

Ljupco S. Risteski (Macedonia)

“BULGARIAN PASSPORTS” – POSSIBILITIES FOR GREATER MOBILITY OF MACEDONIANS AND/OR STRATEGIES FOR IDENTITY MANIPULATION?¹

Abstract: Since its independence, the political situation in Macedonia is quite dynamic and turbulent, while the economical situation is worrying. There are a huge number of unemployed people, who cannot work as migrants in the European countries and overseas, due to the visa problems. Thus, following the entrance of Bulgaria into the EU, the interest of Macedonian citizens for obtaining Bulgarian citizenship expectedly increased, that is, what increased was the interest for obtaining personal documents, and most importantly, a passport of the Republic of Bulgaria. When we think about the strategies, the concept of citizenship, which practically enables the individuals to obtain documents for personal identification and passports, it is legal to start from the idea of Marshall that citizenship as a concept consists of the three basic elements or dimensions. The first is that the citizenship is a legal status, the second element provides the political, while the third one provides the social rights and obligations. Thus, when citizenship is observed as a strategy from the aspect of the individual, it is close to reality if it is related to fulfilling of the legal status, which in the case of Macedonian citizens provides them with passports that open the road to the countries in the world. On the other hand, having in mind the history and the current political events of negating Macedonian national and ethnic identity, negating Macedonian language etc., there are certain interpretations among Macedonian public, that this strategy is one of the many which were already undertaken by Bulgaria towards Macedonians for destabilizing their identity.

Key words: Bulgarian passport, Macedonians, identity, Western Balkans, EU, visa.

The citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, since the country's independence in 1991 until the introduction of visa liberalization with the EU countries in January 2010, had extremely limited possibilities to travel outside its borders. According to the document of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs² of the Republic of Macedonia related to the visa regime with other countries, from the list of 198 countries the citizens of Macedonia could travel without visas only in 21 of them, which is almost 10% of the total number of countries with whom Macedonia had established mutual relations. From the countries in

¹ This paper is a result of the participation in the COST Action IS0803: Remaking Eastern Borders in Europe: a Network Exploring Social, Moral and Material Relocations of Europe's Eastern Peripheries; project led by Prof. Sarah Green, University of Manchester.

² Visa regime of the Republic of Macedonia with other states, special administrative regions and subjects and territorial authorities not recognized as states. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia, Skopje, May 2009. Available at <http://www.mfa.gov.mk/default1.aspx?ItemID=262>. Last visited 24.06.2009.

the region, Macedonians could travel without visas in 7 of them³, of which 5 were countries from ex-Yugoslavia, along with Albania and Turkey. The rest of 14⁴ are distant countries in which Macedonians rarely travel. Some of them have specific political and economic systems, which at the moment are not of interest of the citizens of Macedonia. On this list there is no country from the Central-European ones, and there is no country from the ones that were traditional destinations during the centuries old migrant tradition of Macedonian citizens. From the middle of the 19th century, until today, in Macedonia there is a tradition of economic migration, mainly of the male working force, which fluctuated concerning the destinations and the numbers in relation to the social, political, and mostly the economic conditions in Macedonia, but also depending upon the economic situation of the countries of destination. Even more, there is a continuous migration from Macedonia in other countries of Europe and the world, so according to the data of the Migration agency of the RM around 500,000⁵ people have migrated from Macedonia and are now living in different countries of the world, mainly in Australia, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, USA and other countries. These people still keep their ties with their relatives in the homeland and often, the ones abroad and their close ones in Macedonia, need to travel. However, in praxis such situation of Macedonian citizens meant a huge limitation of possibilities to travel outside the country, and has put pressure upon the family budgets, due to expenses related to the administrative procedure of gathering necessary documents for applying and obtaining a visa, as well as fees for the visas that were granted.

Besides the big social, political and economic turbulences, and even a war conflict in 2001, Macedonia puts efforts into stabilization and consolidation of its system in relation to providing passports and security concerning the rights, freedom and protection, especially in the area of migration, the visa policy, border administration and the protection of documents compatible with European regulations. Thus, from 1st of January 2008 the Agreement on visa liberation between the Republic of Macedonia and the European Community stepped into force. This Agreement simplifies the visa procedures for the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia for a planned stay that does not exceed 90 days, in a period of 180 days. The Agreement is applied by all member countries of the EU, with an exception of Denmark, Great Britain and Ireland.⁶ In 2010 the Republic of Macedonia got visa liberalization with the countries members of the EU, which has put an end to the tiring, long and expensive visa procedures. Visa liberalization produced new processes, as the one in which an important part of Macedonian citizens leave for some of the countries in Western Europe, asking for asylum, mostly political, aiming to save themselves from the poor economic and living conditions in which they live in their own country. Surely, these processes initiate new events, which at the moment are not of our interest.

