

**Greek Helsinki Monitor &
Minority Rights Group- Greece**

*Greece against its Macedonian minority
The “Rainbow” trial*

**ETEPE
Athens, 1998**

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GREEK HELSINKI MONITOR & MINORITY RIGHTS GROUP- GREECE

Minority Rights Group - Greece was created as a Greek affiliate of Minority Rights Group International in January 1992. Its members founded Greek Helsinki Monitor in late 1992, following the encouragement of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF). A year later, in December 1993, the latter's General Assembly accredited it as its Greek National Committee with an observer status; in November 1994, the General Assembly elevated Greek Helsinki Monitor to full membership. In April 1998, Greek Helsinki Monitor also became member of the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX).

In 1994, Greek Helsinki Monitor launched a project to prepare detailed reports on all national, ethnolinguistic and major religious minority communities in Greece (Macedonians and Turks; Arvanites, Pomaks, and Vlachs; Catholics, Jehovah Witnesses, Protestants, and New Religious Movements), as well as the Greek minorities in Albania and Turkey, and the Albanian immigrants in Greece. Besides the usual monitoring of human rights violations and human rights related trials, the issuing of public statements, alone or along with other NGO's, and the monitoring of Greek and Balkan media for stereotypes and hate speech, Greek Helsinki Monitor started in 1997 a Roma Office in cooperation with the European Roma Rights Center.

The publication of this book was supported by the Open Society Institute (OSI).

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PREFACE

On 15 September 1998, Greece's Macedonian minority party "Rainbow" goes on trial for the "crime" of having hanged up on its office a sign written in Greek and also in Macedonian, the mother tongue of its members. According to the indictment, the use of that mother tongue "caused and incited mutual hatred among the citizens, so that common peace was disturbed on September 6, 1995."

The prosecution of four Rainbow leaders was made possible only because almost all local authorities and organizations turned against them. At the same time, the charges that party brought against those implicated in the sacking of its office, on September 14, 1995, have yet to lead to any action by the public prosecutor. The latter has repeatedly stated that the case is still, three years later, at the stage of the "preliminary investigation." However, the same office had no problem carrying out in an expeditious way the investigation on the charges against Rainbow. All sworn statements of the witnesses for the prosecution were made within 15 days, in September 1995; the Rainbow leaders' defense statements ("*apologies*") were made in October 1995; and the defense witnesses' sworn statements, in Athens, were made in February and March 1996. In fact, in the charges brought by Rainbow against those responsible for the sacking of their offices, Rainbow's witnesses had also made their sworn statements in early 1996, while all defendants live in Florina, and could have thus easily been reached. Clearly, therefore, the prosecutor has deliberately chosen to "freeze" the case of Rainbow against the local leadership, while it swiftly prosecuted the case it made, on its own initiative, against Rainbow. So much for fairness of the prosecuting authority in Florina.

We have gathered here a series of documents which will help illustrate not only the case made against Rainbow, but also how difficult and therefore risky it is to declare a Macedonian minority identity in such an extremely hostile if not aggressive environment in Greece. These documents clearly confirm that this is not a usual court case: it is indeed a case of Greece (as a country) against its Macedonian minority (as a whole).

We first present all statements published by our two cooperating Non-Governmental Organizations, Greek Helsinki Monitor and Minority Rights Group - Greece, as well as the statements issued around the time of the first court hearing (scheduled for 14 October 1997, which ended up being postponed) in response to our international appeal for condemnation of the trial.

Then, we present the statements issued by local organizations condemning the hanging up of the sign, in 1995. In the case of the PASOK local party organization, their reaction took the form of charges pressed against Rainbow, signed by the Florina Prefect himself, many commune presidents or mayors, and others most of whom but not all belonging to PASOK; as there were claims of signatures being forged, the charges were later withdrawn. In that section, the reader will also find an excerpt from a police report which shows that the violent events against the Rainbow offices happened while police was standing by, watching, but not reacting to crimes in progress. Finally, the reader will note in this section that even the Bar Association of Florina adopted a strongly worded position against Rainbow; no wonder then that, in this as in almost all other minority trials, the defendants cannot find lawyers from their own region and have to resort to lawyers from Athens or Salonica.

Follow the coverage by the national media of the 1995 events, an inflammatory coverage that prepared the climate and contributed to the assault against the Rainbow offices by “enraged citizens.” Then are presented excerpts from the sworn statements of the witnesses for the prosecution, which include many prominent local personalities: one should note there how many arguments are repeated almost word by word in several statements, giving the impression that there was some “instruc-

tion” given to these witnesses.

It need be mentioned here that, in 1995, one of the political parties whose representative made a sworn statement against Rainbow was the Coalition. To its credit, when, two years later, we sent our appeal to all political party leaders in Athens, the Coalition was the only one which issued a statement clearly condemning the trial and therefore dissociating itself from the statement of its Florina local leader.

The gathering, translation, editing and presentation of that material was the work of Panayote Dimitras, Nafsika Papanikolatos, Hebe Rocou, and Christina Rougheri.

REACTIONS TO THE PROSECUTION
BY GREEK AND INTERNATIONAL
NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

GREEK HELSINKI MONITOR

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PRESS RELEASE

14/9/1995

TOPIC: CONDEMNATION OF THE VIOLENCE AGAINST, THE PROSECUTIONS OF, AND THE SETTING ON FIRE OF THE OFFICES OF THE 'RAINBOW' MINORITY PARTY WITH THE PARTICIPATION OR THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The co-operating organizations **Greek Helsinki Monitor** and **Minority Rights Group - Greece** condemn the violence against, the prosecutions of, and the setting on fire of the offices of the 'Rainbow' minority party a party which expresses the Greek citizens belonging to the 'Macedonian national minority' (as it is recognized internationally but, unfortunately, not yet in Greece). Given the fact that the local authorities have played a leading role in these events, the conclusion is easily drawn that Greece, on the one hand, does not respect its international obligations on issues of freedom of expression and minority rights and, on the other hand, proves that the Macedonian ethnic minority is significant in magnitude (and not 'a handful of agents' as most politicians and journalists usually claim) and, for this reason, it wants to suppress its political expression today as it had banned its cultural expression in the past (prohibition to establish a Shelter for Macedonian Culture, a case which is pending in the European Court for Human Rights [on 10 July 1998, Greece was convicted by that Court, for violation of the right to freedom of association]).

The deplorable events are as follows:

On 6 September, the offices of the Prefecture Committee of Florina of the 'Rainbow' in Florina were inaugurated; they had a relevant inscription in Greek and in Macedonian (as the language is called internationally, or in the Slavomacedonian idiom, as the state prefers to call it). On 7 September, the offices had been broken into and the inscription had been stolen.

On 13 September, the Public Prosecutor of Florina brought charges against 'Rainbow' for 'inciting citizens to disharmony among them' (Article 192 of the Penal Code), with the unprecedented argument - expected to denigrate Greece internationally- that (as stated by the prosecutor to the party's counsel) 'the use of the [Macedonian] language causes disharmony.' Also, she ordered verbally the removal of a new inscription. Following the refusal of the party cadres to do so, the police were ordered to seize the inscription as evidence, which they did at noon, without leaving any relevant documents. In the evening, 'indignant citizens,' led by the mayor of Florina (the police commissioner also confirmed his presence to the Rainbow's counsel) and with the tolerance of the police, attempted to break the door of the offices open in order to remove the new inscription; eventually this was given to them to avoid any unnecessary use of violence. In the early hours of 14 September, the offices were set on fire to by 'unknown persons' who naturally felt 'legitimized' by the actions which preceded and by the intolerant publications of a section of the press. We consider all these people as 'accessories before the fact' for setting fire to the offices of a party, something which means setting fire to democracy, no matter what this party stands for: in a democracy, confrontations take place through an exchange of views and not through prosecutions and use of terrorist violence.

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PRESS RELEASE

1/10/1997

**TOPIC: APPEAL FOR URGENT ACTION ON THE FORTHCOMING
OUTRAGEOUS TRIAL OF A MACEDONIAN MINORITY PARTY IN
GREECE FOR PUBLIC USE OF THEIR MOTHER TONGUE**

The cooperating organizations, **Greek Helsinki Monitor** and **Minority Rights Group - Greece**, appeal to the international community, to concerned individuals but especially to governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as to the media to publicly protest against the -outrageous for a democratic country- forthcoming trial of Vasilis Romas, Costas Tasopoulos, Petros Vasiliadis, and Pavlos Voskopoulos, in their capacity as leaders of "Rainbow" -the Macedonian minority party in Greece-, indicted for the public use of their mother tongue. These protests may take the form of statements and/or letters to the Prime Minister of Greece and/or the Greek Embassies in the various countries. They also appeal to these institutions to send monitors to that trial, to be held on 14/10/1997, in Florina (Northern Greece). The International Helsinki Federation has decided to send a large, multi-national monitoring team. **Please send copies of such statements or letters to our organizations (see address above).**

It is noteworthy that the witnesses of the prosecution include the local leaders of all five main Greek parties at the time (PASOK, ND, Political Spring, KKE, and Coalition); as well as leaders of professional associations (lawyers, merchants, priests, taxi drivers). Most of them, in

their pre-trial depositions, characterize the defendants as “paid agents of Skopjan propaganda,” “anti-Greeks,” etc. Follow: a summary of the September 1995 events; complete translations of the indictment and of the allegedly violated article of the penal code; and the list of witnesses for the prosecution.

The events of September 1995

Rainbow opened an office on 6/9/1995 in Florina, with a sign mentioning “Rainbow - Florina Committee” in both Greek and Macedonian. On the evening and night of 13 and the early hours of 14/9/1995, the office was attacked and eventually sacked by a ‘mob,’ led by the mayor of Florina. Before the sacking, police acting on the prosecutor’s order removed the sign, while the prosecutor announced the indictment of the Rainbow leaders for having incited disharmony among citizens through the use of the Macedonian language in their sign. No political party, nor any media condemned the sacking of the party offices. On the contrary it was praised by extreme right nationalistic papers like **Stohos** and **Chrysi Avghi**, whose members reportedly took part in the sacking. While the use of the bilingual sign was condemned by all mainstream political parties and other social groups: the local PASOK -governing socialist party- organization even brought charges, later withdrawn as it appeared that many signatures on it had been put without the knowledge of those concerned.

Indictment for the trial at the Single-Member Misdemeanor Court of Florina on October 14, 1997

“Vasilis Romas, Costas Tasopoulos, Petros Vasiliadis, and Pavlos Voskopoulos are responsible for, having acted jointly and in public, in any way having caused and incited mutual hatred among the citizens, so that common peace was disturbed on September 6, 1995 in Florina. Specifically, in the aforementioned place and time, as legally representing the party with the name “Rainbow” (“Ouranio Toxo”), the four defendants hanged a sign in that party’s office - in N. Hasou and St. Dragoumi streets. Among other words written therein, there were the words “Lerinski Komitet” written in a Slavic linguistic idiom. These

words, in combination with the fact that they were written in a foreign language, in the specific Slavic linguistic idiom, provoked and incited disharmony among the area's citizens. The latter justifiably, besides other things, identify these words with an old terrorist organization of Slavic-speaking alien nationals which was active in the area and which, with genocide crimes, pillages and depredations against the indigenous Greek population, attempted the annihilation of the Greek element and the annexation of the greater area of the age-long Greek Macedonia to a neighboring country, which at the time was Greece's enemy."

Witnesses for the prosecution

- N. Batsilas, policeman;
- J. Germanidis, president of the Florina Doctors' Association, and elected Florina Prefecture Councilor for the political party "New Democracy";
- N. Fanouriakis, president of the Florina Traders' Association;
- A. Konstantinidis, lawyer;
- Th. Passalis, priest-canon of the Florina Diocese;
- A. Germanidis, Secretary of the Florina District Organization of the political party "Coalition";
- T. Kokkos, journalist;
- D. Liatopoulos, merchant;
- L. Nalpantidis, president of the commune Aghios Achillios, Florina;
- C. Zaravelis, president of the "Radiotaxi" Association;
- J. Novas, merchant;
- G. Moulis, representative of the Florina District Organization of the political party "Communist Party of Greece - KKE";
- F. Kolettis, President of the Florina District Organization of the political party "New Democracy";
- D. Tserkezos, Secretary General of the "National Organization of Macedonian Fighters of the Florina District";
- E. Mavropoulos, representative of the Florina District Organization of the political party "Political Spring";
- M. Tsotskos, Secretary of the Florina District Organization of the political party "PASOK."

