

**ON THE EVE OF THE GREAT JUBILEE – 50 YEARS
OF THE MACEDONIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ARTS
1967 – 2017**

Taki Fiti

President of the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts

This year the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts (MASA) marks and celebrates a great jubilee – 50 years of existence and work of our highest institution in the field of sciences and arts. Although on 22 February 2017 the 50th anniversary of the enactment of MASA in the Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia was marked, and on October 10 it will be 50 years since the solemn establishment of MASA, we proudly emphasize that our roots, the roots of the Macedonian and Slavic cultural and spiritual continuity, are far back, in a time dimension which is measured in centuries. Because the mission of the Ss. Cyril and Methodius, the historical events that made Ohrid, with the famous Ohrid Literary School, already in the IX century to become the center of the Slavic educational and enlightening activity, which then spread throughout all Slavic countries, have fundamentally changed our contribution to the treasury of the European culture and civilization. And furthermore, centuries later, in the middle of the XIX century the Macedonian revival began, with a pleiad of our cultural and national activists. These processes at the beginning of the XX century resulted in the establishment of the Macedonian Scientific and Literary Fellowship in Saint Petersburg, led by Dimitrija Chupovski and Krste Petkov Misirkov, whose rich scientific, literary and cultural activities were a significant reflection of our spiritual continuity and identity, and an event that has marked the dawn of the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts. This continuity will remain in the period between the two world wars, with a pleiad of artists in literature, art, music, philological, economic, legal and technical sciences. A few years after World War II, in 1949, in free Republic of Macedonia, the first state University of “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” was established, within which, in less than two decades, solid personnel resources were created which allowed rapid development of the higher education and scientific activity in our country. It was an event of great importance for the establishment of MASA as the highest institution in the field of sciences and arts.

This millennium pace and continuity in the development of art and scientific thought in our region is an indication and evidence that we are not a nation without its own roots, without its own history, without its own culture, and that the attempts to deny our identity, language, name, no matter where they come from, are residual of the Balkan anachronisms, and essentially speaking, they are absurd and retrograde.

Immediately after the establishment of MASA followed a period of rapid development, diversification and enrichment of its scientific and research activities and artistic work. Almost two decades after the establishment MASA entered the phase of its maturity and has grown and has affirmed as the fundament of the Macedonian science, language, culture and history and as one of the pillars and symbols of the statehood of the Republic of Macedonia.

Today, MASA, according to its integral concept, structure and function, has all the necessary attributes of a modern national academy of European type, and of course, performs the three basic functions typical of the European national academies: creating communication space for confrontation of different views and opinions on important issues in the field of sciences and arts, scientific and research work and advisory role.

The scientific and research activities and artistic work, in fact, constitute the core of the activity of MASA. The number of completed scientific and research projects and projects in the field of arts within MASA is impressive – more than 1,000 projects in the past 50 years. Some of these projects are long-term and are mainly related to the strategic issues of specific national interest, and significant is the number of fundamental and applied research in all fields of science and art represented in the Academy. MASA members in their scientific research increasingly incorporate the international dimension in the work – in the recent years more than 60% of the scientific papers have been published in international journals, most of which have been published in journals with impact factor; 50% of the papers that have been published in

proceedings of scientific and professional meetings are related to meetings held abroad, etc. In addition, the works of our renowned writers and poets, members of MASA, are translated into foreign languages, and their work has found its place in world anthologies. Our prominent painters and sculptors of the older and the younger generation have created and create masterworks that are regularly exhibited at home and abroad. It should be particularly noted that our two research centers – Research Center for Energy and Sustainable Development and the Research Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology “Georgi D. Efremov”, that have gained high reputation in the region and beyond, continue to successfully maintain the attained position. The work of the other research centers also enhances, including the newly established ones, which have begun to work on significant international scientific and research projects.

In its half-century of existence and work MASA developed a rich publishing activity. Since its establishment until today around 700 titles have been published – monographs, results of scientific projects, proceedings from scientific meetings, music releases, facsimile and jubilee publications, joint publications with other academies and scientific institutions, publications of solemn meetings, special issues of the departments of MASA etc. A special contribution to the publishing activities of MASA provides the “Trifun Kostovski” Foundation that has been existing and working for 18 years.

MASA proactively follows the changes and the new trends in the scope of the advisory function of the modern European national economies, and in that context the obligations arising from the project SAPEA - Science Advice for Policy by European Academies, initiated by the European Commission in order to intensify the cooperation of the European academies within their advisory role. Through the publication of the results of our scientific and research work, their presentation to the wider scientific and professional public in the country, to the government officials, etc., MASA participates in the policy-making in the field of sciences and arts and in the overall development of the country. The maintenance of the independence of MASA in carrying out the advisory role is our highest priority and principle.

In the recent years MASA has developed extensive international cooperation that contributes to the affirmation of the Macedonian scientific and artistic work and to the increasing of the reputation of MASA and of the Republic of Macedonia in international scale. Today, our Academy cooperates with more than 30 foreign academies and scientific societies and is a member of 7 international associations of academies. In the recent years the cooperation with the academies from the neighboring countries has been intensified, as well as with the Leibniz Society of Sciences from Berlin, and also, within the so-called Berlin process (Joint Science Conference of Western Balkans Process / Berlin Process) the cooperation with the German National Academy of Sciences – Leopoldina, with the French Academy of Sciences, the academies of Southeast Europe and others.

