

Banquet speaker bridges past to future, encourages full participation

Macedonian Tribune Editor Virginia Nizamoff Surso was speaker at the Grand Banquet of the 87th Annual MPO Convention held Labor Day Weekend in The Westin, Indianapolis.

I recently saw the play *Fiddler on the Roof*, the story of Jewish families living in early 20th Century Russia.

Once again, I am struck by the parallels between Golda and Tevia's people of Anatepka and our people who lived in the villages of Macedonia –

Both lived under oppressors and did the best they could

Both were financially poor, but rich in heart

Both were fatalistic about life

Both relied on the guidance of their spiritual leader and the Bible

Both were buoyed by the family

Both were tradition-bound

Both immigrated to places where other family already had settled

Stories of the lives of our people in Macedonia under the Ottoman Empire are the fabric of Dimitar Talev's trilogy – *The Iron Candlestick*, *Bells of Prespa* and *Iinden*. If you haven't already done so, read them to learn what our families endured in Macedonia during these times of subjugation under the Ottoman Turks.

Read about the constant fear when they had to walk by the home of the Turkish lords or pass a group of Turkish soldiers on the street, or when a Turk entered their shop to purchase something.

It was times like these that made our people want to leave Macedonia.

Begin to understand that during these times minarets on mosques had to be higher than crosses on churches so churches were built below ground. Today if you visit Ohrid, you will no doubt see the church of St. Clement on a hill known as Plaosnik. It is built on the ruins of a mosque, which was built on the ruins of an earlier church. The architects left remnants of both earlier structures as part of the foundation. You can also see beautiful mosaics that date back more than 2000 years ago to Roman days.

Just like many of your families, my baba and dedo, Dine and Georgia Doucleff of Selo Patale, Lerinsko, were among those brave people who left their homes by ox cart or on foot, and traveled halfway around the world so that WE can be free.

My dedo settled in St. Louis and helped build the railroad in Montana, just as Mitch Pedroff's father. Baba joined him later. They came as subjects of the Sultan of Ottoman Turkey.

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November business forums draw big names, kick-off Days of Macedonian Culture

Two business forums in behalf of Macedonia are set in mid-November. The first will be held Nov. 11 at Silicon Valley; the second will be Nov. 14 at Chicago.

The theme of the Silicon Valley Forum is *Macedonia, Land of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Experts*. The theme of the Chicago Forum is *Macedonia – New Economic Miracle in Europe: Presentation of Recent Developments*.

They will kick off *Days of Macedonian Culture* with additional events in Washington and other places in the US. These special events include performances by young Macedonian piano virtuoso Simon Trpceski with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and a screening of Milcho Manchevski's latest film *Shadows* in Washington.

They also will include a ceremonial opening of Macedonia's General Consulate in Chicago, a presentation on the Macedonian language at the University of Chicago, meetings with the diaspora, as well as meetings with companies and persons who can bring business to Macedonia.

Introduction to Macedonia and its economic policy will include information about Macedonia on its path towards NATO and EU, tax reforms including introduction of flat income and profit tax;

regulatory guillotine; flexible labor market; protection of ownership rights; reduction of grey economy; attracting foreign investment; strengthening competitiveness of domestic production; enhancing business climate for small and medium enterprises; expanding technological industrial development zones; etc.

Information regarding Macedonia's plans to expand its successful ICT programs (in education, government ICT applications geared toward the improvement of efficiency and transparency) and several initiatives, including: Establishment of a new ICT University (with support of US university professors), Computer for Every Child Campaign (150,000 computers for primary and secondary schools in Macedonia), Macedonia: the first Internet wireless country in the World" - USAID legacy.

Next steps for Macedonia in the ICT sector? What should the new ICT University look like? "How does partnership between government, private sector and donors contribute to this success?"

The government of the Republic of Macedonia and a newly formed group called Macedonia 2025 are jointly

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Macedonian Ambassador Zoran Jolevski (center) received a beautiful painting of Ohrid for the Embassy. He is shown with MPO President George A. Lebamoff, his wife Rosie and keynote speaker Virginia Nizamoff Surso (right). The painting was created by Donna Stavroff Burns, Columbus, and commissioned by Vanya Dumas, Detroit.

