

## *International Fact-Finding Mission to the Republic of Macedonia*

*Adrian Pop*

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*F*rom April 23 to 29, 2001, a delegation of prominent experts and opinion leaders from Southeastern Europe, the EU and the USA, was on a seven-day fact-finding mission to the Republic of Macedonia. The mission was initiated by the Institute for Regional and International Studies (IRIS), following the interethnic crisis in the Republic of Macedonia from March 2001.

The mission was supported by the Regional Networking Project, sponsored by Freedom House, with funding provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The International Fact-finding Mission has been an extension of the Project on Security Challenges and Development of the Southern Balkans, implemented by IRIS in cooperation with the Euro-Balkan Institute, Skopje and the Institute for Contemporary Studies, Tirana, also supported by the Regional Networking Project, sponsored by Freedom House, with funding provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development. The mission was organizationally and technically assisted by FORUM-CSR, Skopje. The European Integration and Regional Stability Program of the Open Society Foundation-Sofia, provided support to follow-up activities of the International Fact-finding Mission.

The international fact-finding mission aimed at evaluating the situation in Macedonia following the crisis in the country

from March 2001. In pursuit of this goal contacts were established and interviews were conducted with representatives of various institutions, political leaders and civic activists in the Republic of Macedonia. A report was drafted, outlining the current problems and suggesting a set of recommendations for improving the interethnic relations and the security situation in the country.

The **mandate** of the mission consisted of the following:

1. Establish contacts and conduct interviews with:
  - Representatives of the Presidency;
  - Representatives of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia;
  - Representatives of the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia;
  - Representatives of political parties;
  - Municipal authorities in Skopje, Tetovo, Gostivar, Debar, Struga;
  - Representatives of NGOs;
  - Journalists;
  - Experts and opinion leaders;
  - Ordinary citizens.
1. Prepare a report, including:
  - Findings of the mission about Macedonia, concerning interethnic relations and security situation;
  - Legislation and government actions in regard to human rights;
  - Conclusions and recommendations.

1. Communicate the findings to the media, public, governments and international organizations.

The mission was arranged as follows:

From April 23 to 27, 2001, the members of the mission met with representatives of Macedonia's political elite and civic activists. On a workshop on April 28 and 29, mission participants discussed the framework of the mission's report. The first draft of the mission's recommendations was presented at a regional conference on *European Multi-ethnic Macedonia versus Another Balkan Scenario*, organized in Ohrid by the Euro-Balkan Institute, Skopje.

On May 21 and 22, 2001, Dr. Ognyan Minchev, Dr. Nicholas Whyte and Marin Lessenski presented the mission's report to officials from: the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU, the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union, the European Commission Directorate General for External Relations, the International Crisis Group.

The report was also presented and discussed at a major public event at the Center for European Policy Studies in Brussels on May 22, 2001.

A presentation of the report, organized by the Hudson Institute, will take place in Washington DC in June 2001.

#### **Members of the mission:**

Dr. Ognyan Minchev, Director, Institute for Regional and International Studies (Bulgaria)

Dr. John Clark, Director, Center for Central European and Eurasian Studies, Hudson Institute (USA)

Dritan Shano, Executive Director, Institute for Contemporary Studies (Albania)

Dr. Nicholas Whyte, Center for European Policy Studies, Brussels

Paulina Lampsas, Greek Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, Advisor to the Minister of Macedonia and Thrace (Greece)

Milorad Timotic, Secretary General, Center for Civil-military Relations (Yugoslavia)

Mustafa Turkes, Professor, Department of International Relations, Middle East Technical University (Turkey).

Ylber Hysa, Director, Kosova Action for Civic Initiatives

Dr. Adrian Pop, Deputy Director, Institute for Political Studies of Defense and Military History (Romania)