Moreover, the prosecution added in the trial's file public statements

denouncing the bilingual sign, issued in September 1995 by the Florina Bar Association, and by the General Meeting of the Florina Diocese Priests.

Allegedly violated Article 192 of the penal code

“One who publicly and by any means causes or incites citizens to commit acts of violence upon each other or to disturb the peace through disharmony among them shall be punished by imprisonment for not ore than two years unless a greater punishment is imposed by another provision.”

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PRESS RELEASE

11/10/1997

**TOPIC: RESPONSES TO THE APPEAL FOR URGENT ACTION ON
THE FORTHCOMING OUTRAGEOUS TRIAL OF A MACEDONIAN
MINORITY PARTY IN GREECE FOR PUBLIC USE OF THEIR MOTH-
ER TONGUE**

Following the appeal launched by our organizations on 1/10/1997, a considerable number of human rights and other organizations publicly condemned the trial of the Rainbow Macedonian activists to be held on 14/10/1997. They did so with published statements or during the press conference our organizations held on 10/10/1997 in the Foreign Press Club in Athens.

The following non-governmental organizations participated in the press conference:

**Citizens' Movement Against Racism,
Forum of Social and Youth Organizations for Human Rights,
Greek Committee for International Democratic Solidarity (EEDDA)
Greek Helsinki Monitor
Greek League for Human and Civil Rights,
Minority Rights Group - Greece
Movement for Human Rights and Against Racism (Kalamata),
Network of Movements for Political and Social Rights,
SOS Racism,**

**Turkish Minority Movement for Human and Minority Rights
Youth Against Racism in Europe (YRE).**

Also the political parties:

**Organization for the Reconstruction of the Communist Party of
Greece (OAKKE)**

Progressive Left Coalition (Synaspismos).

Follow, in alphabetical order, the statements received:

From Greece:

1. **Birol Akifoglou - New Democracy Member Of Parliament For Xanthi**
2. **Progressive Left Coalition (Synaspismos)**
3. **Turkish Minority Movement For Human And Minority Rights**

From international NGOs:

1. **Albanian Helsinki Committee**
2. **Amnesty International**
3. **Bulgarian Helsinki Committee**
4. **Helsinki Citizens' Assembly**
5. **Human Rights Watch/Helsinki**
6. **International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights**
7. **Moscow Helsinki Group**

BIROL AKIFOGLOU

Member of Parliament for Xanthi
Town Councilor in the Municipality of Xanthi

Athens 9/10/97

I consider it my obligation to condemn the upcoming trial of activists of the “Rainbow” political party, in Florina, on the 14/10/97. These cadres are prosecuted because the party used an inscription in the mother language of the minority citizens in Macedonia similar to those used in their own mother language by politicians of the minority in Thrace without them being prosecuted.

I consider that it is time for Greek justice to align itself with the internationally applicable principles of human and minority rights, which are binding also for Greece. Inter alia, these allow for the possibility of minorities to self-ascription and not hetero-determination, as well as for the respect and free use of mother languages.

Akifoglou Birol
Member of Parliament for Xanthi

(The translation in English is the responsibility of Greek Helsinki Monitor)

PROGRESSIVE LEFT COALITION (SYNASPISMOS)

PRESS RELEASE

Concerning the trial of “Rainbow” members in Florina, the Coalition’s Press Office stresses that:

The trial against “Rainbow” members to be held in Florina on 14/10 is based on article 192 of the Penal Code, which is a residue of the civil war and the abolition of which the Coalition has asked for since 1992.

Such trials violate freedom of expression and aggravate rather than solve the problems.

Our country must respect the OSCE Treaties, as well as the Council of Europe’s Convention on minority rights which she has signed.

9/10/97

Press Office

(The translation in English is the responsibility of Greek Helsinki Monitor)

**TURKISH MINORITY MOVEMENT
FOR HUMAN AND MINORITY RIGHTS**

**PUBLIC DENUNCIATION AND STATEMENT OF SOLIDARITY
ON THE TRIAL OF THE FLORINA FOUR**

Komotini 8-10-97

On the occasion of the “Trial of the Florina Four,” the Turkish Minority Movement for Human and Minority Rights denounces the national-totalitarian mentality governing the overall prosecution of the four activists of the minority Macedonian party “Rainbow,” Romas Bassilis, Tassopoulos Costas, Vassiliades Petros and Voskopoulos Pavlos, who will be brought to trial on the 14.10.97, in Florina, for hanging up a sign with an inscription in their mother Macedonian minority language, on the charge that this has provoked division among the citizens.

So, we denounce the national - totalitarian mentality in the planning of the prosecution as the truly guilty party for provoking a division among the citizens which does not tolerate any expression of minority and ethnic-cultural differences, as a curse upon the Balkans and as a father of Balkan fascism and racism which is resuscitated magnificently with the oncoming “Trial of the Florina Four” and with all that has preceded the trial. And thus it proves that it has lost nothing from its vigor and leveling out momentum on account of the country’s European perspective, the incorporation into the procedures of a multicultural society and the international commitments to respect and protect minority groups. National-totalitarianism is flourishing.

Consequently, it is not an unprecedented matter that an inscription in a minority mother language is dealt with as high treason and is prosecuted, that the right to ethnic self - ascription of minority groups is considered as treason and is banned, and that terrorism against minorities by means of the familiar method of indignant citizens is consecrated and rewarded.

Among all its negative aspects, the Florina trial achieves also a positive function: it reveals the true situation prevailing in the field of minority rights in Greece, but also in the field of freedom of expression when it does not proceed in parallel with the dominant national-totalitarianism. Also, it exposes the hypocritical stance taken by the modernist government which, abroad and in relation to the neighboring countries, devotes itself to championing human and minority rights, whereas inside the country, to anachronistic authoritarianism. Moreover, it exposes the guilty silence and eloquent complicity on the part of the political parties.

The Turkish Minority Movement for Human and Minority Rights coming from a similar area, the Turkish Minority in Thrace, confronted with similar problems, deprivations, restrictions and persecutions, offers its whole-hearted support to the Florina Four in their ordeal.

(The translation in English is the responsibility of Greek Helsinki Monitor)

KOMITETI SHQIPTAR I HELSINKIT
ALBANIAN HELSINKI COMMITTEE

Rr. Ali Deimi, Pall. 2, Ap. 12 Tirana - Albania

STATEMENT

October 8, 1997

The AHC joins the voice of concern to that of the international HR community about the upcoming trial of four Greek citizens from the Macedonian minority to be held in Florina on October 14. We believe that the charges against them are in open contradiction to the law and practices of a democratic country as Greece is and to the international instruments, in particular to the Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe.

The four individuals are accused of "having caused and incited mutual hatred among citizens," because they hung a sign in both the Greek and Macedonian languages outside their party - office in Florina two years ago.

Any consideration related to the past is not a sufficient basis for a criminal action to be initiated by the state against individuals or an organization that wishes to use its mother language.

We hope that reason will prevail and the Greek Court will drop the charges brought against the four defendants, thus giving one more proof that Greece is fully devoted to the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms as it suits to a genuine democracy.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

AI INDEX: EUR 25/10/97
9 OCTOBER 1997

NEWS SERVICE
171/97

Greece: Amnesty International will adopt members of “Rainbow” party as prisoners of conscience in case of imprisonment

Amnesty International will adopt four members of the ethnic Macedonian minority party “Rainbow” as prisoners of conscience and will call for their immediate and unconditional release should they be imprisoned after their trial, the human rights organization said in a letter to the Greek government today.

According to the indictment the four “Rainbow” members Vasilis Romas, Costas Tasopoulos, Petros Vasiliadis, and Pavlos Voskopoulos - whose trial will begin in Florina on 14 October - are accused of “causing and inciting mutual hatred among the citizens” and thus violating Article 192 of the Greek Penal Code by displaying a sign, with the words “Florina Committee” in both Greek and Macedonian, outside the Florina office of the Rainbow Party in September 1995.

The indictment further states that the use of the Macedonian words “Lerinski Komitet” “provoked and incited discord among the area’s citizens [who] justifiably identify these words with an old terrorist organization of Slavic-speaking alien nationals which was active in the area.”

According to Amnesty International’s information, the sign was removed by order of the local authorities and shortly afterwards the office was attacked by a mob. Reportedly no charges have been brought in connection with the attack.

Amnesty International believes that the prosecution of Vasilis Romas, Costas Tasopoulos, Petros Vasiliadis, and Pavlos Voskopoulos represents a violation of Article 10 (1) of the European Convention for

the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR), which Greece has ratified and is legally bound to observe. Article 10 (1) states that: “Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers.”

BULGARIAN HELSINKI COMMITTEE

STATEMENT

8 October 1997

Bulgarian Helsinki Committee is deeply concerned about the prosecution and possible conviction of four Greek citizens - Vasilis Romas, Costas Tasopoulos, Petros Vasilidis, and Pavlos Voskopoulos, activist of the Rainbow Party. According to the information, available to the BHC, the four individuals face trial for the peaceful expression of their opinions - for hanging a sign on Greek and Macedonian outside of their party office in Florina. This allegedly was the cause of violent acts of which however the activists of the Macedonian Party were the sole victims.

Prosecution and possible conviction in such circumstances is in violation of a number of provisions of international human rights law, including some accepted by Greece. We call upon the Greek government to carefully reconsider the basis of the charges and to drop them.

Krassimir Kanev

Chair

Bulgarian Helsinki Committee

HELSINKI CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY

To: Greek Helsinki Monitor
21 October 1997
(sent by e-mail)

The Helsinki Citizens' Assembly is in agreement with the sentiments of your message and the protest letters included. It is a very worrying situation if Greece, an EU member state, can conduct actions against its minorities with impunity. We understand that the date of the trial has been postponed until next October. Please keep us informed of developments in this case and let us know if we can be of any assistance, such as through sending letters of protest to the appropriate authorities.

Best wishes,

Josh Kaldor-Robinson,
International Secretariat
Helsinki Citizens' Assembly
tel.: 420 2 371 241, ext 262, or 259, or 251
fax: 420 2 381 585 (attn. HCA)
e-mail: hca@ecn.cz

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH/HELSINKI

485 Fifth Ave.
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E-mail: abrahaf@hrw.org

October 9, 1997

Mr. Costas Simitis
Prime Minister of Greece

Honorable Prime Minister Simitis:

Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, the largest American-based human rights organization, is deeply concerned about the upcoming trial of four Greek citizens from the Macedonian minority to be held in Florina on October 14. We believe that the charges against them do not comport with Greek or international law and comprise an unlawful restriction on the right to free expression.

The four individuals, Vasilis Romas, Costas Tasopoulos, Petros Vasiliadis, and Pavlos Voskopoulos, activists of the ethnic Macedonian Rainbow Party, are accused of “having caused and incited mutual hatred among citizens” because they hung a sign on September 6, 1995, saying “Rainbow - Florina Committee” in both the Greek and Macedonian languages outside of their party office in Florina. In the evening of September 13, the police removed the sign on order of the state prosecutor. Shortly thereafter, a mob of people led by the Florina mayor physically attacked the office.

The prosecutor charged the Rainbow Party leaders with inciting citizens to commit acts of violence, according to Article 192 of the Greek Penal Code. No criminal charges have been filed against the individuals or political leaders who took part in the attack on the office, even

though the Rainbow Party leaders have filed such complaints. Quite the contrary, neither the government nor any of the major political parties condemned the attack. PASOK, the ruling party in Greece, publicly condemned the use of bilingual signs.

Human Rights Watch/Helsinki understands that the Macedonian minority in Greece is a sensitive political and emotional issue and that the Macedonian words “Lerinski Komitet” (“Florina Committee”) outside of the Rainbow Party office reminded some Greek citizens of a terrorist organization that was historically active in the region. However, this in no way justifies a mob attack on the party’s office or a criminal action by the state against those who use their mother language. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki considers such legal action to be a direct violation of the right to free expression, as guaranteed in both Greek and international law. Likewise, by not prosecuting those who attacked the Rainbow Party office, the state is tolerating and, therefore, implicitly condoning mob justice rather than the rule of law. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki calls on the Greek government to drop its charges against the four defendants and to prosecute those who organized and were involved in the September 14, 1995, attack.

