

Hellenic Electronic Center (HEC)

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September 3 ,2010 Jason Miko's September 2 editorial is demonstrative of extreme ignorance and bias as it pertains to Greece and the Balkans. The insignificant contributions of FYROM in Bosnia and Kosovo pale in comparison to the very real and substantive contributions and sacrifices that Greece has made as an American Ally in the Second World War, Korean Conflict, and Cold War all struggles of which American security depended upon. To suggest that the conflicts in Bosnia or Kosovo had any such relevance for the future of America or the world as a whole is quite frankly laughable as is the effort to bestow on FYROM a record of achievement as an American ally.

Ten percent of the Greek population died of famine or Nazi reprisals as a result of the horrific German occupation of Greece. While the government of Skopje makes light of Nazism as when radicals in that country used the swastika to distort the Greek flag, the contributions of Greece to humanity are demonstrated by the recognition of the Yad Vashem in Jerusalem of over 200 Greek Christians who risked their safety to provide shelter for Greek Jews during the Holocaust. The first blows against Communist expansion occurred during the Greek Civil War when Greek citizens bravely fought to save their country from a Communist takeover with the assistance of the United States.

After a decade of bloodshed and horrific suffering in Greece as a result of the Nazi occupation

and subsequent Communist attempt to seize power, Greece did not hesitate to send troops to fight by the side of the United States in the Korean War. In contrast to the historically illiterate views put fourth by Mr. Miko, Skopje has no right whatsoever to claim an identity and heritage that is not its own. Sources in Classical, Byzantine, Ottoman, modern Greek, and Balkan history attest that the heritage and geography of Macedonia lies entirely with Hellenic civilization and culture.

Mr. Miko would do well to consult some of these sources.

Theodoros Karakostas

HEC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

A place at the table for Macedonia Why the disrespect for a loyal American ally?

By Jason Miko

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The Washington Times

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Sept. 8 is the Republic of Macedonia's 19th birthday. Since 1991, Macedonia has worked its way through the painful transition from a socialist state born out of Yugoslavia to the point

where it is today - a contributing member of the family of nations, an exporter of stability and a reliable ally of the United States and NATO.

Unfortunately, Macedonia has not been granted its seat at the table and instead has been, in many ways, relegated to the "deal with later" box of the administration's issues. But because Macedonia has earned its place at the table, it deserves a bit more consideration than what it is receiving, especially considering the attention lavished on its southern neighbor, Greece.

Macedonia is an important friend and ally of the United States and NATO, though not yet a full-fledged NATO member because NATO member Greece insists that Macedonia change its name, an absurd request. Yet Macedonia has many of the responsibilities of NATO membership and none of the rights. It's like being asked to serve the table but not take a seat. For example, as a percentage of active service personnel, Macedonia is the fourth-largest contributor to the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan, with 244 troops partnered with the Vermont National Guard. By comparison, Greece comes in at 44th place, with 15 troops. Macedonia also has troops serving in Bosnia and had troops in Iraq. And let's not forget Macedonia's contribution during the 1999 Kosovo conflict: Not only was Macedonia a staging ground for NATO, but it accepted 360,000 Albanian refugees from Kosovo and gave them shelter during the conflict.

On the economy, the government of Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski has, among other things, introduced a flat tax of 10 percent on individuals and businesses and has pursued the reforms necessary to create conditions for wealth, which, in turn, contributes to stability. The World Bank report "Doing Business 2010" ranked Macedonia third among top reformers in the world, and Macedonia jumped 22 places in the Heritage Foundation/Wall Street Journal 2010 Economic Freedom Index to rank 56th in the world.

Macedonia continues to be treated as an afterthought, however. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has met with 124 of her counterparts (or in some instances, heads of state or government) in Washington since becoming secretary, including those from all but four of the countries of Europe; Macedonia is one of the four. Somewhat bizarrely, Mrs. Clinton even publicly discussed Macedonia with the Slovenian foreign minister during his July visit but cannot extend the same courtesy to her Macedonian counterpart.

A July 1 article in the Economist notes that America's relations with European allies are good but plagued by snubs and missteps: "President Barack Obama's visit to Prague in April

featured a dinner aimed at reassuring and thanking ex-communist allies. But mystifyingly, two of the most loyal ones, Macedonia and Albania, weren't invited. Administration officials apparently forgot that Albania was a NATO member and that Macedonia (FYROM to the Greeks) was a big help in Afghanistan."

To add insult to injury, President Obama welcomed with great fanfare Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou to the White House in March, and Mrs. Clinton has met numerous times with her Greek counterpart. At a minimum, this sends a very negative signal to Macedonia that it is not a valued partner and ally.

Through all this (or reinforced by this) Greece continues to hold Macedonia and her 2 million people hostage by insisting that Macedonia change its name, even within its constitution, and that all countries recognize Macedonia by a name that Greece will practically dictate. This despite the fact that 127 countries, including the United States under President George W. Bush, have recognized Macedonia by its constitutional name, the Republic of Macedonia.

If the Obama administration wants to contribute toward solving the so-called name issue and recognize Macedonia for what it has accomplished, it needs to give a bit more attention to Macedonia. It can start by engaging Macedonia at a higher level, removing the belief that it is one-sided in favor of the Greeks and their unprecedented request. An invitation to the prime minister to visit the president would be a helpful start.

Every people have a right to a name and identity of their choosing. The Macedonian people made that choice on Sept. 8, 1991, when they voted for the independent Republic of Macedonia. The Obama administration at least should show more understanding and listen to Macedonia's views.

[Story Continues](#) □

Jason Miko is the producer of a documentary film on Macedonia titled "A Name Is a Name."

