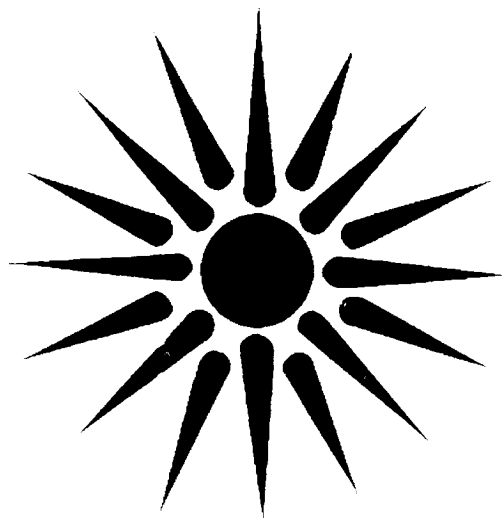


Metodija
Shatorov Sharlo
(Political views)



By Riste Buneski – Bunte

**(Translated from Macedonian to English and
edited by Risto Stefov)**

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Introduction

This publication is a modest contribution to Metodija Shatorov one hundred years after his birth.

Metodija Shatorov participated in the Macedonian national liberation movement and had followed the communist ideology since he was very young. His educational and intellectual qualities enabled him to master the Macedonian national liberation movement's historical authenticity with all its positive and negative aspects.

In 1920 Shatorov joined the Emigrant Communist Union (ECU), organized in Sofia, and since then was a member of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP). Soon afterwards, due to his intense activities, he was promoted to a higher position in the Party.

Shatorov greatly supported Macedonia's affirmation and the Macedonian national individuality. At the same time he greatly opposed external propaganda, regardless of where it came from, because it was always aimed at liquidating the Macedonian national consciousness and instilling someone else's.

He was one of the top VMRO (United) activists of his time. Three regional VMRO (United) conferences (1926, 1928 and 1935) were held when he led the Organization. They were held in the Pirin part of Macedonia in order to elect regional committees. During these conferences Shatorov provided updates on the Organization's role and activities.

In 1928 the Bulgarian police discovered his activities and arrested him. He spent eleven months in an investigative prison. He was released on July 23, 1929. Soon afterwards he left for Moscow where he completed a course on Lenin's set of guidelines.

During a Bulgarian led Supremacist VMRO session held in 1931, headed by Vancho Mihailov, he was sentenced to death in absentia for being involved and active in the Macedonian VMRO (United).

In 1935 Shatorov was elected secretary of the VMRO (United) Regional Committee for the Pirin part of Macedonia. During his term he issued several proclamations and articles in the interest of the Macedonian national revolutionary movement. He did this to strengthen the Macedonian national consciousness in order to prevent Macedonians from being assimilated into the Bulgarian fold.

The Communist International Seventh Congress was held in Moscow in the summer of 1935, which created conditions for a general popular front against fascism, which at this time was on the rise and nations and states were in danger of falling under fascist slavery. Six months after this Congress, thirty communist party officials and world leaders met in Moscow under strict secrecy. Among others, the meeting was attended by Blagoja Parovich, Josip Broz Tito and Metodija Shatorov – a Macedonian.¹ Positions taken and conclusions reached at the Communist International Seventh Congress as well as their implementation and practices by communist parties in the world were discussed during this meeting.

Shatorov found himself in Paris in 1938-39 in connection with the Spanish Revolution. He returned to Prilep in November 1939.

He was elected political secretary of the Communist Party Provincial Committee in Macedonia in the spring of 1940. Under his leadership the Provincial Committee made plans to expand the party organization in order to organize a general Macedonian national front and a trade union movement. At the First Party Conference held on September 8, 1940, a Resolution with program principles was adopted. The Provincial Committee issued proclamations which contained elements of the program principles, which greatly influenced the Macedonian organizational forces to act. Proclamations and appeals were written in the Macedonian language, which increased their importance.

By doing this Shatorov re-energized the Macedonian people's Macedonian national aspirations for the realization of their centuries-old ideals - the unification of all the divided Macedonian

¹ Karlo Steiner "Novratak iz Gulag", Globus, Zagreb, 1985, p. 176.

parts and for the creation of a Macedonian state, equal to those of the neighbouring Balkan states.

All this time, Shatorov actively advocated for the formation of an independent Macedonian communist party with a single leadership for all of ethnic and geographic Macedonia. He opposed the Macedonian communists who were led by neighbouring communist parties.

Due to Shatorov's program principles, in 1941, opposition began to intensify against the agreement made during the Fifth Land Conference held in Zagreb in 1940 regarding the Serbian colonists in Macedonia, as well as the Macedonian national front. After Yugoslavia was occupied there was a clash between the Provincial Committee and the CPY. The program that Shatorov advocated for, calling for cooperation between the Provincial Committee with all neighbouring communist parties, was opposed by the CPY which imposed its own program. According to the CPY, the Provincial Committee should only have been tied to the CPY Central Committee and the liberation of the Vardar part of Macedonia should only be realized within the framework of Yugoslavia. Shatorov's position regarding the liberation of Macedonia, however, called for an independent Macedonian republic that would encompass the entire Macedonian region that included the Aegean, Vardar and Pirin parts of Macedonia as an equal state to the other Balkan states.

Immediately after the fascists attacked the USSR, Shatorov issued a proclamation to the Macedonian people to establish a provincial military commission, prepare subversive groups and train them in the handling of weapons, and organize workshops to build certain kinds of weapons. These preparations made it possible to establish the Skopje partisan detachment on August 22, 1941.

In time Shatorov's program carried out by the Provincial Committee began to contradict the CPY Central Committee's program. This prompted an individual to accuse Shatorov of wrong doing without establishing the actual situation. Tito's indictment letters against Shatorov were based on the information given by this one person. It is interesting that the so called "mistakes" in each subsequent letter

widened and with time became more numerous. In the end Shatorov was accused of being a counter-revolutionary, a traitor, a saboteur, a national chauvinist and was threatened with all kinds of legal charges. Furthermore, there were contradictions in Tito's letters. In one letter Shatorov was accused of connecting himself to the Bulgarian Communist Party immediately after Yugoslavia was occupied. In another letter he was accused of transferring the Macedonian organization to the Bulgarian Communist Party. However, in one of Tito's letters dated September 4, 1941, addressing the Macedonian communists, Tito wrote: "To this day we still don't know if he connected and merged the party organization with the Bulgarian one."

However, the truth is that during Shatorov's time, the Provincial Committee was called the Provincial Committee of the Communist Party in Macedonia and was never called the Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia for Macedonia, nor was it called the Provincial Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party.

In the middle of September 1941, the legally elected Provincial Committee was suspended due to all of these accusations. Shatorov was removed from his position as Political Secretary of the Communist Party and expelled from the Party. The CPY instructor named the newly appointed Provincial Committee as the "Communist Party of Yugoslavia, Provincial Committee for Macedonia."

A short time later Shatorov left for Sofia where he joined the anti-fascist front, actively worked as a member and official of the Bulgarian party and participated in the struggle against fascism. The Bulgarian fascist authorities handed Shatorov two death sentences, one in 1943 and the other in the spring of 1944.

Shatorov died on September 4, 1944. At the time he was commander of the Third Military Operational Area in a battle near Pazardzhik in Bulgaria.

At this point I want to express my gratitude to the Republic of Macedonia's Ministry of Science, which provided me the funds to print this book. I also want to thank A.D. "Radobank" Skopje and to

all the people who contributed in certain ways to create this publication.

I. General information about Metodija Shatorov

Metodija Shatorov belongs to the “Shatorovci” family in Prilep. The family got its nickname from a locality near Prilep called “Shatorov Kamen”. One of Metodija’s grandfathers was engaged in animal husbandry and grazed and kept his cattle in Shatorov Kamen from where the family got its nickname “Shatoro”. It was customary in Prilep for the family to keep the nickname as a family surname.

Metodija’s grandfather’s name was Trajko. He belonged to one of the older families in Prilep. His grandmother’s name was Ana and she too belonged to a Prilep family. His father Tase and mother Jonka had 16 children. After their first two - Talia and Gena, all their other children died one after another in childbirth until Metodija, who was born 12 years after his last living sister. According to popular belief and following a neighbour’s suggestion, who allegedly dreamt that Jonka shouldn’t be giving birth in her house, but in another house to avoid another unfortunate death, Metodija’s mother followed her neighbour’s suggestion and stayed with a close relative in Prilep a few days before giving birth to her son Metodija on January 10, 1897. For the family, of course, it was a great joy that a live and healthy male child was born. As a result of the family’s great love, and to prove that something was true, they swore by Metodija’s name (Zhimi Metodija!). After Metodija was born his mother gave birth to two more sons, Kiro and Todor, and another daughter, Blaga.

Metodija spent his childhood in Prilep. He completed his primary education in Prilep, and high school in Bitola. He was placed in a boarding school in Bitola. After he finished high school in Bitola, he enrolled at the Teacher’s School in Skopje and graduated on June 24, 1915. The certificate he obtained read: “Сведочанство Краљевске српске учитељске школе о учитељском испиту зрелости. Г. Методије Шаторовиќ” (Testimony of the Royal Serbian Teacher’s School about the teacher’s maturity exam. G. Methodije Shatorovich). He completed his teacher’s education with honours. Based on his good marks the examination board recognized his maturity and ability to be an A category teacher. His certificate was validated on August 17, 1918 by the Ministry of

Education in Sofia, which Metodija needed to continue his education, i.e. to enroll in a faculty in Sofia, because at that time this part of Macedonia was under the occupation of the Bulgarian Empire.²

Metodija's education enabled him to have wider contacts in various environments and to meet intellectuals from various fields, which contributed to correctly perceive and experience the situations in Macedonia, especially the anti-Macedonian propaganda that was spread by the Bulgarians, Serbians and Greeks. Of particular importance were the conditions in Macedonia caused by the wars of 1912-18, the suffering of the Macedonian people and their consequences, dying of hunger and disease, the mobilization of Macedonians in the occupying armies (Bulgarian and Serbian) and their use in the front lines, where they died for the interests of the occupying monarchies. He learned about Macedonia's dismemberment which led to great human tragedies, to even greater economic exhaustion and to the Macedonian population's impoverishment. He learned about the wars and the results they left behind and, finally, the measures taken by the occupying authorities for the denationalization and assimilation of the Macedonian people. These tragic events left a deep impression in him.

It was under these conditions that Metodija Shatorov decided to immigrate to Sofia at the end of 1918, where he joined, that is, became a member of the Union of Banking and Commercial Officers. Since he actively worked and was involved in higher youth organizations in Prilep, he continued those same activities in Sofia. After the Emigrant Communist Union was established in 1920 in Sofia, he became a member and since then had been a member of the Communist Party. Since he was deeply involved in this Union he was raised to a notable among the activists and because of that in 1923 he became member of the Communist Party in Sofia. When Alexander Stamboliski's progressive government was in power in 1927, Shatorov worked for the progressive forces in Bulgaria. In 1925, he joined the Communist Party of Bulgaria's Sofia District Committee. In April 1925, he was arrested by the Bulgarian police and was kept in prison until June, 1925, but due to lack of evidence

² According to the narrative of Maria, Metodija Shatorov's granddaughter.

he wasn't convicted but was interned in Gorna Dzhumaija in the Pirin part of Macedonia. After his release, for a short time, he was appointed Secretary of the Sofia City Committee. In the fall of 1925, when VMRO (United) was organized, Metodija Shatorov was one of its active founders. After the Central Committee was elected, it was decided to form three regional committees, namely: one for the Vardar part of Macedonia, which was under Serbian rule, one for the Pirin part, which was under Bulgarian rule and one for the Aegean part of Macedonia, which was under Greek rule.

II. Metodija Shatorov's involvement in organizing VMRO (United) and his views on the Macedonian national question

The Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) Central Committee held its first extended plenum in Vienna in 1926. Coordination and management of affairs between the Macedonian refugees in Bulgaria and the Macedonians living in the Pirin part of Macedonia (under Bulgarian rule) was on their agenda. A governing body was established at this session at the BPC Executive Bureau (EB) level to work inside the country and a special committee was elected to work with various national organizations. Included among the elected members of this committee were: Metodija Shatorov, Hr. Kalajdziev and Hr. Moskov.³

In 1926, Shatorov organized an illegal conference in the districts that were assigned to him in which he began to lay the foundations for a VMRO (United) for the part of Macedonia that was under Bulgarian rule. The following people were present at this conference: M. Shatorov, H. Kalajdzhev, S. Kavrakirov, B. Mihov, B. Mitrev and F. Poptodorov. After that Shatorov wrote a report defining what VMRO (United) stood for and its role as a Macedonian organization. At the same conference a VMRO (United) District Committee for the Pirin part of the Macedonia was elected. Hristo Kalajdzhev was elected secretary.⁴ This was how VMRO (United) started out but achieved insignificant results due to the unclear attitude the BCP and Executive Bureaux leaderships took which opposed the idea of creating new, separate from the existing, legal and illegal emigrant and national revolutionary organizations.

1. Report entitled “History and essence of VMRO (United)”

³ Decho Dobrinov, VMRO (United) Sofia University Publishing House, 1933, p. 119 (From here on he will be referred to as D. Dobrinov).

⁴ Eftim Georgiev, Simeon Kavrakirov, Central Union of Macedonian Educational Societies, Sofia, 1969, p. 8, 9.

According to its content the report entitled “History and essence of VMRO (United)” is one of the most important political documents, which best expresses Metodija Shatorov’s political views. This is what was said in the report:

“VMRO (United)’s foundation was laid in 1925. But VMRO (United) cannot exist in isolation without being connected to the old Macedonian national revolutionary movement. It has to appear as the sole successor of Gotse Delchev’s VMRO, which accepted and developed its ideas and continued the real revolutionary struggle for the national and economic liberation of the Macedonian people. So naturally VMRO (United)’s roots should be sought in the epic Macedonian past, which uncovers the period of the Macedonian revival.

The Macedonian liberation movement has had its own importance since it first began. It started out spontaneously, as a movement driven by the Macedonian peasants who struggled against the plundering and suppression of the Sultan’s Ottoman administration and feudal beys. This was a movement led mostly by Macedonian haiduks (rebels that fought against the Ottomans) who, even without a clear goal in their struggle, expressed indignation and became outlaws and began to help those who needed help. Disgruntled farmers, whose way of earning a living was destroyed by external imperialist competition, had become a mass phenomenon. At the same time industries began to appear in Macedonia, driven mainly by foreign capital, and also began to exploit the Macedonian workers.

These were the conditions which forced the people to act with a specific goal in mind – mass struggle for the liberation of the entire Macedonian population. It was under these conditions that our first apostles of the Macedonian revolutionary movement, Gotse Delchev, Petar Arsov, Gjorche Petrov, Damian Gruev, Pere Toshev, Jane Sandanski, Vasil Glavinov, etc., who were inspired by liberating ideas from abroad, returned to their homeland to organize their people and lead them into a massive revolutionary struggle. The first VMRO Central Committee was created in Macedonia in 1895, and in a few years it turned into a genuine people’s revolutionary organization which included all the people (especially

many peasants) and gained extraordinary trust among the broad layers of the people.

The old VMRO achieved its success thanks to the support it received from the common workers and from the village servants who were exploited and oppressed by the Ottoman beys and wealthy masters. This is how the Macedonian national revolutionary movement's deep national character had been since Delchev and Sandanski's time. The old VMRO won over the common people and stirred up the masses. And on top of protecting them from economic abuse, the old VMRO also strived to create a Macedonian state. But then there were those who opposed the creation of a Macedonian state, they were the supremacists hidden inside the Organization, whose actual goal was to promote Bulgarian belligerent policies and convince the Macedonian people to accept Macedonia's autonomy as the first step towards its accession to Bulgaria. But the old VMRO leadership, the true representatives of the Macedonian people's interests, predicted that taking the autonomy route would be wrong, even though it looked like it was an easier way to achieve independence, especially since the "great powers" were willing to help. The old VMRO leadership insisted that this would be a mistake. There was no doubt that the first apostles who led the Macedonian revolutionary movement at the time wanted an independent Macedonian state: "A free and independent Macedonia with broad rights for the poor and for all inhabitants, regardless of their nationality" (Goce Delchev). This was their aim. The heroic internal Macedonian revolutionary movement persistently struggled against both Ottoman slavery and the belligerent aspirations of Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece, that is, against their authoritarian agents. The old VMRO opposed the Balkan state military plans and provocations for dividing Macedonia, and instead led a people's mass revolutionary struggle. "Liberating Macedonia", said Delchev, "lays in the internal armed uprising... who thinks otherwise, is lying to himself and to others..." And as such, the Macedonian national-revolutionary movement defended the Macedonian people's independence from Balkan state aspiration, and stood for anti-war, anti-supremacy and for an internal revolution. The old VMRO was a nationalistic but not a chauvinistic organization. It waged a fierce struggle against the chauvinists and tried to unite all the Macedonian people and all nationalities living in Macedonia for a single struggle

against the Ottoman oppressor. It was not a struggle against the Turks in general, but against those who ruled the social strata of the Ottoman nation and enslaved Macedonia. The old VMRO was against political oppression and economic theft aimed at the working masses in Ottoman ruled Macedonia. "I don't hate the Ottomans as a people, only their management system." This is how Gotse Delchev described the real causes of slavery in Macedonia. As revolutionary representatives of the Macedonian people, the old VMRO leadership hated any kind of reaction-tyranny and opposed the monarchy. The old VMRO leadership's wishes were to create a free Macedonia. They wanted Macedonia to be organized like Switzerland, a democratic republic.

The Macedonian people were brought up in the spirit of the old VMRO's ideals and were steadily organized to prepare for a decisive clash with the enemy. The mass uprising took place on Ilinden, on August 2, 1903 (July 20th by the old calendar). And thus, the most famous page in Macedonian history, the Ilinden epic, was written with the blood of ten thousand of Macedonia's children. But unfortunately, as predicted, the uprising was doomed to collapse due to supremacist interference and to the meddling of Bulgarian leaders led by Tsar Ferdinand. The Bulgarian supreme committee (the supremacists) was created in Sofia and was composed mainly of Bulgarian officers who, by order of the Bulgarian Court, forced an early uprising before the Macedonian people were fully prepared. The supremacists made many promises but did not deliver. These were false promises with aims at subduing the internal Macedonian organization and placing it under supremacist control. In effect the supremacists prepared new tactics for the uprising. They sent Boris Sarafov and other supremacists like him to Macedonia to take over the organization. The supremacists were apparently aiming to penetrate VMRO from within and take it over. Boris Sarafov took advantage of Damian Gruev's good nature, naivety and temporary political slippage. He also gained the support of Garvanov, another imbedded supremacist, and found himself at the top of the VMRO Central Committee. Unfortunately at that time (the end of 1902 and the beginning of 1903) Gotse Delchev, Gjorche Petrov and other prominent Macedonian figures were outside Macedonia, some as members of the organization's foreign representatives. It was under these conditions that the Solun Resolution was hurriedly adopted by

the 20 delegates (mostly chosen supporters of Sarafov and Gavranov) for an early uprising. The Solun Resolution was then confirmed by the Smilevo Congress, led by Damian Gruev. The early uprising was decided without the support of the Macedonian leadership. In fact most of the far-seeing, prominent Macedonian leaders such as Gotse Delchev, Gjorche Petrov, Jane Sandanski, Pere Toshev, Dimo H. Dimov, Chernopeev, etc., were against an early uprising. Only Damian Gruev was in solidarity with Sarafov and the supremacists. The supremacists wanted an early uprising in order to compromise the revolutionary struggle. They wanted to disillusion the people so that they would lose faith in their own forces and turn to the Bulgarian army for assistance. The general public was unaware of the supremacist leadership's intentions and participated in the armed struggle for their own liberation. The people responded to the call for revolt because their leaders asked them to. Over the years the Organization had taught them that they needed to win their own economic and national liberation with their own forces, through a mass armed struggle. It wasn't the people's fault that the uprising failed. It was the fault of the supremacist element which had infiltrated the VMRO top leadership. The actual Ilinden uprising was never a supremacist act, it was a people's act which took place under the centralist banner.

But even though the centralists opposed the early uprising and declared the Solun Resolution pure foolishness, even though they knew the people weren't ready to fight and win, and even though there would be dire consequences for them, which would surely bring destruction, when the people rose up, their true leaders fearlessly stood with them in the forefront in the heat of the struggle, as real people's revolutionaries. The Ilinden uprising failed; the Ottoman response was violent and devastating. Many people died. In that respect, the supremacists triumphed. But regardless of its results the Ilinden epic inspired the Macedonian masses and still continues to inspire them to this day. The Macedonian people are proud of Ilinden and see it as the only way to Macedonia's freedom.

The national and revolutionary theory and practice of the internal Macedonian liberation movement was also applied during the Young Turk uprising in 1908. The Seres, Strumitsa and Solun revolutionary districts, controlled mainly by Sandanski, Chernopeiv

and Apostol Vojvoda, opposed the VMRO Supreme Central Committee (the supremacists) and, together with the Young Turks, participated in the Turkish Empire's democratic revolution which in fact was initiated from above and not through an uprising of the masses. Those who supported the Young Turk coup came out with their own platform, which corresponded to the economic, cultural and political interests of the Macedonian peasants, artisans and workers. They took advantage of the situation and exploited the broad and massively legal struggle to liberate Macedonia. In view of that, the Macedonian people sent their representatives to the Ottoman parliament. They were protected by certain democratic rights and freedoms they had won. Then when the Ottoman reactionaries in Istanbul raised their heads, Jane Sandanski led the Macedonian revolutionary army and, together with the Russian revolutionary regiments, left Macedonia and headed towards Istanbul, the Ottoman capital, and thanks to them the reactionaries were destroyed. But the Young Turks, representatives of the then advanced Turkish bourgeoisie, proved to be inconsistent even in the first days of taking power. They were hesitant and extremely limited revolutionaries. They didn't remove the monarchical institution but were content with replacing one sultan with another – his brother. They didn't remove the privileges of the Ottoman elite, and instead increased the Macedonian people's obligations, especially their military service. They didn't provide the Macedonian people the national and economic freedoms they promised, they only allowed them some political rights (the right to choose and elect representatives in the parliament, etc.). The dam of absolutism, however, was breached and political rights could be used to branch out into a broader mass struggle, with which the people could win a number of other economic, cultural and political rights before achieving complete liberation. This is what Sandanski and all the others wanted, especially those who remained faithful to the principles of the internal Macedonian revolutionary organization. However, even under these conditions the supremacists continued to play a mischievous role directed from the outside. Their aim was to continue forcing surprise attacks and terrorist provocations in Macedonia in order to provoke the Ottoman government into attacking the people and to accelerate the transformation of the Young Turks into a counter-revolutionary force, to compromise the revolt and with all this to create conditions for Bulgaria and other

Balkan states to attack the Ottomans with aims at invading and partitioning Macedonia. And that was the course taken in 1912 which led to the First Balkan War. That anti-Macedonian course came from the new supremacists Todor Aleksandrov and Aleksandar Proterogrov, members of the VMRO Supreme Central Committee, who remained faithful to the Bulgarian imperialist policy, both during the First World War and after it ended. They, together with their Bulgarian leaders, were the main culprits for the new and worse conditions created in Macedonia (broken up, suppressed and destroyed by Sofia, Belgrade and Athens).

After all the misfortunes the Macedonian people had suffered, their trust evaporated especially from the illusions created by the supremacists about some kind of “liberation”, which was supposed to come from Bulgaria and the other Balkan countries. This was the first major defeat for the supremacists. This opened up new opportunities for renewing the old VMRO and for creating a new unique and massive movement, inspired by the revolutionary ideas of their predecessors. In this regard, this was a good start. A temporary board was created in 1919 and headed by Gjorche Petrov, Dimo Hadzhi Dimov, Pavel Hristov, Hristo Jankov and others. Its aim was to unify all the anti-supremacist revolutionary forces in Macedonia, regardless of their party affiliation. At that time, however, the revolutionary workers’ party wasn’t yet fully free to act. On top of that all national movements and working masses without distinction were thrown under the influence of the bourgeoisie in order to prevent the working class from realizing its class interests. By now the revolutionary proletariat party figured that the national movements had outlived their time and were returning to capitalism. This was in the era when proletarian revolutions struggling for socialism were flourishing. Unfortunately at that time the social forces did not fully understand the deep national character of the national movements in the era of imperialism. They had not yet grasped that these movements struggled for freeing the nationally oppressed from colonial exploitation, especially the peasants, who appeared as a natural ally of the proletariat for a general struggle against a common enemy - imperialism. The revolutionary proletariat party underestimated the national feelings of the enslaved Macedonian people and skipped a whole stage in their struggle, the struggle for national (democratic)

liberation, and in this way, they invited the Macedonian masses to struggle directly for Soviet power and socialism, which supposedly offered a solution to the national question. Pursuing this kind of policy on national issues, the revolutionary party of workers abandoned the renewal of the all-Macedonian national revolutionary movement and set aside its member Dimo H. Dimov from heading the temporary representation. In its place it created the Emigrant Communist Union, which included only a narrow circle of Macedonians who the Communist Party favoured. The broad nationally minded population remained outside of it, even more so because that alliance specifically included the emigrants and excluded the nationally oppressed masses in Macedonia under Bulgarian rule. Not supported by the revolutionary proletariat party, Dimo H. Dimov was dismissed. After that the temporary representation was disbanded. Later the Federated Macedonian National Organization was created but it remained weak because it stood as a purely revolutionary organization.

The reactionaries unfortunately benefited the most from these Macedonian revolutionary weaknesses and fragmentations. Encouraged by the so-called “cheren block”, T. Alexandrov and A. Protogerov restored VMRO and put a mask of autonomy on it in order to attract as many Macedonians as possible and convinced them to aid fascism against the rising revolutionary will in Petrich Region and in the Bulgarian interior. And so once again VMRO fell into the hands of the supremacists and was used to execute a fascist military coup in September 1923, which suppressed a peasant and general worker uprising. However, there were many Macedonian activists and citizens in the ranks of the supremacist led VMRO who joined VMRO with sincere intentions of truly fighting to liberate Macedonia. Many of them belonged to emigrant organizations and most did not agree with VMRO’s new role. They were outraged by the idea that VMRO would fight to protect and guard fascism and struggle against the workers and peasants in Bulgaria and in Bulgarian ruled Macedonia. For that reason many Macedonians began to oppose VMRO internally as well as in the emigrant organizations. (This included the Ilinden organization, its governing body and its editorial office.) Those opposing the supremacist led VMRO called for the unification of all Macedonian forces to fight against the supremacists and to orient themselves towards a single

anti-imperialist, anti-fascist front. This revolutionary movement, which opposed the supremacists, gained strength in 1924, when the communist party corrected its position on the national question and when the Macedonian communists took an active role in the Macedonian national movement for the advancement of the idea of liberating Macedonia. This movement became so strong that in 1924, it frightened Al. Tsankov's government to approach the Serbian government and together began to persecute the Macedonian people, the Macedonian press and all Macedonian journalistic activities. This pressed T. Alexandrov, A. Protogerov and Petar Chaulev, the third VMRO Central Committee member, to sign the historic VIENNA MANIFESTO. The Manifesto included the principles of the organization's new orientation for starting a real revolutionary struggle in alliance with all revolutionary factors in the Balkans against the Balkan imperialists and struggle for a free and independent Macedonia. This was the Macedonian national liberation movement's new program which united all the revolutionary Macedonian forces to work for a general struggle. It also inspired the people and created an atmosphere of enthusiasm especially among the Macedonian emigrants. This was encouragement for success.

Under strong pressure from their Bulgarian handlers, T. Alexandrov and A. Protogerov shamefully renounced the Manifesto and once again returned to the service of the Bulgarian imperialists. But the Vienna Manifesto didn't lose any of its significance. It remained and continued to be a base for unification for all the Macedonian revolutionary forces in a single internal Macedonian national and revolutionary organization. As a result, the foundations for VMRO (United) were laid in 1925, which included in its ranks the old centralists from the Ilinden era, the federalists, the left from the autonomist organization, the Macedonian communists and people from the young Macedonian generation. Thus, the Macedonian people found a new revolutionary organization to lead their struggle, under new conditions but again for Macedonian national independence.

As the sole successor of Delchev's VMRO, the new VMRO (United) accepted all the positive qualities and revolutionary principles under which the Macedonian masses were brought up.

VMRO (United) proudly carried the past glorious Macedonian revolutionary legacy, whose main conductors and heroes were Gotse Delchev, Jane Sandanski, Gjorche Petrov, Pere Toshev, Chernopeev and Dimo H. Dimov.

But in order to be able to continue the work of the first Macedonian revolutionaries with dignity, VMRO (United) needed to learn from the experiences and mistakes that they had made which had put the Macedonian people in jeopardy but without swerving away from the old Macedonian movement's ideology and practice.

Unfortunately the old VMRO was unclear and fell into contradictions when it came to the basic question about the Macedonian people's nationality. It recognized and, as a thorn in the eyes of the supremacists, highlighted the existence of the Macedonian people in an independent geographical and economic Macedonian entity, which had the right to separate into an independent Macedonian state. But at the same time the old VMRO wrongly believed that the Slavic speaking Macedonians were Bulgarians. In that lies the reason why it could not carry out the struggle against the supremacists and against the Bulgarian belligerent policy towards Macedonia. Conviction prevailed in the old VMRO that the independent struggle of the Macedonian people for a separate Macedonian state was dictated by maneuvering political reasons: not because Macedonia wasn't Bulgarian, not because it shouldn't join Bulgaria, but because other interested countries wouldn't allow such a merger. It was this deeply untrue position that forced all Macedonian revolutionaries to become volunteers in the Bulgarian army during the Balkan War against the Ottomans, a big mistake with disastrous consequences for the Macedonian people. The basic and most important reason for the historically wrong course of action taken was hidden in the damage the supremacists and Bulgarian belligerent policies had caused against the Macedonian people. By allowing Bulgarians to function inside Macedonia they temporarily overshadowed the national feeling of independence among the Macedonian people.

Unfortunately VMRO (United) was unable to learn lessons from the disastrous mistakes the Macedonians had made in the past. It could not help but loudly shout at the Bulgarian and Balkan imperialists:

Get your bloody hands off Macedonia! It could not help but fight for the Macedonian people's preservation and against their assimilation... It could not help but promote Macedonian national feeling: they are Macedonians; they are not Serbians, Greeks, or Bulgarians, but a separate Macedonian nation. Therefore, and precisely because of this, VMRO (United) laid a solid base for the Macedonian liberation movement for a principled and rational struggle for a free and independent Macedonian state. In that regard, VMRO (United) not only corrected and supplemented the old VMRO, but continued to deliver on the promises Delchev, Arsov, Teodosij Skopski and others made, who wanted and worked for the creation of Macedonian national literature, independent Macedonian schools and an autocephalous Macedonian church. VMRO (United) restored the Macedonian newspaper "Loza", published in the 1880s and edited in the Macedonian language, which proclaimed the existence of an independent Macedonian nationality and pleaded for an independent Macedonian state.

The old VMRO falsely believed that the great western European powers would help the Macedonian people. That is why it created the slogan "Autonomy for Macedonia under the patronage of the great powers". The old VMRO did not understand the imperialist character of the great powers, which had turned the Ottoman Empire into their own semi-colony and were competing to completely subjugate it and erase it from the map as a state. Macedonia was an enslaved country existing inside this feudal, absolutist and semi-colonial Ottoman region. It wasn't only enslaved by its Ottoman masters, but was also enslaved by the great imperialist states, the great powers, which were looking to expand their growing colonies. They too were robbing Macedonia. Obviously, the old VMRO did not understand the situation correctly and should not have placed its hopes in those countries. On the other hand, the modern Macedonian national liberation movement worked and fought during a different revolutionary time. When it became clear to everyone that the "great powers" had a bloodthirsty nature, the marking of the opposite fronts, that of the revolutionaries and that of the reactionaries, also became clear. And naturally, VMRO (United) could not want an autonomous Macedonia under the patronage of the "great powers", because that would mean that we ourselves would open the doors to our native country for its conquest by the big imperialist countries,

which would mean that the Macedonian people would be no less enslaved in the future than they are today. A true national revolutionary movement, such as ours, cannot, in its desire, tear its people away from being enslaved by the Ottomans and clear the way for certain other belligerents (Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece) to enslave them. All imperialists are enemies of the Macedonian people, just as they are enemies of all oppressed peoples. This is why VMRO (United) led the Macedonian national liberation struggle on an anti-imperialist basis.

The old VMRO was not a chauvinistic organization; it wanted brotherhood and “cultural competition between nations”. It “did not hate the Ottomans as a people, it hated their lordly system of governance”. The old VMRO accepted people from all nationalities living in Macedonia in its ranks; it fought for Macedonia’s liberation and to gain “broad rights for the poor from all nationalities living in Macedonia” (Delchev). Unfortunately, after it began its revolutionary activities, it did not take the second big step and build a single front that included all the oppressed nationalities in Macedonia and did not invite the impoverished Turkish people to join the general struggle against the Sultan and his Beys. Such an attempt was not made even during the Ilinden Uprising, when all the people of all nationalities inside Macedonia were concerned. Also excluded was the Turkish national element which became a target for some. In Kostur Region for example, some insurgents, inspired by the supremacists, set fire to Turkish villages. No one did anything to provide aid for the Turkish people in the entire Ottoman Empire. This is because the old VMRO counted on the support of the “great powers”, and not on the Turkish people, Balkan people, Europe and the world. It was in 1908-09 that the Sandinistas became aware for the first time of the necessity to build a single front using all revolutionary forces. In Macedonia and Turkey the brilliant fulfillment of a single front was demonstrated by the Young Turks during their uprising. The old VMRO accepted this tactic and adapted it to the conditions of the newly enslaved Macedonia invaded, occupied and partitioned by Bulgarian, Serbian and Greek imperialists. The Macedonian people’s closest allies in their struggle for freedom and independence were the Bulgarian, Serbian and Greek workers and peasants, as well as other oppressed peoples and nationalities in Yugoslavia, Greece and Bulgaria. Other allies were

colonial dependent nations and progressive social forces in Europe and the world. The Macedonian people today have another great and strong friend - the USSR, which has provided us with an ideal solution to the national question in the former Russian Empire which openly helps all enslaved peoples in the struggle against imperialist slavery and for self-determination and national independence.

The old VMRO worked with the people and for the people, and in that respect it was a people's organization. However, at the same time it practiced guerilla warfare, expropriation and terrorist activities. Most of the activities conducted by Delchev's VMRO were agitation and propaganda in an attempt to raise the peasants to rebel against paying the sultan taxes, against serving their beys and for appropriating land and livestock for the benefit of the peasants. The old VMRO encouraged the people to boycott state courts and establish VMRO people's courts. As guerrillas Delchev's VMRO military units expropriated money and conducted terrorist acts in order to arm the masses. All this was done to prepare the people for a mass armed uprising to win Macedonia's freedom. In the beginning when the Macedonian national revolutionary movement had small military units it propagated revolutionary ideas and organized the village masses into fighting units. Later, as the units grew, they began to clash with the Ottoman army. When the army became demoralized it carried out retribution against the people. These clashes gave the enemy reason to terrorize the local population and damage the revolutionary organizations. As for the terrorist actions, despite their great heroism and self-sacrifice, the rebels hardly contributed anything worthwhile. At the same time they caused countless acts of prosecution, arrests and made victims of the people, the same people the organization was trying to protect. By their terrorist acts, the internal activists unwittingly complemented the provocative terrorist actions of the supremacists whose aim was to provoke a war. The expropriation of money also produced similar negative results. Delchev's VMRO collected the funds it needed from its patrons and members as well as from extortion, blackmail and kidnapping. This was done to avoid borrowing money from state institutions and becoming obligated to Bulgaria or any other country which had belligerent aspirations

towards Macedonia. Delchev's VMRO wanted to preserve its independence.

The Sandinistas - the left in the supremacist VMRO - realized their mistake as early as the Young Turk uprising and stopped the practice of individual expropriation and terrorist activities, and began to use more civilized means to do their work. VMRO (United) on the other hand liquidated all past practices. It didn't practice individual terrorist actions and no other individual actions that would separate the organization from the masses. VMRO (United) led a revolutionary struggle against its enemies only with the people and for the people. In that respect, it was a real organization for the masses. It employed armed revolutionary units only immediately before and during an uprising. VMRO (United) did not practice expropriation of money. To meet its financial needs to support the movement and the struggle, it collected membership fees. It also accepted donations, gifts and various other funds from its members and from the Macedonian masses. The financial problems were also a political issue, a matter of discipline for VMRO (United) and the mobilization of the masses around it. There was no surer source of collecting funds than to influence the broad masses to support it. But even though it got rid of the tactical weaknesses of the old Macedonian national-revolutionary movement, VMRO (United) still employed Delchev's VMRO tactics in the field of agitation and propaganda.

VMRO (United) understood that using oral and printed propaganda for raising the national and political consciousness of the Macedonian masses was beneficial and necessary for its revolutionary success. That is why it employed both individual and collective agitation by talking to the people and by publishing newspapers, reports, manifestos, etc. VMRO (United) conducted its agitation and propaganda program in close connection with the Macedonian struggle and for organizing revolutionary actions. VMRO (United) also knew that using agitation and propaganda in general was not enough, it had to be connected to the people's daily economic, cultural and political struggles and it had to benefit the masses to best crystallize their knowledge, raise their fighting spirit and move towards complete liberation. By doing this VMRO (United) was mobilizing the Macedonian masses to struggle against

the belligerent colonial policies employed in Macedonia. Specifically, VMRO (United) fought: against the extraction of the life juices from our unhappy homeland; it fought against the dictatorships in Sofia, Belgrade and Athens; against the unbearable state taxes, obligations and burdens on the Macedonian peasants, artisans and workers; for canceling the people's obligations to the state, banks and money lenders; against colonization; for the expulsion of the rich colonists from Macedonia; for the return of the seized land which should be given back to the Macedonian peasants. It fought to take back all the expropriated Macedonian lands taken from the people by the state, the municipalities, the monasteries, etc. All these lands should be given back and distributed among the Macedonian peasants free of charge. VMRO (United) fought: against colonial low prices with which traders and foreign countries bought tobacco, poppy and other products from the Macedonian peasants; against foreign manufacturer high prices, etc. VMRO (United) also fought for economic and cultural advancements in Macedonian towns and villages; against the accumulation of foreign servants and administrators; for democratic rights and freedoms; against forced assimilation; for opening Macedonian schools and making the Macedonian language official; for full national equality; for canceling the debts of the Macedonian people who fled to Bulgaria after the earthquake; for a free organizational, cultural, educational and political life in brotherhoods, youth centres, etc.; For mass Macedonian organizations; against the bureaucratic-fascist tutelage over those organizations; against the dissolution of the Macedonian Youth Union.

Along with the above demands, VMRO (United) highlighted the great slogan for the unification of the Macedonian people in an INDEPENDENT MACEDONIAN STATE. VMRO (United) also highlighted the strategic slogan for the Macedonian people's self-determination, which strengthened the national-liberation struggle in the three regions in divided Macedonia, and led the way to a free and independent Macedonia.

VMRO (United) had no illusions that the enslaved people on their own could contribute to the freedom of the Macedonian people, or that Macedonia's national freedom would be won peacefully. Following Delchev's VMRO example, VMRO (United) stood for an

organized and massive armed uprising in Macedonia. As a matter of fact, today Macedonia is divided into three parts and not only is the struggle getting more difficult, its specific path has changed. There is no greater desire than to start a new victorious Ilinden revolution at the same time in the all three parts of divided Macedonia. That, however, presupposes that a revolutionary situation can simultaneously take place in all three belligerent states. Unfortunately the Macedonian people can't stand up alone against three organized and strong oppressors. At the same time revolutionary situations, due to the uneven development of imperialism, are difficult to start simultaneously in three different countries. Because of this it would be advisable to start a general uprising in one of the three parts either in Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, or Greece. A decisive struggle can begin in that part of Macedonia and in that respective state. In such a case, VMRO (United)'s task in the other two Macedonian regions would be to unite our allies in the other two states, and lead the masses into the struggle in order to hinder any intervention against the revolutionaries where the general uprising is taking place. This is entirely possible when considering the huge revolutionary upsurge, especially after a revolutionary victory in a Balkan state. When considering this, one should bear in mind the revolutionary stage we are living in and the existence of free peoples (USSR). This is a huge fact that imperialists cannot face especially when they have to decide whether to attack the revolutionaries or not. And when a revolution breaks out and the people win in all three parts of Macedonia, the Macedonian national revolution will merge as a victorious new Ilinden in all of Macedonia.

Considering that standpoint, VMRO (United) in the part of Macedonia under Bulgarian rule, is fighting for self-determination in Petrich Region so that it could separate from imperialist Bulgaria and unite with the other two parts of Macedonia in an independent Macedonian state. And as such we have addressed our self-determination demands to Sofia not because we hope Sofia would cede it to us on its own, but to direct its blade against itself and expose the Bulgarian imperialists to the Macedonian masses as enemies of Macedonian freedom and independence and thus to mobilize the Macedonian masses to join the revolutionary struggle. We addressed the Sofia warriors as follows: You, gentlemen, claim

that the Macedonians are Bulgarians and that Macedonia is Bulgarian; you want to appear like you strive for the Macedonian people to be free. We on the other hand say that Macedonians are not Bulgarians and that Macedonia is not yours. On the contrary, you are the same kind of enslavers as those of Belgrade and Athens. Let us, then, take the question to the population in Petrich Region. Let them have their say on how they feel and whether they want to live under your yoke. Let us ask them if they wish to live together with the population in the other two parts of Macedonia. Let us ask them if they want to unite in an independent Macedonian state. In other words, give them the right to self-determination. In order for the population to speak freely, to express its will, withdraw the Bulgarian army and police from Macedonia... (Damaged text) It is our joint revolutionary struggle with the Bulgarian workers and peasants that give us the right to self-determination until we separate as an independent state without being forced to accept a socialist system.

Our unique front with the labour movement was built on flat principles, without in the least violating the independence of the Macedonian national movement. Unfortunately our struggle has enraged the Bulgarian imperialists and supremacists, who sometimes wear a mask pretending to struggle for an autonomous or independent Macedonia. But slowly we are unmasking them more and more before the Macedonian masses. Let our enemies rage and slander us. Let them call us “communists”. It will not confuse us, because we, who truly love and fight for our Macedonian national freedom and independence, cannot but look for hopeful allies in the struggle, and such are the workers and peasants and other nationally oppressed peoples in the Balkans and in the world. Our path only leads to the national and economic liberation of the Macedonian people. VMRO (United) is the only and true Macedonian national-revolutionary organization, in which revolutionary Macedonian forces are members regardless of their party affiliation. VMRO (United) is an independent Macedonian organization, composed mainly of Macedonian villagers. It had a revolutionary-democratic

ideology and held the flag of the Macedonian nationality. It struggled for freedom and independence.”(End of report) ⁵

A precise distinction between VMRO (Supremacist) and VMRO (United) was made in the above report. Regarding the supremacists and their activities, it referred to them as an anti-Macedonian organization led by their new non-supremacist VMRO Central Committee composed of Todor Aleksandrov and Aleksandar Protogerov, who remained faithful to Bulgarian imperialist policies both before and after the First World War. Aleksandrov and Protogerov, together with the Bulgarian leaders who participated, were the main culprits for the new and even darker enslavement of Macedonia. They were responsible for making it possible for Sofia, Belgrade and Athens to break up Macedonia and enslave its people.

