

BULGARIA AND MACEDONIA

HISTORY AND POLITICS

PART TWO

A NEW DIRECTION

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THIS IS 1859 YEARS SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BULGARIAN STATE
IN EUROPE (165 AD) AND 1343 YEARS SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF
DANUBE BULGARIA (681 AD) BY KAN ASPARUH.
BULGARIA – THE OLDEST EUROPEAN COUNTRY EXISTING
UNDER THE SAME NAME FOR MORE THAN EIGHTEEN CENTURIES AND
PRESERVED TO THIS DAY BY THE BULGARIAN NATION.

Lead Scientist Georgi Markov, Regular Member of Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

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The abbreviation of the names of parties and organisations in this book
is based on transliteration of their names in Bulgarian.

VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE BULGARIANS IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

On September 8, 1991, the citizens of today's Republic of North Macedonia, which until then had been part of the Yugoslav Federation, were required to answer an ambiguously formulated question in a referendum: whether they were in favour of a sovereign and independent state of Macedonia which would have the right to join a future union of the sovereign states of Yugoslavia.

At that time, this was the second referendum to be held in the territory of the then Republic of Macedonia. On this occasion, Ljubco Georgievski, chairman of the largest opposition party of the time, VMRO-DPMNE and later a Prime Minister, pointed out: 'In its long history, the Macedonian people only twice have had the right to free self-determination through a referendum: in 1991, when we voted for independent Macedonia, and in 1871, when by decree the Ottoman sultan allowed a free referendum, in which the Macedonian people, with a majority of more than two-thirds, accepted the Bulgarian Exarchate as their own.'¹

On November 17, 1991, a Constitution (Statute) was adopted, according to which 'the Republic of Macedonia is constituted as a national state of the Macedonian people, in which full civil equality and lasting co-existence of the Macedonian people with the Albanians, Turks, Wallachians, Roma and other nationalities living in the Republic of Macedonia is established.'² Such an approach implies a lasting socio-political division, because the Constitution did not see Albanians, Turks, Wallachians and other ethnic



The ballot for the referendum on independence of the present-day Republic of North Macedonia

1 Георгиевски, Л. Кој со кого ќе се помурва. Скопје, 1994.

2 Устав на Република Македонија. Скопје, 1991.

communities living in the territory of the Republic of Macedonia as parts of the 'Macedonian people', whose national state should be the Republic of Macedonia. Such a framework, which provides the right of other ethnic communities to co-exist with the 'Macedonian people', but not to be part of it, inevitably leads to an irreversible redefinition of the Republic of Macedonia. This process was particularly evident after the adoption of the 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement. The current amendments to the Constitution of 11 January 2019 already stated that in the Republic of North Macedonia, in addition to the 'Macedonian people', live 'a percentage of the Albanian people, the Turkish people, the Wallachian people, the Serbian people, the Roma people, the Bosnian people and others', and the central government in Skopje 'respects and develops their ties with their homeland.'³

The ethnic relations examined herein are building on the provision enshrined in the 1974 Communist Constitution that 'the Macedonian people and the nationalities exercise their sovereign rights in the Socialist Republic of Macedonia.'⁴ Such continuity was conditioned by the fact that since the declaration of independence in 1991 to this day, no document has been adopted in North Macedonia which condemned the local form of communism that has been the dominant ideology since the end of 1944. Although formally proclaiming itself the successor of the ideas of the leftist faction of the Macedonian liberation movement – mainly VMRO (United) – this was only a façade behind which a number of digressions from and falsifications of the positions of the Macedonian leftists were concealed. For example, according to VMRO (United), 'the Macedonian people' consists of 'all the nationalities who lived and continue to live there and on behalf of whom we speak: Bulgarians, Albanians, Turks, Jews, Wallachians, Greeks, and Gypsies.'⁵

If we compare the definitions given by even the most left-wing Macedonian faction from the beginning of the 20th century and the provisions of the Constitution of North Macedonia, we will see that the political and geographical content of the term 'Macedonian people' has been replaced by an ethnic one. Of all the ethnic groups prior to 1944, in the following period only Bulgarians were subjected to transformation into ethnic Macedonians and the rest remained as they were. Such a division categorically confirms that there are no objective socio-political factors which may have influenced

3 Службен весник на Република Македонија. Скопје, 12 јануари 2019.

4 Службен весник на Социалистичка република Македонија. 25 февруари 1974.

5 ВМРО (обединета), кн. Скопје, 1978, с. 131.

the formation of a new self-awareness. The transformation of Macedonian Bulgarians into ethnic Macedonians is not a one-time act, but a lengthy process combined with the systematic use of violence and constant propaganda using hate speech against any Bulgarian presence in Macedonia.

The concept that Macedonians are a separate ethnic group is not native to Macedonia, but was first formulated in 1887 by Serbian politician, Stojan Novakovic. He believed that Macedonian nationalism could be used as an ally of the Serbian idea to oppose Bulgarianness.⁶ This idea was adopted by the Comintern in 1934 and was implemented by the Yugoslav regime in Macedonia after 1944. The Yugoslav authorities made much greater efforts to promote Macedonian nationalism as an anti-Bulgarian and pro-Serbian ethno-political doctrine than to impose Communism as a social ideology. In 1991, North Macedonia did not distance from this policy, and its implementation continued in the following period. It was expressed in the continuation of the persecution as 'people's enemies' of those who still preserve their Bulgarian self-awareness. They are accused of being Bulgarophiles, 'supremacists', Vanchovists or Mihaylovists, i.e. followers of Ivan Mihaylov – the last leader of the authentic VMRO who died in 1990. The policy of imposing Macedonian nationalism did not change in any way after the proclamation of the independence of the Macedonian state in 1991.

In order to understand the scale of the repression against the Bulgarians, it is necessary to clarify what part of the population still has Bulgarian self-awareness.

The inherited practices of the totalitarian past do not allow this question to be answered unequivocally. According to the population census in North Macedonia in 2002, only 1,417 people declared themselves to be Bulgarians. This data is definitely not real, since people born as Bulgarians in the Bosilegrad region and subsequently migrated to North Macedonia number alone about 30,000 people. Various field studies show that in addition to the clearly expressed Bulgarian self-awareness, among part of the population there is also crypto-Bulgarian awareness: its bearers declare themselves as Macedonians to strangers, but within the family or to relatives they reveal their Bulgarian self-awareness. In addition, among another part of the population, there is a multi-layered or dual awareness. Its bearers declare themselves as Macedonians, but they admit to relatives that their parents or grandfathers

6 Цамбазовски, К. Културно-општествените врски на македонците со Србија во текот на XIX в. Сконје, 1960, с. 163–164.

were Bulgarians, that there is no difference between Macedonians and Bulgarians, that Macedonians and Bulgarians are one people, etc. The presence of such persons is also documented in a report by the Bulgarian National Television, in which an agent of the secret services was filmed in a referendum on independence on September 8, 1991, beating a Macedonian citizen only because he stated in an interview that there was no difference between Bulgarians and Macedonians.

This complex picture can be supplemented by the fact that at the end of 2021, about 130,000 citizens of North Macedonia acquired Bulgarian citizenship or were in the process of obtaining it, based on Bulgarian ethnic roots and self-awareness officially declared to a notary. According to the assessment of independent North Macedonian media in 2018, based on the previous electoral behavior of the citizens, 'there are about 50,000 pro-Bulgarian votes in Macedonia, for which so far VMRO-DPMNE (Democratic Party for National Unity) and VMRO-NP (National Party) are competing. These votes are concentrated in Ohrid, Veles, Stip, Delcevo, Berovo, Pehcevo, Strumica and Skopje.'⁷ So far, the largest number of votes cast for a pro-Bulgarian formation was in 2006, when 57,204 people or 6.1 percent of the total vote voted for the VMRO-NP. Taking into account the electoral activity and the share of the underage population, the claims that the number of persons with preserved Bulgarian self-awareness is around or over 200 000 can be considered relatively true.

