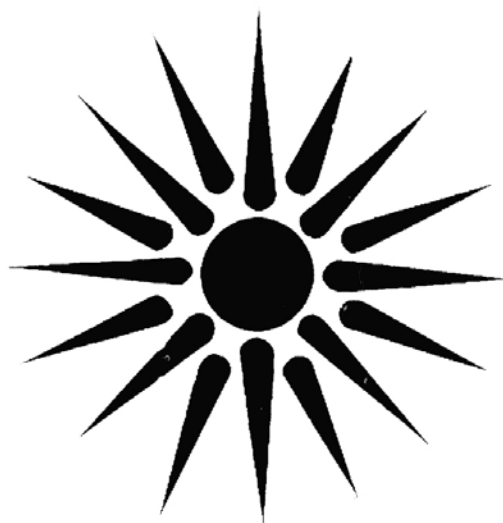


The Truth about Greek Occupied Macedonia



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

The Truth about Greek Occupied Macedonia

Published by:

Risto Stefov Publications
rstefov@hotmail.com

Toronto, Canada

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e-book edition

January 7, 2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface.....	6
CHAPTER ONE – Struggle for our own School and Church	8
1. Macedonian texts written with Greek letters	9
2. Educators and renaissance men from Southern Macedonia.....	15
3. Kukush – Flag bearer of the educational struggle.....	21
4. The movement in Meglen Region.....	33
5. Cultural enlightenment movement in Western Macedonia.....	38
6. Macedonian and Bulgarian interests collide	41
CHAPTER TWO - Armed National Resistance	47
1. The Negush Uprising	47
2. Temporary Macedonian government	49
3. The 1903 Ilinden Uprising	53
CHAPTER THREE - IMRO (United) in Greek occupied Macedonia.....	60
I	80
MACEDONIANS IN GREEK OCCUPIED MACEDONIA AND THE ANTIFASCIST STRUGGLE (1941-1944).....	80
I	80
CHAPTER FOUR - The Macedonian people’s struggle in Greek occupied Macedonia against the triple occupation and for national freedom	81
1. Resistance against restoring the old bureaucracy.....	81
2. Organizing NOB in Greek occupied Macedonia	85
3. First repressive measures instigated by the enemy	89
4. First armed groups of NOB.....	91
5. Partisan unit “Vicho” formed in Lerin Region	94
6. The “Lazo Trpovski” unit in Kostur region	95
CHAPTER FIVE - SNOF in Lerin and Kostur Regions and the Voden Region Macedonian Regional Committee.....	99
1. Establishment of SNOF in Lerin Region	100
2. CPG creates a separate Macedonian SNOF in Voden Region...	102
3. SNOF in Kostur Region	104
4. SNOF’s Regional Conference.....	109
5. SNOF Dismantled	110
CHAPTER SIX - Creation of Macedonian battalions	114
Severing the Macedonian battalions	121
I	137

IN THE STORM OF THE GREEK CIVIL WAR (1945-1949)	137
I	137
CHAPTER SEVEN - Terror	138
1. Terror, murder and mass pogroms committed in Greek occupied Macedonia	143
2. Terror in Voden Region	145
3. Terror in Meglen Region	146
4. Terror in Lerin Region	147
5. Terror in Kostur Region	148
6. Terror in Gumendzhe Region	150
7. Terror in Prespa Region	152
8. Up roar against the terror from abroad	153
9. Nationalist press inspirer and instigator of terrorist actions	155
10. Greek governments falling	158
11. An election farce	162
CHAPTER EIGHT - NOF, AFZH, NOMS	166
CHAPTER NINE - Spring offensive	192
1. The Spring Offensive	193
2. Start of the offensive	197
3. CPG Central Committee 3 rd Plenum	205
CHAPTER TEN - First NOF Congress – The Epic of Gramos	209
1. The Epic of Gramos and Malimadi – 4 th CPG Central Committee Plenum	213
2. CPG Central Committee 5 th Plenum – NOF 2 nd Congress	218
CONCLUSION	223
EPILOGUE	227
WHY A GREEK CIVIL WAR HAD TO TAKE PLACE	230
PROOF THAT BRITAIN WAS BEHIND THE GENOCIDE IN GREECE	231
THE GREEK CIVIL WAR WAS A PERPETRATED AND CONTROLLED WAR	235
RISE OF THE MACEDONIAN REBEL COUNTER-BANDS	253
SNOF CREATED TO DESTROY THE MACEDONIAN REBEL COUNTER-BANDS	257
TENSIONS MOUNT	259
GREEKS MANIPULATING THE MACEDONIAN PEOPLE	260
START OF THE GREEK CIVIL WAR	264
MASSIVE EVACUATION OF MACEDONIANS	266

EVACUATION OF MACEDONIAN CHILDREN FROM GREECE	268
AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE GREEK CIVIL WAR	272
GREECE – AN ARTIFICIAL CREATION	278
MACEDONIAN SCHOOLS IN GREECE	282
GREEK ABUSES AGAINST THE MACEDONIANS	282
MACEDONIANS LEAVING MACEDONIA	285
GREECE – BULGARIA AND THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION	287
MACEDONIANS EXILED FROM THEIR HOMELAND IN GREECE	288
THE TERM SLAVO-MACEDONIANS	288
EFFECTS FROM THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA	
DECLARING ITS INDEPENDENCE	290
HOW MACEDONIA BECAME GREEK – A HISTORY	291
OLD INTERNATIONAL NEWSPAPERS PROVE MACEDONIANS EXIST	296
GREEKS MARRYING MACEDONIANS TO ASSIMILATE THEM	301
IS THERE ANY MACEDONIAN LIFE LEFT IN GREECE TODAY?	302
IS THERE ANY MACEDONIAN LIFE LEFT IN BULGARIA TODAY?	304
IS THERE ANY MACEDONIAN LIFE LEFT IN ALBANIA TODAY?	305
ACRONYMS	307

Preface

The Macedonian people's fate is similar if not identical to the fate of the Irish of Ireland and to the Kurds of Kurdistan. Those lands faced the same tragic fate as Macedonia - to be mercilessly butchered into two or more parts, as dictated by the greedy appetites of their imperialistic neighbours. However, the people of these countries; the Irish and the Kurds, did not have to live through the unthinkable humiliation perpetrated against the Macedonians, using brute force to deprive them of their mother tongue and imposing a foreign nationality on them.

Even under Great Britain the Irish remained what they have always been, Irish. And even though the Kurds in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria lost their territorial unity, they still have kept their ethnic mark, their language and traditions.

In 1912 the Macedonian people lost their national compactness and territorial unity. The ruling regimes in Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria, through their propaganda campaigns, not only strived to turn the Macedonian people into "Serbs", "Greeks" and "Bulgarians" but told the world that "Macedonians do not exist". The Macedonians in Greece were then exposed to all sorts of torment. They were forced against their will, for example, to participate in the First World War and to fight in the front line for Greece. They were also forced to work for free; provide slave labour for the allies on the front line at the Solun Front. Later they were mobilized and sent to fight for the Greek army in the Asia Minor campaign. Then, to reward them, the Greek regime placed them before their military courts and had many of them executed for trying to claim their national rights within the Greek state. Then, during the Metaxas dictatorship (1936 - 1941), they were banned from speaking their native Macedonian language, the only language they spoke, and not just in public places but also inside their homes. They were not allowed to speak or sing Macedonian songs.

But the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia never came to terms with the fate laid out for them by the Greek regime. Their desire for national freedom was always present and simmering inside of them and every time they were given the opportunity they

struggled and sacrificed themselves for their ideals. Should we mention the names of the Macedonian people sentenced to death by the Greek military courts in Lerin, or in Kozhani, immediately after World War I? How long must we remain silent when our very dignity is attacked even in death? We cannot forever keep silent about such things. Before his execution in the city Kozhani, on December 12, 1925, Atanas Popov from the village Boreshnitsa, Lerin Region, not only refused a blindfold, but when he was asked if he had anything to say he said: "My greatest joy is that I will paint the southern border of Macedonia, which is the river Bistritsa itself, with my blood..." Let us also mention the young Atanas Markov from the village Tsakoni who, while being judged by a military court in the city Ber in 1948, boldly told the court: "I only ask for mercy for your executioners who execute my people!" Atanas was a partisan fighter fighting on Mount Karakamen. He was captured after he was wounded.

Through this book we will try and uncover some of the blood covered pages from our tormented past. A testament to the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia who did not wait for freedom to come to their homes but rather who left their bones in the infamous dry Aegean Island prisons like "Edi-Kule" or "Akronavplion", in the prison camps like "Heidari" and "Pavlos Melas" and by sprinkling the tree of liberty with their blood in places like Kaimakchalan, Vicho, Gramos and Karakamen.

Let these pages serve as a small and modest compensation for the thousands of known and anonymous fighters who individually, or together with their Greek comrades, died for honour, freedom and justice.

Hristo Andonovski, Skopje, April 1970

[My (Risto Stefov's) contribution to this project is to provide additional information which has been uncovered since the publishing of the original book in Macedonian in 1971 and to look at events from a different perspective and with a different set of eyes. My part is to also ask the hard questions; of not only "what happened" but "why it happened" and "who were the architects behind it".]

CHAPTER ONE – Struggle for our own School and Church

The Macedonians as well as other peoples in the Balkans, at the end of the eighteenth and towards the early nineteenth century, experienced the dawn of their national awakening, reacting to the specific economic, political and social conditions in the Ottoman Empire. The first phase of the Macedonian national revival was expressed as a struggle for Macedonian schools and churches. The Greek language, with self-taught teachers had been teaching the Macedonian children and self-taught priests had been performing liturgy in the Macedonian churches, was incomprehensible to the vast majority of the Macedonian people. The only exceptions were a few privileged merchants and church notables who were educated in the Greek language and spoke Greek.

[The so-called “Greek” language was not Greek at all in relation to “modern Greek” spoken in modern Greece. The so-called “Greek language” referred to here was the “Coine language”, a language recognized by the Ottoman Empire and used for trade and commerce. The Coine language was left over from the Byzantine Empire. This language existed in the Balkans for over 2,000 years and was brought to Asia and Africa by Alexander the Great. Some authors believe the Coine language existed in Asia Minor even before Alexander’s time. For many years it was the international language of trade and commerce, just like the English language is today. Later, in the second half of the 19th century it was made the official language of the Greek state. When Greece became a state for the first time in 1829, it adopted the Coine language and called it “Dimotiki”. It then tried adopting an ancient Attic language called Katharevusa but over time, it failed acceptance by the people. Then in the 1970s Greece abandoned the Katharevusa in favour of the Dimotiki. The Coine language became especially popular in Alexandria, Egypt, when that city was the capital of the Macedonian Ptolemaic empire, which lasted from about the late third century BC to about the mid first century AD. Alexandria was founded by Alexander the Great and built by Macedonians. There were thousands of books commissioned by the Ptolemais, written in the Coine language and placed in the great Alexandrian library by authors from all over the known world. The first bible was also

translated from Hebrew to Coine in Alexandria, paid for by a Macedonian king. It was indeed a miracle language during its time, supported by the Macedonian royalty as a language of the educated and the elite. It later became the language of the Christian Church. That is until the Greek state, with sponsorship from the Great Powers, made it the language of its people and taught it in its state sponsored schools. Why was this done? To connect the modern so-called Greeks with their ancient past and to show that there indeed was a Greek continuity from 2000 years ago, a continuity that never existed until the 18th century. Just because the modern Greek child is educated in an ancient language and speaks that ancient language does not make them a descendent of the ancients. By calling everything “Greek”, a Latin word, the Great Powers not only managed to fool the world that our modern “civilization” began in Europe and was carried forward and delivered to us as recently as the 19th century by these so-called Greeks, but managed to fool the Vlachs, Albanians, Turks, Macedonians, Roma and all the other people living in today’s Greece into believe that they are all Greeks and have descended from the so-called “ancient Greeks”... even though there never was an “Ancient Greece” in ancient times.]

1. Macedonian texts written with Greek letters

The willingness on the part on the Macedonian population to hear the word of God spoken in their Macedonian mother tongue gave rise to a need to translate the Gospels, the apostles and other religious texts from Greek to Macedonian. At that time the people who did the translating spoke both Greek and Macedonian but only wrote in the Greek script. This is why they used Greek letters to write Macedonian words. There was no formal Macedonian education and the Macedonian (Old Church Slavonic) script was not familiar to them, so they resorted to using the Greek alphabet to write their texts and especially their sermons. These priests and teachers had learned the Macedonian language at home from their mothers when they were children and, being privileged, were sent to schools to learn the Greek language and to read and write in Greek because, as was indicated above, Greek (Coine) was a recognized language in the Ottoman Empire.

Most of the documents translated and transcribed from Greek to Macedonian, with the exception of the four language Danilovian works, which were done earlier, were done during the 19th century.

One of the first contributors and revivalists of the precious Macedonian heritage was the Macedonian patriot Hadzhipavel Bozhigropski. He was not only the translator of the Gospel and the Apostles from Greek to Macedonian but he was also the father and founder of many Macedonian schools in Voden, Enidzhe Vardar and Gumendzhe. His first works date back to 1852, printed in Kiriak Drzhilovets's printing house in Solun. Drzhilovets was another Macedonian patriot. The Gospel was printed in the Macedonian language spoken in the South Vardar region but with Greek letters. The reason for using the Greek alphabet was because at that time the Macedonian (Old Church Slavonic) alphabet, restricted only to monasteries, was not familiar to the wider layer of Macedonians. This was mostly due to restrictions from the so-called Greek Church. Using Greek letters was less objectionable to the Greek clergy.

[At this point I need to mention that the so-called "Greek Church" referred to here was not the "Greek state" church or the Greek people's church of today but rather the Orthodox Church of all the Orthodox Christian people in the Balkans with its capital in Istanbul (Tsari Grad). This was the official church of all the Orthodox nations in the Balkans before the new nations the likes of Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, etc., appeared and created their own state churches. This church was recognized and operated legally under Ottoman law. It was never an exclusively Greek church. It did, however, use a version, the church version, of the Coine language as the language of prayer. Because of that Greece's Western patrons began to call it "Greek Orthodox". This is yet another attempt to attribute Orthodoxy to the Greeks, which is ironic because the so-called "Ancient Greeks" were pagans and believed in the twelve gods of Olympus, a mountain found inside Macedonia. Whereas Tsari Grad, or the City of Kings, or Constantinople as the Greeks like to call it, is the true capital of all official Christianity. This was the capital city of the Eastern Roman Empire, later wrongly renamed the "Byzantine Empire", again by westerners. Tsari Grad was built by Constantine the great and was the first and

official capital of Christianity, which the Western Powers not only abandoned in favour of Rome but left it under Muslim rule so that it would never again rise to its former glory.]

The Gospel and the other works that Hadzhipavel translated represent an attempt at developing and affirming the Macedonian language from Voden – Enidzhe Vardar Regions during a time when the Greek State Church was conducting systematic assimilation of the Macedonian people. Later this was also done by the Bulgarian State Church. The use of the Macedonian language at this time represents the beginnings of the creation of a Macedonian literary language.

[So as not to give the wrong impression here, I need to mention that the Macedonian language has existed for thousands of years. It existed even before the Old Church Slavonic language was codified by Kiril and Metodi in the 9th century AD. The Macedonian language is also the mother of all written Slavic languages because there were no written Slavic languages before it. The need to pass the word of God to the Christian followers in the language they understood created the need for a written language that was understood by the same followers. In the case of the Slavic speaking people, Macedonian was the first written language to serve that purpose. There were too many scriptures for the priests to commit to memory and relay to the people, so a way had to be found for them to read these scriptures in the language the people understood. The solution to that problem was the creation of the Glagolic and later the Cyrillic script initiated by the Macedonian brothers Kiril and Metodi from Solun and later modified and advanced by Kliment and Naum of Ohrid. This was a language understood by not only the Macedonians but also other Slavic speakers in the Balkans and Eastern Europe. The written language that Kiril, Metodi, Kliment and Naum created became known to the West as “Old Church Slavonic”. Instead of calling it “Old Macedonian”, the name it deserves, the West decided to call it “Old Church Slavonic”. The Macedonian arch-bishopric of Ohrid, which was then recognized by the Eastern Roman emperor as equal in rank to that of Tsari Grad, became the ecclesiastic centre from which the Cyrillic script, or better described as “Old Macedonian”, and the Eastern Orthodox Faith were spread throughout Serbia, Bulgaria and as far north as

Old Russia. Old Church Slavonic or Old Macedonian eventually became the sacred language of a large section of the Slav speaking people and the third international language of Europe. Ever since then the Macedonian language has functioned without serious challenge as the principal literary, liturgical and colloquial language of Macedonia. And therefore the Macedonian standard language is a direct descendant of the Old Church Slavonic which in fact is Old Macedonian. Unlike the so-called Greek language, especially the Katharevousa which was resurrected after being dead for over two thousand years, the Macedonian language has continuity for more than a millennium.

According to Dimitria Chupovski, a Macedonian patriot and author, the Macedonian language that formed the basis for Old Church Slavonic has not ceased to exist for more than 1,000 years and resounds in all Slavic places of worship. Slav literature is based on Old Church Slavonic which in turn is based on the Macedonian language, not merely for the development of a written language and Christianity but also for art, architecture and literature. We must acknowledge and must never forget that Macedonia became a renowned centre of Slavo-Byzantine culture and its chief city, Ohrid, became the metropolis of Slavonic Christianity. The literary wealth that accumulated, including some original creations, was to nourish Slavic religious and intellectual life throughout the middle ages. (Chupovski, "Macedonia and the Macedonians").

The first Westerner on record to mention Old Church Slavonic as simply "Macedonian" was the German humanist Hieronimus Megisser in his works of 1603. According to Megisser a psalm was translated into 21 languages. One of those languages was marked "Macedonian". Again, according to Western sources, only a few texts approximating the spoken Macedonian language are known before 1790. However, one important historical record is a small dictionary of the Kostur dialect with a folk song in it dating from the sixteenth century. (Stojan Ristevski, *Sozdavanjeto na sovremeniot Makedonski Literaturen Jazik* (Skopje, Studenki zbor, 1988), p. 96.) But very soon after the first written Slavic language appeared, Macedonia fell under the control of foreign empires which used foreign official languages and more or less squashed the creative spirit of the Macedonian people and the written form of their

language. This, of course, continued until Greece occupied 51% of Macedonia in 1912 and outright banned the Macedonian language altogether.

Late in the fourteenth century, officially in 1430 when Solun fell, the Ottoman Empire occupied Macedonia and remained there for more than five hundred years. After the occupation the Turkish language was used and became the official language in Macedonia. Then, with the Turkish abolition of the Macedonian Orthodox Church in the 18th century, the Coine language, or the “Greek language” as Westerners like to call it, was once again an officially sanctioned church language in Macedonia.]

Translations of the Gospel used in church services existed everywhere in the Vardar vicinity extending as far south as Solun Bay, wherever Macedonian villages existed. One such manuscript was written by Evstatia Kipriadi in 1863 in the village Kulakia, Solun Region, where the villagers spoke both Greek and Macedonian.

Another such manuscript, again written by Evstatia Kipriadi, was found in Solun by French soldiers during the First World War. This manuscript greatly assisted the French Slavists Mason and Vaian in the study of the Macedonian dialects spoken in Southern Macedonia.

Another document which confirms the influence of Greek literature and culture over our spiritual life, but which, on the other hand is a valuable contribution to the study of the Macedonian dialects, is a dictionary from 1876. This dictionary was compiled by Giosho Kolev, a priest from the village Leskovo, Lerin Region, a man, almost illiterate, who had no idea of the Greek language and spelling and who only knew the practical aspects of the language, and that not very well. But in spite of the shortcomings he still managed to capture an extensive collection of lexical peculiarities in the Macedonian speaking region. This dictionary is valuable because it has no outside influence. Also, the peculiarities of the dialect were issued in a very casual form.

The dictionary also contained instructive church sermons and other notes in Macedonian but written with Greek letters.

The knowledge of the Macedonian language and the history of the Macedonian literary language are enriched with yet another valuable document, namely the letter from the people of the villages Boboshchitsa and Drenovo, two Macedonian villages located in the southwest part of Macedonia, at the present day Albanian border.

The villagers from Boboshchitsa and Drenovo were remnants of the southern Albanian population, located about two hours away, on foot, from the city Korcha. Even though these two villages were like islands in a sea of Albanian villages, until recently they spoke a dialect of the Macedonian language and followed their Macedonian customs. They were also familiar with the Macedonian people's movement and their struggle for spiritual rights. A testimony of this can be found in their letter of appeal, dated October 26, 1873, sent to the Exarch Athim I in Istanbul (Tsari Grad) via one of their villagers.

The letter of appeal was composed by 17 laymen, notables from the two villages and two monks. The letter was written with Greek letters but in the Macedonian language, a dialect spoken in the vicinity of the village Nestram, Kostur Region. The person who wrote the letter was the teacher Dimitar Tsanko who was familiar with the Greek language, a lot more than with his native Macedonian language, and was an excellent calligrapher. The same Tsanko, along with the priest Teodor Ikonon, also participated in the translation of a seventeen page Gospel from Greek to Macedonian which was used in the village Boboshchitsa.

In addition to the gospels, apostles and other materials we mentioned earlier that were written in the Macedonian language with Greek letters, we also have the Ottoman law printed on July 25, 1851 for the Bitola Chiflik villages. These laws were printed by Kiriak Drzhilovets, a Macedonian reformer and patriot from Solun.

The Drzhilovets family used their property to do work for the Macedonian cause, which cost the lives of two of their family

members. Giorgi Dinkata and Slavka Dinkova Drzhilova died for the Macedonian cause.

2. Educators and renaissance men from Southern Macedonia

During the 1830's Solun gradually became a spiritual centre not only for Macedonian people in Solun but also for all the Macedonia people. During this period the Macedonian middle class in Solun and other Macedonian towns began to form artisan groups in an attempt to create trade opportunities inside Macedonia to compete against Greek and Turkish merchants, in order to get rid of the Greek spiritual and educational dominance. Now more than ever they felt the need for educating their children.

Thanks to the large Macedonian intelligencia with ties to the Macedonian and other Slavic speaking monasteries in Sveta Gora (Mount Athos), Solun started to become the centre of amplified church and school activities. This was particularly noticeable after the Macedonian educator and the first printer, Archimandrite Theodosia Sinaitski from Doiran, arrived in Solun.

There is evidence preserved in the 1833 records of the Macedonian guild in Solun which testifies to the extent to which the Macedonian people thirsted for learning their native Macedonian language. In the chronicle of this guild, Negria Blazhev wrote the following in the Macedonian language: "The people of Debreno, Krushovo and Kichevo are eager in their hearts for their language and have begun to think about it and try harder to find a means of preserving it so that it will not be lost, and to build either churches or schools. About halfway through 1833 they began to look for a teacher from the city..." (Simeon Radev, "Makedonija i b'lgarskoto v'zrazhdane" p. 300.)

From the above-mentioned chronicles, composed by the sewing guild, we have also learned that for two years a Russian monk from Solun had been teaching Macedonian children using handwritten Macedonian books, which means that most probably at that time

printed books in the Macedonian language did not exist. It was not until 1839 that a Macedonian printing press was opened by Theodosia Sinaitski, which printed the books of the renaissance pioneers and giants of the Macedonian literary language, Kiril Peichinovich, Hadzhi Pavel Bozhigropski and Iordan Hadzhikonstantinov.

The family of the brothers Konstantin and Kiriak Drzhilovets, originally from the village Durzhilovo, Voden Region, occupy a prominent place in the Solun national revival. Konstantin was a participant in the 1821 Greek uprising who later moved to Solun and joined a pure Macedonian environment where he became an ardent patriot to the end of his life, fighting for the national rights of the Macedonian people. After Theodosia Sinaitski, Kiriak Drzhilovets was the second Macedonian printer to operate a printing house and printed many Macedonian language books in the Voden Region speech.

There was an article written about Kiriak Drzhilovets's printing business in Solun in the April 16, 1860 "Tsari gradski Vesnik" (Constantinople Gazette) no. 479, in which the correspondent wrote: "More than ten years ago a Mr. Kiriak Drzhilovets delivered a typography here creating great satisfaction among the inhabitants because all the firstclass Greek schoolbooks, in that typography, were published and sold at moderate prices. Now, however, when Mr. Kiriak Drzhilovets thought of bringing Bulgarian letters to print books in the Macedonian language, what good would it bring to the indigenous inhabitants, who will now be exposed as fake Greeks, and who found reasons to despise Mr. Kiriak and closed down his typography. This created a lot of problems, but God willing he will again try to reopen it."

The Drzhilovets family opened the first Macedonian school in Solun in 1865, which initially operated in the Drzhilovets home. According to Negria Blazhev, as was written in the sewing guild chronicles, the first school opened was attended by girls only; and later by boys. The school was headed by Slavka, Konstantin Drzhilovets's daughter, who at that time was barely 18 years old.

Slavka Dinkova had just finished the Greek gymnasium. Her mother tongue was Macedonian but she did not know how to read and write in the Macedonian language. Her first lessons in the Macedonian language came from her older brother Giorgi.

Slavka's national enlightenment had begun humbly and secretly. The children who attended her school came from the Macedonian neighbourhoods of the city. From having 17 students in the first year, the number climbed to 27 in the second year. Most of them were the children of people who were members of the sewing guild. Initially the school was sponsored by the Drzhilovets family and later some of the costs were picked up by members of the sewing guild, including the Despot Krushovali, Iosif Frango, Geshko from Galichnik, Petko Despotov from Radovish, Stoian Bogo from Vrbitsa and other prominent Macedonians from Veles, Prilep, Bitola and other cities. Three overseers were appointed from the guild to look after the school. They were Giorgi Dinkata, Vele Negrev and Kiriak Drzhilovets.

Besides her work as a teacher Slavka Dinkova, with the same enthusiasm, took on the job of translating and writing children's articles. She translated texts from French to Macedonian in the Solun dialect. Many of these articles were published in the Constantinople newspaper "Macedonia" in 1868.

Her duties as a teacher and administrator, in those early years of the Macedonian enlightenment, full of difficulties due to the lack of textbooks and literature, and full of obstacles and intrigues perpetrated by Patriarchate clergy, wore out Slavka to the extreme. Her patriotic ambition kept her going but not for long. In 1879 she died of exhaustion. She will forever remain a bright character full of humility and endless patriotism.

Another distinguished figure who highlighted the Macedonian people's struggle for establishing a Macedonian national school and church during the period of our national revival was Giorgi Dinkata, Konstantin Drzhilovets's son and Slavka Dinkova's brother.

Born and raised in a family where every member was conscious and fascinated by the ideal of national renaissance, Giorgi Dinkata

energetically continued the enlightenment work that his family had started. Initially he studied in the Greek spiritual seminary in Halki (Constantinople), and then in 1860 he went to Moscow to study theological science. While in Moscow, Giorgi became acquainted with Russian culture and studied Macedonian history, which he found in the Moscow libraries and archives. After Giorgi returned to Macedonia he was not only a theologian but also an ardent revolutionary, thirsting for freedom and having feeling for socialist convictions. While in Moscow Giorgi became acquainted with some of its elite circles including those who were preaching socialism and who in effect were the pioneers of socialism in Russia. Included among them were Chernishevski, Dobroliubov and Belinski.

Giorgi Dinkata set himself up for a difficult mission. His goal was to get rid of the illiteracy supported by the Ottoman state and by the Patriarchate which held the Macedonian people back. He wanted the Macedonian people to raise their voices against the almighty bishops of the time, who enjoyed the full confidence and support of the Ottoman authorities. When Giorgi returned to Solun he began an open struggle against the wealthy and against the Greek clergy, who in their omnipotent ways exploited the Macedonian people. Soon afterwards he was arrested by the Ottoman authorities and charged with being “a danger to the Sultan’s state, a Russian apostle and Russian revolutionary”. Giorgi was thrown into the Vidin fortress in 1862 and then was sent to the Constantinople prisons from where, two years later, was released under Russian intervention.

After he was released from prison Giorgi continued his work and with his sister, and later in her name, as we pointed out earlier, in 1865 opened the first Macedonian school in Solun. Because of his agitation in Solun and in the surrounding areas, Giorgi became famous and was constantly visited by the Macedonians who came to town to trade. Among those who visited him were spiritual leaders from places like “Iasi Ol” and “Chaush Monastery”. In 1866, on behalf of all the Macedonian people in Solun, a petition was delivered to the central Ottoman government demanding that the rights of the Macedonian people in the Solun Villaet (Province) be recognized. A so-called “popular meeting” was then called in Solun, again because of Giorgi’s involvement, during which a municipal council was elected consisting of Ivan Lazarov, treasurer, Blaze H.

Lazov, Dimitar Paunchev, Kiriak Drzhilovets, Iosif Petkov and Traiko Petrovits as advisors, and Panaiot Lazov and Stefan H. Vasilkovits as assistants. The main activities of the Macedonian Solun Municipality consisted primarily of opening schools and attaining independent Macedonian church clergy. The Solun municipal notables had help from the various Macedonian teachers from other parts of Macedonia. Included among those who helped were Kuzman Shapkarov, Dimitar Miladinov, Raiko Zinzifov and Nako Stanishev.

A second school was opened in Solun in 1870, at the “Vardar gate”. Then for the 1880/81 academic year, at Kuzman Shapkarov’s insistence, two Macedonian high schools were opened and operated until 1913.

Giorgi Dinkata traveled all throughout Macedonia collecting geographic, historical and folk materials, and simultaneously worked on writing articles, through which he aspired to awaken the National consciousness of the Macedonian people.

Giorgi even translated books from Russian to Macedonian. Then in 1868, by order of the Solun governor, he translated the Turkish law for the inspectors and a brochure for processing turnips. He wrote lyrics with patriotic themes including his famous song “Samovila” (Fairy). A Bulgarian teacher in Solun, named Salgandzhiev, at that time wrote the following about the language spoken by Giorgi Dinkata: “The teacher Dinkata is speaking Bulgarian in the so-called ‘pulivashko’ (Voden Region) dialect, which he loves and defends, professing that it is closest to Old Church Slavonic...” (“Macedonian voice” no. 27, year I, June 1885.) This part of the article, written by Salgandzhiev, convincingly shows that Giorgi Dinkata as well as many other Macedonian educators appeared to strive to cultivate the Macedonian literary language and emphasize the individuality of the Macedonian people.

After years of teaching in Prilep and Bitola, Giorgi went to Kostur to the village Zagorichani where he proved himself a courageous reformer in the school system.

Up until then the crudest religious pedagogical educational measures were used in Kostur in educating students, delivered by cruel half-educated Greek teachers teaching Greek in Macedonia. Their method of education was to paint the faces of the students with tar and to make them carry a 10 oka (about 25 kilos) bag on their backs loaded with rocks and walk around their desks. Some students were made to kneel on the floor laced with gravel or dry beans. Giorgi got rid of this cruelty including all beatings and violence against children. He introduced free education and humane treatment of the children.

The first thing he did was teach the children about nature by taking them on excursions. He said: “Children need to be guided, not violently punished when they are being educated...” And observing nature and its beauty was one way of doing that. But, at the same time, Giorgi emphasized that: “Everyone has the right to learn in their own native language. Macedonians should have equal rights with the other subjects of the sultan...” So at first he secretly and later publicly taught the children the Macedonian language and soon Zagorichani became the educational centre for all of Western and Central Macedonia. Children from far away places, as far as Prilep, came to Zagorichani to be taught by Giorgi. In the meantime his school grew into a gymnasium. Then, with help from his wife, Giorgi opened and operated a school for girls in his own home in Zagorichani.

And just like the Macedonian political figures and revolutionaries of the 19th century, Giorgi Dinkata too was convinced that, through hard work and dedication, social reform could be achieved and gradually replace despotism and feudalism. He dedicated his full effort in not only enlightening the children in the schools but also in holding public lectures for adults in the Kostur Region villages, to raise resistance against the Greek bishops and against those who supported the idea of “Greater Greece” with Macedonia included in it. As a result Macedonian liturgy was introduced in Kostur, especially in the Koreshtata area churches, where liturgy was previously conducted in the incomprehensible Greek language. This however did not last long. Because of his educational and revolutionary activities Giorgi, the Macedonian revivalist, was

betrayed to the Ottoman authorities by Nikoforos, the Greek bishop of Kostur. Giorgi was thrown into prison.

After a great deal of suffering, Giorgi Dinkata was eventually released from prison. Upon his release he went to Athens and worked as a collaborator of the newspaper “Eon” (century), which at the time was a platform for advanced ideas supporting a Balkan federation. This is more proof that Giorgi Dinkata was fighting for the cultural rights and for the national freedom of his people. He did not hate the neighbouring nations as some would have us believe. On the contrary, he believed in fraternal cooperation between all the Balkan nations. After spending two years in Athens, living in misery and torment, Giorgi Dinkata died in 1878. The life of a man, who shone on the souls of his people like the warm rays of the golden sun in a spring morning, was extinguished.

3. Kukush – Flag bearer of the educational struggle

Kukush, among the other southern Macedonian towns, was the movement’s flagship not only for the Macedonian language schools but also for the Macedonian churches. The people of Kukush were the first people in Macedonia, at that time, who were prepared to turn to the Pope when they were unable to find understanding in the Constantinople Patriarchate. By doing so they demonstrated political maturity and diplomatic skills. The city Kukush, located about 55 km northeast of Solun, was an insignificant village at the end of the 18th century. However, in the early 19th century, with the introduction of capitalism in Macedonia, a Macedonian trade group appeared trading in grain, furs, cocoons, sesame, cotton and other commodities. The city was especially successful in trading fabrics with about 300 looms operating by the middle of century. The group produced white canvas and colorful fabrics which the traders of Kukush sold to all the Macedonian cities, and in the west they even sold fabrics to Albania.

Kuzman Shapkarev, a prominent Macedonian reformer, one time wrote that Nako Stanishev, one of the Kukush merchants, had visited all the towns in western Macedonia and Albania and knew all the places and people in this area as if he has been born and raised there.

Nako Stoimen Stanishev was not only a skilled and reputable merchant but also one of the first fighters and supporters of the movement and the bitter struggle that later began in that region for the spiritual freedom from the yoke of the Patriarchate. We have learned from Kuzman Shapkarev that Nako Stanishev became great friends with Dimitar Miladinov. In fact it was Stanishev who persuaded Miladinov to come and teach in Kukush during the 1840/41 academic year. Dimitar Miladinov came to Kukush as a Greek teacher and for two years also lectured the Macedonian children in their Macedonian mother tongue. This caused a heated reaction from the Greek Bishop Meletios on whose insistence Dimitar Miladinov was forced to leave Kukush.

Dimitar Miladinov and Raiko Zinzifov were the first teachers to open a Macedonian school in Kukush which, according to their contemporaries, became an example for the whole region. Unfortunately Bishop Meletios, once again, began his intrigues aimed at closing the Macedonian school. This prompted the people of Kukush, led by Nako Stanishev, to revolt against the Greek language and against the Greek church. Their actions were unfortunately opposed. In 1858 the people took their dispute to the Patriarchate but Neofitos, the Greek bishop in Solun, refused to hear their pleas so they were left with no other choice but to turn to the Catholic Church.

After learning about the dispute between the Greek bishop and the citizens of Kukush, a Lazzarist mission was sent from Solun to start a dialogue and negotiate a solution. The people, headed by Nako Stanishev, however, refused to negotiate. The people felt they had not exhausted all means to achieve an agreement with the Patriarchate. By mid 1858 when the Russians found out about this dispute and about the people seeking an agreement with the Catholic Church, they immediately sent a committee to stop them from connecting with the Catholic Church. Dimitar Miladinov was also opposed to Kukush joining the Catholic Church. After the Russian mission left, the people put together another delegation, headed by Nako Stanishev and by Dimitar Miladinov, and sent it to Solun to see Neofitos and present their demands. This time too they were unsuccessful and when Dimitar Miladinov saw that they were

getting nowhere, he and part of the delegation returned to Kukush while Nako Stanishev and the others went to the French consul in Solun to seek an audience with the Lazzarists. Then, after the delegation returned to Kukush it convened a people's "assembly" and a vote was taken. The people of Kukush voted unanimously to seek an audience with the Catholic Church.

On behalf of the people of Kukush the Lazzarist mission in Solun, on July 23, 1859, sent an appeal to Pope Pius IX. The appeal was signed by 79 Kukush residents, including 4 priests. Among other things the appeal described the hostilities perpetrated by the Greek clergy against the Macedonian people and because of this the people of Kukush were prepared to recognize the Pope as their spiritual leader, provided no changes were introduced in their rites. "We beg the Holy Pius IX not to make any change in the church services, in the performing of the sacraments, in the clothes of our priests and in the language of the church services, which is an Old Bulgarian, in other words an Old Slavonic language." (Slavko Dimevski "The Kukush Union of 1859", "Messenger of the Institute of National History", Skopje 1959, No. 2, p. 132.)

[I just want to comment at this point that the Macedonian language had existed in Macedonia for thousands of years even before the word "Bulgarian" had ever been heard. So the word "Bulgarian" above cannot be interpreted as a reference to the modern "Bulgarian" language. Having no standard or "literary language" as it is called today, the people of Macedonia spoke dialects of the Macedonian language, more than a couple of dozen dialects to be exact. The fact that such dialects and so many of them existed, shows that the Macedonian language is very old. It takes time, a long time, centuries for dialects to develop. So the reference made above to the language spoken in Macedonia being "Old Bulgarian", at least to me, means that the people of Kukush were attempting to describe their language relative to a language the Pope might be familiar with. "Bulgarian" like "Greek", at the time, was a reference to a language spoken in the Ottoman Empire. We now know that "Greek" was synonymous with "Coine", the language of trade and commerce, spoken by the educated class of people in the entire Balkans, and not just by the modern Greeks. "Bulgarian", on the other hand, was the language of the common people which was also

spoken throughout the entire Balkan Region. Even the Serbians, at that time, spoke “Bulgarian” before they came up with their national Serbian language. Like the modern Greeks who boast that they speak an ancient language and claim it to be their national language since ancient times, the Bulgarians too like to claim that “Old Bulgarian” is their national language since ancient times and, at the same time, deny the existence of the Macedonian language, calling it a dialect of Bulgarian. We must understand here that just because the Bulgarian state expropriated the common Balkan people’s language and made it its national language, does not make it exclusively Bulgarian. Neither Greece nor Bulgaria have the right to change the past to suit the present. Historically, both these languages belonged to all the people of the Balkans and Levant (coastal Asia Minor) until they were expropriated by these two states.]

A while later, after the appeal was given to the Lazzarists by the people of Kukush, a Lazzarist representative from Solun, named Tirok, arrived in Kukush. He, along with some city dignitaries, paid a visit to the Ottoman mudir and explained to him that, from now on, the people of Kukush would be under the auspices of the French consul in Solun. This information was also made clear to the Ottoman Pasha (General) in Solun. It is worth mentioning at this point that, at first the Ottoman government was in favour of spreading Catholicism and Uniatism in the European part of the Ottoman Empire because in this way it was weakening the Tsarist Russian position in the Balkans.

After Tirok’s visit, Kukush was visited by Bore, a Catholic missionary from Constantinople, who informed the people of Kukush that their appeal was accepted by the Pope.

A little later, Nako Stanishev was summoned to Constantinople to explain the process by which the people of Kukush came to “change” their faith. This is what old man Nako Stanishev said to his critics: “When the surgeons see that some part of the body is filled with gangrene they cut it off to save the body. We did the same. When we saw that the administrators of our faith were full of gangrene we cut them off. We did this to save our nation. Since we were not allowed to cut off the administration we cut off both our faith and the administration to save our nationality! How can faith

exist without people?! But people can exist without faith! A person can find faith but faith without people can never exist!” (Kuzman Shapkarev, “Life story of the brothers Dimitri and Konstatin Miladinov”, also something about the life of Nako S. Stanishev, p. 54. Blaze Ristevski, “Uniatism in Macedonia”, part II in the journal “Views”, June 1960, p. 1025.)

In order to separate Kukush from Uniatism, on October 29, 1859 the Patriarchate ordained Partenia Zografski to bishop and sent him to Kukush.

Partenia was born in 1820 in the village Galichnik, Debar Region. He was taught by Dimitar Miladinov in Ohrid who instilled a patriotic spirit in him. He continued his education in Athens and later in Moscow where he graduated from the Moscow Theological Academy. After he returned from Moscow Partenia Zografski again linked up with Dimitar Miladinov and actively collaborated with him, spreading national awareness in the Macedonian people.

Partenia was well-known for his textbooks on the Macedonian language. These books were published with help from the Solun renaissance revivalists Kiriak Drzhilovets and the Paunchev brothers. Included in Partenia’s more famous works are the titles “Short Sacred History” and “Nachalnoe Uchenie”. Partenia also published a collection of Macedonian folk songs with the Miladinov brothers and worked on the cultivation of the Macedonian literary language. “Partenia wanted to give preference to the dialects of Western Macedonia, which he found more harmonious...” (Simeon Radev, “Macedonia and the Bulgarian National Revival”, p. 239.)

Partenia’s textbooks were well accepted and loved by his students. This is what Raiko Zinzifov wrote about that: “Their parents couldn’t be any happier when they hear their children read from Father Partenia’s book ‘Short Sacred History’, the same Father Partenia who lately has become the bishop of the people of Kukush. They don’t need to ask what is written in the book because they can read it themselves and understand what is written...” (Giorgi Abadzhiev, “Aegean Macedonia in our history”, p. 119.)

[If it was a book written in the Greek language then “they” (Macedonians) would need to ask someone who could read and understand Greek in order to explain to them what was written in the book. This is because Macedonians did not speak or understand the Greek language.

It is important at this point, to explain a couple of things in order to clarify the situation. It should be obvious by now that the reason the “Greek” language was introduced in Macedonia was because Greece and its sponsors and patrons, the Great Powers, had aims at erasing everything that was Macedonian and assimilating the Macedonian population into the newly created Greek fold. This was not done by accident but by design. The problems that the Macedonian people experience with Greece and with the Great Powers today (2016) are nothing new, they are only a continuation of what was started even before the Ottoman Empire was driven out of Macedonia. Greece here is a great pawn of a game designed to destroy everything that is Macedonian. The Great Powers of those days, like the Great Powers of today, had aims at destroying Macedonia. This is why they were observing from the distance, watching everything that was unleashed against the Macedonian people and did nothing. Instead of stopping it as they should have done, which was within their power... if they cared like we think they did, then they should have done something... yet they did nothing and, at the same time, they kept silent... They kept silent, just like they did during the 1903 Macedonian Ilinden Uprising against the Ottoman Empire. They watched Macedonia burn from their great ships harboured in the Aegean Sea and did nothing. Why? In 1825, in a similar situation, they intervened and saved the so-called Greeks in the Morea (south Greece) by sinking the Ottoman ships in the Navarino harbour. History can attest to that! Why couldn't they intervene on behalf of the Macedonians in 1903? It is very naïve to believe that these Great Powers are Macedonia's friends, that they have our best interests at heart and that they will come to our rescue when we need rescuing.

I can only speculate as to why they want to save the Greeks and at the same time destroy the Macedonians. This is an act which is hard to believe but that is exactly what is happening. I speculate that perhaps it has something to do with Macedonia's past and its greatness... its contribution to the world... which, by the way, has

been hijacked and undeservedly attributed to the Greeks and the Bulgarians... two newly and artificially created entities.

They say that the Bulgarians one time had a great empire which covered a large span of territory that included Macedonia and therefore they deserve to exist and to have Macedonia... They say that the Ancient Greeks have contributed a great deal to modern science, mathematics and learning... Forgetting that it was not Athens but Alexandria in Egypt, a Macedonian city, built and administered by Macedonian kings. It was the Macedonians and not the Greeks who built and paid for the institutions, including the Alexandrian library, which made that possible. But has anyone ever heard any of the Great Powers, particularly the Western Powers, ever say that the Macedonian people, one time, also had an even greater empire that spanned almost the entire known world... and this empire immensely contributed to our modern civilization... made discoveries in every respectable field? And because of that, that the Macedonian people too have the right and deserve to exist? NO! In fact everything that the Macedonian people did for this world has been hijacked and falsely attributed either to the Greeks or to the Bulgarians... From the trade routes that Alexander the Great carved out connecting East to West, to the Alexandrian museum and library that illuminated and enlightened the world for centuries, to the Middle Ages when the Macedonian language was the language of enlightenment in the Christian world. History will attest to the fact that the Macedonian language was the third global language in Europe next to Coine and Latin. Yet we have people today who say “there is no such thing as a Macedonian language”!

Yes, including the Vlachs and Albanians that came to the region during the 11th and 13th century AD, they have the right to call themselves “Greeks that descended from the ancient Greeks... no less”. How about the Turkish Christian colonists and settlers who were deposited in Macedonia after World War I, they too are Greeks and descendents of the so-called Ancient Greeks. Then after 1988 they, overnight, became “Macedonians, descendants of the Ancient Macedonians”. Let us not forget the “Turkic Asian” elite fighters who arrived and settled in the Balkans in the mid to late first millennium AD; they too have rights including the right to call themselves “Bulgarians” and rightful owners of the Slavic and

Macedonian lands now occupied by Bulgaria. But the Macedonians who, even by DNA tests, have shown to be indigenous to Macedonia, not only have no right to call themselves Macedonians but, according to some Greek and Bulgarian claims, they “simply do not exist”. And this is done under the watchful eyes of the Great Powers... that can do something about it... Yet nothing is done and nothing has been done in the last 150 years! Why? Well I may not know the real reason and I may never find it out in my lifetime. But you can be certain that... we are not only not important to them but we stand in their way... So we need to approach our problems more thoughtfully and carefully. Rely more on ourselves than on false hopes and empty promises. Words are cheap, especially when spoken by strangers who say “we are here to help you...” Our history is full of tragedies because, by thinking strangers have our best interests in their hearts, we willingly allow them to mislead us. We are still doing this to this day despite our past. We look to the very West, which has tried to extinguish us and which has sanctioned the division of our country and approved the assimilation of our people, for our salvation. There is something not right about this... I will provide more historic examples of this throughout the book.]

The following was written in an article by Konstantin Durov from Doiran, a teacher in Seres, and published in the “Tsarigadski vesnik” (Constantinople newspaper): “I was full of joy and wanted to hear more of his sermons in church which he gave in two languages. First he spoke Greek but when he saw that no one understood him, he repeated the sermons in Macedonian. Then my heart could no longer hold out and my eyes welled up with tears...” (“Constantinople newspaper”, February 13, 1860.) Partenia opened Macedonian schools everywhere in the villages. “Partenia opened schools everywhere in the villages and used up all the school primers he had printed. And now again he is printing more in Constantinople”. (“Constantinople newspaper” no. 475, March 19, 1860.)

With help from the Macedonian population in his eparchy, Partenia Zografovski, the Bishop of Kukush, made a bid for a separate Macedonian Diocese, independent of the Solun Metropolis, as a continuation of the Ohrid Archbishopric, and as the first institution of an independent Macedonian Church. Unfortunately, the response

from the Constantinople Patriarchate was a brutal no! This failure also created internal problems within the Macedonian community. The first to react was Nako Stanishev who believed that the Bishop should have been more sensitive to all of Macedonia's needs rather than to just elevate his own Kukush eparchy to a Metropolis. Partenia eventually left the Kukush diocese and the Greek bishop Meletios was sent back to take his place. Being unhappy, a lot of people in Kukush decided to become Uniats. And with Catholic influence also came cultural influence in Kukush. The French Lazzarist missionaries opened a church, an orphanage, a hospital, a pharmacy and a school, which served as examples in the city.

[Uniatism is defined as the union of an Eastern Rite church with the Roman Church in which the authority of the papacy is accepted without loss of separate liturgies or government by local patriarchs.]

With help from the Uniats, the Macedonian national movement, led by seventy year-old Pop Dimo, began to move into Enidzhe Vardar. This was a teachers' movement struggling to implement the use of the Macedonian language in schools and churches. Following the examples set by of Hadzhipavel Bozhigropski, Dimitar Miladinov and other reformists who passed through Enidzhe Vardar, the old priest developed a wide set of revivalist activities which escaped Nikodin's watchful eye. Nikodin was the Greek bishop of Voden. Unfortunately, even though he did not know what was going on, Nikodin suspected something was up? So in order to prevent Pop Dimo from doing whatever he was doing, Nikodin convinced the Ottoman authorities to issue an order to stop the Macedonian revival and evict all revivalists from Enidzhe Vardar. But Pop Dimo was clever. He called on the people to help him and sought protection from the Uniats. He personally went to Constantinople and submitted an application to join the Uniats. The administrator Don Petar Arabadziski gladly accepted the application and gave Pop Dimo the necessary documents to be able to smoothly perform services. When Pop Dimo returned he opened the first school in Enidzhe Vardar, which soon grew into a gymnasium and operated until the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913.

[Here again I need to emphasize that Western Power France was prepared to conditionally help the Macedonian people if they

converted to Uniatism. Why couldn't France help them if they were not Uniats? Obviously France had the power to do so because both the Uniat schools and churches operated freely in that region and unrestrictedly employed the Macedonian language both in the schools and churches without objection from the Greeks or from the Ottomans.]

By 1913 there were Macedonian schools (municipal and Exarchist) in Enidzhe Vardar in the villages Babakoi, Baialtsi, Tushilevo, Damian, Libiahovo and in the city itself.

The most decisive struggle for the Macedonian schools and churches in Voden was fought during 1863. At the same time a new and young Macedonian industry began to develop in the region which brought in traders of silk, skins, oil, etc. The people leading the revivalist movement for Macedonian national education in Voden were George Adzhigogov, Hristo Libarchev, D. Zaneshev, Hristo Kamchev, Kalima, Dimitar Fotev, N. Liushkata, Ivan Bizovetsot, Tasko Konstantinov, Ivan Srebrov, N. Ivanov and others.

Like the Macedonian revivalists led by Nako Stanishev in Kukush who encountered difficulties with the Greek Bishop Meletios, the revivalists in Voden encountered difficulties with the Greek Bishop Nikodin. On top of that there was also a small group of vocal people, in support of Nikodin, who were against the Macedonian movement. These people were Grigor Karahadzhiev, Anastas Bilichot, Dimo Krtsolev, Hristo Noiche, Hristo Nikolov, Pando Mutavchia, Hristo Pesho and Iovan Dimov. Here the division was between citizens who supported the "Bulgarian" party on the one hand and those who supported the "Greek" party on the other. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that the people hated the Greek bishop because he was the epitome of exploitation and the chief conductor of the great Greek assimilation policy in Macedonia. Nikodin was a bitter opponent of any venture leading to a national awakening and empowerment of the Macedonian people. The situation, of course, was exploited by the Bulgarians for their own propaganda purposes.

[The reference Hristo Andonovski made with regards to Greek and Bulgarian "parties" requires some clarification. These were not

“political parties” in the Ottoman Empire at that time. So the reference made refers to “a party or group of people”. Political parties, internal or especially external, were not allowed to function inside the Ottoman Empire, not until reforms were implemented sometime after 1905. The Ottoman Empire at the time was governed strictly by religion.

“The legal system was created around the Seriat which had its basis in Islam. The Koran and Hadith were the books from which the ideals and fundamental principles for the construction of the legal system were drawn. No law could be passed which in principle contradicted the Seriat. Only the supreme religious leader, the Sejh-ul-Islam, had the right to interpret and assess the legal norms and only from the point of view of Islamic law.

The Koran dictated Muslim conduct and behaviour, including punishment for crimes. In the Ottoman mind only religion and the word of God had sole authority over peoples’ lives. Religion was the official government of the Ottoman State. Islam was the only recognized form of rule that suited Muslims but could not be directly applied to non-Muslims. So the next best thing was to allow another religion to rule the non-Muslims. The obvious choice of course was the Pravoslav (Byzantine) Christian religion, which was the foundation of the Pravoslav (Byzantine) Empire. There was a catch however. The official Muslim documents that would allow the ‘transfer of rule’ were based on an ancient Islamic model, which denounced all Christianity as a corrupt invention of the ‘Evil one’. The conservative Turks regarded the Christians as no more than unclean and perverted animals. Also, the ancient documents called for sacrifices to be made. A Christian religious leader, for being granted leadership by the Muslims, was expected to sacrifice his own flock on demand to prove his loyalty to the Sultan. It was under these conditions that the Patriarch accepted his installment as sole ruler of the Christian Orthodox faith and of the non-Muslim Millet.

The Sultans tolerated Christianity as the government of the non-Muslim Millet and sold the Patriarchate to an adventurer who could buy (bribe) his nomination. Once nominated, the Patriarch in turn sold consecration rights to Bishops, who in turn regarded their gain as a ‘legitimate investment’ of capital and proceeded to ‘farm their

diocese'. Under Ottoman rule the Patriarchate in Tsari Grad became a corrupt business, having little to do with faith and more to do with making money. As more and more bishoprics fell into the hands of the new Patriarch, faith at the top began to fade away. This was also the beginning of the end for the Slavonic (Macedonian) Churches in the Ottoman Empire.

In addition to being a religious ruler, the Greek Patriarch and his appointed Greek Bishops became civil administrators of the Christian and non-Muslim people. Their authority included mediating with the Turks, administering Christian law (marriages, inheritance, divorce, etc.), running schools and hospitals and dealing with the large and small issues of life. There were no prescribed provisions on how to deal with criminal matters or the limit of authority on the part of the Bishops. In other words, there was no uniform manner by which Christian criminals could be punished or limits to how far a Bishop could exercise his authority. This opened the way for interpretation, neglect, abuse and activities of corruption such as nepotism, favouritism and bribery.” (Chris Stefou, “History of the Macedonian people from Ancient times to the Present”, Risto Stefov Publications, Toronto, 2005, p. 277)]

A petition was put together by the Macedonian people in Voden Region and sent to the Ottoman authorities requesting that the jurisdiction of the Greek bishops be ended and that the Macedonian language, the mother tongue of the people, be introduced in the Macedonian schools and churches. This petition was published in the Constantinople newspaper “Macedonia” number 54 on May 30, 1877. Among other things, this is what the newspaper said: “First, we want the Macedonian language to be taught in the schools. We want our children to first learn Macedonian, then Turkish and finally, if there is time, they can learn other languages. In their churches want to hear the prayers, the Word of God, in Macedonian, in our language...”

The first Macedonian school in Voden was opened in 1865 in Giorgi Adzhigogov’s house in which 117 schoolgirls attended classes. The same year Dimitar Makedonski, a cultural activist from Istanbul, arrived in Voden. Dimitar was born in the village Embore, Kaliari Region. He too opened a school for boys in the Adzhigogov home

where he taught 90 boys. But on the seventh day after opening the school, Dimitar Makedonski was arrested by the Ottoman authorities and imprisoned.

Giorgi Adzhigogov was one of the more famous traders in Voden. He, together with a man from Switzerland, opened the city's first silk processing factory. Giorgi was very intelligent and knowledgeable. He had studied in Athens and Vienna. He used his own money to fund the school and church in Voden. He personally went from village to village to convince the Macedonian people to fight for the Macedonian schools and churches and to demand that their children be taught in the Macedonian language. Unfortunately trade in Macedonia began to decline during the second half of the 19th century and with it Giorgi Adzhigogov's wealth. But despite the economic decline, Giorgi did not give up on the Macedonian people and continued to support the struggle for revival. Then one day he went to the Exarchate (Bulgarian) Church asking for help. He was told: "Don't expect any help from us. You should withdraw from this social work you are doing because you are in our way hindering our activities..." (Taken from the memoirs "Two teachers in Macedonia", p. 140, Macedonian review, Volume I, book 5 and 6.) The Exarchy never did forget nor forgive Giorgi Adzhigogov for leading a Voden delegation to Tsari Grad (Istanbul) in 1870 to visit the Ecumenical Council with intentions of seeking the revival of the Macedonian Ohrid Archbishopric.

The following villages in Voden Region had Macedonian schools operating right before the start of the Balkan Wars: Vladovo, Volkoianovo, Vechista, Zherbi, Krontselovo, Lukovits, Mesimer and Ostrovo. There were two schools in the city Voden, a primary and a high school.

4. The movement in Meglen Region

The small traders who traded in pepper, cocoons and in manufactured goods built by the local artisans in Meglen, in the middle of the 19th century, had established business links in Bitola, Solun and Voden. Along with the business links they also established cultural links and brought back the need to establish the new national spirit in Meglen Region, which had conquered other

parts of Macedonia. Also, we cannot underestimate the role of Hilandar and Zograf, two Macedonians from this region who, after spending several years in the Sveta Gora (Mount Athos) monasteries, brought back Slavic (Macedonian) literacy to their villages.

The village Sarakinovo was at the forefront in teaching the Macedonian language in the Meglen schools. Education in the Macedonian language began back in 1856 when a Greek teacher decided to secretly teach the Macedonian children to read and write in Macedonian. The Greek teacher's name was Grplio but he himself was not Greek. Grplio was an ethnic Macedonian born in Strumitsa, his real name is unknown. He acquired the nickname Grplio because his face was scarred with blemishes. He started to teach the children by showing them how to write the letters of the Cyrillic (Macedonian) alphabet. Then he taught them how to write Macedonian words. He had no Macedonian textbooks at the time. The people of Sarakinovo appreciated what Grplio was doing, especially the village elders, brothers Petre and Hristo Popov. Grplio unfortunately died in 1859 and was replaced by Pando, also born in Strumitsa. In 1863 another teacher came to Sarakinovo. His name was Giorgi Malenikov. He too promoted Macedonian education and was the first teacher to bring printed student textbooks to Sarakinovo. Unfortunately the Greeks of the region slandered him with all sorts of accusations and in 1868 Malenikov was arrested and imprisoned. During his absence Pop Ivan Ianev took the job as a volunteer and taught the children for free. Malenkov's arrest and imprisonment provoked the people of Sarakinovo to take action against the Greek church authorities, the real instigators of the arrest. They sent Hristo Popov to Bitola to pay a visit to the local Macedonian activists and to the Russian consul. From Bitola Hristo Popov then went to Veles where he met teacher Andrea Bogdanov and convinced him to come to Sarakinovo to teach. Bogdanov taught in Sarakinovo for 5 years.

In his diary and chronicles about the revival in his native village Sarakinovo, the priest Ivan Atanasov wrote that the brothers Peter and Hristo Popov were among those people who, together with Giorgi Adzhigogov and the brothers Zaneshev from Voden, engaged

in the struggle for the introduction of Macedonian liturgy in the churches.

At the same time the first school in Sarakinovo was opened in 1858, another school was opened in the village Tushim on the east side of the Meglen Field and there too the Macedonian children began to learn in the Macedonian language. The Tushim school was opened by the village elders Traio Pramatarov and Ivan Stoikov. Then in 1883 a large school was opened in the village Pozhartsko, where four teachers taught in the Macedonian language. In 1885 a Macedonian school was opened in Dolno Rodivo, in 1886 schools were opened in Strupino and Tsakoni, and in 1890 a school was opened in the town S'botsko, which later, in 1906, became the administrative centre of the Meglen Nahiya. In 1890 Gosho Tanov opened the first home school in the village Leskovo.

In 1893 a school was opened in the village Zbortsko and, later, in 1904, schools were opened in the villages Pochev and Gorno Rodivo. In 1906 a high school was opened in the town S'botsko with boarding facilities for children from out of town.

A number of Macedonian schools were opened in Meglen Region for the 1909-1910 academic year, including those in the villages Sarakinovo, Bizovo, Tushim, Pozhartsko, Dolno Rodivo, Strupino, Tsakoni, S'botsko, Zbortsko, Leskovo, Pochev, Gorno Rodivo, Tudurche, Tsrneshevo, Volchishta, Tresino, Poliani and Kapiniani.

Towards the middle of the 19th century a national movement had also begun in the Boemiska area with Gumendzhe as its capital. At that time traders from Gumendzhe were well-known to the rest of Macedonia, especially for their quality wines and silk.

“The house of church and popular figure Dedo Tano Zaharinov was well-known beyond Gumendzhe and in Solun as the first wine trade house in Gumendzhe...” (Vladimir Karamanov, “From Kukush to Gumendzhe”, p. 93, Macedonian review, year X Vol. III and IV.)

In Gumendzhe, as in other Macedonian cities, the children of the merchants were educated in the Greek language and in the Greek script delivered by illiterate patriarchal priests who substituted as

educators in Ottoman occupied Macedonia. This kind of learning however was not good enough to meet their needs if they were to become traders and merchants. They needed to learn a useful living and comprehensible language. Because of this, the merchants from Gumendzhe sent their children to places like Plovdiv and Zagreb. The first Macedonian school in Gumendzhe was opened by the monk Haralampi Aidarinov, in which 30 students enrolled in the first year. Among the first teachers to teach there were Giorgi Peikov from Gumendzhe and Zaharia Giorev from Kumanovo. The Gumendzhe traders Hristo Sevinov and Dimo Rumaliev hired Nikola Manov from Solun and paid him 3,500 grosha a year to teach their children. Nikola Manov was the first Macedonian teacher in that region to introduce “sound teaching”.

The national wave in Gumendzhe spilled out into the surrounding villages, including the villages Kriva, Tumba, Gorgopik, Konikovo and Litovoi. In the beginning the teachers were paid with money that was collected in the churches from the worshippers. There were people who actually donated one grosh per week to pay for the teachers in the village. This trend took an upswing during the late 1880's with many Macedonian schools opening.

From the middle of the 19th century onward, the Seres and Nevrokop fair also played an important role in the Macedonian cultural and educational development and in the rise of nationalism in the Macedonians in Eastern Macedonia. Traders and merchants who came from Thrace, Prilep, Veles and central Macedonia not only exchanged goods in these fairs but also exchanged thoughts and ideas about the national movement in Macedonia.

