

The War of National Liberation Army in the Karadak of Kumanovo in 2001 (Republic of Macedonia) According to the British Press

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Abstract: The war of 2001 in Macedonia drew the attention of all governments and diplomacies of the superpowers of the world and also raised curiosity of many political and military analysts and researchers who wrote about Modern and Contemporary Balkan history. But it seems that the journalists from the powerful countries of the world in which global politics are created, show interest to follow the tragic events in Macedonia during 2001, war between Macedonian Army and Police forces against National Liberation Army - NLA (of Albanians). U.S. and UK in particular and the European Union were generally engaged in Macedonia politically and military throughout the fighting. Also British journalists and media were seriously interested from both printed and electronic ones who did not delay and arrived at the scene immediately after this "Oasis of Peace" was blurred. Reports and journalistic writings in the UK undoubtedly play an important role to inform both the public and the state leadership that they will build a political concept on events that took place in this part of Europe, therefore we know that in democracies of these countries the "public opinion" plays an important role. These materials are collected from important daily newspapers such as : The Times; The Independent; The Guardian; The Daily Telegraph; The Financial Times; The Mirror; The Evening Standard etc.

The war of 2001 in Macedonia drew the attention of all governments and diplomacies of the superpowers of the world and also raised curiosity of many political and military analysts and researchers who wrote about Modern and Contemporary Balkan history. But it seems that the journalists from the powerful countries of the world in which global politics are created, show interest to follow the tragic events in Macedonia during 2001, war between Macedonian Army and Police forces against National Liberation Army - NLA (of Albanians). U.S. and UK in particular and the European Union were generally engaged in Macedonia politically and military throughout the fighting. Also British journalists and media were seriously interested from both printed and electronic ones who did not delay and arrived at the scene immediately after this "Oasis of Peace" was blurred. Reports and journalistic writings in the UK undoubtedly play an important role to inform both the public and the state leadership that they will build a political concept on events that took place in this part of Europe, therefore we know that in democracies of these countries the "public opinion" plays an important role.

In this study we have taken the British Daily Press that has paid attention to the development of military and political events in Macedonia during the period of war in 2001.

The written articles were taken from the most important daily newspapers like: The Times, The Independent, The Guardian, The Daily Telegraph, The Financial Times, The Mirror, The Evening Standard etc. The ultimate goal of this study is that we not always have to watch events from the perspective of your own nation for an event or process that pervades the nation, but more important is to know that what the others will write or speak for the same process. In this case the British took advantage because of the importance that London is having a wider political range over the world, otherwise known as the Anglo-American one that produces the most powerful politics in the world and additionally Britain was heavily engaged in Macedonia during 2001 war.

The region of Karadak in Kumanovo has been one of the most important areas where the fighting took place. In this study we focused mainly in this province to submit reports of British journalists on the ground and the views of the editorials of these newspapers.

After the events of Tanusevci, north of capital Skopje and then the extent of fighting in Tetovo which events have been covered by British journalists, The Daily Telegraph newspaper outlined "Albanian rebels bring Balkan war closer", among other news also it reports that a day earlier were fighting in Malino, although artillery explosions were heard that bombed the surrounding mountains to "clean up 200 rebels. Additionally the journalist reports that according to several news from terrain, fights are well spreading around Lipkovo 12 miles north-east of Skopje". The journalist Patrick Bishop notes that "Ongoing violence has dampened hopes that the actions of the NLA would be short-lived" basically the journalist quoted, The Prime Minister Georgievski, who says that: "At first we thought that they are just criminals, but according to our information, now it seems that they have strong political and logistic support from structures in Kosovo." (March 16, 2001 The Daily Telegraph). Apparently the Prime Minister Georgievski trying to create the

perception that Kosovo Protection Force is responsible for igniting the war in Macedonia and for arming the NLA to fight against government forces. Many analysts think that Mr Georgievski wanted to justify the losses of unprepared and unequipped Macedonian Army. He was keen to react like this in order to convince the international factor for better support from them.

