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AUDI ALTERAM PARTEM - STATE SECURITY ADMINISTRATION BETWEEN TRUTH AND MYTHS OF MACEDONIAN POLITICAL EMIGRATION¹

Abstract. – This paper presents excerpts from an audio interview with Dimitar Nikolovski, a retired chief of State Security Affairs, who held that position since the late 1960s. The interview was recorded by the author as part of his research for a PhD study. In the interview, he discusses various individuals and events that occurred during the period of political migration within the former SFRY. The issue of hyperbole and minimization of influence from opposing sides remains an open dilemma. The paper explores methods used by authorities against emigration, organizations, and activists, which may shed light on the potential threats to state order posed by anti-communist emigration. Questions regarding who acted as an accomplice and who was a loyal opponent to state affairs are crucial and must be addressed by historians. This paper serves as an initiative for further research in this area.

Keywords. – State security, political emigration, SFRY, anti-communism, Cold War politics.

The research process during PhD studies involves a thorough review of available literature, the examination of published and unpublished sources, and interviews with individuals who participated in significant recent historical events. This approach provides deeper insights into the gaps in the existing narrative. Scholars have taken a more serious look at Macedonian political emigration since the early 1990s, and the reasons for this shift are

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understandable, particularly in light of how state authorities have treated the subject, which has influenced historiographical interest.²

In this context, we must acknowledge the contributions of academican Ivan Katardjiev (1926-2018). He gathered archival material in a unique manner and published his findings.³ Katardjiev served as president of the Macedonian Emigrants Association⁴ from 1987 to 1992 and, as a public figure, established relationships with key private holders of archival materials.⁵

In the last twenty years, renewed interest has emerged in producing written works about the history of Macedonian political emigration. Memoirs, monographs on various individuals, collections of documents, and similar works have started to be published⁶. Some individuals from the emigration, who were members of organizations or their supporters, felt the need to share their memories or have engaged authors write monographs about their activities. These accounts serve as valuable primary sources for professional historians. However, it is always advisable to compare them with sources of different provenance.⁷

In 2016 and 2017, the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia published the series “The Black Pages of UDBA,” which includes six volumes on the history of Macedonian political emigration: “Emigration – State Enemy

² Political emigration refers to that part of emigration that occurred in the decades after World War II, during which organizations were established that generally did not accept the Yugoslav framework for resolving the Macedonian question and disagreed with the state organization. In some cases, their representatives had previously experienced personal injustices in Yugoslavia, after which they left and developed propaganda activities abroad.

³ Makedonska politicka emigracija po Vtorata svetska vojna, (Macedonian Political Emigration after World War II), ed. I. Katardjiev (Skopje: Archives of Macedonia, 1944).

⁴ <https://manu.edu.mk/teams/d-r-ivan-katardziev/>, (accessed July 20, 2023).

⁵ In a letter dated on September 24, 1992, as part of the intensive correspondence he had with Mihail Sarinovski from Australia, a member and later president of the Movement for the Liberation and Unification of Macedonia, he wrote: “thank you very much for the materials you sent me; I was very surprised that they are originals... I want to present, as much as possible, a solid communication regarding the activities of the Macedonian political and cultural entity within the ranks of the contemporary Macedonian diasporas.”

⁶ In the seventh episode of the documentary series *Victims of Communism*, produced in 2011, which discusses the Macedonian political emigration, none of the members of the leadership of the State Security Administration were among the speakers. We do not have information on whether they were contacted to participate in the documentary film. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yh-oLoiV8ps> (accessed March 7, 2023).

⁷ Petreska, Darinka, Ačkoska, Violeta, *Osoznavanje na istorijata* (Skopje: Faculty of Philosophy, 2007), 11.

No. 1," Volume V, Part 2; "Emigration with Collaborators," Volume X; "Direction Rome – Brussels," Volume XI; and "Dragan Bogdanovski," Volume XII, Parts 1, 2, and 3.⁸ These volumes contain personal files, leading to varying assessments among historians regarding the series. We have every right to question the information in these files, as well as their completeness and accuracy. Furthermore, official representatives from the Archive have occasionally stated that some files are missing or that parts of files are absent.