#### **IRIS staff members:**

Marin Lessenski, Program Director

Antonina Arbova, Program Coordinator

Plamen Ralchev, Program Coordinator

Dr. Lyubov Mincheva, Research Associate

George Spanos, Greek Helsinki Citizens' Assembly

**The mission has conducted meetings with:**

- H.E. Boris Trajkovski, President of the Republic of Macedonia
- Nikola Dimitrov, President's National Security Advisor
- Stojan Andov, President of the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia
- Mr. Stoimenovski, Foreign Policy Advisor to the Prime Minister
- Dzemail Saiti, Minister of Local Self-government
- Goran Mitevski, Director Counter-Intelligence Agency, Ministry of Interior
- Zvonko Kashirski, Director of Public Security Bureau, Ministry of Interior
- Georgi Spasov, Secretary General of the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia
- Arben Xhaferi, President of the Democratic Party of Albanians
- Abdyladi Vejseli, Vice-President of the Party for Democratic Prosperity
- Erdogan Sarac, President of Democratic Party of Turks in Macedonia
- Risto Penov, Mayor of Skopje and President of Liberal Democratic Party
- Nezdet Mustafa, Mayor of Shuto Orizari
- Imer Ologu, Mayor of Debar
- Romeo Dereban, Mayor of Struga
- H.E. Carlo Ungaro, Ambassador of OSCE Mission
- Petra Andersson, Economic and Environmental Advisor, OSCE Spillover Mission to Skopje
- H.E. Hansjorg Eiff, NATO Political Representative in Macedonia
- Maria Thissen-Schotgerrits, NATO Civilian Liaison Officer
- H.E. José Manuel Pinto Teixeira, Ambassador, European Commission Representative
- Laura J. Kirkconnel, Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of the United States of America and team of USAID
- Anton K. Smith, Economic/Political Officer, US Embassy in Skopje
- Kim Mehmeti, Director, Center for Inter-ethnic Cooperation
- Dr. Pande Lazarevski, Director of Institute for Sociological, Political and Judicial Research
- Dr. Georgi Ivanov, Professor, Law Faculty at Skopje University
- Dr. Ljubomir Frckovski, Professor, Law Faculty at Skopje University
- Dr. Jovan Donev, Director of the Euro-Balkan Institute
- Guner Ismail, Director of FORUM-CSR
- Saso Ordanoski, Editor-in-Chief, FORUM
- Iso Rusi, LOBI, Editor-in-Chief
- Journalists from Skopje
- OHIS Glass Factory Gostivar
- Students from the Skopje University

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**INTERNATIONAL FACT-FINDING MISSION TO THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

**April 23-29, 2001**

**REPORT**

*May 2001*

***INTRODUCTION\****

Unlike the other parts of former Yugoslavia, where interethnic conflicts have been preconditioned by growing authoritarian tendencies, Macedonia evaded such crises until recently due to the democratic character of the state and legislation, providing more rights for the ethnic minorities than the international legal framework for community rights demands.

The problem with the set-up of the state and the status of the Albanian community has existed since the very independence of the Republic of Macedonia in 1991. The ethnic Albanians demand equal constitutional status, considering themselves being in relative deprivation, as compared to their previous position under the former Yugoslav Constitution. The guerilla activities, allegedly penetrating Macedonian territory, have radicalized the interethnic agenda. The peaceful dialogue, which had been carried out within the legitimate political institutions so far, has been obstructed.

The Kosovo crisis raised once more the "Albanian national question" in the Balkans, activating and radicalizing the public opinion of many ethnic communities of the former Yugoslavia, especially the ethnic Albanians

of Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Southern Serbia. After the expulsion of Yugoslav authority from Kosovo, extremist Albanian groups took advantage of the newly accumulated resources of the Albanian communities in former Yugoslavia – political influence, military bases and arms, financial funds. Those groups – originating from the territory of Kosovo, as well as indigenous actors from Southern Serbia and Macedonia – using armed guerrilla warfare launched a spill-over process of the Albanian national question, initially in Southern Serbia from early 2000 to the spring of 2001 and then on the territory of Macedonia. As a result of the armed activities in Macedonia, the Macedonian state entered a period of crisis and its political model of the democratic coexistence of various ethnic communities was cast into doubt.

The aim of this international mission has been to uncover the facts related to the crisis in Macedonia and to recommend, within its capacity, measures for crisis settlement. The recipients of these recommendations are the major political parties and civic organizations in the Republic of Macedonia, as well as the institutions of the international community.

***A NOTE ON VIOLENCE***

This fact-finding mission took place during a lull in fighting in Macedonia, after the fighting in the hills above Tetovo had stopped and immediately before the ambush on eight Macedonian soldiers and policemen set off another round of conflict. The guerrilla warfare, initiated by the so-called National Liberation Army, pursues the sole purpose

of escalating interethnic tension to the point of civil war such that further co-existence of the two major communities within one state would be made impossible.

Any attempt to present these armed activities as an impetus for reforming the Constitution and the political model of Macedonia are irrelevant. Experience from

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*\* The Introduction reflects the views of the Institute for Regional and International Studies and does not concern the opinions of the members of the International Fact-Finding Mission.*

other ethnic conflicts in the Balkans and especially in former Yugoslavia, indicates that hostilities halt reforms and interethnic dialogue, rather than stimulating them. Stopping armed attacks and prevention of any future hostilities is of crucial importance to preserving the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Macedonia, and the international community must continue to take this line.