Macedonian Ambassador greets banquet attendants

Following are the words of H.E. Zoran Jolevski, Macedonian Ambassador to the US, given at the Grand Banquet of the 87th Annual MPO Convention.

George [Lebamoff], dear Macedonians, it is my privilege and honor to be with you here tonight on this solemn occasion of your annual meeting.

I have been in Washington only one and a half years. On my second day I was faced with a huge problem. One of the senators introduced a resolution using the acronym FYROM in the NATO Freedom Consolidation Act 2007, which is very offensive to all of us.

And then, I called George and managed to get 15 Macedonians together for conference calls. I found out we Macedonians can work together because we all love our country.

Macedonia is on the road to become a strong, developed European country. As you know parliamentary elections were held this year. We have a young and energetic government that knows what to do. NATO and the EU is our future but, of course, we would like to preserve our name, Macedonia, and we are not going to pay the price of giving up our name for anything else. [Applause]

Greeks are making problems for us. We know where we would like to be.

Last year we had a five percent increase in GDP [gross domestic product]. This year we will have more. Last year the World Bank placed Macedonia fourth in its list of the top most reformed governments in the world. The *Wall Street Journal* put Macedonia in first place in the world in monetary freedom. Monetary freedom for economy is the same as freedom of speech for democracy.

These obstacles imposed by Greece, may take longer for us to get into NATO and the European Union, but we will get there. [Applause]

And, I'm sure very soon we will have younger Macedonians coming back to Macedonia. Kristina [Koroloff] mentioned she would like to come to Skopje to work a little bit and see how it is. I know for a many young Macedonians now is the time for them to come back to Macedonia and to help Macedonia's development and to have a good life.

When I speak about young Macedonians, I tell the story of one Macedonian who came back in 2000. He was born in Sweden. His father and mother are from

Ohrid. He started a company with four people; now he has 400 people working for 10 of the Fortune 500 companies, and he continues opening offices with two in the US. Ninety-five percent of his product is sold all over the world. This is just one of our young Macedonians.

As I finish, because my youngest son says I speak too much, I want to say how proud I am of the achievements of young Macedonians. Last year I received an invitation from the president of Ohio University at Athens inviting me to the graduation ceremony. The letter indicated two Macedonians were among the top ten in the graduating class.

When I called his office to ask how many Macedonians were in the graduating class, he said, "just two."

I am sure this government will continue to invest a lot in education. We have doubled our budget for education. We are opening a new IT [information technology] University in Macedonia where half of the professors will be from the US and Europe and will lecture only in English.

In a few years, we hope to have more universities where all lectures will be in English. This will allow your daughters and sons to come [to Macedonia] for a year to study, and allow their credits to be accepted here in the states.

The embassy is organizing two business forums this fall. One will be held in Silicon Valley, the other in Chicago. The one at Silicon Valley is Nov. 11, and the one at Chicago is Nov. 15.

In Chicago, we will also open a Macedonian Consulate on Nov. 14. That night, Macedonia's piano virtuoso Simon Trpceski will perform. During this time, we shall begin Days of Macedonian Culture with a number of events in Washington and the other place in the US.

And through Virginia [Surso], I will make sure you get the program and please feel free to come to those events and enjoy Macedonian culture and learn about Macedonian business also.

So as not to make this too long, I wish you all the best, and I want you to know the Embassy in Washington is open. You are always welcome.

Thank you very much.
Ambassador Jolevski and wife Zizi are the parents of two sons. Pero is a student at Florida Gulf Coast University and Filip is in high school in Washington.

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Tonight I wear a ring with a moss agate stone that my dedo found in Montana and made into a ring for Baba.

These two raised six children to be American. "Speak English," my Baba admonished.

A few years later, my father Christo Nizamoff sneaked out of Serb-occupied Macedonia (or be arrested for crimes against Serbianization). He joined his cousin and hundreds of others from the Balkans working in the cotton mills of Connecticut. Once he learned English, he enrolled in Boston College and later Columbia University. He worked at whatever jobs he could find. He wasn't quite 20 years old, had no wife or children.

