CURE

A Different Future

Xhabir M. Deralla

The Cure - Political Culture and Dialogue is a complex project involving awareness-raising, education, and facilitation actions to launch positive changes in the country. The project is being implemented for two years now, and its core idea became part of CIVIL's long-term strategy. It contributes to development of political culture and re-establishes dialogue in the area of political life, interethnic and intra-ethnic relations.

We are trying to reach far into the future with this project. A future different from what reality offers us today… A future that needs to be created now.

We demand and are committed to changes in a constructive manner, setting up positive examples in the society, and documenting those changes. This society urgently needs strengthening of democratic capacities of political and societal actors; we need real citizen participation in decision-making and political processes; human rights and freedoms need protection now more than ever in the two-decade long history of the Republic of Macedonia.

This project and the publication is a direct attempt to cultivate constructive attitudes of the political actors and carry out a powerful message to bring fairness, decency, and political maturity back to the societal scene. They impede hate speech, and encourages freethinking and demand for human rights and freedoms at all levels.

*

The initial theoretical position of The Cure project and the publication include the standpoint that political culture represents a system of values, attitudes, beliefs, and expectations that constitute specific orientations toward society in general and politics in particular. Political culture rich with high sensitivity for human values and open to dialogue is a dynamic one, with ongoing processes providing a variety of ideas, attitudes, and concepts, often confronted – but altogether – it constitutes a prosperous and humane society; a highly dynamic societal fabric that may serve as basis for democracy and respect for human rights and freedoms for all.

Political culture and the dialogue in the Republic of Macedonia are in a disastrous shape and worsening. Verbal and, occasionally, physical hostilities, tensions, and mutual accusation between political parties accompany and feed political polarization on daily basis. Consequently, political activities have increasingly focused on discrediting of the political opponents, through vulgar and negative campaigning against one another. The ruling political party mastered in negative campaigning, combining its practices with spreading fear, insecurity and tensions amongst people. These practices led to serious political crisis and suspension of vital democratic institutions and processes. Pre-term elections are about to be called, as we finalize our preparations to publish this journal.

254

Interethnic relations suffered badly. Problems that derive from inefficient policies and the dissatisfaction with the situation usually divert through instigation of hatred and tensions mainly between the two largest communities in the country, Macedonians and Albanians. Series of incidents, including physical violence between ethnic Macedonians and Albanians, endangered interethnic relations, freezing or (more precisely) declining processes of reconciliation and integration. Consequently, discrimination and violation of human and minority rights rose at institutional levels, before they even reached any significant quality.

One of the main causes for deterioration of the interethnic relations is the performance of political parties. This situation affected intra-ethnic relations, as well. Accusing the political opponent of treason has become a common way of communicating the political standpoints to the public, within the same ethnic political bloc, whilst nationalist rhetoric is the core of the political behavior between political representatives of different ethnic communities. One trouble feeds the other.

This situation has also affected interpersonal relations between citizens. Belonging to a political party is a necessity. Seeking for a job or even going to a café with friends, political membership matter. People often hate each other based on belonging to one or another political party. They all, in the end, believe that their own political party is the one to solve all problems and "threats" from the "other" ethnic community.

It is not difficult to draw a conclusion that these and such practices lead to dejection of democratic institutions and seriously affect the overall development of the country.

*

People are demoralized and afraid for their future. Party soldiers patrol their lives. Poverty inhabited many homes and rises. Hatred is being planted to cover up ignorance, arrogance and theft in many senses of the term.

*

Civil society sector has also become highly compromised by influences from political parties and the government. Hostile and locked up in their own circles, civil society organizations often fail to provide relevant services and articulate the interests of the citizens. The need for urgent strengthening of political impartiality of the civil society sector becomes more obvious by the day.

The Cure project and this publication address various levels and sections of the society, including political parties, other power structures, voters, etc. The project comes in different forms through awareness-raising activities and facilitation of a dialogue between different actors and stakeholders in the country. We believe that, by implementation of this project and its methodology, we will contribute to overcoming of the current situation, promote political culture and democratic values, as well as establishment of a dialogue to offer solutions to problems at local and national level.

Freedom of press in the country has deteriorated in the past few years. This has been emphasized in a number of documents/reports produced by relevant international institutions, as well as by CIVIL and its branch of CIVIL Media. Therefore, a space where independent intellectuals, analysts and journalists will express their findings and opinion is much needed. The Cure Journal on Political Culture and Dialogue will make an effort to obtain such space, and offer answers to the jarring questions of today.

Politics, culture, dialogue....

Ilir Ajdini

Political culture! Or, perhaps: Political culture? Probably, most precisely it would be: Political culture?! These views and dilemmas are topics in the publication "Solutions", whose first issue is before you. Here, our gusts, authors from number of countries in the region and broader, state their views on political culture and on political and societal dialogue in general.

There is a dialog – all authors agree in this first issue, both those from Macedonia and the region, as well as from the countries with long democratic tradition of political culture. It is beyond dispute that, politicians, the factors creating the societal environment (our lives) discuss – sit together around a table, as a rule, behind closed doors, sometimes in TV debate shows, but they mostly communicate through press releases, rallies..

Quite often, they "discuss" with the political opponents through their "megaphones" – a group of journalists and a certain number of media which openly, usually meaning most impudently and without any scruples, take the side of the political option. The motive is "banal" – they support the one who handles, or is expected to handle the money for the ads of the numerous government campaigns, or support companies "close" to this one or that one. The previous conclusion, I claim with full responsibility, completely applies to Macedonia, however, as we are going to notice both in the texts of the authors in this issue, neither is it alien to the neighboring countries, even to those who "invented" democracy and political culture.

But, is all this a dialogue? How does that dialogue, that conversation manner, reflect our political culture, i.e., our political cultures?

One among the definitions of political culture, introduced as a term in the late 50s of the last century in America, states: "The political culture of a country or part of the population may have various shapes. In case, for instance, the majority of the population wants a democratic political system, then the political culture is called democratic as well, whereby several types of democratic political culture are possible. And, if the political culture and the political system of the country significantly differ for a long time, it may lead to serious problems related to the legitimacy of the country and thus to its destabilization".

What, from all this, do we have in our society, in our broader environment? How far is it acknowledged and learnt by "our" politicians, the ones that create our life, the ones that usually understand power literally and think they are suppose to rule the entire life in their kingdoms, won, sometimes in the literal sense of the word, with blood. Not with the blood of the "rulers", for sure.

And, speaking of them, the politicians, I have constantly on my mind one definition by the Bosnian writer Semezdin Mehmedinovic (living in the USA since 1997) from his cult book "Sarajevo Blues". Politicians, he says in the essay titled "Cats", are people dealing with human activity whose presumption is isolating feelings on behalf of interests. In distinction to such behavior, says the poet, human gestures that are not governed by the soul could be called catlike cunning". While the cat, with "its fluidity", concludes Semezdin, is "literally a political animal".

After the mentioned quotations new questions arise one upon another, but I am not going to pose them in this introduction. Let us allow for questions to be posed and answers to be given by the publication 'Solutions", in this and the following issues.

And in the first issue: ten authors – researchers, university professors, writers, publicists, analysts, journalists…all public figures and authors cherished in their environment and much wider, and an interview with a top diplomat of world calibar, especially for "Solutions". They all positively and enthusiastically responded to the invitation to participate in the creation of this pioneering issue of our journal.

Whether these presented authors' personal views, but also undisputed conclusions arising from comprehensive analyses, and all of us together, have offered any - solutions, remains to your judgment.

Harald Schenker

Harald Schenker (1966), Germany, a Balkan historian and anthropologist by formation, works as political analyst and freelance consultant. He has spent enough time in the Balkans not to be surprised any more. But he remains sustainably intrigued. He still tries to decipher the often instantaneous ballet of things not belonging together, of people in their midst being no more than extras in this rave called the city of Skopje, in which he is living. For the second time.

Harald Schenker

Political Culture and the Mirror of Society: Palanka vs. Centre

I was confronted these days with a thinking pattern that I hadn't encountered in a while. Not that I thought it had vanished, it was just not present in my dealings recently. I am talking about conspiracy. Here's the short version: Ivo Sanader has been arrested, Milo Djukanovic stepped down, Hashim Thaci is under pressure and will most likely not survive politically. And the next step would be the Macedonian government which would collapse giving way to a technical government to solve the name row with Greece. Interesting scenario. Except that it lacks one crucial element: the conspirer. Him, or them, nobody could name.

> Macedonians (and by this I mean citizens, regardless of ethnic background) are torn between two concepts

The example I mentioned is an articulation of reality. A reality as present in the heads of those convinced of it as today's weather forecast. Political culture cannot be anything else than (the)an expression of the society it emerges from. Structures not only dictate behaviour, they form it, they demand it and they are setting the framework. Transcending them is the act of civilisation. In the following, I will try and have a look at a few snapshots that define the ailment of Macedonian political culture and ask

whether they are as unique as they are locally perceived. In other words, I shall try to contextualise them. Not for the sake of relativising or even excusing them. But in order to understand.

From the array of possible examples, I shall start with the street trafficking of secret service files. It is a specifically disgusting phenomenon, when self-proclaimed apostles of morality are throwing mud at self-proclaimed representatives of the people. Because let us get it straight from the very beginning: even if legally elected, none of the current parliamentarians enjoys real legitimacy. I am convinced that the current electoral system, in which parties and their leading structures decide upon the members of parliament and in which there is no direct link between voters and "their" member of parliament is deeply undemocratic. More so, it has contributed ever since its introduction to an erosion of political culture, by making politicians untouchable, by immunising them from the sole instrument of checks and balances that counts in a democracy: the people, aka the constituents. I very well remember how in an act of blank political egoism the then major political parties insisted upon this model and how a professionally weak and uninformed international presence let it happen. For the sake of stability, as they all did not get tired to utter. And by that they meant their own one.

The failure is thus programmed: politicians out of control will misbehave. This is no Macedonian privilege. And it was only a matter of time until the issue of dirty files, which a variety of actors and wannabe-actors have secured over the last two decades into their private property, would cause political turbulences. But let us get back to the premises. The files in question are property of the state that has produced them or of the follow-up state. The whole story thus starts with an unknown number of thefts. Simple and unsophisticated: illegal and illegitimate appropriation. Everything following from there is illegitimate, even if it were true. And the actors are no manifestations of Julian Assange, either. It is not the common good (or whatever Assange thinks to be the common good) that interests this people. It is money. Plain and simple. Lots of it, if possible.

The utter failure of the Macedonian self-proclaimed elites to set up a credible system of lustration and of access to secret service files is taking its toll now. Or does it? Judging from how the insiders of the old system played it in other countries, one might be inclined to see a pattern. It has been a constant in the logic of communist structures that information is power and that holding information would increase personal power. So everybody gathered information about everybody. This is what kept the highly inefficient and paranoid secret services busy. Just think of the collection of tissue samples with the personal scent of regime opponents run by the East-German Stasi. They were to be used to put dogs on the respective person's trail. Could it get more ridiculous than that? And when the system collapsed, hiding information was just as important as keeping it for personal use. In post-communist Romania, a few tons of secret service files were found buried in a valley close to Bucharest. In East Berlin, Stasi employees ripped ten thousands of files by hand because there was simply no time to shred them. Now public employees reassemble them. It will still take years.

This refusal of Macedonian political actors to produce a credible process of lustration is hardly surprising. Even if now legislation is in the process, it is already late. Maybe not too late, as the Bulgarian example shows, where high functionaries had to step down. But it does not take a vivid phantasy to imagine that those who really count had all the time in the world to clean up in two decades. Now is the time for the minor players. Or those who stand in the way. Or who knows who. Heads might roll. People might be forced off-scene. But will they be the real players or just jesters who fulfilled their role and can be sacrificed now?

It is a structural problem. A state that has no means to enforce its monopoly of power and the same rule of the same laws on all its territory and upon all its citizens is weak. The question is whether it is kept weak by its elites or whether these invest all their energy to strengthen both society and the state institutions. In the case of Macedonia one of the major challenges from its very creation was and continues to be the line between crime and politics. A line so microscopically thin that it can often not be found. And the interconnections have become so intricate that there is hardly any serious attempt to untangle this network.

A very obvious visualisation of these interconnections is the armada of buildings popping up everywhere in Skopje and its surrounding villages. Given the sheer number and size and the general state of the economy, it is highly unlikely that these are all generated by legally acquired money. Many of them do not possess the appropriate documentation, making them illegal. But what has been happening in the last two decades? At the most, some, actually very few illegal buildings owned by persons close to the respective opposing political structure got knocked down. One could call it an act of legality, but it could also be seen as a warning. Or as an open invitation to pay for keeping the building. And the current attempt to legalise the situation is nothing but an act of capitulation of the state. The amnesty for urbanistic crime will leave sustainably damaged and scarred landscapes behind. The Skopje neighbourhoods of Kisela Voda and Debar Maalo have fallen prey to criminal structures, as have large parts of other boroughs. While a clear cut is probably the only realistic way of dealing with a situation that got out of hand a long time ago, it is this clear cut that will undermine the credibility of the state institutions even further. Try to explain to fifteen families that have lost access to daylight overnight and for good, because somebody has decided to build a building literally in front of their windows, that an amnesty is the best way to deal with this issue. Needless to say, (that) literally nobody, including the civil society, is helping these people.

(Which)This brings us to the next point: the so-called civil society. In Macedonia, the third sector has yet to play the role of a political and social corrective. The undoubtedly numerous interventions and creations of networks have created a parallel universe, in which, driven by what is now a diminishing interest of international donors, a new middle class has established itself. It is still frail in its self-definition, but rather skilled in securing its own survival. The question is whether this substitute for the Western bourgeoisie will ever develop a consciousness of real citizenship, taking its role and responsibilities within society seriously, while legitimately striving to succeed socially and economically.

The status quo is not really encouraging. A highly politicised and polarised NGO sector is currently offering itself as a willing instrument to the political players and to those behind the scenes. The watchdog role has either been neglected or carried out in an insufficient way. The result is a very low level of credibility of the civil sector among citizens.

There have been many articles written on the ailments of civil society in Macedonia. Most of them look at how things should be, which is legitimate in itself. But why not have a closer look at what there is? Civil society is also merely an expression of the structures within Macedonian society. And these are still focused on subsistence and survival of the family – and I mean family in the broadest possible terms. What this means is that anything will be done for the well-being of the close (and closed) collective. It takes no sociological studies to understand that this is the nurturing ground for the type of patronage and clientelism so typical for the entire region. As long as the focus of society does not shift from the collective to the individual, these reflexes will continue to persist. In a society, which in recent years has been confronted with nu-

merous processes of transformation: privatisation, decentralisation, ethnicisation and in which the public sphere is occupied to an overwhelming extent by political forces, there is little space for a political culture of critical citizenship to develop.

It is thus hardly surprising that the governing structure is currently facing very little resistance from civil society. And where it does, it is so weak that the political machine has no difficulties putting it down. A rather inglorious example is the law on antidiscrimination, which came into force at the beginning of this year. Despite its title, it institutionalises discrimination against persons with any other sexual orientation (that) than the one dictated by the political and religious mainstream by explicitly refusing to include these groups into the text of the law. Criticism from the European Commission was dismissed with the formula that the social discourse was still not favourable to such decisions. The leaders of the main religious groups went public against same sex marriages and the adoption of children by same sex partners. The government structures(,) and some of its exponents rather explicitly fired up the issue, creating an artificial atmosphere, in which no critical debate was possible. And the civil society response? None, (apart from) except by the organisations dealing directly with gay rights. And those are small and weak. Regardless of the fact that it is not in line with the European acquis communautaire, the law has become reality. So far, a vast majority of the discussions I had in private with Macedonian enlightened citizens on this issue contained an element of (sometimes tacit) support for the government on this issue. Deviant sexual behaviour is still considered abnormal and pathological. Needless to say, (that) this content has found its way into schoolbooks, where children are conditioned from an early age to perceive and think of discrimination against others as a normal act. This is the situation. Changes are unlikely to happen overnight.

Speaking of children: problems with the education system have become acute. It seems that the insufficiencies of past decades have cumulated and the development is reaching its peak now. Or rather – the exponential curve is almost vertical. The problems are numerous, but what counts here is that generation after generation of children are carried through the system without being given the essential tool that will turn them into emancipated citizens: critical thinking. Without that, only the very few (only) who receive this knowledge at home will be enabled to make use of it. The others will remain obedient, uncritical, and easy to manipulate. In other words, just the right mass for political games. I just want to recall the groups of youth destroying Albanian or Muslim owned shops in the centre of Skopje in 2001, an amorphous mass led by a small group of professionals. Or the groups of Albanian youth going from polling station to polling station and voting multiply. Criminal offenses conducted by party soldiers. Not by critical citizens. Or may I recall the ugly scene on the Skopje square, where a gang of party affiliated hooligans beat up a group of demonstrators with the police standing by? Party soldiers, not critical citizens.

These are the scenes that are recalled in discussions at home, are mediatised, that jump from cell-phone to cell-phone and on social networks. It is cool to be rough. Imitate the gangster attitude and culture that has become the mainstream on globalised media. It is a global problem of urban agglomerations. In Western countries the education system may not be perfect. And the German one has repeatedly been criticised for not offering opportunities to all children, thus cementing social stratification from early age on. The British system is not even trying to offer equal chances. It is the money for value mentality. I could find a lot of other negative examples. The Macedonian system however is levelling downwards. No quality for all. Like this, everybody will have the same chance after finishing compulsory secondary school. And the higher education has become an industry for issuing diplomas, in which the question of quality has become a factor of little relevance, compared to the economic benefits for the main players.

Critical thinking? Why and for what reason? Because thinkers are more difficult to manipulate, one would think. At least this is the mainstream discourse in pedagogy. When I look at the aberrations produced by the culture of political correctness in North America and Western and Central Europe, I do have my doubts though.

Political parties in Macedonia need soldiers. They breed or hire them, they use them. Mostly it is misused youth we are talking about. Just look at the not so small numbers of young men hanging in front of the major parties' headquarters, hoping to catch a job, an assignment. Ready to do anything to feed their family. It is partially desperation, the result of two decades of governance leaving one third of the work force jobless. But it is also the certainty that patronage and clientelism work. They never stopped doing so for centuries. Modernisation has not reached this layer of society. Only the means of communication have changed, have adapted. No contemporary politician without a Facebook page, on which his or (more rarely) her followers can compete in reaching attention by clicking the "Like" button. The post-modern kow-tow. And maybe, just maybe there's a job coming out of that. Humiliating? Yes, for an individual. But normal for a member of a tribal unit. It is merely a necessary career step.

And since there is a serious lack of jobs out on the free market, the (g)Government is creating them for its followers. Politically correct and ethnically divided. While the new Ministry for Information Society and Administration works on the ethnic Macedonian side, the Secretariat for the Implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement does the same for ethnic Albanian followers, and more recently, for the smaller ethnic groups. Hundreds of party followers receive subsistence and are expected to perform according to party expectations. What this does to the efforts to modernise the administration and to turning it into an efficient and transparent body is self-explanatory.

It is not surprising that this kind of followership does not produce a political culture of dialogue and debate over issues. It is the mentality of Janissaries, of unconditioned obedience, that is nurtured here. Hence the continued clashes between party troops, especially in the pre-election periods. The people clashing do not do that because of ideological differences. They are executing orders, which are often kept vague and allow a broad range of possible interpretations. "I would go through fire for my party leader", a young party spokesman told me not that long ago. I could not imagine a German party spokesman saying anything coming close to that. And he wouldn't need to, either. It is simply not required. It is a job, just as that of the party leader is.

Another element of Macedonian political culture is the party muscle flexing between clashes: rallies. Party rallies are the mastodons of political communication; they are occasions to mark the territory. In Macedonia party rallies have the character of a picnic: busses full of people in need are shipped to Skopje to show presence, while the "supporters" receive a small daily allowance and a sandwich. Everybody knows it, everybody does it. So why bother? For a few unimpressive moments on TV news and a few skewed pictures in newspapers?

A democratic political culture can only strive in a free media environment, such is the current mantra. I also have my doubts here. Some of the finest examples of political culture were created in situations of resistance against totalitarian regimes. It is in the friction against the regime, the constant confrontation that brings out the extremes in humans. For the good and for the bad. It is not by accident that some of Europe's finest thoughts on the nature of politics came from people who have been persecuted either for their beliefs or for who they were: Hannah Arendt, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Martin Niemöller, György Konrád, Jorge Semprún, Václav Havel, Milo Dor, Victor Klemperer, to mention only a few.

Not that I am pleading in any way for anything but free media. It is just that a free frame does not automatically mean a free spirit. To stick to the Macedonian example,

263

I have witnessed some of the worst examples of so-called journalism in this country, who continue to pervert the very idea of a free press for a variety of reasons, most of them being linked to personal gain. Even if Dragan Pavlovic Latas and Slobodan Tomic have nothing in common, they stand for the same type of perversion of their profession. To make your delusions of grandeur come true is in no way better or worse than to make up for lack of professionalism through hyper-servility to the ruling party. On the other hand, the relative freedom of the last two decades has produced very few remarkable stories. Why? What we hear at every occasion is that the owners and editors do not allow good, investigative journalism. It certainly is true. But I doubt it is the entire story. Education or rather the lack thereof plays its part. But how can one expect good journalism from persons who have not learned at any stage in their lives to critically use their potential for their own good and within their personal limits?

There are a large number of popular sayings boiling one issue down to its essence: everybody is an expert, everybody is a genius, and certainly everybody would know how to do things better. This is the perspective of the couch at home, or at most of the world seen through a glass of beer. Because when it comes to it, the good old Yugoslav workers' self-administration and the endless talking deriving from it have produced little else but pure conformism.

What I (am) miss(ing) in Macedonia is the sub-cultures, the counter-culture, the underground. I often hear that Skopje is too small, that it leaves no space for subcultures. Let me counter that: the small town in southern Germany where I spent part of my teenage years belongs to a region, in which protestant Christian fundamentalism is the mainstream. It is a prohibitive culture that dismisses all savoir vivre as sin. And it is a town of twenty thousand inhabitants. But it has produced a strong counter-culture, an underground that at some stage radiated into the entire region: punk and politics, parties and clashes with the authorities, the fight for the right to exist, combined with arts, jazz and cultural events, across generations, across the borders imposed by tradition, and against the mainstream. Much of that has become mainstream today(,) and has created cultural institutions, which have contributed to somewhat opening up the entirely secluded and closed society within a period of more than fifty years. So – size is not an argument. What makes all the difference is the tribal reflex, or the lack there of. Even in protestant fundamentalism it is the individual that stands at the centre of the philosophical or religious construct, in his personal relationship to a punitive god. The essence of Western culture is the individualism. Tribal reflexes are pre-modern and anti-modern, the group is always more conservative than some of its individual members.

Macedonians (and by this I mean citizens, regardless of ethnic background) are torn between the two concepts. On one hand there is the strong group reflex, whether perceived or real, whether traditional or neo-mimi(k)cry. I rarely hear people talk about themselves in political contexts. It is much more often the "us" I am confronted with, together with the laments about the small, neglected nation. Or the "us" as part of a larger nation, across state borders and conflicts. It is a defensive state of mind. Groups do not produce paintings, neither do (not) they write books, nor theatre plays, nor do (not) they make films. Individuals do.

I often hear complaints about turbo-folk taking over public life. And they are well founded complaints. The success of this phenomenon is as frightening as it is unbearable. But what is behind it is the real problem. Turbo-folk is an expression, a materialisation of the periphery taking over the centre. Palanka (against) versus urban life. The values that the periphery stands for are in strict opposition to those of an urban, civil society. It is the group, the mob, the gang against the individual. It is the glorification of thieves and murderers, sometimes wrapped in national colours against creators of culture. It is the impenetrable snarl of family ties, clientele relations and grey economy

(against)versus the rule of law, and versus (against) transparency and accountability. It is stealing from society and the state versus paying taxes and contributing to building a society.

Each of these concepts produces its own political culture and the clash of the two continues to take place in Balkan societies, including the Macedonian one. Regardless of undeniable progress on the path of European integration, at the moment it seems as if the urban, liberal, libertarian and individual-centred culture is being hit hard. It is an apparent paradox, and coming to terms with it is giving the European Union a hard time. It is slowly learning from the Bulgarian and Romanian experience that institutions are not enough. It is also about the kind of people working in them. Qualification on paper is also not the only answer. It is the mental setting that matters just as much. Even the best institution will be eroded by the spirit of the palanka, if this is allowed to spread.

On the other hand, it is unfair to expect miracles. As I have said in the beginning, political culture cannot be anything else than an expression of the state the society is in. In reality, this society is stumbling from exam to exam. Except that the final one seems to move further and further away. The accession criteria are hard to reach for a society that still doesn't know what it stands for. The conflict between centre and palanka in a country, which is itself at the periphery, can easily produce democratic facades, behind which the fight for control of as much as possible of the opponents' assets is becoming more and more brutal. Post-democratic temptations are present in the entire region, and instruments to keep them at bay do not really exist. The current political culture is not such that it would oppose these tendencies on a large scale, all the more so as participation in societal corruption is still beneficial for a large majority of the population. The real challenge for the Macedonian political culture and implicitly for the induction of social change is the discovery of the individual rather than the group as the centre of its identity. And there is a lot of work to be done to get there.

Sasho Ordanoski

Saso Ordanoski (46), Macedonia, is a professional journalist/editor in the last 27 years. His B.A. is in Journalism and his M.A. in Sociology, both at the University of "St. Cyril and Methodius" in Skopje, Macedonia. In his long standing professional carrier he was a regular contributor to many domestic and international printed/electronic media. Among other things, he was a Managing Director and Editor-in-chief of the national public broadcaster Macedonian TV and a Managing Director of the national commercial TV Alsat-M, founder and owner of the weekly "Forum" newsmagazine, Macedonian country editor for the London's based Institute for War and Peace Reporting etc.

He is a consultant/analyst for various international organizations and institutions on media, democracy, security and political issues, as well as a member of several international organizations dealing with media and/or democracy. He is teaching journalism and communicational skills at University of South-East Europe based in Tetovo, Macedonia. He is one of the founders and a standing President of Transparency Macedonia. Currently he is Director for Media and Public Affairs at regional investment and consultancy company VEVE Group, based in Tirana and Skopje.

Sasho Ordanoski

Important Announcement: The Political Culture in Macedonia is Indefinitely Postponed

It is well known in the theatre studies that in most of Shakespeare's crucial trage-dies (*Macbeth, Hamlet, King Lear, Richard III, Othello*…) the focal issue is reduced to two problems: the desire for absolute power and the question of *loyalty*. The intertwining of the treacheries and distrust, numerous fratricides and patricides, the court conspiracies mixed with the ambition for absolute power, are the potent dra-matic *agents* that move the tragic characters in the world of Shakespeare. The guilt and the punishment in that world of endless set-ups and deceits seem not to be in any correlation at all, since not a single triumph of justice is guaranteed and becomes a subject of a new treachery in the very next act.

Such pretentious introduction could in-duce wrong expectations for the develop-ment of the theses in this text – namely, that Macedonian politics also resembles Shakespearean tragedies. Actually, the twenty years of Macedonian transitional democracy abound in political treasons and inside-party "fratricides," with a moral-ity crawling and with such characters as if they had run away from rehearsal of some

Political parties in Macedo-nia and the moral values that they exercise and pro-mote are one of the key factors affecting the politi-cal culture in this country.

267

Left behind on the margins of the democratic reforms undertaken in the last two decades, the political parties turned into powerful centers of political clientele, corruption and non-transparency. Political parties in Macedonia have always attempted to "occupy" the democratic life in the society and to impose their own recruits and logic of values in the public administration.

amateur production of *Richard III*. Yet, the Macedonian democratic scenario lacks the Shakespearean dimensions not because the plots are not tailored around the ambition for total power or domination over the political opponents. But because our characters rather resemble the heroes of *The Suspect* by Branislav Nušic: closed in their provincial mentality, the menagerie of Nušic's characters suffer from various forms of grandness-mania, paranoia, sick ambitions, greed, half-literacy, corruption, and a wide range of socio-political illusions.

In the first decade of the second millennia the Macedonian political class is still showing stubborn persistence to undergo rational political analyses. In order to comprehend the "underwater currents" which create the public policies, parties' attitudes and their human resources' structures in the Macedonian political daily routine, we must apply the multidisciplinary approach to socio-political analyses in which the politics is intertwined with the familial, criminal, business and psychological inclinations of the main actors.

This ambience strongly affects the quality and level of both political culture and political dialogue in the country. Political culture is the "substance" that fills-in the public sphere in the space between the state and the civil society, which is a space not belonging to the privacy of the citizens. The language of that culture reflects the relation of the citizens toward democracy in the society and speaks of the respect for the institutions of such democracy. That is, after all, an indicator for the legitimacy with which the power exercises its rule.

The characteristics and elements of the political culture are being widely researched both in the political theories and in the political philosophy, especially in the second half of last century. The research on creating political attitudes in democracy and their influence (G. Almond, S. Verba), or the research on the political culture of the masses and of the elites (A. Liphart), as well as on the political and social mechanisms which contribute to larger or smaller cohesive power in the societies with different political culture, are a fine pointer for interpretation and understanding of domestic actualities.

Each society in its own specific way determines the major pillars of the political culture in the country. In the Macedonian multiethnic, multicultural and multi-confessional democratic model, the main characteristics of the political culture encompass the principles of *tolerance*, *compromise* and *inclusiveness* as major discourses in the public political debate and in the actions of the political parties and the non-party structures in the democratic system. The quality of the political culture is being determined by the tendencies of increase or decrease of the representation of these principles in the social life and in implementing the public policies. It could be alleged that if a regular system is established for measuring the tendencies of these valuable socio-political aggregates, a relatively precise picture could be achieved regarding the degree of social conflict and the quality of political culture in Macedonia. That, in turn, affects es-

sentially the building of *moral values* in the society, as an imprint of the time we live in.

In circumstances of not yet established institutions, which integrity is under severe pressure of the daily-political interests, the system is not able to "hit back" and to maintain its own independence and professionalism. Because of the party-political instrumentalisation, the state institutions in charge of protecting the public interests and, especially, of prudent spending of the public money, do not operate with their required capacity. They are not able to ensure political neutrality in the public sphere and to establish objective standards of values around the "ring" in which a vehement political debate could be led that would not jeopardize the stability of the system. The state and the social sphere are maximally *partisized*, spreading the logic and the interests of the parties in power.

And what is the kind of moral and political values that Macedonian political parties promote, as distinguished factors of the political culture in the country?

The current government in Macedonia, with its unprecedented ambitious agenda to impose its own party logic in each social and state pore of Macedonian society, undergoes through a record-breaking crashes in the domains of tolerance, compromise and inclusiveness. With these three fundamental pillars of the Macedonian democratic model under severe attack, the political culture and political dialogue in the country is demolished.

