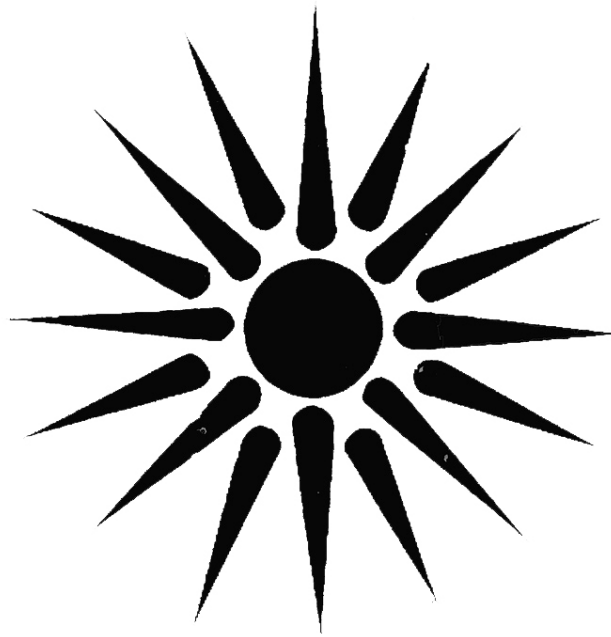


So you are a Greek, eh?

A man's struggle to discover his identity

A Novel



By
Risto Stefov

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A man's struggle to discover his identity

A Novel

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Part 1 – So you are a Greek, eh?

One day a person named Stefanos approached me on the street seeking information. “My name is Stefanos Georgopoulos. I am Greek,” he said. “I am originally from Florina, Greece. I am in my late fifties now and have been living in Canada since I was a very young child. My father, I believe, was from ‘Otsima’ but I don’t know what that is or where it is? I understand you are a historian and you could possibly help me. I’m looking for information on Florina.”

I have to be honest with you. For the last twenty years or so I have been intimidated, threatened with bodily harm, threatened with death, insulted, ridiculed, called a liar and a number of other things by Greeks, but never, ever have I been “genuinely” asked for help. Oh, except one time a Greek diplomat thanked me for my articles which I’d made available on the internet. What I had written in those articles he said, gave him a different perspective on Macedonian and Greek history, something he wasn’t aware of and which he admitted intrigued him. He was flying out of Greece on a jet plane to another country to attend a meeting and, for some reason, he decided to “Google” something on Greece and ran into my articles on the internet. From what he said, he wanted to know what other people, non-Greeks, thought of Greece and wanted to be prepared if there were questions at his meeting. What was funny about this was that he asked me “where do I get this stuff?” (sources for my articles) because he couldn’t find it on any of the Greek websites. My friend, as you may know, Greece doesn’t recognize the Macedonian people or their history. Greece doesn’t even recognize its own “real” history. Greece lives in a fantasy world where everyone in Greece is Greek and descended from the Greeks of ancient times (from 2700 years ago). Greece also believes and has made it clear to everyone in the world that Macedonians don’t exist. So naturally, you aren’t going to find “this kind” of information on Greek websites.

So going back to my story, when Stefanos Georgopoulos approached me, given my past experience with Greeks, you can imagine the number of things that went through my mind the very

moment this man asked me for my help! Was this a setup? A trap? An entanglement? Or was he “genuinely” asking me for help? I didn’t know what to make of it.

My first instinct was to get angry and tell him off. But I took a different approach. I said, “So you are a Greek, eh...?”

“Well, that’s what my parents tell me...” he replied. “My parents don’t tell me much but when the subject comes up they say we are Greek.”

“And what makes you think I can help you?”

“Well, I was thinking of writing my autobiography,” he said, “so I asked around for information and your name came up.”

I was completely stumped by his response and my anger and suspicion turned to sympathy. I felt sorry for the man because, obviously, he was Macedonian, a lost soul, but nonetheless a Macedonian lost soul who wasn’t at fault for what had happened to him. On top of that his father was from “Otsima” or as we Oshchimians call it “Oshchima”, my own village. But obviously he didn’t know that. Or did he?!

“I will help you,” I said, “but you must understand, first I’m not a historian by accreditation, and second you might not like what I tell you.”

He looked at me strangely and said, “Fair enough! But... someone said you were a historian...”

“I am knowledgeable of the history in that part of the world,” I said, “but I have no formal education or degree in history.”

“Why not?” he asked inquisitively.

I didn’t like where this was going. Was I being set up for something? Or was this person genuinely inquisitive?

Let me explain myself here. I have been on this path with Greeks a dozen times. Greeks acting like Stefanos, pretending to be naïve,

had approached me, asking me for information and, after spending months researching and trying to help them, would turn around and stab me in the back. Initially I thought they did this to taunt and frustrate me, but later I began to suspect that they wanted to know “what” and “how much” I knew. They didn’t really care about how much I knew about existing material that could easily be accessed in books or on the internet. They were interested in knowing if I knew anything beyond that, new and damaging information to Greece.

One time a guy wrote me and said that he was a history professor teaching history somewhere in South America and he desperately wanted to learn more about Macedonian history... but had a problem. He didn’t believe Macedonians existed before Tito’s time.

He said, “If you can send me proof that Macedonians existed before Tito’s time, I’ll accept everything you say and have written in your history books...”

After spending considerable time compiling information, over 100 pages of it, that proved Macedonians existed and had used the name “Macedonian” since the 16 hundreds, I thought I had won over at least one professor in the world. I should also mention that the information I compiled was written by many non-Macedonians including foreign kings who recognized the Macedonian identity and the Macedonian people way before Tito’s time. For more information see my essay entitled: ‘Evidence of the Existence of Macedonians Throughout the Ages’, located at this link: <http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/Evidence-of-the-Existence-of-Macedonians-Throughout-the-Ages.pdf>.

But when I gave the alleged “professor” my essay the man’s last words to me, in gratitude for doing all this work were: “Macedonia is Greek”. So you can see why I hesitated to help Greeks including Stefanos. I can tell you that it wasn’t an easy feeling I had at that moment... Was I about to be made to look like a chump... again? Or was I about to commit a moral crime by ignoring the man’s plea for help when he needed it? To be on the safe side I often fell for the latter, and without exception I became a victim of ridicule... So, you can call me a sucker for punishment. This time too I decided to help him.

I said, “I’m not an accredited historian by choice because I don’t want to be part of a history that doesn’t recognize my identity. I can’t truly subscribe to a history that claims Macedonians don’t exist and that they are Tito’s creation... I can’t accept a history that calls me a liar and a fraud...”

Stefanos looked at me like I was some sort of freak, a bogymen... the kind that his parents had warned him about... and told him to stay away from. He looked at me as if I was “everything” that was wrong in his “Greek life”! I was the kind of monster that hid behind the bushes, lurking, peering at him and waiting for the opportunity to jump on him and take his “precious” Macedonia away from him, just like his parents had told him. Yes, he had been warned about “creatures” just like this... like me... and he didn’t like it a bit. But! But this was precisely the test I needed. To see if he was genuine or another pretender attempting to waste my time and, in the end, make a fool of me.

He turned away and without looking at me said, “Sorry, I made a mistake... I thought you were someone else...” and began to walk away.

“Stefanos, wait...” I yelled. “What? Are you afraid of the truth? Don’t you want to hear the other side of the story? Don’t want to find out that your parents have been lying to you all your life?” But there was nothing I said that could dissuade him from running off. Then in a loud voice I yelled, “Don’t you want to find out that you are a Macedonian!?”

That stopped him in his tracks. He was angry now... visibly angry. I must have pushed his red button and he was about to explode. I continued firing my words...

“You know exactly what your parents told you. You know what the Greek priests told you... You know what the Greek teachers told you... What Greek society told you... and yet I can see that you are struggling to accept all that... refusing to believe any of it! But then you tell yourself ‘that you personally must have a problem...’ How can so many people be so wrong... lying to you...? Especially priests... God’s people... You can’t accept that either because you believe priests and teachers always tell the truth...? This is your

dilemma... isn't it? But here you are, in your fifties, and you still have a dilemma, unable to shake it off... that you might be..."

"Enough! What's your point!" he yelled back at me without looking at me.

"Please Stefanos, hear me out... I didn't mean to anger you. Just hear me out... I'm going to tell you my side of the story and you can make up your own mind! You are an adult beyond the age of corruption and there is no way on earth that I can put 'ideas' in your head that you don't want to believe... These are just words..." I said pleading with him to give me a chance to explain myself. I knew what he was feeling because many Macedonians have gone through this kind of process to discover who they really are and it has never been pleasant. In fact it has been awful... families have broken up over it. Children have been "disowned" by their parents...

"Do you want to know what's bothering me?" he yelled. "I'll tell you what bothers me! This isn't the first time I've run into someone like you but you are all the same, bringing division to our people, telling us that we aren't Greeks, making us hate each other... You say they are just words... but... no, my friend, they aren't just words... they are rulers, sticks and belts... When I was a child I ran into other children who claimed to be Macedonian like you... but when I came home and told my parents, both of them said 'they can't possibly be Macedonian because Macedonians don't exist!!!. Do you understand!?' But no... stupid me... I insisted they were Macedonian. That's when my father took his belt out and belted me... many times... I can still feel the pain. This is what I got for 'just words'..." he said and looked down.

"This isn't easy for me either. I get this from every Greek I speak with... and worse... Physical pain heals but psychological torment lives on and eats way at you. I get nothing but pain from doing this... But I feel I must do it... Because I care...! It eats away at me if I don't do it. It's not right for me to walk away from you... from anyone... When someone asks me for my help, I feel compelled to help them... But... but at the same time I'm not going to lie to you to spare your feelings and add insult..."

“Okay! Okay! I’m sorry I acted this way too... But I have this problem... this phobia about these things... which chokes me up. I’ll tell you what’s bothering me...” he interrupted, yelling and looking the other way.

We both stopped talking. He took a moment to compose himself and then turned around, walked towards me, looked me in the eyes and said, “You see... here is the problem. I have been repeatedly told that we are Greeks and have been Greeks for thousands of years. I have been told that we come from a large Greek city and, before we left Greece, we had never been out of Greece. I have been told that all Greeks are born Greek and spoke the Greek language since time immemorial. Everyone told me this... Yes, including the Greek priests and Greek teachers in my Greek school. But here is the thing... When I was a young child, my younger sister and I listened to our parents fighting in their room... they spoke another language... They were yelling at each other in another language! Well, if we are Greeks and only Greeks then where did they learn this other language? They tell me our family has never been out of Greece, so where did they learn this other language!? I don’t know because I was afraid to ask them. You never talked about these things in our home... They both would have belted me just for asking... When we were in the Greek church I used to hear Greek people speaking another language. And no, it wasn’t English. Most of these people, especially the old ladies, didn’t speak English at all. Then when the priest came around they stopped talking, smiled and shook their heads... even when the priest asked them questions... They didn’t answer him... like they didn’t understand what he was asking... If they were Greeks, like my parents claimed, then why not speak Greek... why speak a foreign language... and in church of all places. And what language was this? One time a young couple from Athens was visiting our church. They were well dressed and looked prominent. My father couldn’t wait to introduce himself. He told them our names and said that we were very proud and patriotic Greeks. We all smiled. The man and woman looked at each other. When we walked away I overheard them say, ‘what kind of Greeks are they? They can’t even speak the Greek language properly’. Then there were the children at Greek school... They were all Greeks... That’s what their parents told them... Some of them spoke another language... similar to the language my parents spoke in secret. When I asked them what language that was... that they were

speaking... they insisted that it was Greek! But it wasn't Greek. One of them called his grandmother 'Baba' instead of 'Giagia', which is the Greek word for grandmother... In what language is a grandmother called 'Baba'...?"

The moment Stefanos said the word "Baba" something clicked in my brain and I lost my concentration. His words began to sound muffled and I could no longer understand what he was saying. My mind was preoccupied and took me back... a long way back... to a different time and place... to fifty years ago.

"I KNOW YOU! I KNOW YOU FROM A LONG TIME AGO!!!" I yelled suddenly, interrupting his story. He looked at me strangely and stopped talking.

"How could you possibly know me, we just met for the first time today. I came from Greece and you from... Where did you come from?"

"I came from Greece too, from Oshchima... from your father's village... and you are Stefche. I know you... I mean I knew you when you were a little boy... two years old..."

He looked at me with a confused look on his face and said, "Impossible... We came from a big city... not a village... and you... you can't possibly be Greek... You aren't Greek... How can you claim that you came from Greece... You aren't Greek!" he added and then looked down at the ground feeling all kinds of emotions.

"Stefanos believe me when I tell you that I know you. You are Leko's, Alexander's, son Stefche. You were named after your grandfather Stefo. Your grandmother's name was Chona. I don't remember your mother's name; she's not from Oshchima... the village you were born in. My family left Oshchima and went to Canada in the fall of 1966. Your family left about two months before we did. Your grandparents remained behind and died there. Your sister must be about three years younger than you because your mother was pregnant when you left the village."

I didn't know what else to say so I stopped talking. The two of us stood there on the sidewalk of a street in Toronto like a couple of dummies; him looking down... and me looking at him. We stood there for a few awkward moments. But it seemed like an eternity.

“My name is Stefche!” he whispered barely audibly. “MY NAME IS STEFCHE!!!” he yelled loudly like a crazy man.

He then looked at me and said, “My aunt, who now lives in Australia, used to call me Stefche. When she came to Toronto to visit us she kept calling me Stefche. When I asked her why Stefche, she said I was named after her father Stefo, my father's father, my grandfather. My father objected to her calling Stefche but she told him off, saying that I looked like my grandfather and reminded her of him. She was my father's oldest sister,” he concluded and then smiled widely, looked at me, shook my hand, thanked me and walked away.

“What are you thanking me for?” I asked.

“I'll see you again...” he yelled and vanished into the distance looking happy... He looked like he'd just been freed from a long prison sentence.

“WHAT ABOUT THE INFORMATION ON FLORINA?” I yelled.

He raised his hand up high above his head and waved a couple of times before disappearing behind a building.

I was happy with the way things had turned out with Stefanos... I mean Stefche... but couldn't help but feel sorry for him... Not because of the burden he'd carried all his life but because of what he was about to face with the new information he had when he revealed it to his own family and the Greek community. Being a loyal Greek and a pillar of the Greek community for years and then admitting that you have been a “fraud” of the worst kind, a Macedonian, would have severe consequences for him...

If Stefche thought it was difficult living with a few “anomalies” in life, as the Greeks like to call them, then I can't imagine what he would feel like coming out and admitting to everyone that all these

years he had been a fraud... that he was a Macedonian, not only pretending to be a Greek but admitting that he was a Macedonian... an arch enemy of the Greeks... a Skopjan... one of Tito's sleeper agents... a Slav, an old Bulgarian... In other words, the worst kind of human being to walk the earth.

Part 2 - My name is Stefche!

I had almost forgotten about Stefche until one Sunday afternoon I received an e-mail from someone with the name Stefche Giorgievski in the subject line. I get a lot of e-mails, mostly junk mail, but the words “Message from Stefche Giorgievski” in the subject line caught my attention. I immediately thought of Stefanos and opened it. To my surprise, it was Stefche from several months earlier. He said that he wanted to meet with me... He had a lot of questions... He had been reading about Macedonia on the internet... and had found a lot of my material, including my books, on the websites of the Macedonian Historical Society and Pollitecon Publications. He said he read something about Oshchima, which opened up a lot of questions for him... He wanted to meet with me in the main lobby of a certain plaza in Mississauga on Friday evening at 7 p.m., the next Friday. He said dinner was on him...

Naturally I agreed and wrote him back. In my reply I said, “It’s nice to hear from you... I’ll be there...”

As the days went by, dozens of questions kept popping into my mind. What would he ask? What would I tell him? How would I begin? Where would I begin? It was tiring thinking about it so, as time drew nearer, I decided to let him take the lead and just answer his questions... one by one... and see where it led.

Not knowing where the place was in Mississauga, I decided to leave my house early and take my time looking for the plaza. I arrived about forty five minutes early. I did get lost but only briefly. I passed the plaza by accident and had to turn around. Traffic at that hour was murder... but I still made it to my destination early. I sat down on a bench inside the main lobby of the plaza, a strategic point from where I could see both hallways leading to the exit doors. Every few minutes I looked at my watch and at the big clock on the wall of the lobby. Finally it was 7 p.m... but no Stefche... five after seven and no Stefche... ten after seven and still no Stefche. At a quarter past seven I began to have doubts about this encounter. My suspicious side was already accusing me of being a fool... a sucker for pain and humiliation... But my rational side kept telling me there are other explanations... traffic for example... Suddenly I heard a

voice in the distance calling “Risto, hey Risto”! I looked up and there he was coming down the escalator. Without thinking, I looked at my watch. It was 7:20 p.m. Stefche saw me and, as he ran towards me, apologized for being late. He said he worked upstairs in this plaza and his boss had him finish some work that needed to be done... that’s why he was late.

The moment I saw Stefche all my fears and suspicions evaporated and I felt like I was meeting a long lost relative whom I hadn’t seen for a long time. But giving him the impression that I was upset with him being late bothered me...

We shook hands and he said, “Come, let’s go upstairs to the cafeteria.”

He dashed up the escalator and I followed. He picked a table in the corner of the large room and sat down on a chair with his back against the wall. I sat beside him with my back against the adjacent (perpendicular) wall. We sat side by side as if expecting company. This is how it would have seemed to someone watching us. We both had a full view of the entire cafeteria and our backs were protected... This is how it would have seemed to someone else watching us. This place and table, as it turned out, would be the place where many things would be discussed and hashed out.

After some silence, he spoke first. I was still feeling disappointed with myself for having looked at my watch. “How are you doing?” he asked.

“I’m fine, and how are you doing?” I then looked at him and said, “Have you been discussing this with anyone else...”

“No!” he answered and looked away.

“Not even with your family?” I asked.

“No! Heavens, no!” he replied, paused for a moment and added, “That would be stupid... My parents would disown me. My children would disown me... if I said anything about...”

He looked sad. It seemed like he had been thinking about this a lot. He looked away and said, “My children are fanatic Greeks too you know... I allowed my parents to poison them... My wife is always upset with me because I’m such a wimp... She keeps telling me to tell them to stop but I don’t have the guts. My wife is Canadian and doesn’t much care about these things. She thinks this whole idea of being Greek in Canada is stupid. I mean look... I married a Canadian... And what is she? She is part English, part Scottish, part Chinese, part African, part German, part Italian... and God knows what else? And what are my children? ‘Pure Greek’... according to my parents... I’m not even Greek myself... How can my children be Greek? My parents aren’t Greek either, as I’m finding out... but try to tell them that! I tell you it’s a nightmare.”

He turned towards me, looked at me intensely, pointed his finger at me and said, “We came to Canada and we want to be Greeks but I look at other families who came here before us, much earlier than us, and what do I see? No trace of Greek left in them. They melted away completely... into what... I don’t even know! I can’t say they were assimilated? Assimilated into what? My parents... people in general don’t get this! This idea of being multicultural in Canada... This isn’t multiculturalism... it’s a façade to make you feel like you belong... for a few generations... belong to what? It doesn’t last! Down the line, a few generations later, we all melt away... we become lost souls. That’s what my parents call those who call themselves Canadian and don’t know their ethnicity. But my parents don’t seem to understand that struggling here in Canada to maintain your ethnic identity is useless... a waste of time... most people here don’t know or care about their ethnicity. No one here cares about who you are... My parents want my children to marry Greek girls when they grow up but the ‘real’ Greek girls wanted nothing to do with them... with us... because they know we aren’t ‘real’ Greeks. According to my parents it would be better if they stay single than marry outsiders... visible minorities from worlds apart. God help us if they want to marry Macedonians? Here is a novel idea!” he said, stopped talking and began to take short and quick breaths. I looked away and noticed the people at the next table looking at us. They turned away.

I turned back and looked at him. I noticed he was looking at me. I didn’t know what to say... “Brother, welcome to my world...” I

blurted out. It was an automatic response but it did put a smile on his face. I continued:

“I understand you perfectly. We left Greece and came to Canada to be free as Macedonians because the Greeks persecuted us there. I hear this all the time from Macedonians. We came to Canada to be free from the Greeks so that we could speak our language, have our own churches... and so on... all true but... what do I see happening? We who immigrated here love our Macedonia and become even more fanatic Macedonians. But what happened to the next generation or two? Just look at the Macedonians who came here two or three generations ago. You’d be lucky to find one person in ten who still speaks Macedonian or cares about his grandfather’s country. My friend, we lived in Macedonia oppressed for centuries but remained loyal Macedonians until we died. Then came to Canada to be free and in less than a century we disappeared. What does that tell you? But... But nobody seems to want to talk about that. I always get ‘that look’ from people when I say things like this... People don’t like to hear the truth. All they want to hear is how great Canada is and how free we are living here in this so-called ‘democratic country’... Then they start talking about their grandchildren dating and marrying other ethnicities... and how terrible that is...”

