

ASSOCIATION

DESCENDANTS OF THE REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS FROM THE TERRITORY OF
THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA AND FRIENDS

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To the President of the Slovak Republic
Mr. Peter Pellegrini

To all freedom-loving representatives of
the brotherly Slovak people

Copy to the European Commission and
the European Parliament (Group for the
Western Balkans)

PROTEST

Regarding falsifications and support for the policy of systematic persecution of Bulgarians in
North Macedonia and the destruction of their cultural and historical heritage

Dear Mr. Pellegrini,

From the mass media in North Macedonia, we have learned that during your visit there, after a meeting with your host and colleague, Mrs. Gordana Siljanovska-Davkova, you stated that the process of accession to the European Union should be based solely on the fulfillment of criteria and that no country should use it to resolve its own issues or hold other states “hostage” by setting additional conditions. You justified this position by claiming that North Macedonia has been negotiating EU membership for almost 20 years, has made difficult decisions, but has nevertheless not received a clear position from the EU. You described this as “gambling with people’s trust.”

In an effort to demonstrate support for your hosts, you declared in Skopje: “We – as Slovakia – stand firmly by your side and will support you in every possible way. Because we are convinced that the future of the European Union lies in its enlargement, its security depends on the inclusion of the countries of this region, and I am convinced that your country has a secure place as a member of the EU.”

As an association representing a group of more than 400,000 Bulgarian citizens – descendants of refugees or settlers from the territory of today’s Republic of North Macedonia – who are part of approximately 1.3 million Bulgarian citizens with origins in the geographic region of Macedonia, we are deeply outraged by your statement. We declare that it contradicts

objective facts and European values. Through it, you promote division and disunity within Europe at a time of a global geopolitical confrontation passing through the Western Balkans.

It is a false claim of Skopje's official propaganda that during the past 20 years it has been implementing reforms at the cost of difficult decisions. The state changed its name, but this was entirely logical. The Republic of North Macedonia occupies only 37% of the territory of the geographic region of Macedonia and therefore cannot have a monopoly over that name. In this way, it was prevented from pursuing an irredentist policy.

At the same time, North Macedonia only imitates reforms, while its fundamental policy since 1945 remains unchanged – a long-standing system of discrimination and cultural cleansing has been carried out against everything related to Bulgaria, including against persons who have preserved their Bulgarian identity despite constant repression and hate speech.

Taking this situation into account, in 2022, after Bulgaria lifted its veto, the European Union unanimously adopted the Negotiating Framework for North Macedonia's EU accession, one of the main requirements of which is to amend the Constitution and include the local Bulgarian community. This is the only possible way for it to become equal with the other communities in North Macedonia and to end its discrimination.

On October 14, 2025, in Skopje, you criticized this decision! We ask: what does this stance of yours represent, given that Slovakia itself voted in favor of adopting this Negotiating Framework? Do you intend to revise your position, and if not – why do you make such statements, which in practice support the regime in Skopje in avoiding reforms? We would like to draw your attention to the fact that human rights are universal, and their protection is not a bilateral dispute. How would Slovakia react if Ukraine began to implement a policy according to which the Slovak population on its territory were declared not to be Slovaks but “Zakarpats,” and from the local Slovak dialects started to create a separate “Zakarpats” language, claiming that it had nothing in common with Slovak? Would the defense of such deprived rights be considered a bilateral issue, or would it be the duty of every democratic state to support all those who suffer around the world?

To help you understand the essence of the problems in North Macedonia, we remind you that the Bulgarian nation was officially recognized in 1870 within the framework of the Ottoman Empire. In all official censuses of the population on the territory of today's Republic of North Macedonia up to 1912, it was registered as part of the Bulgarian people. At the same time, not a single ethnic Macedonian was registered. European ethnic cartographers and scholars, including Slovakian Pavel Šafařík, also recorded only Bulgarians. (Appendix 1) They had their own Bulgarian churches, schools, and other cultural institutions. All of these were banned and destroyed by Serbia after it occupied this territory in 1913.

