TO THE MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY OF

ACADEMICIANS AND CORRESPONDING MEMBERS  
  
Dear Academician Revalski,

Dear Corr.-Mem. V. Nikolov,

Dear Colleagues,

I got acquainted with the two texts of MASA, sent to me by the Board of BAS, on the problems of the so-called "Macedonian language" dated 3 December - a day after the US decision to accept North Macedonia into NATO. It is obvious that they - both as a presentation and as a timepiece - have a purely political nature triggered by the situation regarding the elections for its membership in the European Union. One more thing is also evident: the nature and orientation of the statements which are made without alternative formulation, the categorizations and suggestions are aimed at the state institutions and the public in Bulgaria as the main and even sole addressee. Both documents are a sign that they should be adopted namely in our country, without raising objections and being subject to discussion.

I expect my fellow historians and linguists to speak out and give scientifically sound and firm opposition to the envisaged cases and suggestions in this "Declaration" with the pretentious domestic neologism "charter". In practice, it aims - after numerous political pirouettes at state level, joint projects, joint committees, etc. in the last two years - to reflect with today’s date the known official position of MASA, which means of the ruling circles in Skopje. My general philological background gives me the right to express my assessment only on the following two introductory statements which I find to be an outright forgery intended for semi-literate or not at all interested persons:

1. *“The Macedonian language is an undeniable linguistic, historical and cultural fact, recognized and equated with other languages in the world."*
2. *“The Macedonian language has a centuries-old continuity…”*

It is not possible to treat a language codified officially in 1945 as "recognized and equated with other languages in the world", as a language with "centuries-old continuity" - that is, equal to so many national languages with centuries-old history, with enduring values for humanity provided by them and proven over the centuries such as scientific discoveries, literature and art...

Since my personal preparation and professional activities since 1970 have so far been devoted to Bulgarian literature and cultural and educational life during the Revival (XVIII-XIX c.), I feel obliged to express my attitude towards the part of the so-called "Charter" that speculatively exploits the work of many authors in this field. My reaction has been triggered by the fact that in all such cases the reasons to legitimize the originality and independent existence of the so-called "Macedonian language" use as a starting point the deeds precisely of persons from the Bulgarian Revival past. I am referring to the content of the following paragraph on page 2:

*The national Macedonian speech patterns are presented in the works of famous figures such as Marko Cepenkov, Kuzman Shapkarev, Grigor Parlichev, Dimitar and Konstantin Miladinov, Dimitar Chupovski, Vasil Ilyovski, Rayko Zhinzifov, Kocho Ratsin and others.*

Compared to the previous attempts of Skopje to “steal history” in this direction, the names of Dimitar Talev, Nikola Vaptsarov are missing here, as examples, for obvious reasons… Also for obvious reasons but of another nature, the absence of a strikingly prominent figure in the literary and spiritual-educational life of XIX c. in the Western Outlands such as Yordan Hadzhikonstantinov-Dzhinot from Veles comes as a surprise. Is it possible to build an idea of ​​what is happening in them during this period without considering the deeds and roles of the senior clerics **Metropolitan Miletii of Zograf** with his three translated editions from "Russian to Bulgarian language", **Metropolitan Nathanael of Ohrid** with his civic position and books translated from Greek or Russian but into "Slavic-Bulgarian", **bishop Parteniy Polyansky** as the author of the "Elementary Textbook for Children", accompanied by the statement "The Bulgarian alphabet for those Bulgarians who know how to read only in Greek and want to learn also in Bulgarian"…?

The selection presented in this form in an official document, discussed at a special meeting of the academic community in Skopje, should surprise anyone who had decided to build an idea of ​​the beginnings of the so-called "Macedonian language". On the one hand, creative personalities of the rank of the highly educated poets Grigor Parlichev and Rayko Zhinzifov have taken their place among them with their being an integral part of the ripe aesthetic searches of the Revival time, on the other - the self-educated but active collector of folklore Marko Cepenkov, a participant in the struggle against the Greek clergy whose last three life decades were in Sofia. Here, we are also meeting Dimitar Chupovski, deceased in 1940 in Leningrad, known mainly for his political activity; the poet Kocho Ratsin - a member of the Yugoslav Communist Party who died as a partisan (1943); the writer Vasil Ilyovski born in 1902 who died recently (1995), a member of the committee that approved the Macedonian language in 1945...

It is natural for any interested reader to ask themselves what “national” and “equated with other languages ​​in the world” is that language whose appearance is evidenced by the merits of figures who died in 1940, 1943 or in 1995...

Against the background of this circle which puzzles with its arbitrariness and speculative nature, the question arises as to whether it is justified and scientifically sound to emphasize the role of the mentioned Revival writers Kuzman Shapkarev, the brothers Dimitar and Konstantin Miladinov, Grigor Parlichev and Rayko Zhinzifov in affirming the so-called "Macedonian language".

