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Union for Aromanian(Macedo-Latin) Language and Culture
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CLARIFICATION

In Strasburg, at the “Palais d’Europe”, where the Council of Europe is housed , I had the pleasure of meeting the ambassador of the new state with the capital in Skopia, which, by that time, had just broken off with the Yugoslavian Federation – a young man, quiet and wise, who spoke a beautiful, fluent French. He had a Slavic name, Blagoi Zasov, but, at first sight, I did not think at all I had in front of me, a Bulgarian, as we call the slavophones in Macedonia, but the son of an Arman celnicu/lord descended from the mountains to win a hard battle – not with his spade, but his mind. Then I said to myself that he must be one of those many Armans whose names and language were changed during the stormy years the Arman people underwent in the 20th century, out of which we are just coming and stepping, maybe with better luck, into the 21th century.

Quite a few years have passed by since then and I ran into him again, in Bucharest, at the embassy of the Republic of Macedonia. I was happily surprised when I heard him speak Romanian so beautifully and fluently, a language which he had learned in the short time he had been staying in Romania where he was trying to build up diplomatic relationships of hospitality and common interest between the bigger, richer, and stronger Romania and the smaller but not less beautiful Republic Of Macedonia, where the Arman people, though decreased in number, is still alive.

It greatly surprised me when, after a little while, this learned and wise young man was advising us not to use the name “Macedoroman” or “Macedonian” – as he heard we were called in Romania – because “Macedonian” and “Macedonian language” are names by which only the slavophones in Macedonia should be known in the world. They should be the only ones considered “Macedonians”, and their language, the “Macedonian language”.

To make it clear, for the Armans as well, not only for Mister Ambassador of the R of Macedonia, that such an advice is thoroughly groundless. Therefore let us get back to our past for a while – the past of the latinophones as well as to that of the slavophones who share the same lands with us.

Let us clear up some historical facts:

It is true that the Armanians of today have the deepest roots, not only in the ancient and small “**Macedonia**” of Phillip II – the father of Alexander the Great, or in the little piece of land called today R of Macedonia, but also in Epirus and Thessaly. However, we should not forget that the Armanians, a latinophone people, arose in the “**Province of Macedonia**” organized and controlled by Rome for a time longer than 600 years – e.i. from 158 BC until 478 AD, when the Roman Empire ceased to exist. To the Roman province called “**Macedonia**” belonged not only the old kingdom known by the name of **Macedonia** but also Thessaly and Epirus.

In other words, **the Roman Macedonia, a lot greater than the old kingdom with the same name, spread from the Adriatic and Ionian Seas down to the Aegean Sea. There, in those vast lands, was born the Armanian People from the assimilation of the Thracio-Ilirian autochthons/aboriginals with the Latinophone colonists which Rome had brought only from the Italic Peninsula.** There, in the lands controlled by Rome for over 600 years under one single name, “**Macedonia**”, the Armanian people has existed to this very day as a latinophone people.

When the Slavic tribes came down to the Balkan Peninsula (VI-VII centuries AD) and descended farther to the “Province of Macedonia”, which then was under the Byzantine Empire, did not find here empty lands only, looted by barbarians who would come like a storm and then only to vanish just like all storms. The Armanians, so many times forced to go out of the way of the invaders and retreat to safety into the mountains, really decreased in number, but they have never disappeared. When the Slavs spread their rush mat beside our wool tambarrum/cloak, there had passed by about 800 years since our people in those lands were latinophone. The Slavs never found in any place in Macedonia the old people with the name of “Macedonians” who spoke any language of Slavic origin and with the name of “Macedonian language”. They found us there, **the Armanians, a Macedo-Roman** people, latinophone. A people who had been Christian ever since the times of the Apostles, while the Slavs, who descended down to our places, were still living as pagans just as their kin people were (thousands of kilometers away from Macedonia. Until 1054, the year of the great schism, the Christian people of Macedonia had their church ritual in Latin, and a proof to this are also the many fundamental Christian words such as *crusti* (Lat., cross), *băseară* (Lat., basilica), *cumănicari* (Lat., communico), *pătădzari* (Lat., baptisterium), *tsăneari păreasinj* (Lat., tenere parentalium), *sântu* (Lat., sanctus), *sărhătari* (Lat., servatoria), *dumănică* (Lat., dominica, dominium), etc.

And now, we, the autochthons came to the situation when we are considered an ethnicity who, as it is stated, only in preamble, the Constitution of the new state lives “beside” those who in fact they themselves had come to live beside us?

CLARIFICATION (II)

The Republic of Macedonia, the second Switzerland?

The Republic of Macedonia, a new little state in the Balkans, is undoubtedly an European multiethnic region where, just like in a beautiful mosaic, live ethnicities that distinguish from each other by origin, language, and culture.

When the slavophonic peoples reached the Balkans in the 6th and 7th centuries, the Traco-Ilirian people in the "Province of Macedonia", controlled by Rome for about 600 years, and then, for another 200 years, by the Byzantine Empire, had been linguistically homogenized. It was latinophone.

