

Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research

**Issue N.4
March 2002**

B A R O M E T E R

Political Developments in the Republic of Macedonia

Dr. Aneta Jovevska
Dr. Natasa Gaber-Damjanovska

**In cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation
Regional Office Macedonia**

C O N T E N T S

- 1. Framework Agreement influence**
- 2. President's speech at the end of the year 2001**
- 3. Statistical data by the end of 2001**
- 4. Law for local self-government**
- 5. Displaced persons**
- 6. The name issue**
- 7. Personal Changes in the Ministry of Exteriors**
- 8. The Amnesty Issue**
- 9. Amber Fox Mission**
- 10. Election law novelties**
- 11. Northern Border Issue**
- 12. Political Regroupings**
- 13. The Albanian Coordinative Body**
- 14. Public Opinion**

Framework Agreement influence

Obligations taken by the parties involved with the actual signing of the Framework Agreement and its verification in the Macedonian Assembly are the main mark of all political events that took place in the last couple of months. In fact, the implementation of the Framework Agreement imposes the dynamics of the political agenda that has to be followed in the near future as well. When in question the first three months of this year, party elites were supposed to reach agreement for introducing the new law for local self-government, the amnesty law, the set of election laws which are the basic precondition for setting the date for early elections etc. For that purpose the Macedonian government (on 19.02.2002) adopted a priority list for the Framework Agreement implementation. This list contains legal projects, as well as changes and adjustments of the already existing laws, which are under the authority of the Ministry of Interiors and the Ministry of Justice.

President's speech at the end of the year 2001

One week before New Year's eve, the President of the Republic gave a speech in front of the Macedonian parliament. He stressed that the zenith of the war crisis is overcome, but estimated that one cannot say that the country has managed to completely stand up to terrorism. Also stressed that while dealing with the crisis, Macedonia got help from the international community. "From time to time we felt that it had a controversial role, but fact is that while dealing with the attacks of the armed gangs we have got help from all influential European countries and neighbors, from USA, the Russian Federation, Ukraine etc." Underlined was the recognition of the constitutional name of the country, which act shall be the real support of the sovereignty and identity of Macedonia, as well as huge contribution towards regional stability. In case that action does not occur, possible other solutions taken by the international community shall face lack of politically correct principles. The President emphasized the need of support by the international community for the policy against efforts of ethnic differentiation and for

strengthening the country. This should have a form of public support of the country's authorities, but also should contain clear defining of all further acts of violence and terrorism.

Statistical data by the end of 2001

According to data from the State Statistical Bureau obtained by an October poll, the total working force of the country reached the figure of 863.000 persons, out of which are working 599.000 persons, while jobless are left 263.000 persons. Out of the total population over the age of 15, 44,5% are unemployed. Unemployment rate mounted up to 30,5%. Prices in 2001 were raised by 5,3%, while the average salary was raised by 3,7%. The amount of foreign trade in 2001 is 2,9 billion dollars and is for 15% lesser than the year before. Export was 1,2 billion dollars (lesser than in 2000 for 10,2%), and import was 1,7 billion dollars (lesser than in 2000 for 18,6%). All these figures were generally commented as very unfavorable.

Law for local self-government

One of the issues agreed in the Framework Agreement agenda was the quick introducing of the new law for local self-government. It was believed that this law should be on the parliamentary agenda first thing in January after the holidays. Although foreign mediators were hoping the Law to be passed through the government bodies and submitted to the Parliament for adoption before the New Year, that didn't happen. Discussions in the Parliament were moving around some of the basic principles of this Law, especially regarding remarks of the two main Macedonian parties VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM. As a general principle for the adoption of this Law, indisputably agreed by all political players was the need of transferring some of the functions of the state organs on local level and enhanced financial independence of the communities. But the Macedonian parties were reacting over three things: the regulation of the mechanism for cooperation and association of the local communities among themselves, in which are recognized tendencies for regionalization or cantonization of the country; issues of education on

local level; health care on local level. The draft law was submitted by the Ministry of Justice, where Minister is a person coming from the PDP party. After the government looked at some of the legal solutions, suggested to the Minister for local self-government to make some changes of the basic text, which he didn't do, claiming that these were suggestions given only by the Minister of Education. Due to the numerous discussions and suggestions, Albanian parties asked for withdrawal of the amendments, so the actual adoption of the law was put into question. The international community conditioned the organization of a donor's conference for Macedonia by the adoption of this law.