I thought I had said enough about that and decided it was time to change direction. I paused for a moment, looked at him and said, “So, where do we go from here?”

“Before I ask my questions I want to tell you that I decided to set aside my prejudices... I decided to set aside everything I knew and believed to be near and dear to me... and to open my mind to new possibilities for the sake of understanding... who I am. I want to be open to everything... to anything that is possible. One time when I was young I was talking with my father about something gruesome... a woman had been raped and tortured. I asked him ‘how could one person do that to another person’. He turned to me and said ‘son, people are capable of doing all sorts of things, even evil things... If it’s possible and can be done people will do it.’ This stuck with me. I asked myself ‘am I capable of doing something that evil’? I decided that I would never do that no matter what. But I’m a person just like the other person who did that. What makes us

different? I came to the conclusion that it was partly our character and partly the way we were brought up. We have been brought up to believe differently. So it was our belief system, our programming from young that was different. But suppose we were capable of turning off or overpowering this value system, what kind of people would we be then? Would I be evil too? Perhaps! But my point is we have been programmed from young to believe certain things and not to believe other things. These are values we develop as we go along in our early lives. They are important and make us who we are. I thought about this a great deal. These values instilled in us allow us to judge, respect, believe, not believe, hate, love... I had no idea how strong these values could be and how blind they could make us to the many possibilities open to us... to the capabilities we can have. I don't mean to evil but to good things. They guide us to be good people... bad people... whatever... but at the same time restrict us from achieving certain potentials, good or bad. Let me give you an example. I look at you. You look back at me and smile. That tells me you are a good person. The next day someone accuses you of being a murderer. I wouldn't believe that because my value system is telling me that you can't possibly be a murderer because I believe you are a nice guy..."

I must have looked at him funny because his next words to me were, "You don't believe a word I said do you?"

I didn't know what to say so I opened out my arms.

He looked at me and said, "If you don't believe me then let me ask you this. We are all born naked, right? So by rights we should have no problem walking around in public naked, right? So if I'm not right about this value system then you should have no problem taking your clothes off and walking around naked in public. But you won't do it! Why? Because you were told, you were taught and it has been 'programmed' into you, to feel 'ashamed' walking around naked in public. Don't you agree?"

I nodded in agreement.

"Your value system guides you in life. I have been 'programmed' to believe that I'm Greek... but not only that... I've also been programmed to believe that Macedonians don't exist... and those

who 'pretend' to be Macedonians are my mortal enemies! Now you are trying to convince me that I am a Macedonian... and you have convinced my logical side... I am Macedonian. But how can my emotional side deal with this under my current value system? I hope you can appreciate why I'm telling you all this. My current 'programming' doesn't guide me well. Therefore I need to 'bypass it' right here... right now..." he concluded. I looked at him and smiled.

He smiled back and said, "Well, I have thought about this a great deal and have decided to open my mind to everything possible... to everything you have to say to me. But my limit ends at having an open mind... I am prepared to listen to all sides and make my own decision... on my own... I am prepared to have an open mind to everything that is possible," he concluded and waited for my response.

"I hear you brother. I've also had the experience with my value system challenged. I too am aware that people will do things beyond the believable. My view of people was that if they did something good... especially for me... I figured they must be good people and there was little one could do to convince me otherwise. I have always thought Canada and the United States could do no harm because they cared about us Macedonians. After all they opened the doors to us when we were down and desperate. We all crowded here when we were driven violently out of our homes back in Greece and there's not a day that goes by that we don't thank Canada and America for that. So for me, there was nothing that Canada and the United States could do in the world which I would consider wrong. That is, until people started to point at the United States causing problems for our people in Macedonia. At first I didn't believe any of it. I used to say the United States is our friend, it supports us when we need it... it has given our immigrants a place to go, a place to call home. It provides aid to the Republic of Macedonia... It's willing to fight for us and keep our enemies out... For God's sake, the United States recognized Macedonia by its rightful name. How could anyone possibly claim that the U.S. is working against us... causing problems for us. I truly believed that those who badmouthed the United States were simply wrong!

This went on and on for a long time until, one day, I was sitting in a restaurant in Skopje and a good friend of mine sat me down and opened my mind to ‘possibilities’... as you call them. The clincher for me was when he stuck his face in front of mine and quietly and nervously said ‘these people who you say can do no wrong, as you know, actually bombed Japanese cities, not once but twice, with atomic bombs and killed thousands of civilians... innocent people. What, you think they won’t do that to you? Why? Because you think you are someone special? Yes, they will kill you too if you stand in their way... It’s nothing personal... it is business... they are looking out for their own interests and will bulldoze you if you stand in their way... Kapish?’ That was the moment for me and ever since then I’ve taken a different, a wider approach to things... Now I look at everything without attaching feeling to it... Like you said, ‘If it’s possible and can be done, it will be done!’ Kings in the past and now governments send millions of our sons and now daughters to get killed in senseless wars... for heaven’s sake. And how does our value system interpret that? I don’t know...? We all think we have no choice in the matter and somehow dying in some country... on the other side of the planet... is a noble cause. They tell us we are fighting to bring ‘democracy’ to some people we’ve never heard of and we believe them... and we let our children die. Isn’t it ironic that a mother won’t let her children cross the street because she thinks it’s dangerous but will let them go to war and get killed. How does her value system allow her to do that?! Stefche my friend, you are absolutely right, our value system not only guides us in life but turns us into sheep... getting killed at home in a traffic accident is a tragedy but getting shot to death in some God forsaken country on the other side of the world, is somehow ‘noble’...” I concluded and stopped talking.

Stefche looked at me and said, “Now that we understand one another let’s have a look at what is happening to us... to our people. Why are we the way we are...? Macedonians fighting against Macedonians... Macedonians pretending to be Greeks... Why is there such hatred between us? Who made us hate each other? How can we reverse this... if it’s even possible...?” He suddenly stopped talking and looked away... towards the restaurant... and said, “Let’s take a break and eat something. The restaurant will be closing soon... we’d better get some food. What would you like to eat?”

“I don’t eat out much so I don’t know what to get. What do you suggest?”

“The fish and chips are okay. They’re a bit greasy at this late hour but they’re okay,” he replied.

“Then its fish and chips for me!”

He disappeared for a few minutes and was back. “The server will bring them to us soon. Oh, and I ordered us a jug of beer... I hope you don’t mind...?”

“Beer is fine with me... but just one because later I have to drive...”

He sat in the same place where he had been sitting earlier and we silently looked away waiting for our dinner to arrive.

Part 3 - Widening the possibilities

Our fish and chips arrived relatively fast. We both ate quickly. I guess we were both very hungry.

Stefche filled our glasses with beer and we both raised them and toasted... "To wider possibilities," he toasted.

"To wider possibilities," I replied.

He picked up the empty plates and put them on the rack on a tray. When he came back he sat down in the same place, smiled, grabbed my right wrist, squeezed it and said, "We would have been great friends back in Oshchima... What happened to us?" he asked, letting go of my wrist.

I looked at him and said, "Despite our ten year age difference, we would certainly have been great friends... maybe..." I grabbed his wrist and said, "Stefche, our division and dislike for one another didn't start in Canada; its roots go back... back in time... to a time even before our grandfathers were born..."

"I want to know all of it... I want to know everything... But there is too much information... too many details... too many contradictions... and oh, so many lies...! That is why I'm turning to you. You seem to have a better grasp on things. I looked at your stuff on the internet... but there is so much of it... I don't know where to begin. I need a map... I need to know the big picture... generalities... before I can begin to understand the details... I just don't want to know what happened... I want to know why it happened and who did this to us..." he said looking frustrated and exhausted.

I let go of his wrist. "I understand... Stefche. I'll do my best to tell you what I know but first let me clarify one thing... let me explain why we couldn't have been great friends in Oshchima... You were brought up to believe that you are Greek... and I was brought up to believe I was Macedonian... Mortal enemies... Right? But that

didn't happen with just you and me. That happened way before we were born. It didn't happen with our fathers or grandfathers. It happened before Macedonia was invaded, occupied and portioned in 1912, 1913 and annexed by Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria. I hope you know about this... about what happened to Macedonia... Stop me if you don't..."

"I don't, but please go on."

"Our division started around 1875 when the Great Powers, mainly Britain, France, Austro-Hungary and Russia decided to divide Macedonia and give it to Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria. At that time Macedonia was occupied and ruled by the Ottoman Empire. The Great Powers forced the Ottoman Empire to allow foreign countries to open churches; foreign churches inside Macedonia..."

"Why churches... and why do you call them foreign churches?"

"As you know, the Ottomans were Muslims and the Macedonians were Christians. The Ottomans, as well as all Muslims, don't believe in governments. In fact their legal system was created around the Seriat which had its basis in Islam. The Koran and Hadith were the books from which the ideals and fundamental principles for the construction of their legal system were drawn. No law could be passed which in principle contradicted the Seriat. Only the supreme religious leader, the Sejh-ul-Islam, had the right to interpret and assess the legal norms and only from the point of view of Islamic law.

The Koran dictated Muslim conduct and behaviour, including punishment for crimes. In the Ottoman mind only religion and the word of God had sole authority over the peoples' lives. Religion was the official government of the Ottoman State. Islam was the only recognized form of rule that suited Muslims... but it couldn't be directly applied to non-Muslims. So the next best thing was to allow another religion to rule the non-Muslims. The obvious choice, of course, was the Orthodox Christian religion. As a result the Ottomans were literally forced by the Great Powers to allow foreign churches to be established in Macedonia.

I call them foreign churches because they weren't Macedonian churches. Heaven knows how hard the Macedonian people tried to open their own Macedonian church but there were objections from the other churches... these foreign churches... They didn't want a Macedonian church to be opened in Macedonia. And since no Great Power was willing to support the Macedonian people in getting their own church, their requests were constantly rejected by the Ottoman authorities.

When these churches were introduced in Macedonia, the Macedonian people 'finally' had Christian churches where they could go to pray. The Macedonians did have their own Church for centuries but it was banned in 1767 by the Ottoman Sultan. Even though Islam was the dominant religion in the Ottoman Empire, Christianity and Judaism were also allowed to exist. In Macedonia, the powerful Ohrid Archbishopric was active right up to the year 1767 when it was abolished by the Ottoman Sultan Mustafa III.

Unbeknownst to the Macedonian people, there was a sinister side to these foreign churches operating in Macedonia. These churches weren't opened in Macedonia because the world truly cared about the Macedonian people; they were established because the Great Powers wanted to turn the Macedonian people into Greeks, Serbians and Bulgarians and wipe out the Macedonian identity... forever... This is how it all started..." I concluded and looked at him.

He looked back at me and said, "So, what did that have to do with our great grandfathers?"

"So naturally our people, the Macedonian people, including our great grandparents began to go to these churches. And in addition to prayer, many were convinced to join the churches... become members. A Greek church was opened in our village and both our families attended prayer. But soon after it was established, the church began to offer benefits to those who wanted to sign up and become members. While my great grandfather said 'no thanks, I don't want to get involved', your great grandfather signed up and became a member... His membership, however, had conditions... He had to declare himself and his family 'Greek'. However, at the time that meant nothing. Some of the old timers used to joke about it saying 'I am as much a Greek as my horse is a donkey'.

You see, when the Great Powers made up their minds to 'divide' Macedonia and give it to Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria they had no idea how they were going to divide it. So to keep the little kingdoms, Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria, happy and stop them from constantly asking for more territory... the Russian King told them that Macedonia would be divided between them and it was going to be done along 'national' lines. This meant that the Macedonian territories where the Greeks were a majority would go to Greece, the Macedonian territories where the Serbians were a majority would go to Serbia, the Macedonian territories where the Bulgarians were a majority would go to Bulgaria and so on. But along what national lines? There were no Greeks, Serbians, or Bulgarians living in Macedonia so they had to be made from the Macedonian population! I hope now you will understand why Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria wanted to put their own churches inside Macedonia. If there were no Greeks inside Macedonia, it meant that Greece couldn't have a piece of Macedonia. So Greece... and the others... through their churches, had to make Greeks, Serbians and Bulgarians out of the Macedonians. Also, this is precisely why the Great Powers insisted that foreign churches be allowed to open inside Macedonia... to make that possible. And in order to wipe out the Macedonian identity the Great Powers made sure the Macedonian people wouldn't be allowed to open their own church. No Macedonian church in those days meant no Macedonian country. After that, the Great Powers figured the Macedonian people, with propaganda and incentives, would buy into the idea of "becoming" Greeks, Serbians and Bulgarians and easily pledge their allegiance to the foreigners...

Both of our families were pressured to become Greek. Your great grandfather took the bait and his family became Greek. My family remained neutral... My great grandfather, it seems, wasn't adventurous and believed 'nothing good would come of all this'. So naturally we remained Macedonian.

Then in 1913 when our village, along with that part of Macedonia, was given to the Greeks, your family being loyal to the Greeks became a favoured family... a prominent family. In the 1920's, when the Greek authorities came to the villages and changed people's names, your grandfather was renamed from Stefo to

Stefanos. I don't think your family name at that time was Georgievski but because your family was loyal to the Greeks they gave you a prominent Greek name – Georgopoulos. Georgos means farmer, a prominent occupation at that time. The extension 'poulos' was only given to special people, people who were truly loyal to the Greek state. This was done so that these 'loyal Greeks' could easily be identified. So when a Greek official who wasn't familiar with the village, for example, arrived in the village, all the official had to do was ask around for names that had the 'poulos' extension. They knew they could trust them. You see, anyone could have pretended to be a Greek and could have given these officials false and misleading information. So the Greeks were clever and gave their most loyal subjects last names ending with "poulos". Later, your grandfather was what we call a "Grkoman", loyal to the Greek side. And, as you already know, a sworn enemy of the Macedonians... This is how it all started... Your family served the Greeks instead of its own people... sometimes in the worst possible ways... I don't want to discourage you too much right now so we'll talk about the 'wrongs' done another time... And that is why, my friend, we could not have been great friends in Oshchima..."

He was silent and looked disappointed. I was sure he didn't like what I'd said, especially about his family serving the Greeks... instead of the Macedonians.... Also, I'm sure he would ask me what I meant by "in the worst possible ways..." I didn't know how he would take all this...! Everyone thinks they are "good" people... That's what their value system tells them... justifies for them... Why shouldn't he believe what he'd always believed? What his parents, who'd brought him up, had told him... Why should he believe me... a stranger... who had just turned his life upside down...?

"Why did you say that Greeks didn't exist in Macedonia? As I recall, I was told much of the population living in Macedonia in those days was Greek. If there were no Greeks living there at the time, where did the Greeks come from?" he asked in a serious tone of voice.

"Stefche it's true, there were no Greeks living in Macedonia because the Greek identity didn't exist... it was created... by the Great Powers, to serve their purpose. The entire Greek state was created..."

after the 1821 so-called Greek uprising against the Ottomans... for just that purpose... to serve the interests of the Great Powers.

Up until a few months ago, you were sure you were Greek. Your entire family claimed to be Greek and you believed that. But are you Greeks? No! There are many families in Macedonia that claim to be Greek but, as you're finding out... they aren't Greeks. This is how it was throughout all of Macedonia. Before the Greeks came to Macedonia and turned us into artificial Greeks, there were no Greeks... we were Macedonian... The majority... anyway... There were also other ethnicities, if I can call them that... that also lived there, including Vlachs, Turks, Albanians, Jews, Latins and so on... But no Greeks! The people who the outside world often called Greeks were a class of people... the middle class, the merchants and civil servants serving the Ottoman Empire. You see, Muslim law didn't allow Muslims to leave their country and venture out... to handle money... as in banks... to speak foreign languages... and so on. So the Ottomans used Christians and Jews to do all that for them... to be their ship captains, sailors, bankers, translators and so on. The so-called 'Greeks' were an educated class of people... In other words, a 'class of people' and not a nationality or ethnicity! These people came from all over the empire and from all kinds of ethnicities. They were educated in the 'Koine' language, Alexander the Greats' language, spoken throughout the Byzantine Empire. And as the Ottomans conquered the Byzantine Empire, they used its already established infrastructure, institutions, networks and connections. By using this 'class' of people the Ottomans not only filled a void with bankers, captains and translators, the Ottomans took advantage of existing business connections and practices which this Christian class had established. In time, as these people came into contact with people outside the Ottoman Empire, they became known as 'Greeks'. Inside the Ottoman Empire they were known as Phanariots, named after their base located in the Phanar district in Tsari Grad... Istanbul... Constantinople... the Ottoman capital..."

"Okay, maybe there were no Greeks in Macedonia, surely there must have been Greeks in Greece proper, or old Greece... you know... the southern part of Greece... the Peloponnesus," he said, looking at me frustrated.

"No, there were no Greeks there either..." I replied.

“How can you say that? You mean to tell me that an entire country was created based on lies?” he asked looking like he was about to explode.

“Look Stefche, you don’t have to believe me, just listen to me... hear what I have to say and then decide for yourself. Believe me my friend I also went through this... I wrestled with it and came to the conclusion that many things, not just Greece, are fake and lies in this world... And believe me... many of us are ignorant of the truth and die ignorant. What is worse is that sometimes we sacrifice our lives believing these lies... I’ll tell you plenty about that later but for now let me tell you how I found out ‘Greeks don’t exist’ as an ethnicity and were created by the destruction of other ethnicities. You know that the old Greeks created new Greeks by assimilating Macedonians from Macedonia. In other words, Macedonians were ‘made’ into Greeks. Their Greek history begins when they were ‘turned’ into Greeks... Before that they were Macedonians. Well, travel back in time... about 200 years back and you’ll find the same thing happened in the Peloponnesus. The people that lived there... Albanians, Vlachs, Christian Turks, Latins, Macedonians... all were turned into Greeks... instant Greeks. So the old Greeks you are referring to weren’t Greeks either. Those who refused to become Greek were kicked out. Have you ever looked at the first Greek Constitution? It said that anyone who is a Christian, spoke Greek and was willing to fight for the Greek cause was a Greek. Albanians who spoke Greek were instant Greeks and so were Macedonians, Serbians, Bulgarians, Romanians... and especially Vlachs... The Vlachs were the ‘best’ Greeks. Ask any old Vlach and see what they have to say. The Vlachs were the backbone in building Greece.

The Greek language? There was no such thing as a ‘Greek language’. At first, the newly established Greek state pondered with the idea of using the Albanian language as the language of its new nation. This was because the majority of the Greek population then spoke Albanian. Like I said earlier, the so-called Greek language that the Greek state adopted and made the language of the Greek nation is the Koine language... The new Greeks were convinced by their patrons, the Great Powers, to reject the Albanian language and adopt the Koine language, Alexander the Greats’ language of trade and commerce and call it ‘Greek’. This language was taken out of

the boondocks by Alexander the Great and made into a worldly language... by Alexander's successors... especially by the Ptolemas in Egypt. The Koine language gained its prominence, not in Athens or Greece but in Alexandria in Egypt, when it was adopted as the language of science and education and used in the Alexandrian library, museum and schools. Even the first bible was translated from Hebrew to Koine. The Macedonians were responsible for that... Anyway, I'm getting off topic here... In other words, the Greeks in the southern part of Greece were created exactly the same way the Greeks in Macedonia were created... through assimilation.

But there is a difference between the Macedonians and the other ethnic groups that live in Greece today who were assimilated. While the Albanians, Vlachs and other ethnicities were willing to accept their new identity... because it offered them much more than what they could have otherwise achieved, the Macedonians already had a long history, a prominent language and a richer culture and many were unwilling to give them up... and wanted to remain Macedonian. This, unfortunately, posed a problem for those wanting to get rid of them. That problem has persisted to this day and has been dividing us as a people. The process that was started in the late 18th and 19th centuries... i.e. the destruction of the Macedonian identity, has never stopped and is continuing to this day. The Great Powers, even today, don't want a Macedonia and are doing everything possible to erase us. Why do you think the Republic of Macedonia is having all these problems today? Most people say it's Greece that's behind all this... but they are wrong. It's not just Greece, the Great Powers, mainly the United States, Britain, France and Germany, are also behind it. They are allowing Greece to do their dirty work for them. They stand behind Greece and encourage it to abuse us... Again, I'm getting off topic here... I'm sorry... I'll talk about this later..." I concluded and looked at Stefche. He was looking at his watch.

"It's getting awfully late. I'd better get home before my wife sends the police to look for me... What do you say we pick it up next Friday, same time, same place?" he asked and smiled.

"That's fine by me... I'll see you next Friday... Thanks for the dinner..." and looked at my watch. It was 1:10 a.m. Saturday

morning. By the time I looked up, he was halfway to the other side of the cafeteria waving goodbye.

