why are countries that have already recognized Macedonia asking it to compromise with Greece and change its name? The answer, again, is because Macedonia is continuing to negotiate its own name.

If Macedonia is just going through the motions to appear diplomatic, as some politicians have suggested, it has obviously been a huge failure. Instead of showing its flexibility in trying to find a "solution", it has frustrated the United States and other western countries because this dispute has been going on for 21 years, with no end in sight. Of course, it's common sense to see that there is no solution when one country is being asked to change its name to appease another country's racist notion that it has no right to exist. It also doesn't excuse the United States demanding that a country change its name. Is this how the US sees itself as "spreading democracy and human rights" throughout the world?

As the Our Name is Macedonia campaign (which demands that Macedonia end the name negotiations) states "Would any other country negotiate its own name?". To clearly show how ridiculous the name dispute is, it also asks "Should the US state of Georgia demand that the Republic of Georgia change its name?"

If this issue wasn't so serious, it would be laughable.

*Bill Nicholov, President
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The Dubious Nature of the International Crisis Group Reports on the Republic of Macedonia

By Dr. Vasko Nastevski

This article will consider the two International Crisis Group (ICG) Reports on Macedonia, issued respectively in 2001 and 2011. While both Reports cover a range of issues from elections in Macedonia, domestic politics and inter-ethnic relations, the focus of this brief response is on the ICG's comments and conclusions regarding the so-called "name issue". It also offers a supplement to Dr Chris Popov's featured article in Issue 11 of the MHR Review titled 'An Alternative Solution to the Macedonian Name Dispute'. In that paper Dr Popov provides a timely critique of the "managerial" approach taken by the EU and NATO to the so-called "name issue", in which they seem to ultimately ransom entry into their "privileged" clubs by requiring Macedonia to change its name. They are somewhat misguidedly aided and abetted in this by the Republic of Macedonia itself by the act of engaging in the "negotiation" process over its name. Dr Popov highlights the cost associated for Macedonia in continuing with this approach, but also articulates an alternative solution, one that involves the renunciation of the so-called "name negotiations" and the promulgation of a more principled way forward that considers Macedonia's basic rights. This is something that the AMHRC has campaigned on for many years.

But where the EU and NATO can be viewed as international bodies that hold positions that are intrinsically the product of the political manoeuvrings of their member States, the ICG should be viewed differently on the basis that it is not beholden to any such political manoeuvrings. In fact the ICG promotes itself as *"the world's leading independent, non-partisan, source of analysis and advice to governments and intergovernmental bodies"*. One suspects that a principal reason for this boast is the fact that it has prominent individuals with a vast amount of experience in international affairs that sit on their Board as Members or as part of the Executive Committee. No doubt imparting valuable advice to the formulation of recommendations meant to resolve various international issues. For those of us from Australia it is especially interesting that Gareth Evans, a former Member of the Australian Parliament and a long serving Australian Minister

for Foreign Affairs has a prominent role in the ICG. We shall reflect some more on Mr. Evans, later in this article.

Background

In the cacophony surrounding the so-called "name issue" that has so emotionally entangled the Greek psyche, it is very easy to forget that the independence of the Republic of Macedonia and the adoption of a name for its country of its own choosing is well-established in the internationally accepted principle of the right to self-determination. Invoking this principle, the Macedonian Assembly (Parliament) first passed a declaration on 25 January 1991 asserting such a right to self-determination for the Macedonian people. Consequently a plebiscite to this effect was held on 8 September 1991, which resulted in 95.26% of the people that voted being in favour of independence (ENDNOTE 1). As a result, the Macedonian Assembly passed the Declaration on the Sovereignty and Independence of the Republic of Macedonia on 17 September 1991 (Radan, 2002:193-196).

On 27 August 1991 the European Community established an Arbitration Commission to review the claims to self-determination in the case of the former Yugoslav Republics under the chairmanship of Robert Badinter, who was the President of the French Constitutional Council (Pellet, 1999: 1). In other words, Europe instituted a formal mechanism that outlined known principles to gauge the authenticity and the legality of each of the claims to self-determination. Macedonia requested recognition of its claim for self-determination from the European Community by way of a Declaration by its Assembly on 19 December 1991. However, **due to Greek objections that any use of the name "Macedonia"** implied territorial pretensions to the region of Northern Greece (also called Macedonia) it was firstly compelled into making an amendment to its constitution. Accordingly, on 6 January 1992 the Republic of Macedonia added to its constitution an amendment that explicitly dispelled any territorial claims against any neighbouring state. The Badinter Commission consequently de-

terminated that Macedonia had satisfied all the relevant tests for recognition (Rich, 1999:17), thereby giving Macedonia formal acknowledgment of its claim to self-determination.

