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ПРОЕКТОТ СКОПЈЕ 2014

СКИЦИ ЗА ЕДНО НАРЕДНО ИСТРАЖУВАЊЕ

The Public Works Project Skopje 2014

A preliminary investigation by Nikos
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The development of the Macedonian nation state was uniquely delayed by its position as a crossroads and space for expansion of neighboring states and pathway for various roaming conquerors. More recently communist Yugoslavia held the nation in an enforced “puberty”, an immaturity today reflected in the grandiose and absurd.



Macedonia in recent times has liked to call itself an “El Dorado for archaeologists”, because you can’t dig here without coming upon someone’s earlier civilization. What is unusual though, is the great destruction of previous civilizations on the landscape.



Romans hated the ancient Macedonians they conquered. The Byzantine Empire hated the Orthodox Slav states that preceded them. The Turks converted Christian churches into mosques. Communist rulers tried to rid the city of reminders of the bourgeois, Christian society. Present day Skopje is erasing reminders of its communist past.



Macedonian critics of the project also see some present day justification for turning parts of downtown Skopje into a museum of the past. For the past 60 years of statehood there was an absence of historical symbols. Revolutionary leaders such as Gotse Delchev were relegated to outlying parks, and dozens of impersonal, uniform busts of partisans were dispersed in the city's parks, public buildings and schools.



Skopje might be seen as a repeatedly raped and plundered woman, who is then demanded to alter her identity and appearance to please her latest captor: new names, new languages, new symbols, the cross, the crescent, the hammer and sickle, the lion, the eagle, the red star. An impoverished, insecure citizenry simply acquiesces



ГРАД КОЈ РАСТЕ ВО ДЛАБОЧИНА ГРАД КОЈ СЕ ШИРИ ВО ПОДЗЕМЈЕТО ГРАД КОЈ СЕ ЈАДЕ СЕБЕСИ

A city that grows in depth

A city that spreads in the underground

A city that eats itself

Една од фразите со кои многу сакаме да си ја фалиме нашата Македонија пред странците или пред самите себе е дека таа е вистинско „Ел Дорадо за археолозите“, односно дека каде и да копнеш, насекаде во неа наоѓаш археолошки богатства од минатото. Но, при тоа не сме свесни дека овој комплимент длабоко во себе крие и една страшна и трагична определба. Според неа, во нашава земја не само што низ вековите многу се градело, но и дека она што го создавале претходниците, воопшто не се почитувало туку напротив – постојано и немилосрдно се уништувало. Оттука, Македонија може да се сфати и како една голема гробница, затоа што речиси целото нејзино минато е затрупано т.е. погребано под земја. Најстрашно е што ваквата судбина, оваа земја ја следи сè до денешни дни, за што најдобар пример е токму нејзината денешна престолнина.

Како настанале големите европски и светски метрополи, чии историски јадра и денес се простираат со километри во недоглед?

Едноставно – така што растеле во хоризонтала, односно новите градби се граделе покрај постојните, на празните простори лоцирани во градската периферија. Поради тоа, во нив до денес ќе најдете квартал од средниот век, на кој се надоврзува квартал од времето на ренесансата, па на барокот, па потоа зона на градот од 19. век и современ дел од 20. век. Без разлика на тоа што и таму има многу случаи во кои поновите објекти биле инфилтрирани во постарите јадра – на

Skopje as a beautiful 17th century city with 2000 home baths.



SCOPIA ex de Rivier de Veratazar

местото на намерно урнатите постари згради, сепак може да се забележи барем некаква почит кон постојните градби, ако не поради културната или естетската, тогаш барем поради нивната економска вредност. Ова особено важи за периодот од 19. век па наваму, кога во современите напредни општества се појавува концептот на принципиелна и институционална почит и грижа кон градителското наследство.

Зошто Скопје не спаѓа во рангот на ваквите метрополи, наспроти тоа што во минатото било многу фалено како еден од најголемите и најубавите градови во овој дел на Европа?

