

A MIRROR FOR THE “SUBORDINATED“ AND THE “HUMILIATED“ AT THE BALKANS

Concept and editorial: Prof. Aneta Svetieva

A note of the editor: Preparing the text “*Politicisation of the ethnic identity of the Torbesh (the “Nashinci“)*”, I have read a text of A. Dzaferi that has touched upon the same problem, only in a different way. Since this text was a comment of the text of Mr. Kimet Fetahu, whom I know personally, I have tried to get his original manuscript. Mr. Kimet Fetahu has informed me that he has published his text as a reaction of the writing of Mr. Ismail Kadare in the “Shekulli“ newspaper, due to the fact that he did not agree with Mr. Kadare’s thesis and due to the offence directed to his address. This is how it became indispensable to find the “impulse“ for publishing all these texts in Albania, which are directly or indirectly related to this topic. I have joined to this “polemics on the minorities and the Balkan daltonism“ my text that although was created independently from the “impulse“ and the “reactions“ fitted the “mosaic“. The texts’ order is made according to the time of their publishing: 1. Ismail Kadare, “*Humiliation (of the nations) at the Balkans*“, “**Shekulli“**, Tirana, January 2004 and “**Korrieri“**, Tirana, 30.01.2004; 2. Kimet Fetahu, *The Minorities and the Albanian Society*, “**Korrieri“**, Tirana, 30.01.2004; Arben Xzaferi, *A Storm in a Glass*, “**Shekulli“**, Tirana, 06.02.04. The translation into Macedonian of Dzaferi’s text is taken from the magazine “**Delo“** (Skopje), 517 from 27th February 2004, page 12-13; 4. Aneta Svetieva, “*Politicisation of Ethnic Identity of the Torbesh (the “Nashinci“)*” – published in “**Balkanoslavica“** (Prilep-Skopje, Macedonia) No. 32-33, 2003, pp.7-23.

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SUBORDINATION/HUMILIATION (OF THE NATIONS) AT THE BALKANS

(The text was published in the newspaper “Shekulli“,
As well as in the newspaper “Korrieri“,
Tirana, Albania, 30.01.2004)

The subordination/humiliation of the nations is a well known phenomenon throughout history. The oppression and racism are accounted as certain signs, which announce that something bad is going to happen. People await in fear the storm of evil. The catastrophe can be postponed for a season, for several years, sometimes even for centuries, but some day it will come. The longest awaiting of the evil has happened to

¹ **Ismail Kadare** was born on January 28, 1936 in Gjirokastër, Albania. He is probably the most well known Albanian writer. Kadare has studied at the Faculty of History and Philology at the University of Tirana and at the Gorky Institute of World Literature in Moscow. After feeling threatened by the communist regime in Albania, he moved to France in October 1990, just before the collapse of the regime. In 1999, Kadare returned to Albania. He has received many literature awards, is a member of the French Association of Writers, and has been nominated for the Nobel Prize. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ismail_Kadare

the jews. One could see how the evil gradually rose from one century to another. It didn't happen all of a sudden. Even the constant exiles, emigrations and ruthless murders didn't stop the hostility against jews. It continued until the middle of the xxth century when the crime reached its culmination with the holocaust. Perpetrated by the nazi, the crime was of real planetary proportions. It stained the conscience of many nations, conscience that hasn't been entirely analyzed yet. At first site, subordination can appear as an ephemeral evil, simple cultural misunderstanding, as a tough disease. But, to exclude the possibility of finding this kind of comfort, we must realize that the genocide against jews, same as any other genocide, started with subordination. The subordination of nations carries two evils. First, it makes people a victim of a catastrophe. Second, it makes the victim angry, it rages it, by changing its character to such a degree that afterwards the victim actually makes favors to its own persecutor (executor).

As a consequence of this phenomenon, the political climate of a certain region, continent or era can be irreversibly and continuously poisoned. The subordination can be real or imagined. Throughout history there are examples when countries or regimes have presented themselves as repressed, so that they can justify the counterattack and their future violation against others. This fact is a proof of the power of subordination, a mechanism that can serve as a two-bladed knife when it comes to the existence of nations.

In october this year in albania three cases happened, unpleasant at first site, but if one considers more deeply, they contain multiple meanings. In the local election champagne, people who were watching it on tv were surprised by the outrage of anti albanian cruelty in the area of himara. Albanians and greeks, or more precisely drifters of both nations, burdened with certain primitive urge, with words, gesticulations, shouting, without any reason, expressed their intolerance towards the country called albania, and the people that lived in this country – the albanians. The greek administration officers also became involved in this issue. The incompetence of the albanian authorities to protect the dignity of the country from subordination can be seen as obedience (submission). The silence from the international observers can be judged as a suspicion.

Almost in the same time another story continued: the problem of the origin of mother teresa, an example where the stubborn balkan man, according to a well known tradition, denies that there are famous albanians, leaving them only bandits, thieves, thugs. So the jealous balkan men announced that the saint was not of albanian origin, and this is not a coincidence. But the albanian intellectuals made this denial even more problematic, which of course was unexpected and sad. Some of them ironically mocked the albanian public, so another confirmation was required, nothing more or less but to clarify who is mother teresa, although she herself and the whole world have already announced her albanian origin several years ago. Immediately afterwards some of them that were previously mocking the "albanian mother-terrorists", expressing doubt towards their attitudes on her origin and disqualifying them as incompetent, romantically-nationalistic, red neck and grotesque, and describing them with other ironical terms, these same people all of a sudden became serious, began to search through the archives

for data about the origin of the saint that they previously mocked. However, now without smiling and joking, according to them, mother teresa did not have only one (albanian origin), but she was a mixed macedonian, vlach, and maybe even a gypsy, according to one hindu. So, mother teresa could be of any nationality, only not of an albanian one.

In october another case occurred. In one tv discussion about the minorities, some representatives of these minorities have hardly managed to control the anti-albanian feeling. Especially two of them were more aggressive: the representative of the macedonian minority (a man with a muslim name, who was speaking in the name of the orthodox macedonians), and the other who consider himself as a voice of the egyptian minority, of those who were named, according to him, by the racist albanian people as “gypsies“, and who have always been in this country since the times of the pharaohs, who have in fact stayed as their descendants many centuries before the ones who call themselves natives. It is very hard to believe that the ethnic minorities, in whose name they spoke, would like to have these people as their representatives. First it would be a kind of strange that orthodox macedonians would accept a representative who has a turkish-muslim name and surname. Second, why the macedonians and the so called egyptians that live in albania for so long, are so furious and without loyalty towards the country and the people with whom they live. Loyalty towards the country that gives them shelter and protects the minorities, in the same way as it does with its own citizens, is the basic criteria that is obligatory for any european democracy. As if they were not satisfied with the disrespect of the loyalty, the above mentioned representatives have gone so far to ask declaration of albania as a multinational country!

