Anticommunist, but Macedonian:

Politics of Memory in Post-Yugoslav Macedonia

(5,579 words)

> "*The dead heroes of Macedonia, albeit as ghosts,*
> *will rise against all of you who will decide*
> *to give your support to this harmful plan.*
> *Through the destruction of the monuments of the antifascist war, you destroy the present and the future of our country*."[1]

In the famous *Lieux de mémoire*, the French historian Pierre Nora outlines the main forms of a worldwide process identified by him as a 'global upsurge of memory.' These involve the critique of the official versions of history and the return to what was hidden away; the search for an obfuscated or 'confiscated' past; the cult of 'roots' and the development of genealogical investigations; the boom in fervent celebrations and commemorations; legal settlement of past 'scores' between different social groups; the growing number of all kinds of museums; the rising need for conservation of archives but also for their opening to the public; and the new attachment to 'heritage' (*patrimoine* in French).[2]

It is easy to find many similar symptoms in the contemporary public space of the Republic of Macedonia. Since its independence in 1991, political and academic entrepreneurs have promoted, sometimes with opposite goals, new versions of national history. The cult of millenary roots and the genealogical and 'ethnogenetical' (para-)historiographic genres are becoming ever more popular and in some circles at least, the heritage of ancient Macedonia and its famous rulers – Philip and Alexander – is embraced as a token of national pride.[3] In 2003, an impressively long list of commemorations marked the centennial of the anti-Ottoman St. Elias day (Ilinden) uprising, interpreted as the symbolic beginning of contemporary Macedonian statehood. New museums sprang up and as of this writing there are still

many unaccomplished projects, including a museum of the victims of the communist regime.[4] The latter have been meanwhile rehabilitated and vindicated through measures in the Law on Lustration (*lustracija*), which entails in particular the opening of the archives of the communist political police. These are just some of the Macedonian manifestations of the global process described by Nora in another context.

The present article focuses on some specific dilemmas of the attitude towards the communist past in post-Yugoslav Macedonia. It attempts to analyze, through examples of diverse promoters of historical revision (historians, journalists, politicians, veterans, and former political prisoners), the clash between different 'politics of memory,' which are understood as strategies referring to collective memories in order to lay claim to a symbolic position that is either newly defined or recently contested. There is an important reason for not limiting such analysis to academic historiography. As a result of the global 'expansion' of memory, the academic historian, in Macedonia, as elsewhere, is no longer the solitary guardian of the interpretation of the past. Nowadays, s/he has to share this responsibility with the judge, the witness, the journalist, various NGO experts, and others. Moreover, the historian becomes an expert taking part in public debates that bring into opposition not only rival narratives but also social statuses and symbolic or real capital, local inertia and global imperatives. Referring to the latter, this article seeks to examine the trends of Macedonian anticommunist revisionism as a local answer to a more general supranational agenda of mastering the past. It concludes by arguing that Macedonia's occasional refuge in a mythical ancient past is a means of avoiding the relevance for the present of the more real challenges of a contested recent past.

Macedonian historiography: ways of writing and of rewriting

Today's Macedonian historical 'master narrative' has inherited a particular interpretation of the past whose first drafts are to be found in leftist and communist circles of the interwar Macedonian movement in the 1930s. Certain of its activists, who were not professional historians, saw the roots of modern Slavic-speaking Macedonians in the Middle Ages and even in the ancient Macedonian state. In

their rather polemical works, they traced an uninterrupted millenary continuity leading to the so-called 'Revival' period in the 19th century and to the struggles of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) during the late Ottoman epoch (the end of the 19th – beginning of the 20th century).[5] It must be stated that almost all of these historical references (excluding those to the ancient Macedonians) are traditionally claimed by Bulgarian national history which still disputes the legitimacy of the 'ethnic Macedonian' reading.[6] Nevertheless, Macedonians muster evidence about the non-Bulgarian character of a number of historical personalities and manifestations, especially after the split of the IMRO into 'left' and 'right' wings. This separation began in the last years of Ottoman rule and became much more pronounced during the interwar period when Macedonia was divided among Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria and when the draft version of contemporary Macedonian historical narrative was created.

As it was communists who traced the main stages of Macedonian history from the outset, it is not surprising that only leftist revolutionaries are traditionally deemed 'real Macedonian patriots.' From this perspective, the famous interwar right-wing IMRO, led by the last authentic *komitadji* chief Todor Aleksandrov and the famed terrorist leader Ivan Mihajlov, was and is considered to be 'Greater-Bulgarian' in its character.[7] In fact, the right wing also fought for an 'independent and united Macedonia' but unlike the leftist and progressively communist activists it did not develop Macedonian (ethno-)nationalism and stuck to the Bulgarian national identity of Macedonian Slavic-speakers.[8] During the Second World War, it was the communists who organized the struggle in Vardar Macedonia (previously part of a Serbian and royal Yugoslav province) against its Bulgarian occupation. On August 2, 1944, on a second St. Elias day (Ilinden), it was they, not the rightists, who proclaimed a Macedonian state.[9] Hence, the Macedonian communists not only forged the narrative of Macedonian national history but also located themselves at the pinnacle of its teleology. Today, Macedonian historians still exalt the patriotic character of the communist and anti-Bulgarian 'National-Liberation Struggle' (1941-1944), known under the acronym NOB (*Narodnoosloboditelna borba*).

The proclamation of the southernmost Yugoslav republic's independence in 1991 entailed a new level of Macedonian national identity. However, Macedonian historiography, both in its academic and public articulations, had to resolve a grave dilemma. Namely, a revision of the recent Yugoslav past was crucial for the affirmation of the new state of sovereignty, but nearly all the national institutions and 'symbolic forms' were constructed during the communist *ancien régime*. In 1944, the Macedonian state was created as a Yugoslav republic: being 'immune' against Bulgarianism, the communist struggle was amalgamated with the Yugoslav agenda of Tito's resistance. Moreover, it was only after 1944 that Macedonians obtained their own alphabet, officially recognized standard language,[10] and the ability to develop a full-fledged national culture. National history itself took its final shape in a Yugoslav political and cultural framework, its nation-building mission prevailing over the imperatives of Marxist-Leninist doctrinal purity.[11] And there is no pre-communist scholarly tradition, self-identified as Macedonian in a national sense, whose 'classical' authors and texts could be resurrected and serve as an inspiration for the construction of an anti- or non-communist version of the past.[12]