At this very young age, he decided to devote his life to working for a free and independent Macedonia. First, he wrote press releases for the Macedonian Information Bureau, later as a writer and Linotype operator for the **MACEDONIAN TRIBUNE**, then as editor of the **TRIBUNE** and finally as a free-lance writer until May 25, 1989, the day he died at 85 years old.

The Macedonian Information Bureau in New York City was founded by the MPO in the mid 1920s. The early leaders of the MPO had the vision to understand the need to network and publicize the plight of Macedonia.

While running the bureau, he and Lambro Kissilentcheff developed contacts at the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and *Christian Science Monitor*. Their contacts told Macedonia's story even before communism gained its nasty grip in the Balkans. And, when the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, we still could count on these newspapers to be pro-Macedonian.

These two men were like all the other early leaders of the MPO – dedicated to an idea of a free and independent Macedonia that would guarantee human rights for everyone.

The **MACEDONIAN TRIBUNE** was established in 1927. It was so important to those early MPO people of vision that they did everything in their power to keep the presses rolling and the organization alive through the hollow years of the Great Depression, the lonely years of World War II and the troubled years that followed.

It had to continue.

Macedonia had to be free.

Because of their determination -- this weekend we celebrate their fortitude in continually publishing the **MACEDONIAN TRIBUNE** for more than 82 years.

As many of you, I was born into the MPO and grew up knowing the importance of the **MACEDONIAN TRIBUNE**. I was there when the great leaders of the 1940s and 50s met. Today, I am awe-struck at the great fortune of having known nearly all of them, and the honor of having worked with many more during these last 21 years.

The worker bees made the MPO and the **MACEDONIAN TRIBUNE** strong and respected worldwide. These early leaders met often – usually right here in Indianapolis, after all, it was the headquarters.

They worked the chapters in their hometowns and the conventions no matter where they were. They sold and collected tickets, set up the tables and chairs, lugged in ice and drinks. No task was too menial. Because they worked, others joined the effort.

And, for more than four decades, they made sure there was enough money to publish the **MACEDONIAN TRIBUNE** every week. They understood that the printed word is stronger than the spoken word.

Their names must be remembered along with the one or two that are often mentioned.

Strong women should also be remembered for their behind-the-scenes work.

Most of you will not recognize the name of Shenna Grammaticoff. Every year when I was a little girl, she left her husband, two children and her work on *Naroden Glas* in Granite City and came to Indianapolis to typeset the **MACEDONIAN TRIBUNE** so the Nizamoff and Dimitroff families would

have a vacation.

She also came for six months in 1945 or '46, when Chris and Luben were called to Washington to work for the Voice of America.

Shenna Popcheff was another. She cooked wonderful meals for Central Committee meetings in a tiny kitchen with no table and one small, single-oven stove with four burners. Teta (aunt) Shenna cooked and served chicken and fish for the group, which often numbered 50. You see Cheche (uncle) Tashe owned a fish and poultry market and that's what they could afford to serve. Nobody complained.

By the way, Popcheff's Fish and Poultry Market was right here on Washington Street between the State House and the Indiana State Museum.

The men at these Central Committee meetings sat in straight-back chairs wearing dark suits, usually with vests. The cigar smoke was so thick, it was hard to see across the room. If there were arguments, I didn't know because nobody raised a voice. They were clearly single-minded.

These leaders traveled often, sometimes weekly and many times several hours from home; paid their own way, bought their own tickets and raised money for an ideal held deep in their hearts -- a free and independent Macedonia.

My mom Slavka was another one of these women. She opened her door to every MPO friend or stranger needing a meal or a place to sleep because "they are family."

Now I know that most of our Macedonian women have done these things and each should be recognized for their contribution. I mention my mom not only because I know her story, but also because of my father's position at the **MACEDONIAN TRIBUNE**, hers was an almost weekly contribution.