Due to the results achieved in its work, MASA and its members have won a number of high national and international awards. In the past 50 years, MASA has won around 90 awards and recognitions – charters, plaques, certificates of appreciation, medals and decorations from national and international scientific, educational, artistic and other institutions. Particularly, it should be noted that MASA has been awarded with the high decoration Order of the Republic of Macedonia for the contribution to the development of the scientific and research activity and artistic creativity of importance to the development and affirmation of the Macedonian science and state, which is awarded by the President of the Republic of Macedonia, as well as the prestigious Samuel Mitja Rapoport award of the Leibniz Society of Sciences from Berlin, which, for the first time, has been awarded to MASA. Today, 22 members of MASA have the status of foreign, corresponding and honorary members, as well as holders of honorary PhDs at around 60 foreign academies, scientific societies and universities.

The developmental trajectory of MASA unambiguously confirms that the Academy, in its 50 years of existence and work, faced with periods of heights, but also periods of descents and turbulences that are most directly linked to the situation in the Macedonian society, i.e. with crisis periods of different nature – the dissolution of the former common state (SFR Yugoslavia), problems with the recognition of the international status of the country after its independence, the embargoes and the blockades of the country in the early transition years, the internal conflict in 2001 and the political crisis in the last two-three years. In such crises and tense periods the criticism for the Academy grew – that MASA is an institution closed in itself, that MASA stays away from the current issues and developments in the country, and so on. On the one hand, it is a result of the insufficient understanding of the social role of the Academy – MASA is the highest scientific institution, where hasty reactions of columnist 'type', with daily political features are not characteristic. On the contrary, MASA uses facts and arguments. The basic activity of MASA, the results achieved in the

scientific research and the artistic work is our identification within the national and international professional and scientific community, and beyond, within our society. On the other hand, this criticism and perception of MASA has a real basis in the fact that MASA, as opposed to the huge opus of implemented scientific and research and artistic projects still insufficiently affirms the results of its scientific and artistic production to the public. It is our weakness that we must overcome in the future. Of course, we cannot and must not “turn a blind eye” to the other weaknesses and omissions which, at least from time to time, we have faced with over the past 50 years and which we will face with in the future – insufficient scientific criticism of the events in the field of sciences and arts, insufficient resistance to political influence etc. On the contrary, in the future, we will have to clearly identify the weaknesses and the oversights in our work and to find out the right approaches to overcome them.

Today we live in a world of great science. The strong development of sciences, the new technological model based on information and communication technologies, the new wave of entrepreneurial restructuring of economies and societies, the globalization of the world economic activity, opened new perspectives to the economic growth and the development of individual countries and of the world economy as a whole. However, these processes, by their nature, are contradictory. The latest global financial and economic crisis of 2007-2009 revealed the contradictions of the globalization and the discontent of the people from it – the uneven distribution of wealth and power among individual countries, destruction of the resources and the environment worldwide, exhaustion of power of the existing technology and development models. These processes resulted in other problems – refugee and migration crises, strengthening of the regional and national protectionism despite the efforts to liberalize the international trade, fencing of the countries with walls at the beginning of the new millennium, changes in the economic and technological power and of the geo-strategic position and importance of entire regions and continents, etc. Nevertheless, one thing is a fact – societies that aspire to grow into societies and knowledge-based economies more easily deal with all the above mentioned problems, challenges and risks of the modern world. Of course, moving towards a development knowledge-based model assumes large investments of resources in education, science, research and development and in culture, simultaneously accompanied by well-conceived and devised strategies on development of these crucial areas of the human spirit and civilizational endurance. Hence, this fact, undoubtedly, emphasizes the special significance of the national academies of sciences and arts in achieving this objective.

In the recent years the Republic of Macedonia has been facing with the most difficult political and social crisis in the period after its independence. We are facing a crisis of the institutions, breach of the principles of the rule of law, the phenomenon of “captured state”, a decline in the process of democratization of the society and falling behind on the road to the Euro-Atlantic integration processes. The problems that are now in the focus of our reality will require major reforms, much knowledge, energy and political will to overcome them. In this sense, and in this context, the role of MASA and of the overall scientific potential of the country in overcoming the crisis is also particularly important.

The above summarized evaluations and considerations about the development of MASA in the past 50 years, about the achievements in the realization of its basic activity, about the problems it faced and faces with, about the major challenges arising from the new age and which are determined with the changes in the international and national environment, they alone define the main priorities of our Academy in the forthcoming period:

- Our long-term goals are contained in the mission and vision of MASA as the highest institution in the field of sciences and arts. The mission of MASA is through the development of the basic functions that are characteristic for all modern national academies of European type, to give its full contribution to the inclusion of the Macedonian science and art in the modern European and world trends, and our vision is the Republic of Macedonia to become an advanced society based on science and knowledge;

- In the forthcoming years the focus of the scientific and research activity and artistic work of MASA, in cooperation with the other scientific and research institutions in the country and with government experts, will be particularly focused on the elaboration of issues and topics that are most directly related to the sources of the current political and social crisis in the country in order to offer possible solutions, approaches and policies to overcome it;

- The issues related to the Euro-Atlantic integration processes of the Republic of Macedonia, their continuous and persistent scientific monitoring and elaboration and active participation of MASA members in the preparation for the accession negotiations with the EU will remain a high priority on the agenda of

MASA. Our ultimate goal is the Republic of Macedonia to become a democratic, economically prosperous and multicultural European country.

- The increasing incorporation of the international dimension in the scientific and artistic work of MASA, through the cooperation with foreign academies, scientific societies and other scientific institutions, through application and work on scientific projects financed by the European funds and the funds of other international financial institutions, also remains our important priority.

Let us congratulate ourselves on the great jubilee – 50 years of the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts.