

Albanians in the Republic of Macedonia in the years 1991-2000

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I

The independence of the Republic of Macedonia and its withdrawal from the Yugoslav Federation was decided with a referendum held on 8 September 1991. Over 2/3 of those entitled to vote took part in the referendum. A vast majority (95%) voted in favour of forming an independent republic. On 17 November 1991, President Kiro Gligorov announced the establishment of an independent country - the Republic of Macedonia and the parliament adopted a new constitution. In this way, Macedonia withdrew from the Yugoslav Federation. It became a very important task of the country to guarantee broad freedoms and liberties to national minorities, ethnic and religious groups. Albanian people did not take part in the referendum on establishing an independent country, i.e. approx. 22.9% of citizens who boycotted it. This boycott was political in nature as a convention of all Albanian parties from the former Yugoslavia, in Priština in October 1991, Albanians undertook the idea of uniting all land they considered Albanian with Albania, should Yugoslavia fall apart. The governing elites realized that a democratic country had to win the support of minorities and their loyalty. This fact was the basic condition for recognizing a new country on the international arena. At that time, at a European Council meeting criteria were established which were to guarantee recognition to ethnic minorities in the former Yugoslavia and former Soviet Union countries. These requirements were met for Macedonia, which was confirmed by the United Nations and the E.U. Arbitration Commission on Yugoslavia, the so-called Badinter Arbitration Committee. In reality, Skopje's policy towards minorities was more lib-

eral and tolerant than in other multiethnic countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe and it diverged from the way in which the Macedonian minority was treated in the neighbouring Balkan countries where Macedonians were denied fundamental rights of equality and tolerance¹. The guarantees of equality and social justice were approved by other minorities living in the Republic: Turks, Vlachs, Romani people and by Serbs after 1995 and Dayton arrangements. Albanians were the only ethnic group which did not recognize the legal status of ethnic minorities in Macedonia. Differing in respect of the language, culture and religion, Albanians expressed their disapproval of the fundamental decisions, provisions of the constitution and they expressed their suspicion and political mistrust already in the first days of the Republic's independence.

The Macedonian constitution of 17 November 1991 spoke of the equality of all citizens of the Republic (Chapter I, Art. 4), but at the same time it formulated the principle that Macedonian was the official language and the Cyrillic script was the applicable alphabet (Chapter I, Art. 7). However, in areas predominated by other minorities, it is acceptable to use languages other than Macedonian and the Cyrillic script in offices, depending on the existing conditions². A provision was also introduced into the constitution stating that the Macedonian Orthodox church and other religious unions and denomination groups are free and have equal rights and they are separated from the state. It is stated in the preamble to the constitution: "Macedonia has been established as a national state of the Macedonian nation in which complete citizen equality and permanent co-existence of the Macedonian nation with Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Romani people and other nationalities who live in the Republic is guaranteed..."³. These provisions of the constitution did not satisfy Albanians. They wanted the Albanian language and the Latin alphabet to be recognized as official equally with Macedonian as their Muslim religion to be treated equally with the Orthodox religion. Apart from linguistic and religious guarantees, they wanted to have the possibility of hanging out the Albanian flag officially, as, as they stated, it is not only the national flag of Albania and its citizens but it also belongs to the Albanian nation living in the Republic of Macedonia. The statement that Albanians are a minority was the most controversial. They wanted to

¹ K. Todoroska, *Makedonsko-albanske relaciji vo početokot i na krajot od dvaesettiot vek*, in: *Makedonija vo dvaesettiot vek*, ed. N. Veljanovski, Skopje 2003, p. 79, 80.

² *Ustav na Republika Makedonija*, Skopje 1991, p. 6, 7.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

be treated as Macedonians and defined as a nation with equal rights. However, the 1991 constitution in force preferred the citizen concept of the state, ensuring important rights for national minorities in the spirit of compromise. The constitution included a provision (Chapter I, Art. 2) stating that "The independence in the Republic of Macedonia comes from its citizens and belongs to its citizens"⁴. For Albanians the Macedonian state was not important as they felt greatly attached to the areas where they lived and had been born. A lot of them identified themselves with Albania, others with Kosovo or the idea of Albanian unity. Treating the Republic of Macedonia as part of the territory in which Albanians live without a special connection with Macedonians or their slavdom, the term Slav-Macedonians or Slavs was more and more frequently used for ethnic Macedonians in scientific studies. However, they did not submit any reservations to the authorities in Skopje about Macedonians' referral to ancient history, which was so annoying for the Greeks. They did suggest changing the name of the state to a more neutral one in ethnic terms, e.g. the Vardar Republic or the Central Balkan Republic, which would comply with Athens' policy towards Skopje⁵.

II

According to official data of 1994, the number of Albanians in the Republic of Macedonia was 442,914 people, i.e. approx. 22.9% of the general population. These data were challenged by Albanians living there, who claimed that they made up approx. 35 - 40 % of the population. These numbers were certainly exaggerated, but the fact that Albanians boycotted the national census needs to be taken into account. The census included only people who officially (legally) lived in Macedonia or stayed outside the country for business purposes⁶. It did not include people whose absence in the Republic lasted for over a year⁷.

⁴ Ibid., p. 5.

⁵ J. Phillips, *Macedonia. Warlords and Rebels in the Balkans*, London 2004, p. 59.

