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MACEDONIA OVERSHADOWS EU SUMMIT

Stockholm / Pristina, March 23, 2001

The deteriorating situation in Macedonia is high on the agenda as European leaders gathered in Stockholm today. Among guests at the EU Summit are Macedonian President Boris TRAJKOVSKI (*below left*), and Russian leader Vladimir PUTIN, who is also determined the Albanian uprising should be put down.



The situation remains tense, with more fighting overnight - 10 hours after Albanian rebels declared a ceasefire. The UN refugee agency said about 20,000 people had so far fled.

"Dialogue has to be with those who have deliberately chosen a political cause - the ballot box rather than the bullet and the bomb," European Commissioner for External Affairs Chris PATTEN said in Stockholm. He urged Macedonia to keep its nerve, and predicted "the armed extremists will lose."



Condemnation of the rebels has been near-universal, from the OSCE to the UN General Assembly. Today, under pressure from western leaders, the three main political leaders in Kosovo called on extremist groups to lay down their arms. The communiqué was signed by Ibrahim RUGOVA, leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo, and two former leaders of the Kosovo

Liberation Army, Hashim THACI, and Ramush HARADINAJ.

But the situation remains ominous. Fortifications and road blocks in and around Macedonia's second city Tetovo were reported still in place today, and there was no mass retreat by the insurgents. "If the Macedonian army and police go on a total offensive, we will move on to total guerrilla warfare and extend it to other cities," a rebel commander names Sokoli told Deutsche Welle radio

UNILATERAL CEASEFIRE BY REBELS

Skopje, Macedonia, March 22, 2001

A midnight deadline for the guerrillas to quit positions in the mountains above the city expired 15 minutes after Macedonian President Boris TRAJKOVSKI, following talks with political leaders, said: "We agreed not to comment" on the truce.

The ethnic Albanian rebels' declaration of a "unilateral, unlimited cease-fire" was made just five hours before the ultimatum ran out. They proposed talks on a peaceful solution. The Macedonian Army and Interior Ministry special police force have been poised since Tuesday to launch an all-out offensive.



Trajkovski (*left*) said nothing had been ruled out: "We have agreed on the need to neutralize the terrorist threat quickly and efficiently and to condemn the use of violence to achieve political goals," he told reporters.

ETHNIC ALBANIANS IN MACEDONIA

Source: Macedonian government, March 22, 2001

The official data from the last census, carried out on June 20, 1994, says that 22.9 of the population in Macedonia are ethnic Albanians. The census was officially recognized by the Council of Europe and the OSCE.

The total number of members of the Parliament of Republic of Macedonia is 120. Since the last parliamentary elections in 1998 there are 25 MPs who are ethnic Albanians - 11 from the DPA, and 14 from the opposition PDP.

In the current Macedonian Government, there are three coalition partners: VMRO-DPMNE, the Democratic Party of the Albanians, and the Liberal Party. The Government of Macedonia is composed of 15 ministers, and five of them (i.e. one third of the total members of the Government) are Albanians. Five deputy ministers are also ethnic Albanians.

For the first time, two ethnic Albanians have been elected deputy ministers in very delicate ministries - the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Internal Affairs. Moreover, since the beginning of 1999, for the first time the head of police in Tetovo is an ethnic Albanian.

Since gaining its independence, the Republic of Macedonia has been paying significant attention to inter-ethnic harmonization, as well as sustaining and developing all ethnic and cultural identities.

The political parties of ethnic Albanians have participated in all governments with their ministers and deputy ministers, directors of public enterprises etc. The efforts and achievements of the current Macedonian Government in improving inter-ethnic relations and protecting the rights of minorities, through everyday activities for greater integration of all entities in the social life, represent an evident proof for that.

The percentage of ethnic - Albanian citizens employed in the public administration is showing significantly and permanently. Bearing in mind that the percentage in 1993 equaled only 3%, we can say that it has been growing ever since, and is still growing, considering the today the number exceeds 10%...