Aware or not of these problems, diverse actors were already promoting modifications of the national narrative on the eve of independence. Not surprisingly, some of these changes concerned the most distant past and were encouraged in the most distant spatial context. The active diaspora in Australia and North America, to be exact, resurrected the mythology of ancient Macedonia. Works on the so-called 'ethnogenesis' (*etnogeneza*) of the Macedonian people, sought to demonstrate a 'blood' relationship between modern and ancient Macedonians and became a genre of unprecedented public interest.[13] The imagery of the 'ancestors' Philip and Alexander gave legitimacy to the new state and fitted into the construction of an identity exempted from references to 'brotherly' Slavic nations, including the Serbian 'Big Brother', suspected of territorial ambitions. This implicitly anti-Yugoslav aspect of 'ancient Macedonianism' could actually explain why many of the politicians and intellectuals related to the former political regime perceived it, if not as nonsense, at least as a charming legend.[14]

But the greatest challenges were in the field of contemporary history. At the end of the 1980s, the equation between Macedonian patriotism and Yugoslav communism was defied by journalists, intellectuals, and young political activists. They published documents and studies and organized scientific conferences resurrecting historical protagonists and events previously silenced in Macedonian public space. The first rehabilitated personalities were mostly political figures with the ambiguous status of both builders and victims of the Yugoslav communist regime. This was the case, for instance, of Metodija Andonov-Čento, the first chairman of the 'Antifascist Assembly of the National Liberation of Macedonia' (ASNOM), the quasi-parliamentary, quasi-governmental organization that established the Macedonian state in 1944. After 1945, Čento was marginalized and repressed by a new, univocally centralist 'pro-Belgrade' lobby that finally took the leading position in the republic. Today, he is celebrated as 'the first Macedonian president' and is considered an exemplary incarnation of patriotism.[15] After him, the so-called *informbirovci* – communist functionaries who, after the Cominformist split in 1948, became opponents and victims of Tito's regime – were also relatively quickly rehabilitated.[16]

After independence, many (but not all) of the historical revisionists joined the anti-Yugoslav and anticommunist VMRO (later VMRO-DPMNE) party, the first component of whose designation is in fact the Macedonian acronym for IMRO. They researched a series of unearthed traumas from the communist period, such as the devastating collectivization at the very beginning of the regime.[17] Under the banner of a re-examination (*preispituvanje*) of history, the promoters of this new approach to the national past tried to delegitimize the defenders of traditional narratives and the representatives of former elites. Claiming 'impartial' scientific expertise, these new historians actually promoted a specific policy that aspired to the symbolic position enjoyed by the well-entrenched (ex-)communist academics. One can assert that this is an expression of a 'normal' trans-national process of rereading the past, a wave that shook all the former communist states in East Europe. However, as a number of these revisionists

demonstrated, in a specifically Macedonian context that questioning of the canonical interpretation of the past could easily escalate into an attack against national identity itself.

From revision of communism to revision of national identity…

Throughout the 1990s, the Macedonian public was scandalized by a number of historical writings by political and academic figures affiliated with the VMRO-DPMNE. These included even Ljubčo Georgievski – the leader of the party. In his reexamination of the mainstream historical narrative, Georgievski overtly referred to the Bulgarian national identity of Macedonian intellectuals and revolutionaries from the 19th and early 20th century.[18] Similar publications tried to include in the Macedonian pantheon Bulgarian nationalists born on the territory of today's Republic of Macedonia such as the leaders of the right-wing interwar IMRO.

In 1997, Zoran Todorovski, a specialist in the history of the Macedonian revolutionary movement and twice director of the national Archive under VMRO-DPMNE governments, published a monograph praising the IMRO under the ruthlessly anticommunist leadership of Ivan Mihajlov (1924-1934).[19] In June 2005, Todorovski, by that point established as revisionist historian No 1, released an edited collection of writings of Mihajlov's precursor – Todor Aleksandrov.[20] On that occasion, the revisionists referred positively to Bulgarian academic studies on Aleksandrov, who was exalted as 'the last king of the mountains.'[21]

On the other hand, such works tendentiously omitted the role of Macedonian communist partisans from the pro-Yugoslav and anti-Bulgarian 'National-Liberation Struggle' (NOB), i.e., the founders of modern Macedonia. The historical rereading was accompanied by revisionism targeting the codification of the Macedonian standard language after 1944, which was described as a deliberate process of linguistic 'Serbization'.[22] And this reexamination of all things Macedonian was not limited to historiographic and linguistic writings. Fears of a 'Bulgarian threat' under the mask of reconsideration of communism and of the Yugoslav past were also fuelled by new annual commemorations organized by certain circles related to the anticommunist VMRO-DPMNE. This was especially the case with the

repeated attempts to place a plaque in downtown Skopje glorifying the 'bravery' of the 'Macedonian Charlotte Corday' – the IMRO terrorist Mara Buneva.[23]

The revisionist study of the communist regime triggered a reconsideration of the dominant historiography that also implied a new interpretation of the more distant pre-communist past. In general, such criticism of communist Yugoslavia assimilates it to the pre-War kingdom of the same name, particularly to the country that is seen as crucial in its formation – Serbia – whence the anti-Serbian overtones of revisionism. But from such a point of view the very existence of a Macedonian nation is easy to present as the outcome of a 'Serbization' – since the Macedonian republic was created in Yugoslavia and Yugoslav is taken as a synonym of Serbian. This is exactly the Bulgarian reading of the past: the modern Macedonians are 'in fact' Bulgarians, de-nationalized by Belgrade.

For the mainstream Macedonian establishment, an anticommunist and anti-Yugoslav attitude was seen as making a direct transition to anti-Macedonianism. Therefore, such historical and linguistic revisionism was ill received by established historians and by the media related to the former communists of the Social-Democratic Union (SDSM).[24] They pointed to the obvious lack of reference, in right-wing IMRO's tradition, to a distinct ethno-linguistic Macedonian identity as different from that of the Bulgarians. Through rival *magna opera*, members and advocates of the former Yugoslav elite reacted against what they saw as flagrant attempts at 'Bulgarizing' the Macedonian national pantheon.[25]

These reactions actually disclose two implicit facets of modern Macedonian attitudes towards the past. On the one hand is the Yugoslav 'format' of mainstream historical narrative: 'normally', the anti-Serbian manifestations like the commemoration of IMRO militants should not be a problem for somebody who considers him/herself Macedonian. The rereading of the past actually risked destroying Macedonian national identity through the reintroduction of old divisions between 'pro-Serbians' and 'pro-Bulgarians' characteristic of the late Ottoman period.[26] In public polemics, the revisionists were labeled as 'agents of Sofia'. But the defenders of the mainstream perspective put themselves in the

somewhat uncomfortable position of being advocates not only of communist Yugoslavia but also of the Yugoslav kingdom and of the Serbian victims of the historical right-wing IMRO.