⁶ Zavod za statistika. *Popis '94. Podatoci za segašnost i idninata*, Skopje 28 dekemvri 1994 (rabotna verzija), p. 5, provides data for the year 1994 - 442914, i.e. 22.9%. Cf subsequent studies; Zavod za statistika. *Vkupno naselenie, domak'instva, stanovi i zemjodelski stopanstva*, Skopje 1996, XIII, pp. 55-57.

⁷ Zavod za statistika, *Vkupno naselenie...* op. cit., p. 8. D. Draganov in the article: „Kosoviziranje” ili „kantoniziranje”. *Albancite smetat će e vreme fakičeskata etničeska kantonizacija da byde uzakonena*, „NIE”, br. 3(9) 1998, p. 19, claimed that during this

This gave Albanians grounds to challenge the census results. Another census in 2002 showed that Albanians constituted 25.17% of the general Macedonian population (509,083 people). After the administrative reform implemented in 1996, the country was divided into 123 communes and Albanians were in the majority in 25 of them. Over 90% of Albanian people lived in the following communes: Negotino-Pološko (99.8%), Velešta (99.8%), Bogovinje (99.6%), Šipkovića (99.6%), Želino (99.6%), Delogoždi (99.2%), Džepčište (98.7%), Osolomej (98.2%), Kondovo (97.8%), Čegrane (97.5%), Lipkovo (97.1%), Zajas (97.1%), Srbinovo (94.7%). In four communes the number of Albanians ranged from 90 to 75% and in eight it was 75 to 50%. Moreover, in the communes of Žitoše, Vrapčište and Mavrovi Anovi their numbers were nearly 50%⁸.

The most Albanians lived in Skopje (57,986 people, i.e. 13.0% of its population), but they were not in the majority in any of Skopje communes. They were also present in major urban areas, in the cities of Gostivar, Debar, Tetovo, Kumanovo. Compared to Kosovo, Albanians lived in homogenous clusters only in a small part of the territory. They were dispersed in the majority of areas. For strategic reasons, the Macedonian authorities were concerned about the complicated ethnic structure in the Vardar valley where the country's capital - Skopje is situated.

The distribution of Albanian people in tightly-knit areas mostly along the border with Kosovo and Albania, made the process of integration of this ethnic minority with Macedonians difficult. This integration did not progress, which was also a consequence of events which had taken place in the so-called socialist Yugoslavia, when Tito's policy was targeted at satisfying cultural and social needs and even political ambitions of various nationalities and ethnic groups included in the federation. Each nationality and ethnic minority had their own system of education, press and the possibility of using their own language on an everyday basis. In Macedonia, this resulted in the formation of a strong and numerous group of Albanian people (25.17% of the total population numbers) which strongly emphasized their national identity, had separate political goals and did not aim at integration with Macedonians. A quick increase in the number of Albanians in the Republic of Macedonia was caused by high birth rates and also by the influx of people from the neighbouring areas, i.e. from Kosovo and, to a small extent, from Albania, as well as from Muslims from

census approx. 130,000 Albanians who came from Kosovo were not included.

⁸ Zavod za statistika, *Vkupno naselenie...* op. cit., pp. 64-66.

Bosnia. In the years 1992-1996, the average birth rate in the Republic of Macedonia was 8.2%, however, it amounted to 15-20% in four communes inhabited mostly by Albanians⁹. This resulted in growing numbers of Albanian children, compared to their Macedonian peers. According to Fauzi Skenderi, an Albanian researcher, in the years 1992-1996, the birth rate among Albanians was as much as 5.8% times greater than amongst Macedonians in the same period¹⁰. There were many reasons for this situation. High birth rates among Albanians and their longevity, as opposed to Macedonians, were the first of these. This situation was affected by numerous factors. Tradition and religion played an important role here. Albanian women started families early and their main task involved taking care of and raising children. Most of them did not work and these were mostly people living in rural areas. The aforementioned Albanian demographer Skenderi claimed that the number of Albanians increased by 6,994 in 2000, while the number of Macedonians increased only by 1,323 persons and the birth rate among Macedonians fell dramatically, showing a downward trend every year¹¹. Demographic forecasts were quoted more and more often, from which it could be surmised that if the birth rate is maintained amongst Albanians, they will soon make up 50% of the population of the Republic of Macedonia¹².

When the civil war broke out in Yugoslavia, a large number of Albanians and Muslims of other nationalities looked for shelter in Macedonia. For fear of the influx of too large a number of refugees, the Skopje government introduced an act in October 1992 which made it more difficult to settle. "The citizenship act" provided for getting Macedonian citizenship in the following ways: *ius sanguinis* (right of blood), being born in the territory of the Republic, naturalization or international agreements¹³. The provision concerning the acquisition of citizenship by naturalization, i.e. only a person who had been living per-

⁹ F. Skenderi, *Veçoritë e lëvizjes natyrore të popullsisë së Maqedonisë dhe të popullsisë Shqiptare në te*, „Studime albanologjike”, v. 4, Shkup 2011, p. 218.

¹⁰ F. Skenderi, op. cit., p. 219.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 219, 220.

¹² On the rapid increase in the numbers of Albanian people in the Republic of Macedonia cf. S. Kiselinovski, *Etničkete promeni vo Makedonija* (1913-1995), Skopje 2000, s. 105, 106; *Etničkete promeni vo Makedonija od antikata do denes*, vo: „Glasnik INI”, Skopje 1995, god. 39, br. 1-2, p. 12.