The three incidents are a sign of the existence of an anti-albanian climate on the peninsula. In the case of himara, the attacks against albania, against the flag and the state symbols, accompanied with the rising of the greek flag and symbols, have openly demonstrated the old agenda, dug from a grave, for disintegration of albania and separation of one of its parts. In the case of mother teresa another agenda was revealed: to tell the albanian people that they can not have positive models and certainly not such a positive model as the one sublimated in mother teresa, which means that these people are left only with the negative models: criminals, spies etc., which practically closes every route towards prosperity. Albanian people are left only with one open route, the one that brings them to the beginning of a moral collapse, and afterwards simply to collapse. The third case - the one with the tv discussion on the 25th of october, proposes a new project, according to which albania doesn't belong to the albanians, except maybe for one part, the smaller one. In other words, this is an old project for separation of the country wrapped in a new suite: multinational country. These examples accompanied by a dozen of others are not recent. After several thousand years, for the first time on the peninsula, the albanian people declare themselves free. Instead of embracing this achievement with joy, the opposite thing always happens. It was not without a reason that the albanian intellectuals from the time of enlightenment have toll the bells and announced a monster that hides himself in the fog. But the freedom seeking people didn't hear the bells and didn't see the signs. Here, at the balkans, the freedom of one nation is experienced as a frightening

threat, as something harmful to others. That is how the fatal mistake was made, one of those mistakes that history never forgives: unfortunate illusion was made that balkan peninsula could achieve its freedom by locking and baring in its stomach the freedom of one of its older nations. The misunderstanding continues along with a tragedy, from which we are going to present only one example – the thing that was happening in front of the blind european eyes. The “tam-tam“ drums of the festivals, forums and the pseudo liberal nonsense have for long time covered something that shouldn’t have been covered: the drama of a nation whose sufferings were like those from the middle ages in yugoslavia – the albanians in kosovo. It was without a doubt the biggest european minus since the war and the biggest stain on her conscience. Luckily europe and all western citizens finally woke up. They punished yugoslavia and thus marked in the history of mankind the first struggle of a group of nations united mainly because of moral reasons. Recently the sublime laws on rights and freedoms were put under doubt once again.

It is known in the history of mankind that after big injustices have been made, there is regret at the european continent, sometimes clearly stated, sometimes not. Although there are still ongoing trials and punishments of violations in the Hague, there is a certain apparent, silent sympathy here and there. There is also tension and distress towards the ones that have caused such a long bombardment at the balkans – towards the albanian people. The signs of one of the oldest diseases of the world – racism, this time is directed against albanians.

The three examples that we have mentioned are not just momentary signs but they have deeper meaning. They should be a particularly sign for those who are not cautious enough and who can not see what these cases are announcing.

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MINORITIES AND THE ALBANIAN SOCIETY

(Published in newspaper Korrieri, Tirana, Albania, 30.01.04)

Instead of an introduction

I had a tea with a colleague, when an ex-colleague, who has been retired for some time, stood in front of our table. While I tried to greet him, he started talking to me angrily:

² The author is a professor at the Tirana University. He is a President of one of the Associations of Macedonians in Albania. He originates from the village of Trebishta – Golo Brdo (Albania) and considers himself as ethnic Macedonian, as well as the majority of “Nashinci“ (Orthodox and Muslim) from this ethnic area. <http://www.historyofmacedonia.org/MacedonianMinorities/kimet.html>

Mr. Kimet Fetahu informed me that he got an approval from the Editorial Board of the “Korrieri“ newspaper to publish his reaction to the article of Mr. Ismael Kadare, published in January 2004 in newspaper “Shekuli“, under the condition that it re-publishes the article of Mr. Kadare. This is why the two articles are registered as published on the same date, although in reality the “impulse“ came earlier.

“I have seen you on TV“. “Yes“, I answered, “you will see me a few times more“. He continued – “I am very angry at you. How did you proclaim our state a multinational one, when our brothers somewhere there (he pointed his hand somewhere East), have a rope under their throat“. I thought “Oh, God, what has happened?“. I said to him – “Yorgo, you have to purify your brain of this thoughts!“. “No“, he answered, “you are the one who should purify your brain. Read Shekuli (Kadare’s article), so you will see where you stand“.

I have read Kadare’s article “Humiliation (of the nations) at the Balkans“ and I became worried. As a person who has been responsible for management of one of the Associations of Macedonians in Albania (Muslims, Christians, Protestants and other faiths), in two mandates, I had difficulty to believe and agree with the concepts and ideas of the respected author of the article. In Macedonia there are also three major confessions, Christians, Muslims and Catholics. The last data in the Republic of Macedonia say that the Muslim Macedonians make around 18% of the Macedonian people. In Albania tolerance and confessional cohabitation is considered as one of the best achievements and treasures. And why would tolerance and ethnic cohabitation would not be considered as such?

Mr. Kadare!

I cannot understand what is bothering, not just you but also our whole country, and that is the fear of the multi-ethnic character of Albanian society and the problems that stem from this truth. My opinion is different from yours, that is, it differs from your fear of declaring Albania a multinational state.

I believe that during this last 10 years in Albania there were no major problems when some of the previously negated values of the ex-totalitarian regime were given back to the people. I will mention the freedom of formation of political parties, the right of ownership, market economy, freedom of movement, confessional belonging etc. All these freedoms were voted and legalized by our legislative institutions. However, the same did not happen with the rights of the minorities in Albania. The open minority questions remained a taboo topic of the Albanian national chauvinists, disregarding the fact that they were for a number of times mentioned in the written and electronic media.

National minorities in international praxis

The process of creation of the states during the last century has brought interesting experiences in international praxis. In Europe and at the Balkans ethno-nationalism is a philosophical essence of the phenomenon and praxis in the last ten years.

Thus, in Europe where the states are economically integrated, we witness a phenomenon of cultural separation of national and ethnicities, that want to preserve their identity. The last statistics speak about 50 million Europeans, that enjoy or not enjoy the status of ethnic minorities in the states where they live.

A very good description of this phenomenon is brought by Urb Altermant, who stresses upon the fact that European societies, “confront each other, build ethno-nationalistic fortresses and use cultural differences, as an excuse for the intolerance towards strangers“.

On the other hand, the Croat P. Matvejevich in 1993 has described this phenomenon from a philosophical point of view as a fight inside the Union between the individual and society, where the “identity of existence get priority compared to the identity of action“. In other words, the national state became a model for organisation of new societies in the last ten years proving, finally, the power of ethno-nationalism over ethno-pluralism.

If the European political map in the years 1920/1921 has counted 33 states, in 1995 there were 42 states. At the Balkans, from 7 states there were 11 states and from Albanian people of one state (in 1920), today we have two states not counting the tendencies for formation of a third one (the idea and the movement for the Republic of Ilirida in Macedonia in 1992-93).

The problem of ethnic minorities became evident, especially after 1990 when Europe faced the pressure of central and Southeast European nations for democracy and freedom. This was a reason for the “ethnization“ of the state policies that has forced European structures to gather many times in 5-6 years and to vote for a final establishment of the basic standards of human rights the rights of ethnic communities.

One of the basic principles regarding the rights of ethnic minorities is self-designation of the individual. In this sense, the document from Copenhagen and the Convention of equal rights and protection of minorities give the same solution: “Ethnic belonging to a certain national minority is a problem that is related to the individual solution and there is no inequality which could stem from its solving“.

This solution was accepted by all international acts and documents of this domain, and this shows that the minority rights are based on an individual right and not on a collective one. In fact, the domain of minority rights does not include a possibility for a division of the right of the individual with the one of the group.

The clearest example is the Balkans, where the rights of Albanians at Kosovo and Macedonia goes through an evolution from individual rights to collective rights, so that Kosovo achieved a degree of self-designation, as the highest degree of collective right. This is why in the Convention for equal rights it is said that: “the persons that belong to national minorities can realized the rights and freedoms that stem from the published principles of this Convention as an individual right or a common right“.