A genuine scholarly contribution to uncovering facts about the actions of Macedonian political emigration can be found in the work "Dragan Bogdanovski: Life and Work (1929–1998)" by Prof. Dr. Marjan Ivanoski. He utilized the file of Dragan Bogdanovski, the unofficial leader of Macedonian political emigration. In this work, Prof. Dr. Ivanoski clearly strives to present the views of members of the State Security Administration on some contentious aspects of the emigration's past.

While reading and rereading the available literature, several legitimate questions arose: Why is there no statement or memory from a member of the State Security Administration to be found anywhere? Did researchers or authors lack the interest to seek them out or interview them, or did officials refuse to share their perspectives? In the media landscape, we can find statements from Ivan Babamovski related to the activities of political émigrés; however, he served as the head of the Third Department of the Service responsible for internal affairs.

⁸ On October 3, 2016, a presentation of the edition took place at the National Museum of the Macedonian Struggle in Skopje. During the event, the then-director of the State Archives emphasized, among other things: "Dear guests, before you are 9 volumes, 16 books, or 13,500 pages from 202 dossiers. During the selection process, all personal matters were carefully removed. The private lives of those mentioned are not relevant to historical research. We do not claim whether the dossiers represent victims or collaborators; our task was not to assess who is who. We do not claim that a person cannot be both a victim and a collaborator. In a system that employed inhumane methods, it is entirely possible for the same person to have been broken, to have succumbed to pressure in order to save themselves from persecution and torture. There are also cases where the UDBA itself suspected that those who agreed to become collaborators did so to mislead them or provided useless information just to appear as though they were contributing."

<https://arhiv.mk/2021/02/01/%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%BE%D1%86%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%B8%D1%86%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0-%D1%86%D1%80%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5-%D1%81%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BD/>
(accessed 16.09. 2023).

As researchers of contemporary history, we find the so-called oral narratives particularly important. We fully agree with Prof. Dr. Dragica Popovska, who states that while documents can provide information about when events occurred, they do not always reveal why. At the same time, these narratives offer valuable insight into the complexity of relationships in practice.⁹

This motivated us to initiate communication with Dimitar Nikolovski-Mitko, the head of the State Security Service from around 1966 to 1986, who retired in 1990.¹⁰ To clarify, the Administration for State Security changed its name to the State Security Service following the Brioni Plenary of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, although the former name still predominates in the literature. Given his position, Nikolovski serves as a credible source, having been a direct participant and decision-maker in actions related to political emigration.

In March of this year, we conducted a semi-structured interview with him, recorded by the author of this work and Prof. Dr. Marjan Ivanoski. During this interview, he signed a consent form to participate in this research project.¹¹ The central focus of the interview was the unofficial leader of Macedonian political emigration, Dragan Bogdanovski, discussing his activities, kidnapping, and transfer to Yugoslavia, specifically to the Yasenev Reserve.¹²

⁹ Popovska, Dragica, *Usna istoria - minatoto niz nacijata (Oral History - The Past Through narrative)* (Skopje: Institute for National History, 2019), 66.

¹⁰ Dimitar Mitko Nikolovski was born in 1939 in the village of Godivle, in the municipality of Krivogastani. He completed his primary education in Godivle and his secondary education in economics in Prilep. At the age of 20, he moved to the village of Krajinci, near Veles, to teach. He finished his Law Faculty degree in three years and, in 1963, applied to become a judge at the Prilep Municipal Court. He served in that role until 1966. Encouraged by Lupo Arnaudovski, who was the Secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs at the time, he pursued postgraduate studies in security in Belgrade. After returning to Skopje, he took the position of Chief Inspector and later became the head of the State Security Service, which was still a federal institution at that time. In 1986, he received an appointment as the Republics Deputy Secretary for Public Security.

