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THE MEDIA IN GREECE TODAY

Panayote Elias Dimitras

National profile

Greece is one of the smallest European countries, located on the Southern part of the Balkan peninsula, in the Southeastern end of the continent. Her 132,000 km² are inhabited by some ten million people. This relatively small density (76 inh/km²) is due to the landscape of the country (a large part of continental Greece is mountainous) and to the consecutive waves of emigration (an estimated two million Greeks emigrated during the last one hundred years, of which less than 500,000 eventually returned to Greece). The low density figure, though, hides a significant discrepancy: one third of the total population (some 3.5 millions) live in the 427 km² metropolitan area of the country's capital, Athens (a density of some 8,200 inh/km² as opposed to 55 inh/km² in the rest of continental Greece).

Greece has an apparently homogeneous population: some 98% of its citizens primarily speak the same, Greek, language, and at least nominally, identify with the same, Orthodox Christian, religion; however, for more than half a million Greek citizens, the mother tongue is not Greek but Arvanite (akin to Albanian), Vlach (akin to Romanian) and Macedonian, but the state neither recognizes nor teaches them.

Except for the communist left (the orthodox Communist KKE and the modernist Progressive Left Coalition), the country's two-and-a-half party system is notorious for the absence of organized, principled parties. Instead, they depend on the personality of their leader; both major political parties that have ruled Greece since the restoration of democracy in 1974, the conservative New Democracy (1974-81 and 1990-93) and the

Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK, 1981-1989 and since 1993), as well as the new nationalist splinter of ND, Political Spring, share this characteristic. The average citizen feels a profound mistrust of the state: this civic behavior was inherited from the period of the four-centuries-long Ottoman occupation and was perpetuated by the dysfunctioning of the centralized, Napoleonic, administration imposed upon Greeks after independence: the predominantly traditionalist politicians have consciously opted for the dysfunctioning of a state whose imported structure they never liked.

Development of the press and broadcasting since 1945

A country with a dysfunctioning administrative, political and economic system could only have a dysfunctioning media. The first Greek government after World War II forbade the publication of the wartime newspapers; but, after the December 1944 communist uprising, the ban was lifted. The ensuing civil war, that lasted through 1949, prevented any effort to cleanse Greece from the collaborationist elements, generally as well as in the press. In the first twenty-year post-war period, the circulation of the dailies more than doubled, from an average of 320,000 in the early and mid-1950s to over 700,000 in the mid-1960s: at the same time, the internal synthesis of the circulation changed, as the morning papers' lead over the afternoon ones in the early 1950s gave way to an uncontested lead of the latter ever since. On the other hand, some two thirds of the circulation was concentrated in Greater Athens, which had at the time about one quarter of the total population.

Immediately after the military coup in 1967, six newspapers chose or were forced to close down: during the seven-year dictatorship, only nine newspapers (four morning and five afternoon ones) circulated, heavily censored in the beginning, less so towards the end; their circulation oscillated around 600,000. The restoration of democracy in 1974 led to an understandable blossoming of the press: with three of the six newspapers shut down in 1967, and the official communist one outlawed in 1946 reappearing to bring the number of newspapers to twelve (usually seven morning and five afternoon ones through 1979), circulation rose by 50% to exceed 900,000 copies in 1974-1975. As the right settled in (through 1981), circulation fell to as low as 750,000 by the end of the decade. Again, political change (a socialist government between 1981-1989) led to more newspapers published, an average of sixteen, and to a substantial boost in circulation which reached an average of nearly one million copies between 1984 and 1989. This rise came almost exclusively from the copies sold outside Greater Athens, which accounted thenceforth for nearly half the total circulation; in the same period, the morning papers' circulation fell to less than 10% of the total. Moreover, the 1980s saw the entry in the print media business of outside businessmen who, in 1995, controlled seven of the sixteen dailies.

A constitutional act in 1945 gave birth to the National Radio Foundation (EIR). However, mainly because of the civil war, it took eight years for the government to give EIR a legal framework. With Law 2312/1953, EIR became a Legal Entity of Public Law and acquired the monopoly over all electronic media. Radio broadcasting in Greece was regulated by that 1953 Law until 1975, with only minor alterations.

Television first appeared in 1960 at Salonica's International Fair (an annual September affair), in order to advertise the Fair's

exhibited products. This private, limited, television station operated legally until 1968, and illegally until 1969. The first effort to broadcast a regular television program was not made until 1966. When that program proceeded from the experimental stage, a new law (745/1970) was introduced: it changed the title of the state broadcasting authority to National Radio and Television Foundation (EIRT) and provided the framework for the operation of the first television station. In 1975, finally, EIRT was changed into a state-controlled joint-stock company, ERT (Greek Radio & Television).

The state monopoly, however, was, since the beginning, violated by the armed forces. Indeed, as early as 1951, a bill allowed them 'to install radio or television stations (...) for the information, the education, the entertainment and the general improvement of the cultural level of the Armed Forces; furthermore, in times of war, to strengthen the spirit of the fighting Nation'. The armed forces' dominant role in the post-civil war, strongly anti-Communist Greek state, led to an unchecked expansion of that radio network into a fully equipped service, antagonistic to EIR (and later EIRT). The 1970 legislation recognized that reality and provided a legal framework to the Armed Forces' Information Service (YENED), which had also installed an initially primitive television station in 1965. This unique situation of a nationwide armed forces network ended in 1982, when YENED was transformed into a civilian, state owned broadcasting service, ERT-2 (Greek Radio & Television-2). ERT and ERT-2 merged into one company (ERT) in 1987.

Until the 1980s, the Greek media scene was a 'paradise', in the initial, Persian meaning of walled gardens. The printed media were in the hands of traditional publishers, while state monopoly controlled broadcast media. The 1990s brought the 'fall from paradise', as the calm 'walled gardens' were substi-

tuted by fierce competition: in the print media, between traditional publishers and wealthy businessmen who have also acquired or published newspapers; in broadcasting, between state and private media.

The press

Article 14 of the constitution guarantees the freedom of speech and of the press, forbidding 'censorship and any other preventive measure'. Seizure of newspapers or of any other print medium is forbidden except with court order in the cases of: an offense against Christian and any other 'known religion', or against the president of the republic; the publication of information on sensitive defense matters or which could threaten the territorial integrity of the country; and the publication of obscene material. Three condemnations after such seizures lead to temporary or permanent closing down of the newspapers. The constitution also calls for laws to define the right to reply, as well as the conditions and qualifications for the profession of journalist, and it allows for a law to mandate that the financing of the newspapers and magazines be made publicly known. Finally, it specifies that the press-related crimes be tried expeditiously like the crimes caught in the act (flagrant délit).

The press law dates from 1938, though it has been amended many times since. It provides for the right to reply and for criminal and civil suits for libel; the former, though, have short prescription periods which practically guarantee impunity in the slow Greek judicial system, despite the swift procedure mandated by the constitution. A minimum sale price for the daily and weekly newspapers is set by the government. Since 1988, the owners must be publicly known, which means that even press related joint-stock companies (sociétés anonymes) ought to have personalized stocks for their shareholders.

By the end of 1995, sixteen national dailies were published in Athens (for circulation figures of the 10 largest, see the statistical appendix): the morning **Avgi** (Dawn in English, pro-Coalition), **Kathimerini** (Daily, center-right), **Logos** (Speech, center-left), **Rizospastis** (Radical, official KKE daily); the afternoon **Adesmeftos Typos** (Non-aligned Press, center-right), **Apogevmatini** (Afternoon, center-right), **Avriani** (Tomorrow, center-left), **Eleftheri Ora** (Free Time, extreme right), **Eleftheros** (Free, center-right), **Eleftheros Typos** (Free Press, center-right), **Eleftherotypia** (Freedom of the Press, center-left), **Estia** (Focus, extreme right), **Ethnos** (Nation, center-left), **Nea** (News, center-left), **Nike** (Victory, center-left), **Onoma** (Name, center-right). Besides, two dailies in Salonica, the morning **Makedonia** (Macedonia, center-right) and the afternoon **Thessaloniki** (Salonica, center-left) had a regional circulation in Northern Greece, while there existed scores of local dailies, most with no more than four pages; Moreover, there were four national financial and five national sports newspapers.

Newspaper ownership brings the publishers considerable influence (many dramatic events -revolutions, government changes, etc.- were initiated or heavily influenced by the most powerful publishers), name recognition and respect across the political spectrum. A number of businessmen from the shipping industry or other sectors which frequently deal with the government (public contractors, arms dealers, etc.) entered the field and slowly displaced the traditional publishers. In 1995, only one of the pre-1974 publishers was still in business: Lambrakis, the heir to the most powerful press group from the inter-war period (with the daily **Nea**, three weeklies, one fortnightly, two monthlies, one yearly, one radio station and a 20% share in the most successful private television station Mega), still the country's biggest both in terms of turnover and in

terms of profits. Besides him, a national daily (**Avriani**) along with one sports daily, one radio station and two television stations (one only partly) belonged to the recently successful but traditional publisher George Kouris; the daily **Eleftherotypia**, a weekly and a 20% share in Mega to another traditional publisher, Tegopoulos; the other traditionally owned papers were the extreme right and the communist ones (the latter belonging to political parties), with low circulation except for **Rizospastis**; and two newspapers (**Logos** and **Niki**) again with low circulation that Kouris sold to the journalists. On the other hand, the new businessmen owned seven national dailies with more than half the total circulation: three bought traditional titles (**Apogevmatini**, **Ethnos**, **Kathimerini**) while four published new papers (**Adesmeftos Typos**, **Eleftheros**, **Eleftheros Typos**, **Onoma**).

