

**Main issues between Republic of Bulgaria
and Republic of North Macedonia
during the negotiation for membership
of North Macedonia in EU**
(with editorial reductions)

Nina Todorova-Jakova
Expert in the Ministry of interior of Republic of Bulgaria

Abstract:

The article presents briefly some of the issues between Republic of Bulgaria and Republic of North Macedonia during the negotiation for membership of Republic of North Macedonia in European Union. After Macedonia enters EU, the border between two countries will become formal and it is in interest of both Bulgaria and Macedonia. But some issues still hurdle the advancement in this direction.

Keywords: Macedonian issue, Bulgarian national unification issue, negotiation, Macedonism.

Since 2005, North Macedonia has a status of country candidate for membership in EU.

The negotiations between EU and Macedonia for membership however could not start for a long time because Greece imposed veto on them. The formal reason for the veto was the name of the country. In 2018, the dispute between Greece and Macedonia was solved with the Agreement of Prespa. Macedonia changed its name to Republic of North Macedonia to distinguish itself from the south part of Macedonia which remained under Greek rule after the Balkan wars (1912-1913).

But still there are some issues between Republic of North Macedonia and Republic of Bulgaria. These issues are actually part of the problem for Bulgarian national unification as it was multiple times recognized by international community that the region of Macedonia was populated mostly by Bulgarians at the end of XIX and beginning of XX century and actually is part of Bulgarian ethnic habitat.

The conference of the Great Powers in Istanbul (1876) confirmed that population of Macedonia declared itself as Bulgarian during the Bulgarian national movement for independent Bulgarian church. But at the Berlin congress (1878 r.) it was decided Macedonia to be separated from newly liberated Bulgaria and given back to Turkey. Since that time, Bulgaria was forced during decades to dedicate its potential to achieve unification with Macedonia.

The events after the liberation of Bulgaria (1878) and mainly Balkan wars (1912-1913) led to breaking Macedonia into three parts: South Macedonia, which was occupied by Greece, today's Republic of North Macedonia which was occupied by Serbia and the smallest north-east part of Macedonia which successfully joined the motherland Bulgaria.

In this way, the wrong decision of the Great powers at the Berlin congress (1878) and the territorial appetites of the Balkan countries Greece and Serbia were the main reasons for the raise of Macedonian issue as a part of the issue for National unification of Bulgaria.

In the part of Macedonia occupied by Serbia, the idea of Macedonism was proclaimed, saying that the local population is not Serbian, but also not Bulgarian – it is a separate nation – Macedonians. The Macedonism in this way aims to separate the Bulgarians in Macedonia from their motherland Bulgaria.

During one century Bulgarians in North Macedonia (included in Serbia and later in Yugoslavia) were systematically “convinced” that they are separate nation, different from Bulgarians in Republic of Bulgaria, ignoring the fact that people in Bulgaria and North Macedonia are one people in two states.

Bulgaria expects from people in North Macedonia to return to the true history, based on the historical sources and documents, to recognize their Bulgarian ethnical roots. Bulgaria expects the common history of Bulgaria and Macedonia not to be falsified. Bulgaria wants no border between Republic of Bulgaria and Republic of North Macedonia. Bulgaria wants connectedness, common infrastructure projects, economic cooperation for strong economy and prosperity.

A good illustration of what Bulgaria hope for is the fact that for the period 22.01.2002 till December

2017 Bulgarian citizenship was received by 71 524¹ citizens of Republic of North Macedonia.

In opposite, the stance of Macedonism is that Bulgarians and people in North Macedonia are different peoples, speaking different languages, having separate history, that Bulgarians are enemies of Macedonians. Macedonism divides people, strives to separate the Macedonians from their Bulgarian roots.

During 1300 years history of Bulgaria there is no fact showing that till World War II and after it Bulgarians and Macedonians are different nations. In the middle of XX century, Bulgarians in Macedonia are forced to change their names after the instructions of Josip Broz Tito (1892-1980). Till 1945, there is no Macedonian language, no Macedonian science and no Macedonian people, there is only Bulgarian language, Bulgarian science, Bulgarian people. Macedonian language, Macedonian science and Macedonian people were fabricated in the frames of Macedonism mainly after the end of World War II.