However, as we know, this did not end Greek intransigence. The Greek Government successfully deployed its own membership in a variety of European and international institutions to frustrate **Macedonia's ambitions for recognition in these bodies under its self chosen name. The best example of this is Macedonia's admission to the United Nations (UN) in 1993 under the "provisional" reference "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (UN Security Council Resolution 817, 1993).** This was and continues to be a strange outcome given that the Charter of the UN itself begins with an overarching principle about developing **friendly relations among nations "based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples" (Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice, art 1(2)).** The right to self determination ultimately provides that the subject state has a right to determine its own symbols of national identity, the principal manifestation of this right being to choose the name by which it will identify as (Craven, 1995:199-2000).

But things do get even more extraordinary. Following what *prima facie* appeared to be an illegal and unilateral embargo placed on Macedonia by Greece, the international community sought to resolve the differences between the two countries by signing them up to a so-called **"Interim Accord"** (ENDNOTE 2). Whilst this resulted in Greece withdrawing its embargo and encouraging a number of countries to formally recognise Macedonia's independence by establishing formal diplomatic relations, it also meant that Macedonia had to relinquish its State flag (a peculiar compromise for getting Greece to withdraw an embargo that was most likely illegal) but perhaps more disturbing is the **fact that the "Interim Accord" seems to have engaged both countries in an endless "negotiation" over Macedonia's name.**

Driving a sovereign State to negotiate its own national identity is perhaps even more self-contradictory than conditioning its right to self-determination. **Not least of all is the fact that the 'self' in self-determination is a reference to the people of that country.** As I wrote in Issue 7 of the MHR Review, the right to self-determination as a human right transcends to the individual level and is expressed as a right to self-identification. So one might ask, **how is it possible for a State to negotiate an individual's self identification?** The same reason why Greece has no right to deny the existence of a Macedonian minority within its political boundaries, as only the minority itself has the right to define its existence through the concept of self identity, so to the Macedonian State cannot negotiate the national identity of its people. This is as much an ontological question as it is a politico-legal one. Moreover, as with many matters connected to Macedonia, it is also a first. As Craven concluded in 1995:

Most apparent from the case of Macedonia is that its right to determine its own external forms of representation, a right which might presumptively form part of the notion of self-determination in its cultural sense, was left as a matter to be negotiated between itself and Greece. This is the first occasion in which it has ever been suggested that a State, or for that

matter a people, should not be the exclusive determinants of their own cultural and political symbols (Craven, 1995: 238).

With this background in place, let us now turn to "the world's leading independent, non-partisan, source of analysis and advice to governments and intergovernmental bodies" and see how they have proposed to resolve the so-called "name issue".

ICG Report 2001

The first ICG Report on Macedonia was issued as ICG Balkans Report No. 122 and was released on 10 December 2001, named **"Macedonia's Name: Why the Dispute Matters and How to Resolve It"**.

The crux of this document is the "Triangular" proposal for resolving the so-called "Name Issue". In brief, the ICG recommended three elements: Firstly, that Macedonia and Greece enter into a bilateral treaty that would see concessions to Greek demands. Of particular note, was the demand that in all of its relations with Macedonia and including in multilateral institutions, the use by Greece of the names "Upper Macedonia" and "Upper Macedonians" be accepted. Secondly, the international community would acknowledge Macedonia's constitutional name, but as written in the Macedonian language (ie: Republika Makedonija); and thirdly, reflecting the first two elements there would be agreement that Macedonia would be referred to as such in various international bodies (ICG, 2001:18-21). What is immediately apparent is the Report's desire to pander to unjust Greek Demands.