The situation changed at the Bulgarian Communist Party Executive Bureau’s Berlin Conference, which began on December 8, 1927 and lasted until January 15, 1928, when the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) leadership changed its attitude towards VMRO (United). Before that the BCP ignored VMRO (United) and saw it as an unjustified organization, but after the Conference the Bulgarian communists accepted the organization and supported its program. Basically, there was no difference in the BCP and VMRO (United) position regarding the Macedonian national question. Metodija Shatorov actively participated in this Conference and was adamant about taking the right position on the Macedonian national question. He also stated his position that it was not necessary to create a Yugoslav Communist Party (YCP) in the part of Macedonia under Serbia, but to strengthen and support VMRO (United), and to not only form ties between VMRO (United) and YCP but to allow the Macedonian communists to work independently in the United organizations. At this Conference, Shatorov was categorically against individual terrorist deviations. He was against terror responding with terror, because this kind of action did not coincide with VMRO (United)’s principles. ⁶

⁵ Archives of Macedonia, fund VMRO (United) Report by Shatorov under the title “History and essence of VMRO (United), pp. 1-9 (hereinafter it will be known as Shatorov’s report).

⁶ KIAF document, no. 495.

2. Extract from the minutes of the BCP Second Party Berlin Conference held at the end of 1927

When Metodija Shatorov-Sharlo was a delegate of the Sofia party organization he took an active role at the Berlin Conference and in his speech presented his views as follows: "I am a participant in the national revolutionary movement and to this day there are young and old comrades who call all Macedonians fascists. That is wrong. I will say more about the period from 1918 to 1927:

- a) The Macedonian movement has a long and independent history which the majority of our people do not know and do not understand.

- b) After Bulgarian nationalism collapsed in 1918, nationalism in the Macedonian movement also collapsed and favourable conditions were created for that movement to fall into our hands. In 1918-1919, Dimo Hadzhi Dimov's useful initiative and the Serchan people set VMRO to a new starting place. Since it was not supported by the party, it was left out on its own and we had to create the Emigrant Communist Union, which left the Macedonian movement to the bankrupt Bulgarian nationalists headed by their agent Todor Alexandrov. In this way, we allowed that movement to pass into foreign and harmful hands, to play a fatal role in the internal struggles in Bulgaria.

- c) Because we did not understand our mistakes, even later, when the nationalists were still weak in 1919-1920, we did not do anything, not even to protect our Petrich Region mass movement, which was being terrorized by Todor Alexandrov's small terrorist gangs, who did not have the support of the Macedonian masses. The vast majority of the people were with us. While Alexandrov's henchmen were attacking our people we abandoned them and with that, we abandoned all sincere Macedonian revolutionaries from those parts of the country. At the same time the party made no effort to become involved and vigorously break up Alexandrov's gangs, which then would have been an easy task, and to put the Macedonian movement

back into our hands. Instead, the Central Committee retreated into its passive mode and wrong line, while the nationalists took over the Organization and after that it was difficult to build a front with them. It was not an easy task, because they openly worked for the Bulgarian bourgeoisie with whom the party was in open struggle. In those days, even before the coup, if the party had undertaken a vigorous struggle against the nationalists and their Bulgarian agents, and had relied on the Macedonian masses in Petrich Region who were with the party, it would have succeeded in defeating them. And if the party then had taken the right line on the Macedonian national question, it would have taken over that movement and in fact the Macedonian national revolutionary movement would have existed under one front together with the workers' and peasants' revolutionary movement in Bulgaria and the Balkans.

When the supremacists killed Petrov the Communist Party Central Committee remained silent. When they killed 14 of our most active comrades in Petrich Region, again the Central Committee remained silent. And when the Central Committee was threatened with ultimatums from Todor Aleksandrov's gangs, it hid those threats from the party. After all that it wasn't difficult for the Bulgarian bourgeoisie agents and for the Bulgarian nationalists to dominate the Macedonian movement and oppose the Communist Party worker and village movements.

d) After the coup, we started looking to connect with Macedonian organizations and the Macedonian movement. We broke up the communist emigrant union and stopped the v.k. "Liberation", i.e. we were already forced to completely capitulate. But even before that, the Central Committee hid from the party and the people all the ultimatums it had received.

We then joined the fraternities and started working. That was the right thing to do. As a result we achieved significant results. But then we were disappointed with the VMRO masses and the fraternities because Todor Alexandrov's clique made its maneuvers and oriented itself towards the left. It started looking towards the USSR and towards our party. This was before we had a chance to confront Alexandrov and organize and build an effective left suitable for our internal struggle and to lead the Macedonian

movement. We published our “Manifesto” (VMRO (United)) and made it easy for the military league and its VMRO detachments to carry out pogroms against the Macedonian movement and its left. I blame the Central Committee for not taking measures to save Dimo Hadzhi Dimov, who easily became a victim. The Central Committee did nothing even though it was well known that they would kill him.

Now we have VMRO (United) but we don’t support it in Bulgaria and in Bulgarian Macedonia in fact and in deed. And because of that we haven’t been able to suitably bring it to gather around the Macedonian movement. The Yugoslav party in Macedonia works with the supremacist VMRO and not with VMRO (United).⁷

Here Shatorov renounced the necessity for creating an independent Communist Party of Yugoslavia in Macedonia in favour of a VMRO (United). He also suggested that the communists form factions, which should be enough. At the Balkan Communist Federation (BCF) Eighth Conference, held in September 1928, immediately after the VI Communist International (CI) Congress, held from July 17 to September 1, 1928, V Kolarov reported that there was ongoing assimilation of Macedonians within the borders of Bulgaria, and that there was no difference in how the Macedonian people were treated in the three occupying countries. The Macedonians are being nationally suppressed in Bulgaria, as well as in Yugoslavia and Greece. Positions were also taken at this Conference on the right to self-determination up to secession in an independent Macedonian state. By this VMRO (United) was given the right to act as a national liberation organization on the territory of Bulgaria.⁸

In regards to the actions taken to implement the right to self-determination up to secession of an independent Macedonian state, a position taken by the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) and by the Balkan Communist Federation during the Conferences, authorized Shatorov to reconstruct VMRO (United). This was also authorized by the BCP Central Committee Foreign Bureau. As a result Shatorov was dispatched to Bulgaria in August-September 1928, and tasked with implementing the course taken during the Berlin

⁷ Extract from the minutes of the Second Party Conference of the CPSU in Berlin held at the end of 1927. A.M. Shatorov fund.

⁸ D. Dobrinov, pp. 119, 121.

Conference regarding the Macedonian national question. After he arrived in Bulgaria, he prepared a report on VMRO (United)'s condition and activities. According to the facts presented in his report, Shatorov stated that as of that moment, the Bulgarian Communist Party had no functioning commission for a national revolutionary movement at the Central Committee level. This was because the BCP underestimated its value. Shatorov's task therefore was to build a completely new basis, with the understanding that the national-revolutionary movement would have a liberating function in Bulgaria, which until now the Executive Bureau disputed. This unfortunately was expressed as not-acceptable by the BCP, that is VMRO (United) could not be involved in the state's affairs as a national organization. It had to remain as purely a class organization.⁹

Shatorov managed to reactivate the organizations by convincing people that the incorrect political line previously taken had been corrected. He also recommended and in some cases ordered Macedonian communists to join party factions and Macedonian brotherhoods and begin to implement the BCP line. And where such factions didn't exist they were ordered to create them with the same goal in mind. He then led a commission responsible for creating a national liberation movement at the BCP Central Committee level. Apart from the central one, local committees were also created under Shatorov's leadership in the respective party committees.¹⁰

An assembly of Macedonian communists was convened in September 1928, and under Metodija Shatorov's initiative, was charged with laying down VMRO (United)'s foundations in Bulgaria. This included clarifying party policy, VMRO (United) basic platform positions, work directives and assignments. A leadership was elected for the VMRO (United) 3rd revolutionary district which included the Macedonian territory under Bulgarian rule. Simeon Kavrakirov was elected District Committee Secretary, and N. Grnev and B. Mihov were elected members. The District Committee was expected to do the following:

⁹ Ibid., p. 123.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 123.

1. Create active VMRO (United) organizations and groups in the Pirin part of Macedonia.

2. Involve Macedonian emigrants in the creation of VMRO (United) factions. Employ ex-revolutionaries from the recent past in the VMRO (United) ranks who have authority among the emigrants.

With the establishment of VMRO (United) in Bulgaria, BCP factions in the emigrant organizations (brotherhoods) and all others in the national-revolutionary movement became VMRO (United) factions. Activities were no longer carried out in the name of the BCP, but in the name of VMRO (United), thus strengthening VMRO (United)'s brotherhoods who then began to demand that the murders and violence against the Macedonians stop. They called for ending ties with VMRO (supremacists) and accept the VMRO (United) platform highlighting the slogans: "Down with imperialism", "Long live free and independent Macedonia". These calls were also directed against the anti-Macedonian VMRO (supremacist) policies which falsely called for the creation of an independent Macedonia and a Balkan federation and for a single front against national and social suppression.¹¹

In 1928, VMRO (United) described both groups of VMRO (supremacists), that of Aleksandrov-Mihailov and that of Protogerov, as "narrow-minded Bulgarian nationalists, Bulgarian supremacists-annexationists, supporters of the Bulgarian reaction and fascist dictatorship, facilitators of Italian imperialism". VMRO (United) which struggled against Bulgarian fascism was also charged with struggling against the VMRO (supremacists).¹²

So it became clear to the VMRO (United) leadership that in order to win the hearts and minds of the Macedonian people it had to infiltrate these hostile organizations to instill a Macedonian national feeling among their members. Also, a clear position had to be taken against denationalization and assimilation,¹³ and against the Macedonian fascist VMRO (supremacist) leaders who were in favour of joining Macedonia to fascist Bulgaria, who strove to

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 123, 124 and 125.

¹² D. Dobrinov, p. 128 and VMRO (United) doc. and materials, Book 1, p. 159.

¹³ D. Dobrinov, p. 131.

liberate Macedonia so that they could unite it with Bulgaria and for the liberation and unification of our homeland which was divided between Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria,¹⁴ and for the realization of the holy ideal of the Macedonian people and the first apostles of the Macedonian revolution, who had as their ultimate ideal an independent Macedonian state. Opponents of this position were only the hidden supremacists, conductors of the Bulgarian conquest policy inside the Organization, who fought for Macedonia's autonomy only as a stage in its accession to Bulgaria. These ideas, however, were opposed by the hidden supremacists, whose policy inside VMRO (United) supported Bulgarian conquests. They only fought for Macedonia's autonomy so that they could stage its accession to Bulgaria¹⁵

In the second half of 1928, the VMRO (United) leadership took measures to consolidate its like-minded people and create a healthy organization in Macedonia. Several Macedonian communist emigrant groups existed and operated in Bulgaria that were supposed to be united and led by Kavrakirov and Shatorov. In addition to them, there were also groups composed of non-party national-revolutionaries, who accepted the principles of the May Manifesto, and had wider connections with the Pirin area and with the Macedonian emigrants in Bulgaria, and who could contribute to the expansion of like-minded people in VMRO (United). The idea behind this was to create a single revolutionary Macedonian front, based on the VMRO (United) declaration made in October 1925 and in August 1928, calling for Kavrakirov and Shatorov's groups to unite, thus implementing the idea of a single revolutionary Macedonian front, for a mass revolutionary struggle to fulfill the VMRO (United) principles.¹⁶ At the same time, the national-revolutionary groups that respected the basic principles of the Macedonian national liberation movement were united.

This is what Metodija Shatorov said in his report regarding the unification: "Among the groups to be included in the VMRO (United) ranks are the old centralist and Ilinden fighters, the federalists, the left from the autonomist organization, the

¹⁴ VMRO (United) documents and materials, book 1, p. 161, 163.

¹⁵ Shatorov's report, p. 1.

¹⁶ VMRO (United) documents and materials, book 1, pp. 157, 164.

Macedonian communists and the young Macedonian generation. Under the new conditions the Macedonian people have found their new revolutionary leader for their national independence struggle.”
17

In accordance with the authority assigned to him, Shatorov carried out his orders to overcome the specific conditions in which VMRO (United) organized in the Macedonian area under his control with a collection of the various national-liberation elements. But as new members joined, the situation became more complicated and, according to the communist factions, there was danger of ideological upheavals in the organizational leaderships. The communists saw a guarantee in that relationship only if they controlled the organizations. The communist faction in VMRO (United) made efforts to immediately connect with the Comintern and the Balkan Communist Federation (BCF). Some people saw this as a Macedonian communist party and a section of the Comintern and the BCF.¹⁸ This, however, contradicted Shatorov's views expressed at the illegal BCP Berlin conference in 1928 that it wasn't necessary to create Greek, Yugoslav and Bulgarian communist parties in Macedonia but to strengthen VMRO (United), and the Macedonian communists to act as factions and constitute themselves in a separate Communist Party of Macedonia (CPM), an independent section of the Communist International and Balkan Communist Federation.¹⁹

In 1928 Shatorov's home was burglarized and his revolutionary activities were discovered by the Bulgarian police. As a result he was imprisoned for eleven months, where he was subjected to severe torture.

This is what the newspaper “Makedonsko Delo” wrote about Shatorov's imprisonment: “A characteristic example of the unprecedented inquisition to which the prisoners were and are still being subjected is the case of businessman Metodi Shatorov. He was beaten several times on his hands, head, and back from 2 o'clock in the afternoon until midnight. One day they threw him from the

¹⁷ Shatorov's report, p. 5.

¹⁸ D. Dobrinov, p. 136.

¹⁹ Document of CI and AF No. 495 AM Skopje Shatorov Fund.

window of apartment no. 71 or down the so-called “black tube”. One day, after being beaten to the point of unconsciousness, they transferred him to the walkway on the stairs of the third floor and made him “confess” while hanging upside down. At that time his interrogators stood on the first floor of the staircase and wanted to beat him again. After 11 months of continuous torture and harassment, he was found innocent and released!

This is how the working masses are treated in Bulgaria under the shadow of Ljapchev’s “democracy”...”²⁰

On October 18, 1930, the newspaper “Vreme” wrote the following about Shatorov’s imprisonment entitled “Metodia Shatorov in the basements of the Bulgarian police. During his “interrogations”, Metodia Shatorov was beaten and abused. They beat him for four days with batons on the head and back, and then subjected him to torture which included raising his arms up and beating him with wet ropes until his hands bled, then they beat him on the ears until they also bled and until he fell unconscious. Then they put him under cold water and when he regained consciousness they asked him to write a statement. They beat him continuously from two o’clock in the afternoon until the evening. But because his hands were swollen he could not write so they beat him again by rolling him on the floor and hitting him from all sides. They then tied him to a beam and dragged him along the floor and stairs to the fourth floor. One of the agents dragged him to the third floor and grabbed him intending to throw him over the fence. Metodia defended himself as much as he could. The front part of his body was already hanging outside the stairs, and he was about to crash down at any moment. Then they again asked him to tell the “truth” if he wanted to stay alive. They did the same again on the fourth floor. He suffered excruciating pain in his head and whole body for several weeks. His head was constantly kept wet with wet sheets wrapped around it...”²¹

At a VMRO (supremacist) meeting, held in 1931, in the presence of Vancho Mihailov, VMRO (United)’s program and activities were discussed, especially VMRO (United)’s affirmation of a

²⁰ “Makedonsko Delo”, 25.X.1929, page 5.

²¹ Letter from Sofia published in the newspaper “Vreme” dated October 18, 1930, Belgrade, p. 4.

Macedonian nation and a united Macedonian state. They also discussed comments made by VMRO (United) regarding the national slavery that existed in the three parts of Macedonia, and that there should be an organized Macedonian national-revolutionary movement. This program, however, was contrary to the Mihailovist program which branded the Macedonians as Bulgarians, called for Macedonia to be annexed by Bulgaria and that national slavery existed only in the parts of Macedonia under Serbian and Greek rule. And because, according to them, no national slavery existed in Bulgaria the Mihailovists were against the creation of a Macedonian national-revolutionary movement in Bulgaria.

During the same VMRO (supremacist) meeting the supremacists declared that Metodija Shatorov and Simo Kavrakirov, VMRO (United) Regional Committee Secretary for the Pirin part of Macedonia, were the most dangerous people working against VMRO (supremacist), and both were sentenced to death in absentia. On June 8, 1932, the Mihailovists kidnapped Kavrakirov. This is what Kavrakirov's collaborators said about that: "After two years of being persecuted and abused by the Mihailovist gangs Simeon Kavrakirova was killed..."²²

This is what his collaborators said regarding Shatorov's death sentence by Mihailov: "The fascist obscurantists and Mihailov's gangs followed him and forced him to hide and immigrate to the Soviet Union."²³ Another article wrote: "After 1928, Shatorov was imprisoned for a whole year, released due to lack of sufficient evidence, later again persecuted and sought after by the fascist police and their Macedonian mercenaries. He managed to hide and cross the border again."²⁴

3. Report by Metodija Shatorov addressing his party leadership regarding his activities in 1928

²² VMRO (United) documents and materials, book 2, pp. 324, 325.

²³ "Pirinsko delo", no. 74, 16.IX.1959. G.D. Popov.

²⁴ "Rabotnichesko Delo", no. 246, 3.IX.1959. S. Popov, member of the BCP Central Committee.

Metodia Shatorov-Sharlo submitted a report to the party leadership regarding his activities in 1928 on the state of the national revolutionary movements, in which, among other things, he wrote: "After the BCP Second Conference in Berlin and after my return to Bulgaria in 1928, I decided to work for the party especially in the field of the national-revolutionary movement. I found that there was no national-revolutionary movement supported by the party until then, and that the national-revolutionary movements in Bulgaria were inactive. After my arrival, I created a committee of 3-5 people who worked under my leadership. I recruited a friend from Dobruja, one from the Macedonians, and one from Thrace to make up the committee. During our first session we defined our obligations and decided to create factions inside all the leaderships in the Macedonian and Dobrudzha associations, and determined what guidelines they should employ in their activities.

In addition to the central national-revolutionary commission, local commissions were created under the leadership of local party organizations. It was necessary to explain why this was done in order for our party to understand the importance of the national-revolutionary movement, especially the significance and importance of this issue. Many considered the national-revolutionary movement to be of secondary importance. I saw then that a second question arose about the central, regional, local and other organizations, about the internal and especially about the foreign policy of the bourgeoisie in Bulgaria and the continuation of existing conditions. Necessary attention had to be given because there were half a million Macedonian, Dobrudzhian and Thracian emigrants in Bulgaria, and because of that we had to give attention to all the organizations.

After organizing the central committee and adding organizations in Sofia (there was a large emigration in Sofia), we approached the idea to create factions in the Macedonian brotherhoods (legal mass organizations). With this we created party sections which created opportunities to manage all factions in the Macedonian revolutionary movement in Sofia, also in the provinces. It is especially important that we clarify this to the party masses especially the idea of what the national-revolutionary movement stood for, as well as the character of the national organizations. We,

the party, had to put a lot of effort to tackle this problem in order to break certain incorrect views, which were, at this time, held by several party members. Many thought that VMRO and the legal emigrant organizations were acting on the ground and were the only organizations belonging to the national-revolutionary movement in Bulgaria and in the Balkans, and that only the communist party refused to cooperate with them. There were many peculiarities among the Macedonians that needed to be resolved by the party during its conferences. However, measures taken by the leadership are not subject to criticism.

We were not allowed to talk about a national-revolutionary movement in our party, especially following the war years, even though such a movement existed inside the composition of the party (emigrant communist union). This situation existed until the Second Party Conference (held at the end of 1927 in Berlin), when this position was changed and it was accepted that a national-revolutionary movement in Bulgaria existed. But even then, many comrades stood by their former position on the Macedonian national question. That is why it was necessary to clarify to the party that a national-revolutionary movement in Bulgaria indeed existed. Furthermore, it was necessary to rout out VMRO (supremacist) as a fascist organization. The VDRO (Internal Dobrudzhia Revolutionary Organization) also needed to be mentioned. These two “illegal” organizations in Bulgaria acted negatively in the legal emigrant social organizations, as well as in the brotherhoods. After explaining the situation, we decided to activate the party factions in order to clarify the party line on the national question and on the national revolutionary movements in Bulgaria (adopted at the Second Party Conference).

Factions were especially created in Sofia, in certain emigrant organizations and in the central ones. Only Macedonians and people from Dobrodzhia were included in the composition of those factions. Factions were organized in several Sofia party organizations with a larger number of comrades leading them. With that, the central committee established direct connections with them, from which we received data about the situation in those organizations and about our internal struggle against the VMRO (supremacists). Thanks to that, the Party Central Committee

accumulated much data on the internal struggle among the Macedonian autonomists. It was clear that two currents existed and that the infighting was intensifying and that they were preparing for a showdown. The Central Committee knew the reasons for the split, namely: the Protogerovists followed Tsankov's political current, while the Mihailovists followed Ljapchev's political current. The Central Committee unfortunately didn't pay careful attention to the data received and made incorrect assessments regarding the social composition of the groups. It assumed that the Protogerovists were the big bourgeoisie of the Macedonian emigration, while the big bourgeoisie turned out to be the Ljapchevists. Mihailov's wing on the other hand was connected with the petty bourgeoisie led by fascists. However, the real situation was: the Mihailovists were with Ljapchev and the Protogerovists were with Tsankov.”²⁵

A confrontation between the national forces and the communists took place inside VMRO (United) as a result of certain people in the leadership departing from the organization's position. Vasil Hadzi Kimov for example decided to return to the old position, towards creating a third centre to fuse with Vancho Mihailov's VMRO and the National Committee he supported. VMRO (United) criticized these behaviours and their ideological basis under which they were organized. According to VMRO (United), the position taken towards the third direction by these people shows that they were influenced by the supremacists who expressed their views as follows: VMRO can have a national character; Macedonia is a Bulgarian country; there is no national oppression in Petrich Region; there is need to achieve reconciliation between the two VMRO (Mihailovists and Protogerovists) wings in order to avoid a decisive fight between them... After VMRO (United) was empowered in 1928, however, Shatorov had already laid a new foundation for VMRO (United) which diametrically opposed the old attitudes and beliefs that in Bulgaria there is only class and not national slavery.²⁶

Because of the position VMRO (United) took it fell into an extremely unfavourable situation. By insisting that there was national slavery in Macedonia under Bulgarian rule, and in the

²⁵ Doklad 3 – 1 or 396, 2161, AM Skopje Shatorov fund.

²⁶ D. Dobrinov, pp. 212, 213.

context of that relationship, it attacked BCP policies in regards to the national question.

VMRO (United)'s complex political and organizational situation necessitated the convening of a new regional Conference to resolve the newly emerging issues instigated by the supremacists and Bulgarian monarchy. For this purpose Metodija Shatorov was brought back from Paris to lead VMRO (United). The Regional Conference was convened in the Bela Voda area of Vitosha immediately after he arrived. In presence were 10 delegates representing various groups and organizations as well as VMRO (United) leaders. The following items were put on the agenda: 1) report on the internal and external position; 2) report of the Central Committee of the III revolutionary district; 3) clarification of views on self-determination and the Macedonian nation; 4) leadership selection.

During the discussion, new disagreements arose. All those present did not support the position of self-determination for Macedonians in the Pirin part, until the right to secede from Bulgaria and joining the other parts of Macedonia that were under Serbia and Greece, under an independent Macedonian state. Not all supported the position about the uniqueness of the Macedonian nation and about its national slavery in the three parts (Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece) of Macedonia and that a struggle should be waged against the triple national slavery, and not only for class liberation. Against these views were B. Mihov and A. Martulkov. Mihov expressed himself particularly harshly. He was against the existence of a Macedonian nation and advocated for abandoning the stance on the national-revolutionary character of the movement, that is, he was against equating national with class slavery. He claimed that there was no essential difference between the BCP and VMRO (United).²⁷

All this, however, was already decided. A principled setting of the issue was already settled at the Communist International Fifth Congress and especially with the February 1934, Balkan Secretary Agreement. It was clear from this that the Communist International and the Balkan Communist parties were in a position to recognize

²⁷ Ibid., p. 213.

the Macedonian nation and language. However, certain BCP members, as well as members of the VMRO (United) leadership, opposed the views on the existence of a Macedonian nation, and especially on the recognition of a separate Macedonian language. In its disagreement the opposition didn't want to create organizations of VMRO (United) in the Pirin part of Macedonia. Those objecting claimed that it was undesirable to conduct propaganda from the position of a "Macedonian nation".²⁸

After assuming the VMRO (United) Regional Committee leadership for the Pirin part of Macedonia, and after observing the situation on the ground, in addition to his other activities, Metodija Shatorov also took measures to bridge the gap between the various factions. He wanted to overcome all resistance that existed on the line against self-determination of the Macedonian people and against the existence of the Macedonian nation. Shatorov wrote an article regarding these disagreements, entitled "A united front for the Macedonian masses and their struggle with deviations" published on May 1935, in the magazine "Propagandist" no. 5, an organ of the BCP Central Committee. Here Shatorov listed what various individual communists in Petrich Region had said who were of the opinion that the VMRO (United) organizations shouldn't be created, because the struggle for social liberation could also be successfully led by the BCP. Shatorov clearly stated the party leadership position regarding the claim that the masses want to create VMRO (United) because they are not only socially, but also nationally enslaved in Bulgaria. The masses want VMRO (United) to fight for their national liberation. He also assessed the views of the communists who took opposite views on VMRO (United) and called them "non-Bolshevik, narrow-minded and opportunist". And finally he criticized the communists who opposed the views on the existence of the Macedonian nation.

Here is a quote in part of what Shatorov wrote: "There are comrades who cannot understand that the party recognizes that the Macedonian Slavs (speakers) are a separate nation which is not a subject of doubt. These comrades argue that the Macedonian Slavs (speakers) speak the Bulgarian language. However, Macedonians,

²⁸ Ibid., p. 222.

both under Bulgarian and Serbian rule, do not speak the Bulgarian language. This has been proven by several international philologists. But let's assume for a moment that they spoke Bulgarian... Does that mean they are all part of the Bulgarian nation? Of course not...! Many Macedonians do speak Bulgarian despite the fact that they belong to a Macedonian nation. According to our conviction, the issue of a separate Macedonian language is not something that we cannot resolve. The comrades who claim that a Macedonian nation does not exist stand on non-Bolshevik positions on the national question. They actually support the positions that "Macedonians from Macedonia are Bulgarians, Bulgarians from old Bulgaria, i.e. belonging to the conquering imperialist Bulgarian bourgeoisie..."²⁹

At this time, on various occasions, both the BCP and VMRO (United) persistently advocate the position that Macedonians are not Bulgarians, but a separate Macedonian nation, subjected to national oppression and class exploitation. Based on that, the Macedonian people organized themselves to struggle against forced assimilation imposed on them by Belgrade, Sofia and Athens. They are struggling for the right to self-determination and for unification in an independent Macedonian state. They are struggling for the right to speak the Macedonian language in schools, because the Macedonian people have all the marks of a unique nation.³⁰

In 1935, under Shatorov's leadership, the Regional Committee undertook a series of activities to construct a practical VMRO (United) platform in order to create a single united revolutionary front. To do that the Regional Committee recommended that revolutionary committees be created to include everyone regardless of whether the people were mihailovist or protogerovist sympathizers. At the same time, all VMRO (United) factions had to work intensively on the masses to convince them to accept the VMRO (United) views, with the ultimate goal of electing only progressive leaders from the brotherhoods. The program for building a single Macedonian front in general was a VMRO (United) political position and called on the masses to immediately accept it because it was urgent that they create an independent Macedonian

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 222, 223, and *Illegal periodical press in Bulgaria* (Kovachev Velcho), 1923-1941, Sofia, 1986, p. 236.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 223.

movement which was to struggle against supremacy and Great Bulgarian chauvinism; for a free and independent Macedonia; for the Macedonian people's national, political and economic liberation; for a general struggle together with the socially oppressed people in Bulgaria; for the right of the Pirin part of Macedonia to self-determination until separation and union together with the other two parts of an independent Macedonian state.³¹

With its change of attitude towards VMRO (supremacist), the VMRO (United) Regional Committee convened a special session, during which Metodija Shatorov, then Organizational Secretary, submitted a report on the need to organize a single front that would include VMRO members from all sides.³² The BCP Central Committee Foreign Bureau sent a letter to the internal party leadership regarding these views and requested that measures be taken to attract the Mihailovists to the united Macedonian front. It was estimated that with their inclusion VMRO (United) would once again raise the flag of unification. This position was implemented in the spring of 1935 with Shatorov's entry as leader of the VMRO (United) Regional Committee for the Pirin part of Macedonia. The situation for VMRO (United) improved after Vancho Mihailov's VMRO was banned by the Bulgarian authorities in 1934.³³

In April 1935, under Shatorov's leadership, the VMRO (United) Regional Committee for Macedonia under Bulgarian rule published several proclamations, appeals and other articles directed at the Macedonian people. Here we will quote and comment on parts of those documents. The following was said when the 1935 May Day celebration was being organized: "On May Day, the nationally enslaved Macedonian people including the immigrants living in Bulgaria will build a single revolutionary front that will include Bulgarian, Serbian and Greek workers and peasants with aims to struggle against their enslavers... To this day all activities carried out in the name of freedom and for an independent Macedonia have been mistreated and even the name Macedonian has been persecuted. And here, as in Greece and Serbia, we are denied our Macedonian nationality... We call on the state to relinquish lands

³¹ Ibid., pp. 227, 228.

³² Ibid., pp. 228, 229.

³³ Ibid., p. 229.

held by municipalities, monasteries, farmsteads and other state lands and give them to the landless and poor peasants for free... We call on the Macedonian people to raise high the flag of Gotse Delchev, Jane Sandanski, and Dimo Hadzhi Dimov... We call on the people to defend our independent nationality... We demand the right to self-determination of Macedonia under Bulgarian rule (Petrich Region), including the right to its separation into an independent state... We seek liberation and unification of the three parts of Macedonia in an independent republic of the Macedonian workers”.³⁴

This is what was said in the January-April 1935, declaration: “In addition to measures already taken, Zlatev’s government is preparing to stifle the Macedonian national-revolutionary movement. Zlatev even canceled the right of Macedonians to call themselves Macedonian and, in this way, is widely acting to disfigure Macedonians as a people and a nation”.³⁵

Here is what was said in part about the resolution adopted in May 1935, regarding future VMRO (United) activities: “VMRO (United) should instill and strengthen iron discipline in its ranks during the struggle and during the growing development of the struggle, overcoming all phenomena of laxity, opportunism and hesitation. The struggle must be raised higher on two fronts; against opportunism and for reconciliation, igniting a more decisive struggle to unmask the supremacists in the two camps (Mihailovists and Protogerovists); everyone must be united around the VMRO (United) District Committee resolutely and at an accelerated pace to fortify the strength of the single revolutionary front with Bulgarian and Balkan workers for the liquidation of Bulgarian and Balkan imperialism; for the definitive defeat of supremacy in Macedonia; for winning the right to self-determination of Petrich Region and the whole of Macedonia until its consolidation into an independent political state.”³⁶

Opportunism was articulated as follows: denying the need for VMRO (United)’s existence; asserting that one should first build the organization and then conduct actions; that terror should be

³⁴ VMRO (United), Documents and materials, book 2, pp. 303, 304, 305.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 305.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 313, 314.

answered with terror, which did not coincide with VMRO (United)'s principles.³⁷

In its call to the working population in Macedonia under Bulgarian rule, issued in the middle of May 1935, and on the occasion of the coup in Bulgaria on May 19, 1934, the Regional Committee said: "Working Macedonian brothers! Enough hunger and slavery! Enough with silence and a bowed head! We have learned enough lessons from the past. May 19 is also a good lesson for us not to hope that someone from outside will come to free us! 'Our freedom rests in our own hands', that's what Gotse Delchev and Jane Sandanski taught us, that's what VMRO (United), the only organization to continue their work, teaches us today. Let's take our only sure way to organize a mass struggle... and in alliance with the Bulgarian workers and peasants let's rise as one to overthrow the bloody military-fascist government in Macedonia and its hegemonic tools (the Mihailovists and Protogerovists) in the name of our demands: Self-determination of Petrich Region after its separation from imperialist Bulgaria to serve as a start and incentive for the liberation and unification of all of Macedonia as a free republic of the Macedonian workers".³⁸

This is what was said in the call "Tortured and wronged Macedonians" made in mid-May 1935: "The arrest and mistreatment of 300 peasants and workers in Svetivrachko and the conviction of 26 of them; the new process against 19 students and 9 citizens in Gorno Dzhumaja; Bulgarian imperialism wants to make us unquestioning slaves with fire and sword, but it will not succeed. Despite everything, we Macedonians, together with Bulgarian workers and peasants, will crush the beastly head of Bulgarian imperialism. Long live the struggle of the Macedonian workers and peasants fighting for economic and national liberation".³⁹

This is what was said in an appeal by the VMRO (United) Regional Committee in Macedonia under Bulgarian rule, issued in May 1935: "Brother Macedonians! A massive number of Macedonians have been arrested in Bulgarian ruled Macedonia and in Sofia. Those

³⁷ Ibid., p. 313.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 315 318, 319.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 319.

arrested were severely tortured. Some were released, but many were sent to prison. Their only crime was that they are progressive Macedonians - nationalists, and opponents of supremacy. However, the Police Directorate in Sofia has given the press false information saying that those people, sons of our people, have set themselves the goal to introduce Soviet power in Petrich Region... They slander our Macedonian national-revolutionary movement. The fascist press has labeled VMRO (United) a communist organization, an agent of the Third International! Macedonians! Don't trust police intrigues. The Bulgarian press and the police suppress the truth, because they are afraid of it. VMRO (United) is a national organization that fights against slavery in Macedonia. It expresses the Macedonian national consciousness and holds the flag of the national liberation struggle. Macedonians join the ranks of VMRO (United) regardless of your political beliefs. VMRO (United) members are those Macedonians who have accepted the revolutionary-democratic struggle for national and economic liberation - including communism. Our organizations are fighting against Bulgarian imperialism, as (they do) over (the border) – against Greek and Serbian imperialism. Petrich Region has been turned into a colony, whose population is mercilessly exploited and oppressed through high taxes, free labor, forced Bulgarian serfdom, military status... which has become a system absent of freedom. They have banned the Macedonian language in schools, institutions and more. All this makes the situation in Petrich Region unbearable. VMRO (United) is fighting against this slavery; but the Bulgarian imperialists say nothing about it! They deny Macedonians the right to their own state - they want to preserve their dominance in Petrich Region. They are carrying out Bulgarian propaganda among our people, in order to justify their conquering policy in relation to all of Macedonia. In this they are helped by the Supremacists-Mihailovists and Protogerovists. Deprived and tortured Macedonians! The authorities have made mass arrests at a time when world carnage between nations is expected to begin at any moment. The Bulgarian imperialists want us, the Macedonians, together with the Bulgarian people, to push us to fight for their interests. Do not oppose the Macedonian liberation movement because it is fighting against the war and intends to lead the Macedonian people to a new victorious Ilinden. Protest against the arrests of progressive Macedonians! Join VMRO (United) – the only successor to the old VMRO led by Delchev, Gjorche, Pere and

Sandanski! Fight against slavery in Macedonia! Push out the Bulgarian occupying armed forces from Macedonia! Down with the violent Bulgarian oppression in Macedonia! Defend your nationality! Build a unique Macedonian front to struggle against the imperialist yoke! Long live free and independent Macedonia!”⁴⁰

In another call, made by the same District Committee, issued at the end of July 1935, it was said: “Macedonians, ILINDEN, the great holiday of the Macedonian revolution is before us. In 1903, 32 years ago, the Macedonian people led, en masse, by their beloved Delchev’s VMRO, rose to an armed uprising against the Ottoman Sultan and his Beys. The goal of the Ilinden Uprising was to liberate the people from Ottoman slavery and give the lands back to the peasants. The Ilinden uprising is the most memorable and brightest day in the history of the Macedonian revolutionary movement. The Ilinden Uprising unfortunately ended in failure, but it was a great achievement and will remain the most magnificent act in modern Macedonian history. It will show the way to Macedonian freedom and independence. Macedonian brothers! One of the reasons why the Ilinden Uprising failed was because the supremacists - agents of Bulgarian imperialism, whose goal was to interfere from the outside and make it possible for Bulgaria to occupy Macedonia. The same old sinners, who are now in the governing body of the Ilinden organization, are calling on the refugees and migrants to come to their commemorations and meetings in order to abuse and make victims of them, to trade their Macedonian souls and to implement the hegemonic-fascist policy of the Bulgarian imperialists. By refusing to take part in the national Macedonian committee for a joint celebration of Ilinden, the governing body of the Ilinden organization has underlined its hegemonic nature once again.

Boycott commemorations and gatherings organized by the supremacist leadership of the Ilinden organization! All go to anti-supremacist meetings and demonstrations. Long live Ilinden! Long live free and independent Macedonia! Stand up and fight to end the Gorno Dzhumaja process, demand the immediate release of all those arrested! Down with military and police terror”.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 321.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 337.

Another call, also issued by the District Committee a little later, believed to have been issued in the summer of 1935, said: “Enslaved Macedonian brothers! As if the crime of dividing Macedonia between Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece was not enough, the Bulgarian imperialists had to commit another devastating crime. They divided Petrich Region into two parts, which they annexed to two Bulgarian districts - Sofia and Plovdiv.

Why did the thugs from Sofia have to tear apart our Macedonian region? Because they didn't want anyone to mention that a Macedonian region existed within the borders of Bulgaria. Because they needed to strengthen their imperialist control over Petrich Region so that it would remain under fascist Bulgaria and to stop the unification with the other two parts of Macedonia from becoming an independent Macedonian state. The enslavers from Sofia thought they could perpetuate their rule in Macedonia under Bulgarian rule. But they are lying to themselves! The people from Petrich Region will fight and will win the right to self-determination in Petrich Region until its secession from fascist Bulgaria! Long live the unification of Macedonia as an independent republic...”⁴²

This is what was said in the call published in the summer of 1935: “Brother Macedonians. The Greek chauvinists call us ‘Slavophone Greeks’ and the Serbians call us ‘Old Serbians’. Why? - It is clear: to justify their rule and warlike aspirations towards Macedonia.

Bulgarian chauvinists act in the same way. They use the Slavic closeness between Macedonians and Bulgarians and declare that Macedonians are an ‘inseparable part of the Bulgarian nation’.

The Bulgarian imperialists always sought and are still seeking to conquer and enslave Macedonia, not to liberate it. The proof is that we are enslaved right now. Did we fight and are we struggling for this kind of “freedom”, as it exists in Petrich Region? Working Macedonians, We must declare for everyone to hear that we are neither Serbians, nor Greeks, nor Bulgarians. We are Macedonians, a unique and independent Macedonian nation. Only in this way will

⁴² Ibid., p. 345.

we best be able to defend the independence of our movement and our right for an independent Macedonian state.

Our enslavers in Belgrade, Athens and Sofia are hiding and obscuring this truth so that they can perpetuate their rule over Macedonia. There are also rich Macedonians who support them in this. They have become Serbians, Bulgarians and Greeks, and together with the imperialists are robbing and oppressing the working Macedonian population.

Working Macedonians and you Macedonian national intellectuals who are struggling for our national and economic liberation must also struggle against the assimilation perpetrated against our people by Belgrade, Sofia and Athens! Let's shout out loud that we don't want to be Serbians, Greeks, or Bulgarians. Let us be a thorn in the eyes of our enslavers and shout out loud that we are Macedonians and as Macedonians we want to have our own Macedonian state".⁴³

Since he took control of the VMRO (United) Regional Committee and the entire region, Shatorov and his activists couldn't remain unnoticed by the Bulgarian police. A large number of these people were arrested, tried and imprisoned. This is what the newspaper "Makedonski vesti" wrote about it on July 8, 1936, under the title "The Great Macedonian VMRO (United) Trial." Among other things the newspaper wrote: "On the 7th of this month in the Sofia District Court at the third criminal level a case against 20 Macedonians was opened. They were accused of committing crimes in accordance with article 2, 3, 6, 7 of the ZZD code, accused of being members of VMRO (United).

The following people were accused of various crimes as follows: Dimitar Vlahov, Vladimir Poptomov and Jordan Anastasov Konstantinov were accused of being members of the VMRO (United) Central Committee. Vasil Atanasov Ivanovski, Metodi Shatorov, Asen Charakchiev and Hr. K. Kalajdzhev were accused of being members of the VMRO (United) Regional Committee in Bulgaria. Grigor Dinev Stefanov was accused of being secretary of the District Committee. Stefan Georgiev Nanov, Hristo Georgiev

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 345, 346.

Dimitrov and Blagoj Pop Jordanov were accused of being secretaries of the Regional Committee. Aneshti Nikolov Uzunov was accused of being a technical person. Ivan Denishev Nakov and Filip Georgiev were accused of being members of the Regional Committee. Arso Vasilev Poptodorov, Minko Popov, Arso Vasilev, Mara Dimitrova Petrova and Petar Minev Kalchev were accused of helping VMRO (United), even though they weren't members. Aleksandar Onchev Martulkov and Boris Iliev Mihov were accused of creating an action committee related to VMRO (United).

The trial caused an extraordinary amount of interest. About a hundred Sofia lawyers expressed their desire to defend the defendants, including Vrvan Angelov, D. Matsankiev, Gladnev, Runevski, N. Nikolov, Meshkov, T. Tatarchev, Kopchev, Stoimenov and others.

The main task of the defense was to overturn the accusation made by the prosecutor who claimed that the defendants were communists and to prove that they were actors of the Macedonian national-revolutionary liberation movement".⁴⁴

After he was tried Metodija Shatorov was sentenced in absentia to 5 years in prison and fined 50,000 Bulgarian leva.

Under the new conditions the Macedonian national-revolutionary movement was faced with several dilemmas in relation to its basic program goals. Solving the Macedonian question became connected with the "Balkan Federation", "Autonomous Macedonia", "Independent Macedonia". After analyzing these views it was concluded that: Macedonia's liberation would be achieved by connecting to the Balkan Federation which limited the Macedonian people's right to self-determination only to autonomy, without the right to self-determination as an independent state. Unfortunately the solution the Balkan Federation offered was unsuitable because the liberation struggle in the Balkans had not matured at the same pace as everywhere else, and wouldn't allow any of its allies outside of the Balkan Federation to join. This drawback or defect in the Balkan Federation represented a big obstacle in building a single front with

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 356, 357.

other enslaved peoples (Greece), who had not accepted the idea of a Balkan Federation. There was the possibility that this unsuitability would be exploited by the imperialists (Greece) to achieve their goals. Several options were possible: if Macedonia wins its liberation, in a situation where imperialist states around it existed, it would separate from them and organize an independent state; another option was: if the battle front in Bulgaria won, the population of Petrich Region would separate into its own independent state, until the other two parts of Macedonia are freed, and then the three parts would unite into one state. Due to all these difficult options it was decided to abandon the idea of a Balkan Federation.

The possibility for an independent Macedonia was viewed strictly as a separatist issue, which called for separation without the Macedonian people's unification with other liberated nations on autonomous-federal principles. In other words the two options; the Balkan Federation and an independent Macedonia were in conflict. The struggle for the Macedonian people's liberation and the struggle for self-determination should not have been set in the framework, nor should the issue of separation into an independent state been pre-determined. How the Macedonian people would use their right to self-determination until secession, would depend on specific conditions, after the masses succeeded in winning their struggle for liberation.

These are the reasons which forced the Macedonian people, i.e. the progressive movement, to take down the old slogan and replace it with the only correct strategic slogan "the Macedonian people's right to self-determination until their separation and the creation of an independent Macedonian state".⁴⁵

Shatorov was one of the bearers of these basic new arrangements regarding the struggle against the triple enslavement of Macedonia. This is what was said in a report describing VMRO (United)'s activities after its founding: "There is no doubt that the ultimate ideal of our first apostles of the Macedonian revolution in their struggle was to create an independent Macedonian state".⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 215, 216.

⁴⁶ Shatorov's abstract, p. 1.

However, Shatorov doesn't mention anything about a "Balkan Federation" in this document, but emphasizes the right to self-determination up to secession and the formation of an independent Macedonian state.