"THE HOLY COWS" OF MACEDONIAN POLITICS

After two decades of Macedonian democracy and numerous endeavors to reform the Macedonian society in all its political and economic dimensions, it astonishes that one crucial sphere for the proper operation of democracy has remained virtually untouched by the wave of changes that, in one way or another, have flooded our society. That sphere is the "forbidden zone" for reforms, our democratic *terra incognita* – **the functioning of the political parties in Macedonia**. Our parties, these "Holy Cows" of the Macedonian political system, still remain bastions of the non-democratic relations that reigned in communism. Within them, the tradition of the "democratic centralism" is extended. Through pyramid structure of power and control, the role of the party pinnacle is almighty and inviolable. Even where it is not clearly statutory forbidden, in reality, in-party factions and differing opinions are unimaginable. To have an opinion different from that of the leader is rather non-recommendable and quite often it is thought of as equal to treason. Even when some individuals emerge who would insist on their own intellectual autonomy, it does not get further from newspapers' columns, without any significant influence over the parties' positions and their operation.

The inside-party processes for making decisions and creating policies are basically non-transparent. Although all parties have formally proclaimed the significance of opinions by the base and *bottom-up* method for building attitudes, in practice the processes most often happen the other way round, according to the principle *top-down*. The application of such principle in building internal attitudes leaves severe consequences in the operation of the parties. When the substantial part of the communication comes from the top, then the primary principle is *distribution* of the at-

titudes *toward* the membership, and not *gathering* the knowledge and experiences valued by the party base. Speaking of systems, it means that the party leadership is always more important than the base. Thus, both the interests and gains of engaging with politics are processed in this direction. Such "command" systems are easier to manipulate, and are more susceptible to corruption of any kind (financial, carrier, moral). They are also more dependent on the charismatic leaders and the inside-party "mythologies" being weaved around the leader and his surroundings.

As a consequence, the key factor considered within the personnel policy in the parties is the one of closeness and loyalty to the leader, interpreted by the leader himself and by his close-knit associates and *protégés*. Such a system, in due time, becomes increasingly ideologically nonflexible (the attitudes of the base are being adapted to the directives of the leadership) and *exclusive* (not *inclusive*). Since this system is flowing one-way only, what reigns in it is the negative personnel selection according to the criteria of adjustment to the instructions obtained by the leadership. The human resources "cancer" irreversibly spreads itself throughout the tissue of the party, thus creating bureaucratic structures according to the rule that **the first-rate** party "managers" promote **first-rate** associates; **the second-rate** party officials bring third-rate associates. So far, the Macedonian party experience indicates that the number of first-rate human and professional material among the parties tends to decrease.

In The Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM), as an official successor of the Union of Communists of Macedonia, due to the inertia of the democratic centralism and the "committee" type of reasoning, many of the creative and capable activists had left or were even brutally thrown out from the party with cyclical and foreseeable regularity in the last two decades. The kadrovska policy has the function of maintaining the clear-cut party vertical with the leader on its top and his unquestioned rule. Statutory speaking, internal party factions related to certain issues or interests cannot be created, although the party stipulated that each member can have a separated or contrary opinion on particular matter, and should not face any consequences thereafter. Yet, even when in the two decades history of SDSM some party "unlike-minded people" did emerge, they were efficiently isolated on the margins of the party influence. Soon they were stigmatized as unwelcome *squabblers* or "salon-intellectuals" or treated as "necessary evil" in building the party "democratic centralism."

The emphasized crypto-communism in the personnel policy of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization - Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) is cynically camouflaged, among other things, with announcing "public competitions" for nominating members from the lower up to the highest party leaderships. This parody of the democratic principles does not help to change the party functioning according to the model of strict subordination. As if they are a military organization, the leader is its f*ield-marshal* with unlimited power to rule even with the tiny pores of the "army" life. Moreover, in order to avoid any ambiguities, the current Statute of this party in Art.22 stipulates the "democratic" right of its president with which he "can block implementation of decisions and other acts by the [party's] Executive Committee and other [party's] institutions and bodies" for which he is only obliged to inform the party Central committee. In DPMNE the unlike-minded people with the leadership are not even treated like "necessary evil." They are traditionally proclaimed as traitors of the patriotic and the national cause, which results with utter excommunication of the different-minded people and their both in-party and public exposure on the "pillory."

With the Albanian political factor in Macedonia the party democratic standards are at an even more rudimentary level, with frequent outbursts of pre-political phases in the party acting. In the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) the "court games" prevail among the commanding structures of the ex-guerilla movement and the new "intel-

lectual wing" in the party, shadowed by the mythology of the status of the "icon" for the "fight for liberation of the Albanians," epitomized in their leader. In the Democratic Party of the Albanians (DPA), on the other hand, the situation is painfully simple: there is the leader and his spokesperson – all the others are not important and are replaceable *screws* in the party mechanism for supplying and channeling the resources that are placed at the disposal of the leader with no objection.

The other, smaller parties on the stage, mainly operate as solitary leaderships, whose sole task is, through coalition with the major election winner at the next elections, to provide some bread and butter for several leading party officials (MP positions or directors of any public institution/ enterprise) or some lower positions in the "sea with no shore" of the hundred-of-thousands strong public administration.

IDEOLOGICAL "LEMONADES"

This discouraging circumstance with party democracy and negative human selection in Macedonia is due to several key factors. In the beginning, of course, is the chronology of creation and development of the political parties. Most of them – perhaps only with an exception of DUI in the first years of its establishment – do not draw or absorb their developing party logic from the social or ideological (with an exception to the ethnic) stratification of the political body in Macedonia, which would thus represent a reflection of the actual need in the society to articulate specific demands of their own voters. Instead, today they represent a sequence of futile in-party faction movements and fights for supremacy in the several major political formations established in the beginning of the nineties of the last century. Such chronology, besides being spiced with the vanity and spite of the various leaders and pseudo-leaders in the parties, is also significantly directed from the performance of other societal structures of power: deployment of particular business structures and accomplishment of their short- and long-term profit interests; or the intrigues and operations on various levels and off-springs of the Macedonian (and other, as well) secret services, which still manage to significantly control the unfolding of the public processes in Macedonia through controlling individuals in the political life in the country.

The following factor of influence is not specific only for Macedonia, since it is a global democratic phenomenon: we live in a "post-ideological" time ("the end of history") in which the parties, all of them uniformly committed to market capitalism, can hardly be distinguished from "left" to "right" ideological indicators, because they have constructed their systems of values as kaleidoscopic pictures conditioned by the daily policy of the momentary prevailing interests. In the last ten years, in Macedonia as well, the wave of political populism has "ironed" the ideological differences among the major political competitors, thus making their ideological platforms generalized and unrecognizable. For instance, the popular-rightist rule of VMRO-DPMNE is marked by some crucial characteristics of the traditional leftist ideologies combined with the desire to introduce "firm hand" in the society: extensive subsidies programs, huge (and increasing!) inefficient state apparatus, apparent clash with the large capital, desire to control the large part of the actual economic sector, to limit the freedoms in all domains of the civil life, to increase the taxes under the mask of their decrease, open anti-western and anti-democratic tendencies, instrumentation of the media…

Once crucial ideological and program commitments that represented the "holy water" to the party membership and which energized the party masses, are now diluted to the level of ideologically diet "lemonades."

Such general "dis-ideology" results in a political struggle performed in the "theatre" of the activity which gains the prime political significance – public relations. The perma-

nent *mobilization* of the membership and the *monopolization* of the non-party public, devoid even of relevant ideological content, is the main task of the party activists and loudspeakers. The experts on public relations are more significant than the party ideologists. The campaigns become more and more negative and aggressively hostile, turned into a competition about the "size of the nose" of the opponent, instead of a debate about the party values and the suggested plans for managing the state. The political culture weighs down by non-culture, and in the public clash the means are not chosen.

CRIMINAL ASSOCIATIONS

All this is entangled with enthronement of yet another significant factor in the functioning of party life and democracy in the society. Namely, the political process has become so expensive (in money terms!), that parties are forced to operate as some corporate associations which would be capable of collecting enough money in order to finance their own expensive operations to either stay in power or win it over. There are almost no volunteers, neither for sticking party posters nor for dispersion of flyers; every engagement is being paid for, in one or the other way. The number of those who are involved to help in the party activities without any personal interest is very small.

Because the existing laws (neatly copied from the legislations in the developed democratic world) stipulate rigorous measures for the amounts and the ways of legal party financing – amounts that do not nearly correspond to the factual party needs – there are two tendencies that all parties carry out in reality: firstly, the laws on financial activities of the parties are being immensely ignored by tacit agreement of all sets of authorities and of the authorized state services under their control which should otherwise sanction such illegitimate activities; and secondly, due to the large financial needs, the parties from pseudo-corporations are turned into massive criminal associations which fill in their cashboxes by applying various techniques for obtaining "black" party money: racketeering of the business-sector, announcing "party taxes" for the employed party cadre at the state and local level, money laundering in most various ways, "occupying" the tender procedures in the state, but also other, often heavier criminal forms.

This diagnoses is illustratively confirmed by a recent example from the neighborhood: "Use these money to finance the election campaign, since elections are financed with two thirds illegal and one third legal money" – allegedly this is how Ivo Sanader, the arrested ex-Croatian prime minister and president of HDZ, advised his successor Jadranka Kosor, leaving more than two million Euro of illegal money in the party safe at the moment of handover of the party leading position. As a matter of fact, the statements of the arrested owner of A1 TV, Velija Ramkovski, about the illegitimate ways with which the current Macedonian ruling party financed its party campaign from the state budget are strong evidence for the degree of the unscrupulous criminalization of the Macedonian democratic space.

Certainly, there is no need to further explain and discuss the devastating influence of such party activities on the functioning of the whole state. Practically speaking, the state is a hostage of the ruling party structure, which has turned into a criminal association with a right to rule *over* (and not *with*) the state.

WAR UNTIL EXTERMINATION

All these factors add to the distortion of normal democratic processes, and the political competition is turned into a "war until extermination" in which the *winner-takes-it-*

all, and the loser loses everything. Such model of "all or nothing" in the politics is also called a model of "zero sum game" - the winner gains as much as the loser lost and in order to enlarge the benefit on one side, the loss of the other side must proportionally increase. The objective of the parties is, through "democratic" elections – the word *democratic* is in inverted commas since with regard to the financing of the process, the abuse of media, the threats on the free choice of the citizens, the games with the election lists, etc., the elections in Macedonia do deserve *democratic* inverted commas – to obtain "ownership" over the state and its resources, and to completely squeeze out the political opponents on the margins of the society and to exclude them from the normal forms of political endurance. The logic of "eating alive people," spoken or not uttered, is the expedient and the incentive for the general political battle "until extermination." When once they win over the power, muscle-bound with steroids of the unlimited disposal of the state resources after one's own fashion and personal whim, the party oligarchies are prepared to utilize all allowed and less allowed means to stay in power.

Such uncompromising strategy turns the democracy into an *instrument* and the power into an *objective*. In this world of Machiavelli, all means are allowed for accomplishing the goal. So, if democracy is the obstacle to come to/remain in power – so much the worse for it!

In terms of the party, such distortion of the sense for democratic competition in the society produces one criterion in the behavior that stands out as primary over all others – the *loyalty* toward the party, that is, toward its leader. You could be smart or fool, educated or with no education, honest or corrupted, but you certainly must not be disloyal. Loyalty, to be on the safe side, is fortified by signed statements for resignation from the public position obtained by the party, to be used if the leader finds it necessary. This idiosyncratic party-political *omerta* has lately gained new dimensions of loyalty as well, in that, the blood relation is being promoted as an additional guarantee acquired with the membership in the party. If the connection cannot be created by direct *blood relation*, then marriages and godparents are set up which should guarantee the mutual bond and silence for all use and abuse that had been made for the goals of the party, that are established, interpreted and proclaimed by the party leadership, that is, the leader.

Such established loyalty really reminds of the atmosphere in Shakespeare's tragedies: the story is full of drama and of blood and tears as well, but also full of paranoia from treasons and continuous court conspiracies. That is "medieval" loyalty toward the personal/group interest, and not toward the modern standards of the democratic values or toward the state interests. In this model of authority, the principles and procedures of the democracy and the state interests are okay, provided they only suit the interests of the party in power. Such loyalty is awarded with career development and increase of incomes, and with providing for the kin and the offspring. This makes the loyalty like a "two-way street" because it pays to both sides. It is much more about *pathology* than *politicology*.

DIALOGUE UNDER A TENT

In this ultimatum political context – *Either us or them!* – political agendas are maximalist, and the party command is "take no prisoners." The public political dialogue among the political opponents rather resembles the war negotiations under a tent, on the margins of the battle field, or in some wagon parked in a bay. The international factor in numerous circumstances warns about the lack of constructive political dialogue in the country. Such tendencies are getting more severe, instead of more relaxed. The international factor should most probably have to engage the hostage crisis experts

for negotiations (Pardew, Solana, the late Holbrook?), since Macedonian democracy does truly resemble a hostage hijacked by some gang of criminals who come to power by elections.

When VMRO-DPMNE came into power in 2006 the political dialogue, previously at least taking place in some dignified framework and with some minimal dynamics, underwent a total blockade, in circumstances of utter confrontation among the "warring fractions." The logic of the elected winner in the last parliamentary, local, and presidential elections is that there is actually no need for a dialogue, considering the acquired legitimacy at the elections. Each public articulation of a different attitude than the one from the ruling power will be proclaimed as a support for the opposition. "Either with us or against us!" - there is no "nobody's land", neither hesitancy, nor independence. The unlike-minded people experience a public prosecution and stigmatization which dimensions have the characteristics of the autocratic regimes from the worst periods of the last century. The threats are ranging from social pressures, through limits of a whole sequence of political rights, to tax and criminal prosecution with Kafkian dimensions. The force is being demonstrated in front of cameras and the justice ends even before entering the Skopje 1 Court, escorted by the ugly police "robocups".

The fear is a pertinent element in this type of rule. It paralyzes the public, makes it to distance itself from the different-minded people. The authority does not hide the fact that it intends to reign with each pore of the society: the judiciary, the media, the businesses, the academic community, the non-governmental sphere, the professional and occupational associations, the public administration, etc. We witness a process of comprehensive party occupation of the society, in the name of and on account of one ruling garniture. This perilous party experiment has strong signs of violent social engineering both in the material and in the non-material spheres of the social living.

The project of the ruling power is not being implemented only in the domain of the traditional understanding of economic-political spheres of the society and the party taking over the state institutions. On the contrary, the effort is much more comprehensive and in its ambitions includes: thorough redefining ("total design") of the historic postulates regarding the events and the values of the Macedonian state and society, the architectural appearance of the cities, the role of religion in the civil live, the questions referring to the relationship to the various kinds of minorities in the society, the redefining of the family values, etc.

In its foundation, it could be said that the project of the VMRO-DPMNE has the goal of shifting the liberal value system, which (arduously) prevailed in the Macedonian society in the last two decades, toward much more conservative ideas for constituting a new value system, closer to the understandings of the power. The aggressiveness in imposing the "new views" on the reality and the urgency which is insisted on in torpedoing a large number of established values in the society sometimes also shadows some good intentions and initiatives in this megalomaniac, socio-engineering political venture. The haste and the ideological non-circumspection of the whole project, which should remind of the Macedonian adding up to the "modern conservatism" in the world, produce a whole range of contradictions in reality: the market society and the free economy mean a limited role of the state and non-party chance for free initiative of everyone, and not the other way round; the individual freedoms mean non-interference of the power in their exercise, and not the other way round; the rule of strong "law and order" means strong anticorruption practices by the power and a principle of nonselective rule of law, and not the other way round; strengthening the role of the family values requires high moral standards by the power, and not the other way round; the intention to regulate the social behavior of people (from smoking hab-

its to the number of newly born children in the families) requires ruling by one's own example, and not the other way round; etc.

The contradictions in such "heavy," nervous and nondemocratic atmosphere has a strong reflection on the quality and the manner of the public political and nonpolitical communication in the country. In the official party communication and among the conspirators of the antagonistic options the language of the black propaganda most often prevails. The opponent is reduced to one, and negative dimension, and his actions or statements are taken out of context and attributed deprecating characteristics. The lies are being repeated hundreds of times (often by paid party advertisement campaigns as well) in order to look like a truth. The propagandists invest equal attention to both what should **not** be published, and to what should be published. Competent information is deliberately mixed with unworthy information in order to give the latter some credibility. Credible communication channels are being sought for and paid in order to place non-credible information, while all along both the mass and alternative media are being equally used. The emotions are most often being addressed, and not the reason of the audience, and even the most complex problems are reduced to black-white "quiz" questions to promote their own attitude and to debase the one of the opponent. The fabrications are placed as facts, and the facts are so much twisted that become nonsense.

"THE FURIOUS BULL" OF THE PROPAGANDA

The propaganda in the politics, including the "black" one as well, is nothing new, nor particularly scandalous. The perceptions in the public (and their changes) are a constant subject of the political activity and belong to the closest circle of tasks in the "job description" of every politician.

Yet, what represents a pertinent piece of news in the whole current propaganda activity and in the current mega-project by the authorities to influence the perceptions of the Macedonian public – and by which it crucially differs from the previous periods when similar techniques of political communication had been applied – is not just the extraordinary large quantity of aggression and confrontation which are being promoted by the party centers of communication, but also the quantity of money "in circulation." The bets are dramatically increased by the decision of the government to spend enormously for its own propagandistic machinery. Unfortunately, such qualification is not just rhetoric finesse. "The furious bull" of the ruling propaganda annually spends tens of millions Euro of public money to literally impose its own propagandistic "truth" on the society.

The financial-propaganda offer by the authorities created a large demand on the media and the market that serves the propaganda industry. A significant number of the existing media, the marketing companies and the agencies for public relations, the "research" institutes for measuring the public pulse, the non-governmental organizations and numerous individuals, directed their existence toward the effort to transfer through them as large as possible part of the funds spent by the government for its own promotion and in presenting the values and the projects for which it stands for. A particular logic for "sustainability" of the market is being imposed – the more one spends, the bigger the appetite for new expenditures. The connection among the spent for the propaganda, its effects and the one paying for that becomes existential.

The aggressive, nontransparent and selective outflow of public money in the sphere of the television propaganda in the last several years has/had double task: to rent a dominant space for broadcasting the governmental messages, and also to win over for

itself the independent editing policy at the well-paid news media. The consequences, obviously, are primarily political, but the market ones should not be underestimated. The millions of Euro that flowed on the accounts (and in the pockets) of the owners of some Macedonian televisions resulted in thorough disruption of the price policies on the market (both in the sale of the advertisement space and in the purchase of programs), and in total collapse of the loyal competition on the market. These consequences will last long after cessation of the corruptive high governmental finances spent for monopolizing the media market in the state.

In this manner, the "vicious circle" of the local political practice is closed: the parties need more and more money to either stay or to win over the power; this makes the political process more expensive and more corrupted, and the resources more and more limited and thus the pressure over them larger and larger; that, in turn, magnifies the societal-political conflict and fortifies the *winner- takes- it- all* logic of the political action. The process turns around in a circle, and the "pleasure" from the spent money and reinforced conflicts rises to square number!

EU – YES, BUT UNDER OUR CONDITIONS!

The way out of this situation can be neither quick nor simple. The acquired habits do not easily change, and the existing political elites show no signs of readiness for crucial changes neither in the manner of party organization nor in the methods of political battle. The magisterial way to reform the political system, and along with it the awareness and the political culture in the country is to walk the road of euro-integrations. There are several immense challenges on that road.

On one hand, the European Union is on a crossroad in its own development. In the period that follows, the Union will have to consolidate its economic and energetic position after the global crisis, to resolve the destiny of the Euro and the various aspects of its own "constitutional crisis," if it wishes to remain a stable economic and political zone within the world frameworks. The increase of the political rightist and of anti-European forces in the member countries of EU do not infuse much hope, at least not in a mid-term timeframe, that the achieved accomplishments in uniting Europe would continue with the same tempo as in the last two decades. While the Union bashfully reconsiders its policy toward the neighbors, the integration of the Western Balkans, at least declaratively, remains part of its political priorities. But, it is a fact that the European politics has shifted its focal point from Brussels to the capital cities of the largest EU constitutional states, and such trend of national "closure" of the political agendas has always heralded a time of introspection and re-examination of the foreign-political priorities, and not of active expansion of the Union and opening toward what EU considers its neighborhood.

On the other hand, in the last several years Macedonia shows a strong declarative wish for EU membership, but on its *own* conditions. The ruling structure in Skopje considers as more important the processes of utter "occupation" (*vmro-ization*) of the society and preparation for long-term governing, rather than to seriously and non-selectively implement the reforms necessary for further integration within the EU system. Such priorities of the ruling power will not change in a foreseeable future, particularly when it means bringing enough rating points among the voters for winning the next elections.

These trends, from the aspect of political culture and political dialogue in the country, do not induce any optimism. Macedonia, in short-term and mid-term period, enters in a political crisis caused, above all, by the incompetence to resolve the social and economic problems in the society, but also by the politics, imposed by the government,

of resolving open problems by imposing attitudes through conflict and confrontation. The polarizations in the society are being amplified parallel to maintaining low confidence in the institutions of the system, and the wish for a dialogue among the social, political and other partners in the society is declining.

It only means that the political vocabulary in Macedonia will continue to "harden," the media will prevail with negative news and campaigns, and the parties will sink in their positions anticipating pre-term elections in the following months. The maturing of the Macedonian democracy will go through yet another phase of polarizations and disappointments.

The better times for raising the quality of the political culture in Macedonia are postponed indefinitely.

Dusan Velickovic

Dusan Velickovic (1947), Serbia, is a journalist and writer, author of the books *Images of Doubt*, *Amor Mundi, Internationale, Đinđić, Serbia Hardcore*, as well as the films *Lenin on the Move*, *Mortal Men*, *Immortal Crimes, and Djindjic*: A Life. His works are translated in many world languages.
His stories, essays and articles are published in numerous world publications and newspapers (Foreign Policy, Wienner Journal, La Vanguardia, Washington Post, etc.).
His stories are included in the Italian anthology of Serbian contemporary prose *Casablanka serba*.
Editor in Chief of the weeklies *NIN* (1993-1997) and *Evropa* (2007-2008).
He established the publication Library Alexandria (1998) and the publishing house Alexandria Press (1999).
He received scholarship from Literature Board of Australia Council in Sidney and Melbourne (1983-1985), University of East Anglia, Norwich, England (1988), and Château de Lavigny International Writers' Residence, Switzerland (2006).
He received the International Award for Freedom (Premio Internazionale alla Liberta) from the Societa Libera in 2009.
Velickovic lives in Belgrade.

Dusan Velickovic

A Dialogue with a Suicidal Man

At first glance, Serbia is overflowed with dialogue. One could say that dialogue in Serbia is really *in*. The most popular shows on TV are those that include dialogue and one newspaper even has a standard section, called "Serbia Talks". Politicians are facing each other, unsatisfied workers arguing and economists having dialogues about possible ways out of the crisis. It's a miracle; it all looks so fancy, that one could almost say that the culture of dialogue in Serbia has reached very high level.

For some time now, there hasn't been cursing and swearing in the Parliament, no more throwing shoes at each other in the governing institutions, as the Radicals used to do not so long ago. After the gay-pride parade and the riots through the streets of Belgrade, there haven't been any major outbreaks of hate in the eyes of the public. Even the hooligan fan groups got tired, so one could say that, currently, in Serbia there is a miracle happening when

> The fact that everything is a lie and Serbia is the only truth bearer nobody pays attention to is not something new, however what is new is the fact that these contemplations are increasing their presence in the political and cultural life

it comes to dialogue. So, If we look at the culture of dialogue from a trivial, everyday point of view, we have to admit that the dialogue is becoming "more civilized" in various areas of the political, social and cultural life. People have learned some sort of order; they know how to listen to each others' arguments, to respond to them, they became 'smart-heads' and now understand the difference from subject to object in a sentence, a real sight for sore eyes.

But are the things that we listen daily, both on the political and social scene, a real dialogue or just an imitation of it? Maybe it is just a method for avoiding the real questions, deceiving the other side and through "dialogue" attempting to spin an issue , creating a fictional collective mind, giving it a direction, so that it evolved in a generally accepted prejudice. Or, perhaps it is dialogue in Serbia is a neglected discipline, as the culture, or the political culture, which are in a shambles. In fact, the real question would be: What is on offer on the dialogue market in Serbia and what do we most buy?

I am using the word "market" on purpose, accepting Brian Eno's terminology, derived from his labeling of the era we live in, as an era of a global market place.

"This is a market oriented era", said Eno, "a larger, all-inclusive market is being created, a market that hums with constant negotiations among people, where the ideas, technologies, products, philosophies and lifestyles are being presented to possible buyers and they are tried out, analyzed, rejected, accepted, improved and forgotten. This type of market is relatively free from ideology: the value of each good is determined by the amount of attention it attracts. Currency is just one of the measuring units for that attention; because money refers only to what money can buy (that is one small market inside a bigger one). Many of those goods compete amongst themselves, in order to attract our attention, but they can't be bought with money – for example, societal systems that will contribute to better utilization of human ability: these systems are no longer enforced by categorical and at the same time, frivolous religious or ideological decisions, but they are too a part of the offer, they fight on the market where they are presented, in order for us to approve of them and adopt them by chance. Societal systems are successful to the extent equivalent to the amount of our interest in buying their "stocks" on that "market" – and we don't buy with money, but with the acceptance to live in a specifically determined manner, not otherwise by free will".

This contemplation of Brian Eno is a good enough reason for me to stop pretending that I am sort of a serious theoretician, who is in your face, playing smart and who will go on and on about the culture of dialogue, referring to Plato and various other authorities. That would be a torment, both for me and the reader. What is there to say about that market? All of us are on that market, therefore the personal experience is sufficient enough for the analysis of the conditions on that market.

Therefore, I will make a recollection of my own experience in the "dialogue market" in Serbia. All sorts of things come to my mind, but I will speak of a recent experience. I remember a day in my life, and there were many as such, after which I decided that there was hardly any dialogue in Serbia. Referring to real dialogue that will bring forth key questions, create a sense of tolerance and improve the democratic process.

So, listen to how it happened and see if there is a morale of the story.

I was heading to the city in order to buy this book by Nikola Koljevic, which was posthumously published, *Creation of Serbian Republic – a Diary – 1993 – 1995*. Many in Serbia consider it a cultural occasion of epic character, especially because the foreword of the book was written by Dobrica Cosic, most famous and highly acclaimed Serbian writer. Nikola Koljevic, a university professor and expert on Shakespeare, was one of the closest collaborators of Radovan Karadzic during the war in Bosnia. He committed suicide in 1997. If he had lived any longer, probably he would have ended up in The Hague

himself. I was wondering whether the book and the foreword shed new light on the Serbian nationalism of obsolete ideals and that intrigued me. There could have been something on the market of nationalist arguments that I had failed to see.

Out on the street I saw something written on a wall with spray paint, obviously in a hurry, as if the one who wrote it was scared that someone could notice him: "I live in Serbia and I will die of it". In fact, that piece of writing was there for a long time, but I never missed the chance to read it. And each time I got a different association in my mind.

What came to my mind that day was that the author didn't want to say that Serbia was some sort of a deadly disease; but rather some sort of necessity, similar to what the Polish author Miecczyslaw Jastrun said about life, in his book The Beautiful Sickness.

Today, I am entertained by the assumption that the anonymous author of that message is maybe the same one who wrote "It is spring, and I'm living in Belgrade" on the walls of Belgrade in 1999. I'm almost sure it was the same hand paraphrasing itself. Times have changed, so the definitions have to adapt to them. I like the street art of Belgrade, that dark humor and certain type of perverted optimism.

I knew about a bookstore in the center of the city where I would find the book for sure. In former Yugoslavia, that bookstore was called "The Communist" and its motto was selling ideological and propaganda literature, but in time, rather unexpectedly - it became a cult place for people buying the best and most important books. Today, after yet another paradoxical twist, in a democratic societal surrounding, the very same bookstore travelled back in time and specialized in selling hardcore nationalist literature, establishing itself as some sort of cultural headquarters for the anti-Hague lobby. Immediately after Radovan Karadzic was arrested, his statue was placed at the entrance of the bookstore and his books displayed at a prominent place in the shop-window.

I reached the bridge that connects the new part of the city with the old one. In the middle of the bridge, there was a young man standing on the very ledge, ready to jump in the river. Very soon a crowd gathered on the spot and the police arrived, while the young man pulled out a pistol. It was not clear whether he was threatening the police with it or, he would shoot himself. The police stopped the traffic and in a nick of time, endless queues of vehicles formed on both sides of the bridge, as long as eyes could see. Belgrade doesn't have many alternative routes to its center, so this was the beginning of a general traffic collapse.

The police patiently tried to approach the jumper, but the drivers obviously didn't have time. A middle-aged man shouts through the car window: "Come on, push him over so we can pass!" A group of girls chants: "Jump, c'mon, jump, what are you waiting for?"

There was no time to think whether citizens were insensitive or black humor was closely attached to their hearts, because the whole thing quickly turned into real performance, a cruel theatre as if directed by Antonen Arto himself. A man waving his hands said: "Take that gun away, I'll personally put him out of his misery" Probably, Arto would have liked to see this scene as well; a mother taking her children out of the car, they are smiling and hugging, she lines them up for a photograph with the jumper as the background of the scenery, who can't decide whether to jump.

Somebody said that the police were in fact waiting for a special team, trained to negotiate in suicidal attempts. Then a rumor spread that they could never reach the place on time because there was a traffic gridlock all over the city. This information was seemingly true because the policemen on the bridge decided all of a sudden to solve the situation in a plain, non-scientific manner; a dozen of them quickly ran to the

jumper, he tried to break away and jump but they already had him firmly grasped and with lightning speed he was packed up in a police car.

The curtains fall down in this cruel theater and I go on forward to Nikola Koljevic and Dobrica Cosic.

On the bookstore's entrance a surprise awaited me – the sculpture of Karadzic shattered to pieces. Somebody was passing by the store and could not resist smashing it to the ground. The insulted store owner left the debris and put up a sign: *An exhibition of vandals' applied arts*. I think about Karadzic and how, shattered in pieces, he could really be displayed as an art piece in some post-modern exhibition. While he was whole, he was nothing more than an item of nationalistic idealization, but all that debris of plaster had received a new, very interesting dimension.

I went through the book from Koljevic and glanced at the foreword by Cosic, coming to a fast conclusion that nothing new had happened in Serbian nationalistic publications after all. I gave up on the idea for buying the book, but a thought of Cosic remained in my head: "In front of our eyes, us contemporaries, an epochal inversion of a historical event has taken place: the lie about the genocide in Srebrenica has become a holy and global truth… The lie about the war in Bosnia, a fanatic and despicable lie which by its meaning and consequences it has, could have only happened in a civilization and constellation of a world whose cognitive basis is made out of lies and deceit."