Sincerely yours,
Holly Cartner
Executive Director

INTERNATIONAL HELSINKI FEDERATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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**GREEK CHARGES AGAINST MACEDONIAN MINORITY PARTY
CONTRADICT EUROPEAN STANDARDS**

Vienna, 9 October 1997: The International Helsinki Federation (IHF) appeals to the international community to give due attention to the trial of four leaders of "Rainbow," the Macedonian minority party in Greece, in Florina, northern Greece on 14 October.

The members of this legal political party are charged under Article 192 of the Greek Penal Code concerning incitement to violence or peace disturbance, for hanging a sign in the party's office displaying the words "Lerinski Komitet."

The indictment alleges that the use of these words, "in combination with the fact that they are written in a foreign language, in the specific Slavic idiom, provoked and incited discord among the area's citizens," adding that one can justifiably identify these words with "an old terrorist organization of Slavic-speaking alien nationals . . ."

The IHF is concerned about the charges brought against these individuals. A verdict of guilt of the accused on such grounds would put Greece in the position of violating its international obligations under the recently signed "Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities" of the Council of Europe, and its commitments undertaken as a member of the OSCE with regard to freedom of expression and minority rights.

The IHF will send a mission of observation to the trial and will report to the international community further about this worrisome case.

The **International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF)** is a

non-governmental organization which monitors compliance with the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Final Act and its follow-up documents. In addition to supporting and providing liaison among 31 Helsinki committees, the IHF has direct links with human rights activists where no Helsinki committee exists. It criticizes human rights abuses regardless of the political system of the state where these abuses occur.

National Helsinki Committees In: Albania - Austria - Belarus - Bosnia and Herzegovina - Bulgaria - Canada - Croatia - Czech Republic - Denmark - Finland - France - Germany - Greece - Hungary - Italy - Kazakhstan - Kosovo - Lithuania - Macedonia - Moldova - Montenegro - Netherlands - Norway - Poland - Romania - Russia - Serbia - Slovakia - Slovenia - Sweden - Switzerland - Ukraine - United Kingdom - United States.

MOSCOW HELSINKI GROUP

To: The Greek Embassy in the Russian Federation

October 8, 1997

Your Excellency, Mr. Ambassador

The Moscow Helsinki Group categorically protests against the outrageous persecutions of the leaders of the Rainbow Macedonian minority party in Greece: Vasilias Romas, Costas Tasopoulos, Petros Vasiliadis, and Pavlos Voskopoulos. This situation is absolutely unacceptable in a democratic country. They are all awaiting trial for the “public use of their mother tongue” on a bilingual sign in their office in Florina.

The Moscow Helsinki Group believes that this action cannot be qualified as an initiation of discord among nationalities nor will it lead to the annihilation of any ethnic groups. On the contrary this trial is a violation of national equality.

The Moscow Helsinki Group is the oldest human rights organization in Russia, an initiator of the International Helsinki Human Rights movement, and a member of the International Helsinki Federation.

Ludmilla Alexeeva
MHG Chief

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PRESS RELEASE

27/10/1997

**TOPIC: POSTPONEMENT OF TRIAL MEANS 11 MORE MONTHS OF
LIMBO FOR ETHNIC MACEDONIANS SEEKING RIGHTS IN
GREECE. REPORT OF INTERNATIONAL HELSINKI FEDERATION
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS TRIAL OBSERVATION MISSION.**

Vienna, 27 October 1997. The International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF) expresses serious concern over a series of due process and fair trial violations in the context of charges against the leadership of the "Rainbow" Macedonian minority party in Greece, as well as in other cases during the IHF's observation mission in Florina on 14 October 1997. These and other of Greece's violations of the Helsinki principles will be brought to the attention of the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting of the OSCE in November.

The decision to postpone the trial in effect keeps the defendants hostages for almost another year as they remain charged with the "crime" of speaking in their mother tongue. Four members of "Rainbow," a legal political party, are charged under Article 192 of the Greek Penal Code concerning incitement to violence or peace disturbance, for hanging a sign in the party's office displaying the words "Lerinski Komitet," in their native Macedonian language.

The IHF, in a 9 October 1997 statement, expressed its concerns

about the charges brought against these individuals. Our organization stated that a verdict of guilt of the accused on such grounds would put Greece in the position of violating its international obligations under the recently signed “Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities” of the Council of Europe, and its commitments undertaken as a member of the OSCE with regard to freedom of expression and minority rights.

The monitoring mission noticed that the Court seemed unwilling to try the case. Namely, the defendants had, on 9 October 1997, applied for a low number, which would have guaranteed the holding of the trial that day, explaining that there were circumstances for such a priority to be given: their lawyer as well as some of their witnesses were to come from Salonica and Athens. Instead, the public prosecutor gave the trial number 64 out of 75.

In a similar motion of the defense on 14 October, the court stated that indeed it was aware of the demand and was going to try the case after the mid-day recess at 12:30, postponing the other pending trials. Instead, at 12:30, the court announced that it was rejecting the request as the other cases were also important and also it expected an “*in flagrante*” case (for crimes caught in the act and need be tried within 48 hours) to be tried around 13:00.

Finally, the Court recessed for the “*in flagrante*” case after having heard 61 cases, i.e. three short of the trial under consideration here. The Court gave the impression that during its first recess it was instructed to assure the postponement of the case. Moreover, though usually new dates are set within three or four months at most, the public prosecutor gave a new date eleven months away, on 15 September 1998.

The defendants are thus held “hostages” as they and their party’s choice to express itself in their mother tongue continue to be prosecuted for another year. The IHF appeals to the Greek government to drop the charges against the defendants and discontinue prosecution.

The IHF mission was also informed by the court clerk that the

charges the “Rainbow” leaders pressed, in December 1995, against those who attacked and sacked their offices were still at the level of the inquest: though all witnesses suggested by the plaintiffs had made statements, none of the dozen defendants, though summoned, had made his apology; and the prosecutor had not sent them new summons to do so or issued indictments as he could but simply let the file rest for over a year, giving the impression that it does not want to press charges. The IHF deplores that no charges have been brought against these individuals and urges the Greek government to initiate criminal proceedings against them, showing that it will not tolerate mob justice.

Media Coverage of the Rainbow Case

During the court’s short hearing for the postponement, a lawyer from Florina harassed a journalist from the Macedonian television MTV without the intervention of the police or security guards: the incident was in fact reported the following day in a mass circulation Athens newspaper which praised the lawyer’s behavior and called the journalist, whose comportment was impeccable, “impudent.” In fact, the coverage of the trial by the major newspapers in Greece is another point of concern. Already in the events of September 1995 which led to the sacking of the “Rainbow” offices, the IHF (which at the time was monitoring hate speech in the media of all Balkan countries) reported that inflammatory hate speech in some local and Athens newspapers after that party put up the sign with its title in Greek and Macedonian had contributed to the development of the events that led to the sacking of the offices by a mob under the direction of the mayor.

References to this year’s trial were scant and, on 13-15 October, full of negative stereotypes and hate speech in the three large circulation Athens papers that referred to the trial. One called the defendants “Skopjanophiles” and added that “they tried to exploit the trial to further their propaganda, were provocative in the court building ... frequently engaged in broils and scuffles with other citizens” (Eleftherotypia, 15/10), allegations totally inconsistent with the observations of the IHF mission.

Another -the same which praised the lawyer's harassment of the foreign journalist-called the defendants "autonomists - Skopjanophiles" - although Rainbow has never demanded autonomy- and added equally inaccurately that they were charged with "insult; instigating principals in a threat; instigating principals in damaging property, threat; damaging property, for having put up in their offices signs in Bulgarian, on 14-9-95" (Eleftheros Typos, 15/10).

A third newspaper (Adesmeftos Typos), in two consecutive columns, called "Rainbow" a "Trojan association of afflicted relatives and friends" which "two years ago brutally provoked public feeling ... by putting up the Slavic sign 'Lerinski Komitet.' ... The attempt to incite and as a result the indictment of citizens was obvious. Hence the charges against them and the trial tomorrow of these provocateurs" (13/10). As for the Greek and international observers and/or witnesses in the trial, they were called among other things "a dazzling hodgepodge of ... international or naive advocates, observers who create and maintain such issues, refined diplomats and rabid agents" (14/10).

Violations in Other Case Observed

Finally, the IHF mission, while waiting for the completion of the trial procedure monitored the "in flagrante" trial of one Greek bar owner, and one Russian and three Ukrainians who were allegedly employed by him. They were charged with illegal entry, illegal employment and, the owner and one foreigner, debauch. The defendants were arrested in the early hours of 13/10 and, as the Greek defendant's lawyer told the IHF mission, the case should have been tried the same day: it was held up for a day without any official reason but, as he added "we all know why" meaning that the court kept the case to use it to secure postponement of the "Rainbow" trial. On this matter, it should be said that one court room was empty and could have been used for this trial which would have allowed the "Rainbow" trial to take place.

In the event the court tried the defendants using one of them, the Russian, who had a working knowledge of Greek, as an interpreter for

the other three foreign defendants. A procedure which is violating the Greek Penal Procedure Code (a defendant cannot also be an interpreter) and all principles of due process as the defendants in fact had no adequate translation: during the 45 minute trial, there was hardly any translation for the three Ukrainians. All four stated in the end that even the deposition they made to the police station before the trial and signed -in Greek- was done in the same way: the Russian translated to them what the police read them.

In February and September 1997, two other IHF missions in Greece, have stated the problem to the Greek Ministry of Justice. We have been answered that all courts are adequately equipped for that matter and asked for specific cases to be reported to them. Greek Helsinki Monitor has written to the Minister of Justice on 21 October 1997 on this case.

The IHF Trial Observation Mission included was Meto Jovanovski, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia, and Panayote Dimitras, Vasilis Sakellariou and Nasos Theodoridis of the Greek Helsinki Monitor.

REACTIONS TO THE “RAINBOW” ACTIONS
BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND
ORGANIZATIONS

*(The translations in English are the responsibility
of Greek Helsinki Monitor)*

NEW DEMOCRACY PREFECTURE COUNCIL OF FLORINA

RESOLUTION

In order to interpret and express the anger and indignation of the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of the Prefecture of Florina, the Prefecture Council of Florina of New Democracy denounces the hirelings of Skopje; these persons in order to carry out orders given by their employers, resorted to insolent and anti-Hellenic actions, and hanged up the treacherous sign of RAINBOW, which had a progressive content, in the unacceptable Skopjan script, which questions the Greek character of Florina (see 'Lerinski Komitet'); the aim was to create false and deceitful impressions, in view of the New York negotiations between Greece and Skopje.

The group of the well-known puppet of Skopje's propaganda, Voskopoulos, made up of just a few people, abusing of the rights and freedoms provided by the Greek State to all its citizens without exception, engage in actions which are self-evidently treacherous; their aim and objective is for their patrons and principals to help substantiate demands and claims against our country, and for them to justify their pay.

We point out that the artificial script which was invented for the spoken idiom of the Titoist Skopjan construct is completely unknown to the inhabitants of Greek Macedonia, and we want to make clear that provocations of this sort, which hurt and offend the patriotic and national spirit of the people of Florina, will not go unanswered.

The last concession which Hellenism made was to recognize the present borders and to refrain from claiming the purely Greek regions of Monastiri, Megarovo etc. Therefore, those here who receive the silver coins of treason or their masters beyond the borders should not delude themselves with dreams.

Besides, we want to point out that, now, nobody has the right to

shilly-shally on this matter and to remain silent. We call upon all the Political, Trade Union and Cultural Associations and, particularly, upon the Local Authorities and the representatives of the Government, to take a position regarding the actions committed by the treacherous clique of Voskopoulos & Company.

In this case, silence is not golden, neither is it offered as a life-jacket for the political survival of certain persons.