¹³ *Ustav na Republika Makedonija*, 1991 godina, II, Art. 9, p. 7.

manently in the Republic of Macedonia for at least 15 years could become a citizen of this country. In this manner, the law made it difficult for refugees from other former Yugoslavian republics, primarily Muslims from Bosnia and Albanians from Kosovo, to settle in Macedonia. This was also uncomfortable for Albanians due to their mobility. They went to the West very often in search of work or to Kosovo, where they stayed on a temporary basis. According to the data quoted by Ljubomir Frčkovski, the Minister of Internal Affairs, 30-40 thousand people with no Macedonian citizenship stayed in Macedonia in 1995. Human Rights Watch estimated this number to be as high as 140 thousand people¹⁴.

III

An opinion which was quite common in Skopje was that the so-called Albanian problem became apparent when the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia fell apart and large numbers of Kosovar Albanians began to arrive in Macedonia. They settled for two reasons - to improve their living conditions and to take advantage of benefits offered by a democratic country. Albanians living in the Republic of Macedonia belonged to a richer group of the population than their countrymen in Kosovo or Albania. Those who dealt with farming grew tobacco, beans, maize and wheat - the most profitable plants. They built private motels and petrol stations in cities. They established private radio and TV stations, as well as printing houses. A large group dealt with trade, legally but also illegally. Despite the fact that the economic situation of Albanians in Macedonia was better than the situation of those living in Kosovo and Albania, they were not willing to accept their status. The economic situation of Macedonian citizens, including Albanians, considerably deteriorated in the second half of the 1990. This situation was affected by: an economic embargo imposed on Yugoslavia - the Macedonian trade turnover with this country amounted to 60% and, in particular, the economic isolation during the embargo imposed by Greece in 1993. Prof. Pandeli Çina, President of the Forum of Albanian Intellectuals, claimed that there should be two official languages in the Republic of Macedonia: Macedonian and Albanian, and that equal access to schools and jobs should be guaranteed and that guarantees for both nations - Macedonian and Albanian should be equal in the constitution. At the same time, he declared that Albanians wanted

¹⁴ Human Rights Watch, A threat to "Stability", www.hrw.org/reports/1996/Macedoni.htm, (accessed on 2 XII 2011).

to live together with Macedonians in a common state¹⁵. Despite such declarations, already on 11 and 12 January 1992, a group of Albanian nationalists undertook actions aimed at creating the Autonomous Republic of Illyria¹⁶ (from the ancient name of Illyria and Illyrian peoples inhabiting north-western part of the Balkan Peninsula. For this purpose, a referendum was held in western Macedonia (Tetovo, Gostivar, Kičevo and Debar) which was aimed at confirming the idea of future detachment of this territory from the Macedonian state. In the referendum, which was considered illegal by the Skopje authorities, 276,921 Albanians took part, i.e. 21% of those entitled to vote in the country, out of whom 74% were in favour of autonomy for Albanians. Such data was provided by Macedonian mass media, mostly TV news and the press. Other data which was presented by Albanians, claiming that 383,539 people took part in the referendum, out of whom only 57 people were against and 360,928 people voted for the autonomy, i.e. 99.9% of all voters. These numbers were meant to show that there lived many more Albanians in Macedonia than was officially recognized. Together with the referendum, Albanians held demonstrations in Skopje demanding civil rights equal with Macedonians. An Albanian demonstrator died in clashes with the police. During the illegal referendum, the Macedonian police attempted to interfere with voting and tried to confiscate documentation at 120 locations. The police also entered 260 facilities where the vote was being held¹⁷. After winning the referendum, the Autonomous Republic of Illyria would cover the following territories: Kumanovo with the surrounding area, a few communes of Skopje, Tetovo, Gostivar, Kičevo, Struga and their surrounding areas. Approx. 1/3 of inhabitants of the Republic of Macedonia would live in the new republic, mostly Albanian people. This data is quoted by Zeqirja Rexhepi in his study, referring to a document issued by the Assembly for Political and Territorial Autonomy of Albanians in Macedonia¹⁸. The participants of the assembly prepared a draft of a new Constitution for the Republic of Macedonia, which included Albanians' rights and liberties as well as autonomy for territories they inhabited¹⁹. Explaining in detail what changes are meant and which paragraphs

¹⁵ "Rzeczpospolita", No. 274, 27 December 1995, p. 8.

¹⁶ Z. Rexhepi in: *Zhvillimet polityko-sboqerore te Shqiptarët në Maqedoni 1990-2001*, Tetovë 2005, p. 57.

¹⁷ Z. Rexhepi... op. cit., p. 57.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 58.

¹⁹ This document was prepared in Gostivar in March 1992.

of the constitution of the Republic of Macedonia this applies to, the following statement was included at the end of the document "... If the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia does not accept the proposal of changing the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, does not define or guarantee the implementation of demands for political and territorial autonomy for Albanians in Macedonia, we will be forced to accelerate political actions in accordance with the Albanian nation's natural, ethnic and historical right to self-determination"²⁰.

