



RAINBOW (VINOZHITO) – European Movement

Member of the European Free Alliance (E.F.A)

STEFANOU DRAGOUMI 11 P.O. 51

T.K. 53100 FLORINA / LERIN

GREECE

TEL- FAX :++ 2385- 46548

Internet: <http://www.florina.org> E-mail : rainbow@florina.org
vinozito@otenet.gr

Info – ZOPA

EDIFYING BULLETIN OF RAINBOW PARTY

ENGLISH EDITION

OCTOBER – NOVEMBER 2002 No 8

ANNOUNCEMENT

Florina / Lerin 23.10.2002

During MEGA television's recent program, "The Hour of the Ballot Box" [I Ora tis Kalpes] (21.10.2002), Mr. Rousopoulos, press spokesperson for the (conservative) New Democracy party, attempted to justify the defeat of the departing prefect, Mr. Altinis, who was supported by New Democracy in Florina.

Mr. Rousopoulos claimed, inter alia, that the PASOK (socialist) party won the prefecture of Florina because it was aligned with RAINBOW, which he accused of supporting the autonomy of Macedonian autonomy and whose members have separatist views and want to change the borders. He specifically mentioned Mr. Petros Dimtsis, vice-president of RAINBOW. Mr. Dimtsis was one of RAINBOW's candidates successfully elected Prefectural Advisor on a coalition ballot.

Naturally, Mr. Rousopolos conveniently forgot to mention on the same broadcast that Rainbow had received a offer from New Democracy to join its slate in Florina, which it declined.

But what can one say about the "Sherlock Holmes" of Greek journalism and politics, who in an "exclusive" report made for a private television channel (Antenna news broadcast, June 1993) claimed to have "discovered" a secret heroin processing plant run by former Macedonian President Gligorov in Skopje?

Acting like someone out of Medieval politics, Mr. Rousopoulos was the modern-day inquisitor, ostentatiously brandishing a piece of paper but conscientiously avoiding reading what was written on it. He was bent on tarnishing and slandering Mr. Dimtsis and the RAINBOW party in order to justify the defeat of the New Democracy slate in Florina.

To controvert the political immorality of Mr. Rousopoulos and all those who attempt to distort the ideology of our party, we cite below from our political Manifesto:

“RAINBOW considers that the struggle for peace requires the respecting of existing borders - independent of past historical injustices. The battle for civic equality and social justice must be headed by progressive forces within the boundaries. It envisions a Balkan region without confrontations and wars, where nations will live in brotherhood and shared well-being.”

Since its inception in June 1994, RAINBOW never expressed any secessionist or separatist views. Our political ideology as well as our actions have always moved in a direction opposite to what Mr. Rousopoulos alleges. As a characteristic example, we quote from our speech to the parliamentary assembly of the European Free Alliance, of which RAINBOW is a member, in the European Parliament on 12.05.2000:

“We, the ethnic Macedonians citizens of Greece and the European Union understand the sensitivities and/or prejudices that exist among the majority populations in Greece and in other Balkan countries, when the issue of minority rights is mentioned. However, we believe that ethnic minorities, especially in the Balkans, must behave in such a way as to reassure the majority while guaranteeing that in exercising their rights they are not disrupting the peace or promoting the changing of the existing political borders. We are well aware that especially in the Balkans, such Great Ideas have always led to military conflicts.”

RAINBOW further denounces MEGA channel for its total lack of journalistic ethics. Those in charge refused to accept our telephone calls during the Anna Panayotarea Show and the main newscast of Tuesday, October 22, 2002, to protest and correct misrepresentations of party members. Both programs repeatedly accused RAINBOW of being an organization of separatists.

Finally, and on a more positive note, RAINBOW congratulates all its members who were elected to the prefectures and municipal councils and hopes that they will play a constructive role in their offices.

POLITICAL SECRETARIAT

CLARIFICATION – ANNOUNCEMENT

While watching Mr. Hadjinikolaou’s television program, “The Hour of the Ballot Box,” I was shocked to see the New Democracy press spokesperson Mr. Rousopoulos

attempt to slander me with outrageous epithets and characterizations. He demonstrated a shallowness unprecedented in a person of his office.