One does not even need to depart from the Report itself to realise that these **"recommendations" are not necessarily consistent** with international standards. Page 16 of the Report tells us that the Greek demand that Macedonia change its name has no basis in international law or practice. Even if one could concoct an argument that a State can exercise some discretion over the recognition of another State, the ICG Report itself cites international law experts that conclude that such a discretion is **"not a matter of arbitrary will or political concession, but is given or refused in accordance with legal principle"** (Henkin, Pugh, Schacter, Smit, 1993:253). Of course, there is no such legal principle. **Moreover, even making "claims to the legacy of Alexander, history and cultural heritage do not grant a copyright on place names"** (ICG, 2001:16).

The Report goes on to explore the legalities of forcing Macedonia to adopt a **"provisional" name as a condition of membership** in the UN. In the first instance, it is perhaps to be seen as somewhat ironic that the body that was founded on **"the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members"** (Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice, art 2) and where the whole UN framework is premised on the principle that States do not interfere in matters considered to be within the exclusive jurisdiction of other States that there even is a so-called **"name issue"**. Nevertheless, to this effect, Article 4 of the Charter of the UN is the relevant provision dealing with membership of the UN and is instructive:

Membership in the United Nations is open to all

other peace-loving states which accept the obligations contained in the present Charter and, in the judgment of the Organization, are able and willing to carry out these obligations.

The admission of any such state to membership in the United Nations will be effected by a decision of the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council.

Fortunately, this is an Article that has been subject to some consideration by the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which has provided an Advisory Opinion and which has usefully articulated the plain and ordinary meaning to be given to these words. The ICJ breaks-up the requirements as follows: that there is a State, that is peace-loving; which accepts the obligations of the Charter; must be able to carry out these obligations; and must be willing to do so (*Admission of States to the United Nations*, 1948: 61). Paragraph 2 provides the procedure for admission and encompasses “any such state.” **The Article seems straightforward, so one might wonder on what basis Macedonia’s admission to the UN was conditioned by use of a “provisional” country name.**

The question that the ICJ sought to answer, in short, was whether a Member State could insist on placing conditions on the admission of a State to the UN additional to those found in Article 4. In other words, not on the interpretation and application of the conditions expressed in Article 4, but whether these conditions were exhaustive when giving consideration to the admission of States to the UN. The ICJ was emphatic that the conditions in Article 4 were so exhaustive. The answer is not surprising:

*It would lead to conferring on Members an indefinite and practically unlimited power to impose new conditions; such a power could not be reconciled with the character of a rule which establishes a close connection between membership and the observance of the principles and obligations of the Charter, and thus clearly constitutes a legal regulation of the question of admission. If the authors of the Charter had meant to leave Members free to import into the application of this provision considerations extraneous to the principles and obligations of the Charter, they would undoubtedly have adopted a different wording (*Admission of States to the United Nations*, 1948:61).*

As the ICG 2001 Report itself identifies, the ICJ Advisory Opinion clearly places strict limits on the conditions that can be imposed on membership. Therefore, the conditioned admission of **Macedonia into the UN with the “provisional” name seems to clearly be inconsistent with this legal understanding.** But if the ICG did not find their own legal conclusions challenging the treatment meted out to Macedonia convincing enough, then one would probably conclude that they must have found the contrary arguments put forward by Greece more compelling. So what **were Greece’s arguments?**

Apart from the arrogant assumption that Macedonia as a State is likely to dissolve, that Greece does not need or rely on Mace-

donia and that Greek feelings might get hurt, the core reasons **behind Greece’s intransigence is that “there is no such thing as a (non-Greek) Macedonian” and the use of the name will deny the “existence of the Greek Macedonian identity” (ICG, 2001:14-16).** Both arguments are based on linking the modern day Greek State and its people to a particular ancient history. Consequently, affirmation of this Greek position is not only to deny the Macedonian position, but to deny “Macedonian existence” **wholesale (ICG, 2001:16).** In summary, the Greek position is to deny the existence of a whole group of people that self-identify themselves as Macedonian so that Greece can have exclusive entitlement to the name “Macedonia” and all of its associated history and symbolism. **To be even clearer, Greece’s position is that Macedonia should commit identity suicide (ENDNOTE 3) so that Greece can consolidate its own nationalistic fantasy of an unbroken line to ancient times.**