Anti-Bulgarianism as a state policy

However, the massive systematic violation of human rights does not only affect the problematic community of persons with Bulgarian self-awareness. The whole society is subjected to aggressive propaganda via hate speech in order to prevent some Macedonians to revert to their Bulgarian roots. This phenomenon was observed both during the period of communist Yugoslavia and after the declaration of independence of North Macedonia in 1991. Particularly dramatic are the consequences for the children of Macedonian Bulgarians, who are subjected to classic brainwashing in the education system of North Macedonia, starting from language learning, through literature and history. In school, it is constantly suggested that Bulgarians and Bulgaria

7 Готово е со ВМРО-Народна, се раѓа нова про-бугарска партија со директни линкови во Софија. 2018-03-13. <https://narodenglas.com/готово-е-со-вмро-народна-се-раѓа-нова-п/>

are the biggest enemies of the 'Macedonians' and North Macedonia, falsified facts about the ethnicity, language and ideas of historical figures are taught. This mass-imposed knowledge contradicts what children learn from their parents at home. In order to avoid a conflict situation, children are warned not to tell at school what is said in the family. Thus, psychological traumas are inflicted on this category of students, which are difficult to assess or repair. In order to understand the depth of the problem, it should be borne in mind that even now in North Macedonia, a number of schools bear names such as Miladinov Brothers, Rayko Zhinzifov, Kuzman Shapkarev, etc. About these personalities the children of Macedonian Bulgarians know from their families that they were Bulgarians; that they wrote in the Bulgarian language and were actors of the Bulgarian Revival. At the same time, at school, the children are forced to claim that they were Macedonians, that they wrote in the Macedonian language, and that they even fought against the Bulgarians. Graduates of these schools were never shown the original literary works produced by their patrons.

After the declaration of independence, the authorities in Skopje continued the old Yugoslav policy of limiting the contacts of its citizens with Bulgaria. For example, on April 26, 1992, a fee of 30 DEM was introduced for every Macedonian citizen who left the country and entered Bulgaria. This policy was directed straight against Bulgaria, because such a fee was not charged to Macedonian citizens visiting other neighbouring countries. Ivan Lebamov, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Macedonian Patriotic Organizations in the USA and Canada, protested against the application of this discriminatory measure. On December 11, 1992 he wrote a letter to the President of Macedonia, Kiro Gligorov, saying: 'The fact has come to our attention that the human rights of those who consider themselves Bulgarians are often denied... Our concern is also directed at those Macedonians who want to visit Bulgaria and are charged 30 German marks to leave their own country, while at the same time time, Macedonians going to Albania or Serbia are allowed to do so for free... Our concern is for those Macedonians who want to call themselves Bulgarians and cannot do so without being threatened with arrest.'⁸

When the period of the collapse of communist Yugoslavia and the attempt to establish a democratic system in today's North Macedonia are analyzed, it should be borne in mind that this process was controlled by the

8 Makeгонска трибуна. Ново меѓународно издание. Годи. II, бр. 7. Форт Уейн. Јануари 1993.

security services created in the Yugoslav era. For example, the largest opposition party VMRO-DPMNE, whose programme included the idea of secession from Yugoslavia, was created by Dragan Bogdanovski, who, although he lived in emigration and was created an image of a fighter against Yugoslavia, in fact for many years was an agent of the Yugoslav secret services. This situation allowed actions to be taken to remove the members of the VMRO-DPMNE with Bulgarian self-awareness, grouped around the vice-president Dimitar Tsarnomarov. Despite the established control over the main opposition party VMRO-DPMNE, concerns and accusations were constantly being expressed from the circles of former communists that the formation stood on pro-Bulgarian positions. For example, on March 6, 1991, the structures of the Union of Fighters from the People's Liberation War in Bitola, Tetovo, Resen and other areas declared that the requests for independence made by VMRO-DPMNE were 'in the service of the assimilation plans developed by the neighbouring countries'. At a 'protest' meeting held in the pensioners' hall in Kichevo, a declaration was adopted that declared the statements of VMRO-DPMNE as 'positions of Vanchovism and Bulgarianism'.

On August 11, 1991, VMRO-DPMNE organized a memorial service in Strumica for five students from this town who were killed in 1951 by the communist regime as supporters of the authentic VMRO. The organizers of this demonstration disputed that the murdered students had declared themselves as ethnic Bulgarians, but their Bulgarian affiliation was confirmed by the person present, Lyuben Topchev, brother of murdered Stefan Topchev. Lyuben Topchev is a political émigré in Brazil, and later in the USA. He is a member of the Macedonian Patriotic Organization (MPO), whose statute recognized the presence of Bulgarians in Macedonia, and its printed organ, *The Macedonian Tribune*, was issued from 1927 until 2000 in literary Bulgarian.

The beginning of mass anti-Bulgarian repressions in the independence-seeking Republic of Macedonia was set on November 29, 1991, when Georgi Kalauzarov, Secretary of the Municipal Committee of VMRO-DPMNE in the town of Veles, burned a Yugoslav flag hanging on the terrace of an office of the Socialist Party of Macedonia. He stated that his act was 'a protest against the fact that Macedonian soldiers die for the interests of Greater Serbia.'⁹ Although on December 19, 1991, the Republic of Macedonia declared its independence and its government, albeit formally, began to consider the presence of the Yugoslav army as an occupying force, on

9 Ноџа Македонуџа. Скопје, 29 ноември 1991.

June 12, 1992, in the town of Veles, a trial began against G. Kalauzarov and eleven of his followers, with the main charge against them being the burning of the Yugoslav flag.

In order to manipulate public opinion, the media controlled by the government declared the defendants to be Mihaylovists and Bulgarophiles.¹⁰ The Nova Makedonija newspaper, which for a long time was an official mouthpiece of Communist Yugoslavia, declared in an anonymous article that the defendants could not be Macedonians, as Bulgarian and 'supremacist' literature had been found during their detention.¹¹



Dimitar Tsarnomarov

G. Kalauzarov was deprived of both his ID card and his passport. One night, the windows of his house were broken with stones. He also received an anonymous threatening letter warning that he would be punished for his struggle for the dissolution of the now-defunct Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The families of the detainees were not informed for more than 10 days that the detainees had been taken to Skopje prison. During the investigation, the defendants suffered physical and mental torture. The indictment was served only a few days before the start of the trial.

Although the trial was declared public, the Macedonian police prevented several buses with VMRO-DPMNE members from being present in the courtroom to express their moral support for the defendants. Hundreds of citizens gathered in front of the court, but none of them were admitted to the trial. During the first break, two journalists from Bulgaria who were present to cover the process were also expelled from the court. When reading the indictment, the group was accused of being composed of Mihaylovists and Bulgarophiles. During the interrogation, the prosecutor summoned the defendant Zhivko Petrushev from Tetovo, with the family name of Petrushevski. The defendant objected to this arbitrariness: 'My name is not Petrushevski, my name is Petrushev and I am a Macedonian Bulgarian.' Another

¹⁰ Нова Македонија. Скопје, 5 јуни 1992.

¹¹ Нова Македонија. Скопје, 7 август 1992.

of the defendants, Krum Chushkov, under the pseudonym K. Veleski, sent a letter to Bulgarian President Zhelyu Zhelev, stating: 'I am writing to you on behalf of 10,000 repressed Bulgarians in Vardar Macedonia, not only to inform you what is happening there, but also to ask you on their behalf to radically change Bulgaria's policy towards Macedonia... We want Bulgaria to clearly and categorically advocate everywhere for our rights as Bulgarians... In Macedonia, the Bulgarian national cause is not lost – on the contrary, it is now reviving and we want this revival to cover the whole Bulgarian people.'¹²

The campaign against the defendants from the town of Veles continued in the coming years. Three years later, the indictment was gradually reduced to the hypothesis that due to the group's activities 'there could have been great bloodshed with the then Yugoslav People's Army, especially when this dangerous terrorist set fire to the Yugoslav flag on 29.11.1991 in front of the eyes of the SFRY (Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia).'¹³ This accusation was made three years after the separation of the Republic of Macedonia from Yugoslavia!

The methods used in the propaganda campaign against the defendants are identical to those used in the frequent anti-Bulgarian campaigns during Tito's time: 'Krum Chushkov as a student and graduate of occupying Tsarist Bulgaria joined the Brannik organisation, where in 1945, with a group of intellectuals, he was tried for preparing terrorism, and later befriended Kallauzarov.' The tendentious nature of such an accusation is evident from the fact that in 1945, Brannik had already been disbanded and therefore could not have operated in Macedonia.

The use of physical violence during the investigative actions was ascertained by another defendant, Goce Chushkov, who on 22 June 1992 gave an interview to the correspondent of Radio Free Europe in Belgrade, in which he stated about the 'cruellest methods of physical torture, beatings and ill-treatment' that have been applied to the detainees.