In the early 1980s, newspapers were running large deficits and were therefore very dependent on the state banks' 'soft' loans, and through them on the government. Since the late 1980s, however, almost all major press groups have been making profits due to increases in newspaper sale prices which exceeded average consumer price rises. Also, advertising revenues in newspapers have doubled and advertising in magazines more than quadrupled. Circulation kept going up from 1981 to 1989: but, since 1990, there has been a steady downward trend which brought the corresponding figure to the lowest levels since 1974. Possible explanations for this trend were: the beginning of private television which offered satisfactory news coverage (already, in Greater Athens, circulation had fallen after the advent of non-state owned radio); the events of 1989 (collapse of communist regimes and formation of a short-lived ecumenical government) which led to major readership losses in the communist and pro-PASOK populist press; the comeback of the right in power in 1993 (if we recall that circulation was always higher under centrist or socialist

than under right-wing governments); and the generalized crisis of confidence in the political system since the beginning of the 1990s.

Traditionally, each newspaper has passionately supported one political party: in the 1980s, the center-right ones favored New Democracy, the center-left ones PASOK, **Avgi** the Eurocommunists and **Rizospastis** the communists until the two coalesced into the Progressive Left Coalition supported by both newspapers. As a result, more than three quarters of the readers of each newspaper were voters of the corresponding party. This trend has survived into the 1990s, though less acute as some center-left papers have become critical of the PASOK leadership and some center-right papers have also become critical of ND.

According to their content, Greek dailies range from extremely populist newspapers that are not only passionately partisan but also violently slanderous to newspapers trying to emulate the authoritative European press (**The Times**, **Le Monde**, etc.); in the 1990s, though, they have all succumbed to the dominant nationalist tendencies in the country. Among populist papers one finds **Avriani**, which 'pioneered' the style, **Eleftheros Typos**, and **Adesmeftos Typos** which is a 'splinter' of the latter: they or their editors have accumulated scores of criminal or civil condemnations for libel; moreover, **Eleftheros Typos** had been the leader in circulation most years since 1988. Among the serious papers is **Kathimerini**, the only morning newspaper with growing circulation in the recent years, and the only paper with growing circulation in the 1990s, despite the crisis. More generally, nearly all governments have at some point accused the press for 'yellow journalism', a view which many Greeks have shared. On the other hand, they have all attempted to influence the majority of journalists and newspapers with some 40 million ECUs per annum of subsidies and 'secret funds' (**Kathimerini**,

8 December 1990) or by keeping some 70% of the main journalists in the state payroll, sometimes with 'phony jobs'.

Electronic media

The constitution excludes broadcast media (along with the cinema and the record industry) from the legal protection offered to the print media. This exception is formulated in article 15, which also provides for direct state control of radio and television, whose responsibilities should include 'the objective and fair broadcasting of information and news, as well as of products of literature and arts', and 'securing the programming quality required by their social mission and the cultural development of the country'. For a long time, 'direct state control' was interpreted by conservative and socialist governments as tantamount to exclusive state ownership of electronic media.

The extreme pro-government bias of state owned and government controlled radio and television led to social pressure for deregulation, led by a group of intellectuals called 'Channel 15' after the constitutional article. Public opinion's favorable reaction to that pressure made some opposition mayors decide to start radio stations in 1987; in turn, that forced the socialist government to accept the principle of non-state owned local radio stations in the 1987 law and implement it with a 1988 presidential decree. Furthermore, the success of those 'free' radio stations prepared the ground for non-state owned television stations: in late 1988, the socialist government decided that the state company ERT should start over-the-air free retransmission of foreign satellite television programs (having previously threatened to 'shoot down satellites which overfly Greek air space'); and the opposition mayors of Salonica and Piraeus started local television stations. Finally, the conservative-communist coalition government in 1989 gave in to the intense lobbying of the news-

paper publishers and radio station owners and allowed private and municipal local television, including cable, pay-TV and satellite retransmission stations. They also limited ERT's monopoly to national broadcasting and transferred the state's control of the electronic media to a National Radio and Television Council. However, the ensuing conservative government introduced amendments to this law which practically reaffirmed the government's control of the state-owned media. Finally, the socialist government introduced a comprehensive new law on private media in 1995.

Today, therefore, broadcast media in Greece officially function within the framework of the laws 1730/1987 (on ERT), 1866/1989 (on the National Radio and Television Council), and 2328/1995, and the ministerial decision 22255/2/1990 of the Minister to the Prime Minister (on the National Radio and Television Council). The state's constitutionally-mandated control over them is carried out by the National Radio and Television Council (ESR). ESR's responsibilities are: to recommend three candidates 'of high reputation and professional competence' per government appointed position on the ERT board, among which the government will select one; to recommend to the government the dismissal of members of the ERT board; to advise the government on granting licenses to non-state owned radio and television stations; to issue codes of ethics for journalists, programs, and advertisements in broadcast media; to oversee the coverage of the activities of parliament and of electoral campaigns by ERT; and to sanction the violations of these codes or of other laws by the stations.

The state company ERT (Greek Radio and Television) has henceforth the monopoly of only cable and pay-TV broadcasting. ERT is a public company with the form of joint stock company (*société anonyme*): its only stockholder is the Greek state.

ERT consists of two national television channels based in Athens (**ET-1** and **ET-2**), and of a third one based in Salonica (**ET-3**) with limited broadcasting range (Athens, Salonica and a few other cities); of four national radio stations (**ERA-1**, **ERA-2**, **ERA-3**, **ERA-Sport**); of twenty one regional stations, whose programming partly coincides with that of the national stations; of one local radio station in Salonica; and of a short-wave **Voice of Greece** servicing most parts of the globe.

In 1991, 65% of ERT's income came from the special mandatory fee that every client of the state-owned Public Power Corporation (DEI), regardless of whether s/he owns a radio or a television, is paying to ERT through the bimonthly electricity bills; 21% came from sales and advertising and 14% from the state budget.

Private and municipal radio stations were allowed in 1988 and television stations in 1989: in the beginning locally, then nationally as well (in fact, national radio stations are merely tolerated not legally allowed). The government has been supposed to grant the appropriate licenses on the recommendation of the ESR, which, because of its dysfunctioning, took years to issue such recommendations; and the government has yet to complete its part of responsibility. So, in 1995, almost all non-state owned radio and television stations lacked the required contracts with the state required to normalize their functioning, though many have been granted licenses in principle; in fact, the 1995 law canceled all old licenses.

A renewable, four-year license to operate only one local FM radio station can be granted by the government, upon the recommendation of the ESR, to a local authority, a company controlled and managed by Greeks or EU citizens, or to a Greek or EU citizen. Networking is allowed only up to five hours a day and after permission of the ESR. Transmitters cannot be used, unless

they are unavoidable for the station to cover the whole region (locality is defined in terms of prefecture). The emphasis of the program should be local.

A renewable, four-year license to operate only one local, regional or national television station can be granted by the government, upon the recommendation of the ESR, to a local authority or to a company: in the latter, no individual can directly or through his/her relatives own more than 25% of the personalized shares, and foreign, non-EU capital cannot control more than 25% of the total capital. The companies must be reliable, and their members should not have been condemned for press related crimes. Local authorities and media-related experience of the shareholders are considered advantages for the granting of licenses. No shareholder can have shares in more than one stations. Programming must conform to the requirements of the 89/552/EEC directive of 3/10/1989. Presidential decrees should specify the procedure by which 1.5% of the annual gross income (minus taxes and contributions to state agencies) of the state or non-state television companies is invested in Greek feature films also to be shown in theaters; and 0.3% of the annual gross income is donated to two national organizations for the blind.

Advertisements in radio and television cannot exceed 12 minutes per hour, nor 15% of the total daily broadcasting time. Indirect advertising, as well as advertisements of pharmaceutical and tobacco products, as well as sexual services are forbidden in all broadcast media. Anyone offended by a radio or television program has the right to reply, with the ESR acting as the final authority to decide upon these matters.

In 1995, according to Focus data, 99% of the three million Greek households had a television set, 96% a color set, and 52% a video. Audience surveys provided surveys of strong ratings for the, usually private,

local radio stations, well ahead of the national or regional state stations. Moreover, in October 1995, the private channels led the ratings: **Mega** with a share of 26%, **Antenna** 24%, **Star** 16%, **Sky** 11%, with the state **ET-1** and **ET-2** following far behind in fifth and sixth places with a mere 4% and 3%; other channels had a total 13% -of which less than 1% for **ET-3-**, satellite channels 1% and videos 2%.

The main national private television stations belonged to shareholders owning other media as well: **Mega**, on the air since November 1989, to the Lambrakis group (the first private media conglomerate), the Bobolas group (second), the Tegopoulos group (fourth), the Alafouzos group, and the Vardinoyannis group; **Antenna**, on the air since January 1990, to the Kyriakou group owning the radio stations with the same name. **Star** belongs to the Kouris and Vardinoyannis groups and **Sky** to the Alafouzos group. Their 8 a.m.- 2 a.m. program was based on the kind of programs that could attract sizable audiences, and therefore advertising: series, movies, games, children's shows, music, sports, and news; educational television or documentaries had no place. Their news coverage initially of better quality than that of the state stations and, especially for **Mega**, more objective, has lapsed into sensationalism in the mid-1990s. On the other hand, private channels too had the habit of starting many programs later or earlier than announced, or making unannounced last minutes changes, bad habits of state broadcasting. Nevertheless, their efforts were successful, as, less than one year after their beginning, **Mega** and **Antenna** had larger audiences and drew more advertising than the state channels. Overall, only one third of their program was Greek, as compared with more than half for the state channels. Naturally, the private channels' revenue was almost exclusively drawn from advertising.