The threat of detachment of the western part of the Republic of Macedonia was real at the beginning of November 1993. Albanian nationalists, members of a secret paramilitary Albanian organization, were preparing an armed overthrow in the country. The actions of Albanian politicians were called "an armed affair" in which, supposedly, also Albanians from the neighbouring Albania participated. The Vice-Minister of Defence and Vice Minister of Health, both of Albanian nationality, took part in those preparations. They were both arrested after the plot was discovered. The Albanians themselves claimed that the plot was provoked by the Serbs to undermine and destabilize the situation in the Republic to cause the Skopje authorities to undertake repressions against Albanians on a large scale. Albanians also claimed that it was provocation of the Macedonian authorities in which Nikola Kljusev, Prime Minister took part. As Rexhepi states in his study, the archives of the Albanian party Partia za demokratki prosperitet (PDP)²¹ contain a document of a high official from the Ministry of Defence in which the following opinion is expressed: "Kljusev's authorities knew about the idea of Albanians' self-defence. It was not a territorial threat for Macedonia..."²². Macedonians are not convinced by these statements. However, Frčkovski, Minister of Internal Affairs, stated officially that: "... facts about the participation in the plot [of high Albanian state officials - I. S-K.] were confirmed by friendly foreign services which I had access to. But this is not just my claim - you can verify these data yourselves: bank accounts, origin of arms with numbers, contacts, photographs, videotapes...! This resulted in a strong international pressure on Albania. I think it was deserved."²³.

In their monograph Miranda Vickers and James Pettifer²⁴ assume the Al-

²⁰ Z. Rxhepi, op. cit., p. 61.

²¹ PPD - Partia për Prosperitet Demokratik.

²² Z. Rxhepi, op. cit., p. 61.

²³ "Flaka e vëllazërimit", *Zbuluam zbulimin shqiptar*, Shkup, 14 qershor 1994, p. 6-7.

²⁴ M. Vickers, J. Pettifer, *Albania. From Anarchy to a Balkan Identity*, Washington, New York

banian thesis about the provocation on the part of the Macedonian government. It was supposed to lead to the removal of radical leaders from the PPD party, their arrest and the beginning of cooperation with moderate Albanians, such as Xheladin Murati. The authors claim that such provocation methods were successfully used by Serbs towards Albanian people in Kosovo. Today, it is difficult to present a full picture of these events. However, it is a fact that arms and munitions depots were discovered in Tetovo in March and in Gostivar in 1994. The leaders were sentenced to 5 to 8 years' imprisonment, while others were released quite soon.

There are no doubts, however, that Albanians wanted to create their own military structures in western Macedonia - their own army, as it was claimed during court trials, for self-defence, to counterbalance possible actions of the Macedonian army. The "White Book" published by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia in 2001 as documentation of the armed conflict, provides information about arresting two important officials of Albanian nationality - Hisen Haskaj, Vice-Minister of Defence and Imer Imeri, Vice-Minister of Health, members of the Albanian PDP, as well as several Albanians from Tetovo and Gostivar on 10 November 1993, accusing them of illegal arms trade and involvement in a paramilitary organization. It was planned that this organization would have 20,000 members in the future and it would initiate an armed uprising in western regions of the country²⁵. Subsequent arrests in connection with the formation of troops serving paramilitary and separatist activities took place in January 1994. At that time, Mudxad Emini and 9 other Albanians were arrested²⁶.

The situation in the neighbouring Kosovo strongly influenced Albanians in the Republic of Macedonia. The Kosovo Liberation Army (Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës - UÇK) had its military reserves in villages along the Albanian-Macedonian border in the area of Gostivar, Debar and Tetovo where numerous depots with arms, foods and medication were situated. When the UÇK became stronger in 1997, it conducted a few bombing attacks in Kosovo and one in the Republic of Macedonia. Owing to the efficient clan system whose

2000, p. 177.

²⁵ *The White Book on the Terrorist Attack of the so-called NLA*, Skopje 2001, p. 316. There is a counterpart of this English-language version in Macedonian: *Bela kniga. Terorizmot na t.n. Osloboditelna nacionalna armija*, Skopje 2001, p. 314.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

members were very well informed and removed traitors on a regular basis, UÇK announced that its activities would also include western Macedonia starting on 7 January 1998, simultaneously with those conducted in Kosovo. After the beginning of NATO air raids in Yugoslavia, the Macedonian border was crossed by hundreds of more or less armed fighters hiding in plain sight among crowds of refugees from Kosovo.

IV

Albanians conducted legal political activities in two parties in the Republic of Macedonia. The PDP was first established in 1990 led by Abdulrahman Aliti and won as many as 25 seats in the Republic's 120-person Parliament on 11 November 1990. They ruled the country in coalition with VMRO-DPMNE (Vnatrešna makedonska revolucionerna organizacija - Demokratska partija za nacionalno edinstvo; WMRO - Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity) and the post-communist party, today SDSM (Socijaldemokratski sojuz na Makedonija; Social Democratic Union of Macedonia) until the elections in 1994. Albanians owed this great electoral success to an efficient electoral campaign conducted amongst Muslims of all national minorities and high electoral attendance supported by their compatriots from Kosovo. There was a split at the second early congress of this party held in Tetovo on 12 and 13 January 1994. Arbën Xhaferi became the leader of the radical wing. He returned to the programme of awarding to Albanians the status of a nation and propagated a model of consensus-based democracy based on the national criterion. Its democratic wing led by Murati, on the other hand, started cooperation with the coalition in power. In the elections held on 16 October 1994, the PDP won only 10 seats and it remained in the governing coalition. Four members of this party took ministerial positions in the new government. Those were: Minister of Development – Beqir Zhuta, Minister of Labour and Social Policy – Iliaz Sabriu, Minister of Culture – Eshref Aliu and Minister without portfolio Muhamed Halili²⁷. Changes in the PDP leadership in February 1994, when Albanians from

