

Confusion between Macedonia and Greece (update1)

Tuesday, 25 March 2008

As NATO Summit approaches, there seem to be genuine confusion in Greece as well as Macedonia as to what is being negotiated on. Macedonia believes they are negotiating on the temporary reference at the UN, while Greece is certain the negotiations are for the Constitutional name, which the Macedonian sides sees as untouchable. Time is running out.

When Antonio Milososki met with Dora Bakoyannis in Brussels, there was friendliness demonstrated by the Greek Foreign Minister, as well as the Macedonian in reaching a solution. Their friendliness peaked when Dora Bakoyannis congratulated the Macedonian Foreign Minister on his new born son. Dora showed photos of her kids Alexia and Kosta, from her late husband Pavlos Bakoyannis, a liberal journalist and politician, who was tragically gunned down in 1989 by Greek marxist terror group "17 November".

Macedonia's Foreign Minister showed photos of his son to Dora Bakoyannis and were in agreement that Macedonia and Greece should be friendly countries, must work together, for them, and especially for their children.

On Ms. Bakoyannis question what is the name of his son, Milososki responded: "David, I wanted Alexandar, but I feared [Greece] may object to the name and I would have to negotiate." Milososki's joke was seen as a provocation by the Greek Foreign Minister as her face had turned sour. The US Ambassador to NATO, Victoria Nuland stepped in to ease the situation and jokingly remarked "Maybe your next son will be Alexandar".

This week is seen as crucial for any and all outcomes. The way it stands at the moment Macedonia may be looking at a veto which in turn would end all present and future negotiations with Greece. This would mean breach of the 1995 accord signed between the two sides, where Greece had agreed it would not hamper Macedonia's integration into International Organizations, including the EU and NATO. In such event, Macedonia can bypass Greece and go straight to the UN.

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It is a Geographical designation, which has been turned down three times by Macedonia. Meanwhile the US State Department is working on a 'by' solution where Macedonia would enter NATO, however, there would be new negotiations which must be completed by September. US President George Bush on the other hand, is confident that both sides will find a solution before April 2.