Stefan Verkovich, a Serbian national from Bosnia, who at the time was collecting old coins and Macedonian folk songs was instrumental in spreading revivalist activities. Verkovich maintained links with several Macedonian leaders, from all over Macedonia and Constantinople. His first associates in Seres Region were Macedonian enlightenment monks Theodosia and Dionysia, the merchant Govedarov, Dedo Izho, Gradimir, Ilia Kasarov, a teacher from Seres, and others.

The first Macedonian school in Nevrokop was opened in 1840 by the teacher Konstantin who was a merchant by trade. After he returned from being educated in Nish, Vidin and Galati, Konstantin was the first to use the title “Sir” which the population attributed to him as a nickname.

Initially the teacher nicknamed “Sir” taught the children in the Greek language by using the church books Oktaih, Psalter and Chaslavot. Later, when he taught in the Macedonian language, he used the books of the Neofit gospel and a Bulgarian primer (probably the Petar Veron primer published in 1825). Each student had to pay the teacher two grosh per month, as well as provide for him various gifts, food and other products.

Another teacher who taught in Nevrokop was Manidi Kutsiot (the lame) from Melnik, who in 1850 introduced the Slavic (Macedonian) language as a subject in school for two hours a week. This included grammar and penmanship. The reforms introduced by Manidi unfortunately caused him a great deal of upset, which eventually resulted in his dismissal. He was fired from his job in 1852 by the Greek Bishop Meletios of Drama.

However, the people of Nevrokop in 1865 opened a Macedonian school and a Macedonian church of their own which were administered by Nikola Mandushev.

A Greek school was established in the village Trlis in 1815. The teacher who taught in this school was Ivan Simeonov Balabanov, a Macedonian from the same village who also worked as a journalist. The brochure “Odigos tis evsevias” (Guide of piety) he used was his own creation and so was the book “Kipos poliantis” (A Flower Garden), published in Peshto in 1840. In this book Ivan Simeonov made sure to thank the Greek language that had enlightened him. However, Ivan Simeonov also admitted that he himself was not Greek but belonged to the tribe of Slavic speakers. In time, Ivan Simeonov also became a Macedonian teacher. The following comments were made in the Hrlevian edition of the Sofrony from 1856 which said: “The teacher Ivan Simeonov, a Macedonian from the village Trlis, was the first Hellenic teacher in Golemo Trnovo...”

(Jordan Ivanov, “The Bulgarians in Macedonia”, p. 117, document number 114.)

Another pioneer of Slavic literacy in Seres Region was Archimandrite Isaia who, from 1851 to 1856, taught in the village Trlis and later in Nevrokop and Seres. Isaia became familiar with the Macedonian language and literature in the Halki spiritual school in Istanbul at Neofit Rilski. Unfortunately his great efforts to enlighten the Macedonian people in their native language caused him great difficulties, from which he died in 1878 of unknown causes.

Another popular teacher was N. Ivanov who taught in the village Kobachnitsa and, besides his teaching duties in school, often held lectures in the Macedonian language. Two of those lectures, written in the popular local dialect, were preserved in his personal archives. (Angel Dimitrov “From the past of Nevrokop Region...”, Macedonian Review, year VII, vol. 1, p. 98.)

Under the initiative of the teachers, following the example of the Greek silogos in Seres, a Teacher’s Association was organized in Nevrokop in 1874 in which 30 members enrolled in the first year. The Association received some of its operational finances from teacher’s dues and the rest were made up by the citizenry.

Outside of Nevrokop, the enlightenment movement later spread to larger villages such as Plevna in Drama Region, Prosechen, Skrizhevo, Zihnensko and Gorno Brodi in Seres Region, Krchovo and Krushevo in Demir Hisar Region, Starchishta, etc. Many of the brighter students from Eastern Macedonia continued their education in Moscow, Odessa, Sofia, and some went to Belgium and Switzerland. In the Nevrokop kaaza alone in the academic year 1906-1907, one-class schools were opened with three teachers and 65 students, 42 primary schools with 58 teachers and 2,980 students. Schools were supported by revenues from renting out church properties and from capital received from cultural and educational institutions.

5. Cultural enlightenment movement in Western Macedonia

Nestled on the slopes of legendary Mount Vicho, the village Trsie was too small and not fertile enough to provide all the necessities for its residents so many of them, skilled in carpentry and masonry, traveled to Sveta Gora (Mount Athos) to work. This was a practice that went on far back in time. The carpenters and masons worked on the monastery properties all summer and spent the winter back home with their families. One time the young priest Traiko Atanasov joined the expedition but not to work as a carpenter. Traiko put on a monk's robes and devoted himself to monastic life.

Years passed and the young Traiko had been forgotten until one day in 1864 an old monk named Gerasim arrived in Trsie. Gerasim was Traiko Atanasov's monastic name. Father Gerasim wanted to devote his last years of his life in the service of his village Trsie. His noble wish was to educate the village children to read and write in their native Macedonian language. With his savings from Sveta Gora and with aid from his fellow villagers, Father Gerasim built a new church in which all icons and inscriptions were inscribed in the Macedonian language. After the church had been built Father Gerasim wanted to fulfill one more of his desires; to build a Macedonian school. The school, located near the church, was built in 1866. This was the first Macedonian school built in Lerin Region. Father Gerasim was the school's first teacher. He taught the children, as well as some adults, the Macedonian alphabet. In the absence of Macedonian language textbooks, Father Gerasim used the Old Church Slavonic language texts from the Psalter and other texts including the apostle and gospel books. Dozens of Father Gerasim's students later became priests and teachers.

The modest flame that old Father Gerasim brought to Trsie from Sveta Gora soon spread to all of Lerin Region. Two more people who also greatly contributed to the Macedonian national revival and awakening in Lerin Region were the brothers Dr. Konstantin and Panaret Mishaikov from the village Patele. Their tireless agitation laid down the Macedonian educational foundation and they opened Macedonian churches in several villages in Lerin Region.

Included among the villages that led the popular movement in Lerin Region were the villages Nevolani, where an imposing two-story school building was built, Ekshi-Su, where in addition to the many

classrooms there was a beautiful hall built to hold events, Buf, Zeleniche, Pesoshnitsa, Patele, Banitsa, Voshtarani (Ofchareni) and Popozhani.

Leading the Macedonian spiritual struggle in the city Lerin was Priest Konstantin Gulapchev and community leaders Dimusha, Vasil Karadzhatov, Ianaki Kanev, Kotse Hadzhistoikov, Nune Grazhov and the families Boiaxhiu, Kirkov and Zafira. The first Macedonian chapel was established in Priest Konstantin Gulapchev's house. Then, with the segregation of the Sultan's decree, the Lerin notables built the Sveti Panteleimon church.

With funds collected from the citizens (810 Turkish liras and 60 napoleons) a new Macedonian school was built in 1910. We don't have accurate data as to when it opened but we know that it was built on top of an old school and had beautiful classrooms and a dormitory.

After struggling for 40 years to attain spiritual rights and facing all kinds of dangers, 46 churches and 3 monasteries were built and opened in Lerin, which served the Macedonian community and liturgy was performed in the Macedonian language. Macedonian language schools were also opened in the villages Aitos, Armenor, Banitsa, Buf, Voshtareni, Vrbiani, Gorno Nevoliani, Dolno Kotori, Ekshi-Su, Zabrdeni, Zelenich, Krushoradi, Nered, Pesoshnitsa, Petersko, Popozhari, Prekopana, Patele, Trsie, Tserovo, and in the cities Lerin and Sorovich, which operated until the Balkan wars of 1912-1913.

For the sake of history let it be noted that the first Macedonian school was opened in the village Trsie and that the first rifle shot of enlightenment in Lerin Region was fired in Trsie on May 20, 1901, which gave the signal for an armed national liberation struggle in this part of Macedonia.

As was mentioned earlier, the national cultural and educational movement in Kostur Region was fueled by the schoolteacher Giorgi Dinkata who, on October 17, 1869, organized a big demonstration in the city Kostur, during which the Greek bishop's house was

attacked. About 400 protesters consisting of labourers and craftsmen sought to replace the Greek bishop with a Macedonian bishop.

Towards the 1890's a movement was crystallizing to eliminate Bulgarian Exarchate influence in the Macedonian schools. More precisely, in 1892 an attempt was made in Kostur Region to introduce the Macedonian language into the schools. A special meeting was organized and attended by six teachers. Then, on August 22, 1892, the Kostur Region church community adopted decision 17 which sanctioned the Macedonian language to be taught in the schools. Decision 17 also instructed the teachers to put together a program that taught the Macedonian language and Macedonian grammar. This program was then adopted in the various schools in the villages Mavrovo, Lichishta, Tiolishta and Shesteovo. The municipality also made a decision for the Macedonian language to be introduced into the church administration. Dim. Bode, the then Serbian Consul in Bitola, in his letters to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Belgrade, wrote that in addition to introducing Macedonian grammar the committee also introduced a Macedonian dictionary.

The students who studied in the Kostur Macedonian language schools later continued their education in Solun and other places, and many like Lazo Poptraikov and Pando Kliashev later left their schools in favour of becoming leaders in the Macedonian national liberation movement in Kostur Region.

6. Macedonian and Bulgarian interests collide

A few years before the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate a group of Bulgarian intellectuals and a Bulgarian group from the Istanbul reading room, through the church, attempted to create a movement to sway the Macedonian language school and church to submit to the interests of the Bulgarian national bourgeoisie and its aspirations in Macedonia.

During the 1860's many Macedonian patriots and cultural workers in the Solun municipality expressed their opposition to the Bulgarian nationalist interventions and at the same time affirmed the Macedonian language in the schools and in public life in Macedonia.

For opposing the Bulgarian advance the Macedonians were heavily criticized, especially through the Bulgarian newspapers of the time, where the people from the Solun municipality were accused of being “old”, “backward”, “Greco-philes” and so on. These accusations were hurled against the very Macedonian fighters struggling for the creation of a Macedonian national culture and state. These were also the first people who started the struggle against the Phanariots in Solun.

The people of Solun went as far as to dismiss from office the Bulgarian teachers who had been sent from Istanbul. Among those dismissed were the Bulgarian teachers Boshkov, Nedelka and Stanislava Petkova. When the Bulgarian group from Istanbul attempted to start the newspaper “Selianik” in Solun and print it in Bulgarian, the Macedonians from Solun insisted that it should be printed in the Macedonian language because the newspaper existed in Solun, a place where, in addition to Turks, Greeks and Jews, Macedonians lived. A scathing attack against the Macedonians was published in the Istanbul newspaper “Macedonia” criticizing the Macedonians and the Macedonian language. But the same newspaper “Macedonia” (No. 24, 1868) was good enough to publish the comments of a contributor under the signature “A Macedonian” who came in defense of the Solun Macedonians and the Macedonian language, in which he said it was an attempt to preserve Kiril and Metodi’s works and alphabet.

The Bulgarian teacher Salgandzhiev, sent to Solun from Istanbul to implement Bulgarian national policies, said the following regarding the Solun resistance against the Bulgarian influence in Macedonia: “At that time (1868-1869) the wind of an old imaginary plan was blowing. The plan was concocted by some teachers from West Macedonia, according to whom the Macedonian youth should be limited to studying and developing their education exclusively in the Macedonian dialect and to that end they had begun to issue and have issued several textbooks. Some of these textbooks were stored in the warehouses of one of Boshkov’s (Bulgarian teacher) persecutors.” (* SK Salgandzhiev, “Personal matters and reminders”, Plovdiv, 1906, p. 34.)

Participating in the movement for the development of the Macedonian culture and nation and having special attachments to the activities of the Macedonian separatists (who did not want foreign languages taught in Macedonia) and textbook writers in Southern Macedonia were Veniamin Machukovski from the village Machukovo, Gevgelia Region, and Dimitar Makedonski. After returning from Russia where he studied, Machukovski in 1869 was appointed to be a teacher in the Solun municipal school. Machukovski compiled a grammar book in a dialect of the Macedonian language to make it easier for students in Macedonia to study in their native language. This is what Salgandzhiev had to say about that: "I need to note that with the acquisition of Mr. Machukovski as a teacher, everyone was saying that, as a Macedonian by birth, this new teacher would satisfy the claims of the certain circle - to teach students in the Macedonian dialect..." (Ibid, "Personal matters and reminders".)

Looking at the general mood of the Macedonians who wanted to be freed from the tutelage of the Greek Church and the Bulgarian Exarchate, which was formed in 1870 and was managed for completely different motives, namely, to pull the Macedonians onto their side, the leading Greek and Serbian propaganda centres in Macedonia indirectly recognized the uniqueness of the Macedonian nation and language. In that respect, the Istanbul based Greek silogos published the following comments in the newspaper "Maritsa" on August 8, 1878: "The hatred for the misguided population which supports the schismatic Exarchate must be hidden; People should be reassured that the whole population living in Macedonia is neither Bulgarian nor Greek but Macedonian and that there is no reason for hatred and division."

Midhad Pasha, Turkish reformer and governor of Solun, in his tendency to detach the Macedonians from Russian influence, shared the same attitude. He often visited the Solun school and in Voden ordered the church's coffers to be split between the Grkomani (Macedonians supporting the Greek church) and the other Macedonians. Midhad Pasha also openly made requests to the Macedonian people to build Macedonian churches and to seek the restoration of the Ohrid Archbishopric.

Included among the supporters of the Macedonian movement in Serbia in the 1880's, beside the prominent Despot S. Badzhovich from Krushevo, was Priest Kostadin Trpkovich from the village Buf, Lerin Region. There is mention in a preserved document that Priest Kostadin was one of the leaders in the Macedonian uprising in Bitola. Here is what he wrote about himself: "I was born in the village Buf, Bitola District in Macedonia. I have been working as a priest until 1860, before the movement that was directed to free the struggling Christians from the Turkish yoke. I was involved in the uprising and when it did not succeed I would have fallen into the hands of the Turkish authorities who would have sentenced me to life imprisonment..." (Archives of the Serbian Patriarchate, F. J. no. 7, September 7, 1878.)

However, Kostadin Trpkov, as he was called in Macedonia, was not only a priest in the village Buf. He also described himself as the initiator of opening the first Macedonian school in his village. The school was opened sometime around 1861. That same year Trpkovich, or Trpkov, traveled to Belgrade and personally requested that the Serbian Ministry of Education supply him with educational material. His wish was granted and he was given a number of textbooks and workbooks. He was given a total of 186 books and other school materials. (SR Serbian State Archives, Ministry of Education, FH 1612/1861.)

The Macedonian spirit for Macedonians to remain Macedonian was clearly expressed in another document. In a letter dated May 9, 1888, originating from the secret Macedonian Committee in Sofia, sent to the Despot Badzhovich by Temko Popov from the Macedonian movement in Solun, among other things, it said: "To be honest Despot, the national spirit in Macedonia has reached a situation today that even if Jesus Christ himself came from the heavens he could not convince a Macedonian that he is a Bulgarian or a Serb, except for those Macedonians who already have been rooted in Bulgarian propaganda". (Dr. Klement Dzambazovski "For some Macedonian national trends of the Macedonian emigrants in Serbia in the late 19th century," Messenger of the Institute of National History, year 5, p. 171).

Krste Petkov Misirkov, born in the village Postol, Enidzhe Vardar Region, was an eminent Macedonian educationist from Southern Macedonia. He fought against the assimilatory practices and foreign propaganda by stressing in his works the Macedonian national individuality.

Misirkov's philological knowledge and contributions have enabled science to prove the existence of a unique Macedonian language, culture and other national elements and to defend the Macedonian people's national identity. In his famous book "On Macedonian Matters", Misirkov proved scientifically that the names "Serbian", "Greek" or "Bulgarian", which the Balkan bourgeoisie baptized the Macedonians with, were part of the Greek, Serbian and Bulgarian propaganda campaigns to realize their aspirations for "grabbing" Macedonian territories. The release of the book "On Macedonian Matters" was not welcomed by Serbia and Bulgaria. Circles in Sofia and Belgrade ostracized Misirkov with utmost ferocity because this was one of the most serious documents which, with arguments, explained the existence of the Macedonian nation and language, marking Macedonia as a separate historical geographic and ethnic entity.

Misirkov spent most of his life in emigration in Russia and Bulgaria during which time he engaged in fiery agitation through scientific lectures and publications in support of the Macedonian cause. In one of his articles entitled "Macedonian nationalism", published by the newspaper "Mir" on March 25, 1925, Misirkov strongly condemned the Serbian and Bulgarian propaganda waged in Macedonia, which caused a lot of suffering for the Macedonian people. Among other things he wrote:

"We the Macedonians suffer the most, above all, because of Serbian and Bulgarian disagreements, therefore it is our duty to seek and find the means and time for reconciliation. We don't need the Serbians or the Bulgarians to enforce our national spirit, at the base of which lies their interests ahead of ours."

"We have our own Macedonian national feelings and the abilities to create a Macedonian national culture, as we have been doing so for

centuries, when our country was not part of the same state as yours...”

In the same article, with the words: “The knowledge and the feeling that I am Macedonian should stand higher than anything else in the world. Macedonians should not be assimilated and lose their individuality living among Serbians and Bulgarians,” Misirkov categorically declared himself a Macedonian.

The formation and growth of the Macedonian national consciousness was reflected in all of Misirkov’s works. The following was written in an article published in the newspaper “Macedonia Golos” and issued in Petrograd by several Macedonian intellectuals that included Dimitar Chupovski from the village Papradishte, Veles Region, Dr. Gavrilko Konstantinovich from the village Smrdesh, Kostur Region, and Krste Misirkov: “The time has come to confirm to the whole world that Macedonian people live in Macedonia and not Serbian, Bulgarian or Greek. This nation has its own unique history and its own national dignity with major historical contributions to the cultural history of Slavism...” (“Macedonian Golos”, years. II no. 10, p. 14).

Misirkov was an impressive figure because his work emphatically expressed the achieved level of national awareness and affirmation of the Macedonian identity. (Kolishevski: “The pressures placed on the Macedonian people in order to assimilate them was a rare example in the history of mankind...”, “Messenger of the Institute of National History, year IV, no. 2, 1958, p. 22.)

CHAPTER TWO - Armed National Resistance

The first phase of the Macedonian national revival manifested itself as a struggle for affirming the Macedonian language and church. That was soon replaced by the armed resistance against Ottoman tyranny under the banner of Christian liberation from Ottoman oppression and from the crescent of Islam. The strongest expression for the Macedonians from southern Macedonia was the Negush Uprising.

1. The Negush Uprising

According to historian Stuanakis, whose book was published in April 1822, at about the same time the Negush Uprising was taking place in Negush Region, all of Central Macedonia was involved in commerce, domestically manufacturing all sorts of products and handicrafts. Negush Region traders were involved in various business relations, not only within the Ottoman Empire but also in trade centres abroad, including Vienna, Budapest, Moscow, Odessa, and Germany, where they had their own offices. They represented almost all the trades in Macedonia, mostly textile manufacture, workshops, weapons, knives, paintings, etc. The textiles from Negush Region were very popular, especially the silk textiles, of which 30 percent were produced in Negush.

Prompted by the Greek uprising of 1821, the people of Negush Region began to resist the Ottoman administration and the occupation of their city by Ali Pasha of Ioannina. The occupation had resulted in the decrease of trade and manufacturing which upset the economic balance and social conditions, thus leading to the uprising. The situation was pushed to extremes when Lobud Pasha of Solun took hostages from the Macedonian towns, thinking that this would prevent the uprising.

The leaders of the Negush Uprising were Zafiraki from Negush, Karatasho from Ber and Angel Gatso from the village Sarakinovo, Voden Region. They prepared a plan so that the uprising could simultaneously begin in Negush, Ber, Kozhani, Kostur, Voden and Bitola Regions. In early 1822 they organized a meeting, held in a monastery near Ber, in which they invited Iani Barbaresko from

Kostur, Neopulos from Siatista, Panaiot Naum from Voden and a few others during which they discussed cutting enemy communications between Solun and Ioannina in Epirus.

During a consultation meeting, held in Negush on February 15, 1922, Zafiraki, Karatasho and Gatso discussed city defense issues with the city leaders, during which it was decided to: 1) immediately establish strategic defensive positions around the city; 2) begin the uprisings in Voden, Ber and surrounding villages simultaneously; 3) elect a five-member administration for Negush to take control of law and order in the city; and 4) form a committee to take care of acquiring food and other supplies for the citizens.

These committees were representative of the revolutionary government while the rebels held Negush and the surrounding villages. Unfortunately the superior, well-equipped Ottoman army put down the Negush Uprising and drowned Negush in blood. And with the failed uprising, the first attempt to establish a revolutionary government in that part of Macedonia perished. Greek historian Harilaos Trikoupi wrote the following about the town Negush: "...there was a sizable Christian population of Greeks and Slavs..." But, according to Aravantinos "... the city with two thousand households is of Slavic origin..." When the uprising was over, Lobud Pasha's soldiers turned the city into ruins while the multitude of "Bashibuzuks" (armed Muslim civilians, mostly Albanians) robbed everything the people of Negush owned.

The Russo-Turkish War of 1878 brought new hope to the enslaved Macedonian people but at the same time blurred their hopes by San Stefano Bulgaria, a plan to create a Greater Bulgaria at their expense. This plan, however, encountered resistance, not only from the certain major powers in Europe - England, France, Germany and Austro Hungary, but also from Macedonia's neighbours who themselves had aims at grabbing Macedonian territory. This became apparent from the intensity of their propaganda campaigns and their attempts to assimilate the Macedonian people.

The slogan "Macedonia for the Macedonians" was coined by the Macedonian people to show that the Macedonian territory belonged to the Macedonian people. This was done after Gladstone made this

remark a part of the European diplomatic vocabulary. There was also the Istanbul directive of the Greek silogos given to an organization in Solun. According to this directive, the Macedonian people were not to be referred to as Bulgarian, Greek, or Serbian but as Macedonian, a separate nation as was in the title of the Temporary Macedonian government, formed on February 16, 1878 in Southern Macedonia near Mount Olympus.

2. Temporary Macedonian government

The Temporary Macedonian government, consisting of 7 members, was the result of a presumably Macedonian initiative implemented by Macedonians living in Athens. Its creation was intended to prevent the Russian tsar from forming San Stefano Bulgaria and to prevent Macedonia from joining Bulgaria. It was clear from the Temporary Macedonian government's first proclamation, released the same day of its formation, that the Western European Great Powers were behind this initiative. The proclamation laid out the plight of the Macedonian people under Ottoman rule in detail, but the solution recommended was an eventual annexation of Macedonia by Greece.

I think that, regardless of the motives of the actors on the establishment of the Interim Macedonian Government, it is obvious that the term "Temporary Greek government in Macedonia", or something similar, was avoided but correctly called "Macedonian" government. That fact alone speaks to the fact that the Macedonian people were recognized by the neighbouring nations as a unique people in the Ottoman Empire who did not belong to them and who lived in a separate and clearly defined geographical and ethical territory? [At this point I am compelled to say that the Macedonian people do not need approval or recognition from Greece, Bulgaria or from the Great Powers to be Macedonians. They are Macedonians, based on their own ancestry.]

Western diplomacy at the Congress of Berlin found a Solomonic solution to the Macedonian Question. The European Great Powers did not want to lose the sympathy of "the sick man of the Bosphorus" for the sake of pleasing the Macedonian people, so they gave Macedonia back to the Ottoman Empire. At the same time the

Macedonian people were deceived with the infamous Article 23 of the Treaty of Berlin. For the realization of Article 23 a so-called “European Commission”, chaired by Asim Pasha, Ottoman Interior Minister, was put together in 1880 in Istanbul to draft a law on managing the province of Rumeli. They compiled 17 chapters of legislation intended to aid Macedonia in self-government. At the end of 1880, when the proposed legislation was completed, the Commission handed it over to the Sublime Porte. The Sublime Port, in the meantime, remained deaf to demands for self-government and to Great Power suggestions to implement Article 23 of the Treaty of Berlin.

[The fact that Macedonia was handed back to the Ottomans without a single guarantee that no harm would come to the Macedonian people, especially to those who took up arms to liberate themselves from the Ottomans, tells us that the Great Powers had no intention of helping Macedonia. All the Great Powers knew that the Ottomans would take retribution on the Macedonian population yet not a single one put any measures to ensure that that would not happen. Why?

The message delivered to the Macedonian people here was that no one is interested in your survival and no one is going to help you. Basically you are on your own...And it has been this way for the Macedonian people to this day. But were the Macedonian people paying attention?]

The idea of self-governance and autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, as the Great Powers had recommended through Article 23 in the Treaty of Berlin, became common knowledge in Macedonia. It is interesting to note that, influenced by this idea, the people of Macedonia began to develop a common progressive movement that was independent of nationality or linguistic background. Through a series of articles, we will show that the Macedonian people, regardless of the fact that some outside factors were trying to divide them into Greeks, Serbians, Bulgarians, Albanians, Gypsies, etc., were a separate nation, a Macedonian nation. Some of the carriers of that spirit saw themselves, and the Macedonian people, as part of the Ancient Macedonians and associated with famous names such as Philip II and Alexander III of Macedonia.

In confirmation of what was said earlier, we have the Minutes of the Constituent Assembly, convened by the “Central Committee for the Liberation of Macedonia” from May 21, 1880, and the Proclamation of the silogos which, on April 15, 1881, accepted the slogan “Macedonia for the Macedonians”.

“In Macedonia more than anywhere else, because of political purposes, people are divided into Slavs, Greeks, Albanians, Vlachs, Ottomans, etc. Our occupiers, with their deft policies, are attempting to upset our once glorious Macedonia and destroy our national existence. By sowing discord they want us to forever remain in a situation such as we have shown above.” This was said in the proceedings of the central committee for the liberation of Macedonia.

It is interesting to note that included in the part of the Protocol in which the decisions of the Constituent Assembly (National Assembly) were recorded “on behalf of the Macedonian nation”, also recorded are the demands made by the people. These demands were first sent to the Sublime Porte by the Governor General of Solun. They were then sent the European consuls “whose governments were asked to intervene on behalf of the Macedonian people and convince the Sublime Porte to meet its obligations with regards to Article 23 of the Berlin Agreement and provide a statute for Macedonia similar to that provided to the island of Crete in 1868.

Article 4 of the Resolution talks about the formation, by the Constituent (National Assembly), of an Temporary Macedonian government consisting of three members - Vasili Simu, Anastas Dimitrovich and Ali Efendi (Albanian), responsible for implementing decisions made by the Assembly.

There was talk in the Resolution of creating a military headquarters to militarily implement the wishes of the Macedonian people, if a peaceful solution could not be found.

The following is a description of the duties to be carried out by the government:

a) The Temporary Macedonian government, in full secrecy, will make every effort to secure the favour of the Great Powers in order to bring a favourable solution for the Macedonians in the Berlin Agreement.

b) The Temporary Macedonian government will appoint military leaders who, in case negotiations fail, will take measures to militarily achieve the results desired by the Macedonian people.

c) The Temporary Macedonian government will determine if the high order continues the policy of delay or not. Then, with its decisive appeal, it will invite the Macedonian people to arms but only through a national appeal in Macedonia and will take over the struggle with all available means and will fight to ensure its survival. (Central Committee for the Liberation of Macedonia, Minute no. 3, May 21, 1880.)

The Temporary Macedonian government was burdened by this mandate which advocated for organizing political and military authorities, finding funds to fulfill these aims, publicizing and promoting the event, and constructing Macedonian flags and other symbols.

At the same meeting, on May 21, 1880, the Temporary Macedonian government drafted a letter and, with the Minutes of the Constituent Assembly of the Macedonian people attached to it, sent it to the Russian Emperor Alexander II via the Russian consul (does not say which consul from which city). It is interesting to note that the letter was stamped with a round shaped stamp that bore the words “Temporary government of Macedonia” and the word “Equality”. These were slogans adopted by the Central Committee of the Temporary Macedonian government.

According to Hristo Shaldev, the Macedonian population in Gumendzhe Region, following the persistent efforts of the Solun Joint Commission, appointed two Macedonians, one in the town Gumendzhe and the other in the village Grubevtsi, to create a people’s militia which in this region served for two and a half years. In that short time the people’s militia called “Serdan” managed to

break up all criminal gangs in those sectors. Initiated by Bitola governor Rifat Pasha a similar institution, known as the “Faria”, was organized in the Bitola Vilayet. The self-reliant institution organized the villagers of this region into militia groups who then fought against the bandits. This idea of self-organizing the rural militia groups later helped the 1903 Macedonian armed uprising.

3. The 1903 Ilinden Uprising

Southern Macedonia occupies a prominent place in the Macedonian national liberation struggle and in the 1903 Ilinden Uprising. Many of the prominent revolutionary leaders originated from this part of Macedonia including some of the founders of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO). IMRO founders Gotse Delchev and Nikola Deliivanov were from Kukush, Hristo Batandzhiev was from Gumendzhe. When the revolutionary leaders in Solun decided that an uprising was to take place, prominent commanders such as Lazo Poptraikov, Pando Kliashev, Vangel Chakalarov, Alekso Turundzhov, Sole and others rose to the task to organize and lead the Uprising in this part of Macedonia.

A great example of the Macedonian people installing a people's government was demonstrated during the heat of the Ilinden Uprising. The most active regions that fully participated in this Uprising were Kostur and Prespa Regions during which time the town Vlahoklisura, in western Macedonia, was liberated. After its liberation the Kostur freedom fighting bands took it over, restored order and installed a revolutionary government. One of the town's citizens was appointed president with several committees to take care of accommodations for the troops and to collect voluntary contributions. Even the revolutionary fighters were represented through a delegate unit chief Kuzo Blatski. The money raised was invested in solving problems the insurgency was experiencing. The revolutionary government also established a judiciary body to look into and resolve disputes between citizens. While the finance and supply committees in Vlahoklisura were functioning and in the hands of the rebels, the population, among other things, was supplied with vegetables, flour, meat, tobacco, shoes and clothes.

What was said and contained in the Krushevo Manifesto on the nature of the insurgency, i.e. equality between nationalities in Macedonia and so on, was spoken in the speeches in Vlahoklisura delivered by its liberators and keynote speaker unit chiefs Kliashev, Chakalarov, Popov and Blatski. They spoke namely about the struggle led to liberate all the oppressed nationalities in Macedonia, including the Turks. They wanted to remove the oppressive Ottoman government and bring national and social justice to all the people. This declaration had a great effect of the Vlach population in Vlahoklisura and even on the Turks from the nearby villages, who sent delegations to Vlahoklisura and invited the rebels to visit their villages.

In September 6, 1903, in a report sent to Count Von Agenor Goluhovski, Austro-Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, August Kral, Austrian consul in Bitola, wrote that the establishment of the People's Revolutionary Government in Vlahoklisura was assessed as a revolutionary act equal to that of Krushevo. "On August 9, 1903," wrote Kral, "the rebels defeated and drove out the gendarmes. They then took the town Vlahoklisura as well as the surrounding mountain positions along with the strongholds in Mokreni and Bobishta. They then organized a revolutionary municipal government in Vlahoklisura similar to the one in Krushevo..."

In Lerin Region the Macedonian rebels freed the town Neveska. Numerous battles were also fought in Voden Region and on Mount Kaimakchalan. Then on September 12, 1903, Apostol Voivoda and Vancho Karasulski's combined rebel bands won a great victory over the Ottoman army on Mount Piak (Gandach). They left 180 Ottoman soldiers dead and just as many wounded.

Unfortunately the Ilinden Uprising did not turn the tide in favour of the Macedonian people and left the impoverished region of southern Macedonia in worse shape than before, along with many casualties and victims.

In Lerin region 207 people were killed, 631 homes, 2 churches and 3 schools were burned.

In Kostur Region 438 people were killed, 2533 house, 10 churches and 9 schools were burned. The 6 villages devastated in Prespa Region, which belong in the territory of today's Federal Republic of Macedonia, were not included. A large number of women and girls were also assaulted and many properties were looted.

With most of the Macedonian rebel forces crushed during the Ilinden Uprising, the Macedonian people were faced with a new period of darkness and persecution with the Ottoman army on one side and the cowardly Greek and Bulgarian armed gangs on the other. They all concentrated their wrath against the Macedonian population, particularly against the remnants of the regional and village freedom fighting bands. From 1904 to 1907 the Enidzhe Vardar fields and swamp became a symbol of the robust resistance offered by the Macedonian rebels against Ottoman tyranny and against Greek and Bulgarian plans to grab Macedonian territory.

After the failed Ilinden Uprising and after the bloody clashes between the Macedonian rebel bands and the Bugarian Vrhovists (Supremacists) and Greek Andartes, a free and independent Macedonia was not achieved but still remained in the consciousness of the Macedonian people, but as an unrealized ideal. Then in July 1908 the Young Turk Uprising took place. Led by Iane Sandanski, the Seres and Strumitsa revolutionary districts were in support of the Young Turk Uprising because they believed that the Young Turks would bring democracy to the Ottoman Empire and with it autonomy for Macedonia within an Eastern federation.

[In 1908 Macedonia's hopes for a better future were again raised with the start of the Young Turk revolution. The Young Turk movement, led by the Young Turk Committee, aimed to reform the last remnants of the Ottoman Empire by making social and political reforms in Macedonia. Many Macedonians, including Iane Sandanski, supported the Young Turk ideals. The Macedonian revolutionary organization, through Iane Sandanski and the newly formed national federal party, actively took part in the Young Turk movement with aims at achieving autonomy for Macedonia.

Unfortunately that movement too ended in disaster which paved the way for Macedonia's partition by its neighbours.]

The National Federal Party with its organ “People’s Will”, headed by Sandanski, the teacher’s union in Solun with its newspaper “Voice of the teachers”, and the Lerin teachers’ association with leftist tendencies, consistently worked to achieve the idea of an Eastern Federation, in which Macedonia, in its entirety, would be preserved as a geographical, economic and ethnic entity. Unfortunately the Young Turks were inconsistent with their policies. On one hand they were promising to fulfill the principles of their revolution and, on the other, with their excessive, reckless and inflammatory activities allowed Greek, Serbian and Bulgarian agents to prepare the groundwork for the start of the Balkan wars which led to the disintegration of Macedonia. In the future the Macedonian people would continue their struggle to achieve their aims; unification of the Macedonian people in an independent Macedonian state, or struggle for their national, cultural, economic and political equality within the states in which they would find themselves. In other words, advance their movements in Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria.

[The top Macedonian IMRO leaders, including Iane Sandanski, who survived the 1903 Ilinden Uprising and later fought against the Bulgarians, were well aware of Bulgarian plans to annex Macedonia. Sandanski was of the opinion that Macedonia should fight for autonomy, following Delchev’s philosophy. Macedonia could only gain its independence by first becoming an autonomous province inside the Ottoman Empire. Delchev and Sandanski were well aware of the Great Powers and their meddling in Macedonian affairs through their proxies Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria and that Macedonia would eventually be swallowed up by one or all of them.

Delchev had seen what Russia had done with the San Stefano Treaty when Russia gave Macedonia to Bulgaria. He had also seen what the Western European Powers had done with the Treaty of Berlin in 1878 when, instead of giving Macedonia autonomy, they gave it back to the Ottomans with absolutely no safeguards for the Macedonian people. So if anyone was to protect Macedonia from being “swallowed up” by the Great Power proxies, it would have to be the Ottoman Empire. But first Macedonia had to gain its autonomy.]

4. The Macedonians in Greek occupied Macedonia after the Balkan Wars and after the First World War

After the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) and after Macedonia's partition between Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria, the process of national awakening in the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia and their armed struggle for national liberation were completely shattered. Even the gains they had made before and during the Young Turk regime were lost. All Macedonian schools, including those sponsored by the Exarchate Church, were closed down in the most brutal way. The Greeks abolished libraries, newspapers and bookstores. They closed down churches and expelled all priests who performed liturgy in the Macedonian language or in any other Slavonic language. Everything that was written with Cyrillic letters was destroyed. Icons with Cyrillic letters were painted over with a thick layer of oil based paint. The Greek authorities organized a crusade to destroy everything that was Macedonian; monuments, inscriptions in churches, schools, cemeteries and other significant places. The Greek regime was particularly cruel against the Macedonian patriots who tried to demonstrate their indignation against the new regime. They lost all rights including those basic human rights that they had under Ottoman rule. Prior to 1912 there were 229 Exarchate schools, 14,892 students and 396 teachers in Greek occupied Macedonia. Besides those there were Macedonian municipal schools in 200 Macedonian villages. After the Greeks took possession of Greek occupied Macedonia they immediately closed down all Macedonian schools and churches.

In the four year duration of the First World War, Greek occupied Macedonia was also occupied by international forces including the English, French and Serbian armies. Macedonia was the theater of many bloody battles because the infamous "Solun Front" passed through it. And for those four years, even though the Macedonian people were not directly involved in that war, they paid the price of war. All Macedonians, especially those who were active in IMRO in the Ilinden Uprising were being harassed, arrested and killed in cruel ways. Several hundred were sent to prison in France. Many Macedonians left their bones in Kaimakchalan, Paiaik and Vicho doing heavy slave work building roads, transporting arms and

ammunition, clearing snow and so on. Their war contribution, unfortunately, was never recognized. At the end of the war, instead of allowing the Macedonian people to establish a separate Macedonian state, or even autonomy in one or each of the Balkan states they were included in, the Great Powers sanctioned Macedonia's partition and the people remained an object of cruel terror, assimilation and denationalization at the hands of their occupiers.

After World War I, when Macedonia's division was permanently sanctioned, in some ways some of the Great Powers wanted to provide certain guarantees for the survival of the Macedonian people but at the same time they never enforced them. The major treaties signed at the end of the First World War were the Treaty of Neuilly between the Allied Powers and Bulgaria, and the Treaty of Sevres and the Treaty of Lausanne between the Allied Powers and Turkey. During the 1920's, in its population exchanges with Turkey, Greece imported one million Christian Turks, about one fifth of its entire population, from Asia Minor and settled most of them in Macedonia. The 1920 Treaty of Sevres included three articles (7, 8 and 9) which were to guarantee the rights of minorities - including the Macedonians; national rights, rights to their faith, education, language and so on. None of which were implemented in Greece and Bulgaria.

In the period from 1928 to 1934, when there seemed to be a movement for better relations between the Balkan countries, successive Greek governments of the time appeared a little more elastic in their attitudes towards the Macedonian language. Some even made serious statements in favour of the Macedonians. But in order to see the differences between what Greek politicians said and did regarding the Macedonian Question, we need to emphasize the fact that back in 1926 a law was passed by the Greek Government, as published in the Greek Official Gazette no. 332 of 21. XI. 1926, which entailed the erasure of the Macedonian toponymy and replacing it with a Greek one. In other words, the Greek government passed a law to change the names of all villages, towns, rivers and mountains in Greek occupied Macedonia from Macedonian to Greek. At about the same in 1926 the Greek government allowed various different Greek nationalist organizations, such as the "Elino

- Makedoniki pigmi” (Greco - Macedonian fist) and “EEE” (National Organization of youth), to appear which were openly raising the issue of banning the Macedonian language.

On January 27, 1926 the organization “Elino-Makedoniki pigmi” distributed a flyer in Lerin with the following content: “From today forward we prohibit the use of the Bulgarian dialect spoken in social centres, trade relations, meetings, assemblies, festive gatherings, banquets, weddings, etc. We demand that only Greek be spoken in all the above-mentioned instances. We recommend to all political and military authorities, to all public and private employees to not accommodate requests or give out information in a language other than Greek. Parents, teachers, priests, elders and minors, we invite you all to fulfill your patriotic debt; otherwise we will hold you and your subordinates responsible for the offenses you commit. Violators of the ordinance are considered traitors to the motherland and will fall under the terrible blows of our organization which was created to study the situation. The slogan “fatherland above all” means punishing anyone who will not fulfill our orders.

The messages delivered by this terrorist organization, as per its flyer, are reminiscent of the messages delivered by the infamous Ku Klux Klan in the USA. It is an eloquent way of exerting pressure on the Macedonian people to abandon their native language. It speaks only of the absolute, totally ignoring the deep physiological and socio-historical laws that contribute to the emergence, development, or disappearance of a language. Such measures, to forcibly eradicate the Macedonian language, could only sow bitterness, hatred and animosity between the Macedonian and the Greek populations as well as hatred for the regime which bravely supports these inhuman actions.

This kind of pressure, put on the Macedonian people, forced many to leave their homeland and immigrate to Bulgaria. In time the number reached 100,000 and those unfortunate people would later become currency in interstate relations and dealings between Greece and Bulgaria. However, the large majority of Macedonians who remained at home sought new forms of struggle for their survival and for the implementation of their national ideals.

CHAPTER THREE - IMRO (United) in Greek occupied Macedonia

Stagnation in agricultural production of tobacco by 40 percent, overproduction in some industries due to the very cheap labor, mainly from the million or so colonists and settlers brought to Greece from Asia Minor... Greece constantly borrowing foreign capital... All these activities painted a bleak picture of Greece in the years after the First World War, especially after the Asia Minor catastrophe suffered by the Greek army in 1922 in the war against Turkey.

The frequent military coups in the country, the competition between two main but stratified citizen parties, the capitalist liberal party headed by Eleftherios Venizelos and the Feudal Monarchy added to the economic and political problems and spread even more discontent among the masses.

On the other hand, the situation in the Balkans was no better because of the aspirations and imperialist tendencies towards Macedonia exhibited by the various Balkan nationalist bourgeoisies. The Macedonian nation itself was in danger of being ripped apart by such trends and tendencies.

As we have seen so far, after the First World War the Greek regime consolidated its power in Greek occupied Macedonia and began to implement its plans to alter the ethnic character of Macedonia in favour of Greece. It encouraged nationalist and chauvinist elements to work against the Macedonian and the Jewish populations in order to drive them out of the country. From May to October 1919, the newspapers "Eko d'Bulgari", "Zora", "Kambana", "Dnevnik" and others wrote all kinds of horror stories about the terror conducted against the Macedonian population in Voden, Meglen, Enidzhe Vardar, Lerin and Kostur Regions, including the thousands of Macedonians interned and sent to the southern regions of Greece.

We also have seen how the Greek authorities used various "conventions" for exchanging populations between Greece and Bulgaria. All this was done to achieve one objective: change the ethnic map of Greek occupied Macedonia.

With Macedonia's violent division into three or four parts, if you consider that a small part of southwestern Macedonia with about 40,000 Macedonians was given to Albania, the Macedonian people found themselves in four different countries amid terror and systematic assimilation. In order to preserve their existence and their national individuality, the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia not only had to adjust to new conditions but also had to determine which side of the political spectrum in Greece would be willing to support their human and national rights.

Then one day, due to opposition from Eleftherios Venizelos's Liberal Party, the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia decided to side with the Greek populist parties. Eleftherios Venizelos's Liberal Party was responsible for importing more than one million Turkish Christian colonists and settlers from Asia Minor. Over six hundred thousand of them were settled in Greek occupied Macedonia on the lands and properties of exiled Macedonians. The Macedonian Muslims as well as other indigenous Macedonians deemed undesirable to Greece were expelled from their homes and driven out of the Greek border.

However, many progressive Macedonians sided with the Communist Party of Greece (CPG), which from 1924 onward under the Balkan Communist Federation 6th and 7th Conference, and adopted a resolution to allow the creation of a United and Independent Macedonia. In February 1924, during its extraordinary Congress, the CPG adopted a truly revolutionary Resolution with regards to the "Macedonian Question". Among other things the CPG said:

"The most recent imperialistic wars and post war conditions in the Balkans not only did not solve, but further complicated the Macedonian and Thracian National Questions. For many years the people in both Macedonia and Thrace have endured aggressive and violent attacks in the neighbouring countries where they have been exterminated in the many years of wars, and when they collapsed economically they were divided between Serbia, Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece."

“However, Macedonia’s division between Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria further strengthened the Macedonian people’s desire to unite their country and to create a united and independent Macedonia. The Congress recognized the slogans raised during the 6th and 7th Balkan Communist Federation Conference calling for ‘a united and independent Macedonia’ and for ‘a united and independent Thrace’ which are fully functional and revolutionary.” (2)

Underlined in the same resolution is that the Macedonian and Thracian revolutionary struggle for economic and national emancipation could not be effective unless it was jointly led by the workers, revolutionaries and villagers of every Balkan country.

During the CPG Central Committee 4th Plenum, the CPG modified the paragraph that said “united and independent Macedonia and Thrace” without considering that the Macedonians represented a separate nation that was striving for its national liberation. Specifically, during the March 1932 4th Plenum it was concluded that Greece was an imperialistic country which violently occupied large areas inhabited by other nationalities (Macedonians and Thracians) and subjected them to colonial exploitation, persecution and extermination.

“In the name of Bolshevik principles, the Communist Party of Greece took away the Macedonian and Thracian people’s right to self-determination and to completely break away from the Greek state, the right to an independent Macedonia and Thrace and boldly supported the revolutionary struggle of the population in these areas for their national liberation...” (3)

According to former Greek Party leader Stavridis, the CPG was prepared to support the right to self-determination up to secession and the right to form a united and independent Macedonia and Thrace, if there was an IMRO (United) coordinated armed struggle to take place in the three parts of Macedonia, which would include the objectives of the Vlach minority (because the Vlachs like the Macedonians were disadvantaged), the Albanian Revolutionary Committee and the Jews in Macedonia, who were now more than ever willing to see an autonomous Macedonia. If these conditions

were to be met then the CPG would be prepared to materially support such a movement.

The fact that the CPG called for an armed struggle upset the Greek regime in power, which responded by arresting communists, tormenting the Macedonian population, provoking the workers... and all this in order to justify repressive measures, like those taken in Kavala, and mounting trials against the so-called autonomists. Pursuant to Article 123 of the Criminal Code, CPG leaders Paliopoulos, Maximos and Fitsos found themselves before a judge in an Athens court being sued for treason. Using the same law, 12 CPG cadres were also sued for treason in a Solun court and sentenced to 12-18 years in prison. (4)

Coming out with Marxist-Leninist revolutionary slogans, the CPG attracted the sympathy of the Macedonian people, primarily the proletariat from Solun, Voden, Negush, Ber, Seres, Drama, Kavala, Kostur and Lerin.

Many Macedonians began to enter the ranks of the Communist Party of Greece, who in time became the most reliable fighters and allies in the class struggle. Desiring to attract more Macedonians in its ranks, the CPG allowed IMRO (United) to establish itself in the territory of Greek occupied Macedonia. IMRO (United) was created in Vienna in accordance with the May 1924 manifesto.

Before that, IMRO was split into politically right and left factions. The need to come together was forced on some IMRO immigrant federalist organization and on some individual immigrants in Vienna, as a result of pressure from the Macedonian masses seeking a new path and new ways of running the national liberation struggle.

These changes and orientations to the left were a result of the USSR October Revolution and the Macedonian people seeing an example of how the working class, when it's under firm revolutionary leadership, can solve its National Question.

The establishment of IMRO (United) under the Manifesto widened the Macedonian democratic movement in Serbian and Bulgarian occupied Macedonia, and later in Greek occupied Macedonia

encountering mass acceptance and support. If IMRO (United) did not fulfill its objectives, it was mainly because of the subjective weaknesses of some of its leaders, who themselves failed to deal with the most fundamental task; to define whether the Macedonian Question was a national or political issue. In any case around 1930, the period during which the CPG leadership supported Macedonian self-determination and the right to secession, there was a record of activities made that linked IMRO (United) to all three parts of Macedonia. Some of these activities were documented in several reports and confidential letters found in possession of the Lerin Sector border authorities. (5)

A confidential letter, dated January 27, 1930, was sent from the Ninth Division, based in Kozhani, to the Ninth border sector in Lerin Region. The letter advised the military in this sector and the police authorities in Lerin Region to increase their vigilance against suspicious persons. Because of their “Macedonian sentiments” these people needed to be watched and their movements tracked from village to village to find out what they were doing. The letter also recommended that surprise searches be conducted in their apartments, etc.

In order to accomplish the above objectives, namely to keep an eye on certain Macedonian individuals, the Greek regime in Greek occupied Macedonia sought direct assistance from a number of nationalist and pro-fascist organizations the likes of “Ellas”, “Pavlos Melas”, “Steel helmets” and others, and tasked them with “raising the national spirit of the population”. The organization “Pavlos Melas” in Solun, for example, was tasked with targeting the Jews because they were in solidarity with the Macedonian people and supported an autonomous Macedonia.

In Western Macedonia, where the Macedonian population still remained a majority even after the population exchanges took place, the Greek regime often resorted to staging trials against prominent Macedonians who were active in dealing with the Macedonian National Question. In Solun for example, on May 20, 1931, a group of Macedonians from the village Gorno Kalenik, Lerin Region, were tried on charges of having killed civil guard Todor Tsantovski, a former Greek Andart and famous spy, on December 9, 1930.

However, according to an article published in a progressive Greek newspaper, these staged trials were conducted in order to intimidate the Macedonian population which did not want to reconcile with the policy of denationalization and assimilation. The Greek regime wanted to silence the Macedonian people who did not agree with its policy of expelling Macedonians from their homes and their country. The Greek government wanted to legalize these expulsions by calling them “voluntary” exchanges of population between Greece and Bulgaria.

Three of the Macedonian defendants from Lerin Region were sentenced to death and executed in August of the same year, one was sentenced to life imprisonment. This “Greek act” caused bitterness and indignation among the Macedonian people who traveled beyond the Greek borders. As a result Henri Barbis, President of the League for Peace in Europe, sent a sharp protest letter of criticism to Venizelos, the then Prime Minister of Greece.

As a result of the Macedonian patriots Todor Manov, Giorgi Petkov and Stoian Palafa being executed, the Greek “Red” Central Committee issued a sharp protest, which ended with the words: “We, together with the oppressed peoples of the Balkans, protest and call on all working people in Greece to help the minorities who are victims of Greek fascism...” (6)

There was also an article published by the newspaper “Rizospastis” (CPG Central Committee organ) on August 3, 1931, which boldly asserted that the struggle of the Macedonian people for national self-determination is just and advocated for the Macedonian national cause. About the above Solun incident, the newspaper said: “... the reason for killing Chantovski, if not the work of some staged process, is for the feeling of bitterness and hatred the people have against their conquerors who terrorize the Macedonian population. To this day these people have not found their expression in the right path of the mass struggle. Macedonians and Jews are allies of the Greek proletariat; they are fighting against a common enemy, Greek imperialism”.

“That is why,” wrote Rizospastis, “Greek workers are obliged to support the national liberation movement and fight against national,

economic and political oppression of the national minorities, the right to self-determination and to be able to completely break away from the Greek State and form an independent Macedonia and Thrace...” (7)

The Greek government carried out arrests and other terror activities in several districts of Greek occupied Macedonia in order to stem activities conducted by the Party membership and especially by the Macedonian population. In Voden action was taken against Giorgi Manchov and Nikola Galinikov. In Lerin action was taken against two CPG members (names were not mentioned in the “Makedonsko Delo” (Macedonian case), the names of the three accused Macedonians from the village Vladova, Voden Region in 1927 were also not mentioned). One of them, Kosta Dumov, was a prominent communist. He was sent to prison on the barren island Anafi.

Seven protesters were killed in Solun and twenty were wounded. In Seres, on August 2, 1931, twelve Macedonian workers were tried and convicted to a total of 80 years in prison. Prosecutions and trials were also taking place in Kukush and Enidzhe-Vardar Regions. The chauvinist Solun newspaper “Makedonika nea” made open recommendations calling for a crusade against the “nationalists” and against “communist propaganda”.

The persecution and mass terror against Macedonian and Greek communists in Greece, on account of their position on an independent Macedonia and Thrace, stirred into action the progressive Macedonian and Greek immigrants in America and Canada. A protest rally was organized on the initiative of the Macedonian progressive group “Vardar” in Toronto on March 21, 1931, during which speeches were delivered by L. Boshev, G. Shaldev, Spiro Vasilev (Spiro Basil Tupurkovski) and N. Kiriakopulos, former CPG Greek MP from Lerin Region. During his speech, P. Ioannou said that Venizelos had sent Macedonians to the Ukraine as part of a Greek military expedition to fight against the young Soviet socialist state, and to Asia Minor to fight for the interests of the imperialists. Today Venizelos torments these same Macedonians and drives them out of their homes...

Similar protests were also carried out in a number of cities including Gary Indiana by the Detroit group “Pravda” (Justice). All of these protests were in support of the IMRO (United) initiative for Macedonian national independence.

How much were the Greek authorities concerned about IMRO (United)’s popularity with the Macedonian people? Their concern was made obvious when they became interested in whether IMRO (United), outside of Greece, was cooperating with the Greek Communists and with the nationalist IMRO. In regards to this there are secret documents in which there is a letter from the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs informing the Ministry of the Interior that, according to information received from the Greek embassy in Sofia, there is no agreement between the Greek communists and the Macedonian committees. “Such an agreement” says the letter “exists only between Vlahov’s federalists and the Greek communists”. (8) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs letter filed under number 5551, May 15, 1930.) Vlahov at the time lived in Vienna.

However, there was a connection between Dimitar Vlahov’s federalists and VMRO (United) in Greek occupied Macedonia, and this connection was made in Solun by the old Macedonian revolutionary Nedelko Popnedelkov. Popnedelkov, through secret channels, received mail along with newspapers from the organizations “Balkanska Federatsia” (Balkan Federation) and “Makedonsko Delo” (Macedonian Case) sent to him by members of VMRO (United) and by Macedonian communists scattered inside Greek occupied Macedonia. Among others, Giorgi Krontselchev became a victim of these activities. He was one of the people who carried the secret mail. Carrying secret mail became a tradition in IMRO (United)’s liberation activities. Krontselchev was a tempered communist from Voden, who in 1935 was shot by the Greek police in Solun while delivering secret mail.

In addition to Vlahov who represented the federalists, the Greek confidential documents also mentioned the name Tsvetko Hristov who, through Albania, cultivated relations with IMRO (United) members in Greek occupied Macedonia. It should, however, be noted that some of these allegations made in the secret Greek documents cannot be entirely trusted, even though they explicitly

mention VMRO (United) by name. This is because while these places were watched, fascist MRO members were also on the move. This disclaimer must also be made because the genuine VMRO (United) in Greek occupied Macedonia was not established until 1934.

The formation of IMRO (United) was conducted in the manner described in Andreia Chipov's notes. Andreia Chipov was former secretary of the IMRO Central Committee for Greek occupied Macedonia.

Under the directive of the CPG Central Committee a Conference was held in Solun in June 1932. The Conference was held under the name "Conference of Minorities" and was attended by 4 delegates from Lerin, 2 from Kostur, 1 from Solun, 1 from Lagadina, 1 from Negush, 1 from Drama Region and 1 from Voden Region, all Macedonians. Other minorities that attended included 1 Muslim from Western Thrace, 2 Jews from Solun and 1 Vlach from Ber.

The Conference was chaired by the CPG provincial secretary for Central and Western Macedonia. S. Sklavenas, an instructor from the CPG Central Committee, also attended the Conference. A decision was adopted in the Solun Conference calling on all CPG district and regional committees to form minority groups, which would later grow into a separate organization in the city Ber, in which only Macedonians were members. Three months later they were to send delegations from all districts to Solun. In March the next year, a Conference was convened in Voden (another source mentions Solun) in Petar K'chev's house. The Conference was chaired by Andrea Chipov. Among other things the Organization's Central Committee leadership was elected during this Conference and based in Solun. The main topics of discussion during the Conference were drafting the Organization's program, linking the Organization to the outside world and purchasing literature. (Pando Durdulovski from the village Nevoliani, Lerin Region, an old communist and IMRO (United) activist claimed that the Voden Conference was led by Hristo Galabov, while Andrea Chipov was only a CPG Central Committee delegate.) And something more important: delegates from Vardar and Pirin Macedonia were also present in the Conference, something that is not mentioned in

Chipov's notes. It is possible that such cooperation existed but information like that could not be included in confidential documents (see contributing documents). The same was confirmed by Pena Dumova from the village Vladovo, sister of the old communist Kosta Dumov who was shot by the Germans on March 3, 1943 in Solun.

The Organization managed to illegally procure an old printing press which was used to print pamphlets and other propaganda materials in the Macedonian language. Then in 1930, under the initiative of the Lerin branch, the Macedonian newspaper "Zemiodelsko Zname" (Agricultural Flag) was issued which published seven editions. However, it was more practical to publish the various Macedonian language articles in "Rizospastis" the CPG newspaper, by using the Greek alphabet.

At about the same time weekly local newspapers began to make their debut like the Greek newspaper published in Nestram, intended for immigrants in America, Canada and Australia, which constantly published Macedonian songs and stories, riddles and other details about the life and customs of the Macedonian people in this region. An IMRO (United) official was invited to go to Athens, at the initiative of the CPG Central Committee, where he was put to work exclusively on collecting Macedonian folk songs and stories. He prepared a two volume book for publication. This gave the impression that the CPG, through folklore, was truly seeking to develop the Macedonian national culture and Macedonian national consciousness among young Macedonians on whom the official Greek regime was performing systematic denationalization.

All these activities carried out in Greek occupied Macedonia by the Communist Party of Greece and by IMRO (United) were recognized by the Comintern during a decision made in April 1934, by which the uniqueness of the Macedonian nation and its right to self-determination were recognized. At that time IMRO (United) called for the Macedonian language to be freely spoken, to open Macedonian schools and for the Macedonian people to be granted cultural autonomy and other rights. The Organization in Lerin, for example, managed to somehow make itself half-legal during the election campaign in 1935 and to publicly protest against the terror

perpetrated by the Greek government against the Macedonian population.

On the occasion of the Macedonian people's spontaneous demand for cultural rights in Greek occupied Macedonia, the IMRO (United) leadership in Bulgarian occupied Macedonia, in 1935, came up with a declaration demonstrating that the Macedonian nation has its own past, present and future and that it is not an imperialist scrap of Bulgaria, Greece, or Serbia, and that it is an independent element with all the characteristics of an independent nation which for decades has been struggling to attain the right to self-determination up to secession as an independent political state unit.(9)

On April 25, 1936 the following comments were made by S. Sklavenas, head of the CPG parliamentary group in the Greek parliament, as a national equality requirement of the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia, on behalf of the Macedonian people: "One more question which the Greek government ignores with its declarations is the question of granting full equality to the local population and to the national minorities living in Greece. That mainly refers to the Macedonian nation. Anyone passing through Macedonia has felt the pressure perpetrated against the Macedonians. The right to have schools, to use the Macedonian language and to practice Macedonian customs is strictly forbidden.

This kind of situation compels the Macedonian population to organize and fight for its rights which we are compelled to support. The winners of the Great War and the League of Nations have proclaimed that oppressed nations have the right to self-determination. This right we fully recognize for the Macedonian nation..." (10)

But in order to stop the Macedonian people from joining the Communist Party and the IMRO (United) en masse, the Metaxas government, even before the dictatorship was installed, began to brutally suppress the Macedonian population, especially the Macedonian communists.

According to an article published on May 31, 1935 in the CPG newspaper "Rizospastis", a group of 6 Macedonians from the village

Patele, Lerin Region, were charged with being autonomists and tried in a Military court in Larissa. Before that they were brutally tortured by the police in Sorovich. (This information was obtained from the Institute of National History archives in Skopje, Todor Simovski.) Long prison terms were also handed out to the champions of IMRO (United) Hristo Galabov, Kosta Dumov, Foti Tipov, Giorgi Manchov and other Macedonians from Kostur, Lerin and Voden Regions.

The mood of the Macedonian masses, which were expecting self-determination and national rights as we have shown above, became very disturbed by the Greek regime and by the Greek bourgeoisie through the establishment of various political parties with plenty of local slogans and demagoguery to try to exploit them for their own interests and to deter them from being influenced by the CPG.

In 1935, just before the parliamentary elections, the “Macedonian Union” (popularly called “Iskra Makedonska” (Macedonian spark)) appeared in Greek occupied Macedonia with its own Macedonian colours and slogans. It was led by Sotirios Kodzhamanis in Kukus and Voden Regions. In Lerin Region it was led by the independent anti-Venizelos group headed by Philippos Dragumis. In Kozhani Region it was led by the “Macedonian group” and in Drama Region by a similar local party with Macedonian colours. This localized Macedonian movement, which demanded administrative autonomy for Macedonia and decentralization, naturally threatened the Athens government because in its agitation it talked about Macedonia being treated as a colony of old Greece which energized the Macedonian masses. The fear in Athens could be seen through the articles published in the Athens press attacking this localized Macedonian movement. The minister of defense Georgios Kondilis, who arrived in Solun during the election campaign, in his public speeches before all, he addressed Kodzhamanis as follows:

“As for Kodzhamanis’s sermons? They are national treason because they copy the slogans of the Bulgarian Committee (in Greece the Greek nationalists call the Macedonians Bulgarians). The slogan ‘Macedonia for the Macedonians’ does nothing but sow ethnic hatred and seeks secession of Macedonia...” (V. Vradini, May 26,

1935 and ‘How did we arrive to August 4’, pp. 65-66, S. Linardatos.)

The localized Macedonian feelings rubbed off even on the settlers and colonists from Asia Minor living among the Macedonians. They too were talking about the outcomes of the aforementioned elections, in which all these parties with Macedonian colours managed to secure seats for all their candidates.

When the Metaxas dictatorship seized power on August 4, 1936, it halted all these developments in Greek occupied Macedonia including those of the CPG and IMRO (United). The CPG was made illegal and the communist cadres were arrested and jailed. Arrested with them were also many IMRO (United) members including Hristo Galabov, Andrea Chipov, Lazo Trpovski, Mihail Klianov, Trifun Hadzhianov, Tashko Traianov, Foti Ouroumov, Georgi Turundzhiev, Nedelko Popnedelkov, Andon Liomov, Kosta Dumov and Mihail Trpkov. There were also others but their names are not known or, for some reason, were not published. In its relatively short life, IMRO (United) accomplished a lot, despite of its own weaknesses and lack of real help from the CPG. It played a positive role in organizing the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia, it helped them strengthen their Macedonian national consciousness and it managed to mobilize the Macedonian masses in the parliamentary elections to go on the side of the Communist Party of Greece. Reflection of IMRO (United)’s activities could also be seen later in the mass Macedonian participation in the ranks of the resistance movement against the occupiers of Greece.