The following call was also found in this document: "We address the Sofia warriors as follows: '...you gentlemen claim that the Macedonians are Bulgarians and that Macedonia is Bulgarian. You pretend that you strive to free the Macedonian people. Well, we claim that the Macedonians are not Bulgarians, that Macedonia is not yours, that, on the contrary, you are the same kind of enslavers like those in Belgrade and Athens. Let us now take the question to the people of Petrich Region. Let them have their say on how they feel and whether they want to live under your yoke, or will they, together with the rest of the population, wish to unite with the other two parts of Macedonia in an independent Macedonian state. In short, give them the right to self-determination so that the people can express their free will by withdrawing the Bulgarian army and police from Macedonia.'..."⁴⁷

The supremacists (Mihailovists and Protogerovists) on the other hand, had taken a diametrically opposite position, showing their true colours, by quickly opposing the slogan "for the right to self-determination, to separation into an independent Macedonian state." They were against creating a common front with the Bulgarian workers and peasants. They rejected the existence of a national-colonial oppression in Petrich Region and the idea that a double (economic and political) slavery existed in the Macedonian working masses in this region. But the Macedonian people quickly recognized that these people were rebellious provocateurs and were quickly thrown into the landfill, where the enemies of the Macedonian people belong. On top of that, the supremacists actively implemented fascist Bulgarian policies calling for all of Macedonia to join Bulgaria. As faithful servants of the Bulgarian bourgeoisie, the role of the Mihailovists didn't change despite the fact that in 1934, during the last two brotherhood Congresses, they called for an independent Macedonia. The Bulgarian imperialists directed their attack against the Macedonian progressive movement together with

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 9.

their old agents from “Macedonia”, from the “Macedonian Justice” and the “new” ones congregating around the “Macedonian Struggle”. They were now trying to develop a “new” flag to perpetuate Macedonia’s slavery. And so this is how things were developing in those days...⁴⁸

After the Organization was burglarized and after the court trials ended in the summer of 1936, Shatorov was convicted in absentia. As a result he was forced to leave Bulgaria and illegally move to Moscow.

As can be seen from the available documents, there were different views shared about VMRO (United)’s fate between the BCP Central Committee internal leadership and the Central Committee Foreign Office in Moscow. The plan to reorganize VMRO (United) was taken over by the BCP Central Committee which tried to make changes until it was liquidated. The foreign office on the other hand, twice in 1937 tried to discuss the BCP’s policy towards Macedonia and VMRO (United)’s fate. This issue was separately considered during the two Council of Ministers sessions held in February and April of the same year. The prevailing opinion was that at a specific political moment, when the Bulgarian government was implementing an anti-Macedonian foreign policy, it would be necessary to again raise the slogan for the unification of the Macedonian forces. This kind of initiative could only have come from VMRO (United).

At a Foreign Office session held in January 1937, (in the presence of Metodija Shatorov, V. Kolarov, Vl. Poptomov, I. Iskrov, and Tr. Kostov-Spiridonov) it was emphasized that VMRO (United) could still be used as a means to create a large democratic movement. Even after the court trials in 1935 and 1936, VMRO (United) continued to be active in order to protect the Macedonian people from certain members of the BCP and others who were denying the Macedonian people’s existence.⁴⁹

On April 19, 1937, the Foreign Office sent a letter to the Central Committee in Bulgaria expressing their views on the preservation of

⁴⁸ VMRO (United), Documents and materials, book 2, pp. 222 and 229.

⁴⁹ D. Dobrinov, p. 240.

VMRO (United) in Bulgaria. Among other things the letter said: “No matter what the current opinion of VMRO (United) is, in any case, it is a popular Macedonian organization and as such it has acquired certain political positions among the Macedonian people, which we should not give up. This will create a mass base for a Macedonian national front. Creating this base will be a central obligation to the Macedonian national liberation movement in Bulgaria”.⁵⁰ In item 4 of this letter however, where the Macedonian movement’s platform was expressed, it was formulated that VMRO (United) would struggle for the Macedonian people’s national rights but only in Greece and Yugoslavia. This was in contradiction with the Comintern conception, VMRO (United)’s and Shatorov’s views who worked in the Foreign Office. As a result of Shatorov’s objection, a correction was made and a new letter was sent on April 20, in which “Yugoslavia and Greece” were removed from item 4 and “Macedonians are fighting for national rights in the three states” was added. In the list of slogans, the words “independent Macedonia” were removed and replaced with the words “the right to self-determination, but that should not be interpreted as self-determination in general, but as the right to self-determination.”⁵¹

But with time, international circumstances had changed and with them the attitudes of the USSR and the Comintern. In this regard, in 1938, the BCP Foreign Office drafted a new Macedonian national liberation movement platform. This platform contained seven points that fully supported Comintern and the USSR policies in the Balkans. The goal of these policies was to avoid conflicts in the Balkans by removing contentions. Unfortunately the Macedonian question was a permanent contention.

The platform’s basic idea was that the Macedonian situation was the same in all three states that occupied Macedonian territory. According to item 1, one of the tasks was to struggle for the right to have the Macedonians recognized as an independent nation, culturally and linguistically equal to other nations within each Balkan state. The Macedonian movement’s goal was to create a Balkan anti-fascist bloc and to orient its foreign policy towards cooperating with the democratic forces and with the USSR. At the

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 241.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 242.

same time (point 7) to expose the German and Italian “mission of liberation” for what it was, “occupation”, and to convince the people that they were not liberated but enslaved by the new regimes.⁵²

To this day we have not yet found the Foreign Office document that details specifically when in 1938 these views were adopted and whether Shatorov was present or not. According to the same letter Shatorov was sent to Paris on April 23, 1938 under the pseudonym /Marko/. Then a letter dated June 8, 1938, was received from Shatorov from Barcelona (Spain). And then another letter was again received from Paris, where he stayed until November 1939, before he went to Prilep. From the documentation we have, it can be concluded that the last letter Shatorov sent from Paris was dated October 19, 1939.

4. Metodija Shatorov’s attitude towards VMRO (supremacist)

Shatorov’s attitude towards VMRO (supremacist) was determined by his basic position on the Macedonian national question. He believed and promoted the idea that the Macedonian people had a separate Macedonian national consciousness which was based on the fact that the Slav speakers who lived in Macedonia at a certain historical time constituted themselves into a separate nation, and thus they were neither Serbians nor Bulgarians, but a separate Macedonian people with all the necessary characteristics.

Shatorov was well aware that the supremacists were created by the Bulgarian state in order to act against the Macedonian movement. Inspired by Emperor Ferdinand at the end of the last century, the supremacists, with help from well-known emigrant circles, implemented a Greater Bulgarian chauvinist policy to force Macedonia to join Bulgaria even by way of war if necessary.

In a report prepared for the 1926 Conference about the history and fundamental nature of VMRO (United) when the Regional Committee for the Macedonian part in Bulgaria was established, the following was highlighted: “The only people who want autonomy

⁵² Ibid., p. 243.

for Macedonia are the supremacists who hide inside the organization, the conductors of Bulgarian belligerent policies staging Macedonia towards its accession to Bulgaria". The Supremacist Committee was created in Sofia by Court order. It consisted primarily of Bulgarian officers whose goal was to subjugate the internal Macedonian organization to their will. With promises and armed pressure from the outside the Supremacist Committee tried and failed but did not give up. Its new tactic was to send its special member, Boris Sarafov to Macedonia. (As well as some other supremacists like him, who seemingly accepted the centralist idea that in order to subjugate the Organization they needed to penetrate it and take it over from the inside.)

In 1902-1903, the clandestine supremacist leaders (including Garvanov and Sarafov) hiding inside the Organization helped the supremacists fulfill their obligation, which was to provoke an early uprising before the people were prepared. Their goal was to compromise the revolutionary struggle, to disillusion the people so that they would lose faith in their own forces and turn their hopes to the Bulgarian army. Unfortunately the people didn't know about their hegemonic intentions and they rose up in revolt. The people weren't at fault and did what was expected of them, the fault lay with the top hegemonic element which had penetrated the VMRO leadership.

Even during the Young Turk uprising the supremacists played a destructive role. Even then it was not too late for them to instigate internal provocation and insurgent attacks directed from outside to cause harm inside Macedonia. Their aim was to instigate mass terror against the Ottoman government and against the people to turn the Young Turk uprising into a counter-revolutionary force, to compromise the rebellion and to create conditions for Bulgaria and the other Balkan states to declare war on the Ottomans and initiate Macedonia's partition. This anti-Macedonian course was taken by Todor Aleksandrov and Aleksandar Protogerov, the new members of the VMRO Supremacist Central Committee, who remained faithful to the Bulgarian imperialist policy both before and after the First World War.

The supremacists and the Bulgarian state leadership were the main culprits responsible for Macedonia's new problems. This included its invasion, occupation and partition by Sofia, Belgrade and Athens. After all the suffering the Macedonian people had endured, the supremacist illusion that some kind of "liberation" would come from Bulgaria and the other Balkan states, faded away. In this way the supremacists suffered their first great defeat."

Further down in the same report, in the section that described the state of distribution of the revolutionary forces in Macedonia, Shatorov said: "The reactionaries took advantage of the situation following a suggestion made by the so-called "black block", at the time when Todor Aleksandrov and A. Protogerov were renewing VMRO, to put on the autonomist mask in order to fool the Macedonian people and convince them to help the fascists fight against the rising revolutionary will of the people in Petrich Region and in the Bulgarian interior. As a result VMRO again fell into supremacist hands and was used by the fascists for war in the 1923 fascist coup in Bulgaria.

In was under these conditions that the Macedonian revolutionaries wanted to unite all Macedonian forces to struggle against the supremacists and to orientate themselves towards an anti-imperialist, anti-fascist front. The Macedonian revolutionaries were gathering great strength, especially before 1924, when the Communist Party corrected its policy regarding the Macedonian national question and when the Macedonian communists took an active role in the Macedonian national movement for the advancement of the Macedonian liberation cause. Because of this T. Alexandrov and A. Protogerov made an agreement with Petar Chaulev, third VMRO Central Committee member, to sign the historic Vienna Manifesto for an alliance with all revolutionary factors in the Balkans who fought against the Balkan imperialists and to struggle to free Macedonia and to create an independent Macedonian state.

However, under pressure from the Bulgarian government, T. Alexandrov and A. Protogerov shamefully renounced the Manifesto and again returned to the service of Bulgarian imperialism. Because of this, the supremacists and the Bulgarian establishment in Bulgarian occupied Macedonia dealt a blow to the Macedonian

cause and temporarily overshadowed its independent national feelings.

By doing so the supremacists, who tried to convince the Slav speaking Macedonian population that the Macedonians were Bulgarians and sometimes put on a mask pretending to struggle for an autonomous or independent Macedonia, unmasked themselves even more before the Macedonian people.”⁵³

Among other things, this is what Shatorov said about the VMRO (supremacists) in the documents published between April 1935 and the middle of 1936, when he was VMRO (United) Regional Committee secretary for the Pirin part of Macedonia: “The blows that Bulgarian imperialism and the Macedonian supremacist gangs inflicted on the VMRO (United) organizations didn’t give them their expected result. Their terrorist actions (murders, kidnappings, etc.) only temporarily stopped the organization’s growth, but in parallel with that, the revolutionary upsurge and dissatisfaction among the Macedonian working masses increased much more which, together with the Bulgarian workers and peasants, threatened the very rule of Bulgarian imperialism.

After the general revolutionary upsurge began to strengthen in Macedonia and with the Macedonian people’s persistent revolutionary struggle against Bulgarian and Balkan imperialism and against the Macedonian supremacists, the VMRO (United) leadership began to expand its legal position.⁵⁴ At this point VMRO (United) called on the Macedonian people to resolutely resist the terror perpetrated by the Mihailovist gangs. It was now up to the Regional Committee to decisively and at an accelerated pace strengthen the single revolutionary front being created, which was to include the Bulgarian and Balkan workers, in order to liquidate Bulgarian and Balkan imperialism, and to once and for all defeat Macedonian supremacists so that the Macedonian people could gain the right to self-determination for Petrich Region and for the whole of Macedonia until its separation and the creation of an independent Macedonian state.”⁵⁵

⁵³ Shatorov’s report, pp. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7.

⁵⁴ VMRO (United) documents and materials, book 2, pp. 308, 309.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 310, 313, 314.

Among other things, this is what was said in an appeal issued by the VMRO (United) Regional Committee in May 1935: “We, the Macedonians who live in Bulgaria, more than ever, should now unite today under Gotse Delchev’s banner and under the May Manifesto. Today there is a fascist dictatorship raging in Bulgaria under the sign of wild chauvinism and military preparation. The rise of the revisionist wave has made previous concealments carried out by the Mihailovist organizations unnecessary. The temporary game played for an “independent Macedonia” became redundant. Today the imperialists have declared the work carried out by the Macedonians to be part of Bulgarian state policy. They want to impose the Great Bulgarian ideology on all of us at any cost. That is why the National Committee (founded by a supremacist group in 1919) is invading our organizations and persecuting our Macedonian name, our Macedonian struggle, and our ideal of independence. Those who encouraged the Mihailovists to act out the parables are now making a banner out of our struggle against them in order to win over the people.⁵⁶ (In other words, the supremacists secretly invaded Macedonians organizations and are now pretending to be revolutionaries working for the Macedonian cause and are focusing the people’s anger against their former selves... At the same time they are inviting the people to join them. What treachery!).

The Bulgarian government is persecuting every righteous thought and every creative activity even more ferociously than ever before. In St. Vrach for example, it has sentenced 25 of our brothers to about 100 years in prison just because they fought for freedom, for Delchev’s and Sandanski’s ideals and against Mihailovist tyranny. The Mihailovists broke up their gangs in order to save them and themselves from the population’s revenge and wrath which had already begun to riot. Now the people are becoming aware that the Mihailovists are no “liberators” but oppressors...

In another document it was said: “Let our people’s VMRO (United) in alliance with the Bulgarian workers and peasants, rise as one to overthrow the bloody fascist anti-Macedonian Bulgarian government and its hegemonic tools (the Mihailovists and

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 316.

Protogerovists). We demand the withdrawal of all Bulgarian military, police and administrative authorities from Petrich Region to be replaced with local Macedonian militias and an administration made up of conscripts. In this way conditions for self-determination can be created for Petrich Region in order to separate from imperialist Bulgaria. This will serve as a beginning of the liberation and unification of all of Macedonia. Down with bloody Bulgarian imperialism and its agent VMRO (supremacist).”⁵⁷

Among other things, this is what was said in the call “Tortured and wronged Macedonians” in the middle of May 1935: “At the suggestion of the emperor and as ordered by the army, supremacist gangs carried out the most ferocious terror against us. After the military-fascist coup on May 19, last year, the government dissolved Vancho Mihailov’s organizations because they were interfering in Bulgarian imperialist matters. However, this didn’t improve our situation. The terror perpetrated by these massive gangs was now being perpetrated by the military and the police.”⁵⁸

Among other things, this is what VMRO (United) said during the May 1935 call regarding the Bulgarian imperialists and the supremacists (Mihailovists and Protogerovists): “They are denying the Macedonian people’s right to their own state; to their own Macedonian national consciousness; to their own Macedonian language... the Bulgarian imperialists want to preserve their dominance over Petrich Region. They are carrying out Bulgarian propaganda among our people, in order to justify their occupying policy in relation to all of Macedonia. At the end, VMRO (United) would like to highlight the slogans: Out with the Bulgarian occupying armed forces in Macedonia; Down with the violent planting of Bulgarian propaganda in Macedonia; defend your nationality; build the only Macedonian front to fight against the imperialist yoke.”⁵⁹

Among other things, this is what the Regional Committee, headed by Shatorov, said in the June 1935 call: “The supremacists lack ideological arguments so they use parables, murders, distractions,

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 315, 318, 319.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 319.

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 320, 321.

beatings and other similar acts. This bloody hegemony, encouraged by Bulgarian imperialism, is aimed at destroying VMRO (United) because it expresses the Macedonian national consciousness, struggles for national and economic liberation, struggles for the introduction of the Macedonian language in schools, fights for an independent Macedonian state, and struggles for the right to self-determination until separation from the Bulgarian state...”⁶⁰

Among other things, this is what was said on the occasion of Simeon Kavrakirov’s murder at the beginning of June 1935, when two calls were issued: “After two years of torment in the hands of Mihailovist gangs, Simeon Kavrakirov was harassed, tortured, and finally killed, because he was a fiery and unbreakable fighter fighting against the supremacists. After all the torment he endured Simeon Kavrakirov didn’t abandon VMRO (United) and didn’t go over to the side of the supremacists. Other Macedonian activists, who had similar experiences in the supremacist and Bulgarian imperialist crossfire were inspired by Simeon Kavrakirov’s heroism and boldly raised the flag and fought for the complete supremacist destruction and for the overthrow of Bulgarian imperialism. The fascist dictatorship and the Mihailovist gangs killed Kavrakirov because they didn’t want him returning alive and causing a huge revolutionary upsurge.”⁶¹

Among other things, this is what Shatorov and the Regional Committee said in the first decade of June 1935, in the call entitled “Macedonian Brothers”. “Twelve years ago, the Bulgarian bourgeoisie, with its June coup d’état took away even the most elementary rights and freedoms from the labourers and the nationally oppressed, the kind they had during the Stamoblski government. This coup initiated the September events and the Gorno Dzhumaja slaughter, during which many working Bulgarians and Macedonians were killed. T. Alexandrov’s and Protogerov’s Macedonian supremacists also took an active part in this. Therefore on the anniversary of this bloodbath we should take to the streets en masse and demonstrate our readiness to fight against fascism, war, imperialism and against their faithful supremacists. Let us do this in

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 320, 324.

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 324, 325.

the face of the military-fascist dictatorship and the imposed National Committee”.⁶²

In June 1935, on the occasion of the National Committee’s establishment, the Regional Committee issued a special appeal to the Macedonian people: “The Supremacist National Committee appointed by the bloody dictatorship has committed a vile betrayal against the holy Macedonian liberation movement and has trampled on Gotse Delchev’s vows, demanding the accession of Macedonia to Bulgaria. On top of that it has attacked the Macedonian masses and now it wants to completely destroy the Macedonian emigrant movement’s independence.”⁶³

On the occasion of Ilinden, the great Macedonian holiday, Shatorov’s Regional Committee, at the end of June 1935, issued a call. In part here is what was said: “One of the reasons for the Ilinden Uprising failure was its premature start which was caused by the supremacist agents of Bulgarian imperialism whose goal was to interfere from the outside so that Macedonia could be annexed by Bulgaria”.⁶⁴

In August 1935 the VMRO (United) Regional Committee of Macedonia under Bulgarian rule, prepared a call to the Macedonian people protesting against the trial that had began on July 29, in Gorno Dzhumaja in which, among other things, it was said: “The fascist government is preparing to sentence the accused to hundreds of years in prison because they fought against the supremacists and struggled for a free and independent Macedonia. At the same time, the Mihailovist thugs, the executioners of the people, are free and threatening again... The police are accusing the prisoners of carrying out communist activities and are labeling VMRO (United) a communist organization. The Bulgarian government refuses to admit that it has put Gotse Delche and Jane Sandanski’s ideals on the prosecution bench the same way the Turkish government did in the past, and is falsely trying the Macedonian freedom fighters. The fascist government uses furious terror tactics to stifle our struggle which aims to improve our difficult economic situation and to win

⁶² Ibid., pp. 325, 326.

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 326, 327.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 337.

an independent Macedonia.”⁶⁵ The call was ended with these words: “Down with the fascist supremacist Mihailovists and Protogerovists and their master - Bulgarian imperialism.”

Among other things this is what was said in the call entitled “Working-Macedonians.” “We, the Macedonians under Bulgarian rule will contribute the most to the liberation and unification of enslaved Macedonia once we free ourselves from the clutches of Bulgarian imperialism and from the supremacists. They are our main enemies and our immediate enslavers... We struggle against the military-fascist dictatorship; for the self-determination of Petrich Region and all of Macedonia; for the creation of an independent republic of Macedonian labourers.”⁶⁶

The Regional Committee also issued a call in 1935, under the title “Brothers of Macedonia” in which, among other things, it said: “The Bulgarian imperialists managed to dominate VMRO’s leadership through its faithful supremacist agents led by T. Alexandrov and A. Protogerov. This is how this people’s organization turned into a terrorist hotbed of Bulgarian fascism.

The Mihailovists and the Protogerovists are two wings of the same gang. Together in 1923, 1924, and 1925, they slaughtered Macedonian and Bulgarian workers and peasants. Both are tools of Bulgarian imperialism and carry out its anti-Macedonian policy.”⁶⁷

On the occasion of Shatorov’s election as Provincial Committee Secretary of the Communist Party of the Macedonian part under Serbian rule, in the spring of 1940, a call to the working people of Macedonia was issued in June. Among other things, this is what was said regarding the supremacists: “They cannot honestly struggle for the Macedonian people’s freedom and equality... These people are followers of Vancho Mihailov and others who seek freedom from Bulgaria and Italy as well as other foreign imperialists. Only those who are against Serbian hegemony, against Greater Serbian imperialism and against any other imperialism, can honestly say that they struggle for freedom and equality.” The same year Shatorov’s

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 338.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 340, 341.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 342.

opinion was also published in the illegal press: “Bulgarian imperialist demands, like those in Macedonia came from Vancho Mihailov’s bandits and from other, similar, foreign agents”.⁶⁸

In 1941, after the Bulgarian occupation, Shatorov wrote a letter to “Stojan” explaining the supremacist goal: “With Macedonia’s occupation by the German, Italian and Bulgarian armies, some supremacist Macedonians want to say that the Macedonian struggle is over. Is that true? But that can’t be true because Macedonia wasn’t given national or political freedom.”⁶⁹

Macedonian Committees were created in all the Macedonia cities (on April 13, 1941, a Bulgarian Central Action Committee for Macedonia was created in Skopje). “In some cities well seasoned supremacists were sent to join these committees. Even presidents and secretaries were sent from Bulgaria to join the Committee in Skopje. The Committees were instructed to implement purely Bulgarian policies and to shout only Hurrah! Long live Hitler, Mussolini and Tsar Boris!” Those committees worked hard to implement their goals which didn’t protect Macedonian interests, and as a result lost the trust of the people. These Committees were and are now bases of the occupiers”.⁷⁰

Furthermore, Shatorov wrote: “The Bulgarian fascist government, together with the Macedonian supremacist-fascists, believed Hitler’s lies every day.”⁷¹

In 1941, the CPM Provincial Committee, headed by Shatorov, on the occasion of the 1903 Ilinden Macedonian Uprising, issued a proclamation, and in the part about the supremacists, it said: “The Ilinden Uprising and the Krushevo Republic were the work of the Macedonian people, not the work of the supremacists, or the work of the Bulgarian state as some of today’s Macedonian fascists want us

⁶⁸ Documents and materials 1921-1941, volume 1, book 2, p. 315 and CPY Illegal press in Vardar Macedonia between the two World Wars, volume 2, book 2, pp. 170, 171.

⁶⁹ Sources for the liberation war and revolution in Macedonia 1941-1945, volume 1, book 1, p. 15 (hereinafter Sources.)

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 16.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 24.

to believe... The Macedonian-Bulgarian supremacist fascists are trying to falsify the Macedonian struggle and mislead the Macedonian people. They want the people to believe that the Ilinden Uprising and the famous Krushevo Republic were Tsar Boris's and Hitler's "ideas" for giving the people "freedom and equality". This is mockery and fascist brazenness.

Dear Macedonians, the fascists want to bring you new "joy" at our Ilinden celebration this year. It was reported by foreign radio stations that Germany, Italy and Bulgaria want to "somehow" solve the Macedonian question by involving Vancho Mihailov, who was brought in from Zagreb to negotiate with the Bulgarian state leadership. Fascists from all camps believe they will be able to lie to the Macedonian people easier if Vancho Mihailov is appointed "Führer" in Macedonia. Mihailov will play a bloody role in the same way Ante Pavelich plays such a role in Croatia: an imperialist agent, a plunderer, an oppressor, Hitler's gendarme in Macedonia, who will have the task of feeding and clothing the Germans and destroying any movement that struggles for a free Macedonia.

The Macedonian people in Petrich Region and the Macedonian immigrants in Bulgaria know very well who Vancho Mihailov is and who he serves. Today he will again serve Tsar Boris and Hitler and kill and plunder the Macedonians, as he did in Petrich Region. Over 5,000 excellent Macedonian centralists (members of VMRO, supporters of the Central Committee who were against the supremacists), fighters who struggled for a free Macedonia, are dead because of him and his kind.⁷²

⁷² Ibid., pp. 30, 32.

III. Metodija Shatorov and the Provincial Committee's activities in 1940-1941

The Provincial Committee was re-organized in April 1940 as follows: Metodija Shatorov-Sharlo was appointed Political Secretary, Petar Ivanovski-Tikvar was appointed Organizational Secretary, Kotse Stojanovski, Dobrivoje Vidich and Ortse Nikolov were appointed members.

By taking over the party leadership from this committee, the Communist Party of Macedonia in the Vardar part of Macedonia undertook a series of activities to strengthen and expand the party organization and its ideological and political position so that it could successfully connect with the masses and lead them in the struggle for national and social liberation.

The party organization found itself in a difficult situation because there was no provincial leadership from about 1937 to the beginning of 1940, and it only had 140 members at the end of 1939.

In June 1940, the Communist Party of Macedonia's Provincial Committee published a call entitled "TO THE WORKING PEOPLE OF MACEDONIA". This call was of a program-political character and addressed the Macedonian people at the time when the international situation was deteriorating and fascism was expanding in Europe. This is what was said at the start of the call: "The fire from the imperialist war is spreading wide. Yugoslavia is on the verge of being engulfed..." Explaining the situation in Europe at that time, the call addresses the working people in Macedonia with the following words: "Macedonia is the first in line to plunge in this bloody war... The Macedonians, Albanians and Turks in Macedonia will be the first victims of this military slaughter and misery..." This is what the call said regarding the Great-Serbian monarchy in Macedonia: "With its policy of national suppression, the regime is suffocating the Macedonian people, stifling their national consciousness and feeling, and depriving them of their rights... The regime didn't solve the question of dividing the land with its agrarian policy. And with its plundering policy, the regime has squeezed the Macedonian people more and more and drove them into extreme poverty and misery".

This is what the call said about the difficult situation in Macedonia and the way out of it: “Many people have not yet seen the right path; some see Macedonian’s salvation in its division with help from other countries, for example with Italian and Bulgarian reactionary help. Others see its salvation from the Great Serbian imperialist policy by having the Macedonian people taken over by other, even worse, imperialists.” “Those in Macedonia who rely on and seek a solution to the Macedonian question from Italy or Bulgaria, who do not think of Macedonia’s interests, are condemned.” About the attitude towards the Serbian monarchy, the call said: “Some people think that the Macedonian people’s freedom can be obtained through bargaining and compromises with the regime. All these roads unfortunately lead to selling out the interests of the Macedonian people”. The call also points out to the Macedonian people that even Vancho Mihailov’s forces couldn’t bring them freedom. This is what the call said about the Mihailovists: “They cannot honestly fight for the Macedonian people’s freedom and equality... Mihailovists and others like them only fight for Bulgarian, Italian and other imperialists”. As for the way out of the difficult situation and to bring freedom to the Macedonian people, the call said: “Only our Communist Party has the correct point of view on the Macedonian national question. Freedom for the Macedonian people and their right to self-determination can be achieved through the Macedonian people’s struggle together with the Yugoslavian people and with help from the Serbian people who struggle against the regime, against the regime’s policies and against national suppression and oppression and for equality of all the people. Let us be clear that the way out of this difficult situation is to have the working classes cooperating with the Communist Party leading them, which is at the forefront of the Macedonian people’s struggle for national freedom and equality. We call on the Macedonian people to clean up and strengthen their ranks and start struggling for their national and social liberation.”

This is how the call addressed the workers: “You should be in the front lines struggling for your national rights and freedoms; against corruption and war; against the regime that supports violence and brutality...” In calling the peasants to struggle together with the workers, the call said: “The regime is holding you in a tight grip and

has put the entire army, gendarmes, rangers and all kinds of other forces to hold you down. Every right has been taken from you, even the right to call yourself Macedonian. The regime wants to separate you from the workers, your brothers, because it is afraid of your harmony and common struggle. Don't lie to yourself. Defend your Macedonian name and fight for your Macedonian national rights and freedoms.”

With this call, directed at the working Macedonian people, the Provincial Committee formulated its platform for the Macedonian people's liberation, that is, it connected class with national rights. It connected Macedonian identity interests with the interests of the other nations in Yugoslavia who struggled against slavery, and for their national and class liberation. In calling on the peasants to realize their interests, which was only possible through a joint struggle with the working class, in a joint union, the call said: “Create a worker and peasant alliance in the struggle against war and corruption; for the protection of your village interests; for the Macedonian people's freedom; for a brighter and happier future...” In the section about the communists the call said: “You should be organizers and leaders, as the vanguard working class and at the head of the Macedonian people's struggle for full national liberation.”⁷³

Professor N. Vulich wrote an article entitled “Southern Serbia”, published on July 11, 1940, in which he encouraged the administrative and “educational” authorities to “explain” to the Macedonian people that all Macedonians are Serbians. On July 20, 1940, Bulletin no. 1, an organ of the Communist Party of Macedonia in Macedonia, wrote a response to Vulich's article in which it said: “The real Macedonians and real supporters of the struggle for the Macedonian cause, these days, sent a reply to Professor N. Vulich on his article published in Pravda on the 10th of this month”.⁷⁴

Here we will quote certain parts of the response in which important views on the Macedonian question will be expressed. In part here is the response: “The entire progressive society and all those who are

⁷³ Documents and materials 1921-1941, volume 1, book 2, p. 313, 318 (hereinafter Documents and materials).

⁷⁴ Bulletin No. 1, issued by the CPM Provincial Committee on July 20, 1940.

free from chauvinism have raised their voices and have pointed out the possibilities and wealth of the Macedonian language. They are in opposition to the terror that has been perpetrated against the Macedonian people and against their language in the three parts of divided Macedonia now ruled by Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece.” Furthermore: “The Macedonian people are a historical nation and not the brainchild of this or that. For 50 years now the Macedonian people have been leading the way organizing and struggling for their existence... What we need to say now is that the Macedonian people, together with the Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek people, are still struggling for their liberation.” The Macedonian people have a fighting tradition and for many years have struggled for their liberation from slavery, especially during the Ilinden Uprising and the Krushevo People’s Republic. This is what was said about that: “After the failed Ilinden Uprising... after 1903, we in Macedonia have to endure Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek propaganda...” This is what was said in an issue of “Macedonian Voice”, published in Moscow in 1904: “Macedonians are neither Bulgarians, nor Serbians, nor Greeks, but only Macedonians...” (Jovan Babunski also said this before he became a Serbian chauvinist and agent. The same can be said of Boris Sarafov before he became a supremacist and a Bulgarian agent). This is what was said regarding the Macedonian nationality: “The Macedonian nation is a product of historically acquired circumstances and represents a geographical, historical, spiritual and cultural whole speaking the same Macedonian language... Today Macedonia has been portioned by Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece and the Macedonian people suffer because of that... The Macedonian people under Greece from Solun to Kavala are Slav speakers. The Macedonian nation is made up of Slav speaking Macedonians and all other people who live in Macedonia including Turks, Albanians, Jews, Vlachs, Greeks and Serbians. But the Macedonian people are a separate nationality with their own language, culture, economic and geographical whole, which has been historically created through revolutionary struggles and through Macedonian national liberation movements.”⁷⁵

Our research has shown that the call entitled “Macedonians celebrate the glorious Ilinden Uprising!”, which was neither signed

⁷⁵ Documents and materials pp. 318-322.

nor edited, was made by the CPM Provincial Committee and issued sometime in July 1940. Explaining Ilinden events and their significance for Macedonia, in part it said: “Ilinden is a bright and pure Macedonian flag, under which all the poor Turks, Vlachs, Greeks, Albanians, etc., are uniting, just like they did in Krushevo...

Macedonians, Turks, Albanians and all those oppressed people living in Macedonia who are exploited by Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek imperialism, must today again gather together for a general struggle, for freedom and equality. Today more than ever, unity and struggle are needed, because a new yoke, a new division, a new slavery is being prepared for Macedonia”. The call ends with the words: “Let Ilinden serve as an example! May the young generation be infected by the fire of the Ilinden fighters! Long live freedom and equality! Long live FREE MACEDONIA!”⁷⁶

The Provincial Committee, basing this call on the Ilinden tradition, invited the Macedonian people and all the people who lived in Macedonia to join the struggle to liberate themselves from Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek slavery.

The Ilinden demonstrations, organized by the Macedonian communists for August 2, 1940, were a success. In part this is what the call said in the beginning about their actions and successes: “The working people of Macedonia duly celebrated the Ilinden Uprising this year in remembering the people’s fighters from 1903. The fighting flame of our people surged in Prilep with an unstoppable force. Thousands of men and women, old and young boldly stood up to express their great dissatisfaction with the difficult situation with this unpopular government and to express their willingness to get rid of it. The Ilinden demonstrators in Prilep proved to be worthy sons and daughters of their great fathers who fought during the 1903 Ilinden Uprising... Many Macedonians, supporters of the Macedonian cause, faithful sons of their people, regardless of their conviction, joined the Ilinden demonstrations... Unity of the people in Macedonia became a reality through the flames of the Ilinden demonstrations. Workers, peasants and citizens forged a working people’s alliance in Macedonia to continue the struggle.

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 322-323.

The call finally ended with the words: “Let us strengthen our ranks, strengthen our alliance with the working people in Macedonia and lead even more persistently and decisively in the struggle for the people’s rights and people’s freedoms, for a free Macedonia and for a better life”.⁷⁷

Through these calls the Provincial Committee managed to successfully raise and connect almost all issues of interest to the Macedonian people, that is, which were of interest for mobilizing people in the struggle for liberation. It pointed out the fact that the Macedonian people don’t want to be enslaved and are ready to fight for their rights. It pointed out that they don’t want to suffer oppression and be plundered by anti-people governments, by various capitalists and military speculators who reduce worker wages and the prices of tobacco, poppies, silk cocoons and other Macedonian products, which increases the price of everything the people need, burdening them with higher taxes and other expenses. The Provincial Committee also pointed to the fact that people no longer wanted to suffer political lawlessness, violence and national oppression from the Great Serbian imperialists, or from any other imperialists. With the questions raised in this call, with the demonstrated results of the Ilinden demonstrations, as well as with the Ilinden and Krushevo Republic celebrations, the Provincial Committee created a broad platform designed to mobilize all progressive people and unite them with the working people in the struggle for national and class liberation.

An appeal was made with the basic purpose to discredit the Cvetkovich-Machek government in order to mobilize the masses in the struggle for national, economic and democratic rights, and for an alliance with the USSR. This is what was said, in part, in the appeal to the monopoly (tobacco) workers and to the entire working class in Macedonia, published in the summer of 1940: “This government uses us and steals, lies and seduces us, terrorizes and persecutes us. More than a hundred thousand of us are occupied in the planting and processing of tobacco. With our labour we provide the government with billions of dinars in value. The value we provide is not used for

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 324-325.

us but is taken as profit when our boss the state sells the tobacco we grow. This profit is raised with our pain and sweat but we work and live in poverty... We work hard and the money we earn by our sweat is scattered and taken away by various rascals, rascals who ride on the backs of the working people.”

The appeal ends as follows: “We must start a decisive struggle for a better life and freedom for the working class, a struggle that fulfills the demands of our peasant allies. We need to connect this struggle with the village workers. At the same time, our struggle must be a struggle for the demands of the urban middle classes, and especially a struggle of the Macedonians, Albanians and Turks against our oppressors.”⁷⁸

This call, as well as the call to the soldiers and citizens of Macedonia, and to the Skopje workers, made in September 1940, was meant to mobilize the working class to fight for its interests through strikes. This is what was said in the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) Fifth Conference minutes: “There have been no strikes in Macedonia so far. However, for the first time in 1940, we have 16 strikes each lasting 40 days.”⁷⁹ These were visible results achieved at that time because of the activities and involvement of the CPM Central Committee and its base organizations.

1. Resolutions made during the Communist Party of Macedonia’s Provincial Conference held around September 8, 1940

This document, for the communists in Macedonia, had programmatic significance which can be seen in the covered issues and in the positions taken. Here we will only focus on the most essential items used to attempt to solve the Macedonian national question and identity. In part this is what was said: “The policy of national repression, assimilation, wild terror and persecution of everything that is Macedonian, as well as the Macedonian culture, language and songs, is carried out maliciously. The tormented, disadvantaged and nationally enslaved Macedonian population is

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 328-331.

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 347-350.

facing new and great struggles”. Further down it said: “The manifestations and demonstrations taking place in Macedonia are an expression of the accumulated Macedonian national indignation against the Great Serbian policy of colonial exploitation and national slavery”.⁸⁰ The Provincial Committee during this Party Conference raised the Macedonian national question to a high level. This was a very important resolution in order to mobilize the Macedonian people in the struggle against slavery - both colonially and nationally. The Macedonian national question was a very important issue at this time. The Communist Party of Yugoslavia discussed this for a long time, but did not take a clear position on the Macedonian national identity.

In June 1939, during a CPY Central Committee consultation in Slovenia, it was concluded that: “It is necessary for the CPY to pay special attention to this province and as soon as possible start reorganizing the CPY in Macedonia to mobilize a broad layer of oppressed peoples to struggle for their daily needs, freedom and equality”.⁸¹ But there was nothing said about the Macedonian national individuality, even though for the CPY there were wide layers of oppressed people. In a letter Tito sent to Georgi Dimitrov on June 20, 1939, he said: “We must immediately take a clear position towards the national issues in Vojvodina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia. These issues are now ripe for internal and external political reasons. We will inform you of our position but we will have to ask for your help as well.”⁸² In September 1939, in a report to the Communist International, Tito wrote: “Now it is especially important to raise the Macedonian and Montenegro question, where Italian fascism has firmly stepped in and, with the help of its agents, conducts its own propaganda”.⁸³

Without a clear position on the Macedonian national question in a situation like this, the CPM Provincial Committee, in all seriousness, could not commit to asking the people to rise and struggle. The CPY’s procrastination and hesitation only complicated the situation and disorganized the Macedonian people.

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 334-338.

⁸¹ Collected works of Tito, book 4, p. 256.

⁸² Ibid., p. 229.

⁸³ Ibid., book 5, p. 10.

A question was raised about creating unity in the ranks of the working class to struggle against all enemies. The idea behind this was to create a strong alliance between the workers, the peasants, the Macedonian intelligentsia and the entire Macedonian population to fight against the Serbian imperialists and enslavers. As a result the CPM Central Committee introduced a broad platform to encompass all social structures of the Macedonian population to struggle for their liberation from class and national slavery.

A clear position was taken against the monopoly's economic exploitation; that is against high tobacco, cotton, poppy, sesame and wheat prices. In doing so the CPM supported economic requirements that were of material interest to the population. The decision taken on the issues regarding the rural population was unequivocal: take the lands from the chifliks, monasteries, churches, national Greater Serbian nobles and colonists, and give it to the Macedonian villagers and farmers. In conclusion, it was said: "Lands in Macedonia that are held by the chifliks, Great Serbian chauvinists, colonists, monasteries, churches, the crown and the like should pass into the hands of the Macedonian villagers and crop producers. The Macedonians from the great hills and mountains should come down and work the land of their fathers, and the really poor colonists should be given lands in Serbia, the land of their local chifliks and landlords, monasteries and the crown..." (See documents and materials pp. 334-338)

During the same conference it was decided to take a position to preserve the purity of the Party, i.e. to clean the Party from foreign elements and strengthen its fighting ability – to get out of sectarianism, closed-mindedness and organizations with the aim of transforming themselves into political factors and leaders of the mass struggle of the Macedonian people.

With help from the CPY Central Committee and contributions from the CPM Provincial Committee, the CPM organizations in Macedonia began to stand on their own and, in a short time, noticed visible results both in organizational and political terms. During this time, existing Party Organizations in Skopje, Veles, Kumanovo, Prilep, Bitola, Gevgelija and Shtip began to improve their

performance, and new ones began to spring up in Kavadarci, Tetovo, Strumitsa, Krushevo, Ohrid, Gostivar, etc., for a total of 16 party organizations. Party membership increased from 140 members in the fall (end of 1939) to 250 members by the time the 5th State Conference took place. These results were achieved because of the selfless sacrifices people made working hard day and night for the Provincial Committee and for the basic party organizations, as well as for the local committees, that is, the results were achieved thanks to the “correct” policies applied on several issues that were of interest to the Macedonian people. This is what was said regarding these “correct” policies that governed admission of new members: “The conditions when accepting party members should be a willingness to struggle and make sacrifices in order to spread and expand organizations and tie them even more closely with the broad masses of people.” (See documents and materials pp. 334-338.) Even more Party organizations were created for people who were reputable, trustworthy and ready to accept the recruitment conditions. They were also expected to mobilize others like themselves into their local organizations.

The conference concluded that one of the most neglected sectors of work was the contributions made by women. In order to improve this situation, it was decided to create various forms of women’s organizations with different goals according to local conditions. This is what was said about the CPY working with women during the 5th Regional Conference: “In Slovenia, women make up 10% of the total Party membership, in Montenegro 6%, in Serbia 10%, in Croatia 4%, in Macedonia 10%, in Vojvodina 5%, and in the entire party 6%... Since the comrades in Macedonia started working so well in all fields, we can expect a newspaper for women in the Macedonian language from them in the near future.”⁸⁴

This is what was said in the resolution regarding the other nationalities living in Macedonia: “The Macedonian national revolutionary movement is not and cannot be alien to the rights and struggles of the entire Macedonian population, including the Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, etc., all of whom are also exploited and enslaved, subjected to terror and assimilation. The workers and

⁸⁴ Documents and Materials, p. 346.

peasants, Albanians and Turks in Macedonia, are destined for the same fate as the Slav speaking Macedonians. The party organizations should develop an inclusive brotherhood of solidarity in the struggle. Only a free and independent Macedonia can guarantee freedom for all the oppressed and enslaved people living in Macedonia”.

The categorical attitude of the CPM Central Committee and the Provincial Conference in 1940, regarding the colonists deposited in Macedonia by the Great Serbian Monarchy, would be a cause of controversy in the ranks of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, especially during the 5th National Conference in Zagreb in 1940. The colonization of Macedonia caused great dissatisfaction and clashes between the authorities and the colonists on the one hand and the Macedonian population on the other, which led to conflicts and clashes ending in murder. These clashes arose because the poor Macedonian people were deprived of 127,301 hectares of land which lasted until 1934. Up to that time 2,869 households were colonized, with an average of 8.34 hectares per household.⁸⁵ This is how the property situation of the population in Macedonia under Serbian rule was! In 1931, there were 171,667 households in this part of Macedonia. Of these, 127,597 had land for cultivation and 44,070 did not. That is 34.5% of the total households, and of those who had land for cultivation 28,076 households had land up to 1 hectare, or a total of 14,456 hectares, which means the average per household was 0.51% hectares of land, or 22.00% of the households had land for cultivation, that is, 51,954 households had up to 2 hectares of land, or a total of 50,277 hectares, with an average of 0.97 hectares each, or 40.72% of the households had land. If the total arable area was divided by the households that had land, it comes to 4.41 hectares, and if it is divided by the total number of households, it amounts to 3.27 hectares of arable land. With this kind of property situation, in this part of Macedonia, colonization was detrimental to the poor population (and to those without any property) which was a large number of households.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ 1940 report. Documentation compiled by the main commission for the colonization of Macedonia and Kosovo. This documentation is located in MANU Skopje.

⁸⁶ 1931 documents. Wealth Census of the Kingdom CXC.

