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НОВА ЗОРА

ГОРЕ ГЛАВАТА!

ΕΙΔΗΜΕΙΣ • ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗ • ΕΘΝΙΣΜΟΣ • ΔΙΑΦΟΡΑ

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MHR REVIEW



MACEDONIAN HUMAN RIGHTS

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ГОРЧЕ ПЕТРОВ - ЦЕЛ ЖИВОТ БОРБА
ГКИОРТШЕ ПЕТРОВ - ОЛОКАРНИ
ЗОН АТОНΑΣ
(σελ.15)

ΑΝΤΙΡΑΔΙΚΙΣΤΙΚΗ ΦΕΣΤΙΒΑΛ ΒΟ ΣΟΛΥΝ
ΜΑΛΚΥ ΣΛΑΔΟΤ ΒΟ ΓΟΡΧΙΝΑΤΑ
ΑΝ ΠΡΑΤΣΙΣΤΙΚΟ ΦΕΣΤΙΒΑΛ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗΣ
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NOVA ZORA's 4th Birthday Party

OR

HOW I LEARNED TO LOVE THE BOMB THAT WASN'T THERE...

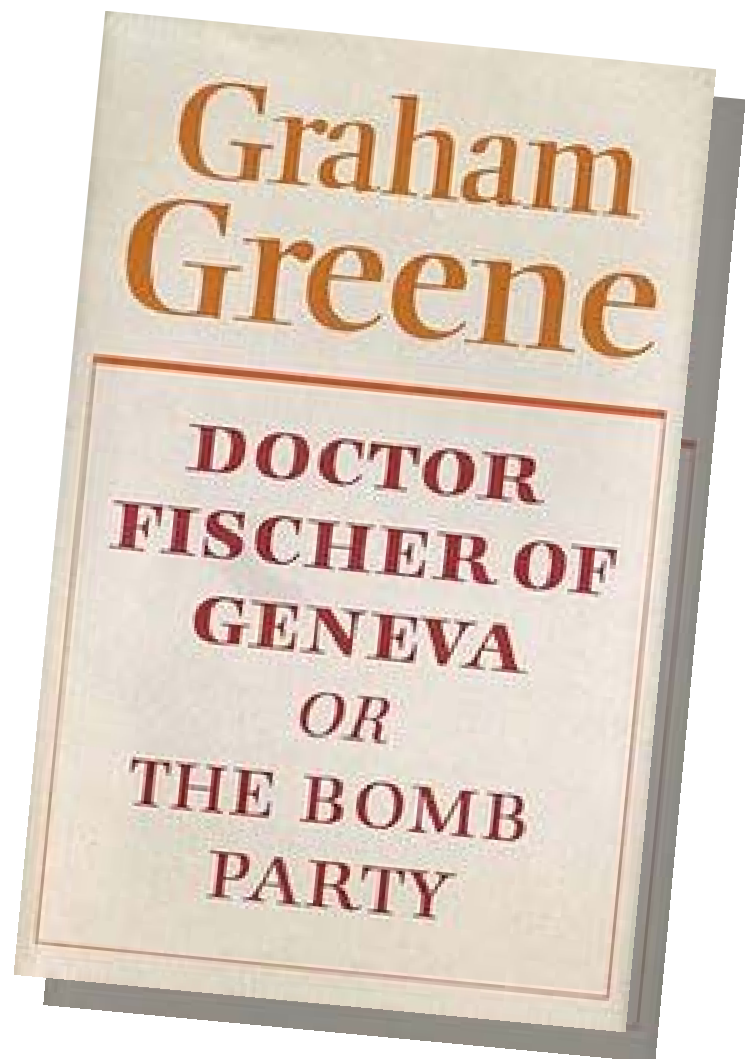
By George Vlahov

Prologue: A Dream with a 'Borrowed' Storyline

It was late and after watching various bits of internet footage of Nova Zora's birthday party, I drifted off to sleep. During my slumbers my mind's eye began viewing a different 'movie' one that I initially thought to be quite original. Some dreams can leave one with a powerful impression, even though the details often quickly become difficult to recall.

Trying to remember the details of a dream can be difficult because they are often disclosed in a manner similar to when one's surroundings might be revealed in a thunderstorm at night – in brief startlingly clear bursts. The lightning flashes can be quite illuminating, but only for a few seconds at a time. Anyway, my dream had various characters. The 'hero' was a certain Mr. Jones who in various brief glimpses was revealed to be a man who had had to struggle much to maintain his dignity, it was very valuable to him. All the same he had a reflexive understanding mind, he was a decent bloke, as it were. Quite unlike the Mr. Jones in Bob Dylan's *Ballad of Thin Man* who possessed a rather limited and more or less intolerant perception of the world.

The villain in my dream was called Dr. Fischer. Fischer was a financially well endowed older 'gentleman' who enjoyed 'experimenting' on a group of not as affluent toadies or sycophants. He would stage elaborate and infamous dinner parties at which his 'guests' would need to sit through various humiliations designed to underline their failings and insecurities. For surviving these ordeals they would be



rewarded at evening's end, with a very valuable 'present' or prize.

The 'crowning' party, which is called the *bomb party* involved the opening of a number packages, with all but one, containing a cheque for a large sum of money. The other package supposedly contained a bomb that would seriously harm the opener of the package...you get the idea. And the character named

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Mr. Jones, was not concerned about the apparent dangers in a situation where his dignity was being fundamentally challenged – so he fearlessly opened the last package after swapping a cheque for it with another of Fischer’s ‘guests’....there was no bomb, but Jones could not have been certain of it, Fischer was sadistic enough to have honored his promise ... Jones ruined his grand experiment and not long after, Fischer committed suicide.

During the course of the day following my dream, it dawned on me that there was *nothing* original about my dream – the whole story came from a Graham Greene novel, *Dr. Fischer of Geneva*. More than three decades have passed since I viewed a film version of that novel and I had forgotten ever seeing it. So it’s understandable that it took me a while to realize that my sub-conscious had made an interesting connection, to me at any rate, between the Graham Greene story and the *Nova Zora* event.



Back to Nova Zora & Closer to Reality

A contingent of the local police found it expedient to attend the *Nova Zora* celebration which was held in the town of Voden (Edessa in Greek). It is perhaps germane to say that these members of the Greek constabulary had armed themselves with more than mere guns; they were also well stocked or charged with twisted hopes and crooked dreams – potentially ‘explosive’ emotions. For upon their arrival they announced that they had received ‘intelligence’ which indicated that a bomb had been planted at the venue. The members and supporters of *Nova Zora* and *Vinozhito* responded by refusing to leave and carried on, virtually as if nothing had happened, somewhat undermining the wisdom of the aphorism that only the dead are without fear.

On YouTube, one can view the moment at which the bomb threat announcement was made via the speaker system in the hall. Ok, so everyone remained, but what were the immediate reactions of the members



and supporters of *Nova Zora* & *Vinozhito*? Well not exactly what I expected, there were some wry smiles and an expression of impatience at the ‘unnecessary’

ВОРА

ГОРЕ ГЛАВАТА!

group: Nova Zora

ΔΙΑΝΕΜΕΤΑΙ ΔΩΡΕΑΝ

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МАКЕДОНЦИ

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ТИВАЛ ВО СОЛУН
О ГОРЧИНАТА
АΛ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗΣ
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ΣΥΝΕΧΙΖΟΝΤΑΙ – του ΜΟΡΕ ΣΟΚΟΛ (σελ.9)

disruption to the music and dancing. The members of the musical group, *Mladi Bilbili*, casually slouched back while they awaited the completion of the an-

nouncement which heralded an unscheduled break in their performance; one of the group took the opportunity to light a cigarette, even the waiter moved about normally looking for some way to be useful to the clientele ... it was not entirely blasé, but near enough, just like the reputedly unflappable discreet charm of *some* sophisticated, world weary cosmopolitans inhabiting modern cities, though *not* like in a Bunuel movie. The celebrating went on as if nothing had happened.

I must say it became overwhelmingly obvious, that as a consequence of residing in Australia, I am not as used to receiving the direct attentions of the Greek state, or more precisely, its police force. If I had been present, I think I would have found such a disclosure at least a little disconcerting and that I would quite probably have managed to frown and or blink and may be even given my apologies while making for the exit ... but not the good people of *Nova Zora* and *Vinozhito*....

So I do indeed 'love the bomb' that wasn't there, precisely because it didn't exist, unlike Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove* who had been so disenchanted with life that he was delighted by the news of an impending nuclear holocaust that would wipe out much of humanity, including himself. He had completely embraced the death drive which nature has imbued all of us with, at the expense of all the other desires nature supplies us. Though let's be clear here, there is no equation of Mr. Jones or the people of *Nova Zora/Vinozhito* with Dr. Strangelove, the formers' predominant motives and desires are generally quite inimical to the (self) destructive urges dominating the character of Dr. Strangelove.

Never-the-less there are, little doubt, bigots with nature's vicious enough, to have made the presence of a bomb, very plausible. So I'm glad that our Mr. Jones's in Voden, were in the end, not harmed. And who knows, with fortitude like that, the intolerance which they strive to debilitate, might, like Dr. Fischer, eventually take to removing itself from the realm of the actual. Whatever the future holds, I really do have a lot of respect for the people in *Vinozhito* – over the course of two decades, they have often conducted themselves without fear, envy or meanness.

George Vlahov

An Interview with...

Dimitri Jovanov (Ioannou), **Editor in Chief of *NOVA ZORA* and** **Member of the Presidency of *Vinozhito***



Dimitri Jovanov

By David Vitkov

1. Dimitri, could you say a few words about *Vinozhito's* results at the recent European elections?

In short, our result was better than we expected.

Overall, we thought the ongoing economic crisis in Greece would negatively impact on our result. Macedonians in Greece, at the moment, are concerned about basic physical survival, more than anything else. Some of our supporters went as far as arguing 'that it would be better for *Vinozhito* not to participate in the elections as the Neo-NAZI's of *Golden Dawn* might take reprisals against Macedonians in Greece' etc.

Taking that into consideration and

also taking into account that our numbers went up in nearly every region in Greece, we think our result was reasonable. We were also happy with the increased participation of younger Macedonians in the party's efforts. With very limited resources and in the face of various other problems, we gained more than we expected. We knew that it was beyond our means to elect a representative to the parliament, even though we desire that very much. We simply wanted to demonstrate that they haven't succeeded in wiping us out and that we have every intention of continuing the struggle for our human rights.

Greece, following a model also used in France, introduced a law which requires a party to win over 3% of the total vote in order to elect a candidate; that means it is necessary to gain over 200,000

votes. The intention is conscious and clear: to make it impossible for minorities to elect any representatives.

2. Can you report on any irregularities or legally questionable actions during the lead up to and on the election day?

Well, it may be a little premature for me to comment in detail on this. I will put it this way; early reports do indicate that there were irregularities and legally questionable actions. In a number of places, the voting forms for *Vinozhito* did not appear and in others, the number of forms was below what is required. Other reports indicate, as in the past, that votes were stolen from *Vinozhito*. Moreover, wherever we placed posters, leaflets and alike, we found that within less than an hour, such materials had been removed and destroyed.

The majority of television channels did not air *Vinozhito's* video advertisement and those that did air it, did so in the early hours. I mean *really*, how many people watch television at 4 in the morning!? Also the *SIRIZA* party made a great effort to target Macedonians with their advertising, which unfortunately appears to have been quite successful.

It needs to be mentioned here that the representative in Greece, of the *United Macedonian Diaspora* organization, publicly called on Macedonians not to vote for *Vinozhito*, but rather to vote for the Turkish party....can you believe it??? The Greek authorities should

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give her/them an award.

Lastly, I will mention a key example of vote theft. In one particular village, *Vinozhito* gained 80 votes and came second to *SIRIZA*. The number of votes we gained was confirmed by a member of our party. Yet a few days later, on the official site of the Ministry for Domestic Affairs of Greece, the results show *Vinozhito* gaining only 73 votes. It doesn't take much imagination to conceive that the same thing might have happened in numerous others of the 23,000 voting booths in Greece.

3. What do you plan to do about these issues?

We are still gathering up all the evidence. Once that is done we will inform all relevant international organizations and it is likely that we will follow that up with legal action. There is no other way to proceed. It gives you a very bad feeling inside, when you *know* these violations occurred, but your response is limited to tedious and long drawn out processes.

4. The Turkish party gained more than 40,000 votes in its first election. *Vinozhito* has been around for 20 years, why can't it achieve a similar result?

That is a reasonable question, though it ultimately involves comparing two very different social contexts. Greece has officially recognized the existence of a Muslim minority since 1923, with the Treaty of Lausanne. Macedonians do not possess that sort of albeit 'indirect' recognition and there are other differences as well.

The Turks have schools in which their language is taught and the students are given a more accurate version of their history than is offered in Greek schools. Secondly the Turks have more access to various forms of media (newspapers, radio and television programs) via which they can more freely communicate with each other. Thirdly, the vast majority of Turks live as a compact mass in a clearly delineated region and have comparatively few doubts/fears about their Turkish identity. They don't need human rights activists to convince them to 'come out of the closet'. Moreover there are Turkish banks, businesses and a Turkish consul located in their region.

On the other hand, Macedonians are scattered throughout Greece and Greek assimilatory measures have been and still are, much sterner in relation to Macedonians. It's probably true to say that most of the people from our part of Macedonia who possess a strong Macedonian identity, no longer live in Greece, but in countries like Australia and Canada; and in many cases, they reside there for the very reason that they possess a strong Macedonian identity.

There are other factors too. For example, an individual from the Kostur (Kastoria in Greek) region, who possesses a strong Macedonian identity and is normally a supporter of *Vinozhito*, informed me prior to the election that he would vote for *SIRIZA* on this occasion, because he considered it more important to try to dislodge the *New Democracy* party. We regularly have to deal with such

attitudes, not to mention the massive amount of misinformation the Greek authorities have been spreading about *Vinozhito* for years – like that we are "separatists who desire war" etc etc.

It also needs to be emphasized here that until the very last possible moment, we didn't even know if we were going to be able to participate in the elections, because of our limited finances. As we have previously explained, it costs around 30,000 Euros just to pay the state for the production of voting forms, which is a legally compulsory expense. That is not counting advertising expenses, etc. Within our limits, we think that we did reasonably well. Here I would like to thank MHRMI in Canada and its president, Bill Nicholov, for their crucial assistance.

5. Would you like to add something else about the activities of *Vinozhito* and Macedonians in Greece?

At the moment, there is a very positive atmosphere in the party. Many things have been re-organized, a number of lapsed members have returned and as I mentioned earlier, the younger generation is getting more involved in the party's activities. The latter, especially, encourages a positive vision of the future. In spite of the desires of various people and social structures, *Vinozhito* will not fall apart; it will become stronger and it will continue to struggle for the human rights of Macedonians in Greece.