Since fall 1988, satellite television channels had been available in most parts of the country, through on-the-air retransmission by, in most cases, ERT: in mid-1995, for example, Athenians could watch **Euronews**, **MTV**, **CNN**, **RAI Uno**, **TV 5**, **RIK** (Greek Cypriot), besides the three state channels and more than twenty private channels with limited or round-the-clock programs. Except for a few neighborhoods in Athens and in Thrace, Greece was not cabled; but in 1994, **Filmnet**, offering films and sport - especially exclusive coverage of Greek championship football games-, signed a contract with ERT and started its pay TV programs, first in Athens and, by mid-1995, in nearly half the country.

Policies for press and broadcasting

The media have for long been at the center of political debate in Greece. In the mid-1990s, three different issues were being discussed:

- inadequacy of the legal framework for both the print and the electronic media,
- cross-ownership and media concentration,
- objectivity of news and current affairs programs in the state owned broadcast media.

The legal framework existing before 1995 was inadequate and outdated. From its provisions listed above, many were never applied or had repeatedly been violated. Many newspapers and magazines offered gifts or prices for games (bingo, etc.). The dismissals of ERT's boards in the 1990s were not done at the recommendation of the National Radio and Television Council (ESR), and, the latter's recommendation for new board were either legally inappropriate or simply pro-forma. Moreover, all non-state radio and television stations operated without licenses as either the ESR or the government

had failed to act upon their applications for new licenses or for renewals. The rules the ESR issued for the April 1990 campaign were overturned by the State Court. Many of ERT's institutions were merely ceremonial or not activated. Some media businessmen owned more than one radio or television stations. Many 'local' radio stations used transmitters that helped them broadcast far beyond the corresponding prefecture; the emphasis of their program was not local. Most private television stations were known to practically belong to one owner each, through ways which circumvented the 25% upper limit per individual; among the owners of the two stations which were given licenses in the 1990s were the two press groups with an accumulation of so many condemnations for press crimes. The 50% European production quota was not observed. The television stations did not invest in Greek movies nor did the private ones contribute to the national organizations for the blind. Advertisements often ran for more than ten minutes per hour in prime time programs, and many interrupting them. Sometimes, products were advertised for more than the upper limit allowed in radio stations. The new 1995 law was supposed to provide cures for these ills, but once voted, it was hardly activated, so that, by the end of 1995, it was forecasted that it will have the ill fate of its predecessor.

Whereas in other countries efforts are made and legislation is passed to discourage or forbid the concentration of media, in Greece the laws gave preference to the media companies in granting the licenses for private radio and television stations. The result was the creation of a powerful oligopoly around the five shareholders of the most successful private television channel, **Mega**. The traditional publishers Lambrakis and Tegopoulos, and the new publishers Alafouzou, Bobolas, and Vardinoyannis own four national dailies with nearly half the total circulation; their media groups, which participate in other channels too, gross nearly half

the total turnover of the non-state media and make more than half of their total profits; in fact, Lambrakis' is the country's largest private group, Bobolas' is second and Tegopoulos' fourth. Finally, it has been documented that they have agreed to use the other media they owned to promote their television channel. Only marginal political parties and some intellectuals had criticized this arrangement as a threat to real freedom of the press; in vain, since the three main political parties appeared satisfied from it.

The main problem of the state electronic media had been the lack of impartiality in the news and other political broadcasts. Both radio and television 'grew up' in non-democratic periods of Greek history: radio in the Metaxas dictatorship and the German occupation, and television in the Papadopoulos/Ioannidis dictatorship. Hence, these mass media became a propaganda tool of the government, as has been the case in all dictatorships. The democratic governments which succeeded the dictatorships became victims of the temptation to follow the same tactic. Therefore, news coverage was often reminiscent of third world or non-democratic countries.

A decisive effort to separate the state media from direct government control was made between the summer of 1989 and the spring of 1990. Then, and for the first time since 1952, Greece was governed by coalition governments. The latter created the ESR, with eleven members selected in such a way as to exclude a one party majority. However, instead of using the opportunity to appoint an independent ERT management, the three parties agreed to distribute among themselves the positions on ERT's board and its various managerial positions, so as to give them to loyal militants. Still, though, the end result was the most balanced news-casts state television and radio ever produced. When a one (conservative) party government came to power in mid-1990, it

quickly did away with the short-lived 'ERT spring': with ministerial decisions, whose doubtful legality was challenged in the courts, ESR and ERT boards were broadened to nineteen and eleven members (the latter from nine members), in such a way as to give the government unquestionable control over the two bodies; consequently, in all ERT managerial positions the loyal New Democracy journalists replaced the ones chosen by the ecumenical government, including those who were favorable to the conservative party. When PASOK came back to power in 1993, it merely applied the same practices. Nevertheless, Greek public opinion was less concerned with ERT's partiality in the 1990s than ten years before, as the private channels filled the gap. In fact, it was noticeable that the state media had made no effort to respond to the competition of the private radio stations and television channels, thus quickly losing their predominant position and, consequently their advertising share. So, since 1990, ERT, still staffed by its 7,000 odd personnel (including hundreds of journalists who did not work but just received a paycheck so as to be under control by the government), has been running huge deficits which the state's budget had to cover.

Statistics

Population	10 m.
Number of households	3 m.
Number of national radio channels	4
Number of national television channels	ca. 10
Number of local television channels	ca. 100
Number of local radio stations	ca. 800
Number of national political daily newspapers	16
Number of regional political daily newspapers	2
Television penetration	99%
Video penetration	52%

Advertising (1994, ECUs)

Television	63 b.
Magazines	15 b.
Newspapers	11 b.
Radio	6 b.

Greater Athens and Salonica TV Audience (AGB, October 1995)

Mega	26%
Antenna	24%
Star	16%
Sky	11%
ET-1	4%
ET-2	3%
Other Greek channels	13%
Satellite channels	1%
Video	2%

Average daily circulation of national political dailies (August 1995)

<u>All dailies</u>	<u>558,495</u>
<u>Morning dailies</u>	<u>55,354</u>
Kathimerini (center-right)	40,264
Rizospastis (KKE organ)	12,207
Other	2,883
<u>Evening dailies</u>	<u>503,141</u>
Eleftheros Typos (center-right)	110,341
Nea (center-left)	107,705
Eleftherotypia (center-left)	102,282
Apogevmatini (center-right)	55,338
Ethnos (center-left)	50,925
Adesmeftos Typos (center-right)	40,658
Avriani (center-left)	13,815
Other	22,057

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HATE SPEECH IN THE GREEK MEDIA: THE MONITORING PLAN

Panayote Elias Dimitras and Vasiliki Neofotistou

Introduction

Beginning with August 1995, the International Helsinki Federation, through its National Committees in the respective countries, is monitoring the media for the hate speech they are producing. The project is funded by the European Union, the Council of Europe, the Open Society Institute, the United States Institute for Peace, and the Austrian government. The project runs through May 1996, and each Committee will produce monthly reports with the 'highlights' of the month. In Greece, the project was launched in September 1995, funded by the Open Society Institute: the methodology used follows.

A. Print Media

The publications to be covered are nine political daily newspapers, published seven days a week except for three morning papers and one afternoon paper published six days a week (**Rizospastis**, **Avgi**, **Kathimerini**; and **Nea**): the seven among them have the largest circulation whereas the other two are the papers affiliated to the small parties Coalition and KKE (**Avgi** and **Rizospastis** respectively). They are: **I Avgi** (meaning The Dawn; pro-Coalition; average daily circulation of 2,167 copies in June 1995); **Adesmeftos Typos** (Non-aligned Press; center-right; 37,761); **Apogevmatini** (Afternoon; center-right; 60,278); **Ethnos** (Nation; center-left; 50,077); **Eleftheros Typos** (Free Press; center-right; 105,809); **Eleftherotypia** (Press Freedom; center-left; 96,809); **I Kathimerini** (The Daily; center-right; 38,711); **Rizospastis** (Radical;

the official newspaper of the Communist party of Greece - KKE; 13,227); **Ta Nea** (The News; center-left; 111,134).

In addition, we cover **To Pontiki**, the weekly satirical and center-left newspaper with a large circulation (35,956) as well as **To Vima**, the Sunday paper which is published by the same publishers of **Ta Nea** which is not published on Sundays; **To Vima**'s circulation is the largest in Greece (170,607). Furthermore, **Economicos Tachydromos**, financial and political weekly magazine which, despite the fact that it bears a resemblance to the **Economist** and maintains the image of a 'serious' magazine, has repeatedly been producing hate speech; its circulation is around 25,000. Finally, **Stohos**: among the hate speech publications the one with the significant circulation, 7,625. All of the aforementioned publications are national and their daily cost is 200 drachmas, apart from **Economicos Tachydromos** which costs 600 drachmas.

B. Broadcast media

As far as television is concerned, the newscasts monitored are those of the privately run television stations which have the highest audience ratings, **Mega** and **Antenna**: they run from around 8:25 p.m. to around 9:00 p.m.. Moreover, we monitor the newscast of the state-owned TV channel **ET-1** (Greek Television - 1), between 9:00 p.m. and 9:45 p.m.. -which has low ratings but as a program on a state-owned channel has special importance. The broadcasting time of these three newscasts (between

8:25 p.m. and 9:45 p.m..) prevents us from monitoring the newscasts of the privately run TV stations **Sky** and **Star**, with ratings between those of **Mega** and **Antenna**, on the one hand, and **ET-1** on the other, as their duration is overlapping (from 8:15 p.m. through 9:30 p.m.) and we have only two videos. Talks shows which may produce hate speech, will also be added, when we have advanced information anticipating such content.

