

MANCHO MITEVSKI



CAPTURED STATE

UNDERSTANDING THE MACEDONIAN CASE

FRIEDRICH
EBERT
STIFTUNG

Mancho Mitevski

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PREFACE

Since May 2017, Macedonia has quickly developed into a symbol for the possibility of change in the Western Balkans. By reaching out to improve the relations with the neighbors and starting much needed reform programs, Zoran Zaevs Government has put the country back on the European track. However, it is important to remember that not long ago, the country went through a state crisis of enormous proportion that grew slowly over more than ten years: Corruption stemming from the highest offices and trickling down to every institution and every corner of the country as well as a wire-tapping scandal of immense scale, to name just some dimensions, contributed to the perfected state capture of Nikola Gruevskis governing period, that found an alarming peak in the violent attack on the Macedonian parliament on April 27th, 2017.

While today we can see hope for a more open society, a revitalized democratic understanding of institutions and political office, a stronger economy and thus a future perspective for the Macedonian people, it is important to remember that the dark past was not long ago. This destructive period has only just begun to be addressed both publicly and behind closed doors. With court cases numerous corruption cases as well as about the events of 27th of April, the past entanglements are slowly being openly addressed and criminals are being held accountable. This is a crucial development towards reestablishing faith in democracy and rule of law. But a debate in civil society is needed as well as to how Macedonia could get to this point: It is only is only through understanding how a state capture of this massive scale was possible and analyzing how and why an entire political class could become entangled in corruption, that a society can prevent this from happening again.

Mancho Mitevski has revisited the period of 2006 to 2016 and the years leading up to it in his book *Captured State*. In recollecting how Gruevski and his people came to power and how they learned to abuse it for their own personal advantage, Mitevski aims to find answers to some of the most pressing questions of post-Gruevski Macedonia: How could the massive state capture in Macedonia happen? What structures and developments both within Macedonia as well as internationally helped the regime and their methods. Were there

early warnings? By addressing these questions the author not only provides important background information to the more public and known facts about Gruevski's state capture. He also uses international cross-references to point out the connecting dots between any populist nationalism and their hypocritical claim to protect national interests. The book was first published in Macedonian language in early 2018 and by translating it into English it is our goal to open up the dialogue this publication started about political corruption and conditions for state capture to a wider audience.

We believe this publication can also provide valuable insights for other countries, particularly in the region, to detect similar mechanisms and to prevent them from spiraling out of control the way they did in Macedonia.

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NOTE TO THE PUBLICATION OF “THE CAPTURE STATE” IN ENGLISH

Owing to the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the Study “The Capture State” now has its own window to the world and an opportunity, through the “Macedonian story”, to enable more readers to see what is a real, and not just a theoretical – capture state.

Although the Macedonian edition of the book happened exactly one year ago, I think that there is nothing to add to the English edition, nor to take away, except to share a few brief explanations.

Following the “Bloody Thursday” (April 27, 2017) with the constitution of the new government and the fall of the authoritarian system of governance, the state was formally liberated. But, in fact in many segments, especially in the lower levels of the institutions, the overemployed party soldiers and clientele remained as installations of the former regime, which in various ways still obstruct the changes, reforms, rule of law, NATO and EU integrations, the normalization and progress of state and society.

After the new reform government was constituted, initial internal reforms began and great achievements were made internationally with the signing of the Agreement with Bulgaria and the Agreement regarding the name dispute with Greece, which widely opened the doors for integration into NATO and for starting negotiations with the EU. At the same time, charges were raised and court proceedings began against the entire VMRO-DPMNE leadership including ex-Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and a number of his ministers for politically organized crime, manifested through mass wiretapping, electoral engineering, corruption and classical crime which plundered and impoverished the entire state and society. Following the first enforceable judgment (for the many charges he is faced with), ex-Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski fled the country and received asylum in Hungary.

Yet another major specific problem has come to surface in the Republic of Macedonia, and those are the profoundly deep ideological, party, international and intra-ethnic divisions. Moreover, the Colorful Revolution, as the driving

engine of resistance against the regime leading to its demise, started manifesting the characteristic features of every revolution. The revolution began to eat its children, deeds and ideals. However, in the case of Macedonia, both those children of the revolution who made it in the government, and those who, disillusioned, decided to stay away from it, began to undermine the revolution from the inside and out!

The author

FOREWARD

The Republic of Macedonia is among those rare countries whose period of transition coincides with its years of independence: more than a quarter of a century of independence and an equally long period of transition. Instead of having these years of independence marked by a maturing of the state, reforms, democratization and Europeanization of its society, the Republic of Macedonia is still preoccupied with various transformations and discontinuities, accompanied at the same time with the 'childhood illnesses', the unpredictability of adolescence and the pathology of old age and fatigue deep in the very substance of the state and the nation. The country reached maturity only formally, while in reality there remain the two dilemmas continuously raised over the years by some politicians and analysts: did the Republic of Macedonia justify its independence and did it prove itself as a mature state, nation and society.

These dilemmas remain because the country has been progressing at the pace of 'one step forward – two-to-three steps back.' In all these 26 years of transition, when it was stepping forward, from the outside Macedonia was perceived as a small, but prosperous, sinewy and adaptable country. Macedonia was a leader in the Balkans in many areas, such as economic development, living conditions, and democratic processes, while generating peace and stability in the region from a security perspective—it was among the first to join NATO's Partnership for Peace, and among the first to acquire candidate status in the EU. On the other hand, there were two occasions during which Macedonia was taking its steps back. The country regressed as in the name of party interests, interethnic relations were worsened, consciously and deliberately, threatening to generate a security crisis in the region. At the same time, state institutions were politicized, became dysfunctional and were losing the confidence of the citizens; corruption and crime escalated; Euroscepticism was promoted, relations with neighboring countries and the international community were deteriorating, as was the country's standing on the international scene. Macedonia was losing that which had set it apart, as well as its position as a leader in the region and, especially in the last ten years, found itself at the tail end of all progressive processes by all parameters, not only in the region, but also on a

global scale. That is precisely why the European Commission, in providing its diagnosis of the situation in its annual report, characterized Macedonia as “a captured state”.

These phases of regressions coincided with the periods when the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) was in power. Whether these were indeed coincidences or not, only time and history can tell, because from the present point of view, the many dilemmas, controversies and priorities that were imposed and effectuated by the party and especially its leadership, remain unclear. However, all the events, indicators, analyses and effects, are showing that VMRO-DMNE, because of its system of governing, lack of ideological definition and unrecognizable features of the party, misplaced priorities, the modest statesmanship and political and personal capacity of its leadership, the tendency to accept foreign influence for pure personal political and material benefit, the easy succumbing to the temptations of power for exercising narrow party and personal interests - led the country into such great risks and dangers that put in question even its own survival.

In both of these occasions the wins on the parliamentary elections which brought VMRO-DMNE in power were undisputed and were met with euphoric celebration, while the expectations of the majority of the citizens, based on the election programs and promises, were high. The first win happened during the parliamentary elections held in 1998 and the party stayed in power for a single mandate until 2002, when it suffered a serious blow because it was punished by the citizens its bad governance and the unfulfilled promises and expectations. In that period the head of the party and the government was Ljubcho Georgievski. The second time VMRO-DPMNE came in power was after the electoral win in 2006. It stayed in power until 2017, when after the parliamentary elections held at the end of 2016 it did not manage to form a parliamentary majority because of the deteriorated relations with the Albanian electorate, the crime and the corruption which resulted in the destroyed capacity for coalition building. In that period, the leader of the party and the government was Nikola Gruevski. In the beginning of 2016, as part of the Przhino agreement, he resigned as prime minister and was succeeded by Emil Dimitriev from VMRO-DPMNE, as technical prime minister. Since the majority of the population that voted in the elections opted for changes and reforms, a new parliamentary majority was formed, which included 67 Members of Parliament from the coalition led by the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM), the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) and the Alliance of the Albanians. The new Government

included SDSM, DUI and the Alliance of the Albanians, while VMRO-DPMNE, Besa and the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) remained in opposition.

Both periods of a VMRO-DPMNE government started out euphorically and ambitiously, achieving relatively positive results, and ended similarly: infamously, having endangered the country, with agreements encouraged, mediated and guaranteed by the international community and with the party punished in the parliamentary elections by the majority of citizens.

In the first mandate of VMRO-DPMNE, from 1998 to 2002, their governing started out well, but ended with disaster. In 2001 Macedonia's security was threatened due to an armed interethnic conflict. A war broke out in the country due to a lack of capacity, an inability to govern the country and to work in the interest of the citizens and for the development of society. Instead, priority was given to party and personal interests—to preserve its position of power at any cost and for personal profits and financial benefits.

The coalition government of VMRO-DPMNE and DPA relied on two principles in its policies: relaxed interethnic relations and positive energy towards neighboring countries, which marked a discontinuity and new approach to the strategy that was practiced by the former government of SDSM and the President of the Republic Kiro Gligorov, based on the following principles: domestically – cohabitation, in foreign relations – constructive equidistance in relation to the neighboring countries. Time and the events that followed revealed that these two principles were misused: domestically, to cover up the mounting problems in interethnic relations, especially between Macedonians and Albanians that escalated in armed conflict; while in foreign relations, the positive energy was one-sided, from Macedonia towards the neighbors, but not the other way round. In that context, Bulgaria solved its language problem with Macedonia and cleared the path to its entrance into the EU, but did not resolve any of the unresolved problems in Macedonia's favor; Greece made real expansion with its companies in Macedonia, but retained its firm position in the name issue, blocking the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of the country (though Georgievski did make efforts to solve the problem with the attribute Gorna/Upper Macedonia). Both Serbia and Albania took the advantage of all that was available to them, providing nothing in return. At the end of its mandate, especially during and after the armed conflict, the government of VMRO-DPMNE and Ljupcho Georgievski had completely broken down relations with the international community and with the most influential countries.

The tensions in the interethnic relations that escalated in armed conflict, the environment of instability, the procurement of weapons and engagement of military experts, the arrival of mercenaries in the country, the introduction of a war tax without thorough control and accountability for how and for what purposes the collected money was spent, created a wide space and conditions for the expansion of organized crime that involved many individuals from the party and the government. Soon after losing the elections, in a brief period of time, the system of governance froze the bud of politically organized crime that had sprouted, and kept it frozen until a more opportune time and environment presented themselves.

When we talk about VMRO-DPMNE's first mandate in power and everything that happened, it is still unclear whose interests the government was representing: global, regional, or perhaps the interest of some neighboring countries—considering that the leader of the party and then prime minister, as an epilogue, introduced the proposal for territory and population exchange, in fact a division of the country, which was backed by the leadership of the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts and as by some politicians as an “interesting proposal” that should not be immediately rejected. Fortunately, the majority of citizens of Macedonia of all ethnicities, the intellectuals and the political parties decisively rejected this proposal. It coincided with the interests and positions of the international community, the proposal was rejected by Albania, and even from the National Liberation Army (NLA), and the end of the conflict was sealed with the Ohrid Framework Agreement, signed by all relevant political parties in Macedonia, the President of the Republic Boris Trajkovski and the representatives of the international community.

In the four year period between the two mandates of the governing of VMRO-DPMNE, during the governing of SDSM, the state was stabilized domestically, interethnic relations were being developed in accordance with the Ohrid agreement, the institutions began to normalize and to carry out their functions, the economy was consolidated and the process was started of incremental but stable development. On the foreign policy level, the relations with the international community were normalized, the conditions for EU and NATO membership continued to be fulfilled, and at the end of 2005 Macedonia was granted status of candidate country for membership in the EU. A short while after, USA recognized the country under the name Macedonia.

In its second mandate, from 2006 to 2017, in the same way as in the first, VMRO-DPMNE started was off to a glorious start and ended infamously—for

the state, but this time also for their leadership. Soon after coming to power and following the early relatively good results in economic development, the monstrous system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE was created. Using electoral engineering to win all elections, it occupied all levels of government, politicized all the state institutions, introduced an autocratic and authoritarian regime helmed by the leader Nikola Gruevski, completely captured the state and made staying in power possible through politically organized crime, while the party and its leaders gain social and material profits and become rich in the process. Unlike the period when Georgievski was governing with the DPA co-leaders Arben Dzaferi and Menduh Tachi, when interethnic relations were falsely presented as relaxed and exemplary before escalating into armed conflict, during the reign of Nikola Gruevski and the leader of DUI Ali Ahmeti, interethnic relations were intentionally disrupted, and none of this hidden in order to allow them to use tough nationalism to win the frequent snap parliamentary elections. The two leaders and their nationalist parties, although jointly governing from the government cabinets, were hoping for a second half of the armed conflict in 2001, each of them dreaming of victory. In that situation, even though they declaratively supported NATO and EU membership and cooperation with the neighbors, rather than fulfill the criteria for membership, the country fulfilled the criteria to close its doors, while Euroskepticism was spreading, alternatives like Russia, China and Turkey were being offered, relations with the neighbors continued to worsen, the countries that were our strategic partners—USA, Germany, France, Holland—were criticized and demonized, steadfastly deteriorating the international position of the country.

Due to the uncovered crimes committed by the government: mass wire-tappings, electoral corruption and crime, robbed state resources, trading with state and national interests, abuse of power and official positions, a large number of conflicts of interests and nepotism—a situation that was threatening to bring about the political and economic collapse of the state, but towards the end also security risks, intraethnic and interethnic conflicts—the international community stepped in again to propose a solution in the form of an agreement. This time there were two, the Przhino Agreement 1 and Przhino Agreement 2, which were initiated, mediated and guaranteed by the EU and USA. The Przhino agreements, which had the goal of institutional reforms and the reestablishment of the rule of law, as well as a legal resolution for the mass wiretapping done by the secret services led by VMRO-DPMNE through the mutually agreed and newly created Special Prosecutor's Office, were constantly obstructed by the VMRO-DPMNE Government, and later on by the technical

government again led by a VMRO-DPMNE prime minister. All necessary means were used: a few international figures and factors were recruited, such as the Republican congressman from United States Dana Rohrabacher (a lobbyist for VMRO-DPMNE, also known for his pro-Russia views) in one of his interviews, as well as the Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov (his Foreign Ministry on many occasions publicly supported the government of Gruevski) during a governmental security forum, had both advocated ideas for even partitioning the country, which was later denied and additionally clarified—but for the moment, it had served its purpose and inflamed passions and fears both domestically and globally.

As a political journalist and analyst, VMRO-DPMNE aroused my interest and intrigued me since its appearance on the Macedonian political scene, as one of the first newly established political parties after the proclamation of independence of the country: because of the name, the persons that created the party, the ideological and political platform, the euphoria which I witnessed as a direct observer of the first party congress held in Prilep (when among other things it was announced that the second congress will be held in Thessaloniki), because of the military type of organization and activities, because of their system of governing when they were in power and the system of functioning when in opposition. I had followed and commented in my daily journalistic observations the period of transition in Macedonia, and in that context the role of VMRO-DPMNE and especially the role and the effects of the functioning of the party during the two periods it was in power (out of 26 years of transition, this party has led the country for almost 15 years, which means that it the party is the synonym for the transition). I have provided more in-depth analyses in three of my previous books: “Changes that Desecrated Macedonia” (*Kultura* – 2001), “2001 – The War with Two Faces” (*Kultura* – 2008), “System 2014” (self-published – 2015), and I am completing this cycle with the present work – “Captured state” (*Kultura* – 2017).

In “Changes that Desecrated Macedonia,” I observed the political and the social environment and the effects on them and in general on the state, of the first rule of VMRO-DPMNE. In “2001 – War with two faces,” I looked at the inadequate priorities, the failure to resolve problems, especially in the sphere of interethnic relations and the radical discontinuities in the governing of the country, the politicization of the institutions—all as part of the reasons why Macedonia’s security was under threat, why it was plagued by armed conflict and why it was pushed to the brink of division and ruin. In “System 2014” I analyzed VMRO-DPMNE’s system of governing in its second term, when it

completely politicized the institutions, equated party with state, created a large political and institutional crisis that threatened to lead the state to total collapse and dissolution. "Captured state" is an analysis of the consequences of the party infiltrating institutions, which captured by the party and its leadership proved exceptional instruments and logistics for politically organized crime and for illegal profits and financial gain.

If anything can be drawn as a specific characteristic of the party and its leadership in the entire period of its existence and operation, then it is without a doubt Niccolò Machiavelli's maxim "the ends justify the means", but in its complete original form defined in his most important work "The Prince": "If the aim of the ruler is to preserve the country, then all of his endeavors will be judged as honorable and will be praised. The crowd can be attracted through appearance, as well as through successfully completed endeavor..."

When talking about the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE, it is important to take into account one important element: the double approach, i.e., the big differences between what was declared and what was done, between what was promised and what was accomplished, which in simple terms comes down to saying one thing and doing another.

With such approach, Machiavelli's maxim that is followed by the party can be formulated as such: **"If the aim** of the ruler (in our case Nikola Gruevski and VMRO-DPMNE) is to win (in all elections in order to achieve absolute power) **to preserve the country** (the name, the language, the identity, and having in mind that the system equals the state with the party, that means to preserve the power of the party), **then all** of his **endeavors** will be judged as honorable and will be praised (**are justified**). **The crowd can be attracted through appearance** (which the system managed to achieve with a part of the citizens in Macedonia, i.e., 'the people' that VMRO-DPMNE is speaking to—with attractive populist propaganda, declarations and promises), **as well as through successfully completed endeavor** (successful for the party and its leadership, but unsuccessful for the state, which on two occasions was on the brink of collapse)..."

VMRO-DPMNE has a lot of similarities with the ancient Roman god Janus, the god with two faces. The double approach as an essential part of the VMRO-DPMNE's system of functioning and especially its the system of governing, is most evident in the realization of on the one hand the state, and the other hand, the party goals and priorities. The party program for the elections that were held in 2006, called "Revival in 100 Steps", outlines five strategic

priorities that are later copied in the programs for all elections that followed: "Increasing economic growth and competitiveness on a permanent basis, a higher employment rate, increasing the standard and quality of living; Integration of Macedonia in NATO and EU; the Continuation of the fight against crime and corruption and efficient implementation of the law; Preserving good interethnic relations and cohabitation based on the principles of mutual tolerance and respect, equal implementation of the law, as well as completion of the implementation of the Ohrid agreement; Investing in education as the path to creating both strong individuals and a strong state".

After almost eleven years in power, VMRO-DPMNE did not accomplish any of these strategic goals. There is no record of increased economic growth and competitiveness on a permanent basis, unemployment was decreased through deletion and other alchemist tricks, the living standard was worsened and the number of people living in poverty increased. The country regressed in its NATO and EU integrations and the candidate status came under threat. Instead of fighting against crime and corruption, the system fought to protect the perpetrators of crime and corruption, and instead of rule of law Macedonia became an authoritarian captured state. VMRO-DPMNE was constantly worsening inter-ethnic relations and in the end lost power because of the broken down relations with the Albanian community and its political parties. Much like all other systems, the system of education was completely ruined, and instead of creating strong individuals, it created dependents, clients and loyal subjects.

If it failed to fulfill the declared state and national interests, VMRO-DPMNE's system of governing more than made up for it with its party and party leadership strategic goals and interests: (1) it won in ten election cycles in a row in all elections, gained absolute power and extended its rule to almost eleven years, (2) it captured the state, adjusted and instrumentalized all institutions for achieving narrow party interests, as well as the personal interests of the party leadership, and created a system of protection from moral, political and legal responsibility for the abuse and crimes that were committed, (3) by abusing its government power, it developed efficient forms of politically organized crime and the party and its leadership gained enormous profits and wealth.

The duality was and still remains a character feature of this party. When the VMRO-DPMNE system wanted to cover up or otherwise downplay certain unfavorable events and situations, it sometimes managed get itself caught up in its own spin. I will elaborate on this with a specific and very indicative example of the government's treatment of the Report by the parliamentary ad-hoc

commission about the events related to the “black Monday” and the forcible expulsion of the opposition MPs from the plenary hall of the Parliament and the journalists from the press-lounge (which, by the way, is the same document that a prominent member of the commission from this party called “Kleenex”). The leader of the party and the Government, Nikola Gruevski, stated that they were coerced into signing that document to protect Macedonian interests, at the detriment of VMRO-DPMNE. However, despite this explanation and in accordance with the nature of the system, they signed but did not implement the report, so the result was the complete opposite of what was declared—the final outcome was in VMRO-DPMNE’s interest and to the detriment of the interests of Macedonia! Here we can raise the logical question: how and why is it that something that is good for Macedonia can be harmful for VMRO-DPMNE and what are the interests of this party which, had they not signed the Report, would have been of use to the party, but harmful to Macedonia !?!

Furthermore, in its desire to fully control processes and people, and in order to intercept any threats to its rule, the system got caught in a mess of its own making with its illegal wiretapping—by wiretapping itself, which in the end was uncovered, this came back as a boomerang and marked the beginning of the fall from the ruling throne.

This is only a small portion of the controversies for which VMRO-DPMNE should always be monitored, treated and analyzed very carefully, if an attempt is to be made to determine the role of the party in contemporary Macedonian history. In order to pass judgment on all this, a number of important elements should be outlined, which can be arrived at without any special analysis. These had harmful consequences to the Macedonian state and society, as well as to the Macedonian national interests. Although many more can be listed, the following four which are the most important will suffice: the divisions, discontinuities, the captured state and politically organized crime.

The burden of responsibility is VMRO-DPMNE’s to bear, if not so much for solidifying the divisions in Macedonia—as these are neither new nor unknown, but rather part of the complete “Macedonian context” in the distant and more recent past, including under other governments with a different ideology and political features in independent Macedonia—then for its role in complete designing, finalizing and implementing the divisions and putting them to use with the sole purpose of governing and keeping its hold on the power. Generally speaking, VMRO-DPMNE’s system of governing enforced and firmly established three types of divisions in Macedonia (a) general: political, national,

confessional, social, cultural, economic, status-based, etc., (b) interethnic: Macedonians-Albanians, (c) intra-Macedonian: historical-ideological-identity divisions (ancient and Slavic Macedonians, patriots and traitors, reformists and the last remnants of the transition, “VMROs” and “communards”, the Macedonian state is established with the referendum in 1991, not in 1944 at the Anti-fascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Macedonia (ASNOM), i.e. with the victory in the World War II and the Anti-Fascist fight...).

In both occasions when VMRO-DPMNE came into power one of the most important priorities on which it insisted and which it faithfully worked toward was radical discontinuity with everything that the previous SDSM government had worked on and accomplished, regardless of whether these were successful or unsuccessful policies, endeavors, projects, conditions. In this way it wanted to show that everything starts with them and that everything that is to be done will be done their way, even if that meant that some things are started from scratch and done exactly the way they were done before, just so they can say that they did them. For instance, after coming to power in 2006, although all that remained to get a starting date for the negotiations with the EU was the passing of two or three systemic laws, the then minister of foreign affairs in VMRO-DPMNE's government made a statement in Brussels that announced a discontinuity in the association too, as they themselves wanted to fulfill the conditions set by the EU. As a result, the process was prolonged for nearly eleven years, and more importantly, the party did not only fail to finalize the process, but also pulled it back. There were discontinuities in politics, the economy, state and national priorities... There was also a discontinuity in regard to the national identity, as they searched to find roots deeper than those of the Slavic period and dug into antiquity and in some historically unknown and undefined persons and territories. The roots of the Macedonian state were sought not in the first one created during the anti-fascist struggle and the war for liberation, but in ancient Macedonia; not in the units led by Mihajlo Apostolski, but in the phalanx of Alexander the Great.

Through absolute power and by completely politicizing the institutions, VMRO-DPMNE's system of ruling captured the state and made subjects of its institutional, material, financial and human resources, which served the narrow party and personal interests of the party leadership. In this way, without any real problems or obstacles and with a strong foothold in politically organized crime, it was free to reign and abuse the power of government for party and personal profits and privileges in every respect, as well as to amass personal wealth.

This is what we have seen, perceived and presumed about VMRO-DPMNE, but much remains unanswered: what all was hiding behind such a system of governing, behind the capturing, the endangering and the robbing of the state? Was this type of state governing by VMRO-DPMNE and the system it created the result of ignorance, unawareness, naiveté, or was it was done with full awareness; then, was it done independently or under the command of hidden players with their own interests, who in order to carry out their global goals allowed the party and its leadership to weaken the foundations of the state in its current shape, order, composition and territory, and at the cost of criminality and amassed personal wealth. These controversial issues and dilemmas will become clear and uncovered in time, sooner or later.

History and the present provide us with facts that VMRO, in the past as a national movement (except in a short period at the very beginning) and VMRO-DPMNE as a contemporary political party, cannot go down in Macedonian history as the bearers of some permanent benefits, effects and values, because they carry the burden of some domestic and foreign remnants, divisions and work against the interests and to the detriment of the Macedonian people, state and society. Many historians and analysts, without analysis and arguments, interpreted VMRO-DPMNE's and Ljupcho Georgievski's declaration after the formation of the party that it will advocate for an own currency, army, national football team, as a commitment to advocate for an independent state. However, one must not forget here two undisputed facts: the first, that in the early 90s VMRO-DPMNE was of the opinion, which luckily did not get a pass from the population and in parliament, that the proclamation of independence of the Republic of Macedonia should not go to a referendum, revealing their doubts in the consciousness of the citizens, but rather as a constitutional law adopted by government, like in Croatia; and the second, the attacks on the barracks of the Yugoslav National Army in Macedonia, acts launched by a few high-ranking party officials, with the aim to provoke the Yugoslav National Army to create the so-called "southern front" and to thus make it easier for Croatian president Franjo Tudjman and his party HDZ to finish their fight against the Yugoslav National Army and Slobodan Miloshevic's paramilitary units.

If many things about the past still remain an enigma, one thing is more than clear in the present: the party of VMRO-DPMNE, as it was and is now—after the uncovering of the wiretapping scandal, the capturing of the state, the politically organized crime and especially the violence of "Bloody Thursday" on April 27th 2017—can ask for nothing, nor has anything to offer to the citizens and to the state. After eleven years of disastrous governing, the party is tired,

defaced and emptied out: without ideology, a platform, personnel potential or energy. The perspectives and alternatives that are in front of the party are small and narrowed down. The only choice that remains for the party is this: to remain as it was till now, and then to collapse (and if it does not collapse, then the state will collapse if it ever comes back to power in its current shape), or to make a complete transformation, to remove the abbreviation VMRO from its name and to continue on equal footing with the other political parties to find its place under the sun on the Macedonian political map.

I

INTRODUCTION

The modern world today is characterized by two global processes that stand in direct opposition. There are a number of other processes that move, entangle, confront or simply merge into them. The class between these processes is later on also reflected on the local level, in the countries—to a larger extent in some, to a lesser extent in others, but but no country is bypassed without sensing them or without some consequences or corrections to the local processes and policies.

The first process, which until fairly recently was the dominant one: globalization, liberal democracy, open society, connecting countries based on democratic values and voluntary giving up part of their sovereignty to larger alliances, unions, movements and other forms, with a common aim—faster and improved development and an expansion of the democratic processes, the rule of law and the legal state, global security, extending human rights and freedoms and the establishment of a functional and efficient market economy (EU, NATO, IMF, WB, etc.). In this process, i.e., in these societies that accepted and practice democratic values – there is an ongoing attempt to build and upgrade systems and instruments for democratic control, sustainable balances, independent regulatory bodies, accountability and responsibility. Of course, there are also the unavoidable weaknesses and lack of resistance due to the variety of ideas, interests and specifics that exist in a particular country.

The other process, which until recently appeared more to be incidental and was localized in relatively less important countries, i.e., those less influential on the global scene, is characterized by narrow national, business, even personal interests and *idées fixes* of some authoritarian leaders—a selective rule of law and legal state, serious limitations and violations of human rights, lack of democracy, abuse of democratic procedures for adopting undemocratic decisions and the establishment of an undemocratic environment, violence against opponents, political trials, arrests, liquidations of people. All of this resulted in the creation of closed and (self)isolated societies dominated by

unchecked and unlimited autocratic governing, with the list of already known and newly discovered consequences produced by these types of regimes.

Between these two global processes that are in a mutual clash of concepts, of values and of interests, in the last few decades there is a manifestation of a specific process that over time makes gains in terms of intensity and power. As such, this process clashes or aligns with the global processes, depending on the interests and the global context. This is a process that we see in China and some other up-and-coming societies that gravitate around its orbit. Chinese society has both features that are typical for a liberal society—a market economy, an increased international presence with trade, financial and economic influence in many countries on the global scale, and for a closed society—a communist system, internally closed and ideologically ruled society, a strong military power, and all of this accompanied by crime, corruption and enormous social differences.

This global clash of concepts and processes and its results create conditions and assumptions for new situations and imbalances that in turn generate new and unpredictable processes with even more unpredictable effects and phenomena, part of which are exceptionally negative, regressive and can easily capture certain vulnerable and dysfunctional states and cause consequences in various areas of the social life. Among them, of course, the unavoidable: corruption and politically organized crime.

A Return to the Logic of the Cold War

Because of the inconsistencies, understatements, the lack of answers and solutions not only for internal problems, but also for the challenges and the new processes happening outside of their court fences, the liberal order and its multinational organizations, unions and alliances lacked the capacity to notice and completely missed and underestimated the process that was giving shape—either premeditated or spontaneously—to nationalist/populist models of autocratic/dictatorial societies/states worldwide, in its own regions, among some of its closest partners, even in its own backyard. The eras of such tectonic transformations of societies/states, peppered with nationalist/populist autocratic governing and euphoria produced by huge quantities of sticky promises, create mass psychological delusions among the population, affecting reasoning and logical thinking and thus creating particularly fertile soil and time for corruption and politically organized crime to the benefit of the ruling elites.

Through the contours of the as of yet not fully profiled epilogue of the clash between the two global processes, one can notice elements of a return to an extremely destructive *status quo* that existed in the world for very many years after World War II between the two global political and military hemispheres – The West and the East. The Cold War restricted the movement of capital, ideas, people, technologies, democratic processes, cooperation in all fields, and created an environment of all sorts of confrontations, and even threats of war. That this exists on a macro level was one of the points in an opinion piece written by d-r Denko Maleski, international politics professor and former minister of foreign affairs, in which he analyzes the clash of interests between the West (USA and EU) and Russia over their influence on the countries of the Western Balkans, and especially on Macedonia. This is good illustration because the global macro situation around the clash is formed by and dependent on many similar micro situations and interests.

“The simple logic of the Cold War is alive again: what is good for one side is bad for the other, and vice versa. As much as it is dangerous, at the same time this rivalry between the USA and Russia is a chance for us to sooner become a member of NATO. As usual in the history of international relations, it is in the interest of the great powers to control all that can be controlled. How? Well, in the way that, according to the values that are behind their power, they want us to look like them. Why? Because in such world, in a world that looks like them, in a world of open societies, for instance, The West feels safer. This was the lesson from the experience with Adolf Hitler, which forced Winston Churchill and Theodore Roosevelt to conclude that dictatorships are threats to world peace, and that is therefore worth fighting for freedom and democracy in a timely fashion. Thus, the western powers insist on political pluralism, the rule of law, the respect for human rights, limited governing mandates, the fight against corruption, on independent judiciary ... Russia, on the other hand, feels quite comfortable with the autocratic systems with which it develops economic cooperation and in so doing exerts its influence on them. Therefore, it is up to us to choose what type of Macedonia we want, or to be more precise, who do we want to look like. There is no easy way out, because while for democratically oriented people the choice is clear, the supporters of the autocratic and corrupt system are feeling quite comfortable in communication with the Russian and very uncomfortable in communication with the western system of governing and the values on which they are built.”

In the increasingly prominent clash between these two processes, i.e., models/systems of organization and governance, we are recently witnessing

a clash between their basic manifested weapons and features. In the essence of the conflict, which is generated by the supporters of a closed society, who are very ambitious to the level of “showing their muscles” and militancy, what appears at the forefront are egotism, egocentrism, nationalism, populism and authoritarianism as a motive and as a system of governing. The primary interest of the newly created political elites in such societies, which is nationalism and a closed society, is in fact the counterpoint to the primary interest of open societies, a liberal democracy and democratic-moral values. Therefore, the tribe, the nation, one’s own backyard, and the narrow, above all personal interests are preferred over the individual, the citizen and the common good, the free world without borders and other limitations. According to Amnesty International, the most important and the most dangerous side effect of this process is the increased overall vulnerability of individual human rights. And all of this is being offered on the world market, with a wide range of products wrapped in nice looking packing of populist, political, ideological, nationalist and even religious extremism.

The trend of national-populism and self-isolationism is presented as an alternative to the trend that was dominated until recently—an open, global and international liberal order, collecting supporters among the political elites and their nations not only in the majority of autocratic “captured” states/societies, but also, surprisingly, in countries with highly developed democracies and economies. What makes a suitable environment and fertile soil for such an alternative are the well-known internal problems of the liberal order which have existed for a long time and for which quick and efficient solutions were never found. These problems in the substance of liberal democracy have to the liberal order being eaten from the inside. The highly developed countries, established as the pillars of successful integration- and security-based associations, unions and alliances (EU, NATO, IMF, WB etc.) and as countries that are cradles and examples of democratic values and traditions, role-models and exporters of democracy, liberalism, rights and freedoms, a market economy, and open societies in which the citizen is at the very center—these countries now find themselves in various phases of disorientation, Euroskepticism, or in deep dilemmas about their next steps. Here is one specific illustration of this. Immediately after the Brexit referendum, the British prime minister Theresa May caused a major shock when she openly challenged the idea of global citizenship, saying: “If you believe you are a citizen of the world, then you are citizen of nowhere”. Her statement was interpreted as an “anti-liberal” switch, and her speech was seen as echoing the year 1933.

While among the ranks of the liberal order there were, for a while (before and after the Brexit referendum) were noticeable signs of crisis and processes of disintegration, there was a trend of attempts to group and build alliances among the supporters of autocratic, totalitarian, closed societies. This occurred on different levels, both vertical and horizontal, as they are not tied by any common ideological, national or value-based standard, but only and exclusively by opposition to the liberal order, the protection and survival of their own autocratic, dictatorial and totalitarian systems of governing, and the export and sale of this model to as many more countries with different regimes and characteristics as possible. This happened because for these societies, or to be more precise, for their autocratic leaders, increasing the numbers and strengthening their positions on the global scale also meant strengthening their positions and power internally, with unlimited possibilities for dictatorship, corruption, crime and the amassing of personal wealth.

The European Union used to be a synonym for integration, as its name indicates, because it was established with the fundamental idea to integrate, to connect countries and projects so that they may prosper in all social spheres—politics, economy, commerce, democracy, rule of law and the legal state, human rights and freedoms, security, etc. In the framework of this process, the founding members and the most important European economic and democratic states were joined by a large number of countries that, following the collapse of the Eastern Block, were transformed into democratic societies, so that the present number of EU member-states is twenty-eight. At present, the remaining European countries that are seeking to enter the union are in various stages of the association process, depending on the specific conditions in each of those countries. And while the accession process has slowed down, inside EU there emerged an opposite process, one of disintegration: leaving the Union and closing their own countries, above all by some of the more important countries, and even founding members.

Macron's Victory Put a Stop to the Retrograde Process

With the Brexit referendum, the citizens of the United Kingdom decided to leave the EU, with the opinion that they will live better and develop faster. Due to the rise of nationalism generated by the conservative and right wing parties, similar processes are expected to happen in Italy, France, Denmark and some other countries. This trend got an additional push and was furthered

with the win of the Republican candidate Donald Trump in the US presidential elections and his nationalist/populist slogan “Make America Great Again”, which announced the closing of the the most open liberal-democratic society, as well as a period of self-isolation.

The arrival of Donald Trump in White House, at least based to his early decisions and according to the first reactions and analyses of leading global and US intellectuals and officials, could lead to serious disruptions in established relations, balances and practices on a global scale as well as in the country policies. This is exclusively because of his understanding of power and easily expressed, but not completely well thought-out and statesmanlike words, moves and policies. He will replace the unprincipled and dangerous policies that he criticized with even more unprincipled and dangerous policies that he is advocating. This type of governing and public expression, decisions and policies move along the very fine and faint line between democracy and authoritarianism, peppered with elements of nationalist populism, and, no reason to shy away from it—mild symptoms of fascism.

It is worth mentioning that the conflict between the liberal and the closed society brought to the surface a contradiction of logic: on the foundations of liberal capitalism on which liberal society relied until now, it is possible to graft and to grow a totalitarian state, an autocracy, a completely closed society, and even fascism. A totalitarian state with absolute power results in a captured and kidnapped state. Nevertheless, the dangers of authoritarianism and fascism are becoming recognizable and publicly exposed, and now even the reverse processes are taking shape, like the one in France, one of the pillars of the European family. Namely, on the presidential elections in 2017 in France there was a direct clash between the pro-European and the anti-European, anti-liberal, anti-global national-populism, even fascist idea, with Emmanuel Macron on one side and Marine Le Pen on the other. The democratic forces of French society, with joint forces and regardless of their party affiliation, convincingly defeated the dark forces of the closed, nationalist and frustrated society. This process was completed with a strong win for Macron’s newly created party, which formed the government.

The outcome of the elections in France has shown that liberal-democratic forces are gradually overcoming the ideological crisis, or to be more precise, the hesitations stemming from the conformist-elitist approach and the self-engagement, and are taking the already consolidated leading position. It was no accident that Emmanuel Macron spent his first day in office as the President

of France almost entirely on a meeting with the German chancellor Angela Merkel. Expectedly, Macron was received in Berlin with the highest honors, but what came as a surprise was that on the streets of the German capitol he was greeted with excitement from the locals, who celebrated his victory in the presidential elections in France over Marine le Pen, who had publicly advocated her country's exit from the EU. Thus, the duo of helmsmen of the European family, both politically and economically, have reunited at the command deck, especially after Merkel won the German elections, so the European idea will not be endangered.

The majority of the British population realized immediately after the Brexit referendum that they had been manipulated into the 'Leave' vote and with radical populism, nationalism and Euroskepticism, as well as with big promises for progress and welfare. The main propagators of the idea for Brexit were punished already in the snap parliamentary elections held in the spring of 2017. Although the Prime Minister Theresa May's Conservative Party won the majority of the vote, they nevertheless lost their majority in the Parliament and with it, the possibility to form a Government alone. The elections almost completely erased from the political map of Britain, Nigel Farage and his UK Independence Party, the biggest Euroskeptic and advocate for Brexit. Theresa May may have managed to form a Government, but the trend is already shaped—the next snap or regular parliamentary elections are expected to punish the Conservatives again and make room for new processes to start.

In his book "Unended Quest," which in a way is his intellectual autobiography, Karl Popper, one of the greatest philosophers of the 20th century and father of the philosophy of "open society," also talks about the inability of liberal democracy to at a certain point "recognize" retrograde processes and fascism. Because of his Jewish origin, his work at the University of Vienna became impossible and in 1937 he emigrated first to Great Britain and later on to New Zealand. Talking about his months-long stay in Britain, he wrote: "The honesty and decency of the people and their strong feeling of political responsibility made the greatest possible impression on me. But even the university teachers I met were utterly misinformed about Hitler's Germany, and wishful thinking was universal [...] I realized that democracy—even British democracy—was not an institution designed to fight totalitarianism; but it was very sad to find that there was apparently only one man—Winston Churchill—who understood what was happening, and that literally nobody had a good word for him."

This phenomenon was also written about by D-r Miroslav Grchev, a university professor and critical observer of the rebirth of fascist ideas in Europe

and its reflections in Macedonia, in an opinion piece in which he evokes the Popper's assertion. "This 'blindness' to fascism is happening to Europe again in the last few decades and once again, the total immunity of the new fascists to democratic law, moral and knowledge—their total and totalitarian Stupidity—it is if it makes them 'invisible' to rationality and political correctness"—Grchev notes.

Slavoj Zizek, the renowned Slovenian philosopher, analyzing the early policies and moves by the US president Donald Trump, writes in "In These Times": "Trump talked about Washington elites, not about capitalists and big bankers. He talked about disengaging from the role of the global policeman, but he promises the destruction of Muslim terrorism. At other times, he has said he will prevent North Korean ballistic tests and contain China's occupation of South China Sea islands. So what we are getting is global military interventionism exerted directly on behalf of American interests, with no human-rights and-democracy mask. Back in the 1960s, the motto of the early ecological movement was "Think globally, act locally!" Trump promises to do the exact opposite: "Think locally, act globally." In the 20th century, one need not proclaim "America first!" It was a given. The fact that Trump proclaimed it indicates that in the 21st century American global interventionism will go on in a more brutal way"

The American senator Bernie Sanders, who ultimately unsuccessfully attempted to secure the nomination from the Democratic Party for the presidential elections in 2016, in his interview for the British newspaper "The Guardian" said that his sharp criticism of Trump is not a consequence of party affiliation: "George Bush was very conservative president, I opposed him every single day. But George Bush did not operate outside of mainstream American political values". The senator from Vermont noted that, "despite the virulent threat of Trump, he finds comfort in the evidence that the resistance is in full swing and added that mass resistance is the only way to defeat Trump's move towards authoritarianism."

Putin is Rushing to Make Russia a Factor Again

Judging by the initial announcements and the first moves from the USA and Russia Federation, destabilization is not out of the question, and neither is even the falling apart of some good and well-established values and forms

of organizing, agreements and relations based on which the world has been successfully cooperating and functioning until now. These messages, like concentric circles will soon send ripples throughout the world, in the form of the possibility of a reign of chaos and unregulated relations, signaling to authoritarian leaders in undemocratic and captured states that they have free reign in muddled waters.

This ideological, conceptual and global-strategic gap, “the fatigue of materials” and dilemmas of western societies and democracies, is used by Russia, which under Putin wants as soon as possible to make itself a factor again as the biggest power and to take better negotiating positions. At a time when there is ongoing debate in the western democracies, i.e., there is a clash on the global level for domination between the supporters of the process of globalization, liberal democracy and open societies on one side, and supporters of closed societies on the national level and living in the self-actualization of one’s own sovereignty and protectionism on the other, Russia is using this pre-occupation for a counterattack—with a strong intention to install itself in regions which, although traditionally of great strategic importance, were never under its influence. We are talking here about the Balkans (Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia) and some other focal points in Europe and in the world, with the aim to penetrate into the zones of interest, influence and security of the European Union and NATO and to insert divisions, anxiety and security threats. Perhaps Russia’s interest is not so much oriented towards specific countries, but rather to ensure that those specific countries, especially of the Western Balkans that are not members of NATO and the EU, are unstable, thus keeping unstable the entire region, which is traditionally a region that causes global shifts and wide-scale war. By achieving this, they would constantly make the Union and the Alliance nervous, while carving out better negotiating positions for strategically more important issues and problems in other regions and areas. After failing to block Montenegro’s entrance into NATO, which became the Alliance’s 29th member, Russia turned its attention to Macedonia.

The bloody events in the Macedonian parliament on April 27th 2017, and especially their aftermath, exposed certain “secret ties” that existed in the relation between Russia and VMRO-DPMNE, as well as in the orthodox-authoritarian transversal: Russia and Vladimir Putin – Serbia and Aleksandar Vucic – VMRO-DMNE and Nikola Gruevski. Namely, according to new findings, Russia was showing increased interest for Macedonia immediately after VMRO-DPMNE came to power in 2006. Only time will tell what was really going

on. Firstly, was the interference done with the knowledge of VMRO-DPMNE government? Secondly, if not with the prior knowledge of VMRO-DPMNE, did the responsible security services fail to detect the work of the Russian secret services? Thirdly, (and most probably) were Russian secret services active without being detected by the Macedonian security services until 2008, after which, i.e., after Macedonia was not accepted in NATO at the Bucharest Summit, cooperation was established between the Macedonian and the Russian secret services, and later on between Macedonian and Russian politics? Many things point to this: the forced Euroskepticism and the anti-NATO sentiment; offering Russia as an alternative which was generated by the system of governing and the pro-governmental media megaphones, and, one should not forget, president Gjorge Ivanov's and prime minister Nikola Gruevski's marvel at Vladimir Putin and his leadership, politics and method of governing. The relations were probably established with the assistance of the Serbian secret services and high officials, and they escalated and were finally and clearly exposed during the bloody events of April 27th.

The most indicative and the most public support from official Moscow for the Government of VMRO-DPMNE, on the level of Ministry and Minister of Foreign Affairs, came after the bloody events in the "Divo Naselje" suburb of the city of Kumanovo, during the formation of the new parliamentary majority between SDSM and the parties of the Albanian community after the early parliamentary elections in 2016, as well as during the bloody events after the supporters of VMRO-DPMNE stormed the Assembly, the attempted assassinations and the attempted *coup d'état*. The common denominator of the Russian strategy for interference was to emphasize the alleged threat of a "Great Albania," with the goal of inflaming interethnic relations and influence the destabilization of the country, thus enabling VMRO-DPMNE to stay in power as a guarantor of the unitary character and the security of the country, of course - outside of NATO! And at the same time, the goal was to keep close relations with Russia and its global interests.

Instead of a Fight against Establishments – a Swap of Establishments

One of the explanations for all these tendencies that are taking over the globalized world in a big wave is people's dissatisfaction with the establishments, the political elites and the governments both in their own countries and in multinational organizations like the European Union, NATO, IMF, WB

etc. the criticism of the elites and the establishments is justified because of their egotism, corruption, crime and the protection of personal and narrow interests. This is true in principle; however, things then become twisted, minimized and spun.

In this context it should be emphasized that, as much as the original European idea of a common family is progressive and noble, nevertheless the enormous apparatus, the bureaucratic routine, the overlooking of the need to continuously search for new and better solutions and reforms and, more importantly, silence before the manifestation of the dominance of narrow and often personal interests of the individuals, the corruption and organized crime that exist and are not immune to these structures—all of this creates revolt and undermines the Union as an institution from within, and undermines confidence in it from within and from outside, which is manifested as criticism, revolt, Euroskepticism and other similar expressions of dissatisfaction. In this regard, the highest structures of the Union and the member states have double standards. When it comes to corruption and organized crime, and even politically organized crime, the EU's institutions and officials are correct in pointing out their prevalence when they assess the conditions in the EU candidate countries. However, when it comes to corruption and crime in the member states, as well as in the structures of the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament, because of solidarity, non-confrontation or not wanting to make waves that might create an unexpected tsunami, they simply say nothing or minimize and downplay.

And, instead of fighting against the elites and the establishments in the specific states, and for their replacement and purification if there was abuse, as was declared in heated election rhetoric, once power was seized, things were twisted and minimized, emphasis was put on the international institutions and associations, and there was an abstraction of the ideas that formed them and the undoubted positive results that they had accomplished in their missions. Thus, the circle is closed—new elites and establishments (political and otherwise) are created, and once they have seized power and the institutions, they again alienate themselves from the people and the citizens and start to govern above all for personal profits and narrow interests. These processes, which are the result of the rise of nationalism, populism and the closing of one's own borders, have hatched as their direct consequence putinism, Erdoganism, Orbánism, Trumpism... as “moving in circles” on their own territory. Therefore, the elevation of heated nationalist slogans such as “nation above all” to the forefront even in the richest EU countries and especially in the USA,

is used as obvious camouflage for personal interests and creates serious pre-conditions and fertile soil for corruption and organized crime.

World experiences reveal that all the evils, and especially the biggest ones, have happened after big and sticky slogans with good intentions were expressed, which over time and due to some interests other than those initially declared become their own antipode and opposite. Populism and nationalism, always and everywhere, according to their most favored “menu,” have fed on hostility and conspired against foreign and domestic enemies, against the “others” and the “different” in every sense of the word, against various injustices, plots, dangers, dark conspiracy scenarios, and what is usually an unavoidable feature—the fight against corruption and crime.

The phenomenon of populism has been studied for long time, but little attention was paid to the insight and conclusions gained from these studies. They started to receive their due attention recently, as the phenomenon of populism came out like a genie from the bottle and was becoming widely accepted and practiced. The political journalist Albrecht von Lucke believes that we are facing political counter-revolution, in the sense of the swift changes to the old political order that are happening all over the world. The conflict, according to him, is led by representatives from society that are ready for changes and protagonists of the radical culture of demarcation and exclusivity that are offering a homogenous society. A great number of the industrial workforce turned its back to the socialist and social-democratic parties and turned towards the right almost everywhere in Europe. Electoral analyses are proof of this. No matter whether it is the USA, Poland or Hungary, the workers—many of them members of unions—have for quite some been voting for nationalist parties.

Populism and nationalism were, in most cases as social processes, phenomena and movements, the shortest path and ended in autocracy and dictatorship. The autocracy camouflaged itself under the veil of protecting ‘its own’ people, economy, values, as well as with the demonization of the “traitors, the domestic and foreign enemies,” who are in principle, imagined. On the other hand, the fight against corruption and crime was reduced to a fight with political opponents and protection of the autocrats, the elites around them and their criminal oligarchy.

In this context, the Bulgarian political analyst Ivan Krastev in his essay “The Collapse of the Post-Communist Order” (*Feuilleton* – “*Utrinski vesnik*” February 1-6) describes populism by emphasizing that “the key characteristic

of populism is hostility, not towards elitism, but towards pluralism.” Here, Krastev quotes Jan-Werner Muller from his study “What is populism”--“The populists claim that they and only they represent the people... Claiming the right to exclusive representation is not empirical, but always emphatically moral.” Krastev goes on to provide several illustrations in the form of specific arguments and situations: “Jaroslaw Kaczynski does not represent all Poles, but ‘the true Poles’. Almost half of Turkey is against the politics of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, but he is convinced that he is the only one who speaks in the name of the people because “the true Turks” vote for him”.

Following the same pattern, in the Macedonian part of this story, during his ten years of autocratic rule Nikola Gruevski addressed, spoke to, made deals with, respected and hailed “his people – the true Macedonians,” who voting for him and his party in his. According to his most recent rhetoric, he addressed “his people” as the “majority Macedonian community,” as opposed to the traitorous “minority of Macedonians,” despite the fact that the results of the early parliamentary elections (at the end of 2016) revealed that the “minority of Macedonians” who voted for a change in government was bigger than the “majority Macedonian community” who voted for Gruevski to remain in power in the “captured state” with a “hybrid democracy!”

Herein lays the trap for the people who are becoming attached and voting *en masse* for nationalist-populist politicians and parties that hail and privilege their voters as “the real people”, only to later on, once they have gained their unconditional trust and the right to think and act in their name, use autocratic governing to do whatever they want to do to the extent that they want to do it for their own interests.

Can Trump be the Undertaker of Anti-Globalists Trends?

This populist approach and theses of the autocratic leaders were refuted by Transparency International’s Report on the perception of corruption in 2016, according to which: “In the countries with populist and autocratic leaders, instead of dealing with friendly capitalism, those leaders usually establish even worse forms of corrupted systems,” and which provides examples from Hungary and Turkey. There is also an opposite, positive example—it highlights Argentina’s progress after the collapse of the populist government. The Report also highlights two global trends that support the thesis about the causal relationship between closed societies in autocratic regimes and the rise of

corruption and crime, i.e., the smaller scope of corruption and crime in the open democratic societies. Thus, out of 176 countries that were evaluated, the least corrupt states were Denmark, New Zealand, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland and Norway, which are all proven as countries with great democratic strides and rule of law, as well as values and moral. On the other hand, the most corrupt country in the world is Somalia, immediately followed by South Sudan, North Korea and Syria, where dictatorial regimes are in power. Since the number of autocratic regimes in the world is on the rise, and the number of democratic societies is decreasing, it seems quite normal that, according to the Transparency International Report, in 2016 “more countries noted a decrease of their index than those that noted an increase”.

Will these processes of Euroskepticism and disintegration in the EU, and “Trumpism” in the making in the USA, provide examples that lead to similar processes in other important countries, primarily in Europe: Germany, Italy, Denmark etc., or will they lead to a sobering return to *Realpolitik*? In other words, will these processes help to open the eyes of those blinded by the sticky national-populism and force them to consider that, perhaps, one need not be egotistical and selfish and that perhaps an investment in the public good will provide returns for all individuals, i.e., for country and society? In fact, only one month after the inauguration of Donald Trump as President of the USA, some media and renowned analysts signaled that they noticed the early manifestations of controversies and autocratic governing in the way that he understood and practiced governing.

Considered though the global context, among the “precedents and novelties” that happened in the campaign for the presidential elections in the USA (November 2016 and the Donald Trump’s unexpected win)—manifested as total misses in the public opinion polls and the prognoses about the winner in the elections by most renown specialized agencies—what should be also emphasized is the enormous, decisive influence of new media technologies and tools, and especially the internet and global social networks on the electoral process. And not as much as pure propaganda, but more as anti-propaganda with fake news from all parts of the world, in which, by the way, an important role was played by some young computer hackers from Macedonia.

Another element that remains to be investigated, but for which there are serious indications and even evidence is the influence of “foreign services”, i.e., powerful foreign governments and their secret agencies, with hacks into the computer systems of high-ranking officials, parties, ministries and secret

agencies in the powerful countries (Russia in the USA) and the public dissemination of information (fake news) that are harmful to a candidate or party or are useful for the opposing candidate and party in the election process. This, in itself, is not only organized crime of the most sensitive and the most sophisticated type, but it also can be used, as legal proceedings are sure to ascertain, for corruption and especially for politically organized crime in many countries where rule of law, institutions and democracy are captured by autocratic leaders and the elites surrounding them, for gaining narrow, party and purely personal interests and profits (victories in elections, maintaining power, material and other profits).

This was a red flag for reasonable people, institutions and organizations and there are already signs that a sobering is taking place. Perhaps it is a good thing that “Trumpism” came about, so that we may draw comparisons and lessons and begin to search for swift solutions to overcome the weaknesses of the liberal order, which must be reformed and which must above all be rid of the routine lack of ideas, the sluggishness, the anemia, the lack of personality, as well as the reliance on its former glory and past merits and generations. There is an increasing number of intellectuals globally who believe although “Trumpism” as a model, system, benchmark and example, especially to the autocratic politicians and regimes in the smaller countries, will cause harm to democracy, human rights, security, economy and the environment, it may still prove useful. Among these authors is the Macedonian political analyst Petar Arsovski, who in his column (published in “Utrinski vesnik” on February 9th 2017) wrote: “Although the fear of flat assessments and political autism of these ideas is real, still I think that the Trump phenomenon in the USA is rather an exception than a turning point. In the end, if things continue to develop in their current direction, it is quite possible that Trump will be the undertaker of the anti-globalist tendencies, and not their ally. This is already coming through in processes that are currently under way on the domestic scene in the USA, but also in the global arena, which is realigning in order keep up with the Trumpian era.”

This trend of national-populism, which in the bigger countries borders on dictatorship and totalitarianism, is already noticeable in Russia and Turkey, as the autochthone processes of “Putinism” and “Erdoganism”. We must not undermine the similar autocratic processes in Hungary with Viktor Orban, Poland with Jaroslaw Kascynski and Belarus with Alexander Lukashenko. Authoritarianism is characteristic for the smaller countries as well, including some in the Western Balkans, and in that context Macedonia was a specific

example with its 'Gruevism'. At the same time, it is evident that these trends and processes of dictatorships or in their milder form – autocracies, are organically linked to the political system, i.e., how the state is organized.

We are talking about countries with a presidential system (Russia, Belarus and Turkey) and countries which, although not presidential, have leaders that govern with unlimited power as prime ministers, with the help of a large parliamentary majority (Hungary), or even as ordinary parliamentarians ("grey eminences"), such as leaders of parties that have a large majority in Parliament (Poland). In this way, regardless of whether deliberately or spontaneously, what we are seeing in Europe is the coming together of a group linked by interests and ideologies, which based to the system of governing has been dubbed by some analysts as "the authoritarian axis," which follows the relation: Russia, Belarus, Hungary, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (Republika Srpska), Macedonia, Turkey. Based on its consequences, it also can be called "the national-populistic political-kleptocratic axis".

What is characteristic for this type of countries is the existence and interconnection of four elements: an authoritarian regime of governing, nationalism, populism and politically organized crime. And while in other societies allow for the coexistence and manifestation of two types of patriotism, the constructive and the destructive, whereby the constructive is one of the driving forces of societal development, in the authoritarian societies only destructive nationalism, i.e., ethnocentrism can exist, which combined with populism is used as an efficient tool of the regime against the opposition and challengers, as well as against all kinds of imagined enemies and conspiracies. In its essence, destructive nationalism is a counterpoint to patriotism, and the majority of nationalists that represent themselves as true patriots, are in fact merely false patriots—a phenomenon that is very characteristic of regimes from the "authoritarian axis".

The Turkish example is especially indicative. When the crimes committed by the autocrat Erdogan's family, ministers and surrounding elites were publically exposed and ignited mass protests and demands for accountability, and when the regime felt that its hold on power was threatened, there was a staging of a *coup d'état*. This event was (ab)used for a showdown with a former friend, but now his biggest enemy, the Muslim preacher and imam Fethullah Gulen who now lives in the United States, but also with the opposition, the media, the journalists, the internet and social networks, as well as the nongovernmental sector. It lead to amendments to the Constitution, to the establishment

of a presidential system with unlimited jurisdictions and powers, allowing the President to do what he wants and govern as he pleases.

Following the Russian and Turkish example, the most powerful person in Serbia, a proven nationalist-populist whose party has had a large majority in the Parliament for several elections in a row, abandoned the prime minister's office and soon after ran and was elected President of the Republic. There is no doubt that this autocrat is also toying with the idea and waiting for the moment to present itself when he can change the Constitution to establish a presidential system and strengthen his authoritarian positions, as well as satisfy his untamable ambitions.

In this context it should be noted that in Macedonia too, albeit timidly, there have been some structures at the top of the governing party, as well as some of their supporters from academic circles that also toyed with this idea, should favorable circumstances and preconditions present themselves (i.e., to make use of two-thirds majority in the Parliament they had at the time), to transform the system of governing into a presidential system and to have the master of absolute power take such a command position with increased constitutional authorities. Until the snap parliamentary elections in late 2016, this option was present and possible, but the election results precluded such desires and scenarios.

When it comes to our region and especially the relations between Serbia and Macedonia, it is important to point at the system of communicating vessels, i.e. the copying of some important processes from one state to another, having in mind the existing similarities in the mental code of the people, of the ruling elites in some periods, multi-ethnicity of the societies etc. The ruling elite of VMRO-DPMNE, after the period of consolidation, strengthening and understanding of the power and the unlimited possibilities that government authority, started to copy the authoritarian and national-populistic experiences from Serbia from the era of Slobodan Milosevic. "Milosevicism" replicated and practiced in Macedonian conditions by Nikola Gruevski was turned into "Gruevism". Several years after "Gruevism" had been established, experiences from the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE led by Nikola Gruevski became a good example worth following and copying by the candidate for new great Serbian leader—nationalist and populist Aleksandar Vucic. However, with the process of dismantling authoritarianism, national-populism and the beginning of liberation of the captured state from "Gruevism" in Macedonia, as the then leader of the opposition and current prime minister Zoran Zaev said "in

a peaceful manner, with a vote and a pen,” the Macedonian experience with the “Colorful Revolution” started to be used in Serbia, by the opposition, intellectuals and the non-governmental sector for overthrowing from power the ex-prime minister and new president of the Republic Aleksandar Vucic, with accusations that he had convincingly won the presidential elections with election engineering and electoral manipulations.

However, in the processes that were going on in Macedonia and Serbia there is one important difference. It was pointed out by Vladimir Gligorov, professor of political economy at the Vienna Institute for Strategic Research, in his analysis for the Serbian weekly “Novi Magazin”. He differentiates between the events in Serbia and Macedonia, assessing the Serbian as “democratic”, and the Macedonian organized by the former government as “patriotic”. “One should draw one more difference between the democratic and patriotic protests. In Serbia protests are largely motivated by the very slow economic development. Because they are democratic protests, their possible influence on the economic decisions and development in that particular area cannot have negative effect. Even further, up to the point that it is strengthening the belief that there is democratic potential, it should stabilize the expectations of the business sector. In Macedonia this alleged patriotic obstructionism is very expensive, and because from the very top of the state it is proclaimed that the country is in danger, the already noted negative economic movements can only be accelerated. Despite the best intentions from the protesters. That is the difference between the democratic and patriotic protests,”—says Gligorov.

Migrations of the Young People - For a Change of the Geography

Worth noting is also the third process which is moving and intertwining with the two big global processes—the problems of the liberal order and the expansion of the populist order as a good context and environment that works to the trend of dulling the edge in many states/societies in the battle against authoritarianism and criminalization of politics. Here I am speaking about the mass migrant processes from the poorer societies (economically and democratically) towards richer and more developed societies. These processes are noted and in a very detailed and argumentative way explained by Ivan Krastev (“Utrinski vesnik” February 6th 2017). “People are no longer thinking about their future. Instead of that, they are dreaming of other places. In this interconnected world, migrations – unlike the utopia of the demagogues of the

21st century – are really offering instant radical change. They don't need an ideology, a leader, nor a political movement. They even don't ask for change of the government, but only the change of the geography," –states Krastev.

Unable to alone to change the government in their societies, i.e., the overall situations they are dissatisfied with, it is easier for people to change "geography", in which case they can choose where to emigrate (although for many migrants it is not possible), or in other words to choose a destination where they think they will have better conditions for life, work and development. On the other hand, in the countries/societies of origin of the large migration processes (for instance, in the last decade nearly one quarter of the population, or around half a million people, emigrated from Macedonia), are left without one large social category, primarily young and educated people. (Here, it is not about societies in the world that are affected by wars and other crises, although their same characteristics apply for them as well). That means that such societies are left without the most potent stratum, which according to the natural and social laws, are the leading force of progress, development, democracy, justice and balances. Those societies which are without this basic and driving stratum, are not only aging, but they are also being left without the necessary developmental and critical mass for reforms and changes, becoming promised lands for autocrats who, assisted by the unchecked power of the government get deeply stuck in corruption and politically organized crime, along with all else that this social evil is carrying.

The fourth process is the unequal, i.e., the unfair distribution of wealth on the global scale, as well as on the level of individual societies, where the largest portion of the wealth is accumulated in the hands of small percentage or a handful of people, while the smaller percent goes to the rest of people. This situation is not the result of the abilities of the extremely rich (although there are also such people), as much as of the existing suitable conditions for creating wealth: monopolistic positions, protectionism and, of course, shady transitional conditions in the former communist societies which produced large number of the newly rich, who found themselves high on the lists of the wealthiest people in the world. On a global scale, these divisions and big social and economic differences create problems in terms of equality and justice in the widest sense of the word. Speaking about the price of the inequality and injustice, the Nobel Prize laureate Joseph Stiglitz concludes that it is quite big, because "today's divided society is endangering our future".

On a microscale, in the smaller and democratically and economically less developed societies, or more concretely in the region of the Western Balkans, the extreme inequality led to economic and social stratification and larger-scale poverty. Combined with political, party, ideological, ethnic, religious, status-based and other divisions, all of this creates adequate conditions for autocratic governing, which easily produces shortcuts to corruption, crime and the amassing of wealth of the ruling elite. This situation is described in an excellent way by Sonja Licht, a well-known Serbian sociologist and political analyst, with the statement that she feels sorry that in the Balkan societies there is a return of some already surpassed retrograde processes from the past, in a way that again “the civil society and the citizens are perceived as the main threat for an authoritarian system.”

When civil society is persecuted and part of the citizens are considered to be traitors, and on the other hand “the people and the patriots” are being favored, what we have is a well-known scheme that exists as an unwritten law—this is happening in societies lead by right wing governments, headed by authoritarian personalities, supported by large doses of populism, nationalism and propaganda, and all of that slowly, but visibly, sliding towards some contours and forms of fascism.

Rastko Mocnik, a well-known Slovenian sociologist, psychoanalyst and political activist, analyzing the situation in the states that were created from former Yugoslavia, concludes that they are living in post-fascism. In one interview Mocnik, replying to the question how much fascism exists today in the Western Balkans, says: “The Right does not have answers to the basic questions, so it is practicing clero-fascist variants of the neo-liberals masked as fighters for the National Cause. But the National Cause is not a true interpersonal solidarity. I think that, in fact, we are living in something that can be called post-fascism. In the period of historical fascism, fascist states were changing the constitutional order. That means, they were abolishing the parties, introducing racist laws, dictatorship of the police state. Closest to approaching that model is Hungary, which, formally, is a liberal-democratic state. Or Turkey—that is also a liberal democratic model. It seems that now this parliamentary model is so closed, so distant from the people which give their blessing every four years, that in these countries it is not necessary to introduce a police state. In that way they can preserve the formal parliamentary democracy, which is even more dangerous. Because it is difficult to introduce dictatorship, which sooner or later explodes. But to have elections every four years that do not change anything, that is a serious problem.”

This diagnosis seemed to be copied and indicated from the conditions present until recently in Macedonia, as one of the most extreme and longest-serving examples, methods and techniques of governing in the region from an authoritarian national-populist neo-fascist criminal structure, from which authoritarian regimes in the surrounding countries are learning lessons, as well as modifying and upgrading them. Because of this situation, the absurd was brought to the edge of insanity. In these small, closed and extremely divided authoritarian societies there exists an incomprehensible, extremely dangerous type of division – on one side are the citizens and the civil societies which, through protests, resistance and electoral voting are advocating justice, reforms and accountability for the corruption and crime of the ruling authoritarian pro-fascist structure (“Colourful Revolution”), and on the other side are the manipulated people who come together at protests and gatherings and are misused and corrupted for voting in elections – defending the government to protect its abuse and crime (“Counter-protests”).

Part of these global processes were happening also in Macedonia, and led to the biggest gap between the rich and the poor social classes, even bigger than the situation that exists in Russia which is considered to be the worst in Europe. The social and economic stratification, which are organically inter-connected, because they are part of one common substance, also have some very specific characteristics. The process started before the dissolution of SFRY (The Law on privatization of Ante Markovic, the last president of the Government of ex-Yugoslavia) and continued during the everlasting transition (the first phase – with the implementation of the concept of privatization which was supported by the majority of the parliamentarians from all parties 1990-1998, the second one 1998-2002-2006, and the third one since 2006 until today). Apart from some positive things, the inconsistent enforcement of the concept brought also many unwanted by-products: criminal privatization, closure of thousands of companies and leaving jobless between two and three hundred thousand employees, etc.

That created the most bizarre and at the same time the most extreme division in the country: people who continued working and people who were left jobless on the street. One relatively small group of then directors and managers of the companies with state capital, using different types of acquisition of the internal stocks and shares of employees, and with many manipulations and crime, for small amounts of money and almost overnight became the dominant owners. Once they privatized them, they restored the companies, modernized them and with good management got them back on their feet. Part of

the companies that were privatized in this way, due to the lack of capacity of the owners and the management or for some other reasons, collapsed. During this time, the former socialist directors transformed themselves in new capitalist managers and became the new Macedonian rich class. A similar process happened in the second wave of privatization, as well as in the third, but this time not with the privatization, but through the take-over and purchase of companies. SDSM in the first, and VMRO-DPMNE in the second and third transitional phase created their rich elite and oligarchs.

The epilogue of this redistribution of domestic income and wealth, which extremely divided the society, in line with the statement by the Nobel Prize winner Joseph Stiglitz that “the divided society is endangering the future”, endangered also the future of Macedonia. According to the unofficial data from different sources (because the ruling VMRO-DPMNE was not publishing data that was unfavorable), the top 10 percent of the Macedonian population has almost as much wealth as the lower 90 percent of the population, and the largest amount of this 10 percent is in the pockets of top 3-4 percent! Out of the five richest people in Macedonia, the top two were working on many governmental projects, during which time they managed to significantly increase their wealth.

To round up this topic and to make the point, I will quote again Jan-Werner Muller, who getting to the core of the problem, somehow described the last decade of ruling in Macedonia: “The techniques of governing of the populist governments is manifested in three ways: as a kind of colonization of the state, as mass clientelism and, as systematic suffocation of civil society”. To make it more understandable and explained in a plainer way, this is how Muller’s quote would look like, if we insert the techniques of governing of the Macedonian institutions: colonization of the state (**captured state and kidnapped institutions**), mass clientelism (**bribery of large social categories in order to buy loyalty when the policies of the government need defending and the votes in elections have to be secured**) and, at the end, systematic suffocation of the civil society (**absence or misuse of democracy and governing without independent control**). All of this looks like something that is deliberately created for autocratic governing and large doses of crime on the highest political and institutional level.

Macedonia, according to the Transparency international Report on the perception of corruption in 2016, recorded a drastic fall of 24 places compared to the previous year and was ranked 90th out of 176 countries in the world, accompanied

by Mozambique, Mauritania, Trinidad and Tobago. From all European countries, only Kosovo was several places lower on the ranking list. This fall was the result of the general perception about the crime and corruption in the state in which for several years in a row these witnessed progression, but were also strengthened by the large-scale and long lasting crisis which escalated at the beginning of 2015 with the appearance and publication of the illegal wiretapped conversations of tens of thousands of citizens (politicians, ministers, parliamentarians, journalists, businesspeople, diplomats, etc.), and especially after the start of the legal proceedings by the Special Prosecutor's Office.

That is why one should not be surprised with the assessments of the competent international and domestic organizations and associations, in which Macedonia was identified as having two symptomatic characteristics: a captured state and a hybrid regime.

In the Progress Report of the European Union for the Republic of Macedonia in 2016, among other things, it is stated: "Concerning the political criteria, the country was faced with the continuation of the most severe political crisis since 2001. Democracy and rule of law have been constantly challenged, in particular due to state capture affecting the functioning of democratic institutions and key areas of society. The country suffers from a divisive political culture and a lack of capacity for compromise."

According to the Democracy Index of the British "Economist", Macedonia was assessed as a hybrid regime and was ranked 95th out of 165 states included in the survey. According to the index, the situation with democracy in Macedonia has worsened and the state is a hybrid regime. In 2015 Macedonia was in the group of problematic democracies, and in 2016 it dropped down among the group of hybrid democracies, which are characterized by unfair and problematic elections, problems with the rule of democracy, pressures from the governing parties, disrespect of the rule of law and the legal state, pressures on journalists and the judiciary, weak political culture and civic sector, large scale corruption. In the group of hybrid states Macedonia is accompanied by Montenegro, Ukraine, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan.

***A Captured State is Only Possible with an Authoritarian Regime
and Absolute Power***

Additional proof that the country was slipping into an authoritarian regime was the Report from "Freedom House" on "Nations in Transition".

Macedonia was included in the group of countries with transitional-hybrid regimes, bordering with autocracy. In the published report for 2016, which includes 29 former communist countries from Europe and Asia, a new regression was reported in Macedonia. Overall, for the period from 2005 until 2016, Macedonia is singled out as the country with the biggest regression in the Balkans, and also identified as being on its lowest democratic level since 2001, when it was faced with violent ethnic conflict.

The level of democratization of the countries is measured by “Freedom House” on a scale from 1 to 7, taking into account: democratic governing on the national level, democratic governing on the local level, freedom of media, civil society, legal framework, and independence of judiciary and corruption. Grade 1 on the scale is the highest level of democracy. Macedonia in 2016 had an average score of 4.43, leaving only Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina behind. The average score for Macedonian democracy in 2015 was 4.29. When it comes to specific elements, Macedonia was already considered as an authoritarian regime regarding governing on the national level (grade 5) and freedom of media (5.25), and very close to that status regarding independence of the judiciary and corruption – with an average grade of 4.75.

“In Macedonia, ex-prime minister Nikola Gruevski was suggesting that an assassination should be carried out on the leader of the opposition Zoran Zaev”, the “Freedom House” report is quoted as saying. “In the meantime, the threats against the non-governmental organizations reached a new level with the initiative “Stop Operation Soros”, launched by the editors of the state news agency MIA.” In addition, the report contains the following statement: “Gruevski puts in danger the multiethnic character of his state, stimulating the nationalistic sentiment against the Albanians”. It is very likely that in the report for 2017 the country will rank even further down, when the scandalous behavior of the president of the Republic Gjorgje Ivanov is taken into account, as for months he was refusing to give the mandate to the new parliamentary majority to form the government, as well as the behavior of VMRO-DPMNE which did not want to allow for a smooth transition, and later on made numerous obstructions and was blocking the new government from overtaking the governing of the institutions.

Unfortunately, because of the system of governing practiced by VMRO-DPMNE, Macedonia rightfully deserved these unpleasant and infamous assessments and rankings. These statements of the European Commission and all the others who were monitoring the processes in the country were based on

several key elements: the intertwining and identification of party and state, the highest level of partisanship of the institutions and the instrumentalization of the state and the public administration, which resulted in giving priority to the interests of the party and those of the party elite over the interests of the state and the citizens. That means that the state was captured by its own authoritarian, selfish and greedy political and business elite, which the government practiced with large quantities of populism, nationalism and propaganda, as well as with various types of demonization of all who were critical towards the government. After more than ten years of governing and in charge of absolutely all leading positions in the state, the ruling elite captured the state and subordinated everything to its party and personal interests – carrying it out with the assistance of corruption and politically organized crime.

When it comes to Macedonia, which is the main area of interest in this analysis, one can draw a conclusion, which in fact is the crucial point, i.e., the leading thesis that I will try to lay out, develop and prove. Namely, what was notable was the large interdependence between corruption and crime on one side, and the political organization, system/regime and functioning of the state on the other. At same time, two extremes in the functioning of the state were gradually becoming more and more visible: the big gap between democracy and autocracy, which of course was in favor of autocracy, and the larger the gap between them, the bigger the possibilities of escalation of unseen proportions of the corruption, the crime and especially of the politically organized crime.

Therefore, in order to create favorable conditions in a society for the appearance and existence of the highest and most serious type of organized crime—the politically organized crime—and to have this type of crime implemented as the system in this society, three elements are necessary: (1) many years of functioning of the autocratic system of governing, (2) establishment of absolute power, and (3) a state captured by the ruling party or coalition.

