GOCEVATA VECHER - KOMITSKATA VECHER
ke se odhug na 7 Fevrawari 2009 godina, so pochetok vo 7.00 chasot

Special Guest from the Canadian Government
Honourable Jason Kenney, Immigration Multiculturalism
Special Guest from the Macedonian Government
Mr. Vladimir Gjorcev, Mr. Oliver Sambevski and Mr. Aleksandar Nikolovski

UNITED MACEDONIANS

YEARS ANNIVERSARY

1959-2009
The Macedonian people yearned for their own national identity toward the end of the 19th and the early 20th and as a result of this desire for national autonomy the Macedonian national liberation movement emerged. This was a direct result of the political, national, economic and cultural oppression of the Macedonian people. The Turkish occupation had lasted for over 500 years leading to social, economic, administrative and legislative crisis in Macedonia. The Turkish presence interfered with other foreign states in Macedonian affairs.

The Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (MRO) was formed and quickly became the established leader of the Macedonian national liberation and social revolution movement, struggling for national independence and social justice. Gotse Delchev, was an extraordinary visionary and ideological leader who organized and mobilized the MRO. Delchev had a brief but brilliant career and was completely dedicated to the cause of Macedonian national liberation.

Gotse Delchev, was born to Macedonian parents, Nikola and Sultana Delchev, on February 4th, 1872, in Kukush, a town 35 km north of Salonika. He completed his primary education in Kukush, expanded his education by completing his secondary education in Salonika, with emphasis on science, literature and social studies. Delchev furthered his education in the sciences at the Salonika Military Academy. He read widely on Macedonian national affairs whilst attending the Academy. He took an active role in politics, and joined several political clubs in Salonika and Sofia, and had close contacts with others, especially with the socialist and the “Lazarista” clubs in Sofia. Membership of these political organisations contributed to the formation of his revolutionary ideals.

Gotse Delchev’s membership in the MRO was the most significant change in the course of the history of the Macedonian national liberation movement. While Delchev’s involvement with the MRO was short, the years between 1894 and 1903 represent the efficient revolutionary sequence of the MRO, and was directly attributed to the influence of Delchev. They comprise of Delchev’s public education career as a scholar in Novo Selo (near Shimp) and Bansko (1894-1905), and of his involvement with revolutionary ideals, making preparations and seeking support for the armed uprising from the MRO.

After taking the oath of membership of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, a meeting of significant and historical importance took place in Stip, in November 1894, between Delchev and Dame Gruev, the founder of MRO. Gruev had already realized the major importance of the country.

Delchev was able to recognize the influence of other Balkan monarchies, and in particular Bulgaria, which continues in part today, and their aspirations for independence. Delchev was one of the founders of the Bulgarian propaganda, was a destructive fact that called “Voryvism”, became the target of Delchev’s most fervent opposition. Delchev continued to attend district meetings all over Macedonia and put into place a revision of the revolutionary districts in Macedonia in 1895, by strengthening the weaker districts, by providing contacts for a reliable network, and by the appointing of strong district leadership of the MRO. Delchev continued his belief that any revolution could only be fought by Macedonian forces to protect Macedonia from falling under any foreign control of neighbouring Balkan states, in particular Bulgaria.

At the First Congress of MRO, in April of 1896, a revised structure of the districts was introduced, and MRO was renamed TMORO (Secret Macedonian Odrin Revolutionary Organization), a new Constitution and a Charter was adopted which was drawn up by Gotse Delchev and Gjorche Petrov, and an expatriate branch of TMORO was established in Sofia, where the national liberation movement developed and became a leader in the construction of a bomb manufacturing plant in the Osogovo Mountains. The inclusion of the rural areas into the TMORO resulted in the expansion of the organization and the obvious increase in its membership. TMORO became the first representative of the revolutionary districts in Macedonia.

Petrov became the first representative of the revolutionary districts in Macedonia. Gotse Delchev was appointed as his secretary, a position which the liberation of Neveska, Kurea and Krusevo, where the Krusevo Republic was proclaimed by its president Nikola Kstev.

Macedonia broke away from the Yugoslav Federation. It is interesting to note that the 1991 Macedonian breakaway from the Yugoslav Federation was achieved without armed uprising or bloodshed. Other former Yugoslav Federation members have not fared so well, and have all endured some degree of armed conflict to achieve their independence.
Дакле, претседателот на организацијата "Обеднати Македонци" во Канада, Драги Стојковски, се приклучил на речите на премиерот Никола Груевски во поддршка на истиот, кога од страна на Граѓанина Ќура Искру во Македонија, македонските изселеници во Канада, укривува во Media, Утриски Весник, Вечер, Време, Шипци, Нова Македонија и новинска агенција Фокус. Тука пренесуваме некои од наведеното:

Ислелениците бараат поевтини пасоци за нас е многу да плакаме со 250 канадски долари за еден пасоц со кој можеме да патуваме.