Given his position, Mr. Rousopoulos should know, or at least should have been informed, that the Rainbow party of which I am a member has neither a chairman or vice-chairman but a collective Secretariat. Nor does Rainbow have any secessionist or separatist leanings. This, he easily could have discovered simply by reading Rainbow's political manifesto. He immediately would have seen that Rainbow is diametrically opposed to any policy of border change. My personal stand on these issues, as well as on the problems concerning our region, is well-known both in the village community where I was born and live and also in the broader community of our prefecture.

As the recent elections demonstrated, my stand is applauded by the citizens of our prefecture, who chose to elect me Prefectural Advisor. The people of Florina similarly honored Yannis Stratakis by electing him Prefect because they admire the ethics and abilities of both the man and the cadres who staffed his ticket. At the same time, they showed their disapproval of Pavlos Altinis for his incompetence as Prefect of Florina during the last four years.

This is where Mr. Rousopoulos should seek the reasons for the New Democracy defeat in Florina. Instead, he accepted the absurd, irresponsible and nationally dangerous justifications served to him by the local deputies of his party, who obviously wish to disavow their own responsibilities.

Florina, 23.10.2002
PETROS DIMTSIS
Prefectural Administrator Elect
On the Yannis Stratakis ballot
"Hope for Florina" [Elpida gia ti Florina]

How Many Interpretations does Democracy have?

(The following article was published in the newspaper EXPRESS, 6 October 2002)

Exactly one week from today, the citizens of Greece will be summoned to the polls to select their mayors and prefects for the next 4 years. All the parties, major and minor, are publicizing their positions, the candidates they support, and perhaps even those they denounce, on TV shows and in statements to the national and local press. This is absolutely fair and democratic. But it isn't the case for everyone. There are some parties that are never called on to expand upon their positions. And to make matters worse, they encounter closed doors across the media spectrum, even when it comes to paid advertising.

One of these political groups is Rainbow, a small regional party founded by citizens whose primary objective is to promote their particular linguistic and cultural character and advocate their right of ethnic self-definition. Rainbow is fully legal and has run in

various electoral contests with – if nothing else – noteworthy results. In the upcoming municipal elections, Rainbow chose to support individual candidates (its officials and members) regardless of the ticket they were running on. The Political Secretariat wanted to inform the voters of central-western Macedonia of the reason for maintaining this particular position, and chose to do so in a statement to the regional media, which could also be published as a paid political advertisement. But to no avail. Rainbow contacted exactly forty-one dailies and weeklies in the prefectures of Florina, Kastoria, Kozani, Pella, and Imathia. Most did not deign to reply. At some papers, the owner had just died (!), while others responded initially but then vanished from the face of the earth once they saw the statement. Of course, there were those who wanted 300 euros (!) to publish a 300-word text - on the grounds that it was the campaign period [sic] - and those, too, who feared, defamed, or ridiculed the text and its authors.

To their credit, three newspapers finally did agree to publish the statement, moreover free of charge; a fourth may also publish it for a fee. But that is not the problem. The problem in general lies in the workings of a well-governed democracy and one of its most fundamental linchpins, the Press! Just days before the expression of popular will, things are occurring around us that we are ignoring, that ignore us, and are certainly unbecoming a member country of the European Union. That is, unless we embrace the opinion of certain regular guests on TV talk-shows, who ask that these “annoying” parties be banned by law, along the lines of the Spanish and the Herri Batasuna party. The difference, however, is that the armed wing of that particular party (ETA) is responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Spaniards over the past three decades. Is this the case with Rainbow and every other comparable party?

By George N. Papadakis
EXPRESS

Report on the Helsinki Conference

CREATION OF JOINT STRUCTURES FOR HISTORICAL LINGUISTIC MINORITIES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

(From the Press Release by the Greek Committee of EBLUL)

Naousa 16 October

A delegation from the Greek Committee of EBLUL, consisting of Athanasios Parisi, Committee Chairman, and Sotiris Bletsas, Deputy Chairman, attended the recent Conference of the European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages (EBLUL), held in Helsinki, Finland, on 11-12 October. The topic of the Conference was the “Creation of joint structures for the historical linguistic minorities in the European Union.”