On October 20, 1995, the trial in Veles was again resumed. In this way, the defendants spent 43 months in custody. The main prosecutor in the trial was a former officer with 30 years of experience in the Yugoslav secret services.

In addition to the ranks of VMRO-DPMNE, Bulgarian self-awareness also manifested itself among the members of other newly formed organi-

12 Македонска трибуна. Vol. 3083, Fort Wayne, November 29, 1990.

13 Вечер. Скопје, 19 август 1994.

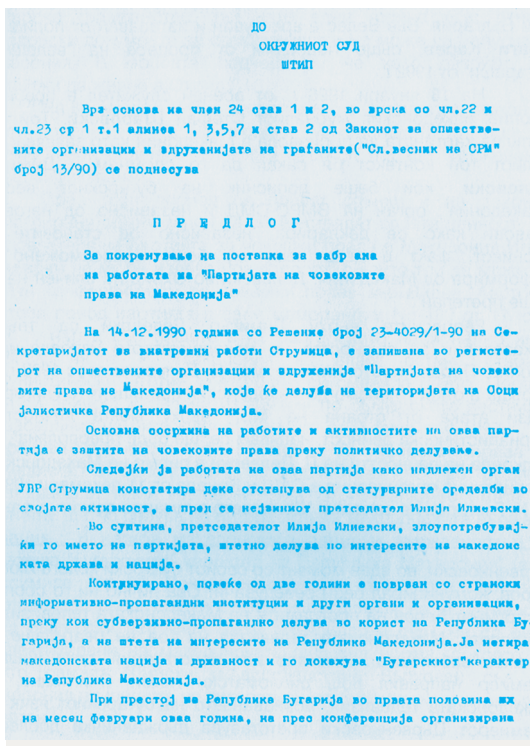
sations. However, these processes were severely persecuted by the security services. For example, on June 2, 1991, Ilija Ilievski, chairman of the Party for Human Rights in Macedonia, registered on 14 December 1990 with decision No 23-4029/1-90, was arrested by the authorities at the Bulgarian-Macedonian border. Books in the Bulgarian literary language and other materials were seized from him. In early September 1991, his passport was revoked, in order to prevent him from travelling. He was thus prevented from participating in the International Conference on Human Rights in Moscow, where he would have disseminated a memorandum on human rights violations in the territory of North Macedonia. However, the document was published on 12 September 1991 and stated that 'The Human Rights Party has gathered from its own sources, information on over 23,000 killed or missing persons and over 150,000 severely repressed, most of whom are persons with Bulgarian self-awareness.'¹⁴

During the subsequent period, the activities of the Human Rights Party were hampered by various bureaucratic obstacles. Its chairman, Ilija Ilievski, was not issued a new passport so that he could not attend the Human Rights Conference held in Vienna, Austria. On this occasion, the party, in its memorandum No 180 of 17 June 1993, drawing attention to the suppression of the rights of persons with Bulgarian self-awareness, declared that despite its new socialist name, the power was still in the hands of the old Communist Party. Due to this action and the statements of its leader published in some Bulgarian newspapers, the activity of the Party for Human Rights in Macedonia was banned on 9 December 1993 at a hearing of the Stip District Court. The court stressed that 'in fact, Chairman Ilija Ilievski, taking advantage of the party, often acts against the interests of the Macedonian nation and state, renounces the existence of the Macedonian nation and statehood, and insists on the 'Bulgarian' character of the Republic of Macedonia.'

In the course of the trial, articles and statements by Ilija Ilievski published in Bulgarian newspapers were presented as evidence against his party. These materials were used in the original, in the literary Bulgarian language. Thus, the District Court in the town of Stip, and then the Supreme Court of Macedonia, in practice acknowledged that the literary Bulgarian language was completely understandable to the judges.

During the same period, the Party of United Macedonians was also subject to persecution by the Macedonian authorities. In the summer of

14 Makeгонска трибуна. Vol. 3099, Fort Wayne, July 11, 1991.



Proposal of the District Prosecutor's Office in Stip to ban the Human Rights Party on the grounds that it ascertained the Bulgarian nature of the Republic of Macedonia

1992, its chairman Vancho Veskov gave an interview to Dimitar Delevski, a correspondent in Skopje of the Sofia newspaper, Macedonia. Due to the difficulties in transmitting the information to Bulgaria, it was published only on 20 November. In his

interview, Veskov said: 'The biggest mistake at this point is to eliminate the help of Macedonians from all over the world, especially from Bulgaria whose self-esteem is Bulgarian. I think that these people are discriminated in the Republic of Macedonia because of their Bulgarian self-awareness. Even those who feel Bulgarian in Vardar Macedonia are persecuted. The Republic of Macedonia must recognize those Bulgarians who live in its territory.'¹⁵ This giving of the interview was intercepted by the Macedonian police, because Dimitar Delevski and Vancho Veskov were monitored by them. Veskov's police harassment began immediately, and on September 15, 1992, under ambiguous circumstances, his two-year-old son Alexander Veskov was killed with a hunting rifle in front of his house. The father stated that he expected this incident to happen to him. The police did not find the killer. The persecution of V. Veskov at the hands of the Ministry of the Interior continued, and he was forced to leave the Republic of Macedonia. He settled in New Zealand, and the Party of United Macedonians ceased activity.

15 Macedonia. бр. 46. София, 20 ноември 1992.

The Paunkovski case

In addition to the persecution of existing organisations that recognised the presence of Bulgarians in the Republic of Macedonia, during this period, all attempts by persons with Bulgarian self-awareness to register their organisations in the manner provided by the laws and to lead a legal organisational life were stopped. On June 7, 1993, documents for registration of VMRO were submitted to the branch of the Ministry of the Interior in Ohrid. According to Art. 1 of the attached statute, it was defined as ‘a democratic, independent, national and political organisation of the Macedonian Bulgarians’. Art. 11 stated that ‘VMRO will fight for the preservation and revival of Bulgarianness (the Slavic existence of the Macedonian Bulgarians) in Macedonia’. Minutes of the Constituent Assembly held on 5 June 1993 was also attached. The document made it clear that Vladimir Paunkovski was elected chairman. He was a former dissident who left Yugoslavia for political reasons in June 1986 and settled in Switzerland. Believing in the democracy of the processes taking place in the Republic of Macedonia, Paunkovski returned to his homeland in December 1991. The founding documents showed that the members of the organisation rejected the ethnic content of the term ‘Macedonian people’ by stating: ‘We believe that in all the nationalities that inhabit Macedonia, there is a common consciousness of mutual belonging, so they all bear the common name ‘Macedonian people’. The authorities in Skopje refused to register the newly established organisation. Following a decision of the Supreme Court of Macedonia in the same sense, the organisation dissolved itself, but the founders instructed the members of the Central Committee to continue with the attempts to obtain registration.

In 1995, V. Paunkovski became chairman of an initiative committee that intended to hold a memorial service at the grave of Toma Davidov, one of the voivodes of the authentic VMRO, on August 2 in the village of Ozdoleni near Ohrid. The Committee printed posters and sent invitations to sympathisers in the Republic of Macedonia and abroad. Invitations were also sent to the ambassadors of the United States, Germany and Russia, to Macedonian President Kiro Gligorov and the Human Rights Office in Skopje. On July 18, the organisers sent a notice of the memorial service, along with a copy of the posters, to the office of the Ministry of the Interior in Ohrid. On July 25, two police officers entered V. Paunkovski’s apartment and verbally informed him that the memorial service was banned. All event posters were confiscated. At the same time, the police refused to issue a written

decision on the ban and a protocol confirming that the materials were confiscated. On July 27, 1995, Vladimir Paunkovski was summoned by phone to the police and was detained there from 10 am to 5 pm. He was forced to sign a declaration that he had been informed about the ban on the memorial service, but he was not given a copy. He was verbally told that any attempt to visit Toma Davidov's grave would be stopped by the police, even if the use of force was necessary. During the detention, Paunkovski was beaten by the officer of the Ministry of the Interior in Skopje, Aca Cancarevic, an ethnic Serb. Because of these repressive actions, the initiative committee decided to mark the memory of Toma Davidov through an informal gathering at the Kotzare Motel near Ohrid. On August 2, V. Paunkovski was arrested in his apartment and held in police custody until 9 pm. Upon his arrest, he was told that an 'important conversation' was to take place with him, but no such conversation did. At the same time, his lawyer Savo Kocarev from Skopje asked the police about the reasons for Paunkovski's detention, but was told that they knew nothing.