The violence that erupted toward the end of this fact-finding mission highlights two facts about dialogue between ethnic Macedonians and Albanians: opening discussions and negotiations is more important than ever before, and the process of dialogue is extremely fragile. If anything will send Macedonia spiraling into the abyss, it will be violence. The consequences will be unfortunate for everyone in Macedonia, whether ethnic Albanian, ethnic Macedonian, or member of other groups.

- Armed conflict can make all sides unwilling to talk to one another, and without dialogue there will be no solution to the many serious problems facing Macedonia. This can mean that the leaders of the Albanian and Macedonian political parties will not work constructively with each other. It also can mean that the very large social distance between ordinary Albanian and Macedonian citizens grows even wider, further diminishing the willingness of both sides to trust one another.
- The campaign launched by the National Liberation Army contributes to prejudices against the Albanian community in Macedonia from ethnic Macedonians and from members of the international community.
- Overt fighting distracts everyone from addressing many of the serious problems that stand in the way of Macedonia's long term political and economic development. When everyone's attention is focused on ending the fighting, some of issues that are shunted aside include privatization, attracting foreign investment, and increasing the effectiveness of government at the national and local levels.
- If positive policy reform is eventually adopted, there is a risk that ethnic Albanians will draw the lesson that violence is an effective way of forcing social change.
- Violence can discredit the activities of the Albanian parties and political leaders. In fact, it can discredit anyone who is engaged in the process of dialogue since they can be accused of negotiating and possibly compromising with a dangerous and untrustworthy opponent.
- Violence can provoke retaliatory acts of violence from members of the other ethnic group. This was the case in Bitola, where the funerals of four of the slain soldiers and police sparked anti-Albanian rampages that damaged dozens of shops and homes.
- Violence and the threat of violence undermine any political settlement. Ethnic Macedonians are likely to feel that they were forced to make concessions at the point of a gun. When the threat is removed, they may say, any concessions that were grudgingly granted to the minority can be rescinded since they were extorted under threat of violence.
- The acts of violence in Macedonia pose threats to the stability and the security of the entire Balkan region;
- The responsibility of the international community to stop the violence in Macedonia is crucial. Unlike other cases of organized ethnic terrorist assaults (the Basques in Spain, Northern Ireland under British army control), Macedonia is a fragile state with drastically limited resources of armed control over its territory. Deterring further escalation of guerilla warfare in the South Balkans region is within the capabilities of the international institutions;
- The present violence in Macedonia is diminishing the chances to negotiate the final status of Kosovo;

For this reason, we strongly condemn violence as a means for solving political and interethnic conflicts. All recommendations for reforms and a new balance in interethnic relations in Macedonia can be fully implemented only if armed violence has been stopped.

As the current ambiguity, violence and instability continue, it is likely that the other minorities, such as the Turks and Roma, may soon feel squeezed between the political

pressure applied by Albanian and Macedonian communities, thereby adding a new problem. To refrain from such current exclusivist approach, the whole debate may not be narrowed down to the concerns of Albanians and Macedonians. The concerns of the other minorities should also be taken into consideration and the dialogue mechanisms should create rooms for the other minorities too.

This report offers a wide range of recommendations for the government and civic organizations of Macedonia and for the international community, which is a stake in the success of this country. We believe everyone in Macedonia will benefit from a richer culture and from a better understanding of the other people and cultures in their country. We believe that basing Macedonia's state and constitution on a civic rather than ethnic-group foundation will make

government more effective and more democratic. The reforms we put forward, we believe, will better integrate Macedonia into the *European and world communities*. It is important to emphasize that we do not expect the government of Macedonia to adopt these reforms because of the threat of violence. We recommend them because they will make the country stronger and the lives of the citizenry better. Advocating changes becomes much more difficult in a state of armed conflict, rather than in a state of negotiated peace.

*This is why we consider:*

- Interethnic dialogue at all institutional and civic levels is crucial and should continue in all circumstances.
- In order to implement the reforms, which may come as a result of this dialogue and which we recommend, violence must be stopped.

## FACTS AND ATTITUDES ON THE GROUND

### ZONES OF AGREEMENT

Particularly among the members of the political elite – ethnic Albanian and Macedonian – with whom we talked, there was substantial and in many ways surprising consensus about a wide range of issues. This “zone of agreement” includes a recognition of the severity of the problems facing Macedonia and a consciousness of some of the boundaries within which solutions can be sought. Any settlement and reform in Macedonia will need to be based on this zone of agreement.