If an autocratic authority exists in a country, if this is the foundation on which the entire system of government is placed, if in such a country with such a government and such a system of governing has been discovered, documented and charges were raised that the secret services illegally wire-tapped more than 25.000 citizens (politicians, ministers, officials, diplomats, journalists, businesspeople, intellectuals, etc.), if in those conversations the public can hear with their own ears about various kinds of organized electoral and classic crime and corruption that was negotiated and carried out by the highest state officials, structures and institutions, and none of the individuals

implicated bears any responsibility and resigns, and the institutions instead of investigations and charges, protect them by obstructing justice, then no one should be surprised that such country, in this particular case Macedonia, according to the foreign monitoring systems in many areas, and first and foremost by the EU and individual influential countries, was qualified as a captured state and hybrid regime. To bring the absurdity to the next level, with the use of the tactics taken from sport – “the attack is the best defense”, institutions, and especially the judicial and security institutions, tried and partially managed to downplay the mega scandal, twisted the theses and pressed charges against those who spoke out and the whistleblowers and who disclosed the illegal wiretapping (in the process named “Putsch” for the alleged blackmailing of the then prime minister, with the aim to secure his resignation), and also obstructed the work of the Special Prosecutor’s Office which investigated the wiretapped conversations and were bringing charges against those implicated in them.

When there is such an evident organic connection and conditionality between politics, the ruling parties and the state, which as epilogue leads to the statement in the EU Report on Macedonia as “a captured state”, one can draw a thesis that this “capturing of the state”, which is possible only in situations where there is an autocratic regime with absolute/total power, cannot be generated by merely employing classic corruption and the usual types of organized crime. If it is known and historically and practically proven as the truth, that power corrupts, and absolute power – corrupts absolutely (to enormous extents), one can draw two logical causal notions: the first, that absolute power is possible only in societies with autocratic system of governing, and the second, that absolute power in an authoritarian system is suitable soil for large-scale crime and corruption that leads to the enormous amassing of wealth of the governing criminal association – located and personalized in the highest ranking functions/institutions and in the ruling elite. Or, to put it even more plainly: Macedonia was ruled by a political mafia organized and led by central – political criminal association.

That means that in this specific case there was something bigger, more extensive, more numerous, more organized, more sophisticated, more political and logistically supported by the entire system, behind which stood enormous and institutional potential. It was a sophisticated system with great institutional capacity adequate to the capacity of the state institutions (power, people, money and other resources). It is a new complex of criminal acts, i.e., a very complex criminal act composed of several elements that need deeper, wider

and higher-level analyses than the classical ones – corruption, abuse of official positions and jurisdictions, organized crime, criminal association. Namely, this is about politically organized crime from the highest level and intensity in which important state institutions and top state officials were instrumentalized, while the biggest damages were caused to the state, the citizens and to their highest national and personal interests. Because of that, after more serious analyses and expert debates, including the criminal law theory and legislation, we should define, develop and codify a new complex of criminal acts under the common name – “politically organized crime”.

In its essence, this is a complex criminal act of politically organized crime, i.e., of many individual criminal acts done with intent and with a plan, which constitute one whole as a plurality of offenses in the form of continued and repeated criminal acts which endanger the highest and most important values, interests and institutions of the state: the Constitution, the rule of law and the legal state, human rights and freedoms, freedom of speech and expression, exercising free will on elections, independence of the media, dignity, equality, equal status and responsibility of citizens before the laws and the institutions, elections as the fundamental democratic institution, etc. In the very essence of the problem lays the abuse of power of the government with misuse of its official status and jurisdictions with the goals – instrumentalization, tricking, failing to act according to the will of the citizens who gave their votes in the elections to the party/coalition (according to the proportional model – for the electoral list of the party or the coalition). It is completely contrary to the publically declared promises, contained in the election platform and given in the campaign – that it will honorably and authentically represent their interests and the interests of the state, as well as the interests of all other people that have citizenship of the country despite the fact that they voted for other parties/coalitions or did not vote at all, because according to the Constitution and the existing laws as that protect them as equal citizens, the government should also care about their interests.

Betraying the trust and the freely expressed will of the majority of citizens given on election day is done with the assistance of the organized criminal association. This association, with corruption and organized political crime, done by practicing long list of abuses - poor and incompetent governing, abuse of the official status and authority, criminalization of the electoral process with frauds, forgeries, violence, corruption, false and unrealizable promises, fabricated accomplishments, violations of the constitutional principles, creation of laws and by-laws that in practice will be abused or implement to

be impossible, bribery and the creation of clientelism of large social groups with money from the budget, non-transparency in its work, unaccountability, non-responsibility and non-punishment for illegal and immoral activities, mass violations of human rights and freedoms with violations of the basic legal principles – presumption of innocence and the freedom of expression, corruption of the media with government advertisements and businesses with their owners transforming them into megaphones for spreading propaganda, lies and hate speech for the demonization of the opponents of the government, and with all of that – in an illegal way to acquire personal and party material, financial and status-based benefits and wealth. Such a conglomerate of criminal acts, i.e., indications, evidence and testimonies is what the special Special Prosecutor's Office is dealing with, in its investigations into the wiretapped conversations and their indictments for different criminal acts.

I am drawing attention and putting emphasis and especially insist on the fact, which I illustrate with many examples, that weaknesses, non-resistance and abuses of democracy, the manner and shape of governing, as well as the lack of checks and balances between the three authorities – the legislative, the executive and the judicial—all of this enables the establishment of an autocracy (dictatorship, totalitarianism), which at a suitable moment and conditions will get out of hand, mutate and manifest in a certain shape and stadium of a captured state, and that all of this mixed together can produce a favorable environment for the total expansion of politically organized crime with all the consequences for the state and the citizens that this social evil can bring this.

In the basis of my thesis, which I will try to argue and support in this paper, are several layers. If in one society an autocratic regime is in power, if one party and its regime conquer, occupy and rule all the state institutions, meaning if absolute power exists, then it is a classical example of a totally captured state. If in one totally captured state, the ruling elite is practicing organized crime and corruption and is performing that organized crime through a supreme criminal association, then what is created in that state are optimal conditions for politically organized crime, which means that illegal and criminal means are used to gain political and financial-material benefits and profits. The circle is closed when indications, evidence and testimonies of this type of crime appear and, in the conditions when the responsible institutions are corrupted and criminalized, a special institution is formed with a *lex specialis* which will start to prosecute this type of crime performed by a criminal association equipped with the highest ranking members of the governing party and the government.

This study is an attempt to provide in a more popular and understandable way for the ordinary reading public, and of course not only for them, an analysis, to open a discussion on the many dilemmas and controversies and to point out the arguments which will support or reject this thesis and will provoke critical thinking and new ideas in the academic circles, especially among the theorists and practitioners from political and criminal law, which may deliver new legal solutions for the prosecution, but also for the prevention of this type of crime, which is practiced by the highest ranks of government and politics.

II

AN ENDLESS TRANSITION

Countries that are going through some kind of transition, and especially those that are transitioning from one political and ideological system into another (which was the case in the 90s decade in the 20th century after the fall of the Berlin wall and with it the fall of communism), in the early years of their transition and the quest for a new model of development begin to manifest elements of a captured state—some to a lesser and some to a higher degree. By definition, countries in transition from a one-party into a multi-party system are unstable, their citizens and political parties are euphoric in their romantic trance brought on by freedom, which leads to different types of deviations—from extreme anti-communism, to radical nationalism with elements of fascism and to large doses of anarchy.

The new societies in those countries are internally and externally unstable and are therefore not free in the real sense of the word. On the international stage, they are not fully established, their international status and legitimacy is yet to be recognized, which makes them unequal as they are seeking their place in international organizations, alliances, unions, etc. Internally, there is a transformation of the legislation, especially the constitutional legislation, taking place, and institutions are being built on new foundations created by new conditions. The economy is suffering shocks during its transition from planned and controlled into liberal and market oriented; the old markets are disappearing, and production moves forward with outdated technologies, making it small, expensive and uncompetitive. The ruling parties, at a time when the institutions are not fully rebuilt and functional and the rule of law and the legal state are not fully established, take over the institutions and put them in the service of their party programs, but also their party interests and the newly created and euphoric party and social elite which sticks to the ruling party for lucrative reasons. The country is showing symptoms of being captured, and the capture of institutions by the party and politics create favorable conditions for the personal appetites of the ruling elite for power and, with the assistance of unlimited and unchecked power, personal profits and wealth.

The Tradition as the “Teshkoto” – One Step Forward, Two Steps Back

The Republic of Macedonia will be studied in both domestic and global academia as a case study for an extremely long lasting transition, for a completely captured state and, in the face of such conditions and environment—a well-planned and efficient system of politically organized crime.

The transition, unlike in the other countries, dragged on for more than two and a half decades. At times, the country was making steps forward. When the transition finally seemed to be coming to an end, a change of government, the radical discontinuities that were deliberately carried out, along with each new government wiping the slate clean and starting from scratch—all this brought the country two steps backward.

In the twenty-five years of transition (1991 – 2017) there two political options in power, together with their coalition partners from the Albanian parties. The champion of the transition is the right-wing nationalist party VM-RO-DPMNE. Out of twenty-six years of independence, this party was in power on two occasions (1998 to 2002 and 2006 up to beginning of 2017), so a total of fourteen and a half years. During their mandates, and especially during the second one, this party did not only complicate the processes of the transition, but by turning to new processes and discontinuities, generated new types. The left-centrist Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM), was also in power on two occasions (1992 to 1998 and 2002 to 2006), for a total of ten years. In the first year and a half of the transition, there was an expert government that governed the country.

In this long period of transition, many events happened in Macedonia that marked reversals, regressions, threats, falls, poor progress, and then again in a circle. In the very beginning of its independence, Macedonia was recognized by only a few countries and was not yet fully established on the international scene, while the sovereignty of the country was protected by the US and NATO (with the small military team under the name UNPREDEP and under the UN flag). With the Resolution of the UN General Assembly April 8th 1993 the Republic of Macedonia was accepted in the UN as the 181st fully-fledged member of the global family of nations, averting the threat of a prolonged stint as a protectorate.

The first more significant process that followed after the proclamation of independence and the establishment and election to the new institutions—the Assembly, the Government, the President of the Republic, the army,

police, customs service, the introduction of a currency and the inauguration of the flag as a state symbol—was the process of privatization of the former companies with social ownership, which started in the previous system and federation, according to the model introduced by the last prime minister of the SFRY—Ante Markovic. This process, launched without any significant previous public debate and preparations and regulated with the Privatization Act that was adopted by the majority of parliamentarians from both SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE, involved the dissolution of many enterprises and a massive number of layoffs. Some of these enterprises became the private property of their former directors for small sums of money: some of the new owners managed to build successful companies; some did not and the companies dissolved. The country and its citizens saw little gain from this process, while billions of denars (German marks, euros, dollars) ended in private pockets. Thus, a new oligarchy of people close to the government was created. This process, at a time when the country had yet to become a fully formed and functional state, with the “childhood illnesses” of the institutions, their incomplete process of professionalization and the lack of immunity to corruption and crime, created in a way a “promised land” for those ready to fish in troubled waters.

In 1994, VMRO-DPMNE and DP boycotted the second round of parliamentary elections, practically leaving Parliament without an opposition. SDSM and its coalition won a two-third majority which created preconditions for great comfortable governing that was practically left unchecked, which allowed for serious abuses in decision-making and governing, as well as corruption and crime that could neither be stopped and uncovered, nor prosecuted and punished. At this time there was a collapse of the pyramid savings scheme, when a number of savings houses went bankrupt, including the largest one—TAT in Bitola, in which many depositors, primarily from Pelagonija region, tempted by the high interest rates, lost their savings. This scandal had both criminal and political features, because the government and the National Bank (NBM) failed to raise the alarm about the illegality of this type of saving and by not taking adequate measures on time, allowed for the pyramid savings schemes and the high interest rates without proper backing to function without obstacles.

As is always the case with pyramid-scheme savings houses (which at the time was widespread in the region, but also in some countries in the West) individuals close to the political elite and the savings house (among which was the mysterious “minister in training suit,” whose identity was never revealed) withdrew their money on time, while ordinary people and those who were the last to place their deposits were left penniless. Apart from the owner

of the savings house, who was sentenced, charges were also brought against the then governor and vice-governor of the National Bank for their irresponsible actions and abuse of their official position as those most responsible for the scandal. The vice-governor (who was, by the way, the son-in-law of the first prime minister in the expert government) was also found guilty of abuse, because he had gained huge profits on his deposits that originated from loans, but he never served his sentence due to "health problems". Partly because of the privatization, partly because of the TAT scandal, and partly because of the lack of the more significant results and unfulfilled promises, SDSM was punished by the citizens and lost the parliamentary elections in 1998.

The transitional period of 1998 to 2002, when VMRO-DPMNE was on the helm as the governing party for the first time, was rich with scandals, large-scale crimes and events that led Macedonia to a latent institutional, security and economic crisis. In 1999 the new President of the Republic, who was candidate of the ruling party, was elected with violence and forgeries. The security systems were diminished with the removal of the professionals from the commanding posts, replacing them with party soldiers and loyal subject, which threatened the defensive immune system of the country. The decision to recognize and establish diplomatic relations with the internationally unrecognized state of Taiwan (which China considers as an integral part of its territory, so as a member of the Security Council, it vetoed the decision to extend the mandate of UN - UNPREDEP) in exchange for the promise of a billion dollars in investments and assistance, created additional security problems. The UN forces which were securing Macedonia and its border with the war-stricken province of Kosovo, then part of NATO-attacked FR of Yugoslavia, were forced to leave the country. Then, in a gesture of good will towards its coalition partner from the Albanian political block - DPA-NDP, the Government led by VMRO-DPMNE proposed and later on adopted in Parliament an Amnesty Act for prisoners, among which the majority were ethnic Albanians. Because of the war and the bombing, over a very short period time more 300.000 people from Kosovo sought refuge in Macedonia. Once the refugee crisis was resolved, a substantial number of refugees from Kosovo stayed on in Macedonia, among them many members of the KLA.

The end of 2000 brought the spillover of KLA fighters over the border from Kosovo to Macedonia, which was no longer secured by the UNPREDEP (UNPROFOR) forces. Many of the amnestied prisoners released from the prisons, but also members of the ethnic Albanian population from the border region with Kosovo joined KLA. At the beginning of 2001 there were several

terrorist attacks on police stations and military objects. Towards the end of February military activities had begun, marking the beginning of an armed conflict, which according to the KLA's communiques was considered to be a fight for liberating the ethnic Albanian populated territories in Macedonia. After several months of military activities, in which dozens of civilians, soldiers and policemen on Macedonian side and several hundreds of terrorists, later on treated as fighters of the LKA lost their lives, with the assistance of the international community assisted with transforming, reframing and explaining the conflict as a fight for rights. The conflict ended with the signing of the peace agreement known as the Ohrid Framework Agreement. At the end of the year, the solutions from the agreement were implemented in the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia as amendments.

In VMRO-DPMNE's first bout in power, the administration was increased, many young and educated people left the country, and as a result of the FESAL 1 and FESAL 2 arrangements in 2000 and 2002 thirty-five companies with several thousand employees went into bankruptcy. The governing party increased its property and profits through legal party companies and even formed its own bank. The war tax on all financial transactions, which was introduced in the state of emergency and due to the need to purchase new weapons and service of the security forces (around one billion German marks we collected without information how and to what end they were spent) additionally drained the real sector, investments dried out, organized crime experienced an expansion and with its assistance, the new VMRO oligarchy was created. At this time, two very important companies for the Macedonian economy were sold/privatized: the refinery OKTA and the Macedonian telecommunications - "Telekom", both in an extremely non-transparent and scandalous way, with many elements that indicated corruption and crime on part of the government. This was later proved through in legal processes in the US, and members of the management of "Deutsche Telekom" and its subsidiary "Magyar Telekom", both mother-companies of "Telekom", were forced to resign and the companies were ordered to pay compensation for the privileged position and corruption of several high ranking government officials in Macedonia. The process is still open and other court procedures are still possible, in the US as well as in Macedonia. At the time, Macedonia was known in Europe and the world as a safe haven for organized crime with money laundering, arms smuggling, drugs and human trafficking. This resulted in the defeat of VMRO-DPMNE in following parliamentary elections, and SDSM came to power again with a significant majority.

The Entire Transition with Symptoms of the Captured State

The post-war SDSM government (2002 – 2006) spent the first two years of its mandate on filling the holes in the state budget and recovering the institutions from the party captivity they underwent during VMRO-DPMNE's government before and during the war. The SDSM government, after its defeat in the parliamentary elections in 2006 left to the new VMRO-DPMNE government many problems, but also some solid trends. Life was difficult and the employment rate (according to data from the State Statistical Office) was a high 37.3 percent in 2005 and 36 percent in 2006, which was constant since the beginning of the transition. (These percentages should be treated with caution and care, because the State Statistical Office at the time was using outdated methodologies in their work, and rather than being accompanied by social unrest and strikes, which periods of high unemployment are expected to bring about, this was a time of relative social peace). The high unemployment rate was the result of the unpopular for the public but necessary for the state intervention to solve the financial burden created with the existence of companies that were producing enormous losses, which was started by SDSM's government and continued with the VMRO-DPMNE government, as part of the important structural reforms in the economy. The poverty rate was very high—around 30 percent or 600.000 people lived under the poverty line. At the end of the mandate, the largest energy company in the country “Electrical Management of Macedonia” (ESM), was sold to the Austrian company EVN, and the SDSM government deposited the entire profit in the NBM, so that after the parliamentary elections the new government may decide how and where to invest it. On the international stage, two major successes were achieved: in 2005 the EU granted candidate status to Macedonia (using the UN reference), while the US recognized Macedonia under its constitutional name.

The end of the transition seemed to be near and after the elections in 2006 that brought VMRO-DPMNE back to power, the first year and a half saw a successful start to the reforms. However, after the NATO summit held in 2008 in Bucharest, when Macedonia was not admitted to the Alliance, things started to move in a negative direction. Snap parliamentary elections were held in which VMRO-DPMNE won with overwhelming majority, having played the nationalist card under slogan “We are not giving up the name,” and going on to enter into a coalition with the leading party from the Albanian political block, DUI. The process of the so called “antiquization” was started, which involved digging deep in history in search of ancient roots. In the place of the established and recognized Slavic roots, the project “Skopje 2014” was designed and launched, the history textbooks were challenged and revised. Alexander

the Great became more important than the national revival ideologues Goce Delchev and Krste Misirkov, and the legendary partisan commander Mihajlo Apostolski, who along with his fighters in the anti-fascist and national liberation war, whose courage and sacrifices brought liberty, and at the First session of the Anti-fascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Macedonia (ASNOM), the fundaments of the first Macedonian country in history.

New false values and morality were promoted, new unreasonable priorities were set, and at the same time those of the highest national and citizens' interest were rejected. Divisions across all lines were enforced, opponents were demonized, persecuted, arrested, tried and lustrated, loyal party subjects replaced professionals in the institutions. By taking over all levers of government, they established absolute power, and absolute power combined with the politicization of the institutions led to authoritarian governing of the leader of the party. Once the party and the state became one and the same, politically organized crime escalated reaching enormous proportions. The transition, enhanced with new elements came to its climax, and the Republic of Macedonia became a captured state.

The extent of the absurdity of the Macedonian case of a captured state is illustrated as a paradigm or a metaphor in one of the illegally wiretapped telephone conversations released by the opposition, between the then Minister for Internal Affairs and the then Secretary General of the ruling party: "We are all here, at work; we have our headquarters here. I mean, we have two headquarters—one here on my floor, which is local office of VMRO-DPMNE, a call-center ...we have everything here, and the other one is downstairs in the hall where the ambassadors come, and from OSCE, and what not, and I go down to see them from time to time so that the ambassadors can see that everything is OK; and then I go back upstairs to my floor and we do our party business. That's how we are organized. If you want you can come for an inspection to see how the call-center works ..."—says the Minister to the Secretary General of the party. "Here in MVR (MOI—Ministry of Internal Affairs), in VMRO-MVRO ... unlike the other institutions are not hiding, or anything"—says the Minister.

To round up the absurdity and insanity, here is one more specific illustration. When it became clear that the end of the criminal government was near and that after the elections in 2016 another parliamentary majority will form government and likely launch an investigation of all the government's abuses, crime and corruption, all hopes were placed on a single goal—to defend the leadership and the leader under the inflammable motto: Our very statehood is threatened!? The authoritarian leader, in the style of Louis XIV and his famous sentence: "I am the state", was all over pro-governmental media with

the claim that if he and his party are not governing and defending the state, it will collapse!

When analyzing the long lasting transition, we can draw three very important conclusions.

The first conclusion is that Macedonia is a classic illustrative example of a country whose transition had visible symptoms of a captured state. At times, there were only elements of the early stages of captured state. Towards the end, especially after 2011, the highest stage was reached—a completely captured state, which was also confirmed by the relevant international organizations: the analysis of the European Commission prepared by the group of senior experts led by Reinhardt Pribe in 2015 and the European Commission's 2016 Progress Report for Macedonia.

The second conclusion is that during the long lasting transition, in the periods when the right-wing nationalist VMRO-DPMNE was in power, the survival of Macedonia was threatened on two occasions—in 2001, with the armed conflict and the proposal to divide and exchange territories and population, and in the period between 2015 and 2017 with the two mega-scandals: (firstly), with the mass wiretapping and the decision of the President of the Republic Gorge Ivanov to violate the Constitution and grant amnesty to those prosecuted by the Special Prosecutor's Office for politically organized crime, and (secondly) to violate the Constitution for a second time and refuse to give the mandate for the formation of the government, which is his constitutional obligation, to the legitimate parliamentary majority consisted of SDSM and the Albanian parties. That violation of the Constitution was an attempted *coup d'état*, but had he gone through with it, it would have been a *coup d'état* in the real sense of the term.

The third conclusion is that in the final phase of the transition, when VMRO-DPMNE was in power, and especially after 2008, when the radical discontinuity and divergence in state politics and priorities (internal and external) were in full force—the level of a fully captured state with an authoritarian regime and absolute control of government was finally reached. In this highest level of a captured state what occurred next was the most significant feature of this type of states—the system of politically organized crime. The circle was closed—the country got its political mafia from the ranks of high state and party officials, and the political mafia got its country tailor-made to their desires—an absolutely captured state!

III

SYSTEM OF GOVERNING

While normal democratic countries have governments that govern according to the Constitution and the political system established in the laws, countries in which it is the laws of the parties and the politicized institutions, where law and the legal state are suspended, where the institutions are captured, dysfunctional and de-professionalized, where democratic processes are not developing, but rather are regressing and are marginalized—two parallel systems exist. One of them, the official one, is non-functional and it is only an illusion that the system is functioning according to the Constitution and the laws. It is practically deliberately raised to the level of being non-functional and inefficient so that it may not be able to work in the interests of the state and its citizens, for which in fact it exists. On the other hand, the other system—the unofficial one that exists hidden behind the official, is using all available state and institutional resources, is fully functional and efficient in advocating and realizing the interests of the ruling party and its elite. In order for such an efficient parallel system of governing to function, it is necessary to create adequate institutional preconditions and environment.

When it comes to the institutional preconditions, the most important one is to establish an authoritarian system of government and governing, where everything is centralized and led by one person with undisputed authority in the governing party. In order to secure such authority, as a rule, a single person holds the two most important functions—the leader of the government (prime minister or president) and the leader of the party. The party, in order to be efficient, needs to have a military-style centralized and hierarchical organization and command regime. Behind the party and its leader unconditionally is an army of loyal subjects and the majority of citizens who trust and vote for that particular party and leader. In order for this type of system to function, the state must be completely captured, i.e., the party and the state must become one and intertwined to the point where one cannot be recognized from the other; to be impossible to tell what is of the party and what is of the state.

The favorable environment for such an authoritarian system of governing consists of several preconditions and elements in addition to the captured legal state, the politicized institutions and suspended democracy: an extremely uncritical society, i.e., lack of a social critical mass, avoidance of dialogue and wider social debates for the most important issues, extreme divisions on different levels, maximum politicization in all pores of the society, mass violations of human rights and freedoms, large-scale poverty and fear for the existence and for the businesses, the corruptive mentality of the government and the clientelism among the larger social groups.

Once these institutional and environment preconditions for the smooth functioning of the authoritarian system of governing in the captured state are in place, an additional compatible element is included in the form of an upgrading and a sort of VAT ("value added political tax"): the system of politically organized crime. While the system of governing is securing the functioning of the government, the system of politically organized crime—in addition to abetting the process of governing and maintaining political power—is satisfying the personal, financial and status-based appetites and ambitions of the top officials in the government and the group interests of the party. Or to put it more plainly and directly—it serves for the enjoyment and profiteering of the privileges of power, allowing above all the illegal amassing of wealth of the leader, and then of the ruling elite and the party. These two systems are interconnected, mutually dependent, and constantly functioning in synch, because they are ruled from the same command post and from people are aligned and organized and sharing the same mentality and interests.

Every autocratic government that is guided by very narrow party and personal, egotistical interests of the party elite, uses Machiavellian pragmatism as its basic approach when governing. The only goal is to stay in power as long as possible, to amass party and personal profits and to leave behind indelible traces of their era of governing. A government that is coded and motivated in this way, creates and uses in its system of governing numerous means and instruments—legal and illegal, moral and immoral, human and inhumane, probably and impossible—to fulfill its goals. In the foundations of that system there are strongly embedded three key and most efficient means and instruments: elections, institutions and the corruption/crime (politically organized crime), which are organically linked, deliberately tuned to be interdependent and complementary to each other. This system of destruction can survive and function only as a triangle, only as closed system and only as communicating

vessels that react simultaneously to the programmed commands and instructions from the center.

After long years of following and analyzing the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE, especially in the period between 2006 and 2017 when the party was led by Nikola Gruevski, it became obvious that the system is a very specific one, because it was established and organized in some type of triangles and pyramids. The system created several formulas and models for a comfortable, long lasting and efficient rule, financial profits and profiling society in accordance to the mental code and understanding of things by the party elite: “the Macedonian Bermuda Triangle”, “the controversial Macedonian triangle”, the “5P” formula, “the pyramid of power”, “the pyramid of wealth” and, finally, “the pyramid of antiquization” in which “the Cheops effect/syndrome” is also embedded.

Over time, the system of governing was beginning to be called after its ideology and main protagonist. It was not necessary to use many words and to explain: an autocratic regime, a captured state, politicized institutions, selective rule of law, limited rights and freedoms—it simply sufficed to say “Gruevism”. There were some other similar subsystems, metaphorically named for the prevailing conditions in certain social spheres. For instance, “Kanchevism” for the kitsch-projects and endeavors in culture (named after the minister of culture), “Zvrlevism” (named after the public prosecutor) as a synonym for a prosecutor’s office which rather than fight crime, protected it by obstructing justice, a “Swarovsky judiciary” for the corruptable judicial system that could be bought with gifts, gestures and appointments, which protected the government and white-washed and covered its criminal activities.

“THE MACEDONIAN BERMUDA TRIANGLE”

According to the well-known mythology, in the real Bermuda triangle, the compass ‘goes crazy’, the navigators of ships and airplanes are disoriented, and ships and airplanes are lost without a trace. In “the Macedonian Bermuda Triangle” there was a dual ‘going crazy’ of the compass. The government lost its way (its compass) when it became blinded by the power of its politicized institutions and the efficient electoral corruption which were disorienting and attracted without efforts and funding the support of part of the population that was not thinking with their heads, but rather with their empty pockets, empty stomach and washed brains. Forced by the system of governing of

VMRO-DPMNE, the opposition was also losing its “compass.” After 2008 it was easily persuaded numerous times to “voluntarily and bravely” accept elections, entering in this way the troubled waters of “the Macedonian Bermuda Triangle,” only to become caught up in the vortex and to drown into the “black hole” of the government. While “the Macedonian Bermuda Triangle” was a complete disaster for the opposition, for those who disagreed with the government, for democracy, for human rights and freedoms, for the legal state, for the independent and critical media, etc., it was for the ruling VMRO-DPMNE “the Holy Trinity” to which it was permanently and faithfully “praying”. With its assistance, even when the polls were indicating that it is on the way out, the party would be resurrected, going on to win elections and continue its rule!

The “Macedonian Bermuda Triangle” could be “located” on three coordinates: elections–institutions–crime:

(1) The elections are a regular and legitimate means of coming to power, and snap elections in a row (four in eight years) in the period between 2008 and 2016, were an extraordinary and efficient way to protect and continue the rule of the governing party.

(2) The institutions—in a captured state, meaning they are fully taken over by the party—were the entities that secured the logistics for the electoral process and the corruption/politically organized crime.

(3) The corruption/politically organized crime was one of the most efficient tools for the government/party to win all of the elections in a row (parliamentary, presidential, local).

Due to this organic bond between the elections, institutions and politically organized crime, in their assessment of the local elections in 2013 OSCE/ODIHR would draw the conclusion that there is identification between the party with the state as one and the same. One of the most realistic assessments of these elections was given by professor D-r Mirjana Maleska, whose words gave us the very essence of what had happened: “We had a competition between a state and a party!” (In the elections, the state was working with all available resources in favor of VMRO-DPMNE, easily beating the opposition SDSM). Although at that time it was not entire clear to and expressed by the EU (the conclusion about the captured state would only appear later, in the EU Progress Report for 2016), professor Maleska had precisely located and diagnosed this phenomenon three years earlier.

The total criminalization of the electoral process and the leading role and influence of the politicized institutions were confirmed in “the bombs provided by Zaev and the opposition” as part of what they dubbed “the Truth about Macedonia,” in which audio recordings of the conversations between high governmental officials were presented to the public. The Public Prosecutor’s Office for the prosecution of the criminal acts linked to and originating from the content of the illegal wiretapping of the communications—known to the public as the Special Prosecutor’s Office (SJO)—began its work with a criminal investigation under the code name “Titanic” and devoted to the dozens of cases linked with the elections. The investigation procedure, according to the prosecutor Fatime Fetaj, was launched for the following criminal acts: criminal association, violation of election law, violation of the freedom of choice in the elections, bribery during elections and voting, destroying electoral materials, misuse of finances for electoral campaigns, abuse of official duty and responsibilities. Charges have been brought against twelve persons, the majority of them former ministers, while the rest are officials from various state bodies. According to the Special Prosecutor’s Office, they completely criminalized the election process. Using their influence on the state and local level, they created a group that performing criminal acts in order to secure a win for of certain political party in the elections, allowing them to stay in power.

It was these indictments that provided confirmation and justification for the thesis that I developed several years ago about “the Macedonian Bermuda Triangle,” composed of three branches: elections—institutions—politically organized crime, which was the basis for the system of governing and which enabled the continued preservation of the state throne for the governing political party.

“THE CONTROVERSIAL MACEDONIAN TRIANGLE”

Several months after the first early elections in Macedonia (2008) in which VMRO-DPMNE won with a strong majority on the wave of the hot motto “We will not give up the name” and populist patriotism, in my weekly column in “Utrinski vesnik” I was writing about “the controversial Macedonian triangle”. Unlike “the Macedonian Bermuda Triangle”, where the threat for the government was the possibility of disrupting the interdependence and unity between its elements, in the case of “the controversial Macedonian triangle” the threat was in the possible confrontation between its elements.

The elements of “the controversial Macedonian triangle,” at the time when it was established, were: the first one—the vast majority of citizens wanted entrance in NATO and EU (between 80 and 90 percent); the second one—the leader of the party and government Nikola Gruevski was in favor of entering NATO and EU, “but not at any cost”; and the third one—Gruevski has the highest rating of all politicians and parties! I then came to the conclusion that this triangle: what the citizens want, what Gruevski wants with reservations, and Gruevski has the highest rating, could be disastrous for the government if the elements are confronted, but allows for comfortable governing and the realization of its interests as long as the elements are kept at a certain distance and as long as they are controlled in order to avoid confrontation between them.

The strategists and spin doctors for every authoritarian ruler, including those of our former ruling party, in setting up the policies and the propaganda were always guided by the unwritten winning rule—to get the most from information and situations that are favorable for the government; if no such information and situation exist, then they should be feigned; and, if they are unfavorable, to hide, marginalize or downplay them. Such spins were applied in both domestic and foreign use, especially for the creation of a positive impression. It was for this purpose too that the three elements that illustrated “the controversial Macedonian triangle” were used. The first element—that the vast majority of citizens want membership in NATO and EU—was oriented towards the international community, with the goal to show that as a result of the complete dedication of the government to the fulfillment of the Euro-Atlantic aspirations, citizens stand behind that strategic orientation. The second element—the leader of the party and the government Gruevski is positive about NATO and EU membership, “but not at any cost”—was for domestic and foreign use: as much as the citizens favor entrance in NATO and EU, the leader will not allow this at the cost of “giving up the name”. The third element—Gruevski has the highest rating of all politicians and parties, wanted to show that because of the firmness and unwillingness to compromise in “defending the name”—he has the highest support and rating, which strengthened his negotiating positions so that he could explain to the international community that he has no room and visa for compromise!

The first signs of a possible confrontation of these three elements were noted in the opinion poll carried out by IRI in 2010. The first element in that poll was even more convincing than in 2008: membership in NATO was backed by 98 percent, and in EU 92 percent. The second element did not have any changes compared to 2008: Gruevski still wanted in NATO and EU, but with a

condition—not at any cost. The third element was the most complicated one: Gruevski still had the highest rating, but at a lower percentage than before. This meant that as the desire for NATO and EU was increasing, the Gruevski's rating was decreasing, forming a new trend. The possibilities of a fatal confrontation of the triangle's elements from the triangle was hinted at in some of the other results from the opinion poll: almost half of the respondents were of the opinion that Macedonia is moving in the wrong direction and that the Government, therefore Gruevski, has no plan how to solve the problems in the country. In 2014, according to the opinion polls, the relations in the triangle were almost identical to those in 2008 and 2010. The desire of the citizens for entrance in NATO and EU registered a small decrease, but still was very high. The reasons for that are several: on the one hand it is the decision of the EU, despite the recommendations of the Commission, not to set a start date for the accession talks, as well as the NATO decision to prolong the invitation for membership until the name dispute with Greece is solved; on the other hand it is the favored Euroskepticism by the pro-governmental media and high state officials. Gruevski continued to score the highest rating, but it was lower than in 2010, and much lower than in 2008. An even larger number of citizens (more than half of the respondents) were of the opinion that the government is leading the country in the wrong direction and that they are living worse than before. With time, this "controversial Macedonian triangle" was becoming more and more topical, troubled and less controllable, while the greatest potential danger—the collision of its three sides/elements—was becoming more and more imminent.

The system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE had managed for a long time to control this potential dangerous conflict for the government, but it was becoming more and more difficult despite wins in the elections that extended their time in power. However, following the series of events that followed: the "black Monday" on December 24th 2012, when the secret police following the order of the government brutally threw out the parliamentarians of the opposition and the journalists out of the Macedonian Assembly just before a vote on the state budget; non-recognition of the results from the early parliamentary elections in 2014 by the opposition due to election fraud, violence and corruption of the voters; the discovery of the scandal that the secret police was wiretapping over 25.000 citizens, followed by the publication of more than forty so-called "bombs from Zaev and the opposition," in which the public could hear how top state officials were arranging electoral and other criminal acts and legal abuses; following the Przino Agreement and the establishment

of the Special Prosecutor's Office with the main task to investigate whether the indications from the illegally wiretaped conversations can be supported with other evidence for legal and political indictments—the positions, mutual connections and relations from “the controversial Macedonian triangle” were substantially changed.

At the time when the truth about the system of governing of the authoritarian government were beginning to come to light, the mutual relations between the three sides of this controversial, but functional triangle that kept the government in power, started to worsen and to collide. The first one—the citizens aspirations, although not as dominantly but still by a large majority favored entrance in NATO and EU (around 70 percent); the second one—Gruevski, who supports NATO and EU membership “but not at any cost,” lost his relevance after the Przino agreement as he had to step down from the Prime Minister post and remained only as party leader; the third one—Gruevski is no longer the top rated politician, but rather the most disliked one. Very soon after that, the pyramid of the autocratic government started to fall apart. Following the early parliamentary election in 2016, no party wanted to cooperate and to form a coalition government the man who used to be the most powerful leader and his party. VMRO-DPMNE and Nikola Gruevski were dethroned and de-factored. The process of dismantling the the autocratic system of governing was launched and one by one the links in the chain of the captured state started to break. Once the new parliamentary majority was formed, the state/party went into opposition.

To make the irony worse and absurd, once it became clear that the two triangles of governing and power started to irretrievably fall apart, and the end of its rule and a return to the opposition was the only alternative, the ruling party fought for its survival by turning to its winning game from the past. Once again, the hot nationalist-populist thesis used to win elections and stay in power – “we will not give up the name” – was reaffirmed. Along with this slogan, the party relaunched their coercion leitmotif from the three previous election cycles – “Let's have early elections and give us a majority so that we cannot be blackmailed by DUI and Albanians,” this time modified in accordance with the new situation: “Only new early elections are the salvation for Macedonia,” “Only VMRO-DPMNE and the people can save Macedonia from federalization and bilingualism,” i.e., “If VMRO-DPMNE is not in power – Macedonia will collapse”! But, these inflammable paroles were not effective anymore and did not intimidate the citizens as much as they used to, but rather everything fell into its logical place: a verification of the will of the majority

of the citizens; a change of the autocratic government; the formation of a new reform oriented government: and, a start of the reforms for a better life in every sense of the word.

THE “FIVE Ps” FORMULA FOR A PEACEFUL AND EXTENDED RULE

Out of the autocratic government’s calculations based on the foundations of the “Macedonian Bermuda Triangle” came the formula for VMRO-DPMNE’s governing - the “4 Ps”, which over time and with the complete takeover of the judiciary (the courts and the public prosecutor’s office) and its independent regulatory bodies (the Judicial Council and the Council of Public Prosecutors of the Republic of Macedonia), was “enhanced and upgraded” to “5 Ps”! Thus: populism + propaganda + *pari* (money) + *pendrek* (police baton) + *pravosudstvo* (judiciary) = victory in elections and maintaining, i.e. preservation of power! Or, to use an even plainer explanation: Populism—in the form of permanently emphasizing that the government is completely devoted and is constantly working for the interests of the state, the people and the ordinary person and their improved life, starting tomorrow—the usual promises that people like to hear. Propaganda—in the form of nicely wrapped assurance that the state is led by the people’s government which is the best government and which really cares about improving the people’s quality of life, thanks to which the country lives in peace and welfare. *Pari* (Money)—also means bribery, some with less and some with more money, in order to increase the number of loyal supporters and clients of the government. *Pendrek* (Police baton)—to secure support and prevent attacks and threats to the government; if not by peaceful means then with the use of force through the public and secret institutions. *Pravosudstvo* (Judiciary)—when the first four “P’s” are not providing the expected results, as the last and most efficient tool we have prosecutors, courts/judges, attorneys, inspections and enforcement agents, all of whose decisions and actions are dictated from the highest ranks of the government.

Even though the formula is consisted of several elements that have their own function, weight and importance, in the context and specifics of the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE, money and propaganda are the core elements. With their assistance, the system of governing was always kept in good form and vitality in the ongoing struggle to preserve power. The populism, the baton and the judiciary, although important because without them the formula would not work and would not produce the “desired end result”,

they nevertheless serve more as logistics. They were activated and used when something needed to be won over, broken, enforced, stressed, emphasized, to get a conviction or hide something in the bottom drawer until its forgotten.

Populism – or the People are Always Right

The core of the election strategy, as well as the strategy practiced by all nationalist parties while they are in power, is the populism. Populism, along with nationalism, represents the true opium for the people, because it means serving people something that they want to hear, promising them things they do not have, and motivating them to a fight against what they fear, against that which is unreachable, frustrating, unknown, different, etc. It is precisely on those verbal promises, without proper backing, that the populist use to attract large masses of the population for their parties, movements, ideas, programs, etc. Such populist games were played by VMRO-DPMNE in continuity and with great success—they won ten electoral cycles (parliamentary, presidential and local) and remained in power for almost eleven years.

Incidentally, populism as a tool was practiced by both the winners and the losers in the elections, of course, with different motives. During the reign of VMRO-DPMNE, the government and the opposition were clashing over “the role of the people” in the election process. Two theses were in play that at first glance appeared to be different, but in their essence both were populist. The first one was that “the people are always right” (used by the previous government, which had won all elections for ten years in the row by securing the majority of the votes). The second one was that “the people are always right, even when they are wrong” (used by the former opposition which was losing the elections in those ten years, i.e., by the then leader of SDSM, Branko Crvenkovski). The first thesis is populist, it flatters the “people” and is usually expressed during the euphoria of an electoral win. The second one, also populist, but expressed in moments of powerlessness, in the acceptance of election defeat, being careful not to insult the “people” who, in the end, are those who decide.

The system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE based its success and longevity on the use of three populist tools: the first one, that the people are always right (although on elections they never won more than one quarter of the total number of voters); the second one, that the party and the leader do not want to

communicate directly: and, the third one, that the party promises a lot, fulfills all its promises, and then even fulfills some things that it had never promised!

It is interesting to see the foundations on which the governing system of VMRO-DPMNE was building its national-populism, with whose assistance it established absolute and autocratic authority and as a party completely captured and criminalized the state.

The first larger doses of populism in VMRO-DPMNE were noticed as early as in the program "Revival in 100 steps," which was the main document for the winning campaign in the 2006 parliamentary elections that brought them to power. Starting from the election campaign for the first early parliamentary elections in 2008, populism became an unavoidable tool—the leading idea, philosophy, program platform, driving force and code of the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE. Populism, in its winning combination and unavoidable logistics always had national-patriotism by its side, while the leading party for a long time considered and called itself the party that was closest to the people, the most Macedonian, the most patriotic, etc. (By the way, populism also pretended to attract the bigger social groups; hence the party often called itself—the most agricultural, the biggest supporter of the pensioners, etc.) National-patriotism, as one of the forms and covers of populism, was mostly exploited and misused in the doctrine of the autocratic regime to divide people, in line with the maxim "divide/quarrel and govern". The ruling party created divisions along many verticals and horizontals: political, party-based, inter-ethnic, confessional, intra-ethnic, economic, social, status-based, etc.—making Macedonia an extremely divided society.

The system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE understood this trend and started to ride on it. Although populism as a social phenomenon is very useful for the party/leader that manifests and implements it, on the other hand it is harmful for the state and for the society in which it operates. In its essence, as historical experience and contemporary examples show, populism as a phenomenon is a regressive process, an illusion, a cover for downplaying and hiding the real situation and intentions, running in circles and buying time on part of the governing structures to delay or avoid making real strategic and political decisions, employing real economic and social measures that are of interest to the state and its citizens. Populism is evidence that a certain government has no capacity to govern according to the democratic rules and procedures for the benefit of the state and its citizens, or that the governing is used for the group interests of the party and the narrow personal interests of the

elite. Historical and current experiences reveal a repeated pattern: the more prominent populism is, the stronger the autocracy and absolute populism in some societies leads towards authoritarianism, absolute power, arbitrariness and dictatorship. Hence, the countries in which populism exists share an image of welfare and progress that is created with artificial propaganda. Behind that virtual reality that is manufactured and propagated by the government in the form of “Potemkin villages” is the hidden reality and the truth that the country is stagnating or, to put it even more accurately, moving backwards.

The populism of the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE operated on the basis of two relations. The first was the relation government–people, i.e., “my” people and “the true” people according to the rhetoric of the populists. The second was the relation government–traitors, SDSM-ovians, communards, Soroshores, Albanians, foreigners, the others, the different, the enemies, the challengers, the conspirators, USAID, EU, NATO, Soros and his Open Society, etc.

As in all populist authoritarian systems, the VMRO-DPMNE system, in flattering “its” people, seduced them like opium, making them addicts and blind followers who believed in everything that were told—and the government was telling them what they wanted to hear, even if the promises were unrealistic and unattainable.

From the very beginning of its governing, VMRO-DPMNE declared several key determinations in one of its most important programmatic-ideological documents: “Doctrine – The Values of VMRO-DPMNE – for Freedom, Man and Conservatism,” which was part of their election platform for the 2006 parliamentary elections. In it, in a highly populist-propaganda approach, it declared the values on which it would base its rule and the person to whom the system will be fully dedicated.

“It is VMRO-DPMNE that is the party defending the value of freedom as our heritage from the historic VMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) and celebrates the struggle of the Macedonian people and the achieved freedom of an autonomous and independent state, Macedonia. Our basic task is to protect the true principles of freedom. The man we are addressing is a real man, who wants dignified life for himself, his family and his country, as well as conditions in which he can work, create and breed with a full chest. The real man is an active individual. The freedom to act means freedom of opinion and association. The activity of the individual is reflected in the freedom of opinion and of expression, to move freely, to associate, to work

and to do business. The freedom also means freedom of entrepreneurship and freedom of the market. Conservatism, which is based on tradition and belonging, is most upset by the despair of the individual that does not know his place in society and in the world. The individual has background in tradition, in the state, national and group belonging. Conservatism is on the other side of the reckless cynicism, which says "I belong only to myself", and on the other side of the "naïve, romantic cosmopolitanism" which says "I belong only to the world," i.e. I don't belong anywhere. The individual is not lonely and isolated. He is part of the family and the community."

Although it did nothing to realize these values in the practicalities of its governing and all that was written remained only on the page, the system started to discover new horizons for national-populism and romanticism. The project "Skopje 2014" was a project of the greatest importance, in a negative connotation, that VMRO staged in Macedonia during its reign, in the second decade of the 21st century. "Skopje 2014" became a metaphor, paradigm of a time and a government with a tendency to undo the past and everything that was built by previous generations. "Skopje 2014" is not entirely true to its name, other than this is its location in the center of the capitol no larger than half a kilometer in diameter, because this project has the importance and size of "Macedonia 2014". "Skopje 2014" was not only a seal, an identification and a trade mark of the governing of VMRO-DPMNE and Nikola Gruevski, but at the same time it represented a multifunctional project for "revival", for re-composing many of the important national, state and social characteristics, peculiarities and categories created and built for a long time, by many generations and with great efforts. "Skopje 2014" is a staged project that tried by force to create a new face of society, the nation and the state as a "proud and revived Macedonia". In fact, it was an inadequate and awkwardly-made mask, which neither suits nor fits, and which the Macedonian people, despite the characteristic blindness and behavior to follow the line of least resistance, increasingly to recognize it as expensive fraud over time and rejected it as a foreign body.

One of the explanations, or to be more precise, one of the initial motives of the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE, for the project "Skopje 2014" was for it to ride on the wave of populist national-romanticism and with it to cheat, to blind and to attract the simpleminded, the poor and the hopeless population. This approach, which was instrumentalized by the governing system, was very successfully and with brevity, clarity and precision defined by George Orwell in his "1984": "Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past". When establishing this strategy, the

PR strategists and spin-doctors of VMRO-DPMNE, knowing well the mentality of the majority of the Macedonian citizens and especially of the supporters and the membership of the party, were playing on two cards, that (according to Orwell)–“until they become conscious they will never rebel and until after they have rebelled they cannot become conscious”. In that way and with such an approach, the system had closed the circle, created absolute power, and captured and robbed the state.

This stadium of consciousness in the category of supporters, voters and party members was only possible with the use of the mass psychology produced by the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE and disseminated through aggressive populist propaganda. The system managed to insert it in the mentality of these people, according to the pattern (again in Orwellian language): “To be ideologically correct, means not to think – to have no need to think.” Meaning, “we have the people to do the thinking”–which in our situation meant – the Big Brother and the Big Cousin are thinking about everything and for all!

This approach to governing revealed that VMRO-DPMNE, i.e. the strategists of the party’s policies had studied and understood well the characteristics of the majority of the Macedonian population. The people are kind-hearted, peaceful, adjustable, corruptible, do not want to think with their own heads too much, want to be led and have somebody else do the thinking and make decision for them. In the very early stage of its ruling, the system of VMRO-DPMNE concluded that using nationalist-populist and propaganda-based policies, backed with solid logistics, can secure a firm and constant number of voters at 300.000 in every election. That number, along with the guaranteed 100.000 votes secured with electoral engineering and the “5 Ps” formula (populism, propaganda, “*pari*” - money, “*pendrek*” - police baton, “*pravosudstvo*” - judiciary) and around 50.000 undecided voters that were making their decisions in the last moment, depending on the promises and their perceptions, was creating the necessary quantum for a guaranteed victory. Although these roughly 450.000 votes are only one quarter of the total number of voters in the country (around 1.800.000), the system had all their data (name and family name, address, job position in the company/business, marital, family and economic status) and was continuously giving them their full attention and respect. At the same time, the rest of the voters/citizens (half of the total number of voters who vote for the other parties and the one quarter or roughly 450.000 that rarely or never vote on elections) were uninteresting for the system, which was taking note of political, status-based and ideological differences and treated them as second-class citizens compared to their supporters/voters–“our

people”, proclaiming them as traitors, conspirators, foreign servants, cursed, freaks, non-people!

After drawing all the divisions in the country—the vertical, horizontal, three-dimensional, etc.—the system started to profile its “own people” with flattery, peanuts in cash, employment, social assistance, subsidies, pensions, rewards, status, functions and similar clientelistic baits, in accordance with its code and in order to make them obedient and endlessly thankful and loyal, so they can be used for various purposes: as voters, as defenders of the ruling throne, as counter-protesters, and when necessary—as violent thugs and executioners of the dirtiest work for the party and the system. National-populism and extreme propaganda—made zombies of the “government’s people,” brainwashed, automated and blindly obedient individuals, grateful clients and humble dependents.

The columnist Teofil Pancic, in describing the final moments of a regime and the consequences of national-populism to its most blinded obedient followers, in the Serbian weekly “Vreme” uses an illustration the events that took place in the Macedonian Assembly during “bloody Thursday”. “So, this is what it looks like when the populist regime is letting out its last breath, live and in front of the cameras. Brutal, disgusting, miserable, low—but how else? That is what populism is like when it appears, when it is rising and blossoming, when it rules in full swing, when it receives its first serious blows, when it starts to decline, when it falls into decadence. In the end, when it falls apart and disintegrates. Finally, when dying, with the last atoms of power it tries not only to survive, but also to kill. To them, it is all the same. It is like that in all of its phases, with the difference that the last one gets a note of the bloody grotesque. So that is what we saw a few nights ago in the building of the Macedonian Assembly: the final eruption of the destructive anger of the fatally wounded Mordor. And who—along with his paid lackeys—stayed behind to protect him? Only those for whom he the is natural habitat, the street scum, rascals and rented street fighters, respectable suburban madmen, few gray-haired lunatics of both genders, and that is it. That is what is left after all else has been sowed and no one knows what to do with the residue. “The unnecessary folk”, like those in Dostoyevsky, whose heads are filled by the endlessly cynical Great Inquisitor that they are the salt of the Earth, the last defenders of the “true values”, the most sworn among the sworn daughters and sons of the motherland and all other motherlands. Even though it is precisely him, the Great Inquisitor that despises them more deeply than even those who hate with passion would ever

despise. And he will wash his hands from them on the first occasion, like he is already doing it now”—concludes Pantic.

Such “filling of heads” was done in Macedonia by the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE and its leader. As concluded by the acclaimed Macedonian neuropsychiatrist Metodij Chepreganov, what this way of governing and policy making created among the majority of people were “a mental condition of fear, of being easily bribed, of divisions and of hate speech.” With such a mental state of the majority, the system could capture the state, win the elections in the continuity, perform politically organized crime and amass great wealth for the party and its elite.

On this topic we also have very vivid and illustrative descriptions from Lina Kostarova Unkovska, an expert on social psychology. Commenting the violence of the VMRO-DPMNE supporters in the Assembly on April 27th 2017, whom she describes as “the people of the no-way-out”, she says: “For the individual in Macedonia it was always normal for somebody else to manage his life. The same goes for the children, the poor, as well as with the majority. And they never questioned it, much less tried to change it...Since early childhood this is what is taught and retaught, they are more often criticized than praised and encouraged. In school they obedient and a bit provocative, on the street rough and inconsiderate, and towards those who are weaker—violent. In the work place, as a rule they are scared and servile. And this goes on for years. There is some regularity in the collapse of the powers through these roles that he acquires, learns and plays during his life—the little big man from Macedonia”—concludes Unkovska.

“Perhaps these descriptions sound harsh and offensive, but the responsibility for them lies only and exclusively on the community, the state and the enormous deficit of their visions—where it is going and what it is investing in. Perhaps that is why the exalted participation of that same man (from the majority) in the ordered protests, appears so confusing, on one hand grotesque, while on the other, sincere in its authentic need to be important and recognized, in the role of his life, regardless that it was a role that was invented, but this time so important—to be the “patriot” and “savior” of Macedonia. At the same time, he himself does not have to think about the justification, the contexts, the consequences or anything else that might arise from his actions. And so, how are we to expect from anyone to learn from their personal experience, when even this they did not choose for themselves. What is terrifying is that this will remain so for a long time. It is difficult to change and yet it is

omnipresent: in the family, in the schools, on the streets, in the institutions, everywhere that ignorance, lies and brute force are winning. And, all of saw it on “bloody Thursday,” that frantic face of hopelessness in its most infuriated shape. This time we should not leave room and make the mistake of not naming it loudly with its true name—crime”—says Unkovska.

Everything populist that it said, promised or proclaimed during its governing, VMRO-DPMNE took back, i.e., they did quite the opposite from what was declared and promised in its programs. Despite the enormous doses of populism and propaganda that flooded Macedonian society by the nationalist-populist autocratic government, in 2008 in Macedonia there was not a single reform that was completely carried out, not a single strategic goal that was achieved, as the country’s ten years in the waiting room of the EU were now under a very real threat to lose the recommendation to start the negotiations, and had no sign of entering NATO after waiting at its doors for nine years. In the area of freedoms and human rights, the judiciary, the media, economic and social status of the citizens, all relevant rankings marked a continuous downfall. Although the former government was trying very hard to persuade citizens that their life was getting better and better, they believed in these stories less and less, because they were feeling those regressions on their pockets and on their shoulders. During the entire period of governing of VMRO-DPMNE this was clear to the majority of Macedonian citizens, who knew it and felt it. But, the final stage of its rule and especially after the “Bloody Thursday” in the Assembly, even part of “the people of VMRO-DPMNE” were slowly opening their eyes and their brains, making a hard landing into reality.

The political journalist Albrecht von Lucke, who studies the phenomenon of populism in contemporary societies, is right in pointing out that we are facing a political counter-revolution, in a sense that speedy changes of the old political order are happening almost everywhere in the world. According to him: “The conflict is led between representatives of the society prepared for changes and protagonists of the radical culture of demarcation and exclusivity who are offering a return to the homogenous society. The great number of the industrial working force has turned its back to the socialist and social-democratic parties and switched to the right—almost everywhere in Europe. The election analyses are confirming this, whether in the USA, Poland or Hungary, the workers—many of them members of unions—have for quite some time been voting for nationalist parties.

Vuk Perisic, the acclaimed Croatian intellectual and columnist, is perhaps even more precise in his thesis that stands in opposition the dominant

ones and which can be considered as sound and logical—that the people are not the victim of the national-populist political elites! Although he is constructing his thesis based on the situation in his country, nevertheless, because of the existing similarities it can also apply to the other countries in the region—and especially to Macedonia. “The time has come to admit to ourselves that the elites are banal and authentic interpreters of the “people’s will”. The “People” had enough time these thirty years to realize they are being dragged into the role of the robbed and humiliated murderer, the robbed and humiliated victim. They had enough chances to sober up even from the most skillful propaganda, which, by the way this, this nationalistic one was not. It was stupid and disgusting, but it was precisely that which attracted the crowd. Still, the support for the nationalists never dropped below from the existing and frightening thirty percent, which is a sufficient critical mass for comfortable governing, because like gravity it attracts the hesitating opportunists and the conformists, securing the “democratic” majority.

This also shows that national-populist autocrats, in their attempts to achieve and preserve power are ready, at least temporarily and seemingly, to become hostages of the people, promising things the people want to hear, even if this realistically cannot be fulfilled. With such capital, at least in the Macedonian conditions, over time, with the assistance of the power and the resources of the government, the roles were switched—the hostages of the “people’s will” were becoming masters of the “people’s will”, i.e., of their “own people”, doing with them whatever they wanted. With that, they were conquering many new territories and incomprehensible ranges of power, becoming absolute masters.

To this indisputable knowledge and dark realities about the “achievements” of populism, we must add and underscore the autochthon populism in Macedonia, which has grown into national-populism and made gradual stepping into fascism. This became especially clear with the bloody events in the Assembly and the lasting refusal of VMRO-DPMNE’s governing system to allow the regular transfer of power to the new parliamentary majority, which had the will of more than 700.000 citizens behind them, as expressed in the snap elections held in December 2016. D-r Aleksandar Litovski and D-r Miroslav Grcev, both analysts and experts on fascism and its consequences, in the last several years were pointing out the manifestations of this horrible and dangerous (in its essence national-populist) ideology contained in the policies and the concrete actions of VMRO-DPMNE’s authoritarian regime.

“Today, after the violent and bloody events in the Macedonian parliament, it would be good for everybody to be reminded that Hitler had started his

anti-communist march and the establishment of his dictatorial fascist ruling, which in the end set the entire world on fire, with the burning of the Reichstag in 1933. This is why, after our comic version of the “burning of the Reichstag”, we must think and speak about the Macedonian fascism. Our struggle, our anti-fascist struggle against the criminal vandal forces of fascism must continue. It must continue because we must stop the feeble-minded twisting of the truth, to stop the shameless trampling on our common sense, to stop the distraction of our human dignity by the orange Center for lies and manipulations and its numerous transmitters in the media space. The fascistic-schizophrenic reality these days literally started to smell of human blood”—writes Doctor Aleksandar Litovski.

According to professor Miroslav Grcev: “The direct participants in this most serious crime against the state and the legal representatives of the state sovereignty—in the role of inspirers, motivators, preparers, organizers, assistants and executors—are the President of the Republic, the leader of VMRO-DPMNE and his party, VMRO-DPMNE’s parliamentarians, the party police, their branch office “For a Joint Macedonia” and a bunch of moral monsters and other human scum. A day later and here it is—almost a week the criminals are behaving like nothing terrible had happened; they even blame their victims for the crimes of breaking the “rules of procedures,” justifying their fascist rampage in Parliament as “justified anger” by the “protectors of the state”! They use the entire propaganda machinery of their party-state to make banal the Evil and to re-qualify the crime into norm! To make things worse, the crime continued even after the “bloody Thursday”, with media and social-network reactions of the morally twisted supporters of the Evil and the expressions of malice of an even bigger group of inhumane Macedonians. If you watch the horrific recording released on TV Alsat-M that shows how the butchers from VMRO-DPMNE are dragging a nearly dead Zijadin Sela in the parliamentary corridors, you will be shaken up and shocked—but not by the horrific bloody scenery, but by the inhumane reptile indifference of the fascist fighters “For a Joint Macedonia”, their empty eye holes and even some unthinkable disgusting pride, like they are dragging a killed animal for taking a picture as a souvenir! And they are shouting from the grave holes of their dead souls: “C’mon, Kurban lamb!” (animal sacrifice), and then: “Zaev, we need Zaev!”—concludes Grcev.

As a reminder and a reference, it must be noted that the inflammable message which served as instructions for the violent preservation of the government (even though with the formation of the new parliamentary majority, saving it was no longer possible) were given by the “grey eminence” of

the system of governing himself—former prime minister and leader of VMRO-DPMNE, Nikola Gruevski. “I want to tell all citizens that if they think that they can plan to sit at home and watch television and that someone else will defend the state, they are deeply mistaken. The people can demonstrate this in action and with different behavior”—said Nikola Gruevski in his interview for TV Sitel on February 26th. The very next day the first protest for the defense of the motherland was staged, whose epilogue occurred on April 27th 2017.

Propaganda - for Lies, Downplaying and Brainwashing

The propaganda campaign for the relativized positive perception of the system of government and the government's messages to the public and especially to its members and the supporters, which had the goal of winning elections, became one of the most important tools of the system of governing. The propaganda was widely used by the system of governing during its departure as well, and continues to be used now that they are in the opposition to cover up the weaknesses of the government as a whole, as well as those of the prominent party and state officials. Covering those weaknesses and downplaying them, the propaganda was also spinning almost super-human, mythological virtues and capabilities, especially of the leader: the most humane, the most conscientious, the bravest, the hardest working, the most responsible, the impeccable—a personification of the new Alexander the Great and Robyn Hood!

With the assistance of the ideally placed, developed, equipped and well-trained system of information, disinformation, spinning and ultimately mass aggression on the senses of the people, the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE used this organized propaganda machinery to impose itself as the master of the truth! The truth was only what was said by the party or the leader. The official version of the truth, i.e., every policy, event, case, move, dilemma, scandal, project, was presented or, to put it more accurately, read by the adequate institution or individual—the Government, a ministry, the president of the Republic, a Member of Parliament, the court, the university, the hospital, the kindergarten etc. However, every truth, for every situation and purpose was constructed and strictly controlled in accordance to the needs, from one place—VMRO-DPMNE's Center for communication. The “truth” was then taken over by the large and well-paid media propaganda machinery, which spun it for so long and with such intensity as necessary until even the biggest lie was accepted and spread as truth and fact, especially until the process of brainwashing the

targeted social group was completed. In such a way, the party not only captured the state, but also managed to capture, politicize and instrumentalize truth.

Downplaying in the era of VMRO-DPMNE's governing was not only used as an efficient instrument of the governing system (this is, by the way, is also a tool used in many other countries and societies, in some places more and in some places less (mis)used), but it gradually became one of the basic pillars on which the strategy of functioning of the party/state as a system of governing was founded. With three false, twisted and, in their essence, disastrous theses, for years VMRO-DPMNE was fully and consciously downplaying things in order to create confusion among the population, and later on to fish in troubled waters and govern peacefully. The first false thesis, which with the assistance of the aggressive propaganda campaign (following the pattern—"a lie repeated a thousand times becomes truth") was snuck in and established as fact, was that those who were in power before "the most Macedonian, the most patriotic and the most folksy" party and government, built nothing and left nothing good behind—only devastation and despair! The second false thesis, which can be summarized in a somewhat naive and modest statement that was very often used by the leader, was that: we are here to help as much as we can! The third false thesis: the government/party is working for the people, building and reforming—subsidizing, employing, feeding, healing, educating, rewarding, punishing—all for the benefit of the common good.

Downplaying, or in other words, blurring the lines between the virtual with the real, the promised and the achieved, the use/abuse of a word or a term in its true and its opposite meaning, defocusing, changing or twisting of theses, false theses and news and the creation and publication of scandals, cases and problems-- all this was part of the long list of preferred, efficient and most frequently used tools by the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE. This list of tools was complemented with more subtle measures: resolving the created problems, giving subsidies and benefits to large social groups in order to switch the attention of the public from real problems that the government was trying to hide, creating scandals to turn the attention of the public from some serious criminal scandals, as well as the unavoidable and widely used hate speech transmitted by the "intellectual" champions and media megaphones against all those who dared to think differently. An unavoidable and even substantial tool that (due to its effective tactical and psychological dimension) was on equal footing with those included in the previous list of used tools, was "the new language". Created and practiced in such a way that the members and sympathizers of the party, but also the ordinary and naive patriotic and

ideologically undetermined citizens, could easily recognize and understand it, this newly invented tool was of great help in securing more supporters and votes for winning various elections.

The personal frustrations from the past, i.e., the “Freudian complex” that were present in a number of individuals from the governing structure, were manifested through revenge on individuals and social and political groups that they assumed belonged to some political nomenclature and social strata from the period in which these frustrations originate or who they thought were guilty for their marginal and irrelevant professional or social role. These frustrations were always present and active in the heads of these individuals, like a worm. A very good explanation for the frustrations (though it applies to another period and other political figures) is given by the professor Jakov Lazaroski: “The strong feelings of frustration usually lead towards aggression. Massive frustration brings massive aggression. The aggression is usually focused on the origin of the frustration”.

So what were the frustrations of VMRO-DPMNE party and some of its leaders, apart from those from early childhood and from the past? Even a shallow analysis allows for the conclusion that, in addition to the political-ideological motive, one important reason for the emphasized severity of VMRO-DPMNE's governing stemmed from those domestic political entities and non-governmental organizations, as well as the international organizations and associations, which were seen as enemies that work against them and who, with their activities, policies and actions are attempting to dethrone them, and later indict and imprison them. That is the explanation for the brutality of the government towards the origins of its frustrations: people who think differently, those who are more capable, professionally and socially established individuals, the opposition, and those different on any basis—Albanians, Greece, the “the foreigners”, the international community, etc.)

Especially characteristic and manifested was the obsession of the government and the party to show through propaganda that what starts from them is not only the history of Macedonia, but also of the entire world, i.e., that they are the builders of the present and the future, using the experiences from the past, leaving behind construction trails (the Cheops effect) in the form of monuments, buildings, corrections to the identity and historical injustices that no one before them had the “courage and virtue” to correct and “bringing back the dignity to its people,” along with similar inanities.

The syndrome of sheep in wolves clothing and vice versa—the syndrome of mixed up manifestations as characteristic of an unbalanced personality, can also be explained through the superiority complex that was clearly manifested by the government. Namely, in acting like the wolf and displaying arrogance, brutality, revenge, strictness, lack of democracy, autocracy, blackmail, manipulation and profiteering, the government was covering up the real complex they were suffering from—the inferiority complex, the massive frustration, the lack of knowledge and experienced maturity, i.e., the defensive guard they put up against everything they were faced with after coming to power, so that they became themselves aware that they were in over their heads and the powerful position they suddenly found themselves in was a bite too big to swallow. This, of course, was true only up to the point when, as people will do, they adjusted to the new conditions and until the government and the money helped them find their footing, transforming the lamb into a frustrated “bloodthirsty wolf”! As the Macedonian saying goes, “the small man is a real devil.”

Even though according to the Constitution and the laws the executive power, i.e. the government is responsible for everything in the country, in the mental code of the government that created by the system of governing of VM-RO-DPMNE, another supreme rule was established—“the good guy syndrome.” For everything that is good in the country, all credit goes to the government and its leader Gruevski; for all that is bad—poverty, misery, unemployment, economic collapse, divisions, hopelessness, etc.—the guilt was to be found in the opposition and SDSM (despite the fact that more than a decade had gone by since they were in power), their leaders from Branko Crvenkovski to the current Zoran Zaev, the world financial and economic crisis (which occurred years prior) and, in the last several years, practically everyone! For the beating and expulsion of the opposition parliamentarians and journalists on “black Monday” (December 24th, 2012), the opposition was to blame because they were preparing “to execute a *coup d’état*”; for the illegal wiretapping of more than 25.000 people in Macedonia it was the opposition leader Zaev and his party that were to blame, as well as foreign secret services in “yellow vans” (of untraceable origin!?), because they manufactured, edited and stitched together the recordings; for the delayed association in NATO and EU, it was the Greeks and NATO/EU that were to blame, because of the blackmail surrounding the name issue; for the poor interethnic relations, it was the Albanians that were guilty; for the country’s poor international standing, it was the foreign powers that were to blame, etc. The same pattern also applies to the events on “bloody Thursday” (April 27th, 2017)—the culpability and responsibility was on

the beaten parliamentarians that were held as hostages and the leaders of the party of the newly created parliamentary majority, because they were going to federalize the state, sell the name of the country and the identity of the people, force everyone to speak Albanian, etc.

In the context of the “good guys syndrome”, the system created one specific feature that was often used in its policy—the “hot/cold” behavior towards the citizens. In its pathological desire to control everything in the state and later with legal support to control the processes and relations, VMRO-DPMNE’s government, with the assistance of course of DUI’s representatives in the Government and the Parliament, it would (un)consciously create a larger problem for the citizens, under the veil of a “reform project” (a term that the government liked to use in various occasions) that allowed the system to start collecting extra money for the budget or to further limit the rights and freedoms of individuals, associations and companies. These were laws and measures that introduced draconic punishments and fines for everything and anything, the grey economy, shortening the lists of unemployed and social assistance beneficiaries, external exams in public education and so on. When the system would notice that the so-called reform was faced with a harsh reaction from the citizens that threatened to seriously damage the political rating of the party and its leader, especially if this happened on the eve of upcoming elections, there was a swift step backward—the law or the measure would be softened, abolished or delayed for better days. Immediately after, the Goebbels-type propaganda would come to the forefront—instead of accountability and an apology, attempts were made to make the most from even the most harmful policies and acts. With the assistance of the skillful maneuvers and constructs of the spin-doctors, which were spread by the numerous pro-governmental media megaphones, the end result was a positive vision of the government as the benefactor who abolished the bad decision because it cares about the interests of the citizens, counting on their short memories.

The VMRO-DPMNE government alone and with the help of the well-paid propaganda machinery, was creating an illusion to inaugurate the “syndrome of faultlessness”, that they are the good ones, the patriots, that only they want what is best for the people, that they are working day and night (24/7) and taking care about the present and future, basing all this on the newly created “glorious past” (the antiquization of history and glorification of Alexander the Great). The government, despite all its evident failures, did not acknowledge mistakes, never accepted responsibility for anything, but was rather trying hard to present itself, to be shown and to be seen by the people only in the best

light—as the only defender of the state interests of the Republic of Macedonia and the national interests of the Macedonian people, but also as a contemporary Robin Hood, who takes from the rich and gives to the poor and protects the weak and disempowered!

When all of this was almost perfectly put together by the government, and the mighty financed propaganda/media machinery would further mold and spread it to the public, it was perfectly normal that the state became captured: when the illegal became legal, the undemocratic became democratic, the immoral became moral, the unjust became just, the unreasonable became reasonable, then finally, the abnormal was becoming normal. Then, in this state of abnormality, it was quite normal that the biggest criminals from the political mafia walked arrogantly and shamelessly around the country yelling “catch the thief!” The chief of the criminal association called the opposition officials and especially their leader the biggest thieves, and at the same time used the system of governing to stage political trials and engage false witnesses. In this way, the attention of the public was diverted, covering up the indications, suspicions and indictments for several cases of organized crime that were initiated against him by the Special Prosecutor’s Office. That is why it was normal when the “black counter-revolutionary protesters” with red and yellow ribbons, which had represented themselves in public and in the media as “meek lambs” under the motto “Together for Macedonia” and with the exclamations against the federalization and protection of the unitarian character of the state, acted like “bloodthirsty wolves” when they were shouting the nationalist-chauvinist slogans such as “cursed Shquiptars” (an offensive moniker for Albanians) and “A Clean Macedonia”.

Populism, assisted by propaganda (as these two always go hand in hand), represents a threat for the democracy of every country, because the populists are using their rhetoric for outshouting and outvoting their political opponents, so that instead of debating they are downplaying and propagating. One of the most useful tools for carrying out a campaign and propaganda, the so-called “what-about-ism,” in its essence means that instead of recognizing one’s own mistake or a faulty policy, one downplays it, pointing to the opponents and their mistakes. It is done in such a way that every thesis is confronted with a counter-thesis, the reply to every question is a counter-question, and in every debate there is a detour from the main topic into strong accusations that the opponent was doing bad things and making mistakes while in power. This can be illustrated with examples that were and are happening every day before the Macedonian public. For example, when after the 2016 parliamentary elections

VMRO-DPMNE failed to form a parliamentary majority and was refusing to allow a peaceful and democratic transfer of power to the new majority led by SDSM, depending on the needs and the situation, it sometimes acted as if it were in power, and sometimes as if it were in the opposition. The party that as an autocratic and authoritarian ruler captured the state and as a criminal association used the secret agencies to wiretap over 25.000 people, that made gross violations of the electoral processes and other types of organized crime of the highest ranks and whose top officials are under investigations or already indicted for many criminal cases, used its Center for communications on a daily basis to publish press-releases in which it blamed its political opponents as if they were in power and as if their government carried out organized crime, even though their political opponents had been in opposition for exactly eleven years, without access to any state and budgetary resources.

The phenomenon “what-about-ism” or to use the traditional expression “catch the thief,” was very clearly described by the journalist-analyst Goran Mihajlovski in one of his columns: “I realized that we are no longer talking about the moral erosion of the system. This is more of a psychopathological condition of the soul of the society in which we live. We live in a country where the patient is guilty because he trusts his doctor and the doctor who is consciously lying the patient is not guilty. So, the president of the country who is violating the Constitution deliberately is not guilty, but we who are indicating to him that he is violating it are guilty. The politicians who were deliberately stealing from us for years are not guilty, but we—who are asking for them to be sentenced and to return the money that they stole—are guilty. Those who ordered and carried out the wiretapping for years are not guilty, but we who heard the conversations are.” Examples such as these from Macedonia exist in the entire Balkan region, as well as in every country in Europe or in the world where democracy is regressing, i.e., is not given permission to develop at a normal pace. However, this tendency is also characteristic for the national-populists in countries with long traditions and functional systems.

The spins and lies produced by the spin-doctors of the system of governing would not have the desired effect unless they are well-packaged and distributed by the mass-media and the social networks, with the goal to reach as many people as possible, as well as to be accepted by them. The system of governing includes in this important propaganda function an enormous number of pro-governmental media, pumping them with large amounts of money through government campaigns, various projects and other kinds of relations with the owners and the editors of the media. To those people, the media

business is only important for their image and for getting better standing with the government for other, much more lucrative businesses. Thus, the media and the journalists, rather than committing to their professional obligation to inform the people, became instruments for brain washing the public in favor of the government. The government in the fully captured state made hostage of yet another important sphere of the aspect of social life.

The basic product and function of journalism in Macedonia in the period when VMRO-DPMNE were in power was not information, news, investigation, substantiated comments, the presentation of facts so that the readers can draw their own conclusion. Journalism in the vast majority of the media, especially in the pro-governmental media, was reduced to pure propaganda politics intended for brainwashing, for the production of half-truths and lies in favor of the system of governing and for the construction of scandals, labeling, demonizing and discrediting the opposition and anyone who challenged the government. Here too the circle was coming to a close. The system of governing in its campaign to politicizing the institutions and to capture the biggest and the most influential televisions on the national level—first and foremost the state/public TV and Radio Service (MRTV – Macedonian Radio and Television), several radio stations, almost all daily newspapers and weeklies, and huge number of web portals. All of these were served, in logistics and as a protector of their interests in the industry, by a parallel journalist association—MAN.