²⁷ M. Boden, *Osteuropa. Eine kleine politische Länderkunde*, München 1995, s. 212-223; H.-J. Hoppe, *Die politische Szene der Republik Makedonien*, "Berichte des Bundesinstituts für Ostwissenschaftliche und Internationale Studien", Köln 1995, J. XLVII, p. 16-22; *Republika Makedonija. Prva dekada (1990-1999)*, ed. A. Tuntev, Skopje 2005, pp. 91-92. After the reconstruction of the authorities on 23 February 1996 Beqir Zhura became Vice Prime Minister and the Minister of Econ-

the moderate PDP wing became leaders of the party, gave reasons to believe that Albanians would become more closely integrated in the state power structures and conflicts would be solved by means of concessions of both parties and compromise. The growing number of recruits in the Macedonian Army was the first such indicator. In 1992, Albanians in the Republic of Macedonia constituted 7.5% of soldiers, while in 1993 their numbers grew to 26.5%²⁸. The situation was different as far as the number of Albanian officers was concerned. They made up only 3.7% of officers in 1994. The army was dominated by Macedonian officers²⁹.

The other Albanian party - founded under the name of Narodna demokratska partia – NDP (National Democratic Party) in 1990 was led by Iliaz Halil³⁰ and had four MPs after the elections in 1994. But also there were four Members of Parliament from the radical PDP wing with Arbën Xhaferi and Rufi Osmani who changed the name of their party to PDPA adding one element to the existing name. Until that time the name of their party was - Democratic Party for the Development of Albanians. It found growing recognition among Albanians. In the local government elections held in 1996, its representatives won the positions of mayors in Tetovo and Gostivar. To increase their forces, they admitted NDP into its structures at the Congress in Gostivar on 11 June 1997, thus creating a strong radical party DPA Demokratska partija na Albancite (Partia Demokratike Shqiptare - Democratic Party of Albanians) with Xhaferi as their leader. Initially, the newly-established ultra-nationalistic party was not registered by Macedonian authorities. It did not only postulate federalization of Macedonia, granting the nation status to the Albanian minority and recognizing the Albanian language as an official language, but also formulated demands presenting a dangerous *casus belli* not only for Macedonia but also for the Balkans.

omy, Abdylmenaf Bexheti became Minister of Development, Naser Zyberi became Minister of Labour and Social Policy and Asllan Selmani became Minister of Science.

²⁸ D. Perry, *Makedonien*, in: W. Weidenfeld (Hrsg.), *Demokratie und Marktwirtschaft in Osteuropa. Strategien für Europa*, Bonn 1995, p. 288. T. Gocevski, *Krizite vo nezavisna Republika Makedonija*, Skopje 2010, p. 246, 5.6% of Albanians were employed in public administration before the outbreak of the conflict in 2001, approx. 3.1% of Albanians served in the Army, out of whom only 1.2% were officers.

²⁹ M. Vickers, J. Pettifer, *Albania...* op. cit., p. 172.

³⁰ Za założyciela tej partii uznaje się Jusufa Rexhepiego. PDP - Partia për Demokratike Popullore.

In the parliamentary elections in 1998, Albanians won 25 seats, out of whom 14 MPs were from the PDP and 11 from the DPA. The latter were included in the government formed by WMRO-DPMNE and Democratic Alternative (Demokratska Alternativa – DA). Prime Minister Ljubčo Georgievski, WMRO-DPMNE leader at the time, also regarded as a radical Macedonian politician, formed this coalition probably under the influence of international factors. Moderate Albanian leaders were replaced by radicals, not only in the power structures, but also in the state administration. Xhaferi succeeded in placing his compatriots at the top of the police structures as well as in local authorities in areas inhabited by Albanians, gaining much greater actual power in these regions. Albanians used to hold lower-ranking positions in the power structures. However, this situation changed in 1998, when WMRODPMNE held 14 ministerial positions, DA - 8 ministerial positions and the Albanian party DPA had 5 ministerial positions: taking over the Ministry of Justice, Labour and Social Policy, Information, Local Government and 1 minister without portfolio³¹. A vote in favour of the establishment of a private university in Tetovo in July 2000 was Xhaferi's greatest success. His policy became more moderate due to the international factor. Such was the line-up of political forces at the beginning of 2001 when an open armed Albanian-Macedonian conflict occurred.

V

The political balance between Macedonians and Albanians in Macedonia largely depended on the condition of Albanian culture, access to mass media, radio and television, but primarily on the development of education in the Albanian language. The Republic of Macedonia established in 1991 had a lot to do in the area. Its most important task involved overcoming the problems left over from the previous political system when Macedonia was part of Yugoslavia. It was an issue of introducing new curricula, new handbooks, especially history and geography handbooks. However, it needs to be stated that all citizens of the Republic, regardless of their nationality and religion, had equal access to education and the same learning opportunities. At the primary and secondary levels of education, national minorities had the right to learn at their own schools in their mother tongue. The problem of education of Albanians at the higher

³¹ These ministries were taken over by Albanians after the reconstruction of the power on 27 December 1999, cf. *Republika Makedonija...* op. cit. p. 95, 96.

level became urgent, as this was both educational and political issue.