³ These are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Turkey, Croatia and Monte Negro.

⁴ These are Argentina, Bangladesh, Botswana, Guatemala, Israel, Japan, Cuba, Malaysia, Nicaragua, Singapore, Tunisia, Hong Kong, Honduras and Shri Lanka.

⁵ Migration Agency of the Republic of Macedonia, Statistical data on the number and structure of migrants from Macedonia in certain countries abroad (table); <http://makemigration.readyhosting.com/aktivnosti/statistika/statistika1.asp>.

⁶ Agreement on visa liberalization between the Republic of Macedonia and the EU. Available in Macedonian at <http://www.mfa.gov.mk/default1.aspx?ItemID=384>.

Citizenship and passport

Since its independence, the political situation in Macedonia is quite dynamic and turbulent, while the economical situation is worrying. There are a huge number of unemployed people, who cannot work as migrants in the European countries and overseas, due to the visa problems.

In fact, the problem with the passports and travel possibilities of Macedonian citizens outside Macedonia is not only a problem that stemmed from the international relations of Macedonia with other states, but it was also a result of a number of social, political problems and processes that took place in the country in the period after it gained its independence. The development of the processes related to Yugoslav citizenship in the Socialistic Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, from 1945 to the end of the '80-ties is quite dynamic, but analyzing these specific processes would defocus us from our main topic. Thus, on this occasion we would emphasize the fact that in the Yugoslav Socialistic Federation, besides the unique federal citizenship, there was also a republic citizenship, where an individual could be a citizen of SFRY only if he or she was a citizen of a certain Republic of the Federation. In this way a unity between the federal and the republic citizenship was obtained.⁷

This idea enabled "the workers, the people and the ethnic groups to realize their sovereign rights, in concordance with the Constitution, in the frames of the socialistic republics and autonomous provinces, but also at the level of the Socialistic Federative Yugoslavia, whose Constitution treats these rights as mutual interest".⁸ Thus, each law of the individual republics, providing separate citizenships for its inhabitants, presupposes that the citizens of a certain republic are at the same time citizens of the Federation, so that the citizens of any socialistic republic in the frames of Yugoslavia have equal rights in all other republics.⁹

After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the Yugoslav citizenship, ie. the citizenship of the SFRY, ceased to exist, and each of the newly created states faced the challenge of establishing new citizenships of the new states, as well as issuing documents for their inhabitants, as a basic precondition for fulfilling their civil rights. Thus, the citizens of the newly formed states were put in a situation where they have to prove and confirm their citizenship once again, thus proving their loyalty towards the newly formed states. Most of the citizens, almost by automatism, attained a citizenship document, and thus got a valid legal base for fulfilling all other civil rights, to obtain documents on personal status and passports. However, a number of citizens, who due to different reasons were related to some of the ex-Yugoslav socialistic republics, had to start a separate procedure, applying for Macedonian citizenship. Thus, for example, in the transitional provisions of the Law on citizenship of the Republic of Macedonia from 2004 ("Official Gazette of the Repub-

⁷ Gjidara Marc, *Državljanstvo i nacionalnost u Federativnoj Jugoslaviji*, Hrvatska Revija, Br. 1, God. 1, 2001, <http://www.matica.hr/HRRevija/revija01.nsf/AllWebDocs/Sadrzaj>.

⁸ I. Borković, *Upravno pravo*, Beograd, Informator, 1981, str. 128, quoted in Gjidara Marc, *Državljanstvo i nacionalnost u Federativnoj Jugoslaviji*, Hrvatska Revija, Br. 1, God. 1, 2001, <http://www.matica.hr/HRRevija/revija01.nsf/AllWebDocs/Sadrzaj>.