The fact that everything is a lie and Serbia is the only truth bearer nobody pays attention to is not something new, however what is new is the fact that these contemplations are increasing their presence in the political and cultural life. There are alternative and opposing opinions, but they stand isolated and are, in a way, too serious, thus, to many, they simply look like the other side of the coin, like it is the same dogmatism, but in a different color. Some call themselves patriots, others traitors and anti-Serbs. It's said: this novel is anti-Serbian or this play is anti-Serbian, something is always either patriotic or treacherous.

But what happened to Belgrade's irony, to Belgrade's humor that could perfectly mock both sides and that eventually brought Miloshevic and his regime down? It clearly exists, but it takes a bit of searching under the layers of propaganda and nationalist bragging, covered in the mud of the past.

Still, instead of the former communist bookstore, I found the creative and frivolous spirit of Belgrade's cultural life at the frequency of a small, recently founded radio station. Its name was New Radio Belgrade and could be listened to only online. The radio host sings a song about the disco-punk band from New York, *LCD Soundsystem*, but with slightly changed words: *Prishtina I love you, but you're bringing me down*. After that follows an announcement: *Prishtina – Belgrade, mouth to mouth, ear to ear*. That is the beginning of an hour long joint program by New Radio Belgrade and Urban FM Radio from Prishtina, called New Balkan. The entire program is presented as a cultural exchange, as a renewal of terminated contacts and to prevent any type of confusion, the host adds: *Fuck off politics*! And then ironically: *we are here for the money*. Albanian and Serbian language can be heard in the program, but the dialogue is predominantly in English.

Still, whatever they would touch upon in both studios is close to taboo or an extremely sensitive subject, to say the least. But none of the sides pays attention to that. The formula is simple – anything can be looked upon and discussed with ridicule and irony, every political dogma and restraint has its opposite, caricatured face. For example, the broadcast of one of the shows overlapped with the anniversary of Kosovo's independence. From the Belgrade studio they say: "Let's hear your anthem". And in the moment

one would get uneasy, a bit scared, thinking that it is becoming dangerous and perhaps some zealous patriots could barge in the studio and stop the show, Prishtina gets back with the answer: "We haven't downloaded it yet". Everybody laughs to that and it seems like there was no danger at all.

So in this way, the show informs Serbs and Albanians about the latest events on the music scene in their cities, awhile ridiculing the big political truths and slogans. Suddenly, the borderlines seem invisible, non-existent, the same borderlines that were drawn out in this part of the world in the recent decades, as if that "beautiful sickness" is not incurable.

Of course, this show did not last long; it came to an end just like it started, quickly and unexpectedly. As I understood later on, this unexpected alternative dialogue between Prishtina and Belgrade died out because of auto-censorship, and not because of any type of open political pressure. For a different analysis, it would be an interesting fact that the Prishtina side found hard to manage itself in that unrestrained, youthful irony and it tried to distance itself from the slippery political ground. The reason for that, probably, could be the fact that in Prishtina political consensus on the independence was more consolidated and unified, than what was Belgrade's consensus against the independence, although it is legitimate according to the Constitution.

So what did I learn on a day like that, about the market of dialogue in Serbia? First, nationalism, patriotism and war crimes were still hot subjects for dialogue, but it seemed as if there was no one willing to enter that dialogue in the proper way. Supposing we are talking about a market which is totally free and governed by the simple principle of supply and demand; in this case nationalistic and quasi-patriotic ideas sell better.

But everything is not so simple. Obviously, there is something controlling that market. It is enough if you look at the papers or t overhear politicians' public opinions on topics that have never been placed in a real dialogue to understand that the "market" is in a greater part, under control. The media of today have an ambiguous character. In the race for higher print circulation and the desire to satisfy everyone, the media as well as, the political elites are constantly juggling with populist clichés, thus creating and enforcing a certain form of public opinion. This is a vicious circle, we reach the conclusion that readers shaped in this way actually look for these exact topics, this becomes a self-perpetual spiral . I won't say that the media should have the role of educators or that politicians should be zealous enlighteners of the plebs, but in a country in which the political elite and the media are constantly manipulating with historical, national and other clichés and prejudices, you can't expect nothing else than a terrible infinite repetition.

When journalists' texts and political speeches are filed with demagogy, creating a climate suitable for playing around with nationalists and patriots, one could at the least, expect from literature to remain an area in which those social and political clichés would be disclosed. However, only a few writers deal with the time we live in and good pieces of writing are scarce in numbers. I do not believe that the reason for this is the absence of so-called historical distance. It is rather the fact that many writers, just like the readers and the TV audience, are somewhat confused from the charade of ornamenting and covering up the past, hence they do not dare to demystify things. Of course, there are some that feel sorry for the dark past as well, but they do not speak up since that is not *in* these days.

Patriotism is a particularly privileged subject on the market of dialogue; it resembles some sort of monument, protected by the state. Demystification of patriotism is simply never on the agenda, probably because it still keeps its prime position in the shop-window of the store for state-constituting souvenirs. But, the reality is totally different.

Patriotism was considered to be an ugly word because it was primarily used by thugs and various political and other hustlers, from Slobodan Miloshevic and Mira Markovic to Seselj, Arkan, let's not even mention the followers and successors of Karadzic and Mladic. To make matters worse, that word has always inferred that there was another, opposing side, the traitors, who believe it or not have something against those privileged carriers of patriotism. And we know what happens to traitors. The fact that the patriotic propaganda of Miloshevic marked Djindjic and Curuvija as traitors and only assassination was the next step, was one of the most drastic and characteristic examples. Therefore, "patriotism" grew to be such a repulsive and ambiguous word, that I'd rather not use it.

Similar to this, there are words in history which gain completely different meaning with time and we can't help it; is the best thing is to wait for another period in which they could retrieve their original meaning. Instead of patriotism, I would discuss the understanding about the common interest, whether or not we recognize it and insist on it. This is what the political elite lacks and each one of us, individually. But it is never a question of debate, because there are no "buyers" for that dialogue.

Still, the subjects of war crimes and the responsibility of the accused show can a dialogue become a simple imitation of a serious and constructive conflict of opinions. In fact, I would say it is a black stain in the Serbian market of dialogue, something which obstructs intelligence and acknowledgement, the dialectic that never flourishes and progresses. There is submission to nationalists and so-called patriots, but for those accused of war crimes, one can understand from reading between the lines that, they are in fact, in most cases heroes or victims of the historical circumstances.

Recently I had the opportunity to give an answer to a question - Whether or not a good movie could be made about Karadzic I have mention something on this topic in one of my books and now I would like to add on to it. I do not believe that there would be a good movie about Karadzic, because the reality already resembles some silly movie in which the hero flashes around some maps while people get killed, then turns himself into a quack-doctor, and at the end he stages a pointless legally-globalist performance in the International court. One who transfers this reality to a movie, would be making a bad movie; but the one who tries to scratch the surface of this life story, would make something interesting. You could look upon Karadzic, per se, as a prototype of a great fraudster, what is in fact true for all the other actors involved in the so called Yugoslavian crisis. They are only different by the number of dead they left behind and the ones in mourning, due to their fraud politics. The history of the Balkans could be written as a story about magicians and illusionists, which take a rabbit out of a hat with one hand, while they lead the bewitched audience to the abyss with the other.

The way in which this fraud mechanism works –is the real subject for dialogue. Instead, we read how a famous writer gave his opinion on Srebrenica, someone thrashed the statue of Karadzic, someone organised violent demonstrations for support of a prisoner in the Hague and to tell you the truth, quite often you read how Karadzic was just another patriot, defending his people.

A champion in the constellation of subjects on which "Serbia Talks" is of course, the subject of the accession to Europe. Perhaps, it is the most creative ongoing dialogue in Serbia, even though it is alive owning to the pressure from Europe, but it still has one clear limitation. People say: "Yes, we want to be a part of Europe, but with our own identity and culture". At first glance, it sounds logical and convincing and it is not strange that even the President of the country said the same. It is here where dialogue stops and the opportunity seems ideal for throwing around some rusty schemes.

I can certainly understand that the President made this sloppy statement in an old-fashioned way. I suppose that he referred to the idea that we would bring our creativity, our talent, free thinking and free will to Europe, or at least I hope he had these aspects in mind. Personally, I am a bit frightened by the insisting on cultural identity; it sees the image for some collective, fixed fabrication. Identity can only be individual, and culture is not an unchangeable thing which you can give as a gift or dowry, nor keep it in a shop window. There is no pure identity that is ours, nor French, nor European, on contrary; we create it with our individuality, while the culture is in constant interaction and flux. It has been this way until now and it will be like that, after we enter Europe. They will take something small from us; we will probably take more, and things will not be like they used to. This is the way it has always been and we should not be afraid that someone would take away our gusla and trumpets. Still, I interpret the President's statement as some sort of sedative for the vulgar patriots and nationalists, which are in great numbers even among the 'decent gentry' – though still, a more determined demystification should follow on the majority of populist clichés and prejudices, which drag us away from Europe as a chain to our feet. And of course, followed by a true dialogue about the journey of Serbia to Europe and the reasons why does it take so long.

However, one issue from the many that are in control of the Serbian market of dialogue is of high, rather key, importance - . Serbia has the choice, like any other country, to be a boring and sclerotic country in which everything stands still, ruled by provincial mentality and where mediocrity is the only *spiritus movens*, or it can be a lively country, an interesting place which provides opportunity to its citizens for creativity, diversity, mobility… I am afraid that, at present, in Serbia, the provincial state of mind and mediocrity are firmly established, as they seem to be the best way to stay in power or in the executive chair, or dominate in the family. It is only now that I see this as an incurable disease that has spread over all the societies where transition lasts too long and in which, a political class minding only its own interest and not the general wellbeing was created. It is in the essence of such establishment to perceive creativity and exceptionality as something unwanted, which could corrupt the established regime.

In such circumstances, dialogue, in best case can be civilized and decent , but can't reach far, not even to offer simple compassion for a suicidal man on a bridge.

Iso Rusi

Iso Rusi (1951), Macedonia, journalist. He started his professional career in "Mlad Borec" (youth publication) in 1971. Cooperated with weekly "Danas", Zagreb; "Delo" (Sunday edition) and "Teleks", Ljubljana; "Nasa Borba", Belgrade. He was a reporter and columnist for "Koha" and "Koha Ditore", Pristina. Cooperated with the weekly "Puls", Skopje (the first 100 issues) and was editor at the weekly Fokus (1996-2000). Cooperated with the networks AIM and IWPR. Published op-ed's in "New York Times" (1996 and 2001) and "Wall Street Journal" (2002). Rusi is one of the founders and editor-in-chief of the Albanian language weekly "Lobi" and the three lingual web site "Pressonline" (2001 – 2007).

Rusi also worked as a media coordinator at OSI Macedonia (1992 - 1996) and served as Interim President of Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Republic of Macedonia (2007 – January, 2011). He lives in U.S. since 2007.

Iso Rusi

A View on Macedonia from the USA: It's not about the Words, it's about the People

If political culture, interpreted as: "convictions, values, beliefs and aims of the individuals in a society for their political system" is the framework in which the Americans express their ideological and political views, the tool which helps them express their communication should be the culture of dialogue, which begins with the belief that: people with strong differences can relate to each other honestly and respectfully; sacred assumptions can be openly and non-defensively explored; people can relate to each other as unique and complex human beings; the seemingly unspeakable can be spoken – and heard; people can seek a deep understanding of multiple and conflicting opinions and ideas; even where there is disagreement and disapproval, compassion and understanding can displace animosity and with active listening and speaking the truth from their own perspective, people can expand their vision of what can be done"

> The political culture for the Americans is "convictions, values beliefs and aims of the individuals in the society, concerning their political system" or a set of ideas which the Americans share on the matters of governing the country.

But this is not always the case, when it comes to the U.S.A., which stand for the cradle of democracy, where the almost limitless freedom of speech is one of the sacred freedoms, embedded in society in 1791, with the Bill of Rights". The ones who oppose this freedom of speech today, consider that "Free speech is hate speech" and they strive to revoke the First Amendment of the American Constitution with the explanation that: "since 1791 the feelings of countless innocent people have been hurt. The sensibilities of millions have been offended. The right of these people not to be offended has been ignored long enough. In fact, as of now it's a not right".

The vehemence of the language used on the political scene is more than obvious, especially after the Presidential elections in 2008. The ardor between opponents could almost be felt in the air, the division between political options had reached the edge of sustainability, the division (and exclusiveness) of the media, judged by their closeness to one or another (extreme) political pole was more than obvious and quite often, lately, it borderlines with party propaganda, the division in public figures according their political affiliations is becoming relevant for assessment of their professional qualities…

Does all of this resemble something we have already seen in Macedonia?

1. On January 8th this year, in her home town of Tucson, Arizona, while meeting her voters, just one week after the beginning of her second mandate, Gabrielle Giffords was shot in the head. Six other people present on the rally were killed (amongst which a federal judge, a PR assistant from the Congresswoman's office, and common people as well, which attended the rally to see and hear what she had to say and ask her questions) and thirteen more were wounded. The casualties would have been greater in numbers if a group of few brave men didn't stop the gunman, a young man with serious psychological problems who tried to reload another magazine with thirty one more bullets.

The Congresswoman miraculously survived and is in rehabilitation in Houston, Texas, even though the bullet went in and out on the left side of her head.

The tragic event held the prime position for days in all American media, which competed in printing or broadcasting more new information on 22 y.o. Jared Lee Loughner and his psychological problems, for Giffords' recovery or for the brave individuals who protected their dearest in that havoc of gunfire, subdued the gunman and gave first aid to the wounded.

The first interpretation hit the public eye right after the event was over, claiming that it was a direct result of the overheating of political passions and ardor on the American political scene (and the manner in which the media handled it) on which, the two dominant options – the Democrats and Republicans – have held seriously vehement opposite standpoints. For a part of the Liberal-Democratic circles, the aggressive actions and the vocabulary of the Conservatives amongst the Republicans (which grow increasingly stronger, especially through the Tea Party Movement) create "bad blood" amongst the common people.

Following the initial information on Congresswoman Giffords was the map of the U.S.A. with marked electoral units, in areas where the Republicans should do their best to beat their Democratic opponents. One target was the electoral unit of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords. This map was uploaded on one of the sites of Sarah Palin, who unfortunately lost the vice-presidency in the presidential elections in 2008, being part of the Republican pair and who had in the meantime, emerged as a symbol for the new Republican-Conservative forces. Above the map was the statement: "We have diagnosed the problem… Help us prescribe the cure", a call clearly understood - to beat all 20 democrats, opposed by the Tea Party Movement's candidates, whose sin

was the vote for healthcare reforms, which the Republican call "Obamacare" and its revoking which is marked as a primary goal of the new Republican Congressmen and Senators.

On this matter, Congresswoman Giffords will state in her appearance on MSNBC, concerning the rhetoric of the conservative Republicans, that: „ We need to realize that the rhetoric, and the firing people up and … for example, we're on Sarah Palin's targeted list, but the thing is, the way she has it depicted, we're in the crosshairs of a gun sight over our district. When people do that, they've got to realize that there are consequences to that action…"

Similar ferocious examples added on to this, from the shows of Glenn Back, radio and TV host, the crown jewel of the most viewed news channel, Fox News, Rush Limbaugh, a radio host, which both have largely contributed to the growth of the Tea Party Movement with their media actions, fierce criticism and calls for action against the Democrats and Obama's politics. Limbaugh's last "word of wisdom" is that if they do not revoke the reforms in public healthcare (it succeeded in Congress, but not in the Senate where the majority still stands its ground) then the U.S.A. will have to walk the path Egypt recently did – as means for taking Obama down! Limbaugh even has a slogan for this: "Go Egypt!"

In Macedonian circumstances, Back could be easily described as a combination of the actions of Dragan Pavlovikj – Latas on TV Sitel and the conspiracy stories of Mirka Velinovska, even though when compared to Back, both of them seem utterly naïve. These last couple of months Glenn Back has outdone himself. Two years ago he promoted the real conservative values and became the unofficial ideologist and unselfish promoter of a "People's Movement" in the shape of the Tea Party Movement. At the peak of his viewer's rating and public power, he gathered a few hundred thousand people on Capitol in Washington, on the same date on which Martin Luther King gave his "I have a dream" speech (he explained this coincidence as God's choice) and he declared himself "half-worldly, half-religious" prophet. He explained the uprising in Egypt as an orchestration of the Marxists and Muslim brothers, propagating a cataclysm of the political order in the world, by the schematics of a Communist and Muslim scenario. His competition, MSNBC who follow him closely (and comment) each of his outbreaks, will – with a note of malice – ask: Glenn is losing his viewer ratings, but is he losing his sanity as well?

From the aspect of (too) strong political language, Sarah Palin (faithful to her style, she will condemn the Tucson shooting over Twitter, wishing Giffords a quick recovery) tried to interpret the map on her site for Fox News, but she just made another gaffe, using the term "blood libel" which has been used throughout history as a century old false accusation that Jews used blood from Christian children in their rituals, as justification of their exile.

Even though Sarah Palin's and the Tea Party Movement's support brought victory to many Republican candidates and was surely one of the reasons for losing the majority in Congress, in Giffords' case, her Republican opponent, an ex-marine who even mentioned his M-16 rifle in an attempt to stir emotions and achieve victory, did not succeed in his attempt. Giffords, being an ex-Republican herself, considered herself a "Blue Dog" Democrat and ended up winning.

Only a few days before the shooting, Congresswoman Giffords took part in the first item, on the agenda of the new Congress body, imposed by the new Republican majority – a public reading of the Constitution of the U.S.A. by the members of Congress! Bigger the irony – it was her that had to read the First Amendment, which discusses the freedom of speech, press and expression. The first of the ten amendments of the American Constitution, known as the "Bill of Rights", ratified by the U.S. Congress

on December 15th, 1791, is one of the sacred instances of American democracy. The Americans, like no other people in the World, enjoy a practically limitless freedom of speech, even though there were some attempts on more strict limitations after 2001. Thus, the "Patriot Act" brought after September 11th, 2001 as part of the fight against terrorism, imposed certain restrictions on these practiced freedoms – surveillance on phone conversations, electronic communication and business and financial activities and also insights in health records, etc. which made the activity of media more difficult, for example it obliged journalists to reveal their sources. These attempts fall short (recently the Congress did not vote for the continuation of validity of certain articles of this controversial law and afterwards it hardly managed to get the needed majority of two thirds, which the Republicans own after ten months of continuation).

President Obama faced a hard welcoming by the angry Republican opponents at the very start. The annual presidential addressing to Congressmen and Senators is a tacitly respected event by the whole political specter of the Congress. In his first annual appearance (February 2009) a month after his inauguration, Obama faced the scream "You lie!" by Rep. Joe Wilson, Republic of South Carolina. Hosts like Back and Limbaugh and TV channels like Fox News labeled Obama a socialist because of the alleged redistribution of wealth in the U.S.A. and claimed he attempted to make a socialist state from the U.S.A. alike some European states (in this parallel the difference between social-democrats and Socialists is always omitted) and that his oversized administration spends too much money and will bring the U.S.A. to bankruptcy, that his quasireforms in healthcare will destroy the country. They propagated the claims that he was not born on American ground and therefore, his election was against the Constitution (according the Constitution, a President must be born on American ground). This type of claims and demands is far from naïve, since like a result to a Congressman's demand in Montana, the state will consider a special law, which will examine the presidential candidates and their factual state of birth, even though it is against the Constitution, because it does not fall under the state's jurisdictions but to the Federation, which issues a document as proof. In addition, the proposer of this bill, which if adopted, will be on power only in Montana, considers that every child born on American ground, whose parents are legal citizens of the U.S.A. is considered an American citizen. The proposed bill thus annuls the automatic procedure of gaining American citizenship by simply being born on American ground, established by the 14h amendment of the Constitution of the U.S.A. This is the reason why, the percentage of those who bought the wide-spread lie about Obama not being born on American ground, has risen to 41%.

The Americans that believe in Obama being a Muslim are not so rare. That percentage is quite variable, but by tacit rule is measured by double figures. In a recent focus group, chosen from Iowa by Fox News, almost half of twenty people questioned, answered that they believe Obama is Muslim. In NBC's political show, "Meet the Press", the host David Gregory in an interview with the current Speaker of Congress, John Boehner, asked him why do the Republicans allow the creation of stereotypes about the President's religion. Speaker Boehner replied that it is not his business to tell the Americans what to think. After the host mentioned an ironic statement of a Republican Congressman in which he said that he owned an actual birth certificate (implying that Obama did not own one), Speaker Boehner said that probably that Congressman meant to be humorous.

The journalists and media which are critically oriented towards Obama's administration, quite often and from obvious reasons denote his middle name (Hussein). On assemblies and rallies that emerged with the creation of the Tea Party Movement across America, Obama is not only mocked but depicted as Hitler as well.

The latest example is the caricature in which Michelle Obama is depicted as a fat woman, with a bunch of hamburgers. She is telling her husband Barack, that she has stopped trying to convince restaurants to lower the number of meals with high calorie percentage. Obama, depicted with long donkey ears, answers that it could cost him votes in the next re-elections. The whole thing ends with Michelle's response: "Shut up and pass the bacon!" In MSNBC's primetime show, "The Last Word" the host Lawrence O'Donnell, criticized these caricatures as utterly offensive and racist, calling upon the public but also the parents and friends of the authors of that caricature, to react on the insults addressed to "the most favorite African-American woman in the World". On the conservative site where the caricatures were published, the visitors' comments are either a positive response to the depiction or have been removed by the administrators – one could suppose what sort of language has been used.

Still, when the language and style of political communication come to question, the new structure of the American Congress will be interesting, mostly because the certain contribution by the freshmen in office, from the conservative block which gave a mark of sharp, direct and provocative political speech to the period of pre-elections. Their efforts for decreasing expenses in order to lower the American state deficit in the light of an upcoming debate on budget-cuts, was an endless field of language experiments for the Representatives whose motto was that the American people have spoken their mind ("the people have spoken", "the message of the people") when electing members of the Congress and the Senate in November 2010. Of course, it was excellent ground for comments of the media close to the Democrats about the intellectual level of prominent members of the Tea Party Movement.

The tragic event in Tucson did not result in the strengthening of a critical mass which would comment or restrict the use of the Second Amendment of the Constitution of the U.S. – the right of the people to keep and bear arms, another sacred ground in the American interpretation of freedoms. Originally it was conceived as the right to protect private property and personal safety, in recent time it is often brought to absurd, according to our European views (these rights are being exercised by purchasing automatic assault rifles and like in the Tucson case, the purchase of an automatic pistol with an extended magazine of 31 bullet by a person who had psychological problems for a while, which resulted in his expulsion from college.) After the Tucson incident, the public was informed that the Congress, probably out of fear of unfavorable public reactions, took an approach after the election in November which was closer to the Conservatives, who by definition love the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, did not give continuation to a law which had to a certain extent, regulated the purchase of particular types of weapons in the last ten years.

Be that as it may, the American public rushed to distance itself from labeling the Tucson incident as a consequence of too strong political speech, foremost by the new, emerging Conservative current amongst the Republican lines. It imposed a direct discussion on the quality of language used in political communication. A lot of sober voices were heard in the U.S. Congress, which warned on cautious use of public speech and promoted exclusion of the fierce radicalization used in public speaking.

But this didn't last long as well. In a Congress discussion dealing with the revoking of healthcare reforms on which Obama's administration spent almost the entire first year of governing, the Democratic Congressman from Tennessee, Steve Cohen, will use these words: "They say it is a government takeover of health care, a big lie, just like Goebbels. You say it enough times, you repeat the lie, you repeat the lie, you repeat the lie, and eventually, people believe it." A big part of the Republicans, but a part of the media and the public as well, understood these words as a comparison of the Republicans to the Nazis. The explanation given by Cohen was of little effect, he

explained that Goebbels was known for his political propaganda and probably one of the most effective ones, according to which – a constant repetition of a lie, leads the people to believing in it.

Cohen was given a hard reaction by Liberal programs as well, one of which is the "The Daily Show" by John Stewart. This show, airing on Comedy Central, even though a humoristic one, has been awarded the "Emmy" for years in a row, for best talk-show in the U.S.A. In his merciless and ironic style, Stewart mocked the clumsy comparison by Congressman Cohen, of the efforts of the Obama administration on healthcare with Goebbels' propaganda. And everything would have ended there and then, if a hostess from Fox News didn't take part of the process, claiming that Fox News never used comparisons like that one, not even in the fiercest disputes with the Democrats. In his next show, Stewart aired a bunch of edited footage from Fox News, where Liberal or Democratic politicians are compared to Nazis in various occasions. The footage included almost every host from Fox News, including the hostess herself, which had also made a comparison of the sort on her own show.

This cable TV channel has taken the primary position among so called news-channels in the last year, leaving behind CNN and MSNBC. The increase in viewers overlapped with the emergence and growth of the Tea Party Movement in the lines of the Republicans themselves. Maybe it would be more accurate to say that Fox News, as well as individual "talk radios" like Rush Limbaugh's program have, alike ideologists (and Glenn Back is considered as one) encouraged the increase of Conservatives in the Republican Party and the extreme Conservatives in the Tea Party Movement, which act as their spokesmen. It is not an accident that, amongst the exclusive collaborators of this channel you would find Sarah Palin (Republicans' candidate for vice-president in the 2008 elections), Mike Huckabee (one of the runners-up for a Republican nomination for presidential candidate in the 2008 elections), Newt Gingrich (Republican Speaker of Congress from 1995-1999), Carl Rove (Deputy Chief of Staff for George Bush until 1997)… All of which are mentioned as potential participants in the race for the Republican candidate in the presidential elections in 2012.

Recently, right after the "Super Bowl" finals in American football, following some unwritten tradition, President Obama gave an interview for the network that aired the program, in the case, Fox News. The interviewer was Bill O'Reilly, probably the most appreciated host of political programs at Fox News. Obama is an everyday target in "The O'Reilly Factor", every single action he takes is critically analyzed, and the motto of all claims concerning Obama is either his socialist political orientation or his incompetency. This is why it was interesting to see the first interview of the fierce critic with the object of his criticism. In the end, the interview was far from interesting. It all boiled down to O'Reilly's rapid questions and his interruptions of the President in the middle of an answer. The competitive and by orientation closer to the Liberal Democrats, MSNBC, counted 72 interruptions in Obama's responses, preventing him from finishing a thought or one interruption every 19 seconds!

In an attempt to justify this interview, analyzed by many as unsuccessful, Bill O'Reilly published a written column. „Bush, Obama share a belief in themselves"claims O'Reilly in the title, based on the impressions from the recent conversations with the two Presidents. The message is: "Presidents Obama and Bush the Younger have one striking similarity: self-assurance". Bush in the claim that: „The Iraq War has cost America more than $750 billion... So far, more than 4,400 Americans have been killed in that country, in addition to the approximately 32,000 who have been wounded. .. Yet Bush thinks the great sacrifice was worth it because Saddam Hussein is dead and Iraq is on the road to democracy. There is not an argument in the world that could dissuade Bush from this belief." It is likewise with Obama. He sincerely believes the country was on

the verge of another Great Depression when he took office, and that the massive federal spending he has championed prevented economic catastrophe. Again, there is no way anyone is going to persuade the president otherwise – writes O'Reilly.

What O'Reilly is attributing to Bush Junior and Obama (self-assurance) is de facto true for him. In the days following the interview with the President of the U.S.A. Bill O'Reilly adds on an explanation to clarify his intent. Hence in one of "The Factors" that followed, in a conversation with one of his guests, O'Reilly claimed that President Obama didn't want to define the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and its role in the Egyptian situation. Furthermore, he claims that – that "avoidance" of Obama's is similar to MSNBC's broadcasts and that all of it is simple anti-Americanism. On this note, MSNBC will shortly state that O'Reilly is "well known for his fictionalization of things."

The last episode of "Saturday Night Live", a renowned comedy show which had brilliant episodes in the pre-election campaign for the Presidential elections in 2008, (where it ruthlessly made caricatures of all politicians involved in that race – Sarah Palin, Hillary Clinton, John McCain, Barack Obama, Joe Biden…) made a version of O'Reilly's interview with Obama, in which the reporter was - to say the least - represented as a highly self-assured ignoramus, which amongst everything else, claims that Gadaffi is the President of Afghanistan and does not fall for Obama's corrections, he poses a question and immediately interrupts the speaker, not allowing him to utter a single word, leading a practical monologue but clearly stating that, even though he does not know for sure if what his guest is saying is true, he is not "buying" it.

But the other side isn't better at all. The cable TV MSNBC has clearly set Liberal-Democrat positions and is ruthless on the left and right of its preferred political position. Of course, the emerging mass of Conservatives, the Tea Party Movement is priority no.1, but in MSNBC's eye the compromises of the Republican Party with President Obama also have a hard time.

One of MSNBC's prestigious names is Cris Matthews who does not restrain from calling Congresswoman Michele Bachmann a "baloonhead". The Congresswoman is in charge of the new Tea Party caucous in Congress and in the traditional oppositional response (in the case-the Republican one) on Obama's annual addressing, added on a response by the Tea Party Movement's caucous (even though it is a part of the Republican body). Bachmann does not hide her intention to run for President on the 2012 elections, with a limitation that she will take the circumstances into serious consideration, if in case Sarah Palin does not run in the same elections. Truth be told, the Congresswoman is quite often a target because of her incredible claims, like the one that, a day of Obama's visit to India costs 200 million dollars! Her public appearances earned her a place in DickipediA, (the honor of being included in this site means to be stupid!) This "encyclopedia" is a product of Huffington Post Comedy, a part of the renowned Liberal-Democrat site Huffington Post which was recently bought by the Internet giant A.O.L.

The daily programs of John Stewart and his colleague from Comedy Central, Stephen Colbert, (Colbert Report) literally get their high ratings from the nonsense in daily politics from their colleagues from Fox News, (Back, O'Reilly and the rest). It is not even necessary to emphasize that quite often, with all due respect, they are depicted as incredibly stupid.

2. We could point out new examples to an infinite extent, which are to be found everyday on the American political scene and in the American media. We could label the content which is in accordance with the market of supply and demand (something needs to be "juicy" in order to draw attention) as vehement, both by the style and vocabulary used.

To put it simply, the written political culture for the Americans is consisted of "convictions, values beliefs and aims of the individuals in the society, concerning their political system" or a set of ideas which the Americans share on the matters of governing the country. Thereby, the values are in fact shared ideas about what is good, while the beliefs are shared ideas about what is true. The beliefs are quite often the foundation for the values, hence the beliefs that the right to life, liberty and property are sacred, gives these categories a status of values in American political culture. The subcultures are also existent and are based on different religions, races, ethnical identities, sometimes containing different or even opposing values.

Historically speaking, Republicanism (initially interpreted as a form of resistance through allegiance for equal rights for all, despite of what was considered as deviant in the nobles and the Royalist system – corruption, luxurious lifestyle of the aristocrats) together with Classic Liberalism have been a dominant American ideology for quite long, and you will find them in the documents in the Declaration of Independence (1776), in the Constitution (1787) in Federal documents and a year later in the Bill of Rights (1791).

