



GEORGI STANKOV

BULGAROPHOBIA IN NORTH MACEDONIA

**Analysis
of the Public Discourse
in 2021**

Georgi Stankov

**BULGAROPHOBIA
IN NORTH MACEDONIA**

**Analysis of the Public
Discourse in 2021**

Reviewers:

Daria Krachunova Nikolieva, Ph.D., Associate Professor

Teodor Danailov Detchev, Ph.D., Associate Professor

Bulgarophobia in North Macedonia. Analysis of the Public
Discourse in 2021

© Georgi Angelov Stankov, Ph.D.

© “VUSI” Publishing Complex

ISBN (Print) ISBN 978-619-7343-63-2

ISBN (Online) ISBN 978-619-7343-64-9

Georgi Stankov

BULGAROPHOBIA IN NORTH MACEDONIA

Analysis of the Public
Discourse in 2021



Plovdiv, 2022



*In memory of Savo Kotsarev (1928 – 2022)
from the City of Ohrid.*

© д-р Георги Ангелов Станков

© Издателски комплекс ВУСИ

ISBN (Print) ISBN 978-619-7343-63-2

ISBN (Online) ISBN 978-619-7343-64-9

Contents:

Preface	13
Bulgarophobia as a result of the ongoing process of construction of Macedonian nation (<i>Assoc. Prof. Teodor Detchev</i>)	
Introduction.....	35
Problem outlines.....	37
Formation and development of antagonism against the Bulgarians in North Macedonia.....	39
Chronological review of some Bulgarophobia manifestations in the Republic of North Macedonia in 2021.....	47
• <i>Burning the Bulgarian flag at the festival in the village of Vevcani</i>	47
• <i>Scandal with Vasil Garvanliev, representative of the Republic of North Macedonia in the Eurovision competition</i>	50
• <i>Hate speech at a happening of the main opposition party VM-RO-DPMNE</i>	55
• <i>Threat of social rejection and ostracism of football fans from Bitola</i>	58
• <i>Desecrating the monument of Bulgarian nationals who died in Lake Ohrid</i>	61
• <i>Substitution of a gravestone in the village of Klepach</i>	63
• <i>Compromising evidence against Danela Arsovska</i>	68
• <i>Reactions after the Nations League draw</i>	76
• <i>Revealing cases of abandonment of Bulgarian identity in a Bulgarophobic social environment</i>	79
From antagonism to reconciliation.....	86
Conclusion.....	94
Appendices.....	96
Sources.....	105



English:

Bulgarophobia in North Macedonia. Analysis of the public discourse in 2021

Abstract

The study examines Bulgarophobia and hate speech toward Bulgarian people and Bulgaria as a very pronounced social phenomenon in the Republic of North Macedonia (RNM). The paper surveys Bulgarophobia's key characteristics in the context of contemporary Macedonian ethnocentrism and the process through which they are formed and manifested in RNM. Finally, it presents and discusses specific cases of Bulgarophobia in from 2021. Finally, it presents and discusses specific cases of Bulgarophobia in from 2021.

Key words: Bulgarians, ethnocentrism, hate speech, human rights violations, North Macedonia



Français:

Bulgarophobie en Macédoine du Nord. Analyse du discours public en 2021

Résumé

L'étude examine la bulgarophobie et le discours de haine envers les Bulgares et la Bulgarie en tant que phénomène social très prononcé en République de Macédoine du Nord (RNM). L'article examine les principales caractéristiques de la bulgarophobie dans le contexte de l'ethnocentrisme macédonien contemporain et le processus par lequel elles se forment et se manifestent en RNM. Enfin, il présente et discute des cas spécifiques de bulgarophobie à partir de 2021. Enfin, il présente et discute des cas spécifiques de bulgarophobie au cours de l'année 2021.

Mots clés: Bulgares, ethnocentrisme, discours de haine, violations des droits humains, Macédoine du Nord



Deutsch:

Die Bulgarophobie in Nordmazedonien. Analyse des öffentlichen Diskurses im Jahr 2021

Zusammenfassung

Diese Studie befasst sich mit einem stark ausgeprägten sozialen Phänomen in der Republik Nordmazedonien – die Bulgarophobie und die Hassrede gegenüber dem bulgarischen Volk und Bulgarien. Es sind die wesentlichen Merkmale der Bulgarophobie im Kontext des modernen mazedonischen Ethnozentrismus und des Prozesses deren Entstehung und Entwicklung in der Republik Nordmazedonien untersucht. Konkrete bulgarophobische Fälle im Jahre 2021 sind dargestellt und kommentiert.

Schlüsselwörter: Bulgarophobie, Ethnozentrismus, Hassrede, Menschenrechtsverletzungen, Nordmazedonien



Ελληνικά:

Η βουλγαροφοβία στη Βόρεια Μακεδονία. Ανάλυση του δημόσιου λόγου το 2021

Περίληψη

Η έρευνα εξετάζει την έκφραση ενός ισχυρού κοινωνικού φαινομένου στη Δημοκρατία της Βόρειας Μακεδονίας – τη βουλγαροφοβία και τη γλώσσα του μίσους απέναντι στο βουλγαρικό λαό και στη Βουλγαρία. Μελετώνται τα βασικά χαρακτηριστικά της βουλγαροφοβίας στο πλαίσιο του σύγχρονου μακεδονικού εθνοκεντρισμού και η διαδικασία της διαμόρφωσης και της εξέλιξής τους στη Δημοκρατία της Βόρειας Μακεδονίας. Παρουσιάζονται και σχολιάζονται συγκεκριμένα παραδείγματα της βουλγαροφοβίας κατά το 2021.

Λέξεις κλειδιά: βουλγαροφοβία, εθνοκεντρισμός, γλώσσα του μίσους, παραβίαση των ανθρωπίνων δικαιωμάτων, Βόρεια Μακεδονία



Española:

La búlgarofobia en Macedonia del Norte. Análisis del discurso público en 2021

Resumen

El estudio examina un fenómeno social muy pronunciado en la República de Macedonia del Norte: la fobia a los búlgaros y el discurso de odio hacia el pueblo búlgaro y hacia Bulgaria. Se examinan las principales características de la búlgarofobia en el contexto del etnocentrismo macedonio contemporáneo y el proceso de su formación y manifestación en la República de Macedonia del Norte. Se presentan y comentan casos concretos de fobia a los búlgaros en 2021.

Palabras clave: bulgarofobia, etnocentrismo, discurso del odio, violaciones de los derechos humanos, Macedonia del Norte



Svenska:

Bulgarofobi i Nordmakedonien. Analys av det offentliga diskussionen under 2021

Sammanfattning

Studien undersöker ett mycket uttalat socialt fenomen i Republiken Nordmakedonien - bulgarofobi och hatretorik mot bulgarer och Bulgarien. De huvudsakliga egenskaperna hos bulgarofobi i samband med samtida makedonsk etnocentrism och processen genom vilken de bildas och manifesteras i Republiken Nordmakedonien har undersökts. Specifika fall av bulgarofobi 2021 presenteras och diskuteras.

Nyckelord: Bulgarofobi, etnocentrism, hatretorik, brott mot mänskliga rättigheter, Nordmakedonien

Bulgarophobia as a result of the ongoing process of construction of Macedonian nation

(References to the work of Georgi Stankov Ph.D.: "Bulgarophobia in North Macedonia. Analysis of public discourse in 2021")

The work of Georgi Stankov Ph.D., with which the readers will have the opportunity to get acquainted, is remarkable in that it contains for the first time an overview and analysis of the attitude of the broad public circles in the Republic of North Macedonia towards Bulgarians and towards Bulgaria. The title – "Bulgarophobia in North Macedonia" speaks for itself, but right here it is worth making some terminological clarifications.

The literal translation of the word "Bulgarophobia" means "fear of Bulgarians". We all know the origin of the word "phobia". At least, around the planet with the name of the Roman god of war – Mars, orbit two satellites with the very appropriate names Phobos and Deimos - "fear" and "horror". However, it turns out that a long time ago words like "Bulgarophobia", "Islamophobia", "Turkophobia", "Russophobia" and so on were used not as an indication of fear of a certain nation, people or ethnic group, but literally as an indication of hatred and abhorrence. The work of Georgi Stankov Ph.D. is no exception, as the punctually and meticulously described cases of "Bulgarophobia" are extremely clear examples of hatred towards Bulgarians in today's North Macedonia, and not exactly fear of them.

Undoubtedly, the fear of something can also generate and generates hatred, but with regard to Bulgarophobia in the

country with the capital Skopje, it is above all about the manifestations of hatred themselves, which appear to be abundant on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia. Scientists and publicists who condemn ethno-nationalism, and nationalism itself, do not fail to emphasize that hatred is an important element in the toolkit of nation-building. According to them, love for the native locality and the motherland in general, for the native language and for compatriots is not enough. There must also be an enemy, there must be an object of hatred that plays a certain mobilizing and consolidating role.

This statement, which many will reject with indignation, but without particular reason, finds confirmation in one of the most often cited and analyzed, more or less bona fide, verses of the Bulgarian national poet Hristo Botev:

“But this the brothers will see
and when they, mother, grow up
like their brother they will become -
to love and hate strongly...”

Ever since Botev's poem has been the subject of study, especially as in secondary schools in Bulgaria, these four verses have subjected to constant examination by trustworthy literary scholars and literary critics, by teachers and, of course, by students, who have written countless pages, attempting to uncover the meaning of these words. However, the strange thing is that no one wants to pay attention to the fact that the fourth verse of this quatrain by Botev is one of the key formulas of nationalism.

For nationalism to be strong, to inspire minds, to mobilize “the masses”, it cannot rely on love alone. Hate is also necessary, and hatred necessarily requires its object. In the quoted

poem "On Farewell", Hristo Botev devotes a lot of space to defining the object of his hatred, but when it is cleared from the context of the Bulgarian national liberation struggles in the middle and late 19th century, the mentioned fourth verse tells us unequivocally that left on its own, love is not strong enough to mobilize and direct social action. Hate is also necessary.

Nationalism is a secular religion, just like Marxism, but historically more victorious. Whether a religion is based on spiritual teachings such as Judaism, Christianity, or Islam, or is a secular religion such as nationalism or Marxism, it requires strong, even fanatical, faith. The most important thing in this faith is that "your" community is righteous and serves the good. However, the implication that "their" faith, the faith of those who think differently, often called "infidels", serves evil is not to be underestimated.

Well-intentioned people would immediately bring us countless examples of theologians and spiritual leaders who preach tolerance between different religions of a transcendent nature, especially between the three Abrahamic religions and their endless varieties. However, such cases would be significantly more difficult to cite under secular religions such as nationalism and Marxism.

On the contrary, such worldly religions are dominated by intransigence and uncompromisingness, absolute conviction in the correctness of "your" point of view and in the viciousness and impiety of the "other's" point of view. At the same time, they dominate very convincingly. Dogmatic Marxists who turn Marx's thoughts into a "religion of revolution", such as Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot and so on, define the "class enemy" as the embodiment of evil. Of course, there can be nuances, temporary maneuvers, retreats, tactical alliances, but the "class ene-

my” must always be destroyed in the end.

In nationalism, the spectrum of the definition of the enemy is much wider, usually evil being personified by some external oppressor or enemy of the community which has formed, is forming, or will be formed as a nation. There are, of course, internal enemies, collaborators who cooperate with the external enemy, but generally they are not the main threat – they only serve the main enemy. In this sense, the conscience of the nationalists is purer than that of the originators of the class struggle - they identify the evil with a specific oppressor who, in general, has also committed some hostile acts against the community that is being formed or has already been formed as a nation.

Anyway, going back to Hristo Botev’s verse, we have to admit that if religions based on spiritual teachings easily direct hatred towards the abstract and at the same time absolute evil personified by the Devil, Lucifer, Satan, Shaitan, Ahriman and so on, with secular religions much greater “visuality” and “concreteness” is needed. The poet does not hesitate to say that to realize his national and social vision he needs not only love but also hatred.

Here someone would challenge the argument that Hristo Botev was a nationalist. Anarchists, communists, and nationalists claim as their own the “soul” of the poet. Everyone puts forward their arguments, some of which are well-founded, and others are rather clumsily adapted to the personality and biography of the poet. In fact, Hristo Botev died very young, and until his death, his political path meandered between different ideas. Since Botev has the status of a national icon, not everyone in our country would point out the fact that at the date of his tragic death, he was still in the process of in-

tensively searching for his own truth and forming his views. His genius as a poet and as an artist largely conceals this political meandering and the search for political ideas which he firmly embraces as his own. Still, we should not forget that, from Hristo Botev's biography written by Zahari Stoyanov, we learn that there was even a time in Botev's life when he wanted to become... Cossack.

This is not the place to develop the thesis of Botev's nationalism¹. Many authors claim that Bulgarian nationalism is "defensive"² and we have to agree with them to a considerable extent, at least as far as the period up to the 1885 Unification is concerned and the majority of the actors of the Bulgarian national movement, starting with Paisiy, passing through Rakovski and reaching Hristo Botev and his strong love and hatred. The main thing is that a genius poet has given us a synthesized expression of two of the main engines of nationalism, of two of its key tools – intense love and burning hatred.

If we return to the question of hatred towards Bulgarians and especially towards the state of Bulgaria in the Republic of North Macedonia, for which we have been using the term "Bulgarophobia" for a long time, we would think about how far the

¹ Here we would recommend to the reader one of the most recent, very thorough, studies of nationalism in the views, work and language of Hristo Botev: Peleva, Inna, Botev. The Body of Nationalism, Ed.: "Queen Mab", 2015, S., ISBN 9789545331459

² One of the latest studies in this direction supporting such a thesis are the publications and dissertation work of Dr. Lyuben Georgiev Manolov in 2018-2021. See for example: Lyuben Georgiev, Bulgarian Renaissance Nationalism and ensuring the security of Bulgarian society during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire (70s of the 18th century - 80s of the 19th century), Dissertation for the acquisition of the National Academy of Sciences title of "doctor" in professional field 9.1 . National security, protection date: 23.01.2021, Higher School of Security and Economics, Plovdiv, number of pages: 234 pages, bibliography: 248 titles. See also: Manolov, Lyuben Georgiev, Social and ideological foundations of early Bulgarian nationalism from the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, Politics and Security, no. 1, 2018, pp. 57 – 81, ISSN 2535-0358

hatred goes and how far the fear, the phobia. What is the interaction between these two feelings? Where do they lead the development of the statehood of the Republic of North Macedonia?

In order to be able to answer these questions at least partially, we need to know the phenomenon itself - the phenomenon of "Bulgarophobia". Here, too, the contribution of Georgi Stankov Ph.D. is quite significant, regardless of the fact that the studied time interval includes only one year. To date, there has been no assiduous, detailed and comprehensive study of the manifestations of hatred towards Bulgarians and Bulgaria, or "Bulgarophobia" in the Republic of North Macedonia. There is an enormous volume of journalism and an even greater volume of downright vulgar political propaganda. However, scientific texts are absent. There is a very serious political controversy, including at the European level. However, there is no scientific discussion. The reason is most likely that all parties involved in the dispute consider science to be the "handmaiden" of politics and especially geopolitics in the given case. Even reputable titled scientists fail to find a place for "pure science" in the debates on the hatred towards Bulgaria and the Bulgarians in the Republic of North Macedonia.

With his work, Georgi Stankov Ph.D. makes a very commendable effort to fill this essential void. He arranges in his own gradation the manifestations of hostility towards Bulgaria and the Bulgarians, examining: ethnocentrism and the feeling of superiority among the citizens of North Macedonia, "which in some cases escalates to treating Bulgarians as subhumans (from German *Untermensch*)"³; discriminatory treatment in the public

³ Stankov, Georgi, *Bulgarophobia in North Macedonia. Analysis of the public discourse in 2021*, IC VUSI (Publishing Complex of the Higher School of Security and Economics), Plovdiv, 2022

sphere, media and social networks; hostility and hate speech towards the Bulgarian people, the Bulgarian state and the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia of Bulgarian origins; ridicule and sarcasm; trolling on social networks⁴.

The presentation of Dr. Georgi Stankov's research is sufficiently concise and orderly that we have to present it in the preface as a summary. The important thing is that he manages to a very large extent to avoid the emotional approach obligatory for the Balkans when considering such a topic. At the same time, most of his work will certainly be completely new information for the reader, regardless of whether they are citizen of the Republic of North Macedonia, the Republic of Bulgaria or any other country of the European Union.

The study of "Bulgarophobia" in each of its contexts, especially in the field of hate and odium towards the official Bulgarian state and towards the Bulgarians as a community, has key scientific importance. This is not just a collection of facts to show the emotional state of large segments of the society in the Republic of North Macedonia. The generation of hatred at different administrative levels in North Macedonia, from different political circles and among certain groups of intellectuals, inter alia, is a clear indicator of the unfinished process of nation building in North Macedonia.

When we talk about the genesis of one or another nation, we should not forget for a moment the conditional nature of the concept "nation". There is great variety in the ways of formation of different nations. There is also the complete impossibility of formulating a definition of "nation" that corresponds "ideally" even to the group of European nations from

⁴ Ditto.

the countries on which Stein Rokkan based his famous study on the role of the so-called “cleavages” in shaping their party-political systems. Not to mention the “schism” between the defenders of the “primordialist” and the “constructivist” theory of the formation of nations.

What is interesting in the case of the nations in the neighboring and extremely close countries of Bulgaria and North Macedonia is the fact that the case of the formation of the Bulgarian ethnos and, accordingly, of the Bulgarian nation can serve as a serious argument in favor of the claims of the primordialists, while the case of the Macedonian nation is an indisputable triumph of constructivism.

The name “Bulgarian” is one of the oldest ethnonyms in Europe and Asia. Bulgaria is a country that has kept its name for centuries. On the other hand, any serious consideration of the beginning of the genesis of the Macedonian nation inevitably leads us to the twentieth century. Until the beginning of the 20th century, no one questioned the Bulgarian ethnic origins of the population in today’s Republic of North Macedonia.

This is not only about the scientific assessments and the opinion of cartographers, who have left us a number of maps, from which it can be seen that their authors considered the population on both sides of the Vardar River to be Bulgarian. It is about the regular correspondence of the diplomatic agents of the Great Powers, who without hesitation call the population of today’s cities Bitola (seat of consuls from all the Great Powers), Ohrid, Struga, Veles, Prilep, Shtip and so on, and so on – Bulgarian⁵.