The special EU envoy Mr. Alain Le Roi after consultations with all the relevant political players gave a package of suggestions for amending the law of local self-government. Previous disagreements were especially strong when were in question issues of education and health. He offered compromise solutions about both issues and about the common administration, while concerning the practical implementation of the law, it was already jointly agreed that it should be postponed until the beginning of 2004. When the education was in question, suggestion was: "...founding and administrating of elementary and high schools is in cooperation with the central government in accordance with Law". With this, education shall stay in the domain of local self-government, but further precision shall be done in a special law. It is stressed that the central government shall take care about the programs (curricula), the school net, the number of pupils, as well as taking care of the other EU standards.

Regarding the health domain, Le Roi suggested while administering the public health organizations and those of primary health care by the state, to be included the local authorities as well. According to the Minister for Local Self-government (Mr. Arslani, DPA) it was agreed that primary health care financing shall remain on state level through the Health Care Fund, but through other laws referring to this domain shall be formed special committees, as well as boards and supervising bodies, which shall have the task of controlling the Fund's expenditures. It is anticipated that the units of the local self-government should have authorization in managing with the net of public health

institutions, where they should be included an adequate representation and decision-making of the relevant bodies.

SDSM representatives said that the thing they especially mind is the possibility of "common administration", which might be an interesting solution for the financially weak communities, but this should not be abused for political purposes, in the sense of directing the efforts for federalization and regionalization of the country. Macedonians living in Tetovo and in other areas with Albanian domination, insisted in amending article 41, where was suggested to be put a protective mechanism for the Macedonian and inhabitants of ethnicity other than the majority, to have an obligation for certain decisions of the local authorities to have the compulsory agreement of at least 2/3 of them. Some experts argued that "local communities cannot behave like a state in a state, because they do not get such important competencies, but still they can make big problems in public services' functioning". SDSM parliamentary coordinator stated that "DPA and PDP are behaving inappropriately and have maximalist requests. If someone calls us to talk and while doing that we are blackmailed, then there is no reason for us to talk. The Framework Agreement does not contain a regulation to have the communities found a common administration at all, so it is not possible every wish they have to be our obligation to realize it. SDSM shall not withdraw the amendments. It is clear why the Albanian parties react- with such a form of the Law have the intention to unite the communities in the western part of the country in one big region." On the other hand, PDP and DPA parties left the Parliament and said that they will not come back if there is not a meeting of the four leaders who put their signature in Ohrid. These parties say that this was agreed by the Framework Agreement and that the opinion of the international community is that the text must not be changed. Finally, through a successful international mediation it was agreed for the term "common administration" to be changed in the following formulation: "common administrative bodies of the local communities, which would be formed in particular areas". Another novelty is that the mayors shall be able to elect directors of all public services, which are founded by the local self-government. Election is to be based on a public competition.

Finally, after numerous discussions and inter-party negotiations the four leaders who put their signatures on the Framework Agreement has found the compromise solution for the mentioned elements in question. According to the leadership agreement, VMRO-DPMNE, SDSM, PDP and DPA MPs withdrew their amendments, and discussions were lead only on the other parties' and independent MPs suggestions. The Law was voted at the end of January and got support by 85 MPs (out of the total of 120 MPs in the Parliament). It is interesting to mention that for this Law was used the new voting mechanism determined in article 16 of the Constitution. This Law was adopted by a two-thirds majority of the total number of MPs and simultaneously with majority votes of the total number of MPs belonging to non-majoritarian ethnic communities in the country. Out of this group (total 27 MPs) "for" voted 19, that is more than the necessary minimum 14 votes. This successful voting was positively estimated by many foreign factors, like the USA State Department, the Council of Europe Secretary General, the President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, as well as the German Foreign Minister.