The basic principles of civil duties are derived from these documents (the need to understand and support the governing of the country, to participate in elections, to pay taxes, to serve in the military…), these can be defined as: to actively resist attempts of political corruption, to practice democracy (where the government is responsible in front of the citizens, which can change their representatives through elections) equality in front of the law (with emphasis that the government workers are equal to the common citizen), religious freedoms (the government neither supports nor underestimates religions), freedom of speech (the government cannot limit by law or action a peaceful citizens' speech)… From the very start, the economy is out of the Government's reach, while the country is predominantly dependant from private and local initiatives. This laissez-faire economic policy, was reinforced yet another time and was dominant in the first half of the 70s and the first half of the 80s of the last century.

In recent times, especially in these critical periods for the USA, the attitude of the country towards the economy (and the results, like the size of the administration, taxes rate and budget quantity) is one of the subjects of confrontation of the modern American Liberalism and modern American Conservatism, mainly presented through the Democratic and Republican parties. That is why you will often come across definitions according to which the American Conservatives oppose a significant role of the State in the economy and in the strengthening of social norms through means of the State, while the Liberals believe in the power of the State in strengthening the economy and are more tolerant about the differences in social norms.

When talking about the U.S.A. and in particular, the development of American political culture, before the WWII, the U.S.A. mainly upheld a principle of avoiding interference in Foreign policy, but after being acknowledged as a Super Power, it practically abandoned that principle.

At this point, the civilization advantages are important for the level on which the differences in political debates are being argued. The culture of dialogue is nurtured, it is founded on the belief that no matter how different people are, they need to respect and appreciate each other when discussing the differences in the perception of things. At the same time, tolerance is based on the principle that there are no sacred truths which cannot be discussed in an open manner, without the feeling that they are endangered by the process of analysis from multiple aspects, and each pro and against argument is taken into account. There is nothing sacred that will stop even what is considered indescribable from being articulated and heard. People communicate with each other as the only creatures that posses the power of reason in this

world, aware of the complexity of their nature and views. People can ask for a deeper understanding on multiple and conflictive opinions and ideas based on the belief that even where disagreement and disapproval is present, empathy and understanding can replace impatience and that by active listening and speaking the truth, each in their own perspective, the people can enlarge their vision about what can be done in the environment they live in and make the world a better place.

Understandably this culture of dialogue is not manifested by peaceful situations, through quiet intellectual discussions, characteristic for contemplating people convinced in the power of the arguments they use. Passionate, strong and sometimes murderous words are not that rare, it could be said that they are the rule of thumb, because it is common practice to make the cruel reality focus on the argued topic or ongoing debate. Cynicism, irony, mockery are not rare at all, therefore amongst the other, TV talk shows are amongst the most viewed programs, while Jay Leno, David Letterman and Conan O'Brien are true stars.

3. What is the political culture or political articulation that, in comparison, we can speak of in the case of Macedonia, where for over twenty years of independence – not a single step forward has been made? We still have ethnically clean political parties which are socially still not established and political programs from the type of ideological ornaments, which do not express the social interest of the party membership and electoral body at all. On contrary, everything boils down to political contest, understood like a daily smart-ass competition, while upholding the motto: "the end justifies the means" and at the same time everything is (politically) allowed and the only important goal is to come to governing power, no matter its form.

Is any sort of dialogue, not just the political one, is any sort of dialogue possible in a state that has been in the alleged process of "establishment" for twenty years?

To be in rule, by itself, means total partization of the institutions of the state, control over the flows of economy, patronization of private businesses, concentration of all power in the party leadership, interpreted as the party leader and his people of confidence, nicknamed as "family" and in some cases, bearing the literal meaning of the word.

The Government is a power above all. Therefore, if the Parliament is a silent voting machine, instead of a legislative body of power which controls the executive body of power, it will turn into a machine that simply ratifies the Government's wishes. The Ministries and Ministers would turn into a form for selective control of different segments of the state, the Ministry for Internal Affairs the striking fist of the party (the leader and his close followers) in power. The concept does not undergo any type of Movement closer to the citizens; therefore the decentralization and strengthening of local governing no longer take even the declarative form.

On the outside – the more isolated, farther from any form of integration in the global community – the better.

This type of concept, undoubtedly demands putting under control the center of political power, the judicial sector, media and the civil sector, including all levels of education, making all of these tools for the realization of absolute governing and power and a form of payment for those that contributed in the process.

Elections, de facto don't bring any change, they become trivial and practically obsolete, except the rare possibilities for changing the roles of the main actors, falsely adorned like political opponents, while striving for the same political goal.

The stakes are high in such a political ambiance, because if you are on the winning side, you have everything that provides your good quality of life. If you belong to the

ones defeated, you will have to endure in the dark, until the next chance occurs that will put you back in the saddle of the winning horse. The great stakes bear with them great passion.

This set of political rules, imposes tolerance towards those which are "yours" and share the same beliefs. Anyone out of that circle is a fierce enemy, according to the rule: "if you're not with us, you're against us". Warlike antagonisms are a logical consequence in such a political ambiance.

The shattered glass of this kaleidoscope, make the definition that "an anti-Semite is a person that hates Jews more than necessary" acceptable for the immediate circle of the "own" individuals. Authors of such a definition in a University textbook for political theory, used by future lawyers and politicians, will never step down from the political case at any point, neither will be judged on their anti-Semitism, neither will be labeled as dilettantes, because they are in the position of President of our country, academic people close to our politics.

So, what strikes as peculiar, when those that think that all of the power and governance is theirs, have contemplations of this type:

In the spiritual rearrangement of society, according to conservative values interpreted in the manner which we in governance make, we will set our own system of values. We will do anything to prove that our roots go back for millennia and that we are a Biblical category of people. The state – that is us, so in a sign of gratitude towards religion which has preserved us through centuries, we will build sacral objects. In return, the Church will change our Constitution so we don't display our homophobic tendencies.

In times when the developed world argues on the failure of the multi-ethnical concept, why should we cherish ours? It is better to live alongside each other, than together.

Why should we get upset about incidents that inflame ethnical vehemence, when we have daily political favor in it?

It is better for us to control our people, and they control their own.

It is allowed for their leader, our partner to get limitless loyalty from his deputy Minister for Internal Affairs, when we have the endless loyalty of our Minister of Internal Affairs. It is allowed for us to bring a joint decision on the building of an object that may inflame the tensions between the already divided ethnical communities and afterwards, each of us will continue dealing with it by our separate, individual beliefs – ones will organize themselves in civil groups for protests against the building of that object, while the others join in protection of it, because of the money invested by the state. After all, the coalition needs stability and longevity.

Who is closer to our ugly reality in these circumstances: the ones who use the public sphere and social media for presentation of hate-speech or the ones who are falsely concerned for its usage on Facebook, because they are not just tolerating it, they are promoting it in all segments of Macedonian society?

If Facebook is being used as a tool for inter-ethnical verbal war, after the Kale incident, will its prohibited use in Macedonia help us leave the slippery ground of inter-ethnical clashes? The Ministry of Internal Affairs, which demands this action is taking the steps of Mubarak's government, whose fall was announced precisely by the growing strength of the social media. Is the Ministry of Internal Affairs afraid of the social networks or from the overpowering words, which it tolerates elsewhere?

I am under the impression that after all, it does not come down to the words, it comes down to the people.

David Brewer

David Brewer, Great Britain, is a media strategy advisor and director of Media Ideas International Ltd (http://www.mediaideas.co.uk/).

His journalistic career spans newspapers, radio, TV, and online. He was the launch managing editor of BBC News Online in 1997, moved to CNN in 2000 to set up CNN.com EMEA and CNNArabic.com, and was an editorial consultant for the launch of Al Jazeera English in 2006. David works with a number of media development organisations in Asia, SE Europe, the Middle East, Africa, the CIS and Central America.

David set up Media Helping Media (http://www.mediahelpingmedia.org) in order to support media in transition and post-conflict countries and areas where freedom of expression is under threat. He spends a lot of his time working in Africa, Asia, the Balkans, the CIS and the Middle East.

David Brewer

A Healthy Society Requires a Media Free from Influence

The politicians make decisions and take action on behalf of the public. The role of the journalist is to scrutinise those decisions (and the executive that enforces them) and report the implications on behalf of the public. The media/political ecosystem is one of checks and balances, truth and falsehood, and deception and divulgence.

To complicate matters, human weaknesses creep in. These can range from a simple lack of journalistic professionalism on the one hand, to compromise, complicity, and politically motivated manoeuvring on the other. All these elements play out in a complex theatre of events that either leads to an increase in transparency and accountability, or results in manipulation and corruption. The co-existence of the media and politics is rarely simple or straightforward.

The relationship between the media and politicians can have a significant impact on the functioning of a fair and just society

299

JOURNALISTIC TYPES

My experience of dealing with politician comes from my time as a journalist and political editor, and, more recently, from my work as a media strategy consultant working in transition and post-conflict countries.

For this piece, commissioned by the Macedonia's Civil - Center for Freedom I will draw on both. However, mine is the perspective of a journalist and not a politician; a piece written by a politician will most likely be totally different in its focus and conclusions.

In order to try to understand the relationship between the media and politics it's important to look at the various relationships that can exist between a journalist and a politician. Here are a few:

The hunter: Tracks politicians down relentlessly. Follows any trail. This journalist never gives up until they have their prey. They are driven and won't believe the politician, even when the politician is telling the truth. The hunter journalist can often lack perspective and objectivity. Their contribution to enhancing the understanding of the audience is questionable.

The activist: Committed to a cause and will fight any politician who is against that cause while supporting any politician who backs the cause. This journalist can be blinkered and one-dimensional. They find it hard to achieve balance because they either can't evaluate the other perspective or because they realise that offering balance may weaken the story line they wish to push. The activist journalist enjoys being seen as the martyr and often risks becoming the story rather than covering the story.

The buddy: Becomes a close friend to the politician and rarely questions their position, often taking the stance that the politician is right regardless of any evidence to the contrary. This journalist will do the politician a favour, but will have limits – usually when they think they will be found out. However they will always be ready to lend a hand when needed if they feel that their coverage may have a beneficial effect to the politician and to them. The buddy journalist tends to go where the wind blows and is easily manipulated.

The possession: Owned by the politician through dependencies established through compromise and over-familiarity. They probably lost their journalistic integrity at an early age. Likely to publish anything the politician wants with no questions asked. This journalist is little more than an unpaid member of the politician's public relations team. They enjoy name dropping and being seen as connected to the influential.

The party member: Does his or her best to hide their allegiance but can't help it showing through in their tone, story choice and their ability (or inability) to ask the searching question. The party member journalist will spend a lot of time rubbishing the political opinions of those with whom they disagree. They can be spotted by their enthusiasm for a story that other, less compromised, journalists fail to see. They will defend that story choice against all logical reasoning.

The comfortable: I'll scratch your back, you scratch mine. Why fight when you can both have a profitable and easy life? Who will know? This journalist sees their job as a 9-5 chore that only serves the purpose of providing the means to exist. Usually enjoys fine wine and good food. Is available to all parties to woo. The comfortable journalist sees this as being fair, impartial and balanced.

The true journalist: Free from party ties, has integrity and can't be bought, is passionate about informing the public debate, seeks the truth, reports objectively and fairly, and includes multiple perspectives even if they could weaken the story. Is prepared to investigate all they hold dear. Sees nobody beyond reproach and is realistic about human nature. The true journalist seeks the truth.

THE ROLE OF THE JOURNALIST

In democracies, the role of the journalist is supposed to be to inform the public debate so that the audience can make educated choices. The role of politicians is supposed to be to represent those who elected them and ensure that the concerns of that electorate are listened to, considered and, where appropriate, acted upon.

In such a political system, the journalist should act on behalf of the audience to ensure that politicians do their job. The journalist should be exploring and covering the issues that most concern their readers and listeners. In doing so they should include a diversity of voices and political opinions in order to offer the richest and most complete coverage possible. If they achieve that, they are more likely to offer journalism that enhances understanding and encourages dialogue and debate.

To some, that role, sometimes referred to as 'the fourth estate', is crucial to the functioning of a healthy and fair society – as important as the role of the politicians themselves. The former President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, once remarked, "were it left to me to decide whether we should have a Government without newspapers or newspapers without government, I should not hesitate for a moment to prefer the latter."

Perhaps Jefferson was right in suggesting that journalists are more important to society than politicians. Perhaps, in some societies, the politicians know and fear that. Perhaps that is where the complications and compromise originates from.

Journalists need information and they have to get it, or some of it, from politicians. So the journalist is either put in the position of supplicant to obtain that information, or has to go undercover to prise it out. The politician can decide whether to give or withhold the information, but it is far more difficult to plug every possible leak and cover over every past trail. The politician has the upper hand in some situations – the release of information they think they control – but not in the case of the release of information that is out of their control. And the line between the two categories is increasingly blurred as we have seen with the recent stories surrounding the Wikileaks cables.

THE DANGERS OF COMPROMISE

The temptation will always be there to court, to woo and to befriend the politician. Some journalists may think that by adopting that strategy they are likely to be privy to more information and achieve an advantage over their competition (selling newspapers or winning the air time ratings is also a massive media motivation). But closeness has its dangers.

If a politician is your friend, you may find it difficult to expose them or criticise and write about them in an honest way. So one key question, for political journalists, is about the distance they keep from the politicians they're writing about, and this distance will vary, depending on the state of the political system.

If you are living in a rotten polity, your duty as a journalist is to expose its rottenness to the public gaze. The difficulty about keeping your distance from the politicians is a practical one. How far can you go in your reporting? Can you remain free? Can your newspaper or TV station stay in business? Are you in danger?

STARTING OFF WITH HIGH IDEALS

As a young newspaper journalist, my head was full of the finest editorial mission statements that, to me, justified my existence. I felt I had a responsibility to 'scrutinise the executive', 'hold the powerful to account' and 'give voice to the voiceless'. Each day I would set off with my notebook in my hand seeking out the story that rectified a wrong – in truth, I wanted a cracking front page lead that would result in my name being printed on the cover of my local newspaper.

Of course I had no right to do this. I was not elected. I was only appointed by my editor to do a job. Often that job was fairly mundane. Trips to the newspaper's front desk to talk to a woman about a lost dog, attending the opening night of a variety show at the local theatre, or walking along to the local police station to see if there were any crimes left unreported.

However, I was also asked to attend local council meetings where locally elected politicians were discussing day-to-day issues that had an impact on the lives of those who read my newspaper and my stories. This involved a large amount of preparation. I had to read through council agendas and reports to try to understand the complex language used and figure out what was actually being decided, by whom, for the benefit of whom and why. I would try to talk to all sides involved in the issue - those defending the policies and those opposing them. In my conversations and dealings with each group I had to remain fair and objective. It was a small town. Everyone knew each other and where they lived. It had its own peculiar dynamic between the local media and the local politicians – familiarity and accountability - because you would be rubbing shoulders with the same people the following day after the newspaper had hit the newsstands.

REALISING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ROLE

Journalists are in a privileged and important position. And it is a position that some will have failed to honour. We can knock on the doors of the powerful and we can pick up the phone and request an interview. Our job has always been to do this as part of our responsibility in society: a free and independent media, digging where others don't, investigating corruption and wrong doing.

During this career journey I got to know many politicians who became my contacts. They would brief me and would often be available, sometimes at short notice, to help me investigate a story where I felt there may have been wrongdoing. Sometimes they would phone me late at night with a story lead in the hope that I would follow it up.

I was using them for information gathering in order to find good stories for my newspaper, and they were using me to ensure that issues they wanted aired were not missed, or were at least considered. With this came a strange, never discussed, obligation. If they helped me as I researched a story which I felt was important to cover, did I, in return, owe them an obligation to cover those stories that the politician may view as important – even if I didn't feel the story they were pushing had any merit? And, of course, if I then gave undue prominence to an issue that I felt was not really in the public interest, was I being used by the politician? Clearly the answer is yes.

Working out the fine balancing act that defines the relationship between the media and politics became more complex when I moved to TV and radio and, finally, down to Westminster to cover national and international politics. At that time I had a parliamentary patch to cover and my job was to get to know the politicians in the area about which I was reporting.

I soon began to understand how the system worked. Journalists would meet members of parliament (MPs) for a drink or a meal to talk over 'background' information. This was justified as being essential information gathering to enable the journalist to do those insightful (or not so insightful) comment pieces or broadcasting spots where they appear able to offer a depth of understanding about the issue of the day that is not normally available to the man or woman in the street.

However, gradually, the journalist becomes part of 'the system' where contacts with politicians are essential for survival. It is a system that is not readily available to the young journalist starting off. It has to be earned. And here in lies a problem.

My former editor, Bob Eggington, then head of the BBC's Political Unit, highlighted the challenge faced by journalists living in a country where freedom of speech is protected by rule of law.

Eggington takes the view that there are dangers in the Western political system where "political journalists are closely integrated into the machinery of briefings, news conferences, press releases and scheduled events set up by the executive." Eggington says "power corrupts, and proximity to power can be heady and exhilarating." In this atmosphere, he says, "the journalist must avoid being seduced by the system."

And that was true in my experience. After some time covering parliament and politics as a TV and radio reporter and correspondent, I was given a lobby pass. This small credit card sized identity document gave me access to many areas of the British political scene not available to other journalists. I became a member of a small group of journalists who were allowed to walk through the corridors where MPs mingle in the Palace of Westminster. I was able to get the occasional 'off the record' comments from people who would only be known from then on as 'sources' or 'a minister, or 'a backbencher'. It also gave me access to the regular government press briefings at the Prime Minister's office at number 10 Downing Street.

For a young political journalist, the day you are ushered through the doors of the Prime Minister's London residence and into the Press Secretary's office is an intoxicating moment. At first being able to listen in to conversations off the record was an amazing adrenaline buzz. As Bob Eggington says, the power can be "heady and exhilarating" and it would be easy to be "seduced by the system".

With this introduction to the corridors of power came another pressure - the fear of stepping out of line, and there were enough people around who used that to their advantage. This sinister undertone of control first raised its head early on in my career as a political lobby correspondent when we were being briefed in number 10 Downing Street on a particular government decision. I raised my hand to ask a question. It was a question I wanted clarification on so that I could better inform my audience. The censorship came not from the government press spokesperson (although his gruff look said a lot), but from an older member of the media lobby who looked at me, shook his head, coughed and moved the questioning on. After the meeting he gently pointed out that it was 'not appropriate' to ask such a question, "not the done thing". Perhaps it was a stupid question – I can't remember now – or perhaps I was simply being pulled in line so that from then on I would observe the rules and standards of behaviour that had been previously agreed by both sides. My guess is that it was about the latter. I was certainly left under no illusion that I had offended the rules of the club to which I now belonged. The question was how much I valued being part of that club. For some this could be a limiting factor.

From my perspective it was as if I was gradually being sucked into an accepted way of behaving that had the potential to weaken my effectiveness as a journalist through

developing a familiarity and understanding with those I was supposed to be reporting about objectively. It is hard to be tough on a politician with whom you have shared a drink or a meal and who has, in the past, given you valuable information. Familiarity between a journalist and a politician can lead to impotency.

THE MEASURE OF ROBUST, RELIABLE JOURNALISM

When it comes to covering politics, the real journalists uncover what the politicians don't want them to know. Publishing only the information the politician wants made public is little more than being a press officer or a peddler in propaganda. The real journalist is prepared to risk all in order to print uncomfortable truths, is able to back up their stories with undeniable facts and is committed to exposing incompetence, venality, lies and corruption. This, I think, is exactly what Thomas Jefferson meant when he placed such a high value on newspapers.

In doing so, it is crucial that the journalists to understand themselves, and their own motives, and to subscribe to and apply a set of editorial ethics that ensure that all they do is done with integrity. But journalists and politicians are human beings. They all have their own agendas which could be set by ambition, the craving for status and recognition, obtaining wealth, exercising influence and a whole host of other issues which.

For example, in a democracy a journalist has the vote. He or she will probably vote for one party or other. They may have personal experiences that influences that choice. They may have an environmental or social concern that they want to see changed and feel that only one party is committed to achieving that change. This is normal, what is important is that the journalist doesn't let that influence their work.

All they do must be in the public interest and must satisfy the public interest test. They must always ask themselves whether the story they plan to cover corrects a significant wrong, brings to light information affecting public well-being and safety, improves the public's understanding of the big issue of the day, and leads to greater account-ability and transparency in public life.

Only by ensuring that the stories covered pass the public interest test can a journalist start to try to fulfil most important role of journalism – to inform the public debate so that the audience can make educated choices. This test also helps the journalist see their own motivation more clearly.

Most of all, a journalist, particularly one dealing with politicians, needs to owe no-body and seek no favours or favourites. They must be totally free of any influences that could be used against them or cause them to compromise their integrity. However while there remains a danger of 'understandings' weakening the power of journalists in so-called democracies, the challenge is far greater in transition and post-conflict societies.

In transition and post-conflict countries where there the media is still developing there is a danger of moving too fast. Antagonising politicians and the rich and powerful could result in the journalist disappearing. I have trained journalists who have been told that if they don't write what their newspaper owner demands they will be out of a job. These are tough choices. In fact, for some, there is no choice. What is more, there is not always the protection that exists in the West where journalists have the backing of trades unions to support their case if they are victims of unfair dismissal or pressure.

Another difference in the West is that journalists are often taken out and wined and dined by the powerful and influential – in other territories journalists are often taken out by the powerful and the influential with bullets and bombs.

In such a developing media landscape, systems may not have been put in place for the media to operate without hindrance. Old ways of working, often tied into cultural norms, can have a bearing on what happens day to day.

To try to combat this, media training in transition and post-conflict countries often focuses on investigative journalism. This, in my view, is a massive mistake. Of course, all journalism is investigative, but to fill the heads of journalists who are still in transition with ideas about investigative journalism sends out all the wrong signals.

What this approach is in danger of delivering is a group of journalists – some who in recent years may have been political activists – fired up to believe that they have a right to investigate former political enemies. With this will come the temptation to seek revenge on those who they perceive as the bad guys from the previous regime who may well now be involved in big business and, almost certainly, politics.

And this is a recipe for disaster. A fledgling media scene with impressionable journalists - many of whom have still to learn the basics of journalism - focused on delivering investigative journalism without first establishing the ground rules for engagement. This will never help a country or its people develop – and it will certainly do nothing for political/media relations.

CONFUSING JOURNALISM WITH PUBLIC RELATIONS

The smart politician, in any society, will engage in heavy public relations (PR) offensives to win over and tame certain journalists. And they only do that because they know it often works. Those who are not won over, and who do not belong, can get left out in the cold. The culture of ostracisation is powerful and debilitating; the culture of compliance can be comfortable and extremely rewarding, but not in the terms that define true journalism.

According to Premesh Chandran the CEO of the online news site Malaysiakini, which was set up during the rule of Malaysia's Dr Mahathir bin Mohamad, politicians love the media when the media organisation in their control, or ideologically within the same camp.

In such cases, Chandran says the media organisation can often serve "to validate political positions" by setting out "facts" which support "political objectives." Chandran says the result is that journalists trade their objectivity for privileged access to power and politicians.

To break the cycle he says there is a need for "journalists with integrity" and media companies that are "motivated more by principals than profits." As for the politicians, he says society needs "politicians that are able to put accountability before their egos."

Shahidul Alam, the Director of the Drik Network in Bangladesh, and a prominent journalist, says there is a clear difference in the relationship between journalists and politicians once a politician enters government. Alam says that when that relationship goes sour the impact on journalism is profound.

The general procedure, he says, is that the opposition politicians consider the media to be their friends, while the government see them as enemies. "This is largely because the media, in playing the role of a nation's critical conscience, has generally critiqued unjust and unreasonable government policies."

Alam says exceptions do occur, and both government and opposition "have taken it upon themselves to intimidate journalists, when reports have gone against them." He

cites cases where he says "ministers in Bangladesh have been known to publicly announce that photographers are easy prey."

This has resulted in "instructions being sent to party followers" to "break the bones of photographers." Alam says that while several photographers have been attacked, "no action has been taken either against the police or against the party activists involved in the attacks."

THE IMPORTANCE OF JOURNALISTIC INTEGRITY

Journalists have to realise that, whatever territory they are living and working in, they have a duty to remain removed from those who wield the power. Their job is to scrutinise the executive and hold the powerful to account – and they can only do this if they have integrity. They need to be as accountable to the audience as the politician is supposed to be to those who voted for them. If they are not, the so-called journalist who is compromised by politics and politicians ends up being nothing more than a deliverer of propaganda or a public relations officer for the politician. The result is that the public is denied access to the information society requires in order to function in a healthy and fair manner.

Jasna Koteska

Jasna Koteska (1970), Macedonia, Literature Professor at the Faculty of Philology in Skopje. She obtained her M.A. degree in Skopje and Budapest, and her Ph.D. in Skopje. Works on several disciplines: theoretical psychoanalysis, literary theory, gender studies and on wide range of topics: communism, reconciliation, sanitation, intimacy, identity. Her texts and books have been translated in many languages. She is author of: *Postmodern literary studies* (2002), *Macedonian Woman's Letter* (2003), *Sanitary Enigma* (Templum, 2006), and *Communist Intimacy* (Templum, 2008).

Jasna Koteska

Dialogue and Samizdat

1.

Xhabir Derala [President of Civil – Center for Freedom] invited me to write a text on the political culture and the dialogue in the Republic of Macedonia. Culture seemed as a wide topic for me, so I decided to take the second one: the dialogue. The first thing that occurred to me was the three dialogues that ended up recently in the court room. Irena Cvetkovic [human rights activist] has opened a dialogue on the homophobic high school text-books, so she ended up in court. Zarko Trajanoski [columnist and human rights activist] has opened a dialogue on the public calls for lynch of unlike-minded people with the government by Milenko Nedelkovski [TV host], so he ended up in court. And Nikola Gelevski [columnist and publisher] debated with Dragan Pavlovic Latas [TV journalist], so he ended up in court; then he lost, and he had to pay fine for slander. In all three cases the

> The most influential people in Macedonia are often those who are most incompetent

dialogue has been initiated by people from the civil society. The message has become worrying. Will everyone opening a public dialogue end up like this? And whether this is a new phenomenon linked to small countries without a critical mass? Those were my first, instinctive questions.

I have decided to find the answers in the past. Michelle Montaigne has a very important text on the "Art of Conference", which seemed to me as a good introduction. But as soon as I have started to read the text, I was shocked. Montaigne starts the essay on the dialogue literally as follows: 'Tis a custom of our justice to condemn some for a warning to others. To condemn them for having done amiss, were folly.... but 'tis to the end they may offend no more and that others may avoid the example of their offence". And adds to this: "we do not correct the man we hang; we correct others by him". Isn't it an irony that the essay of Montaigne on the art of conference mentions the court in the very first sentence? If the things were like that in the 16th century, did anything change in these four centuries in the combination dialogue - court? It seems that this has been the case in the communist times as well. My father had criticized the state system, so he ended up in court and served two years to prison. But it was a totalitarian system. Could it be that democracy, for which we are all proud of, nowadays only oddly finds its continuity in totalitarianism?

Montaigne does not have an answer to these dilemmas, but his essay continues: why is it of use to have a dialog? He says that reading a book "heats not", whereas conversation with a tough, strong minded interlocutor incites you to raise yourself above yourself. But Montaigne makes the main difference by saying that "I love to discourse and dispute, however it is with but few men and for myself". And that is quite different from the public dialogue, isn't it? Well, yet, just a few things on Montaigne. He says that "when any one contradicts me, he raises my attention, not my anger."

And he also says that it was hard to find a man in his time that has the courage *to correct*, because "people do not have the courage to oppose". There is another similarity with present times. People do not discuss because of fear. They are afraid that they will insult somebody from the ruling power, but they are also afraid that they will be criticized as well. On the contrary, Socrates had always received with a smile the objections offered to his arguments, knowing by that the powerlessness of his interlocutor; on the other hand, there is something insipid and not persuasive in people that admire us or give way, telling us how good we are. Antisthenes for example, advised his children never to take it kindly when any man commended them.

But when the rightful attacks by our weaker interlocutors cease to be interesting and become tormenting? When we are not asking them only to be strong or witty, but to respect the rules as well; when, if we go to court, we demand the court to judge without fear the arguments on both sides? But do our judges act in this way? It is impossible to debate with a fool, and it is also impossible to do that in front of a judge who's frightened, isn't it? In conversations, what happens is this: first, we start a quarrel about arguments, and then we move on to the people. The judge also judges us in this manner as well. Plato in his *Republic* prohibited the spiritually incapable and ungrateful people to conduct a dialogue. They can often be found among politicians, journalists and judges, and Macedonia is full of them.

And another thing: Montaigne says: "I had rather my son should learn in a tap-house to speak, than in the schools to prate". He is right. Teachers have the advantage of great knowledge, but yet they do not conduct public debates. Why? Knowledge carries a heavy burden, and they fall under such burden. Teachers also sink in the fear, same as judges. In Plato, Socrates disputes with his interlocutors in order to train them. I am often reading the Macedonian portal *Okno*, and I see how Kolja trains his interlocutors. In one of his numerous responses, I have found a really funny sentence that cheered

my day, and it went like this: "I am fed up teaching you here. Let the party enroll you in a night school, to mingle and to learn through games." Truly, people are sometimes more offended by dullness and lack of sense of humor, rather than by ignorance or untruth. Montaigne reminds us of a scene when Megabyzus, a nobleman, visited the painting-room of the Greek artist Apelles, who at first stood a great while without speaking a word, and at last began to talk extensively about his paintings, to which Apelles responded: "Whilst thou wast silent, thou seemedst to be some great thing, by reason of thy chains and rich habit; but now that we have heard thee speak, there is not the meanest boy in my workshop that does not despise thee."

One of the wise traps is when the dialogue is transferred to a meta-level. For example, if I want to argue with my husband, he acts to that strategy accordingly. If I ask him: "why are these glasses here?" he replies: "Sorry, did you say "glass" or "drag"? Since "drag" is an informal word". And this is when the dialogue turns into a dialogue on the dialogue and creates a closed system, as in the Esher's graphics *Drawing Hands* (1948), where the drawing hand has a hand, which draws a hand, which draws a hand. Or, as in the iconographic painting about the television which shows a television, which shows a television, etc. The series of this kind either continue to infinity or the human mind cannot grasp them. In these cases we are hardly talking about the form, as in many of our public debates.

2. The most influential people in Macedonia are often those who are most incompetent. Once I had been invited in a live debate show on television. The main politician was so dull and boring that made me wish to fall asleep out of misery, so that I do not have to listen to him for an hour. I was counting spots on the wall in the studio, to stay awake. How did those feel in front of the TV screens? We do not judge people with high positions according to their opinions, but according to their suit and the illusion of their greatness. As the Roman saying: "I didn't see him since he was *darkened* by words", but here it was quite the contrary: "I didn't hear him, since the irrelevant words were *subdued* by his high rank." Public offices make the incompetent people look like clowns, scorned by the whole nation. Yet, they have the power and the citizens - blinded by their suits, often times are forcibly trying to find virtue in their words, where there is none.