Taking into account that a lot of Greeks listen to the radio during morning and early afternoon hours, we will monitor the radio news bulletin produced by the privately run radio station **Sky** (from 2:00 to 4:00), the one with the highest audience in Greater Athens, and perhaps nationally. Despite the fact that the **Antenna** and **Flash** radio stations are in the second and third places in the audience lists, the monitoring of their afternoon newscasts is rendered impossible as they overlap with **Sky's** respective program.

C. Target Groups

The target groups against whom Hate Speech is directed and are monitored here are:

1. National, ethnolinguistic, religious, social, and immigrant minority communities: Macedonians (as well as Slavomacedonians), Turks, Roma (Gypsies), Vlachs, Arvanites, Catholics, Protestants, Jehovah's Witnesses, New Religious Movements, Homosexuals, Foreign Immigrants, and Non-Religious Conscientious Objectors.
2. The people outside the borders of Greece: Albanians, Macedonians, Bulgarians, Turks, the respective countries themselves, as well as the minority groups in them.
3. The references against Muslims, Catholics, and the West in general, as they contribute to xenophobia and to hatred towards minority communities in Greece.
4. Human rights activists, and 'dissident', independent intellectuals in Greece.

HATE SPEECH IN THE GREEK MEDIA: THE SEPTEMBER 1995 REPORT

Panayote Elias Dimitras and Vasiliki Neofotistou

Important note: It is noteworthy that despite the official declarations of Greece that Macedonia should be referred to as FYROM, the Greek media, with rare exceptions, persistently use the term 'Skopje', which seems to prevail in the conscience of the Greek people. References of this kind, will not be added in the Hate Speech project, as there are almost no exceptions to the rule.

Print media abbreviations: A=Avgi; A.T.=Adesmeftos Typos; P=Apogevmatini; ETH=Ethnos; E.T.=Eleftheros Typos; EL=Eleftherotopia; K=I Kathimerini; R=Rizospastis; N=Ta Nea; ST=Stohos; V=To Vima; P=To Pontiki; ECT=Economicos Tachydromos.

Introduction

In September 1995, three hate speech themes dominated the media. The first had as a target the Macedonian minority and, especially, its political organization 'Rainbow'; as the hate speech was followed by violent events inspired by some authorities' actions, it was a classic case of how hate speech can foment violence. The second hate speech story targeted the Albanian authorities and the Albanians more generally; while the third targeted the West and the Muslims.

The attacks against the Macedonian minority party offices

Despite the international recognition of an ethnic Macedonian minority in Greece, in

that country itself, the impression that "the Skopjans have put forward an irredentist demand for their... 'minority' in our Macedonia, when it is known that there are neither 'Skopjan Macedonians' nor any similar minority in Greece" (A.T. 9/9, p. 47), prevails. Besides, "there was never a distinct nation of Macedonians, it has never been mentioned anywhere and it does not exist. (...) This is a contemporary 'accomplishment' of the Americans and their indigenous Filipinos in Skopje and in Athens." (A.T. 9/9, p. 4). So, the message of U.S. President Bill Clinton, in which he extolled the Macedonian civilization, was greeted as "an inadmissible message to a pro-Bulgarian Skopjan organization" (AP. 6/9, p. 7).

It is well known that the cultural expression of the ethnic Macedonian minority was not permitted in the past by Greek authorities as the founding of a Center for Macedonian Civilization was prohibited. In such a climate were the offices of the Florina District Committee of the Macedonian minority party Rainbow inaugurated in Florina on 6 September, with a sign in both Greek and Macedonian. This action was characterized as "an invasion of Slavs in Florina" (A.T. 7/9, p. 7), "an unprecedented provocation of the agents of Skopje" (E.T. 8/9, p. 9), "an insolence of the Rainbow autonomists" (E.T., 10/9, last page); an action "of the members of the so-called Slavomacedonian [sic] organization Rainbow" (MEGA 7/9), "of the pro-Skopjan enemies of Greece" -in a resolution signed by the 91 priests of Florina- (AP. 13/9, p. 7), "of the pseudo-Macedonians" (AP. 15/9, p. 6), "of the puppets of American diplomacy in Macedonia" (R. 15/9, p. 3), "of teleguided pro-

vocateurs of Gligorov's irredentist regime in Florina" (E.T. 13/9, p. 4), "a provocation of the well-known pro-Skopjan, anti-Greek small band" (AP. 10/9, p. 15); "Greece is finished (...) a ceremony of Bulgarizing Florina (...) unprecedented preachings of hatred against Greeks from the pro-Skopjans who admit that they made a party seeking separatism" (ST. 13/9, p. 1).

Consequently, it was argued that "the case creates a very bad precedent as on the one hand the power of Rainbow in Greece is nonexistent, but on the other hand this pro-Skopjan nucleus finds shelter in a party of the European Parliament and attempts (...) to create the impression that a 'Macedonian minority' exists in Greece" (E.T. 12/9, p. 11). Reportedly, then, "the inhabitants of Florina were horrified (...) as they had not seen a sign in pro-Bulgarian characters in their city since the time of Nazi occupation in 1941" (AP. 7/9, p. 8). "The declaration of the Vronteros' Commune President, Mr. Vassilis Tsepas, is characteristic of the climate that prevails in the area: 'If they think that we here are going to let our borders move south to Olympos, they are mistaken. We will arm ourselves to keep Greece in the place it deserves from its long history'" (A.T. 7/9, p. 7). On the same day, the offices were broken into and the sign was stolen.

A week later, the Public Prosecutor of Florina pressed charges against "Rainbow" for "incitement to disturb the peace through disharmony" (EL. 15/9, p. 15), arguing that the use of the Macedonian language causes discord. In addition, the removal of a new sign was orally ordered by the Prosecutor. After the refusal of the party's cadres, men of the Fire Brigade confiscated "the sign with the inscription 'Lerin' according to the Skopjan alphabet" (E.T. 15/9, p. 17). On the night of 13 September, "the Mayor of Florina Mr. D. Stylou and the entire city council" tried to force the door of the offices to take away a new sign, which was

finally handed to them in order to avoid the purposeless use of violence; afterwards, "singing 'Renowned Macedonia, country of Alexander the Great', they burned it" (A.T. 15/9, p. 9). In the early hours of 14 September, "hundreds of furious citizens, singing the national anthem" (A.T. 15/9, p. 9) set the offices of the party on fire. Moreover, the co-operating organizations "Greek Helsinki Monitor" and "Minority Rights Group-Greece", which denounced the anti-democratic actions as well as the riots against the ethnic Macedonian minority, were characterized as "pro-Skopjan" (E.T. 15/9, p. 17).

Similar inflammatory comments were made in the same newspapers the days that followed the events of 14 September. No newspaper, apart from a journalist in **Avgi**, another one in **Eleftherotypia**, and **Rizospastis** (in an unsigned article), condemned the incidents. Indicative is **Eleftherotypia's** reaction, in view of the fact that it is usually considered to try to be objective and not nationalistic: two days after the events (16/9, p. 24), one journalist commented that "spokespersons and members of the minority were abused but the Public Prosecutor saw neither thugs nor riots"; the previous day, though, in reporting the story, the newspaper characterized "Rainbow" as a "pro-Skopjan organization" (15/9, p. 15). At the same time, **Rizospastis** claimed that "the well-known for their relations to the American consulate of Salonica 'leaders' of the 'minority party', as 'Rainbow' calls itself, did everything in their power to provoke with words and deeds"; further on, though, it refers to "well-known local thugs" who "attempted to set the offices on fire" [sic] (15/9, p. 3).

On the whole, the other print media put the emphasis on and stressed the "provocations of the pro-Skopjans." Consequently, it is obvious that the hate speech produced not only by the media but also by the state authorities contributed to a climate of ma-

nipulated intolerance in which acts of violence, prosecutions, as well as arsons took place. "Such scare-mongering evaluations, such doomsday rhetoric poison the climate in the Greek border area, they give the impression that a new 'Western Thrace' is emerging in Northern Greece, and they aim at dynamiting the rapprochement with the neighboring country" (A. 8/9, p. 12). "Do the authorities believe that all these actions against Greek citizens are within the constitutional framework? Or do they believe that the prosecutions do not expose the country internationally? (...) It seems that the spirit of New York [where Greece and Macedonia signed an interim agreement the same day the Rainbow offices were set ablaze] will not affect Florina for quite some time..." (A. 15/9, p. 12).

CHARACTERISTIC TITLES OF NEWSPAPER ARTICLES:

- A.T. 7/9, p. 7: Invasion of Slavs in Florina
- AP. 7/9, p. 8: Pro-Skopjans raised their heads
- E.T. 8/9, p. 9: Agents knocking about ...
- AP. 10/9, p. 8: Skopjans prepare radio station
- AP. 12/9, p. 9: Provocation
- E.T. 12/9, p. 10-11: Slav provocation by Rainbow
- AP. 13/9, p. 7: Rally in Florina against pro-Skopjan organization
- E.T. 13/9, p. 27: Uprising against Skopjan agents

- E.T. 14/9, p. 17: Sign of pro-Skopjans ripped off
- AP. 15/9, p. 6: Indignation in Florina
- EL. 15/9, p. 15: Attack on the offices of Rainbow
- E.T. 15/9, p. 17: Florina became a powder keg
- A.T. 15/9, p. 9: Tension in Florina yesterday
- R. 15/9, p. 3: The puppets

The failure of Greek-Albanian negotiations

The talks between the Greek Foreign Minister Mr. Papoulias and his Albanian counterpart Mr. Sereki about the educational rights of the Greek minority in Albania, in early September, were not fruitful. On the one hand, the Albanian side did not accept the abolition of the minority zones where Greek schools already exist, and the consequent opening of schools in Saranda, Gjirokastra, Delvino as well as wherever there is a sufficient number of Greek pupils. On the other hand, the Greek side did not sign the agreement on the seasonal occupation of Albanians in Greece. The issue of the abolition of visas for Greeks who want to go to Albania was also left pending.