On the other hand, the opposition to any 'innovation' in the commonly accepted list of heroes indicates the fact that contemporary Macedonia has *no rightist political tradition*. The Macedonian nation does not have at its disposal *četniks* like the Serbs, *ustaše* like the Croats,[27] non-communist democrats or alleged 'fascists' like the Bulgarians. There are few historical references that could compete with mainstream ones, which are based on a particular Yugoslav reading of an exclusively leftist and communist tradition. The revision of the communist past and the rehabilitation of the pre-communist right-wing circles and personalities is therefore a risky matter, unlike the Bulgarian case, for instance, where the communists were meanwhile denigrated as 'national traitors', 'terrorists' etc. In the Macedonian context, continuity vis-à-vis the mainstream narrative of the communist period, emphasized by a number of authors,[28] is actually a continuation 'by default'. Yugoslav communism and Macedonian nationalism have been intermingled to the extent that the attack against the first element could be easily perceived as a denial of the second one.

… and the other way round: the anticommunist assertion of Macedonian identity

Therefore, the revisionist attempts might seem to confirm predictions like that of the German scholar Stefan Troebst, who believed that Macedonian historiography would take the shape either of a 'history of the Macedonian Bulgarians' or of a 'history of Southern Serbia' according to the future political developments.[29] Moreover, many historical polemicists in Sofia are eager to endorse every revisionist effort in the former Yugoslav republic as a step towards the (re-)Bulgarization of Macedonians, as a promise of 'return to Bulgarian roots.'[30]

However, the Macedonian construction of an anticommunist history and memory has not conformed to these expectations. Many manifestations of post-Yugoslav rereadings of the past diverge from, or at least delay, (re-)Bulgarization scenarios. Unlike the revisionism of the 1990s, characterized by overtly pro-Bulgarian writings, the explicit purpose of current anti-communist historical

interpretations does not serve the denial of Macedonian national identity. On the contrary, nowadays, the reexamination of the communist past seeks to *reaffirm* it, on a new basis.

Let us begin with the rehabilitated communists. Already, Čento and the *informbirovci*, whose tragic fate during Titoist regime was adroitly exploited by Bulgarian historians, have been vindicated as 'Macedonian patriots' unjustly accused by that regime of pro-Bulgarianism. Their rehabilitation has thus been accompanied by an acquittal of all charges of national treason.[31] The same holds true even for the scandalous Metodija Šatorov-Šarlo, the local communist leader who, in the spring of 1941, joined the Bulgarian communist party after breaking with the Yugoslav leadership. It was after his elimination that the Macedonian partisan movement took on a univocally pro-Yugoslav character. In the 1990s, the efforts to exculpate Šatorov triggered indignant reactions: veterans of the 'National-Liberation Struggle' (NOB) condemned the pro-Bulgarian character of both the dead activist and his latter-day promoters.[32] But, in November 2005, a scholarly conference at the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts marked a decisive turn. It was decided that Šatorov was *"a great Macedonian patriot who felt Macedonian, fought for Macedonian national identity, and was not a traitor of the Macedonian cause."*[33]

The rehabilitation of the right-wing revolutionary tradition of IMRO is also not necessarily what the Bulgarian historical polemicists would expect. Anticommunist historians such as Zoran Todorovski simply declared that the revolutionary right wing was as 'Macedonian' as the Macedonian leftists and communists.[34] In this affirmation, he referred to the 'ethnic Macedonian' origin of the IMRO activists and to their struggle for 'independent Macedonia.' While the latter is indeed the case, Todorovski omits the Bulgarian self-identification of these same personalities or simply states that, anyway, this used to be also the case of the early leftists.

Apart from the works of professional historians, such an interpretation is promoted by a number of new public forms of reconsidering the past. In June 2007, the museum of the town of Kavadarci decided to commemorate the victims of a local anti-Serbian uprising organized by the IMRO in the

summer of 1913. Embarrassing and strictly silenced during the Yugoslav period, this event has been actively exploited by historians from Sofia trying to prove both the 'Bulgarian past' of Macedonia and the 'pro-Serbian' nature of the Yugoslav republic's establishment.[35] Moreover, it is still viewed skeptically by mainstream Macedonian historians who claim the uprising was pro-Bulgarian. However, the leading revisionist, Todorovski, himself native of the region in question, rejected such allegations and affirmed the genuine Macedonian character of the IMRO's act.[36] This was also the view of the organizers from the local museum.

Even more intriguing is the changing attitude towards the anti-Yugoslav and anticommunist victims of the regime after 1944. Quite often, they were persecuted as pro-Bulgarian collaborators or as agents of the IMRO. Until recently, crimes such as the mass killings of pro-Bulgarians in January 1945 were silenced. But in 2005, a scholarly conference in the town of Veles commemorated the sixtieth anniversary of the murder of more than fifty local civilians.[37] They were portrayed as patriotic Macedonians wrongfully accused of pro-Bulgarianism. Historians paid special attention also to an as yet unproven mass execution at Skopje's fortress *Kale* where soldiers were allegedly killed because of their Macedonian patriotism.[38] In the past, these cases were among the most emphasized by Bulgarian polemicists.

The situation is even more complicated by the fact that many of the victims of the communist regime, most notably former political prisoners, are still alive. Today, they publish autobiographies where they reject all accusations of national treason previously leveled at them. It was only 'the cause of Macedonia' that inspired their activity.[39] The anticommunist contesters depict the Yugoslav communist period as a 'compromise,' not a fulfillment, of the 'truly Macedonian cause' – which was, for them, the ideal of a greater, 'unified' Macedonian state, free from 'Serbian' tutelage. In this way, they try to gain symbolic capital in the eyes of the new public in independent Macedonia, the supposed object of their struggles. Revisionist historians have supported them and published research on the oppression of tens

of thousands of 'patriots' during the communist regime.[40] Zoran Todorovski put forward the number of 50,000 victims, including those killed, imprisoned, deported, sent to forced labor, tortured, etc.[41]

In this way, acts that were stigmatized as 'pro-Bulgarian treason' are progressively being rebranded as 'Macedonian patriotism.' In fact, a more general memory (re)construction process can be seen in this potentially endless rewriting exercise of history. In the post-Yugoslav political and social setting, where previously official and obligatory memory is no longer uncontested, new actors have appeared and sought public legitimacy. In the 1990s, they attempted to voice historical taboos, but these were ultimately welcomed neither by mainstream academia nor by the wider public. The conversion to a 'Bulgarian past' for Macedonia failed, and Macedonian nationalism proved to be much more vigorous than was expected in Sofia.