⁵ A huge set of examples in which the Austrian consuls in the Ottoman Empire, located mostly in the city of Bitola, emblematic of today’s Republic of North Macedonia, clearly defined the population of the region as “Bulgarian” and unequivocally indicated the majority of the settlements there as “Bulgarian”, can be found in the three-volume bilingual (Bulgarian and German) edition of their reports for the

Here, we deliberately do not include in the list of cities in North Macedonia with a pronounced Bulgarian appearance, according to European diplomats, today's capital Skopje, where Bulgarians were not a pronounced minority, due to the huge Muslim presence in the form of Turks and Albanians who profess Islam. For Muslims, Skopje is Uskub, moreover, the city is in a certain sense sacred to them. The companion of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk - Yahya Kemal, who was a native of Uskub, emphasized the important fact that on the eve of the Balkan Wars, Uskub was in second place in the Islamic world in terms of the number of revered graves of Muslim saints⁶.

The genesis, more precisely the construction of the Macedonian nation, which today is considered "titular" in the Republic of North Macedonia, generally includes two stages. The first one began in 1913 and with a break from 1915 to 1918, continued until 1941. This was a period of extremely brutal denationalization combined with a purposeful policy of assimilation of the population in Vardar Macedonia, which was declared to be made up of "southern Serbs". In general, the experience with denationalization did not lead to the desired transformation of Macedonian Bulgarians into "Southern Serbs" by the authorities in Belgrade. However, this period left an indelible traumatic

period 1851 - 1877-1878, made by Prof. Virginia Paskaleva-Zaharieva in the period 1994 - 2001: Paskaleva-Zaharieva, Virginia, (selection and editing), Macedonia through the eyes of Austrian consuls 1851 - 1877/78, Volume I (1851 - 1865), Macedonian Scientific Institute, S., 1994; Paskaleva-Zaharieva, Virginia, (selection and editing), Macedonia through the eyes of Austrian consuls 1851 - 1877/78, Volume II (1866 - 1871), Translation: Elena Prodeva, Macedonian Scientific Institute, S., 1998; Paskaleva-Zaharieva, Virginia, (selection and editing), Macedonia through the eyes of Austrian consuls 1851 - 1877/78, Volume III (1872 - 1878), Translation: Elena Prodeva, Publisher: Panorama, S., 2001.

⁶ Kemal, Yahya, Childhood, Adolescence, Political and Literary Memories, Ed. "Boyan Penev", BAS, S., 2013.

mark on the then inhabitants of the present-day Republic of North Macedonia. One cannot deny a certain success in the process of denationalization, because among the Bulgarians from Vardar Macedonia, a conditioned reflex was literally created, to the effect that defining themselves as “Bulgarians” would immediately lead to repressions, emotional and physical suffering.

This is not the place to go into details about the dimensions and forms of terror in Vardar Macedonia in the period between the two world wars. Suffice it to say that the scale of the violence exceeds the extremes that occur in any other disputed region in Europe, and the regime is effectively colonial, even worse. This can be seen from the fact that until August 15, 1919, Vardar Macedonia was formally governed according to the Law for the Extermination of Outlaws of 1895. After that date, the Serbian Constitution of 1903 was already applied there, but the spirit of government according to the Law of 1895 had not been changed. No one repealed the openly terrorist “Ordinance for Public Safety in the Liberated Areas” introduced by the Serbian military command in 1913, either, it was re-enacted with the reoccupation of Vardar Macedonia by Serbian army in 1918⁷.

The label “terrorist” attached to the governing regime of Vardar Macedonia between the two world wars is used here in a very meaningful sense and is not loaded with emotions or a desire to lead a polemic. Apart from the mentioned “legislative foundations” of this government, the applied “governance practices” involve horrific abuses, the description of which the unprejudiced reader would probably consider too

⁷ Paleshutki, Kostadin, *The Macedonian Question in Bourgeois Yugoslavia 1918-1941*, Sofia, BAS Publishing House, 1983, p. 47

“naturalistic”⁸.

The period ends with the collapse of Royal Yugoslavia under the blows of the German army and with the handover of Vardar Macedonia to Bulgaria for administration until a peace treaty is signed. A certain part of today’s western territories of the Republic of North Macedonia remains under Italian control within the framework of the then created Greater Albania.

This period has been systematically missed or at least greatly underestimated by researchers, but it has a very significant value for the success of nation building and for the construction of the Macedonian nation after 1945, when the royal regime in Vardar Macedonia was replaced by the totalitarian regime of Tito’s Yugoslavia.

The second period began in 1945 and continues to the present day. This period is the time of the actual national construction on the territory of the state, called successively: People’s Republic of Macedonia, Socialist Republic of Macedonia, Republic of Macedonia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Republic of North Macedonia.

The Macedonian nation was indeed constructed, and in an unusually short time. Tito’s regime makes an extremely clever maneuver by offering the Macedonian Bulgarians a deal - he provides them with their own state, against guar-

⁸ One of the most bona fide sources for the characteristics of the mentioned “governance practices” in “integral” Royal Yugoslavia, is the book by the Frenchman Henri Pozzi, written in 1933, after a long tour in Vardar Macedonia and familiarization on the spot with the methods of Royal Yugoslav government. It is filled with detailed descriptions of the mockery and torture used not only in Yugoslav police practices in Vardar Macedonia, but also constantly present in the everyday life of the local population. The original publication of the book was in French in 1933: Pozzi, Henri, *La Guerre Revient...*, Paris, Paul Berger, 1933. An English translation of the book can be found in: Pozzi, Henri, *Black Hand Over Europe: Consisting of War is Coming Again*, translated by Francis John Mott, London, Published by Francis Mott Company, 1935.

antees for a complete and unconditional rejection of Bulgarian irredentism, of the desire for unification with Bulgaria in some form. In the established People's Republic of Macedonia (later the Socialist Republic of Macedonia), a special law was passed that incriminated not only the declaration of Bulgarian identity, but also the "unsanctioned" reading of Bulgarian newspapers, the possession of Bulgarian books and attempts to bring Bulgarian literature through the border.

People who did not agree to the terms of this deal were sent to prisons, concentration camps or were simply liquidated. People who were willing to compromise were brought into the mainstream of the Macedonian nation-building process, under the leadership of the Union of Communists of Yugoslavia and its Macedonian affiliate.

One of their main duties is to constantly distinguish themselves from Bulgaria and their Bulgarian origins, not only on an ethnic basis, but also on a class-party basis. Bulgaria has been given a "fascist" label and the loyal citizens of the People's (Socialist) Republic of Macedonia are obliged to constantly condemn and denounce the "Bulgarian fascist regime", that is, the period of administration of Vardar Macedonia by the Bulgarian state in 1941-1944.

However, it must be clearly emphasized that for those who were ready to compromise and agreed to join the accelerated construction of the Macedonian nation, the regime of Josip Broz Tito, Lazar Kolishevski and their associates was much milder in comparison with the terrorist regime in Serbia and in Royal Yugoslavia.

During the denationalization, which was carried out from 1913 to 1941 by Serbia and by "integral" Royal Yugoslavia, the population of the newly formed administrative unit

- Vardar Banovina, was forbidden to speak not only literary Bulgarian, but also their native dialects. Conversely - in the People's (Socialist) Republic of Macedonia, a new literary language was forged from the native local dialects of the Bulgarian population⁹. Objectively speaking, this is a big "weakening of the grip" compared to beating at school, as a punishment for speaking Bulgarian - literary or dialect¹⁰. Here, the regional self-esteem of the Macedonian Bulgarians is skillfully played with, the role of which could be the subject of a separate study¹¹.

In any case, the formula of the new nation-building is this: the declaration that you are "Macedonian" and not Bulgarian gives you the right to speak a language that is a codified local dialect and guarantees you some degree of peace and security. In fact, the share of conformists in Vardar Macedonia has been growing progressively since before the Ilinden Uprising of 1903, but after it the pace is even greater. Uncompromising Bulgarians left Macedonia and moved to Bulgaria in waves - in 1902, in 1903, in 1913, in 1918, plus the permanent flight across the border of people with a Bulgarian self-consciousness who were persecuted for any reason. In contrast, those who took conformist positions felt a serious relief in their situation in 1945.

Ironically, in the construction of the Macedonian nation, which is carried out, as we have indicated, not only on a (qua-

⁹ On the matter, there is an official opinion of the BAS from 1971, which states that the Bulgarian language has three literary norms - Sofia, Skopje and Banat with the Latin alphabet

¹⁰ It is a separate matter that for decades, classes in Vardar Macedonia began with the repetition of the "incantation words" that the students were "true Serbs". This ritual recitation was then given more importance than the saying of the prayer "Our Father".

¹¹ A very strong regionalism is observed among the inhabitants of Vardar Macedonia. It is characteristic not only of the Bulgarians, but also of the Turks born there. All of them have no doubts about their ethnic origins - they are Bulgarians, Turks (or Vlachs), but they are very proud of their regional identity.

si-)ethnic, but also on a class-party basis, a second circumstance intervenes. It is political again. It is about the conflict between Stalin and Tito. Macedonian Bulgarians are faced with an unpleasant alternative. They can continue to identify with Bulgaria, which is, however, right then the number one supporter of Stalin's satrapy, or they can support Tito, who opposes Stalin.

In the first option, repressions are inevitable and very severe. The insistence on defining oneself as Bulgarian continues to cost too dearly, as, on top of that, the Bulgarian identity is equated not only with the Bulgarian political regime until 1944, labeled as "fascist", but also with the new political regime in Sofia, which, even unlabeled, is Stalinist.

In the second option, the Macedonian participating in the construction of the new nation receives the right to travel around the world and a corresponding passport for this. Self-identification as "Macedonian" and the directly related support for Tito against Stalin, guarantees the possibility to leave the Balkan hell and go to the free world legally and without obstacles. The perception of the Macedonian identity immediately after the Second World War is, among other things, conformism. It represents an unwillingness to "break a wall with your head" and sacrifice your life for something that is far beyond the horizon, such as the prospect of Macedonia becoming Bulgarian, seen from 1945.

In 1945, the Bulgarians in Macedonia saw only two things - the catastrophe of Bulgarian politics and the option offered to them to replace the terrorist denationalization with a milder one. A large part of them chose the milder form of denationalization and the participation in the construction of the Macedonian nation and in the state building of the then People's Republic of Macedonia.

The stated circumstances are the basis of the emotion-

al non-acceptance of things like the “Macedonian nation” or the “Macedonian language” on the part of certain strata of the Bulgarian society. The fact is, however, that 77 years have passed since the beginning of the accelerated construction of the Macedonian nation, and they have left an indelible mark. Regardless of how it was constructed, what vicissitudes it went through, with what large-scale violence - mental and physical, it was associated with, the Macedonian nation was formed.

Undoubtedly, compared to a number of other European nations, including the Bulgarian one, the period of its formation, in this case accelerated construction using both finer and coarser forms of pressure, is very short. But that doesn't mean the process doesn't exist. Moreover, the process of constructing the Macedonian nation continues, and this is precisely where the reasons for the existence of Bulgarophobia, to which Georgi Stankov Ph.D. has devoted his work, are hidden.

In the modern context of ongoing construction of the Macedonian nation, there is a non-acceptance of established facts not only on the Bulgarian side. Many of the citizens of today's Republic of North Macedonia cannot accept that the Macedonian nation has “branched off” from the Bulgarian¹².

¹² Historical circumstances create different situations, as a result of which different nations sometimes arise. The classic example is the Dutch settlers (the so-called “Boers”) in South Africa, who arrived there in waves in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Over time, they formed into an independent ethnic group, and the language they spoke, “Afrikaans”, was seen by everyone as an independent language, different from Dutch. What is interesting in this case is that in the language of the emigrants from the Netherlands, the vocabulary matches up to 95% with the Dutch, but over time, more significant differences in grammar and pronunciation arise. Most linguists consider the Afrikaans language to be a creole language. It is very important to note that nowadays linguists from the Netherlands, Flanders (the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium), Surinam (former Dutch colony in South America), and Indonesia (former Dutch colony in South-East Asia) annually work on the comparison and coordination of trends in the development of the language, so that the case of the separation of the Afrikaans language from the stem of the Dutch language does not repeat itself. The case of the separation of the Macedonian literary

They indignantly reject the fully justified thesis that the construction of the Macedonian nation began, and with great speed, in 1945. They cannot accept that the Macedonian nation originates from those who in their national “canon” are listed as historical enemies. Thus, we arrive at the key concept of “national myth”, about which a few words must be said, which are directly related to the topic of Bulgarophobia.

In his book “National Identity”, which has long become a textbook on the problems of the formation, construction and development of nations, Professor Anthony Smith lists the “fundamental features” of national identity, with all their conventionality, as follows: 1) historical territory or fatherland; 2) common myths and historical memories; 3) common mass public culture; 4) common legal rights and obligations of all members; 5) common economy and territorial mobility¹³.

It is not at all difficult to see that, in the course of the ongoing process of constructing the Macedonian nation, difficulties for the “engineers of national identity” appear with “common myths and historical memories”. Most European nations find their national myths either in the Middle Ages or even in the ancient era. Bulgarian national mythology is no exception - it draws images and inspiration from different periods of the Middle Ages¹⁴.

language, as codified under the leadership of Blaze Koneski, is in many respects very close to the case of the Afrikaans language. Undoubtedly, the separation of Afrikaans from Dutch took longer than it took Macedonian to separate from the Bulgarian language. Furthermore, Afrikaans does not have the decree that was applied in the codification of literary Macedonian. But nevertheless, in both cases we witness the separation of one language from another, and in the period of New and Recent History, and not during the Middle Ages.

¹³ Smith, Anthony, *National Identity*, Ed. “Queen Mab”, S., 2000, p. 26.

¹⁴ On the need for a “national myth”, on the relationship between confirmed historical truth and what is simply a “folk narrative” can be read in Arash Abizadeh’s article: Abizadeh, Arash, *Historical Truth, National Myths and Liberal Democracy*, *Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol. 12, Number 3, pp. 291-313, http://www.cridaq.uqam.ca/IMG/pdf/Abizadeh_-_Historical_truth.pdf

Under the circumstances described above, however, it is extremely difficult for the Macedonian “engineers of national identity”, who continue to construct the Macedonian nation, to select historical facts and/or legends from the Middle Ages to be acceptable as “common myths and historical memories”. The attempt to constitute King Samuel as a Macedonian king is generally unconvincing. The only Macedonian king of the Middle Ages appeared seemingly out of nowhere and his legacy vanished into thin air.

This is not the place at all to analyze the enormous efforts of Skopje historiographers to respond to the “public procurement”. This requires too much scientific work. But it should be noted that, due to the enormous difficulties with medieval history, in the search for national myths, the people who took it upon themselves to guide the construction of the Macedonian nation and the Macedonian statehood, set out on a journey in two opposite directions.

Some of them (including the “primary builders” of the Macedonian nation from 1944-1945) find the national myth in the rather loose resistance against the Germans and against the Bulgarian administration on the territory of Vardar Macedonia in the period 1941-1944. Under the label of “anti-fascist resistance”, these events, to some extent exaggerated, to some extent overestimated, but nevertheless – actually happened, have been canonized to the status of a national myth.

This national myth of the People’s Republic of Macedonia, respectively the Socialist Republic of Macedonia, was acceptable to the ruling elites during the existence of Tito’s Yugoslavia. Although devoid of the mystique of the distance of time and not quite as heroic as the “national engineers” would like them to be, these events fulfilled the function of a national myth. They were particularly convenient from the point of view of the clear opposition against the “historical enemy” - Bulgaria

and the practically non-existent “Bulgarian fascism”¹⁵.

These seekers of the Macedonian “national myth” had chosen recent history as the medium from which to extract it. However, time worked against them, because with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the bankruptcy of real socialism (it was also changed into the clothes of Yugoslav “self-governing socialism”), the canon they created became untenable.

Therefore, while some of the Macedonian politicians, intellectuals and propagandists tried tooth and nail to protect the right to exist of the original Macedonian national myth - the myth of “Macedonia born from the anti-fascist resistance”, others embarked on a search for a new national myth which to be more appropriate for the new historical era. This “search” unfortunately quickly degenerated into fiction, and thus “ancient Macedonism” appeared on the scene with all its absurd and frankly anti-historical claims and pretensions.

The sad thing is that if the myth of “anti-fascist Mace-

¹⁵ It is not claimed here that in Bulgaria in the 1930s and 1940s there were no fascists, fascist organizations or parties that called themselves “fascist”. There were, of course, but the vast majority of them played a marginal role and never touched power. If at the time Stalin forbade the use of the term “National Socialism” in the USSR and thus Hitler and his comrades were reclassified as “fascists”, then in Bulgaria the rather soft authoritarian regime of Tsar Boris III which retained many of the substantive and formal characteristics of the previous democratic rule, was labeled with the absolutely anti-scientific term “monarcho-fascism”. The strange thing is that the only period in Bulgarian history for which we can reasonably claim that an attempt was made to establish a corporate fascist state on the model of Mussolini’s Italy, is the period of the government of the “Zveno” political circle and the Military Union, with Prime Minister Kimon Georgiev, which came to power with the military coup on May 19, 1934. Then an attempt was made to establish a real fascist regime and a special state institution was created to impose a corporate state - the Directorate of “Public Renewal”. The constitution was suspended, political parties were banned. But the rule of those who carried out the coup on May 19, 1934 did not last long and they were eliminated by Tsar Boris III and his supporters among the officers, led by General Pencho Zlatev. The authoritarian regime of the Tsar that was established thereafter cannot be described as fascist in any way. The latter does not prevent many from continuing to label the rule of Bulgaria between 1934 and 1944 as “fascist”. However, this has no scientific value, but is only a polemical trick used by a certain category of politicians and publicists closely related to the leadership of the Bulgarian Communist Party from 1944 to 1989.

donia" defined Bulgaria as an enemy because it was among the countries of the Axis during the Second World War, the myth of "ancient Macedonism" constantly steps on opposing Bulgaria and the Bulgarians, based on frankly racist and discriminatory approach. The search for a new "national myth" is precisely the basis of this part of the manifestations of "Bulgarophobia", which Georgi Stankov Ph.D. has described so comprehensively in his work.

The declaration of Bulgarians as "sub-humans" is not the result of extremism and the lack of elementary education of those nationalists in the Republic of North Macedonia who give out similar qualifications. This is a result of the identity crisis that arose with the loss of popularity of the myth of "anti-fascist Macedonia". Replacing it with the outright megalomaniacal myth of "today's Macedonia - the successor of Alexander the Great" inevitably creates a need to distinguish Bulgaria and Bulgarians in another way¹⁶. It is no longer so important that

¹⁶ It would be absolutely unfair and an outright lie to pass over the Bulgarian manifestations of the search for a "national myth" somewhere during the historical epoch that occurred shortly after the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. It is enough to quote the title of the book published in 2020 by Professor Evgeniy Sachev: "Bulgarians are the basis of human civilization". This is something like a Bulgarian "counterpoint" to "ancient Macedonism", which cannot cause anything but condescending smiles. The book is sold with the following annotation: "For the first time, so many facts and evidence are presented in one place in a systematized and fascinating socio-historical commentary, which reveal our history as an inseparable part since the beginning of human civilization." The book convincingly proves that: we, the Bulgarians, we founded the earliest state not only in Europe; we, the Bulgarians, are the creators of the earliest written systems in the world; we Bulgarians have created the archetypes of the first monotheistic and cultural systems; we, the Bulgarians, of all peoples over the millennia, have preserved our national name for the longest time; we, the Bulgarians, the first of all nations, have laid the foundations of scientific knowledge and technology". See: Sachev, Evgeniy, Bulgarians are the basis of human civilization, New Civilization Publishing House, S., 2020, ISBN 9786197470116.