¹¹ In qualitative interviews, including semi-structured ones, interviewers can allow themselves significant flexibility in deviating from the question plan they use. By following up on respondents' answers, they can add new questions, change the order of questions, and even modify how the questions are phrased. Brajman, Alain, *"Metodi na opstestveno istrazuvanie" (Methods of Social Research)* (Bitola: University "Saint Clement of Ohrid," 2015), 470.

¹² The exploration of lesser-known episodes from the life of Dragan Bogdanovski, a key figure in organizing emigration organizations starting in the 1950s, provides a general overview

He represents an emigration that strongly opposed Yugoslavia and actively worked for the territorial and spiritual unification of all parts of ethnic Macedonia. Such efforts inevitably led to conflict with the Yugoslav state.

Regarding the kidnapping of Dragan Bogdanovski, Dimitar Nikolovski emphasized that he led the group responsible for carrying out the operation, which included operatives who had friends in France and Italy. These friends assisted “many of his acquaintances” (referring to Dragan Bogdanovski), although not all of them were known to him. Only one name was mentioned directly: Đoko Jovanović from Kratovo¹³. According to Nikolovski, the basic rule of the Service was to operate under the principle of “checking and confirming.” Based on operational intelligence, Dragan Bogdanovski moved through Paris, France, in early June 1977.

On the day of his arrest, Dragan Bogdanovski was on an outing in the Bolognese Forest at the invitation of certain friends when agents approached him and informed him that he should be going to Yugoslavia, explaining the reasons for his departure. Dimitar Nikolovski asserts that Dragan Bogdanovski did not resist his arrest. He also explicitly denies the claim that agents took Dragan Bogdanovski to Germany and Switzerland in a diplomatic vehicle after the abduction.

Interestingly, Nikolovski states that they notified the Italian service in advance about the operation. According to him, they learned that an anti-communist bureau located near Milan funded the individual involved. However, we have a completely opposing account of how the events unfolded. For instance, in an interview with the newspaper “Nova Makedonia” on August 11, 1990, Dragan Bogdanovski stated that the French authorities warned him about the intention to transfer him to Yugoslavia and that the act of “kidnapping” occurred in a hotel managed by his friend Đoko Jovanovski-(ić).

According to his testimony, he needed to pick up a letter from Australia that had been delivered to the hotel. Upon arriving at his friend's apartment in the basement, he found six men and two women from Macedonia whom he did not know. As soon as he sat down, one of them struck him on

of the relationships between activists, as well as the goals and methods of the UDBA (State Security Administration).

¹³ Đoko Jovanović was an ethnic Serb, whose mother was from Belgrade and participated in the looting of the homes of prominent Jews in the city, who were then taken to the camp near Jajinci during World War II. She later moved to Macedonia using her personal connections. Dimitar Nikolovski, Audio Interview, interviewed by M.Sc. Marjan Gijovski and Prof. Dr. Marjan Ivanoski, Skopje, March 2023.

the head with an object, while one of the women pressed a cotton ball soaked in chloroform over his mouth. He also received two injections in the neck, after which agents transferred him to Yugoslavia in a diplomatic vehicle.¹⁴

Without delving too deeply into the actions that preceded this event, we encounter diametrically opposed claims regarding the apprehension of the leader of Macedonian political emigration.

In the interview, Dimitar Nikolovski explains Dragan Bogdanovski's motives for portraying the event as those of a "victim." He discusses the publication of *"Makedonska Nacija"* and states that *Dragan Bogdanovski planned to travel from Munich to Copenhagen to write the piece. He would receive about 200–300 crowns from the bureau funding him.*

Nikolovski asserts that the transfer from Ljubljana to Skopje occurred on a regular passenger plane, not a military aircraft, as claimed by Dragan Bogdanovski's close friend, Vlado Trantalovski, in the seventh episode of the documentary series *Victims of Communism*. This discrepancy likely arises from what Bogdanovski communicated to him. A striking point mentioned by Nikolovski is the offer that the State Security Service made to Bogdanovski: he could gain release after serving half of his prison sentence, provided to remain passive, and refrained from continuing his activities in emigration.

