

## Milcho Manchevski Interview For The Italian News Agency ANSA

Milcho Manchevski (whose *Before the Rain* won Golden Lion in Venice, thirty other international awards and a nomination for foreign-language Oscar) is in the process of finishing his second film *DUST*, which he shot in Macedonia and New York. It stars Joseph Fiennes, David Wenham and Adrian Lester. It talks of history and how it is shaped.

1. The recent clashes between security forces and Albanian guerillas in Macedonia have raised fears of a new Balkan war, which could drag in neighbouring Bulgaria, Greece, Albania or Yugoslavia. Do you feel these fears are real and do you think there is an immediate danger of a civil war?

1. I don't expect a civil war, but only if a few conditions are swiftly met. There will be civil war if the government of Macedonia does not defend itself and its citizens in a way in which any country in the world would respond when gunmen start spreading murder and terror. The current government has been turning a blind eye on preparations for separatist activity in Macedonia, and it has to take a 180 degree turn now.

Killers now abuse the phrase "civil rights." They train civilians how to talk to foreign TV crews, building on the concept of eternal victim; forced conscription by terrorists takes place in ethnic Albanian villages; the local media reports of forged mass graves prepared for propaganda purposes near Tetovo.

The international community has to take full responsibility for their previous and future actions. Both overt and tacit support for criminals has been the result of great power strategy in the region.

2. Some Albanian politicians in Macedonia say that the Skopje government must respond to legitimate demands, such as official recognition of the Albanian language and real representation at all levels of authority. What is your opinion on this issue?

2. Absolutely, goes without saying - the legitimate demands must be addressed, the way it is in any democratic country. Macedonia is a democratic country. Every citizen has to be equal under the law regardless of ethnic origins. However, killings by terrorists have nothing in common with recognition of language. The phrase "civil rights" has been hijacked by racists.

The situation on the ground is as follows: there are primary schools, high schools, colleges and (within a year) a university in Albanian. How many universities in the Scottish language there are in Britain or in the Basque language in Spain? There is a theater, several newspapers, TV stations, radio stations and programmes on national radio and TV in Albanian. What other shape can this recognition take? In addition, Albanian parties have been partners in coalition governments since independence, Albanian representatives sit in the Parliament, a number of mayors, six ministers and several ambassadors are Albanian (in addition to a Gipsy/Roma representative in Parliament, Serbian, Turkish, Bosnian and Vlach parties, newspapers, and programmes).

The Macedonian citizens of Albanian minority must start talking responsibilities in addition to talking rights. They should decide whether they are Albanians in Macedonia or Albanians from Macedonia.

The Albanian political parties in Macedonia must stop condoning crime. Sadly, no Albanian intellectual, non-government organization nor political party conclusively (and without reservations) condemned the murderous activities of uniformed men with snipers in the hills over Tetovo. Multi-ethnic Tetovo may

become a victim of violent provocations by armed Albanian nationalists, like multi-ethnic Sarajevo.

Insisting on the differences rather than the similarities and achievements widens the gap. The flip side of Macedonian ethnic intolerance is Albanian ethnic intolerance. I have been refused service in a store because I did not speak Albanian. The terrorists in the Macedonian hills are inseparably linked to KLA and to murders of civilians in Kosovo. The phrase "civil rights" has been hijacked by killers, and its impact diminished.

3. NATO sent more troops to Kosovo's border with Macedonia but said that it would not seek an extended mandate for a military action outside Yugoslavia. Do you think that NATO should upgrade its involvement? How do you see the role of the international community in Macedonia and in the whole Balcanic area?....

3. NATO helped the Balkans get rid of Milosevic and stopped the terror over the Albanians in Kosovo. However, as a side effect, NATO's bombardment and support for nationalist militant groups is now helping escalate ethnic intolerance. Reverse racism is still racism, and its existence questions the position of the start of the circle.

K-FOR (NATO) says they don't support terrorist actions, but they turn a blind eye on terror over civilians in Kosovo and attacks on Macedonian territory. They rule Kosovo - militarily and administratively - and since Kosovo is used as a military base for operations against Macedonia, theirs is the full responsibility for actions originating in Kosovo.

There is a jihad being waged under NATO's wing. The Taliban-style fighters are helped by NATO's desire to stay out of the fry. Not to mention arming and training the KLA in the past.

In addition, if NATO wants stability in the region (rather than only a clean and sexy exit), they must participate in enforcing law and order while they run the place. This includes fighting illegally armed men and the narco-cartels operating out of Kosovo and Western Macedonia. The narco-cartels' activities (which flourished since NATO arrived in the Balkans) and the fight for real-estate are a bigger threat to the region than the mythic "centuries-old hatreds."