In the era of VMRO-DPMNE's governing, media and journalism in Macedonia were going through the most difficult temptation of its long history. At this time, many critically oriented media were closed down. The process began with the powerful A1 TV, the daily newspapers "Vreme", "Shpic", "Koha e re," the newly formed A2 TV. Due to the financial problems (lack of advertisements and lawsuits initiated by the government), two daily newspapers "Fokus" and "Den" ceased publication, as did two exceptional and free-thinking weekly magazines, "Globus" and "Gragjanski." The last days of the governing of VMRO-DPMNE witnessed the folding of "Utrinski Vesnik," which until it was taken over by people close to government a number of years prior, had been one of the best and most influential daily newspapers in the country three daily newspapers; the best-selling "Vest"; and closing the circle, the first private daily newspaper, at that time the most powerful "Dnevnik". Due to the close relations with their owners, managers and some of the chief editors, the government managed to make them instrumental for their own purposes, finally leading them to bankruptcy and dissolution.

By becoming the biggest advertiser and for that purpose “pouring” tens of millions of euros from the state budget, the government bought for itself the right to create editorial policy, becoming the editor-in-chief of all pro-governmental media. In the period of VMRO-DPMNE’s governing, the “incestuous” relationship between the party/government, the pro-governmental media and the media owners/editors/journalists gave birth to a monster that left severe consequences on Macedonian society and Macedonian journalism. Macedonia has witnessed the abuse of tremendous power of the (pro-governmental) media for organized crime by the owners, editors and government officials. When we are speaking about the relationship between the government and (pro-governmental) media, there was one general relation: governmental advertising—money—corruption, while the common denominator was the criminal association for politically organized crime. This incestuous relationship also gave birth to a “genetically modified” type of journalist—in whom the government was investing a lot and was rewarding them for being a useful instrument of the propaganda strategy—“journalists-racketeers” that used hate speech and linguistic pornography to motivate the party soldiers into dirty work, for counter-protests and for the demonization of the opposition and all who dared to think differently.

When we look at the relationship between the government and the media, the first association is the institutional: government—owners—editors-in-chief/editors/journalists. The second association is functional: the government gives money and the pro-governmental media, on one hand, demonizes the opposition and opponents as the biggest “enemies” of the people and the state, and on other hand, they give devoted support and compliments for the policies, reforms, actions, ingenuity, modesty and kindness of the party and especially its leader aimed at the pensioners, the farmers, the social assistance beneficiaries, the students, the ordinary people, the disadvantaged, the sick, the poor, etc. The third association is financial—the money. Taking into account the strategy of VMRO-DPMNE’s system of governing according to which the new propaganda campaign for the next elections begins on the very day after the previous elections have ended, the Government, although it was hiding this information, was spending approximately 20 million euros on an annual basis. This information was collected and presented to the public by several critically oriented and investigative media and was never denied by the state institutions. Out of the total amount, half was paid to the pro-governmental TV Sitel, a quarter to Kanal 5 TV, a bit less to Alfa TV, and the rest in the form of crumbs, to other media. The main principle in the relationship was this: you scratch my back and

I will scratch yours. The Government gives the money to the pro-governmental televisions and press and they return the favor to the party/Government in the form of huge discounts for advertising during the election campaign. These discounts sometimes went up to 95 percent! The fourth association was corruption-crime. In mixing up the origins of the money provided to the pro-governmental media, a problem arises in that it is unclear whether a certain amount is used for public government campaigns or party campaign ads, and whether the amount comes from the state budget or the party's bank account? There are serious indications and concerns that the money and the accounts were all mixed up at the expense of the state budget!

The goal of all these associations and deals was to create a good and positive impression about the government and its policies, with the final result—winning the elections and staying in power.

To round up this chapter, we can look at the media freedoms ranking in the captured state. According to the 2016 World Press Freedom Index, prepared by “Reporters without Borders”, Macedonia is ranked 111st out of 180 countries in the world. According to this organization, the media freedoms registered a setback in the entire Balkan region, but the erosion of this right was most visible in Macedonia. Slander was decriminalized in 2012, but the criminal processes were changed into civic cases, with the possibility of high financial and harsh prison sentences for journalists and media owners. There were many registered threats, violence, harassment and intimidation of journalists during the protests in 2016, but very few of those responsible were punished. The political instability was influencing the work of the journalists, and the pressure of the party in power created a situation where a number of media practiced self-censorship—this was one of the main observations contained in the chapter of the 2016 Report devoted to Macedonia, under the title - “The Balkans Bad Boy”.

Money - a Little for the Others, and Most for One's Self

For the leader of VMRO-DPMNE, Nikola Gruevski, during his relatively short, but meteoric career – money was his profession, it later became his obsession, and at the very end it cost him dearly. It became his destiny, as everyone who is involved in illegal activities, including dealings with money, should be aware that the perfect crime does not exist and that justice is maybe slow, but always wins. He started his professional career as a broker in private bank.

He continued to work in state institutions – first as minister of trade, soon after that as minister of finance, and ending as prime minister. Since one of the solutions contained in the Przino agreement was that one hundred days before the elections he must leave his government position, he resigned on January 15th 2016. Although the elections were postponed twice (in April and June), he did not return to the prime minister's post. Now he is only the leader of the party with several convictions for politically organized crime.

He was managing two large budgetary bank accounts: the state budget, as prime minister, and the party budget, as party leader. At the same time, in accordance with the image that he created about himself as a techno-manager, he treated the state and the party as profit-making joint-stock companies, generating from them big dividends. The money, to the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE, to the party elite and especially to Gruevski, was one of the most functional and most efficient instruments for winning elections, for governing, for preservation of the ruling throne and, of course, for the high life.

The former prime minister in the first government of VMRO-DPMNE, Ljubco Georgievski, several years after the ending of his mandate, stated about himself that he was “as rich as some average businessman”. In response to the critics that it is not possible to become rich only with the monthly salary of a prime minister, he laconically replied: “We took, but we also gave to others”! Nikola Gruevski did not say anything similar, but at the end of his mandate and after the public exposure of the “bombs of Zaev and the opposition”, it became clear from the wiretapped conversations that Georgievski's motto was upgraded and expanded so that today it would read: “We took the most, but we gave a little bit to the others”!

With such a strategy, the government developed a completely rounded system. On the one side – for the amassing of wealth of the party elite and the party itself, and on the other – for the creation of dependents, clients, users of services and other sorts of people and groupings deliberately attached to the state finances to whom the government is distributing, giving and donating as act of benevolence. Of course, the expectations were that when needed all these people will return the favor with: a vote, a donation, participation in counter-protests, support, loyalty, violence against the political opponents, etc. In order for such system to realize its function, the government, i.e. the party/state, became the biggest employer, investor, creditor, advertiser, subsidizer, publisher, project-manager, social-worker, rewarder, editor, nourisher, doctor, educator, etc. In that context the government, i.e. the party/state, was giving

jobs, salaries, official positions, subsidies, various types of assistance, rewards, recognitions, allowances, loans, seats on the managing boards, extra-pensions, honorary ambassadorial and consular posts, rewards at cultural and music festivals, down to sandwiches and free transportation for the pro-governmental counter-protesters. It was allowing, encouraging and turning a blind eye to the friendly or hostile take overs of successful companies/businesses from the people and companies that were close to the government. If it was not possible to buy someone with money, then they were bought with a lot of money!

The system of “the market economy” in politics, as practiced by the government, was developed to perfection. The state finances were directed in accordance to the party needs and benefits. In the most stellar moments of their reign, criticizing the opposition that is not capable of winning elections, the leader of VMRO-DPMNE, Nikola Gruevski, (sub)consciously (in a Freudian slip) exposed the strategy of the system of governing of his party – emphasizing that the elections are not won during the election campaign or on election day, but much earlier. That was absolutely correct, because the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE introduced the everlasting campaign that started from the very first day after the completion of the previous elections, repeating that pattern endlessly. In their entire period of governing, there was not a single day without campaigning, without laying foundations and cutting red-ribbons for new investments, without announcements for thousands of real and virtual ideas, projects, activities, etc. However, all of that was not done with the financial means of the party and personal finances of the ministers and other officials, but with the money from the state budget that belonged to all citizens.

From what we know and what experience says, starting in 2011 VMRO-DPMNE was winning the elections practically in the years, months and days before the formal election day. At the same time, it depended on the amount of the “invested” budgetary resources for corruption of the larger social groupings of citizens (clientelism) whether the difference in votes against the opposition would be 70.000, 120.000 or 200.000. Namely, it became obvious that in the period between 2008 and 2014, the number of die-hard members and sympathizers of this party was stabilized at around 300.000, and for the opposition at around 200.000 voters.

It should be explained that in the mixing of what belonged to the party and what to the state and the usage of the state resources for party and personal promotion of the government, at the disposal of the leader and a few untouchable ministers, the VMRO-DPMNE government was allocating huge amounts

of budgetary resources (according to the governments language – “for previously planned projects”) which were spent without any control or accountability. One of the first steps taken by the VMRO’s system of governing starting from 2007 was continuing the uncontrolled increase of the state budget. It is an undisputed fact that the governing coalition between VMRO-DPMNE and DPA (Democratic Party of Albanians), and later on with DUI, inherited from its predecessor approximately 1.6 billion euros. With the increase of the budgetary funds every year, the state budget in 2017 reached the amount of 3.3 billion euros, which means in ten years it was doubled. But that was not all. The VMRO-DPMNE government in 2006 inherited an insignificant budgetary deficit (nearly zero), which every year and in a planned manner was increased, only to reach in 2017 the projected sum of 320 million euros. That means that the system of governing during their eleven years in power had at their disposal the fantastic amount of roughly 30 billion euros, funded from the annual budgets and the budgetary deficits, in addition to money from other resources.

Out of those incredible amounts, according to the relevant international organizations and domestic analysts, it is estimated that between 5 and 8 billion euros have disappeared in unknown ways and to unknown destinations. After the completion of the process of money-laundering, a portion of these funds was coming back into the country from various off-shore destinations, the so-called tax heavens, usually as foreign investments, but also as additional financial injections for election purposes.

According to the structure of the budget, it could be said that from 2008 onwards, instead of being developmental, as popularized and boasted by the then government, the budgets became electoral (2009, 2011, 2013, 2014 and 2016). The system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE in all those years did not start the elections without a budget structured for the elections and a pre-election loan amounting to no less than 220 million euros – ether from the IMF (with the purpose of ‘putting out fires’ in the case of a need), from the World Bank for budgetary “consolidation”, or from Deutsche Bank for the “undisclosed needs” of the government. In that way, the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE created a scheme/pattern/model for election wins which was based on the habits from the famous dimmed and smoky “Balkan cellar”, well explained by the lucid expression of the columnist Arsim Zekoli: “You get as many votes as you spend money for”.

In the election year of 2011, the government of VMRO-DPMNE spent approximately 220 million euros out of a 440 million euro credit from IMF. Out

of fear that the rest could be spent undesignated – IMF has first froze the remained amount, and later on withdrew it. For the elections held on June 5th that year, only in the second quarter the bulk of the state budget was “eaten” – 651 million euros, including the credit from IMF. Because of the electoral budget for 2013 and the credit of around 220 million euros from Deutsche Bank, with guarantees of 60 million from the World Bank, on December 24th 2012 the government showed its “determination” to pass the budget, even if that meant the brutal use of violence against their colleagues from the opposition, along with the journalists, who were literally thrown out from the hall. The government proved that it would rather violate the Constitution, the Law on the Assembly and the Rules of Procedure, kill the essence of democracy, suspend the rule of law and the sovereignty of the citizens who voted for the opposition, capture the state, thus sending a terrible picture about Macedonia in the world, rather than risking going into the elections without having secured money. In this way, the only once that stood to lose, but not necessarily, was the party and no one else. At the same time, following the same pattern of always finding excuses for itself and turning the blame on the others, the government accused the opposition that it was trying to execute a *coup d'état*! Only in the first quarter, due to the local elections held on March 24th 2013, the government spent 672 million euros – 186 million from foreign loans and the rest from the state budget.

In the election year 2014, although the government declared that it had no plans to go after foreign loans, and that the loans would be made on the domestic financial market, it still managed to obtain just before the elections, by force the Assembly to approve it, a new loan from the Word Bank amounting to 50 million euros, earmarked for the development of competitiveness policies. But, having in mind the previous experiences and the fear of improper use for election purposes, the World Bank prolonged the start of the credit line until after the elections! For the elections held in April, the government spent in the first month and a half (starting from January 1st until February 14th 2014), primarily for election purposes, more than 400 million euros. That amount is 100 million euros higher than in the same period in 2012 – a year in which there were no elections! A similar situation was repeated in 2016, when the elections were postponed several times, but the state budget and the borrowed money were used in abundance!

With all of these huge amounts of money, material goods, services and gestures of good will, the system of governing was perfectly servicing and making dependent the large social categories – clients and users of the benevolence of the government. The pensioners and the social assistance beneficiaries were

receiving a linear increase of the pensions and the assistance, the farmers were receiving the overdue and part of the regular subsidies, growers of grape and tobacco were receiving payments for previously purchased grape and tobacco, the students got their scholarship, the new mothers their monthly allowance, the artists their honorariums, victims of weather and other disasters the usual financial support, etc. All those who were angry because of the poverty were regularly “surprised” before the elections and reminded about the need to show gratitude towards the “humane and generous” government, although it was only paying its obligations and debts that were their right according to the laws. Of course, nothing was given or serviced from the private pockets of the government, which was creating false media-propaganda images that it and its leader were the benefactors, although in fact the money was coming from the pockets of all citizens in the country. All these distributions to the poor, to the dependents and to the clients of the government, were done by the system of governing on one hand, to buy the trust and votes of these numerous social categories, and on the other hand, as a cover for the enormous crimes perpetrated by the ruling elite.

Although the system was trying to create the image of itself as humane, honorable and just, by distributing money, corrupting and borrowing, at the same time it was brutally punishing individuals and companies with the aim to collect additional money. The penalties, i.e., the fines became a trade mark, because after VMRO-DPMNE took over power, the amounts of the fines were doubled and even tripled, compared to those that previously existed. The amounts of future collected fines were even planned as budgetary income in the projections of the state treasury, and every following year this budget line was increased by several percentage points. The annual income that was collected in the form of fines was amounting to up to 20 million euros!

Following the traditional saying “God created the beard on himself first, and then put it on others”, the same was done by the “God from Macedonia” – the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE commanded by its leader. The intertwining and mixing of the state and the party, according to many indications and evidence, also meant that state and party budgets were also mixed and interlinked. They were at the disposal of and ruled from one command post – the party headquarters which served as “gatekeeper and the key keeper” of both accounts. The treasurer in charge of these enormous amounts of money, was taking double for himself from the bulk of the amount – for the leader and several high-ranking members and for the party, and giving peanuts to the others, to “their people” and the party army. In the end, when the final

receipt is calculated, it turns out that the money that was given for the corruption of “their people” and for the party army came from the country’s loans, meaning that the created debts in the future will be paid not only by those who believed that the party “loves and showers them with wealth,” but also their descendants. At the same time, much of the borrowed funds went to the bank accounts and were added to the illegally acquired wealth of leaders of the system/regime and the party itself.

According to data provided by the relevant international institutions, the system of governing made VMRO-DPMNE one of the richest parties in Europe, with property worth tens of millions of euros, despite the fact that Macedonia is one of the poorest countries in Europe! While it is clear who will pay the bill for the “sandwiches” for the people and how the borrowed money will be returned, the full knowledge about how the criminal elite and the party gained its wealth, what is the exact amounts were, where they are now and how they will return the enormous acquired wealth, will only be clear at the end of the legal process started by the Special Prosecutor’s Office. However, they will be conducted after the captured state is completely freed and the institutions become functional.

No matter how important funding is for the taking and preservation of power, nevertheless it is not always and at all times the most important. A clear example of this are the elections held at the end of 2016 and the postelection political-institutional crisis in the first half of 2017, which culminated on April 27th when the supporters of VMRO-DPMNE assisted by the police made a bloody feast of violently entering into the Assembly and the brutal attacks on the parliamentarians, even endangering their lives, in order to prevent the transfer of power. Namely, these events have definitely shown two things about money as a tool of the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE. Firstly, that the huge amount of money that the system of governing poured into the election process (partly from the state, and partly from the party account), for corruption of the voters and for propaganda and advertising, resulted with only 15.000 votes more for VMRO-DPMNE against SDSM, although there are serious doubts that even that result was accomplished with fraud and pressures. Secondly, the postelection period and especially the catharsis that marked the beginning of the fall of the system, on April 27th, confirmed the traditional wisdom that “money is the root of all evil”. Namely, blinded by the power of government, by wealth and money, the ruling elite of VMRO-DPMNE lost touch with reality in firmly believing that money and power are everything. However, that illusion came back to hit them like a boomerang. It became clear that money cannot

buy and do everything. Money, the same as the power of government, can only work up until a certain point. Later on, despite the money and the power at the disposal of a government, when the political earthquake happens – which in the case of VMRO was of their own making, with the purpose of preventing the transition of power – then caught under the ruins of the system are the party, its elite and the criminally acquired money.

The Police Baton of the System of Governing – VMRO-VMRO

The system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE, after acquiring absolute power and capturing the state, instrumentalized the security services, the public security forces, the inspection services and the prosecution offices and used them to meet the needs and in the function of the interests of the party. The police baton was left as the last tool, if the equation with four unknowns did not give results with the three operations mentioned earlier and before the judiciary – the extraordinary legal instrument is used. In those difficult cases when opponents could not be won over, discouraged or broken with populism, propaganda or money (meaning they “the nice way” fails), then comes the police baton at the forefront – either literally or as a metaphor.

During the eleven years of VMRO-DPMNE's governing Macedonia gradually became a captured state, but at the same time, it also became a police state. When the state and the party became one, then the Ministry of Interior (the Macedonian abbreviation is MVR) became MVRO-VMRO, according to a statement by then minister of interior Gordana Jankulovska. This play on words, later often used by columnists and political analysts, served in a way as confirmation that Macedonia became a police state, because the police instead of being a service for the citizens, functioned as a service for the party. The system of governing did not only not hide this, but it intentionally emphasized it as a preventive measure – to block any idea of resistance, criticism or the composition of a new parliamentary majority that would remove the governing party from its ruling throne. In line with that and for the same purpose was the permanent emphasizing of the role of the “grey eminence” of the system – the “Big Cousin” – as the chief of the secret services, which can hear everything, see everything, follow everything, know everything and can do everything!

In the same vain we had the emphasis on one of the features from the historical organization whose traditions were continued by the party: about the “long hand of VMRO” and the execution of the traitors, snitches, enemies

and the opponents. This rhetoric was reaffirmed in the last several years, and was symbolically marked with the placing of the monument of the executioner Andon Janev Koseto in front of the Criminal Court. To make the pressure even heavier, the private security agencies that were employing thousands of people, and whose owners were people close to the government and the party, were given permission to be armed, to check identification documents and to make arrests, with the help of a special law adopted for this very purpose! Similar authorities were extended also to the army police!

The “Police Baton”, i.e. the instruments that came to the forefront when some groups (the opposition, the NGO sector, companies, etc.) and individuals did not want to voluntary, in a peaceful manner, with persuasion, rewards, money or lots of money, become loyal to the system, apart from the Ministry of Interior and the secret police, also included: the Prosecutor’s Office, the courts, the Public Revenue Office, the Customs Office, the financial police, numerous agencies, offices, inspectorates, enforcement agents, bankruptcy judges, etc. These institutions captured by the party became instruments which assisted the system by protecting, covering and tolerating the politically organized crime.

The extent to which attention was paid to the “police baton” as an instrument of the government is evident from several facts. Firstly, in the institutions that constituted the “baton” there were those most trusted by the party elite and the leader. Secondly, the power and the discretionary rights of these institutions were enhanced. In order to keep everything under control and to collect different types of data about the companies, NGOs and prominent individuals of interest, they were allowed to search and take all kinds of personal, banking, health and many other data and information. Thirdly, all staff members in those institutions were the most loyal, most obedient and most corrupted members and supporters of the party. All those who were suspected to be supporters of other political options or all those who wanted to work professionally, were expelled or marginalized, while the total number of employees was significantly increased. Fourthly, large amounts of money from the state budget were invested in these institutions without any indications about their purpose. For instance, the budget of the Ministry of Interior since the first year in power of VMRO-DPMNE was increased multiple times, while the budget of the Ministry of Defense, which was then slightly higher, in the last year of VMRO-DPMNE’s governing was reduced by half!

The system, in order to instill fear among the subordinated, but also as a lesson, a warning and an deterrent, in the presence of the cameras of the

pro-government TV stations and with logistics of the police, prosecution office and the judiciary, started to make public arrest of opponents, officials and people close to the opposition with spectacular interventions of the fully armed special forces. The system also started with the court verdicts with prison sentences and rounded up several political processes: against Velija Ramkovski, businessman and owner of the highly influential A1 TV, which was later closed; against Ljube Boskovski, leader of a political party; against the journalists Tomislav Kezarovski and Zoran Bozinovski; against Fiat Canovski, businessman and party leader, whose building under construction was ruined. etc. The critically oriented media were under permanent pressure and were publicly demonized by the leader of the party and the then prime minister, which led to court cases and self-censorship by journalists. In constructed political processes and without evidence, the system lustrated hundreds of government opponents for alleged collaboration with the secret services in the previous political system. The companies of the businesspeople who did not cooperate with the government, were under constant scrutiny of the inspectors, punished and some were even subjected to hostile takeovers.

The NGO sector was treated as the main enemy of the government and was under permanent attacks in the form of various campaigns led by the pro-government media and high-ranking government and party officials. The peak of the demonization was reached after the early parliamentary elections in 2016, when VMRO-DPMNE did not manage to win enough seats in the Assembly to remain in power, and when they decided to launch a campaign under the motto "Stop Soros", which was coordinated together with Hungary, Serbia and some other countries with authoritarian national-populist regimes and leaders. The insanity went so far that the President of the Republic, Gjorgje Ivanov, accused the multi-billionaire George Soros, the founder and funder of the idea/project for building open societies, that he burnt down his public offices in the center of the capitol(!) despite the fact that, as registered by various media, it was done by group of angry protesters from the "Colorful Revolution", revolting against the illegal amnesty that the illegitimate president granted to the highest state-party officials who were prosecuted for large-scale crime and corruption.

With such examples and precedents, the citizens were led to the conclusion: when they can do that to these wealthy and powerful people, than they can easily do the same to us, the ordinary people! The intention with the "police baton" was to eliminate any idea for resistance and countering the system. As time passed, and the undemocratic, authoritarian and criminal activities

of the government were gradually unmasked, the system started to use the “baton” much more frequently, on a larger scale and more brutally. In the period that lasted less than 5 years, the authority also used the “police baton” to switch the attention of the public from the big scandals that threatened the throne of power.

The first example occurred on December 24th 2012, the so-called “black Monday”, when the opposition parliamentarians and the journalists were brutally thrown out of the assembly hall, so that the regime could pass the Law on the budget for the following year and which contained more than 200 million euros intended for corruption during the local election held in 2013. The second, on May 9th 2015, when the authority staged a “small war” with the assistance of the foreign consultant – the terrorist attack in the Kumanovo neighborhood called “Divo naselje”, when eight policemen of the special forces and ten terrorists (in fact mercenaries from Kosovo and Macedonia) lost their lives. The goal was to turn the attention of the public away from the disastrous “bombs by Zaev and the opposition”. The third time, on April 27th 2017, when the crowd of two-three thousand people from the so-called pro-government movement “For a Joint Macedonia”, allegedly to prevent the federalization of Macedonia, its partition and bilingualism – brought the country to the edge of civil war, endangering the lives of many parliamentarians, party leaders, journalists, policemen and assembly employees, with the aim to save as much as possible its influence, to remain as part of some large coalition and to save itself from the consequences of the crimes they had committed. In order for all of that to be even more indicative and clear, the common denominator and the creator of these actions was one man, the first person of the Department for Public Security of the Ministry of Interior (uniformed police), Mitko Cavkov, whom the government, together with the chief of the secret police, Saso Mijalkov, did not hold back from singling out and promoting as the baton of the system.

With the loss of influence of the party and its leader, when after the elections held in 2016 a new parliamentary majority was created, when the unavoidable process of dethronement of VMRO-DPMNE and their going into opposition started, the “police baton” became a frequently used tool of the system. The units for pressure and defense of the criminalized governing elite camouflaged themselves behind the veil of the alleged civic initiative “For a Joint Macedonia”. Soon after that, many associations sprang up like mushrooms, with members who looked like body builders in black T-shirts, with fat necks, wearing heavy golden chains with crosses, with names borrowed from

the revolutionary period of the historic VMRO. They associated themselves as the “Macedonian national front” which, allegedly, if needed, would defend with force the “unitary character, the language and the territorial integrity” of Macedonia. The “Hard-core patriotic defenders” in black shirts, which appeared like party para-police forces for the defense of the regime and the party, were blessed by several “black mantles” of the Macedonian Orthodox Church (MOC), which largely functions as religious logistics for the party. Somehow at the same time, its revival on the Macedonian scene was announced by the party’s para-police unit “Lavovi” (“Lions”), formed in 2001, blessed by the MOC, and disbanded after the conflict ended.

The blessings of these para-police units for disseminating fear and threats were accompanied by swearing, demonization and throwing anathemas for “traitors”, i.e. opponents. Here we should not forget at any moment the numerous security agencies which were formed by the people from or close to the VMRO-DPMNE government, who gained wide credentials and despite cases linked with violence and illegal activities, were never caught by the responsible institutions, who made sure to turn a blind when searching for them.

The events of April 27th 2017 disclosed the unpleasant truth that the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE, having captured the state, out of all the institutions had captured most of all the Ministry of Interior, meaning police in uniforms and the secret police, creating a police state, to later use it as a “baton”, i.e., as a tool for intimidation and repression for all those who think differently or fought to come into power, which the legitimate goal of any political opposition. Although it lost the parliamentary majority and should have ensured the smooth transfer of power to the newly created parliamentary majority, the system of VMRO-DPMNE for months created obstacles and slowed down this inevitable process, created obstructions in the Assembly and constantly stimulated its supporters to protest on the streets, to protect something that was not threatened and to propagate violence if a new governing coalition was formed.

What was suggested and stimulated by the leader and the party was accomplished when the time was right. Following the well-prepared scenario, after the election of the new speaker of the Assembly from the new parliamentary majority, the “people” of VMRO-DPMNE, led by well-known multiple criminal offenders, most of them criminals pardoned by the head of state, mobsters, bullies and masked policemen and army officers, assisted and directed by policemen in uniforms and the chiefs of the parliamentary security, entered

and violated, kept as hostages, injured and seriously endangered the life of many parliamentarians, several party leaders, employees in the Assembly and the policemen who were professionally carrying out their tasks.

These facts were also confirmed by the then minister of interior, Agim Nuhii, who on behalf of the Ministry condemned the events in the Assembly and informed that part of the structures in the Ministry did not fulfill their professional tasks, for which they must be held accountable. "Part of the structures in the Ministry of Interior last night did not perform their task, and for that they must be held accountable. There was an operational headquarters formed when there were peaceful protests, in the event that the president of the Assembly and the Government were elected. The head of the headquarters was Mitko Cavkov. From the beginning of the escalation of the violence until 8 p.m. Cavkov was not available for me, although I was trying to reach him on the phone, and also personally on the premises of the headquarters", said Nuhii. He announced that the internal control will investigate the accountability of Cavkov, as director of the Bureau of Public Security and head of the task group, as well as of those employees in the Ministry who refused to act in accordance to his orders. He immediately replaced Cavkov as head of the task group in the Ministry. On that occasion, Nuhii stressed that "The Ministry of Interior is an institution that should guarantee public order and peace and not to be under the influence of political structures and to be abused for their purposes". He stated that the majority of the employees in the Ministry are professionals and he thanked them, because with their assistance the situation was put under control. The new minister of interior in the reform government, Oliver Spasovski, taking over this role, announced fundamental reforms in the Ministry of Interior aimed at its professionalization and decriminalization in a situation when it was a completely de-professionalized, politicized and criminalized security system.

"Swarovski" Judiciary - the Defense Bastion of Crime

Reforms in the judiciary were one of the top priorities of VMRO-DPMNE in their program "Revival in 100 steps", with which they won the parliamentary elections in 2006 and formed a government, as well as for all the three next governments formed after the snap parliamentary elections in 2008, 2011 and 2014. When it comes to the priorities in the judiciary, VMRO-DPMNE usually was emphasizing: independence and transparency of their work, strengthening

of the trust in the judiciary system, implementation of the career system for the judges, appointment and advancement of judges depending on results, and so on. In reality, quite the opposite processes were taking place.

VMRO-DPMNE never had strong enough political will to implement the declared priorities and principles in the judiciary, but on the contrary – it obstructed and modified them to the point that they mutated and became their counterpoints. Thus, instead of making decisions in the name of the citizens, the judiciary was making decisions in the name and in favor of the party.

This approach created serious consequences for the constitutional system and for the rights, freedoms and interests of the citizens. The judicial power, as part of the system of division of powers, which implies independence, autonomy and checks and balances between the three powers (together with the legislature and executive branch), under the pressure of the ruling party voluntarily and arbitrarily capitulated, allowing itself to become captured and to enter into the unconstitutional and illegal system of becoming one with the government. At this time, in the system that generated single-mindedness, the leading role belonged to the executive power. Later on it was upgraded into unity of the government and the party, which in reality meant the party and the state were equated, or in other words – the state was captured.

In order to keep up with this strategy and its goals, the judiciary system needed a complete transformation into an important factor in the governing of VMRO-DPMNE. The role of the chief ideologist, manager and political commissioner of the process of transformation of the judicial power, i.e. its politicizing, capturing and putting it into the function of protector of the government, was given to Mihajlo Manevski, the first minister of justice in the VMRO-DPMNE government and a person of trust to the leader Nikola Gruevski. Manevski used legal, staffing and organizational engineering and various maneuvers to shift the judiciary from the constitutional and legal to the political party track. The minister and person of trust legally and institutionally built the foundations of the judiciary that suited the model and the needs of the system of governing. In fact, the judiciary was used as the last line of defense with the task to protect the government and as an extraordinary legal-institutional instrument and remedy to react if the other four previous lines of the defense fail to defend the position of the ruling power by eliminating and marginalizing the political and other opponents.

In parallel with the legal, institutional and organizational set up of the judicial power so that it may functioning for the party, another group was tasked

and worked on personnel staffing of the judicial institutions: the composition of the Judicial Council, the Council of Public Prosecutors, the Council for Determination of facts, the managing officials in the judiciary, the presidents of the courts on all levels, and the “striking force” - the judges. This list also included operative executors of the most important and most exposed positions in the courts, the prosecutor’s offices, chambers, associations and so on. The chief human resources officers in the judiciary were high-ranking party officials that were holding important state positions: the minister of interior, Gordana Jankulovska, the chief of the secret services, Saso Mijalkov, at the same time the cousin of the prime minister and party leader Nikola Gruevski, the vice-prime minister Musa Xhaferi, the president of the Supreme Court and best man to the speaker of the Parliament, Jovo Vangelovski; at that time the president of the Appellate Court in Skopje and husband of the minister of justice, Filimena Manevska, the former president of the Primary Court 1 in Skopje, Vladimir Pancevski; etc. The decisions were made from the “legendary notebook” of minister Jankulovska, while on the governmental level the proposals were coordinated, synchronized, and in extreme cases marketed and bargained between Mijalkov and Xhaferi.

Because of this approach, the domination of the trusted and background-checked staff, extreme nepotism and conflicts of interests were present in the sector on a large scale. Nobody even tried to hide the existence of close functional relations between: judges – prosecutors – lawyers; judges – prosecutors – politicians; judges – lawyers – politicians; etc. The judiciary became politicized, party-affiliated, corrupted, unprofessional, selective, inefficient and partial. As a result, this most important part of the social make-up of a country had completely lost the trust among citizens, while many of them were seeking and finding justice in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

Entering into this enchanted circle, the judicial power, i.e. the complete legal system with all of its elements – the courts on all levels, the prosecutor’s offices on all levels, the Judicial Council, the Council of the Public Prosecutors, the Fact Finding Council, the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors, the associations of judges and public prosecutors, the chambers of enforcement agents, the Notary Chamber, the Administrative Court and the Higher Administrative Court, even the Constitutional Court, although it is not a typical court, but rather an interpreter of the Constitution and assessor of constitutionality and legality – became one of the most efficient and most trusted tools of the party. The judiciary was used for the preservation of power, for

punishing the opposition, people with different opinions, the NGO sector and individual intellectuals, with staged and “didactic” political processes, as well as a defender of the criminals of the government which were investigated by the Special Prosecutor’s Office.

The most important and highest judicial instance, the Supreme Court, apart from its regular responsibilities, has the task to form and define the judicial practice, which once formulated –was later on followed by the lower courts. There are a number of cases when such judicial practices were formulated (with the assistance of the pro-governmental majority in the highest court), that were crossing the limits of what is legal and just, and were serving the system of governing. If during the election processes something that was not planned went unnoticed by the State Electoral Commission, endangering the election result of VMRO-DPMNE, the administrative courts were serving as “damn” or corrector of the electoral engineering.

According to the analyses of those well acquainted with the situation in judiciary, the biggest problem and the origin of the troubles in this sphere were the Judicial Council, the Council of the Public Prosecutors, joined by the Fact Finding Council, which, due to the party majority in the Assembly, were staffed in such a way that they became party outposts through which the system of governing was electing and appointing the judges and the presidents of the courts (the Judicial Council), the presidents and the public prosecutors on all levels (the Council of the Public Prosecutors) and punishing judges and prosecutors, primarily from the group of “misfits” who were unreliable and whose behavior and decisions did not serve the interests of their superiors and the party (the Fact Finding Council). These councils, instead of being professional and just, became the generators of the deteriorating conditions in the professional execution of the judicial and prosecutorial functions, as well as of the broken interpersonal relationships.

The Judicial Council was designed as an independent organ that appoints and discharges judges, appoints and discharges presidents of the courts, evaluates, gives proposals for changes of the laws and so on. The Council has fifteen members. Eight members are chosen by the judges from their ranks (three of them from the ethnic groups), three members are chosen by the Assembly applying the Badinter principle and two-thirds majority, two are proposals of the President of the Republic (one of them is from the smaller ethnic groups), plus the president of the Supreme Court and the minister of justice, who initially had, but with the changes to the law, lost the right to vote. VMRO-DPMNE with

its majority in the Assembly, influence on the judges and its election engineering managed to achieve dominance in the Council, which became part of the “Swarovski” system. The similar situation happened in the Council of the Prosecutors. It consists of 11 members – one is the state prosecutor, one member is chosen by the public prosecutors from their ranks, one member is chosen by the regional higher prosecutor’s offices in Skopje, Bitola, Stip and Gostivar (one of them from the smaller ethnic groups), four are elected by the Assembly from academic circles, advocates and other prominent lawyers (two of them are from the smaller ethnic groups). Hence, these council instead of being independent, professional and just, became a generators of the deteriorating conditions in the functioning of the judiciary and the prosecutors’ offices, as well as of the broken interpersonal relationships and the lost trust among the citizens.

The problem was multiplied with the fact that, according to the legal provisions, these councils are not responsible to anyone for their actions and faulty policies and moves, which is unthinkable in institutions from such a sensitive sphere. In reality, they behaved as if they were faultless and as absolute masters of the truth in this sphere.

Part of the fault for these conditions around the appointment of suitable judges and prosecutors in these important institutions falls on the judges and prosecutors themselves. The new members of the councils were elected with secret balloting, unless the sophisticated electoral engineering of the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE had somehow found its way here.

When we analyze the model of the judicial system (used as a tool of the system of governing) established by VMRO-DPMNE, it should be said that it had a dual purpose: defensive and offensive. From the beginning, when the system started to for itself, it was programmed in such a way that the function of the judiciary was set up and transformed according to the needs. Hence, it was defensive and was concentrated on legalization, laundering, covering and marginalizing of the illegal acts and the crimes committed by the people from the government/party, as well as people close to the government/party. And vice versa – it was in the offense and oriented towards manufacturing judicial processes and intimidation and elimination from the political, public and business stage of people and legal entities from the opposition, the NGO sector, critically oriented intellectuals—all of those the government saw and treated as a danger and an enemy. It lasted as long as the government was kept in power.

Due to these poor conditions and mistrust in judiciary, in 2015, after the mega-scandal involving the wire-tapping of more than 25.000 people erupted,

due to the passivity, defensive attitude and avoidance in taking swift and efficient action by the regular Public Prosecutor's Office, an additional/new Public Prosecutor's Office was created for the prosecution of criminal acts connected and originated from the content of the illegally followed communications, or in short – the Special Public Prosecutor's Office.

In this newly created situation, after the crimes of the government were publicly exposed with the explosion initiated by the “bombs from Zaev and the opposition”, after the formation of the Special Public Prosecutor's Office, in the final phase of governing, when it became obvious that the process of losing the public trust had already started and that the losing power was becoming a real possibility, the judiciary was given an extremely protective and defensive function, or to use the football jargon, the “bunker system,” with which the government was desperately defending itself from losing power. With all the powers, means and procedures that were at their disposal, the courts and the prosecutors' offices on one hand put themselves at the forefront for the protection of the people from the government and the party for the crimes that they had committed, and on the other hand, for the obstruction of the investigations, the collection of evidence and gathering witnesses from the Special Public Prosecutor's Office, which was necessary for the indictments and court processes.

When talking about the last defense of the party elite from the legal state and from justice, it must be underscored that a special strategy was being implemented. All of the suspects, the charged and the party, and in general, the parliamentarians, technical ministers and other officials from leadership and the administration, the inspections, the prosecution, the police and most importantly, the judiciary, even in the first phase after VMRO-DPMNE went into the opposition—everyone had to be loyal to the very end, to stick together and to never allow any link of the chain to break. The most obvious case was the one involving the businessman Sead Kocan, convicted for forgery when applying for a public procurement tender worth several millions of euros. In this case, the legal principles, legal practices and the laws were broken by the highest legal authorities – the Supreme Court, the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Republic and the Criminal Court, who did not hide that they were working under instructions of the lawyers of the defendant, conducted from the party headquarters. In this case the absurd of absurd was manifested, a case that will be cited in many domestic and foreign legal textbooks – to free from custody a person with serious charges, who had already been a fugitive for more than two months and for whom an international and domestic arrest warrant was issued!

The judiciary defensive bastion of VMRO-DPMNE's government from the indications and convictions of the Special Public Prosecutor's Office for committed crimes and abuses, was not numerous. But it was very loyal, motivated, ruthless and efficient. It consisted of: around twenty specially selected, most trusted and most loyal judges from the Criminal Court, headed by the then president and current judge, the Public Prosecutor of the Republic and the Basic Public Prosecutor. As main logistics behind the first defensive line, they had the Judicial Council, the Council of the Prosecutors, the Fact Finding Council, the Appellate Court Skopje, the president and group of judges of the Supreme Court, and if needed, the Chamber of lawyers, the associations of judges and prosecutors. The last line of defense was consisted of the Constitutional Court, or to be more precise, five out of the nine judges, who became constitutional judges through party connections. The Constitutional Court was kept as the last resource, because upon the request from the party which selected and appointed them in this court, it could decide that the Law on the Special Prosecutor's Office had no constitutional ground, blocking it from further activities and proclaiming its decisions as null and void.

When speaking about the judiciary, as an important instrument of the system of governing, a realistic gradation of the situation should be made, because they were not only black or white, but there were shades of grey in between. Namely, depending on the staffing and their distribution, three groups could be identified.

The first group was the "fighting fist" of the system, not so much due to its numbers, as due to its accumulated power, the distribution in the most important positions in the most important institutions, covering the most important and sensitive cases that were of interest to the government. That was the group that is called "Swarovski judiciary", because of the mutual gestures, gifts, obedience, corruption, express promotions jumping two-three steps at once - from the lowest to the highest positions in the courts and the prosecutor's offices. This group, which was chosen from the small party notebook and appointed directly from the top of the government, had expanded with the voluntarily participation of a number of judges, prosecutors, lawyers and high-ranking officials in the judiciary who gradually established private, ideological, friendly, family, clientelistic feelings and relationships towards the party and the "Swarovski core".

This situation and environment of intertwined powers, privileges and clientelism, when it became quite clear what "the Swarovsky group" was doing

and how much they were profiting, had formed - out of pure lucrative reasons and a policy of non-confrontation with the government - a second group from the court-prosecutor-lawyer industry. It was not part of the first ranks and the “fighting fist”, but was always nearby, to assist in case there was a need for protection, logistics, support, encouragement, a vote and so on, even if that meant losing their reputation and dignity.

Aside from these two - and at a clear distance - was the third group, which consisted of those judges, prosecutors, lawyers and judicial officer who had tried by any means necessary to maintain their professionalism, independence and dignity.

The infiltration of the party in the judiciary in the most direct and illustrative way could also be seen in the activities of the Public Prosecutor's Office and the courts in the case of “bloody Thursday”, when the crowd of VMRO-DPMNE supporters using force and with assistance from the police entered in the parliament building - the Assembly, endangered the lives, injured and for hours kept as hostages the parliamentarians and the leaders of the parties. According to the Public Prosecutor, these serious criminal acts were qualified as the most benign ones - participation in a crowd that prevents the official person to perform an official act, and participation in a crowd that commits a crime (articles 384 and 385 of the Penal Code).

Important segments of the judiciary - the Criminal Court, the Appellate Court, the Supreme Court and the state Public Prosecutor's Office, i.e. the top officials of these institutions and small groups around them, had proved themselves as the most faithful and most energetic defenders of the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE, even when it was formally dethroned. The umbilical cord between these institutions and the system/party was very clearly manifested with the procedure for the dismissal of the state public prosecutor Marko Zvrlevski. From the position of the state prosecutor, Zvrlevski wholeheartedly, energetically and with all the means at his disposal protected and covered for the system, the party and the officials of VMRO-DPMNE and their crimes. In return, when the party was dethroned from power, they fiercely defended and praised him, obstructing the legal and procedural rules in the Assembly for his dismissal from the top post. The party and its main proponents in the Assembly, by defending Zvrlevski were in fact defending themselves and the party leadership from the inevitable facing of justice for the politically organized crime that they had committed.

After the fall of the VMRO-DPMNE government and in parallel with the beginning of the process of dismantling of the system of governing (which was installed in all social pores) and the liberation of the captured state, in Macedonian society there were already beginning to circulate ideas and debates about the reconstruction, i.e., reforms of the complete judicial complex, which means depoliticizing, independence and professionalism of this system. The ideas are moving in two directions.

The first: the dissolution of the system and a general re-election of judges and prosecutors, which was advocated by the former head of the opposition and current leader of SDSM and of the new parliamentary majority, Prime Minister Zoran Zaev. Here the Albanian model suggested by the EU could be applied, for the removal of all judges and prosecutors, the opening of an open competition for new ones, where one of the crucial criteria will be the results of their previous work. This option is a problematic one and is difficult to execute since two-thirds majority in the Assembly is necessary. It is currently not possible without the votes of VMRO-DPMNE, the main opposition party which is against this decision, because it views it as revenge and an attempt to politicize the judiciary by SDSM.

The second: a general revision or re-examination of the appointment, advancement and the performances of all judges and prosecutors, as well as change in all of those cases in which formal illegal acts and procedures during their appointments or advancements will be confirmed, and poor performances and decisions can be established. In that context, it is possible to think about the Albanian experience - the so-called "vetting" - which includes thorough checks and revisions of the judges and the prosecutors (checking the origin of the property status and the sworn statements for not having contacts with persons that committed organized crimes). Such a process of revision could be implemented with changes and amendments to the Laws on the Judicial Council, on the Council of Public Prosecutors and on the Judiciary, since they require only a simple majority in the Assembly.

THE PYRAMIDS OF THE SYSTEM AND THE CHARACTER OF THE GOVERNMENT

The system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE in the era of leadership of Nikola Gruevski who, with the assistance of the party captured and instrumentalized the state for narrow party and personal interests (his and those of the

elite), was relying on the pyramidal principle of structuring and functioning. It is a system of governing shaped similar to the pyramid, where the top is occupied by the pharaoh/shepherd/leader who is undisputed and who decides about everything. He is commanding directly and straight-forwardly through all verticals, horizontals, positions and levels, using mobile phones, text messages, the internet and similar contemporary communication tools, as well as indirectly – through his party branches and politicized institutions, the loyal party soldiers and bureaucrats and the party megaphones. He was doing this 24/7. Because of all of this, it can be concluded that the government in Macedonia was led by one person with hints of autocratic-populist leadership and manifested elements of dictatorship. Hence, it was quite logical that in VMRO-DPMNE, the party bodies and positions, with the exception of the leader, were only formally appointed, only so that they can prove they exist, while party democracy was an abstract concept. According to logic, experience and dialectics, it was inevitable that once the leader/pharaoh will go down in history, according to the tradition, he will be joined into the darkness of the pyramid by those from his closest surrounding, but also by many of his simple and blind followers. It usually happens as a process, but when the fall from power occurred, the first who entered in the darkness of the pyramid were several of those from the top, while the leader/pharaoh still thinks that they are enough to serve as scapegoats, still refuses to surrender, even though he is completely surrounded.

In the pyramidal system of governing were incorporated three inter-linked sub-systems, which, could be named as: (1) the pyramid of power; (2) the pyramid of wealth; and (3) the pyramid of “antiquization”.

The Pyramid of Power

The pyramid of power, or perhaps a more fitting expression would be – the personal pyramid of power, as a system was built according to a specific strategy, structure and components. It is no coincidence that throughout history dictators and autocrats relied in their regimes on the maxim that the human resources (HR) policy is the foundation of every politics and every government. It was such an approach that was used to lay out, structure and build the HR pyramid of power by Nikola Gruevski and the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE: intellectually not so striking, but on the contrary - below the level of the leader/shepherd who himself was not above the average level. However, they were endlessly loyal, enormously thankful, impeccably committed, easily

corrupted, emphatically humble, and without too much thinking were ready to sacrifice – in every sense of the word – to impress the leader. On the other hand, authoritarian leaders do not tolerate capable and liberal minded persons in their surroundings. But smart and wise people, also, do not want to become part of the authoritarian regimes or, if for some reason they do enter, they stay for short period of time, so they either resign, or the system eliminates them as incompatible.

According to this, the basis of the pyramid of power of VMRO-DPMNE was built to include, as its main supporting component of the party itself, which with its numbers, military discipline, complete support and devotion, secured the electoral win and takeover of government, and later on the preservation of power. The building of the pyramid of power in its wider foundations included numerous members, supporters and non-affiliated citizens which for various reasons and motives voted for VMRO-DPMNE. In the middle layer of the pyramid were the party officials and leaders of lower rank, intellectuals, businesspeople and similar categories of groups and individuals which are regular companions in every government, especially in the populist-authoritarian government which spares none of the budgetary/people's money for curating its image and rating, which is gallant and generous with other people's money towards all of those who supported, praised and promote it. Near the top there are the officials from the second circle of power. At the very top of the pyramid of power, as if in a fairy tale, was the "pentagon" – the five most important persons of the system of governing in the captured state. Nevertheless, even among the "great five" it was clear who is who. Above the other three mortals from the "pentagon", were the two with divine halos and credentials – the Big Brother and the Big Cousin.

VMRO-DPMNE and Nikola Gruevski devoted special attention to the personnel/HR as an important component for designing and constructing the pyramid of power. With the HR decisions, the system of governing and the system of control of everything in the state and the society were brought to a full circle, enclosing them in several levels inside the pyramid. In the first circle, i.e. in the "pentagonal pyramid" there was a small interlinked nepotistic group (with family – godfather – friendly ties): on the top – the party leader and the Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski; immediately next to him his cousin Saso Mijalkov – through the mythologized prism of the public – the grey eminence of the system and director of the Office of Security and Counter Intelligence; the party leader's best man, Zoran Stavrevski – treasurer and gatekeeper of the finances; then the former chief of staff promoted to chief of the "police baton",

Gordana Jankulovska; and, the chief of the land-construction-communication tenders, arrangements, annexes and other deals, Mile Janakievski. At the top of the pyramid, with a lot of coordinative credentials, was the big adviser/editor/operative agent, Martin Protuger, a communications officer and transmitter of the directives to the lower layers of the system and the pyramid of power.

In this vicious circle at the top of the pyramid of power of the government, nobody else could enter. However, as difficult as it was to enter, it was even more difficult to leave! Or, if the exit was forced due to external influences, as it was the case with four of them for various reasons at the end of the governing, they had to stay loyal until the end and in close vicinity to the leader – just in case.

In order to enable the smooth governing of VMRO-DOMNE while in power, the system deliberately neutralized and made passive (in order to avoid the possible creation of problems) two important security-control institutions: the Security Council of the President of the Republic and the Committee for supervising the work of the security and counter-intelligence directorate and the Intelligence Agency in the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia. Since 2006, these institutions practically existed only on paper, while their role was overtaken, i.e. usurped by the first circle – the top of the pyramid of government/party.

This indicates three important characteristics of the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE: that it is closed, that it has weak HR potential and that it has limited personal capacity (in both life and professional experience) at the top of the ruling party. If the HR policies of Nikola Gruevski are closely followed, it will become clear that except the five persons from the top of the pyramid, who were irreplaceable and unchangeable, in the second layer of the pyramid/the vicious circle, there were several individuals which were in good terms with the governing “lodge”. This second circle of power included: Martin Protuger, Elizabeta Kancevska-Milevska, Nikola Todorov, Antonio Milososki, Vladimir Pesevski, Spiro Risteovski, Ilija Dimovski, Silvana Boneva, Emil Dimitriev, Vlatko Gorcev, Ivica Konveski, Ivan Ivanovski, Goran Trajkovski and perhaps a few others. Nevertheless, they were either not fully trusted, which would have permitted them entry into the privileged circle that has no exit door, or it was simply the case that the circle was envisaged and established in such way as to deliberately avoid further enlargement, so that it does not explode like an overinflated balloon, which is the more likely option.

This level, i.e., this circle of the power consisted of people in the party that were implementing policies and directives and were giving proposals to the top, which were accepted or refused by the “supreme lodge”. They were the first to disseminate, try out and practice the new policies and the messages of the party and the system, and were playing the role of analysts, ideologists, HR managers, operatives, organizers, propagandists, representatives, executioners, inventors of headlines against the political opponents, creators of smaller successes (it was clear who was creator of the “big successes”) and the big dirty work. To use the terms borrowed from a football game, they were also playing the role of the “wall” when the opponents were performing their “free kicks”. A very nice picture was created about them in public. They were presented as people with great reputations, authority and influence in the party, in order to use them inside the party as the punitive expedition (better known as Protuger’s groups of three), for demonizing the opposition and of those who think differently, for sending messages to the Macedonian public and the international community. Because the second “lodge” had the primary task to protect the reputation of those who were inviolable and of the party, the individuals from this group had stable party positions, status and power.

Nevertheless, it must be said that in their essence, the people in both of these highest levels of the governing elite of VMRO-DPMNE while they were in power, were individuals without life and political experience, some of them with low capacities and immature for the functions and the departments they were managing. In contrast to that defect, the vast majority of the persons from the two highest ranks of the ruling party were acting arrogantly and as if the development of the world, as well as of the Republic of Macedonia, had started with them. An even bigger sin for some of them was if they really believed (and according to their behavior, unfortunately they were giving such an impression) that with the nomination to a high-ranking post and sitting down in the big chair, God himself (in whom they as Christian-democrats claimed that they truly believed) implanted in their heads “chip of genius” and they were immediately becoming the smartest, the most intelligent, the most educated, the most appreciated, and even the most beautiful ... (!)

Outside of these two circles/levels, everything else in VMRO-DPMNE was easily and simply replaceable and transient. Often, the “others” were covered by the so-called “second wave”, caught up in the staff restructuring and clearing, while some of them – in order to demonstrate impartiality – as members of “criminal associations” and similar groups, become targets for investigations by the Ministry of Interior, for the prosecutors and for the courts. The using

and reusing of the same people in the first and the second echelon of the government, especially in the last several years of governing and the lack of new and talented people in the party, was a clear sign of the crisis in human resources that was the result of bad party policies, which was becoming more and more visible as the fall from the throne was becoming inevitable - a realistic and proved political rule from the textbooks.

From the early beginnings of the historical VMRO as a secret revolutionary organization, through the VMRO-DPMNE (the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity) of Ljubco Georgievski which as a new political party proclaimed itself as a continuation of VMRO, up to the early phase under the leadership of Nikola Gruevski – as an organization, and later on as a party – was characterized by swearing allegiance towards the cause and the military organization, discipline and punishment for mistakes in behavior and in actions. While in the historic VMRO, but also in a short period after the creation of DPMNE, the swearing on a pistol and dagger and ordering death penalties were part of the rituals and the way of functioning (in the beginning of the 90's there were even some leaks that were made public from the party, about death warrants handed out by the militant wing of the “protection committees” of the party, especially from Ohrid, but these were fortunately never realized), in the last period other forms of swearing allegiance were in force.

The system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE not only captured the institutions and fought with its opponents, but was also distrustful and cruel towards its members, and in a way captured and kept as hostages their parliamentarians, mayors and officials from the lower echelons. The representatives of these echelons, their loyalty towards the party and the gratitude for the functions were not guaranteed with their ideological-political affiliation and devotion, but with the illegal written agreements and signed “loyalty bills of exchange.” In the context of transforming VMRO-DPMNE in the era of Nikola Gruevski into a political joint-stock company, according to some accusations from the opposition that were presented in the Assembly (and that were never strongly denied or rejected by the party) and which after the fall from power became publicly exposed and confirmed - the parliamentarians and the mayors of this party were obligated to sign in advance resignation letters and to take mortgages on the amount invested in their electoral campaign, that could be activated in case the parliamentarians or the mayors decide to switch party allegiance or refuse to follow the party policies. Such “safety measures” also existed for the lower-level officials, in the form of threats that they will be

removed from the office, fired from the jobs, lose of some of their privileges, have their “dirty laundry” exposed in public, and so on.

The military discipline (orders, praises and punishments), the motivation (rewards), the loyalty and the commitment to the cause of the party, as well as the permanent activities for keeping the body in shape and spirits high, were the main engines that maintained, moved and protected the party. This was accomplished in different ways. The system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE always had “reserves” of potential topics, culprits, motivations, photos and a non-stop, 24/7, machinery that was on call. This is how they stayed in permanent “top-form” and kept in patriotic/electoral/counter-protest shape their members, supporters, corrupted and privileged groups and the politicized administration, which were organized and motivated in such a way as to always be ready for everything the system would ask from them – especially for winning the elections.

The first and basic winning topic that they had on call was “we will not give up the name”, which, when needed, was arranged and served with the topics: “we will not allow DUI and the Albanians to blackmail us”, “we will not give up the language”, “we will defend the unitary state”, “we condemn the platform from Tirana”, etc. The culprits on call for everything bad in the country were the opposition, SDSM, Crvenkovski, Zaev, Radmila Sekerinska, the “sorosoids”, the “southern neighbor”, Greeks, Albanians, the foreigners from the so called international community. The motivation on call were the increased pensions and social allowances, subsidies for the farmers, allowances for those who lost their jobs due to bankruptcy, regular payments of the monthly salaries in the administration, etc. The on-call pictures for “artistic impression” and for lifting the spirit and dignity of the little “Macedonian”, which, according to the leader, under the guidance of VMRO-DPMNE has grown up into a big and dignified “Macedonian”, were: “Skopje 2014”, the new “baroque-tradition”, “Styrofoam/pavement urbanization” and the newly composed “turbo monumental – museum culture”. The machinery that was on call were the party soldiers from the highest down to the lowest ranks, including the volunteers. In such an environment and with a controlled tempo, the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE was doing whatever they wanted and however they wanted.

The Pyramid of Wealth

The pyramid of wealth and well-being had the same structure, levels of hierarchy and personnel composition as the pyramid of power. The bigger the power, the more specific interests and bigger status privileges, benefits, profits and wealth.

The base, like every other base, although it was the most numerous and represented a massive and fanatic defensive shield for the small in numbers but powerful ruling elite – was receiving only peanuts, crumbs, i.e., small benefits and privileges when the “victory cake” was cut and shared by the spoiled and greedy government. Those from the middle layer and those near the top of the pyramid were being paid in accordance to their rank in the hierarchy and in accordance to the merits and loyalty – the higher posts and salaries, rewards, tenders and other privileges and benefits. The first and the second, as a part of the management of the corporate system of government were receiving according to what was envisaged in their “manager contracts”, which usually meant a lot. The two at the top of the pyramid owned the “golden stock” which meant the undisputed right to have at their disposal the social wealth and the resources: profits, dividends and everything that they could have wished for, which was part and parcel with the power and authority.

Except for the formal financial data contained in the property lists, which were submitted at the beginning and at the end of the mandate to the State Commission for preventing Corruption, and in which only the small and publicly known real estate, stocks and bank accounts were noted, the property that was the most valuable – the secret and illegally acquired enormous properties, stocks and amounts of money – was in a time manner deposited in foreign banks and off-shore companies, out of the country. In other words, they were secured far from the eyes and the reach of the Macedonian justice system and the responsible institutions.

However, because there is no such thing as a perfect crime and the rule that “everything that goes around comes around” is still valid, the bill even in the “Balkan cellars” is due at the end of the day. The final bill, sooner or later, will be presented to the citizens after the end of the mandate or after the fall from the throne and the legal outcome for the crimes that were committed. Part of the “bill” was paid in advance by the citizens from their pockets during the reign of the criminal government, but their share will definitely be paid by the biggest utilizers of the illegally acquired wealth – while the “fiscal receipts” will be delivered with court decisions.

The Pyramid of Antiquization

The pyramid of antiquization, in fact, represented a reflection, a mirror to the character, mental set up and worldview of the ruling elite on all social processes, history and universal values. Practically, through this pyramid the ruling elite drew and built the priorities of its governing, and without consulting anyone – spent almost a billion euros of the people's money. A synonym for this project, paradigm, and common denominator was – “Skopje 2014”. In the framework of this project, understood in the widest meaning of the word, a radical discontinuity was made with everything in the state and society that was previously built, established and affirmed and had given positive results, but was against the will, the worldview, or the priorities of the ruling elite.

The so-called revision of history brought into question the Slavic identity of the Macedonian people, which was internationally recognized and established. Therefore, an attempt was made to start digging in search of deeper roots and in order to prove some kind of ancient Macedonian identity. Because of that, a large number of the Macedonian people were disoriented and started to split between those who accepted the ancient roots and the Macedonians who remained committed to their Slav identity and origin. These revisions of history had marginalized the most historical and the most effective part of the Macedonian history, the famous People's liberation war, when the partisans led by the Communist Party of Macedonia (as part of the CP of Yugoslavia) liberated the country and for the first time in history formed a Macedonian state. This glorious feat was replaced with some not fully clear events and controversial persons who fought behind the name of some historical VMRO (Todor Aleksandrov, Vanko Mihajlov, etc.) which never existed under that name, and when it did exist was acting from pro-Bulgarian and anti-Macedonian positions (the middle of the twentieth century, during the Second World War, and after that).

In the dispute with Greece over the name issue, because of the insistence on the ancient identity of the Macedonians, the identity, the language, the culture, the tradition, etc. suddenly found their way on to the negotiation table. Practically everything that is the mark of a nation was suddenly brought into question. In addition, the relations with the other neighboring states and nations were deteriorating. Finally, the traditional and universal moral, cultural, esthetic and all other kinds of values that were cherished for centuries among the people, started to change in accordance to the mental code and worldview of the ignorant elite and the leader of the party, which led to new and even bigger dilemmas and disorientation.

The “Cheops syndrome”, or to be more precise the obsession to show as a government and as individuals that it from them that the history not only of Macedonia, but of the world had started, i.e., that they are the builders of the present and future, using and instrumentalized the past. Behind them they left construction traces in the form of monuments, buildings, corrections to the identity and the historical injustices that nobody in the past had “courage and virtue” to mend and some other inanities, because they were not based on objectivity or rationality, and the least of all – on facts and evidence.

Two big lies were invented which the spin-doctors of the government produced and sold to a large category of people who were not thinking rationally with their heads and accepted for someone else to think and act on their behalf. The first, with which they disarmed and captured the naive people, that the leader and the government worked “24/7” (twenty four hours a day, seven days a week) and were completely devoted to the creation of a better life for the citizens. The second, which was inserted like a chip in the heads of the gullible, and then spread as a statement of the “people”, that this government “is at least building”, while the previous did not leave anything behind them!

Realizing that it cannot fulfil the election promises which were of help to win the 2006 elections and take over power, i.e., to improve the economic performances of the companies and the business climate, as well as to tackle the existential problems of the people (despite the fact that it worked 24/7), the government, assisted by the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE, turned to the past after the 2008 elections – in search of the new identity roots in the ancient period and the protection of the endangered national dignity from the absurd Greek demands in the name dispute. As an irresponsible manager and user of the state budget, the government soon began with the practice of what is known as the Cheops effect, which stems from the populism and the need (of the pharaoh) to leave something behind him, increasing the non-productive spending of the precious (especially during crisis) financial means, which are hard to come by. The Government became the biggest contractor of monuments, the biggest employer, the biggest advertiser, the biggest publisher, etc. The Cheops effect mutated into a dangerous “Cheops syndrome”, because the spin-doctors of the government, with tireless use of the rating-engineering produced a 35 percentage positive rating for the leader and the party.

For the government, everything that was built, was done and publicly manifested as part of the bigger project – “Skopje 2014”, with the aim to increase the national dignity of the Macedonian which, according to its belief,

was ruined and underestimated. For the government, the project “Skopje 2014” also meant keeping in shape the Macedonian economy, especially the construction industry, as well as a save from an even bigger decrease in the GDP and a longer recession in a situation of great financial, and later on economic crisis which affected the entire world.

For the then opposition and the critics of the government, “Skopje 2014” is everything but the thesis that was propagated by the party and its propaganda machinery. Neither something economically viable was built, something that would return the investment, or would assist the country to overcome the crisis and stabilize or strengthen the economy, nor would increase the dignity of the people. In fact, this project further diminished the human dignity because the poverty, misery, unemployment, hopelessness and emigration of the young educated people escalated in a situation when the government continued to spend huge amounts of money from the budget and the loans, domestically and from abroad, for unproductive monuments, museums, bridges, palms, administrative buildings, baroque kitsch-facades, etc. “Skopje 2014” with its controversial content, dealings and tenders, the huge amounts of money thrown on the territory with a radius of less than five hundred meters, without any accountability and responsibility and with fishing in muddy waters, became one of the main sources of financing and populist-propaganda instruments of the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE.

As time was passing, the project “Skopje 2014” got an additional dimension. With the help of this project, organized crime was taken to a higher level, it transformed itself into the system of politically organized crime and became extremely sophisticated: the electronic tenders were legal, while with a number of annexes the conditions in the tenders were changed, the amounts of the prices of the projects and the construction were raised; money laundering and money sharing (according to the system “pay and payback”) between the contractor and construction companies became everyday practice; new relations were established between the ordering party and the propaganda executioners (“you – propaganda in your medium, me – procurement tender for your private company); the allowances for the sculptors and painters reached amounts of millions of euros, as well as the amounts of travel and accommodation costs of the ministers/officials for control of the process of casting of the monuments in Italy and Serbia.

Following this matrix, the starting calculated price of the project “Skopje 2014” according to the then prime minister Nikola Gruevski was expected to be

80 million euros, according to the former (then) minister of culture Elizabeta Kancevska – Milevska reached 210 million euros, while according to the then opposition and the opinion of the experts the real amount was around 700 million euros. After the fall from power, when the archives of the institutions and all hidden bills and criminals were opened, it should not come as a surprise if the amount reaches one billion euros! Because of all of this, part of the population who earlier would say with pride that unlike the previous government, “at least these guys are building something”, after several years of experience and insight, added to this with anger—“but they were also stealing a lot”!

IV

CAPTURED STATE

Politically organized crime is a specific social phenomenon that could rightfully be considered at the level of a complex process, and for it to be designed, become operational and effectuated, it needs a number of enabling circumstances. These cannot be accidental and spontaneous, but deeply conceived, perfectly organized and implemented, as well as appropriately concealed and downplayed.

Firstly, after taking its place and stabilizing on the ruling throne and getting a firm grasp on all levers of the system of governing, time must pass before the ruling elite fully learns the power of government and the possibilities that are at its disposal, considering that it is hard to imagine a party or its leader going into elections only with the goal to instrumentalize power once it is won for personal interests, for crime and for amassing wealth. The idea and the awareness about these possibilities only come and are formed with time, once there is a better understanding of the power of government and, as result of this knowledge, increased ambitions and appetites of the ruling party and its elite.

Secondly, certain enabling preconditions must be met, along with an adequate socio-political, systematic, institutional and social environment: completely captured, fully politicized and instrumentalized institutions (as services of the party); a blinded and well-indoctrinated party structure (an organized party army); poor (both in wealth and privileges) social categories of citizens that can be easily corrupted with small amounts of money, some privileges and a lot of populism (budgetary clientelism), which unconditionally believe that the government they support and voted for works only for them; and, the unavoidable, powerful and well-paid media and propaganda machinery.

In addition to these general conditions, it is also necessary to create conducive formal circumstances. This is the more difficult part of the job, but practice has shown that it is not impossible to do. The key task is to capture, to grab, to entrap the state, which means: a political party or a coalition wins

absolute power, establishes authoritarian governing, suspends the legal state and the rule of law, instrumentalizes democracy, and use all this as the perfect alibi for irresponsible and unchecked governing.

Politically organized crime and the captured state are two parts of a whole. Between them, there is an organic connection, mutual conditionality and interdependence. They function as a system of communicating vessels. For a state to be captured by the ruling party/coalition, its elite and, as is usually the case, by the undisputed leader/autocrat, this can only be done with the assistance of the highest type of organized crime—the system of politically organized crime.

The thesis will still hold is proposed vice versa. In order for the highest type of organized crime—the system of politically organized crime in a country, the basic, crucial condition is that state be captured by the ruling party/coalition, its elite and its undisputed leader/autocrat. To make this system work, it is important that the leader/autocrat be the head of the party and the most influential executive official in the state—primer minister or president, depending on the constitutional system. This is, of course, important, but not necessarily crucial. There are examples of this in practice, the most striking of which is the one in Macedonia, where the captured state was nominally led for a long time by a technical prime minister, and in reality all the processes in the country were directed by the former prime minister, from the headquarters of the ruling party as its leader.

To complete this picture of the context it is necessary to add a few theses/elements. Lately, these are very much present and often exploited in countries with authoritarian governments, in which crime becomes part of everyday life and which are the result of the relation: mafia—state, i.e., state—mafia.

In the book that looks at organized crime in Italy, “Gomorrh” by Roberto Saviano, there is quote of the thesis by journalist Ricardo Orioles: “Crime is not government, but one of the forms of the government.” One of the most knowledgeable experts on organized crime in Macedonia, professor D-r Grozdan Cvetkovski, in his book “The Macedonian Octopus” (“Silons”, 2008), to be more precise and clear about the book’s content, uses the subtitle: “The Fifth Power in Macedonia.” “Every government in Macedonia has its fifth power which is hidden and semi-legal. It does not require legitimacy from the citizens. It is established as a true rival, i.e., partner of the official government through the creation of criminal networks with blurred combinations at the personal, family, clan, party and institutional level. By connecting and operating in such

a way, crime becomes institutionalized, and the social organism is criminalized”—notes Cvetkovski.

There is a very interesting and very logical thesis that has been making the rounds in our academia, in the public and in the media: that in Macedonia there is an evident criminalization of politics and politicization of crime. This means that politics (meaning the parties and the government) are at the core of the problem, as it tolerates and assists all these negative processes, and in recent years is directly involved in them, using them for personal profits.

In the foundations of this logical and evidence-based statement there are several undisputable facts. Politically organized crime is higher degree and more sophisticated upgrade of classic organized crime. With this type of crime, the political entities (parties), political officials (party leaderships), political satellites and clients (businesspersons, journalists, administrative officers, intellectuals, etc.) gain political benefits: electoral wins for taking over and especially for extending power, so that they may then use the wide “assortment” of politically and classic organized crime that will allow the parties, the party leaderships and the party’s business and intellectual-journalist-administrative camarilla to acquire social, political, status-based, professional, financial and material benefits and wealth.

These complementary claims, based on my knowledge about the situation in Macedonia in this area, which I have been carefully following for long time, I propose to connect, widen and upgrade in the following way: “organized crime is both politics and government—and one of the forms of politics in the government in Macedonia.” Because of all of these elements, Macedonia became a captured state, and as such, the ‘promised land’ for organized crime, and especially for one of its most sophisticated branches, politically organized crime, which reached the highest echelons of the government (institutions and officials). This was also confirmed with the conclusions from the independent international institutions, seriously indicated in the “bombs of Zaev and the opposition,” and sealed with more than twenty charges and an equal number of investigations from the Special Prosecutor’s Office for Prosecuting Criminal Offences Related to and Arising from the Content of the Illegally Intercepted Communication.

Based on all this, we can use an analogy as confirmation that, just like any other government in the world, and like any other government in Macedonia—and I am not sparing SDMS here—VMRO-DPMNE’s of course had its organized

crime as one of the forms of government, i.e., had its “fifth power,” except that it in this case it was expanded and upgraded in every way.

Even though it is a fact that there is no country in the world without classical mafia and oligarchs that are close to politics, in Macedonia it seems that everything is somehow different and clearer! Although the statement may sound too harsh, nevertheless, the impression we get is that in Macedonia there is practically no classical mafia, but in a way its role was overtaken by the highest officials of the government and part of the business oligarchs (which in parallel with politics are running their personal and family businesses, or vice versa—with their personal and family businesses are running politics). Considering the fact that the largest number of politicians/officials and oligarchs are connected and supported in their businesses by the institutions (through the system of procurement tenders and annexes), they somehow became an institutionalized (“laundered”) mafia! Thus, in the real sense of the word, the thesis is confirmed that mafia conquered/got its state—the captured state, and the captured state—got its mafia!

The inevitable regularity which results when the captured state and politically organized crime are in relation and on the same track can be described in brief. The first phase: the identification of the party with the state inevitably leads towards the captured state. If it does not stop here, then the second phase is the following: if the captured state is used for amassing wealth for the political elite using politically organized crime, which is one of the main motives for capturing the state, then the captured state is transformed into a state captured by the political mafia. Therefore—politically organized crime as a system of intents and deeds can function only in a situation when the state is completely captured, while the executioner of this highest level of organized crime can only be the political structure that is at the helm of the party and the state.

WHO WAS THE FIRST TO SAY “CAPTURED STATE”

The term “captured state,” in contemporary conditions in the European framework was used as the most adequate word in the European Commission’s Report on Macedonia for 2016, responding to the unusual and abnormal situation in the Republic of Macedonia—the country which had been a candidate for many years and which was repeatedly given recommendations for the start of the negotiating process for EU accession. Regarding the situation in

Macedonia, the European Commission notes: “Democracy and rule of law have been constantly challenged, in particular due to state capture affecting the functioning of democratic institutions and key areas of society.”

In global theory, one of the original and early contemporary general definitions of the term, or better yet the phenomenon of a “captured state” (Group of authors, “Anticorruption in Transition – a Contribution to the Policy Debate”, World Bank, 2000) reads: “State capture refers to the actions of individuals, groups, or firms both in the public and private sectors to influence the formation of laws, regulations, decrees, and other government policies to their own advantage as a result of the illicit and non-transparent provision of private benefits to public officials. For example, an influential “oligarch” at the head of a powerful financial-industrial group could buy off legislators to erect barriers to entry in a particular sector. Alternatively, the state can be captured to serve the private interests of a political leader who shapes the framework of reforms to ensure his own private control over key resources.”

Over time, in addition to the individuals, groups or companies in the public or private sector of the economy, new entities appear with the ambitions to, assisted by crime and corruption, completely capture the state and acquire illegal commission and personal benefit. The process that leads towards “state capture” is completed when in some countries politics and the ruling party/coalition with the power of government, completely capture/kidnap the institutions and with the assistance of their system of governing achieve multiple gains—political, material, financial, status-based, etc.

HOW TO CAPTURE A STATE

In its essence, national-populism comes down to quasi-nationalism and quasi-patriotism, because these categories are always functioning as tools of the ruling structures for populism and instrumentalization of the masses/people/larger social groups. Once they are pulled in, what follows is a manipulation of the feelings and undeniable loyalty of the gullible, who are then abused by the authoritarian or dictatorial regime for the fulfillment of its own ambitions and interests. At the same time, the primary interest is to capture the state and with the assistance of the institutions to dominate with its resources, and later on to use them to realize the narrow party and personal interests of the ruler and the elite around him.

"If we understand the mechanism and motives of the group mind, is it not possible to control and regiment the masses according to our will without their knowing it?"—wrote Edward Bernays, the so called "master of lies that become truth", in his book "Propaganda" in 1928, in the eve of the appearance of fascism. It is precisely the understanding of these mechanisms and the motives of groupthink, i.e., the expression of those things which the large social groups want to hear the most, that are of great assistance to the autocrats/dictators seeking "to make lies truths." Something like this happened when the German state was completely captured by the Nazi Party and based on those postulates Adolf Hitler established, directed and controlled the mass psychology of the fascism.

Profesor Denko Maleski, a great expert on contemporary political systems, in his column "Captured State" ("Sloboden pecat", February 18th 2017) writes: "I did not pay special attention to the term "state capture" used to define the Macedonian political system in the last Report of the European Commission, until I started to read texts about Russia in which the political system in this country is defined with the same words as the Macedonian. Perhaps the English word "capture" can equally correctly be translated with the words "to grab" and "to catch", so the translation would be "grabbed state" or "caught state". But "captured" is also acceptable because you grab and catch in order to capture. How does one catch and capture a state? In the text in front of me, the capturing of the Russian state is defined as an action of a small group or simply kleptocratic politicians, who are shaping the rules of the game to their benefit, and they are doing this through unlawful and non-transparent conditions for gaining private benefits from a public function. Catching, grabbing and capturing is happening everywhere, across the entire society."