For entering the NLA units in Lipkovo The Times, stating that they are entered in Lipkovo armed with machine guns and grenade launcher. This neutral attitude of the British press about the events of mid-March 2001, which is clearly expressed in their tabloids that the NLA is not a terrorist organization, it means that foreign journalists do not emphasize the same view towards NLA as it has been claimed by both Macedonian state officials and Macedonian media as a terrorist organization. Although the view of British journalists is that the actions of the NLA won't be short-lived which creates the impression that NLA is a well organized military structure and not as claimed by some quarters who represented as an anarchist group of people. These journalists expression will quickly reflect positively in favorite of NLA, as it influenced the international political and military factors to keep the NLA side. (The Times March 16th 2001)

The Independent newspaper reports for the visit of British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook in Skopje. Apart from meeting protocol that took place the journalist, Steve Crawshaw highlights the reaction of the DPA leader Arben Xhaferi towards Robin Cook, as the later one uses the term <terrorist> regarding to NLA as a political tool to make pressure upon them to withdraw from the frontlines. "Mr. Xhaferi though a declared opponent of the NLA firmly rejected Mr. Cook's use of the word "terrorist". He said "They cannot be terrorists, because they have uniforms and a front line- they haven't attacked civilians. We have an uprising." (The Independent April 6, 2001) This is a turning point in managing the war in Macedonia, as Mr. Xhaferi's political party takes part in the government and he was not a supporter of NLA, at once he protected the Albanian guerillas, which took by surprise Mr. Cook and Macedonians as well. Even though Mr. Xhaferi wanted to be shown in front of the Albanians and NLA solders as a hero, it still meant a lot for British and European diplomacy as he gave a clear message to them.

On May 7, 2001, journalists reporting from Slupçani Nicholas Wood and Ian Black from Brussels, in The Guardian newspaper reports that the situation has escalated in this region as government forces have taken air and ground offensive against the province of Lipkovo again yesterday after the expiry of a deadline for civilians to leave the area, as Mr. Wood writes: "Helicopter gunships, tanks and mortars were used to pound the villages of Slupcane and Vaksince. The attack came as the rebels showed no sign of withdrawing from their positions in the north- west, where security forces bombarded them for a fourth day running. A senior rebel leader chief swore that his men would not leave the region, as rebel units had done near Tetovo more than a month ago when attacked by the army. We'll never let Tetovo happen again said commander Sokol, speaking at his headquarters near Slupcane." At least seven people all civilians according to the rebels have been killed in fighting since last Thursday is reported by journalists. Regarding speculation that the NLA is holding civilians as human shields the journalist in a very correct way enlighten the case by interviewing local residents who say: <Where can we go. If we go the Macedonians will be waiting for us. They will separate the men from the children. Here the women are afraid and the children are crying.> (The Guardian 7 May, 2001) says a resident named Osman Aledin 50 years. "Out on the street not a single house was left untouched by the shelling.... the guerrillas claim to have 2000 men in 12 villages around Kumanovo. Rebel checkpoints and bunkers can be seen at the entry to each village. They wear either black or khaki uniforms, all of them with a red badge bearing the group's initials." (The Guardian 7 May, 2001)

For the above mentioned fighting notifies the Wall Street Journal Europe on May 7, 2001, by journalist Geoff Winestocks. Reporter writes "Fast escalating conflict between the quarters of the Macedonian government forces and ethnic Albanian rebels, gradually forcing Western leaders to admit that once again can get their hands dirty in the Balkans. Infantry forces of the Macedonian government, backed by helicopter for a few days attacked and bombed villages, believing that they are strong holds in the north-east of the capital Skopje. Diplomats say that the battle has caused at least seven deaths and 1000 civilian Albanian refugees crossed the close border with Kosovo.

Also on May 7, 2001 Christian Jennings reporter for The Daily Telegraph newspaper reports about the situation in the region of Lipkovo and civilians who have remained trapped in villages. A spokesman of the committee, Anick Bouvier International Red Cross says: "One reason why people are staying in these villages is a form of intimidation." Also he said that "The ICRC was worried for hundreds of civilians after the villages came under fire for the third day running from helicopter gunships artillery, machine guns and mortars."