(no date mentioned in the original)

BAR ASSOCIATION OF FLORINA

RESOLUTION

The members of the Bar Association of Florina,

On the occasion of the action carried out by very few persons, hirelings of foreign aims and interests, to hang up a sign written in a foreign language at a central point of our town, convened at a general meeting and unanimously decide the following:

- A: They castigate and condemn the action carried out by the members of the Local Committee of the 'RAINBOW' party to hang up at the offices of their party a sign written in the language of FYROM which is non-existent for us and giving our town a Slavic name and not Florina, as it is known since the dawn of its history, as a successor of Heraclea Lynghistic.
- B: They declare towards all directions, that the inhabitants of this land where, through a process of tens of centuries, a style of life and an ethos of persons have been formed which are only Greek, are not going to tolerate similar actions on the part of anybody.
- C: Finally, they call upon those imprudent persons who renounce their own country, to pull themselves together and stop provoking; otherwise they will find themselves up against the entirety of the Florina People.

The members of the Bar Association of Florina

(no date mentioned in the original)

**RESOLUTION
OF THE GENERAL MEETING OF THE PRIESTS
OF THE HOLY DIOCESE OF FLORINA, PRESPE & EORDEA**

We, all the priests, assembled at a extraordinary general meeting in our region, which is a land of heroes and martyrs, decided the following:

1. We strongly protest because the insignificant minority of the Skopjanophiles, which was recently formed under Rainbow, causes problems to our border area. Specifically, we protest because a group of them, having recently opened in the town of Florina a rented office, has hung an inscription with the letters of the Slavic alphabet.
2. We declare that we, as priests of this border area and sensitive region, who are proud of our Greek Orthodox convictions and who have published a book entitled 'The Sacrifices of the Clergymen in Greece' and follow in the footsteps of them, will not tolerate the noble people of our region be scoffed at and slandered through actions carried out by very few persons known to our small society for their treacherous and anti-Hellenic sentiments.
3. We declare that in the event that we establish that there is a possible inaction on the part of the state authorities regarding the problem which has emerged, we will convene anew a General Hieratic Congress, we will ring the bells of the holy Churches and we will call the people to a mass rally of protest against these enemies of Greece, who arbitrarily hang up signs with such anti-Hellenic inscriptions, and we will demand their banishment.
4. As we have confidence in the old-aged bishop who, for sixty years, has been serving the Church and the Nation, we empower him to keep the state authorities posted, in order for them to promptly take all necessary measures promptly, so that our region is not exposed in the eyes of the European and Balkan communities as an area which

is not Greek.

In Florina on the 12th September 1995

THE SIGNING PRIESTS

On behalf of the ninety-one signing priests

The Secretary of the Holy Diocese

Lazaros Melissas

Before the Single-Member Court of First Instance of Florina**APPLICATION
FOR SUMMARY MEASURES**

1. Petkanis Traianos, resident of Florina [Prefect]
2. Aspridis Emilios, resident of Florina
3. Tsotskos Michael, resident of Florina
4. Ioannou Pavlos, resident of Florina
5. Naum Christos, resident of S. Ioannidis
6. Brayannis K. Yannis, resident of Florina
7. Manos Dimitrios, resident of Ano Kalliniki
8. Paspalis Ioannis, resident of Papayanni
9. Gogos Stergios, resident of Itea
10. Evangelos Dougiakis, resident of Tripotamos
11. Lazaridis Christos, resident of Neochoraki
12. Tsiipas Stavros, resident of Aghios Panteleimonas
13. Dones Michael, President of Aetos
14. Karakostas Christos, President of Sklithro
15. Siomos Evangelos, President of Variko
16. Nastos Dimitrios, President
17. Mingos Thomas,
18. Kourtis Vasilios, resident of Skopia
19. Papadopoulou Anastasia
20. Dimopoulos Simeon
21. Lazaridis Pavlos,
22. Maridis Isaac,
23. Psaltis Elias,
24. Rammou Alik,
25. Babakos Christos,
26. Papadopoulos Lazaros,
27. Sahinidis George, resident of Florina
28. Tsiokas Michael,
29. Alexiou Constantine, resident of Florina
30. Grigoriadis Efstathios,
31. Yannopoulos John,
32. Theodoridis Savvas,

33. Athanasios Soulidis,
34. Nalmpantidis Michael,
35. Tartoras Constantine,
36. Anastasios Vasilios,
37. Estes Socratis,
38. Tsiglis Nicolas.

AGAINST

1. The Florina Local Committee of the Rainbow party which is legally represented;
2. Pavlos Voskopoulos, resident of Florina; Legal representative of the aforementioned party and candidate of that party in the 12-6-1994 elections for the European Parliament,
3. Petros Vassiliadis, resident of Xino Nero
4. Constantinos Tasopoulos, resident of Lofoi
5. Stavros Anastasiadis, resident of Meliti
6. Ioannis Angelidis,
7. Alexandros Siekris,
8. Petros Dimtsis, resident of Kato Kleines
9. Christos Filippidis,
10. Athanassios Ghoghos.

Florina 13-9-1995

On 8 September 1995, the aforementioned second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth hanged an inscription of large dimensions outside the office of their party in Florina, on N. Hassou and Stefanou Dragoumi No. 10 streets, where in addition to the Greek written, 'Rainbow P[refecture].C[ouncil]. of Florina,' the words VINOZHITO LERINSKI KOMITET were also written in the Cyrillic alphabet; namely, the aforementioned have used a language and scropture of the neighboring country, FYROM; since then, this remains hanged on the outer side of their office in common view of the passing-by citizens and visitors of Florina.

The above action offends our personality in its moral, spiritual and personal elements as persons who are justified regarding movement and action in all cases of social co-habitation in accordance with the law (Thessaloniki Court of Appeal 3691/90 Armenopoulos Volume 44,1172).

The National sentiment and consciousness of the cultural and national identity and origin of a person is also a semblance of personality, in application accordingly of the provisions regarding the protection of the religious sentiment (First Instance Court of Athens, 17115/88; Legal Tribune [Nomiko Vima] 37, 270).

There is an offense against the personality in any of the actions carried out by a third party by which they disturb one of the semblances of the personality in the event that this (the disturbance) is illegal, regardless of which part of the law is included the provision which protects the personality of the individual.

The offended in his personality person is entitled, also by means of the summary measures procedure, to demand for the offense to be removed and not repeated in the future (Clause 57 of Civil Code, Supreme Court 259/71, Legal Tribune 19/873).

Following an application by the person offended and after it takes into account the nature of the offense, with its decision the Court can, in addition, sentence the person responsible into satisfying the moral damage inflicted upon him (the offended person) in accordance with clause 39 of the Civil Code, in the event that a misdemeanor has concurred (First Instance Court of Athens, 17115/38; Legal Tribune 37, 270; Greek Lawyers Journal 1989, 149).

In the specific case, the writing of the title of the party, 'RAINBOW,' with the words VINOZHITO and LERINSKI KOMITET, in a language of a neighboring state and in the script which is used by it (Cyrillic alphabet), the state entity of which has not as yet been recognized by Greece, neither by other countries, and the official name of which (FYROM) is temporary because of strong objections on the part of our

country and because of its refusal to accept the term MACEDONIA and its derivatives in the name of this country; all this creates the impression that the inhabitants of Florina, but also of the broader region, have identical national consciousness to that which the neighboring state (FYROM) internationally claims, maintains, propagates and invokes regarding the inhabitants of Greek Macedonia and in particular of its frontier Prefectures, namely 'Macedonian,' non-Greek national consciousness.

The existence of a party which, moreover, participated in the elections for the European Parliament, last year, under the title 'RAIN-BOW' and its function and free activity within the legal framework in force for all the parties legally recognized, certainly does not constitute an obstacle to the existence of all the elements comprising or constituting a semblance of our personalities, nor does it entail a derogatory disturbance of it regarding one or more of its elements.

The illegal use of another language, however, not officially recognized and of an alphabet other than that which is set by the Supreme Court's approval of the operation of this party, namely, of the language of FYROM instead of the Greek language, is an action clearly illegal and, moreover, culpable and deliberate, having the evident intention of identifying the objectives and aims of this party with those of the neighboring country and of presenting the inhabitants of the town and of the area as imbued with these views, since it refers to a party which functions in Florina and presents as its members and voters the citizens of this town.

Moreover, the political exploitation of the issue on the part of the neighboring country and the broad publicity which it takes on, create the impression that the inhabitants of the town and the broader area, have a 'Macedonian' non-Greek consciousness; this is also expressed in the fact that the title of the party has been inscribed in a language which is broadly connected, expresses and is attempted to become established internationally as an expressive tool of the view that we, as Macedonians, allegedly do not have a Greek consciousness and a national and cultural opinion, and this is an offence to our personality.

This impression is also strengthened by the fact that, at an international political level, this party (RAINBOW) constitutes the official expression of the MACEDONIAN MOVEMENT FOR BALKAN PROSPERITY, which directly agitates for the 'Macedonian' non-Greek consciousness of the Macedonians, i.e. of the inhabitants of Greek Macedonia; this is a fact which also offends our personalities as citizens and members of society who are entitled to enjoy the freedom to self-assertion of their National & Cultural consciousness, a right which no third party is entitled to usurp, to monopolize or illicitly exploit.

Considering that, for these reasons, it is evident that our personalities are offended, in accordance to clauses 57 & 59 of the Civil Code.

Considering that, due to the very urgent and immediate danger for discords, quarrels and possibly taking the law into their own hands, the need has arisen for you to issue a temporary injunction, valid until the issuance of a decision on our application, which will order the removal of the banner or any other sign which bears or will possibly bear the above elements.

Considering that our application is legal and well-founded.

WE ASK

To make this application acceptable, to order the removal of the offense and the taking away of any signs, whereon the title of the 'RAINBOW' party or any relevant information will be inscribed in a language of any other country and of FYROM in particular in Cyrillic alphabet. To order the omission of the offense in the future. To impose a fine in the amount of Drs. 100,000 to each one of the applicants as money satisfaction due to moral injury, and to order a temporary injunction by force of which the removal of the disputed inscription will be ordered, until the issuance of a decision regarding the present application.

The Authorized Attorney at Law
Athanasios Constantinidis

**THE HELLENIC REPUBLIC
THE HELLENIC POLICE
SECURITY DEPARTMENT OF FLORINA**

Report of 14 September 1995 (Reference Number 3021/8/79-b)

- *At about 01:45 hours on 14-9-1995, about twenty (20) persons gathered below the offices of 'RAINBOW' and with a movable scale (a ladder) belonging to the Municipality of Florina, they attempted to remove the sign. () the persons gathered gradually began to depart and until 03:30 hours they all had departed.*

- *At about 04:20 hours, it was established by Policemen on patrol that on the road surface of N. Hassou [street], one (1) moquette, some papers and various other objects which most probably came from the offices of the 'RAINBOW,' were burning.*

ARTICLES IN GREEK NATIONAL MEDIA ON “RAINBOW”’S ACTIVITY IN SEPTEMBER 1995

A guide to Greek newspapers mentioned here

Adesmeftos Typos (right-wing and nationalist)

Apogevmatini (right-wing and nationalist)

Avgi (affiliated to the Coalition party- and usually anti-nationalist)

Eleftheros Typos (right-wing and nationalist)

Eleftherotypia (center-left with occasional nationalist overtones)

Rizospastis (KKE official newspaper with occasional nationalist overtones)

(The translations in English are the responsibility of Greek Helsinki Monitor)

Incredible insolence. They have hanged up signs in town center.

SLAVS' 'INVASION' OF FLORINA

Florina has been struck by the Slavs. The blind instruments of Skopje and other secret centers, have become impertinent following the recent submissive handling of the so-called Macedonian issue by the government.

As residents of the border town revealed to 'A.T.,' some persons hung up Slavic signs in the center of Florina at noon yesterday.

By exceeding all limits of insolence, and having as an apparent aim the materialization of their separatist plans, they have placed a sign at the junction of Nikolaou Hassou and Stefanou Dragoumi streets, which, first in Slavic script and then in Greek, bears the title 'Prefectural Committee of Florina'; this title represents the 'Rainbow' organization, which is well-known for its anti-national action and had participated in the latest Euro-Election; a participation promoted by the American consulate of Thessaloniki.

News of the incident spread immediately throughout this border area, since its inhabitants had not seen any Slavic and Bulgarian inscriptions in their town since 1941.

Provocation

Many turned to the local authorities for an official reply to the provocation. In vain. The cherished friends of the member of parliament, Mr. Ghiorgos Lianis, the prefect Traianos Petkanis and the deputy regional director Ms. Theodora Peidou, through their silence showed their true colors. People are upset especially with the prefect, for whom it is said (see newspaper 'Paron' on 6 February 1994) that, as a Secretary General of the Ministry of Northern Greece, he had expressed views on the national issue of Skopje which, in many cases, were contrary to those of the Greek government.