#### I. Fundamental issues

- A. *Condemnation of the violence in March.* This has, for the most part, continued through the second round of fighting in April and May. Although several people (especially ethnic Albanians) said that the eruption of fighting should not have come as a surprise, no one endorsed the use of arms as a way of addressing the dissatisfactions of the Albanians in Macedonia.
- B. *There really is a serious set of problems.* All political leaders in Macedonia admitted that ethnic Macedonians would have to compromise and make concessions in order to defuse these complaints.
- C. *When the crisis erupted, leaders of all leading parties and both major ethnic groups almost reflexively agreed on talking.* All the major political parties engaged in discussions convened by the President, for instance, and most leaders found appealing the idea of forming a Grand Coalition of all major political parties (both Macedonian and Albanian) in a government that could carry on a dialogue.
- D. *Macedonia's territorial integrity should be preserved.* No Albanian with whom we talked called for a “Greater Albania” or “Greater Kosovo.” In addition, no one of any ethnicity mentioned “federalism” as option. Given the experience of what once was Yugoslavia, ethnic Macedonians view federalization as a prelude to the splintering and dismemberment of the country. Albanian leaders appear to recognize this anxiety and avoid the use of the word. At the same time, Macedonians do seem to think that several of Albanians' demands for constitutional reform and bilingualism are in effect the beginnings of federalization, whether that word is used or not.

- E. *The international community has a vital role to play.* Some ethnic Macedonian leaders were annoyed at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's call for reform in the Macedonian constitution, and many criticized particular actions by international organizations and Western governments (in particular, the failure to patrol and seal the border between Kosova and Macedonia). All agreed that the international community could play a constructive role or could help to diffuse the crisis.
- F. *Approve the EU Stabilization and Association Agreement signed in March.* This was viewed favorably not only because it marked a major step toward eventual membership in the European Union and not only because it was seen as being necessary for increased economic assistance in the short run. The Agreement was seen as providing a framework for policymakers to reach compromise on such issues as language policy, local government reform, and so on.

**II. Immediate policies:** Agreement about these fundamental issues contributed to a consensus on many policies that had for months and years been stalled. Many of these policies were agreed upon in the discussion convened by the President on April 22, 2001. Some remarked to us that there has been more progress toward meeting the demands of Albanians in the last two years, since coming to power of the VMRO-DMPNE/DPA coalition, than there had been in the eight previous years of Macedonian independence.

- A. *The census should be postponed,* because it is inappropriate to hold it in a warlike public environment.
- B. *Accept the new Southeast European University in Tetovo.* Although they had different reasons for doing so, both Albanian and Macedonian political leaders had in the past opposed the new private university being established in Tetovo with money from the EU, the United States, and the Dutch government. Now everyone, except the Albanian PDP, agrees that it will be good to have a first-rate university offering instruction in Macedonian, Albanian, and English.
- C. *State supported TV-3 in minority languages,* in addition to the existing state TV-2, broadcasting in the Albanian language. Macedonian political leaders dropped their objections to the establishment of another state-supported television station devoted to minority languages.
- D. *Minority government employment should be increased.* No ethnic Macedonian with whom we spoke supported the idea that Albanians should be so badly underrepresented in various government ministries, including in particular the Ministries of the Interior and of Defense.
- E. *Increasing the quality of Albanian language primary and secondary schools* and provide some other educational opportunities. This goes beyond establishing the new university, which will offer some instruction in Albanian.
- F. *Local governments should have greater authority and responsibility.* No one seemed prepared to argue that local governments should essentially be charged only with picking up trash and changing the bulbs on streetlights.

**III. Longer-term problems that must be addressed:** Although most of the political leaders with whom we talked seemed preoccupied with short term concerns, most mentioned several issues that would eventually have to be addressed if Macedonia is to become a stable and prosperous country.

- A. *The state is too weak.* Even the leaders of the main political parties seem to agree that the institutions of the state are ineffective and easily open to capture by particular interests (including those of the leaders of the main political parties).
- G. *Crime and corruption.*
- H. *Economic development and growth will be vital to solve problems.*

## ZONES OF DISCORD

This is not to say that there was unanimity on all issues. We discovered that on several crucial matters, political leaders took almost entirely opposed positions. This fundamental discord was not limited to disagreement between Albanian and Macedonian politicians. We also discerned a disturbing set of differences between professional politicians and the populace that transcended ethnicity. Among the issues on which there was profound disagreement:

