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Political Parties Development in the Republic of Macedonia

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2nd of August Festivities

Two big national festivities in Macedonia coincide at the same date- August 2nd. First is the festivity marking the Ilinden Uprising in 1903 against the Ottoman Empire and the second is the formation of the then socialist Macedonia in 2nd of August 1944 as one of the former Yugoslav federal republics. This year, the Republic celebrated the 100 years of Macedonian statehood, and as the President of the Parliament said in his speech- "St. Ilija's day is just a crown of the one century efforts of many generations who fought for free Macedonia". "A special place belongs to the Krushevo Manifesto that represents program declaration of the goals and strive of the rebels and shapes the foundation of the unity between Macedonians and the parts of other peoples with whom we live together and who took part in these historic events". As challenges that the state still must address were stressed: the name of the state, which is still disputed, and reestablishing state security. For the first time representatives of the ethnic Albanian party in government (DUI) honored this event.

Unfortunately, the second festivity could not be celebrated as it was appropriate, due to the inability of the Macedonian delegation to enter the "St. Prohor Pciniski" monastery¹ and honor the place where modern Macedonia was formed. SOC² conditioned the entering of the Macedonian delegation with "cessation of the illegal and discriminatory decisions" against SOC priests and the Serbian metropolitan Jovan³. Finally the Macedonian delegation was not permitted to enter the monastery (in spite of the efforts of the Serbian government as well), ending up in honoring a provisional post near the monastery. Considering the circumstances, in spite of the good political relations between the two governments, the dragged dispute between Macedonian and Serbian Orthodox churches, significantly burdens today's inter-state relations. As political preferences in Serbia are shifted more to the nationalist side, it is expected that things regarding this domain shall be further dragged, used politically and perhaps worsened.

Security Problems

At the beginning of September a couple of bombs exploded in the center of Skopje causing no casualties. Responsibility for these deeds was taken by ANA⁴ whose port-parole wrote that "...the goal of these actions is weakening of the military bases of the Slavo-Macedonian occupier. Albanians do not wish to live anymore with their slavomacedonian colonizers. They want their own ethnic state- they want to join Albania". The Ministry of Interiors stated that ANA is a small marginalized group and is not a threat for Macedonia, neither shall the situation escalate like it was in 2001.

At the same time, some movement has been registered near the northern border, while in the Tetovo region a couple of incidents occurred. Skopje police brought criminal charges

¹ Which today is located in neighboring Serbia and is under the jurisdiction of the Serbian Orthodox church

² Serbian Orthodox Church

³ Who broke out from the MOC- see previous Barometers

⁴ Albanian National Army

against Avdil Jakupi, the so called commander Chakala for kidnapping⁵ and robbery that happened at the end of August. Due to the registered movements, police started to position itself in strategic positions in the northern border area. Since these moves provoked nervousness among the local population, in Vaksince village a meeting took place among present DUI⁶, PDP⁷ and NDP⁸ MPs and the local population, together with representatives of the "armed groups". Several requests have been given, like: urgent withdrawal of the police forces and their replacement by multiethnic patrols, consistent application of the amnesty law, cessation of all political court processes in the country, releasing the imprisoned Albanians and better resocialization of former NLA⁹ fighters.

In spite of those efforts, situation escalated when a five member armed group opened fire at the security forces¹⁰ near Brest village, so the Ministry of Interiors had to intervene. Result of the clash were two killed members of the group, while there were no civilian or police casualties. Some media estimated that the clash was inevitable, since for some time now structures that declare themselves as ANA terrorized the inhabitants of the former crisis regions¹¹. It was said that these structures intended to use the same methods as in 2001, where at first by use of pressure and terror over the local population was gained support, in order to spread activities further and attract international publicity and political verification of their criminal activities¹². After the failure of this attempt, media (domestic and foreign) commented that maybe a new manner of dealing with forces that intend to introduce instability is occurring.

Unfortunately the police action in Brest caused a government crisis. SDSM¹³ stressed the general consensus that exists for dealing with such gangs and estimated that although certain tension is expected there should be awareness that such activities are performed in the interest of the local population as well. Prime minister Crvenkovski stated that DUI representatives were regularly present in meetings where the country's security was discussed. On the other hand, DUI manifested nervousness and threatened to leave the government, if there were civil casualties during the action. The party complained that it was not consulted for the action, so a working group was formed to investigate the case, composed by the Minister of Interiors and the Minister of Defense, their deputies (ethnic Albanians), as well as OSCE, NATO, EU and USA representatives. Facts showed that when operation would start was impossible to predict, since none knew when the police forces were going to be attacked. DUI positions on the matter evolved from at first conditioning their government presence, through the possibility of seeking responsibility

⁵ Avdil Jakupi (Chakala) kidnapped two ethnically mixed policemen. He conditioned their release with the release of one of the "Kumanovo bombers" who is in jail.

⁶ Democratic Union for Integration, ethnic Albanian party in government

⁷ Party for Democratic Prosperity, ethnic Albanian party

⁸ National Democratic Party, ethnic Albanian party

⁹ National Liberation Army

¹⁰ Various types of heavy weaponry were used.

¹¹ Media said that these forces are lead by the so call commander Breza and that the group in question had about 25 members. One person, for whom was sent out a wanted circular for several criminal deeds was arrested as well.

¹² After the action, police found large quantity of weapons and ammunition.

¹³ Social-Democratic Union of Macedonia

by leading persons in the ministry, and ending up with the statement that DUI shall insist on police reforms according to NATO standards.

VMRO-DPMNE¹⁴ supported the police action, leaving a question mark whether this long-expected action shall be a durable one. On the other hand, DPA¹⁵ stated that the government continues to show and apply repressive methods which are typical for the Miloshevic policy of problems solving- "Two villages are not able to destabilize the country, so the action is a manner of showing how to deal with the Albanians, for their disciplining like in the past times".

The Commander of the South Wing of NATO Admiral Johnson estimated the police action as "legal". "In this concrete case criminals have tried again to present themselves as freedom fighters"-he stated. In the same line of thinking was the EU port-parole who expressed support to the government efforts to fight criminal groups by use of a determined methodology. Once again was confirmed that in spite of some nervousness, the 2001 conflict shall not happen again. Reinforced police presence in the Lipkovo region was qualified as "operation for peace and order preservation for the local inhabitants and it has no ethnic dimension in it". EU, OSCE and USA representatives supported the police action, saying that it is performed in accordance with the country's laws, as well as with international standards and that so far there have been no complaints by the local population. They stressed that the operation is against Chakala, who must be held responsible for his deeds and not against the local population. "Behavior of such criminals may not be tolerated anymore by the population, the state and the international community"-was stated.

Commenting the current situation, the Minister of Defense said that because there was not a place in the government structures for all former NLA fighters, probably they had too large or unrealistic ambitions. "Fact is that DUI produced MPs and part of the managing structures in the second or third tier in the power, but the huge amount of weapons, the dissatisfaction and the unrealistic expectations or ambitions stimulated the internal clash in the Albanian ethnic block. Logically, there was political involvement combined. In addition, some groups are fighting to gain the identity of ANA, and there is no consistency in this, regarding the seat where this organization is, or who is its member or not. These are mostly persons who after the amnesty did not succeed to resocialize themselves into society mainstreams"- he added.

Amnesty Application Problems

The Minister of Justice Ismail Darlishta (DUI) expressed dissatisfaction with the so far application of amnesty when in question 60 cases of persons who are not included under the Amnesty Law of 2001. Contrary to this, the Public Prosecutors office stated that half of the cases mentioned are accused of crimes against humanity and international law, so they cannot be granted amnesty in accordance with the Geneva conventions. For all other cases connected to the 2001 conflict there were no problems, if the accused in person or

¹⁴ Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization- Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity

¹⁵ Democratic Party of the Albanians, ethnic Albanian party

by their appointed lawyer give a statement in front of a court of inquiry. Relevant authorities took responsibility to look at all the cases one by one and decide, but the Minister of Justice (DUI) and the Prosecutor jointly agreed that old and new criminal deeds should not be mixed up. It is understood that amnesty is not to be granted for criminal deeds committed after September 26, 2001. Commenting about the issue, the EU port-parole stated that over 900 persons who took part in the 2001 conflict have been granted amnesty for deeds that are not considered war crimes. Only cases regarded as war crimes are still open, where are included the five cases for which showed interest The Hague Tribunal.