Part 4 - General overview of events

I got home late that night and didn't get any sleep. I thought about what I'd said. What I could have said and what I shouldn't have said... But, as is always the case, most people want to hear what they want to hear and interpret things the way they want to interpret them. All I was doing, thinking about it after the fact, analyzing what I had said just showed my own insecurities. What was most important is that we ended our first planned encounter on a good note... and there was next Friday...

The next Friday I arrived first and sat in the usual spot. He arrived on time, in a uniform and said he had something to finish and would join me in a few minutes. He left and was back ten minutes later. After greeting me and shaking my hand he sat in his old spot.

“So, what are we going to talk about today?” I asked.

“Last time you told me the Greek identity was artificially created for some greater purpose to serve the Great Powers. You also made it sound like we Macedonians are something ‘special’. I'd really like to know why that is?” he replied.

I thought about it for a moment. Is this what I sound like when I talk about Macedonia and the Macedonians? Do I give the impression that we are something special? Greeks talk like that. In fact these ‘fake’ Greeks believe the world owes them because the so-called “ancient Greeks” gave the world “everything”. How delusional is that?

“Stefche, I never meant to give you the impression that we Macedonians are something special... All I meant to say is that we are true to who we are because we come from a rich culture... a real culture... and not something that was made up for the greater purpose of some Great Power ... I'm sorry about that...”

“So, if Macedonians aren't ‘special’ then why would you want to be Macedonian?”

“That’s a good question... In fact many Greeks have asked me exactly that question. I told them honestly that I don’t want to be Macedonian but that’s what I am. If you want to be true to others then you must first be true to yourself and if you can’t do that then you’re no different than the Greeks. I’ve seen and experienced misery because of that... because I am Macedonian... but like it or not... that’s what I am... that’s what I was born. It just happens that Macedonia was a prominent place with a rich history and culture just as it happened that I was born Macedonian. In the past they used to say there was no greater glory than being a soldier of Macedonia and today they say Macedonians are so worthless they need not be mentioned. And you know from your own parents that that is true. Even they say ‘Macedonians don’t exist’... ”

“Yes that’s true. What a screwed up situation...” he said and looked at me.

“Yes, there’s a lot to unpack here and I just don’t know where to begin...” I said and looked down.

“How about you tell me why Greeks think Macedonians don’t exist?” he asked with a serious look on his face.

“They have many reasons; the first and most important is to cover up the myth that all people living in Greece are Greeks. If the Greeks admitted that Macedonians exist in Greece then how could they explain the Greek occupation of Macedonia? The Greeks say they ‘liberated’ Macedonian territories from the Ottomans in order to unite them with the rest of Greece. And why did they do that? Because, according to the Greeks, Macedonia has always been Greek and the people living in it are Greeks. For more than a century now the Greeks have been telling the world ‘Macedonia is Greek’ because Greeks and only Greeks live in Macedonia, which is a lie.

To now admit that indeed Macedonians live in Greece they would not only have to admit that the Greeks lied but they would also have to give Macedonia back to the Macedonians; the rightful owners of those lands. But they don’t want to do that. So to avoid problems the Greeks say Macedonians don’t exist. It’s easy to say that. This was

the plan from the start... since 1878, when the Great Powers decided there would be no Macedonia and left it to the Greeks and the other inheritors of Macedonian lands to erase the Macedonian people..."

"Hmm, I see... Didn't anyone point out to the Greeks that these people weren't Greek and didn't want to be Greek?"

"Yes they have..."

"And?"

"Well, the Greeks just brush it off and say 'these people were under Ottoman occupation for so long they just forgot what they were'..."

"Hmm..."

"Yes and there's more... When the Republic of Macedonia broke away from Yugoslavia and became an independent country, the Greeks started panicking... afraid that the Republic of Macedonia might demand that Greece recognize the Macedonian people living in Greece. As you may know the Greeks exiled many Macedonians from Greece since 1912, since the time the Greeks occupied Macedonian lands and many of these exiled Macedonians over the years have demanded that Greece reinstate their Greek citizenship and give them back their lands. Many now live in the Republic of Macedonia and are complaining to the Macedonian government that Greece illegally confiscated their lands and property and are demanding that the Macedonian government 'do something' so that they can get their lands back. So to avoid problems, Greece has made many attempts to 'silence' the Republic of Macedonia..."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, you must have heard of the so-called 'name dispute' between the Republic of Macedonia and Greece?"

"Yes, I know all about it. Those Slavs... Skopjans... or whatever they call themselves, who live on Greece's northern border want to take Macedonia by pretending to be Macedonians... But they are not!"

“That’s what you were told... right? But do you believe that?”

“Well, that’s what I know. I suppose you will tell me something different?”

“Stefche, you must know that Macedonia is a lot bigger than the part that is occupied by Greece?”

“Yes but those parts are Slavic and not Greek...”

“So, in your understanding what do you think the difference is between Greeks, Macedonians and Slavs?”

“All I know is that Greeks are an ancient people. Macedonians are Greeks and the Slavs came to the Balkans during the sixth century A.D.”

“Stefche, the Macedonians living in Greece and the Macedonians living in the Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria are the same people. When Macedonia was ‘liberated’, I call it ‘occupied’ by Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria, the Macedonian people were ethnically one people before they were divided by the borders imposed on them. They were living without borders for a thousand years, if not more, so how can the Macedonians living in Greece be Macedonians of the Greek kind and those living in the Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria be Slavs? Wouldn’t they be the same people – either Greeks or Slavs?”

“I suppose... But all I know is that they are called Macedonian because they live in geographic Macedonia.”

“They are all the same people... They are ethnic Macedonians who speak a Slavic language that is different from Greek, Bulgarian, or Serbian, which we today call Macedonian. We are a unique people... Macedonians...”

“You have a point... I’m just telling you what I know from what the Greeks told me.”

“Now let’s go back to the ‘name dispute’. The name dispute isn’t about the name and I can prove that to you. It’s about erasing the

Macedonian identity. Greece doesn't want the world to know that Macedonian people live in Greece and that the Macedonians in Greece are the same people as those living in the Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria. So, by not allowing the Republic of Macedonia to use 'Macedonia' in its name, Greece hopes to prove to the world that the Macedonians living in Greece are 'different' from the Macedonians living in the Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria... But, as I said, in reality we are one people. The borders between us were placed there in 1913. They are artificial borders..."

"Listen... it's getting late. Let's get going and next Friday you can tell me more. Especially the part about proving that the name dispute isn't about the name..."

And with those words Stefche left in a hurry.

Part 5 – The ‘name dispute’ explained - Briefly

I had plenty of time to think about what I was going to say but if I had to tell him everything I knew it would take days, so I decided to be selective and give Stefche a brief overview.

I began by saying, “What is going on between Greece and the Republic of Macedonia today is not a ‘dispute’. The Republic of Macedonia and the Macedonian people in general have no problem calling themselves Macedonian and their little country, one third of the whole of Macedonia, the Republic of Macedonia. And like I said, it’s Greece who is objecting to using the word ‘Macedonia’ in the Republic of Macedonia’s name. So this isn’t a dispute but rather an objection coming from Greece.”

“Okay, okay... But isn’t it the same thing? Isn’t it just semantics?”

“No! Because Macedonia is not disputing anything, it’s only reacting to the Greek objection. In fact it’s not even disputing Greece’s usurpation of the name ‘Macedonia’. How can Greece have exclusive rights to the name ‘Macedonia’ when there are other parts of historic and geographic Macedonia where Macedonian people live?”

“Wait a minute, wait a minute. As far as I know Macedonia is Greek from ancient times, so why wouldn’t Greece object to someone else using that name?”

“Stefche, Macedonia is not and never was Greek in ancient times, today, or in any other period in its history. It always belonged to the Macedonians. I should know that. I wrote a book about it called ‘History of the Macedonian People From Ancient times to the Present’ which can be found at this link:

<http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/History-of-the-Macedonian-People-from-Ancient-Times-to-the-Present.pdf>

While you’re at it, you should also read my book ‘Macedonian Struggle For Independence’ which can be found at this link:

<http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/Macedonian-Struggle-for-Independence.pdf>. I wrote this book in response to those Greeks who wrote me and told me that if Macedonians existed how come they never made a single attempt to liberate themselves. These Greeks hardly know their own fake history, never mind the Macedonian people's history.

And here is another shocker for you. There was never a Greece, not until 1832, when the Greek Kingdom became a country for the first time. In ancient times there were City States, like Athens, Sparta, Thebes, etc. Besides, the word 'Greece' is a Latin word. There were no Latins when the City States were independent and functioned like independent countries. They were never a single country. It was Philip II, a Macedonian, who defeated them in battle and, except for Sparta, made them Macedonian vassals. In fact if I use Greek logic I can claim that the ancient City States belong to Macedonia and, in modern terms, Greece belongs to the Macedonians. But I've never said that and I've never heard a single Macedonian making any such claims. The Macedonian people only want what is theirs.

On top of that the modern Greeks have nothing to do with the so-called ancient Greeks; we've already discussed that... Like I said, the modern Greeks are a modern creation... a fabrication... The people that lived on the lands where Greece is today were Albanians, Vlachs, Turks, Macedonians, Latins, etc. They lived there before Greece was created. So how can Macedonia belong to those people? And if you don't believe me then read my book: 'Who are the Modern Greeks?' which can be found at this link: <http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/Who-are-the-Modern-Greeks.pdf> and my book: 'A Glorious place called Greece' which can be found at this link: <http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/A-Glorious-Place-Called-Greece.pdf>. Most of the information about the modern Greeks in those books comes from pro-Greek western sources."

"Well, you're right. Many of the books I have read seem to agree with you. I mean the books written by western authors... Life would be so much easier for me if Greece admitted to all this so that we can get on with life."

“As you can see Greece has no rights to the name ‘Macedonia’, neither from ancient times nor modern times. So why is Greece behaving this way? There must be another reason.”

“Well, what is this reason? Surely there has to be more than you just told me!”

“Greece wants to hide the fact that modern Greece is a modern fabrication and the fact that modern Greeks aren’t really Greeks and have nothing to do with the ancients... But most importantly, Greece wants to hide all the atrocities it committed against the Macedonian population and all the other people who refused to become Greeks.”

“Like what...?”

“Well, where do we begin?”

“Begin at the beginning...”

“I’ve already told you what the Greeks did in Macedonia before Macedonia was invaded, occupied and partitioned during the Balkan Wars of 1912, 1913. I haven’t told you what happened after that.

During the Balkan Wars many Macedonians were killed for no reason at all, especially civilians. The Greek soldiers were told that Greeks lived in Macedonia and spoke Greek. All others who didn’t speak Greek were the enemy and you know what that means... So when the Greek army rolled into Macedonia the soldiers expected to find Greeks but instead they found mostly non-Greek speakers so they slaughtered them. If you want to learn more about this you should read my book: ‘Greek Atrocities Committed against the Macedonian People’. You can find it at:

<http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/Greek-Atrocities-Committed-against-the-Macedonian-People.pdf>

Right after Greece took control of the Macedonian territories it told the Macedonian people that this is Greece now and all of you who become Greeks can stay, all others can pick up as much of your stuff as you can carry and get out. Many left and went north, most of them ended up in Bulgaria. The Ottomans left during or right after

the Ottoman army withdrew. Later the Greeks exiled all Muslims. These people weren't Ottomans; they were Macedonians who had converted to Islam. They too were gone.

After that, during the 1920's, Greece changed the names of everything that was Macedonian. They wanted to erase everything that was Macedonian and replace it with Greek so that they could show the world that Macedonia was Greek. They even destroyed old Macedonian cemeteries and painted over the Macedonian writing on church icons. They changed the names of people, even family names that had existed for many generations. They changed the names of rivers, lakes, seas, regions, cities, towns, villages, etc. Our village that was called Oshchima for centuries was changed to Trigonon, a name that has no history. Everything that was historically associated with our Macedonian heritage was suddenly erased.

After that the Macedonian people, young and old, were forced to learn Greek. Later the Macedonian language was banned and it became illegal to speak Macedonian. The Macedonian people weren't allowed to speak their mother tongue in their own country, on their own ancestral lands. They were actually fined, made to drink castor oil and jailed if they spoke Macedonian. Many spent years serving their prison sentences in the dry Greek island concentration camps. Just for speaking Macedonian... Imagine that... It was horrible.

And if that wasn't enough, after the so-called Greek Civil War ended, Greece closed the border on all civilians that had fled the war. Both my grandparents on my father's side went to Poland. They left in 1949. My grandfather died in Poland. I never met him.

Those who fled over the border to save themselves, to this day, were never allowed to return, not even for a visit. I have written extensively about the Greek Civil War and if you want to learn more about it you should read my books: "Macedonians in Greece 1939-1949" which can be found at this link:

<http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/Macedonians-in-Greece-1939-1949.pdf>, and the book: "Macedonians and the NOT so Civil War in Greece" which can be found at this link:

<http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/Macedonians-and-the-NOT-so-Civil-War-in-Greece.pdf>.

This is only a small sample of what Greece did to the Macedonian people which, by the way, is all hidden from the international public, even from the Greek public because Greece insists that Macedonians don't exist.

Greece wants all this to remain hidden and that's why it has invented the so-called "name dispute" and made it about ancient history about which no one cares."

"That was a good explanation... but it wasn't enough for me to fully grasp the whole story. I need to know more... not just for myself... but to explain it to others... But it will have to wait for another time... maybe many other times... if that's okay with you...?"

"No problem. It's okay with me."

"It's getting late and I must go. See you next Friday... And thanks for all this, I'll read those books... eventually," he said and left.

Part 6 - From the beginning

The next Friday we met, I found Stefche waiting for me at the usual table. He had arrived first and looked anxious. After we greeted each other he said:

“What you told me last Friday was hard to believe... Greece is a democratic country... The world views it like a jewel... According to common knowledge, Greece gave the world democracy, mathematics, science... It’s considered the cradle of democracy. I just can’t believe what you said about Greece... It’s inconceivable that the Greeks aren’t real. I wonder how many people in the world really know that, especially the Greeks themselves... Who would have thought that the Greeks are a fraud? This is just unbelievable... I just can’t believe it.”

“Stefche, welcome to my world... And that’s not all. I haven’t even begun to tell you about all the evils these Greeks have committed against our people to satisfy their interests and to promote and propagate this lie called Hellenism.”

“Well, lay it on me. If it doesn’t kill me it will make me stronger...”

“Where do I begin...?”

“Start from the beginning...”

“Okay, I’ll do my best. Let’s start with the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire.

When the European Great Powers began to sense that the Ottoman Empire was slowly beginning to disintegrate, they were sure that one day it would disappear forever and the territories it occupied would be free... up for grabs. Unfortunately the Great Powers didn’t trust one another. They were afraid that if one sent their army to grab Ottoman territories the others would follow and there would be war. So they had to come up with a plan, an agreement on how those territories could be acquired by avoiding war. But one thing they seemed to agree on was that the Ottoman territories would be replaced by many small equal sized countries. They didn’t want the

entire Ottoman territory to be replaced by a single large Christian country because that too in time would become a Great Power and they didn't want more Great Powers in Europe, or anywhere else for that matter.

The ideal thing would be to have the Ottoman territories replaced by small countries that couldn't threaten the Great Powers. They all would have to be equal sized so no one country could dominate or occupy the others. They wanted to be sure that the Ottoman territories would never recombine. They also wanted the inheriting countries to be different from one another; to hate each other so that they would never combine. They also decided each country would be ruled by a monarchy. These were some of the ideas that the Great Powers could agree on while each secretly plotted about how to influence these countries and turn them into proxies.

The first country to come out of the Ottoman Empire was Serbia, followed by Greece. The southern most part of Greece was liberated with help from the Great Powers. I think it was Russia, France and England.

Then, with help from Russia, Bulgaria was liberated next. Russia wanted to create a large Bulgaria that included most of Macedonia in order to turn it into a Russian proxy so that Russia could gain access to the Mediterranean Sea. But the other Great Powers didn't agree. Like I said before, first they didn't want a big country to exist in the Balkans and second they didn't want Russia to have access to the Mediterranean Sea. England in particular didn't want Russia to have access because it regarded the Mediterranean Sea as its own 'back yard'.

In 1878 the Great Powers decided to create a smaller Bulgaria and give Macedonia back to the Ottomans. It was around this time that the Great Powers decided that there would be no Macedonia. They decided Macedonia would be divided up and given to Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria. But first they would have to wait for the Ottoman Empire to further disintegrate.

The Macedonians tried to liberate themselves several times after 1878 but, without outside help, they were unsuccessful. I don't know if you've heard of the 1903 Ilinden Uprising but this was the

time when all of Macedonia rose up to liberate itself but failed. It failed because, as I said before, it received no help from the outside. On top of that the Great Powers, through Bulgaria, made sure the uprising was sabotaged from the inside. It's a long story, I don't want to get into it now but if you want to know more I have written about it extensively in my books.

Then when Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria became economically and militarily strong, strong enough to take on the crumbling Ottoman Empire, the Great Powers unleashed them and allowed them to attack Macedonia and drive the Ottomans out. This is what the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 were about. Even the Macedonians helped them kick out the Ottomans..."

"Why did they do that...?"

"Because the invaders told the Macedonian people that they were there to liberate them... to liberate their Christian brothers. But this was a lie; they were there to occupy and partition Macedonia for themselves.

In 1878, the Great Powers decided that Macedonia would be divided and given to Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria but they had no idea how to divide it. At some point it was decided that Macedonia would be divided along 'national lines' which propagated the 'church wars', which I mentioned earlier where the Greeks tried to convert everyone in Macedonia into a Greek. The Serbians and Bulgarians, of course did the same. And as the competition between the three intensified so did their measures. First they began by providing church services, then they opened schools and eventually resorted to using violence, forcing Macedonians to become Greeks, Serbians and Bulgarians by any means possible including terror. Armed gangs were hired on all sides to terrorize the people. If a village, for example, accepted one side, say the Bulgarian side, the Greeks would then send their gangs to force the people in that village to accept the Greek side.

"And if the people refused?"

"If they refused they were punished and even killed. Their homes were robbed and burned, women and girls were raped, men were

tortured and priests were killed. Sometimes entire villages were killed as was the case of Zagoricheni. See the chapter 'The Zagoricheni massacre' in my book entitled 'Collective Punishment', which you can find at this link:

<http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/Collective-Punishment-Genocides-Committed-Against-the-Macedonian-People.pdf>.

Then before Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria attacked the Ottomans in Macedonia, they consulted with the Russian king on how to divide Macedonia because Macedonia couldn't be divided along national lines. Practically there wasn't a single village in Macedonia that could be divided along national lines. The Russian king advised them to attack the Ottomans from the south, northwest and northeast and the dividing lines would be placed wherever their armies met. In other words, whatever territory they freed from the Ottomans would be theirs. And this is what they did in 1912.

From there on the situation became complicated, you'll have to read my books to find out what happened. But one thing I can tell you, the Macedonian population paid dearly with lives and destruction of property during those wars. It was horrible.

The Balkan Wars were so traumatic and so horrifying that an investigation was initiated.

On August 2nd, 1913, shortly before the end of the second Balkan War, the Carnegie Endowment dispatched a Commission on a fact finding mission. The mission consisted of seven prominent members from the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia. To learn more about this read my book: 'Collective Punishment - Genocides committed against the Macedonian People' you can find it at this link:

<http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/Collective-Punishment-Genocides-Committed-Against-the-Macedonian-People.pdf>.

Unfortunately, before the Commission's findings could be released World War I broke out and the report never saw the light of day.

After WW I ended the Greeks resumed their policy of assimilating Macedonian territories and Macedonian people and, like I said

before, those Macedonians who refused to assimilate were expelled, many through population exchanges, mostly with Bulgaria.

In all of this, not once did the Greeks ask what the Macedonian people wanted. They were treated like animals.

Things went from bad to worse during the Metaxas dictatorship in Greece right before World War II started. In 1936 the Greek Government started passing laws by which thousands of Macedonians were arrested, imprisoned and expelled from their homeland. One specific law (legal act 2366) outlawed the Macedonian language and prohibited people from speaking it by imposing heavy fines and imprisonment. Many Macedonians unfortunately didn't speak Greek, especially the old people, and had no other way of communicating with their families and friends. People weren't allowed to speak Macedonian anywhere, not at the market and not even at home. On top of that many policemen were hired to spy on the population and anyone caught speaking Macedonian was fined; even old ladies trying to purchase vegetables in the market.

A percentage of the fine was paid to the policemen who arrested them so the Greek police had plenty of incentive to catch people.

Imagine that happening to you?

This practice continued even after the Metaxas dictatorship ended.

One of my uncles, on my mother's side, was beaten by a policeman for simply answering an old lady's question. This prompted him to join the partisans and fight against this Greek injustice. He was killed during the Greek Civil War. There isn't a single Macedonian family that hasn't experienced a tragedy in Greek hands.