Да потсетиме дека тоа било главен град на римска провинција (Скупи), веројатно црковно средиште на најголемиот дел од Балканот (Јустинијана Прима), царска престолнина (Душаново царство), „град со 2000 домашни бањи“ (Евлија Челебија), „град убав колку Прага“ (Пиколомини). Скопје не припаѓа во оваа група од една проста причина, затоа што во него новото не се градело покрај постојното, туку врз постојното, се разбира откако тоа претходно до темел ќе се урнело. Затоа, историските фази на овој долговековен град не можете да ги согледате шетајќи од улица до улица и од квартал до квартал, туку копајќи длабоко во подземните

Skopje 2014 is merely a variation on the pattern of the past. Not so much a destruction as a usurping and overshadowing of structures from past times.

идеален, доследно геометриски конструиран „град во облаци“ како симбол на социјалистичкиот прогрес.

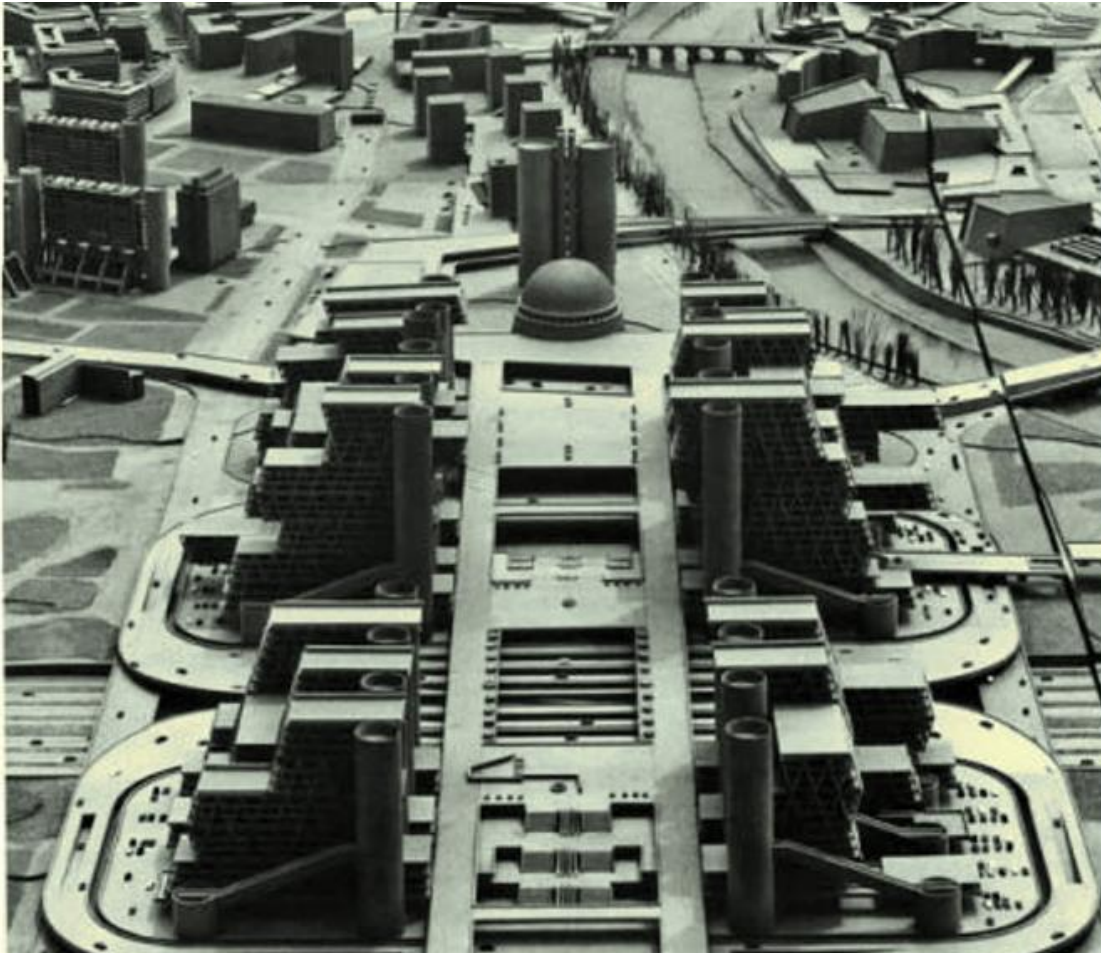
Во оваа милениумска историја на периодично уривање и повторно градење „од нула“, совршено се вклопува и проектот „Скопје 2014“. Во него е сосема јасно изразено целосното непочитување на постојното градителско наследство. Најголемиот дел од неговите досега изградени објекти се поставени не на слободни парцели, туку во комплекси и амбиенти кои од урбанистички, архитектонски и стилски аспект се веќе одамна оформени и заокружени, па дури и исполнети со одредена историска и емоционална аура. Паѓа во очи силното инсистирање, новите градби по секоја цена да се изградат на многу фреквентни но исклучително тесни и несоодветни локации, макар и прикештени од постојните објекти и на само два-три метри од нивните фасади.