Education Problems

It has already become traditional at the beginning of the school year to have problems that have ethnic connotation. For various reasons, over 7.000 Macedonians and Albanians did not start their school year on September 1st. Boycott was visible in the former crisis regions especially in villages Vaksince and Lojane¹⁶. Out of a total of 280.000 primary school pupils and 90.000 high school pupils, critical still remained the village Shemshovo, the high school in Tetovo, part of Kumanovo high school pupils and some from Skopje.

Eleven classes of high school pupils- ethnic Albanians, who in the last seven years have been going to school at the forward section of the state school "Arseni Jovkov"¹⁷, as of this year requested to be brought back to their home school. They protested and announced a meeting of the parent's council to discuss the situation. It was said that ethnic Albanian pupils were not feeling safe going to school there, instead of the other, closer by location home school where only Macedonians are attending. The Director of "Arseni Jovkov" commented that he does not understand the reason of the protest, since current education conditions were satisfactory. The Minister of Education Azis Polozani (DUI) signed a decision by which seven (of the 11) classes from the first and second year shall be brought back to their home school in Chair. The classes of the third and the fourth year remained to attend the same building as before. He explained that this was done because there was enough space only for the seven transferred classes. On the other hand the Council of the Macedonian parents was dissatisfied with such a solution. "There is no space to transfer these classes here. This is not about education, this is a political game", they said. Like the other pupils, Macedonians were complaining that "individuals and groups of the school vicinity" have physically mistreated their children who are going to school in Chair. Therefore the Council thought that without the involvement of the Chair police station even education process in the school would have been put in question. Again, after consultations with the home school "Arseni Jovkov", the Minister decided that only four classes are to be transferred in that building. Dissatisfied with the Minister's solution, pupil protests have been going on for a week bringing the danger of having street fights among the pulps.

¹⁶ Where tensions were taking place-see the beginning of this issue of Barometer

¹⁷ Which was the "8th of September" elementary school in Avtokomanda

At the same time, in Bitola other pupil's protests emerged due to huge reactions regarding the decision of the Ministry for opening an Albanian speaking high school class in the city. There have been various (and politicized) interpretations of whether the city already has as predetermined by law a sufficient number of ethnic Albanian pupils living there, in order to open a class or not. Some have been claiming that only in order to start such a class, pupils have been inscribed in Bitola from the neighboring city of Kichevo. However, fact is that the issue was not prepared on time and managed very successfully by the authorities, in order misunderstandings to be avoided. In the protests took part 800 high school children and unfortunately events took a nationalistic turn. SDSM and LDP claimed that political parties have manipulated pupils. Epilogue to both cases was given by the government, which after intensive consultations with the Ministry, froze both decisions.

In the Tetovo region, Macedonian pupils did not start the school year in Shemshovo¹⁸. Others went to the neighboring Zilce where the Ministry of Education determined for the classes in Macedonian to be held, while other parents preferred the school in Siricino, justifying their position to the insufficient security conditions. For the same reason in Tetovo there were problems for the teaching in Macedonian in the school "Brotherhood-Migeni". Also, there were problems in Kumanovo regarding the Technical school.

On top of all these ethnic-educational problems came the issue of the presently illegal Tetovo University. Minister Polozani stated that this University from September next year shall start as third, state university, if by then estimations shall be made for obtaining accreditations of particular faculties¹⁹. The Minister was defending the amendments by stressing that it is needed a Law to provide normal communication between the Government and the University, and to be in harmonization with the Bologna Declaration. Other DUI representatives said that they do not wish bad quality education, which would be out of state control. This was stated after the government passed the amendments of the laws for elementary, higher and high education, in order to be harmonized with the Framework Agreement. According to the novelties "the state shall finance high education on languages spoken by 20% of the inhabitants in Macedonia, based on special agreements". The law shall be changed in the part of diploma nostrification, where it is said that diplomas obtained abroad shall be validated by the relevant faculties, while the others, for which there is a bilateral agreement shall be verified by the Minister jointly with an expert committee²⁰. According to amendments, shall be established the status of the Council for High Education which shall determine the means and criteria for work of the universities. For studies on other languages of the other ethnic groups²¹ may decide the Council for High Education, if it is proven that they are of "public interest". In the laws for elementary and higher education according to

¹⁸ For more details about this case, see previous Barometers

¹⁹ It is expected to be legalized the economic, Law and Mathematical faculties, and from the existing higher schools shall be legalized the politechnical and humanitarian sciences.

²⁰ The Minister had information that so far at this university about 300-400 students have finished their education and for their diplomas "modalities" are to be found under article 198 of the existing Law.

²¹ The not so numerous ones

decentralization processes, the school directors shall be suggested by the mayors and appointed by the Ministry of Education.

Foreign diplomats²² commenting on the high education in Albanian language stated that Tetovo university should make a big cleansing from the old team consisted of extremists and give place to others. That would also mean that education standards should be significantly raised, real students and real professors should be there, since that is not always the case. Future possible uniting of the Tetovo University with the Van Der Stoel University should be done only after these conditions are met.

Further complication of the whole matter created the Rectorate of the Tetovo University, which forcefully moved in the building of the firm "Tetovo Tabak", without awaiting its legalization. The building was reconstructed, fence has been built without respecting the urbanistic plan, some smaller buildings have been torn down, etc. This move raged the public opinion, since it is believed that all this was done in an illegal way, preceding a very nontransparent shift of ownership of the factory and the building to the new owners²³. The Government concluded that the building of Tetovo Tabak is not entering into any plan of the future Tetovo university, nor as an idea is mentioned in the officially submitted university plan. Still, people who currently dispose with the firm's property claimed the opposite²⁴. This complicated situation is going to have a court finalization. The Public Prosecutor from Tetovo as a temporary measure suggested forceful moving out and locking the buildings of Tetovo Tabak. OSCE Ambassador stated that they would like to prevent any transferring of the students to the "Tetovo Tabak" building. He stated that he is talking on behalf of the Ambassadors of USA, EU and NATO as well, suggesting that it is better to wait for the court decision to be seen who is the owner of the building. "Anything which is against the Law makes the legalization process harder and is a manipulation with the students. In all the cases we have two persons who are problematic: Izair Samiu and the ex-rector Fadil Sulejmani. These two and their supporters work against the Ohrid Agreement and against any legalization"- added the Ambassador²⁵.

Unfortunately, with the involvement of the same individuals in Tetovo, opening of a medical faculty has been initiated, as well as a cardio-surgery. The "faculty" has already been illegally opened and started functioning. The director of the Tetovo Medical center

²² French Ambassador Teral

²³ Stockholders of this firm complained that all the property of the firm that was found in the place is being robbed, including tobacco reserves that were about 70 tons.

²⁴ An ethnic Albanian business woman is saying that she owned the dominant stocks package which was then sold to the university by her. On the other hand, privatization agency, former employees in the factory, the pensioners fund, and the social security claim that own more than the businesswoman is claiming. These owners confirm that purchase of stocks may be very well tracked by the stocks selling in the privatization agency at the stock market.

²⁵ He explained that as he was informed, it was not a Senate decision in full membership to move into the new building, but rather it was "a meeting of negative and destructive forces". This was stated again at the NATO, OSCE and "Concordia" press conference, where the OSCE port-parole stressed that they regard the moving to "Tetovo Tabak" building illegal, stressing that "it complicates the legitimization process of the Tetovo University". She said that Sulejmani and Samiu are above all interested for their own financial interest.

Shinasi Gafuri stated that they shall seek approval from the relevant ministries in the near future, -"first you should create something, to work, and then to legalize it"-he said. Regarding this case, Minister Polozani stated that medical sciences shall not be legalized.