But as the ICG concludes, “however important ancient Macedonia may be to Greeks, there is an objective difference: Greece does not depend on the name Macedonia as the exclusive signifier of the Greek identity” (ICG, 2001:16). So the ICG not only reject Greek arguments that Macedonia be forced to change their name based on international law and practice, but notionally here also reject their position based on an anthropological/sociological perspective. Given this, it is difficult to reconcile the ICG recommendations that not only provide for Macedonia compromising on the use of its self chosen name in different spheres, but that Macedonia also enter into a bilateral treaty with Greece that provides for unilateral concessions from Macedonia only. **It seems strange coming from “the world’s leading independent, non-partisan, source of analysis and advice”.** The **ICG’s recommendations in their 2001 Report are misplaced and quite inconsistent with their very own analysis.**

ICG Report 2011

On 11 August 2011 the ICG issued Europe Report No. 212, named “**Macedonia: Ten Years after the Conflict**”. For the purpose of this article the relevant part of the Report is found under “**Part V – Moving Forward on the Name Issue**”. As the heading infers, ten years after their first Report, the ICG believes that **there still is a “name issue”.** In fact, their opening sentence under this sub-heading begins with a conclusion, which reads the “**inability to solve the name dispute with Greece**”. Under international law, the general principle that is followed to distinguish whether there in fact exists an international dispute is that it is a “**matter for objective determination**” (*Interpretation of Peace Treaties Case*, 1950:65). Accordingly, all that need be shown is that “**the claim of one party was positively opposed by the other**” (*South West Africa Cases*, 1962:319) so that as “**a matter of fact, law or policy in which a claim or assertion of one party is met with refusal, counter-claim or denial by another**” (Merrils, 1998:1).

It is worth briefly highlighting the different forms of dispute settlement available where an international dispute exists in order to **test the ICG’s response to the so-called “name issue”.** The conventional form of international dispute settlement tends to follow a **relatively clear path.** Firstly there is a form of “**negotiation**” that usually allows the parties to maintain some form of control over their dispute and will usually succeed when the parties involved **believe that the “benefits of an agreement outweigh the loss-**

es" (Merrils, 1998:1-26). However, the negotiation process becomes totally ineffective if the position of the disputants is exceedingly distant and there appears no scope for the respective positions of the parties to be bridged to any extent. This clearly has been the case with the so-called "name issue" between Macedonia and Greece. Whilst both sides have flirted with the idea of compromising at different times, there has been no negotiated outcome and both sides seem to have reverted to much more strident rhetoric against any negotiated compromise.

Intervention by a third party to help mediate an outcome is also a process that is normally followed. Again, this has characterised the subject matter "name issue", as a UN appointed "mediator" has been engaged to facilitate a resolution since Macedonia was formally admitted to the UN in 1993. Notably, "mediation is not an act of friendship ... it is never mandatory, [and] it ceases as soon as one of the parties has acknowledged its failure" (Cot, 1968:36). After nearly twenty years of fruitless mediation between Macedonia and Greece, it seems neither party is yet ready to acknowledge its failure.

It is not surprising that the occasion may arise where either one side to a dispute or both cannot reconcile themselves to concede any ground, effectively rendering the "dispute" not negotiable. Though the protracted dialogue may have evolved into a *modus operandi* that deliberately leads nowhere until one side abandons its position altogether or simply loses patience. Of course, after twenty years, one might be forgiven for believing that there is no prospect of even this occurring in the "name issue".

The above mentioned methods of international dispute settlement are regarded as diplomatic efforts given that the parties maintain some control over the process and ultimately can decide to either accept or reject the outcome. Juxtaposing this is the category that comprises a legal means of settlement. This may consist of arbitration or judicial settlement. Importantly, these mechanisms aim to provide binding decisions based on international law, or at least a form of determination with the pretence of finality of the "issue". For Macedonia in particular, this is a course of action open to it as was impressively presented by Dr Igor Janev in 2002 (and discussed by Dr Popov in issue 11 of

the MHR Review). As Dr Janev surmises, the "dispute" over the name is to be considered not one between Macedonia and Greece, rather between Macedonia and the UN, in which Macedonia defends its right to self determination of its own legal identity (Janev, 2002:5).