The media reported on the "intransigent" (SKY 1/9), "narrow-hearted" (ET1 1/9), "particularly provocative" (MEGA 1/9), "inflexible if not offensive" (E.T. 5/9, p. 6), "rigid" (A. 3/9, p. 1) behavior of Mr. Sereki, his "attitude of conceit and arrogance" (AP. 2/9, p. 4), making him appear as "an irrational and insolent neighbor" (AP. 2/9, p. 4), "cruelly negative" (E.T. 2/9, p. 5) when he "insisted... Tiranically on

the matter of the Greek minority's education in Albania" (ETH. 2/9, p. 4). "The Albanians' inadmissible and totally anti-democratic positions which nevertheless proved to be like 'reinforced concrete'" (E.T. 3/9, p. 18) constituted a "premeditated humiliation by the Albanians" (E.T. 2/9, p. 9) since the Albanian Foreign Minister "arrived with the mask of a good neighbor" (E.T. 1/9, p. 6) only to transform himself to an "untrustworthy" man (ETH. 2/9, p. 4), who had only one purpose: "Papoulias, do learn to read" (A.T. 2/9, p. 6).

Furthermore, "The Albanians became insolent!.." (AP. 2/9, p. 6) as, after the Greek request for allowing the creation of a military cemetery in Northern Epirus had been rejected, "Albania by falsifying history wanted a similar cemetery for the Albanians who ... were killed in Greece during 1941-44, when they were fighting in Greek liberation forces!" (AP. 2/9, p. 6). "We came across tricky and wise guys" (ETH. 4/9, p. 6). "Mr. Sereki is fooling us. He has forgotten Korytsa and even more Moschopoli, the Acropolis of modern Hellenism, the city with 70,000 inhabitants in the 18th century, the biggest in the Balkans at the time, with trading partners throughout Europe" (A.T. 2/9, p. 11).

Moreover, many media inaccurately reported that "Greek children in Albania definitely remain without schools, at least for next year (...) this evolution automatically lowers the morale of the Greeks who live in Albania" and "the minority in Northern Epirus is at the mercy of Berisha" (AP. 3/9, p. 14); "the Greek children cannot go to school after the decision of Tirana to keep them closed (ANTENNA 18/9), and so they face the danger of "missing the school year" (A.T. 28/9, p. 5) something "which condemns the children of the minority to deprivation of their mother-tongue and not just that" (E.T. 28/9, p. 16). "The Tyrants of Tirana, by the most imper-

tinently manner which springs from the obscurantist regime of Hoxha, did not allow after all the teaching of the Greek language" (AP. 22/9, p. 4). "The efforts of all Albanian governments aim at the complete de-Hellenization of the ethnic minority through attacks against the areas of the Orthodox religion, language, history, traditions etc." by leading to the "strangulation of Greek education in Albania" (AP. 1/9, p. 6). "At the dawn of the year 2,000 Northern Epirus will be totally de-Hellenized" since "in Albania our education is on the cross" (A.T. 10/9, central pages).

It is noteworthy that the day following the snag in the Greek-Albanian talks, there was a plethora of information associated with incidents in Greece in which Albanians were implicated: "Albanian illegal immigrants 'hit' villages in Imathia [in Northern Greece]" (A.T. 2/9, p. 14). "Albanian gunmen" (A.T. 2/9, p. 14), "Albanians 'hit' houses in Dilesi" (ETH. 2/9, p. 16), "Albanians 'have choked' Imathia" (K. 2/9, p. 7). These articles, in combination with the multiple references to the dead end in the negotiations, "caused by Albanian intransigence" -as journalists claimed-, provided ample hate speech towards the neighboring country and its inhabitants. The spokesperson of the party Political Spring [headed by Mr. Samaras], Mr. N. Martakis, recommended to the government to denounce internationally the "Albanian logic of Hoxha" (EL. 2/9, p. 3). Readers are reminded that: "Tirana should learn that Greece is never blackmailed nor does it tolerate offenses. The time of the whip has come" (AP. 2/9, p. 4).

The shelling of Sarajevo and NATO's reprisals against the Serbs

The shelling of the market of Sarajevo on 28 August, which caused the death of 37 civilians and led to NATO's military reprisals against the Serbs, was presented by

almost all Greek media as a provocation. We read: "The launching of the long prepared operation "Deliberate Power" had as a pretext a major provocation, the murderous shelling of Sarajevo" (ETH. 7/9, p. 2). "The provocation, made at the same point and with the same results by the Muslims in February 1994, is well-known and unanimously admitted" (A. 6/9, p. 4). "A conspiracy of the West's secret services is behind the slaughter in the market of Sarajevo, but also behind the respective one which took place last year" (AP. 8/9, p. 18). "The only ones who stood to gain from the slaughter, were the Muslims of Bosnia (...) "Doesn't last year's provocation make it likely that this year's slaughter is a younger sister of the first one?" (V. 10/9, p. 14).

Moreover, "with half-words [is reported] the revelation that the Serbs are not implicated in the dropping of the shell in the market of Sarajevo. (...) In this case, it is a provocation. When NATO wants to bomb Serbia, it will drop a bomb in Sarajevo, kill some people and then bomb" (SKY 1/9). "Revelation by the British that the report about the slaughter in Sarajevo, which provided the pretext for the bombings, may dissimulate deceit and provocation" (MEGA 1/9): it is noteworthy that the information here refers to an article in the newspaper **Guardian** according to which "The United Nations based its conclusion that the Bosnian Serbs were responsible 'beyond any reasonable doubt' for the Sarajevo mortar attacks on an inexact military science known as crater analysis" (**Guardian** 30/8); nowhere does the **Guardian** article refer to deceit and provocation, and certainly the article does not reflect the official or even the prevailing British view as presented in the television newscast.

The Member of the European Parliament, from Political Spring, Ms. K. Daskalaki, mentions: "The airplanes from the other

side of the Earth mercilessly bomb the Serbs, for whom there is the 'certainty' (I wonder how?) that they dropped the famous shell (for the other one, the old one, the one of Muslim origin, there is complete silence, and we have covered it up very well), and they kill women and children which, since they are Serbs, it don't matter very much" (K. 3/9, p. 4). According to this reasoning, "the Westerners, in an admirable accordance with Attila, Hitler's heirs and the Muslims everywhere, massacre a people -hero of the anti-fascist struggle and deeply Christian. And they put the firearm on our temple: Back off!" (E.T. 5/9, p. 4). "The new fascism has decided to wipe out the brother Serbian people" (A.T. 6/9, p. 10).

NATO is portrayed as "a useless organization of insane politicians and militaristic criminals who have fired their missiles against Bosnian Serb civilians. (...) Which anthropoids are in the end these hot-headed dwarfs of NATO so that they fire their missiles safely against CIVILIANS? And how does mankind put up with these worms?" (A.T. 12/9, p. 3). "The Ushtasha - according to an old Serb- are the greatest fascists since the world was made and so are the Americans and Germans who help them" (ETH. 4/9, p. 35). "Some scamps, who consider themselves to be 'progressive', applaud a murderous NATO operation which has been ordered by the powerful of Islam, the important oil-rich states. And they satisfy the feeling of vengeance of the Huns from neo-imperialist Germany and of their collaborators, the Ushtasha slaughterers of Croatia, against the two peoples who dared humiliate the Axis. The Greek and the Serbian" (A.T. 10/9, p. 19). "Where is the uprising of public opinion against the NATO bombings of the Serbs? Where are the shoutings, the protests, the manifestations and the demonstrations?" (A.T. 1/9, p. 4).

There were few skeptical, if not outright dissident views: “who is giving the right to whom to assert denouncingly from kilometers away that the shell in Sarajevo was dropped by the Muslims or the Bosnian Serbs? As if any other possibilities do not exist. As if all Muslims just as all Bosnian Serbs are completely ‘under control’” (A. 13/9, p. 6). “Because of the fact that millions of uninformed viewers are daily invited to take a stand on disputes like the Bosnian one, the stereotypes of the good and the bad ones, the Catholics and the Orthodox, the Croats and the Serbs, the friends of the West and its enemies are forged rather easily” (EL. 3/9, p. 41). “This

year the headquarters of Greek disinformation have decided to resurrect the retracted hoax [that an EU report claimed that the February 1994 shelling of the Sarajevo market was done by Muslims] and baptize it reality. Against the ... real reality that the Bosnian Serb terrorists are the ones who besiege Sarajevo from the surrounding hills and who, only in the first two years, had fired 300,000 missiles on its inhabitants. You see, in Greece we are far behind Serbia. At least there, there are many more who do not believe Dr. Karadjic, when he said last year (6/2[94]) that the 68 dead people were shop windows’ mannequins!” (A. 8/9, p. 6).

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Introduction

In October 1995, three hate speech themes dominated the media. The first had as a target a delegation of British deputies who voiced unpopular opinions about Greek politics in a meeting with their Greek counterparts. Anti-Westernism also characterized an incredible series of stories of scare-mongering based on an alleged NATO scenario for a partition of Greek Thrace. Finally, a New Religious Movement, the Scientologists, became the target of many hate speech stories that also implicated human rights activists who had defended religious freedom.