⁹ Gjidara Marc, *Državljanstvo i nacionalnost u Federativnoj Jugoslaviji*, Hrvatska Revija, Br. 1, God. 1, 2001, <http://www.matica.hr/HRRevija/revija01.nsf/AllWebDocs/Sadrzaj>.

lic of Macedonia”, n. 45/04), article 29, paragraph 3 reads: “Citizens of other republics from ex-SFRY and the citizens of ex-SFRY that have a registered address at the territory of the Republic of Macedonia, can obtain Macedonian citizenship if, in a period of one year from the date of this law’s entrance into force, they submit a request, under the condition that they have a regular source of income, they are over 18 years of age and until the submission of the request they stayed at the territory of the Republic of Macedonia at least 15 years” (Law on citizenship of the Republic of Macedonia, “Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia”, n. 45/04).

The Republic of Macedonia, until the introduction of the Law on citizenship of the Republic of Macedonia in 1992 (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia”, n. 67/92), starting from its independence recognized as a valid the republic’s Law on citizenship of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia from 1977 (“Official Gazette of the Socialistic Republic of Macedonia” n. 19/77), and the Law on citizenship of the Socialistic Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (“Official Gazette of SFRY” n. 58/76). It is interesting that in the transitional provisions of the Law on citizenship of RM from 2004 (“Official Gazette of RM”, n. 45/04), i.e. its Article 33 provides that at the moment when this Law enters into force the Law on citizenship of the Socialistic Republic of Macedonia from 1977 (“Official Gazette of SRM”, n. 19/77), and that the Law on citizenship of SFRY will “seize to be implemented at the territory of RM” (Official Gazette of SFRY”, n. 58/76).

Perceiving the passports as one of the most important documents which, based upon the previously verified citizenship, enables citizens to obtain a right of mobility outside their native states, one wonders how come that the Governments and the states believe that a piece of paper would so authentically identify an individual, so that it secures the border of our nation-state. The passport is a technology that creates the categories of identity, as well as the ones of nationality and citizenship (Robertson 2004: 456).

Thus, the passport is a document through which the truth of national identity of the individuals and the state is created. One could say that the passport assists the creation of citizenship more than it simply confirms it. In this sense the passport is produced alluding to objectivity, but still the history of the passport as a document for identification of individuals illustrates the specific contexts in which one could perceive different practices of verification (Robertson 2004: 454-455). The researches related to the meanings of the passport show that the modern states and international state systems have estranged the individuals and the private entities from the legally regulated “meanings of movement” (Torpey 2000: 4). Surely, this does not mean that the states and the state systems effectively control all the individual movements, but that they monopolize *the authority* to limit movement, which surely differs depending on the time and on the type of the state.

Western Balkans in relation to its surroundings of EU in the region

In the years from the end of the 80-ties, at the Balkan peninsula, which in the media and the literature was already notorious, a number of drastic events occurred: there was a war, thousands of people died or disappeared, more than half a million people were refugees from the territory and inside the territory of ex-SFRY, new states have been created, almost all have changed their political system, there were new classifications and

divisions. What was left from ex-Balkan was now re-formulated as Western Balkans, including mainly Macedonia, Albania, Serbia and Monte Negro. The so called Adriatic group of countries was invented, which besides the above mentioned countries also included Croatia. Slovenia promptly separated itself from this group of “Balkan countries”, as it did even before, and successfully entered the EU. It became the main “door” of Europe for the Balkans, that is the Western Balkans, although Greece is a member of EU much longer, and it is spatially closer to the Balkans. However, the drastic changes regarding the equivalency of the countries, and an even greater disproportion in the statuses of the countries, took place when Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU in 2007. Bulgaria had submitted an application for visa liberalization and its deletion from the black list even in 1995 (Tchorbadjiyska 2007: 91). The text of Tchorbadjiyska on the Bulgarian experience concerning visa politics in the process of joining the EU emphasizes that “the accepted changes are not a result of political debates, but they stem from the requirements of Bruxelles”. One gets an almost identical impression when the public opinion in Macedonia is analyzed. This impression relates not only to Bulgaria, but according to the opinions of the citizens could be spread to other countries from the region that would like to join the EU. In fact, the citizens of Macedonia, at the beginning perceived the recommendations of the EU with huge distrust and skepticism, since they stated that Bulgaria and Romania, making important steps in implementation of the reforms, are much ahead of other countries, and that conditions for their inclusion in the Union would soon be created. Many people, remembering the end of the '90-ties, which were extremely critical for Bulgaria, and surely remembering the times of communistic Bulgaria, could not face the fact that Bulgaria in 2000 started negotiations to enter the EU. Thus, Western Balkans already in the years following 2000, found itself in a situation of facing a cruel fact that the visa wall and the symbolic, but solid and non-bridgeable borders of Europe, were built in front of their citizens. In spite of the much acclaimed ideas on deletion of borders and the “free movement of ideas, goods and people” a new situation was created, of even more emphasized borders that enabled illegal business, smuggling goods or ever-day use of the citizens, smuggling petrol, arms, drugs, and surely people. Some of the states went ahead in the negotiating process with EU, which has put the other countries, i.e. the citizens with whom until that moment these countries have shared an almost identical political and economic situation, in a less favorable position.