Displaced persons

During the crisis internally were displaced about 30.347 persons living in Tetovo and the surrounding areas. At the beginning of the year 2002 didn't go back to their homes 947 families with 3.170 persons. In the city of Tetovo and the three gravitating villages Lavce, Vejce and Selce have 503 damaged homes (apartments or houses), with estimated losses of 5,5 million euros. Damages are also done on the water supply systems, the electricity infrastructure and to other institutions of public use. Unfortunately, after these estimations, followed other burning and robbing of houses, which were abandoned by their Macedonian owners, out of fear for their own lives. In the meantime some more churches have been burned and destroyed in the occupied areas as well (the church St. George in Mala Recica village).

The name issue

ICG (International Crisis Group) has stirred up the public opinion in the country, regarding the suggestion given in the organization's last report about the most appropriate

solution for solving the name dispute between Greece and Macedonia. Namely, the suggestion states that for all the countries worldwide the name of the country should be "Republika Makedonija" (as is its name in the Macedonian original), with the only exception of Greece, for which in mutual communication the country is to be called "Upper Macedonia". At first, both countries showed a certain amount of reserve, followed by silent approval. Then came some negative reactions from MPs and other political factors in the country.

One interesting reaction was publicly issued by the "Forum for Macedonia 2001" (whose member is also the ex-Macedonian president Mr. Kiro Gligorov). Although it was estimated that this suggestion was "the most fitting effort to be put on the table and be solved issues that are burdening not only the Macedonian-Greek but also the regional countries' relations, and even the European ones", still this Forum thinks that suggested solutions are problematizing the Macedonian identity. Main reason is that in the report Macedonia is treated as a geographic region, and thus the Macedonians as a politically newly formed nation, without its own geography, history and culture. The fact that this issue is politically imposed over Macedonia, this NGO thinks that of exclusive importance is to have the state showing concern over the results of the negotiating process, as well as to maintain reciprocity in mutual concessions. In that sense, the Forum thinks that the only concession should be made towards the south neighbor Greece, and to no other country, subject to international law. Macedonia should give the concession in the form of a mutually agreed formulation of the country, which shall be used by Greece when addressing Macedonia only in mutual and bilateral relations. It is stressed that Macedonia, as any other UN country, should be allowed to report its constitutional name and abbreviation, which are to be used in the UN. At the same time, as contradictory and inconsistent is estimated the ICG suggestion for limitation in use of the adjective form "of the Republic of Macedonia, with the only exception of the language and the people". Although from this suggestion is evident that ICG does not question the state-legal identity of the Republic of Macedonia, still this formulation does not strengthen, but limits the ethnocultural identity of the Macedonian people.

Still negative reaction was not considered so vigorous. On the first week of December 2001, the State Department port parole stated that USA supports the efforts of ICG regarding this matter. During the first days of January followed a meeting between the two countries' Ministers of foreign affairs, which did not result to an official statement, but most certainly talks have touched upon that subject. For Deutsche Welle the President of the Republic Boris Trajkovski stated that the ICG suggestion gives a good basis for solving the name issue. It is necessary that to this given frame should also be given formal procedure in the mediating mission lead by Mr. Niemitz in UN. PDP and DPA found the ICG suggestion an excellent solution. Unfortunately, later Greece has sent some negative "vibes" through some statements of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Therefore, the issue still remains pending.