But still, we must note that, in Bulgaria, it is a single and personal case of nationalist grandiosity, which has overtaken a single scientist. In the Republic of North Macedonia, a similar approach to the country's history is brought to the level of national doctrine.

during the Second World War, the Bulgarians were “fascists”. The national aspect is now important, and if you want, the racial superiority of the Macedonians over the Bulgarians.

In its present form, in which Georgi Stankov Ph.D. meticulously, punctually and exhaustively researched it, “Bulgarophobia” or simply put - hatred of Bulgaria and Bulgarians, is to a large extent the result of the change of mythologeme. “Anti-fascist Macedonia” is replaced by “Ancient Macedonia”. In everyday political life, this replacement is operationalized by the confrontation between the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (supporting the old “national myth”) and the party VMRO-DPMNE, which currently gathered under its banner the supporters of even the most exotic varieties of “ancient Macedonism”.

Therefore, the study of “Bulgarophobia” in the Republic of North Macedonia is of great importance. The peculiar “measurement” of “Bulgarophobia” is an indicator of ongoing dynamic processes in the ongoing construction of the Macedonian nation. Unfortunately, these processes are more destructive than constructive, but knowing their origin, we should be able to propose more intelligent ways for overcoming their negative consequences, instead of going into a rage and entering into primitive forms of confrontation.

Such bona fide scientific research should not be seen as an effort to arm propagandists with new arguments. Moreover, serious scientists must resist attempts to use their work for such, to put it mildly, impure purposes. But unfortunately, the fact that the evolution of the Macedonian “national myth” does not lead to a reduction in the confrontation between Bulgarians and Macedonians cannot be ignored. Exactly the opposite.

In both Macedonian “national myths” the differentia-

tion of Macedonians from Bulgaria and Bulgarians is decisive and it takes different forms of “Bulgarophobia”. Unfortunately, the new version of the Macedonian “national myth” creates the conditions for an even rougher confrontation and for an even sharper opposition. Bulgarians from “fascists”, but still people, have already been transformed into “sub-humans”, according to the terminology of “Annenerbe” and Himmler.

Teodor Danailov Dechev, PhD, Assoc. Prof.

Introduction

After decades dominated by open mistrust and estrangement because of the inherited from communist totalitarian ideology Iron Curtain between them, in 2017 the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Bulgaria signed a Treaty of Friendship, Good-Neighbourliness and Cooperation aimed at opening a new page in their relationship. The Agreement was ratified by both Parliaments in January 2018. The objective of the Treaty was to create and promote a new socio-economic and political environment in the two countries that would lead to improving the relationships on all levels, as a preparatory step for the entry of the Republic of North Macedonia in both North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and European Union (EU).

Contrary to expectations, after the accession of North Macedonia in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in early 2019, a complete lack of desire and/or capacity on the part of the government of North Macedonia, and therefore lack of any progress in the implementation of the articles in the ratified Treaty, became apparent. For example, according to Article 11, Paragraph 6 of the Treaty, the two parties must “discourage acts of private entities aimed in instigating violence, hatred or similar actions that would harm their relations.”¹ In this regard, good practice has already been created in Bulgaria, so when Bulgarian nationals use hate speech against Macedonian nationality, institutions in charge respond in a timely and

¹ United Nations (2018, March 8). Treaty of Friendship, Good-Neighbourliness and Cooperation between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia. [Online publication]. United Nations Treaty Collection. Accessible at: <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/No%20Volume/55013/Part/I-55013-08000002804f5d3c.pdf>.

adequate manner, and this leads to convictions.² In identical manifestations in the Republic of North Macedonia, institutions do not take any steps to penalize and reduce hate speech against Bulgarians and Bulgaria.

By using analytical tools of Social psychology, Peace and conflict studies, and Reconciliation studies, this study aims to explore hate speech and actions incited by hatred in the Republic of North Macedonia against Bulgaria and Bulgarians within the framework of a larger social phenomenon that should be called *Bulgarophobia*. To this end, it proposes a working definition of this term: “Bulgarophobia is a complex of psychological attitudes, statements and acts expressing aversion, hostility and intolerance towards the Bulgarian people, its individual representatives and the state of Bulgaria as a whole.” Obviously, here under “phobia” is not meant the literal translation of the term φοβία (from Greek φόβος - fear), since in the social sciences expressions like “xenophobia” are increasingly used to present not the feeling of fear of a certain nation or ethnicity, but the feeling of hatred towards it. Along with a review of the theoretical framework that explains this phenomenon, the study also looks at the specific Macedonian historical context in which Bulgarophobia has emerged and developed, and then presents and comments on several cases of Bulgarophobia in 2021.

² In Bulgaria, in 2021, was convicted the 34-year-old Stefan Belev, who, on November 23 of the same year, used hate speech in a Facebook post against Macedonian people after the crash of a bus from the Republic of North Macedonia on the Struma Highway, where 45 Macedonian nationals perished. Pursuant to Article 162, Paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code, Belev was sentenced to 4 months imprisonment with a three-year probation period. See Kanal 5 TV (2021, December 16). In Sofia, a man was sentenced because he had published inappropriate online comments on the bus accident. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://kanal5.com.mk/vo-sofija-osuden-mazhot-koj-na-internet-objavi-nedolichni-komentari-za-avtobus-kata-nesrekja/a508041>.

Problem outlines

The analysis of public speaking and political rhetoric in the Republic of North Macedonia in 2021 shows that Bulgaphobia is one of the leading trends in the public discourse. Hostility against Bulgaria and Bulgarians in this public conversation is manifested in several ways:

- Ethnocentrism and a sense of superiority, which in some cases escalates to depicting Bulgarians as sub-human (from German *Untermensch*).
- Discriminatory attitude in public sphere, media, and social networks.
- Hostility and hate speech against Bulgarian people, the Bulgarian state, and the citizens of North Macedonia of Bulgarian identity.
- Mocking and sarcasm.
- Trolling on social networks.

As a phenomenon, ethnocentrism is inherent in all societies and is generally expressed in “a predisposition to divide the human world into in-groups and out-groups” and “a readiness to reduce society to us and them”³. It might have its positive aspects because it encourages the intragroup cohesion on the base of ethnicity, creates and maintains a sense of collective identity, promotes the “we”-mind-set among its members, and creates criteria for perception and interpretation of the existing world through the prism of the ethnic community placed in the “center” of the identification of an individual. In addition, though, in some cases, ethnocentrism forms the public opinion on the “Others” and is often related to the sense of superiority of one’s own group compared to other groups, which can

³ Kinder, D. R., C. D. Kam (2009). *Us Against Them: Ethnocentric Foundations of American Opinion*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, p. 8.

sometimes evolve into hostility, contempt and rejection. This trend, for example, was demonstrated in antiquity by the attitude of the Hellenes to the so called by them “barbarians”, who were usually described as cruel, uneducated and uncivilized, and sometimes devoid of human qualities. Even in present days, some forms of political speech can stimulate similar negative ethnocentric trends to the level of extremist and xenophobic sentiment in society⁴. A serious problem that immediately stands out when meeting such negative ethnocentrism in the modern world is that it is contrary to the fundamental values of democracy, human rights and peaceful cohabitation between representatives of different peoples. Following the tragic experience of the 20th century, during which mankind experienced events of the scale of the Armenian genocide, the Holocaust, the genocide in Rwanda, and the ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, democratic civilized societies consciously oppose approaches leading to ethnic and national confrontation, such as emphasizing the superiority of one or another group at the expense of humiliating of the so-called “Others”, and they strive to promote tolerant attitude towards all ethnic communities.

⁴ Booth, K. (1979). *Strategy and Ethnocentrism*. New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc.

Formation and development of antagonism against the Bulgarians in North Macedonia

The review of the media content in the Republic of North Macedonia as well as social media content detects plenty of materials devoted to Bulgaria's "anti-Macedonian policy" or "humiliating treatment". At the same time, in the country's public discourse there is a high level of Bulgarophobia, which remains completely neglected by local analysts, journalists, public figures and politicians. The discourse of the Macedonian media and social environment is characterized by vivid manifestations of ethnocentrism. On the one hand, mythological superiorities of the Macedonian nation are emphasized: Macedonia as a biblical land and the first region in Europe in which Christianity was preached; the exceptional military achievements of Alexander the Great; an exceptional role in the history of mankind and self-proclamation as the "cradle of civilization"⁵; talents, qualities and culture inherent only or mostly in the Macedonian people, unlike the backward and ignorant neighbors, and much more in this spirit.

On the other hand, public discourse in North Macedonia expresses hostility towards the Bulgarian state and people, to whom in the local narrative has been assigned the role of the necessary antagonist, enemy and ill-wisher to Macedonia, a stalking archetypal evil, causing feelings of tangible danger and anxiety and national mobilization among modern ethnic Macedonians.

As a result of specific social and political circumstances, Bulgarophobia and self-identification against everything Bulgarian has become one of the most important factors for the

⁵ Thiessen, I. (2019). Life among Statues in Skopje. In: Montgomery, D. (ed.). *Everyday Life in the Balkans* (pp. 251 – 261). Quote from p. 260. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

construction of the Macedonian national identity.

The roots of this process of differentiation can be traced to the period after the Balkan wars and the First World War, when during the Serbian conquest the Bulgarian identity on the territory of Vardar Macedonia was purposefully erased and the local population was forcibly subjected to Serbization and assimilation by the Kingdom of Serbia, and then by the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (since 1929 Kingdom of Yugoslavia). During this period, the expression of Bulgarian identity was cruelly persecuted, and every suspicion of links with the entering from Bulgaria VMRO "chetas" (guerilla groups) led to brutal repression and torture⁶. However, the differentiation reached its actual completed form at the end of the Second World War and the years after when the new Macedonian national identity was imposed in Tito's Yugoslavia. In this case, too, the main factor in social comparison and social categorization was the attitude against Bulgarian identity, which was subject to denigration by the state and whose expression engendered persecution, discrimination, social rejection and low social status.⁷ In this period, the ruling Communist Party led a "fight against everyone who felt as Bulgarians in Macedonia"⁸ and thus Bulgarophobia in Yugoslav

⁶ Pozzi, H. (1994). *Black Hand over Europe*. [Reprint of 1935 edition]. Zagreb: Croatian Information Centre.

⁷ Social sciences have long investigated the tendency to separation and comparison on a group basis. The comparison with others and faithfulness to the group are fundamental to social life and are also important factors for ethnic opposition, discrimination and initiation of ethnic conflict. Comparison is followed by differentiation, and it is usually demonstrated by favoring the own group. The group to which the individual belongs is assessed positively, but representatives of the external groups are most often assessed negatively. See Horowitz, D. L. (1998). *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Los Angeles: University of California Press (especially pp. 141 – 147).

⁸ Kiselinovski, S. (2016). Historical Roots of the Macedonian Language Codification. *Studia Środkowoeuropejskie i Bałkanistyczne*, vol. 24, p. 137. Accessible at: <https://www.ejournals.eu/pliki/art/8684>.

Macedonia reached almost the level of state ideology, a phenomenon that continues to the present day⁹ - when someone is still called "Bulgarian" instead of "Macedonian", it is "the most damning rebuke one can imagine in Macedonia."¹⁰ Since then to this day in North Macedonia's public speaking occurs a very primitive but very effective method of differentiation against Bulgarian - dehumanization. Under this term is "the act of perceiving or treating people as if they are less than fully human"¹¹, encroaching on their human dignity and treating them as something, or their reduction to something.¹²

There are many subtle approaches for the use of language to cause and maintain dehumanizing views, for example through the use of presupposition and nominalization - two of the most prominent means of achieving reification and elimination of critical thinking, so the possibility of questioning stereotypes is precluded.¹³ And the formation of stereotypes, including ethnic ones, begins in childhood, and usually not by direct first hand experience, but from second-hand information, conveyed through "humans' most effective symbol system, language."¹⁴ Where there are negative stereotypes of

⁹ Maleska, M. (2003). With the Eyes of the "Others". New Balkan Politics, Issue 6. Accessible online at: <http://www.newbalkanpolitics.org.mk/item/WITH%20THE%20EYES%20OF%20THE%20%E2%80%99COTHERS%E2%80%99D>.

¹⁰ Brunnbauer, U. (2005). "Pro-Serbians" vs. "Pro-Bulgarians": Revisionism in Post-Socialist Macedonian Historiography. History Compass, 3 (1), p. 10.

¹¹ Haslam, N., M. Stratemeyer. (2016). Recent research on dehumanization. Current Opinion in Psychology, 11.

¹² Mikkola, M. (2021). Why Dehumanization Is Distinct from Objectification. In: Kronfeldner, M. (ed.). The Routledge Handbook of Dehumanization, pp. 326 - 340. New York: Routledge.

¹³ Fiedler, K., J. Schmid (2001). How Language Contributes to Persistence of Stereotypes as Well as Other, More General, Intergroup Issues. In: Brown, R., S. L. Gaertner (eds.). Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Intergroup Processes (pp. 261 - 280). Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

¹⁴ Idem, p. 262.

a particular ethnic group, dehumanization may occur, whether through words or actions. Probably the ultimate form of dehumanization through language is hate speech, defined by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe as “all forms of expressions that spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance.”¹⁵ The problem of instilling hatred and incitement to hatred is extremely serious, since history shows that when specific groups of people are subject to hatred, they are often perceived as less human or even definitely inhuman, and this creates space to violence and discrimination towards them.¹⁶

The famous British actor and engaged citizen Stephen Fry highlighted the role of the language used about certain groups of people and the power of the words through which representatives of these special groups are dehumanized. Any example of massive atrocities such as genocides, Fry claimed, is “preceded by language being used again and again and again to dehumanize the person that had to be killed in the eyes of their enemies.” He presented the varieties of dehumanizing insults to the Jewish people, which were commonly used in Nazi Germany in the 1930s, such as parasites, monkeys, subhumans (*untermenschen*), viruses or “anything but human being.” Subsequently, this approach became a well-established propaganda practice for atrocities around the world. The systematic portrayal of a group (“week after week after week after week”) led to its gradual perception as unpleasant and disgusting and finally came to the idea that they were sim-

¹⁵ Council of Europe (undated). Hate speech. [online publication]. Available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/freedom-expression/hate-speech>.

¹⁶ Haslam, N., S. C. Murphy (2020). Hate, dehumanization, and “hate.”. In: Sternberg, R. J. (ed.), *Perspectives on hate: How it originates, develops, manifests, and spreads* (pp. 27 – 41). Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association.

ply not human beings. In such a social context, it became possible for representatives of the denounced group to be treated in ways “which we would call totally unhuman, and inhuman, and lacking humanity.”¹⁷

In a way similar to the Holocaust, before and during the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, victims Tutsi were often called the names of some of the most contemptible animal species in the country - cockroaches, snakes and hyenas.¹⁸ To strengthen Hutu’s hostile attitudes to Tutsi a key role played RTLM radio, which a year before the genocide began a powerful and malicious dehumanizing propaganda against the future victims, imposing the hate speech in everyday discourse.¹⁹

In the daily speech in the Republic of North Macedonia, there are expressions such as “Bulgarian job” (Bugarska rabota - when something is not done well or not good)²⁰, “it has Bulgared itself” (Izbugari se - when something goes wrong), “the female Bulgarians cost two red” (Bugarkite chinat dve curveni - the Yugoslav banknotes of the low value of 100 denars, which, according to the widespread Macedonian narrative, women from Bulgaria received as a fee for the provision of sexual services to Yugoslav citizens), as well as “Tatars”,

¹⁷ Fry’s statement is part of a discussion in which the actor discussed the Planet Word series, led by him on BBC, and devoted to the importance of speech and language. See Cameron Dallas and Nash (2016, December 26). Stephen Fry Planet Word. [YouTube video]. Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5_WJtRP_Kw.

¹⁸ Macheri, E. (2021). Dehumanization and the Loss of Moral Standing. In: Krohnfeldner, M. (ed.). *The Routledge Handbook of Dehumanization*, pp.145 - 158. New York: Routledge.

¹⁹ Gordon, G. S. (2017). *Atrocity Speech Law. Foundation, Fragmentation, Fruition*. New York: Oxford University Press.

²⁰ The expression occurs even in the comedy movie “Bal-Can-Can” from 2005 by the Macedonian director Darko Mitrevski. Entry of the expression into the scenario is indicative of the state of everyday conversation and existing ethnic stereotypes.

“Mongols” or “Fascists”, which are considered unprestigious and degrading addresses and are used for this purpose. In addition, different ideas are distributed through textbooks and media, which must encourage the cognitive and emotional distinction of Macedonians from the Bulgarians – for example, they are taught the theory of Turk-Mongolian origin of the (ancient) Bulgarians, the medieval Bulgarian history and culture on the territory of Macedonia are presented as non-Bulgarian and ethnic Macedonian in nature, the Bulgarian National Revival in Macedonia is called “Macedonian Rebirth”, the educational activity of the Bulgarian Exarchate is labeled “Bulgarian Propaganda”, and the World War II period is termed “Bulgarian Fascist occupation.” The latter period in a number of state-sponsored artworks, in educational content and monuments in public spaces is represented as one of the worst and most cruel moments in the centuries-old Macedonian history, and Bulgarians are always presented in unfavorable light. Movies such as “Macedonian part of the hell” (1971) and “The Third Half” (2012) are exemplary in this regard. Thus, “post-war generations grew up “overdosed” with strong anti-Bulgarian sentiment, leading to the creation of mainly negative stereotypes for Bulgaria and its nation.”²¹ This, on the one hand, helps the internalization and transmission through generations of the historical narrative created by the Macedonian Communist Party more than seven decades ago and maintained in the state to this day, according to which Macedonians are victims, and Bulgarians are aggressors and “fascists” and, on the other hand, politically and ideologically justifies and even encourages speaking against Bulgaria and Bulgarians. Thus, through demonization and attribution of

²¹ Maleska, *idem*.

negative and undesirable characteristics to Bulgarian people and the Bulgarian state, were laid the foundations of the ritual of their dehumanization and transformation into an object that can and should be hated. In this context, the process of dehumanization and depreciation of everything Bulgarian can also be defined as a psychological operation to intimidate these citizens of Yugoslav and Post-Yugoslav Macedonia who identify as Bulgarians and consider the cultural and historical heritage of the country as Bulgarian by character, who know that their ancestors had Bulgarian identity, or who just feel benevolent towards Bulgarian people - in order to weaken their desire to express an alternative position in the public conversation. At the same time, every word dehumanizing Bulgarians invariably gets approval and support, so even extremely unpleasant and rough statements seem morally justified in the eyes of society. In some cases, infrahumanisation is observed, which is "a subtle form of dehumanization in which uniquely human emotions are denied to outgroups relative to the ingroup."²² This creates a form of moral self-censorship and excludes the possibility of manifesting empathy to the denounced group, in this particular case – Bulgarians.