The Conference was organized by the Swedish Assembly of Finland, the National Finnish Association of Sweden, the EU Mission, and the Ministry for Language of the Welsh Assembly.

The Greek delegation also contributed to the work of the EBLUL Conference.

The Conference was addressed by Bojan Brezigar, President of EBLUL, Paavo Lipponen, Prime Minister of Finland, Martti Ahtisaari, former President of Finland, Viviane Ridding, EU Commissioner for Education and Culture, Asrid Thors, Finnish Euro MP, Ulpu Livari, Euro MP, Jean-Luc Dehaene, former Prime Minister of Belgium, and Colin H. Williams, Minister for Wales.

The topic of the Conference, which is most timely and relevant to the problems we are currently facing, focused on two pressing issues: the impending expansion of the European Union, and the control of developments in southeastern Europe following recent upheavals.

Mr. Martti Ahtisaari, who chaired the Conference, spoke *inter alia* of the necessity of ensuring the protection of human rights and diversity in the current member states. During the discussion on the role of the European Union in respect to minority languages, it was agreed that efforts must be made to encourage the development of basic standards in accordance with which the member states will take appropriate measures on the basis of their individual cultures. Given that the protection of linguistic rights is problematic in several of the member states, the EU's role as coordinator for the development of these standards is of great importance.

Mr. Jean-Luc Dehaene, former Prime Minister of Belgium, stressed that the EU must play its part in matters concerning linguistic diversity in a future Europe. He also stressed the need for a strong constitutional foundation that would commit the Union to its stance on linguistic and cultural difference.

The future European Constitution must also clarify that all languages have the same value and the same dignity.

Ms. Vivian Ridding, EU Commissioner for Education and Culture, described the current agenda for future EU policy on linguistic diversity.

A draft bill is to be published before the end of 2002, which will put forth the future measures for linguistic diversity and language education in a European framework.

This process will result in an exchange of views and the cooperation between the European Parliament and the European Commission on the launching of an action plan.

EBLUL President Brezigar stressed the need to define minimum standards for the protection and promotion of minority languages and their inclusion in future EU legislation.

This will benefit the linguistic communities as well as the EU itself, since it will help avoid future tension and possible conflicts within the new member states. In addition,

Mr. Brezigar made note of the fact that respect for minorities is required among the entry criteria that candidate states must meet, as designated in Copenhagen in 1993.

Lastly, Prime Minister Lipponen of Finland spoke of the status of linguistic groups in his own country and described the measures being taken to develop linguistic and cultural diversity. Finland has two national languages recognized by its Constitution, Finnish and Swedish. He reminded the audience that the Swedish linguistic minority comprises only 6% of the population to indicate the courage and flexibility required: courage for the minority to speak its mother tongue, and flexibility on the part of the Finnish majority to support this. He also emphasized the demand that Swedish be used where required. Flexibility is necessary to the understanding that the fundamental principle of equality cannot be applied automatically. The Finnish speakers, who make up 92% of the population, must be encouraged to learn another language in order to be able to understand the situation.

The Chairman
Athanasios Parisis

First International Conference of the Greek Committee of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages (EBLUL)

The 1st International Conference on “Linguistic Diversity in Greece,” organized by EBLUL Brussels (European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages) took place in Thessaloniki on Friday, 15 November 2002. Participants in the Conference included delegates from the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, EBLUL, and a variety of professionals in the field of minority-language issues. Representing Greece were spokespersons for linguistic minorities including the Aroumounic (Vlach), Macedonian, Turkish, Pomak and Arvanite languages. The opening speech was made by Mr. Bojan Brezigar, President of EBLUL.

Following this was the welcoming address by Mr. Athanasios Parisis, President of the Greek Member State Committee of EBLUL. Mr. Lambros Baltiotis then spoke on behalf of the Minority Language Research Center (KEMO – Kentro Erevnas ton Meionotikon Glosson).