за организацијата "Обеднати Македонци" од Канаада. Тој ја повика македонската власт да ја намали цената, заедно со "споставување на процедурата за добивање на пасоци. Тоа се големи пари и за нашите сонанорци што живеат во странство. На некое од четири години сеемството треба да даде 1.000 долари за добивање на македонски пасоци. Тоа е нивна национална претстава, но за македонското име, тоа е недостаток."

Драги Стојковски, Тетов, 04 септември 2008

Стојковски побара од Граѓанин Ќура Искру да ги пренесе преговорите во спорот

Македонци од Канаада бараат пренес на преговорите за името

Македонци од Канаада бараат пренес на преговорите за името

нашето уставно име со Граѓанин Ќура Искру, ние не треба да ги пренесуваме нивните проговори за името, а ги пренесуваме за нивното барање на Македонци од Канаада. Тој е заради македонското име во Канаада, ние не треба да ги пренесуваме нивните преговори за името, а ги пренесуваме за нивното барање на Македонци од Канаада.
In the years of the First World War, Macedonia is men-
tioned along Gallipoli, Egypt and France. A similar plaque
and for the same purpose, adorns the Canadian Parliament
building in Ottawa. When we are mentioning Macedonia, it
is only fitting that we also mention the plaque that the
British placed on a Macedonian cliff after the First
World War and a replica was recently placed in the Republic
of Macedonia which reads: “To the memory of the heroic
dead of the 22nd division who fell in Macedonia 1915-1918.

As proof of the Scots love for and connection to Macedonia, here we present the
beautiful monument depicting the scene of Alexander of
Macedon (the Great) taming the
wild Bucephalus. Another Scottish
monument of Macedonia concerns the
memorial plaque in honour
of the soldiers fallen on battle-
fields. The plaque reads: “To the
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By presenting this map of Greece, our aim is to simply counter Greece’s claim that the Republic of Macedonia has “territorial pretensions against the Greek province of Macedonia”. The map, which was taken from Stavrianos’ book “The Balkans since 1453”, clearly shows the opposite - that Greece as a country, since its inception in 1832, has had territorial pretensions on its neighbours. Namely, as the map depicts, indicating with a black colour, the Greek state was formed on the historic territory of the Hellenic city-states. Since then, the Greek state has been in expansion: in 1864 the British gave them the Ionian Islands in order to strengthen the state for the forthcoming attacks on the neighbours; in 1881 Greece attacked Turkey and occupied Thessaly and part of Epirus; in 1913, Greece, along with Bulgaria and Serbia, attacked Turkey and occupied the biggest part of Macedonia as well as Crete and the north-eastern Aegean Islands.

Of course, the territorial aspirations of the ever-hungry Greek state for territory did not stop here. Fortunately, the subsequent territorial excursions into Turkey ended in total fiasco, so that the “darling of the west” was
forced to retreat. Unfortunately for the Macedonians, the retreat did not go far enough.

From the moment that Greece occupied and partitioned Macedonia with Serbia and Bulgaria, the Greek king gave orders for the "newly occupied territories". This was not a naive statement by the king – he knew perfectly well that Macedonian was never Greek prior to that time (1912), therefore the use of the statement "newly occupied territories".

Just to be fair to the European politicians and policy-makers, we will attempt to educate them about the territorial expansion of the new EU country, Bulgaria, by also present the map from the same book. Stavrianos here presents with black colour the formation of the Principality of Bulgaria in 1878, following the Treaty of Berlin. In 1885 Bulgaria occupied Eastern Rumelia from Turkey and in 1912-13, along with the other expansionist EU country, Greece (with the future EU country, Serbia), occupied and partitioned Macedonia.

The European policy-makers need to also be reminded that both expansionist countries, Greece and Bulgaria, even after the occupation of foreign lands, pretend to be ethnically homogenous countries! Whom are they trying to lie? For obvious reasons it is very easy to manipulate the European policy-makers (or maybe they know they are being manipulated, however, it is in their interest to play along).

However, it is hard to manipulate the Macedonians, Turks, Albanians, Vlahs and others whose lands they have occupied.

Taken from: L.S. Stavrianos, The Balkans Since 1453, p. 645

![TERRITORIAL GROWTH OF BULGARIA](image-url)
 Од прославата на Илинденскиот пикник
 Август 3, 2008 година

На 2 август беа положени веници во чест на паднатите борци за слободата на Македонија и Канада.

Претседателот на "Обединети Македонци" Драги Стојковски со Генералниот конзул, Амбасадорот Мартин Треневски и Конзулот Бранко Трајковски, подоле со поголема група гости на пикникот.
Изјаденици Македонци будно го следеја изборот за Убавица на "Обединети Македонци за 2009 година" - победничка беше Мери Лазаревска додека Александра Пазаркоска и Билјана Марковска го поделиа второто место.