Personal Changes in the Ministry of Exteriors

The newly appointed Macedonian Minister of Exteriors Slobodan Casule is coming from the party New Democracy, which is the break out piece of the Democratic Alternative. At his interview he pointed out that Macedonia should show that is able to be a place that has certain stability as opposed to its neighbors. He also stated that Macedonia shall not be able to be that, if still Aracinovo village (near Skopje) continues to be free trade mafia zone, if still Tanusevci (a border village towards Kosovo) is a base for the dogs of war, and until Shipkovica is the center where the crime syndicate is located. He also thinks that next victims of these conditions shall be the moderate Albanian politicians, due to emerging of new, much more radical politicians. Casule points out that those who still shoot in Macedonia are criminals (statement also given by Mr. Robertson¹) and that high priority is to cut the wings of the organized crime of weapons, drugs, cigarettes and people.

The Amnesty Issue

Although at the beginning was estimated that the amnesty declaration issued by the President of the Republic shall be enough to settle the problem, still after one month, the

¹ Mr. Robertson stated that ANA members (or renewed armed groups) are simply common criminals. He thinks that they should not be given a status that is above that qualification.

Coordinative body for handling the crisis has put the Ministry of Justice in charge for preparation of an amnesty law. Before this event, the PDP party (this party holds the ministerial position in the Ministry of Justice) was the one that was insisting even before on the idea of having a Law for amnesty that will encompass the ONA fighters. At the same time, PDP was trying to primarily get together on the draft law all the signatures that were submitted on the Ohrid Framework Agreement. PDP has then stated that they are not rushing and that their idea is to completely close this issue, while suggesting that upon this depends the safe return of the Macedonian forces on the ground. On the other hand, other coalition parties at that point of time thought that so far there is no need for such a law, because the President's pardoning decisions are well functioning so far. These statements comprised only those ONA fighters who voluntarily gave up their weapons but had acted in correlation with the conflict. From this procedure were excluded those who made crimes against humanity, for which most probably shall be in charge the Hague tribunal.

But since the in-field situation was not calming down in a satisfactory way, in spite of the presidential declaration, the Justice Minister (Mr. Memeti) initiated the process of introducing an Amnesty law. He stated that in the process shall be included people from the academic world, from the Ministry and representatives of the international community. The urgency of introducing this law was conditioned with the realization of the Plan for returning of the police in the crisis regions. Although in some villages the local inhabitants accepted the ethnically mixed police patrols, still other Albanian villages were conditioning the return of the police with the releasing from prison of their covillagers (which is in fact a domain in charge of the Courts). The Minister stated that "the basic and sole goal of the Amnesty law is reintegration of the ONA members, and that is the first step that we have to make if we want to bring back peace in this country²". NATO General Secretary Robertson said "the amnesty should refer to the period when war was on in Macedonia and should terminate by the date of the official disarmament on September 26, 2001". In addition, the amnesty should encompass all persons involved in the conflict, and not only those who gave the weapons to the NATO mission.

² "Start", 22.02.02

The actual work on the working text of the Law was followed by a series of controversies, which lead to a resigning of one of the team experts who was a former Minister of Justice and a criminal law professor (Mr. Vlado Kambovski). According to him, the offered amnesty concept "is the least legal and lawful". He thought that if it is going to be adopted in the form suggested, huge application problems shall emerge. A couple of focal points were the subject of dispute: the timing which shall be pronounced as a start of the amnesty period; the types of criminal acts, as well as the precise definition regarding the concrete persons for whom the amnesty will refer to. Mr. Kambovski was insisting the starting term to be the Tanusevci event on 12.02.2001, while NATO and OSCE representatives considered that it should be the very start of the year 2001. The Justice minister, as opposed to these opinions, thought that the starting period should not be mentioned at all, which element was kept in the final version of the Law. In general, the amnesty is to be referred to all criminal acts connected with the conflict, and done by members of ONA. Excluded should be only the persons that would be considered responsible in front of the Hague Tribunal.

