

designer bags black friday deals

“This is for the great people of Veles, I couldn’t do it without you!”
Here in Veles, a run-of-the-mill city in the centre of Macedonia, I’m shown a tweet from Donald Trump dated 9 November 2016. The day he won the US presidential election. Trump never visited Veles, 7 553 kilometres away from New York City, but a large number of Veles inhabitants “worked for him” during the election campaign. The tweet is fake, Donald Trump never wrote it. It’s a joke on account of so many fake news launched from Veles in a favour of Donald Trump during the campaign.

Once upon a time, the Veles factories produced clothing and china sold throughout Yugoslavia. Nowadays, small workshops assemble fake news for the US market. The members of this new digital workforce earn €350 – €500 a month for their work. By comparison, the national TV correspondent in Veles earns €300 a month. In Veles, the era of digital fake news actually started with food. The precursors of the golden age were the famous Healthy food brothers, Borče and Aleksandar Velkovski, the brothers responsible for launching Healthyfoodhouse.com. They posted texts full of health and beauty advice, such as “putting a slice of lemon near your bed lets you wake up feeling top fit”, or “eating bananas and avocados instead of pills is the best way to cure depression”. He went on to explain: “But I’m not prepared to post any news whatsoever just for the money. For example, I came across some fake news saying that Syrian terrorists were about to attack New York. That’s something you can’t take lightly.” His credo is not to post anything that could endanger lives.

Everything else is acceptable.
Somewhat later, his spokesman Orce Nikolov passed on to us data stating that the unemployment rate in Macedonia was 24.5%, and that it was of the same order of magnitude among young people. There was no official data on the number of Macedonians working abroad. The mayor evidently knew that Veles had gained a bad reputation on account of its fake news industry, but that didn’t seem to worry him: “The lads are getting by. They haven’t breached any law in Macedonia and they’re paying their taxes.” He did however admit that the community had not benefited from it: “They only profit from it themselves. You see more fancy cars in the streets, but the money is not finding its way into the city economy.”

“They’re all just amateurs. All they understand about the technology or the Internet is what they need for their business. Moreover, they don’t think about what they will do when the source dries up, when they get blocked by Facebook and Google. They’re not investing in new opportunities, not starting up new companies. They’re spending their money on fancy cars, holidays in Th