Aren't the free babblings on public debates and on television also from the same category? When in the debates one can hardly notice table-talk babble, an ease created from the vague closeness in the studio, a place where one can practice everything but the spirit of conversation and debate - one should keep in mind that these people are talking only not to say anything pertinent. One should not listen to them at any cost. There is anecdote from the 19 century from the cabinet of the Hungarian psychoanalyst Balint, holding sessions with a charming lady: likeable, interesting, talkative, a woman that only talks, talks and talks, without a beginning and an end. At one of the sessions, after an hour of hard babbling, Balint has gently touched upon her symptom, asking for help. The charming lady had got a recommendation for a new job. It was written in the recommendation that she was a "person of full confidence". The concerning moment was in the fact that she didn't want to be seen as confident. She didn't want anyone taking her word for granted. Because the word means a commitment. If she stops talking, she will have to start working and respecting the agreements. It is exactly due to this charming non-binding behavior, people are babbling and babbling when debating. They are doing this in order not to say something significant, and not to commit to anything.

In one TV show I had been asked for an opinion on the antic roots of the Macedonians. I said that the antic root of the Macedonian nation is a nebulous myth. I am teaching

at the Department of Macedonian Literature and Macedonian language, as Slavic language is part of my most intimate identity. My mother is from the Aegean Macedonia, in that country I have lost much more than many other Macedonians. My mother and my grandmother spoke Macedonian Slavic language. My grandmother died at the age of 93 a decade ago, she lived in Michurin, in the Aegean district in Skopje, where I live today with my family. Her mother tongue was Slavic, she was born in the area of Kostur, which was then Slavic minority language in a neighboring state, the Greek state; my grandmother was part of the minority and only due to the fact that she was minority, she was expelled from her property; she lived in a country with ordinary people, but with unfair politicians. That is why today, I consider that I should defend the right of minorities in my country with the same severity and force with which my grandmother was condemned to exile, only because she was a minority. One should always respond to injustice with fight for justice.

When I had been given the possibility to teach literature to students at the Departments of Albanian and Turkish language, I felt really happy, and today I am proud for each student that I managed to get through to, in one way or another. For me personally, that meeting has been a return to my roots and to the possibility to fight the differences - right of origin, embedded if you wish in the history of my ancestors. My grandmother and I have been speaking the Macedonian Slavic language in the same way, with minor differences as in a dialect. Those differences were not Greek. Nothing more to say on this topic. In all my conscious life I have been taught to make a difference between languages and literatures. My ancestors were expelled from their homes, but they will not be able to return their estate with the forged history created and sold by our politicians in the last years. Also, as a scientist, I am quite aware that there is no scientific way to join ten centuries of non-existing history, without lying about it. I know many classicists that in these desperate times are sinking under the burden of their knowledge and instead of making clear to the public the differences between the ancient and the modern Macedonia today, they are silent, and their place is filled with people with selective or no knowledge at all. At the same time, we need our antic lie only to justify our failures and semi-products, the all illegal constructions of our provincial thoughts. And this is why I have answered in the show: "No, the Macedonian antic origin of my people is nebulosity."

But then, on the site of the show I had to read many comments that I am a traitor of my own people, traitor of my father, that I am leftist with rightist origin; as if, My God, that sentence is a death penalty or a fate insult. My students came utterly upset on the next class. Why do people think that I am a traitor? I have answered them with a line from the *Death Poets Society*, the first thing that occurred to me that arduous morning. When the English teacher, played by Robin Williams, took his students on the first class in the school yard and told them to march. Just to march. At first, each student marched in his or her best way, only for himself or herself, and later on they started to synchronize, to coordinate their speed, the tempo and the rhythm of their steps, and at the end they were all walking jointly as one big body. That was their first lesson of hypocrisy: the lesson that sometimes we yield our most intimate knowledge and the specialness as if they are trophy weapons taken from us by our enemy, only because at that particular moment we were thinking that everybody walks in the same way. Because we have never heard a different step. Once I wrote, and now I will repeat. My favorite verse is from the 16th century, which is not by Montaigne, but by an anonymous wise man, a priest who said: "Never say that it is silent. Say I didn't hear anything".

And just a few more words on the legs. Kierkegaard describes that once, due to the circumstances in the 19th century, he had to travel for thirty-six hours from his city to Berlin in a narrow coach, together with five other passengers. And he gradually felt how the six passengers are all of a sudden becoming one big, giant body in which he

could not find out whose leg is his. Life in narrow circumstances and Macedonian life is necessarily condemned to be such (each one of us is constantly activating his or her memory that we are a leg in a giant body), is a phenomenon to which we should constantly and alertly remind ourselves, if we want to have an authentic dialogue.

Finally, many times in the dialogues you can see that after you have presented well your arguments, the collocutor will answer to you: "I meant the same, but I had no words to say so". Montaigne says that one should fret and vex at folly with evil. Of course, one should not be evil in conversation, but to instruct wherever possible, however that is not possible in all cases. Why to give a hand to the fools? One should allow them to perceive their dullness through the rejection. As Montaigne says: "A man does not become a good musician by hearing a fine tune".

Prlichev in his *Autobiography* depicts the narrow streets of Ohrid, and all of a sudden he says that they were so narrow that two donkeys could not accost without affronting each other. This is how small towns and communities function. Stubborness and obstination are not only a proof of stupidity, but also a sign in the small communities on the culture of mule's stubborness. There are so many rude and unreasonable public duels - hard to watch and boring to hear.

However, there are debates in which you simply should *not* participate. Everyone is quite familiar with the aversion of Gilles Deleuze towards dialogues. When a man in a cafeteria would approach him by saying" "Let's debate on this topic", the great philosopher would just stand up and beating a hasty retreat, would simply leave the cafeteria.

In justifying his strange behavior, paradoxically, we have at disposal a major part of the Western philosophy. In Plato, the conversation is a thoroughly asymmetric exchange of arguments. Plato (the man who invented the format of the conversation in the Western world) had immediately brought the disturbing sentence that one should not leave same room for discussion to all the interlocutors. In early Plato, Socrates often disputes. In late Plato, only the main character disputes, while his collocutor serves from time to time to say some *wooden replica*:"Yes, it's true." "In the name of Zeus, you are completely right".

Isn't Slavoj Zizek right when he says that all Western thought consists of no conversation or of not understanding the interlocutor's arguments? Aristotle did not understand Plato. Hegel did not understand Kant. Nietzsche did not understand Jesus. Marx did not understand Hegel. Stalin did not understand Marx. It's a fact that all western thought movement is based on deaf ears.

I remember when Henry Miller in a documentary said: "The first pupil is the one that will distort the truth". Exactly. The one that will first overvote him has a sound voice, and not the one that will listen to him first, or will discuss with the other.

Then, isn't it fairer to accept a *radical* philosophical gesture and to honestly say to ourselves: we should not pretend that there is always a way to talk with our ideological unlike-minded people! Sometimes it is healthier to just start with a *wrong choice* and say frankly to our ideological enemy: "I do not want to talk to you", instead of deceptively filling in the pit among our misunderstandings, so that conditions can eventually be created for *some kind* of a conversation. I don't know to what extent we can have a compromise in the conversation, since today we are governed by proliferation of the right that everyone can shit (apology to the sensitive readers) his opinion, even when that opinion is close to pure fascism? And one should not negotiate with fascists.

There is one icon scene: the Nazis ask the mother the impossible question: "Which of the two kids Madam, would you like not to be shot?" One cannot and should not, and under any circumstances have a conversation.

3. We can constantly hear: "In the debates, we should include as many analysts as possible". But why, for God's sake? There are situations when the task of the analyst is *NOT* to take part in the debates, especially since participation means acceptance of basic coordinates by which government elites formulates the problem. Or the medium itself.

Anyone called on a TV "conversation" knows that well. The analyst is given three minutes slot, which should be filled with roustabout *talking from the stomach*, asking for punctual sentences that actually do not serve anyone but the medium, as a huge Matrix.

Didn't Hardt and Negri exactly formulate the problem when they said that democracy and the right of conversation are in the center of all present permanent conflicts and wars. Today, behind the demand for a common dialogue, sharing and communication, there is a clear military hegemonyzation of the world.

If we agree that without a medium, there is no conversation (except as a private, almost *confident* exchange), then what stands behind the medium? Let us remind ourselves on the scandal with the Macedonian A1 TV in November and December 2010. First, the police had made a raid around the TV building on grounds of corruption in the work of the companies owned by the owner. Then the owner came out with a shocking confession that government bought the marketing space from him not with party, but with state money – which means he replied back with a bigger corporation and state scandal. At the end, the owner himself, a day after, apologized to the public for giving a wrong statement in a fit of rage.

The major problem in this potentially criminal series of actions is that even if these statements would be true, even if all actors would admit their guilt without any objection, the truth for these events will change with such vertiginous speed, from one day to another, that at the end the truth will merely become an ephemeral category, without status, without stability and sustainability, and in the long run only a short-term sensation. In all that, the public will be placed in a position to swallow the truth, which at the moment will be served as such. The medium addresses a passive, and by that *damaged* public, for which the truth is merely a *daily event*. Regardless of the real illusion for the virtue or the corruptness of the medium, the liberal or the conservative image, the style that may vary from attractive to boring, from vulgar to refined or both, the medium always serves *to interrupt the conversation* and to confirm the Plato diagnosis that the louder wins the conversation, and not the more reasonable one.

In the Samuel Beckett's *Film* (1965) nobody talks to each other, and the characters show a vague, but dreadful fear from something mysterious, to which we cannot define the shape, until the last part in the move, when one can see that without exception, they fear from *our* gaze, from the gaze of the camera with which they *refuse* to have a dialogue. Similar to Negri and Hardt, Beckett defined the medium as a place for an impossible dialogue: hence, the generic name of the movie is simply: *Film*. For Beckett, the format of the medium becomes its content, which later on McLuhan packed in an elegant sentence: "The medium is the message." No conversation brings a message through the medium; it only makes the medium *legitimate*.

But there is something even more dramatic. Isn't it a case in Plato? We owe him the concept of a dialogue, and to his Polis - the concept of democracy. But from ancient times the two of them come in a package with the symptom: democracy is based on the allowed conversation, precisely because the conversation becomes irrelevant. Brought to its philosophical extreme, the public dialogue is either addressing deaf ears or vice versa, asking the impossible question: "Which of your two kids Madam, would you like not to be shot?" And to a very similar prohibition of the voice in *The Thief* (1952) movie is based. In it, we are really hearing some unclear murmuring of

the people behind or noise by the cars passing by, but there is no scene in which the character would be forced or enabled to enter a dialogue.

Of course, the two movies play on the claustrophobic atmosphere, the acoustical universe is suspended, and the senseless murmuring of the people, as in the Balint's lady, does not serve a thing - the more the media produces a nice noise, the more the audience is deprived of the response. We know this from our thorough experiences when people say to us: "Why do I have to present my opinion, when it is lost in the senselessness of many conversations?", by which the whole dialogue is reduced to the polite stereotype of the British conversation on weather conditions. Dialogue draws its infinite perpetual force exactly by the fact that it is dumb.

However, this approach is capricious. It is not senseless to debate, but while debating, to be aware on the *parasite* stuck on the dialogue's body - the media and the government dictating the conversation.

Derrida asks what would our media machineries do out of Rimbaud or Lautreamont, out of Nietzsche or Proust, or of Kafka or Joyce? These authors were saved by a bunch of readers, by a minimum rate of popularity, they were saved by the *privacy*, and not by the *publicly*. On that scale, if a book is not read by more than ten thousand copies, Derrida says that it should be treated as hardly a private correspondence.

Let me get back to the beginning of the text. After the news on offence charges brought against Irena Cvetkovic by the writers of the homophobic textbooks, the *Makfax* Agency have called me for an opinion on the homophobic school books. I answered that they are incompetent if they are defining the homosexuality as an illness, and added that I want to live in a country in which my son or his friends, when they grow up, would be able to say loud and clear that they are gay, if they are, and to be proud of it. They did not publish my opinion. That is why our dialogues are not conditioned only by journalists who may be helpless, even not only by the media, but by what we call "general atmosphere" (whatever this vague axiom means). This is why I am saying that dialogues are sometimes impossible, except as private debates. And those are of no use.

4. Then, what is remaining?

Between the *private* (our books and analyses, that are basically reduced to a conversation between three people) and the *public* (the media and their vertiginous speed from one truth to another), there is a grey zone that is called *Samizdat*. Samizdat is the only form of a dialogue in which I still nurture faith.

On 2 December 2010 (six days prior to the deadline for this text) *Amazon* had refused to host the site of *Wikileaks*. The same day Wikileaks replied: "If Amazon is so uncomfortable with the first amendment (the freedom of speech, my remark), they should give up the business of selling books", and since they have left the public terrain for a conversation, the same day they have precisely defined their space in the world: "Wikileaks is the first global *Samizdat* movement". I could not agree more.

At the moment, Wikileaks leaking information network is the only global political dialogue, which belongs neither to the *private* - they do not share the truth mutually, but give it to all people having a computer and a modem, from Johannesburg to Skopje unconditionally; while at the same time they do not belong to the *public* - many states and banks in the world (even the Swiss ones) are tightening the ring around the leading persons of Wikileaks, mainly around the founder Julian Assange, with a highly suspicious legal case, and Internet companies have been cancelling their space.

We are living in an era of the post-politics, each fool starting from Berlusconi, to Sarkozy or Sarah Palin, as well as our own political fools, looks more like show business, media clowns than as politicians, and in return, people feverishly take over the role of politics, talk only about politics, helplessly endeavoring to keep things under control. But, with Wikileaks we are entering into a *post-Samizdat* era, with a range of resistance unknown to our civilization up to now. In that sense, Wikileaks have a decent historical predecessor in the Samizdats from the times of totalitarianism, but also with a technological support unknown so far.

Wikileaks at the moment is not only redefining the history as a science (Timothy Ash wrote for Guardian that what was available to history after 20 or 30 years, with Wikileaks is available for 30 weeks, calling Wikileaks a feast for historians), but also to journalism as profession. *Guardian, CNN, New York Times* and *Time* can do nothing but follow Wikileaks and dedicate their first main three news and editorials to the data leaking from them.

It is interesting that four years ago Wikileaks started as a *concept for dialogue.* They called their network Wikileaks according to the model of Wikipedia, where each member of the global community can give their contribution for the truth of events. Wikileaks had a similar idea. They believed that if they published information on the corruptive-environmental crimes in Albania, for example, that part of the Albanian citizens would be interested in giving authentic testimonies and that the two concerned parties would open a dialogue to come to the truth. It seemed that the world is not ready, neither for research, nor for conversation since the damaged audience after a long training, actually does not know how to *communicate*, if the conversation is unfolding out of the established rules on empty talking, out of *ceremonies, rituals* and *simulations*. Many people have a sincere wish to correctly edit the dictionary database on Tolstoy, on the national parks in Malaysia, or about the electrons, but it turned up that very few, or none knows how to talk on the focal political, financial or media pillars of our civilization.

On 3 December 2010, we have heard the news that the Columbia University careers service administration in New York has warned its students not to make public conversations on Wikileaks; otherwise, they face to endanger their future professional careers. In other words, it has sent the same message as the states, banks and media: that it is OK to be a hypocrite. As a person working at university for years, this news was shocking for me. Aren't universities a place where truth is defended by all means, where you believe that humanity can win, where you believe in ethical gestures? Where is Al Pacino coming from the *Scent of a Woman* (1992) to slap the obvious truth to the corrupted members of the university committee through the legendary sentence: "And I have seen boys like these, younger than these, their arms torn out, their legs ripped off. But there isn't nothin' like the sight of an amputated spirit; there is no prosthetic for that." This movie from school desks asked the ancient old question on the ethical gesture: "Are your words worth enough in the moment when you can lose your personal wellbeing? Are you ready, if the circumstances are not in your favor, to eat your own words?" And answered that there are moments when even at the cost of your whole visible universe falling apart, what you should not sell out is the truth. But life is not a movie and the moral amputation of the *Columbia University*, of *Amazon* are only part of the surprises that will follow in the months to come, when we shall see the sale of the morale from top instances that have advocated it just yesterday.

This phenomenon, although new, brings us paradoxically back to the 16th century, right in the time of Montaigne. But not in a sense to bring us back (Umberto Eco commenting Wikileaks gave a witty remark that from now on the diplomats will use pigeons to carry confidential information), but quite the contrary.

316

Several analysts have already commented that Wikileaks to the modern world is what printing houses were in the 16th century. When, as a result of the availability of printing press, in Netherlands they started spreading pamphlets and newspapers with confidential information, a phenomenon which final outcome was to annul the censorship of the Catholic Church, which had earlier controlled the books publishing. This led to development of science, and finally to democratization of the world. Then newspapers were more and more regulated with severe legal orders that eventually created today's media monsters, disgusting political *animals*, as another tool for the world dominance.

However, practical politics shows that the influence of Wikileaks, unfortunately, will not have a long-term effect. The spokesperson of Wikileaks, Julian Assange, on 7th December was detained in London. And now we are back to the relationship between: "free dialogue - court", from the beginning of this text. Probably more surprises are waiting for us about Wikileaks. Yet, the influence that they currently have on the history, diplomacy, and journalism is enormous.

One of the most probable scenarios for the end of Wikileaks will be that the concerned states, the banks and the media will finally manage to pack such a network of information and stories that will convince each citizen of this planet that Wikileaks was part of the plots for power, and that it was just a branch of CIA, FBI, of the great spy networks. Personally, I will need a lot of time to accept this cynicism, even after months of brain washing to which we will be exposed in the months to come. But even for a moment, Wikileaks has made visible the essence of being of our planet. For many years now, and for more than a half decade, I have been publicly speaking of the need for de-classifying the archives of communist Macedonia and opening them through internet, and immediately, on the principle "all for all", and without mediation of political structures and the media. What does not seem to work here, worked for Julian Assange immensely, and so far to an unparalleled degree, not only for the past, but also for the current archives of the secret services and of diplomacy. That is why to me, Assange and his team are the heroes of our time. While I am writing this, it is still unclear what will his personal destiny be. When you read this text, you will probably know much more than me at the moment. But, Wikileaks is not only Assange and a lot of work and logistics will be needed (which, to be realistic, the empires have it in tons¬) to catch Wikilieaks and to put it on lynch and execute it. Still, the information from Wikileaks are already downloaded on millions of PCs on the planet, and a lots of invisible persons are working everyday on the secret documents, to de-classify them while we are speaking. Nonetheless, Wikileaks, for the time being, has regained the confidence in the dialogue, and at least today, without any regrets, I can repeat the comment of Socrates' interlocutor, from the Plato: "In the name of Zeus, it's as it is written in the Wikileaks document of 29 November 2010."

For the end, a true story. The philosopher Alain Badiou, was once sitting in the audience, while Slavoj Zizek was delivering a public lecture. All of a sudden, the mobile phone of Badiou rang. Instead of turning it off, Badiou has gently interrupted Zizek and asked him if he can talk in front of the public quieter so that he can hear his interlocutor on the other side of the phone. For this event, Zizek jokingly wrote that this is the only sign of a lasting and deep friendship. If I use this anecdote as a parable, Wikileaks, at the moment, would be the ringing of the global Samizdat to all our mobile phones at once, and our job is to ask those shouting from the speaker's platform to speak quieter, if they can, we kindly ask them. We may have a direct link online that addresses the whole world, at the same time. We should hear it.

8 December, 2010

Afrim Krasniqi

Afrim Krasniqi M.A. (1971), Albania, political analyst and journalist. Graduated at the University of Tirana, Faculty of History and Philology (1996). M.A. studies at European University of Viadrina, Frankufrt (Oder), Germany. Has acquired M.A. certificate in political studies and inter-cultural communication (2003) and is currently enrolled in Doctorate studies in International Affairs at Tirana University.
He has work experience as a political commentator in printed media (1991 – 1995 and 2000 – 2002), spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1993 – 1994), assistant and political counselor to the President Alfred Moisiu (2002 – 2007) and general secretary of the Ministry for Health (2007 – 2008). Since 2005 to present day, he works as a professor of Political Science at the University of Tirana and part time at some private universities.
His most important books are: "The Fall of Democracy" (1997), "The End of Albanian Siberia" (1998), "Albanian Civil Society" (2004), "Political Parties in Albania 1920 – 2006" (2006), "(Ubër) Power of the parties" (2007), "Political parties and systems" (2008), "Political Systems in Albania 1912 – 2008" (2009) and "Elections in Albania 1991 – 2008" (2009).

Afrim Krasniqi

The Fragile Political Dialogue: Albania's Example

Political dialogue is one of the political criteria needed for a steady and democratic development, and EU integration of Albania and the South Eastern European region. The fulfillment of these criteria depends on securing social and political prerequisites for development of the political dialogue, as well as securing agreeable ambiance for conscientious po-

This study will attempt to analyze all historical and actual factors which obstruct dialogue

litical elite, where the dialogue will represent an incentive for strengthening of the institutions and democracy. Albania represents a complex example of the complex problematic of the lack of political dialogue and the difficulties in the attempts to initiate it. The lack of tradition, the fragile institutions, the position and role of political individuals to the detriment of those institutions, as well as the mentality and culture of behavior inherited from a system that excluded dialogue – are some of the specifics of Albania's case. This study will attempt to analyze all historical and actual factors which obstruct dialogue. It will analyze the forms of political dialogue, the role of the international and domestic factor, the products of dialogue and the consequences which have occurred because it did not exist within the institutions, as well as the

future challenges. It defends the thesis that, the Albanian model of political dialogue as part of the regional model represents a reflection of a newborn, fragile system, of a hybrid democracy, a conflicting transition whose influence over the democratic and economic progress of the country has been generally negative. Albanian and foreign sources have been used to develop and support this study, sources that deal with the political processes in Albania and especially international reports of the EU, OSCE, Freedom House, etc., all institutions with a high degree of credibility in the analysis of data and getting results.

THE NON-EXISTENT TRADITION OF POLITICAL DIALOGUE

The word "dialogue" was unknown and nonexistent for the political and public vocabulary. In The Dictionary of Albanian Language (1980), which has over 41 thousand words, the words "consensus" or "political dialogue" do not exist. For the duration of five decades spent in a single-party political system, political monologue took the place of political dialogue. The Albanian Labor Party, the only political party at the time, banned opposite opinions with law and anyone who would utter criticism or opinions which differed from the official line of principle, according to the Criminal Code, was punished by a prison sentence. The term "political dialogue" was used for the last time in Albania in the spring of 1946. At the time, about 10 members of Parliament proposed new discussions on the constitutional draft and the political problems of the country. Two months later they were arrested and sent to prison and in the next two months after that, they were sentenced to death and executed.

In the internal social structure, like most of the Balkan nations, Albania had a long tradition of tribal and patriarchal hierarchy. The head of the family was the decision maker, the chief of a community would be in charge of decision-making and in a county – that would be the "bayraktar" (flag-bearer), while in the most general circle – in the political regimes, in 7 out of the past 10 decades, decisions were made by the leading individual (King Zogu or Dictator Hoxha). The Italian researcher R. Rocca, in analysis of the contrast of today's Albanian heritage, comes to a rightful conclusion that "Albania's past is totally filled with feudalism, 'clanism', foreign conquests and dictatorship. Albania is missing the bourgeois tradition". He sees this not only as an Albanian characteristic, but also more widely, as a regional feature. According to him, "politics is the same in he Balkan like in Eastern Europe: without meditation, without compromise, with constant open clashes over the monopolization of that same politics. This political practice has nothing to do with personalities… neither with the principles of the Right and the Left oriented".

The Albanian model has a great many similarities with the models and patterns of its eastern neighboring countries. Of course, it is understandable for it to have many specific characteristics. For example, in difference to many other former communist countries, where the mediating institutions were quite often the civilian groups and organizations or intellectual elites and religious institutions, in Albania they were non-existent. The religious institutions were banned by law in 1967 and civil organizing and congregating was banned by the Constitution, the present intellectual elites were actually a product of the same mechanisms of formation, of political education and state propaganda that produced the APL. Moreover, the creation of political parties in 1990 - 1991 was conducted by that same elite and there was not a single political leader who was a political dissident and the political involvement of members of the Diaspora was banned by law. Albania did not have a period of liberalization as Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia or Yugoslavia had; Albania had no visible and tangible democratic experience between the two World wars and during the communist system, Albania went from Yugoslovenian under Russian control, then to Chinese and

after that it completely isolated itself from both the East and West. Albania's contacts with the Western world, with the new concepts and development were minimal and without any internal effect.

Albania encountered this negative legacy in 1990. Two decades have passed from that time, there have been many new achievements and improvements, but in the sense of political dialogue as a culture of thinking and behavior, little has changed. This is confirmed by the Progress Report for 2010 by the European Union for Albania, as a response to the request for admission. That request was rejected with a main explanation that the country did not meet the Copenhagen Summit criteria. Among other things, the EU referred5 to the political dialogue as: "the political dialogue is confrontational and unconstructive" and it concluded that "the current political situation, risks imposing long-term results of deep and lasting polarization with serious consequences", regarding the ability of the political class to reach compromises and find the needed consensus about key reforms. This type of criticism was not new to Albania. It faced it also in 1991, 1992, 1996, 1997, 2001, 2003 and 2007. In two of those cases (1991 and 1997) political conflict reached to such an extent that the country went blindly in the direction of utter chaos which later on forced the country to seek strong international assistance, in the form of military and humanitarian aid, manifested through the missions "Alba" and "Pelican".

The phases of development of the political dialogue in Albania

In a retrospective analysis, the political dialogue in Albania has transited through several time periods which are at the same time, the main phases of Albania's democratic development.

■ The first phase included the first two years of change in the political system and the beginning of the transition from an enclosed to an open and pluralist society. The first concepts for political dialogue and public politics were created in this phase. The first months were simply moments when the politicians met with the new concepts of democracy for the first time; it was a political rush to make up for lost time. The first sessions of Parliament were alike classes in elementary school for democracy, where each Member of Parliament and each political party learned something new and subsequently the new knowledge took the shape of a normative adopted by others. The results of that prevailing Utopian climate, were some of the most important political agreements of the transitional period, amongst which was the creation of a coalitional government from the majority and the opposition, with the duty to convey technical and political administration until the early elections in 1992.

■ A part of that compromise was the consensual division of the executive positions in all municipal units of the country, according the formula where those positions would be taken by the winners from each unit on the Parliamentary elections. The second step was a unanimous decision for the annulment of the Communist constitution (1976) and a joint elaboration and preparation of the Principal Constitutional Decree (1991-1998). Another elementary and founding step were the consensual laws for political parties, on the elections, property, for the de- politicization of state organizations for security, defense, strike, syndicates and amnesty for former victims of political exile. The parties included worked their efforts with consensus and dialogue, having in front of themselves the goal of the admission of Albania in today's OSCE, the re-establishment of the international relations with the U.S.A. and Great Britain, another aim was the start of a collaboration with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, etc. This openness for multiple dialogue and manifestations of good will for cooperation, for joint reforms and consensual elections with time, simply went down the drain, mostly because it was artificially created, to say the least – it was accidental and in atypical circumstances. The ex-Communists had still not tried the transfer to the

oppositional forces, while the Democratic anti-Communists had still not felt the taking of power and political rule in their hands. When these two sides put themselves to the test after 1992, the political distance between them deepened to such an extent that, instead of invitations to dialogue, the political leaders aimed for imprisonment, arrest and belittling of their opponents.

■ The second phase started exactly in that point of transition from consensual to bipolar politics, in a sharp conflict between sides which would later on, in 1997 turn to a wider, more harmful social clash. This phase lasted too long, until 2002. Its specifically owned characteristic was the complete lack of political dialogue and institutional conversation. The symbolical fact that the two eminent political leaders who in the period of 1991-1992 had been meeting every week or every month on regular basis, in and out of the country, in the period of 1992-2002 did not have one single meeting, whether formal or casual – that fact paints the best image about the nature of the conflict and the complete lack of political dialogue. In this period, the political relations between the majority and the opposition had retarded to an uncivilized, hard-spoken language and confrontation, mostly because a syndrome occurred which made all things personal, relating to the individuals and their closest family. Therefore, with the beginning of the new reforms, a larger part of the political members of the opposition were removed from public office and administration positions. The political rotation in 1997 was just violent as the former ones and far from any pattern of international parameters. The new winners – the former Communists, were now grouped in a wide coalition and conducted themselves towards the oppositional Democrats just as they did in 1992, with disrespect, belittling and vengeance.

■ The third phase refers to the period from 2002-2008 and has two climaxing moments: a consensual solution for the political crisis of 2002 as well as a broader consensus for the admission of Albania to NATO and the second one, attempt for Constitutional changes in 2008. When the political sides fell under strong international criticism in 2002, the political leaders of the time, Nano and Berisha, agreed to meet after ten years of political cold war and conflict. Albania received a few months of peace and normality after their meeting, but the biggest victory was the consensual election of President of the Republic, as well as the beginning of negotiations for SSA with the European Union. In the last year of the third phase of political tumult and political dialogue in Albania, two results were achieved that had great meaning to the country and its political system: Albania received an invitation for NATO membership and the political sides adopted the thorough changes in the Constitution with wide consensus. A part of the Constitutional changes, included avoidance of political crisis in Presidential elections (the model was switched from the absolute majority system to simple majority of the votes), strengthening of the Constitutional position of the Prime minister through implementation of the German concept of constructive movement in the Constitution, changing the election model to the proportional one, giving the Public Prosecutor a fixed mandate with limited duration, etc. This evolved phase of dialogue and political cooperation got terminated on the Parliamentary elections in 2009, after which the political sides went back to their traditional positions of conflicting and reciprocal political refusal. The fact that Albania was admitted to NATO in 2009, did not remedy the expression and restraint of the political elite and did not alleviate the interpretation of the refused statute of Albania, as a country candidate for admission to the EU as a giant step backwards.

MODELS OF POLITICAL DIALOGUE OUTCOMES

In its weakness, the political dialogue survived through several cultural, social and political factors, imposed by the internal needs or by external interventions. The process of good administration and management leadership of the country, when social conditions are determined as a lack of necessary financial assets or the lack of will and clear vision for reforms, was in the start, initially compensated by reaching political compromises. The idea and goal of those compromises was getting advantage in time and the removal of the political obstacles which could have occurred from the major political and public disputes and inquiries. Some of the joint, coalitional governments (1991, 1992, and 1997) were a direct result and product of the need to shut down the channels of protest.