This failure of pro-Bulgarianism can be explained through the hostile position of Macedonian neighbors vis-à-vis the attributes of the new state, in particular the Bulgarian contestation of its very national identity and language. One can meditate over the question if a more balanced and less aggressive position of Sofia would not have been more adequate to its own goals. In any case, Macedonian patriotic character of revisionism was greatly strengthened by the most serious internal challenge: the political claims of Macedonia's ethnic Albanians. The conflict in 2001 could be seen, regarding the meanings and purposes of historical interpretations, as a *terminus post quem* the revisionists of communism sought to endorse by all means their Macedonian national conformity.

The official recognition of anticommunist activity

The anticommunist politics of memory acquired a strictly political form after those declaring to have been persecuted called for official intervention to bestow legitimacy on their claims. It was the authorities that were supposed to do justice to a hitherto silenced collective experience. In autumn 2005, the cabinet of Vlado Bučkovski decided to grant financial compensation to persons oppressed (*progonuvani*) by the Yugoslav regime. This decision conferred legitimacy on the interpretation of the past promoted by those who have been officially designated, from now on, as people 'sentenced because

of their struggle for independent and unified Macedonia' (*osudenici za samostojna i obedineta Makedonija*). In this way, the government accepted the self-understanding of the anticommunist 'dissidents': their only 'sin' was their activity for the creation of a greater and sovereign Macedonia out of Belgrade's control.

In fact, this measure was somewhat paradoxical: Bučkovski's cabinet was dominated not by the anticommunist VMRO-DPMNE but by the SDSM, i.e., by the party of the former Yugoslav communists. Apparently the latter has itself experienced a change of generations – or at least a change of heart – and its leaders were trying to present themselves as symbolic champions of 'the truly Macedonian cause.' Then again, the explanation of this act might not be located entirely inside Macedonia. The revision of the Yugoslav past is, at least in part, a Macedonian response to a supranational political agenda that urges the country to rearticulate its relationship to the past in order to fulfill its ambitions for the future. These ambitions include, first of all, membership in NATO and the European Union. Thus, the domestic politics of memory mirror a more general context.

As early as 1996, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, of which Macedonia became a member in 1995, voted a resolution 'on measures to dismantle the heritage of former communist totalitarian systems.' Ten years later, in January 2006, the same institution condemned the 'crimes of totalitarian communist regimes.'[42] Almost automatically, in April 2006, the Macedonian parliament (*Sobranie*) voted a 'declaration of apology to the victims of communism.' At the end of the same year, Stojan Andov, the leader of the Liberal Party of Macedonia, introduced in the parliament a legislative draft aiming to exclude informers of the political police of the Yugoslav communist regime from a wide range of public offices. A culmination of the legislative revision of the past, the project of lustration is called the 'Law for the determination of additional conditions for the carrying out of public functions' (*Zakon za opredeluvanje dopolnitelen uslov za vršenje javna funkcija*). It refers explicitly to the example of a number of countries in post-communist Eastern Europe that, following Czechoslovakia in 1991, voted such measures.

As a matter of fact, the political actors backing lustration have fairly varied biographical trajectories. Stojan Andov is an established politician whose LP has been several times in a coalition with the former communist SDSM. It was the VMRO-DPMNE historian Zoran Todorovski, still not recognized by mainstream academicians, who was initially expected to be in charge of the lustration commission foreseen in the legislative project.[43] The most active supporter of the law and one of its consultants was the young columnist and blogger Ivica Bocevski, a former SDSM activist, in 2007 and in the beginning of 2008 speaker of Nikola Gruevski's VMRO-DPMNE government.[44] The law itself is inspired by the NGO sector, the product of a project entitled 'Disclosing hidden history: Lustration in the Western Balkans' that was run from 2004 to 2006 by the Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe.[45]

Referring to the need to rethink Yugoslav communism, the anticommunist revisionists obviously have tried to deprive their opponents of legitimacy. In the public debates on lustration during 2007, one could discern a clash of different social statuses, one resting on already established symbolic capital and the other still striving to accumulate its own.[46] The strange coalition of revisionist actors seemed to signal that the anticommunist politics of memory did not mobilize considerable forces of collective action and remained, more or less, a matter of personal strategies.

However, the law was approved in January 2008 with a striking consensus: 73 voted for, none against, and no abstentions. Clearly encouraged by the vote, Stojan Andov also anticipated a 'Law for rehabilitation' of all the victims of the previous regime and referred to the supposed importance of this process for Macedonia's integration into NATO and the EU.[47] Apparently this was the main motivation behind the former communist SDSM's support of the lustration law: the construction of a new official memory of the communist past was believed to be a necessary prerequisite for the country's incorporation into its desired global context. Moreover, it is likely that the new social-democratic

activists did not consider themselves to be related to the power structures of the former Yugoslav secret police.

The law is as historically 'correct' as possible: Andov explained that nobody would dare question the value of 'the glorious epic of the antifascist war in Macedonia.' He also confirmed that the victims of the Yugoslav communist regime were unjustly labeled as pro-Bulgarians: they 'felt pure Macedonians by nationality.' But even if with such a high level of political approval, the revision of the Yugoslav communist past had not yet proven its consistency with the Macedonian national identity – a problem that those involved in the revision thought had been resolved.

Tito strikes back: the reactions to the rehabilitation of anticommunist 'dissidents'

Revisionism was especially resented as a threat by Tito's former partisans – the combatants of the National-Liberation Struggle (NOB). They were particularly scandalized by the exculpation of the so-called 'sentenced because of independent Macedonia.' For communist veterans, the activity of anticommunist opponents was suspicious and did not deserve such recognition. The situation was complicated by the fact that the anticommunists were persecuted by the former partisans. After 1944, the latter occupied high functions in the administrative and security apparatuses, particularly in the secret police affected by the lustration law. Now, facing their victims' vindication, the communist combatants found their own legitimacy called into question, and they did not accept being put on the same symbolic level as the former 'traitors.' As a result, the Macedonian media became a virtual battlefield between the two camps.[48] But in this battle the symbolic capital and strategic interests of individuals were not the only issues. At stake was the very definition of what should be regarded as having been 'properly Macedonian' in the past.

