

Fetahu Kimet (Tyrana, Albania)

WE ARE REQUESTING THE SAME RIGHTS AS THE ALBANIANS IN MACEDONIA
Interview by Victor Cvetanoski

Mr. Fetahu, you are the President of the society "Peace" that includes Macedonian from Tyrana, Drac, Elbasan, Golo Brdo, Gora and other places. Do you face any problems in your activities? How much are the rights of the Macedonian national minority met in Albania?

FETAHU: We are loyal citizens of Albania, we respect this state, we love it, but at the same time we request that it recognizes us as Macedonians and enables us to be educated on our, Macedonian language. This language is taught only in Prespa, and only up to the fourth grade, and in Golo Brdo and in Gora, as well as in the cities, this can not be imagined. For the moment the official authorities do not want to undertake such steps, to open schools in Macedonian in other places in Albania, where Macedonians live.

It should be known that in Tyrana there are around 30.000 Macedonians. There is a big Macedonian minority in Elbasan and in Drac. We only ask that the rights prescribed by International Conventions and rights of man would be accepted and implemented by the Albanian authorities. At the same time we are aware that it is a matter of a long-term process.

In Sophia it is claimed that the Macedonians from Albania are Bulgarians. If one takes into account the Bulgarian media, the most powerful propaganda is made in Golo Brdo. You originate from this area and you know well the circumstances there. What is the reality, do these people really feel as Bulgarians or as Macedonians?

FETAHU: This is a game of high Albanian politicians, to present the Macedonians as Bulgarians. This is made since between Albania and Bulgaria there are not ethnic problems. Indeed, there is an organization called "Ivan Vazov" that has practically no influence. They are supported by Bulgaria. It is a small group that has connected its personal interest with certain structures there.

There are no Bulgarians in Albania - this is the reality. How can Macedonians from Golo Brdo be called Bulgarians, when their language, customs and folklore are Macedonian? All these villages are family related to the villages on the other side of the border, with Otishani, Dzepcishte and other places in Macedonia, where the people are Macedonians. Bulgaria can look for Bulgarians somewhere near its border.

PROPAGANDA

Recently in Sophia a new book titled "Bulgarians in Albania from 1913-1939" was published, in which it is claimed that during the Balkan wars these villages have requested to belong to Albania, since it was the only state of the ones that were dividing Macedonia that allegedly did not try to change their Bulgarian identity.

FETAHU: I have not read this book. It is true that in the past the people that live here did not have big connections to Bulgaria. The life of our people in Golo Brdo was related to Debar, Struga, Ohrid, Bitola, Solun. This was the road of our economic migrants. Only a small number of people went to Sophia, Plovdiv, Blagoevgrad, looking for work. In the past years there were no events from which one can conclude that Bulgarians live in our villages. In 1991 15.000 signatures were collected that request autonomy of Golo Brdo, at the time when the new changes in Albania started. The request of this economically disabled area was reasonable since under Peshkopeja or Librash there was no life. The Bulgarians have not made a major influence over the Macedonians in Albania. Everything that one hears or reads in the Sophia media is just propaganda. They waste time and energy in vain and fulfill interests of a small number of people that sell their nation.

According to your opinion, what should Macedonia do to help Macedonians in Albania, especially in the places that are economically disabled?

FETAHU: Macedonia, together with the Albanian authorities, should make efforts to solve the global problems of the Macedonian minority in Albania. All Macedonians live near the border of the two states. They have great problems related to providing water and electricity, and their living standard is very low. There should be mutual projects that would solve the basic problems of these people. Through concrete projects, for example constructing water and electricity supply network etc. This is the most important. Going to Sophia, Skopje or Rome for studying means solving personal problems, although through the studies one can make certain influence. Me, for example, I have graduated in China. I can not say I am Chinese. What is important is the strategy and cooperation of the municipalities on both sides of the border.

SUPPORT

Are you satisfied by the support given by the Macedonian state?

FETAHU: To be honest, for the moment we are satisfied, but this support is mainly moral. Sometimes assistance is sent over. In the future it should be bigger. Because the Macedonian problem, here, in Albania, is current. The authorities have even officially declared that in Albania there are Macedonians and Greeks. The problem is in the number of Macedonians that is declared. Albanians say that there are only 5.000, and we think that our number is 120.000. Macedonia has done a lot, but it should do something more, more concretely. There is no institution that should deal with the problems of Macedonians in neighboring countries. There are Macedonians in Bulgaria, but also in Greece and in Albania.

How much are Macedonians participating in the political life of Albania?

FETAHU: I am a member of the Stability Pact Commission that deals with the rights of man and the rights of the minorities in Albania. We are still not represented in the Albanian Parliament and in the state institutions as a minority. We are only requesting what the Albanians have received in Macedonia - to form our political parties, to have our own MPs. In Albania, there is a fear of such forms of organization. We want to form a party, but the Albanian Constitution does not allow political organizations upon national grounds. We are taking step by step, according to the changing of times.

*Taken from Utrinski vesnik, daily newspaper