According to reports sent from Florina by our correspondent Tilemachos Kokkos, the inhabitants are chiefly disturbed due to the insensibility shown by the local authorities which do not seem to understand anything of what is happening before their own eyes. As he mentions, they are especially angry, because the unacceptable sign was placed in the street dedicated to the brother of Ion Dragoumis, our national hero. Regarding the prevailing climate in the area, the statement made by a commune president Mr. Vassilis Tsepas is characteristic. In a message sent to the entire political leadership of the country's center and particularly to the government, the commune president whose village is a hundred meters away from the Albanian border, points out: 'If they think that we who are here will allow our borders to shrink down to Mount Olympus, they are gullible. Arms in hand, we will hold Greece at the position which it deserves by its long history.'

National Underbidding By PASOK

The national treason committed by the PASOK government has been exposed! From the phrase 'Greece belongs to the Greeks,' we have ended up with a crude collusion against the Greek people but also at the invasion of Florina by Skopjans.

Irony

Now, Mr. Holbrooke scoffs at us that he has fooled us, but the game was fixed. As soon as the agreement on the betrayal regarding the name was announced, the operatives of the US General Consulate in Thessaloniki, whom the previous Consul General, Mr. G. Blandford, was meeting but also backing, came out and hanged up signs with Slavic inscriptions. Despite the complaints made by the people, the socialist prefecture gave no reply and went into hiding. But the indignation of the people has reached the limits of self-defense. Many individuals undertake the responsibility to take the defense of the borders into their own hands and let the other competent parties in Athens continue to be complacent.

(Yiannis Tassiopoulos, *Adesmeftos Typos*, 7/9/95)

ANGER REGARDING THE SLAVOPHONE SIGN HANGED UP BY THE SKOPJANOPHILES

The agents do as they please

By T. Kokkos, G. Charvalias

The border area of Florina is literally boiling because of the unprecedented provocations on the part of the Skopjan agents who dared, the day before yesterday and in broad daylight, hang up a Slavophone sign at a junction of streets, just thirty meters away from the central square of the town!

This action of the very few Skopjanophile elements who, moreover, find shelter in the 'Rainbow' political formation of the Euro-Parliament, is not at all unrelated with the recent developments which are leading to a de facto recognition of Skopje by the PASOK. government and, what is more, under the name of 'Macedonia.'

Indignant Florina citizens substituted themselves for the local police administration (which obviously had instructions not to intervene), and, last night, removed the shameful sign bearing a banner in exactly the same script.

The mere reference to Florina by a Slavic name (Lerin) should have led to an ex officio prosecution by the local Public Prosecutor. However, in the new era of Greek-Skopjan relations, it seems that everything is allowed.

It is characteristic that, in the town of Florina and in the surrounding villages, the 'Rainbow' 'review' having the Slavic title of 'Zora' (Dawn) is freely circulated together with pages containing an improvised dictionary from Greek into the 'pseudo-Macedonian' idiom for further educating the population of Northern Greece!

The well-known 'separatists' of Voskopoulos, Tasko Boulev, Traianos Passois etc. have already found shelter in the 'Rainbow' which

is handsomely funded from abroad; now encouraged by the attitude of the PASOK government, they resort to unprecedented improprieties thus provoking the public feeling of the inhabitants of the area.

There were also some minor scuffles in the show of the day before yesterday.

Vassilis Romas, well-known in the town for his beliefs, owner of a cafeteria and candidate for the European Parliament with 'Rainbow' during the recent elections, began to shower abuses on passers-by because they did not attend the opening of the new offices of the party. Some of them being more hot-blooded reacted, the fight flared and charges were pressed by both sides.

Provocations

A characteristic of the infiltration attempted by the Skopjans (certainly with the assistance of the U.S.A.) is that, the day before yesterday, during the 'opening' of the local party committee of the 'Rainbow,' three [public] teachers on the active list of the area were seen there.

(Eleftheros Typos, 8/9/1995)

‘...ETHNIC MACEDONIANS’ GREET THE DIALOGUE

The ‘Rainbow,’ which calls itself a ‘political movement of the Macedonian ethnic community,’ in an open letter to ‘A. Papandreou, Prime Minister of Greece, Kiro Gligorov, President of the Republic of Macedonia, Cyrus Vance, UN mediator between Greece and the Republic of Macedonia, Hans Van Den Broek, European Union Commissioner, the ambassadors of the European Union member-states in Greece,’ characterizes ‘the fact of the direct dialogue between Greece and the Republic of Macedonia within the framework of the UN Organization as a positive development in principle.’ Furthermore, it asks for rights to be attributed to the community it represents, and to remove the consequences of the civil war with regard to ‘the Macedonian political refugees.’

(Eleftherotypia, 12/9/95)

SLAVIC PROVOCATION

By George Charvalias

An intervention into the New York negotiations on behalf of the 'Macedonian ethnic community in Greece' (!) was attempted by the 'Rainbow' yesterday by means of a letter of theirs to Andreas Papandreou!

This unprecedented development is combined with converging indications that, in the 'small package' agreement, an informal commitment by the Greek side is included; this pertains to a free return of the so-called 'Aegean Macedonians' who had abandoned the country during the civil war, and also the right to education in the 'Macedonian language' of the few thousand inhabitants in Northern Greece who use the Slavophone idiom.

Through its letter which is also communicated to Messrs. Vance, Gligorov, Van den Broek as well as to all the ambassadors of the European Union member-states in Athens, an effort is made by the Greek branch of the 'Rainbow' (a marginal political formation in the Euro-Parliament) which assembles the very few Skopjanophile elements and pawns of Gligorov, to create impressions regarding the existence of a 'Macedonian minority' in Greece, at a time when the signing of the agreement on the 'small package' is imminent.

Claim

Thus, at the same time that Skopje theoretically gives up its unsubstantiated irredentist claims against our country, it makes sure that in practice it puts them back into the talks through their agents in Greece!

The situation creates a very bad precedent; because, while the strength of Rainbow in Greece is non-existent (just 7,000 votes at the recent Euro-Elections), this Skopjanophile nucleus finds a shelter in a Euro-Parliament party and it now attempts to create a misleading pic-

ture at the international level. Characteristically, in the letter which was also written in Slavic the following is mentioned verbatim: “We consider that, with the beginning of the dialogue, those conditions have matured for the status of the Macedonian ethnic community in Greece to be defined.” And it is added: “For the Macedonians of Greece to become a bridge of friendship between the two countries, a basic precondition is their participation in that dialogue”!

This development follows the hanging up of a Slavophone sign in the center of Florina and the ceremony of the ‘inauguration’ of the ‘Rainbow’ offices in the border town.

(Eleftheros Typos, 12/9/95)

PROVOCATION

The unacceptable submissiveness shown by the government on the national Skopje issue gave the opportunity to the anti-Hellenic circles of RAINBOW to send a very provocative letter to A. Papandreou, K. Gligorov, C. Vance and Hans Van der Broek, in which they ask for a dialogue (!) with the Greek state regarding the rights of the pseudo-‘Macedonians.’

By forging the history of Macedonia, RAINBOW claims that the status of human rights of the non-existent ‘Macedonian’ citizens of Slavic origin should be determined(!), and that Greece should accept(!) the ‘Macedonian’ ethnic group as ‘a bridge between the two peoples’!

(Apogevmatini, 12/9/1995)

UPRISING AGAINST THE SKOPJAN AGENTS

The simple priests have decided to stop the brazen propaganda carried out by Gligorov's agents in Florina, by organizing a rally of protest in the next few days! In the past few days, the persons in charge of 'Rainbow' who serve Gligorov's aims in Northern Greece, have hanged up at their offices a sign written in a Skopjan dialect, which resulted in the entire population being upset, since the prefecture of Florina is called 'Lerin'!

In a resolution passed yesterday, at a special general gathering, the ninety-one priests under the Diocese of Florina, Prespes & Eordea ask that the state takes immediate measures, because, otherwise, they will resort into organizing dynamic mobilizations. In their resolution, the priests mention that, if these anti-Hellenic signs are not taken down immediately, then, in the next few days, at a special gathering, they will ring the bells in all the churches in the Prefecture and will call out the people to a rally. It is worth pointing out that several priests have already proceeded to pressing charges towards the persons in charge of the specific 'party,' the architect Pavlos Voskopoulos and the teacher Petros Dimtsis.

(Eleftheros Typos, 13/9/1995)

'HOLY WAR' BY THE DIOCESE

By T. Kokkos

A 'holy war' against the Skopjan provocations has been declared by the ninety-one members of the Holy Diocese of Florina-Prespes-Eordea.

It is noteworthy that, on 7 September, 'Adesmeftos Typos' had exposed the action of the Skopjanophile organizations (Rainbow) in Florina, since they had hung signs in Slavic script in various points of the city. The priests, during yesterday's general meeting, decided to organize a rally of protest, in the next few days.

At the antipode, the members of the Skopjanophile 'Rainbow' organization continue the provocations in the border area town. Specifically, five days ago, an inscription was hanged up whereon Florina is mentioned as 'LERIN.'

(Adesmeftos Typos, 13/9/95)

THE SKOPJANOPHILES' SIGN HAS BEEN TORN DOWN

Following the order given by the Florina Public Prosecutor's office, at 4 o'clock in the afternoon yesterday, men of the Fire Brigade went and 'tore down' the Skopjanophiles' sign from their offices, in spite of the reactions and the resistance put up by one of them who was at the time in the offices of the 'Rainbow.'

Present during the unnailing was the Magistrate of Florina, Mr. Constantinos Galis, as well as the commander of the Police Security department Mr. Kalaitzakis; and this in order to prevent any incidents that might be caused by the inhabitants who had gathered at the offices and shouted that, if there were no reactions, they would take it down themselves. Eventually, the unnailing took place without any incidents occurring.

(Eleftheros Typos, 14/9/1995)

FROM NEW YORK TO FLORINA

At dawn yesterday, when, in New York, the Hellenic Republic and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia were signing the significant agreement for the smoothing out of their relations, in Florina, 'unknown' persons set fire to the offices of the 'Rainbow' party, a party which aims at expressing those Greek citizens who belong to the 'Macedonian national minority,' as they mention in their program. This had been preceded by other actions also nationally detrimental and anti-democratic. A few days before, its offices had been broken into and the bilingual inscription of the party had been stolen. According to the abused citizens' and the 'Greek Helsinki Monitor's' denunciations, during the evening the day before yesterday, 'indignant citizens' 'having the mayor of Florina at the head' and with the tolerance of the police, tried to break the door of the offices open in order to remove the new sign which had been hung up; eventually, the sign was given to them in order to avoid any incidents.

The arsonists acted in a climate of guided intolerance. Unfortunately, last Tuesday, on the eve of the meeting in New York, the public prosecutor's office of Florina brought charges against 'Rainbow' for 'inciting citizens to disharmony among them' with the incomprehensible argument that the use of the 'Macedonian language' incites disharmony. The unnauling of the controversial inscription was also ordered; this was carried out with police intervention.

Do the competent authorities believe that such actions against Greek citizens are within the constitutional framework? Or do they consider, perhaps, that the prosecution do not compromise the country internationally? And even if they lack such 'sensitivities,' don't the competent authorities realize that physical assaults against a small section of citizens who declare that they constitute an ethnic minority strengthen, instead of bending, their morale? We wonder whether the competent authorities have forgotten that, by doing this, they offer an alibi to the Albanian regime or an 'absolution' to Turkey with regard to the discrimination and prosecution against the people of Greek origin. Do they find a vague condemnation of acts of violence by the government spokesman satisfactory? It seems that the spirit of New York will not influence Florina soon

(*Avgi*, 15/9/95)

INDIGNATION IN FLORINA

Two days ago, the Public Prosecutor of Florina brought charges against 'Rainbow' for 'inciting citizens to disharmony among them' and ordered verbally to take down an anti-Hellenic inscription which had been hanged up by the pseudo-Macedonians. Following the refusal of the 'Rainbow' cadres to take it down, the police was ordered to seize it. The new inscription which was hanged up by the pseudo-Macedonians was removed early yesterday morning by indignant citizens, who set fire to printed matter of anti-Hellenic character.