The events related to visa policy in the region made the unequal status of some of the Balkan countries even more obvious, so that the citizens of the region started to perceive these processes as something that instead of integration initiate segregation, even creating a specific political hierarchy, which, having in mind the historical obstacles between the Balkan countries, is now used to favor the ones versus the others.

From all Macedonian neighbors, some cursed and other favored, Bulgaria is considered a neighbor which promptly progressed towards the European integrations, and thus has started the changes of the visa regime and legislative in concordance with the Scheme agreement faster than other states in the region, due to which some of the countries in the region have experiences important repercussions, like Moldavia, Ukraine and Macedonia.

The development of the visa policy of Bulgaria is a result of two interrelated factors: the process of joining the EU, which presupposed the acceptance of the Schengen agreement, as well as the political and legal programs, whose aim was to delete Bulgar-

ia from the black EU visa list (Tchorbadjiyska 2007: 88). As it is well known, the process of entering the Schengen zone is realized in few phases, so that the first phase from Bulgaria's entrance in the zone did not have special implications for the neighboring countries – Bulgaria did not establish a new regime towards them. The second period starts with the day of entering into EU and it seizes with the date of entering into the Schengen group; during this period the border control between the old and the new member countries is still maintained. The new member countries, until they become full members of the Schengen group, cannot issue Schengen visas, although these states formally become “exterior Schengen borders”. However, during this period the states were able to issue national visas. Thus, on the 1st of January 2007 Bulgaria had to accept the mutual “black visa list”, with an exception of Macedonia and Serbia and Monte Negro (at the time one state) (Tchorbadjiyska 2007: 90).

In Bulgaria it was expected that this process of accepting the visa regimes of the EU would have specific effects, especially towards the countries “that had special relations with Bulgaria”. Two main effects were envisaged: first, that the introduction of visas for the citizens of these states will create administrative and economic burdens that will surely result in decreasing the number of visitors coming from these countries, and secondly, that this will have an impact over the “Bulgarian minorities” outside Bulgaria, due to their more difficult access to Bulgaria (Tchorbadjiyska 2007: 93). “Having in mind that the entrance into Bulgaria will be more difficult, many people that fulfill the criteria will apply for citizenship; this will not only enable them to have an unlimited access to Bulgaria, but since Bulgaria became a member state, will provide them an unlimited access to the EU as well” (Tchorbadjiyska 2007: 93).

Ethnography of the “Bulgarian passports” for Macedonians

A number of researchers of Macedonia, in the period of its transition, especially after its independence of 1991, note that probably one of the biggest disappointments and frustrations after attaining the long-awaited independence, was the limitation of their movement, which lasted until the introduction of the visa liberalization with the EU countries in 2010, especially in relation to the possibilities for traveling abroad. A huge number of Macedonian citizens, as well as many others in the newly formed states that stemmed from the SFRY, face a number of administrative, legal, practical and other obstacles in obtaining citizenship of the new states, and thus obtaining new documents, mainly a passport, that would enable them to travel abroad.

On the other hand, Macedonia, after it gained its independence, faced the fact that it does not have the same status and reputation as Socialistic Yugoslavia had, and thus the numerous limitations, a separate visa regime for its citizens. Suddenly people who, by the end of the '80-ties of the 20th century, could freely travel in most of the European countries and the world without a visa, proud of their “red SFRY passport”, found themselves isolated in their own countries, facing one's own problems and the problems of negation of their identities. Suddenly, trying to find and build one's own national states and identities, the collective Yugoslav ideas of “us” as West versus the East and East versus the West started dissolving. More precisely, the notion on the “non-aligned” was destroyed, the ones that enjoyed the reputation of the socialistic, Tito's state that was a tampon zone

between the capitalistic West and the socialistic East. Many people could not imagine that Bulgaria, which was, for more than 40 years, a stereotype for the rigid and isolated Soviet socialism in which citizens had to ask a special permission even when traveling inside the country, became a member state of EU, a state that should be an example that should be followed in progressing towards full membership in the EU.