Согледан низ горепретставената археолошка и историска перспектива, проектот „Скопје 2014“ е сосем вообичаен за овој град и всушност, само уште една манифестација на концептот на „градење ex nihilo“ кој во него се спроведува последниве 1500 години. Од претходните градителски кампањи тој се разликува само во две нијанси. Наспроти јасниот однос на тотално непочитување кон постојните градби, во него сепак не е изразена доволна храброст, таквото



There is little respect for past architectural styles, for a number of reasons.

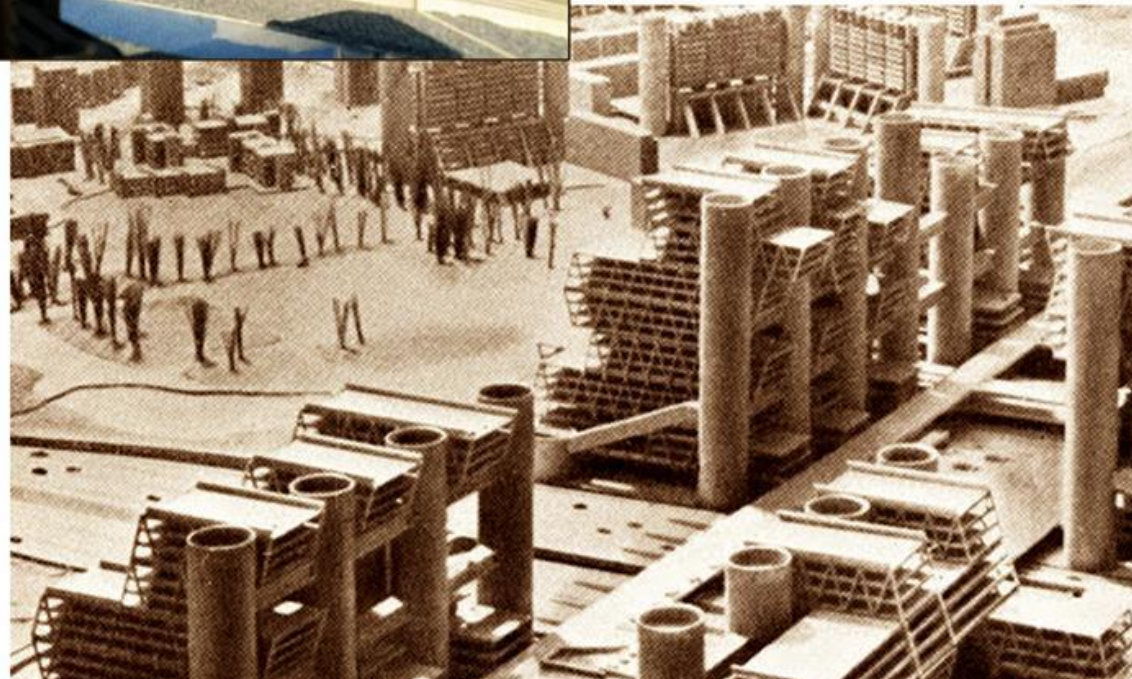
1. To take advantage of prime locations for new buildings to be readily seen by all.
2. Pride in building something big and new of ones own making.
3. Hatred for past creations as reminders of a hated past ruler or regime.