On the other hand, even though in the period after the 90s, there were political parties that had significant majority in the Parliament, each government was made on the basis of a wider coalition, with alliances between the Left and Right wing, regardless of the differences in political ideology with a goal to distribute the responsibilities and governing power to multiple instances and factors. In the beginning the coalitions were of a formal character (like media statements by the presidents) which later on turned into institutional (long and short forms of conversation and dialogue) so in present time, each side is aware that in order to have a coalition, conversation, negotiation - agreements and political contracts need to be made, which are at the same time overseen by both sides and the public.

In comparison, political agreements reached in Albania from 1991-2010 on the basis of dialogue and political consensus, can be divided and analyzed in five general models:

1. The first model is realistic and responsible dialogue. Its balance is minimal and generally related to the periods of great change. It occurred in the cases when the government was very weak and when the tendencies of the internal processes were malignant and pointed towards the government. It has also occurred before major events that had to deal with questions of national and public interest, when none of the sides was ready to take full responsibility if they had failed. Such are the agreements for political and constitutional changes in 1991 and 2008, the agreements in the fields of integration (SSA and the NATO integration), considering the liberalization of the visa regime, the Kosovo war, the cooperation with the U.S.A., etc.

2. The second model is instructed dialogue. The international factor has counseled the political sides ever since the 90s and has imposed its influence on them to engage cooperation for a mutual agenda of development and reforms. The idea was to transcend from the mentality of a political party to the mentality of a state, where that political party strived to command all governing with its political power and in fact, it was more important to adopt the idea of dispersing the power of governing to more factors and turning those involved into factors of development and fair political competition. This model has functioned in separate phases, especially when related to questions dealing with both of the political sides, like: issues of the electoral reforms, solution of the right to property, polling committees, judicial committees, reforms of the defensive structures, integrative ones, etc. Quite often this type of agreements have been short termed, because whenever some of the sides had gained or lost something as a result of the processes, the political conflict would get back on stage.

3. The third model is the one of formal dialogue. Such a form is used when the political sides do not refuse but neither improve the debates through dialogue, so they create formal committees, a bunch of monotonous actions and statements all for the purpose of pushing the matters of the debate to infinity. There is a commonly familiar phrase in the Albanian language, "Talk just for talk" which symbolically expresses the essence of this type of dialogue, which has been dominant in Albanian political

living7. Endless negotiations, conversations, suggestions for assemblies, international interventions, presidential or party round tables which in the end resulted with a total lack of the practice of consensual agreement, adopted and abided by the involved sides. Inclined to creating a positive image in terms of the domestic public and the international factor, the political sides never reject dialogue, but accept its flow with a conviction not to achieve any specific results.

4. The fourth model is the one of dialogue and personal agreements between the political leaders. The opposites come together in politics only when it comes to power and mutual interests – a statement which in Albania is illustrated with specific examples. Both of the traditional leaders, the Democrat Berisha and Socialist Nano refused to meet in a period of ten years, but when they finally sat together in May 2002, they managed to make drastic changes in the political structure of the country in only a few hours. Between 2005 and 2008, right oriented Berisha and the Socialist president Rama chose to practice a sharp and discrediting rhetoric towards each other, but when they met in March 2008 on Parliamentary assembly, they managed to change the Constitution and the political and executive structure of the country in only four or five hours.

5. The fifth model represents the agreements reached concerning the division of constitutional power. These instances are small in numbers, but their effective meaning is very big in the political and executive system of the country. In 1991 all sides agreed on the executive powers of the newly formed statutory institutions8. Between 1992 and 2002, the governing side withdrew from this deal and created institutions which were mainly governed by the party majority. After 2002 the conversations and negotiations began again, concerning the balance of constitutional institutions (Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, Central Electoral Committee, The Management Board of the Central Bank, Managament Board of the National Televison, etc.) even though it was against the Constitution to do such actions of balance. These forms of agreement outside of the constitutional framework have mainly been personal agreements between the political leaders and were symbolically labeled by the President Bamir Topi in 2007 as "aksham bazaar", a phrase that gives negative connotation for the political culture in Albania.

CONTRASTS AND PROBLEMS OF POLITICAL DIALOGUE

Conduct towards political dialogue as a concept and the respect for it, are two different things when it comes to the Albanian model. As far as the political programs of the bigger parties are concerned, all of them accept and promote political dialogue as the basis for communication and political relations. They even go further than that, when they label it as an irreplaceable tool for achieving political agreements, in a transparent process which will have quality and inclusiveness in the preparation and adoption of parliamentary laws, as well as the preparation of political agendas, which would overcome momentary political interests9. But when the same actors and political parties face each other in the field and with the need for dialogue, a dramatic change occurs in their concepts. Each side considers dialogue to be crude acceptance of the suggestions the other side has, not a possibility for institutional discussions in order to find a solution through compromise. So, in plain terms, the actors of the political processes confuse the concepts for political dialogue with the ones of political debate and political monologue.

The Parliament has been an institution "under the shadows" in the last two decades, as a consequence of this confusion in concepts and mainly because it has been largely

affected by other political institutions in times of political crisis. None of the government's 16 transitional cabinets have been taken down by Parliament voting and none of the total of 22 political agreements has been negotiated and ratified in the Parliament10. The Parliament has had the role of a notary office which ratified decisions brought by the leadership of political parties, a fact that has resulted with a decrease of public trust and the Parliament's democratic efficiency. Furthermore, the boycott of Parliament and the transfer of political means of engagement to the streets, like protests, rallies, hunger strikes, etc. is not a new problem for Albanian democracy.

The political parties in Albania are the mirror of a deep contrast between attitudes towards domestic and foreign politics. For example, on the list of political priorities can be found a couple of fields on which the political sides in Albania have reached a broad consensus. There are no differences and the vote is always absolutely consensual on each decision regarding matters of national interest or the areas of international interest, social arrangements or questions of security and defense. There is not a single party which promotes and stands for differences in terms of foreign policy, in references to the U.S.A. or the EU, or regarding the admission to NATO, taking parts of international missions or anti-terrorist missions. But what contrasts this is the attitude towards domestic politics. For example, the main traditional sources of political misunderstandings have been and still remain to be the disputes over the electoral processes. From 1990 to 2010 there have been 3 referendums, 7 parliamentary elections and 5 local elections, but from all of these only the referendum for the shape of the regime has been accepted (1997) and the Parliamentary and local elections in 199211. Every other election, including those in 2009 are considered irregular, which has created permanent political tension and undermined the ground for political dialogue, at the same time opening the path for a type of conflict which has enormous consequences on the stability and efficiency of the Albanian democracy.

Another problem of the present and future time of the Albanian democracy is the lack of dynamics amongst the political elite. Political choice is mainly based on the votes of the citizens, but when those same citizens are forced to choose from the same alternatives, then they feel limited in their democratic freedom. From 1991 until now, the same political leaders, the same political attitude, promises and public image are still present on the political scene. The same individuals have attempted to be Prime minister or President, both Party president and community chief, a Member of Parliament and a Minister at the same time; all of them have been taken down from power by mass protests and put in power by electoral support. The two party political system, renders impossible each idea for a new political movement or for movement of the party elites inside the political parties. This process is accompanied by a decreasing number of voters and supporters of the main political parties.

Another significant problem is the civil factor and its fragile role in Albania12. During the years, there have been efforts in Tirana for the creation of public civil instruments for political dialogue. Political foundations of the major American, German, Italian and French political parties are established in Tirana, each one of them conducting a project for the encouragement of political dialogue. In the capital city as well as in other larger cities in Albania are situated independent institutions, civil society groups, cultural networks and organizations with political accent, whose purpose is the encouragement of democratic culture of political dialogue, cooperation and good will in treating basic civil problems. Retrospectively, there is not a single political decision or crisis that have been successfully negotiated by these non-political actors, but regardless, it is clear that they have used all of their positive political pressure, whether on their own or in a joined initiative, for encouragement of dialogue and problem solving.

THE FUTURE CHALLENGES OF DIALOGUE

Each political actor in Albania accepts the fact that the crucial determiners for the level of political dialogue and its future are at the same time, the main parameters needed for a functional and sustainable democracy. The international reports emphasize that Albania needs a sustainable and productive dialogue, based on significant public interest in the country, like the domestic political and economic reforms. The very fact that the Albanian Parliament has not managed to successfully vote a single law with the needed majority (reform laws which require votes from the opposition) is a clear indicator that, there is a need for a distinct division between the significant interests of the country and the momentary interests of the political parties.

Albania has a need for replacement of the model of the strong politicians with the one of strong institutions. The individuals can have a positive or negative role while enjoying a significant role in political processes, but surely they cannot replace the institutions with their political and constitutional role13. Personalization of politics goes to the harm of the institutions; political conflict holds the functionality of the institutions as hostage, the fight against corruption prevents the very institution from proper functioning; that is why a healthy society can be formed only from strong, effective, plausible and democratic institutions. The functioning of the institutions does not aim to weaken the political parties but to give a new dimension to their role in the public and legal space, provided for their functioning by the Constitution and the political system.

The part of institution-enhancement should be a new, active and all-inclusive role for the Albanian Parliament, which has the role of the main debating body where political diversity is created. Political debates in support of this role have already been started in Albania, concerning the possibility for structural change (a Parliament consisted of two houses or the change of the electoral system for an increase in direct democracy) or for organizational changes (abolishment of Parliamentary immunity, a clear distinction of its executive responsibilities and increase in its transparency).

Because of the significant 'weight' of the political parties and their leaders, Albania is in a great need of internal democracy inside the political parties and their greater synchronization with their positions, guaranteed by the Constitution. There is not a single political party which has internal democracy at the present moment – this is where the changes should start, so they could be able to achieve changes in career based on political projects, vision, abilities and competitive voting. A part of political reforms are the extensive changes in formal law for political parties and especially their ways of financing, a law which his expected to be a part of the Parliamentary agenda in 2011 an 2012.

Political dialogue seeks conscious political actors and democratic education. Albania still has a lot of chances for correction of these activities. These areas extend over: democratic education in schools, an increase in the level of civil involvement in public debates, encouragement of the civil society and media independence, expansion of direct democracy and political responsibility to the public. The democratic culture gained through democratic education is of a fundamental value and represents a long-term challenge for actual separation from the negative traditions of the past and at the same time, it is the gateway for the formation of a new civil identity – the European one. Furthermore, the Albanian society should detach itself from this model of dialogue and the formal agreements, in order to create a sustainable agenda and practice of conversation in the Constitutional frameworks and in favor of the public interest, alongside the needed reforms for EU membership. It is the public sphere and the citizens, the media and the civil society as well, which have a crucial role in this case.

Albania will need to show personal abilities for solving the conflicts which are the result of the internal processes, as a member country in the NATO and a serious aspirant for the EU. The country has to prove it possesses democratic stability, a virtue which is currently fictional, but which paradoxically brings votes to politicians, so they could stay in power. A society and state which are democratic and functional are in favor of the citizens, politics, public sphere, neighboring countries and associations in the immediate region, in Europe and worldwide.

Bibliography

• Anastasi, Aurela. "Institucionet politike dhe e drejta kushtetuese në Shqipëri (1912-1939)". Tirana 1998.
• Bashkurti, Lisen. "Diplomacia shqiptare në fillimet e Luftës së Ftohtë". Tirana. 2003.
• Biberaj, Elez. "Shqipëria në tranzicion. Rruga e vështirë drejt demokracisë", Tirana 2001.
• Biagini, Antonello. "Historia e Shqipërisë nga zanafilla deri në ditët tona". Tirana 2000.
• Daniel Serwer, Referat, ISHSN, Tirana, 29 maj 2001
• Ferraj, Hysamedin: "Kriza e përkryer e Shqipërisë". Tirana 2003.
• Fuga, Artan. "Majtas, jo djathtas". Tirana. 2003.
• Hensell, Stephan. "Regieren in Albanien". WeltTrends Nr 45. Hamburg. 2004.
• Grup autorësh. "Këshilli i Europës për Shqipërinë", Tirana 1999.
• Krasniqi, Afrim. "Partitë Politike në Shqipëri 1912-2006", Tirana 2007.
• Krasniqi, Afrim. "(Mbi)pushteti i partive politike", Tirana 2008.
• Krasniqi, Afrim. "Zgjedhjet ne Shqiperi 1991-2009". Tirana 2009.
• Krasniqi, Afrim. "Sistemet politike në Shqipëri 1912-2008", Tirana 2009.
• Omari, Luan. "Sistemi parlamentar". Parlamenti në Shqipëri, Tirana, 2004.
• Pëllumbi, Servet. "Pluralizmi politik", Tirana, 2007.
• Pëllumbi, Servet. "Të mendosh ndryshe". Tirana. 2001.
• Pipa, Arshi. "Albanian Stalinism. Ideo – political aspects". USA 1990.
• Rama, Shenasi. "Probleme politike shqiptare I". Tirana, 2006.
• Vickers, Miranda. "Shqipëtarët, një histori moderne", Tirana, 2008.
• Zaganjori, Xhezair. "Demokracia dhe shteti i së drejtës". Tirana. 2002.

Publications/ Journals / Reports

• Archive of the ODIHR/OSCE. Report on the Elections in Albania, (www.osce.org)
• Archive of EU. "Albanian - Stabilisation and Association Report", 2002-2010.
• Archive of IPU. "Report on Election in Albania", (www.ipu.org)
• EU: "Ballkani Perëndimor 2004. Asistenca. kohezioni dhe kufijtë e rinj të Europës". Bruksel. 3.11.2002.
• BHHRG: "Albania 1996: Democracy or Dictatorship?". London. 1996
• Publication "Quo vadis. Shqipëri?". Tiranë. 1993.
• Publication "Shqiptarët në Ballkan". ISHSN. Tiranë. 2001.
• Constitution of Albania, Tirana, 1998.
• Journal "Politika & Shoqëria". ISPS. Tirana 2000-2002.
• Journal "E drejta parlamentare dhe politikat ligjore", 2004-2008.
• Journal "Studime Historike". Science Academy. Vol. 1-4. Tirana. 1997.
• U.S. Library of Congress. Albania - A Country Study.

Anna Triandafyllidou

Anna Triandafyllidou, Greece, (B.A. - Panteion University, Ph.D. - European University Institute) is Professor (part time) at the European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, in Florence, and Senior Research Fellow at the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP) in Athens. She is also Visiting Professor at the College of Europe in Bruges since 2002. She has held teaching and research positions in the UK, Italy, the USA, Belgium and Greece. Her main areas of expertise are migration, nationalism, and European integration. She has authored and edited more than 10 books and published more than 100 articles in refereed journals and chapters in collective volumes on these topics. Her recent books include *Migration in 21st Century Greece* (with T. Maroukis, 2010, Kritiki, in Greek), *Muslims in 21st Century Europe* (2010, Routledge), *Irregular Migration in Europe: Myths and Realities* (2010, Ashgate).
For more details on her work please visit: www.annatriandafyllidou.com

Anna Triandafyllidou

What's in a Name?
Greek Nationalism and the
'Macedonian Question' in a
Changing Europe

The early currents of Greek nationalism in late eighteenth century were marked by the influence of the Enlightenment and its ideals privileging a territorial and civic definition of the Greek nation. However, as of the first decades of the existence of the independent Greek state in the nineteenth century, the nation has been predominantly defined in ethno-cultural terms, through references to common ancestry, culture and language. The dominant narrative of the nation, constructed by Greek historiographers in the late 19th century, started with the much acclaimed at home and abroad, Greek classical past, continued with Christianity, rehabilitated the Byzantine Empire and concluded with Greece's subjugation to the Ottoman Empire and the national resurrection in 1821. The Greek national community was thus seen as unique both in its singularity and universality. It had a unique historical trajectory from ancient times till the present, and a unique cultural profile combining the particularism of the nation with two competing universalisms: that of ancient Greek culture on one hand, and that of Christian Orthodoxy, on the other.

What stands behind the 'Macedonian question', the 'name problem' and identity?

329

The united and unique national community thus invented, was further reinforced through state policies in military conscription, education and culture throughout the twentieth century. Even though the identification of the nation with Orthodoxy was problematic due to the contradiction between the particularistic claims of Greek nationalism and the universalist tendencies of the Christian Orthodox religion, the separation of the Greek church from the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1833 confirmed the intricate link between the nation and the flock. Thus, Greekness became an amalgamate of (belief in) common ancestry, cultural traditions and religion. This triple self-definition provided also for a triple boundary that distinguished Greeks from their neighbouring nations. Greeks were differentiated from Muslims and Jews in the East because they were Christian Orthodox. They were also distinct from the Slavs in the north thanks to their claim to classical Greek culture. Modern Greece saw itself as the natural heir of the ancient Greek civilization – as if culture is an object, and the nation is its owner – a feature that made small, relatively backwards and geopolitically peripheral Greece symbolically central to the construction of a European civilization. Although territorial and civic features have also gained importance through the consolidation of the national territory in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Greekness is still often defined as a transcendental notion in Greek public discourses.

THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION

The complexity of the Macedonian question is due to the intertwining of cultural with geographical and political issues. On one hand, there is a Greek part of Macedonia, whose capital is Thessalonike and which forms an integral part of the Greek state and the Greek nation. According to Greek historiography, the inhabitants of this region define themselves primarily as Greeks. Moreover, this region is identified in Greek dominant self-understandings with the dynasty and the accomplishments of Alexander the Great. Therefore, Greeks consider the symbols, myths and traditions relating to Alexander as part of the national cultural heritage.

By contrast, according to the FYROM government, there can be no such historic claim regarding the nationality of Alexander the Great; he was certainly not Slav, but neither was he Greek or Bulgarian in the modern sense of the concept. Therefore, all parts of the geographical region of Macedonia (the ex-Yugoslav, the Bulgarian and the Greek section) have equal rights to refer to Alexander since his cultural heritage is shared by the entire territory. This view does not contest the Greek idea of 'ownership' of culture as an object. Rather it contests who is the owner, arguing that those bearing the name Macedonia as a national marker are the legitimate heirs of Alexander's heritage.

As Bourdieu argues, naming is a fundamental expression of political power. To name something means to bring it into existence. Although Greek government officials are most probably unaware of Bourdieu's analysis, they have only confirmed his argument by vehemently opposing to this day the use of the name *Macedonia* as a national symbol and name of an independent state. The Socialist Republic of Macedonia existed previously as a federal state within Yugoslavia without affecting Greek national sensitivities. But the situation changed when, after the dismantling of the Yugoslav federation, an independent and sovereign state was established in 1991. Paradoxically in agreement with the FYROM government's view that culture is an object that can be owned and so are national heroes and national myths, Greek governments as well as Greek public opinion have repeatedly expressed their concerns that the use of the name implies the overall appropriation of the symbols, traditions, myths and even the territory associated with the name Macedonia.

In other words both FYROM and Greek elites and citizens seem to agree that culture is an 'object' that can be owned by a people, a nation. The question is who owns this specific bit of culture that is related to Alexander the Great and the ancient Macedonia. Was it Hellenic or Macedonian? Is there a Macedonian Macedonia or a Hellenic Macedonia. And are these adjectives: Macedonian, Hellenic (or indeed Bulgarian) qualifications of a geographical nature or of a political/cultural one?

The Greece-FYROM dispute over the ownership of culture has involved various national symbols and cultural artefacts. Greece has opposed the use of the initial flag of FYROM (used between 1992 and 1995 but revised afterwards upon the request of Greece), because it presented the *sun* of Vergina. This *star* or *sun* as it is often called, was discovered in the mid-1970s at Vergina, at the southwest of Thessaloniki, where the ancient Macedonian capital *Aegai* was located, and has since been considered as the emblem of the empire of Alexander the Great. The Greek government has pointed out the oddness of a flag which represents the national identity of a people, i.e. the Macedonians, by evoking the national tradition and cultural heritage of another nation, namely the Greeks. Indeed, after the dispute started, the *sun* of Vergina has been increasingly often displayed in public buildings and other sites in the Greek region of Macedonia as a national and regional symbol.

The argument of both sides is based on the political role assigned to cultural symbols within the nation-state. These are supposed to represent the continuity and unity of the national community through history. The historic and cultural semantics embodied in the national symbols has led the Greeks to regard the recognition of the new republic as a violation of their national identity. The Greek nationalist movement has thus acquired a defensive character; it has sought to delineate and protect what was perceived as national heritage from the symbolic invasion of the *Skopjans* (as FYROM citizens are called in colloquial Greek).

A rigid nationalist position was initially adopted by the conservative government (1989-1993) of Constantine Mitsotakis, leader of *Nea Demokratia*. The government took up a number of cultural initiatives against the recognition of the Republic of Macedonia. Roundtables, workshops and public debates with the participation of intellectuals and the media were organised. The National Tourism Agency launched an advertising campaign promoting cultural trips to the North of Greece, in the regions of Macedonia and Thrace. Nationalist messages written in English so that tourists would understand were stamped on T-shirts and stickers. "First learn history" and "The spirit of Alexander the Great is universal but his homeland Macedonia has been Greek for the past 3,000 years," were some of the most eloquent slogans.

The government's initiatives were successful in mobilizing Greeks at home and abroad. An enormous public rally of approximately one million people took place in Athens in December 1992. Collective mobilization occurred spontaneously but public outrage against the FYROM's claims were significantly stirred by political elites. Another public demonstration was organized in Thessalonike a few months later, as were others in most of the Greek diaspora communities in the U.S.A., Canada and Australia.

The adoption of a more flexible attitude with regard to the Macedonian question by the conservative government during the summer of 1993 led to its fall from power. The then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andonis Samaras, together with a number of conservative MPs that supported him, accused the Prime Minister (PM) Mitsotakis of "nationally dangerous" behaviour and withdrew their support from the government. Samaras created a new party called *Politiki Anixi*. A small number of conservative MPs abandoned *Nea Demokratia* and joined the new party arguing that the Prime Minister

was acting against the national interest. Nationalist fervour dominated the pre-election campaign in autumn 1993 and was widely promoted by the opposition parties, both *Politiki Anixi* and the Socialists of PASOK, in their campaigning discourse.

The Macedonian question remained a major policy issue for the socialist government and its then leader Andreas Papandreou, who won the election of October 1993. The Papandreou administration adopted a more rigid position on the issue and in November 1993 imposed an embargo on FYROM trade through Greece, FYROM's only outlet to the Aegean sea. The situation reached a peak of tension during the Greek presidency of the European Union in the first semester of 1994. The Greek government upheld its position and refused to raise the embargo. In fact, any proposal for compromise regarding the name *Macedonia* and the symbols associated with it seemed likely to provoke a strong popular reaction and put into question the legitimacy of the government itself.

Diplomatic and economic relations between Greece and the FYROM were restored in September 1995 after the intervention of the U.S.A. which put pressure on both countries to reach a compromise. The sun of Vergina was removed from the flag of FYROM, while Greece lifted the embargo it had imposed on the country in 1993. The administration of Kostas Simitis which succeeded Andreas Papandreou in January 1996 have made clear their wish to find a compromise and so did the government of FYROM. Nonetheless, negotiations over the name question are still in course and a number of alternatives (Novomakedonia, Nova Makedonia or Slavomakedonia) have been discussed within the framework of UN mediation but no final decision has been made. Both sides are extremely cautious in accepting a solution that could in any way provoke the national sentiments of their populations. For the time being, the country has been recognized by the United Nations, the Council of Europe and other international organisations with the name FYROM. However, several national governments and most people (outside Greece) would refer to the country as Macedonia, *tout court*.

The so-called Macedonian question which has arisen with the creation of FYROM, centres on the use of a common set of cultural symbols by two different nation-states for the same purposes. FYROM did not seem to have other alternatives in defining its own national identity considering the Balkan context. Given that all Balkan nations define nationhood based on ethnic origin and cultural ties, the new republic had to follow suit. Given also that the region's official history is perceived as well explored, registered and *distributed*, in spite of disputes among the neighbouring countries with regard to certain interpretations, space had to be made for the emergence of a new nation. That was a particularly uneasy task. FYROM had to create its own official history somehow 'at the expense' of another nation's history and cultural symbols.

The conflict created for the Greeks a sense of isolation, both geographical and cultural, with respect to their European partners who found it difficult to appreciate Greece's sensitivity on the question. They saw no territorial threat in the creation of the new republic and failed to grasp the complex cultural symbolism embodied in the name dispute. The idea of Greece's difference was particularly salient in the Balkan context of the 1990s. The dismembering of Yugoslavia, political and economic instability throughout Central Eastern Europe, the close political and religious affiliation between FYROM and Turkey, and a historical experience of traumatic ethnic mixing during the nineteenth and early twentieth century were all factors that contributed to raising Greek concerns about the creation of a Republic of Macedonia. This same context and past experiences reinforced Greece's self perception as a *brotherless* nation, that is a unique nation but also a nation without brothers or allies. Greek governments' and public opinion's reaction to the Macedonian question both in the early 1990s and indeed to this day has to be understood in that context.

THE POSITIONING OF GREECE IN EUROPE AND THE BALKANS

But why should Greek citizens and elites perceive themselves as a brotherless nation? Indeed, Greek history and politics have been marked by the country's ambivalent geopolitical position, at the crossroads between East and West. This ambivalence is reflected on Greek national-cultural identity and also on foreign policy and relations with other countries. Greek identity is Janus-faced. On one hand, it looks to the East, to the Byzantine tradition and Christian Orthodox heritage. But the East is also a potential threat for modern Greece; it represents Turkey and the Muslim world. On the other hand, the West has been a source of nationalist inspiration and support for the young Greek state in the nineteenth century. European intellectual and political elites saw in Greece the craddle of European modernity. Modern Greeks were thus burdened and honoured with the legacy of a glorious past, that had to be semantically unique so as to distinguish Greeks from other nations, and culturally universal so as to provide for the archetype of European Enlightenment.

Even though the nationalist narrative managed to incorporate classical Greece with the Byzantine tradition and construct a national past without ruptures, the ambivalence between East and West remains an important feature of Greek identity and politics even nowadays. Europe has constructed its view of modern Greece with reference to its ancient civilisation omitting the two thousand years in-between. Greeks have thus found themselves trapped between Hellenism and Romiosyne. Although (western) Europe has been Greece's main political and cultural referent throughout the twentieth century until today, the positioning of Greece remains ambivalent, modern Greek-ness being of but not in Europe. Nonetheless, the European-ness of modern Greece has been officially confirmed by its accession to the European Union in 1981. Still, Greeks look at *Europeans* with suspicion; lay people as well as political elites often perceive modern western European culture as alien to Greek customs and traditions.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

Since 1989, Greece has become host to a large number of immigrants mainly from the Balkans (Albania and Bulgaria), central and eastern Europe (Romania, Ukraine, and Russia) but also increasingly from Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and China). Immigration has posed important challenges to Greek national self-understandings. With immigrants accounting for about 10% of the total resident population, state institutions and public opinion have gradually realized that Greek society has become *de facto* multi-cultural and multi-ethnic. Even if dominant discourses on the Greek nation continue to emphasize the 'Greece belongs to the Greeks', everyday life in schools and at the workplace clearly shows that this is not the case. The recent citizenship law reform (in March 2010) has indeed come to recognize and institutionalize these new realities.

The first decade of the 21st century has started very positively for Greece. The inclusion of the country in the first phase of the Euro zone implementation, on 1 January 2002 has confirmed its 'Europeanness' at the monetary but also at the symbolic level. The Olympic Games in 2004 have epitomised the view that modern Greece was a culturally confident society and a robust economy, having left its identity problems and economic weaknesses behind. In addition, the mid-2000s brought significant changes in the European and Balkan context of Greece: the 2004 enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe shifted the EU geopolitical, cultural and religious borders farther East making Greece inevitably more central in the European landscape.

Both developments made Greek national discourses more firmly anchored in Europe. At the same time, however, the EU enlargement to include Turkey and the Balkans opened up new identity and geopolitical challenges. While Greek public opinion fa-

voured the accession of Croatia and the Western Balkan countries to the EU (the whole process was seen as a factor ensuring stability, democracy and peace in the region) it was against Turkish EU membership. Turkey was and still is perceived as a threatening neighbour for Greece because of the Cyprus questions, the Turkish claims over the Aegean sea as well as Turkey's manipulation of its ethnic Turkish minority in western Thrace.

The new decade has started with the onset of a severe and painful economic crisis. This crisis has confirmed what many citizens suspected (but did not want to believe), notably that the 'golden' years of high economic growth and the Olympic Games grandeur had only concealed the structural weaknesses of the Greek economy and the need for radical changes in the Greek labour market, economy, welfare and pension system as well as in the overall organisation of the public administration.

It is indeed surprising that with all the social, political and economic challenges that Greece has faced (and more or less successfully answered) during the last two decades, the question of the naming of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) has not died out, it has not been forgotten. While the 'Macedonian question' does not lead to public rallies today, public opinion polls document that an overwhelming majority of respondents consider the issue important and would be very sad if the Greek government would accept a compromise that includes the name Macedonia without a clear qualification (such as Slavic Macedonia for instance). They would consider it a national loss and the government (that would accept such a solution) would be treated as traitors.

I believe that the only way forward for the two countries is naturally a compromise. However the compromise should less be based on the selection of the specific words that should constitute the name of the FYROM. It should involve a change in direction: a public campaign aiming to explain to the citizens of Greece and FYROM that Alexander the Great was neither Macedonian nor Greek in the sense that we understand these terms today and he probably was BOTH a Macedon and a Hellene in the sense that they understood those terms then! Hence there is no point about fighting for the ownership of history, heroes and indeed names. There is an issue of mutually recognising each other's existence, building on trade, economic cooperation, cultural exchanges (after all our popular music and dances resemble a lot) and tourism. Resolving the name issue then could and should be the conclusion of all this rather than the beginning of it. History is indeed the way we reconstruct our past to make sense of our present and imagine our future. Hence maybe we both need to reconsider our history with a view to discovering what unites us and not what divides us.

Milaim Fetai

Milaim Fetai (1958), M.A., Macedonia is an expert in political sciences. Graduated Po-
litical Science at the Zagreb University, where he acquired the title Master of political
science in the field of international relations.
He was elected Deputy Chairman of the Broadcasting Council of the Republic
of Macedonia in Since May 2010. He was the initiator and first manager of the Na-
tional TV Alsat-M in 2004-2005. A lecturer at the State University of Tetovo since 2001.
Series of papers published in several domestic and foreign publications.

Milaim Fetai

The Dispute with Greece and Macedonian Integrations

1. THE FALL OF THE REAL-SOCIALIST EPOCH AND THE BIRTH OF MACEDONIA AS AN INDEPENDENT AND SOVEREIGN STATE

1.1. Right after the World War II, real social and political conditions were created, which would serve for the creation of a united Europe. Even though it was a young idea, emerged in difficult times, it was supposed to create a path and methods of realization. The Cold War, which as a phenomenon found its place and articulation immediately after the coalition against Hitler won the war, was at the same time responsible for the speeding up of the integrative processes in Western Europe.

1.2. Since the newly founded Organization of the United Nations failed to solve the basis of the conflicts of interest between the East and the West, Western Europe managed its integrative processes in many areas with great success. Most of those processes, primarily found an expression in the area of politics and defense.