On 25 October 1995, V. Paunkovski was arrested at the airport in Skopje and his Macedonian passport was confiscated. He was detained for 5 days and severely abused. The detention and arrest were undertaken by the Macedonian police in order to prevent his visit to Austria at the invitation of Professor Otto Kronsteiner of the University of Salzburg. There, V. Paunkovski was to read a report on the Bulgarian nature and dialectal basis of the written language norm in Skopje, constitutionally referred to as the Macedonian language. During the detention of V. Paunkovski, his apartment was robbed without any signs of force on the door, but the keys to it were with the police. On the walls of the apartment there were scrawls written in an irregular Macedonian dialect with mixed Serbian Latin and Cyrillic letters: 'Bulgarians out of Macedonia' and 'Bulgarians live here and death awaits them.' The losses from the theft of items from the apartment and the seized airplane ticket amounted to more than 10,000 German marks, for which the victim has not been compensated.

On this occasion, on November 8, 1995, Prof Otto Kronsteiner sent the following open letter to the President of the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Professor Bozidar Vidoeski, to the Rector of the University of Skopje and to the Dean of his Faculty of Philology: 'We have just learned that one of the academics from Macedonia who had not refused his participation (in the Discourse on Slavic Studies in the University of Salzburg), was detained by the authorities at the airport in Skopje, just before his departure

for Salzburg... If it is absolutely necessary for you to save and breathe life into the Macedonian nation and the Macedonian national language by such means, then you confirm that in your republic terror prevails over the citizens' own beliefs and suppression of the free expression of their opinions. In this way, your republic and your Macedonian language will become a symbol of injustice. Against the struggle of academics and students from other countries for spiritual and



Vladimir Paunkovski
(1954–2020)

intellectual freedom, you are opposing a meaningless and outdated ideology that you are trying to 'petrify' by pseudo-scientific means.'

Due to these brutal repressions, Vladimir Paunkovski submitted an application for renunciation of his Macedonian citizenship with a statement to the Minister of the Interior at the time, Lubomir Frckovski. He wrote: 'I, who by ethnic origin am a Macedonian Bulgarian, a citizen of the Republic of Macedonia, voluntarily renounce my Macedonian citizenship with a clear conscience. The reason for my renunciation of Macedonian citizenship is the violation of my human rights by the state.'

Particularly interesting is the interview which Vladimir Paunkovski gave for the Skopje newspaper, Focus: 'I accept the concept of a Macedonian nation, but only in its meaning of statehood, because we believe that in Macedonia, which is a territorial integrity, live Bulgarian, Sers, Wallachian, Albanian, Greek, Turk and Roma ethnic communities, but not Macedonian, because this is a fictional Communist category... I claim that all that the official history or literature promotes throughout the country is forgery and theft from the cultural and historical heritage of Bulgaria... I guarantee you that in Ohrid alone there are from 10,000 to 15,000 people who feel and know that they are Bulgarians, but they still do not have the courage to say so.'¹⁶

On 1 May 1996, V. Paunkovski addressed the Bulgarian President Z. Zhelev with a request for Bulgarian citizenship, since his own Macedo-

¹⁶ Фокс. Сконје, 8 септември 1995.

Паунковски Владимир
ул. Галичица 47 2/4
96000 Охрид

МВР на Република Македонија
ул. Димче Мирчев б.б.
91000 Скопје
Н/Р на Министерот за Внатрешни
работи господин Љ.Фрчковски

ПРЕДМЕТ: Откажување од Македонско Државјанство

Почитуван господине Фрчковски,
Јас Паунковски Владимир, роден на 9.11.1954 година во Охрид, со стан на ул.Галичица број 47 2/4 96000 Охрид, по етничка припадност Македонски Болгарин, државјанин на Република Македонија, при потполно сознание, доброволно се откажувам од македонско државјанство. Причина за моето откажување од македонското државјанство е кршењето на моите човечки права од страна на државата. Ве молам писмено да ме известите што е потребно да се стори за да биде правно регулирано моето откажување од македонско државјанство.

А. Правата на човекот

1. Всеобшта Декларација за правата на човекот донесена од Општото Собрание на Обединетите Нации со резолуцијата 217А (III) од 10.12.1948 година.

Член 1

Сите луѓе се раѓаат слободни и равни по достоинство и права. Тие се надарени со разум и совест и следува тие да се однесуваат помеѓу себе во дух на братство.

Член 2 (Алинеја1)

Секој човек има право на сите права и слободи, прогласени со оваа Декларација, без никакви разлики, засновани на раса, боја на кожата, пол, јазик, религија, политички и други погледи, национално и социјално потекло, материјално, обштемествено или друга положба.

Член 3

Секој човек има право на живот, на слобода и на лична сигурност.

Член 5

Никој не треба да биде подлежуван на малтретирање или на нечовечко или унижувачко третирање или казнување.

Член 6

Секој човек, каде и да се наоѓа има право на признавање на неговата субјективност.

Request of V. Paunkovski to the Minister of the Interior of the Republic of Macedonia for renunciation of his Macedonian citizenship due to the violation of his human rights by the state

nian identity documents from Macedonia had been confiscated the previous year and he could not leave the Republic of Macedonia. In his application, he stressed that as a patriot he would continue to live in Ohrid. In this application, Vladimir Paunkovski declared that he wished to restore his surname of Pankov, which was the authentic name of his family used by his predecessors before they were forced to change it to Paunkovski after 1944. On November 8, 1996, V. Paunkovski was detained for the sixth time at the airport in Ohrid. The Macedonian police took away his newly issued Bulgarian passport on the grounds that it ‘suspects it to be forged’.

Other cases of repression

The legacy of the anti-Bulgarian policy between Tito’s Yugoslavia and North Macedonia is also evident in the continuing widespread practice of confiscation by Macedonian citizens of books and other materials written in literary Bulgarian.

According to Protocol No 239-01/339 of December 28, 1991, a large number of Bulgarian books and photocopies of historical documents were confiscated from Slavcho Tsekovski. Paradoxically, by that date the Republic of Macedonia had already declared its independence, but the seizures were based on Article 14 of the Yugoslav Law on the Import and Distribution of Foreign Media, adopted in 1974. In 1992, Slavcho Tsekovski tried to set up an association of Bulgarians in the Republic of Macedonia. He even managed to publish a single issue of a newsletter called All-Macedonian Movement for the Rights and Freedom of Bulgarian Christians and Muslims in the Republic of Macedonia, but then its activity was banned.

СЕКРЕТАРИЈАТ ЗА ВНАТРЕШНИ РАБОТИ
РЕПУБЛИКА МАКЕДОНИЈА
Граничен премин
бр. 239-01/339
28.12.1991 година
Дево Баир

Примерок на решение
В.Е.С.А. - 11.1.91
Советник: Дево Баир
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Секретаријатот за внатрешни работи Дево Баир врз основа на член 14 од Законот за внесување и растурање на странски средства за масовно комуницирање и за странската информативна дејност во бугосленици („Службен лист на СФРЈ“ бр. 39/74), го донесува следното

РЕШЕНИЕ

на ТСЕКОВСКИ СЛАВЧО — носител на патна исправа бр. 984721, државјанин на С.А.Р.Б. со постојано место на живеење во Скопје ул. Харџиџе бр. 26-42

МУ СЕ ОДЗЕМААТ без надоместок следните печатени работи:

- 1. КНИГА НА НАСТАВНИКА (материјал);
- 2. ТЕЖИКИ (материјал);
- 3. МАТЕРИЈАЛ (материјал);
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- 100. МАТЕРИЈАЛ (материјал);

Образложение

Именуванот на ден 28.12.1991 година, минувајќи преку овој граничен премин со својот личен багаж ги внесо во СФРЈ горенаведените печатени работи, за чие внесување немаше потребно одобрение.

Против ова решение може да се изјави жалба до Републичкиот секретаријат за внатрешни работи — Скопје. Жалбата се поднесува во рок од 15 дена од денот на приемот на ова решение и се таксирала со 20 динари таксис.