As a reaction to the events, big student protests were organized against the legalization of the Tetovo university, supported by the Coordinative body of students from the universities of Skopje and Bitola, together with 22 NGOs, the Macedonian World Congress, the High school Union and VMRO-DPMNE. The Union of students of both Skopje and Bitola Universities called upon the students not to support the protests. Instead, they asked for better arguments by the government in order to support this project. Protests were very intensive the first day, but the next couple of days were calmed down. Rioted students asked resignation from Minister Polozani.

Due to all the events that took place in the domain of education, opposition initiated interpellation of the Education Minister Aziz Polozani, which at the end was not supported by a majority vote. Opposition parties announced further obstructions in the process of legalization of the Tetovo university, arguing that there is no need for a university in Albanian language, other than the Van Der Stohel university.

Return Home – Is It Possible?

A figure of about 3.000 persons coming from the former crisis villages are still living in collective centers or managing somehow without any concrete hope of returning home. Reasons vary from case to case, but often people mention personal safety as the main precondition to go back home. Situation is worsened by the cases of burned already reconstructed houses exactly in that area. For example, in the village of Aracinovo houses owned by ethnic Macedonians have been burned. Police found that juveniles, who have been assisted by older persons, did it. In the village during 2002 and 2003 a total number of 12 houses have been burned. The association of the diasplaced Macedonians from Aracinovo "Zora" qualified the burning of the houses as "classic case of ethnic cleansing". On the other hand, in Matejce village 30 houses are ready for the people to move in (reconstructed).

Framework Agreement Implementation

Fact is that due to insufficient information offered to the citizens regarding the FA process and its limits, very often it is an object of manipulation and mobilization on ethnic basis on both sides. There is almost no issue which has not been problematized, politicized or does not seek additional explanations, finally ending up to the international community representatives for mediation or "interpretation"²⁶.

After two years of signing the Framework Agreement political parties' opinions differ a lot, regarding its durability, its encompassness and its possibility to function in practice.

²⁶ And a paradox appears here- part of the political parties signatories of the FA, recognizing the use of force as a way to achieve political goals threat again by force due to its alleged slow implementation or non-implementation.

PDP has shown dissatisfaction of the implementation speed. It is said that there is a tendency to be imposed new rules and interpretations of the FA content and even underestimations, redefining and putting some elements under question, which show that some are not ready to accept reality. VMRO-DPMNE thinks that the FA at most part is realized but security conditions for normal state functioning are not yet met, since state sovereignty is not yet fully accomplished in all territory. This party is cautious about the further two steps that need to be made: decentralization and public administration reforms. DPA thinks that what is said in the FA and the new Constitution are not respected. This party is not satisfied with the degree of encompassment of ethnic Albanians into the state administration nor with the security situation. SDSM states that there are no changes in the position towards the FA and that it is worked for its implementation. This party stresses that regardless the different positions, none should forget that the FA is a compromise that prevented Macedonia to enter into a war. No matter how imperfect some solutions might seem, still by it was stopped the largest crisis Macedonia had in its recent history.

For DUI the FA has no alternative and every other deviation means a waste of time and energy which is very needed for establishing peace and stability. This party had a special celebration, marking the two-year anniversary of signing the Framework Agreement. All foreign embassies representatives and members of the international community by their presence gave support to the event, same as representatives from the President of the Republic's cabinet, SDSM and PDP. Absent were the parties DPA and VMRO-DPMNE. "13th of August is a historic date when happened the reconciliation between the two largest ethnic communities in Macedonia. Giving the hand of reconciliation is an act by which are overcome mistakes and injustices from the past and are positioned new relations of partnership and responsibility for the future. The past should not be forgotten, and the future must be jointly built. History should serve as a bitter past that should not happen again"- stated Ali Ahmeti on the occasion. The party expressed satisfaction with the so far application of the FA. The planned 23% of just representation of ethnic Albanians in the administration have been already achieved in the third row of employees. Currently, in the Ministry of Interiors ethnic Albanians are represented by 20,3%, in the Ministry of Justice 23%, in Agriculture and Forestry 18%, in the Education 14% and in transport and communications 17%²⁷.

Encouraging event was the state celebration of the 95 years of founding the Albanian in Bitola. On the occasion spoke the vice-prime minister Musa Dhaferi and at the official academy were present the prime minister, together with the vice-president of the parliament, the vice-president of the government etc. Another indicator for the improved interethnic relations were the joint meetings of the Prime Minister and the Vice-prime minister with the Macedonian and the Albanian diaspora during their visit in USA.

²⁷ French Ambassador Teral stated that DUI as a party is a victim of the fact that among Albanians there are many people who do not understand that there is no magic wand that can introduce immediate change. According to him, the basic problem is of cultural nature, since there is no governing culture nor do they know anything about administrative work.

Generally, the state is consequently realizing the duties that derive from the FA. In the legal sense, the agreement is almost completely covered by laws. Bilingualism is functioning in the local communities, in the state administration, in the courts, in elementary and high school education, in issuing personal documents. What is still lacking is the law for the use of symbols of ethnic communities. In the domain of language use is achieved the largest part of the novelties, where about 15 laws are introduced, dealing with the local self-government, the census, for criminal, civil suit and for general administrative procedure, for organization of administrative organs, for the ID card²⁸, for the record books, passports, traffic security, for elementary and high education. Within this range is included the actual bilingual work of the Macedonia Assembly as well as publishing of all laws in the Official Journal of the Republic of Macedonia. After introducing the parliamentary rules of procedure, MPs who are ethnic Albanians may on plenary sessions and on committees debates address on their mother tongue. In local communities where a certain community living there are at least 20% of the inhabitants, as official language, other than the Macedonian language the language of that community is officially used. At the same time, another language that belongs to a community less than 20% may be used as well, if the local community democratically decides so. Regarding new employment, in order to reach just representation of ethnic communities living in the country in the state administration, so far have been employed 2.000 persons, most of them ethnic Albanians, especially in the ministries of police and defense. Government insists that these employees should fulfill the requirements of competency and professionalism. Other changes refer to constituting legal institutions where 1/3 of the members of such bodies shall be chosen by majority of the total number of MPs, but also cumulatively by obtaining a special majority, that is a sufficient number of votes of MPs who belong to ethnic groups (this is valid for the Constitutional Court, the Republic's Judiciary Council, the Committee for Relations Among Ethnic Communities-19 members, 7 Macedonians, 7 Albanians and 5 persons coming from smaller ethnic communities, the Law for Ombudsman).

Last package of priority laws that should be harmonized with the FA and passed this autumn are the laws for local communities boundaries and the law for local communities financing. These laws are considered as important part of the decentralization process, which encompasses many laws that shall transfer duties from central to local level, like in the area of local economic development, social care, education, health, environment, culture and sports. After that it remains to come in full force during the summer and to be effectuated after the upcoming local elections next year (the latest duties shall be transferred in March-April 2004).

From "Concordia" to "Proxima"

December 15th is the date when "Concordia" mission lead by EUROFOR shall cease to exist in Macedonia. Concordia was estimated as "an operation whose main contribution is to reach peaceful, democratic and prosperous nation as part of the regional stable countries, where international military presence is no longer needed".

²⁸ Up to mid-August the Ministry of Interiors issued 3.744 bilingual personal IDs.

The future mission named "Proxima" shall be a police mission, lead by the so far OSCE police chief, and shall be established after the Concordia military mission leaves the country. Proxima is expected to help in the direction of increasing the efficiency of the police, improving and deepening the cooperation between the citizens and the police, as well as offering training for the Macedonian special forces. It shall make estimation of the work of the Macedonian police, identify the current working standards and compare with those of EU. Policemen shall be unarmed and shall be wearing their national uniforms. Estimation is that security situation in the country improved, but there are still problems of criminal nature. The mission shall be completed in February, by having 180 policemen and 20 civilians, positioned in police stations in Skopje, Kumanovo, Tetovo, Gostivar, covering Debar, Ohrid, Struga and Kichevo. Later, mobile teams shall start covering the rest of the country.

EU and NATO Membership – Is It Too Hard to be Achieved?