In 2009, The Institute for Macedonian literature in the frames of the University of Skopje started issuing 135 volumes of the book "Macedonian literature". In the first volume devoted to the time IX-XVII century, there are terrible falsifications of cultural facts. There, St. Kliment Ohridski and St. Naum are presented as fighters against Bulgarian rulers Boris and Simeon, and actually they are first supporters of the initiative of Boris to convert Bulgarian to Christianity and to distribute newly created by St. Cyril and Methodius Slavic alphabet. There is mentioned, that Kliment has not recognized the Bulgarian church hierarchy, and actually he was Bulgarian archbishop in Macedonia. The book „Bulgarian folk songs“ of Miladinovi brothers² was presented as a collection of songs of a separate Macedonian people, and not as Bulgarian folk songs from Macedonian region of Bulgaria. The novels of the great Bulgarian writer Dimitar Talev³ also were presented as a work of Macedonian literature. The volumes of "Macedonian literature" are translated to several languages and are sent to 370 national libraries and universities in more than 50 countries

There are also many falsifications on the material cultural monuments. For example, on the gravestone at the tomb of Grigor Parlichev the Bulgarian letters were removed and changed with Serbified Macedonian alphabet.

According the official history of North Macedonia, the Bulgarian tsar Samuil (997-1014) is not a Bulgarian tsar but tsar of a separate Macedonian kingdom. Bulgarian fighter for national liberation Gotse Delchev⁴ also is presented as being of Macedonian nationality.

Unfortunately, the created Intergovernmental commission so far has not succeeded to solve the issues to come to agreement of both sides.

Bulgaria insists in the framework of the negotiations to be included the following points:

1. Sofia wants the language in use in Republic of North Macedonia to be called "official language of Republic of North Macedonia" and not Macedonian language because it is actually a version of Bulgarian language as for example the official language of Republic of Brazil is Portugal (with some local specific features).

2. Sofia wants a roadmap to be accepted for applying Good Neighbor Agreement between Republic of Bulgaria and Republic of North Macedonia (1917).

3. As the population of Republic of Macedonia is of Bulgarian ethnicity, Bulgaria insists in the framework of negotiations for EU membership of Republic of Macedonia to be written that Macedonia do not pretend for Macedonian minority in Bulgaria. Such pretension is nonsense as the population of Republic of North Macedonia is actually part of the Bulgarian people.

In 1963 former Bulgarian Chairman of the State Council Todor Zhivkov⁵ says about Republic of Macedonia, at that time part of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: „We must fight against the falsifications of our history but not through igniting disputes and through its objective presentation... We have to recognize the existing of Republic of Macedonia and the formation of Macedonian state traditions... But we can" give up from

¹ <https://www.president.bg/news4125/vitseprezidentat-v-skopie-2017-godina-e-nay-uspeshna-zatoshneniyatamezhdu-balgariya-i-republika-makedoniya.html>

² Miladinovi brothers – Dimitar, Naum and Constantine are prominent Bulgarian Revivalists, enlighteners and folklorists. They were born in Struga. Dimitar Miladinov was teacher in many cities of Macedonia. He developed there public and educational activity. In 1861 the work of Miladinovi brothers „Bulgarian folk songs" was published. In it they gather, order and systematize samples of Bulgarian folk songs.

³ Dimitar Talev Petrov Palislamov is a prominent Bulgarian writer and journalist, author of the tetralogy „The Iron Candelstik“, „The Bells of Prespa“, „Ilinden“ and „The Voices I hear you“, the novel "Samuil" and other novels, stories etc.

⁴ Gotse Delchev was born on 23 January 1872 in Kukush, then in Ottoman Empire, now Kilkis, in Greek part of Macedonia. He is one of the most significant Bulgarian revolutionary, leader and ideologue of Bulgarian Macedono-Odrinska revolutionary organization. He is national hero in Bulgaria and North Macedonia.

⁵ Todor Hristov Zhivkov between 1954 and 1989 is Secretary General of the Central committee of Bulgarian communist party, Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Chairman of the Council of the State of People Republic of Bulgaria..

our history. The historical truth must be clearly and objectively stated.”⁶

For good or for bad, Bulgaria is today member of EU and a way to remove the border between the Bulgarians from both countries is Republic of North Macedonia to become also a member of EU. So, instead to block the negotiations for EU membership of Republic of North Macedonia, for Bulgaria is better to look for diplomatic ways for solving the issues. Our common ethnicity, language, culture and history must unify and not separate the people in both countries.

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