Одговорен работник за контрола на приемот на работите: Дево Баир

Decision on the confiscation of publications in the Bulgarian literary language from Slavcho Tsekovsky at Devo Bair border crossing

Decision on the confiscation of publications in the Bulgarian literary language from Angel Mitrev at the Deves Bair border crossing

**Confirmation by the Skopje Secretariat
of the Interior for the search and
confiscation of publications in the
Bulgarian literary language from the
home of Angel Mitrev**

Скопје

Комисијата за решавање на управни работи во втор степен од областа на народната одбрана, внатрешните работи правосудството и управата при Владата на Република Македонија решавајќи по жалбата изјавена од МИТРЕП АНГЕЛКО од Скопје, ул. "Среќко Пушавка" 48-в провело решението на Министерството за внатрешни работи - Граничен премин - Деве Баир - Крива Паланка број 71-01/91 од 18.01.1992 година, согласно член 37 од Законот за "Внатрешни работи", број 38/90, на основ на член 28 од Законот за општа управна постапка на седиштето одбрана на 15.05.1992 година го донесе следното

Refusal of the Commission for Solving Controversial Issues of the Second Degree in the fields of National Defence, the Interior and Justice under the government of the Republic of Macedonia to return to Angel Mitrev the Bulgarian literature confiscated from him

On November 16, 1992, the police searched the home of the Macedonian citizen, Angel Mitrev and, according to Protocol 71-01/91 of March 18, 1992, found brochures with the image of Ivan Mihaylov, issues of the Macedonia and Zora Bulgarian newspapers, issues of The Macedonian Tribune published in the USA and the book *VMRO*, written by Ivan Mihaylov and published in Brussels, Belgium. All the materials described in the protocol were confiscated from him. At the end of the police protocol, the motives for the confiscation were also described: 'REMINDER: all the journals are printed in Bulgarian'. This and other similar police documents confirmed that the possession of literary Bulgarian language editions continued to be a crime in North Macedonia!



Angel Mitrev (1919–2008)

This is how Angel Mitrev described the search itself: 'A few days ago I had a meeting with friends. We talked about Macedonia, and I took out one of the badges with the image of Todor Aleksandrov and said to a young man: you should wear the image of Todor on your chest, he is the eagle of Macedonia. This was heard by a man who was an officer in the Serbian army. We started an argument. And then he went and reported me to the police. They came to my home.'

Angel Mitrev submitted a written objection to the Government of the Republic of Macedonia against the confiscation of his materials, but according to decision 28/11-409/1-92, his appeal was rejected on the grounds that 'according to his statement, he would have distributed them to his friends.'

On August 2, 1995, the Macedonian police prevented Bulgarian MP Evegeniy Ekov from visiting Osdoleni by car despite that he had a diplomatic passport. After his protest, he was told that he could go there alone and on foot, and at the same time his car had to return to Ohrid, because if it remained parked on the side of the road, it would interfere with traffic.

After the attempt on the life of Macedonian President K. Gligorov on October 3, 1995, a wave of arrests engulfed the Republic of Macedonia, persecuting mainly persons with Bulgarian self-awareness. Dragi Karov, one of the defendants in the trial against the Bulgarians from Veles (Veles Bugarashi) in 1992, was arrested in Veles.

On December 21, 1995, at 7.30 am, Riste Manev, also a member of VMRO-Ohrid, was arrested. He was taken away in a police car, but in front of his family the police denied knowing anything about the arrestee. In addition to him, such repressive actions were taken against Georgi Nastevski, Stavre Temelkovski, Ivan Pipilev and others, all members of VMRO-Ohrid.

On 18 January 1996, Macedonian journalist Stefan Sarovski was severely beaten by an army official in Skopje. Describing the picture of arbitrariness in the Republic of Macedonia, he recalled the 1992 case of the Macedonian journalist Dimitar Delevski and thus exposed the unpunished crimes committed by persons close to the government: 'In this context, I would also like to mention Dimitar Delevski. He was a correspondent of the Bulgarian newspaper Macedonia, a publication of VMRO-SMD, and regardless of his positions on what he has declared himself, regardless of the positions of the newspaper, the fact is that he was prevented in this way from sending correspondence materials from Macedonia. Delevski in Ohrid was similarly beaten.'¹⁷ The repression of Dimitar Delevski is indicative of the nature of the regime in Skopje. Due to the constant harassment on him, in 1992 Delevski addressed the Macedonian President with an open letter: 'I hope that this attack by the Ministry of the Interior on my personality and my journalistic activity will cease.' On December 11, 1992, the Macedonian Patriotic Organization in the United States and Canada also sent President K. Gligorov a letter in support of the activities of D. Delevski: 'The fact that the human rights of those who consider themselves Bulgarians are often violated has come to our attention. This is the truth, although Bulgaria is the only neighbouring country that has shown friendly feelings and immediately recognized Macedonia... Our concern is for Dimitar Delevski, a Macedonian correspondent in Skopje of a newspaper published in Sofia, whom the police have ordered not to write for the Bulgarian newspaper anymore.'¹⁸ Despite this interference, the situation of D. Delevski did not change. On March 27, 1993, two calendars with the inscription '100 years of VMRO'

¹⁷ Дело. Бр. 139. Скопје, 26 јануари 1996. с. 15.

¹⁸ Македонска трибуна. Vol. 3135, Fort Wayne, December 17, 1992.

containing the images of revolutionaries and the statutes of the Bulgarian Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary Committee (this was the first name of the organisation) of VMRO were confiscated from him.

In order to defend himself from repression and obtain protection, Dimitar Delevski requested Bulgarian citizenship, which was granted to him in 1995 by a decree of Bulgarian President Dr Zh. Zhelev. He settled in Bulgaria, where he studied journalism and continued to publish articles against the crimes of Macedonian nationalism.

On November 13, 1996, the corpse of Gerasim Delevski, father of D. Delevski, was found in a well in his own property. A number of facts indicate that he was first killed and then thrown into the well. The medical authorities refused to perform an autopsy and a medical conclusion. Relatives of the Delevski family stubbornly claimed that Gerasim Delevski was killed in order to intimidate his son Dimitar. These assumptions were also based on the refusal of the police to investigate the case.

In addition to the unexplained deaths of relatives of Dimitar Delevski and Vancho Veskov in the Republic of Macedonia, recorded are other unexplained deaths, believed to have been committed by pro-Serbian circles within the police and its agents. These are the murders of Interior Minister Yordan Mijalkov; Interior Ministry officer Mile Milevski; VMRO-DPMNE leader in Kumanovo Mile Ilievski, and journalist Ljupco Atanasovski from the editor's office of Glas newspaper, an organ of the VMRO-DPMNE.¹⁹

During this period, efforts were made to remove from VMRO-DPMNE all its activists with Bulgarian self-awareness. The main strike was

РЕПУБЛИКА МАКЕДОНИЈА
МИНИСТЕРСТВО ЗА ВНАТРЕШНИ РАБОТИ
СЛУЖБА ЗА ЈАВНА БЕЗБЕДНОСТ

Имена за извршени работи: КУМАНОВО

Бидејќи за извршени работи: _____

Правилникот за: КУМАНОВО-Дево Баир

Н. 71-01/12/МН

— 06.05 — 1995 — МН — НМН

Дево Баир

Прв основан на член 211 став 5, а во врска со член 151, 152, 154, 184, 196 и 210 од ЗКП, односно член 47 од ЗП и член _____ од Правилникот за правилата за вршење на работите на СЈВ („Службен весник на СРМ“ бр. 29/85) ПО ЗА КУМАНОВО Дево Баир

на лице: Делевски, Димитар, МВ. ПИ. 0030745

роден-а: 1.11. 1958, година, во Скопје, Р. Македонија

со постојано место на живеење во Скопје

ул. Манчу Матак бр. 37, му се издава:

ПОТВРДА
за привремено одземање предмети

Овластено службено лице: Сребре Баевски на ден 06.05. 1995, година, во _____ часот, привремено ги одзеде следните предмети (број, вид, големина, особина и слично):

1. Два Календари со натпис „100 години ВМРО, на кој се водичани револуционери и во кој е испиан уставот на Бугарско-Македono-Одржски Револуционерен комитет на ВМРО.
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Заклучно со реден број 1 (еден).