In 1878, only a part of the Bulgarian nation was included in the newly liberated Bulgarian state. Macedonia and Thrace were returned to the Ottoman Empire, but the Bulgarian people there retained their cultural and educational rights. In 1893, the Internal Macedonian–Adrianople Revolutionary Organization (IMARO) was founded, whose political program was the common territorial autonomy of Macedonia and Adrianople Thrace within the framework of the Ottoman Empire.

Your statement that Gotse Delchev was some kind of “Macedonian revolutionary” represents a gross distortion of the facts and is offensive to the Bulgarian people. Gotse Delchev himself identified as Bulgarian; he wrote in the standard Bulgarian language, which was also the language of all legal and illegal documents of IMARO. (Appendix 2) Gotse Delchev never fought only for Macedonia. In light of his political program, he may be called

a “Macedonian–Adrianople revolutionary,” but by no means solely a “Macedonian.” In the same way, Slovak cultural and educational figures in Ukraine may be referred to as “Zakarpats,” but that does not mean they are not Slovak.

Finally, we would like to assure you that no one in Bulgaria denies the existence of a contemporary Macedonian identity and the right of its bearers to call their language, in accordance with the Constitution of North Macedonia, “Macedonian.” However, we support the struggle of our relatives and friends in North Macedonia who have preserved their Bulgarian identity to be able to express it freely and to continue calling their mother tongue by its centuries-old name – Bulgarian. We also state that the place of North Macedonia is in the European Union, but before that, it must undergo reforms to break with the vicious practices of the totalitarian past and to prevent it from playing the role of a Trojan horse for Moscow and Belgrade within the EU.

In view of all the facts presented above, we propose to you the following package of 11 points:

1. Slovakia should clarify that its support for North Macedonia’s European integration is conditional upon the implementation of the 2022 Negotiating Framework, including respect for the rights of the local Bulgarian community.
2. Slovakia should state openly that the inclusion of the Bulgarian community in the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia is a necessary initial and indispensable criterion for progress in the negotiations.
3. Slovakia should insist that every intergovernmental conference be preceded by a review based on clear indicators of progress regarding the rights of Bulgarians; in cases of regression – the freezing or reversal of negotiating chapters.
4. Slovakia should support a joint OSCE/HCNM + Council of Europe (FCNM/ECRI) mission for annual monitoring of hate speech, violence, and institutional discrimination against Bulgarians.
5. Slovakia should demand guarantees for freedom of association, the cessation of repressive measures against Bulgarian clubs, and effective investigations of assaults and acts of vandalism.
6. Support for the possibility of elective education in the standard Bulgarian language, the provision of educational materials and media services for the Bulgarian community, and revisions of school curricula to remove hate and stereotypes.
7. Progress in the chapters “Education/Culture/Public Policies” should be linked to verifiable results from the Joint Historical Commission established under the Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighbourliness, and Cooperation between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia (2017), which forms an integral part of the European Negotiating Framework.
8. Ensure free access to and preservation of Bulgarian monuments, archives, and church sites; establish joint expert groups for inventory and restoration.
9. Support international supervision of censuses and registers to guarantee free self-identification and the absence of administrative pressure.
10. Slovakia should endorse a roadmap with concrete deadlines and public reports to the EU Council concerning the above points.
11. We call for the avoidance, in future statements, of any language that devalues the rights of the Bulgarian community, and for the use of wording consistent with European standards on the rights of ethnic communities.

We are convinced that such a position will strengthen Slovakia's authority as a state that defends European values and human rights without double standards. Our protest is not directed against the Slovak people, but against any action that could legitimize the continuation of anti-Bulgarian discrimination in North Macedonia.

Respectfully,

CO-CHAIRPERSONS:



Prof. Trendafil
Mitev



Assoc. Prof. Spas
Tashev



Ilija Stojanovski

SECRETARY:



Dimitar M.
Dimitrov

Sofia, 17 October 2025

Appendix 1

The great Slovak scholar Pavel Jozef Šafařík writes in his classic work *Slavic Antiquities* (1837) that Bulgarians have inhabited Moesia, Thrace, and the whole of Macedonia since ancient times.

SLOWANSKÉ STAROŽITNOSTI.

SEPSAL
PAWEL JOSEF ŠAFARÍK.

ODDJL DĚJEPISNÝ.

POMOCÍ ČESKÉHO MUSEUM.