A confrontation between British and Greek MPs

The joint session of the National Defense and Foreign Affairs Committee of the Greek Parliament with the Parliamentary and Public Relations Committee of the West European Union’s Parliamentary Assembly (WEU/PA), on security problems in the Mediterranean, the perspective of solving the Cyprus issue, the Macedonian issue, the Greek-Turkish relations and the Yugoslav crisis, in mid-October, ended in a “Greek-British confrontation” (A. 13/10 p.2). “The British conservative John Hand argued that ‘in Europe we are becoming more and more indignant when observing the never-ending controversy between Greeks and Turks and we are frankly tired of this issue’ (...) The vice-president of the Committee of the WEU/PA Russel Johnson, considered the Greek persistence on the name of Macedonia as ‘unbelievable’ and therefore the imposition of the embargo as ‘incomprehensible’ (...) and he are wondering how on the one hand Greece supports European integration and on the other hand it backs the Serbs. The third British, Anthony Durant, asked the Greek side whether the borders with Albania are open and whether it is true that 2% of the Greek population are Albanians, as it is quoted in a NATO information document” (K. 13/10 p.5).

All Greek media seemed to adopt the standpoint that “the three British did not just have a point of view different from ours, which is honest and correct on the basis of the real facts. Their attitude was clearly hostile. They appeared to fully accept the positions of Greece’s opponents.”

(E.T. 14/10 p.11). We therefore read: "British provocation inside the Parliament, (...) extremely impudent anti-Greek attack" (E.T. 13/10 p.8), "unprovoked British 'bombing' of our positions on our national issues" (AP. 13/10 p.10), "provocative statements" (ANTI 12/10), "provocative points of view" (E.T. 1 12/10), "extremely impudent and unprovoked British attack against our country, and in particular, inside the Greek Parliament" (A.T. 13/10 p.6), "attack inside our home!" (ETH. 13/10 p.5), "Man, look who's talking!.. (Hey, Kid!.. Fetch a portion of ... a solution 'Irish-style' for the Skopje issue and another ... 'pure from the Falklands' for Tancu in the hope ... we settle our differences, quickly!.. O.K. boss??? Happy???)" (A.T. 17/10 p.10), "They heard that... and the gypsies barged in!" (A.T. 15/10 p.8).

Moreover, "they came ignorant, uninformed and provocative 'the feather-brained from Western Europe', the English 'drivers' of the Turkish armored vehicles, which divided Cyprus. They came, allegedly sober, since they are 'logical', the frenzied, in order to teach 'realism' to the humble Balkan people of Athens" (EL. 14/10 p.28), "British against Greece in a demonstration of anti-Hellenism and ignorance" (K. 13/10 p.1) who "developed their points of view and gave their orders with the brutality of suzerains" (R. 13/10 p.8) "the three Tory MPs arrived with their well-known phlegmatic little style (a mixture of irony and haughtiness) in order to express their anti-Greek sentiments" (ETH. 13/10 p.5) since they "reciprocated our hospitality with provocations" (Mega 12/10) and consequently they are asked "Lords... GO HOME!" (A.T. 13/10 p.6).

However, the "incendiary statements" (A.T. 13/10 p.6) "provoked rudely the Greek MPs" (E.T. 13/10 p.8) who after "having all united, they 'hammered' their foreign colleagues" (N. 13/10 p.7) and "held the British allegations in check 'by

returning fire'" (AP. 13/10 p.10), they answered to "the slap in the face with a naturally bipartisan fist" (E.T. 15/10 p.28). Thus, PASOK's MP Th. Pangalos "cut the ground from under the unprepared English MPs' feet" (EL. 13/10 p.64) by referring to a "hypocritical attitude of Britain" (ET 1 12/10) since "Britain is a guarantor of the island and bears the responsibility for today's situation - violation of the international law by Turkey" (N. 13/10 p.7). He also asserted that "we like the Serbs. We had the impression that we are on the right side. Some people are trying to prove us that we have to re-write history" (Mega 12/10). At the same time ND's MP Ms. M. Koutsikou maintained that "the use of the term Macedonia by the neighboring country is connected to the irredentist dispositions of groups of people, who come even from terrorist organizations, which develop theories that have nothing to do with History" (ANT 12/10). Furthermore, "such an [Albanian] minority does not exist. When we were accepting Albanians, others were throwing them into the... sea" (A.T. 13/10 p.6). In this way, "our most-courteous guests (...) got the answer they deserved (...) and we enjoyed it very much..." (E.C.T. 19/10 p.12).

Finally, ND's MP Eu. Haitidis called the government to proceed with "actions of protest, disapproval and demand for concrete refutation of the provocative assertions" (AP. 14/10 p.10) and "to gather information through its diplomatic delegations who among these gentlemen or those of other foreign state-run organizations and media which develop anti-Greek, pro-Turkish or pro-Skopjan propaganda own real estate or other economic interests in occupied Cyprus, Turkey and Skopje!" (A.T. 14/10 p.7).

"We shouldn't raise hell with the British MPs. Who showered abuse on us, in our home... Besides, they are both English and Tories, a lethal combination. Most disa-

greeable from long time ago" (A. 15/10 p.8).

An incredible scare-mongering campaign based on a non-existent NATO scenario to partition Western Thrace

The meeting of the Minister to the Prime Minister, Mr. Ant. Livanis with the Official Opposition Leader Mr. M. Evert in order for the latter to "pass on a grave piece of information on a national issue [which, in spite of the publicity given to the meeting, was not communicated to the general public], excited imagination and strengthened scenarios [related to] apprehensions about dangerous developments" (EL. 13/10 p.7). Therefore, "Fears about provocation in Thrace... (...) foreign secret services intend to create a hot spot in Thrace and the target of a potential provocation will be the dense Muslim minority, which is already under mobilization under instructions from the Turkish consulate in Komotini" (E.T. 13/10 p.10). Also, "the Turks are preparing the conquest of the Patriarchate" (A.T. 13/10 p.1 title). The plan also called for a generalized conflagration in the Greek-Turkish relations caused by a controversy about the successor of Mgr. Iakovos, whom the Turks will try to keep under control" (A.T. 13/10 p.5). "The President of ND, Mr. Evert, fears provocation. Deep concern about Thrace" (E.T. 14/10 p.10). "Thrace is the 'target', the message of Evert. These estimations are strengthened by two particularly important elements. The first has to do with the tension, originating in the conflict on the hours of teaching of Greek as well as in the introduction of 'special subjects' in the educational program of minority schools, which pro-Ankara circles in Western Thrace attempt to cultivate. (...) The second one concerns the ban or the 'advice' made to the editor of the extreme-right publication 'Stohos' George Kapsalis and to the 'notorious' retired Air Force Group Captain Thomas

Vrakas [who had thrown leaflets with nationalistic content over Northern Epirus by airplane] not to visit Xanthi today [14/10]" (ETH. 14/10 p.5).

In addition, "Government afraid of provocation in Thrace" (EL. 14/10 p.6), "Scenarios of tension in Thrace" (R. 14/10 p.6), "Suspicious plans of the Turks" (AP. 14/10 p.1 title), "Suspicious plans about Thrace" (AP. 14/10 p.7) and there are references to "potential moves of extremists in Thrace" (N. 14/10 p.8). PASOK's MP Mr. St. Papatthemelis "pointed out that 'nothing is accidental' (...) it is certain that Thrace constitutes Turkey's strategic target" (A.T. 14/10 p.7) while the opinion that "the national 'secret' was about the creation of impressions [as] it is possible that the [Livanis-Evert] meeting concerned domestic affairs about which both sides would not want anything to be known" (A. 14/10 p.2) was set out. At the same time, broadcast media referred to "probable organized provocations of extremist elements aiming at the creation of tension in the areas of Thrace inhabited mainly by Muslims" (Mega 13/10). According to the Deputy Speaker of Parliament Mr. P. Sgouridis "The area [Thrace] is not in danger because the Thracians as well as the political forces of the country are determined to defend it. And also the best-trained Fourth Army, which is exactly where our comparative advantage lies: if the Turks try to do anything, it will be a twister for them" (Sky 14/10).

Then the information is given that "To Vima" ['reliable' Sunday paper with the largest circulation] publishes a story on a plan in the form of a staff maneuver. (...) It is substantially about a conflict scenario which anticipates NATO's intervention and almost exclusively concerns Western Thrace. The solution which will be proposed by the Alliance, and is no other but the partial autonomy of Thrace, is also included in the plan." (ANT 14/10), as well

as the estimation, in the same news bulletin, of Howard University Professor N. Stavros that "NATO has been transformed into a lever of imposition of a new world order. (...) It is highly alarming". The information is confirmed by the newspapers **To Vima** and **Apogevmatini** on 15/10: "To Vima reveals a most serious national issue which the government is already aware of. NATO's plan for... Thrace's autonomy! 'Conflict' 'exchange of populations' and 'mapping out of new borders'. Maneuver on paper without the participation of Greek officers" (V. 15/10 p.1 title). "The event acquires (...) grave significance mainly for three reasons: Firstly, NATO is not used to carrying out, even on paper, maneuver of theoretical interest only. Secondly, the 'maneuver on paper coincided (?) with an upheaval which is sustained ever since in the minority element of Thrace (...) Thirdly, the exclusion of Greek officers from the exercise indicates that it is not merely about an innocent as much as imaginative working hypothesis" (V. 15/10 p.8). "Suspicious plans for Thrace. They seek upheavals aiming at autonomy" (A. 15/10 p.1 title) "Suspicious plans for Thrace are being elaborated by NATO and Turkey attempts to exploit the opportunity in order to forward its objectives" (AP. 15/10 p.14).

Subsequently, it was argued that "We have to be prepared not only to express our wrath by 'means of an open hand' but also to shatter and trample these deplorable rascals, wherever they are, who think that they are going to play games in Greece. No more games. Greece will throw out of her soil, of her area, any scum who wishes to plot against her national independence and honor" (statement of PASOK's MP Mr. E. Yannopoulos on ANTENNA 15/10). "There must be a very strong Greek warning. The gentlemen of NATO are not entitled to play games" (statement of PASOK MP Mr. St. Papatthemelis on Mega 15/10).