The Financial Times on May 7, 2001, wrote about events in the region of Lipkovo, for the number of civilians killed and the fate of the other civilians who remained in the villages. Represents the views of Ljubco Georgievski to declare a state of war and opposition from international community and Arben Xhaferi which states: "The declaration of war would throw Albanians out of the system and lead to further ethnic polarization... There is emotional pressure on us to pull out of governments, but rationally it is better to stay in. That is the only way we can exert some influence over events. "

A week later, on May 14, 2001, The Daily Telegraph Christian Jennings reports from Lipkovo, also is published a photo of a masked Macedonian police in the newspaper. Despite severe fierce fighting that took place NLA is still holding more than 200 Km² under it's control writes the author of the text. He had a conversation with members of NLA and he citet commander Shpati: "The Macedonians hold the key. It's peace or war. The situation depends on them... Despite attempts at a political solution captain Shpati said the rebel National Liberation Army had thousands of men under arms poised to strike anywhere in Macedonia, where an Albanian insurgency has raged against government forces since January...We're going to let the Macedonians to reflect a bit before we attack again to see if there's any chance of dialogue with them".

Further reporter states "A month of continuous shelling of several villages they occupy between Kumanovo and the Kosovo border has had little impact on rebel movements." Captain Shpati denied government claims that 30 rebels had died in a weekend offensive. Although the journalist Cristian Jennings is raising the issue whether the Macedonian Army could have military power and equipments to deal with insurgents. Based in his information he is citing some Western defense sources that they are doubtful whether the 12000 strong Macedonian Army could dislodge the rebels. (The Daily Telegraph, May 14 2001)

The Guardian on May 14, 2001 represents the situation as worrying in the Lipkovo region. For Slupcane and Vaksince Nick Thorpe writes: "... there are many men in NLA uniforms, but even more young men in civilian clothes . Almost every roof is damaged by mortar fire and almost every window is broken... In the basement of one house, 70 men , women and children are sheltering in the gloom. The youngest is four months old baby, the oldest is 84 years old ... The children sing a ballad about the NLA defending Slupcane, to keep up their spirits . The village doctor estimates that at least 3700 of the pre-war population of 4200 people, are still here."(The Guardian on May 14, 2001)

Also, the same journalist Nick Thorpe on May 17 for The Guardian presents the issue of civilians as International Red Cross tries to evacuate the villages of Lipkovo. While women and elders were in the cars of the International Red Cross as Macedonian and international journalist swarmed around the vehicles and they asked them "Have you had contact with terrorists?" Nick Thorpe tells how one woman took herself from exhaustion and hunger by looking at the reporter who asked them and said determinedly : "The men there are our brothers, defending our homes," It is important to mention that the reporter notes: "Every shell fired by the Macedonian army, every bullet fired from Albanian positions, further polarizes Macedonian society. And the country's growing ethnic tensions are not taking place in a vacuum."(Nick Thorpe on May 17 for The Guardian)

Several days later the British press was invaded by articles that are talking about the war in Macedonia, respectively the hot spot of the region. The Independent on May 22, 2001 informs the British public about fightings in Karadak of Kumanovo. Aleksandar Vasovic writes: "The fighting centered on Opae. The gunship and tanks shelled ethnic Albanian positions to win control of the one – third of the village in rebel hands. The insurgents responded with machine – gun fire."(The Independent on May 22, 2001)

While newspaper The Guardian on May 22, 2001 informs that "the Macedonian government used helicopter gunships, tanks and artillery to bombard Albanian rebel positions yesterday in the heaviest fighting for more than two weeks.... The exchange of fire was centered on villages, of Vaksince and Slupcane, in the north-east of the country. The rebels said that six civilians had been wounded and the minaret of the mosque in Vaksince had been destroyed. The International Committee of the Red Cross estimates that there are up to 10,000 people still living in rebel held territory , and a government minister accused the rebels of using them as human shields . Last week the Red Cross evacuated hundreds of women and children from the area, but said that many people had decided to remain, taking refugee in their cellars."(The Guardian on May 22, 2001)

