

C. PDP and PDPA/NDP: With Wisdom

Despite their many differences, the ethnic Albanian political parties in Macedonia do agree over basic principles. The largest ethnic Albanian party, PDP (*Partita per Prosperitet Demokratik* or Party of Democratic Prosperity), believes that by participating in the government, it will bring greater benefits to its constituents. Its motto has been that it is better to be in government and exercising influence than to be in opposition achieving nothing. The PDPA/NDP (*Partita per Prosperitet Demokratik te Shqiptareve* or Party of Democratic Prosperity for Albanians and *Partia Demokratike Popullore* or People's Democratic Party) coalition takes a less compromising approach to achieving equal representation and treatment of ethnic Albanians in all aspects of society.

The coalition platform promises to achieve the following: equal status for ethnic Albanians in society; education for ethnic Albanians in their native language at all levels; more uses for the Albanian language in central and local government; proportional representation of ethnic Albanians according to their numbers in the wider population in state institutions, public enterprises, public administration, and economic and financial centres; decentralisation of central government; and the release of ethnic Albanian political prisoners.¹⁵

The coalition is especially concerned with the on-going violence in neighbouring Kosovo and frequent outbreaks of anarchy and violent demonstrations in Albania. Although the parties are independent, the fraternal links to Albanian and Kosovo cannot be ignored. The radicalisation of ethnic Albanian politics in Kosovo has brought broader changes to Macedonia as well. PDP, as a long-term coalition partner, is losing popularity for not being able to bring about any solutions to long-standing problems of their electorate.

Not all ethnic Albanians are happy about the electoral coalition. The parties are hoping to win 17 seats in predominately ethnic Albanian constituencies. PDP will run ten and the PDPA/NDP will run seven majoritarian candidates. However, many party members are upset by the choice of candidates to run in specific districts. The merger had been talked about for some time but was cobbled together at the last moment. In its haste to select candidates, the nominating commission members seemed more concerned with placing themselves on the ballots than choosing the strongest candidate from each district.¹⁶

PDPA/NDP branches in Gostivar and Struga nominated candidates other than the ones selected by the committee. These two local branches objected to the selected candidates and have threatened to

¹⁵ *Flaka e Vellazerimit*, 11 September 1998.

¹⁶ The committee members include: Mevlan Tairi (PDP), Abdyladi Vejeli (PDP), Qamil Veliu (PDP), Menduh Thaci (PDPA), Fadil Bajrami (PDPA) and Fatmir Etemi (PDPA).