In the last local elections, held in September 2000, 26 ethnic Albanians were elected mayors of municipalities; the total number of municipalities in Macedonia is 123.

The draft law on altering and annexing the Law on Local Self-Government is in parliamentary procedure. The new law is supported by the Council of Europe and will improve functional decentralisation and significantly extend the authorities of the municipal representatives, their greater independence in the decision-making process, as well as independence in managing budgets.

The unique system of education provides education for Albanian young people in their own language in all subjects from primary to university education. 30.41% (77,496 pupils) of the total number of pupils in primary education are ethnic Albanians. They are in 2,986 classes and are educated in the Albanian language. Primary and secondary education in Macedonia are funded by the state.

There are 15,302 students of Albanian nationality, i.e. 17%, receiving secondary education i.e. the high schools. They are in 450 classes, including all fields of vocational and general high school education.

A rising number of young Albanians are educated in both state universities in Skopje and Bitola. The university administrations and the Ministry of Education are committed to involving a larger number of students from different nationalities. Both of the state universities have for years implemented "affirmative action"...ensuring that there will be 22.3% Albanians among new students.

The "Law on Use of the Languages of the Nationalities in the Pedagogical Faculty in Skopje", passed in 1997, anticipates a larger number of students being educated in the languages of the nationalities. At the moment, the Pedagogical Faculty in Skopje produces a sufficient number of teaching personnel, including teachers in various kindergartens and teachers in the elementary schools, to meet the needs of Albanian children. The head of the faculty, the dean, is of Albanian nationality, while the professors are Albanian in proportion to the number of Albanian students... Furthermore, a Department of Albanian Language and Literature has been established within the framework of the Faculty of Philology.

The new Law on Higher Education, passed last autumn, enables the foundation of a South-Eastern Europe Private University in Tetovo... This University is due to commence its work with the first generation of students this autumn. The adoption of the new Law on Higher Education was supported by the OSCE and the EU, and was supported by various political parties.

The information system includes a remarkable number of media in Albanian. There are 64 newspapers, magazines, and other periodicals in Albanian registered with the Agency of Information, out of which four are daily newspapers, 12 weekly, and 25 monthly. Albanians have also registered many electronic media - radio and TV stations broadcasting in Albanian language.

Furthermore, the second channel of the Macedonian National Television, as a public state-owned national broadcasting service, broadcasts at least six programs in the languages of the nationalities every day - more than 70 % (at least 4 hours) is in Albanian language. Macedonian Television also organizes and broadcasts numerous festivals and other cultural events in Albanian. The preparation of a third Macedonian Television channel is on its way. The purpose of this channel is to broadcast programmes only in the languages of the nationalities, mainly Albanian.

In short, Albanians in the Republic of Macedonia have everything that any other citizen has, regardless of whether he is Turkish, Macedonian, Roman, or Serb.

Because Macedonia is a democratic country in which it is not forbidden to talk openly and loudly concerning any particular issue. The doors of democracy are open for everyone, but there is no place for Kosovo's terrorists in our country.

In the Balkans and the wider region, there is not a country that has such a democracy and inter-ethnic improvement like Macedonia does. When you compare the human rights and life conditions in this region, you can conclude that an ethnic Albanian would rather choose to live in Macedonia than in Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, or even Albania.

TENSE CALM BEFORE MIDNIGHT DEADLINES

Skopje, Macedonia, March 21, 2001



Javier SOLANA, EU foreign affairs representative (*right*), yesterday tried to enlist Macedonia's ethnic Albanian political parties in efforts to end fighting by Albanian insurgents.

This morning, a tense calm was reported from the second city of Tetovo after the government warned ethnic Albanian guerrillas to withdraw, surrender, or face an onslaught of tanks and artillery.

The government gave the rebels until midnight to quit their positions in the hills above Tetovo, the country's unofficial ethnic Albanian capital.