(Apogevmatini, 15/9/95)

TENSION IN FLORINA YESTERDAY

By T. Kokkos

Tension and scuffles in Florina, yesterday. The cause for the commotion was the continuing provocations made by the members of the Skopjanophile organization called 'Rainbow.' () The 'unnailing' of the provocative inscription was co-ordinated by Mr. Kalaitzakis, police commissioner of Florina; and, regarding legal coverage, the Magistrate Mr. Galis was present.

The Skopjanophiles, however, did not obey the Public Prosecutor's order and they put back the provocative inscription. The count-down had begun. The spirits flared up and, as a result, serious scuffles occurred. Since yesterday morning, posters have been posted up in the town having the following content: 'Greek patriot, resist! Your tolerance, gives them strength. No compromise regarding our Macedonia' [*see complete text below*]

The Mayor

After the new development, Mr. Dimitris Stylou, Mayor of Florina, and the whole municipal council went to the offices of the 'Rainbow' organization and took down the provocative inscription. Then, they set up a fire and, while singing the song, 'Renowned Macedonia, country of Alexander' they burnt it. The members of the Skopjanophile organization continued, until yesterday at daybreak, the provocations and, as a result, hundreds of enraged citizens gathered outside their offices. The citizens gathered and, while singing the National Anthem, smashed up everything 'to smithereens.'

GREEK PATRIOT

How long are you going to tolerate the various paid agents of Skopje pouring their poison against the fatherland?

RESIST

Stifle the voice of the traitors and make every anti-national activity of theirs to end up in the gutter.

YOUR TOLERANCE GIVES THEM STRENGTH

NO COMPROMISE FOR OUR MACEDONIA.

PATRIOTIC MOVEMENT

(Adesmeftos Typos, 15/9/95)

ATTACK AT THE OFFICES OF 'RAINBOW'

Florina. At a time when the first historical agreement between Greece and Skopje was being signed in New York, in Florina a group of citizens besieged the offices of the Skopjanophile organization 'Rainbow' twice and, in the second time, invaded them, destroyed them and set fire to the sign bearing the Slavomacedonian inscription on it which was hanging at the balcony as well as to other objects existing in that area.

The day before yesterday, the Public Prosecutor's office of Florina ordered the organization to remove the inscription which, among other things, referred to Florina as Lerin, as the Skopjans call it. It even brought charges against them for 'inciting citizens to disharmony among them.' The cadres of the 'Rainbow' removed the inscription temporarily, but later they put it back again.

Late in the evening of the same day, an extraordinary meeting of the municipal council took place and took the unanimous decision for citizens to go to that place and protest, having the mayor D. Stylos at the head. Indeed, a lot of people arrived outside the offices at the center of the town and, while singing the song 'Renowned Macedonia,' they took the controversial sign and burnt it. Afterwards they departed.

However, some cadres of the organization placed a new sign. When this became known, a group of enraged inhabitants of Florina invaded the offices by pushing back the 'Rainbow' cadres. The group set fire to fitted carpets, inscriptions, as well as leaflets which they found in the offices. The invaders chanted the National Anthem and then went away.

The Fire Brigade arrived at the offices and put the fire out, and so did police forces, without, however, making any arrests.

The attack against the 'Rainbow' was condemned through statements by the organizations: Greek Helsinki Monitor, Minority Rights Group - Greece, and Network of Movements for the Defense of Political and Social Rights.

(Eleftherotypia, 15/9/95)

FLORINA GOT ALL STEAMED UP

By T. Kokkos

Scuffles have taken place in Florina, between the Skopjanophiles of the 'Rainbow' party and the inhabitants of this borderland town.

In the evening of the day before yesterday, the Skopjan people placed outside their offices a new sign of anti-Hellenic content, and they would not remove it despite the protests by the inhabitants who gathered below the offices, on Stefanos Dragoumis street, at the center of the town.

As soon as the mayor of the town, D. Stylos, was informed of this action of the 'Rainbow' cadres, he convened an extraordinary meeting of the Municipal Council at one o'clock at dawn yesterday.

All the municipal council members decided unanimously to go to the offices of the 'Rainbow' and ask the persons in charge to remove the new sign and to comply with the public prosecutor's order; because, otherwise, an uncontrolled situation would arise, since the hundreds of persons who had gathered below the offices threatened to enter them and burn everything.

Insolence

The spirits in the town were aggravated because, when men of the fire brigade took down the sign with the inscription 'Lerin,' following the Skopjan alphabet, and despite the public prosecutor's intervention and the protests of the inhabitants, the cadres of the specific party hung up another one with the same content.

Eventually, the presence and the intervention of the mayor had a positive effect at the beginning, and the Skopjan people agreed to take

down the new sign. Later, however, new scuffles took place. At 4:30 yesterday, at dawn, there was a new provocation on the part of the Skopjanophiles who shouted Lerin, Lerin.

As a result, hundreds of persons, shouting 'Macedonia is Greek' invaded the offices and burnt everything.

Eventually, things got calm in town when strong police forces arrived at the offices and turned away the indignant inhabitants.

The insolence of the Skopjanophiles, however, went beyond any limits. Thus, the collaborating Skopjanophile organizations Greek Helsinki Monitor and Minority Rights Group, with a statement, refer to a 'Macedonian national minority' and claim that the local authorities have played a leading part in the events.

(Eleftheros Typos, 15/9/95)

THE PAWNS

In order not to have any misunderstandings as to the fact that 'calmness' and 'security' are enforced under American terms, exactly during the days when the backstage diplomatic processes were culminating, the pawns of American diplomacy in Macedonia made everything possible to set off tension. Well-known for their relations with the American Consulate of Thessaloniki, the 'leaders' of the 'minority party,' as 'Rainbow' calls itself, made everything possible to provoke with words and with actions. The 'reply' was given by well-known and non-exemptible local thugs who, assisted by the mayor of Florina, attempted to break the offices of this organization open and to take down an inscription written in Slavic. Then, some known-unknown persons attempted to set fire to the offices, while the Public Prosecutor of Florina brought charges against 'Rainbow' for inciting citizens to disharmony among them!!!

All this is indicative of a climate which, if not dealt with promptly, everybody can understand where it can possibly lead

(Rizospastis, 15/9/1995)

PAPUANS' BOX!..

'Since it became impossible to construct a 'Macedonian' minority in Greek Macedonia, a claim is made to import one into the Papoulias state!..'

Moreover, no sooner had the inks and the other juices dried upon the paper than the first historical results already began to occur. Florina, always the Number One target of enemy action and not just of propaganda carried out by Skopje, has already been struck by the tele-controlled agent-provocateurs of the Gligorov regime. And, since yesterday morning, this irredentist regime of the most insolent imperialism, runs wild with all its state media, against Greece, which it accuses internationally 'for the most crude violation of human rights of the ethnic Macedonian minority'! The well known 'progressive democrat activists' from Athens follow on its footsteps, in the same trench with Gligorov.

The apparatus had been set up even before signing the 'historical' Agreement of the Not Named [the Interim Agreement called so as it does not mention the names of the two countries] and, from a breathing distance, it had been noted in this column beforehand that the 'Lerinsko Komitet' had operated openly in Florina.

In the heart of this border area and much-afflicted Macedonian town and in cold blood, the inscription was hoisted in a Slavic Cyrillic script and in large letters; the aim of this was to act as a lightning rod for popular anger, so that the 'Komitet' takes advantage of the consequences of this anger - as it has done so far.

The standing demand of irredentist 'Macedonianism' regarding an unconditional dialogue between 'Greece and Macedonia' is now out-of-date, as it constitutes an international vested issue in the Agreement of the Not Named. Now, a written statement from Florina via Skopje demands 'a direct dialogue between Rainbow (of the agent-provocateurs) and the Greek State, to eliminate the consequences of the civil war on the Macedonian political refugees whose Greek citizenship has been revoked.'

The Pandora's Box has been opened. Since it became impossible to construct a 'Macedonian' minority in Greek Macedonia, a claim is made to import one into the Papoulias state!..

(Adesmeftos Typos, 16/9/1995)

SKOPJANOPHILES DO NOT GIVE UP

Everything in life has a limit. It seems that the inhabitants of Florina felt this way also when, after the Public Prosecutor's ban, they saw the Skopjanophiles of the 'Rainbow' organization raising again a 'banner' in Slavic at a central building of their town. Then, with the mayor and the municipal councilors at their head, they entered the offices of the organization and burnt their leaflets. The Skopjanophiles, however, do not seem to give up and, according to exclusive information obtained by 'Apogevmatini tis Kyriakis,' the offices of the 'Rainbow' will be transferred to an apartment building which is under construction at the junction of Stefanou Dragoumi and Arrianou streets. There, they plan to set up their radio station. They have even asked the Hellenic Telecommunications Organisation (OTE) to have nine telephone lines installed. The question arising is with what license and on whose funds will the radio station of Messrs. Voskopoulos and Pasois operate?

(Apogevmatini, 17/9/95)

EXCERPTS
FROM SWORN STATEMENTS
OF WITNESSES FOR THE PROSECUTION

*(The translations in English are the responsibility
of Greek Helsinki Monitor)*

Fotios Kolettis

(son of Spyridonas and Sophia)

Civil servant

President of the Florina District Organization
of the political party New Democracy

(...) “This action, and because of the fact that on the day the sign in the Skopjan dialect was hanged there was an open market, resulted in a lot of people gathering below the ‘RAINBOW’ offices; these people vividly heckled its members and threatened that, should that sign not be removed at once, there would be a dynamic reaction with unforeseen consequences. Everybody put the blame on the competent authorities of the prefecture (Public Prosecutor - Prefecture - Local Council - Police) and they threatened that if the authorities do not intervene to remove the specific sign, they will take the law into their own hands and will remove it themselves.”

(...) The fact alone that a sign was hanged promoting ‘RAINBOW,’ the members of which are well-known to all Florina citizens for their anti-Hellenic propaganda, has provoked the public feeling of all the sanely thinking inhabitants of the prefecture; much more so did the words in the Skopjan dialect-script on the third line by which the Hellenic nature of Florina is disputed and which conceals territorial claims on the part of Skopje. I repeat again that this action (the hanging of the sign) provoked as well as incited the citizens of the Florina prefecture and, moreover, as a result, violent actions have also been committed between the citizens. Everybody was swearing at and threatened the members of the ‘RAINBOW.’”

(...) “In the early hours of the 7-9-1995, the ‘RAINBOW’ member, VOSKOPOULOS Pavlos, wrote the same content on a piece of cardboard and hanged it on the same point where the previous sign was, a fact which caused greater anger and indignation to the people of Florina, and more serious incidents were threatened. I fear that the insistence on the part of the ‘Rainbow’ members to keep a sign in the Skopjan dialect hanged will drive the people of Florina to uncontrolled

situations, since the word 'RAINBOW' alone which is interwoven with anti-Hellenic propaganda, constitutes a provocation."

(...) "Methods and actions of an anti-Hellenic nature carried out by specific centers result in bend the national morale of the people of Florina who have fought for many years so that this town remained Greek. The members of 'RAINBOW' cause an internal emigration towards the large urban centers (Athens, Thessaloniki, Larissa etc.) and it is not accidental that a decrease instead of an increase in population is manifested in Florina and that it does not develop economically. They have set as their program the destabilization of the area, and have as an ulterior aim to send away from Florina all the investors, so that the area be economically declining, and therefore its inhabitants will be increasingly vulnerable to the propaganda on the part of Skopje.

(...) Their anti-Hellenic propaganda is manifested in all manners and means; they publish the monthly review called 'ZORA' with a clearly anti-Hellenic content; they have circulated from time to time maps where the 'AEAGEAN MACEDONIA' according to them is pictured, meaning that our Macedonia belongs to Skopje and that the Greek territory ends at Tembi [at the border between the Grek regions of Thessaly and Macedonia]. Also, they distort the lyrics of old Macedonian songs, and their ulterior motive is the division and indignation of the native population."

Ioannis Ghermanidis

(son of Pavlos and Aspasia)

President of the Medical Association of Florina

Elected Prefecture Councilor from the New Democracy party

(...) “The action of the ‘RAINBOW’ members and any other similar actions have consequences on the national, social and economic life of the area, because these provocations bring about upheaval and conflict and, as a result, the serenity and the relations of the inhabitants of the area are disturbed; and as a consequence the economy is affected. I express the above positions also in my capacity as Prefecture Councilor”.