Another man whom I met in Canada told me that he too was beaten by the Greek police for speaking Macedonian. He didn't have a father; I don't know what happened to his father but his family was very poor. When he was a boy his mother bought him a white shirt, which he proudly wore through the village one holiday. On his way to church he met an old woman and said good morning to her in Macedonian. Unfortunately a policeman passing by overheard him

and scolded him. He told the policeman that the old woman didn't speak Greek, so he had to speak to her in Macedonian. For his 'insolence' the policeman hit him across the face with his baton and broke his nose, which bled all over his white shirt and ruined it."

"That's cruel... What a cruel bastard..."

"This unfortunately was normal practice for the Greeks in those days. But that's not all. Many times policemen were observed outside people's windows listening to hear what language the people spoke in the privacy of their own home. If they heard them speaking Macedonian they fined them. The safest thing for Macedonians to do in those days was not to speak at all. If they spoke Macedonian they were fined and even arrested for multiple violations. If they spoke Greek they were frowned upon by Macedonians.

Because of the way the Macedonians were treated, the Macedonian people hated the Greek language and didn't want to hear anyone speaking Greek, especially when it was spoken by their own kin or by their neighbours."

"So, how were people expected to communicate... especially those who couldn't speak Greek?" asked Stefche.

"Very carefully..." I said and laughed but Stefche didn't find it funny.

"They managed to somehow survive," I said and added. "I know of one old woman from our village who was fined. She was in the city market and tried to purchase groceries. The only language she spoke was Macedonian. Unfortunately she didn't see the policeman standing beside her. Her fine amounted to more than she made from selling crops for an entire year. It was devastating for her. She lived alone. Her adult children were partisans who had left Greece during the war and weren't allowed to return. And because they lived in Eastern Europe they couldn't help her. The letters she sent and received were opened by the Greek authorities. They constantly monitored her mail. Besides, unless they could send her American or Canadian dollars, money from the Eastern European countries was illegal. The villagers made a collection to help her pay her fine.

She was a very nice lady. She always had a candy for me every time I went to visit her.”

“Man, that’s terrible... I had no idea...”

“And despite what the Greeks have done to us in Greece, they now want to silence all Macedonians everywhere they live. On top of that they accuse us of cruelty and theft. They accuse us of wanting to steal ‘their’ history and heritage... These Greeks were and still are cruel people and the sad thing about it is that we can’t do anything about it. Despite what they’ve done to us, the world still supports them...”

Just as I finished talking I could see that Stefche was getting anxious about going home so I said, “Stefche, it’s getting late... We should get going... We’ll pick it up next Friday.”

Part 7 - More about artificial Greece

The next Friday that we met, Stefche looked sad. When I asked him what was wrong he said, “I’m happy that I found out I’m Macedonian but I’m sad that I’ve found out this late in my life. If I had known earlier I could have saved my children from being poisoned by my parents. I just can’t believe how we’ve become beholden to the Greeks, our worst enemies. How can we look up to them and pretend to be them after what they’ve done to us. I’m happy that I’m Macedonian but I still don’t know enough about us to confront those who deny us our rights... starting with my own parents.”

“If you want to confront the Greeks you have to do it on their turf, challenge their identity the way they have challenged ours. The Greeks have convinced the world, or at least some of the world and themselves that they are a solid sphere made of steel, in other words pure Greeks; descendants of the ancient Greeks. Unfortunately they are only a shiny apple on the outside and rotten to the core inside. If you get past their shiny skin you’ll uncover rot inside.”

“You know I was a baby when my family came to Canada so I hardly know any Greek history...”

At that point I couldn’t help but laugh out loud.

“It’s true, I’m not joking. I don’t know any Greek history... real or fake...” he said looking at me puzzled.

“Sorry about that. I wasn’t laughing about what you said, I was laughing at the idea that the Greeks have a ‘real’ history. Today’s Greek history is as artificial as the Greek nation itself. Most of today’s Greek history is fiction... pure fiction... For example they say they liberated Macedonia... Liberated it from whom... from the Macedonians? The truth is they occupied Macedonia... They say they drove the Bulgarians out of Macedonia... What Bulgarians, the people they drove out weren’t Bulgarians, they were Macedonians.

The truth is they drove the Macedonian people out of their own lands because they refused to become Greeks.

Every word in Greece's history is twisted to fit Greece's modern narrative and interests. Forget about Greece's official history and learn its 'real' history. The Greek people of today rose out of the mud and not out of any ancient glory like they pretend they did..."

"And how do I do that? How do I learn Greece's 'real' history?"

"The way I did. By asking questions, by reading books, other than Greeks books, etc., here is a sample of what I wrote in my book 'Who are the modern Greeks':

The best answer I can give you at this moment is that they are NOT who they say they are! I have been accused on several occasions of being a "liar" when it comes to answering such questions, so here I'll use Mazari's words;

"Mazari, writing in 1446, stated that the Greeks of this time were not a race but a debris of other races."

If the Greeks of 1446 were a 'debris' of other races, then what are the Modern Greeks of today, 98% pure Greeks and 2% Muslim Greeks? I think not!

If God himself came to earth and spoke to the Greeks and said 'these people here are Macedonians', the Greeks wouldn't believe him. If Greeks start believing that Macedonians exist in Greece then they'll also have to believe that Slavs, Albanians and Vlachs also exist in Greece. If Macedonians, Slavs, Albanians and Vlachs exist in Greece then Greeks would be asking 'who then are the Greeks?' And as I've found out in my quest 'searching for the Greeks', ethnically speaking, there are no Greeks.

But how can that be? The entire world knows that there is a country called Greece, populated by 10 million Greeks who are 98% pure Greeks and 2% Muslim Greeks!

Well yes, there are people who identify as "Greek". Unfortunately, ethnically speaking, they aren't 'ethnic Greeks'; they are

‘politically’ Greeks. Did I just say ‘politically Greeks’? Yes I did, politically Greeks. They identify as Greeks not because ‘they are’ ethnic Greeks but because they ‘want to be’ Greeks! It’s a matter of choice. How else can one explain Slavs, Albanians, Vlachs, Macedonians, Christian Turks, Armenians, Russians and a whole group of other ethnicities ALL identifying as ‘Greeks’?

In other words, anyone can be Greek provided they agree with the ‘Philhellenic indoctrination’ of what a Greek is. Anyone who speaks Greek, claims to be a descendent of the so-called Ancient Greeks, pretends to be superior to other people, claims minorities don’t exist in Greece, is arrogant and insensitive to non-Greeks and hurls slogans like ‘Macedonia is Greek’ and ‘Macedonians do not exist’ can be a Greek.

And here’s how I came to that conclusion. For more information see: <http://www.mlahanas.de/Greece/History/FilikiEteria.html>

According to Greece’s 1st Constitution written in 1827:

Provinces of Greece are all those that were taken and will be taken by weapons against the Ottoman Dynasty.

Greeks are:

- a. All those indigenous people of the Greek State who believe in Christ.
- b. All those, believers in Christ, who under the Ottoman slavery, came or they will come to the Greek State to struggle or to reside in it.

Greeks are all those aliens, who came to Greece and enrolled as citizens.

To become a Greek, it was enough to be a Christian!

This document proves that Greeks have a very short memory. They don’t remember how the Greek State was created and also who the modern Greeks are.

Why should we Macedonians have to prove that we are Macedonians since antiquity when the Greeks don't have to prove anything for being Greeks?

The fact is that about 180 years ago anybody who was a Christian in the Greek State became a Greek automatically. Why doesn't that bother the modern Greeks?

Can an Asia Minor Christian Turk settler who was deposited in Macedonia in the 1920's be a Greek? Yes they can! They can even be a Macedonian, descendent of the Ancient Macedonians! Can a Macedonian whose family identified as Macedonian before Greece annexed Macedonia in 1913 identify as a Greek? Yes they can, provided they accept and swear by the "Philhellene Indoctrination". Can any of my relatives, like myself who were born in Greece, with whom I share great grandparents, be Greeks even though I identify as a Macedonian? Yes they can! They can in fact also be "full fledged" Macedonians, direct descendents of the Ancient Macedonians!

Can I be a Greek, and I did ask this question, on account of some of my family members identifying as Greeks? The answer was a flat NO! And according to the same "Greek authorities" who said I could never be a Greek, I don't even qualify to call myself Macedonian. According to them I am a 'Slav' and a 'Skopjan' from some 'other' country called 'Skopje', which I have yet to find on any 'world' map except on Greek maps!

If you're still not convinced that the Greek identity is a 19th century Philhellene fabrication; an identity 'created' purely for political purposes, then you had best read my book 'Who are the Modern Greeks' mentioned earlier which can be found at this link: <http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/Who-are-the-Modern-Greeks.pdf>. And the book: 'A Glorious place called Greece' which can be found at this link: <http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/A-Glorious-Place-Called-Greece.pdf>.

Fight fire with fire. The Greeks, the smart ones, will back off when you challenge their identity and prove to them that it is artificial...

fake... The not so smart ones will attack your character. They may even attack you physically... So you'll have to be careful..."

"I know... I know... I have been attacked for thinking differently... It's difficult to tell them anything when they don't want to hear it..."

"Stefche, all joking aside, things like this have ruined family relationships, so you really have to be careful how you approach this subject with Greeks. People may get very angry at you and even bring you harm.

Let me give you an example of what happened to me. By mentioning in my books that the Christian settlers and colonists from Asia Minor brought to our part of Macedonia by the Greek state were Turks, one fellow from my mother's village got very upset with me and hated me for years before he accepted the idea that he might be half Turk. His mother was Macedonian. One of the worst things you can do to a Greek is call him a Turk. Even worse than that is calling him Bulgarian. They hate that because in their own minds Bulgarians and Turks are the worst kind of people in this world. So, this guy was so afraid that he 'might be' half Turk he hated me for reminding him. It bothered him a great deal and upset him a lot when I called him a Turk.

"Wow! Wow! Unbelievable! People hating what they really are? That's unbelievable."

"Well Stefche, don't you think your own parents hate themselves for being who they are?"

"Yes, you're right. But I don't understand why? Why can't they be who they are?"

"I can't give you an answer... You'll have to ask them... I can tell you, however, what others have told me..."

"Yes, I would like that...It might give me some perspective as to why my parents are such fanatics..."

"One of the reasons Macedonians or what we call 'Grkomani' are loyal to the Greeks is because they grandfathers or great

grandfathers accepted the idea of 'Hellenism' and became Greeks. But in order to become Greeks they had to reject their 'real' identity... Not only their personal identity but also their entire Macedonian ethnicity... In other words they had to reject everyone who wasn't Greek including their own Macedonian family, their Macedonian neighbours, the Macedonian people in their village and all the people that were Macedonian in general. In those days you couldn't openly be anything other than Greek if you wanted to live in Greece."

"So, how did your family remain Macedonian?"

"It didn't. While your great grandfather voluntarily accepted to be a Greek, my great grandfather accepted it unwillingly. The Greeks changed his last name, his first name, the names of all his family members... but deep inside his heart he remained Macedonian and kept his real identity a secret. Then over time, as we all grew older and could keep a secret, he told us that we were Macedonians and not Greeks. This was passed on from generation to generation. I found out I wasn't a Greek from my parents. One day my mother told me I wasn't Greek. She had to tell me because I was becoming a nuisance. When I started going to public school in Greece, I sang the heroic Greek songs I had learned in class. I even sang them at home. One day as I paraded around the house like a proud Greek yelling I was born a Greek and was ready to die for Greece, my mother took me aside and told me to stop saying that. Fearing that I might tell my teacher she had to tell me why. She told me the entire 'secret'. In short, she told me we were Macedonians, not Greeks. I had never heard the word 'Macedonians' before and it sounded very strange to me but I listened to her and promised her I would stop singing Greek songs and would keep her secret safe."

"And who were these Greek heroes you sang about?"

"They were the murdering thugs who tortured and killed Macedonians in an attempt to turn them into Greeks, so that Macedonia could be Greek. So when someone says to you 'Macedonia is Greek' just remember how many Macedonians had to suffer and die so that Macedonia could be Greek."

"Oh, man, that is cruel..."

“What was even crueler was what happened to the widows and orphans of the Macedonian men who fought for Greece during the Greek-Turkish War (1919-1922). The wives and children of the Macedonian men who fought for Greece and were killed during that war didn't receive any compensation or benefits for their sacrifice and were left to starve. The reason for that, according to the Greeks, was because these men weren't Greek. According to them they were Bulgarians. This is how the Greeks treated the Macedonians who sacrificed themselves for Greece.

The Macedonians weren't the only people that were mistreated by the Greeks. I heard stories from two people of how the Turkish Christian settlers and colonists from Asia Minor were treated. You know the people that were deposited in Macedonia after the population exchanges between Greece and Turkey that took place in the 1920's. They too were beaten by the Greek authorities for speaking Turkish to one another. Most of the Turkish Christian people that were exiled were rich and educated. They lost everything when they were kicked out of Turkey... just because they were Christian. And they too had to suffer pain and humiliation alongside the Macedonians. Unfortunately, in the Greek social scale they were levels above the Macedonians. They were considered to be 'true Greeks'. Now they are the 'real' Macedonians, descendants of the ancient Macedonians and we're still third class citizens without a single basic human right.”

“I, I just don't know about all this... I have a hard time accepting it. And if I do accept it, I'll never recover from it...”

“By now you must agree that it's a curse to be Macedonian, to know the truth and not be able to do anything about it! Many Macedonians felt this way and those who dared to do anything ended up dead or exiled... If your parents were so loyal to the Greeks and the Greeks loved them so much, why did they leave and go to Canada?”

“I don't know...”

“They left because they had no hope of advancing in Greece. They were treated just like the rest of us, despite their loyalty. A Macedonian is always a Macedonian, it's our fate. One day, a

generation or two later, your family would have turned on the Greeks... They know that. I'm sure you would turn on the Greeks once you find out who you are and what they have done to you and your people. The Greeks don't want us... loyal or not..."

"You never did explain to me why Macedonians are loyal to the Greeks. What other reasons do they have... Is it because they're ignorant like me?"

"Well, some are ignorant but many feel that they can avoid trouble and humiliation if they 'become Greeks', others think they can gain advantage over Macedonians. Others feel they can function as equals to the Greeks in Greek society. But it doesn't always work out that way. I'll give you a few examples where Macedonians loyal to the Greeks fell flat on their faces.

One man from the village Trnaa, a neighbouring village, now called Prasino in Greek, was very loyal to the Greeks to the point that he informed on his villagers to the Greek police. He had a son who had very high marks in public school but when he applied to go to high school he was rejected. The school board told him his son's marks weren't good enough. His father tried everything but he couldn't get his son in to attend higher education. Eventually the man gave up and moved his family to Canada. In Canada his son was one of the top students in his school despite the language difficulties.

Another man from the village Zhelevo, another neighbouring village, now called Andartikon in Greek, also loyal to the Greeks had a smart son whom the Greeks also rejected. That man too moved his family to Canada. His son finished medical school and worked as a skilled surgeon. Unfortunately he was killed in a car accident. His father was devastated and died soon after that.

This other story I heard from people and I don't know where this particular young man was from but when he was an adult he joined the Greek military. He was an orphan, his parents were both killed during the Greek Civil War and he was adopted by a Greek family. He didn't know that he was Macedonian.

One day when the Greek army was doing exercises over the frozen Lake Prespa on the Greek side of the border, the ice broke and the

general leading the exercises fell into the water and would have drowned if not for this young man who jumped into the cold water to save him. In gratitude the general told him that if he ever needed anything he could count on him to help him.

The Greek military, for this young man, was his family and he did his best expecting to be promoted... but after years passed... nothing. Eventually he wanted to know why he had been denied promotions and made many inquiries but no one would tell him why he was being held back. Finally he decided to go and see the general who by now was retired. The general promised to help him. Sometime later the general called him back and told him that his promotions were denied because he was the son of 'slavs'.

The young man was devastated. He quit the military and, after he found out he had an aunt living in Canada, he moved to live with her. He didn't speak any other language besides Greek so, until he learned English, he refused to speak Greek. I was told that he is also trying to learn Macedonian. That's what I was told."

"Oh man, oh man and I thought I had problems..."

"My friend you will have problems, the moment you open your mouth and start telling people that you are Macedonian..."

"How do you do it? How do you cope with the crap?"

"I have known that I was Macedonian from an early age, from a long time ago and I've adapted. I learned how to cope with the negativity to a point that it has become normal for me... But I can't say it doesn't affect me. I get upset every time I read something or watch television and hear this and that about the 'ancient Greeks', about the ancient Macedonians being Greek, how Philip and Alexander were Greek, how Cleopatra was Greek, and so on. It doesn't bother me when the Greeks say this but it does when outsiders say it, especially the English who never miss an opportunity to tell the world about how 'everything' about the ancients was Greek, even though nothing about the ancients was Greek. If you want to learn more about this you should read my book 'The little book of big Greek lies' which you can find at:

<http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/The-Little-Book-of-Big-Greek-Lies.pdf>.”

“I will...”

“Stefche, I’ve taken enough of your time today. We should go home now and pick it up again next Friday...”

“I agree...” and with that we both went our separate ways.

Part 8 – About Macedonia

The next Friday we met, Stefche had some questions... He said:

“A couple of Fridays ago you mentioned that the Macedonian people had a massive uprising in 1903, I believe you called it Ilinden. You also mentioned that the Great Powers, through Bulgaria, made sure the uprising was sabotaged from the inside. I know you said you didn’t want to talk about it but can you at least tell me something about how it was sabotaged? Was Greece also involved?”

“No, Greece wasn’t involved... Not directly... But Greece refused to sell weapons and ammunition to the Macedonian revolutionaries. The history behind the 1903 Ilinden Uprising is a little complicated when it comes to Great Power involvement and how they worked through their proxy Bulgaria to weaken both the Ottomans and the Macedonians and prepared the grounds for Macedonia’s invasion and occupation. Like I said before, the Great Powers in 1878 had already decided that there would be no Macedonia and that Macedonian territory would be divided between Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria. However there was no schedule as to when this would happen.

But when the Macedonians started preparing for their liberation, the Great Powers, through Bulgaria, decided to take advantage of the situation. They chose to use Bulgaria because the Macedonian revolutionaries associated with Bulgaria much more than with any of Macedonia’s other neighbours. Besides, there was a huge Macedonian population that had immigrated to Bulgaria, which could also be used to manipulate the Macedonians.”

“So, what exactly did the Bulgarians do?”

“Are you sure you want to know more about this... It has nothing to do with Greece?”

“Yes I do. If it involves Macedonia I want to know...”

“Okay. Some of the Macedonian revolutionary leaders in those days were aware of, or at least suspected that the Great Powers were planning at some future time to divide Macedonia between Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria. But before that could happen, the Great Powers had to take Macedonia out of the hands of the Ottomans. The Macedonian leaders had realized that in order for Macedonia to remain intact it had to remain as part of the Ottoman Empire... but not under the existing circumstances. They wanted Macedonia to be given autonomy as a province of the Ottoman Empire. At the same time they realized that the Ottoman Empire had to be strengthened in order to resist the Great Powers from destroying it. Unfortunately this wasn't possible at the time because Macedonia was under Ottoman occupation and the Macedonian people were fighting against the Ottomans; struggling to liberate themselves. No Macedonian was prepared to stay in the Ottoman Empire without major concessions. Besides, many Macedonians didn't believe Macedonia would be divided and felt it would be madness to continue to be slaves under the Ottomans. The Ottomans, on the other hand, didn't want to give Macedonia autonomy. They didn't believe the European Great Powers would defeat them and somehow believed they would survive without Macedonia's help... which was wishful thinking of course. Later I found out from a Turk that the Ottomans were willing to make Macedonia an autonomous province but it was the Macedonians who resisted, they wanted outright independence. But I couldn't verify that.”

“So, what happened?”

“Well, when the Great Powers found out that the Macedonians were preparing to either join the Ottoman Empire or fight to liberate themselves through a massive uprising, they began to accelerate their plans to ‘liberate’ Macedonia through their proxies, particularly Bulgaria.

“What did the Bulgarians do?”

“They constantly interfered in Macedonian internal matters, especially through the Macedonian immigrants in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian propaganda worked overtime to convince the Macedonian people that it was time to rise up and liberate themselves... and they

would be right behind them to help. The idea that the Ottomans were the enemy was strictly emphasized and that was that...

Most Macedonians couldn't understand how it would be beneficial for them to continue to be slaves to the Ottomans. And for that reason they were against an Ottoman-Macedonian alliance and tended to believe the Bulgarians.

And like I said, the Ottomans, on the other hand, didn't want to give Macedonia autonomy. Why should they? Macedonia was already theirs.