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We have already announced that we will be holding a press conference about the elections and the current situation in Greece in general. That conference will be held in Solun (Thessaloniki in Greek) and it will go ahead regardless of the intensive efforts that have been made to block it. We will intensify the distribution of our newspaper *Nova Zora* in combination with more regular visits to villages inhabited by Macedonians in order to enlist new supporters. Our aim will be to increase our domestic activity so that it becomes comparable to the success we have gained in obtaining international recognition. Though we appeal to Macedonians around the world, who originally came from Greece, to join us, to join the struggle. One cannot dance if one stands outside the circle.

6. Recently *Nova Zora* held its 4th annual dinner dance. Tell us a something about the event.

The event gets better every year. The 4th was especially successful as a political meeting seeing as we had an attendance from more villages all over Aegean Macedonia than on previous occasions. It was the first time we held the event in the town of Voden (Edessa in Greek) and in a large hall designed for bigger gatherings and musical performances. Performances were given by Tasho Jovanov (Tasos Ioannou) on the bagpipes; the five piece "Lerinski Bilbili" and the vocalist, Vera Miloshevska, from the group "Ljubojna" based in the Republic of Macedonia. It was fantastic; a hall full with young, old and in between; men and women dancing until 4.30 in the morning.

The committees of management

of *Nova Zora* and *Vinozhito* took the opportunity to award long time servants of the movement with recognition for their efforts; similar awards were given to a number of cultural associations and non-Macedonians who have contributed to the struggle for Macedonian human rights.

The first event was held in Lerinsko, the second and third in Sorovichevsko, the fourth in Voden and may be the next one will be held in Enidzhevardarsko or Solunsko... we shall see.

7. We heard that an unusual or 'funny' attempt was made to sabotage the event. Could you tell us something about that?

Not 'funny' but ridiculous. Once upon a time, in the early 90's, at our first attempts to have songs publicly performed in Macedonian, the local authorities would arrive in the company of the police and would use physical force to try to break up the event. Slowly, that type of repression came to an end, and the authorities began using more sophisticated methods. But at this year's *Nova Zora* event, we witnessed a return of the older methods. When a country like Greece is experiencing a serious socio-economic crisis, fascism rises fast and that affects the operational manner of both the police and other authorities.

The dance was going great and then I was called outside. I thought that there might have been a violent incident of some sort, but when I exited the hall, I saw members of our organizations arguing with what appeared to be seven civilians. Those seven turned out to be members of the secret police. They informed us that they had received a tip off that a bomb had been planted in

the hall and that everyone would need to be evacuated while the hall was searched. Yet they had no official documentation confirming their claims, nor did they have any special equipment or the special dogs, which are normal for such searches.

So we responded by saying that we will not evacuate the hall. We were aware that if we gave in to the demands of the secret police that our event would have been ruined. The policemen responded by demanding that we use the microphone in the hall to inform everyone present of the reported bomb threat. We did that and no one showed any alarm. When we informed the police of the result of the announcement they complained that we had made them objects of ridicule. We responded by asserting that they had done that to themselves. Our dance



went on without further incident and the police left after taking down the personal details of the organizers and the owner of the hall. Just prior to their departure the policemen stated that within a few days, the organizers would be called in for questioning and that legal action might be taken against them. But nothing of the sort ever occurred...

Interview conducted by David Vitkov on 5/6/2014. Translated from Macedonian by George Vlahov.



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YES, I want to become a member of the **AMHRC** and help defend the human rights of Macedonians all over the world.

MEMBERSHIP STATUS: ☐ I am a NEW Member ☐ I am an EXISTING member

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News in Brief

Mitch Belichovski

April 14 it was reported by BIRN that an EU Diplomat is calling for the investigation of the US Ambassador responsible for the controversial “Patriotic Highway” project in Kosovo. The former Ambassador has recently taken a post with the American firm that secured the project deal in Kosovo. Bechtel Corporation, the same American construction giant has since secured another deal to build a road from Kosovo to neighbouring Macedonia.

April 15 Independent MK reported that a new EU funded project was launched in Macedonia aimed at promoting and encouraging anti-corruption. The project is facilitated by the Centre for Research and Policy Making (CRPM) and also aims to provide sustainable conditions for social, economic and environmental growth. The research spans across 43 municipalities in the eight planning regions of Macedonia.

April 15 Independent MK reported that the EU announced a tender for the reconstruction of the Bitola-Kremencia railroad. The 20 million EUR investment will entail a 17km-long railroad to Greece as well as a smaller offset to Zabenj, a local industrial zone of Bitola. Tenders applications closed on May 27.

April 15 Independent MK reported that Harma Fruit is to invest EUR 6 million into Macedonia. The Greek company will establish a centre for purchase and packaging as well as a cooler in the southern town of Gevgelija. The owner of Harma Fruit, who's products are well placed on European and Middle Eastern markets, noted “the climate and the high quality of agricultural products” as reasons for the investment in Macedonia.

April 16 Independent MK reported that the State Election Commission declared 23,428 ballots null and void following the first Presidential round in Macedonia. Over 70% of the invalid ballots were due to over voting. While other votes for Russian President

Vladimir Putin and the Albanian Prime Minister Sali Berisha as well as scribbles, offensive messages and song lyrics were all counted as invalid. It is well known that citizens voice their discontent in every election with regards to political affairs.

April 17 it was reported by Dnevnik that Macedonians in the vicinity of Korcha in Albania have raised a complaint that they were dismissed from their place of work on a discriminatory ethnic basis. A representative of the Albanian government declared that the matter will be investigated.

April 22 Independent MK reported that the Macedonian movie “The Third Half” directed by Darko Mitrevski won an award at the Atlanta Film Festival. The premier of The Third Half was held in Bitola in 2012 and has participated in festivals across the world. The movie, which was also Macedonia's Oscar candidate for best foreign movie in 2013, is soon to be released on DVD in Australia.

April 22 Independent MK confirmed that a platform called “Green Macedonia” was signed by Non Government Organisations and political parties to tackle the “eco hotspots” and the “numerous environmental problems” in Macedonia. Environmental organisations consider that steps need to be taken to address issues such as the Veles pollution, the protection of the National Park Mavrovo and the reduction of forest logging.

April 23 Independent MK reported that in an attempt to stamp out fraudulent ballots, Macedonian voters would be marked with election ink on their left hand thumbs. The Electoral Commission developed a manual which had been forwarded to all municipal electoral committees across Macedonia.

April 28 BIRN reported that Macedonia's VMRO DPMNE comfortably won a fourth term in office. The State Electoral Commission declared that Nikola Gruevski won by the largest margin since the party came into power in 2006. It was confirmed that the

turnout for the early general election was 64 per cent while the presidential vote was 54.33 per cent.

April 28 the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe reported that “election day went smoothly” and that the overall assessment of polling station openings, voting as well as the counting and tabulation of votes was positive. However, it was noted that in the lead up to the election there were credible allegations of voter intimidation particularly by one party on ethnic Albanian voters to boycott the presidential ballot. Media monitoring also observed a bias in the favour of the ruling party and its presidential candidate.

April 29 it was reported by the Canberra Times that Queanbeyan is eager to establish a sister-city relationship with Ohrid, Macedonia. While Queanbeyan already has a sister-city arrangement with Minami Alps in Japan, the city’s councilor stated that the large local Macedonian population are “from the Ohrid region, if not Ohrid itself.” Pending Council sign off, two councilors will formally sign the agreement in Macedonia this July.

April 29 Independent MK reported on the views of Takis Michas, a Greek journalist who recently published an analysis named “Macedonia and East Germany.” Michas proclaims that Greece should recognise the constitutional name of the Republic of Macedonia. He draws on similarities between East Germany being recognised by its constitutional name in the early 1970’s and that the same should apply to Macedonia today, which is a “country which holds sovereign rights, including the right to name itself.”

April 30 Independent MK revealed that a committee report from the Greek member of the European Parliament requested the revocation of Macedonia’s EU membership. The report comes as no surprise following Prime Minister Gruevski’s reelection. Jorgo Chatzimarkakis claimed a nonexistence of freedom of speech in Macedonia and “insults on cultural legacy.”

May 15 BIRN reported that Macedonia’s opposition MP’s, which together won 34 seats in the recent general elections, were not present at a constituent session of the new parliament. The boycott follows a string of allegations from the opposition protesting that Nikola Gruevski’s VMRO DPMNE won both the April general and presidential elections by fraud. The ruling party has rejected the allegations and speaker of the parliament Trajko Veljanovski noted that he “sincerely wished opposition MP’s would now change their minds and take up their seats.

May 28 BIRN reported that all opposition MP’s excluding one, handed in written resignations to parlia-

ment. As per previous claims the members of the opposing parties attribute the victory of Nikola Gruevski’s VMRO DPMNE party to fraud. Despite the boycott and resignations it will not greatly affect the new parliament, as 89 of the 123 seats remain filled.

Chatzimarkakis: A mindless Request

The political elections in Macedonia resulted in quite some controversy. However, before the dust settled, an ethnic Greek member of the European parliament



wanted to have his say and like many Greeks before him, began a tirade against Macedonia, which included overblown attacks against the “Skopje 2014” project in a report presented to the European Parliament President, Martin Schulz. If such rants are to be taken seriously, it is Greece, much more than Macedonia, which needs to answer questions about “antiquisation”. The report’s motive: suspend Macedonia’s candidate status for EU membership.

Jorgo Chatzimarkakis’s ignorant claims included the

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assertion that there is “no freedom of speech” in Macedonia, to which we can be sure, the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia would have a strong message in retort – “We are Macedonians and as citizens of an independent country with its own identity have every right to join the incorporation which we know as the European Union.”

Nikola Gruevski and his Macedonian political party VMRO-DPMNE won the Macedonian general and presidential elections quite comfortably and although the otherwise “well conducted” polls were shrouded in controversy following allegations of serious media bias. Such is little different to what follows an election result in many countries around the world, including the last federal election in Australia. Thus Chatzimarkakis’s attacks and demands for a stricter stance from the European Union are out of place. At any rate Chatzimarkakis would have more credibility if he were willing to openly talk about and criticize the questionable practices of Greek governments which have led the way in contributing to a catastrophic financial crisis throughout Europe.

Chatzimarkakis accuses Macedonia of insulting the cultural legacy of neighboring countries, but it is Greece and not the Republic of Macedonia which is well known around the world for the last two decades, as desiring to take away the sovereign right of Macedonians to name their own country. A wise man once said if the pot calls the kettle black we must first have our own conscience clear of any hypocrisy. It is Greece which claims a totally homogenous ethnic Greek population, while systematically avoiding the accurate collation of data on ethnicity and it is Macedonia which officially respects the existence of its ethnic minorities. Such facts make it clear who is more respectful of cultural legacy.

Whether or not the EU is a body which the Republic of Macedonia should be seeking membership of, is debatable, but the claims made by Chatzimarkakis are exaggerations and his recommendations are unwarranted.

Mitch Belichovski

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MHRMI and AMHRC Increase Funding for Macedonian Language Classes in Albania

Toronto and Melbourne (May 8, 2014) – Macedonian Human Rights Movement International and the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee have increased funding for the MHRMI/AMHRC sponsored Macedonian-language schools throughout Albania and the Macedonian-language TV station in Korca, Albania.

Previously, Albanian government officials and secret service agents issued death threats to the Macedonian teachers, beat and tried to intimidate the students, but the private Macedonian-language classes have continued to thrive. (www.mhrmi.org/news/2010/december10_e.asp and www.mhrmi.org/news/2010/february14_e.asp)

The Albanian government's latest move in trying to suppress the Macedonian language is a reorganization of Macedonian-populated municipalities and amalgamating them into Albanian-populated ones. This would reduce the percentage of Macedonians in each district and give Albania an excuse to stop providing public education in Macedonian.

This directly affects the community of Pustec in the region of Mala Prespa, the communities of Ostreni, Steblevo and Trebishte in the region of Golo Brdo and the communities Zapot and Shishtavec in the region of Gora. During a meeting with local Macedonians, the Minister of Local Self-Governance, Blendi Chushi, offered a "guarantee" that the community of Pustec would not be dissolved. However, no guarantees were received for the other communities as the Albanian state does not recognize the existence of Macedonians anywhere other than in Pustec, and does not provide them with any public education.

"The Albanian Parliament will vote on this proposed law at the end of July. Until then, we demand from the Albanian authorities and international representatives, that the communities where Macedonians live not be dissolved. Albania's attempts to deny us our right to education in our mother-tongue must end", said Edmond Osmani, President of the Golo Brdo local committee of the Macedonian Alliance for European

Integration.

Macedonian organizations have repeatedly started petition drives and delivered

(Continued on page 14)

(Continued from page 13)

demands to the Albanian Ministry of Education and other educational institutions to allow the instruction of the Macedonian language, only to be denied or ignored.

“Thankfully, MHRMI and AMHRC have stepped in and funded several private Macedonian-language schools and kindergartens, and continue to open more throughout the areas where Macedonians live, including the regions of Gora and Golo Brdo and the cities of Korca, Pogradec, Bilishta and Vrbnik”, added Edmond Osmani.

The need for a private Macedonian-language TV station arose from the lack of Macedonian content on Albanian television and the denial of access to Macedonian candidates running in local elections.

Ironically, Albanians complain of discrimination in the Republic of Macedonia, despite being taught in Albanian at the university level, but are taking every measure possible to limit the amount of Macedonian being taught in Albania.

MHRMI and AMHRC condemn Albania’s continued state-sponsored discrimination against its Macedonian minority and demand that the international community finally hold it accountable. This includes the recent Council of Europe resolution which requires that Albania ensures education in all of its minority languages.

MHRMI and AMHRC will continue to increase Macedonian language classes throughout Albania. To help ensure the survival, and growth, of the Macedonian language in Albania, please contribute to the [MHRMI Human Rights Fund](#) or [AMHRC Macedonian Minorities Support Fund](#).

###

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

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



MHRMI Condemns Greece's Harassment of Human Rights Defender Panayote Dimitras

Toronto - January 31, 2014

In response to the International Secretariat of the World Organisation Against Torture request for urgent intervention (www.omct.org), Macedonian Human Rights Movement International condemns the ongoing judicial harassment of human rights defender and Greek Helsinki Monitor Spokesperson, Panayote Dimitras.