The Daily Telegraph on May 22, 2001 informs about the situation of civilians who have remained in the cross-fire of the war, wherein quoted spokesman Chris Janowski UN High Commissioner who says there in the villages are 5000 villagers and 10000 civilians. Further stated: "Faced with a major government offensive, ethnic Albanian rebels threatened to take their war to the cities."(The Daily Telegraph on May 22, 2001)

On May 25, 2001, Douglas Hamilton reporter from the newspaper The Independent reports on the bombing of villages in Lipkovo. He quoted commander Shpati who says: "This is the fiercest shelling we have withstood so far. We have unconfirmed reports that shells have hit the shelters." The journalist writes below that humanitarian organizations were unable to send a team to the villages Slupcane, Orizari, Vaksince and other Albanian villages held by guerillas for the past three weeks despite frequent bombardments were also under attack. There are more information that Albanian political leaders had made a peace deal with NLA rebels in secret talks involving a western diplomat. The deal was apparently brokered by the special envoy of the Organization for security and Cooperation in Europe, Robert Frowick. (May 25, 2001 The Independent)

As far as civilians who managed to flee the areas of fighting the British press writes very clearly about their mistreatment by Macedonian forces. Reporter Julius Strauss who reports from Kumanovo writes: "Dozens of refugees were beaten and tortured by Macedonian forces trying to put down an ethnic Albanian uprising at the weekend. The government had promised villagers in the north safe passage away from the fighting, food and lodging. Instead army units beat men, women and children. At the police station in Kumanovo, suspected rebel sympathizers were tortured by masked man wielding buttons. Several had their hands burned, some were beaten on the soles of their feet or had sacks placed over their heads. The journalist quotes Peter Bouckaert of Human Rights Watch, who is compiling report on the abuses, said: "Just about every male has been beaten. It's one of the main reasons they're not leaving their villages. We have cases of women, children and elderly men being beaten." (The Daily Telegraph on May 28, 2001) The Times published an interesting report to Richard Beeston, who with a historical-poetic language describes several minutes of fighting in the region Lipkovo but it suggests very few lines of densely woven. He writes: "Camped by the side of a road with fields of wheat and white flowers on either side, a motley group of spectators turned out yesterday to watch the two opposing forces in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia do battle beneath the blistering Balkans sun. Villagers foreign television crews and Western military observers sat at a safe distance from the battle as tanks, helicopter gunships and artillery pounded a handful of villages which have become the front line in the 5th ethnic conflict in the Former Yugoslavia. Despite the boom of field guns behind us and the destruction of the nearby village of Matejce, we stood and gazed like 19th- century European aristocrats, who watched the Continent's battles with picnic humpers, wine and a powerful telescope." (May 29, 2001, The Times)

The Massacre of Zymberi family in the British press

How were received from English and foreign journalists in family massacre Zymberi and appeared before the public as the best British journalist's article speaks Justin Huggler. He starts writing in this way: "

Valbona Zymberi died in agony, a terrified child in a hospital far from home. She spent the last weeks of her life in total darkness, crouched in a filthy basement with 65 other people while the explosions of shells and rockets echoed over head. Valbona lived at the end of the basement the villagers thought was safest, where they put the restless, frustrated children. And when rocket fired by a Macedonian helicopter gunship, ploughed into that end, it was the children who were torn apart. As the villagers stumbled through the cellar they found the bodies. All the dead were members of the extended Zymbery family. Selvie Zymbery, a cousin of Qefajet's, lie dead. Beside her were the bodies of her eight-year-old son, Mersim, and two year-old-daughter Isnje. Suzan Zymbery, who was 23 and Jonuz Zymbery, 18, had also been killed. Neale Zymbery a 15 year-old girl lay screaming. She died half an hour later." (The Independent on June 5, 2001) In an editorial comment of The Independent, entitled "The West should not close their eyes to the violence in Macedonia," among other things writes: "Around a third of all Macedonian citizens are Albanians; in western Macedonia, they form a majority. In those circumstances, it becomes doubly essential that the government should be ready to show willingness to treat the Albanians as equals. That is not yet the case. Worse, they go after the bombing of their basement hiding place, reported in The Independent today, is a reminder of the casual brutality that must be left behind. Evidence from Human Rights Watch and others shows that agreed ceasefires have been abused; men leaving villages have been taken to a police station and badly beaten." (The Independent on June 5, 2001) In this newspaper article are enlightened two important elements: first that Albanians make up one third of the country despite the state propaganda that they are only 22%, secondly the evidence of human right abuse by the Macedonian police.