However, the Macedonian leaders who wanted autonomy for Macedonia and for it to remain in the Ottoman Empire as an Ottoman province figured that in time they could convince the Ottomans to see things their way. They figured that by agitation, by attacking them from the inside, the Ottomans would eventually get tired of fighting and give them what they wanted; their autonomy.

The Great Powers unfortunately didn't like that and looked for ways to stifle the Macedonians. And they did. Every time the Macedonian people made any gains, the Bulgarians would interfere and sabotage them. Instead of helping the Macedonians the Bulgarians constantly hampered their efforts.

Eventually the Bulgarians succeeded in dividing the Macedonians into two factions, the internal and the external faction. The internal faction struggled for an independent Macedonia while the external faction struggled for Macedonia to join Bulgaria. The story is a bit more complicated but you can understand what I'm getting at."

"Yes I do. Please go on."

"To make sure that Macedonia wouldn't become independent, either through winning an uprising against the Ottomans or by joining the Ottomans, the Bulgarians escalated their interference in Macedonia's internal matters to a point where they influenced an early uprising; before the Macedonian people were ready to fight. To learn more about this read my three interviews entitled 'Analysis of Historical events in Greek Occupied Macedonia' which can be found at: <http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/Analysis-of->

historical-events-in-Greek-occupied-Macedonia.pdf,
<http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/Analysis-of-historical-events-in-Greek-occupied-Macedonia-2.pdf>, and
http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/Analysis-of-Historical_Events-in-Greek-Occupied-Macedonia-Part-3.pdf.

The Bulgarians succeeded in starting the Ilinden Uprising early, before the people were ready to fight. The idea was to start the uprising early, before any deals were made with the Ottomans and before the Macedonians were fully prepared to fight. By getting them to fight one another the Great Powers, through Bulgaria, aimed to weaken both the Macedonians and the Ottomans to make an invasion of Macedonia possible. And they succeeded because ten years after the Ilinden uprising Macedonia was invaded, occupied and partitioned as planned between Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria.

But, as it turned out, Bulgaria got screwed. For all its effort it only got 10% of Macedonia whereas Greece, which invested the least effort, received 51% and Serbia only 39%. The part that Serbia occupied in 1913 became a Republic of Yugoslavia in August 1944. Then in 1991, after Yugoslavia broke up it became an independent state. Today we call that part of Macedonia, the Republic of Macedonia.

“Did the Bulgarians help the Macedonians?”

The Bulgarians promised the Macedonians many things including military help but none of it was delivered. They told the Macedonians ‘you just start the uprising and we’ll be right there behind you, to help you. We’ll send our army to help you liberate yourselves.’ That never happened. The Bulgarians even sold the Macedonians rifles but wouldn’t sell them bullets. And just like the Greeks, the Bulgarians were party to every evil that was committed against the Macedonians. And today they dare to say that the Macedonians are Bulgarians. Is this how Bulgaria treats its own people? I think not!

Even the Great Powers were there watching the Ilinden drama unfold. English ships were floating in the Aegean Sea watching villages burn in the hills and didn’t lift a finger to help. Some say they were there to stop the Bulgarians from invading. Others say

they were there to turn the tide... to stop the Macedonians from winning. All I can tell you is that they were there and did nothing to help save their Christian brothers from being slaughtered.”

“Is there anything good you can tell me that someone did for us?”

“I’m afraid not. Everyone looked after their own interests and didn’t care about us. I’m not saying that they should have cared about us and helped us, but there were better and more humane ways they could have treated us. But that would be asking for too much...”

“Man, I still can’t believe what I’m hearing. Are we cursed or something as a people?”

“We must be. When I was back in the village before we left for Canada, I used to sit with the old men and listen to their conversations. Some of their stories were tragic. They used to say ‘curse that Alexander for the crimes he committed, now we’re cursed because of that’. They would say that we are still suffering and paying for Alexander’s evil deeds, for the thousands he slaughtered; turning the rivers red. We are a cursed people...”

Another story they used to tell and laugh about it, was what happened to them when Greece attacked Turkey in the early 1920’s. They would say it took us 90 days to get to Ankara and one day to get back. When we were attacking them we used to yell ‘five Turks to a bayonet’ but then when they attacked us we ran like rabbits.

I could have learned a lot from those old men but I was too young to understand. They made history, the kind you can’t learn in school...”

“Well, I’m glad you remember all these things.... But now that we’re talking about the Bulgarians I have a question.”

“Go ahead, ask away...”

“I’ve heard many Greeks, or Grkomani’ as you call them, call the Macedonian language Bulgarian. Is there any truth to that?”

“No! And I can prove it. Let’s start with the Bulgarians. According to Bulgarian history the first Bulgarians arrived in the Balkans during the 7th century AD. They were a Turkic people and spoke a Turkish language. The Macedonians speak a Slavic language, so how can the Macedonian language be Bulgarian? On the other hand, the Macedonian people were already in the Balkans before the Bulgarians arrived, so what language were they speaking then? They were speaking the Macedonian language, of course, the same language they spoke before and after the Bulgarians arrived... the same language we speak today. If the Bulgarians spoke a Turkic language before they arrived in the Balkans and today they speak a Slavic language, then whose language are they speaking? And if the Bulgarians today claim the Macedonian language is Bulgarian, then the Bulgarian language must be Macedonian and not the other way around. In other words, the Bulgarians today speak the Macedonian language...”

“You have a point... You have a very good point. In other words by claiming the Macedonian language is Bulgarian the Bulgarians are in fact admitting they speak the Macedonian language and, therefore, the Bulgarian language is Macedonian.”

“Now you’ve got the idea but don’t say that to any Bulgarians because they might be liable to bite your head off.”

“I want to ask about the Serbians. I assume things were different with the Serbians?”

“The Serbians too committed the same or should I say similar acts of evil against the Macedonian people. The Serbians sent settlers to Macedonia, mostly Serbian and Montenegrin military officers, to administer their newly acquired Macedonian territory and gave them the best and most fertile lands. The Serbians also changed people’s names from Macedonian to Serbian and began to teach the Macedonian people Serbian. In school, children were told they were Slavs who had come to the Balkans and that Macedonia’s history began in the 6th century AD with the arrival of the Slavs.”

“What about the Albanians? Were they any better? I understand a small part of Macedonia was given to the Albanians?”

“That’s true. Albania was given a small part of Macedonia. The Albanians in Macedonia were deposited there by the Ottomans. The Muslim Albanians were allies of the Ottomans and were predominantly responsible for spying on the Macedonians. They too committed horrific crimes during the Ottoman occupation. After the Ottoman occupation the Macedonian people lived peacefully with the Albanians, that is, until the Republic of Macedonia became independent. After that, instigated by the West, especially the United States, they too started causing problems, especially in 2001 when they rose up against the Macedonians. You know the rest...”

“Yes, yes I do... So, what else can you tell me about our new occupiers?”

“Well, let me put it this way, all of them want more of Macedonia and demonstrated that over the years, especially the Bulgarians and Albanians. The Bulgarians want all of Macedonia and joined the side that offered them more of Macedonia during the two world wars. It was easy for Hitler to offer more of Macedonia to the Bulgarians because he had nothing to lose. It wasn’t the case with Churchill who didn’t want to displease Greece by offering Bulgaria more of Macedonia’s territory.

As for the Albanians...? They are allies and special friends of the Americans. The Americans gave them Kosovo and also want to give them the western part of the Republic of Macedonia. Even though they are a minority in Macedonia, they act like they are the majority. They literally run the country.”

“So, Macedonia played an important role in how the wars were shaped? That’s interesting...”

“There is more to it than that. Let’s say that there can be no Greece or Bulgaria without Macedonia...”

“What do you mean?”

“It doesn’t take a genius to see that Greece ‘expropriated’ everything that is ancient about Macedonia and Bulgaria expropriated everything that is modern. The dividing line is the 6th century AD. The Greeks claim that Macedonia and its entire ancient people,

including Philip II and Alexander the Great, were Greek. Bulgaria, on the other hand, claims that Macedonia and the entire modern Macedonian population including Gotse Delchev, the supreme commander of the Macedonian revolutionary force, are Bulgarian.”

“What a quagmire... Will it ever be straightened out?”

“Yes, but not by the Macedonians alone...! It will take Great Power intervention to straighten it out.”

“How do you mean?”

“Well the Great Powers of yesterday who signed the 1913 Bucharest Treaty to partition Macedonia are the same Great Powers of today and as long as they are in power they will dictate the rules of what happens to Macedonia. The rules to this day have been, as we know them, ‘Macedonians do not exist and Macedonia shall belong to Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Albania’...”

“What about the Republic of Macedonia. Didn’t it become independent in 1991?”

“Yes but both times it surfaced, once in 1944 and the other time in 1991, it never received full support from the Great Powers. Look at the problems we’re facing today with Greece and Bulgaria? Both of these countries are supported by the United States in their endeavours to keep us from achieving our goals. If you want to know more about American influence in Macedonian and Greek affairs, read Risto Nikovski’s book entitled ‘America’s Role in Macedonia’s Troubled Journey to International Recognition (1991 – 2013) Second Edition’ which you can find at this link: <http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/America%27s-Role-in-Macedonia%27s-Troubled-Journey-to-International-recognition.pdf>.”

“What about Serbia...? Part of Macedonia was given to Serbia by the same Great Powers, wasn’t it?”

“Yes but Serbia is a Russian ally and an enemy of the United States. The Western Great Powers not only took Macedonia from Serbia but bombed it for over 70 days and took Kosovo. But... If Serbia

ever joins the European Union, mark my words, it will ask that the Republic of Macedonia be given back to it. Serbia is being punished for being a Russian ally.”

“Do you think so?”

“Yes, unless of course the 1913 Treaty of Bucharest is annulled. But that will never happen.”

“Why not?”

“Well, what can Macedonia offer the Great Powers that Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria can't? All Serbia has to do is break relations with Russia and become an ally of the United States in exchange for getting its part of Macedonia back. If I were an Albanian today I would think very carefully... If Serbia becomes a Western ally what do you think will happen to Kosovo? The other thing to think about is Russia's growing influence in geopolitics...” I said and after a short pause added. “I think we've said enough for one day, don't you?”

“I'm grateful to you for all this... I'll see you next Friday...” replied Stefche and walked away shaking his head from side to side.

Part 9 – Lead up to the Greek Civil War

The next Friday we met Stefche was excited to see me and tell me how happy he was to have met me.

“Since I met you a whole world opened up in front of me. It was sitting there in front of me but I just couldn’t see it. And despite all the tragic things that have happened to our people, I’m glad that I’m Macedonian. Now I want to know more... I want to know everything there is about us...”

“You know my friend there is more than one side to our story. Just being Macedonian isn’t enough; you’ll have to accept others and be accepted by them. Otherwise you’ll either become a lonely old man hiding a secret... a lonely man with a cross to bear... or a hated, scorned pariah. You have to be careful how you deal with your new found knowledge and how you use it with your family and friends, especially in your autobiography.”

“If there is a will there is a way... I’ll learn how to handle it... I have given up on writing my autobiography. What could I possibly say about myself, with all the things I’ve learned...?”

“Stefche, what you’ve learned could be your autobiography; a man struggling to discover his identity. What could be better than that?”

“I’ll think about it but for now, for this moment, I need to learn more... Tell me more about our struggles...”

“Everything I know I’ve written down in my books. You should read my books.”

“Yes, but it is different when you can look in the eyes of the person telling the story and feel his emotions... his passion... than just reading...”

“Okay, okay. I haven’t told you much about the Greek Civil War. It was another tragic event in our people’s history. Maybe today we can talk about that...”

“Yes, yes... that’ll be fantastic... Tell me more about the Greek Civil War...”

“Let me begin by saying that the Greek Civil War was a perpetrated war and by that I mean it was started to serve two purposes. One was to destroy the communists in Greece and the other was to get rid of the Macedonians living in Greece.

After the Second World War ended, the countries that were affected by the war were divided into zones of influence. Greece fell under English influence and the English didn’t want a Greece with communists or Macedonians living in it. England was afraid that if the Greek people voted for a communist party in Greece and that party came to power, England would lose Greece. As you know Greece is an English proxy. In its entire existence as a country it has served England as a bulwark against Russia gaining access to the Mediterranean Sea. So Greece was very important to England and it didn’t want to lose it under any circumstances.

Later, during the Cold War, when the world was divided between East and West and the Iron Curtain, as Churchill called it, was drawn, it divided Greece from Yugoslavia. This meant that the Iron Curtain divided the Greek part of Macedonia from the Yugoslav part (formerly the Serbian part). I mention this to you now because I want you to remember it. I’ll explain later.

Like I said, two things prompted England to take immediate action in Greece during the Second World War. One was the massive number of communists and the other was the large number of Macedonians living in northern Greece.

As far as the English were concerned there were no Macedonians living inside Greece. The Greeks themselves had said so. According to Greek statistics from the late 1920’s, after the population exchanges took place and all minorities were evicted, only Greeks lived in Greece, that is 98% pure Greeks and 2% Muslim Greeks. Unfortunately for the English that wasn’t true.

During the German, Italian and Bulgarian occupation, England had set up spy rings in the Balkans to monitor the war situation, particularly to organize and connect the internal resistance movements. One such ring was set up in Florina, the city we Macedonians call Lerin. My father had told me about that but later, as I did my own research, I found an article written by a Captain Evans who was present there at the time.

One interesting thing that Captain Evans found and wrote about was that a large number of Macedonians were living there. He found that the majority of the people living around Lerin were Macedonians and spoke Macedonian. He had visited Greece before and, as far as he knew, everyone in Greece was Greek and spoke Greek. So this was a surprise for Captain Evans which he felt was important. So he informed his command in London about it. He also reported that these people were locals, not Yugoslavs, and had lived there for many generations.”

“Why were these people speaking Macedonian, especially in front of strangers, weren’t they prohibited from speaking Macedonian by law?”

“Yes it’s true, they were prohibited by the Greek government but by this time the Greek government had capitulated and the new invaders, especially the Italians, didn’t care what language the locals spoke. The locals naturally took advantage of their new found freedom and started speaking Macedonian openly.

So after Captain Evans filed his report and sent it to London, in which he estimated that about 120,000 Macedonians lived in that part of Greece, England went into panic mode and looked for ways to get rid of them. England used, or I should say abused, Captain Evans report to create plans to forcefully remove the Macedonians from their ancestral homeland, just because they were Macedonians, and this was genocide.

England feared that if Stalin of the USSR found out about them he would have two reasons to ask for giving them independence: One, because they were indigenous people living on their ancestral lands and two, they were fighting on the side of the allies. But according

to the Atlantic Charter, about which you can find more information on pages 129 and 130 of my book: 'Macedonians and the NOT so Civil War in Greece', which can be found at this link: <http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/Macedonians-and-the-NOT-so-Civil-War-in-Greece.pdf>, the Macedonian people in Greece had the right to make territorial adjustments and the right to self-determination because they fought on the side of the allies... which they did. This worried England to the point where it decided it was time to 'get rid' of them from Greece."

"But how? How does one get rid of 120,000 people, unnoticed?"

"Well it seems the English have ways... Since these people lived close to the Greek-Yugoslav border, the easiest thing to do was drive them out of Greece and into Yugoslavia. The English had good relations with the Yugoslav government of the time and an agreement was reached. But unfortunately for the English, Tito and his communists took over Yugoslavia and derailed their plan. It took some time before the English could convince Tito to do the same but by the time they did, WW II was over.

The English, however, still wanted the Macedonians out of Greece and the communists destroyed so they had to invent new ways to do it; especially since Tito was still willing and open to the idea. And they did. Somewhere down the line the English, with help from the Greek government they had created and the Greek communists, they succeeded."

"Are you telling me that the Greek communists helped the English; to destroy themselves and get rid of the Macedonians? That sounds ridiculous!"

"It wasn't all communists. It was the top communist leadership that was involved, both Siantos and Zahariadis were English agents."

"Who were these people?"

"They were both general secretaries of the Greek communist party. A general secretary occupied the top leadership position in a communist party, similar to a president in the West. If you want to know more about them (Siantos and Zahariadis) read my book:

“Macedonians and the NOT so Civil War in Greece” which can be found at this link:

<http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/Macedonians-and-the-NOT-so-Civil-War-in-Greece.pdf>. I have dedicated a chapter for each. It is important for people to know who these people were and that they secretly worked for the English during WW II and the Greek Civil War.

People say, and even historians agree, that Siantos and Zahariadis ran the Communist Party of Greece (CPG) like a couple of idiots. Almost everything they did made no sense. They acted like they didn't know what they were doing. They've been called incompetent, fools, idiots, etc. The more polite people said they made many 'mistakes'. However, if you view their actions from the point of view that they were English agents and worked for English interests, then things start to make sense.

Siantos led the Greek communist party during World War II and Zahariadis led it after him during the Greek Civil War. They both did things that were destructive to both the Macedonians, who were their best allies, and to the communists who supported them. They made too many 'mistakes' and did things that made no 'sense' but I'd rather you read my book than discuss it here. I'll give you some highlights.”

“No problem. I'll read the book... eventually... So, please go on.”

“Siantos signed a number of Agreements with the English that were detrimental to the communists but benefited the English. He also disbanded the lead communist army (ELAS) and left the progressive Macedonian and Greek people defenseless and at the mercy of the fascist terrorists who earlier were allied with the occupiers and hated both the Macedonians and the communists. Siantos allowed and encouraged these terrorists to attack the Macedonian people, especially the innocent Macedonian civilian population.

One has to wonder why? What else could be going on?

After World War II ended, the communists, the very same people who liberated Greece from the German, Italian and Bulgarian Fascist occupiers, were left defenseless to be tormented by the same

people who yesterday were allies of the Fascists. Siantos and later Zahariadis allowed this to happen... They created the conditions for unchecked terror to take place after Siantos, at the request of the English, disarmed and disbanded ELAS; the communist led army. Many Macedonians served in that army and many ended up in prison on the dreaded dry Greek islands.

While the rest of the world celebrated the armies that liberated them, the army that liberated Greece was punished and sent to prison.

Why?

Because England wanted it that way! It seemed like England was preparing Greece for something! But for what?!

That will become apparent when you look at what Tito was doing in Skopje. At the same time terror was raging in Greece, directed against the communists and the Macedonian population. Tito and his Yugoslav cronies were preparing the Macedonians from Greece for war.

For what war you may ask?!

WW II had ended and no one wanted to fight. But, nonetheless, Tito created a liberation organization called NOF and sent it to Greece, where Macedonians lived, to start a liberation war.

Tito and the Macedonians in NOF told the Macedonian people in Greece to start a liberation war to liberate themselves from Greece and unite with the Yugoslav part of Macedonia. You got that? The Macedonian people were told to start a war with Greece, liberate themselves and join the Yugoslav part of Macedonia. Tito, the leader of the communist party of Yugoslavia, told them that.

Earlier, if you remember, I told you that the Iron Curtain separated the Greek part of Macedonia from the Yugoslav part. So the only way these Macedonians could breach the Iron Curtain and 'unite' Macedonia was by fighting against the entire Western world, including the United States, and winning. How was that possible?

But nonetheless, our friend Tito encouraged the Macedonians in Greece to fight.

So my friend what do you make of this? Were the Macedonians capable of such a feat? Of course not! But then why would Tito suggest it to them if not for an ulterior motive?

So when the local Macedonians in Greece refused to join NOF and fight, both the Greek fascists and some Greek communists escalated their terror activities against the Macedonian villages to a point where people began to fear for their lives. Many ran up into the mountains to save themselves and began arming themselves... and naturally NOF was right there to help them.

NOF started creating cells in almost every village and began to recruit Macedonians, first to fight against the terror and later to 'liberate and unite Macedonia'.

At this point one needs to ask, 'What were the people in NOF thinking... that they could win this war?' Or I should say they weren't thinking at all and were blindly following Tito's orders.

Please don't misunderstand me. The Macedonian people were true patriots but most of all they'd had it with Greek rule and the abuse they were taking. So they were ready to 'do anything' to change their situation. That's how England trapped them, took advantage of them and got them to 'pick up guns' and fight. Once they picked up guns it was over for them. A situation was created in Greece where the Greeks 'had no choice but to fight back and protect Greece's integrity'. And from then on whatever Greece did against them would be legal."

"I don't see how England trapped the Macedonians. It makes no sense."

"Let me explain. England created the conditions, false conditions, for the Macedonians to believe that they would get what they truly desired – to be free, to be recognized as Macedonians and to have a piece of land called Macedonia... but only if they fought against the Greeks and won."

“I understand now. One more thing... How does it make it legal for Greece to kill Macedonians, if that’s what you mean...?”

“You know that in Canada if you pick up a gun and shoot at people, especially at the authorities, the police will shoot back and if you refuse to surrender they’ll eventually kill you. Is it legal if the police shoot and kill you because you shot at them?”

“Yes.”