Mr. Dimitras was indicted on charges of perjury and defamation of Konstantinos Plevris, a member lawyer of the Athens Bar Association and author of the anti-Semitic book *"The Jews: The Whole Truth"*, which glorifies Hitler and calls for the extermination of Jews. In 2009, Dimitras was a witness in a trial in which Plevris originally received a suspended sentence of 14 months for *"incitation to racial violence and hatred and for racial insults"*. The other three defendants were acquitted of the same charges. Mr. Plevris appealed the sentence and was later acquitted.

In his defence deposition before the trial, Plevris accused Dimitras of being *"a wretched traitor of Greece, actively and publicly supporting the existence of a Macedonian minority in this country"*, and being *"the object of a complaint for treason against the Fatherland"*. Plevris also claimed that Andrea Gilbert, GHM specialist on anti-Semitism, was *"a Jewish-American who boasts of representing homosexual women, meaning that she is a psychologically defective, sexually perverted person who, as she does not respect her female nature, does not respect the truth either"*.

Instead of prosecuting openly racist, homophobic and anti-Semitic lawyers, politicians, religious leaders and others, Greece chooses to target minorities and minority rights advocates.

Rather than appealing to Greek authorities, who conduct this state-sponsored persecution, MHRMI calls on the international community to condemn Greece's practice of harassing minorities and human rights defenders and to force Greece to conform to the various human rights treaties to which it is a signatory.

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Dear Mr Casule, Mr Radosavljevic and Ms Billingham,

14/4/2014

I read with interest your article entitled "Macedonia to hold presidential runoff vote April 27" of 13 April 2014 which appeared on your web site (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/13/us-macedonia-election-votes-idUSBREA3C00520140413>). However, I must take issue with your use of the term "ethnic Slavs". There is simply no such thing in existence, anywhere. You are obviously unaware that ethnicity, is a matter of subjective choice. In other words ethnicity refers to how a group self identifies. Note well the difference with nationality, which refers to a person's legal citizenship status, irrespective of their ethnic identity choice. Thus all citizens of the Republic of Macedonia are Macedonian nationals, but not all of them choose to identify as ethnic Macedonians, though it needs to be underlined that 64.2% do indeed identify their ethnic identity as Macedonian.

Thus if you examine the census results in the Republic of Macedonia, you will not find any ethnic groups identifying as "Slav"; rather you will find groups identifying as Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish and etc. Moreover, in your article you state that "Ethnic Albanians represent a third of Macedonia's 2 million population". That statement is mere speculation.

At the last census conducted in 2002, ethnic Albanians in Macedonia numbered 25.2 % of the population (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mk.html>).

It is most unlikely that the population of Albanians has increased to over 33% in the last eight years when the total population of the country has barely in-

(Continued on page 16)

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creased in the past 12 years and also given the significant number of people, from all ethnic groups, who have emigrated from the country.

I therefore ask, that in future, when writing about the Republic of Macedonia, you describe the ethnic groups in a manner which is accurate and is based on reliable data, like the available census results. Anything short of that is frankly insulting and demeaning, seeing as it is an act which disrespects the actual identity choice of the ethnic group in question.

I hope to receive a prompt reply to the issues I have raised, as they relate to matters of fact and it will not do for a respected agency like Reuters to disseminate such inaccurate information.

Yours sincerely

Dr Chris Popov

Executive Member

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To whom it concerns,

6/6/2014

In the New Internationalist magazine no.473, Jo Lateu states that Macedonian and Bulgarian are "more or less the same language". This statement is without foundation and is not borne out by objective research. While there are lexical and grammatical commonalities between the two languages-as there are also between Macedonian and Serbian and Bulgarian and Serbian-due to the fact that they belong to the South Slavic section of the Slavic language group, there are also significant differences which set them apart as distinct languages. For example, verb conjugation is different, as is the use of demonstrative pronouns, the use of the definite article is more complex in Macedonian (three forms versus one in Bulgarian), the double object exists in Macedonian whereas it does not in Bulgarian, accentuation is different, not to mention pronounced lexical differences (identical words can have completely different meanings). Such differences make mutual intelligibility very difficult at times. In any case, a degree of mutual intelligibility does not make distinct languages one and the same. (eg: Spanish/Portuguese, Russian/Ukrainian etc). The work of eminent linguists such as Victor Friedman, Christina Kramer, Horace Lunt and Reginald De Bray has firmly established Macedonian and Bulgarian as distinct languages.

Bulgarian nationalists have long used the myth that Macedonian and Bulgarian are the same language, by which they mean that Macedonian is Bulgarian, to denationalize and forcibly assimilate the sizeable Macedonian minority living in Bulgaria and to deny the distinct ethnic identity of Macedonians in the Republic of Macedonia, Greece and Albania.

It is unfortunate that Jo Lateu has uncritically repeated this fallacy and, in so doing, unwittingly undermined the unique linguistic and ethnic identity of Macedonians.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Chris Popov

Executive Member

Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee

Melbourne, Australia.



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Igor Pavlovski



THE MACEDONIANS IN BULGARIA FACE A NEW CONTEXT

By Stojko Stojkov

After the fall of communism, over the last quarter of a century Macedonians in Bulgaria have lived and struggled in conditions which are not easy to explicate. On the one hand the state actively negates the existence of Macedonians. It refuses to engage in dialogue with Macedonians; forbids the registration of Macedonian organizations and political parties; limits the freedom of assembly of Macedonians and confiscates their publications etc. On the other hand, Bulgaria was striving to create an image of democratization and respect for human rights, in order to be able to join the EU. Thus the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg seemed to become crucial for Macedonians in Bulgaria. The Human Rights Court found in favour of Bulgaria's Macedonians on eight occasions. Never-the-less Bulgaria's older generation of Macedonians, still fearful as a result of the memories of the terror during communism and generally living in poverty in a quasi-democratic state, could do nothing to stem the tide of young Macedonians migrating out of the country, as the latter were cynical about the 'changes' supposedly taking place in Bulgaria.

In this context, Macedonian organizations concentrated their efforts in two main directions. The first involved legal defensive actions un-

dertaken to protect their rights via the court in Strasbourg. The second, with the establishment of a political party, Macedonians attempted to enter political life at the local government level, with the hope of eventually electing a representative to parliament and in that way, contribute to the conversion of Bulgaria's legislative house into a forum that defends the rights of Macedonians. The hope was that Macedonians would thus liberate themselves from their fears and simultaneously, convince Bulgarian society that it need not regard Macedonians as 'enemies' but rather as civilized co-citizens.

There were some successes in that regard and their value should not be underestimated. They were partially the result of democratization/Euro-integration, in spite of all its shortcomings; but equally, the efforts of Macedonians themselves, were fundamental to the progress that was made. It was because of the efforts of Macedonians that the *total* bans against their freedom to assemble and against their right to express themselves via newspapers etc, came to an end. All the same, too much remained unchanged: the negation of the existence of Macedonians; the refusal to register Macedonian organizations; refusals to participate in dialogue; the continued treatment of Macedonians as objects of hate and

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the desire of Macedonians for self-determination, was and is still viewed as a form of national betrayal. The latest developments in Europe have not helped. Of late, human rights have been seriously downgraded in importance. The very court, via which some progress was made, has now been practically emasculated. The first sign of this was when the Committee of Ministries began to declare their decisions as implemented, even though they had not been (as was the case with the Macedonian political party in Bulgaria). More recently, it has begun rejecting the hearing of complaints without a proper examination of those complaints – such was the case with the organization of *Repressed Macedonians in Bulgaria*. The latter's complaint was rejected without the right of appeal and without a proper investigation/hearing.

Euro optimism has now vanished. Prior to Bulgaria's EU integration in 2006, many felt that integration would lead to a resolution of numerous problems and that made for a very enthusiastic activism on the part of Macedonians. Eight years after integration, such illusions no longer exist. Bulgaria has totally ignored all recommendations from international institutions, in relation to human rights and in turn, the international institutions have done nothing to 'encourage' Bulgaria to respect the rights of Macedonians. All of that delivered a powerful blow against the Macedonian human rights movement.

Europe watched but not did not react, when in Bulgaria, it became common to 'purchase' votes during election campaigns; nor did Europe react when the Bulgarian state falsified the census results by reducing the official number of Macedonians to 1,600 individuals and when it discharged public servants from the National Statistical Institute because they had attempted to place a Macedonian identity option on the census forms.

Moreover the blockade of the Republic of Macedonia's Euro-integration by means of absurd anti-democratic requirements imposed by Greece and Bulgaria silenced even the most strident Euro enthusiasts among the Macedonians in Bulgaria. All of the mentioned features, including the emasculation of the court system which was supposed to defend human rights, combined with the recent economic crises, culminated in so much negativity that the very existence of Macedonian organizations in Bulgaria, is now threatened.

Fortunately, thus far, certain Macedonians in Bulgaria have demonstrated an admirable level of persever-

ance, so that while the activity of Macedonian organizations has dissipated considerably, it has not come to an end. In particular, OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN and "Narodna Volja" both carry on, due to the huge sacrifices of some of their members. During this critical period, support for the Macedonian human rights movement in Bulgaria, by Macedonians, wherever they may live, has become very important; that is especially the case in relation to the AMHRC and MHRMI.

The Way Ahead



The realities of the current situation within both the EU and Bulgaria, do not make it easy to map out the road ahead. Official participation in the political life of Bulgaria has been made virtually impossible. Thus the focus at present is on cultural activities and the organization of large gatherings devoted to building up the presence of the younger generation in the movement, in order to prepare for the moment when more serious political activity becomes possible again.

Even these truncated plans are proving difficult to organize at present. The wide scale of youth immigration and cynicism is proving difficult to overcome. The mainstream Bulgarian political parties are managing to attract the participation of some of the younger generation of Bulgarians by offering definite career opportunities. For the Macedonian movement to do the same, is not really possible at the moment – the work is done mostly on a voluntary basis. Nevertheless, larger scale cultural gatherings continue to be organized, as they are essential.

On the international front, more priority has been

given to working with organizations like the European Commission on Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the protection of national minorities. Some progress has been made in cooperation with those organizations, though it remains for their findings to be forcefully and unambiguously brought before official Bulgaria. Their conclusions relate to the basics: recognition of the existence of Macedonians, the opening up of dialogue and equality before the law. The force of their findings is limited and if the Macedonians in Bulgaria are to be finally recognized, more international pressure will have to be applied. Official Bulgaria is aware of this eventual possibility and that is why it makes enormous efforts to confuse the issues before the eyes of institutions like ECRI.

In order to help illustrate the current situation, I will mention some concrete examples of activities undertaken by OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN. In October 2013, representatives of OMO met with a delegation from the Advisory Committee which was visiting Bulgaria. OMO presented the delegation with a full report on all the problems faced by Macedonians in Bulgaria and with proposed solutions to those problems. That was followed up with a report prepared and sent by OMO, to all relevant human rights or otherwise relevant organizations in regard to human rights violations experienced during 2013 by Macedonians in Bulgaria. The same will be done for 2014.

During the course of every year no less than three large scale gatherings are held (in Melnik, Teshovo and Mosomishte) and around a dozen open forums in all the major towns of Pirin Macedonia (and in other parts of Bulgaria). These are connected to important dates like February 4 and May 4 (the birth and death dates of Gotse Delchev); at the end of July (Nikola Parapunov); September 12 (the date on which a mass murder of leaders and members of the independent

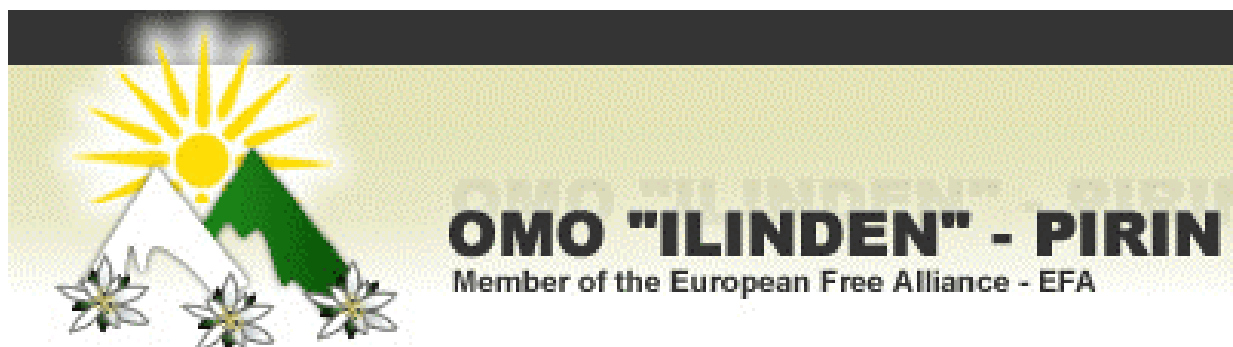
Macedonian movement took place) and December 7 (the birth date of Nikola Vaptsarov). The annual festival held in Melnik on the date of Yane Sandanski's murder (April 22) remains the most important of these gatherings. Over a thousand people usually attend, including delegations from bodies in the Republic of Macedonia, Aegean Macedonia in Greece, the AMHRC in Australia and MHRMI in Canada.

Apart from the regular publication of the newspaper "Narodna Volja" and the occasional bulletin "Makedonski Glas" (which is also distributed via the internet), it is also worth mentioning that some books have recently been published. This year a particularly significant collection of documents about the repression of Macedonians in Bulgaria during the communist era was published by the Association of Repressed Macedonians, with the aid of the AMHRC. It has 550 pages and brings to light a substantial amount of evidence in relation to the terrorization of Macedonians and of course, demonstrates their existence in Bulgaria.

Finally the creation and maintenance of various Macedonian folklore groups needs to be mentioned. The performances of these groups always liven up the large scale gatherings of Macedonians in Bulgaria and they have also begun performing at important celebrations in Aegean Macedonia and the Republic of Macedonia and they do so, on a voluntary basis.

We envisage the Macedonian human rights rising in importance over the coming years, as a factor opposing the politicking of the Bulgarian state, which all the more of late, has been focused on denying the existence of the Macedonian nation. The capabilities and efforts of Macedonians in Bulgaria cannot be expected to bring about quick results, there is a long road ahead of us, but we shall stay the course.

Translated from Macedonian by George Vlahov. Stojko Stojkov is a member of OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN a political party struggling for the rights of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria. It has been banned since 2000, despite a 2005 European Court of Human Rights judgment ruling that the decision was a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights. For more information please visit www.omoilindenpirin.org.



PARLIMENTARY AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN MACEDONIA: *HAS ANYTHING REALLY CHANGED?*



Zoran Zaev

By Dr Chris Popov

Background to the Elections

Early or snap parliamentary elections are usually called by a government when it feels that there is either some electoral advantage to be gained by doing so- being returned to government and/or increasing its parliamentary majority or limiting the electoral damage that would otherwise ensue by holding the elections at a time determined by accepted political and constitutional requirements- or in response to a political, economic or social crisis which threatens the stability of a country.