Last night, a statement signed by the leaders of the two largest Albanian parties after talks with Solana called for "groups which have taken up arms on the territory of our state to lay down their arms and return to their homes peacefully". The statement was broadcast later on state television.

But the Democratic Party for Albanians (DPA) appears divided about remaining in the coalition government with the Christian Democratic VO-DPMNE under prime minister Ljubco GEORGIEVSKI. Arben XHAFERI, the party's leader, said the DPA intended to remain, but deputy leader Menduh THACI told reporters: "The party is torn between two views."

The EU is instead encouraging moderate ethnic Albanian politicians in both Macedonia and Kosovo to speak out against the Albanian insurgents, who were last night fighting Macedonian police in the north-western town of Tetovo for the seventh day running.

Solana supported the government's refusal to negotiate with the e insurgents, who do not yet enjoy widespread support among Macedonia's Albanians: "These terrorists have to be isolated."



MACEDONIA - HOW THE CONFLICT ESCALATED

Brussels, March 20, 2001

- Jan. 22 National Liberation Army launches grenade attack on police station in Tearce, ethnic Albanian village in western Macedonia, killing one.
- Feb. 17 Border patrol exchanges fire with ethnic Albanian militants near village of Tanusevci.
- Feb. 26 Insurgents in Tanusevci open fire on police, drawing army units into clashes.
- Feb. 27 NATO sends advisers to help Macedonia contain insurrection and moves more observers to Kosovo boundary.
- March 4 Three Macedonian army soldiers killed near Tanusevci.
- March 5 Macedonian authorities announce plan coordinated with NATO to combat guerilla activity, using border guard units.
- March 7 U.S. peacekeepers in Kosovo wound two men in gunbattle near Macedonian border.

- March 8 Ethnic Albanian guerillas ambush Macedonian police convoy near Tanusevci, killing at least one policeman.
- March 10 Rebels call for constitutional changes and end to alleged discrimination against ethnic Albanians in Macedonian political institutions.
- March 13 Rally organized by moderate ethnic Albanian party draws about 30,000 people in Skopje, the capital.
- March 14 Rally organized by ethnic Albanian militants draws 5,000 in Tetovo, Macedonia's second-largest city. Heavy shooting erupts in suburbs; state radio reports at least 10 people injured, including eight policemen.

MACEDONIA - SOLANA FLIES TO BALKANS

Brussels, March 20, 2001

EU foreign ministers last night issued the following statement:

- * We are deeply concerned about the situation in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and southern Serbia. The EU calls for an immediate halt to the violence. We discussed this also with Foreign Minister Kerim of FYROM.
- * The Council made a strong statement against the extremist Albanian groups. The EU will not tolerate any support for insurgents. We support the moderate and democratic Albanian groups.
- * We also agreed a package of measures to prevent the crisis in Macedonia from escalating further. It includes assistance for border control, and promoting inter-ethnic relations, as proposed by the government of FYROM. We met with Nato Secretary-General. Lord Robertsson, and discussed co-ordination KFOR-EU. We support a strengthened presence of the OSCE.
- * The High Representative Javier Solana is going to Skopje tonight together with representatives for the Presidency. I will go there on Thursday together with the EU Troika.
- * We also decided formally to send more EUMM observers to Presevo. The EUMM will double the number of observers in Presevo to 20 in four days, and then increase further (30).
- * We had a thorough discussion on Bosnia with High Representative Petrisch. We emphasised the Dayton/Paris agreements and our support for a unified state. The citizens and people of Bosnia and Herzegovina can only move towards Europe in the framework of a unified state.

MACEDONIA 'FROM BAD TO WORSE'

Transitions on Line, Skopje, Macedonia, March 19, 2001

"We want arms," a crowd of more than 3,000 ethnic Macedonians from Tetovo shouted at President Boris TRAJKOVSKI - who was appealing for calm and reason - at a protest in front of the Macedonian Assembly on March 17.