It was most unfortunate that the Communist Party of Greece later abandoned the Macedonian “self-determination” clause in favour of “equal rights as a minority”.

NOTES:

1) – On October 2, 1926, the Solun newspaper “Proodos” was pleased to announce that the “Anatolian catastrophe” (Greco-Turkish war of the 1920s) had at least one positive result for Greece. This result helped Greece to do away with the final disputes on that part of the peninsula. With the signing of the exchange of population

convention between Greece and Turkey, Greece was able to increase its Greek population in Greek occupied Macedonia to a point where it no longer had to worry about the Macedonians being a majority in the region. The population exchanges, according to the newspaper, made the population in Macedonia homogeneous Greek. This prompted French colonel Lamush, member of the Commission for the protection of minorities under the League of Nations, to say in a report that this Greek convention of voluntary exchanges of population has turned into a forced expulsion of Macedonians from their native hearth.

2) Collection “Saranda hronia agones tou KKE” (CPG - forty years of struggle) p. 144 and 261.

3) Again there.

4) In 1925, Atanas Popgeorgiev, Todor Kirovski and Dimitar Skenderov from the village Papagianni were arrested and imprisoned in the “Edi-Kule” prison in Solun. They were accused of high treason and of being autonomists. They were held in prison for many years without a trial even though in 1928 the Venizelos government issued an amnesty for political prisoners.

5) In the contributions part of the notes we have included eight unpublished, official Greek security confidential letters. These letters reveal a special plan put in action by the Greek regime to instill fear in the Macedonian people and make them give up their struggle for national liberation, or to be forcibly evicted from their homes and lands. (The letters are dated: January 27, 1930, May 15, 1930, April 22, 1931, May 3, 1931, July 13, 1935 and April 24, 1939.)

A) CONFIDENTIAL

Division IX
Bureau Headquarters
Protocol number E. P. 1172/104
January 27, 1930. Border sector IX
Division IX
Lerin

Be informed of the following:

1. The ninth sector and border police superiors are to join the continuous monitoring of anyone who is in a relationship with suspicious people because of their Bulgarian-Macedonian feelings, to track their movement from village to village and so on.
2. The purpose of their arrival in the above area and even their lives are to be examined in detail.
3. Enforce abrupt searches of their apartments as if discovering suspicious acts and suspicious behaviour.

All of the above effort will have to be made carefully under various motivations, so as to avoid causing suspicion among the shady types. They need to be monitored by all means to reveal their network.

B) MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Protocol number 5551

Announcement

Second Corps

Athens, May 15, 1930,

Absolutely confidential.

To the Ministry of the Interior.

In regards to your act of April 25 this year, under no. 7/21, we have the honour to inform you that we called our embassy in Sofia for our target detection network based on the data obtained. The above-mentioned Embassy with its own answer put it as follows:

It is not true that there was any agreement between the Greek and Macedonian communist rebels. Such an agreement is only between the federalists of Valhov, who lives in Vienna, and the Greek communists.

Hristo Tsvetkov came to Greek Macedonia from Albania as a representative of the Federalists to determine the details of the deal.

2nd Army Corps
K. D.

C) NINTH DIVISION

Chief of Staff - E. Mandakas - Lieutenant
Headquarters Bureau II.
Protocol no. 740
To Ninth Border Sector
Lerin

A meeting was convened by the IMRO (United) Committee on February 15 in Lerin. Participants in the meeting were Stoichev, Milanov, Panchev and Dinkov.

We order:

Determine all details on this and get back to us as soon as possible.

Kozhanik, April 22, 1931.
Division Commander

D) NO E. PROTOCOL 2445

G. Falkreas
Major General.

To Second and Third Army Corps.

We are pleased to inform you that, according to the reports from our embassy in Sofia, 18 youths from Enidzhe-Vardar and Voden Region arrived in Sofia in the first ten days of July and were made available to VMRO (United).

Please determine the names of these people and any other information they may have by any means possible.

Athens, July 26, 1930 Order of the Minister
Deputy Commander
Mr. Brondamitis

With respect to the cases presented above, we can see that the Greek reactionaries had mobilized the entire state apparatus, the security services, the military, various agents, etc. Now let us see what assistance was given to the Greeks from the other side, by the Bulgarian and Serbian security services.

E) NUMBER 12/2/362 - PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL

Bureau of Special Security - Ultra urgent
Lerin, May 3, 1931

Police principalities, Lerin

To the high command of the police in Macedonia (Bureau of Special Security).
Solun.

It is my honour to inform you that, according to data provided by the Yugoslav authorities in Bitola, the VMRO (United) has divided all of Macedonia into 11 sectors, three sectors in Greek Macedonia and 8 sectors in Serbian Macedonia.

Commander
Petrakis

F) BORDER SECTOR IX

To Police Command in Lerin.

According to information received from Serbian Captain Drashkulia Georgich, about 60 armed bandits have gathered on the opposite side of the village Rabi, in the Albanian border sector Bernin.

As it is known they are preparing to attack our territory, mainly the Yugoslav territory.

December 19, 1930
Commander of platoon
(Signature illegible)

These two documents contain sufficient information to prove the close cooperation between Greece and Karageorgievich's Yugoslavs against the Macedonian people's progressive movement which struggled for its national, political and economic freedom.

Next we will mention another document refuting Greek reactionary claims, that the Macedonian movement is managed and maintained by the Bulgarian consuls and that the Macedonians are allegedly Bulgarians. To what extent did Bugaro-philos or Bulgarians exist in Greek occupied Macedonia? Here is what the next official document says:

NUMBER 13/176/8 – CONFIDENTIAL – PERSONAL – WITH RECEIPT

Bureau of Special Security - Lerin, July 13, 1936
Police Command in Lerin

To Police High Command for Macedonia
(Bureau of Special Services)
Solun.

Regarding this year's June 9 elections in Kostur District.

I am glad to execute your order number 15/158/1 for this year and to inform you that during the June 9, 1935 elections, in the village Gorentsi we found only one ballot with the following written on it: "Down with Greece – Long live Bulgaria." It was only one ballot,

not eight, as reported by the Third Army Corps scout Andreas Papanaiotopoulos, who probably exaggerated things.

According to the Kostur Prefecture police and local public prosecutor, officer of the Gorentsi constituency number 195 from this year, the ballot was sent, along with other materials, to the local prosecutor. I am obliged to inform you that no other case of this nature has appeared in the vicinity of my District, according to reports received so far by my office.

Order UTRE
Commander M.P.
IX Border Sector
I. Frangou – Major

Summons number 6

KINGDOM OF GREECE

The Public Prosecutor of the village Dolno Kotori, pursuant to Article 143-145, calls on Georgios J. Mitrousi, resident of the village Nered, to appear in person before the court on Monday May 15, 1939 at 9am to be tried for being caught on February 19, of the same year, speaking the Slavic language with other individuals as reported by the police authorities.

For violation of Article 697 n. n. regarding Police Decree number 15/36.

If he does not appear he will be tried in absentia.

The Village Nered – April 24, 1939
Public Prosecutor of Dolno Kotori
(Signature illegible)

6) Newspaper “Makedonsko Delo” (Macedonian case) July 10, 1931.

7) “Rizospastis” (Radical) organ of the Communist Party of Greece.

8) Sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under no. 5551, May 15, 1930.

9) Dimitar Mitrev “Pirinska Makedonija” (Pirin Macedonia), “Struggle for national liberation”, p. 244.

10) A special brochure with the text recording discussion in the Greek Parliament on April 25, 1936, four months before the Metaxas (August 4, 1936) dictatorship was implemented.

I
MACEDONIANS IN
GREEK OCCUPIED
MACEDONIA AND THE
ANTIFASCIST STRUGGLE
(1941-1944)
I

CHAPTER FOUR - The Macedonian people's struggle in Greek occupied Macedonia against the triple occupation and for national freedom

At the end of April 1941, Greek occupied Macedonia, by the will of Hitler's occupiers, was divided into three occupational zones: Eastern Macedonia from the river Struma in the east along with western Thrace was given to fascist Bulgaria; Western Macedonia that included Kostur Region, part of Kozhani Region and Lerin Region were ceded to Italy; while Central Greek occupied Macedonia with Solun was occupied by Germany. However, the entire territory of Central and Western Macedonia, where the majority of the Macedonian population lived, over 200,000 people, was placed under the jurisdiction of General Cholakoglu's quisling Greek government.

The lawless situation, which ruled Greek occupied Macedonia in the first two months of the occupation, very quickly brought in the old state apparatus. The occupiers needed people who would follow their orders. And people who until yesterday served the Metaxas dictatorship now unreservedly put themselves in the service of their new masters. The gendarmerie was replaced with the so-called "Ekatondarhi" whom the occupiers needed to collect tithes from the villages, requisition materials and spy on and arrest patriots who worked against them.

As soon as the new security forces, the "Ekatondari", occupied the gendarme stations their first order of business was to requisition part of the harvest from the villagers. The people, however, expected that the occupiers and their servants would do this so they began to form spontaneous resistance groups and oppose the restoration of the state apparatus as well as its first violent measures - confiscation of part of the harvest in the fall of 1941.

1. Resistance against restoring the old bureaucracy

Restoration of the old Greek state apparatus in Greek occupied Macedonia (only in Central and Western Macedonia because Eastern Macedonia was occupied by Bulgaria which would not tolerate the Greeks) was opposed by the Macedonian people,

particularly by those in the villages that suffered the most during the Metaxas dictatorship, when about 5,000 Macedonians were heavily fined and sent to prison because they were speaking Macedonian, their native language. The Macedonian people were not happy about having to face the same monsters who had earlier occupied the same gendarme stations and in this they saw the resurrection of the old dictatorial and discriminatory regime and the beginning of new terror and oppression.

In the fall of 1941, the people from the village Sarakinovo, Meglen Region, took measures against the armed “Ekatondari” by surrounding them and keeping them out of the gendarme station for three days. An entire brigade had to come from Sobotsko to rescue them. The villagers in the village Banitsa, Lerin Region, opened fire on the “Ekatondari” with weapons they had acquired from the abandoned gendarme station. The “Ekatondari” and the gendarme station were saved by German intervention. The Macedonian people were punished for revolting against the restoration of the former Metaxas administration in Banitsa. The Germans arrested 60 people from Banitsa, Tserovo and Gornichovo, took the captives to Lerin and then killed one person from each village. Those killed were Dine Liakov from Banitsa, Stavre (Kitse) Stangolev from Gornichovo and Miaile Tashonov from Tserovo. As was shown by the Banitsa case, the German occupiers did not favour the Macedonians, as Greek nationalists would have us believe. The occupiers tolerated only those who served their interests.

Similar resistance, like the type in Banitsa and Sarakinovo against the “Ekatondari”, was organized in the villages Neret, German and Zeleniche, Lerin Region, in Tresino, Meglen Region, in Konomlati, Kostur Region and in other places. These few cases we mentioned were the most typical examples of resistance and protests carried out by Macedonian people against the bloody dictatorship regime. But that did not stop the Greek chauvinist reactionaries from trying to characterize this Macedonian resistance as a Bulgaro-phil movement, citing the Bulgarian campaign, which at that time prevailed in Greek occupied Macedonia, without analyzing the deeper reasons that forced the Macedonian people to resist. But what will the Greek reactionaries say about the events in the village

Krmsko, Kaliari Region, which occurred around the same time in 1941?

After 1924, the village Krmsko in Kaliari Region (which the Greeks renamed to Mesovuno in 1926) was inhabited by Turkish Christian colonists and settlers from Pontus and Asia Minor. A second line of defense was organized near Krmsko during the Greek-Italian war in 1940-41, which ran along the side of Mount Karakamen where the Greek army was fighting the Italians on the Albanian front. With the withdrawal of the Greek army, after Greece capitulated to Germany, the warehouses full of arms and ammunition were abandoned. And so the villagers were given the opportunity to arm themselves with all kinds of new weapons and to prepare to resist the occupiers. Among those organizing and taking part in the Krmsko resistance were the teacher Alekso Hadgi Tashkov from the village Katranitsa, a Macedonian and an old communist. He participated together with the Communists Georgios Petridis and Neophitos Anthopoulos from the village Krmsko. They, on their own initiative, undertook to organize the armed Krmsko villagers into military formations and to perform military exercises in order to prepare for the day when the rebellion started.

In the fall of 1941, the employees of agricultural banks and agricultural cooperative alliances were organized in teams whose task was to go around the villages and requisition wheat, corn and other products and deliver them to the occupiers and to the quisling government. One such team, supported by a group of “Ekatondari”, went to Krmsko. The villagers immediately disarmed the “Ekatondari” and, together with the team that was sent to collect grain, kicked them out of the village with a warning that if they came back they would be killed.

The anti-fascist people from Krmsko were spurred into action when the Kozhani District governor decided to replace the old Krmsko Municipality mayor Yiannis Mourena with Pavlos Konstantinidis, one of his own people. (The occupier made sure that only trusted people were put in key positions in the occupied territory.) These measures that the occupiers and the Quisling governor of Kozhani took further aggravated the Krmsko villagers, especially when the new mayor asked for help from the gendarme and from the German

army to assist him to claim his new post. In response to this the Party organizations made a decision to liquidate the new village mayor after he was charged with being an occupying agent. Then, in the morning of October 11, 1941, a group of gendarmes from Katranitsa, led by a sergeant, appeared in Krmsko looking to arrest persons suspected of murdering the mayor. The gendarmes were attacked by armed Krmsko villagers and disarmed.

On October 16, 1941 the village Krmsko was invaded by the German army which, before entering the village, got into a fight with a group of fighters from the same village. After a brief skirmish the Germans returned to Kozhani. Several days later, in the morning of October 23, 1941, the residents of Kremsko suddenly found themselves surrounded on all sides by the German army. The entire male population ages 15 to 60, 146 people in total, were taken and shot in village meadows.

A similar situation occurred in Ekshi-Su, a large Macedonian village, but for completely different reasons. In October 1941, Yiannis Papaperos, a Greek officer and hardened Greeco-phile from this village, made an agreement with some Greek officers and with the Lerin Gendarme to surround and attack the village Ekshi-Su at night in order to liquidate the Macedonian leaders, and then tell the Germans that allegedly armed Macedonians and communists had committed this attack. Ekshi-Su was attacked as planned by the attackers and were resisted because the villagers had their own weapons and defended themselves well. Killed during this attack were villagers Kole Madzhov, Kiril Tsitskov, Romanov and Kitse Karov. Despite of the real provocateurs being exposed, on account that a Greek officer's corpse was found in the village, the Germans kept the villagers locked up in a church without food or water for three days and three nights. After that 30 people were taken to the prison "Iedi-Kule" in Solun, among whom was Boris Kargov. He was sentenced to death and shot. Because of this incident and because of what the Germans had done, 300 armed people from Ekshi-Su fled to Mount Radush. After the danger passed most of them returned to their homes but 12 decided to remain on the mountain. These were Giorgi and Ilo Turundzev, Kiro Piliaev, Trivko Popov, Mihail Kargov, Ilia Popov, Minche Alipashov, Traiko Lisichev, Krume Ashelov, Iordan Shapardanov and two

others. These 12 people belonged to the village organization and were organized by the communists. They formed a small detachment on Mount Radush and wore the hammer and sickle as their badge. Later they were ordered by the CPG Lerin District Committee to go to Mount Hasia, in Thessaly, because the conditions for partisan warfare were not ready in Lerin. The fighters refused the order and remained in Lerin illegally.

After the spontaneous events above, in Krmsko and Ekshi-Su and with the dramatic killings of many Macedonians in Greek occupied Macedonia, a new four-year bloody period of occupation was launched. And with it flowed the blood of the best sons of Macedonia.

2. Organizing NOB in Greek occupied Macedonia

The Metaxas government and its apparatus fell apart after Greece was invaded and occupied by Germany, Italy and Bulgaria. This gave the paralyzed Greek Communist Party the opportunity to revive itself and use the short interval of anarchy, during the first days of the occupation, to establish a new order in Greece and to free some of the captured and interned communists, both Macedonian and Greek. Immediately after the communists were freed they were dispatched to various places to restore the Party organization and to prepare to resist the occupiers. The main Party force at that time consisted of a group of 24 communists who, with the help of Julia Schneider, were freed from the medieval prison Akronavplion. Julia Schneider was of German origin and spoke German. She was the wife of Nedelko Popnedelkov, one of the prisoners from Solun. She took her case to the Germans herself and told them that the people imprisoned were not communists but Macedonians who the Greeks had imprisoned because they were Macedonians. Included among the people freed from Akronavplion prison were Lazo Trpovski, Andrea Chipov, Lazo Damovski, Rusalim Harizani, Giorgi Peikov, Andrea Dzhuma, Atanas Ziogas, Lazo Bozhinov, Lampro Moskov, Stavre Stavridis, Petros Kendros, Giamo Damianidis, Trpo Kalimanov, Ziso Kalimanov, Foti Ouroumov, Dimitar Leskov, Anastas Karadzha, Kiro Piliaev, Nedelko Popnedelkov, Theodoros Eftimiadis and Bahchevanov. This case was later used by the Greek chauvinistic press and by

some historians to “prove” that the CPG put itself in the service of the occupiers and “sold out” Macedonia to the Bulgarians.

Clearly the Greek chauvinists, led by Maniatakis, Greek Minister of Public Security, deliberately kept the communists locked up in the prison and surrendered them to the German occupier so that they would be liquidated. But their release, of course, did not work out as planned, so it is understandable why the chauvinists reacted with such fury against the CPG. Far from the truth, these accusations and slanders were largely fabricated in the offices of Goebbels and the Gestapo. It is a well-known fact that the Communists were the first hostages of the occupiers who threw them into the concentration camps and were executed to take revenge for the sabotage and other partisan actions conducted against them.

After Hitler attacked the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, all Party organizations throughout Greece, especially in Macedonia, were placed under full alert. The organizations in Solun, Voden, Negush, Kostur, Lerin and other Macedonian cities recovered quickly and began to acquire old and new weapons. The Party organization in Voden was saved largely thanks to the re-activation of the old communists, in July 1, 1941.

The history of the Party organization in Voden began in 1924 when Trifun Hadzhianov was its organizer and leader. At the initiative of the Party organization, various unions in Voden were quick to organize and conduct strikes and demonstrations. Included among the unions organized in Voden were the union of textile workers and the union of the landless, which made much gain by organizing strikes, demonstrations, May Day marches and so on. While they were conducting their strikes, various ovens were organized to supply the unemployed workers and political prisoners with free bread. This was done all through the 1929 economic crisis.

The most loyal and rational proletarian fighters originated from the Voden Party organization. Among them were fighters Atanas Traianov, Kosta Dumov, Trifun Katkadankata, Dimitar Kartov, Giorgi Manchov, Iani Takev, Apostolaki and many others who, together with their teacher Trifun Hadzhianov, gave their lives in the struggle against the occupiers. (For more information on Trifun

Hadzhianov's revolutionary activities see "Nova Makedoninja", May 5, 1961, Vangel Aianovski.)

In September 1941, the Voden Party organization established links with the CPG Regional Committee for Macedonia in Solun through Yannis Tifengopulos the "Turk", an old CPG cadre who had escaped from Akronavplion prison.

Taught and tempered by Trifun Hadzhianov, who at that time was still in prison in the Greek islands, the Voden communists strengthened the Party and became involved in the trade unions of agricultural workers, in the factories, cooperatives and other energetic organizations and began to prepare for a mass struggle. The Party was the main instigator behind organized demonstrations, strikes against rising costs of living, high prices and black marketeering.

Other activities conducted by the Party included collection of weapons, ammunition and other military equipment. The old communists did the same in Lerin and Kostur. Massive actions of similar character were taken against the Italian occupiers in Kostur.

The local organization in the village D'mbeni, Macedonian veteran Lazo Trspovski's village, among the other villages in Kostur Region, did a lot of preparatory work during the summer and fall of 1941 towards resisting the occupiers. About 300 boxes of guns, bullets, bombs and other materials, abandoned by the Greek military in a warehouse in the village Gabresh, were taken to D'mbeni. Besides securing light weapons the Party organization in Rupishta also secured an anti-aircraft cannon.

During the summer of 1941 a strong Party organization was formed in the village Izvor, Gumendzhe Region, and in July 1941 its leadership was tasked by the Provincial Committee for Macedonia to sabotage the railway line from Solun to Gevgelia. To do this the organization transferred large quantities of dynamite and other explosive materials from the mine in Izvor to Mount Kozhuv.

In 1941 alone, the Solun to Gevgelia rail line was mined three times in memory of Dimitar Dimchevski from the village Liumlitsa

(Shkra). Deterred by these actions the German occupiers assisted by the Greek police in Gumendzhe, in September 1941, began to arrest the old communists.

In September 1941 a gendarme detachment from Gumendzhe surrounded the village Plagia intending to arrest three known communists Tsangaras, Hristo Kozakis and Nikos Vafiadis. The gendarme broke into Kozakis's house and arrested him. But before getting out of his yard Kozakis managed to get a hold of his gun and kill one of the gendarmes. He wounded the second and the third dropped his weapon and ran. The three men left their village, crossed over the Vardar River and disappeared in Kulush Region.

The movement became even more popular throughout Greek occupied Macedonia on September 27, 1941 after EAM (National Liberation Front) was established.

EAM's program called for expelling the German, Italian and Bulgarian occupiers from Greece and re-establishing the integrity of Greece with its national platform. It was done in such a way so as to attract the majority of the Greek population in all of Greece. The only consolation for the Macedonians, although minimal, were the decisions made in relation to national minorities during the CPG Central Committee 7th Plenum in September 1941 and during the 8th Plenum in December 1942. It was decided that: "The national minorities, especially the Slavic speaking Macedonians, should unite their struggle with the national liberation struggle of the Greek, Serbian and Bulgarian people against the fascist axis and fight for the victory of the Soviet Union and for the oppressed peoples, because only this way we can guarantee their national and social liberation." ("Ten years of struggle," Athens 1935-1945, pp. 126-169.)

For decades the anti-popular regimes in Greece had created a sense of mistrust in the Macedonian people and now, during this inflamed and fateful moment of the National Liberation Struggle, the CPG showed little interest in defining the Macedonian Question, which did not go well for the Macedonian people. And now with the ranks of EAM and later ELAS wide open and hostile elements from the ranks of the former dictatorial apparatus joining them, it was natural

for the Macedonian population to not trust the Greeks. The CPG leadership was satisfied with EAM's first successes underestimated the situation, which later inevitably had negative consequences for the entire national liberation movement in Greece.

Most of the old Macedonian communists were indirectly aware that the CPG lacked a revolutionary position with regards to the Macedonian Question. This was brought up at the CPG Central Committee 6th Congress in January 1935. At that time the CPG line called for self-determination up to secession for the Macedonian national minority. Unfortunately this line was later replaced with the notion of "full equality" for minorities. Desire to create separate Macedonian organizations and appoint Macedonian leaders were expressed by individual initiatives, which called for the formation of MAO (Macedonian Liberation Organization) in Voden Region and the SNOF Macedonian partisan groups in Kostur and Lerin Regions, as we shall see later.

3. First repressive measures instigated by the enemy

With the restoration of the state apparatus the "Ekatondarhi", as mentioned earlier, replaced the old gendarmes. These individuals, who earlier worked for the Greek repressive regimes, were now working for the occupier and informing on the revolutionary movements and the Communists. Searches for hidden weapons were initiated in the German occupied zone and several people were arrested and executed without trials. Here are a few such examples:

Kon. Liaskos, Stavros Stangulis and Mih. Tesianos were shot to death in Lerin on August 29, 1941. Stefanos Hristiforidis and Kostas Klasidis were shot to death in Solun on September 24, 1941. Ieremias Stefanidis, Kiriakos Chotilis and Kostas were arrested for allegedly possessing ammunition and shot to death on October 5, 1941 in the village Gostoliubi, Meglen Region. Panagiotis Ialamas was shot to death on October 30, 1941 in Enidzhe – Vardar. Mihail Voiadzhopulos was hung on November 4, 1941 in Nigirita for allegedly participating in the resistance movement. Macedonian student Ilia Kapeshev and Socrat Diariros were killed on November 13, 1941 during a search in Solun. On December 27, 1941 496 people were executed in German occupied Macedonia (Solun,

Kukush, Gumendzhe, Voden and part of Lerin Region) alone, because they were accused of either hiding weapons or of participating in acts of sabotage and other attacks against the occupiers. This was due to the actions committed by the Nigirita detachment “Andrutsos” in the village Krmsko, Kaliarsko Region and others. (See “Makedonija” in Solun, February 19, 1959. A list of communists executed was revealed during the process of the military criminal proceedings against Max Merten in Athens.)

At the same time, with assistance from the Greek police, the Germans arrested many Macedonians accused of being communists and they were thrown in the “Pavlos Melas” prison camps in Solun. Arrested in Voden were Iani Takev, Dinko Delevski, Zisi Mesimercheto, Risto Petlev from Rusilovo, Foti Tipev, Georgi Angelov, Iani Sheretov, Hristo Popov and Dimitar Leskov from Chegan.

Similar actions were also taken at the same time in Kostur Region in order to dismantle the Party apparatus in the territory under Italian occupation.

A special battalion, commanded by Major De Prima, was dispatched through Kostur Region to search for hidden weapons. The search was initiated in response to the liquidation of the spy Dailakis who was killed by the local communists from the village Zhupanishta. The October 5, 1941 organized murder of Dailakis was orchestrated by Micho Shishkov, Vangel Tankov, Ziko Koliovski, Teohar Vurichkov and Atanas Popleksov.

The village D'mbeni was blockaded on October 28, 1941 and all Party organizers and communist sympathizers were arrested. This was also done in other villages including Nestram, Drenoveni, Rupishta, etc. These arrests were carried out in accordance with the lists provided to the occupiers by the Greek Police from Kostur. The searches conducted by the Italians in the Kostur Region villages were guided by the Greek gendarmes and so were the people identified to be arrested.

The infamous Italian “search battalion” was responsible for detaining many Macedonians from various villages.

In December 1941, Liondo Popvasilev, Andon Bitva and Atanas Lazarov from the village Drenoveni were executed in the city Volos, Thessaly. Sixteen people from the village D'mbeni were arrested and sent to the "Averoff" prison in Athens. In the spring of 1942 they were transferred from "Averoff" to the camp in Karditsa, Thessaly and shot. Included among those shot were Naum Zhurkov, Naum Miskov, Hristo Andriovski, Zhivko Kenkov, Staso Skivinov and Nikola Chekrov. In November 1942 Kosta Trpovski, D'mbeni Party Secretary, was captured and sent to "Averoff" Prison. The other eight people who were captured with him were taken to the notorious "Haidari" Camp just outside of Athens. Imprisoned with them were other people including 19 individuals from Nestram. Some were executed. Included among those who were executed were Paskal Luvradov, Niko Popianov, Slave Todorov, Iane Chakurovski and the well-known Party champion from this town, Ververis who, under unexplained circumstances, was found dead outside the camp. Also shot in the same camp was Bugev from Lerin Region, who for a long time was pressured to sign a repentance declaration but he refused.

The occupiers undertook vigorous measures to liquidate the national liberation movement in its early stages. The blow endured by the Party organizations all throughout Greek occupied Macedonia brought into hopelessness all the cadres that had been uncovered. They were persecuted by the Germans, Italians and Bulgarians and by the Greek police. In the meantime the CPG was not prepared to enter the armed struggle until the spring of 1942. Many of the patriotic cadres were operating underground at their own initiative. Others fled to the Bulgarian occupational zone in order to hide their tracks.

4. First armed groups of NOB

The first partisan group was founded in Kostur Region and consisted of illegal migrants from the village Zhupanishta who, as we mentioned earlier, were responsible for liquidating the informant Dailakis on October 5, 1941. The first Party group in Kostur Region was formed in the middle of April 1942, in the "Sveta Troitsa" monastery. Then, despite opposition from CPG District Secretary

Atanas Zhiogas, a Vlach from Kostur, the first partisan group in Kostur Region was formally formed and given a number of tasks to perform. The formation of this group was personally attended by Lazo Trpovski, CPG Regional Committee instructor for Macedonia. (For more information on the revolutionary character of veteran Lazo Trpovski from Kostur Region, see “Messenger of the Institute of National History” by Hristo Andonovski, year IV. No. 1-2, 1960.) Naum Peiov was appointed commander of the partisan group and Kosta Trpovski was appointed commissar. In November 1942 Trpovski was captured by the Italians and sentenced to life imprisonment to be served in “Averoff” Prison.

“The formation of the group,” wrote Naum Peiov, “gave rise to the question of what kind of badges would these fighters wear? Lazo Trpovski proposed that the fighters wear a band of the Macedonian flag on their left sleeve. All the fighters embraced the idea with enthusiasm except for Secretary Zhiogas who disagreed and stubbornly insisted that the struggle was to be led with a Greek flag and as a Greek national liberation struggle. Under conditions of constant pressure, intrigue and slander, perpetrated by the chauvinist Ziogas on one hand and by the occupier on the other, the group did not survive more than two months.” (Naum Peov, “CPG relations and its contributions to the Macedonian Question”.)

In other districts in the meantime, the movements for going to the Mountains did not show any tendencies of Macedonian colouration, but was carried out jointly by Macedonians and Greeks through ELAS.

In December 1941 the CPG Central Committee and EAM decided to form ELAS (Greek People’s Liberation Army). Then in January 1942, by a decision from the EAM Central Committee, the ELAS Central Committee was established which, in February 1942, issued its first proclamation to the people and to the former Greek army officers, in which it set out its objectives and explained why it was established.

ELAS’s first actions were against the tax services, against some armed gangs and against gendarme stations where the partisans disarmed the Greek gendarmes and burned the archives of the

former dictatorship. These first successful actions, against the Greek quisling government, soon earned ELAS the sympathy of the people and its acceptance as the people's army.

The first ELAS actions in Central Greek occupied Macedonia were observed in the summer of 1942. They were carried out by the first ELAS detachment on Mount Paiak. The villages at Mount Paiak at that time were hotbeds for criminal activities where gangs committed all sorts of crimes which the gendarmes and the reactionaries then attributed to the communists in this region. In other words, the reactionaries created an excuse to attack the Party organizations because of the supposed criminal activities being committed by their members. This resulted in the gendarme from Gumendzhe carrying out organizing actions against the Paiak villages on the east side of Mount Paiak. But their aims failed when the partisan movement became stronger.

The first partisan action against the occupiers took place in Gumenzhe Region on December 3, 1942. The partisans decided to attack the German and Greek gendarme guard post at Boemichki Bridge. About 120 partisans, accompanied by about 130 volunteers from the villages near the city Gumendzhe, attacked and destroyed the bridge and captured the gendarmes. The bridge was attacked while a German train was passing over it. The train engineer and a German Major were killed.

This first significant partisan action conducted by the Paiak detachment caught the attention of bourgeois historiographer Athanasios Hrisohou, who wrote: "On Mount Kozhuv in Meglen an EAM armed group demonstrated its desire for freedom during the night of December 3, 1942 when it attacked the Gumendzhe railway station and disarmed the gendarme station, consisting of one sergeant and five policemen and when it killed a German train engineer. The German sentry on the bridge was also attacked wounding one German soldier and five Czech workers. In the evening of December 7, 1942, the same partisan group attacked the "Mavrodendro" mine near the village Fanos and confiscated a large amount of provisions and dynamite." (A. Hrisohou, "The occupation of Macedonia", Vol. I, p. 40, Solun 1950.)

On December 9, 1942 the Germans retaliated against the partisan attacks by attacking the partisan groups in Paiak and Kozhuv Mountains. The Germans arrested many villagers from the surrounding countryside and sent most of them to the “Pavlos Melas” concentration camp in Solun. Twelve people from the village Liumnitsa alone were sent there. One of them named Frints was immediately executed. The Germans discovered the partisan camp on the village N’te, in Kozuv and burned it down along with all the stored food and ammunition. For the attack on the lookout and the railway bridge, the occupiers, in their familiar countermeasure manner, gathered 25 hostages from Solun and on December 31, 1942 executed them. (“Macedonia”, February 20, 1959, records from processing Max Metren.)

The Partisan group in the Paiak and Kozhuv Mountains fought several battles against the German army but was forced to withdraw before it was demolished. It relocated to Mount Kaimakchalan. By the fall of 1942 the partisan movement had spread all around Voden Region. The first partisans to come out of Voden Region and to join the Kaimakchalan partisan group were Kosta Simadi, Gito Salahorov, Kosta Tsironkov, Aleko Tsrvenkata, Vangel Kordalov, Hristo Pochepov, Kolokotronot, Atanas Provata and others. In 1943 a number of partisan units were formed on Paiak Mountain and led by Captains Gerafis and Nikitaras. Many prominent fighters from the city Gumendzhe joined those units including Aleko Zelenkov, Aleko Pishuta, Atanas Popstoianov, Tomo Sadrazanov, Vangel Karagiorgiev, Ivan Kovachev, Klearhos Dimchevski from Liumnitsa, Apostol Simovski from Izvor, and several young men from the villages Tsrna Reka, Barovitsa, Kriva and others. In the fall of 1942 a large group of these partisans relocated to Mount Kaimakchalan.

5. Partisan unit “Vicho” formed in Lerin Region

The first partisan unit in Lerin Region was formed on February 28, 1943 in the village Lagen and was named “Vicho”. Among the top fighters included in the unit were Ilia Dimovski – Gotse, Kocho Kalinov, Lambe Popovski, Miltiadi Popnikolov, Giorgi Kalinov, Giorgi Rusov, Iani Chochev, Hristo Sahidis - Pandelis Masiotis, Giorgos Gavrilidis, Pashalis Papadopoulos – Spartakos, Atanas Furtunas and Stoian from Lerin. A few days later the unit was joined

by other fighters including Risto Kolentsev from Lerin. By then the unit had grown to 35 fighters.

Among the first actions the “Vicho” unit performed was disarming the gendarmes in the village Voshtareni (Ofchareni) in Lerin Region. About 20 gendarmes were disarmed and their arms, ammunition and food were confiscated. But more valuable than that was the effect this action had on raising the morale of the people and the fear it created in the occupier and in its domestic servants who immediately became restless in the city Lerin. The next day after this incident occurred, word was out that 5,000 partisans were operating around the town, prompting German command to barricade Lerin and implement strict control measures.

On May 20, 1943 the partisans organized an attack on the Lerin – Voden train line in order to free political prisoner Haralambos Haralambidis - Athanatos. The mission was a success. Four Germans were killed and German collaborator Papathanassiou was heavily wounded. All weapons and ammunition was seized and the prisoners were freed.

The “Vicho” unit also participated with the “Dame Gruev” unit from Bitola and together disarmed many Macedonian villages in Kostur Region that were armed by the Italian occupier and especially those bands that were seduced by Bulgarian fascist propaganda. Four months after its formation the “Vicho” unit had grown to more than 80 fighters. On July 20, 1943 this unit was split into four smaller units. The “Vicho” unit, the “Kaimakchalan” unit commanded by Ilia Dimovski - Gotse, the “Bigla” unit commanded by Mito Tupurkovski – Titan and the “Dauli” unit were all named after the mountains where they operated.

6. The “Lazo Trpovski” unit in Kostur region

Despite objections from the CPG Regional Committee for Macedonia to form Macedonian political and military organizations in Greek occupied Macedonia, a decision was made in September 1943 to form the “Lazo Trpovski” partisan unit in Kostur Region. This unit was appropriately named after Lazo Trpovski, a well-deserved fighter and political leader from this region, who was

killed by a band of PAO collaborationists in the village Imera, Kozhani Region.

The reason for creating the “Lazo Trpovski” unit in this part of Greek occupied Macedonia was because the vast majority of the population here was Macedonian and distrustful of the CPG, EAM and ELAS, the organizations that led the National Liberation War on an overemphasized national platform. The population was suspicious of the Greeks, with good reason, because the Greeks had consistently shown their chauvinistic side towards the Macedonian population. So to overcome their problems the Greeks, yet again, used the Macedonians to do the dirty work. By forming a Macedonian unit the Greeks attempted to accomplish a couple of objectives. One, get the Macedonians on board the so-called “common” struggle against the occupiers and two, convince them to fight against their own brothers on account that their brothers were in favour of a greater Bulgaria. In other words, the Greeks got the Macedonians to fight one another. The Greeks filled the heads of the Macedonian partisans with ideas that the Kostur bands were fighting for the Bulgarians when in fact the Kostur bands were actually fighting against the Greek Fascists to protect their villages, homes and everything that was Macedonian.

When the Kostur bands found out that the Partisans they were fighting were not Greeks but Macedonians, they all surrendered and many joined their ranks. Then, one by one, the Greeks made sure the most patriotic ones disappeared.

The “Lazo Trpovski” unit played a major role in mobilizing the Macedonian people from Koreshchata. Most helpful of all was the fact that the fighters wore the pointed star as a badge on their hats instead of the ELAS insignia. The star attracted the Macedonians and being spoken to in Macedonian convinced them to join the movement. However, as we shall see later, the Macedonian armed formation lasted only a very short time because this unit was disbanded in the spring of 1944.

In the meantime due to external factors, such as the dismantling of the German army under von Paulus at Stalingrad, the advance of the Allies in North Africa, and so on, further contributed to the

widening of the resistance movement in Greece. ELAS grew into a massive military organization and became a strong and popular army. It made a name for itself in the struggle in Bugazi, near Siatista, Kaitsa, Domenico Tsankarades and others places where the enemy suffered great losses. According to information published in December 1944 in "KOMEPE" (organ of the CPG Central Committee), in 1943 in the above-mentioned battles the Italians suffered losses with 235, including 1 general and 20 officers killed and 880 wounded. At the same time about 1,000 Germans were killed and about 1,200 were wounded and captured.

During the entire occupation, the course the resistance leadership took with the resistance movement was to organize and concentrate its power base and political struggle in the towns. All throughout 1943 EAM organized strikes and demonstrations in the cities in Greek occupied Macedonia against rising costs of living, uneven distribution of certain industrial products such as silk cocoons, tobacco etc., against the black market and also took measures to stop the quizzing government from pilfering agricultural products. Several organized rallies in Voden were attended by more than 10,000 workers and citizens, in Enidzhe-Vardar over 8,000 villagers attended the rallies and in Gumendzhe Region over 5,000 attended. A mass rally was organized in Lerin in August 1943, which was attended by 15,000 demonstrators. Similar strikes and demonstrations were also carried out in Kostur and Rupishta. And let us not forget the rally in Subocko in November 1943 during which more than 20,000 people from across the entire region showed up with black flags and banners and took part in the demonstrations in the town square.

The biggest demonstration conducted was the one against the Bulgarian occupying Army's entry west of the Struma River in the city Nigrita. This demonstration was attended by about 30,000 people. More frequent demonstrations and strikes were organized in Solun, Negush and Ber with many citizens and workers participating. The occupiers knew very well that the CPG and EAM stood behind all these events and their response was drastic. They amplified their reprisals, executed more patriotic people and imprisoned many en mass in concentration camps. The German

occupiers became even more aggressive after Italy capitulated on September 8, 1943.

CHAPTER FIVE - SNOF in Lerin and Kostur Regions and the Voden Region Macedonian Regional Committee

SNOF (Slavo-Macedonian National Liberation Front) appeared as a separate anti-fascist Macedonian organization in Lerin and Kostur Regions in the fall of 1943, during a crucial period for the development of the resistance movement at the same time when the occupiers, through various collaborator organizations and military formations, were preparing to liquidate the resistance movement. SNOF came as a result of a three-year Macedonian struggle against the occupiers in this region and as an expression of the age-old desire for the Macedonian people to achieve their national ideals in a common struggle with the Greek people through the Allied victory and the entire anti-fascist alliance.

[“The CPG, EAM and ELAS leaderships, ‘concerned’ about the situation that existed in Greek occupied Macedonia, especially in Kostur, Lerin and Voden Regions, decided to create a separate Macedonian organization; SNOF (Slavo-Macedonian National Liberation Front). SNOF, for Kostur and Lerin Regions, was created on October 20, 1943 and for Voden Region a little later. The people who created SNOF were Greeks who belonged to the CPG District Committee for Western Macedonia; Hristos Kalfas (Andreas), Antonis Andonopoulos (Periklis), CPG District Committee Secretary for Kostur Region and Thanassis Kartsunis, CPG District Committee Secretary for Kozhani Region.” (See “Giorgi R. Peikov (1915-1991)” by Stoian Kochov, Skopje 1995, for more information.)]

During the last war the Greek nationalist press and historiography made great efforts to present SNOF as an “autonomist organization” in view of the domestic and international public. There was only one motive for this kind of writing and that was to portray the CPG and EAM as traitors to the Greek people because they patronized SNOF. By denouncing the resistance organizations, especially for patronizing SNOF, the Greek nationalists justified their own absence from the anti-fascist front. They even invented reasons for cooperating with the occupiers. (P. Enepekidis, a Greek university professor at the University of Vienna, wrote a paper entitled “Secrets in the Wehrmacht archives”, published in the “Vima”

newspaper in 1963, in which he delivered a series of authentic documents exposing the nationalist Greek cooperation with the occupiers.) It should also be noted here that even some of the CPG leadership, due to pressure from the bourgeois parties and from the government in exile, expressed chauvinistic impulses towards the formation of SNOF. In any case SNOF's appearance in Greek occupied Macedonia was inevitable because the Macedonian population wanted it and because it was necessary for the entire national movement in Northern Greece.

In the course of 1943, Greek nationalist and collaborator organizations such as IVE (Protection of Northern Greece), PAO (Pan-Hellenic Liberation Organization) and ESA (National and Social Renewal) and others, which represented an open threat to the anti-fascist movement, began to appear in parallel with the development of the National Liberation Movement on the terrain of Greek occupied Macedonia. At the same time, part of the Macedonian population, which was still infatuated with the illusion that the Bulgarian mission was to "liberate" Macedonia, an excuse which aided the Bulgarian propaganda to create an anti-revolutionary nest and a reactionary movement under the banner of "autonomy of Macedonia", began to also organize. Under these circumstances the Regional Committee for Macedonia had no other option but to meet Macedonian demands to participate in a common struggle with their own organization.

1. Establishment of SNOF in Lerin Region

There is some pre-history associated with the formation of SNOF in Lerin Region. Up until 1936, the line for forming IMRO (united) in Greek occupied Macedonia was acceptable to the CPG and as a result a strong Organization was developed. About 110 IMRO (united) members existed in the village Ekshi-Su alone, many of whom donated ten gold pounds (one pound then was worth 250 drams) each for the purchase of literature to aid in the liberation struggles of the Macedonian people, in which they were very interested.

According to Giorgi Turundzhov, a prisoner who was freed in the summer of 1941, then member of the Temporary Committee, a

request was made to restore IMRO (united). This request was made during the first CPG Regional Committee for Macedonia meeting. Among others, present at this meeting were Leonidas Stringos Apostolos, Ianis, Lazo Trpovski, Andreas, Dzhimas, Rusalim, Harizani, Kosta Perdushi and Kerasidis. Dzhimas, who at that time was serving as temporary Central Committee secretary, said that “Now is not the most convenient time to bring up such issues, as they could lead to a split between Greeks and Macedonians.” Unfortunately two and a half more precious years had to pass before the CPG finally realized that the National Liberation Movement could greatly benefit from allowing the Macedonian people to have their own political anti-fascist organization and their own army.

In September 1943, Thanos, CPG Lerin District Committee Secretary, convened a meeting, held in the village Banitsa, between himself and a number of Macedonian members from Lerin District including Kiro Piliaev, Giorgi Turundzhov, Stavro Kochevski, Trifko Popovski and Vangel Koichev during which SNOF was staffed. Kiro Piliaev was appointed Political Secretary of the newly created SNOF Macedonian organization, Giorgi Turundzhov was appointed Organizational Secretary and Stavre Kochevski was given responsibility to run the agitation and propaganda department. These three people were the first leaders of SNOF in Lerin District, but under the EAM District Committee.

Their first task as SNOF leaders was to organize and operate an illegal press and to begin printing a Macedonian newspaper. But in order to do that they needed a typewriter that typed Cyrillic (Macedonian) letters. That task was given to Giorgi Turundzhov. Unfortunately such a typewriter was impossible to find in Greece so Giorgi Turundzhov, with his brother Ilia and Giorgi Bukchev, decided to travel illegally to Bitola and make contact with the Party organization there, which would then supply them with such a machine. When they arrived in Bitola they made contact with Krum Hololchev, member of the Bitola CPM leadership, who referred them to the Party Organization in the village Novatsi, Bitola Region, where they were supposed to be given a machine because the village mayor was a Macedonian from Ohrid and was organized in the resistance movement. But when they arrived there the mayor could not find such a machine to give them. The next night they returned

to Bitola and, with help from the Bitola Organization, stole a typewriter, as well as supplies, from a popular bank in the city.

The next day when the Bulgarian occupation authorities looked into the break-in and found out that no money had been taken and that only a typewriter was missing, they concluded that it must have been the action of the communists who were in need of a machine and materials for propaganda purposes. Seven bank employees were arrested.

And as Giorgi Turundzhov himself has told us, they had no mimeograph in the Agitation and Propaganda department which they themselves had to make from glass and canvas. Soon afterwards they published the first issue of “Sloboda” (Freedom) in the Macedonian language.

After that it did not take long for SNOF to penetrate all the Macedonian villages in the Lerin District. In the 4 regions involved SNOF’s membership rose to over 10,000 in no time at all. The strongest evidence of how much the Macedonian people in Lerin Region loved their Organization was manifested during a SNOF District conference held in February 1944 in the village Bapchor on Vicho Mountain, when large masses attended and expressed a great desire to fight alongside the democratic Greek people until they achieved victory over the occupiers.

2. CPG creates a separate Macedonian SNOF in Voden Region

The SNOF Organization in Voden Region did not appear as a separate Macedonian National Liberation Organization, as was the case with SNOF in Lerin and Kostur Regions, but as a separate Macedonian regional organization, organized by the CPG. Initially SNOF consisted of members from the CPG Committee, organized Macedonians from the town itself. Gradually SNOF expanded to include Macedonian villages from Voden and Meglen Regions. These people were attracted into the Organization through agitation for the purpose of participating in the anti-fascist struggle. The main medium used for this purpose was the newspaper “Tsrvena Dzvezda” (Red star) published in the Macedonian language using the Greek alphabet.

The Regional Macedonian Party Organization also issued a special newsletter with news about the anti-fascist movement in the country and its military operations in the allied fronts. But according to claims made by Vangel Alianov, head of the Regional Macedonian Party Organization in Voden, back in the early days when the Regional Organization was formed, it encountered many difficulties, created mostly by the various CPG and EAM District Committee leaders. This was especially true after the time “Tsrvena Dzvezda” published an important article with Macedonian national content. After that the District Committee banned the newspaper because it supposedly expressed “nationalistic deviations”.

A similar plan for conducting agitation in Meglen Region was initiated in the fall of 1943. The local newspaper “Iskra” (Spark) was included as a Macedonian add-on issue in the newspaper “Flora”; a newspaper that belonged to the CPG District Committee. Unfortunately after publishing its third edition “Iskra” was deemed unnecessary and its publication was terminated by the CPG Regional Committee. “Iskra” was deemed redundant and unnecessary because, according to the CPG Regional Committee, the same news could be carried by “Flora” or by any other existing newspaper.

Similar inconsistencies and unwarranted opinions were expressed when lengthy talks were taking place during the establishment of a separate Macedonian detachment in Voden Region in the month of April 1944. During these talks the District Committee proposed that the detachment wear badges of the hammer and sickle with the inscription “communist army”. The Macedonian leaders counter-proposed that while the Macedonian Organization was recruiting Macedonian soldiers into its army their emblem should be the Macedonian flag. The District Committee unfortunately did not agree because such a symbol, it argued, would serve as a lure to attract fighters only from the Macedonian population. Given all this, it was obvious that the District Committee had not given much serious thought as to what the Macedonian people wanted in order to satisfy their historical necessity. So the entire process, as it turned out, was a complete failure.

3. SNOF in Kostur Region

After SNOF was formed in Kostur Region, the Greek newspaper “Laikon Vima”, organ of the CPG District Committee for Kostur Region, on January 10, 1944, on the occasion of SNOF’s formation in that region, wrote: “Mature political thought has deemed it necessary to create SNOF, the Macedonian National Liberation Front, which for the Slavo-Macedonian people is the same as EAM is for the Greek people. SNOF, as an instrument of our struggle, will lead the Slavo-Macedonian people with fanaticism and brotherly love for the realization of common goals with the Greek people.”

A similar assessment about SNOF’s importance was later given on April 2, 1944 by the Greek newspaper “Efedrikos ELAS”, organ of ELAS Divisional Command in Western Macedonia, when it wrote: “EAM and SNOF are Organizations that fight for the same purpose, desires and aspirations. Greeks and Macedonians firmly united and working together to decisively realize the demands of the people...”

Noting further action and widespread participation of Macedonians in Lerin and Kostur Regions in the common struggle against the occupiers, the newspaper “Efedrikos ELAS”, wrote: “Despite the difficult conditions, the terrible storm and the terror, the Macedonian people participated en masse in the First ELAS for all Western Macedonia Conference. The Slavo-Macedonians in Lerin and Kostur Districts have significantly contributed to the number of delegates. This shows quite clearly to what extent the Slavo-Macedonians are convinced in the righteousness of the goals and aspirations of today’s all-National struggle.”

Considering SNOF’s importance in the role it played in the six months of its existence as a mobilizer, leader and educator and as a faithful interpreter of the Macedonian people’s ideals, the newspaper “Slavomakedonski Glas” (Slavo-Macedonian Voice), organ of the SNOF District Board for Kostur Region, on April 3, 1944, wrote:

“SNOF is the only organization that will meet all of the Macedonian people’s national and social demands. SNOF is the new IMRO for the Macedonian people, which will lead them to end the work that was began by the Ilinden leaders and fighters...”

In answering enemy slanders regarding SNOF's alleged relationship with the autonomist counter-band movement in Kostur Region, the newspaper "Slavomakedonski Glas" (Slavo-Macedonian Voice), wrote: "These so-called autonomists are nothing more than fascists attempting to put our people under the fascist yoke. SNOF, as successor to the real IMRO, was born of our people's aspirations seeking freedom and to continue the struggle to expel the occupier and to exterminate every traitor who intends to keep the Nazi tyranny alive..." At the end of the story the newspaper wrote: "Death to the fascists and to the traitor Kalchev and his companions."

In its short life, which lasted only 6 months, SNOF in Kostur Region emerged as a strong leader for the Macedonian people, following in the Ilinden tradition, from the early days of its formation to the last day it was disbanded. Almost the entire population from the Koreshtata villages and other parts of Kostur Region was organized in SNOF. All the villages that were armed by the occupying forces, one by one, surrendered their arms and joined SNOF. SNOF's peaceful tactics of persuasion and its agitation through the Macedonian language press contributed a great deal to not only the surrender of arms but also in convincing members of the counter-bands to join the ranks of SNOF and ELAS. During one such call, for example, the SNOF District Board, addressing the armed counter-bands, said:

"Fascism is finding itself in its final minutes. The Red Army is already in Romania and Czechoslovakia and soon will begin a new offensive to liberate the Balkans. This is why we are giving you your last chance; Now is the time, as was said by ELAS Division Nine, for you to hand over your weapons to the ELAS political organizations or to the ELAS military units. The Organization SNOF will guarantee the safety of your life and property. SNOF gives you its word that no one of those of you who surrender your weapons, or joins the Organization, is going to be harmed. Be warned, however, that later, when ELAS starts cleaning up the region, if you have not surrendered we will not be able to help you because by then you shall be deemed an enemy of the people. We are your brothers and we care about you, and for the sake of our

Slavo-Macedonian people who need to finish the Ilinden work, do not forsake our glorious history. Join us and help us write new glorious pages. Do not listen to those who want to prevent you from embarking on the right path...”

Even in the first month after SNOF was created, its membership rose to 6,000 fighters of whom 1,834 were women. Women too joined the ELAS reserve combat units bringing back heroic Macedonian traditions reminiscent of those of Sirma, Irene, Giurgia and all the other brave women fighters from the Ilinden era who, with guns in hand, watched over villages, took part in the ambushes and transferred weapons and food through occupied territories.

It is important at this point to note that, even though the Kostur Region armed counter-bands were labeled “fascist”, “autonomist” and “Bulgarian agents”, none of that was true. Yes, there were individuals and small bands of people, basically a criminal element, who were affiliated with the fascist Bulgarians but their cause was not ideological. They were purely opportunists who used circumstances to benefit themselves. The vast majority of the counter-band members were loyal Macedonians who were armed by the Italians to protect themselves, their families and their villages from all the Greeks, including the communists. They were Macedonians, spoke Macedonian and fought for the Macedonians cause and for the integrity of the Macedonian people. That is why they put their trust in SNOF, especially when they found out that the SNOF fighters were actually Macedonians. That is why they surrendered their arms and joined the Macedonian units.

Unfortunately, the Greeks did not want to expose the fact that these people were Macedonians and struggling for the Macedonian cause, so they labeled them all “fascist”, “autonomist” and “Bulgarian agents”. And yes, there was an attempt by Bulgarian fascism, through Kalchev and other Vancho Mihailovich agents to create a Bulgarian hotspot in Kostur. But with much verbal and printing press agitation, SNOF contributed to the awakening of the national consciousness and freed those Macedonians who were under the influence of Greek or Bulgarian assimilationist propaganda.

SNOF also contributed to the cultural and educational elevation of the masses through lectures, art programs and celebrations. In the

villages it organized and promoted national events including Ilinden celebrations. In addition to fighting in the political field, SNOF also stood at the head of the people and fought for improvements in their living conditions, especially in the villages. By getting the villagers to participate in massive demonstrations in Kostur, SNOF was instrumental in obtaining rations of sugar, oil, soap and other products for them. Referring to SNOF's political activities, Pop Traikov, head of the SNOF District Board, on March 29, 1944, sent a very convincing report to the SNOF District Board in which, among other things, he said:

“With their massive protests the villagers of Breshteni (Ftelia) managed to receive 700 oki of beans and 27 oki of sugar. The people of Drenovo not only received 560 oki of beans but also had their identification cards returned, which the city had confiscated. The villagers from Dobrolishta received a certain amount of beans and all this was a result of the mass protests the villagers had undertaken against the district governor and the bishop of Kostur. The protests in the city were free of the usual manifestations of terror perpetrated by the occupiers and collaborators.”

“The people are in good spirits and the population is ready to fight. Young people want to be educated and are looking at the prominent youth groups in ELAS. Reserve groups in ELAS are demanding they be given weapons. The reactionaries are limited to two villages, Chetirok and Tikveni. About 40 reactionaries from Chetirok went to Kostur and after receiving support from the Germans came back to the village, and through intimidation armed about 180-200 people. They also delivered arms to the village Tikveni...” (This quote was taken from Lazo Damovski's personal archives).

SNOF's difficulties and problems with some fanatic Greek leaders in Kostur were also described further down in the same report where it said:

“I tried to open SNOF offices in the villages Chuka and Stena but was stopped by Ioannis Papadopoulos. And because I asked him to explain to me why he was in opposition he said that if I didn't stop I would be severely punished and that I needed to provide the CPG

District Committee with a written explanation and appear before it.”

The people of SNOF organized support groups to help partisan families cultivate their fields and financially assist with the purchase of groceries and medicine for the sick. And it was not rare for SNOF leaders to settle disputes between villagers. They applied the law much better than most professional judges.

It should be considered a merit of SNOF that 500 Macedonians joined the ranks of ELAS from the villages where SNOF operated. Even more Macedonians joined the ELAS reserves from the same villages. Many of these fighters contributed to the disarming of the armed Kostur village “counter-bands”.

Macedonian participation in SNOF and other antifascist organizations in Kostur Region were massive. Despite the raging terror and copious propaganda, the enemy could not break the Macedonian people, with the exception of several villages, most of which, through acts of terror, lies and offers of an independent Macedonia, were armed by the enemy through exploiting their patriotic sentiments and deep desires for freedom.

The massive Macedonian participation in SNOF was confirmed by a report written by Kocho, SNOF Regional leader, on January 17, 1944, in which, among other things, he said: “In my area of operation in the 9 villages assigned to me I managed to recruit 7 where SNOF is the primary organization. I could not recruit Blatsa and Setoma because large groups of reactionaries were present in those villages. By this point in time I have recruited about 200 SNOF members here. They consider SNOF their primary organization, but there is some fear among them that the Greek propaganda may fool them again. To a lesser extent there are some who are Bulgaro-phils in most villages, except in Blatsa, Setoma and Chereshnitsa where their slogan is “Independent Macedonia”. (The original report can be found in Lazo Damovski’s unpublished archives.)

4. SNOF's Regional Conference

One of the great but last massive SNOF manifestations was the SNOF Conference held in the village D'mbeni, Kostur Region, on April 12, 1944. This Conference highlighted not only SNOF's strength but also its massive popularity among the Macedonian population in Kostur Region. The Conference was a bright and important event for the national liberation movement of the Macedonian and Greek people in Greek occupied Macedonia. All machinations and intrigues, perpetrated by the reactionaries and occupiers to create a rift between the Macedonian and Greek people regarding the "Macedonian Question", were exposed and so were the slanders that allegedly called SNOF an autonomist movement and its Macedonian leaders, traitors.

The SNOF Conference, held in the village D'mbeni, was attended by over 500 delegates from local and regional SNOF organizations, by guests from the fraternal organizations such as EAM, CPG, ELAS, the CPG Western Macedonian Bureau and by delegates from the British military mission to free Greece. Lazo Damovski, SNOF Political Secretary, submitted a paper on organizational issues and their resolution. Paskal Mitrevski, SNOF Organizing Secretary, spoke about SNOF's organizational position in the region. Rigas (Kostas Sidiropoulos), EAM representative in Western Macedonia, spoke about the international military and political situation and of the specific tasks carried out by the resistance movement in Greece.

Part of the work carried out during the Conference was dedicated to relations between ELAS, SNOF and the people and the role played by PEEA (National Liberation Political Committee).

According to the Conference minutes (located in Lazo Damovski's private archives), SNOF's composition of the newly elected SNOF District Board consisted of 21 members, which included Lazo Damovski, Paskal Mitrevski, Andon Kalcho, Blagoi Panduli, Kokkinos Peev Naum, Boshko Hadziev, Evdokia Baleva, Shishkov, Gulev, Moskov, Poptraikov, Vasilka Galeva, Hrisanta Chocheva, Risto Dimitriev, Karadzov, Kalimanov, Pandeli and Liuba Balsamova. (The names listed here are as they stand in the original document mentioned in the unpublished SNOF archives.)

In the telegrams sent from the Conference to SNOF's allies; to PEEA, to the EAM Board for Western Macedonia and to the ELAS IX Division, the Macedonian population, through SNOF, expressed its faith in the anti-fascist victory, in which it said it would find the right conditions and the right to self-determination. In a telegram to PEEA, the people of SNOF refuted all slanders perpetrated by the reactionaries who sought to present SNOF as an autonomist organization and its leaders as autonomist agents who allegedly sought autonomy for Macedonia, and so on. The following, among other things, was included in the telegram to PEEA:

“We the five hundred SNOF delegates from Kostur Region, in our first historic Conference, overflowing with enthusiasm, put our trust in the commitment of the people to bring ultimate victory. From the bottom of our hearts we truly welcome the National Liberation Political Committee (PEEA). We are willing to work with PEEA side by side and are ready to help it with all our strength to form a national unity government. We are convinced that we Macedonians will find absolute socio-political and economic equality with the Greeks in a people's democratic Greece.”

5. SNOF Dismantled

Throughout SNOF's existence, in an attempt to achieve “national unity”, the CPG leadership continued to make unbelievable concessions to the Greek bourgeois parties. The CPG did everything it could, at all costs, to be benevolent towards the reactionary bourgeoisie. Following the example of the bourgeois nationalists, the CPG leadership did not hesitate to take away the Macedonian people's right to have their own special organizations, Liberation boards, National army, Macedonian schools, etc. The first victims of this CPG capitulatory and opportunistic policy were the Macedonian people characterized by the damage that was done to SNOF.

During the April 12, 1944 district Conference there was great admiration shown for SNOF by the CPG and EAM representatives. They openly admired the Macedonian people's successes and there was nothing said or done to prevent the Macedonian organization from functioning in the future. But just a few days later it was

declared that SNOF was “no longer required” and that its function could be done by EAM and that SNOF should be remitted to EAM because there was “no need” for two organizations to be doing the same thing. But looking at this from the other side, the CPG could not achieve national unity with the Greek bourgeois parties while SNOF existed because the reactionaries had doubts about the CPG’s patriotism.

The final decision to dissolve SNOF for Kostur Region was made in the beginning of May 1944, during a Party Conference held in the village Mogila, Kostur Region. A similar decision was made during the Lagen Conference to dissolve SNOF in Lerin and Voden Regions.