Fighting illiteracy was still relevant and this problem still occurred amongst national minorities, including Albanians. Due to the boycott of the census in 1994, no data is available concerning the actual numbers of such people. This phenomenon still frequent, especially in large families, was the willingness to create a habit of taking care of themselves in children and earning money since the earliest years by begging, selling newspapers in the streets, washing cars, cleaning houses (which mostly applied to Romani people) and, unfortunately, also by making money illegally. Not sending girls and women to school was still a problem in Muslim families. To fight illiteracy, a reading and writing course for adults and primary (8-year) schools were opened for adults. These schools are still open to them today. In the school year 1997/98 there were 17 such schools with classes in the Macedonian language and 4 schools with classes in the Albanian language. Moreover, there were 12 parallel classes taught in the Albanian language. In general, 246 adults completed education at such schools and parallel classes in the school year 1997/98³².

Members of national minorities had the right to participate in the learning process equally with Macedonians in all types of schools at all educational levels, including university education. In primary and secondary schools students could learn in Albanian. The number of schools with classes in Albanian was constantly on the rise. This was accompanied by high birth rates among Albanians. It was characteristic that the number of students was higher when Albanian nationalism could be freely manifested.

This refers in particular to the period at the end of 1990s, which was significantly affected by the political situation in neighbouring Kosovo.

To prevent the negative results of such tendencies, the Skopje authorities complied with the Primary and Secondary Education Act of 1985 which introduced the principle that parallel teaching in national minority languages can be conducted only at schools where there are 15 students willing to take on such education where a qualified teaching personnel is available (for secondary schools this limit was 30 students). This act resulted in a temporary decrease in the number of students at secondary schools with the Albanian language. This problem arose again in May 2000 when eight Albanian students from the Josif Broz Tito Middle School in Bitola requested the formation of a parallel class taught in Albanian. The school authorities responded firmly and refused the re-

³² *Statistički pregled*, br. 327, Skopje April 1999 godina, p. 33.

quest referring to the applicable regulations. This aggravated the situation between the Albanian and Macedonian communities which was already tense and Albanians used it to put forward similar requests for middle schools in Kruševo, Resen, Prilep and DemirHisar and to emphasize the existence of unfavourable legislation, in their opinion³³. According to the data of the Ministry of Education and Sports, 69,950 thousand students were educated in the Albanian language, which constituted 26.79% of this group of children in the Republic of Macedonia, while in the school year 1996/97, this index already amounted to 27.87%³⁴. Few Albanians were educated in middle schools.

Students at state and private secondary schools, according to the declared nationality in the school year 1997/98.

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Macedonians	67,510	80,3
Albanians	12,024	14,3
Other	4,525	6,4

Source: Statistički pregled, ... op. cit., p. 36.

The table shows that there existed differences in the level of education within the individual nationalities. Mostly Macedonian teenagers attended secondary schools 80.3% (the Macedonian population constituted 66.6% of the country's population) and only 14.3% of Albanians (they accounted for approx. 23% of the population). As shown by statistical data, only 683 Albanians studied in the Macedonian language, i.e. in the official language of the country in which they lived, in the school year 1997/8. Others were educated in the Albanian language. The existing gap in the educational level between Albanians and Macedonians grew larger as both communities lived separately, isolated from each other and each of them had their own problems - Macedonians lived in fear of albanization of their country and Albanians had a sense of lack of equal opportunities. In the state founded after 1991, the program of children's and teenagers' secularization was abandoned and permission was granted to create denominational schools. Albanians could get their middle school education

³³ „Nova Makedonija”, 16 V 2000, p. 2.

³⁴ *Facts about National Minorities in the Republic of Macedonia*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Skopje, April 1997, p. 12.

at a secondary Islamic school. In a similar way, an Orthodox secondary school is available and a Catholic middle school opened in the school year 1997/98. The Islamic school was attended by 225 students in the school year 1997/98, the classes were conducted by 28 teachers and, moreover, 143 Albanians attended extramural secondary schools (for adults) in the school year 1997/98³⁵.

The teaching staff for primary and secondary schools with classes in the Albanian language were educated in the Republic of Macedonia. New regulations of September 1995 stated that only citizens of the Republic of Macedonia could be teachers and only if they knew the Macedonian language³⁶. Representatives of national minorities (including Albanians) had the right to study at all departments (there were altogether 29 of them) at two existing state universities in Macedonia, i.e. the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje and the St. Clement of Ohrid University of Bitola in the Macedonian language. The Albanian and Turkish language and literature majors at the Philosophy Department were an exception here. Also, classes were held in groups divided according to the language of a given nationality at the Department of Drama and Arts. Albanians educated in their mother tongue since early childhood were often incapable of undertaking education in Macedonian at a higher level or had language difficulties during the learning process. This is why they did not fully use the quotas of places which were reserved for them at the Skopje and Bitola Universities. The Skopje authorities decided to open a major for future teachers at the Pedagogy Department at the St. Clement of Ohrid University with classes conducted in Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish. 280 places were available in the academic year 2000/2001.

The adoption of the act on introducing classes in the Albanian and Turkish languages on 30 January 1997 caused protests among Macedonian students. Demonstrations were held using anti-Albanian slogans and 15 students started a hunger strike to mark their protest. The actions of Macedonian authorities were perceived as belated and aimed at calming the too bold demands on the part of Albanians.

The number of Albanian students at all departments was small and, as shown by the data of the Ministry of Education and Sports it amounted to 5.2% in the academic year 1992/93, 7.1% - 1993/94 to reach 9.2% of all university students in the country. In the following years, a reduced interest of Albanians

³⁵ *Statistički pregled...* op. cit., p. 43.