Наведените предмети се предмети на кривично дело – прекршок со кој е оштетен _____ од _____

Предметите за одземање: Сребре Баевски

Сребре Баевски

Confirmation by the State Security Service of the Republic of Macedonia about the temporary confiscation of Bulgarian publications from journalist Dimitar Delevski at the Devo Bair border crossing

19 Makeгонска трибуна. Vol. 3131, Fort Wayne, October 22, 1992.

directed against Dr Dimitar Tsarnomarov, Deputy-Chairman of VMRO-DPMNE. In September 1993, he was expelled from the organisation for having taken part in a celebration of the anniversary of the Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising in Bulgaria. After his expulsion, he, together with his supporters, created the VMRO-Fatherland [Tatkovinska] Party and he became its chairman. On 8 March 1995, he was arrested from his home in Bitola, after which he was detained for more than three days. Upon his arrest, a search was carried out in his house and the police confiscated all the documentation of his party, all his books in literary Bulgarian, as well as his passport. Subsequently, the Macedonian police refused to provide information to his wife Marina Crnomarova about the reasons for his detention and his physical condition. During his detention, Dr D. Tsarnomarov was constantly questioned about his contacts with various circles in Bulgaria. During these interrogations, he was beaten on the head with an automatic rifle stock, as a result of which his vision was impaired. On October 18, 1995, Dr D. Tsarnomarov and VMRO-Fatherland Party activists Hristo Petsev and Grigor Tsurev were arrested in Strumica and taken to the local district prison. In the government-controlled press in Skopje, Dr Crnomarov was constantly proclaimed a 'Bulgarophile'. As a consequence of this physical and mental abuse, he suffered a heart attack on 3 January 1996.

On March 6, 1996, in Strumica, 25-year-old Trajan Godev, a member of the VMRO-Fatherland Party, was detained for questioning by the police. On the same day, under police escort, he was taken to his home, where a search was carried out and the Bulgarian-language literature in his possession was confiscated. Godev complained to his relatives that while in custody, he suffered severe psychological abuse. The next day, Tihomir Yajnaliev, 30, and Dimitar Nikolov, 36, were arrested again in Strumica. The latter was fired from his job for expressing Bulgarian self-awareness. The independent Macedonian press reported in connection with this case that those arrested 'in classical Stalinist style were subjected to several hours (from 6 to 14 hours) of psychological abuse, insults and threats by the police. In addition to treating them as enemies of the state, threats have been made to all of them regarding their right to freedom of travel, religion and political affiliation.'²⁰

On November 6, 1996, the Ministry of the Interior in Strumica called for an 'informative conversation' and detained the Macedonian citizens Lilyana Stoimenova and Trajan Godev for more than 10 hours. They were ques-

²⁰ Дело. бр. 146. Сконје, 15 мајм 1996. с. 8.

tioned about their contacts with Bulgarian citizens and organisations and were abused.

During the same period, a number of Macedonian intellectuals were subjected to particularly humiliating harassment. On March 1, 1996, Prof Dimitar Galev, author of a number of books containing objectively presented historical documents about Macedonia. Two of them stand out: *The White Terror in South-Eastern Macedonia* [Белият терор в Югоизточна Македонија] (Stip, 1991) and *Todor Aleksandrov - From Autonomy to An Independent State* [Тодор Александров – от автономия до самостоятелна държава] (Skopje, 1996). Dimitar Galev was also the chairman of the Agricultural Party of Macedonia and of the Movement for Friendship and Cooperation between the Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Bulgaria, which was not registered for more than two years. On this occasion, he addressed the Macedonian public with an open letter: 'I was summoned for an official conversation with the police, which in my opinion is a modern test of the state of the Macedonian cause, where I was interrogated on the book about Todor Alexandrov, the memoranda sent to the European Union and the United Nations in 1992 and 1993, about my stay in America in 1993 at the Congress of the Macedonian Patriotic Organisation, about my conversation with the Secretary of the Russian Embassy in Sofia, about my participation in a forum in Bulgaria in 1993, where the topic of 'Macedonia today and tomorrow' was discussed.²¹ In another extensive interview, Prof D. Galev expressed his opinion in a discreet way about the language spoken in the Republic of Macedonia: 'It is true that at the congress (of the Macedonian Patriotic Organization in the United States and Canada) English and Bulgarian were spoken. But we, who were from Macedonia, apologized and said: 'Let us speak the language spoken by our mothers, because we know the Bulgarian language, but we cannot speak it literally.'²² Because of his activity, Prof D. Galev was fired from his job and died a little later.

Another intellectual who has been subjected to enormous psychological harassment was Macedonian writer Mladen Srbinovski. The reason for the campaign against him was his bold articles in which he openly and reasonably defends the idea of the Bulgarian ethnicity of the Macedonian population. Here is an example of the hate speech used against M. Srbinovski, published in a newspaper in Skopje: 'a Bulgarian parasite and a native

21 Дело. бр. 146. Скопје, 15 март 1996. с. 20.

22 Дело. бр. 147. Скопје, 22 март 1996. с. 20.

Macedonian, Srbinovski (read Bugarinovski)... an incurable pathological case and a slanderous criminal... a Macedonian Bulgarian... a proven Bulgarian parasite and a hardened fighter for the spread of Bulgarian supremacist ideas... a high ranking supremacist in his native country... a hardened Bulgarophile... the Macedonianophobe Srbinovski... one of the most reliable Bulgarians... a rabid pro-Bulgarian ficious fellow... his dark Macedonianophobia and twisted spirituality...'²³ This quote is indicative of the atmosphere in which Macedonian intellectuals were forced to work.

The fear among educated people is very clearly shown by the repressive actions of the Ministry of the Interior of Macedonia against dozens of its young people who studied at Bulgarian universities. In the summer of 1996, most of them were called to informative talks in police units across the country. Students were questioned about whether they knew specific people in Bulgaria and what conversations they were having with them. If they denied such acquaintances, the police inspectors showed the individual students pictures of them having conversations with such persons. During these informative talks, students were pressurised to stop their studies in Bulgaria.

Indicative of the methods of torture used by the Macedonian police is the case of Skopje resident Maria Stoimenova and her husband Georgi Stoimenov. They were arrested on October 6, 1995, and the reason for their detention was that they were relatives of Alekso Stoimenov from the village of Veljusa, Strumica district, who at that time was a political émigré in Belgium and Chairman of the Todor Alexandrov MPO. The association was carrying out patriotic Bulgarian activities and published some of Ivan Mihaylov's books. Maria Stoimenova described the methods of ill-treatment used by the Macedonian police. During her detention, she needed to go to the toilet: 'I got ready and went to the toilet. At that moment, a woman came in with me, and while I was performing my most intimate need – a physiological need – she was standing next to me. When this happened, at that moment I wondered if I was a human and if I had any human rights.' Here's the topic of the interrogation itself:

'They started with a threat which made me realise that whatever I said, and I had to say everything from the first arrival of Alekso Stoimenov; to remember when he came, who he came with, why, at which border he entered, who he met, what he talked about, how long he stayed in Macedonia, who he telephoned, what ideas he had, for what purpose he was in Macedonia, why he

23 ПУЛС. бр. 256. Скопје, 15 декември 1995.

**Part of Maria Stoimenova's
written statement about
the physical and mental
repressions carried out on her
after her detention by officers
of the Ministry of the Interior of
the Republic of Macedonia**

5.
и ако не признаам дека јас сум го
нападнати, тешко ми е да кажа
со мене е крај, дека личностите ќе
ми го сметаат и дека 20 год ќе седнам
затвор.

То емо разговорот: ајде дајте ми
како што дојде Алексо Стоименов во
Скопје и со кој пат се среќава во Скопје
и како дојдовме, одговорите ми сеа
каквишто беа, па што беше ме беа
задоволни, па ќе се среќаваа на други
места, и ќе ме испитуваа; јас каже
одан, како дојдовме, во кои се среќаваа
дејти или одан, кајмикајте сум била
во Бугарија, што од Бугарија имам
несено за македонците, одлично што
Алекса ми има работи да брнесом јука
во Скопје, каде се во македонците се
имаат дојдовме и јука, кајмикајте
дејти што, како кајмикајте се среќа
ваа на својот пат или 22. со то 2-3
инспектори во исто време, како кајми
кајмикајте дојдовме, а
јас веќе погнав да кажувам сфа

was coming to us, where he was travelling around Macedonia? And if I don't say all this, and if I don't tell my life for the last 3-4 years, where I went every day, and if I don't admit that I did the attack on Kiro Gligorov, it would be my end, they would take everything from me and that I would spend 20 years in prison.