17th century Austrian General Piccolomini, who reportedly felt it necessary to burn the city down to stop the spread of a plague, said at the time: “The beautiful city will rise again.” That quote occasional appears today as graffiti on building walls.



The 1963 earthquake allowed the communist rulers of Skopje to remake the city. With international collaboration a modest, baroque style of building was often replaced by modernistic designs based on recent avantgarde trends.



The project Skopje 2014 is grandiose and not well thought out. The archaeological museum, for example, is of an inappropriately grand scale and a mixing of elements of antiquity, classical, and more recent European styles. The cupolas at the ends of the building do not harmonize with the structure. It is disproportionate, with reduced functional space, and yet, very expensive. It also blocks the view of older buildings.



The 1963 earthquake allowed the communist rulers to tear down buildings in an older style: such as churches, the army officers' home, banks and theatres. A new patriotism and nationalism is once again causing the erasure of the past. A thoughtful restoration of some buildings, such as has occurred in Warsaw, Moscow, Dresden, Petersburg and elsewhere, would be a way to maintain some of the city's historical-cultural identity.



A modern Western world mentality tends to work against holding onto local history and tradition, and buildings are typically divided into categories of utilitarian and sacred. However, Macedonian society traditionally mixes usage. Religious holidays and occasions, for example, are celebrated at home and in various locations in the city.