A general discussion followed, and a press conference. The afternoon session presented the best practices for the promotion of minority languages. Professor Peter Nelde of the Brussels Research Center on Multilingualism expanded on the issue of whether lesser-used languages require a common European language policy.

Mr. Domenico Morelli, President of the Italian MSC (CONFEMILI) compared the legislation in Greece and in Italy on lesser-used languages.

The changes and limits set by the European Union was the topic of a presentation by Mr. Gabriel Nikolaj von Toggenburg, Researcher at the European Academy.

An open discussion followed. Speakers at the evening session expanded upon the topic of what Europe can do for lesser-used languages in Greece.

Participants included:

Ms. Marieke Sanders, Member of the European Parliament,

Ms. Teresa Condeco, Administrator at the DG for Education and Culture at the European Commission,

Ms. Regina Jensdottir, Administrator of the Charter for Regional and Minority Languages at the Council of Europe,

Mr. Wolfgang Meier, Member of the Society for Threatened Peoples,

Mr. Bela Toncovic, Member of the Federal Union of European Nations (FUEN).

Afterwards there was an open discussion with conclusions, followed by the closing ceremony.

On Saturday, 16 November, participants visited regions in which lesser-used languages are spoken.

‘Шо ми велис мари кумо!’

THE CHRONICLE OF A DISCOVERY TESTIMONY

It was getting late and the inter-city bus from Thessaloniki was nowhere in sight. The few prospective passengers, most of them weary soldiers (of which I was one) from the town’s military bases, were getting restless and nervously looking at their watches. I’d finished my tea, and since the rain had stopped I thought I’d go outside. Most of the people in the bus station-café were smoking, and besides being an anti-smoker I’m also asthmatic!

The fresh air revived me, and as the clouds cleared up so did my mood. I began watching the people passing by. An elderly woman stopped to greet her neighbor who was waiting for the bus, too. Their conversation became quite animated, but they were not speaking loudly. Soon they were smiling, then laughing out loud. The local gossip they were sharing must have been particularly juicy! I have to confess that they caught my attention and I started eavesdropping. That was when I realized that the two gossips were not speaking Greek. One of them kept laughing and saying, “Шо ми вели { mari kumo![Sho mi velish mari kumo!].”

The language the two women were speaking puzzled me. At first I thought they could be “Hellenorussopondes,” [ethnic Greeks from the Black Sea region], like one of the soldiers I was teaching Greek to. But that wasn’t it. I’d heard those people speak Russian and their accent was completely different. Besides which, these women didn’t seem foreign at all, but 100% local, and were greeting many passersby. I had some rudimentary knowledge of Serbo-Croatian and Old Church Slavonic languages, so I knew that they were speaking some Slavic language. But what language was it? And where in the world had these two neighbors learned it? I was left with this dual

question as I boarded the bus and began my trip from the town I was stationed in to Thessaloniki, Greece's northern capital.

Of course, my acquaintance with Greece's linguistic diversity had come much earlier. When I was in the seventh grade (1st year of gymnasium), I was best man at the wedding of a girl who lived in the same apartment house as I did, and who was marrying an Arvanite from a village of Thebes. At the wedding, which took place in the village, and when we were their guests at Easter time, I'd heard the villagers speaking Arvanitika. In fact, the bridegroom, a "conscientious" Arvanite, had undertaken to enlighten me on the subject, giving me a book on the ethnological origins of the Arvanites. As I recollect, the book set me thinking even though I didn't understand that much of it.

My next encounter with minority languages took place in the summer of 1986. I had just finished my first year in high school and had gotten a scholarship to study English at a college in London for three weeks. One of the students was a girl my age from the north-central Greek city of Kastoria. Her beauty and liveliness immediately caught my eye. Unfortunately, I lost out! This beautiful Macedonian girl chose a nineteen-year-old "Yugoslav" from Skopje. However, any disappointment I may have had for being unlucky in love gave way to surprise; the young couple was speaking a language I didn't know! Sometimes, when the girl spoke the boy would smile and correct her, but mostly they communicated just fine. Naturally, I asked them what language they were speaking. The boy told me they were speaking Macedonian since they were both Macedonians. The girl told me she was speaking a "local" language with the boy. To my next question – how she learned this language – she said that she mainly spoke it with her grandmother but also with her other relatives.