Essentially, Dr Janev's legal case is twofold. Firstly, the conditions placed on Macedonia that it must enter the UN under the "provisional" reference and subsequently "negotiate" with Greece over a mutually acceptable name for the country "transcend in time the act of admission" to the UN itself. On this basis and consistent with the ICJ Advisory Opinion, this is in breach of Article 4 of the UN Charter. Secondly, by imposing these additional obligations on Macedonia as a UN member "distinguish its position from that of the other UN members and define a discriminatory status" (Janev, 2003:13). In other words, membership of the UN has a legal status that has attached to it a set of rights and duties which purport to be equal for all UN members. Derogation or reduction of these rights and duties results in discriminatory membership and a breach of Article 2(1) of the UN Charter, which states that the UN "is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members" (Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice, art 2(1)). The discrimination in this case is manifested every time Macedonia is represented through the "provisional" reference and especially so within an organisation with such a universal character (Janev, 2002:4).

Dr Janev's analysis characterises the so-called "name issue" as one of a "purely legal nature" and since such an issue cannot be resolved by political means, it consequently renders the "negotiations" between Macedonia and Greece as pointless. Importantly, what Dr Janev's legal analysis exposes is that there is an alternative to the "negotiations" to resolve the so-called "name issue". Indeed, Dr Janev suggests that "resolution by legal means should be regarded as the most logical and straightforward option" (Janev, 2003:20). Macedonia could seek such judicial/legal redress against the UN itself as the UN possesses an international legal personality that is bound by its own constitutive provisions. In the present case, this means it must abide by its Charter not to impose additional conditions on prospective mem-

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bers other than what is contained in Article 4 and it must not discriminate against any member state by derogating their legal personality in the UN as per Article 2 of the Charter.

It is important to note that this legal approach is about testing the integrity of the provisions of the UN Charter by using as evidence the terms of the Interim Accord and the associated Security Council Resolutions on Macedonia's admission into the UN. Accordingly, a corollary to pursuing this course would mean Macedonia would have to reject and withdraw from the Interim Accord. To remain a party to the Interim Accord whilst engaging in litigation against the UN for acceptance of its admission to the UN under its self chosen name would be to institute an absurdity. The act of withdrawing from the Interim Accord is largely a question of political fact, not law, and it is something that the AMHRC has been calling for as part of the 'end the name negotiations' campaign. Notably though, this particular legal approach is purely about Macedonia's admission to the UN under its self chosen name. Whilst it does not contemplate further negotiations/questions over Macedonia's name *per se*, arguably it neither can, on its own, purport to resolve the so-called "name issue" in its totality. In other words, given the entrenched intransigence of Greece against any use of the name "Macedonia", a legal win at the UN, although persuasive to an extent, may not scupper Greece's continuing objection elsewhere.

This perhaps neatly brings us to yet another alternative that the ICG has simply ignored. As stated above, the validity/existence of the Interim Accord guiding the so-called "name negotiations" is a political question. The Interim Accord itself has provision for either party to withdraw from it (*Interim Accord*, art. 32(2)). Therefore it is only to be considered valid to the extent that both parties continue to accept it as valid. Given what we have said about Greece's intransigence, Macedonia's claims under the principle of a right to self-determination, the clear inconsistency of Macedonia's treatment based on international law and practice and Macedonia's clear moral standing on the issue, Macedonia could withdraw from the Interim Accord, provide notice to the UN and other international and regional bodies that it will henceforth be exercising its independent legal personality under an identity of its own choosing. In other words, it would be acting on its right to self-determination. This course of action would most definitely resolve the so-called "name issue" as far as Macedonia is concerned, on a level purely relating to Macedonia, internally.

Again, Greece's vetoing of Macedonia's membership to various international organisations would probably continue unhindered for quite some time and therefore Macedonian society would need to be willing to accept the pursuit of a politically independent road on the international stage.

Never-the-less, the very possibility that an option is capable of being adopted relatively quickly and thereby providing an end to the so-called "name issue", which may prove satisfactory for the party in the dispute being asked to surrender some of its most basic human rights, raised expectations that "the world's leading independent, non-partisan, source of analysis and advice to governments and intergovernmental bodies" would give it proper consideration. It didn't even mention it.

Settlement?