In the case of Macedonia, the immediate cause of the snap parliamentary election was the refusal of the governing VMRO-DPMNE and Premier Nikola Gruevski to accede to the demand of DUI, its junior coalition partner, that both parties field a joint candidate in the presidential election. Presumably, this would have meant either an ethnic Albanian candidate from the ranks of DUI or an ethnic Macedonian that DUI considered more acceptable and “Albanian-friendly”. Gruevski naturally rejected DUI and its leader Ali Ahmeti’s demand as it would have meant that the post of president would in all likelihood not

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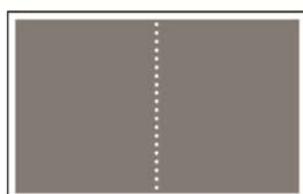
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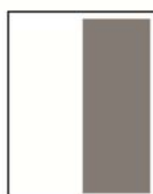
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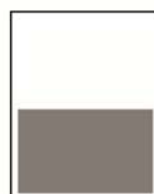
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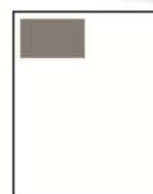
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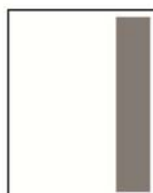
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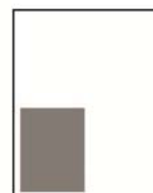
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(Continued from page 20)

be held by its own VMRO-DPMNE candidate. Moreover, he argued that the concept of a “consensual president” directly undermined the democratic process as it effectively imposed on the electorate someone who was the result of backroom party deals between two parties and permitted the Albanian minority, albeit through the influence and lobbying of DUI, to have a disproportionate influence on the choice of president, effectively shutting out the will of the Macedonian majority and other smaller minority groups in the Republic of Macedonia. Other observers, however, have claimed that the “dispute” over a consensual president was confected between the two governing coalition partners so that early general elections in which both have a vested interest could be held.

The elections were called early as Gruevski thought that he could capitalise on fears on the part of ethnic

27 April 2014 so as to coincide with the presidential elections which were held over two rounds on 13 and 27 April 2014.

Election Campaign

In the course of the campaign Prime Minister Gruevski appealed to the electorate to give VMRO-DPMNE a clear majority of at least 62 seats in the 123 seat parliament, so that the government could not be “held to ransom” by the ethnic Albanian parties. VMRO-DPMNE also stressed its successful stewardship of the country’s economy in the last three years and during the global financial crisis, the increase in pensions and lowering of unemployment (claims which had some justification) and its determination not to change the country’s name under Greek and EU pressure. The DUI appealed to ethnic Albanian voters to boycott the presidential election- though notably not the parliamentary elections, as the post of presi-

dent is essentially ceremonial- in the hope that the election would be rendered constitutionally invalid by not having 50% of all registered voters participate. The main Macedonian opposition party, the Social Democratic Union (SDS), accused the government of being corrupt, incompetent and unable to solve the country’s severe economic and social problems, as well as the crucial name issue which is blocking Macedonia’s membership of the EU and NATO. Its presidential candidate, Stevo Pendarovski indicated that he as President would assist in achieving a compromise on Macedonia’s “international name” so as to advance its march towards full EU and NATO membership. (“Пендаровски е за државен компромис за името”, 28 March 2014 [http://www.utrinski.mk/?](http://www.utrinski.mk/?ItemID=676360905A0BD14BB06642FA7B642F25)



Ali Ahmeti

Macedonian voters and those of other ethnic communities that the Albanian minority was once again trying to impose its will on the country and electorate. The DUI and its leader Ali Ahmeti on the other hand, sought to exploit the perception that the Macedonians were once again discriminating against ethnic Albanians and their vital interests. Thus, the parliamentary elections were brought forward one year and held on

[ItemID=676360905A0BD14BB06642FA7B642F25](http://www.utrinski.mk/?ItemID=676360905A0BD14BB06642FA7B642F25)) Pendarovski also controversially in the course of the campaign visited Kosovo on April 25 and criticised the Macedonian government’s conduct of the bilateral relationship with Kosovo and Albania in a blatant attempt to attract Macedonia’s ethnic Albanian electorate. (“Пендаровски од Приштина со навреди за Македонија”, 25 April 2014 http://kanal5.com.mk/vesti_detail.asp?ID=37669)

In contrast, the President Gjorgje Ivanov, presidential candidate of VMRO-DPMNE stressed the fact that he had played a strong stabilising role in his five years as president, and that he and the government had contributed to economic growth, job creation and increased pensions, while not losing sight of Macedonia's quest for membership of the EU and NATO. ("Иванов: Работевме домаќински, успесите се видливи", 2 April 2014 <http://www.novini.mk/read/719446/ivanov-rabotevme-domakjinski-uspesite-se-vidlivi>)

It is important to also focus briefly on the conditions in which both the campaign and the elections themselves took place. For many years, Macedonian NGOs and opposition parties have, not entirely without foundation, alleged that Macedonian elections since 2006, when the current government came to power, have been marred by systemic faults like party-controlled police and judiciary, an established structure of political clientelism in the administration and state-controlled media that manipulate and spread an atmosphere of fear. There have also been claims that the electoral roll has been manipulated to favour the ruling party (with deceased persons still appearing on the roll, voters residing at addresses where they do not live, issue of fake ID cards etc) and its DUI coalition partner, that there has been a lack of civic control over voting in the diaspora, as well as intimidation of voters at their workplaces and at polling stations which all help the ruling party retain power. In the interests

of fairness though, it must be said that such systemic failings were also observed during elections held prior to 2006 when the SDS was in government, especially in those areas of the country inhabited by the Albanian minority, although the international community was less inclined to focus on them.

While the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) /ODIHR (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) said the voting in the first round of the presidential elections was smooth, it did say that biased media coverage and the blurring of state and party activities were significant issues. OSCE ambassador Ahrens stated that "there was a lack of political analysis and independent reporting, and the public broadcaster failed to provide balanced coverage" before the polls. Ahrens also said that Ivanov had a "significant advantage in resources and predominance in paid advertising" over the other three presidential hopefuls.

In its preliminary report on the conduct of the elections, the OSCE calculated that while Ivanov had 23 hours of paid political advertising during the campaign, his main competitor, Pendarovski from the Social Democrats, had only three. "The government's clear support [for Ivanov] during the election campaign did not fully respect the separation of party and the state," Ahrens concluded.

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REDEFINING THE CAFE EXPERIENCE

In March, Police Minister Gordana Jankuloska dismissed claims that fake IDs and addresses were being handed out to people in preparation for the general and presidential elections in April. Jankuloska stated that "the ministry conducts all activities prescribed by the law with maximum professionalism", dismissing opposition claims as "attempts at self-promotion".

Answering a question about cases of dozens of people appearing to live at the same address, her answer was that there were no legal obstacles to multiple people living under the same roof. ("Critics Claim Macedonia's 'Smooth' Election Was Rigged", 18 April 2014, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/critics-claim-macedonia-s-smooth-election-was-rigged>)

Election Results

The results of both the presidential and parliamentary elections were as expected and as had been foreseen by pre-election polls. In the second round of the presidential election held on 27 April 2014, Ivanov recorded a convincing victory over the SDS's Penдарovski: 534,910 votes (55.28%) to 326, 164 (41.14%). At the parliamentary elections which were also held on 27 April the results were as follows: The VMRO-DPMNE-led coalition gained 42.18% of the vote and 61 seats, the SDSM-led coalition, 24.91% of the vote and 34 seats, the DUI, 13.48% of the vote and 19 seats, the Albanian Democratic Party (PDA-PDSH), 5.83% of the vote and 7 seats the National Democratic Revival (RDK) won 1.56% of the vote and retained only one of its seats, while the Citizens' Option for Macedonia (GROM), won 1.56% of the vote and 1 seat. ("Gjorgji Ivanov is re-elected President of the Republic of Macedonia and the outgoing Prime Minister's Party wins the general elections", 13 April 2014, <http://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/doc/oe/oe-1502-en.pdf>)

In the immediate aftermath of the elections the OSCE/ODIHR repeated most of the criticisms that it had made after the first round of the presidential elections. The OSCE/ODIHR monitoring mission to Skopje said that the polls were well-administered and fundamental freedoms were respected but there were a number of serious faults during the run-up to the second-round presidential vote and simultaneous parliamentary elections.

The SDSM and its leader Zoran Zaev backed up OSCE's criticisms and added that there had been

"threats and blackmails and massive buying of voters". It announced that it would not recognize the results of the general elections and that its MPs would not take up their seats in Parliament. ("OSCE Criticises Macedonia Over Election Shortcomings", 28 April 2014 <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/>



[osce-sees-reoccurring-shortcomings-in-macedonia-elections](#)). In mid-May 2014 all 34 SDS MPs formally relinquished their seats in Parliament, although given that they have had their election ratified by the Parliament there is still considerable debate about whether they have legally relinquished their seats by providing only notarized declarations.

Predictably, VMRO DPMNE dismissed the SDSM allegations as a case of sour grapes and a futile attempt by the opposition to justify its abysmal performance and manipulate public opinion, although it was more measured in rejecting the OSCE criticisms. ("Macedonia's disputed elections were orderly: OSCE", 28 April 2014 <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/28/us-macedonia-election-osce-idUSBREA3R0WV20140428>).

Post-Election Manoeuvring

The reaction of the DUI, with which VMRO DPMNE is currently negotiating about forming a new government, was interesting. While it claimed victory in the elections- a strange claim indeed, given that it won 19 seats and finished in third place, but which nevertheless reveals its federalist agenda, as it considers itself the “winner” in the Albanian political camp- it does not recognize the re-election of President Gjorgje Ivanov as legitimate, as he was not a “consensus” candidate. It does say, however, that his re-election was, strictly speaking, legal. However, in keeping with its stance on this matter, it- and the SDSM MPs- did not attend Ivanov’s inauguration on 12 May, but bizarrely its spokesman Bujar Osmani stated that DUI would recognize the legitimacy of Ivanov’s re-election if Macedonia became a member of NATO in September

(“BDI: Albanians will recognize Ivanov’s legitimacy if the country becomes a NATO member”, 14 May 2014 <http://www.balkan.eu.com/tag/bujar-osmani/>).

It appears that despite the campaign rhetoric from both VMRO DPMNE and DUI about defending the interests of the Macedonians and Albanians respectively, nothing much has changed in terms of the internal logic of the Macedonian political system and its nature. Nikola Gruevski’s appeal to the electorate to give his party 62 seats so as not to be “blackmailed” by the ethnic Albanian parties has been revealed as nothing more than empty rhetoric given that he has accepted a mandate by the president to form a new government in coalition with the DUI. Given the provisions of the Framework Agreement of 2001 and article 69 of the Constitution which states that laws that directly affect the areas of culture, use of languages, education, personal documents and use of symbols need the approval of a majority of those MPs present who belong to communities other than the “majority” community (in effect a double majority), it is clear that “blackmail” by the ethnic Albanian parties is built into the Macedonian political system. Gruevski, despite the fact that he could form a parliamentary majority, albeit slender, with the support of the GROM party’s sole MP, knew all along that he would have to form a coalition with DUI (or DPA in the event that it garnered enough MPs) in order to guarantee that he could secure the necessary number of ethnic Albanian votes in Parliament to ensure the passage of legislation requiring a double majority. (And herein lies the perversity of this system; whichever Albanian party commanding a majority of seats is invited to join a coalition government, even though its votes may not be required to form a parliamentary majority, as an incentive not to block legislation covered by article 69, even though the content of such

legislation must be approved by it, and which it may still decide to block in order to extract concessions in other areas!).

However, a coalition with the DUI was also inevitable given the expectation and pressure of the international community that ethnic Albanian parties should always be included in any governing coalition in order to secure internal stability, but, even more importantly, because the ethnic Albanian political block has consistently threatened in the post-independence epoch- that there will be “consequences”, should they not be included in governing coalitions. No Macedonian party since the declaration of independence in 1991 has been able to, or had the fortitude to resist this external and internal pressure. It is clear that the Macedonian and ethnic Albanian political elites in Macedonia have long ago made their peace, despite the obvious tensions that exist between Macedonians and Albanians in general as evidenced by the latest murder and anti-Albanian violence in the Gjorche Petrov municipality of Skopje.

An important outcome of this election has been the decision of the SDS to not take up its seats in Parliament in response to what it terms “massive electoral fraud”. While fraud may have played some part in the poor showing of the SDS at this election- a total loss of 8 seats- it is clear that its policies and oft-expressed willingness to consider a name change for the country, have alienated voters. Its boycott of parliament is therefore, on the one hand, an attempt to divert attention away from its own shortcomings and unpopularity and, on the other hand, a strategy designed to create a political crisis in Macedonia which may lead to new elections. For the moment though, it has marginalised itself and given the hold of VMRO-DPMNE on government, the bureaucracy, mass media and other social institutions. SDS may find that it has very little alternative to returning to Parliament (if its seats in the interim have not been filled by other candidates from other parties) as the international community has been urging.

The likely formation of a VMRO-DPMNE/DUI coalition government will only underline once again the inevitable tension which exists between Macedonian and Albanian political aspirations in Macedonia. The name negotiations with Greece will continue in an attempt to please the international community and placate DUI by showing that progress is being made to advance Macedonia’s “Euroatlantic aspirations”, however in so doing Macedonian identity and statehood will be further weakened as more pressure is applied, both internally and externally, to arrive at a

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“compromise”. Concessions will continue to be made to the Albanian minority in the interests of “stability”, however the practical effect will be to continue on the seemingly inexorable path towards federalisation of the country. In the absence of concrete measures designed to create employment opportunities for the youth of the country, the brain drain will continue robbing Macedonia of precisely those skilled workers essential to economic growth and progress. As has been stated many times in the pages of this review,

new political and social forces, built around policies designed to protect the country’s name, territorial integrity, independence and identity are needed in order to safeguard its future, however the results of the recent elections have once again highlighted that such movements and forces either do not exist or are so marginalised, (such as the Makedonski Manifest organization) that they present no credible threat to the current political elites.

Dr. Chris Popov

A PERFIDIOUS PLAN OF THE GREEK STATE: THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY PROVIDED LOANS FOR THE SETTLEMENT OF “SOVIET GREEKS” IN THE AEGEAN PART OF MACEDONIA

Dr Dimitar Ljorovski Vamvakovski

In recent history Greek colonization of parts of the territory of Macedonia can be divided into two stages. The first stage covers the period when Macedonia was still part of the Ottoman Empire, while the second stage, which has continued up until the present day, was implemented in the wake of the inclusion of the larger part of Macedonian territory within the borders of Kingdom of Greece. While during the first period irredentist motives drove Athens to colonize Ottoman Macedonia with Greek settlers, during the second period the aim was to bring about the homogenization of the Greek nation in the Aegean part of Macedonia.