The Guardian newspaper informs by the journalist Nicholas Wood in Macedonia that the situation is worrying because fighting took place in three fronts: Tetovo, Skopje and Kumanovo. The reporter writes: "Rebel forces are concentrated around Kumanovo, north east of Skopje. Rebels killed a soldier and wounded three others in that area yesterday as the army tried to retake the village of Slupcan, the state news agency said. The gunmen's arrival in Aracinovo means the thinly stretched army has trouble on three fronts." (The Guardian June 11th 2001) While in The Guardian the journalist Jonathan Steele commented the situation in Macedonia in an article entitled "Right of the map".

Journalist commented the proposal of Macedonian Academy of Science, the country's intellectual elite accompanied by a map. which to a great way to open with a well developed project proposes the division of Macedonia and the exchange of population. The text begins with Franjo Tudjman's Croatian ex-president who once drew a map for Paddy Ashdown in Bosnia, a project which is now the author of the text derives from the intellectual elite of the state. Noted that part of the Macedonian politicians disagreed with this proposal, but the Albanian politicians have opposed this, as the author cites "Albanian politicians also opposed the map, after allegations that Albanians as undermining this country, was a significant group Macedonians who openly advocated the separation. Stojan Andov, the president of parliament called

the proposal for voluntary ethnic cleansing "interesting and provocative". Ljubco Georgievski, the nationalist prime minister, went to television to reveal "the latest demographic facts", showing that Albanian children were 34% of new entrants to primary school and Macedonians only 52%. This means Macedonian political elite is disturbed because according to official statistics in Macedonia, Albanians are 22%, which means that 12% are represented more in primary schools, so the number of Albanians are increased so high. On the other side the Macedonians officially were 67% but in primary school are represented with only 52%, basically 15% less than the percentage of population, it means a drastic decline of fertility. This is an interesting presentation by the Prime Minister Georgievski who pays special attention to demographic figures and by telling people he is rising the alarm to find a solution to get rid of Albanians as he warns that Macedonians will be minority in their own country in the near future. (The Guardian June 11th 2001)

The Daily Telegraph, reports that, ethnic Albanian rebels say they will hit Macedonia's main airport, police stations and other targets. Yesterday a Macedonian soldier was killed and three others were wounded as the army tried to recapture Slupcane. Also, at the same day The Times, confirmed the same story for fighting in Slupcane and the National Liberation Army seized the district of Aracinovo, six miles from the centre of the city. (June 11, The Daily Telegraph)

The daily newspaper The Independent published a picture of a tearful child on the arm of his mother as ethnic Albanians cross the border into Kosovo to escape the fighting in Macedonia. The following text of Justin Huggler titled "Macedonia calls ceasefire after rebels threaten to attack capital's airport", the text begins as: "The threats from ethnic Albanian rebels attack the Macedonian capital Skopje, yesterday appeared to cause the government to back down and call off its assault on the insurgents." Also at talks in Luxembourg, EU foreign ministers expressed "growing concern" at the deterioration of the situation in Macedonia. Anna Lindh, the Swedish Foreign Minister, who chaired the meeting, also cited about the situation in Macedonia. "It's extremely serious, extremely tense."

The EU also appealed to the Macedonian government to keep its response "proportionate" and deliver political concessions to the Albanian community within two weeks. (The Independent on June 12, 2001)

The journalist also informs for the water supply to the city of Kumanovo to be reconnected. The city has been without water during a heat wave since the rebels cut off the supply from a dam just outside a village they are occupying. The Macedonian army has been shelling several rebel held villages for a month now, without any significant success.