While discussions on the formulation of this Law were on, Human Rights Watch as a well-known international NGO has sent its opinion on this matter to the President of the Republic. "serious violations of the laws of war have been committed by both sides to the armed conflict and accountability for those crimes has to be an essential part of the peace process"- said the HRW Executive Director. She also said, "The international tribunal can only hear a handful of cases. If the Macedonian authorities cannot hear the rest, then serious crimes like torture, murder and attacks on civilians will go unpunished". HRW expressed concern that drafts under consideration would acknowledge the international tribunal's jurisdiction, but bar Macedonian courts from prosecuting violations of international law or crimes against humanity. Also, HRW cautioned that a sweeping amnesty that prevents domestic persecutions for violations of international humanitarian law would be contraproductive. "The peace will only be as strong as the justice is thorough".

As expected, the amnesty issue divided sharply the Macedonian and Albanian parties. The DPA coordinator Mr. Zamir Dika stated that this draft is agreed in the form that is given from the Ministry of Justice by the four parties that signed the Framework Agreement. This is the reason why it has to be voted without any amendments in the Parliament. With this agreed the PDP party coordinator Mr. Naser Ziberi. As opposed to this, MPs from the Macedonian parties considered that the Law has some omissions, for which can be discussed and there should be amendments accepted. The SDSM coordinator Mr. Popovski thought that it is very unclear to whom the amnesty refers to, especially when in question persons that are of foreign origin. The text of the Law, as it was suggested by the Ministry of Justice, although it did not obtain support by the Committee for Political System Issues in the Parliament, it was however submitted as such to the Parliament. Some MPs complained that this Law contained regulations that were contradictory to the leader's agreement. Namely, in the draft, it was suggested the amnesty to refer to foreigner as well, and the criminal acts were not properly described.

On March 7 the Amnesty Law was voted, in the same form offered by the Ministry of Justice. Although nine amendments were submitted, none was accepted by the Minister nor got the necessary majority in the Parliament. The parliamentary group of VMRO-DPMNE did not use its opportunity to submit amendments, nor discussed the matter. It is publicly known that the Macedonian authorities and all other relevant domestic political factors have been subdued to a direct pressure by all the representatives of the international community, for the Law to be urgently voted. That was the condition for organizing the donor's conference later the same month. Finally, the Law was voted by representatives of all major parliamentarian groups (a narrow majority of 64 MPs), but some of SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE MPs did not support this Law, as well as MPs from the Former Democratic Alternative, VMRO-Macedonian and 5 independent MPs (12 MPs voted against and 8 sustained). Like many other times the DPA leader and MP Arben Dhaferi, was not present at the session. Many legal experts publicly condemned this Law, stating that by this act the end of the rule of law in Macedonia has been reached. They claimed that the Law is voted under foreign pressure, and that it is a political act that derogates the legal system of the country.

Amber Fox Mission

Although the Amber Fox (NATO) mandate is terminating on March 26 it is obvious that this mission shall continue to have its presence in Macedonia. The Macedonian government officially submitted the request for continuation of the mission. In the postpeace period, the Alliance forces are intended to have the role of neutralizer of the eventual incidents in the crisis regions. According to some representatives of the international community during next spring are possible new actions of the armed extremist groups, who in fact started the war in the country. So far Ali Ahmeti seems to control those forces, but it is unknown what is certain to happen. The Macedonian police is gradually patrolling in a slowly augmented number of Tetovo villages. At the beginning, bad weather conditions have significantly slowed down the process, which was expected to continue somewhat later. Unfortunately, entrance for the ethnically mixed police in the villages is not easy at all. Villagers often have a very long list of requests in order to allow the patrolling, which are in fact very hard to meet. At first the major request was the Amnesty law, but when it was passed, the list of requests went on and on, which puts the question if there is a real need for all these demands or that is another justification of not letting the police in. In Tetovo and Kumanovo area shooting (often not directed to anybody, but just shooting in the air, in order to show presence) didn't stop for quite some time, even after the Amnesty Law was voted. A couple of times there was immediate danger for the police checkpoints so they responded.