One of the permanent foreign policy priorities for Macedonia is achieving EU and NATO membership. Current government has put into its agenda these two goals, ambitiously pursuing them. Realistically seen, the country still needs time and many efforts to comply with the standards required for such membership in order to achieve the desired policy outcome. On the other hand, the country and its inhabitants are in a great need for further motivation boost and advancement towards a clear vision for the future- a thing which was obviously not the case in the recent past, when the country was passing through traumatic experiences. Citizens of Macedonia need a common goal, which would serve as a turning point towards a new wave of positive change.

Macedonian authorities are hoping at the meeting in May 2004 in Turkey to get an invitation for a future NATO membership. As an answer to that, NATO Secretary General Robertson stated that "Macedonia is not seen as future source of problems, but as a future NATO member", -but also added " there shall be no international integration without internal integration. Macedonia should implement the Framework Agreement and unite the country". He also stressed that things in the country have been back to normal.

In order to fulfill preconditions for NATO membership the Defense Ministry and the General Headquarters of the Macedonian Army in 2004 shall: transfer border security from the Macedonian Army to the Ministry of Interiors, create brigade for special operations, legally shall shape the project for crisis management as well as achieving adequate representation of ethnic communities in the Army²⁹. Main intention is to transform the Army into a small and efficient one, by putting an accent in fighting terrorism instead of thinking of old, conventional threats, which are unrealistic. The planned brigade for special operations is supposed to be adjusted to NATO standards and shall comprise the following special forces: "Wolfs", rangers, scouts and policemen. Their number shall move about 1.300-1.400 soldiers. An expert team is formed, which should remove any doubts about the possible dualism regarding the tasks, the functions

²⁹ These points are the substance of the Annual National program report of Macedonia for NATO membership.

and the purpose of the special forces of the ministries of Interiors and Defense. In addition, from the Ministry of Defense about 892 officers are going to be early retired.

Still, in Brussels, the Macedonian delegation was given a bit of praise and many remarks regarding the reforms that need to be done. Remarks were given in the sense that decentralization is being one year late, that the administration law was not passed yet, and special accent was given to the bad representation of ethnic communities in particular in the special forces unit, and for the inadequate way of spending budget money in the Army. Whether Macedonian hopes for the upcoming meeting in Istanbul in 2006 are realistic, shall be known only after the meetings of the representatives of the PARP program who are to visit Macedonia next January.

At the Forum of EU and the West Balkans the Minister of Exteriors Ilinka Mitreva seeked support for the announced Macedonian application for the EU, due to be forwarded next February. A general sense is that EU is rather reserved on the matter, continuously stressing that Macedonia should look on its reforms and Framework Agreement implementation first, but also that choosing the moment for application submitting is the right of every state, so none may forbid it.

Relations with Kosovo

As discussions about the future status of Kosovo are increasingly heated, Macedonian government is trying to position itself as constructively as possible. This effort is shown through the statements of the Prime Minister who said that the Framework Agreement implementation should be speeded up, so Macedonia could have a clean situation on the interethnic issues, in order to wait for the final status of Kosovo the most comfortably possible. "What is substantial for Macedonia is not the quality of the Kosovo status (independence or within the frames of Serbia), but whether Kosovo shall be a regulated territory where will be order and rule of law and real and efficient institutions. If Kosovo is a regulated territory and shall have institutions that shall guarantee the application of laws, then it is less important whether Kosovo shall be independent or in the composition of an existing state structure, or vice versa, if Kosovo is a territory where there are militant structures, where criminal gangs determine citizens political life, if it is a black hole from the aspect of order and ruler of law implementation, -even if it is in the frames of Serbia, it is not a guarantee that there shall not be an spillover of instability". The Minister of Defense stated that is in Macedonia's best interest Kosovo to be stabilized. "The status shall be solved by direct negotiations between Pristina and Belgrade and we shall respect whatever comes from those negotiations. Any solution that does not endanger Macedonia is acceptable. Extremists in Kosovo and in the region who want to destabilize South Serbia and Macedonia in fact work against the interests of Kosovo" –he said.

As media have stated, Kosovar temporary authorities shall soon receive a document in which shall be stated the confirmation of the regionally defined borders, which is one of the standards that are to be met in order to start the negotiations regarding their final status. Diplomats state that from the Kosovo side there is will to close the issue of border

demarcation towards Macedonia, without any pretensions for its change, although they resent to make it public, due to fears of reactionism.

Law on Citizenship

The Ministry of Interiors prepared amendments of the Law on Citizenship, intending to harmonize it with the European Convention for Citizenship and with other international standards. Main change is the shorter period of stay as a condition for obtaining citizenship, which was lowered down from 15 (the so far solution) to 8 years. These amendments provoked large public debate regarding the potential number of persons who are expected to get Macedonian citizenship after the Law shall be in force. VMRO-DPMNE was arguing that the figure expected is very high- about 80.000 foreigners, mostly ethnic Albanians. Due to that argument, opposition asked the government to withdraw the amendments until the moment census results are going to be publicized. Contrary to this, the government claimed that there is no place for such fears, since records in Macedonia show that in the country currently live about 11.000 foreigners³⁰, which is the theoretically maximum number of persons who are going to get Macedonian citizenship, under the conditions that all are able to fulfill legal requirements for that. Answering to other opposition accusations of previous issuing large number of Macedonian citizenship to ethnic Albanians, the Ministry of Interiors publicized the following data: According to the ethnic structure, Macedonian citizenship was issued to 31.092 Albanians, 20.121 Macedonians, 13.935 Muslims, 21.532 Serbs, 2.831 Bulgarians, 836 Turks, 1.633 Roma and 21.200 others. In total, since 1992 when the Law has been introduced and up to August 2003 in total issued citizenships are 2.291.587.

After the accusation by the opposition³¹ that current government does not take care of the expatriate Macedonians who would like to obtain Macedonian citizenship, a correction in the new amendments has been reached. Article 8 of the amendments was alternated and allows issuing Macedonian citizenship to "all Macedonians by origin who live out of the country"³². Another alternation in the law is the previous condition that "the applicant should master the Macedonian language", which now turned into "the applicant should master the Macedonian language up to the point when he can easily communicate with his surrounding".

Latest Parliamentary Activities

In September MPs determined the text of the draft-amendment of the constitutional Article 19, by which the second phase of the constitutional tapping legalization occurred. By this, opened the opportunity for use of special investigation measures for all persons

³⁰ Temporary legal stay in the country have 10.115 persons, 602 persons are with permanent, 690 with business stay and 26 persons have a refugee status. In fact, by Law potential applicants for obtaining Macedonian citizenship may be only persons who have a legally regulated stay in the country. "The rest, if there are any, are illegal and for them this Law is invalid",- says the state Secretary in the Ministry of Interiors.

³¹ Opposition, the World Macedonian Congress and associations of Macedonians living abroad, put pressure to government to make corrections.

³² Two LDP MPs gave this suggestion and the Ministry accepted the change.

that prepare or commit criminal acts. However, contemporary tapping methods in practice shall be applied after a special law regarding these techniques shall be passed and on basis of a court decision. Entering a person's privacy shall occur only in three cases: preventing or discovering criminal acts, leading a criminal procedure, or when state interest of security and safety are in question. After the voting, which obtained the necessary specific majority, a 30 days public discussion upon the amendment was officially opened. The whole procedure is expected to finish by the end of the year.

The final version of the Law for Ombudsman determined that this state organ shall communicate with the citizens on Macedonian and on Albanian. The Ombudsman shall be able to act upon submitted cases by the citizens when in question postponing of trials or issues regarding the work of the state administration. Other than this, the Ombudsman shall be able to initiate discipline procedure against official or responsible person, as well as to initiate a criminal procedure to the public prosecutor. It may also challenge laws and other regulations in front of the Constitutional court. It is planned in the future, the Ombudsman to open six regional offices.

The Assembly adopted the amendments of the Macedonian Criminal Law and the Law for Money Laundering, which were in accordance with the suggestions given by GREKO. The most important change was the provision that a legal person can have criminal responsibility. In the future high fines it can be paid (up to 3 million denars), it can be given prohibition for the legal person's activity that can be either temporary or permanent, and in addition special responsibility shall be sought by the firm's manager. This legal person may be liquidated, or can be prohibited inscription in the trade registry.