W PRAZE, 1837.

TISKEM JANA SPURNÉHO.

§. 29. Přehled dějin.

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ČLÁNEK III.

O SLOWANECH BULHARSKÝCH.

§. 29. Přehled dějin Slowanů bulharských.

1. Slowany v někdejší Moesii a ve kraginách přiležících osedlé potkal tentýž los, kterýž spolukmenowce gegich na severu, totižto že dostawše se pod vládu panownjkůw z národu cizjho, uralskočudských Bulharůw, opanowawých l. 678 Moesii, domácí své gméno utratili, osobiwše sobě přigmj panujecjho nad nimi národu, t. Bulharůw. My zde gménem bulharských Slowanůw, berauce ge w neyširajm smyslu, zahrnujeme wšeccky někdejší Slowany w Multanech, Walachii, Sedmilhradsku a gijnjch Uhrijch od Prutu sewernj stranau Dunage až k austj Dráwy, dále we staré Moesii a nynějším východnjm Srbsku od austj Dunage až k Morawě, pak we Thracii, Macedonii, Albanii, Thessalii, ostatnjm Řecku, až i w samém Peloponesu a na ostrowech gemu přiležících, kterjžto djlem proto, že téměř wšickni druhdy gedod wládě podrobeni byli, djlem také, že podlé gazyka neypřjbužněgáj sobě býti se wykazuj, we starožitnostech našich pohodlně w gedem celek pogati býti mohau. O wystaupenj těchto Slowanůw ze starodáwnjch swých sjdel a rozloženj se na sewernjm břehu Dunage, w Multanech, Walachii a gijnjch Uhrijch, nastapiwajm bez pochyby poneypřwé w době hunského panowánj, giž wýš nadběžně něco game podotkli (§. 25. č. 5.). Hogněgáj a určitégáj zpráwy o nich počjnaj se w letopisech byzantských a gegich wpády do Moesie, Thracie a Illyrikum, za panowánj cjs. Justiniana. K uloženímu cjlj přjtomného djla náležj, abychom zde aspoň krátký obsah těchto zpráv podali. Před nastapiwajm vlády cjs. Justiniana nic o wognách Slowanůw a Řeky se nečte, buďto že onino skutečně pokogně we swých sjdlech na seweru Dunage se chowali, buď že ge dějepisci byzantičtj geště od gijných cizogazyčnjkůw náležitě nerozseňawali, a gména Hunůw, Bulharůw atd. jim lépali. A wšak za panowánj dotčeného cjsaře [527 slđ.] rok co rok, gakk Prokop ugišoge, Hunové (t. Bulharové), Slowané a Antové ¹⁾ plenili kraginy římského cjsarstw. Illyrikum, Thracie, wlastnj Řecko (Hellas) a Chersonesus, wšeccky země od jonského zálíwu až ku předměstjím Byzantu, strádaly náramně od wpádůw dotčených národůw, gauce bez přestánj z obywatelstwa a zbožj lampeny, ačkoli ne bez veliké stráty samých nepřátel ²⁾. Hned z počátku panowánj Justiniana [527] slđné wogako Antůw, sausedjcech se Slowany, předsedši přes Dunag, a zabjhaje do Thracie, bylo od wůdce Germana na blawu

¹⁾ Prokop gména Antůw a Slowanůw, gak se zdá, a rozdjem uijwá, čeho i my zde šetřiti chceme. Srow. §. 25. č. 7.

²⁾ Prokop. Hist. arc. c. 18. p. 84. 85. Stritter II. 25.