- I. **Was the March crisis a result of internal or external factors?** Virtually every ethnic Macedonian politician with whom we talked agreed that the causes were external, that the crisis came from outsiders entering from Kosovo to disrupt Macedonia's stability. Ethnic Macedonians were more likely to ascribe criminal motives to the Albanians who took up arms, often arguing that they wanted to preserve their smuggling routes even at the price of chaos. Virtually every Albanian leader told us that the crisis was a result of internal factors, that the causes were the unfair treatment received every day by the ethnic Albanian population in Macedonia.  
It is probably significant that the border between Macedonia and Kosovo – which had under the Yugoslav Federation not been of great significance and cut across well established lines of communication – was given international legal status as the result of an agreement between Macedonia and the Yugoslav authorities on February 25, 2001.
- II. **Bilingualism.** Albanians tended to argue that Albanian should receive the same legal and constitutional privileges enjoyed by the Macedonian language. Most Macedonians said that the privileged status of Macedonian as a service language should be preserved.
- III. **How do the country's economic problems relate to the ethnic set up?** All Macedonians believe the other group is doing better economically. Ethnic Macedonians are disproportionately employed by the government, which is resented by the Albanians, who demand a share of those jobs. Albanians were at large excluded from employment in the government and the large state enterprises. As a result they set up small enterprises and small farms. This private sector has weathered the crises of economic transition much better than the state sector. Macedonians claim that the relative economic success of ethnic Albanians results from criminal activities or, at the very least, massive tax evasion.
- IV. **Has the international community performed well or badly?** Although there was disagreement about how NATO, the EU, the OSCE, the Americans, and others have contributed to causing and resolving the March crisis, this did not seem to be particularly correlated to ethnicity.
- V. **Should constitution be changed?** We heard two opposing opinions referring to whether the state and citizenship should be based on: 1) the status quo with a dominant ethnic group and with extensive and carefully delineated rights for minority groups; or 2) two co-equal ethnic groups and protected minorities. However a third option was also expressed. There was an agreement between Macedonian officials we have met (including president Trajkovski) and one ethnic Albanian official (Mr. Arben Xhaferi), who supported the moderate version of constitutional change – civic constitution with extended linguistic rights.
- VI. **Politicians think they can resolve the country's problems; non-politicians think they cannot.** Perhaps most striking was a universal belief among party and government leaders of both ethnic groups that they would be able to cut and deal and devise a solution to Macedonia's difficulties. By contrast virtually no non-politician that we interviewed expressed confidence in the political elite. The gap between elite and public – of all ethnic groups – seems enormous.



## FROM ETHNIC IMPASSE TO CIVIC RESOLUTION

The political elite in Macedonia disagrees on such fundamental issues as the nature of the state and citizenship, constitutional reform, and language policy. Even on issues about which everyone agrees something should be done – education policy, for instance, or local government reform – politicians are far from reaching agreement about how to proceed. Combine this with the deep mistrust with which the publics of both ethnic groups, and the result is a series of impasses, policy problems that cannot be solved but that fester and contribute to overt conflicts.

What makes this situation volatile today is that these issues manifest themselves as ethnic disagreement, even if they are to an even greater degree political or economic problems. Ethnic relations on an every day level in Macedonia have been both fairly good and fairly bad. They are good because hardly any Macedonians or Albanians report frequent overt conflicts with members of the other group. But this is because the two groups live lives that barely touch the other.

### **IMPASSE #1: CONSTITUTION, STATE, AND CITIZENSHIP**

Virtually all Albanians find offensive the preamble of the Macedonian constitution, which states:

Taking as the point of departure the historical, cultural, spiritual and statehood heritage of the Macedonian people and their struggle over centuries for national and social freedom as well as for the creation of their own state, and particularly the traditions of statehood and legality of the Krushevo Republic and the historic decisions of the Anti-Fascist Assembly of the People's Liberation of Macedonia, together with the constitutional and legal continuity of the Macedonian state as a sovereign republic within the Federal Yugoslavia and the freely manifested will of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia in the referendum of September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1991, as well as the historical fact that Macedonia is established as a national state of the Macedonian people, in which the full equality

This self-imposed segregation may not be healthy or productive for the country, but it can hardly be described as a state of war between the groups.

Nevertheless, the problems facing the country are defined largely as ethnic problems, or even worse as zero-sum ethnic conflicts in which any gain for the Albanians is perceived as a loss for the Macedonians, and any continuation of the status quo is seen by the Albanians as an intolerable expression of their second-class status. The challenge for the leaders and people of Macedonia is escaping from these "ethnicized" impasses.

One solution could be to redefine the nature of the problems facing the country. Rather than only being ethnic conflicts, the problems are also results of the failure of political institutions. Progress addressing these problems can be achieved if they are no longer seen as the struggle between two groups for special status, but rather as the need to reconceptualize the relation between the government and citizens of all ethnicities.

for citizens and permanent co-existence with the Macedonian people is provided for Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Romanies and other nationalities living within the Republic of Macedonia.