The lack of a dominant Greek population in the territories of Ottoman Macedonia which Greece had laid claim to was sufficient reason, among other measures, for concrete action to be taken for the settlement of Greeks from the Greek state, as well as from the remaining Ottoman territories where Greeks lived. In Greece the prevailing theory at that time was that “whoever claims a population as its own, will also claim the territory it lives on”. According to this logic, the claims of Athens would have remained speculative, had it not “shown and proved” that a large “Greek population” lived in Ottoman Macedonia.



Ion Dragoumis

During this period historical documentation records settlements of Greeks in the coastal parts of Macedonia, in its central and southern parts, especially in major urban centres, but also in low-lying villages. In a report at the end of 1903, Ion Dragoumis, a national ideologue of the time, concluded that the systematic settlement of Greek farmers in areas inhabited by the ethnic Macedonian population was necessary, in the course of which particular attention

should be paid to the imposition of the Greek language on the Macedonians. He observed that the Macedonians were a mostly agricultural people who had settled in rural areas and claimed that they had moreover Macedonianized the “Greek” and “Greek-Vlach” cities of Macedonia. Precisely because of this fact, he considered it necessary that the mixing of Greek farmers with Macedonians take place, so that the Greeks could impose the Greek language on the latter. To bring about this plan, Dragoumis considered it necessary to buy agricultural plots and resettle Greeks from the Greek state so that Greek enclaves could be created to bring about the assimilation of the Macedonian population.

The second phase of Greek colonization began after the Balkan Wars and the inclusion of the largest part of Macedonia within the borders of the Greek state. In contrast to the preceding period, Greece, making use of the new situation, employed all instruments of the state to change the ethnic structure of the Aegean part of Macedonia. The goal was the national homogenization of the northern part of the country where, in addition to the dominant ethnic Macedonians, there also lived a significant Muslim population, as well as Jews, Vlachs, Roma and Albanians. The Greek community was the third largest in Aegean Macedonia in this conglomeration of peoples. This factual situation was in stark contrast to the national theory on the “purity” of the Greek nation and state. One of the measures taken to “correct the situation” was the resettlement of a large Greek and Christian population in northern Greece. In relation to this we mention the well-known Convention signed between Greece and Bulgaria in 1919 for the “voluntary” exchange of popula-

tions and, later, the Lausanne Convention of 1923 between Turkey and Greece for the mandatory exchange of the Christian population of Turkey and the Muslim population of Greece. By virtue of the first agreement a significant number of ethnic Macedonians, who were declared by Bulgaria and Greece to be “Bulgarians”, were forced to leave their centuries-old homes, while by virtue of the second, the Muslim population of Aegean Macedonia was forced out completely. On the basis of these two agreements a large Christian population, which according to Athens was “Greek” was settled in Greece, and especially in Greek Macedonia, such that the ethnic structure of northern Greece was drastically changed. This practice continued after the Civil War, which brought about a huge depopulation of ethnic Macedonians in Greece. The new situation was taken advantage of after the war, when in accordance with legislation enacted in 1953, plans were made for the resettlement of persons with a “tried and true national consciousness” from central and southern Greece in the north western border areas of Greece; i.e., in those areas inhabited by Macedonians.

In any case, despite the numerous measures taken by Greek institutions to fully incorporate the northern province into the “pure” nation-state, by the end of the 1980s it was clear that the “guardians” of Greek nationalism had not fully accomplished their mission. On the one hand, the development of a contemporary Macedonian movement in the Aegean part of Macedonia, which later developed into a political movement, under the leadership of the “Rainbow” party, actively worked for the recognition and granting of basic minority rights in the country. On the other hand, the fall of communism and the

recent creation of an independent Macedonian state, the increased internationalization of the Macedonian question by the organizations of children refugees from Macedonia and the large worldwide Macedonian diaspora, were reason enough for Athens, after adjusting to the new-found situation, to continue the past policy of assimilation of the ethnic Macedonians in Greece. One of the measures taken in this regard was the plan to settle “Soviet Greeks” in northern Greece, with funds from the European Economic Community (EEC), today the EU.



On 2 June 1990 in an “exclusive” report, the newspaper “Nova Makedonija” featured a text with the title: “A New Colonization Awaits Aegean Macedonia”. In its subheading, the newspaper stated: “Perfidious measure of the government in Athens to complete the assimilation of Macedonians in Aegean Macedonia”, before immediately formulating the following question: “What do the secret documents of the EEC and the European Council regarding the plan for the resettlement of 100,000 ‘Soviet Greeks’ in northern Greece contain?” In the introductory part of the text, the greater part of which we will reproduce for purposes of a more authentic presentation of the facts, “Nova Makedonija” provides its opinion and analysis of the EEC document which it claimed to have obtained from “its own

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sources". "The plan contains a strategy for the 'reception and resettlement' of 100,000 refugees of Greek origin from different parts of the USSR and the construction of apartments for 25,000 families in those regions severely affected by depopulation in the period 1950 to 1970". Moreover, the paper continues on, "this type of formulation, however cleverly it may have been drafted to conceal the true goals, makes it clear that the basic intention is to significantly influence changes in the demographic map of Aegean Macedonia, where the 'Russian Greeks' will be mainly resettled. Namely, the question is one which relates to the settlement of agricultural land where the migrants will be given apartments, 10,000 hectares of land (only in the first phase) where 2000 farms will be created and all this will be occurring in the northern part of Greece." At the end of the first part of this report, the newspaper observed and at the same time posed the following question: "The impending Greek colonization of Aegean Macedonia, unfortunately, is being carried out in a well programmed and unhindered manner before the eyes of the Yugoslav and European public. No one has tried to unmask before the Council of Europe in Strasbourg the true assimilationist goals of the proposed project, which is contrary to the Charter and spirit of Helsinki! Will Greece once again be permitted to reshape the ethnic map of Aegean Macedonia with the oppression and eradication of the Macedonian national element in the area where it has existed and fought to preserve its national identity?"

In the second part of the article, the newspaper published the entire document of the European Council, which was marked

"confidential". The document was issued by the "Fund for Social Development-Administrative Council" in Strasbourg on 20 March 1990. It was proposed that in Greece the project would be carried out by the Agricultural Bank of Greece, in whose name the Greek government on 1 March 1990 submitted a request for the grant of a loan worth 300 million U.S. dollars "for the partial funding of the program for the reception and resettlement of 100,000 refugees of Greek origin from the USSR".

The document contained three parts. The first part, entitled "Report of the Governor on the Technical and Financial aspects of the Project," contained the entire design and strategy for implementing the "project". In the second part entitled, "Opinion of the Secretariat of the Social Development Fund", the total amount of the loan which we previously mentioned as being 300 million dollars was included, while it was also mentioned that the remainder of the loan would be financed by the Greek government. In addition, the Greek government offers a guarantee that the Agricultural Bank will repay the loan. At the end of this section the Secretariat provided the positive opinion that "the application is acceptable from a statutory, political and social point of view". This section was signed by a Greek named Konstantinos P. Pilavaki on 15 March 1990. The last, third part of the paper is entitled "Opinion for the Administrative Council and Recommendation to the Governor". It states as follows: "In considering the request for a loan of \$300 million which represents 40% of the total project cost of settlement of Greek refugees from the USSR submitted by the Greek government on 1 March 1990 and taking into account that the difference will be funded by the Greek

government and that a quality assurance has been given, as well as the fact that the project anticipates that it will have a positive effect on the accommodation and employment of the refugees, and having in his possession the positive opinion of the Secretariat in accordance with resolutions 199 and 934 of the Administrative Council, the Governor recommends that the project be approved and that a loan of 300 million dollars also be approved. Paris, 16 March 1990, Roger Vanden Branden, Governor."

At the very end we shall observe that from today's perspective it is clear that with the fall of communism, the collapse of the USSR and the economic collapse of the Eastern bloc countries, a substantial number of Soviet "Greeks" immigrated to Greece. The exact number is unknown to us, but Athens, naturally, did not let slip the chance to settle as many people as possible in this category in the "sensitive" districts of northern Greece, which increased the percentage of the Greek population. In addition, this project dramatically increased the opportunities for the Greek state to continue on with its institutional assimilation of ethnic Macedonians in Greece.

Dr. Vamvakovski is a historian based in Skopje.

Translated from Macedonian by Dr. Chris Popov.

SUBMISSION ON EXPOSURE DRAFT BILL ON AMENDMENTS TO THE RACIAL DISCRIMINATION ACT 1975

By Dr. Chris Popov
16 April 2014

The Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) is deeply concerned by the proposed repeal of ss18B, C, D and E of the Racial Discrimination Act which is detailed in the Exposure Draft Bill on the proposed amendments to the Act, released by the Attorney- General on 25 March 2014.

The proposed amendments jettison key protections to groups within Australian society which have for almost two decades contributed in no small measure to the building and maintaining of a harmonious and inclusive Australian society.

We are particularly concerned by the proposed weakening of s18C via the removal of the terms “humiliate”, “offend” and “insult”. Moreover, the limitation of protection to vilification and intimidation, to mean respectively “to incite hatred” or “to cause fear of physical harm”, will encourage ill-intentioned individuals and groups to engage in racist and hate speech. We do not accept the argument that individuals who are subjected to racist hate speech will be able to effectively counter such speech by using their own right to free speech, given the power imbalance that often exists between those who make racist verbal attacks and the targets of such attacks.

Moreover and alarmingly, the inclusion of sub-section (4) will have the effect of removing most, if not all, of

the limited and inadequate protection in proposed sub-section (1). Sub-section (4) provides that the entire section will not apply to “...words, sounds, images written, spoken, broadcast or otherwise communicated in the course of participating in the public discussion of any political, social, cultural, religious, artistic, academic or scientific matter”.

In addition, the existing qualifications to s18C contained in s18D which protected free speech, by not deeming illegal anything said or done “reasonably and in good faith”, have been removed entirely. It is of great concern that persons or

groups will now be able to engage in racist vilification and intimidation, unrestrained by any obligation to comment or act “reasonably and in good faith”.

We are also concerned by the inclusion of sub-section (3) which states that:

(3) Whether an act is reasonably likely to have the effect specified in sub-section (1) (a) is to be determined by the standards of an ordinary reasonable member of the Australian community, not by the standards of any particular group within the Australian community.

Inclusion of this sub-section means that the primary targets of racist harassment, whether they be individuals or groups, will not be those determining, on the basis of their own personal experiences, the level of offence, humiliation, intimidation or vilification felt, but rather a more nebulous “ordinary reasonable member of the Australian community” who presumably will not be able to provide the cultural and contextual background required when assessing levels of fear, psychological harm and threats of violence in particular cases. Equality before the law is not enhanced by subordinating the rights of those who have

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been deliberately attacked and abused to the sensitivities of an “ordinary reasonable member of the Australian community”, who may often have no connection whatsoever with the ethnic, racial or minority group being subjected to such mistreatment.

Our organisation and the Macedonian community it represents condemn all forms of bigotry and consider that racial bigotry in particular is pernicious in the extreme as it directly undermines social cohesion and harmony. The proposed amendments to the act will have the effect of emboldening those who wish to engage in racist hate speech under the guise of free speech. Moreover, they will be able to do this unencumbered by the present requirement that any comments are made “reasonably and in good faith”.

The Macedonian community in Australia has in the recent past been the victim of a systematic campaign of denial by groups whose goal was to prevent it from freely identifying as *Macedonian* and calling its language *Macedonian*. Such a campaign is still continuing. Notably, from 1997-2001 the AMHRC fought a long legal campaign, the upshot of which was that the Victorian Government was found to have violated the Race Discrimination Act and was compelled to cease doing so.

We find it difficult to imagine that we shall be able to seek such redress against similar such discrimination in future if the proposed amendments to the Racial Discrimination Act are passed. We believe that the current Racial Discrimination Act provides enough

exemptions so as to allow robust discussion of sensitive issues relating to race. We therefore request that the Government abandon the proposed amendments to the Act in the interests of maintaining the social cohesion which has been a hallmark of Australia’s multicultural society. Free speech will not be enhanced by legislative acts which will only create discord, division and enmity and place a greater emphasis on the rights of bigots as against those of the vulnerable.

Dr Chris Popov

On behalf of the Executive of the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee

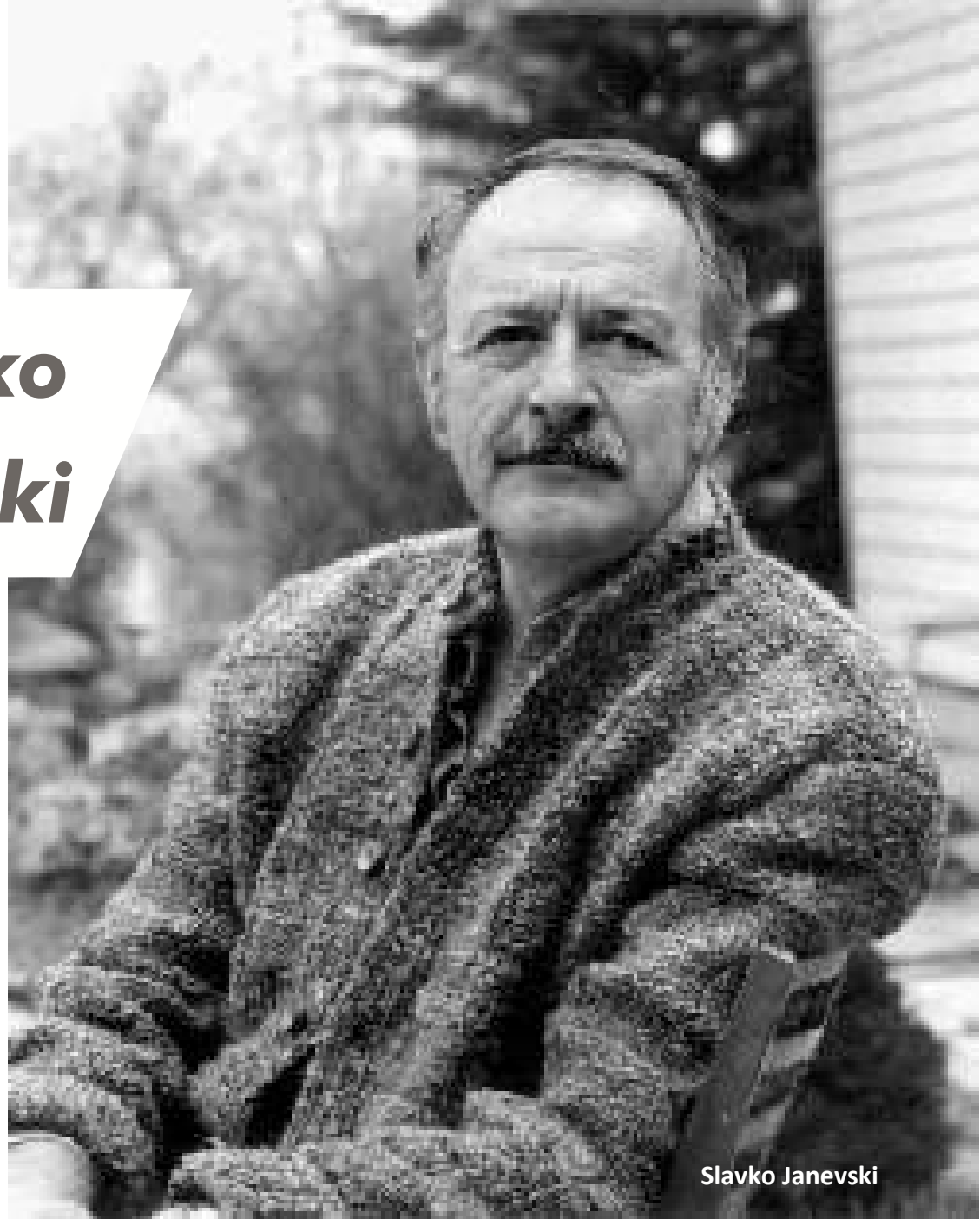


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The works of *Slavko Janevski*



Slavko Janevski

A Literary Review by Dr. Michael Seraphinoff

This time I would like to talk about the author Slavko Janevski. My intention in writing these columns is to stir reader interest in the beautiful and moving works of so many fine Macedonian writers, and no review of such writers could be complete without mention of this talented and prolific writer of poetry and prose for both children and adults, whose life spanned most of the previous century.