wách oboj Moesie již mnohem dříve a sice na konci 5ho stol., povolením vlády řecké, snad i samosným zápatím na vojně Slovanů sem přewdéním, se začalo, a že w něm w běhu celého 6ho stol. se pokračovalo. Mám pak této své domněnky čelné základy tyto. a) Nepřítelstíj wpádové Slovanů nadunagky: do zemj řeckých nepřítelstíj Řekům přigjmatí gine Slované do služby jak wogenské tak i městanské, a tjm i propaštěti gindřenj a sděláwáj spustlé po stencénj dřewnjho obywatelstwu pele w Moesii, Thracii, Dardanii a Macedonii. Gsant příkladow že týmže časem, když wybugněli Slované z Dacie přes Dunag i Řeka zajištěli a sem i laupili, gij gegich bratřj bogowali Řeky proti Gothům, Persánům, anobř i samým Slovanům. T. l. 536 — 537, 547 gszdcow z Antůw a Slovanůw sebranj sluzili we wogátě Belisariowě proti Gothům we Wladjch⁴¹⁾. T. l. 555—556 Antowě Dobrogost a Wsegrd byli počtēni wšdcowstwj we wogátě řeckém proti Persánům: prwnj měl sobě poručensu spřiwlostwa na moři⁴²⁾. Sautě podlé gmená mám sa to, že připome nutj od Jana Biktarského Anagastus patricius⁴³⁾, t. Onogost (l. 574) pak známý z výpraw Priskowjch proti Slovanům wšdce řecký Tati mir [l. 592, 593] byli též rodilj Slované: oboje zajiště gmeno geslowanské, u předkůw našich zhušta užíwané⁴⁴⁾. Podlé toho zawnrluc, že Řekowé Slovanům nebyli odpornj, gestlže tito w Moesii w osasowali, poddāwajec se vláde řecké. b) Mnohá gmena, obsazenj we přehogném Prokopowě popisu měst a hradůw, ležecjch w Moesii Thracii, Macedonii atd., pronášecj na sobě patrné a bezw wšoh etymologického natakowāj půwod slowanský, z čehož zawnrluc že tehdaš [ok. 552] již slowanské osady w dotčených zemjch nepřjdku se našelaly. Mezi těmito gmeny čtu se np. Milareka, Kawetza (n. Kawica), Labutza (n. Labica), Debre (n. Debr'), Dolebin (Dulebin, srow. Dulebi), Miletis, Bersana, Kleswestita (n. Klešewica), Wraxista (n. bul. Wračišta), Streden a g., kteráš jak formau tak i materij swau znateli gasykůw slowanská se býti wykazuj, a na mnoze w těch kraginách gestě až do dnes trawj⁴⁵⁾. c) Podlé zpráv, kteráš Theophilus [umř. 534] w žiwotopisu swého schowance Justiniana o pogiťj a domáecjch gmenech tohoto panownjka i rodiny geho podává, nebezdwodně domýšletj se lze, žeť i dotčený cjsař byl z rodiny slowanské, již na konci 5ho stol. w ilýrské Dardanii osedlé. Otec geho, gmenowaný u Prokopa a Theophana Sabbatius, slaul podlé Theophila po domácku Istok (col orica),

⁴¹⁾ Procop B. G. I. l. c. 27. l. III. c. 22. Stritter II. 31. 32.

⁴²⁾ Agathias I. III. c. 6. 21. ed. Niebuhr p. 150. 186. Stritter II. 33. 1067. Mjsto Dabragasanthos u Strittera čti podlé rkp. s Niebuhrm Dabragasas Anta.

⁴³⁾ Jo. Biclar. ed. Card. d'Aguttre T. II. p. 425 sq. Srow. Onogost, městečko a někdy župa w Hercegowině.

⁴⁴⁾ Porownej i gmeno Chliwud, užíwané sarowě od řeckého wšdce a prostého gonáka z rodu Antůw. Welmi podobné gost, žeť wšdce Chliwud byl dle původu a rodu Slovan Chliwut.