In the Resolution of the 3rd CPY World Conference, held on October 19, 1940, it was concluded: “A struggle will take place against the colonizing methods of the Serbian bourgeoisie in those areas (Macedonia and Kosovo). All colonists deposited there, of whom the Serbian bourgeoisie oppresses the Macedonian, Albanian and other peoples, will be expelled.”⁸⁷

During discussions in the same conference, after Milovan Gjilas reported on the national question, Metodi Shatorov, then CPM Central Committee Secretary said: “The second mistake was about the question of the colonists. Milovan Gjilas said that the Caucasus’ colonists were defended by the Bolsheviks. Tsarist Russia is not Macedonia. The national question before the war was one thing but today it is another. Milovan Gjilas has demonstrated a chauvinistic attitude. We cannot go and tell the Macedonian peasant that the colonists from Serbia are his Macedonian brothers. Just like the generals, the gendarmes, the spies who are not his brothers. If the peasants were to ally with the colonists, they would respond with a spade. There are about 10 thousand families with about 70 thousand hectares. All of them are oppressors who tyrannize the Macedonian people and we can’t have good relations with them. All the colonists in White Russia were arrested and their land was confiscated. We are also obliged to do the same. If you know the psychology of the Macedonian peasant you will know that he is fighting to exact bloody revenge on the colonists... The colonists were given the best lands which were taken away from the peasants. Pastures and forests have been taken away from the villagers. There is little land in Macedonia, so we ask that the colonists be moved to Serbia. The lands should be given to the Macedonian peasants. And if there is leftover land they should be given to the other nationalities...”⁸⁸ The delegates from Vojvodina and Montenegro didn’t agree with Shatorov’s views and neither did representative Milovan Gjilas.

In time the differences between the CPY and the CPM Provincial Committee leaderships regarding the colonists began to recede and eventually it was decided to allow the colonists to remain on the lands assigned to them by the Serbian monarchy. This is what was said about that in the CPM Central Committee Bulletin no. 3 on

⁸⁷ Documents and materials, pp. 360, 361.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 349-350.

October 30, 1940: “As you can see from the above we prefer the peasants own the land. The most painful question in Macedonia was the one about the land. The Serbian warriors weren’t in favour of the Macedonian peasants. The Macedonian peasants aren’t just complaining they are fighting for their lands. There are many examples of bloody battles and spontaneous fights in Macedonia. Let the village Lisiche in Skopje Region serve as an example. When the colonists were brought there by the Serbian authorities to take over the village pastures and gardens, both in the small and large villages, the villagers came out with pitchforks, hoes and sticks. A fight broke out in the middle of the village which turned into a battle. For almost four years the people of Lisiche, to this day, have been dragged into the courts... The villagers know they will never get their lands back this way. They also know that the only way to get them back is by kicking the looting Serbian authorities out. That struggle and the desire for the lands to be given back to the peasants, was initiated and led only by the Communist Party of Macedonia. The peasants will get their lands back in alliance with the workers - with the communists...”⁸⁹

In the September 1940 proclamation to the working people in Macedonia, the CPM Central Committee addressed their struggle against corruption, speculation, hunger, poverty, bloody terror committed by the police, imprisonments, torture, unfair legal practices and pillaging practices committed by speculators and merchants. In part, this is what the call said: “A bloody terror is spreading throughout Macedonia that persecutes our people. Sons of the people from Skopje, Kumanovo, Tetovo, Veles, Prilep, Bitola and Shtip are being arrested and tried in accordance with the law for the protection of the state. But their only crime is that they want bread and freedom...” The people are called upon to struggle against the Greater Serbian monarchy, which provides Germany and Italy with unlimited meat, fat, bread and other goods, and leaves the people without food. The entire weight of that situation has been thrown onto the backs of the Macedonian people leaving them hungry, miserable and terrified.

⁸⁹ CPM Central Committee Bulletin No. 3, October 30, 1940.

The proclamation also said: “The government thinks it could crush the struggle for bread, freedom and peace by violence and terror against the Macedonian people but it is very wrong. The Macedonian people will not stop fighting against the politics of hunger and misery, against national slavery and oppression, for bread, peace and freedom...” The proclamation ended with the words: “Long live free Macedonia!”⁹⁰

In the call entitled “Macedonians” issued in October 1940 by the Provincial Committee on the occasion of Dragisha Tsvetkovich’s arrival at the Skopje military club, among other things, it was said: “The Tsvetkovich-Machek-Pop Koroshets reactionary fascist government is in action. Ministers and politicians are walking around Macedonia and saying bitter words in defense of the Serbian chauvinists, in defense of the Greater Serbian oppression perpetrated in Macedonia... Frothing at the mouth, Dragisha Tsvetkovich struggled to prove to the Macedonian people that they are Serbians from Southern Serbia (read Macedonia) which was the main post of Serbian culture because Serbian history was created in the south, in Skopje - ... But he could not convince the Macedonians that they are Serbians because for thirty years they have only been hearing such empty stories. But you have to admit that to a large extent Tsvetkovich’s presence and speech had a calming effect on the Great Serbian chauvinists and tormentors in Macedonia, who were fearful of the external and international events.” Further down in the same call it was said: “In Kumanovo and Skopje, the patriarch gave military speeches. He praised and wept for the sacrifices made for the “freedom of Southern Serbia” from the Turkish yoke, but forgot to mention the yoke imposed by the Serbian perpetrators - ...for the honour of Macedonia, but the Macedonian people turned their backs on these actions.” The purpose of these actions taken by the authorities and the priests was to introduce and impose Serbian feelings in the Macedonian people, that is, to instill a sense of Serbian nationalism and chauvinism, to conquer the minds and hearts of young Macedonians and to create traitors among their own people who would work against their interests and ideals. This is what was said in the call about that: “Those Macedonians who think that it is better if Hitler and Mussolini came to Macedonia are very

⁹⁰ Documents and materials pp. 338-339.

wrong. They have been lied to viciously. Those Macedonians who think that way knowingly or unknowingly have become Tsvetkovich-Machek-Pop Koroshets's partners, partners of German and Italian imperialism, a sworn enemy of freedom in Macedonia. Should that happen the Macedonian people will have two masters, two exploiters, two oppressors... The Serbian gendarme and the German boot... And if Hitler has his way he will give Macedonia to the Bulgarian imperialists.

Salvation and freedom for the Macedonian people lies in their struggle against the Tsvetkovich-Machek-Pop Koroshets government and for EMPOWERING THE PEOPLE. THIS WILL EARN MACEDONIA ALL ITS FREEDOMS IN FOREIGN POLICY AND WILL CONCLUDE WITH A SOVIET UNION PACT FOR PROTECTION AGAINST ANY IMPERIALISM.” With the slogan “LONG LIVE FREE MACEDONIA!”⁹¹

With this appeal to the Macedonian people, the Provincial Committee took a clear view on Macedonia's fate. As for the Macedonian people's enslavement, the Provincial Committee equated that on the same level as Serbian and Bulgarian enslavement, that they are all the same and that there was no difference here for the Macedonian people. It pointed out that the only way out of this situation for Macedonia was to struggle to empower the people to create a PEOPLE'S GOVERNMENT and gain all its freedoms that way.

The work carried out by the Party Organizations in Macedonia was evaluated at the CPY 5th Regional Conference held in Zagreb in 1940.

Thanks to the CPY Central Committee's implementation of a proper political platform, the Provincial and Local committees as well as the CPM membership, have achieved good results in Macedonia. This is what the evaluation said during the 5th national conference: “Today we have about 250 Party members in Macedonia (in contrast to the end of 1939 when we only had 140 members). We also have a District Committee (now known as the Provincial Committee) and

⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 340-341.

several local and area committees.” Great results have been achieved in trade union organizations with the increased memberships and with their participation in various activities. “Earlier there were only 40 workers in the Skopje unions and now there are more than a thousand. The “Abrashevich” Primary Society for example, was recently involved in 9 strikes and 2 tariff actions. The metal workers have been out for 40 days and are still out. Good luck to them. A second metal worker strike has been ongoing for 30 days. Experience has shown that trade unions can be successful in their action under Party leadership. We have unions in Veles, Bitola and Kumanovo. We have taken bigger actions in Prilep, where we have over 150 members...”

This is what the evaluation said regarding the state of the Party: “There was a Party in Macedonia. It was created by the Shmarna Gora Council in June 1939. However, the appointed bureau worked very poorly. It almost never met to discuss issues. When the Central Committee saw that the work wasn’t going well it sent help in March 1940. Until then there was zero movement in Macedonia. The appointed bureau consisted of a number of opportunistic chatterbox intellectuals and cowards. The first actions appeared as slogans written on walls and broke the Macedonian people’s fear of the gendarmes...”

At this time there were 16 organizations established mainly in largely populated areas, with 247 members, of whom 23 were women. They achieved good results. They held two plenums and one conference during which a new leadership was elected. Tobacco and poppy producers were also organized in unions. The Communist Party organized the Ilinden celebration for that year as well as demonstrations against the unpopular regime.

On the issue of the People’s Front, Metodija Shatorov didn’t agree with the views expressed in the report on the national question, submitted by Milovan Gjilas. Shatorov criticized the presented position as follows: “The report is abstract. Gjilas could have included the material that shows that the Macedonians brought a Resolution to the Conference. They have printed documents which show the opposite. Dimitrov wrote that the People’s Front still remains in the colonies. Gjilas, on the other hand, only calls for an

alliance between workers and peasants and leaves out the liberal bourgeoisie, etc. So he rejects the People's Front. He sees it as a template, in the same way as, for example, in Croatia... In the Conference Resolution we established that both the middle strata and the liberal bourgeoisie enter the national front, all with the exception of spies and imperialist agents. A group of the liberal bourgeoisie themselves sought to make contact with us. But, even though the peasants are the basic mass on the national front, there is something else: language, culture, etc., which the whole nation (and the liberal bourgeoisie) is looking for..."⁹²

Recently a monthly newsletter was published in Macedonia. Four issued have already been released. The first two issues were printed in Serbian and Macedonian, and the other two exclusively in Macedonian. On top of the newsletters, there was also an issue of "Iskra", printed exclusively in the Macedonian language. In addition to the newsletters there are leaflets, bulletins and slogans pasted on the walls, written in the Macedonian language. It is expected that all these will have great influence on the Macedonian people who will be uplifted in the struggle for national and social liberation, and thus the Provincial Committee will gain great reputation as a leader in the struggle for liberation.

This is what was said in the CPY evaluation documents from the Fifth Regional Conference about the CPM's achievements for the time since the Provincial Committee was elected in the beginning of 1940: "At the conference in Macedonia, it was shown that as soon as the CPY Central Committee began to seriously assist the Party Organizations in that province, they became organizationally stronger in a very short period of time. The CPY also helped them remove some of the old opportunistic and anti-party elements that hampered their progress. After the Regional Committee (Pokrajinski Komitet) and the Party Organizations were created in various parts of Macedonia, the terribly exploited Macedonian workers and peasants were able to revive the struggle. Having the Provincial Conference in Macedonia, then the Macedonian Delegation participating at the CPY 5th Conference, undoubtedly was of great importance to further develop the Party Organization in this

⁹² Ibid., pp. 355-359.

province, where national oppression and cruelty knew no bounds.”⁹³

In November 1940, the CPM Central Committee issued a leaflet to the Macedonian people (Brajkja) which explained what the two-year imperialist war (the war between Greece and Italy) brought to Macedonia, which also affected the entire Balkan Peninsula. This is what in part was said: “Macedonia under Greece has been turned to ashes by Italian bombs. Bitola was also bombed by Italian planes...” The leaflet continued: “In these critical moments the Great Serbians and Great Bulgarians are arguing about to whom Macedonia belongs and who should govern it. This dispute started because of what P. Dumanov said during the National Assembly (Bulgarian assembly held on November 21, 1940). There he said that Macedonia should shine like a jewel in the crown of Tsar Boris. The Serbian chauvinists and enslavers answered him that Macedonia will shine like a diamond in the crown of the Yugoslav king... The entire Great Serbian press, together with the Skopje newspaper “Glas Yuga” whose editors are all Macedonian traitors and spies, shouted: “We are not giving Macedonia to Bulgaria, Macedonia will remain Serbian...” etc.

The first thing that stood out in this dispute between the Bulgarian and Serbian chauvinists is the Serbian admission that Macedonia exists. Until now, they have always yelling and screaming that there is no Macedonia, only “Southern Serbia”, and now they have admitted that Macedonia does exist not only in Greece and Bulgaria, but also in Yugoslavia. But the crux of their dispute was not Macedonia’s existence but who should rule it and who should reap the benefits from its occupation.”

Further down the leaflet addressing the Macedonian people, the CPM Provincial Committee said: “The gentlemen from Belgrade and Sofia are arguing about Macedonia without asking what the Macedonian people want. The same people who enslaved

⁹³ Tito’s collected works book 6, p. 124. Note: The clash between Metodija Shatorov and Milovan Gjjilas appeared and expressed itself only in relation to the Macedonian national question. (How to set and treat the paths to be followed in regards to settling the Macedonian national question.)

Macedonia have the nerve to say that the Macedonian people were always Serbian... or Bulgarian... and that Macedonians have no history, language, etc. Those who enslaved you are lying to you! In fact Macedonians are not Serbians or Bulgarians, but only Macedonians... You have your own language, your own culture, your own traditions, songs, etc. You have a glorious past and history. Kiril and Metodi were neither Serbs nor Bulgarians, but Macedonians... Slavic speaking Macedonians, who brought Macedonian literacy and culture to all the Slav speakers... In the more modern sense, Macedonia is rich with struggles for national freedom with Ilinden being the most famous point in the Macedonian struggle for freedom and equality.”

Further down the leaflet the Provincial Committee clear said. “Macedonia’s enslavers will do everything they can to prove that (in the occupied parts) the Macedonians are free. But the truth is there is no freedom in Macedonia, only torment and suffering. People are arrested beaten by the gendarmes and exploited like colonists... There is only political slavery and injustice... If there was a war between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria the Macedonian people in both countries will suffer the most... In such a war, Macedonia will only change one master for another... Macedonia’s salvation is in its struggle for freedom together with all the other oppressed nations in Yugoslavia.” The leaflet ended with the slogan: “Long live the people’s government in Yugoslavia, which will bring equality and freedom to all in Macedonia! Long live the free Macedonian Republic”.⁹⁴

Note that the words “... free Macedonian Republic” were mentioned for the first time. In previous calls and addresses the Provincial Committee always used the slogan “Long live free Macedonia.”

2. Balkan war provocateurs (Bulgarian, Serbian and Croatian reactions regarding Macedonia)

In November 1940, the Provincial Committee was once again obliged to draft another leaflet under the title “Balkan War Provocateurs” to again address the Macedonian people about which

⁹⁴ Documents and Materials, pp. 361-363.

Tito wrote in early December 1940. The subject covered the appetites of the Serbian and Bulgarian monarchies towards Macedonia. In part the leaflet said: “Like the dictators of Versailles and other European nations who never asked the people if they were willing to accept the yoke of their masters and oppressors (the people in Versailles never accepted the yoke. It was imposed on them by force), the Macedonian people too were never asked and instead were handed over to the mercy of the cruelest national oppression.

And as the war between Italy and Greece continued, appetites for fascism grow and so did the fascist desire to enslave people. And as the fascists wanted to divide the world, Bulgarian and Serbian monarchy appetites also grow. They wanted Macedonia to be their ornament.” Further down the same leaflet it was said: “Then we will have to yell even louder at those war instigators to tell them that Macedonia is neither Serbian nor Bulgarian. The freedom loving oppressed Macedonian people, under years of Serbian national hegemony, have been exposed to the cruelest terror, hunger, denationalization and exploitation. Our blood-soaked country Macedonia is not here to serve as an ornament to someone’s royal crown, nor to be the dowry of the Serbian or Bulgarian bourgeoisie, but to be freed from all national oppression. The Macedonian people are fighting for their national liberation and in that struggle so far they have made many bloody sacrifices. No reaction can stifle the Macedonian people’s will to fight for freedom... nor the will of any other oppressed peoples... They cannot destroy their right to self-determination, the right to manage their own destiny.”⁹⁵

3. Call to the “Tobacco Producers in Macedonia”, made at the end of 1940, when tobacco trading began

Knowing the tobacco producer’s situation and their exploitation by the Great Serbian Monarchy through the tobacco monopoly, the Provincial Committee called on the tobacco producers to organize and fight for higher prices, and thus against the great exploitation. In the beginning, the call described the round-the-clock work to produce the tobacco. This is in part what it said: “The suffering of

⁹⁵ Tito’s collected works, book 6, pp. 108-111.

the tobacco workers is great. Nine months of intensive day after day under the hot sun, wind, rain and cold the children of the Macedonian people work to plant, dig, peel, string and fold the yellow leaf into tobacco. A large part of the Macedonian population goes to sleep and wakes up with the word “tobacco” coming out of their mouths. They expect to make a living from tobacco... The expect joy from it... But that does not happen!”

Here is what the call said about the tobacco producer’s situation: “Isn’t it a shame to cultivate tobacco for 20-30 dinars and to sell it for 300-400 dinars? Isn’t it robbery to cultivate the tobacco for practically nothing, for less than an old dinar, and sell it abroad for a high price?” Tobacco farmers were urged to fight to appoint their own representatives at the commissions for the purchase of tobacco, and not to allow self-appointed representatives to set prices. This is what the call said about that: “Self-appointed representatives are a joke for the tobacco producers.”

This is what the call said about the Macedonian villagers who produce tobacco: “The Macedonian villagers who cultivate and produce tobacco are being tormented and abused by their Belgrade masters. The Great Serbian nobles in Belgrade on the other hand, who profit from the pain and sweat of the Macedonian villagers, build palaces and receive large salaries and pensions...”

The Provincial Committee, therefore, called on the tobacco producers to organize resistance as follows: “It is time to resist this plundering and exploitation organized by Belgrade. It is time to resist and start a decisive fight against these plunderers who are condemning you, your wives and children to starve to death. The means the fight is in your hands. Raise your heads up and demand that good money be paid for good tobacco.... Unite and create tobacco associations, boards, committees and delegations. Organize meetings and demonstrations against the low tobacco prices. Ask for an average of 50 dinars per kilo of tobacco...”

These are the slogans used in this call: “Down with the Belgrade imperialists and plunderers! Down with the Monopoly! Take over the tobacco promotion boards and committees! Demand 60 dinars average price for tobacco! Organize meetings and demonstrations!

Choose your own representatives to set prices and monitor the weighing scales! LONG LIVE THE FREE MACEDONIAN REPUBLIC!”⁹⁶

The Provincial Committee calls had a great response with visible results from the tobacco producers who immediately began to organize strikes as can be seen from the call made to the Skopje workers and tobacco producers, in which in part it was said: “Friends, workers and tobacco producers, the Prilep tobacco producers could no longer endure the Great Serbian tyranny and exploitation so they went on strike. They will not take their tobacco to the monopoly until the price of tobacco is raised, and until their wishes are met. The tobacco producers in Prilep are united in their actions. Only three Serbian chauvinist scoundrels took their tobacco to the monopoly.

The action taken by the Prilep tobacco producers was fair! They are now fighting for their rights, for a higher tobacco price, for bread to take to their wives and children, who struggled all year long to collect and process the tobacco leaves.

The people of Prilep have thrown off the yoke you don’t need to carry it. Their struggle is your struggle. This is a fight for your survival and theirs. Resist! Express solidarity with the Prilep tobacco producers, they are your brothers...”⁹⁷

The Provincial Committee managed to mobilize a large part of the Macedonian population with these calls because growing tobacco was one of the main economic activities for people who made their living from tobacco. But, because of the ongoing exploitation, through low prices, the population was brought into great poverty and deprivation.

At the beginning of January 1941, the Provincial Committee issued a call to the working class in Macedonia on the occasion of the banning of class-based trade unions. On January 2, the government passed a law to ban all these organizations. Among other things, this is what was said in the call: “In these difficult times, instead of

⁹⁶ Documents and materials, pp. 369-370.

⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 366-367.

giving workers the freedom to organize, instead of giving them food and fuel, to ensure the people have peace, those bloodthirsty murderers in the government from the 14 December and 8 September generation, stood in the defense of capitalist interests... They banned the trade unions under conditions when there is huge corruption and low wages, when there are no basic food items in the market place such as bread, fat, fuel, etc.

The banning of the class based unions is a big blow to our working class in Macedonia. The Macedonian worker is paid the lowest wage, is the most exploited, and the most disadvantaged. The workers know that life will get worst and more miserable without their unions..." The Provincial Committee assessed the situation and encouraged the workers to organize a struggle for their class rights. Among other things, this is what was said: "Workers, tighten your ranks firmly and in solidarity and as before stand as one in defense of your class trade unions. Gather together in assemblies and protest... Demand your rights!"⁹⁸

In January 1941, the Provincial Committee published a call under the title "Macedonian Workers, Peasants and Citizens". This call was directed against the Ivanitsa-Megjurchje concentration camp, to which more than 600 Macedonian citizens were sent, accused of not being 'good Serbians'. Two other camps were also opened in Serbia to house communists. In its call to the general population, among other things, the Provincial Committee said: "A new wave of reaction, of injustice and violence has engulfed Macedonia. New arrests and torture is being carried out and new concentration camps are being built to jail the good sons of Macedonia.

The Serbian authorities in Macedonia have been exploiting, robbing, pillaging and plundering the Macedonian people for more than 20 years, but since this Second Imperialist War (WWII) has taken hold, the exploitation of labour and goods, especially of tobacco, is visible to everyone. The blind can see, the deaf can hear and the children understand that the Macedonian tobacco producers, the Macedonian peasants, are being robbed in broad daylight. The outlaws, Ottomans and Albanians of the past were better behaved than the outlaws who

⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 370-376.

came from Serbia and settled in Macedonia. This year the tobacco was taken from the producers who were paid the same price as nettles in spring time. The whole of Macedonia is wailing and crying, because the effort, because the bread has been taken from the children's mouths. After that, fathers, sons and children of Macedonian families were arrested and taken to concentration camps in Serbia and forced to work on the roads and tunnels... At the opening of the Skopje radio station Tsrvetkovich said: 'Justice for everyone and everything.' But instead NOT JUSTICE, BUT BARE VIOLENCE, ARRESTS, TERROR AND CONCENTRATION CAMPS ARE GIVEN TO THE MACEDONIANS...!

Dear Macedonians!

The government of Serbian magnates, reactionaries and exploiters is hanging around your neck. It will not allow you to work freely, to breathe freely, to speak freely in your native language... It sends you to concentration camps... beats you and persecutes you. You can save yourself from all this but only if you unite and together lead a general, popular struggle for freedom and democracy in alliance with the democratic parties and elements in Serbia, as well as with the other oppressed peoples in Yugoslavia, for a decisive struggle for a democratic government, that will join the foreign policy of the great Soviet Socialist Union.

Workers and Macedonian communists!

You, who are the most fiercely exploited and persecuted, you who are at the forefront of the fight against terror and violence - for national freedom, equality and socialism - tighten your ranks and fight even more decisively for a truly united Macedonian democratic front, for peace, freedom, for people's justice and for a people's democratic government in Yugoslavia".⁹⁹

With these slogans and pledges made to the people, the CPM Provincial Committee greatly contributed to the mobilization of the Macedonian population in their fight against the Serbian monarchy,

⁹⁹ Ibid., pp. 377-379.

and for their national liberation. The Provincial Committee also closely followed the political and economic conditions, as well as the ongoing war. It reacted in times of need to inform the population of what was going on and to organize events, direct actions and mobilize people in the struggle to achieve their goals.

4. Communist Party of Macedonia Provincial Committee Expanded Plenum Resolution

After reading the reports given by the delegates at the CPY 5th Regional Conference, the CPM Provincial Committee Extended Plenum decided to unanimously accept all recommendations made during the 5th conference. This included political tactics, as well as measures taken in terms of forcing mass work, and influence and expansion among the broad masses in Macedonia. It was underlined that the successes the Party experienced in the last year or so created an opportunity to hold the 5th National Conference, which would be of colossal significance for the development of the Party. Held in January 1941, the Plenum set out to create a Macedonian democratic front which would include all anti-imperialist groups and elements. The Macedonian democratic front would then join the Yugoslav general democratic front on the basis of mutually supporting each other and develop friendly relations with the USSR. In addition the Plenum set out a special task for the CPM to look for organizational solutions to consolidate the Party, as well as clean out any opportunistic or other elements that might exist within its Party ranks.

The Plenum also underlined that “the Communist Party of Macedonia has not, even for a moment, given up on its ultimate goal: full liberation and equality of Macedonia, even to the point of secession into an independent Macedonian state.”¹⁰⁰

The Plenum had a concrete and clear view of what it wanted to do and was determined to solve the Macedonian national question. With their actions, the Provincial Committee and the Plenum demonstrated their commitment to supporting the Macedonian people’s Macedonian national identity and interests, which were

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 381-382.

consistent with the historical ideals of organizing the Macedonians to struggle for an independent Macedonian nation, and a united and independent Macedonian state as it existed for centuries until 1912.

A call “TO THE WORKING PEOPLE AND TO THE ENTIRE OPEN COMMUNITY” made in February 1941, was directed against the Tsvetkovich-Machek government and its measures, which wanted to break the working class struggle and suffocate the people who were fighting for a better life. This is what, in part, the call said: “By not choosing a means in this fight and in order to ensure the unimpeded enrichment of the war speculators as well as to please their masters in Berlin and London, the fifth column government has abandoned its own people in hunger and corruption, and is treading more and more in blood.”

Further down, the call said: “Today the people’s fighters are being ambushed and killed in the streets and are being beaten while serving in judicial prisons. And in police prisons, the killings are a regular occurrence... But neither being arrested, beaten, chased, nor having trade unions banned, will stifle the people’s struggle. The tenacity and faith of those who are fighting for a better life for their people can not be killed... And the generals-the fifth columnists who carry out the orders of their capitalist masters have now decided to open more military concentration camps.

Working people, young working people!

Don’t let your best fighters be imprisoned by the barbed wire of the concentration camps. Organize and fight against the labour camps, raise a strong force and fight against terror and the reactionaries. By fighting against them you are fighting for a better life. Respond, in a worthy manner, to the working class fighting tradition by organizing protests against this unheard-of attack on your lives, and on the lives of your families...” This is what, in part, the call said addressing the working peasants and peasant women: “Don’t let them take the lives of your best people... your most conscientious comrades and sons”. This is what the call said to the soldiers, non-commissioned officers and officers: “You must not accept the role of being bloody servants to even bloodier masters. You must not become gendarmes and policemen...” This is what, in part, the call said addressing the

general public: “We call on all of you to join the struggle against the use of war concentration camps. Concentration camps are used when a country prepares for war or for its capitulation. Raise your voices clearly and openly in protest against this atrocity...”¹⁰¹

Activities carried out by the CPM Central Committee greatly contributed to the affirmation of the Macedonian national individuality, within the ranks of the Communist Party, that is, among the leadership that for many years didn't take a clear position on the Macedonian national question, and this can be seen from the September 1939 report, written by Tito to the Communist International which, in part, said: “It is especially important to raise the Macedonian and Montenegrin Question now, where Italian fascism has firmly established itself and where, with the help of its agents, propaganda is being carried out.” The urgency of solving the Macedonian and Montenegrin national question was so important that Yugoslavia was being immediately threatened by the danger of Italian fascism, especially after Albania was occupied (in April 1939).”¹⁰²

In an the article entitled “Against the expansion of the war in the Balkans - for the freedom and equality of the Macedonian people”, published at the beginning of January 1941, Tito made a clear statement in which, in part, he said: “Macedonians are neither Serbians, nor Bulgarians, nor Greeks: they are Macedonians. And as a separate nation, they have the right to self-determination up to the point of secession; they have the right to their freedom and independence like the other peoples of the Balkans... for their liberation and unification...”¹⁰³

Tito's views completely coincided with the views of the CPM Central Committee expressed in its documents published in 1940.

The Macedonian revolutionary movement in 1940 caused great concern for the Serbian monarchy, which can be seen from reports written by certain state authorities. This, in part, is what was said in a summary report written by the III District Army Headquarters on

¹⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 382-384.

¹⁰² Tito's collected works, book 5, pp. 10 and 269.

¹⁰³ Ibid., book 6, p. 167.

June 28, 1940, about the situation in the Vardar and Bregalnitsa territory divisional areas: “With the support of other factions in Macedonia, the Macedonian national consciousness is being thoughtfully awakened and spread. The ultimate goal is clear... The lists that I am attaching to this report are of those who appeared as state opponents, either as separatists or as communists... I am obliged to say here that it would also be necessary to move the majority of the natives (term for Macedonians) in these parts from the ranks of the army (officers, non-commissioned officers)...”

Proposals and measures: “Don’t get angry with the measures against communism. It is wrong to believe that we don’t have communism, as it is often heard by serious people, and the most important thing is that they (communists) are the biggest enemies of the state”.¹⁰⁴

LETTER

From “Colonel and former Member of Parliament” to Dragisha Tsvekovich, President of the Yugoslav Council of Ministers, dated June 8, 1940. Personal. Strictly confidential.

It begins: “As a long-standing People’s Deputy of our South, as an officer who participated in all the military conflicts, through which we dearly paid with blood, we came to the precious benefit of Southern Serbia, and finally as a descendant of the forefathers of our Grandfather... I will clarify the situation there today, so that as an individual I can help save the Serbian South.

The spirit of separatism with the idea of creating a free Macedonia has penetrated to such an extent that it can be said without exaggeration that it is at its peak, and that only one spark would be enough for that spirit to come to the fore. This is especially true for the youth, who we can freely say - they are for us completely lost...”¹⁰⁵

This letter mentions specific activities carried out by Macedonians who publicly came out in favour of creating a free Macedonian

¹⁰⁴ Documents on the Macedonian people’s struggle for independence and for a national state, volume II, pp. 31-33. (Hereinafter referred to as Documents.)

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 167-168.

state. In fact the letter cites Metodija Andonov-Chento's speech which he gave at the plenary session of the Chamber of Commerce, which was attended by about 60 advisors. And about Professor Epaminonda Jovanovich, it was said openly and without obstacles that he was spreading propaganda in favour of a free Macedonia. This was done on May 19 of this year at a meeting held in Topana on the outskirts of Skopje.

These documents, which are voicing Greater Serbian concerns, in fact highlight the activities carried out by the Macedonian revolutionary movement in 1940 (through strikes, demonstrations, celebrating the Krushevo Republic, as well as public appearances by certain persons) in favour of creating a free Macedonia.

Serbian monarchy concerns (about the situation in Macedonia) were spelled out in a letter written by the Great Serbian youth and sent to Novakovich, governor of the National Bank in Belgrade, in July 1940, while he was on vacation in Ohrid. Among other things the letter said: "A heavy duty has fallen upon you! The Serbian youth, inspired by the heroism of their great leaders, decided to respond to the secret solution of our country by the revolutionary Macedonian youth with revenge. We all know that the Macedonians hate us with all their hearts and want to unite with the Bulgarians. They are all wrong. Southern Serbia is our homeland, our---. That is the greatness of our glory... We will fight to the last drop of our blood. At our last secret meeting, we decided to proceed with... The most visible must disappear from the main towns of South Serbia." ¹⁰⁶

Certain specific persons were ordered in this letter to assassinate prominent Macedonians by poisoning them. These prominent Macedonians were considered dangerous by the Serbian monarchy. Similarly certain persons from Ohrid were also named to be liquidated the same way.

This is what the CPM Central Committee wrote in its Bulletin on July 20, 1949, under the title "MACEDONIANS ON STRIKE", responding to the letter: "The Macedonian people have also fought against the Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek rulers in Macedonia. Let's

¹⁰⁶ Communist Party of Macedonia Central Committee Bulletin, June 20, 1940.

put aside what happened centuries ago. The Great Serbian youth themselves now admit that the Macedonians don't want to be under Serbian slavery and are waiting for their moment to free themselves. This is the strongest evidence that Macedonians are not Serbians and will remain only Macedonians. They will remain free Macedonians, not oppressed and not exploited by anyone... that's what the Macedonian struggle is about.

The Macedonians are not to blame for the blood shed by the Great Serbians. No one forced them. No one invited the Greater Serbians to come to Macedonia. For that reason they should leave so that Macedonia can be clean of Serbian chauvinists.

Macedonians! Expose the Great Serbian hellish plans! Put prominent Macedonians on alert! Fight back!"¹⁰⁷

By what was said in this Bulletin it was clear what position the Provincial Committee had taken on the Macedonian Question, as can also be seen from the following statement: "The joint struggle offered by Albanians, Turks and Macedonians against all kinds of oppression (by any oppressor) was strengthened, regardless of who perpetrated it, whether it was perpetrated by Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece or Italy. - This was no small credit to our Party."¹⁰⁸

In September 1940, the Provincial Committee published an article entitled "THE SITUATION AND THE NEW DANGER IN MACEDONIA". Considering its importance I will quote a large part of it here without commenting. This is what was said: "There is great danger, especially for the Macedonians, as there is for the other peoples in Yugoslavia, of becoming German and Italian slaves but under a Bulgarian cover. Bulgaria is Hitler and Mussolini's indulgent child which has aspirations for Macedonia and is preparing to annex it with German and Italian help. The question is what will the Macedonians gain from the change of masters, from one imperialist to another, who are already suffocating it and will suffocate it tomorrow. With the Macedonians being passed to Tsar Boris will the situation in Macedonia change significantly? It will not!

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., No. 1, pp. 21-23.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 3.

Instead of Serbian gendarmes, there will be Bulgarian ones, instead of Serbian tax collectors, there will be Bulgarian ones, etc. The Macedonians will be persecuted by the Bulgarian authorities, just as they are being persecuted today by the Serbian imperialists. The Bulgarian gendarmes know no less how to curse “your fu**ing Macedonian mother!”

If you don't believe Bulgarian rule represents a new slavery then have a good look at the part of Macedonia that is under Bulgarian rule – Petrichko. Let that serve as an example... For the last 28 years Petrichko has been in Bulgarian hands. That part of Macedonia has not progressed in any direction. The Macedonians in Petrichko are treated the same as the Macedonians under the Serbian colony. The violence is much greater there and let us not speak about rights and freedoms.... Since the war started about 3 thousand of the best and most faithful sons of the Macedonian people have been killed, just because they didn't want to be enslaved, they didn't want to be exploited colonially, and because they wanted freedom and equality.

Let it be clearly understood that only that nation which frees itself can be the bearer of freedom...”¹⁰⁹

As was shown above, the Provincial Committee called on the Macedonian people to stand up and fight for their own freedom and not wait for someone else to fight for them. It called on them to fight against the Serbian and Bulgarian monarchy, that is, to fight against Bulgarian and Serbian colonial slavery, and from that it was understood that they were also expected to fight against Greek colonial slavery.

5. Peoples of Yugoslavia! CPY Central Committee Proclamation on the occasion of the 1941 April War

Most of the attention in this document was devoted to the Croatian people, even though it was aimed at all the people in Yugoslavia. In part, this is what it said: “Know, Croatian people, that history will

¹⁰⁹ CPM Central Committee Bulletin, September 1940, No. 3, pp. 1-3.

condemn with contempt those who built your divine independence with Jewish coins and enslaved their blood brothers - Serbian, Slovenian and other nations". The Macedonian people were not mentioned. Further down, after a long explanation regarding the Croatian people's situation, it said: "Peoples of Yugoslavia - of Serbia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Vojvodina! You, who fight and die in the struggle for your independence, know that that fight will be crowned with success, even if you succumb to fighting against a superior enemy." ¹¹⁰

This is what Georgi Dimitrov said to Josip Broz Tito in a telegram dated March 22, 1941: "We recommend that a decisive stand be taken against capitulating to Germany. Support the movement for international resistance against a military invasion. Seek friendship with the Soviet Union.

There is no need now for a general Balkan declaration and there is no need to highlight the Macedonian question in particular. There is no need to highlight the slogan to fight against national oppression and for the liberation of nationally oppressed peoples." ¹¹¹

This is what was said in a telegram sent by Dimitrov to Tito on March 22, 1941, only five days later: "We expressly advise you to limit yourself to an intensive and skillful explanation to the masses of the position you have taken at this stage about giving up on street demonstrations and in every way avoiding armed clashes between the masses and the authorities... Attention was directed to the explanation of our principles and slogans, of our communist policy; of strengthening the Party, of gathering and organizing the forces of the working class. Don't rush to go out. Do not expose the people to attacks and do not prematurely throw the vanguard of the people into the fire... The moment for a decisive clash with the enemy has not yet arrived." ¹¹²

The opinions expressed here caused misunderstanding between the CPM Provincial Committee and the CPY Central Committee regarding the defense of the existing Yugoslav borders.

¹¹⁰ Tito's collected works, book 6, pp. 243-245.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 277.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 278.

In the first half of March 1941, the CPY Central Committee issued a leaflet under the title “AGAINST CAPITULATION - A PACT FOR MUTUAL AID WITH THE SOVIET UNION”, in which, among other things, it said: “Workers, villagers, citizens, soldiers, non-commissioned officers and officers of Yugoslavia! Stand against the imperialist bandits from the two warring camps, both the English and the German-Italian, who transferred their bloody war dance to the Balkans.” Explaining the situation and the position of the peoples, the leaflet said: “Today, all the people should raise their voices louder than ever in protest against every attempt to capitulate to the demands of the German-Italian imperialists, as well as against every attempt by British imperialism to harness the willingness of the Yugoslav peoples to defend their freedom and independence. There are only two possibilities before us all today: either the Yugoslav people and working masses succeed in the twelfth hour in winning a mutual aid pact with the Soviet Union and thereby saving their independence and peace; or the Tsvetkovich-Machek regime will lead the Yugoslav peoples on the path of war”¹¹³ The leaflet called on the organizations to organize protest meetings and rallies in order to explain to the people that everything in Yugoslavia, the land, the people, is being torn apart and that our separation will only benefit the imperialist military exploiters and conquerors. The people should remain united and continue to fight for their full freedom and equality and for the rights of the oppressed peoples and national minorities in Yugoslavia.

The people should fight against the accession of Yugoslavia to the Triple Pact or to the British imperialist bloc and for an immediate conclusion of a mutual aid pact between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. It was understood that this leaflet was said to have been written at the beginning of March, and to have been published and distributed in the middle of the same month. But considering Dimitrov’s telegram to Tito, sent on March 22, 1941, it seems that the leaflet was written after the telegram was received.

On March 30, 1941, the CPY Central Committee issued a leaflet entitled “PEOPLE OF YUGOSLAVIA” in which it said: “These

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 233.

days we witnessed unheard of betrayals against the Yugoslav people by the previous Tsvetkovich-Machek government... which approached the Triple Axis Pact. But, because of the people's strong revolt led by the CPY, that treacherous government together with Pavle Karagjorgjevich was overthrown and replaced by the new Dushan Simich government from which the people expect their demands to be fulfilled, that is, to gain their freedom, independence and survival... and to be saved from the horrors of war. The people want peace, bread and freedom." The leaflet went on to say: "There has been a change in the government, but there is still no clear change in its current internal and external policies. The new government has not yet made a statement about how it will behave towards the Soviet Union, and whether it will terminate the treacherous and capitulating agreement on accession to the Triple Pact which shamed and humiliated our peoples." In the end, the leaflet concluded that: "We do not want an imperialist war. We do not want to be a weapon in the hands of the English imperialists, just as we do not want to be slaves to the German imperialist conquerors and bloodsuckers who have enslaved numerous peoples! We want a peaceful, free and dignified life which we can ensure at this moment only if we rely on the Soviet Union. We want the Yugoslav people to have democratic and national rights and freedoms."¹¹⁴

A larger space in this leaflet was devoted to the problems the Croatian workers, villagers and citizens were facing in general. There was nothing special mentioned about the other nations in Yugoslavia. The Macedonian nation was not mentioned at all. There was talk in the leaflet about the overthrow of the previous government and Pavle Karagjorgjevich, but nothing was said about the new government that came to power and placed Petar Karagjorgjevich on the throne, who at that time was an Anglophile who declared himself ruler. Could such a government, headed by a monarch, be expected to satisfy the interests of the people? In this regard, a question that comes to mind is who will defend the country in the absence of a people's government? Will the country be defended by a monarchial government that stands on the side of English imperialism? In the telegram that Dimitrov sent to Tito on March 29, 1941, it said: "We expressly advise you to limit yourself

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 239.

to an intensive and skillful explanation to the masses of the position you have taken at this stage about giving up on street demonstrations and in every way avoiding armed clashes between the masses and the authorities. Don't rush to go out. Don't expose the people to attacks and do not prematurely throw the vanguard of the people into the fire... The moment for a decisive clash with the enemy has not yet arrived..."¹¹⁵

6. Letter from Metodija Shatorov to "Stojan" dated May 1941

In this letter, Shatorov, then CPM Central Committee Secretary, expressed his evaluation and views on the situation after Yugoslavia was occupied by fascist Germany and Italy. The letter in part read: "In the last weeks, two big imperialist countries: Germany and Italy attacked two Balkan countries (Yugoslavia and Greece) and with millions of blows they defeated their armies and occupied them." Expressing his views on the reasons for the rapid disintegration of the Yugoslav army and on the situation in Macedonia, he said: "As a result of the war, the German, Italian and Bulgarian armies have occupied our Macedonia. This fact, however, doesn't interest us because as Macedonians we have fought for national and political liberation for half a century. We have fought as Macedonians, following our leaders and founders of the Macedonian internal organization headed by Gotse Delchev, Jane Sandanski, Gjorche Petrov, Pere Toshev and Dimo Hadzhi Dimov." He continued: "It is clear as day that the Macedonians aren't fighting only to have their own priests and teachers... Macedonians are fighting for their national and political freedom. Some Macedonian-supremacists like to say that the Macedonian people's struggle was over when Macedonia was occupied by the German, Italian and Bulgarian armies. Is this true? It cannot be, because Macedonia was not free... it had no national or political freedom before the occupation. Today, not only Macedonia, but the entire Balkan Peninsula (without Turkish Thrace) is occupied by the German and Italian armies along with the attached Bulgarian armies..." Speaking about the Bulgarian occupiers who presented themselves as liberators, Shatorov said: "Every honest Macedonian might rightly ask: What kind of freedom

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 278.

is this when, as soon as the people of Shumadin are replaced by Bulgarians the Macedonians are placed under quarantine...” Analyzing the situation in Macedonia after the occupation and looking for an exit strategy that would also solve the Macedonian question, Shatorov in his letter said: “The question is what to do. There is only one answer: to unite all Macedonians and other nationalities in Macedonia to fight for their general right to freedom and equality, but not splitting the Macedonian land and the Macedonian people. The Macedonian people should fight together with the peoples of the Balkan Peninsula for their freedom and equality. That includes the Bulgarians, Croatians, Serbians, Greeks and Montenegrins because today their fate is the same as ours... The Balkan peoples lost their freedom and independence today and are all occupied by foreign armies, that’s why the struggle for freedom should be a general one... Macedonians tell me that they are not satisfied with the new found “freedom”. They are right because in Macedonia only the administrators have changed, not the system... Everything that is ours is treated as if it belongs to the Bulgarians.”
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7. Provincial Committee Proclamation on the attack on the USSR

Among other things, the CPM Provincial Committee Proclamation on the occasion of the June 22, 1941 attack on the Soviet Union, entitled “MACEDONIAN PEOPLE, ON STRIKE!” said: “The fascist imperialist powers Germany and Italy have declared war and have attacked the great Soviet Socialist Republics...” Evaluating the situation at the beginning of this war, as well as the situation in the Balkans at that time, especially regarding the situation in Macedonia, the proclamation said: “Workers, guilds and intelligentsia... You already know how high the stakes are because you know that the Nazi Germans and their fascist allies, the Bulgarians, didn’t come here to bring Macedonia freedom but to rob it and enslave it again. All the Macedonian treasures, all the Macedonian labour that was collected by the Serbian giants in the monopolies, the warehouses and barns were looted and taken to Germany... On top of all that, the Macedonian people are forbidden

¹¹⁶ Sources, vol. I, book 1, pp. 13-18.

from calling themselves Macedonian, and the Macedonian culture and the entire 50 -year-long Macedonian struggle for freedom and equality, according to the Bulgarians, is now not Macedonian but Bulgarian. This is what our so-called “Bulgarian liberators” have done to us. Bulgarian violence against the Macedonian people is not only increasing but spreading... There are people who are beaten for no reason just because they call themselves Macedonians... They are preparing to increase the violence and arrests in Macedonia...”