The change of the constitutional name of Macedonia, clears the way of the country towards integration in the Euro-Atlantic structures

The first institutional and integrative forms in the field of economy were created as well: from the first unions that had an über-national character, through European economic treaties and finally, the European Union.

2. MACEDONIA'S NATO MEMBERSHIP IS THE FIRST INTEGRATIVE STEP IN THE EURO-ATLANTIC STRUCTURES

2.1. The fall of the Berlin Wall, symbolically described the end of the Cold War era and at the same time, it denoted the definite fall of the real-socialism epoch. That very fall, meant strengthening of the idea that, small countries like Macedonia will be able to raise their hopes higher, in terms of defense and security, which would be raised once it became a NATO member and at the same time, it would allow and enforce the development of the newborn democracy.

2.2. Macedonia, in its strive for full Euro-Atlantic integrations, expressed its aims and goals in a plebiscitary manner concerning the NATO integration, claiming the wish of the people to gain full membership with all rights and responsibilities, as determined by the founding acts of this international alliance.

2.3. As a NATO partner in Peace missions (for several years) and as a member of the Adriatic Charter and especially as a state which has enjoyed the support and help from NATO in certain crisis situations, experienced from the time when independence was declared until the beginning of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, Macedonia has rightly awaited an invitation to the NATO summit in Bucharest (first half of April, 2008) as a country candidate for NATO membership.

But Greece, as a full member of NATO, stated in an unambiguous way that it will not renounce its right on veto. This action by Greece, which effectively postponed the decision for Macedonia's membership in NATO, caused various comments, in the political circles of the involved countries, Greece and Macedonia and in the wider political sphere as well.

In order to explain these matters more closely, in continuation we will try to examine some crucial aspects of this dispute and as a conclusion, propose a possible solution.

3. THE CONSTITUTIONAL NAME SLOWED DOWN MACEDONIA'S EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATIVE PROCESSES

3.1. Macedonia's constitutional name was contested by Greece right after its enactment. This action came to focus both in the time when other countries acknowledged Macedonia's independence and during the procedure for Macedonia's membership of the U.N.

3.2. After this pressure by Greece, strictly on Macedonia's constitutional name, the General Assembly of the U.N. came to a precedent: it did not accept Macedonia by its constitutional name, giving it the "Former Yugoslavian Republic Of Macedonia" name. At the time, this step was justified with the remark that it would be used only in the internal structures of the U.N.

This action by the General Assembly of the U.N. was accepted with sadness in the institutional, political and constitutional circles in Macedonia. These circles considered that, it was not only an action which "enforced" Greece's standpoint in contesting Macedonia's constitutional name, it also annulled all claims Macedonia had against Greece, for the economic damages it suffered in the beginning of 1990 as a conse-

quence of the blockage of transportation of goods which came from Thessaloniki, including merchandize for some of the countries members of the European Economic Community.

3.3. This "all-inclusive" blockage of the new country – Macedonia – and its weak economy in the first five years of its existence as an independent and sovereign state was a severe and hard blow. It had heavy effects on the internal political and social relations as well, especially for its international political affairs because the process of affirmation on the international political scenery was highly obstructed.

Despite it all, Macedonia's membership in the U.N. was an event which raised all hopes in overcoming the obstacles set by Greece and it shed lights of hope over existing disputes, implying that as neighboring countries, they would be able to find solutions for any conflicts, solutions which would be acceptable for both sides. In truth, resulting from joint efforts, on September 13th 1995, both countries signed a Temporary Agreement (*Interim Accord*), giving signs of hope to both countries for future bilateral relations and problem solving.

3.4. This agreement from 1995 spurred the hopes of other neighboring countries, the region an especially the European Union, for the ending of the five year period which was very hard on Macedonia's economic potential and international affirmation. But as it turned out – and it showed very fast after that agreement – Macedonia did not solve the name dispute with it; in fact, the solution was postponed indefinitely.

It is a fact that the agreement from 1995 opened up the ways for Macedonia to have an increased economic development and political establishment on the international scene; it had increased chances for coming one step closer to the European Economic Community and to the European Union as well. In particular, it had a more opened approach to NATO, a goal Macedonia had set from its very establishment as an independent country.

3.5. Since most of the obstacles on the way for economic, political and military integrations were removed, Macedonia had the opportunity to develop a close collaboration with many economic structures from the E.U. and later on became a partner with NATO in many operative missions.

Some of the decrees that were promising for Macedonia, included the Article 11 from the Temporary Agreement from 1995, according which Greece obliged itself not to take any actions that would prevent any of the integrative processes Macedonia would take part of. This article was understood by the Macedonian side as an international obligation for Greece to willingly renounce its power of veto, regarding international organizations and normative acts.

Greece abided this rule until 2001. With the armed conflict in Macedonia, and the emerging crisis situation, Greece did not wait a single moment to start ignoring its responsibilities which were the result of the Article 11 from the Temporary Agreement in 1995.

3.6. The armed conflict put Macedonia in a very serious crisis. Regardless, with heavy internal mobilization of the political structures and with the help of the International Community, the conflict was resolved within a year with the signing of a treaty that holds historical meaning and which brought peace for all, while at the same time it ensured institutional and state stability; that act is later on known as the Ohrid Framework Agreement.

4. THE CHANGE OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL NAME ENFORCES MACEDONIA'S INTEGRATIVE PROCESS IN THE EURO-ATLANTIC STRUCTURES

4.1. The constellation of international affairs in the Balkan, which was created like a result of the effective military efforts on the territory of the freshly dismantled Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, had preconditioned and sped up Macedonia's inclusion in NATO. This apparent closeness was further enforced by the inclusion of the international factors in the armed conflict in 2001, an armed outbreak that happened on Macedonian territory, only ten years after its independence and international acknowledgement.

These events which in sequences had put Macedonia's existence to risk, with the omnipotent aid by the International Community, had contributed to an increased collaboration of the country with NATO, on various levels. We can emphasize one of those collaborating points: immediately after the armed conflict was over and the Ohrid Framework Agreement was signed and enforced, NATO received a significant duty - to conduct mass disarmament, an important fact relevant to the implementation of the Framework Agreement.

4.2. In continuation, regarding the terms of the Adriatic Charter, Macedonia was successful in conducting all of its obligations which resulted from the Partnership Arrangement with NATO: to successfully enforce the internal reorganization of military forces and to participate in the all-inclusive NATO program with its specially created military units, in the peacekeeping missions for international safety (Afghanistan, Sudan) and thereby reassure the determination of the country and its ability to take part in the Alliance's international duties and successfully enforce them.

But, in the beginning of 2008, when Macedonia had already fulfilled all of those conditions and when it was expected for it to join the Alliance, alongside other participants of the Adriatic Charter – Albania and Croatia – Greece repeated its blockage: it threatened to use its right on veto, in order to prevent Macedonia from becoming a member of NATO, unless it would change its constitutional name!

4.3 After Greece took this approach, while it was widely agreed that Macedonia was expected to follow the footsteps of Albania and Croatia and receive an invitation for the NATO summit in Bucharest, the country – its people and governing institutions suddenly faced an obstacle impossible to avoid, the name dispute was to be solved as quickly as possible. The reason for this was the fact that, the inclusion in NATO was the opening of an international road for Macedonia and at the same time, securing of its physical safety in the future.

5. A DECISION ON THE NAME OF MACEDONIA, ACCEPTABLE FOR BOTH INVOLVED SIDES SHOULD BE AN AIM OF JOINT POLITICAL WILL

5.1 The question of Macedonia's name has international political character, involving multiple sides; hence it has more than one dimension. Even though this issue has burdened and still continues to burden the bilateral relations between Macedonia and Greece, there still hasn't been an acceptable solution. Having in mind that this issue HAS to be solved, we will go on with this analysis with a treatment of certain facts and approaches, we consider relevant in the process of solving the problem.

5.2. We begin with the fact that the safety of a country is a founding predisposition for a stabile development. This safety (security) includes a system, a combination of methods whose implementations secures safety and wellbeing of the people, their

defense from an unknown number of risks, including risks of war, sabotage, criminal actions, natural disasters, traffic accidents, subversions, terrorist acts, etc. The safety and defense of a country is build and established upon an integrated system of the functional government institutions. By taking certain measures (everyday preventive measures) and with the introduction of certain acts and decisions (legal and political), the government institutions, depending on their jurisdiction and competency, significantly secure a stabile social and economical development of their country.

5.3. But, whatever this system of government institutions is constituted of, even if it is a multifunctional one, it should never be understood as the sole solution, created once and for all times! This is due to the fact that, each of these systems should be constantly adjusted to the social, political and economic needs, before all – inside in the state, but it should stay aware of the actual matters of the immediate region.

"Internal" and "external" security and defense, i.e. the safety of the immediate region and of the wider one as well, represent two sides to a same coin, in fact – stand for international security. Furthermore, the established system of the institutions, set by the ones in power, like Macedonia's example – which represents a country that strives to actualize the will and efforts of the people to reach complete security on the internal plan – should be, before all, oriented towards close collaboration with a appropriate international security factor, who will work both on regional and international plan. This appropriate factor is undoubtedly – NATO. There is no question that today NATO is unique amongst the larger regional, international and global organizations of greater significance.

5.4. There are a lot of reasons and factors which impose – and especially on small countries, like Macedonia – a constant adjustment of its institutions, so they will be ready and able to respond and meet certain demands at any given time. These reasons and factors can be of an internal and political nature. i.e. they can have internal political and economic origin, considering that their emergence depends on the developments in politics as well as the general social and economic development.

Those reasons and factors can also have ideological or religious roots! Professor Gaber's analysis is particularly interesting from this point of view. According to this analysis, among the relevant reasons and factors which are strong enough to affect the general stability of a country, internal and external, Professor Gaber takes into account the cultural, ethnic and moral values, followed by historical and religious values, which have all been accepted by society and received a status of "Rights of the Citizen" in the state. Gaber states that, in the Balkan, all of these values, bearing their significance, fabricate founding grounds on which possible conflict/crisis situations emerge, alike the crisis in Macedonia in 2001.

5.5. It was a realistic expectation for Macedonia to be invited, alongside Albania and Croatia, to the Bucharest Summit in 2008. If that was the case, Macedonia (who had fulfilled all preconditions demanded by NATO) would had open doors to full NATO membership, as first, followed by an EU membership, as second.

But what was supposed to happen, i.e. what was expected as "normal" – didn't! Just as two decades ago, when it came to the Macedonian inclusion to the United Nations, the Greek obstacle once again blocked Macedonia's way to integration, with a strong demand that, before Macedonia was accepted as member, the name dispute should be resolved, in other words – to change its constitutional name to an "international" one, acceptable for Greece.

5.6. So today, we are faced with the question which by its nature and significance, surpasses the borders of a "bilateral disagreement" between Greece and Macedonia, despite the fact that the International Community following the Bucharest Summit, took

the standpoint which defines this dispute as bilateral, without having international dimensions! Regardless these facts, if we have in mind the international subjects and institutions involved in this matter, especially if we consider Macedonia's aim to be a part of such organizations – it will be impossible to achieve that, if Greece is already a member of those very subjects and organizations, unless Greece shows acts of "good will". It is a realistic assumption that Greece will now raise the name issue as a "former issue" which remains unresolved.

5.7. According to Greece, the constitutional name "Republic of Macedonia" by itself, denotes and suggests territorial aspirations Macedonia has towards its neighbor. In contrast, there are a lot of countries that take the position that the attitude of Macedonia does not suggest any territorial pretensions towards Greece. These countries are 126 in number, amongst which there are countries that are permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and have recognized Macedonia under its constitutional name.

In favor of the disposition of these countries goes the report of the Badinter Commission, which was sent to the European Council. This report included a claim that if the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was to be dismantled, it was only Slovenia and Macedonia that met the conditions for international recognition! It was precisely at this point that, Macedonia was recognized as "(Socialist) Republic Macedonia".

5.8. Besides these facts, as a state, by its constitutional (present) name – Republic of Macedonia, the state was internationally introduced on the political map of the world in 1994, as a Federal unit of the new state – People's Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Macedonia's name – the constitutional one – "Republic of Macedonia" was noted in the first Constitution of 1991, and decades after its existence as constituting part of ex-Yugoslavia, was adopted as formal. Greece is the only state in present time, which contests that name. Furthermore, under strong pressure from Greece, before Macedonia became a member of the United Nations, a proposition supported by the whole International Community, Macedonia was accepted under a "temporary nomination" – "Former Yugoslavian Republic Of Macedonia", and is a member bearing that name.

5.9. So this way, the argument Greece had – which was considered as "unsustainable" made its way in everyday citizen usage; Macedonia had officially received two names: first, the constitutional one, Republic of Macedonia, used only for internal needs (and in communication with countries which have recognized Macedonia under that name) and the second, the name which resulted from the inclusion of the country in the United Nations, Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia, meant for "international" use, i.e. in the framework of the United Nations. Thereby, Macedonia is a member country bearing the second name, and at the same time, member of all organs and specialized organizations that function within the United Nations, where Macedonia has political and legal statute as a constituting country.

5.10. The temporary agreement from 1995 really brought a clarification in the bilateral relations: Greece and the "Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia" almost "normalized" the bilateral relations, which had been very tense after the declaration of Macedonia's independence. The bilateral relations had progressed: a close and friendly collaboration began on all issues and it was especially evident in the fields of economy and finance. In the field of economic relations, "Greece evidently improved its rating" by becoming the country with which Macedonia had the highest rate of goods and services exchange. This is confirmed by the vast statistical information on the trade between these two countries.

The efforts for improvement in good political relations were also intensified. But in this field, they remained to be – just efforts, because after a decade and a half Greece

had still not backed off its position – the constitutional name of Macedonia had to be changed. Hence, Greece has not made a step forward, when it comes to this standpoint: even though the "name issue" has at times, been set aside, it has always been only "temporary" because In fact, we have never moved from that same "agenda".

5.11. That same fact was once again, reconfirmed in 2008 in the dawn of the Bucharest Summit. Greece used that summit for the "resurrection" of its standpoint, which it had never put much emphasis on, since 1995.

But this time, Greece expressed determination on this matter and decided to push it even harder, what resulted in a temporary slowing down of Macedonia's process. "Skopje has only one way to NATO and the European Union – that is the respect of the principles for developing and nurturing of the neighboring affairs, a fact that implies mutual actions in finding out solutions for the name issue, which would be acceptable for both sides" states Mrs. Dora Bakoyannis, Greek Minister for Foreign Affairs, immediately after her meeting with Mrs. Condoleezza Rice, United States Secretary of State, in the middle of February, 2008. Mrs. Bakoyannis had serious remarks on the level of preparedness of Macedonia, when it came to the NATO inclusion because according to her words: "Skopje leads a nationalist politic, a politic of anachronism, making efforts to monopolize the Macedonian identity… It is not a question of political psychology or a group state of mind, we are talking about regional stability", she states.

5.12. Subsequently, Macedonia opposed this attitude, both on the political and legal plan. Macedonia had made changes in its Constitution, in order to eliminate any doubts about the country having territorial pretensions; with the Amendment I on January 10th, 1992, Macedonia provided that: "The Republic of Macedonia does not have territorial pretensions towards its neighboring countries" and that "The borderlines of the Republic of Macedonia can only be changed in accord with the Constitution and the principles of free will, adjuring with recognized normative or internationally acclaimed laws and legislations".

Thereby, Macedonia keeps the standpoint that with the Agreement from 1995, Greece is obliged to not stand in the way of the integrative processes Macedonia is supposed to be a part of, where Greece is already a member and as such, according to internal regulations has the right to veto. This standpoint is derived from Article 11 of the Temporary Agreement from 1995. At present day, Macedonia interprets this Agreement as if Greece has renounced the use of veto, concerning Macedonia's inclusion in NATO and the European Union.

5.13. The development of events after Macedonia's inclusion to the United Nations, expressed that the UN as well is determined to help both sides in dealing with the problem and to help in finding a fast solution, acceptable to both sides. The inauguration of Mr. Nimetz as emissary was a result of this determination, who is still making efforts with his technical and advisory teams for finding a way to bring the sides closer, in order to find a solution. It is considered that, in this way, both sides will reach an "internationally acceptable" solution for the name, appropriate "for all". In the framework of the "technical and advisory" team under Mr. Nimetz, all possible variants for the name substitute are being considered. Each of the possible solutions is treated with extensive care and at the same time, numerous other ideas and suggestions are taken into account, revising closely the pro and against arguments.

5.14. But because this process regarding the name has already lasted for several years and considering the fact that Macedonia's membership in the United Nations is already a closed matter, it is crucial for the international efforts to be broadened and expanded, i.e. for certain key subjects from the NATO and the European Union to be included in the process. It is considered as necessary, considering the fact that Macedonia and the two institutions with immense international meaning (NATO and the

European Union) have put significant efforts in their collaboration thus far; in order to improve all agreements and implement them as well. Hence, Macedonia and the EU have made major steps forward in the implementation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA), while at the same time Macedonia is taking major steps forwards with NATO, in the realization of the "Partnership for Peace" program.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1. It is a clear fact that, Macedonia, since its establishment as an independent country has been facing unexpected difficulties, which constantly slow down the processes for integration in international organs, organizations and institutions. These difficulties are manifested in formerly latent pretensions by its neighbor, Greece, not to allow the newly formed state on ex-Yugoslavia's territory, a former federal unit (1944 – 1991) and contemporary, a sovereign state (since 1991) to use the name – Macedonia – by which it is known in the larger part of the world.

6.2. Macedonia is having a difficult time with the handling of this pretension by Greece. Mostly because its name, while being a part of the ex-Yugoslavia, had never posed as a problem in international affairs and law and in the realization of its interests on international level, in economic and cultural fields, as well as in political collaboration.

Still, this "carefree" trip of Macedonia, through the world of the development of international affairs and in all aspects of life, while being a federal state of ex-Yugoslavia, ended at the very moment it declared independence and sovereignty: Greece imposed a strong demand for a constitutional name change, stressing the fact that if that doesn't happen – Macedonia can't count on UN membership (an issue already resolved by use of a temporary name) neither on European Union membership (for which exists a large number of preparations) nor NATO inclusion (an issue posed in 2008, proven to be true by certain Greek actions) and at the same time, Greece denied Macedonia's inclusion to multiple international organs, institutions and unions where only independent and sovereign states can participate.

6.3. The name dispute has for some years surpassed the borders of a bilateral dispute; ever since Macedonia was included in the UN, the issue expanded and today, a larger part of the International Community is showing interest in its resolution. In the moment when Macedonia applied for UN membership, the dispute was disclosed to the world, because it was there that Greece posed the problem – in front of the UN Security Council. Significant steps have been made since, in order to resolve this issue with compromise. But compromise only worked in Macedonia's membership in the UN by a temporary name, the Former Yugoslavian Republic Of Macedonia.

6.4. Today, Macedonia lives by two names, the constitutional one, used for internal matters and communication with states that recognize that name – The Republic of Macedonia. But as an international political and legal subject, except in those countries which have recognized the constitutional name, Macedonia stands as F.Y.R.O.M. valid for all international spheres where Macedonia functions as a concerned subject. Therefore, F.Y.R.O.M. stands in all agreements with the EU and NATO.

6.5. Significant efforts have been made in order to lower the level of these problems, on bilateral plan and on multilateral as well. This dispute is foremost of a political nature and according to all present arguments, does not have material and legal basis.

6.7. After the inclusion of the United Nations and its organs (the Committee) and emissaries (Nimetz) and after listening to both sides (Macedonia and Greece), many solutions have been proposed. Still the two sides have rejected all of them. For refreshing

the issue, these are some of the propositions that could provide a solution: Democratic Macedonia, Northern Macedonia, Vardar Macedonia, Upper Macedonia, Republic of Macedonia (Skopje) and some others, generated based on these variants.

6.8. It is a necessity to consider these possible solutions, in order for this unnatural dispute to be solved. The possible solution should be a political decision reached by compromise. The involved sides, Macedonia and Greece should be the first to agree on such a solution. But if the two countries, after producing their own arguments still remain on the same positions, then appropriate help should be provided by the UN (who are already involved) and NATO and the European Union as well, through their selected organs.

Finally, we consider all of these international subjects, which at the present time represent a founding pillar of the modern day International Community, have the most jurisdictions to resolve the matter, with proposing ideas and creating opportunities for the involved sides to adopt the recommended solution.

Gordana Duvnjak

Gordana Duvnjak, Macedonia, political journalist in *Untrinski Vesnik* (*Morning Newspaper*). She serves the second mandate as the Chairperson of the Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia, and a Member of the Coordinative Assembly of the REKOM initiative for Macedonia since October 2010.
Graduated journalism at the University in Skopje. Worked as a journalist in *Nova Makedonija* daily 1991-1999. Participated in many projects in the area of multiethnic societies.

Gordana Duvnjak

How to Forgive and Not to Forget

The Balkans has a long history in creating myths. People living in these region are, perhaps more than others, inclined to creation of myths and political shading of the history.

In all of the post-Yugoslav societies, war crimes committed by the other side are inflated extensively, while own crimes are diminished to the extreme

Despite some beliefs that a myth is simply a process of reverting to some former evolutional phases of the human world and that it should be looked upon solely as a part of folklore, there is rise in the opinion that "rationality" and "irrationality" are twins. Besides the fact that it is not easy to determine when one ends and the other begins, when it comes to myth it is believed that they do not stand in opposition. It is believed that the ability to rationalize does not denote the ability of demystification of the myths. This implies that myths continue to live. Someone still needs them – and they continue to function. Following some unwritten rule, the deconstruction of one myth gives birth to another… That is why it is not strange that some myths have prevailed through centuries, while there is still space for creation of new, modern ones. The early and recent history holds many examples. Do you need specific names? No, thanks!

347

This is the reason why now, more than ever, we need an unbiased confrontation with the past, as that approach contributes to dissolution of the stereotypes and prejudices we have about the others around us. This gives us an image of the history from different perspectives, it puts myths aside, leading to de-victimization, forgiveness and reconciliation. This approach provides the ability to simultaneously look at facts, to establish the reasons why something happened, and give opportunity for an acknowledgement of the consequences, create a basis for mutual memory and accepting the truth… Because the truth can have many faces, some of them truly twisted and ugly.

In times of armed conflicts and war, truth is the first victim. That is because it is easy to put the blame on someone else for your own suffering, even when we don't have a logical answer or we simply do not want to accept one.

These days I am reading a book that compiles the testimonies of the residents of Pakrac, Croatia. One of the characters was Vesna, who was brought up in an environment where mixed marriages were common in the early 90s. She could never imagine that a war would be possible in such a heterogeneous environment. But her father had the explanation about how a man could take sides, when he thought he was obliged to do so and that was necessary: "When the war starts, everyone knows to which side they belong to!".

But, which is the real side? Is there one at all?

Could someone have imagined that something similar would happen in Macedonia? One would say that, if it happened in multi-ethnical Bosnia which went through the bloodiest and most dramatic pogroms , it could happen anywhere.

Are we able to give an unbiased answer to the question: What happened in Macedonia in 2001?

Was it an imported terrorist aggression from Kosovo, helped by a part of the local Albanian population or was it a fight for human rights of an unsatisfied ethnic community? Was it an attempt to reconstitute the integrity and sovereignty of the state, while annexing others territories or was it means to an end in correcting a historical injustice and inherent error in the Constitution? Was it completely necessary and if so, to what extent was it the substitution of political means by military ones, which resulted in an epilogue of casualties on both sides, displaced and kidnapped people, destroyed homes, families left in misery… Ultimately it created deep frustration and shattered trust between the two largest ethnic communities.

Even ten years after these events, which fully changed not only the manner of thinking and the consciousness about the functioning of the Macedonian state – but its legal concept as well, there are still many open issues, as well as fear of an open discussion about one of the most dramatic periods of the country's recent history. This is because of the fact that it is much easier to let things find their own path.

Many are probably puzzled by the current need for a debate about 2001. Is there a particular reason to pry the open wounds which still have not healed? Is now the right time, when all political and creative energy should be directed towards reforms and removing the blockade to the Macedonian processes of EU integration?

All of the countries of former Yugoslavia face and go through the same or similar dilemmas. But can we move forward, without looking back?

„I can forgive, but I can never forget."

This short but sincere statement, filled with strong emotional potency, it seems to express the idea about the region and its coming to terms with the past. It is included in the 15 minute propaganda film, dedicated to expectations from REKOM. The author

is a member of a veteran's association who has personally experienced the horrors of the Balkan wars in the early 90s of the last century. Therefore, he feels obliged to speak, because he knows from own experience that not all participants in the war are war criminals. Thus, a man in such extraordinary circumstances could be caught in a double role – himself being a victim.

But he is not the only one having high expectations from REKOM.

In the upcoming months, this word will be frequently mentioned, not only in Macedonia but across the whole of the Balkans. It will stir the interest of many people, to find out what lies behind this slightly unusual abbreviation. Those who will manage to understand it will ask themselves why the need for REKOM right now.

For those that still don't know the meaning of this term, or vaguely recognize it as yet another abbreviation or made up word, we need to say that REKOM is an abbreviation for the *Regional Committee for Establishing the Facts on War Crimes and Other Strong Violations of Human Rights.*

It is in fact, a regional citizens' initiative founded on the territory of former Yugoslavia three years ago, whose goal is to form an inter-state committee for establishing facts on war crimes, as well as for other human rights violations in the wars from 1991 to 2001, on that same territory. Macedonia is the last of the formerYugoslav countries to join this initiative, in June 2010.

The initiative is consists of a network of NGO organizations and individuals, united in the Coalition for REKOM. This initiative brings together more than a thousand groups and individuals from the civil societies of all six former states (Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Slovenia and Macedonia) as well as Kosovo. Various associations and organizations of victims, human rights protection groups, veterans, prisoners, religious communities, women's groups, minority groups, lawyers, media together form REKOM. A target group of high importance are the young, who even though, do not share the responsibility for the misconduct in politics by their countries, have a great interest in seeing this initiative work. As they say, they want to live in "normal countries" which have learned their lessons from the history. This is why young people will be the bearers of the campaign for collecting one million signatures in the region, which will send a strong message to the political elites to support and implement this process.

The initiative was for the first time promoted on 9th May 2008, in Podgorica (Montenegro) within the framework of the debates with the representatives from the associations of victims in the region and related to the finding of suitable instruments for documenting and displaying the truth about the past. The coalition was founded in October 2008 and so far it organized over 120 consultations and seven international forums with groups from the whole region, which are interested in the possibility of establishing such commission.

Coincidence or not, this year is the 20th anniversary of the first war on the Balkans and the tenth of the last conflict in Macedonia. Those who believe that "coincidences don't happen randomly" would say that there is a hidden symbolism in the fact that it is this year precisely that would be marked by the activity of REKOM.

In the first half of the year, the document that will be a basis for the establishment of this regional committee is to be finished. The draft of the Statute should have the force of an international treaty and it should be adopted by the national parliaments of all the seven signatory countries. The text of the Statute reflects the experience from the region and follows the example of twenty other committees for truth and reconciliation, which have existed in post-conflict societies.

The difference between the committees formed in Argentina, Uganda, Chile, Peru, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Morocco and other places, is that REKOM would be a unique and first international committee of this kind. It will be different from other committees as it will not start from scratch and it will take into account all the trials on war crimes by ICTY, as well as trials of national courts, which have been the only legal instrument so far to determineindividual criminal liability. Bearing in mind that there were few trials they are insufficient for compiling records and to document what was actually happening in this region in the past two decades.

It is estimated that the region needs an extra-judicial body, which will keep its focus on the victims. This body would have the authority, power and knowledge to establish the facts on war crimes, which would be accepted by all post-Yugoslavian countries. This would prevent new war breaking out every 40-50 years, each one more atrocious than the previous one, where violence *provokes* violence and weapons become substitute for reason and dialogue. Each nation has its truth; there are as many truths as nations.

All the above mentioned is not a coincidence, as the Balkans has its tradition of creating myths. In all post-Yugoslav societies, the war crimes committed by the other side are inflated extensively, while own crimes are made extremely relative. It has become a usual practice to demonize the other side and glorify one's own. To victimize those perceived as potential threats or enemies. To replace political culture and sense for common life with isolation and building stereotype for those who don't belong to our own community. To measure suffering in numbers and to give homage to casualties only at ceremonies and festivities.

Or as Natasa Kandic from the *Fund for Humanitarian Rights*, as one of the major actors of this project, stated: "the Balkan culture always desires to speak with a political language, but cares little for the people and their suffering".

Should we remind you on the horrific body count from the last Balkan wars, which is more than overwhelming?

The numbers of casualties of the wars in former Yugoslavia are not precise and range from 130.000 to 160.000 people. According the *International Committee of the Red Cross*, 14.790 people are accounted for as missing. There are unofficial speculations that the number is higher, and it is around 16.000 people. The fate of 10.512 people in Bosnia and Herzegovina is still a mystery. Exactly 1.842 people in Kosovo are reported as missing In Croatia the search for 1.859 people still continues after twenty years. . Serbia has no missing people at its territory; the numbers for missing Serbian citizens are within the numbers of missing in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. In Macedonia 12 people are reported as missing since 2001. The fate of 4 has been partially resolved, when bodies were found at Neproshteno. The fate of 6 missing Albanians is still unknown. For years now, the families of these people go back and forth from office to office, from one international organization to another, looking for information about their closest family.

This is why a great number of people see their chance in REKOM, which is supposed to represent a local response to the quest on the road to the future, so such crimes would never happen again. It should also represent a sign for hope, whose strength is derived from the regional approach.

It is believed that REKOM will have the power to prevent fabricated truth for certain events to be presented to the public, and n cases where this already happened, their credibility would be undermined. Furthermore, REKOM would manage to build a platform where the voices of the victims would be heard and through it, it would instigate public compassion, respect and solidarity.

The process for establishing the Regional Committee should start six months after the Statute is adopted at a I Parliament session. The head office is planned to be in Sarajevo. This is not an random choice, because Bosnia and Herzegovina is the country which experienced the most atrocious war conflicts and had the highest number of victims. That is why, five out of twenty REKOM members will be elected from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Three members will be elected from Serbia, Croatia and Kosovo respectively, and two from Macedonia, Montenegro and Slovenia. The members will be elected in accordance with a strict and precisely defined procedure, which will be conducted simultaneously in all countries. The selection of the candidates will be closely and carefully monitored;   the persons selected will have no dubious career history ,will have high moral qualities, good status and integrity, will be dedicated to tolerance, dialogue and constructive approach to problem solving. They will build the reputation of REKOM itself, which is supposed to be free of national interests,and would highly depend on the credibility of its chosen members. National offices will be established in all seven countries, which will have an active collaboration with the head office in Sarajevo.