Two LDP MPs submitted to the parliament a draft law for political parties financing, arguing that it is high time to be put some order in that domain. It is said that basic solutions offered are of anticorruption nature, since the ability of oligarchy financial elites to influence politics shall be limited. The idea is parties to be financially supported from the state budget out of which from 0,6 to 0,8% shall be covered and there shall be a precise view of how money are spent. Transparent and controlled expenditure of budget money in a limited amount (from 500.000 to 700.000 EUR annually) is a way of avoiding the dirty ways of taking citizen's money as taxpayers. All MPs voted "for" this first phase of the Law. The president of the State anticorruption committee supported this initiative as well.

The voted amendments of the Law for Profits Tax determine that investors who invest up to 100.000 EUR in their businesses, in the future shall have a decreased profits tax rate. For investments larger than this sum, the decrease shall be 30%, while the first 100.000 EUR shall be completely released from this tax.

Government Reshuffle

Informal speculations and rumors that have been circulating for quite some time about the need of a government reshuffle³³ became true at the annual address of the Prime Minister in front of the Parliament. In his speech he said: This year was a year of stabilization, a year when main efforts were put to bring back the state to normalcy, and at most part this goal has been achieved. Next year, the 2004 shall be a year dedicated to economy and shall be a start of economic development. We publicly take responsibility the level of total domestic and foreign investments in 2004 to be bigger for 200 million USD in comparison with the level of total investments this year. This guarantee represents big responsibility, but this risk with a high positioned promise we take it consciously". Crvenkovski stated seven concrete projects, which the executive power prepares for quite some time now. All building locations owned by the state (which number is over 100) before the end of this year shall be sold by licitation to interested investors. The unsuccessful free economic zone Bunardzik that was a project from the previous government is going to be offered in a tender³⁴. Other economic, infrastructure projects were mentioned as well.

In addition to the government report was suggested the first government reshuffle. By that, the President of the Parliament Nikola Popovski (SDSM) became the Minister of Finance, the mayor of Karposh local community Stevco Jakimovski (LDP) became the Minister of Economy, the judge from the Constitutional Court (DUI) Idzet Memeti³⁵ became Minister of Justice, and the parliamentary and DUI vice president Agron Budzaku became Minister of Transport and Communications. Out of office went Mr. Petar Goshev (Finance) whose change occurred due to inter-party turbulence, and who by being a prominent person in LDP might cause further party internal fractions.

After the Prime Minister's speech the two opposition parties VMRO-DPMNE and LP sought government's resignation. VMRO leader criticized the government for the increased unemployment (for 5%), and for the unsuccessful administrative measure in the form of a Law for employment which was a complete fiasco. Other critics were directed to the government's inability to control the whole territory of the country, the fact that Macedonia is still an unattractive country for investment, the increase of VAT together with prices of basic alimentary goods, and the battle against corruption which is seen only as fight against political opponents.

³³ Speculations for change were directed towards Ilija Filipovski from the Ministry of Economy, Redhep Selmani from the Ministry of Health (as rumors and media said due to insufficient results, non-communicative, conservative, although this area needs urgent reforms), Ismail Darlishta in the Ministry of Justice (described as incompetent) and Milain Ajdini in the Ministry of Transport and Communication. Mostly, DUI ministers have been criticized for their incompetence and inability to introduce change, combined with their indifference of the matter. In the case of the Minister of Economy the reason was "health" and alleged nepotism.

³⁴ The Government decided to restart the idea of activating the economic zone in Bunardzik near Skopje. An international tender was published in November, after which a strategic partner is to be sought. Believe is that this zone is located in a very convenient position strategically and by communication links. The founder of the zone who will conclude a 50 years agreement with the government should offer infrastructure and all the other preconditions of functioning of an industrial park.

³⁵ He was a minister in the same ministry a couple of years ago

How To Improve National Economy?

According to UNDP report about economic conditions in Macedonia 12% of the polled citizens did not get any salary, 6% have a salary up to 50 EUR, 15% from 50 to 90 EUR, 32% from 90 to 130 EUR, 22% from 130 to 200 EUR, 7% from 200 to 270 EUR and higher than these salaries have only 5% of the polled. Majorpart of the respondents were extremely (34%) or very (24%) dissatisfied from the salaries, while 28% were neutral. Only a total of 14% are in the "satisfied" gradation range. Big (34%) or certain (25%) insecurity about the possibility of losing their job feel a significant number of people. Ethnically viewed, insufficient food claim to have 82% of Romas, 32% of Turks, 25% of Albanians, 14% of Macedonians, 11% of Serbs.

The World Bank in September approved the new Strategy for help for Macedonia, which shall be implemented from 2004 to 2006. It contains structural and investment loans, economic and sectoral studies as well as technical help. During the Strategy promotion it was concluded that advancement has been noted in the economic reforms, in health and in the financial system, and up to a point with public assets managing. Areas that need further improvement are the public sector management, especially regarding transparency and efficiency of public expenditures, public administration professionalization, and investment climate improvement. As main strategy goals are mentioned: efficient public resources management, dealing with corruption, support of the decentralization process, improvement of conditions for private entrepreneurship, building human capital, protection of the vulnerable groups, good quality elementary education.

Macedonia currently is at the bottom of the list of countries in attracting foreign investment. Government experts interpret this as a result of mostly external factors, like: bad encirclement, crisis region, and high political risk. Still, negative internal factors cannot be neglected, like the inefficiency of the courts system, especially the length of legal processes. Many cases remain in the courts for months, enabling abuse of the private capital and mortgages are hard to realize. In addition, Macedonia is missing an image promotion, still has non-harmonized legal system and lots of administrative barriers. Good side is the low profit tax (15%), cheap labor force, rich natural resources, satisfactory infrastructure (especially telecommunications), and ready-made capacities.

Making the procedure easier for foreign investment entering is the goal of the Ministry of Economy that took charge for establishing the One-stop-shop. The plan is by the end of 2003 to start functioning the Agency for Foreign Direct Investments. The idea is that this agency is to be formed by law, and to be highly professional, flexible and have more independence in decision-making. This agency is supposed not only to attract foreign investors, but also to offer services in the preinvesting, investing and re-investing periods. Other tasks enumerated by law are the following: to prepare and annually to renew the manner of attracting foreign direct investments, to identify sectors that could attract foreign direct investment, to define a marketing message that could improve Macedonia's image as an attractive investment location, to initiate a dialogue between the private and

public sector, to present the country's potential in print or electronically, and to influence public opinion on the matter.

One of the Government measures for unemployment decrease was the initiative taken by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, which initiated a change in land utilization, in order to stimulate persons who are jobless to be offered land and work on it, to provide an income. After the current use of available land was checked, it was realized that a certain amount of land has not been used at all or has been used illegally. After the land distribution, a certain amount of money is to be given to the future users, so they can start the production circle. Here are added the benefits of non-paying a rent, the pension and health care fund which shall be covered by the state and the free advice for the agricultural initiative. As a result of this effort, in Sveti Nikole as a starting pilot project about seventy persons who have been recent social cases have turned into farmers.

Budget Rebalance

While discussing the budget rebalance, opposition parties accused the present government and the Minister of Finance Petar Goshev for producing economic collapse and catastrophic economic movements. Rejecting these accusations, Mr. Goshev argued that in the first six months of this year GDP growth has reached 2,7%³⁶, during the first seven months the industrial production was raised to 5,2%, the inflation is kept on 0.8% and foreign currency reserves are raised. According to him, the budget correction is into accord with IMF, and shall not disturb the macroeconomic stability of the country. "These are facts, regardless how impatient we are to feel the effects upon the standard of living, since that is impossible to be felt for only 11 months"-he said.

After finalizing the last round on budget expenditure for next year with the new Minister of Finance Nikola Popovski (after the government reshuffle), the IMF representative stated that the projected deficit of 0,9% of the brutto domestic product remains, the banking system is estimated as stable, and projected inflation shall be from 2,5 to 3%.