Thus, following the entrance of Bulgaria into the EU, the interest of Macedonian citizens for obtaining Bulgarian citizenship expectedly increased, that is, what increased was the interest for obtaining personal documents, and most importantly, a passport of the Republic of Bulgaria. In Macedonia this sensitive issue is discussed mainly in the media, where attempts are made to analyze all aspects, both positive and negative of this phenomenon – they try to interpret the strategies of the state institutions, they try to understand the practical needs of the citizens. This issue is sometimes discussed by politicians as well, even in Macedonian Parliament, mainly when someone attempts to prescribe a political character to these phenomena. In the couloirs of the local Macedonian public, which is a topic of discussion in the regional political centers as well, is the Bulgarian citizenship and passport of the ex-premiere of Macedonia Ljubcho Georgievski. Still, it is difficult to obtain official data on this issue, there are no public reactions of the Governments of Macedonia and Bulgaria, and if there are they in fact avoid the most pressing issues, initiating even more questions and confusion of Macedonian citizens. There are almost no official data on the number of persons from Macedonia who submitted requests, or have obtained Bulgarian citizenship and passport. The numbers are mainly speculations, according to which more than 60,000 passports have been issued to citizens of RM¹⁰. Other sources say that more than 200,000 Macedonians declared themselves Bulgarians, of which 60,000 have been granted citizenship, and 100,000 more are waiting for an answer to their request for obtaining Bulgarian personal card.¹¹

In her study A. Tchorbadjiyska presents statistical data on the number and origin of applicants for Bulgarian citizenship according to the report on the emigrational situation in Bulgaria.

5 top countries according to the origin of the applicants

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Macedonia	169	1360	1685	2281	2425	2930
Moldavia	157	583	1172	2210	2455	2610
Russia	300	447	346	281	160	217
Ukraine	65	243	222	209	245	249
Serbia and Monte Negro	61	219	285	161	128	235

Source: Annex 5 of the Report on the emigrational situation in the Republic of Bulgaria in 2006¹²

¹⁰ Bulgaria stopped issuing passports to Macedonians.

¹¹ Bulgaria stopped issuing passports to Macedonians.

¹² Report on the migration situation in Republic of Bulgaria in 2006.

According to the Law on Bulgarian citizenship¹³, there are six conditions to be met in order to obtain Bulgarian citizenship:

- Minimum 18 years of age;
- Status of a regular inhabitant in a period of no less than 5 years;
- Clean criminal file;
- Possessing income or activities in Bulgaria;
- Knowledge of Bulgarian language;
- The applicant should be in a procedure, or should already be free of his/her current citizenship.

However, according to Article 15 of this Law, the applicants that have Bulgarian origin are exempted from all above mentioned conditions, except from two: minimal age and clean criminal record (Tchorbadjiyska 2007: 100). Also, the time for processing the applications for these applicants is shortened from one year to three months (Tchorbadjiyska 2007: 100).

Analyzing the media and other reports, one has an impression that in the period of 2005-2007, when Bulgaria became officially a member of EU, the interest of Macedonian citizens for Bulgarian passports culminated. The journalists' reports, as well as the field research, show that the applicants state few basic reasons for applying for Bulgarian passports. Firstly, the need for traveling abroad is emphasized, especially when it comes to the Western-European countries. People have traveled abroad a lot, and now their basic right and their feeling of freedom and freedom of movement have been broken. Still, the possibility to use this passport to go abroad and work there is listed as the main reason, especially when it comes to avoiding the crowd in front of the embassies and skipping the long, expensive and humiliating procedures of waiting for visas to travel abroad. The author of this article, in the last six months of 2009, besides having a 3-year valid Schengen visa, that provides possibility for multiple entrances and exits in the countries of the Schengen group, had to fulfill the whole administrative procedure three times more, to pay for issuing a visa and to loose time and nerves in order to professionally travel, in Bulgaria, Great Britain and Greece. Unfortunately, in these states the Schengen visa is not valid. However, it is said that the application for Bulgarian passports is not motivated by economic motives.¹⁴ "Employment with Bulgarian passports in the Czech Republic, Germany, Poland", was the text of one of the many ads in Macedonian media in the period 2004-2007, which motivated Macedonian citizens to issue Bulgarian documents.¹⁵

¹³ Law on the Bulgarian Citizenship of 18 November 1998, (*Държаен весѝник*, State Gazette) No 136/1998, last amendment SG. 52/29 June 2007).