But this kind of “anti-revolutionary” act could not easily be implemented. The Macedonian people did not want to give up the right they had won to have their own organization, which at that time had not even fully satisfied their wishes and aspirations. They knew that their brothers in Vardar (Serbian occupied) Macedonia had the right and were able to not only form their own Macedonian organizations but to also have their own units with their own Headquarters as well as other anti-fascist social and political organizations. They also knew the Macedonians there, during the second AVNOJ Meeting, were recognized and treated as a separate nation with the right to self-determination. They knew that their Macedonian brothers to the north were invited to enter a Yugoslav Federation as equal members. Unfortunately most Cadres in Greek occupied Macedonia, not those who felt and thought as Macedonians, but all others, thought that this was impossible because if the Macedonians in Greek occupied Macedonia were granted such rights, what makes you so sure that Northern Epirus and the Dodecanese would respect such rights? So whatever little the CPG had promised the Macedonian people, in regards to the right to self-determination, it took away because of pressures imposed on it by the bourgeois-democratic parties. This led to SNOF’s dissolution. The CPG deprived SNOF of its existence and robbed the Macedonian people of their rights.

After SNOF was dissolved, its military units were also dissolved and the fighters were ordered into ELAS units. But all this had

detrimental consequences. On the one hand it caused a split in the anti-fascist front, and on the other, it created favourable conditions for autonomist and fascist propaganda to seduce a considerable number of Macedonians and re-arm them.

These CPG political tactics towards the “Macedonian Question” had negative consequences since January 1944. According to Lazo Damovski, SNOF District Board Secretary for Kostur Region, the CPG Regional Committee for Macedonia had reservations about SNOF. On January 24, 1944 Damovski, among other things, wrote the following in a report to the Western Macedonian Bureau (a department of the Regional Committee):

“During the Second World War, the national liberation movement in all occupied countries of Europe and the Balkans opened a new road, the road to self-determination for various peoples. The same applied to the Macedonian people who shed so much blood during the 1903 Ilinden Uprising, fought against the fascist and made many new sacrifices for freedom. Vardar Macedonia, comrades, is going straight in that direction...”

“The Macedonian people in the territory of Lerin and Kostur Regions constitute a majority (70 percent). Today they fight side by side with the Greek people. In ousting the occupiers on the basis of the Atlantic Charter, they have the right to self-determination. But will they be given the right to be together with their brothers from the Serbian and Bulgarian parts of Macedonia to create a People’s Republic of Macedonia, as well as economic, geographic and ethnic representation as a whole?”

“The CPG promised the Macedonian people equality within a People’s Republic of Greece, whereas the “Dodecanese and Cyprus Question” for self-determination rests on the basis of the principle of self-determination. The Macedonian people would justifiably like to ask: Why won’t you leave us free to create our own national culture and fight for our ideals? Why won’t you allow us to make our own choices and form our own organizations? We are not Greeks, we are Macedonians! Why is the Party afraid of what the chauvinists are saying? Does it not have enough information or has it not sufficiently investigated the ‘Macedonian Question’ due to lack of

documents? If the CPG is worried about what the chauvinists might say then how will it ensure our equality? Chauvanists will always respond the same way, but our understanding is that the Party is fighting against chauvinism and the ‘Megali Idea’. Will the Party analyze the current reality soon and give us a proper answer in regards to the ‘Macedonian question’ ...”

Unfortunately the CPG and EAM’s opportunistic and extremely permissive attitude towards the Greek government in exile and towards the English in general, have resulted in NOF’s elimination from Kostur, Lerin and Voden Regions, and with it the Macedonian people’s opportunity to lead themselves. Naturally this caused a revolt among the Macedonian communists which resulted in a group of about 40 Macedonian partisans separating from the ranks of ELAS in Kostur Region. Led by Naum Peiov, they fled to Karaorman in Yugoslavia. They were being threatened by attacks from ELAS. Something similar took place with a group of Macedonian fighters in Lerin Region. Led by Giorgi Turundzov, these fighters passed through Prespa and also left for Karaorman. A similar situation was developing in Voden Region but Vangel Aianov, a Macedonian leader who wanted to form a similar unit, was arrested and taken to Paiak Mountain.

The following SNOF leaders were arrested and jailed by ELAS in Kostur Region: Lazo Damovski, Paskal Mitrevski and Lazo Poplazov. The following Macedonian regional leaders from Ostrov Region were killed in Kaimakchalan: Pando Dzhikov, Dimitar Leskov, 10 people from the village Chegan and 3 from the village Rusilovo.

The CPG did not even try to explain itself or give reasons regarding its non-Marxist policy towards the Macedonian people and towards the “Macedonian Question” in general. It never analyzed or even admitted to its mistakes on this issue. It took the easiest path by putting the blame for the split on the Macedonian units that fled for Vardar Macedonia. According to the CPG it was they who allegedly spread autonomist ideas to the Macedonians in Greek occupied Macedonia.

CHAPTER SIX - Creation of Macedonian battalions

The Macedonian units from Kostur Region that fled Greek occupied Macedonia and ended up in Karaorman were eventually included in the Macedonian NOV units in Vardar (Serbian occupied) Macedonia. This unfortunately began to cause problems between the CPY and the CPG. After the defection the CPG immediately sought the return of the fighters so that it could punish them for deserting. The CPG made no effort to understand or to explain the real reason why the fighters defected.

The CPY, on the other hand, seeing the breakaway group as a natural consequence of events, took advantage of the situation and employed the Macedonian fighters to fight on its behalf against the fascists. Then, through negotiations, it was decided that the fleeing fighters would be allowed to return to the CPG and ELAS if they were allowed to form separate Macedonian units in Kostur, Lerin and Voden Regions. In that spirit a letter was written by Ortse - Dobrivoje Radosavljevich, delegate of the Supreme Headquarters of NOV and POJ Yugoslavia, and sent to the Macedonian units in Vardar Macedonia. This letter was read at the CPG District Party Conferences in Voden, Lerin and Kostur Regions.

But instead of forming the units as per the agreement, much time was spent in discussing whether to form the Macedonian units or not, and if such units were formed what kind of badges would they wear. This wasted time gave the enemy the opportunity it needed to escalate its propaganda through Kalchev (a Bulgarian liaison officer working with the Germans in Lerin, Kostur and Voden Regions) and exploit the discontented Macedonians who distrusted all the Greeks.

While the Greek communists debated over forming the Macedonian units or not, the occupiers and their quislings began to promote the idea of an "Independent Macedonia". But that was not all; the occupiers were also promising the Romano-Vlachs of Pindos a Vlach state and the Albanian Shqipitare a Greater Albania. Then, after it was decided to form the People's Republic of Macedonia, by a decision of the Second Session of AVNOJ, where a case was made to recognize the right of the Macedonian people as a nation with the right to form its own state, Hitler's Germany responded with its own

offer. To completely confuse the situation, Hitler offered to create an “independent” Macedonian state with its capital in Solun, similar to Slovakia of course, as a German satellite.

In connection with the above, Walter Hagen, among other things, wrote:

“Hitler had little interest in Macedonia in 1941. It was not until 1943 when the secret service, with one of its own memorandums, succeeded in getting Hitler’s attention about the kind of advantages Germany could have if it established an independent Macedonian state with its capital in Solun. This independent Macedonian state would then be friendly toward Germany and would allow it access to the Aegean Sea. That could have easily been accomplished in 1943. But Hitler made no advances towards this plan until late 1944, when Germany came in contact with Vancho Mihailov. Hitler sent Mihailov to Macedonia by plane to familiarize the Macedonian people with Hitler’s plans and with Germany’s decision to create an independent Macedonian state. But Mihailov thought it was too late for that and said that he could not take such steps now because it would be very difficult to realize such a plan at that point in time.”

In his book “Macedonia, Switzerland of the Balkans” Vancho Mihailov wrote that the Germans has established links between the Bulgarian government and Drazha Mihailovich for the creation of an autonomous Macedonian state.

According to Kalchev and Dimchev’s propaganda, a number of Macedonians had created autonomist “Ohrana” formations in Voden Region around mid-June 1943. Similar organizations were created in Kostur and Lerin regions around March 1943, when the number of armed villages began to increase. These villages were armed by the Italians under the initiative of the head of Ravana, the Italian information service. Dimchev was especially sent from Sofia with the task of forming autonomist movements in Greek occupied Macedonia.

The Ohrana was a military formation based in Voden and operated together with the German units stationed there. In its quest to create “counter-bands” in Voden, Ohrana managed to recruit around 700

people, mostly from Gumendzhe Region. Many of the individuals recruited were criminals. Criminals were especially encouraged by the organizers to join the Ohrana. After they were formed, these groups terrorized the Macedonian population not only in the city but also in the villages where they circulated. The Fifth School in Voden was turned into a torture chamber where people, particularly Greek as well as Macedonian Communists, were tortured. The first “Ohrana” victims in Voden were retired Major Atanasoglu, Siganidis, Giorgios, Ipokratis, Aspalidis, the teacher Lazaros Vafiadis, Karavasilis, Vasilios, Nasko Pechinarov, Georgios Akritidis, Stavridis Kariofilis and others. All major resistance organizations in the city were smashed. Included among the brave Macedonians saboteurs in the city who resisted the Ohrana were Hristo Kardalov, Aleko Tsrvenkata, Tushi Keramitchiev, the brothers Giasharev, Hristo Pochepov and Leonida Proioiv. They successfully fought against the Ohrana and inflicted damaging blows to the reactionaries, liquidating some of the more active ones.

In order to prevent more Macedonians from the villages from joining the Ohrana, ELAS burned down the houses of those who had already joined. ELAS also attacked the village Iavoriani several times but without success. Unable to cope with the situation, the CPG decided to welcome the unavoidable, which it had tried to avoid for a long time, and establish separate Macedonian units within ELAS. And, if the CPG Regional Committee for Macedonia ordered the formation of Macedonian units in Voden, Lerin and Kostur Regions, it did out of necessity and more as a maneuver to attract more Macedonians into ELAS so that it could use them to liquidate the counter-band movement. In other words the CPG put Macedonians to fight against Macedonians, brother against brother, for the interest of foreigners. The CPG Regional Committee could not care less about forming a separate Macedonian People’s Liberation Army, for the sake of the Macedonian people; it did this in order to use the Macedonian people to do its dirty work. This was especially true after the Lebanon Conference had taken place and after it was decided to scale down Macedonian involvement in the resistance movement. More information on this was gathered from the harsh criticism made by Stringos, a member of the P. K., while conversing with Renos of ELAS Ninth Division, during which time

it was allegedly admitted that battalions in Kostur and Voden Regions were being formed. Let us have a look at what was said:

P. K. representative Stringos said: “Why did you create battalions in Kostur and Karadzova Regions when you were ordered to form only one unit per region?”

Renos replied: “And what would have been the harm even if we had created divisions?”

Stringos then said: “You are so naïve. If the Macedonians had divisions, then we would not find ourselves in Macedonia...” (Taken from a letter written by Renos to Dobrivoe Radosavlevich - Orce. The text can be found in the Yugoslav National Historical Military archives.)

On July 16, 1944, Pavle Rakovski – Ilia Dimovski - Gotse and Giorgi Atanasov – Blazhe formed a Macedonian battalion in Kaimakchalan. Later, the CPG Voden District Committee appointed Giorgi Urdov – Dzhodzho, CPG Voden District Committee Organizational Secretary, as Commissar of the battalion. This event was welcomed by the Macedonian people in Voden and was greeted by many young Macedonians who wanted to join the Macedonian battalion. The battalion at the time was camped right above the village Gorno Rodivo in Kaimakchalan and dozens of Macedonian young people arrived on a daily basis. They left their villages behind with a single desire - to become fighters in the Macedonian army. There is no time in recent recorded history when there was such a massive desire for young people to want to join the Macedonian army, as was shown by the youth from the Meglen, Baovo and Pozhartsko Region villages. Groups of hundreds showed up, many with their own sacred arms and ammunition, well-preserved in hideouts by their predecessors for such an occasion.

There was a massive turnout of Macedonians in Meglen and Voden Regions, even with the first call to arms in the Macedonian battalion, a proclamation written in the Macedonian language, spelling out the anti-fascist struggle objectives. The proclamation read as follows:

“Brothers,

Please be aware and understand that this great struggle is not a struggle between Greeks and Bulgarians and between Bulgarians and Serbians here in the Balkans, it is a People’s struggle against the fascists. The same struggle is carried out all over the world.

Together with the Red Army all nations are struggling to the death against the fascist tyrants. Our popular forces here in the Balkans have been fighting against German Nazism and Italian fascism since these occupiers invaded our lands. But now that the Italian Fascist hordes have died off, their place has been taken by their local collaborators. The German Nazis are arming the Greek fascists and now the fascist dogs, the likes of Kalchev, Dimchev and others, want to seduce our young people to fight for them. They lied to and collected several young people and gave them weapons to serve the German fascists.

To counter this, our Macedonian People’s army has allied itself with the Greek National Army and together they are now fighting here against the German Nazis and Greek fascists and against those of our children who have been seduced by fascism!

And now our seduced children share weapons with the Greek fascists...!

We know what the Greek fascists and their gendarmes are fighting for... But our seduced children, tricked by Kalchev, Dimchev and others, who are united with the Greeks under German fascism, are not fighting for the Macedonian cause. They are fighting for fascism against the People’ army and against the Macedonian people!

Dear Macedonian people!

Our path is not with the fascists. We will win our human rights and eternal freedom here and now, together with the Greek people and with other nations.

Fascism will die... The Italian people have risen up against it. The Romanian people are doing the same. The same is done by the Czechoslovakian, French, Finnish and Bulgarian people...

Sons and daughters of Macedonia!

Let us move forward, join the ranks of the popular Macedonian army and fight against fascism. Let us be united with the national army of the Greek people and together fight against the Greek and all other cursed fascist tyrants!"

A few days later, enough Macedonians had joined the Macedonian army to form the first Macedonian unit belonging to the Kaimakchalan battalion. Petar Tanurov was appointed commander and Parikli Iovchev commissar. Immediately after its creation the unit was dispatched to act against the occupiers. This particular unit participated in many bitter battles, fighting against the German army and against the Greek fascist gangs which were serving the Germans in Edindzhe Vardar, Plasnichevo and Solun Regions. It also fought in the battles for Kukush, demonstrating exemplary heroism and self-sacrifice.

There was an uproar about the formation of the Macedonian units in ELAS from the ranks of the "Ohrana". Dimchev himself, at the time commander of the Ohrana in Voden, requested to meet with the Macedonian battalion leaders in Kaimakchalan with aims at joining the partisan units. He said his intent was to move his unit with light and heavy weapons out of the city (Voden) and join the partisans. Such a meeting was organized in August 1944 and took place in the village Teovo, Voden Region. Here Dimchev met with Macedonian battalion commissar Dzhodzho. Dzhodzho's conditions were simple. He told Dimchev that he wanted all Macedonians to leave the "Ohrana" and join the people's army. If they did that and fought against the occupiers they would be able to "wash the shame from their faces and their transgressions would be forgiven - proving that they had been misled by enemy propaganda." It was clearly emphasized that "those persons who soiled their hands in the people's blood", would be judged based on what they had done. By accepting these conditions "Ohrana" would not only be disarmed but its weapons would arm the Macedonian battalion and equip it with heavy weapons and ammunition for which there was great need. This naturally would also weaken the power of the occupier and create favourable conditions for the liberation of Voden.

Dimchev, of course, had his own proposal. He wanted his entire unit to join the partisans but also to retain the right to be a separate combination with joint headquarters. This proposal, of course, was unacceptable to Dzhodzhos for obvious reasons. The ELAS Macedonian battalion barely had enough weapons to arm one unit and most of these arms were old and defective. In the event of any disagreement, the Macedonian battalion would be at a disadvantage while the Ohrana unit would have a lot of new and modern weapons. On top of that, if Ohrana were to join ELAS, as an intact and separate formation, there would be no end to the criticism coming from the Greek reactionaries regarding the National Liberation struggle. In addition, talks such as these were viewed with suspicion because, after all, the Ohrana were nothing more than a bunch of criminals who assisted the Gestapo and had taken strong measures against the people and against ELAS itself. However, by agitation from the Macedonian battalion, a large number of the Ohrana counter-bandits, who had not committed crimes against the people, tossed away their weapons and joined the partisans. Almost all of them fought and many died honourably, fighting against the occupier.

The next Macedonian battalion to be formed was the Kostur-Lerin Macedonian ELAS battalion, formed on July 20, 1944 during a meeting in the village Pozdivishta, Kostur Region. Amindas was appointed commander and Ilia Dimovski - Gotse of Lerin was appointed commissar. The core of this battalion was composed of Macedonian fighters who, by agreement between NOV Headquarters of Vardar Macedonia and ELAS, had returned from Karaorman to Kostur. And like the Voden example, many Macedonian young people joined the ranks of the Lerin - Kostur Macedonian battalion en masse. Even reactionary historian Polis Ioannidis admitted that: "Many Slavophones joined the military en masse. About 300 of them were sent to Langa, home of the 28th ELAS Brigade, to be armed. But Lazaridis, commander of the brigade, on his own initiative, armed only 50 of them and sent them to the units of the 28th Infantry Brigade. The rest he sent home..." ("Ilia Dimovski - Gotse's Mystery", excerpt 169 from the book "Elinikos Vordas" July 4, 1955.)

Immediately after its formation, the battalion was dispatched to disarm the village counter-bands.

What the Greeks could not do in many months, after many attempts, the Macedonians accomplished in only 15 days. They disarmed the counter-bands in the Chereshnitsa and other villages, seizing over 200 rifles, several heavy machine guns and ammunition.

The Macedonian battalion even attacked the city Lerin with much success. It burned down a German petrol depot, a warehouse full of ammunition and destroyed the entire tax administration. During bitter fighting in the city streets the partisans fought chest to chest with the enemy, killing 80 German soldiers. In August 1944, during an ambush, the Macedonian battalion burned down 10 German trucks, captured 15 German soldiers and liberated 110 Armenians from German hands. In August 1944 alone, the Macedonian battalion killed 220 Germans in total. The battalion was in constant contact with the occupiers fighting in the region around Bigla Mountain, where it destroyed most German communication lines. During a battle near the village Kamenik, on the road to Lerin, the battalion killed 60 more German soldiers.

Severing the Macedonian battalions

There were issues sprouting as early as the Macedonian battalions were formed in Kaimakchalan and Vicho. These issues were bad omens for the outcome of the struggle, which forced the Macedonian leaders to question the benevolence of the partnership and the ELAS leadership.

Young Macedonians were joining the battalions en masse. This, unfortunately, not only did not impress the CPG and ELAS leaderships but rather deeply upset them. And not too long after that the first response came to the fore.

The first to react was the medical team which examined the volunteers wanting to join the Kaimakchalan battalion. The medical committee that examined these volunteers was located at a distance of 8 hours away from where the battalion was camped in the village Manastir. The young people wanting to join the battalion had to pass

a medical exam. During their examination most were told they could not join the battalion because they were “not fit” and that they should go home. But despite the medical team’s “advice” they were anxious and ready to join the partisans anyway. They specifically wanted to connect with the Macedonian battalion in Kaimakchalan. Those were their wishes. But instead of sending them to the Macedonian battalion, ELAS leaders sent them to the units of the XVI Brigade in Negush Region, far away from the Macedonian battalion.

The same thing happened during the mobilization of the Macedonian partisans in the Lerin – Kostur battalion. When about 200 young Macedonians arrived in the village D’mbeni to take their medical exams they were categorically barred from joining the Macedonian battalion. Several days later the Kaimakchalan battalion was ordered to disarm two of its three units. The other two units were to remain without weapons until further notice. It was not because there were no weapons; at the time there was an entire warehouse full of weapons and ammunition in the village Pozdivishta that included many guns, mortars and machine guns. The Macedonian battalion leaders and fighters alike were completely in the dark as to why this was done and where it was leading. This was done at an especially critical moment when all forces and people were mobilizing to fight against the occupiers.

A few days later the 28th Brigade sent a letter to all the armed officers and fighters of the Macedonian battalion in Kostur, ordering them to surrender their pistols because those pistols were needed by the saboteurs in Solun. A little later Divisional Headquarters requested that the battalion hand over the 5 machine guns it possessed. Another order called for the battalion to send an “outfitted” unit to the village Negovan.

Suspicion surrounding the intentions of the CPG and ELAS leaderships soared after people became aware of the content of a secret letter addressed to Zaharias, Commissar of the ELAS 28th Brigade, which emphasized the following: “Ilia Dimovski - Gotse’s battalion must be moved south at all costs, even attacked and disarmed if necessary, because it represents a great danger...” Before the content of this secret letter became public, Ilia Dimovski

- Gotse had received another letter from the Division ordering him to move the battalion to the city Siatista. Why all this? There is no doubt that the Greek intent here was to liquidate the Macedonian units. Now that there was no longer any danger from the counter-bands and after the counter-bandits were disarmed and many had joined the Macedonian battalion, the CPG and ELAS “thought” that the Macedonian battalions were not only not required but posed a “danger” to Greece. Besides that, there was great pressure from the Greek government in exile to “get rid” of them so when Prime Minister Papandreou’s “national unity” government came to power in Greece it could declare that “There is no ‘Macedonian Question’ in Greece”. However, based on information obtained from declassified documents fifty years later, there was a conspiracy to “get rid” of all the Macedonians from Greek occupied Macedonia permanently, by any means possible, and close the “Macedonian Question” once and for all. See report that follows:

[Balkan States – Report 1 - December 11, 1944

Mr. Leeper to Mr. Eden
Athens 24th November, 1944

Sir,

I HAVE the honour to submit the following comments on the Research Department paper of 26th August, 1944 on the subject of Macedonia. (1)

2. The two formidable Macedonian problems about which Greece is concerned are: (a) that of Greek relations with the Slav world as represented by Serbia and Bulgaria, both of whom must be expected in the immediate future to be under strong Russian influence and to have Russian sympathy for their aspirations; and b) that of the surviving Bulgarophone minority in Western Macedonia.

3. The former problem turns chiefly on that of Serbian and Bulgarian access to the Aegean, the subject discussed in paragraphs 35-40 and 41-43 of the paper under reference. There is clearly no case (or handing over to Slav Powers any part of the North Aegean coast, which in 1940 had nowhere anything but an infinitesimal

minority of Slav inhabitants. On the other hand, the strategic position of Greece here, even with Turkish backing, is very weak, vis-à-vis the Slav world, so that even in her own interests it behooves Greece to come to terms with her northern neighbours. The only possible solution-however difficult in practice under present conditions-seems to be that referred to in paragraph 51, namely, a return to, and preferably an extension of, the system of free zones. A Serbian free zone at Salonica is not difficult but a Bulgarian zone at Kavala, or even at the outlying Alexandropolis, would probably be out of the question for a considerable period to come, in view of the passions aroused by the atrocious conduct of the Bulgarians in Northern Greece since 1941. It remains, nevertheless, a Greek no less than a Bulgarian interest that Bulgaria's desire for access to an Aegean port should be satisfied so far as possible; since otherwise Bulgaria's southward political aspirations, which are now largely artificial, will be kept alive by the real and continual irritation of an unsatisfied economic need. (How far this need might be met by the alternative of a free zone at Durazzo is a matter for separate study.) It may further be pointed out that the grant of free zones at her northern ports would, in fact, be of direct financial benefit to Greece herself through the revivifying influence of increased trade on the life of those ports in general and through the restoration of a natural degree of intercourse between these Greek ports and their Slav hinterland.

4. The problem of the Western Macedonian Bulgarophones, who are briefly mentioned in paragraph 7 of the paper, also remains serious and formidable, in spite of its limited dimensions. This minority, which extends through the region from Florina and Kastoria through Siatista to the plain of Yannitsa, has proved exceedingly unreliable during the war. Satisfactory data are not available, but it appears from events during the occupation that the dissatisfied minority must be considerably larger than is suggested by Greek census figures; and it is certain that successive Greek Governments have shirked facing the problem and have preferred to persuade even themselves that it did not exist. On the assumptions (1) that the policy of His Majesty's Government is to treat Greece as the most important Balkan country from the point of view of British interests, and to support those elements in Greece which are most stably pro-British and (2) that Greece does not wish to belong to a Balkan Federation

in which there would be a large Slav majority, it would appear to follow that Greece had better not contain any Slav minorities at all. And since the amputation of the Slav areas in Western Macedonia and their annexation to a Slav Federation is a practical impossibility and would also be economically disastrous for Greece, it would follow that, difficult as it may be, a home must be found for perhaps 120,000 Slav Macedonians north of the Greek frontiers of 1941.

5. I have sent copies of this dispatch to the Resident Minister at Caserta, to Mr. Houstoun-Boswall at Sofia and to Mr. Broad at Bari.

I have, &c. R. A. Leeper.

(1) See “Balkan States” print section, 26th August, Section 6.]

As one can clearly see, the British, Greece’s most valued patron, had as early as 1944 already suggested that 120,000 Macedonians, civilians and all, be displaced from their homes in Greek occupied Macedonia and sent north. So the plan to “get rid” of the Macedonians from Greek occupied Macedonia had been hatched years before the so-called “Greek Civil War” had begun and that the Greek Civil War was the instrument by which this plan was carried out.

The moment the Lerin-Kostur Macedonian battalion learned of the secret letter and the Greek leadership’s intent to destroy it, it took measures to secure its own safety. Its leaders decided to take a strategic position at the heights of Bigla Mountain, while still fighting the Germans in the region and anticipating an attack from ELAS. A few days later the Macedonian battalion was attacked by the ELAS 28th Brigade led by Ianoulis. The Macedonian battalion had no doubt that it could have easily crushed the 28th ELAS Brigade but the Macedonian leadership, still hoping to find common ground and common understanding because both the Macedonian and Greek people supported the same ideology and had similar aspirations, did not engage the 28th Brigade in battle. So when common ground could not be found, and before ELAS had a chance to concentrate more of its forces and on avoiding shedding brotherly blood, on December 13, 1944 the Macedonian battalion crossed over the border into the territory of Vardar (Serbian occupied)

Macedonia. There it continued to fight against the German forces that were retreating from Lerin and heading for Bitola - Prilep.

In danger of being dismantled, the Voden battalion also took measures to protect itself and, on October 16, 1944, retreated from Kozhuf Mountain and went to Kavadarci Region in the Serbian occupied part of Macedonia.

On November 17, 1944 the Lerin-Kostur and Voden battalions, after Bitola was liberated from the Germans, were combined to form the First Macedonian Shock Brigade from Greek occupied Macedonia, with Ilia Dimovski - Gotse as its commander and Mihail Keramitchiev as its Commissar. Several days later the brigade left for Shar Planina to combat against the Balisti (Albanian fascist groups created by the Nazis).

The Macedonian rational at the time, as to why the Macedonian battalions left Greek occupied Macedonia was primarily because the CPG and ELAS employed the “wrong tactics” towards the “Macedonian Question”. They were blinded by their chauvinistic opportunism to see the big picture of the value these battalions could have added to the liberation struggle. On the other hand, by leaving the Macedonian people expressed their dissatisfaction and disapproval, protesting against how they were being treated by the Greeks who not only denied their right to self-determination but even the right to equality and to fight together with the Greek people for freedom within Greece itself. But what the Macedonian people did not know at the time was that the Greeks “never” intended to “give” the Macedonian people any rights and were afraid of the Macedonians becoming strong enough and able to achieve their aspirations on their own. This was the real reason why the Greeks wanted the Macedonian battalions destroyed. And this is why the Greeks perceived the Macedonian battalions as “dangerous”.

Instead of revising its position, or at least making a conscientious effort to analyze what it had done wrong, the CPG Regional Committee for Macedonia issued a directive to the Voden, Lerin and Kostur CPG District Committees to label the fleeing Macedonian battalions as acts of treason. The Greek communist press also became involved by labeling the Macedonians who left “counter-

bandits”, “autonomists”, sold outs to the British Intelligence Service and all other slanderous words it could find in the Greek dictionary. The Greeks used unprecedented methods in a smear campaign to discredit the Macedonian soldiers who left in full view of the Macedonian people. This was done, it would seem, not only because the Greeks did not want those fighters back but they also made every effort to make the Macedonian people not want them back.

This is what, among other things, the CPG District Committee for Kostur Region said in a report on November 11, 1944:

“Many of the Slav-Macedonians in Ilia Dimovski - Gotse’s battalion, consciously or unconsciously, continue to create discord and division, which is condemned by our Party. They have separated the Slavo-Macedonian struggle from that of the Greeks people’s struggle and have become organs and supporters of foreign and domestic fascism. By doing that they are harming the Greeks and are ruining the Slavo-Macedonians. They are continuing the work of the old counter-bands in the District.”

“One more time we condemn these people as traitors to our common struggle.”

“We invite all Party members, all EAM members, all honest Slavo-Macedonian patriots and Greeks to rise up against them, against their lies and propaganda against their treacherous plans against the terrible adventurous clique that leads them...”

But the campaign against the Macedonian leadership was not only waged through the press, ELAS and EP (national militia) units were arresting, jailing and harassing the parents, wives and even relatives of the Macedonian leaders who were leading the Macedonian battalions. Many of these parents, wives and relatives were sent to the same concentration camps where the leftists held the collaborators of the occupiers.

In response to the CPG, EAM and ELAS’s smear campaign against the battalions and against the Macedonian people, who had left Greek occupied Macedonia in order to avoid unnecessary bloodshed, the Macedonian battalion leadership from both battalions

sent a protest in form of a letter. The protest was sent to the CPG Regional Committee for Macedonia which, in brief, exposed the CPG, EAM and ELAS's unprincipled policies towards the Macedonian people and towards their struggle.

Among other things, the protest letter said:

“... We did not leave our homes to become servants of fascism, as you have made us out to have done in the face of our people. We and the Macedonian fighters have left because we wanted to fight against fascism based on the principles set out by the great alliance; to have our national rights recognized and to allow us to freely find our own way to achieve our national freedom.”

“But every step of the way, you made that impossible for us. All we met with was denial, hatred and an undemocratic attitude towards all issues that concerned the Macedonian people. Here is a brief overview of events:

The first Macedonian partisan groups came out in 1941. The Party did not care about them at all. It did not care to organize them, lead them, or help them. They were left alone with their fate in their own hands. By doing so, the CPG practically allowed the Italian and German occupiers to destroy these brave anti-fascist Macedonian groups and to behead their leaders. This type of behaviour, for example, was exhibited in Kostur Region in 1941-42 by Atanas Ziogas – CPG District Committee Secretary for Kostur Region, as well Periclis, Lefteris and others.

The first fanatic Greek nationalists and known traitors and executioners of the people, the likes of Kolaras, Baskakis Captain Stefanos, Kirchidakis and others, came out in 1943. The Macedonian people, still unfamiliar with the Party organizations, were afraid of all Greeks on account of the most recent tragedy they experienced with these fanatic nationalists. The Bulgarian-fascist propaganda, working in cooperation with the occupiers, thought it had found fertile ground to create counter-bands. However, enemy propaganda did not achieve the desired results because the majority of the people wanted to find their place in the anti-fascist camp.

Instead of taking the path of reassurance, you took the road to violence, to destroy the Macedonian people in this part of Macedonia only because you thought they had been influenced by enemy propaganda. In March 1943, CPG Party leaders Periklis and Lefteris burned down the village Starichani and killed 35 people, of whom only 2 were guilty. In April 1943 you let Captain Kolaras slaughter 8 Macedonians from the village Gorentsi, of whom you knew most were ready to join ELAS.

In March 1943, influenced by his right-hand man Fascist and German spy Yannis Dailakis, Periklis condemned to death and shot five innocent villagers from the village Ludovo. During the same month the fascists robbed and burned down the houses of innocent Macedonian people in the village Breshtani who were not involved in any of the organizations. Papaflesas's unit was responsible for abducting, jailing all the men and women from the village Galiste and then beating many to death. Women and even young children were stripped naked, tortured and mistreated. They blockaded the Macedonian villages Zhuzhultsi, Moleni, Ezerets and Nestime and tortured the innocent villagers. None of the villagers belonged to any of the organizations. In May 1943, 5 Macedonians from the village Kalevishta were abducted and shot to death. Only 2 of them may have been guilty of crimes involving Bulgarian propaganda. In Voden and especially in Meglen Regions, Laras, Renos and Kiriakos were responsible for abducting, jailing and killing dozens of Macedonians from the villages Tresino, S'botsko, Prebadishta, Chegan and other villages, and for the lawlessness conducted in that region without having to answer to anyone.

At this point in time, the anti-Macedonian campaign was manifesting itself everywhere in Greek occupied Macedonia. ELAS officers and soldiers, prowling the Macedonian villages, were not only saying all kinds of bad things but were subjecting the Macedonian people to unheard of humiliation. To the Macedonian people this seemed like the Metaxas regime was right back. One ELAS unit invaded the village Dobrolishta and beat to death a number of elderly Macedonians whose sons were serving in the ranks of ELAS. They intimidated the Macedonian people with threats like: 'You are Bulgarians and what did you think, that Bulgaria would come here? This is Greece and we here are all

Greeks and you will remain under us.’ They destroyed houses and broke the windows of others. Many Macedonians were arrested and without being convicted of any crimes were thrown into the prison camps. And what was the CPG political line with regards to the ‘Macedonian Question’? The only thing the CPG recognized was: ‘The Macedonians are a minority and they will receive their equity in a people’s democratic Greece.’ It said nothing about self-determination. The Atlantic Charter exists for the Dodecanese and for Cyprus but not for the Macedonian people, especially at the very moment when there is talk about forming a Macedonian state out of Serbian occupied Macedonia.

Despite of all this, the Macedonian partisans were willing to sacrifice themselves in the common struggle against the occupiers. On top of that, the Macedonian partisans took it upon themselves to disarm the counter-bands. No one can dispute the fact that if it had not been for the Macedonian partisans the counter-bands could not have been disarmed. It was the Macedonian ELAS reserves from Kostur Region who disarmed 45 villages and took away over 3,000 guns. But the moment the job of disarming the counter-bands was done, the CPG and ELAS saw to it to disarm and disband the Macedonian partisan units.

SNOF was created, but from first day of its creation it experienced hostilities and a smear campaign against it. This smear campaign was spread by the very same Party leadership which helped its creation, fearing that it would attract the entire Macedonian nation into its ranks. Triandafilis, a CPG leader, openly criticized SNOF by claiming that: “The stupid people are joining SNOF and they will see what will happen to them later...” And sure enough, a little after SNOF was disbanded its leaders were all arrested.

Finally, after long negotiations, SNOF, the Slavo-Macedonian People’s Liberation Army, was formed. Slogans such as the following were ostentatiously thrown around in public conferences: ‘Forward to forming a SNOF Macedonian army’ and ‘All Macedonians to SNOF’, ‘Forward with the SNOF brigades and divisions’ and ‘May the Trpovski unit become a brigade...’

But all this proved to be a tactical ploy. SNOF was disbanded and naturally the Party created the impression that SNOF was created by the Party. This was a blatant lie just to throw dust in the Macedonian people's eyes.

This is why our way is not the way to betrayal, but to an honest revolutionary road which was chosen even by the Greek people themselves..." (The original document can be found in Ilia Dimovski - Gotse's archives, Ilia Dimovski - Gotse was commander of the Macedonian Shock Brigade from Greek occupied Macedonia.)

The Lerin-Kostur battalion took a step further by acquainting the people with its situation and by refuting the defamatory campaign against its leadership, waged by the anti-fascist movement in Greece.

In its refutation of December 15, 1944, among other things, the battalion leadership said:

"We can't remain silent on this matter for much longer. We need to answer to these allegations and to the people who have the right to hear our side of the story. We and our oppressed people have been fighting against the occupiers, the Nazi's and fascists, and nothing more. All statements made by the CPG and ELAS are false. It was the CPG and ELAS that issued orders to liquidate us and dispatched the 28th Brigade to destroy us. Every partisan was well-aware that we were fighting against the occupiers for our freedom and nothing more. Everyone was well-aware that our struggle was a shared struggle, shared with the partisans of ELAS and that we would never step out from the EAM and ELAS line. Even today we are again ready to die along with the honest Greek people."

"Therefore we categorically declare to the entire world that:

1) We are not 'traitors' like the 28th Division has claimed us to be in its December 1, 1944 allegations. The 1500 or so Macedonian partisans who represent the Macedonian population in Kostur and Lerin Regions are not traitors just like the rest of the Macedonian partisans, sons of the Macedonian people in all of Macedonia, are not traitors. Again, we must strongly emphasize that we are not what

the 28th Division has portrayed us to be. If we are traitors then the entire Macedonian nation are traitors.

2) The big lie and fabrication is that we have stepped out of line. That we have taken measures against ELAS and against our own people. But by now you must all know that we were persued by the Greeks of ELAS with aims at disarming us. You must know by now that Greek ELAS troops were dispatched from Kostur and Prespa Regions to cut us off and destroy us. So, outside of fighting for our lives and causing much fratricidal blood to be senselessly spilled, we took other counter-measures and crossed over the border into Yugoslavia. The Greeks ordered us to go south deep into Greece proper. They did this for one purpose only, to break our Macedonian partisan movement. EAM and ELAS, so far, have never spoken or informed us of the Atlantic Charter, of the negotiations in Tehran and Moscow which have entitled us to our rights. The Atlantic Charter has given us the right; it has given all enslaved peoples the right to five basic principles which entitle us to fight for our national freedom and to form their own state. Today we have taken arms in our hands to gain our rights and to get rid of the current life of slavery... We are prepared to die, to the last Macedonian, and we will not allow anyone to divide us like they have done up to now.

How can we trust ELAS when the Minister of the current Papandreou cabinet has declared to the entire world that the ‘Macedonian Question’ does not exist for Greece but in the meantime it exists for the Dodecanese and Cyprus? We can no longer believe the Greek lies and Greek deceit. We want our rights and we want to live free, the same as the Greek people. We don’t want new dictators or foreign masters. That is why we will fight, all of us together, in the same way as all the great allies fight together to crush Hitler and his followers in order to bring freedom to all the oppressed people.” (The document was taken from Ilia Dimovski - Gotse’s personal archives.)

On top of that there were a number of Macedonian leaders in the Lerin Region movement who sent open letters to the Macedonian people with the real reasons why the Macedonian battalions left. They wrote these letters in order to counter the defamatory propaganda waged by EAM, ELAS and the CPG against the

Macedonian fighters and against the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia.

One of these open letters was written by Giorgi Turundzhov, on December 10, 1944, in which, among other things, he said:

“...A decision was made by the 9th Division in Lerin Region to form a brigade in the ranks of ELAS, to be led by a Macedonian leader. But ELAS took every measure to counter the request. Every Macedonian Comrade is well-aware of this. Every Macedonian Comrade is also well-aware of the fact that all our Macedonian units were disbanded and later a decision was made to disband Ilia Dimovski - Gotse's battalion. This pushed us to convene a Conference in Kostur on December 7, 1944 with delegates from across Western Macedonia and delegates from the ELAS 9th Division.

During the Conference it was decided to not only create Macedonian battalions but Macedonian divisions, so that the last of the occupiers and their sold out supporters could be kicked out.

But after we returned to our designated areas and informed our ELAS superiors, a number of unscrupulous people organized an illegal group to arrest us. To avoid being arrested and who knows what else they had in mind for us, we decided to cross over the border into our free Macedonia and fight against the occupiers there...”

Unfortunately a large number of chauvinists and affirmed enemies working against the “Macedonian Question” existed in the CPG Regional Committee, in EAM and in ELAS. Among them there were some true Marxists who saw the situation differently but they were too few to be able to turn the tide.

Statements made above are confirmed by a report sent from Renos, Commissar of ELAS 9th Division, to the Headquarters of the group of Divisions for Greek occupied Macedonia.

In regards to the “Macedonian Question” the report that Renos sent to the Bureau II group of divisions, on November 13, 1944, among other things, said:

“I read the interview of Comrade General Bakirdzhis, published in the ‘Laiki Foni’ newspaper about the partisan movement in Macedonia, and found expressions in it that are unacceptable to the National Liberation Dictionary, including the term ‘Bulgaro-phone Greeks’.

As a partisan of ELAS and consequently as a popular fighter, I am obliged to protest and on this occasion see to it that it is necessary to expose the atmosphere that reigns in the Ilia Dimovski - Gotse battalion (II / 28) because it clouds, it seems, the truth and it is not for the good of the Allied Balkan struggle. It should also be noted that there is mention of the Bulgarian counter-bands without noting relevant activities of the Greek counter-bands (Greek reactionaries) amidst this unhappy people. There is also no mention of the heroic Slavo-Macedonian partisans and their deeds in the dismantling of the counter-bands.

It is an unprecedented injustice to treat these people as ‘Bulgaro-phone Greeks’, victims of the Bulgarian counter-bands, without informing the public about their struggle which they undertook to liquidate the counter-bands and their general struggle against the Axis...

I am also obliged to point out that if I were a Slavo-Macedonian partisan I too would look for an explanation as to why I was never given the only thing that would make me remain in ELAS. I would want it to be known that, even though ELAS will not recognize me, I would still take the opportunity to fight against fascism and its patrons, not as an equal but as a worker of an ungrateful employer...

Churchill said that Tito had solved the national question in an exemplary manner. That is why all the Macedonians in Yugoslavia who swear by Ilinden, are today supporters of this struggle and are ready to achieve an Ilinden Macedonian state in the Yugoslav federation. This is a reality. If we close our eyes in view of this we will then be blind, hazardous to life and a detriment to peace and

brotherhood in the Balkans and in all the nations...” (This document can be found in Hristo Andonovski’s personal archives.)

Renos, who at the time was an exception to the other CPG leaders, did not see the question of the battalion as an isolated incident, but as a protest of the Macedonian people who, from 1912 onwards, have participated and gave their lives in all the wars that Greece was involved in and, instead of recognition, the Greeks gave them the title “Bulgarians”, Greece’s worst enemies.

Renos, as can be seen from his report, did not agree with the CPG’s attacks against the battalion, especially those expressed by ELAS on December 10, 1944, accusing the fighters of the battalion of being separatists and counter-bandits. About that Renos said: “We are saying all these things in front these people and expect them to believe that the people of the battalion were separatists and counter-bandits when in fact they shed blood fighting against the counter-bands and for unity for our people. How can ELAS expect to gain any authority by doing this?”

Unfortunately, Renos’s single voice was unable to convince the many chauvinistic anti-Macedonian voices expressed by the CPG Regional Committee and ELAS. Renos was not only unable to change the CPG’s position, but also fell out of the CPG’s favour and, a little later, was removed from responsibility and from all functions. This could only be done by intoxicated nationalists, or for other reasons, by people who were self-absorbed and overly overenthusiastic who thought that, with the Germans retreating from Greece, power was in their hands. Or was this part of the plan to “get rid” of the Macedonians from Greek occupied Macedonia once and for all?

But despite their feelings being ignored and their rights being circumvented by the CPG, the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia and the Macedonian resistance movement leadership not only honourably bore all their difficulties from the occupiers and from the Greeks alike, but also fought on the side of the anti-fascist forces in Greece.

If one needed to give balance to the Macedonian participation in World War II in Greece, it is sufficient to say that 90,000 Macedonians participated in the ranks of the liberation movement in Kostur, Lerin, Voden and Solun Regions alone. About 6,000 Macedonians joined the ELAS regular units and another 7,000 joined the ELAS reserves. That's not counting the 1,700 Macedonian fighters who had joined the all-Macedonian units, including the first shock brigade. More than 3,000 Macedonians were killed in this war and 4,094 Macedonian houses were burned down. This does not include the 4,150 Macedonian men and women who were sent to the concentration camps and the 38 villages and towns that were destroyed.

The greatest victims and casualties of this war (WW II) were the Macedonian villages Katranitsa with 380 casualties, Rantsi, Nestram, Vlahoklisura with over 200 casualties, Gramatikovo, Enidzhe-Vardar with over 100 casualties, as well as the villages Note, Lugunsi and Liumnica in Meglen Region. The most beautiful and brightest pages of the common Macedonian-Greek struggle were written with the blood of dozens of hundreds and even thousands of the best Macedonian sons who were sent to the Greek concentration camps, the likes of "Pavlos Melas" in Solun, Karditsa and Volos, as well as the dry and desolate Greek islands, the likes of Aistratis and other places.

I
IN THE STORM OF THE
GREEK CIVIL WAR (1945-
1949)
I

CHAPTER SEVEN - Terror

The Varkiza Agreement signed on February 12, 1945, between representatives of the CPG and EAM on one side and General Plastiras's government on the other, which came to power after Papandreou's government fell due to the December 3, 1944 events in Athens, was seen as unjustifiable by most resistance movement leaders and was contrary to the expectations for normal political development in the country. It turned out that the CPG-EAM agitation, conducted during the inter-Party meetings and conferences, alluding to the Varkiza Agreement being a victory of the democratic front, turned out to be lies and illusions. We were even lied to during the anniversary of the signing of the Varkiza Agreement, when CPG General Secretary Nikos Zahariadis, again asserted that the signing of this Varkiza Agreement was the most reasonable solution... During the 2nd CPG Central Committee Plenum, on February 2, 1946, in his introductory speech, Zahariadis specifically said: "...Today, just a year ago, the Varkiza Agreement was signed giving Greece a fair chance in taking the path of a peaceful and democratic evolution, which will allow us to freely express our will during the elections, so that our country could take the path to peace and reconstruction. That was our goal and our tendency. This was the right thing to do. Without a doubt today we can say that Varkiza was correct. It was the correct path to take because it absolutely served our democratic and national interests. The signing of the Varkiza agreement was the only correct step that could have been taken under those circumstances..." (Taken from the report given by Nikos Zahariadis the during the CPG Central Committee 2nd Plenum on February 12, 1946.)

The first people to become free from the Varkiza illusions were Aris Velouhiotis, Commissar of ELAS General Headquarters (Greek People's Liberation Army), Officers Orestis and Zaharias, Ianis Petsopoulos, member of the CPG Central Committee, and the Macedonian leaders of the Macedonian partisan battalions in Greek occupied Macedonia. Those who were not deluded followed the Varkiza Agreement developments in the political situation in Greece as a logical consequence of the compromises made by the CPM-EAM leaderships and their capitulatory policies - to please the nationalist government in exile and the English: a result of the July

1944 Lebanon Agreement and the September 1944 Casserta Agreement, later classified as treasonous and capitulatory by the CPG leadership itself, clearing the way for the restoration of the old right-wing, nationalist regime in Greece and for England to provide a legal basis for an armed intervention in Greek internal affairs. (Nikos Zahairiadis, “CPG, Ten years of struggle”, part 1, published in the journal “Neos Cosmos”, August 1950.)

Ianis Petsopoulos called the Varkiza Agreement “Unconditional capitulation”. This Agreement, which called for the demobilization of all forces and surrender of all weapons, basically opened the doors for the top leadership to move around freely through Greece and permitted it to carry weapons. The resistance movement fighters, in the meantime, were left unprotected in the hands of the nationalists. Regarding the Agreement, Ianis Petsopoulos wrote: “What does the Varkiza Agreement do for us? Did we sign this Agreement so that Churchill can assure Roosevelt and Stalin that the right government will be installed in Greece and so that he can meddle in Greece’s internal affairs? With this Agreement, Churchill has shown that even the Greek left has given him consent and, together with the decisions made in Yalta, he can install the English in Greece. This is what this Agreement has done! Allow me to also say this with gloves off: This Agreement will provide amnesty for political crimes, and the mere participation in the resistance movement qualified as a political crime. So, in simple terms, in order to ensure its right to immunity and amnesty, our CPG-EAM leadership has agreed to sign an Agreement that deprives Greece of its rights and instead allows the English to implement the Yalta Agreement (guaranteeing that no socialist system would be implemented in Greece). This only serves the British in Greece and with it legalizes the installation of fascism which will deliver our fighters into the hands of the executioner as ordinary criminals.” (Ianis Petsopoulos “The real reasons for my expulsion from the CPG” pp. 442-451.)

Aris Velouhiotis also did not agree with the CPG-EAM signing the Varkiza Agreement and decided to separate himself from them. He took a unit with about one hundred fighters and fled into the mountains. The CPG Central Committee wasted no time to label him a “coward” and “deserter”. On June 25, 1945 Aris was found

dead on Mount Pind. He was murdered. To this day, however, no Party functionary has explained the circumstances under which Velouhiotis, a glorified ELAS Commissar, died. Some bourgeois Greek historians have led us to believe that Aris was killed by men from the Party because only they and their informants knew of his whereabouts and his movements. Petsopoulos, Orestis and Zaharias were all expelled from the ranks of the Party.

In their absence the CPG launched an even more vitriolic and relentless smear campaign against the Macedonian battalion leadership, defying even Goebbel's propaganda. The Macedonian leaders who instigated the secession of the Macedonian battalions were called "separatists", "autonomists", "counter-bandits", "sold outs to the British Intelligence Service"... Then on December 10, 1944 a leaflet appeared in the streets of Voden, on which, among other things, the following was written: "...These questionable and anarchist elements and autonomists who, by their adventurous activities, have inflicted damage to the Slavo-Macedonians... They are provocateurs pretending to be your protectors, who by their actions have caused the fascists to implement new and harsher violence against the Slavo-Macedonian people..." This message not only brought harm to the Macedonian people but it encouraged the fascist elements to attack everyone in the left camp. Everyone who saw fit to defend his or her rights as a democratic citizen was labeled a traitor. Instead of protecting its members, even the Party took measures against them. The Party leadership openly urged its members to consider going to the internment camps instead of fleeing to the mountains. Zahariadis used Velouhiotis's example of fleeing to the mountains as "cowardly" and "an attempt to use yesterday's ticket today". This is what Zahariadis said: "Many of our cadres and members are unclear in what it is that we are doing and where we want to go with the Varkiza Agreement. This confusion is a result of certain narrow-minded Party members who have changed their minds. Some, like Velouhiotis, could be dangerous, that is why the Party resolutely opposes them. These phenomena are not caused by our class enemies; they are a result of ideological weaknesses. These party members want to keep their guns and continue the partisan war. They want to use yesterday's ticket today. The Party has attacked these individuals and has broken their spirits because they are misleading the struggle, bringing to it

dire consequences...” (Taken from a report that Nikos Zahariadis submitted to the CPG Central Committee Plenum on July 1, 1945.)

So it was no wonder that the EAM District Board for Lerin Region found those Macedonians and democratic citizens, who were forced to liquidate two criminals and murderers who were terrorizing the Macedonian population in Lerin Region, guilty of “murder”. The EAM Coalition leadership for Lerin Region went as far as to equate the Macedonians who had fled with the reactionary nationalist gangs. This is what the EAM said in a leaflet regarding the two criminals mentioned above: “Be they Monarcho-fascists or followers of Ilia Dimovski - Gotse, they are enemies of the people, enemies of the democratic evolution and development, and therefore should be judged by the people...” (Taken from the EAM District Committee for Lerin Region leaflet. The original can be found in Hristo Andonovski’s personal archives.)

What was the CPG’s policy after Varkiza and on what prerequisites was it based on at that time? After the Varkiza Agreement was signed, the CPG leadership took it upon itself to believe that it had the political clout and strong chances of developing a mass movement in the cities. It believed its leadership had the ability to attract the people to its side and win an election. It counted on such success because it believed that its influence on the masses was great. This is because it had had some successful events, such as the labour unions elections, in which it delivered for ERGAS, an overwhelming majority ranging from 88-100%. Winning elections in agricultural cooperatives was a major victory for the democratic forces. The post Varkiza impact the CPG and EAM had on the craft industry, on associations, on intellectual organizations, on EPON, etc., was great. The Greek bourgeoisie was well-aware that it could not win a majority in an election through the political struggle. While the CPG struggled to further influence the masses, the bourgeois reactionaries, assisted by the British government, began work on systematically organizing the state apparatus including the military (regular army, security units, armed gangs, etc.). Then, when the Greek government estimated that its “reactionary” forces were strong enough to take control of the country, it unleashed its forces to behead the labour movement by throwing people in jail and in internment camps, particularly the CPG, EAM and ELAS cadres

who influenced the people. The terror unleashed on the peaceful and democratic population inside Greece was unprecedented. The various organizations, trade unions, associations, etc., were forcibly usurped by the government. By doing so they took the control out of the hands of the CPG, rendering the CPG's mass political struggle a failure.

Events have shown that all this was pre-planned by the reactionaries. After the government disarmed the resistance forces, it began to exploit the situation by arming its own right-wing gangs and former collaborators through the gendarmes determined to rebuild the National Guard all across Greece. Then it began a terror campaign against all resistance forces without precedent. This continued all throughout 1945 and early 1946, especially in Greek occupied Macedonia where violence and killings were the law of the land. Every democratic citizen who was caught was sent to prison. All the internment camps were packed with fighters from the resistance movement.

According to official court statistics, in 1945 there were 17,985 people in prison "due to violations of the criminal law" of whom only 2,388 were convicted. There were 18,401 people indicted and 48,936 prosecuted as members of EAM-ELAS. So, according to official data, the number of people imprisoned and exiled at the time was over 80,000. Terror was used by the right as a means of liquidating its political opponents. Every day the number of terror acts committed increased. Terror began to take on frightening proportions, causing disturbances, worries and even reaction from the more understanding people in the democratic centre. They criticized the government and the State apparatus for inspiring such savage actions. In one such criticism, directed at the Greek political leaders: Sofulis, Kafandaris, Plastiras, Tsouderos and Milonas, on June 5, 1945, described the situation in Greece as follows: "It started after the December events and the terror from the far right has escalated every day making life unbearable for the non-royalist citizens... Unfortunately, the state is not without responsibility for this deplorable situation... terror organizations of the extreme right, most of which were armed by the Germans with whom they collaborated in many ways, were never disarmed and their members were never persecuted. These same people, on a daily basis, are now

allowed to cooperate with the authorities in stifling the democratic spirit in this country. Thus, the state apparatus has put organized right-wing terror in its services and every day it multiplies its crimes against our free citizens with arrests, detentions, violence against women, murder and other crimes, stigmatizing our civilization...” (KOMEF (Communist Review), organ of the CPG Central Committee, July 1945, p. 47.)

There was a similar appeal with a similar content made by the District Governor for Kozhani Regions to the Ministry of the Interior, which reads as follows: “From the point of view of public order, our District has found itself in a wild situation. There is no security at all. Disgusting murders and releases of known criminals from the prisons are taking place on a regular basis. These criminals have committed a number of murders and are known German collaborators under whose leadership they carried out blood-thirsty activities...” (ibid)

To camouflage the crimes it committed against the democratic people all throughout Greece, the nationalist government and its apparatus blamed the Communists and other peaceful citizens for the violence. The nationalists committed many murders while looking for hidden weapons which were allegedly being used by individuals who wanted “to surrender Macedonia to the Slavs”. Besides that, the unleashed pro-nationalist gangs belonging to the Gendarmes and to the National Guard took such drastic measures that even the most skilled propaganda machine was unable to camouflage their activities and deceive the world public.

I. Terror, murder and mass pogroms committed in Greek occupied Macedonia

After the Varkiza Agreement was signed the known German collaborators and dangerous thugs, the likes of Mihalagas (Michalis Papadopoulos) and Kolaras in Kozheni- Grebeni Regions, resumed their terror activities in Greek occupied Macedonia. Kolaras, who extended his treacherous activities as far as Lerin and Kailari Regions during the German occupation, after Varkiza was often seen traveling in the same car with Captain Evans, representative of the British mission in the Vicho area during the occupation. Kolaras

became widely known for his brutal methods of liquidating his victims.

During the occupation Lieutenant Kostas Papadopoulos, of the Kukush Region reserves, led a unit of traitors dressed in military uniforms and killed over 500 people, patriots of Greece. The same Papadopoulos continued the same kind of activities after Varkiza.

The systematic terror, the raping, the persecutions and the murders turned tragic especially for the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia who, without exception, were targeted by the murderous thugs. From the start, all attacks against the Macedonian villages were conducted by the Greek National Guard, the Greek Gendarmes and the Greek pro-nationalist gangs under British instruction and in full cooperation with the British occupational forces.

The National Guard was the first Greek government army formed after the conclusion of the Varkiza Agreement (February 12, 1945) and consisted solely of loyal and proven nationalist soldiers. This is the kind of unit that made up the entire National Guard in Greek occupied Macedonia in 1945. Included in the Greek military under Solun Military Command were Battalions 115, 150, 163, 165, 183 and 605. Included in the Greek military under Ber Military Command were Battalions 111, 103 and 305. Under Seres Military Command were Battalions 145 and 158. And under Drama Military Command were Battalions 101, 147, 159 and 167.

From February to September 1945, after it turned into a regular army, the Greek National Guard, accompanied by British troops, conducted a series of raids in the villages and several operations in the mountains, killing and harassing peaceful citizens and accusing them of supporting the CPG, EAM and ELAS.

Both the Greek National Guard and the first Greek Gendarme formations were trained by the British mission under the leadership of General Charles Whicome, a well-known enemy of the communist ideology from the time when he was head of the British military interventionist forces in the Soviet Union. By the summer of 1945 the Greek Gendarme numbered 27,000 soldiers, with 14,000

stationed in Greek occupied Macedonia. The most extreme soldiers from these Gendarmes were later deployed in the so-called “hunting squads” who, together with the “mountain squads” (LOK), committed numerous surprise attacks against DAG (Democratic Army of Greece) positions and forces. These notorious squads were especially dedicated to the nationalist regime. They were hardened fanatics and were the only units in the Greek Gendarmerie to suffer great losses during the Greek Civil War, totaling 2,450 killed and 2,600 wounded. During 1946 when the democratic population in Greece, and especially in Greek occupied Macedonia, was again forced to pick up weapons and join DAG, it obtained most of its arms and ammunition from the Gendarmerie stations and from the gendarmes themselves. The people who composed the gendarmes were the cruelest people in Greece and persecuted the supporters of the National Liberation Struggle during the occupation.

2. Terror in Voden Region

The very first day the National Guard arrived in the city Voden it killed 4 people. The population had gathered together in a peaceful demonstration against the unilateral actions and terror committed against them. The authorities immediately intervened by unleashing the armed National Guard to break up the demonstration. Four innocent citizens were killed. The first act of the restored regime was to persecute the Macedonian people and act against the Macedonian language. This is what Petsi, NOF Committee Secretary for Voden, in a report, had to say about the terror acts committed against the Macedonian population:

“People from the security services arrested Kosta Chorlinov because they heard him speak Macedonian. The same day Petre Tsarakinliev was caught and charged for speaking the Slavo-Macedonian language in public. They held Petre in prison for 24 hours and then beat him to death.”

“One day members of the Greek National Guard tried to arrest Traio Sapundzhiev and Anastas Akrepov from Voden, when these two were in their gardens in “L’got”. Anastas Akrepov managed to escape in a hail of bullets. To this day no one knows where he is. Traio Sapundzhiev was taken to prison where he was subjected to

unheard of torture. He was released six days later, crippled from the beatings...” (The original of this document can be found in Hristo Andonovski’s archives.)

There are many other incidents, such as those mentioned earlier. The same report that highlighted the above actions has also highlighted other harassments endured by the Macedonian population in Voden Region. For example, on June 25 a Master Sergeant with a pistol in his hand chased a number of young children in the “Kiupria” neighbourhood in Voden because these children, while playing, were speaking the Macedonian language. The obvious spies, the likes of fascists Ianis Perchemlis and Gerimdzhes Fotiadis, circulated through the streets around the clock chanting slogans like: “Sofia – Moscow”. They were saying this to frighten the people that they had already made their lists and many would soon be arrested.

3. Terror in Meglen Region

Four women from the village Lukovits were arrested on July 10, 1945 for no reason at all and taken to the city S’bocko where they were subjected to extreme torture. A few days later, 14 children under the age of 15, from the same village, were arrested and beaten to death. On August 15th the fascist Sokratis Toupanidis, from the village Dragomantsi, entered Likovits, arrested 10 people and took them to Dragomantsi. There the villagers were subjected to bestial torture to extort gold from them. Among those beaten and tortured the most was Nikola Markov, who endured hot eggs being placed under his armpits and salt in his wounds.

On August 19, 1945 the Greek gendarmes arrested 25 people from the village Sarakinovo, reasons unknown. A captain from the stationed troops in the village Tresino, along with several of his soldiers, brutalized a Macedonian woman in front of her father-in-law. Iovan Dokov, in the village Pozhartsko, was cruelly beaten almost to death and, while still alive, was thrown into a dug hole and covered with soil. The gendarmes burned 13 houses in the village Strupino, including Tasho Boichev’s house where Tasho’s wife was also murdered and thrown into the fire. The same day Gerasimos Papadopoulos’s gang shot two children.

4. Terror in Lerin Region

The infamous collaborator and executioner Andon Chaush and his gang from Drama appeared in Lerin Region during the summer in 1945 and resumed his violent ways. His criminal nature inspired him to invent new ways to harass the Macedonian people. Upon his return he ordered his henchmen to seal the outside doors of every house with wax so that the residents could not leave or enter their homes from 6 pm to six am, rendering them under house arrest.

One night the Greek National Guard arrested and raped all the democratic women in the village Popozhani whose relatives had been jailed by the fascist authorities. In the village Setina they raped a woman and her sister-in-law. A girl from the same village was taken and held in the barracks all night where she was repeatedly raped. Her half-dead body was then handed over to her parents the next day.

A girl from the village Petoratsi was raped because she was a member of EPON. A group of Greek soldiers belonging to the 165 Battalion raped four women in the village Gornichovo on June 6, 1945 simply because their husbands were serving in the Yugoslav army. Raids were also conducted in the villages Gorno Kleshtina, Elovo, Sorovich and Rudnik. The villages were looted of their gold and other valuables.

A report compiled on June 10, 1945 by the NOF leadership for Lerin Region, among other things, stated that members of the Greek National Guard illegally seized 250 sheep from the village Eksi-Su, 2 flocks of sheep, 6 oxen and 6 pigs from the village Zelenich and 3 flocks of sheep from the village Mokreni.