DPA Congress

During the month of July DPA held a Congress, announcing new directions in party's future political activity. In order to attract attention through promotion of radical policy, DPA determined in its platform the Albanians' right of self-determination, the establishment of a two-house Parliament and Macedonia to have obligatory an Albanian Vice-president of the Republic. Old DPA coalition partners VMRO-DPMNE and the Liberal Party did not send representatives, as a sign that they distance each other with the politics this party is currently leading.

DPA MP Ilijaz Halimi, commented that the party came back to Parliament due to the political developments in the country, the laws that now should be introduced (above all the law for territorial division and local communities financing), but also the worsened

³⁶ Which was close to the government projection of 3% growth for this year

security situation. Regarding the aspect of self-determination of the Albanians he stressed that by the constitutional changes after which Albanians have become a people, that right can be used in the moment when it is going to be estimated that collective interests of Albanians are endangered. One of the ways might be the federalization or cantonization of Macedonia. "We think that Macedonia should remain as a whole in these borders which we respect, but having in mind that although we have a Framework Agreement, the position of Albanians is getting worse, it is normal that Albanians could not reconcile with such a situation. Unfortunately, the situation is going towards that direction, because the government is behaving in such a way that dissatisfaction is growing every day. By the self-determination there will be a way out of the crisis"-he said.³⁷

PDP supported the DPA platform and in its action program gave the government six months time to implement the Framework Agreement principles into practice. If expectations were not met, the leader stated that "PDP might join the idea of self-determination of the Albanians" DPA was promoting. Regarding the DPA ideas for division of the country, DUI's leader Ahmeti for the Albanian journal "Clan" said that "Dhaferi is not right. It is not known to whom might serve his solution".

Changes in PDP

As a new President of PDP as new leader was chosen Abdulmenaf Bedgeti, professor in the Stuhl college in Tetovo, publicly known as the former Minister of Transport and Communications. In his speech he stated that he accepted the duty, in order to consolidate the party that has lost support of the electorate. He showed willingness to cooperate with all other ethnic Albanian political parties, but with the others as well, regarding the security, prosperity and in function of speedy implementation of the Framework Agreement. Among other goals he mentioned: high education on Albanian language, decentralization of power and new territorial division, regulating of the legal and financial situation of political parties, electoral reform, continuation of the struggle against organized crime. Special interest is to be given to the economic sector development³⁸. "Ohrid Agreement implementation is the first PDP priority and if the government does not stop making relative the laws that derive from it, this party shall reactivate the old initiative for self-determination of the Albanians", he stated. He continued by explaining that this is not a new idea, since a referendum was held by the party ten years ago and it was successful, so it should not be a taboo topic". He explicitly complained about the slowness of the process and introducing change, although it is planned and imposed upon the government as the most important priority.

Since the two ethnic Albanian parties DPA and PDP have again come up with the ideas of self-determination of the Albanians, there was a reaction by the NATO Ambassador Nicholas Bigman. He commented that the DPA and PDP position for NATO are considered as effort of those parties to gain publicity and because of that are not

³⁷ "Utrinski Vesnik", September 11, 2003

³⁸ To unemployment, non-investment, non-functioning of the economic institutions, suspicious privatization, inefficient administration etc

upsetting. "NATO would have been uneasy if DPA was on power. Seems that they have a need for publicity and I assume that by this they shall attract a little attention. As for PDP I'm a little confused that they are joining DPA",- he said. He also expressed disappointment for the DPA congress results, for the non-offered "new vision" of the party. "Before the Congress a new vision was promised, and we hoped for that. Instead, we got a vision that dates from the previous century, a vision for "self-determination" of the Albanians in Macedonia, which in practice would mean division of the country by an ethnic boundary. This old version died with the Ohrid Agreement"- stressed Mr. Bigman. As for the Ohrid Agreement application he said that "it is normal that implementing of such an agreement is very complicated and time-consuming. Everywhere in the world there were ethnic conflicts like these in Macedonia, but the problem is solved peacefully and agreement implementation is moving forward. But if you accuse someone, then do not forget that during the first year of implementation there was a coalition having DPA which was responsible for the position of the Albanians".

Changes in VMRO-DPMNE

The new VMRO-DPMNE leader Nikola Gruevski (former Minister of Finance) immediately after his election, appointed a new party leadership. As a vice-president is chosen the former minister of culture Ganka Samoilova-Cvetanovska, and for the Secretary general Dan Donchev. A new executive committee is chosen as well, which has been verified by the Central party committee. This new body has as members some of the former ministers, but also some well-known professionals. This was the first refreshed approach of the new leader, trying to improve the party image and to fill the important party places with people that do not carry the baggage of the former rule. Opposition officially promised to be constructive in supporting the strategic interests of the country, while at the same time severely criticizing the government on real policy issues.

VMRO-DPMNE critics to the Government on policy issues have been numerous: SDSM and the Prime Minister have gone out of the frames of the FA offering too much concessions to their Albanian partner on power; the census results are of dubious nature; the Minister of Interiors does not provide the country's safety and promotes revenge on prominent VMRO members for alleged criminal; in the economic domain poverty and unemployment are still dominant; the government is doing nothing to solve the problem of bankrupt enterprises, etc. Since a certain number of administrative workers have been released from their jobs³⁹ VMRO called upon all the bearers of public functions in the country to refuse to sign the decisions for dismiss from the job of persons working in the state administration. However, the public's general remark to the Government is that it does not create an atmosphere for change and reforms, characterizing the first year in office as gone in vain.

"Third" Option United

³⁹ At the end of the previous government mandate, large number of persons got employed in various administrative and public enterprises posts. See previous Barometers

The Democratic Alternative leader Vasil Tupurkovski together with the leader of the Socialist party Ljubisav Ivanov Zingo and the Democratic Union Pavle Trajanov created a tripartite coalition of the center named "Third Way". This coalition is planning to compete on the next local and presidential elections, promoting a common presidential candidate and mayors. Their basic aim is to "put an end to country's partization", by placing the right knowledgeable persons to adequate positions, instead of party soldiers. DU leader stated: "we are uniting, because the country is in crisis, there is huge human potential which is not included in the processes and we think that this potential may offer new visions and ideas". At the founding meeting the coalition asked for "free, democratic and unitary Macedonia".

The Census Results

Many speculations, political games and rumors preceded the announcement that final census results are going to be publicized on December 1st. Among others, the State Census Committee showed dissatisfaction with the so far treatment by the persons in charge from the Statistical Bureau, who "are not informing them sufficiently and on regular basis about the methodology for census data processing". Their better information was requested due to the politicized opinions that were circulating in public regarding the census data, especially the ethnic affiliation of the polled. Contrary to this, the Statistical Bureau responded that the SCC was regularly informed, has been only one to visit the Department for data processing, and at the second meeting not all SCC members were present so monitoring was not performed at that date. In addition, there is a special working group that follows the data input and can enter in those rooms at any time.

Finally, according to the official results presented that day, Macedonia has got 2.022.547 inhabitants, out of which Macedonians are 1.297.981 (or **64,18%**), Albanians 509.083 (or **25,17%**), Turks 77.959 (or **3,85%**), Roma 53.879 (or **2,66%**), Vlachs 9.695 (or **0,48%**), Serbs 35.939 (or **1,78%**), Bosniacs 17.018 (or **0,84%**) and others. Skopje has got the largest population concentration or 467.257 inhabitants (or 23,1%).

International monitoring mission stated that the census was performed professionally. The only remark is about the census of persons living abroad, which might have been counted twice. Otherwise, foreign ambassadors supported the results publicizing, as vital part of the Framework Agreement.

Almost all opposition parties, same as parties that belong to smaller ethnic groups, publicly doubted the census results. Opposition parties unofficially stated that in the census documentation are found about 500.000 persons who have no personal identification numbers, mainly of Albanian ethnicity and for which is not clear what status they shall get in the future.