During that time, even under prison conditions, Bogdanovski did not remain idle. Through the inmate Lazar Malinovski, he sent a letter intended for Vanko Markovski in Sofia.¹⁵ The State Security Service (SDB) intercepted the materials, and the plan to establish new organizations failed with the help of "engaged inmates" acting as intermediaries.

After Dragan Bogdanovski left the prison (KDP) "Idrizovo" in November 1987, Dimitar Nikolovski recalls asking him whether it was possible to live on the social assistance provided by the SDB. Bogdanovski replied that he could not survive on those funds, and that he intended to leave.¹⁶

¹⁴ This event is reconstructed based on the account of Dragan Bogdanovski in the docudrama *"Dissident"*, written and directed by Petar Đurovski, produced by the Labyrinth production company, and promoted in 2013.

¹⁵ Dimitar Nikolovski, Audio Interview, conducted by M.Sc. Marjan Gjovski and Prof. Dr. Marjan Ivanoski, Skopje, March 2023.

¹⁶ Dimitar Nikolovski unequivocally denies that Gojko Jakovleski bought the apartment for him in the Kapistec neighborhood, where he stayed after prison. Instead, he claims that the apartment belonged to the State Security Service (SDB). Prof. Dr. Marjan Ivanoski, who studied the file of Dragan Bogdanovski, writes that the SDB reached out to Gojko Jakovleski to finance Dragan Bogdanovski's stay in the apartment. Jakovleski then sent 20,000 marks, which were deposited in the SDB and reportedly used to furnish the

Ultimately, Nikolovski denies all claims circulating today that Dragan Bogdanovski agreed to collaborate with the SDB after his release from prison. It seems that Bogdanovski cleverly assured the SDB that he could no longer take any action without their knowledge. Time would reveal that he would intensify his activism and work toward establishing a political party in Macedonia after the democratic changes in 1990/1991.

In the interview, Dimitar Nikolovski raised the topic of the attempted assassination of Gojko Jakovleski by Tome Balaban, an Ohrid resident and member of the State Security Service.¹⁷ In the 2015 monograph *"Macedonia – My Life"* by Kiro Kiprovski, the author discusses Jakovleski's life and activities, including a subsection in Chapter 3 titled "They Prepared an Assassination of Gojko."¹⁸

Kiprovski recounts a conversation with Balaban after Balaban retired from the State Security Service. During this conversation, Balaban confirmed that individuals were indeed planning an assassination attempt against Jakovleski, then West Berlin, where the family-owned restaurant "Novo Skopje" was located.

The author recounts what Tome Balaban said: *"Every day we went to 'Novo Skopje'; we were assigned to follow Gojko, to find out where he lived in the city, what time he left his home, and when he arrived at his restaurant... we had him in our sights 24 hours a day."* When the author was asked why they did not carry out the assassination, Balaban responded, *"We did not receive orders from our superiors in Belgrade and Skopje to eliminate him. It would have been a serious mistake if such an order had come through because Gojko is a great Macedonian."* The chapter also includes testimony from Boško Iloski, an Ohrid resident and friend of Gojko Jakovleski, who claims that in 1987, while staying in Berlin, he received a warning from Balaban¹⁹ not to go to the

apartment. Ivanoski assumes that they used part of the money to pay social assistance. Ivanoski, Marjan, *Dragan Bogdanovski: Život i delo (Life and Work) 1929-1998* (Skopje: Institute for National History, 2023), 154-155.

¹⁷ Gojko Jakovleski was born on February 20, 1935, in the village of Zubovce, in the Gostivar region. He is a well-known Macedonian émigré from Berlin, Germany, and the State Security Administration created a file on him in 1961. Starting in 1972, he became involved in Macedonian émigré organizations and established a long-term collaboration with Dragan Bogdanovski. Džikov Stavre, Džikov Aleksandar, *Goce Makedonski – borec za slobodna i objedineta Makedona vo Evropa bez granici - (Fighter for a Free and United Macedonia in Europe without Borders)* (Skopje: Makavej, 2014).