³⁶ Previously teaching staff were educated at the University in Priština.

in studies at state universities was observed. In the academic year 1996/97, only 7.2% of Albanians studied at state universities³⁷. This can be explained by growing numbers of students at the illegal universities in Tetovo.

When Albanians announced the opening of an Albanian university in Tetovo (with the seat in Mala Rečica) in October 1994, the Skopje authorities responded in a very firm manner and forbade its activity. Despite the ban, the university existed illegally until 2001 when changes in the Republic's constitution occurred. The university was situated in private Albanian houses, another department was located in each of them: philology, philosophy, mathematics, economics, law, arts. On 14 December 1994, a congress of Albanian intellectuals from Albania, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia was held in Skopje, where the opinion of the necessity of the university's existence was held³⁸. The university was funded using private contributions, while Albanians living outside the country also donated some funds. Financial support was also granted by the Sorosa foundation and the Albanian newspaper "Koha". During his visit to the USA in 1995, the university's rector Fadil Sulejmani received support for the university's activities from Richard Holbrooke, American Secretary of State³⁹. Prof. Sulejmani planned on the formation of a medical department claiming that students could do their internship at private Albanian clinics⁴⁰. Riots took place on 15 January 1995 when the authorities demolished the building in which Albanians students were to study. One demonstrator was killed during demonstrations and 15 other demonstrators were injured. The university's rector was arrested and sentenced to 2.5 years' imprisonment. At the same time, Albanians drew attention to the problem of using the Albanian language as an official language in the Parliament. As David Owen writes in his memoirs⁴¹, during the third round of talks between the Skopje authorities and Albanian parties which were mediated by Ambassador Geert Hinrich Ahrens from the ICFY - International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, at the time of Prof. Sule-

³⁷ *Facts about National Minorities...* op. cit., p. 20

³⁸ Peter Bachmaier, *Die Kulturpolitik Makedoniens 1944-1997*, in: *Makedonien. Geographie-Ethnische Struktur-Geschichte-Sprache und Kultur-Politik-Wirtschaft-Recht*, Walter Lukan, Peter Jordan, (Hrg.), „Österreichische Osthefte“, Wien 1998, J. 40, p. 332.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 332.

⁴⁰ „Rzeczpospolita”, No. 15, 18 I 1996, p. 8.

⁴¹ D. Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, London 1995, p. 355.

jmani's trial, Albanians brought up the issue of using the Albanian language in the Parliament. At that time, the question was asked how the translation of possible speeches made by Albanians into other languages would look. Members of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia were then convinced that, despite the radicalization of Albanian demands, it was still possible to resolve the issue of the University in a peaceful manner. Lack of the Skopje authorities' consent to the approval of the university resulted from the conviction that the university would cherish the ideas of Albanian radical nationalism and spread the ideology of "Greater Albania". Furthermore, the level of education, the skills of academic teachers and the existing learning conditions were questioned⁴².

The battle for the university in Tetovo was treated by the Macedonian authorities as a political action aimed at creating an impression that national minorities were being discriminated against in the Republic of Macedonia. The level of education of the individual ethnic groups can also be illustrated by the number of defended master's theses and doctoral dissertations. In the years 1994-1996: 4 Albanians, (compared to 1 Turk, 2 Vlachs, 7 Serbs and 159 Macedonians) defended Master's theses and 3 Albanians, (compared to 2 Turks, 1 Vlach, 6 Serbs and 112 Macedonians) defended their doctoral dissertations⁴³. It should be emphasized that newspapers were published in the Albanian language in the Republic of Macedonia (the most popular ones included the "Flaka e vël-lazërimit" and "Fakti" published in Skopje), books and radio and TV programs were broadcast. These rights were already guaranteed to Albanians under Tito's rule.

VI

Conflicts were mitigated and relations between both ethnic communities, i.e. Albanians and Macedonians improved, amongst other things, owing to American mediation and U.N. efforts. At the first stage, international actions were aimed at preventing an outbreak of an open conflict. The Working Group appointed by Jussef Boutros-Ghali, U.N. Secretary-General led by Geeret H. Ahrens (a German diplomat) who had already started negotiations in October 1991 within the ICFY. The Working Group played the role of the mediator with

⁴² K. Gligorov, *Makedonija e se što imame*, Skopje 200, p. 518.

⁴³ *Albancite vo Republika Makedonija...* op. cit., p. 348.

the three-lateral forum whose members included:

Serbs, Albanians and the Macedonian government. Owing to its work, it was possible to negotiate several concessions for Albanians, i.e. greater access to education and media, sharing power with Albanians. Despite the fact that progress in solving the most urgent problems was only slightly noticeable, these actions in the first years of the country's independence where the structures of a new state were being formed and the economic crisis radicalized the Albanians' attitudes helped to prevent the outbreak of violence on ethnic grounds⁴⁴.

Visits of CSCE/OSCE representatives were very important for keeping peace in the Republic of Macedonia. The creation of the mandate of High Commissioner on National Minorities OSCE in 1992 as an instrument for conflict prevention played a very important role, and especially Max van der Stoel (Dutchman) appointed in 1993. The mission in the Republic of Macedonia (official name: the OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje) was appointed on 18 September 1992 to observe the development of the situation in the borderland with Serbia and to prevent the extension of the conflict in Macedonia. The basic task of the mission was also to establish contact with political parties and citizens and also active elimination of economic, political and ethnic results of the Kosovo crisis for Macedonia⁴⁵.