In this sense, after 77 years of state-led anti-Bulgarian propaganda and even persecution of citizens with prominent Bulgarian self-awareness, manifestations of Bulgarophobia in North Macedonia cannot be perceived as accidental, isolated or provoked by the Bulgarian side phenomenon. This is a deeply rooted among many representatives of the Macedonian society model of perception and evaluation of the Bulgarian people and its remaining representatives on the territory of the country. It can be assumed that this model has long been op-

²² Haslam, N., M. Stratemeyer, idem.

erating at the level of the so called banal everyday nationalism where people use the created by the elite national narrative, symbols and mechanisms to understand things in their usual social interactions.²³

The following pages present a brief overview of several emblematic cases of Bulgarophobic conduct or hate speech against Bulgarians and Bulgaria in the current discourse of public figures and ordinary citizens of North Macedonia in 2021. The approach is not quantitative and is not intended to make a comprehensive content analysis and typology of negative Bulgarophobic statements and behaviors in the country's public discourse; it is qualitative and aims at presenting their diversity in an extremely wide range of social and life situations.

²³ Billig, M. (1995). *Banal nationalism*. London: SAGE Publications.

Chronological review of some Bulgarophobia manifestations in the Republic of North Macedonia in 2021

Burning the Bulgarian flag at the festival in the village of Vevcani

During the traditional folklore festival in the municipality of Vevcani in the western part of the Republic of North Macedonia, which took place on 13 and 14 January 2021, participants in the event burned the Bulgarian flag.²⁴



*Screenshot:
Burning the flag*

*Screenshot:
The left-overs of
the burned flag*



²⁴ Televizija 24 (2021, January 15). Bulgaria sent a protest to the MFA for the burning Bulgarian flag in Vevcani. [YouTube video]. Accessible at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2hnATjcz_qs.

The burning of the Bulgarian flag happened on January 14 and was not followed by any reaction by the police, the judiciary power in the Republic of North Macedonia, or by representatives of civil society. The act itself was welcomed with significant approval by users in the social networks in which the act has been published.²⁵

Also in Vevcani, on the day before, 13 January, when the participants in the fest traditionally dress in various costumes and put on masks, another participant dressed as a combination of a Bulgarian soldier and Hitler. He was wearing a sign on his back with the inscription “Bulgarian fascist occupier”, as “fascist occupier” crossed out, and “visitors” was sarcastically added. There were roots in the wheelbarrow the participant in the festival pushes, on which the inscriptions were hung “Bulgarian roots” (reference to the Bulgarian position that Macedonian nation and language have Bulgarian roots) and “an annex of 12 points” (a reference to the statement by the Bulgarian Deputy Prime Minister Karakachanov that Bulgaria had proposed to the Republic of North Macedonia an annex of 12 points on the fulfilment of the contract between the two countries). The participant, richly decorated in Nazi symbols, was widely interviewed by Macedonian media.

Indicative for the reaction of Macedonian society was

²⁵ Although it is out of the topic, it is important to know that burning the Bulgarian flag has been typical for the Macedonian nationalists and xenophobes since the beginning of the 1980's. For example, this happened at a demonstration held on 11 October 1986 before the Bulgarian consulate building in Sidney, Australia. See sashauzunov (2021, March 29). 11 October 1986- Australian Macedonian Protest at Bulgarian Consulate, Sydney, Australia. [YouTube video]. Accessible at <https://youtube.com/watch?v=rCeUrOXIus8>.

the opinion expressed on Twitter by the user Batman's.²⁶



*"Mask of the century, bravo
Bulgarian roots
Bulgarian wire
Annex of 12 ..."*

Screenshot of the user BATMAN's tweet



"Bulgarian fascists" is one of the most common ways of presenting the Bulgarian nation and expressing negative opinion against it.

Photography source: Gorgi Vlajnkinoski.²⁷

²⁶ BATMAN (2021, January 15). Mask of the century, Bravo. [Twitter publication]. Accessible at: <https://twitter.com/Vasko44271763/status/1350181639566061570>.

²⁷ Vlajnkinoski, G. (2021, January 15). Vevcani carnival 13.01.2021. [Facebook publication]. Accessible at: <https://www.facebook.com/gjorgji.vv/posts/10221755101121785>.

*Scandal with Vasil Garvanliev, representative
of the Republic of North Macedonia
in the Eurovision competition*

The case with of the singer Vasil Garvanliev is illustrative of the discrimination against the Republic of North Macedonia nationals of Bulgarian identity, or of Bulgarian origin and well-disposed towards Bulgaria, as well as of the discriminative anti-Bulgarian view of a greater part of the country's society, In March 2021 a big social scandal burst out because of the video through which the singer promoted his song for the Eurovision competition as a representative of the Republic of North Macedonia.



A frame from the original video of Vasil Garvanliev which, after the scandal burst, was taken off the YouTube and reworked. An artistic work is seen at the right the colours of which bear an association with the Bulgarian national flag.

Nationalist political figures, as well as some media personalities, expressed suspicions that the triptych of colors reminiscent of the colors of the Bulgarian national flag was a deliberate manifestation of the singer's pro-Bulgarian sympathies.

After that a part of an interview given for a foreign YouTube channel in English was spread, where smiled Garvanliev admitted that he has double citizenship – Macedonian and also Bulgarian - due to his grandmother of his father's kin who was from Bulgaria.²⁸ On the video he talked about his Bulgarian grandmother and his Bulgarian citizenship in a positive and bright mood, which seems to add fuel to the fire of Macedonian nationalists' hatred. Garvanliev was accused of provocation and national betrayal, the media overflowed with statements by intellectuals against him, in his social media profiles he received hundreds of life threats²⁹ and thousands of Macedonians signed an online petition against his participation in Eurovision.³⁰ In response to the accusations the singer shot a video address in which he stated that he had always represented Macedonia with pride and had done nothing intentional with the video of his song³¹, but the social reaction to his emotional message was ignoring and lack of empathy.

The journalist Ljupcho Zlatev's comment is an example of discrimination and rejection: "What you are, we are not!"³²

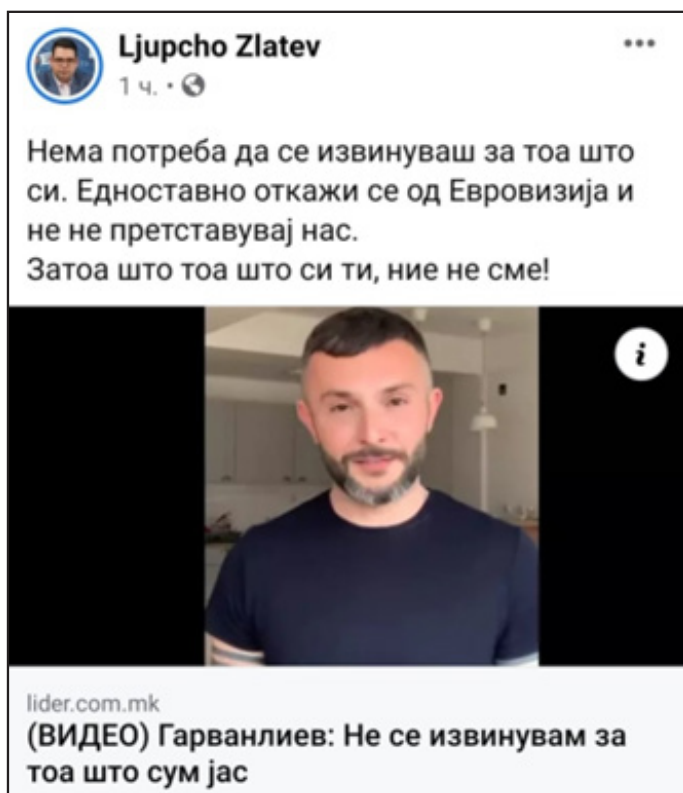
²⁸ wiwibloggs (2020, February 5). Vasil Garvanliev - North Macedonia Eurovision 2020 | Interview. [YouTube video]. Accessible at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jv4UzkcKkkl>.

²⁹ Bulgaria ON AIR (2021, March 20). The Macedonian Eurovision representative has received 400 threats. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://www.bgo-nair.bg/a/4-world/221180-makedonskiyat-predstavitel-na-evroviziya-e-poluchil-blizo-400-zaplahi>.

³⁰ The petition "Stop Vasil Garvanliev from representing Macedonia at Eurovision. Due to many scandals ..." is accessible at: <https://www.change.org/p/this-individual-with-his-anti-macedonian-activities-must-not-represent-macedonia-at-eurovision>.

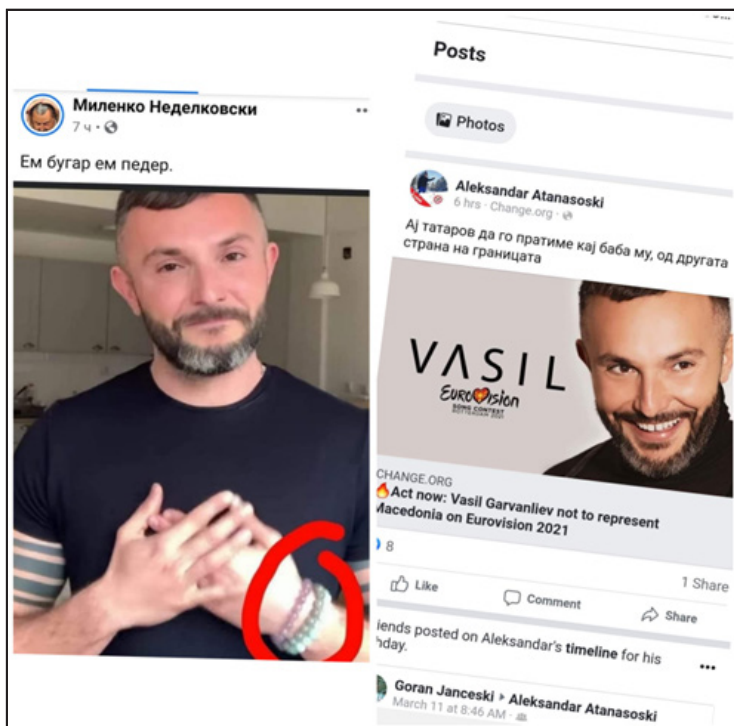
³¹ vasilg (2021, March 15). Here I Stand. [Instagram video]. Accessible at: <https://www.instagram.com/tv/CMcE1cmjis0>.

³² Zlatev, L. (2021, March 15). There is no point of apologizing for who you are. [Facebook publication]. Accessible at: <https://www.facebook.com/lzlatev/posts/4187966701236761>.



Screenshot of the journalist Ljupcho Zlatev's status.

Macedonian state television re-edited the clip of the song by which the singer represented the Republic of North Macedonia at Eurovision, and the elements reminiscent of the Bulgarian flag had been removed, but this did not stop the mass hysteria. The television convened a commission to assess whether a person with another nationality could present the country at the competition (although there was no such restriction in the Regulation). Along with anti-Bulgarian speaking, there were homophobic speeches because of the sexual orientation of the singer, for example from journalist Milenko Nedelkovski, who called him "Both a Bulgarian and a faggot."



Well-known public figures, such as the newsman Milenko Nedelkovski, joined in the anti-Bulgarian hysteria against Garvanliev.

“The case of Garvanliev” proves that anti-Bulgarian rhetoric against citizens of Bulgarian self-awareness or of Bulgarian origin in the Republic of North Macedonia is not just a part of the past but is a continuing phenomenon in modernity. The expression of Bulgarian identity or simply pro-Bulgarian disposition in Macedonia is unacceptable and leads to a high psychological and social price for the persons who do so.³³

³³ Stankov, G. (2021). The national identity in Macedonia – a diffusion theory and a reversion theory. Collection of reports from the International Scientific Conference “Security and Economy Challenges for the States of the Black Sea, Caspian and Mediterranean Region”, Vol. 2, pp. 6 - 20. Plovdiv: Higher School of Security and Economics (HSSE).

There were no reactions to the hate speech against Garvanliev, neither from the police or the judiciary, nor from non-governmental human rights organizations.

It is impressive to observe the difference in Macedonian society's attitude to other representatives of the Republic of North Macedonia at Eurovision: the Vlach / Aromanian Kaliopi, the Serbian Tijana Dapčević, the Albanian Adrian Gaxha and the Roma Esma Redzepova. The participation of none of them has provoked such xenophobic reactions.

Hate speech at a happening of the main opposition party VMRO-DPMNE

On June 27, 2021, at a VMRO-DPMNE event in Skopje Macedonian society witnesses an exemplary hate speech from Dragan Gurovski from the Union of Young Forces of the Party. A video of Gurovski's speech was published on the Facebook page of the Union of Young Forces of VMRO-DPMNE and has so far gathered over 120000 views, over 3700 likes and hundreds of approving comments from users.³⁴

Along with the ethnocentric magnification of their own nation ("We Macedonians are always lions"), the young political activist pronounced a number of pejorative expressions about Bulgaria and Bulgarians. Gurovski used the expression "Eastern Neighbor" for Bulgaria introduced into the political dictionary in the Republic of North Macedonia from his party leader Christian Mitskoski, then branded the Bulgarians with epithets such as "Tatar Fascists" and "Bugarska gnasna raka" ("Bulgarian disgusting hand"), to get to the humiliating statement that the only thing in common Macedonians have with Bulgarians are "the two reds."³⁵

³⁴ Union of Young Forces of VMRO-DPMNE (2021, June 27). Dragan Gurovski's speech. [Facebook video]. Accessible at: <https://fb.watch/6ufYg8EDfS>.

³⁵ "The two reds" is a reminder of a humiliating expression spread in North Macedonia in the time of the Yugoslavian decay. "The female Bulgarians cost two red" refers to the Bulgarian women who, according to the myth, offered sexual services, charging two red colour banknotes. The suggestion is that Bulgarian women are light, venal and immoral. The segment with the strongest examples of hate speech by the young political activist is shared by the Bulgarian News Agency BGNES: BGNES Agency (2021, 1 July). The VMRO-DPMNE Youths: Fascist Tatars, The female Bulgarians cost two red banknotes. [YouTube video]. Accessible at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KhIRk2IISH8>.



Screenshot from the speech of Dragan Gurovski, a youth activist of VMRO - DPMNE

The inadmissible for a civilized and democratic European country conduct of this young man and the widespread social approval of his statement in the social media is an indicator of the very acute need for the society of the Republic of North Macedonia to take steps towards enhanced civic education - for all ages and social groups, not just within school education. It is apparent that after the decades of dehumanization and stigmatization of Bulgarians and Bulgaria, Bulgarophobia is internalized to such an extent that in cases of rhetoric against everything Bulgarian, for a large share of the society of the Republic of North Macedonia the border between moral categories such as “good” and “evil” is blurred, and it cannot respond adequately to such explicit hate speech. This case also reveals one of the paradoxes in the contemporary Republic of North Macedonia: The Bulgarian people who have been called “fascist” for 76 years are actually abused by brutal neofascist

behaviour.

A telling proof of the existence of a serious social problem is the fact that there were no reactions to the hate speech by Dragan Gurovski against the Bulgarian people not only from the police or the judiciary authorities, but also from human rights NGOs and the civic society as a whole.

Threat of social rejection and ostracism of football fans from Bitola

On 21 Jul 2021 the fan-group “Ckembari Bitola”, which unites the fans of the football club “Pelistrer” - Bitola, published on Facebook an announcement that those fans who had yielded to the foreign propaganda and “deny everything Macedonian” will be excluded from it.³⁶ (See Appendix 1).



*A screenshot of the announcement by “Ckembari Bitola”
in Facebook.*

The threat of social rejection is not a small problem, especially given the social profile of organized football fans

36 Ckembari Bitola (2021, July 21). The fan-group Ckembari has proven to be a patriotic group. [Facebook publication]. Accessible at: <https://www.facebook.com/1985ckembari/posts/289014139690360>.

- mostly young men related to others through a sense of belonging and joint activities that play the role of initiation. A research point out that social rejection has serious consequences for the individual on emotional, cognitive and physical level. In this sense, the thesis of the high psychological and social price of the bravery to manifest Bulgarian national feeling in the Republic of Northern Macedonia is confirmed yet again.

This seemingly patriotic, but above all discriminatory and anti-Bulgarian position of "Ckembari Bitola" is a softened and "civilized" contemporary version of the existing in the 1940s specialized court for "crimes against Macedonian national honour." The court was created mostly to cover in a lawful form the persecution of the citizens of the People's Republic of Macedonia, who insisted on the Bulgarian nature of the history and culture of the Slavic population of Macedonia in the period 9th - 19th century and thus opposed the violently imposed national historical canon.³⁷ Today, the time of power and made-up trials has passed, but there are more sophisticated and perfidious ways of punishment through various forms of social pressure, such as the threat to rejecting the ones who disagree with the canon, in the case by evicting from the community of local football fans. Those who "deny everything Macedonian" are the citizens of Bitola and the region who support the local football club "Pelister" and feel Bulgarians (the "denial", actually, is that, according to the Bulgarians in Bitola, King Samuel was a Bulgarian king, and Miladinovi brothers, Gotse Delchev and Dame Gruev were ethnic Bulgarians). The threat against them has been put under the form of the ultimatum: "Those who unfortunately have already fallen on propa-

³⁷ Tsarnushanov, K. (1992). Macedonism and the resistance of Macedonia against it. Sofia, UPH "St. Kliment Ohridski", p. 249.

ganda will be excluded from the group!!!”, in other words, “If you say that Gotse Delchev is a Bulgarian, you’re out of the group.”

The parallel between the statement of a fan group with the Court for “crimes against Macedonian national honour” may seem exaggerated, but it is not random, because the fans’ position draws the attention to a particular phenomenon that reflects changes in public relations and interactions since 1945 up until 2021. The position of “Ckembari” is a symptom of evolution in the way society sanctions people who are a threat to the “Macedonian consciousness”: while in the 1940s and 1950s, the policy of accusations, repression, censorship, discrimination and social rejection occurred from the top downwards vertically with orders and rules imposed by the central government to the population, in the 2020s when the Bulgarophobia is already fully internalized at a public level, it runs at a horizontal level among the citizens and social groups themselves. It is no longer necessary for the authorities to “protect” the “Macedonian national honor” on a daily basis - citizens indoctrinated in anti-Bulgarianism do it instead.