Maleski quotes Karen Dawisha, who in her book "Putin's Kleptocracy" describes today's Russia as a "mafia state" ruled by "an overlapping network of associations and politics that relies on clans which have Putin at their center," with the goal of "strengthening Putin's power over the government, silencing the critics and maximizing the ...economic benefits." According to Dawisha, "this network is hierarchically structured and widespread; it is consisted of politicians on all levels (including ministers in the highest ranks), people from the intelligence and security agencies, businesspeople, prominent companies, state-owned companies, as well as organized criminal elements." According to her, the state institutions, including the Russian Federal Security Service, are responsible for maintaining these networks which are so intertwined that

“it is not possible to differentiate between the government and the organized criminal groups”.

A very indicative (if viewed through a very specific lens) yet at the same time realistic definition on state capture in the Macedonian version, is provided by professor Miroslav Grcev. “The epithet ‘captured state’ which Macedonia got from its foreign friends who are analyzing the method of governing of Gruevski and his VMRO, is a carefully chosen euphemism which aims to tell the truth, but in a gentle and kind way. The real words for the essence of our ‘political crisis’ is that the governing of VMRO structurally deformed out constitutional liberal democracy into a quasi-totalitarian party-state with fascist ideology. Politicizing of the institutions of the state with pretensions for totalitarian influence on all aspects of social life, produced not only the dramatically decreased capacity of the institutions, but also dumbed-down all of society. So much so, that Macedonia in the last decade experienced real civilizational regress, a sort of fall of all knowledge and skill—in some aspects true cretinism—which have happened only to societies run over by horrific totalitarian regimes from the time of the European catastrophes. As much as it seems controversial, this general national intellectual insufficiency at the same time is the reason for the loss of our freedom and its consequence. Because, in the end, the real misfortune is always in relation to the loss of freedom”—states Grcev.

Even though the comparison is perhaps not adequate, the term “state capture” has some connections with the term that used to be used with great frequency in political jargon—“banana state”. This term primarily referred to improvised states in Latin America and some other democratically and economically underdeveloped territories in the world, where mafia and autocrats were in power without any democratic institutions, procedures and checks. Today the term “banana state” has pejorative usage when referring to the countries from the so-called third world, in which foreign companies have important influence in the creation of corruption, crime, nepotism, amassing wealth from the state budget and suspicious elections. This term is used for states in which political culture is part and parcel of corruption and crime. Even though the captured state has all democratic institutions, laws and procedures, nevertheless it is ruled by an autocrat and an authoritarian government, party and state are intertwined, and preference is given to the party and personal interests and the acquisition of wealth through politically organized crime. The difference between the “banana” and “captured” state is that in captured state there are resources, power, will and propaganda to camouflage this situation and the facts and in such a way to create the illusion of a normal state, while in

a banana state there are no attempts for a cover-up, but on the contrary—this is emphasized in order to create fear among all those who oppose such conditions and the regime and dissuade them from taking action.

In order for a state to be captured, it must have a governing party which has ambitions to utilize its authoritarian governing to take over all institutions and commanding posts of the government and by equating the party and the state, to put them in function for the accomplishment of the goals and interests of the party, its leader and the elite around them. Because of the complexity of the activities that need to be undertaken, the capturing of the state is the result of a completely preconceived and systematically implemented process. In order for such a complex process to be carried out, it is necessary to have a well-designed system which will create the optimal conditions for a swift and smooth implementation of the preconceived plan and desired epilogue.

A large number of necessary preconditions can be noted for the capturing and functioning of the captured state, but I will point out the most important: emphasized national-populism, radical divisions in society (political, party-based, identity-based, ideological, inter-ethnic, cultural, religious, social, economic, status-based, etc.), complete politicization of the institutions and rather than separation of powers—unity of the powers led by the party, poverty and clientelism, elimination or marginalization of the middle and the working class, emigration of the most those social categories of citizens that are most important for the future of the country (young, educated, capable, highly trained, etc.), real fears and fears imposed by the government, etc.

The state is practically captured first through staffing decisions, when the most loyal party officials and members of the highest echelons of the party are posted in top positions in the institutions. Then, the state is captured legally—with the creation of normative preconditions for a complete capture; functionally—with the instrumentalization of the institutions; and personally—by massively employing party soldiers. In the third phase the dominance is established over all financial resources and transactions, so as to be able to stay in power and realize party and personal benefits and profits, with the assistance of the captured state.

Unity in the Place of Separation of Powers

Following the fall of communism, manifested through the physical demolition of the Berlin wall and metaphorical raising of the “iron curtain” which symbolized the end of the Cold War between the two confronted systems, the twenty-first century was supposed to be the beginning of a new era in the development of the world, of the democratic processes, of the rights and freedoms of the people, of the legal state and the introduction of new and higher standards of rights. However, what happened instead was the appearance of retrograde processes, not only in countries that became sovereign, independent and started to build democratic societies, but also in those countries that were part of the democratic world and had long democratic and state traditions. Autocratic regimes started to appear, democracy was being abused, freedoms were being limited, rule of law was suspended or selectively applied, institutions were infiltrated by parties and states were captured. These processes also appeared and soon led to the capture of the Republic of Macedonia.

To capture a state, there needs to be a political party or coalition which has the intentions and strong enough capacities and resources to undertake such a complicated and risky process. Because all parties in parliamentary democracies are, by definition, or should be democratic, what must precede the state capture is a change to the standard democratic code of the party, i.e., a group from within the party that has such intentions must first capture the party, its leading bodies, political program, priorities and so on. Such a process happened in VMRO-DPMNE. After the change of the party leadership, sometime in 2003, when Nikola Gruevski became the leader of the party and filled the top positions in the party with his trusted advisors, whose political background was in other political and ideological options—factually and formally, the party was captured. The capture occurred when local (community) leaderships were replaced with new loyal staff compositions and a new political platform and program. Even though the final phase of state capture began in early 2007 with the complete takeover of the strings of power, the process was formally completed after the win in first early elections in 2008.

Why did state capture happen in the Republic of Macedonia? Because democracy and the development of the democratic processes in Macedonia were not a priority and so neither were they a priority for VMRO-DPMNE. In the code of the party, democracy as the basic institution of the governing of the people was not considered to be of interest or as a priority, as democracy by itself does not bring instant profit and is therefore not compatible with the

system of governing that wants to stay in power at any cost (which by definition is antidemocratic). In reality, VMRO-DPMNE and DUI, as the long-running governing coalition, had no regard for democracy other than to fulfill the basic minimum, to justify the first letter from the name of the party (Democratic) and last but not least, to provide an alibi before the international institutions/factors. This is why democracy, human rights and freedoms, freedom of speech and independence of media, the legal state and rule of law were far from the primary priorities for the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE, especially after 2008. On the contrary, the less attention they paid them and the less they practiced them, the better, much like in any other captured state and autocratic systems of governing!

The parliamentary democracy in Macedonia, whose basic postulate is the system of separation of powers between the legislative, the executive and the judiciary, and whose foundation embeds the method of functioning, i.e., checks and balances, which implies their independence from each other and mutual checks—was transformed by the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE during its long reign into a unity of the powers, which existed in the former socialist single-mindedness/single-party system. Practically, the executive power, or the party and leader as is the case in captured states, overtook, i.e., commanded the legislative, judicial and local government. They also had at their disposal and decided on the spending of the people's money from the budget, and with a captured “fourth estate,” the editor-in-chief of the majority of the corrupted media was the Center for Communications of the ruling party.

Here is a specific example of how the institutions were captured. The staffing of the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs without a set plan and with inadequate, primarily party staff, created a huge problem in the functioning of this department. Namely, in the period between 2008 and 2014 the number of employees rose from 320 to 540. In order to assign them throughout the ministry, numerous organizational units were created whose existence was difficult to justify. Since too many were hired in managing positions, an organizational chart of the ministry would have looked like an inverted pyramid. In modern foreign policy, the top priority is to create a completely professional diplomacy, i.e., career diplomats holding hundred percent of the posts. However, this is difficult to accomplish even in countries with long democratic traditions. This is why, the initial version of the Law on Foreign Affairs provided for a ratio between professional and unprofessional (political) appointments in the diplomatic and consular missions of at least 75 percent professionals, and not more than 25 percent unprofessional diplomats (politicians, intellectuals, experts,

businesspeople), enabling Macedonian diplomacy to get closer to the usual standards of modern European countries. However, during the ten years of VMRO-DPMNE, the percentage of appointed party and unprofessional chiefs of diplomatic and consular missions (embassies, permanent missions and consulates) reached 85 percent. For comparison, the representation of professional diplomats in Slovenia is over 95 percent.

The legislative power, the Assembly and the Members of Parliament, i.e., the parliamentary majority, rather than being sovereign, showing initiative, acting independently when making decision on laws, representing the interests of the citizens and keeping the executive power and the government in check—much like in a one-party system (but even more directly, with a larger scope and more rigidly)—was under direct command of the executive power and was transformed into a voting machine, which in the context of complete intertwining and equating of the party and the state, acted as a service to the ruling party VMRO-DPMNE, the leader and the elite around him.

The judicial power, the judiciary (the system of courts, the system of prosecutor's offices, the Judicial Council, the Council of Public Prosecutors, the Fact Finding Council, associations of judges and public prosecutors, chambers of lawyers and notaries)—after several years of elections/re-elections, personnel clean-ups and changes in accordance with the directions from the ruling party, due to the party affiliation with the ruling parties, the majority of judges' fears about their status and peaceful life, as well as due to acting on the line of least resistance and conformism, transformed from an independent power to (predominantly) willfully function as the extended arm of the executive power.

It was a similar situation in local municipal government, which was largely dependent on the central power (limited financial means and responsibilities), complemented with the fact that VMRO-DPMNE and DUI, as a ruling coalition, had used electoral engineering for many years to place their mayors and their majorities in the local councils in more than ninety percent of the local self-government units in the country.

An analysis of their entire more than ten year mandate (with the series of early and, what is absurd, not a single regular election after 2006) and especially of the system of governing, allows us to conclude that VMRO-DPMNE did not govern on behalf of the people (which by definition is the reason why a winning party takes office) as was declared by the party, but rather governed the people in a way characteristic for all autocratic systems. With the motto "order and discipline 24/7", they started the "process of revival" in accordance

to their own worldview of everything in the state and in society, which in principal meant a change of all prevailing codes and standards in all spheres, less because of party ideology (in fact, the party did not even have consistent and rounded concept of ideology) and more according to the daily-political needs and interests, i.e., following the paradigm and Machiavellian doctrine “the ends justify the means”.

Based on all this we can extrapolate the following element which is characteristic for the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE, and with that of the captured state: a large amount of state, or more precisely party interventionism, through the state institutions and mechanisms, in literary everything. That means state-party standardization, control, execution and penalties for everything—from that which is of the state, of the citizens, of society, the public and the private—from state institutions and public companies to private businesses, from the state to the private media, social networks, the internet, private telephones, family, personal life, intimacy, etc. That created huge problems to the citizens as individuals, to the companies, to the NGO sector and all entities and processes in the state.

One of the most efficient instruments and methods which the system of governing used to impose its worldview of social life, and through that to politicize and capture the institutions and the entire state, was the process of imposing radical discontinuity with everything that existed, remained, was done, was respected, was implemented, was studied, was celebrated, prior to them. This was done despite the fact that many of above mentioned things in practice and in life had proved as good, successful, useful, valuable, etc. From the very start and in the most radical way the following thesis was implemented: everything begins from us; we won the elections, the people placed their trust in us and we will govern as we think, as we want and as we can. For eleven years there was not a single area of state and social life in which discontinuity was not imposed: in state priorities, strategies, policies, systems, in the national identity, history, traditions, state holidays, morals, values, standards, behavior, culture, articulation. Thus, the physiognomy of the society, the state and the people was changed. They had created a man after their own liking; the man who does not need to think with his own head, because there is already someone who thinks and decides for him, who no longer know how or even needs to live as an individual, but is rather part of a crowd made up of subjects of the state, which the government will refer to as “my people” and will flatter them that they are always right and always make the right decisions! Therefore, both

the state and the people were completely and lengthily captured, with enormous and permanent consequences.

If we take a deeper look at the processes in the state by analyzing the programmatic-ideological positioning and acting of the party, we come to a seemingly illogical conclusion: that everything was happening due to the lack of a consistent and well-designed program and party ideology. As result of the first conclusion comes the second—that the party in fact does not have a true and real party identity. Out of these two we come to the third realistic conclusion—that all of this was a consequence of the varied ideological-political and mental code of the people who held the highest ranks in the party. This ideological-political and mental mixture was an adequate reflection of the fact that the majority of the party leadership did not come from the group of founders, veterans or the original party youth, but came from and held different party and ideological codes.

Such identity, ideological and mental variety and controversy which was present and existed in VMRO-DPMNE as a party, logically produced identity problems for the state and the nation, because with the politicizing of the institutions the party equated, fused and captured the state. Everything that followed was only a cause and effect relationship with a common denominator—national-populism: changes of historical truths with those that were more distant, went deeper and were more true—with roots starting from the Bible onwards, of the identity, of the basis of the language, of the history, of tradition, etc. Therefore we can make one possible and logical analogy: someone who is not sure in their personal background, identity, belonging, option, is also not sure about the wider identity, origin, belonging, option, etc, and what is most dangerous of all is if the heritage, origin, identity and options are changed based on political conjuncture and profits, as was the case with the autocratic regime and the captured state of Macedonia!

The enabling conditions and environment for the arrogant and complete capturing of the state during the long years of reign created one of the maxims of governing and several anti-values which in pragmatic way were (mis) used by the system of governing. In the foundation of the dictatorship of the party and the leader was embedded the maxim, which the leadership and especially the MPs of VMRO-DPMNE made sure to point out on many occasions and which was drawn from their established unwritten rule for distribution of the loot after electoral wins: “We won, the people gave us the mandate and we will do as we please.” The system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE produced

a set of anti-values which were, mainly, based on several principles: daily-political and tender-annex interests, life and policy only from day to day, buy a day – sell a day, pragmatic political morals in the form—today it is like this, tomorrow its opposite, depending on the interest, situation and profit. In this fight of the government which for many years acted like a classical joint venture for profits, in the widest possible meaning of the word, patriotism rather than being measured in love and engagement for the prosperity of the country, was being measured according to the level of attachment towards the party VMRO-DPMNE, while the criticism and disagreement with the policies of the ruling party became betrayal.

Finally, among the preconditions and the environment for the functioning of the autocratic system with a captured state, we should also mention the downplaying of various kinds, used in order to adjust, spin and twist unfavorable events and situations to the benefit of the government. As in illustration of this, we can use two examples of audacious downplaying employed by VMRO-DPMNE's spin-doctors, which were one of the key tools for their extended stay in power.

One of the ways that VMRO-DPMNE used to downplay things that were unfavorable for the party was the spinning between state and party interest, where the interest of the party was always defended and, as a bigger priority, dominated over the state interest. I will support this with one specific and very indicative example—how the government treated the Report of the Assembly's ad-hoc commission for the events on “black Monday” (December 24th 2012) and the forceful expulsion of parliamentarians of the opposition from the plenary hall of the Assembly and the journalists from the media gallery (a report that one member of the Commission from this party called Kleenex). The leader of the party and government, Nikola Gruevski, stated that they were blackmailed into signing the Report because it was for the benefit of Macedonia, but to the detriment of VMRO-DPMNE(!) This leads us to a logical question: how and why is it that something that would benefit Macedonia can be to the detriment of VMRO-DPMNE, and vice versa—what are the interests of this party that, had they not signed the Report, would have benefited the party at the detriment of the state!?!

There is also one an opposite of this case of spinning and downplaying. After the adoption of the authentic interpretation of the Amnesty Act for the four Hague cases of the then parliamentary majority VMRO-DPMNE – DUI (which led to the release of the perpetrators of crimes against humanity in

2001), which created justified revolt among the Macedonian public, experts, the families of the murdered and kidnapped in the conflict, the defenders of the state and so on, prime minister Gruevski stated that he does not agree with such a Law, but believes in the good intentions of the parliamentarians!?! Here, a logical question similar to the one above, can be raised: How is it that something which is detrimental to Macedonia can be beneficial for VMRO-DPMNE? The answer lays in the political agreement between VMRO-DPMNE and DUI, when Gruevski defending the interest of his coalition partner Ahmeti and with the aim to preserve power, “did not support the Law, but believed in the good intentions of the parliamentarians.”

Divisions – Divide and Conquer

By promoting divisions as an integral part of the system of governing, which functioned as protection for the governing position – the VMRO government extremely divided society, the nation and the citizens, creating potential risks which in the event of certain unfavorable developments could have led to the partition/dissolution/loss of the state the Republic of Macedonia. Out of the entire complex of divisions as an instrument of the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE, those that were especially dangerous included: intra-national/ethnic divisions between the Macedonians (with the main generator forced by the system of governing—the approach towards the name dispute with Greece); inter-ethnic relations/divisions, especially promoting the alleged danger of federalization and cantonisation of the state if the Albanian community was given equality in terms of human rights and the use of Albanian language in the institutions; the social and economic stratifications, as the most acute and dangerous for the extremely divided Macedonian society, as well as emigration, primarily of the young and educated, which is the direct and indirect consequence of the divided, unequal and perspective-less society.

During VMRO-DPMNE’s decade-long reign, with Nikola Gruevski at the helm, Macedonia cracked and divided along many horizontals and verticals, which under the system of governing that was practiced could not only not be fixed, but were deepened with the risk of intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic conflict and collapse of the state. Although a number of reasons, motives, types, ways, instruments and particularities could be listed, some of them were nevertheless more important if viewed through the lens of the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE.

The divisions as a tool are used/misused by almost all rulers in the world throughout history and even nowadays, for more efficient governing and for extending the stay in power. Of course, some use them more and some less frequently, depending on the type of political system and the level of development of the democratic relations. In societies where predispositions exist, such as great political polarization, multiethnic and multi-confessional variation, large social inequalities, and all this complemented with authoritarian elements of governing and a lack of democracy with imposed groupthink, divisions are often used as an important element of the system of governing. In such systems and regimes of governing, the government throughout history has used the tried and tested doctrine formulated by Julius Caesar: make them quarrel/divide and conquer!

Macedonia is one the countries in which in the last ten years this doctrine was used in large doses, while the effects of it are clear: the ruling VMRO-DPMNE during its long stay in power, nearly two years in a coalition with DPA and almost nine years with DUI, did not fulfill its election promises—the economy was stagnating, unemployment remained high, poverty and social stratification were multiplied, the Euro-Atlantic aspirations remained unfulfilled and inter-ethnic relations deteriorated. Despite all of that, VMRO-DPMNE won all the elections in continuity: one regular and four early parliamentary elections, three local elections and two presidential elections! Along with the other tools used by the system of governing, this was precisely the result of forced divisions in society.

One of the biggest sins of the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE was the forcing of divisions in every segment of society they could think of, in order to secure a win in the elections and continue their stay in power. Such pragmatic tactics proved to be useful for the party, but were detrimental and almost catastrophic for the society, the state and the citizens. Besides the permanent crises which were cyclically repeating during the reign of this party, there were two occasions in which the survival of the state was under threat—in 2001 and in 2016/2017. The first time because it had invented and staged inter-ethnic armed conflict or at least did not do anything to prevent it on time, and the second time because it completely captured and criminalized the state, made it non-functional and ensured it only served the interests of the party, a few individuals from the party leadership and the loyal party soldiers who were enjoying small privileges. Still, the divisions and the lack of future potential are one of the main reasons for the ‘white plague’ that happened to Macedonian society: the continuing process of emigration during the entire transitional

period, which especially intensified during the last ten years, when according to the data provided by relevant international organizations nearly 500,000 people, or a quarter of the total population had (temporary or permanently) left the country. At the same time, the biggest number of those who decided to emigrate are the young and educated, creating a serious threat for the development of the country, which is already considered to be aging.

Besides the personal reasons among a number of people who decided to emigrate, the majority of them decided to take that step due to the political divisions in the country and the treatment of people not according to their capabilities, but according to the divisions forced by the system of “ours and yours”. Namely, not giving equal chances to “yours and others” for employment, advancement and perspective compared to “ours”, as well as the dissatisfaction of the capable, gifted and ambitious individuals with the pattern “job and a 300 euros in salary in the administration, for obedience, gratitude and silence,” paved the way for the “river of no return”. This painful reality was clearly reflected in an opinion poll by TV Telma and the Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation (MCIC), published in April 2017, according to which 39.2 percent of Macedonian citizens would like to leave the country permanently. But what is even more worrying is the fact that the majority of those thinking about the emigration is the younger population aged between 15 and 24, while 61 percent of them would like to leave permanently. The possibility of emigration is also an option that was considered by those aged between 35 and 54, which means that the entire workforce is included in this group. What also very indicative is that 15 percent of those who want to emigrate, give as their main reason the bad political situation in the country, which is rarity on a global scale!

The divisions, as one of the specifics of the captured Macedonian state, could be classified according to the motives, according to the types and sub-types, according to the methods, according to the instruments and their epilogues. Several types of divisions could be detected: party (first and foremost and also the main cause of all the other divisions), ideological, identity-based, ethnic (intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic), religious, economic, social, status-based, etc. Nevertheless, as a peak, the most tragic and the most absurd because of the specifics of the character of the Macedonians, are the divisions based on the party affiliation, which then trickle down to the family level, between parents and their children, between siblings, close relatives, continuing among friends, colleagues, etc. Therefore, the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE, explained in Orwellian language, brought things to absurdity, creating two

standards, two criteria, two measures of division and differentiation of people and legal entities: equal and more equal, even and more even, etc.

According to the reasons, motives and methods, the divisions caused by the policies and projects forced by the governing structure, generally speaking, can be separated into: revising and/or writing new upgraded history; anti-communism and discontinuities/denials/marginalization of everything that was done by the communist and the leftist parties in the more distant past (even the creation of the state) as well as the recent past when they were in power; deepening of the national identity with search for the roots from the Slavic into ancient history; “we will not give up the name”; “Skopje 2014”; “we will not allow bilingualism, federalization, cantonization, etc.”; degradation of all state systems (education, healthcare, security, administration, diplomacy, etc.) in accordance to the VMRO worldview; separation between ours and theirs, where everything that is good is “ours” (of the government and its supporters), and everything that is not good is “theirs” (of the opposition, those who think differently, others, etc.); privileging municipalities where mayors were from VMRO-DPMNE (investments, donations, projects, etc.) and punishments, demonization, blockings of the functioning, of the accounts and the projects of the four municipalities and its citizens where mayors and the majority in the councils were from the opposition; lustration of political opponents and of those who criticize them without the presumption of innocence and without evidence, but only with the raised hands of the majority pro-governmental lustrators in the commission; with arrests, persecution, public condemnations of their opponents, etc.

There were also sub-divisions inside the government, with the coalition partner DUI, which were “positive” because they were introduced in the “marital agreement” between them. In fact, they were profitable in the real sense of the word, and were part of the system of governing and protection of the power: functional-institutional division (ministries, departments, public companies, spheres of party interest, etc.), territorial division (communities/regions of influence and control, companies for racketeering through donations, territories exempted from state control – taxes, communal tariffs, the use of flags, smoking, religious objects, etc.) and procurement tender divisions (tenders with annexes for the supporters of DUI, tenders with annexes for those who were close to VMRO-DPMNE and the smaller partners from the coalition “For a Better Macedonia”).

The basic violation of the system of institutions was their division according to party affiliations. The party division of the ministries created entire verticals of divisions by profession. Where DUI was in charge, there was no serious interference from VMRO-DPMNE. And vice versa, where the top position was held by VMRO-DPMNE, DUI acted like “gentlemen” and did not interfere. Ministers, directors and other officials appointed by DUI, were responsible to their leader and the “integrative premier” Ahmeti, while those from VMRO-DPMNE were responsible to the leader and the former factual premier Gruevski. Similar to this was the territorial division, which was done without mutual interference. Although it originated during the government of Ljubco Georgievski (1998 – 2002), for a long time during Nikola Gruevski’s government there was the tacitly accepted territorial-functional border “on that side and on this side of Grupcin”. Still, it seems that these two divisions, the functional and the territorial division of the institutions of the government and the state were the consequential result of the secret clauses from the so-called May Agreement, which served as a platform for the 2008 government coalition between VMRO-DPMNE and DUI.

Macedonia, the multiethnic society, was ruled for almost a decade by a coalition between the two pro-nationalist parties, which is what VMRO-DPMNE and DUI can be qualified as, since they presented themselves as the biggest defenders of their ethnicity. This illogical situation confirmed the thesis that two extremely nationalistic parties can work together and survive together only if the “connective tissue” was some more lucrative interest, and not the fulfillment of the interests of their “own people”.

As instruments, i.e. naming, identifications, stigmatizations and labeling (in a negative sense) from the spectrum of this type of divisions, the system of governing most frequently (mis)used the division of “patriots” and “traitors”. This instrument was especially (mis)used when the system wanted to make a distinction and to stress the love and dedication of VMRO-DPMNE towards its people and the motherland, against the national “unawareness and disloyalty” of SDSM and the opposition towards these virtues. The system, with a twisted thesis, forced the division based not on the relation towards the motherland (which is correct), since no one is against, but towards the party identified with the state (which is wrong). Hence, everyone who did not vote for the party and did not think like the party, was by default proclaimed a “traitor”.

At the same time, those who were in power insisted on patriotism and proclaimed themselves as true patriots. That the difference between patriotism

and betrayal is thin and variable is revealed in the historical memory in many countries, according to which, if the citizens detect frauds and lies, they can easily switch the role and overnight the patriots that lead wrong policies are recognized, caught and qualified as the biggest “traitors”!

In this context we can list some other often used divisions (although as finesses and variations they are countless): vmro-ists and grujo-ists (in a positive connotation), sds-m-ists and branko-ists/zaev-ists, soros-oids (in a negative connotation), ancient Macedonians and Slavic Macedonians, demo-Christians and non-believers/communards, orthodox Christians and Muslims, reformists and remnants of the transition, revivalists and regressive forces, heroes-martyrs and snitches, honest and hardworking businesspeople and the communist oligarchy. By the way, the real oligarchy hardly existed, because part of it was completely passive buying its peace with large donations to the government/party, and the larger number turned its back to SDSM, or like “sunflowers”—became the most loyal supporters, financiers and builders of the VMRO-DPMNE projects).

Speaking about divisions, one important characteristic is noted by the journalist and writer Tomislav Osmanli in his novel “The Ship. Konzarhia.” He notes: “the joint stock political system absorbs all impulses for mass revolt, except the inter-religious relations. They can, in a very short period, create crisis and clashes with unpredictable consequences.”

Namely, in Macedonia the ruling coalition forced and created false divisions to be able to rule more easily and, based on that, to win the elections. They were certain that treating the state as a joint stock company with a joint stock political system instead of a system of parliamentary democracy and rule of law, with corruption, clientelism and the power of the institutions and the money everything can be legalized, regulated, controlled, downplayed, bribed and forced. The only sphere in which they were afraid to interfere with too much was the inter-religious relations. On one occasion they did get involved, and with a return to the functioning of the legal state and the judiciary, there is a serious possibility some officials from the former government will face serious legal consequences. It concerns the murders of four teenagers and an elderly man near Smilkovsko Lake, on the outskirts of Skopje, the day before the great Christian holiday, Easter. The public Prosecutor’s Office in this case, known in public as “Monstrum” (the monster), treated it as an attack by Islamic terrorists with the aim to ruin the inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations in the country. Although the court case ended with prison sentences for

the murderers who are on the run, and for their assistants who are in jail, according to indications from the wiretapped conversations it was a murder with political-business motives and it is possible that innocent people are in jail.

The system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE will be remembered in the political memory of Macedonian history as a regime which, when it was unable to establish complete authority, absolute power and do everything else in the state in a legal way, then it did not hesitate to implement illegal or extremely suspicious methods, without the majority and freely expressed will. The system countered every non-governmental initiative, idea, position or organization that did not share the same position as the government or was acting taking into account the wider positions and interests, with similar (counter) protests, the hasty establishment of organizations and associations which were taking the counter-position, i.e., advocated the opinions and interests of the system of governing. Counter-institutions and counter-associations started to appear, to balance out those publicly manifested social, professional, institutional, non-governmental and various different types of organizations which had different, opposing or critical positions compared to the positions and policies of the government.

When the “Student Plenum” appeared, there was a counter “Student’s parliament”, and hastily organized counter movements also appeared against the professors, high-school students and teachers plenums with similarly staged counter protests. Against the medical doctors’ protests there was an immediate response from pro-government doctors with their own protest, the farmers’ protest was followed by pro-government farmers’ protests, and the protests of the journalists organized by the Association of Journalists of Macedonia were countered with protests of the newly created rivalry association. As a reaction to the biggest citizens’ protest organized on May 17th 2015, when hundreds of thousands of people from all ethnic communities gathered in front of the government’s building, a “spontaneous” mass protest for the defense of the government was staged in front of the Assembly, while the improvised camp with tents in front of the Government was countered with copy of that camp in front of the Assembly.

The legendary massive and justified “Colorful revolution,” which spontaneously appeared after the illegal abolition of 56 persons granted by president Gjeorge Ivanov, which included high-ranking government officials and lasted until the cancellation of this anti-constitutional act was countered, a year later with what can symbolically be called “the black counter-revolution”. It

started with marches of militants dressed in black shirts for the alleged defense of the unitary character of the Republic of Macedonia and the Macedonian language. After realizing that it is counterproductive, the black color was changed with “more neutral insignia and colors” and continued as “a red-yellow revolution” before finally publicly deciding on a name for itself as the initiative “For a Joint Macedonia”, according to the VMRO pragmatism and “wash and wear” approach!

In comparing these two symbolical “revolutions”, it is possible to provide in the most illustrative and precise manner the reasons, motives and the essence of both public manifestations with large groups of people.

The Colorful revolution came about spontaneously, after the decision of the president of the state to pardon over fifty persons charged or convicted with serious organized crime, of which most were the highest state and party officials of the ruling party, while the others were included to create an illusion of some kind of balance and alibi—people from the opposition, business-people and so on. The Colorful revolution contained in itself also some kind of symbolism, as well as a specific metaphoric revolutionary character in the fact that participation was voluntary, without force and with the presence of individuals from all ethnic groups, religions, parties and social categories. The common denominator of the Colorful revolution, which got its name because of the symbolical painting of the institutions that did not work for the interests of the citizens and the kitsch-monuments and facades of “Skopje 2014” (which were built irresponsibly, without accountability and on which enormous sums of money were spent without approval), was the support for the Special Prosecutor’s Office, which was supposed to be an early sign for building a reformed and just legal state, peace and freedom for the captured state and the oppressed citizens by the criminal party elite. Metaphorically speaking, the Colorful revolution was a sign of a continuation of a kind of revolution against occupation—the captured state by the party and the captured citizens, which started with the students, professors, high school students, journalists and all other progressive protests against injustices and crimes. The greatness and the universal value of the Colorful revolution was also in the fact that in the battle for the liberation of the state and the citizens, for justice and peace, there was no selectivity, but it was a fight for all citizens, and perhaps most of all for those who were under double occupation—the “hardcore” counter-protestors known as “the People,” who were forced to defend the government’s crimes and who like all other citizens had their everyday existential problems.

The “black”, i.e. the “red-yellow” revolution was in total contrast to the Colorful Revolution. It was not a spontaneous movement. They emerged after the call of the leader/autocrat to “his people” not to sit at home in their slippers, but to get out and to defend “the unitary character of the state and the language”, which allegedly were endangered. Standing behind these theses of the leader and the party in defense of the unitary state and the language, the “black counterrevolution” also stood behind the permanently proclaimed principle to which the leadership of VMRO-DPMNE referred to—the creation of a coalition between “the winner and the winner”. In fact, this controversial principle means quite the opposite, the counterpoint of what the “red-yellow” stood for. Namely, “winner with winner” means that in the government it is not the citizens who are entering, but rather the ethnic segments—the winner among the Macedonian, and the winner among the Albanian parties. That, by definition, means federalization, means a bi-national state, means bilingualism. In practice, it means territorial division of the power between VMRO-DMNE and DUI, “on that and on this side of Grupcin”, and the functional distribution of the ministries and other institutions, the same as during the previous division of power. Hence, in essence, it was not about the defense of the unitary state and the language, but the preservation of the ruling throne and power.

The “revolutionaries/people/patriots”, in fact, were the professional counter-protesters from the administration supported by “indebted clients” of the government from the ranks of pensioners, social assistance beneficiaries, farmers, artists, intellectuals, those who were affraid, those who were blackmailed, etc., who with public or secret messages were called by the authority to pay back “their debt” towards the leader and the party. Behind the “colors” of the flag and the calls for the protection of the state, name, language, the unitary character, hidden and masked was the protection of the regime, the ruling throne and above all – the protection from prosecution and jail sentences of the ruling party elite and the return of the illegally accumulated wealth. Therefore, according to the motives and the essence, it is a kind of civic-cultural counterrevolution, i.e., an attack of the status-quo, the anti-reformistic, the illegal, the criminalized, closed, narrow, egoist, against the advanced and reformist; from the hard national-chauvinism against the civic reformism and liberalism; from narrow-nationalistic against the universal, liberal, open, different, progressive, multinational, multi-confessional, multicultural, etc.

Counter-protests, as an invention of the system of governing for breaking all types of resistance and for the protection from potential threats to the Achilles heel of the government, emerged in the beginning of the governing

of VMRO-DPMNE, but were intensified and became more pronounced near the end of the reign, when VMRO-DPMNE, after the 2016 elections, could not form a parliamentary majority with DUI. In this situation a new parliamentary majority was created, but VMRO-DPMNE refused to peacefully hand over power, allow for smooth transition and to go into opposition. The Platform, i.e. the Declaration of the until then coalition partner DUI and the other Albanian parties about the rights of the Albanians, became the main tool of the system of VMRO-DPMNE in its attempt to preserve the power or, at least, to become part of the some kind of wider coalition. It was seen as one of the last possibilities for its top party leadership, and especially its leader, to escape from judicial responsibility and the charges for crimes committed during their reign, which based on the wiretapped conversations and other material evidence were being brought to court, one by one, by the Special Prosecutor's Office, which was created precisely for that purpose.

Parallel with the street protests, the goal of which was to save the criminal leadership, the counterrevolution was joined by Gjorge Ivanov, who was either forced to or voluntarily stepped up to pay his debt for the previously received support in the presidential elections, when he won two terms through various legal and illegal acts. Firstly, without a secured majority and thus violating the Constitution, he gave the mandate to form a government to the president of VMRO-DPMNE. After the expected failure of that attempt, Ivanov again violated the Constitution with the refusal to give the mandate to form a government to SDSM and its leader Zoran Zaev, despite the secured majority of 67 parliamentarians. At the same time, without any constitutional power, he started to impose political and legal conditions which were to be fulfilled in order to give the mandate. VMRO-DPMNE and president Ivanov, with their obstructions to the parliamentary majority to elect the president of the Assembly and to form a government, were preventing the smooth transfer of power, extended and deepened the crisis and caused great damage to the state, the citizens, the economy and the international reputation of the country.

Poverty and Misery of the Spirit – On Clientelism

Speaking about the price of inequality, Nobel Prize winner Joseph Stiglitz, notes that “today's divided society endangers our future.” This observation of the Nobel laureate which refers to the global framework, in a way replicates the local state of the affairs in Macedonia, because it can be used to explain

one of the instruments which was utilized by VMRO-DPMNE's system, when creating an enabling environment for peaceful governing. The growing social and economic inequality and stratification, as part of the same substance, are one of the biggest side effects of the long lasting transition and a negative consequence of the unfair redistribution of social power and wealth.

The epilogue of the redistribution of social income and wealth, which extremely divided society and created huge inequalities, as noted by professor Stiglitz, in the true sense of the word is endangering the nation and the state. According to the unofficial data from various sources (because the system of governing did not share such unfavorable information), 10 percent of the population in Macedonia has at its disposal an equal amount of income as the remaining 90 percent, while the largest portion of those 10 percent are in the pockets of 3-4 percent of the wealthiest people! On the other side, as counterpoint to this is the information that one third of the population in the country lives with 1 euro per day, and additional third with 2 euros per day! When it comes to these extreme differences, revealed in the statistics of several world institutions, Macedonia is ranked first in the European list of countries, even higher than Russia which serves as a benchmark for extreme socio-economic differences.

These contrasts completely took apart the Janus absurd of the Macedonian social conditions, which, without a doubt, existed during the entire endlessly long transition, which reached its extremes during the last years of VMRO-DPMNE's government—the party that often wants to proclaim itself as the Christian democratic and people's party. On the one hand, instead of social state, Macedonia transformed itself into state of social assistance cases. On the other hand, instead of state of equal citizens, it became a state of unequal citizens—of which 10 percent are “more equal” (extremely rich) than the other 90 percent (which are more or less poor). As evidence of this is the information noted by experts that at the end of the VMRO-DPMNE's reign, Macedonia found itself in a situation when “profits of the companies for the first time had bigger contribution to the GDP in comparison to salaries. This fact is not something to be praised if the number of participants in the creation of these two aggregate sizes are taken into account – the profits (few hundred owners) and the salaries (more than half million workers)”.

This brings us to the crucial question: why did the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE, instead of fighting against poverty in accordance with the famous Japanese proverb “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; Teach a

man to fish and you will feed him for a lifetime,” it chose the option of the benefactor and just gave fish to the poor. This of course was due to purely pragmatic reason—to remain in power. Namely, had the system taught the people “to fish by themselves”, they would not be dependent on the “fish - free of charge” given by the government that was acting as benefactor (with the money from all citizens from the state budget, and not from the account of the party). The “fish” may not be enough to make them feel full, but the dependents will always be thankful to the benefactor, ready to express their gratitude by voting for the party.

Translated to the doctrine of the system of governing, this meant: it is enough to give the employees in the administration 200-300 euros, which may not provide a quality living standard, but the mentality is already set on believing that it is better to take 200-300 euros than nothing. Or in the case with the pensioners—give them a linear increase of 600 denars (10 euros) before the elections, then another 600 before the next elections, with the explanation that without the care of the party for their financial wellbeing, they would be left without those amounts. The expectations were that the pensioners will express their “gratitude” in the polling stations for the following elections. It was a similar situation with the subsidies for the farmers which served as allowances for buying social peace, because they were enough only to cover the minimal needs for existence, and definitely not for restructuring of the production and increase of profitability. The same pattern was followed when it comes to the allowances for social assistance beneficiaries which were a miserable 1,800 – 2,800 denars (30-46 euros), the bonuses for the students, the lotteries for the unemployed, the soup kitchens for the homeless, etc. Hence, with dosed small amounts of money and privileges brought to absurdity, or with other words – with blackmailing and clientelism – the system of governing was securing double control: (1) over poverty, and (2) over the political orientation of people affected by poverty, who were returning to the benefactor with “gratitude” in elections, and when needed, at the counter-protests against the opposition.

The system of VMRO-DPMNE, in similar way as all other authoritarian national-populist regimes, established clientelism on emotional-corruptive foundations. Knowing well the corruptive and emotional weaknesses in the mental code of the population, especially of those uneducated, unaccomplished and poor, the system constantly praised the people verbally raising them on the pedestal, declaring that it does not want any mediators between the party/government and the people, but refers and communicating with them directly, stressing their role: the people are always right, the people never make a

mistake! Still, historical memory shows that people are neither always right, nor are they sinless. Taking into account the Macedonian experience of the relations government/party – people, it can be said (or proved) that they are not always right, because they do make mistakes and are aware of that when, for instance, they vote for those who bribe/corrupt them with money, empty gestures, promises, privileges, i.e., when giving blind support for someone else to decide instead of them for their future.

The thesis that the people are always right is not absolutely true, because the people often make serious mistakes, and such mistakes carry difficult consequences for the country, and especially for them. That is something that history has shown in numerous cases in the world, as well as in our region, and even in our country. If every person as an individual can make a mistake, then how is it possible that people as a totality consisted of many individuals can be sinless/faultless? Although the massive mistakes are not as frequent as the individual, still they exist and remain registered in historical memory. I will mention only the most drastic and most expensive mistakes, when the people massively, almost absolutely stood behind the leaders of the states and alliances from which originated the greatest evils in the modern human history – fascism, Stalinism, Milosevic-ism, and lately Putinism, Erdoganism, Orbanism, Gruevism, etc.

When analyzing clientelism as a relationship, one condition that the government avoids is striking – why is the system of governing entirely devoted to specific large social groups, while completely abstracts and marginalizes other also large social groups. Those ‘seen’ by the government are the large social groups which due to the poverty, status and the existential problems are deliberately directed by the system towards its mercy and assistance: pensioners, social assistance beneficiaries, farmers, the unemployed, students, the administration – all of which, if not because of party affiliation then for pure existential-client dependence are forced to support it. The government marginalizes the highly educated and workers in the real sector/economy, because they are not dependent and represent part of the middle class which depends on its work, thinks with the own head and is always a progressive segment which pushes development and progress, but also rebels against injustices and abuses of government in every society.

That is why the workers, as a middle class and as a social group, were missing from VMRO-DPMNE’s circle: they were completely socially marginalized, they were ghettoized and silenced in their working environments, whereby

their control on behalf of the government was practiced by the owners of the companies and the pro-government captured unions. The middle class was discouraged with the fact that it was marginalized and treated as something unnecessary and unimportant. The workers were left to live on the level of a educationally/professionally under-educated and under-skilled workforce because of the depression of workers vocations. They were deliberately distanced, and even deliberately oriented to be against the parties left of center to which they naturally incline; while their rights were constantly taken away, the rights, privileges and profits of the government and the owners/employers were increased.

Why did the system of governing not do anything for the protection of the dignity of the workers and for the creation of conditions for the financial-status empowerment of the working class that would enable their gradual return to the middle class? The answer is very simple and is not in line with the spirit and strategy of the system of governing: because it knows that the middle class implies free, creative and productive people who want to be the masters of their own labor and their future, people from all social and professional strata – workers, craftsmen, administrative officers, intellectuals, small businesses owners, or simply the largest and the moving force in a healthy and normal society. At the same time, the most suitable for corruption and gratitude, even for the “crumbs” is the poorest stratum – the unemployed, social cases, workers with minimal wages, the big army of users of small pensions, with a single word – the clients.

When it comes to the pensioners, the system made serious abuses with the aim to turn into the largest clientelistic group thousands of those who were receiving the lowest pensions. The government did something that in a normal society is unthinkable and inadmissible – it practically interfered in the amounts of the personal pensions which the pensioners acquired with regular monthly payments while they were working, based on the amount of their salaries. Instead of receiving pensions based on how much they invested in the state pension fund, as it is the case in every normal state, the government, with the cancelation of the legal obligation for regular annual adjustment of 2 to 4 percent to all pensions, unilaterally decided to increase the total amount for pensions by 5 percent, which was later equally shared in the amounts of 560 and 600 denars to all pensioners. Using this calculation, the linear increase meant 10 and 15 percent for the lowest pensions, and for the highest and those in the middle between 1.4 and 4 percent! Using this method, the government discriminated one group of pensioners, while the other was rewarded and corrupted.

Speaking about divisions in general, it is necessary to note another important fact which has a strong connection with the system of governing whose final goal was the protection of power. Why did the government not take any measures to stop the process of massive emigration, when in a period of 15 years around 500,000 people or a quarter of the total population left the country, but was calmly standing on the sidelines? Because this in fact suited the government. It is well-known that the largest number of those who were emigrating were young people – highly educated, intellectuals, trained craftsmen, who were at the beginning of their careers or in the most creative and productive period of their lives. That category, at least the majority of it, is the potential, future middle class which instead of being stimulated to stay in Macedonia, was calmly monitored as they were leaving the country. It is the category that is looking for its place in the world, when such an opportunity was not found in its own country. It is the category which, if it stayed at home, in such numbers, and with such capabilities, enthusiasm and courage for labor and confirmation, would have been the sprout for changes the regressive, single-minded, silenced Macedonian society, and, understandably, the change of the government.

Because of that, that government did not make any attempts to stop “the river of no return”, but instead, protected and took care of its satisfied bureaucrats with party membership cards, of its “bathed, cleaned, ironed, driven and sun tanned” pensioners, of its subsidy-farmers, of its priceless social assistance beneficiaries, of its overpaid media and tender-journalistic megaphones, of its NGO’s, all of which were part of the governments mobile forces for urgent party interventions, for counter-protests and for keeping safe the Achilles heel of the government.

Precisely these groups of people, client-dependents from the government as a result of poverty, both material and spiritual, together with the blinded echelons of party soldiers were the biggest hostages and victims of the captured state and the government. Unlike people who were thinking with their own heads and were aware that the capturing of the state also means their occupation, shared a critical approach and in different ways manifested revolt and fought against the limited freedoms and rights, the client and party groups, which were giving and losing a lot, primarily their human dignity, were in fact receiving the least, but due to the constant brain-washing, they were living under the impression that they are the most privileged.

The Fears of the Citizens and the Fears of the Government

The system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE since the very begging of the process of capturing the state established a set of tactics and instruments for limiting and disabling the possibility for development of the democratic process which will result with the final and highest goal –freedom, in the widest meaning of the word. Between these two democratic categories, the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE established as a kind of wall/ barrier its “supreme” and most efficient tool –fear!

Democracy by definition is rule of the people, a manifestation of its freely expressed will, an implementer of its interests. That means the existence of the rule of law, of democratically passed laws, of democratic procedures and democratic implementation of legal provisions. Democracy and freedom are compatible, and freedom is considered as the supreme achievement of democracy. Democracy and fear are incompatible and mutually exclusive. If in a society there is no democracy, then there is a fear, because the right to freely express certain positions, especially one that does not correspond with that of the government, is not protected. Freedom and fear are also mutually exclusive like two opposite poles—a frightened or fearful person is not a free person, i.e. a free person in a democratic environment has no fear of publicly expressing a certain position which is contrary to the position of the government. That means, if in one society there is a lack of real democracy, if the democratic procedures are not obeyed, if the rule of law does not exist, if the state and freedom are captured—then what governs in such a state is fear!

In the Macedonian society in the last decade we can identify two types of fear, which were extremely exposed: fear from the government and fear of the government! They confronted each other, but also mutually complemented, intertwined and conditioned each other. If we define and specify the reasons and shapes of fears from the government, then we can identify the most important elements. The people feared the government from pure human impulses: existential fears—for the socio-economic survival of the individual, family, children, job, career, social assistance, subsidies, pensions; security fears—jail, repression, mobbing, anarchy, fear of degradation of the state, intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic clashes or even war, which also means lowering of the quality of life.

According to the levels, or in other words – developmental stages, three types of fear from the government can be identified . Firstly: fear of the people from the government as general term present throughout entire human

history, fear from its policies, fear from collision with the narrow personal interest of the individuals in power and the wider interests of the government, fear from its repressive laws, institutions, mechanisms, radical exponents, etc. Secondly, real fear from revenge and repression of the government against the opponents and those who think differently, etc. Thirdly, mythologized fear, which constantly floats between the real and the virtual – that the government is intercepting, wiretapping, following, controlling, inspecting, punishing, etc.

Unlike democratic societies, where the secret services and their top management are working discretely, avoid public appearances and protect themselves from scandals, in Macedonia the system of governing raised and promoted the Big Cousin, Saso Mijalkov, the chief of the secret services and practically the most powerful person in the pyramid of power – to the level of mythologized greatness. The spin-doctors spread the thesis among the population that the Big Cousin sees everything, hears everything, knows everything, can do everything. Hence, among the people the perception was created that all of them are followed, wiretapped, have secret files, which in case of need will be activated as pressures, blackmails, clientelism. Acting in such a way, the system of governing acquired a great preventive tool for silencing the people, preventing critics and dissatisfaction from the government, as well as from activism in the opposition, civil society and the non-governmental sector.

However, the events have shown that the Big Cousin was not only a propagandistic mythologized greatness, but he was really almost omnipotent: he was seeing and listening to everything, he knew everything, he could do anything – arrests, jail sentencing, insulting, maltreating, abusing; he was the main negotiator during the formation of coalitions – first with DPA, and later with DUI; he was the (secret) negotiator about the name issue with Greece; he was the top party HR official in charge of the judiciary and the prosecutor's office. From the "cuckoo's nest" of the secret service that he managed came the biggest scandal without precedent in the country, with global dimension – the interception and wiretapping of over 25,000 people in Macedonia – officials, politicians, journalists, diplomats, businessmen, ordinary people. If we take into account that the total number of the population in Macedonia is about two million people (although due to the emigration the actual number is nearly a quarter lower), it turns out that one percent of the population were wiretapped (!), which is unimaginable even for the dictatorial systems which had the infamous secret services like Stasi, KGB, Sigurimi, Siguritate, etc. According to the available data, in the entire 45-years period of the existence of the former SFRY, its secret services did not have so many intercepted and

wiretapped communications and files, as there were in the last seven-eight years of UBK (the Administration for Security and Counterintelligence) headed by VMRO-DPMNE and Mijalkov. It should be added that in Macedonia members of the opposition and all those who were thinking differently were demonized politically, there were a number of political processes, and several political prisoners.

What was the authoritarian and absolute power in captured state afraid of, as was the case with Macedonia in period from 2008 till 2017? Every power has its Achilles heel. Every government is aware of its weaknesses and that is the reason why they have built a particular system of governing, which at the same time is serving as a system for the protection of the ruling throne from all eventualities and dangers. The VMRO-DPMNE government was afraid and because of that took all legally allowed and legally prohibited means to prevent an arrow from (even accidentally) hitting the heel of our Achilles (VMRO-DPMNE and Gruevski). That in reality meant: there should not appear even the mildest "breeze" which would push in the back of those dissatisfied with the regime. Something like that had to be prevented and intercepted on time in order to avoid the creation of waves or something even worse – a big tsunami of revolt on the streets which can run out of control.

Knowing about the unpredictable power of the protests, strikes, the street and the latest threat for every government that is manifesting elements of authoritarianism – spontaneity of the social networks – when small things can erupt into massive political-institutional earthquakes and reversals, the system of VMRO-DPMNE in its desire to remain in power as long as possible, in continuity followed the developments with great care, intercepted and responded to all situations with alternatives and a well thought out system. The system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE was established and programed not to allow any manifestation of dissatisfaction, even less - for that dissatisfaction to be publicly articulated against the autocratic regime, especially before and during the phases of the various election cycles.

This system of VMRO-DPMNE also devised non-institutional type of protection of the Achilles heel of the government, which was used only when needed – preventively or combined together with the party-institutional one. That was the system of counter-protests in which they massively used those large social groups (the satisfied and thankful pensioners, farmers, administrative workers, social assistance beneficiaries, students, intellectuals, actors, artists, etc. through their associations and similar forms of organizing, as well

as large number of pro-governmental “non-governmental” organizations). On the biggest protest against the government, held on May 17th 2015, in which citizens of all nationalities and all opposition parties participated, the regime responded with similar protest on May 18th 2015; as alternative to the camp with tents in front of the Government building, they responded with a similar camp against the then opposition in front of the Assembly building; similar counter-protests were organized against the students, professors and high-school students plenums. The answer to the “Colorful Revolution” and its slogan “No Justice, No Peace” - which was triggered by the illegal massive abolition of the criminals from the government by president Gjeorge Ivanov and ended with its withdrawal, came a year later with the so called red-yellow counter-revolution against the declaration of the Albanian parties and with the initiative “For a Joint Macedonia” and the demands against bilingualism and keeping the unitary character of the state, etc. In these counter-protests they recruited the most ferocious guardians and protectors of the government, in which the system invested huge amounts of money, material goods and state and professional rewards, who were ready when needed to take the front line of defense of the Achilles heel, but also, defending the regime, to defend and protect their own interests and privileges.

The system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE dimensioned and dosed the fear among the people with false dangers depending on the level of endangerment of the government and its top individuals from the peak of the pyramid of power. Two examples are very characteristic because they show that when the ruling party, as well as the structure of the power, were endangered, the threats with “striking fear in people’s hearts” (of the regular consumers and of those who directly endanger the government) are the biggest.

The first example is the two-day bloody armed conflict (May 9th and 10th 2015) with the tens of killed “terrorists” and eight members of the special forces of the Ministry of Interior, in the Kumanovo’s neighborhood “Divo Naselje”. According to many indications, which are waiting to be confirmed (probably with foreign assistance), the system of governing, in order to divert attention from the “bombs of Zaev and the opposition” about the crimes of the highest state and party officials, which threatened to force the fall of the government, staged a “small controlled war”. However, the situation ran out of control and created a boomerang effect. Two days after the conflict, probably pressed by undeniable evidence in a foreign embassy, two powerful figures from the pentagonal of the pyramid – the minister of interior, Gordana Jankulovska, and the chief of the secret services, Saso Mijalkov, resigned.

The second example happened after VMRO-DPMNE failed to create a parliamentary majority after the early elections at the end of 2016. When the new parliamentary majority was created consisted of 67 parliamentarians from SDSM and the parties of the Albanian community, after the series of procedural obstructions, the system of VMRO-DPMNE, instead of enabling a smooth transition of power in a democratic and peaceful way, threatened with counter-protests from the party installation "For a Joint Macedonia" and with various newly created aggressive para-military and para-police forces tried to prevent violently the election of the president of the Assembly and the election of the new Government. With that, the system spread fear among the citizens, and at the same time showed that it is ready to protect the ruling throne by all means and without hesitations, despite the very real possibility that they could spark intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic conflicts with catastrophic consequences.

The governing structure in its fear of losing power, besides the other tools for spreading fear, as one of the most deceitful, most remarkable and most effective introduced lustration. Lustration, as a system's instrument for "purification" of society from the individuals who collaborated with the secret services of the past regime, soon started to follow the dictate of the party/government thus violating the rights of the citizens. At the same time, the lustration was also used as a system of spreading fear, stigmatization and political elimination of the ideological-political opponents and those who think differently.

The practice of the Macedonian model of lustration, due to the deliberate avoidance and negligence of the delicate balance between politics and law, exclusively in favor of the needs of politics and the ruling party, did not have the expected effect. At the same time, the lustration was misused for daily political needs, the process lost the legitimacy and turned into its antipode - in a witch-hunt, stigmatization and demonization of political rivals and opponents. In other words, it turned into lustrations of everyone else but those who were trying to get official posts in the government and were really collaborators of the secret services, who received for that some material and financial benefits and advanced in their career, reaching high positions and power in the ruling structure.

Functioning in this way, instead of "social purification" lustration led to even bigger "social pollution"; instead of "enlightenment" - a "total eclipse". It divided society and the nation even deeper. Instead of advocating, promoting and protecting the public interest, lustration was used and functioned as

protector of the interests of the government. The process of lustration was characterized by selectivity and revenge towards the political opponents, towards liberal minded and critically oriented people, towards the representatives of the civil sector and the NGO's, towards the personalities that fought for Macedonian statehood and held important positions in the previous system. Because of that, in its opinion, the Venice Commission of the European Council assessed that in the concept of the Macedonian model of lustration are present elements according to which it can be judged as political, ideological and politically motivated, since in the way that it is set up, it represents an attempt for stigmatization and discrimination of political opponents, as well as those critically oriented towards the government.

Although it was announced that out of 36,000 files that were supposed to exist in the archives of the secret service at least 3,000 of them would be sanctioned, after several years of work the Commission found out that only 203 persons were their collaborators! Out of them the process was completed with final decisions for 68 person, while in 23 cases the Court proclaimed the decisions of the Commission as invalid. Although they had passed away, 78 persons were lustrated. Almost all of the 40 lustrated persons who appealed to the Administrative court got positive decisions. Several of them appealed to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg and three of them already got positive decisions, while the others are also expecting decisions in their favor. After such a debacle, the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE stopped the process with a special law, recognizing that it had returned as a boomerang, bringing more damage than benefit and accelerated their fall from power.

WHY A STATE IS CAPTURED

The state is captured with a primary goal for the governing elite to preserve the ruling throne, which at the same time means everything else that government brings with it.

Firstly, the state is captured in order for all social processes, events and people to be completely controlled with the assistance of the instruments of power, so that they can act preventively and repressively to block and disable every (spontaneous or organized) attempt for endangering, i.e. bringing down the power and the authoritarian leader. Especially to control those political and social groups which the government considers as hostile and fears that they can inflict damage, and finally, bring it down from the throne – the

opposition, the people who think differently, the critically oriented non-governmental sector, or simply – the different, the others.

Secondly, the state is captured to rule over the power of government, with the different state instruments, in legal and illegal ways, and with their assistance to protect and prolong governing endlessly, with continuous victories in all elections.

Thirdly, the state is captured for the lion's share of the prey, i.e. for governing and abusing the huge state resources – material, financial, status-based and, ultimately – for criminal profits and group, party and personal amassing of wealth.

The captured state, as much as it is beneficial, effective and functional for the governing structure that captured it, is at the same time extremely harmful for the interests of the state and for the citizens that live in it (except for the ruling elite and the small social groups which are in a clientelistic and dependent relationship with the government). The problem is even more pronounced and multiplied if it is a country which is ideologically, politically, ethnically, religiously, culturally divided with forced discord by the government, with the aim to corrupt and govern more easily. The captured state, because of such prevailing conditions, is dysfunctional and a generator of legal insecurity, security instability, injustice, poverty and, finally, is susceptible to corruption and crime.

TO WHAT EXTENT A STATE CAN BE CAPTURED

When analyzing the phenomenon of state capture with all of its elements, and especially the size, forms and the ways of capturing, three types of capturing of the state can be identified, with their specific phases/stages of capture. Analyzing the practice, and especially the concrete experience of the captured state through the example of Macedonia, two kinds of captured state with three phases/stages of this phenomenon can be classified.

The first type is the incidentally captured state. It is the case when individuals and/or smaller groups illegally or in a corruptive way influence individual carriers of state functions or institutions to take certain legal decision, decrees or other normative acts and secure them material, financial or other type of benefits, to the detriment of the state, other legal and private subjects, or to the detriment of larger segments of society. These, in their essence, are

elements through which the classical organized crime is recognized. If in some country the process of capturing is not blocked in this (incidental) stage, but continues, then it moves into the second type.

The second type is the completely captured state. To reach that state, one interphase/inter-level should be passed—the partially captured state. Here, the intensity and the size of the committed crime is bigger, and the number of involved subjects is higher. Still, although there are several criminal associations and larger number of involved administrative officers and officials from the state institutions, they are not interconnected and coordinated from some “headquarters”, but from the lower ranking individuals or groups, i.e. the local level of the ruling party or coalition. If the process continues to develop, only then it will reach the second type – the completely captured state.

In normal democratic societies institutions are the pillars of the state, of its positive development and movement, of its security and stability, of its relations with the others states and with the outside world in general. They are the most qualified and the fairest link in the functioning of the state, they guarantee continuity of the strategic state policies and interests when changes of the governing structures occur, because the governments do change, but the institutions, administrative officers and career professionals remain. They are the partners and services of the citizens in their relations towards the state and due to that the people (should) have great confidence in them. However, Macedonia during the reign of VMRO-DPMNE, and especially in the last seven-eight years, starting from 2008 – after the NATO debacle in Bucharest and the early parliamentary elections, gradually forgot about the reforms and started the process of politicization of everything in the state, becoming a completely captured state. Hence, Macedonia was no longer a normal state in the real sense of the word. The system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE kidnapped the institutions and in a short time completely politicized them, so instead of implementing the Constitution and the interest of the state, of the nation and the citizens, they implemented the program and realized the goals and priorities of the party.

In this case, i.e. stage, on the highest level of the executive power is the organized criminal association, which assisted by the top managing officials of the institutions, planned massive politically organized crime. The aim was, over time, for the criminal association, but also for the other actors and participants in the process, to use the power of the government and the institutions, as well as with the abuse of the official function and powers, in inadmissible,

illegal and criminal way to gain huge material, financial and status profits and personally and as a group (party) to amass wealth, while they were or could be aware that the state and the citizens suffered enormous and irreparable damage.

It is better and more precise if this qualification is viewed through the phase/stage approach rather than some other approach, because the first phase is possible everywhere and it is simply classical organized crime. If there is an expansion of that phase/stage in a country, i.e. metastatic growth, then (if in the meantime there is no change of power after elections) the third phase—the completely captured state—comes as the logical follow up. That means, in some countries only the first phase/stage of the incidentally captured state could happen and remain there. In some other countries the first phase may be followed by the second phase/stage, but the intention can be intercepted with change of government or criminal liability of the criminal association that captured the state and tried to perform acts of organized crime. In the third phase we can see the complete development through all three of its phases, with the metastatic growth into a completely captured state with heavy and massive politically organized crime.

WHAT ALL WAS CAPTURED IN THE MACEDONIAN STATE

The Macedonian example of state capture is very specific and unique. By definition, the state is captured by the party or coalition. In the case of Macedonia, there was an earlier, i.e. in-between phase. In order for the party to capture the state, earlier, a group of ambitious people, ideological-political and national hermaphrodites, who had little or nothing in common with VMRO, but were intruders from other political subjects and ideological options – had to capture the party VMRO-DPMNE. In such a way, the party captured itself with its ideological-political and national controversies, allowing to be captured by a small group of intruders with its lucrative-profitteering appetite. In that way, the captured party VMRO-DPMNE (by the way, which never in history, even as VMRO during the Ilinden uprising, between the two world wars or national liberation war/Second world war, did not play any useful and positive role in the creation and existence of the Macedonian state) started to capture the Macedonian state. And even if it was not successful in many positive things and processes, in this undertaking the party even surpassed itself – it not only won absolute power, but also managed to capture the state.

It is interesting to analyze the phenomenon of the captured state through the size and stage of capturing, as well as the levels to which the capture can trickle down and what all the state as an institution can capture, from private entities to individual persons. The capturing of the individuals is specific, because it is about personal relation and will. In practice, many individuals willingly, for personal reasons, sold their freedom. Still, much larger is the number of those who, despite the usual relations with the government as individuals (paying taxes, other obligations and use of the services of the state institutions and the public sector), have felt themselves as captured individuals of the captured state. However, these relations should be observed and studied on some other occasions and some other scientific disciplines.

The Personnel Policies in MOI and the Secret Police

The capturing of the state is a continuing process started with the arrival in power of VMRO-DPMNE and the establishment of completely new and until then unprecedented system of governing in Macedonia. Although at first nobody thought that during the governing of VMRO-DPMNE social processes will start moving in an unpredicted direction that would end with the capturing of the state; still, two dates can be determined as cornerstones. The first, the starting one, when in the first session of the Government of VMRO-DPMNE headed by Nikola Gruevski (at the end of August 2006), with a single decision they removed from office around 1,700 officials in the state and public institutions and agencies, marking the start of the gradual but continuing (fully realized several years later) capturing of the state. The second, when the process of complete capturing of the state was completed: on December 24th 2012, on the well-known “black Monday”, when the system of governing assisted by the secret police, forcefully threw out the parliamentarians of the opposition from the plenary hall and the journalists from the gallery, which was an unprecedented act in the new global parliamentary history, marking with that the end of the legal state and the rule of law, which meant a complete rounding of the process of capturing the state.

Coming into power, VMRO-DPMNE has shown incredible efficiency in replacing the top officials in the institutions and installing its own people, which was the start of the process of complete politicization and capturing of the state. The decision for removal from office in the first government session under VMRO-DPMNE rule, in 2006, was only the beginning of replacements and

dismissals, because during their reign the same destiny was faced by several thousand administrative officers and other employees of different categories. In their place they immediately installed party members and people of trust of the party and its leader. According to the assessment of the Professor of law D-r Borce Davitkovski, "that was a big shock for a sensitive organism such as the state administration, and that shock brought with it great negative consequences for the state, for those dismissed, as well as for the newly installed and newly employed, because the 'craft' is not so easy to learn".

After this act the system of governing started the swift and efficient kidnaping and capturing of the institutions, increasing their numbers and the number of their employees. The institutions immediately went under special treatment of genetic engineering and the change of their established constitutional and legal code. In order to successfully implement such a complicated operation of politicization and change in the mental code of the institutions and the individuals in them, the system previously started with the infusion of "fresh blood," with the goal of increasing the presence of their party members in the institutions. In such a way the institutions were instantly increased – by number (with the creation of tens of new agencies, directorates, inspectorates, councils, committees, various police units, etc.) and by size (although the government kept as the biggest secret and manipulated until the very end with the exact number of employees in the public sector, i.e. the state and the public administration).

Taking into account the huge importance of the institutions, in this important segment the government of VMRO-DPMNE managed to install a real military system of command and hierarchical relations. With the enlargement of the Ministry of Information Society, in which without any special connection they included Administration, the system centralized the management and control of the entire administration from one place. The desired system of command and control of the administration, in accordance with the model adequate to the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE, was introduced with the new Law on administration, which was done without consensus with the opposition and with violation of several universal international standards and rules which are of importance for this sensitive sphere. At the same time, behind the screen of the legal system on employment, the institutions of the state and public sector were governed by an unwritten (but consistently applied) rule of the party: to obtain employment it is necessary to have a party membership card, and once you have a party membership card then the primary task is to serve the party.

The hierarchy and command in the institutions was secured with the installment of top officials in the ministries, agencies, departments, directorates, offices and so on. In the most important ministries that were of interest for VMRO-DPMNE's system of government they selected persons that the leader trusted fully – Ministry of Interior, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Transport, Information Society and Administration, etc. If the minister was from DUI, the managing-commanding function was reinforced with installment of their own vice-minister and state secretary – a person of trust who listens and executes. These two options were at play in almost all ministries. While the powers of the ministers are clear and most important when it comes to managing policy in the ministries, the state secretaries were acting from behind the scenes. They were not so present and active publicly, but were highly devoted - not so much to the perfect functioning of the ministries, but to their politicization with appointment of party members in key managing posts in the administrative hierarchy of the ministry and employment of party soldiers.

The “armchairs” of the state secretaries, who are among the highest ranking managers with the greatest powers in the ministries and are appointed by the government with a mandate lasts until the end of the government's mandate, are the most coveted positions for all parties, without exception, while they are in power. These positions were usually occupied by persons of trust of the parties and their leaders. They are essentially loyal and obedient apparatchiks with inadequate education (for instance, in the Ministry of Defense – a dentist) aware that in a normal country, in equal competition of people with high professional and life experience they could not even dream to find themselves in such a high position, which by definition is the highest professional and career function.

In the states with longer parliamentary and democratic traditions, in which the career is dominant, the state secretaries in the ministries are the main levers and guarantors of professionalism, expertise, authority, dignity and continuity of the functioning of the state administration, because they do not change with the change of the power. In our system, i.e. in the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE, the state secretaries were people who, explained roughly but in an illustrative way, were making political transfers of the party soldiers in the state institutions. Generally speaking, unfortunately, after every election in Macedonia, after every change of power from one political party/coalition to another, almost as a rule, instead of continuity we had discontinuity in the state administration, as well as in the entire public sector. The leading

role in that process, status and jurisdictions, was concentrated in the hands of the state secretaries.

The system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE gave to the state secretaries the function of political-commissioners in the ministries, with the aim to control loyalty and dedication of the party soldiers, but also to serve as “an extended arm” and as executioners of the personnel decisions of the “cadre-officers”. In the most sensitive institutions where there was the highest party interest, the transmission was excluded and the decisions and solutions were executed directly. For instance, in the judicial institutions (courts, prosecutor’s offices, Judicial Council, The council of Public Prosecutors and the Fact Finding Council) the communications with the first persons of these institutions was done by the key “cadre-officers” from the pyramid of power – the minister of interior and the director of the secret service, while in “Gordana’s little notebook” were the names of all party personnel solutions, including the appointments, advancements or resignations in this sphere. For coordination with the coalition partner DUI, as well as when it was necessary to show muscles or have someone disciplined, the person in charge was the director of the secret services. For the less important ministries and the lower echelons, decision were made by less important persons with large notebooks, which contained personnel decisions for “taking care” in the institutions of the larger groups of party soldiers – starting from simple administrative officers up to guardians, janitors, coffee-makers and so on, in the public companies and the local self-governments.

The “little notebooks” of the party HR managers were functioning not only for the state and public sector, but often were “reaching” in some of the private companies, even foreign companies, depending on procurement tenders or business relations of the their owners with the institutions, i.e. with the state and party high officials. In a large number of companies, voluntarily or with threats and blackmailing, party soldiers were employed, while in the companies that were foreign investments it was done on the bases of reciprocity – subsidies from the government for party employment in the companies. In the framework of these relations, very characteristic is the existing reciprocity between the government and the media: the government invests in the media with advertising and subsidies and the media return with propaganda and finishing the “dirty work” against the opposition and the opponents.

Institutions - Barracks for the Party Army

According to the statement of then minister of information society and administration, Marta Arsovska Tomovska, in a TV debate (beginning of April 2016), based on the “inventory” made in the public sector, in roughly 1,300 institutions (ministries, local self-governments, public companies, agencies, directorates, inspectorates, councils, regulatory bodies, committees, educational institutions, health organizations, etc.) 130,000 persons were employed. This number, during the same TV debate, was “complemented” by Professor of Law D-r Borce Davitkovski, with an additional 16.000 that worked in companies which received money from the budget and “unspecified” (but large) number of those with service contracts. This intervention was not denied by the minister. Based on that, the conclusion is that in the public sector in Macedonia around 170.000 persons were employed or otherwise paid from the budget, which was twice as much as when VMRO-DPMNE took over power from SDSM. That number was 71.000 persons and they worked in half the number of institutions compared to 2016.

It is interesting how party dominance was established in the highest, most important and most professional institutions. An example is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which should be the bastion of seriousness, professionalism and accountability. When VMRO-DPMNE took over power in 2006, this ministry had 320 employees. Using the methods of the system of governing, the process of imposing power started with the employment of new, primarily young people out of which the majority were without previous professional or educational contact with or knowledge of diplomacy. The massive employments were on a permanent basis, sometimes with transfers from other institutions and also with short-term contracts (as brief inter-phase until permanent employment), of course with recommendation of the party based on the ownership of a party membership card and expressed loyalty.

The change of in the personnel composition of the diplomacy was also assisted with the first in the world innovation created by the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE – elections of ambassador in public competitions! As a result, among the new ambassadors there were psychiatrists, veterinarians, brokers, postal officers and people with similar backgrounds, who until the nomination for ambassadorial or consular posts had nothing in common with foreign policy. In several years the number of employees in the Ministry of foreign Affairs reached 600. The experienced diplomats - former ambassadors and career diplomats and consular officers were side-lined - placed in separated

offices and without any professional tasks. In the next phase a new practice was established of sending as ambassadors, general consuls, diplomatic and consular staff in the missions abroad young people in their late twenties and early thirties, without any or with extremely brief diplomatic or consular experience, without adequate higher education, but with adequate party merits. Ambassadors and high diplomatic-consular posts were also occupied by those who changed their professional dresses with the party dresses. In this context we should also mention the “framework” (Ohrid Agreement) diplomatic-consular quota system, which also in a way meant further contribution to the continuity of “politicization and de-professionalization” of Macedonian diplomacy.

Marginalized and demotivated, part of the experienced career diplomats became passive, took their monthly salaries and went to the Ministry without any duties, the other part left the Ministry in search of better/more dignified options, one group retired, while part of the lower administrative officers were dismissed from work as surplus or as the result of alleged mistakes and lack of commitment in the work place. Therefore, after several years of genetic engineering and forced transfusion, the number of employees was reduced, even though it remained much higher than the starting figure, while the Ministry/diplomatic service suffered almost a complete change of personnel, with employees who were members or loyal supporters of VMRO-DPMNE.

Similar processes, depending on the specifics, were carried out in all other institutions. In the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, the number of employees during the VMRO-DPMNE reign was increased from 500 to 1,500.

In the police there was a major overhaul, with complete change of the management and the personnel structure. The older and experienced policemen and civil servants with the adoption of special law became “young” pensioners. As a sort of compensation, they all got privileged positions in regard to the other categories of employees (state and private) who were retiring – less years of service and higher pensions, even above the previous limits. In a very short period, the Ministry as an institution and personnel composition, was transformed into party police. Hence, it was not a case of *lapsus mentis*, but most probably a Freudian slip when the minister in one of the intercepted telephone conversation called it “MVRO-VMRO”. Apart from the regular police units, as a kind of para-police there were the private security agencies that were formed by people close to the government or individuals acting on behalf of the high government officials, while the biggest private agency was

linked to the name of the then director of the secret police. With a special law, these agencies got almost the same powers as those of the police, among other things – to carry fire arms, to be allowed to check the identity of a person, to use force, and to arrest individuals in certain circumstances! After the fall of the regime of VMRO-DPMNE from power, the biggest number of these agencies, due to their political orientation, party origin of the owners and the gratitude towards the former government for the status and powers they got and the money they earned, can be seen and considered as party installation and some kind of party para-police possibly ready to be used in case of need.

Another trend was also noticed. In the ministry where the minister was, for instance, from the party ranks of the coalition partner DUI, the number of Albanians, despite the principle of equitable representation of 25 percent, was much higher (according to some statistics, even 50 percent). It is interesting that in the Secretariat for implementation of the framework agreement which served as the base for later transfers of ethnic Albanian civil servants to another institutions, the number of employees who received regular monthly salaries, but stayed home without any duties, reached 1,700. At the same time, VMRO-DPMNE for every “framework- employed” person, employed several of its own “framework” party soldiers.

