

Fra den græske ambassadør 8/9-08

THE DIFFERENCE OVER THE NAME OF FYROM

I. The name issue with FYROM is not simply a bilateral dispute about historic facts or semantics. It is a problem with regional and international ramifications, consisting in a policy of irredentism and territorial claims on the part of FYROM, underpinned by the falsification of history and the usurpation of the ethnic and historic heritage of Greece.

II. The name issue manifested itself in its current form in 1991, when FYROM seceded from Yugoslavia and declared her independence under the name "Republic of Macedonia". Historically, the term "Macedonia", which is a Greek word, refers to the state and civilisation of the ancient Macedonians, which, indisputably, form part of the Greek national and historical heritage. Geographically, this term refers to a broader region spreading across the contemporary borders of several Balkan countries (mainly Greece, FYROM and Bulgaria), although its geographical limits have never been accurately defined and its size varied from era to era. However, it must be noted that the bulk and the core of this region have always been considered to coincide with the area occupied originally by ancient Macedonia, which lies within the boundaries of modern Greece, covering most of the northern part of this country with 2.5 millions of inhabitants who call and consider themselves Macedonians since time immemorial.

III. The name issue draws its origin in the aftermath of WW II, when Marshal Tito separated the region of Vardar Banovina (as FYROM was called at that time) from Serbia, granting it the status of a Republic of the new federal Yugoslavia under the name of "Socialist Republic of Macedonia", promoting at the same time the concept of a separate and distinct "Macedonian nation". Marshal Tito had a number of reasons for doing this, the most important being his wish to justify future Yugoslav territorial claims against the rest of the geographical region of Macedonia (and in particular Greece) in the name of the "liberation" of the region, so that Yugoslavia would manage to have access to the Aegean Sea. Marshal Tito's designs on Macedonia were asserted as early as 1944 when in a proclamation he claimed that his goal was to reunify "all parts of Macedonia, divided in 1912 and 1913 by Balkan imperialists".

IV. Against this historical background, FYROM sought her independence in 1991, basing her existence as an independent country on the fabricated concept of the "Macedonian nation" which was forged by a preposterous falsification of history, clearly serving purposes of political expediency. Greece reacted strongly to the usurpation of her national heritage and history and the issue was brought before the Security Council of the UN, which adopted two resolutions (817 and 845) urging the parties involved to reach a speedy settlement of the difference in the interest of maintenance of peaceful and good-neighbourly relations in the region. FYROM was accepted in the UN under the provisional name "former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", until a definitive one is agreed upon, and the two countries (i.e. Greece and FYROM) signed in 1995 an Interim Accord which provided for negotiations with the aim of reaching a mutually acceptable solution, establishing, at the same time, a binding "code of conduct" between the parties.

IV. Thirteen years later, no significant progress has taken place because of the intransigence of Skopje in the negotiations and their bad faith as regards the

implementation of the said Accord. The Government of Skopje has breached materially almost all of the provisions of this Accord, by trying to impose their constitutional name under dispute, bypassing thus the obligation for a negotiated settlement, by continuing to usurp symbols and other elements of Greek heritage and by putting forward irredentism and territorial claims against Greece. In addition, the Government of FYROM follows an offensive and provocative policy vis-à-vis Greece, by condoning hostility, fanaticism and chauvinism. Until recently, there were all over Skopje defamatory banners defacing the Greek flag, by replacing the Christian Cross with the Nazi swastika. A couple of months earlier, the Greek mission in Skopje had suffered damages perpetrated by a fanatic crowd under the tolerance of the police authorities.

VI. It is clear that this conduct poses self-evident and real threats to Greece's security and territorial integrity, upsets good neighbourly relations, an essential norm of the international legal order, runs counter to fundamental principles of international law and adds a destabilising factor in a sensitive region such as the Balkans, where nationalistic frictions and upheavals flare up.

VII. In the aforementioned background, NATO's Summit in Bucharest (April 3, 2008), in its final Declaration on enlargement (paragraph 20), rejected FYROM's application to join its ranks, with inter alia, the comment "the Alliance has noted with regret that these talks have not produced a successful outcome. Therefore we agreed that an invitation to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia will be extended as soon as a mutually acceptable solution to the name issue has been reached. We encourage the negotiations to be resumed without delay and expect them to be concluded as soon as possible".

VIII. The Government of FYROM, unfortunately, instead of showing positive signs to negotiate at long last on the name issue, through its prime Minister and other members of its Government publicly and privately, have started a campaign against Greece, trying to fudge the issue of the name, adding other elements that have nothing to do with resolutions 817 and 845 of the Security Council of the UN, with the obvious target to derail once more the ongoing effort of the Secretary General's envoy Mr. Nimetz to find a solution to the real problem, which is the name issue.

IX. Despite of these regrettable tactics followed by the Government of Skopje, Greece genuinely seeks a negotiated solution to the name issue with FYROM. As a proof of good faith and constructive spirit, Greece has made a significant concession by accepting the idea of a composite name, which would also include the term "Macedonia", provided that this will clearly have a geographical, and not an ethnic or cultural, connotation. However, we look for a real, viable and effective solution, addressing, once and for all, the root causes of the problem, not just sweeping it under the carpet. It is in this context that we made perfectly clear our red lines, which we cannot cross. These are the following:

- Regarding the name, we would accept a composite denomination, including the term "Macedonia", as long as it is definitive, single, *erga omnes* and for all purposes, with a distinctive attribute which would allow for a clear distinction between FYROM and the Greek region of Macedonia, while putting a brake on irredentism and the territorial aspirations of Skopje. No term with an ethnic connotation or implying territorial expansionism would be accepted, because this would simply perpetuate existing problems.
- FYROM must abandon and renounce, in words as in deeds, irredentism and territorial claims against Greece as well as the usurpation of the historic past and national heritage of the Greek people.
- The agreement must be endorsed by the UN Security Council, as a guarantee that it will be respected by FYROM, because so far our experience in this regard has been rather negative.

X. We ask all friendly countries to:

- assist our efforts towards finding a peaceful, comprehensive and real solution to the name issue,
- avoid encouraging the intransigence of FYROM by recognising or using the "constitutional name" of the latter, until an agreed and definitive settlement is reached, in accordance with Security Council Resolutions 817 and 845,
- adopt the eventual agreed settlement between Greece and FYROM, by using the definitive denomination, which will hopefully result from the negotiations, for all, bilateral and international, purposes.