¹⁸ Kiprovski, Kiro, *Makedonia - mojot život* (Skopje: Kiro Kiprovski, 2015), 149-152.

¹⁹ Boško Iloski, known by the nickname Remis, is a businessman from Ohrid who, at the age of 19, went to work abroad in Berlin, Germany, in 1984. There, Gojko Jakovleski, who

restaurant anymore because someone was planning an assassination against Jakovleski.

Regarding the conspiracy “Assassination attempt of Gojko Jakovleski,” Dimitar Nikolovski asserts that there must be a motive for Jakovleski’s potential assassination, questioning why the State Security Service (SDB) would want to kill him? He also asked Jakovleski to name others killed by the Service.

Nikolovski described an encounter during a visit to Ohrid at the restaurant “Letnica,” where he was with friends when Gojko Jakovleski approached him. At one point, Nikolovski stated, “*We’ve known each other forever; Gojko was an informant for the Service!*” During their discussion, after Nikolovski, Jakovleski claimed that Balaban wanted to kill him. Nikolovski pressed for reasons behind this and urged Jakovleski to call Balaban and confront him directly.²⁰

In the interview with the former head of the SDB, the discussion included an event that caused significant upheaval in the Macedonian political emigration: the murder of Blagoje Šambovski in Munich on the night of July 31 to August 1, 1974, at the “Royal” hotel near the Munich train station. To this day, many believe that the Service carried out the assassination, as reported in the magazine “*Makedonska nacija*”, the official publication of the The Movement for the Liberation and Unification of Macedonia (DOOM), issue number 23, published in September-October 1974.

The article dedicated to Blagoje Šambovski states that during this period, a series of murders occurred, including those of four Croatian political émigrés and three Serbian political émigrés, among them Jakov Ljotić, a leader of the Serbian political emigration. The text states that Šambovski received threatening postcards in early spring and emphasizes that multiple complaints were filed with the German police about their failure to prevent the incident from gaining publicity. It criticizes the German investigative authorities for remaining silent about the “activities of the Yugoslav bandit UDBA

provided him with accommodation and food, took him in. Kiproski, *Makedonia - mojot zhivot - Macedonia - My Life*, 142.

²⁰ „And he started screaming, running here and there, but I caught him, there was no escape. Now he sits down, adjusts himself, and says: “Go ahead.” Tell me, at least one more person whom the State Security killed, and tell me the reasons for the murder. What were you, what made you so important? Anyway, how could you be our guy, you were State Security. Every time he came to Yugoslavia, he would come every year and first go to see Tošo Škartov, tell him everything he had to say, and then he would go to Gostivar. Nikoloski, Audio Interview, 2023.

on the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany.” These accusations formed the basis for the DOOM leadership's claims that the Service was responsible for the assassination.

Regarding this case and the allegations, Dimitar Nikolovski stated that he participated in verifying the incident by visiting the German authorities to inquire whether they had any evidence that a Yugoslav, specifically a person from Macedonia, was responsible for Šambovski's murder.

He insisted on knowing which name was mentioned most frequently, including that of Blagoja Šambovski's wife, Zora. During the conversation between Dimitar Nikolovski and his German colleagues, with an Interpol representative present, they did not present any evidence that the SDB had killed anyone or intended to kidnap or murder someone. In this context, Nikolovski mentioned the Italian and French intelligence services, noting that they were aware of “some kind of agreement.”²¹

Ultimately, Nikolovski emphasized that no one is certain who the killer of Blagoje Šambovski is. He also had contact with the German service stationed at the embassy in Belgrade. He reported that Zora Šambovska reached out to the embassy to inquire about her husband's death. The embassy contacted the police in Munich, and their response stated that Blagoje Šambovski had suffered from epilepsy and fallen down the stairs, hitting the back of his head. According to a detailed account, a colleague working at the reception desk found Šambovski.