The conversation began: Come on, tell us when Alekso Stoimenov first came to Skopje and what people he met in Skopje, ...what was he saying... Where do I go, what do I work... how many times have I been to Bulgaria, what did I bring from Bulgaria to Macedonia and what does Alekso give me to bring here to Skopje?

And here is the description of the torture itself: 'One of the inspectors told me: if you do not want to admit voluntarily that you did the attack on Kiro Gligorov, we will have to use force, and that they didn't have the nerves to deal with me. He left and after five minutes came back with a police baton, started bragging, first he started banging on the wall, then on the desk and shouting at me: 'Do you see what will happen to you?' He started pushing me towards the wall with his hand and when I got to it, he started pushing me against the wall with the words: 'You are very strong, stronger than the wall, let's see if you are stronger than the police baton?' ... What was happening to me, as I was abused and humiliated, the same was done to my husband, except that he was beaten without mercy... On the sixth day (of the detention) I collapsed from hunger and lack of sleep.'

After Maria Stoimenova was released from the police station, her problems did not end: 'We called for first aid. When we said who we were and what we were looking for, we were told: we can't come; go to the nearest hospital, we can't offer you help. We searched all over Skopje to get a doctor's certificate for our injuries. None of the doctors wanted to give us a certificate and signed it with the explanation: 'We don't dare, we will also be imprisoned.'

The following employees of the State Security Service of Macedonia participated in the physical repression against persons with preserved Bulgarian self-awareness: Ice Damchevski and Igor Galovski from Bitola, Aleksandar Chancharevic from Skopje, Stefan Buzovski from Ohrid and others. No one has held them accountable for their violence.

Violation of the rights of citizens of other countries

In order to impose control over information flows and to combat the expression of Bulgarian self-awareness of persons originating in Macedonia, the authorities in Skopje often violated the human rights of citizens of other countries.

On January 21, 1991, the Bulgarian citizen Nedka D. Ivanova was arrested in Skopje, only because she declared that an ethnic Macedonian nation did not exist and in fact the Macedonians were ethnic Bulgarians. At the time of her arrest, she was physically abused by security authorities.

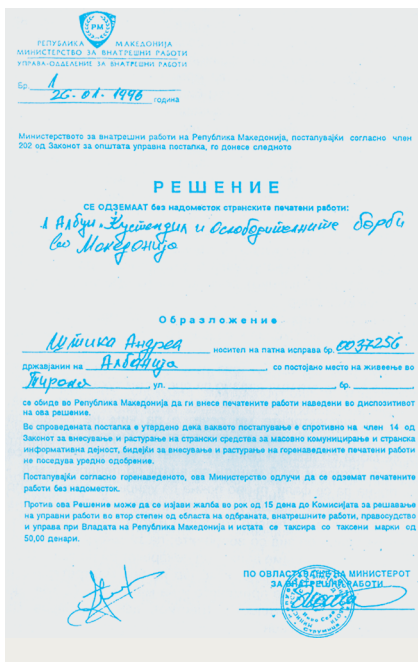
From 18 to 22 August 1992 Ismet Tolja and an accompanying Albanian citizen of Bulgarian origin were asked by the Macedonian authorities what their ethnicity was when crossing the Albanian-Macedonian border at the Kafasan border checkpoint. After answering that they were ethnic Bulgarians, the Macedonian border authorities charged them an unusually large fee of 110 DEM for the car and 25 DEM for each of them for a transit visa valid for 5 days. Transit visas are usually issued for one month. The aim was to prevent the two Albanian citizens of Bulgarian origin from visiting Bulgaria. The amount of 160 DEM they paid was equivalent to one year's salary at that time in Albania.

According to Protocol No 1 of 26 January 1996, the Macedonian border authorities confiscated a photo album 'Kyustendil and the liberation battles in Macedonia' from an Albanian citizen of Bulgarian origin, Andrej Stika, in transit through the Republic of Macedonia. The purpose of the confiscation was to prevent persons of Bulgarian origin living in Albania

from seeing photocopies of original documents confirming the Bulgarian ethnicity of the Slavic population in the geographical area of Macedonia. According to the Macedonian authorities, the Slavic minority in Albania consisted only of ethnic Macedonians, but not Bulgarians. Any attempt to declare Bulgarian ethnic self-awareness in Albania was persecuted in a very brutal way by the authorities in the Republic of Macedonia. The following article in the independent Albanian newspaper Koha Jone about the destruction of Albanian passports by the Macedonian border authorities is very telling: 'The Macedonian national minority is a victim of this policy. One of its representatives told a representative of Koha Jone: 'We now have many problems with the customs service of Macedonia. From there, we were told that while we were calling ourselves Bulgarians, we had to get visas from the Bulgarian embassy. The Macedonian authorities invalidated the visas of those who were caught in the various towns in Macedonia and returned them to the border.'²⁴

The Macedonian police also restricted the right of free movement of Alekso Stoimenov, the longtime political émigré from the Republic of Macedonia to Belgium and Chairman of the Todor Alexandrov Macedonian Patriotic Organization in Brussels. Pursuant to Protocol No 3 of 17 May 1996, his Belgian passport was temporarily revoked. The Macedonian authorities had the same hostile attitude towards Metodi Dimov, Macedonian émigré from Bitola. He was also Secretary of the Todor Alexandrov Macedonian patriotic Organization in Brussels and a former spokesperson for Radio Madrid's broadcasts intended for Macedonia. He was repeatedly summoned to an informative conversation with the police and warned to leave the Republic of Macedonia.

24 Koha Jon. Tiranë, 20.11.1996.



Decision of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Macedonia to confiscate Bulgarian publications from the transiting Albanian citizen Andrej Štika

РЕПУБЛИКА МАКЕДОНИЈА
МИНИСТЕРСТВО ЗА ЗАШТИТНИ РАБОТИ
СЛУЖБА ЗА ЈАВНА БЕЗБЕДНОСТ

Тодан за изготвена евиденција СТРУМИЦА
Одделение за изготвена евиденција
Видот на евиденција ЗА ВАРД. Н. СЕО
Бр. 17-05 / 1992
СТРУМИЦА

Прз основа на член 211 став 5, а во врска со член 151, 152, 154, 184,
и 210 од ЗКП, односно член 47 од ЗП и член од Правилникот за пра-
вилата за вршење на работите на СВБ („Службен вестник на СРМ“
бр. 29/85) ПС за КДП, Ново Село
на лицето СТАНКЕВА, Александар мск УЗ59342
роден/а 16.02.1942 година во с. ВЕЛИКА СТРУМИЦА
Р МАКЕДОНИЈА со постојано место на живеење во БЕЛГИЈА
име: ОЛИМПИЈА ВАРДАВА бр. — му се издава оваа

ПОТВРДА
за привремено одземен предмет

Овластеното службено лице ТРАКОВ, АНДАН на ден
17.05.1992 година, во 15:00 часот, привремено ги одзема следните предмети
(број, вид, големина, особини и слично):
1. ВЕЛИСКИН РАБОТ БР. УЗ59342
2. —
3. —
4. —
5. —
6. —
7. —
8. —
9. —
10. —

Заклучно со реден број 1 со букви срм
Наведените предмети се спречени на кривичното дело — прекршок со кој
е оштетен — од —

Предметите се одземени од — (накажано службено лице)

**Confirmation of the Ministry of the
Interior of Strumica for the temporary
withdrawal of the Belgian passport of
Alexandar Stoimenov**

ed the MPO and even its leadership. I know a case where an UDBA officer from Skopje, during his visit to Columbus, boasted that ‘UDBA has its people in the MPO and knows everything that happens there.’ Every step of Ivan Lebamov (former Chairman of the MPO) was monitored during his visit to Macedonia. MPO activity in Fort Wayne has no doubt been monitored.’²⁵

On September 18, 1992, MPO Central Committee member Pando Mladenov and his brother Georgi Mladenov, Chairman of the local structure of Lyuben Dimitrov MPO in Toronto, met with Macedonian President K. Gligorov, and made a request to allow the publication of a Bulgarian newspaper in Skopje. After the refusal of K. Gligorov, they told him: ‘You did not give your consent. We do not intend to lose money given this an uncertain situation in the country.’²⁶