The discriminatory conduct towards Bulgarians from Bitola by Chkembari was not perceived as such by the police, the judicial authorities, non-governmental human rights organizations or by citizens.

Desecrating the monument of Bulgarian nationals who died in Lake Ohrid

On August 11, 2021 near Ohrid was desecrated the memorial monument “Rosa’s tear” dedicated to 15 tourists from Bulgaria who died in Lake Ohrid in 2009, as the word “Bulgarian” of the text on the Commemorative Plate was scratched. Scratching the ethnonym “Bulgarian” proves that it is not a simple hooligan act, but an ethnic hate crime.



*The vandalized gravestone. Source:
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of RNM.*

The Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed its regret for this repeat act of desecrating the memorial plate of Bulgarian tourists and qualified it as “an act of hatred” - a conduct that is contrary to the fundamental values of modern democratic societies.³⁸ The Bulgarian MFA calls this act “repeat” because the previous year the memorial had been desecrated too.³⁹

³⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2021, August 12). MFA position. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://www.mfa.bg/bg/news/30759>.

³⁹ Nova televizija (2020, November 27). The memorial of the Bulgarians who died in the Ohrid Lake was desecrated. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://nova.bg/news/view/2020/11/27/306867>.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Northern Macedonia responded with a position in which it condemned the vandal action and published photographs showing that the Macedonian side responded quickly and, in a very short time, the plate at the monument was restored to its former state.⁴⁰

There was no response from local non-governmental human rights organizations against the anti-Bulgarian act. The police did not attempt to search the offender, who is currently unknown.

⁴⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2021, August 12). The memorial in Ohrid returned to the original state. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://mfa.gov.mk/mk/page/13/post/2677/spomen-obelezheto-vo-ohrid-vraten-vo-prvobitnata-sostojba>.

Substitution of a gravestone in the village of Klepach

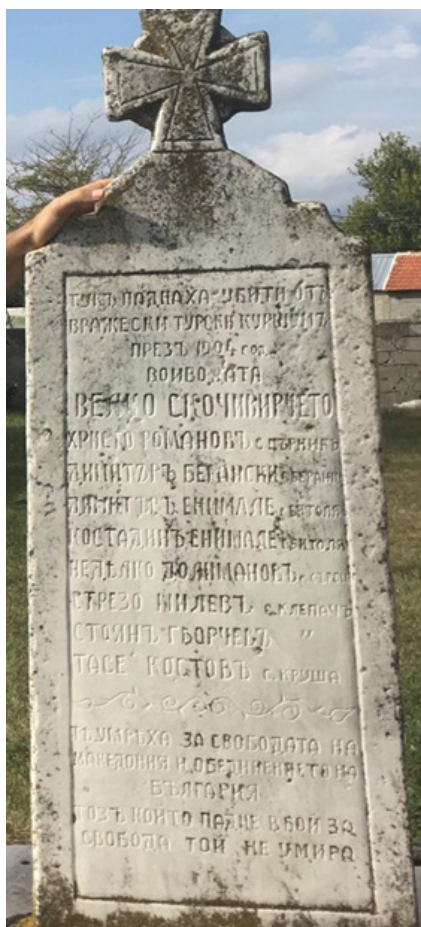
In September 2021, broke out the scandal with the replaced memorial plate of Macedonian revolutionaries in the village of Klepach, Prilep region.⁴¹

In the courtyard of the St. Archangel Michael church during the First World War a gravestone monument was placed in Bulgarian language in memory of Voivoda Velko Skochivircheto and his eight comrades who died in battle with the Ottoman army.⁴² On the original monument, the names of the dead revolutionaries of TMORO⁴³ are written in their original form - almost all of them are with the traditional Bulgarian endings -ov and -ev. There is also a citation on the gravestone from the poem "Hadzhi Dimitar" by the Bulgarian poet Hristo Botev. In 2021, the monument was removed and a new, politically correct one relative to the current national ideology of the Republic of Northern Macedonia was installed. It is extremely outrageous that in the new inscription the dead were subjected to a peculiar "renaming process", and suffixes -ski were added to their surnames, according to the post-1944 practice to form the surnames of Macedonians in Communist Yugoslavia.

⁴¹ Velichkov, A. (2021, September 27). We change monuments, riding Europe. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://tribuna.mk/menuvame-spomenici-javame-kon-evropa>.

⁴² On the tombstone was given the date of 15 May 1904, but according to Georgi Traichev, Velko Voyvoda's detachment died two years later - on 15 May 1906. See Traichev, G. (1925). The city of Prilep. Historico-geographical and business review. Sofia Publishing House "Fotinov" No. 1, p. 268.

⁴³ TMORO (with an abbreviation in English SMARO - for Secret Macedono-Adrianopolitan Revolutionary Organization) was the revolutionary movement of the Bulgarians in Macedonia and Thrace during the Ottoman period.



The original monument written in Bulgarian, with the birth Bulgarian surnames of the perished revolutionaries, mentions Bulgaria and cites verse from the poem "Hadzhi Dimitar" by the great Bulgarian poet and revolutionary Hristo Botev. Photo from October 2020.



The new memorial: With forged heroes' surnames, holding the suffix -ski, with the name Bulgaria erased, with "translated" verse by Hristo Botev. Photo from 22 September 2021.

MFA of Bulgaria reacted by calling in the diplomat temporary governing the Embassy of the Republic of North Macedonia in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian side stated that the replacement of historical artifacts was an act of destroying the authentic type of cultural and historical heritage and an attempt to rewrite history, which was a serious concern, including in the context of the need for strict implementation of the Treaty of Friendship, good-neighborliness and cooperation from 2017.⁴⁴

In its statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia replied that the memorial was not an object of protection and did not have the status of a cultural landmark. The motivation for replacement was: "A member of the Voivoda Velko Scotchivircheto's family, in agreement with the Church board of St. Archangel Michael church, on his own initiative and engagement performed the replacement of the tombstone, moreover he unilaterally decided to change the content and the language."⁴⁵ (See Appendix 2).

The Prespa-Pelagonian metropolitan Petar entered the debate and stated before the Macedonian media that the peasants of Klepach did not accept a "falsified history from Bulgaria" and unanimously decided to replace the tombstone and to change that part of the content because some of them were direct heirs of the dead.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Ministry of External Affairs (2021, September 29). The temporary governor of the Embassy of the Republic of North Macedonia in Sofia was called for a conversation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://mfa.bg/bg/news/31266>.

⁴⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia (2021, October 3). In connection with the case of the replacement of an existing tombstone. [Facebook publication]. Accessible at: https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=10159541363284850&id=249118824849.

⁴⁶ Pressing TV (2021, September 30). Bishop Petar: The villagers of Klepach do not want a counterfeit history, unanimously decided to change the tombstone. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://pressingtv.mk/makedonija/vladikata-petar-selanite-na-klepach-ne-sakaat-falsifikuvana-istorija-ednoglasi-no-odluchile-da-ja-smenat-plochata>.

There is discrepancy between the two theses given above: whether the descendant of Velko Skochivircheto, unilaterally made a decision (according to Macedonian diplomacy) or all the villagers unanimously decided on the replacement (according to metropolitan Peter). However, in this case this is of little importance.

It is important that there is an extremely strange approach to treating historical memory. If the logic of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia or His Eminence Peter were followed, then it would be fully justified for the descendants of Gotse Delchev's family in Bulgaria to demand to change the inscription on his gravestone in the yard of St. Spas church in Skopie because the stone sarcophagus does not have the status of a cultural landmark, or they can even ask for the transfer of his bones to Bulgaria because they are descendants of the revolutionary, and it is their "family business" to decide where his remains should rest.

It is worth noting that to the replacement of the Skochivircheto's gravestone there was a reaction not only by the Bulgarian state, but also from the Bulgarians in the Republic of North Macedonia. Dobro Mitrev, chairman of the Association for Macedonian-Bulgarian Friendship stated before a local media: "In the 21st century it is unacceptable to desecrate the memory of these people who died in the struggle for the freedom of enslaved Macedonia. How long will we live in lies, gentlemen from the government? Does RN Macedonia plan to solve in such a way the open issues with Bulgaria?"⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Mitreska, S. (2021, September 29). WHO GAVE THE COMMITTEES SUR-
NAMES ENDING IN SKI? The new monument of Voivoda Skochivircheto angered
the Bulgarians. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://plusinfo.mk/ko-imdade-prezime-na-ski-na-komitite-noviot-spomenik-na-vo-vodata-skochivircheto-gi-naluti-bugariteko-komitite-spomenikot-na-vo-vodata-skochivircheto-vo-prilep-sko-gi-naluti-bugarite>.

Neither state institutions nor Macedonian non-governmental organizations working in the field of human rights or historians who should have regard to the preservation of the facts of the past and specifically the naming system of residents in the area more than a century ago, did not react to the postmortem change of the names of real historical figures. Currently the original monument is being kept in the Macedonian Scientific Institute in Sofia.

Compromising evidence against Danela Arsovska

On October 26, in the course of the Skopje Mayor's election campaign, between the two rounds, the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDUM) spread the information that Danela Arsovska, a candidate for mayor, supported by VMRO - DPMNE, has Bulgarian citizenship.⁴⁸ According to the SDUM, Arsovska would not be able to take care of the interests of Skopjan citizens as she had Bulgarian citizenship and was an honorary consul of Hungary. Instead, she would be destroying the city. VMRO-DPMNE denied the "accusations" and stated that "Such a black campaign has not been remembered so far." It comes out that, according to the leading opposition party the "denouncement" of a political opponent as a Bulgarian citizen is a black campaign (although the Constitution allows mayors to have dual citizenship).

Even the Prime Minister Zaev joined in the attack, saying that he expected Arsovska to give up her candidacy because the problem with her Bulgarian citizenship was "political, ethical, moral, dishonest." Zaev announced: "This is very serious. She does not deny. There is no clear denial. The whole truth will come out. A city governor is elected in Skopje, a mayor is elected in Bulgaria. There was a mayor in Skopje in 1941, but here we elect a city governor."⁴⁹

On 27 October again, SDUM reveal "exposing" pictures of a Bulgarian ID card to the name of Daniela Arsovska with

⁴⁸ Sitel (2021, October 26) SDUM claims that Danela Arsovska has a Bulgarian passport. [Online publication]. Accessible at:

<https://sitel.com.mk/SDUM-tvrdi-deka-danela-arsovska-ima-bugarski-pasosh>.

⁴⁹ Slobodna TV (2021, October 27). Zaev: For Skopje, I put my personal career at stake, citizens need to go to the polls. [YouTube video]. Accessible at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKatHRkax4A>.

address registration in the Bulgarian town of Petrich.⁵⁰ This was the reason for the appearance of “Petrich” inscriptions on Arsovska’s advertising billboards:



*Rapid response groups from the political opponents
sticked inscriptions “Petrich” on “Skopje” inscriptions
of the billboards of Arsovska.*

Picture of the ID claimed to be Arsovska’s. Up to now it is not clear if they are original photos or software processed counterfeit:



*The front side
of the Bulgarian ID*



*The back side
of the Bulgarian ID.*

⁵⁰ 360 stepeni (2021, October 17). SDUM also announced a Danela Arsovska’s Bulgarian ID, with address in Petrich. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://360stepeni.mk/SDUM-objavi-bugarska-lichna-karta-od-danela-arsovska>.

The information from the ID that Arsovska has an address in the Bulgarian city of Petrich became a reason for a smear campaign by the political formation “Levitsa” (The Left).



Anti-campaign by the “Levitsa” party: “We do not vote for a Bulgarian mayor in Skopje! Danela, this is not your fatherland! This is not your city! Petrich will vote, The Left will no!”

In front of Macedonian media, Arsovska denied having Bulgarian identity documents, arguing that on the identity card spread by her opponents, is written “Daniela”, not “Danela.” She also added that, with the accusation that she hides the possession of Bulgarian citizenship, her opponents “Now present me as an anti-state element.”⁵¹

In a public statement, Danela Arsovska once again emphasized that the attack on her presented her as an anti-state element and that affected the national feeling of Macedonians.⁵²

⁵¹ Express.MK (2021, October 27). Arsovska: I was named Danela after my grandfather Dane. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://www.expres.mk/arsovskaimeto-danela-go-nosam-po-dedo-mi-dane>.

⁵² Arsovska, D. (2021, October 17). The black campaign led against me by the current government and the incumbent mayor will not make them winners. [Facebook video]. <https://www.facebook.com/ArsovskaDanela/videos/1064778430939838>.

It turns out that even the possession of Bulgarian citizenship by an acting politician is able to hurt the national feelings of Macedonians.

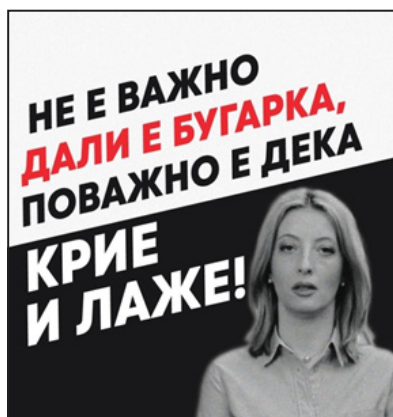
The official party page of the SDUM on Facebook published an image with the inscription “I will go out to vote! Skopje does not need a Bulgarian mayor!”

After negative comments under the publication, the UDSM page administrators deleted the image and uploaded a new one, which again contained the “Bulgarian” theme, but in a softer form: “It does not matter if she is Bulgarian, it is more important that she is hiding and lying!”⁵³



The new image against Arsovska.

A screenshot of the deleted picture against Arsovska on the SDUM Facebook page. The link <https://www.facebook.com/148427235188637/posts/4756298027734845> is already inaccessible.



⁵³ SDUM - Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (2021, October 27). Daniela Arsovska has Bulgarian citizenship. [Facebook publication]. Accessible at: <https://www.facebook.com/148427235188637/posts/4756212024410112>.

Every citizen of the Republic of North Macedonia with other citizenship has the constitutional right to run for mayor, but the SDUM used the Bulgarian citizenship of Danela Arsovska for political attack against her. The case of Danela Arsovska is another example of abuse of the Bulgarian topic in Macedonian political and public life. References to 1941, made by the Prime Minister Zoran Zaev, exploited citizens' Bulgophobic attitudes. The stakes in this scandal were high because Zaev was busy binding the outcome of the local elections in Skopje with his withdrawal from the post. He stated that if Arsovska won, he would resign.⁵⁴

According to the SDUM, the problem with Arsovska was not that she had Bulgarian citizenship, but that she lied about it. However, then comes the question why from the very beginning the fact that she was (probably) a Bulgarian citizen was presented as a problem? This is not and should not be a problem in a normal public environment.

In a video address to voters, Mrs. Danela Arsovska said that “no one in Macedonia deserves to be so humiliated and pointed-out” by such a smear campaign.⁵⁵ It is clear from her words that if someone is said to be a Bulgarian citizen or even Bulgarian, in the Republic of North Macedonia, this is perceived as humiliation and pointing-out. Who would like to be mentioned and called a Bulgarian in a country where this is perceived as something humiliating?

What helped Danela Arsovska win the elections, despite the fact that she was accused of the biggest transgression in

⁵⁴ Indeed, Danela Arsovska won at the second round of mayoral elections and Zoran Zaev resigned from the position of Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of North Macedonia.

⁵⁵ Arsovska, D. (2021, 28 October). Address to Skopjeans. [Facebook video]. Accessible at: <https://fb.watch/8WBtbD8JIX>.

Macedonia - to be Bulgarian? Citizens' dissatisfaction with the management of the previous mayor most probably was one of the major reasons, but in no case should another factor be underestimated: Danela Arsovska was supported as a candidate from the VMRO-DPMNE party, which in the last ten years with its policies significantly had contributed to the even more radical dissociation of Macedonians from Bulgarians. The very fact that she was a candidate from this political party, for the voters was a redemption for a possible Bulgarian citizenship. A causal link probably appears in the mass consciousness that if she has been "recognised" by the "Patriotic" party, she is a real patriot and the accusations against her have no serious weight.

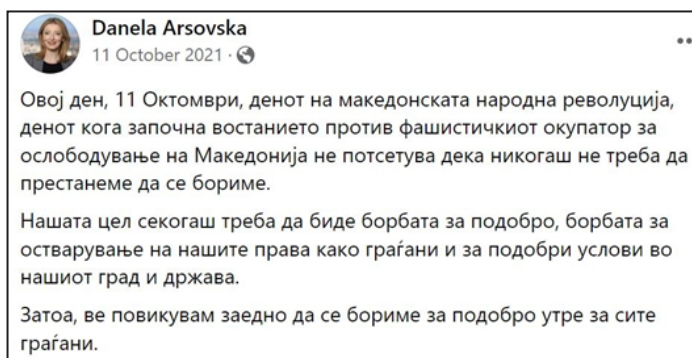
The sad irony in this case with Mrs. Arsovska was that she became a victim of the same Bulgarophobia that she herself spread in the public space. On 11 October, "Day of the national uprising of the Macedonian people", as worded by national mythology, she published in her personal Facebook account a political address to the citizens containing the phrase the "Bulgarian Fascist occupier." (See Appendix 3).



Screenshot of Danela Arsovska's status from 11 October 2021. The Bulgarophobic rhetoric and the desire to present herself as a Macedonian patriot do not spare her the black anti-Bulgarian campaign. The link <https://www.facebook.com/ArsovskaDanela/posts/411881293897141> is already inaccessible.

A number of media in the Republic of North Macedonia published Arsovska's statement about the "Bulgarian fascist occupier", including the state-owned agency MIA.^{56 57 58 59}

Subsequently, for unknown reasons, Danela Arsovska removed her Bulgarophobic message on Facebook and replaced it with another, in which the ethnonym "Bulgarian" is missing.⁶⁰ The image of the status was also changed - instead



Screenshot of Danela Arsovska's second status in Facebook, also from 11 October 2021.

⁵⁶ MIA (2021, October 11). Arsovska laid a flower at the tombstone of Metodii Andonov-Chento. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://mia.mk/арсовска-положи-цвеќе-пред-споменико>.

⁵⁷ Infomax (2011, October 11). Arsovska with greetings on October 11. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://arhiva.infomax.mk/wp/арсовска-со-честитка-по-повод-11-октомври>.

⁵⁸ Media (2021, October 11). Arsovska: October 11 is the day when our fight with the Bulgarian fascist invader began. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://www.media.mk/2021/10/11/арсовска-11-октомври-е-ден-кога-започнал>.

⁵⁹ Sloboden pechat (2021, October 11). Arsovska laid a flower at the tombstone of Metodii Andonov-Chento [online publication]. Accessible at: <https://www.slobodenpechat.mk/arsovska-polozhi-cvekje-pred-spomenikot-na-metodija-andonov-chento>.