The Proclamation also called on the Macedonian villagers as follows: “How could you feel economically, nationally, or politically free when you were exploited by the Great Serbians, when your tobacco, poppies, rice and grain were taken from you at the lowest price, when your land was taken from you and given to the Chetniks, officers and national heroes who oppressed you... Your land that was formerly taken from you by the occupiers and colonists is now being taken by the Bulgarian state. In those same lands the Bulgarian government is preparing to forcefully resettle peasants from northern Bulgaria, so that it can melt the Macedonians. The Bulgarians are following in the footsteps of the Serbians... Terrible exploitation and robbery await you. Everything will be taken to Germany and Bulgaria. The Macedonian people will starve because they will have nothing to eat, not even peppers or garlic.”

The Proclamation, under the subtitle “MACEDONIANS, TURKS, ALBANIANS AND OTHERS” called on the people in general as follows: “In these decisive hours for all humanity, when the fate of nations is decided for eternity - it is the duty of the Macedonian people, together with other nations, to show their solidarity, their sympathies towards the great Soviet people, because that is where the brotherhood and equality of the peoples was built, for brotherhood, equality and freedom our Macedonian people gave thousands of bloody sacrifices... The struggle of the USSR against Hitler is also your fight, for freedom, for justice and equality against the fascist dictatorships, against imperialism and colonial slavery... Hitler must be beaten! Not only the USSR, but also all the oppressed peoples of Europe must be saved from this scourge. It is time for all the small nations, including the Macedonians, to free themselves from the German and Italian yoke. The Bulgarian fascists who are

preparing to fight against the USSR together with Hitler must also be beaten.”¹¹⁷

After fascist Germany attacked the USSR, the CPY Central Committee also published a proclamation. A comparison between the two proclamations is needed here because they later caused certain disagreements (and accusations) which will be discussed in this book.

In part, the CPY Central Committee proclamation to the “WORKERS, PEASANTS AND CITIZENS OF YUGOSLAVIA!” said: “In the early morning of June 22, rampant German fascist bandits attacked the great and peaceful state of workers and peasants, the Soviet Union... Don’t let the precious blood of the heroic Soviet peoples be shed without your participation. Your slogans must be: no working man or woman must go to fascist Germany, to strengthen the forces of the fascist thugs with their labour. Not a cannon, not a gun, not a shell, not even a grain, etc., must go to the fascist criminals with your aid.” Under the subtitle “SERBIANS, SLOVENES, MONTENEGRINS, MACEDONIANS AND ALL OTHER TESTED PEOPLES OF YUGOSLAVIA!” the Proclamation said: “You who groan under the boot of the occupier, all of you who love freedom and independence, who hate fascist slavery, know that the hour has arrived for your imminent liberation from the fascist conqueror... The struggle in the Soviet Union is also your struggle; those people are fighting against your enemy under whose yoke you groan... Communists of Yugoslavia! Do not hesitate for a moment, but immediately prepare for that hard fight. Adapt your organizations now for that final battle. Do everything you can to provide for our precious people who we need today in that struggle more than ever... Stand at the head of the workers and the nationally oppressed masses and lead them in the struggle against the fascist oppressors of our peoples... All forward in the last and decisive battle for the freedom and happiness of humanity.”¹¹⁸

The proclamation, published by the CPM Provincial Committee released on June 22, 1941, when the USSR was attacked by Germany, according to our information, was an independent act of

¹¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 19-22.

¹¹⁸ Tito’s collected works, book 7, pp. 55-59.

the Provincial Committee, i.e. the Provincial Committee had not yet received the proclamation issued by the CPY Central Committee, but received it later. As can be seen from our data on June 23, 1941, Lazar Kolishevski was sent to Belgrade by the CPM Central Committee to submit a report to explain the situation in the Provincial Committee. At the end of June Tito held a meeting with members of the Politburo, which must have been after June 27 because on this day there was a Politburo session during which this question wasn't asked. We don't know if there was a meeting at the end of June because no minutes have been published so far, so we don't know who attended it and what was discussed. What we do know is that Kolishevski was sent back to Macedonia to implement the CPY Central Committee decision and to deliver the Central Committee's Proclamation published on the occasion of the German attack on the USSR. From this it can be concluded that the Provincial Committee didn't know about the CPY Central Committee's proclamation.¹¹⁹

The CPY Central Committee's June 22, 1941 Proclamation didn't call for an armed uprising. It called on the people only to prepare for one. The CPM Provincial Committee did the same in its Proclamation. This was confirmed by Tito's report to the Executive Committee of the Communist International at the end of June 1941, which reported on the proclamation adopted on the occasion of the attack on the USSR. This is what the report also said: "We are preparing for a popular uprising against the occupier because the people are ready to fight. Let us know what you think... We have very few weapons. - Is there any chance that we can get more soon?"¹²⁰

On July 2, 1941, the Provincial Committee issued another proclamation in which the Macedonian people were informed about certain issues of concern. In part this is what was said: "For ten days now a bloody struggle has been taking place between two worlds - the old world of fascism-imperialism and the new world, the revolutionary world of socialism." With this proclamation German fascism was exposed and the USSR struggle was popularized. In that regard, the proclamation said: "Hitler is an imperialist, a

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 335.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 61.

plunderer, a conqueror and an oppressor, everyone in Macedonia has seen this for themselves from his policies and from the policies of his Bulgarian vassals - the fascist clique in Bulgaria headed by the Ministers. Today, after Hitler's attack, the USSR is shedding its blood for the protection of its country, for the protection of the Socialist Motherland, for the liberation of its people from the fascist yoke, for the freedom of the Balkan people and for the freedom of our much-suffering Macedonia. The USSR is not fighting to give Macedonia to the British and to Petra Karagorgievich (Serbian imperialists) but to make Macedonia Soviet! That's the truth! But our enemies want to hide that truth from you, to make you an enemy of the USSR, so that the German conquerors can ride you, tear your skin off, strip you naked and keep you in slavery." Regarding the Bulgarian government in Macedonia, the proclamation said: "The Bulgarian fascist government and the Macedonian supremacists-fascists eat Hitler's lies every day."

In its conclusion of the proclamation to the Macedonian people, in part the Provincial Committee resolutely said: "You should know that the Red Army and the USSR won't be defeated, they will defeat fascism. The struggle will be difficult with many victims but the USSR will win because it is the bearer of the new revolution against capitalism and speculation, and because it is fighting for freedom and socialism..."¹²¹

CPM Provincial Committee Proclamation to the Macedonian people, published in July 1941, under the title "FRIENDS OF THE SOVIET UNION!"

This is what was said: "Everyone should know that the German imperialists have attacked the people of the Soviet Union... The people in Macedonia point to Hitler as the culprit. But because the Macedonian people have disapproved of this and have widely expressed dissatisfaction for fascist policies, the Bulgarian imperialists and enslavers, together with their German Gestapo agents, are persecuting and arresting the Macedonians who are friends and sympathizers of the Soviet Union. A terrible terror is being perpetrated. Bulgarian policemen and German Gestapo

¹²¹ Sources, vol. I, book 1, pp. 23-25.

officers, faithful to their methods of suppressing and torturing the Bulgarian and German people, are now doing the same in Macedonia. There is a case where young Macedonians are subjected to terrible violence by the Skopje police... The Bulgarian and German police resort to the same methods the Serbian oppressors have used and, on the other hand, as if joking, they say “we freed the enslaved women from the Serbians”. Further on in this proclamation under the subtitle “DEAR BROTHERS”, it was said: “You yourself have felt the ‘freedom’ the Germans and Bulgarians have given you. Your situation is bad. You have been robbed terribly by the government and speculators. You have not won the freedom for which you fought for over 50 years. Instead of gaining freedom you have been given new slavery, violence and new terror. Your sons and daughters from Skopje and Bitola are still lying in the Kosovska Mitrovitsa dungeons... as well as all those who have been arrested under German fascist rule... Their crime was and is because they fought against the Serbian enslavers and imperialists for a free Macedonia... What is the difference between the Bulgarian and Serbian oppressors?

The violence and terror that is perpetrated against the Macedonian people today will not break your will...; you are striving for freedom and a better life... The Macedonian people have seen a lot, endured a lot, suffered a lot and will be able to bear these new tortures. The time for Macedonian freedom is nearing... it will be here very soon. Until then, until that hour strikes, it is the duty of all Macedonians, all friends of the USSR, who are, with a tight heart, following the great struggle of the Soviet peoples against fascism, - to help the victims with everything they can for the sake of freedom in Macedonia.

Raise money, collect clothes and food and give them to the Macedonian martyrs and glorious sons!

The proclamation ended with the slogans: “DOWN WITH TERROR AND VIOLENCE AGAINST THE MACEDONIANS!”
DOWN WITH THE GESTAPO BARBARIANS AND THE
BULGARIAN POLICE! LONG LIVE FREE MACEDONIA!”¹²²

¹²² Ibid., pp. 26-28.

8. Provincial Committee Proclamation on the celebration of the Ilinden Uprising

Just before August 2, 1941, the CPM Provincial Committee issued a proclamation to the Macedonian people under the title: “TO THE MACEDONIANS, TURKS, ALBANIANS, AND VLACHS!” In part the Proclamation said: “This year marks the 38th anniversary of the great and glorious Ilinden Uprising.” Explaining the meaning and purpose of the 1903 Ilinden Uprising, as well as its traditional celebration every year, the Proclamation called on the people to continue the Ilinden celebration even this year. Among other things, the proclamation said: “Ilinden is the day of the Macedonian revolution, the first in the new century of the Macedonian people’s conscious history, who no longer wanted to endure shameful slavery, who didn’t want to come to terms with their fate, with violence, murder, robbery, corruption and exploitation by the chifliks and the rotting Ottoman administration”.

The Proclamation continued: “The Ilinden Uprising and the Krushevo Republic were deeds of the Macedonian people and not of the Bulgarian supremacists and certainly not of the Bulgarian state. Today’s Bulgarian and Macedonian fascists, however, want to present them as their deeds. The Bulgarian fascists want to steal the Ilinden flag from the hands of the real Macedonians... they want to falsify Macedonian history... The Macedonian people didn’t fight for a monarchy, a Turkish Sultan, or a German King... They fought for their own country, a FREE MACEDONIAN REPUBLIC, an equal member to all neighbouring Balkan states. Behind every king, even behind Boris the Bulgarian king, lie lawlessness, dictatorships, terror, violence and slavery... The Bulgarian fascists have taken everything from the Macedonian struggle that is beautiful, including our Macedonian history, and are presenting them as Bulgarian: St. Kiril and Metodi, Gotse Delchev, the Macedonian revolutionary struggles, the Macedonian language (claiming it to be a dialect of Bulgarian), Macedonian culture and traditions are all presented as Bulgarian. And on the other hand they are forcing you to learn their Bulgarian language... You saw with your own eyes the kind of “freedom” Hitler and the Bulgarian fascists brought you. And the right to elect your own mayors, which wasn’t denied to you in the

darkest Ottoman times for 500 years - today that right has been taken away from you by your “liberators”. You are truly slaves!

The proclamation also emphasized that this year the Ilinden celebration was held during the fascist occupation – under exceptional conditions and circumstances. Explaining the military situation, the proclamation said: “The struggle is difficult, the struggle is great, but it will end with the powerful USSR victorious over Hitler. You can be sure of that! THE DAWN OF FREEDOM WILL BREAK FOR ALL THE ENSLAVED NATIONS IN EUROPE - ALSO FOR THE MACEDONIAN PEOPLE. It is your duty to help the Soviet people’s struggle with everything you can to win over fascism, because their struggle is also your struggle.”

This proclamation was also used as a medium to inform the Macedonian people about what certain European radio stations were reporting about the Macedonian national question. According to these reports, Germany, Italy and Bulgaria wanted to “somehow” solve the Macedonian question. For this purpose, Vancho Mihailov was summoned to Zagreb where the negotiations with the Bulgarian authorities were being held. Regarding this the proclamation said: “Fascists from all camps have figured that they will be able to lie to the Macedonian people easier if Vancho Mihailov is appointed “fuehrer” in Macedonia. Mihailov will play a bloody role in Macedonia, just as Ante Pavelich played such a role in Croatia... The Macedonian people in Petrich Region and the Macedonian immigrants in Bulgaria, however, know very well who Vancho Mihailov is and who he serves. Today he will again serve Tsar Boris and Hitler and kill thousands of Macedonians, just like he did in Petrich Region where 5,000 great centralist Macedonians, fighters for a Free Macedonia, were imprinted on his conscience.”

Under the subtitle “MACEDONIANS, TURKS, ALBANIANS, VLAHS” the proclamation said: “On the day of Ilinden come out and demonstrate. All together show your will, your desire to fight for freedom just as your fathers and older brothers did during the Ilinden Uprising, when they fought for democracy, equality and freedom. Ilinden was the work of all the poor nationalities in Macedonia... The Bulgarian district governors and gendarmes have

nothing to do with Ilinden. Today, they are what Sultan Hamid's gendarmes and guards were during Ottoman times."

The proclamation ended with the slogans: "EVERYONE COME OUT FOR A DEMONSTRATION! RAISE MACEDONIAN SLOGANS! DOWN WITH TODAY'S MACEDONIAN ENSLAVERS! DOWN WITH THE FASCISTS-HITLERISTS-DEVILS OF MACEDONIAN FREEDOM! DOWN WITH THE ANTI-SOVIET WAR! LONG LIVE THE USSR AND ITS STRONG RED ARMY! LONG LIVE ILINDEN! LONG LIVE FREE MACEDONIA!"¹²³

The following was ascertained from the CPM Provincial Committee documents published in 1940-1941:

Unlike the previous period when the party leadership in this part of Macedonia had a regional committee under the leadership of the Provincial Committee for Serbia, in 1940 the CPM Provincial Committee, i.e. the Macedonian Communist Party, was formed in the same way the Communist Party of Slovenia and the Communist Party of Croatia were formed. The difference was that those party organizations had a Central Committee and Macedonia had a Provincial Committee, under the leadership of the CPY Central Committee. That is why it wasn't correct in certain writings for this period (1940-1941) for Macedonia to say the CPY Provincial Committee for Macedonia, but was required to say the CPM Provincial Committee (Provincial Committee of the Communist Party in Macedonia).

The documents issued by the CPM Provincial Committee basically explain the important program steps taken in support of the Macedonian people's permanent interests in their endeavour to liberate themselves from Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek slavery. The Macedonian communists, for the first time, had an action program to tackle the most essential and important issues of interest to Macedonian national individuality, that is, there was a robust program to liberate all parts of Macedonia and to create a Macedonian state within its ethnic-historical borders. As can be seen

¹²³ Ibid., pp. 29-33.

from the program details, the Provincial Committee didn't recognize the borders of divided Macedonia from 1912-1918, that is, it didn't agree with the positions taken by the CPY, CPB and CPG – that the Macedonian question should be resolved within the existing borders as a minority issue, or as a nationality issue - CPY, within the existing borders (Splitski Plenum).

The fact that the Provincial Committee issued its documents in the Macedonian language was also of great historical significance for Macedonia. In the earlier period, documents were written almost exclusively in Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek - by the leaderships which managed the Macedonian communists. The Macedonian language was introduced to the party in writing which had a great impact on the Communist Party members and sympathizers, as well as on the wider Macedonian population which came into contact with these documents.

With its published documents, the Provincial Committee successfully connected the contemporary communist movement with the Macedonian people's historical revolutionary traditions (regarding their struggles for liberation), especially with those of 1903. This successfully connected the CPM with the broad masses of the people. This was confirmed in 1940-1941 (at the call of the Communist Party through the various proclamations) during the Ilinden celebrations and demonstrations. Before that the previous leadership didn't pay enough attention to tradition.

With its well thought out program, the Provincial Committee successfully connected class interests with the Macedonian people's national interests, thereby mobilizing the masses in the struggle for realizing their ideals. The strikes and demonstrations held during those times are sufficient proof of that. Before that the previous leadership didn't pay enough attention to the national question, which of course was one of the most essential issues for Macedonia, especially after 1912 when Macedonia was occupied and ruled by the surrounding monarchies.

Through its contribution to the Macedonian national question, with ample arguments and facts, the Provincial Committee was able to break the CPY's hesitation about the existence or non-existence of

the Macedonian national individuality and to convince the CPY to take a definitive position at the World Conference held in 1940. This happened even though there was still a certain hesitation among individual leaders regarding the Macedonian national individuality. But what is important is that the CPY Central Committee at the time took a definite position. And for that we need to thank the CPM Provincial Committee making the arguments on the Macedonian question available in the 1940-1941 published documents.

It can be seen and determined from the published materials that the CPM Provincial Committee which was established at the beginning of 1940, and elected at the Party Conference in October of the same year, was rising and growing into an independent party entity with its own robust, independent program for solving the Macedonian national question, that is for liberating Macedonia from Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek slavery and for the creation of an independent Macedonian state as an equal member within the framework of a Balkan or Yugoslav federation. The Provincial Committee's program, however, wasn't completely in line with the attitudes of the neighbouring Communist Parties, which had minimal to no program solutions, or sought solutions within their existing borders that were set in 1918. There was also disagreement on the issue of the colonists who were deposited in Macedonia by the monarchies. There were disagreements on the creation of the Macedonian People's Front that was to include the Macedonian people in the struggle, regardless of their nationality or religion, i.e. include all the people that were ready to fight for liberating Macedonia. Or to create an alliance that would include only workers and peasants (the poor and the middle-class). This was proposed at the 5th National Conference.

The Provincial Committee's vision in building a platform and a program that would support the essential permanent interests of the Macedonian individuality was to encompass those interests as a whole and to require a resolution for a complete solution. The Provincial Committee couldn't accept partial solutions, as proposed by the neighbouring Communist Parties. The CPY Central Committee's position, for example, regarding the most pressing Macedonian issue, referring to a divided Macedonia, was to provide a partial solution that was to include only the part that was under

Yugoslavia, the so-called “Serbian Macedonia”, and not to include the unification of all parts of Macedonia into one sovereign Macedonian state. At the CPY May meeting, held in 1941, the following position was taken on Macedonia: “Macedonia also experienced the misfortune of being divided among several conquerors. From under Great Serbian oppression, it came under Bulgarian, and also partly under Italian oppression. The Bulgarian reactionary capitalist clique is doing the same to the Macedonian people as the Greater Serbian clique did before. The Bulgarian conquerors don’t recognize the right of the Macedonian people. They persecute them and work with all their might to renationalize them and turn them into Bulgarians. The Bulgarian language is introduced everywhere in Macedonia. The Bulgarian conquerors are looting the Macedonian people just as the German and Italian imperialist looters do. The task of the Macedonian communists is to gather the masses to fight against the forcible annexation and division of Macedonia, and for the free national determination of the Macedonian people as well as for their national independence and freedom.”¹²⁴ At the same consultation, however, the following position was taken regarding Slovenia: “The Communist Party of Slovenia now has more important tasks ahead of it. Its task is to gather the Slovenian people in all occupied areas, including those that were seized from Slovenia during the last imperialist war, and to get them to fight against the occupiers and their atrocities. The Slovenian communists must provide a clear view to the Slovenian people in their liberation struggle. They must expose before the people the treacherous Slovenian reactionary bourgeoisie which has placed itself in the service of the occupier, as well as the one which has placed itself under the protection of the British imperialists. In these difficult days the Slovenian communists must be the ones to raise the spirit of the people and their faith in their imminent liberation.”

From the above cited views, we can conclude that when it came to Macedonia only the part that was occupied in 1941 was taken into account. The other parts that were occupied during the last imperialist war (1912-1918) were not taken into account. However,

¹²⁴ Tito’s Collected Works, book 7, pp. 40, 44.

when it came to Slovenia, all parts were taken into account regardless of when they were occupied.

The CPY Central Committee took the same attitude or made the same “mistake” in its November 7, 1941 Proclamation to the peoples of Yugoslavia. This is what it said to the Macedonians: “The hated occupiers didn’t bring you liberation as they promised, but lawlessness and slavery, like to all the peoples of Yugoslavia. The occupiers deceive and lie to you, in order to separate you from the Yugoslav people’s general liberation struggle. The German fascist conqueror and his allies – Mussolini and others was your main enemy that took your freedom and independence and that of all small nations. Now is the time for you, the Macedonian people, to stand up against that greatest enemy of national independence, against the enemy of all humanity.” In the same proclamation this is what it said to the Slovenians: “You, the Slovenian people, unite on the territory of Yugoslavia. Unite all your torn forces; Slovenes from Yugoslavia, from Primers, from Korushka... all of you who have been enslaved, unite your forces in a single Slovenian people’s front and fight against your beastly enemies who have torn apart and enslaved our country. The time has come for your final liberation and reunification, the time has come for you, together with the other peoples of Yugoslavia, to expel the hated occupiers from your entire territory.”¹²⁵

From the above quoted proclamation, we can conclude that the Macedonian people were asked to fight against the occupier, but the call didn’t offer a perspective for Macedonia’s complete unification. Only part of the Macedonian people was called to fight against the enemy for all of Yugoslavia. However, in the call to the Slovenian people there was a clear perspective – the people from all parts of Slovenia were called to fight for the liberation and unification of their entire homeland.

Typical of this was also a document Tito sent to Rade Konchar and Vlado Popovich in Croatia in mid-August 1941, in which it was said: “Furthermore, with the development of the popular uprising on the one hand, and with the enemy’s attempt to portray that

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 217.

movement as purely communist on the other, the question of creating a People's Liberation Committee from our people, - and that as soon as possible - which would include representatives from the democratic currents of Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia. It would be a kind of people's government that would issue its own proclamation to the people and call on them to fight... We would need about three or four people from Croatia and two from Slovenia, four from Serbia and two from Montenegro".¹²⁶ Note that Macedonia or Macedonian representatives are not included in the concept of creating a People's Liberation Committee (a kind of people's government, that is, a unifying all-Yugoslav political body).

9. Relations between the CPY Central Committee and the Communist Party of Macedonia in 1941

The following chronology of events was summarized in Tito's collected works, book 7, under the heading "notes":

"In the second half of May 1941, Tito met with members of the Politburo - Aleksandar Rankovich, Ivan Milutinovich and Milovan Gjilas and with members of the CPY Central Committee Ivo Lola Ribar and Svetozar Vukmanovich Tempo. During the same meeting Tito decided to send Lazar Kolishevski to Macedonia, to take a number of CPY Central Committee documents covering the period from April 15 to the beginning of May, and to determine why Metodija Shatorov Sharlo, then CPY Central Committee Secretary for Macedonia didn't respond to the CPY Central Committee's invitation to go to Zagreb for a CPY consultation, i.e. determine why Shatorov broke ties with the CPY Central Committee."¹²⁷

"Aleksandar Rankovich informed Tito that, at a CPY Central Committee invitation Lazar Kolishevski was summoned to Belgrade and after the conclusion of the CPY May consultation he was sent back to Macedonia with the CPY Central Committee Proclamations from April 15 and May 1..."¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Ibid., pp. 99-100.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 331.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 332.

“On June 23, 1941, when Lazar Kolishevski arrived in Belgrade on his return from Macedonia he informed Tito that Metodija Shatorov Sharlo, then CPY Provincial Committee Secretary for Macedonia, had separated the Macedonian organization from the CPY and joined it to the Bulgarian Workers’ Party (communists) as per his agreement with the Bulgarian Workers’ Party Central Committee”.

¹²⁹ We haven’t found any written documentation to indicate what Lazar Kolishevski reported to Tito regarding the CPM Provincial Committee’s position. At this time, the Provincial Committee wasn’t called the CPY Provincial Committee for Macedonia; it was called the CPM Provincial Committee.

“At the end of June 1941, Tito met with members of his Politburo and decided to expel Shatorov from the Party. Lazar Kolishevski was again dispatched to Macedonia to convey the CPY Central Committee’s decision, to inform the Macedonian communists regarding the CPY’s positions and to deliver the CPY Central Committee’s Proclamation on the occasion of Germany attacking the USSR, which was to be translated from Serbian to Macedonian and dispersed throughout Macedonia.” ¹³⁰

It was said that the question to expel Shatorov was raised on June 27, 1941, during the Politburo session. However no document was found to explain the reason for Shatorov’s expulsion, which Politburo members were present at the session and the exact date this session was held.

“During the second half of July 1941, Lazar Kolishevski again returned to Belgrade from Macedonia and visited A. Rankovich. Based on Kolishevski’s report, Rankovich then informed Tito that Shatorov, then CPY Provincial Committee Secretary for Macedonia, once again refused to accept the CPY line and the CPY Central Committee’s decisions that disputed his authority over the Macedonian Party organization, which was allegedly taken over by the Bulgarian Worker’s Party Central Committee with the approval of the Comintern. Shatorov allegedly wouldn’t even allow the CPY

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 335.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 335.

Central Committee's Proclamation, written on the occasion of Germany's attack on the USSR, to be dispersed in Macedonia..."¹³¹

Unfortunately, again no written document of what Lazar Kolishevski said in his report has been found.

"Tito convened a Politburo meeting (that included members of the CPY Central Committee who were in Belgrade at that time) which was attended by Tito, Rankovich, Milutinovich and I.L. Ribara. Included in the agenda was the issue of the Macedonian Party Organization and the problems experienced with its leadership. After a long discussion a decision was made to send Dragan Pavlovich Shilja to Macedonia and give him the authority to implement the CPY Central Committee's decision regarding Shatorov's removal from his duty as secretary, suspend the Provincial Committee and help the Macedonian communists form a people's leadership, which was prepared to follow the CPY line. It was also decided to send the CPY Provincial Committee for Macedonia a letter."¹³²

Again no written document of this Politburo session has been found.

"On behalf of the CPY Central Committee, Tito, on July 24, 1941, wrote a letter to the CPY Provincial Committee for Macedonia, in which he informed the Provincial Committee why the CPY Central Committee decided to expel Shatorov from the CPY. In the letter, Tito assigned the Provincial Committee the task to organize partisan detachments and launch armed actions against the occupier, like all communists were doing in all parts of Yugoslavia. The letter sent to Macedonia was delivered by Dragan Pavlovich Shilja, a CPY Central Committee delegate who at the same time also acted as a substitute."¹³³

Among other things, this is what the letter said:

"To the Provincial Committee for Macedonia!

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 338.

¹³² Ibid., p. 338.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 339.

Dear friends,

The actions taken by the old “Bulgarian” (Metodi Shatorov Sharlo), who was responsible for the CPY Central Committee’s work in Macedonia turned out to be not only anti-party but also counter-revolutionary.

1) He sabotaged the issuance of the CPY Central Committee Proclamation and took a national-chauvinistic stance.

2) After the occupation he severed all ties with the CPY Central Committee and didn’t respond to the call to report to the Central Committee. Not only that, he didn’t even consider it necessary to explain his actions.

3) He took a hostile attitude towards his fellow Serbians; he took an attitude that is in no way different from the attitude of the Macedonian reactionary bourgeoisie.

4) He neglected his Party activities and now left it up to the Party to develop the forces required to fight against the occupiers, and to help the USSR.

5) He ignored all party rules regarding internal party relations and discipline...

As a result, the CPY Central Committee deems his entire feat to be anti-party and counter-revolutionary, and for that reason he was removed from his duty as member of the Central Committee for Macedonia and expelled from the Party.

Friends,

The Central Committee has decided to send to you one or two comrades, but until that is done we set the following tasks for your organization to work on:

1) In connection with the attack by the fascist gangs on the Soviet Union, our entire Party, including your organization, should carry out comprehensive sabotage actions against the occupier: a) destroy

the railways; b) destroy transport trains; c) burn down and destroy all military material and food products that are designated for the occupier and the occupier's military campaign against the USSR; d) carry out sabotage actions in factories and mines; destroy mines when possible; e) tear down and cut telephone and telegraph wires, because this slows down traffic and the movement of enemy troops and materials. Destroy everything - everything that serves the occupiers and the enemies of the USSR. Those enemies include the Bulgarian occupiers. It isn't only our decision, but also Dedo's (Comintern's) decision from above. Anyone who refuses to carry out these tasks will not only be expelled from the Party, but will also face much heavier punishments.

2) In almost all provinces of Yugoslavia, and especially in Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia, partisan detachments have been organized to fight against the occupier and carry out diversions. These partisan detachments are already succeeding in battle. I am setting before you the task to immediately start organizing partisan detachments, in which all those who want to fight against the occupier and want to help the USSR struggle can join, because this is also our struggle.

Act immediately on these directives.

I greet you in a friendly manner,

Tito, on behalf of the CPY Central Committee.”

This is what was also said in the notes of the above mentioned book: “Tito became acquainted with Dragan Pavlovich's report at the end of August 1941. Pavlovich was a CPY Central Committee delegate who had returned from Skopje to Belgrade and on August 28, 1941 wrote a report for Tito.”¹³⁴ However, according to the minutes written on August 31, 1941, during the CPY Central Committee Politburo Session, Dragan Pavlovich submitted an oral report and was obliged to submit a written report later. This means that the report wasn't submitted in writing on August 28, 1941 and it wasn't written in Nish, as stated in the documents.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 344.

Further on in the notes it was said: “Regarding the Party organization in Macedonia, Tito was informed by Dragan Pavlovich on August 31, 1941, after which Tito convened a Politburo Session that was attended by Tito, Rankovich, Milutinovich and I.L. Ribar.” The CPM situation was reviewed during this session and a decision was made to send a letter to CPM members with a call to action. It was also decided to send the Bulgarian Workers’ Party Central Committee a letter to complain about its interference in the internal affairs of the Communist Party of Serbia. It was also decided to inform the Communist International of the problems experienced by the Macedonian party organization and to send delegate Dragan Pavlovich to Macedonia. Details of this problem can be read in the Politburo Session minutes.

“FROM THE MINUTES of the meeting
POLIT BUREAU of the CPY Central Committee, August 31, 1941

Present: Valter-Tito, Marko-Rankovich, Milutin-I. Milutinovich,
Fischer – Ivo Lola-Ribar.

1) Macedonia: 1) The report by Shilja (Dragan Pavlovich) is acknowledged, with the provision that he also provides a written report, 2) Send a letter to the Bulgarian Central Committee regarding the Macedonian organization’s position and the saboteur attitude regarding the actions of the majority of the Provincial Committee in Macedonia, 3) send a letter to the members of the Communist Party in Macedonia with a call to action and clarification of the inactivity of the previous Provincial Committee, 4) Send a telegram to Georche (Georgi Dimitrov, Secretary of the Communist International), regarding Macedonia, 5) Shilja and another person from Partisan Headquarters, from the detachment is to be sent back to Macedonia to carry the letters for the Communist Party of Bulgaria and for the members of the Communist Party in Macedonia to organize partisan units in Kumanovo and other places where possible.”¹³⁵

“On September 4, 1941, in the spirit of the CPY Central Committee Session, which was concluded on August 31, 1941, Tito sent the

¹³⁵ CPY Historical archives, volume 7, p. 44.

Comintern a telegram through the liaison office in Zagreb, to inform it of the connection between the CPY Provincial Committee for Macedonia and the Bulgarian Workers' Party Central Committee and to let it know that the CPY Central Committee had severed ties with them." This note refers to a CPY Central Committee session which that took place on August 31, 1941, however, there was no such Central Committee session reported on that date. It should have said...the Politburo of the CPY Central Committee...

This is what the telegram to the Comintern said:

“FOR DEDO (Executive Committee of the Communist International)

The Provincial Committee in Macedonia has decided to cancel relations with us (CPY) and connected itself to the Communist Party of Bulgaria immediately after the occupation of Macedonia began. After being invited three times Sharl(o) (Metodi Shatorov) didn't want to attend our Central Committee session in Belgrade to discuss Macedonian issues. He also refused to distribute the CPY Central Committee Proclamation on the call to action. He gave a directive to hand over all weapons to the authorities and took a stand for Soviet Macedonia, waiting for the Red Army to arrive. He took a hostile attitude towards his Serbian comrades in Macedonia. Sharl(o) led a harangue among the membership against the CPY leadership and its secretary, calling him an Anglophile because he said in the Proclamation that Yugoslavia was enslaved.

We sent a delegate to Macedonia and Sofia. The Bulgarian Party Central Committee supports Sharlo and says that Macedonia was attached to the Bulgarian Communist Party by order of the Comintern. We believe that this kind of action taken by the Bulgarian Party Central Committee is irregular. We expelled Sharlo from the Party for sabotaging our actions, for gross violation of discipline, for haranguing against the leadership, for national chauvinism, etc.

There were no actions taken or partisan detachments formed in Macedonia until today because of the criminal attitude taken by the Macedonian leadership.

We are sending our delegate to organize partisan detachments and actions and to continue the work, and we will bring the culprits before our military partisan court. Please call us if it is true that the Communist Party in Macedonia was truly attached to Bulgaria by your order. We think that this isn't good, because the Bulgarian Party is in a weak position with its own actions and connections, because its connections are broken.

Valter.”¹³⁶

It would appear that the slogan “Long live Soviet Macedonia”, expressed by Shatorov and the Provincial Committee in their Proclamations issued in the months of June and July 1941, was misinterpreted and evaluated negatively. However, by this time the CPY Central Committee had developed a firm attitude towards the Soviet government. This can be seen from the document that Tito sent to the Communist International Executive Committee in the first half of June 1941, in which he stated: “The CPY Central Committee, at the request of the Serbian farmers, has authorized Valter and another member to lead the talks for cooperation at the current stage. This agreement concluded that: 1) there will be a joint fight against the occupier. 2) We will carry out a joint struggle with the Soviet government and form an alliance with the USSR.”¹³⁷

Similarly, when the uprising began in Montenegro and when a number of its territories were liberated, a Soviet government was created. The CPY Central Committee delegated Milan Gilas, member of the Politburo, to oversee the proceedings when the Soviet government in Montenegro was being organized. This can be seen from Tito's letter to the Communist Party Central Committee of Croatia dated August 10, 1941, in which, among other things, he said: “Considering that some travelers came from Montenegro with permission from the Soviet authorities in Montenegro, we were afraid that a great folly had been committed. We took measures to prevent that.”¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Tito's collected works, book 7, p. 345.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 54.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 81.

It can be seen from these two documents that the same attitude towards the Soviet government in Yugoslavia also existed among other leaders of the Communist Party.

In the same letter to the Comintern, Shatorov was accused of refusing to issue the June 22, 1941, CPY Communist Party Central Committee Proclamation on the occasion of fascist Germany's attacking the USSR. However, the same proclamation also wasn't issued by the Communist Party Central Committee of Croatia, which can be seen from the letter written by the CPY Central Committee and sent to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Croatia dated July 17, 1941, which stated: "We don't understand why our Proclamation wasn't immediately printed. It was very current. It was issued on June 23 and immediately sent to you. We demand that an accurate investigation take place so that we can find out who is to blame for the fact that the Proclamation wasn't printed."¹³⁹

The Communist Party of Croatia Central Committee answered the question as follows: "We received the CPY Central Committee Proclamation on the same day (26) when we received the message about the Party line from Dedo (Comintern). Because we saw that there were differences in the basic Party line between the message we received from Dedo's Executive Committee and from you, we decided not to print the Proclamation (not even the one written by the Communist Party of Croatia's Central Committee). Because the anti-fascist character of the struggle at the current stage and the issue of creating a single national front wasn't clearly highlighted, we asked the CPY Central Committee if we should issue the Proclamation as it was or if the CPY Central Committee was going to write a new Proclamation in the spirit of Dedo's message."¹⁴⁰

The inconsistencies between the CPY Central Committee Proclamation and the Comintern Directives were in the Proclamation slogans: "Long live international solidarity of all the oppressed and exploited!, Long live unity and the struggle of the working masses in Yugoslavia!, Down with the imperialist-fascist

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 69.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 265.

criminals led by bloody Hitler, Mussolini and their satraps!”¹⁴¹ It was interpreted that these slogans were only calling on the oppressed, exploited and working masses to join the struggle, and left out all the others who wanted to fight against fascism. This was contrary to the Comintern Line which called on everyone, all the forces in the world to fight against fascism to try and form a coalition with the USSR, England and America for a joint fight against fascism. Also, the slogan referring to fighting against imperialism, at the time, was incompatible with the Comintern Line because the USSR was fighting against fascism, not against imperialism.

On September 6, 1941, Tito wrote a letter addressing members of the Communist Party of Macedonia in which he informed them of the reasons why Metodija Shatorov was expelled from the CPY. This is what the letter said:

“To Members of the Communist Party of Macedonia!

At the call of the CPY Central Committee thousands of CPY members joined the ranks of the people’s partisans who are now heroically fighting against the fascist occupiers who enslaved our country and are brutally exterminating our people. Partisans are fighting in Serbia, Montenegro, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Vojvodina and Dalmatia. Not hundreds, but thousands of fighters who rushed to fight against the hated fascist conquerors have fallen in that struggle. The heroic struggle our partisans have undertaken is admired by the entire world.

Hitler, the bloodthirsty and insidious conqueror, who recently enslaved so many nations in Europe has now brutally attacked the Soviet Union. From that moment on it has been our sacred duty, together with the heroic peoples of the Soviet Union, to contribute our part in the fight against the bloodthirsty fascists, to support the Soviet people who are fighting so heroically not only for their freedom, but also for the freedom of all cultured humanity.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 60.

By creating and deploying partisan detachments and sabotage groups to fight against the enemy in Yugoslavia, the Communist Party has made great achievements compelling the enemy to bring new divisions into Yugoslavia. That, however, was also made difficult for him because his transportation lines have been disrupted. Many of the mines from which he obtained raw materials for his campaign were destroyed. The ground under his feet has been set on fire and he is beginning to lose confidence in this country, which was supposed to serve him as a source of supply materials for his bloody hordes in the fight against the Soviet Union.

While such fierce battles against the occupiers are being waged all over the country, Macedonia is at rest and the enemy roams freely there and feels secure because no one bothers him. Why is that? What are the reasons for that? The reasons are in the saboteur attitude in some leading people from the Regional Committee of Macedonia, who are consciously sabotaging CPY Central Committee objectives. Old Sharlo (Metodi Shatorov), the main man in Macedonia, destroyed the CPY Proclamation which called on the membership to join the struggle and take action. Lately Old Sharlo made a gross political mistake by taking the course to create a Soviet Macedonia, instead of organizing all the peace-loving forces to fight against the fascist conquerors; he issued a directive to hand over your weapons to the enemy, leaving the people unarmed, thus betraying our interests and those of the people. Why don't you have weapons now? Because you surrendered them! Instead of keeping them, like all the peoples in Yugoslavia, to fight against the hated conquerors, you gave them up. Old Sharlo refused to respond like all the nations of Yugoslavia. He refused to respond to the call of the Central Committee of our Party and come to Belgrade to investigate issues in the Macedonian organization. Instead he went to Sofia without our knowledge and there he made a divine contribution to the Bulgarian Party, about which we still have no idea. He harangued against the CPY leadership and slandered it in the most insidious way. The Provincial Committee of Macedonia didn't create partisan detachments, didn't take any sabotage actions, didn't carry out what the Comintern demanded, but consciously sabotaged those actions and wanted to escape from our control by fleeing to Sofia. Those people are waiting for the Red Army to arrive. They are calmly watching the beautiful Soviet people die and bleed. They

fantasize about the Red Army coming and bringing power to them on a plate. The leadership attitude of some comrades in Macedonia towards the Serbian comrades isn't correct; there is national chauvinism in it which is inadmissible in the ranks of the Communist Party.

Because of all this we expelled Sharlo from the Party and replaced the entire leadership, about which we informed the Communist International and our fraternal Bulgarian Party.

Fellow Macedonians, we are once again sending you a representative with authority to implement the tasks described in our letter, to organize partisan detachments and perform other functions. We ask you to cooperate with him in his duties and support him to do his job. Rise up and fight against the fascist conquerors and their Bulgarian agents. Get to work now and make up for the things you missed, not through your own fault but through the fault of a few saboteurs. Our representative has the authority to organize your operational leadership, from which you should take directives, until you hear from us pending a Communist International decision regarding your matter.

Your old leadership no longer has any rights. We instructed our representative to organize a Commission to re-examine the case and find out which of our excluded comrades is guilty of wrongdoing.

Fellow Macedonians, to battle! Don't let things get in the way and sabotage your actions. Organize partisan detachments, destroy bridges, railways, telegraph lines, destroy all military facilities, destroy Bulgarian agents and destroy traitors and saboteurs! It is your duty to encourage the heroic Soviet people's struggle, to encourage the Yugoslav people's struggle that rose up against the oppressors. Join the ranks of the people's Yugoslav partisans who are now writing a glorious page in the history of our Communist Party and all the peoples of Yugoslavia.

Death to fascism - freedom to the people!

Central Committee of

The Communist Party of Yugoslavia.”¹⁴²

On September 6, 1941, Tito wrote a letter to the Communist Party of Bulgaria’s Central Committee in which he criticized it for bypassing the CPY Central Committee and allowing the Macedonian Party organization to join the Bulgarian party and for supporting Metodi Shatorov. This is what was said in the letter:

“To the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Bulgaria

Dear friends,

The case with the Macedonian organization prompted us to address you with this letter, because we believe that you are also to a certain extent responsible for what happened to the Macedonian organization. The leadership of the Communist Party in Macedonia justified its actions with the fact that, by God, the questioning of the Macedonian organization was arranged by you - that it receives directives from you and that the Comintern agreed with that. We consider such an act to be completely incorrect because we should have discussed the issue and jointly made that decision.

When Yugoslavia was enslaved by the occupiers, we urgently called representatives from all district and provincial committees and members from the Party Central Committee so that we could investigate the new situation together. Everyone responded except the Macedonians. We, again, twice more, called Sharlo (Metodi Shatorov) to come to Belgrade so that we, together with him, could examine the issues that had arisen in the Macedonian organization, and provide directives to take corrective action and to organize partisan detachments. But it was in vain, Sharlo didn’t want to come, he left for Sofia the moment the German and Bulgarian troops occupied Macedonia. At the same time, our comrades who we sent to Macedonia to investigate the situation brought back reports that claimed that the Macedonian Party leadership had taken a saboteur and an anti-party attitude in leading the people. It could clearly be seen that Sharlo was the main culprit in this matter.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 345.

What is Sharlo guilty of? – 1) As a member of that forum, the CPY Central Committee invited Sharlo three times to come to a session but he didn't reply to the invitations, which grossly violated Party discipline and sabotaged his party duties. 2) He sabotaged the reproduction and dissemination of the Proclamation which the CPY Central Committee sent to him on the occasion of the fascist attack on the Soviet Union, in which the people were called to fight against the occupiers. He destroyed that proclamation with a strange motivation claiming the proclamation was Anglophile, because it said that the peoples of Yugoslavia were enslaved by the occupiers. Therefore, according to his point of view, contrary to the point of view of the USSR and the whole world, the peoples of Yugoslavia are not enslaved, and Macedonia is liberated. This smells not only of national chauvinism but also of Germanophilism. 3) He took a saboteur's stance on the question of action against the occupiers, and in contrast he made a decision that the weapons should be handed over to the authorities, thereby committing open treason in favour of the occupier. 4) At the current stage of the liberation war he took a completely wrong and harmful position, contrary to the CPY line, and instead of fighting together with all progressive forces against fascism, he decided to create a Soviet Macedonia. 5) The delegate we sent to investigate him concluded that Sharlo not only didn't admit his mistakes but also slandered the CPY leadership and its Party Secretary, accusing them all of being Anglophile, etc. Based on all this, the CPY Central Committee removed Sharlo from the Party ranks because we found him to be a saboteur and an anti-party element, about which we also informed the Comintern.