An important problem remains the definition of the term – national minorities. In 1979, Kapotorti gave an interesting formulation based upon five elements: territory, relations with the state, ethno-cultural elements and language features, demographic potential and motifs for keeping the values of national minorities. Here we have two concepts

that reflect two praxis for recognition and support of the rights of minorities. The first concept says that the citizens of one state belong to that nation, so that they could not enjoy international protection. The second concept presupposes that if we want to protect minority, it could be related to a bigger nation that is organized at the level of state. Although this issue creates discussions and polemics, there is logic in the fact that the Permanent Tribunal of International Law gives: “The existence of a minority is an issue that concerns a Fact and not a Right“.

Minorities and Albania

Without going too much in the past, Albania until 1990 has recognised only two national minorities: 1. the Greek in Saranda and Gjirokastra and 2. the Macedonian in the Prespa region. There the education in Greek and Macedonian was guaranteed and that was about it. Each member of these minorities that moved to other regions has automatically lost the minority status, and changed his/her nationality in the documents of marital status etc.

In the years 1945-1990, Albanian society based itself on three major pillars: 1. Marxist-Leninistic philosophy; 2. state ownership and 3. civil atheistic society

The Marxist and Leninist philosophy, as praxis of exercising power and governance, state ownership, fight against private ownership in an isolated economy, as well as building of an atheistic and civil state in which citizens could be without confessional and ethnic belonging. In other words, it has oriented itself during a dozen of years as being against ownership, different political ideas, confessional and ethnic belonging.

The state policy has turned minorities into hostages of politics in relation to neighbours and in many cases it used physical and psychological torture. The report of the Albanian government sent to the Council of Europe on the 26th of June 2001, brings unreal and incorrect information. It is well known that in Albania a census of the population, categorized in different columns regarding confessional and ethnic belonging, was never made. The numbers of the minorities in 1960, 1979 and 1989 (2,7%, 2,1% and 2,0%) are not correct, they are not real. The number of Greek minority is reduced and the Macedonian minority in Gora and Golo Brdo is being negated (“Golo Brdo“). As an illustration of blurring the problems, Roma, Serbs and Montenegrins, as well as Vlachs are mentioned, and there is a total negation of the presence of Egyptians and Bosnians.

At the same time an Albanian/German project is being condemned, since the atlas which is prepared for printing mentions that in Albania around 11% of the population belongs to minorities.

In concordance with its efforts for integration in the international and Euro-Atlantic structures, Albania has signed and ratified starting from 1955 around 15 conventions and international treaties. Those documents presuppose engagement of the Albanian government and they are in fact an obligation of the Albanian state.

Other documents are expected to be sign, but even those that have been signed have to undergo a process of monitoring and evaluation. In one of the most important five points of the annual Report on the Process of Association and Stabilisation, the Commission of the EU has asked the Albanian Government to continue with its efforts of improvement of the rights of the minorities through expanding legal norms, strengthening of responsible institutions to ensure the implementation of the rights of the minorities in concordance with international standards. The Council of the Committee of monitoring the implementation of the Convention of equal rights and protection of minorities, in September 2002, insisted that the Albanian government would put bigger efforts into cooperating with the ethnic communities and would undertake concrete measures for implementation of the Convention on equal rights.

As one could see, the state and the Albanian society were strongly supported by the international factor to realize their obligations not only towards the ethnic minorities in Albania, but at the same time to step forwards towards integration in the European structures.

Minorities in Albania and their problems

Starting from the realistic situation of organizing ethnic minorities in Albania, the Centre of Ethnic Investigation in Tirana, in the frames of their project “Ethnic Minorities in Albania“ has realized a study with 11 minorities that live at the territory of our county.

Besides the 33 questions from the survey, other problems are treated as well, as for example the Minorities statute, the relations with the media, education, social and economical problems, relations with the political, administrative and legislative structures, types of cooperation etc. Finally, interesting results stemmed from these data, important for Albanian society. In Albania there are 7 ethnic minorities, Vlachs, Bosnians, Egyptians, Greeks, Macedonians, Roma and Serbo-Montenegrians.

The number of the population belonging to the ethnic minorities in Albania, without declaring the numbers of representatives of the Greek minority, is 780.000-840.000. Taking into account the representatives of the Greek community, one can conclude that the Albanian society is multi-ethnic.

All ethnic minorities ask for a unanimous official recognition of their status in the Republic of Albania. They are well organized in Associations and Societies, and have strong motifs related to their identity, language, culture or their settlements. They considered their existence in a critical way, since their number is not high, and they are not present in the electronic or written media. They require space and relations with the public while their presence in the press is anaemic and with no institutional support.

The Bosnians, Roma, Vlah and Serbian-Montenegrin ethnic community does not have education in their mother tongues. The Greek and the Macedonian ethnic community is not satisfied and they ask for education in their mother tongues in Himara, Gora and

Golo Brdo. The situation with the education in Albanian is also not good when it comes to ethnic minorities.

Their economical situation is estimated as bad/averagely bad. They are not satisfied with their presence in Albanian public administration and institutions of the legislative domain, as well as with the outcome of the last Parliamentary elections. They are also not pleased with the electoral law and with the cooperation with the institutions and the representatives of ethnic minorities regarding the change of this Law. All representatives of the ethnic minorities in Albania require direct representation in the Albanian Parliament through representatives elected according to the proportional electoral system. They require a discussion over the Constitution of the Republic Albania and its improvement.

The representatives of the minorities in Albania also want a formation and well functioning of a separate structure for minorities in the Albanian Government. The finances of the ethnic minorities in the Republic of Albania are based solely upon own sources. All representatives unanimously ask that the Albanian state finances the activities of the minorities. At the first Conference titled "Improvement of the situation and the rights of ethnic minorities in the Republic of Albania" held 17-19 June 2002, the representatives of all these minorities have voted for a Resolution, that is in concordance with the Convention on equal rights, as well the whole international legislative. This is how the signatories have declared respect on the territorial integrity and independence of Balkan states, as well as support of the friendly ties and good relations between states in the region. The representatives of ethnic minorities have agreed that the Republic of Albania has to be built as a multi-ethnic, multi-confessional and multi-cultural society. In the preamble of the Albanian Constitution, all ethnic minorities that live in Albania should be mentioned. Supporting the official Albanian language at the territory of the Republic of Albania, the representatives of the ethnic minorities asked for language rights for all local self-governance units, where the language of the minorities is used by 20% of the population. There the language of the minority should gain a status of an official language, equal with the Albanian. The Resolution requires the state to guarantee that the minorities can receive education, up to high school, in their mother tongue.

Being one third of the Albanian population, and being loyal citizens, the representatives of ethnic minorities want to have their delegates in Albanian legislative and public administration, in the National Broadcasting Council and the programs for Albanian public. They want the Albanian Parliament to pass the Law on the rights and freedoms of minorities in the Republic of Albania, to form the State Committee on relations with ethnic minorities in the Republic of Albania, as well as organising the census of the population by a separate law and international monitoring, with the presence of ethnic minorities in each phase of the census process. As one can see, the ethnic problems in our country are big and severe, but this is why a bigger political will is needed, as well as engagement of all interested factors and much work to see and solve the problems.

Mr. Kadare!

I believe that the solving of the above-mentioned problems is much more important than the Muslim or Orthodox scenarios, that you would like to inject into Albanian society. The minorities in Albania are not a “Humiliation at the Balkans“, but a honour for this country. They are equally responsible for the fortune of this country as the Albanian majority. They fight to become one of those progressive forces on the side of evolution and civilization. Their wish is to face problems and reality of the Albanian society, and this is the essence of their loyalty.