⁶⁰ Arsovska, D. (2021, October 11). This day, October 11, the day of the Macedonian People's Revolution, the day when the uprising against the fascist invader started. [Facebook publication]. Accessible at: <https://www.facebook.com/ArsovskaDanela/posts/411940830557854>.

of the Republic of North Macedonia flag was published a business picture of the campaign. The new content was devoted to her vision for the development of the capital. (See Appendix 4).

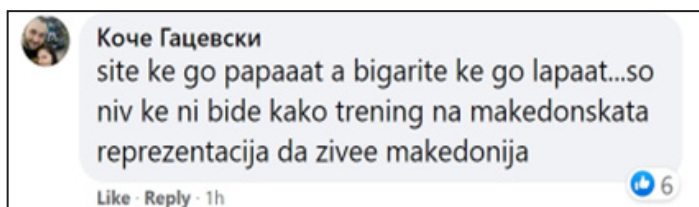
The optimistic assumption of the deletion of the original status and the change of messages is that Mrs. Arsovska realized how unacceptable from a moral point of view it was for ethnic stereotypes in Macedonian society to be used for political purposes. In this case, she probably regretted that she also abused them in her campaign. The realistic assumption is that the change in the text was recommended by PR specialists who understood that as a politician Mrs. Arsovska was observed by representatives of European countries and institutions, especially in view of Bulgarian criticism aimed at some Macedonian politicians' statements on the Bulgarian people – statements which are at clash with European values and democratic principles. The litmus test as to whether Danela Arsovska grew up as a European city governor and politician would be not only whether she would use Bulgarophobic expressions in her future public appearances, but whether she would oppose the Bulgarophobic actions and statements by other individuals against Macedonian citizens of Bulgarian identity, some of whom are residents of the city governed by her and have the right to calmly live and work in it.

During and after the citizenship scandal no Macedonian human rights organization made a reference to it, denounce the Bulgarophobic tone of the elections campaign, or protect the right of each Macedonian citizen to run for mayor, whether they are citizens of another country or not.

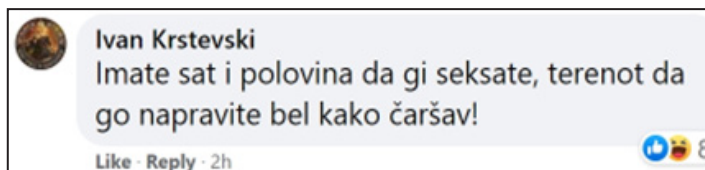
Reactions after the Nations League draw

On 16 December 2021, the lot for the Nations League, an international football tournament organized by the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), was drawn. The lot ruled the teams of Bulgaria, Republic of North Macedonia, Georgia and Gibraltar to play in League Group C4. Like many other sports, cultural, etc. forums, the League of Nations can stimulate smoldering conflicts among the supporters of some countries and foster nationalism. This this also happened in the Republic of North Macedonia, where the news for the upcoming football clashes with the team of Bulgaria provoked Bulgarophobic comments on the part of social media users.

Here are some examples of hate speech against Bulgarians under a publication on the Macedonian Facebook page MakSport.⁶¹

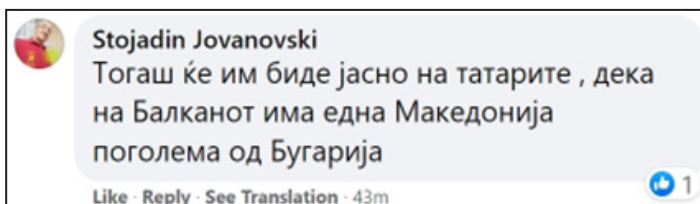


Comment with offensive sexual content.

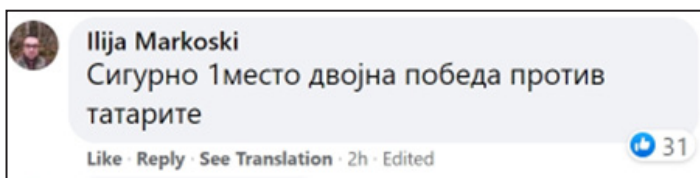


Comment with offensive sexual content.

⁶¹ MakSport (2021, December 16). LEAGUE OF NATIONS - GROUP C4 [Facebook status]. Accessible at: <https://www.facebook.com/maksport10/posts/4921195767902323>.

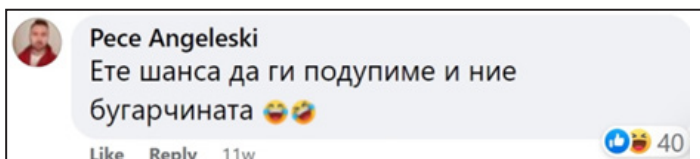


Comment with insulting racist content.

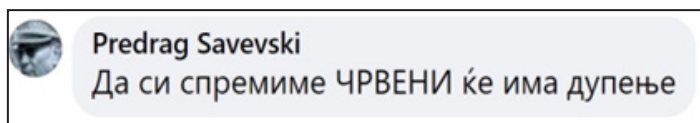


Comment with insulting racist content.

Here are some examples of hate speech against Bulgarians under publication on the Facebook page of Gol.mk.⁶²

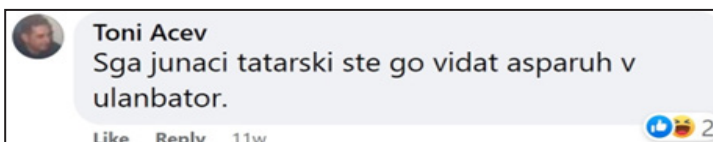


Comment with offensive sexual content.

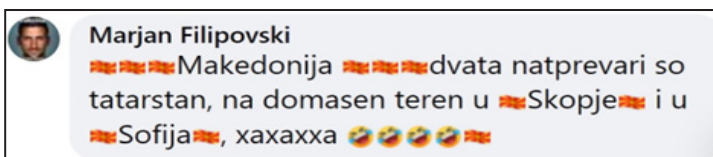


Comment with offensive sexual content.

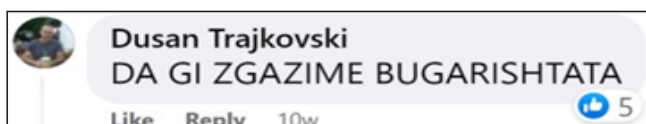
⁶² Gol.mk (2021, December 16). Macedonia found out the opponents for the new season in the League of Nations. [Facebook status]. Accessible at: <https://www.facebook.com/gol.mkd/posts/2461545127314008>.



Comment with insulting racist content.

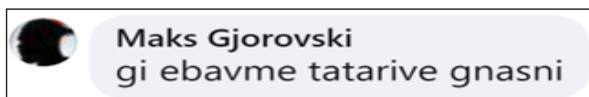


Comment with insulting racist content.



Comment with insulting racist content.

Probably most effective in expressing his antibulgarian feelings was the user, who managed to combine sexual and racist insults in four words:



In this way, a normal sporting event, which should provoke the most positive thoughts and feelings, to encourage the love of homeland and to be inspiration for young people to do sports activities, triggered the manifestation of the negative aspects of Macedonian ethnocentrism once again. By comparison, there was a lack of negative comments against the teams and peoples of Georgia and Gibraltar on social media.

There were no reactions from the police or the judicial authorities to the explicit hate speech against Bulgarian people by social network users.

Revealing cases of abandonment of Bulgarian identity in a Bulgarophobic social environment

Ljupco Kurtelov of Ohrid notes that in Macedonia the denial of all Bulgarian has been a consistent policy since 1945 and is a leitmotif for the existence of the Macedonian nation, so today the situation “Macedonian = anti-Bulgarian” has been reached.⁶³

The consequences of this decades-long phenomenon today can easily be found in electronic, printed and internet media in the Republic of North Macedonia, where in the discussions affecting Bulgaria or relations between the two countries, the generalization “the Bulgarians” is traditionally used, almost always in a negative context. This attitude towards Bulgarians is also transferred to the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia who have a Bulgarian identity.

The Anti-Bulgarism as a state policy and public ideology is a leading factor for the debulgarization of the population in the country, as it urges a number of Macedonians to conceal information about the Bulgarian identity of their older relatives or in full consciousness give up this identity. Two cases from the latest months illustrate this fact.

The first case happened in the course of the campaign against Danela Arsovska. Vane Tsvetanov, at the moment close to the governing SDUM and a high-ranking public official published a Facebook status on October 26. Although Tsvetanov wrote it in his quest to support the governing party in their attack against Arsovska, he involuntarily testified to the overall process of debulgarization in Macedonia. His status is actually an unconscious acknowledgment that while his parents have

⁶³ Kurtelov, L. (2021, December 26). Plato is dear to me, but dearer still is truth. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://tribuna.mk/mil-mi-e-platon-no-po-mila-mi-e-vistinata>.

Bulgarian identity and sincerely feel Bulgarians, he has chosen to be a Macedonian.⁶⁴ (See Appendix 5).



*A screenshot of Tsvetanov's Facebook status. His parents were **always** Bulgarians, but he was **never** a Bulgarian.*

This publication (excluding the current at the moment of its publication political part of it) testifies that since the end of the Second World War up to now through various means in Macedonia has been created and maintained a public environment that encourages people to give up their Bulgarian ethnic, cultural and historical heritage in order to integrate into the dominant and state-led national ideological mainstream, which guarantees a good and peaceful life, career, social acceptance, and so on. Of course, the right to self-determination is inviolable and every person has the right to be as they

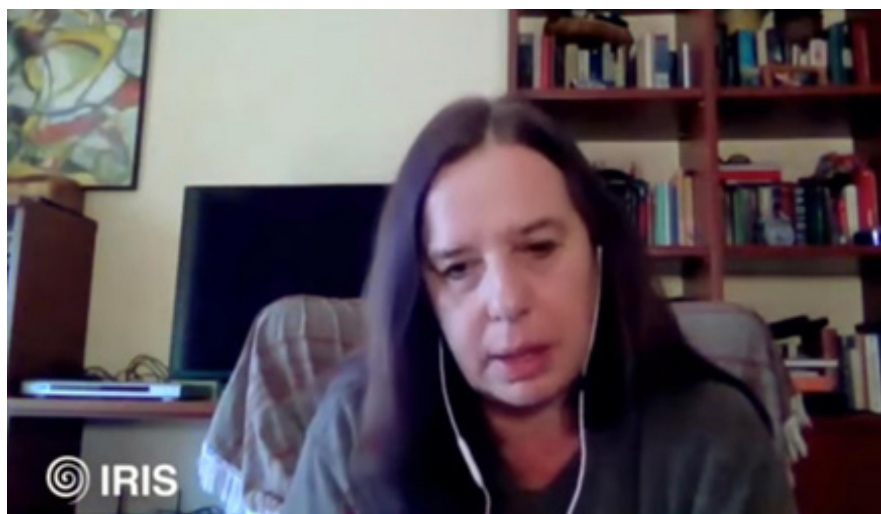
⁶⁴ Tsvetanov, V. (2021, October 26). Dear Friends, I have never felt myself to be Bulgarian. [Facebook publication]. Accessible at: <https://www.facebook.com/cvetanovvane/posts/2703281576631624>.

feel. However, when one identity is subjected to denigration and is placed at an extreme disadvantage in comparison with another which is favored by the state, this individual right is most often subject to social coercion. Over time, it becomes more “advantageous” for a person to be a Macedonian, rather than Bulgarian.⁶⁵ Thus the son of two Bulgarians identifies as Macedonian. About 30 years ago the first president of the independent Republic of Macedonia Kiro Gligorov said that the process of debulgarization in Macedonia was completed and Tsvetanov’s announcement reveals what the former Macedonian president meant. This act also confirmed the statement of the Bulgarian President Rumen Radev that there is still debulgarization going on in the country. There can hardly be a more striking example of conscious macedonization of a person who thanks not only to personal and professional qualities (here we do no doubt that he has such) but also to becoming a prominent Macedonian has held the prestigious positions of Director of the Office for Prevention of Money Laundering and Financing Terrorism, and then Director of the Council for Advancement and Oversight of Audit of the Republic of North Macedonia.

The second case refers to the well-known Macedonian social researcher Katerina Kolozova during the Online Conference “The Macedonian Knot after 2019” organized by the Bulgarian Institute for Regional and International Studies headed by Assoc. Prof. Ognian Minchev. The conference was joined by Vlado Treneski, a Bulgarian from Macedonia, who told an anecdote about Professor Kolozova’s father, the popular

⁶⁵ Stankov, G. (2021). The national identity in Macedonia – a diffusion theory and a reversion theory. Collection of reports from the International Scientific Conference “Security and Economy Challenges for the States of the Black Sea, Caspian and Mediterranean Region”, p. 2, pp. 6 - 20. Plovdiv: Higher School of Security and Economics (HSSE).

Macedonian actor Gorgi Kolozov - Tsarot. Treneski said that in 1999, when he was the director of the “Ohridsko Leto” Festival, in a private conversation Tsarot told him he was Bulgarian.⁶⁶ Treneski also claimed that “life in Macedonia is a living hell for Bulgarians. As long as this is not changed, we negotiate in vain”, and he advocated for the inclusion of Bulgarians in the constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia, among other nationalities listed in it. Obviously unprepared to hear an academic forum narrative involving her late father, Katerina Kolozova replied that this topic was an “intimate family matter” which referred to their “family history” and “family intimacy.”



*Screenshot of Katerina Kolozova at the conference
“The Macedonian Knot after 2019”.*

⁶⁶ Also Vladimir Perev has personal impressions that Gorgi Kolozov had a clearly expressed “Bulgarian connection” and good relations with Bulgarian politicians who emphatically defend the position for the Bulgarian ethnic nature of the population of Macedonia in the past. See Perev, V. (2022, January 12). Kolozova - “pure Macedonian”. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://tribuna.mk/kolozova-chistata-makedonka>.

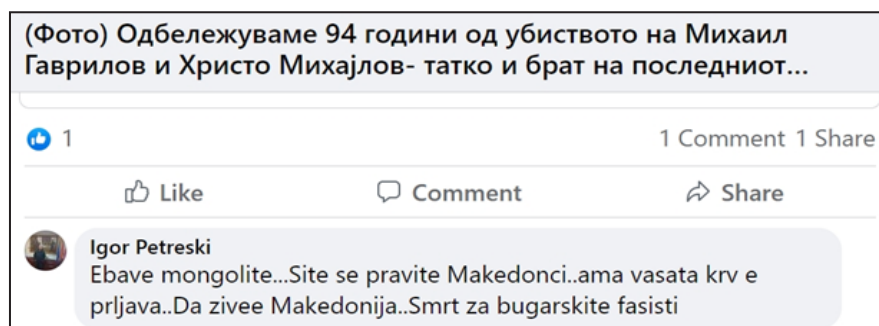
From Kolozova's response, however, the following is clear: her father, Gorgi Kolozov, strongly disapproved of Bulgarophobia in Macedonia, of the censorship of the facts in the official Macedonian historiography, he had a liking for the Bulgarian people and history and thought that the Bulgarian and the Macedonian people had a "interwoven" history that had some continuity, but he did not deny that there was something called "Macedonian identity" and even "Macedonian nationalism" (understood in the western sense of the term as patriotism), which was naturally close to Bulgarian history and Bulgarian identity. Her assumption was that her father had a "complex, double identity."

Kolozova emphasized that she assumed his identity, which means that either the father had not discussed these issues in the family in order to protect his daughters from problems in society or if he had discussed them, she preferred not to remember such discussions. She claimed for herself: "I am from another generation; I became an adult at the very end of the 80's; I was born in a new identity."⁶⁷ Of course, one can choose how to operate with the information they receive in their family and whether to identify with their parents or accept an identity shaped by the social environment and, in turn, shaping the environment. Treneski has chosen one, Kolozova something else, as both choices are equally legitimate, but are they equally acceptable and equitable in society?

Case studies with public figures such as Tsvetanov and Kolozova put inherited policy of debulgarization as a problem with the democratization process of the Republic of North Macedonia. The country is faced with the challenge of solving the outstanding problems with its own anti-bulgarism from

⁶⁷ IRIS-BG (2021, December 16). The Macedonian Knot after 2019 [YouTube video] Accessible at: <https://youtu.be/qbRWnI4OSEo>.

its close past and current present, manifested in the stigmatization of Bulgarian nationality and violations of human rights based on ethnicity, which for decades has influenced the “free” choice of citizens to feel Macedonians, not Bulgarians - unlike their ancestors. Discrimination of citizens with Bulgarian identity or Bulgarian origin in the Republic of North Macedonia is not just part of the past - it is an ongoing process - as found by the European Parliament, which in paragraph 76 of its European Parliament resolution of 25 March 2021 on the 2019-2020 Commission Reports on North Macedonia stated that “regrets the continuous lack of progress in implementing the previous European Parliament recommendations regarding discrimination against citizens openly expressing their Bulgarian identity and/or ethnic background.”⁶⁸



An offensive comment from a Macedonian social media user under a publication on the Macedonian site “Tribuna”, dedicated to the murder of the father and the brother of the last chairman of VMRO Ivan Mihailov. Igor Petreski called the Bulgarians “Mongols” and “Fascists.”

⁶⁸ European Parliament (2021, March 25). Resolution of 25 March 2021 on the 2019-2020 Commission Reports on North Macedonia [Online publication]. Accessible online at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0114_EN.html.



Screenshots of part of the talks that Deyan Tankovski, a Bulgarian from the Republic of North Macedonia, is forced to lead with his fellow citizens.

From antagonism to reconciliation

From what has been stated so far, it is clear that such a hostile social environment creates difficulties for the Bulgarians in North Macedonia in their socialization and inclusion. To break this negative social phenomenon, North Macedonia should apply the principles and methods of reconciliation. European Parliament's resolution of 25 March 2021 on the 2019-2020 Commission Reports on North Macedonia highlighted the need for the country to overcome the difficult legacy of inter-ethnic relations, stating that "strongly encourages the authorities and civil society to take appropriate measures for historical reconciliation in order to overcome the divide between and within different ethnic and national groups, including citizens of Bulgarian identity"⁶⁹.

There are many definitions of the term "reconciliation". Some researchers define reconciliation as "a societal process that involves mutual acknowledgment of past suffering and the changing of destructive attitudes and behaviour into constructive relationships toward sustainable peace."⁷⁰ For others, it is "the process of addressing conflictual and fractured relationships"⁷¹, and for others it means the process of "restoring friendship and harmony between the rival sides after conflict resolution, or transforming relations of hostility and resentment to friendly and harmonious ones"⁷². Activities aimed

⁶⁹ European Parliament (2021, March25). Resolution of 25 March 2021 on the 2019-2020 Commission Reports on North Macedonia. [Online publication]. Accessible at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0114_EN.html.

⁷⁰ Brounéus, K. (2003). Reconciliation – Theory and Practice for Development Cooperation. Stockholm: Sida, p.3.