In this tense situation, we have an analysis of the historian Misha Glenny, author of many books for Balkans, in The Daily Telegraph newspaper on June 14, 2001. Misha Glenny's text begins with a few sentences concerning about the situation in Macedonia, "Time is running out for Macedonia. After months of low-level clashes between the poorly equipped Macedonian army and the highly effective Albanian guerrillas of the National Liberation Army, the last two weeks has seen the situation slip rapidly out of control. Moreover, one senior European Union diplomat said: "A collapse of this fragile state would endanger more or less everything we have been trying to achieve in the region during the past decade. It would be almost impossible to put Macedonia's pieces back together again"

Rory Carroll, the journalist of the daily newspaper The Guardian in June 27, 2001, informs that: The ceasefire brokered by the European Union allowed several hundred rebels to move from the village of Aracinovo, just six miles from the capital, to Nikushtak four miles further north. Macedonian tanks, artillery and machine guns poured fire into Nikushtak and two other rebel-held villages of Kumanovo. In August 7, 2001 the journalist Justin Huggler in The Independent quoted commander Shpati who said by telephone: "We will not hand over any weapons until we have a deal that is not only signed, but holding"

"We're not happy with the deal" said Shpati. "We have invested a lot in this, and we hoped for something better". (The Independent August 7 2001)

Nicholas Wood, the journalist of, The Guardian on August 13, 2001, quoted commander Sokol, leader of the 113 brigade, based in the villages around the city of Kumanovo, said there had been four hours of non-stop shelling of Lipkovo. "Here they are shelling the civilian population without any reason".

After 13 August 2001 when the Ohrid Framework Agreement, signed by the international mediation, in which part of the deal was disarming the NLA by NATO forces in action to be called "Essential Harvest". Under the agreement NLA soldiers had to hand over their arms to NATO soldiers voluntarily in areas where they had set up their collecting points. So journalists Julius Strauss who report from Nikushtak and Michael Smith from Skopje, for The Daily Telegraph newspaper on August 28, 2001 report on the action of collecting weapons from the NLA who voluntarily are handing over to NATO forces. Among the settlements mentioned is the village of Hotle, where a day earlier French troops have collected over 400 weapons and wherein the action continues even further by the British and French troops.

In another article being on August 28, 2001 The Daily Telegraph by journalist Michael Smith that reports from Skopje, he notified that the collection of NLA weapons has already began. This action will last 30 days to disarm the Albanian

guerrillas. Michael Smith also reports that yesterday in the village of Hotle are handed over 400 guns. The text is accompanied by a large picture showing the mosque of the village Matejce wholly ruined along with the minaret of the mosque which lies on the road where British troops are patrolling.

“For months, Ljubco Georgievski, the Prime Minister, and Ljube Boskovski, the Interior Minister, have publicly savaged Nato for allegedly backing the ethnic Albanians. As a result, many Macedonians hate the West even more than the Albanians, and attacks on Westerners have become commonplace. The nationalist local media have further stirred feelings, accusing Nato of Illicitly arming Albanian rebel and preventing the government from using force to crush them “. (The Daily Telegraph)

“One thing that Macedonian conflict has in common with the Bosnian and the Kosovo conflict is that ignoring the problems now would only store up worse problems to come – not just in Macedonia but across the region.”(The Independent , 28 August 2001)

Are these authentic sources which in translation with full care are adapted in Albanian not changed or distorted views and comments of various journalists.

Based in the newspaper articles and reports from British journalists there could be a conclusion that from the beginning of the war they have been very careful using the vocabulary to do not degrade the NLA. Also is never called by derogatory or belittling term of any other form, except the term <Insurgents> or <Rebels> which based in Oxford Dictionary mean “1. A person who fights against the governments of their country. 2. A person who opposes somebody in authority over them within an organization, a political party etc.” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, New 8th Edition, 2010). Also in a professional manner the British journalist are representing the events in an objective way as they were developing in the battlefield. The British reporters denounces government discrimination policy towards Albanians. Their fair reports made the British public to understand the reality in Macedonia and to calm down opposition voices who were against the British involvement for this issue, in particular they played a very important rule for preparation of the British public at the right time not opposing to send British troops to Macedonia.

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