Mom often told the story of a new bride – married just a few weeks, when her husband called to say he was bringing seven for dinner to their three-room apartment. They would be there in about an hour.

Let me tell you, he didn't do that again!

Christo Ognanoff, Dimo Kovacheff, Christ Anastasoff and Ted Tchoukaleff were regular guests in our home. Cheche Dimo slept on the floor with my brother and me, and Ted and Georgia Tchoukaleff grew up with my parents – the men in Resen, the women in Granite City.

One of my most cherished books is a gift from Ognanoff, a renowned poet who worked for the Voice of America in Europe -- *Sonnets of the Portuguese* by Elizabeth Barrett Browning for my high school graduation.

One evening when Ognanoff was staying with us, my parents invited Michael Padev to dinner. He was foreign editor at the *Indianapolis Star* where I was working. During the conversation, Padev and Ognanoff discovered they viewed the same naval battle from ships on opposing sides and reported their experience to readers on opposite sides of World War II.

This discovery by my two friends was an amazing experience for me -- a budding journalist.

I also remember the morning when Dedo Kyrill cooked breakfast for everyone. He was very dramatic in presenting his special eggs. The only thing missing was his miter.

Dita and Peter Atzeff were such leaders and always a part of my life. She often told me stories about her first year of married life – how they traveled by bus from city to city talking to Macedonians about the MPO, signing up subscribers and collecting donations. Many years earlier, Dita's mother sent her door-to-door, collecting a quarter a month for MPO dues.

Once while sitting on the floor playing backgammon in Pennsylvania, floodwaters crept through the floorboards, and they moved to higher ground -- upstairs.

Later when their daughter Dorie became **MACEDONIAN TRIBUNE** editor, Dita translated articles. As a member of the MPO Central Committee, she expected all MPO leaders to work hard, excel, persevere, be loyal and raise money for the cause.

I am privileged to have known all but the

first two MPO presidents and all **TRIBUNE** editors except the first. Boris Zografoff returned to Europe -- way before I was even a glimmer. In these past 21 years, I have been honored to work with the past four presidents as well as Editors Lou Todorov and Paul Simoff. Did you know that Lou and Paul were the only volunteer editors?

By the way, did you know that **TRIBUNE** editor Luben Dimtroff and MPO President Peter Atzeff both were accomplished artists and poets?

While still in grade school, I often "worked" in the **TRIBUNE** office. I learned how to mix flour and water paste to mail papers. I learned how to use the Addressograph Machine, now displayed in the Macedonian Museum, and I learned to type on an upright typewriter.

The office always smelled like newsprint, ink and charcoal. I still love the smell of newsprint. In the summer, it was hot, very hot. You see there was always a charcoal fire burning in the Linotype Machine to keep the lead melted. In winter, it was wonderfully cozy.

The office was generally noisy with keys clanking on two-three typewriters in addition to the Linotype. Visitors from everywhere streamed in and out – stopping by to chat and to see what was happening.

I remember the first two offices best. The first was where we re-dedicated the Indiana Historic Marker yesterday. The best way to describe the office is that it was much like a garage of today -- cement floors with doors and walls. The second was next to St. John's Church; perhaps you have seen the tall steeples a half block from here. It was more spacious, on the second floor overlooking the church garden.

Luben, Chris, Peter, Stereo Nicoloff and Ted Vasileff worked long hard hours. Tuesday, they put the paper to bed, locked in wooden forms and sent to the printer. The men went home dog-tired.

Stereo lived with the Vasileff's because his family was stuck in *stari kraji* (old country). They never re-united.

A very interesting part of the day was eating lunch in the back room of Popcheff's Tavern, a couple of blocks from the original *radatsia* (office) just down the street from here. Teta Tsila made *manja* (stew) and served plenty of bread from a Macedonian bakery. We ate at a makeshift table large enough for a dozen or so to dine; meanwhile, Cheche (uncle) Dine tended bar and poked his head in the backroom long enough to join the conversation every couple of minutes. The meals were free. It was their way of giving.

I also loved walking around town with my dad, whom many called "Mr. Macedonia" because he always told Macedonia's story. He was often on television, often interviewed by local and national media. It was not unusual for Ted Koppel to call for a consultation.