⁷¹ Hamber, B., G. Kelly (2005). A place for reconciliation? Conflict and locality in Northern Ireland, p. 7. Belfast: Democratic Dialogue.

⁷² Bar-Siman-Tov, Y. (2004). Introduction: Why Reconciliation? In: Bar-Siman-Tov, Y. (ed.). From Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation, p. 4. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

at achieving reconciliation most often take place after the end of a conflict or a totalitarian regime, and consists of “mutual recognition and acceptance, invested interests and goals in developing peaceful relations, as well as fully normalized, cooperative political, economic, and cultural relations based on equality and justice, nonviolence, mutual trust, positive attitudes, and sensitivity and consideration for the other party’s needs and interests”⁷³. A distinctive feature of reconciliation is that it is both an instrumental process and a terminal goal. Reconciliation theories, discourses and practices presume that “inter-group conflicts involving deep cleavages such as ethnicity, race and religion can be resolved by processes involving interpersonal contacts, and achieving a desired end-state of shared values, narratives and identity.”⁷⁴ Therefore reconciliation is not a one-time act, but “a long and deep process which aims at radical changes in the hearts and minds of the communities involved in an identity conflict”.⁷⁵

The process of reconciliation consists of five interwoven strands:

1. Developing a shared vision of an interdependent and fair society.
2. Acknowledging and dealing with the past.
3. Building positive relationships.
4. Significant cultural and attitudinal change.
5. Substantial social, economic and political change.⁷⁶

⁷³ Bar-Siman-Tov, Y., G. H. Bennik (2004). The Nature of Reconciliation as an Outcome and as a Process. In: Bar-Siman-Tov, Y. (ed.). From Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation, p. 15. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁷⁴ Hughes, J. (2017). Agency versus structure in reconciliation. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 41(4), p. 624.

⁷⁵ Auerbach, Y. (2009). The Reconciliation Pyramid: A Narrative-Based Framework for Analyzing Identity Conflicts. *Political Psychology*, 30(2), p. 292.

⁷⁶ Hamber, B., G. Kelly (2005). A place for reconciliation? Conflict and locality in Northern Ireland, p. 7. Belfast: Democratic Dialogue.

Previous study, based on international experience and good practices for reconciliation and taking into account the context of Macedonian Bulgarians' situation, proposed a set of policies to achieve historical reconciliation between citizens of North Macedonia with a Bulgarian identity and the state and the rest of society.⁷⁷ They consist of:

1. *Rehabilitation of the convicted Macedonian Bulgarians, who in the years of communism were persecuted because of their identity and beliefs.* Rehabilitation, although very belated, will alleviate the trans-generational trauma of their heirs, who have been carrying and failing to work out the "inherited guilt" for decades. To this end, in addition to formal legal action, it is necessary that:

1.1. The state leadership of North Macedonia should officially apologize and express regret to the citizens with Bulgarian identity who were repressed in former Yugoslavia and in the three decades thereafter, as well as to their living heirs (in case the victims have died).

1.2. The state leadership of the North Macedonia should recognize the contributions and merits of the victims as Macedonian patriots, who during the rule of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and then during Tito's dictatorship fought both for the independence of Macedonia and for the preservation of their Bulgarian ethnic identity.

1.3. The state leadership of North Macedonia should condemn the actions of the regime established by the Communist party in Yugoslav Macedonia and the forcible imposition of a political system and ideology through persecution, repression and discrimination of political opponents, in particular Bulgarians.

⁷⁷ Stankov. G. (2021). Policy recommendations for historical reconciliation in the Republic of North Macedonia. Public Policy.BG, 12(3), pp. 35-44. Accessible at <https://ejpp.eu/index.php/ejpp/article/view/400>.

2. *Establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the Republic of North Macedonia*, which will be entrusted with the main activity of detecting and declaring abuses and violations of human and community rights by the Yugoslav authorities against the representatives of the Bulgarian ethnic community in Macedonia. The Commission should have a mandate for the following steps:

2.1. To work for the opening of the files of the Macedonian Bulgarians and their relatives, as well as the announcement of the names of the agents, informers and recruiters who worked on the surveillance of the Macedonian Bulgarians. The resolution of the European Parliament also emphasizes the importance of opening the archives of the Yugoslav secret services.⁷⁸ The heirs of those repressed and tracked down by the Yugoslav secret services have a right to truth⁷⁹, including to have access to the files of their relatives; the whole society in North Macedonia has such a right to get acquainted with the methods of persecution of the Macedonian Bulgarians by the totalitarian communist and anti-Bulgarian system of Yugoslavia.

2.2. To organize and conduct in-depth interviews with citizens with Bulgarian identity on the territory of North

⁷⁸ Paragraph 32 of the Resolution states: "Encourages the authorities to retrieve and open up relevant Yugoslav secret service archives; takes the view that transparent handling of the totalitarian past, including the opening up of the secret services archives, is a step towards further democratisation, accountability and institutional strength in both the country itself and the Western Balkan region as a whole."

European Parliament (2021, 25 March). Resolution of 25 March 2021 on the 2019-2020 Commission Reports on North Macedonia. [Online publication]. Accessible at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0114_EN.html.

⁷⁹ "Right to truth" is an emerging concept in modern theory and practice of human rights and democracy, focused on victims' and their descendants' rights to know about pre-transition human rights abuses, which in the light of the discussed topic is especially important for a society in transition like the Republic of North Macedonia. For more information about the term, see Sweeney, J. A. (2018). The Elusive Right to Truth in Transitional Human Rights Jurisprudence. *International & Comparative Law Quarterly*, 67(2), pp. 353–387.

Macedonia, in order to study the repressions against them during the communist and post-communist periods. To interview the heirs of the repressed Macedonian Bulgarians about their experiences with the stigma of children of “traitors” and “collaborators”. To announce and disseminate the data from the conducted interviews to the general public in North Macedonia.

2.3. To organize long-term restorative, transitional, therapeutic and conciliatory activities between the communities of Macedonian Bulgarians and the representatives of the modern Macedonian national identity in order to overcome stereotypes and prejudices of the past, built by the dominant communist anti-Bulgarian ideology and passed on to Macedonian society through the generations via the media and the educational institutions.

2.4. To make recommendations for changes in curricula and their contents that emphasize the importance of human rights and help remove the stigma towards Macedonian Bulgarians and their struggle against the Yugoslav regime and for preservation of Bulgarian identity on the territory of North Macedonia.

3. *Restoration of the identity of the Bulgarian cultural and historical heritage in the Republic of Northern Macedonia.* In the case of Macedonian Bulgarians, their history and cultural heritage as legitimate sources of identity and self-determination were taken away from them. Through a process of cultural appropriation on behalf of the ruling Communist elite and the governments thereafter, they have been uprooted, deprived of the right to call their heroes Bulgarians and their dialects and songs Bulgarian. The state leadership of North Macedonia should apologize to its citizens with Bulgarian identity for the trauma inflicted on them by the fact that during the creation of the historiography and the national narrative of the People’s Republic of Macedonia within the SFRY an ethnocide

was committed against the Bulgarian heritage in the country. The recovery measures of the government of North Macedonia should include the following:

3.1. To declare that St. Kliment of Ohrid and St. Naum of Ohrid were Bulgarian church and educational figures who carried out the state policy of the Bulgarian rulers Boris and Simeon, that the state of the Comitopoules and their successors (from Tsar Samuil to Tsar Peter III Bodin) had a Bulgarian political continuity and tradition, and the Bulgarians were the state-building people of the territories under the dynasty, and that the Revival activists in Macedonia and the revolutionaries from IMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) self-identified as ethnic Bulgarians.

3.2. To state that the dialects in the geographical area of Macedonia and the dialects in today's Republic of Bulgaria are all part of a dialect continuum and that in the past the local population, no matter where it was positioned on the territories of this continuum, identified their dialects as Bulgarian.

3.3. In connection with the above two points, to introduce relevant changes in history and literature curricula of the education system in North Macedonia.

4. Financial reparations for the Bulgarian ethnic community.

4.1. Allocation of funds from the state budget for the construction of monuments symbolizing the Bulgarian historical heritage in North Macedonia. Such may be, for example, monuments to Knyaz Boris I Michael and Tsar Simeon in Ohrid, Tsar Ivan Vladislav in Bitola, Todor Alexandrov in Shtip and Col. Boris Drangov in Skopje. In the capital Skopje, an avenue of the Macedonian Bulgarians' resistance during the period of the Serbian/Yugoslav rule should be created with busts of personalities such as Dimitar Guzelov, Yordan and Dimitar Chkatrovi, Georgi Karev, Asen Tatarchev, Roza Koyzeklieva, Boris Svetiev, Ivan Shopov, Pande

Eftimov and others.

4.2. Payment of compensation to victims of discrimination and political persecution because of their Bulgarian identity (if not directly “Bulgarians”, they are often called “Mihailovists”⁸⁰), as well as to their heirs, in case the victims are no longer alive.

5. *Creation of new cultural initiatives for rapprochement of the different groups in North Macedonian society.* For instance, every year in Skopje the governments of North Macedonia and Bulgaria can organize large cultural forums, which have to achieve cultural and attitudinal change in the society of North Macedonia regarding Bulgarians. For example, a literary forum could be created for authors, publishers and readers from both countries, named “Yavorov’s evenings”, after the great Bulgarian poet and Macedonian revolutionary Peyo Yavorov.

Some of these policy recommendations, for example for the rehabilitation of the convicted and for the disclosure of secret service archives, are included in the package of requirements from Republic of Bulgaria to Republic of North Macedonia, known as 5+1 (now 4+1).⁸¹ Also relevant to the proposed

⁸⁰ After the name of the leader of IMRO Ivan (Vancho) Mihailov.

⁸¹ “5+1” is the package of requests that the Republic of Bulgaria sent to the Republic of North Macedonia in 2021 in order to approve the negotiation framework for the latter’s membership in the EU. The demands include: 1) Inclusion of the Bulgarians in the constitution of North Macedonia, along with the other nations that are included in the founding document of the country; 2) Declaration to the UN that the short name “North Macedonia” refers to the state and not the region, since Pirin Macedonia located in Bulgaria is also a part of the geographical area of North Macedonia; 3) Rehabilitation of the Bulgarians - victims of communism in North Macedonia; 4) Decisive actions against hate speech directed at Bulgaria and the Bulgarian people; 5) Activation of the Joint Multidisciplinary Expert Commission on Historical and Educational Issues; 6) A clear declaration of non-interference in the internal affairs of Bulgaria. The first of these demands (inclusion of the Bulgarians in the constitution) was put forward as a condition before the start of the negotiation process. Of the remaining 5 requests, the Republic of North Macedonia fulfilled only one: it submitted an official note to the UN that the short form of its name “North Macedonia” refers only to the state, with which the Bulgarian requirements became 4+1.

measures for reconciliation will be the results of the work of the Joint Multidisciplinary Expert Commission on Historical and Educational Issues, established under the Treaty of friendship, good-neighbourliness and cooperation between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia, in order to help the “objective, based of authentic and evidence-based historical sources, scientific interpretation of the historical events”.⁸²

⁸² United Nations (2018). Treaty of Friendship, Good-Neighbourliness and Cooperation between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia, p. 16. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/No%20Volume/55013/Part/I-55013-08000002804f5d3c.pdf>

Conclusion

The study presents a variety of examples from the public discourse in the Republic of North Macedonia on Bulgaria and the Bulgarians in 2021, which indicate that it is predominantly ethnocentric, often saturated with hate speech, sometimes dehumanizing and fully negative in its essence. The opinions that Bulgarophobia in the state is provoked by the so-called “veto” (the popular expression that the Bulgarian state does not adopt the negotiations framework for the accession of the Republic of North Macedonia to the European Union) are not accurate. Such assumptions do not take into account the difference between triggers, causes and prerequisites in the social processes and the development of the social relations. In the last two years the public manifestation of animosity towards Bulgaria and Bulgarian people has increased, but it was always present in the Macedonian public discourse and its foundations were laid in the decades before that. Bulgarophobia is a long-established and essential model of thinking and behavior not only for the political elite, who, for over seven decades has fostered a spirit of hostility towards the Bulgarian people, state, history and culture, but also for public figures and for many of the ordinary citizens. Bulgarophobia shapes the overwhelming perception and understanding of Bulgaria and Bulgarians among the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia and is a means of promoting the Macedonian national identity in its present form. In the nearly 77-year-old history of the Macedonian state, there was no stronger and more lasting form of hatred against the “Others” than that directed against the Bulgarians and Bulgaria.⁸³ It is worrying that state

⁸³ In this regard, Ljupcho Kurtelov cites an Albanian intellectual from Ohrid: “My father told me that after the war it was difficult to be an Albanian in Macedonia, but it was even more difficult to be a Bulgarian.” (Kurtelov, idem).

institutions, political leaders and even civil society organizations in the Republic of North Macedonia do not exhibit the necessary social criticism and do not pay serious attention to the manifestations of Bulgarophobia. Even when individuals or private media express Bulgarophobic positions, this can not be justified by “freedom of speech.” Hate speech is not freedom of speech. It is a crime. Its free and undisturbed expression impedes the process of democratization and protection of human rights in the country, which confirms the thesis of some researchers that the Republic of North Macedonia has a historically determined democratic deficit.⁸⁴ In the Republic of North Macedonia, precise mechanisms for eradication of hate speech need to be developed and applied, political actions to demonstrate respect for Bulgarian cultural and historical heritage in the country have to be taken, to start implementing specific policies to achieve historical reconciliation⁸⁵ between representatives of individual communities in the country and to overcome stigmatizing xenophobic ideologues from the Communist past of the young Balkan republic.

⁸⁴ Moncheva, K., T. Detchev (2022). The democratic deficit in the history of political struggle in the Republic of North Macedonia. In: Scientific works of HSSE, vol. VII, 2021, pp. 235 – 275. Plovdiv, HSSE.

⁸⁵ The need to achieve historical reconciliation in the society of the Republic of North Macedonia, through which to overcome the division between and within different ethnic and national groups, including citizens with Bulgarian identity, there is a European dimension and reflected paragraph 77 of the European Parliament resolution from 25 March 2021 on the reports of by the Commission on North Macedonia for 2019-2020. On the essence of reconciliation and opportunities for achieving it in the Republic of North Macedonia, specifically with the Bulgarians in the country, ref. Stankov, G. (2021). Policy Recommendations for Historical Reconciliation in the Republic of North Macedonia. Public Politics.BG, 12(3), pp. 35 – 44. Available at: https://ejpp.eu/index.php/ejpp/article/view/400/pdf_3.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1

Announcement by the fan group “Ckembari Bitola” published on the Facebook page of the group on 21.07.2021.

The Ckembari fan group is a proven patriotic group that, besides our love for Pelister, was always here for Macedonia. Our members are patriots and of pure Macedonian consciousness. We do not mind against those who love Pelister and are of another faith and nation, but we mind against those who deny everything Macedonian. Such can not be our members, and we will not allow foreign propaganda to prevail within our group. Those who unfortunately have already fallen on propaganda will be excluded from the group!!! We are Macedonians from the Republic of Macedonia who identify with the Macedonian heroes, Dame, Goce, Yane, Karev ... whoever disagrees with this is in their right, but will not be part of us. Long live Macedonia and everything that is Macedonian!!

APPENDIX 2

Position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia on the case of the replaced gravestone in the village of Klepach and the change of its content, published on the Facebook page of the Ministry on 03.10.2021.

Regarding the case of the replacement of an existing gravestone dedicated to the Voivoda Velko Skochivircheto and eight of his comrades from 1904, located in the graveyard of St. Archangel Michael church, in the village of Klepac, Prilep, with a new gravestone, which has a different content of the inscription and Bulgarian is replaced by Macedonian language, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs informs that after the investigation and appropriate procedure from the Directorate for Protection of Cultural Heritage and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia, as well as an appropriate engagement of the General Public Prosecutor's Office, it was noted that the tombstone does not hold any status of a protected cultural landmark or natural rarity, but it is a private grave and gravestone.

Namely, a member of the Voivoda Velko Scotchivircheto's family, in agreement with the Church board of the Church of Archangel Michael, on his own initiative and engagement performed the replacement of the tombstone, moreover he unilaterally decided to change the content and the language.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia appeals to such personal and private acts not to obtain political and ideological course, which, in turn, burden the efforts of the

two countries for the promotion of mutual relations, violate mutual trust and make difficult the progress of good neighborly relations.

For the process of finding a common solution in the direction of unblocking the integration process in the European Union, the two parties express clear will and determination for cooperation, and such personal and individual cases should not compromise these efforts.

APPENDIX 3

Address by Danela Arsovska to the citizens of the city of Skopje on the occasion of the “Day of the national uprising of the Macedonian people” in the Republic of North Macedonia, published during the election campaign in her Facebook account at 10:41 on 11.10.2011 at the already inaccessible link <https://www.facebook.com/ArsovskaDanela/posts/411881293897141>.

October 11 is the day when our fight with the Bulgarian fascist occupier has begun.

This day is a reminder of our struggle, of our disobedience!

On this day we should remind ourselves that our ancestors have left us the testament that we should not give up, that we should fight for what is most important.

This day is the day we have shown that we know how to fight for freedom.

Therefore, we have an obligation to continue on that road and provide a better future for our future generations.

Happy and forever 11 October, Macedonia!

APPENDIX 4

The second address by Danela Arsovska to the citizens of Skopje, published during the election campaign in her Facebook account at 11:51 am on 11.10.2011 after the first address was deleted. The expression “Bulgarian” was removed, the “Fascistic occupier” remained, and the message’s content was completely changed.

This day, October 11, the Day of the Macedonian People’s Uprising, the day when the uprising against the fascist occupier for the freedom of Macedonia began, does remind us that we should never stop fighting.

Our goal should always be the struggle for the better, the struggle for the realization of our rights as citizens and for better conditions in our city and state.

Therefore, I invite you to fight for better tomorrow for all citizens.

There are quality people in Skopje and Macedonia and there are people who want positive changes, and their voice should be heard.

Therefore, the City of Skopje for citizens will really be available in every respect.

➤ *We will introduce a service to listen and realize the sustained projects by citizens and will form a special budget for their realization.*

➤ *Budget planning in the city will be done according to priorities of the citizens and local and urban communities, municipalities and non-governmental organizations, experts will always be consulted when allocating funds for realization of projects.*

☞ *The city administration through an open office will work throughout the day, in order for people to complete their obligations without waste of time and resources.*

☞ *More platforms will be introduced - Web page, applications, social media channels, through which citizens will have the opportunity for fast and direct communication with city authorities.*

Skopjans are quite fed up of arrogance and irresponsibility because Skopjans have no more years to spend on unfulfilled promises, unrealized, and promised projects.

It's time for capable people to come, start working and improve things!