Among the individuals mentioned from the political emigration in the interview was Angelle Vretoski.²² According to Vretoski, his file under the

²¹ In his explanation of why the Italian intelligence service, SISMI, was requested to assist in investigating the murder of Blagoj Šambevski, Dimitar Nikolovski highlighted the cooperation between the two services. After the assassination of Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro in 1976 by the extreme left-wing group “Red Brigades,” some of their members were sheltered in a camp run by the Yugoslav People's Army in Yugoslavia. The two services had an agreement to extradite members of the Red Brigades when requested, and in return, the Italian service allowed the smooth execution of the operation to arrest Dragan Bogdanovski.

²² Angele Vretoski is a long-time activist within the Macedonian community in Australia and a radio journalist. He left Yugoslavia due to his rejection of Josip Broz Tito's regime. He moved to the Federal Republic of Germany, where he began reading the newspapers “*Ilinden*” and “*Makedonska Nacija*”(Macedonian Nation). He immigrated to Australia in 1972, where he was invited to meet with Krsto Škordov, an activist from Sydney. Together, they agreed to form a Committee for the Movement for the Liberation and Unification of Macedonia in Sydney, consisting of nine people. Among their first activities was the reprinting of *Macedonian Nation* and sending copies to members of the Macedonian

pseudonym “Metalec,” which the State Security Service maintained, contains 760 pages. On one occasion, he became the target of a knife attack while attempting to prevent a physical altercation. After the Fourth Congress of the Democratic Organization of Macedonian Revolutionaries (DOOM) in Altenau, West Germany, during the summer of 1977, Vretoski disagreed with the decision to give the Politburo more authority than the Central Committee, following Mikhail Sharinovski's election as president of the organization.²³

Dimitar Nikolovski confirmed that the State Security Service knew of Angele Vretoski and stated that Vretoski lived in Port Kembla, Australia, and was an ideological follower of Bakunin.²⁴ Nikolovski also mentioned that Vretoski had a conflict with a relative in the church in Port Kembla after he discovered, through his contacts in the Republican Secretariat for Internal Affairs, that Nikolovski had relatives in Australia. Furthermore, Dimitar Nikolovski claimed that Angelle Vretoski had no contact with the State Security Service.²⁵

After listening to the interview multiple times and analyzing it, it becomes clear that some previous assessments of certain events are undoubtedly open to debate. For example, was the incident involving the leader of the Macedonian political emigration truly abduction, a deportation, an escorting, or a kidnapping?²⁶ Dimitar Nikolovski, the former head of the State Security Service, continues to monitor publications related to Macedonian

community. In 1977, he became involved in publishing the newspaper “*Glas na Makedoncite*” (*Voice of the Macedonians*) (the last issue was published in 1991). Along with like-minded individuals, he helped establish the *Macedonian Cultural and Educational Society*. In 1980, he participated in the publication of the newspaper *People's Will* as a technical editor, with some issues published in Greek and English. This newspaper aimed to neutralize the propaganda effect of “*Makedonska Tribuna*” (*Macedonian Tribune*) within the emigrant communities in the United States and Canada.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xHObd0CmSSM> (accessed July 3, 2023).

²³ Mihail Šarinovski was born in the village of Bapčor in the Aegean part of Macedonia in 1932 and passed away in Perth, Western Australia, in 1999. He was elected president of the DOOM (Democratic Organization of Macedonians) in 1977 and held this position until 1982.

²⁴ Mikhail Alexandrovich Bakunin (1814-1876) was a leading ideologist of anarchism who advocated for the complete freedom of the individual, opposing political control and submission to authority. <https://historiografija.hr/?p=29597>, accessed on August 28, 2023.

²⁵ In other words, Angele Vretoski was an opponent of the State Security Service.