“Well, the Macedonian people in Greece picked up guns to defend themselves from the Greek terrorists but the Greek propaganda machine was busy telling the world that some bandits from Yugoslavia had invaded Greek Macedonia and were trying to take it from Greece and give it to Tito... to join it with Yugoslavia. As for the Greek authorities, as far as they were concerned NOF had been created in Yugoslavia and therefore wasn’t only a Yugoslav organization but was dispatched to Greece to start a war... inside Greece. So it would only be reasonable for Greece to fight back and defend its territory, right?”

“So that’s what you mean by legal. It makes sense. I must say it was a clever plan. The English are clever that way. No wonder they had a huge empire.”

The Macedonian people, on the other hand, had no reason to ‘mistrust’ Tito and their Macedonian NOF leaders. They witnessed the creation of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia in Yugoslavia and wanted the same thing in Greece. They figured Tito was a clever world leader and was capable of doing what he promised them. But they had no idea what England and its accomplices were planning for them.

Now to truly understand the tragedy of our story we must examine what the Greek government and the Greek communists were doing in the meantime. But before we do that let me tell you something else that was tragic. Let me tell you what the Greeks did to secure their position in Macedonia.

Did you know that the Greeks created conditions for the Macedonians to fight each other?

I'm not talking about Macedonians in the Greek Civil War fighting on the Greek government side against Macedonians in the communist resistance. You know that both sides recruited Macedonians and forced them to fight one other. I'm going to tell you about that later but for now I want to tell you about how the Macedonians in ELAS, the communist led army, fought against the Macedonian freedom fighters in Kostur Region. I'll only give you the highlights here... you'll have to read my books to learn more."

"Okay, I'll do that..."

"During the triple occupation, Kostur Region was occupied by the Italians. But even during the occupation many Greeks were active in the region and made life a living hell for the Macedonians. So one day the Macedonians appealed to the Italians to 'do something' to protect them. The Italians said no... They insisted that these were local and internal matters and none of their concern. But since the Italians hated these Greeks, they offered to arm the Macedonians so that they could defend themselves. As a result the people of Kostur Region organized themselves and created armed bands in practically every village.

As long as the people of Kostur didn't interfere in the affairs of the occupiers they were allowed to freely carry on with life. So the armed bands encouraged the people to speak Macedonian, open Macedonian schools, perform liturgy in Macedonian, etc.

These armed bands, however, were still armed and active after WW II was concluded and the occupiers had gone. The Greek communists tried to disarm and disband them but they couldn't. The bands, especially when they combined to form a huge force, were too strong for them. At the same time these people wanted to live free and out of the hands of the Greeks. In other words, they wanted to remain free Macedonians and fought hard to keep it that way."

"I heard somewhere that the Kostur bands were Bulgarian... Were they...?"

"No! There were also Bulgarian bands but these particular bands were Macedonian. The Bulgarians tried to recruit them but they

refused... they knew better. The only people the Bulgarians recruited were criminals and lowlifes and they were few and far between. The Greeks unfortunately labeled all of them Bulgarian and used that information in their propaganda campaigns to mask the fact that they were Macedonians fighting for their rights. The Greek communists especially hated them and the bands hated the Greek communists just as much...They were very suspicious of the communists.

So, with Yugoslav help, the Greek communists were convinced that the only way they could get rid of these bands was by getting Macedonians to fight against Macedonians.

So the Greeks created an exclusively Macedonian army called the Slavo-Macedonian National Liberation Army (SNOV) and unleashed it on them. But first they convinced the Macedonians that these bands were Bulgarian and worked exclusively for Bulgarian interests. Many Macedonians to this day still believe these bands worked for the Bulgarians.

In any case, when the Macedonian army clashed with the Kostur freedom fighting bands and the bands found out that these people were Macedonians and had a Macedonian army, they not only surrendered but joined the Macedonian army.

Regretfully, because these freedom fighters were fierce fighters and refused to give up their Macedonian ideals, the Greek communists killed them, one by one, in the most horrible way. You'll have to read my books to find out more about that.

The Macedonian army (SNOV) was disbanded right after the bands were disarmed and disbanded. So in reality, there was no 'Macedonian army', it was just a ruse to disarm the Kostur Region freedom fighting bands.

Now I'll tell you more and prove to you that the Greek Civil War was perpetrated with the aim of getting rid of the Macedonians and the communists and that neither the Macedonians nor the communists had a chance of ever winning."

“Okay, I’d like that very much... But it’s getting late... Can we pick it up next Friday?”

“Yes we can...” I replied and with that we departed and went our separate ways.

Part 10 – About the Greek Civil War

The next Friday we met Stefche looked tired and a little sad. I didn't know what to make of it. He was my friend and I couldn't just dismiss what was bothering him without asking, "Is everything okay with you?"

"Yes, everything is okay... It's something I have to work out for myself..." he replied and looked at me. I didn't say anything.

After a short pause he said, "It's my parents... I haven't been able to sleep... They have been at me to register my children in the Greek school at our local Greek church. I don't want to send them there and neither does my wife. After what I've learned I honestly can't send them to Greek school. It would be hypocritical... I just don't know what to do..."

"My friend, this is your family... I told you how it would be the moment you met me and listened to me. I know it's hard for you but this is your family. It's important to maintain a good relationship with them and not let what you have learned interfere... It's not worth it..."

"What would you do?"

"I don't know but I wouldn't sacrifice my relationship with my parents over 'historic Macedonian matters'..."

"How would you handle it if you were me?"

"These are your children and you and your wife must do what you think is best for them... what your hearts tell you... what makes you happy... or in your case what makes you less sad. But whatever you do keep the Macedonian issue out of it."

"I guess you're right. I'll have to think about it some more. Sorry about that. This is my problem. Now tell me more about what happened during the Greek Civil War."

“Last Friday I told you about the Macedonian army that fought the Kostur freedom fighting bands being disbanded, but what I forgot to tell you was that the Greek communists wanted to destroy the Macedonian army. They wanted to send it south into Greece where they could encircle and destroy it. But some Macedonians must have got wind of it and refused to go south. One of the leaders, a fellow from our neighbouring village Statitsa, told the Greeks ‘we don’t want to go south, we want to stay here where our homes and families are so we can protect them, we have no business going down south’. Because of their insubordination the Greek communists made preparations to attack them. But to avoid bloodshed the Macedonians crossed over the northern Greek border and went to the Yugoslav part of Macedonia.

The composition of NOF was created from these soldiers. Later most of them returned to Greece and fought in the Greek Civil War.

A little later, after NOF recruited, trained and armed many Macedonians units, Tito abandoned NOF and passed it on to Zahariadis and the CPG. One day, the NOF leadership was invited to Skopje where the leaders weren’t asked but were told ‘now you go back there and fight. From now on you’ll be reporting to the CPG. The CPG will be your leader.’

And like good soldiers they went back and supposedly negotiated a merger between the Macedonian and Greek military units led by the communists. But this wasn’t a merger, it was a takeover. All the Macedonian officers and leaders were demoted to simple soldiers and sent to the mountains to fight. The new force was made up roughly of half Macedonian and half Greek soldiers but all of them were led by Greek officers... except for one. But he might just as well have been a Greek because he was a Grkoman, working for Greek interests.

NOF was subordinated to the CPG and all throughout the Greek Civil War had almost no rights and only served as a recruiter bringing more and more Macedonians into the meat grinder.

I also have to tell you that initially when the Macedonian people discovered a Macedonian army was being built, they began to join

in droves. Obviously the Greeks didn't want to be overpowered so the recruitment centres began to turn them back. The doctors told the volunteers they weren't fit to fight, which was ridiculous... Then, for 'mysterious reasons', when these young men tried to return to their homes, they were intercepted by government forces and Greek terror groups and disappeared. They were picked off and killed before they could return to their homes. As far as their families knew they had joined the Macedonian army and died fighting.

So now I have to ask you, 'if Tito and Zahariadis wanted the Macedonians to liberate themselves then why did they keep restraining them and not allowing them to create a large Macedonian army. Why didn't they allow them to lead their own people?'..."

"Obviously they were telling them one thing and doing another..."

"But for what reason?"

"Well, like you said, they had ulterior motives..."

"So, when Zahariadis had the chance to build up a large resistance force of about 60 thousand soldiers, he told the recruiters to only recruit about 5 thousand. The reason he gave was that he was going to try to seize power in Greece through the election process.

Then, after he lost in all the elections, he tried recruiting again but it was too late. The Greek governments in Athens in those days were very unstable and kept failing. It seemed like no party was able to hold onto power for too long.

When the English supported party finally seized power in Greece, it escalated the terror campaign against the Macedonians and the communists. And because of these terrorist actions, Zahariadis boycotted the next election and allowed another English supported party to win. When that too failed, Zahariadis told his supporters to vote for the liberal party to stop the extreme right from taking power. But after the liberals came to power they opened the way for the extremists to take over. Was that a mistake or was it done on purpose?"

“Obviously, from what you’re telling me, the Greeks were incapable of forming a stable government and naturally Zahariadis tried to help them. But what I don’t understand is if the majority of the people in Greece favoured the communist party, why didn’t they just vote communist?”

“Most of the people, especially in the rural areas where the populations were small, were terrorized by the extremists and threatened with death if they voted communist. In fact people were given ballots and told for whom to vote. It was a real mess; the people weren’t free to vote for who they wanted...”

“So, I guess they didn’t vote communist and were coerced to vote for the extremists...”

“That’s correct. When the political right took power it escalated its terror activities against the communists and Macedonians and began to arrest people. That’s when Zahariadis started thinking of seizing power by force, which eventually resulted in the start of what later was named the Greek Civil War. But by then recruitment had dried up and the best Zahariadis could do, at the peak of the war, was build up a force of no more than 25 to 30 thousand soldiers, half of whom happened to be Macedonian.

This was when NOF went into overdrive recruiting first Macedonian men and then, after the Macedonian children were sent out of the country in March 1948, Macedonian women.”

“The Macedonian children were sent out of the country?”

“Yes. I’m surprised you haven’t heard about that?”

“Who would tell me? My parents...?”

“You have a point. So, as the war escalated and started moving north into the heart of the Greek part of Macedonia, the Greek air force started bombing our villages. From what my mother told me the airplanes were dropping bombs on everything that moved. It wasn’t even safe for the animals. So to save the children from the Greek bombs, a program was started where all the children aged 2 to 14 living in the war zone were collected and evacuated north into

the Yugoslav part of Macedonia. This was supposed to be temporary, until the war was over, but as it turned out it became permanent. When the war was over the Greeks wouldn't allow the children to return so they ended up exiled all over Eastern Europe to this day. But this wasn't the worst of it. When the communists started collecting children, overwhelmingly Macedonian children, the Greeks, including the Fascists in the Greek government, complained to the world that 'the Slav bandits' were kidnapping 'Greek' children. And the Greeks also began to collect children, including many Macedonian children under a program called "pedomazoma". Unfortunately for us these children were brainwashed and indoctrinated to become Greeks. If you remember earlier I told you a story about a Greek soldier who didn't know that he was Macedonian and who, as an orphan, was adopted by a Greek family? He was one of those children collected by the Greek army from our villages. It was the Greeks who were kidnapping Macedonian children, taking them by force, and not the communists. From what I know from our people the parents of the children from our village, for example, sent their children voluntarily. They weren't kidnapped or taken by force. My mother was one of those children who qualified for evacuation. But she stayed behind to look after her ailing mother who was very sick and dying. Her younger brother left with the children and so did my other young uncle, my father's youngest brother."

"You mentioned 'Slav bandits', who were they?"

"They were the Macedonians, the local indigenous Macedonian people like you and me who were living in Greece. The Greek government called them 'Slavs' and claimed they had 'come from the north'. The Greeks didn't want to admit that Macedonians lived in Greece, so they concocted the idea that these people, the indigenous Macedonians, were foreigners; bandits that came to steal 'their' Greek Macedonia and give it to Tito. The communists were also accused of the same thing... but the communists supposedly were all Greeks who wanted to take the Greek part of Macedonia and give it to Tito. As a result they were bad people.

This is how the 'idea' that Tito 'created' the Macedonian identity was invented. Many Greeks, to this day, still believe that... that Tito 'created' the Macedonians. These were lies the English and Greek

governments concocted and perpetuated to hide the fact that Macedonians lived in Greece and that those calling themselves 'Macedonian' were nothing but Tito's agents. The idea that they were there to 'steal' their Macedonia aggravated the Greeks and riled them up. As a result they gave their support to the Greek government and demanded that it drive them out. There are many articles in newspapers of that time that echo their sentiments.

You must understand that the Greek Civil War was different things to different people. To the Macedonians it was an 'uprising'. The Macedonian people were told that they were fighting for their rights... to liberate themselves from the Greeks... to re-unite their Macedonia. The Greek people were told they were fighting to expel the 'Slav invaders, the 'bandits' and to destroy the communist menace which strived to steal their Macedonia and give it to Tito. The rest of the world was told that this was an ideological war between communists and capitalists. The name 'Greek Civil War' was coined much later, many years after the war ended..."

"Your family wasn't driven out... you told me that you were born in Greece. How did that happen?"

"Well, I told you how my mother ended up staying in Greece. My father was left behind because he was in prison. He was confined in the prison in the Greek island concentration camps.

I forgot to tell you that while helping Greece, England went bankrupt and the United States took its place. This was in March 1947. When the Americans took over they made every effort to destroy the resistance in Greece. Unfortunately for them, they continued to fail, that is until they brought in a general who specialized in guerilla warfare.

The Greeks had difficulty defeating the Macedonian and communist resistance because they were unable to anticipate where they were going to attack. But Van Fleet, the American general, suggested that in order to defeat the 'guerillas' the Greek government needed to rob them of their food and recruits. To rob them of their food, which was supplied by the surrounding civilian population, the Greek government evacuated all the villages and placed the people under guard in villages that had Greek army garrisons. To starve them of

their recruits the Greek government collected all the young men of military age and put them in prisons on the dry Greek islands in the Aegean Sea.

My father was taken to one of these Greek island prisons in 1947 and was released in 1951, a couple of years after the Greek Civil War ended...”

“Can I stop you here?...”

“Yes, but why?”

“You can tell me more about your family the next time we meet... Earlier you told me you would give me the highlights of the Greek Civil War but you’re giving me way too much information... too many details. I can’t remember all that....”

“Sorry about that. But if you do want to know more you should read my books, especially the material at these links:

<http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/Analysis-of-historical-events-in-Greek-occupied-Macedonia-2.pdf>

http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/Analysis-of-Historical_Events-in-Greek-Occupied-Macedonia-Part-3.pdf

<http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/Macedonians-and-the-NOT-so-Civil-War-in-Greece.pdf>

Now I’ll focus on the most important points that prove that the Greek Civil War wasn’t what it seemed.”

“Thank you.”

“Well, let’s put it this way, if Siantos and Zahariadis weren’t English agents, which we know they were, why did they do things that created conditions necessary to defeat the communists and suppress the Macedonians.

1. Siantos, for example, had a large army and could have resisted the English and the Greek government from landing in Athens. He

could have easily installed a communist government in Athens... but he didn't. He already had all kinds of cells everywhere running the country. But instead he acquiesced and allowed the English to install a Fascist government in Athens.

2. After the occupiers left, the communist led army could have gone to Solun and occupied it but instead the top communist leadership allowed the English to go in first, establish themselves, and then 'tell the world' that the England had liberated Solun. There too, in the heart of Macedonia, the communists allowed the English to take root.

3. If the top communist leaders really wanted to win in Greece and if they wanted to 'liberate' the Greek part of Macedonia, then why did they disarm and disband their own army and allow the Greek government, with England's blessing, to recruit former collaborators and Fascists?

4. Most important of all, both Siantos and Zaharadis knew they had the military power to take over Greece. Why did Zahariadis wait until the Greek government in Athens was strong enough before engaging it in combat... and with such a small force? In the heat of the war the Greek government had 600,000 soldiers, the most modern aviation, tanks, heavy artillery, etc. While the resistance had at most 30,000 lightly armed fighters, mortars and light cannons.

5. If the communists in Greece and Yugoslavia wanted the Macedonians to fight, win, liberate the Greek part of Macedonia and join it to the Yugoslav part, why didn't they allow the Macedonian people to raise their own large Macedonian army and lead it?

6. If Zahariadis wanted to win the war why did he replace his army's fighting tactics. Why did he drop his successful hit and run tactics and opt for stationary tactics and engage the Greek government army in a frontal attack. Was it because a 'stationary' army would make a better target for the Greek artillery and aviation to tear apart?

Historians tend to call all this 'mistakes' but they weren't mistakes; this was purposely done so the resistance forces would lose the war and be driven out.

7. Another puzzle that adds mystery to the Greek Civil War was Tito and the Yugoslav involvement. Not only was Tito supporting and fueling the war but he involved the Macedonians in it. Why did Tito create NOF in Skopje and send it to Greece to start a war. Was it because the English wanted it to look like Greece was being attacked from the outside?

Tito never asked the Macedonians if they wanted to start a war in Greece, he just ordered them to start it. Also, how did Tito know that a civil war was going to start in Greece at some future time? Unless this war was pre-planned?

The Macedonians didn't want to fight. Tito encouraged them and lied to them, telling them they could liberate the Greek part of Macedonia and unite it with the Yugoslav part, despite the fact that the Iron Curtain separated the two parts of Macedonia. Tito knew the Macedonians couldn't win, especially with the USA supporting Greece, but he made them get involved in a losing war anyway.

8. If the communists wanted the Macedonians to have rights as Macedonians then why did they call them 'Slavo-Macedonians' and why did they give them concessions (equal rights with the Greeks, autonomy and even independence to separate from Greece) and then immediately take them away?

One of the authors (Stoian Kochov) whose books I translated told me that in order to understand why the communists gave the Macedonians concessions you must look at the Greek Civil War in its entirety in chronological order. Look at the big picture of what events were taking place before the concessions were given and what resulted from them. He said that every time the Greek government needed to 'do something' which required the assistance of the Greek people, Zahariadis gave the Macedonians concessions. Immediately after that the Greek government would react negatively and get the Greek public riled up. Zahariadis also did this to 'motivate' the Macedonians to fight harder. You get the picture.

9. If Zahariadis cared so much for the Macedonians why didn't he surrender and make agreements with the Greek government to spare the civilian population. Why did he send all the people to Albania; outside the Greek border? The entire resistance force, including all

the Macedonian civilians, was evacuated to Albania when the war was concluding, after which Greece permanently closed its borders. My grandfather and grandmother, on my father's side, were part of those civilians. I never got to meet my grandfather, after whom I was named... he died in Poland several years after I was born.

10. And while all this was going on, Greece was passing all kinds of laws to make sure the Macedonians would be robbed of their rights, properties and assets. I have an entire chapter dedicated to this in my book 'The not so civil war in Greece' which can be found at this link: <http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/Macedonians-and-the-NOT-so-Civil-War-in-Greece.pdf>.”

Why was Greece passing laws to confiscate citizenships and properties even before the war was over? Did Greece know ahead of time that these people would be leaving en masse and crossing the border into Albania?

I can give you many examples where the top communist leadership made it possible for England and the Greek government to achieve their objectives; destroy the communists and get rid of the Macedonians.”

“Listen, I've heard enough for one day. My head is spinning... Can we pick it up next Friday?

“Sorry, next Friday I'll be busy with something else. Can we do it the Friday after?”

“Okay but you're buying dinner...”

“Okay, see you then...” I said and with that we both left.

Part 11 – Life in the village after the Greek Civil War

The next time we met I told Stefche, “A couple of Fridays ago I forgot to tell you that when the number of Macedonians in the communist army grew a little too large for their liking, the Macedonians were again ordered to go south and again they refused. When some realized what was going on, that they weren’t only being mistreated but also misled by the Greeks, they separated themselves from the Greek forces and again fled to Yugoslavia. In other words, they deserted the communist led Greek army... I’m telling you this because there were lasting consequences as a result of that, not only with the Greeks but also with the Macedonians who stayed and fought in the Greek Civil War.”

“What sort of consequences?”

“The fighters who fled must have realized that the Greek Civil War was a futile war and only served Greek interests, so they felt that the Macedonians who were still fighting in it were fighting for Greek interests. Unfortunately this became public knowledge and upset those who were still fighting in the Greek Civil War, who didn’t believe they were fighting for Greek interests and still believed they were fighting for their rights and to protect the Macedonian people in Greece. So, in response, they called those who had fled cowards and traitors for abandoning their comrades and their own families.

As a result, a verbal war was started between the Macedonians fighting in Greece and those who had deserted, which resulted in a deep divide which is ongoing to this day.”

“What sort of divide?”

“I didn’t know about the divide even after I wrote my book ‘Macedonians in Greece 1939 – 1949’, in 2009, which can be found at this link:

<http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/Macedonians-in-Greece-1939-1949.pdf>.