Pressure and terror on the Macedonian population intensified during the March 1946 parliamentary elections in Greece. Members of the National Guard arrested 10 people in the village Nered on March 5, 1946. All were charged for being members of EAM and ELAS. The same was done in the villages Neokazi, Popozhani, Boreshnitsa and Sekulevo. On March 13, 1946 10 people from the village Petoratsi were arrested and given 10 to 15 year prison sentences by the Lerin court. Included among them were Bitko Mialev, Lazo Damianov,

Nasto Zhunzov and Vasil Popov. The same court sentenced 18 people from the village Setina and gave them 8 to 12 year sentences. The teacher Miltiadis Douloukas was a witness who testified against them. Fingering by Irini Mechkari, arrest warrants were issued by the gendarmes in the village Voshtareni (Ofchareni) at 9 pm, on March 6, 1946, to arrest Dimo Kratev and Vane Alamchev from the village Krushoradi. Then, led by the spy Ianis Apostolidis, on March 15 the same gendarmes from Voshtareni again entered the village Krushoradi and arrested Petre Donevski, Pando Vesev, Spase Dzhadzhov and Giorgi Mainov who, the next day, under escort, were taken to the prison in Lerin.

The regime also tried to sow discord among the villagers by attempting to recruit spies with handsome bribes. Included among those who “sold out” to the regime from the village Krushoradi were Giorgi Bukovski, Metodi Mechkarov and Spase Rumelov, who also became agitators for the nationalist regime. They constantly terrorized their neighbours telling them that: “The end for all communists is near.” They also kept all UNRA donations, meant for the needy, for themselves and sold them on the black market.

Even the most decent fighters and revolutionaries who fought to liberate Greece from the occupiers were not immune to the terror. They were especially targeted because they were Macedonians. Among them, convicted in the Lerin court, were Alekso Gashtarov, Sveto Charkev, Giorgi Chakalov, Iordan Vitkov and Katerina Ts. Shabalova from the village Setina. Iordan Vitkov was sentenced to life imprisonment, Katerina Shabalova to 3 years and the others were given 8 to 12 year prison terms. They told the court: “We are Macedonians and we will not find it difficult to lie in prison. This is tax on our freedom. Macedonians are used to lying in dungeons. But we know that the sun will rise for us again...”

5. Terror in Kostur Region

The terror campaign conducted in Kostur Region was similar to the mass terror and persecutions instigated in other parts of Macedonia. With regards to the terror activities conducted in Kostur Region, the EAM District Board newsletter “News of the Day”, on July 6, 1945, among other things, mentioned a number of cases of terror, arrests

and killings committed by the Greek nationalist gangs and by the Greek National Guard against the Macedonian people.

On May 17, 1945, a nationalist gang from the village Tsakoni surrounded the village Nered and beat all the villagers. They also beat and tortured Zhivko Poptraianov until he was almost dead, they then transported him to Kostur. On May 19, 1945 a gang of 200 armed men from the villages Shiaki, Chetirok and Gorno Papretsko tried to attack the same village intending to loot it. This time the villages were not afraid. Armed with stones and farm tools they met the attackers head on and stopped them from entering their village. Only Lazar Antonopoulos from the village Nered was wounded during the brief skirmish. On May 23, 1945 the same village was again raided by members of the National Guard who beat many villagers, accusing them of being communists. Fifteen villagers were badly beaten. Most of the houses were looted and three herds of sheep were illegally confiscated.

On May 31, 1945, led by Andreas Papadopoulos, a group of 15 thugs from the village Zagorichani, dressed in military uniforms and armed with guns, blockaded the Macedonian part of the village, gathered all the villagers and began to beat them to death. They tied several villagers to one end of a rope and tied the other end to a pillar and made them run around the pillar while they beat them with whips.

Mitse Popiovanov, the village mailman, was beaten so badly that he was in danger of losing his life. In May 1945 a group of nationalists, belonging to the Asia Minor colonists and settlers settled in Greek occupied Macedonia in the 1920's, attacked the village Brest and stole a herd of 1,200 sheep. They also stole all the sheep from the village Dolno Papretsko and another 300 sheep from the village Setoma. When the villagers whose sheep had been stolen went to complain to the District Governor in Kostur, he had them brutally thrown out of his office and he told them to "go to hell".

On June 1, 1945 Andreas Papadopoulos's infamous "derikozha" armed gang surrounded the village Breshtani, gathered all the people in the village square and beat them to unconsciousness. Three women fell unconscious. Four bandits undressed Lazar Panduli's

wife and raped her. They then locked her in a room. After that they loaded her naked on a donkey and paraded her through the village to publicly shame her. But the man who they sent to lead the donkey showed her mercy and allowed her to escape and hide. On June 2, 1945 the same gang entered the village Tsakoni and committed similar atrocities. Andon Siula, who did not want to be mayor by force and a traitor to his villagers, was mercilessly beaten to death. Vasilis Souklidis, Naum Nartea, Andreas Stavridis and Petar Chocho from the same village were also ruthlessly beaten that day.

The murderous nationalist gangs slaughtered Pavle Siagary in the village Tikveni and looted 15 cattle. The gangs killed Dafina Valtova in the village Izglebi. Members of the National Guard raped 20 women in the village Grachi. They repeatedly raped them over night and released them the next day.

The only thing the Voulgaris and Sofoulis government could boast about accomplishing during 1945-1946 was the violence, the looting and the killing it committed against the peaceful citizens. All across Greek occupied Macedonia, from Kostur Region to Drama Region to Kukush Region, the nationalist gangs, the Gendarmes and the National Guard waged a wild terror campaign against every village in their path. Palaikov, a 70 year old man, was violently tortured to death in the village Postol, Enidzhe-Vardar. The nationalist band of German collaborator Kisabadzhak wounded 8 villagers in the village Mikrokambos, Kukush Region, of whom Andreas Georgiadis and Hristos Georgiadis were severely wounded on their heads with the butt of a pistol.

6. Terror in Gumendzhe Region

The bloody list of arrests and of those Macedonians who were taken prisoner, abused and killed is long in Gumendzhe Region. The following information was obtained from a report entitled “Blockades, arrests and internments after Varkiza” compiled by Hristo Balkanov, a NOF leader in Gumendzhe Region:

a) Arrests: On February 12, 1945, 18 democratic citizens from the city Gumendzhe were arrested and taken to Solun. Included among those arrested and taken to Solun were Giorgi Kostraki, Vangel

Kostraki, Iovan Popnikolov, Kostadin Korov, Traio Kalinov, Hristo Michiorov, Hristo Hadzhigiorgiov, Vangel Hr. Nichev, Dimitar Shaldev and Hristo Chiakov.

On accusations of being members of “Ohrana”, citizens Risto Kostarski and Stamat Liapa were arrested and taken to Solun on March 18, 1946. On March 8, 1946, arrested were villagers Petros Hadzhikarmelis, Ianis Hadzhikarmelis, Kostas Hadzhikarmelis, Ianakis Kostas, Dimitar Uzunov, Hristo Uzunov, Stamat Stamenov, Todor Vaskov and Gligor Tumbov from the village of Petgas. Thirty five people were interned from the village Kriva, both men and women. Included among those interned were Vangel Ianakev, Atanas Iankov, Iovan Ropkov, Tano Ianakev, Iovan Mladen, Petar Hadzhikarmelis, Tano Tsegli, Hristo Siagli, Giorgi Gianakov, Paskalina Mitkova, Anastas Karatsa, Elizabeta Gatsi, Katerina Stoiu and Marika Pulka.

In Gumendzhe alone over 100 people were arrested from January to August 1946, including all members of the Menchev family. Arrested in the village Barovitsa were Iovan Chutra, Hristo Siuli, Hristo Aita, Giorgi Kiosev, Iovan Gata, Katina Kuta, the entire Vangel Shoshov family, Paskalina Garti and Giorgi Todorov Shoshov. Arrested in the village Karpi were Giorgi Tekni, Hristo Peikov, Hristo Kirkov, Hristo Kioska, Giorgi Kioska, Giorgi Dzhapov, Giorgi Popnikolov, Atanas Betov, Maria Beta, Aneta Benova, Giorgi Egov, Aneta Tumba, Dimitar Popianov and Iovan Popianov. Arrested in the village Mandalevo were 16 people, 50 in the village Isiklar, 15 in the village Boemitsa and 50 in the village Gorgopik.

b) Rapes: 4 women.

c) Executions: In June 1945, Petar Stamenitov from the village Pendalofos was pursued by British troops, led by the traitor Hristo Petsi, and killed in a chestnut grove near the village Kriva. On August 25, 1945 the Greek military, Gendarmes and nationalist irregulars killed Kosta Dzhina from the village Laka, Atanas Koroveshov from the village Smrdesh and Atanas Luvchev from the village Kastaneri in an area in Kromevi, Edinzhe-Vardar Region. On November 17, 1945 the Greek National Guard killed Giorgi Shashev

from the village Kastaneri, Hristo G. Tarteve, Trifun Aita, Dimitar Parlapanov, Hristo Gatsov, Giorgi Gubev, Petar Karamutev and Alexander Vasilev from Kriva Gumenzhe Region. They were killed in an area in Sehovo near the village Barovitsa. These Macedonians from Gumendzhe Region were surrendered by the collaborator Dimitar Doiara from the village Kastaneri.

Killed in the village Izvor, on August 1946, were Hristo Sima and Vasilios Kustalidis. That same month the Greek nationalists and the Greek Gendarmes beheaded 15 people in Gumendzhe Region. Included among those beheaded were Giorgi Hadzhipopov, Dimitar Karadzha from Gumendzhe, Kosta Popianov from Karpi, Lazo Proichev from Gumendzhe, Giorgi Tampov from Kastaneri, Petar Dautis, Iovan Shashov, Trifun Minov and Tano Mitani from Karpi. On September 16, 1946 the Greek irregulars and Greek Gendarmes killed Ianis Asaridis from Gerakona, Nikos Karamanlis and Ianis Sideris from Aksiupolis.

d) Looting and burning: On September 20, 1946 a gendarme detachment of bandits invaded the village Barovitsa and burned down the houses belonging to the brothers Giorgi and Trifun Kurlev. They took 2 mules, 300 goats, cheese, fat and other valuables that they found in the houses before they burned them down. The same thing was done to Hristo P. Kurlev's house. They also looted and damaged the houses of Peter Aita, Kosta Proichev, Tano Gachev, Kosta Gachev, Giorgi Taretev, Iovan Kovachev, Hristo Dautov, Vasil Dautov, Dimitar Cholakov, Hristo Cholakov and Giorgi Poppetrov. These homes were also looted of sheep, goats, mules and other livestock.

7. Terror in Prespa Region

The following information deals with crimes committed by the Greek authorities and Greek nationalists against the Macedonian civilian population in this part of Greek occupied Macedonia. The information was compiled and reported by Petre Asprov, NOF leader for Prespa Region, on December 23, 1945. On October 5, 1945, members of the Greek National Guard blockaded the village Shtrkovo and arrested 7 Macedonians. After they beat them they took them to the prisons in Lerin. Included among those beaten were

Ioshe Grozdanov, Bozhin Kostov, Pando Kostov and Stavre Katielov. On October 10, 1945, the village Rudari was blockaded and 15 villagers were arrested and taken to prison in Lerin. The most beaten of those arrested were Ioshe Tsaklarovski and Mihail Mihailovski. The police chiefs, Gizas serving in the village German and Sarandopoulos serving in the village P'pli, after restoring the state apparatus and until the spring of 1947, when Prespa was liberated by the Democratic Army of Greece, had turned the entire Prespa Region into an inquisition centre for torturing and interrogating Macedonians.

8. Uproar against the terror from abroad

The everyday scenes of terror and bloody murders in Greece, particularly in Greek occupied Macedonia, committed against the Macedonian people sparked a wave of anger among the progressive people around the world. The Greek nationalist made every effort through the press and radio to misinform the world public about what was going on; trying to show itself a victim of the resistance organizations in Greece and of its northern neighbours, who allegedly were threatening the national integrity of Greece. The Greek reactionary propaganda, however, could not prevent objective observers from seeing what was really happening and from expressing their dismay and disgust at the crimes committed by the pro-nationalist gangs and by the government authorities.

A British officer, who at the time of the terror was serving in Greece, on November 22, 1947 described the situation in Greece for the newspaper "Hiu stetsmen ent Neison", as follows: "A week after the signing of the Varkiza agreement I witnessed the worst inhuman actions taken by the newly established National Guard - composed mainly of former collaborators. All those who believed the word of the agreement (which was guaranteed by the English) and did not escape promptly were imprisoned and tortured. I saw 16 men locked up in a dungeon the size of a small apartment kitchen in which men, women and children were included. Two of the men were tossed on the floor unconscious and swam in their own blood. Each prisoner had the right to use the toilet only once in three hours and for just three minutes. An old man, on account that he sold EAM newspapers, was tied up and beaten for an entire hour. None of these

prisoners were informed as to why they had been arrested. No one was tried but they found themselves in prison for nine months. This was not an isolated incident, especially at a time when there were no communist groups, no leftist activities and not even people representing any kind of party..."(Connie Ziliakus: "Interventions in Greece", excerpt 2 from "Mahi", May 9, 1950).

The newspaper "Daily Mirror" printed several specific images and a description given by a British sergeant, who personally witnessed gruesome acts committed by the Greek government forces. The images showed beatings, torture, mass slaughter, decapitations and even a 16 year old dead girl hanging over the saddle of her horse.

The Greek public administration and the army were no better than the police and the Gendarmes organized by English General Charles Whicome, who served from beginning to end in the ranks of the British military mission during the intervention in the Soviet Union. Here is what Connie Ziliakus wrote: "Four-fifths of the forces in the public administration, the judiciary and the police are in the hands of the extremists. Surlas's gangs rule the province and have installed themselves in the administration. They are well-armed and do whatever they want..." (Connie Ziliakus, "Interventions in Greece", excerpt 7).

On December 8, 1947, British Colonel Sheppard described the situation in Greece for the newspaper "Nova Demokratia" as follows: "The security battalions consisting mainly of German collaborators today make up the backbone of the Royal Gendarmes". Richard Mauer of the US overseas news agency reporting from Athens said: "A large part of the former Gendarmerie that served the Germans is now using the German lists left behind to prosecute suspected persons..." (ibid).

A Commission of British Labour MPs visited Greece in 1946. Included among them were MPs Soley, Tifanys and Daudt. They examined the political situation in Greece in detail and on their way back to Britain, in Paris on June 17, 1946, said that Greece was ninety percent fascist... While Lasky, former British Labour Party President, prophetically said: "The Return of King George to Greece will turn this country into a second Spain..."

9. Nationalist press inspirer and instigator of terrorist actions

The Greek nationalist press also played a role in aggravating the internal political situation in Greece. In particular, it was responsible for promoting the “Greater Greece” policy of the Greek bourgeoisie and its British patrons on one hand, and spreading racial hatred between the Greeks and their Slavic neighbours on the other. The fact that Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania won over fascism and became “people’s republics” was bothersome to the Greek plutocrats and to Britain. The campaign against an alleged “Slavic threat” from the north became a rallying flag for the Greek reactionaries. The signal for the “anti-Slavic” march was given by the greatest exponent of imperialist policy in the Balkans, Winston Churchill himself, during an inflated speech he made in Fulton, USA in the summer of 1946.

The main goal of the Greek nationalist press behind the “Slav threat” campaign was to intimidate the Greek people into believing that they would be attacked and eliminated by the Slavs. The effect of this, in turn, would create mistrust and disrupt the brotherhood and unity created between the Greek and Macedonian fighters in the four years they fought side by side. The campaign particularly concentrated on making the Macedonians look like agents of the neighbouring Slavic nations working against the Greeks. This campaign in effect began to promote the idea that the Macedonian people should be physically liquidated or expelled from their own country. These kinds of pronounced intentions, harboured by the Greek chauvinistic bourgeoisie and by military circles began to surface in the newspaper “Ellinikos Voras” which, on June 13, 1945, (no. 114), published an article labeling all Macedonians Bulgarian collaborators and promoters of Bulgarian fascist propaganda. This is, among other things, what the article said: “If today’s anti-fascists in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria are so much interested in them then by all means, they can have them. We will give them to them as a gift. Let them take them to their rich fields and let us clean them up from our end. Our fellow ‘democratic’ citizens and ‘mortal’ friends number no more than 30,000. Let them go and leave us and their late patrons alone. They are nothing but ‘weeds and stones of scandal’...” “Ellinikos Voras” made no effort to hide its anti-

Macedonian desires when it called on the Greek people to expel the Macedonians, without delay, from their own homeland in Greek occupied Macedonia and push them north to “join” their so-called “brethren”. On what moral and international law was “Ellinikos Voras” basing this genocidal act against the Macedonian population when it decided that the Macedonian people, who inhabited their own lands in that part of Macedonia, needed to be driven out? Was this part of Britain’s “Grand Plan” to get rid of the Macedonians from Greek occupied Macedonia? It would appear so!

“Ethniki Floga”, an organ of collaborator Napoleon Zervas, now under British protection, on December 23, 1946 also waved the flag of discontentment by giving the Greek nationalist the signal to launch a terror campaign against the democratic citizens and anti-fascists in Greece. Among other things, the newspaper wrote: “The danger is permanent and ongoing... It will not stop... it will risk the life of our country as long as Soviet Russia does not withdraw to within its own borders. While Russian watchtowers are located no more than 30 km from the Aegean Sea, Russia will try to come to the coast, it will always encourage an attack. Russia, with its flammable timber supplied by its subsidiaries Serbia, Bulgaria and Albania, will use its hand to ignite our country. This is how the Communist Party is disguised under various forms. There is only one way out of this – complete destruction of the bandits (Macedonian partisans) who are betraying us and are trampling on our law and our justice. Our slogan is: ‘war without mercy and without hesitation. Wage war on our enemies and turn them into food for the wild beasts and vultures, or send them to the dungeons they call People’s Republics’...” (Journal “Ethniki Floga” organ of Napoleon Zervas, former leader of EDES, December 23, 1946).

Long-term Greek aspirations for the north in this anti-Slavic climate have further fueled the newspaper “Nea Alithia”, on August 8, 1945, to say: “Greece fought, suffered and sacrificed much. It is now winning. It has national requirements in the north which cannot be ignored...” The autonomist movement and Slavic danger are “Ellinikos Voras’s” favoured subjects. It constantly invents events and attempts about Macedonia’s “abduction” by the “Slavs”. The following comment is witness to the size of its imagination: “We have learned from reliable sources”, reads “Ellinikos Voras”, on

March 24, 1945, “that Captain Amindas Avgerinos (I. Papadopoulos from the village Pesoshnitsa) of the ELAS 28 brigade, which is composed mostly of Slavo-Macedonians, does not recognize the treaty of Varkiza and has formed an armed group which has surrounded the villages Pesoshnitsa, Leskoves, Papazhani, Vrbenik, Kamenik and Voshtareni and it is intimidating the villagers and driving them to move to Bitola and enter the ranks of the Bulgarian squads commanded by Ilia Dimovski - Gotse, who is fighting for Macedonian autonomy...”

These types of reports, printed by the newspaper “Ellinikos Voras”, were pure fiction. Let us get to the facts:

First, Amindas Avgerinos was not one and the same person, but two ELAS officers who not only did not send fighters to the Macedonian brigade but, as loyal and disciplined CPG members, obediently implemented the CPG line at the time. They were even well-known for having attacked the Macedonian liberation movement. Second, “Ellinikos Voras” accused the Macedonians of having “autonomist tendencies” when it was well-known that it was the Macedonian fighters who fought bloody battles against the Kostur and Lerin autonomist counter-bands and against the Bulgarian “Ohrana” in Voden Region. The Macedonian people, through People’s organizations such as EAM, ELAS and NOF, consistently fought against all apparent autonomists. Also, during 1945-1946, the British government and the Greek security forces, through police officer Bafas, were secretly planning to create their own autonomist movements in Lerin Region through the various collaborators. The strings of this conspiracy kept British Vice Consul Hill busy in Lerin. Hill’s involvement was uncovered by Doctor Ioannidis, a medical doctor practicing in Lerin, when he appeared as a witness before the UN Inquiry Commission in March 1947. The doctor paid with his life for having the courage to speak.

No less brutal were the Athens newspaper attacks against the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia. The Athens newspapers “Eleftheria” and “Ethnikos kiriks” were the leaders leading the war against the Macedonian people through the pages of print in their daily anti-Macedonian campaign. In an article published in “Eleftheria” on January 28, 1946, the newspaper openly

requested the persecution and exile of the Macedonian people from their own homes and country: “Let the Slavo-Macedonians leave our Macedonia. Let them go wherever they want to go. They need to disappear from here; they need to move out immediately and permanently. It is difficult for them here and it will be even more difficult for them later because this is Greece...”

In the same tone as “Eleftheria”, the nationalist newspaper “Ethnikos kiriks” began to prepare the ground work for violent pogroms against the Macedonian people and for their expulsion from their homeland. “Ethnikos kiriks” demanded that: “The sooner Greece expels 180,000 Slavo-Macedonians the better off we will be...” The former collaborator of occupational forces, Periklis Iliadis, for the newspapers “Foni tis Kastorias” and for “Ethnos”, had even harsher words when he attacked the Macedonian people. He said: “There is no more space for Macedonians and Greeks in Greek-Macedonia...” (See: “Ethnikos kiriks”, organ of Papagos’s movement Sinagermos.)

The harsh anti-Macedonian campaign, instigated among others, by the Greek nationalist press, created an atmosphere of savage terror against the Macedonian population in Greek occupied Macedonia, which brought the Macedonian people face to face with a serious predicament: If they were to remain completely passive it meant that they would be tormented, murdered, raped and abused to no end by the Greek nationalist gangs roaming their region. If they were to abandon their families, friends, homes, livestock and cross over the border into the Republic of Macedonia, then would they ever be able to return home... without dire consequences? The majority of the Macedonian people chose not to remain passive and not to leave. They picked up arms and began to fight for their existence. They began a new joint struggle with the Greek democratic people and fought to establish a truly democratic regime in Greece that would guarantee them the most basic human rights.

10. Greek governments falling

The lawlessness and persecutions committed by the Greek nationalist gangs throughout Greece against the democratic people, with encouragement from the Greek police, Gendarmes and

National Guard, caused an outcry in the world public accusing the British and the Greek government of being directly responsible for this situation. The inability of Greek governments to stay in power was also a reflection of the abnormal situation in Greece. This was because unscrupulous nationalist and revanchist elements had taken control of the country and were carrying on with their fascist activities... These people were completely discredited by the progressive world public.

After the Athens events of December 1944, which led to the collapse of Papandreou's government in Greece, several new and short-lived governments were established, always with the blessings of British Ambassador Lippert, of course. The government of General Plastiras, who succeeded Papandreou, was quickly undermined by the nationalist organizations which had a major impact on the authorities. The reactionaries could not accept Plastiras's government tolerance of the CPG and EAM and its decision, which led the negotiations in the Varkiza Agreement, to only surrender 42,000 guns instead of completely disarming ELAS like they had insisted.

But, a deeper reason why the far right and royalist element was attacking Plastiras was fear that he, a bourgeois democracy veteran, might indefinitely postpone the plebiscite for returning the King in Greece. On the other hand, Plastiras's government was not spared from attacks from the EAM left coalition because it was ineffective in combating the terror regime. In any case, Plastiras's fall was caused by the right. The ultra-nationalist press called him a capitulator and a Hitler-ophil, and at the same time revealed a letter from him in which he advocated for an agreement between Germany and the Metaxas government. ("Ethnikos kiriks", November 2, 1952.)

Next to take power in Greece was Admiral Voulgaris's government. Voulgaris was an obedient puppet of the English, who, according to general Zafeiropoulos, was the greatest prospect for "satisfying the national rights" and that at "any cost". (Dimitrios Zafeiropoulos, "O Antisimoriakos agonas", p. 75.) Because of its fondness for the extreme right-wing and chauvinist elements and for allowing terror against members of the resistance movement to intensify, the same

Voulgaris government was blamed, even by the democratic centre, for sponsoring white terror. In those days Voulgaris's campaign to capture the northern part of Epirus, i.e. southern Albania, and to annex parts of Pirin (Bulgarian occupied) Macedonia, for allegedly "extending" the Greek northern border, had reached its highest point. The Regent Damaskinos, under whose blessings Voulgaris's government acted, entered defense mode and, on July 9, 1945, declared: "There is no country in the world that is more democratic than Greece... The press enjoys privileged freedom... There is great effort made by the state to limit the cases of revenge acts and the fatal consequences of the civil war..." ("Bilten", organ of the NOF leadership, July 1945.)

And, as we have seen above, the greatest number of terror acts committed in Greece were committed during the time the Voulgaris government was in power. This was an act that not even Sofoulis could ignore. Sofoulis went on to blame Voulgaris's government for the total absence of security in the country, for the volatility in the state itself and for the omnipotence of the armed nationalist gangs. A solution to the political crisis in Greece, according to Sofoulis, could be found in the formation of a national coalition government based on the 1938 Greek Parliament criteria without CPG participation. While the democratic left demanded a "representative" government be formed, the extreme left wanted the formation of a representative government to include the resistance movement organization. However, a "representative" government would also include nationalists from the right. So, the continuance of the Voulgaris government as mandated also crystallized a definite date for a referendum on the return of the King to Greece. In other words, the right saw Voulgaris as the right man who, through terror and through liquidating the democratic forces, would pave a safe way for the return of the King in Greece.

The EAM leadership repeatedly accused the government of gross violations and of violating the Varkiza Agreement because it not only persecuted the democratic elements in the country but also discriminated against the ELAS fighters and against EAM supporters by not allowing them to join the Greek military. The government unilaterally chose people with extremely nationalistic beliefs for its security forces. These were people with verified

nationalist convictions, most of whom were collaborators of the occupiers. The EAM, through memoranda to the governments of the major powers - Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union and France, demanded the formation of an allied commission to monitor the situation in Greece and to aid in the formation of a representative government, based on the Treaty of Yalta.

On October 10, 1945, under pressure from the left and from the democratic centre, the Voulgaris government was replaced with another government led by Kanelopoulos. This government, however, lasted only a very short time and was replaced by a "broad-based" coalition government and was entrusted to Temistokles Sofoulis to lead. But, no sooner than Sofoulis took power, his government came into conflict with the left on the issue of amnesty. Because of this, Sofoulis's government split into two camps. One camp, led by Minister Ioannis Sofianopoulos and Giorgios Kartalis, was prone to allow for general amnesty, and the other for allowing only a limited amnesty.

When Sofoulis was in power there were 80,000 political prisoners in the Greek prisons. The government then passed law 730/45, under which crimes committed between April 27, 1941 and February 12, 1945, were prosecutable depending on their severity, with the exception of killings. Murder and moral participation in murder were definitely prosecutable. In the drafting of this law three aspects had come to the fore: a) Minister Constantine Rendis and G. Kafandaris were of the opinion that there should be leniency shown in the prosecution of indirect participants involved in political killings; b) Minister Ioannis Sofianopoulos was of the opinion that amnesty should be granted to those who committed crimes during the occupation and limited penalties for cases of mass murder. According to Sofianopoulos, by taking such steps Greece would make friends abroad and many would be in favour of Greek aspirations towards its neighbouring countries; c) Minister G. Kartalis was of the opinion that not even direct participants in killings should be prosecuted. Not even those who participated in enemy formations against armed collaborators of the occupiers and against hostile agents.

Despite opposition to the politics for freeing prisoners, and the insistence of some that an amnesty commission composed of persons who had participated in the resistance movement be formed and led by Alexandros Zvolos, the Sofoulis government finally decided to take some limited measures and, from November 1945 to October 1946, freed 5,535 prisoners. It was a half-measure because the prisons and the camps were still filling with new prisoners. This was because with law 730/45 in their hands, it was easy for the Greek police and for the nationalists to mobilize countless paid professional witnesses to invent crimes and lies and to accuse peaceful citizens and honest participants in the resistance movement of committing them.

11. An election farce

In April 1945, in a private letter to Stalin, Winston Churchill, among other things, wrote: “In Greece we seek nothing more than its friendship and its independence and integrity. We have no tendency to impose a monarchy or democracy. The only policy that exists is to normalize things as quickly as possible and to conduct fair and free elections in the next four to five months. These elections will decide the regime and later the constitution. The will of the people will decide the conditions of freedom. That is our desire...” (Connie Ziliakus: “Interventions in Greece”).

This was what Churchill wrote. However, the goals he and Britain wanted to achieve were quite different. Britain’s tendency was to maintain its positions in Greece at any cost. According to the December 1943 Tehran Conference and to the Tehran Agreement, Churchill was allowed to do everything in his power to keep Greece in Britain’s sphere of influence, with the consent of his partners Stalin and Roosevelt. By the Lebanon Protocol signed by representatives from the resistance movement and by delegates from the Greek government in exile in May 1944, at the time escorted by British politics and later by the Caserta Agreement, Churchill had secured the right to intervene in Greece even in the event that British presence in Greece was undesirable. These were consequences of the mistakes made by the resistance movement leadership, - EAM - CPG – ELAS. Mistakes which are very difficult to distinguish from

open treason, for which the Macedonian people, in particular, had to pay with blood.

All the cruelties and measures of terror taken against the democratic civilian population by the Gendarmes, the National Guard and nationalist armed groups with open support from the British troops in Greece, on the one hand, and the British Foreign Office including Lippert, the British Ambassador to Athens, on the other, were factors of the same plan working against having free elections in Greece. Britain wanted a fully obedient government in Greece that would serve only British interests. It also wanted to showcase Greece and Greek nationalists and chauvinists in a future peace conference. That government, boosted by its Western patrons would then raise Greek nationalist aspirations and damage Greece's northern neighbours. Even Ernest Bevin, Foreign Minister of Great Britain, in the December 1944 Labour Party Conference, regarding Churchill's policy in Greece, said: "Britain cannot abandon its positions in the Mediterranean..." And so it would appear that the situation in Greece in 1945-1946 was created due to Bevin's foreign policy, who after the 1945 elections led the British Foreign Office.

The Greek election comedy performed on March 31, 1946 may have been successfully choreographed by following Bevin's instructions, but those elections were the spark that fell into a barrel of gunpowder leading the way to the Greek Civil War. The terror and pogroms conducted during the election campaign reached their highest point on the day of the elections, which led Prime Minister Sofoulis to declare that: "It is impossible to hold fair and impartial elections under such conditions." The elections were indeed tampered with and were not just suspicions invented by the democratic camp. Here is what Sheppard, a British Colonel, said on December 8, 1947, for the newspaper "New Democracy".

"A Greek officer," said Shepherd, "watching a British officer dared to confess: 'We will make it such that the people will vote for the royalists one hundred percent. No more than five per cent may vote against. But this five percent will give us enough reason to call them enemies of the regime. It will later give us a chance to herd them as they need to be herded'..."

The kind of monster created in the May 31, 1946 elections in Greece is represented by the following facts: "While most European countries such as France, Italy and so on had their populations reduced as a consequence of the war, the number of voters in Greece, despite the half a million casualties resulting from the war and famine, the number of voters in the 1946 elections had increased in comparison to the 1936 elections. For example, in 1936 there were 1.753 million registered voters. In 1946 the number of voters jumped to 2.200 million. On top of the about 250,000 democratic voters were excluded from the voter lists." Elections in Greece were mandatory.

It is true that the March 31, 1946 Greek elections were monitored by international observers, without the participation of those from the Soviet Union and from other people's democracies. But the international observers from the West did not know what was happening in Greece, and even if they did know they were unable to prevent the fraud that was taking place. How could they have known that dead people were voting in the election? Their job was to check the names on the voter lists against those who voted. So, anyone who was registered on the list and showed valid identification was allowed to vote. But when people in some districts complained that the lists for those districts were longer than the number of people living in the district, some foreign newspapers noted the election irregularities. One foreign newspaper wrote: Frances Becker, the son of British Minister Noel Becker, was in Greece during the elections and found it very easy to vote and even though he had no right to vote, he voted anyway. One French journalist named Utrillo, also, by trial and error, wanted to see if could vote. He was given the right to vote and he voted twice.

When one considers these facts, it becomes very clear why Minister Theotokis, a man who had experience in the 1935 plebiscite, was specifically hired to conduct the elections, and then it becomes even clearer how the election results could be dressed up to such an extent so that the left could muster only 9.5 percent of the total vote.

Due to the unprecedented terror conditions imposed on them, the parties belonging to the EAM coalition abstained from taking part in the elections. Under these conditions it was impossible to conduct

objective and honest elections as confirmed by the New York “Herald Tribune” on October 17, 1946. But, despite the unbearable conditions, when every citizen who belonged to the EAM was labeled a communist, in Greek occupied Macedonia, particularly in Solun, the majority of voters voted for the EAM anyway.

The EAM abstaining from participating in the election later created internal problems. Disputes about the reasons why the democratic movement in Greece was defeated surfaced in 1949 and gave rise to a variety of attacks and counterattacks. CPG General Secretary Zahariadis was accused by the group Partsalidis – Karagiorgis with taking the “wrong” approach in the 1946 parliamentary elections. According to Partsalidis – Karagiorgis, abstinence in the election weakened the EAM coalition political platform because the EAM coalition had no representatives in Parliament. If it had representation, according to Partsalidis – Karagiorgis, EAM would have publicly debated and would have denounced the regime of its terror tactics and discrimination against the democratic left. And finally, abstaining from the elections, after the CPG called on the strife-ridden cities to vote for the democratic left, aside from the conditions under which these elections were held, represented a negation of the political course. On the other hand, by abstaining from the elections it armed the nationalist right with another argument that allegedly the CPG-EAM avoided the parliamentary legal battle because it was preparing for illegal armed actions and subversive activities. So, events have confirmed that abstinence from the election favoured the right-wing, the royalists and the British government, which at that time was mostly interested in the return of King George II to Greece.

CHAPTER EIGHT - NOF, AFZH, NOMS

The emergence of NOF (People's Liberation Front) in April 1945 in Greek occupied Macedonia was used for a negative campaign by the Greek and world reactionaries, even by the very democratic movement leadership in Greece. The government and nationalist print media identified this new Macedonian Liberation Organization as a reactionary movement and as a military organization whose goal was to break Greek occupied Macedonia away from Greece.

The far-right circles in Greece were suddenly very concerned about NOF looking for any sort of "argument" to create a "hysterical" campaign about an alleged Slavic danger in the eyes of the world public and to justify the pogroms used against the Macedonian population and against those participants who fought in World War II to free Greece from the fascists. But, it is also a fact that in 1945-1946, there were recorded movements to revive the old autonomist tendencies. But the inspirers and organizers of this kind of "reactionary movement" were the people from the British Consulate in Lerin that included Vice Consul Hill and Captain Evans. They were the ones preparing the "reactionary movement" through police colonel Bafas, with aims at tormenting the Macedonian people in Lerin Region.

The dubious and meddling British institution was installed near the southern Yugoslav border, immediately after World War II, stretching its tentacles into the Socialist Republic of Macedonia and re-organizing old elements in an attempt to undermine the socialist construction and unity of the people in new Yugoslavia and to restore the old reactionary regime. These attempts, made by imperialist and adventurer agents of the autonomist movement in Yugoslavia, however, were exposed by the NOF and CPG press in Greek occupied Macedonia soon after the institution began its operation.

NOF was immediately attacked by the CPG and EAM the moment it appeared. It was attacked by the Greek left the same way it was attacked by the Greek nationalists. But, at the same time, the CPG was not yet exposed to the Greek public regarding its capitulation to British politics and to the Greek government in exile. So, it should

have been no surprise that the Macedonian people were not happy with the CPG capitulation and that they were prepared to take action to defend themselves. It should not have been a surprise that the Macedonian leaders would label these CPG and EAM tactics capitulatory, adventurous and anti-revolutionary and that they would advise the Macedonian people in this part of Macedonia to resist. The Greek resistance leadership could not or did not want to accept that the Macedonian people from this part of Macedonia, once resorting to arms, would not be satisfied with a mere promise of equality with the Greek people and with an “unspecified” regime in power in the future which was not prepared to guarantee the existence of the Macedonian nation as an equal ethnic group in Greece. Especially since the Macedonians, by their participation in the anti-fascist war, were expecting their rights and self-determination to be guaranteed in accordance with the Atlantic Charter.

NOF, it would appear, according to Andonovski, sprouted from the unrelenting need to defend the bare existence of the persecuted Macedonian population and its desire to achieve its human rights in Greek occupied Macedonia. So, in 1945 it was forced to fight on two fronts: to defend against attacks from the revanchists and nationalists on one hand, and to convince the Greek CPG leadership, poisoned by chauvinism, on the other, that NOF was an ally of the Greek democratic movement.

On September 2, 1945 NOF experienced its first casualties. Two of its members had fallen victim to the struggle; they were Atanas Koroveshovski, member of the top NOF leadership, and Kosta Dzhina, member of the NOF Enidzhe-Vardar leadership. They were surrounded by a Greek National Guard unit accompanied by a British unit near the village Kornishor in the Paiak Mountain vicinity and being outnumbered the two were killed after a short skirmish. Two months later, on November 17, 1945, 9 more Macedonians were killed through treachery while sleeping in a barn about two hours outside of the village Barovitsa, again in the Paiak Mountain vicinity. Included among those killed were Giorgi Giuda, Giorgi Shasov, Giorgi Trifunov Shasov, Trifun Aitov, D. Parlapanov, Giorgi Tartov, all from the village Borovitsa,

Gumendzhe Region, G. Karlov from Valtovo, Aleko Vasilev from Gumendzhe and P. Tufa or Karmuta from Kriva.

The brave Macedonians who died in the barn were murdered under the following circumstances: The barn in which the 9 NOF leaders took refuge was well-known to former German collaborator Duiama who, in the evening of November 17, 1945, instructed the National Guard detachment in the village Barovits to go and check out the place. The barn was surrounded and the 9 Macedonian fighters were killed. After that the nationalist press triumphantly wrote that: "It was a fierce struggle with the autonomists..." but the fact that these people were killed execution style with wounds from the waist up was never mentioned and neither was the fact that no autopsy was permitted to be carried out. Neither was the fact mentioned that none of these people were armed and that they were only NOF workers and staff (See newspaper "Laiki Foni", organ of the CPG Regional Committee for Macedonia, November 24, 1945).

NOF and its networks expanded very rapidly among the Macedonian people in the villages and the cities. Their morale was high and they were in good fighting spirit. Macedonian involvement in NOF was growing exponentially especially in the partisan units in Kaimakchalan, Paiak and Vicho Mountains. This was an obvious reality that even the CPG could not ignore. Finally the CPG leadership had relaxed its hostility and attacks against NOF and its Organizations. The CPG finally realized that its attacks against NOF were to the detriment of the democratic movement in Greece. And its acceptance of the Macedonian organization, which was already a reality, was only beneficial to the common democratic movement in Greece. The CPG leadership accepted the fact that, day by day, NOF was growing as an influential factor in the economic and political life in Voden, Enidzhe-Vardar, Gumendzhe, Lerin and Kostur Regions.

The above confirms Pavle Rakovski's report which stated that: "More than 70 percent of the young workers in Voden have become members of NOMS. They managed to hijack the worker's centre administration through organized strikes in the factories. The CPG unfortunately was afraid of their success. So, future strike organizing was taken over by the CPG. Its leaders claimed that the

CPG was a legal party and it alone has a better opportunity to a smooth transition towards the government.

The president of the craft association and half the members of the agricultural workers association have come to our side. Most of the Macedonian personnel who earlier worked for the CPG are now moving to NOF. Being short-staffed, local CPG and EAM staffers are now resorting to seeking assistance, for both food and labour, from the Macedonian NOF staff. But after the Varkiza Agreement was signed most Macedonian villagers refuse to offer them the assistance they seek and as a result many of these Greeks are moving to the side of the reactionary nationalists..."(The original report can be found in Hristo Andonovski's personal archives.)

By the beginning of 1946 the CPG, it appears, was entering a certain evolution in its position towards NOF. Leonidas Stringos, CPG Regional Committee Secretary for Macedonia and Thrace, while introducing the Party's new position, wrote: "There is a basis to ensure understanding and unity among Greeks and Macedonians, which was violated by the signing of the Varkiza Agreement. Lately there have been Slavo-Macedonian national organizations such as NOF and ENOF that have emerged with leaflets proclaiming: 'Let us unite and stand on the side of the workers. Let us fight the way we did during the time of the Resistance, united, in order to liquidate fascism in our country, to crush the regime of quislings, to demand a representative government with the participation of the CPG and EAM. Let us unite and fight for our bread, for our jobs and for our freedom. Let us move forward together as a united people in a people's democracy...'

If NOF is willing to consistently follow this line, there will be no obstacle to our common cooperation." (Magazine: "Protoporos" (Vanguard), monthly organ of the CPG Regional Committee for Macedonia and Thrace, Solun, February 7, 1946, See article: "Our struggle for democracy and the Slavo-Macedonian Question", p. 9.)

Another such article, written in the same spirit, entitled "Our ideological front", was authored by Vasilis Bardzhotas, member of the CPG Central Committee, in which he said: "In the last few days a trial was conducted against NOF in Voden where 3 people were

sentenced to death and others were charged with severe penalties. But, despite abominable attempts by the Monarcho-Fascists to prove otherwise, it was officially proven that NOF is the EAM of the Slavo-Macedonians, which demands equality with the Greek people in a people's democracy and its first task is to preserve the sovereignty and independence of Greece..." (Periodical: "Komep", December 1946.) Further down in the same article Bardzhotas, referring to CPG members, said: "Our party organizations with all their tools need to help the Slavo-Macedonians who have suffered the most. They need to explain to the people of Northern Greece that NOF is being slandered as an autonomist movement in order to frighten the Greeks and to push them away from the fraternal common front of the Greek population in Macedonia and Thrace and of the Slavo-Macedonian element, and to nurture the theory of a 'Slavic threat', in particular to justify the questionable autonomist movement generated by British agents in Macedonia..." ("Komep", same page in the same article as above.)

On December 28, 1945, during a Plenum of the CPG Regional Committee for Macedonia and Thrace, speaking about the contents of the NOF Voden organization leaflet, CPG General Secretary Nikos Zahariadis characteristically said: "Every Greek democratic citizen would certainly agree with the call of the anti-fascist Slavo-Macedonian organization (NOF) in Voden District, which calls on all working people and on all the inhabitants of this district to jointly fight for the people's freedom, for political, legal and social equality and for general political amnesty. We will struggle together for our bread, for our freedom and for a new Greek people's democracy." (Newspaper: "Laiki Foni", organ of the CPG Regional Committee for Macedonia and Thrace, Solun, December 29, 1945.)

It would appear that the CPG changed its attitudes towards NOF because it wanted to revise its earlier views of the "political struggle". In its new view it looked to the cities for membership in the new armed struggle and these tendencies were increasingly coming to the fore in early 1946. This was made evident during the aforementioned plenum when the following slogan was coined: "We call on all people wherever they may live, in cities or in the countryside, to join us in the armed struggle against the reactionaries. We call on all people to respond en masse and by any

means possible to this act of self defense.” (Newspaper: “Laiki Foni”, December 24, 1945.) In other words, the new armed struggle was in demand of united forces including all citizens and democratic anti-fascists, especially the Macedonian population at a time when it had a solid organization (NOF) and a significant number of armed partisan groups roaming the mountains.

1. Exceptional measures, the battle in Pochevska Forest, Mirka Ginova, the battle for Lerin

The first day it took power, the Tsaldaris government, which emerged after the “rigged” March 31, 1946 parliamentary elections, initiated a new high in the terror campaign against the democratic population in the country. This terror was carried out by the Greek National Guard, the Greek Gendarmes and by the pro-Greek government organizations such as “X”, “VEN” and others.

These terrorist acts were reminiscent of the Nazi and Fascist occupation (1941-1944) and their culmination was achieved by the adoption of ‘extraordinary measures’ on June 7, 1946.

With people being deprived of their constitutional rights, with political and professional organizations being banned, the new regime, with assistance from the military organization SAN, was openly walking towards establishing a military dictatorship in the country.

Especially hit were the Macedonian people, because all the nationalist regimes, especially this one, made sure Macedonians were treated differently and more harshly than the Greeks from the southern part of Greece. While the democratic citizens of southern Greece, who fought against the regime, were treated as elements who sought to remove the regime, the Macedonian democratic citizens from Greek occupied Macedonia were treated as vermin to be exterminated and viewed as an enemy of Greece whose aim was to break off Greek territory and destroy the integrity of Greece, deserved the death penalty. For example, Article 1 of the resolution for “extraordinary measures” explicitly stated that:

“Those who want to secede part of the Greek national territory, or plan conspiracies with foreign entities such as rebellion or armed struggles, or are taking part in them, are punishable by death...”
(Newspaper: “Macedonia”, June 7, 1946.)

With the “emergency measures” put into force, the regime established military courts, which were immediately turned into factories of daily executions, sending dozens of patriots and fighters, who fought during the Nazi occupation and shed their blood in the struggle against the occupiers, to their death. All that was needed now was for “someone” to accuse a person of “engaging in subversive activities against the state” and that person would be sent straight before a military tribunal... and to their death.

To justify the frequent, unexpected and brutal house searches, as envisaged by Article 10 of the extraordinary measures (See: “Macedonia”, June 7, 1946), every day the press spread misinformation and fabricated stories of all kinds of uncovered plots including autonomists and separatists crossing the border to bring harm to Greece. On the same day that Parliament voted to enact the emergency measures, the newspaper “Macedonia” declared the following:

“In the last few days our competent authorities received specific information, according to which there has been unrest of a revolutionary character in the first 15 days of June, which has been spreading throughout Macedonia, as much in the interior as in the cities. The signal was given by the bandits who entered the villages and were preparing their ranks, ready for action at a given moment’s notice...”

“According to the same information, the order was given by NOF gangs operating in Macedonia and they had recently increased their activities...”

“The long-term goal of this movement is to prepare Macedonia to seek its freedom from the Greek fascist yoke and to declare it a Macedonian People’s Republic to be annexed by Tito’s Federation of People’s Republics...”

With these kinds of fabricated accusations concocted by professional liars, thousands of Macedonians, even entire families, were sent to the Aegean dry island internment camps. Scores of others were sentenced to death and executed. (See newspaper: “Laiki Foni”, November 24, 1945.) The first victims of these so-called “extraordinary measures” were 6 Macedonian NOF cadres, including Mirka Ginova and one Greek, trapped in July 1946 in Pohepska Forest, Voden Region. They were prosecuted by a military court in Enidzhe-Vardar.

Attacks against NOF were massive and relentless. The Macedonian unit “Kaimakchalan”, operating in the west part of Meglen Region during the spring of 1946, was considered enemy number one by the Greek state apparatus and was first in its list to destroy. One day in mid-July, while taking a short break, the unit was suddenly attacked from three sides. The unit was hidden in a grove near the village Pohep when it was attacked by the Greek gendarmes. Its location was revealed by betrayal. The simultaneous attacks came from the villages Dragomantsi, Lukovits and Sarakinovo. The operation was carried out by about 500 Greek gendarmes. The much smaller Macedonian unit fought valiantly but was ordered to break off and retreat from the attack before it was decimated. That same day a group of seven NOF cadres were meeting in the same forest where the unit was resting. Also among them was Mirka Ginova. When the unit was ordered to withdraw, the seven NOF workers also withdrew but somehow made an error in the direction they took out of the forest and ran straight into enemy hands. Of the seven only Mirka had a firearm. She fired at the enemy and when she ran out of ammunition she threw her pistol at the gendarmes rushing to capture them. All seven were captured (among them a Greek) and escorted at gunpoint to Voden. To demoralize the democratic population, especially the Macedonian people, before entering Voden the gendarmes dressed Mirka in rags to make her look like a scarecrow. But Mirka, like the fiery revolutionary that she was, walked proudly with her head held high, cheerfully addressing the town’s people yelling: “Mothers don’t cry we will win the revolution!” A housewife, Ivan Shupov’s wife, who lived next to the gendarme station in Voden, later told people that the gendarmes ran a motorcycle, revving it for three nights, outside of the station near the window of the cell where Mirka was held. It was intended to mask

Mirka's screams while she was tortured by the gendarmes using medieval inquisitorial methods. Several times at night they led her to the cemetery and buried her alive up to her neck in an open grave and shot at her with blanks, firing flaming gunpowder at her to scare her so that she would betray NOF's network. Mirka, however, remained solid as a rock. On July 23, 1946 Mirka, along with the other six people she was captured with: Giorgi Proiev, Petre Popdimitrov, Risto Stoianov, all from Voden, Alekos Moutsakis (the Greek person) from the village N'te, Mitse Liumbata from Vladovo and Tomo Mihailov from Teovo, were all brought before a military judge in the Enidzhe-Vardar courthouse. Mirka's defense was a dramatic event for NOF and for all the Macedonian people from Greek occupied Macedonia. To her last breath, Mirka fought the court in defense of NOF and all the Macedonian people who had been slandered and accused of being autonomists. Among other things, at one point she yelled out: "I am a leader of NOF. During the occupation I fought against the Germans and against the executioners Kalchev and Dimchev who threw themselves like beasts against the Macedonian people to claw them into joining the 'Ohrana'. We Macedonians fought as hard against the 'Ohrana' as we did against fanaticism and Nazism during the German occupation. NOF is not a military organization. It is a democratic political organization made up of Macedonians who are fighting for equality for the Macedonian people living within the Greek state. We are fighting for freedom and democracy!"

On the morning of July 26, 1946, during the last moments of her life before she was shot by a firing squad, Mirka sang the International song. This trial of a NOF leader became the subject of a number of newspapers and news agencies. Many major world advocates of peace and human rights, working through the United Nations in the defense of Mirka Ginova, branded the Greek regime "undemocratic". Mirka was the first woman in Greece to be sentenced to death by a military court because of her political beliefs. Her courageous posture even touched her opponent. In an anonymous letter sent to her father, a Greek military correspondent described Mirka as a brave revolutionary who held her posture for a long time while the executioner's guns were pointing at her. Among other things he also wrote:

“Unfortunately, today, at six o’clock in the morning, Irina’s life ended (Irina was Mirka’s slave name given to her by the Greek regime because no Macedonian in Greece was allowed to have a Macedonian name). Congratulations to you for giving birth to such a brave daughter. She met her death with a smile on her face, bravely singing... She was a wonderful and brave person and showed no apathy before her death. The other six were also brave but not as much as her. I am not so much writing these words to praise your daughter, but rather to expose the truth as I saw it...”

The enemy also recognized the rare heroism demonstrated by the 7 NOF leaders through the dry statements that Supreme Headquarters made to the army regulars in which it said: “The seven accepted their execution bravely by not wanting to be blindfolded. But of them all Irini Gini (Mirka Ginova) showed the greatest coolness by singing the International song and by shouting CPG slogans...” [In retrospect, Mirka Ginova fought and died for what she believed in... but what she believed in was never going to materialize because all the promises made to her were nothing but lies concocted by the CPG... and later by Zahariadis himself... the top man in the CPG...] Risto Stefov

The Lerin Region branch of NOF suffered a similar fate when several NOF cadres fought an unequal battle against the Greek gendarme and were all killed in Lerinsko Pole. After the Greek regime adopted the ‘emergency measures act’ a new wave of terror was unleashed all across Western Greek occupied Macedonia. The villages Chereshnitsa, Gabresh, Biraltsi, Bukovik and others experienced horrendous night terrors. Following are just a few cases of the pogroms perpetrated against Macedonian villages:

On July 12, 1946, at 6 o’clock in the morning, the Greek army and police stationed in the villages D’mbeni and Gabresh attacked the village Chereshnitsa using mortar fire and machine guns. After burning several barns, they collected all the village residents and took them to the village square where they tortured them. The most tortured of all were 13 people who were beaten with iron and wooden rods. Included among those beaten were Hristo Markov, Vasil Ralev, Hristo Andreev, Vasil Skivinov, Poptraianov and Anton Terziev. The most severely tortured was the village cow

herder Dimitar Atanasov, who the police apprehended while he was grazing his cattle. From there they took him to the village Gabresh where he was beaten to death in the barracks. His dead body was then dragged outside of the village, soaked with gasoline and burned. This was the second attack against Chereshnitsa. The first attack took place on July 9, 1946 during which time the following people were arrested and sent to the prison camps on Corfu Island. Included among the people sent to prison were Lampovitsa Popfilipova, Olga Trpovska, Donka Kalkova, Pavle Kalkov, Marko Vivkov and Filip Ralev. Their crime was that they were members of families whose family members had fled Greece as refugees.

Ivan Kizov from the village Gafesh was apprehended and severely tortured. He died the same night from his injuries. His torturers then took his dead body and tossed it in front of his house. The next day they arrested Lena Makrieva, Nikola Rompov and Hristo Robov.

During a raid on the village Biraltsi, Kaliari Region, conducted by the Greek army and gendarmes, 70 villagers were arrested, of whom 50 were women and 20 were men. The captives were betrayed by the village spy Mincho Shpirov. The detainees were severely and monstrosly tortured.

On July 28, 1946 the Greek military stationed in the village Breznitsa attacked the village Besfina and arrested Dimitar Skenderov, Ristana Skenderova, and Giorgi and Iane Skenderov. The next day the army apprehended Donka Dukova and, after being brutally tortured, took her to prison in Lerin.

Many Macedonian people were taken to the Lerin prisons and brutally tortured. Included among them were the following women from the village Robi, Prespa Region: Sevesti Dimitrova, Barbara Kalkova, Metoditsa Iakreva, Mitrovitsa Dimitrova, Stoianitsa Dimitrova, Ioshevitsa Nikolova and Sofia Bailova. Taken to the same prison on August 1, 1946 were Vezo Karavanov, Ilia Nichov, Done Lazarov, Mitre Gogov and Ilia Srbinov. Among the many prisoners held in these jails were also people from many Prespa and other villages including Bukovik, Oshchima, German, Orovnik and Orovo.

According to the Greek press, during the months of May, June, July and August 1946, 5246 people were killed, 415 people were severely wounded, 1446 people were tortured, 1246 were detained and 3920 people were thrown in jail. In the same period the number of Macedonian people who fled across the border was around 20,000.

2. Strengthening armed actions. – The battles in Kozhuv and Paiak Mountains. - Greek government requests to the UN Security Council. - UN Inquiry Commission arrives in Greece

In 1946 the entire year was spent under unprecedented terror conditions and under the trampling of human rights. There was total disregard for the Varkiza Agreement on the part of official Greek authorities, which was formally annulled by the Greek government and Greek parliament on July 19, 1946. The targeted victims of these murderous attacks, carried out by the Greek police, National Guard and pro-nationalist organizations together with their military formations consisting of criminals and former occupier collaborators, were the veterans of the Resistance Movement and democratic citizens of Greece. In the beginning of this unbearable situation, many of the democratic people and former resistance fighters were forced to pick up arms and flee to the mountains. Initially they formed small units, consisting mainly of political exiles, and fought defensively to protect themselves from the nationalist formation. The first offensive actions they took were in early 1946 and were aimed against the gendarme stations and nationalist formations.

In the spring of 1946, after the partisans attacked the village Lithohori on March 31, 1946, strong NOF armed units began to form in Kaimakchalan, Paiak and Vicho mountains resisting the Greek nationalist formations which were determined to destroy the democratic movement. Among other places, NOF units fought battles in the villages Lukovits in Voden Region and Sarakinovo. They also fought on Vicho Mountain in Lerin Region. Hundreds and even thousands of fighters, mostly former CPG and EAM members, were mobilizing. These were people who were willing to leave the regular army and switch to the partisan side. The first fighters to signal their willingness to switch sides were stationed in the village

Pontokerasia in Kukush Region. These desertions were not taken lightly by the Greek military which then began a crackdown on the rebellions in its ranks. As a result of a rebellion in the ranks of Division 5 in Kozheni, the military court sentenced 14 soldiers and 1 officer to death, 22 soldiers to life imprisonment and another 23 were charged with minor offenses. All these soldiers were accused of collaborating with the partisans. (V. "Vradini", December 6, 1946.)

Unfortunately, even though partisan units were prepared and ready to go on the offensive, the CPG leadership, as late as February 1946, was still insisting on finding a peaceful resolution to the political crisis. The CPG, all through 1946, continued to demand that a coalition government be formed, to include itself and the EAM, and for British troops to withdraw from Greece. In 1957, during the CPG's Central Committee 7th Plenum, the majority of the Central Committee criticized CPG General Secretary Nikos Zahariadis for not calling for an armed struggle. During the February 1946 CPG Central Committee 2nd Plenum, Zahariadis called for an armed struggle but only as a bluff, without having any serious intention of starting one. Regarding this, Panaiotis Mavromatis, member of the PK for Macedonia and Thrace, characteristically said: "I would like to point you to the guidelines we received in Macedonia from the Politburo after the 2nd Plenum asking us to study the situation and figure out how long it would take to mobilize our forces. And when the PK informed Zahariadis that we could mobilize 20 to 25 thousand fighters in about a month, he told us not to bother because his call for an armed struggle was only a bluff." (Monthly magazine: "Neos Kosmos", organ of the CPG Central Committee in exile, no. 4-5, April and May 1957, entitled: "Materials from the CPG Central Committee 7th Plenum", p. 102.)

It was also said in the 7th Plenum that 1946 was a perfect year to perform extensive mobilization and it would have assured the democratic side a victory because the government, at the time, was not prepared for an armed struggle on account that it only had 5 divisions with 2,000 troops each for a total of 10,000 troops and only 150 machine guns. (General Zafirpoupoulos "O antisimoriakos agon", p. 220.) Had the democratic side been prepared to conduct mass mobilization in early 1946, it would have solved the problem

of DAG reserves which, later, during the Greek Civil War proved to be DAG's basic weakness because it was very difficult to resolve the issue. [This may be so, but we are forgetting that Britain was involved here and could have supplied the Greek regime with troops and whatever else it needed and so was the United States of America. The only thing that would have happened under this scenario is that more people would have been killed and the war would have lasted longer. On the other hand, delaying the democratic mobilization process could have been part of the British plan. Perhaps Zahariadis was instructed to do exactly that in order to weaken DAG and shorten the length of the war? The end result would have been the same because Britain's goal was to break the communists in Greece and drive the Macedonian people out of Greece.]

But in time the government consolidated its forces and beheaded the workers' movement in Greece by removing its most active members and by pacifying most of the population through terror and internments. This had a detrimental effect on many CPG supporters and members who were slowly losing confidence in the CPG.

But, despite the CPG's inability to formulate a solid plan and its failure to see what was happening with the political situation in Greece, it seems the situation began to correct itself. Reacting to the events taking place on the ground was in fact strengthening the partisan movement, especially after the plebiscite was held to return King George Glizburg to Greece. On October 28, 1946, two months after the plebiscite was held, a Headquarters for the Democratic Army of Greece (DAG) was established.

Before establishing a DAG supreme body, an Agreement was reached on Mount Vicho between the the CPG Regional Committee for Macedonia and Thrace and the top NOF leadership, which called for the unification of all the democratic armed forces. This was to include NOF's armed units and all other former fighters who had been politically exiled from ELAS. The Agreement, signed on November 16, 1946, called for one Macedonian, a member of NOF, to be appointed a member of DAG Headquarters for Central and Western Macedonia. That appointment was given to Giorgi Urdov – Dzhodzho. The Agreement also called for another Macedonian from

NOF to be appointed a member of the CPG Regional Committee for Macedonia and Thrace and for a third Macedonian to be appointed to serve in the CPG Central Committee. Unfortunately these last two appointments were ignored and the Greeks appointed their own people instead. If all this had been done it would have meant that NOF would have been recognized as a legitimate organization. NOF had gone through some very difficult times in the past two years, especially after the Varkiza Agreement was signed. NOF could have been a great asset to the CPG in Central and Western Macedonia.

Of all the things that were promised and agreed to, only Dzhodzhov took his place in DAG Headquarters for Central and Western Macedonia. Everything else turned out to be empty promises. And not only that... After NOF was stripped of its armed forces, the CPG, EAM and DAG leaderships placed all kinds of obstacles in front of NOF in order to reduce its influence and liquidate it as a separate Liberation Organization for the Macedonian people. NOF was not allowed to do anything but to remain an instrument for the mobilization of Macedonian fighters in DAG without having a decisive voice as to how these fighters would be managed in the war.

Given what was happening to NOF, the question is “would the democratic movement in Greece, and in Greek occupied Macedonia in particular, have been more functional if the November 16, 1946 Agreement on unification had been set on a different basis?” What would have happened, for example, if the Greek communists did not completely subjugate NOF and NOF was to remain an equal partner in the struggle with its Macedonian units intact and with its own special headquarters, and coordinating its activities with the CPG, EAM and DAG relevant authorities? If the CPG and DAG leaderships were prepared to accept the idea of separate Macedonian units in October 1948, why could they not accept the same in 1946 when NOF was in its best shape? NOF acted mainly in three major Macedonian regions, Voden, Lerin and Kostur and in parts of Negosh Region up to the Vardar River riverbank (of course there were some bases in Eastern Macedonia in Seres and Drama Regions for example). NOF, however, concentrated its main activities in the three large regions where the Macedonian population was a majority. The Macedonian people had accepted NOF and it was

naturally logical for NOF to be equal to the CPG and EAM, not only a mobilization instrument.

[In retrospect, Zahariadis and his cronies did not start the Greek Civil War to “bring socialism to Greece”, because that would have been impossible given that Stalin had agreed to that. Greece being under the British sphere of influence, Churchill would never have allowed that. Given the above and what we know today, we can conclude that Zahariadis stripped NOF of its power in 1946 because he did not want it to become too strong and unmanageable and because the “Greek regime” was not yet strong enough and prepared to “obliterate” the communists in Greece and to “get rid” of the Macedonian population from Greek occupied Macedonia. But in 1948, after the “Greek regime” gained enough strength and was capable of “taking on” both communists and the Macedonians, Zahariadis accepted the idea of separate Macedonian units...]

