

The Hellenic News of America, May 6, 2006.

The Danger of the Slavs' Claims to be Macedonians

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On 9 March 2006, Congressman Mark Souter (R-ID) provided a room on Capitol Hill to ambassador Nikola Dimitrov to explain why his country, the former Yugoslav province bordering Greek Macedonia, deserves to appropriate the Greek name of Macedonia.

Dimitrov explained he was not there to attack Greece, but to defend the right of his country to chose its name and destiny. "This name issue is not something one can take lightly," he said. "For us the name Macedonia is inseparable from our identity."

Dimitrov was talking to a small group of Congressional staffers and others, most of them Americans. So he praised the role of the United States in Southeastern Europe and the wrecking of Yugoslavia from which his country came into being. He thanked George W. Bush for recognizing his country as "the republic of Macedonia" because his government has a few soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan as part of the "coalition of the willing."

What outraged me in this Republican project of giving prominence to an enemy of Greece, was the shallowness of the presentation, the mixing up of truth with fiction, the use of platitudes for covering up a systematic campaign of faking history, and the dishonest proclamation of assuming a foreign identity.

I reminded Dimitrov that the ancient Macedonians were Greek; they worshipped the Greek gods, spoke Greek, and participated in the Olympics. In addition, I said to Dimitrov his Slavic ancestors appeared in Northern Europe a millennium after Alexander the Great, and that it was the communist tyrant Tito in the early 1940s who named one of the Yugoslav provinces Macedonia. I also asked him, Why was he not proud for being Slav? He ignored my questions, repeating the refrain that history was of no importance in settling issues of security in 2006.

So, in 2006, we have a dangerous paradox. There are a couple of million Bulgarians and Albanians living north of Greece who claim to be Macedonians. Yet these people have no historical or ethnic relation

whatsoever with either Macedonians or Greeks. They speak an artificial Slavic tongue. But for some 15 years, they keep repeating the blatant lie to themselves and gullible foreigners that they are the descendants of Alexander the Great, calling themselves “Macedonians,” and 119 countries, including the United States, agreeing with them. Meanwhile, they insult Greece by suggesting the country is suppressing the rights of its “Macedonian minority.” Adding to this global hatred for Greek culture, we have Greeks from Greece being the real economic force in this pseudo-state. Their investment in 2005 was about \$ 1 billion. One wonders if these Greeks are either naïve or under an illusion, thinking their businesses will paper over the hostility of these Slavs and Albanians for Greek culture.

Unfortunately, Greece is also responsible for this tragedy in its northern frontier. Christianity has made the country always hesitant in defending its Hellenic culture. Thus when the Slavs of Yugoslavia started calling themselves Macedonians, Greece was sluggish, vacillating, but largely silent. It should have protested vigorously Tito’s grab of Hellenic culture, but it did not. Second, it was the New Democracy administration of Greece that in 1993 suggested FYROM, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, for the UN name of its neighbor. In fact, according to Chris Spyrou, former president of the Democratic Party of New Hampshire, prime minister Metsotakes was responsible for this synthetic name. That anti-Hellenic decision of the Greek government, and its support by the “leaders” of the Greek American community, led the Clinton administration to abandon its pro-Greek position and the UN to recognize FYROM on 7 April 1993. “That day,” says Spyrou, “part of my Greekness died.”

The mixed but pro-FYROM messages of the Greek government convinced other countries that Greece was not serious about protecting its culture and Hellenic identity.

Of course, Skopje is too small a country to threaten the security of Greece – I agree on that with ambassador Dimitrov.

The real danger of Skopje is its hubris, speaking with so much certainty about being Macedonia, an audacious claim, certified by muddled Greek policy and the international community, of stealing part of Hellenic culture. Imagine, in the not so distant future, children and adults all over the world reading that the fabulous Macedonian Hellenic traditions of Alexander the

Great, in other words, Hellenism itself, come from this little Slavic country north of Greece?

What will this do to the Greeks' self-respect and identity? Such a development is certain to lead to war because the Greeks, much more than the deceptive policies of their government since 1991, do care about who they are.

Time is of the essence to put an end to the propaganda of Skopje. The Greeks need to change their government to one that has a Hellenic vision, no more peddling the multiculturalism of the American-made policy of Skopje. Greek businessmen must also decide between their personal dignity and pride in being Greek and cashing in while making stronger an enemy of Greek culture.

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