When I went to Macedonia for a visit, I had discussions with various people about my book and found out things I'd never heard of before. One of those things was this deep divide between our people. That's when I decided to start translating other people's books from Macedonian to English because these authors knew far more about the wars than I did. Up to that time I was misled to believe that the Macedonians hadn't written any books. I didn't know that books existed that contradicted the official Yugoslav narrative and that they were written by independent authors. But when Macedonia gained independence from Yugoslavia these books began to surface. Most of the books I translated were written by people who had either fought in the Greek Civil War or were Macedonian children who were exiled during the Greek Civil War."

"Again, let me stop you here. I'm more interested in knowing what happened to our families. I want to know things about which you haven't written in your books. You don't need to tell me things you've written in either your books or the ones you've translated. My interest right now is to know who we are and what happened to you and me personally."

"Got it. As far as your family is concerned I know nothing about them but I know your grandmother, on your father's side, was still alive when my family left the village."

"That's too bad. I wonder if my father served in the resistance."

"No way...! Your family was 'Grkoman' and wouldn't have served with the Macedonians or the communists. The Grkomani always served with the Greek political right. Your father was probably serving in the Greek government army or was hiding somewhere in a big city. Why don't you ask him?"

"I have... but he refuses to talk about it."

"Then you should ask someone who knew him in the past, like your aunt who calls you Stefche. Make the effort to find out whatever you can from her."

"Not now, maybe later... Now tell me about your family."

“Well, I told you about my mother and father. I have written about them in my book: ‘OSHCHIMA The Story of a Small Village in Western Macedonia’, which can be found at this link: <http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/Oschima.pdf>. In fact I’ve written about many Oshchimians and their tragic experiences in that book. You can also learn a lot about Oshchima.

I haven’t written much about my mother’s side of the family but my cousin Spiro has written a book called: ‘A story told about a person from Zhelevo A book about Risto Mavrovski’, which can be found at this link: <http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/A-Book-About-Risto-Mavrovski-English.pdf>. He has written extensively about my mother’s family.”

“I don’t want to know ‘everything’ about your family. Can you just give me a summary?”

“That I can do... Let’s start with my grandparents on my father’s side. They were too old to be directly involved in the Greek Civil War or to look after their farm and livestock so they were left in the house. While their other children participated directly in the war, my father was left behind to look after them and the house. And just when the war was about to end, they were told... the communist leadership told them to leave their home and go to Albania because the Greek army was coming and the soldiers would kill them. And so they did... with the understanding that this would only be temporary. That’s what the communist leaders told them.

Unfortunately it turned out to be permanent. After my grandparents left, the Greek government closed its borders and wouldn’t allow them to come back. They ended up in Poland.

My oldest aunt joined the resistance as a field medic. She was married and had five children. Her husband was a resistance fighter and was killed. Because of that the communists relieved her from duty and allowed her to leave Greece with four of her children and other children from Oshchima. This was during the 1948 child evacuation. Her oldest son was recruited as a fighter by the resistance. Eventually she ended up in Skopje in the Republic of Macedonia where she raised her children on her own without

assistance. She worked for a company that collected herbs from the mountains and turned them into pharmaceutical products.

My oldest uncle died in 1943 from appendicitis at age twenty-two. He was one of the first from Oshchima, and the first in our family, to make contact with the WW II resistance movement and signed up as a volunteer fighter. Tragically, very soon afterwards he became very ill and died. The loss was devastating for my grandparents.

My second oldest aunt was also drafted into the resistance and she too served as a field medic. From what she told me, her greatest fear was of finding her younger brother or brother-in-law, her older sister's husband, dead in the field. She was devastated when she found out that her brother-in-law had been killed. She too was married and had two daughters who were evacuated with the children in 1948. Her husband was also drafted but not in the resistance. He served in the Greek government army and fought against the resistance. They had both been brainwashed by the ideological propaganda waged by both sides and were unable to reconcile their differences for the rest of their lives, even though they lived together under one roof. Most of their lives they lived in Toronto, Canada.

Because my uncle served in the Greek government army he was allowed to leave Greece. My aunt at the time had been evacuated and ended up in Poland. Eventually my uncle brought his family to Canada; his wife from Poland and his two daughters from Yugoslavia. My aunt and uncle had a third child in Canada, a boy. They named him Risto, like me, after our common grandfather. My aunt made it possible for us to go to Canada.

My second oldest uncle fought in both WW II and the Greek Civil War. Both times he joined voluntarily. He was wounded multiple times. During WW II he served in the resistance as a police officer and during the Greek Civil War he served as a resistance fighter. Once he told me that he had guarded Zahariadis who congratulated him for his bravery. As a result my uncle admired Zahariadis. Unfortunately he didn't know what kind of person Zahariadis was. My uncle died before I found out who Zahariadis was and the harm he'd done to our people. After the war my uncle was sent to the USSR where he married my aunt, a woman from Trnaa, a

neighbouring village, who had also fought in the resistance. They had two boys, both born in Tashkent, USSR. They too ended up in Toronto. I lived in their house for a year before my father could afford to buy his own house. His older son, my cousin, has been my best friend ever since we met.

I've already told you about my mother and father.

Next was my aunt, my father's youngest sister. She was drafted by the resistance in 1947 when she was only fifteen years old. But because she was young and frail, initially she was assigned to courier duties. Later she was issued a machine gun and fought in many battles. Because she was a combatant, after the evacuation she ended up in Tashkent in the USSR where she married my uncle and had two children, a boy and a girl. Eventually they too ended up in Canada.

The last in my grandfather's family was my youngest uncle. Because of his age (twelve years old) he qualified for the 1948 child evacuation program and ended up in Romania. Then when Zahariadis was desperate for recruits, for more bodies for his meat grinder, he was brought back to fight. He was thirteen by then but because of his large stature and ability to carry a gun he was brought back. He was in the second group that came back. Everyone in the first group was killed. When parents and generally all the people found out that the children who were supposed to be saved had been brought back, they protested to the communists who then decided not to send the children to battle. My grandfather, my uncle's father went and got him from the training camp and kept him home until everyone was evacuated. He too ended up in Poland with his parents and older sister who later brought him with her to Canada. He married in Canada and had three daughters. He was the one who sponsored my father's family and brought us to Canada.

On my mother's side, she had four brothers. As for her mother and father... My grandfather was drafted to build roads and bridges for both sides in the war. For most of the time he was out in the field working while his wife, my grandmother, was ill and bedridden. She had been tossed into a cold pool of water during the German occupation by German soldiers having their fun and then she was

attacked by a German shepherd. She never recovered from the shock and eventually died.

My oldest uncle was killed during the Greek Civil War. He was badly wounded and lost his eye but still he went back to fight and was killed. Like my other uncles he too was a volunteer. He was often abused and beaten by the Greek police in his village, which motivated him to go and fight for his freedom.

My second oldest uncle, despite his mother pleading with him not to join the resistance, also joined as a volunteer. He was wounded many times but survived... He lost the use of one of his arms. He was recovering in a hospital in Poland when the war ended. There he met and married my aunt who was also an evacuee and they had a son while living in Poland. After that they moved to the Republic of Macedonia, to Bitola where they had two more children, a boy and a girl.

I've already told you about my mother. She often said she regretted not leaving with the children in 1948 because her life in the village was terrible. Her father remarried and she had to live with a stepmother who had two children of her own.

My youngest uncle was evacuated with the children in 1948 and ended up in Hungary. From there he moved to Poland to be with his brother. After that he followed his older brother to the Republic of Macedonia, to Bitola where he married a girl he knew from Poland, originally from the village German, Prespa. They had one child, a boy.

That's the whole story of my family in a nutshell..."

"Wow, that's fascinating... that you know so much. I know practically nothing about my family. In fact a few months ago, I didn't even know who I was, where I was from, or that I was Macedonian..."

"You too will learn more like I did... Just give it some time. You remind me of a second cousin of mine who came all the way from Australia to interview my father and find out about her past. Her immediate family were Grkoman but she was curious to know 'what

the other side of her family' had to say about her family. My father told her many things, some negative, which were different from what her family had told her..."

"Was she disappointed?"

"I don't know. As soon as she gathered her information she left and went back to Australia."

"Now can you tell me a little more about your immediate family and your life back in the village? Tell me how life was in the village for you."

"Well, after he being sent to prison my father was finally freed and arrived home in January 1952. When he arrived in Oshchima he found his home empty and looted. Everything was gone; his father's tools, the farming tools, furniture and clothing, everything. His parents, along with ninety percent of the people from Oshchima, had abandoned everything and fled in a hurry to avoid being killed. And like I said, when the war was over no one was allowed to return. His entire family was gone.

I told you before that I was born in Oshchima and my parents wanted to name me Risto after my grandfather (my father's father) but the Greek government wouldn't allow it. So the Greek priest who baptized me named me Hristos. Because I belonged to a family that had participated on the losing side of the war and because my father had served in prison my family was looked down upon. But because I was born into that situation, that kind of life was normal for me. It was normal to be suspicious of everyone, especially strangers, not to ask questions, not to speak Macedonian in public and to be very cautious and fearful of authority; especially the Greek police.

I remember one day a stranger arrived in the village and asked the people to gather around him. After many did he began to speak incoherently in Greek. He went on and on for many hours. I could hear people whispering: "When is he going to stop talking? I want to go and do my chores..." People were afraid to leave because they didn't know who he was. About six hours later he got tired and stopped. Everyone left. Later we found out that he was a mental

patient... I also remember my father complaining about having to go to church Sunday morning and listen to the Greek priest speak and perform liturgy for several hours while his livestock remained unattended and without food and water. People faced jail time if they didn't go to church regularly or to Greek events put on by the Greek authorities. Survival in the village, especially under those conditions, meant that on top of working hard, everyone had to follow these Greek imposed rules or else there would be severe consequences. I was six years old in 1959 when I started my first summer job. My father had purchased ten lambs in an effort to grow his herd of sheep and it was my job to take them to pasture in our meadows in the mountains and look after them for the rest of the day. I left with them in the morning and returned home in the evening. Unfortunately something happened one day and we lost all of them.

The loss of the lambs was devastating to our family. Even more devastating was the loss of our grain crops that year due to a wet period and prolonged rain during the August 1959 harvest. After harvesting the wet wheat my mother made bread from the flour, which not only tasted foul but was hard as rock. Being unable to feed his family, my father wrote a letter to my uncle in Canada, his youngest brother, the one I told you about earlier, explaining the situation and asked him for help. He sent us one hundred dollars with which we purchased flour to get us by until the next harvest.

From the moment I was able to understand and follow instructions I helped out with all sorts of chores during all seasons. In my early years, during the winter I helped feed and water our livestock, brought wood from the woodpile outside for the fireplace and woodstove inside the house and fetched drinking water from the Oshchima spring. During the other seasons I helped with the planting, watering the garden, fields and meadows, harvesting crops and hay and looking after the livestock.

Everything was done by hand including cutting and collecting wood from the forests for cooking and heating, which was then transported home by horse and donkey. We harvested hay to feed the livestock, grains such as wheat, barley and rye, and other crops such as corn, beans, potatoes, walnuts, apples, plums, wild pears, etc. We sliced and dried some of the apples and plums in the sun to preserve them

for winter. We also had a large garden in which we planted onions, leeks, garlic, peppers, tomatoes, lettuce, cucumbers, zucchini, squash, etc. We often dried both sweet and hot red peppers to preserve them so that we could cook with them during the winter. Hot peppers were a regular part of our diet. In the fields that needed watering we planted corn, beans and potatoes. In the dry fields we planted wheat, rye and barley. Before plowing with our oxen, the fields and garden were fertilized with manure from the livestock, which we collected over the year and composted in big heaps along with organic table scraps.

Everything was done by hand, including milking the sheep and making feta cheese, butter, cottage cheese, etc. Before my father left for Canada we owned two oxen, sheep, three dogs, one horse, one donkey, a pig, a couple dozen chickens and a cat. The village had no electricity, no indoor plumbing, no running water and no indoor toilets – no television or radio (until about 1965). We cooked and stayed warm using firewood. We used a kerosene lamp for light in the night. We fetched drinking water in ceramic jugs from a spring about half a kilometre outside the village. Everything that was harvested was processed by hand and set aside to feed the family and livestock year round.

At the end of the year we slaughtered our pig, which we had fattened with slop made of table scraps, garden greens, flour and water. Every spring we purchased a piglet from the pig farmers, fattened it and then slaughtered it before Christmas. The pig fat was melted and used year round as cooking oil. Everything was processed and preserved, even the pig's intestines – that were used to make sausages. Since we had no refrigeration, the meat was pickled in salt brine, just like the green tomatoes and green peppers we picked from our garden at the end of the season. We harvested apples, potatoes, beans and corn by hand. We spent many evenings removing the corn from the cob and the beans from their pods. We collected the grain plants, which we harvested by hand using a sickle and processed them on a threshing field using our horse and donkey to stomp on them.

Everyone participated. More than ninety-five percent of the food we and our livestock subsisted on was grown in our fields, meadows and garden and was processed and preserved by hand using traditional methods. We only purchased our piglet, salt, sugar, olives

and olive oil. Our grains were ground into flour in the local village water mills.

There were two mills operating during my time and only one was working when we left Oshchima for Canada. Life was great for me. I was a happy child even though I had to work hard. Everyone had to work hard but being born under these conditions this kind of life was normal for me and everyone else. The village was quiet and peaceful. The food was natural, organic, nutritious and wholesome. Our water, which came from a spring, was pure and clean. Everyone knew everyone else in the village and neighbours often got together to do chores and socialize. My grandmother was the champion at removing the dry corn from the cob. The bean pods were allowed to dry in a warm and dry place and were then beaten with a long birch twig until they split open. The beans were then removed one by one by hand. The old women in the village gathered together and spent a lot of time socializing, separating beans from pods, corn from cobs and other such activities, while looking after the young children, teaching them how it was done and making a fun activity out of it.

There was very little time for play because most of the children in the village worked all the time. Also there weren't many toys to play with. Most of the toys from my early years were rusty old, empty sardine cans and used bullet shells left over from the wars. A year before leaving for Canada I raised a pair of pigeons to which I added two wild pigeons I'd captured in the woods. I was told they wouldn't survive in captivity but they did. When I was four years old my sister was born. I was too young to remember but, from what I was told, August, the month she was born was the busiest month of the year. That's when most of the crops were harvested and my mother had to work right up until her birth and afterwards.

She gave birth to all of us at home without any medical aid.

Initially Oshchima had a single room public school and one teacher who taught all grades (1 to 6) simultaneously. Prior to 1960, a house was temporarily used as a school. One of its rooms was converted into a classroom and used for teaching until a new school was built in 1960.

The new school was heated by a potbelly stove fueled with firewood. Students were responsible for providing the firewood and managing the stove, on a rotational basis. Sometimes a generous resident, usually a parent, donated some firewood. Each student was responsible for bringing a log or two of firewood from home daily. Failing to do so usually resulted in punishment. A student was delegated the task of bringing coal embers from home to school for a week. In the morning the student filled a perforated tin can, with a long wire handle, with coals from the fireplace at home and brought it to school to start the fire and warm up the classroom before class began. Leftover wood at the end of the day was taken to the teacher's residence for his or her use.

When I first started school, classes were held in a room in the above-mentioned house. A couple of years later we were moved to the new school. Initially we had two separate classes taught by the same teacher in the same classroom but as more people left the village and emigrated overseas all grades, 1 to 6, were combined into one class. Other than the teacher punishing us for every little infraction, school life was great. Our teacher used a long birch twig and hit us on the head if we didn't pay attention, or strapped us on our open hands for more serious infractions; like not having done our homework or being caught speaking Macedonian in the yard. We were taught to speak, read and write Greek, rudimentary arithmetic, geography and our pride and joy, Greek history, of course. The teacher taught us that Greece was a democratic country, the best country in the world. There was no better life anywhere in the world. The teacher taught us about our glorious ancient Greek heritage and the Greek heroes who freed Greece and the Greek Province of Macedonia from the dreadful Ottomans and the terrible Bulgarians.

Our teacher taught us patriotic songs which we sang out loud and with much pride. Like I told you earlier, I took those songs home and sang them with pride every day in front of my parents, while emphasizing my Greek-ness and yelling "Greek I was born and Greek I shall die!" Of course I didn't know that we were Macedonians and that part of our country had been forcefully invaded and occupied by Greece. Neither did I know our true history, the genocides committed against us or about our mass

evictions from our homeland. All I knew was what I was taught and all I was taught, it turned out, was Greek fiction.

As it also turned out, I was one of those so-called “terrible Bulgarians” the Greeks were talking about... Like I said, one day, when my parents had had enough of my shenanigans and insults, they decided to tell me the truth about our Macedonian identity. My mother spoke first. My father was reluctant and said that I was too young to keep a secret and that I would unwittingly betray them. My mother made me swear that I would keep this secret to myself. All she told me was that we weren’t Greek and those heroes that I admired so much were nothing more than cut-throat thugs who killed many of our people, including relatives on both sides of our family... At that time I knew nothing... Not that we were Macedonian, not that there had been Macedonian uprisings, not that Macedonia had been invaded, occupied and partitioned and not even that there was a so-called Greek Civil War. In fact, the Greeks called it a “bandit war” and it wasn’t classified as a civil war in Greece until the 1970’s.

In school and in public the Republic of Macedonia was called Serbia and we were taught that the people living in Greek (occupied) Macedonia were Greeks and those living in the Serbian (occupied) Macedonia were Serbians. I believed what our teacher taught us. I believed that my mother was Greek and my uncles, my mother’s two brothers, who had left Zhelevo during the Greek Civil War and who now lived in the Republic of Macedonia, were Serbian. That’s what I had been told...and that’s what I believed before I found out that we were Macedonian. I kept what I had found out a secret and continued my Greek education but did things with less enthusiasm and graduated from public school with honours (9 out of 10). After I graduated from grade school I didn’t bother to apply for higher education because my father had already made arrangements for us to leave for Canada so there was no point. Later I was told that even if I had applied chances of someone like myself, being a Macedonian and belonging to a family that had fought on the wrong (losing) side of the civil war, had no chance of being accepted.

Life in the village for me was wonderful and I very much enjoyed every bit of it, especially going to the mountains, tending our livestock and exploring new places further and further away from

home. I didn't have many friends because people kept leaving the village and emigrating mostly to Canada, the USA and Australia. When I was born the village had over 60 residents and by the time we left Oshchima only a few families remained. As the people of Oshchima were leaving, some gave us their homes and properties to look after. By the time we left Oshchima we had accumulated many fields and meadows, including seven houses and several barns which we used to store our crops and feed our livestock. I kept my pigeons in a room in one of those houses.

After finishing grade six, I took over some of my father's responsibilities looking after the farm; especially the sheep. At age 12 I became a full time shepherd looking after the entire flock 24 hours a day, taking the sheep to graze in the mountains in the summer and, after my father left, milking them twice daily with my mother and sister. I did this for over a year. Milking was at minimum a three-person job, two to milk and one to guide the sheep to the opening of the corral. After my father left for Canada, my mother and I did the milking and my eight year old sister guided the sheep.

In the summer sheep grazed in the mountains and were milked at designated corrals. The milk was particularly aromatic and tasty when the sheep grazed on healthy green thyme which grew in abundance in Oshchima. Sheep rested in the shade during the hot day and grazed in the early morning, late afternoon and night. Very late at night I brought the sheep home for only a few hours for some rest and to milk them early in the morning. We also milked the sheep in the evening but that was done in the mountains at various corrals.

During the summer I stayed with the sheep almost twenty-four hours a day. Even though I was very young, I wasn't afraid of the dark and enjoyed the stars and moonlight during bright nights, all alone with my trusty dogs and vivid imagination. From very young we learned to be productive and responsible and took our tasks very seriously because our lives depended on them. It was hard work, looking after the sheep day and night, grazing during the night and resting during the day with only a few hours of sleep. We milked the sheep twice a day, very early in the morning and in the evening. Sleep for all of us in the summer was a luxury. One day during a late summer

afternoon, after milking, and as the temperature of the air cooled down, the sheep began to leave the shade to graze on the slopes of one of our mountains. As the sun was setting the sheep went higher and higher up the slopes approaching the mountain peaks bordering the village Zhelevo. I followed closely behind and watched my shadow grow longer and longer as the sun dropped lower and lower towards the horizon. As I peered eastward I noticed a glare from the corner of my eye. I looked and there on the upright rocks of the adjacent mountainside I saw the reflection of the sun. A stone was burning, shining like a mirror, reflecting the sun back at me, or so I tried to convince myself. As I stared at the light I began to see moving images... people in a bustling community. There were rows of glistening houses painted white. People were sitting in rows conversing and enjoying the warmth of the setting sun. I saw an old woman with a white kerchief on her head cleaning vegetables for her family's dinner. As I watched, a feeling of loneliness engulfed me. I wished I was there with them, listening to their conversation and stories, enjoying the aroma of supper cooking and listening to the sounds of the village before it went to sleep.