Xhaferi Arben (Tetovo, Macedonia)³

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STORM IN A GLASS OF WATER

(Published in newspaper “Shekulli“ 06.02.2004, (Tirana, Albania) and into Macedonian in the weekly newspaper “Delo“ (Skopje, Macedonia), No. 517 27.02. 2004)

These days I read a text from a representative or President of the so called Union of Macedonians in Albania (Kimet Fetahu), of a certain association that incorporates citizens from Albania who consider that their reputation would improve if they identify themselves with that political fiction - Muslim-Macedonians, one that did not take roots even in Macedonia itself. It looks like the news arrive late in Albania... Of course that, on its own, this tendentious polemics with the text of Kadare “Humiliation at the Balkans“ would not cause any attention at all, but on the contrary would create disrespect, as many other opinions in the section “letters from readers“. But, this text becomes interesting if considered as the most illustrative example of the syndrome created by Gligorov’s doctrine, that is in fact completely artificial and confusing even for Macedonian people, especially when it comes to their relations to other Balkan people. This article is worth analysing just to understand **the absurdity of Macedonism⁴**, at least seen through the eyes of Gligorov’s doctrine.

³ The author of the article is a leader of the ethnic political party of the Albanians in Macedonia. **Party for Democratic Prosperity of Albanians in Macedonia (PPDSH)** Partia për Prosperitet Demokratik e Shqiptarëve në Maqedoni/Partija za Demokratski Propseritet na Albancite

President: Arben Xhaferi

It is a second largest Albanian party in Macedonia. It was formed 3 years ago, from a wing that separated from the PPD. This party’s main strongholds are Tetovo and Gostivar. <http://www.albanian.com/main/countries/macedonia/parties.html>
<http://flagspot.net/flags/mk%7Dpdsh.html>

The author by origin is ethnic Albanian from Kosovo and since recently a citizen of R.of Macedonia. He is a sociologist by profession. The article has been published in the weekly newspaper “Shekuli“ (Tirana), 06th of February 2004, as a reaction to the text “The Minorities and the Albanian Society“ published by Mr. Kimet Fetahu (“Subordination/Humiliation on the Balkan Peninsula“). The translation of the text in Macedonian is taken from the weekly newspaper “Delo“ (Skopje), 517 from 27th of February 2004, page 12-13.

⁴ The provocative parts of the text are highlighted by the Editor, Prof. Aneta Svetieva.

The Macedonian idea appeared after the Russian-Turkish war, the so called East crisis, or more precisely after the international refusal of legalizing the expansion of St. Stephane Bulgaria. The retrieval of Bulgaria resulted with the emergence of a strong political movement, known today under the acronym VMRO. The principal idea of this political movement was the formation of a state in the geographical area that was again starting to be recognized by the name Macedonia. Of course, neither in that time, nor today, Golo Brdo in Albania was the area of political perception. According to the political platform of VMRO, this Macedonia was supposed to be Switzerland on the Balkans, where Bulgarians, Albanians, Greeks, Turks, Vlachs, and others would live under total equality. Thus, a part of the Bulgarian elite was leaning towards re-establishing the dominant position of Bulgaria upon a strategic territory that was lost thanks to the international arbitrage, through a new concept of the state which would follow the example of Switzerland. After this project met a number of obstacles, under the influence of various provincialisms, it got divided into two parts, pro-Bulgarian and pro-Macedonian. The World War I and the military alliances have corrupted all plans and aspirations. The Serbo-Croat-Slovenian kingdom was formed. In this new state the idea of Macedonism did not function, neither in Macedonia nor in the other areas, and certainly not in Albania, in Golo Brdo.

When the inner quarrels began, the Bulgarian government pronounced both sides of VMRO illegal. At that time in Golo Brdo, and in Gora in Kosovo nobody spoke about Macedonism. Starting from this fact, one must ask the following question: since when the idea of Macedonism and the need of forming various associations of the Union of Macedonians in Albania occurred?! The idea of Macedonism, of the distinct ethnic identity, is contested by many neighbours, as well as by foreign impartial investigators. At the moment Albanians are standing aside of this phenomenon. If this idea starts to be contested inside Macedonia (the last time a crisis happened among the Orthodox clergy, when a part of it declared loyalty towards the Serbian Orthodox church), then a question would have to be posed: What is the source of that energy, that willingness for forming a “Macedonian cause“ in Golo Brdo in Albania? Certainly, the answer should not be searched for in history, nor in the tradition, but in the political projects of the considerably old leaders, or in the agendas of the Macedonian secret services that tend to minimise the Albanian issue in the region of former Yugoslavia. “The Macedonian cause“ in Golo Brdo, or more precisely the Muslim-Macedonian one, is a fiction within the framework of the Yugoslavian agendas, **meaning Macedonian as well, created for minimisation of the Albanian cause**, because, in Golo Brdo there has never been a political movement with Macedonian character. In Golo Brdo and elsewhere there haven't been uprisings, deaths, persecutions etc. Albania is not decomposing while other national causes open automatically, which was the case in Yugoslavia. “The Macedonian cause“ opens up as an anti-Albanian challenge within the frame of the Gligorovistic strategy, whose goals are realization of several segments of the secret services' plans and destroying the careers of certain individuals in Albania, who tend to open big dilemmas through these kinds of associations. However, they will understand that they are causing only a storm in a glass of water. The delirium on the establishment of ethnic causes in Albania is not just a political rhetoric, but also a geo-strategic policy. There is a plan that dates from former Yugoslavia for forming of a

Buffer-zone that would link up the regions inhabited with **Muslim Slavophons** in Gora in Kosovo, in the Torbesh villages of Debar and those in Golo Brdo in Albania. The current Macedonian government is discussing an opening of another road, which would link Golo Brdo with the Torbesh villages around Debar. The Yugoslav army leaders have had intentions of using this population against the Albanian element. By all odds, in one part of the Albanian territory there is also a group that speaks an **extinguished dialect** of the Slavic language and belongs to Muslim confession. This group is not very familiar with its national identity; moreover, they are quite behind from the others that are today recognized under the name of Pomacs, Torbesh, Bosnians etc. Thus, they simply identify with the toponym of Golo Brdo, and they often even declare themselves Bulgarians.

The pretentious and transcendental concepts of Gligorov on Macedonism are constantly creating immense historical, political, religious and other confusions, not only in Macedonia but around it as well. With the case of the emerging Macedonism in Golo Brdo orchestrated from Skopje, opens up a tough political dilemma concerning the forming of Macedonia as an independent state and its influence on the stability of the states and constellations around it. The most adequate answer to the Gligorovistic, and more generally to the Macedonian policy of non-recognition of independent Kosovo, as a condition for preserving the stability of Macedonia and the Macedonian state is that, either as a concept, or as an activity of the secret services, it destabilises the Albanian territories and the region.

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POLITICISATION OF THE ETHNIC IDENTITY OF THE TORBESH (THE “NASHINCI“)

Abstract: The text refers to the Islamized Macedonian population in Western and North-western Macedonia, and the politicisation of their ethnic identity. This is a population that speaks Macedonian and has authentic culture, that lives in few ethnic areas in the Macedonian-Albanian and Kosovo border region, as well as in some border areas in Albania and Kosovo. They are known under different ethnic names, as “Torbeshi“, “Nashinci“, “Kurki“, “Uljufi“ etc. Two terms are used parallely in this text: “Torbeshi“ and “Nashinci“, those are names which this group has assigned to itself, or they were assigned to them by others. The first term is widely accepted, while the second is accepted by the population itself and does not imply religious background.

Key words: “Torbeshi“, “Nashinci“, ethnic areas, ethnic culture, Western and North-western Macedonia, border areas, Macedonian-Albanian border, Macedonian-Serbian (Kosovo) border, Islamization, Albanization, Turkish influence, Golo Brdo, Gora, Debar

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area, Debarska Zupa, Dolna Reka, Gorna Reka, ethnic transition, Macedonian language, Drinkol and Golobordo dialect.