Најмладите Македончја се разгондуваа скокажи на скокачката тврдина, играаи на лигалките, пулацките и другите играчи.
2009

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December

*GOCE DELCEV NIGHT - February 7, 2009  *ILINDEN PICNIC August 2, 2009

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

Сречен Божик и Срећна Нова Година
Book Review:

THE UNTAMED BALKANS

The book “The Untamed Balkans” was written by Franz Carl Weiskopf (born 3. April 1900 in Prague; died 14. September 1955 in Berlin) under the pseudonym Frederic W.L. Kovacs in 1941 by Modern Age Books Inc, New York (the book was also published in 1942 by Robert Hale and now the book can be viewed on the Internet at http://www.archive.org/details/untamedbalkans009125mbp.)

The book was written and published at the height of the Nazi occupation of Europe and the start of the underground movement for liberation. For that reason the author dedicated the book (T)o the soldiers of the great underground army in the Nazi-occupied countries-Germany included-in the victors of tomorrow.

The book has 248 pages and is divided into three parts. The first part, The Debacle, in two chapters explains the Nazi Blitz strategy of conquest and the reaction of the Balkan governments and their peoples to the German occupation.

Part two, The Balkan Pattern, is divided into seven chapters. The third chapter of the book (or first in this section) gives a historic overview of the Balkan Peninsula while the following chapters cover the Balkan countries under the headings: Albania: The Sons of the Eagle; Macedonia: Forlorn Land; Hellas: Home of Beauty and Poverty; Bulgaria: Black Sea, Blue Sea, and Red River; with a map of the country with graphic depiction for the areas where minorities live.

The chapter that covers Macedonia (Chapter 5, Macedonia: Forlorn Land) also has a map of the area, indicating the state borders as they existed between Albania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Greece, however also indicating the ethnic Macedonian borders with separate shading and covering the parts of Macedonia that were within the above mentioned states. Similarly, a bigger map on the inside front cover, showing South East Europe with emphasis on the Balkan countries, depicts Macedonia within its ethnic borders.

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The chapter covers pages 54-66 and gives an overview of recent Macedonian history through headings such as The Bulgaro-Serbian Feud, IMRO: Hridex, and Reaction and Feudism.

It is interesting here to present what the author says about the Macedonians and the Macedonian language: The inhabitants are a mixture of peoples, the majority of them Slavic. Macedonian idioms belong neither to the Serbian nor to the Bulgarian tongues. They constitute a sort of link between these two branches of the South Slavic family of languages. The Serbs, however, call the Macedonian language “Southern Serbia”; the Greeks contend that the Macedonians are only “Slavophones,” meaning Slavic-speaking Greeks, and the Bulgarians claim the Macedonians as pure Bulgars. The Macedonians themselves are not asked their opinion. And this is the story of Macedonia in a nutshell: a country and a people continually under the domination of other peoples and states, a bone of contention between rival neighbours, a battlefield for foreign wars, an oft-cheated rebel whose struggle for freedom and independence has been constantly misused for the sake of others. (p. 56)

One needs to be reminded that the book was printed three years before Tito apparently “made up” the Macedonians as a separate people and four years before Blaze Koneski “made up” the Macedonian language, both “historical claims” according to the Bulgarian and Greek propagandists. It is also interesting that neither Tito nor Koneski are mentioned anywhere in the book.

The author makes an in-depth analysis of the stages of the Internal Macedonian
Chapter 9 covers “Unity or Death”: The Story of Yugoslavia. The chapter starts with a map of Yugoslavia where the different ethnic groups (Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Hungarians, Bulgarians, Turks, Macedonians, Germans, Albanians and Romanians) are represented with a different graphic design and the Macedonians are presented as covering most of the territory of present Republic of Macedonia.

In terms of the population of Yugoslavia, on page 130 the author states the following:

“Yugoslav population of 15,000,000 has a manifold national and religious pattern. There are about 7,000,000 Serbs, 5,000,000 Croats, 3,175,000 Slovenes, 600,000 Macedonians, 500,000 Germans, and as many Albanians; the rest are Bulgarians, Romanians, Jews, Greeks, Turks, Italians, Walachians, Turks, and a few other national splinters.”

Throughout the book the author uses the terms Macedonians (always Macedonians, as people or ethnic group) or Macedonian (language, peasants.) separately from Serbian, Bulgarian or Greek (always the latter, as people or ethnic group). In another sentence, here we will present few examples.

On page 6 (Chapter 1: “The Madness of War”), the author explains the internal contradictions in Yugoslavia that make the country:

“There are serious threats from within too. Maintaining itself through treachery and corruption, the dictatorial regime for years has aroused and fed the hatred of the national minorities — Croats, Moslem Bosnians, Albanians and Slovaks. In relation of the economic conditions of the Balkan peasants, in Bulgaria, Rumania, Albania, Greece, Macedonia, and Serbia there is now a new minority of a million Rumanians under the rule of Serbia, and in Yugoslavia there has been the emergence of a new minority of a million Hungarians under the rule of Rumania. Where formerly the soldiers and the publishers were considered "solution" to the Macedonian question, we present the section in its entirety.