The linguistic Latinization was probably favored not only by the fact that the Roman colonists intermixed with the local people, for so many centuries. If the legend saying that Enea of Troy was the "forefather of the Roman people", a fast linguistic homogenization of the people in the "Province of Macedonia" was natural. When Eneas and his companions left Troy, they were probably not mute. If so, they brought along with them their home language, which was the same as the language of the Thracians in Macedonia, or related to it. Therefore, when 500 years later, the descendents of those Thracian escapees of Troy, became commanders of Macedonia, it was not hard for them to communicate with the autochthons who spoke the same or a similar language. During the hundreds of years that followed, the language of those arrived from Latium and that of the autochthons in Macedonia enriched with new vocabulary and became the Macedo-Latin spoken today by the Arman People.

No wonder why not only Sophia and Athens do not agree with the name of "Macedonian people" and "Macedonian language" by which the Bulgarians in the new multiethnic state, the R of Macedonia, want to be known, but neither the Armans nor the Albanians, beside whom the slavophones settled much later, agree that the newer-comers consider themselves the only owners of the new multiethnic state, claiming that they are more numerous, by using false statistics and through a forced slavization of over 90% of the names of the Armanmacedonians, and claiming to be of "Macedonian origin and language", **origin and language to which none of the slavophonic tribes in the Balkans have any direct relation.**

After Macedonia fell under the Ottomans in the year 1371, there came the Turks to live as turkophones beside the latinophones, albanophones, and slavophones.

Hundreds of years under the Ottoman Empire these 4 peoples lived together. The old peoples - the latinophones and the albanophones controlled the mountains, while the slavophones and the turkophones spread in the fields. Along seashores, in small fortresses surrounded by defensive walls lived the Greeks. And this is how the "Old Province Macedonia" became a real multiethnic mosaic.

As they are sharing the lands of Macedonia, all these peoples can be considered as "Macedonians", just as in Switzerland all peoples are considered Swiss. But, as no people in Switzerland (72,6% speakers of German, 22% speakers of French, 7% speakers of Italian, 0,4% speakers of Rotoroman) monopolizes the name of the state in order to baptize their own language as "Swiss language", so the Bulgarians (the slavophones) in the R of Macedonia do not have the right to claim monopoly of the name of this new **multiethnic state**. All ethnicities in Macedonia are Macedonian after the name of the place where they live, but each has its own different language which distinguishes it from the other ethnicities: the Arman (or Macedo-Latin), the Albanian, the Bulgarian (or Macedo-Bulgarian, to distinguish it from the one in Bulgaria, or Slavo-Macedonian, if they like it that way), the Turkish - all these are maternal languages of the peoples that make up the Republic of Macedonia.

Not as of today nor of yesterday did the Armans/Macedolatins - the oldest people of these places - express their wish that all ethnicities with whom they live together have the same rights. They never put up with the tyranny of any "lord" who came to rule over them, nor did they claim themselves tyrants over others. I would like to point out here the project of the Arman Riga Velestinlu made up 200 years ago for a great republic in the Balkans, which guaranteed, by Constitution, equal rights for all peoples of any language, origin, or creed.

When in 1903, the people in the European Turkey decided to get rid of the tyranny of the Sultan and make in Crushuva a "multiethnic government" standing for all ethnicities in those places, all who fought for the revolution agreed upon a "multiethnic republic" with the name of **Macedonia**, for all the people of Macedonia, and not a republic in which the Bulgarians should be the ruling ethnicity while all the others can only have the right "to live beside the Bulgarians". In other words, the other peoples could only be "tolerated" in the new republic for which they all fought. No! In the government of the year 1903, the Armans (the Latin Macedonians), as a **constituent nation** of the new state, had 4 important ministries, out of which the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Defense - the latter one commanded by **Pitu Guli**, who, together with his companions preferred death instead of slavery which they did not have the chance and power to get rid of at that time. When Carev - the slavophone elected as president, in one of those 10 days of existence of the new government of Crushuva, shouted in the public square: "Long live liberty! Long live Bulgaria! - Pitu Guli drew out his sword and threatened him by the words: "Long live the

Republic of Macedonia, as for it – for a country of us all, of all ethnicities in these places – we fought, and not for a country for Bulgarians only!

Ten years after, by the unlucky Peace Act of Bucharest, a small part of Macedonia which was divided amongst the new states of the Balkans was given to the Kingdom of Serbia, which was called “Southern Serbia”, and Serb was declared its official language.

For the Arman, Serbia, by the signature of Prime Minister Pasic, guaranteed not only schools in Cutsovlach (Arman) language, as they called it in order to distinguish it from Romanian, but also an episcopate under the patronage of the Patriarchy in Bucharest, which was supposed to make sure that the Cutsovlach (Arman) language was to be used in all their churches.