Due to the threats addressed to USA and its military and other infrastructure in the area by ANA, USA has decided to include ANA in the black list of terrorist organizations. By the USA President's Decision N.13.219 ANA is declared as one. It is said that this organization derives from the Kosovo UCK and uses the already established structure of ONA in Macedonia. Commanders are said to be Daut Haradinaj (the brother of the Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj) and Djavid Hasani from Tanushevi (Macedonian border village). However, this act does not put equalization with NATO and EU. Repeating the same move shall be done after consultation with all the member-states of NATO, EU and OSCE.

Election law novelties

Once more the law for parliamentary elections is due to be amended or corrected. This idea has been largely discussed among all political factors and sometimes even used as a justification for the delay of early parliamentary elections. All parties were striving for change of the electoral model, especially after the presidential (1999) and local (2000) elections. Basic justification for the initiative were the numerous irregularities that emerged during these two elections, making some of the parties believe that these problems were due to the electoral model. Specifically, some political factors were arguing that by having a two-round majoritarian model for two thirds of the parliamentary seats allows the parties to prepare aggressive strategy and forbidden pressure methods for the second round, where the winner is decided. (The so far model out of the 120 seats makes 35 seats by party lists nationwide by using the D'Hondt PR formula, while the remaining 85 seats are distributed by a maximum two-round majority model.) Some parties were suggesting the option -the whole country as one constituency, having the D'Hondt PR formula and closed lists for all 120 seats (PDP enforced that idea and perhaps DPA). Others preferred a couple of solutions: the regional proportional model (up to 12 multi-member constituencies), or to have the old model but only in one round, or to have the PR-majority seats of distribution half-half, meaning 60PR:60 majoritarian seats (SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE). Later, after long public discussions, opinions were met between SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE at first, where the two parties agreed to have a regional proportional model, by dividing the country in six multi-member constituencies, where each constituency shall produce 20 parliamentarian seats. After that, negotiations have been made with the other two Albanian parties (PDP and DPA), in which case DPA joined the SDSM-VMERO idea, while PDP was still dissatisfied, putting its preference on the solution: the whole country as one constituency. Finally, after some joint adjustments to the constituency boundaries, which were made due to the PDP pressure, the regional PR model was agreed. Each one of the six constituencies is now having an approximate number of potential voters moving around the figure of 278.000. With this agreement, parties made the most important move

towards one of the basis elements of the Law. The other details shall be soon discussed, or left to the mere parliamentary voting procedure to be decided in their final shape.

A burning question, which especially confronted the main political parties, is for course the early elections timing. The need for early elections was also mentioned in the Framework Agreement but the exact date was an issue about which a lot of playing around was done. Although as a first date mentioned was January 27, still agreement has not been reached. Only SDSM was the party that insisted on this date, while the other parties did not agree. Later SDSM again suggested as a date for early elections a couple of dates (9, 16 or 23) in June. In fact, the largest disagreement about the election date occurred among VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM. It was obvious that VMRO was not that keen in having early elections (the regular ones are due in November 2002), stating that in the country has not met the preconditions to have elections yet, due to the fact that it has not completely regained back its sovereignty. Special debates were made when VMRO-DPMNE suggested as a possible election date September the 8th (it is a national holiday). The fact that this date is the Republic's Independence Day, SDSM thought that there is a hidden idea behind this suggestion. In the context of these discussions, the DPA vice-president suggested to have early presidential together with the parliamentary elections. At the end, again with the successful mediation of Mr. Le Roi, parties put their signature on a document determining the early election date on September 15. Still, having in mind that regular elections would have followed a couple of months later, it is a big question how "early" elections really are. The last element of this chain of decisions on early elections is the unavoidable President of the Parliament (Mr. Andov) who according to the Macedonian Constitution is in charge to officially announce the elections.