One of the most effective Nazi weapons in disrupting the defensive potentials of the Balkan countries was the national question. The minorities were correctly called "human dynamite" in the hands of Nazi foreign policy. The Nazis have succeeded in shattering Yugoslavia and Rumania largely by means of the human dynamite. But their "New Order" in the Balkans creates half a dozen "New Yugoslavs" in place of the one old one. Where formerly the soldiers and the publishers were considered "solution" to the Macedonian question, we present the section in its entirety.

The author ends with the heading “Half a Dozen New Macedonians” the author explains how the Nazis used the over the area. Because of its insight on the topic, especially the Bulgarian/Serbian "solution" to the Macedonian question, we present the section in its entirety.

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The Macedonian question was "solved" in the way that the Bulgarian reactionaries wanted it. The biggest part of Macedonia became Bulgarian. It simply there already has been a period of Bulgarian administration in Macedonia from 1916 to 1918 with the result that Bulgarian courts-martial had to work on a twenty-four-hour-a-day schedule in order to deal with the flood of "Serbophile treason." When, later on, Macedonia was turned over to the Serbs, Serbian tribunals had the same trouble and often tried the Serbophile of yesterday for "Bulgariophile treason." (pages 229-230)
за бегалците од военните дејствија во Република Грција за време на Граѓанската и Втората светска војна

Соочувања се со последиците од военните дејства на над 80.000 бегали, од кои 28.000 бегали од военните дејства во Република Грција за време на Граѓанската и Втората светска војна, раководети од сродните на Македонија и бегали од Егејскиот дел.

Сопул координација на здруженијата на Македонците од Егејскиот дел на Македонија

Сопул координација на здруженијата на Македонците од Егејскиот дел на Македонија, даден од Конференцијата за формирање на институционално начело за извршување на политики по правото на човекот и осново за институцијата за заштита на човековите права и основни свободи со кои се забранува дискриминацијата, поддржан од сородните на Македонија, а предвид правните акти доставени од страна на Грчка, како што се Законот број 1285 од 1982 година за признавање на националниот пат на грчкиот народ према окупираните војска (1941-1944), Законот број 1543 од 1985 година, Законот број 1540 од 1985 година за елиминирање на последиците од Грчката војна (1944-1949), како и бројните одлуки на судовите и локалните органи на Република Грција, како се врши дискриминација по етничка основа на оние лица, заеднички граѓани на Република Македонија.

Имајќи ги предвид изнесението ставови на секоја од нивностите на Постојната актена комисија за заштита на локалните и правата на граѓаните на Собранието на Република Македонија, во арка со претставите на грчката национална заедница на Република Македонија, организирана преку Здружението на децата бегали од Егејскиот дел на Македонија и поддржани од сородните здруженија во Република Македонија, в доброволна акција во Конференцијата за правата на човекот и основи за институцијата за заштита на човековите права и основни свободи со кои се забранува дискриминацијата, а по потреба да се применуваат на генерална суплика,

1. Собранието на Република Македонија и У служба на Властите на Република Грција:

- да ги претставува сите активности со цел да се одвие задолженост за оние бегали од военните дејства во Република Грција за време на Граѓанската војна и Втората светска војна, граѓани на Република Грција, односно на земјата на Македонија, а за прекрашување на докази на драпиране фондови, а со цел да се доставуваат нивните документи на претседателот на Собранието на Република Грција и на председателот на Собранието на Република Македонија за со цел да се пратени на било која друга страна за сочињување на компетентните институции за заштита на човековите права,

- за претставување на активностите во рамки на соработка на Собранието на Република Грција и Владата на Република Македонија и на државите на билатерална соработка за заштита на човековите права.

2. Собранието на Република Македонија за преземување на мерки на национално и регионално ниво за регулирање на нивните активности и мерки на национален ниво за усвојување на информациите до Собранието на Република Македонија за заштита на човековите права и основи за институцијата за заштита на човековите права и основни свободи со кои се забранува дискриминацијата, а по потреба да се применуваат на генерална суплика,

- да обезбеди поддршка со цел да се помогне во процесот на вратување на една таква обемна и сложена активност и поддржан поштовање на сите форме на било која друга страна за сочињување на компетентните институции за заштита на човековите права.

3. Оваа резолуција ќе се објави во "Службен вестник на Република Грција".
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In recent search on the Internet, however, I found a reference on the American census of the 1910. Namely, the site mentions the instructions to Enumerators for the 1910 Census (the Instructions can be seen on http://usa.ipums.org/usa/voliii/inst1910.shtml) and quotes Article 137 which states:

Do not write “Macedonian,” but write Bulgarian, Turkish, Greek, Servian, or Roumanian, as the case may be.

The Bulgarian propagandists use this as proof of non-existence of the Macedonian language and, therefore, a separate Macedonian ethnicity. However, this would not be a propagandist theory if it did not stop there, without revealing the reasons for such a statement and without continuing the research for the censuses before and after 1910.