Max van der Stoel's greatest achievement was to obtain the consent to the creation of the University in Tetovo just before the outbreak of the armed conflict between Albanians and Macedonians⁴⁶. The university is still open today and classes are conducted in Albanian, Macedonian and English. It bears the name of South East European University in Tetovo. Van der Stoel also issued an early warning document, which was very important at the time - the first in history on the part of the OSCE. It was a declaration and simultaneously a warning of May 1999 about the destabilization of Macedonia during NATO air raids in Yugoslavia.

In November 1992, due to a very difficult situation in the Republic dur-

⁴⁴ B. G. Ramcharan, *The International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia: official Papers*, Cambridge 1997, vol. 1, p. 489-521.

⁴⁵ Cf. OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje, URL: <http://www.osce.org/skopje>, (accessed on 1 XII 2011).

⁴⁶ The Macedonian Parliament adopted the Act on the formation of the University in Tetovo in July 2000, as a non-public education facility. It was officially opened in November 2001.

ing the first years of independence, President Kiro Gligorov turned to the United Nations Security Council requesting that peace mission troops should be sent to the border between Serbia and Albania. Frequent provocations both on the part of Belgrade and Albanians mostly from Kosovo, crossing the border without the required documents destabilized the situation in the country. After adopting UN Resolution 795 dated 11 December 1992, at the beginning of 1993 the United Nations sent 1,100 soldiers to protect the border of the Republic of Macedonia, half of whom came from the USA. These soldiers were stationed at the Albanian-Macedonian and Serbian-Macedonian borders. Until 1995, those were UNPROFOR units, appointed to supervise the truce and demobilization of soldiers in Croatia, and in spring 1995, it became an independent preventive mission - UNPREDEP. Its tasks were clearly and precisely defined. They included: firstly, monitoring the border between the Republic of Macedonia, Albania and Yugoslavia, secondly, preventing all threats in this country, enhancing its stability and thirdly, protecting civilians against threats⁴⁷. The advantage of this mission consisted in the fact that it had received a UN mandate and the primary involvement of the USA. Its nature was strictly preventive and it was based on three pillars: military - observing the border by continuous or temporary monitoring, political - monitoring political, economic and social conditions and humanitarian - it mostly concerned long-term social problems under the UN auspices, including the development of the country's infrastructure. UNPREDEP closely cooperated with OSCE. The UN mission in the years 1995-1998 was led by Henryk J. Sokalski, a Polish diplomat⁴⁸.

Agreements with Taiwan (Republic of China) signed in 1998 concerning financial aid and capital investments led to a diplomatic conflict with China (People's Republic of China), which, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council vetoed the extension of the peace mission in the Republic of Macedonia. UNPREDEP had to withdraw during the Kosovo war and the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia. For strategic reasons, i.e. the plans of Republic of Macedonia to become a NATO member in the near future and for security reasons, a declaration was issued in Skopje in summer 1999, which concerned the

⁴⁷ A. Ackerman in, *International intervention in Macedonia. From preventive engagement to peace implementation*, in: *International Intervention in the Balkans since 1995*, ed. By Pater Siani-Davies, London and New York 2003, p. 109.

⁴⁸ Henryk J. Sokalski, *Odrobina prewencji. Dorobek dyplomacji prewencyjnej ONZ w Macedonii*, Warszawa 2007.

readiness for cooperation and the possibility of implementing the “Joint Guarantor” operation by distributing NATO quick reaction forces all over the Republic. This evoked sharp reaction on the part of Belgrade and issuing an official letter of protest in which it was emphasized that the distribution of the NATO forces “may have a detrimental effect on the interests of both countries”⁴⁹. Since that time the mutual relations between Belgrade and Skopje have been tested. After starting the NATO bombing in Yugoslavia, there was just one violation of the Macedonian border. The borderline villages of Jažince, Malino and Tanuševci came under fire. The Macedonian forces took no action.

After the end of military actions in Yugoslavia and signing an agreement in Kumanovo on 9 June 1999, preceded by UN Security Council Resolution No. 1244, Albanians were disarmed and the regular troops withdrew and were replaced by the international *Kosovo Force* – KFOR led by the NATO. Some of them were stationed in the Republic of Macedonia. Poland sent over the 18th Landing-Assault Battalion consisting of over 800 soldiers led by Roman Polko, a Polish Military Unit of the Strategic District of the Supreme Allied Commander Europe. The military base - Camp White Eagle was situated near the Petrovec airport, approx. 20 km away from the capital city of the Republic of Macedonia - Skopje.

At that time military operations did not reach the Republic of Macedonia. However, the country found itself in a very difficult situation. The arrival of enormous numbers of refugees and fighters from Kosovo was a big problem. Some of them were Albanians from Macedonia who helped their compatriots in Kosovo. They realized that they had international support. Moreover, the NATO force (KFOR) was engaged in Kosovo and after the withdrawal of the UN forces did not guarantee the effective defence of the Macedonian border. Therefore, it is not surprising that soon after - in 2001 military operations moved to the Republic of Macedonia. At that time, Albanians put forward their demands for the Skopje authorities with arms in their hands.

⁴⁹ J. Phillips, *Macedonia...* op. cit., p. 76.