The Macedonian secret services were particularly interested in the activities of a number of émigré organisations which defended the position on the Bulgarian ethnic affiliation of the Slavic population in Macedonia. These included the Macedonian patriotic organizations in the United States and Canada, the editorial office of the Vardar Macedonian-Bulgarian Review in Toronto, Canada, etc. A citizen of the Republic of Macedonia, who wished to remain anonymous due to fears of reprisals against him, but was known to the editorial office of The Macedonian Tribune, reported: ‘Knowing the history and character of the Macedonian Patriotic Organization and its strong position for many years, I know that people from the Macedonian UDBA (secret police of communist Yugoslavia) have infiltrat-

25 Makeдонска трибуна. Ново меѓународно издание. Год. III, бр. 12. Форм Ујун. Октом-
ври 1994.

26 Macedono-Bulgarian Review ‘Vardar’. Year 3. Issue 7, Toronto, 1996, p. 68.

On August 26, 1996, the Macedonian border authorities did not allow Bulgarian citizen Andon Traykov Spasov from the village of Rupite (Pirin Macedonia) to visit the Republic of Macedonia because he carried Bulgarian literature with him. His passport bears the stamp: 'Banned from entering the Republic of Macedonia on the basis of Article 17'. On 22 September and 28 October 1996, once again he was prohibited from visiting the Republic of Macedonia. Andon Spasov's father, Trayko Atanasov, was from the village of Gabrovo, Strumica region, Republic of Macedonia. To his neighbours in Skopje, he was known as Trajko Bugarinot (the Bulgarian). He died in 1990, and in 1996 his grave was desecrated. Spasov's mother and sister were Macedonian citizens and lived in Skopje, but Andon Spasov was unable to see them.

As a result of these repressions against him and his family, on 31 October 1996, Andon Spasov appealed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria with a request for assistance:

'I write these lines with pain and resentment because these actions were a phenomenon in the former Yugoslavia. As a Bulgarian and a Bulgarian citizen, I was declared persona non grata three times. During my previous visits to my family, I was subjected to degrading and unlawful treatment by the Macedonian authorities. I was forced by the police authorities at the time of my arrival to appear at the regional office of the Ministry of the Interior in person for address registration and deregistration at the time of my departure. Twice, after a delay of two or three hours, uniformed police officers would come to my house, forcing me to immediately go to the police for registration. Regularly during my visits to the Republic of Macedonia I was followed by civilian officers of the Macedonian police during my trip and during my stay in Skopje. During my last visit on November 8, 1996, after three consecutive refusals to be admitted to the country, for several hours the house of my sister and my mother (Davcha Spasova and Ilinka Atanasova) was surrounded and monitored by civilian perions until the time of my departure... With this request, I address you as a Bulgarian and a citizen of the Republic of Bulgaria in the hope that my human and civil rights, as well as those of my relatives, will be protected.'

Conclusion

The examples of human rights violations in the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia clearly show that there is an identity crisis among the main ethnic group of its population – the persons who have been declared ethnic Macedonians. This is the main reason why ‘on the pages of newspapers, on TV screens, every day we encounter at least one enemy of Macedonia, a Bulgarianophile and fascist, over which a verdict is apparently pronounced.’²⁷ Such an approach is officially on the agenda of some of the ruling political formations, e.g. Reformist forces – Liberal Party, calling for ‘greater police presence in politics, business life, and even in the newsrooms’.²⁸

Through the implementation of such mechanisms, the development of the democratic process was halted and subjected to total control by the state. As one of the famous liberal-minded Macedonian authors Aleksandar Bonev said, the period 1988–1989 ‘was called by some the ‘Macedonian Spring’, but this phenomenon is more a Macedonian version of Khrushchevism than a sincere, sober, objective and party-impartial destruction of the manufactured cult of Tito.’²⁹ Opposition participants in political life such as Prof D. Galev believe that ‘the end of 1989 and the whole of 1990 was more democratic than now, because in 1990 (when the first stone foundations of the independent Macedonian state were really being laid), we did not have any obstacles.’³⁰

As a result of the behind-the-scenes management of the political processes in North Macedonia, certain Macedonian politicians, such as the former leader of VMRO-DPMNE and former Prime Minister Ljubco Georgievski, rightly criticized the behaviour of the former Communists: ‘The government says that it supports equidistance and that someone in VMRO-DPMNE wants to violate it, let’s say with Bulgaria. What does this accusation consist of? The authorities keep repeating that the equidistance of the Republic of Macedonia would be disturbed if Bulgarian newspapers were to be sold in Macedonia, or if a Bulgarian song appeared on Macedonian television. For them, this is a violation of equidistance. And people forget, and don’t want to see that Macedonia is an open wagon for imposing an-

27 Дело. Бр. пуломен. Скопје, 14 мај 1993, с. 6.

28 Дело. Бр. пуломен. Скопје, 14 мај 1993, с. 12.

29 Дело. Бр. 142. Скопје, 16 фебруару 1996, с. 45.

30 Дело. Бр. 147. Скопје, 22 март 1996, с. 22.

other culture, by the northern neighbour... A real look at the situation will show that Macedonia is an unbalanced country. It is closed to all other neighbours, and only open to the North.³¹ We cannot but accept these findings as true. They also explain the reasons why in the already independent Republic of North Macedonia, Yugonostalgia is still imposed by force, and civil and political rights are violated more often and more brutally than in the last months of the breakup of Yugoslavia. With the continuation of the policy of forcefully implanting Macedonian nationalism and preventing a free and open discussion on the complex and controversial Macedonian Question, including the past, as well as the origin and ethnic character of today's Macedonians, the authorities in North Macedonia are consciously creating prerequisites for future Serbian expansion and destabilisation of the entire Balkan region.

For a long time, the official Bulgarian policy did not pay the necessary attention to the fact that in North Macedonia the human rights of persons with a preserved Bulgarian self-awareness are being systematically trampled upon. Only towards the end of 2021, the Bulgarian approach was rethought and upgraded, with respect for human rights becoming the basis of the Bulgarian argument before our Euro-Atlantic partners when considering the common policy towards Skopje. For example, on December 15, 2021, President Rumen Radev during his participation in the 6th EU Eastern Partnership Summit, and on December 16 in the meeting of the European Council in Brussels before the heads of state and government of the member countries of the European Union, stated: 'Bulgaria has stood its ground and most European leaders understand the essence of the problem. It goes beyond notions of a historical dispute between two neighbouring countries. This is a problem that deeply affects the foundation of the European Union. These are the values and principles we profess – human rights, non-discrimination... At all the European councils in which I have participated – from May until now, I have spoken to all European leaders on the subject of North Macedonia. I want to thank them, because for the second time this year the subject of enlargement has been dropped from the agenda... Our partners have finally understood where the real problem is and we will continue to defend not only history, but the observance of the rights of the Macedonian Bulgarians... Any attempts to put pressure on Bulgaria are counterproductive and lead to a delay in the process.' At these meetings, President Radev

31 Дело. Бр. 150. Скопје, 12 април 1996. с. 20.



President Rumen Radev at the European Perspective on Good Neighbourly Relations between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia National Conference, Sofia, May 4, 2022

emphasized that the Bulgarians in North Macedonia should receive clear constitutional guarantees, and this is the most important of the Copenhagen criteria – the observance of human rights. According to him, the EU enlargement process should not be guided by deadlines, but by results.

Practice confirmed that the official reporting of data on the systematic violation of the human rights of persons with a Bulgarian self-awareness in the territory of North Macedonia is precisely the missing link in the argumentation of the official Bulgarian position regarding the European integration of Skopje. For the first time at a scientific forum, even if only partially, this information was disclosed in Bulgaria at the international conference dedicated to the life and work of Gotse Delchev held on May 4, 2022 in the National Palace of Culture under the patronage of Bulgarian President Rumen Radev. In addition to the presence of Bulgarians from North Macedonia and Macedonian Bulgarians from the USA and Canada, foreign diplomats are also invited to it. They had have the opportunity to personally familiarize themselves with the data on the repressions against the Bulgarians in Macedonia that began after 1945. After the disclosed facts were recorded and reflected in the diplomatic reports, they played a significant role in the preparation in mid-2022 of the proposal of the French Presidency of the EU, which committed the authorities in Skopje to comply with the objective facts and respect the human rights of the Macedonian Bulgarians.