²⁶ In the Digital Dictionary of the Macedonian Language, the term *doveduvanje* (bringing) is explained as “helping or forcing someone to come to a specific place.” The term *kidnapira* (kidnaps) is explained as “seizing or abducting someone for ransom.” The term *odvlekuva* (abducts) is interpreted as “taking someone by force or with difficulty.”

political emigration after World War II, even 33 years after his retirement. This has allowed for a discussion of the prevailing narrative today from the perspective of those who opposed the state of Yugoslavia and, by extension, the UDBA/SDB.

As researchers, we gained valuable professional insight by hearing the perspective and experiences of political emigration from the individual who led the State Security Service (SDB) during the period that is the focus of our investigation. He was prepared for conversation and willing to provide detailed answers to all questions, making him an ideal interlocutor for a scholarly interview. One particular impression was left by his response to whether the truth was always recorded in the files, or if there were times when not everything could be written truthfully. He briefly answered, “Not everything could be.” That short response serves as a warning to researchers and anyone reading these files: they should approach their interpretation with caution, seek and compare other sources, and use various methods to verify the information.

Nikolovski firmly believes that political activists in exile consistently exaggerate their personal experiences and the actions of the State Security Service. Nikolovski referred to the proponents of a united Macedonia when asked about the SDB’s position on a united Macedonia, recalling a discussion he had with Dimko Nečevski. He had asked Nečevski to explain what Macedonian emigration was and how he should treat it as the head of the SDB, since he already knew how to handle the Croatian and Serbian emigrations. According to Nikolovski, Nečevski responded by saying that they were “*sous la poubelle*” (translated from French as “under the garbage can”). In another instance, he spoke about a meeting he had with a political activist from Australia, whose name he did not mention, at the Macedonian Emigrants’ Association in Skopje.

The activist was supposed to deliver a message from Mihailo Šarinoski. During the meeting, Nikolovski recounts, that he asked the interlocutor how much he should trust him and how much he should trust the other collaborators. The interlocutor replied that he should trust no one, as all were “*pashiti goveda*” (translated as “uncontrolled cattle”), meaning people without any master or authority.

In summary, Macedonian political émigrés believed that the SDB was omnipresent and highly organized. Dimitar Nikolovski remarked that if they even stumbled in the street, they would quickly assume the service was behind it.

Nikolovski mentioned the activist Mile Ilievski from Gothenburg, Sweden, and his brother Ilija Tupackovski as examples of political émigrés who used threats but in reality, never took any action.²⁷

In an attempt to expose the exaggerations among members of the political emigration regarding the SDB, Dimitar Nikolovski recalled his encounter with the emigrant and activist Jane Delianev from Perth, Western Australia, originally from the Aegean part of Macedonia. Nikolovski, talking about Jane Delijanov, pointed out that he was very outspoken in spreading the information that if any member of the political organizations from emigration went to Macedonia, they would face problems with the SDB. During one of his visits to Skopje, Delianev stayed at the Grand Hotel (now the Holiday Inn), and Nikolovski arranged for him to be followed while ensuring maximum safety precautions. After Skopje, Jane Delianev traveled through Veles to Prilep, where he had relatives. He then continued through Bitola, heading to Ohrid and Kičevo. Delianev was walking around the barracks in Kičevo, where they strictly prohibited taking photos or approaching, and he noticed that an operative was following him.

The local police intervened after an argument broke out between them and arrested the operative on Nikolovski's orders, to convince Delianev, who had certainly expected that the consequences of what he had been propagating would eventually fall upon him. After the incident, Jane Delianev contacted the president of the Macedonian Emigrants' Association, Tome Bukleski, and requested a meeting with Nikolovski. The meeting took place at the SDB offices, and Jane Delianev adopted an aggressive stance. After venting his frustration, Nikolovski recounts that Jane Delianev ultimately declared that no one in Macedonia treated members of the Macedonian emigration organizations seriously and that all their efforts were in vain. He admitted that he had deliberately traveled through Macedonian cities, just to get himself arrested.