Northern Border Issue

At the beginning of the year 2001 (February 23) in Skopje, the Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia signed a joint border agreement. This act was characterized as closure of the most serious opened issue that was a remnant of the Milosevic policy before. The agreement was praised and supported by all international

factors, and regarded as a big step towards the regional stabilization. As expected, this agreement was not positively viewed by other factors, especially coming from Kosovo, who felt that they are excluded in the negotiations. After the Macedonian crisis has started to calm down this year, the American general Huber active in the KFOR contingent has made a statement, which was considered by the Macedonian authorities as very upsetting. He stated that if it is necessary, he with his soldiers will enter in the territory of the Republic of Macedonia in order to allow the Kosovar peasants to work on their land, which was in Macedonian territory. What's more, the UNMIC portparole Mr. Anjeli made an official statement out of which it was anticipated that UN does not consider valid the signed agreement, since its validity is conditioned with solving the final status of Kosovo. These statements were the cause of numerous reactions from official institutions, as well as from the media. Confirmation of the controversy of the statements was the estimation by the media which was saying that such attitude means declaration of war to Macedonia by USA (Utrinski Vesnik 20.02.02) The seriousness of this matter was further confirmed by the portparole of the Defense Ministry who stated that "anyone who shall enter without previous announcement, out of the border crossings of our territory, shall be treated as an illegal person, and shall be warned, disarmed and as a final measure shall be shot". Macedonian authorities were extremely upset, since in this very sensitive moment the country is in, these events were seen as a direct denial of its territorial integrity, thus containing a hidden destabilization danger. In this line of thinking were the comments of the Macedonian ambassador in UN, who said that the whole thing is about off hand statements and that UNMIC are incompetent and non-serious. Other former Macedonian ministers were stressing that the Agreement is registered in UN, and they were publicly commenting that it is very doubtful whether UNMIC is in charge to give such estimations at all. But the Albanian parties in Macedonia used the moment and once more reminded the public that they did not agree with the Agreement's signing. The DPA parliamentary coordinator noted that "this issue is not about change of attitude towards the Agreement, since it is signed for an abstract line".

Macedonian ambassadors in UN and NATO filed a demarche to both UN and NATO Secretary-Generals. At the same time, the Republic of Macedonia asked for an official interpretation by UN, as regards to the statements given. As a final clarification effort, the Minister of Exteriors traveled to New York, in order to be present at the UN Security Council meeting. There, Macedonia got the support on this imposed case and the border was officially confirmed as valid. EU, NATO and USA representatives repeatedly confirmed this position as well.

Another uneasiness regarding this matter came again, when the newly appointed Kosovo Prime Minister Bajram Redzepi said that for Kosovo this Agreement is controversial. Similar statement has the President of the Kosovo local self-government Ibrahim Rugova, who said that the Kosovo government shall ask from the Security Council to reconsider the border agreement, since it is not acceptable for the highest Kosovar institutions (Dnevnik, 8.03.02). Such opinions were the motive for the newly appointed Kosovo administrator Michael Steiner to point out the unacceptability of their statements. Steiner warned Mr. Redzepi that in the future such statements shall not be tolerated.

Political Regroupings

As elections are slowly reaching their critical day, the Macedonian party system is showing vigorous dynamism and instability. Part of the members of the VMRO-Real (which was created as a break-up part of VMRO-DPMNE), have announced anew their return to VMRO-DPMNE. Two key members of VMRO-Real (the vice-president Zmejkovski and the Central committee president Kekenovski) have pointed out that Mr. Boris Stojmenov (president of the party), was freed from the function and excluded from the party. He was accused that he created a pharaoh-party. To this tendency joined an MP and the Minister of Environment (coming from that party). The remaining five MPs of VMRO-Real remained faithful to the party.

It is interesting that all these individuals at the time of the 1998 parliamentary elections were members of the VMRO-DPMNE leadership. After the elections took place, Mr. Stojmenov became the Minister of finance at the first VMRO-DPMNE government

composition. The breakup in the party came soon after that and regroupings in VMRO-DPMNE followed. Six MPs under very unfavorable conditions, threats and pressure left the VMRO-DPMNE party and together with Mr. Stojmenov formed the VMRO-Real. Then joined Mr. Zmejkovski and Mr. Kekenovski who were openly confronted with Mr. Georgievski (the present prime-minister and VMRO-DPMNE leader). During the crisis in the country, while the big coalition was formed, VMRO-Real as one of the opposition parties got a few appointed places in the government, among which was the deputy minister of defense position, taken by Mr. Zmejkovski. After the breakup of the "big" government coalition, speculations have started that Mr. Zmejkovski was not ready to leave his position, and that was the reason why the turmoil in VMRO-Real occurred. Another motivation for VMRO-DPMNE to attract back the breakout wing is the fact that this party has succeeded at the last local elections to gather about 50.000 votes, which could be useful for the next national elections.