It is an indisputable truth that speaking about the Bulgarian Revival as a process, the call for national awakening and cultural enlightenment in the second half of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th c. is associated with the works of writers from Macedonia - Hristofor Zhefarovic of Doiran, Father Paisii from Bansko / Samokov, Kiril Peychinovich and Yoakim Kurchovski, Emanuil Vaskidovich from Melnik, Marko Teodorovich from Razlog ... The author of “Stematography” (1741), H. Zhefarovich, identified himself as follows: "a painter of the entire people, **upholder of the Bulgarian Fatherland, lover of the Illyrian kingdom**." Under the title of the "Book Called Mirror" (1816), published by K. Peychinovich, we are reading: "**it has been written for the needs and use of the simplest and non-literary Bulgarian language.... by the priest of King Marko’s Monastery which is in Skopje…**" I do not even need to repeat the position from which the “Slavo-Bulgarian History” of Paisius of Hilendar begins.

As a consequence of recognizing Greece as an independent principality outside the wardship of Turkey, after the 1930s, it was precisely the Western Outlands - objectively distant from Europe, Russia and the Slavdom - that were subject of and threatened by the encroachments of the unleashed Hellenism in the utmost. And then with the support of such an active ally in the very capital of the Turkish empire as the Ecumenical Patriarchate... In the following decades, our National Revival public figures who had to realize themselves as teachers, writers and national leaders in Skopje, Bitola, Prilep, Veles, Ohrid were facing difficulties and terror not only by Greek bishops but also by the looming threat of Hellenization under the tutelage of Athens. The resulting situation forced them to rediscover ways to the idea of ​​national awareness. As if Father Paisius had not passed through the Western Outlands, as if Emanuil Vaskidovich and Neophit Rilski had not developed there ... Here is the confession made in the late 40s by the then young Grigor Parlichev:

*„No one was found to advise me to go to Russia, and then only the name of Athens and Ioannina sounded in our country“.*

In this oppressive atmosphere for the personalities - bearers of the idea of ​​national awareness and spiritual and educational progress among the population in Macedonia in the 40-50s - perhaps the most striking example is the not mentioned in the "Charter": Yordan Hadzhikonstatinov. Here, I am not going to recall his biography which included selfless teaching in almost all the towns from around here, over 40 imprisonments and arrests, even exile in Diyarbakir, and his prominent cooperation with the Constantinople periodical press. I will afford an excerpt from his laconic self-portrait found in the “Constantinople newspaper” (issue 44 of 21 July 1851):

*And if anyone should ask me: are you a learned man or a Bulgarian? I would answer in full: I am a Bulgarian. Since it is not fair to do evil and fraud to my Slav-Bulgarians; the true Bulgarian does not lie, does not envy, does not denigrate, does not pretend, does not err, for a roast chicken does not exchange his faith.“*

In order to grasp the speculative nature and the gross manipulation of the facts used in support of the thesis that "the Macedonian language has a centuries-old continuity", I will recall the positions from which the above-mentioned Revival writers have realized themselves. And then through their authentic publications.

**Kuzman Shapkarev: "Bulgarian primer** ... in a dialect more understandable ***for the Macedonian Bulgarians***" (1866); "Concise geography for little children in a dialect more understandable ***for the Macedonian Bulgarians***" (1868); ***Girls’ Bulgarian*** *and Greek* ***Schools******of Ohrid*** (v. Law, 1871); Collection “**Upsurge of the Bulgarian Spirit in Macedonia**” (1986).

**Grigor Parlichev:** ***"A pitiful song for the Bulgarian people in Ohrid and Struga and for every Bulgarian****"*, 1st publication in “Chitalishte” magazine (1872); 2nd publication (Belgrade, 1875).

**Dimitar and Konstantin Miladinov: "Bulgarian Folk** **Songs**, collected by Miladinovi Brothers - Dimitar and Konstantin and published by Konstantin" (Zagreb, 1861); K. Miladinov, “A Greek and a Bulgarian” (poem in “Bulgarian booklets” magazine, 1958).

**Rayko Zhinzifov:** "Letter from one of the **Bulgarians studying in Moscow** to the editor" (poem, 1861); **New Bulgarian Rebec** (*Bratski trud*, 1862); **New Bulgarian Collection** (1863); "**Has Bulgaria Asked?**" (poem, 1863); “Phanariotes and **Unrest in Bulgaria**” (article, *Day*, 1864); “Speech on the **Phanariotes in Bulgaria”** (article, *Day* newspaper, 1864); “**The Bulgarians and their Neighbors”** (article, 1867); “**To a Bulgarian Mother**” (poem, footnote “**To my mother**”, *Danube dawn* newspaper, 1868); Church **Councils in Bulgaria** (article, 1868); "Blood stained shirt. **A Tale of Contemporary Bulgarian Life**” (Braila, 1870, 28 pp.); "**Folk Bulgarian Songs**" (1870), "**Bulgarian Literature and Bulgarian Poets**" (essay, collection *Poetry of the Slavs*, 1871).

**Conclusion.** In this form, the “Declaration” of MASA, although dated 3 December 2019, is another political document in the spirit of ambitions and goals known and followed by the state circles in the Republic of Macedonia as part of Yugoslavia in the second half of XX c. My definite opinion is that the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences should formalize its firm position on this document, grossly claiming to appropriate part of the Bulgarian past as language and literature, as prominent figures and events. Let us not forget that we are talking about our national identity as a nation with a 1300-year history but also about our national sovereignty and security nowadays.

8**-**9 December 2019

Veliko Tarnovo Academician IVAN RADEV