So let’s start from the beginning. The Instructions to Enumerators for the 1900 Census (the Instructions can be seen on http://usa.ipums.org/usa/voliii/inst1900.shtml) under the section Nativity, Column 13 — Place of birth of person it had explanations for enumerators in order to help in situations when a client states a name of nonexistent country as a place of birth. This is what the Instructions state at the end of Article 137:

...Thus, do not write Prussia or Saxony, but Germany. To this rule, however, note the following exceptions:

140. Write Ireland, England, Scotland, or Wales rather than Great Britain. Write Hungary or Bohemia rather than Austria for persons born in Hungary or Bohemia, respectively.

Thus, in Finland rather than Free Finland for persons born in Finland.

141. Note, also, that the language spoken is not always a safe guide to the birthplace. This is especially true of Germans, for over one-third of the Austrians and nearly three-fourths of the Swiss speak German. In case a person speaks German, therefore, inquire carefully whether the birthplace was Germany, Austria, or Switzerland.

142. In case the person speaks Polish, as Poland is not now a country, inquire whether the birthplace was what is now known as German Poland or Austrian Poland, and enter the answer accordingly as Polish (Ger.), Poland (Aust.), or Poland (Russ.). This meant therefore, just because Poland was not a country at the time, the Polish language and “nativity” had to be specified with a geographic designation (specifically naming what the Greek nationalists demanded of the Macedonians at the present time).

Perhaps already at this time, during the census of 1900, there were people who claimed that they spoke Macedonian and that their “nativity” was Macedonian, although not in a large enough number to make a mark as a separate language and ethnicity for the following centuries. And now we come back to the first quotation from the top of this article, which the Bulgarian propagandists love to quote. However, by looking at the whole section “Ability to speak English” of the Instructions, Article 154 gives a list of languages with additional instructions. It is best to quote the full Article:

The following is a list of principal foreign languages spoken in the United States. Avoid giving other names when one in this list can be applied to the language spoken. With the exception of certain languages of eastern Russian, the list gives a name for every European language in the proper sense of the word.

Albanian
Armenian
Basque
Bulgarian
Chinese
Danish
Dutch
Dutch
English
Esperanto
Finnish
French
French
Greek
Gypsy
Irish
Italian
Japanese
Lappish
Latvian
Little Russian
Lithuanian
Magyar
Moravian
Norwegian
Polish
Portuguese
Rhaeto-Romansch
Rommanian
Russian
Russian
Scotch
Servian or Croatian (Including Russian, Dalmatian, Hregegovian, and Montenegro)
Polsk
Portuguese
Romanish
Romanian
Russian
Russian
Slovak
Slovene
Spanish
Spanish
Turkish
Turkish
Ukrainian
Welsh
Yiddish
Yiddish
Yiddish
Yiddish
Yiddish

As can be seen from Articles 139 through 142, because of the border changes in Europe, it became very confusing for the enumerators what they can write down. Therefore, if a Pole stated that he spoke Polish or that he was Polish, the enumerator was instructed to “inquire whether the birthplace is what is now known as German Poland or Austrian Poland, and enter the answer accordingly as Polish (Ger.), Poland (Aust.), or Poland (Russ.). This meant therefore, just because Poland was not a country at the time, the Polish language and “nativity” had to be specified with a geographic designation (specifically naming what the Greek nationalists demanded of the Macedonians at the present time).
Christopher Deliso: Victor, thank you so much for discussing your ideas and your research, it's a great privilege.

Victor Friedman: Thank you, I’m always happy to speak about the Balkans and Macedonia.

Reincences

CD: Victor, the first time you visited Macedonia was in 1971. A lot must have changed since then.

VF: Indeed it has. When I first came here, during the height of Yugoslavia, many houses did not have telephones, and I recall you had to wait for your guests to get there even in 1970 what was here for 3 months it was impossible for me to get on the apartment where I was staying. Things have improved considerably since those days. And some of the damage from the 1963 earthquake damage was still evident in Skopje.

CD: Even in the center?

VF: Even in the center. A lot of the new buildings were already completed, but there were still some piles of rubble near the Hotel Turist, today’s Best Western on the Ulitsa Makedonika pedestrian street. Sewer lines were being laid in those days, and there were a lot of workers spending their time trying to find out how languages generally resembled one another.

CD: So what was it about the Balkans that made it so amenable to multilingualism?

VF: Well, really we’ve caught up with the discovery of the regularity of sound change. Languages were spending their time trying to find out how languages generally resembled one another.

CD: Genealogically, meaning finding a common ancestor, you could calculate the result of the influence of Darwinism, some sort of conceptual zeitgeist of the time?

VF: Well, but some people might tell you that, but most accurately we can say that it coincided with Darwinism and similar trends. But what got people really interested in the genealogical approach to linguistics was the British conquest of India.

CD: Really! Very unusual.

VF: Well think about it: you had these cultures, British gentlemen, who had been trained on the full classical education of Latin and Greek and had been exposed to this land of supposed primitives and savages- and for them, it was the best blow away by the resemblances between Sanskrit, which they came across for the first time, and Latin and Greek.

The Balkans: A Special Place

CD: So then, to return to the former topic, can I ask whether you had a predilection for different languages within a specific terrain is a rare thing? Do you find it in other parts of Europe like, say, Switzerland, with its four official languages (French, German, Italian, and Romansh) as well as the linguistically distinct Swiss German?

