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Is Macedonia Next for the Ethnic Pyre?

By Mike O'Connor
New York Times Service

TETOVO, Macedonia — In an office above the streets of this ancient city of Albanian people, where the clothing and crowds reflect the flavor of the Middle East, a quiet, obviously thoughtful man said the words that make many Macedonians fear theirs will be the next Balkan country to fall into ethnic turmoil.

"We are not Macedonians, we are Albanians who live in Macedonia," said Arben Xhaferi, leader of an Albanian political party whose nationalist positions have been gaining considerable support from Albanians in Macedonia. "We cannot be part of this state if there is only one official language and one approved culture and it is not ours."

With unrest in Albania, which borders Macedonia to the west, many Albanians in this country say they feel under increasing pressure to curtail their campaign for greater protection of their civil rights.

But despite the pressure, leaders like Mr. Xhaferi say, they are becoming more assertive.

At the same time, foreign diplomats and Macedonian politicians say the scenes of thousands of Albanian gunmen running through the country next door reinforce the position of Macedonian nationalists who insist that the demands of the country's Albanian minority, who account for about one-quarter of the population, must not be granted.

"We are seeing the old fears between

the two ethnic groups come right to the surface," a foreign official said. "I won't say it will continue to spiral upward, but I can't say it will not."

The leader of the largest opposition bloc in the national legislature, Stojan Andov, had a much gloomier prediction. "We moderates have about a 20 percent chance of stopping the chaos in Albania from spreading here," he said.

"The extremists are spreading a fire. Each side gets stronger. The fire from Albanian nationalists frightens the average Macedonian and makes some of them move toward the extremist position. Then the extremists among the Macedonians say things that frighten the average Albanian, and they get more extreme."

He said he felt like one of the politicians in Bosnia-Herzegovina who, six years ago, tried to calm the nationalist mood as that country headed to war.

Macedonia, with a population of about two million, escaped the violence that enveloped much of the region as Yugoslavia dissolved.

But it is the gulf between Albanian

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Albania	US \$2.00	Latvia	1.20 Ls
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Italy Won't Intervene With Troops in Albania

Compiled by Our Staff From Dispatches

ROME — Italy has no plans to intervene militarily in Albania, but it will patrol coastal waters to try to stem the exodus of refugees toward Italian shores, the defense minister said Thursday.

"Nothing's on the horizon today, now, for an Italian intervention, let alone a unilateral Italian one," the minister, Beniamino Andreatta, said after meeting here with the Albanian foreign minister, Arian Starova.

The Italian press has been awash with reports that Italy was about to undertake a military operation to secure landing sites for emergency deliveries of food and medicine for Albanians hurt by the anarchy in their homeland.

Mr. Andreatta said an accord had been worked out with the government in Tirana, the capital of Albania, to let the Italian Navy patrol Albanian territorial waters to monitor the coasts.

About 11,000 Albanians have already crossed the Adriatic Sea in crowded boats.

In Tirana, the first plane to leave the capital's airport since it was closed by the unrest a week ago took off for Sofia on Thursday.

An Albanian Airlines plane carrying 30 passengers of various nationalities took off only hours after the authorities declared that the airport had been secured

by special forces, that all key staff were in place and that it was open for business.

A manager of the airline said it planned to resume scheduled flights to Rome and Bologna on Friday and to Istanbul on Saturday. But Western air carriers have said they will not start flying until Sunday at least.

The airport is Albania's main gateway to the outside world, and the staging point for any flow of the humanitarian aid that its government and European observers say it will require soon to cope with food and other shortages.

The reopening of the airport was a further indication that the capital was returning to normal after days of near-anarchy last week, set off by the looting of weapons from army depots.

But unrest was reported in other parts of the country, mainly in the south, which is mostly under the control of rebels demanding the resignation of President Sali Berisha.

In the town of Korce, 180 kilometers (110 miles) southeast of Tirana, residents reached by telephone said that gunmen had looted all the town's shops and that shooting was continuing.

Rebel leaders in the south were still awaiting a visit by Prime Minister Bashkim Fino, head of an all-party government called to restore order and organize elections by June. (AP, Reuters)

ALBANIA

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