When I got back to Greece I asked the father of a friend of my to tell me more about it. He was a professor of philology and had taught high school for some years in Macedonia. What he told me troubled and confused me. According to him, the language that the boy and girl were speaking was a nonexistent language, a barbarian dialect like Bulgarian, but not exactly. Also, that young man was an enemy of our country and the girl was a traitor who was collaborating with him. That Macedonia was and always will be Greek and, finally, that it was a big mistake for me to be friends with them. All this seemed excessive to me, and the products of fanaticism. I refused to believe him.

Some years later, I found myself back in London, this time as a university student. At university I could study a foreign language as an elective course. I first thought about taking German or Italian. But unfortunately for me, the days and times that these languages were taught coincided with those of my required departmental courses, so I had to select something else. After much thought, I chose Serbo-Croatian, thinking that since Yugoslavia is a neighbor country, some knowledge of the people might be useful to me in my future professional life.

I got to know the professor who taught the course and we began talking to each other during the breaks or after class on broader topics, mostly history and politics. During one conversation he asked me, "What's the real story about the Macedonian minority in Greece?" His question startled me. As far as I knew, only Greeks lived in Greece. There were, of course, some Muslims in Thrace, but they were also Greeks,

descendants of Greek converts to Islam, as far as I'd read. What he was telling me was the first I'd ever heard of minorities living in Greece.

All these incidents came back to me as I continued on my trip. It occurred to me that my military service could assist me in my study of minority dialects, etc. It looked as though I would be serving in the same unit for ten more months (I was serving for twelve months so I couldn't be transferred). So, I had a lot of time to conduct my own investigation of whether, indeed, there were minorities living in the area, what language they spoke, what their history and customs were. I would believe any conclusions I drew. It would be the product of my own research, rather than something someone else told me, even if that person was an expert and I was simply a biologist. Besides, I wasn't making a scientific study, and since I wasn't beginning my study with any prejudice, I'd surely learn a great deal.

This isn't the place to record all the details of my research in the villages of rural Paionia (the region I refer to) and its surroundings. Perhaps I'll speak exhaustively on the subject some other time. In general, however, the results of my research were a true revelation to me. Not only was there a dialect, even a language in this area, but there was also an entire people, whose existence I was ignorant of (or to be exact, was withheld from me) all these years: the Macedonian people, with their language, history and traditions. These people had endured despite years of persecution, despite their trial by fire and sword, despite the lack of a definitive ethnic consciousness in many Macedonians because they fear what the outcome of such an awareness would be. And they weren't a body of nationally dangerous monsters, as they had been portrayed by some to be. These were people like me, with the same hopes and concerns, citizens just like I was of the much afflicted Hellenic Republic.

The discoveries I made in the field were supplemented over the years by the knowledge I obtained from books on the history of the Macedonians in Greece. These were written by authors, who had been cured of the bug of the chauvinism that had brought such pain to this country during the previous century. I recommend these books to anyone who wants to form an opinion on the perpetually sore (even if the days of rallies are over) subject of Macedonia. It's time to stop accepting the thinking that has been preprocessed with a high nationalistic content. It is hazardous to our intellectual health!

In closing my testimony, I'd like to believe that it will not be long before the Macedonian minority of Greece is able to officially claim its just demands (which in their case are the demands to implement their fundamental human rights), and that soon all the unhappy vestiges of this painful past will vanish along with any of its current-day backers. Moreover, I would like to send a message of support to all those fighting for this vindication. I hope, as the 21st century progresses and we become citizens of the European Union, that all Greek citizens, independent of their ethnic origin, language, religion or other "personal data" will work together, each in his or her own way, but all with equal rights and responsibilities, for the peace and prosperity of our land.