Before I begin though, I would like to tell a little story that suggests how books change lives. It was the summer of 1973. I had come to Macedonia for the first time after completing university to stay with my father's older half brothers and their families in

the Tetovo region. That summer and fall I spent a good deal of time helping my uncles and cousins with village chores and roaming the countryside with and without companions, just getting to know Macedonia. One little excursion took me by myself to Ohrid, where I stayed in a camping park on the shores of the lake.

One day while I was too absorbed in my own thoughts I foolishly stepped over some barbed wire trailing down to the shore and after about another thirty steps I looked back to see that I had stepped over onto a military base. I immediately started to retrace my steps back toward the camp, when a guard shouted for me to halt, and I was taken into a room on the base for questioning. This dumb foreigner could have easily ended up learning about life in a

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Yugoslav prison, if it hadn't been for the book under my arm that day.

As the officers on the base began to question me, one asked what the book was that I was reading. It just so happened that that day I was carrying around a biography of Gotse Delchev. I explained that I had come to Macedonia from America to learn as much as I could about the land of my forefathers. I was still struggling with the written language, but I was fascinated by what I was reading about this remarkable man. Apparently this was the right answer, because they let me go after a brief argument between two officers, one sympathetic officer, who I assume was Macedonian and another, who really wanted to see me arrested for spying, who I assume was probably not.

Anyway, I take this as just one more small story about how good literature can be for body, mind and spirit. And I still often carry some work of Macedonian literature around with me as I go through my day. Always good.

Those who grow up in the Republic of Macedonia are schooled in the works of most of the writers, such as Slavko Janevski, that I choose to review in this journal. However, those of us raised overseas must make a special effort in order to understand and appreciate the works of Macedonian literature. That is one reason why I have decided to point readers toward the growing body of Macedonian literature and information about the authors now available through the Internet.

According to the Blesok on-line publishing house, Slavko Janevski was a poet, novelist, screenplay writer and painter. Born 11th January 1920 in Skopje. Died in Skopje, 2000. Finished technical school. Was director and editor-in-chief of the publishing house "Makedonska kniga" also editor of the literary journals "Nov den", "Sovremenost" and "Horizont". Member of the Macedonian P.E.N. Centre. Member of the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts (1967). One-time President of the Council of the Struga Poetry Evenings Festival. Member of the Macedonian Writers' Association since 1947. Was president of the same Association.

Works: The Blood-stained thread (1945), The railway track of youth with Aco Sopov (1946), Pioneers, Boys and Girls, little insects and Forest Beasts (poetry for children, 1946), A Million Martyrs (poem for children, 1948), The Aegean gunpowder tale (poetry for children, 1949), Poems (1950), The street

(a story, 1950), Lyric (1951), The Village beyond the Seven Ash-trees (novel, 1952), Sugar story (a story for children, 1952), Clowns and People (short stories, 1956), The two Marias (novel, 1956), Bread and stone (poetry, 1957), The Sleep-walker (novel, 1959), The Shadow of Karamba Baramba (poetry for children, 1959), Martians and Mice (poetry for children, 1959), Bitter Legends (travelogue, 1962), Both Pain and Rage (novel, 1964), a new version of the novel The village beyond the seven ash-trees (1965), The Gospel according to Peyo the Smart (poetry, 1966), Black and Yellow (poetry for children, 1967), Kainavelia (poetry, 1968), The stubborn ones (novel, 1970), Sultry days (short stories, 1972), The Chest (short stories, 1976), The Chained Apple (poetry, 1978), Astropeus (poetry, 1979), Kites (poetry, 1983), The Miracles of Awfulness -a trilogy made up of: The Legions of St. Adonis, Dog's Crucifix and Waiting for the plague (1984), The nine Centuries of the Cherub (novel, 1987), Deaf Commands (selection of poetry, 1988), Dog's Woods (poetry, 1988), Miracle Workers (novel, 1988), Roulette of seven numbers (novel, 1989), The Petrified Orpheus (selection of poetry, 1990), Puppy Paff (prose in verses for children, 1991), Behind the secret door (short stories, 1993), The continent of Kukulino (prose, 1996), Puppy Paff in the town of Sumsul (book for children 1996), Puppy Paff watches from the space (1996), Puppy Paff the master of Dreams (1996), The dump (novel, 2000).

Awards: "11th October", AVNOJ, "Miladinov Brothers", Racinovo Priznanie", "Miroslav Krleza", "Koco Racin" as well as the award by the publishing house "Misla" for his entire work.

Here is a lovely and quite beloved little poem by Slavko Janevski. Lyrical and touching, it is a sad elegy to one who dies too young, in war. Let yourself be moved by it. Is it not part of our nobler higher selves that we can be moved by the sacrifice and suffering of others?

Цветои

Во Тиквешко негде, в некое село
кај в слана тивко венеше цвете,
убија дете.

Последна солза од око капна...
Кога на ридот есента стапна,
в крви се изми утрото бело.
И кога в зраци челикот светна
—последна мисла ко птица летна:
„Мајка ми сама остана в село!"

О, детски очи!
Криевте в себе небесно катче...
Румено крвје течеше в жили
в радост без почин...

Кај око детско натопа земја
гороцвет никна, разлиста пролет,
кај крвта врела растопи слана
црвена роза закити поле.

Мајската роза и цветот модер
в миризма молат:
„Закити, друже, огнена пушка
со цвеќа млади,
па напред појди и други деца
брани со гради.”

В Тиквешко негде, в некое село,
кај в слана тивко венеше цвете-
убија дете...

Flowers

It was somewhere in Tikvesh, in some village,
Where the hoar frost gently fades on the wildflowers,
They killed someone's child.

A final tear drop falls from an eye...
When autumn steps over the hills,
The white dawn is washed in blood.
And when the steel rays of sunlight gleam
-A final thought like a bird takes flight:
"My mother remains alone in the village!"

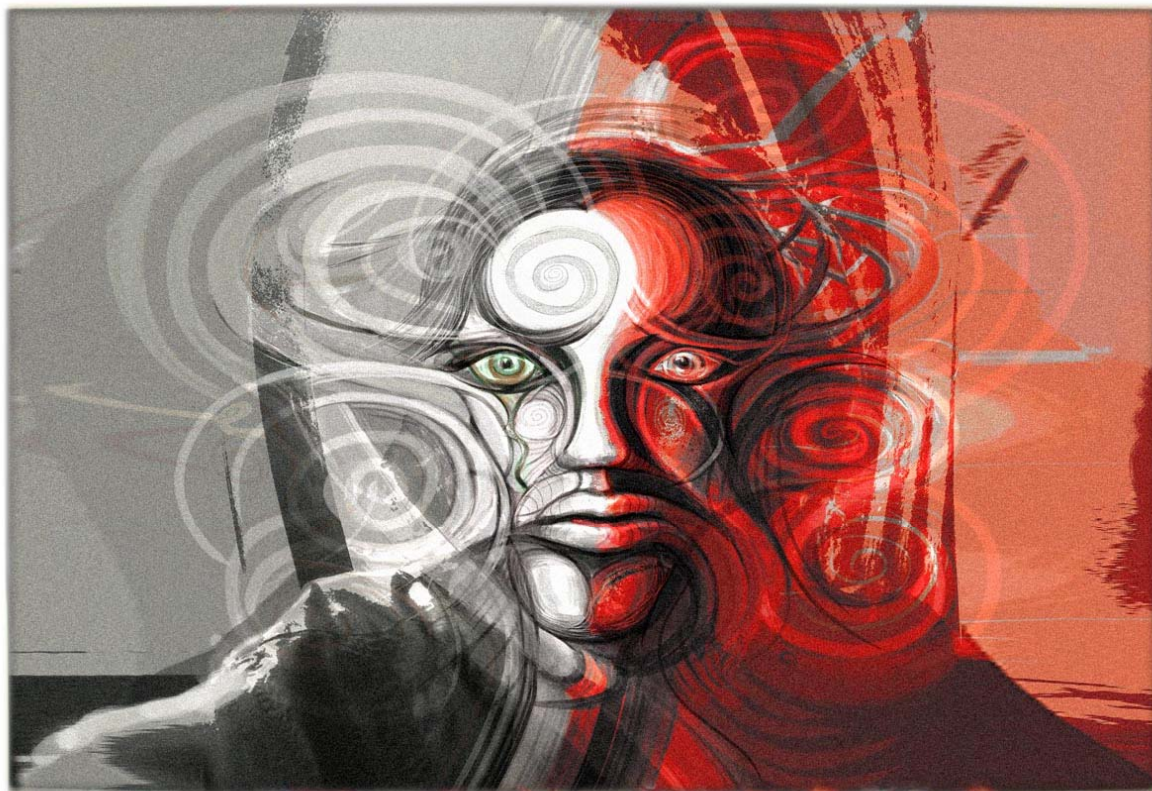
Oh, eyes of a child!
You've hid yourself in a heavenly hideaway,
Red blood flows in your veins
In joy without repose...

Where the earth through a child's eye peers out,
The asphodel blooms, and as springtime leafs out,
Where the warm blood melts the hoar frost
The red rose decorates the fields.

The mother's rose and the flower blue
In its fragrance they offer a prayer:
"Decorate, comrades, the fired gun
With tender young flowers,
Then onward go you young ones as well
Defend them with your own breasts!"

It was somewhere in Tikvesh, in some village,
Where the hoar frost gently fades on the wildflowers,
They killed someone's child.

Transl. M.S.



‘OUTER SPECTION’

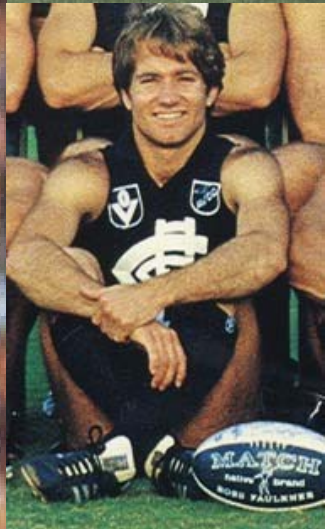
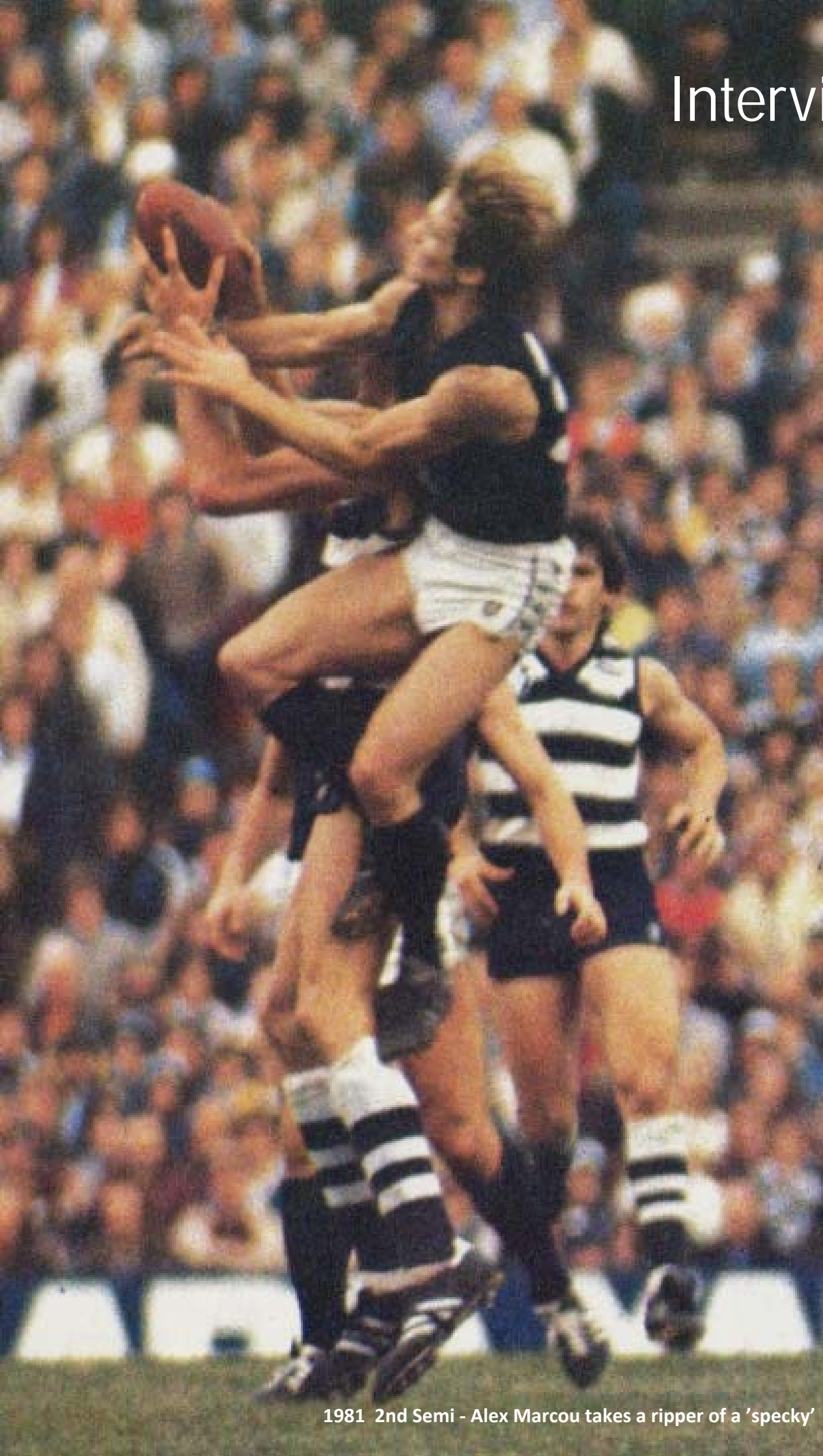
Johnny Tsiglev
digital paint 2012

We can sing our hearts out in song, but how do we paint a feeling which cannot be physically felt?
How do we visually illustrate a heartache which cannot be described?
There are two sides to every story, like the two sides of our asymmetrical faces. Our dark side and our light side perhaps?
Eyes surrounded by swirls of confusion and also spiritual connection.
‘OUTER SPECTION’ is an ‘introspection’ trying to capture this dichotomy of emotions in a single static image.