Having considered the possible methods to resolving the so-called "name issue", it is also useful to quickly pose the obvious question about when would a dispute be considered settled? The answer may depend on the interpretation we give to the word "settlement" in the context of either a "subjective" or "psychological" construct. A dispute may be considered "settled" as soon as it has been submitted to a process that leads to some form of binding outcome. For example, any judicial/legal process can be said settles a dispute in the "psychological" sense as the parties have seemingly accepted that the question is one of law only. Alternatively, a dispute can only be "settled" when the disputing parties demonstrate acceptance of a solution and "cease to put forward opposed viewpoints". This suggests a more "subjective" approach and is perhaps difficult to see occurring in the so-called "name issue", as a dissatisfied party can maintain that the outcome was unjust. Arguably, the best that can be said is that such a process settles the formalities that exist around the dispute, if not the conviction of both parties (Darwin, 1972:12). Perhaps this is the best that can be hoped for in the current circumstances.

The Omissions of the ICG Report

In any event, the preceding discussion around different approaches to dispute settlement is helpful in considering the ICG Report 2011. It is worth beginning by reproducing the ICG's recommendations on how to "Resolve the Name Dispute":

10. Skopje should accept the UN mediator's proposal for using "Republic of North Macedonia" or a similar formula with a geographic qualifier as the name of the country for all international purposes; promptly after it does so, NATO should admit Macedonia, and the EU should begin membership negotiations.

11. Athens should acknowledge the national identity and language of its northern neighbour as "Macedonian"; Skopje should reverse its decision to rename its airport after Alexander the Great and desist from similar moves certain to provoke Athens, especially within the context of its Skopje 2014 project.

Just as the former Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Gareth Evans concluded in 1994 that Australia would only recognise Macedonia under the condition that the official name of the country would be "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and that as a consequence the Macedonian Community of Australia would be referred to as "Slav-Macedonians", so to Mr Evans' ICG has now concluded that Macedonia accept the use of a name that is different to the one that it has self chosen. Where the ICG Report of 2001 gave the pretence of engaging both Macedonia and Greece in a "Triangular" proposal that involved a "Bilateral" treaty calling on "unilateral" concessions from Macedonia, the ICG Report of 2011 has altogether dispensed with attempts at being innovative and simply calls on Macedonia to change its self chosen name.

The ICG Report 2011 proceeds on the basis of a number assumptions and a paucity of analysis, effectively undermining the integrity of the ultimate recommendations. What are these assumptions? Let's list them:

Firstly, the notion that it is Macedonia that has a "dispute" with Greece subtly permeates the Report. In other words, it begins with the premise that the so-called "name issue" is something that has apprehended Macedonia's consciousness. But how is it possible that Macedonia would have an "issue" with its own self chosen name? A more honest use of language in the Report would make it clear that this so-called "issue" is one that has totally pre-occupied Greece. In doing so, the report should then proceed to answer the question why? The answer can partly be found in the second assumption.

Secondly, the Report completely ignores the obvious fact that within Greece, there is a significant Macedonian minority that has been persecuted for decades, in which Greece has invariably denied its identity and its very existence. This fact has been widely documented by various international and European human rights monitoring bodies, so the evidence is easily attainable. To remain silent on such a fundamental question as the existence and identity of a Macedonian people, especially given that Greece itself has put forward arguments denying a separate Macedonian identity in connection with the so-called "name issue" is intellectually dishonest. No report should pretend to offer solutions on an issue if it has not even bothered to give consideration to all relevant matters. Any assumption that the existence and treatment of the Macedonian minority in Greece is not relevant to the larger "name issue" is simply not sustainable.

Whilst the ICG does recommend that Athens should acknowledge the national identity and language of its northern neighbour as "**Macedonian**"; this recommendation is premised on Macedonia accepting a change to its name. Moreover, as the Report suggests, if Macedonia "*compromises on the name, the ball would be in Greece's court to accept the "Macedonian" identity of its neighbour and language*" (ICG, 2011:22). So other than treating such existential questions as a tennis match, it merely places an onus on Greece to consider its position once Macedonia capitulates on the name; there is no actual *quid pro quo* here. Perhaps most telling is that the ICG offensively references Macedonian identity and language in quotation marks, which, as anybody will know, is a way of leaving a question mark over the proposition being put forward in the word/s being used. In other words, the ICG seems to be questioning the legitimacy/authenticity of a Macedonian identity and language itself. This is hardly objective.