The Albanian Coordinative Body

Although Albanian politicians at the beginning of the ONA emergence have expressed reservations regarding the possibility to form a common union of all Albanian parties, still, exactly this trend prevailed. Before this process occurred, Albanian politicians have been very cautious when they were asked to give qualifications for the ONA leader, Ali Ahmeti. Arben Dhaferi (DPA leader) stated that Ali Ahmeti is not only a personality, but he is also a symbol of something which shall be opened in the future, which is the issue of political articulation of his structure. He also added that DPA should not be so naïve and leave that space politically not "processed". Simultaneously, he qualified ANA threats to the Macedonian politicians as non-serious. According to him, after adoption of the constitutional changes, situation in the state shall stabilize itself, but should be understood that in Macedonia shall be tectonic movements, which must be controlled, and one cannot expect these movements to stop all of a sudden.

It was said that the union of Albanian parties is done to allow joint participation in the next national elections. Formally this body was named Coordinative council and as its president was appointed Ali Ahmeti. At the beginning, this idea was supported solely by

DPA, while PDP and NDP believed that this unification option shall signify the banning of pluralism and annulling the basis of a democratic society. The DPA vice-president Ilijaz Halimi commented that "pluralism should not be opened within an ethnic group, he must exist in the frames of a system. We are against uniformism in the way of thinking within a society, but not in the ethnic group, because that kind of closeness cannot be provided by any institution in Macedonia".

Fact is that Macedonian political parties are looking at that body with a large dose of mistrust. According to them, the Council is structured on exclusively ethnic basis, which hides the danger of further segregation and dismantlement of the Macedonian state. During the inauguration of the Council, Ahmeti addressed the Macedonian parties by saying that they should not look at this body as a parallel institution to the existing system, and advised them to do the same thing for their side, in order to secure peace and stability in the country. This last remark was commented by some Macedonian parties, who said that if that would also happen within the Macedonian political block, it would signify the end of parliamentary democracy in the country. Alternatively described, it would mean that "elections without elections" will happen. The SDSM vice-president Ms. Sekerinska stated that "these are old-fashioned ideas which are not at all in accordance with the European standards, so often favored by Mr. Dhaferi."

Public Opinion

"Freedom House" research data, point out that about 40% of foreign investors in Macedonia were obliged to give bribe to the customs or to the inspection organs working in the country, in order to be allowed to work undisturbed. Participants in this research replied that corruption and slow bureaucracy are the main problems with which are faced foreign companies' owners who are interested to invest in Macedonia. Among other problems in investing, "Freedom House" mentioned the non-regulated legal status of land, the 2001 crisis and the expensive investments in comparison with the other countries in the region.

In this line of thinking is the ICG report as well. This organization has serious remarks to both donor countries and to the Macedonian authorities, as regards to the country's level of corruption. These appeals for caution were sent exactly the day when the donor conference for Macedonia was held. The basic ICG message was: "Finance peace in Macedonia, and not corruption". One of the basic ideas suggested (in order to diminish the risk of corruption and uncontrolled money spending) was to be established an anticorruption advisor who will monitor the money spending. Still, in spite of the direct warning to the Macedonian state about the large corruption wave, Macedonia got 307 million euros in donations, and for bilateral projects got additional 271 million euros. The co-president of the Donor's conference pointed out three key sectors in which donor's money is to be aimed: private sector and employment, public sector and poverty alleviation. At the end, donors demanded from the state to remain on the main reform course.