#DanelaForSkopje

#ForModernSkopje

#FastAndSecure

APPENDIX 5

Vane Tsvetanov's address during the election campaign for mayor of Skopje, supporting Petar Shilegov, criticized Danela Arsovska and, among other things, revealed his Bulgarian ancestry. Published in his Facebook account on 26.10.2021

Dear Friends,

I have never felt a Bulgarian, and for these reasons, I have NEVER submitted documents for a passport. Although I could in the year 2000 ... It's honest I think, I did not feel like that, but that's my attitude.

I think it if fair enough.

But,

*My parents, who are RETIREES,
especially my mother, sincerely feel Bulgarian.*

They submitted documents for citizenship purely due to their desire, (they do not need passports for work),

but they were rejected during the procedure in Sofia and did not receive passports.

*I AM WRITING THIS TO AVOID BEING BLAMED
THAT I WRITE SOMETHING AGAINST THE REPUBLIC OF
BULGARIA.*

BUT,

BUT, one big BUT!

I have never lied to the citizens,

I feel Macedonian, and SO I ACT.

And what do we do with DANELA?

*The "Patriots"
or Quasipatriots fell in THE TRAP.*

*1. They spat on all agreement attempts with Bulgaria, or they
spat on everything that is Bulgarian,*

*2. And their "Golden" - candidate managed to receive a docu-
ment - Citizenship, that she HAS FELT AS BULGARIAN?*

Good feeling ...

BUT WHAT DO WE DO WITH MITSKO?

*IS IT CORRECT THAT HE OFFERED HIMSELF IN AN
EMBASSY TO RECEIVE SUPPORT FOR A PRIME MINISTER,
AND HE SWORE THAT HE WILL GIVE DOUBLE,
HE WILL GIVE DOUBLE, JUST TO RECEIVE SUPPORT
TO BECOME PRIME MINISTER.*

And what did Zoran Zaev GIVE?

*I will tell you, Zaev did NOT give anything in terms of what
WAS OFFERED BY MITSKO...*

*(After this, I highly recommend that DPMNE will reconsider
if he is good).*

And what does Mitsko offer?

*(Because he was dreaming of being Premier when he grew
up,*

ALL.

Mitsko offers ALL,

He offers ALL that IS NOT his.

It is uncultured, disgusting, rude,

But it's Mitsika, Mitsko ...

Friends,

Do you believe this?

*1. So Mitsko did not learn what a NATIONAL INTEREST,
DUNSTER, DISASTER is!*

*2. Mitsko supports the candidate B.C., agreed in Zemun at a
meeting between them personally,*

3. Mitsko supports a candidate for mayor of Skopje, who feels as a Bulgarian...

What should the citizens of Skopje do with someone like Mitsko and a candidate like Danela?

To unveil Danela and send a message to B.C and Mitsko that Shilegov is the choice.

So this is how the true Skopjans are.

What about the QUASIPATRIOTS?

About the QUASISKOPJANS?

Message to them:

Bravo for Skopjans,

who swear in Macedonia and voted or plan to vote for the Hungarian Honorary Consul with Bulgarian citizenship.

Bravo hypocrites,

Or Bravo "patriots"?

Congratulations to the PATRIOTS or the QUASIPATRIOTS?

Friends from Skopje,

Please support Shilegov,

in order to be sure

THAT YOU HAVE A STABLE MAYOR.

The time of POLITICAL SMUGGLERS is long gone.

Sources

1. **360 stepeni** (2021, October 17). SDUM also announced a Danela Arsovska's Bulgarian ID, with address in Petrich. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://360stepeni.mk/SDUM-objavi-bugarska-lichna-karta-od-danela-arsovska>.

2. **Arsovska, D.** (2021, October 11). This day, October 11, the day of the Macedonian People's Revolution, the day when the uprising against the fascist invader started [Facebook publication]. Accessible at: <https://www.facebook.com/ArsovskaDanela/posts/411940830557854>.

3. **Arsovska, D.** (2021, October 17). The black campaign lead against me by the current government and the leaving mayor will not make them winners [Facebook video]. <https://www.facebook.com/ArsovskaDanela/videos/1064778430939838>.

4. **Arsovska, D.** (2021, October 28). Address to Skopjans. [Live video in Facebook] Accessible at: <https://fb.watch/8WBtbD8JIX>.

5. **Auerbach, Y.** (2009). The Reconciliation Pyramid: A Narrative-Based Framework for Analyzing Identity Conflicts. *Political Psychology*, 30(2), pp. 291–318.

6. **Bar-Siman-Tov, Y.** (2004). Introduction: Why Reconciliation? In: Bar-Siman-Tov, Y. (ed.). *From Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 3–9.

7. **Bar-Siman-Tov, Y., G. H. Bennis** (2004). The Nature of Reconciliation as an Outcome and as a Process. In: Bar-Siman-Tov, Y. (ed.). *From Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 11–38.

8. **BATMAN** (2021, January 15). Mask of the century, Bravo. [Tweeter publication] Accessible at: <https://twitter.com/Vasko44271763/status/1350181639566061570>

9. **BGNES** Agency (2021, July 1). The VMRO-DPMNE Youths: Fascist Tatars, The female Bulgarians cost two red banknotes. [YouTube video]. Accessible at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KhIRk2IISH8>.

10. **Billig**, M. (1995). Banal nationalism. London: SAGE Publications.

11. **Booth**, K. (1979). Strategy and Ethnocentrism. New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers.

12. **Brounéus**, K. (2003). Reconciliation – Theory and Practice for Development Cooperation. Stockholm: Sida.

13. **Brunnbauer**, U. (2005). “Pro-Serbians” vs. “Pro-Bulgarians”: Revisionism in Post-Socialist Macedonian Historiography. *History Compass*, 3 (1), pp. 1–17.

14. **Bulgaria ON AIR** (2021, March 20). The Macedonian Eurovision representative has received 400 threats. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://www.bgonair.bg/a/4-world/221180-makedonskiyat-predstavitel-na-evroviziya-e-poluchil-blizo-400-zaplahi>.

15. **Cameron** Dallas and Nash (2016, December 26). Stephen Fry Planet Word. [YouTube video]. Accessible at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5_WJtRP_Kw.

16. **Ckembari** Bitola (2021, July 21). The fan-group Ckembari has proven to be a patriotic group. [Facebook publication]. Accessible at: <https://www.facebook.com/1985ckembari/posts/289014139690360>.

17. **Council** of Europe (undated). Hate speech. [Online publication]. Accessible at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/freedom-expression/hate-speech>.

18. **European** Parliament (2021, March 25). Resolution of 25 March 2021 on the 2019-2020 Commission Reports on North Macedonia [Online publication]. Accessible online at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9->

2021-0114_EN.html.

19. **Express.MK** (2021, October 27). Arsovska: The name Danela I wear on my grandfather Dane [online publication]. Accessible at: <https://www.expres.mk/arsovska-imeto-danela-go-nosam-po-dedo-mi-dane>.

20. **Fiedler, K., J. Schmid** (2001). How Language Contributes to Persistence of Stereotypes as Well as Other, More General, Intergroup Issues. In: Brown, R., S. L. Gaertner (eds.). *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Intergroup Processes* (pp. 261-280). Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

21. **Gordon, G. S.** (2017). *Atrocity Speech Law. Foundation, Fragmentation, Fruition*. New York: Oxford University Press.

22. **Gol.mk** (2021, December 16). Macedonia found out the opponents for the new season in the League of Nations. [Facebook status]. Accessible at: <https://www.facebook.com/gol.mkd/posts/2461545127314008>.

23. **Hamber, B., G. Kelly** (2005). *A place for reconciliation? Conflict and locality in Northern Ireland*. Belfast: Democratic Dialogue.

24. **Haslam, N., M. Stratemeyer.** (2016). Recent research on dehumanization. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 11, p. 25–29.

25. **Haslam, N., S. C. Murphy** (2020). Hate, dehumanization, and “hate.”. In: Sternberg, R. J. (ed.), *Perspectives on hate: How it originates, develops, manifests, and spreads* (pp. 27-41). Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association.

26. **Horowitz, D. L.** (1998). *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

27. **Hughes, J.** (2017). Agency versus structure in reconciliation. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 41(4), pp.624–642.

28. **Infomax** (2011, October 11). Arsovska with greetings

on October 11. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://arhiva.infomax.mk/wp/арсовска-со-честитка-по-повод-11-ОКТОМВРИ>.

29. **IRIS-BG** (2021, December 16). The Macedonian Node after 2019 [YouTube video] Accessible at: <https://youtu.be/qbRWnI4OSEo>.

30. **Kanal 5 TV** (2021, December 16). In Sofia, a man was sentenced because he had published inappropriate online comments on the bus accident. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://kanal5.com.mk/vo-sofija-osuden-mazhot-koj-na-internet-objavi-nedolichni-komentari-za-avtobuskata-nesrekja/a508041>.

31. **Kinder**, D. R., C. D. Kam (2009). *Us Against Them: Ethnocentric Foundations of American Opinion*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

32. **Kiselinovski**, S. (2016). Historical Roots of the Macedonian Language Codification. *Studia Środkowoeuropejskie i Bałkanistyczne*, vol. 24, pp. 133–146. Accessible at: <https://www.ejournals.eu/pliki/art/8684>.

33. **Kurtelov**, L (2021, December 26). Plato is dear to me but the trough is dearer. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://tribuna.mk/mil-mi-e-platon-no-po-mila-mi-e-vistinata>.

34. **Macheri**, E. (2021). Dehumanization and the Loss of Moral Standing. In: Kronfeldner, M. (ed.). *The Routledge Handbook of Dehumanization*, pp.145 – 158. New York: Routledge.

35. **MakSport** (2021, December 16). LEAGUE OF NATIONS - GROUP C4 [Facebook status]. Accessible at: <https://www.facebook.com/maksport10/posts/4921195767902323>.

36. **Maleska**, M. (2003). With the Eyes of the “Others”. *New Balkan Politics*, Issue 6. Available at: <http://www.new->

balkanpolitics.org.mk/item/WITH%20THE%20EYES%20OF%20THE%20%E2%80%9COTHERS%E2%80%9D.

37. **Media** (2021, October 11). Arsovska: October 11 is the day when our fight with the Bulgarian fascist occupier has begun. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://www.media.mk/2021/10/11/арсовска-11-октомври-е-ден-кога-започнал>.

38. **MIA** (2021, October 11). Arsovska laid a flower at the tombstone of Metodii Andonov-Chento. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://mia.mk/арсовска-положи-цвеќе-пред-споменико>.

39. **Mikkola, M.** (2021). Why Dehumanization Is Distinct from Objectification. In: Kronfeldner, M. (ed.). The Routledge Handbook of Dehumanization (pp. 326–340). New York: Routledge.

40. **Ministry** of Foreign Affairs (2021, August 12). MFA position [Online Publication]. Accessible at: <https://www.mfa.bg/bg/news/30759>.

41. **Ministry** of Foreign Affairs (2021, August 12). The memorial in Ohrid returned to the original state. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://mfa.gov.mk/mk/page/13/post/2677/spomen-obelezhjeto-vo-ohrid-vraten-vo-prvobitnata-sostojba>.

42. **Ministry** of Foreign Affairs (2021, September 29). The temporary governor of the Embassy of the Republic of North Macedonia in Sofia was called on a conversation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://mfa.bg/bg/news/31266>.

43. **Ministry** of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia (2021, October 3). [Facebook publication]. Accessible at: https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=10159541363284850&id=249118824849.

44. **Mitreska**, S. (2021, September 19). WHO GAVE THE COMMITTEES SURNAMES ENDING IN SKI? The new monument of Voivoda Skochivircheto angered the Bulgarians. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://plusinfo.mk/ko-im-dade-prezime-na-ski-na-komitite-noviot-spomenik-na-vo-vodata-skochivircheto-gi-naluti-bugariteko-komitite-spomenikot-na-vo-vodata-skochivircheto-vo-prilepsko-gi-naluti-bugarite>.

45. **Moncheva**, K., T. Detchev (2022). The democratic deficit in the history of political struggle in the Republic of Northern Macedonia. In: Scientific works of HSSE, vol. VII, 2021, pp. 235-275. Plovdiv: HSSE.

46. **Nova** televizija (2020, November 27). The memorial of the Bulgarians who died in the Ohrid Lake was desecrated. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://nova.bg/news/view/2020/11/27/306867>.

47. **Perev**, V. (2022, January 12). Kolozova - "pure Macedonian". [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://tribuna.mk/kolozova-chistata-makedonka>.

48. **Pozzi**, H. (1994). Black Hand Over Europe. [Reprint of the 1935 edition]. Zagreb: Croatian Information Centre.

49. **Pressing** TV (2021, September 30). Bishop Petar: The villagers of Klepach do not want a counterfeit history, unanimously decided to change the tombstone. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://pressingtv.mk/makedonija/vladikata-petar-selanite-na-klepach-ne-sakaat-falsifikuvana-istorija-ednoglasno-odluchile-da-ja-smenat-plochata>.

50. **sashauzunov** (2021, March 29). 11 October 1986- Australian Macedonian Protest at Bulgarian Consulate, Sydney, Australia. [YouTube video]. Accessible at <https://youtube.com/watch?v=rCeUrOXIus8>.

51. **SDUM** - Social Democratic Union of Macedonia

(2021, October 27). Daniela Arsovska has Bulgarian citizenship. [Facebook publication]. Accessible at: <https://www.facebook.com/148427235188637/posts/4756212024410112>.

52. **Sitel** (2021, October 26) SDUM claims that Dane-la Arsovska has a Bulgarian passport. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://sitel.com.mk/sdsm-tvr-di-deka-dane-la-arsovska-ima-bugarski-pasosh>.

53. **Sloboden** pechat (2021, October 11). Arsovska laid a flower at the tombstone of Metodii Andonov-Chento. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/arsovska-polozhi-cvekje-pred-spomenikot-na-metodija-andonov-chento>.

54. **Slobodna** TV (2021, October 27). Zaev: For Skopje, I put my personal career at stake, citizens need to go to the polls. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://youtu.be/zKatHRkax4A>.

55. **Stankov**, G. (2021). The national identity in Macedonia – a diffusion theory and a reversion theory. Collection of reports from the International Scientific Conference “Security and Economy Challenges for the States of the Black Sea, Caspian and Mediterranean Region”, vol. 2, pp. 6 - 20. Plovdiv: Higher School of Security and Economics (HSSE).

56. **Stankov**, G. (2021). Policy Recommendations for Historical Reconciliation in the Republic of North Macedonia. Public Politics.BG, 12(3), pp. 35–44. Accessible at: https://ejpp.eu/index.php/ejpp/article/view/400/pdf_3.

57. **Sweeney**, J. A. (2018). The Elusive Right to Truth in Transitional Human Rights Jurisprudence. *International & Comparative Law Quarterly*, 67(2), pp. 353–387.

58. **Televizija** 24 (2021, January 15). Bulgaria sent a protest to the MFA for the burning Bulgarian flag in Vevcani. [YouTube video]. Accessible at: <https://www.youtube.com/>

watch?v=2hnATjcz_qs.

59. **Thiessen**, I. (2019). Life among Statues in Skopje. In: Montgomery, D. (ed.). *Everyday Life in the Balkans* (pp. 251-261). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

60. **Traichev**, G. (1925) The city of Prilep. Historic-geographical and business review. Sofia Publishing House "Fotinov" No. 1.

61. **Tsarnushanov**, K. (1992). Macedonism and the resistance of Macedonia against it. Sofia, UPH "St. Kliment Ohridski"

62. **Tsvetanov**, V. (2021, October 26). Dear Friends, I have never felt myself to be Bulgarian. [Facebook publication]. Accessible at: <https://www.facebook.com/cvetanovvane/posts/2703281576631624>.

63. **vasilg** (2021, March 15). Here I Stand. [Instagram video]. Accessible at: <https://www.instagram.com/tv/CMcE1cmjis0>.

64. **Velichkov**, A. (2021, September 27). We change monuments, riding Europe. [Online publication]. Accessible at: <https://tribuna.mk/menuvame-spomenici-javame-kon-evropa>.

58. **Vlajnkinoski**, G. (2021, January 15). Vevcani carnival 13.01.2021. [Facebook publication]. Accessible at: <https://www.facebook.com/gjorgji.vv/posts/10221755101121785>.

65. **wiwibloggs** (2020, February 5). Vasil Garvanliev - North Macedonia Eurovision 2020 | Interview. [YouTube video]. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jv4Uz-kcKkkl>.

66. **Union** of Young Forces of VMRO-DPMNE (2021, June 27). Dragan Gurovski's speech. [Facebook video]. Accessible at: <https://fb.watch/6ufYg8EDfS>.

61. **United Nations** (2018, March 8). Treaty of Friendship, Good-Neighbourliness and Cooperation between the

Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia. [Online publication]. United Nations Treaty Collection. Accessible at: <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/No%20Volume/55013/Part/I-55013-08000002804f5d3c.pdf>.

62. **Zlatev**, L. (2021, March 15). There is no point of apologizing for who you are. [Facebook publication]. Accessible at: <https://www.facebook.com/lzlatev/posts/4187966701236761>.

Bulgarophobia in North Macedonia.
Analysis of the Public Discourse in 2021

Българска на английски език

Първо издание

Автор: д-р Георги Ангелов Станков

Тираж: 300 броя

Формат: 145 / 215 милиметра

Редактор: Теодор Данаилов Дечев

Коректор: Лидия Кирилова Стайкова

Предпечат: „Свят. Наука“

Корица: „Свят. Наука“

Издава: Издателски комплекс „ВУСИ“

(Висше училище по сигурност и икономика)

Bulgarophobia in North Macedonia.
Analysis of the Public Discourse in 2021
Bulgarian in English
First Edition

Author: Georgi Angelov Stankov, Ph.D.
Circulation: 300 copies
Format: 145/215 millimeters
Editor: Teodor Danailov Detchev
Proofreader: Lydia Kirilova Staikova
Prepress work: "World. Science"
Cover: "World. Science"
Publisher: "VUSI" Publishing Complex
(Higher School of Security and Economics)



Georgi Stankov has Master degrees in Developmental Psychology and Social Psychology, and a PhD in Political science from Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. As a psychotherapist he specialized in psychodrama, sociodrama, and sociometry. His academic interests and publications are in the following areas:

Collective memory and transgenerational trauma;

Conflict resolution and reconciliation;

Intergroup relations, intercultural communication, migration;

Democratic innovations and citizen participation;

Bio-cultural communities and environmental psychology.

He’s been involved as a collaborator in a number of educational and research projects, among them Balkan Summer School of Religion and Public Life (Shared Past /Contested Heritage, Plovdiv University, 2021) and MATILDE (Migration Impact Assessment to Enhance Integration and Local Development in European Rural and Mountain Areas, New Bulgarian University, 2021), and professional networks such as the Global Memory Reading Group.

Georgi is a researcher in the Laboratory on the Problems of the Black sea and Caspian region.