The NOB veterans reminded the public that the anti-Yugoslav and anticommunist activists were often condemned as pro-Bulgarians. A large quantity of data was mobilized to show that the newly proclaimed 'dissidents' were actually paid by Sofia.[49] Throughout the quarrel, the communist partisans

had a significant advantage since they could exploit the established mainstream version of national history. According to that version, the period within the socialist federation with the five other 'brotherly peoples' was 'an important stage' (*značajna etapa*) in the development of the Macedonian state.[50] From this point of view, the independence of the republic proclaimed in 1991 represented a logical continuation of, rather than a rupture with, the preceding period. Paradoxically, it was precisely the preservation of continuity with the Yugoslav past that was decisive for the actual sovereignty of the Macedonian state.

This alignment of communist past and post-communist present still has significant political and public support. It was emphasized in 2005 by an initiative of Macedonian president Branko Crvenkovski, former leader of the SDSM: he provoked considerable controversy in Macedonian public space by suggesting that a monument to Tito should be built in the center of Skopje. Crvenkovski argued that the Yugoslav communist ruler deserved such recognition for his contribution to the Macedonian nation. Some NOB combatants immediately expressed their enthusiasm for the president's proposal. They erected a statue of Tito in a central location in the city of Bitola, with no formal permission from the municipal authorities. However, cases like these are not just a matter of what some label as *Yugo-nostalgia*. To a great extent, their explanation is to be found in the very history of Macedonian nationalism.

As already mentioned, the definitive construction of Macedonian national identity *coincides* with the construction of socialist Yugoslavia. Former communist partisans, politicians from the SDSM, and historians affiliated to this party frequently remind the public that it was only in the framework of Tito's Yugoslavia that Macedonians were recognized as a separate nation and obtained their own statehood (*državnost*), language, and culture. Would the denial of these historic achievements not also be a denial of Macedonian ethno-national individuality? Tito's partisans ask what kind of Macedonia their opponents fought for, considering that they rejected federative socialist Yugoslavia – the framework

enabling the recognition of the Macedonian nation. They also ask those 'sentenced for independent Macedonia' where they were during the Bulgarian occupation (1941-1944) – a question that is sometimes uncomfortable for the latter to answer.

Prior to communist Yugoslavia, Macedonian national identity was not recognized: it was able to develop *thanks to* and not *in opposition to* Tito's regime. In the light of this argument, anticommunist memory still looks problematic despite all of the recent striving to show its Macedonian patriotic character. For many Macedonians, one question still lacks a proper reply.

How to be Macedonian in a non-Yugoslav way?

If this question risks being the impasse of Macedonian anticommunism, the veneration of the Yugoslav communist past is not itself unproblematic. Right-wing critics have noted that the practice of crediting Tito for all things Macedonian is actually quite close to the Greek and Bulgarian interpretations of history, which portray modern Macedonia as precisely Tito's creation. Consequently, the NOB veterans were caught in a terrible bind: instead of being champions of Macedonianism, they were only providing further evidence for the pernicious assertions of some of Macedonia's most malevolent neighbors.[51]

Thus the conflict over the communist past in Macedonia took the shape of two diverging articulations of what it meant to be Macedonian in the post-Yugoslav present. The first articulation, dominant until recently, connected Macedonianness with Yugoslavness. The second amplified the distinction between the two and claimed itself wholly untainted by Belgrade sympathies. In this way, it also tried to parry the accusation that Macedonian national identity was merely a Yugoslav communist product. The attempts to construct a right-wing and anticommunist version of Macedonian national history and memory still risk being suspected of 'anti-Macedonianism'. But the nostalgia for the 'well-being' of communist Yugoslavia seems increasingly anachronistic in a country aspiring for 'Western living standards' through integration into the EU.

The contestation of the single historical narrative of the *ancien régime* led to an unprecedented upsurge in challenging and mutually exclusive interpretations of history.[52] Contrary to Bulgarian hopes, the upsurge of memory no longer questions Macedonian national identity as it did in the first waves of revisionism in the 1990s. Today, in the face of an unclear reevaluation of Yugoslav communism and of uneasy articulation of anticommunist historical narrative, Macedonian authorities seek other solutions. In their attempt to reconcile rival stories and traumatic memories, they turned to the mythological symbolism of ancient Macedonia.

At the end of 2006, Nikola Gruevski's cabinet gave Skopje airport the name of Alexander the Great and, as of this writing, it is not Tito but Alexander who will take the vacant place in the central square of the capital. In front of the parliament, one can now admire statues from antiquity installed there in March 2007. Many young people are participating in archeological excavations at the Skopje fortress *Kale*. They are expected to provide long expected proof of the ancient Macedonian character of the modern city whose ethnic Albanian minority seems to many Macedonians too ambitious. At the same time, nobody seems as interested in political crimes that probably happened in the same place some sixty years ago. Obviously, the most secure way to deal with the challenges of memory is to turn to the immemorial.

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1. From the protest note of the Union of Combatants from the Second World War against a decision of the Bitola municipality, in May 2007, to remove 26 monuments to communist partisans from the city park: "Lokalnata vlast gi seli bitolskite heroi od gradskoto šetalište," *Utrinski vesnik*, May 15, 2007. Bitola is Macedonia's second largest city.

2. See the introduction to the first and conclusion to the last volume of Pierre Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire*: *La République*, *Les France*, vol. 3 (Paris: Gallimard, 1984, 1993).

3. At the same time, those who would connect Alexander's Macedonia in some organic way with today's Republic of Macedonia are mocked by others as *Bukefalisti* 'Bucephalists' (after Bucephalos, Alexander the Great's horse).

4. "Vladata proglasuva žrtvi na komunizmot," *Vest*, June 25, 2007.

5. See, for instance, the writings of Vasil Ivanovski, *Zošto nie Makedoncite sme oddelna nacija? Izbrani dela* (Skopje: AM, 1995). Communists like Ivanovski or Dimitar Vlahov, Angel Dinev and others were certainly not the first to develop a

particular Macedonian historical interpretation. Modern Macedonian nationalism had its first documented manifestations already in the 1870s, but only after WWI and especially during WWII did it become a real political force.

