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**ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE THE LANGUAGE DISPUTE
WITH THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA (1995 – EARLY 1997)**

(Summary)

This article aims to examine the policy of the cabinet of Zhan Videnov on the language dispute with the Republic of Macedonia by focusing on the diplomatic activity of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in terms of its approach to the problem, the way of conducting negotiations and the choice of negotiation strategy. For this purpose the analytical method is applied. The problem in bilateral relations arose during the administration of Prof. Lyuben Berov (December 30, 1992 – November 17, 1994) in connection with the dispute in which language to sign bilateral documents, and it blocked Bulgarian-Macedonian contacts for a long time. The first attempt to unblock the language dispute was made in 1995–1996. The article shows that the government of Zhan Videnov was consistent in its policy towards the Republic of Macedonia. In its attempts to resolve the language dispute it demonstrated continuity with the previous government and insisted on the formula that documents should be signed “in the official languages”. The draft declaration and its defence is analyzed in detail and is assessed as successful. The conclusion is that the government almost succeeded in unblocking the bilateral relations, but lacked the political time to complete the second round of negotiations and sign the final document. A comparison is made with the Joint Declaration signed in 1999 between Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia, and

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it is found that, although different, it contains the most important elements of the project advocated by the cabinet of Zhan Videnov.

Keywords: language dispute, Macedonian question, Transition, Bulgarian foreign policy.