VF: Not to the same extent as in the Balkans. French, German and those languages had specific influences of different kind on each other, but the ordinary populations were not necessarily multilingual, but relatively recently, and even today each language in Switzerland is influenced significantly by the usage in the neighboring nation-states where they are standardized.

CD: So what was it about the Balkans that made it so amenable to multilingualism?

VF: Well, going back to Ottomans times, we could consider it partially an issue of pragmatism for city dwellers, traders and so on, for whom knowing other languages was directly beneficial to their livelihoods and businesses, with such diverse populations living in the Ottoman Empire.

It’s also interesting to note that most linguistic studies of multilingualism today are being carried out in particular areas of the world, or among immigrant communities in the wealthy countries. My research here in the Balkans is unusual in that respect, and the region with an endemic, long-existing multilingual history.

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Multilingualism as a Culture Value: A Telling Absence

VF: At the same time, multilingualism here was an aspect of a common cultural value, one shared by speakers of all languages, except Greek. But we should also note that the Macedonians generally did not feel resistance on the part of Greek did not keep the language from being influenced by those with which it was in contact.

CD: Really? That’s unusual. How do we know Greek lacks this value?

VF: One telling aspect, from a linguist’s point of view, is that Greek is the only language in the Balkans that does not have a proverb to the effect that “languages are wealth” or “the more languages, the more people you’re worth.” All other Balkan languages have some such saying that indicates a value placed on multilingualism.

CD: Are we sure this is true, that Greek lacks such a value? Or could someone just invent one for the sake of it?

VF: To the best of my knowledge, there is no such expression. And over the years I have asked every Greek friend of mine for such a proverb and one of them came up with one. And I am thinking about languages, experts on the Balkans who are not subjective.

An example I recall comes from the introduction to a recently published book on the minority languages of Greece (which is, alas, still a highly political topic in that nation-state). The author was discussing the Albanian dialect/language of speakers who migrated to Greece from Albania as long as 600-1000 years ago.

VF: The introduction was written by a respected Greek linguist... he wrote that among the Arvanitika, and probably, emphasis mine, among the Arvanitika, there is this expression of languages as wealth. But he didn’t know of any such expression in Greek.

Confusion and Denial

CD: By the term ‘Arvanitika,’ you mean medieval Albanian?

VF: Most precisely, it refers to the Albanian dialects of Greece that separated from the main body of Tosk Albanian 600-1000 years ago. The dialects were spoken on many Greek islands, the Peloponnesus, and in Attica and Central Greece. Greeks don’t like to admit it, but they have had large Albanian-speaking populations for a very long time, not just post-Communist economic collapse.

VF: But there are also points of view, deeply flawed booklet entitled Old State of Skopje and Its Language – referring, of course, to Macedonia and the Macedonians within socialist Yugoslavia.

CD: This is very interesting to me, because as you know, many Greeks today refer to the whole country of Macedonia by the name of the capital, and the people are 80% Greek, but they’re there, but no one’s doing dissertation research in a subject.

VF: Of course. But already in the 19th century, Greek speakers were calling themselves Macedonians (non-Macedons), their language, ‘Makedonski.’ This is documented.

VF: But they were also calling themselves ‘Makedonar.’

VF: Yes, some were, and speakers identified a Greek or Turks or Greeks, depending on religious loyalties. In the time, speakers called themselves Christians or Turks (Muslims).

CD: Because the Ottoman system used religion as the main factor in classifying its subjects?

VF: Yes, but not just because of the Ottoman religion - it was more important then as well. It was the late 18th/early 19th century, developments from the French Revolution that led to nation-state ideologies.

Organized Obliteration

VF: But even well before this, some scholars have argued - and this refers again to the social resistance against other languages – that the Greeks have been trying to destroy Slavic culture in this area since the Middle Ages.

CD: ‘Greeks,’ meaning the Byzantines?

VF: Yes. For example, John Fine in his book The Early Medieval Balkans (p. 220) cites Vladimir Moshin, who published an article in 1963 in a Russian academic journal in which he made the argument that the reason there are no Slavic language manuscripts from this region prior to 1180 is owing to their destruction by the Greeks/BYZANTINES.

CD: Really!

VF: Up until his article, people had been saying it was the Turks who destroyed everything. But there are Greek-language manuscripts from this period that survived in this region, whereas Slavic ones did not. And it is not as if the latter were not being composed in an organized way. The Ohrid literary school which began in the late 9th century is just one place where manuscripts were being written in large numbers. Which means that Greeks have been trying to destroy Slavic culture and literacy for a very long time.

CD: Many Bulgarian politicians and academics claim that Macedonian is just a dialect of Bulgarian. What do you say on this topic?

VF: The answer is of course Macedonian is a distinct language, different from Bulgarian, just as Swedish is different from Norwegian, although similar languages, but separate, so, too, are Macedonian and Bulgarian.

VF: Why?

VF: Both sets of languages have different dialectal bases. And for this reason it is not just like the case of Moldovan and Russian. The Moldovan standard language is not based on Moldovan dialects; it is based on Romanian dialects, a standard Romanian.

VF: In the case of Macedonian, however, the standard language is based on the dialects spoken in the west-central geographical area defined by Veles, Bitola, Pripel, and Kichevo. It is not identical with any specific dialect. And the languages of the eastern ones as well. It is not based on a single dialect, but is based on eastern Bulgarian dialects, from Veliko Turnovo to the Danube and further east.

CD: Why were these dialectal areas chosen, in both cases?

VF: What happened was that in the 19th century there were two major centers of literacy and prosperity - one in southern Macedonians, and another in northeastern Bulgaria. The Bulgarians decided to impose those those of the Stara Planina range, east of the dialectal division called the ‘stara line,’ and south of the Danube, on the whole state.

CD: What was the thinking? Was this an organized campaign for specific reasons?

VF: Yes, and it happened to a colleague of mine who was doing dissertation research in a village that was used to protect the inhabitants.

CD: Ah, the village of... near Kastoria?

VF: Yes, and precisely for this reason. They had a very strong interest in Macedonian dialects, because it is the most widely spoken Albanian dialect. Its transitional between eastern Albanian and Greek. And the Greek police confiscated the tapes of this linguist and interfered with his research. However, he did finish his dissertation on this dialect. In fact, in his introduction, he made a point of thanking the Greek police for teaching him to always keep backup tapes!

CD: Ha! So with all of this researcher’s wife, the journalist arrests we saw recently, what are the Greeks so afraid of?

VF: They’re incredibly insecure. No, they’re just insecure. They have a linguistic ideology that insists on wiping out all other languages. This is an old idea, this is the term the barbarian. Think about it.

CD: Why don’t we have any traces of other languages preserved? As a matter of fact, there are some ancient inscriptions in Thracian.

CD: I thought the Thracians had no written language.

VF: They did. The inscriptions are in Greek script, but the words are Thracian. And the inscriptions are the result of gathering dust. They know they’re there, but no one’s interested in them because the language is not Greek. So they’re gathering dust. I see them. I have this from a colleague of mine who is a subject and interested in the subject.

CD: Your Greek vernette reminds me of being the village where the Thracian script, that last year. I came across these inscriptions, not from the other in Macedonian. I said dobavit’ den’ (‘good day’). And the Thracians said, ‘Yes, and she was so alarmed that she reacted instinctively, by blurtting out ne razvivam Makedonski (I don’t understand).” I thought that was one of the most ironic examples of fear of speaking a language I could imagine.

VF: Indeed.

CD: So I guess my question for you, was there a group of people in Florina what percent of the population speaks Greek? The question is: since public life is mostly in Greek it was an interesting question. Several people said, ‘oh, everyone speaks it.’ What is your experience?

VF: Well, as far as was told me there are two groups of people in Florina, or Lerin in Macedonian, or not in Macedonian, whatever they’re Macedonian or not. This is according to a colleague of mine who has done recent research. However, the younger

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Macedonian Herald - Voice of the United Macedonians Organization of Canada

January 2009
The Greek government is effectively carrying out 'linguicide' on the Macedonians of Greece. And it has been a long, ongoing process. For example, I have a photo of a sign in Greek, from the 1950s, pinned up in a working-class area, urging people to scorn the Macedonians. This sort of explicitly anti-Macedonian propaganda is unfortunately not an isolated case. The whole Greek government has succeeded in imposing its own Macedonian identity, plain and simple. Note that the Greek Macedonians are not speaking Macedonian, no. They are speaking their own language, the language they learned in kindergarten. Even the so-called 'corrective' methods were used: teachers beat them, or stuck their tongues with needles, or rubbed a hot pepper on their tongues; anything to make them stop speaking Macedonian.

CD: Really! That sounds very extreme.
VF: Oh, they were terrible. In the 1930s, people were put in jail just for speaking Macedonian. The Greek government had people skimming around the windows of people’s houses, listening to hear if they spoke Macedonian so that they could report them to the police. Mothers were thrown in jail for speaking Macedonian to their babies. They prohibited the Macedonians, and then, with the Greek Civil War, they drove many of them out.

CD: Never to return?
VF: And then there’s the infamous ‘race clause’ in the amnesty law of 1982. It stipulated that anyone who claimed the country and proclaimed one’s property, all those without Greek origin, had to declare they were Greek by genos, by race or birth. Macedonians who had been expelled, and half the children in the area, in 1949, were never allowed to reclaim their property. It was racism, pure and simple.

CD: Do you recall what was the reaction here in Macedonia, from the locals? And what about the European countries? Surely this was considered an enormous breach of European values?
VF: I was actually here at the time this was announced. The people went berserk, because they have been so badly mistreated all along. The ‘Great Powers,’ of course, said nothing.

CD: Well this is interesting because here we have in America a new president, a black man who surely knows something about the meaning of racism, and indeed the Greek government has resonated throughout Obama’s campaign. And at the same time, Obama signed an anti-Macedonian Senate resolution, and has been a big supporter of the Greek lobby, who are probably counting on a return on their investment. Has anyone, to the best of your knowledge, pointed out this blatant hypocrisy regarding his support for a country that has a history of racist policies against its own citizens?
VF: No, I haven’t heard anyone put this to his people. It would be nice if the message could be gotten through, but so far I haven’t seen this happen. The Macedonians don’t seem to be alert to public relations and American politics—they should be using lobby companies, getting their message out every day in every newspaper, for example. I do, I concern with that.

VF: And, at the same time, the Greeks get away with this cradle of democracy image! Give me a break! Ancient Greece was a slave-owning society. And you know, some scholars argue that Modern Greece is a creation of the Western European romantic imagination—for example, Lord Byron’s romanticized view of Ancient Greece projected, on the modern population. This is persuasively argued in a book of academic Michael Herfelard, called Ones Ours More. On.

CD: That is an interesting school of thought, I had not really considered it as such but there is something to it. What was the reaction to this book?
VF: I do not think there was a huge reaction. Michael Herfelard was involved with another book, Anastasia Karakasidz’s Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood, which did generate a great deal of controversy. Published by the University of Chicago Press in 1997, this book was actually a very mild challenge to Greek hegemonic notions. What it dared to do, based on fieldwork in Greek Macedonia, was to state that there were citizens of Greece who did not feel themselves to be ethnic Greeks and that they still spoke their own language.

Cambridge University Press had committed to publishing the book with minor revisions, and then suddenly decided not to publish the book. They had committed to it and suddenly changed their minds. Prof. Herfelard was on the editorial board of CUP’s anthropological series at the time, and he resigned in protest, as did other members of the board.

CD: Yes, they cited the ‘security of their staff in Greece’ as their reason, right?
VF: Well they said that. However, then in 2005, they had a monopoly on English-language testing in the schools of Greece as well.

CD: Do you believe that the Greek government threatened that they would lose this privilege?
VF: I have no idea, but apparently they had a monopoly—two plus two, what are you going to make of that, four or twenty-twenty?

CD: But then you guys saved it?
VF: Yes, the University of Chicago went ahead and published the book, their credit. But the whole situation is just disgusting; it makes Europe look like what she was called at the beginning of the 20th century, as depicted in the Bulgarian film Mera spored Mera, made in the 1980s. It was somewhat provocative, relevant and received criticism from some quarters of the Communist government, because it used Aryan Macedonian dialect, as it was about the post-Ilinden period just after 1903.

The memorable line from the film, which was part of a real folk song dating back to 1878, was something like this: ‘be thus cursed and thrice cursed, you Greeks, who whored away your Babylons—that, relatively, the murder of Macedonia.’

CD: So, what do you think then of the international negotiations over the name issue, and the constant pressure for Macedonia to ‘compromise’ with Greece here?
VF: There is no real compromise. There can’t be. Think about it: if a thief comes up and holds a gun to your head and says ‘give me your money’, do you say, ‘I’ll give you half,’ and call that a compromise? That’s Greece. They are trying to destroy Macedonia’s identity, plain and simple.

CD: Note that no one on the Macedonian side is saying that Greeks cannot call themselves Macedonians, or their province Macedonia. But they never call themselves as such out of this context— they are, to themselves, Greeks first and foremost. So nobody actually needs the name Macedonia, and no one needs to call themselves Macedonians for their primary identity, except for these people in this small country that is not a threat to anyone.

CD: On that note, to conclude, let me ask this: based on your research, do you think that Macedonia gets enough credit for preserving its own alphabet and multiculturalism? And does it reflect at all on the temperament of the people here that it has been able to do so?
VF: First of all, Macedonia doesn’t get any credit. And in fact the isolation that Greece has succeeded in imposing on Macedonia in the last 17 years has been a major factor in adding to interethnic tension here, as we saw unfortunately in the 2001 conflict.

If the Greeks had just left the Macedonians alone to begin with, there would have been fewer such problems, or at least greater capacity to deal with the existing ones. But it was the Greek government (especially after 1991) and the Serbian government (especially after 1999) who exacted the problems, for their own purposes.

You know, the vast majority of people of all ethnicities in this country live together peacefully. There is a saying in Greek: “ marathon: we are a mild people.” A people who will not suffer. This is something that is constantly overlooked by the Greek government, relative to the rest of the Balkans and much of the world, for all the very real problems that exist, Macedonians are still among the most peaceful and tolerant people you will find anywhere.

VF: I am sure of what I say.
CD: Victor, thank you very much for your time and insightful comments. I appreciate it.
VF: And thank you.

VF: Yes, the University of Chicago went ahead and published the book, their credit. But the whole situation is just disgusting; it makes Europe look like what she was called at the beginning of the 20th century, as depicted in the Bulgarian film Mera spored Mera, made in the 1980s. It was somewhat provocative, relevant and received criticism from some quarters of the Communist government, because it used Aryan Macedonian dialect, as it was about the post-Ilinden period just after 1903.
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