It was heard however that, "I think it is an exaggeration - let alone an irresponsibility - of To Vima, to the extent that we all know that these organizations, but also the superpowers like the USA, and probably Germany, make various hypothetical scenarios for eventual cases of crisis. (...) A lot of the scenarios are not applied because they form working hypotheses which function as case studies for scholars and military or politicians" (statement of Panteios University Professor Chr. Giallouridis, Sky 15/10).

Even after the official NATO denial of the existence of such plans and the exhortation to "remember - because we blow up these stories very much in Greece - that a few years ago there were NATO scenarios which forecast a military coup in Belgium, a country which is the seat of NATO itself" (Sky 16/10), the debate continued "We came from Asia Minor, we were given a rough time and now the Americans wish to bring us Turkey here? No!" "They are going to create a Bosnia, just as they have done in Serbia" (statements by inhabitants of Thrace, ET 1 16/10). "What have we got the rifles for? For our looks? I am sixty nine years old and I am ready!" (statement by an inhabitant of Thrace, ANTENNA 16/10). "I am afraid that Thrace and the Aegean are in the next order of priorities in the plans of the new order" (PASOK's MP Mr. M. Kapsis, Mega 16/10).

At the same time, there was talk about an "insidious stab in Thrace. NATO is playing into the hands of Ankara." (E.T. 16/10 p.1 title) "They would have lit the fire" (A.T. 16/10 p.1 title), "Turkish plan to provoke upheaval in Western Thrace already applied" (A.T. 16/10 p.13). "Attention! We are being set up. An exercise of blackmail about Thrace. NATO and the Turks conspire" (AP. 16/10 p.1 title). "So, did you say that you just did a maneuver on paper? Or on toilet paper? Ah, O.K. they said it happened within the frame... of preventive

strategy! As we say, preventive medicine on a corpse" (EL. 16/10 p. 64); "A formula of provocation" (N. 17/10 p.3); "We were watching over the Bulgarians, Yankees and Dutchmen and Germans and French sprung up. And we'd better walk out from this filthy alliance of idiots (...) We have to do something NOW. Because these scams are not kidding!" (A.T. 17/10 p.14); "Blunt 'war games' by NATO. Multipurpose suspicious scenarios" (R. 17/10 p.1), "Unofficial war games about Thrace" (E.T. 17/10 p.11), "Games of Ottoman imagination. The 'plan' on a para-NATO computer was commissioned by Ankara" (EL. 17/10 p.1 title), "The suspicious and impudent NATO scenario is attributed to a political and to a military planning" (AP. 17/10 p.7) "Suspicious scenarios for Thrace were hammered out behind the scenes by NATO circles for the benefit of Turkey" (Mega 17/10). The nationalistic newspaper **Stohos** (19/10 p.5) under the headline "This is the truth about Thrace" presents titles of previous publications connected to Thrace. Among others: "They granted 'autonomy' to Thrace." "CSCE monitors in our Thrace", "Thrace handed over to the Turks", "Western Thrace is a Turkish territory".

Furthermore, "NATO undermines Greece's national independence" (R. 17/10 p.7). "War prelude made in the USA. (...) There is no smoke without fire. (...) It is obvious that the American side envisages a stable and powerful Turkey, able to play all these roles that various strategic brains have granted it from time to time" (EC.T. 19/10 p.5). According to the international relations and military affairs expert Mr. Th. Drougos, the war games, because of the fact that they come from Langley, Virginia, from the CIA, and then pass through to NATO where simulations are made, want Thrace as the Eastern Slavonia of the South; that is just like the problem of Serbia-Croatia, the problem of Greece-Turkey should also exist. In addition they create

Thrace now like a situation for a cushion-state, that is autonomy of the area and the union of all Muslim populations in Greece-Bulgaria-Turkey." (On the talk-show "The Time of Truth" ANTENNA 18/10). "The whole expansionist strategy is based on this: One day we will come to your rescue, that is to carry out the second Attila in Thrace, as the first Attila in Thrace took place in 1923" (PASOK's AP Mr. M. Haralambidis on the talk-show "Profile", Star Channel 19/10). "The planner of this provocation could never have either contemplated or imagined such a tremendous success which is due to our irresponsibility and ignorance of the problems" (PASOK's MP Mr. G. Kapsis on the talk-show "The Apple of Discord", Mega 18/10).

Information connecting "NATO's scenario" to a university lecture as well as publications referring to political expediencies and party rivalries tend to give the issue a different dimension: "Scenarios about the autonomy of Western Thrace were discussed in a closed seminar in Napoli, Italy, with the presence of NATO's South wing commander, Admiral Clayton Smith. Their instigator was the American professor Michael Roskin." (ANTENNA 18/10), "The scenario was... a seminar! (...) Stupidity (the most lenient characterization) reaches its zenith" (P. 19/10 p.8-9); "Universal fire for the national blunder" (ETH. 19/10 p.4), "New confrontation between government-ND about Thrace" (K. 19/10 p.5), "Massive fire against Evert" (N. 19/10 p.7), "Andreas: 'To Vima' promotes Evert" (EL. 19/10 p.12), "Autonomy from... seriousness" (A.T. 19/10 p.3) "They handed the American scenario with a petty political reasoning. First they hushed up, then... they 'leaked out'" (E.T. 19/10 p.6) "Irresponsible uproar about Thrace" (A. 17/10 p.1), "After he played with Thrace, he leaked... the national secret to 'To Vima'. 'Evert the pusher'" (ETH, 16/10 p.1 title), "Government and ND go on playing hide-and-seek" (A. 19/10 p.5).

“The scenario was bad, the actors were worse and the director was the worst” (A. 22/10 p.2) “How Ekali and Arsenis carefully plan the disorientation of public opinion. Shedding light to the greatest provocation.” (E.T. 22/10 p.4) “The industry flourishes in the USA and NATO. War scenarios all over the world.” (AP. 22/10 p.9), “All NATO’s scenarios. From the unorthodox methods to operation plans” (V. 22/10 p.1 title). “Last July NATO organized and financed a seminar on the ‘new crisis hot spots’. Mr. Michael Roskin, Visiting Professor at Washington War College and former cadre of the American intelligence services is invited to take part in the seminar. (...) During the seminar the American expert will develop a ‘scenario of a Greek-Turkish conflict which totally unexpectedly ended in a ‘partial autonomy’ of Western Thrace” (V. 22/10 p.4).

“Finally, it is evident that the only ones who got the best of the unsubstantiated scenario debate on Thrace, which pestered the country during the previous days, are the professional scare-mongers of all kinds, the supporters of ethnic cleansing in the area, the ones who fire up barbarism” (EL. 21/10 p.27). “Never before, to the best of our knowledge, was the question of Thrace raised, let alone... the question of its partition!!! (...) Now EVERYONE talks about... ‘the question of Thrace’!..” (P. 19/10 p.9) “That is a goal against our side. We may never learn ‘whose fault it is’” (N. 17/10 p.3). “With all these that have taken place in connection with this area of Greece, [Thrace] could have demanded partial - at least - autonomy in order not to listen to the many follies of the Athenians, who undertook to protect it from the enemies (...) And all these, not even for a handful of dollars, but only for a ‘NATO’s scenario’ which was not worth even one cent!” (K. 22/10 p.32).

The controversy about the Church of Scientology and other ‘heresies’

The references to the activities of the Greek Center of Applied Philosophy (KEFE) which represents the Church of Scientology in Greece led a significant number of Greek media to characterize KEFE as “a dangerous heresy” (ANTENNA 18/10), “New ‘masonry’ in Greece” (ETH. 18/10 p.1 title), “school of murderers in downtown Athens” (AP. 22/10 p.1), “a dangerous parareligion [from which] Greek children are in danger” (AP. 22/10 p.6), “an organization of hallucinations (...) which enlists mainly young recruits whom it exploits” (ETH. 18/10 p.10), “a mystery organization whose members call it ‘religion’” (ETH. 21/10 p.12), “parareligious organization ‘Scientology’” (A.T. 19/10 p.16), “an organization which forces its members to cut themselves loose from their families and keeps them under total control” (A.T. 19/10 p.16), “new Satans” (ETH. 18/10 p.6).

In addition, Scientology is described as “an international gang with money, sex and suicides” (ETH. 18/10 p.10), “a terrorist-destructive organization which incites the... extermination of every opponent” (AP. 22/10 p.6) “diabolic, its technique is diabolic, its practice is medically, morally and socially a grave threat to community [according to] an Austrian government report on Scientology” (ETH. 19/10 p.12). “The Administrative Court of Hamburg, in a recent verdict, regards the heresy of the ‘Scientology Church’ as a dangerous heresy for youth, society and democracy” (ETH. 21/10 p.13), it is a “heresy and a particularly dangerous one for the Orthodox reality” (ANT 1 18/10), whereas the people who belong to the organization are “corrupted, bad and dangerous” (AP. 22/10 p.6-7), who while “they used extensively the electronic pages of Internet in order to spread their heretical positions (...) they now watch their propaganda being pulver-

ized [as] the critics of the organization have found (...) in the avenues of cyberspace an expedient step towards fighting the organization” (E.T. 19/10 p.37).