Albanians demand the preamble be changed to say that "Macedonia is established as a national state of the Macedonian and Albanian people, in which the full equality for citizens and permanent co-existence with the Macedonian people is provided for Turks, Vlachs, Romanies and other nationalities living within the Republic of Macedonia."

Many Macedonians told us that this is not acceptable. There is only one Macedonia, they say, only one special place that the Macedonians can call their own. Giving the Albanians equal status in the constitution would by definition reduce the special status

of the Macedonian people. Granting the Albanians the status of a constituting nation would, in Yugoslav thinking, start Macedonia down the road toward federalism, fracture, and the disintegration of the country.

What causes this impasse is that the argument is framed in terms of special status, which by its nature allows no group to win by increasing its status without diminishing the status of one or more other groups. Compromise is difficult in such a case.

An alternative to this struggle for ethnic group legal status is to guarantee the civic equality and liberty of all citizens, regardless

### ***IMPASSE #2: LANGUAGE***

For ethnic Macedonians, the preservation of Macedonian as the state language is crucial for the continued existence of Macedonia as a special home for Macedonians. Their language is part of what they believe defines them as a people. For the Albanians, their language is equally a matter of group self-definition and identity.

On a more practical level, Macedonians protest that becoming a bilingual country would be enormously expensive as all documents and official signs would have to be translated and duplicated. Belgium can afford that, but not a poor country such as Macedonia. Albanians counter by pointing out that the existing situation is already expensive since the special status of Macedonian in government and higher education means a

### ***IMPASSE #3: POLITICAL REFORM***

Both Macedonians and Albanians believe that local government in Macedonia is extremely weak. Macedonians do seem to think that granting extensive power to Albanian local governments might be another step on the path to federalization. Macedonians also claim that this will only encourage local corruption.

It is undeniable that the current structure of local government in Macedonia is ineffective and the proposed Law on Self-Government should be revised once again.

of the ethnic or religious group to which they belong. In this case, Macedonia would be "the state of the citizens of Macedonia."

This "civic option" could contribute to the resolution of other ethnic impasses facing the people of Macedonia.

The basis of citizenship itself will need to be agreed. Albanians claim that an ethnic Albanian must reside in Macedonia for 15 years before gaining citizenship; because of the massive movements of population since the Kosovo crisis first flared up, as early as 1989, this is a serious issue and agreement all parties must be sought.

restricted set of life opportunities for speakers of Albanian.

As so often is the case, it becomes a matter of fear and mistrust. Macedonians fear that granting equal status to Albanians in language policy sets the country on the path of federalism and fracture. Albanians say they cannot trust a people or a government that demeans their native tongue.

This impasse can be rethought as an issue not of groups fighting for the special status of their language, but as how best to ensure that people communicate with each other, how to help the Macedonian government (at all levels) perform more effectively, and how to help the people of Macedonia build a more prosperous future by joining Europe.

There is a missing link of government between the national and municipal levels. Most mayors have never met the chief of police, who has been appointed by the Ministry of the Interior in Skopje. There is no room for local government to innovate, no encouragement for local government to promote partnerships between NGOs and businesses, no incentive even to perform efficiently.

But local government officials are not prepared for increased power and authority, and the devolution of power without other

reforms will probably increase corruption and inefficiency. Local reform as it is being demanded would only provide additional sources of patronage for local political parties and officials. It would not lead to the better provision of services for the people of Macedonia. Decentralization then must be addressed not as a concession to Albanians

who seek a bigger share of a pie for their clients. It must be seen as a way of making sure that citizens of all ethnicities are better served by the government. Reform must be accompanied with training in public administration for local officials, with greater transparency of government operations, with greater accountability of officials through fair and contested elections.

#### **IMPASSE #4: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Some Albanians we interviewed thought that the Macedonian government had intentionally hobbled the national economy because of a fear of Albanians getting ahead. Privatization has been delayed, they said, because the only residents in the country possessing large quantities of capital for purchasing state-owned properties have been ethnic Albanians who have received remittances from the large Albanian Diaspora working across Europe. Moreover, the impotence of local governments, which they say is a deliberate policy adopted by Macedonians out of their fear of federalization, contributes greatly to the country's economic difficulties.

Macedonians also see their economic problems in ethnic terms. Ethnic Macedonians claim that Albanian businesses are dominated largely by shadowy interests.

The IMF is demanding as much as 40% of the workforce in overstuffed state industries and ministries to be reduced. This alone would be a grave threat to the livelihood of many Macedonians, but it is compounded when they hear ethnic Albanians demand an increase in government employment from the current level of around 2% to 20%.