A professor from the Institute for Geography from Skopje stated that such a grow in number of the Albanians is due to the mechanical influx, but also is due to serious indications that persons without citizenship or residence permits have been included in the total number. He thinks that it is impossible to have a growth of 70.000 persons if it

is known that the natural growth of the population number in the country is 8,5 permil. Namely, statisticians in the last census showed a percent of 25,17% (509.083) ethnic Albanians as of 22,7% (441.104) eight years ago. He says that when Macedonians are in question the process is reversed. In 1994 Macedonians were 1.295.964, while last year their number was 1.297.981 (64,18%), meaning that the number in the last eight years increased for only 2.017 persons⁴⁰. At the same time within these eight years the number of Albanians rapidly increased on 67.979 persons. Other experts of Macedonian origin say that Albanians in Macedonia are not over 19% and they might be even less. Some data have been cited, where in 1953 Albanians were 162.524, while now are 509.083. Other experts, who are ethnic Albanians say that Albanians should be about 28% and not the official 25%. But here are included all Albanians living in the state, regardless of they are Macedonian citizens or not.

Decentralization Process

Local selfgovernment decentralization process shall be performed by introducing change in 49 laws referring to many areas, like: urbanism, rural planning, environment protection, communal activities, water resources managing, roads, lights, green areas, local economic development, sports, recreation, social care, health, education etc. New local units duties imply a new territorial division of the country, where instead of the present 123 local communities, shall be lesser in number and bigger. Skopje is planned to be under a special treatment, where the city shall be divided in nine or ten local communities, which shall be regulated under a special law. In order to form a community, the minimum number of inhabitants requested is 5.000, but this was not the only criterion. Other than the demographic size of the unit, concentration of administrative and financial resources is important, together with the economic sustainability, which includes existence of sufficient number of economic units or firms that would generate sufficient resources for social community development⁴¹. Communities' sources of income should be reviewed, but it should be considered how taxes currently collected by the central government are to be transferred on the community accounts.

It is exactly the local community boundaries that arouse a lot of political games, manipulations and ethnic passion. Motivation varied from every side involved, seeing this operation as one of once in a lifetime importance. The Albanian diaspora through their representatives in October have asked from Ali Ahmeti to support the ideas for federalization of Macedonia, through the new territorial division of the country "as a counter-reaction of the not putting into effect the Ohrid Agreement". The diaspora expressed their dissatisfaction with DUI regarding their comportment on the matter "for propaganda reasons". If Ahmeti was not to accept their requests, they denied further funding to the former NLA fighters' families. If ideas for federalization were not to be accepted, was asked to be created new local communities, one in Skopje, to make Lipkovo a separate local community and creating one "Albanian" community in Struga

⁴⁰ He finds reasons for the lesser number of Macedonians in the migration processes and the lower birth rate.

⁴¹ Here were included the other social, health, educational, sports and other institutions as well.

and another one in Kichevo area. PDP has been complaining for the "unfavorable" conditions under which the territorial division of local communities is planned for Albanians living in Skopje and Struga, implying that the villages Arachinovo, Saraj and Studenicani are not to be included in the city of Skopje, in order to avoid having the Albanian as official language in the city. There have been used other examples to show the "efforts" to avoid concentration of the Albanian population.

On the other hand, other difficulties occur in local communities where Macedonians are a minority, like for example a line of villages near Tetovo. VMRO-DPMNE did not agree with the suggested new local communities boundaries, requesting to have more input in the process of their shaping⁴². This issue was one of the main points in the meeting between VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM representatives, since government was accused that the process of creating the new local units was "non-transparent" and "an effort to federalize the country". Common agreement on the number of local communities, (SDSM started with 60 and VMRO-DPMNE with 80 local units) was not reached. Although it was agreed while determining boundaries to take care of the predetermined parameters that would make a local community viable, still these meetings have been proven as unsuccessful.

OSCE reacted that a lot of "ethnic policy elements" have been present while creating the local community boundaries, instead of trying to concentrate more on the realistic needs of people and what shall they actually gain by decentralization. The Minister for Local Self-government stated that territorial division shall not cause ethnic and political divide⁴³. He felt that most sensitive part of the process is the transferring of duties in the areas of health and education. As a reaction to the opposition question what are the protection mechanisms of the state for consistent application of program education concepts, he was categorical that supervision remains on central level and here substantial role shall play the state audit, the Ministry of Finance and the Public Revenue Office. Supervision is going to be stronger, inspectors shall be reintroduced and there shall be discipline and criminal measures, up to the level of suspension. The state is going to control the constitutionality and legality of the local communities' and mayors' deeds since they are going to get bigger power, authorizations and money. "If we build communities-feuds, then we shall not succeed-he said. He stressed that local self-government reform shall make sense only if citizens get better conditions and bigger opportunity for decision-making. New local communities shall start to exist as of January 1st 2005.

At last, the Government determined the key decentralization Laws for Territorial Division and for the City of Skopje. Drafts shall be put on a public debate and published

⁴² This party has prepared a separate law for territorial reorganization, where 81 local communities are planned, out of which 33 urban and 58 rural communities.

⁴³ Experts express fear that like in 1996 when local communities creation was made by using political criteria, the same mistake shall be made again. They stress that there is no feasibility study which describes the economic viability, infrastructure, geographic location, administrative capacity for duties application, cultural and historic criteria, and the so far experience. They say that it is important for the new law to have mechanisms for local communities where Macedonians are a minority by which they are going to be protected from majorization or humiliation of their ethnic and cultural identity.

in daily newspapers. All opinions shall be taken under consideration, and citizens shall be included in the whole process, by having the possibility of holding a referendum if they wish to, but it shall have no obligatory consequence to the decision-makers. According to the drafts, Macedonia shall be divided in 71 local communities and the capital shall be a special self-government unit, which shall contain 9 or 10 local units. This means that 33 communities shall be urban and 29 rural. In 62 local communities shall be organized complete local self-governing, while the city of Skopje shall share the duties with the communities. Inhabitants of 27 local communities shall be able other than the Macedonian language to use the language of the ethnic community above 20% of the inhabitants, in fact shall have oral and written communication on Albanian, Turkish, Serbian or Roma language⁴⁴. Average size of a local community is 28.000 inhabitants. The Minister admitted that this suggested territorial division was a product of application of objective criteria, but also there was political pressure, which is a result of every coalition government. Dissatisfied remained the cities of Kichevo and Struga, whose mayors feel that they are the scapegoat of political negotiations between DUI and SDSM/LDP. Main complaint is that in the urban local communities have been added the surrounding villages which are inhabited mostly by ethnic Albanians, thus changing the ethnic structure of the local unit. It is expected that these interventions shall introduce interethnic problems in the communities' functioning, so both mayors announced that they are going to organize local referendums and see if the inhabitants are going to change this government idea.

Disarmament Campaign

There were different opinions about when the disarmament campaign should start, but Macedonian authorities insisted that this should happen during the year 2003. The Minister of Interiors thought that "by postponing the operation for next spring we do not gain anything else but increase of the number of victims due to illegal weapons possession". Government intended to coordinate the campaign with the "Concordia" military mission cessation, and that is why it was agreed campaign to start from November 15th and finish by December 15th. The Law that has been passed⁴⁵ shall be in full effect after December 15th, when the new, severe measures shall be applied. There shall be no alternative punishment of paying fines or imprisonment to up to three years for illegal weapons possession. New penalties shall be prison starting from one to ten years. If weapon quantities are larger, or the person is producing or selling weapons, the penalty is starting from minimum 5 years.

Estimations of the Ministry are that currently in the country are 150.000 pieces of legal weapons of light caliber, meaning that every tenth citizen or every third household is armed. Disarmament initiative was a result of the increased need of a second disarmament campaign after the first one, which was performed by the NATO forces in

⁴⁴ More precisely, in 25 communities shall be used together with the Macedonian the Albanian language, in one the Turkish language, and in one the Roma language. In two other communities Macedonian shall be used together with the Albanian and Turkish language, and in one Macedonian together with Albanian and Serbian.

⁴⁵ See previous Barometer

autumn 2001. Estimation is that at that point of time very small number of weapons was handed over, so since that period there was a significant number of civilian casualties due to the illegal weapons possessed by persons involved in criminal activities or being without permit or knowledge of how to use it. Statistics say that during the year 2001 have been registered over 90 cases of heavy injuries or injury with lethal consequences caused by arms of different type.