For us, another key fact regarding the service's approach to the Macedonian political emigration is crucial. Specifically, concerning the period after Dragan Bogdanovski was brought to Yugoslavia in June 1977, Nikolovski states that the SDB spread disinformation, claiming that he was in emigration, with the intent of deceiving his associates and followers. The SDB also or-

²⁷ Mile Ilievski (1935-2006) was a member of the leaderships of OKM, DOOM, and NOMF, and in 2006, he published two volumes of documents titled *"Dokumenti za makedonsko nacionalno dvizenie vo diasporata"* (*Documents on the Macedonian National Movement in the Diaspora*) OKM-DOOM-NOMF", which actually represented his personal archive.

chestrated the sending of letters from Switzerland, France, and Austria to Dragan's collaborators in Australia, the USA, and Canada. These letters convinced recipients that they were receiving messages from Dragan Bogdanovski, when, in reality, he had been compelled to write them under pressure.

Based on everything presented so far, a key dilemma arises: did the Macedonian political emigration, as an opponent of the Yugoslav framework for resolving the Macedonian issue and the socialist system, exaggerate its actions? If so, why did it do this? Alternatively, why did the State Security Service (first the federal, and later the republican), which was responsible for the country's security, downplay the significance of the Macedonian political emigration, its activities, and its leaders? In such cases, historians face two completely opposing interpretations of the same event or situation. At best, they can confirm only indisputable facts. However, the task ahead involves further research and verification using archival documentation. If we assume that the leaders and activists of the political emigration have exaggerated, or continue to exaggerate, in their recollections, memoirs, and so on, this can be explained by the conditions in which they operated. The SDB did indeed create an atmosphere of distrust among them, fostered fear in individuals, interfered with internal communication, and distorted their perceptions. It is also possible that certain members of the emigration organizations exaggerated their own role as "self-sacrifices" or as powerful figures. This is understandable due to the human need for personal recognition.

If we accept that the State Security Service minimized the potential of the Macedonian political emigration after World War II, and more specifically after 1966, this can be explained by the fact that one of the challenges for any security service is dealing with the preparation of armed groups to infiltrate the country, as well as with terrorist activities and sabotage. The Macedonian emigration organizations did not engage in such actions; their activities were primarily propagandist, activist, and, therefore, lobbying in nature.

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**AUDI ALTERAM PARTEM - STATE SECURITY
ADMINISTRATION BETWEEN TRUTH AND MYTHS OF
MACEDONIAN POLITICAL EMIGRATION**

(summary)

This paper does not aim to establish a final historical truth but rather to offer a perspective that may not have been fully represented until now. Researchers studying the Macedonian political emigration after World War II must take into account the perspectives of State Security Service (SDB) operatives to understand the context in which these groups functioned. The files now accessible under legal norms provide valuable information, but researchers must analyze them carefully and critically. As Dimitar Nikolovski confirmed, these files are incomplete, and it is reasonable to assume that someone may have adjusted them.

Due to uncritical interpretations and selective publications, the contents of these files have often been used in public discourse for political and personal agendas. After 1991, the rise of memoirs and monographs by political dissidents of the Yugoslav regime—often emotionally charged—became more widespread. This phenomenon is understandable, but it also led to attempts to measure the influence of the “adversary.”

While the SDB did not view emigration organizations as a direct threat to peace and stability, they still monitored these groups through a special department. These organizations also had a profound impact on the Macedonian diasporas and played a crucial role in the creation of a political party with a national agenda after the adoption of a pluralistic political system.

In studying the Macedonian emigrant organizations that opposed the state of Yugoslavia and the socialist system, we often questioned the extreme caution and pervasive suspicion among the activists. While not entirely, at least predominantly, the “responsibility” lies with the SDB and its methods of operation. On the path to uncovering scientific truth, it is essential to comprehend and recognize historical facts, while neutralizing myths and subjective viewpoints shaped by personal positioning within particular historical events. In the end, something always remains unspoken, which could prove crucial to reconstructing historical events and uncovering the truth.