P. SOMALIS

The Current Extreme Right and Don Quiotes Politicians

By DIMITRIS TSIODRAS

Is there or isn't there an extreme-right in Greece after all? "There is, and the New Democracy party is flirting with it," says the government. "There isn't," assures former New Democracy Prime Minister Constantinos Mitsotakis. "But there is someone who is doing business with it - the government - to harm the New Democracy," the opposition emphasizes.

The political system seems to shadowboxing with ghosts, and ignoring reality. This debate is based on stereotypes of past decades. Its only aim is to stimulate the electoral reflexes of those population groups with memories of the 60s and 70s. Things would be simple and the target easy if the extreme right began and ended with George Karatzaferis (leader of the ultranationalist LAOS party), with the candidacy of Mr. Kazakos in the Zographos municipality of Athens, and with Mr. Psomiadis.

However, the extreme right danger comes the fringe political forces that glorified the dictatorship or long for the monarchy, and who have been resoundingly crushed any time they've tried their luck at the polls. The reality is much more complex, and those who ignore the current parameters of the issue are deluding themselves, as the European experience also shows.

Today's extreme right has nothing to do with the return of the ex-king, or the overthrow of the constitution with the use of tanks. It consists in transforming democracy into a "closed" system with "politically correct concessions," the incrimination of difference (cultural, racial, etc.) and the restriction of personal freedoms in the name of "national interest."

The dictatorial triptych, "country, church, family," in today's terms means: a) National entrenchment, ignoring international developments, and hostility to "foreigners" who have ongoing designs on Greece and are constantly conspiring against it. b) Marginalization of those who are not "like us." The "other" is trying not to maintain his or her identity in the framework of a multinational (and not just multicultural) society, but, rather, is trying to subvert our own. And this "other" can be the migrant, the Muslim, the atheist, the culturally or sexually different, etc. c) Fear of the new, of open horizons, and of free competition; a return to protectionism in the framework of an authoritarian, centralized "big daddy" state that takes care of its children, but also sternly punishes them.

One would not be concerned if the sole brokers of these views, which form the ideological-political leavening for the rise of an extreme right party, were Mr. Karatzaferis, Mr. Psomiadis, and Mr. Kazakos. Unfortunately, however, these views are disseminated from diverse sources that have much greater potential to impact public opinion.

1. By politicians across the entire spectrum, starting with the New Democracy, passing through PASOK and arriving at the traditional left, who preach the political philosophy described here. Is it an accident, therefore, that in France, Le Pen's constituency is made up to a large extent of former Communist Party voters?
2. By the Orthodox Church, with the Archbishop's nationalistic discourse and, aiming to preserve its privileges, the support of an anachronistic state model that, rather than being neutral to difference, has an identity and "closed" world view that is unrelated to serving its social objectives.
3. On the part of the media (mostly television), which cultivate absolutism as a way of thinking. Forever aiming at the easy target, as though everything is black-and-white like an old-time Hollywood Western, they leave no room for hue or in-depth analysis.

Of course, this ideological-political climate is not unrelated to the prevailing socioeconomic conditions of a country.

The incorporation of Greece in a larger entity, such as the European Union, the gradual abolishment of borders, the exposure to international competition without sufficient preparation, the necessity of function in a perpetually uncertain world all act to gradually marginalize certain social strata, causing them to long for the "good old days" of protectionism.

The "enemy," which is based on these recycled stereotypes, is easily personified. They are the "ultra-nationalist cells" and the "other" within the country.

The social and ideological-political raw material for an extreme-right party is created very slowly. The political conditions have not yet matured; no has the ideal spokesperson has been found. But if we continue at the same pace, the nightmare will recur with mathematical certainty. It will emerge when EU funds dry up and the low competitiveness of the Greek economy drives large sectors of the population into poverty and unemployment. It will claim an important role when a significant portion of the voting public, disenchanted with the major parties, turns further to the right.

The leaving has been created and the rest is simply a matter of time. Only the parties don't seem to see it, and wear themselves out tilting at windmills, shadowboxing with easy opponents in quest of a handful of votes. After all, it's a fact that the ruling principle of the Greek political system (with very few exceptions) is "live for today."

SUNDAY'S ELEFTHERTOTYPIA – 13/10/2002