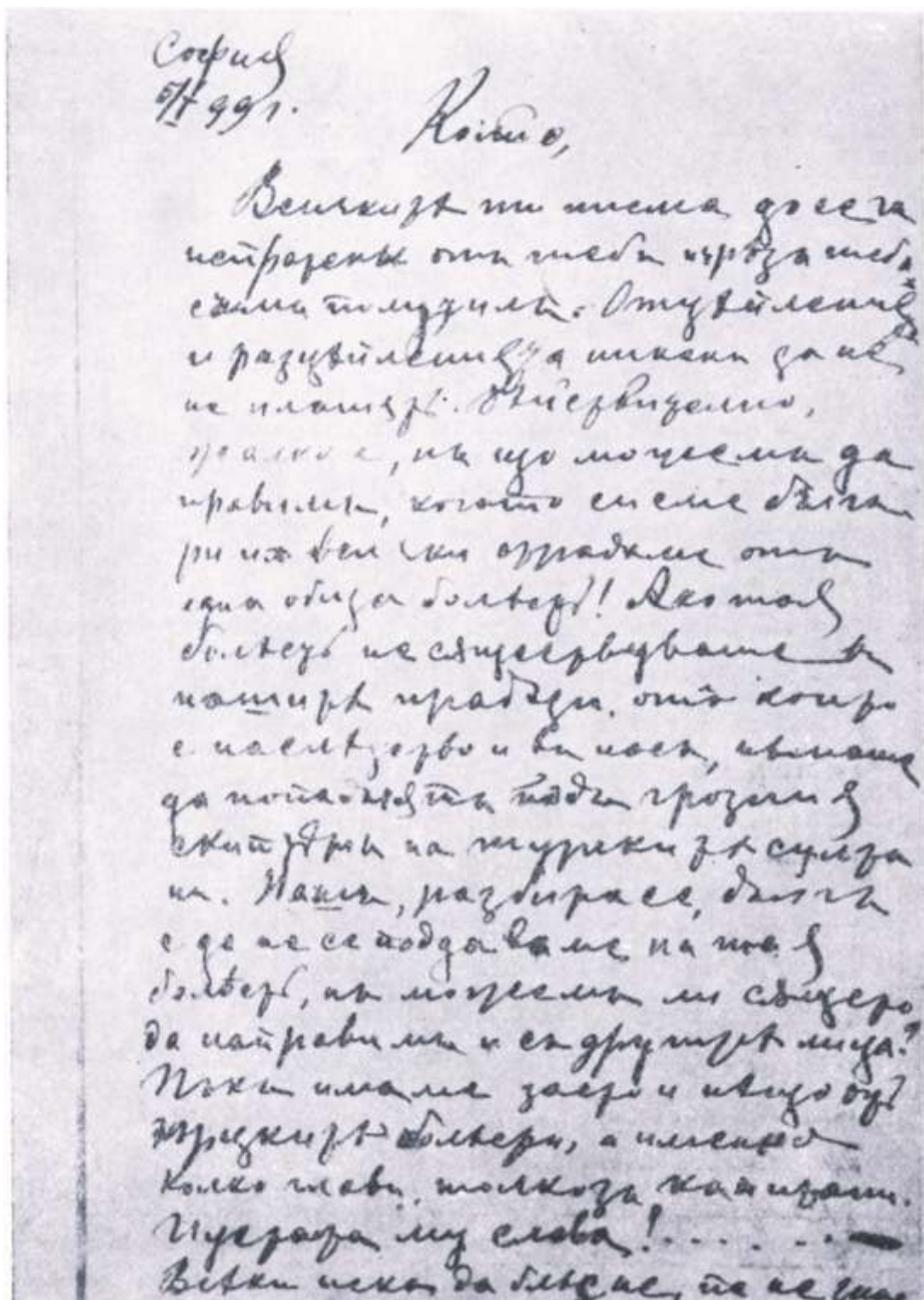
⁴⁵⁾ Procop. De Aedific. Justin. ed. Voss. p. 487. sq.



Appendix 2

Letter in literary Bulgarian from Gotse Delchev to the IMARO voivode Nikola Maleshevski, January 5, 1899:

“Separations and divisions should not frighten us at all. Indeed, it is sad, but what can we do, since we are Bulgarians and we all suffer from one common illness!”



Сопруц
1899. Коинио,
Венкият ти мисла до сега
непроречена от тебе ирвдана ме,
едина ти мисла. Отувдана
и разувдана мисла да не
не иланир. Висвдана,
права е, не що можеш да
правим, когато ене дана
ти не вни иланир от
една отува дотер! Да мав
дотер не свдана в
нашир правдана. Оти дотер
е на свдана и в нас, иланир
да мавдана поди прозана
и. Наши, развдана, дотер
е да се свдана на нас
дотер, не можеш ли свдана
да иланир и свдана мисла?
Наша иланир за свдана иланир
ирир дотер, а иланир
когато мав, тогава иланир.
Иланир мисла!...
Викни иланир да свдана, не се свдана