Throughout his life, my Dad's goal was to teach everyone about Macedonia's need to be free.

Eleven years after his death, the *Indianapolis Star* chose him as one of 12 people who helped shape ethnic relations in the 20th Century.

The *Star* wrote, "In the past 100 years, Indianapolis has been home to hundreds of such men and women who helped change how the city views ethnic, racial and gender relations."

He certainly never would have imagined receiving such an honor as a child growing up in a tiny village straddling the Via Egnatia in the mountains of Macedonia.

It is an honor for which we can all be proud -- to have one of the editors of the **MACEDONIAN TRIBUNE** honored in such a way.

You see our early history is the story of our people who worked together for the good of everyone. They gave what they could, and expected nothing. All they ever wanted to do was assist in creating a Free and Independent Macedonia.

Many years later, Alex Tsakoff conveyed the same sentiment. He pulled me aside to tell me stories of trips to Toronto – "... sometimes Dr. Isakov and I went every week. It was never enough. Tell Ivan [Lebamoff]," he instructed.

As I read the essays by four young Macedonians for the writing contest *What the Macedonian Tribune Means to Me*, I am struck by the very same feelings about our people. No matter what we accomplish or endeavor, no matter where we live, our young feel connected through our newspaper. Theirs is a resounding affirmation of the **MACEDONIAN TRIBUNE**.

In these essays, Jeff Mentzer of Youngstown wrote, "Even though I am not related to people in the photos or articles, I somehow feel we are kind of an extended family because of our nationality."

Salena Nagy, also of Youngstown, wrote, "The **MACEDONIAN TRIBUNE** is my connection to my ethnic family. It brings us closer to one another."

Lauren Reid of Fort Wayne wrote, "The **MACEDONIAN TRIBUNE** is a newspaper with high quality stories and spreads about people who live in and love that special country."

And who can forget the words of Alex Alusheff who wrote, "Silly Greeks. We will reclaim our Aegean lands or my name isn't Alexander Philip Alusheff."

Do young people in your family read the **MACEDONIAN TRIBUNE**?

I challenge each of you to introduce our 82-year-old newspaper to one young person this year. Get them involved by sending us an article or photo of them. Once they see themselves in the **TRIBUNE**, they will want to learn more about others their age.

In conclusion, I ask that you sit back, close your eyes and think of a time long ago when Lazar Pop Traikoff spent his last hours writing the amazing epic poem *Lokvata & Viniary*. It is dated June 21, 1903, D'mbeny, Lerinsko, Aegean Macedonia

To the life of slavery,
to this dreadful hell
we shall never
be persuaded
to return --
for the sake
of freedom,
for the sake
of making
our deeds sacred,
for the right
to work,
for domestic peace
we shall not allow
our glorious names
to be tarnished.

Through all the
blasphemy ungodly,
all the torments,
all the deadly
guerilla life,
we'll strive
with our powerful weapons
up until we hear our country
proclaimed free.

Thanks to Dr. Lambro Dimitroff and his wife Pat for having the poem translated into English for all to learn.

Business Forum *from page 1*

sponsoring the forums and all activities encompassing them.

Speakers at the Chicago Forum include: Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, Vice Prime Minister Zoran Stavreski, US Ambassador to Macedonia Philip Reeker, Chief Economist for the World Bank Simeon Djankov, Foreign Minister Antonio Milososki, Minister of Economy Fatmir Besimi, Minister of Foreign Investment Vele Samak, Director of the Agency for Investment Viktor Mizo, Minister of IT (Information Technology) Ivo Ivanovski, former USAID Mission Director in Macedonia Dick Goldman; Mike Zafirovski, president and CEO of Nortel Networks, Inc., and Mitre Kutanosvki. Speakers in California will include Gruevski, Reeker, Djankov, Zafirovski, Ivanovski, Goldman as well as John Bitove, Professor Peter Bock and Igor Lestar.

H.E. Zoran Jolevski, Macedonian Ambassador to the US, will moderate both events.