Events that followed confirmed NOF’s suspicions that the Greeks did not want a partner in NOF but wanted to deliberately liquidate it. On one hand the CPG was calling for unity in the resistance movement and on the other it opposed every initiative NOF made. Its actions were absurd and made no sense. The CPG, in principle, was all for “self-determination” of minorities but acted the opposite in practice. This was exactly how Eleftherios Venizelos behaved in 1929 when the League of Nations ordered Greece to “respect the rights of its minorities”. Venizelos wholeheartedly agreed with the League... in principle... but in practice he did the opposite. But even amid this apparent discrimination, NOF invested all their forces in the struggle, hoping that one day it would achieve real equality in Greece.

The battles that took place on Mount Paiak in November 1946 created a great uproar, not only in Greece but in the entire world. In order to highlight their importance we will briefly look at the course of fighting that took place in Shkra (Liumnitsa), Oshani and Mandalevo, and the resulting consequences.

After establishing DAG Headquarters in Greece, on October 28, 1946, newly formed DAG units began to take on more serious military endeavours. Among the first major battles to take place at

this time was DAG's attack against the Greek government troop dispensaries in the northern Meglen Region villages. On November 17, 1946 DAG attacked the villages N'te, Oshani and Liumnitsa (Shkra). The echoes of these attacks reached international proportions. The attacks were carried out by a large group of DAG soldiers and officers and were directed by DAG Headquarters for mountains Karakamen, Paiak and Kajmakchalan under the leadership of Panos Kapetanios.

The Greek government press wrote about these attacks, calling them fierce, destructive and overwhelming... On November 29, 1946 the newspaper "Macedonia" in Solun, among other things, wrote: "...Yesterday we received new details of the attack on the village N'te where the army was hit dramatically, leaving behind Lieutenant Karanzhas and a dozen soldiers from his platoon..." The same newspaper admitted that the army encountered a very difficult situation where the air force was forced to take part and supply the military with ammunition and food. The newspaper also reported that Captain Silemanis was killed in the village Liumnitsa. According to an article published on November 17, 1946, by the Associated Press in the United States "...two government troop detachments fighting in Liumnitsa suffered heavy losses in a clash with about a thousand members of ELAS..."

These unexpected defeats, suffered by the government army, caused terrible unrest in the ranks of the Athens government and with the political right. In order to conceal the real causes of the civil unrest, Prime Minister Tsaldaris accused his northern neighbours, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania, of interfering in Greece's internal affairs by helping the partisans. Tsaldaris then urged the UN Security Council to send an Inquiry Commission to investigate the matter. These claims, however, were denied not only by the Greeks themselves but also by Greece's British allies. Former Greek Foreign Minister Ioannis Sofianopoulos, for example, in a statement to the French newspaper "Fran-tirer", published on December 3, 1946, said: "In order to justify these actions, Tsaldaris likes to talk about the atrocious Macedonian separatists and to conveniently blame his Balkan neighbours..." In a similar article, published on November 23, 1946, the London Times wrote: "Today's Greek government explained to the British and American Ambassadors in

Greece that the current unrest in that country is due to external influences. These external influences, the government claims, were attempting to break away Greek Macedonia and join it to federal Macedonia. These claims, however, are in need of investigation. And as can be highlighted by events, no truth can be hidden from such an investigation. The Greek government is struggling as much with political difficulties as it is with the workers' organizations. The extremists from the right are also causing unrest in the Peloponnesus and there are ample indications that the extraordinary Greek courts are enforcing the law with particular bias..."

The battle that took place in Skra and Oshani on the ridge between the Kozhiv and Paiak Mountains, and the battle that took place in the villages Mandalevo and Mavreinovo on the southern slopes of Paiak Mountain, created great uproar over the entire Western world. According to comments made by the Greek regime and by Greek military experts, the aim of the partisans was to isolate the Meglen Region valley, from Solun to Voden, and after that it would be easy for the partisans to occupy it. Taking over this valley would then solve the partisan supply problems. According to some experts, the said occupied region would then serve as a springboard for further partisan action to "break away Greek Macedonia from the Greek body..." (See newspaper: "Macedonia", November 27, 1946.)

DAG's actions in Kozhuv and Paiak Mountains caused serious anxiety in the West, as reflected by the discussions between Burns, US Minister of Foreign Affairs and Diamandopoul, Greek ambassador in Washington. A group of 30 conservative MPs from the British parliament asked the British government to send an Inquiry Commission to investigate the situation. While the Greek Minister of the Interior asked for troops from neutral countries to be sent to Greece to secure Greece's northern borders following the example of the League of Nations which, in 1925, sent its own people to the Greek-Bulgarian border.

On November 26, 1946 the French Telegraph Agency sent a wire from Washington reporting that the US government was considering sending American troops to Greece. At the same time a squadron from the British Navy stationed in the Mediterranean was sent to the Gulf of Solun. Being attacked for his inability to provide internal

security and under pressure from the opposition, Prime Minister Tsaldaris was forced to address the Security Council and ask for UN help to stop Greece's northern neighbours, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania, from allegedly organizing the attacks against Greece.

3. Greek appeal to the UN. Sending an Inquiry Commission. US and British insistence in the use of the UN as a policy weapon in the Balkans

Tsaldaris's appeal for help to the Security Council, of course, was done at the suggestion of his patrons in Washington and London. As proof that Greece's northern neighbours were indeed involved, the Greek government put together a suitcase full of "arguments" which included old Serbian medals from 1915, buttons from uniforms and statements made by prisoners under intimidation and threats of death, and presented it to the UN body. This was the "proof" that the cause of the civil war in Greece was to be found outside of Greece and that the Greek political crisis was to be blamed on Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania. In order to present Greece to the world as a "stolen paradise", thanks largely to the Pomaks, Tsaldaris sent two Pomaks who had fled Bulgaria to New York. These two told the American people of the "great freedom" they experienced in Greece and the "hell" they lived through in Bulgaria.

It was more than obvious that both the British and the Americans were keenly interested in convincing the world organization, first to justify the stay of their armies in Greece, and second to secure their position in Greece, which traditionally was under the British sphere of influence. Truman's plan for US intervention in Greece was revealed on November 29, 1946 by the newspaper "Daily News", when it wrote: "America has a strong navy presence in the Mediterranean which will stay there indefinitely to secure Britain's major and important Far East routes now threatened by Russia... There is a danger in Greece of starting a new Spanish war. This is why we must intervene in the same way the Germans, Italians and Russians intervened in Spain."

A little later, Austin, the US representative to the Security Council, categorically stated that the United States would intervene with full force. About the abnormal situation in Greece, The New York Post

echoed: "...the antagonism between Great Britain, on the one hand, which supports a fascist regime in Greece, and Russia, on the other hand, which supports a communist regime in Poland..."

After a long and heated discussion at the Security Council a special Inquiry Commission was formed and sent to Greece, of course, not to exclusively investigate the causes of the civil war, as requested by the Soviet Union and the other People's democracies, but to do what the Western Block demanded and that was to conduct a survey of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania, who were allegedly victimizing Greece.

In early February 1947 the Special Inquiry Commission, made up of delegates from Australia, Brazil, China, France, Mexico, the Netherlands, Pakistan, the Soviet Union, Great Britain and the United States, as well as observers from Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece and Albania (the four suspect countries), arrived in Athens. The Commission's central office, while performing its work in Greece, was located in Solun. After that, when the Commission was ready to compile its report, it was moved to Geneva. Once the report was completed it was to be submitted to the Security Council and to the United Nations General Assembly.

Upon its arrival in Athens, Greece, the Special UN Commission was welcomed by the EAM with a huge banner on which was written the slogan "British Leave Greece." While the Inquiry Commission was still in Greece, there was an incident instigated by DAG to prove that it was not outsiders that meddled in Greek affairs, as the Athens government had claimed. DAG attacked the central prison in Sparta, in the Peloponnesus, and freed 300 political prisoners.

To do its investigation faster, the Inquiry Commission was divided into 4 teams, each investigating a sector of Greek occupied Macedonia. It would appear that not all of the Inquiry Commission observers were "impartial" and that there was no doubt that the majority of them were obedient to the United States and consequently sympathetic to Greece because they made absolutely no effort to try and find the real causes and the real culprits of the civil war. The local work of the Commission was pure tragic comedy. Before arriving at the designated places, the Greek royal

army, the gendarmes and the police prepared the ground and after the UN delegates arrived they heard testimonies from people who were instructed by the regime on what to say. These people were loyal to the regime and were briefed in advance to make accusations against Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania. If any member of the Commission had any elementary sense of responsibility towards their mission, they would have asked themselves: “what democratic citizen would dare to go in front of the army and police and tell the Commission the truth about what was happening without a thought for the consequences to their life the moment the UN representatives left?” The people, especially the Macedonians were well aware of the consequences of such actions. Many Macedonians in the past had been put to death for speaking out and even for asking questions. With the exception of a few, no legitimate democratic person testified before the Commission. Almost all the testimonies collected by the Commission were given by the same people who were causing the terror, murder and pogroms. Included among those few from the democratic side, who did dare speak out against the regime, were Manavis, Panakidis, Tsereos and Mihailidis who were all later condemned to death by the regime.

At this point it is worthwhile mentioning the struggle of a group of 161 Macedonians from Lerin Region interned in the “Pavlos Melas” camp in Solun, who sent a letter of protest to the Special Inquiry Commission on the occasion of the slandering comments made by witness Valtadoros, who the Greek government had pardoned for testifying against NOF.

Among other things the letter of protest said: “The claim that NOF and the Macedonian people in general are seeking an autonomous Macedonia is a lie. In all the wars we fought, we fought together with the Greek people. We are the same people who fought in Albania against the fascists and now our children are on the front lines in the defense of the integrity and independence of Greece, because we believe in one democratic and free Greece where we Macedonians will receive our equality...

At the time of the triple occupation we fought in the ranks of EAM and ELAS to liberate Greece from Germany, Italy and Bulgaria. We relentlessly fought against “Ohrana” and against all of Greece’s

enemies together with the Greek people for the freedom and independence of Greece, for our democracy and for our equality within the Greek state...” At the end of the letter the 161 Macedonian prisoners urged the Inquiry Commission to visit the “Pavlos Melas” camp and see how Macedonians are treated today, the same Macedonians who fought and died for Greece yesterday. They urged the Commission to come and see for itself instead of relying solely on professional liars for their information. (See newspaper: “Zora”, April 15, 1947, organ of the NOF District Board for Lerin.)

While the Inquiry Commission was still in Solun, NOF, through its district committees, sent its members a number of memos and other documentation with detailed information of the terror committed against the democratic population. In addition to sending the Commission a memorandum, the NOF District Board for Voden Region, in February 1947, also released a special issue of the newspaper “Pobeda” on the occasion of the Commission’s visit, in which it published a 10 page open letter with the names of the democratic people who were killed and imprisoned. It also listed the various crimes committed by the armed Greek collaborators, gendarmes, army and police against the democratic population in Greece.

In the meantime the Maximos government, which succeeded Tsaldaris’s cabinet, did its best to put on a façade in order to deflect criticisms from the Inquiry Commission. Many prisoners were released by decree. Some internment camps were closed and moved. The British Vice-consul established in Lerin for the purpose of organizing an autonomist movement and sending agents to Yugoslavia, mercenaries and war criminals who had come to Greece before the Inquiry Commission arrived, was closed, and so were the camps that housed the Yugoslav and Albanian bandits who had arrived in Greece. The bandits too were arrested and jailed.

Included in the same façade were many professional liars which the Greek government employed to act as witnesses and provide the Inquiry Commission evidence of Yugoslav and Albanian involvement in the war. The following is a conversation that took place between Colonel Kerenezi, the Albanian representative of the

Commission, and Valtadoros, the Greek government witness, as recorded in the minutes of the Commission's 36th session.

Question: "Were you the only convict or was there a group of people that had also been tried?"

Answer: "There were four others who were tried besides me."

Question: "What kind of sentences did the convicted receive?"

Answer: "They were all sentenced to death."

Question: "Where are the other people who were sentenced to death?"

Answer: "They were shot."

Question: "Can you then explain why the four people, your friends, were shot and you are still alive?"

Answer: "I can't explain it, but I think I am still alive so that I can come here to bear witness and to put the blame on our neighbours..."

The Special Inquiry Commission was also expected to interview General Markos Vafiadis, leader of the armed side of the resistance. That task was given to the Belgian delegate who systematically tried to avoid him. The Belgian team made several trips to Western Macedonia to meet Markos, but every time it did it was escorted by an advance Greek army. Naturally, to avoid being captured Markos could not take chances. Being determined to hear Markos's side of the story, delegates from the Soviet Union and Poland along with the representatives from Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania made the dangerous trek to Mount Hasia. Here, representatives of the World Organization heard the reasons for the Greek Civil War first hand and became acquainted with the conditions the democratic movement in Greece was enduring and what needed to be done to normalize the political situation in Greece.

In the special interview that General Markos gave to the representatives of the aforementioned countries, in addition to the

explanations he gave about the resistance movement, he also made a few remarks about NOF, the Macedonian organization. Regarding NOF, Markos said: “NOF is the EAM of the Slavo-Macedonians. The Slavo-Macedonians consider themselves members of the Slavo-Macedonian minority living in Aegean Macedonia. NOF’s program is identical to that of EAM. Their goals are the same; their methods in the struggle are the same as EAM’s. But one thing that is different is that the Slavo-Macedonians have always suffered and bled more than the Greeks. They have always been tougher than the Greeks both during and after the war...” (Oscar Davicho “Sa Markosovim partizanima”, p. 96.)

In late April 1947, after spending two fruitless months in Greece, the UN Inquiry Commission was dispatched to Yugoslavia and Bulgaria to interview more witnesses at the request of the Greek government. The Greeks were making accusations against Yugoslavia for allegedly harbouring a NOF organizational network in Skopje and Bitola, which allegedly managed the partisan groups in Aegean Macedonia. The witnesses offered by the Greek government were Patatoukas, Mensourakis and Bopchis who, in their testimony, created a lot of confusion about what NOF’s role was and about the refugees from Greek occupied Macedonia found in Yugoslavia, which caused many Commission members to declare that the statements made by these witnesses were deprived of any value. In other words, their testimony was useless.

As recorded in the minutes of the 57th session, on page 12, Orutia, the Colombian delegate, said: “It was a futile exercise listening to Bopchis. At first the witness gave a certain statement and later he completely changed his mind. Some delegates felt that he was giving false testimony. Other delegates said they were not interested because his statements had no value...” (A. Vishinski, “O takozvavom Grchkom pitaniu, ratnoi propaganda i ratnim hushkachima”, p. 62.)

The special Inquiry Commission once again manifested its bias while drafting the final text of its report in Geneva. Despite the irrefutable evidence presented to it in Greece alone, of what the real causes of the “Greek drama” was, the Commission still found Greece’s northern neighbours, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania,

guilty of misconduct. However, the Commission could not conceal one fact, namely, that the Greek regime was guilty of committing terror and persecuting its minorities.

In early July 1947 the UN General Assembly examined the report on “Greek issues” presented to it by the Special Inquiry Commission. Then, on July 8, 1947, during the sitting of the UN Security Council, Andrei Gromiko, the Soviet delegate of the Inquiry Commission, blasted the Inquiry Commission’s report which, at the time, was submitted for approval. Gromiko accused the Greek government and its protectors, the US and the UK, of purposely organizing events on the Greek northern borders. Among other things, Gromiko said: “The internal situation in Greece, which we personally witnessed, clearly shows that the problems Greece is facing are the intensification of the struggle between the Greek people and the anti-democratic forces grouped around today’s Greek government, which is the main factor creating the tense situation in the northern border areas...”

In addition to blasting the report for being completely biased, the Soviet delegation proposed a number of additions to the report:

1. The Greek government is to take measures to prevent incidents on the border with Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania;
2. Normal diplomatic relations between Greece, on the one hand, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania, on the other, were to be made;
3. The Greek Yugoslavian, Bulgarian and Albanian governments were to address the issue of refugees in the spirit of understanding;
4. The Greek government was to take all necessary measures to eliminate any discrimination against citizens of the Macedonian and Albanian nationalities who lived within the borders of Greece and to give them the opportunity to speak their native language and develop their national culture.

At the end, the Soviet delegation insisted that the draft resolution contain a clause calling for the withdrawal of foreign armies from Greece. Unfortunately, because the Anglo-American camp

controlled the majority of the votes in the UN (Security Council), the Soviet proposal was rejected in favour of a US resolution which called for the establishment of a permanent Balkan Commission to be set up in order to register border incidents. This commission, imposed by the majority in support of the Anglo-American camp, did not record even a single incident until the end of the Greek Civil War. This proves that the whole story of Greece's northern neighbours interfering in Greece's internal affairs was just a story, more American ammunition to deflect Greece's internal problems elsewhere.

Just because the UN Security Council adopted the US resolution did not mean that the delegates, even those who were sympathetic to the United States, were convinced of the claim that the causes of the Greek Civil War were to be found outside of the Greek borders. The Norwegian delegate, as a typical example, was of the opinion that the evidence presented by the Inquiry Commission was not sufficient to conclude that, without a doubt, the governments of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania offered direct help to the Greek partisans and that they indeed were in violation of the UN Charter..."

Delbos, the French delegate, for example, said: "In all honesty I cannot say that the Yugoslav, Bulgarian and Albanian governments provided aid to the Greek partisans. In our opinion there is no evidence to support the suspicions and suspicions are not evidence. Therefore the reasons for Greece's unrest should be sought inside Greece itself..." Even Spak, the Belgian delegate, who almost always wanted to please the Americans said: "I cannot say that it can be confirmed that Greece's northern neighbours are supporters of the Greek Civil War..." (Connie Ziliakus. "Interventions in Greece", taken from the newspaper "Mahi", May 20, 1950, extract 10 and 11.)

CHAPTER NINE - Spring offensive

Watching the hopeless situation in Greece continue to deteriorate, with no end in sight, despite all the effort made in the last two years to stabilize it, especially with the restored Greek regime through brutal British intervention, the British Labour government publicly renounced its financing of the Greek regime in the beginning of March 1947. [But also mainly due to the fact that the British government was broke.] However, the US government did not feel the same way and in no way was going to let Greece slip out of its hands. The US also knew that without foreign intervention the Greek regime would not be able to survive and the democratic forces in the country would win, then Greece would become another people's republic in the family of Balkan people's republics.

On March 12, 1947, in his speech to the American Congress, US President Truman outlined his government's plans to intervene in Greece. To make this possible, in the same speech, Truman announced his program which in political and diplomatic circles became known as the "Truman doctrine". This was the first step in his open intervention in Greece. After that the US government immediately approved aid to Greece in the form of 350 million dollars, which actually was in absolute contempt of the UN, ignoring all its recommendations, warnings and advice. There was also a huge reaction outside of the UN in world circles to whom the US government tried to justify its position with the following statement: "The US government respects the UN and if the majority of the General Assembly or the Security Council decides to change this policy, the US would then respect that decision..." The US government made this statement being well-aware that the majority of the states in the General Assembly, thanks to their subjugation by Britain, France and other countries, dependent on the US for economic aid, would have voted for the USA. The US was sure that it held the majority of votes in the world organization before making that statement.

President Truman, during his meeting with the American Congress on March 12, 1947, was not at all honest when he said: "We aim to economically assist the free people of Greece who are resisting the

armed minorities and external pressures..." The facts, however, speak differently:

President Truman told the American Congress that his plan for intervening in Greece was a plan drawn up by US experts as a program to provide economic aid. Military aid was not even considered and if it was, it was a secondary factor. Unfortunately that was not true at all. America's intentions became quite clear when the so-called American economic aid to Greece was staffed primarily with supplies to arm 200,000 soldiers. Also provided with that aid were an entire army of generously paid American agents and "advisors" to assist the Greek political and military process. The entire Greek military operations were actually led by US officers, prompting an American war correspondent to write: "It is a fact that the United States government is now leading the Greek Civil War, which it earlier funded..." The United States was in Greece not because the Greek people wanted it but only to serve its own interests. In a telegram sent from Athens addressed to "P.M." in New York, dated December 15, 1947, Thomas Reynolds wrote: "The American experiment in Greece caused a far greater intervention than in any other intervention in Europe. The main objective of the US was, of course, to prevent Greece from falling into Russia's orbit which would have opened a door for the Soviet Union to the Mediterranean Sea."

As can be seen from the reports, the US was not as much concerned for the well-being of the Greek people as it was for its own interests in the Mediterranean and in the Middle East, particularly in the oil rich sources which the American tycoons wanted to dominate like they were their own. US intervention in Greece came as an extension of the old English policy from the time of the Crimean War, namely to prevent the Soviet Union from expanding its influence in the Middle East, which would have endangered the economic and strategic interests of the United Kingdom and now the US.

1. The Spring Offensive

With the generous US economic assistance, in parallel with the US intervention in Greece, in the beginning of April 1947, the Greek

government began the long-advertised spring offensive aimed at defeating the Democratic Army of Greece.

Several months before the April offensive began, the Greek government regular army began to attack the various villages where permanent DAG bases in Greek occupied Macedonia were located, and moved the people in towns and larger villages adjacent to its own military garrisons. In February 1947 the Interior Ministry of the Napoleon Zervas government issued an order to forcibly evacuate these villages and move the people to towns and villages that the government controlled. The evacuation, of course, made no provision to safeguard the people's properties and livestock and the fact that their fields and gardens would not be planted that spring, condemning these villages to economic failure.

The regular army General Staff's objectives, on the eve of the spring offensive, were:

- a) To rob DAG of replenishing its fighters through the forcible eviction of the villages. This would be the most painful point for DAG and in time clinch its fate;
- b) To rob DAG of its natural sources of food supply because the villages were the main suppliers of food for DAG;
- c) To cut DAG's ties with its eyes and ears and liquidate its information network, which was mainly carried out by the villagers.

As we will see later, the measures mentioned earlier, taken by the Zerva regime indeed made things difficult for DAG, especially by the evacuation of the villagers. This, of course, and the fact that many people were fleeing as refugees, had devastating consequences for DAG. In the future DAG would be forced to fight, even for its food, as well as blindly carry out missions without the necessary information on enemy movements. And all this would have to be done with less and less fighters, being unable to secure new recruits... and this naturally would be the main reasons for its defeat.

On the other hand, a new wave of terror began in the towns and villages controlled by government forces. The people were carefully monitored and their movements restricted in order to stop them from supporting the resistance movement. Murder and deportation of the democratic population was on the rise in order to eradicate all bases of the democratic movement in the rear of the army which, as we said, was preparing for a big spring offensive against DAG. Pro-nationalist organizations staffed with former occupier collaborators were let loose on the civilian population mistreating, arresting and killing civilians. On June 5, 1947 Burdas, a former minister, wrote: "Every day people who have nothing to do with the partisans are being killed. They break heads, violate women and sow havoc and fear everywhere. Many people have no choice but to flee to the mountains..." (La verité sur la Grece. – "Livre bleu" p. 38.)

While the United Nations Inquiry Commission was still present in Solun, Greek police agents, in broad daylight, killed the CPG Central Committee Politiburo member and representative of the EAM in the Inquiry Commission, Iakis Zevros. There are serious facts that point to Zervas, Greek Minister of Public Order, as the instigator of many of these political killings. (The above information was obtained from a letter written by Sidiropoulos, a participant in the assassination, published in the "Livre bleu" p. 32.) Two NOF leaders serving in the village Krushari, Enidzhe - Vardar Region, were also killed, but through treachery. They were Todor Doichinov - Morava, NOF District Board Secretary for Enidzhe - Vardar Region, and Pavle, a Regional leader for Enidzhe - Vardar. (NOF Enidzhe - Vardar Region Report.) Details of Morava's murder were also featured in the magazine "Idnina", published in August 1950, in an article entitled "Captain Morava's Death" and in the newspaper "Voice of the Aegeans" published in April 1953.

The following table was presented on May 20, 1947 to the 1st NOF World Conference. It provides a detailed picture of the terror and genocide perpetrated against the Macedonian population in Greek occupied Macedonia after the Varkiza Agreement was signed on February 12, 1945, up to the end of April 1947:

Casualties:	Kostur Lerin		Voden Gumendzhe		Total
1. Killed	56	90	74	48	268
2. Raped (women)	42	96	150	9	297
3. Detained	596	3083	2057	814	6550
4. Adjudicated	320	1507	1952	436	4215
5. Convicted	285	1214	1305	436	3240
6. Interned	122	509	552	115	1298
7. Bullied	1396	10280	1085	1082	13816
8. Beaten to madness	5	5	2	1	13
9. Burned houses	110	?	813	968	1891

(Note: The above table is incomplete because it has no data for Negush Region and for Greek occupied Macedonia on the eastern side of the Vardar River. Also there is no data for the theft and plunder of properties during this period, such as stolen valuables, theft of herds of sheep, goats and cattle, and the destruction of 45 villages and the residents who were forcibly taken from their homes.)

In fact, it was under these conditions that the regular Greek army Supreme Headquarters began its spring offensive and mass pogroms, initiated on April 9, 1947. During this period DAG, from separate squads and bands, grew into battalions. These battalions were led by various District Headquarters named after the mountain where they were stationed. DAG General Headquarters was not formed until October 28, 1946. The total DAG force on the eve of the enemy offensive was about 25,000 fighters, armed mainly with light weapons.

DAG General Headquarters grasped the idea behind the spring offensive and in a timely manner prepared to move the partisans away from Greece's northern borders. After being attacked, the Greek government was counting on the partisans to flee north into the neighbouring people's democratic countries where they would seek asylum. And if they did that then the Greek government would prove that the partisan forces were indeed assisted by the neighbouring countries and that it would be impossible for Greece to liquidate them, especially if they were reorganized, rearmed and sent back. Seeing that this might happen, DAG General Headquarters

ordered its forces to go south. To deprive the Greek government of its intentions, in February 1947 DAG General Staff ordered its battalions in Paiak, Kaimakchalan, Karakamen and Vicho to go south to Thessaly. The idea behind this move was to also show that there was a partisan movement in Greece, south of Macedonia and not just in Macedonia. Unfortunately these operations took place without preparing the Macedonian fighters and the Macedonian people who began to question DAG and the CPG's intentions, especially since this move took place shortly after the Macedonian and Greek partisan units were unified. Besides this, after the Macedonian units arrived in Thessaly their Macedonian leaders were replaced with Greeks, which caused much indignation among the Macedonian fighters. Some of the fighters who openly protested were shot on sight, as was the case with Giorgi Milev from the village Tsakoni, Meglen Region. Unable to endure this humiliation some DAG officers and soldiers decided to desert, as was the case with Major Adramanov from the village Patele, a major in the DAG Kaimakchalan battalion. He deserted in April 1947 in Thessaly and surrendered to the Greek government regular units.

2. Start of the offensive

In the first days of the offensive, a large part of DAG's forces were stationed in Western Thessaly in the Koziak-Agrafa terrain. The government army's aim, during the first phase of operations, was to bypass the larger DAG units and so, on March 9, 1947, the First Corps of the regular army began operations to clean up both sides of the Lamia-Karpenisi road corridor. Frustrated by the siege, the DAG fighters stationed in these areas transferred over to the rear of the enemy to Navpaktia and Dorida. In their absence the First Corps was able to secure its rear communication lines.

The Greek government began its main operations on April 22, 1947, involving over 12,000 infantry troops in addition to the artillery and aviation. These operations were carried out within a perimeter of about 300 km. According to statements made by the Greek government, DAG had around 3,000 to 3,500 fighters in the field. But even with its superior numbers and fire power, the Greek army Supreme Headquarters was unable to realize its objectives, mainly

to encircle and destroy the DAG units in this area, due to the following circumstances:

- a) DAG General Headquarters did not allow the enemy to surprise the partisans and gave them sufficient time to prepare a counter-plan.
- b) DAG, at this time, had excellent intelligence and reporting services in the villages throughout the territory.
- c) Its small formations and light weapons allowed DAG to manoeuvre rapidly and to avoid being encircled.
- d) The mountainous terrain with different heights and varying weather conditions lasted throughout the first phase of the offensive, prohibiting the Greek air force from carrying out successful flights.

According to a government report, released on April 25, 1947, DAG's losses amounted to 651 killed, 84 captured, 414 missing and 117 surrendered, for a total of 1266 casualties. On the government side, outside of the gendarmes, there were 31 killed, 80 wounded and captured, for a total of 111 casualties. However, according to DAG Headquarters in Thessaly, which led the operations on the terrain, the losses on both sides were as follows: DAG's losses amounted to 130 killed, 42 wounded, 39 taken prisoner, for a total of 211 casualties. The government army's losses amounted to 219 killed, 294 injured, 19 taken prisoner, 130 disabled due to freezing weather, for a total of 662 casualties. In terms of equipment, the Greek government lost 22 trucks and 3 tanks. At the same time 300 new fighters were mobilized by the partisans. (See newspaper: "Rizospastis" organ of the CPG Central Committee, May 13, 1947.)

The second phase of the spring offensive began on May 11, 1947 and was conducted along a 250 km horizontal front line. The front stretched from Mechovo in the west to Elasona in the east. During this phase of operations the aim of the government forces was no longer to circumvent DAG and to destroy it, but to prepare the ground to push the DAG units north. These operations involved about 30 Greek government battalions, aided by other units. The Greek government's objectives during this phase were:

- a) To push DAG units north and clear the ground for new bases, which would later be used as springboards for the third phase and for future operations;
- b) To deprive the partisans of important strategic positions, food and reserve fighters;
- c) To break the bond between DAG Headquarters in Western Macedonia with that in Thessaly.

The May 11, 1947 operations ended on schedule on May 19, 1947. Then, in mid-June 1947, the government army began operations in the Mount Olympus sector. The result: thanks to its large number of soldiers and heavy vehicles, the government army managed to realize its goal to take the ground it set out to take but failed to push DAG north, which now appeared in new positions. In a manner of speaking, the Greek government failed to accomplish its main goal; to expel DAG into the neighbouring northern countries and to give the Greek government and its patrons the validation they needed to convince the Security Council that they had been right all along; that Greece's neighbours were the cause of the problem in Greece.

When examining the Greek government spring offensive, we need to keep in mind that it was not a very easy venture and that DAG too did not escape being scathed. Many DAG fighters froze to death during the manoeuvres on the Niala mountain range. There was also Kartsiotis's detachment which was decimated by the Greek government forces while trying to return to Mount Koziak. DAG suffered similar losses during its attack on the city Grevena when its leadership made an attempt to put pressure on the enemy during the third stage of the spring offensive. D. Vlandas, former CPG Central Committee Minister in the Interim Democratic Government of Greece, remarking on DAG's activities during the spring offensive, said the following to General Markos, who then was DAG's Supreme Commander, about DAG's failures:

- a) That it was Markos who, in early 1947, gave orders to the DAG units stationed in the Hasia and Antihasia massif, sent there to occupy these positions outside of the free territory perimeter, to

remain there. As a result these units found themselves glued to their seats and did nothing.

b) Contrary to the Party policy, instead of remaining in Northern Greece and concentrating the DAG forces there, from where the enemy was going to throw the first strategic blow, Markos took the elite DAG units from Northern Greece and transferred them to the south near Athens, with the intent of meeting with the UN Inquiry Commission.

c) That Markos was directly responsible for the destruction of Kartsiotis's detachment because General Markos was the commander responsible for taking the Koziak Massif by any means possible.

d) That, at the time, DAG Headquarters and General Markos did not quite understand what the main objective of the enemy offensive was which, according to Vlandas, was not to concentrate on DAG's destruction but to eradicate the rural population of the mountain areas in order to cut off DAG from the people and from its source of power.

e) That in August 1947 General Headquarters, with its manoeuvring towards Zagoria in Epirus, did not return the majority of the DAG forces to Western Macedonia and to Western Thessaly, and did not attack the city Ioannina where, at the time, it could have had great success because the area's defenses were very weak.

We have to admit that there are some truths to these criticisms. For example, the erroneous manoeuvres in Zagoria, the failure to return the troops to Western Macedonia and Thessaly, or the deployment of the Thessalean units in permanent fixed positions before the spring offensive must have had some negative effects on DAG. However, we also believe that the CPG's attitude, as expressed by Vlandas, for the concentration of DAG's forces in Northern Greece was also fundamentally flawed. We can't completely renounce the positive significance of Markos's decision, in the spring of 1947, to order the majority of DAG's units to go to Thessaly, where at that time the movement was still very weak and DAG had greater room to manoeuvre. Also, Vlandas underestimated Markos's venture and

the effects it had on the members of the Inquiry Commission. While the Commission expected the disturbance to be on the northern Greek borders, it found it to be closer to the Greek capital. Given that the disturbances were further south, any attempts made by the Greek government to destroy the rural population in the Macedonian mountainous areas, in the spring offensive, sounded dubious. The criminal activities perpetrated by Zervas, Greek Minister of the Interior, and carried out by the regular Greek army, one month prior to the commencement of operations, were part of the Supreme Command's tactical move but not its ultimate goal. As for the criticisms for Markos Vafiadis's disobedience in concentrating his forces in northern Greece, we don't believe were fully justified. General Markos's idea that DAG units needed to be light and in small formations to make them mobile and act with ease on the ground was well justified and appropriate for that kind of warfare.

In any case, despite its weaknesses in the period from March 31, 1946 to September 15, 1947, DAG was involved in many operations which inflicted many losses on its opponent. This was also the period of time when the CPG used solid Marxist policies in the development of its armed forces and in the struggle which were completely different from those it employed at the end of the Greek Civil War.

According to the statistical review of DAG's "three and a half years activities", conducted by the magazine "Neos Kosmos", and published in September 1950 (pp. 601-602), in the period from March 31, 1946 to September 15, 1947, in its fighting with the Greek army, Gendarmes and the notorious MAI gangs, DAG was involved in 593 battles during which it killed 4874 enemy soldiers, wounded 2061 soldiers, captured 1329 soldiers and took 92 prisoners for a total of 8356 casualties. Material damage inflicted on the enemy included 17 tanks destroyed, 6 planes shot down, 1 cannon destroyed, 14 locomotives, 11 wagons and 6248 metres of railway mined, 68 bridges destroyed and 1640 metres of telephone lines cut. DAG seized 38 large 81 mm mortars with 1,268 shells, 57 small mortars, 10 machine guns, 342 automatic rifles, 2741 rifles, 326 semi-automatic rifles, 36 revolvers, 757 hand grenades, 44 radio stations, 6 field telephones, 571 horses and other booty.

In time and with much effort, the partisan units began to wear down the Monarcho-Fascist gangs and gendarme stations which acted as the torture chambers for the democratic citizens. The backbone of the Greek government forces consisted mostly of ferocious collaborators who not only escaped the wrath of the people's court but now were protected by the British interventionists, thanks to the power of the British tanks.

The period from March 31, 1946 to September 1947 was the most appropriate time for developing the armed movement and for the resistance to take power but, for subjective reasons, this was not done. Some light was shed on this during the discussion that took place during the CPG Central Committee 7th Plenum in April 1957.

In 1946, almost through the entire year, the top CPG leadership showed apathy toward the drama that was unfolding over ordinary people, especially over the former ELAS fighters. Even in early 1947 people were still asking: "When will Zahariadis seize power in Greece?" But Zahariadis's position steadfastly remained: "For now we go on creating power and not taking it." Once in a while he would say "We will see, maybe in 1948." In the meantime the CPG Party leadership insisted on focusing primarily on economic problems and reconciliation. Zahariadis at that time was against any violent resistance and forbade ELAS fighters from fighting back, even against the terror and violence perpetrated by the Monarcho-Fascists and former collaborators. There are some who say that the conditions for enlarging DAG were ideal at that time and DAG could have grown into an army of over 60,000 had Zahariadis allowed it. (This information was obtained from discussions with Markos Vafiadis during the April 1957 CPG Central Committee 7th Plenum, published in the April-May 1957 issue of the magazine "Neos Kosmos".)

The above information was confirmed by Leonidas Stringos also during the CPG Central Committee 7th Plenum in April 1957. Here is what Stringos had to say:

"At that time our opponent possessed only five divisions with 2,000 soldiers and 32 heavy machine guns each, for a total of about 10,000 soldiers and about 150 guns. If, during 1946 or early 1947, our Party

had skillfully manipulated the situation and started preparing for an armed struggle, with a firm policy for mobilization and increasing our military effectiveness, primarily the issue of reserves, one of the most important issues of the time, we would have been properly prepared to solve our problems there and then... But Zahariadis told us that we didn't need to have a force of more than 2,000 fighters in Macedonia. And as time went on the problem of reserves was getting harder and harder..." (Ibid p. 86.)

So, given the divergent direction in the very CPG leadership, about the course the Party was to take in relation to the armed struggle, and in spite of the subjective DAG leadership weaknesses, in terms of military skills and tactics in the conduct of the armed struggle against the government army, gendarmes and the MAI, it is indisputable that a big mistake was made to now allow DAG to grow. There can be one and only one reason for this. It was intentionally done by Zahariadis to give the government enough time to grow its forces to strengths needed to be able to defeat DAG along with communism in Greece and to "get rid" of the Macedonian population from Greek occupied Macedonia, all in one confusing conflict. During the summer of 1947, after the 1947 Communist Party meeting in Strasbourg had taken place, Miltiadis Porfirogenis, the Strasbourg Greek delegate, began to toy with the idea of a free territory for the interim government, a DAG General Headquarters headed by General Markos, which had already been adopted, and so on. All these ideas point to the initial stages of establishing a people's government in the liberated territory.

On August 10, 1947 DAG General Staff adopted the first acts that related to a people's government under the title: "Πράξεις και απόψεις του Γενικού αρχείου του ΔΣΕ", July-August 1947 and issue II of "Πράξεις και απόψεις ..." September-October 1947. At this point we need to underline the following fact: The resistance movement leadership in Greece, during the years 1941 to 1944, provided no tangible recognition of the national minorities in Greece and did not pass any acts, resolutions, or offer any guarantees to them in the highest bodies of the National Council and PEEA (Political Committee of National Liberation), which adversely affected their combative mood, especially that of the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia which led to the secession of

the Macedonian armed units in the fall of 1944, which then led to DAG Headquarters condemning them for their act. This was completely wrong and a historical mistake in the struggle. But, was this done intentionally? Of course it was! Had the Greeks recognized a Macedonian national minority and credited it with fighting against the Fascists, then the Atlantic Charter would have applied to them and they would have been granted their rights, including the right to form their own independent Macedonian state and secede from Greece? But remember, as far as the world was concerned Macedonians did not exist and the communists in Greece made sure it stayed that way.

Article 4 of the legislative provisions prepared by DAG Headquarters for the territory of free Greece literally says: “All Greeks, men and women are equal and have equal political and civil rights. The national minorities have equal civil and political rights and may preserve and develop their culture, language, religion, ethnic education, etc...”

Article 5 is also important because it explicitly underlined that discrimination against a person’s nationality, religion, race, or democratic conviction would be considered a crime. This provision, of course, was also against fascist theories, fascist organizations and fascist activities. (Acts adopted and decisions made by DAG General Staff on August 10, 1947.)

In the same documents there was discussion on how the people’s government was to be organized in the liberated territory, i.e. in choosing the people’s traditional localities, in choosing district committees, national defense and public order. Also formulated in the same discussions were ideas on how to secure the rights of Macedonian people in Greece, the recognition of their participation in the National Liberation Movement in Greece and their contribution to organizing the people’s national government. The discussion also included ideas about how to introduce an educational system and other institutions in the free territory, including setting up new bases in the trade union movement. Also included in the initial acts were provisions for opening Macedonian schools in the free territory. As a result, in December 1947, the first school was opened in the village German, Prespa Region, where the first

Macedonian teachers were given instructions in the Macedonian language. A few months later, 87 Macedonian language schools were opened in the free territory around the Vicho and Kaimakchalan regions where more than 10,000 Macedonian children attended Macedonian language classes. Also, most of the People's Councils in the free territory were composed of Macedonians, mainly from the Lerin and Kostur Region Boards.

3. CPG Central Committee 3rd Plenum

On October 15, 1947 the CPG Central Committee held its 3rd Plenum in the free territory of Greece, directly after the hostile spring offensive, under the following circumstances:

The Athens government, now headed by the old liberal Temistokles Sofoulis, conducted extensive mobilization and created a huge police apparatus as well as a large armed civilian formation but still failed to liquidate DAG. On the contrary, DAG came out in larger numbers, morally stronger and even more experienced in the conduct of military operations and actions, even though it was discouraged from growing. However, let us not make the mistake that, while DAG was limited in its growth capability, the Greek government forces kept on growing and, in no time, managed to achieve a relative balance with DAG. Then, at the same time, by using rigorous measures, the Greek government sought to isolate DAG from its support, thus minimizing its supply potentials and isolating it from securing new reserves. DAG was depending on the villagers for almost everything; its food, soldiers, communication networks and so on, and it was quickly being isolated from them. All this was directly attributable to the CPG's reluctance to act while it could, when it had free access to the people, in the period from early 1946 to the first half of 1947.

To resolve the above-mentioned unfavourable conditions, the CPG Central Committee, during its 3rd Plenum, decided to create a compact liberated territory in Kozhani Region, basically in the area surrounded by the mountains Pind, Pieria, Karakamen, Kaimakchalan and Vicho. A free area that would be defended at all costs until the spring of 1948, at which time DAG was to expand to 65,000 fighters. This unfortunately proved to be completely

unrealistic. According to General Markos: “That was wishful thinking on our part and did not necessarily reflect the reality of the day...” (“Neos Kosmos”, August 1950, p. 476-477.) The unrealistic assessment of the situation by the CPG Central Committee Politburo and by DAG General Staff on the one hand, coupled with the weak DAG leadership on the other, plus, due to a series of DAG defeats as a result of DAG attacking a number of cities including Grebena, Mechovo and Konitsa, DAG’s perspective of raising an army of 50,000 to 60,000 fighters, as required by 3rd Plenum decisions, remained only a wish.

DAG’s failure to take Konitsa, even after losing 650 fighters, had exposed the DAG leadership’s unrealistic expectations and the expectations of those who made the decisions during the 3rd Plenum. More than 2,000 fighters were lost in those unsuccessful attempts to take the three cities. The resistance leadership, which signaled the establishment of the interim government as early as July 1947, did not establish the government until December 23, 1947, which not only came too late but proved to be too hasty, premature and without first providing the necessary prerequisites; a free territory with urban centres and a regular army capable of defending its capital and its government. After all that fruitless effort the provisional government then sought recognition from the people’s democratic countries, which it did not receive.

Unfortunately all the “wrong” decisions Nikos Zahariadis, CPG General Secretary, had made and all the failures that resulted from them, he attributed to General Markos. It was General Markos, said Zahariadis, who gave us inflated data during the 3rd Plenum on DAG’s forces and capabilities on the situation in Northern Greece. The Politburo did not have accurate data when it made its decisions during the Plenum. By this time there were deep disagreements regarding the tactics and strategy DAG utilized between Zahariadis and Markos. Their disagreements reach their climax after the battle for Gramos in November 1948, which resulted in Marko’s removal from his position as commander and chief of the resistance forces, and the removal of all those who supported him.

Notes:

It is important at this point to mention that, along with the extensive operations committed against DAG units by the Greek government regime, there were also hundreds of thousands of people from the Macedonian cities and villages sent to the infamous island death camps, the likes of Makronisos, Giura, Aistratis, etc. The Greek military courts were busy convicting people and sending them to the island concentration camps on trumped up charges concocted by government informants and professional liars. This was another method the Greek government used to deprive DAG of its recruits. These kinds of measures even caused resentment in the non-communists as was the case with Athens independent MP Hristakos who, in his newspaper “O dimokratikos”, on January 4, 1951, in an article entitled “Greek Bastilia”, among other things, wrote: “...as an honored National MP for Athens, I promised to fight against the ‘gifts’ that have been bestowed upon our people in our country by the tyrannical oligarchy. ‘Gifts’ such as ‘emergency measures’, ‘fascist tyrannical provisions’, ‘internments’, ‘prisons’, ‘banishments’, ‘torture’, ‘concentration camps’, the ‘Makronisos camp and place of torment’...”

During the entire two years in 1948 and 1949, the local Lerin newspaper “Eleniki foni”, was always full of declarations of “repentance” made by many poor and unfortunate resistance fighters who were sent to Makronisos and tortured into submission. There were also those who were forced to beg the village priests to go to the authorities on their behalf and beg them to release them under the promise that they in turn would “voluntarily” pick up weapons and fight against the notorious “Slavs” and communist “bandits”. These types of “stereotypical declarations”, however, were usually written by paid individuals and sounded something like this:

“Declaration of repentance

We, the undersigned named Grozdanis Naum, Paros Vasilios born in Dendrokhori (D’mbeni), Maros Pavlos, Triandafilis Ioanis, Stambolidis Stavros, Biekaris Ilias, residents of the village Armenohori, Georgiadis Konstantinos, Stasinis Vasilis, born in the village Atrapos and a resident of Armenohori, Terpinis Sotirios,

Traikos Hristos, Zaikos Kostinos, Naum Lazaros, Zaikos Georgios, residents of Atrapos, Utkaris Nikolas resident of St. Petka, Ioanis Ioanidis born in Aitos, Minkos Evangelos born in Aminteon (Sorovich), Paparusis Pavlos resident of Vevi (Banitsa), (and twenty other names of people from Lerin and Kostur Regions), were arrested for preventive measures between May 5 and 10, 1949, as people who had no confidence in the national forces which are waging a struggle against the communist bandits. We feel the need to let you know that we never belonged to the anti-national organizations CPG and EAM, which we reject with indignation. Today we find ourselves in the re-educational centre in Makronisos and we now clearly understand the treacherous goals of the Slavo-communists and are ready to prove that we have been fed with clean natural feelings and hate the Slavo-communists that inflicted so much sorrow on our beloved homeland..." (Newspaper "Eliniki foni", September 3, 1949.)

On August 27, 1949, the same newspaper published a judgment pronounced by the Lerin military court, which condemned 49 people to death and 9 people to life imprisonment. Included among those sentenced to death were Kelimbaris, Kl. Buktsis, Kl. Katsikis, St. Diksos, Ilias Butis, Gr. Frangotsis, Il. Dzhodzhos, Il. Gatopoulos, Tr. Grkos, Vas. Georgopoulos, Pan. Matkari, Toma Nikolaidis, Theodor. Dzhodzhos, I. Iliadis, Nik. Hadzikonstantinou, Kon. Tsigos, Il. Papanastasiou, Il. Rozos, H. Hatzis, Evst. Ganoustav, Spyropoulos, St. Kindos, Theodor Romantsi, I. Dimkos, Ap. Mbatsos, I. Souperis, G. Hadzhitrifun, P. Hadzhidimitri, Ev. Manangounidis, Ap. Petrakis, P. Skordas, An. Skordas, V. Kerpilidis, H. Dzhodi, I. Katsoras, Sot. Staios, M. Patsoulis, St. Kolitsis, Pas. Mintouli, Mahi Lazaridis, Pan. Boshkos, Tr. Beliaskas, Pavl. Hrisostomidis, Ir. Georgiadis, Sp. Pavlidis, Is. Vafdis, G. Htistidis, St. Hadzhikonstatinou, Is. Aitas and Tr. Veliaskas, all from Strovichka Region.

In May 1948 the Greek fascist government regime went as far as liquidating George Polk, an American journalist working for Colombia, because, after arriving in Solun, he tried to come into contact with DAG Headquarters. With his arms and legs tied his body was thrown out into the sea, in the Gulf of Solun, which caused great indignation in the progressive American public.

CHAPTER TEN - First NOF Congress – The Epic of Gramos

NOF's 1st Congress was held on January 13, 1948 in the free territory of Greece, in Western Macedonia, during which NOF's accomplishments, for its three years of existence, were summarized. The Congress took place under the following conditions:

On the one hand we have the Greek government and its fascist regime, with assistance from the USA, spreading terror against the democratic population, especially against the Macedonian people. On the other hand we have a completely paralyzed economy because the Greek government violently evacuated the rural population and moved it to the impoverished cities, exposing the people to hunger and misery and to mobilization into the government forces to fight against the democratic movement in the country and against DAG.

As a small illustration of what was happening in Greek occupied Macedonia, here is an excerpt from a Kostur District report for the period between May and December 1947:

Villagers shot - 37, people who died in prison – 4, deaths from bombings – 5, from artillery – 13. In total for the region: killed - 59, interned – 107, arrested - 365, bullied - 1650, gone mad from torture - 5, women and girls raped – 63. Three villages evacuated, 110 homes and 406 barns burned, 28 villages bombed, 412 houses looted, 1840 heads of sheep and goats and 462 heads of cattle robbed. (Newspaper: “Edinstvo”, organ of the NOF District Board for Kostur Region, January 1948.)

In the meantime, the out of control right-wing nationalist gangs continued to blockade Macedonian villages, kill peaceful citizens and burn down Macedonian houses. Here are some examples:

On January 17, 1948 the armed right-wing gang from the village Dragomantsi blockaded the village Lukovits and arrested and killed 13 innocent people for no reason and without a trial. Included among those killed were Petre Dzhopov and Andon Karabatakov. Included among others mistreated by the armed right-wing gangs was Dimo Tsrebrenov from the village Tsakoni who, after being

taken to Sobotsko, was tortured until he went mad. He died a little later. Included among those brutally beaten to death were Ito Toshavcharov and Bozhin Samardziev. Six more people from the village Tsakoni were arrested during the spring in 1948. They were betrayed by Ioannis Grigoriadis – Floros, Agrarian Party (ACE) District Committee Secretary. The six were later sentenced to death by the military court in the city Ber and executed. They were Lazo Tsakonchev, Giorgi (Gushi) Tsakonchev, Giorgi Petsov, Giorgi Itov Baltakov, Giorgi Vasilev Baltakov, Mladen Popdimitrov, Georgi Dimitriev Hadziev and Dimitar Satchiev. After they were brutally killed their bodies were taken away and they were never found. (It is interesting to note at this point that in March 1907, many of the parents of those who were killed like beasts in the spring of 1948 were massacred by a mixed Turkish and Greek “andart” band because they were active in the Macedonian people’s struggle for national liberation.)

On February 25, 1947, Greek armed civilians and soldiers attacked the village Lagen, Lerin Region, and plundered it. They burned down 16 barns, ransacked and burned down Evdokia Ivanova’s house and raped one girl.

The infamous Skordas gang roaming Enidzhe-Vardar and Gumendzhisko Regions, led by Garapis, mayor of the village Kalinita, and by the Vlach Argir from the village Plasnichevo (Kria Vrisi), reigned terror against the peaceful Macedonian population in these regions. Greek armed civilians and gendarmes with whips in their hands were shouting: “Bulgarians you will die!” According to a report by the NOF District Board for Enidzhe-Vardar, compiled for its May 20, 1947, 1st Plenum, “The Macedonian people had never before experienced this kind of humiliation...” The same report also said:

“The idleness and economic crisis are unbearable for the people who survived another terrible period after the 1941-42 crises. After Todor Doichinov - Morava, NOF District Secretary for Enidzhe-Vardar, was killed in March 1947, a terrible situation befell the region.

Entire villages were liquidated and the Greek military courts in Ber, Lerin, Kozhani and other Macedonian towns are issuing death sentences every day... Terror has indeed reached new heights...”

Back in the spring of 1947 hundreds of villages were forcefully emptied of their populations. In Negush Region alone, 17 villages were emptied. Included among the villages that were emptied were Gorno Seli, Dolno Seli, Kutsufliani, Trasilovo, Golema Reka, Ianakovo, Nea Strandzha, Rupan, Arkudohor, Chernevo, Iavornitsa and Tursko Selo. These rigorous measures, taken by the enemy, could not remain without negative effects on the morale of the population. After the summer of 1947, DAG began to increasingly lose its connection to the population and found it difficult to obtain its food supply, new recruits and maintain its communication networks, without which the democratic movement could not survive.

Considering all the above facts one should have arrived at the logical conclusion that the 1st NOF Congress was convened in order to turn this organization into a mobilizing Machine to mobilize all the Macedonian young men and women into the war effort in accordance with the decisions made during the CPG Central Committee 3rd Plenum with regards to DAG fighter reserves. It was meant for us to believe that NOF was the only organization expected to solve the recruitment problem because at that time it was increasingly becoming obvious that the best period for mass mobilization of fighters, primarily from the pool of former ELAS fighters, remained unfulfilled and that the Greek proletariat living in the cities remained apathetic towards the appeal “All to arms – everything for victory!” Most of the Greek proletariat preferred to go to jail rather than go to the mountains and join the resistance. This was confirmed during the NOF 1st Congress when a resolution was passed which literally said: “All Macedonian people, both men and women, must enter DAG’s ranks. Everyone, by all means possible, must help DAG meet all its needs. The Slavo-Macedonians can and must acquire more forces to strengthen DAG. They need to enter DAG’s ranks en masse...” (The original document, written in Greek, is in the author’s archives.) This, however, was the whole truth. The real story, as subsequent events have shown, is that Zahariadis intentionally delayed the recruitment process so that

recruitment could take place after the Greek government had gained its strength to fight back, and at a time when only Macedonians were available to join DAG's ranks. By this time the Greek proletariat was well aware that the tide in this war had changed and the communists in Greece had no chance of gaining power. So Zahariadis, once again, manipulated NOF to do his dirty deeds and involved the entire Macedonian population en masse so that he could fulfill the British and Greek dream to have a Macedonia without Macedonians.

In order to "realize" the recruitment needs, as per the above-mentioned resolution, all NOF personnel were mobilized into DAG in 1948. All Macedonian men and women in the liberated territory capable of fighting were also mobilized, mostly by force. Even some children from the children's homes in the people's republics outside of Greece, ages 14 and 15, were mobilized into DAG's reserves and some were sent to the front to fight. Why did Zahariadis do this? First he sent the Macedonian children away to save them, then he brought them back to have them killed? He, and everyone around him, knew very well that there was no chance in hell that he could win that war! So why sacrifice an entire generation of Macedonian children? Was this not "genocide"?

These children were not only very young but also untrained and inexperienced. They were sent to fight at the front against a well-trained, well-organized seasoned army which decimated them on contact. The children were sent away to the Eastern Block democracies, presumably to save them. But in effect what happened was that their mothers were now free to join the war effort and Zahariadis made sure every one of them was mobilized into DAG's ranks and sent to the front. Now the Macedonian home was left completely desolate and has remained that way since the cursed war ended. This is how Britain, Greece and the United States wanted it and this is how it was done. A Macedonia without Macedonians! This was a criminal act directed specifically against the Macedonian people.

On the other hand, the CPG leadership took advantage of the Congress to also score another point. By removing the NOF leadership and sending it to DAG's ranks, the CPG opened up new

opportunities to replace the Macedonian leaders with its own trusted people who acted like a Trojan horse and who in the years of strained relations between NOF and the CPG (1945-1946) were the most bitter opponents of NOF. Now they were in charge of it. At this point NOF completely lost its independence and was transformed into an obedient body, a tool for performing CPG and DAG tasks. The attacks against NOF that took place during NOF's 1st Plenum on August 8, 1948 were again repeated with the removal of Keramitchiev and Mitrevski from the NOF leadership. They were removed under the pretext of in-fighting. Mihailo Keramitchiev at the time was President and Paskal Mitrevski was Secretary of the Main NOF Board. They were replaced with Stavre Kotsevski as Secretary and Vangel Koichev as President. Both these individuals were long standing NOF opponents and were against the movement for national rights for the Macedonian people.

On April 29, 1948 the 1st AFZH Congress was convened. This Congress had the same objectives as the NOF 1st Congress where, this time, the CPG succeeded in convincing the Macedonian women to join DAG as was decided by the CPG Central Committee during its 3rd Plenum, with regards to solving the reserve problem for DAG. Now the Macedonian women too were coaxed into joining DAG and fighting at the front. This particular CPG move, while attempting to include the entire Macedonian population into the war effort, managed to only nominally include the proletariat from the Greek population, particularly members from the Greek proletariat who belonged to EAM and other leftist coalition democratic parties and organizations. This CPG isolation also increased with the formation of the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece, established on December 23, 1947, during which time the CPG leadership promised the Macedonian people that after it installed the interim government in Greece, the rights of the minorities would be looked after, a promise which never materialized.

1. The Epic of Gramos and Malimadi – 4th CPG Central Committee Plenum

In mid-1948 the Greek government, with copious American aid, was preparing to deliver a decisive blow against DAG in Greek occupied Macedonia. All other operations, including those in the

Peloponnesus, Epirus and Rumeli, were of secondary importance. The aim here was to stop DAG from mobilizing new fighters and to tie down its local units where they stood.

The enemy plan for a decisive venture in Gramos was outlined as follows:

- 1) Continue with the forced evacuation of villages located near the mountain ranges, in order to completely isolate DAG from its food and recruits;
- 2) Create local National Guard formations to protect the cities, the communication lines and other military facilities in order to free the regular army and dedicate it to carry out operations against DAG;
- 3) Strengthen the terror groups in the areas under government control in order to fully liquidate all political resistance organizations;
- 4) Perform limited scope operation to prevent DAG from mobilizing new fighters;
- 5) Intensively work the regular units in order to build new military facilities near the main battle zones. For that purpose the Americans built large airports to accommodate heavy bombers in Solun, Kozhani and Kavala in Greek occupied Macedonia.

The main goal of the government forces was to break DAG's hold in the area north of Pindos (Gramos) and to push DAG north to the neighbouring countries and thus end the civil war in Greece.

The intention of the Greek regular army supreme command was to have a decisive battle on the northern part of Mount Pind. This certainly was no secret to DAG Headquarters, which undertook parallel moves, as summarized by the following points:

- 1) To nail down the enemy's main forces before they had a chance to organize defensive positions against DAG in this mountain range. This would give DAG's units time to become more active in other areas;

- 2) To exhaust the opponent's main operating forces, and
- 3) During a critical moment, for DAG to initiate a counteroffensive and liquidate and get rid of the opponent from this country.

CPG General Secretary Nikos Zahariadis and General Markos Vafiadis were divided on the question of DAG's tactics and strategy, even on the eve of the 1948 great battle, when their division reached its climax with General Markos being removed from office as Supreme Commander of DAG Headquarters and as President of the Interim Democratic Government of Greece in November 1948. General Markos was of the opinion that DAG should not engage its opponent in a direct and frontal manner but rather remain in a constant hit and run defensive position. Markos was of the opinion that DAG should remain in its current situation but intensify guerrilla warfare. Unfortunately his idea was rejected by Zahariadis and his Central Committee supporters, as well as DAG Headquarters, because guerrilla warfare was characterized as an outdated form of warfare in modern terms. According to Zahariadis, DAG was already a regular army and should act like one.

General Markos also held those views during DAG's evaluation at the CPG Central Committee 7th Plenum held in 1957, during which he said: "DAG could not have been turned into a regular army by giving speeches and by writing articles about it, or by simply having a desire for it to be a regular army. By calling DAG a regular army and by removing it from its solid defensive positions, Zahariadis not only threw away its tactics of defense and permanent positions, but also began to create a terrible danger for the very existence of the democratic armed resistance movement in general." ("Neos Kosmos", April-May 1957, p. 60.) Unfortunately, as was mentioned earlier, Zahariadis's decision prevailed and DAG accepted to fight the battle in Gramos which lasted more than two months. The ratio of forces was ten to one and the material and military equipment was fifty to one in favour of the government army.

For the DAG fighters the battle of Gramos was truly epic. The enemy suffered heavy casualties with 5,125 dead, 16,000 wounded, 439 captured, 98 voluntarily surrendered and 1,200 deserted. DAG

also shot down 35 aircraft, destroyed 18 tanks and 5 cannons. Involved on the government side were 23 brigades with a total of 70,000 troops, 100 artillery pieces as well as many tanks and the entire air force. This means that the Greek government tossed around 100,000 troops against an estimated 10,000 DAG fighters armed with only light weapons and 15 mountain cannons.

In the two month campaign the government forces, indeed, became the masters of North Pind but failed to break DAG despite the fact that it suffered heavy losses. Gramos was an undeniable success for DAG, even if it paid for it with heavy casualties. However, that success still did not bring it to liquidate the enemy and to seize power in Greece. This was similar to the success that DAG experienced in its August 21, 1948 manoeuvre when its main forces escaped a hostile attack and managed to pull away into Vicho and Malimadi.

During the Malimadi sector battle, launched on September 2, 1948, the enemy employed four infantry brigades with tanks and aviation but suffered heavy losses. An entire division was decimated and its panic-stricken remnants fled along the Bistritsa River and into the city Kostur.

In his book “The anti-bandit War 1945-1949”, reserve General D. Zafeiropoulos, with rare objectivity, acknowledged that the government forces in the sectors “Rabitina” and “Buchi” on Mount Malimadi were completely decimated by direct hits from DAG’s artillery. The events in Malimadi, that played out between September 10 to 12, 1948, were discussed during a public trial in Athens on October 19, 1957 when plaintiff General Vasilopoulos, with his argument against Zafeiropoulos, author of the book “The anti-bandit War 1945-1949”, admitted that he himself was the commander of the unit that suffered defeat, and he himself was witness to the panic suffered by his troops, which twice abandoned their commander and that he was forced to issue orders to kill any soldier who left his position, and that his orders were not carried out. He explained that the withdrawal was dictated by the fact that the battalions were layered one after another.

Lieutenant Colonel G. Fakiris, a witness at the Athens trial, said that the defeat at Mount Malimadi was due to the low morale of the soldiers and that the losses amounted to about 50 percent... (See newspaper: "Macedonia" October 19, 1957 under the title: "The trial of two generals has begun".)