6. Without entering into the intricate details, here is an example: during the Ottoman period, the IMRO was named, most of the time, Secret Macedono-Adrianopolitan Organization, and, after 1905, Internal Macedono-Adrianopolitan Revolutionary Organization (VMORO). It was active not only in Macedonia but also in Thrace – in the Vilayet of Adrianople (modern Edirne in Turkey). This fact is still difficult to explain from a Macedonian historiographic viewpoint: it suggests that Macedonian revolutionaries in the Ottoman period did not differentiate between 'ethnic Macedonians' and 'ethnic Bulgarians' from Thrace. Moreover, as their own writings attest, they often saw themselves as 'Bulgarians' (or 'Macedonian Bulgarians') and wrote in standard Bulgarian rather than in the Macedonian dialect. On this topic, see Ulf Brunnbauer, "History, Myths and the Nation in the Republic of Macedonia," in *(Re)Writing History. Historiography in Southeast Europe after Socialism*, ed. Ulf Brunnbauer (Münster: Lit-Verlag, 2004).

7. These are among the historical figures from Macedonia who are now celebrated in Bulgaria but not in the Republic of Macedonia. Thus, for example, in the 1990s, a new boulevard in downtown Sofia was named *Todor Aleksandrov*, but one will search in vain for such a street in Macedonia even though Aleksandrov is native to its territory. In May 2008, a pro-Bulgarian inhabitant of the town Veles was even put on trial after inaugurating a bust of the IMRO leader in his own house's courtyard. Let us emphasize that IMRO *sensu stricto* is only the right-wing interwar organization. See the previous footnote about the designations of the Macedonian revolutionary organization during the Ottoman period. Paradoxically or not, the abbreviation IMRO (VMRO) is used in the Republic of Macedonia also for the organization from the Ottoman period, which is positively integrated into the Macedonian national pantheon (especially its leftist activists).

8. According to the traditional Bulgarian and Macedonian nationalist mappings, 'historical' or 'geographic' Macedonia comprises the modern Republic of Macedonia, the administrative districts with that name in northern Greece, the Pirin region in Bulgaria as well as some small parts of modern Albania, Serbia and Kosovo. IMRO imagined future 'independent Macedonia' as a state of Bulgarians and other nationalities (Turks, Greeks, Albanians, Vlachs). It did not embrace the idea of a separate non-Bulgarian Macedonian ethnicity and nation that, since the 1930s, was promoted by Macedonian communists, members of the communist parties of Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Greece.

9. On the meaning of different 'Ilindens' see Keith Brown, "A Rising to Count On: Ilinden Between Politics and History in Post-Yugoslav Macedonia," in *The Macedonian Question: Culture, Historiography, Politics*, ed. Victor Roudometof (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2000).

10. The process of standardization of Macedonian is certainly more complex and began already before 1944: Victor Friedman, "The Implementation of Standard Macedonian: Problems and Results," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 131 (1998): 31-57.

11. Cf. Stefan Troebst, *Die bulgarisch-jugoslawische Kontroverse um Makedonien 1967-1982* (München: Oldenbourg, 1983).

12. As noticed by James Frusetta, "Common Heroes, Divided Crimes: IMRO Between Macedonia and Bulgaria," in *Ideologies and National Identities. The Case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe*, ed. John Lampe and Mark Mazower (Budapest, New York: CEU Press, 2004).

13. On Macedonian diaspora and its participation in this process: Loring Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict. Ethnic Nationalism in a Transnational World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Keith Brown, "In the Realm of the Double-Headed Eagle: Parapolitics in Macedonia 1994-9," in *Macedonia. The Politics of Identity and Difference*, ed. Jane Cowan (London: Pluto Press, 2000).

14. Such reservations were expressed by Kiro Gligorov, the first president of independent Macedonia and former member of the inner circle of the Yugoslav party leadership, secretary of State for finance in the Yugoslav Federal executive council, member of the Yugoslav Presidency and President of the Assembly of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Cf. the attitude of Denko Maleski, former minister of foreign affairs: "Poraka do EU: Dostoinstvo za Makedoncite", *Utrinski vesnik*, February 3, 2007.

15. Cf. his first biography Fidanka Tanaskova, *Metodija Andonov-Čento* (Skopje: Nova Makedonija, 1990).

16. This is in particular the case of Pavel Šatev and of Panko Brašnarov, leftist activists of the Macedonian revolutionary movement since the Ottoman period and founders of Yugoslav Macedonia.

17. For instance, Violeta Ačkoska, *Zadrugarstvoto i agrarnata politika 1945–1955 godina* (Skopje: INI, 1994).

18. See his historical pamphlet: Ljubčo Georgievski, *Koj so kogo kje se pomiruva* (Skopje: no year). In 2006, Georgievski, prime minister of Macedonia between 1998 and 2002, obtained Bulgarian citizenship. In 1999, Dimitar Dimitrov, minister of culture in Georgievski's cabinet, provoked a series of public scandals that ultimately resulted in his dismissal. Under his auspices the folkloristic collection of the Miladinov brothers, central figures of the national 'Revival' in the 19th century, was reissued under its original title *Bulgarian Folk Songs*. See also his book: Dimitar Dimitrov, *Imeto i umot* (Skopje: Naše delo, 1999). Cf. Christian Voss, "Sprach- und Geschichtsrevision in Makedonien," *Osteuropa* 51 (2001): 953-967.

19. Zoran Todorovski, *Vnatrešna makedonska revolucionerna organizacija 1924-1934* (Skopje: Robz, 1997).

20. Todor Aleksandrov, *Sè za Makedonija*. *Dokumenti 1919-1924* (Skopje, 2005). The volume was published under the auspices of VMRO-DPMNE.

21. "Aleksandrov izednačen so Goce Delčev," *Utrinski vesnik*, June 18, 2005.

22. See especially the entries on Blaže Koneski, the most important linguistic codifier, in the encyclopedic dictionaries of Stojan Kiselinovski et al., *Makedonski istoriski rečnik* (Skopje: INI, 2000); Stojan Kiselinovski, *Makedonski dejci (XX-ti vek)* (Skopje: Makavej, 2002). Cf. the critique of Novica Veljanovski, former chief of the academic Institute of National History in Skopje: "'Objektiviziranjeto' na Stojan Kiselinovski," *Utrinski vesnik*, January 27, 2003, "Kiselinovski gi politizira istoriskite ličnosti," *Utrinski vesnik*, January 28, 2003. See also Victor Friedman, "The First Philological Conference for the Establishment of the Macedonian Alphabet and the Macedonian Literary Language: Its Precedents and Consequences," in *The Earliest Stage of Language Planning: The "First Congress" Phenomenon*, ed. Joshua Fishman (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1993), 159-180.