As the first world war started, Serbia shamelessly disregarded all the natural rights of the Arman people and, in order to make them vanish without a trace, it started a forced assimilation by Slavicizing their names. Thus, the Arman name of Martin, a famous painter, became *Martinovici*.

Later on, when Southern Serbia was occupied by the Bulgarian army (1916-1918) the Arman went through even worse times: deportations, spoliation and extortion of their wealth and properties...and, to increase the number of the Slavs, this time Bulgarians, Martin who became Martinovici, was baptized again, Martinof.

Discontented with their fate, the ethnicities from all over Macedonia, divided again after 1918, sent a delegation to the first “International Congress for the Rights of Nations” which was held in Geneva from September 1st to 10th, 1921. The delegation represented the Macedonians of Albanian, Arman, Turc, and Bulgarian languages. These were the ethnicities that had more important communities at that time in Macedonia. A particular people by the name of Macedon was not known by that time. The Slavs in Macedonia considered themselves Bulgarians. At that congress, in Geneva, the peoples of Macedonia all agreed on a multiethnic state by the name of Macedonia, in which every ethnicity must have equal rights. In his word, the slavophone delegate, the Bulgarian Jouroukof declared: “All ethnicities that make up Macedonia decided that our state be independent. Every ethnicity will have the right to practice its own religion, to speak its own language and to have schools in its own language... To have equality among all ethnicities we decided that a common language of our state be Esperanto.”(2)

In the publication number 1/1997 of "Zborlu a Nostru" (pp 41-42) it is given, in French, excerpts from the "Buletin pour l'indépendance de la Macedoine" (No 3/1921) from which we are giving here a fragment of the conference held by the Macedonian Bulgarian delegate to the congress: "*Nous, Macedoniens, reclamons hautement le droit de decider nous memes du sort de notre pays. Les divers nationalites macedoniennes don't la solidarite par la presence de ses delegues, se manifestent devant vous d'une facon eclatante. Veulent vivre en freres a l'exemple du peuple suisse... Nous venons d'exprimer la volonte de tous les macedoniens de creer une seconde Suisse sur le bord de Vardar...*" *Vive les deux Suisses – celles des Alpes et celle des Balcans!*"

The European diplomacy ignored the wishes of the ethnical mosaic living in the old Roman Province of Macedonia, and abandoned them by the unlucky diplomatic decision of 1913. The 2nd world war was under way now, again with the new masters of Sophia and further misfortunes for the Arman people.

When the partisans started their battle for the "liberation" of Yugoslavia, a new hope was born for the Armans, but for a short time. At the congress of the partisans in Yugoslavia (Aug. 2nd, 1944), the Armans, called to help in this battle of liberation, were promised that after the war they would have the same rights as all the other ethnicities in Yugoslavia. When the first elections were being held, to ensure his success, Tito was able to find both paper and the Latin alphabet to approach the Armans and take them to his side. At our library in Freiburg, we have a collection of posters archived for posterity. They show the calls to the Armans in the Arman language: "*dats zborlu a vostru ti frontulu a laolui/ give your word for the front of the people*". After they had given their word, all the promises made to them were forgotten and neither paper nor Latin alphabet were found for the misfortunate Armans. Then the time came when Tito told the ones in Sophia that the Slavs in Macedonia are not Serbs, but nor are they Bulgarians. Thus he manufactured one more Slavic people, which he called "Macedonians", after the name of the place where they lived. Tito even found grammarians to make a grammar for this new Bulgarian language to which some Serbian words were added to enrich it. So the poor Arman painter, Martin was endowed with the many names of Martinovici, Martinof, again Martinovici, and subsequently Martinovski just as many more Armans whose names end in "ski" have the "good luck" of being taken for "Makedonski" of "Makedonski language" or taken for a small ethnic community members, Vlasi, who are tolerated to live beside the owners of the country, the "Makedonskis". **And this is how the Armans were constrained to end up with Slavicized names, to forget their own language and learn from now on two official languages: Serbo-Croatian and Makedonski or Bulgaro-Serbian.**

We were also lucky to see communism go down the drain. The Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia became independent, and the Armans began breathing

some air of freedom, particularly after achieving the “Recommendation of Strasburg” – but, the power in the new republic has remained in the hands of the Bulgarians only, who will not understand that if they want to join the great family of the European countries, all ethnicities in the R of Macedonia must have the same rights.

The current troubled waters will soon clear up and peace will settle down only if the “owners” of today’s Scopia can understand that the time for a second multiethnic Switzerland, for which all the peoples living in the new European region - Macedonia - hoped and fought together at the beginning of the 20th century, **has arrived**. And in order that this equality of rights become reality for all the constituent ethnicities of this second Switzerland of Europe, it may be a good idea that instead of the Esperanto language, for which a decision was taken in Geneva in 1921, another language, a neuter language, such as French, could be used as a state language, which is also an international language of today’s United Europe. We remind here that, The Republic of Macedonia has been, since 1999, a **member in the International Organization of Francophones!**

V.G.Barba