After our delegate returned we decided to change the entire Macedonian Organization's leadership because its majority was in solidarity with Sharlo.

Our decision wasn't made on the basis of some slander or incorrect assessments of the entire leaderships' action or Sharlo's in particular, but on the basis of real facts which confirm the following:

1. Massive campaigns and sabotage actions are being carried out all over Yugoslavia - Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Vojvodina and Dalmatia – and fierce struggles are being waged by our partisans, organized and led by our Communist

Party against the occupiers and their domestic agents. But there are no such actions carried out and no partisan units created in Macedonia despite our objectives. Our demands, directives and the material aid we have sent are being ignored. No excuses can justify that sabotage. At the cost of huge sacrifices, almost bare-handed, we take weapons from the enemy and continue to take them every day in the battles we fight, just to help the Soviet Union struggle and to liberate our people. We already have thousands of dead fighters who bravely gave their lives at the call of the Party in the fight against the hated fascist bastards, and the Macedonian cowards who justify their inactivity by guarding their cadres.

2. Our delegate established on the ground that the majority of the party organizations complain of inactivity, and that in their opinion there are sufficient conditions for creating party units and performing various actions.

3. We sacrificed a lot to acquire a printing press for our friends in Macedonia but they threw it outside to rust in the rain, instead of using it for the purposes for which it was intended.

4. A national chauvinistic attitude was taken towards the fellow Serbians in Macedonia. They were slandered like they belonged to the same league as the various Great Serbian reactionaries and they are of the opinion that they will do nothing for Macedonia. With such an attitude they affect other members of the Party. Is that proletarian internationalism?

5. Sharlo slandered the CPY leadership in front of Party members and thus destroyed the leadership's reputation and unity in the Party ranks.

These are the facts that forced us to take such drastic measures.

We believe that it wasn't right on your part not to contact us and to solve the Macedonian organizational issues without us, and for you to still support Sharlo. Your issues could have been resolved amicably, without upheavals in that organization. Don't you think that the fascist conquests should have been an occasion for fraternal communist party expansions and not for the burial of a real and

successful people's organization with good connections and continuity in the struggle?

This is why we believe that you are responsible for what happened because you could have come to us, as we have already come to you many times, to discuss issues and come up with a common plan for the struggle, to avoid the unhealthy state and inactivity in the Party Organization to occur due to the criminal actions of a few people.

We are in constant contact with Georche (Georgi Dimitrov) and it was he who constantly emphasized the need to rise up with the strongest actions possible. Because this is a Communist International directive we feel it is our duty to warn you of this. It is your duty to help the heroic Soviet people, as well as the Bulgarian people.

We once again turn our attention to the membership in Macedonia to explain this whole unfortunate situation and are sending a representative to appoint a new operational leadership, create partisan detachments and organize actions in Macedonia.

To this day we haven't yet received a decision from the Communist International regarding the Macedonian organization's issue, so that is why today we have asked for a clarification.

We believe that you should send one or two people from the Central Committee together with our representatives to attend a meeting, where we would have discussions and come up with a plan for joint actions in the struggles in Macedonia and Bulgaria. If necessary, we could also send some armed units to assist you. Give us your opinion on this matter. ¹⁴³

Death to fascism - freedom to the people!

For the CPY Central Committee

Secretary Tito"

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 346.

The following can be concluded from the examined documents and from the clarifications provided in the notes in Tito's collected works, book 7, regarding the relationship between the CPY Central Committee and the CPM Provincial Committee in 1941:

1. The notes mention Lazar Kolishevski submitting a report on June 23, 1941, after he returned from Macedonia. However, so far no such report has been found (it is unknown what it contained). It may have been submitted orally and what he said may not have been recorded.

2. As was stated in the notes, a CPY Central Committee Politburo Session was held at the end of June 1941, during which a decision was made to remove Metodija Shatorov from the Party. This decision was based on a report given by Lazar Kolishevski. Unfortunately Kolishevski's report, mentioned here, hasn't been found... There is no document (minutes) from which would confirm who was present at this session and what, basically, were the reasons for the decision to remove Shatorov. This important decision was only explained in notes in Tito's collected works. There is, however, a published document of a session that the Politburo held on July 27, 1941, but there is no information that the issue about the Provincial Committee and Shatorov was raised.

3. Lazar Kolishevski's report, which was allegedly given after his return from Macedonia in the second half of July 1941, after which Tito called a Politburo session, hasn't been found. Tito's clarification notes mention who was present but didn't say when this meeting was held and no published document has been found, which would confirm what issues were discussed and what was decided. In the clarification remarks the only clarifications given were those about the decision made and its implementation, that is, it refers to a CPY Central Committee decision but at this time the Central Committee didn't have a session. It was the Politburo that had a session, as stated in the remarks. And there is no document published for a Politburo session from which one could see the content of the issues discussed.

4. From Tito's letter sent to the Provincial Committee for Macedonia on July 24, 1941, it can be seen what the disputes were

and of what Shatorov was accused. Namely: he was accused of sabotaging the June 22 CPY Central Committee proclamation issuance, severing ties with the CPY Central Committee and not informing it, not respond to invitations, having a bad attitude towards the Serbian Party leadership, and neglecting his Party's activities and ignoring Party rules. In the letter these issues were formulated into five points. This can be seen from the letter itself, which was published above in this book. Tito, in his letter, didn't say when and who made the decision, however, it was stated that the CPY Central Committee considered Shatorov's entire action to be anti-party and counter-revolutionary and for that reason he was removed from his duty as a member of the Provincial Committee for Macedonia and expelled from the Party. However, the Central Committee didn't have a session at this time and the question arises as to who made the decision, and nothing was said about a Politburo session and its decision.

In the above mentioned notes, it was stated that the decision to expel and replace Shatorov was made at "the end of June 1941". At this time however, the disputed proclamation was neither published nor submitted to the Provincial Committee for distribution. In the Politburo session notes it was concluded that Lazar Kolishevski had gone to Macedonia to implement the decision and take the proclamation issued on June 22, 1941. At this point in the decision making process, there couldn't have been a dispute about the proclamation. But as can be seen from Tito's letter to the Provincial Committee, the dispute was about severing ties with the CPY Central Committee, and not the ties created between the Provincial Committee and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Bulgaria. It follows from this that when the decisions were made at the end of June, only the questions in points 2 to 5 of the letter were considered.

It was typical of them to exaggerate the reasons for Shatorov's removal and expulsion as described in the telegram Tito sent to the Communist International Executive Committee on September 4, 1941. From what was said in a letter sent to the Provincial Committee dated July 24 the following can be deduced: the cancellation of ties and connections with the Communist Party of Bulgaria took place immediately after Macedonia's occupation. This

includes the directive given to hand over all weapons to the authorities, the attitude towards creating a Soviet Macedonia and waiting for the Red Army to arrive, creating a harangue among the Party members against the CPY leadership and its secretary and calling him an Anglophile (because in the Proclamation he said that Yugoslavia was enslaved), not having created partisan detachments and no action taken in Macedonia until today because of the criminal attitude of the Macedonian leadership.

In addition to the reasons stated in Tito's telegram to the Communist International, Tito's letter sent to CPM members on September 6th gave the following additional reasons: failure to carry out what the Comintern demanded, conscious sabotage, fleeing to Sofia (to escape CPY control), replacing the entire Provincial Committee leadership. In the previous letters and in the telegram to the Communist International there was nothing about changing the entire Provincial Committee composition. This decision wasn't made even at the Politburo session held on August 31, 1941.

In the letter Tito sent to the Communist Party of Bulgaria, in addition to the reasons stated in the telegram sent to the Communist International and in the letter sent to the CPM members, he also accused Shatorov of taking the position that "the peoples of Yugoslavia were not enslaved but Macedonia was liberated. This smelled not only of national chauvinism but also of Germanophilism." For the first time there was mention of a printing press thrown out and destroyed (instead of being used)...

The decisions made by the Politburo were based on Lazar Kolishevski's reports, which have yet to be found in published form. On top of that there no published minutes of the Politburo sessions that explained the reasons for the positions taken and decisions made, which brings up the question: "did these sessions even take place?" The only minutes that do exist are those of the August 31, 1941, Politburo session during which it was decided to send letters to the Communist International, to the CPM and to the Communist Party of Bulgaria which highlighted the CPM Provincial Committee's situation. But not everything was highlighted, that is, for example, there was no mention that the Provincial Committee

had been replaced. If this was a decision made as stated in the letter to the CPM members, then who made this decision?

10. Report by Dragan Pavlovich, CPY Central Committee representative

On August 28, 1941, Dragan Pavlovich-Shilja submitted a report from Nish to the CPY Central Committee under the title “From Macedonia”. This report, however, wasn’t written on this date, or in Nish. This can be seen from the August 31, 1941 Politburo minutes in which it was written: “I) Macedonia: Shilje’s (Dragan Pavlovich’s) report has been accepted and a written report is also available.” This report expanded on the accusations made against both Shatorov and the CPM Provincial Committee. Here is what was said in the report:

“/1941/ August, 28
Nish, 28.VIII. From Macedonia

On the second day after arriving in Skopje, I met with the entire Provincial Committee (four members) (1). I earlier spoke with two members separately. One (a female friend) (2) immediately accepted “Father’s” (3) decision with approval. The second (4) did the same after some hesitation. However, at the meeting where I read the letter, he and two others refused to accept the decision. They were motivated by the fact that they were now answering to the Bulgarian “Father” (5).

Clarification: The numbers indicate the following:

- (1). Metodija Shatorov, Pero Ivanovski, Kotse Stojanovski and Mara Natseva,
- (2). Mara Natseva.
- (3). CPY Central Committee.
- (4). Pero Ivanovski.
- (5). Communist Party of Bulgaria Central Committee.

They also didn’t recognize their inactivity or accept the “old Bulgarian’s” (6) mistakes. They believed that “Father’s” decision was made based on the slander and lies of one man.

I told them that I was suspending them in the name of the “Father”. Of course, they didn’t accept that either. They took a very hostile and sarcastic attitude towards “Father”, especially the old Bulgarian who, everywhere and in front of everyone, said that “Father” was an Anglophile who supported a dictatorship of individuals, like a man with a golden ring (7), etc. Regarding the expulsion, he said that this was a dirty thing to do and that the Intelligence Service was involved in it (8). They called me and the comrades who waged the fiercest fight against the Provincial Committee factionalists and saboteurs...

In the days I was there I spoke with some friends who fully agree with “Father’s” decision but wanted the question to which Party the Macedonian organization belongs to be resolved as soon as possible. Many now think that they belong to Bulgaria (9). Many good friends will only follow discipline and go with the Provincial Committee. The way we are going, that is, fighting against the Provincial Committee, some consider our actions artificial and factional. This turned out to be absolutely true. That’s why I immediately sent our friend L (10), who came with me to Macedonia, to Sofia. I also sent a friend (11) to the province to get in touch with and talk to the local organizations.

Clarification: The numbers indicate the following:

- (6). Metodija Shatorov.
- (7). Refers to Josip Broz-Tito.
- (8). British News Service.
- (9). Refers to the Bulgarian Workers’ Party (Communist Party of Bulgaria).
- (10). Lazar Kolarov.
- (11) Strasho Pindzhur.

I also wrote a pamphlet (12) for all the organizations and members of the Party to read. This is what I said in the pamphlet: “Today’s situation, i.e., the attack on the Soviet Union and the tasks set before all communist organizations in connection with it, have prompted struggles to take place in all occupied countries including all the Yugoslav provinces, except in Macedonia. No activities are taking

place in Macedonia. The fault lies with the Provincial Committee. “Father’s” decisions are being excluded by those persons responsible for the Provincial Committee (13). The position taken by the Provincial Committee after that decision prompted the question, which Party will the Macedonian organization join. But this question is not central or important and will be solved in a brotherly manner by the two “Fathers”. What is important is the Provincial Committee’s inactivity, its mistakes and the saboteur and counter-revolutionary attitude it has taken. I end with a call to immediately start preparations to execute the tasks assigned to you.”

Some organizations fully accepted the decision, while some hesitated or completely rejected it.

On August 17, 1941, the Provincial Committee convened a provincial conference which was also attended by a delegate representing the Bulgarian “Father” (14). I was prevented from seeing him before the conference. Only after was I able to talk to him and only for 45 minutes because he immediately went back. I laid out the whole case to him, emphasizing the especially criminal inaction at this point. He told me that Comrade Dimitrov (15) had approved the joining of the Macedonian organization to the Bulgarian party.

Clarification: The numbers indicate the following:

- (12). The editorial office doesn’t have the pamphlet.
- (13). It refers to Metodija Shatorov, then CPY Central Committee secretary for Macedonia.
- (14). Petar Bogdanov.
- (15). Gjorgi.

Then, to my great surprise, the Bulgarian delegate saw no inactions and mistakes made by the “old Bulgarian” (except for the decision to hand over the weapons, and he didn’t seem to consider that a big mistake either). He said that the Bulgarian “Father” and “Grandfather” (16) know the “old Bulgarian” very well and have confidence in him.

The Bulgarian delegate thinks the leadership should remain unchanged. He believes that our “Father’s” decision was too harsh and that it was made without verifying the charges against the “old Bulgarian”. Because of this, I am forced to agree that the fighting must stop at the field level and the entire case must be passed on to the “fathers” and the “grandfather” to find a solution. Three days later my friend whom I sent to Sofia (17) came back. He met with the Bulgarian “Father” (18) who told him roughly the same thing the Bulgarian delegate had told me.

I had to leave Macedonia under these circumstances. I believe this issue should be clarified as soon as possible directly between the “fathers” from Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, in other words, an all Slavic Congress should take place to address certain issues related to the situation in the Balkans. This Congress should be arranged to take place in Macedonia (19).

Comrade Lazar should be included as well as two or three more comrades and maybe our female comrade from the Central Committee. Comrade Lazar and his friend are looking for an answer as soon as possible of whether they should go to Serbia or stay in Macedonia.

Please note that, three days after my arrival I sent my report through Vranje (20) but due to the sudden multiple arrests taking place in Vranje and the termination of the connection with Leskovats, the report didn’t arrive at its destination. I found this out when I was in Leskovats.

Clarification: The numbers indicate the following:

(16). Communist International.

(17). Lazar Kolishevski.

(18). Tsola Dragojcheva, member of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) Central Committee.

(19). No such meeting was held between the representatives of the CPY Central Committee and the BCP Central Committee in 1941.

20. The editorial office doesn’t have the report.

Initially I thought you received it. But later I found it very difficult to send a courier.

Regarding the tasks the Provincial Committee was expected to carry out, I was able to briefly check and determined the following:

1. All sectors were inactive.
2. There was almost no control or an inspection carried out by the Provincial Committee as well as no help was provided to the local organizations.
3. Ruined machinery was found (when the occupying troops arrived the printing press was thrown outside where it rusted and was ruined. It is still outside).
4. The decision to surrender and not collect weapons caused enormous damage to the Party.
5. Many organizations were dissatisfied with the Provincial Committee's performance.
6. The Provincial Committee wasn't aware of its organizational state and strength (for example, the case of the demonstrations in Skopje) (21).

In addition there were a series of minor errors made which included omissions, irregularities, conspiracy violations, lack of discipline, sloppiness, etc.¹⁴⁴

D. 22”

Explanation: The numbers indicate the following:

(21) Refers to the attempt to organize demonstrations on August 2, 1941 in Skopje.

Dragan Pavlovich

According to the remarks made by Tito in September 1941 in book 7, the Comintern made its decision on this issue towards the end of August 1941. This is what was said:

¹⁴⁴ Sources, volume I, book 1, pp. 34-37.

“The Comintern didn’t respond to Tito’s question on whether it had approved the Macedonian party organization’s attachment to the Bulgarian Workers’ Party (communists). However, when D. Pavlovich from the CPY Central Committee first arrived in Skopje, the CPY Provincial Committee for Macedonia received information from the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Workers’ Party that the Comintern sent word to the Bulgarian leadership in August. Today’s letter reads: “Macedonia should be with Yugoslavia for practical and expedient reasons. The main struggle is now being waged against the German and Italian occupiers and their agents. Now it is mainly developing on Yugoslav territory under the leadership of Yugoslavia. Serbian Macedonia should become the base of this movement in order to disorganize the German and Italian rear in the Balkans.” The Comintern leadership further recommended close cooperation between the CPY and the Bulgarian Labor Party on Macedonian soil and that both parties “take a stand for self-determination of the Macedonian people”.

As to what to do about Macedonia, a question asked by the Bulgarian Workers’ Party Central Committee, given the situation that occurred in the Macedonian Party Organization in July and August and the decisive action the CPY Central Committee took, the Comintern gave an answer. The answer in text form, however, was recorded to having been received by Tito in October 1941.¹⁴⁵

The Comintern had already made its decision before it received the telegram from Tito sent on September 4, 1941. According to the CPB Central Committee the decision was made at the end of August. This means that the Comintern had made its decision independently of Tito’s intervention. Why then did the Comintern change its position regarding this decision? One possible reason could be because of the agreement signed in Moscow on July 12, 1941 between the USSR and England for a joint war against Germany. It must have been decided not to recognize the borders set by Germany in Europe and the Balkans, and according to the Comintern’s one state one party rule, the parties decided to act within their previous borders and therefore the CPM in “Serbian Macedonia” had to remain with the CPY.

¹⁴⁵ Tito’s collected Works, book 7, p. 297.

Metodija Shatorov received the Comintern's decision through the CPB which he then delivered to the CPY Central Committee with the following letter:

“Letter

From: Metodija Shatorov, Secretary of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia Provincial Committee for Macedonia

To: the Communist Party of Yugoslavia Central Committee

I am sending you this letter in its original form. It seems a mistake was made. The first letter in the letters B.C. should be P.C. We have always promptly notified our Organizations of the Comintern's decision and the Provincial Committee's consent. We await your instructions and welcome your representative. We are ready to act which can be done in a short time. Personally, I am asking to be allowed to join a partisan movement. As for the mistakes, I admit the one about “Soviet Macedonia”, which we corrected with Bulgarian help. As for the other mistakes, like the one about the weapons or the one about organizational issues, I do not admit to. Until we made ties with the BCP, I always followed your directives exactly. The abnormalities began to occur after that.¹⁴⁶

With communist greetings,
For the Provincial Committee, Sharlo”

¹⁴⁶ Sources, vol. I, book 1, p. 38.

IV. STATE OF AFFAIRS OF THE MACEDONIAN PARTY ORGANIZATION DURING 1940-1941

1. Statements made by NOF participants and scientific workers

Following are statements made by certain participants as well as certain scientific workers regarding the state of affairs of the Macedonian Party Organization in the period 1940-1941:

“After the creation of a large number of SKOJ (Union of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia) organizations in the beginning of May, a SKOJ Provincial Committee was also formed. One or more illegal SKOJ organizations were formed in almost all major enterprises, factories, workshops, institutions, secondary schools and in neighbourhoods. In Skopje in June 1940, a SKOJ Provincial counsel was held in Tsvetan Dimov’s house, which was attended by various representatives including some from outside of Skopje. In the fall of 1940, a City Conference was held in Stara-Nova Banja, which lasted all night. This conference was attended by about 40 SKOJ members.

During 1940, according to available information, 17 economic events took place in Skopje, of which 12 were strikes and 5 tariff actions. Other smaller events also took place. Some lasted a long time. The one in Papateodosi lasted 50 days. The one in the “Balkan” section lasted 20 days and the one in the “Vardar” factory lasted 14 days.

The advanced women’s movement continued to grow and further strengthen its ideological structure. The action the Communist Party initiated to create a women’s supply cooperative in the summer of 1940 produced positive results with 150 women joining and being led by a Communist active. These women, through various forms of activities, worked for their inclusion in social life and for their rights.

In 1940, the Communist Party in Skopje expanded its activities and began to work intensively in the countryside. The “Selska samopomosh” (Village self-help) subsidiary organization was

created and installed in the villages Singjelijka, Petrovets, Bunardzhik, Katlanovo and others.

At this time, the faculty advanced student movement as well as the entire Macedonian student movement in general aligned themselves in the Yugoslav plain.

Outings for August 2, 1940, on the occasion of the Ilinden Uprising, were organized in several places including Shishevo, Matka, Nerezi and Saraj.

Among the more significant actions carried out were the January 1941 demonstrations at the time when Prime Minister Dragisha Tsvetkovich and the Minister of Education Anton Koroshets were visiting Skopje. During their visit to a gathering in the Faculty of Philosophy they were met by demonstrating students and monopoly workers, who expressed dissatisfaction with their government's policies.

For the first time in 1940, Communist Party and SKOJ members began a mass campaign of writing slogans on the walls of houses in various parts of the city. A large number, sometimes over a thousand copies, of leaflets and proclamations were distributed. In 1940, leaflets were also distributed among the mobilized soldiers, protesting about the government not providing enough for their families. The soldiers in 21 regiments refused to eat their food, spilled their cauldrons and demanded to be sent home or be sent to war. Twenty four soldiers were punished for their deeds.

According to the activities the Communist Party carried out, especially within the labour movement, it shows that the revolutionary movement wasn't disjointed, random, or isolated, and that all this wasn't the action of individual persons or small groups but of a broad layered people's movement, with broad support, managed by one centre, that is, by the Communist Party, which acted in accordance with the established systematic plan. The Communist Party connection to the working class was so strong and wide that arrests and acts of terror couldn't stop it from growing. The few arrests that the police made weren't as widespread as before but rather localized. This was due to the precautions taken by the

Communists when dealing with the police and their ability to work secretly.

The scale of economic actions carried out by the URS unions and worker participation in the communist-led demonstrations in 1940, showed that attempts made by the Tsvetkovich-Machek government regime through YUGORAS, as regime unions, to dull the fury of URS in Yugoslavia were futile. The trade unions fell directly into the hands of the Communist Party through commissions and illegal trade union boards.

1. The labour and revolutionary movement in Skopje, as well as the labour movement in Macedonia, which took place within Yugoslavia in 1940 and 1941, was intense and broad in carrying out its activities. It was a time when all foreign influences were completely removed from the labour movement that fell under Communist Party influence, when the organizations and the communists were freed from the outdated narrow organizational forms in how they acted and did their work, when the circle of illegal-political activities was broken.

2. In addition, the Communist Party provincial leaderships, SKOJ, and the Red Aid in Skopje worked under illegal technical conditions. In other words, they worked from a place where they led and set the tone for labour and for the national revolutionary movement in Macedonia.

3. With its program and activities, which were aimed at the interests of the broad strata and the national interests of the people, the Communist Party grew into a unique party with authority and influence among the masses, which enabled it to be placed at the head of the working class struggle and the people in Macedonia.

4. A significant role was played by the legal, illegal and revolutionary press (in the Macedonian language) and through Marxist literature, to influence the people and strengthen their organizational, ideological and political unity.”¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ Dr. Velimir Brezovski, “Skopje in NOV 1941”, Skopje 1973, pp. 15-25.

“The basic food in Macedonia was more expensive than anywhere else. While in Belgrade the price of food went up by 10-15%, in Ljubljana by 16%, in Zagreb and Sarajevo by 25%, its percentage in Macedonia went up to 25-40% (1940). During this time, the cost of living went up the fastest, especially for food and clothing, with some items rising in price by 100-300%. The cost of bread had risen by 50%. At the same time, while nominal earnings recorded an increase of 12%, real earnings showed a decline.

The ruling on minimum wages, according to which workers’ wages were supposed to be increased from 22.5 to 32 dinars, didn’t even remotely improve the bad situation. Worse than that was the fact that no one implemented that ruling in the Vardar part of Macedonia. The majority of workers received wages of less than 32 dinars, so that, compared to 1939, their wages were reduced by 40%. The wages of the workers working at the “Fakir” canned goods factory were as low as 8 dinars.

The Skopje communist struggle to take over the trade unions was hard and long-lasting. In 1940, however, it gained greater dimensions and was determined to achieve its set goal. Gradually the trade union leadership was taken over and reoriented towards an anti-fascist and revolutionary direction.

The communists in Skopje also achieved great success by winning over and involving the Turkish and Albanian workers in the class struggle. The Party played a leadership role in a large number of agrarian organizations where they worked and in the cultural and sports societies of which they were members.

The Skopje workers’ struggle in 1940

Activities carried out by the Skopje workers include the action taken by the monopoly workers, the carpet industry workers’ strike, the “Vardar” factory workers’ strike, the action taken by the transportation workers, the ceramic factory workers’ strike, the “Fakir” canning factory workers’ strike, the “Papateodosi” factory workers’ strike, the action taken by the woodworkers, the Anton Ruchigaj workers’ strike, the action taken by the barbers and hairdressers, the action taken by the mill workers, the shoemakers’

strike, the action taken by the sewing workers, the action taken by the metal workers, etc.

All these major actions and revolutionary activities carried out by the Skopje workers, as well as the entire working class in Macedonia in 1940 and 1941, were a sure sign of the successful Party connection with the broad working layers and of its empowerment to challenge and lead the masses in the struggle for their economic, political and national rights and freedoms.

Despite the perpetrated political terror, the working class reacted with a series of protests, rallies, demonstrations and strikes, in response to the ban of the class unions, which took place all over the country. The CPY Central Committee and the CPM Provincial Committee issued proclamations inviting people to join the battlefront.¹⁴⁸

“Unfortunately the Tsvetkovich-Machek government team was just a continuation of the previous monarcho-fascist regimes, this time with an even more emphasized fascist component, both in the external and internal struggle. The pressure on the University intensified, its autonomy was threatened often, and the student-leaders who organized and ran the protests and strikes were dealt with fiercely. After they organized the May 28, 1940 strike to defend the autonomy of the University, the faculty council decided to expel three students from the Skopje Faculty of Philosophy without the right to take exams or to enroll in the next two semesters.

The resistance to fascist aggression was initiated on March 27, 1941, which was welcomed by the students at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje. The first mass protests carried out by the workers, high school and other students turned into mass demonstrations, the likes of which Skopje hadn't seen in a long time (it was estimated that 15,000 people participated).

The three student speakers who were protesting were thrown out because they were calling on the people to resist. They were

¹⁴⁸ Dr. Orde Ivanovski, *ibid.*, pp. 30-43.

Filimena Mihajlova, Anton Kolendich and Blagoj Korubin. It can be said that those demonstrations were the baptism in fire for the many determined fighters who later joined the National Liberation Struggle. Blagoj Korubin spoke in the Macedonian language.”¹⁴⁹

“In the last school year before the war started – about which we are talking here - the Faculty of Philosophy Party organization cell in Skopje was joined by 15 or 16 people, of whom eight were Montenegrins, three or four were Serbians and three or four were Macedonians. They were all students from this faculty: thirteen men and three women. Apart from them, there were also three or four other students at the faculty who were party members of other cells and party organizations.”¹⁵⁰

“In fulfilling the tasks that was set before them after the June 22, 1941 consultations regarding the preparations for the armed struggle against the occupier in their country and as their international duty, the communists in Skopje during July and August 1941, developed wide actions to collect weapons and other military and medical materials. In July and August 1941, communists from the Skopje ranks organized sabotage groups and regularly carried out military training. Some of these groups focused on specific tasks such as gathering intelligence, with which they became very successful. Much attention during this time was also given to manufacturing various sabotage devices that were made in special camouflaged workshops.”

The first sabotage action was carried out at the beginning of August 1941, at the chromium mine in Radusha from where large amounts of explosive material were taken. Two more such actions were carried out at the same mine before the end of August 1941. All this time, during the execution of the two last actions, the saboteur group lived and operated out of a military camp located in a grove near the Vardar River, on the opposite side of the village Zlokukjane. The military camp was organized and well looked after. Leading it were military elders – a commander and a political commissar.

¹⁴⁹ Dr. Desanka Miljovska, *ibid.*, pp. 50-52.

¹⁵⁰ Blagoja Korubin; *ibid.*, p. 57.

In addition to the military preparations to create partisan detachments, political preparations were also carried out. This included holding meetings, conferences and gatherings during which information was exchanged to expose the occupier and to create anti-occupation sentiments among the masses, especially in the villages. Special attention was given to actions aimed at tightening the attitude towards the occupier and gradually preparing the masses for fighting. The most significant actions that came out during that period were the Ilinden demonstrations, which emphasized the uniqueness of the Macedonian people who rejected the intentions of the occupier and collaborationists to present the history of the Macedonian people as Bulgarian. At the same time, many proclamations and leaflets were more frequently distributed against the occupier.

On August 2, 1941, Party organized, mass demonstrations were carried out against the Bulgarian occupier in Skopje, Bitola and Prilep.”¹⁵¹

“It is a fact that the revolutionary national liberation struggle in Macedonia, especially in Skopje, went through various phases of winning and losing battles as well as declines and defeats from 1941 to the day of the final victory, some publicists - even politicians – however, drew wrong conclusions, providing unscientific and untrue – even insulting – assessments of the strength and action on the part of the Party organization in Macedonia, especially in 1941. In this respect, editors of the “CPY Historical Archive” went the furthest in the preface of volume VII, published in 1951, in which they consistently wrote: “...the party organization in Macedonia... small, weak, disorganized and disoriented by Metodija Shatorov (was) at the tail of the masses in 1941...” However, the historical truth is different.

During the occupation a Communist Party did exist and functioned well in Skopje with the following composition: 160 active Party members, 100 candidates waiting to become Party members, 400 active SKOJ members, a Local Party Committee, SKOJ, the CPY Provincial Committee for Macedonia (currently the CPM Provincial

¹⁵¹ Slavka Vidanova, *ibid.*, pp. 125-154. (Unfortunately the proclamation the Provincial Committee issued for this purpose wasn't mentioned - m.z.)

Committee m.z.), etc. Apart from these there were also about 2,000 sympathizers, men and women, engaged in various organizational formations in Skopje.

During the large demonstrations that took place in March, the Party not only exhibited its slogans, which expressed the people's wishes and interests, but at the same time, for the first time since its declaration in 1921, it publicly manifested itself as a Communist Party.

In fact, there was no political party, organization or group in Skopje or in all of Macedonia during the occupation except for the Communist Party.

How did the CPM behave in those fateful days, what slogans did it use, what actions did it lead - in short what political line did it follow?

It should be immediately emphasized that most articles that dealt with this issue at that period of time show that much attention was paid and elaborate details were recorded from various quotes from individual leaflets, directives and even from Provincial Committee "districts". However there was nothing written in these leaflets, directives and even manuscripts addressed to anyone that paint a bad picture of Sharlo or the Provincial Committee to imply that they were capitulators or had a Great Bulgarian attitude. All those innuendoes spread about Sharlo and the Provincial Committee came from somewhere else. Unfortunately this is what has been referenced in the selected 1941 "historical documents" in Skopje and Macedonia as Macedonian history.

It seems that certain indisputable facts about the Macedonian involvement in the first organized armed uprising have been bypassed, forgotten, or just kept hidden. These are facts that speak about the resistance in Macedonia, its preparations, its undertakings and its numerous armed actions.

Yet some people (Kolendich) have implied that precisely these facts, these numerous heroic actions which are indisputable proof - proof of practice over expressions - that the leaflets, "letters", "directives", etc., that Sharlo and the people around him have issued, had no

influence on the life and work of the Communist Party, no influence on the communists, no influence on the SKOJ sympathizers and no influence on the wider masses of people in Skopje and in Macedonia.

According to Kolendich “Sharlo had no idea that preparations were made at the beginning of the large and massive March demonstrations. He had no idea why exactly they were taking place from March 25 to 27 because he wasn’t in Skopje, like other members of the Provincial Committee, so the demonstrations were led by us - the faculty party leadership and the Skopje Local Committee. This entire operation was based on an agreement with comrade Lola Ribar - a member of the Central Committee from Belgrade.”¹⁵²

“As we now know, the news of the Triple Pact signing, which meant the Nazi-fascist forces had capitulated, was announced by radio in the early morning on March 25. I went to work that morning and met Metodi Shatorov-Sharlo, then CPY Provincial Committee Secretary for Macedonia, near the Stone Bridge, who for some time had an insight into the work of the editorial office of the newspaper “Nasha Rech”, a Provincial Committee legal organ. When the news first came out, the first to demonstrate were students who ran throughout the city. The first ones to come out were from the ranks of the Serbian Club and from the Chetnik organization, which gave them a nationalistic character. But soon afterwards, with the participation of the people from SKOJ, the situation changed. I expressed my opinion to Sharlo that in those very important events the communists should take an active part and carry basic anti-fascist slogans for the democratization of the country and its defense as it was written in the CPY Central Committee proclamations. To that Sharlo said: ‘That’s their business!’ That was the end of our short conversation and everyone went their separate ways.”¹⁵³

¹⁵² Dr. Anton Kolendich, *ibid.*, pp. 141-150.

¹⁵³ Dejan Alexich, *ibid.*, p. 102. (Here Dejan Alexic claims that Metodija Shatorov was in Skopje. Anton Kolendich, on the other hand, claims that Metodija Shatorov wasn’t in Skopje from March 25-27. m.z.).

“Kolendich: I received a directive from Blazho Orlandich, who was my contact (the faculty leadership’s liaison) with the Provincial Committee, that a call for a large number of volunteers should be organized. In addition to telling the faculty, I also passed on that directive to five party workers’ cells, in which I was an instructor.

Based on the Local Committee directive conveyed to me by Tsvetan Dimov-Chairchanets, we all started to organize and popularize the collection of weapons. We passed on that directive not only to communists, but also to sympathizers. Later we used the same ‘announcement’ the German authorities used earlier that all weapons must be surrendered, and through our connections we went after people: mostly reserve officers, officers, etc., from whom we took weapon, because they were afraid to keep them. As I recall we collected twenty revolvers and ammunition in this way. I also heard from friends that they collected machine guns, rifles, even a cannon hidden on Alija Avdovich’s property. Alija Avdovich was a communist who was later killed in the village Singjelich.

I have never heard of a directive that arms must be surrendered, nor have I heard of any comrades surrendering their arms to the enemy. Then the party equipment was added. A number of typewriters, several radios, a gestetner (a type of duplicating machine named after its inventor), large quantities of paper and other materials were transferred.

Even from the first day of the occupation, the SKOJ groups started writing slogans on the walls, slogans against Hitler and Nazism, slogans for the USSR and later slogans against the Bulgarian occupiers.

On its own initiative a SKOJ group, in the spirit of the general Party line decided that it was necessary to fight and move to a direct armed struggle against the occupier, carried out a major action: it set fire to a German Junkers 52 type transport plane forcing it to land in a field. There was a lot of talk about that in the first few months in praise of the young heroes.

The Red Aid organization, later called the People’s Aid, soon became massive. Under direct Party leadership this organization

became very active and undertook a series of well-organized measures. We should mention that among them were actions of solidarity towards the Serbian families who were expelled from Macedonia, helping Polish prisoners and especially helping the Jews, etc.

It should be especially emphasized that there were also brave people who took well-thought-out action to break into the Hanrievo military warehouses where they seized the former Yugoslav army's stored weapons. Despite the German guards, a group of young communists retrieved much needed weapons, bombs, ammunition, etc.

On the initiative of communist and sympathizer mechanics and machinists, a workshop was created to make bombs, repair weapons, etc. This workshop functioned all throughout 1941.

The Local Committee created several armed strike groups which undertook a number of actions. These strike groups began by carrying out military exercises to prepare for action, which included learning to handle weapons, acquiring basic military knowledge, etc. The strike groups then carried out several successful actions, such as breaking into the "Alatini" dynamite warehouses, causing major sabotage at the Lodge where the locomotive was destroyed, creating a traffic jam and panic among the Bulgarians and Germans; attempted assassinations of policemen and agents, liquidating confidants, etc.

After that - despite the intensified open terror perpetrated by the occupier - Party activities grew significantly... connecting with the villages, creating the first Party groups, taking up arms en masse, demonstrating, distributing leaflets on the occasion of the Ilinden celebration, students going on strike in the gymnasium for men, women protesting and demonstrating, etc.

Kolendich: When talking about Skopje in NOV in 1941, historical fact should be sharply underlined that on one side was the Provincial Committee with its opportunistic, Great Bulgarian, capitulatory Sharlo-vist attitudes or compromise-conciliatory views and policy towards those attitudes and practice, and on the other side was the membership, the Local Committee and active party organizations,

the heroic SKOJ, numerous sympathizers and the lively masses who worked, fought and took all possible actions for the development, expansion and success of the peoples' armed uprising.

All I can say about the Provincial Committee's functions is what I have found out: 1) Complete inactivity in all sectors, 2) Many organizations are dissatisfied with the actions of the Provincial Committee, 3) The Provincial Committee is not aware of the state and strength of its organization (for example the case with the Skopje demonstrations)." (See Dr. Anton Kolendich, *ibid.*, pp. 141-150.) (Kolendich took these accusations against the Provincial Committee from Dragan Pavlovich. m.z.)

"The many political and military actions that took place such as protests, boycotting various occupier measures and actions (high school students refusing to participate in the pompous celebrations organized by the occupiers); writing slogans, displaying red flags on May Day on the divisional building in the city centre; demonstrating; burning down the JU-52 German transport plane; collection weapons and other diversionary actions, meant not only that people were beginning to prepare for an armed uprising but they also were engaging in various types of resistance against the occupier.

During the months of June, July and August, until the Provincial Military Headquarters was established, the Provincial Military Commission held three meetings during which members were assigned tasks by sector: for forming and operating subversive groups and partisan detachments and for organizing intelligence activities and work inside the Bulgarian army. Decisions were also made on how to create subversive groups and partisan detachments.

During the month of June 1941, a special group was put together to collect weapons and ammunition for the city.

In early August the combative mood and pressure from the membership led the Provincial Committee and the Provincial Military Commission to create subversive groups. The most significant actions the saboteur groups undertook were the break-ins into the 'Radusha' mine warehouses where they expropriated large

caches of explosive materials to supply their organizations. On three occasions they managed to take explosives, capsules and fuses weighing more than 800 kg. They boldly broke into various military warehouses and, in a relatively short time, acquired about 20 pistols, several rifles, a “Brno” brand machine gun, a dozen bombs and certain amounts of ammunition.

The Skopje partisan detachment was formed in the second half of August 1941, from the saboteur group troikas. (The detachment was formed on August 22, 1941).¹⁵⁴

“Significant action was taken in the resistance against the Bulgarian occupier during the Ilinden demonstrations when the Local Committee implemented the Provincial Committee’s directive to plan and organizing massive demonstrations that would include Communist Party and SKOJ members, prepare slogans, etc.¹⁵⁵

“We should mention that under the Party organization’s leadership in Skopje, 17 strikes were organized and carried out in 1940 alone, in which almost the entire working class participated.

This means that the Party organization in Skopje was experiencing rapid development up to the time when the occupation took place. At that time the Party was already a well-organized political force with 160 Communist Party members, about 100 candidate members and about 400 SKOJ members.

In his memoirs, under the title ‘Actions of the Military Commission under the Provincial Committee in 1941’, Branislav Shikich wrote:

‘The Provincial Committee’s Military Commission was supposed to be created at the end of June 1941. I assume the Provincial Committee made a decision to create it immediately after June 22. Two or three days later Sharlo made an appointment for me to attend a meeting at the Jewish cemetery. Present were Sharlo, Kotse Metalets and Gjuro Lekovich-Gorski, (refers to Ljubomir Lekovich - b.m.). Sharlo informed us that a military commission was being

¹⁵⁴ Aleksandar Spasovski, *ibid.*, pp. 160-162.

¹⁵⁵ Dr. Mile Todorovski, *ibid.*, p. 179.

formed in this Provincial Committee's composition." (Branislav Shikich: Actions of the Military Commission under the Provincial Committee in 1941.)

The military commission functioned in this composition until September 1941. It was an organ of the Provincial Committee and its activities were carried out all throughout Macedonia. However, it is interesting to note that it also served as a military headquarters for Skopje, since a separate local headquarters didn't exist until September 1941.

The first sabotage action in Skopje was carried out on June 5, 1941. In doing so, a JU-52 German transport plane was set on fire right next to the military airfield. The same group also destroyed a German military truck in the middle of a city street.

The following items were acquired through various sabotage actions: a dozen rifles, two machine guns, a chest of ammunition, 30 hand grenades, 6 revolvers, over 1,000 kilograms of dynamite, a large amount of detonators, fuses and other material. According to statements made by NOB individual participants and organizers the dynamite and most of the military equipment was sent to Prilep, Titov Veles, Bitola, Shtip, Kumanovo, Kavadarci and Negotino.

Here is what Vera Atseva had to say about the transfer of dynamite and other military equipment from Skopje to Prilep: "Couriers were sent to Skopje several times to deliver the dynamite after the first Local Military Headquarters meeting took place in the last days of June."

On August 22, the saboteur groups assembled in the field opposite the village Zlokukjani and from there went up Vodno Mountain and camped in the forest above the village Gorno Nerezi. On August 23, Perisha Savelich and Ljubomir Lekovich-Gorski, Military Commission representatives, visited the saboteur camp and delivered the Provincial Committee's directive to create the first partisan detachment, which was to include all members of the previously created subversive groups.

This is what Tsvetsko Uzunovski wrote in his article entitled “Appendix to the Truth” published in “Politika”: “There were mass demonstrations on August 2, 1941, organized by the Party against the Bulgarian occupier in Skopje, Bitola and Prilep.”

Here is what Boro Trajkovski said about the first Skopje partisan detachment action: “On August 26 and 27, 1941,... we carried out a successful action at the Radusha mine. We seized about 370 kilograms of explosives and a certain amount of capsules, fuses, etc.”

The Provincial Committee’s technical equipment was located at street 335 no. 17 in a small ground floor house in Skopje. Boro Petrushevski-Papuchar worked there printing agitation and propaganda materials illegally. However, in the beginning of September 1941, the Bulgarian occupiers discovered his shop and the army and police blockaded the house on the night of September 8-9. Boro hastily packed up his equipment and, without hesitation, opened fire on them with his revolver which he always carried with him. After he broke through the blockade, during the same night, Boro went up Vodno Mountain, in the area where the Skopje partisan detachment was located and joined it.

On June 22, 1941, the local party met and decided to widen its activities, which were of great importance for furthering NORD in Skopje. After the meeting ended it was announced that in addition to carrying out protests, demonstrations, strikes and similar types of resistance, it was time to prepare for an open armed struggle against the occupier and against the domestic traitors. Immediately after the meeting ended the local party organizations took immediate measures to begin implementing the armed struggle. This included collecting weapons and other military equipment, carrying out training on how to handle weapons and carrying out sabotage actions.

During July and the first half of August, five armed subversive groups were created and began to operate in the city and its surrounding areas... At the same time secret warehouses were created to store weapons and open workshops to produce various

mines, bombs and other munitions that could be used for sabotage purposes.”¹⁵⁶

“In Skopje, as the economic-political and cultural centre of Macedonia, the working class struggle and that of the progressive forces began to intensify. A significant number of revolutionary protests and movements in the ranks of the working class began in the summer of 1940 and continued until April 6, 1941. The majority of these economic and political actions were organized and led by the Communist Party.

Almost all larger factories and workshops in Skopje were caught up in this revolutionary wave of strikes and other political actions. This strike wave was particularly significant in 1940. There was no branch, no category of worker that wasn't affected by the demonstrations and actions: textile workers from the “Vardar” factory, seamstresses, barbers, hairdressers and carpenters... all were involved in the movement. Especially noticeable and long-lasting were the strikes led by the metal workers from the “Papateodosi” factory and the “Ruchigaj” metal workshop, which lasted over 50 days.