But moreover, the premise of the recommendation itself is offensive. It may appear a reasonable proposition on paper, but fundamentally it is not up to Greece to acknowledge what the identity of Macedonians should be, or should not be. Rather, consistent with international human rights law, only the subject people can self-identify. It is only up to Greece to respect these rights by ratifying relevant international law and enforcing them. Something they have deliberately avoided over many decades.

Thirdly, the Report seems to treat the fundamental right to self-

determination with contempt. Whilst the ICG Report 2001 provided a glimpse of the incompatibility of forcing Macedonia to change its name with the right to self-determination, the ICG Report 2011 provides no discussion on this point. In fact, it appears to be deliberately silent, thereby providing no counterweight to their final conclusion that Macedonia should accept a change to its self chosen name. The ICG does not answer why it is up to Macedonia to abandon its right to self determination instead of up to Greece to abide by international law?

Fourthly, and related to the previous assumption, the Report is equally silent on the deeply entrenched proposition that no State should be able to interfere in the internal affairs of any other sovereign State. The ICG Report does nothing to reconcile Greece's interference in Macedonia's affairs. Even worse, the Report demands that Macedonia "*reverse its decision to rename its airport after Alexander the Great and desist from similar moves certain to provoke Athens, especially within the context of its Skopje 2014 project.*" The ICG suggests that this is "*gratuitously provoking Greece*". Frankly, this is an absurd statement. It seems to accept that Greece has some sort of monopoly right on usage of symbols from ancient Macedonian history – something that is quite untenable.

Ironically the ICG accuses Macedonia of developing an 'unhealthy' form of nationalism because of its adoption of some ancient symbols, but makes no mention of the fact that Greece has been building monuments itself celebrating such historical figures for decades; and that this has actually formed part of a twofold policy of firstly delegitimizing the existence of a whole people that self-identify as Macedonian and secondly, forcing their assimilation into the dominant Greek ethnos (also described as cultural genocide).

This has not only included naming its own airports and other infrastructure after ancient Macedonian figures (whilst claiming them as 'Greek'), but at the same time renaming whole geographic landmarks and even peoples given names from their Macedonian representation and into Greek versions. Strange how the ICG Report does not find this "*provocative*", and does not suggest that Greece should desist from violating an entire ethnic group's human rights or even reverse its racism. To use the words that the ICG directed towards Macedonia, Greece's history of human rights violations against its Macedonian minority "*represents for many a nationalist vision of the state that leaves little room for minorities*" (ICG, 2011:23).

Fifthly, the ICG Report makes the assumption that Greece actually wants a resolution on the so-called "name issue". Given the length of time existing "negotiations" and "mediation" by the UN has taken, is a settlement of the so-called "name issue" with Macedonia something that Greece actually wants and aspires to? Given that every recommendation made to date (including by the ICG) seems to be asking Macedonia to compromise on its name, yet fundamentally asks nothing of Greece, why has Greece not moved to accept a resolution? Can it be that the so-called "name issue" is but a pretext for the more "difficult" issue of the Macedonian minority in Greece? Is such an inevitable introspection required on the part of Greece a problem for it, especially given that it has denied the existence of Macedonians for decades? Isn't the problem really one for Greece and about

Greece, and not Macedonia?

Sixthly, the ICG makes the further assumption that Greece is actually a democratic country, and a rational agent that will act with reason. But when it comes to issues of minorities and the **identity of other peoples, Greece's claim to being a democracy** is highly suspect. One need go no further than the myriad of reports from independent human rights bodies that place Greece firmly in the anti-democratic basket. For example, Human Rights Watch, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, Minority Rights Group, Amnesty International, **the Council of Europe's Special Rapporteur on Human Rights** and the UN expert on minority issues and even the European Court of Human Rights have all raised serious issues with Greece's democratic record relating to its Macedonian minority. Given this, what comfort does the ICG have that Greece will begin acting democratically on these issues overnight in relation to the **identity of its "northern neighbour" (as the ICG refers to Macedonia)**?