As I continued to watch and enjoy the fruits of my imagination, the images began to lose their beauty and slowly turned murky and distorted. I struggled to recall them but they continued to escape me, melting away, vanishing into dark shadows. I could no longer look. I turned away for a moment and my eyes caught the bright red aura of the setting sun. The sun was slowly disappearing behind the mountain. It was setting and trying to hide; gone, the day was gone. As I looked harder and harder I could only see large shadows engulfing the valleys, then the hills, swallowing the terrain whole with everything on it. The thought of darkness gave me shivers but I wasn't worried. Soon I'd be home safe, with my family in our house illuminated by the familiar light of our faithful kerosene lamp. As my imagination drifted further and further away, an eerie feeling came over me pulling me back, reminding me that home was the other way and far away. I was afraid now, my heart was pounding. Everything looked dark, unfamiliar, unrecognizable, menacing. I was all alone left to the mercy of the night.

Startled by footsteps rustling behind me, I quickly snapped back to reality and turned to look. It was my faithful dog that had come to join me; it was time to feed him. I had two sheep dogs and they were

both there with me waiting for their dinner. I lowered my food bag from my shoulder and took out my supper. It was bread and cheese as I recall. I also had food for the dogs, a baked bun of bran each.

I was no longer afraid. Life as a shepherd wasn't always fun. Many days I had to work in the rain and stayed wet all day long. The worst days were when I had to walk long distances in pouring rain, in wet grass on treacherous terrain, especially at night when it was pitch black, not being able to see the sheep and only guided by the bright flashes of lightening. I was almost struck twice by lightening. One time I was so startled I threw up for hours. But in this job one had to take the bad with the good."

"Thank you, I thoroughly enjoyed that. That's what I needed to hear... something positive... I enjoyed that so much I didn't want to interrupt you... I hope you don't mind but I need to go. We went overtime today and I'm afraid my wife, who doesn't know I'm with you, will either think I'm having an affair or lying dead somewhere in a gutter."

"Sorry about that. I guess I was trying to make up for last Friday... I'm just joking, I plain forgot about the time. That for me was also therapeutic. It was nice to think back on the more innocent times. For years after we left for Canada, I kept dreaming of being back in the village..." and with that we both left.

"See you next Friday..." he said and quickly disappeared.

Part 12 – Who are the Grkomani?

The next time we met Stefche said, “I started reading one of your books... the book about Oshchima... I found it very informative and I think I can learn a lot from it... However you said nothing there about the Grkomani... positive or negative... I need to know more about them... about my family. What can you tell me about that...?”

“I hate to burden you with another book but what I know I’ve already written. To be honest, the Grkomani for me were on the other side of the fence and I don’t know much about them. For more information you should read my book: ‘Dismantling the Greek Myth A Collection of Essays’ which can be found at this link: <http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/Dismantling-the-Greek-Myth.pdf>.

This is what I wrote about the Grkomani in one of the chapters. Let me read it for you:

‘Plainly put, in this context, a ‘Grkoman’ is a Hellenized Macedonian. But in the eyes of the genuine Macedonian people, a “Grkoman” is simply a traitor. The “Grkomani” are a product of Greece’s forced assimilation policy designed to Hellenize Macedonia and the Macedonian people.

To truly understand the ‘Grkoman’ or ‘Bulgaroman’ phenomenon one has to imagine an ‘occupied’ people in a world where the conditions for survival are ‘created’ by the ‘occupier’. In order to maintain control of the occupied, the occupier needs to know when and where to act and for that he needs reliable information. This information must come from the inside and must be accurate. So, to gain such information the occupier needs to enlist the services of insiders in the occupied world. Unfortunately, the only insiders who are willing to provide such information are those who are either disgruntled individuals or individuals that can be bought in exchange for something they desire such as sums of money, social status, free education, a better job, power over others, etc.

However, to prove his or her loyalty the insider or collaborator is expected to commit some act, usually a criminal act, against his own people. This way the occupier will be assured of the collaborator's loyalty. So how will a collaborator react to a situation where the occupier is threatened? In such a situation the collaborator will fight for the occupier in order to maintain the status quo. I am not implying that all 'Grkomani' are collaborators but I do question their actions. If these people have committed no harm to the Macedonian people then what are their motives for siding with the occupiers? So my hope here is that many of these 'Grkomani' are ignorant of their real identity or are taking advantage of the situation for some small personal gain. Thus, no harm done and there is hope for them yet. But for those who have done serious harm, good luck to them! Some day we will see them at the Hague. To be loyal to family and friends is fine but it should not stop people from thinking for themselves and finding out who they really are.

I have been told that loyalty to family comes first and I can't say that I disagree with that. If your parents or grandparents saw themselves as other than Macedonians, for which I am sure they had a reason that does not change the fact that they have a Macedonian ancestry which, when the time comes, will be recognized as such. So where does that leave you? You can argue with me that, that will never happen just as many in the past have argued that Macedonia will never be free of the Romans, Byzantines, or Ottomans or you can reconsider where you stand and make the right choice.

The Republic of Macedonia's independence has created a problem for Greece. Greece took the 19th century road but somewhere down the line forgot to take a turn when the whole world was turning. Yugoslavia was whole at one time populated by 'South Slavs'. In fact Yugoslavia was touted as the Switzerland of the Balkans. But where is Yugoslavia today? Who would have thought Yugoslavia, the Switzerland of the Balkans, would disintegrate to its elemental level? Who would have thought that Yugoslavia was populated by other than 'South Slavs'? Believe me; Greece is not far behind. Its belligerent behaviour towards its minorities, especially the Macedonians, will not serve it well! So if I may summarize, I see the 'Grkomani' falling into three categories;

1. Those who are truly ignorant of their own ethnicity. The ones who learned to speak Macedonian from their predecessors and think it's a 'Greek dialect'. They call themselves Greek because all their lives they have been told they are Greek.

2. Those who know they are not Greek but pretend to be Greek because there are advantages to 'being Greek' or because they are afraid of being harmed if it is discovered that they are not Greek.

3. The ones who in the past, in the name of Greece, have committed crimes against their own people and need the Greeks to protect them from prosecution. These types will do anything to keep themselves safe, even help the Greek cause against the Macedonians in order to maintain the status quo.

If the man who called me on the telephone falls into the first two categories I would be more than glad to help him and I am sure I speak for every Macedonian when I say 'welcome back'. But if the man falls into the third category I want no part of him and I will not hesitate to expose him and the crimes he has committed. It is people of the third kind who helped the Greeks make the dreaded 'black lists' and sent so many innocent Macedonians to their death and to the Greek concentration camps.

It is people of this kind that made so many Macedonians permanent refugees. It is these 'sold out' Macedonians that today are so vocal and against the Macedonians gaining their human rights. Another thing that this man mentioned, which sounded peculiar, was the number of Macedonians living in Ontario.

'Did you know,' he asked 'that 600,000 Macedonians live in Toronto, or, well, I mean in Ontario and roughly 3,000,000 in Greece?' I did not know that! I didn't bother to ask where he got his figures, but then I remembered a friend from Australia sent me the following article, part of which I would like to share with you. 'Some Greek community leaders say there are 700,000 Greeks in Australia, implying that one in 25 Australians is Greek by some way or another, but are they? Another interesting perception is that outside Greece Melbourne is the second largest Greek speaking city in the world, but here again is it?

Not by birthplace, or even by parental birthplace. The 2006 census recorded only 109,989. The 1991 census recorded 136,331.

Not by Language. The 2006 census recorded 252,216. The 1991 census recorded 274,974 Australians who said that they spoke Greek at home.

Not by Ancestry. The 2006 census recorded 365,145. The 1986 census, when this question was first asked, recorded 311,942.

If there are indeed 700,000 Greek Australians then that suggests that most Greek Australians were not born in Greece, do not have Greek born parents, do not speak Greek at home and do not see themselves as people of Greek Ancestry.

According to various Greek Community sources however, which continuously convey information to the Australian authorities, there are still 700,000 Greeks in Australia.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics the real figure for the Greek Australian population lies in the 365,000 range. Information relating to the three census questions all point to this figure. Another misconception portrayed in the Australian Greek media is that Melbourne is the third largest Greek City outside of Greece.

But is it?

In Canada the Greek media portrays Toronto as the third largest Greek City in the world. In the USA the Greek media portrays New York as the third largest Greek City in the world.

The Australian Bureau of Statistic has shown that Victoria has a population of 5.3 million of which 3.9 million live in Melbourne and 128,164 Melbournians are of Greek ancestry.

Despite the census being conducted by government bodies, the Greek media has still managed to convince various authorities in Australia, Canada and the USA that the third largest Greek city in the world is situated in Melbourne, Toronto and New York respectively! How can that be?' (Zoran C.)

We know very well that 'Greek' as an ethnic entity does not exist but to maintain the impression that it does, Greeks will resort to anything and everything possible from claiming that people of the Christian Orthodox religion are in reality Greeks to anyone who has a 'Greek sounding name' is Greek.

Just pick up a Greek community telephone book in Toronto and you will find Macedonians, Spaniards and even Latvians represented as Greeks. As long as it sounds Greek, it must be Greek! But then if you think about it, it all makes sense. If Slavs, Macedonians, Albanians, Christian Turks and Vlachs can be 'instant modern Greeks' then why not other people with 'Greek sounding' names? After all 'Greek sounding' is almost Greek; isn't it?

How more fake is a Greek-sounding name of a Latvian than a 'Hellenized' Greek sounding name of a Macedonian? I would say they are about equal! 'Hellenizing' other ethnic groups, to most Greeks, is equivalent to subjecting them to a 'civilizing' process!

And what is wrong with that?

There is nothing wrong with it except 'fake Greeks' have no heritage and cannot be the descendents of the so-called ancient Greeks. Unfortunately being upright and honest has never been a Greek forte so to cover up their artificiality they resort to not only changing people's name but erasing timeless place names and replacing them with alien ones to suit their purposes.

But how were the names changed?

One method was by the direct replacement of the existing names by their ancient predecessors. The usual source was Pausanias' description of Greece, written in the second century AD. When the names stemmed from (ancient) Greek toponyms but had been adopted to the local dialect (i.e. they had been 'altered'), they should be reformed in accordance with the phonetic and morphological rules of Katharevousa. (Marousi, derived from the ancient Amarynthos became amarousion). Sometimes toponyms were replaced by names that really existed; other times they were changed randomly and hastily. When non-Greek toponyms were adopted,

this was done in a total arbitrary fashion, sometimes on the basis of misunderstood morphology (for example, a wooded village might be called ‘tree-less’ (adendron). In other cases, the result was the unsuccessful translation of the non-Greek name. Names that had acquired a commemorative value, particularly since the Revolution of 1821, were often replaced by obscure, antiquated denominations (Tripoly in place of Tripolitza, Aigion in place of Vostitsa, Kalamai in place of Kalamata, Amphissa in place of Salona, Lamia in place of Zitouni, Agrinion in place of Vachori). Even national heroes had to change their names. For example, Rigas Valestinlis had to change to Rigas Pheraios because his village of Valestino was near the site of ancient Pherai. Still, despite apparent chaos, frequently comic results, and general incoherence, the process followed an internal logic: the creation of a ‘Hellenized’ toponymic environment.

Who decided to change the toponyms?

It might have been expected that this would have been done at the initiative of the state: An instruction came from above, from the center to the region. But it did not happen exactly this way. The government used to appoint commissions composed of university professors of history, linguistics, folklore, and archeology. The 1920 commission, set up after the acquisition by Greece of Macedonia, Thrace and Epirus, was constituted by the same persons who had created the ‘scientific’ study of the Greek nation – that is, the creators of the country’s history, archives, and the Museum of National History (Spyridon Lambros), of its folklore (Nikolaos Politis), and of its linguistics (Georgios Tajiadakis).’ (‘Hellenism Culture, Identity, and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity’, edited by Katerina Zacharia, pages 232 and 233)

I hope this gave you an idea of who the Grkmani are, at least how Macedonians see them. I have no idea how Grkomanis see themselves.”

“I don’t know how they see themselves either since they don’t want to talk about it. All I can tell you is that I’m not a Grkoman since I don’t fit in any of the categories you described of what a Grkoman is. I see myself as a lost soul... Someone who was left completely ignorant of reality... I have to blame my parents for that...”

“I too have to blame my parents... I was a happy Greek child when I was very young but they had to spoil it for me... telling me that I was a miserable Macedonian which made my life a living hell... I’m joking, of course, because I prefer to know the truth than live a lie. Your parents must have known they weren’t Greek because of what the Greeks call that small anomaly; they spoke another language, a Slavic language, the language of their worst enemies. Imagine how they must feel?”

“But why do they persist in pretending to be Greek?”

“Well, if you put it that way... there are two kinds of Greeks; the ones who pretend to be Greek and all the others who are completely ignorant of their real identities... I feel sorry for them both.”

“Why feel sorry for them? They have made your life... and mine too, a living hell?”

“Because they too are victims. They are victims of the Great Powers. The Great Powers and their trickery have shaped them this way. They made them behave this way. They made them hate us... The Great Powers created the mess we are in when they divided the Balkans into divergent and polarized identities using the same people as the raw material.”

“How do you mean?”

“Well, as you know, the people in the Balkan region from the Mediterranean Sea in the south to the Danube River in the north and from the Adriatic Sea in the west to the Black Sea in the east lived without borders for over two thousand years, since Philip II expanded Macedonia to cover that region. Since then, this entire region was known as Macedonia until the 18th century. It was a multiethnic, multicultural world but without borders. It was predominantly populated by Slavic people whose language and culture somewhat diverged over the years, but nonetheless, all those people lived without borders. More diversity was added as the region was invaded by other groups such as the Romans, the Ottomans, the Vlachs, the Albanians, etc. But then came the European Great Powers in the 19th and 20th centuries and not only carved up the region into small countries but gave each a unique

identity. This is how modern Greece was created from the Slavs, the Macedonians, the Albanians, the Vlachs, the Turks, the Latins, etc., who lived on those lands. These people were used as raw material to create the Greeks.”

“And, based on what you told me earlier, the Greeks are now creating more Greeks out of everyone whose name sounds Greek. And they are doing this all around the world...”

“I actually said the USA, Canada and Australia...”

“Yes I know but why stop there...?”

“And it’s not just people...”

“How do you mean...?”

“Well, we now have Greek coffee... Greek yogurt... and even Greek gods... At some point some Greeks were claiming that even Jesus was a Greek.”

“Yes, you’re right... How humiliating...”

“Yes but very lucrative too... I don’t mean their claims about Jesus but about the products they claim to be Greek. And as for the ‘Greek gods...’ the English are to blame for that... They are the ones who invented the idea that they were ‘Greek gods’ instead of Balkan gods and continue to promote them as Greek at every opportunity...”

“If anything they should be Macedonian gods because they live at the top of Mount Olympus, which is located in Macedonia right?”

“Right, but we don’t want to be like the Greeks and rob the Balkan people of their heritage...”

“What do you mean?”

“I’m not going to say any more about that but if you want to learn more about these so-called ‘Greek gods’ you should read my translation of the book: ‘Prehistory - Central Balkans Cradle of

Aegean culture' which can be found in this link:

<http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/Prehistory-Central-Balkans-Cradle-of-Aegean-Culture.pdf>.”

“Thank you again for everything. I think now is a good time to stop and go home. It's getting late. See you next Friday...” and with that we both left.

Part 13 – Problem solved

The next Friday I walked into the restaurant and Stefche, sitting in the usual place, was beaming with a wide smile. “I’m buying dinner tonight...”

“What’s the occasion and what are you smiling about...? Did you win the lottery?”

“Better! I’m moving to Australia...”

“What?”

“Yes, you heard me right! I’m taking my family and moving to my aunt in Australia. I called to ask her some questions, like you suggested, and one thing led to another. I ended up telling her everything. I thought she would be furious with me but she said she’d never been happier. I had no idea she identified as a Macedonian... and her husband too. He’s also from the Greek part of Macedonia and knows a lot about our history... Oh boy, you can’t believe how happy that made me feel...”

“You can’t just drop everything here and go to Australia just because it makes you feel good? What about your family, your wife and children...?”

“My wife is all for it, she could use a fresh start in life. My children are teenagers...”

“You said you were in your late fifties, how can your children be teenagers?”

“Well, actually I’m sixty years old now, I was born in 1963 and we left the village for Canada in 1965. I didn’t get married until I was forty-two. I married a younger woman and my children are fifteen and thirteen.”

“You old dog... Good for you. But how do you manage teenagers at your age...”

“Actually I don’t. My wife is parenting them most of the time. I just work and make the money... Speaking of which, my aunt who is now in her eighties offered me a management position in her company and I’ll finally be working regular hours sitting at a desk. She also has a job for my wife and a place for us to live.”

“What about your parents...? They must be in their eighties too. Who will look after them when you’re gone?”

“That job will be relegated to my sister. I looked after them all these years... It’s about time she did something...”

“Does she know that you’re going?”

“Yes... She sympathizes with me... She says I had a hard life here and deserve a break...”

“What about your friends? What do they say?”

“Sorry to say, I have coworkers but not many friends. I haven’t told anybody yet.”

“I’m your friend and I will miss you. I agree with your decision... you have to do what’s best for you and your family.”

“Yes I have to do that. There I can send my children to Macedonian school, if they want to go. It’s a private school. My aunt offered to pay. I might even enroll and learn a few Macedonian words myself...”

“It’s kind of late for you... But, if you want to learn some Macedonian words the way they were spoken in Oshchima I have a...”

“Not another book...?”

“Yes, another book. It’s a dictionary and it’s called: ‘English – Macedonian Dialectal Dictionary Based on the Lerin-Kostur Dialects As Spoken by Oshchimians’ which can be found at this link: <http://www.pollitecon.com/Assets/Ebooks/English->

Macedonian-Dialectical-Dictionary-based-on-the-Lerin-Kostur-Dialects.pdf.”

“Thank you. You never disappoint... I don’t know what to say... You have been a true friend.”

“You too... I wasn’t sure about you in the beginning but I’m sure now... When are you leaving?”

“As soon as possible... I live in an apartment and as soon as my lease expires we’re gone. I’m sending my things to Australia by cargo. We have very little in terms of material goods. We’ll be flying. I’m sad to say this but this will be the last time I see you.”

“Please make sure you write the moment you’re settled in Australia... and all the best.”

“I will...”

After that Stefche took me inside the restaurant and introduced me to his coworkers. He told everyone that I was his Macedonian friend but no one seemed to care. I’m sure everyone already knew we were Macedonian. They must have overheard our conversations enough times.

After we had finished our dinner for which Stefche paid, even though it was my turn to pay, we hugged each other and parted ways. I felt both happy and sad. Happy for him that he’d found what he was looking for in life and sad that I was losing a friend. I was sure I would miss him and the conversations we’d had.

If there was one thing I learned, it was that there was hope for us Macedonians... Hope that some day the Grkomani would find their way home... We would learn to respect one another and again live together as Macedonians, just like we did for many generations before... before we allowed strangers to come between us and divide us.

Part 14 – Life in Australia

Some months later I received an e-mail from Stefche. He did as I asked and wrote me. I felt nervous opening it. This is what he wrote:

“My dear friend Risto,

Greetings from Australia.

First, I would like to thank you for opening up a new and wonderful world for me. I am very happy... My whole family is happy to be here, especially my aunt. I never did tell you, she has no children of her own so she adopted me as her Macedonian son. How weird is that? But I am happy to be her son.

We are well liked here, not just by my aunt and uncle but by the entire Macedonian community. My aunt took us to the Macedonian church and introduced us to all her friends there, as a Macedonian. They all like us. I had no idea what it would be like to be a Macedonian in the Macedonian community.

I found people here who know of you, just like in Canada... Young Macedonians too.

I love my new job. People look up to me. I have to wear a suit, which initially made me nervous, but I'm getting used to it. My wife who didn't work in Canada also loves her job. Now she now has money of her own and she loves that.

My children love it here too. They met young Macedonian boys and girls at the Macedonian church. They were nice to them and love to hear them speak Canadian English, they thought it was cool. Imagine that? Now they want to be enrolled in the local church school so that they can learn Macedonian. That's what they tell me but I know they like to be with their friends. I might also enroll them in some of the cultural programs.

I have a lot of free time here. I'm free during the weekends too, not like in Canada where I had to work practically every day, especially on weekends.

I also want to tell you that I often get together with my uncle and his friends and we have discussions about the 'old country' and the wars and I seem to know more about that than they do. I thought you would like to hear that.

Many here want me to say 'hello' to you and are inviting you to come and visit Australia. So please take some time off your writing and come and see us.

Best regards, your friend Stefche.

P.S. I told my wife about our Friday meetings and she wants to thank you too. She says you changed my life and that I'm a happier person now."