Efstathios Mavropoulos

(son of Vassilios and Christina)

Cardiologist

Spokesperson of the Florina District Organization
of the political party Political Spring

(...) “That sign with the content in a Skopjan dialect or Slavic script has provoked a great anger and indignation to the entirety of the people of Florina for the reason that the well-known paid agents of the Skopjan propaganda were let loose. From what I was informed, scuffles have been provoked because of the anger and indignation caused by that sign and, if signs in the Skopjan dialect continue to be hanged up, we will be led to uncontrolled situations; while the members of ‘RAINBOW’ present themselves as pacifists and internationalists to the peace-loving people of Florina as well as abroad, in essence they are pure racists and fascists as is clearly proved by their anti-Hellenic actions.”

(...) “The mention on the sign of the word LERINSKI () shows the expansionist plans of the ‘RAINBOW’ members; it causes disharmony among the inhabitants of Florina, thus disturbing public peace, and everybody expresses anger and indignation as to where we will be led by this kind of actions; it is evident that their anti-Hellenic actions will be escalated and there will be dynamic reactions on the part of the inhabitants of the Florina Prefecture with unforeseen consequences.”

(...) The inscribing of the sign in Slavic script and, moreover, the use of a Slavic term regarding our town, namely LERINSKI, has offended my patriotic feelings and my national consciousness and it has enervated me unimaginably, I would say it has literally infuriated me. From various discussions which I have heard, I established that the same feelings were caused to the entirety of my fellow-citizens: the world of Florina is upset, because such actions stir up old memories and passions of the past; this area and its inhabitants have gone through a lot of suffering because of the Slavic aims and it is natural for someone to get infuriated when they see signs with the unacceptable Slavic inscription and name for their town, which moreover was hanged at the office of a political

party. In the recent years, the major cause for the economic decline of Florina is the activities of the RAINBOW members and of the agents of Skopje in general, because the people of Florina do not invest in the area and all those who are able to emigrate to the large urban centers (Thessaloniki, Larissa etc.). Exactly what the 'RAINBOW' members stand for and seek can be clearly seen in their publication called 'ZORA'; it would be good if the competent persons in the state apparatus and all Greek citizens study it."

Michael Tsotskos

(son of Aristidis and Athena)

Lawyer

Secretary of the Florina District Organization of the political party
PASOK

(...) “A metal sign was hanged on which and in addition to the title of the ‘RAINBOW’ party, the words ‘VINOZHITO’ were also written in Cyrillic script, which means wine and grain; and next to them ‘LERINSKI KOMITET’ which means committee of the Florina organization.”

(...) “What I want to stress on my part as a cadre of an organization (PASOK), as a citizen, and primarily as an inhabitant of this area, is the fact that any person, anybody, any group of citizens, any party organization has the inalienable right to freedom of expression of speech and of thought, and the publicizing in the best way of all these things with any legal means and manners. ‘RAINBOW’ is a party which has been approved by the Supreme Court and participated in the recent Euro-Elections of 1994; it has the same rights and obligations that all other parties in the Greek state also have. It has the right to present-propagate its positions like any other party which functions within a framework aiming at the social, economic, political and cultural development and -and this is the main thing- the safeguarding of the freedom of citizens, of democracy, of peace and of security in our land. Nonetheless, it also has the obligation to function and act as a legal entity of an association of people with a specific aim within the framework of the law and the constitution as laid down by the state within the limits of the Greek state. I believe that the words which have been written (with the exception of the words RAINBOW - FLORINA PREFECTURE COMMITTEE [in Greek]) are not within the limits of legality and the usefulness of a party to exist and function in the Greek state; they do not serve the aims and objectives for which it was founded, they exceed the framework provided by its constitution. Under the present conditions prevalent in the Balkans today, I would say that the above action renders only bad services to our country and to the peoples of the Balkans, and I fear very much that it serves some transatlantic

third parties who 'have a stake' in the destabilization of the broader area of the Balkans. Our land, and the broader area, are in need of normality, peace, cooperation among its peoples and development. This is the duty of the citizens as well as of the states and the parties."

Athanassios Ghermanidis

(son of Ioannis and Ioanna)

Secretary of the Florina District Organization of the political party
Coalition

(...) “In fact, the hanging of the specific sign provokes indignation among the citizens of Florina, stirs disharmony among them, and can disturb the public peace; because it is unacceptable in the offices of a political party to hang a sign where the term Lerinsko is mentioned in Slavic letters, i.e. the name of the town turned Slavic. Moreover, I want to add that, from what I know, Greek parties are not allowed to use foreign language letters in the title of the party and foreign language inscriptions are not allowed even for the shops. Moreover, with regard to the fact that the specific sign is provoking the citizens to violent actions, there is proof which is that some incidents have occurred; however I do not know more details regarding these or the persons who have participated in them. My opinion is that the instruments of the State should judge the legality of this action and take any additional measures, within their competence.”

Gheorghios Moulis

(son of Anestis and Marika)

Accountant

Representative of the Florina District Organization
of the political party Communist Party of Greece (KKE)

(...) “From what I also got to know, the word ‘LERINSKI’ is a derivative of the word ‘LERIN’ - it misinterprets the place-name of Florina and is mentioned as it exists in the maps of the Skopje publishing circles.”

(...) “In my opinion, without having any specific evidence to prove this, the leading group of this movement is instigated by foreign centers and serves objectively the games of the Great Powers in the area and the ‘New World Order.’ Therefore, if they continue the same tactics, the possibility cannot be excluded to have greater incidents, something which will cause nothing good.”

(...) “The problem in my opinion does not lie so much in a foreign language inscription (for that matter, there are very many inscriptions in foreign languages around us) as in the specific word ‘LERIN’ - which, as I said, conceals territorial claims on the part of the neighboring country; this provokes by itself the indignation of well-meaning citizens, arouses the public feeling and disturbs public peace; but the same happens also with the so-called ‘indignation’ of some busybodies who lack any essential political positions on the important issues of the area and so they ‘thrive’ on and try to survive politically by appearing as ‘indignant’ citizens. In any case, however, the peace in the area is disturbed with multiple negative consequences.”

(...) This is why, in my opinion, any public prosecutor’s investigation should not be directed only towards the hanging of the specific sign which, as I also said before, is not the primary issue but simply a trifle on the tissue of the existing problems. Mr. Public Prosecutor should investigate the more general interconnections which the leading group of ‘RAINBOW’ has with foreign centers and, to the extent that this is possible, all the links in the chain which start from Washington and the

decision centers in the European Union, pass through Skopje and end up in our area. This, in my opinion, is the main issue, because by having these interconnections (regarding which, as I said, I do not have specific evidence as proof but I deduce them by reasoning from their whole activity), the leading group of 'RAINBOW' objectively serves the destabilizing games of the Great Powers in the area. A basic means to pass through this policy is to 'divide and rule,' i.e. the disharmony among the peoples, the provoking of artificial conflicts among the population of the same country, and taking advantage of existent and non-existent minority problems. Also, Mr. Public Prosecutor should, in my opinion, also investigate the possible financial interconnections which this leading group has with the foreign centers. Therefore, a bar should be set against any activities which create such problems, divide the population and disturb the calm and peace in the area."

Lazaros Nalpantidis
(son of Anastassios)

President of the commune Aghios Achillios, Florina

(...) “I never believed that those who have hanged the sign would have the nerve to write in the Skopjan dialect and provoke so overtly the peace-loving people of Florina; and if we go back to history, we will see how much they have suffered by similar actions.”

(...) “All the fellow citizens I was meeting at the place where the sign in the Skopjan dialect was hanging were indignant and angry and they expressed threats and curses against the ‘RAINBOW’ members who are well-known all over the Prefecture of Florina for their anti-Hellenic propaganda (VOSKOPOULOS Pavlos, KLIGATSIIS Pantelis, ROMAS Vassilios etc.). Specifically, I learnt that LIATOPOULOS Dimitris quarreled with ROMAS Vassilios because of the anger and indignation caused by the content in the Skopjan dialect of the specific sign; and, from what I was informed, they pressed charges against each other.”

(...) “This action committed by the members of ‘RAINBOW’ was the subject of discussion in the entire area of the Municipal Market and, in the shops we visited, everybody said that the specific sign should be taken down without fail, because, otherwise, there will be a dynamic reaction with unforeseen consequences.”

(...) “As I was informed, on the same day, as soon as fellow citizens of mine were meeting persons of ‘RAINBOW,’ they were swaring at them brazenly and were telling them that they do not have the right to characterize themselves as defenders of the local population, that they do not have the right to cause disharmony among the native population and how much money were they given in order to resort to such an action. I was also informed that my fellow citizen BELIANIS Gheorghios, on the same day and for the same reason, verbally attacked ROMAS Vassilios before a crowd. All the above actions by the persons of ‘RAINBOW’ have disturbed the peace of the inhabitants of Florina, a town which is renowned for the peace-loving temper of its citizens. This rousing of the

Florina citizens is justified, because our ancestors have undergone all sorts of foreign propaganda, have shed their blood so that their town remains Greek; and, for this reason, not only will we remain defenders of the border area and trustees of our fatherland but we will not allow any suspicious action like that movement threaten in any way our historically established rights. In my capacity as president of the commune of Aghios Achilleios and as president of the council of the entire seventh territorial region of Florina (Prespes area), I was impressed by the reaction of my colleagues, the commune presidents, and of the inhabitants of the villages of Prespa who, on the telephone as well as in private discussions, indignant and angry, urged me to appeal to the competent authorities of the Prefecture, because, otherwise, if they would not remove the sign, they would themselves take the case into their own hands.”

(...) “This action committed by the members of ‘Rainbow’ is not the only one which provokes the inhabitants of our prefecture. These very few fellow citizens who are blamed by all of us, are certainly instigated by some other unknown centers and they function as paid agents whose aim is to disturb and create problems in the broader area of Macedonia. For this reason they have been publishing the monthly review ‘ZORA’ - (DAWN) which has a clearly anti-Hellenic content; they have circulated from time to time maps, which depict ‘AEGEAN MACEDONIA’ according to them, meaning that our Macedonia belongs to Skopje and that the Greek territory ends at Tembi [at the border between the Grek regions of Thessaly and Macedonia]. Also, they try to cause problems to the inhabitants of our Prefecture and to influence their morale with all sorts of anti-Hellenic propaganda (by distorting the lyrics of old Macedonian love songs and by organizing at the various festivals popular feasts where they invite all the people on the pretext of a dance, and the organizers are singing and dancing themselves separatist songs and dances). It is a usual phenomenon that problems are caused in villages of the Prefecture by the sustained propaganda of these persons which, as a result, causes disharmony and indignation among the inhabitants. With regard to the social and economic life, problems are of course caused, because these very few people condemn our Prefecture; because I know many people who would like to invest their money in our

Prefecture, but when they see the actions of these persons, then they avoid to do so. Also, many fellow citizens of mine say that they will sell their properties in Florina and will move to other towns (Katerini, Larissa, Athens, Thessaloniki, Veria). The result of all the above actions of the propagandists is the weakening of national morale and patriotism of many inhabitants of our Prefecture, and it is evident that these persons want to cause problems to the development and calm of Macedonia.”

Athanasios Constantinidis
(son of Dimitrios and Maria)
Lawyer

(...) “All the people who were informed about this anti-Hellenic action committed by paid persons shared my feelings and many of them manifested intentions of taking the law into their own hands; namely they reached a point where they were saying, ‘we will go to remove it,’ ‘to break it,’ ‘to break the offices.’”

(...) “I myself heard many such statements from fellow citizens, namely people who bitterly criticized the ringleaders of this anti-Hellenic action, and it was with difficulty that one could restrain them from their inclinations to take the law into their own hands; and they even reached a point where they wanted to use force against the persons they suspected as ringleaders of this action, whom they consider as hirelings paid by the enemies of Greece. I was informed afterwards that incidents have taken place between the very few hirelings of the Skopjan propaganda and indignant citizens of this town and area; with sacrifices and streams of blood throughout the centuries, mainly however at the end of the previous century and at the beginning of this century, these citizens have characterized and continue to characterize their nationality as Greek and nothing else, and the name of their homeland as Florina and only Florina. Moreover, a similar answer but not of course by means of taking the law into their own hands, was given by all priests of the Holy Diocese of Florina, Prespes and Eordea, and all Florina Lawyers with special resolutions, and all the population of the Prefecture, men and women, young and old.”