The reality is that so long as economic issues are framed in ethnic terms and so long as government is ineffective at all levels, Macedonia will never be able to achieve self-sustaining economic growth. It will never be prepared to integrate into the European or international economies. It will be trapped, unable even to absorb and use productively the resources it receives from the international community.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Our recommendations fall into four rough time frames, each with a different set of priorities. The recommendations are addressed to:

- The major political parties in the Republic of Macedonia;
- Civic organizations in the Republic of Macedonia;
- The international community.

|             | Time                                     | Priorities and goals   |
|-------------|--|--|
| Immediate   | Today                                    | Stop the violence<br>Prevent the poisoning of politics with ethnic grievances<br>Establish frameworks for discussion   |
| Short-term  | Through next election<br>(probably 2002) | Prevent political actors from trying to manipulate crisis for opportunistic gain<br>Normalize discussion and dialogue about reforms at governmental and nongovernmental level<br>Build confidence between ethnic groups and between political leaders and the public<br>Discuss options for governmental and constitutional reform |
| Medium/term | 3 years                                  | Political institutional reform<br>Revise constitution<br>Economic reforms  |
| Long-term   | 10 years                                 | Self-sustaining economic development<br>Integration of Macedonia into Europe and into global economy<br>Reduce social distance between ethnic communities  |

### RECOMMENDATIONS TO BE ACTED UPON IMMEDIATELY

- I. Stop guerilla attacks and isolate extremists. Support peaceful dialogue as the only means of positive social change.
  - Parties should continue to condemn use of violence to effect political change.
  - Social and nongovernmental organizations, local government officials, religious leaders, business people, and others in society should be encouraged to initiate inter-ethnic discussions of how to address the immediate and the longer-term problems facing Macedonia. These discussions may begin informally, but could be institutionalized over time.
- II. Preservation and restoration of citizens' trust in the government of Macedonia, representing both the Macedonian and Albanian communities through their *political parties*.
  - The government should strongly condemn and investigate acts of violence.
  - Although the government of Macedonia should continue to use proportionate force to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity, it should emphasize that it will not tolerate the abuse of civilians by the armed forces or by the police. Allegations of such abuse should be investigated and, if well-founded, should be publicly punished.

### ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN RESOLVING THE CRISIS

- The international community should employ measures to stop conflict spilling over from Kosovo and Southern Serbia to the territory of Macedonia. This includes establishing control along the borders, prevention of illegal trafficking and illegal arms trade.
- A key to defusing the fighting between the National Liberation Army and the government of Macedonia is the unresolved status of Kosovo. Until a long term prospect of Kosovo's constitutional status is generally accepted, adventurism from armed groups there will continue. KFOR must seal off the border between Kosovo and Macedonia. Without support from the structures of the former Kosovo Liberation Army, the National Liberation Army is unlikely to continue fighting in Macedonia.
- UNMIK, the Western governments and international organizations in Kosovo should strongly press ethnic Albanian political leaders in Kosovo not only to condemn the use of violence to effect political change in Macedonia, but also to cooperate actively to prevent violence.
- The government should continue to allow international and pan-European organizations, such as OSCE to observe and monitor the situation. In addition, the international community should be prepared to become more actively involved in the mediation process between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians, and should offer help even before it is requested.

### SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (BEFORE NEXT ELECTION)

- I. **Two streams of dialogue.** It is clear that the final responsibility for legislation and for deciding the destiny of Macedonia lies with the formal political institutions (the party leaders, the President and the Sobranie). However our mission found a need for this political process to be supported by *discussion with the wider community in Macedonia* – in particular, civil society representatives and also the ethnic groups which are not well represented in the political process.
  - Stream I: Formal discussions by political leaders should clearly define a few basic parameters for dialogue. These would include a commitment to the territorial integrity of the Republic of Macedonia and the rejection of the use of violence to force social and political change. All other issues should be open for discussion: constitutional amendment, language policy, education policy, local government reform, and so on.
  - Stream II: Non- and extra-governmental dialogue. A Macedonian "Forum for National Dialogue and Reconciliation" could be

established, by including the following members: 1) leading members of political parties, with each of the large parties represented roughly in proportion to its parliamentary strength; 2) representatives of the NGO community, business, unions, and religious bodies; and 3) representatives of the ethnic minorities not otherwise represented. A clear majority of participants should be from political parties. All participants must reject the use of violence for political means. The Forum should provide a new space for interpretation of the problems of Macedonian society. It should meet in public. It should also invite submissions from the public, both in Macedonia and across the world, on the question of improving interethnic relations in Macedonia. The Forum can then invite the authors of the most interesting ideas to present them at a public session. Its members should also be able to commission expert papers, and interview expert witnesses. The international community should be prepared to help fund this initiative.