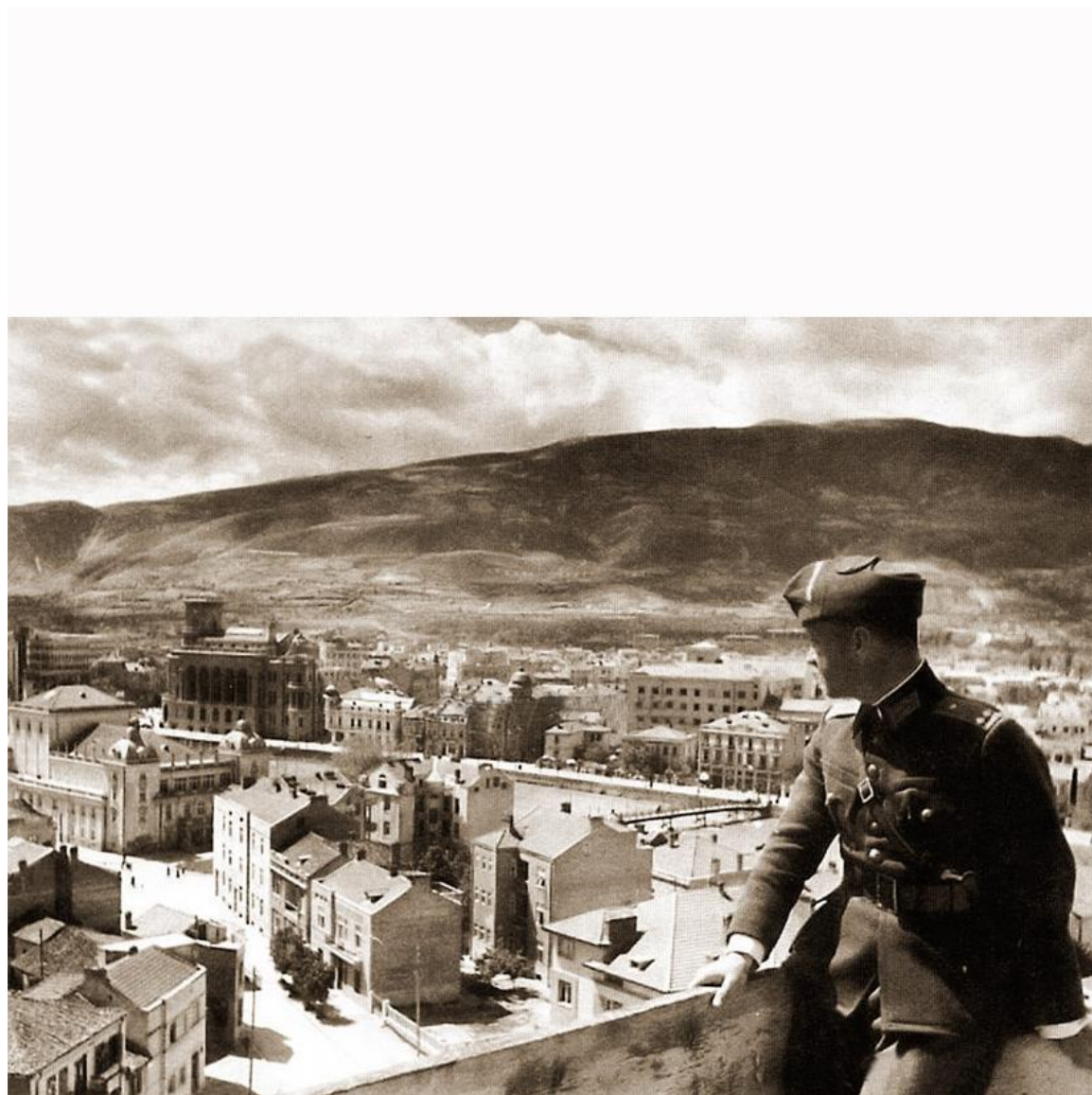


The city has always been a city of symbols more than a utilitarian, functional city, filled with pretentiousness, extremism and implausibility.



In the 1960's and 70's there was a great wave of migration from the countryside to the city. This was also a time of disregard for the past. An insecure populace under the influence of clan and oligarchic leadership meekly accepted the remake of the city.











Many new buildings are being placed without careful thought. This museum building is far too close to the river front. It needs space surrounding it.



The Public Prosecutor's Building is a frankenstein-like patching together of elements of disparate eras. Part of the building appears classical in design and another part appears as if a UFO came down and settled atop the structure.

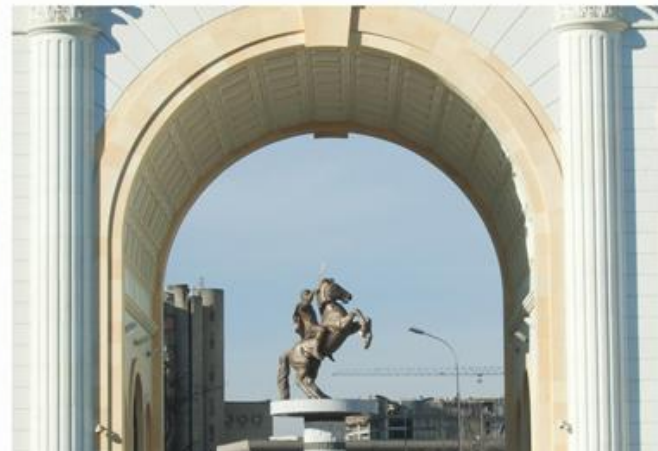




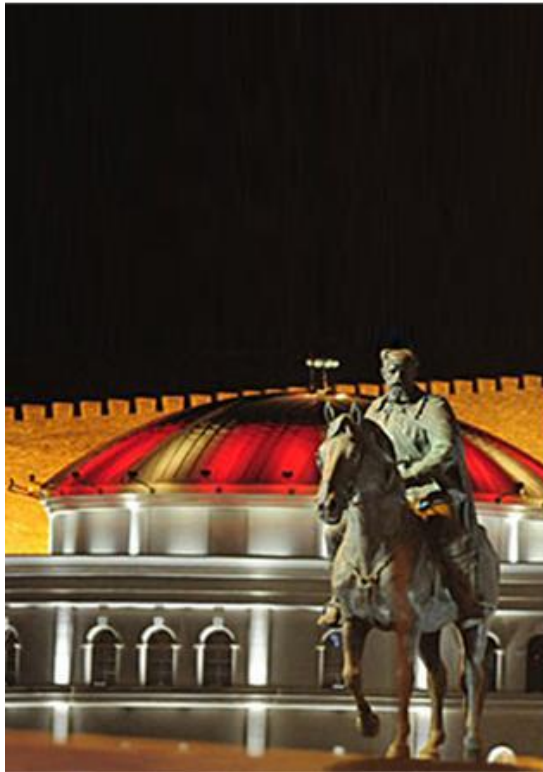
So much is happening by chance here. All of these combinations of cheap looking, gaudy statuary and grandiose buildings make the project appear chaotic and improvised, as if the entire project has gotten completely out of designers' control.