23. In January 1928, Mara Buneva shot Velimir Prelić – an important Serbian clerk, adviser of the governor of the Vardar region and colonel at the police. He was considered responsible for tortures of pro-Bulgarian students in Skopje. After the assassination, Buneva shot herself. The commemorations of her 'exploit' in Skopje are traditionally attended also by Bulgarian nationalists coming from Bulgaria. In January 2007, a new attempt to lay the plaque ended with a violent clash in a lively area by the bank of the Vardar. In the aftermath of the incident, journalists and historians such as Todorovski mused whether it was still a sin, in the Republic of Macedonia, to commemorate fighters against Serbian rule. Others were perplexed: is Mara Buneva a Macedonian hero or a pro-Bulgarian betrayer? See Viktor Cvetanoski, "Mara Buneva ja razgore antimakedonskata kampanija vo Bugarija," *Utrinski vesnik*, January 16, 2007; Zoran Čitkušev, "Istorijata nema samo svetli stranici," *Forum Plus*, January 19, 2007; Todor Čepreganov, "Ne ostanaa nerasčisteni prašanja, no nekoi se ušte bolaat," *Vreme*, February 4, 2007. Reactions to the commemoration of Vlado Černozemski, the IMRO assassin of the Yugoslav king Alexander Karađorđević, were similar: cf. Keith Brown, *The Past in Question. Modern Macedonia and the Uncertainties of Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 244.

24. Marija Pandevska, "Todor Aleksandrov se boreše za bugarskata kauza," *Utrinski vesnik*, June 18, 2005; Viktor Cvetanoski, "Za Aleksandrov bez strasti i politika," *Utrinski vesnik*, June 21, 2005.

25. Ivan Katardžiev, *Makedonija sto godini po Ilindenskoto vostanie* (Skopje: Kultura, 2003). See also the historical dictionary of the journalist (and amateur historian) Jovan Pavlovski, ed., *Sto makedonski godini 1903-2003* (Skopje: Mi-An, 2004). This publication provoked a dispute between Pavlovski and Todorovski: Zoran Todorovski, "Sto makedonski

nevistini," *Utrinski vesnik*, May 18, 2004; Jovan Pavlovski, "Imavme madinja!," *Utrinski vesnik*, May 28, 2004; Zoran Todorovski, "Sto makedonski nevistini – vtor pat," *Utrinski vesnik*, June 3, 2004.

26. Cf. Ulf Brunnbauer, "'Pro-Serbians' vs. 'Pro-Bulgarians': Revisionism in Post-Socialist Macedonian Historiography," *History Compass* 3 (2005): 1-17.

27. The post-Yugoslav Croatian politics of memory certainly entailed not just a rehabilitation of the *ustaše* but rather a 'national reconciliation' on the ground of glorification of all the 'patriots,' right-wingers, fascists and communist partisans, who, in different ways, 'fought for Croatia'. One can postulate a more or less significant Croatian influence on the talk of 'national reconciliation' (*nacionalno pomiruvanje*), which, since the beginning of the 1990s, has been episodically emerging in Macedonian public space. See Georgievski's booklet and the four articles of Antonio Milošoski (former speaker of VMRO-DPMNE, later Macedonian minister of foreign affairs) "Proštavanje i nacionalno pomiruvanje," *Utrinski vesnik*, April 2005.

28. Such as Brunnbauer, "History, Myths and the Nation in the Republic of Macedonia," 167-199. Macedonian revisionists are at least as critical: Zoran Todorovski, "Makedonskata istoriografija i politikata (aktuelni refleksii vo makedonskiot pluralistički sistem)," in *Makedonskata istoriska nauka – dostignuvanja i problemi* (Skopje: INI, 2001). See Violeta Ačkoska, "Politikata i istoriografijata 1944-1998," in the same collective volume.

29. Stefan Troebst, "Geschichtspolitik und historische 'Meistererzählungen' in Makedonien vor und nach 1991," in *Das makedonische Jahrhundert Von den Anfängen der nationalrevolutionären Bewegung zum Abkommen von Ohrid 1893–2001* (München: Oldenbourg, 2007). Cf. Idem, "IMRO+100=FYROM? The Politics of Macedonian Historiography," Ibid.

30. Number of such evaluations could be found in *Makedonski pregled*, a journal of the Macedonian Scientific Institute in Sofia. Some of Zoran Todorovski's articles were published there.

31. See *Čento i makedonskata državnost* (Skopje: MANU, 2004). Cf. *Pavel Šatev: vreme - život - delo (1882-1951)* (Skopje: INI, 1996); Vera Veskovikj-Vangeli, *Dosie Brašnarov* (Skopje: Magor, 2003). The rehabilitation of Čento was confirmed by a governmental decree in 2000.

32. Blažo Naumčevski-Škonata, "Vistini za Metodija Šatorov-Šarlo," *Utrinski vesnik*, February 19, 2004; Stefan Aleksovski, "Koja e vistinata za Šarlo," *Utrinski vesnik*, September 24, 2005.

33. "Šarlo bil golem Makedonec, a ne predavnik," *Utrinski vesnik*, November 24, 2005.

34. See the interview with Todorovski, "Uште robuvame na starite podelbi," *Tribune*, www.tribune.eu.com (accessed June 30, 2005). During the debates that followed the publication of Todor Aleksandrov's writings, many people considered 'the last king of the mountains' as an incarnation of exemplar Macedonian patriotism. All allegations of (pro-)Bulgarianism against

Aleksandrov were denied as 'absurd,' and the 'Greater-Bulgarian chauvinist' from the academic writings was transformed into a partisan of the 'true' Macedonian cause: Vera Josifova, "Vistinata za Todor Aleksandrov," *Utrinski vesnik*, June 27, 2005; Marjan Gjorčev, "Skopje-Brisel via Dramče i Belgrad," *Utrinski vesnik*, August 4, 2005.

35. See, for instance, the voluminous work of Kosta Cârnušanov, *Makedonizmât i sâprotivata na Makedonija sreštu nego* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo, 1992).

36. "Tikveškoto vostanie konečno kje najde mesto vo istorijata," *Dnevnik*, June 21, 2007.

37. "Vo Veles trkalezna masa "Šest decenii podocna," http://www.idividi.com.mk/vesti/svet/299229/index.html (accessed January 17, 2005).