- Both tracks must be completely transparent. Dialogue will succeed only if the public trusts those who are carrying out the talks, and they will be more likely to trust if they can see and listen and understand discussion. The public must feel they are part of decisions, that their interests are being represented. This means that the media must be fully engaged as part of the process of dialogue.

**III. Local government and police.** After the various forms of violence (both by Albanian guerrillas and consequent anti-Albanian incidents) and accusations made by Albanians that their rights are abused by the police, the police must be better integrated into the activities of local governments and into the lives of citizens.

- The mayors of municipalities should have regular meetings with the chiefs of police in their municipality.
- Police liaison committees should bring together the chief of police, mayors and local municipal

councils, NGOs, and other interested persons. These should be open to the public.

- Train all police in the respect of human rights (including but not limited to protecting the rights of ethnic minorities).

#### IV. International community

- These changes will not be cheap. The international community should be prepared to help pay for many of them. The existing Stability Pact mechanisms are inadequate for this task.
- Organizations such as OSCE and the EU should moderate discussions such as those over constitutional reform.
- International organizations should make themselves available to assisting Stream II dia-

logue among NGOs and other non-state actors. This could be particularly important for local level discussions.

- In general, the perspective of conflict prevention and peace-building as expressed in the Stability Pact and other international declarations, should be at the core of all internationally funded projects in Macedonia.

#### II. Education

- The new Southeastern European University.
  - It should not be treated as an "Albanian university", i.e. as a further concession to the "separate but equal" status of the ethnic Albanian population, bringing about segregation. A mixed university is an excellent way for young people to have a chance to live and cooperate with members of other ethnic groups. Students should be recruited from Macedonian, Turkish, Roma, and other communities.
  - The creation of the new university should not mean the University of Skopje stops seeking qualified Albanian students. The University should be encouraged to continue to offer classes in Albanian and other languages.
- Improving the quality of primary and secondary education in Albanian and Roma classes should be a priority. Better textbooks is particularly important in the short term.
- Design and provide training programs to prepare teachers for leading multicultural classes consisting of students from different ethnic groups.

## **MEDIUM TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (NEXT THREE YEARS)**

**I. Constitutional reform.** We strongly recommend that the Macedonian constitution be based on a civic rather than ethnic basis. It should protect the rights of citizens and individuals, not corporate group rights.

### **II. Institutionalizing dialogue processes.**

- A wider range of issues with ethnic implications should be brought into the process of social dialogue. These issues could include economic development, environmental protection, and religious concerns.
- Establish a "Social Dialogue Observatory" that will:
  - Track progress toward achieving ethnic reconciliation.
  - Collect and disseminate objective data about ethnic and social relations.
  - "Translate" the languages of researchers, social activists, politicians, policymakers, businesspeople, and ordinary citizens.
- Broaden the Stream I dialogue of formal governmental discussions to include all governmental levels, including the various ministries and municipal levels.
- Broaden the Stream II dialogue of the "Forum for National Dialogue and Reconciliation" to include more NGOs without explicitly ethnic missions or orientations, including youth and women's organizations, churches and religious institutions, and so on. Ideally, this should engage all of civil society (i.e., everything between state and family).

### **III. Education**

- Provide opportunities to students from all ethnic groups to learn Macedonian and Albanian.
- Give everyone more opportunities to learn English and other languages that will provide them with opportunities to succeed in the European and world economies.
- Encourage underprivileged children to finish secondary school. Provide them with scholarships to attend university if they are qualified but lack financial resources.
- Design and offer course in civic education to children of all ethnic backgrounds to help them become fully engaged citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, not only members of particular ethnic groups.

- Revise the curricula of all schools to reflect in a historically accurate manner the experiences of the various groups in Macedonia.
- Education should not be limited to children and young people. Schools and universities as well as other institutions should provide training to unemployed people as well as to adults who wish to better themselves.

### **IV. Local government reform**

- A middle level of government should be created between municipalities and the central government. This will improve the performance of local and the national government as well as promoting regional development in accord with European standards.
- Local governments should have greater financial independence: they should be able to set tax rates and draw up their own budgets. They also must be subject to fiscal discipline. This means they should receive extensive training in public administration and public finances. The new Southeastern European University should be ideally suited to offer courses and training to soon-to-be-empowered local officials.
- A stronger Local Government Association allowing public officials to exchange information with one another and to speak in a unified voice should be encouraged.

### **V. Crime and corruption**

- Actively recruit and train qualified local citizens for the police.
- Provide all members of the police with equal opportunities to advance, regardless of ethnicity or political party membership.
- To fight organized crime engaging the help of the Regional Center for Combating Organized Crime in Bucharest.