The portal of Macedonia suffers from the lack of systematic planning. There is a chaos of clashing styles to this and surrounding structures in the square.



Other planned structures add a Disneyland like quality to the downtown.





Statues have been multiplying in public places at an alarming rate.



The statue of “the father of the warrior on a horse” on the opposite side of the Vardar River competes with the nearby church steeple for attention.



There are far too many horsemen in the center of the city, all ridiculously crowded. The horseman is a symbol of rulership that might be interpreted as a longing for a great father figure of a king or emperor that Macedonians have lacked for centuries. The populace may possibly identify more with the hard ridden horses than the riders.



Prometheus, originally unclothed until public outrage demanded a wrap, stands incongruously in front of a set of monumental statuary depicting a woman warrior accompanied by four horses in this public park setting .



Indecisiveness is evident in this set of ancient Macedonian warriors placed at the base of a major fountain. The original 16 rayed sun symbol on their shields was reduced in number in order not to offend the Greeks, who claim exclusive right to the symbol.



The parliament building was retrofitted with a new classical style façade in order to erase reminders of its past as a communist state assembly building.



A main highway bridge built during the 1970's has also received a makeover. The bridge now has rather gaudy, gilded, ornate iron railings and lamp posts.



This downtown building recently received a baroque façade.



This is the same building after its recent makeover



The covering over of the city's chaotic and often traumatic past in endless facades, in order to hide that past, is at times an affront to those who have a sense of affection for the flawed but very real past of the city's inhabitants.



The statuary can at times suffer from a lack of dynamism, emotion and charm



Tall pedestals of many statues set them above and apart from the citizenry.



The old Skopje fortress, due to politicization of scientific and cultural work on the site, is now a source of tension in the multi-ethnic, multi-confessional city. There is a plan to build both a mosque and a church museum on the grounds.





The ambivalent, indecisive nature of much of the project is evident in the naming of this giant statue of Alexander the Great, “The Warrior on a Horse.” The defiance of Greece and all of Europe in the statue is once again served up as a half measure.



The rejection of the Republic of Macedonia for membership in the European Union, due to neighboring states' objections, has fed a sense of inferiority and led to a desire by Macedonians to remake their image in certain ways that imitate Western European models. They imagine that this will then make them more acceptable to the West.