According to data presented in the weekly “Gragjanski” (January 2013), in 2001, before the start of the implementation of the obligation deriving from the Ohrid framework agreement for equitable representation (the end of 2001), the representation of the Albanians in the state and public sector was 7 percent. Until the end of 2004 (when SDSM and DUI were in government) the number was almost doubled – 13.8 percent, and until the end of that government (2006) it reached 14.5 percent. Since 2006, when VMRO took over power together with DPA, and later (since 2008) with DUI, until 2011, meaning in 5 years, the percentage was increased by only 2.2 percent and reached 16.8 percent. At the same time, the number of employed in the state and public sector was almost doubled! This means there was trend of stagnation when it comes to equitable representation, as well as the ratio in the percentages between the Macedonian and Albanian employees in the state and public sector. It is worth noting that absolute figures of the employed in these two sectors reached abnormal heights, two times larger than in normal states with a similar number of inhabitants. The situation started to improve after the crises known as “black Monday” (December 2012) and especially after the Przino agreements in 2015, so equitable representation might have reached the targeted 25 percent, but is still not balanced in all spheres of the administration and public sector.

Based on these examples, it can be said that politicization as a process was fully completed by the system of governing, so the last several years were a time harvesting – it won all the elections. That was the case till 2016, when the system, using all means (legal and illegal) at its disposal, won but only with the difference of two seats against their main rival, which were not enough to secure parliamentary majority for the formation of government, so the party was forced into opposition.

Nothing in the Country was Left Uncaptured

After the successful engineering done with the assistance of its system of governing, the government managed first to completely politicize and after that to put under command and surveillance, that means to capture, all state institutions – horizontally and vertically. It is interesting to explain where it started, how it developed and how far the engineering of the politicization of institutions had gone, and with that – the capturing of the state, until the fall from power of VMRO-DPMNE.

VMRO-DPMNE started the campaign for capturing the state from its own ranks. Even before the elections in 2006, while in opposition, according to the statements of former members and officials, the party obligated its candidates to sign blank “checks of loyalty”. They mortgaged their movable and immovable property worth large sums of money, which in case of disobedience and change of the party flag, the party would automatically activate, together with the letters of resignation from the parliamentary post signed in advance. Hence, the parliamentarians of VMRO-DPMNE became the first hostages of the system of governing of the party, became its voting machine and were forced to be obedient executioners of the orders coming from the party headquarters.

That marked the beginning of the capturing of Parliament through the instrumentalization of the Rules of Procedures and the democratic procedures, because an obedient ruling majority automatically meant captured democracy. The most important were the hand raising, the argument of the numbers, violence and obstructions, instead of dialogue, common sense and facts. The system that VMRO-DPMNE used to govern while in power, soon after moving into opposition has transformed into a system of blockades and obstructions of the government and the democratic procedures and processes. Though in opposition, using the parliamentary rules and procedures, this system managed to

keep the Assembly captured for months, blocking the establishment of the new government and obstructing the reform processes. It broke two unwritten democratic rules, accepted in the whole world. The first one, to leave the newly established government to work "in peace" for the first 100 days. The system of obstructions of VMRO-DPMNE before the end of the period of 100 days of the government, launched interpellations for six ministers, nearly one third of the government's cabinet and without any credible arguments. The second one was for one party to form only one parliamentary group in the Assembly. VMRO-DPMNE, after going into opposition, formed ten parliamentary groups with the sole purpose (which was implicitly confirmed) to block and obstruct the reforms, the legal projects and the staffing of the government of the new parliamentary majority.

After the parliamentarians, next on the party list for "capturing" were the institutions which were independent. Legislative power was conquered through winning in elections the majority of parliamentary seats and formation of majority in the Assembly with the coalition partner from the Albanian political campus. The winning of the legislative power automatically meant the conquering of the executive power, because the majority in the Assembly creates/elects the Government.

The President of the Republic, according to the constitutional separation of powers, is part of the executive power. VMRO-DPMNE in 2009, with the election of their candidate Gjeorge Ivanov, also won this important institution of the government. Ivanov was elected as president twice. Unlike his first election, the second one, in 2014 did not have its legitimacy recognized by the opposition. On the contrary, they rejected the results blaming and claimed election fraud, while the coalition partner DUI, who insisted on a consensual presidential candidate, also refused to recognize the president. Ivanov did not show subjectivity and personality, but was satisfied with the ceremonial role of the president "for the world," but in his second mandate was isolated because of the controversial policy (his and of his party). On the domestic scene he did not behave as a president of all citizens, but as a loyal and grateful party soldier. President Ivanov will remain remembered, at home and in the international community, as executor of two scandals without precedence which shook the country and upset the world – two times he acted in favor of the party and two times he violated the Constitution, something that he will be legally held accountable for after the change of power. The first case is the abolition of the ruling elite for the indictments for enormous election and organized crime, which later under domestic and foreign pressure he had to withdraw. The

second case is the refusal to give the mandate and (later) conditioning of the giving the mandate to the new parliamentary majority, despite the lack of any constitutional or legal right to act in that way and the appeals from the country, other states and the international institutions. According to his position in the functioning of the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE, the President of the Republic, Gjeorge Ivanov, can be considered as an active participant in the capturing of the state. Playing his role as the obedient party soldier, he may also be considered as one of the many detainees of the captured state!

Professor dr Svetomir Shkarikj, who was also an advisor in the president's cabinet in his first term, is absolutely correct in his assessment about the position and the role of president Ivanov. In his textbook "Constitutional Law" (eight edition) professor Shkarikj notes: "The fourth President of the Republic of Macedonia, Gjeorge Ivanov, is significantly different from the previous presidents. As president he came from the university environment, without political experience and charisma. In the election campaign for the first presidential mandate in 2009 he presented himself as an independent personality, with the ambition to introduce knowledge in politics (political science) and not to live from politics, as previous presidents had done. In his election campaign he was stating the he will be 'one for all' and that in the execution of the presidential function he will be assisted by a team of councilors consisted of university professors from the country and from abroad – his colleges of trust. After the election, that which was promised was soon forgotten and he became one with the party that promoted him as a candidate, relying entirely on the staff in his cabinet. He decided to be a depersonalized person, to be "part of the team" composed of parliamentarians, the prime minister, the ministers and the local government". "It is absurd for someone to promote himself before the elections with the slogan 'one for all', and after being elected for president, of his own volition to become hostage of the party that supported his candidacy," – comments Shkarikj, and adds: "The Macedonia's challenges of great, and the future is uncertain when it comes to the presidential function and when the opposition is absent from the plenary hall of the Assembly. All 'models' of factual functioning of the combined model of organization of the government are still in the game, including its transformation into the model of unity of power, with one single party from the Macedonian and Albanian block. That is a worse solution even than the model of assembly, known from the period of the socialistic constitutionality of the Peoples Republic of Macedonia and the Socialist Republic of Macedonia (1944 – 1990)."

Then followed the conquering of the judicial power, which was achieved with the informal re-election through the Judicial Council, which was completely politicized, while the entire process was completed with the local government, when in the local elections held in 2013, with the well-known election engineering and election crime, VMRO-DPMNE and DUI won ninety percent of the mayoral positions in the municipalities and a slightly lower percentage of representatives in the local councils.

All governments to which citizens have passed sovereignty, which means the right to govern for the interests of the society, state, nation and their own interest, have in such way become a function and instrument of the executive power which was commanded from the party VMRO-DPMNE, assisted by DUI. But it did not stop there. The capturing continued, this time accompanied by something worse: the dismantling and decoding, according to the ideas of the regime, of the biggest systems that formulate, direct, move and maintain the most important processes in a country and in a society: education, health care, science, defense and security, diplomacy, culture, welfare and media. Partially, depending on the need of the system and who was at its helm, the system also instrumentalized the Macedonian Academy of Science and Arts. Under strict control and pressure were also many private entities from these spheres.

The government established control and management of these systems by “placing” suitable and loyal party members/supporters for rectors, directors, general managers, presidents, members of managing and supervisory boards, councils and so on. In such a way, the institutions and other entities in these systems, some more and some less, due to the staff composition and management, became tools for unlimited support of the interests, a downplaying factor for the mistakes done by the absolute authoritarian executive power and the front row of the new “part-time profession”—counter-protesters and counter-revolutionaries, in fact defenders of the criminals of the ruling elite.

Next in line to be captured were the independent institutions which in principle were supposed to be fully professionalized, just and to execute their activities in line with state interests: National Bank of Macedonia, Constitutional Court, Judicial Council, Public Prosecutors Council, Fact Finding Council, State Commission for Preventing Corruption, Public Revenue Office, State Statistical Office, State Audit Office, Central Register of Macedonia, various regulatory, control and inspection bodies and commissions, agencies for media and electronic communications, etc.

Gradually they started attacking and taking down the non-governmental sector: several labor unions, first and foremost the largest one (remaining from the previous socialist system) – The Labor Unions of Macedonia, the Social Council (employers, labor unions and government) which regulates and adjusts the positions of the three social partners on working conditions and the rights of the employers, then the student parliaments, associations of pensioners, of the war veterans, of the people with disabilities, etc. It was done so systematically and went so deeply that this process included even the leading positions of the sport associations, sport clubs, while the “long arm of the party” was often becoming a key factor when the selection of the national sport teams was taking place!

One by one the associations from the non-governmental sector were gradually transformed into the “non-governmental governmental sector”. Acting in line with the party policies, they transformed themselves into main supporters and propagators of the government and, along with the administration and the media megaphones, constituted the unit for swift deployment in counter-protests against the opposition and the minor, but very vigorous and authentically critical NGO sector. The fact that the local self-government was almost completely in the hands of the ruling parties, was enabling the leader of the government and the party, according to his wish, to act as prime minister of the entire state or as chief of the local government – as mayor of all communities in the country!

With special attention and interest they captured the professional and guild associations. All that could be captured, with legal and illegal means, was captured; the rest was weakened with the establishment of parallel/alternative associations where the party soldiers and supporters were directed. The Macedonian Chamber of Commerce was created, while the lawyers, public notaries, doctors, craftsmen and other chambers were conquered. The same happened to the associations of farmers, wine producers, vendors, etc. Thus, almost all pores of society that were of interest and potential use of the government were captured, leaving nothing uncaptured – either on a voluntary basis, or in any other forcible way.

The Highest Level of Capture – the Capture of the Mind

Although by definition the government, other than the creation of legal preconditions and enabling business climate, has no other responsibilities, it

consistently tried to establish influence and control upon the real sector, the private companies, etc. Even the foreign companies were not avoided – companies that came after great efforts were invested to attract them and even special arrangements with many incentives were made in closed ministerial/party circles. How was the private sector captured?

The system of governing found very efficient instruments for capturing, which otherwise are unimaginable in normal states where there is a rule of law and a market economy. The economy was led according to the model of a planned economy from the previous socialist system. The government using legal and other instruments, but also with threats and pressures – was norming, directing, controlling, punishing, investing, giving work and employing. The foreign companies were receiving subsidies and many privileges, while the domestic (privileged) companies that were close to the government, were awarded with businesses. The companies close to the government were winning the fixed procurement tenders or were reaching discrete person-to-person arrangements. These companies were receiving the most and were protected from inspections and other controls and punishments, but in return they had to give part of the received amounts to the party or to some of the party top officials. They also had to employ party soldiers, spouses and children of the party officials. The government as investor not only did not pay on time for services rendered, the period for which was legally limited to a maximum of 90 days, but changed the law and the legally extended period of the payments to one and a half years! The companies that were not close to the government could hardly win any procurement tenders; they were exposed to hard pressure, forceful donations for the party, advertising in the media sponsored by the government, actions of the various inspection offices, huge penalties, hostile takeovers, racketeering, bankruptcy, etc.

When speaking about the captured state, the Church is another story, because it went voluntarily in the captivity of the party. With the coming into power of VMRO-DPMNE, since the first government of Ljubco Georgievski, the Macedonian Orthodox Church, like opium of the people, became one of the main supporters of the system of governing of this party. As the politicization of the institutions of the system led to the state and the party becoming one, in a similar way the benevolence of the clerical elite towards the party led to adhesion of the state with the Church, which is act of destruction of one of the basic constitutional decisions – the secular state, i.e., the separation of the church from the state.

The religious communities, especially the Macedonian Orthodox Church and the Islamic Religious Community got huge properties and concessions. Using different ways, the central government composed of the coalition partners VMRO-DPMNE and DUI returned to them properties and land, and with the assistance of the local communities built or donated to them churches, mosques, building, etc. Because of the existence of such relations, part of the highest Church dignitaries became an unavoidable accompanying part and décor of the activities of the state leadership. The blessing of every new government building became a compulsory ceremony. The church supported the government's grandomania and propagandistic projects. While some of the church dignitaries were doing it tacitly, others publicly agitated during the election campaigns. They constantly acted as advocates of the government's conservative policies on marriage, abortion, religious education, the wave of religious holidays, but also as provocateurs of violence (the beating of the students of the Faculty of Architecture during their peaceful protest against the construction of a Church in the central square in the capitol and the demolition of the offices of the municipality of "Centar" in Skopje against the alleged destruction of the church "St Konstantin and Elena" which was under construction, committed by party-religious fanatics in both cases), etc. Doing all of that, the Church violated its basic reason for existence and the postulate - that it cares equally for "all god's children." In our case, the "children" of the government were treated as "closer to god" than the others! It became a matter of prestige among the mayors of VMRO-DPMNE who will build more churches and bigger crosses, and the benchmark was the Millennium Cross on the mountain Vodno in Skopje. Very indicative, but absolutely correct is the comment of the late brilliant cartoonist Darko Markovic, presented through his cult cartoon-hero Pecko about the trend of building crosses and their size: "Why do you make these crosses so big? - So that the entire nation can be crucified on them!"

Thus, the system of governing assisted by several bishops of the Synod headed by the patriarch Stefan (who, by the way, was elected in the 90's as the head of the MOC on a church and peoples electoral gathering in Ohrid with the assistance of then high officials of VMRO-DPMNE Saso Staninov, Valentina Bozinovska and others), although fully aware that they were creating divisions among the believers, because the believers are not all supporters of VMRO-DPMNE, instrumentalized the religion and the MOC as one of the important spiritual levers of this system of governing. In that intertwining of part of the Synod and the ruling party and the government, at first glance it was almost unrecognizable who is the patriarch and who is the party leader/

prime minister. Still, according to the position and the power, it was quite clear who is the Macedonian “earthly god”, and it could be easily assumed who was doing “hand-kissing”!

Because of the twisted position of the institutions in regard to their basic constitutional function, according to the public polls, in the last several years they were constantly losing trust among the majority of the population. They were no longer viewed as institutions that are taking care of all citizens equally, but were more seen to be unjust, because towards certain citizens were privileged over tohers. The institutions were constantly losing trust among the citizens because the complete politicization was accompanied by one additional “vice” of the system, which while building the basis of politicization was also built inside the unavoidable by-product of authoritarianism and of the regime – nepotism, which has an umbilical link to conflict of interests. It existed on the top of the pyramid – which was based on the family, the godfather and the friendly connection, and all that was trickling down to the lowest level in the institutions and the lowest hierarchical and personnel echelons.

Still, the highest degree of capturing of a state is when the government starts to change the mental code of the majority of citizens in the country to the level of washing, and later of capturing their brains. This tragedy happened to the Republic of Macedonia during the reign of VMRO-DPMNE, when the captured mind – following Orwell’s “the Big Brother thinks about everything” – and moving along the line of least resistance (“there is someone who thinks”) left the Big Brother and the Big Cousin to think and make decisions for them, “in their name and for their own good!” The problem was multiplied with the fact, also confirmed in the case of Macedonia, that the minds remain captured for a very long time – even much longer after the formal liberation of the state and its institutions, while the Big Brother, although without powers, continues to control and instruct them for an unusually long period of time.

THE CAPTURED STATE CAN BE LIBERATED WITH CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT

The time distance, i.e. how long a state can remain captured depends on several elements, but primarily on the setup of the political system in the country, and even more of the placement of the system of governing developed by the party that captured the state. Of course, another important element is the level of captivity of the state. Absolute power means an absolutely captured

state, while the longer the captivity of the state, the longer its liberation will take, much longer and even past the dethroning of those who captured the state.

Macedonia is a specific case and an illustrative example that the liberation of the captured state can be extended and last much longer after the formation of the new parliamentary majority, which was the result of the freely expressed will of the citizens on the 2016 parliamentary elections. Although the President of the Republic flagrantly violated the Constitution and several legal procedures, and without receiving any proof for the formation of a parliamentary majority gave the mandate to the leader of VMRO-DPMNE, as expected, they did not manage to find partners and form a coalition. Instead of giving the mandate to SDSM, which managed to create a parliamentary majority with several parties from the Albanian block, the president and the new opposition started with various procedural and other legal and illegal obstructions, blockades, oppression of the minority over majority in the Parliament, all with the aim to prevent the swift, democratic and peaceful change of power. Almost six months after the elections, Macedonia remained fully captured by a dysfunctional technical government of the party which was on the way out – without a legitimate government, without a completed process of constitution of the Parliament, without a president, vice presidents and formed bodies, commissions and committees of the Assembly. The occupiers who used political violence, politically organized crime and numerous violations of the laws and the democratic procedures to capture the state, did not allow for the smooth transfer of power and start of the process of liberation. This situation, followed by staged pro-VMRO-DPMNE protests and threats of violence if the election of the new President of the Parliament and new Government went through, deepened the political-institutional crisis, the lawlessness and threatened with the eruption of a security crisis due to the danger of intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic conflicts which could seriously destabilize the country, with repercussions for the entire region.

When can we say that the state is liberated from the captivity of the authoritarian regime of the ruling party? The “Macedonian Case” shows that if the state is captured by an authoritarian individual who grabs absolute power, and behind him is a party which in its name contains that it is revolutionary-democratic(!), manifesting this duality in many occasions depending on the circumstances and the needs (when needed – violence, when needed – democracy), then the process of liberation will be long, stressful and with violent resistance, blockades and obstructions.

Formally, the state is liberated at the moment and with the act of falling from power of the previous ruling regime and the party which captured the state, and when power is taken over by a new political group. In fact, the process of liberation of the state is very complex and lasts, perhaps not so long as the period of "occupation, but as long as it is needed to reset and clean all the state bodies and institutions from the residues and remnants of the complete politicization and de-professionalization. That means, until a sharp discontinuity from the bad policies and practices is made, until fundamental organizational and personnel changes are completed and reforms implemented, until the unusable laws and dysfunctional regulations are filtered, and until the institutions are cleaned from the supernumerary and incompetent party soldiers.

A Long Captivity – a Long and Difficult Liberation

The process of liberation, no matter how long it lasts, and it usually lasts very long, also has its phases. The first is a personnel purge – changes and replacements in the managing positions in the institutions, because in the captured state the institutions were not run by professionals, but by loyal party soldiers. In the second phase, it is necessary to proceed with the functional dismantling of the system of governing of the party that captured the state. In the third phase, a reset is necessary, or to be more precise a change, liberation and purification of the mental code of the captured minds of the people in the institutions. The fourth phase is the longest, most difficult and most important, because it means reforming, professionalization and return of trust in the institutions.

The Macedonian experience has shown that the party that lost the elections is trying to keep the state in captivity for a long time after the elections, obstructing the transfer of power for months, subjectively interpreting and abusing the democratic procedures, as well as threatening with violence, paramilitary forces and staged protests. At the same time, in that interval of a technical government and not completely constituted Assembly, it grabs the opportunity to complete unfinished businesses, wash and destroy compromising illegal documents and evidence in the institutions, conquer and position itself with the businesses of the few from the party leadership, primarily the Big Cousin, in the most attractive spheres and businesses assisted by the usurped and still non-transferred power, as well as with corruption using the money from the previous criminal activities.

The Macedonian absurd with the captured state went so far that seven-eight months after the elections, six months after the constitution of the Assembly and formation of the parliamentary majority (government), a hundred days after the election, constitution and start of the functioning of the new Government, the largest number of operative functions of the government, the so-called “second and third echelons” were led by the previous executive power, i.e., the current opposition. It succeeded in that because of the number of obstructive (slowing-down) decisions which the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE, knowing that the day will come when they will have to leave power, placed as “mines” the by-laws and rules of procedures of the Assembly, Government, institutions, regulatory bodies and public companies, with the sole purpose to make more difficult the work of the new government and to take its time to, from the inside, quietly cover up the documents, to clean and wash its dirty wrongdoings and crimes, to create problems and leave behind “trails”.

For instance, the technical (interregnum) ministers on the last day before the election of the new government were signing decisions for the beginning of construction of the new Clinical Center worth hundreds of million euros, decisions for financing non-governmental organizations worth several million euros, another minister signed the decisions for sending around thirty diplomats in the Macedonian embassies around the world, the director of ELEM (Macedonian Power Plants) launched a procurement tender for a major investment without the approval of the new government worth eighty million euros, continued to sell electricity on the international market, etc.

The latest innovations for “prolongation of the governing” and obstruction of the new government to take over the institutions of the state were happening in the parliament. For more than one month the formation of the Committee on Election and Appointment Issues was blocked, in order to block the election of the President of the Assembly from the ranks of the new parliamentary majority. It was done with the use of procedural “tricks”. Namely, VMRO-DPMNE did not form a parliamentarian group, so that every single parliamentarian could ask procedural questions, to discuss, to reply, to counter-reply, etc. All 51 parliamentarians requested to participate in the discussion. For the completion of the discussion of a single parliamentarian, together with the procedural remarks, replies and counter-replies, were necessary roughly ten days. To complete the list of registered speakers it would take several years. That conclusion was also stressed by VMRO-DPMNE. The agony was interrupted by the parliamentary majority with the speedy procedure of

voting and election of the President of the Assembly, on which VMRO-DPMNE replied with entering of the mob (violent “patriots” from the initiative “For a Joint Macedonia”), who made a bloody feast, physically attacking parliamentarians from the new parliamentary majority and two leaders of parties, while for several hours they kept as hostages dozens of parliamentarians, journalists and administrative officers, their lives were put in danger, several of them were seriously hurt, and one was in critical condition. This happened on April 27th 2017, during “bloody Thursday”.

Macedonia is an illustrative example where using facts and dates we may define the method and the necessary time to liberate a captured state. A captured state definitely starts to become liberated with the elimination of the fear of the repressive instruments of the captured state and with the consistent exposure of its system of governing. Despite the enormous repression, threats, punishments and other means of intimidation from the system of governing, at one moment the captured and humiliated citizens overcame their fear. That twist happened on April 27th 2014, on the day of the early parliamentary elections and second round of the presidential elections, when the leader of the then opposition SDSM, Zoran Zaev, in the moment when polls were closing, without waiting for the results, declared that electoral crime had been committed and that because of that he and his party cannot accept the results. On that occasion he asked for new elections, a new election law, a census of the population and six months before the elections, the creation of a so-called technical government for the implementation of fair and democratic elections. Later on came the publication of the scandal with the illegal interceptions of communications, when around 40 “bombs” were released – audio recordings of wiretapped telephone conversations of high state and party officials when all citizens could hear about the different crimes. It triggered the explosion of revolt of the people. Soon after the students, the high-school students and the freelancers went on the streets. The Przino agreements were designed to offer an exit from the political crisis, but the anti-constitutional abolition of the suspected criminals of the government proclaimed by the President of the Republic, further deepened the crises and the massive “Colorful Revolution” erupted. The fear disappeared, the citizens were encouraged and the throne of the government started to shake. Caught in panic, the system of governing moved from one mistake into the next, falling deeper and deeper.

The opposition and the civil sector, patiently, with thinking and common sense, as the leader of the resistance Zoran Zaev used to say, with a vote and a pen demolished the system of governing in the captured state. In fact, the

fall of the regime was announced on April 27th 2014, when the election process was disputed by the opposition as criminal, it was accelerated with the detonation of the “bombs” in the first half of 2015, and the formal fall happened exactly on the same day three years later – on April 27th 2017, on “bloody Thursday”, when the new President of the Assembly was elected and when the new parliamentary majority took over power. The intrusion of the mob organized by VMRO-DPMNE, keeping as hostages the parliamentarians of the new parliamentary majority and the attempt to lynch two party leaders and several parliamentarians, was only an act of despair by VMRO-DPMNE to keep power in a violent way, and use political manoeuvres to remain an important factor in Macedonian politics. However, this insane attempt and scenario only accelerated the fall and sealed the destiny of the party VMRO-DPMNE, as it used to be. The dismantling of the system, i.e., the factual change of power was moving harder because of the installations, “tails” and “moles” which the system left behind as “cuckoo eggs” to the new governing structure.

The invention with the obstructions in parliament was perfected during the parliamentary procedure for removal from office of the state prosecutor, Marko Zvrlevski, whom the former opposition and current government regards as one of the main culprits for the capturing of the legal state and especially of the judicial institutions, as an active participant in that process. This opinion was widely spread because the public prosecutor and his office did not act preventively on the received information and indications for corruption and crimes of the government. He also remained silent even after the fact, after the publication of the wiretapped conversations. This time, the opposition VMRO-DPMNE, instead of one, formed ten parliamentary groups with ten coordinators who had the right to discuss fifteen minutes, to make procedural remarks, replies and counter-replies, to ask for one hour break, etc. Except the procedural right, VMRO-DPMNE, although in opposition and minority in the parliament, took the liberty to judge in the parliament what is harmful for the state in regards to the government's initiative and with procedural “inventions” to obstruct the process endlessly. This is a clear indication for how long one criminalized structure, which for many years with the assistance of the politically organized crime captured and subordinated the state for its interests, even without real authority can keep the state in the situation of captivity and for its own lucrative and criminal interests to dictate and condition the processes.

How long the replacement of the old government will last we can see through few examples and facts. Six-seven months after the elections and two months after the formation of the new government, the ex-prime minister was

performing a control of the projects that were started by the government of his party, while he was still in power. That is more proof of how much the state was usurped. During that same amount of time, with legal and procedural traps, the second and the third echelons of the power were still functioning with the VMRO-DPMNE staff (out of 1,300 managerial posts in the institutions, only around 20 were replaced). The procedures for replacements of the old heads of the institutions, in accordance with the legal and procedural rules which while in power VMRO-DPMNE arranged for the new government, as well as the upcoming local elections, created serious delays in the process of complete transfer of power. The expectations are that changes will be completed almost one year after the parliamentary elections. This is also one of the innovations of the system of governing of the captured state in which politically organized crime reigns.

That a state is liberated from captivity can be said only at the moment when the process of political and legal responsibility of the persons who were leading the state and the party starts. Namely, those are the most responsible individuals who by intertwining the state and the party and putting the state institutions and resources in function for the realization of the narrow interests of the party and the personal interests of the leader and the political elite, practically captured the state.

In such states the most difficult part of the process of liberation is resolving part of the responsibility that is directly linked to the authoritarian power of the party and its leadership who captured the state – responsibility for politically organized crime with whose help they illegally and for many years remained in power, and later on gained material and financial benefits, i.e. wealth. That a society is finally completely liberated, not only from the formal status of captured state, but also from the heavy burden of such a long and sad state of mind, can be confirmed only after not only the political mafia will be convicted for the abuses of its highest state functions for their own interests and enrichment, but when all of the gains from these illegal activities will be taken by the court, returned in the state budget and made available to the citizens and their needs.

IT TOOK TWO PARTIES TO CAPTURE MACEDONIA

As in the case of a multiethnic state where at least two are necessary (two parties, two coalitions, two ethnic groups, etc.) for the normal functioning, stability, existence, and even dissolution, two are also necessary for capturing

that type of state. Fully aware of the existence of those circumstances and of the experience and practices in similar states, since the beginning of the independence of the Republic of Macedonia and the introduction of a multi-party system and the parliamentary democracy, in the first government which was composed of experts, with several ministerial posts participated the representatives of the smaller ethnic communities. In the first political government, which was formed by the parliamentary majority around SDSM, the coalition partner became the then unique and biggest party of the Albanian community, PDP (the Party of Democratic Revival).

Since then, in every new government, led either by SDSM or VMRO-DPMNE, the parliamentary majority, and with that the government, was composed of the party or coalition of parties from the ethnic Macedonian campus which won the majority of parliamentary seats and at least one party from the ethnic Albanian campus, regardless of whether one of the two biggest ethnic Macedonian parties have a big enough majority to form the government alone. That was the case in 1994, when SDSM and its coalition partners had almost a two-third majority in the Assembly, but PDP became part of the coalition and the Government. The same was the case in 1998 and 2006 when VMRO-DPMNE with its coalition partners had a simple majority. Coalition partner in these governments was DPA, although in 2006 the strongest party in the ethnic Albanian campus was DUI, which created a parliamentary crisis. With the assistance of the international factor, DUI forced VMRO-DPMNE to sit on the negotiating table and in May 2007 to conclude the secret "May Agreement", in which is formulated, agreed and accepted the controversial principle according to which – the government coalition should be composed of the winners in the Macedonian and the Albanian block. That principle the two parties implemented after the early elections in 2008, 2011 and 2014, when the parties achieved more or less respectable wins, despite the serious suspicions and accusations from the opposition, the experts and the foreign observes – with big irregularities, which were definitely confirmed after the non-recognition of the election process in 2014 by SDSM, and the public exposure of the content of some of the intercepted communications (the "Wiretapping" scandal).

VMRO-DPMNE – DUI, a Marriage of Convenience, without Love and Respect

Due to the bad management of the economy, the social policy, the foreign policy and all other ongoing policies in a country – a government is (by

definition) expected to fall. Due to the bad management, orientation and worsening of the interethnic relations in a multi-ethnic society (as is the case of Macedonia) – the state may fall (apart). Macedonia, thanks to the ruling coalition in 2001 (nationalistic and rightwing VMRO-DPMNE and DPA) found itself on the edge of destruction of the state (war and suggestion for partition through exchange of territories and population). The then government declared that it is building “relaxed interethnic relations” and claimed that they were never better. And while claiming that from their cabinets, on the ground an armed conflict erupted, in the beginning for territories, and later, in the second phase (with the serious involvement of the international community) transformed into a struggle for rights. All of that resulted with, at that particular moment, the only possible and optimal solutions – the Ohrid framework agreement. In the second government of VMRO-DPMNE after 2006, especially in the period between 2015 and 2017, events occurred which represented attempts to worsening interethnic relations, again thanks to the ruling coalition (VMRO-DPMNE and this time DUI). The conflict situations were staged to satisfy the needs of the coalition “marriage of convenience”, i.e. for daily political needs: when needed, they loved each other, when needed, they fought! When the time for elections came, it was a right time for “love quarrels” between the spouses, for the electoral motivation of their nationalist party families!

The ruling coalition between VMRO-DPMNE and DUI was based on very strange ingredients, relations and interests. It appeared as a marriage of convenience, without love, emotions and mutual respect, which meant – a coalition that governs without ideological-political, value-based, ethical and cultural closeness and mutual trust. It was about pure interest to rule and, of course, to share the privileges of the power of government. That is why, throughout the period of nine years of a coalition partnership between VMRO-DPMNE and DUI they cooperated in the government cabinets, and both dreamed about victory over the partner in some “second half-time” – the first, to rehabilitate for the defeat in 2001 (feeling widely spread among the VMRO-DPMNE members and leadership regarding the epilogue of the war-torn 2001 and the Ohrid agreement) and the second, DUI, to break the cease-fire established with the Ohrid agreement and to finish the war with a win!? Due to such a dishonest relationship, the foundations of the coalition were strengthened with large quantities of pragmatics.

The coalition was based on the functional-territorial and personnel division of the competencies, i.e. everyone was “the boss” in their spheres of influence: in its ministries, public companies and offices; on its territory – “on this

and the other side of Grupcin”; for its party cadres, etc. The ministers and the other officials from DUI were, first and foremost, responsible to the party leader and informal/parallel prime minister, Ali Ahmeti. Practically, the coalition was functioning as a profitable bi-party joint venture, formed by the partners, the parties as legal entities and their elites as individuals – stockholders, while everything was based on the postulates of “secret procurement tenders with many annexes”. Those elements, practically cemented and made indivisible in this, in its essence, unnatural coalition, although as formal explanation (for the public) of the main motive for creation of the coalition was used the May agreement and the principle of coalition of “the winner with the winner”. This was the basic assumption in this area and one of the key preconditions for complete state capture.

The coalition between VMRO-DPMNE and DUI in a very short period captured the state. Instead of state and citizens’ interests and priorities, since the very formation of the coalition government they were more dedicated to the party priorities and the personal interests of the party elites. The evidence for this claim is the fact that in the platform for the future coalition, the May agreement, the priorities are the promises made by DUI to its Albanian voters, and not the introduction of complete equality of the members of all ethnic groups as citizens in Macedonian society. It is indicative that in the May agreement, although it was a government coalition pact, there was no single mention of the VMRO-DPMNE priorities and whether they were compatible with the priorities of DUI. Because of that, neither were the special priorities of the Albanian community accomplished, nor the strategic goals of Macedonia as: an integrated society of equal citizens in a state in which democracy and law rule, freedoms are respected, institutions are reformed, the economy is developed and the conditions for a better life are secured. On the contrary, everyone was dissatisfied and everything came down to narrow party and personal interests of the party elites.

In this context it is interesting to see what was contained and planned with the May agreement, for which there was much public speculation and it was at the same time used as dogma and as an alibi for many things, especially for a lot of troubles that the coalition between VMRO-DPMNE and DUI created for the society and the citizens. (1) The parties agree with the list of 46 laws which will be included in the Rule of Procedure of the Assembly on which the voting with Badenter majority will apply. (2) The parties agree for a change of one of the members of the Committee on the relations between the communities from VMRO-DPMNE with one from SDSM. (3) The parties agree to

access the question of securing material and social help to the victims of the conflict in 2001 and their families, with the existing laws and procedures. The parties agree to continue the activities of the working group on this issue. (4) The parties agree to prepare and propose a draft-law for the use of the languages which will be completely in line with the Ohrid framework agreement and amendment V of the Macedonian Constitution. The parties agree to continue the work of the working group on this question. (5) After the return of DUI in the Assembly, the parties agree to continue with the negotiations on how the government will be composed (this formulation VMRO-DPMNE and DUI, when needed and “creatively”, interpreted as the so called “the winner with the winner” principle).

According to the analysis of professor D-r Besa Arifi, if we summarize what was accomplished in the last ten years since the May agreement, which matches the period of the existence of the coalition between VMRO-DPMNE and DUI, then we can conclude that “the first two points are fulfilled, the third point is not fulfilled, the fourth point is incorrectly fulfilled with some kind of law that does not fulfill the needs of the citizens and is extremely controversial and unjust, while the fifth point comes down to some mysterious oral agreement between Gruevski and Ahmeti.” By the way, the May agreement, concluded between VMRO-DPMNE and DUI in May 2007, in the presence of foreign facilitators is not a state agreement - in which the foreigners, like in the cases of Ohrid and Przino agreements, are guarantors of its implementation and interpretation - but is exclusively an interparty (political) agreement. The text for the first time appeared in public at the beginning of 2017, after VMRO-DPMNE failed to agree a coalition with DUI and the principle “the winner with the winner” was problematized, because each of the parties interpreted it according to its preference.

The machinery of the former coalition broke apart when VMRO-DPMNE and DUI as government completely lost sense of reality and criminalized themselves by giving preference to party and personal power, profits and wealth instead of social and citizens’ interests. In the fulfillment of their lucrative goals, they completely instrumentalized and captured the state. That is why, in the early elections held at the end of 2016, the majority of the population from the Macedonian, Albanian and the other ethnic communities turned their back on VMRO-DPMNE (a bit less), and DUI (a bit more), voting for changes and reforms and gave their majority support to the coalition led by SDSM and several Albanian political entities, above all the movement Besa and the Alliance of Albanians. Despite the fact that DUI won the majority of parliamentary seats (10),

the number of received votes, and with that the number of seats in parliament was nearly halved in comparison to the previous elections. That was a sign that if DUI stuck to the principle “the winner with the winner” and formed a coalition government with VMRO-DPMNE, which based its entire campaign on anti-Albanian sentiment, in the next elections it would have been punished even more drastically by the Albanian voters, winning a small number of votes and parliamentary seats and maybe even disappearing from the political scene. VMRO-DPMNE also won the biggest number of seats in the so called Macedonian political block (51, two more than SDSM, which won 49), but it was not only less than expected and far from enough to form a government, but the only chance was with DUI, because the other Albanian parties that won seats in the new Parliament rejected any possibility to enter into coalition with VMRO-DPMNE.

The citizens, especially from the Albanian community, with their refusal to give support in the elections in 2016, as well as with the massive voting for SDSM, the party that promised civil equality despite the ethnic background and a better life for all if gets the power, plus the number of over 700,000 votes given to the opposition in support for the necessary reforms – sent a clear message that the country must as soon as possible face important changes. The majority of members of DUI asked the party to refuse the coalition with VMRO-DPMNE and isolate pro-VMRO elements in its leadership, and for the party to undergo serious internal reforms and to assist the democratization of society and state reforms. Opting for reforms meant also that there is a necessity to start with the liberation of the institutions of the captured state from the captured party. Hence, it was expected those structures in DUI which assisted the capturing and participated in the governing of the captured state to take part of the responsibility, because if DUI really wanted, it could either prevent the capturing or in every moment to leave such a criminal/corrupt government. However, the party did not make such move.

Why DUI was scoring own goals for VMRO-DPMNE

When analyzing the attitude of DUI towards VMRO-DPMNE, i.e., its acceptance to participate in a government that captures the state and obstructs the democratic processes, the rule of law and the Euro-Atlantic integrations, two logical questions demand an answer. What were the motives of the party to allow itself, on one hand, to deliberately score own goals – to stimulate

the revolt and dissatisfaction of its membership, its electorate and in general the Albanian community, due to the lack of commitment and failure to fulfill the main priorities and promises about the increasing of ethnic rights and improvement of the civil and social status – and on the other hand, to be an almost blind and deaf follower and supporter of the policies, priorities and interests of the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE. What were the motives of DUI for such commitment, loyalty and protective stand towards VMRO-DPMNE, and especially towards Nikola Gruevski, which continued even several months after the elections and after entering the newly created majority?

Several reasons can be mentioned, but in the form of questions and dilemmas I will highlight only a few of them.

Firstly, was it done because of the interest of DUI for Macedonia to remain stable and secure and by all means, as soon as possible, integrate in NATO and EU – as it was frequently publicly declared by the party? Based on the nine years in which nothing change, and even regressed, it is hard to believe that this was the motive for staying in power with VMRO-DPMNE.

Secondly, was it the interest to achieve complete ethnic and civil equality of the members of the Albanian community in the common state – Republic of Macedonia? DUI was the initiator of the Declaration/Platform for the rights of the Albanians, signed by all parties of the Albanian political block that won seats in parliament in the 2016 elections, which became one of the preconditions for the creation of a new parliamentary majority and for a reforms-oriented governmental coalition.

The Declaration, i.e. the “Tirana Platform” as was spun by VMRO-DPMNE in the anti-propaganda against the new parliamentary majority, in short, contains several important elements: 1) Achieving full equality in accordance with the Ohrid agreement and the Constitution. Achieving complete language equality, use of the Albanian language in all levels of government and guarantees for its application as a fundamental and constitutional right. The Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia must contain a provision that “the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet and the Albanian language and its alphabet are official languages in the Republic of Macedonia”. A thorough debate about the flag, national anthem and the coat of arms of the Republic of Macedonia with the aim the state symbols to reflect the multiethnic character of the society and the ethnic equality. 2) Achieving economic equality and social welfare, especially through equal regional development. 3) Strengthening of the rule of law, as a precondition for the advancement of the Euro-Atlantic

integrative process. Implementation of the reforms in accordance with the agreement in Skopje, recommendations of Reinhard Priebe, urgent priorities of the EU, as well as the recommendations from the Accession high level dialogue with the EU. Support for the unbiased implementation of the tasks of the Special Prosecutor's Office, without ethnic and political prejudices. Complete clearance of the questions and court cases known as "Sopot", "Brodec", "Monstrum" and "Kumanovo" through formation of inquiry commission or with the engagement of an independent international body. 4) Creation of a spirit of trust necessary for the good interethnic relations which are essential for political stability of the country. 5) Settlement of the name dispute in accordance with the European values and the principles of international law. 6) Good relations with the neighbors. 7) Swift integration in NATO and EU.

If we compare what was expected with what was achieved, it seems that with the largest number of requests the Albanians parties "were knocking on the open door" of SDSM, which had already included part of the requests as commitments contained in the election program with the motto "a society equal for all", and later in the platform of the new government. In the government platform it denied all lies about alleged conspiracy deals, changes of the constitution and so on, but stressed that from the Declaration will be chosen those undisputable requests and rights that do not require changes of the Constitution. Even in this constructive approach VMRO-DPMNE found alibi and room, with its spin-relativizations, to qualify the Declaration as a platform from another state, to characterize it as a threat to the state and to spread fake news that it advocates federalization, a bi-national state, use and obligatory learning of the Albanian language on the whole territory of the country, the sale of the name, etc. VMRO-DPMNE (ab)used the opportunity to allow the chairperson of the plenary sessions of the Parliament, the outgoing speaker Trajko Veljanovski, with usurpation of the position and abuse of parliament, to obstruct the election of the new speaker. It opened wide possibilities and room to the President of the Republic, Gjeorge Ivanov, to widen and abuse his powers and avoid the giving of a mandate to the leader of the new parliamentary majority consisted of 67 parliamentarians, the leader of SDSM, Zoran Zaev. Acting in such a way, the President, violating the Constitution, kept the country "boiling on low temperature", without a functional Assembly, without a new speaker and new government.

Thirdly, was it due to the profits from the tender-annex contracts that made rich some individuals from the party elite and businessmen close to DUI?

This, definitely is one of the main reasons for such coherence and loyalty of some of the top officials from DUI towards VMRO-DPMNE.

Fourthly, are there hidden interests, which are not publicly declared, but it makes sense to calculate with them when some situations and processes are explained? There are two possible answers to this question. One can be summed up with the conclusion that the party elite, absorbed and blinded by the power of governing and money cared only about preservation of the throne of power and privileges, which is partially true, but at the same time very a “shallow” explanation. The other answer can be explained in a more illustrative way borrowing from the terminology of chess: could it be an “exchange sacrifice” for mate in three moves? That means, with the undisputed acceptance of everything the system produced, DUI was allowing the conditions in the country to progressively deteriorate until they reached the irreparable state, in line with the strategy “the worse the better” - for some party or different kind of hidden agenda. When the current unitary and multiethnic society cannot continue to exist, the dream of the Albanian radicals for new solutions, agreements, and maybe divisions, could be fulfilled. Although the chances for such a solution are slim and hardly possible, still, in some extreme situations they are probable. Or perhaps this is a case of “mortgage captivity” of the leadership for the legal amnesty (proposed by the longtime partner in the government) for one of the four so called “Hague cases” - the one that refers to ONA/Macedonian UCK, which means DUI). Let us not forget that the system of governing some years ago gave a “wink” to the Commission for lustration to turn a blind eye on the files on the cooperation of members of ONA with the former Yugoslav secret services, with the explanation that the documents were “copies instead of originals”.

The events that followed in the post-election period after the early elections in 2016 brought plenty of interesting situations and twists. They showed the true face of one influential group in the narrowest leadership of the party, headed by Ali Ahmeti, which rounded up the real judgment for the role of DUI as a party during the ten years of ruling with the political “marriage of convenience” with VMRO-DPMNE. Firstly, that the assessment of DUI as a player on the political scene in Macedonia must be at least partially negative, because it was an important part of the system that downgraded the development of the Macedonian society and, what is the most important, was an active participant in the process of distraction of the institutions and the complete captivity of the state. Secondly, due to such behavior, a larger number of members and supporters punished in the elections the party elite and its unproductive

and retrograde policies, sending a clear message that they have to immediately cut relations with VMRO-DPMNE and Gruevski, to enter the new parliamentary reform oriented majority and to start with the thorough purification and transformation. Thirdly, time and history have still to prove whether the existing suspicions and indications that the post-election declaration on the Albanian requests, initiated by DUI as a platform for the basic conditions on the formation of new parliamentary majority and government, was in fact a “cuckoo’s egg” laid by Ahmeti and Gruevski to preserve the positions in the government and in their parties, but also for the preservation of the freedom - their personal and of their closest collaborators. All of that was done despite the defeat of their policies and parties in the last parliamentary elections and the clear message of the majority of citizens for changes and reforms in the state and society.

THE FOREIGNERS – SCHADENFREUDE WITNESSES OF THE CAPTIVITY OF THE STATE

How is it possible for a country, which has since 2005 been candidate for beginning accession talks with the European Union, and in 2008 was only one step away from entering NATO, which means that it was always under constant monitoring of these two international organizations, to deviate so far into autocracy, politicization of the institutions and organized crime and corruption, to reach the point where the EC’s Progress Report qualified it as a captured state? Do they have and, if so, how big is the contribution of EU, NATO, the strategic partner USA and the other countries, friends and supporters of the Republic of Macedonia, to the deviation from the Euro-Atlantic road?

If we look at the circumstances, relations and approaches, the answer must be a positive one. Without any doubts, part of the blame lays on the international factor for its tolerance of the government and its policies, its passive behavior when there was a need to be more active, the bureaucratic attitude and for a long period, the total lack of interest due to the fact that the country was not among the (bilateral and regional) priorities of their foreign policy. Of course, what is also unavoidable is the tolerant attitude of the international factor towards Greece in the irrational name dispute, which blocked and froze the processes of association of Macedonia in NATO and EU. However, a large part of the blame for this also lays with the leading structure of VMRO-DPMNE which with the project of “antiquization” and forcing national-romantic

mythology about the ancient roots of the national identity, with “Skopje 2014,” was constantly provoking the Greek nationalism, the obstructions and conditions in EU and NATO, where decisions are taken with consensus, and Greece as full member has the right to veto.

Taking into account the undemocratic functioning of the system of governing, which means VMRO-DPMNE, i.e. the government in the Republic of Macedonia, for years there was a strange attitude from the international community (EU, NATO, USA, Germany, etc.), which declared themselves as proponents, exporters and guardians of democracy and universal values in Europe and in the world. In the beginning there was no reaction, simply turning a blind eye to the system of governing which was breaking the democratic rules and procedures and was winning elections in an unfair and undemocratic way, as well as manipulating the state resources. When the exceptions in democracy, freedoms and rights, the rule of law and the legal state, and the freedom of speech escalated and became the rule, the international community started to react with public statements and with critical observations in the regular reports, but, in principle, diplomatically mild and without consequences and sanctions for the government.

Since the beginning of the electoral 2014, the international community entered the stage of declarations, observations, recommendations and notifications of the violations, done by their specialized governmental and non-governmental institutions. The diplomatic representatives of EU, NATO, USA, Germany and other influential states until then were frequent guests (almost on a daily basis) on TV and the front pages of the newspapers commenting different events in the country, even some bizarre things that had nothing in common with diplomacy and its function. During the period of creation of false arguments by VMRO-DPMNE and DUI for organizing early parliamentary elections without the existence of reasonable explanations, as well as in the period before the official start of the campaigns when there was mass bribery and a number of other irregularities (which is the real beginning of the election epilogue, making election day only a formal act) – the striking silence was creating an impression that all diplomats were pulled back in their countries for “consultations” for an undetermined length of time! Of course, the elections and all other processes in the country are, first and foremost, a problem of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia. But the inertness and passivity when the eyes of the citizens and their hopes for the development of the democracy and legal state were turned to the international community, made it (or at least

created the perception of) a silent observer, accomplice and verifier of unfair and undemocratic activities.

The Parallel-Slalom of VMRO-DPMNE with the international community

This attitude did not have any real logical explanation. One of the explanations was that the international community was again manipulated by the government that this time it really intends to finally resolve the name dispute if it wins another mandate, which did not sound like a solid argument and was not something to be believed. Another explanation was that the international community has little or no interest in the events in the country, which was not something to be believed, because for many years it invested huge efforts and resources to fully implement its project – Macedonia as a stable and functional multiethnic society. Finally, it is also hard to believe that some of the representatives of the international community were corrupted by the system, following the example of many groups and individuals in the country, although the government was truly capable of doing that. According to this explanation, the task of these allegedly corrupted representatives was to monitor and keep silent while the ultra-nationalist and corruptive operation of the “coxless pair” (Gruevski and Ahmeti) under the agreed (mixed) motto: vote for us to get 62 parliamentary seats so that we will not be blackmailed by DUI and the Albanians; and vice versa, vote for us to get 25 parliamentary seats so that we will not be blackmailed by VMRO-DPMNE and the Macedonians!

The system of governing of VMRO was for a long time racing a parallel-slalom with the name issue and with the international community. One policy was proclaimed in front of the international factor, which in many elements contained (public and secret) promises for a compromised solution of the dispute, and quite different for internal use – uncompromising and demonizing for all who were making efforts for a compromised solution. In practice, the government was practicing the following tactics: (mis)use of the foreign policy questions for internal needs (“we are not giving up the name”, as the go-to theme for winning in the frequently organized, faked and bribed early elections), and (mis)use of the internal-political issues for external purposes (for instance, the interethnic relations for getting concessions for NATO and EU – calculating that it can control the fake conflicts, which in fact seriously affected the interethnic relations).

But, when analyzing in detail the conditions surrounding the process, a hypothetical, but not illogical, conclusion can be drawn that the international factor was also racing “parallel slalom” regarding the name issue with VMRO-DPMNE and DUI. A logical thesis dominated public discussions for a while, that the international factor tolerates the government of VMRO-DPMNE and Gruevski (despite the fact that they were sinking deeper and deeper in autocracy and party single-mindedness with the violation of the democratic processes, the freedoms and the rule of law and the legal state), only because they were given a promise that they will solve the name issue, reaching a compromise with Greece. Apparently, the international factor was of the opinion, following the model for Serbia and Kosovo, that if the problem is not solved while the national-populist party VMRO-DPMNE together with the Albanian nationalists from DUI are in power, it will be very difficult when the “most Macedonian” party is in the opposition.

Here one should take into account the “games” that VMRO-DPMNE and Gruevski played for the international community. When the community was concentrated on other problems and was reducing its attention and interest in Macedonia, the government was relaxed and was having fun while playing their games, but when it was pressed by the international community and instead of the carrot it was faced with the stick, it made promises and started negotiations. Because of this hypocritical behavior during the reign of VMRO-DPMNE, the country lost the pace of Euro-Atlantic integrations, was left almost without friends, supporters and lobbyists in the process of accession in EU and NATO and was isolated as an “enclave” on the territory of the Western Balkans.

Up until this point there is some logic and justification for the attitude and tolerance of the VMRO-DPMNE government by the foreigners. The concerns though, come from the question: why did the international factor tolerate for such a long time their the failure to fulfill the promises? It seems that the reason for this was the second “track” of the “parallel slalom” of the foreigners, because of the second problem that they wanted to solve together with the first. Namely, with this “combined alpine skiing” the foreigners wanted to finish the Euro-American pilot-project in Macedonia—the transformation of the Macedonian multiethnic society into a multiethnic (bi-national) state, at the same time without touching the unitary character with federalization. Proof for this were DUI’s requests for a postelection agreement with the winning party of the Macedonian block after the early parliamentary elections in April 2014, which had to be completed again with early parliamentary

elections. In that agreement DUI, in line with the Ohrid Framework Agreement and the Badenter principle, was asking for the solution of several issues: the election of a consensual President in the Assembly, a framework budget, Albanian language as the second official language on the entire territory of the state, equal access to the highest functions in the state, opening discussions about the national anthem, coat of arms, the flag, etc.

Taking into account all these elements, it seems that two issues were of importance for the international community. Firstly, that the government declared their dedication to EU and NATO integrations, although in that sphere it did not accomplished any significant results, but rather the country moved backward in all spheres and lowered its ranking in regards to the situation with democracy, the rule of law, the freedom of expression, independence of the media, etc. Secondly, the government, being consisted of the two strongest parties of the Macedonian and Albanian community, was securing some kind of stability and did not create regional security problems. Because of that, the government and system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE were supported and tolerated, while the increased deviation towards autocracy and spread of crime among the top officials of the power – was less of a concern.

This means that the international community, without concerns or objections, treated the government as pro-European and reform oriented. It calculated that as a right-wing nationalist party, which has strong control and influence over its base, unlike the left-of-center parties, can more easily solve the name issue with Greece. The international community was satisfied with the adoption of laws with European standards, but did not react when these laws were not implemented at all, or were implemented selectively. The international factor believed more in the stories of the VMRO-DPMNE leadership about the fight against resurrection of the remains of communism in the country, than in the enormous rise of national-populism with the elements of fascism practiced by the ruling party – a practice they witnessed with their own eyes. The consequences of such an approach and the price that will have to be paid, were left as a heavy burden to the state and its citizens, and not to the ruling party and its leader. Furthermore, even though everyone was aware of the wrong direction in which VMRO-DPMNE was leading Macedonia and of their disastrous way of governing, the government was protected by the powerful community of European people's parties.

Five Events that Woke up the International Community

The international community started to take the situation more seriously with the deviation of the government of VMRO-DPMNE and DUI in Macedonia in late 2015, when several big scandals and security threats occurred in the country. The international community started to manifest its critical attitude towards the ruling party VMRO-DPMNE and its system of governing because of the five serious events that provoked tectonic displacements on the political map of Macedonia and represented a threat of spillover in the region, but also a potentially bad precedent if followed by some countries with similar characteristics and trends in the neighborhood. The same events can be also treated as the five phases in which the international factor understood the seriousness of the situation and completely changed, i.e. took a realistic, critical approach and position towards the policies and the way of governing of VMRO-DPMNE.

The events on December 24th 2012, on “black Monday”, when prior to the discussion on the state budget for the following year, by order of the government and the speaker of the parliament, the secret police threw out in a brutal way the parliamentarians and the journalists from the plenary hall of the Assembly, caught the international community totally unprepared (celebrating the Christmas holidays). However, it had the effect of a wake-up call. The “bombs of Zaev and the opposition”, which started to “detonate” on February 9th 2015, and everything that was presented with the audio-recordings of the intercepted communications – shook the nation. The two days “small war” in Kumanovo’s “Divo Naselje”, which, according to several serious indications, was staged by the government to divert the attention from the disastrous “bombs” published by Zaev, in which eight policemen from the special units and ten terrorists lost their lives – helped the international community finally come to their senses. The amnesty that the president of the Republic, Gjeorge Ivanov, gave on April 13th 2016, with a unilateral act and without explanation, to 54 individuals – criminal suspects, their assistants and witnesses from the government, as well as few of the opposition and some ordinary citizens (with the aim of camouflaging his motives) was designed to save the ruling elite from legal prosecution. The reaction of the international community on this move of the president was clear astonishment! The bloody events on April 27th 2017, when the mob consisted of supporters of VMRO-DPMNE organized under the initiative “For a Joint Macedonia” and with the logistics of the party and the police, after the election of the new speaker, in order to prevent the transfer of power to the new majority of SDSM and the Albanian parties, used violence

to endanger the lives of many parliamentarians who were kept as hostages – finally persuaded the international community that “the devil ran away with the joke” and forced it to present things as they really are, as well as to take measures adequate to the situation.

At this time, under reinforced monitoring and mediation of the international community, primarily the EU, USA and Germany, in the period since the beginning of the crisis, December 24th 2012 (“black Monday”), until the first steps for solving the crisis, which happened on April 27th 2017 (“bloody Thursday”) and the final transfer of power from VMRO-DPMNE to the new parliamentary majority of SDSM - DUI, BESA and the Alliance of Albanians – several important steps were taken in Macedonia for the resolution of the crisis and normalization of the situation. In this period that lasted almost 5 years, the international factor was actively included in the conceptualization, formulation, acceptance and implementation of several key agreements and strategic directions for overcoming the crisis.

Unlike the conclusions of the parliamentary Inquiry Committee for the events from “black Monday” 2012, when the parliamentarians and journalists were thrown out from the Assembly and many constitutional and legal solutions and principles were violated, which VMRO-DPMNE signed and immediately qualified as “toilet paper”, which meant refusal to accept its responsibility for this shameful event without precedent, the other agreed and adopted documents where there was strong involvement and control of the international community gave positive results.

Most important among them were: Przino 1 and 2 signed by the four leaders of the most relevant parties – VMRO-DPMNE, DUI, SDSM and DPA for the legal and political resolution of the “Wiretapping case”, for which purpose the Special Prosecutor’s Office for Prosecuting Criminal Offences Related to and Arising from the Content of the Illegally Intercepted Communication (known with its Macedonian abbreviation as SJO) was formed; then, the Report about the assessment and the recommendations of the senior experts group led by Reinhard Priebe on systemic Rule of Law, and one of the most important documents, on which the complete liberation of the state and its reforming is based – the Urgent reform priorities. The entire complex of negotiations, measures and recommendations resulted with the formation of some kind of technical government which, despite the number of obstructions and abuses by the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE, led the difficult and long “Przino process” to the relatively well-organized early parliamentary elections,

with final results recognized by all participants in the elections. If the captured state could not obstruct the elections, it happened in the post-election period when VMRO-DPMNE (until then ruling party) failed to form a parliamentary majority, and because of that for several months blocked the democratic and peaceful transfer of power. The result of such behavior was the violent entering of the mob (members and supporters of VMRO-DPMNE) which demolished the “temple of democracy”, attempted assassinations on party leaders, hurt and endangered the lives of many parliamentarians, journalists and police, and created substantial material damage.

The international factor was no longer acting in a diplomatic, neutral and tolerant way, but was unanimous and very firm and precise in the naming of the things: when it came to the responsibility for the violence, the finger was pointed to VMRO-DPMNE, stressing that the party did not want to transfer power to the new parliamentary majority, while Nikola Gruevski was qualified as an ultranationalist who spent all his credit with the international community.

Given that international factor for many years supported, i.e., did not criticize and sanction the government which in front of their eyes politicized and instrumentalized the institutions and captured the state – it must take part of the responsibility for such an epilogue, but also assist the process of liberation of the state from captivity with experts and resources. In parallel with the monitoring of the ongoing processes of reforms and speeding up the processes of association in the EU family and full membership in NATO, the international community must also assist in the prevention of such evil – an autocratic system of governing, captured state and politically organized crime – from ever happening again.

A CAPTURED STATE LOOKS LIKE “POTEMKIN’S STATE”

The Republic of Macedonia became one of few states in global practice, which will be remembered and certainly analyzed and pointed out as a completely captured state in which saw two huge precedents that rarely occur, or if they did occur, then it was centuries ago in history, but never in a contemporary parliamentary democracy.

The first, during “black Monday” – on December 24th 2012, when following the order of the government, the members of the secret services in a brutal

manner threw out parliamentarians of the opposition and journalists, in order to (without the presence of the public) pass swiftly the state budget for the next year, which was designed and tailored for corruption in the upcoming local elections. That is exactly what happened, since the ruling parties won over 90 percent of the local self-governments in the country. The second one, which is also an illustrative example, is when after ten and half years of ruling, because it won a minimal advantage in the early parliamentary elections in 2016 and, unlike the opposition, failed to form parliamentary majority and government, the party that captured the state, for more than half year – staging a false institutional crisis – did not allow the transfer of power and formation of the new institutions. VMRO-DPMNE blocked the Assembly immediately after its formal constitution and verification of the mandates of the newly elected parliamentarians, and left it dysfunctional and without a president. That also meant, according to the Constitution, that for more than three months there was no institutional replacement for the President of the Republic in case of his absence or impediment to perform his duty. That was also a reason for the prolongation of the local elections in spring 2017, because only the President of the Assembly, or one of his deputies, is authorized to announce them. The dysfunctional Assembly without a president also meant that the process of election of the new government was blocked. This process was stopped by the President of the Republic, an integral part of the absolute government of the former ruling party, who for a second time (after the anti-constitutional amnesty of a large number of officials of the government for the crimes they have done), violated the Constitution by not giving the mandate to the leader of the opposition, despite his constitutional obligation, since the new parliamentary majority was created and proved with 67 signatures of the newly elected parliamentarians.

In that period, a technical government was functioning longer than three months in which, against constitutional provisions, four members of the government were at the same time newly elected parliamentarians with verified mandates, and one of them was even a prime minister! Despite the clear abuse of legal regulations, the technical government was carrying out decisions as if they had full capacity, which meant that the state and the institutions continued to be captured and were functioning under the rule of the leader of the party from the party headquarters, although he was removed from the prime minister's office one year before. For more than three months continued the absolute rule of the autocratic regime in the absolutely captured state, with three primary functions in such conditions: (1) obstruction and prolongation of

the transfer of power, (2) execution of new crimes, and (3) delating the traces of the enormous crimes in the past ten and half years of governing.

From the Macedonian experience, one very concrete and precise definition of the notion “captured state” can be formulated. The captured state appears as a state, it looks functional, and looks like it cares about the interests of society and the citizens – a formalized state, with a formalized democracy and *pro forma* rule of the law, of the constitutionality and the legality. That means, formally, in the perception of the citizens the impression is that it is functioning, and factually, it is not functioning as a real state – but rather as “Potemkin’s state”. Practically, it is a state captured by the party – a politicized state, state-party, i.e. party-state. The captured state by definition also means an internally closed state, and externally isolated state, because as self-sufficient state, i.e. self-satisfied and arrogant establishment, it becomes a potential generator of conflicts and instability for the region and because of that loses friends and allies. The captured state is also unacceptable for the majority of population that lives in the country, who have two options: to rebel or to leave. Self-satisfied with the situation of a captured state is the ruling elite, as well as those who have benefits and incentives, who are members and sympathizers of the ruling party and without thinking, by default support and vote for the party. There is also a group of people who maybe are not satisfied with life in a captured state and feel captured, but are dependent or blackmailed by the system of governing and silently exist in such a state.

As evidence that the state is captured, politicized and formalized, are two facts. Firstly, the captured state is a state without national goals and priorities, or to be more precise the national goals and priorities are subordinated to the party goals and priorities, the same as the Constitution and the laws are subordinated to the party program and party laws. VMRO-DPMNE won the elections in 2006 and came in power with the program in which five national priorities were noted, with declared dedication to work on their realization. (1) Increase of the economic performances and the competitiveness on permanent bases, higher employment rate, increase of the living standard and the quality of living. (2) Integration of Macedonia in NATO and EU. (3) Continuation of the fight against crime and corruption and efficient implementation of the law. (4) Keeping good interethnic relations and coexistence based on the principles of mutual tolerance and respect, equal implementation of the laws, as well as the finalization of the implementation of the Ohrid agreement. (5) Investment in the education as a way for creating strong individuals and strong state.

Although it promised an economic increase of 6-8 percent annually, during the nearly eleven years of rule it managed to realize in average 2,7 percent, the quality of life worsened, and the gap between the small number of rich and the huge number of poor deepened. Macedonia remained in the waiting rooms of NATO and EU for nearly eleven years, and from the leader in the region, due to the bad policies of the government it worsened its positions and found itself at the tail end of the aspirants. Instead of fight against crime, the government criminalized itself. The top of the pyramid of power is suspected by the Special Prosecutor's Office as a criminal association for organized crime. The whole decade the system of governing kept the interethnic relations on "low heat", while before the elections and on another occasions when it was needed to switch the attention from the big scandals and failures, in a controlled manner it was increasing the temperature. Finally, at the end of the reign, when the party failed to form a parliamentary majority and government, to increase the temperature to the level of institutional-security crisis with huge risks, and all of that for the sake of power and avoiding responsibility for the bad management of the country and the crimes that were committed. The same as with the other systems previously - health, security, diplomacy - the government completely destroyed the system of education, which with the mass transfer of the unemployed from the bureau to the faculties (as regular students), created a system for temporary decrease of unemployment, combined with the emigration of almost one quarter of the total population in the country, primarily young people.

Secondly, evidence that the state is captured are the results of the public opinion polls in last several years, according to which the government is leading the country with wrong priorities in the wrong direction, so instead of advancement, it is regressing. At the same time, the people lost their faith in the institutions completely and perceived them not as a services of the citizens and the society, but as services and instruments of the party.

If VMRO-DPMNE was unsuccessful in the realization of the five strategic goals of the state, then it was very successful in the realization of the six strategic goals of the party: (1) captured and politicized/instrumentalized the state, (2) won ten times in ten years, in continuity, on various elections (parliamentary, presidential and local/communal) practicing well developed engineering in which everything is allowed to the party, (3) employed hundred thousand persons, mostly party solders in the state and public administration and subsidized foreign investments, (4) built the project "Skopje 2014" without debate and decisions of the Assembly and without accountability for the spent

nearly one billion euros and doubts of huge crime, (5) the party became the richest party in Europe with property worth 65 million euros, and few of those on the top and people close to them, became extremely rich, (6) for months did not allow to be realized the will of the majority of the population, while at the end, with violence and use of all means, as an act of state terrorism, tried to protect the ruling throne, although it had to transfer the power to the newly created ruling majority after the 2016 elections, on “black Thursday” (April 27th 2017).

HOW THE LIBERATION OF THE CAPTURED STATE BEGAN

The “bloody Thursday”, April 27th 2017, will remain deeply engraved in the historical memory of the Republic of Macedonia as a state and a society, and in the memory of the citizens, but also of the world - as the date and events in which two biggest contrasts in the modern history of the country and the world parliamentary experience happened. That day of bloody violence - when the crowd in which were members and supporters of VMRO-DPMNE forcefully entered the Assembly, attacked, badly hurt, endangered the lives and several hours kept as hostages leaders of the parties, parliamentarians journalists and the parliamentary civil servants - the citizens of Macedonia and of the world, through media and social networks, were witnesses of the climax of the captivity of the state by the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE, led by the party elite. The events were an extraordinary illustrative example through which the truth for everything that was happening, and was hidden, spun, relativized, lied about - was uncovered live, as in a movie: when, how much, in what way, why and by whom was Macedonia captured. That bloody night, when it appeared that the last act of the tragedy started and the last hours of the existence of the Republic of Macedonia, as a state and society that existed till then, were passing - because the thing could easily turn into intra-ethnic, interparty and interethnic conflict with all consequences which follow in such situation - what happened was a catharsis, twist and changes.

It seems that the situation went out of control of the ideologists, instigators, organizers, supporters and direct executioners of the violent attack. For breaking the violence probably attributed the calls and the threats done by powerful and relevant international factors and personalities. However, the key factor is the bravery of the endangered parliamentarians and the leaders of the parties who risked their lives, but did not allow spreading of the conflict

with arrival of their angry members and supporters, so at the moment when certain hesitation appeared among the instigators and organizers – the special units of the police acted, broke up and neutralized the crowd, evacuated the injured parliamentarians and leaders and freed from the captivity all the others who were forcefully kept in the Assembly.

The symbolic code name of this action of the system could be named “defense of the state with a coup”. The appeal to “his people” made directly the party leader, Nikola Gruevski, from the screens of his favorite propagandistic TV station “Sitel”, on February 26th 2017, Nikola Gruevski threw the “burning arrow” which almost ignited and burned to ashes Macedonia. “I want to send a message to all citizens that if they think and plan with sitting at home and watching television, that somebody else will defend their state, then they are deeply mistaken. The people can prove that with deeds and different behavior”, stated Gruevski. The very next day “the people showed different behavior”, went on the streets and held the first protest for “homeland defense”. Later, after two months of peaceful protests of the initiative “For a Joint Macedonia”, with occasional attacks on the journalists – on April 27th, the dissatisfaction escalated after the legal election of the new president of the Assembly, Talat Xhaferi, by the parliamentary majority consisted of SDSM and the Albanian parties.

On April 27th, a date already named in the Macedonian historical memory as “bloody Thursday”, a crowd of around 2,000 supporters of VMRO-DPMNE, instructed and organized, with force, with silent approval from the police and with assistance of several parliamentarians of VMRO-DPMNE who removed the metal bars from the main entrance of the Assembly, entered and started their bloody and destructive fest against the parliamentarians of the parliamentary majority and the leaders of SDSM and the Alliance of Albanians, as well as everything that could be on their stampede through the halls, offices and corridors of the legislative home.

When the System's Masks Came Off – the Balaclavas Came On

After the bloody and demolishing events, when the situation calmed down and when certain segments of the institutions were activated, the contours of the real intentions of the intrusion started to be recognized, as well as the assessments what could have happened if the scenario during the intrusion succeeded. All that preceded to the “bloody Thursday”, the events during

the intrusion and the violence, as well as the knowledge which became known after April 27th, speaks that the system of governing finally, when found itself in despair, took off the masks, put on the balaclavas and started the bloody fest! In these violent events, everyone could see the sick mind, true face and bloodied eyes of the system and the crime association which managed it. The events, again showed that the “king, who captured the state and thought that He is the state – is naked”, all subjects were watching him, but nobody from his court accompaniment did not gather strength and courage to tell him.

More and more evidence and indications (statements, video recordings, witnesses and documents) lead to the thought and suspicion that behind the screen of the intrusion of the crowd of the “people of VMRO-DPMNE” from the initiative “Together for Macedonia” and their “justified” revolt because of the alleged introduction of “bilingualism, federalization and cantonization of the country, sale of the name, and loss of the state”, stands well-designed plan and premeditated scenario. All the indications and evidence are showing that in this scenario, with different roles – initiators, organizers, assistants, executioners – were involved high state and party officials, institutions, para-institutions, etc. Gradually the pieces of the puzzle started to fit, signaling the involvement and participation in such scenario, the same as in Montenegro, of some secret services and domestic and foreign individuals for party, personal and state interests and money.

Over time and with the ongoing investigations the pieces of the puzzle started to fit, the contours of the scenario started to be noticed. When the intrusion in the Assembly had happened, more than apparent and documented is the passive assistance of the police and the active assistance of several parliamentarians of VMRO-DPMNE when opening the well protected main entrance. Among the “people” were present and recognized well trained and armed individuals with cold weapons and firearms and other means for violence, members of the police, of the secret services, of the army, of the political and criminal underground, foreign secret services and mercenaries, all of them with well-designed roles. While the crowd of VMRO-DPMNE people had to switch the attention of the media and the public with euphoric paroles for salvation of Macedonia, for victory of the justified struggle and so on, as well with waving the state and party flags, the people with balaclavas and other party and payed bullies tried to directly attack, seriously injure and liquidate several earlier chosen parliamentarians, among them the leader of the majority party who got the mandate to form the new government, Zoran Zaev, and the leader of the Alliance of the Albanians, Zijadin Sela. The “true”, i.e. the false news

that they are already killed, was supposed to ignite anger and organizing of the supporters of the SDSM coalition and from the Albanian parties, to come in the Assembly and to protect and revenge their parliamentarians, provoking intra-ethnic, inter-party and interethnic conflict. Then, on the main scene would appear the president of the Republic announcing state of war, bringing the army on the streets and taking over the power in his and the hands of the technical prime minister, which means VMRO-DPMNE and its leader (and the grey eminence of the system), Nikola Gruevski, who would govern from the shadow.

In Macedonia on April 27th 2017, according to the previous findings, there was a *coup d'état* whose aim was preservation of power of the till then ruling party and its elite, despite the fact that the new parliamentary majority was created which should take over the power. Luckily, due the set of circumstances (which and what type are they, the time and the investigation will show), this violent coup failed, meaning that the attempt of the party elite to stay in power a bit longer also failed. In the scenario of VMRO-DPMNE for staying in power, with the primary goal defense of the party elite from the series of charges of the Special Prosecutor's Office for various cases of organized crime and corruption, one of the leading roles got the formal president of the Republic, George Ivanov – formal, because in fact he did not presented himself as dedicated conductor and guardian of the Constitution and as president of all citizens in Macedonia.

According to this scenario, taking into account the way he behaved and the moves he pulled, he was given the role of the last and highest line of defense of the criminal leadership of the party and the former government, as a debt that he had to return to the party and to the leader who invented him, made him a candidate and elected him as president and “father of the nation”. In order not to be “unarmed on the bastion of defense”, Ivanov got on his disposal several earlier designed instruments: amnesty of the suspects and those indicted for organized crime and corruption from the top of the **government** and the party; obstruction and refusal to give the mandate for formation of new government to the leader of the new parliamentary majority, Zoran Zaev, although he was presented with evidence with signatures for the secured majority, with the aim to avoid the transfer of power; and the last but not least, the option contained in the earlier prepared scenario for causing intra-ethnic, interparty and interethnic clashes – eventually to introduce state of war, and the key powers to remain in his and the technical prime minister's possession,

which practically meant in the hands of VMRO-DPMNE and Nikola Gruevski as party leader.

In parallel with the clearing of the dilemmas and indications whether it was an instructed scenario or something else, runs the process of responsibility for the “bloody events”. According to the approach of the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE and the institutions of the captured state, the state prosecutor Marko Zvrlevski and the Prosecutor’s Office managed by him, were put in a position to protect the interests of their, till then, master and were forced to return the debt. Despite the serious indications for scenario, for keeping as hostages, for command responsibility and so on, the prosecutors in beginning were charging only the most benign criminal act – participation in a crowd. Ministry of interior asked for start of the investigation against the organizers of the protests, whose participants forcefully entered in the Assembly and injured hundreds of people, but for a long time they were not subject of observation by the prosecutors. There was complete lack of activities for discovering who initiated the eruption of violence, who were their supporters and was there any command responsibility in the police structure which did not react on time to prevent and stop the violence. However, the experts of criminal law are pointing to the existence of much heavier and different kinds of criminal acts.

The legal team of SDSM, analyzing the events in the Assembly on April 27th 2017, assessed that there are enough elements for the criminal act: terrorist endangering of the constitutional order and the security of the state. The experts on criminal law from the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights and some other legal experts and lawyers, through serious analysis of the events on “bloody Thursday”, listed 28 criminal acts that were committed, starting with the easiest one – participation in crowd, then through grave body injuries and attempted murder, till the most difficult – high treason, state terrorism and endangering the constitutional order and the security of state and citizens.

As time goes by, as the new evidence emerges and as the events are much better reconstructed and analyzed – more and more comes to the surface the real suspicion that it was well prepared and organized action by the criminal association. That was pointed out also by the Public Prosecutor’s Office for organized crime, which took over some of the investigations. According to the knowledge and the fitting of the parts of the puzzle by the experts on criminal law, the first phase – the attack – was well designed: now it is much clearer that there was well developed scenario and agreement between the initiators,

organizers, executioners and their assistants (police officers and their superiors). Well-designed was also the second phase – defense of the initiators, organizers, executioners and assistants: with agreement between police, Public Prosecutor's Office, and judiciary for directing towards the most benign criminal act – participation in a crowd, and reduction of the number of executors to avoid reaching the highest ranks – the creators and organizers. Probably after certain period, after the change of the state prosecutor and with overtaking the operative positions in the new government and managing posts in the institutions, as well as with the reforms in the judiciary and the security services, especially the secret services, the things will change and the culprits for the “bloody Thursday” – initiators, assistants and executioners will be discovered and will be convicted for the committed crimes.