Seventhly, the ICG Report is characterised by its obsession with **Macedonia's potential membership with the European Union and NATO, making the assumption that this is the "end game" for Macedonia**. In fact, the Report recommends that upon Macedonia agreeing to a change in its name, that *"promptly after it does so, NATO should admit Macedonia, and the EU should begin membership negotiations"*. The obvious question is why should Macedonia's potential membership in the EU and NATO be linked to the so-called "name issue"? This is clearly a strategy that Greece favours, but why is it one that *"the world's leading independent, non-partisan, source of analysis and advice"* should also favour? The objective conditions for membership in these two institutions should have no bearing on how a country self-chooses to name itself following the principle of the right to self-determination, nor should such a strategy be employed as a way of holding a State hostage to the whims and clear political bias of another State. The principle expressed in the ICJ Advisory Opinion limiting conditioned membership requirements for admission to the UN equally applies here. Of course, another inherent assumption is that membership in the EU (and NATO in a different context) will have enduring benefits to Macedonia, something that is quite debatable given exigent circumstances. **Refer also to Dr Popov's article which discusses this point in Issue 11 of the MHR Review.**

Eighthly, the ICG Report operates on the basis that a diplomatic negotiated outcome in which only Macedonia makes concessions can resolve the so-called "name issue". As mentioned earlier, there are at least two other alternatives that could break the long-standing impasse of the so-called "name negotiations"; these include a legal settlement and/or the exercise by Macedonia of its right to self-determination by withdrawing from the Interim Accord and **associated "name negotiations"**. Arguably, both of these processes would have a greater chance of resolving the matter in a way that does not compromise Macedonia's human rights and are something that the international community already has mechanisms in place for, which can be invoked.

If this offends Greece because they are likely to lose any legal settlement or because Macedonia exercises its fundamental rights as a sovereign State, then so be it. It would at least lead to

an outcome, rather than continuing to punish one side over another by continuing with the current charade. Equally, the international community (including the EU) *should* also abide by any such outcome, given they were a part of establishing such dispute resolution mechanisms and pretend to abide by such a dispute resolution framework (although given how comfortable such international/European bodies have been to perpetuate the so-called "name issue" despite all the credible evidence rebuking it, it would not be a surprise for them to express discomfort and even reject these resolution methods).

The rhetorical question is: why settle for a negotiated outcome rather than the right outcome? Regarding a legal/judicial approach, this would also recalibrate the characterisation of the "name issue" from one that involves a dispute between Macedonia and Greece to a more accurate representation that this is a legal matter between Macedonia and the UN over its proper admission as an equal member of that universal body. Regarding the self-determination path, this would rightly place the so-called "name issue" in context and afford Macedonia the opportunity to be treated with respect and in a manner consistent with international law and practice. But to reiterate, the ICG failed to consider alternative responses to the so-called "name issue" other than capitulation by Macedonia.

Conclusion

The approach recommended by the self prescribed "world's leading independent, non-partisan" provider of "analysis and advice", the ICG, is far from independent or non-partisan and has produced questionable analysis in reaching its ultimate advice. It is generally what has been publically favoured by Greece. Indeed, the ICG is not even particularly wedded to the name "Republic of North Macedonia", so keen are they to "resolve the name dispute" that they would be equally contented with any other "similar formula with a geographic qualifier as the name of the country". Presumably, it would need to satisfy the Greek position.

The assumptions relied on in the ICG Report 2011 and its clear bias towards one party in the so-called "name issue" is breathtaking. The Report is anti-heuristic in its nature and intellectually lazy in its execution. It conveniently ignores well-established international standards, which its 2001 Report actually addressed to an extent, but later shamefully disregards. Its biggest flaw however, is that it fails to identify the real problem/issue, which is not what name Macedonia should or should not call itself, but the uninhibited racism inherent in the attitude of the State of Greece.

Dr. Vasko Nastevski – Secretary of the AMHRC

Endnotes

Notably, the majority of the Albanian population in Macedonia boycotted the plebiscite. A separate plebiscite was held by the Albanian minority which demanded greater autonomy for Albanians within Macedonia on 11-12 January 1992.

The European Commission referred Greece to the European Court of Justice seeking an injunction on the Greek embargo. The ECJ dismissed the appeal in a preliminary ruling. The substantive legality/illegality of the Greek embargo was not decided.

The term "identity suicide" was used in the documentary "A Name is a Name" by the musician Branislav Nikolov to describe what it means to have to deny one's own identity. Jason Miko then extends the concept with the term "identicide" to describe attempts by one nation to eradicate the identity of another nation (Miko, at http://www.pollitecon.com/html/reprints/An_Invitation_to_National_Suicide.html).

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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:



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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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