The commission would have a three years mandate, with a possible extension period of six months. This timeframe is considered optimal, according to the experience of o similar committees. An additional argument for this timeframe is to prevent the accumulated time distance from the war crimes, making some of the victims unable to testify. The main goals of the Committee will be the establishment of the facts on war crimes and other heavy violations of human rights, on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, in the period from January 1st 1991 to December 31st 2001. REKOM will dedicate itself to acknowledgement of the injustices imposed on the victims and contribute to the exercise of their rights. Making the political elites accept these facts is also one of the goals, as well as contributing in the disclosure of the fates of the missing persons and preventing such actions from happening again.

This extra-judiciary body will have the duty to conduct the hearings of the victims, but also hearings of all those who feel the urge to disclose significant facts. Making a register of all casualties will be in REKOM's mandate as well, regardless if they would be civilian or military, on all sides. It will act as an investigative body which will be able to provide evidence for the negligence of certain institutions, individually or as groups and failing to protect human rights and freedoms. All the evidence will be accurately verified and documented, and they will be incorprated in the final report sent for a review to all the Parliaments.

It is hardly surprising that Macedonia still hasn't had a debate about the needs and the goals of REKOM, bearing in mind the fact that Macedonia was the last to join the initiative Unlike Croatia and Serbia , where presidents Ivo Josipovic and Boris Tadic openly supported this initiative, Macedonian politicians are still quiet. We wish to believe that it is not a matter of opposition, but rather it is due to the fact that REKOM is still widely unknown in Macedonia.

However, this is not the case with the European diplomats who pay close attention to everything that is happening, concerning REKOM.

The Ambassador H.E. Erwan Fouéré, the Head of the EU Delegation in Macedonia, will mention REKOM in his speech on the 75th Rose Roth seminar held in Skopje, from the 19th to 21st October, 2010.

"Any kind of reconciliation process will be successful only if all the parts of the societies in the region take part in it. The recently established initiative for REKOM is a network of civil society organizations and individuals, who are planning to establish a Regional Committee for Establishing the Facts on War Crimes and Other Heavy Viola-

tion of Human Rights. It strives to promote the process of the European integration of the Balkans as a peaceful project and the rule of law in the region is one of its main objectives".

The Rose Roth program, is a part of the program led by the Parliamentary Assembly of NATO. It is a cooperation program between PA NATO and the Parliaments of Eastern and Central European countries, dealing with issues mainly connected to the Balkans and the security issues in the region.

The international community gives huge support for the REKOM initiative , and at the same time it has great understanding for the importance of this process. The European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Council have already given their support calling upon countries from the region to get proactive in this process.

A considerable number of people from this region are still sensitive to the word "reconciliation". They consider that it should not be REKOM's mission to do so, as they consider reconciliation to be a very personal and individual act that needs to be conducted by each person in their own way. However ,if REKOM's initiative succeeds, following its plan, tasks and objectives, that process will inevitably start.

The key question is how to make positive pressure on the governments to accept and implement this extremely important regional project. The key dilemma is what will happen if any of the countries fails to sign this international agreement, because it is only through the government's validation that REKOM can promote its legitimacy and mandate. Moreover, REKOM's success will hugely depend on the cooperation with the official institutions of the countries, as well on their financial support.

Resistance may be faced from many sides, because this Committee will endanger someone's interests, which are guided by the need to keep things as they are and never change. What is most important is that the strength of this initiative is gathered from "the inside" and from those who most need its help. The main convincing argument is that nobody should stay aside, because in that way a great civilization injustice would be made, both to us and to future generations. That is a luxury that almost no government in the world could afford.

Interview

H.E. Ambassador Erwan Fouéré, European Union Special Representative and Head of the European Commission Delegation

ROLE MODELS, MORAL VALUES AND POLITICAL CULTURE... A PERSONAL ACCOUNT
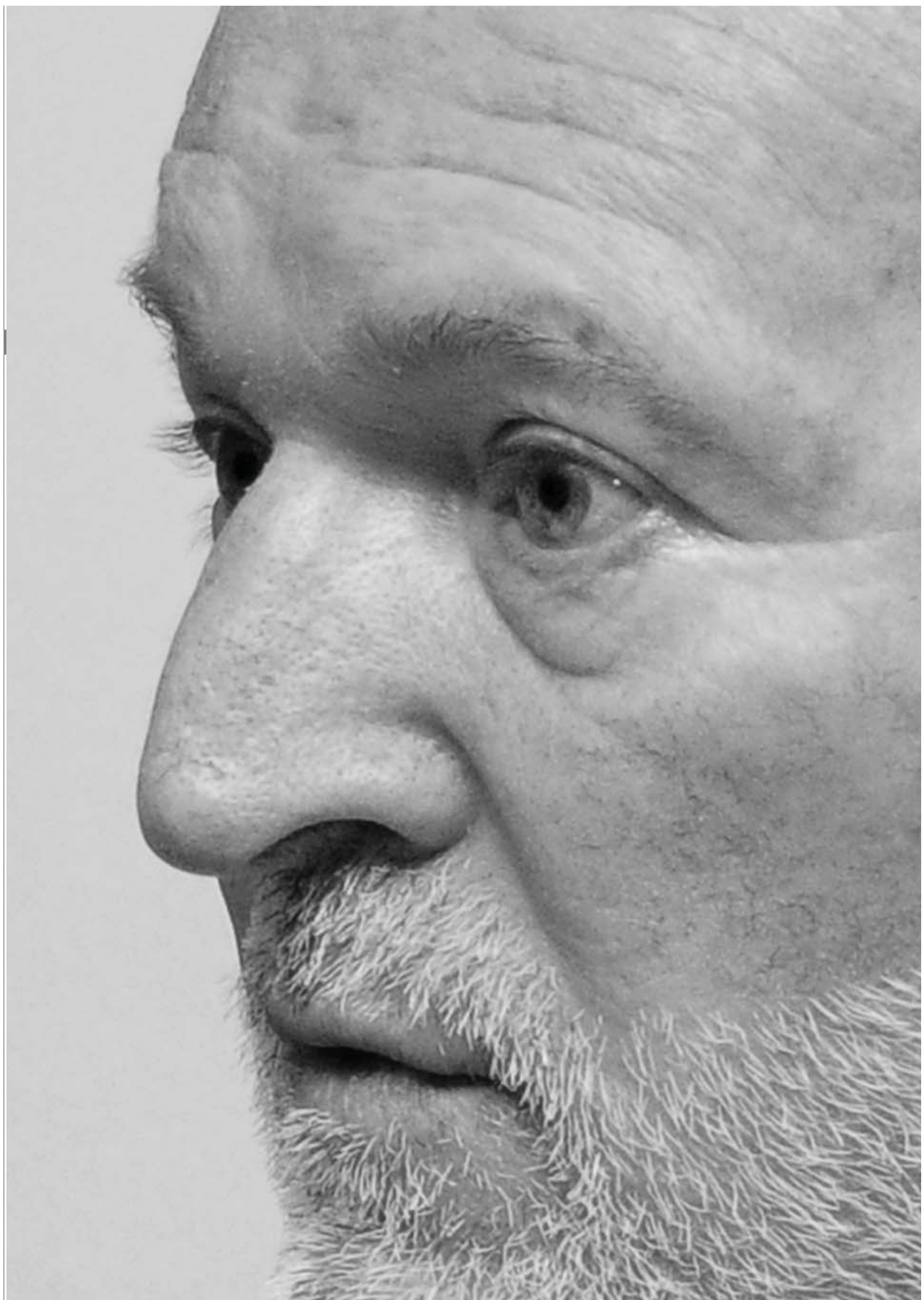
H.E. Amb. Erwan Fouéré (1946), Ireland, a career European official, who has served as Head of the European Commission Delegation in Macedonia, Slovenia, South Africa, and Mexico. Bachelor of Civil Law, University College, Dublin, 1967, Bachelor of Laws, University College, Dublin, 1968, Diploma in European studies, Institut Européen des Hautes Etudes Internationales, Nice University, 1969, Post graduate Research Assistant at the Max Kohnstamm Institute for European studies, Brussels 1970-72. Awarded the Order of Good Hope, Class II; Grand Officer by President Mandela (January 1998).

INTERVIEW:

His Excellency Ambassador Erwan Fouéré
**EU Special Representative and Head of Delegation
of the European Union in RM**

ROLE MODELS, MORAL VALUES
AND POLITICAL CULTURE...
A PERSONAL ACCOUNT

Ambassador Erwan Fouéré was one of the main inspirers of our project on political culture and dialogue, from which this publication originate, which we based on our talks over a year ago. One of the most remarkable and charismatic diplomats to have set foot on Macedonian soil since its independence, a man committed to his mission for Macedonia, he visited every square foot of the country, talked and listened to countless numbers of people. Popular with many and controversial to some, he made a difference during his mandate. This interview coincides with very difficult times for the Macedonian democracy, the closure of the EUSR office, and with the start of our long prepared publication.

At the end of our meeting he told us he would retire. That is hard to believe. We firmly believe that we will see him in action one way or the other in the many years to come.

INTEREST If you don't have dialogue then you don't have trust between the different communities and you don't move; you don't move forward. That's a constant waste of energy on trying to defend one's own interests, and the broader interest of society is totally lost.

CURE[1] : What is your definition of political culture?

Erwan Fouéré: Probably the best definition of political culture is what I witnessed in South Africa, a country which had a system of apartheid, where the vast majority of the population was denied basic human rights. Then, we had a leader who spent 27 years in jail and when he came out, his whole mission was to preach reconciliation and promote dialogue and stretching a hand to those who had kept him in jail. And this for me was an extraordinary example of moral authority and of the highest values that so often is missing in our societies. Particularly in post-conflict societies like Macedonia, where you have different ethnic communities, different political interests, but where there is an objective which brings together the entire country: which is to move forward and be a part of the European family of nations. And the sad thing is that you don't have a culture of dialogue existing here.

So this is one dimension of political culture which is particularly important. If you don't have dialogue then you don't have trust between the different communities and you don't move; you don't move forward. That's a constant waste of energy on trying to defend one's own interests, and the broader interest of society is totally lost. This is why we have always been advocating strongly the importance of dialogue, in strengthening the political institutions and trying to reach political consensus. Another part of, I would say – political culture relates to laws and implementation of laws that govern society. For example – antidiscrimination. How to make sure that all practices of discrimination against people on the basis of: people with disabilities, their ethnicity, their religion, their sexual orientation - the least is a guarantee to prevent that from happening? We have

---

1 Interviewers: Xhabir M. Deralla, Herald Schenker, Ilir Ajdini, Dzvezdan Georgievski

the EU laws at the EU level, and it is an obligation for all member countries or all countries who want to become members to adopt all these laws and to implement them.

So, these are all values that in some societies might be accepted, but unfortunately, not in others – for historic reasons or other. It needs to be defined by law and there needs to be effective monitoring and implementation and so on. Another important aspect of political culture for me is that nothing is irreversible. This is what I have witnessed in the European Union, but also, in particular, in the Balkans. Even if you have established rules, if you have an established framework and all that, there is always a danger that, if the checks and balances are not strong enough, a different government will come in and put everything into question, in a manner which could go against the basic values.

DIALOG For me, the most important aspect of political culture is the manner in which the democratic institutions, like the Parliament, function. In that context, dialogue is absolutely the essence of a functioning Parliament and of course the Parliament is tributary to a political environment. If there's no dialogue between the leaders of the political parties – and I'm talking particularly of Macedonia, then there is no proper, functioning democratic process in the Parliament.

For example, you have laws relating to media and the respect for the media, which vary a lot of course, but there are basic principles, that are inherent in the EU society, like respect for the independence of the media as a fundamental part of the democratic process. And now we have a new law, in Hungary, which will tend to limit that and which has been questioned by the EU institutions, and many other leaders have expressed concern. So, this is a society that went from a former communist process to post-neo and they tend to be going back to some of the practices of the past, so that's what I mean by irreversible. There needs to be much stronger checks and balances.

For me, the most important aspect of political culture is the manner in which the democratic institutions, like the Parliament, function. In that context, dialogue is absolutely the essence of a functioning Parliament and of course the Parliament is tributary to a political environment. If there's no dialogue between the leaders of the political parties – and I'm talking particularly of Macedonia, then there is no proper, functioning democratic process in the Parliament. And really, for a proper dialogue the government must take the lead and it must show openness, there is a magnanimity that has to be demonstrated by the government in power. Just because it has an absolute majority, that does not mean it can ignore opposition. On the contrary, it has a responsibility to reach out to the opposition and to create a climate more conducive for consensus building. This has been lacking over the past years in particular with this government. I take just one example, maybe I will be criticized for being very partial, but for me it was quite revealing. I arrived in November 2005. In 2006, the Parliament was debating the electoral law and the revisions of the electoral law. The Prime Minister at the time, as DPA was boycotting Parliament, he actually travelled to Tetovo with the draft to try to convince the DPA to embrace it and endorse consensus. That for me was an example of an effort at consensus on a very difficult law, which unfortunately, we haven't seen much of since.

CURE: May we take you back to the subject of South Africa? I was there on a study tour, and I would like to share an impression with you. What amazed me there was the optimism of those people after the fall of the apartheid, their confidence that authorities are doing something for the benefit of everyone. For example, you probably know it, cab drivers, sales persons, everyone, have the constitution of South Africa in their pockets. They were showing it to us, saying that we are their citizens, too…

Erwan Fouéré: Yes, great pride. They had a role model, Nelson Mandela, who really demonstrated that despite of the very divisive history, they can come together. It was in a sense, a miracle, a wonderful example of how reconciliation can work, but you need leaders who really would drive the process, it won't do it on its own. And it needs to be nurtured.

CURE: Do we have such leaders here?

Erwan Fouéré: Well, unfortunately, not just in Macedonia but in other countries as well, we are lacking leadership, we are lacking people who have courage and vision, like Vaclav Havel, who despite all the odds, really managed to bring the country through difficult time. Also, in Northern Ireland, we reached a peace agreement which

was very painful. I think, we are the only example in modern society where we gave up – Ireland gave up – a piece of its territory, Northern Ireland, and we had to change our constitution to accept that, in order to make peace with Britain. That was the courage and leadership of the leaders, which enabled lasting peace to come to those islands. You have other role models, like Mother Theresa who instilled a sense of moral values, by her own work, by her own example. These are models that can inspire, they emphasize that our society is shaped not by machines or procedures, but by people. We can really make a difference.

CURE: There is a contradiction between the reality of society and the legal reality. You can have the best laws, but if the society is not able to implement them, to back them, you can revert it many times, by just having another government. Now, you have had this experience not only in South Africa, but also earlier in your life, you were confronted with all kinds of variations of political culture. Would you want to draw a comparison?

Erwan Fouéré: Well, the most immediate one was Slovenia. I was there when they were preparing and finalizing their accession negotiations with the EU. There – what struck me was that – consensus prevailed, but that's because the leaders really drove that. They had a professional public administration that was highly respected. The chief negotiator who is now commissioner, Mr. Potočnik [Janez Potočnik, the European Commissioner for the Environment], again gave an excellent example of inclusiveness in establishing a very direct dialogue with all the different actors. He was an excellent example of creating a climate of trust with all the leaders. Latin America had other challenges as well. I set up the first EU missions in Mexico and Cuba, where there were human rights issues, there still are, also refugee issues, etc. Laws were not enough, we had to try to convince the regional leaders of the importance of respect for human rights and the importance of the rights of refugees and also, we had to go and mediate on the spot. I remember one case where there were refugees from different communities, living side by side and some of them had access to water and the others didn't. They were fighting among themselves. There, on the spot, we had to mediate and to find a compromise. It's not easy sometimes, but if you establish a trust with the interlocutors, then it makes the whole task better and more acceptable.

I guess a lot of that has come also from my childhood, when we were political refugees from the war. We were confronted with human rights issues and we were instilled with this imperative to always ensure proper respect for human rights of individuals, political refugees and that sort of things. That marks you for life, I think. And also, what is important is the direct contact with people through dialogue.

Again, South Africa is a great example, because of the amount of patience exercised by the leaders: sitting, listening to the people for hours. I've been to many villages, we had water projects and everything – and it was the villagers who ran everything. We would listen to what their problems were and then we would come up with solutions because everybody respected each other. There wasn't arrogance. If the leaders come or the headman comes and doesn't listen, that arrogance doesn't help. A big problem with the political climate here is that the political leaders, the government, don't listen at all, they have this arrogant attitude that everything they do is correct and that decisions on whatever are correct. Putting a funicular up Vodno or putting up all these monuments, they have the authority to do it, they have the money and therefore they will do it – rather than considering to open a consultation with the citizens, to find out what the view of the public is on these things, do they agree or not, particularly in a country where the resources are so limited. So again, it all comes down to dialogue and to respect of one's political opponents.

CURE: You just mentioned you belong to a family of political refugees. Could you tell us about those days and how that affected your future?

Erwan Fouéré: Yes, indeed. I was born just after the war, but my father was very active in the Breton movement, to get recognition of linguistic rights for the Celtic minorities. There were many Bretons who were accused for collaboration with the Germans. This was a very easy accusation to discredit all the Breton movements and what they aspired, what they stood for. There were more people in prison immediately after the war than during the war in France. It was a very difficult period of retribution and "instant justice", which really took many years to recover from.

So, my father went into exile after spending a year in prison without trial, he was sentenced in absentia. We went to Wales, because the Welsh nationalist party knew about the persecution of the Bretons at the time and welcomed all the Bretons and all other minorities. Eventually, we moved to Ireland and my father's case was the first one that came before the court after the war, about five years after the end of the war. The charges against him were declared null and void and he was completely exonerated. By then we had established ourselves in Ireland and we started setting up our life there. But, he always maintained his views and his campaigning for the rights of minorities. He is now a hundred years old and he's written many books and many of those are textbooks, used in universities, on the rights of ethnic minorities in the European federation. He established very strong links with many minority communities in Switzerland, in Italy, Austria and this has been very much a part of our life. My mother said that when she married my father she also married his political cause. She is also alive, she is ninety-three and I guess what kept them alive for so long is their mental and physical activity and also their dedication to their values and principles that they instilled in us.

I was always interested in European affairs and European integration. I set up the first Irish students' European association at the university in Dublin. Also, I was vice-president of the Young European Federalists for quite a few years. I was very active. This was the time of the dictatorships in Spain, Portugal and Greece, when we were campaigning actively. I was in Amnesty International, writing letters for release of political

prisoners. So all of that marks one's life and I've always had a particular touch-to-print importance to human rights issues, I guess because of that childhood experience.

CURE: Do you have any more experience and examples to tell us about Slovenia? Maybe, as it is the closest country to Macedonia, in terms of the mutual past, meaning half a century in the same federation. Is there anything that Macedonia should learn from Slovenia or maybe from another country, apart from the impressive examples that you mentioned elsewhere in the world?

Well, one thing in Slovenia that made the accession process so successful was the personality of the chief negotiator and also the methods. He established a core-negotiation team, where you had representatives of the government, technical people, political parties, civil society organizations, business community and the media. So, each time Slovenia went to the negotiations in Brussels or elsewhere, people knew that what was presented was really the view shared by all political forces and actors in the society in Slovenia, which made the voice of Slovenia very strong, very effective. If you have a situation when a negotiator goes and it is known that behind him there is a country that is totally fractitious, where there is no interaction, where there is no inclusiveness in the negotiating process, then it weakens the voice.

Certainly, I think that Macedonia will have to take a leaf out of Slovenia's book, with regard on how negotiations should be conducted and they need to behave in a totally different manner to what they are now. They are really not making the effort to reach out to the civil society or they are being very selective, and this creates this terrible division in society that you have here. It also creates this fear which is totally unnatural. It is very sad because it is affecting the contribution that citizens can make to civil society and organizations, to the development of the country. Slovenian experts came here, offered technical expertise, they offered it all, but here the trouble is there is no continuity: you train some people and six months later they are gone. This is something that really weakens the government's capacity. I worry that as we approach elections, whether they would be early elections or normal elections that this intimidation and filling up civil service with party foot-soldiers will increase. This creates a terrible situation. It is poison which is being sown, and it will bear poisoned fruit for years to come.

CURE: In other words, the level of the political culture in Macedonia is still quite different from the one in Slovenia…

Erwan Fouéré: Yes, it unfortunately leaves a lot to be desired. I think that even though there are some good MPs, some good civil society organizations, this divisiveness, this polarization and this tendency by the governing party to divide people into what they call patriots and traitors, this is really the worst recipe for a country.

CURE: In the beginning, when you were talking about South Africa, you mentioned vision. I think it is the key. Do you see a common vision for the future of this country being developed here?

Erwan Fouéré: Unfortunately I think this is what is lacking here. The vision that we see is more a vision for each political party of how to stay in power, to have its own agenda. It is not a vision of the country as a whole that really can make a difference in order to achieve the objectives that the country has set itself, objectives that have the entire support of the people. All the citizens of Macedonia – that's the greatest asset that Macedonia has – to be all so much in favor of the European Union. Until such time arrives, there is a long term vision for the country, which is really one, which reflects the interests of all the sectors of society and of all the citizens.

Here we have this abusive power, I'm afraid it's abusive power and again it reflects the approach here: for many it is about how to share the spoils of power with one's friends and party foot-soldiers, not how to ensure that the power that is exercised

is one which will really bring benefits to all the citizens, irrespective of their political affiliation. It's a big concern to see that at the municipal level, you have a small minority of municipalities that are run by opposition mayors, where they have terrible problems to have their voices heard, because they are opposition. This is not right, all the decisions relating to the distribution of regional funds need to be much more transparent, and need to be on the basis of objective criteria.

This was one of the points that were mentioned in the progress report, to emphasize the importance of the continuing decentralization process. The short answer to your question is that you need people with that long term vision for your country.

ABUSIVE POWER Here we have this abusive power, which reflects the approach: how to share the spoils of power with one's friends and party footsoldiers, not how to ensure that the power that is exercised is the one to bring benefits to all the citizens, irrespective of their political affiliation.

CURE: We've been discussing a lot about the manner in which some politicians behaved towards your work and personality. How would you judge the personal attacks on you? Is that a consequence of lack of political culture or elementary manners? Or both?

Erwan Fouéré: Both, I'm afraid it's a bit of both. Again, these are actions that undermine the image of the country and demonstrate a total lack of understanding of how the European Union operates. The impression, I think they were trying to make, is to try to show that I was giving my own personal opinions, whereas all that I do here is on behalf of the European Union. I'm the messenger. But somehow, they wanted to twist whatever I said, to say it's just my personal views. I think, the most shocking experience was in the European Parliament, where the MP Mr. Gjorchev spoke out in a man-

ner which shocked all the MP's who were there. They couldn't believe that this was happening. But again, it demonstrated to the members of the European Parliament the situation here. It was a lack of culture and a lack of basic human values, I would say. It is very sad, because, after all, he comes from a party which promotes Christian values. I didn't see anything Christian in what he did, at all. I'm sure, as Mandela always says, that in every individual there must be something good, somewhere, but I have yet to find it.

CURE: Do you regret anything during your mission here? Anything that you believe you could have done better? And, do you think that the European Union has a share of responsibility for the low level of the political culture and weak democratic capacity of the country?

Erwan Fouéré: On that point, no, I don't think so: we have tried, we have been very consistent all the time, on what we believe is needed to be done. So, unfortunately, at the other end, the interlocutors did not want to take on board these recommendations and advice, even though it was repeated many, many times. So yes, I do feel very sad that all these values we're talking about sometimes are totally forgotten and that political dialogue is very often purely declaratory. Also, the commitment to EU reforms often tends to appear as if we're doing it because the EU says so, not because it's good for the country. I mean, even the Prime Minister last week was quoted when

he was criticized for being closer to the East than to the EU, he refuted that, rightly, but he said: if we were closer to the East, we wouldn't be spending all this time adopting painful reforms from the EU. This for me was quite shocking, because after all, these are reforms which are necessary for the country, even if the EU wasn't there. They are reforms that have been tested in all the other countries that joined, in 2004 and so on. They are reforms in public administration and judiciary that are vital to ensure that the interests of the citizens are fully respected, fully met.

Also, we have been at the receiving end of so many petitions from citizens here. My policy is that we respond to every petition even if, unfortunately, we cannot intervene in individual cases, but I believe that they address us because we are the last resort. And it's symptomatic of a dysfunctional legal system, of a dysfunctional administrative system, where they get no response when they address their petitions to the government or to a minister, to an MP. This is, again, a failure of a government to respond to the aspirations of the citizens, to respond to the problems that are evident there.

But nevertheless, I am very satisfied that we have maintained a consistency in our approach. I have a dedicated team that works all the time, I am very proud of what we have achieved here with my team, who are all deeply committed despite the criticism we get and sometimes this commitment is forgotten by those who criticize us; also the amount of financial resources we are investing here, grants in average of one hundred million euro a year, which is an enormous amount. I think, citizens throughout the country do appreciate that greatly, because when I travel around it is always so gratifying to see the response of the citizens in every community, even in the remotest community. This to me is very heartwarming and I share this with all my staff.

CURE: How would you judge the impact, the effect, of the low level of political culture, of political dialogue on the rule of law and the democratic development, especially regarding the respect of human rights and respect for minorities and especially in the area of discrimination, i.e. anti-discrimination efforts and processes in the country? What is the balance between the two areas, political culture and dialogue on one hand and democracy and rule of law on the other? Where should we start? What should we do?

Erwan Fouéré: As I mentioned at the beginning, an important way of defining political culture is how those rights are respected and how society responds to all these issues, relating to discrimination, etc. Of course, citizens take their lead from the elected representatives, but if the elected representatives of the government of the day promote policies which in fact enhance the prejudices then this is not helpful at all. One example was the debate on the antidiscrimination law, where the EU was heavily involved. We sent in submissions, the Commissioner sent a letter to the Prime Minister,

stressing the importance of an all-inclusive law, which really would create a very positive environment and would help to eliminate these prejudices. But unfortunately because of the attitude of some of the governing MPs that debate was extremely divisive and it exacerbated those prejudices, rather than reducing them.

Now we have this stupid debate on same-sex marriages, as if there was a queue of people wanting to register. It's not an issue, but unfortunately because it has arisen, suddenly, it's been used. Or the advertising on the abortion question, which is a very sensitive question. In Ireland, as you know, it was very, very, always very difficult, but at least there was a greater sensitivity in dealing with this than what we witnessed here. We have a manipulation by some groups who try to push through an agenda, which is not reflective of a democratic society, an open society. It's only raising latent prejudices. One can deal with prejudice or a latent prejudice by dialogue, by discussion, open discussion. That's what's lacking here, unfortunately. There I think, what CIVIL has done, what other civil society organizations have done is very important, because it's raising awareness of the dangers of these prejudices and is creating a greater tolerance in society. I hope gradually this will become the norm. The voice of civil society is vital in these areas.

CURE: About Macedonia's main problem, regarding international relations, the dispute with Greece… What is the level of political culture and political maturity of the actors in this country (government, parties, civil society, intellectuals, etc.) when it comes to the name issue, the dialogue and the means of communication with Greece, and in particular, Macedonia's treatment of the international community's advice? What does it express about our culture?

Erwan Fouéré: Well, again, I think an atmosphere of divisiveness, when there should be an effort to promote a consensus around this and when I compare the atmosphere now, on this issue, to the atmosphere when I arrived, there's a world of difference. Now it's got much more emotional, much more confrontational and all this focus on identity - this of course is a perfectly correct concern for any citizen. But identity, as we've said many times, is not something that you negotiate and the name issue is about the name of the country, however illogical it may be, it's the political reality, there needs to be a solution to it. This was made clear by the European Union. We're very encouraged that the two prime ministers have been meeting, etc., but now there needs to be some sort of solution.

There was this – in my view – misuse of the identity issue for purely domestic political motives by this government. This has made the solution much more difficult; there is not a proper preparation of the citizens. This emphasis on the ancient history, how-

ever – yes, it reflects the history – but first of all, why now? Why do this now and why provoke in this environment? As you know, there were these unfortunate decisions, renaming the airport and also renaming the highway. As a result of that decision, the government lost 60 million Euro of Greek money, which had been committed to building that highway. But because the name was changed, that money was lost. There was no need to do these provocative acts, but they were done. This has made the final solution much more difficult. I have also said that the European Union is not in the business of changing people's identity. Identity is something sacred to each individual, to each nation and it's not something you can negotiate on a piece of paper. For me, Macedonians will always be Macedonians; the language will always be Macedonian, Albanian, etc. There can be no question about that, but the name is the stumbling block.

Because of the tactics of this government, unfortunately, I have to be frank, Macedonia lost a lot of friends in the EU, who were very keen to help Macedonia and put more pressure on Greece, I'm sure of it. But – because of these actions, one after the other, all these statues and everything else, all this money being spent, despite the high unemployment and people living in poverty – the friends said: What's the point? They had no stomach anymore, to put pressure on Greece. I think this is going to make the final solution much more difficult. There needs to be preparation of public opinion. If I look at my own country, I told you about how painful our decision was, to give up a piece of our territory, but the government prepared public opinion well in advance, this was important for the long term future of the country, of the region, to bring us prosperity, investments and all that. The proposal was overwhelmingly adopted by all the citizens. A year later, the government was reelected, to demonstrate the vision and the courage. This is what we need here.

**CURE: We haven't been able to exploit all our questions and issues.
Would you like to share a final thought with us?**

368

Erwan Fouéré: Well, there are so many thoughts that I will take with me when I leave Macedonia, but certainly the one thing I will cherish the most is the warmth and the friendship of the people, the hospitality of the people, even in the remotest areas, as I mentioned – you are welcomed with open arms. And what I also really enjoyed is the attachment to the local traditions. We are losing many of those traditions in our western societies, but here you have this really special attachment to these traditions, by the younger generations, as well. This is part of the fabric of society here, sort of bearers of value, as the Irish Nobel poet laureate, Seamus Heaney would call it: "bearers of value reflecting the moral and cultural tradition of a country".

Also, what I've greatly appreciated here is the spirit, the very strong spirit, people really want to move forward, they want to get things done, but of course, they are frustrated when they don't see a reaction from the elected political leaders. There needs to be much greater interaction between the citizens and the elected leaders. For me, it's the strength of determination, this warmth and the friendship, that I hope, I'm sure, will be preserved by the citizens. I have always greatly appreciated this extraordinary hospitality that was extended to me, all over the country, whether I was going up Vodno or jumping in the Ohrid Lake or anywhere else, it was always great; I was very privileged to be here during these years.

CURE: Can we connect a question to that – How many clones of you are there actually? There are a lot of people saying that you cannot possibly be in all those places at the same time. Is there any place that you haven't visited in this country?

Erwan Fouéré: (laughs) Thank you. Well, actually I did see someone dressed up as me at the Vevchani carnival. I get my energy from the people and also from my people, from my staff. I feel very motivated when I meet world citizens. For me, I think it's a part of the work we must do. It's not in Skopje where we would feel the pulse of the Macedonian nation. It's not here that we can penetrate the heart and soul. The only way we can understand the Macedonian soul is to travel, to go out, to meet the poets, the writers and all those who express all of these values, the musicians, that I've been privileged to meet. These are all things that I will certainly remember and cherish.