A sadness in the eyes that can hypnotise.

for all your Art needs.....
email: johnnysig@iprimus.com.au or phone: 0419 351 341

Interview with



MARCOU, Alex



Guernsey No.: 34.
Age: 22 years. **Birthdate:** 6.7.1958.
Height: 5.10 (178 cm.)
Weight: 11.8 (73.5 kg.)
First played Carlton Seniors: 1979
First joined Carlton Club: 1977
Carlton games: 52. **Goals:** 55.
Represented Victoria: 1980.
Nickname: "Marcell".
Occupation: Sales Representative.
Previous Club: Thomastown.
Marital status: Single.
1980 Carlton Best award votes: 77 (7th).
Finals Appearances: 4.
Grand Finals: 1979.

1981 2nd Semi - Alex Marcou takes a ripper of a 'specky'

... ALEX MARCOU

Johnny Tsiglev manages to take a 'specky' with Carlton Football Club 'Hall of Fame' legend 'Alex Marcou'

Yet again I've managed to interview someone who's on the other side of the artist's spectrum. Being an A-grade sportsman in his past life, AFL football as a discussed topic resides in a far away galaxy in my brain's universe. A sport completely out of my (*cough*) league and definitely nowhere near my area of expertise, yet you'll soon read that we Macedonians truly are a creative bunch of shape-shifting 'Babari' (Macedonian masked faces) who can sink their proverbial boot into anything!

Alex and I have already had a good chat and discussed all manner of things before I commence the interview. I meet him at his warehouse studio which is in the suburb of.... wait for it.... 'Collingwood'! Alex introduces me to all his staff as; "Hey, here's another Macedonian" and; "You wouldn't believe it, I'm getting interviewed for the Macedonian 'newspapers'!" I knew we were going to have a great interview after he calls out another staff member (and friend) and says; "Hey Johnny, this guy's Greek", and his Greek colleague replies; "I'm from the south mate", with a big smile on his face. It's a multi-cultural work place that works the way all multi-cultural things should work, with mutual respect, and a damn good sense of humour!

JT> Hi Alex, how are ya mate?

AM> Goooooooood, thank you John.
(Alex slowly winds out with a smile)

JT> We've never met before, but I still remember your name being bandied around during Collingwood and Carlton games in the early 80's.

AM> You heard my name, really? You Collingwood?

JT> Ahh, yeahhh...(I say hesitantly)

AM> Le, le... (Alex smiles)

JT> I guess what I'm interested in to start with is what made a young Macedonian boy decide to play professional football?

Where did it all begin and what was it that got you into the game?

AM> I was born in North Fitzroy....you know, near Gertrude Street. We used to go to the Macedonian Church there in Young street. I used to walk to Edinburgh Gardens.... On a Saturday my dad would take me to the Brunswick Street oval and watch Fitzroy play. Amazing ha?

I can't believe I can remember that stuff. My dad used to say; "You're only 5 years old, I can't believe you're out there kicking the ball around by yourself all day and night". I used to play first thing in the morning, after school, all the time.

JT> Ohh, you're a true old-school Macedonian Fitzroy boy! I thought you were a Thomo boy, like me?

AM> We moved to Thomo, well actually Lalor. You know, the Village there... (Alex laments with a sense of loss)

JT> Did you know that the Young Street church was the first independent Macedonian church in the world?

AM> What? The church there in

Fitzroy?

JT> Yeah, I helped put a book together for their 50 Years Jubilee.

AM> Wow!! I feel honoured to have gone!

JT> I did it for Sveti Giorgi in Epping with Father Luca. He's a top bloke. We had a few beers together. He sang some Maco songs.

AM> Ohh yeah, in Epping. He buried my father. My mum really respects him!

JT> During weddings, christenings, funerals, doesn't matter what it is, I'll go up to him and we have a good hug and a laugh.

AM> That's the way it should be.

JT> Back to the 'Fitzroy to Thomo' thing... I talk about this all the time, what a shame so many Macedonians moved to the burbs and never established a proper community in Fitzroy!

AM> Yeah, I remember the old Macedonian coffee shops on Gertrude St. We used to go to the Macedonian dances... It was something.

JT> Ha ha ha, those Macedonian dances in Fitzroy. There are so many crazy stories of fighting

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around those dances. But yeah, it was full of Nashi back then. Our own little village. What a pity the community is no longer around there now. Gertrude Street is so hip now. It's like a little SoHo in New York.

AM> My dad was a proud Macedonian, both actually, mum and dad..... My parents had a magnificent terrace house in Delbridge Street North Fitzroy... We used to drive past it and my dad goes; "That's our house". I don't want to tell you what it sold for (recently)!

JT> I can imagine!

AM> And then he (dad) goes; "i maikati beshe stra ot skakale!" ("and your mum was scared of the stairs") (Alex says with a laugh)

JT> He he he....The old wogs are classics! :)

I show Alex a copy of the MHR Review and explain what this interview is all about. I was introduced to him by Anton Klimev (who you might know from an earlier interview and who also collaborated with me on my Detsa Begaltsi doco/exhibit). He initially thought I was from the Macedonian newspapers. Alex asks me a few questions about what I do etc... I told him about my art and the exhibition. He says;

AM> "Yeah, yeah, I remember. Anton told me about it but I couldn't make it because I had a footy function on that night!"

Then he pauses for a minute and reflects.....His blue eyes light up with excitement;

AM> Hey, you know what? I think

my mum was one of them...the.... what do you call them again?

JT> Begaltsi.

AM> Begaltsi! Yeah, yeah, she was sent to Hungary and then Czechoslovakia. My dad came over and setup camp here".

JT> No way! Pity you couldn't have come along!

And then like clockwork he gets a phone call from a business friend.....

AM> "Another Macedonian is calling".

He puts on the speakerphone...

AM> Hey, you wouldn't believe it, I'm getting interviewed by the Macedonian Human Rights. Did you know my mum was a part of the Begaltsi?

JT> A Begalka.

AM> Yeah, a Begalka! Do you know about this stuff?

And the voice on the phone says; "Yeah!, and they were taken away by the Red Cross".

AM> Is that right John?

JT> Yep. Apparently in the name of safety, but they weren't allowed back in if they called themselves Macedonian.

AM> My God! For a blonde (about woman on phone), you're very knowledgeable!

The voice on the phone quickly responds; "I'm an educated woman. There are a lot of things I know about!"

We all have a good laugh and I try

to carry on with the interview!

JT> Alright, let's get back to the questions!

I was barely out of nappies (well 5 years old! J) when you made your VFL (Victorian Football League) debut with Carlton in 1979.

How did that feel when you started? You know, when you actually made it. Were you on top of the world or just too eager to play football and not too concerned with the popularity part that comes with playing professional footy?

AM> John, to play at Carlton was the greatest buzz you could have. Carlton was one of the three power sides, together with Collingwood and Richmond. For me to get a game with the Jesaulenko(s), Doull(s), Southby, who was a great full back, and Maclure, to just to name a few, was amazing! An honor. And to top it off, a little Macedonian boy to play in a Premiership side against your side, Collingwood.

JT> Wow, yeah! I never thought about it that way. It must have been a great thrill!

AM> Ohhh yeah....great thrill alright.. (the look on Alex's face is priceless as he puts himself back in time. The genuine excitement is palpable)

JT> Did you realise the significance of it at the time?

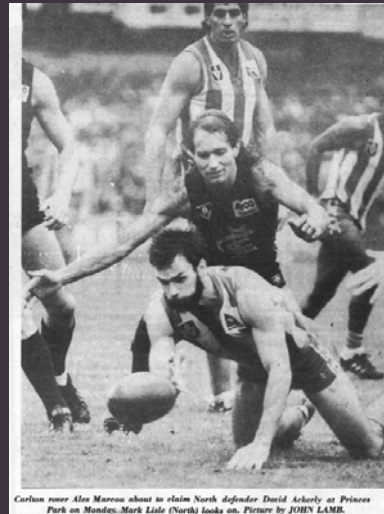
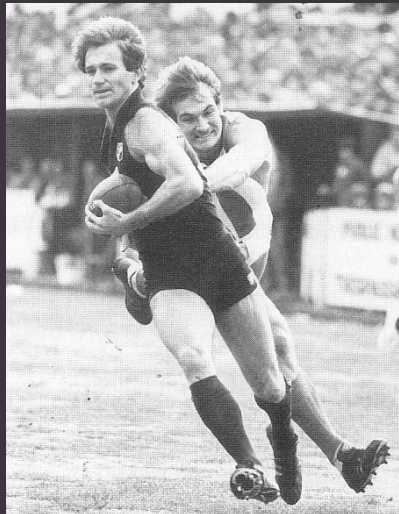
AM> Obviously! There were 100 thousand people attending the game!

JT> It's like being a Rock Star I guess??

AM> At the time yeah, there were girls hanging around....

JT> Le le full on!

AM> Le le, ha ha ha... Heaps of women. Heaps of hanger-on-ers....



Carlton rover Alan Mervin about to claim North defender David Achterly at Princes Park on Monday. Mark Little (North) looks on. Picture by JOHN LANE.

(Alex says smiling)

JT> Bloody hell! Full on Rock Star!

Today, so many parents I know, and in general I guess, push their kids into all sorts of sports in the hope of a lucrative career. Obviously back in the 70's VFL footy players weren't making anywhere near the money of today's AFL players.

Firstly, what did your parents think about you playing professional football at a time when there weren't many Europeans playing football?

AM> Well, my dad, he came out when he was 16, and he basically fell in love with the game. He didn't push us into playing football. He supported us, my brothers and I in all sports... my two younger brothers.

JT> So did any of them become sports stars?

AM> My little brother who lives in Perth, he became a mobile mechanic and runs a good little business there... They all know him over there, all the Macedonians. All his business is with the Macedonians!

JT> Ha ha ha, he probably knows Chris Angelkov. 'He's the man' when it comes to Macedonian stuff in Perth. He's a real go getter.

AM> Ohh yeah, for sure he would.

JT> And secondly to loosely continue on about the lucrative aspects of the game... Do you think the players during your time, your peers I guess, were more purist in the sense that they played purely for the love of it (the game) and not for the money or popularity?

AM> Let's put it this way, we had no managers then. We had to do our own negotiations. We had to go in (to meetings) ourselves and with our mates! Do you know how much pressure we were under? We had to go in and negotiate with people like Ian Collins at the time.

So as purists yes, we didn't have that managerial support like they do now and we had to think about everything ourselves.

JT> Gee, that would have been very tough and pretty stressful on a young guy who just wants to play and think about footy.

AM> John, 100 percent, that's how it was, exactly.... Sometimes I wish we did have it (the support and management).

JT> With all your years of experience, is it obvious to you today, who is playing for the right reasons? You know, what I mean by that; is a young guy who might be a very talented player, but just might be milking it for something else, such as stardom?

AM> I think everyone goes out there for the right reasons. I would be disappointed if I heard people just played for the money. You've got your Buddy Franklins and the like who make millions, but he just goes out there and plays football and he's got pride in himself. Even like yourself (an artist), who does paintings, there might be money in it but it's about pride. If you go out there just for the money, you're not going to survive, they'll pick you out straight away.

JT> That's great, I like to hear that sort of stuff.

Do you consider playing in a multiple (triple) Premiership winning side your career highlight(s), representing Victoria in interstate football, or were there better/bigger moments that we don't know about?

AM> John.... (again saying my name to illustrate the enormity of it).... To play at my age, 21. Playing in three Premiership sides in four years, there was no bigger highlight. Probably my daughter being born, but that's not the same thing.

JT> Yeah huge. Do you have any interesting stories about the world of football that you'd like to share with us?? Come on, don't be shy :)

AM> Yeah, I'll just say, before the

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81 grand final, I'll just explain it to you. There is a YouTube video of it. You'll have to look it up; Alex Marcou and Fabulous: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-fk0R1sbN54> It goes for 10 minutes, and the prime minister of Australia at the time, Malcolm Fraser, before we ran out onto the ground against your team, Collingwood.....

JT> (I butt in)... Oh I remember that Grand Final... I was at the show grounds, you know, the Royal Melbourne Show. It's at that time of year isn't it?. September? With some family friends....another Macedonian champion sportsman, but that's an interview for another time.

AM> (now Alex butts in) What? How old were you? How did you remember that??

JT> I was 7, you know what I was talking about earlier. I remember everything from my childhood.

AM> My God. That's great.

JT> Sorry, continue with the story!

AM> Well, we were down in the race there, and he the Prime Minister (Malcolm Fraser) said: "Boys, if you win today, I'll fly you all up to 'The Lodge' (the Prime Minister's house in Canberra), with your partners, on a private jet and we'll have a big party! Can you imagine?... Me, from Thomastown, and some of the other boys. Some from Broadby. Some from Bendigo! Alex Marcou and fabulous..... 'Fabulous' was Macedonian too!

JT> What, so you guys all flew over?

AM> Yep, all of us, wives, girlfriends, the lot! And when I told this story 30 years later at a Carlton function, Malcolm and his wife Tammie were in the audience and they were pissing themselves



1981 Grand Final - The Blues doing a lap of honour - Alex Marcou (centre)

laughing.... Both of them!

JT> At least he stuck to his to word, unlike some other Prime Ministers!