Both major operations, in Gramos and in Malimadi, played out on the territory of Western Macedonia, where the Macedonian population was massively made available to help the DAG veterans both at the front lines and behind the scenes. Everyone in NOF, AFZH and NOMS was mobilized to aid DAG in transporting ammunition, in gathering food for the fighters and in transporting the wounded. Men and women in the thousands were exposing their lives to danger from enemy artillery and aviation, while working around the clock making trenches and other defense facilities for DAG at the front line that stretched from "Bela Voda", along the Yugoslav border all the way to Mount Malimadi and Vicho. Unfortunately all this massive participation and all these sacrifices made by the Macedonian people during the war effort were not recognized by the CPG Central Committee during its 4th Plenum held on July 28 and 29, 1948 while the fighting in Gramos was still going on.

The only thing that was mentioned in the 4th Plenum about the Macedonian contribution was that the Macedonian people struggled in a common cause of freedom. The Macedonian participation in the struggle for liberation was nation-wide. This struggle that spilled the blood of their sons and daughters has won them the right to a people's democratic future... (See newspaper: "Nepokoren", no. 12, August 23, 1948.)

During the CPG Central Committee 4th Plenum, the CPG issued an imperative task to build up DAG's reserves. A few days later the Interim Democratic Government of Greece issued a directive to mobilize all women and girls in the liberated territory. These measures directly affected the Macedonian population because the free territory was in Lerin and Kostur Regions where only Macedonian villages existed. The mobilization of wives, whose husbands were already fighting in DAG, and the mobilization of young children, returned from the children's homes in the people's

republics, negatively affected the morale of the fighters who had already become aware of the fact that DAG had no hope of recruiting reserves from the urban proletariat, and that the CPG had already lost its authority among the masses, and that people no longer believed in the CPG's revolutionary and vanguard role. During the CPG Central Committee 7th Plenum, Petros Roussos said: "Zahariadis threw the Party into the second armed struggle without the masses. However, politics without the masses is an adventurous policy..." ("Neos Kosmos", April-May 1957, p. 91.)

The emergence of defections from DAG's ranks, especially during the fall of 1948, were not due to anything other than the CPG leadership's mistaken policies regarding the course of the armed struggle in Greece. In order to refute Markos Vafiadis's stand that partisan warfare in the country could only be conducted under specific conditions and that, according to Markos, operating DAG like it was a regular army was disastrous for the armed movement, Zahariadis, in the winter of 1949, ordered a string of attacks for DAG. He ordered DAG to attack the cities Karpenisi, Sobotsko, Voden, Lerin and Negush in order to mobilize new fighters and to prove to Markos that he had been right all along. But all these attacks ended in a defeat for DAG. These Pyrrhic victories in Karpenisi and Negush and defeats in Lerin, Sobotsko and Voden forced DAG to return to its bases decimated. And all those persons DAG forcibly mobilized, as a rule, more than half deserted before reaching the base for training.

2. CPG Central Committee 5th Plenum – NOF 2nd Congress

During the CPG Central Committee 5th Plenum, which took place on January 9, 1949, CPG General Secretary Zahariadis expressed his views in this Plenum, as he did in the previous plenum, namely that DAG should test its strength through a frontal attack against the regular Greek government army. His wish was to break the bourgeois regime and seize power. By saying this Zahariadis gave the impression that DAG was ready and capable of such a feat, which gave rise to the motto "1949 will be the year of victory, and the tomb of Monarcho-Fascism and American imperialism". This kind of talk on Zahariadis's part continued to delude the fighters and the people in the liberated territory, from whom now Zahariadis

expected even more sacrifices. But as it turned out, this Plenum was nothing more than an act of deception to “get rid” of the Macedonian people from Greek occupied Macedonia. At this point even a layman would have known that DAG’s inevitable defeat was soon approaching. But to further instigate the Macedonian people to become even more involved, Zahariadis modified the CPG’s earlier view on the “Macedonian Question” from “providing equality to minorities” when the CPG comes to power, to “National self-determination for the Macedonian people”. On January 30 and 31, 1949, on the specifics of this issue, during the CPG Central Committee 5th Plenum, among other things, it was said:

“In Northern Greece the Slavo-Macedonian people gave everything for the struggle and are fighting with extraordinary heroism and admirable self-sacrifice. There should be no doubt that, as a result of DAG’s victory and the victory of the National Revolution, the Macedonian people will be able to realize their full national goals as they themselves want for which they are shedding their blood today...” (“Greece on the road to victory before the fateful CPG Central Committee 5th Plenum”, p. 20.)

The above position, taken by the CPG, regarding the “Macedonian Question” was fully in line with Marxist-Leninist principles on “national questions”. It would have been sincerely welcomed had it happened in 1941 when the CPG leadership started the resistance movement against the occupiers. With a revolutionary position like that the CPG would have had no problem attracting the Macedonian people to its side. Every Macedonian who aspired to live in a free and independent Macedonia would have voluntarily joined the resistance movement. However, to take such a position in the most critical phase of the struggle, in 1949, when people had lost all hope of having a democratic victory in Greece, was an insult. At this point it was more than obvious that completely different goals were pursued, sinister goals, and the Macedonian people were needed to pursue them. These suspicions were confirmed later during the NOF Central Board Plenum which took place only three days after the CPG Central Committee 5th Plenum, during which, to put it mildly, this scandalous resolution was reached, in which the following was stated:

“NOF’s 2nd Congress will be the Congress proclaiming NOF’s new programming principles, principles that hold century-old desires of the Macedonian people, principles that proclaim the unification of Macedonia into one united country in a people’s democratic federation of Balkan nations. This will be a reward for the Macedonian people who have fought a long and bloody fight...” (“Nepokoren”, February 1949.)

The fact that the first Bulgarian daily, the newspaper “Trud”, had accepted and welcomed this resolution speaks volumes about this scandalous Plenum, during which shady deals were made in which the BRP(k) (Bulgarian Communist Party) delegation played a major role in the push for preparations following Zahariadis’s suggestion regarding the “Macedonian Question” for a united and independent Macedonian state within a Balkan federation, which the BRP(k) had accepted.

What does all this mean? The Bulgarians ignored the existence of the People’s Republic of Macedonia within the Yugoslav Federation, that was gained by Macedonian blood, and adopted the 1948 GRP(k) Resolution passed by the Executive Bureau in June 1948 which denied the Macedonian people in Pirin, Bulgarian occupied Macedonia, the right to be a separate nation with national rights. By doing this they not only denied the Macedonians their rights but also promoted the theory of a Greater Bulgaria with Macedonia in it. Then, a little later, they had the audacity to support a “United Macedonian State” in a people’s democratic Balkan federation. Why? It is clear that the Bulgarians did not want an independent Macedonia. No sort of federation was possible at the time. Which means that if the Macedonians did not enter any form of federation they could not realize their century-old ideals of forming a united and independent Macedonia.

With this “insulting” slogan, turned primarily against the already existing Macedonian state (People’s Republic of Macedonia), Zahariadis tried to convey to the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia that the CPG was the only way to “self-determination” and that the Macedonians in the Republic of Macedonia and the Yugoslavs were standing in their way and sabotaging them. It didn’t take too long after that for Zahariadis’s

propaganda apparatus, especially targeting the Cominform, to blame DAG's defeat on Tito. He alleged that it was Tito who attacked DAG in Greece from behind, which caused DAG's defeat. The fact that this was a well-planned defeat, which was so easily attributed to Yugoslavia, speaks volumes. It was not by chance that, in the spring of 1949, the Mount Vicho massif bordering Yugoslavia was called the "bulwark" of liberty and the "grave of Monarcho-Fascism", which was clear even to a layman, with no military experience, that Vicho was a mountain very inaccessible to tanks and armoured cars on which the government army heavily depended. So, if not the government army then who "defeated" DAG? But because Vicho bordered Yugoslavia it was easy for Zahariadis, in subsequent smear campaigns, to blame Yugoslavia for allegedly striking DAG from behind which was fatal to the outcome of DAG's struggle.

NOF's 2nd Congress, held in March 1949, it would appear, was used to strike against Yugoslavia which, according to Zahariadis, allegedly acted with hostility toward DAG, thus gradually preparing public opinion that Yugoslavia and only Yugoslavia was responsible for the defeat of the resistance movement in Greece. In this dirty work, names with secular authority were used such as Jean Cassou, Connie Ziliakus and others.

For propaganda purposes, to reduce the importance of the already existing Macedonian state within the Yugoslav federation, to reduce the CPY authority acquired among the Macedonians in Greek occupied Macedonia and to place a wedge between the Macedonians in the two states (Yugoslavia and Greece), Zahariadis attempted to solve the Macedonian Question by Marxist revolutionary means. In the summer of 1949 he formed a separate Macedonian Communist Party Organization KOEM (Communist organization of Aegean Macedonia). KOEM was immediately engaged in the propaganda campaign against Yugoslavia, labeling dedicated Macedonian fighters like Ilia Dimovski Gotse, Mihailo Keramitchiev and others as traitors to the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia. (See KOEM Resolution.)

Meanwhile Soviet diplomacy, through the United Nations and through contacts in Washington, London and Paris, tried to prevent DAG's total defeat, proposing negotiations between the Greek

government in Athens and the Interim Democratic Government of Greece. But the Athens government, being well-aware of its superiority and the current force ratio on the battlefield being in its favour, would not accept the talks and demanded DAG's full and unconditional capitulation.

In August 1949, during the Greek government offensive in Vicho and Gramos, DAG suffered major losses and was forced to withdraw into Albanian territory. Most of the fighters, who fought bravely and were willing to go back into the battlefield, were not aware of the "behind the scenes affairs". They only found out about the so-called "bitter Tito betrayal" after the war was over, when Zahariadis himself told them that "Tito had betrayed them and robbed them of their victory". They all immigrated and scattered all over the world feeling bitter and betrayed, believing that Tito had done this to them. Eight years had to pass before the CPG Central Committee 7th Plenum took place in 1957, during which time it was revealed that the betrayal was a lie. There had been no "infamous blow from behind"! It had all invented by Zahariadis and his cronies in order to deceive the world and the Greek public to make them look "elsewhere" for who was actually responsible for DAG's defeat. ("Neos Kosmos", no. 4-5, April-May 1957, pp. 37-118, CPG Central Committee 7th Plenum.)

CONCLUSION

Twenty years after the guns went silent in Gramos and Vicho, where today thousands of graves are found without names, it is finally possible to talk about this war and to look for answers to the many questions and shed some light on what happened in the period from 1946 to the 1949, later termed the “Greek Civil War”. It is now a good time to draw up appropriate conclusions regarding the launch of the second armed struggle in Greece, even if it was provoked by the restored reactionary regime, and ask: “Was it a reckless adventure or a Great Power game?” In either case the Macedonian people paid the heaviest price for it.

Nikos Zahariadis took control of the CPG in June 1945, after which time he ran from one contradiction to another in his assessment of the political situation in the country. He was unsure of what line to take and what targets of action to commit to. In 1946, on the one hand, he talked about reconciliation between the democratic left and the right-wingers and on the other he directed the democratic grassroots organizations to abstain from voting in the March 1946 election, which would have allowed the CPG to maintain its legal status. At the same time Zahariadis’s MP’s could have taken a political stand in the Greek Parliament and publicly criticized the political right’s undemocratic policies and the Greek Civil War could have been avoided. The CPG leadership demanded that a representative government be established with EAM participation and, at the same time, it called for “self-protection” and for drawing up a new armed struggle. And when the CPG Regional Committee for Macedonia sought CPG approval for establishing armed units from the Macedonian population, exactly when the time was right, it too was rejected. The Politburo’s answer was “there is no need for that, our call for an armed struggle was only a bluff to blackmail the right...”

In 1945 and 1946 NOF was repeatedly attacked by both the CPG and EAM leaderships and accused of being “autonomist”, of working for the British Intelligence Service and so on. But when there was a need for NOF’s armed units, created in Kaimakchalan, Paiak and Vicho, NOF was recognized as an “antifascist democratic organization for the Macedonians”. Then, over time, NOF’s

leadership was gradually made submissive and subordinate to the CPG. In other words, NOF became a tool for the CPG. Then when the CPG needed to spill more Macedonian blood it used NOF as a propaganda tool against the Macedonian people and against their national ideals. There was no other purpose other than to spill more Macedonian blood when the NOF and KOEM Resolutions were taken for “Creating a Macedonian state”, an impossible feat given the circumstances, and for turning the people in Greek occupied Macedonia against the people in the Republic of Macedonia. There was no other purpose than to create hatred between the Macedonians when NOF was slandered and “Ilinden” was created, by none other than Zahariadis himself. These were signs of a guilty person trying to put blame elsewhere.

Given their past experiences in Greece, especially after living through the Metaxas dictatorship, the Macedonian people saw a protector in the CPG. The CPG was the only Party prepared, at least in principle, to meet the Macedonian people’s national, cultural and social rights. This is why the Macedonian people never missed an opportunity to help the CPG with its undertakings during the last thirty years from 1920 to 1950, during which many Macedonians sacrificed their lives. But what was their reward for those sacrifices? Contempt, discrimination, exploitation, abuse and the Macedonian fighting spirit being taken advantage of to advance the Greek cause. Over and over again the CPG confirmed its distaste for the Macedonian people all throughout the anti-fascist war, through its capitulatory attitude towards Greek bourgeois parties and towards British politics in the Mediterranean. During the Greek Civil War we witnessed no fewer cases than before of discrimination and inconsistent implementation of policies pertaining to the rights of the Macedonian people, even to those fighting for the CPG in the Democratic Army of Greece, of whom more than half were Macedonians. There was not a single high ranking Macedonian officer in DAG, or in DAG Headquarters, or in the interim democratic government of Greece. The only Macedonians who served in the interim government were put in those positions only a month before DAG was liquidated and after the interim government was reorganized. Paskal Mitrevski was appointed Minister of supplies and Vangel Koichev was appointed member of the Military Council. Many times the Macedonian fighters asked if they could

sing Macedonian songs during their marches but they were not allowed to because, according to their Greek officers, the Greek public would think DAG had Bulgarians fighting in its ranks. Zahariadis himself was critical of Macedonians wanting to sing Macedonian songs, as stated in an article written by P. Baines under the initials K. published in “Dimokratikos Stratos”.

What results did the second armed struggle produce for the Macedonians? More than 13,000 Macedonian DAG fighters were killed. Hundreds and even thousands of Macedonian patriots were executed by the Greek military courts in Enidzhe-Vardar, Lerin, Ber, Kozhani, Solun and other sinister places. Thousands of Macedonians were maimed in damp prison basements in Edi-Kule, in Solun, on the island Krv, in the dry and infamous islands Aistratis, Gavdos, Folegandros, in the Makronisos and Giura concentration camps, where several hundred Macedonians contracted tuberculosis and others went mad from torture and psychological abuse. And those who remained alive were required to swear loyalty to the same regime that tormented them; that is if they wanted to provide bread for themselves and their families. And on top of that, some 45,000 Macedonian civilians fled the horrors of the Greek Civil War to save themselves. They had done nothing wrong, yet to this day they are not allowed to return and they too must drink from the same bitter cup as the others; having to live abroad as political immigrants while their properties and homes are confiscated by the Greek government and given to “Greeks with Greek national feelings”. And all this has been happening since then to this day while Greece, every year, pledges to the UN Declaration on Human Rights.

The following Macedonians died of torture on the dreaded Giura Island prison camp:

- 1) Bardzhov Dimitar from the village Zagorichani, Kostur Region,
- 2) Bardzhov Lazar from the village Chegan, Voden Region,
- 3) Bogov Filip from the village Ostrovo, Voden Region,
- 4) Zidrov Metodi from the village Zagorichani, Kostur Region,
- 5) Kuzinov Trifon from the village Tiolishta, Kostur Region,
- 6) Lipitkov Andon from the village Liubetina, Lerin Region,
- 7) Malinov Dore from the village Banitsa, Lerin Region,

- 8) Miov Trifon from the village Liubetina, Lerin Region,
 - 9) Likov Mihail from the village Patele, Lerin Region,
 - 10) Paunov Lazar from the village Liubetina, Lerin Region,
 - 11) Vasil Traikov from the village Chereshnitsa, Kostur Region,
 - 12) Chochov Tome from the village Grache, Kostur Region,
 - 13) Shalov Kuzman from the village Zagorichani, Kostur Region,
 - 14) Iunchov Stoian, from the city Lerin, Lerin Region,
 - 15) Ianchev Petre from the village Ostrovo, Voden Region.
- As well as many others

And what did the Macedonians want from 1913 onwards, after they found themselves in the Greek state? The most elementary things! To be recognized as equal citizens in the country in which they paid taxes, to serve in the army; participate in wars when it came to defending the common homeland for the Greeks. And what danger would the integrity of Greece be in if the Macedonians were given these rights? How would it endanger the Greek state if Macedonians spoke, without fear, their native Macedonian language, educated themselves in Macedonian schools, prayed to God in their own churches, had their own cultural and educational organizations, just like the Turks have in Western Thrace and just like the Jews, Vlachs, Albanians and others nationalities in Greece have? There would be absolutely no danger. On the contrary, Greece will only win their sympathy and devotion, their gratitude because they will live with the knowledge that their sacrifices are recognized and are made for their country's fate. They will want to live in communion with the Greek people and will have the freedom to develop their national culture as an equal nation.

EPILOGUE

There is not a paragraph in this book that does not scream “the Greek Civil War was nothing more than a perpetrated war, a concocted war, a controlled war... designed to manipulate and involve the entire Macedonian population in Greek occupied Macedonia in order to permanently remove it from its ancestral home, by any means possible.”

The Macedonian involvement in World War II was not about “Communist ideologies” or about alliances or obligations to the Great Powers. It was simply the next stage in the long struggle for “liberation from oppression” and to fulfill a longing for freedom, re-unification and self-rule. The Macedonian contribution in fighting against Fascism is not only under-emphasized but also misinterpreted by historians.

The Macedonian people, during the Second World War, rose on the democratic side and fought against fascism for the liberation of the states in which they lived. The Macedonian people, like other people in the Balkans, fought to liberate their homeland and thus earn their place in the world. This cannot be ignored and must be recognized and recorded in the annals of history.

Word of a Macedonian Partisan movement in Greek occupied Macedonia spread like wildfire. People came out on the streets to freely speak their native Macedonian language, to sing songs and write Macedonian plays and poetry. The Partisans even set up Macedonian schools and taught children patriotic songs, poems and Macedonian history, using local Macedonian dialects. The younger generations, for the first time, saw written words in their beloved, sacred Macedonian language. The newfound freedom brought happiness to the lives of the oppressed Macedonian people who welcomed the Partisans into their villages as “our own boys and girls”. The new found confidence and strength projected by the Macedonians terrified the Greeks, especially the gendarmes and the collaborators. For a while they were no longer a threat.

The Germans and Italians did not care one way or another about Macedonian affairs as long as there was no trouble for them.

Macedonian interest in Partisan activities continued to climb, bringing new recruits and volunteers to the cause. Youth organizations were created with young men and women recruited to be the eyes and ears of the community and to help defend the villages. Many young volunteers of military age were recruited and trained to perform policing and civic duties in the newly formed organizations.

But once the war (WWII) was over the Macedonian people were betrayed again. In their zeal to divide the world into spheres of influence, Stalin and Churchill decided to put Greece under British influence even though Greece, at the time, was in communist hands.

After this deal was made Britain asked Greece to disarm the partisans and get rid of the Macedonians. It's not hard to believe that Churchill would want Greece out of communist hands but it is hard to believe that he would want the Macedonians out of Greek occupied Macedonia, right?

Ideologically I would say that at the time the Greeks were 80% pro-communist. The groups that established the resistance movements were all communist organized and so were the armed units of ELAS (the Greek resistance army), among which were Macedonian fighters.

Was all this inspired by the Soviet Union....?

Well perhaps... But as I mentioned earlier, the Macedonian people were fighting to free themselves... still believing that if they helped the Greeks liberate themselves they would throw a crumb or two towards them, to at least recognize them as Macedonians. It was foolish and dangerous but when they saw wolves in sheep's clothing they mistook them for sheep. But the Greeks were no sheep...

The Macedonians expected recognition because of the communist philosophy...believing that everyone had the right to self-determination. But when issues came to a head about the "Macedonian question", the communists and so-called progressive Greeks did say that "the Macedonians are a minority in Greece and

they will achieve equal rights as one of the peoples in democratic Greece”.

However, there was also the Atlantic Charter which offered self-determination to anyone who fought against Fascism on the side of the Allies and yes, the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia fought against the Fascists on the side of the Allies. ELAS was part of the Allied force in Cairo. The British had established a centre of Greek activity in Cairo where a Greek army, navy and air force operated under British command. Much of the ELAS force was composed of Macedonian fighters.

According to the five principles of the Atlantic Charter, all people who fought to liberate their lands from the Fascist occupier had the right to fight for their national freedom and create their own state. The Macedonians took up arms to do exactly that, to achieve the right to free themselves. The Macedonians were prepared to die to the last man to achieve exactly that. But even though they fulfilled the Atlantic Charter requirements for self-determination, by willfully and voluntarily fighting against the occupiers and disarming the Fascist groups inside Greece, the Macedonian Partisans in Greek occupied Macedonia received no recognition and no rewards.

No one can dispute the fact that it was the Macedonians who disarmed and disbanded the so-called Fascist counter-bands just as no one can dispute that proportionally more Macedonian fighters joined the struggle and fought harder than the Greeks to drive the occupier out. Yet still the Macedonians received no recognition and no reward; not even a mention in history.

The Atlantic Charter offered the Macedonian people a country of their own, which called for separating from Greece and no Greek was willing to see Macedonia leave Greece. No Greek, communist or not, was going to say “I am going to help give Macedonia away...”

So, if no Greek was prepared to allow an independent Macedonia then the least they could have done was create a federal Greece, just like federal Yugoslavia.

We could have had a Greek federation with two Republics, Greece and Macedonia, just like we had the Republic of Macedonia under a Yugoslav Federation of five republics. It would have solved many problems. Unfortunately the Greeks have this inherent fear, introduced to them by Metaxas, I think, that somehow the “Slavs” are going to “steal” their precious Macedonia and that they are not to be trusted. And basically everything after that took a turn for the worse for the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia.

While the Macedonian people who once lived under Serbian occupation achieved their human rights just like the Atlantic Charter promised, the Macedonians in Greece not only lost their promised rights but, in the long run, lost their homes and became exiled and drifters in this world.

WHY A GREEK CIVIL WAR HAD TO TAKE PLACE

Before we continue with what happened to the Macedonian people, I want to take a moment to explain why the Greek Civil War took place and who the architects behind it were. I will provide evidence to back my claims.

Allow me to come right out and just say it:

I believe the Greek Civil War was not a Greek Civil War at all, it was a war perpetrated against the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia to get rid of the Macedonians once and for all.

If the reader finds this hard to believe then the reader should also find it hard to believe that a million Jews were murdered in gas chambers and that two atomic bombs were dropped on Japan; on a civilian population. But these atrocities did happen. So why is it so hard to believe that the Greek Civil War was a perpetrated war; a means to get rid of the Macedonian people from Greek occupied Macedonia?

Do we think we Macedonians are something special?

Just take a good look at our history and see for yourselves how special we are. We have been taken through several planned genocides in the last century or so alone. These were not secret acts perpetrated against the Macedonians that no one knows about? These genocides were perpetrated in the open and yet no one who had the power to do something has done anything. Why?

These acts of genocide have been purposely committed against the Macedonian people for one purpose; to eradicate them from their native land in Greece. What prevents us from seeing the truth is our own inability to see that there are people out there who want to do us harm.

For generations we have been programmed to believe that everyone is good and would do us no harm... Even during moments when we witnessed atrocities we still believed that “no, they will not do that to us because they are our friends...” Our own value system is keeping us from seeing the truth and as long as we allow our own values to guide us in dark alleys, we will be victims. The Macedonian people have allowed themselves to be victims because of their belief system that refused to allow them to see the emptiness of the seemingly sincere promises made to them.

PROOF THAT BRITAIN WAS BEHIND THE GENOCIDE IN GREECE

Earlier I mentioned that the British wanted ELAS disarmed and the Macedonians fighters removed from ELAS. Why do you think the British wanted the Macedonians disarmed and out of ELAS?

Because they were planning to get rid of them, push them out of Greece. I did not believe this myself until I found the following information in a declassified British government document. Here is the document in its entirety:

[Balkan States – Report 1 - December 11, 1944

Mr. Leeper to Mr. Eden
Athens 24th November, 1944

Sir,

I HAVE the honour to submit the following comments on Research Department paper of the 26th August, 1944, on the subject of Macedonia. (1)

2. The two formidable Macedonian problems in which Greece is concerned are: (a) that of Greek relations with the Slav world as represented by Serbia and Bulgaria, both of whom must be expected in the immediate future to be under strong Russian influence and to have Russian sympathy for their aspirations; and b) that of the surviving Bulgarophone minority in Western Macedonia.

3. The former problem turns chiefly on that of Serbian and Bulgarian access to the Aegean, the subject discussed in paragraphs 35-40 and 41-43 of the paper under reference. There is clearly no case for handing over to Slav Powers any part of the North Aegean coast, which in 1940 had nowhere anything but an infinitesimal minority of Slav inhabitants. On the other hand, the strategic position of Greece here, even with Turkish backing, is very weak, vis-à-vis the Slav world, so that even in her own interests it behooves Greece to come to terms with her northern neighbours. The only possible solution-however difficult in practice under present conditions-seems to be that referred to in paragraph 51, namely, a return to, and preferably an extension of, the system of free zones. A Serbian free zone at Salonica is not difficult, but a Bulgarian zone at Kavala, or even at the outlying Alexandropolis, would probably be out of the question for a considerable period to come, in view of the passions aroused by the atrocious conduct of the Bulgarians in Northern Greece since 1941. It remains, nevertheless, a Greek no less than a Bulgarian interest that Bulgaria's desire for access to an Aegean port should be satisfied so far as possible; since otherwise Bulgaria's southward political aspiration, which are now largely artificial, will be kept alive by the real and continual irritation of an unsatisfied economic need. (How far this need might be met by the alternative of a free zone at Durazzo is a matter for separate study.) It may further be pointed out that the grant of free zones at her northern ports would, in fact, be of direct financial benefit to Greece herself through the revivifying influence of increased trade on the life of those ports in general and

through the restoration of a natural degree of intercourse between these Greek ports and their Slav hinterland.

4. The problem of the Western Macedonian Bulgarophones, who are briefly mentioned in paragraph 7 of the paper, also remains serious and formidable, in spite of its limited dimensions. This minority, which extends through the region from Florina and Kastoria through Siatista to the plain of Yannitsa, has proved exceedingly unreliable during the war. Satisfactory data are not available, but it appears from events during the occupation that the dissatisfied minority must be considerably larger than is suggested by Greek census figures; and it is certain that successive Greek Governments have shirked facing the problem and have preferred to persuade even themselves that it did not exist. On the assumptions (1) that the policy of His Majesty's Government is to treat Greece as the most important Balkan country from the point of view of British interests, and to support those elements in Greece which are most stably pro-British and (2) that Greece does not wish to belong to a Balkan Federation in which there would be a large Slav majority, it would appear to follow that Greece had better not contain any Slav minorities at all. And since the amputation of the Slav areas in Western Macedonia and their annexation to a Slav Federation is a practical impossibility and would also be economically disastrous for Greece. It would follow that, difficult as it may be, a home must be found for perhaps 120,000 Slav Macedonians north of the Greek frontiers of 1941.

5. I have sent copies of this dispatch to the Resident Minister at Caserta, to Mr. Houstoun-Boswall at Sofia and to Mr. Broad at Bari.

I have, &c. R. A. Leeper.

(1) See "Balkan States" print section, 26th August, Section 6.]

I would like to draw your attention to part 4 of the report, particularly the sentence "It would follow that, difficult as it may be, a home must be found for perhaps 120,000 Slav Macedonians north of the Greek frontiers of 1941". This was a shocker for me which sent me into a tail spin. Before that I believed that Greeks were doing this, tormenting us, all on their own. After that I began to look at the situation in a different light.

And why were the British planning to get rid of the Macedonians from Greece?

Well that too is in the above report. Take a look at part 2. Britain could not stand Greece, its protectorate, being influenced by Russia. Greece had to be under British influence, at any cost, even at the extinction of the Macedonians in Greece.

You see, Britain does not want to allow Russia access to the Mediterranean waters and does not want it to encroach on its sphere of influence. It is clear from the report that Britain does not trust the Macedonian people and passionately despises Russia.

Now that we have established who was behind the idea of getting rid of the Macedonians from Greek occupied Macedonia and why, let us have a look at how they were planning to do it.

First it had to be done nice and legal for both Greece and Britain and second it had to be done out of necessity. The Macedonians had to leave voluntarily. But how? Surely one cannot ask 120,000 people to leave their homes and go to another country? Surely you can't force them to leave and not be noticed?

One way to do it nice and legal and out of necessity was if the Macedonian people were either convinced or instigated to pick up arms and fight against Greece in a bid to liberate themselves or to carve out Greek territory. In this scenario Greece would have no choice but to fight back and defend its territorial integrity.

That kind of war, a controlled war that Greece was sure to win, if conducted on the territory where these Macedonians lived, would also create a flood of war refugees. These refugees would then be driven to flee their homes and exit the Greek borders to save themselves. Then all Greece had to do was close the border and ban them from returning, thus exiling them forever. Problem solved!

Isn't that exactly what happened?

But how do I support this theory? In retrospect how can I be sure that what happened was not purely a coincidence?

THE GREEK CIVIL WAR WAS A PERPETRATED AND CONTROLLED WAR

To show that this was a perpetrated war we need to examine and analyze what happened, how this war was started, how it progressed and how it ended. We need to look for evidence and patterns that support this theory. But first let us look at some critical points that support my arguments.

1. The so-called Greek Civil War was unnecessary. The Great Powers, Russia and Britain, had already decided that Greece would remain 90% under British influence. It would remain intact with Greek occupied Macedonia in it. Since super power Russia was in agreement and a part of this deal, who was going to support the communists in Greece to gain power? Nothing can be achieved without the support of the Great Powers. The communists in Greece should have known that. And I believe that they did, at least the top communist party leadership knew. But it seems, as it turned out, gaining power in Greece was not the real communist objective.

Russia's position in all this was clear: Stalin wanted to interfere in capitalist affairs even though it had been decided and he had agreed with the Western Powers that: Greece in its entirety, Greek occupied Macedonia included, was going to be 90% under English and American influence and only 10% under Soviet influence. This was done under the Yalta Agreement which guaranteed that no socialist system would be implemented in Greece. This Agreement negated and made the need for the Greek Civil War unnecessary. So if the War was not about "installing" socialism in Greece, then there was only one other option left: internationalize the problem, crush the communists and legally ethnically cleanse the ethnic Macedonian population in Greek occupied Macedonia and then replace it with the new Asia Minor colonists and settlers, commonly known as "Prosfigi". But how?! By instigating the Macedonian population to pick up arms and start a war.

2. Nikos Zahariadis, the person who started the so-called Greek Civil War, was a German prisoner. He was freed by the British and sent to Athens on a British plane to take over the Communist Party of Greece. Now ask yourself why would the British send a known and influential communist to Greece to take over the communist party, especially when Greece was in the hands of the communists already? It doesn't make sense. But what does make sense is that it was in Britain's interest to weaken the communists in Greece, not to strengthen them. The only thing that actually makes sense is if Britain sent Zahariadis to Greece to control the situation. In the end, that is exactly what happened.

3. Being in control of all of Greece, why would the communists sign the Varkiza Agreement passing control to its arch enemy, the British supported Greek government of Athens?

The Varkiza agreement was signed on February 12, 1945 requiring all Partisan and other bands to demobilize and surrender their weapons. The British, once again, confirmed their allegiance to the Greek Government by giving Athens full political and military support, committing their willingness to fight to prevent a Partisan victory. The biggest losers of the Varkiza Agreement were the Macedonians. As soon as the Agreement was signed, all anti-Macedonian laws were back in force and the Macedonian people lost all that they had gained during the German occupation, including the right to form their own state as per the Atlantic Charter. The Greek Communist Party made absolutely no effort to safeguard Macedonian rights in its agreements with Britain. This was not only a betrayal to the Macedonian people but it also left them vulnerable to persecution from the Greek Fascists.

4. Why was NOF, the Macedonian Liberation Front, created in Yugoslavia and sent to Greek occupied Macedonia to prepare for a new conflict right after World War II ended and before the Greek Civil War had started?

The ELAS fighters who earlier had left Greek occupied Macedonia and went to Yugoslavia came under the leadership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and the Communist Party of Macedonia (CPY/CPM). It was from these fighters that, in Skopje

on April 23, 1945, the organization NOF was formed under the initiative of the CPY/CPM and sent to organize the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia in preparation for a new conflict - the Greek Civil War.

This shows that the Greek Civil War was foreseen before it happened. It was anticipated. Yugoslavia knew about it and was probably part of it. The top Yugoslav leadership must have known about it. And how was that possible? Could they see into the future? The only way Yugoslavia would have known was if Yugoslavia was part of the conspiracy to get rid of the Macedonians from Greece. And surprise, the classified document I posted earlier was dated December 11, 1944, which means that, at the diplomatic level, this plan was already in motion by 1945 when NOF was created. There was no way that Britain could have gotten rid of the Macedonians from Greece without Yugoslav help. The fact that Yugoslavia put together NOF to start a new war in Greece proves it.

NOF was created on April 23, 1945 before the Greek Civil War was even thought of. The Greek Civil War did not officially begin until March 31, 1946 by a decision of the CPG 2nd Plenum held on February 12, 1946. It did not happen by accident, it was planned.

After the Second World War, the Greek Civil War was a new test for the Macedonian people. The war had a dual purpose; one, to expel the Macedonian population, and for that reason the war was located inside Greek occupied Macedonia; and two, to liquidate the Communists who obviously were grossly misinformed and wanted to create socialism inside the British Protectorate of Greece.

5. When NOF was unable to motivate the Macedonian people to re-arm themselves and go to the mountains, the Greek political right escalated the so-called “white terror” campaign and began to torment the Macedonian population to no end.

The war (WWII) was over, so why was there a need to torment the population? Most people after World War II wanted to end all hostilities, to rest and live in peace. They were craving peace. The Macedonian people were craving peace. They had had enough of wars. That is why the Macedonian people were reluctant to pick up

arms and go to the mountains. When NOF failed to motivate the Macedonian people to rise and fight, the Greek reactionaries stepped in and resorted to using Metaxas's tactics to terrorize the people and get them to fight back or leave their homes and run off over the border. This was the expected reaction.

[“The idea here was to have the Macedonian people raise arms against Greece so that Greece would have ‘no other choice but to defend itself against an aggressor who wants to carve out parts of its territory’! Yugoslavia, for the sake of having good relations with the West, naturally prepared the groundwork through the creation and indoctrination of NOF and AFZH (Women’s Anti-Fascist Front) with aims at starting an armed uprising in Greek occupied Macedonia. The Macedonian people, however, did not want to fight and initially refused to participate. To get them motivated the Greek right, the Fascists, pitched in and initiated what was later termed “white terror”. Greeks indiscriminately began to kill people and burn properties and homes. Fearing for their lives many Macedonians fled to the mountains (Vicho and Gramos) where they were armed and trained to protect themselves. And this is how the conflict was started. This was a war that would be fatal to the Macedonian people; it had to be an ideological war in order to involve the international factor (US and Britain); a war that Greece would have no choice but to fight in order to save its territory. This was going to be a legal genocide because these ‘Slavs’ were prepared to carve out Greek territory! The Macedonians were told they needed the guns to protect themselves but as soon as the shooting started they were told they were fighting to ‘re-unite their Macedonia’ and after Yugoslavia abandoned them they were told they were fighting for their human rights to gain equality with the Greeks. Then, when the war became very hot, they were told to fight for their lives; ‘to fight or die!’...”] (Stoian Kochov).

There was not a single Macedonian in those days who not only publicly proclaimed that he or she was fighting to re-unite Macedonia, but many Macedonians were made to believe that it was possible to do that! And why do you suppose they believed that? Because the architects of this war, through NOV and AFZH, told them so..., naturally through lies and deception!

Again, there was no reason for starting this war because it had been decided by the Great Powers that Greek occupied Macedonia was staying with Greece. The most likely reason for starting this war, that actually makes any sense, was to eradicate the communist menace and to exterminate the Macedonian population from Greek occupied Macedonia.

6. In the course of the Greek Civil War: (a) the Macedonian people were led to believe that they were fighting to re-unite Macedonia and to gain their human rights, even though they were robbed of their rights afforded to them by the Atlantic Charter, (b) the Greek people were led to believe that the Partisans were actually “Slav bandits” and, with the help of the “communists”, were attempting to carve out Greek territory and give it to Tito’s Yugoslavia, and (c) the outside world was led to believe that this was a Civil War - Greeks fighting against Greeks.

There is not a single word in Western history that “Macedonians” were actually involved and that they were fighting for their human rights. Why the three different narratives about one and the same war?

The British and the Americans were the “overseers” and “architects” of this war; couldn’t they tell who was involved and what the war was about? According to the classified documents from that time, and I have hundreds of them, the British and Americans knew exactly what was going on and who was fighting against whom. Why then call it a Greek Civil War? To cover up the truth?!

Even though, proportionally, the Macedonian people were a larger factor in this war, they were never mentioned. Why? Was it done to cover up what was done to them? To cover up that they suffered genocide at the hands of the British and Americans?

[“What do the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia remember about the Greek Civil War and how do they interpret what they remember? Many I have spoken with remember what they had done and the events that took place around them. It was an intense moment in time. Human life did not matter much and hardly anyone cared to pay attention outside of trying to survive. A giant

wave hit them and swept them away. In their struggle to survive they listened to the guiding voices coming from above and did what they were told! They remember these times as an era of brutal propaganda with destructive goals calling out on the people and wanting more of their blood... After the war ended it was followed by a half a century of fear and silence... no matter where these people were... at home or exiled abroad. This fear and silence kept them from talking about what happened during the war... about the genocide they experienced... a forgotten genocide... an unreported genocide... an un-registered genocide with world institutions and with the international community... a guilt free genocide for those who had committed it!”] (Stoian Kochov).

7. The so-called Greek Civil War was a controlled war that was concentrated in Greek occupied Macedonia and in the rural areas where Macedonians were the majority. But apart from that, what qualified it to be called a “controlled war” was the fact that this war was guided strictly by Greek hands and their British and American handlers.

It would be no exaggeration to say that of the 25, 000 fighters mobilized into the ranks of the Democratic Army of Greece (DAG), 50% were Macedonians, most of whom were forcibly mobilized.

Looking at this in proportion, it means that half of the fighters came from the Greek population of 6 million and the other half came from the Macedonian population of no more than 300 thousand people.

So in terms of percentages, the Greek population contributed 0.21% of its total population while the Macedonian population contributed 4.17 %, that ratio being 20 to 1. In the long term, throughout the entire Greek Civil War, the total Greek contribution amounted to 18-20 thousand fighters while the Macedonian contribution amounted to 15-20 thousand fighters. The sum of the armed forces possessed by the Athens regime, on the other hand, was more than 300,000 soldiers belonging to all branches and armed with the latest weapons.

Let us also not forget that on March 1, 1947 - U.S. President Harry Truman announced the decision to proclaim the “Truman Doctrine”

for engaging the U.S. in Greece. Greece was granted credit and advanced military equipment to equip its government army. At the same time Van Fleet, an American General and anti-guerrilla specialist, was made available to the Greek government. (See: Todor Chepreganov, 1997/178.)

“... Immediately after the ‘Truman Doctrine’ was proclaimed, information services were established in Greece by FBI and OSS agents. An American military mission was also sent to Greece. Invited by the Greek government, representatives of the United States began to arrive in Greece in order to assist in the preservation and sovereignty of Greece as a nation. They were there unarmed with aims at regulating material assistance and providing advisory functions. Upon its arrival in Greece, however, the American mission took over the most important headquarters functions in the army, navy and aviation as well as the organization and management of military operations, which were established to fight against the rebels...”

Given the number of Macedonian fighters involved, the lack of Macedonian leadership both in DAG and in the CPG, the organizational tactics, the number of governments involved, the location where the war took place, do you still think this was a grass roots “Civil War”?

Also, given the numbers and proportion of Macedonian fighters involved, don't you think the Macedonian fighters deserved their own leaders? Why were Macedonians not allowed to lead their own people in battle and in the political field? Why was every aspect of this conflict strictly controlled by Greeks on both sides, with the British and Americans pulling the strings on both sides? Why were the Macedonians not allowed to fight freely and for Macedonian interests? Why did they have to be tightly controlled by Greeks on all sides? The entire top DAG and CPG leaderships, the people who actually made all the decisions, were Greek. The Greek leadership determined what battles were going to be fought and where. The Greeks then led those battles. The Greek leadership determined and controlled the composition of fighters in the units and what units to deploy where. The Greek leadership determined how many Macedonians could be armed; who and how many could join DAG,

and so on. In other words, the Greeks controlled this war by keeping a tight leash on the Macedonians. Why?

Because this was a “controlled war” especially designed so that the Macedonians would fail and be driven out of their homeland.

One more thing...

“It is well known that in 1947 DAG had not resolved either the issue of military supplies or the issue of arming its fighters with ordinary battle machine guns and other battle assets, as well as ammunition. It also remains to be explained why, on the one hand, Zahariadis gave Markos orders to increase the number of fighters in DAG to 60,000 while Ioannidis gave Markos orders to acquire arms for only 4,500 fighters. It is also well known that Markos, in 1947, ended up sending home thousands of Macedonian fighters who wanted to voluntarily enter the ranks of DAG.” (See: “DAG-strategic issues and management tactics,” G. Maltezos Dzhumerkiotis, p. 354.)

The question here is: “If this was not a controlled war, then why did General Markos conduct an illegal mobilization only in Macedonia, mobilizing young and old and wreaking havoc on the Macedonian population?”

8. Speaking of the Greek leadership, let us examine who were the top leaders in Greece who led the Macedonian and Greek partisan forces. Who were the top leaders who led the Communist Party of Greece and the Democratic Army of Greece?

The two top leaders were Nikos Zahariadis, whom I mentioned earlier, and General Markos Vafiadis. They were the leaders of the political and military pillars of the rebellion or of the one side of the Greek Civil War. Both Zahariadis and Vafiadis were Asia Minor colonists deposited in Greek occupied Macedonia in the 1920's.

Nikos Zahariadis was born on April 27, 1903 in Edirne, Eastern Thrace. His father was employed as a clerk at “Razim”, a French commercial tobacco company based in Constantinople. From 1911 to 1912 Nikos Zahariadis lived and attended school in the “Ibin Paiko” settlement in Skopje, where his father worked as a

representative of the “Razim” Company. In 1913 he moved to Solun. In 1922 and 1923 he worked as a sailor, a job which took him to the Soviet Union where he became a member of the Communist Party. In 1924, with the exchange of populations between Turkey and Greece, Zahariadis’s family was moved to Greece. In 1924 he visited the famous Communist University of Eastern European nations, KUTVE in Moscow. Nikos Zahariadis was leader of the Greek communist movement and secretary general of the CPG from 1936 to 1956. Zahariadis treated the CPG like a cult and had absolute confidence in Stalin and his Communist Party, which he believed to be infallible. He himself admitted to this. Zahariadis committed suicide in 1973 while serving a prison sentence in Sorgun, Siberia.

General Markos Vafiadis was born in the village Tosi near Ankara, in Asia Minor, and was planted as a colonist in Greek occupied Macedonia in 1922, a man who we, again and again, meet throughout our history, who, for some reason that escapes me, we see as some sort of “great legend”, when it is well-known what he told the magazine “Epikera” about us Macedonians when he returned to Athens. Markos, at best, was an ordinary person; he was no General let alone the great general who headed the army with more than 50% of the soldiers being Macedonians. He was also not a Greek... he was a pseudo-Greek at best, just like Zahariadis.

And to add insult to our injuries, when Markos returned to Greece after the Greek Civil War had ended, he was welcomed with hugs by the Athens press in Athens airport, as the Chief of Staff of the armed forces of Greece who fought in the Civil War. At that point a journalist from the weekly “Epikera” asked him a question alluding to the “struggle” and if it was worth it. Markos replied: “The sense was that the Slavo-Macedonians were driven out of the northern parts of Greece and that Macedonia remains Greek.” (See “Nova Makedonija”, February 25, 1992.)

This was said by Markos Vafiadis, the main culprit who led DAG during the so-called Greek Civil War and who contributed to this disaster in which so many lives were lost. He was a colonist from Asia Minor brought to Greek occupied Macedonia. His role in the war was to lead DAG as a General and, as he said “he fought to

preserve Greece by driving the Macedonians out of their homeland"... This has been our fate so that the Christian Turkish colonists could have more of our lands and Greece could live in the glory of knowing that Greek occupied Macedonia was only populated by "pure Greeks and Greeks by genus"... even though none of them are Greeks... But that does not matter! What matters to the Greeks is that there are less Macedonians in Greece today!!

"And this is how this colonist dog, General Markos, was prepared to solve the Macedonian National Question. And we, the Macedonian army, gave ourselves to him to lead us to our death." (Stoian Kochov, a partisan under Markos's leadership.)

During the Second NOF Congress, held on March 25, 1949, just prior to DAG's liquidation, Zahariadis said: "You Macedonians have a right to secession, within a Balkan federation..."

But what did Stalin recommend, most likely based on what was decided between Stalin and Churchill in Yalta and in Moscow from October 5th to the 20th 1944, during the division of spheres of influence of the Balkans between the Great Powers? Stalin's clear and undeniable position was that the USSR was against Zahariadis's decision to announce the creation of a "United and Independent Macedonian state within a Balkan Federation" passed during the CPG Central Committee 5th Plenum.

Stalin's dislike of this was made very clear in the correspondence files between the USSR leadership and Chernishov, Soviet Ambassador to Athens.

In his speech, which he made during the 6th Plenum, Nikos Zahariadis said the following: "... And here we need to openly say that, if provocateur Tito's role was known in 1946 the CPG would not have taken a resolution to take up arms and enter the War. It would have been assigned to another time and by a different method of struggle..." (See "I trihroni epope tu DAG, 1946-1949", p. 422.)

Zahariadis here not only put the blame on Tito for his own failure but also identified Tito as one of the culprits in this disaster.

“They should stop telling us that we need to respect Zahariadis’s Testament otherwise known as the ‘Communist Pledge’ for a ‘United Macedonia’, which was nothing more than a ruse to draw us into the communist camp so that we would be wiped out to the last one! The Greeks understand why Zahariadis did this! Why can’t some Macedonians? Why are they still beating the communist drum and asking us to respect someone who tried to destroy us... to the last one?” (Stoian Kochov)

So at this point I need to ask. Why would two Christian Turkish colonists deposited in Greek occupied Macedonia, who were given illegally confiscated Macedonian lands to live on, want to help the Macedonian people liberate themselves? The Christian Turkish colonists were the very so-called Greeks who had occupied Macedonia and were living on confiscated Macedonian lands. What did they and their kind think would happen to them if Macedonia was freed from them? Wouldn’t they be thrown out of Macedonia? So why do we Macedonians think they were “helping” us when we very well knew they were “hurting” themselves? Who can we blame but ourselves if we allowed our enemies, the very people who replaced us in our native lands, to lead us?

About the only thing that makes sense in this scenario is that the Christian Turkish colonists and settlers led us to our destruction in order for them to acquire more of our homes and lands, which is exactly what happened! The Macedonian people were driven out of their homes and native lands during the so-called Greek Civil War and replaced by the colonists, the likes of Zahariadis and Vafiadis.

9. The February 12, 1949 battle for Lerin was one of the bloodiest battles in the so-called Greek Civil War, which was unnecessary because the partisans were already losing the war. But Zahariadis insisted on capturing Lerin because, as he said, if the Partisans won this battle and captured a city then they would be taken seriously by the outside world. So Zahariadis was granted his wish.

The available forces for that battle were as follows: In its composition DAG had brigades 13, 103, 14 and 107. It also had the school of officers, one mining battalion, one sanitation battalion and one battalion for transferring the wounded. DAG had approximately

5,354 soldiers at its disposal. The government forces stationed in Lerin numbered about 4,000 soldiers. After about eight hours of fighting DAG suffered devastating losses: 334 dead, 1500 heavily wounded and 199 missing.

But that's not the whole story. A lot of the partisans who fought in that battle were local and untrained young Macedonian boys and girls, some of whom I interviewed for my books.

In part here is one of those stories:

"Leffa's final mission before the war was over was the attack on Lerin. After spending a couple of weeks in Karadzhova they were told to prepare for battle at an undisclosed time and location. When they arrived at Bigla, they saw that the artillery and machineguns were set up to face the city Lerin but still they were not told when the battle was going to take place. They expected the attack to be a surprise ambush carried out at night. When the order to attack was given, however, it was already dawn and the partisan frontline was in full view. After the initial contact, the response from the Royalist side was quick, fierce, and decisive. No sooner had the battle started than the partisans were in retreat. Those like Leffa, in support of the frontlines, were trapped. They had two choices, surrender and face the consequences or run and take their chances dodging machinegun fire. Those brave enough ran and lost their lives in the process. Most, however, were too afraid to run and waited for a rescue attempt which never materialized. By the time it was over, several hundred young Macedonian men and women died, cut down by machinegun fire and buried in a mass grave. Among them was Leffa's friend Trena Boglevska, from Oshchima. It seemed like moments ago that Leffa and Trena hugged and wished each other good luck before they parted company. Trena was working on the opposite side of the frontline from Leffa. She was dead now, cut down in her prime of life by a Greek bullet. To this day, Leffa still mourns her loss.

In a few hours the battle was over and, huddled together with two male officers, thirty Partisan women were trapped in a school awaiting their fate. Leffa ripped off the pins and symbols from her uniform and threw them away. Soon after, the Greek soldiers came

accompanied by an old General. The General went from girl to girl as they sat on the floor, patting each on the head and whispering to them in a soft voice, "You saved your life by surrendering." The women were expecting the worst, but no harm came to them. After their capture each woman was sprayed with pesticide to kill the lice on her body and was placed under arrest in the Lerin prison. Six days later, Leffa was transferred to Kozhani, a larger prison camp that looked like a town of tents. There, Leffa endured three months of daily interrogations being asked the same questions day after day after day. Leffa insisted that she was drafted by force by the partisans and stuck to her story. Leffa is grateful to her brother Naso for his frequent visitations to the prison and for making life a little more bearable.

Thanks to UNDRA, Leffa was given a change of clothing that was a welcome contribution in prison. While Leffa was in prison, her family was working on her immigration papers to Canada. With her record there was no future for her at home. Leffa's father came to Canada in 1947 and wanted to give his daughter a better life away from the conflict. Leffa arrived in Toronto on August 15th, 1949, and soon after took a job in a laundromat where she worked for two years." (Stefov/Oshchima, 2003.)

Even so, today there are no graves or markers to commemorate the sacrifice of the Macedonian fighters who fought to take Lerin, but certainly there are graves and markers for the soldiers of the government army. There is no trace of our people anywhere in Lerin because they were buried in a ditch, in a mass grave; both dead and heavily wounded - but still alive, were buried together in a common grave. This, however, is only one part of our whole tragedy; those who were buried we buried everywhere, wherever they fell, most without markers on their graves. Many were left where they had fallen, for nature to take care... were they ran for cover to save their lives... What is most tragic about all this is that the Macedonians were victims of someone else's doing... victims of someone who wanted to start a war... the Greek Civil War... in order to turn Macedonians into casualties... for their own interests.

This problem may look complicated but it is very simple... if we open our eyes, set our prejudices aside and look impartially at it, we

will discover the truth. We don't need to look at how historiography reflects the facts, because history is written by those who won and who want to change the past to reflect the present; history is written by those who want to put the blame elsewhere... All we need to look at is exactly what happened and ask ourselves "why did it happen the way it did?"

First we were not ready or able as a people to seek justice with fire and sword. But we did anyway... Following the lead of strangers... Second, we were led by Greek generals, the likes of Markos, whose interest was not for us to win the war. In other words, the Greeks who led us had a lot more to gain if we lost the war and were driven out than if we won and stayed in our homes. Looking at this from a different angle, if the Greeks wanted us to "win" like they said they did, then they would have allowed us to have our own generals! And why did we not have our own generals? Why did we need "permission" from the Greeks to have our own generals? Because, as I said earlier, "we were not ready or able as a people to seek justice with fire and sword" on our own! And thus we not only relied on strangers to lead us, we believed their lies until it was too late and we all became sacrificial casualties... for foreign interests.

The end result? Many of the fighters who fought in the Lerin battle were young people from the neighbouring Lerin villages. They died for nothing. They were taken and told the fight would be over in hours, they did not need to be prepared... but then they were left outside, all night long... in the cold; they were not allowed to light fires. By morning they were all frozen and demoralized. Most of them were 17 to 19 year-old girls. There was snow on the ground. They were visible as they ran towards the Greek front line. By the time the battle was over the snow had been painted red with their blood...

10. One of the most devastating acts in this so-called Greek Civil War, which leads me to believe it was a perpetrated war, is the fact that there was no negotiation for surrender and no exit strategy for the partisans and for the refugees, except to leave the country. There was no plan B, no "what happens if we lose the war". It was always assumed that the partisans would win the war and anyone who thought differently was a coward and a traitor. Even when the

partisans lost the war, Zahariadis spun it and told the fighters to go to Albania to regroup; the war was not over... and they were going to win it. All the fighters left their positions and went to Albania believing they would regroup and return to fight.

Many Macedonian fighters still believed Zahariadis when he told them that DAG was going to win the war and that it was only a matter of time! They only stopped believing after Zahariadis accused the NOF leaders of losing the war, of being traitors and Tito's agents and after Zahariadis sentenced them to live out the rest of their lives in the Siberian camps... Initially Zahariadis wanted the NOF leaders executed but because they were on Albanian soil, the Albanian authorities would not allow it.

The Macedonian people, including the majority of NOF leaders, were completely taken by this change of events and surprised and confused by the development of them being guilty of losing a war they did not lead? They were well aware of their duty which was to urge the Macedonian people to fight; i.e. to do as they were commanded by the Greek leadership, especially by Zahariadis; and they did exactly what they were told! And now they were being accused of losing the war; especially after Zahariadis kept telling them that they were winning? If they did not trust the Greeks, then they surely trusted the Yugoslavs who, only a short time ago, had passed them on to the CPG and told them to follow the CPG's lead because the CPG would look after their interests? Surely the Yugoslav's would not put them in such a harmful position... at least not intentionally?

Well, no! Or perhaps yes! But the fact of the matter is that DAG was ordered to go to Albania, outside the Greek border, and was never allowed to return and fight... and win the war, as promised. Once the fighters and the Macedonian civilian population, driven out by the war, were outside the Greek border, Greece closed its borders. The partisans were completely confused as to what had happened and did not know what to do...

Here is what Vera Foteva, leader of AFZH, had to say about the last moments of that dreaded war:

[From August 10th to the 15th, 1949 the Monarcho-Fascists carried out a violent, hellish attack against DAG with unprecedented air support supplied by the United States. The poet Atso Shopov was right when he wrote the poem “Gramos” telling us that “no bird can fly in Vicho from the hail of bombs and grenades”. This struggle has been objectively presented in two volumes by Greek historian Giorgos Margaritis, a professor at the University of Crete. Margaritis has relied on the memoirs of prominent anti-Fascists for his source material. The information presented is the best example I have read that describes why DAG aborted Vicho and pulled out of Gramos, leaving the population unprotected and running for its life.

One hundred and thirty bombing runs were made on August 10th, 1949 by the American supplied air support using “Dakota” and “Spitfire” military aircraft to bomb units of DAG and columns of fleeing refugees. The next few days the military aircraft did the same, at the same pace, providing air support for the Monarcho-Fascist artillery and infantry. There was not a square foot of space that had not been bombed on Mount Vicho, on Lisets, on Mount Malimadi and in Prespa along the Albanian and Yugoslav border. The entire area had been bombed with aerial bombs, grenades, napalm bombs and rockets and was garnished with machine gun fire by the dive-bombing aircraft. This clearly indicates the conditions under which DAG was placed and the kind of pot its fighters were put in to boil. There was an insurmountable amount of pressure and worry placed on the fighters not only for saving their own lives but also for caring for the wounded and for saving the huge columns of fleeing refugees. DAG was again attacked in Gramos with the same vigour. It was under these circumstances, created mainly by foreign intervention, that the “freedom-loving democrats” of Gramos dropped the “last flag”.

DAG was defeated by the Monarcho-Fascists on Mount Gramos on August 30th, 1949 with Anglo-American support. After Vicho fell to enemy hands, Nikos Zahariadis, General Secretary of the CPG Central Committee, said: “Gramos will be the tomb of the Monarcho-Fascists.” But that did not turn out to be the case. DAG suffered numerous casualties but, had it not backed down and fled to Albania, the opposite would have been true. Gramos would have been the tomb for DAG. For the longest part, after removing

General Markos Vafiadis from his command and after abandoning the proven military strategies of the so-called “Supreme War Council Law”, Zahariadis worked personally with his Politburo installing new “military strategists” who had absolutely no relevant experience. Units of DAG from Gramos and from other places withdrew to Albanian territory.

The main culprits for DAG’s defeat naturally were Nikos Zahariadis, General Secretary of the CPG Central Committee and his Politburo. But that’s not who they found guilty. Instead of laying blame where it squarely belonged, Zahariadis and his clique pointed their fingers at the Macedonians, specifically at the NOF and AFZH leadership and at the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece. In Bureli, a town in Albania, Zahariadis staged a fake political trial, similar to those staged by Informburo countries. He had the last word.

On October 2nd, 1949 we were camped in a meadow under some olive trees beside a creek outside Elbasan. There was a beautiful white building on top of the hill. It had been converted into a hospital for the sick and wounded DAG fighters, cared for by doctors and nurses who were also members of DAG. There were both Macedonian and Greek patients and caregivers in the hospital, they were people who had fought shoulder to shoulder in the struggle and who had suffered and celebrated together. All the anti-Fascists were united as one people then and had the same goal.

From earlier on, October 2nd was designated International Day of Peace in honour of the International Congress which was held in Prague on April 20th, 1949 as well as in Paris and Tokyo. A delegation from Greece also attended the Congress including representatives from Macedonian organizations. We, the cadres of NOF, AFZH, DAG, Ministers of the Interim Government of Greece and members of the CPG Central Committee were planning and making preparations for that extra-special occasion to mark this day with an appropriate program followed by speeches from several leading cadres, including some from the Macedonian side.

Even before the celebrations began many fighters and civilians began to gather and fill the hospital courtyard. Around 8 o’clock a

jeep arrived carrying an officer from DAG Headquarters, whom I did not recognize. As soon as he got off the jeep the officer came in the direction where we were standing: Mihail Maliov, Urania Iurukova, Tashko Hadzhiianov, Gora Petrichevski, my (not yet married) spouse Mincho Fotev and I. The officer knew me. When he came close to me he said: "Comrade Vera, this letter (he handed me a blue envelope) is for you from Comrade Bardzhotas, he wants to meet with you at his place." Vasilis Bardzhotas was a political commissar of the DAG General Staff and a member of the CPG Politburo inner circle. I quickly opened the envelope. In it was a short letter with the following text: "Comrade Vera, You, Mincho, Urania and Hadzhiianov, the moment you receive this letter, are to immediately get in the jeep and come to Bureli" signed "Vasilis Bardzhotas". When I read the letter I was stunned, I froze like lightning had just struck me. I looked at my friends all around me. I had the feeling that something bad was going to happen and I could not get that feeling out of my head; an evil feeling that had been hovering in my head for a while now.

My friends looked at me strangely as I was eager to tell them what the letter said. Mincho became impatient and grabbed the letter out of my hand. I quietly squeezed my words out of my mouth and said: "Us four: Mincho, Urania, Hadzhiianov and I are being called to immediately take the jeep and go to Bureli, to DAG's General Headquarters". There was silence. The message was worrisome to everyone and we all kept silent. A group of civilian men and women traveling with DAG units from the free territory, with whom we had camped together in that place, surrounded us and wondered what was going on.

We told our friend Gogo Petrushevski, a seasoned NOF fighter, that "we were sure that they would arrest us. If you can, leave now because you will suffer the same fate." I also told some of my fellow villagers, my aunts and a first cousin that I was sure they would arrest us. This kind of threat against the central NOF leadership had been "circulating" for a long time and now they were putting it into practice in order to hide the real culprits for DAG's defeat. Despite the threats that we would be liquidated, taken by some provocateurs, we were and remained to the end faithful to the people whom we organized, fought with, died with and rejoiced with.]

Vera was one of Zahariadis's staunchest followers and she truly believed they were going to win the war, like Zahariadis had told them.

There are volumes of evidence in our history books and among the eye witnesses who survived the dreaded Greek Civil War, which leads me to believe that the Greek Civil War was a perpetrated war to get rid of the Macedonians from Greece, just like the British wanted. But, I believe, the 10 points listed above are sufficient evidence to give credence to my theory and to also confirm the behaviour of the players in this war which otherwise would seem illogical.

RISE OF THE MACEDONIAN REBEL COUNTER-BANDS

The moment Germany invaded Greece, the Greek government capitulated and the troops fighting against Italy on the Albanian front were abandoned. The majority of the soldiers fighting at this front were Macedonians and after Greece surrendered they were abandoned, left without provisions or support. Without orders to disband they remained at the front. The Germans found them starving. After disarming them they sent them home.

Some time after Greece was occupied by Germany, Greek occupied Macedonia was placed under German, Italian and Bulgarian control. Kostur Region was placed under Italian control but the Macedonian people living there were still having problems with the Greek Fascists who used every opportunity to harass them. So, some of the village elders turned to the Italians for protection. But instead of protecting them, the Italians gave them arms so that they could protect themselves and the Macedonians were able to repel the Greek tormentors.