These strikes and actions, in themselves, spoke of the Party's successful connection with the broad working masses and of its ability not only to mobilize these masses, but also to lead them decisively in the struggle to win economic-political and national rights and freedoms.

Under the leadership of the party organizations in Skopje, mass protests and demonstrations were organized for March 26, 1941, against the signing of the Triple Pact. All the demonstrators in the streets of Skopje shouted slogans: “Down with the traitorous government”, “Down with the triple pact”, “Better in the grave than being a slave”, “We want an alliance with the Soviet Union” and so on. About 12 to 15 thousand young people, students, workers and citizens took part in these demonstrations. These were the most massive demonstrations exhibited in Skopje in the entire pre-war period.

¹⁵⁶ Mitre Nepadovski, *ibid.*, pp. 192-205.

The demonstrations continued the next day (March 27, 1941). This time with stones and sticks, the protesters attacked the policemen who were trying to disperse them. They smashed the windows of the Italian and German consulates with stones. In numerous clashes with the police, a large number of police officers and protesters were injured, and more than 10 protesters were arrested and imprisoned.

By the first days of May (1941), the walls in the Skopje streets of were filled with slogans against the occupying power and against their police measures.

At the end of June, the “Tselokupna B’lgaria” newspaper workers, who were organized by the Printing House party units, went on strike. The reason for that wasn’t only because they were paid very low wages but, above all, because of the hatred and disgust they felt towards everything that was printed in that newspaper.”¹⁵⁷

“Implementing the tasks noted at the CPY Fifth State Conference in connection with the massive and more active inclusion of women in the advanced movement, a special Women’s Committee was established in the CPY Provincial Committee for Macedonia in April-May 1941.

The SKOJ group was given tasks in all the grades starting from grade V and up, to form educational groups. Educational groups were soon formed in grades V, VI, VII and VIII so that in 1940 there were about twenty educational groups in the Women’s Gymnasium.

Towards the end of 1940, more than 150 women, mostly housewives and some workers and students, became members of the cooperative.”¹⁵⁸

“In 1939 and 1940, on the eve of the historic and revolutionary year 1941, the Turkish and Albanian peoples acquired their first SKOJ

¹⁵⁷ Dimche Hadzhi-Mitrevski, *ibid.*, pp. 207-213.

¹⁵⁸ Marija Jovanovich, *ibid.*, pp. 233-236.

and CPY organizations, and on September 1, 1940, for the first time in their history, they formed a party candidate unit.”¹⁵⁹

“In the beginning of August (1941), Robert Gajdich visited Vidovski and suggested that his workshop be used for making and repairing weapons.”¹⁶⁰

“When the party organization in Skopje first appeared, the police noted that slogans had been written on the walls of some houses - such as the slogan in support of the USSR which was written on May 21, 1941. During the same month, the police noted that the working class initiated actions to organize strikes in the form of requests for the increase in wages. On June 17, a meeting was held to prepare for a strike by the tobacco workers which the police discovered and arrested the meeting attendants.

After this action, the Bulgarian police noted that the communist propaganda was intensified among all branches of workers. Communist leaflets were distributed, meetings were held in private houses and group excursions were organized, during which prominent communists advised the workers on the situation in the Soviet Union, against supporting the Bulgarian government, etc., and called on them to fight for increases in wages and reduction in working hours.

In August, the police discovered a meeting being held at the St. Pantelei monastery, which was attended by about 30 workers. Another meeting was held in “Matka” in which about 40 workers were present. These meetings were held in order to discuss how to organize the young people to participate in strikes, sabotage, etc. Immediately after the USSR was attacked by the Germans, a leaflet was published and distributed throughout the city. The leaflet glorified the Soviet Union. After that another leaflet was written and distributed, which included parts of “Stalin’s speech” pointing out the fascist enslavers’ danger.

At the end of July 1941, a leaflet was distributed in Skopje, in which the Communist Party invited the Macedonians, Turks, Albanians

¹⁵⁹ Prof. Mustava Karahasan, *ibid.*, p. 240.

¹⁶⁰ Dragoljub Bogojevich, *ibid.*, p. 272.

and Vlachs, as well as the rest of the population, to come out en masse to celebrate the Ilinden Uprising and demonstrate against the new enslavers of Macedonia.

According to police data, members of the Skopje Regional Headquarters robbed quantities of explosives from the “Radusha” mine. During the first attack they seized 4 backpacks of explosives and one backpack of capsules. During the second attack the group seized 8 backpacks of dynamite and 1 backpack with capsules.

Weapons and munitions store discoveries included the discovery of one warehouse where 2 machine guns, 9 Serbian rifles, 75 packs of dynamite, 3 dry batteries, 4 magazines with machine gun ammunition, 8 pistols, 9 boxes of capsules, and other military materials were seized.

A second warehouse was discovered containing several machines and a large amount of explosive material, capsules and other items which were seized.

A third warehouse was discovered in which were found explosive materials, capsules, a spool of wick for exploding dynamite, 1 Serbian carbine, conspiratorial materials and other items.

A fourth storage place was discovered in a vineyard in the valley near Kozle were 4 clocks, several machines, about 7 kg of dynamite and other materials were found and seized.

In addition to the above-mentioned warehouses, the police in Skopje also discovered Serafim Vidov’s workshop in which a radio-transmitting station with a radius of 30 km was set up to teach Morse code.”¹⁶¹

“And now, if I may, I want to say that I am sorry that my friend Vera Atseva is not here... essentially there is no difference in our points of view... Yesterday Vera spoke against the wording in my presentation – that Sharlo wasn’t up to the given situation. The problem here is terminology. It’s different when a politician speaks

¹⁶¹ Boro Mitrovski, *ibid.*, pp. 326-332.

in a political dialogue. He can use appropriate terminology. And it's another thing when a scientist presents his scientific achievements. A scientist can't say - Sharlo is Bulgarian, like my friend Vera said yesterday. I'm sure she doesn't believe that. Because if a scientist says Sharlo is Bulgarian he or she will have to prove it. And we all know that Sharlo was born in Macedonia (Prilep) and that he grew up there. On top of that he declared himself Macedonian. We can only confirm that the Communist Party of Bulgaria was conceptually closer to Sharlo..."¹⁶²

"Now let's move on to why it is clear that Sharlo consciously went about this business. First, comrades, if one carefully reads Metodija Shatorov-Sharlo's letter, written after the Provincial Committee was dissolved and after he was removed from his position as CPY Central Committee Secretary for Macedonia in 1941, and if the letter is viewed with a political eye, one will surmise that deep in his soul he was Bulgarian. One will surmise that Shatorov spoke of Macedonia, but he spoke in the subtext of Bulgarian Macedonia and Bulgarian Macedonians. One will surmise that even though he didn't say the word Bulgarian, it was in his soul. All his actions through the summer of 1941, as secretary of the Provincial Committee, were subordinated to Macedonia being an integral part of Bulgaria. I knew him personally, I have worked with him, I was a member of the Provincial Committee, and so I know what I am talking about..."¹⁶³

"In June 1940, Comrade Bajo told us that we should form a SKOJ Provincial Committee. Bajo, Bekjo Bashnich and I joined the Provincial Committee. During the first meeting it was just the three of us. Bajo was the secretary. He spoke about the goals and tasks that stood before our SKOJ Provincial Committee, and that we should also create SKOJ local committees in other cities in Macedonia as well as maintain a constant relationship with them. In October, we held the First Local SKOJ Conference which was attended by 20-30 people.

In the beginning of 1941, we established SKOJ groups in secondary schools, as well as among the workers and in the various

¹⁶² Mihailo Apostolski, *ibid.*, p. 377.

¹⁶³ Vera Atseva, *ibid.*, p. 379.

neighborhoods. Included among the high school groups were the First Boys' Gymnasium - five groups with 40 students; The Second Men's high school - four groups with 23 students; The Women's high school - 10 groups with 70 students; The Great Medresa (Muslim high school) - three groups with 14 students; The Isa-Bey's Medresa - one group with 5 students, The Secondary Technical School - one group with 7 students; The teacher's school - two groups with 7 students; The Trade Academy - two groups with 8 students; The youth (trade) school - two groups with 9 students. In total - 30 SKOJ groups with 183 students.

There was a SKOJ group of 50 students inside the Faculty of Philosophy and another SKOJ group of six students outside the Faculty.

If we again recalculate, by the month of April 1941, we had 48 SKOJ groups with 269 people.”¹⁶⁴

“I also know that on March 26th, around noon, a decision had already been made, at least by our organization - I only know that for the Faculty: to go out in the evening and demonstrate. Based on the decision made by our organization we began to prepare for the evening. Whose merit was this? Did it belong to the local committee? Did it belong to the connections between the local committee and the faculty Party organization? Or did it belong to the Provincial Committee? The only people that know for sure, of course, are the comrades who were then in those governing bodies and, if something needs to be said about the merit of that organization... On the evening of the 26th, the demonstrations started at the Korzo. Organized by the Party, SKOJ groups came from everywhere.

The demonstration wasn't so consistent: there were official demonstrations, and there were evening ones organized by the Communist Party and the working class. I don't think the ideological positions and the political positions were consistent either - nor were the emotional characteristics of certain forces in those demonstrations.”¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ Ilija Jakimovski, *ibid.*, pp. 394-397.

¹⁶⁵ Blagoja Korubin, *ibid.*, pp. 401-402.

“After the Local Party held its consultation in Kozle on June 22, 1941, during which a decision was made to start an armed struggle against the occupier, the Provincial Committee formed a Military Commission on June 28 at the Jewish cemetery. The Commission consisted of Metodija Shatorov-Sharlo, Branislav Shikich-Bruno, Kotse Stojanovski-Metalets and Ljubomir Lekovich-Gorski. At the same time, it also served as the Local Military Headquarters for Skopje.

On July 3, 1941, the Military Commission moved towards creating sabotage groups in the city as the first armed form of struggle against the occupier. The sequence for creating such subversive groups, however, wasn't determined but, as we now know, from July 3 to August 22 there were 5 such groups successfully operating in the city and surrounding areas.

On August 22, 1941, the First Skopje Partisan Detachment was created. The Detachment was created near the Vardar River opposite the village of Zlokuchani in the “Chiflik”- Skopje locality. In fact, this was the first partisan detachment created in Macedonia in 1941.”¹⁶⁶

“As we know, during 1938, 1939 and 1940, up until 1941, the Skopje Party Organization, was created, hardened and strengthened through a series of political and strike actions, so that in 1941 there were over 130 Communist Party and over 300 SKOJ members in Skopje. The March 27, 1941, demonstrations clearly showed the influence and authority the Party Organization in Skopje had. I don't know of any other city except for Belgrade, to have such organized and mass demonstrations, in which the Party Organization was actively involved.

Immediately after the occupation, the Local Committee had an extended meeting during which the directive to intensify vigilance was conveyed. Furthermore, another directive was given to the communists not to carry weapons because if they were caught they would be killed, which could spell disaster for our cadres.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Aleksandar Krstevski-Parto, *ibid.*, p. 406.

¹⁶⁷ Boge Kuzmanovski, *ibid.*, pp. 410, 411, 412.

2. Military Commission activities in 1941 under Provincial Committee leadership

Here I will refer to the report written by Dragoljup Bogoevich and Velimir Nikolov, regarding statements made by Serafim Vidovski under the title “Functioning of the first weapons workshop in Skopje 1941”.

First, in my opinion, the report the way it was presented was flawed on many issues. Namely, creating and organizing this workshop to function the way it did was one of the most important tasks the Military Commission undertook under the CPY Provincial Committee for Macedonia’s leadership. However, according to the above-mentioned report, there is no mention that the workshop was organized by the Military Commission. Even more than that, it follows from the report that Shikich, who then was a member of the Provincial Committee Military Commission, was the only expert material translator who served to organize the workshop.

By taking this approach, the authors of this very important document managed to reduce the Skopje Party Organization’s role. Perhaps this stems from the fact that at that time Sharlo was leading the Party in Macedonia. However, it seems they lost sight of the fact that it was wrong to attribute their problem with Sharlo’s views to the entire Party in Macedonia and especially to the Skopje party organization as a whole. If they had a reduced role the Party in Macedonia and the Skopje party organization wouldn’t be able to successfully organize and lead NOB and the Revolution to its end.

The Military Commission operated from the end of June to the beginning of September 1941, under the leadership of the CPY Provincial Committee for Macedonia.

The Military Commission served as a special body for the Provincial Committee’s military functions. I don’t know if, when and where local Military Commissions were formed at the Local Party Committees, but I do know this was discussed by the Provincial Committee’s Military Commission which deemed it to be necessary. However, the Skopje Party Local Committee didn’t create a separate

Military Commission, but the tasks in the sector in which the Skopje Party Organization functioned were performed by members of the Provincial Committee Military Commission. At the same time, Perisha Savelich was in charge of the Local Committee along military lines. I assume that Savelich was directly under Sharlo, who at the time was president of the Military Commission at the Provincial Committee.

The Provincial Committee Military Commission was scheduled to be created at the end of June 1941. But it appears the Provincial Committee changed its mind and created it on June 22, on account of Hitler's Germany attacking the Soviet Union. A few days later, my friend Spomenka Shikich, who (together with Mileva Sabe) at that time was taking care of maintaining the apartment, supplying food and other necessities for the Provincial Committee secretary, told me that I should meet Metodija Shatorov in the evening near the old Directorate for Forests (today's "Ortse Nikolov" street). At the meeting, Sharlo told me that a military commission had been created and asked me to join it as a reserve officer. He also asked me to attend the first meeting, which would take place at six o'clock in the evening in the clearing near the "Treska" sawmill.

The next day my "intellectual" Party cell held a meeting in my apartment. At the time Strasho Pindzhur was Party cell secretary. The meeting started at 3 in the afternoon and continued for a long time. Time was getting short and I started to worry that I wouldn't get to the field at "Treska" on time for my six o'clock meeting. The thing was that the cell wasn't supposed to know about the Military Commission and my 6 o'clock meeting. I was relieved when Pindzhur looked at his watch and said the meeting was over. So I had just enough time to get to my next meeting. I was very surprised when, after a while, I saw Strasho Pindzhur appear in the meadow. He asked me if Sharlo had asked me to be here and when I confirmed he told me that he had come for the same reason. However, when the allotted ten minutes passed and no one else arrived, we dispersed. That was the last time I saw Pindzhur. From this I conclude that Pindzhur was included in the Provincial Committee's first Military Commission composition.

Two or three days later, Sharlo invited me to attend a meeting at the Jewish cemetery. The meeting started at 3 o'clock and was attended by Sharlo, Kotse the metal worker, Gjuro Lekovich-Gorski and myself. Sharlo informed me that a Military Commission was being created as part of the Provincial Committee composition. The Military Commission was made up of Sharlo as President, Kotse in charge of public relations with our people in the Bulgarian army, Gorski in charge of the subversive groups and I was placed in charge of the intelligence service. The following tasks were set before the Commission: collecting weapons, ammunition and explosives, producing flashlights, acquire devices and other equipment that would damage railway tracks and other equipment, collect information - timetables for the movement of trains, specifically those transporting military units, ammunition and other military equipment, organize sabotage groups, train sabotage groups and party members to on how to handle weapons (rifles, guns, bombs, explosives, etc.), collect data, find places for military training, etc. Members of the Military Commission were asked to immediately begin executing the assigned tasks.

The Military Commission had four meetings during its existence. Except for one, which was held in Pajo Momchilovich's apartment, the rest were held around the Jewish cemetery. The last meeting took place at the end of August or beginning of September. I am certain that the Military Commission stopped functioning the same day when our "intellectual" cell discussed the CPY Central Committee's letter regarding Sharlo's anti-party attitude. That meeting was also attended by Lazar Kolishevski.

At its meetings, the Military Commission spent its time analyzing the tasks it performed. Among other things, it discussed the three sabotage groups that were created in Skopje, it discussed the situation with the collection of weapons, the manufacturing of flashlights, bombs and other explosives materials. It discussed the organizing of action for extracting explosives from the Radusha mine, for creating a radio station, collecting radio devices, etc. It discussed its connections with some Bulgarian soldiers and the way to collect data on the movement of trains, which the commission aimed to blow up, and how to use the Bulgarian party organization at the railway station in Skopje for that purpose. It also discussed

how to attract reserve military officers to train the subversive groups, Party members, etc.

The Military Commission also spent time analyzing and discussing ways to organize a partisan detachment. In connection with that I attended a meeting with Sharlo near the end of July during which I informed him that some workers (among whom was Mihajlo Andrich) who worked at the Kapina factory and who, before the occupation, came from Porechje, had asked me or one of my friends to join them. They said we should organize the people who hid in the forest to avoid the Bulgarian occupier's terror. They told me they could assemble about 80 people and about 300 rifles. They also told me that some workers from Kapina were political workers before the war. I suggested to Sharlo that after work I should go there and organize a partisan detachment. He told me that he needed to consult the others in the Provincial Committee and maybe he would go himself to get to know the situation better and for now that we should wait. Two or three weeks later, at my constant insistence for an answer, Sharlo told me that the comrades (he meant the Provincial Committee) didn't agree with my proposal because its realization at the moment wasn't politically opportune. The population in Porechje was Serbian leaning. The detachment that would be created wouldn't be considered by the Macedonian people as their own but as a Serbian detachment, and the occupier would use this to blame the Serbians and accuse our Party of being a Serbian nationalist weapon. That's why we had to postpone all the work until later.

As part of my work in the Military Commission, I was assigned to supervise Serafim Vidoevski and Bogoljub Dimitrievich who were responsible for manufacturing flashlights, bombs, flame throwers, a radio receiving station and other items. I was also there to help them interpret the drawings and professional literature. As a result I often found myself in the workshop with these comrades.

After training the three subversive groups in Skopje, towards the end of July and the beginning of August, the Military Commission decided to combine the three subversive groups and create a partisan detachment. The Military Commission also decided to train military tactics to party members, young people, sympathizers and all kinds

of groups throughout Macedonia. As a result we needed to find as many military instructors as possible. I was expected to be the chief military instructor. There was talk of appointing Gjuro Lekovich-Gorski commander of the Skopje detachment. However, the Military Commission never mentioned Gorski as the commander in chief of all the partisan detachments in Macedonia, even though Gorski later claimed that he was. He couldn't have been because at that time not a single partisan detachment had been formed.

The Military Commission stopped functioning the moment Sharlo was removed from his post as Provincial Committee Secretary.”¹⁶⁸

“WEAPON WAREHOUSES IN 1941

In July 1941, several sabotage groups were created in Skopje. They attacked the Radusha mine several times and expropriated ecrasite, dynamite, capsules and other items. These were very difficult and dangerous measures, especially since we weren't armed and couldn't fight back if the enemy discovered us. After that we carried out an action at the Pyrotechnic factory in Gjorche Petrov - then known as Handrievo.

In addition to expropriating explosive items, we also built bombs and flame throwers at Seraphim Vidovski's workshop and several other places. All those weapons had to be secretly stored somewhere. That was my task with the help of a few other comrades. Parts of the explosives were stored locally in secret warehouses and the rest we gave to comrades from Prilep, Kavadartsi, Veles and other places. I packed the explosives for them in cement bags and they carried them to their places.

We had a warehouse at the Jewish cemetery. Dragan Tomich and I opened old grave slabs and filled them with dynamite and other explosive items. It wasn't pleasant walking around the graveyard at night but it was a very good shelter.

We also used a small house in Madzhir-Maalo as a weapon's warehouse. We rented the house for some time and no one knew

¹⁶⁸ Branislav Shikich, *ibid.*, p. 444 and the “November 13” edition of the Skopje Fighters Organization, Skopje, Year VI, no. 6/1967 p. 12.)

what was happening inside it. In fact, there was hole dug under the shower which we filled with explosive materials that were used to supply the saboteur groups.

After the First Skopje Partisan Detachment was disbanded, its weapons were left in Vodno. Those weapons were taken and secured with the other weapons. Dragan Tomich, Kemal Sejvula, Vancho Zafirov-Chanakov and I brought them to the city. We took them from Vodno, loaded them in a car, brought them down to Skopje and secured them in our warehouses.

We had a third warehouse in Madzhir-Maalo located in Nada Veselinova's house. Nada was a monopoly worker at the time. There was a bunker dug in the shed where we stored most of the weapons, the rest we stored in her attic. However, I don't remember why but Nada had to move from that house to another. After she did we moved the weapons to her new house. We loaded them in a cart: weapons and explosives at the bottom with a bed on top of them and Nada's child on top of that. Her child has now grown and is in school. We dug a bunker in the yard of Nada's new house and hid the weapons in it. Next we built a chicken coop on top of the bunker. This house also had a well in which we hid more explosive materials. There we hid explosive liquids, a Geshtetner (duplicating machine) and some propaganda materials.

These were the main weapons warehouses in 1941. As a result of a major search campaign in Skopje some were discovered by the Bulgarian police, the rest remained intact and were used throughout the struggle".¹⁶⁹

"During the month of June 1941, organizations for your people were created in Chucher and Gluvo. The two organizations held a joint meeting above the village Gluvo, near the Pudarats Locality where they discussed Germany's attack on the USSR. At the end of the meeting they decided it was time to arm themselves and for that they needed to start collecting weapons."¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Ilcho Jakimovski, "Weapon warehouses in 1941", The "November 13" edition of the Skopje Fighters Organization, Skopje, year VI, no. 6/1967, p. 12.)

¹⁷⁰ Trajko Stojkov, *ibid.*, year I, no. 1 of 1962, p. 9.

“While I was going home accompanied by Metodija, (Shatorov) we talked about people who had been killed and why they were killed! They were killed because they were caught carrying weapons on them. Then Metodija said that a directive should be issued to all party organizations in Macedonia and to all organized party comrades not to carry weapons on them because the fascists would instantly shoot them for that. He was thinking that way in order to preserve Party cadres.

This directive was immediately implemented in Skopje. A few days later it was also implemented in the interior.

During the entire occupation, even when I was in Skopje, in Albania and after I was released from prison, I never heard of any directive given to hand over weapons to the Germans! I heard that after the occupiers left. I was surprised that someone would even say such a thing. Several years after the liberation, a friend accidentally told me that it was I who had delivered the directive to Prilep in 1941. I immediately denied that because it wasn't true. I told my friend that I never delivered such a directive, nor did I know about such a directive. And why is it that no one asked me about this until today?”¹⁷¹

Svetozar Vukmanovich - Tempo, a member of the CPY Central Committee in Macedonia, sent Sreten Zhujovich to Macedonia at the end of 1939 and he remained there until the first half of 1940. This is what Sreten Zhujovich said in his memoirs: “First, we organized a mass celebration to celebrate the Ilinden Uprising. When we gathered the people on a national basis the Macedonian people didn't know why we acted this way...” Then in 1940 we learned that after Shatorov was placed at the head of the Party organization, in the spring of 1940, the Macedonian national question became a primary issue in Macedonia. In 1939 both Zhujovich and Tempo were in Macedonia but they did not pay attention to this issue and attached primary importance to the class issue, which for Macedonia was of secondary importance and therefore the Macedonian people were passive observers. This

¹⁷¹ Kiro D. Petrevski-Dimush, autobiography, August 9, 1971, MANU Skopje N.R., no. 87.

shows how little the CPY knew about the situation in Macedonia. Attitudes were imposed that didn't mobilize but created passivism.

Secondly, there were different views on how to organize the general Macedonian People's Front. Shatorov was of a firm position that the entire Macedonian population should join the Macedonian National People's Front, regardless of nationality, religion, or social affiliation - all who were ready to fight for national liberation, unification and the formation of an independent Macedonian state. Those who were fighting for other people's interests on an anti-Macedonian basis couldn't be included in the front, regardless of whether they worked for the Greater Serbs, Greater Bulgarians, or Greater Greeks. However, Svetozar Vukmanovich-Tempo was adamant: "only those who are pro-Soviet Union can enter the front and participate. Those who aren't cannot participate..."

The third question that was asked was about the unification of all parts of Macedonia. This is what Zhujovich said about that: "As for the unification of the Macedonian people, this couldn't be established then because there were Macedonians under Serbia, under Bulgaria and under Greece, and a conversation with those bourgeoisies wasn't possible... because they were all against the unification of Macedonia." But Shatorov advocated for an opposite view, unification should be the main goal in the program for the liberation of Macedonia.

The fourth issue was that all proclamations handed out should be written in the Macedonian language.¹⁷²

The following can be concluded from carefully analyzing the documents and other materials, as well as the statements made by the contemporaries:

The Provincial Committee, formed in early 1940, eventually renamed the Party Organization in Macedonia from the Communist Party of Yugoslavia Provincial Committee for Macedonia (CPY PC) led by Serbia, to the Communist Party of Macedonia Provincial Committee (CPM PC). The Provincial Committee had been under

¹⁷² Sreten Zhujovich's memoirs, June 14, 1960. INI Skopje, Sl. IV no. 748, pp. 32-40.

CPY Central Committee leadership since 1940. With the renaming, the Macedonian Communists finally achieved their goal which they had established in 1919, and amended in 1923-1924 to include the formation of a separate, independent Communist Party of Macedonia (CPM), equal to the other Communist Parties in the Balkan countries. Unfortunately their effort was in vain because the CPY, CPB (Communist Party of Bulgaria) and CPG (Communist Party of Greece), which led the Macedonian communists in their respective parts of occupied Macedonia didn't agree with that concept and stood firm for a fragmented communist movement in Macedonia, i.e. that each Communist Party should manage the communists living in their part of the Macedonian territory which the various monarchies occupied and annexed during the wars of 1912-1918. This situation led to each of these Parties looking for communists in Macedonia to support their respective Party. Those communists in the three parts of Macedonia who didn't want a CPM to be created were declared undesirable and removed from the Party ranks, that is, they were accused of being Bulgarian, Serbian, or Greek but not Macedonian.

After it renamed its Party to CPM PC, the Provincial Committee began to build its basic program goals for solving the Macedonian national question and for tackling social and economic issues. One of its main goals was the unification of Macedonia as an independent state and as an independent subject with its own sovereignty and to be allowed to participate as an equal partner with the other Balkan states in solving Balkan problems. Unfortunately the old leaders at the District Committee level who could implement directives, answered only to the Provincial Committee of Serbia and weren't too keen to create programming goals to serve Macedonian interests. They wouldn't issue independent documents of program importance for solving the issue of Macedonian individuality. They were basically set on the issue of class liberation, which wasn't at all connected with national issues and national traditions which the Macedonian people desired.

The Serbian led District Committee refused to recognize the CPM Central Committee's program goals, which represented a maximum program for solving the Macedonian question, i.e. for the Macedonian people's complete liberation from slavery from Serbia,

Bulgaria and Greece. In the District Committee's view the wars of 1912-1918 liberated Macedonia. The District Committee refused to recognize that Macedonia was occupied, fragmented and annexed by the surrounding monarchies and that the Macedonian people were enslaved by those same monarchies. The CPM Provincial Committee's idea was to create a single Macedonian communist party with a single leadership. The CPM Provincial Committee wanted to create a Macedonian state that would be equal to the other Balkan states, which would fight in a joint struggle with the working class in the other states which were struggling for their liberation. The CPM Provincial Committee wanted to create a Macedonia which, in addition of struggling for class liberation, would also struggle for its national liberation.

The CPM Provincial Committee's program goals fully encompassed the Macedonian people's interests and protected their permanent historical interests. The Provincial Committee's goals, unfortunately, didn't coincide with the interests of the neighbouring communist parties, which in their program goals envisioned a partial solution for the Macedonian question within their existing borders and to be treated as a minority issue. Unfortunately for some (CPB and CPG) the Macedonian question didn't exist at all as a national issue. They hesitated (refused) to recognize the Macedonian national identity.

The position taken and decisions made at the CPM Provincial Party Conference held in September 1940, weren't accepted by any of the delegates attending the CPY Fifth State Conference held in October 1940. Disputes and major controversies arose on the following issues: the status of the Serbian colonists deposited by the monarchy for the period from 1919-1940, the Macedonian national question, the front organization in Macedonia, etc. The Macedonian delegation's views, especially those of Metodija Shatorov, were a thorn in the side and were sourly received by the Serbian Party leadership.

A growing inter-party struggle for greater influence in Macedonia began in 1941. The Bulgarian Communist Party took action to expand its influence and to act in all of Macedonia but left the Vardar part of Macedonia to the Communist Party of Yugoslavia,

i.e. the part that was under the slavery of the Serbian monarchy. Contrary to that were the CPM Provincial Committee's views. The CPM Provincial Committee wanted to preserve its independence and be treated as an equal in decision-making. It wanted to be an independent master in the struggle for a complete solution to the Macedonian question, that is, for the establishment of united state on the entire Macedonian territory. These views, however, weren't acceptable to the Communist Parties of the neighbouring countries. To achieve their goals, the communist parties used the Communist International, which at that time was a major factor in the communist movement with its ability to decide on personnel and organizational issues. The CPY and CPG asked the Communist International to leave the party organizations in Macedonia, each in their own part of Macedonia, as they existed before the war. On the other hand, the CPB, using the war and the expansion of the Bulgarian state, sought to expand its activity to the whole of Macedonia. Each wanted to grab as large a part of Macedonia as possible, and none of them wanted an independent Macedonian communist party as defined by the CPM Provincial Committee program goals. None of the Parties respected what the Macedonians wanted and each imposed itself without choosing the means to achieve the Macedonian people's goals. Each asserted their views and demanded from the Communist International a solution in favour of their own interests, regardless of whether they coincided with the Macedonian national interests or not.

For reasons still unknown, the Communist International decided to authorize the Communist Party of Bulgaria to manage the CPM Provincial Committee and, on May 24, 1941, summoned Metodija Shatorov, then Provincial Committee Secretary, to go to Sofia to receive further instructions. Metodija Shatorov returned to Skopje on June 1, 1941. Why did the Communist International do this? Was this done after the CPB intervened? Or was it done because of the pact made by the USSR and Germany by which the USSR recognized the new borders set by fascist Germany and according to the former principle: one state one party?

From this we can deduce that the connection between the CPM Provincial Committee and the CPB wasn't under the Provincial Committee's random initiative but under a Communist International

decision. This is evidenced by the fact that the Communist International didn't answer the question posed by the CPY Central Committee as to whether the Communist International had made a decision to authorize the CPG to manage the Macedonian Party Organization. The Communist International on its own initiative decided to return the Macedonian Party Organization to the CPY composition (to the part of Serbian Macedonia). This didn't happen by accident. Also, this took place before the CPY Central Committee intervened on September 4, 1941. From this it follows that the separation and reinstatement of the Provincial Committee wasn't the Provincial Committee's decision, and specifically not the Secretary's (Shatorov) decision. This decision, in its entirety, was made by the Communist International, i.e. the decision of an external factor which interfered in Macedonian affairs and didn't allow the CPM Provincial Committee to independently adopt its own position and decide on its own how to resolve current issues that were of interest to the Macedonian individuality, that is, as an independent entity.

Disputes arose between the CPY and the CPB over the Macedonian question on one hand and disputes between the CPM Provincial Committee and the CPY and CPB on the other. The CPM Provincial Committee wanted to become independent and act independently in the entire Macedonian territory as a single Macedonian organization in a joint struggle until a Macedonian state was created. This CPM Provincial Committee proposal was based on the decision made at the CPM Provincial Committee Plenum held in January 1941, which stated that the CPM Provincial Committee would be consistent in its struggle until the complete liberation of Macedonia and the establishment of an independent Macedonian state.

CPY leadership accusations against the Provincial Committee were leveled on the basis of reports sent to the CPY by its own delegates who were sent to Macedonia by the CPY Central Committee. The Provincial Committee and especially its secretary Shatorov, were accused of having a nationalistic and chauvinistic attitude towards the CPY leadership; of severing ties between the Provincial committee and the CPY; of not responding to the call to report to the Central Committee (not considering it necessary to explain the termination); of having a hostile attitude towards the Serbians,

which doesn't differ from the attitude of the Macedonian reactionary bourgeoisie; of neglecting one's party activities; of ignoring all party rules regarding internal party relations and discipline; of conducting anti-party and counter-revolutionary activities; of giving a directive to hand over weapons to the occupying powers; of the position taken to create a Soviet Macedonia and waiting for the Red Army to arrive; of haranguing against the CPY leadership and its secretary, of calling the secretary an Anglophile because the proclamation said that Yugoslavia was enslaved; of not taking action in Macedonia to create partisan detachments thus expressing criminal attitudes; of having the attitude that the peoples of Yugoslavia are not enslaved, and Macedonia is liberated, which smells not only of nationalism but also of Germanophilism; for handing over the weapons to the occupier and leaving the people without weapons; for the destruction and disposal of the printing press; for not knowing the state and strength of the organization; for complete inactivity in all sectors, for conspiracy violations and lack of discipline, laziness; for Shatorov declaring himself a Bulgarian and a Bulgarian exponent, a Bulgarian at heart; for not acting even in the presence of colossal objective and subjective conditions, etc. These accusations were based on the published reports and letters sent in the name of the CPY Central Committee as well as from other sources and signed by Tito.

We have presented this summary of accusations in order to appreciate the conditions under which the Provincial Committee had to function at the time and what was said and written against it and against Shatorov. All these accusations have been already described in detail earlier in this book.

From the material presented here, one can see that the Provincial Committee Bureau's responses to the CPY Central Committee leadership's accusations were false. This is what Dragan Pavlovich, a CPY Central Committee delegate, said in his report: "They believe (referring to Provincial Committee Bureau members) that "Father's" (referring to the CPY Central Committee) decision was made on the basis of the slander and lies of one man (Lazar Kolishevski)." The CPM Provincial Committee Bureau believes that the decisions made to dismiss Shatorov and suspend the Provincial Committee were based on a report in which the contents were incorrect, slanderous

and false. Dragan Pavlovich's report had quoted Provincial Committee opinions not facts. He made his decisions on the basis of untested arguments. These weren't the decisions of the collective body but the decisions and dictates of one individual.

From the published documents that we have looked at so far regarding this problem, it isn't possible to determine who made the decisions – whether it was the Central Committee Politburo or an individual. According to book seven of Tito's notes, Tito had convened a Central Committee Politburo session where this problem was discussed. However, there are no corroborating documents that show which day the session was held, who was present and what conclusions were reached. There is a document from a session held on August 31, 1941. In the conclusions of this document there is only information about letters being sent to the members of the CPM, to the Executive Committee of the Communist International and to the CPB Central Committee.

From this it can be concluded that the CPM Provincial Committee Bureau was right when it took the position that the decisions were made by an individual. We should be able to prove this by looking deeper into the Party archives, to the extent that there are available documents about these events. When that happens we should be able to get to the truth.

3. Shatorov informs the Comintern on the situation and disputes that have arisen

It follows from this document that, while the Provincial Committee and the Macedonian organization were part of the CPY, they never neglected, not even a single directive issued to them by the CPY. At some point later, relations between the Provincial Committee and the CPY Central Committee began to change. Around April 20, 1941, the CPM Provincial Committee received a directive from the CPY Central Committee to cleanse the Party organization of various unhealthy elements. At that time, there were about 300 Party members, and if the same CPY Central Committee criteria was applied like it was in Shatorov's case there wouldn't be "even five souls" left, which would mean a complete dissolution of the Macedonian Party. This is what Metodija Shatorov said about that:

“It is true that on my proposal we decided that the party shouldn’t be dissolved, but the membership should be increased and I was a determined opponent of that panicky directive. It was my duty, however, to suggest that this decision be carried out in the exact opposite way. We would do no great good if we disbanded the party, which was already small in number. Our goal was Macedonia’s liberation from fascist slavery. How could we achieve that without the party organization? We took over everything and increased the membership to around 700.”

The reason why the Provincial Committee didn’t implement the CPY Central Committee’s directive was because it deemed it to be incorrect and harmful to the Macedonian communist movement. The Provincial Committee at that time was preparing for a complete social and national liberation, and in order to achieve that goal it needed a party organization. Further research should be done to determine why the CPY Central Committee issued such a directive in the first place.

This is what Shatorov said about the CPY Central Committee’s allegation that the proclamation the CPY issued, calling on the membership and masses to action, was annulled: “That proclamation didn’t exist. No such proclamation was received. It is true that if we had received even one copy and if we’d had the technology, we would have duplicated it into multiple copies. Also, not a single word was said about not publishing it, neither from me, nor from my comrades.” However, someone had said that the Provincial Committee had received a proclamation that was brought to it by the CPY Central Committee representative but it wasn’t the same proclamation. This proclamation was the one the CPY Central Committee issued on the occasion of fascist Germany attacking the USSR. The CPY Central Committee, in this proclamation, didn’t call for action but only to prepare for an armed struggle. The decision to call for an armed struggle was made on July 4, 1941. This second proclamation was discussed by the Provincial Committee about which Shatorov said the following: “In my conversation with that villain “Mitre” (Kolishevski) and with the CPY Central Committee representative, I said that even if we wanted to issue this proclamation in Macedonia it would have been especially harmful because this proclamation equated Macedonia to

the other provinces in Yugoslavia regarding losing their freedom and independence because of the occupation. Macedonia, however, wasn't free or independent before the occupation or after it. It simply fell under a new slavery. However, the real reason for not issuing this proclamation was because at the time we didn't have the technology to duplicate it. The equipment was thrown out by a fellow technician, a Montenegrin, whom the CPY Central Committee had expelled from the party for that reason. The CPY Central Committee might be regretting doing that and that's why it's talking about us persecuting our Serbian comrades and accusing us of being nationalists and chauvinists.”

Regarding the allegations made by their contemporaries against the Provincial Committee and Shatorov, accusing them of issuing a directive to hand over the weapons to the occupier, it can be concluded that such a directive was never issued. Conversely: the weapons were collected and stored in warehouses. On top of that the Provincial Committee organized workshops to repair and manufacture weapons. This is what Shatorov said regarding this accusation: “This issue is also misused; we haven't passed a directive on handing over weapons.” From statements made by his contemporaries it is clear that no weapons were handed over to the occupier by directive. There is no document found claiming that weapons were handed over to the occupier at the time. However, there are statements made that the weapons were kept in secure warehouses and that new ones were collected.

This is what Shatorov said about the accusation made that the Serbian comrades were persecuted and that the Provincial Committee took a chauvinist position: “It would be good if the CPY Central Committee would say specifically, how and which of our Serbian comrades were persecuted and mistreated. The CPY Central Committee also talks about this same issue in the documents that it has adopted. Unfortunately, the CPY Central Committee and its representative can't cite a single example. One Montenegrin, a technical person of the party, was excluded, not because he was a Montenegrin, but because he committed a crime against the Party (because he threw the printing press out). As for the three comrades (two Montenegrins and one Serbian) leaving, it happened at their request and in agreement with the Provincial Committee and not

because someone had said that they were not really useful in Macedonia because they were constantly being persecuted by the authorities. There are comrades here who can prove that the comrades left of their own accord. We still have a lot of Serbians and Montenegrins in the party who are in responsible positions and we not only didn't persecute them but we, the party, the leadership and I, all worked to convince them that they should stay. The CPY Central Committee representative was himself convinced by several Serbian and Montenegrin comrades, in my presence, that something needed to be said and written about "nationalism and chauvinism and the chasing of Serbian comrades." This is boondoggling..."

It's also interesting what Shatorov had to say during the concluding part of this document under the issue of "the other charges - persecuting the Serbian comrades and Macedonian chauvinism". To this Shatorov said: "This was invented to strengthen their incorrect Bolshevik position on the national question, mainly on the Bolshevik position in practical terms and relations... The question arises as to why in all its editions from the war onwards it was stated that Macedonia had lost its independence and freedom. They talk about 'lost freedom' etc., when such freedom never existed in Macedonia before the occupation. The Communist Party in Macedonia can't accept these statements and slogans because it will lose the Macedonian people's trust that it had gained so far. I am saying this because this attitude isn't accidental; it follows from the CPY Central Committee's letter. The party organizations in Macedonia are rightly wondering what the difference is on this issue between the CPY Central Committee and the Yugoslav speaker (this part in the document is not legible, but surely the speaker is Radio London m.z.). The difference is that the Central Committee calls us 'Macedonians' and the speaker calls us 'Southern Serbians'. From this it follows that only these two terms are distinguished in the address to the Macedonian people and the attitudes about lost freedom and independence are the same. My comrades and I don't take a chauvinistic position but the comrades from the Central Committee do. They are hitting a blank by throwing blame on us. The speaker, on the other hand, is standing on the Greater Serbian position in regards to the Macedonian question. With this kind of attitude, the Communist Party in Macedonia is losing confidence. This is a gain for Hitler and for his Bulgarian agents in Macedonia.

In other words, the Macedonian people are yet again being disappointed.”

This is also what Shatorov said further down the same document: “I blame the Central Committee of Yugoslavia for secretly organizing a war against us; their Provincial Committee comrades. It placed a wedge between us when it called us chauvinists. But there was no specific reason given for that, except for the question we asked during the Conference (he thinks of the Second Land Conference held in 1940, m.z.) when we asked them to clarify their stand on the Macedonian question. But it seems our question was received sourly. Since then, that is, from the end of the conference until our binding to the Central Committee of Bulgaria, we weren’t informed about current internal or external issues, so we had to figure things out on our own.”

The Provincial Committee and Shatorov were against the CPY Central Committee’s views as expressed in the proclamations that referred to Macedonia, that is, that Macedonia also lost its freedom and independence with the fascist occupation, implying that Macedonia had freedom and independence during the Serbian monarchy, which meant that the 1912-1918 wars were liberation wars for Macedonia and not its occupation and enslavement. In its proclamations issued to the Macedonian people after the fascist occupation in 1941, the Provincial Committee had clearly stated that Macedonia had fallen under a new slavery, that is, the proclamation said: “Every honest Macedonian had the right to ask: ‘What kind of freedom is this, when the people of Shumadin were replaced by Bulgarians, and the Macedonians were kept under quarantine?’” This is what the Provincial Committee in its July 1941 proclamation to the Macedonian people said: “You are now under a new slavery, new violence, new terror... Your children-sons... are still lying in the dungeons of Kosovska Mitrovitsa and others who were arrested under the rule of the German fascists. Their crime was and still is, because they fought against the Serbian enslavers and imperialists for a free Macedonia.”

The CPY accused the Provincial Committee and Shatorov of not organizing sabotage actions against the occupiers and Shatorov of wanting to escape from CPY Central Committee control and flee to

Sofia. This is what Shatorov said about that: “It is a lie! I did not desert my work or my duty to the Party. I was away only once in the month of May and June, that was from May 24th to June 1st, 1941 when I was summoned to go to Sofia at the request of the CPB. It is true that we have not organized actions here like they have done in the other parts of Yugoslavia, but we have conducted minor sabotage campaigns in the tobacco monopolies. We have not conducted sabotage campaigns in the factories and the reasons for that are of a political and organizational nature. I deny that we did that consciously. As for the CPY Central Committee’s accusation claiming that we said that the peoples of Yugoslavia are under occupation and enslavement (except for Macedonia), and that with the current occupation we see the Macedonian masses ‘liberated’? This CPY assessment is not correct and I reject it because the Party, even before the arrival of the occupier, explained to the people the true intentions of the fascist occupiers, that is, the dangers from Germany, Bulgaria and Italy. I can also say that I personally as well as the Provincial Committee membership, in our oral and written agitations always pointed out the dangers that threatened the Macedonian people from the Bulgarian, German and Italian fascists. Germany’s entry into Bulgaria gave us a new opportunity to explain to the Macedonian people that their enslavement was about to begin. Our newsletters and announcements are proof of that. But most Macedonians didn’t believe us until they experienced the enslavement for themselves. We couldn’t eradicate this from the Macedonian masses for a third of a year, until the Germans attacked the USSR which every Macedonian felt in their soul. Until then nothing was able to convince them that the USSR and Germany weren’t in some secret war alliance. The people of Yugoslavia, and especially those in Serbia and Montenegro, were convinced that they had lost their freedom, and that’s why they immediately took up arms at the call of the party. That couldn’t happen in Macedonia. The friendship between the USSR and England had to be explained because the Macedonian masses, with English help, were enslaved under colonial slavery. In the beginning, the Macedonian people were worried about the broken friendship between the USSR and Germany, now the majority began to sympathize with the USSR and struggle against Hitler. These are political reasons which go back to organizational reasons, that is, we weren’t fully connected with the villagers until the Germans attacked the USSR. It is true that we had

connections in some places but they weren't of any great importance. And, despite the fact that we made many attempts to find connections that we could at least rely on, there weren't many, not even in the extreme parts of Macedonia (Resen... Ohrid Regions). In time however, with our oral and written proclamations to the rural population we managed to change that. Now the people are with us and are resisting the Bulgarian authorities by not supplying them with the products they need. We are also creating reasons and conditions for a partisan movement. We even started to act in districts which the fascists consider the safest. One of the reasons for being slow in this is because most of our Party members are relatively young and haven't served in the army; as a result about 90% of them needed to be trained to handle weapons."