Ethnic Macedonians - mostly women and children - from Tetovo have been fleeing the city since the fighting between Macedonian police and Albanian terrorists started on 14 March. In the protests on March 17 and 18 in Skopje, Macedonian refugees from Tetovo requested that the government take immediate action against the Albanian insurgents. Most of the refugees are now staying in Skopje, and in other cities in the eastern part of the country where the majority of the population is ethnic Macedonian.

Ethnic Albanians from the villages near Tetovo are leaving their homes as well. Some have said that rebels from the ethnic Albanian National Liberation Army (UCK) have tried to force them to join the organization and fight. Albanian authorities said that as many as 1,200 people have entered Albania.

Events escalated on 14 March during a demonstration in support of the UCK. Three ethnic Albanian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) organized a rally in Tetovo to protest what they believe to be unfair treatment of the Albanian minority. At the demonstration, Miljaim FEJZUI, the president of an NGO called the Human Rights Forum in Gostivar, said that "We support the KLA. They are our children who were brave enough to go to the forest."

Gostivar is in the western part of the country, where the majority of the population is ethnic Albanian. While the protest of approximately 2,000 people was occurring, shots were fired from the nearby forest.

Since then, the fighting in Tetovo has continued day and night, as ethnic Albanians battle from their positions in the forest near the city, and Macedonian police answer with gunshots from within the city.

Macedonian politicians are trying to find a solution, but the divide between the ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian factions in the government is growing. Despite the fact that all the parties in the parliament - including the opposition and ethnic Albanian parties - voted on 17 March to support the government in the fight against the armed extremists, contradictory viewpoints have emerged.

On March 18, Prime Minister Ljubco GEORGIEVSKI said in an address to the nation that "Macedonia will use all its forces to stop the terror and aggression from Kosovo ... Nobody is negotiating or will negotiate with the terrorists." He went on to say that Macedonian police and armed forces will not cede even one centimetre of territory, further insisting that Albanians in Macedonia have equal rights and that "Macedonia has a high level of multi-ethnic cooperation."

His partner in the government, Arben XHAFERI - president of the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) - did not agree that the people in the mountains are Kosovar insurgents. Xhaferi said that those fighting are normal inhabitants of Macedonia who have had enough of the oppressive political climate against ethnic Albanians. "If Western countries do not help us," Xhaferi said the same day, "the fighting will go on."

The prime minister and the DPA are united in their condemnation of what they see as a lack of assistance from the international community. Western countries have announced their support for Macedonia, but many in the country feel the support has not been clear or concrete enough.

Last week, KFOR and Yugoslav forces began operations near in the border region between Kosovo, southern Serbia, and Macedonia to try to flush the Albanian rebels out of the area, but NATO has insisted it will not send combat troops to assist Macedonian authorities with the struggle against the rebels.

Meanwhile, most Macedonians - of all ethnicities - were still hoping for peace last week, even as the fighting continued to spread.

- by Gordana Icevska

MACEDONIA 'CLOSE TO PRECIPICE' - BILDT

Skopje, Macedonia, March 19, 2001

Macedonia's security forces are proving no match for the self-styled National Liberation Army, dismissed by NATO last week as a small group of extremists, according to UN special envoy to the Balkans Carl BILDT (*left*).



"What we have in Tetovo is civil war," the former Swedish prime minister said during a visit to Skopje on 18/03. "It is eating up the fabric of a fragile state. We are uncomfortably close to the precipice."

The guerrillas were "a competent military organisation," he said. "They have a core of very experienced fighters. They are well fortified, evidently well prepared, and in all probability they control substantial parts of the hinterland."

Like the Macedonian prime minister, Bildt - former leader of Sweden's [Moderaterna](#) party - was highly critical of western failure to avert the crisis, and felt "a moral debt" to reward Macedonia for its support during the 1999 Kosovo crisis had not been honoured.