¹⁴ Зошто Македонците бараат бугарски пасоши? (Why do Macedonians ask for Bulgarian passports?), BBC Macedonian com., 01.06.2006
http://www.bbc.co.uk/macedonian/news/story/2006/05/060501_mac_bul_passports.shtml

¹⁵ Костовска, Ивана, Бугарија прекина да им издава пасоши на Македонци (Kostovska Ivana, Bulgaria stopped issuing passports to Macedonians), Nova Makedonija daily,
<http://www.novamakedonija.mk/NewsDetal.asp?vest=611934236888&id=9&prilog=0&setIzdanie=21709>.

The most important role in this visa issuing machinery is played by the Agency for Bulgarians abroad, which is the place where the applications for Bulgarian citizenship are really submitted by the citizens that claim their Bulgarian national feeling and Bulgarian roots. "Every person who can prove that he or she has a Bulgarian origin can obtain Bulgarian documents. If we are in doubt, we ask for additional documents" – stated Sonja Burnaska, spokesperson of the Agency, which was published in Macedonian media.¹⁶ In order to examine the alleged simple rules for Bulgarian passport application, especially for the citizens from Macedonia, few Macedonian journalists applied for Bulgarian passport. "Research showed that in the request written in Bulgarian and confirmed by a notary, the applicant should write the following: "Dear Minister, I hereby request that you recognize me as a Bulgarian citizen, since I have a Bulgarian origin. I am, through my mother and grandmother, Bulgarian by origin, and I am myself Bulgarian. My grandfather and grandmother were Bulgarian citizens. My father from Macedonia is Bulgarian, as well as my mother", says the request. The process of issuing a personal card costs around 200 EUR and the document is issued in three months. It is issued in an illegal way since in it there is a fake address that nobody has heard of.¹⁷ Those Macedonian citizens who obtain Bulgarian passport also get a Bulgarian personal card, but often with a fictive address: "I saw this street name somewhere in the city and I told them a random number. Now I'm registered at a street that I cannot even locate. There is no control" – says a Macedonian citizen that has a Bulgarian citizenship".¹⁸

In Macedonia, as a result of the increased demand for Bulgarian passports, during the last few years there was another business flourishing, of the so called agencies that mediate the process of obtaining Bulgarian citizenship and passport. If one does even a superficial analysis of the media, especially of the advertisements, one can notice that almost in every city in Macedonia there was an agency for mediation, which for a high fee was conducting all necessary administrative operations, in order to provide all necessary documents and a Bulgarian citizenship.

It is important to note that the Bulgarian state administration did not treat all citizens of Macedonia according to the same criteria and rules. It is widely known that the ones who could apply and obtain Bulgarian passports had to be ethnic Christian Macedonians. The rest "Muslims, Roma and Albanians, could not obtain it. Also to Serbians, they don't give passports to them."¹⁹

On the other hand, Bulgarian official politics has a completely different attitude towards the Gorans, i.e. the inhabitants of Gora and Sredachka Zupa in Kosovo, on which there are semi-public strategies whose aim is to put these people under the ethnic protectorate of Bulgaria. Gorans are another part of a very important corpus of Muslims at the Balkans, who speak some of the Slavic languages. There are official state discussions, but also scientific studies that concern their ethnic and national affiliation, where one declare

¹⁶ Idem.

¹⁷ Idem.