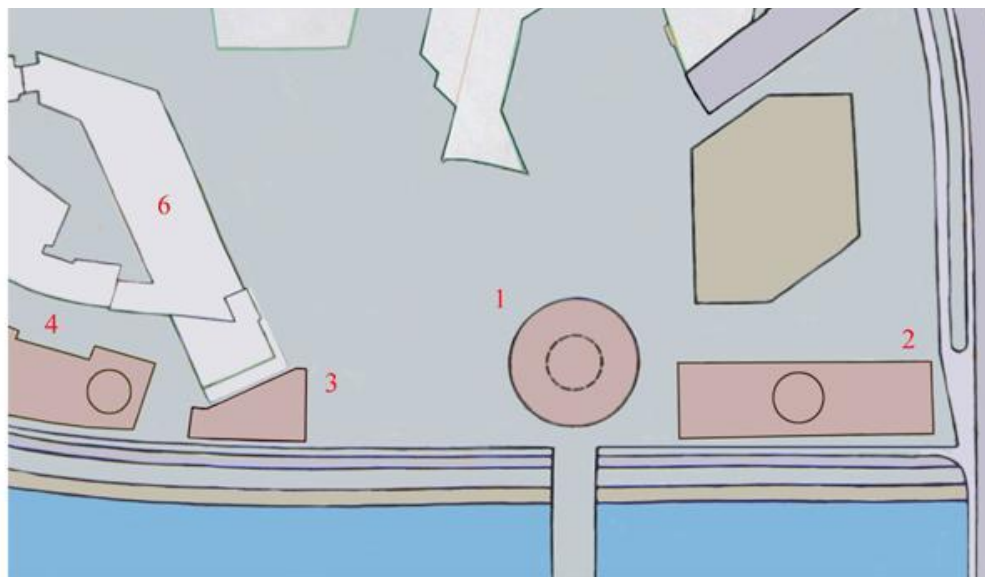


Thoughtful work is a fine way to maintain historical cultural identity. However, work must be based on certain criteria of quality in urban design, architecture and sculpture. Broad consultation and collaboration must replace local and party control.



Skopje 2014 has once again destroyed the city center, a center dating from the last half of the twentieth century. It has thoughtlessly buried the city of their grandparents and the Skopje of the childhood and youth of so many.

1. Јавно обвинителство
2. Министерство за надворешни работи
3. Агенција за електронски комуникации
4. Археолошки музеј
5. Македонски народен театар
6. Комерцијална банка
7. Филхармонија
8. Музичко-балетски училишта



Conclusion

In future decades under new rulers the city center will likely be torn down and rebuilt from the ground up. With a more professional approach we might have had a more realistic and aesthetic experience of our history expressed in public places, with certain romantic notions and extravagant excesses in the spirit of our people. People might stroll, for example, through different quarters of the city that reflect different eras in its history, much as we see in cities elsewhere. Some places might reflect the European baroque past while others might reflect the socialist past, while others reflect new visions, all open to comparison and debate. The public works of a society are in many ways a reflection of the values and level of civilization of that society. The idealism of the project's initiators, in this case, was distorted by indifferent, disinterested politicians who allowed the project to be misused and exploited for personal gain. There are those who find a deep significance in the fact that Skopje 2014 occurs one thousand years after the fateful blinding of Tsar Samuil's army by a Byzantine emperor, leaving one eye for each one hundred men. This meant there were the rare one-eyed left to lead the blind. Again 1000 years later we must hope that there are the one eyed to guide the way.

Further observations of my own

Is it so unreasonable for your average Macedonian to seek comfort in a cultural artifact, the warrior on a horse, that represents protection from harm, even if a bit overblown in its proportions? It was not so long ago in Macedonian history, during the dark, insecure days of the Turkish Empire that the downtrodden Macedonian peasant drew comfort in the recitation and singing of hundreds of tales of the exploits of a semi-mythical, out of all proportion, mighty defender of the people, Krale Marko. He also rode to the rescue of the beleaguered Macedonian people on a mighty steed and brandished a mighty sword.



While the works of "Skopje 2014", are mocked using terms like "kitsch," and "reminiscent of fascist art," and the like, I myself often like to, at least, mount the minor defense that a professor friend used before me, that unlike truly fascist monuments, none of the statues are of living persons. And I bring up the fact that the Greeks are unwilling to grant Macedonians the least connection to the ancient Macedonians who once lived here, and they use this as part of the pretext for denying the Republic of Macedonia entry into the modern political and economic union of Europe or the NATO defense organization. They are unequivocal. Macedonians must give up the constitutional name. This is one reason why so many Macedonians chose to support the placement of a giant statue of an ancient warrior (Alexander the Great? Everyone asks). This is in clear defiance of Greek insistence that they have exclusive right to the name and all of the ancient Macedonian heritage. Some of us do cringe a bit at the ridicule of others for what appears to be a somewhat immature Macedonian behavior. So, collectively, Macedonians are not an entirely mature people. Ironically, as the new capital of kitsch in Europe, Skopje is drawing in a surprising number of tourists with the remake of the city center. Perhaps many of them come only in order to enjoy an odd silliness to the city center, but they stay in hotels and shop the old city market. They enjoy the restaurants and, hopefully, venture out to experience some of the authentic Macedonia beyond the city center. So the project has its limited value.