K-For, the peacekeeping force in Kosovo had failed to cut supply routes to the rebels, he said. The UN shared the blame: "It is an acute embarrassment if territory the UN is responsible for is used for terrorist actions against a neighbouring country. If we are serious about this we need considerable more manpower on the border."

ALBANIAN REVOLT GAINS MOMENTUM

Tetovo, Macedonia / Brussels, March 19, 2001

The ill-equipped Macedonian army today sent four tanks into the country's second city of Tetovo - a centre of ethnic Albanian population - to try to hold back ethnic Albanian guerrillas.



In Brussels, NATO Secretary-General Lord ROBERTSON said more troops were being sent to the Kosovo border with Macedonia to cut off supply lines. "We are determined to

starve this limited group of extremists of the means of carrying on the fighting", he said.



In an address to the nation yesterday, Prime Minister Ljubco GEORGIEVSKI - whose Christian Democratic party is close to the EPP - said: "Macedonia will win this battle without giving up a single foot of our territory. And after the victory, Macedonians and Albanians will continue to live together - as they must."

EU foreign ministers today discussed proposals for supporting the Macedonian government, including help in improving border security and increased financial aid.

But Georgievski accused the US and Germany of not doing enough to stop the rebels: "You cannot convince us that the chieftains of these gangs are unknown to your governments, nor can you persuade us that they cannot be stopped."

Despite denials that the uprising has been instigated by the Kosovo Liberation Army, fears are growing that the rebels' intention is to carve out an enlarged Kosovo, including part of Macedonia. The country has at least 500,000 Albanian inhabitants, although some claim they represent as much as a third of the 2m population.

The Democratic Albanian Party is a partner in the coalition government - whose leadership is close to the EPP. But many ethnic Albanians complain they are still treated as second-class citizens. The revolt in Macedonia has spread far more quickly, and with greater violence, than expected.

The rebels are demanding international mediation:

- to resolve their differences with the Slavic majority, and to determine the exact size of the ethnic Albanian community. , variously estimated between 22 percent and 30 percent of the country's 2 million people;
- changes in the Macedonian constitution to declare the country ``a state of two constituent peoples - Macedonian and Albanian" to prevent discrimination.
- The release of all "political prisoners."

'Kosovo a dangerous precedent' - analysis by Prof Mark Mazower

Financial Times, March 16, 2001

The west's Kosovo campaign, which resulted in borders being changed by force, has set a dangerous regional precedent, says Mark Mazower

A century ago, Macedonia was plagued by bombs, assassinations and armed bands. In those days it was part of the Ottoman empire and the moustachioed revolutionaries fighting Sultan Abdul Hamid were mostly Macedonian Slavs. They blew up banks, sank ships and even triggered a peasant uprising - all in the hope of dragging the Great Powers into the region.

Ottoman troops burned their villages in revenge and the peasants suffered, as so often before, for a dream of independence most of them did not share. The powers sent inspectors to make sure the Turks ruled Macedonia properly but did not support the insurgents' cause - and the guerrilla bands of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation never prevailed against the Ottoman army. After 1912, when the empire lost its last European territories, the lands they claimed went to Serbia and Greece. Their troops, not bands of bandoliered irregulars, decided the fate of the region.

Today, the Macedonian state, formed in the aftermath of the collapse of Yugoslavia, is having to cope in its turn with insurgency. The armed Albanians infiltrating from Kosovo are in many ways mirroring IMRO's tactics. They have already gone one better than IMRO in Kosovo itself: two years ago, in the classic style of Balkan revolutionary activity, the irregulars of the Kosovo Liberation Army managed to gain victory, not by defeating the Serbian army, but rather by provoking the Serbs and then manoeuvring the Great Powers to intervene on their behalf.