“Bloody Thursday” – the Peak of Politically Organized Crime

Bloody Thursday” was confirmation of one situation which was kept hidden for a long time or, at least, was not mentioned with its true name. Namely, these events did not establish Macedonia as a state, even less as a legal state, but confirmed it as completely captured state in which for many years everything was arranged to function in favor of the ruling party. For instance, the parliamentarians of VMRO-DPMNE opened the doors of the Assembly, allowing the crowd of party supporters to lynch and to keep as hostages the parliamentarians of the new parliamentary majority. The police, instead of protecting the “temple of democracy”, allowed the furious mob, and behind it the well trained bullies, mercenaries and agents to run riot, to endanger lives of the parliamentarians and the party leaders and to destroy people's property. The Prosecutor's Office, with the accusations which were inadequate to the criminal acts and the consequences enabled the perpetrators (temporarily) to save themselves from punishment for the criminal acts they had done – accusations for pushing the protective fence and pushing the policemen! The court, with the naive explanation that this is the case of “honest citizens who expressed remorse for their acts”, enabled those few accused perpetrators to avoid justice, convicted them with suspended sentences. In other words, corrupted institutions and persons enabled the captured state to perform state terrorism without any consequences almost for nobody, although in this scandal of enormous proportions were included several hundred of people and many institutions.

The captured state, in the case of Macedonia, reached its climax at the end of the governing of VMRO-DPMNE. What it means to be a captured state by the absolute authoritarian power and a party elite, was clearly seen during the last several months of the denouement of the several years long political-institutional crisis. After the elections held on December 11th 2016, the epilogue was such that no party (VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM) could form the government alone, but it forced formation of coalition with participation of one or more parties from the Albanian political block. After VMRO-DPMNE failed to create parliamentary majority with the longtime partner DUI, started in various ways to obstruct the creation of parliamentary majority between SDSM and the parliamentary parties from the Albanian campus: DUI, the movement Besa and the Alliance of the Albanians. Although this new majority of 67 parliamentarians was formed in a short period, with procedural interventions, (mis)use of the rules of procedure, and even illegal acts, first and foremost by the president of the Republic and the former speaker of the Assembly, who usurped the leading of the parliamentary sessions, for a very long period remained blocked the election of the new president/speaker of the parliament, the giving of mandate to the leader of the parliamentary majority and the election of new government.

Because of that, for six months Macedonia was a dysfunctional state. Out of three most important institutions, the only functional was the President of the Republic. However, due to his biased and protective position regarding VMRO-DPMNE, he remained without any trust, government and legitimacy among the citizens. Macedonia for six months was with technical government, that means without legitimate government with full capacity, five months was also without functional parliament and its speaker, five-six months will also be without legitimate local self-government, without mayors and councils. Because of the dysfunctionality of the Assembly the local election could not be called in the legally envisaged term, but they were delayed until October 2017.

Macedonia did not by chance get the unpleasant epithet – captured state. Without special elaboration, it is enough to mention several precedents which are brought to the level of absurdity and will be studied and analyzed as rarity in the world democratic and legal-political praxis. Macedonia became authoritarian state with absolute power, with ten times in row electoral wins of the ruling party, which remained in power full eleven years with the assistance of forced early parliamentary elections, without any regular mandate of four years. The system of governing with the assistance of the staged *coup d'état* wanted to impose itself as important factor and to remain in power in order to

continue with engineering of the elections and, if possible, to rule endlessly. Based on the indications and the evidence of the illegally intercepted communications of thousands of citizens by the secret police, almost the entire leading team of the government was qualified by the Special Prosecutor's Office as criminal association which performed various types of organized crime. The biggest absurd is that in the entire mandate of governing, the ruling party behaved two-faced – extensively used the power of the government and the institutions for autocratic governing and illegal gaining material benefits, while verbally behaved as opposition. It was especially visible in the last period of the governing when, in case of need, acted as government, while in other situations – as opposition.

The system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE turned Macedonia into a frozen state, in which all processes were blocked. Macedonia, not only was captured and frozen, was also an isolated state, because the system constantly produced news that is self-sufficient to survive, and that was done because of its policies which were not understood among the international factor and the public. Finally, Macedonia from the locomotive of the reforms and development, country with the biggest associative capacity for entering in the NATO and the EU and country generator of stability, became “stuck” country, because became last in the row when it comes to those processes, and all of that was upgraded with the unpleasant qualification – country potential generator of security crisis and of bad undemocratic precedents which could be followed by similar states and regimes in the region.

If there is something useful as a lesson that could be drawn from what was happening in Macedonia as a state and society is that even ordinary people understood what can happen to them in a state captured by the authoritarian, autocratic and absolute power. Experts, scientists and politicians with their own eyes and in practice saw something that they believed even theoretically is almost impossible – that one state, due to populist and nationalist oriented, unreasonable, ignorant and irresponsible politicians can transform into a monster who grinds everything in front of it: the state, the law, the judiciary, the freedom, the institutions and the people – all of that adjusted to its needs. Criminologists understood and documented everything that could be done in a captured state, with the excessive use of corruption and politically organized crime.

The most flagrant, concrete, documented, scandalous and most cruel example of politically organized crime was the “bloody Thursday”, on April 27th

2017. Then, with staged false interethnic and intra-ethnic conflict, murder attempts and endangering the lives of the people's representatives and leaders of the parties, as well as with expected, intended and desired reaction to such act, VMRO-DPMNE in fact performed *coup d'etat* with the aim to provoke introduction of state of war by the president of the Republic, to annul the results of the 2016 elections and to block the constitutional right of the new majority to form government. The intention was the till then ruling party by all means to remain in power or at least to remain important and integral factor in the new government. Such behavior, acts and deeds were done for realization of one priority which was above all other priorities: the previous state-party elite to escape from the legal accountability for the crimes that were well documented and under serious investigation by the Special Prosecutor's Office. But, this monstrous wish and scenario, luckily, did not succeed, the unstoppable process of liberation of the state and the institutions already started, and everyone who committed a crime or did not act in the line of duty will face the legal consequences.

With the election and the formal start of the work of the new reform oriented Government, started the process of factual liberation of the state. How long this difficult and complicated process will last, seriously contaminated with "VMRO's political-ideological and abnormally high radiation", only time will tell.

V

THE GENESIS OF THE POLITICALLY ORGANIZED CRIME

When it comes to politically organized crime, an integral part of this criminal social phenomenon that provides the environment, the preconditions and/or the consequences, are several unavoidable elements, manifestations and actions: politics, party, power, captured state, crime, corruption, organized crime, criminal association. All these elements, and of course many more, constitute the term, i.e., the illegal behavior that, in short, could be located and defined as politically organized crime. Through the lexical lens, in a literary and figurative sense, the elements and the terms that are the essence and content of politically organized crime, are explained and defined in following way.

Politics is a skill in managing the state, the skill of the possible, and even more specifically in the context of the topic at hand, politics is set of measures, actions and procedures for achieving certain goals or protecting certain interests, especially with the aim of capturing or staying in power.

Government is the system that governs, or more precisely the instrument, the set of institutions, organizational forms, norms and people that practice the governing of a state. A number of organizational forms and structures of governing/government can be mentioned, depending on the political system and the level of democracy in a society. There are societies where governing is conducted based on the accepted constitutional set up and accepted norms are respected. However, there are also societies that have great distortions and abuses of the system of governing, which produce various types of regimes. Autocracy represents a system of unlimited and unchecked personal power, the will of the ruler, the government of an autocrat, and similar characteristics are features also of authoritarianism as a type of state power concentrated in the hands of a group of people or, even more often, in the hands of one person who introduces a cruel dictatorship, a type of governing that was witnessed in recent history in the fascist regimes in Germany, Italy, Spain and Portugal, as well as in the USSR during the era of Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin. There are

even some modern societies in certain countries in which we are witnessing the rise and presence of autocratic and authoritarian regimes. Such regimes of governing create a suitable environment and fertile soil for the appearance of the phenomenon of a captured state. A certain country is characterized as a captured state when the ruling party or the ruling coalition use the power of government to fully take over and privatize the institutions and who use their system of governance for multi-layered gains—political, material, financial, status-based, etc.

In the broadest sense of the word, crime means a criminal act, i.e., a socially dangerous and harmful act of an individual or a group. Corruption on the other hand, simply means bribery; in the criminal sense, it means bribery of officials, while in the broadest sense of the word it indicates moral decay. According to the “Encyclopedia Britannica” organized crime is interpreted as: “crime that was committed by criminal associations that has state or international implications. Such organizations engage in offenses such as theft, fraud, robbery, kidnapping for ransom, and the demanding of ‘protection’ payments”. The criminal association represents group or gang with its own organization and logistics that aims to perform criminal offenses. If the criminal association is consisted of politicians, i.e., the highest ranking state-party officials, which assisted by the institutions of the state committ crimes and corruption for the realization of their narrow party interests and profits and personal amassing of wealth, then it is a case of politically organized crime.

In this context, to complete this complex of social phenomena, we should emphasize several other conditions, i.e., expressions: partocracy, pathocracy, plutocracy and kleptocracy, as interpreted in their lexicographic definitions. Partocracy is a system of governing in which the parties abuse their position of authority and use the resources counter to their intended purpose, i.e., for personal and party interest. Pathocracy represents a totalitarian type of governing where the government is abused in the hands of a psychopathic elite, i.e., a system of governing created by small pathological minority that gains control over a community of normal people. Plutocracy is a system of social relationships in which the influence of a wealthy business elite on and over government dominates, i.e., a small group of people which corrupt the political process and the laws that allows them to benefit at the expense of the majority of people. The majority of modern western democracies are often claimed to be plutocracies, which especially applies to the USA. Kleptocracy is condition of the state in which corruption of the highest political institutions is brought to a level in which the government exists only for the personal benefits of

individuals and the party (in Greek *kleptes* means “theft” and *klepto* “I steel”, while *kratos* – power/rule, and when merged together – the rule of thieves).

This dispels the thesis held by politicians and theorists that, in principle, crime has no political affiliations, i.e., that only individuals can be criminalized in a party, who may be engaged in the structure of the government or in the state institutions. This thesis is very narrow, singling out “incidental” cases and “individuals” in the parties, and is refuted by current practice. In authoritarian societies in which national-populist parties are in power, there is a noticeable criminal genetics caused by the ideological-political and pragmatic matrix. This further backed up with the Macedonian experience during the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE. The very fact that the political party (both as a political and as a legal entity) were involved in organized crime, including top party officials who were at the same time holding high-ranking state positions, speaks to the fact that crime, unfortunately, has specific and clearly identifiable political party affiliation! In VMRO-DPMNE, both the historical one and that of Ljubco Georgievski and especially of Nikola Gruevski, money, property and the wealth of the party and its leaders which were not the result of labor and lawful work—they both a trade mark and destiny.

Organized Crime – a Symptom of a Severe Illness of the State

In the global criminal law theory, organized crime as an illegal activity contains several common elements that have to be fulfilled: a criminal act should exist and it should be committed by three or more persons; that activity should be agreed, planned and organized in advance and each of the involved persons should have a special role and task; serious criminal acts should be executed in a given time frame; and, finally, the perpetrators should have made certain financial-material profit and personal wealth and/or social status and power from the committed crimes. Another common, unavoidable characteristic, without which organized crime cannot function and be performed is the link, i.e., the compulsory involvement in the criminal act of people in politics and people that are employed or hold managerial posts in the institutions.

Organized crime throughout history had its genesis, development, transformations, improvements and its regulations, or more precisely, its rules. At the time when this criminal act was criminalized, organized crime was linked to the classical mafia and the crimes it committed most frequently. The execution of these criminal acts was assisted by individuals from the police, judiciary

or administrative structures of the state. With time, as the mafia improved its activities, increased its capacities and widened its areas of interest, it began to include more and more politicians and state officials from the higher echelons of power. This entire process is completed in such way that in some corrupted societies, the mafia gets its own state, and so the state has its own mafia.

According to some American authors which study this topic (Gardiner, Chambliss, Lyman, Potter, Jenkins, Block and Skarpatti), it is quite usual that throughout the history of organized crime there were exchanges between "the underground and the above ground," which transform into a long lasting corruptive link. Empirical studies have found that in some cases, those who held positions of public trust were in fact the real organizers of the crime. According to them, organized crime must be considered as an integral part of the political, economic and social structure of society. In fact, "one of the basic characteristics of organized crime is that it must, because of its necessity, to emphasize the cooperation between the criminals, the police and the politicians." According to these authors, "the guild that is managing vice is consisted of businessmen, law enforcement agents, political leaders and members of the main trade unions." That means that organized crime could not function without the direct participation and cooperation of the political machinery.

One of these authors, the American criminologist and sociologist William Chambliss, rounds up his analyzes of the complex that circles the organized crime with one generalization: "Money is the oil of our modern machinery, and the elected officials are the cogs that maintain the work of the machinery. Those who pour oil, regardless of the source, are in a position to manage the machine according to their own desires. Crime is an excellent producer of capitalist oil. Those who want to influence the results produced by the machine realize that the money created by crime is an effective means of allowing them to go where they want to the same extent as money that was made by other means. Those who make the money control the machine. Crime is not a by-product of an otherwise effective political economy. It is the main product of the political economy. Crime is, in fact, the foundation upon which the political and economic relations of democratic-capitalist societies are built."

Until several years ago, Macedonian academia treated organized crime from a purely theoretical perspective, as something that does not happen in our parts. More recently, however, since the publication of the illegally intercepted communications of more than 26.000 citizens (some of them in continuity for several years, even after the scandal erupted) done by the secret

services shook the nation like a strong earthquake, the scope and the features of our indigenous organized crime were being studied more intensively. Nevertheless, this is done very carefully, shallowly and occasionally until the activities are first confirmed with the legal outcomes of the court cases.

In his book "Organized Crime" (2005), professor of criminal law Vlado Kambovski, gives precise formulations and definitions about the most important elements in this area, especially in the parts related to crimes committed with abuses of power. As criminal acts committed while performing public functions, Kambovski mentions: abuse of official duty and public authorizations, bribery, embezzlement, dereliction of duty, etc. The main characteristic of this type of crime is that there is a special entity which always has the capacity of an official person, a military person, a responsible person or person that performs tasks of public interest. These entities perform those criminal acts by non-execution of their legal duties, dereliction or overstepping the legal mandate. Of the legal goods that are targeted by crime committed through abuse of power, we have: political acts, acts of corruption and acts of violation of the rights and freedoms of citizens."

To provide a more vivid and understandable explanation, Kambovski uses medical jargon to diagnose the situation: "Organized crime is the symptom of a serious chronic disease, and as the case may be, an incurable disease of the state. It is confirmation that the legal state does not exist or that it is not functioning, that what is represented as a state and may even have the semblance of legality, is in fact just a masked system of illegitimate rule that is maintained with combined methods of police coercion, economic deprivation, mass manipulation through mass media and political exhibitionism that imitates democratic governing. All of these markings of the "sick" state can be identified in every aspect of our daily lives."

In this context, Kambovski emphasizes the most serious problem: "the defense of society 'from its protectors', protection of the legal state 'against the state'". At the same time, he raises the key question: "If organized crime is 'organized' by structures that are embedded in the state itself, should protection from it be sought from structures outside of the state, and of course, which are those structures. How is it possible to organize them, or more precisely, how can civil society protect itself from the crime that is given a pass from certain political structures." As Kambovski goes on to say in his book "Organized crime": "The answer to this question is very simple: the state itself should have strong and autonomous instruments of protection, above all an

independent and powerful judiciary and other institutions for the protection of human rights, which will act as a counter-weight to the criminal aspirations of powerful politicians.”

Macedonia had a Malignant Mutation of the Institutions

All these logical and well-designed instruments that educated and experienced professors and lawyers suggest as a dam against crime are unfortunately valid and succeed in normal and legal states and in democratic societies. However, such instruments, norms and good intentions cannot survive in states where one party has got a hold of absolute power, which is functionally autocratic and with an authoritarian system of governing, where the party became the state and the state became the party, keeping the state in total captivity. At the same time, all these “strong” autonomous, independent instruments for protection were formed, established and staffed by the ‘criminal association,’ which at the same time is the key structure of the government, as well as in the leadership of the party. When the “independent judiciary” is elected from the “little notebooks” belonging to the general secretary of the party and the minister of interior tasked to protect the government rather than the legal state, and when the non-governmental and independent organizations dealing with the protection of human rights and freedoms are labeled, marginalized, demonized and silenced with populist-propaganda campaigns as the biggest traitors and enemies of the state and the nation.

Macedonia, as captured state, had a malignant mutation of the functions of the institutions and the mandates of the officials, so that they became party institutions and functions. If take into consideration the system of governing that was imposed by VMRO-DPMNE, treating the state as a family-party corporation/joint stock company, it can be concluded that some sort of corporate crime existed in Macedonia for a long time, as the party functioned as both the as managing and supervisory board of that family corporation (the government boss was also leader of the party, the Big Cousin—chief of the secret services and chief selector of the party cadres, the Small Cousin—a trusted person for customs and other specific jobs, the leader’s best man—the key-holder of the state treasury, the trusted friend—the first “police-baton” of the state and owner of the infamous “little notebook” for the judiciary, and then friends, relatives, nephews, neighbors, etc.)

The idea of this book is not to study in detail the global and our own theoretical knowledge and comparisons around organized crime and the legal measures to fight against this great evil, but to locate and analyze specifically the Macedonian experience in this type of crime. According to the vast size of what was conquered, the high levels of imagination and sophistication, the variety of the most serious crimes and the enormous damages to the state, as organized crime in which the criminal association (as ideologists, organizers, perpetrators, assistants and consumers of benefits and wealth) participated in the highest structures of the party/state, the Macedonian model and experiences will be carefully studied, because it reached the highest, absolute level—politically organized crime. This theoretically almost impossible stage was achieved because it was a case of a captured legal state with autocratic governing in an authoritarian environment and with almost “genetically” criminalized personalities.

In order to make a transition and to better present the Macedonian situation in this area, I will again borrow one of professor Kambovski’s explanations, this time about the beginnings of penal law, two centuries ago. In his (text-)book “Organized crime,” Kambovski writes: The true history of penal law starts at the beginning of the XIX century with the predominance of the principle of legality and affirmation of the legal penal non-law as prime criterion for demarcation of law and non-law. That is a period when the public-legal character of the punishment is finally predominant, i.e., the state as the hegemon of the right to punish. But a question arises here—what kind of a state? At the beginning, it is the unlimited, absolute state, which finds the stronghold for its absolutism in identification with the myths of nation (nation state), economic and social progress (liberal, imperial state) or care for the people (modern social state of welfare, and so on). For all different types of government the predominance of the political structures remains. The individual must not commit a crime, but crime is not prohibited for the state, and it is even free to cover it up with good legal mantel.”

Although the context is different and perhaps not the most appropriate, when we speak about politically organized crime here, the environment, the conditions and some elements from those understandings and practices look as if they are literally taken from and mapped in our environment: an unlimited state, collective myths about the nation and nation state, conspiracies for a national, economic and social revival, absolute state and absolute power, predominance of the political structures. If the party is the state, i.e., the state is the party, if the party is captured by an authoritarian elite and an autocrat

leader, if the state is captured by the same small group/gang, if the state is allowed to do whatever it wants (any laws it wants—it adopts, anyone it wants—it imprisons, as much as it wants—it will spend..), then the elite is free to do whatever it wants, as well as politically organized crime with the assistance and logistics of the state resources, with the aim to acquire to gain benefits, profits, status, power, money, wealth, etc., for the party and its leadership.

This situation in very illustratively and precisely described by professor Besa Arifi in one of her columns: “In these conditions, when we have a country in which instead of a mafia that is prosecuted by the state institutions, the mafia itself in fact has its own state, it is an illusion to say that we live in democracy, because the real name of that system is already introduced in global trends and its name is mafiocracy!” And so it continues until the party-state, the criminal association at one moment “slips,” makes a mistake or someone discovers its Achilles heel. Then, however captured the state, some of its mechanisms will start working properly and the criminal association will face justice, which is what happened to Macedonia!

THE AXIS OF POLITICALLY ORGANIZED CRIME

Politically organized crime as a process and specific phenomenon has its own genesis and development. In order for organized crime to appear, to develop in all its “glory” and to reach its highest phase—politically organized crime—requires the creation of a number of specific preconditions, environment and causal relations.

The process starts around an accidentally created or pre-designed joint project and interest: (1) of a group of people who hold high ranking positions in the party and in the government or are very close to them, organizing themselves in criminal association, (2) with the goal of, in an illegal way and with the abuse of the institutions of the state and their official duties and responsibilities, realizing their idea and fulfilling their joint group/party and personal interest—to gain power, status, material benefits and wealth, (3) with the assistance of politically organized crime.

Based on this we can conclude, but also define: if a state has an autocratic system of governing and it is captured, then politically organized crime is an almost complete and unavoidable certainty. The definition can also be

presented *vice versa*—if a state has visible politically organized crime, then it must be a case of a captured state with an autocratic regime.

The Capturing of the State and Politically Organized Crime – a Joint Venture

The process of formation and development of the axis of politically organized crime is very interesting. Much like with the capturing of a state, which is part of this process, in the case of politically organized crime we can differentiate several phases. The first two-three phases (in the case of capturing of the state and in the case of politically organized crime) are identical.

First: the political grouping enters and finds common language, i.e., interest in a relevant political party on the political scene and they become connected. This linking may be spontaneous (as a result of an accidental event) or deliberate (motivated by politics, ideology, interests, friendship, family ties, etc.), with intentions planned in advance. When we have such groups, they are generally not connected by a certain partisan, ideological, national or other type of political bond, but most likely by lucrative interests, as was the case with the leading elite of VMRO-DPMNE, headed by Nikola Gruevski after 2003.

Second: such a group, over time and with a pre-prepared strategy, takes over the key positions and functions in the politically party. As time goes by, the strength of the group is bigger and bigger, and if that was its intention, it captures the party.

Third: in elections, this type of party seizes, i.e., keeps power. If the goal was only political, to govern and implement the ideological-political program, it can stop at this level. However, these types of groups are not generally satisfied only with authority and power, but they also need wealth. Therefore, the next challenge for a group with such a strategy is the gradual conquering of as many levers of government as possible.

Fourth: for the most “ambitious” groups, as was the case with the VMRO-DPMNE group, which developed an efficient and ruthless system of governing, the final goal is the autocratic governing of the leader and his “godfather/family” elite and conquering absolute power. With the assistance of the absolute power comes the next step—the complete capturing of the state. And so it was.

Fifth: after that, cause a deliberate functional deformation of the constitutional system, treat the state like a joint stock company and start to function like a corporation.

Sixth: The government and the state are being criminalized for the joint profit of the party and the personal amassing of wealth of the leader and the corrupted elite.

Seventh: with this, the highest degree of capturing of the state and of politically organized crime has been achieved. The highest stage of institutional-functional-profitable linkage in the relation between the state—the party—the criminal association is reached. Because of this, it is difficult to conclude whether it is a mafia state or a state mafia! The specificity of politically organized crime is not only that it is more sophisticated than organized crime of the classical mafia, but also by the fact that the mafia is always prosecuted by the institutions of the state, while the state never prosecutes political mafia in the state institutions, because that would mean to prosecute itself!

The new minister of interior, Oliver Spasovski, precisely located this axis. In an interview in the weekly “Fokus”, Spasovski said: “If you analyze the eleven years of VMRO-DPMNE rule, you will see that UBK (the Office of Security and Counter Intelligence) was the main tool for the implementation of all criminal activities committed by Nikola Gruevski and Saso Mijalkov. The massive abuse of the system of interception of communications reveals that in its desire to stay in power and illegally amass wealth, they used all possible mechanisms and in that respect were ruthless.”

When it comes to the axis, i.e., the line of movement of politically organized crime as a process, it should be said that, in its essence and manifestations, it is a two-way process: it moves vertically from the top down to the bottom and after then returns from the bottom to the top. It can be also interpreted as moving in a circle: it starts at one point, moves around the circle and comes back to the starting point. The starting point of politically organized crime is always the highest level of power. It is executed through the institutions as collective bodies or their top officials. At the bottom of the path it results in organized crime with substantial political characteristics, benefits and profits. After that, it continues upwards, using the same vertical and going back again to the starting position: political benefits, profits and material-financial wealth gained in a criminal way, are “laundered” and “legalized” through the institutions with their decisions, and then finally make it to the

top, in politics—the political parties (as a group) and the party-state officials (individually).

Therefore, when analyzing the processes of movement on the two-way vertical (from the top to the bottom and vice versa) two specific and important characteristics can be noticed. The first, that the idea for politically organized crime, the creation of preconditions and its realization (capturing of the party, an autocratic and authoritarian regime, capturing of the state, the creation of a criminal association, the most brazen methods of politically organized crime)—is a process that functions from the top to the bottom and vice versa, i.e., from the beginning back to the beginning. The second, that everything that was gained through politically organized crime is moving upwards (or in a circle) and the largest portion of the gained benefits, profits and wealth reaches and stays with those who designed and organized it, as well as with the party as the fortress that hides part of the treasure that will be used for the financing of next election cycles and new acts of politically organized crime. Along the way, in order to mask the crimes and the wealth of the criminal association, some crumbs are also given to the executors and to the large numbers of poor clients and dependents of the state.

This line of movement of the wealth and the benefits gained through politically organized crime refutes the thesis of the megaphones of the government and the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE that “Gruevism,” the just like Robin Hood, takes from the rich and gives to the poor. For the poor there was only the leftovers—the crumbs that were used as a cover while the money from politically organized crime was taken from state accounts and the pockets of the poor and brought up to the top of the government, into the pockets and accounts of the highest party-state officials.

This vertical of movement confirms the thesis of D-r Grozdan Cvetkovski that: “The money from organized crime is not moving from the top to the bottom, but from the bottom to the highest ranks of the political government.” It also confirms his second thesis, that: “The political underground, ‘the fifth power,’ substitutes and swallows the other powers in the state—the legislative, executive, judicial, local”. Here it should also be added and further explained that: the substitution and the swallowing, other than destroying or dulling their functionality and immunity, also meant bribery, clientelism, blackmail and preventing people who work and manage them to perform their duties honorably and professionally—some to a lesser and some to a higher degree, some voluntarily and some against their will.

The Connective Tissue of Politically Organized Crime is the Government

For criminal law theorists in highly democratic countries, where the rule of law and the legal state exist, organized crime is something that is connected to the mafia and criminals who have individuals in the institutions in a classical criminal relation. However, in countries with limited democratic capacity, with not fully developed and dysfunctional institutions, selective rule of law and, to top it all, with an autocratic government, such an approach and definition are inadequate, especially in the case of a captured state, where it is almost impossible to distinguish between the party and the state, and to complicate things further, between the state officials and the party-political mafia.

What are the particularities that make visible the differences between classic organized crime and politically organized crime? The simplest explanation could be the following: if organized crime is a crime committed by criminals with the assistance of individual politicians and/or individual officials from the state institutions, then politically organized crime is crime by a group or groups of politicians from the highest echelons of government and the ruling party, as well as the political elite close to them, assisted by the state institutions. In Macedonia, in the period when it was considered to be a captured state, there was no need for criminal organizing, because the institutions deformed by autocratic governing and complete politicization transformed themselves into criminal organizations managed by the criminal association.

According to penal law theorists, "organized crime could not exist at all without the direct involvement and cooperation of the political machinery." At the same time, according to professors Michael Lyman and Garry Potter, in every form of organized crime there exists a symbiosis between the (political) machinery, the leaders of the electoral campaigns and organized criminal. If that is indeed so and if it is valid for all societies, even for those where there is rule of law and organized crime is an incidental occurrence, then in the societies where there are black holes in the democracy and there is selectivity in the functioning of the law, i.e., autocratic and authoritarian states (where the state and the ruling party are intertwined and preference is given to party interests, the institutions are completely politicized, and all decisions are made in one center and by a small circle of people) politics is both the connective tissue and the substance of organized crime.

This means that organized crime is not only not possible without the direct involvement and cooperation of politics and political parties, in other

words, with the political machinery, but that the political structures and institutions that they are managing are the end all and be all, i.e., ideologists, contractors, executioners, assistants and beneficiaries from politically organized crime. Hence, in the autocratic-authoritarian societies, the symbiosis is happening in a closed system, without elements and entities from the outside, or more precisely, everything stays inside. In the Macedonian closed society, that means it stays inside the family, that for many years led the state, the party and the political mafia.

Politically organized crime, as an illegal activity that endangers the highest social and political values, and with that produces the biggest social and political harm, has its own particular goals which it intends to accomplish and its own users that gain power, social status, profits and material and financial wealth. The fundamental goal, basic idea and connecting tissue of politically organized crime is the government: conquering the government on part of the political party in elections, securing political power through government and gaining financial and material wealth, social status and other profits for the individuals and the party, again through the government.

We can identify two types of instruments for the accomplishment of these goals with the assistance of politically organized crime. The first type of instrument are the party and the institutions that actively participate in designing, organizing and executing the various kinds and acts of political crime. Here we are talking about the criminal association. However, the small subtlety that marks the difference between classic organized criminal and political organized criminal is the fact that in the former case there is a criminal association, while in the second, in addition to there being a criminal association for each individual criminal act (since this is a plurality of offenses with two long-term goals: preserving power and amassing power and wealth for the party and for the leadership), there is also a central criminal association that controls the process of politically organized crime overall, in continuity and for an extended period of time. The second type of instrument are the institutions (prosecutors' office, judiciary, police, the legal profession, inspectorates, etc.), which controlled, organized and instructed by the party, cover, launder, defend or, simply do not initiate procedures to find and convict organizers, perpetrators, assistants and those who covered politically organized crime.

The beneficiaries of the acts of politically organized crime are: the party that captured and governs the state, high state officials (who are also high-ranking party officials), businesspeople—partners of the government and

the party, and the entire clientele spectrum—intellectuals, artists, athletes, experts, etc. As beneficiaries of politically organized crime, whether conscious or not, we can also include some of the party members and certain social categories of citizens—clients and dependents of the state who are grateful for some benefits (employment, rank, some kind of favor, social status, etc.) and are ready to participate in or cover up the crimes of the government (lending their identities for money laundering through donations, although they did not give their own money, etc.).

The Party and the Institutions Managed by a Single Criminal Association

Penal law theorists specifically locate and personalize each type of individual criminal act. As a result, they have developed, criminalized and sanctioned several acts related to organized crime, and for each of them there are identified perpetrators, i.e., criminal associations. How is a criminal association organized and how does it function?

The professor of criminal law, D-r Besa Arifi, provides the vertical of the organizational chart of a criminal association in classic organized crime: boss – deputy – commander – soldier. However, she also frames this in Macedonian conditions. “It is necessary to emphasize that these associations are formed to commit illegal acts that bring huge profits, such as for instance illegal trades, or as in our case, to unlawfully allow the gaining of high profits through massive raids of the state budget. Namely, Macedonia is not a country well-known for the production and sale of narcotics or any other types of products that can bring huge profits. What remains as the only option, therefore, is to steal from the state budget as the main target of the criminal associations,” concludes Arifi.

“If we look at the chart again, we can easily identify the roles that are obvious: the leader of the ruling party, at the same time a former prime minister—the most important person who makes the most important decisions based on the advice of his closest advisers (his right hand, his chief of cabinet charged with communication with the media, but also other advisers that are less well-known to the public) is understandably at the helm of the association. His cousin is playing the role of his deputy-chief, the former director of the Administration for Security and Counterintelligence, the main sector for monitoring the process of implementation of the decisions of the boss, as well as a main person who decides about the hires in all sectors that are of importance

for flawless operations of the association. The commanders or “*caporegime*” are persons that hold the positions of ministers in the government and who transformed their ministries into commanding units of the party (as we all heard with our own ears from the former minister of interior: ‘VMRO-MVRO’) and who command their party soldiers to directly execute the orders of the chief, such as “a few slaps on the face” in front of the cameras, throwing people in a “ditch” and other dirty jobs. Among the collaborators, we find all those policemen, prosecutors, judges, parliamentarians, coalition partners, the President of the Republic and other holders of public functions that were appointed under direct orders from the chief and carried out by the deputy-chief, who are here “around” to help if needed during the hard days when the association is prosecuted by the Special Prosecutor’s Office.”

Professor Arifi very thoughtfully probes into the essence of the problem that occurred in Macedonia: “This represents something quite different and a very dangerous level of intrusion of the criminal association deep into the system of state institutions, when the mafia identifies itself with the state and remains in power using several tools: blackmailing the citizens and keeping them on a leash with their jobs and other privileges, full control of the media that is close to the association, full control of the economy and the business (through problematic activities regarding the procurement tenders and so on) and, what is most important: a totally paralyzed legal and judicial system. This allows the association to manage directly all institutions with the aim to advance its goals and to profit at large through the misuse of citizen’s money which they later invest in off-shore companies and other businesses. In these circumstances, when we have a country in which instead of having a mafia that is prosecuted by the state institutions, the mafia itself in fact has a state, it is an illusion to say that we live in democracy, because the real name of that system is already established in global trends and is named *mafocracy*!”

This approach is very close to my thesis, i.e., food for thought: apart from the individualization of the acts and of the perpetrators, in some large acts of high crime, that are qualified as a plurality of offenses, where the same persons appear both as members of a criminal association and holders of the highest-ranking positions in the state and in the party—is it not possible to find a common denominator. The common denominator is more that obvious: all these acts and perpetrators are connected by the same motive, the same goal and the same profit, i.e. illegally gained power of government (criminalized electoral process), wealth, privileges and social status (criminalized abuse of power for narrow and personal interests).

The Macedonian case of politically organized crime, as a serious enough situation for which the Special Prosecutor's Office has brought charges, leaves sufficient room for us to draw the conclusion that, although there is a criminal association for each of the criminal acts separately, there are enough elements and arguments to conclude that there existed (and still exists, despite leaving office and going into opposition) a kind of central, supreme, commanding criminal association that designed, planned, organized and coordinated the separate criminal acts that were later committed by specifically chosen individuals from the institutions, the party, the business environment, various indebted clients, loyal party soldiers, blackmailed dependents of the government and the party, etc.

The main motive of this supreme commanding criminal association was the preservation of power (electoral corruption and crime), which later on with the abuse of the power of the government (abuse of official duty and responsibilities in the politicized institutions) was also used for making profits and group (of the party) and personal amassing of wealth (of the party-state officials).

THE TRANSITION - A PARADISE FOR POLITICALLY ORGANIZED CRIME

The Republic of Macedonia, as a Southeast European country, from the newly-constructed region by the international factor—the Western Balkans and especially from ex-Yugoslavia, much like all the surrounding countries transferred many uncertainties, leftovers, and not fully resolved issues in its transition from the former communist system to capitalism. As a result, organized crime, which had a big role in politics, has its own genesis, history, characteristics and phases of functioning and transformations.

The most serious types of organized crime appeared at the beginning of the transition in the process of transformation of social ownership into state and private. Given the fact that the new system was entered into after an entire phase of privatization that carried out in socialism, based on the Law on Transformation of Social Property, which was popularly named after the last president of the government of SFRY, the "Law of Ante Markovic," the entire process marred by controversy, because it was a mix of two systems. Most of the former firms were privatized by their former directors, some by all employees. A small number of them used the transformation to become successful companies and retained their employees. However, the bulk of them, due to

how the transformation was carried out, the inability and disinterest of the management teams, failed or barely survived. Thousands of employees remained on the streets without jobs, and the properties of the companies were looted from groups and individuals or became ruins over time.

Crime was Blooming—and No One was Held to Account

Due to the fact that the new country had not yet built the legal state and the fact that there was no political will, social capital was privatized unfairly, almost for free, so that neither the state nor society nor the citizens benefited from the privatization. What is even more tragic is that almost no one was held responsible for the criminal privatizations of many firms. According to the applicable laws, the statute of limitations for these types of crimes had passed shortly after. Twenty years later, when SDSM and then its leader Branko Crvenkovski, who were most criticized for the “criminal” privatization process, had proposed an amendment to the Constitution to include an article according which there would be no statute of limitations for the crimes committed in the privatization process. However, the greatest critic of privatization, then ruling VMRO-DPMNE, did not support this proposal. Perhaps the main motivation for this decision was that most of the privatized companies and their owners had over time turned their backs on SDSM and became close and collaborated on big projects with the ruling party.

When we are talking about the early phases of organized crime with political involvement in Macedonia, we should also include the “turbulent period” of the early years after independence. As a result of the unresolved name issue, Greece introduced an embargo on Macedonia, closing down the transport lines (sea and rail) for goods and food in and out of Macedonia. During this time there was also an embargo imposed by the international community against the regime of Slobodan Milosevic and Serbia, because of the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and the situation in Kosovo. It was a time when the Macedonian authorities and the international community turned a blind eye on certain violations of the sanctions; however, in addition, there were also many criminal transfers that had the blessing of state and party officials and were carried out by people and companies close them, so organized crime had a “rich harvest” making hefty profits. During that time, the first Macedonian oligarchs acquired their initial wealth.

During this time there was also the attempted assassination of the President of the Republic of Macedonia, Kiro Gligorov. Although severely injured, the president fortunately survived and continued to perform his state function until the end of his mandate. The assassination attempt took place in a very sensitive political moment for Macedonia, just before the signing of the Interim Accord with Greece that was supposed to prevent political and economic obstructions, blockades and embargoes for Macedonia from its southern neighbor because of the irrational name issue. It took place one day after President Gligorov's visit to Belgrade and talks with Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, who had opposed the Republic of Macedonia's independence and who had been in secret talks with Greece to divide the country. The assassination has never been resolved and neither the motives, nor executors, nor those who ordered it are known, leaving room for various speculations at the time.

Speculations indicated the involvement of the Bulgarian company Multi-group, the Serbian secret services, the Albanian mafia, the Bratislava connection, the extreme Macedonian diaspora, the involvement of domestic factors and others, but none of this was ever proved. In any case, it is a case of the highest and most sophisticated act of organized crime in Macedonia, which certainly has regional, if not wider implications. Considering the contexts—the time of the assassination, the political events in the region, certain distorted businesses and interests that were the result of Macedonia's independence, the radical Macedonian diaspora that was against any compromise with Greece, as well as some controversies in Macedonian politics—we can conclude with a some certainty that the assassination can also be filed under organized crime with elements of politically organized crime.

Towards the end of this phase, the pyramid savings scandal was also revealed. In search of quick and easy earnings, thousands of people started investing in several savings houses, the most famous of which was Bitola's TAT. The state, i.e., the government, was aware it was happening and aware of the risk, but tolerated it. And as it happens with everything that is acquired quickly, easily and without sweat, because of the pyramidal system of saving, once the first depositors made big gains from even higher interest rates and withdrew their savings, the pyramid collapsed, and those from the higher parts of the pyramid, who had invested smaller amounts later on and had no connections with the owners of the savings houses, were left without their deposits and without the "promised wealth." Even though the scandal included the names of several politicians and people SDSM's government, other than the owner of the Savings Bank TAT, Sonja Nikolovska (who was sentenced to 3.5

years in prison), no one else was held accountable. However, due to the opposition's campaign to reveal the connection between the government and with the owner of the savings house, SDSM lost the elections in 1998 and for many years lost the city of Bitola as a bastion of SDMS support.

Although there were numerous and obvious cases of organized crime with serious involvement from party-state officials, other than a few minor trials in which only middlemen and marginal actors were tried, there were no major cases of uncovered and tried criminal acts of this type in this first phase of the transition in Macedonia.

Macedonia—the Crossroads of International Organized Crime

Generally speaking, the beginning of the second phase of organized crime in Macedonia can be placed in the period of the first government of VMRO-DPMNE between 1998 and 2002 (Ljupco Georgievski - Prime Minister, Nikola Gruevski - Minister of Finance). The process of bankruptcy and privatization of 35 companies with state capital, the so-called 'loss-makers', continued in this phase, with the projects FESAL 1 and FESAL 2, when some of the companies were bought cheaply by people close to the government, some failed and thousands of workers were left jobless. In that period, along with some of the countries in the Western Balkans region Macedonia, became a "soft spot" for autochthonous organized crime, but also a crossroads of the east-west and south-north corridors of international organized crime involving the trafficking of drugs, arms and humans. This should be viewed through the context of the situation in the region: the dissolution of the legal state in Albania (1997) and the plundering of all military warehouses that housed arms and ammunition, which according to the system of connected vessels, were then transferred to Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, BiH, Croatia and around the world; the conflict in Kosovo (1999); the bombing of Serbia by the NATO alliance; and the military conflict in Macedonia (2001) as a completion of this process that had a common denominator.

During the conflict in 2001, the VMRO-DPMNE government imposed a so-called military tax on all transactions in the country in order to fill the budget from which huge amounts were spent on servicing the security forces—the army and the police. On the other hand, the economy, with its reduced production, could no longer fill the state treasury, weakened due to the state of war and the high costs. Even though no one doubted the justification for the

introduction of a military tax, the funds that were collected from it, however, were spent in a non-transparent way. The tax continued to be collected in 2002 and some experts estimate that about one billion euros were collected in this way; however, there was never a report on how much money was collected and what it was spent on. In political circles it was speculated (because there was no transparency) that much of that money was not used for its designated purpose and that with the help of criminal transactions and businesses that belonged to certain individuals, enormous amounts of budget money flowed into private pockets.

The start of the third phase of organized crime in Macedonia, generally speaking, can be placed in 2008, in the second year of the rule of VMRO-DPMNE headed by Nikola Gruevski. This is when the most sophisticated system of governance was created, which, regardless of whether knowingly or not, created an autocratic-authoritarian regime, full control of all processes in the country, identification of the party with the state, and finally resulted in the highest possible degree of rigidity—a captured state and politically organized crime.

In the final part of the third phase, when the power of the ruling system of VMRO-DPMNE reached its peak, is when the falling apart of the system began. Although the leader of the then opposition Zoran Zaev challenged the 2014 elections and later began to publish the criminal scandals of the government, demanding new elections and a technical government to implement them, the key conflict that had the greatest importance for the future of Macedonia as a country occurred in an interval of several days, between January 31st and February 9th 2015, when a clash occurred between the “Putsch” scandal, manufactured by the system, and announced by Gruevski and the “Wiretapping” scandal that was released by Zaev.

Knowing that Zaev and the opposition were in possession of the illegally wiretapped conversations that revealed government crimes, the system of governance and Gruevski, in order to intercept and prevent the publication of the so-called “bombs, manufactured a case using special investigative measures on part of the secret services to accuse Zaev of attempting a coup, the removal of a legally elected government, and blackmailing the then prime minister to accept a technical government and early elections. It was followed by additional manufactured conspiracies of “yellow vans eavesdropping on and recording government institutions, foreign secret agencies, recordings that were manufactured, edited and stitched together created...” The idea was to arrest Zaev

and prevent the publication of compromising conversations that revealed the crimes committed by the government and Gruevski.

However, under pressure from the international community, opposition leader Zaev was not arrested and he began publishing the “bombs.” He accused the government of wiretapping more than 25 thousand people in Macedonia—politicians, opposition leaders, senior government officials, journalists, intellectuals, ambassadors—which seriously undermined the governance system. Although the system managed to use the power of government and the logistics of the institutions to remain unscathed for a while, and even managed to win an additional two seats in the early elections in late 2016, it still had to capitulate. After exactly two years of uncompromising struggle, supported by the non-governmental sector, the plenums of the students, professors and high school students, assisted by the principled approach of the international community and the highly professional work of the Special Public Prosecutor’s Office, Zaev and the opposition managed to beat “Putsch” and have Gruevski and VMRO-DPMNE removed from power.

When it comes to the genesis of politically organized crime in Macedonia, one seemingly marginal should not be avoided, as it contributed greatly to the creation of fertile ground to support the development of this evil in our political and legal environment. Here I am speaking about the distortions in the substance of the mental code of the ruling structure and among some of the people, which was like an umbilical cord between the criminalized government and the corrupt groups of citizens. In other words, there was something criminal and clientelistic in that mental code. Namely, some of the people wanted to be ruled by an iron fist, and disciplined if necessary, even at the cost of violating democratic and legal principles and laws. Some of the people believe that success means living the good life and getting rich, regardless of whether this is attained through hard work or not, whether it is attained legally or not. For some people it is not a problem that senior government officials abused and stole from the budge—as long as some of that money ‘trickles’ down into their clientelistic pockets in the form of an increased pension, subsidy, donation, assistance, procurement tender, salary, fee. This is why in Macedonia for many years there was no critical mass for stopping on the path of crime and corruption.

THE FOREIGNERS WERE LATE TO PUT ON THEIR DIPLOMATIC GLOVES

There is no report on Macedonia, of any kind and from any international institution or influential country, whether it is on the topic of the judiciary, the police, the administration, the economy, and even the environment, there does not include indications of corruption and organized crime, including recommendations that an uncompromising battle is necessary against these negative occurrences. There has never been a government structure in Macedonia that has not included in its campaign programs as its ultimate goal the fight against corruption and crime. To add to the absurd, when Nikola Gruevski's party won the election and came to power, he had singled out this fight as one of the main goals of his rule. This goal was touted by all four governments that Gruevski formed after each victory in the early elections.

As revealed later on with the "bombs" of the wiretapped conversation, as the rhetoric of the ruling system of VMRO-DPMNE about a resolute and uncompromising fight against crime and corruption got louder, corruption and crime by the highest structures of the government and the party were blooming, aided and protected by the institutions in charge of fighting against those criminal acts.

Officials–Kleptocrats Using States for Profits

The most persistent, specific and sharp criticism of corruption and crime in Macedonia and the region came from the United States and Germany. However, everything that was said was within the limits of 'gloved' rhetoric: diplomatic, generalized, and in a regional context. The American administration 'took off its gloves' and for the first time started sending serious messages to corrupt Balkan politicians, pointing out that the United States knows about their corrupt practices and their undemocratic rule. The most direct and sharpest messages came from then Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasia Victoria Nuland. In a very short time span, in 2014, she sent two very clear and unambiguous messages that directly hit at the heart of the problem.

The first was at the Strategic Forum for Central and Eastern Europe, held in Washington DC, where the discussion focused on the Europe's challenges given the current complexities of the international political scene. Addressing the leaders in the region, Nuland asked: "How can you sleep at night hidden behind NATO's Article 5, while during the day you promote non-liberal democracy

and nationalism, you limit free media and demonize civil society. I also ask those who protect corrupt officials from court investigations, who bypass parliament when it suits them or who agree dirty deals that increase the dependence of their countries on a single source of energy, even though you have committed to diversifying at the state level.”

Immediately afterwards and with similar rhetoric, at the “Croatia 2014” forum, Nuland urged that the fight against corruption should maintain the values of the transatlantic community. “Europe cannot be whole when kleptocrats treat their countries as a source of profit for them and their friends. A country cannot be free when elections are manipulated, when free media is silenced and minorities are under threat. There can be no peace when corrupt politicians serve with political, economic and judicial threats to crush the opposition and rob their citizens,” Nuland told the forum participants. According to her, corruption poses a threat to the national sovereignty of the countries from the Balkans to the Baltic and the Black Sea, because every dirty politician and every non-transparent deal that is tolerated creates an opportunity for external influences. “Corruption is not only a killer of democracy, but an additional tool in the arsenal of autocrats and kleptocrats, who are looking to expand their influence and weaken our democracies and get rich at the expense of our citizens.”

This entire campaign and messages from the US about corruption and crime in the region and the need for serious actions, was “translated,” completed and adapted to Macedonian conditions by then US ambassador, Paul Wohlers, who said: “Politicians in Macedonia are using politics to destroy the country, not to overcome conflicts.” This message, which was up until that point the strongest message issued by an American ambassador to the country’s political protagonists, was expressed in September 2014 in Skopje at an academic conference dedicated to the 100th anniversary of World War I, organized by the Institute for the Spiritual and Cultural Heritage of the Albanians. “Unfortunately, in many countries—and with regret I must say in this country too—I see leaders who think of politics as a short-term game for amassing wealth for themselves and their own party, which creates conflicts in the country, rather than help solve them. I think this is a recipe for the demolition of the state,” Wohlers said on that occasion.

When we bring all of this together and with the knowledge of events in Macedonia at the time, the impression is that the United States had “confidential information” that something serious was happening in the area of

corruption and organized crime in Macedonia. The events that followed after the elections in 2014, the opposition's decision to not recognize the results of the early parliamentary and regular presidential elections, the "bombs" of wiretapped conversations that began to "explode" at the beginning of 2015 and were followed by the proceedings and charges from the Special Public Prosecutor's—all this confirmed many previous speculations, findings and assumptions.

What was indicated in the "bombs" released by Zaev and the opposition was confirmed and fully analyzed by a group of experienced experts on systemic rule-of-law issues related to the monitoring of communications, which was the subject of the report and recommendations named after the leading German expert Reinhard Priebe, former director of the EU Enlargement Directorate. This analysis provided the main solutions contained in the Przino agreements.

The findings of Priebe's expert group "demonstrate serious incidents of political corruption at various levels and in multiple ways. Fighting this form of corruption will definitively need to become a top priority for the country. The problem of corruption would be worthy of a report all to itself; the fact that it is not addressed in detail in this report is not because the issue is not of great importance but because treating it as a side issue in a report the focus of which is elsewhere would not do justice to the problem. Corruption is the most serious problem facing the country apart from the specific issues arising from the current crisis, caused by the communications interception scandal, which is the primary focus of this report."

UBK (Office of Security and Counter Intelligence) Worked Outside of its Legal Mandate to Favor the Government

The wiretapping scandal revealed a massive violation of fundamental rights, including the right to participate in public affairs and the right to vote, the right to equal access to public services, the right to privacy and the protection of personal data, as well as the right to an independent and impartial trial. These findings in the Report confirmed the severity of the situation and provided the red flag for both the domestic and the international public and were a motive for decisive action.

“From 9 February 2015 to the present date, the opposition party SDSM has released a total of 36 packages of audio tapes of recorded telephone conversations of among others the Prime Minister, government Ministers, senior public officials, Mayors, Members of Parliament, the Speaker of the Parliament, opposition leaders, judges, the State Prosecutor, civil servants, journalists, editors and media owners into the public domain. The amount of material contained in these releases so far has reached around 500 pages of transcribed [*sic*] conversation. SDSM claims that it has access to over 20,000 such recorded conversations in total, and that these recordings have been made by the national intelligence services. The making of these recordings is generally acknowledged to have been illegal, to have taken place over a number of years and not to have been part of any legitimate court-sanctioned operations. The recordings are also of a quality, scale and number to be generally acknowledged to have been made inside the national intelligence service’s facilities. The content of many of the recordings provide indications of unlawful activities and abuse of power by senior government officials. The head of the intelligence service and two senior government Ministers have resigned since the start of the interception scandal in January 2015,” is stated in the part of the Report dedicated to the case with the “wiretapping”.

The wiretapped conversations, according to the Report, point to a violation of the fundamental rights of the individuals concerned, a serious violation of the legislation on the protection of personal data, as well as a violation of the 1961 Convention on Diplomatic Relations (Vienna Convention), taking into account the fact that diplomats were also illegally wiretapped. “[There is a] pparent direct involvement of senior government and party officials in illegal activities including electoral fraud, corruption, abuse of power and authority, conflict of interest, blackmail, extortion, (pressure on public employees to vote for a certain party with the threat to be fired), criminal damage, severe procurement procedure infringements aimed at gaining an illicit profit, nepotism and cronyism,”—the Report notes. Finally, independent experts state that “UBK works out of its legal mandate, on behalf of the government, to control senior officials in the public administration, prosecutors, judges and political opponents, which consequently interferes with the independence of the judiciary and other national institutions.”

Due to all these illegalities identified by the independent expert group of the European Commission headed by Reinhard Priebe, as well as due to the fact that the current public prosecutor’s office and other judicial institutions did not perform their legal functions and competences successfully and

efficiently (on the contrary - they helped to keep them hidden, covered up and downplayed the corruption and crime in the government structures), international mediators, along with the leaders of the four then most relevant parliamentary parties, following long and difficult negotiations reached a consensus and agreed to adopt a special Law on establishing Public Prosecutor's Office for criminal offenses related to and arising from the content of the illegally intercepted communication, in an expedited procedure in the Assembly. This Prosecutor's Office, due to the special law with which it was established, is popularly called the Special Public Prosecutor's Office (SJO). Prosecutor Katica Janeva was appointed at the helm, with consensus of the leaders of the four parliamentary parties.

The law was proposed and later adopted in Parliament (with the votes of almost all MPs from all parties) in order to regulate the jurisdiction, establishment, abolition, organization and functioning of the Public Prosecutor's Office for prosecution of crimes related to and arising from the content of illegally intercepted communication, the grounds for appointing and dismissing the public prosecutor for the prosecution of crimes related to and arising from the content of the illegally intercepted communication, as well as other issues related to the work of the Prosecutor's Office. The purpose of the proposed law was to regulate completely the issue of prosecuting crimes related to and arising from the content of the illegally intercepted communications. The law was based on the following principles: legality, autonomy of the public prosecutor who manages the Public Prosecutor's Office, hierarchy and subordination.

Politically Organized Crime "Hand in Hand" with the Captured State

The captured state and political organized crime are organically interconnected, they are mutually conditioned and can function only if the same or identical preconditions and ambience are met. This means: an authoritarian power whose power extends to all levers of government, i.e., absolute power; and a government leadership that uses its power of government for status profits and amassing wealth for the leader-autocrat and the party elite around him.

If there is a state captured by an authoritarian regime, there are also optimal conditions for politically organized crime. Therefore, politically organized crime in large doses and shapes is possible only in a captured state. However, in addition to these substantive preconditions, in order for these two

negative and retrograde social phenomena to survive and function, a number of other logistical tools and instruments are necessary. In this context, the most important elements that function like the fertile soil that creates and keeps in existence the captured state and politically organized crime, are electoral engineering (for the preservation and continuation of the hold on power) and wiretapping (for controlling and strengthening the hold on power).

These two components can only be realized from a position of power. From the position of the opposition they are almost impossible, unless the opposition has received or collected “dark money” from unknown or illegal sources for winning elections, which once power is captured can easily be concealed. Something similar to this happened with VMRO-DPMNE, a party that won the parliamentary elections in 2006 with a huge budget for propaganda, much larger than what was available to the party in power, and what is most telling is that they never gave nor were asked to submit a report on how it resolved the large deficit of the election account of about 3.5 million euros. The same may happen in the local elections in 2017 and in some future parliamentary elections, because the VMRO-DPMNE system, although it is no longer in power and the party is now in opposition, has installed its loyal people in the institutions and has accumulated huge amounts of money from politically organized crime in order to control some influential segments of the institutions, which also includes the electoral process, and to corrupt or condition larger social groups.

As a result of the autocratic rule, the capturing of the state and the politically organized crime of the leadership of the system that at the same time functioned as government, as party leadership and as a criminal association, two extremes arose: VMRO-DPMNE as a party became the richest political party in Europe, while the party-state leadership, i.e., the criminal association known as the “Family” became enormously wealthy.

Historical examples of the largest totalitarian regimes, such as Germany during Hitler’s rule, Russia during Stalin’s era, Spain during general Franco’s era, and several current dictatorships and authoritarian regimes throughout Europe, ending with Macedonia in the time of VMRO-DPMNE, show that they all came to power at a certain time by winning elections and that they remained in power and continued to rule by winning the elections, but also with another additional, but significant “element”. This “element” was the massive illegal wiretaps, surveillance and similar prohibited acts that controlled individuals, groups, parties, and even their most loyal members, supporters and

officials, to ensure that no unpleasant surprises come from the outside, and especially from within.

Electoral engineering and illegal wiretapping, in addition to being criminal acts, are powerful instruments for the successful and efficient functioning of politically organized crime. Within the framework of electoral engineering, as a form of politically organized crime that has the function of keeping the criminal government in power, we can identify two larger criminalized elements: electoral corruption and electoral crime.

In the context of politically organized crime it is worth mentioning that when the hold of power is extended in elections, there appear various forms of abuse of power with the goal of amassing material and financial wealth, gaining status and many other advantages for the narrowest structure of the government and the party.

VI

ELECTORAL ENGINEERING

Elections are one of the most democratic acts and an inevitable institution and instrument for the functioning of modern democratic societies and states. Elections are an expression and effectuation of the will of the majority of citizens in a state who then transfer their sovereignty to the party or coalition that has secured or formed a legal parliamentary majority and as a result formed a government. In normal democratic states, elections are an attempt to come power with the primary purpose of forming a government and implementing its programmatic ideas, policies and promises for a better life of the citizens. In democratic societies, parties go into elections with the awareness that the government can be lost (if they are in power), or not won. Therefore, in such states, all political entities pay the greatest attention to the elections, because it is on elections that their relevance in society and their survival on the political map depends. These postulates all refer to societies in which democracy and the rule of law function.

On the other hand, in countries where there is a lack of democratic capacity in the governing structures and where the rule of law does not apply, the elections represent the end-all and be-all, i.e., they are the fertile soil from which the authoritarian government, the captive state and politically organized crime sprout, grow, develop and attempt to survive for as long as possible. Seen through this lens, elections are a basic motive, a primary goal and an effective instrument for states with leaders with authoritarian features that intend to abuse the power of government for personal and party benefits and material wealth, with the help of politically organized crime. This only refers to political parties or groups that are already in power, that manifest an autocratic system of governance, that have won absolute power and have captured the state. This was confirmed in a very convincing and evidence-based manner the situation in Macedonia. The extent to which the state was captured and the extent to which the party used the state as its logistics for its electoral engineering, which allowed them to win ten times in a row in ten years all kinds of elections, was best illustrated with an assessment that hit at the very

heart of the matter, and which came from professor d-r Mirjana Maleska, who commenting on the local elections in 2013, claimed: "In the elections we had a fight between a party and the state"—referring to the duel and the unequal battle between the then opposition SDSM and the ruling VMRO-DPMNE.

In countries with authoritarian characteristics and criminalized conditions, elections are a top priority and an end in themselves for the system of governance. In these countries, of which of course, Macedonia during the governing system of VMRO-DPMNE is one of the most fascinating examples, the epilogue of elections is decided with the help of electoral engineering. Instead of a significant part of citizens freely expressing their will in the elections, the system uses electoral engineering to manipulate through propaganda, to corrupt with clientelistic offers, to unlawfully steal and falsify, thus turning it into a tool for the secured and continuous electoral victories. The elections, or more precisely the frequent snap elections, were therefore an effective form of staying in power and extending the rule for nearly eleven years. Finally, after the crimes of the government were uncovered and during the efforts to implement the Przino Agreements, when it felt like the end of the electoral engineering and the government was near, VMRO-DPMNE, in the peak of absurdity, began to think about and publicly demand early elections, with the aim to win, to push through "at least" an entire four-year mandate, even though throughout its time in power and manager to "push through" two and a half mandates!

EARLY ELECTIONS – THE FORMULA FOR CONTINUED GOVERNING

For many years after its independence, Macedonia was an example of a country in which early parliamentary elections were never held, and it was therefore said that citizens are poorer for this democratic experience which in some situations can be a solution to a social problem! In sixteen years the country had five cycles of regular parliamentary elections. Many have already forgotten that the last regular parliamentary elections held in the country were in the distant 2006. On the other hand, in the eight years that followed there were four cycles of early elections (2008, 2011, 2014, 2016). The first regular elections were held in 1990 when the Republic of Macedonia was still part of the former Yugoslavian Federation. This was followed by regular elections in 1994, 1998, 2002, and 2006, with the long stretch of regular parliamentary elections having been broken in 2008. The question arises: why is there such an interest for snap elections, and what are its origins?

Immediately after failing to join NATO at the 2008 Bucharest Summit, instead of resolving the name issue, as was suggested by then-President George W. Bush, and then being immediately admitted to NATO, the government of Nikola Gruevski decided to ride the wave of the people's discontent with the Greek veto and to go to snap elections, demanding from citizens more parliamentary seats "so that his hands may be freed to effectively solve problems". And he got what he asked for. The government then realized that early elections could be an extraordinary tool for an easy, painless and endless extension of their mandate, without having to give detailed explanations and reports on what had been promised and what had been accomplished. What is more, the scheduling of an early election depends exclusively on the majority in parliament, since it alone has formal and real power (number of MPs) to decide on its dissolution and to announce the elections. This was the case in the first early election, which was proposed by then opposition DUI, and supported by VMRO-DPMNE (at that time DUI already had the secret May agreement with Gruevski in his pocket, and in it, among other things, perhaps a provision for early elections that would place DUI instead of DPA in the government!)

From the experiences from the first snap elections, the leading parties VMRO-DPMNE and DUI learned three essential things that became a tool for the system of governance and for winning elections. The first, that the parliamentary majority they have can call early elections; the second, that not only can they formally call for elections, but can easily manufacture a problem that will require early elections; and third, that not only can they formally call for elections and easily manufacture a problem that will help them win the elections, but that they can also easily increase the number of their MPs by including in the Electoral Code, in the absence of the opposition, a decision to allow the Diaspora to vote in their own MPs.

A similar situation happened with the second snap parliamentary elections in 2011, only unlike the first, the proposal for calling elections this time came from VMRO-DPMNE ("provoked" by opposition SDSM's calls for early elections), and was supported by DUI. With the "Slupchane Case" to counter the "The Law of the Defenders Case" directly from government cabinets, with mutual extreme nationalism and as if with by remote control, inter-ethnic relations were sparked, and coalition partners, with guns cocked, blamed the other side of the two-headed government and demanded early elections! Using a manufactured soap opera and hard nationalism such as: "No one can take away the dignity of the Macedonian people" (Gruevski), that is, "Under no conditions will the Law of the Defenders pass if it does not protect the rights of

the fighters of the NLA” said Ahmeti, yet the ruling parties have improved the disrupted ratings and won the elections.

Inspired by the tried and tested “winning combination” of the first and the second early elections, VMRO-DPMNE-DUI manufactured and coerced the third early parliamentary elections in April 2014. It was reportedly due to a disagreement over a legitimate but insufficiently developed DUI proposal for a consensual candidate for president. In the first version, the proposal was to have consensus from all relevant parties from the government and the opposition, which was then hastily reduced to a consensus between the Macedonian and Albanian parties in the ruling coalition, only to eventually be transformed into a proposal for a new constitutional principle that would mean the establishment of a consensual democracy in a multiethnic society! After the epic soap opera with “prematurely and still-born consensus-president”, which provoked another disruption in inter-ethnic relations and which was the result of a secret agreement of mutual interest, DUI came out with their public “proposal” for early parliamentary elections, which VMRO-DPMNE expressly accepted as a “thrown down gauntlet”. Capturing the “gauntlet,” VMRO-DPMNE asked voters to give them 62 MPs in the Assembly, so that DUI cannot blackmail them even if they enter into a coalition with SDSM to “sell” the name. DUI asked for 25 MPs so that VMRO-DPMNE could in turn not blackmail them.

Given that the provided reasons for the third consecutive snap parliamentary elections in only six years had no real cover, but were manufactured in the most arrogant political manner which could only be afforded by an irresponsible authoritarian regime, it immediately became apparent that the motive of the two parties of the ruling coalition VMRO-DPMNE and DUI is not the one they were publically declaring. There was no disagreement over the “consensus president”, there was no “thrown and caught gauntlet” around the thesis that VMRO-DPMNE is asking for 62 MPs from the citizens so they may not be blackmailed by DUI and the Albanians and vice versa, but rather the governance system estimated that the spring of 2014 is the best, if not the last moment, in which two simultaneous and parallel electoral cycles could take place (regular presidential and early parliamentary), and that with “one shot” they would score “three goals”.

The first, and the most important one, to catch off guard the unconsolidated opposition, which was at the time in a post-crisis mode after the internal change of leadership, and with the help of already tried and tested electoral engineering, secure their decisive electoral defeat that SDSM will not be able to

recover from, so that it will either split into fractions or fall apart. In this way, without a strong opposition, in peace and under no pressure, they will “wash and iron out the dirty laundry” of their crimes that SDSM had detected and documented at the highest level of leadership in VMRO-DPMNE. The second goal was to maintain its hold over the office of the President of the Republic. The third goal was to use the anticipated and well-managed convincing victory, to rule without a strong opposition and with absolute power at all levels, so that the system can continue to function unhindered, and the party elite can enjoy the privileges and wealth that accompanies unchecked rule.

The fourth snap parliamentary elections came as the result of the crisis in the country that was created after the opposition SDSM, immediately after the vote was over and the polls were closed in the previous parliamentary and presidential elections on April 27, 2014, had announced that they did not recognize the election process and the results of the elections. “The government has committed election robbery,” opposition leader and SDSM leader Zoran Zaev said, noting that “there is no article in the electoral law that the government has not violated; all articles of the Criminal Code that refer to the elections have been violated.” During his speech, he called for new elections in which the people would choose the government of their own free will and persuasion.

From then on, the crisis deepened by the day. The opposition was out of Parliament, and the government did whatever it wanted, however it wanted. At the beginning of 2015, the government accused the leader of the opposition of a “putsch” because he had informed the prime minister he was in the possession of recorded conversations from illegal wiretaps by the secret services and had demanded the establishment of a technical government and new early parliamentary elections, and at the same time had asked the Public Prosecutor’s Office to investigate and prosecute. Ten days later, the opposition leader Zoran Zaev revealed the “Wiretapping” scandal, accusing the government of illegally wiretapping more than 25.000 people - politicians, intellectuals, journalists, businesspeople, diplomats - as part of the project “The Truth About Macedonia”, and began publishing the so-called “bombs” - audio recordings of conversations by high-ranking officials from the government in which they implicated themselves in alleged criminal activities.

As a result of the crisis, the international community took the role of intermediary and concluded the process with the two Prizno 1 and Prizno 2 agreements, of June and July 2015, signed by the leaders of the four relevant parliamentary parties: VMRO-DPMNE, SDSM, DUI and DPA, the conditions of

which included a technical government that would conduct the early elections, amendments to the Election Law, election of a new composition of the State Election Commission, and the adoption of a Law on a Special Public Prosecutor's Office, which would investigate and resolve the unlawfully wiretapped conversations. Then the snap elections were scheduled for April 24th 2016. However, due to the continuation of the crisis and the obstruction of the solutions from the Przino agreements by the government, they were postponed twice to finally be held on December 11th and recognized by all participants. Because of the narrow result and the low number of MPs on both sides: VMRO-DPMNE-51 and SDSM-49, the ruling party was unable to secure a parliamentary majority and form a government and a new government was formed by SDSM. Finally, the early elections, which were the main tool of the system of government of VMRO-DPMNE and from which they profited and used to extend their rule on three occasions, returned for the fourth time as a boomerang - as a Pyrrhic victory - and they lost power.

Behind the formal implementation of the election processes and despite the VMRO-DPMNE-DUI coalition's best attempts to conceal this, there were many indications pointing to the facts that in the captured state, the authoritarian government practiced electoral engineering with the help of electoral corruption and electoral crime, which is how they won the elections. In its ten years in power, VMRO-DPMNE won the four early parliamentary elections (2008, 2011, 2014, 2016), two presidential elections (2009, 2014), and the local elections in 2009 and 2013.

It should be noted that since the victories in the local elections in 2005 and the regular parliamentary elections (as the opposition) in 2006, VMRO-DPMNE has collected a series of ten victories and is a party that had managed to hold on to power for almost eleven years, which is more than any other party in the relatively short parliamentary history of Macedonia. VMRO-DPMNE failed to verify its narrow victory in the early parliamentary elections in late 2016, with a difference of only two seats in Parliament ahead of SDSM (51:49), and was unable to form a parliamentary majority, since none of the parliamentary parties of the Albanian community accepted it as a coalition partner. A new parliamentary majority and a new coalition were formed, and the party that captured the state, after its many obstructions and violence against the institutions and the parliamentary democratic procedures and the violations of the Constitution and laws, was forced to step down. The narrow victory of these early parliamentary elections was in fact a defeat, since the majority of citizens opted for changes and reforms in the country, and against the will of

the majority, despite the most diverse obstructions and attempts to violently remain in power, VMRO-DPMNE could not come out as a winner.

TEN YEARS - TEN ELECTORAL VICTORIES IN A ROW

The governing system of VMRO-DPMNE, as well as other processes in the country, had developed a complete system of electoral engineering that guaranteed victory in all elections. For its logistics, electoral engineering had the resources of the state institutions at hand, which during the election processes were fully put into function in the interests of the party. Considering the fact that electoral engineering includes, among other things, unlawful/criminal actions, and those actions are conceived, organized and carried out by a larger group/association, which what is more is also a group of people that hold high-ranking positions in government and politics—what we have is a politically organized crime perpetrated by a criminal association.

On October 10th 2011, only a few days before it was supposed to end, the government abruptly cancelled the official census of the population and property, with the claim that it will not allow census fraud—a claim that was never elaborated. According to those who are familiar with the party's internal affairs, at the same time and by activating its disciplined party army, VMRO-DPMNE conducted a party census in the function of feeding its electoral engineering. By going door to door or from neighbor to neighbor (in cases when the door was slammed on them or no one answered), the system collected data in order to get answers to three questions that were important for the party in terms of the election: (1) which citizens prefers which party, (2) which citizens are deceased, (3) which citizens have moved out of the country. On the eve of the 2013 local elections, a few critically-minded media published their investigative stories in which they provided facts to reveal that the system had made such election census lists, and also showed what these lists looked like—first and last names (with streets, numbers and apartments) written down in markers with different colors, which signified party affiliation, and singled out undecided voters.

Then, following party directives, this data was 'processed,' i.e., they were put to 'work' to determine the 'melting point' of the undecided and the hesitant, using the 'carrot and stick,' or the better known Serbian proverb loosely translated as "if nice doesn't work, then force will" (*ако не милом, онда силом*). A person that has a lower "melting point" will be persuaded or bought, and

those who do not “melt” with promises or money will be blackmailed with threats that members of the family who work in the state and public sector will be fired, with threats that inspections will be sent to family businesses and shops, along with similar specialties from the arsenal of the system of government. After this type of data was collected and processed, it paved the way for electoral engineering, which the system of government essentially based on two elements: electoral corruption and electoral crime.

Electoral corruption is the milder form, i.e., it lies on the fence between assistance and crime. It involves the establishment of a clientelistic relationship, that is, the bribing of the will of certain major social categories of citizens who are in some way dependent on the government, on the pretext that the state helps them live better, work, study and get medical attention: social assistance beneficiaries depend on their social assistance, the unemployed and party supporters depend on promises of employment, the administration depends on their jobs and salaries, the pensioners on pension increases, students depend on scholarships and spots in student housing, farmers on subsidies, artists on awards and state pensions, the sick depend on medication and surgeries, the prisoners on pardons, etc.

Electoral crime on the other hand is a classic form of crime that is prosecuted under acts from the Criminal Code. The electoral crime includes a whole range of illegal acts that the system of governance has developed to perfection and successfully applied them without consequence until the appearance of the unlawfully wiretapped conversations that were released by then opposition leader Zoran Zaev in the so-called “Bombs”. These revealed how cunning the system of governance was and in what ways and with what means it organized and perpetrated electoral crime: violence, forgery, theft, various “Bulgarian trains” and “Serbian buses”, “Chinese pens”, bribes, threats, changes of identity, and similar stretches of the imagination that a reasonable person or a decent democratic party would not have come up with.

With perfectly developed and deceitful electoral engineering, the system could model the electoral processes: to increase voter turnout according to needs (even though there was data to suggest that nearly a quarter of the population had emigrated from the country), to win continuously in ten electoral cycles, to win as many seats in parliament as required by leader (61 or 63), so that they can even form a government independently, that is without the need for a coalition. Electoral engineering especially came into prominence after the early parliamentary elections in 2011 when VMRO-DPMNE won the

elections, but the opposition parties and coalitions won more votes. However, they saw benefit from this as they did not go into the elections as a coalition, but individually.

It was the red flag for the system of governance to develop a new approach in electoral engineering that would not allow for any surprises and under which VMRO-DPMNE would continuously call snap elections and convincingly win them. During the reign of VMRO-DPMNE, and especially after 2011, the secret services were also involved in the logistics of electoral engineering, charged with eavesdropping on political opponents, but also their some from their own party, so as to avoid any surprises. In this context there is one more fact that must be emphasized and which was a characteristic both of the governing and of the election processes in the VMRO-DPMNE era—that many media that were critical to the government were closed or forced into folding: above all the most powerful TV A1, several relevant daily newspapers: “Vreme”, “Shpic”, “Koha”, “Denes”, “Dneven Fokus”, the weekly newspapers “Globus” and “Gragjanski.” This process was completed at the end of VMRO-DPMNE’s mandate, with a decision on part of the owners of the company MPM (Orce Kamcev, Srdjan Kerim, Jana Stanisavleva, Alexander Dinev) who are all close to VMRO-DPMNE, to fold all the publications of this former media giant, “Utrinski Vesnik”, “Vest”, “Dnevnik” and the web-portal “Telegraf”. With this we can note that VMRO-DPMNE’s governance system become the undertaker of media in Macedonia. After the brutal single-use abuse of the media—for its own propaganda, to manipulate the will of the citizens and to capture the state, and some of them also for politically organized crime, it closed them down and tossed them in the dumping grounds of history, leaving the general public with almost no print media.

After the uncertain elections in 2011, the system of governance carried out a large party-initiated statistical operation—an inventory of voters throughout the country, studying and instrumentalizing the Voters’ List. The administration (fully politicized) became the main source for staffing election commissions at all levels (vote counters that worked according to Stalin’s maxim, paraphrased - it does not matter who voted and how, but who counts the votes), managed the increased voter turnout and increased the number of votes for the ruling party, and developed many subsystems of electoral engineering, both in the area of electoral corruption and in the area of electoral crime. We had a strange trend: the more the governing party’s rating fell, the more convincing their victories in increased voter turnout. The effects of the “measures” adopted by the system of governance had already become clear in

the 2013 local elections, and in the early parliamentary and presidential elections in 2014.

In the local elections, VMRO-DPMNE won 58 and SDSM only four mayoral seats, with similar ratios in the number of municipal councilors, although the differences were not as pronounced. In the early parliamentary elections and in the regular presidential elections, VMRO-DPMNE won about 480.000 votes and 62 seats and SDSM about 280.000 votes and 34 seats in the parliament. In the presidential election, , the candidate of the ruling party won for the second time with a hundred thousand votes ahead of his opponent from SDSM. This surprising result was generated by the second accompanying and even stranger trend: the increased turnout in the elections. Here is what the numbers say. In the regular parliamentary elections in 2008 when VMRO-DPMNE won, turnout was 53.58%. In the early parliamentary elections in 2008 it was 57.06 percent, in 2011 - 63.48 percent, and in 2014 - 62.96 percent, with 1,821,122 registered in the 2011 election and in 2014 about 1,780,000 voters. Turnout increased despite the fact that there were no long lines at the border crossings and at airports, no lanes full of cars entering the country, no bus convoys, special trains and charter airplanes from abroad that were bringing the voters to the country on the days of the elections. An additional element that makes this increase seem even more absurd is the fact that this was happening at a time when the turnout of the Albanian electorate was decreasing with each election and had come down to about 50 percent. In these conditions it can be concluded that the actual turnout of the ethnic Macedonian voter turnout reached up to eighty percent, which is far from the facts and defies logic.

Electoral Corruption

Within the framework of the election corruption, the VMRO-DPMNE governing system, assisted by DUI as its long-standing coalition partner, had developed a massive and almost ideal system of clientelism. And for there to be clientelism, by definition, there must be enough money and specific services to go around.

In half of the time it was in power, considering that there was some type of election cycle every year (2008, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2016), the VMRO-DPMNE system of government, would not start elections without a budget specifically structured around the elections and electoral loans of no less than 220 million euros—weather it was from the IMF (earmarked for extinguishing

possible “fires” in the budget) or from the World Bank (for budget consolidation) or from Deutsche Bank (for unspecified needs of the government), or from domestic banks). In this way, the VMRO-DPMNE governing system created a scheme for guaranteed election victories based on the habits from the famous dimmed and smoky “Balkan cellar”, well captured in this lucid description by the columnist Arsim Zekoli: “You get as many votes as you spend money for”.

Proof that the government was using budget funds, collected from citizens and private companies, to corrupt large social groups and entire segments of the population in the elections—administrators, pensioners, farmers, social assistance beneficiaries, the unemployed—can be found in the frequency of budget payments for social transfers. In 2011, 2013, 2014 and 2016, in which elections were held in the first half of the year (the exception here is 2016, but even though the elections were postponed, against the will of VMRO-DPMNE and due to the political crisis, and held in December, they were nevertheless planned for April 2016), the payments of budget funds for social transfers in the first months were much larger than, for instance, in 2012 or 2015, when no elections were held.

Pensioners and social assistance beneficiaries received linear increases in pensions and assistance, farmers received both the owed and some of their future subsidies, winegrowers and tobacco growers were paid for the purchased grapes and tobacco, victims of floods received damages. All those tens of thousands of people, angered by poverty, would be given their one-time reward before the elections and reminded of the need to show their gratitude to the “humanitarian and generous” government, even though they were only being paid what they were entitled to by law, which was regular increases of pensions and social assistance to keep up with the cost of living and salaries, the normal payment of subsidies and payments for the grapes and tobacco that was sold. Of course, nothing was serviced from the private accounts of the high-ranking officials that were praised publically as humanitarians!

When we put together all these projects, promises, jobs and donations, we can conclude that this was a case of attempted electoral corruption of several hundred thousand citizens, and when we look at all the categories that are covered, we can see that almost everyone in the country was targeted and processed for the elections: not a single social layer or group of citizens was left out. Even though this involved many hundreds of thousands of citizens, and despite the subsidies, the pension increases, the social assistance, the jobs, the increased minimum wage, the free house calls and pharmacy runs, the free bus

rides, the skiing and other benefits and privileges—it should be noted that not everyone noted for VMRO-DPMNE. Nevertheless, the system of governance managed in this way to secure the decisive advantage it needed of a hundred thousand votes!

Electoral crime

In the captured state, by definition, the election process involves various criminal acts, on the top of which we have several tried and tested and universal criminal electoral maxima that bring election victories. A number of these are interesting to note, some as experiences from other societies, some as combinations of global experiences applied at home, some as indigenous domestic inventions of the ruling system of VMRO-DPMNE.

In the last few election cycles in Macedonia, in addition to the familiar and world-renowned electoral “specialty” from the time of Stalin’s USSR that “aside from the voters, the election result depends most of all on those counting the votes,” we also saw implemented the invention from Ivo Sanader’s Croatia that “elections are won with one third of the money on the table and two-thirds of the money under the table.” Several new and indigenous to Macedonia “electoral innovations” were also inaugurated, among which the most significant was the “invention” of Gruevski’s system: “eavesdropping on your opponent and managing the electoral process to secure victory with a result of your choosing!” Incidentally, this “invention” was also practiced in many other spheres and for a variety of purposes.

One of Gruevism’s maxims for victory in elections was that elections are bought with money, and if they cannot be bought with money, then they will be bought with a lot of money, which was accompanied by pressure, violence and blackmail. Among the more significant electoral innovations was that the system of governance, even before the start of the elections and as if in a card game “starts with a three point lead,” since it has previously put in the work to secure enough clientele-based and fake votes for victory, in addition of course to the secure votes from its large pool of party membership. The system also became known for its invention in which the main role was given to the employees in the state and public administration under the principle “one leads and ten more follow,” according to which every employee in the administration or an indebted party soldier and sympathizer is charged with persuading and bringing to the polls anywhere between two to fifteen people (relatives,

friends, partners, etc) that will vote for VMRO-DPMNE. The most original innovation, on the other hand, was the role of the “printer” of new ID cards and passports in the Ministry of Interior (some with a legal validity period, some only for single use) in the electoral process (for the phantom voters taken from Pustec, Kavadarci, Veles, Sveti Nikole, Gazi Baba to Skopje and anywhere else there was a need to improve the standing, i.e., the number of votes for MPs or mayors from the ruling party).

Finally, if the previous elements proved insufficient, then the election results depended on the political superiority, i.e., the interests-based coalitions within the State Electoral Commission (SEC), where voting was party-based rather than based on the law, as the profits for the parties from the elections became more important in this Commission than the respect of the Constitution and the laws. If this too was not enough, the power of government in the Administrative Court stepped on the scene! If we carefully analyze the decisions made by the Administrative Court on election lawsuits or the decisions of the SEC, we can note lawsuits brought by the opposition were rarely or never accepted (and the few that were accepted were formal and did not affect the final election result), while the administrative judges’ decisions on the complaints were identical to whatever the VMRO-DPMNE members in the SEC had voted for! Because of all this, for which there were indications in the wiretapped recordings, the Special Public Prosecutor’s Office indicted five judges of the Administrative Court, as well as four members of the State Election Commission.

Electoral crime, that is, the most profound and harmful source of election crime, was directly related to three elements: (1) the Voters List and the institutions responsible for keeping it up to date, primarily the Ministry of Interior and the SEC, (2) the electoral bodies, headed by the SEC and administrative courts (the Administrative and Higher Administrative Court) that are responsible for the election process and decide on lawsuits related to election irregularities; and (3) the MoI, the prosecutors offices and the courts that are supposed to detect and sanction electoral crime.

In the history of democratic societies, there is almost no case of ideally regular, fair and democratic elections in which the freely expressed will of the citizens /voters is expressed to the fullest. Every government has some minimal advantage going into an election, even if this is only a psychological advantage, which gives privilege to the position of power. However, there are several general criteria and observations that international and domestic

observers, as well as ordinary citizens who participate in the election process, can use to assess whether elections are regular, fair and democratic. Such a degree of fair and democratic elections has been established and is maintained in countries with longer democratic traditions and with the inviolable rule of law, where even if irregularities do occur, those responsible will answer before the courts. In those countries elections are brought to the level of a procedural routine that is not abused.

Unlike these countries and societies, there is a large group of countries where the democratic processes and the rule of law are not sufficiently developed or are consciously blocked so that governments can rule without limits and according to their will and interests, rather than the will and interests of the majority of citizens, of the state and of the community. In such societies, therefore, there are no basic preconditions for a regular, free, fair and democratic election contest, because the governments will go to any length to make sure they win the elections and stay in power. Over the last ten years, Macedonia can be classified as being among those countries that do not have fair and democratic elections.

One of the preconditions that enabled the government to organize unfair and undemocratic elections in Macedonia lay, among other things, in the abuse of the Voters List. The government deliberately cancelled the largest statistical operation in 2011, the population census, with an extremely strange explanation that they were allegedly “preventing census fraud” (without explaining who had attempted the fraud, especially since it is the government that organizes and controls the process), when in fact, among other things, this enabled the continuation of the manipulations with the number of voters, i.e., the deceased and the emigrants, so that ‘the dead’ and those with ‘changed personalities’ could vote in the elections (the emigrated, those who had cancelled their citizenship).

The Voter List has been completely contested over the last few years, even though it was the go-to contentious issue between all governments and all oppositions in more than two decades of transition. In the elections between 2008 and 2016, the early parliamentary and the regular presidential and local, a significant discrepancy was noted in the Voters List: of just over two million citizens in Macedonia, about 1,779,000 people had the right to vote. Based on the ratio population to voters, it turns out that only about 12-13 percent of the population are minors up to the age of 17, which is unrealistic, considering that the State Statistical Office puts this age group at 436,000 people. Furthermore,

it was claimed that 7.5 percent, or about 130,000 of the voters, had moved abroad, when according to the World Bank and other relevant international institutions about 450,000 people emigrated from Macedonia in the last ten years. All in all, there were large and illogical discrepancies in numbers. When this is how things are set up in principle and in substance, then it is easy to corrupt, abuse, manipulate and forge—and win in elections.

For the early elections in 2016, under the obligations from the Przino agreements, the Voters List had to be revised and cleaned. However, despite the cross-referenced data from several institutions and the hundreds of thousands of “phantom” voters that were discovered, in the final tally there were about 30,000 names erased, along with 130 thousand that were registered as being abroad. At least the deceased were removed from the Voters List, as well as the voters from Pustec, Albania, who were more of a ‘red herring’ to distract from the real electoral crime—the falsified personal and travel documents, the double identities, the numerous voters in single apartments that were unknown to the owners, the added non-existent floors and non-existent apartment building numbers filled with names of voters, the fifty voters in villages with two or three inhabitants, and similar absurdities.

The electoral bodies and, in particular the SEC, instead of constantly being vigilant about irregularities, were always on the lookout for party interests; they were selective, subjective, calculating, all with the goal of helping the political option that they represent and for which they advocate, and as a result, the more numerous and the more powerful win the elections, who are of course those who are already in power. It was the Ministry of Interior that was the blame for the unrealistically high number of voters on the Voters List. MVRO-VMRO, as this ministry operated during the elections (according to the minister’s own words), manufactured new voters by issuing personal documents, changing identities, providing single voters with multiple ID cards so that they can vote in several places, where there was a need. They were also responsible for the voters from Pustec, who voted both as foreigners in the Embassy in Tirana and as domestic residents, with ID cards issued for Skopje, Resen, Kicevo and who knows where else. Neither MoI nor the Public Prosecutor’s Office intervened against the obvious election crime, few criminal charges were brought, and almost none of them ended in convictions for electoral crime in the courts. Thus, the electoral crime of the governing system of VMRO-DPMNE was closed in a circle and remained undetected, even though there were serious indications and evidence, which only changed with the announcement of Zaev’s bombs, when things went downhill for the system.

Everything will be revealed and cleared when the trials begin for the charges that the Special Public Prosecutor's Office have brought for this type of crime.

There are numerous indications, but also evidence that was investigated and collected by the Special Public Prosecutor's Office, that the VMRO-DPMNE system of government, which was led by a criminal association composed of the most senior members of the party, developed and applied criminal acts through which they compelled large segments of the population to vote as they instructed, despite their will and affiliation.

One of the most serious crimes that the system was determined to have committed was the illegal wiretapping of political opponents, which was done in continuity but became more pronounced before and during the election process. In this way, the system could intercept, obstruct, break down and devalue all ideas, policies, tactics and strategies prepared by their political rivals and regularly defeat them. One of the most brazen crimes that not only falsified the people's electoral will, but also violated their human dignity, was the system one leads (an administration or party employee, an ordinary person or a businessperson who received some benefit from the party such as a procurement tender, a job, a discount or similar)—five, ten, fifteen or twenty follow! Namely, many who were indebted to the party in some way were forced to bring to the polls five, ten, fifteen or twenty of their relatives, friends, employees, etc. who were to vote and provide some type of confirmation that they voted—either a recording of the ballot made with a cell phone, or a mark left on the ballot in the form of a dot, a circle, a dash, or a similar sign. These lists were secured by investigative journalists, but the partisan prosecution did not initiate an investigation into this practice.

The criminal association had built a system for checking party loyalty, but also for checking the reliability of the promised vote of the potential new voter for the party. In anticipation of the early parliamentary elections in 2014, the system did a test run by collecting signatures for the VMRO-DPMNE candidate for President of the Republic, Gjorge Ivanov. They tested civil servants and persons who were employed with limited contracts, with the promise that after the elections they would be rewarded with permanent contracts. The civil servants were required to secure at least three signatures for Ivanov's candidacy from among the supporters and undecided voters, but not members of VMRO-DPMNE, while those who were waiting for jobs were supposed to provide ten. In this way (along with the signatures of the members of the party and the supporters of the candidate), 63,000 signatures were collected in three

days. The same people who signed the bid for candidacy, in order to complete their end of the deal, were required to also vote for the ruling party in the early parliamentary elections.

The surveillance for these individuals, in order to make sure that they actually showed up at the polling stations to vote, was multilayered. Firstly, their 'recruiters/mentors' were responsible for bringing them to the polling stations or checking in to ask if they voted. Then, to make sure that no one bails on their commitment, individuals from the party's local committee checked to make sure everyone showed up to vote, and if they had not voted until 4 pm, special groups for 'quick interventions' were activated to knock on the door of the voters who failed to show up and reminded them of their obligation. This scheme employed by the system was detected by an anonymous direct participant and published in media critical about the government. In this way, the system of governance secured several tens of thousands of guaranteed votes immediately after the elections were scheduled.

Through the Ministry of Interior and in other ways, a whole industry of producing forged personal IDs and passports was developed and given to people so that they may vote in the place of deceased persons, persons who had emigrated abroad and who never voted; identities and photographs of people were replaced for this to work. In the Voter List, non-existent streets and non-existent building numbers were inserted, while buildings with two floors had an extra floor or an extra entrance number added. In villages with three or four inhabitants, fifty voted in the elections. In several apartments in Skopje, Resen and Kichevo, fifty, sixty or even seventy voters were registered in a single apartment, and most of these were from Pustec, Albania. They were given identity cards with addresses and residence in Skopje, which they did not even know how to read out—all for election purposes. Electoral crime included abuse of office in almost all embassies, where partisan diplomats, assisted by the specially sent and trained MFA officials, were mobilized to ensure that the ruling party got all three seats from the Diaspora. This system was effectively implemented and all three seats from the diaspora were always secured.

As an illustration, I will quote two of the wiretapped conversations that were presented in the "bombs" by then leader of the opposition Zaev and which represent how the system of electoral engineering operated in practice. The first conversation was between then Minister of Interior and the Secretary General of the Government: "The Voters List is closed"—"I don't know if something is being printed in the meantime. These cards (IDs) are all printed out

.” – “They are printed, people are taking them. There is one risky thing, but we knew about it, so which is why we insisted that the committee provide more addresses. As you know, we have 50 people in 40-square-meter apartments. But it is what it is.” In another conversation between the same minister and an employee of the Ministry, among other things, they say: “So, this is the situation. The checks are negative, considering they reported 42 voters in a single house in villages with 40 voters. In one house they put 44, somewhere 19, somewhere 22, somewhere 42.” – “I agree Vicky, we can no longer have a situation where a village that has 5 voters gets 40 new voters.”

The so-called “Bulgarian train” was also one of the methods in the elections. Someone from the electoral commission in an already agreed upon polling station would steal a blank ballot and give it to a party activist. The party activist would then fill out the ballot with a vote for the party’s candidate and give it to a party voter. The voter places that ballot in the ballot box and the empty ballot they receive at the polling place is then taken out and given to the party activist, who again fills out the ballot and gives it to the next party voter. In this way they can control the vote of as many voters as they choose—five, ten, fifty. Another option is “the Serbian bus” in its Macedonian version. For example, from Kavadarci, Veles or some other town where the party certainly wins, a bus full of party activists goes to Skopje and heads to polling stations for which the party has estimated that the result will be uncertain. In their pockets they have several ID cards with their photographs but other people’s identities. They may also be real ID cards, if they previously reported that they live in the Center municipality in Skopje at an address where they were needed to help out the party. “The bus” would go not only to Skopje, but to some other places as well, such as Resen, Kicevo and others.

There are two more tricks that the system is known to have used in rigging the election process. The first, a “Chinese pen” in the form of a ring which those who count the votes use to mark in some way ballots for the opposing party, thus making the ballot inadmissible. The other trick was to use a special marker for certain pre-determined voters which can be erased right away, allowing them to vote at another polling station in a different name, as opposed to the regular markers used in elections that leave a stain on the voters’ thumbs that last for days.

Although the early elections in December 2016 were recognized by all parties, a number of puzzles remained. The biggest doubts are around the fact that the scandals with the two or three missing machines for printing personal

documents from the Ministry of Interior, as well as the scandal of ‘factories for ID cards and passports’ run by private persons who worked for MoI, were never cleared. This list also includes the scandal with the 35,000 double ID cards in the MOI depot, which was discovered by the then technical minister of the Interior Ministry, and for which it would surprise no one if it turned out that they were only an easy bait, or a decoy to draw attention away from the who knows how many more such IDs were left in circulation, to be used to secure “phantoms” to vote for VMRO-DPMNE. All of this may provide an answer to the question of how it is possible that, despite scandals of wiretapped conversations, discovered crimes and investigations and charges brought by the Special Public Prosecutor’s Office, the party won almost the same number of votes as in 2014! In order to resolve these serious suspicion, it will be necessary to compare, i.e., to see if the number of voters registered in the Voters List is the same as the number of photographs of voters, because for the first time in the elections in 2016, photographs from the MOI database (photographs of ID cards, passports and driver’s licenses) were used for identification. If differences are noted, then these differences will mean that one photo was used with several different names.

VII

WIRETAPPING

Illegal wiretapping of communications in times of a technological boom in this area, when for the most part, the entirety of our lives and work relies on computers, mobile phones and the internet, is an usurpation of the highest order of people's intimacy and businesses, the most flagrant violation of basic human rights and freedoms, and a very serious type of organized crime. Massive illegal wiretapping for political and criminal ends is the height of impertinence on part of the government and the institutions in a country, which following this violation, can be qualified in no other way except as a captured state, i.e., as a state belonging to the political mafia. Perhaps the most massive wiretapping in more recent European history happened in Macedonia in the period between 2008 and 2015, and there is evidence the wiretapping continued after the scandal, in 2015 and 2016, while the governing party was still very much holding on to the strings pulling government, hoping to somehow pull itself out of its predicament and continue to govern with the help of the existing system of government and a win in the elections.

The majority of the governments' members, supporters, clients and dependents did not take seriously the scope and the harm caused by the wiretapping, taking instead at face value the spin doctors' constructs peddled in the form of aggressive propaganda on pro-government media, that the conversations were doctored, edited and stitched together and provided by foreign agents in order to harm the highest ranking officials of the government, the party and especially the leader, and to remove VMRO-DPMNE from power. On the other hand, the scandal caused outrage among the opposition and freedom-loving and free-thinking citizens, the international community and international factors, who rallied firmly behind the need to get to the bottom of the scandal, and for those responsible to be held to account, both politically and legally. The wiretapping scandal was the reason for the *Przhino* agreements, the establishment of the special public prosecutor's office for the crimes related to the illegal wiretapping of communications and the crimes revealed from its content, the Report and Urgent Reform Priorities provided by

the expert group led by Reinhardt Priebe, the establishment of a technical government for organizing snap parliamentary elections, as well as all else that followed. The officials ignored and obstructed, and seemingly avoided political responsibility. The legal, i.e., judicial resolution has already begun, despite the obstructions from the institutions of the captured state, and will certainly be concluded with punishments for all those who violated the laws.

The mass illegal wiretapping of communications turned out to be not only an innate character flaw and a lack of basic democratic capacities on part of the VMRO-DPMNE party and its leadership, but it also became its bitter fate, as it accelerated their fall from the throne of government, which additionally meant taking on the full burden of all political and legal consequences of all that is to follow once the trials have begun. VMRO-DPMNE, as a party that twice led the government in Macedonia (1998-2002 and 2006-2017), was twice the subject of large scandals related to mass wiretapping, which was illegally conducted by secret agencies controlled by high-ranking party officials.

The “Big Ear” scandal broke out at the end of 2000, when then opposition SDSM’s president Branko Crvenkovski released transcripts of wiretapped conversations of politicians, journalists and diplomats. Forensics conducted in 2001 revealed the MOI and “Macedonian Telecommunications” had adequate equipment for wiretapping. Two years later, then Minister of Internal Affairs Dosta Dimovska and the head of the Bureau for operative equipment at MOI, Aleksandar Cvetkov were charged for the wiretapping. The Skopje Public Prosecutor charged them with having ordered the act, but then President of the Republic, Boris Trajkovski, granted their pardons and they did not face legal consequences for the act of which they were accused.

In 2007, seven years after the fact, the wiretapping scandal “Big Ear” got its judicial epilogue. All of the seventeen journalists who sued the government (many more were subject to wiretapping, but not all of them sued) received court confirmations that the wiretapping did indeed take place, that the wiretapping was conducted for political purposes and that the journalists’ human rights were violated, for which the court determined monetary compensation. Due to the marathon trial that was drawn out for almost seven years, the Strasbourg Human Rights Court verdict determined that the journalists’ human right to a reasonable time for trial was violated and determined adequate monetary compensation.

Creating “Putsch” to Intercept and Prevent “Wiretapping”

The “Wiretapping” scandal was made public on February 9th 2015, even though the public had speculated that massive wiretapping was taking place as early as the autumn of 2014 and the publication of evidence of wiretapping came several months before the scandal broke out, and followed several occasions in which the president of the then opposition SDSM Zoran Zaev announced that he had compromising materials. The “wiretapping” scandal was a continuation of the political and institutional crisis that rocked Macedonia after serious doubts about electoral irregularities, fraud and falsifications of the electoral processes. The opposition SDSM had decided not to go through with the election process, and as the polls were closing after the snap parliamentary elections and the second round of presidential elections and before the counting of ballots began, at 7 pm on April 27th 2014, they decided to contest the election process and not to accept the election results. That evening, SDSM leader Zoran Zaev laid out five demands for a dialogue with the government to overcome the crisis that was just announced: separating the party from the state, regulating the media, clarifying the election legislation, conducting a population census and forming a technical government six months prior to all elections that will plan and organize the election process.

In the beginning, VMRO-DPMNE and Nikola Gruevski did not accept any negotiations and conditions. They then accepted four conditions, with the exception of forming a technical government to organize elections. After the system of governance realized that the leader of the opposition was not bluffing, knowing what was going to be said at an upcoming meeting between Gruevski and Zaev in Gruevski’s cabinet, at the request of Gruevski, the secret services installed equipment and recorded the conversation in which Zaev said that he has taped conversations, demanded the fulfillment of his previously stated conditions, as well as demanded the resignation of Gruevski as prime minister. The recordings of the meeting, covered under special investigative measures (PIM), were supposed to serve to intercept the publication of the wiretapping scandal.

In an act by the system, in coordination with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the UBK, the scandal with the code name “*Putsch*” came about. Four people were suspected in it: “The first suspect, Zoran Verushevski, former director of the Security and Intelligence Directorate, according to police findings, was charged with a crime of “espionage” (Article 316, paragraph 4 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Macedonia), and “aiding violence against

representatives of the highest state authorities" (Art.311 with Art.24 from the Criminal Code). According to the police, "in the period from 2012 to the present, he obtained secret data related to the work of the competent authorities in the Republic of Macedonia in the form of documents, photographs, names and other data related to the socio-political, economic and security situation in the country, with the intention of communicating and handing it over to a foreign country, organization or person serving them." The second suspect, his wife Sonja Verushevska, helped in the execution of these acts. The third suspect, Branko Palifrov, a municipal official in Strumica, was charged with "violence against representatives of the highest state bodies" (article 311 with article 24 of the Criminal Code). The fourth suspect, Zoran Zaev, president of the main opposition party SDSM and then Mayor of the Municipality of Strumica, was charged with "violence against representatives of the highest state bodies" (article 311 article 19 in attempt). He is charged with evidence that during four meetings with the Prime Minister (September, October and November 2014), according to the Ministry of Interior, "he clearly and categorically warned the Prime Minister that he possesses evidence of a compromising nature for holders of high public, official and state functions. He specified the threat by requiring of him, as President of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and the political party VMRO-DPMNE, to accept the requests for the establishment of a technical government, and then to announce early elections for MPs in the Assembly. In return, the person promised that he would not publicly disclose the data. This data was received by the fourth party from the first accused, with whom he met in several secret meetings with the mediation of the third accused."

The Ministry of Interior informed that special investigative measures were conducted against the accused under the control and supervision of the public prosecutor. On January 31st 2014, the first three suspects were handed out a 30-day detention by the competent court and they were taken to the investigative prison in Shuto Orizari, while the fourth suspect Zaev was stripped of his passport and was given a measure of "caution" with an obligation to report to the court once a week.

Two hours later, then Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski presented the story in his style and through his lens in a news conference in the government, directly broadcast by the national TV service - MRTV, in a dramatic way. Gruevski informed that he had four meetings with Zaev in the prime minister's office, the first being at the request of the opposition leader. According to Gruevski, Zaev demanded in these meetings the formation of a technical government,

informing him that, in cooperation with a certain foreign intelligence service, he received recorded telephone conversations from almost the entire state leadership—the President of the state, the Parliament, the Government, journalists and other public persons from the government and the opposition. “I asked him if he was certain of what he was saying about the foreign intelligence service, and I received a positive answer. He told me of several phone conversations about which we found that some were accurate, some were partially accurate and some were fully inaccurate. However, the fact that some of them were accurate indicated the severity of the situation. In the coming days and weeks he began to speak publicly that he possesses such material, increasing the threat to us, that if we do not accept the establishment of a technical government, he will publish the material. There is serious damage being caused to the state, a scenario has been created where you are all witnesses from the beginning, in which the whole country was eventually to be held hostage.”—Gruevski said on that occasion.

Zaev denied Gruevski’s allegations, and a few days later, on February 9th he published the “Wiretapping” affair, for which SDSM filed a lawsuit with the Public Prosecutor’s Office. According to the opposition and Zaev, a previously unseen precedent happened in world history. More than 25,000 people were wiretapped illegally—officials, journalists, businessmen, public figures, diplomats. It was not just the massive scale of wiretapping, but also the timing—for several years and continuously, party leaders had been wiretapped illegally, without a court order, even during election campaigns and elections. In a matter of days, around 300 phone conversations of the leader of the opposition, Zaev, were wiretapped; the journalist killed in an unspecified traffic accident, Nikola Mladenov, a sharp critic of all authorities, was for also wiretapped for many years, and according to data from the opposition, about 10,000 of his conversations had been recorded; ministers, businessmen, hundreds of journalists and the ambassadors of the six most influential countries were wiretapped.

The fight between the government, which had the criminal case “Putsch” in its hands as an instrument against the opposition, and the opposition, which had the “bombs” from the wiretapped talks, lasted for several months. However, the bombs had destroyed VMRO-DPMNE’s ratings, as well as those of its leader Gruevski and the party leadership. With the ‘detonation’ of about forty bombs, the opposition exposed the character of the system of governance, but also the individual characters of several main protagonists: their way of thinking, the language of communication and the system of action. Although many journalists, politicians, DUI leader Ali Ahmeti, former State Public Prosecutor

Ljupcho Shvrgovski, Supreme Court President Jovo Vangelovski and many foreign experts's forensics confirmed the authenticity of the recordings, this never stopped VMRO-DPMNE and Gruevski from after each bomb and still to this day, downplaying the contents to qualify it as manufactured and edited, that none of it happened, that there is no motive, that they are creating gossip and that the charges against officials of VMRO-DPMNE are there only to damage the party, even when they are in opposition, etc.

With the Przino agreements the bombs ceased and on September 15th 2015, a Public Prosecutor's Office was formed to prosecute crimes related to and arising from the contents of the unlawful interception of communications, popularly known as a Special Public Prosecutor's Office. The Special Prosecutor was formed because the existing prosecutor's office did not process them, but rather kept in a drawer about thirty lawsuits filed by the opposition for acts indicated in the illegally taped conversations. With the establishment of the Special Public Prosecutor's Office, the announcement of "Zaev bombs and the opposition" has ceased. All the files from wiretapped conversations and other documents were handed over by SDSM to the SJO.

According to the latest report on the work of the SJO, before the expiration of the legal period of 18 months in which it is mandated to file charges, in the reporting period this Public Prosecutor's Office acquired specialized information-forensic software solutions and with the help of that software, 66.909 deleted audio files were discovered, bringing the total number of audio files to 606,555. In these files, as well as the previous 540,646, an electronic inventory was made, which appears on a total of 15.906 pages in electronic form. During the inventory, it was determined that the duration of all audio files is 13.200 hours. As of the date of submission of this Report, the content of 272.950 audio files had been analyzed or, in other words, 45 percent of the total number of audio files available to the Public Prosecutor's Office had been processed. Given all this, what the public has heard can only be treated as the peak of the iceberg, because, who knows how many new scandals and crimes will be discovered in the remaining 55 percent of the unheard audio recordings.

In order to understand the scope and severity of the wiretapping, it is necessary to insert a little digression. Namely, according to statements provided by the experts on this issue, in the almost half-century existence of the former state of the SFRY, with its population of twenty million citizen, despite the fact that it was a one-party rule system back then, with powerful ideological secret agencies; they had not wiretapped even a tenth of the twenty-some thousand

people that the secret agencies of the ruling system of VMRO-DPMNE had targeted in pluralist Macedonia in the period between 2008-2015, and even later, until the change of power in 2017!

Up until the legal deadline in which the Special Public Prosecutor's Office was entitled to file charges arising from the contents of the illegal interception of communications, which was 18 months since its establishment, until 31 June 2017, this prosecution filed a total of 20 charges against more than one hundred persons and a dozen legal entities. By the way, an interesting specificity was that the names under which all the cases were filed began with the letter "T". Three charges are currently in court proceedings ("Slaps in Centar", "Transporter" and "*Tvrđina*"(Fortress)). On the last day of its legal deadline, SJO filed 17 charges for 18 cases against 94 persons and 7 legal entities. These were the cases codenamed Titanic, Torture, TNT, *Trezor*, *Toplick*, Tenders, Tank, Tariff, Tiffany, Total,, "Three Hundred", "Trajectory", "Lawn (*Trevnik*)", "Trust", "Fortress (*Tvrđina*) and Target", "Tabla". The case known under the name "Talir", for which there was great interest among the public as it is the case against the illegal financing of VMRO-DPMNE, did not get to an indictment due to a lack of time and the investigation will continue in the upcoming period.

The charges relate to 22 paragraphs of 14 articles of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Macedonia. The following are the crimes included in the charges: Torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment and punishment; Criminal association; Bribery in elections and voting; Abuse of funds for financing election campaigns; Violation of the right to vote; Violation of the voters' rights to free determination; Forging an ID document; Forging an official document; Abuse of official position and authorization; Destruction of election material; Receiving a reward for unlawful influence; Tax evasion; Illegal construction; Abuse of the procedure of a public announcements, awarding a public procurement contract or public-private partnership.

In the 'Target' case, SJO determined that the overall illegal wiretapping was carried out by the UBK in the period from 2008 to 2015. In its indictment, SJO submitted evidence that thousands of people were illegally monitored in the period from 2008 to 2015 by the UBK. A total of ten people, some of whom are former senior officials, and some part of the lower echelons, are suspected of organizing and coordinating the illegal wiretapping. All of them are suspected of abuse of office and authority. The two first accused suspects are the former head of the sector and his deputy in the sector, who are believed to have conducted the entire operation of illegal wiretapping, and having often

themselves added telephone numbers for which they did not have court orders, and listened to the talks of politicians, businessmen, journalists and others. “The communication systems were used to monitor at least 4,286 telephone numbers without issued court orders were monitored between 2008 and 2015,”—said prosecutor Fatime Fetai at a press conference. Wiretapping was occurring even before orders were given and after they had expired, and according to the SJO, there were at least 1,541 such cases. The total number of telephone numbers that were monitored during that period is over 20 thousand, and it includes numbers of people who were not the target of unlawful monitoring, but had spoken to those that were.”

During the same press conference, prosecutor Lence Ristoska said that current ministers and officials from the ruling VMRO-DPMNE and DUI and their followers were among those wiretapped. The telephone number of former Interior Minister Gordana Jankuloska was unlawfully tapped for more than 700 days, the three phones of former transport minister Mile Janakieski for over 800 days, Ali Ahmeti’s phone was tapped for more than 1.000 days and Menduh Thaci and Musa Xhaferi for over 1.200 days. Only the former Prime Minister and VMRO-DPMNE leader Nikola Gruevski was not wiretapped. The illegal monitoring of communication continued after the publishing of the wiretapping scandal by opposition leader Zoran Zaev, but also in 2016, according to the SJO.

In the period from 2008 to 2015, UBK used three different wiretapping systems. Two of them were destroyed illegally by the UBK, for which the SJO has charged four people. In the “Fortress (*Tvrđina*)” case, two UBK chiefs were charged, who together with the interior minister at the beginning of 2015 unlawfully destroyed communications monitoring systems and thus inflicted damage on the state in the amount of 10 million euros. The crime was committed immediately after the Court made the decision that the illegal interception of communications was done using MoI capacities. Namely, the first defendant, in order to conceal other persons, issued an oral order to other organizational units in the Ministry of Interior to destroy the technical equipment with the excuse that it was obsolete. In addition, documents related to the wiretapping and destruction of equipment have been destroyed. The SJO linked the two cases “Target” and “Fortress” and filed charges against a total of 14 people. The wiretapping and destruction of technical equipment and documents, as the tip of the criminal iceberg of the VMRO-DPMNE governing system, ended with the escape of the two accused from UBK for the Fortress and Target case, which was aided by the judiciary and the prosecution.

In January 2017, the Special Public Prosecutor's Office filed a motion to the Basic Court Skopje 1 to officially give up on the indictment for the case "*Putsch*," as the factual situation in the indictment is contrary to the evidence that this Public Prosecutor's Office possesses with findings in the investigation procedures "*Target*" and "*Fortress*". According to the explanation, this decision was made in order to allow for additional evidence that will fully clarify the actual situation and will enable them to come to a proper and lawful public prosecution decision.

The System Caught Itself in the Wiretapping Net

Knowing to what extent, how, why and who was being tracked and wiretapped, the system wanted to protect the illegal wiretapping from any possibility of disclosure. However, as there is no perfect crime that is not revealed, it turned out that there is no perfect unlawful wiretapping which, in the end, will not be revealed. In the desire to listen in to the conversations of more and more people and to find out what they are talking about and to learn the plans of the opposition, the opponents, the different, the foreigners, but also to have insight into their thoughts, and on the other hand, wanting to provide maximum conspiracy, the system was at one point restructured. Practically, as the system got itself entangled in own intrigues, it got itself discovered, that is, it was discovered by people from within who found unacceptable their unlawful political, profit-led and petty-motivated massive eavesdropping.

If the heart of the long-running crisis in Macedonia was the wiretapping, then its soul, the very being of the crisis, were the contents of the wiretapped conversations. Therefore, the main task of the Special Public Prosecutor's Office is to clear this mega-scandal that shook Macedonia and to use solid facts to prove who, why, how and whose orders unlawfully wiretapped thousands of people and brazenly violated their human and professional rights. The joint case and charges of "*Fortress (Tvrдина)* and *Target*" is dedicated to the wiretapping and the SJO is convinced that they have solid evidence against fourteen defendants.

According to "Zaev's and the opposition's bombs", as well as according to the charges brought by the Special Public Prosecutor's Office, a mosaic of the motives for illegal wiretapping can be compiled. The motives are numerous; however, in general, they can be reduced to three motives: (1) to manage the election processes that occurred in continuity almost every year, with all

lawful and unlawful instruments and methods, in order to achieve electoral victories and to preserve power, (2) to control its rule, that is, to overcome all the dangers and risks of major shocks that would destabilize the government and would contribute to its loss, and (3) for party profits and the personal wealth of the party-state leadership and the clientele around them.

The primary motive for the wiretapping was explained during the first press conference held by the Special Public Prosecutor's Office in February 2016, where the prosecutor Fatime Fetai explained that it was to manage the election process. "In the case Titanic, after a huge number of pre-emptive actions were taken, there was reasonable suspicion that a certain group of people exploited their influence and official position for the sake of the continued hold on power by the party, both at the local and state level, and especially for their immediate privileges from having that power, creating a group that had the goal of committing criminal acts against the elections and voting or to put it plainly, the conquest of power through the overall criminalization of the electoral process,"—Fetai said.

"According to Fetai, after it was created, other suspects, witnesses and other unknown persons became members of the group. Some of the suspects and other as of yet unknown persons for the investigation, created this team with the goal of winning the elections for the political party, and they came up with a plan to, in an unlawful manner, enable more persons to use the right to vote, which activities, according to the plan, would be carried out by officials who are employees of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Macedonia, and persons who will directly recruit and bring persons from abroad, through the information and telecommunications department of the Ministry of Interior; then, through violence and other illegal activities during the election campaign and the election days to influence the manner in which the right to vote is exercised and to prevent the exercise of the right to vote in the election; to target persons with voting rights with offers, gifts and promises of gifts or other benefits, with the intention to influence their vote; and to use illegal means for financing the campaign, which plan was accepted by the other suspects, witnesses and other as of yet unknown individuals, all of whom had a specific role within the group and which roles are described in detail in the order for conducting an investigative procedure, Fetai said. Taking into consideration these circumstances and facts, SJO believes that they are looking at total criminalization of the election process that included illegally issuing ID cards and inserting on the Voters' List persons who should under no circumstances be there."

The second motive for the wiretapping was to ensure full control of power, i.e., is to intercept all the dangers and risks of major shocks that would destabilize the government and would contribute to its loss of power. In order to avoid any kind of surprise or conspiracy, in addition to wiretapping political rivals and opponents, journalists, businessmen, NGOs, foreign diplomats and many others, the leadership was also intercepting the communications of all the officials of the party and the state, except for the top leader's phones—the prime minister and the head of the secret agency. However, they were also wiretapped to a certain extent, when they talked with those to whom they were listening.

This speaks to the mental code at the top of the party and the state, but it also confirms the thesis that the VMRO-DPMNE government had not only created fear deep in the bones of citizens from its unscrupulous system of governance, but that the powerful ruling elite was also scared of itself—both of losing power and because of the fact that it used its power for many unlawful acts and so constantly lived in fear that the illegal and criminal acts would be discovered sooner or later. The more power they gained, the more they were burdened with a variety of conspiracy theories, persistent persecution, various scenarios for *coups*, conspiracies, Soros scripts, and similar conspiracy theories.

The third wiretapping motive was business, stock markets, public procurement procedures, companies' plans so that the businesses of senior government officials, the businesses of close collaborators and the businesses run by officials on behalf of government officials may profit, to intercept business ideas and deals, to carry out a hostile takeover, to make profits and to acquire wealth. Similarly, this also worked in favor of the parties' interests, because as it turned out from the wiretapped conversations, the party functioned as a company and acquired immense wealth and money, becoming the richest party in Europe.

VIII

A WIDE ASSORTMENT OF ORGANIZED CRIME

In every captured state, which implies a totalitarian, dictatorial, autocratic rule of one man and the small group around him, over the party, through the party over the institutions, and through the institutions over state; historical experience and current practice show that, in principle, in one such model of power, three things are most important. The first—to use the power to create conditions that would allow remaining in power longer or forever, the second—through extreme national-patriotism, declarations and slogans to defend the “endangered” national and state interests to manipulate, corrupt and rule the people, and the third—the proponents of power and the party to amass wealth and enjoy the riches of power.

This means that in addition to the election-related crime, which is one of the methods that preserves power, and the massive illegal wiretapping and monitoring of a large number of persons by the secret services in order to control the processes in the country and thus to prevent possible dangers and risks that pose a threat to the ruling throne, the VMRO-DPMNE system of governance, led by the leadership that simultaneously functions as a central criminal association, has developed a whole range of types of politically organized crime in many spheres of social life, both with the purpose of extending their rule, and for amassing personal wealth and other types of social status and privileges for the people close to them. The so-called opposition bombs from the wiretapped conversations, the increasingly frequent and professional media investigative reports, and the investigations and charges by the Special Public Prosecutor’s Office have located several global areas of interest and activity of political organized crime in Macedonia: politics, institutions, the economy, media, human rights and freedoms, history, identity, the cultural, value, and moral sphere. Some of them are politically organized crime, some may not have been treated and sanctioned as organized crime, but either violated established democratic rules and practices or created favorable conditions and environment for crime.

As an illustration, here is one such example of selective justice, which is not a crime in itself, but with its practice it protects crime and prevents justice, and all of it is done in the name of politics and the interests of the party. In the ten years of VMRO-DPMNE's rule, the judiciary handed out detentions under the guise of special protective measures almost as a rule. According to the statistics, people were detained pending trial in several thousand cases. In contrast to such an approach, in the last one and a half years since the establishment of the Special Public Prosecutor's Office, there is only one case in which a person was detained before trial, which was then replaced with house arrest. As for another case with pre-trial detention given by the courts, one defendant in another case was given pre-trial detention, but was not available for the court's decision and left the country. Once his detention was invalidated by the higher courts, he returned to the country. In another case, although the detention of two defendants was confirmed by a higher court, due to the appeal of the defendants (a practice that was made up to ensure that an appeal postponed the detention), the detention did not come through and, when confirmed by the higher court, due to the several days of proceedings in the different courts, and especially because of the four-hour travel of the court's decision from the courts to the police, the defendants were not available for detention and had left the country. In this way, justice from the courts and judges was prevented. By the way, a non-governmental association filed lawsuits for judges from all levels of the courts (the Criminal, Appellate and Supreme court) who by unlawful interpretation of the laws enabled the escape of the defendants.

The creation of an environment and conditions for the way the system was governed, which implied fully politicized institutions and processes and profiting from everything possible and as much as possible, was one of the priorities of the machinery of the masters of the captured state. The institutions of the captured state - the ruling party, its managing elites, which at the same time led the state, the people and the businesses close to the elite, the clients, the pro-government intellectuals (professors, artists, architects, directors, writers, academics, publishers, entertainment stars and media owners) and a whole plethora of other obedient government dependents were treated, to use Orwellian language, as "more equal" than the others.

For them, everything was allowed, everything was "according to the Constitution and the laws" (the go-to statement of the then Minister of Interior Gordana Jankuloska), even when the Constitution and the laws were flagrantly violated, there was no accountability, but there only rights and privileges; they were never guilty before the justice system, and when after a "coincidence"

they were found guilty, they got off with a slap on their wrist or were handed minimal punishments that were never enforced. The partization of the institutions weakened their defensive and professional immunity to the point that they neither noticed, nor did anything when the ruling elite, according to their understanding of the power and based on their maxim - the winner gets everything, started to treat “everything” as their own, modeling it, profile it, revise it, change it, forcibly overtake it and raping it—from people and institutions, up to businesses, historical events, identity, traditions, and even holidays.

The system of government of VMRO-DPMNE captured and then abused the Macedonian Orthodox Church for the realization of the historical doctrine practiced by autocrats and dictators of religion as opium of the people. Much like the partization of the institutions led to the consolidation and identification of the state with the party, so the benevolence of the church towards the party (voluntary capture) led to the consolidation of the state with the church, which represented an act of demolition of one of the basic constitutional principles—the separation of the church from the state. Some of the highest ecclesiastical dignitaries have become an inseparable part, decor and part of the propaganda machinery of the state party, becoming the blessers of every newly established VMRO government, supporters of government propaganda projects, secrets and from time to time, public agitators during elections, ambassadors of conservative government policies about marriage, abortion, religious instruction, a flood of religious holidays, instigators of violence (the beatings of students from the Faculty of Architecture during their peaceful protest against the building of a church on the square in about Skopje, demolishing the areas of the municipality of Centar against the alleged demolition of the church under construction “St. Constantine and Helena”, in both cases, from instructed party-religious fanatics and monsters).

In this way, an environment and conditions for authoritarianism, selectivity, arbitrariness, corruption and crime were created. Telling the “truth” about everything that was happening in the country was an exclusive right only of the leader and the top party officials, only to be repeated *ad nauseum* by well-paid propagandistic pro-government media. When good things were happening in Macedonia, the merits as a rule were attributed by the government and the propaganda machine to Nikola Gruevski and VMRO-DPMNE, and for the bad and harmful things, those responsible were the opposition, the opponents, the Albanians, the foreigners, the non-governmental organizations, the Sorosoids. The exclusivity was also complete when it came to determining the values: what is good, what is bad, what is moral, and what is not, who

is a patriot, and who is a traitor, who loves and defends Macedonia, who does not love and wants to sell it, what is a positive, and what is a negative event and person, who will be rehabilitated and celebrated, and who should be lustrated and demonized. It went so far that even the leader gave instructions on what kinds of foods should be eaten, what to read, and how many children one should have. This practice of power disrupted many beneficial balances that made Macedonian society sustainable—a society which was already divided in different ways. In such a wider social setting and conditions, an absolute power could be established with authoritarian rule, the state could be captured, politically organized crime could run smoothly and with impunity, and the party and its clan could amass group and personal wealth.

The people from the highest echelons of power and the party rarely or never directly got their piece of the criminal cake, that is, their commissions, percentages, shares, cash and other profits, but indirectly through companies of relatives, friends, people who were only nominally and formally owners of companies, while the real owners were officials or people close to the officials. It was covered by offshore firms and similar practices. In that way, attempts were made to erase or camouflage the traces; however, given the fact that the money trail can never be completely hidden and erased, the SJO and investigative journalists have already discovered such traces, part of those links and the course of that type of money.

A whole series of reasons, methods and ways of instrumentalizing and disabling the institutions responsible for preventing corruption and crime were created. This was done with selective justice, abuse of the legislature as a voting machine of the government for the “production” of regulation in function of the system of governance and for using deliberately made “factory malfunctions”, legal gaps, uncertainties and countless amendments and supplements to the laws in the interest of the ruling and business interests of the party, the ruling structure and the people close to them. Therefore, many practices that have elements of politically organized crime and corruption have emerged in the practice of functioning of the governance system. Here are some of them, without the ambition to encompass everything, because the imagination of the system of government was infinite and did not recognize any objective, legal, or moral ceilings.

The creation of fake international conflicts and security crises in order to win elections and to distract the public from real problems in the country and from the crime inside of the structures of power. The redistribution of national

wealth to private pockets of people in power or close to power and creating a new oligarchy, at the expense of increasing poverty. Taking bribes for awarding public procurement tenders, money laundering, tax evasion and abuse of the VAT. Manipulation of tendering procedures, tender rigging, four-eyes contracts, transformation of the cheapest bids for tenders into the most expensive final cost of the object of the tender, corrupt manipulations with the general and detailed urban plans for profit of the privileged from the government, conversion of the agricultural land in construction and realizing huge profits for privileged people, the rampage of the urban mafia, the hostile takeover of companies, huge crime in the financing of parties, especially the government for example, purchasing media loyalty through advertisements financed from the budget and by giving tenders to the owners of the media, the crimes during the construction of the project “Skopje 2014”, torture and mistreatment of the opponents, suspicious murders and their concealment, unlawful demolition of huge buildings, party-political re-reading and recreating history, denying the historical events and personalities that created the first Macedonian state at the expense of individuals who, at least, are controversial and have worked for foreign causes, huge doses of conflict of interest, nepotism, discretionary rights, changing the established and internationally recognized cultural code of the nation with some adopted code that is an insult to common sense and all that had been accomplished prior, a complete replacement of the universal and traditional value and moral standards and categories with fictitious and very similar standards of the mental code, the base level and understanding of the proponents of the governing structure.

Great Violence to Protect the Highest Priorities of the Government

The height of the authoritarianism, unscrupulousness and crime of the VMRO-DPMNE system of governing happened when the key goals and priorities of the leader, the party and the ruling leadership were threatened, which usually meant a threat to victory in the elections, the preservation of power, the personal and party wealth and profits. In such cases, the system was not picky with its methods to prevent the change of power, because in its essence, that is, the Machiavellian paradigm according to which “the ends justify the means”, even if the methods were illegal: criminal, corrupt and violent. In the second phase of the decade of governing of the VMRO-DPMNE system, three such events took place that not only rocked Macedonia, but they also destroyed

what was left of the normal, legal, democratic and moral aspects of the state and society. Yet the absurdity went so far that it activated the boomerang effect, which ultimately hit the power and the party itself back, all of which led to its rapid fall from the throne.

These three events that caused tectonic shocks to the Macedonian state and the Macedonian society in a political, legal, institutional and security sense, as well as led to the destruction of its international reputation and the loss of friends and supporters (as a sort of added value abnormality). Firstly, there was “Black Monday” on December 24th 2012 (with the motive to create conditions for a new electoral victory and preservation of power), then the “small war” in the Kumanovo neighborhood “Divo Naselje” on May 9th and 10th 2015 (with the motive of redirecting public attention from the contents of Zaev’s wiretapping ‘bombs’) and finally “bloody Thursday” on April 27th 2017 (with the motive to ignite an intra-ethnic and interethnic, Macedonian-Albanian, conflict, proclaiming a state of emergency and thus retaining power).

Macedonia ceased to be what it once was after December 24, 2012, when it witness what was perhaps the biggest precedent in contemporary global parliamentary history. On December 24th 2012, “black Monday”, the system of governance, even at the cost of a scandal of an unprecedented domestic but also global scale, directly from the plenary hall of parliament, during the debate on the budget, brutally threw out the opposition from Parliament, namely the SDSMs coalition with its partners, and in order to avoid witnesses to the execution of this premeditated act, the journalist where removed from the parliamentary media gallery earlier in the day. It later turned out that VM-RO-DPMNE wanted at any cost to adopt the electoral budget for 2013, as well as the law regulating a loan from Deutsche Bank. This meant that the party did not want to go into the local elections of the following spring without an electoral budget and a loan that would service the electoral engineering.

In his book “Constitutional Law - Eighth Edition”, (“Kultura” - 2015), professor D-r Svetomir Shkarikj, one of the greatest experts on domestic constitutional law, as well as comparative constitutional law, notes: “The manner of removing MPs from Parliament was a rare example in comparative constitutional law. The removal can be compared to the cleansing of the English parliament by opposition MPs - royalists in 1648. Then, Oliver Crownwell ordered Officer Pride to thoroughly clean up parliament from all the opponents who were on the side of King Charles I.”

In the book professor Shkarikj devotes special attention to the sharp polemics between members of the Ad Hoc Commission that was charged with examining the constitutionality of the events that took place on December 24th 2012, “Black Monday.” “The members of the opposition condemned the raid of some 60 policemen in the Assembly Hall with an assessment that such a thing “does not exist in parliamentary democracy “. On the other hand, the members of the ruling party justified the police intervention on the grounds that “a *coup* attempt was made by SDSM deputies and the coalition.” Opposition representatives consider December 24th a “black Monday” of Macedonia’s parliamentary democracy. By contrast, members of the ruling party regarded the date as “white Monday”: “For me that Monday is a Monday morning, a bright Monday in respect of Macedonia’s preservation of the institutions of the Republic of Macedonia. Who knows how many states would have used this scenario had it succeed with us. “ This is how the President of the Legislative Committee of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia (2011-2014), the former judge of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Macedonia and a member of the Republic’s Judicial Council, reflected on this, explains Professor Shkarikj, adding: “When one does not sympathize with the plight of others, one does not think about what one says, nor is one aware of the consequences that come from the violent events for the country. From that moment on, the Republic of Macedonia entered into a state crisis.”

Starting from “black Monday”, meaning the end of 2012, up until the spring of 2017 and the change of government, in Macedonia there was practically no functioning parliamentary democracy. The brief return of the expelled MPs to the Assembly was made under pressure from the international community and was made as a gesture of good will in the interest of the citizens and the country, although with great consequences for the then opposition, which resulted in its split and divisions. But all this was not respected by the ruling party, since the findings of the Inquiry Committee on the responsibility for the “black Monday” were completely ignored by the ruling VMRO-DPMNE party, proclaiming them worthless tissue paper and continuing to rule as it had done prior.

The bloody events in Kumanovo’s “Divo Naselje”, which took place on May 9th and 10th 2015, which according to the official version provided by VMRO-DPMNE’s government was “a terrorist attack against the Republic of Macedonia” by a terrorist group expelled from Kosovo. This bloody event was preceded by an episode of intrusion, on April 21st from a forty-member “terrorist group” in the border guard building of the Macedonian security forces

“Goshinets,” during which the four-member border patrol was caught off guard in in their sleep, tortured, their cell phones and others communication devices taken from them, the vehicle disabled and a large arsenal of weapons and ammunition was taken from the border post. One of the border police officers was released by the terrorists to report the event. The same terrorist group, with part of the stolen weapons, moved for two days and stationed themselves in several houses in the Kumanovo “Divo Naselje” neighborhood, without being noticed by the security forces, although it was noticed by the local citizens. The fighting in “Divo Naselje” between several hundred police officers, specialists and helicopter logistics against fifty armed terrorists lasted for two days, from the morning of May 9th until noon on May 10th. The epilogue of this police operation was eight dead members of the security forces, 30 wounded, officially ten killed terrorists (fourteen according to police) and the same number of injured, thirty arrested terrorists, as well as great material damage, destroyed homes, houses and infrastructure. Several hundred MOI specialists, in which the state invested hundreds of millions of euros in sophisticated arms and logistics, had almost the same number of victims as the terrorist group!

The VMRO-DPMNE government and the security agencies, in coordination, declared the incident in Kumanovo’s “Divo Naselje” as “a great victory that will go down in history and the textbooks” of the Macedonian security forces. The families of the dead and the injured received huge financial damages, and according to some new findings, announced by the interior minister of the new government, around 900 police and police officials were rewarded with huge amounts of money, although not even half that number took part in the event. It was reportedly supposed to silence many who were revolted because the raid was quite amateurish and had seemed like a raid to arrest a group of drug dealers, rather than well-trained and armed terrorists. A few days after the euphoric celebration of the “historical and textbook victory,” Interior Minister Gordana Jankuloska and UBK Director Sasho Mijalkov resigned following a visit to a foreign embassy, which was expressly accepted by Prime Minister Gruevski. Immediately after the action, speculations appeared, but also serious indications, that there were recording of wiretapped conversations, which indicated reasonable suspicions that the raid was planned, ordered and paid with big money to terrorist group which was apparently formed for this specific purpose. It was speculated, and some investigative journalists presented indications, that the raid was designed by a French expert on “controlled small wars”, who had contacts with the Macedonian government.

It is important to note that the bloody events of “Divo Naselje” were preceded by the protests against the attempt to conceal the murder of young Martin Neshkovski, which, as officially supported with a court decision, was carried out by a member (unofficially, including another member) of Nikola Gruevski’s security team, which included violence against police by a group of hooded and masked provocateurs among peaceful protesters, and which ended with a brutal dispersing of protesters by the police and a large number of arrested and charged protesters. At the same time, those who ordered and perpetrated the violence against the police were not caught and remained at large.

The “Small War” in the Kumanovos “Divo Naselje” was a very risky way of distracting the public’s attention from the larger problems of the VMRO-DPMNE system of governing created by the “opposition’s bombs”. The stakes for this were very high, because the authority and ratings of VMRO-DPMNE and Nikola Gruevski were questioned, and thus the preservation of power was in jeopardy. It all began to be seriously threatened with the daily “bombs from Zaev and the opposition”, as citizens could hear with their own ears the crimes and the aggravated and arrogant behavior of the ruling elite. This is why so much was put at risk: to make an effort to transforming the political-institutional crisis into a security crisis, turning the public’s attention to another, much more serious threat and direction, and so to save what can be saved. Fortunately, this attempt failed, because a bloody interethnic conflict was not rejected by the Macedonians and Albanians in Kumanovo, but by the whole country. At that time, civic unity manifested itself as never did before. The Albanian and Macedonian citizens vigorously rejected all attempts to get involved in an interethnic conflict, noting that nobody is fighting and losing over anyone else’s interests, that is, for the profits of the party elites, especially for the criminal interests of VMRO-DPMNE and DUI.

The events of the “Divo Naselje”, whether manufactured or not, further accelerated the fall of the governing system and the fall of VMRO-DPMNE, as there were serious indications that, following the announcement that there was to be an independent international investigation into the “small war,” some of the leadership of the then government coalition VMRO-DPMNE and DUI might get caught up in new problems with the judicial institutions.

On April 27th 2017, “Bloody Thursday” occurred with the storming of the crowd of people close to VMRO-DPMNE from the “Together for Macedonia” initiative, which defended the state, the name and identity, and their “justified” revolt for allegedly introducing “bilingualism, the country’s cantonization, the

sale of the name and the loss of the state by the new majority in parliament.” However, in more than two months of protests, what was manifested during these protests was radical nationalism (“pure Macedonia”), clear albanophobia (“death to the shqiptars”), threats to the “traitors” (“death for Zaev”), the demonization of the non-governmental organizations (“antisorosoisation”), and the literal acceptance of the allusion by a former senior official and passionate supporter of VMRO-DPMNE and Gruevski’s policies that “the Assembly is only 20 meters away from us.” With the support of the MPs of VMRO-DPMNE, the passive standing-by on part of the Ministry of Interior and, in particular, the non-reaction of the Headquarters for the control of the protesters, headed by the then Director of Public Security, Mitko Chavkov—the crowd of the “Together for Macedonia” violently stormed into the Assembly, held MPs from the new parliamentary majority and jeopardized the lives of several party leaders, deputies, journalists and employees in parliamentary services. It was immediately noticed that behind all this was a thoughtful scenario with morbid imaginations: murders, counter-reactions, the danger of intra-ethnic and interethnic conflicts, the introduction of a state of war. Luckily, this did not come, and the motives were slowly unfolding—for VMRO-DPMNE to remain in power and organize new early parliamentary elections, arrest political opponents and continue to rule for a long time.

Retaliations against Opponents - Manifestations of Personal Frustrations

The VMRO-DPMNE party and its leader Gruevski, almost from the very beginning of coming to power, started to reveal their true selves. In the first phase, hate speech against political opponents was manifested, and with the strengthening of the authoritarian regime and the deepening of the radical divisions, in the second phase, the verbal hate speech was transformed into demonization and manufactured retaliatory political trials against political opponents—individuals, which resulted in political prisoners and political casualties.

Two cases, the “Arrest of Ljube Boshkoski” and the “Cosmos - Fiat Canoski” case are characteristic because they were both leaders of political parties that had given up their loyalty to the ruling party and, as an epilogue, the former’s political retaliation was several years of imprisonment for several suspicious criminal procedures and trials that resulted in a guilty verdict, and the latter’s political retaliation was economic revenge and the demolition of a

huge residential complex under construction whose value is estimated at tens of millions of euros. While the processes of the arrest, trial, imprisonment, destruction and humiliation of Boskoski and Canoski were in progress, the public could only assume that it was a matter of manufactured processes and retaliation, while “Zaev bombs” and the prosecution charges brought by the Special Public Prosecutor’s Office unambiguously confirmed the public doubts that it was two cases of political retaliation, a whim and the personal frustrations of powerful individuals from the government.

The SJO filed an indictment under the name “Torture” in the case of the capture of the leader of the United for Macedonia political party, Ljube Boskoski. The SJO accused seven people of committing a crime of torture and other cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment and punishment. The former chief of the UBK, Sasho Mijalkov, was initially charged. According to the indictment, on June 6th 2011, the day after the parliamentary elections, the first defendant, as an official director of the UBK, on grounds of discrimination based on a different political affiliation, enlisted the other defendants, police officers and members of the unit “Alfi” to perform the act deprivation of liberty of a suspected person, Ljube Boskoski, causing him mental suffering. The first defendant, after working out an operational plan in the MOI for the deprivation of liberty of Boskoski on suspicion that the latter had committed the crime “abuse of funds for financing the election campaign” from Article 165a of the Criminal Code, and motivated by retaliation due to the political messages he had directed at the first defendant during the election campaign, directed the police officers who arrested Boskoski to cause mental suffering. During the arrest, without resistance from Ljube Boskoski, they used force and threats and overstepped the legal powers for the use of means of coercion, mistreated, intimidated and insulted him with abusive words, and placed a pistol on his cheek. He was held lying down and kept in this position to ensure that the media could record him. Thus, Boskoski was caused mental suffering, had his human dignity and personality humiliated and was discriminated on political grounds.

The then Prime Minister and then Minister of Transport, together with the mayor of the Municipality of Gazi Baba and four other people, were charged by the SJO for the demolition of the Cosmos building, which was in construction process by the investor Fiat Canoski, only because he and his party PEI no longer wanted to be a government coalition partner. In the case that the SJO has dubbed “TNT”, the criminal case brought against the defendants is for the abuse of office and authority. The action took place at the time when the

PEI party left the coalition with VMRO-DPMNE, after which followed a direct order from the former prime minister and former minister of transport and communications to knock down parts of the Cosmos building. It is a crime that was directed from the central to the local level government. According to the Special Public Prosecutor's Office, "It was a desire for revenge, after which the mayor of Gazi Baba committed a crime with the abuse of his official position and authority and destroyed the object "Cosmos", owned by Fiat Canoski."

The cases of Neshkovski and Mladenov, however, are a confirmation of one of the character traits of the system of governing of VMRO-DPMNE—that when pressed in a corner, it is able to take any and all measures necessary to prevent an admission of guilt and take responsibility for something on the one hand, and on the other, to organize the procedures of the institutions and to downplay things in such a way so as to make sure that the truth is not revealed.

The first case concerns a 21-year-old young man, Martin Neshkovski, a VMRO-DPMNE supporter, killed by a policeman for no special reason, but only because he wanted to come closer to the election victory celebrations following the early parliamentary elections in 2011, to the stage on which the leadership of the winning party celebrated and congratulated each other. The Neshkovski case contains three important elements: the first, excessive use of force from the police, the second, an almost two-day attempt to cover up the killing by the Ministry of Interior, and the third, transferring the blame exclusively to the policeman who carried out the murder only to avoid command responsibility at many levels in the Interior Ministry, about the order for the presence of an off-duty police officer at the celebration, and about the attempt to conceal the murder, which the management structures of the Ministry of Interior and the system were aware of. The brutal murder was discovered by the public on social networks and caused great emotions, revolt and spontaneous protests.

In one of "Zaev bombs", a wiretapped telephone conversation was broadcast in which the then Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski dictates the closure of the whole case: "His security should nothing to do with the case, the police officer Igor Spasov must be declared as not having been present in an official capacity at the event, but rather that he was there and acted in a private capacity, not as an official " The SJO has begun an investigation into this case as well, and what is characteristic of this case is the fact that the convicted police officer never admitted that he had hit the murdered person on the head, leading to public speculations that another police officer had struck the deadly

blow, who had also been part of the security of the then prime minister and leader of the VMRO -DPMNE.

The case of Mladenov is at the very least suspicious because the case was closed without being fully resolved. According to Zaev's explanation for the "bomb" dedicated to this case, "The investigation into the death of Nikola Mladenov, was accidentally or deliberately on part of the government of Nikola Gruevski, led unprofessionally and irresponsibly, deliberately hiding key information from the public." Because of this, and because of the extremely decreased public confidence in institutions, in the police, the prosecution and the judiciary, only a small number of people believe in the official version of a tragic car accident—as was the conclusion when the case was closed. This is especially so because it is a case involving Nikola Mladenov, a longtime established journalist who owned the weekly newspaper "Fokus", was critical of every government, a tireless fighter for freedom, truth and justice, who made a pioneering contribution to the establishment and development of Macedonian investigative journalism in his youth as head of "Young Fighters", and then in his "Focus" (weekly journal). Due to the many indications and evidence that the competent institutions did not take into account in their procedures, they abstracted or minimized them, in the "bomb for the Mladenov case", Opposition leader Zaev cited ten reasons why it would be necessary to conduct a genuine investigation into Nikola Mladenov's death. The SJO is also investigating this case.

Procurement—the Perfect Legally Permissible Crime

Public procurements that are carried out by state institutions, public institutions and local self-government have become a "promised land" for the ruling system of VMRO-DPMNE and for the coalition partner DUI. Therefore, it is not by chance that the coalition of VMRO-DPMNE and DUI, for many years, had a negative moniker attached to—the tender-annex coalition, because the tenders, i.e. the manipulations and abuses of this legal procedure were one of the main tools for the profits and wealth of the parties in power, party leaderships and businesses and people close to parties and leaders. Journalist Aleksandar Sholjakovski used a phrase that is very close to reality and gets to the core of the problem of public procurement and tenders. According to him, the procedure of public procurement is so created by politics, that it becomes the "perfect legally permissible crime".

VMRO-DPMNE, in the first phase of taking over the government, showed that it would abuse public procurement for its own lucrative interests. One of the first crucial precedents of the abuse of public procurement and emphasizing the power of the government, which instead of the exception became the rule and everyday life, was the attempt to sell TEP “Negotino” not to the highest bidder, which was EVN, but rather to a Bulgarian-American phantom firm. This triggered the first serious crisis between the parties in the government coalition, since the then NSDP minister of economy did not want to sign the controversial agreement, evaluating it as harmful. EVN complained to the international arbitration for such disputes, announced a claim of over a billion dollars, but over time, some secret compromise was made, the case became obscure, EVN became a loyal partner, and in some election campaigns even a propagator of Gruevski’s government. This case turned into a paradigm/metaphor for the operation of the tender-annex coalition, which over time was brought to perfection.

One of the biggest criminal public procurements is the case for which the Special Public Prosecutor’s Office filed an indictment under the name “Trust”. It is characteristic in the method by which it was carried out and the amount of the damages. Namely, according to the SJO, a consortium composed of three companies received forged tenders with forged documentation and thus gained an unlawful advantage in the amount of over one billion denars or about 17 million euros. The public procurement, related to the excavation of a pit in REK Bitola “occurred during 2011. The consortium which got this tender was “Transmet” DEO from Skopje, “Sileks nonmetals” from Kratovo and “Vato” DEO from Studenichani. Against the three companies an indictment proposal was submitted, and against their managers an indictment that they “knowingly violated the public procurement procedure and provided the consortium with a profit of several million euros” and were prosecuted for “misuse of the public call procedure, awarding a contract for public procurement or public-private partnership”.

The Center for Civil Communications, which continuously and systematically monitors public procurements, constantly publishes reports in the public that most accurately capture the state of play when it comes to public procurement in the country. According to the latest report for 2016 from the monitoring of public procurements conducted on the central level institutions, the neuralgic points and the actual conditions in this area are pointed out.

"In 2016, as much as 23% of the tender procedures were completely or partially annulled. More often it was the tender procedures with larger sums, i.e. of larger value that were annulled and canceled, rather than the smaller, less valuable tender procedures. A number of examples of problematic cancellations of tender procedures were noted during the monitoring. Almost every third tender procedure had only one bidder. This is a consequence, first of all, of the low competition recorded in the first half of 2016. The bureaucratization of public procurement procedures according to the requirements for consent from the Council of Public Procurement did not significantly drop in intensity. In 2016, the contracting authorities submitted to the Council of Public Procurement a total of 16,067 consent requests, which cost them a total of EUR 1.8 million. Although it was planned in all public procurement tenders, e-auctions were held in only 55 percent of the monitored procedures."

"In 2016, a total of 605 procurement contracts were signed without a previously announced call for bids and their value amounted to 34.8 million EUR. The total value of these contracts is 20% higher compared to 2015. The highest procurement contract signed under this non-transparent procedure belonged to JSC Macedonian Power Plants and concerned the excavation of coal and slag for the needs of RU Mines, MEC Bitola, in the value of around 5.8 million EUR. Only 557 complaints were submitted by the companies to the State Appeals Commission in 2016. The number of complaints points to an extremely low percentage of appealed procedures for public procurements by the companies of 3%,"—the Center for Civil Communications reports.

Public procurements and tenders were an instrument for massive misuse of budget funds and hundreds of millions of euros of crime, which then, in an illegal and unlawful way, left the country to unknown destinations, and some of them returned to be laundered and legalized. Although the public and relevant investigative media reports had noted many illegalities, the few cases and even specific charges that were brought in this area by the Special Public Prosecutor's Office, which will show the extent of this issue. However, the findings about the deformations in of public procurement have focused the attention of the public to several unlawful situations.

Firstly, there was discouraging of applications through threats or bribes to companies that are interested in competing in the public procurement tender, so that the favorite company of the government can win the tender. Secondly, there was widespread abuse of the lowest price, which is one of the criteria for a company to be chosen. It would be fulfilled by the favored company's

in order to win the public procurement tender, and then with countless annexes added to the agreement, the price of the tender project went up. This was the case with the new building of the Macedonian National Theater. In this case, although at the beginning the construction was projected to cost about 6 million euros, after many corrections and annexes, the final price reached a fantastic 40 million euros. It was a similar situation with the new building of the Macedonian Philharmonic, and there are many more cases of publicly procured buildings with high “built-in” prices. Thirdly, there were provisions of commissions in some percentage of the total value that went to the ruling party, so that capital goods objects could be won without a tender or with manipulations with the tender by the foreign company that received the tender. This happened with the choice of contractor of the two highways built by a Chinese company with loans from a Chinese bank, where instead of under Macedonian public procurement laws and procedures, the contractor was chosen according to the rules in China, without a tender procedure and transparency of the procedure, so that the price for these projects is almost double the cost of construction and involved a lot of crime, corruption and harm for the Macedonian state. Fourthly, the principle “You scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours”. Namely, the party or a senior party-state functionary would “help” a company secure a public tender for the construction of an object or service at an unusually high price, such as the casting of the monuments from “Skopje 2014”, with an obligation to the recipients of the tenders to transfer a part of those inflated prices to a private or party account abroad or in cash. It is highly likely that the interception of communications between businessmen and other professions around the tenders played a role in public procurement and the determination of the most optimal conditions or the lowest price.

In this context we have the analysis of the EU’s Security Research Institute (EUISS), which concluded that the Chinese investments in infrastructure in the Western Balkan countries are encouraging corruption in the region. The report says that there have been 5.5 billion euros’ worth of investments in roads and railroads in Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro and BiH, and that the Chinese received the work directly through government officials and not through tender procedures. This analysis also mentions the case of the construction of the Kicevo-Ohrid highway, with which the budget of Macedonia was damaged by 155 million euros, mentioning also that implicated in this case are politicians and a former prime minister, for which the Special Public Prosecution has opened a procedure. The analysis says that the Chinese company “Sinohydro”,

which is building the Macedonian highways, was on the World Bank's black list of corruption and fraud in 2016.

The analysis of the EUISS confirms the indications of the wiretapped conversations, for which the SJO has launched an investigation, that in order to get the construction of the two highways (Miladinovci - Shtip and Kichevo - Ohrid), the Chinese company gave huge commissions to high state-party officials. As compensation, the cost of the construction of the highways increased enormously, which came at the expense of the budget of the Republic of Macedonia. Something similar happened with the motorway section Demir Kapija-Udovo, which is being built by the Greek firm "Aktor", against which a competent EU agency has initiated an investigation procedure and imposed a sentence on this company. In Macedonia, despite the fact that an investigation was launched into unlawful payments of millions of euros to persons from Greece that are part of "Aktor", that were then returned to Macedonia, likely for cash payments for commissions to some officials, the Public Prosecutor's Office has not announced whether a procedure is being conducted and what, if anything, has been established, even after several years since the EU investigation.

For the project "Skopje 2014" there are indications of non-transparent tenders, suspicious contracts, money laundering and the financial profiting of individuals and firms through elements of politically organized crime. Several unlawful and controversial elements characterize this project: of a historical, identity, aesthetic, legal and financial nature. The idea and design of the project were not the result of a public debate about its need, content and cost. Since it is a matter of statues and monuments of persons and events that have a wider social and state character and importance, Parliament should have been legally responsible for its content. Although the central government and the party repeatedly claimed that the project was in the hands of the City of Skopje and the Municipality of Centar, huge amounts of the state budget were transferred to the city and the local self-government. Considering the amount of money that was invested in some segments of the project—there should have been line items for these costs in the budget, but these did not exist and there only general items for procurement of equipment and other needs. In order to avoid controlling the spending of money for the Skopje 2014 project, the VMRO-DPMNE system of governance placed this project in the "budget labyrinths," spending it with no transparency, while for capital infrastructure investments such as the highways, it borrowed from Chinese banks

that conditioned contractors to be Chinese firms, and construction prices were inflated like corrupt balloons.

The entire project was conceived by the party leadership of VMRO-DPMNE and personally by its leader Nikola Gruevski. At the beginning, it was announced that the project was going to cost 80 million euros, but since then the price was corrected to 120 million euros, while the final price of the project was never publicly announce, and yet it is assumed that the costs of this project are more than 670 million euro, with some estimations going as far as one billion euros. There is no report for this project. An expert analysis in the municipality of Center showed many illegalities and was sent to the competent public prosecutor's office, but for years this case is waiting in someone's drawer.

Party Financing - "Legal" Money Laundering

The financing of parties in Macedonia, in the way that it functions, is a major source of crime. Despite the fact that legal solutions are being created so that the financing of political parties is conducted in a normal and legal way, due to the privileges of the ruling parties and because of the lack of response from the competent institutions, and due to some kind of solidarity between the parties when it comes to financing, this is a persistent problem. However, the system of governance of VMRO-DPMNE, fully and to an unprecedented extent criminalized this process and the party thus became the richest party in Europe, with assets worth about 90 million euros. Only the headquarters of the party is worth about 40 million euros, and for comparison, the second biggest party in the country, SDSM, owns property that is worth ten times less.

According to the legal solutions, the parties are financed by donations, from membership fees and from the state budget, according to the votes won in the parliamentary elections. The only undisputed and clean way of financing is the money that the parties receive from the budget. The other two means, donations and membership fees, are exploited and subject to abuse, manipulation and illegal actions, especially when it comes to the ruling parties that control the institutions responsible for monitoring these activities, which especially in the captured state, become helpers in the committing of these crimes. Part of the donations and membership fees are governed by the rule – from me to you and back again, or 'take and give'. The ruling party helped the companies of their close businessmen, friends and relatives acquire public tenders from which they gain large profits, and in return, as a sign of gratitude,

the companies donate the maximum legal amounts in donations to the party. Some donations, according to testimonies of witnesses and according to findings from investigative journalism pieces, were coerced through threats that came from inspections from various state bodies or bringing various charges against business owners, which is a classic example of racketeering. The membership fees are similarly problematic. All members that the party indebted through a function, employment, some privilege, etc., donate to the party in the election campaigns. Donations are often several times higher than the salaries of these members. However, the VMRO-DPMNE system of governance has developed another way of donations: hundreds and thousands of members or supporters appear as donors with large amounts of donations without having to donate their money. Several investigative research stories have proven that many are on donor lists without having given any money or even without knowing they are donors! In this way the party launders the money it has received illegally.

For the ruling system of VMRO-DPMNE, there is another way of financing the party that is familiar to the public: payment of party activities using state budget funds, i.e. mixing the state and party treasury. This is a topic that the businessman Velija Ramkovski spoke about: as the owner of the closed A1 TV station, he was sentenced to a long prison sentence for tax avoidance, and had his TV station and several newspapers closed down, perhaps as a result of speaking out against this practice. In an interview in 2010 in Studio 2 (part of which is quoted in the weekly "Focus", January 2014), Ramkovski said: "The party is in debt. They tell me, I cannot pay you, but I can pay you through government money, through invoices from government money. Yes, it is wrong, the Prime Minister said, to pay you from the budget. Well, pay me. I've advertised you already, why not pay me. But where is the source of this money? This I can get into and the security and police services should investigate it. How much VMRO was advertised on A1".

In the first term of VMRO-DPMNE's government, when the party leader and prime minister was Ljupco Georgievski, and Nikola Gruevski was Finance Minister, this party developed huge businesses through many party-related firms. They even owned a bank later on. As a result of this, the Constitutional Court adopted a decision banning parties from own firms, dealing with businesses, and making profits. However, just as it was at that time, as long as it was in power, the party was run as a joint stock company, and with the capture of the state, the state was treated and managed as a joint stock company, with profits and dividends being transferred to the party and party leadership.

Due to all this, as well as the indications in the released wiretaps and Zaev's bombs, the Special Public Prosecutor's Office launched an investigation into the financing of VMRO-DPMNE. From that investigation we have the Talir case, for which SJO failed to bring an indictment before the end of the mandate, due to the large amount of material evidence that had to be processed.

According to the SJO, "there is well-founded suspicion that the first suspect, the party leader, enabled party financing in the period from 2009 to 2015 that was contrary to the legal provisions. The first suspect, as leader of the party, accepted the money and with the help of other suspects allowed for the accumulation of financial capital for the needs of the party through money laundering. In this case it is a matter of abuse of office and authorization. There is reasonable doubt that the money comes from the crime committed by a group of people who through the local party organizations enabled money laundering, by putting money into the party account through cash payments as personal payments. From 2009 to 2015 this method led to the accumulation of 301.531.662 denars (4.9 million euros). Some of the suspects presented this money in the final accounts as donations. The money was spent on marketing costs, paying bills, buying real estate."

According to SJO, "between 2009 and 2015, 71 contracts for the purchase of real estate, paid from these illegally acquired funds, were arranged. Part of the property was not in the function of achieving the goals of the party and was not used for party purposes, and had no party logos or signs on the property. Eleven persons committed money laundering, out of which 9 people were direct executors, and two were associates." The Special Public Prosecutor's Office points out that this was not the only way of financing. "The first suspect allowed VMRO-DPMNE to acquire services from GP "Beton" Skopje, through public procurement. There is a reasonable suspicion that the second suspect made a co-investor agreement of 79 million denars, while the total investments of Beton were 556 million, out of which 442 million were the value of the object, and 131 million denars were paid to the account of the party in the name of regulating the mutual rights and co-investor relations agreements. This, in fact, was a donation from "Beton" to VMRO-DPMNE. Under the legal provisions, through a public service contract, this company could not be a donor. The first suspect did not prevent it. There is reasonable doubt that five persons committed the criminal offense abuse of office, of which two were direct perpetrators and three were associates. In "Talir" there are a total of 14 persons that are suspected, including persons from the leadership of VMRO-DPMNE who have used the party for personal motives."

Redistribution of Social Wealth for One's Self and One's Own

Throughout Macedonia's infinite transition, which has been going on for more than half a century and has never really ended, there are several trends that were most pronounced in the last ten years, when they inflicted enormous damages and created major imbalances on the overall social processes and conditions in the country. On the other hand, a small group of senior party and state officials and businessmen close to the ruling structures added to their enormous wealth and power. What happened was a quick and extreme redistribution, or rather the plundering of social wealth from the majority of the population to a small group of people. There was the characteristic double drain: firstly, huge amounts of money were 'drained' to unknown foreign destinations abroad (which were then returned in order to be laundered as foreign investments), and secondly, we had the 'brain drain' of the most important resource of a society—the young and the highly educated and the professionals had started to leave the country. These are criminal processes that are detrimental to the wider social community, but very useful and profitable for a small group that has governed the state as a joint stock company with its private capital.

Such large processes and even larger amounts of money, capital and resources could not be directed, controlled, abused, and used by ordinary criminals and random people, but only by those who have access to government and, what is becoming more and more likely, those who were at the highest positions of power. If there were elements of consciousness and intent in initiating such processes and carrying out such actions, and the facts increasingly indicate that there were, this means that we have the highest form of politically organized crime, bordering on high treason. Even if there was no consciousness and intent—even negligence in such crucial processes and deeds is a crime. As an illustration, several specific examples should suffice.

Macedonia, in its transition period and most notably in the last decade, was becoming an extremely divided society. One of the most unjust divisions, with elements of organized crime, occurred with the redistribution of social wealth, which surpassed even Russia. The dominant part of the social wealth, between 80 and 90 percent, is owned by a small group of extremely wealthy people who became wealthy mainly through the privatization of former social capital. The remaining 10 to 20 percent are allocated to the vast majority of citizens. One third of the country's population lives in deep poverty, and a large percentage are at the brink of poverty. In one of his expert analyses, Branislav Jovanovic suggests that in recent years, 50 percent or half of the growth of

the social product went to one percent of the population (the richest), and the remaining 50 percent or half go to 99 percent of the population. In this context he asks the question: who and how is directing this money towards this small structure?

In an interview with Fokus (November 6th 2015), the professor and former minister, D-r Tito Belichanec, announced that the government of Nikola Gruevski, in addition to the privatization of the remaining 50 percent of companies that were not privatized during the time of SDSM, carried out the largest privatization of state-owned land that was not covered by the privatization process of social enterprises. "In value, the relationship between privatized social enterprises, that is, their facilities and equipment and privatized land is, I might be exaggerating here, 1 to 1.000. Earth is a natural treasure, given once and for all. You can become the owner of a factory, a building, a technology, and if you are not a successful entrepreneur, the firm, that is, the property, is worthless, but the land of the privatized enterprises for only one euro per square meter remains in permanent ownership and acquires enormous value. In hundreds of cases, the factories were demolished, the privatization contracts were not respected, and the land was reassigned into construction land."—Belichanec concluded. According to some findings, it was precisely with such deals and the conversion of agricultural land into construction lots, many people from and close to the structures of VMRO-DPMNE gained huge wealth, especially those owned who owned construction companies.

Towards the end of 2015, the organization Global Financial Integrity published its report "Illegal Financial Flows in Developing Countries: 2014-2015." According to this report, in the ten year reporting period, as much as \$5.162 million were taken out of Macedonia, amounting to \$516 million a year or 5% of the GDP. In the analysis of this report, in the daily newspaper "Sloboden Pecat," former NBM governor Petar Goshev was asked whether the amount of \$516 million of illegal financial flows annually is large or small, to which he answered with a very specific example. "In 2014, the total international trade of goods with foreign countries (import and export together) amounted to 9,821 million dollars. The possible manipulations in exports and imports can occur on several grounds: (1) inaccurate declared price, (2) inaccurate declared quality, (3) inaccurate declared quantities. In the same year, the total value of the services in both directions (import-export) was about 3 billion dollars. Thus we get the total exchange of goods and services abroad (in both directions) with a value of 12.8 billion dollars. If we assume that it is possible to, on average, in each invoice for the export of goods and services (overvalued or undervalued

value in comparison with the real one) to “hide” the financial value of “only” 3%, the undeclared or untaxed value approaches \$400 million in one year.”

However, according to Gosev, that is not all. “For example, we do not know whether there is a paper trail of the millions that were paid in connection with the “Magyar Telekom” affair to our former and current officials—party officials or state officials—it does not matter; , where, when and whether or not the Chinese commission (paid for by our money) is or may be recorded somewhere, for the construction of the famous high-ways in the country; whether there is and if yes, where is the money train for the financial mismanagement with the Greek firm “Aktor”; we do not know how many officials and businessmen from Macedonia have opened accounts and registered companies in the so-called tax havens and countries with secret jurisdictions,”—s ays Goshev. In this he exposes another important fact. Namely, he says that one may get the impression that “all of these large amounts have been” stolen only by state officials. That, of course, is not true, Gosev argues. From the methodology of the GFI and their estimates, it is evident that these amounts became the property of persons from both sectors—the private and the public. In corrupt countries, only once such symbiosis (officials, private and public sector, etc.) can pump out so much money without any responsibility.

When it comes to money that has been ‘drained’ from the country, it should be noted that in the same period, the country witnessed a ‘brain drain’ of one of the most valuable resources for the development of a society—approximately one quarter of the population, mostly young, educated and skilled people, left the country. Although it may not seem logical, in principle, this is a type of organized crime by the political factor that manages the processes in the country. Among the more important reasons for this ‘brain drain,’ two are caused by the then governing structure. The first is the great stagnation in society in every respect: poverty, unemployment, persistent political and security crises and scandals, a regression in Euro-Atlantic integration, the isolation and ghettoization of the country, the debasing of the cultural, value-based and moral standards, selective justice—in brief, the general sense of agony and hopelessness. The second is that the state became the largest employer, and the main condition for employment was not a diploma, but a party membership card.

The VMRO-DPMNE system of governing was very ambitious in its promises, which is why it won ten election cycles in a row. However, as time passed, data and conditions showed that, to a large extent, these promises were false,

especially the biggest promises such as those for foreign investment. According to Petar Goshev, during the ruling of VMRO-DPMNE, for each dollar of foreign investment, the state/government invested 1.2 dollars, instead of the ratio being reversed. It essentially speaks to unprofitable investments, or in other words, investments at any price. In one of the election campaign, Gruevski promised eight billion euros of foreign investment, which was not taken seriously, but rather like the one time promised billion from Taiwan by Vasil Tupurkovski. According to BIRN's research, in ten years VMRO-DPMNE announced foreign investments in specific projects in the amount of 3.7 billion euros; however, only about 580 million euros were effectuated. During this period, 138 factories, plants, hotels and other facilities were promised, and only 51 were realized, 44 are on the course of realization, and 43 were not realized at all. 62,701 jobs were announced, but only 20,245 people were hired through foreign direct investments.

The ineffectiveness and expensiveness of the foreign investments is captured in the analysis by D-r Branislav Jovanovic called "The Real Price of Cheap Labor," which looked at 25 foreign companies that received state aid in the period from 2007 to 2015. "The study showed that the direct costs of government policies to support foreign investment amounts to about 160 million euros and are significantly higher than the direct effects of these policies, which amount to 92 million euros, and that is the salaries of workers employed in these factories,"—Jovanovic said. During this period, the net profits of the auxiliary firms amounted to 235 million euros, or 2.5 times more than the salaries of the workers." According to Jovanovic, "the total number of employees in companies that received state aid is 12.600, which means that the cost per employee amounts to 12.850 euros. By comparison, in Serbia, in the period 2014-2016, the government paid 159 million euros in subsidies to foreign companies, but these firms employed 20.967 people. This means that state subsidies per worker in Serbia are 7.644 euros or 5.000 euros less than Macedonia."

Laws and Rules of Procedure of the Assembly - At the Order and to the Measure of the Government

Even though good democratic practices mean that Parliament, as a legislature, should adopt laws in a normal procedure, with the implementation of all stages (proposal for adoption, draft, debates in the commissions and with the relevant stakeholders and then finally, a draft law), and only use expedited

procedures that avoid broader debates as an exception, in practice, especially in the last seven to eight years, the system of governance of VMRO-DPMNE made the exception the rule, and more often than not, the laws were adopted in an expedited procedure and without accepting the suggestions of the opposition. It was a similar situation with the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly, which, according to democratic 'fair play', is adopted by consensus involving all parties. However, the system adopted the Rules of Procedure at a time when the opposition boycotted the work of Parliament, so it was adapted to the government's interest in speeding up the procedures for hearings and adopting laws and other decisions, as well as obstructing the work of the Assembly in case a new majority was formed. This was noticed after the early elections in 2016, when after many obstructions, the president of the Parliament and then the government could barely be elected, and the procedures for the dismissal of former high-ranking officials of the institutions lasted for days, weeks and months.

It is interesting to know how and why the VMRO-DPMNE governing system imposed changes to the highest constitutive act in the state, the Constitution, passed laws that were of broader social interest, camouflaged the laws that could influence the party's and the leader's rating and similar manipulations and abuses that bordered on crime, but because of the absolute power and captured institutions, there were no reactions. In the final phase of the era of governance, the VMRO-DPMNE government submitted an initiative for a dozen changes to the Constitution. Among several indisputable amendments, for which however it was not the right time to be introduced to the Constitution, they introduced an amendment to form free financial zones, and in order to distract the public from that amendment, they proposed several irritating amendments, including an amendment to change the crest of the state to include VMRO-DPMNE's party lion. The free financial zones, in which the state would not have any competencies and would not apply Macedonian laws, in fact, according to experts, were to become a function and an instrument for businesses, that is, for laundering the money of the governing structures from the offshore destinations. Added later was the amnesty of financial capital (a proposal by former VMRO-DPMNE leader and prime minister, Ljupco Georgievski), which in translation would mean amnesty of the financial crimes and the investment of such laundered and legalized money in the Macedonian and world economy. The constitutional changes initiative, as it turned out, failed, because the wider social community, sobered up by the revealed crimes in bombs provided by Zaev and the opposition, could see right through it.

Laws were being changed as if in an assembly line, in order to create legal chaos, legal uncertainty, to make the laws inapplicable and non-functional, by creating such an environment, to make it easier to rule and gain power and wealth. The two institutions that were in charge of the constitutionality of the laws that were adopted—the President of the Republic, with the right to veto, i.e., the right to refuse to sign the decree into law, and the Constitutional Court—did not fulfill their constitutional obligation. In his eight-year mandate, the president did not veto a single law submitted by the government and voted on by majority in the Assembly. Similar was the vassal attitude to the laws contested by individuals and the opposition and the majority in the current composition of the Constitutional Court. In principle, unconstitutional too was the Law on the Authentic Interpretation of the Amnesty Law, which gave amnesty to the perpetrators of the crimes in the four Hague cases concerning acts against humanity (which according to international law can neither be pardoned nor made obsolete). Instead of by the government, the law was proposed by the parliamentary group of VMRO-DPMNE, and then voted by the ruling majority of VMRO-DPMNE and DUI. Significant laws were passed on Fridays after midnight or before holidays so that they may go unnoticed by the public and avoid public reactions in the media. Therefore, if something was unconstitutional and unlawful, but the state institutions either said nothing or proclaimed it to be constitutional and lawful for party-political and personal goals and interests—this is politically organized crime.

The VMRO-DPMNE system of governance introduced a certain precedent in the signing of some of the government's laws and decisions that were complex, controversial, unpopular, and could have damaged the party's ratings and especially the ratings of its leader. This was the case with the government's decisions for the delineation of the border with Kosovo and for the recognition of the Republic of Kosovo, which were not signed by the Prime Minister (who, as is usual on such occasions, stepped out during the vote or did not attend the session), but by the then Deputy Prime Ministers for European Integration Vasko Naumovski and Ivica Bocevski. Similarly, Gruevski bypassed the signing of the law that regulated the loan from China for the highways, which was signed by the Deputy Prime Minister. According to what was said by the then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Zoran Stavreski, Gruevski demanded that the Vice Prime Minister Vladimir Peshevski and the Minister of Transport and Communications Mile Janakieski sign the agreement with the representatives of the Chinese company Sinohydro for the construction on the highways Miladinovci - Stip and Kichevo - Ohrid. As it was seen later, the secret

clause was added in person, with a commission of about five percent of the value of the cost of the highways agreed with the Chinese. This is a familiar method used by the leader Nikola Gruevski in unpopular or dubious decisions and laws. A similar case occurred during the mandate of the first government of VMRO-DPMNE, under Prime Minister of Ljupco Georgievski, when, as Minister of Trade, Gruevski was not present in the government sessions and did not take part in the (criminal) decision to sell OKTA, even though this sale was under his portfolio!?

As with many other things—elections, wiretapping, the election budget, etc., the years 2013 and 2014 were also characteristic for the engineering in the adoption of laws. In 2013, when the opposition was only present in Parliament for a short time following the events of “black Monday” at the end of the previous year, and in 2014 after the dissolution of parliament before the elections and after them, when the opposition did not recognize the results of the election process, the government, as in a production line, passed laws after an expedited or urgent procedure and almost without any discussion. In this way, in 2013 a total of 315 laws and amendments were passed, of which one third in expedited or urgent motions. Then in 2014, out of 185 laws passed, two-thirds were expedited or urgent!

In 2015, however, a new revivalist invention of the system came into practice. Every promise that Nikola Gruevski delivered at the rallies organized by VMRO-DPMNE in the sports halls of the major cities in the country, as a counterweight and to match the opposition’s “bombs” that revealed the government’s crimes, not only immediately became a law for the party, but in a few days, in an expedited procedure and without any debate, regardless of whether it was planned in the budget or not, with the votes of the majority in Parliament, the promises and the laws of the party quickly became the law of the state. And another small intriguing piece of data about the absurdity of the situation in how the laws were passed in the era of the greatest power and arrogance of the VMRO-DPMNE governing system: more than 90 percent of the laws were at the government’s proposal, about 70 percent were adopted in an expedited or urgent procedure, and several dozens of laws, i.e., changes and amendments to laws were passed in a single day! With this approach and dynamics, it becomes clear why the criminal organizations and perpetrators of politically organized crime had long been a step ahead of those who chased them.

Conflict of Interest and Nepotism - a Normal Phenomenon

Conflicts of interest and nepotism were a defining feature in both of VMRO-DPMNE's spells in government, but especially during the government headed by Nikola Gruevski (2006-2016). Conflicts of interest were manifested in the functioning of the institutions and their appointments and employment. In particular, although conflict of interests and nepotism are both legally prohibited and morally dubious, it seemed that VMRO-DPMNE's governance system was neither bothered nor attempted to block these two methods, but rather treated them and defended them as completely normal and legal conditions.

A conflict of interests in the functioning and operation of the institutions took place massively and on several occasions. Such controversies took place with the adoption of many laws in 2008, in the aftermath of the early parliamentary elections, when there was a situation of new MPs having been elected to parliament and therefore a new government structure that had not yet been confirmed by Parliament, during which time the technical work until the appointment of a new one, was being done by the old government. Then, speaker Trajko Veljanoski boasted that until the new government was formed, he would get passed all the laws and amendments that were submitted to his desk by the technical government. He succeeded because all of these laws were adopted in an expedited procedure, without commission hearings and similar legal procedures, in the absence of the opposition which, due to such illegal procedures, boycotted the parliament. The ruling majority, assisted by DUI deputies, who replaced DPA and became coalition partners of VMRO-DPMNE, sat in the round-the-clock parliament sessions, and there was almost no time to put their hands up between two votes. Moreover, an unprecedented thing happened when the same man, Imer Selmani, had at the same time proposed a law as a minister, and was then in the situation to vote on the same proposed law as an MP! In this global record of a harvest, about 140 laws, amendments and changes were passed in about two weeks, in a procedure of 35-40 seconds each per law, where some were adopted at midnight or on a work day or a holiday, in the same moment when they were submitted by the technical government.

A similar thing happened after the early parliamentary elections in 2016, when in 2017 four of VMRO-DPMNE's MPs, with verified mandates in Parliament, held the position of technical ministers (one of which was a technical prime minister) for nearly six months, signed decisions in the name of the government, made agreements and similar actions, thereby violating the Constitution which explicitly states that the parliamentary function excludes any

other function. It was only because of the standstill, that is, the non-functioning of the Assembly, that they did not have a chance to vote as MPs. Despite the public's request, it was not disclosed whether they received two salaries simultaneously for the execution of both functions in the executive and legislative power.

The conflict of interest in staffing, or nepotism, was widespread from the highest positions to the lowest levels of government. Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, without blinking an eye, as if in a monarchy, had placed his first cousin, Sasho Mijalkov, as the director of the secret service—UBK. Prime Minister Gruevski's best man at his wedding was the Minister of Finance, Zoran Stavreski. At the top of the government there were other relations of kinship and friendly relations. It was similar with the lower echelons. And then family relations of parents and children in politics and the judiciary, officials - judges - lawyers, it was so widespread and normalized that it seems like it is not even worth mentioning.

One of the most serious situations of conflict of interest, perhaps not in the truest sense of the term, that the system of governance of VMRO-DPMNE developed to perfection was the employment of thousands of people in the state and public sector, not according to the conditions of the public call for the position, but according to the most important condition - the party membership card.

In this context it is worth mentioning another situation that was become increasingly wide-spread the longer that VMRO-DPMNE was in power—taking advantage of the positions in power for status benefits. Namely, a large part of the top officials of the government, starting from the leader down to the ministers and other high-ranking officials, during their term gained the highest academic titles—doctorates and masters of science at the Macedonian universities, which is more than immoral and exploitative of the official positions and power for academic advancement. Furthermore, the party helped many of its deserving and loyal members to complete their education and acquire university degrees in an express way, and often by buying diplomas with money.

IX

A SPECIAL TYPE OF CRIME POLITICALLY ORGANIZED CRIME

In the end, I would like to give a brief and summarized elaboration and definition of politically organized crime. Politically organized crime as a punishable unlawful act that endangers the highest social and political values, and therefore has the greatest harmful social and political consequences, has its own specific goals that it wants to achieve, has its own instruments to help achieve its goals and has its users who gain power, social status, profits and material and financial wealth. The main goal, the basic idea and the binding tissue of politically organized crime is power: the political party arrives to power through elections, secures political power through government, and acquires financial and material wealth, social status and other profits for individuals and the party.

From the analysis and monitoring of these processes, two types of instruments can be identified that were used for the accomplishment of the set goals with the help of politically organized crime. According to their function, they are instruments of the offense and the defense. The first type of instrument, the offense instrument, consists of the party and institutions of the state that actively participate in the design, organization, and execution of the types and actions of political crime. This is what is referred to as the criminal association. In it lays, is contained and manifested the finesse that makes the difference between classical organized crime and politically organized crime.

In the classical type of organized crime, for every crime, there is a criminal association. In the case of politically organized crime, where there is a stack of several criminal offenses, besides the criminal association for each individual act, because it is a stack of several acts for achieving two long-term goals: achieving power and wealth for the party and for leadership—there is a central, supreme criminal association that controls the process of politically organized crime in all individual acts, in continuity and for a longer period of time. Practically, these arguments and elements show that politically

organized crime should be analyzed as a process in continuity. The second type of instrument, the defensive, is the judiciary and security institutions (the prosecution, the judiciary, the police, the inspectorates) that are organized and instructed by the party to mask, white-wash, iron out, and to attack opponents with politically manufactured cases in order to defend and obscure the crimes of the government (for example, the manufacturing of the “*Putsch* case” to prevent, intercept and neutralize the “wiretapping” affair) or simply to not initiate procedures for finding and punishing organizers, executors and assistants in politically organized crime.

Those who stand to benefit from the acts of politically organized crime are: the party that has captured (and is itself captured) and is leading the state, senior officials from the government and the party, businessmen—partners of the government and the party and certain intellectuals, artists, experts. Towards the number of direct or indirect beneficiaries of politically organized crime, whether this was done consciously or unconsciously, we should also add part of the party membership and certain social categories of citizens—customers of the government, who feel gratitude for some minor benefits (a job, an appointment, a pension, a subsidy, social assistance) and are willing to participate or to cover or carry out the crimes of the government (borrowing their identity for money laundering through donations, even though they did not give their money at all, the perpetrators of violence of the type on the “Bloody Thursday”, when in order to help the party continue their rule, they committed serious crimes such as a *coup* attempt, an attempt to murder MPs and party leaders).

There is another element, or perhaps we can even call it a fact, to politically organized crime that should be considered and that is yet to be addressed. Namely, after the liberation of the state and the institutions, in addition to the legal resolution to the criminal acts of the top officials and the party itself as a legal entity, initiated by the Special Public Prosecution, the court trials, that is, the prosecutors, the defendants, the protected witnesses, the expert witnesses, and other participants, will reveal many dark and unknown things that were done in the function of the crimes of the system of governance of VMRO-DPMNE. Furthermore, with the help of foreign independent institutions, the biggest and most monstrous cases and affairs of politically organized crime that have inflicted huge damage and consequences to the state, and which the former government tried to hide at all costs, will be revealed.

The resolution to all these acts has yet to show the full dimensions of far a single governing structure can go, or more precisely, what kind of damage a criminal structure can cause to society, the state, and its citizens, in order to gain power, government, status, money and wealth. Many such cases can be listed, but the three most significant ones, that is, those that have caused the greatest harmful consequences are sufficient. The first—a two-day “small war” in the Kumanovo neighborhood of “Divo Naselje”, which killed dozens of security forces, as well as terrorists, while dozens more wounded. For this event, for which there are indications that it was set up by the secret services under the command of the ruling system of VMRO-DPMNE, it is increasingly likely that its goal was to divert attention from Zaev’s bombs. The second - the monstrous pre-Easter murder of four innocent boys and a fisherman, with the goal of disrupting interethnic relations before the elections, allowing the governing parties to bank on the increased tensions. The third - the events of “Bloody Thursday” on April 27th, when a *coup* attempt was organized in order to kill MPs and party leaders, to introduce a state of war and to allow the already failed governing structure to restructure and to remain in power to organize the following early parliamentary elections.

Having in mind the identified criminal practice, which is confirmed by the wiretaps and the charges brought by the Special Prosecutor’s Office for prosecuting crimes related to and arising from the content of the illegal interception of communications, it is worth considering a revision to the Criminal Code to include the sanctioning of a new type of crime, or more precisely, a complex of criminal acts. Namely, among the most serious crimes, to standardize and introduce new acts that will incorporate a group of individual acts, carried out with intent and which constitute a whole as a group of extended and repeated crimes that endanger the highest and most important values, interests and priorities of the state, the citizens and the fundamental values protected by the Constitution and the laws: the rule of law, the freedoms and rights of the citizens, freedom of speech and expression, equality and accountability in front of laws and institutions, and elections as the most democratic institution and process.

This criminal case should be qualified among the most serious offenses also because the social harm and risks it causes are incomparable to other crimes. Politically organized crime, viewed as a whole, is a process or a group of multiple acts, according to the consequences it causes, in its essence causing injustice, that is to say, it impedes justice. Politically organized crime as a set of acts can be carried out: (1) by committing crimes on part of individuals

from the structures of the government/party and with the assistance of the captured institutions; and (2) by failure to act—not prosecuting and not sanctioning on part of the captured judiciary. Politically organized crime is carried out by perpetrators—criminals from the senior positions of the ruling party, and is downplayed, camouflaged and protected by those who should prosecute and sanction—the police, the prosecutor’s offices, and the courts.

This criminal case incorporates three parts of high corruption and crime, i.e., violations of the three greatest values in a democratic parliamentary society. Firstly, the abuse of the will of citizens in elections. This abuse is done with various types of pressures, violence, bribery, fraud and other election irregularities and criminal behavior. Secondly, the abuse of citizens’ trust (legitimacy and legality), given to the victorious party or coalition with the majority of votes in the elections, whose role is to lead the state on behalf of the citizens and in their interest. This type of abuse is done by failing to fulfill that which was promised, by prioritizing the party before the state and civic interests and priorities, with no accountability and responsibility. Thirdly, the abuse of the delegated sovereignty and legitimacy of the citizen/citizens, as sovereign in the parliamentary democracies to govern on their behalf and in the name of societal and state interests. Abuse is done in such a way that the state is guided in the wrong direction and by the wrong priorities because of which society and the citizens are inflicted irreparable damage, that is to say, they are working against their will and entrusted sovereignty.

The abuse of the power by the government is done through the abuse of office and authority and with the instrumentalisation of the freely expressed will of the people to rule on their behalf, as it is the citizens who give the party/coalition their majority (according to the proportional election model—party list or pre-election coalition). The abuse was committed because they did not fulfill the promises made as part of the electoral platform—that they will honestly and authentically represent the interests of the state, as well as the interests of all other citizens living in the country, even if they did not give their votes to the victorious party/coalition or have not voted at all, but according to the Constitution and laws as equal citizens, their interests should also be taken into account.

Betraying the trust and the free will of the majority of citizens given in elections, by working to accomplish narrow party and personal interests, has been carried out by an organized political party criminal association. The essence of the acts, in particular the abuses, consists of: poor and incompetent

governance, fraud and falsification in the election process, false and unfeasible promises, fictitious and unplanned achievements, violations of constitutional principles, construction of laws and by-laws that can be instrumentalized in practice or that are inapplicable, bribery and creating dependents and clientelism of large social groups with budgetary means, non-transparency in the work to conceal major illegalities, irregularities and irresponsibility, instructing and stimulating segments of the judiciary to apply selective justice, which means brutal persecutions and punishments for the opponents, and impunity for the government, mass violations of human rights and freedoms with violations of the basic legal principles—the presumption of innocence and freedom of expression, corrupting media with budget money, advertisements and businesses with their owners, making them turn into megaphones to spread propaganda, lies and hate speech in order to demonize opponents, and all that so party leaders and those around them can illegally gain personal and party material, financial and status-based benefits and resources.

One more specialty, that is, one additional important element of the act of politically organized crime, which distinguishes it from classical organized crime: politically organized crime in all its scope, dimensions, and damages to the state, society, and citizens appears, can function and can be executed only and exclusively in conditions of a captured state and a captured party, that is, in conditions of a state-party, while the illegal acts, with the assistance and logistics of the institutions, are performed by senior state officials, who are at the same time senior party officials. In addition to the numerous benefits, profits, wealth and social status that the individuals from the party-state leadership acquire, a party that does not bear responsibility for the illegal acts as a political-legal entity acquires wealth by illegitimate means (a problem that has yet to be addressed and sanctioned).

This crime, because it is qualified as, and taking into account the damaging consequences for the state, society and citizens, can be included among the class and rank of acts related to high treason towards the state and its citizens. As it is known, the legitimacy of power stems from the confidence that the majority of citizens gives through elections, and then transfer their sovereignty in order to rule on their behalf and their interests. As citizens give sovereignty and legitimacy, they can also take it back through elections, but also by creating a new parliamentary majority, as an alternative, in the inter-election period. The legitimacy of individuals from the government can be confiscated, also on behalf of the people/citizens, with interpellations and

dismissals from the functions of the Assembly, as well as by court verdicts, if they have broken the laws.

In the context of the acts related to politically organized crime, what should also perhaps be considered is the appearance of three newly minted criminal acts, which in conditions of an authoritarian regime and captured state, were often manifested and had inflicted huge social harm and consequences, while for the perpetrators they brought material and status-based benefits.

The first is the abuse of the legislature, the parliament, with utter vulgarization and instrumentalization of the democratic procedures in order to block the announced and initiated democratic and reform processes in the country, to prevent the rule of law and the legal state and the reaffirmation of institutions that would have completed the process of legal, political and moral responsibility for all those who broke the law, captured and robbed the state.

The second is the abuse of the power of the media and media individuals for acquiring unlawful material, financial and status benefits with the help of a full spectrum of criminal associations composed of officials, media owners and editors/journalists for carrying out (politically) organized crime.

The third is the abuse of official positions and authority by judges and prosecutors in preventing justice and protecting perpetrators of (politically) organized crime. This is a very sensitive matter - because the abuse of official position and powers of judges and prosecutors is something that can inflict serious human rights violations, selective justice and major harmful social consequences.

Despite the fact that at the moment of completing this book and handing it out to be printed, none of the above-mentioned crimes has received a court verdict, it can nevertheless be concluded that the very clues, suspicions and accusations show that they are possible in conditions of an authoritarian system and captured state, as it was in the time of the governing system of VMRO-DPMNE.

X

**THE THREE KEY ACTORS THAT
BROUGHT DOWN THE REGIME**

The political and criminal practice and daily experience confirm the rule that there is no perfect crime, that is, that there is no regime that has can forever hold onto power. Two things happened in Macedonia. Crimes of various kinds were committed by an autocratic regime against the interests of society, the state, and the citizens. Furthermore, , even though it was an abnormal country under the “boot” of the VMRO-DPMNE governing system, Macedonia confirmed one of the laws of parliamentary democracy: that in spite of how ruthless the regime or the system of government can become, at some point it is the opposition that will undo and bring down the government. VMRO-DPMNE’s perfectly organized and militarily established system of governance overlooked a few things, made a few mistakes, and were even victims of some coincidences that led to the initial spark that rocked and then destroyed the regime. In the example of Macedonia it turned out that regimes do not only fall violently, with revolutions and twists, as it still happens now in the 21st century in some countries, but that the regimes can also be dismantled in a peaceful way, with the method announced by the then leader the opposition, and the current prime minister, Zoran Zaev: peacefully, with perseverance, with reason, a vote, and a pencil. We should add, however, the coming together of circumstances.

The system of governance, i.e., the authoritarian government of VMRO-DPMNE, headed by Nikola Gruevski, was being brought to a collapse over a period of a few years, through resistance, massive expressions of dissatisfaction, continuously and in process. The final undoing and destruction had a beginning and an end and lasted exactly three years: from April 27th 2014 until April 27th 2017. The fall and the changes were triggered by five significant events and were carried out by five separate (some smaller, some much larger) groups that acted toward a joint goal: (1) the entire opposition organized around SDSM and led by Zoran Zaev; (2) The plenums: the student, the professor, the

high-school and the teachers plenums, supported by the critical and public opposition; (3) the international community that devised and managed the Przino agreements; (4) the institution that emerged from the Przino agreements and became the bearer of hope, as well as marked the formal beginning of the reforms and the new transformed rule of law - the Special Public Prosecutor's Office; (5) the group that presented the contents of the unlawfully wiretapped conversations from the secret services of the system of government to the public: Gjorgji Lazarevski, Zvonko Kostovski, Zoran Verusevski and Zoran Zaev

The five key events that marked the beginning of the end of the VMRO-DPMNE governance system, were: (1) The unwillingness to recognize the election process by SDSM and Zoran Zaev, at the time of the closing of polling stations for the early parliamentary elections, and the second round of presidential elections (on April 27, 2014), assessing both as election fraud; (2) The "Bombs of the Opposition and Zaev" within the project "The Truth About Macedonia", that is, the publication of the wiretapped conversations between high-ranking officials and the party in which they openly talk about crime, corruption, violence, abuse of power—which shook the ruling party like an earthquake from which it never recovered; (3) The student protests against the quasi-educational reforms implemented by the then government and the protests against the state of affairs in society, which were then joined by university professors, high school students and teachers, freelancers and other social groups, which after the abolition of the criminal leadership of the government by the President of the Republic, Gjorge Ivanov, grew into the joint Colorful Revolution. According to the symbolism of the name, it consisted of: the non-governmental sector, the opposition, students, other groups and citizens regardless of their national and party affiliation; (4) The early parliamentary elections of December 11th 2016, in which the coalitions of VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM were almost equal in the results, and a parliamentary majority for a coalition government was formed by SDSM; (5) The attack from the crowd of "For a common Macedonia" initiative, supported and instructed by VMRO-DPMNE on April 27th 2017, on "Bloody Thursday", when, after the attack and the endangering of the lives of MPs of the majority and two party leaders, there was a catharsis in which VMRO-DPMNE lost the throne of power and reluctantly went into the opposition, while several of the top leaders headed to the Criminal Court under charges from SJP for politically organized crime.

By not acknowledging the results of the early parliamentary elections in 2014 and the qualification of those elections as election fraud, with the return of the mandates of elected MPs (a lawful move that was not respected

in Parliament by the speaker and the then parliamentary majority), a serious political crisis was created that the government did not notice at the beginning and behaved as if everything in the country was normal. In that period, a quiet fermentation of dissatisfaction with the government began, which began to shift from opposition-minded citizens to large political and social groups, non-governmental organizations, independent intellectuals, representatives of Albanian and other ethnicities.

The student plenum laid the foundations of this process. As the swallow that announced the political spring, they were followed by several other newly formed plenums: the professors, the teachers, the journalist, the high-school student, the parents (in education), the freelancers, the independent trade unions and leftist associations ... Undoubtedly in this process of getting over the fears and encouraging people in the effort to bring down the system, as well as to stir up dissatisfaction with the negative aspects of the governments rule, a role was played by though few in numbers, many brave, independent, open-minded and influential critical and opposition-minded media, which can be counted using one's fingers. That small, but courageous media group consisted of three televisions, two or three printed daily newspapers and weekly newspapers, several radio stations and a dozen Internet portals.

The long-announced "Bombs by Zaev and the opposition" heated and accelerated the fermentation of dissatisfaction, of getting rid of the fears and the expectations of the process, and the crisis expanded and became a political-institutional crisis. An accelerated process of bringing down the government and its monstrous system of governance had begun. The project "The Truth About Macedonia", which emerged as a logical follow-up to the events after the publication of the "Wiretapping" affair, and "the detonation of Zaev's 40 bombs", showed that the opposition had a well-conceived strategy for exposing the governing system of VMRO-DPMNE, and serious evidence of delegitimizing power, a strong will to endure until its dethronement, and a platform to restore democracy, freedom, and normalcy in the state. Over time, the project "The Truth about Macedonia" had become a mass movement for the freedom fighting and critical thinking public against the autocratic criminalized regime and for changes and reforms in Macedonian society.

In Macedonia what slowly began was a process of creating a massive opposition environment and critical mass for change. This opposition was built according to the broadest definition of the term: the opposition of one politics to another, as opposing something, as resistance to something, as disputing

something, as a relationship between two opposing notions, attitudes, opinions—after the scandalous abolition of the party-state criminalized leadership of VMRO-DPMNE by the President of the Republic, Gorge Ivanov, and in defense of the Special Public Prosecutor's Office, which started conducting thorough and professional investigations, the Colorful Revolution appeared spontaneously.

With the original approach of formulating and articulating its demands, with the unusual horizontal organization of the protests and the new energy, the methods and how they acted, which were then accepted and upgraded, the Colorful Revolution, it can be definitely be said, created an authentic, autochthonous Macedonian way of activism, resistance and expression of dissatisfaction, which unpleasantly surprised the system, which in the first moments did not know how to react, but it also pleasantly surprised the world.

During this period of undoing and dismantling of the governing system of VMRO-DPMNE, two truths were confirmed. The first truth that was confirmed was that when VMRO-DPMNE was in power, unfortunately, the survival of the Republic of Macedonia was always under threat. This happened in the mandate of the first government of VMRO-DPMNE, headed by Ljupco Georgievski, when Macedonia was on the verge of a security abyss in the war-defined 2001, and in the period from “Black Monday” December 24th 2012 to “Bloody Thursday” on April 27th 2017, during the second government of VMRO-DPMNE, headed by Nikola Gruevski, when Macedonia was threatened institutionally, internationally, interethnically and in its security, with the possibility of failing as a state. The second truth showed that, even if Macedonia was an abnormal country when it was under the “boot” of the VMRO-DPMNE governing system, at least it confirmed the lawfulness of parliamentary democracy, in that regardless of a regime with a ruthless system of government, at some point the opposition is the one that reverses it and overthrows its power.

Two persons: Zoran Zaev, at the head of his party SDSM, who managed to reform it and bring it to a winning position on the political scene, and Katica Janeva, at the head of her institution, the Special Public Prosecutor's Office for the prosecution of acts related to and arising from the contents of the illegal interception of communications, which began to restore the standards of the rule of law and the responsibility for illegal acts committed the government—put the stamp of the new era of development of the Republic of Macedonia: a return to normal and returning to the path of European integration.

Zoran Zaev, courageously and with many risks to himself, his political party and family, and without compromise, started the project “The Truth About Macedonia”, whose main weapon were the “bombs”, i.e., the announcement of the compromising interceptions of government officials and the party, recorded by the secret services at the order of the party-state leadership.

Here we must also mention the three intelligence officers who are the most deserving that the unlawfully intercepted conversations have seen the light of day and have confirmed the public’s suspicions that the government was eavesdropping at a massive scale to be able to control and rule longer. In Macedonian criminal law practice, this case was the first time the institution “whistleblower” appeared, that is, people who indicated the illegal actions and crime in their working environment. These were Gjorgji Lazarevski and Zvonko Kostovski, employees of the Directorate for Security and Counterintelligence, who were unable to keep silent about the massive illegal wiretapping committed by their agency, handed over a large number of audio recordings to the former director of the UBK, Zoran Verushevski, in order for him to make their way to the public. Verushevski handed over the materials to opposition leader Zaev, who presented them to the public (Against all four, the VMRO-DPMNE government soon filed a lawsuit, and Kostovski was sentenced to three years in prison after an agreement with the prosecutor, while the trials against the other “Putsch” defendants was stopped by the Special Public Prosecutor’s Office because it had evidence that this process should be filed against others, which indeed happened).

Reviewed and analyzed, conditionally speaking, the project had two phases with two functions.

The first phase had the function of undoing and dismantling the system of governance, which at the same time meant its demystification, demythologization, defactorization and delegitimization, intimidating the system with the fact that its Achilles heel had been discovered, encouraging people against the system, that is, ridding the people of their fear of the system. With the exposing, dismantling, demystification and demythologization of the VMRO-DPMNE system of governance, the fully partisan institutions were defeated and they were recognized as part of the problem, instead of being the part of the solution of the political and institutional crisis. With the evidence presented by the wiretapped conversations, but also with the SJO investigations and charges, an increasing number of the public confirmed their fears that in recent election cycles, especially in 2013 and 2014, the victories of the then

ruling party were, at least, suspicious, that is, they were not the result of the freely expressed will of all citizens, but rather were the result of the electoral system of the system of government. In this way, their power was delegitimized.

The second phase was the most difficult part of the process. It was necessary to carry out the political articulation of civil dissatisfaction, regardless of the political, ideological, national, religious, status and all other belongings, a process that, even though it was only in its initial stage, nevertheless had solid predispositions. Efforts were required to unite all political subjects, non-governmental, civil, professional and all other associations and associations, and of course the citizens who were not politically determined and organized—in a massive civil movement whose program and strategic goals would be the return of freedom and democracy, the return of the rule of law, the return of Macedonia on the fast track leading to the family of EU countries and formal entry into the NATO security umbrella. This had been achieved and the necessary critical mass for change had been created. The main opposition party SDSM, its coalition partners and the Colorful Revolution, in the political sphere, and SJO on the legal sphere, became the main drivers of progressive processes. The pressure on the government and the system was democratic, cultural, peaceful, and evidence-based, without violence and revenge. The phase, although with many obstructions and violence from the government's side, ended with the dismantling of VMRO-DPMNE's authoritarian system of governance and its replacement with a democratic system based on constitutional postulates and the best traditions of a parliamentary democracy.

Zoran Zaev, who announced his Gandhi-like approach, to bring down the regime in a peaceful manner, “with reason, vote, and pen”, succeeded in accomplishing this. Nevertheless, in the end, in the final moments before the twist and the win, during “Bloody Thursday”, the regime's supporters, in a pre-death agony, gave him several bloody tattoos on his forehead and his head, to serve as an eternal memory and a reminder that never again will it be allowed in Macedonia to have an authoritarian and criminalized regime. However much the short-term memory syndrome is present in Macedonia, Zaev's contribution to the fall of the regime as the first opposition member and his role in laying the foundations of the reformed state of law, as the head of government, must not be abstracted, much less forgotten. This is not an attempt to glorify and create a cult of this person, but such a significant contribution to the state's salvation must be valued and remembered

Katica Janeva, as the head of the Special Public Prosecutor's Office, as a new institution derived from the Przino Agreements, was agreed upon as a hire for this position with the consensus from all four relevant parties (VMRO-DPMNE, DUI, SDSM, and DPA) and unanimously elected by the MPs of the Assembly Republic of Macedonia. Considering the fact that Macedonia was a captured state and the institutions were completely partisan from VMRO-DPMNE's system of government, in the sense that nobody fully trusted them, the Special Public Prosecutor's Office was established with a special law with two goals. The first was to legally investigate and process the indications of related criminal offenses arising from the content of the unlawful interception of communications, and, secondly, through its professional, just and lawful work, to set the foundations of the new and reformed institutions of the legal state, which will begin to return the lost confidence of the citizens. As a principled attempt to break the agony of the captured legal state and the symbolic start of thorough reforms, the dismissal of the state public prosecutor Marko Zvrlevski was also a key event. Despite the obstructions and obstacles that it was facing from the VMRO-DPMNE government, when SJO began their serious investigations in which the highest party-state officials were implicated, this institution bravely and virtuously, as the public prosecutor Janeva put it on, continued to do their job. This is confirmed by the high confidence in SJO that citizens have, and which compared to any other institution, at sixty percent, is the state institution with the highest level of public trust.

Given the excellent results, the approach to work and the scrutiny of the lawfulness of the procedures, the international community sees SJO as a positive example that should be applied to other countries in the region for uncovering, prosecuting and sanctioning organized crime. In order for the SJO to be more successful and more efficient in its work and in order to avoid obstructions from the State Public Prosecutor's Office, the Criminal Court, the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court, which are run by judges close to and appointed by VMRO-DPMNE, it is highly likely that a separately unit in the Criminal Court will be formed, to preside over the indictments triggered by the unlawfully wiretapped conversations. With the new reform government, with the normalization of relations in the country, with the reintroduction of the rule of law and reforming the institutions and restoring confidence in them, we can expect the establishment of a large front against corruption, crime and especially politically organized crime so that it may be reduced to manageable and reasonable prevalence, as this type of crime cannot be completely eradicated in any country.

The professor of Constitutional Law, Dr. Svetomir Shkarikj, pointing to the new trends of European law, provided the direction in which the liberated and reformed rule of law should head in Macedonia. Instead of the current politicization of the law, the system of political jurisdiction, i.e., control of politics by the reformed judiciary should be implemented. This will prevent the establishment of authoritarian rule, state capture and politically organized crime, and the legislative, executive and judicial authorities will carry out their constitutional functions and will cooperate and control each other.

(August 28th 2017)

AFTERWORD

The Macedonian Model of a Captured State

Prof. Svetomir Skaric, PhD

The captured state as a notion and term is a relatively recent phenomenon. It appears in the collective consciousness for the first time at the very end of the 20th century, and not in science, where it belongs, but in the documents of the World Bank, as a financial institution, pressed by corruption in countries transitioning from socialism to capitalism. Thus, the term “captured state” is the result of the practical needs of financial capital, rather than democracy and human rights.

In the 2000 World Bank Report, the notion of “state capture” is exclusively related to the corruption of state authorities responsible for passing laws and other decisions, on the use of economic resources. It is about the captivity of state regulation by individuals or groups in order for such regulation to be beneficial to their business interests (Regulatory Capture).

The captivity of the institutions is carried out through bribery, nepotism or their partisanship, in order to hijack the laws and place them exclusively in the protection of corruption. A high corruption index inevitably leads to a captured state, towards the capture of state institutions to turn them from public to private bodies. This is evident from the high corruption index of in the countries of Eastern Europe, and especially in Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Ukraine, Georgia, Albania and Moldova (World Bank, 2000, Anticorruption in Transition).

A second case of a captured state was uncovered in the South African Republic in 2015. In the large and rich in natural resources country, a link of corruption was discovered between the private company Gupta Family on the one hand, and South African President Jakob Zuma, and the leaders of the African National Congress, on the other. In this case, the head of state appears as the main colonizer of the South African Republic, which has a large Hindu colony. The opposition claimed that the South African Republic was a “captured state” because a private company, the seventh richest in the country, had final

say in passing of laws in the African National Congress. In 2016, the country's judiciary found that *Gupta Family* managed to secure a role of a "shadow government" and make hefty profits using corrupt ties in the South African Legislature (State Capture Report: Wath Mandosela Wants Inquiry to Probe, 2016).

These cases of a captured state tie it exclusively to its effects in the economic sphere. We have a corrupt state in the function of private businesses, i.e., the state power is bribed in order to be in the function of the private sector. The public domain becomes the private domain - a transformation that has been held back by legal means since the 15th century in order to allow the development of democracy and the separation of powers.

The economic model of the captured state is simple. You change the leadership and install your people in its place. You are changing the staff and setting up a new body that will follow your directives. The rest is easy to do. It is a scenario for the establishment of a captured state when it comes to the economic sphere. Regulation helps to carry out the capture of state institutions.

The Macedonian case of a captured state is more complex as it also includes the political sphere. It has a political dimension because it reflects the capture of state power as a public domain. The state, as a synonym for that which is public, what is orderly and order, which should be stable and fixed (Stato), is placed under personal or group control in order to use state institutions and public resources for selfish purposes. The private or party overtakes the public and keeps it in slavery, in chains.

The closed state as a political phenomenon attracts the attention of the open mind more strongly than corruption in the economic sphere. It is attractive to both science and the wider public. It especially interested journalists - analysts who closely monitor events that occur in their environment and beyond. It also arouses interest among ordinary citizens, because it is a matter of their fate.

Spontaneously or consciously, a vast empire of examples and forms of capturing the Macedonian state was created in the past eleven years. Individuals and institutions that are captured in a mental and physical sense can clearly be identified. The captors and their supporters in the election process and in the intellectual sphere are clear too, as are the phases of its capture and consequences. You can see the beginning of the capture, but also its end. Those who are willing can see the divisions, especially between backward and progressive Macedonia, between those who pull back and unwittingly contribute to its

collapse as a state and those pushing forward, who consciously and bravely advocate for its success on the road to the European Union.

In brief, there is a solid empirical basis for the open mind to synthesize events, actors and consequences in one whole and to form a theoretical concept of the Macedonian model, different from already seen models of the captured state. To go a step further - to point out the similarities, but also to underline the differences between the Macedonian model and the models of the normal states in which there is a tolerable dose of authoritarianism, corruption, clientelism, electoral engineering or kleptocracy.

This is exactly what the author of the study "The Captured State - Politically Organized Crime", Mancho Mitevski—a journalist analyst and law graduate from the time when legal studies were on a higher level than they are today, is doing. The law allows him to be more precise in the analysis and to move more safely in the area of constitutional and criminal law when considering the relationship between the captured state and politically organized crime.

In the model he creates, he embeds already recognized elements that pull towards the capture of state institutions, but he also embeds something new that only appeared on Macedonian soil during the eleven-year rule of the former government. This element is organized political crime, as the peak of the captured state and its promoter and protector. The study locates the site of organized crime and illuminates its role in capturing the Macedonian state as a particularity compared to other forms of captured states.

In attempting to understand the opportunities for capturing the state by political structures, the author starts from an assertion in the study of criminal justice, that the individual must not commit a crime, but that crime is not forbidden conduct for state power and that it finds ways to conceal it from the public eye using various tricks: "The individual must not commit a crime, but crime is not forbidden to the state—it is even free to mask crime with a good legal gown" (Vlado Kambovski, *Organized Crime*).

The state is the hegemon of the right to punishment, but as the hegemon it exempts itself from punishing itself. In this way, the doorway to the emergence and development of politically organized crime opens wide if it finds favorable ground for seeding and development, in the way that it found ground in the Republic of Macedonia in the period from 2006 to 2017.

The author is not satisfied with just identifying the opportunities for political structures to have open space for crime. He is also looking to identify

the reasons for their criminalization, to uncover what methods they use and how they are transformed from public bodies into a secretly organized criminal association with a central position. He finds this knowledge not in domestic literature, which has clear understanding of this issue, but in American Criminal Law, especially in papers dedicated to State-Organized Crime.

The author, above all, relies on William Chambliss's insight that crime is the foundation of a capitalist society; that without it such a society can neither be created nor function: "Money is the oil of our modern machinery, and the elected officials are the cogs that maintain the work of the machinery. Those who pour oil, regardless of the source, are in a position to manage the machine according to their own desires. Crime is an excellent producer of capitalist oil. Those who want to influence the results produced by the machine realize that the money created by crime is an effective means of allowing them to go where they want to the same extent as money that was made by other means. Those who make the money control the machine. Crime is not a byproduct of an otherwise effective political economy. It is the main product of the political economy. Crime is, in fact, the foundation upon which the political and economic relations of democratic-capitalist societies are built."

With the help of criminal jurisprudence, the author manages to locate politically organized crime and delineate it from classical crime and classical political crimes. But he is not satisfied with that. He goes further to seek an escape from the captured state and from unbridled nature of political crime in the Republic of Macedonia. The escape is sought and found in constitutional law—not in the form in which it exists today but rather in the jurisprudence of constitutional law, which is in the stage of creation as part of judicial law (jurisprudence of constitutional law).

* * *

The most significant sources of data on the inception and manifestation of the captured state in the Macedonian conditions are: the Report of the Commission for the Examination of Events in the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia from 24.12.2012, Reinhard Priebe's Report on Crime, Corruption and Wiretapping in 2015, and the EU European Commission's 2016 Progress Report on the Republic of Macedonia. From the first document we can see how "Black Monday" becomes a "White Monday," from the second document the

high standing of corruption for which a special report is required, and from the third the term “state capture,” used for the first time overall for any country in the long history of the EU.

Thus, the Republic of Macedonia became the only European country with the term “captured state,” eleven years after the start of accession negotiations with the European Union. This epithet prompted Mancho Mitevski to write a special study about Macedonia as a captured state and about politically organized crime as the crown of captivity, but also as a key dimension of the captured state in the Macedonian conditions.

The study “The Captured State - Politically Organized Crime” is a continuation of the author’s three previous studies: “Changes that Desecrated Macedonia” from 2001; “War with Two Faces” from 2008 and “System 2014” from 2015. It is a cycle of four studies woven with threads of a large number of data, information and personal assessments of the author of what happened during the transition from socialism to capitalism, and especially during the period of the capture of the Macedonian state in 2008 when “state-party leadership,” made up of six people, became a “central political criminal association” with the ambition to spread the composition both vertically and horizontally.

Through the composition of the central association, the author provides a vivid account of the power of the conquerors and methods for capturing the Macedonian state: “VMRO-DPMNE and Nikola Gruevski paid special attention to the personal component when shaping and building the pyramid of power. With staffing decisions, they completed the system of governance and the system of controlling everything in the country and in society, closing it in into several layers in the pyramid of power. In the first circle, that is, in the pentagonal pyramid, there was a small, closely connected and nepotism-based group (family-godfather-friend): at the top - Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, next to him, his cousin Sasho Mijalkov - through the mythologized prism of the public - the gray eminence of the system and head of the UBK (the secret service agency of the country), followed by the leader’s best man, Zoran Stavrevski - the money head, and in the end—his former chiefs of staff, promoted: the baton boss, Gordana Jankulovska and the head of land-construction-transport procurement, land plots, annexes and other deals, Mile Janakieski. Towards the top of the pyramid, with many coordinative powers, the Great Advisor/Editor/Operator, Martin Protuger, a communications officer—transmitter of directives to the lower layers of the system and the pyramid of power.”

Following the presidential election of 2009, the head of the state also became “part of the team” and entered the system of power, from the very first minute of his first term, of his own will, and continued to act in this capacity until the “Bloody Thursday” of April 27th 2017, with firm determination to protect the captors from any legal responsibility for the crimes committed. From the moment he entered the political scene, the process of transforming the limited captured state into an “absolute captured state” began, opening the door to politically organized crime.

The author considers the captured state as an authoritarian state, closely related to the tyranny dating back to antiquity. Its head is an individual without legal limitation to his will. He wants to rule permanently through intimidation, with a rope in his hand. He eavesdrops on all around him, so that he can intercept in time the threat of a power change. He trusts no one, not even his closest associates. He is protected by a personal guard, a large number of bodyguards. He appoints depersonalized individuals and persons without professional integrity to the highest ranking positions. His tragedy is that he cannot voluntarily give up power, like Hieronymus, the tyrant of Syracuse described by Xenophon in the fourth century BC—well-known to the President of the Republic.

The captured state is the result of absolute power. The destructive effect of absolute power is well-known, identified in the works of Lord Acton: “All power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Such a government cannot but become entangled in unlawful and illegal acts, since it is only through illegality that it can maintain power and function for a longer time. It references laws only declaratively, but only those laws that benefit them, adopted in a swift or urgent procedure, without public scrutiny. It clings secretly and persistently to the rule: “What is good for Macedonia - is harmful to the party. And the other way around!”

The author believes that the Macedonian state is internally captured by the ruling party or coalition wants to remain in power that at any cost. This is the path chosen only by those parties that lack a democratic capacity, that have a vague ideological identity and bend towards absolute power. In such circumstances, the ruling party is first captured by the leader and the party leadership, and then spreads the capture to party membership and state institutions. The principle of separation of powers is abandoned and a unity of power is introduced with the conviction that is for Macedonia’s own good.

The author also describes the stages of capture. It locates its first capture in 2006, when in a single decision the government dismissed 1,700 people in senior positions in the state and public institutions. What followed was the capture of regulatory bodies and the media, and through the Minister of Justice, the capture of judicial authorities and the Constitutional Court. The process of was completed on December 24, 2012, when “Black Monday” was recommended by the government as a model to be followed by other states, unruffled by the presence of Peter Vanhoutte and Daniel Tarschys, the EU experts in the ad-hoc committee to determine the unconstitutionality of the events of December 24th.

The fall of the captured state occurred on April 27th 2017 (“Bloody Thursday”) when it felt that it was at its strongest. It fell precisely three years after the parliamentary and presidential elections were declared illegal by the opposition. On “Bloody Thursday”, the captured state unraveled live, like in a movie: when, how much, how, where, why and by whom the Republic of Macedonia was captured. That bloody evening, when it seemed that the last act of the tragedy was beginning and that the last moments of the existence of the Macedonian state were ticking, a catharsis, a twist and changes occurred, the true face of Macedonia came to the forefront.

Instead of slavery, Macedonia gained freedom, the masks and hoods fell down and the fear of the power of the Cheops pyramid disappeared. Fortunately, we did not have a “Bartholomew’s Night,” like the one that took place Paris under the direction of Catherine de Medici in the distant 1572. The script to throw to the floor the new candidate for prime minister, like the leader of the French Huguenots Gaspard de Coligny was thrown out of the window, had failed.

* * *

The author writes about the long capture of the state, but also about the long and difficult path to getting rid of it, with brevity and clarity in his words and messages. Organized crime is a symptom of the severe illness of the state—a severe malignant disease of the state institutions. The binding tissue of politically organized crime is the government with wider party support and long rule after winning ten consecutive elections. The electorate was exposed to heavy electoral engineering. Ordinary people are in a state of confusion, while the state institutions are blocked from within. In such circumstances, liberation will be difficult and will take a long time. We should neither hurry

nor use the methods of the captured state, as demanded by the radical individuals (intellectuals).

The author points out several stages of liberation. The first involves personal purification—changes and reshuffling of managerial functions in the institutions, but not to the extent and the manner employed by the government in 2006. The second phase would involve a functional dismantling of the ruling system of the party that captured the state. The third phase would include a reset, or rather a change in the thinking, to liberate and purify the mental code of the captured minds of people in the institutions. The fourth phase is the longest, the most difficult and the most significant, because it involves reforming, professionalizing and restoring citizens' trust in the institutions.

As models of behavior that should be followed in the liberation process, the author openly, without reservations and with evidence, singles out the behavior of Zoran Zaev and Katica Janeva, both members of progressive Macedonia. The former disclosed to the wider public the "Truth about Macedonia" and managed through its promotion to enable the change of power "with reason, voice and pen". The letter, modestly and inconspicuously, despite obstructions from all sides, managed to maintain the dignity and integrity of the Special Public Prosecutor's Office in such a way as to clear the wider road to justice, relying on the power of law and truth for Macedonia.

Truth and justice are the only values that can return Macedonia to the right path after its wild detour into a captured state. Mancho Mitevski's book, "The Captured State - Politically Organized Crime," acts in that direction. The book is written in the first person, with passion and without hatred towards anyone, in the days of depression and moral chaos, at the moment when ordinary and honest people were in a state of confusion. But it is promoted in a time of optimism and hope, when Macedonia is going back to normal, when it wants to triumph and when it is rightly expecting that truth and justice are its glory and its perspective. And this in a way as it behoves the Macedonian genius that suddenly flashed like a light after the shed blood in the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia on April 27th 2017.

As of today, the book enters the world of academia as an important work for studying the phenomenon of "State". The book comes out precisely on the centenary of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin's work "The State and Revolution"—written with the goal of having the state liberate the human and gradually cede its place to society, rather than to be captured and held permanently like a hegemon. That retrograde noted by the author is the most important value of his work.

A Starting Point for Wider Thinking

Prof. Besa Arifi, PhD

The 2016 European Commission Progress Report for the Republic of Macedonia was the first time the country was characterized as a “captured state with captured institutions”. Earlier, in 2015, Macedonia received a “frozen” recommendation to start negotiations with the EU, conditioned by the implementation of the Przhino Agreement and the implementation of the urgent reforms identified earlier in the report by the European Commission’s expert group. The two final European Commission progress reports and the EC expert group’s report were the most critical reports for Macedonia thus far. These reports were fundamentally different from previous years, when despite the deep regression of democracy in the country, the European Commission did not react visibly through its progress report, which further contributed to the strengthening of what in its latest report it called a “captured state.”

Within that captured state, another interesting phenomenon developed, which Mancho Mitevski analyses in great detail in his book, which is politically organized crime. Namely, in the unauthorized wiretapped conversations, the citizens of Macedonia, most of whom already knew what kind of a reality they lived, had the opportunity to hear for themselves how the state is governed and operates. The reality was cruel. The “Bombs” revealed how judges are elected, how public prosecutors act, how the party takes revenge on its challengers and how it punishes political opponents, and how in the meantime the media was abused and completely controlled by the ruling party. Hence, it became known that all affairs in the state depended directly on the ruling party that controlled and directed everything that was going on and that would happen in the country. The party was above the state and firmly held on to all the strings of what was happening in it. It was the center from which the state was governed and therefore it was the institution most strictly protected in it. We recall the protests of 2015 and 2016 when, of all the state institutions—Parliament, the Government, the courts—the largest number of policemen were deployed around the building of the party in power, not allowing anyone to come close, or, God forbid, to throw some paint on the white facade of the large

and expensive structure, the splendor in which reminded one a time when Louis XVI lived in Versailles while the citizens of France were starving. This is why we have deeply engraved in our memories Stavrevski's words: "We have no bread, and yet we are spending on chocolate!"

Nevertheless, what was happening—though it looked very much like a feudal rule of the state in which the relationship between the rulers and the citizens was in the form of a feudal lord and serf (in which "the feudal lord" provides state work, certain rights, or some privilege to the "overlord," who on the other hand pays "rent" through the sworn loyalty to the master and his well-being)—in fact was not feudalism. It was simply a mafocracy that Mitevski successfully describes as politically organized crime. It was only through the laws of organized crime and the mafia that the form of governance known as the "captured state" could be explained as a whole and in all its detail.

In every captured state, state institutions are captured by the ruling party, and the party keeps power by functioning as a criminal organization. If we recall the first case brought by the Special Public Prosecutor's Office, we will understand that it was no coincidence that this case was tried as criminal association even if it was election crime. We have learned to identify organized crime only in illicit trafficking in narcotics, people, weapons. However, organized crime is, in fact, every kind of crime that is carried out through criminal association, which, in turn, is a group of at least three people, with its own organization and hierarchy, that commits crimes that are punishable with at least four years in prison. The SPP's "Titanic" case revealed that organized crime also happens around issues closely connected to democracy, such as, for example, the election process.

Mancho Mitevski also analyzes the electoral process as one of the ways in which politically organized crime was conducted in Macedonia. However, he does not stop there. He analyzes other phenomena that clearly show that this type of crime was carried out on a daily basis and under the full control of the party in power. He extensively analyzes the wiretapping scandal, which best reveals how the basic human rights of more than 25.000 citizens in Macedonia were violated for years, completely illegally, by the security services in the state which, as is already known, function with a complete lack of transparency and control. It is no coincidence reforming the security services are one of the urgent reforms that the state must accomplish in order to unlock the recommendation for starting negotiations and making any progress in the EU accession process. Mitevski perfectly makes the link between the wiretapping

and the attempt to hide it by constructing the “Putsch” case, in which although the basic elements of the legal essence of the act were not fulfilled, it tried as high treason.

The author Mancho Mitevski talks about a wide range of cases of organized crime that was committed by the political party in power, abusing state institutions and enabling such legal provisions to make it possible. Mitevski precisely explains how violence was used to protect the highest priorities of the government, how revenge was carried out against challengers, how procurement procedures were used for what he calls “the perfect legally permissible crime,” and how through the financing of political parties they became “legal” money launderers. Politically organized crime, which in some studies is referred to as “mafocracy,” functions in the same way that typical criminal associations work, with the logic of the functioning of those associations transferred to the essential rule of the state.

Thus, every criminal association has a leader, who is called Godfather, Don, Boss, etc. He has his advisors and he controls everything in the association. Under him is the person who is known as his deputy, and is usually a close family member, perhaps a son, or as in our case, a cousin. The deputy leader is a person who actually runs the organization by managing the so-called Capos, the commandos that lead the soldiers of the association. Each capo is responsible for his area and for leading the soldiers who directly perform the association's, i.e., the party's dirty work. The very foundation of this pyramid is the layer of collaborators. Here we have the people that the association has in the judiciary, in the public prosecution, in Parliament, with the President and with all other state bodies, who are bound to the leader through his “offers that they cannot refuse,” and for which the counter-service varies, and can be for example: not bringing charges for obvious crime, bringing charges against political opponents, journalists and other challengers and punishing them by handing down draconian sentences, granting abolition for crimes committed by the authorities counter to constitutional and legal provisions, among many other things.

This is how the pyramid of politically organized crime works—through actions that Mancho Mitevski describes clearly and accurately in his book. This book is a significant retrospective of what was happening to Macedonia in the last decade, that led us to the qualification “captured state,” which appears in all relevant international reports for the country. The book represents a profound analysis of all segments of the functioning of that captured state and

introduces the concept of politically organized crime, which has thus far rarely been studied in Macedonia, and which best describes what this country has been through in the last few years.

Mancho Mitevski's book is significant and instructive reading for anyone who wants to learn more about how the captured state and politically organized crime functioned in the past years. It is instructive, above all, for all who want to and have to establish justice in this country. All that is described in the book must have a legal resolution, so that we can move from being a captured to a normal state. Any normalcy, which will be reflected in the normal processes of Euro-Atlantic integrations, will not be possible without putting an end to the current practice of impunity. Being held responsible for a committed crime is an essential and most important element of the rule of law, without which no legal state can function, and without which we will forever remain trapped in the hands of the political mafia.

Therefore, this book should serve as a starting point for a wider reflection on what we should strive for: do we continue to live in a captured state with captured institutions and a captured mind that justifies it all, or do we become a liberated state that will function according to the laws of liberty, in which political parties will be groups of interests that have to goal of coming to power to implement certain policies, as opposed to dangerous centers of power that lack transparency and capture state institutions.

A Narrative Archive of Anti-State Violence

Prof. Ana Chupeska Stanishkovska Ph.D.

It is with great pleasure and as an honor bestowed upon me by Mr. Mancho Mitevski, a distinguished journalist and social activist, that I will try to briefly outline the content of his latest work “Captured State - Politically Organized Crime.” At the same time, I will emphasize those aspects that are essential to understanding our reality, but also the more recent political history of the Republic of Macedonia.

This work, I would firstly like to note with compliments, does not suffer from the pretense of only addressing the “learned audience”, but neither does it lack the quality that will satisfy the appetites of such an audience. In other words, the book “Captured State - Politically Organized Crime” is intended for those who professionally deal with politics, as well as for those who analyze politics. At the same time, this book will stir interest in both academics and every day, “ordinary” citizens with a need to think about their socio-political environment.

“Captured State - Politically Organized Crime” is not an ordinary book. In addition to being a chronological and detailed continuation of Mitevski’s book “System 2014”, it is a chronicle of a period of injustice. Namely, the work is a narrative archive of the “violence” committed in the Republic of Macedonia—violence that has an aesthetic, cultural, economic, political and symbolic dimension, and which, above all, is related to the authoritarian perversions of the legally elected government in the Republic of Macedonia all the way back in 2006.

However, the author—a conscious and experienced witness of the more distant past as well—rightly notes that the unpleasant transient experiences in Macedonian society and politics date back to earlier than 2006, namely, since the independence of the Republic of Macedonia, following the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the nineties of the last century. In this sense, in fact, the book clearly and unequivocally addresses the problems related to the “transitional oligarchies,” which it justifiably regards

as an additional reason for the installation of the authoritarian government in the country that will later capture the state and its institutions as a whole, which is in fact well documented in all international reports relevant to the analysis of the democratic capacities of the states.

What is even more interesting is that Mitevski, as rarely anyone thus far, points to the repercussions from Macedonia resulting from the geopolitical constellations in the Region. In particular, he recognizes the country's position as "torn" along the old East-West division axis. Similarly, he opens the topic of the so-called "Pan-Slavic Authoritarian Transversal", which, as we understand from the book, had the chance to permanently install itself in the legal institutions of the political system of the Republic of Macedonia.

Although the image of Macedonia painted through Mitevski's words is hyper realistic, as one reads it, one gets the impression that the events in this small country are taking place in a criminal-political thriller. This is because the operation that was carried out against the democratic-liberal order was carried out systemically and systematically, and that premeditation of authoritarian governments is accurately and precisely depicted by Mitevski. Namely, he provides a detailed elaboration on how the state institutions of the Republic of Macedonia were captured one by one. He shows all phases of installing authoritarian populism. Firstly by participizing institutions, followed by electoral engineering, the abolition of the rule of law, the abolition of the separation of powers, through the corporatized propaganda media, but, above all and most of all, with the heavy operational assistance to politically organized crime and serious misuse of the Intelligence Security Services.

What Mitevski justifiably calls not ordinary organized crime, but *politically organized crime*, is in fact the main subject carrying the action forward in the Macedonian thriller. The author, therefore, legitimately gives politically organized crime special attention—both qualitatively and quantitatively, in terms of page count. The text on the pages dedicated to this type of crime, or as Mitevski consistently calls it, "a new type of crime", archives the dark side of Macedonian society, which, unfortunately, as one reads it, reminds one of collaborations with fascists and capitalists, i.e., refreshes our memory and knowledge of the capitalist foundations of fascism that are related to the European modernist project. The similarities are undoubtedly there, which is a claim I, unfortunately, have to make. What is more, he provides an accurate and precise elaboration of the genesis of the politically organized crime, in particular its connection to the transition of the socio-political and economic system of the

Republic of Macedonia from decayed socialism and a planned economy into an early democratic political system with predatory squandering of the social capital and consequent early accumulation of social goods. In short, the causes and consequences of a robbery are provided in detail in this book. In this part of the book, the reader will also encounter curious facts about Macedonia that are related to international organized crime.

The book also gives special attention to indicating the serious crimes that were committed against the electoral process in the Republic of Macedonia, which had the goal of keeping the criminalized leaders in power. There is also a chapter devoted to the crimes related to massive violations of human rights—that is, through the illegal surveillance and wiretapping of over 26,000 citizens of the Republic of Macedonia. Here, the “Putsch” trial is the focus of attention.

After the vivisection of the aforementioned premeditated systemic and systematic deformations of the Macedonian political system, Mancho Mitevski's book has a happy ending, i.e., an overview of the resistance against authoritarianism, addressing several key events and several key actors that contributed to overthrowing the regime. I therefore, warmly recommend the book not only for reading, but as an expert reference book as well.

BIOGRAPHY

About the author

Born in Skopje in 1947. He graduated from the Faculty of Law at the University “St. Cyril and Methodius” in Skopje.

He has been active in journalism for 42 years and was both journalist and editor in “Studentski zbor”, “Vecer”, “Communist”, “Utrinski vesnik”, in which he was one of the founders and owner, deputy editor-in-chief and opinion editor, a position from which he retired.

He is the author of the books “Changes that Desecrated Macedonia” (“Kultura”, 2001), “War with Two Faces” (“Kultura”, 2008), “System 2014” (self-published, 2015), “State Capture - Politically Organized Crime” (“Kultura”, 2017).

He is the recipient of numerous awards and recognitions, including the award of the Association of Journalists of Macedonia “Krste Misirkov” and the state award “Mito Hadzivasilev Jasmin” for journalism.