DUI's MP Gzim Ostreni who was Chief of Staff of the former NLA is the President of the Coordinative body for implementation of the Law for Voluntary Handing Over and Collecting of Illegal Weapons, Ammunition, Explosive Substances and Weapons Legalization. Opposition commented that this is a very understanding appointment, since DUI representatives have the information about the import and use of illegal weapons during the conflict. Still, none commented the purchase of 600 expensive pieces of weapon by the VMRO ex-minister of Interiors who gave them as a gift to his collaborators, high party people and supporters. DUI members replied that not only they have that knowledge, since information about the issue have the former government people as well.

At the debate organized by the London Institute for Military and Peace Research was estimated that regardless of the actual number of collected weapons, the disarmament action may be estimated as successful. The only person who did not agree was the DPA MP Ruzhdi Matoshi, who thought that the action shall not be successful, because adequate climate has not been created, for which an additional reason is the non-realization of the Framework Agreement. According to the Chief of the Operation center, the action is going as planned, since the anticipated figures in the first and second phase are realized: collected are exactly 13.235 pieces of weapons and 938 pieces of other weapons. In neighboring countries were collected in average five to six thousand weapons in one operation. He also informed that largest problems were met in areas where mayors were persons from the DPA party. Expectations are that the third phase will be the most successful one.

Religious or Political (?) Issues

On the occasion of the festivity of the century tradition of the Ohrid Archbishopry, the Archbishop Ohrid-Macedonian g.g. Stefan stated "recognition is the established way of living in the Orthodox Church, but we are still a victim of the non-determined principle who should recognize who. The history so far has not marked an example of an autocephalous church to exist in a certain period of time, to be stopped its activity and mission, again to be established and not to be recognized". This comment was directed to the latest events of worsening the relations between the MOC and the SOC⁴⁶. Lately, the SOC appointed high church officials⁴⁷ who are by origin from Macedonia, by putting

⁴⁶ Serbian Orthodox Church

⁴⁷ In May the SOC proclaimed a parallel church in Macedonia, by proclaiming "a holy Synod of the autonomous Ohrid Archbishopry". The Synod of the MOC unanimously rejected this decision, by annulling it, since from 1959 MOC has its own Constitution. In the official announcement MOC states that

then under SOC jurisdiction in the areas that are in today's Republic of Macedonia. Although there have been diplomatic efforts to somehow settle the dispute by having the Russian Orthodox Church as mediator, due to the latest moves of the SOC the initiative has been frozen. MOC has seen those moves of the SOC as direct provocation.

Although the Russian OC carefully follows the developments in the Balkans (meaning the decision of the SOC to elect bishops for the Polog-Kumanovo eparchy in Macedonia), still the Russian Patriarch does not withdraw from his mediation role. However, it is very unrealistic to hope that this mission shall start soon, considering the current circumstances. Macedonian Government publicly supported the MOC, stating that it stands firmly in defense of its integrity and identity of the state and MOC. "The Government is categorical in maintaining and defending the autocephalous status and the completeness of the MOC, maintaining and defense of its name which is directly in relation with the national identity of the Macedonian people and the Macedonian state are of strategic interest not only to the Church and the people, but to the government as well"- stated the government port-parole.

Public Opinion Polls

In June, the NGO "Project for Common Vision" came in public with the research results. Data show that about 68% of the Macedonians and 78% of the Albanians believe that trust may be returned after the 2001 conflict. About 78% think that the conflict had a political and not an ethnic background. As 51% of the poled state, politicians are the ones to blame for the 2001 conflict. According to Macedonians, "the conflict was caused by politicians who benefit for personal interests, or because of their incapability through systematic practice of irritating have prepared all conditions for a fabricated armed conflict". Opposed to this, 29% think that they are to blame for the conflict. A third group of 16% thinks that the conflict came as a historic circumstance, meaning that the roots of the conflict should be seeked in a certain historic necessity, inevitable to occur. Regarding the current situation in the state, as well as a shopping list of priorities, citizens think that first and most important is the country's economic stabilization and then follow the decentralization process, struggle against corruption and nepotism, interethnic relations, and the Framework Agreement implementation.

In the beginning of October according to the International Republican Institute poll, the rating of Prime Minister Branko Crvenkovski and the Minister of Exteriors Ilinka Mitreva has gone down, same as the trust in the government. More popular have become the mayor of Skopje Risto Penov and the President of the Parliament Nikola Popovski. There is an evident turn among Albanian leaders as well, since Arben Dhaferi (11%) is leading in comparison with Ali Ahmeti's popularity (7%). Over half of the respondents were dissatisfied with the work of the government (60%), and increased is the number of those who are disappointed from the election results (53%). Asked for whom would they vote if elections were held today, 20% replied SDSM (as opposed to 23% before in April), 10% VMRO-DPMNE, DUI 5% (as of 12% in April), DPA 4% (5% before), 2%

SOC breaches the church rules in a vulgar manner and that is inappropriate to mix up in the life of an independent Orthodox Church.

PDP and 1,4% LDP. There is a raise in number of people who would not vote for any party (the Macedonians is 23%). One quarter (25%) do not know who to vote. Within the Albanian block per se, 23% would vote for DUI, 20% DPA and 8% PDP. In this block is raised the number of those who would not vote at all (19%). Still, as the largest problem in Macedonia respondents stated the unemployment (40%), then followed the poverty and the low standard of living. In the question whether the country is moving to the right direction or not, 44% said that it is moving to the wrong direction, but this is an improved percent, since in April 62% of the polled were pessimistic. Slight increase show the persons who think that the country is moving to the right direction (18%), as opposed to the ones in April (16%). Regarding the perspective of the Macedonian economy for the next two years 36% think that it will improve and in comparison with the 2001 results the number of pessimists decreases (35% think now that the economy shall develop negatively, as opposed to 43% back then). The support towards the Ohrid Agreement is raising. According to results from 2001 now the support is 55%. The name recognition (53%) and the visa regime (31%) are two of the major external policy problems.

According to the repeated November IRI poll, the most serious problem Macedonia is facing today is unemployment (51%) and then follow again economic problems and privatization (15%), low standard and poverty (13%), and then much lower on the scale are interethnic relations (2%), corruption (2%), security crisis (1%), peace and stability (1%) etc. About half of the polled still think that Macedonia is moving in the wrong direction, while the percent of those who think that the state is moving in the right direction is only 15%. As the most important external policy issue is mentioned the recognition of the state name (41%), abolishing visa requirements (32%), Euroatlantic integration (14%), struggle against terrorism (10%), etc. Large majority of the polled support entering in NATO (76%) and in EU (92%). Over half (58%) of the respondents believe that the FA is a successful story while 34% do not agree. Last data say the all parties' rating is going down: SDSM 17%, VMRO-DPMNE 9%, DUI 8%, SP 2%, LDP 1%, DA 1%, DPA 2%, PDP 1% others 5%, shall not vote 21% and undecided 27%. As for support of individual politicians, the ratings are the following:

Name	Has support	Does not have support
Branko Crvenkovski	41%	55%
Ljubco Georgievski	24%	72%
Arben Dhaferi	22%	73%
Stojan Andov	20%	74%
Ali Ahmeti	25%	71%
Risto Penov	39%	53%
Ganka Samoilova- Cvetanovska	33%	54%
Trifun Kostovski	46%	40%
Tito Petkovski	48%	46%
Aziz Polozani	21%	70%
Musa Dhaferi	20%	67%
Nikola Popovski	48%	45%
Den Donchev	17%	51%

Abdulmenaf Bedzeti	21%	65%
Hari Kostov	40%	51%
Mehduh Tachi	16%	76%
Nikola Gruevski	52%	41%
Vlado Buckovski	40%	43%
Dosta Dimovska	14%	80%
Ilinka Mitreva	44%	50%
Boris Trajkovski	40%	55%

When asked who is their most favored politician, respondents replied: Kiro Gligorov 13%, Branko Crvenkovski and Nikola Gruevski 11% each, Ali Ahmeti 7%, Tito Petkovski 6%, Arben Dhaferi 4%, Ljubco Georgievski 3%, Boris Trajkovski 2%, Vasil Tupurkovski 2%, Nikola Popovski 2%.