38. They were punished for their refusal to fight 'for Serbia' on the Srem front: they demanded to march south and take Salonica for Macedonia. Cf. Gjorgji Malkovski, ed., *Nastanite na Skopskoto kale na 7 januari 1945 g. Dokumenti* (Skopje: INI, MM, 1997).

39. Eftim Gašev, *Našata kauza* (Skopje, 1995). Cf. Stojan Risteski, *Sudeni za Makedonija (1945-1983)* (Skopje, 1993); Gligor Krsteski, *Otpori i progoni, 1946–1950* (Skopje: MM, 1994).

40. Violeta Ačkoska, Nikola Žežov, *Represijata i represiranite vo najnovata makedonska istorija* (Skopje: Makavej, 2006). See also the interviews of Ivica Anteski, "Četvrtinkata od kilimot na Vera Aceva," *Forum Plus*, April 2006.

41. E.g. Zoran Todorovski, "Humanosta na makedonskiot komunizam," *Utrinski vesnik*, February 2, 2006. Among these, most noteworthy is the group of about 820 *informbirovci* sent to the infamous labor camp on the Adriatic island of Goli Otok. Todorovski claims there are about 36,000 political files of practitioners of diverse forms of opposition to the Yugoslav regime. According to him, pro-Bulgarians constituted a negligible portion of the victims of communism, most of whom were devoted Macedonian nationalists (personal conversation, March 15, 2007). This view is held by other historians as well (Andrew Rossos to Victor Friedman, p.c. 1999).

42. Accessible on http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta06/Eres1481.htm (accessed May 28, 2008).

43. See the project on http://www.lp.org.mk/lustr.pdf (accessed May 28, 2008). Todorovski had to give it up, being 'compromised', according to the socialist opposition, by the historiographic scandals in which he has participated.

44. See Bocevski's articles on his blog http://theskopjetimes.blog.com.mk (accessed May 28, 2008).

45. Cf. http://www.lustration.net (accessed May 28, 2008). The project is financed by the EU, USAID, the Balkan Trust for Democracy (a project of the German Marshall Fund based in Belgrade) and involved many NGOs from the Western Balkans.

46. The lustration law was severely criticized by the former communists of SDSM, but also by the Macedonian Helsinki Committee (http://www.mhc.org.mk/eng/a_analizi/a_012007_Lustration.htm, accessed September 15, 2007) and was paradoxically opposed by the Open Society Institute in Skopje. The Institute's chief executive, Vladimir Milčin, a renowned theater and film director and son of the illustrious Yugoslav actor Ilija Milčin, rejected the need for what he labeled as a 'witch hunt': Vladimir Milčin, "Frustracija, lustracija, konfiskacija," *Utrinski vesnik*, May 5, 2007.

47. See the interview with Stojan Andov, "Na red e zakon za rehabilitacija," *Dnevnik*, January 26, 2008.

48. See the polemics between one of the most important of the 'dissidents' – Eftim Gašev – and the NOB veterans. Eftim Gašev, "Fakti, fakti, a ne zborovi," *Utrinski vesnik*, September 29, 2005; Gavro Panovski, "I fakti, no i zborovi!," *Utrinski vesnik*, October 7, 2005; Ilija Josifovski, "Za nekoi istoriski kontroverzii," *Utrinski vesnik*, October 8, 2005; Todor Atanasovski, "Neistoričnost i maroderstvo," *Utrinski vesnik*, October 12, 2005; Eftim Gašev, "Mnogu rekovte – ništo ne kažavte!," *Utrinski vesnik*, October 17, 2005; Gavro Panovski, "Kameleonstvo?!," *Utrinski vesnik*, November 7, 2005; Eftim Gašev, "Kodošlak," *Utrinski vesnik*, November 16, 2005. In fact, a number of problems divide the anticommunist 'dissidents' among themselves: see Gašev's articles against other former political prisoners as well as against Zoran Todorovski: "So šopska salata vo Evropa," *Špic*, February 3, 2007; "Falsifikat," *Utrinski vesnik*, January 9, 2008.

49. A thesis that would seem to be confirmed by the fact that Bulgarian historical polemicists traditionally claim that all the Macedonian victims of the Yugoslav communist regime were 'Bulgarian patriots.' According to Cârnušanov, after 1944, Macedonia "*gave hecatombs of victims* [repressed] *because of their Bulgarian name*" (Cârnušanov, *Makedonizmât i sâprotivata na Makedonija sreštu nego*, 334). The outbidding continues in Dimitâr Gocev, *Novata nacionalno-osvoboditelna borba vâv Vardarska Makedonija (1944-1948)* (Sofia: MNI, 1998).

50. Katardžiev, *Makedonija sto godini po Ilindenskoto vostanie*, 431.

51. Antonio Milošoski, "Republika Makedonija (vo zagrada) – Tito," *Utrinski vesnik*, June 4, 2005. VMRO-DPMNE's promotion of Todor Aleksandrov's writings was also directed against the initiative of the president of the republic: "Ako može bista na Tito, može i kniga za Todor Aleksandrov," *Utrinski vesnik*, June 14, 2005. Cf. Tatjana Popovska, "Ima i Makedonci zaslužni kako Tito," *Dnevnik*, May 10, 2005; Branko Geroski, "Pismo do drugarot Tito," *Dnevnik*, May 21, 2005.

52. Certainly, the repertoire of the polemics between 'Yugo-nostalgics' and VMRO-ists, 'pro-Serbians' and 'pro-Bulgarians,' does not exhaust the painful debates over the past. Representatives of the Albanian minority also developed their own historical revisionism and memory of the WWII, which is difficult to reconcile with mainstream Macedonian history. This extremely important topic is beyond the scope of this article. One can only indicate here the most contentious points, namely the evaluation of the actions of the armed units of the Albanian nationalist *Balli Kombëtar* 'the National Front' in western

Macedonia, on the one hand, and the mass murders of Albanian civilians committed in 1944 by Macedonian partisans, on the other. Today, in the village of Gorno Blace, near Skopje, and in Tetovo, one can see monuments commemorating such atrocities. These were carefully concealed during the communist regime glorifying the 'National-Liberation Struggle'. Nowadays, communist veterans and pro-SDSM media react severely against the new monuments: Kuzman Georgievski, "Vo Skopsko Blace se podiga spomenik so izmisleni fakti," *Utrinski vesnik*, December 1, 2004.