¹⁸ Зошто Македонците бараат бугарски пасоши? (Why do Macedonians ask for Bulgarian passports?), BBC Macedonian com., 01.06.2006

http://www.bbc.co.uk/macedonian/news/story/2006/05/060501_mac_bul_passports.shtml

¹⁹ Why do Macedonians ask for Bulgarian passports?, BBC Macedonian com., 01.06.2006

http://www.bbc.co.uk/macedonian/news/story/2006/05/060501_mac_bul_passports.shtml

them as Macedonians, some of them declare themselves as Macedonians, other as Serbs, third as Bulgarians. Thus, the strategy concerning the Bulgarian passports is considered “valid” when it comes to undertaking actions towards this population. According to the data from the field, and according to the media reports, in 2006 the Bulgarian National Community was founded, which is registered with UNMIK. Among the Muslims in Sredachka Zupa there is a Cultural and Educational Community of the Islamized Bulgarians from Kosovo, whose members, when applying for Bulgarian passports, declare themselves “Bulgarians-Mohammedans”.²⁰

The stress of the EU started when Bulgaria joined the Union, and since the Cypriot Greeks reacted to the fact that even Turks applied for Bulgarian passports only to be able to cross the borders of the EU and find a job.²¹

This was on the other hand a reason that some of the member states of the EU, that are afraid of migrants, as for example Great Britain, used the easy issuing of Bulgarian passports to foreigners as an argument to close their work force market for Bulgaria. Some of the British media published texts titled “Invasion of Macedonians with Bulgarian passports”. It was a moment when the leader of the UK Independence Party Nick Farage stated: “People can now use other countries as waiting rooms, so that they appear on our threshold. We’ve lost control”, and Sir Andrew Green, from the Migrationwatch UK campaign groups stated that “The borders of EU are quite permeable”.²²

Thus, journalist Ivana Kostovska, in her article “German passport for a feeling of affiliation?!“ asks: “Would Macedonian citizens be able to obtain French or German passports only if they register a document at a notary that they feel like French or German?!“ The answer is clear and shows that same rules do not apply in the whole of EU, even though the Union tries to be a strict teacher towards countries as Macedonia that wants to become a part of the European society”.²³

However, in the first months of 2009, while the author worked on this research topic, it seems that the situation started changing as promptly as at the time when it first appeared at the Macedonian social scene. Thus, in Macedonian media there are numerous articles and analysis that show that the number of applications for Bulgarian passports of Macedonian citizens has drastically dropped, and that the interest for them has almost vanished. This was firstly interpreted as a result of the repeated reports that the EU Commission for visa liberalization with Macedonia will issue, by the end of 2009, a positive report for putting Macedonia on the white Schengen list, which could mean complete visa liberation for Macedonian citizens, and free travel through a number of countries in the world. Also, in the media there were a number of articles that emphasized the fact

²⁰ Бугарски пасоши за Гораните (Bulgarian passports for the Gorans). Дневник 18.март 2006, бр. 2947.

²¹ Костовска Ивана, Бугарија престана да им издава пасоши на Македонците (Kostovska Ivana, Bulgaria stopped issuing passports to Macedonians), Nova Makedonija daily, <http://www.novamakedonija.mk/NewsDetal.asp?vest=611934236888&id=9&prilog=0&setIzdanie=21709>.

²² Invasion: Macedonians with Bulgarian Passports, http://international.ibox.bg/comment/id_1528913771

²³ Костовска Ивана, Германски пасош за чувство на припадност?! (Kostovska Ivana, German passport for a feeling of affiliation?!)

<http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/NewsDetal.asp?vest=612942053427&id=13&prilog=0&setIzdanie=21710>

that Bulgaria, before its final entrance in the Schengen group, is criticized by EU since “it allows foreigners to promptly become Bulgarian citizens and then work in the member states. Hoping that in two years it will become a part of the Schengen zone, Bulgaria is pressed not to give away Bulgarian passports to foreigners”²⁴, so that Bulgaria has decreased the number of issued Bulgarian citizenships.

Visa – possibility for mobility and/or strategy for identity manipulation

In this part we would like to elaborate the different interpretations through the prism of different strategies undertaken by citizens as individuals, by the state institutions, in this case the states as representatives of certain political ideologies, and surely taking into account the strategies of the EU towards itself and towards the countries of the Western Balkans to whom they would like to join.