Having the powers fight their wars for them in this way was exactly how Greece and Bulgaria won independence in the 19th century. Now, however, some armed Albanian units have moved into southern Serbia proper and also across the border into Macedonia, a fragile polity with a large Albanian minority. There seems a strong possibility of further clashes between these bands and Macedonia's fledgling army this spring. Will the borders of Macedonia remain unchanged?

Europe tore itself apart fighting over borders through much of the 20th century. In 1975 a meeting in Finland tried to change all that: the Helsinki Final Act declared that henceforth the boundaries of European states would not be changed by force. But the death-throes of Yugoslavia have tested this principle to the limit. Not so much in Bosnia, where international intervention was supposed to protect Bosnia from external aggression. But in Kosovo, matters were different.

Because Kosovo was technically part of Serbia, Nato's campaign against the Serbs involved it in that republic's internal affairs. At the time, the west's spokesmen argued that preventing "ethnic cleansing" and human catastrophe trumped such considerations. The outcome was to tear Kosovo from Belgrade's control. At present, Nato insists that the province will remain part of Yugoslavia. But until the interests of Kosovo and rump Serbia converge more closely, it is hard to take this very seriously.

Autonomy and eventually independence for the province seem far more likely. This means that inter-national borders will have been changed by force through events initiated by armed ethnic Albanian separatists. In which case, some KLA activists argue, if Kosovo, why not Macedonia too, where large numbers of Albanians live as well? And so the west is forced to confront these unpredictable consequences of its Kosovo campaign.

If the international community makes it clear that it will not countenance any change in Macedonia's borders, some of the steam may go out of the National Liberation Army, the KLA offshoot. The Americans, in particular, need to listen to their European partners, to stop demonising the Serbs and to take the threat of Albanian separatism seriously.

More concrete measures should be taken, too. Guerrillas and brigands have traditionally flourished in the Balkans and exploited its mountains. They have flourished, however, only when permitted - by weakness or indifference - to do so.

Brigandage died out quickly in the early 20th century, when states organised professional police forces. Guerrillas were never a match for regular troops and when borders were closed, and supply and escape routes were shut off, their activity fell away sharply. Tito's closure of his border with Greece crippled the insurgent Democratic Army of Greece during the civil war in the late 1940s and brought it swiftly to an end. Macedonia's borders with Kosovo should be properly patrolled, not half-heartedly as the Americans have been doing until recently.

Nato should also recognise the regional nature of this problem. The possibility of conflict in Macedonia has alarmed all her neighbours. Serbia may have been the enemy in Kosovo but, without Serbian assistance, especially in policing the no-man's-land on the Serbia- Kosovo border, things are going to get a lot worse.

Greece takes the threat of instability and further refugee flows so seriously that George Papandreou, its foreign minister, rushed recently to reassure the Macedonians of his government's support.

As for the Bulgarians, who may now provide military aid to Skopje, their country was torn apart in the first half of the last century by Macedonian activists; they know the importance of preserving tranquillity.

Many Albanians, too, are far from sharing the ideals of the NLA. Albania itself, Europe's poorest and most youthful state, has the continent's worst brain-drain: a large number of its intellectuals have left the country; a majority of students sees no future at home.

Political stability, the restructuring of public institutions and economic growth are what Albania requires, not more fighting and more land. Inside Macedonia itself the maximalists are still a fringe group. So far the Macedonian government, for all its many problems - refugees from Kosovo, poor economic performance, internal political scandals - has shown sensitivity about the question of ethnic relations. Ljubco Georgievski's administration includes an Albanian party and has supported a new, private Albanian-language university. Such policies may allow a new relationship between majority and minority to emerge throughout society, not only the elite.

Even if things do not proceed down this benign path, it is difficult to see how the diehards of the KLA can win. A Greater Albania, like some well known expansionist adventures of the past, would be more likely to end up harming its intended beneficiaries, as well as everyone else. Let us hope they, and we, do not have to find out the hard way.

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