This is what Shatorov said specifically about the accusations leveled against him and against the Provincial Committee for not organizing sabotage actions and for waiting for the Red Army to free Macedonia: "It isn't true that anyone in the Provincial Committee would even think, never mind say, that the Red Army should liberate us and that we should stand aside and wait. Without political and organizational preconditions, we couldn't have organized partisan actions in such a short time without mastering and understanding certain conditions on the part of the party and the part of the Macedonian masses." From the available documents that the Provincial Committee had produced, which are available to this day, we can say that after fascist Germany attacked the USSR on June 22, 1941, the Provincial Committee immediately organized a War Commission led by Shatorov, which started making preparations for an armed uprising. The War Commission also organized subversive groups that took certain actions such as the attack on the Radusha mine and so on. Military training was also organized for the young communists in Skopje. The War Commission also made preparations to organize partisan detachments and, as a result, the Skopje partisan detachment was created.

However, Dragan Pavlovich's allegations in the report he submitted to the CPY Central Committee on August 31, contradicted the actual situation. This is what Dragan Pavlovich wrote in his report: "There is fighting taking place in all the occupied countries, as well as in all Yugoslav provinces. Only in Macedonia there is no activity. The

fault lies with the Provincial Committee... What matters most is the Provincial Committee's inactivity, the mistakes it made and the saboteur and counter-revolutionary attitude it has adopted... The Provincial Committee isn't aware of the state and strength of its own organization... There is complete inactivity in all its sectors... Its decision to surrender and not collect weapons has caused enormous damage to the Party."

Let the reader decide who is accurate and who is not regarding Dragan Pavlovich's report.

Shatorov was accused of refusing to report to Belgrade for clarification, that is, for not attending discussions on the Macedonian question. This is what Shatorov said about that: "It's true that I didn't go to Belgrade but this is why: I went to Sofia at the CPB's request... and to receive instructions. I did that by decision (he didn't say by whose decision), I left on May 24 and I returned on June 1, 1941. During my absence an invitation from the CPY Central Committee arrived summoning me to go to Belgrade. My comrades decided that another member of the Provincial Committee should go. Another member did go, who at the same time visited the CPY Central Committee and reported on the situation in our organization... and informed the attendants that I couldn't be there because at that time I was in Sofia. I later reminded my CPY comrades of the fact that we hadn't only asked the CPY Central Committee about our connection to the CPB Central Committee but that we had received consent from them to make the connection. They even recommended that we have a relationship and for that they also gave us the link between the two central committees. I went to Sofia based on that. Until my departure we were part of the CPY, organizationally. After that we connected with the CPB."

From the same document it can be ascertained that immediately after the Balkans were occupied, the CPB sent a person to liaise with the Macedonian party organization. With the return of the first prisoners of war, returning to Macedonia, the liaisons acted through them to pressure the Macedonian party organization to connect with the CPB. As a result the party organizations in Strumitsa, Gevgelija, Veles, etc., several times had asked the question: "Why aren't we

associated with the Bulgarian party?” On the other hand, the Provincial Committee didn’t make the connection without CPY Central Committee consent. Shatorov left for Sofia after he received consent from the CPY Central Committee and after the Communist International decision was made to send him to Sofia. Unfortunately the part of the document that contained this information had been severely damaged and we couldn’t corroborate this part of the story, that is, not until we found more documents that reference this.

According to what Shatorov wrote in his documents he had doubts that the CPY Central Committee had pure intentions towards him and towards the Provincial Committee. The CPY had made too many allegations that didn’t exactly fit reality. And this wasn’t new, it began when the war in the Balkans started and with the CPY Central Committee sending liaison representatives to monitor and report on the Provincial Committee. However, in this case no CPY Central Committee representative was sent for two and a half months. This is what Shatorov said about that: “The CPY Central Committee waited for two and a half months before sending a representative. Was it necessary for the representative to come just for my expulsion from the party? Or was the CPY Central Committee building a case to show that we had betrayed the organization? Of course! Had we not received the decision (thinking of the Communist International m.z.) and agreement from the CPB we wouldn’t have handed the organization back to our Yugoslav comrades, we would have waged a new struggle and even more difficult than the one in August. If this happened all responsibility would have fallen on the CPY Central Committee and its representative. But we didn’t because we followed orders and betrayed no one.”

Contrary to other claims, the CPM organizations and the Provincial Committee were basically surrendered by the decision of an external factor, that is, by the decision of the Communist International, and not because of the accuracy of the overall accusations made by the CPY Central Committee.

The part of the document where Shatorov was talking to the CPB was damaged and it isn’t possible to see what the CPB requested from him in terms of the Provincial Committee’s organizational

structure, but from several unrelated sentences where “regional committees” were mentioned, it can be assumed that Shatorov was asked to organize several such committees in that part of Macedonia and thereby lose the party unity with the CPM. According to the words “no reorganization of the party”, it can also be assumed that Shatorov didn’t agree to lose the entirety of the CPM Provincial Committee in this part of Macedonia.¹⁷³ In addition to this, I can say that in a casual conversation I had with Pero Ivanovski-Tikvar, the then Provincial Committee organizational secretary, I learned that when Shatorov returned from Sofia he was nervous and dissatisfied with the conversation he’d had with the CPB Central Committee representatives, because they demanded that he reorganize the party organization by establishing a District Committee in this territory. Shatorov, however, was in favour of Macedonia having a separate party leadership for the whole of Macedonia.

Of course, the question arises as to why the Provincial Committee was suspended and why political secretary Metodija Shatorov was replaced in this way. Did they really make “mistakes” (all those attributed to them) or was the Macedonian party leadership independent and that it independently created the CPM with its own program to completely liberate Macedonia and establish a Macedonian state on its entire territory? The kind of program the Macedonian party leadership was proposing, however, wasn’t acceptable to the CPY, CPB and CPG. Therefore, everything that was done was done to prevent the CPM Provincial Committee from achieving its program goals.

Based on this documentation, we can say:

1. A major turning point in the Macedonian communist movement took place with the creation of the Provincial Committee in early 1940, which has historical significance:

- The Communist Party of Macedonia was constituted (abbreviated CPM PC);

¹⁷³ Metodija Shatorov, letter to the Communist International dated September 16, 1941, INI Skopje.

- Independent party documents of program importance for the CPM and for the Macedonian national individuality were adopted;
- Party organizations expanded and membership increased (from 140 to 720 members);
- The number of SKOJ organization increased;
- The number of sympathizers in the workers' revolutionary movement increased (they acted in an organized manner to exercise their economic and political rights, organize strikes, etc.);
- The masses of people also acted in an organized manner jointly with the CPM (expression through historical traditions, especially in the Republic of Krushevo, for which appearances and demonstrations were organized);
- The CPM connected class with national, past with future, for the Macedonian national individuality, thus gaining the Macedonian people's trust and improving its reputation among the broad masses;
- At the Second State Conference, held in September 1940, the Provincial Committee asked the CPY to take a clear position on recognizing the Macedonian individuality (there was hesitation among certain leaders).
- The Provincial Committee issued all its documents in the Macedonian language!

2. Criticism, accusations and slander made against the CPM Provincial Committee and against its political secretary Metodija Shatorov didn't come from the basic party organizations, or from certain party leaders in Macedonia. These accusations were made by the CPY Central Committee representatives sent to Macedonia by the CPY Central Committee leadership in 1941, namely Lazar Kolishevski and Dragan Pavlovich, as well as certain other CPY Central Committee party leaders. The CPY Central Committee party leadership made certain decisions without determining the actual situation. This includes the decisions to suspend the Provincial Committee and expel Shatorov.

3. The CPM Provincial Committee and political secretary Metodija Shatorov weren't counter-revolutionaries and saboteurs, and Shatorov was neither a Bulgarian nor a Bulgarian exponent, nor a traitor, nor a Bulgarian at heart, nor an old Bulgarian as they called him. He was a Macedonian, communist and revolutionary who had a clear vision of the Macedonian national individuality and its struggle for liberation, which is why he created the Communist Party of Macedonia.

4. The reason why the CPY Central Committee suspended the Provincial Committee and expelled Metodija Shatorov was because of the Provincial Committee's program goals announced in the proclamations issued in 1940 and 1941. The goal for liberating Macedonia was clearly spelled out in these proclamations, and its strength was seen in the words expressed in the proclamations: "The Macedonian people are fighting and should fight together with the Serbian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Greek and Montenegrin people for freedom and equality, but not for splitting Macedonia and the Macedonian people, for a free Macedonian republic as an equal member among all the Balkan states." This, however, was contrary to the CPY Central Committee's position regarding the liberation of only part of the Macedonian territory, which was conditioned by the existing borders of Yugoslavia.

5. Clearly there were opposing views on the Party organizational setup between the CPM and the CPY. The CPM Provincial Committee was consistent in its position that the communists in Macedonia should be organized in an independent Macedonian Communist Party, as part of the CPY, the way the Communist Parties of Slovenia and Croatia were organized according to the decision made at the CPY Fourth Party Conference held in 1934, when it was decided to reorganize the CPY into separate parties for Slovenia and Croatia, and in the future also for Macedonia. However, the CPY Central Committee didn't implement this decision for Macedonia until the Provincial Committee was created. But even after the CPM Provincial Committee was created in 1940, the CPY Central Committee leadership hesitated on this issue and didn't agree with the uniqueness of the Macedonian organization. After the Provincial Committee was suspended (on September 10-

11, 1941), and with the newly formed Provincial Committee, there was no longer a CPM but only the abbreviation CPY PC for Macedonia (CPY Provincial Committee for Macedonia.)

VI. CPM PROVINCIAL COMMITTEE PROGRAM PRINCIPLES IN 1940-1941

The Provincial Committee was created in the spring of 1940 and Metodija Shatorov was appointed Political Secretary. With its many years of revolutionary experience and knowledge of the historical situation in Macedonia, in a short time the Provincial Committee and Shatorov built a platform of program goals in support of the Macedonian national revolutionary movement, which included the Macedonian Scientific and Literary Society's program principles. The program contained the following basic goals: preserve the Macedonian national consciousness; struggle against the assimilation of the Macedonian nation; unify the entire Macedonian space; struggle against the enslavers of Macedonia; establish a Macedonian state equal to the other Balkan states; connect the Macedonian struggle with the workers' communist movement in other Balkan nations and in the USSR; organize a general Macedonian liberation front; oppose the colonization of Macedonian ethnic space by other countries; oppose religious and national hatred; take over the land held by the chifliks and divide it among the peasants who cultivate it; advocate for the formation of a Macedonian communist party equal to other communist parties in order to successfully conduct the struggle; connect class and national issues; adopt the Macedonian language as the official language of the people; condemn the Balkan Wars and label them as the wars of Macedonia's occupation; condemn the national and economic exploitation by the occupiers.

1. The following position was taken in regards to the Macedonian national question: the Macedonian nation was created historically; it wasn't the fruit of someone's imagination. The Macedonian nation developed under historically acquired circumstances and represents a geographical, historical and spiritual-cultural entity with the same language, culture, tradition, songs, etc., that is, it is geographically determined within its borders and to this day is fighting together with the Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek people for its liberation. ¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ Documents and materials, volume 1, book 2, pp. 321 and 322.

The CPM Provincial Committee held a Conference on October 8, 1940 during which the following conclusion was reached:

“Everything that is Macedonian is being furiously attacked through policies of national suppression, assimilation and wild terror. This includes the Macedonian culture, language, songs, etc. The Macedonian population is being tortured, robbed of its rights, and nationally enslaved. It is now facing new and great struggles.”¹⁷⁵

The Provincial Committee in its November 1940 Proclamation to the Macedonian people took the following position: “The gentlemen from Belgrade and Sofia are arguing about Macedonia but they aren’t asking the Macedonian people. Those enslavers of the Macedonian people... say that the Macedonian people are Serbian or Bulgarian and that they don’t have a history, language, etc., but those enslavers are lying! In essence, Macedonians aren’t at all Serbians or Bulgarians, but Macedonians. With the war between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, Macedonia and the Macedonian people will just change masters. Therefore, long live the free Macedonian Republic.”¹⁷⁶

2. For many years now the neighbouring monarchies have implemented policies to assimilate the Macedonian people and turn them into Bulgarians, Serbians and Greeks. In connection with this Shatorov wrote the following around 1926: “VMRO (United) couldn’t help but shout loudly to the Bulgarian and Balkan imperialists: ‘get your bloody hands off Macedonia!’ ...” He led a fight to save Macedonia from assimilation and raise the Macedonian national consciousness. He said: “Macedonians aren’t Serbians, Greeks, or Bulgarians, but represent a separate Macedonian nation...”¹⁷⁷

Further down the same document Shatorov wrote: “With their Bulgarian occupational policies, supremacists Todor Aleksandrov and A. Protugjerov caused a great deal of damage to the Macedonian cause by planting Bulgarian-ness in Macedonia and temporarily overshadowing the Macedonian national feeling for independence... The struggle to save the Macedonians from

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 334-338.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 362-363.

¹⁷⁷ Shatorov’s report, p. 6.

assimilation is by raising awareness that as Macedonians they are independent Macedonian national beings and that they aren't Serbians, Bulgarians, or Greeks, but a separate Macedonian nation".¹⁷⁸

The CPM Provincial Committee in its August 1941, Proclamation wrote the following: "Everything about Macedonia that is beautiful, including Macedonia's history and struggles, the Bulgarian fascists have taken from us and call them Bulgarian. This includes St. Kiril and Metodi, Gotse Delchev, our Macedonian revolutionary struggles, our Macedonian language (calling it "broken and Bulgarian sounding"), our Macedonian culture and traditions, etc. On the other hand they force us to learn the nice Bulgarian language."¹⁷⁹

Shatorov and the Provincial Committee understood all the Macedonian nation's elements and actively worked to expand, deepen and strengthen them, raising them to a high level of national consciousness, for the nation to be able to defend itself from attacks, suffocation, encroachment and liquidation perpetrated by its occupiers and assimilators the Serbians, Bulgarians and Greeks who were determined, by any means possible, to assimilate and liquidate the Macedonian national being.

This was confirmed by the statement the Provincial Committee made in 1940, when it concluded that: "But neither terror, nor violence, nor the artificially created, invented Yugoslav nationality, can stifle the national liberation movements of the peoples of Yugoslavia oppressed by the Serbian monarchy."¹⁸⁰

3. Regarding Macedonia's unification, Shatorov made his decision as early as 1926 and noted that: "Given the VMRO (United) perspective in Macedonia under Bulgarian rule, Petrich Region will fight for self-determination until it secedes from imperialist Bulgaria, so that it can achieve unification with the other two parts of Macedonia and create an independent Macedonian state."¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 5, 6.

¹⁷⁹ Sources, volume I, book 1, p. 31.

¹⁸⁰ Illegal Press, volume II, book 2, p. 120.

¹⁸¹ Shatorov's report. p. 9.

In his May 1941 letter to “Stojan” regarding this question, Shatorov concluded as follows: “One wonders what to do, there is only one answer: I am for uniting all Macedonians and other nationalities in Macedonia for their general right to freedom and equality. I am against splitting the Macedonian land and the Macedonian people. Macedonians should fight for their freedom and equality together with the Bulgarians, Serbians, Greeks and Montenegrins in the Balkan Peninsula because today their fate is the same.”¹⁸²

In the documents they have issued, Shatorov and the Provincial Committee are categorical in their request to fight for Macedonia’s unification, and not to resolve the Macedonian question within the existing borders established after the First World War, as was advocated by the neighbouring communist parties.

4. The Provincial Committee attached equal importance to the fight against the enslavers, regardless of whether they were Serbians, Bulgarians, or Greeks. For example, this is what was said in the article entitled “Our Way” published in 1940: “The unity between Macedonians, Albanians and Turks for a joint struggle against any oppression from any side, whether it comes from Serbia, Bulgaria, or Greece, is getting stronger.”¹⁸³

This equal treatment of the enslavers was expressed in the July 1941 Provincial Committee Proclamation, where it was pointed out that: “The Bulgarian and German police resorted to the same methods used by the Serbian oppressors and, on the other hand, as if joking, they say ‘we have freed you, enslaved brothers...’ an unachieved freedom for which you fought for 50 years. Now you have a new slavery, new violence and new terror.”¹⁸⁴

In his 1926 report, Shatorov pointed out that: “It is impossible for a revolutionary movement to leave its people under the slavery of Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece...”¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Sources, volume I, book 1, p. 17.

¹⁸³ Illegal Press, volume II, book 2, p. 103.

¹⁸⁴ Sources, volume I, book 1, p. 27.

¹⁸⁵ Shatorov’s report, pp. 1-9.

5. The ideal for creating a Macedonian state appeared a long time ago, during the Kreshna and Ilinden uprisings. This is what was said about that in a 1940 document: “If the Macedonians don’t have their own state they are not to blame. The ones to blame are the Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek imperialists who allied themselves, occupied it and partitioned it between themselves and enslaved the Macedonian people. Instead of doing that they should have left it alone to develop independently.”¹⁸⁶

In its August 2, 1941 Proclamation, the Provincial Committee took the following position: “The Macedonian people are not fighting for a monarchy; not for a Turkish sultan and not for a German king. They are fighting for a free Macedonian Republic, an equal member among all the neighbouring Balkans states.”¹⁸⁷

Creating an independent Macedonian state was one of the fundamental issues the CPM Central Committee wholeheartedly supported.

6. The Provincial Committee, in its struggle to liberate Macedonia, accepted the workers’ communist movements in the other Balkan nations and the USSR, as allies in a common goal to liberate themselves from fascist slavery.

This is what Shatorov wrote about in his 1941 letter to “Stojan”. “For that freedom and equality, the Macedonian people should be fighting together with the Bulgarians, Serbians, Croatians, Greeks, Montenegrins... all the people in the Balkan Peninsula, because today their fate is the same. The entire Balkan peninsula is occupied by Germany and Italy, two great imperialist states...”¹⁸⁸

Contrary to the attitude taken by the Provincial Committee and Shatorov, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia’s position was that the Macedonian people should fight in a joint struggle with the other Yugoslav peoples for the liberation of a democratic Yugoslavia.

¹⁸⁶ Documents and materials, volume I, book 2, p. 319.

¹⁸⁷ Sources, volume I, book 1, p. 30.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

7. In order to mobilize the broad Macedonian masses, the General Macedonian Liberation Front was organized so that all citizens could participate in Macedonia's liberation regardless of religion, nationality or social status. Anyone who worked for the interests of the neighbouring monarchies wasn't welcome.

The following Resolution was adopted during the September 8, 1940 Provincial Committee Conference: "One of the basic and most important tasks of the Party organizations in Macedonia is the initiative for creating a general Macedonian national-revolutionary front, which should be part of the general struggle... The need for this initiative is to unite all Macedonian groups and elements who are ready to fight against Great Serbian imperialism to gain their freedom. All strangers and enemies of the various imperialist and fascist propaganda, be it Bulgarian, Greek, German, Italian or other, are also welcome."¹⁸⁹

This position was contrary to the position taken by the CPY during its Fifth Regional Conference, when it was suggested that only workers and peasants should enter the People's Front, and no other social strata. Shatorov objected to that and said: "In the (September 8) Conference Resolution we stated that both the middle strata and the liberal bourgeoisie may enter the national front, all with the exception of spies and imperialist agents. A group from the liberal bourgeoisie is seeking to make contact with us..."¹⁹⁰

8. A categorical stance was taken against the population's ethnic composition change implemented by the monarchies to colonize Macedonia with a non-Macedonian population. The CPM Provincial Committee, during its Provincial Conference, adopted a position that called for taking Macedonian land from the national Greater Serbian chauvinists, bigots, "Serbian heroes" and Serbian colonists and giving it to the Macedonian peasants. The poor colonists should be given land in Serbia.

During its Fifth Land Conference, the CPY didn't adopt the position taken that the poor colonists should be given land in Serbia. Instead,

¹⁸⁹ Documents and materials, volume I, book 2, p. 337.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 349.

the CPY adopted the position that the colonists should stay where they are and not have their land taken away.¹⁹¹

9. The composition of the ethnic population in Macedonia, on one hand, was used by the neighbouring monarchies to create religious and national hatred in order to divide the people so that they could assimilate them easier. On the other hand, the Macedonian national liberation movement was struggling to achieve unity.

The Provincial Committee in its 1940 Bulletin, entitled “Our Way”, took the following position: “The Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish people’s unity in their joint struggle against any oppression from any side, be it from Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, or Italy, is getting stronger, which is no small feat for our Party.”¹⁹²

In its June 1940, Call to the working people in Macedonia, the Provincial Committee said: “Macedonia is the first in line where the bloody war dance will take place. The Macedonians, Albanians and Turks in Macedonia will be the first victims of the military slaughter...

With its policy of national suppression, the regime has robbed the people of their rights, suffocated their national consciousness and feeling, and deprived them of their freedom. The regime has caused strife and sowed hatred between nations and has divided them...”¹⁹³

In its July 1940, Call for celebrating the Ilinden Uprising, the Provincial Committee said: “Also today, Macedonians, Albanians and Turks, and all the oppressed and exploited people in the whole of Macedonia under Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek imperialism, are obliged to group together for a general struggle, for freedom and equality.”¹⁹⁴

10. Most of the land in Macedonia wasn’t in the possession of the peasants who worked it, but it was the property of the Chifliks and others. The villagers were interested in becoming owners of that

¹⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 334-337, 349 and 350.

¹⁹² Illegal Press, volume II, book 2, p. 103.

¹⁹³ Documents and Materials, volume I, book 2, p. 314.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 323.

land. Regarding this the Provincial Committee, during its Conference, adopted the following Resolution: “Measures must be taken to support the Macedonian peasant who represents the basic element of the national-revolutionary movement in Macedonia... Action must be taken to free the land from the Chifliks, monasteries, the church, the crown and such, and pass it into the hands of Macedonian peasants and growers. Macedonians from the big hills and mountains should come down and work the land of their fathers and grandfathers.”¹⁹⁵

11. Shatorov, as well as other Macedonian communists, was of the opinion that, in order to successfully lead and organize the Macedonian national liberation movement, an independent Macedonian communist party should be formed which would unite the communists from all three parts of Macedonia. This position was expressed at the BCP Second Berlin Conference, held in 1927, as well as at the CPB Central Committee Foreign Bureau on January 26, 1937. However, these views weren't accepted by the neighbouring communist parties. With Shatorov's appointment as Provincial Committee Secretary in the spring of 1940, the CPM was created but only for the Vardar part of Macedonia. All the documents that were issued during his time were issued under the name Provincial Committee of the Communist Party for Macedonia.¹⁹⁶

12. After the 1912-1918 wars ended, the Macedonian people were still nationally enslaved. The communist parties that led the Macedonian communist movement in the three parts of Macedonia ignored that and began preparations for class liberation. The Provincial Committee and Shatorov, however, being well aware of the situation in Macedonia, that is if the class issues weren't connected with the national and historical traditions of the Macedonian people, they couldn't expect positive results. This is what the Provincial Committee said about that in the article “Our Way”: “In this struggle, class interests must coincide with the right, true interests of the nation, without this connection there will be no broad mass activities in the struggle.”¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 337.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 313-384.

¹⁹⁷ Illegal Press, volume II, book 2, p. 136.

13. The Provincial Committee took the position that its documents and articles should be issued in the Macedonian language. Its view was that the Macedonian language was special and that it differed from the Serbian and Bulgarian languages. This is what was written about it: “First of all, the Macedonian language is neither Serbian nor Bulgarian; it is uniquely Macedonian... we fight against the terror that is perpetrated against the Macedonians and their language in the three parts of Macedonia which are now under Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek control”.¹⁹⁸

Writing about VMRO (United)’s activities, this is what Shatorov said: “Even before the 80’s (1880) it (VMRO (United)) was involved in publishing the Macedonian newspaper “Loza”, which was printed in the Macedonian language, proclaiming the existence of an independent Macedonian nation and pleading for an independent Macedonian state.”¹⁹⁹

This is what Shatorov said in his article published in 1935 in the magazine “Propagandist” issued in the month of May under the title “The united front with the Macedonian masses and the fight against defection”: “You meet comrades who can’t understand the Party’s assessment, that the Macedonian Slavs (speakers) represent a separate nation. In no way can this be doubted. The only argument those comrades present is that the Macedonian Slavs (speakers) speak the Bulgarian language. However, the Macedonians who are under Bulgarian and Serbian rule don’t speak the Bulgarian language. This has been proven by several internationally known philologists”.²⁰⁰

14. The Macedonian people, as well as the Macedonian communists, and especially the Provincial Committee in its documents, are all categorical that the Balkan wars of 1912-1918 didn’t liberate but occupied Macedonia. Unfortunately this position wasn’t accepted by certain persons in the CPY leadership whose opinion was that the Balkan wars liberated Macedonia.

¹⁹⁸ Documents and materials, volume I, book 2, p. 320.

¹⁹⁹ Shatorov’s report, p. 6.

²⁰⁰ Article by Shatorov published in “Propagandist” in May 1935, No. 5, pp. 24-28 and D. Dobrinov: VMRO (United), Sofia, pp. 222 and 223.

This is what was said in the CPY Central Committee May Proclamation: “The peoples of Yugoslavia have lost their independence...” Because they (all these countries) were later mentioned individually, the Macedonian people were equated as equal to the Serbian and the others, that is, it was said that they had lost their freedom and independence. This is what Shatorov wrote about it in his September 16, 1941 report to the Communist International: “This proclamation was discussed by the Provincial Committee... even if we wanted to issue this proclamation, it would have had a negative impact on Macedonia. The Proclamation presumed that Macedonia was equal to the other parts of Yugoslavia because it lost its freedom and independence due to the occupation. Macedonia, however, wasn’t free and independent before the occupation, or after it. It only fell under new slavery.”²⁰¹

Regarding this issue, while conducting its analysis of the Party organization development in Macedonia in 1948, the CPM Central Committee concluded that: “Sharlo thought that having this kind of attitude was incorrect because, according to Sharlo, ‘Macedonia wasn’t independent and free and therefore didn’t lose anything; but gained new masters’...”²⁰²

Even in 1948, after Shatorov was dead, the Central Committee leadership in Macedonia condemned him for asserting that Macedonia didn’t have freedom and independence when it was part of Royal Yugoslavia, and that the Balkan wars were wars of occupation for Macedonia. The Central Committee leadership in Macedonia supported the CPY position taken in the May Proclamation that Macedonia lost its freedom and independence with the fascist occupation. This means that the Central Committee leadership in Macedonia accepted the idea that Macedonia was liberated during the Balkan wars.

15. In its program objectives, the provincial committee paid special attention to the issue of social and national liberation.

²⁰¹ Shatorov’s report to the Communist International, Moscow, September 16, 1941.

²⁰² Report-analysis of the CPM Central Committee to the CPY Central Committee, June 16, 1948, pp. 7 and 8.

To help the workers get higher wages, work eight-hour shifts, get more favourable prices for their agricultural products, etc., at the end of 1940 the Provincial Committee in its appeal to the tobacco workers in Macedonia wrote: “Tobacco is a monopoly run by foreigners, conquerors, exploiters and thieves who exploit Macedonia... Isn’t it thievery to buy tobacco for 20-25 dinars and sell it for 300-400 dinars?”²⁰³

The CPM Provincial Committee’s program principles for Macedonia were maximally geared towards Macedonia’s liberation as opposed to the minimum program envisaged by the CPY, CPB and CPG for solving the Macedonian national question within their existing borders.

²⁰³ Documents and materials, volume I, book 2, p. 368.

VII. METHODIJA SHATOROV'S SITUATION AND ACTIVITIES AFTER THE SUSPENSION FROM HIS POSITION AS PROVINCIAL COMMITTEE POLITICAL SECRETARY

In his letter to the CPY Central Committee, after the Communist International decision was delivered in early September 1941, Shatorov asked if he would be allowed to join the partisans. The Skopje Partisan detachment at that time had already been created. The CPY Central Committee instructors, however, would not allow him.

Among other things, this is what Tito said in his September 4, 1941 letter to the Communist International Executive Committee: "We will bring the guilty before our partisan military court..." From this we can deduce that the CPY Central Committee was prepared to bring Metodija Shatorov before a military court to be judged for his so-called mistakes as recorded in the various documents. Unfortunately, to this day, we have found no documents as to whether Metodija Shatorov was convicted by a partisan military court or not. However, according to Tsola Dragojcheva's recollection ("From my memoirs"), we know that she had spoken to the CPY delegate who had asked her to help Metodija Shatorov move to the middle of Yugoslavia, that is, to Serbia, to stand trial. However, Dragojcheva said she didn't believe that he was tried because Shatorov had already been sentenced to death by a firing squad based on false accusations. Dobri Michev also wrote about this (Military anthology, book no. 6, p. 20) as follows: "The CPB Central Committee stepped in and convinced the Communist International to release Metodija Shatorov and save him from the death sentence issued by Tito's headquarters. Metodija Shatorov was then withdrawn to Sofia." From these two statements and from Tito's letter sent to the Communist International about Shatorov's trial, we can assume that he was court-martialed and sentenced to death in his absence, without a commission being formed to investigate the charges against him.

In early October 1941, Metodija Shatorov was withdrawn to Sofia and sent to assist the Plovdiv District Committee where he actively participated in organizing the District Party Organization.

Shatorov actively worked for the affirmation of the Macedonian national consciousness to prepare the people to fight for their national liberation, for their unification and for creating an independent Macedonian state. His effort was not only directed towards the Macedonian people, but also towards the neighbouring nations and their communist workers' leaderships to struggle for a common cause and for Macedonian national interests.

This is what the December 1941, BCP Central Committee Proclamation, entitled "For Macedonia's Freedom, Equality and Self-Government" under the subtitle "Macedonians", said: "The German and Bulgarian war in the Balkans led to Macedonia's occupation... Today you can see for yourselves that you were enslaved and robbed a hundred times more than before the war. You didn't get any freedom but only cruel slavery.

The Macedonian communists told you that Hitler is an evil scourge on humanity, that he didn't bring freedom but only slavery... that he came to Macedonia not to help you but to take things and rob you and, together with his Bulgarian fascist servants, to exploit you. Today all that became true..."²⁰⁴

Comparing the views expressed by the Bulgarian Party leadership, Shatorov's views expressed in his letter to "Stojan", and the views expressed in the Proclamation issued on August 2, 1941 for the Ilinden Uprising celebration, we can see that there are close similarities. Here is an example of what the BCP Central Committee said in its Proclamation: "Your leaders and fighters from the past such as Gotse Delchev, Pere Toshev, Gjorche Petrov, Jane Sandanski, Dimo Hadzhi Dimov and others..."²⁰⁵ These same persons were mentioned by Shatorov in his May 1941 letter to "Stojan".²⁰⁶

The BCP Central Committee Proclamation said: "In the current situation in the Balkans, Macedonia's freedom depends mainly on the Macedonian people's active participation in the Serbian,

²⁰⁴ CPY historical archives, volume VII, 1941-1944, pp. 82 and 83.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 83.

²⁰⁶ Sources, volume I, book 1, p. 17.

Croatian, Montenegrin, Slovenian, Greek, Bulgarian and other Balkan peoples glorious liberation struggles that they lead against the Germans, the Italians and the Bulgarian enslavers and occupiers of foreign countries and peoples...”²⁰⁷ In his letter to “Stojan”, Shatorov wrote that the Macedonians should fight together with the other nations and mentions the same nations (except for Slovenia).²⁰⁸ This shows that in May 1941, Shatorov had already connected the Macedonian struggle not only with the Yugoslav peoples struggle but also with the struggle of the rest of the Balkan peoples, something the CPY had denied him saying.

Similarly, the BCP Central Committee Proclamation said: “Now, according to Serbian law, you are being forced to pay heavy taxes...”²⁰⁹ This is what Shatorov said in his August 2, 1941, Proclamation: “The Macedonians didn’t fight to collect taxes from you to fulfill Serbian orders...”²¹⁰ Data about the Bulgarian occupation of Macedonia (and about the forcible confiscation of grain and other food products) was obtained from the August 2 Proclamation issued by Shatorov.

This is what the BCP Central Committee Proclamation for the Ilinden Uprising said: “The older Macedonians, who are living witnesses of Ilinden, will confirm that Ilinden was and is truly Macedonian and not the Ilinden of the Bulgarian fascists...” This is what Shatorov wrote about this: “The Ilinden Uprising and the Krushevo Republic are the work of the Macedonian people, not the work of the supremacists - today’s Macedonian fascists – who want to present it as the work of the Bulgarian state. The Bulgarian fascists want to steal the Ilinden flag...”²¹¹

This comparison is sufficient to show that the BCP Central Committee December 1941 Proclamation (in the interest of the Macedonian national being) was adopted and adapted to modern conditions according to Metodija Shatorov’s letter to “Stojan”.

²⁰⁷ CPY historical archives, volume VII, 1941-1944, p. 85.

²⁰⁸ Sources, volume I, book 1, p. 19.

²⁰⁹ CPY historical archive, volume VII. 1941-1944, p. 83.

²¹⁰ Sources, volume I, book 1, p. 40.

²¹¹ Ibid., p. 30.

In January 1942 Shatorov joined the BCP Central Committee, was elected Secretary of the Sofia District Committee and placed in charge of the District Committee Military Commission in charge of creating the first partisan detachments. In October 1942 the Party Organization's office was searched, which resulted in 31 people being arrested and imprisoned. During the search the police discovered that Metodija Shatorov was the main organizer responsible for subversive actions against the Bulgarian regime. As a result the Bulgarian fascist court sentenced him to death in absentia. But, in spite of all that, Metodija Shatorov continued to be active and, as Regional Committee Secretary, directly managed the subversive groups responsible for assassinating high-ranking fascist leaders in Sofia. In this capacity in February 1943, among others, he organized General Hristo Lukov's assassination.

In March 1943 the District Committee decided to celebrate May Day and organize resistance to protect Jews from persecution. The local Party Organization appointed Metodija Shatorov and another member of the Committee to write the Proclamation. According to V. Goranova, then Regional Committee Organizational Secretary, the Proclamation was drafted in an illegal apartment. This is what was written in the book "Revolutionary Sofia", p. 596: "The May Day proclamation was supposed to be written by Metodija Shatorov and another person. For this purpose we decided to have him come to the District Committee's illegal apartment located on 'Dorostol' street no. 48, in Petrana Natseva's apartment. There was a secure place inside this apartment. I went into the apartment in the evening, and Shatorov was supposed to arrive at six o'clock the next day. The doorbell rang at exactly six o'clock in the morning. We figured it was Shatorov so Petrana went to open the door and as she turned the key once she heard unusual voices outside. She then called out 'who is it?' She said that to warn us. At that moment Vasilev, our host, knew that something wasn't right so he warned us that it could be the 'police'! Before Petranka opened the door she said, 'Wait a minute I need to get dressed.' When I heard that I went into the secure place. After the policemen came in they searched the entire place carefully... While they were searching Shatorov arrived. He climbed up the stairs and quickly figured out what was happening but he didn't run. Instead he continued walking past the guards and rang the doorbell of our apartment. The agents inside opened the

door for him and he coolly handed them a bottle of milk and told them it was ‘for the teacher’ (Petra was a teacher). The agent holding a gun pointed at Shatorov took the bottle after which Shatorov said ‘goodbye’ and went back down the stairs unimpeded. His composure and clean appearance (he was always well dressed) saved him from being detained.”

They wrote the proclamation the next evening in another illegal apartment. Eventually both participants were sentenced to death by the Bulgarian authorities, but despite that they didn’t give up their activities.

After the January 15, 1943 Sofia demonstrations (and other activities which Shatorov had undertaken), the Bulgarian authorities conducted searches and arrested a large number of activists. They then initiated legal proceedings against them. Included in these searches was Shatorov, then Regional Committee Secretary in Sofia, who once again was sentenced to death in absentia by a firing squad.

In a dialogue with one of his colleagues regarding his death sentences Shatorov said: “You know that I was twice sentenced to death but my duty demands that I remain here even though conditions are difficult. But as I move around from person to person I don’t know who is a friend and who is an enemy. But we are here to make the impossible possible...”

Shatorov served as secretary of the Sofia District Committee until July 15, 1943, after which he was replaced by G. Changov. After that he was assigned to new duties in the Pazardzhia front line where he led the third operational zone. This is what one of his colleagues said about that: “We and Metodija Shatorov served something like guards...”

According to the testimony given by his close associates, Shatorov always spoke Macedonian in personal conversations, speeches and when giving orders. This is what was said about that: “Partisans from other detachments came to our side of the fire at Chepintsi. Next to us was Metodija Shatorov with the other members of the staff... he spoke Macedonian during our conversations. He was well spoken and knowledgeable. He was well aware of the situation we

were in and his intellectual abilities and qualities were far superior in relation to the others.

Metodija Shatorov joined the partisans in June 1943. After that he led the partisan units and Headquarters in the Pazardzhik operational zone. Among the many combat actions he was involved in he also fought in the difficult “Eledzhik” battle on February 15, 1944 during which he was wounded in the leg. What made it even more difficult was the bad weather with blizzards and frost. Also among the many partisans who were wounded during that battle was Stojan Popov, zone Political Commissar. He was seriously wounded. Shatorov ordered the rescue of the wounded and personally participated in carrying them under the difficult conditions, even though he himself was wounded. He personally took measures in their treatment and saved many lives.

In mid-August 1944, Metodija Shatorov and his Zone Headquarters gathered a number of detachments numbering over 200 partisans and began a military campaign at the top of Mount Mileva Skala. Shatorov formed four strike groups and ordered them to simultaneously attack in four different locations. The first group, consisting of 117 partisans, was ordered to attack and take over the Varvara railway station which, according to intelligence reports, contained weapons that needed to be acquired. The second group, consisting of about 60 partisans, was ordered to attack the village Varvara. The third group was ordered to invade the village Simeonovets and capture the German warehouse. For this purpose Shatorov used a ruse. He ordered this group of partisan to dress in Bulgarian military uniforms. The fourth group, consisting of 20 to 25 partisans, was ordered to attack the village Semchinovo. Before the military campaign was executed, Headquarters called a meeting in which all the commanders, commissars and partisans were included. The plan of attack was discussed and everyone was given their orders. Metodija Shatorov accompanied Asen Banev’s group which was ordered to attack the village Varvara. After carrying out their assignments, the detachments retreated back to Mount Mileva Skala where this part of the territory was freed in early August.

The number of partisans joining the resistance movement under Shatorov’s command kept increasing and by August 27 that number

had reached 800. Shatorov had predicted this increase in his territory, not only in the mountainous areas but also in the more densely populated plains near Pazardzhik. With time partisan actions became more frequent and bolder. For example, on September 1, 10 partisans attacked the Drenov Dol railway station. Several groups attacked the flat land villages and reached Lozen. Chapaev's detachment broke through into Gabrovitsa and took the town again. Unfortunately these actions provoked the Bulgarian army and police to retaliate against them.

On September 4, at 7 o'clock, Headquarters was informed that the free zone where the partisans were concentrated would be attacked by military and police forces. Metodija Shatorov immediately ordered his companies and detachments to prepare for the impact. He said: "Comrades, the situation now is such that we cannot give up the fight..." he spoke with a harsh tone of voice. "We need and are obliged to accept the enemy's challenge to battle and we need to destroy him, because if we don't the population will lose confidence in us, so take your places as soon as possible..." Unfortunately the military and police forces were well armed and organized and outnumbered the partisans. They surrounded the area and began to break down the partisan formations, forcing them to retreat from their geographical vantage points. The partisan units were forced to break through rough terrain during which 12 were killed. Metodija Shatorov also retreated and was killed.²¹²

This is what Atanas Semerdzhiev writes about this: "After the people's victory, his body was found shot in several places and he had been robbed by his killers..."²¹³

²¹² The statements made here were part of the material published in the books "The Revolution in Sofia".

- Atanas Semerdzhiev "So that there can be life", Sofia, 1964.

- "For the people's freedom", Collection - Sofia, 1970.

²¹³ Atanas Semerdzhiev "No one fell back" Partisan memoirs, Sofia 1973, p. 245.

VIII. ABBREVIATIONS

BCF – Balkan Communist Federation

BLS – Balkan Lander Secretariat

VMRO – (centralists-old) Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization

VMRO – (United) Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization

VMRO – (supremacists) Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization

VDRO - Internal Dobruja Revolutionary Organization

EC of CI – Executive Committee of the Communist International

EB BCP – Executive Bureau of the Bulgarian Communist Party

CI - Communist International

KPY – Communist Party of Yugoslavia

CPM - Communist Party of Macedonia

CPB - Communist Party of Bulgaria

CPG - Communist Party of Greece

CP - Communist Party

FO – Foreign Office

LPS – Law for the Protection of the State

LC – Local Committee

DC – District Committee

PC – Provincial Committee

PC of CPM - Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of Macedonia

PO – Party Organization

ECU – Emigrant Communist Union

CC – Central Committee

CCY - Central Committee of Yugoslavia

CCB - Central Committee of Bulgaria

CC of CPY - Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia

CC of BCP - Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party

Pseudonyms used by Metodija Shatorov during his revolutionary activities

1. Marko,
2. Panaiot,
3. Panteli,
4. Bai Panaiot,
5. Katelini,
6. Atanosov,
7. Katil,
8. Mitre,
9. Charlo,
10. Savo,
11. Dimo.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Riste Buneski - Bunte was born in the village Golemo Konjari in Prilep. He graduated from the Faculty of Law in Skopje. He is now retired. Buneski was a researcher and student of Macedonian history. He participated in several symposia organized by the Municipal Board of the Union of Associations of Fighters from NOV – Prilep. This included the topics: Economic and social conditions and colonization in Prilep and Prilep Region between the two world wars; Craftsmanship in Prilep from 1912 to the end of 1939; Material situation in Prilep and Prilep Region between the two World Wars; Parent meeting in the Prilep high school in 1940. He participated in the Symposium organized by the Society for Science and Art in Prilep on the following topics: Metodija Andonov – Chento’s political views on solving the Macedonian national question; Economic and social conditions in Prilep and Prilep Region from 1886 to 1920. He also participated in the Symposium organized by the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts on the topic: Economic and social consequences of the wars from 1912 to 1918 in Prilep and Prilep Region.

Riste Buneski - Bunte authored Kuzman Josifovski – Pitu’s monograph published by the Society for Science and Art in Prilep. He reviewed the books “Yugoslav Socialist-Communists and the Macedonian Question (1918-1945)” by Dr. Slavko Milosavljevski and “The socio-economic development of the Republic of Macedonia”, by Dr. Lazar Lazarov, as well as two publications printed in the newspaper Nova Macedonia on the topics: “Basic program goals of the Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of Macedonia in 1940 and 1941” and “Days of the Trials”: Panko Brashnarov.