The accusations against KEFE by former members, relatives of those who belong to the organization and representatives of the Orthodox church have the place of honor in media stories, while with regard to the internal methods and practices which are allegedly adopted by KEFE, we read about “details of initiations reminiscent of the Middle Ages” (Mega 20/10): “Cry of despair for the lost children...” (ETH. 19/10 p.1), “The parents of the youth who became members of the parareligious ‘Church of Scientology’ are in despair. Three of them clamor in all directions: ‘Help! They lead our children to suicide!’” (ETH. 19/10 p.12) “The state must revoke KEFE’s operating license because it is not a charitable society, so as to prevent our children from being lost and families from breaking up” an ex-member of the heresy “Church of Scientology” stated to **Ethnos** (20/10 p.17). According to Father Alevizopoulos - in charge of the Holy Synod’s office for the anti-heretic struggle (ETH. 21/10 p.13)- “Scientology is widely known to various researchers for its reverse ethics and its fascist methods with which it attempts to terrorize and neutralize everyone who will dare criticize it objectively”. “The members of KEFE have to endure trips in the past with the use of pharmaceutical products and also interrogations in dark rooms and in specially prepared places of a well-known hotel in Athens” (Mega 20/10). “In order for one to become clear, that is to clean himself of ‘engrams’ (inscriptions), he has to answer to the same questions for hours. He is obliged to jog, have sauna, swallow salty water... oil, metals and the medicine ‘Sustaniacin’, which is on sale in capsules of 500 mg. However, KEFE administers to its members amounts which reach up to 5,000 mg per day.” (AP. 22/10 p.7).

At the same time, there were reports about documents that the Public Prosecutor Mr. Angelis, who investigated KEFE’s activities, possessed and which were allegedly related to the organization’s activities: “Even... pink envelopes in the Prosecutor’s hands” (ETH. 23/10 p.1). “The possibility that the members of the parareligious organization ‘Church of Scientology’ even spy out at the expense of Greece is investigated by the Prosecutor [who] possesses a ‘hot’ document according to which the organization rewards one of its members (...) because she ‘managed’ (...) to bring a secret report of the Greek CIA to KEFE (ETH. 20/10 p.16). Furthermore, after the “invasion in... the lodge of hallucinations” (ETH. 21/10 p.1 title), the “onslaught on... the well of souls” (ETH. 21/10 p.12) it ensued that “the members of KEFE pay an ecclesiastical... tax, which they call ‘tithe’ to the mother-organization of Scientology, in the USA. In this way, valuable Greek hard currency is exported illegally, while the organization, which appears as a charitable society, evades taxes as well”. The latest investigation conducted by the Prosecutor at KEFE (...) revealed that these [heretical] groups [KEFE and other similar organizations] constitute special cartels to coordinate their struggle and ‘silence’ anyone who is critical of them” (K. 31/10 p.6). “In a KEFE report to the headquarters in the USA there is a paragraph in which it is recorded: “Arrange for an article by [journalist] Mr. B. Raphailidis on Mr. Alevizopoulos in relation to the way that the latter brain-washes and manipulates parents”. Mr. Raphailidis flatly denied that he has written an article against Father Alevizopoulos in the newspaper **Ethnos** on such order: “If the Scientologists did such a thing, then I tell them that they are worse scams than Alevizopoulos” (ANT 1 21/10). “When Father Alevizopoulos presented the documents that the Prosecutor has, he disclosed that (...) the European Scientology office of special affairs has given an order for this surveillance and that in the end the

immediate objective is to intimidate and defame him. Father Alevizopoulos maintained that [for this cause] the media and known columnists, like Mr. Raphailidis, are used. He also pointed out that among the organization's objectives was the development of a rivalry between the Jewish and the Catholic communities" (Sky 30/10). "Father Alevizopoulos asserted that the parareligious organizations, groups and heresies, in order to achieve their aims, use 'methods of secret services and totalitarian regimes, like those of German nazism'" (EL. 31/10 p.51).

"Youth, the target of four hundred heresies" (ETH. 31/10 p.14). "Hundreds of dangerous parareligious organizations 'recruit' youths. Destroy families. Organize 'armies'. Threaten lives. Insult Greece, moral principles, the Church. Apply insane methods. Evade taxes. Operate without license etc., etc. However, the Public Prosecutor orders raids on three particularly dangerous organizations (...) which are terrorists of conscience. Raids against the worst which is KEFE, against the 'castle' of the indescribable homeopath Sp. Diamantidis and (...) on Krisna's den. (...) The miscellaneous organizations cooperate and probably form a cartel, aiming at damaging the Church. (...) Are we unprotected at the mercy of some 'terrorists' who suddenly emerge mighty and pulling the strings? Who will apologize should a Greek Socko Ashahara cast poisonous gas in Omonia?.." (AP. 29/10 p.6-7). According to Father Alevizopoulos "this threat will continue to exist and as time goes by it will increase, unless all responsible agencies as well as the media unite in this holy army to deliver our country from that danger" (A.T. 31/10 p.9).

Towards all aforementioned comments, "The representatives of the center of Scientology in Greece, in a letter to the media refer to 'slanderous, false references' and 'absolutely personal documents of our members originating from a classified investigation which was suddenly leaked for the press" (E.T. 20/10 p.18). According to letters of KEFE members, "it is inadmissible for you to say that, in Scientology, drugs and pills are given, a practice that Scientology is not only opposed to but it also has special procedures for the disintoxication of individuals from them." "KEFE is an organization which helps people. It has helped thousands of people, anonymous as well as well-known ones." "Scientology has nothing - absolutely nothing to do with masonry. It is a philosophy open to all with well-known aims and transparent function".

Consequently, it is plausible to ask, as unfortunately very few journalists did: "Don't we have freedom and religious tolerance? Since some people wish to do different things from the average, it is their right. Let them enjoy their lives." (A.T. 23/10 p.55). "Since [Scientology] functions at the level of human consciousness, everyone has the right to be himself and believe what he believes. In any case, the right to stupidity is a human right" (statements of Mr. Raphailidis on ANTENNA 21/10). "It is probable that our unorthodox conduct is activated once more towards the matters of consciousness due to the intervention of the unprincipled who believe that their own consciousness is of excellent quality" (ETH. 27/10 p.7).

HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS OF THE MACEDONIAN MINORITY

INTERNATIONAL HELSINKI FEDERATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

PRESS RELEASE

Greeks Drop Charges Against Sideropoulos; New Charges Brought Against Macedonian Minority Party

Vienna, 2 October 1995 On 26-27 September 1995, an IHF mission visited Florina, in Northwestern Greece, to monitor the trial of Macedonian minority activist Christos Sideropoulos and investigate the problems of the Macedonian minority, especially the sacking of the headquarters of the minority party Rainbow. Greek authorities denied an entry visa to a delegation member from the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in the Republic of Macedonia on grounds that a trial of a Greek citizen does not necessitate the presence of foreign observers; such an attitude is in direct violation of the OSCE Human Dimension agreements to which Greece is a signatory. Moreover, the movements of the three remaining members of the delegation were followed by plainclothes state security agents, as has happened in previous monitoring missions of IHF national committees. With respect to the trial itself, the IHF welcomes the court's decision to drop the charges against Christos Sideropoulos as inadmissible in accordance with the Greek penal code, an argument that the IHF and Greek Helsinki Monitor had repeatedly made in the past. Christos Sideropoulos had been charged for statements he made in the 1990 Copenhagen CSCE meeting about his Macedonian identity and discriminatory treatment of ethnic Macedonians in Greece. It is now the responsibility of the Greek authorities to investigate the reason why an

inadmissible procedure was initiated against a Greek citizen and take all necessary steps to compensate him.

The IHF delegation also visited the offices of the Macedonian minority party Rainbow, which were set on fire and completely destroyed on 14 September 1995. On the previous day, the police, on the order of the prosecutor, and later a group of people, led by the city's mayor, pulled down signs which read Rainbow - Florina Committee (in both Macedonian and Greek). The delegation also observed hate speech slogans ('Out with the Slavs,' 'Out with the Traitors,' etc.) on many walls near the party's office, but also in one high school, which were not erased, unlike other unrelated slogans. Moreover, it gathered evidence that these violent incidents were preceded by inflammatory and defamatory public statements by a number of Greek media, as well as the local mainstream party committees.

The district's public prosecutor pressed no charges against anyone for these violent incidents, but instead pressed charges against the Rainbow leadership for incitement to disturb the peace through disharmony, through the use of the Macedonian language and the Macedonian name of the city. There was no condemnation of these events by the government, the country's political parties and media - with a few rare exceptions among the latter.

We note the context within which these events took place. In the recent past, the authorities had refused the necessary accreditation to a Macedonian cultural association (the case is before the European Commission of Human Rights); refused the return of tens of thousands of Macedonian political refugees who had fled the country

during the civil war (although all Greek political refugees were allowed back) - these people are also not allowed to visit Greece even to attend family weddings or funerals; revoked the citizenship of Macedonian activists who are living abroad and have acquired a second citizenship; disturbed Macedonian cultural festivals in which Macedonian songs were being sung; harassed and prosecuted Macedonian activists as well as Greek activists who spoke in favor of the rights of the Macedonian minority; and slandered Macedonian activists as foreign agents, traitors, etc.. Naturally, in such conditions, there is neither any education of, or in the Macedonian language, as Greece refuses to treat the mother tongue of the ethnic Macedonians, as well as the larger group of assimilated or nearly assimilated Macedonian speakers with a

Greek national consciousness, as a language; it is considered to be an idiom, different from the literary Macedonian language and heavily influenced by the Greek language, and therefore not appropriate to be taught.

The IHF welcomes the Interim Agreement signed by Greece and Macedonia, and considers it a major step towards improving relations between the two countries. It is unfortunate, however, that at the very moment this agreement was being signed in New York, the violent events against the Rainbow party were taking place. It therefore calls upon the Greek authorities to honor their signature on international documents which calls for the recognition of all minorities and the respect of their rights.