Firstly, I would like to emphasize the importance of the dynamics of the processes that are taking place in the region. As one could conclude from the ethnographic materials, things happen quite dynamically, which makes them difficult to follow and register. But what is more important, the dynamics of these events does not have only its own inner energy that initiates changes, but changes are initiated from outside, mainly as a result of the relation and the events in the EU, i.e. the attitudes of the EU concerning certain regional issues. Thus, it is quite clear that the intensity of the events and their directions are directly related to the attitudes of the EU concerning these questions. In Macedonian media one can notice articles that speak of the politics of double standards of the EU towards the countries that would like to become its members. “The egoism of the EU has been unmasked in the case of the Bulgarian passports that are issued to Macedonian citizens. The Union of nations that should be an example of democracy, freedom and human rights remained passive at the warning that the issuing of Bulgarian passports for Macedonian citizens presents an attack over Macedonian ethnicity (...) EU was worried only at the moment when it felt threatened by the influx of workers with Bulgarian passports”.²⁵

When we think about the strategies, the concept of citizenship, which practically enables the individuals to obtain documents for personal identification and passports, it is legal to start from the idea of Marshall that citizenship as a concept consists of the three basic elements or dimensions. The first is that the citizenship is a legal status, the second element provides the political, while the third one provides the social rights and obligations. Thus, when citizenship is observed as a strategy from the aspect of the individual, it is close to reality if it is related to fulfilling of the legal status, which in the case of Macedonian citizens provides them with passports that open the road to the countries in the

²⁴ Костовска Ивана, Бугарија престана да им издава пасоши на Македонците (Kostovska Ivana, Bulgaria stopped issuing passports to Macedonians), Nova Makedonija daily, <http://www.novamakedonija.mk/NewsDetal.asp?vest=611934236888&id=9&prilog=0&setIzdanie=21709>.

²⁵ Костовска Ивана, Германски пасош за чувство на припадност!?! (Kostovska Ivana, German passport for a feeling of affiliation?!)

<http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/NewsDetal.asp?vest=612942053427&id=13&prilog=0&setIzdanie=21710>

world. None of the citizens of Macedonia that own a Bulgarian passport with whom we talked to, and none of the citizens of Bulgaria as well, have an idea of an eventual practical realization of their rights and obligations as Bulgarian citizens in Bulgaria. In fact only a minimal number of the ones that obtained Bulgarian passport live and work in Bulgaria. They at least leave for Greece, or some of the other more distant countries of the EU. These citizens do not think that they can influence the future of Bulgaria as its citizens, since they enjoy the right to vote, the right for political organization etc.

On the other hand, the political implications of the citizenship status become accentuated in the state strategies and the strategies of the political parties, something which is especially clear if one analyzes the statements and discussions in the media, from the press conferences of the political parties and their representatives. Political strategies, surely, are not obvious, but are most often latent, always having in mind the respect of legal frames. In the case with the strategy of the Bulgarian state and administration, from a legal point of view, there is nothing disputable concerning the citizenship which was given to Macedonian citizens. On the other hand, having in mind the history and the current political events of negating Macedonian national and ethnic identity, negating Macedonian language etc., there are certain interpretations among Macedonian public, that this strategy is one of the many which were already undertaken by Bulgaria towards Macedonians for destabilizing their identity. I think that the most sensitive is the fact that the members of the EU for a long time did not want to consider this problem, which is maybe far from their considerations, but that can be misused by Bulgarian state in different statements, and also through undertaking activities of “protection” of Bulgarian citizens that live in Macedonia, and who in this case have a Bulgarian ethnic origin. This is especially important for the states where national citizenship is practiced, as for example in Macedonia and Bulgaria. In the cases of citizenships where the nation is emphasized, in whose name the state has been founded, citizenship is considered a privilege of the members of a certain ethnic, language, religious or cultural community (Hammar 1990).

References:

- Hammar, T. 1990. *Democracy and the nation-state: Aliens, denizens, and citizens in a world of international migration*, Aldershot, Eng: Avebury.
- Marshall, T. H. 1985/1949. *Citizenship and social class*. Bo: D. Held et al. (Eds.) *States and societies*, Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell&Open University, ctp. 248–260.
- Robertson, C. 2004. *The Archive, Disciplinary, and Governing: Cultural Studies and the Writing of History*, *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, Volume 4, Number 4, ctp. 450–471.
- Tchorbadjiyska, A. 2007. *Bulgarian Experiences with Visa Policy in the Accession Process: A Story of Visa Lists, Citizenship and Limitations on Citizens' Rights, Regio, Minorities, Politics, Society*, English Edition, issue: 1, ctp. 88–105.
- Torpey, J. 2000. *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship and the State*, Cambridge University Press.