AM> Ha ha ha ... that's good John..... (laughing)

JT> That's a great story, thanks Alex.

Do you still have any involvement with any of the football clubs you played for/with or the AFL in general?

AM> Yeah, 'Spirit of Carlton'... I'm on the committee. What we do there John is we have fundraisers for the club. Dinners, lunches, and what we do is donate about \$150,000 (a year) to the club so they can buy laptops and other equipment... Anything the players need.

JT> I would have thought the club would have had enough money for stuff like that?

AM> We help past players who are going through hard times, who have had football injuries where they can't afford to pay for medical bills. Stuff like hip replacements,

knees...all that sort of stuff.

JT> Ohh, now that's a bit more noble.

AM> Once a player's career is over, the club tends to forget about you. Again, like a Rock Star, once you're gone.... see ya later!

*We're sitting in the back room of-
fice of Alex's studio where all man-
ner of labels, clothes and 'Point of
Sale' promotional posters adorn
the walls etc.... Today is the second
day of our interview as Alex is a
busy man, and had to dash out yes-
terday to deal with some minor is-
sues at his boutique in Spencer
Street in Melbourne; [https://
www.facebook.com/
TheCartelStore](https://www.facebook.com/TheCartelStore)*

*This time I bring with me a lovely
drop of dedo's (father-in-law's)
Rakija (Firewater a Macedonian
spirit). As soon as I walk through
his showroom towards the back
meeting room I get stopped by his
Greek colleague; "Is that what I
think it is?" he quietly says. "Yeah,
'Rakija'" I reply.... He's so ex-
cited! "Come, come, try this. I just*



made it with my dad”, he excitedly exclaims... We share a little shot and then he asks to try my dedo’s batch. “Ohh my God, that really is refined”. “Alex, try this drop that Johnny brought in”. So before we even sit down and continue with the interview, we’ve already had a few shots of the pure stuff! :)

WE DID IT!



Cup of joy...
 • IT'S that one day in September, the game is over and that magic feeling of a premiership win is within your grasp. The Carlton players after their magnificent 20-point win over Collingwood at the MCG on Sunday.
 For the Blues boys and coach Brian Parker, sharing credit by Peter Bell and Paul Hogg. This was a fairly rare one.
 But what of Collingwood? Great football writer TGM says, "Football fans are asking if how long can Collingwood continue to fight its way into grand finals, it can't win. Summary, P. 18"
 Picture: TREV

JT> So Mr. Marcou, after reading my prologue, there will be many of our readers out there who will be interested in your transition from ‘Football to Fashion’. We have a mutual friend in Anton Klimev, who introduced me to you and made the transition from ‘Music to Fashion’, although he is still essentially a ‘Musician’ who runs a fashion boutique. Age and fitness have no real bearing on quitting from being a musician, (or any artist for that matter), but it’s fairly obvious that in sport there is an expiry date where the body just can’t keep up with the necessary zeal, so many ex-sports stars tend to naturally gravitate to a sporting related career post-game, for example: a sports commentator or a coaching position so that

they can maintain an involvement or connection to their chosen career. The rest seem to buy pubs!

JT> What made you get into the fickle world of fashion? Why the jump and was it a difficult industry to crack?

AM> Why I got into fashion..... My mum’s sister’s son was into fashion. He used to work for Sportcraft, and he asked me, he kept coming into the footy club when we were training, and said; “Get into business with me”, and that’s how I got into the world of fashion. The fickle world of fashion as you said. I was with him for 10 years and then we went our own

way and... he kept manufacturing and I started wholesaling, distributing, the Agency business (Alex Marcou Agencies). I got sick of the factory, it does your head in..... I’ve been doing it for 30 years!

JT> 30 years! Maikata!

AM> Ha ha ha... Maikata!

JT> Did you contemplate taking the yellow brick road to football eternity after retiring or did you simply need a change? What I mean is, did you think about getting into footy related stuff?

AM> Back then it wasn’t as popular as it is now. Like Ricky Nixon said, he’s a good friend of mine, he said; “When you were playing Al, there was one journalist to every six players, now there are 6 ‘journos’ to every one player”. That’s how big it’s gotten now.

Now they have managers, financial advisers, they save their money. We’d blow it on booze, going out.... like ‘Rock Stars’ J. Football is the same...

JT> Yeah true. Steve Kilbey (from the band ‘The Church’) was telling me the same sort of

story. How he lost so much money on various addictions, living the ‘Rock Star’ lifestyle, people using him etc... It’s pretty sad when you think about it. The lack of support after the glory days. I believe it’s a bit different in the States. They support their ‘Stars’.... or ‘ex-stars’ a bit more than here I guess.

AM> Yeah, I’ve heard that about America too. But you’re right. It is sad!

JT> Ahhh, no wonder why footy players buy pubs. Their financial advisors must tell them it’s a sure thing!

Why do think so many AFL players or ex-AFL players start their own clothing label these days?

AM> Personally, it’s like this; if you’ve got your own label you’re somebody. “Look what I’ve achieved”. The only perception from the general public is: “Look at me, I’m successful. I’ve got a fashion label”. When you talk to them about ‘grading’ (the sizing system of clothing)... no idea! Little do they know it’s a money pit. Your wife is correct (*I was telling Alex about having original art on my tees*) because your artwork is not appreciated in the rag trade.... They just buy the stuff and that’s it! They don’t really care or put any thought into it.

JT> Do you think they simply use their celebrity profile as a sure fire marketing tool for success?

AM> 100 percent! Spot on! I had Bryce Gibbs in here the other day. He’s started a label himself. I said to him, “What the f*ck are you doing getting into the rag trade?” And he just thinks he can do it. Like everyone thinks they can do it... It’s not easy! Like you know.

JT> I sure do know!

Were there any other footy players that got into it back then?

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Maybe you were the catalyst or the inspiration for these other guys to follow (*pun*) suit!

AM> Nahh.... I don't think there were other guys then? But Nathan Brown was one of the earlier ones. I don't think I had anything to do with all these other guys doing it.

I later (post-interview) find out that there was a newspaper article written about Alex naming him "The Most Dapper (fashionable) Player off the Field", so he must have been a stylish man in his time!

JT> Do you have your own label also, or are you solely an Agent representing others?

AM> I did have, 'Mosquito'. It was very successful. I did it with a partner and things just changed.

JT> Yeah, I remember that label.. Ohh gee, that was yours? Fantastic!

Again, I find out later from my brother-in-law (who's a big Carlton supporter), that 'Mosquito' was the moniker for a group of players of a slightly smaller stature compared to the regular blokes, Alex being one of the elite 'Komartsi' J (Macedonian for Mosquito)

AM> I have 10 labels that I represent... My God!

I strategically came in to Alex's office with a jacket of mine which I knew will rouse his attention.....

AM> John, that's a 'Duck and Cover'. How did you get that?

JT> Ha ha ha.... That's why I brought it in! I knew you'd ask. I wore it intentionally today!

AM> What the? I sell those. What's going on there?

JT> Well, I'll tell you a great little anecdote about when I first heard of you being in the fashion industry. My wife Meri and I have a Men's Clothing Label (TSIG, which is sleeping at the moment) and we were in Sydney a few years ago searching for stores in NSW. We went to a pop-up shop in a mall at Manly and got talking to the owner there. I bought a really cool English jacket from her and she asked us what nationality we were? We said Macedonian, and she goes, "No way, the jacket you just bought is from my supplier who's also Macedonian!" I asked her who it was and she said; "Alex Marcou". And I said, "The 'Alex Marcou'. The Carlton footy player?" And she replied; "That's him".

AM> Ohh yeah... that's great. Yeah... that's right. That's her store there (in Manly). She's a great girl. Ha ha ha fantastic. She sells 'Duck and Cover' for me. That's good John.

JT> That's another great little moment in our ever-decreasing six-degrees of Macedonian connectedness. We also supplied our tees to three other boutiques with Macedonian owners, including one in Brisbane. Do you find this happening to you with all your travels and dealings with various businesses?

AM> Yeah, all the time. There are many Macedonian's in the retail business that I bump into and also work with. Who was in Brisbane??

JT> Bill, at Wall Flower. You know, in the Valley there just out of the city.

AM> Wow, yeah. I know Wall Flower. He was Macedonian too? Wow!

JT> It just always happens to us (my family). We were in Venice a few years ago and I was telling off my son in Macedonian for making trouble, or complaining

in Macedonian about the Pizza we just bought. Out of nowhere, a bloke comes up to us and says; "Ahh, vie ste Makedontsi?" It ended up that he was a builder who worked on the island with other Macedonian tradesmen, but lived in a nearby neighbourhood where he reckons thousands of other Macedonians live!

AM> What? In Venice? Really? That's amazing!



JT> I heard you're from the Lerinsko Selo Neret. We (the AMHRC) have laugh with George Vlahov (the editor of this mag' who is also from Neret) that it seems like every Macedonian muso and business person we hear of comes from Neret! Bloody hell! George dismisses it as being due to the large size of the Village, but there must be more to it? Was there some sort of surreptitious business school in Neret that the rest of the Villages were unaware of?

AM> Nahh, I don't know about anything like that? (Alex says with a wry smile) My dad was one of the founders of the Neret Social Club, you know, the one down there in

Epping. They're doing alright. Do you guys (The AMHRC) use that?

JT> Yeah, we have our annual dinner dances there. Maybe you guys (from Neret) don't know of any secret school, but I still believe something's going on there... Look, even your old man was involved with the business there!

AM> Ha ha ha, no idea? :)

JT> Why do you think Daics (fellow Macedonian VFL/AFL star Peter Daicos) had a bigger presence in the Macedonian community than yourself? Is it because he put himself out there more, or does Collingwood have more Macedonian supporters? I for one, my brother and all the Maco boys in the neighbourhood became Collingwood supporters because of Daics.

AM> 'The Macedonian Marvel'.... When you're *that good!* The media, once the media gets onto you, that's it! He was so good. So skillful. A great player. The goals he used to kick. He was a machine, the way he used the ball.

JT> Ohhh man! I just loved watching him play. Something died within me when he retired! L But yeah, all the boys seriously followed the pies because of Daics... All the Maco neighbourhood kids.

AM> Yeah I believe that.

JT> Do you know Daics?

AM> Of course I do! (*Alex confidently answers as if that was the dumbest question ever!*). We don't see each all the time, but of course we know each other!

JT> Yeah, derrrrr!

So many Macedonians I know, (especially those from Banitsa), assimilated into the greater Australian community so well that most people thought they were 'Yobbos'. Did you have to as-

similate into the VFL and go rather unnoticed/under the radar, or were you quite vocal about your ethnicity?

AM> To a certain degree, yes, but no one stopped me from being who I was.

JT> Did you find any ethnic prejudices toward you when playing a mainly Anglo dominated (especially at that time) sport?

AM> John.... (*again Alex says my name to illustrate the seriousness of what he's about to say*) Of course. They talk about racial vilification now! They called us; "You greasy little Wogs"....there was heaps of stuff. But back then we took it all with a grain of salt. I didn't give a f*ck. I was proud when they called me that!

JT> I personally have friends and know of many Australian born Macedonians who denied their cultural heritage in their youth, for various reasons, one being fear of reprisal or simply not being accepted into mainstream society. But then once they reached a certain age, and particularly after having kids, they have almost done an 'about face' and can't get enough of their long-lost Macedonian heritage.

Can you relate to this in any way, or do you know of anyone else who has gone through something like this?

AM> Yeah, but I have never been embarrassed of where I've come from, or where my parents come from, or my heritage. Look, the Greeks at the footy, still to this day, 30 years later, think I'm Greek. They come up to me and speak Greek, and I go quietly; "Ummm, I'm sorry, but I'm not Greek. I don't speak a word actually. I'm Macedonian, you know, from the northern part of Greece". And then they go silent.

JT> Bravo Nashyo! I guess you don't want to offend your fans by being abrupt about it.

Did you contemplate or were you interested in playing soccer, or "Wogball" as it was called during those years?

AM> Nope! Nahh. Not at all! There weren't many of us (wogs) playing football but I loved it.

JT> Why didn't soccer interest you?

AM> When I started playing footy, soccer didn't even come into the picture!

JT> Did you find you had some similarities with our Aboriginal brothers who would have faced many prejudices in the 70's and 80's?

AM> Yeah, we did. 100 percent. Syd Jackson (Aboriginal player at the time), he copped heaps!

JT> Really!

AM> Ohh yeah!

JT> How about in the fashion industry? Do you think it makes a difference where you (or your parents) come from?

AM> Nahh, nothing.

We're having another little drop of dedo's special brew, and I spilt a bit on his desk as I was pouring a couple of shots..... Alex blurts out; "Was that for pari? (money?)" I replied that I think it's "Za Oumbrenite? (for the dead?). We did a "Na Zdravje" (cheers) to our lost fathers. I ask Alex how long since his father passed away? Alex replies; "Two years"

JT> Ohh, that's not too long ago. Do you miss him?

AM> Ohh yeah (*a sudden sadness sweeps over Alex's face*) My dad was in here (the warehouse) every

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day. He built the place. “Sho sakash da te napram?” (“what do you want me to do?”) He project managed the place. He brought sandwiches for the builders. It was the best! *(the sadness is fading as his face lights up with fond memories of his dad)*

JT> That’s hard mate. I lost my dad when I was seven, but I guess it doesn’t matter how old we are, our ‘tato’ is our ‘tato’! :(

What advice would you give young Macedonian kids out there wanting to make a professional career out of AFL and are there any pitfalls they should be aware of?

AM> Nah, no pitfalls. Be proud of

your heritage. Believe in yourself... “The pages of your youth turn quickly, make the most of them”.

JT> Geez, I couldn’t agree more... It’s funny because Simon Damevski (who I interviewed last time and who’s mum is also from Neret) left me with a couple of similar anecdotes... You bloody Neretsi!

Is there anything I’ve missed, seeing as I’m an artist (who doesn’t really follow the footy anymore), that you might want to talk about?

AM> Nothing!.... I’m pissed be!.... What have you done to me? :)

JT> Ha ha ha, it’s a beautiful little drop.....and no hangovers or headaches with this stuff. It’s

natural! (We both have a good laugh)

Al, thank you so much for your time and I hope to see more young Macedonians succeed in sport (and the arts obviously!) the way you did. ‘Alex the Great’, now why didn’t that stick?

It’s been a great interview and I feel honored to have met you!

AM> And I’m honored to have met another Macedonian who’s proud (of his heritage) and to see you do great work!

JT> My pleasure mate!



ABOUT MHRMI & AMHRC

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

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

RELATED ORGANIZATIONS

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



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MACEDONIAN ALLIANCE FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

The political party of the Macedonians in Albania

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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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