Today the ethnic name “Torbeshi“ is used in general, for identification of all Islamized Macedonians in the Republic of Macedonia, although this ethnic name originally referred to the Islamized from the area of Debar and Reka and the near-by border areas in the North-western part of Macedonia. Even at the territory where the ethnic name was created, it is a seldom case that the groups and the individuals to which it refers identify with it. There is a resistance towards this ethnic name expressed by almost all Macedonian with Muslim religion (the ones from Golo Brdo, Debarska Zupa, Gora, Gorna Reka, Drinkol, even the Islamized Mijaks from Dolna Reka to which it mostly refers).⁶ Besides the local ethnic names, this population uses a general ethnic name as a non-verbal symbol of an ethnic and cultural proximity, which has most probably emerged as a feeling of cultural closeness between the Macedonians of both confessions, way before the creation of the Macedonian state. This is the ethnic name “Nashinci“. It is interesting that the Albanians from Golo Brdo – Albania, when they want to identify the dialect of the neighbouring Macedonian population use a term derived from this ethnic name and say “you talk ‘nashki’“⁷. Otherwise, at the territory of the Debar and Reka ethnographic region one could notice other ethnic names that refer to the Macedonian Muslims or are mutual for the two main confessional groups. In the narrative sources and literature one notes data on ethnic names given by the ethnic group describing itself and ethnic names given by others (egzonims) like “Kurki“, “Esti“, “Uljufi“ etc. A common thing for all these ethnic names is the partial or complete distancing from them by those to which they refer. For other groups of Islamized Macedonians there are other folk ethnic names and egzonims as for example “Dilszi“ (Tikvesh); “Pomaci“/“Turci“ (Maleshevo, Delchevo region, Pirin Macedonia, Aegean Macedonia), “Turks“ (Prilep region), “Apovci“/“Turci“ (Kichevo region)⁸

⁶ Islamized Mijaks from the wider ethnographic area of Reka in Western Macedonia are well known under the ethnic name Torbeshi. Science tries to explain this ethnic name. IN this sense, it relates to the old Slavic tribe name “Torbatchei“, then to the special type of employees of the Turkish army and candidates for “janichars“ that carried bags (torbi in Macedonian, Torba Oglanlari/Torba Asemileri – in Turkish), it is also related to the Persian construction “Torbesh“, that denotes a mobile salesman that sells halva and oriental drinks. In accordance to the confessional endogamy as a cultural border between Mijaks and Torbesh, the ethnic name has a pejorative meaning, that is the “the Torbesh sold themselves for a sack of flour“, in the sense that they have sold their faith. There is an opinion that the ethnic name is related to the Bogomil movement, that is, that the Bogomil missionaries (“kutugeri“) wore bags (torbi). It is true that the map of the Bogomil movement and Islamization are overlapping at the Balkans, but this is not so relevant when it comes to the ethnic name. The question of the origin of the ethnic name is still open. It is known that the ethnic names appear also as denoting ethnic background but also as denoting territory of origin. In this sense, I note two toponyms identical with the ethnic names “Mijak“ and “Torbesh“: 1, Mijak – a village or a part of the village Tanushevci at the border between Kosovo and the Republic of Macedonia and 2. village of Torbach in Golo Brdo – the part which is in Albania.

⁷ Field research in Golo Brdo 2003. Information from Prof. Vita Koya.

⁸ Паликрушева, Галаба, Этнонимы исламизированных групп южнославянских народов. Во: „VI Меѓународен конгрес за проучување на Југоисточна Европа“ (Софија 1989), Скопје, Македонска академија на науките и уметностите, 1991, стр. 119-127.

etc., but they are not a subject of investigation of this text, they are just mentioned according to the need. In the Turkish period and immediately after it, the most acceptable public ethnic name for the Islamised from Macedonia (Macedonians, Albanians and others) was “Turk“, which gave a possibility for identification with the Turkish Muslim state. Also, according to the popular opinion, “a Turk equals a Muslim and vice versa“. During the last century of the Turkish empire when the state did not have a real authority over its territory and when the Albanian Muslims have acquired most of the functions of the state in the Western and North-western parts of ethnic Macedonia, the Albanian ethnic feeling started to gain strength. As a result of this situation, the process of Albanization of the Macedonian Islamized population has also gained strength. The old formulae that “a Turk equals a Muslim and vice versa“ started to change and to emerge filled with new content, that is, that “an Albanian equals a Muslim and vice versa“. There are many examples, but a most typical one comes from Gorna Reka⁹ This is proved by the recent field research. For example, a Muslim from Gorna Reka would never identify himself with the ethnic name “Torbesh“ or “Shkret“. If he would be put in a situation today to publicly identify himself in ethnic terms, at a local level he would identify himself as inhabitant of Gorna Reka, while in the official census as an “Albanian“ (in the past as well as a “Turk“), contrary to their fellow Christian villagers who also identify themselves as inhabitants of Gorna Reka, but in the official census as Macedonians. This phenomenon would not be strange if one would not be aware that it is a matter of a mixed, culturally unique ethnic group of “Gornorekanci“ that belong to two confessions, but have mutual cultural characteristics (bylinguism=Albanian and Macedonian language, costume, economy, customary law, almost the whole folk calendar, folklore etc.).

A certain redirection of the pressure of Albanization upon the Torbesh is the period before the Balkan wars and First World War when they were pressed by the classical methods of the Serbian and Bulgarian propaganda¹⁰. The Albanization has started again during the occupation of Western Macedonia at the time of the II World War by Italy, that is, Albania. Using different violent means, not only through education in Albanian language, but also using exterior non-verbal ethnic symbols, as for example the indispensable white hat (keche) for man, the change of names and surnames to Albanian ones etc¹¹. In the period of the Socialistic Republic of Macedonia, the state did not take any action to change the imposed Albanian names and surnames of the Torbesh (the “Nashinci“), that could be an indicator of the attitude, that is of an absence of an attitude regarding their ethnic background. The (old) formulae “An Albanian equals a Muslim and vice versa“ today is especially vital and is used more

⁹ Мирјана Мирчевска, Вербални и невербални етнички симболи на Горна Река, Скопје 2004 (ракопис на одбранета докторска дисертација).

¹⁰ Глигор Тодоровски, Малореканскиот предел, ИНИ, Скопје 1970, 382-386; Весна Петреска, Пролетни обичаи, обреди и верувања кај Мијаците, Скопје 1998, 24.

¹¹ Глигор Тодоровски, Верскиот фактор како основна детерминанта во определувањето на националноста кај исламизираните Македонци, Историја, фолклор и етнологија на исламизираните Македонци, Скопје 1987, 60-121; Весна Петреска, н.д., 24.

often when it comes to Islamised Macedonians as an organized action from the inside but also from the outside. One gets the impression that the current Albanian parties fight for an introduction of a new Albanian “milet system“ where the national (ethnic) identity will be based upon religious identity. One can talk about processes of re-Islamization of the Islamized, that is a re-Christianisation of the Orthodox, as a characteristic process after abandoning atheism by the previous political and social system. However, the fact of the cultural uniqueness of the Islamized Macedonians is a reason why these groups are still vital although in conditions of a different ethnic and political activity of the parties that have an ethnic character. This is strengthened by the local ethnic names, as well as by the generally accepted ethnic name “Nashinci“, that takes into account the confessionally mixed areas and villages of Macedonians from both confessions, as for example Golo Brdo, Gora and other places¹².

In all censuses made after the II WW in Macedonia, one can notice a transition of part of the groups of Islamised Macedonians in different categories of ethnic belonging¹³. The illogical nature of the numbers of the demographic growth and decline can be noticed by every professional demographer, as well as by a total amateur. As a result of this “ethnic instability“ of the Macedonian Muslims, sometimes in the censuses there are more “Turks“, sometimes more “Albanians“ and sometimes more “Muslims“/“Bosniaks“, etc¹⁴. In contemporary conditions, the biggest influence upon the intensity of those phenomenon in the sense of politicisation of ethnic identity, is made by the parties that have ethnic character, especially the Albanian and the Turkish parties. In this sense, the Macedonian parties are not very successful. I should be, as a scientist, happy for this pro-European behaviour, since from a historical view point it is entirely logical. As it is already known, the Macedonians were never burdened by a monarchist or a nationalistic state tradition of a Balkan type and this fact resulted with an absence of feeling of superiority in relation to other nations and ethnic groups, and an absence of ideas of conquests of any kind. On the contrary, the common people have developed special psychological features indispensable for fighting for one’s own life, mechanisms for tolerating the “other“, his confession and culture. I understand the well known contrary attitudes of the Albanian parties as a political fight for positions, since even if one wants to negate to benevolent behaviour of the Macedonian state, the facts speak for themselves, besides the incidents that happen from time to time when it comes to the state institutions, that according to the rule were a reaction of an extreme disrespect of the state. In this sense, the current “pro-European“ behaviour of the Macedonian political parties would be all right if there would be a reciprocal behaviour on the side of the neighbours, but it is well known that this is not the case. This is why there is a doubt in the competency of the so called “people’s

¹² Own field research in Golo Brdo 2003; Information by Merdzan Muaremovski, born 1957 in the village of Ljubovishte, Gora (Kosovo, Serbia), lives in Skopje.

¹³ Благоја Марковски, Карта на промените во народносниот состав на населението во Република македонија по Втората светска војна, Етнолог, 4-5, Скопје, 1994, 198-204.

¹⁴ Baskin Oran, Religious and National Identity Among the Balkan Muslim : A Comparative Study on Greece, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Kosovo
<http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com/publica/cemot/text18/oran18.pdf>

representatives“, since for each and every real representative of the state this inertia of the Macedonian parties should present a failure of the state in a sense of negligence for the cultural identity of its own citizens that are victims of the obvious propaganda. Recent events in this sense is the introduction of Turkish language in Debarska Zupa (2002) under the influence of the Democratic party of the Turks in Macedonia, although the “Torbesh“ that live there do not speak Turkish and they are not ethnic Turks, besides two-three villages of which there are historical data. From a “Turkish“ point of view, the Torbesh – “Turks“ from Debarska Zupa and the Kichevo area, that is the parents of the school children, have signed a petition regarding the introduction of Turkish language in the curriculum, explaining that “they are Turks who do not speak Turkish“, since the Turkish schools were closed down after the Turks have left (1912/1913), while the second argument was that “even the children of Macedonians that moved to Australia do not speak Macedonian, while they still learn the language using Macedonian teachers“!¹⁵ In this context one could pose the question to the DPT, “why have they chosen as a mother tongue exactly the Macedonian one, when they could choose Albanian, since a major number of villages have mixed ethnic composition? Anyway, this is the way the Torbesh village Plasnica (Dolno Kichevo) became a Turkish village, and now it is on the way to become Albanian. Under the influence of the Democratic Party of the Albanians¹⁶ (Ristoski B., 2004) and other parties of the ethnic Albanians that have the same opinion regarding this matter, in the new census of 2003 the Torbesh village Labunishte (Struga region) became a big “Albanian“ village, although there are no ethnic Albanians there.¹⁷ The continuous Albanization of the Torbesh (the “Nashinci“), having in mind their attitude that the Torbesh are Turks¹⁸ since they have voluntarily identified themselves or are still identified with the ethnic name “Turks“. In short, the two mentioned ethnic parties through aggressive and persistent activities achieve to turn a part of Islamized Macedonians on their side, contrary to the “sleepy“ Macedonian parties that wake up only when positions are to be attained.

Even bigger problems with ethnic identity is the one of the “Nashinci“ - Islamized Macedonians that today live outside the state borders of Macedonia or in diaspora. Thus, the “Nashinci“ - people from Golo Brdo and Gora, a part which is in Albania, do not have any minority rights in Albania while the education is in Albanian language although their mother tongue, spoken at their homes, is Macedonian (the Drimkol, Golo Brdo and the Gora dialect). Children start to learn and speak Albanian language after starting their primary school. This is why the teachers are all “Nashinci“ - local people who can easily transfer the new language to the kids¹⁹. According to talks with

¹⁵ Democratic Union for Integration

¹⁶ Blazhe Ristovski, The Map of Future Federation is Already Drawn, Reality Macedonia, January 11, 2004 http://www.realitymacedonia.org.mk/web/news_page.asp?nid=2898

¹⁷ Idem

¹⁸ Own field research in Golo Brdo, May 2003.

¹⁹ Personal discussions with prof. Kimet Fetahu, prof. Vita Koya and Cvetan Mazniku, who live and work in Tirana and originate from the Macedonian group in Golo Brdo.

intellectuals that originate from Golo Brdo, the Albanian science at state level supports the “scientific thesis“ that the population is ethnically Albanian, but that it has lost the mother Albanian tongue due to the proximity of the “Slavs“!²⁰ The Bulgarian science establishes thesis that it is a matter of Orthodox and Islamized Bulgarians. In this sense the publications and the web-site of the Macedonian scientific institute in Sophia²¹ has the lead role, but also politicians from Macedonia who think that they are the only ones that have exclusive right to fight for minority and ‘human’ rights, while the Macedonians in Albania who require their rights ignore them through attaching different negative etiquette, forgetting the good old proverb: “Do not do the other something that you don’t want to be done to you“²² This construction of false truth, the so called “Bulgarian thesis“ is based upon a term that individuals from the older generation use in relation to language. Namely, the local dialect of the Macedonian language is describe by the population of Golo Brdo as: “nashinsko“, Macedonian and Bulgarian. The first one is the most frequent. The term “Bulgarian“ is used by certain representatives of the older generation of Golo Brdo, but they sometimes mix this term with “Macedonian“. The term “Bulgarian“ language is not an expression of an ethnic feeling, but a reminiscence from the time of spreading the Bulgarian name, propaganda, church and state organisation among Macedonians, especially in the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. I have noticed this phenomenon with individuals that belong to the older generation Islamized Macedonians in Turkey, that have practically never lived in free Macedonia. Similarly, one can hear how certain older inhabitants of Gorna Reka try to speak Serbian, since “at the time“ they have learned this language. On the other hand, I have never seen an informant describing himself as Bulgarian²³ Serbian. The correctness of this statement can be checked at the field, but I fear that correctness is not something of interest of these “commanders and soldiers“ of the political parties, who think that through working for others’ political interest, will “gain something for their cause“²⁴ However, the most important source of data on the ethnic structure of Albania is the American electronic data-base CIA - The World Factbook. Here, in the category of ‘others’ (2%) there are Vlachs, Gypsies, Serbs and Bulgarians, while there is no mention of Macedonians. Surely, these are data from the Albanian statistics, but the creators of the World Factbook were more careful regarding the official percentage of Greeks (3%) and they say that according to the data of Greek

²⁰ <http://www.macedoniainfo.com/> , especially the text of the Austrian professor Otto Kronshteiner, The Collapse of Yugoslavia and the Future Prospects of the Macedonian Literary Language) http://www.macedoniainfo.com/bul/knigi/ik/ik_3.html

²¹ Bulgarian Parliament Speaker Demands Albania Recognise Bulgarian Minoriti, Souteast European Times, 6 March 2002 <http://balkantimes.com/html2/english/020307-GEORGI-008.htm>

²² Arben Dzaferi, A Storm in a Glass of Water, Shekuli (Tirana), 6th of February 2004 (transmitted by “Delo“ Skopje, 27th of February 2004, pages 12, 13); **Xhaferi Claims That Macedonians in Golo Brdo Are Fictitious** http://www.afsouth.nato.int/organization/NHQSOPJE/PRESS%20REVIEW/_2004/february/dawn_20Feb2004.htm

²³ Own field research in the Republic of Turkey, 1982-84 and Golo Brdo 2003.

²⁴ Arben Dzaferi, idem.

organisations it is a matter of 12%²⁵, while the Macedonian population is simply deleted, while there are Macedonian organisations that have the numbers. The displeasure of the Factbook is even greater having in mind the fact that at least in one part of Albania (the Small Prespa, the areas of Podgradec and Korcha) the Macedonian minority and language are officially recognised²⁶, although according to a principle that is restricted to a certain territory. Contrary to the mentioned examples, the web site Ethnologue.com²⁷ contains data on the presence of Macedonian language in Albania and the neighbouring countries, which indirectly confirms the existence of Macedonian ethnic minority.

The “Nashinci“ from Golo Brdo and Gora, Albania, are well organised in their efforts to gain minority rights.²⁸ The ones from Golo Brdo are just in their demand to open a border crossing at Dzepishta - Trebishta, that is towards the other part of the separated area Golo Brdo - Debarski Drimkol on Macedonian side. They find this as something already agreed after II World War, and as a proof they take the old border passes of their parents and relatives. Unfortunately, this useful initiative for both countries has still not yielded results.

The example of the “Nashinci“ in the greater part of the divided Macedonian area Gora that became a part of Serbia (Kosovo) after I World War is even more problematic. Besides the constant pressure of Albanization, there was a Serbian state program for creating Serbian ethnic feeling among the Gorans, especially when it comes to the younger generation, mainly through education institutions, where the classes took place in Serbian. This program was supported by the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, which has been an organiser of scientific investigations and printing of publications where based upon “scientific grounds“ they prove the Serbian background of the Gorans²⁹. The confusion lasts even today. It is a paradox that the web-sites of the same organisation (OSCE), present the Gorans once as Serbians with Islamic faith³⁰, and another time as migrants from Bulgaria that arrived in the 13th century.³¹ Even more, the same web-site says that the language of Gorans is a mixture of Macedonian, “nashinski“, Turkish, Bosniak and Serbian, so since Macedonian is mentioned two times (as Macedonian, and as “nashinski“), practically it is confirmed that it is a matter

²⁵ <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/al/html>

²⁶ Wikipedia - The Free Encyclopedia http://en2.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macedonian_language

²⁷ <http://www.ethnologue.com/>

²⁸ A political association “MIR“ of the Macedonian minority in Albania, Center for ethnic research, Tirana.

²⁹ Милисав Лутовац, Гора и Опoље, Српски Етнографски зборник, књ. LXIX, Насеља и порекло становништва, књ. 35, САН, Београд 1955.

³⁰ GORA/DRAGASH, <http://www.osce.org/kosovo/documents/reports/part1/p5gor.htm>

³¹ MUNICIPAL PROFILE, Dragash, October 2003, http://www.osce.org/kosovo/dokuments/reports/municipal_profiles/

of Macedonian population! However, this is not clearly stated! It is comforting that at least they are not directly identified as ethnic Bulgarians, that is this 'wise' formulae associates them more with the Bulgarian state of the Middle ages, when Macedonia was part of Bulgaria, in fact the same way as parts of Albania were in Bulgaria during that period. It would be nice if the author of this text explains to us where certain groups whose descendants live in Kosovo and declare themselves ethnic Albanians have come from? Did they come from Byzantium, from the Bulgarian or Serbian state in the middle-age, or from Ottoman Turkey? Through irony, I want to emphasise, that in all these text, either on purpose or not, one feels the negation of the ethnic particularity of Macedonians. On the other hand, the inertia of Macedonian politicians and scientists from the time of the II WW towards the "Nashinci" - Macedonians of both confessions that live on the territory of neighbouring countries³², with few exceptions³³, have also perpetuated the processes of assimilation of the Macedonian minority. Even if there were certain tries in this sense, one can say that the 'best' option considered was that this population becomes a Serbian one, having in mind the factor of a mutual state and the dominant cultural position of Serbia in relation to Macedonia as its ex-territory from the period of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and Vardarska Banovina (1918, 1929-1941). In this sense one can conclude that these processes happened due to the silent permission of the Macedonian state and the pro-Governmental Macedonian scientists, similarly as in the case of the Macedonian region Pčinja or the Macedonian colonists in Vojvodina, in the villages around Pančevo and Vršac, etc. Besides all programs for Serbisation, the Gorans have maintained their dialect and folk culture. IN most examples they identify themselves as "Nashinci" and "Gorani", but the ethnic name "Torbeshi" is still vital, while the language is identified as "nashinski" (talk 'nashinski').³⁴ It is obvious that through the silent permission of the existence of the ethnic name "Gorani" the Serbs have pleased a part of the ethnic feelings of the Gorans. This ethnic name obviously fit the Gorans, that indirectly shows that they wanted to distance themselves from the Serbs, the Albanians and other entities at Kosovo, but also regarding the Macedonian cultural policy that did not show interest for their problems. The reports of the Human Rights Watch regarding the situation with human rights of the minorities 1999, show that the Gorans were oppressed by the ethnic Kosovo Albanians that were part of KLA.³⁵ A positive element is the new administrative organisation of Kosovo where the new municipality "Dragash"³⁶ is created, which culturally unites

³² Each attempt to show interest for the Macedonian population in neighbouring countries was condemned as nationalism and was strictly sanctioned. This was especially valid for the territories that were part of former Yugoslavia.

³³ Ристовски, Блаже. - Горански народни песни. - "Македонски фолклор", II/3-4, Скопје, 1969, п. 429-493. Идем, Кон проучувањето на народната поезија на Гораните. - "Македонски фолклор", II/3-4, Скопје, 1969, стр. 137-157

³⁴ According to Merdzan Muaremovski, born in the village of Ljubovishte, Gora (Kosovo, Serbia), lives in Skopje.

³⁵ Human Rights Watch <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/kosovo/unword2c.html>

³⁶ OSCE Mission in Kosovo - Documents - Municipal Profiles, http://osce.org/kosovo/documents/reports/municipal_profiles/

the Gorans. However, the numerous tries to open a border crossing to Macedonia, at Restelica, are still not realised. According to informant from the field, lately the old relatives ties with the “Nashinci“ - Gorans at Albanian territory are renewed.³⁷

When we talk about the identity of the Islamized Macedonians, the image would not be complete if we would not mention the “Nashinci“ from the diaspora. The biggest number of Islamized Macedonians in Diaspora is in Turkey. It is tragic that during the 50ties and 60ties of the 20th century, when there was a Macedonian state in the frames of Yugoslavia, there was a huge migration of the Islamized Macedonian population towards Turkey. This migration has continued in the following periods, with a smaller intensity. Big colonies of “Nashinci“ that still speak their local dialect of Macedonian and cherish their culture can be found the bigger cities of Istanbul, Izmir, Bursa etc., as well as in Akisar, Manisa, etc.³⁸ The attitude of the Macedonia as a state towards this migrations which usually happened without a reason, was extremely undefined, so that many of the migrants say, even today, that they were neglected and even initiated to migrate. The relations with the places where they were born are still maintained by the old migrants, as well as their descendants who were born in Turkey, while the word “memleket“³⁹ is pronounced emotionally.

The “Nashinci“ left to Turkey believing that as Muslims are nothing but “Turks“. According to Turkish laws they have declared there as Turks and were immediately forced to change the names. However, exactly through the “new“ names that are often related to toponyms in Macedonia, especially their birth places, one can see their nostalgia. They themselves say that when they arrived in Turkey they faced the problem of not knowing the Turkish language and culture, that created misunderstandings and sometimes comic situations. They makes jokes on their own account and tell different anecdotes like “A Turk who does not speak Turkish“. Since every person wants to find the reasons behind phenomena, among them there is a wide spread folk story that their ancestors were “real Turks“ when they arrived in Macedonia, but here they forgot Turkish language and could not transmit it to their descendants⁴⁰ This can be heard in Macedonia, with the Islamized that declare themselves as “Turks“, for example individuals from the village of Debreshte (Prilep), Plasnica (Dolno Kichevo), Skopska Torbeshija and other places. This legend can be heard also as one of the “Turkish scientific thesis“ on the origin of the Torbesh⁴¹. In different “locants“⁴² in the suburbs

³⁷ Merdzan Muaremovski, born in the village of Ljubovishte, Gora (Kosovo, Serbia), lives in Skopje.

³⁸ Own field research in Turkey, 1982-84.

³⁹ Abdulah škaljić, Turcizmi u srpskohrvatskom jeziku, Sarajevo, 1985, s.v. meml~će, meml~ke, meml~ket m (ar.) (homeland, country)

⁴⁰ Own field research in Turkey, 1982-84.

⁴¹ Baskin Oran, Religious and National Identity Among the Balkan Muslim : A Comparative Study on Greece, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Kosovo <http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com/publica/cemot/text18/oran18.pdf>

⁴² Inns of a traditional, oriental type.

of certain Turkish cities one can meet middle-aged man who drink coffee, tea and play “shesh-besh“, talking in pure Macedonian language. One can hear Macedonian in whole city settlements, since when they arrived they settled there in groups, according to the birth place/area where they came from. The life of this group has slowed down the processes of assimilation. It is a positive sign that in Turkey no one forbade them to talk in their language at home and to appreciate their cultural traditions, however the story ends here since each attempt for a public ethnic or cultural differentiation would fall under Turkish laws. Up till now there is no attempt in this sense, since the “Nashinci“ who left there did that voluntarily, to be “Turks“ and they think that they have completed their goal, although it is evident that somewhere deep inside them there is something that looks like nostalgia towards the birth place, something that is essential but no one wants to mention it publicly since this would mean a negation of the primary goal and sense of their migration.

During the first decades of the migrations, the groups were still endogamous. Maybe they did not have another choice, since on the other side the local Turks showed certain resistance towards the language and culture of the new-comers. During time there was an integration with local population mainly through establishing marital ties. This is the way how the process of real Turkization and a gradual introduction of the Turkish language as a parallel one in the family and the group. The last generation of the descendants of the new-comers is hardly speaking Macedonian language, although most of them understand it. This facts are making the process of assimilation clear. Still, all representatives of the last generations that I had contacts with stress upon their origin from Macedonia, so that one can never be sure if the ethnic processes would finally develop according to certain laws.

From the above mentioned, one can say that besides the relevant data on the processes of Islamization in the Turkish period, these arguments are not fully accepted by the Islamized Macedonian population. A part of the population accepts them as relevant, but a major part is oriented towards its own thesis and arguments. Such thesis have also the Turkish, Albanian, Greek, Serbian, Bulgarian policy and who knows whom else. The whole “amount“ of “folk“ and “scientific thesis“ falls on the head of the “Nashinci“ that are often confused and not ready for such an “intellectual war“. From a point of view of science, it is a non-sense to prove the correctness of the Islamization thesis having in mind the huge number of Turkish documents that are available today to every one who is interested in this issue. Unfortunately, the number of interested “Nashinci“ is still small. Their culture values oral tradition, so this is how planed thesis presented in forms of folk legends can be accepted. The “Nashinci“ see another reason for their distancing, and this is the relation church-state, having in mind the fact that the Macedonian media at least once a day say that the “real Macedonians“ are the one whose guardian is the Macedonian Orthodox church. The absence of this kind of spiritual unity creates a feeling of being reserved at both sides and suppresses the issue of ethnic belonging. The phenomenon of a multiple change of the public identity of the Islamized Macedonians, as well as the emergence of a dual identity: Albanian-Macedonian, Turkish-Macedonian etc., in the cases where there is still a doubt, is a basis on which the descendants could make their final decision on their national and

ethnic belonging depending on the current social, political and economic situation. In contemporary conditions in Macedonia, confession is an important factor in making a decision of choosing a side and belonging to a certain ethnic group. It is a fact that the ethnic identity is not only about faith, which is proved through the attitude of these groups and individuals, that with no regard to the confession, declare themselves as Macedonians or Islamized Macedonians, led above all by the personal feeling of being culturally bond. However, there is threat of loosing the identity of an important number of Islamized Macedonians, who have a problem with accepting this identification. It seems that there is a certain resistance towards the descriptive public ethnic name "Islamized Macedonians" that includes a certain tone of "imperfection" compared to the appeal of other public ethnic names. Still, this suggested name is a lesser evil compared to the danger of loosing one's own cultural identity, or as the folk proverb says: "Call me a pot, just don't break me". The fact that there are different thesis and programs for attracting the "Nashinci" coming from different ethnic communities, means that their particularity and culture is being destroyed. This situation is a signal that there is a powerful politicisation of their identity. Getting to know the culture of the "other" is as important as having an own cultural identification - the latter is even more important. When it comes to "Nashinci" there are a number of obstacles for ethnic identification, which were laid by "science" that contains a lot of politics, as well as in religion. It is a matter of "thesis" that explain their "Turkish", "Bulgarian", "Antic-Greek"⁴³, "Albanian" etc, origin. In this sense the value of the thesis of their Macedonian origin, that is built upon the original Turkish documents is being undermined, and this thesis is being red as all other thesis, although the feeling of ethnic and cultural bond with the Orthodox Macedonians is contained in the general term "Nashinci". The every-day threat of melting into another nation and culture could finally mobilise all these "Nashinci" that feel as ethnically and culturally non-identified or marginalized. In this sense, an exit out of the confusion and the different ethnic designation of a part of "Nashinci" (Torbeshi) from Macedonia, that are not deeply convinced in the correctness of the public ethnic name "Islamized Macedonians" could be made by an agreement and choosing another mutual name as a public verbal symbol of their ethnic culture that could further on initiate an unification in civil or political forms in the same way it is done by the "Pomaks" of Pirin Macedonia in the Republic of Bulgaria.⁴⁴ This is how the intensive politicisation of the ethnic identity of the "Nashinci" would be stopped.

⁴³ Baskin Oran, *Religious and National Identity Among the Balkan Muslim : A Comparative Study on Greece, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Kosovo*

<http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com/publica/cemot/text18/oran18.pdf>

⁴⁴ Sdruzenie na Pomacite za Kultura i Evropintegracija v Bulgarija.