(...) “The group, made up of few people, of the ‘RAINBOW’ party, by abusing the rights and freedoms provided by the Greek State to all citizens without exception, engage in self-evidently treacherous actions; their aim and objective is to substantiate unreasonable and historically unproved demands and claims. I want to make clear that provocations of this kind offend the patriotic and national morale of the people of Florina and all the sectors of development in our Prefecture.”

Thomas-Theoklitos Pasalis
(son of Vasilios and Paraskevi)
Priest

(...) “The priests who participated in the meeting are indignant, because a sign was hanged with letters in the Slavic alphabet by a group of Skopjanophiles constituting the ‘Rainbow’ movement at their offices in Florina; they also express the holy indignation of their flock which amounts to thousands of Orthodox Christian Greeks of our border area, who were ready to resort to radical and dynamic solutions, namely to go to the place where this anti-Hellenic inscription was placed and remove it.”

(...) “They stated, however, that if the provocative sign were not removed soon, then clergy and people led by the Elder Bishop and while the bells of the Holy Churches of the Florina would ring mournfully, would set out all together to remove the anti-Hellenic sign and will protest very vigorously and dynamically in all directions.”

Tilemachos Kokkos

(son of Michael and Anastasia)

Journalist

(...) “Indignation, feelings of disgust and at the same time perplexity on the part of the inhabitants, because some authority would not intervene immediately to remove the shameful sign. Simply I would like to also note that the telephones of my office as well as of my home have not ceased ringing all day long by manifestly angry persons from the Prefecture, common as well as important ones, who were insistently asking to convey, through the three Athens newspapers of which I am the correspondent as well as through the television channel, their anger as well as their will to stop these anti-Hellenic provocations carried out by the Skopjan agents.”

(...) “A few hours after the hanging up of the treacherous ‘banner,’ the first incident occurred.”

(...) “The action is premeditated; it is dictated purely by Skopjan propaganda centers with the exclusive aim in the future to persuade enemies and friends that there is a ‘Macedonian’ ethnic minority and, of course, such a theory also has all the ensuing (national, social, economic etc.) deplorable results.”

Nicolaos Fanouriakis

(son of John and Vasiliki)

President of the Florina Traders' Association.

(...) "Since the day the sign was hanged, and in our discussions, traders colleagues of mine, customers of mine, acquaintances of mine, did not omit to talk exclusively on this issue; to swear at the representatives of the 'RAINBOW,' well-known for their anti-Hellenic attitude; and, because of the anger and indignation which they were feeling, to blame the competent local authorities of our town for not reacting to this movement; and to say that, if the sign is not taken down, they will take it down themselves dynamically."

(...) "Other activities of the 'RAINBOW' members, like the circulation of anti-Hellenic maps, separatist songs, shaping [*sic*] of the history of our Macedonia through the 'ZORA' magazine, and continuing anti-Hellenic propaganda primarily directed towards the uneducated population of our area, provoke and incite the inhabitants of the area to disharmony, because it is a fact that such actions stir up passions among the indigenous population primarily and they bring back to memory the atrocities committed in the old days by terrorist organizations of Slavic speaking alien nationals who were active in our area."

(...) "These 'RAINBOW' activities indicate that its members, and particularly those with the leading roles, are directed by unknown centers and function as agents and in an anti-Hellenic manner."

(...) "Naturally, this provocative and shameless action committed by these few persons who act and operate under the inelegant cover of 'Rainbow' and ignore everybody and everything, will have repercussions on all sectors of development in our area; they hurt the national morale of the inhabitants and, with whichever manner they can, they attempt to present a picture that there is a separate entity of inhabitants in our area; this is refuted historically as well as by us who were born and grew

up in this town and know the patriotic nature of the inhabitants; and for this reason, I believe that we will not let anybody disturb the social tranquillity and injure our dignity.”

Ioannis Novas
(son of Pantelis and Eleftheria)
Trader

(...) ‘I saw the fellow-citizens of mine and well-known for their anti-Hellenic activity, VOSKOPOULOS Pavlos, ROMAS Vassilis and some others going in and out of the apartment building entrance.’

(...) “I felt, therefore, flooded by a wave of anger and indignation and was wondering who are these gentlemen who want to characterize and discredit an entire Prefecture and its People; and this because I am an indigenous Macedonian from Florina, I speak the local idiom of my area; but there is no way whatsoever that I will accept these very few ‘gentlemen’ to call themselves patrons and advocates of the native element and to appear as allegedly genuine ‘Macedonians.’ It is known and discussed everywhere in our Prefecture, that these few persons who instigate the anti-Hellenic propaganda, are directed by unknown centers and act as paid agents whose sole aim is to cause more general problems in the area of Macedonia; and the good thing is that they have not found even one follower from Florina and, whatever happens, they will always be people without any substance in our Prefecture. With regard to the reactions of my fellow-citizens who were seeing the sign on that particular day, everybody without any exceptions swore and said: “What is the State and the Police doing? Until when will these paid agents act uncontrolled?” Notably, I heard many people say that if these persons do not take down the sign, “we will take the law into our own hands and we will not take notice of anything and anybody.” In the afternoon of the same day, also, at the central square of my town, ROMAS Vassilios, well-known ‘RAINBOW’ candidate, overtly provoked my friend, LIATOPOULOS Dimitrios who hit him, not being able to hold back his anger and his temper, as I was informed. Also, other incidents occurred; as soon as the common people of the town saw any of the persons of the above ‘party’ who was known, they swore at them with vulgar expressions and many incidents were just about avoided. I was also impressed by my acquaintances who come from the villages in my Prefecture and passed by my shop during that day; all of them were swearing and

threatening with dynamic actions should competent authorities not remove the sign.

(...) This activity of these few persons not only provokes and arouses but if pursued, I fear that incidents will occur much worse than those which I mentioned above. It is certain that no person from Florina will let these few people bring disharmony and disturb the tranquillity of our town. As I have been informed, on the night of the 6/7-9-95, some persons unknown to me, surely fellow-citizens of ours, took down the aforementioned sign by breaking the door of the 'RAINBOW' offices; and now the persons in charge of the party have hanged a 'banner' which inscribes exactly the same phrases. From now on, however, and if the Authorities of our town do not take down this 'banner,' I fear very much that the Florina people themselves will do it with dynamic actions, and I state this because I was impressed by the universal reaction, anger and indignation."

(...) "Actions such as that of the 6-9-95 by the 'RAINBOW' members as well as their previous activity, like premeditated propaganda manifestations with separatist songs and dances in festivals, circulation of anti-Hellenic maps, circulation of their magazine called 'ZORA' with anti-Hellenic content and distortion of the history of Macedonia; also the fact that they try to gain support for their propaganda primarily among the uneducated population of the Prefecture; they divide the people of Florina, they deal blows against the national morale and patriotism of the inhabitants. Also, they create problems to Tourism and to investments in our Prefecture and, as a result, its development is obstructed. Because of the fact that, for several years now, I have been visiting the neighboring country, Skopje, I am impressed by the fact that many common citizens of the neighboring state swear at the actions of the 'RAINBOW' members and at their own leadership, because the only thing that they themselves want is good relations between the two peoples and cooperation; and they consider that all these actions are provocative and that they are directed by unknown centers, having as an aim to deal blows to the relations between the two peoples."

Dimitrios Liatopoulos
(son of Pericles and Vasiliki)
Trader

(...) “Because of the ‘open market’ on that day, there was a lot of people in our town and particularly in N. Hassou Street; therefore, I was terribly impressed by the anger and indignation of my fellow citizens of all ages who, as soon as they saw the aforementioned sign, began to swear at the persons of ‘RAINBOW’ using strong expressions and called them paid agents; and they (the members of ‘RAINBOW’) were watching coolly at the angry crowd. It is a good thing that the people of Florina are peace loving and do not easily resort to dynamic actions; however, many things were heard like, ‘What are the competent authorities doing? Since they do not do anything, we will take up arms etc..’” However, the hanging of that sign has caused a serious problem; during that day there was not one fellow citizen with whom I discussed and who did not say, ‘Are they not ashamed; until now we have tolerated these agents and now they have reached the shameful point to inscribe in Slavic and to call our town ‘Lerin’ (Lerinski Komitet).”

(...) This action (the hanging up of the sign) as well as previous actions (circulation of anti-Hellenic maps, circulation of the ‘ZORA’ magazine, separatist songs, vigorous anti-Hellenic propaganda among the uneducated population of the Prefecture) carried out by the members of ‘RAINBOW,’ influence and deal blows against the development of the prefecture, bring about disharmony and cause problems to the patriotism of the inhabitants in an area which is bordering with two Balkan countries, the relations of which with our country are not at the best point.”

Dimitrios Tserkezos

(son of Evangelos and Anna)

Driver

(...) “The aforementioned sign has inscribed on it ‘RAINBOW’ in the Greek language, and ‘VINOZHITO’ in Slavic, and ‘LERINSKI KOMITET - FLORINA PREFECTURE COUNCIL’ on the third row. I do not know the Slavic script but from what I learnt, the first line is translated as ‘wheat-wine,’ and the third line is interpreted as ‘Florina Committee.’ The inscription of the sign and moreover the use of a Slavic term for our town, namely the word ‘LERINSKI,’ has offended my patriotic feeling and my national consciousness and it has enervated me unimaginably; I would say it has literally infuriated me.

(...) “The people in Florina are agitated, because such actions stir up old memories and passions of the past: the area and its inhabitants have undergone many sufferings because of the Slavic aims and it is natural for one to get infuriated when seeing a sign with a Slavic inscription and name for our town which, moreover, has been hanged at an office of a political party. During the years 1903 until 1909, this land has gone through a lot of suffering because of the Slavs, and the toll in blood of Greek patriots has been very heavy so that our region and our Macedonia remain Greek. For the above holy cause three brothers of mine and thousands of other Greek patriots have fallen in heroic fighting; their relatives, as well as I, shuddered as soon as they saw the above inscription.”

(...) “Such actions as that of the 6-9-1995 by the ‘RAINBOW’ members as well as other earlier propaganda activities which, moreover, are also premeditated -like the separatist songs at the various festivals held in our area, the circulation of anti-Hellenic maps, also the fact that with their propaganda they attempt to get support among the uneducated population of the Prefecture- divide the people of Florina, deal blows against their national morale and their patriotism. I believe that all the aforementioned cause harm also to the economic development of the area, because many Florina citizens, when seeing these things, avoid to

invest in their area and they turn towards other areas in our country and, as a result, our area declines economically and socially. I believe that due to the above propaganda of the well-known circles, there is a trend for the inhabitants of our area to escape from our area towards other urban centers and, as a result, Florina has being continuously depopulated. This I believe is included in the priority aims of the above circles.”

Christos Zaravelis

(son of Evangelos and Evangelia)

Taxi driver

(...) “The above sign was hanged by the well-known anti-Hellenic persons of ‘Rainbow.’

(...) “As I am the president of ‘RADIOTAXI,’ the first to get indignant were my colleagues, who moreover were swearing at those who hanged the sign and they demanded that it be taken down at once. Also, the reaction of the inhabitants of Florina impressed me, because on that day there was an open market and there were many people. Therefore, my fellow citizens were manifestly indignant with the well-known anti-Hellenic persons whom they were swearing at and they were saying, ‘they made us a laughing stock internationally,’ ‘whoever wishes to do so can leave and move to Skopje’; also that ‘they do all this for the money they take from foreign centers and they cause harm to our town.’”

(...) “I heard many fellow-citizens of mine saying that they will hit these anti-Hellenes and that they will burn their cars and their offices.”

(...) “These actions by the ‘RAINBOW’ members do harm to all the sectors, because, as they have shown previously with separatist songs, anti-Hellenic maps and other things, they have the aim of dealing blows against the Prefecture and generally against the area of Macedonia. I have heard many immigrants say that they avoid investing their money in our town. All this is tragic, because these literally very few persons do serious harm to our Prefecture in all respects. In any case, as a taxi driver and as a Florina citizen, I believe that the official state should take measures and bring again peace and calm to our town and, as a first step, remove that sign at any rate.”