In the absence of the Greeks the people in Kostur, as well as in other places in Greek occupied Macedonia, found a new freedom they had never experienced before in their lives. The Italians allowed them to speak their Macedonian language openly in the streets without being arrested, fined, or jailed. The Macedonians took advantage of this

freedom and began to read and write in Macedonian, even perform liturgy in the Macedonian language in church.

Kostur Region village Macedonian armed counter-bands protected their villages from Greek attacks and combined together to form larger bands to protect themselves from bigger dangers. They became a formidable force in the region.

“This Macedonian patriotism was put into action on March 5th, 1943 in Kostur Region when an Assembly of 48 members, representatives of the various villages, was convened and decided to form the “Macedonian Committee” for Kostur Region whose aim was to defend the 54 to 60 villages in that region. They were allowed to arm themselves because they needed protection from the Greeks. Everything else that has been said about them is a lie.” (Stoian Kochov)

Unfortunately, being occupied by Italy, an ally of Bulgaria, the Bulgarians too had access to Kostur Region and used their propaganda to not only convince some of these Macedonians to support the Bulgarian cause, but also to convince the world that these bands were “actually Bulgarian”. Some of the fighters in the Kostur bands did join the Bulgarians and began to spread Bulgarian propaganda among the people and as tensions mounted they did commit crimes against the Macedonian people. Both the Greeks and Bulgarians unfortunately used these incidents to vilify all the Kostur counter-bands and label them criminal and Fascist.

People still write me to tell me that these people were “no-good Bulgarians”. But what leads me to believe that they were neither criminals nor Bulgarian Fascists, with the exception of a few, is the fact that they spoke Macedonian, allowed the Macedonian language to be taught and to be used in church. They also operated under a code of conduct that protected the Macedonian people and supported the Macedonian cause.

The fact is the Kostur rebels were guided by Delchev’s philosophy and by the Macedonian freedom fighters who believed that if you die for something then die for Macedonia. And this is exactly what led them to create their own Macedonian army and refused to be

subservient to the Greek government or to the Communists (internationalists) and that is exactly why they were vilified and destroyed.

History will record the strategy of the eternal rebel desire: to have our identity and language returned, to protect our families, properties and villages and to remain masters of our grandfather's hearth.

“First: The rebels, as the rightful sons of these Macedonian lands, brought back the Kostur dialect of the Macedonian language, which for years had been prohibited from being spoken, by Greek law;

Second: The rebels re-opened the Macedonian churches and liturgy was conducted in the Macedonian language and so were other rites including baptisms, weddings and funerals;

Third: The local militia addressed the people in their native Macedonian language.” (Stoian Kochov)

The Kostur rebels believed in driving the Greeks out of Macedonia and forming a united Macedonian state. Why would they do that if they were fighting for the Bulgarian cause?

At about the same time, when Russia began to push the Nazis out of Russian soil, a resistance movement started growing in the Balkans with aims at driving the occupiers out. This resistance movement was organized by the communists at a grass roots level. The Macedonians also began to organize their own resistance movements in the various regions of Greek occupied Macedonia including Kostur, Lerin and Voden.

Unfortunately, instead of combining and forming a single Macedonian force, the Greek communists “convinced” the Macedonians to join the Greeks and fight a united front against the occupier. From this point on the Greeks took the upper hand and began to control the entire movement including the one started by the Macedonians.

The National Liberation Front (EAM) in Greece was formed on September 27, 1941 without any Macedonian markings. Its aims were to expel the German, Italian and Bulgarian occupiers, establishing the integrity of Greece, establishing the self-determination of Cyprus, the Dodecanese and Northern Epirus but nothing was said anywhere about the Macedonians.

After EAM was formed and joined by the CPG, it called on the entire Greek population to resist fascism. Then, in a joint meeting with the CPG Central Committee, it called for organizing a resistance army. This new Greek Army, appropriately named ELAS, was created on February 15, 1942 with the appearance of its first ELAS military units. The first detachment of ELAS formed in Greek occupied Macedonia was in Kostur on December 7, 1942 and it consisted of 10 Macedonians, 7 Greeks and 2 Vlachs.

Here is the ELAS oath that everyone who joined ELAS had to take: "I swear that I will fight to the last drop of my blood for the complete liberation, stability and independence of Greece. I will fight to preserve the integrity of the Greek people and the establishment of order and basic human rights... by performing due diligence and demonstrating discipline. I will follow orders and instructions from my superiors and I will avoid every process that may turn me into a traitor against the Greek people." Still nothing about the Macedonian people.

And as the allies started to gain the upper hand over the occupiers and the German army began to retreat, the armed counter-band groups, such as the ones I mentioned earlier in Kostur Region, started to become a problem for the Greeks. EAM and the CPG communists wanted them eradicated.

The Greeks could have put a Greek armed force to pursue and eradicate the Kostur rebels but they didn't. The CPG decided to create an all Macedonian force and let it deal with them.

SNOF CREATED TO DESTROY THE MACEDONIAN REBEL COUNTER-BANDS

“The CPG, EAM and ELAS leaderships, ‘concerned’ about the situation that existed in Greek occupied Macedonia, especially in Kostur, Lerin and Voden Regions, decided to create a separate Macedonian organization; SNOF (Slavo-Macedonia National Liberation Front). SNOF, for Kostur and Lerin Regions, was created on October 20, 1943 and for Voden Region a little later. The people who created SNOF were Greeks who belonged to the CPG District Committee for Western Macedonia; Hristos Kalfas (Andreas), Antonis Andonopulos (Periklis), CPG District Committee Secretary for Kostur Region and Thanassis Kartsunis, CPG District Committee Secretary for Kozhani Region.” (See the book: “Giorgi R. Peikov (1915-1991)” by Stoian Kochov, Skopje 1995, for more information.)

Why did the Greeks insist on using the prefix “Slavo”? There were no “other” Macedonians in Greece! They used the prefix “Slavo” to distinguish them from whom? Why were the Greeks so keen on hiding the Macedonian identity in Greek occupied Macedonia? If not to, yet again, deny the Macedonian people their rights and their rightful place in their own homeland? Who were these “Slavo-Macedonians”?

SNOF was allowed to recruit only for a short period of time, after that its fighters were subordinated to ELAS. On September 16, 1944 all military units belonging to the Slavo-Macedonian National Liberation Army (SNOV) were disbanded.

It is a historic fact that the CPG and EAM leadership, up until April 1944, used SNOF for its own political and military aims, primarily in dealing with the armed bands. Then in the beginning of May 1944 the CPG disbanded SNOF and SNOV (its armed wing) because they say SNOF had become an obstacle in the CPG’s negotiations with the Greek government in exile and with the other coalition government parties scheduled to meet in mid-May 1944.

The CPG did not explain who was objecting and why they were having problems with the Macedonians being armed, even though

they were allies in the struggle against the occupiers and even though SNOF was instrumental in the removal of the armed bands in Greek occupied Macedonia. The CPG did not even object to the British and Greek government request to disband SNOF.

So, less than 6 months after it was created by strangers and foreigners, SNOF was disbanded, again by strangers and foreigners, even after proving that it was a great asset to the CPG.

Clearly, the Greeks on the entire political spectrum had a problem with the Macedonians, both with SNOF and with the armed Kostur bands.

So after getting SNOF to do the dirty work for the Greeks, the CPG ordered SNOF to disband.

SNOF and its fighters were told, through Greek communist propaganda, that the armed bands in Kostur and other regions in Macedonia were “Bulgarian Fascists” who were fighting for the Bulgarian cause. The Macedonian partisans that were sent to destroy them had no idea that these bands were Macedonian. In other words, through deceit, SNOF was sent to liquidate its own people.

This was yet another “unfortunate” Macedonian mistake in a string of historic mistakes.

Macedonians “must” learn not to be so trusting! Macedonians must learn that they cannot depend on foreigners and strangers to lead them and tell them what to do! Macedonians must grasp the fact that the world around them was built on lies and deception and no one cares about them!

In short, the Macedonians were lied to and used to disarm and destroy the Macedonian village bands.

Even before SNOF was disbanded, relations between the Greek communists and the SNOF leadership were abysmal to say the least.

The Greeks were promising “cooperation” between SNOF and ELAS but that cooperation never materialized.

TENSIONS MOUNT

Many Macedonian leaders, particularly Ilia Dimovski Gotse, a Macedonian battalion commander, were upset and unhappy about the Macedonian situation in Greece.

Then tensions came to a climax in October when Ilia Dimovski Gotse found himself face to face with ELAS units deployed in front of his SNOF units ready to attack them.

Instead of fighting, Ilia Dimovski Gotse, along with 800 of his fighters, crossed over the Yugoslav border and entered the Republic of Macedonia. He did not want a direct confrontation with ELAS, especially with the Macedonian fighters who had joined ELAS. And especially not on Macedonian soil. The implications would have been horrendous to say the least...

First the Greeks wanted to disband the battalions, later they wanted to move them south, outside of Macedonia. But Ilia Dimovski Gotse refused their orders. He told the Greeks that the fighters in his battalion were all Macedonians and wanted to stay in Macedonia to protect their families and the Macedonian people. His fighters were all volunteers; kids who joined his force to fight for Macedonia and not for Greece. They were simple people who were fed up with Greek aggression and wanted it to end.

Their strength was in their patriotism and that worried the Greeks. But the Greeks used their patriotism against them. First, they used it to destroy the Macedonian armed village bands on account that they were allegedly "Bulgarian bands". Then they promised the Macedonians political and military cooperation. Later they promised the Macedonians human rights and equality... This was purposely done to get the Macedonians to do their bidding. The Greek communists even promised the Macedonians complete independence. But, none of these promises materialized... They were all Greek lies.

GREEKS MANIPULATING THE MACEDONIAN PEOPLE

In those days anything was believable because the world was in constant flux. The Macedonian people on the other side of the artificial border, the ones who had been occupied by Serbia not too long ago, had just gained their independence and now had their own country, a Yugoslav Republic... with human and national rights...

So yes, it was believable! The Macedonians in Greek occupied Macedonia felt they too could and should be recognized and given their human and national rights. Why not?

Their need to “believe” unfortunately clouded their Macedonian minds and blinded them from seeing the signs and the fact that they were being manipulated.

Everything was always within their reach but always out of their grasp. The Greeks made sure of that. The Greeks took full advantage of their patriotism and naivety and used it against them.

But this was nothing new. The Bulgarians manipulated the Macedonians during their 1903 Ilinden Uprising to get them to rise up against a stronger opponent and they did... As a result of that we not only lost to the Ottomans, ten years later, in 1913, our country was invaded, occupied and partitioned by three new foes who we assumed were our Christian brothers.

As I mentioned earlier, the turning point for Greece was when Stalin and Churchill decided that Greece would go to the British sphere of influence and no socialist system would be allowed to take place in Greece. But given that Greece was over 80% in favour of a socialist system, Stalin pushed the point that Greece’s future should be decided by an election. Both Churchill and Stalin agreed on that point and decided to put that matter into the hands of the Greek people.

It was agreed that an election would take place. It was also agreed that the election would take place under certain conditions. One of those conditions was that all armed groups inside Greece were to be disarmed, including ELAS, the communist led army.

And, as I mentioned earlier, the Macedonian units were to be disbanded and all Macedonian organizations were to be shut down and eliminated. That was Churchill's request.

The British and the Greek political right were certain they could not possibly win the elections fair and square so they began to take measures against their opposition.

As the national election date in March 1946 approached, terror and pressure on the Macedonian people increased dramatically. On March 5th, 1946 members of the National Guard jailed 10 people from the village Nered. They were all taken to court and, without a shred of evidence, accused of being members of illegal organizations. Similar events took place in the villages Neokazi, Popozhani, Boreshnitsa and Sekulevo.

On March 13th, 1946 10 people from the village Petoratsi were sued in the Lerin court and were given 10 to 15 year prison sentences. They were accused of belonging to illegal socialist organizations. Among those sued were Bitko Mijalev, Lazo Damianov, Naso Zhinzov and Vasil Popov.

Another 18 people from the village Setina were also sued by the same court and handed 8 to 10 year prison sentences. These people were accused of various crimes. Their accuser was the teacher Miltiadis Dulukas who was a witness at their trials.

The amount of violence used by the Greek government was much greater than in the past. Even the death penalty was used against Leftists between 1945 and 1950. This overshadowed the violence perpetrated in all previous and subsequent periods.

It is interesting to point out that while Greek governments in the immediate postwar period were disinclined to carry out death sentences against known and convicted German collaborators and war criminals, such reservations were much less in evidence against the Leftists and against Macedonians especially after the 1946 elections.

While the British and the Greek press continued to speak of free elections in Greece, the nationalist and chauvinistic elements continued to rain terror on the civilian population, arresting and imprisoning people uncontrollably. By the time the elections took place on March 31st, 1946, almost all of the former resistance fighters were either missing or serving jail sentences under trumped up charges.

Terror and persecution escalated before the elections and peaked on the day of the elections, prompting even Sofulis himself, who was running for office, to say: "It is impossible to hold impartial elections under these conditions." Not only were people terrorized to vote for whomever their tormentors wanted but there were also all sorts of other irregularities which were being ignored by the state apparatus.

Interestingly some of these irregularities were confirmed by British, Colonel Shepard who was quoted by the newspaper "New Democracy" on December 8th, 1947 as saying: "During the election a Greek officer was watching a British officer and finally got enough nerve to speak to him. The Greek officer boasted to the British officer about how his regime was capable of creating conditions where 100% of the people would vote for the royalists. 'Even if not 100% then at least 95% and for those 5% who vote differently we will call them the enemies of the regime and invent reasons as needed to bring them in' explained the Greek officer."

The March 31st, 1946 Greek elections were a total farce, not only because of the coercion by the rightist regime forcing voters to vote for them but also because of the perpetrated election fraud. In most European countries like France, Italy and others the population had naturally shrunk because of the war but not in Greece. In spite of the half million deaths due to starvation and war, Greece, according to the number of people who voted in 1946, showed a massive population increase, much greater than those voting in 1936. For example, 1,753,000 voters participated in the 1936 elections and 2,200,000 voters participated in the 1946 elections (voting in Greece was mandatory). Above that another 250,000 voters, known democrats were intentionally left off the lists so that they could not vote.

Please note that NOF was formed on April 23, 1945 under Tito and Kolishevski's leadership and was dispatched to Greece by Kolishevski in the fall of the same year. The elections in Greece were scheduled to take place on March 31st, 1946. Why would Tito and Kolishevski prepare and dispatch NOF to Greek occupied Macedonia to start a new conflict even before the elections had taken place unless they knew something beforehand? The election was the key to ending the conflict by letting the people decide what course to take.

Right after the CPY and CPG agreed on what to do regarding the continuation of the war in Greek occupied Macedonia, Lazar Kolishevski, Secretary of the CPM Central Committee, invited the NOF Board, headed by Paskal Mitrevski, for a briefing during which Kolishevski said the following: "Now you go down there (in Greek occupied Macedonia). The CPG is now responsible for you. You must have faith in the CPG. Its policy on the Macedonian question is clear. Any questions that may surface will now be decided by the leadership of the CPG Party. Be careful not to splinter or stray from the Party. You are to work under its directives. You are to struggle and fight to strengthen your unity with the Greek people and fight hard with all your strength against chauvinism, separatism and localized tendencies."

Also let me remind you of what Rakovski said: "... During our meeting with Kolishevski when we were preparing to return to Aegean Macedonia in order to lay the foundations of the revolution, Kolishevski, in his first class cynical speech, said to us: ... 'That we Macedonians were a talented people, with appallingly visible international and revolutionary orientation, with a sense of tact and strategy' and that Tito told him: 'Now is your moment!'..."

The elections in Greece were scheduled for March 31st, 1946. NOF was already dispatched to Greek occupied Macedonia in the fall of 1945 to start a conflict.

Immediately after the March 31st, 1946 elections, when it was made abundantly clear to everyone that the elections in Greece were neither fair nor democratic, many small Macedonian groups re-

armed and took to the mountains, Kaimakchalan, Paiak and Vicho, not only to save themselves but to fight back and provide protection for their families and villages.

Many detachments led successful battles in several villages including Lukovits in Voden Region and Sarakinovo in Lerin Region. Thousands of Macedonians expressed their readiness to fight for freedom in Greek occupied Macedonia and many more were prepared to leave the ranks of the regular army and join the Partisan units.

The first fighters to show desire to abandon the regular army and cross over to the Partisans were a group of soldiers from a unit stationed in the village Pondokersia in Kukush Region. Similar desires were expressed by a group of men from the 5th division stationed in Kozhani.

When the Greek authorities found out, the men were court-martialed by a military court which sentenced 14 soldiers and 1 officer to death, 22 soldiers received life imprisonment and 23 others were handed down lesser sentences. All the above mentioned soldiers were accused of cooperating with the Partisans.

START OF THE GREEK CIVIL WAR

Most historians would argue that the Greek Civil War began on December 3rd, 1944 with the bloody demonstrations in Athens when the police opened fire and killed a number of demonstrators. But it would be more appropriate to attribute the beginning of the Greek Civil War to March 31st, 1946 the day of the elections, the day when, instead of voting, many Partisans re-armed and rebelled against the Greek Government.

The rebellion manifested itself as an attack on the Greek right which began in the village “Lithohorion”, situated in Thessaly east of Mount Olympus directly south of Katerini. Other attacks soon followed and in no time the conflict escalated into a full scale war, engulfing not only Greece but also Greek occupied Macedonia.

In a bizarre turn of events, the National Liberation Army of Greece (ELAS), which less than a year before had turned their guns on Macedonian fighters, now regrouped as the Democratic Army of Greece (DAG) and extended its hand in friendship. It seems that all was forgiven and forgotten when the former National Liberation Army of Greece leadership asked the Macedonians for their help. This time the Greek communists came with offers of “equal rights”, “recognition” and even possibilities of “re-unification with the Republic of Macedonia”.

Many Partisan fighters from Greek occupied Macedonia who had crossed over into the Republic of Macedonia the year before got their chance to return home. On their return they organized themselves under a new organization bearing the name the National Liberation Front (NOF).

Many Macedonians were well-aware of the saying “beware of Greeks bearing gifts” and knew that the Greek offer was too good to be true. But there was always that small ray of hope that perhaps this time the outcome for Macedonia might be different. Besides, their families, homes and lives were in Greek occupied Macedonia. What other choice did they really have?

They returned because they were lonely, loved their families and because they had to live with the guilt of having to leave their loved ones in dire straits. Every Macedonian born in Macedonia, even in the most desolate places, knows the feeling of homesickness and yearns to return.

And so the seeds of deceit that were planted earlier began to germinate. The Macedonians were fooled into joining the so-called Greek Civil War knowing nothing and perhaps suspecting very little of where this storm was going to take them. And where did this storm take them? To their own extinction, just like Britain wanted.

MASSIVE EVACUATION OF MACEDONIANS

After the conflict started, details about which can be found in my books, in Stoian Kochov's books and in Petre Nakovski's books which I translated from Macedonian to English, Greek occupied Macedonia began to be emptied of its population in a dramatic way.

Just to give you an idea of how dramatic it was, just look at my own village Oshchima. In 1939 my village had about 600 residents. In 1949 it had only 60 residents. This was not a small loss; this was a disaster from which the village never recovered.

By the time I left Oshchima in 1966 there were less than 10 people, only three families left. In 2015 there was only one family left. The entire village is in ruins.

A lot of people were killed fighting in the war, being bombed by American planes and being murdered by the Greek fascists. The majority left and crossed over the border into Albania; pushed north and out of their homeland by the Greek army.

This was typical of all the villages in Lerin, Kostur and Voden Regions.

A flood of people, that no one wanted, ended up in the camps over the Albanian border. They left their homes to save themselves from the Greek bombs and hoped to return when the conflict was over. That was their plan. They left their homes because they were told to.

["The front has been breached! The front has been breached!" voices called out, bringing fear and spreading it among the people. The horror grew. People were frightened and panic filled the air. It was time to flee, to run away.

Messengers on horseback were running around everywhere warning people, telling them to leave, showing them which way to take and where to go. Irritated, they spurred their horses to run through the village streets while they yelled: "Leave! Leave! The Greek army is coming! Leave now!"

With the pounding of horse hooves, for as long as the warnings lasted, like echoes repeating again and again, was the message: "Leave! Leave! The front has been breached! The Greek army is coming! They will beat you, rape you and kill you! They will hang people and burn everything! Leave now!"

The horsemen who had orders to sow the seeds of fear and horror into the people crossed over Preval and split up at the crossroads, one ran to Bukovik, L'k and Drenovo and the others took the road to German.

People in Prespa were gathering their most important things, from what remained, and packing them in sacks. There was yelling, screaming, pleading and crying. The roads were packed with people leaving. A woman was wailing at the top of her voice looking up and cursing the sky. Winds of fear hovered over the people spreading panic and horror, making them run. The people who passed Perovo, the narrow passage where the water flows between the two Prespa lakes, and took the road to Vineni could see the rising smoke and flames behind them. They could also see the same horsemen who had warned them to leave, burning the wheat fields. Flames were now consuming the mature grains from which bread was made...

The thick smoke generated by the cannon and mortar fire covering the mountains and valleys was blown away by the wind and the sky had opened up. The broken stones were warmed by the summer sun.

No one dared move. The hill seemed dead. The enemy was monitoring the region with binoculars from over yonder. They were combing every bush and every stone. The slightest movement awakened the cannons and the hill was on fire again.

Explosions burned the piles of broken rock. The days in August were long. Tired, numbed, faces were glued to the ground, coiled they squatted in the shallow trenches. The sun was hot and the earth was burning. The Sergeant repeated the order: "Not a single step back, hold your ground to the last one!"

Every attempt to take a new position was met with death. There was not even 300 metres to the forest behind them. It would be safer there. The space between them and the forest was bare like a shaven head. The silence and anticipation was torturing them.

The earth was baked by the sun and burned by grenades. They broke stone with their dull pickaxes. They shoveled soil and broken stone with their bare hands. Their hands were raw, bleeding and full of sores. Their bodies baked, burned and blistered with bubbles full of yellow fluid.] (Petre Nakovski).

The Greek government closed the border behind them and would not allow anyone back, not even the women and children. No Macedonian was allowed to return ever since to this day. The Macedonian refugee children who were evacuated in 1948 are still not allowed to return. Having no prospect of returning home, the Macedonian flood of refugees and fighters was settled in the camps in Albania until a place could be found for them to go.

Russia decided to take the fighters. Most of the civilians were taken by Poland. The refugee children who were evacuated earlier were taken mostly by Yugoslavia, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary with some being taken by other countries including Bulgaria. Some of the refugees remained in Albania, but a very small number. Albania took some, East Germany took some.

EVACUATION OF MACEDONIAN CHILDREN FROM GREECE

The children left home in 1948. They were sent to Yugoslavia first and then they were separated and sent to the other countries. The children were not told that they would be separated which, from what we are told, was basically done for educational purposes, they wanted them in different age groups and certain countries wanted a certain age group and so on. The youngest ones ended up staying in Yugoslavia.

When the Royalist and Republican Greek Government began to use heavy artillery and aerial bombardment, the idea for evacuating the children quickly gained CPG support and the “save the children”

program was born. Before the program was put into action it gained approval from the Macedonian National Liberation Front (NOF), the Women's Antifascist Front (AFZH) and the Red Cross. The host countries, willing to look after the children, were contacted to gain their approval and information campaigns were begun to inform the people about the program. The district and village organizations were also asked to participate and were eventually given the responsibility of organizing and implementing the actual evacuations.

When the authorities in the Greek Government found out about the "save the children" program they initiated their own so-called "pedomazoma" (collect the children) campaign. The Greek army upon capturing Macedonian villages was ordered to evacuate the children, by force if necessary. After being gathered at various camps the children were eventually sent to the Greek Island Leros. There they were enrolled in schools to study religion and became wards of the Greek Queen Fredericka.

After the conclusion of the Greek Civil War (1951-52) some children from the "pedomazoma" were returned to their homes in Greek occupied Macedonia. Most, especially those whose parents were killed or had fled the country as refugees, became wards of the Greek State and remained in dormitories until adulthood. All the children who remained at Leros were completely Hellenized and were never heard from again.

The Leros camps became active again after 1952, this time with children who had returned from the "save the children" program from Eastern European Block countries who had to declare themselves Greek in order to be allowed back. As a result of Red Cross intervention some children were allowed to return home. Unfortunately the Greek authorities collected them and sent them to the camps in Leros where they were kept until the fall of 1959 before they were released.

Pressure from the community prompted organizers of the "save the children" program to expedite the evacuation process to stop the "Burandari" (nickname for Greek Government soldiers and policemen) from taking more children.

The evacuations carried out by the Partisans were done strictly on a voluntary basis. It was up to the child's parents or guardians to decide whether the child was to be evacuated or not. No child was ever evacuated by force or without consent, but fear and peer pressure were certainly motivating factors.

The evacuation zones were selected based on the severity of the conflict and the degree of danger it posed to the children. Central command organizers decided on the selection criteria and qualifications for which children were to be evacuated. The lists included all children between the ages of two and fourteen as well as all orphans, disabled and special children.

Before the evacuation was put into effect, women over the age of eighteen were enlisted from the local population and from the Partisan ranks to be trained to handle young children.

Widows of fallen Partisans were also recruited as "surrogate mothers" to accompany and assist the children through the evacuation process and during their stay in the host countries.

The evacuation program began to gain momentum in early March 1948, starting with the recruitment and training of the special teachers. The actual evacuations were carried out en masse starting on March 25th through to March 30th, 1948 until all the designated villages were evacuated.

Most children were transported through Yugoslavia and were sent to Hungary, Romania, Czechoslovakia and Poland. Some were evacuated through Albania and Bulgaria. As the numbers of the evacuated rose, children were also sent to East Germany and the USSR.

It is estimated that about 28,000 children in all were evacuated, most of them from northwestern Greek occupied Macedonia. Although smaller in number some orphans, children of Partisans and children of families who were in trouble with the Greek Government authorities, were also evacuated.

When their turn came the children from each village were summoned and escorted by Partisan guides to the closest designated border crossing. For their safety the children traveled under the cover of darkness and away from the main roads. In some cases, due to heavy aerial attacks and falling bombs, some villages evacuated their children in haste without escorts and they became stranded in the snow-covered mountains without shelter.

Mothers prepared luggage, a change of clothing, food and eating utensils before escorting their little ones to the designated meeting places. With eyes tearing, mothers said goodbye to their loved ones before sending them into the hands of destiny. Their cries could be heard for a long time as they disappeared into the distance. It didn't take too long before the emptiness was felt and many mothers could not stop crying, contemplating the fate of their little ones.

The children walked in single file behind their surrogate mothers, holding hands. The older children comforted the young as they moved into seclusion.

Under the cover of darkness they silently slipped over the terrain, avoiding roads and open spaces, being constantly reminded by their Partisan guides to keep quiet. They crossed over high mountains and steep slopes ever mindful and vigilant of the flying Greek menace above as they made their way to the borders.

The lucky ones spent the nights indoors in designated villages. The others slept outdoors in the open spaces of the frigid mountains questioning the wisdom of their elders and wondering, which was more dangerous the falling bombs or the freezing cold.

The orphanage in Leros was created especially for housing the children from the war zone. It was supported and sponsored by Queen Frederica.

Regarding the orphaned Macedonian children who ended up in Leros and in the hands of Frederica, they were adopted by Greek families and brought up as Greeks. Some of them later found out that they were not Greeks. I know one lady from Zhelevo, my

mother's friend, who was brought up by a Greek family. But she found her way back.

The people who remained behind were mostly supporters of the Greek regime in power. There were also those, the unfortunate ones who were caught before they could leave and who belonged to families that openly identified as Macedonians. And let us not forget those who were socialist sympathizers.

After the so-called Greek Civil War was over only horror and fear ruled the land. Those who fought on the losing side became reclusive and wanted to forget the past... but they were constantly harassed and reminded of it by those who won.

The Greeks expressed great hatred for those Macedonians... who only fought for human rights and for wanting to be free. This fear became ingrained in the people's psyche and by the time I was born, it was normal to be afraid and reclusive, it was part of daily life in Greek occupied Macedonia. That's why we left Greece... That's why the villages kept emptying.

AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE GREEK CIVIL WAR

One of those unfortunate people to get caught and remain in Greece, after the Greek Civil War was over, was my father Nikola. Nikola was forcibly taken from his village, along with a number of other men, on April 17th, 1947 and sent to the Greek island prison camps. He was kept in prison until January 17th, 1952, the day he arrived back in Oshchima.

On several occasions I asked my father what he had done and why he was sent to prison but to the day he died he did not know, because no one would tell him. All he knew was what his jailers told him, "that he was a danger to the Greek state".

Later, as I began to research the so-called Greek Civil War, I found out that my father was a victim of American policies in Greece. He was a victim of Lieutenant General James A. Van Fleet's military tactics.

On March 1, 1947, U.S. President Harry Truman announced the decision to proclaim the “Truman Doctrine” for engaging the U.S. in Greece. Greece was granted credit and advanced military equipment to equip its government army. At the same time Van Fleet, an American General anti-guerrilla specialist, was made available to the Greek government.

With Van Fleet’s strategy and tactics applied in the last battles fought in the Vicho and Gramos battlefields, DAG was defeated and ejected outside of Greece.

So what exactly was Van Fleet’s strategy and how did it involve my father... and he didn’t know about it?

Van Fleet was familiar with the concept of how to starve a guerrilla army. In order to do that, he said, you will have to rob it of the ability to feed itself and of the ability to recruit new fighters.

Most of the food and recruits that supplied the partisan army came from the Macedonian mountain villages.

To stop the food supply all residents from the small villages were removed and placed in towns and large villages. These places were guarded by the Greek army and by the Greek police. Curfews and restrictions of movement were then placed so that no one could move without authorization. This cut off most of the food supply to the partisans.

To stop the partisans from recruiting new fighters, the Greek government arrested basically every man capable of carrying a gun who was not loyal to the government or was affiliated with the partisan movement. All these people were arrested and sent to the Greek island prison camps.

My father was affiliated with the partisan movement. All his brothers and sisters were partisans and fighting in the war. He was the only young person left home to look after the farm and his aging mother and father, so he became a target of Van Fleet’s strategy.

So, to starve the partisans out, Van Fleet basically emptied all the small villages of their population and arrested every man who might be a potential partisan.

The people from the small villages were moved to the large ones because the Greeks didn't have enough policemen to send to every village to defend it. The move, of course, was done by force.

All the villagers were moved. They moved them into already occupied houses and told the people that they had to share their space and their food. Then the Greeks went looking for and hunting down partisans who were on the move.

The civilian population had limited mobility and curfews were in effect, even in the large villages where people were guarded by the police.

But in spite of what Van Fleet had done, his Greek forces still could not defeat the Partisans.

On August 10 – 14, 1949, a Greek government offensive was initiated against DAG. A force of 60,000 Greek government troops, commanded by General Van Fleet of the U.S.A., organized in 6 divisions from all branches of the military, with 200 tanks and armoured cars and with about 100 aircraft of all types, was unleashed on Mount Vicho.

Opposing this force was commander Michos Vlandas of the resistance with 9,863 fighters and 40 cannons. DAG was defeated in the period during August 13 and 14 with 1,859 dead, wounded, missing and captured fighters. The Government side sustained only 256 dead and 1,336 wounded.

On August 15-16, 1949, DAG units retreated into Albania but in the following days about 6,000 were transferred to reinforce the fighting on Mount Gramos.

On August 20, 1949 the CPG Central Committee Politburo held a meeting and promised its fighters that "Gramos has all the means necessary to deliver the enemy a death blow" and coined the slogan

“Gramos will become the tomb of the Monarcho-Fascists Government troops”. That, however, never happened! All Zahariadis wanted to do was kill more Macedonians.

There is now a bust of General James A. Van Fleet in the city Kostur, who did a lot for the Greek government army to end the Greek Civil War.

This is yet another statue to rub in the faces of the Macedonian people to remind them of the genocide they experienced at the hands of the Greeks and foreign powers.

In spite of everything the Greeks had done, even with American help, they still could not defeat the partisans. So they began to use napalm.

Here is what Van Fleet said to a number of Greek officers during a meeting while pointing at a map:

[“Well, dear generals, you only have to take two handfuls of space. Two handfuls of space and nothing more! We dressed and fed your army well and armed it with the best weapons we have. Now you have everything! The most modern aircraft, the most modern cannons, mine throwers, mortars, napalm bombs and bazookas!”

Van Fleet paused for a moment, looked at the audience and continued:

“Being in possession of such weapons should boost your courage but for only five days, gentlemen, in just five days you can put an end to this war”. He hit the map with his left hand and continued, “here 90 aircraft will drop their bombs and napalm, hundreds of artillery pieces will thunder and just as many mortars will be dropped. On top of that, nearly 80 thousand troops, assisted by over two hundred tanks and armored cars will be stomping this ground! For no more than five days! Don’t take the communists out of the trenches and bunkers, leave them there dead...”

You have five days and if you don’t destroy the enemy in these five days, adios amigos, we’re gone... The American taxpayer spent a lot

of money for you and for this war,” concluded Van Fleet.] (Petre Nakovski)

On the tenth day (August 20th) since the beginning of the “great battle” for Gramos, with the approval of General Van Fleet, head of the U.S. military mission in Greece, the air force renewed its attacks, this time with napalm bombs, thus unleashing a new, never before seen horror against the Partisans... And still the front could not be broken... It did not even move...

[That day the airplanes came shortly before noon. They did not drop bombs or fire on us with their machine guns. First they flew low then high and we could see barrels being dropped from not too high above our positions which exploded about fifty to a hundred meters above us. Fire and flames fell on us. Everything began to burn. Everything burned, the ground, the trees, the rocks, the mountain, we were burning too... Those people, who unfortunately got splashed by this never before seen burning fluid, caught fire and burned like candles.

There was squealing, screaming and many sounds of horror as people rushed out of the trenches looking to the sky and begging for help. All you could see are flames running at you screaming and begging for help, flames that you had to put out with your bare hands?! We fought the flames all day, then, at night, under the light of a full moon, we buried the burned corpses in mass graves.

The aircraft attacked us in this manner, with that damn fire, several more times, but we quickly learned we could avoid being burned by burying ourselves deep into the ground. We dug tunnels in the bunkers and trenches and before the barrels fell we hid underground like moles.] (Petre Nakovski)

The offensive began on August 10th, 1949 but the war did not end until August 30th 1949.

Earlier I mentioned that the partisan fighters were sent to Russia, more precisely to the Soviet Union; to Uzbekistan. Why do you think only the fighters were sent to the Soviet Union?

If you recall, during the Greek Civil War Stalin was having difficulties with Tito which led to Yugoslavia breaking relations with the other socialist countries.

According to secret CIA documents, the conflict between Stalin and Tito was about Tito not adhering to the idea that the Soviet leader did not want problems with the allies America and England because of the Yalta agreement. So Tito continued to supply the communist rebels in Greece with weapons, equipment and officer corps to fight on the Greek partisan side. Stalin sent a letter to Tito criticizing him for opening the “Greek line” and for helping the Greek communists who started a fight that had no chance of success because Athens was supported by America, “the most powerful country in the world”.

One of Greece’s most prominent historiographers - Tassos Vournas, in his book “History of modern Greece – the Civil War”, on page 176 wrote that Stalin, on February 10, 1948, literally told the Yugoslav delegation in Moscow that: “I do not agree with you, my Yugoslav comrades that the revolution in Greece should continue. That struggle has no hope of success. What do you think, the UK and the USA, the strongest countries in the world, will allow it to bring down a line of communication with the Mediterranean Sea? Nonsense! And there’s almost nothing of naval forces! No! The revolution in Greece should stop, as quickly as possible.”

So, why would Stalin want the Macedonian fighters from the Greek Civil War, especially since he did not approve of the struggle, to be sent to the Soviet Union? And why did Tito want to continue helping the struggle after Stalin told him to stop and gave him a good reason for it. And then, before the war ended, why did Tito close the border and refuse to allow Macedonians fighters entry into Yugoslavia unless they disarmed? Yes, Yugoslavia would not allow them entry unless they surrendered their arms.

I have not found evidence to support this, but I was told that Stalin had threatened Tito with creating an independent Macedonian state out of the People’s Republic of Macedonia with aims at breaking up Federal Yugoslavia. And he was going to use the Macedonian fighters to do it.

But since none of this materialized, I am led to believe that it was only a bluff. But this does not answer the question as to why Tito continued to support the struggle in Greek occupied Macedonia, knowing full well that the struggle was not going to succeed because the United States was about to crush it. On top of that, why didn't the United States object to Tito's involvement in supporting this conflict? In fact Yugoslav and American relations were never as good as they were during this period of time?

It doesn't make any sense, does it? Unless, of course, Yugoslavia was working together with the United States and with Greece, in an attempt to control the war inside Greece and prevent it from ending prematurely, that is before the communists were crushed and the Macedonian people were evicted from their homeland.

They wanted to make conditions so unbearable so that all the Macedonian people would leave and abandon their homeland just like Britain wanted.

And is this not exactly what happened?

GREECE – AN ARTIFICIAL CREATION

Greece was created by the West and has been supported by the West. Greece has been the bulwark for Britain in the prevention of Russia entering the Mediterranean waters.

In the old days the British were sympathetic to the Greek cause but at the same time they wanted a strong Turkey to counter Russia. Initially, the British were prepared to support Turkey to prevent Russia from gaining control of the Turkish Straits and threatening the Mediterranean trade routes.

“Canning (a British politician, 1812-1862) had planned to head off Russia's advance, not by direct opposition, but by associating her with England and France in a policy of emancipation, aimed at erecting national States out of the component parts of the Turkish Empire. Such States could be relied upon to withstand Russian encroachment on their independence, if once they were set free from

the Turk. The creation of the Kingdom of Greece was the immediate outcome of Canning's policy" (Page 372, Trevelyan, British History in the 19th Century)

Greece was a "Western creation" for the purpose of achieving two objectives. One, to keep Russia out of the Mediterranean Sea and two, to break up the Ottoman occupied Slav lands into small, nationally divergent, easily manageable and loyal states.

Created by the Western Powers, the new Balkan States would be loyal to their creator; British politicians were counting on it. The Western Powers introduced "nationalism" in the Balkans as a way of replacing the Ottoman Empire, not with a single state but with many "divergent", manageably sized states. Nationalism, however, was not a way with which Balkan people identified before the 19th century.

For over 2,300 years the Balkan region was without borders and without a sense of national identity. For over 1,800 years the people in the region lived with "religion as the only unifying force" which brought them together and allowed them to live in peace. Lack of borders and freedom of movement allowed the diverse people to travel anywhere within the empire to settle and mix with other people.

So, how does one create "national consciousness" where one does not exist?

Ignoring the fact that the Ottoman Empire of the 19th century was a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural pluralistic society, the Western Powers initiated the nation building process anyway.

To them, it didn't matter what kind of "nations" they were building, provided that the new nations were a "non-Slav" singular society that agreed to keep Russia out of the Mediterranean Sea.

Unfortunately, Macedonia did not fit the Western Power mold and was never allowed to become an independent state. And to make sure it never did, it was partitioned into four parts and given to four different and divergent states with aims at destroying it.

So, what happened to Macedonia during the Greek Civil War was a continuation of what had been happening to it for over 150 years since the modern Serbian (1806), Greek (1828) and later Bulgarian (1878) and Albanian (1912) states were created.

After the Greek Civil War ended and the Greek borders were closed to the Macedonian fighters and refugees, Greece took measures, legal measures, to prevent the Macedonian people from re-entering the border and returning to their homes.

Let me backtrack a bit and say something very important because this is evidence, I believe, that the Greek Government, even before the Greek Civil War had ended, had plans “to deal with the Macedonians in Greece”.

“In 1947, during the Greek Civil War, legal act L-2 was issued. This meant that all those who left Greece without the consent of the Greek government were stripped of their Greek citizenship and banned from returning to Greece. The law applied to Greeks and Macedonians, but in its modernized version the act is binding only on Macedonians. It prevents Macedonians, but not former Communist Greeks who fought against the winning side, from returning to Greece and reclaiming property.

On January 20, 1948 legal act M was issued. This allowed the Greek government to confiscate the property of those who were stripped of their Greek citizenship. The law was updated in 1985 to exclude Greeks, but was still binding on Macedonians. (See pages 116-117, John Shea, Macedonia and Greece, The Struggle to Define a New Balkan Nation)

Clearly acts L-2 and M were designed to work against the interests of the Macedonian people. Even innocent Macedonians who left before the Civil War were not allowed to return. The way acts L-2 and M were enforced over the years brings another question to mind.

If there were no Macedonians living in Greece, as the Greeks claim, then what nationality were these people the Greek Government refused to allow back?

Why is it that Greek law makes the distinction between Macedonians and Greeks when it suits Greece but not when it benefits the Macedonians?

This also reinforces my theory that Greece all along intended to exile as many Macedonians as possible and enacted these laws in preparation for it.

As mentioned earlier, in the spring of 1948, to save the children, a temporary evacuation program was introduced and implemented on a voluntary basis. It is estimated that about 28,000 children from the ages of 2 to 14 were rounded up and taken across the border into Yugoslavia. From there they were sent to various Eastern European Block countries.

Again, I want to point out that the evacuation program was sponsored and organized by the Greek Partisan Leadership which was fully versed in “Greek Law” (act L-2). Yet they carried out the children’s evacuation program and lied to the trusting mothers that the evacuation was only a temporary measure and that the children would be returned.

Almost all the Macedonian children who were evacuated in 1948 are still not allowed entry into Greece. Don’t tell me that the communists did not know that these children would never be allowed to return?

They knew that there were laws that would prevent every refugee who left Greece without government permission, from returning to Greece. Yet this information was never made available to the Macedonian parents. Why?

MACEDONIAN SCHOOLS IN GREECE

One positive thing that the CPG did was to allow the Macedonian people to establish Macedonian language schools in the so-called “liberated territories” (Partisan held territories).

A school to educate teachers in the Macedonian language was opened in the village German in Prespa Region in December 1947. The aim here was to prepare Macedonian language teachers who in turn would teach Macedonian children the Macedonian language.

Among the regions that received Macedonian language education at the time were the villages in the free territories of Vicho and Kaimakchalan. Even though this program only lasted several months, 87 Macedonian schools were opened with the participation of over 10,000 students.

The Macedonians were happy to be taught Macedonian in school. The Greeks were the ones who were not happy. The Macedonians knew very well that they were under occupation and played by the rules. They had seen occupations come and go and no one was sure what the future would bring. But the Greeks, even in areas where they were a minority, were not happy to see Macedonians speaking Macedonian and learning to read and write in Macedonian.

GREEK ABUSES AGAINST THE MACEDONIANS

The Greeks wanted nothing to do with anything Macedonian and would have loved to see everything Macedonian wiped out. By 1928, 1,497 Macedonian place names in the Greek occupied Macedonia were Hellenized (LAW 4096) and all Cyrillic (Macedonian) inscriptions found in churches, on tombstones and icons were destroyed (or overwritten) prompting English Journalist V. Hild to say, “The Greeks do not only persecute living Slavs (Macedonians)..., but they even persecute dead ones. They do not leave them in peace even in the graves. They erase the Slavonic inscriptions on the headstones, remove the bones and burn them.”

It is traumatic to have a people's history ripped from under them like the Greeks did to the Macedonians, to have every place name and every person's name changed. We feel that trauma to this day.

I have people write me, asking me to tell them the Greek name of their village because they only know the Macedonian name. These are people who are born in Canada, the USA and Australia whose parents have already died and who now want to go to Greek occupied Macedonia and visit the village of their ancestors but they don't know what it's called in Greek.

Some had already gone to Greek occupied Macedonia but returned disappointed because no one could tell them where the village was because they had never heard of its Macedonian name.

We even have problems identifying each other as people. There are many people from my village who I don't know by their Greek names. Unless they tell me their Macedonian name and which Macedonian family they belong to, I won't know who they are.

My village "Oshchima" was renamed to "Trigonon" by the Greeks in the 1920's and there is no history of it before that because it was not only renamed, its Macedonian name was completely erased. This was done to every village, town, city, river, mountain, lake and every person's name. We were erased out of existence.

Even before Greece had secured its grip on Macedonia, officials were sent to administer "the new lands". The first official Greek administrator arrived in Solun near the end of October 1912, accompanied by two judges, five customs officials, ten consulate clerks, a contingent of reporters and journalists and 168 Cretan soldiers.

Among other things, the first order of business was to "Hellenize the New Lands".

"After the Greeks occupied Aegean Macedonia, they closed the Slavic language schools and churches and expelled the priests. The Macedonian language and names were forbidden, and the Macedonians were referred to as Bulgarians, Serbians or natives.

By law promulgated on November 21, 1926, all place names (toponymia) were Hellenized; that is the names of cities, villages, rivers and mountains were discarded and Greek names put in their place. At the same time the Macedonians were forced to change their first and surnames; every Macedonian surname had to end in 'ou', 'os', 'es', or 'poulos'.

The news of these acts and the new, official Greek names were published in the Greek government daily 'Efimeris tis Kiverniseos' no. 322 and 324 of November 21 and 23, 1926.

The requirement to use these Greek names is officially binding to this day. All evidence of the Macedonian language was compulsorily removed from churches, monuments, archeological finds and cemeteries. Slavonic church or secular literature was seized and burned. The use of the Macedonian language was strictly forbidden also in personal communication between parents and children, among villagers, at weddings and work parties, and in burial rituals." (For more information see page 109, John Shea, Macedonia and Greece, The Struggle to Define a New Balkan Nation)

In the years following World War I, the Macedonian people underwent extensive measures of systematic denationalization. The applications of these "denationalization schemes" were so extensive and aggressively pursued that in the long-term, they eroded the will of the Macedonian people to resist.

"In Greece, in 1929 during the rule of Elepeterios Venizelos, a legal act was issued 'On the protection of public order'. In line with this Act each demand for nationality rights is regarded as high treason. This law is still in force.

On December 18, 1936, Metaxas's dictatorial government issued a legal Act 'On the activity against state security' on the strength of which thousands of Macedonians were arrested, imprisoned, expelled or exiled (EXORIA) on arid, inhospitable Greek islands, where many perished. Their crime? Being ethnic Macedonian by birth.

On September 7, 1938 legal Act No. 2366 was issued banning the use of the Macedonian language. All Macedonian localities were flooded with posters: 'Speak Greek'. Evening schools were opened in which adult Macedonians were taught Greek. Not a single Macedonian school functioned at the time." (See page 8, What Europe has Forgotten: The Struggle of the Aegean Macedonians, A Report by the Association of the Macedonians in Poland)

Many Macedonians were fined, beaten and jailed for speaking Macedonian. Adults and school children alike were further humiliated by being forced to drink castor oil when caught speaking Macedonian.

Such was the life for the Macedonians under Greek rule... in their own ancestral homeland and place of birth no less.

MACEDONIANS LEAVING MACEDONIA

The Macedonian people have been living under one rule or another and have been leaving Macedonia since Macedonia was occupied by the Romans. Many went north and east and established Macedonian colonies. More recently, many had fled Macedonia during the various uprising against the Ottomans and some ended up north of Macedonia as far north as Russia. There was a Macedonian colony established in Russia during the 18th century.

More recently, during the 19th century, many fled to Bulgaria. When Bulgaria became independent it attracted Macedonian pechalbari (migrant workers), who left their homes before and after the failed 1903 Ilinden Uprising. Many decided to make Bulgaria their permanent home. According to Macedonian activists in Bulgaria, as many as 2 million Macedonians have settled over the years in Bulgaria.

After 1878, while the Ottoman economy in Macedonia was crashing down by leaps and bounds, the Bulgarian economy was improving dramatically. This was partly due to the cheap labour provided by a large influx of Macedonian pechalbari (migrant workers). Experiencing a very different life in Sofia, in contrast to life in the

village, many Macedonian pechalbari were seduced into believing the Bulgarian propaganda that Macedonians are Bulgarians, and many decided to make Bulgaria their home.

What is interesting about that is that the descendants of those Macedonians today are the staunchest Bulgarians, even though they know that they are Macedonians. The Macedonians who decided to remain in Bulgaria were not attached to the lands. In other words they had no land or farms of their own to work on and their options of finding good paying jobs were limited.

Many decided to become educated to widen their prospects. Being educated they were able to take on work in the Bulgarian government and advance upwards. Georgi Dimitrov, leader of the Bulgarian Communist Party and Secretary of the Comintern, for example, was a Macedonian. Even today there are many members of Parliament in the Bulgarian government who are of Macedonian descent.

I have a friend, an Armenian academic, a PhD, who runs a museum in the States. He was educated in Bulgaria. He told me that most Bulgarian academics know the truth about Macedonia but will not talk. I am sure most academics in Greece know the truth about Macedonia also and they don't dare say a word either. They can't say anything because they will lose their jobs.

The Macedonian immigrant population in Russia from the 18th century has already been assimilated and today it is lost. A lot of names of prominent Macedonians who left for Russia have been recorded in history but it would be difficult to find their descendants because Macedonian names are so similar to Russian names. But it should be easier to find Macedonians in Bulgaria because they emigrated more recently. Unfortunately they can't declare themselves Macedonian because Bulgaria does not recognize the Macedonian identity.

Things in Greece haven't changed much either. It's quieted down but it is still oppressive, especially after the Greek Civil War. From what I am told, about 85% of the Greek people before the civil war were in favour of having a socialist system but they had to settle for

what they got, an “oppressive system”, at least for the Macedonians, because that’s what Britain and the United States wanted.

I know this was not what the Macedonian people wanted but this couldn’t have been good for the majority of the Greek people either. Perhaps that is why so many Greeks dislike Americans...

GREECE – BULGARIA AND THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION

Both Greece and Bulgaria have painted themselves into a corner with regards to “the Macedonian National Question”, i.e. what to do with the Macedonian people, especially now that the Republic of Macedonia has emerged as an independent Macedonian state.

The Americans, the British and their Western allies created the “Macedonian problem” by being belligerent towards the Macedonian people since the Ottoman Empire began to fall apart... but to be more accurate, since the Roman Empire conquered and partitioned Macedonia into pieces.

Even today the Americans and their European allies are behind the so-called “name dispute”. They want Macedonia to change its name because they want Macedonia to cease to exist! They want Macedonia to change its own name as the first step to self-destruction.

Every single international convention and every single human right in existence has been violated in order to achieve this objective – “persuade Macedonia to change its name so that it can begin to self-destruct”. This is the road the Great Powers have taken today to solve the Macedonian problem.

I am convinced Greece on its own does not have the power to have done all these things, including commit genocide against the Macedonian people, several times, and get away with it. Greater powers are at hand behind Greece, pulling the strings...

MACEDONIANS EXILED FROM THEIR HOMELAND IN GREECE

Regarding the Macedonian people who were driven out of Greek occupied Macedonia by the violence of the Greek Civil War, as I mentioned earlier, initially they were sent from Albania to the various Eastern European countries but mostly to Poland and the USSR. A few years later many made attempts to move to the Republic of Macedonia, Canada, the USA and Australia but were restricted by the iron curtain.

In fact, what is ironic about this is that the Macedonian people were led by Zahariadis and his partner Tito into believing that they could unite Greek occupied Macedonia with the People's Republic of Macedonia while an international border, i.e. "the iron curtain" ran between them.

Years later, after re-uniting with their children who were living in different countries, most Macedonians from Greek occupied Macedonia settled in the Republic of Macedonia.

Those who had family members living in Canada, the USA and Australia emigrated over the years to join them. The situation, after the 1970's, has basically remained static. These Macedonians, having declared themselves as Macedonians, are still unwelcome by Greece which has not only exiled them but has also confiscated their properties.

THE TERM SLAVO-MACEDONIANS

Years ago when the communists on the left of the political spectrum decided to recognize the existence of Macedonians in Greek occupied Macedonia they decided to call them "Slavo-Macedonians". The Greeks belonging to the middle and the right of the political spectrum did not recognize the existence of any Macedonian group living in Greece. For them there were no Macedonians living in Greece.

So what does this mean? Why Slavo-Macedonians and not just Macedonians? There were no other groups of people who were

called “Macedonians”? So why Slavo-Macedonians, to distinguish them from whom?!

I believe the word “Slavo” as a prefix to the word Macedonians has a different meaning for different people. “Slavo” is a tribal term not a national term.

To the Macedonians it means “Slavic” Macedonians, an acceptable term at the time, which defined them as Slavic speaking Macedonians. Well, at least it was better than calling them “endopii” (indigenous) Greeks.

To the progressive Greeks the word “Slavo” meant they were Greek people who spoke a Slavic language and lived in geographic Macedonia.

To the fascist Greeks it meant foreigners who came to Greece from the Slavic countries pretending to be Macedonians so that they could carve out a chunk of Macedonia and steal it from them.

According to the Fascists, with Metaxas as their idol, only pure Greeks who descended from the ancient Greeks lived in Greece.

To the people of the outside world, who have been conditioned to associate Macedonia with “Ancient Greece”, “Slavo” implied “Slavic”, a tribal people who do not belong in Macedonia. In other words, to the outside world, a “Slavo-Macedonian” was someone who was not of Macedonian origin, who was a Slav, a settler and a newcomer, whose ancestors arrived in Macedonia during the 6th century AD. In other words, a “Slavo-Macedonian” could not possibly be a Macedonian because the “real” Macedonians were Greek.

EFFECTS FROM THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA DECLARING ITS INDEPENDENCE

Well, let us look and see what happened after the Republic of Macedonia surfaced as an independent state.

In 1988 when it became inevitable that a new Macedonian State was about to be declared, from the breakup of the Yugoslav federation, the word “Macedonia” became very popular in Greece.

After attempting to extinguish the name for seventy-six years, the Greek State reversed its policy and made Macedonia a very popular word in the Greek vocabulary. It even renamed its northern province (Greek occupied Macedonia) to Macedonia, claiming for historical reasons that it was the only legitimate Macedonia and belonged to Greece.

Also after all the years of claiming that only Greeks lived in Macedonia, Greek authorities almost overnight “invented” a new ethnicity called “Greek Macedonians”. This new ethnicity, it appears, is Macedonian but of Greek origin, descendents from the ancient Macedonians and rightful heirs to the Macedonian heritage.

The present population of Greek occupied Macedonia is approximately 2 million people. Approximately 1 million are of direct Macedonian descent. After nearly a century of systematic effort to denationalize the Macedonians, many have succumbed and developed a Greek consciousness and refer to themselves as Greeks or “Greek Macedonians”. But this only happened after the Republic of Macedonia became an independent state.

The Greek state has always portrayed the Greek identity as being more cultured and superior. The Macedonian identity has always been portrayed as an uncivilized, barbaric and dirty presence within a pure Greek space.

As I mentioned earlier, the psychological aim was to make people abandon using the Macedonian language. It has gotten to the point where one is looked down upon for speaking Macedonian. The language is referred to as the “local idiom.”

It is interesting to note that the Macedonian language is recognized internationally but it is forbidden in Greece. After three generations of policies of denationalization by the Greek state, the Macedonian consciousness among the population has been badly damaged to the point where those who retain their Macedonian consciousness fear to declare it openly.

This fear is difficult to comprehend by those who grew up in free and open societies. You have to experience it to understand it.

Among the older generation of Macedonians the fear is pervasive and ingrained. It is as if the person is always on guard for his actions and words for fear that he will be betrayed or heard by Greek authorities.

When one Macedonian was pressed further on this issue he blurted out in exasperation, “It (fear) has gotten into the genes!”

The other 1 million of the 2 million people, who live in Greek occupied Macedonia, are non-Greek colonists and settlers who were brought to Greek occupied Macedonia over the years, predominantly from Asia Minor, as late as the 1920's.

In fact, according to the same Greeks who yesterday were yelling and screaming that “there is no such thing as a Macedonian”, a sentence that has been yelled in my face many times, were now claiming that there are Macedonians. They were saying that Asia Minor Christian Turk colonists are the “real” Macedonians and we, the rightful heirs to the Macedonian heritage, were “Slavs”, “Skopjans”, “Bulgarians”, “Old Bulgarians” and many other derogatory words that they found in their vocabulary.

HOW MACEDONIA BECAME GREEK – A HISTORY

1. It is a well-documented fact that Greece, in 1912, 1913 during the two Balkan wars, entered and forcibly occupied Macedonian territory illegally without the consent of the Macedonian people. It then, along with its partners Bulgaria and Serbia, went on a rampage

bombing Macedonian villages and indiscriminately killing and murdering entire populations (first genocide).

2. It is a well-documented fact that as soon as Greece consolidated its hold on Greek Occupied Macedonia, it murdered or forcibly exiled all Macedonians who refused to accept its conditions (second genocide).

3. It is a well-documented fact that after ethnically cleansing the Macedonian population, Greece brought Greek settlers from Asia Minor, Epirus and other regions and settled them on Macedonian territory, mostly on the lands of the exiled Macedonians, without their consent.

4. It is a well-documented fact that during the early 1920's Greece began a campaign of denationalization by banning the Macedonian language and making it illegal to speak Macedonian in Macedonia. It then proceeded to forcibly change all peoples' names and toponyms.

5. It is also a well-documented fact that during the Greek Civil War, Greece exiled a large part of the Macedonian population, including the refugee children, illegally expropriated properties and issued them to new settlers (third genocide).

The territory which Greece today calls "Greek Macedonia" is in fact "Greek Occupied Macedonia" and has been occupied since 1912. The so-called "Greek Macedonians" are not really Macedonians at all, in fact the majority of them are Christian Turks and other settlers and colonists who Greece has been depositing on Macedonian lands since the Balkan wars (1912, 1913).

During 1989 to 1993 the Greek Foreign Ministry, headed by Andonis Samaras, used a secret fund to pay Greek journalists \$130 million dollars (US) to promote the "Greek-ness" of Macedonia! Although these funds were originally intended for external promotion, according to the testimony of former Prime Minister Constantinos Mitsotakis, they ended up in the pockets of Greek journalists.

There is much, much more that can be said about the Greek position and its denial of the existence of the Macedonians but all they are doing is lying to themselves and to the world in order to cover up what they have done and hope that we will go away and leave them alone.

The Greeks refuse to look at the problem from our point of view, from the Macedonian point of view, and see how much damage they have done to us and how badly they have hurt us over the years.

It is also ironic that the Macedonian people are called “indigenous” and at the same time they are called “Slavs” who don’t belong in Macedonia. Again, here the Greeks painted themselves into a corner. The moment they prohibited their own people from calling them Macedonians, they had to call them something. Initially they called them “Bulgarians” and “Serbians”. Then, when Greece declared itself 98% pure Greek and 2% Muslim Greek, they had very little left to call them... to distinguish them from the “loyal” Greeks... so they began to call them “locals” but “locals” what? Everyone was local, even the newcomer colonists. So they began to call the Macedonians “endopii” meaning indigenous.

When a Macedonian arrived in the Greek court and the judge asked him to present his case the lawyer would say he is “endopios” for whom a translator would be required. There were actually educated Macedonians, certified by the Greek government, to be court translators. These certificates are still in existence. I have seen one.

This means that Greece had recognized that the Macedonian people spoke a unique language in the region that was not Bulgarian or Serbian, which they called an “idiom”. The age-old Macedonian language that enlightened Eastern Europe, the Greeks called an idiom. How bizarre is that?

I also have a copy of a Greek personal identification card that has the name “Oshchima” on it as a place of origin; a place that today Greece says does not exist... and never existed.

And then we have the “Abecedar”, the Macedonian primer.

A book of great importance to Macedonian linguistics and historiography was published in Athens; was the primer entitled ABECEDAR (A B C), printed in the Latin alphabet, and intended for the children of the Macedonian national minority in Greece.

“In 1920 Greece signed before the League of Nations a treaty obliging it to grant certain rights to the minorities of non-Greek origin in Greece. Four years later, in 1924, at the suggestion of the League of Nations, Greece and Bulgaria signed the well-known Kalfov-Politis Protocol under which Bulgaria was obliged to grant the Greek minority in Bulgaria their minority rights (language, schools and other rights), while Greece, recognizing the Macedonians from the Aegean part of Macedonia as a ‘Bulgarian’ minority, was to grant them their minority rights. This agreement was seemingly very much in favour of Bulgaria, but when in 1925 the Greek government undertook certain concrete steps towards the publication of the first primer made for the specific needs of that minority, it made it clear that there were no grounds on which Bulgaria could be officially interested in any ‘Bulgarian minority’ or expect the primer to be in Bulgarian, for that minority - though speaking a Slav language - was neither Bulgarian nor Serbian.

The very fact that official Greece did not, either de jure or do facto, see the Macedonians as a Bulgarian minority, but rather as a separate Slav group (‘Slav speaking minority’), is of particular significance. The primer, published in the Latin alphabet, was based on the Lerin - Bilola dialect. After Gianelli’s Dictionary dating from the 16th Century, and the Daniloviot Cetirijazicnik written in the 19th century, this was yet another book written in the Macedonian vernacular. The primer was mailed to some regions in Western Aegean-Macedonia (Kostur, Lerin and Voden), and the school authorities prepared to give Macedonian children, from the first to the fourth grade of the elementary school, instruction in their own mother tongue. (Grigorios Dafnis, ‘Greece between the two world wars’, ‘Elefteria’ newspaper, March 15, 1953, Dionisios Romas in ‘Elefteria’ newspaper of October 9 and 12, 1954 and Dimitrios Vazuglis in Racial and religious minorities in Greece and Bulgaria, 1954)

The Greek governments have never made a sincere attempt to solve the question of the Macedonians and their ethnic rights in Greece. Thus, while measures were being undertaken for the opening of Macedonian schools, a clash between the Greek and Bulgarian armies at Petrich was concocted, which was then followed by a massacre of the innocent Macedonian population in the village of Trlis near Serres. All this was aimed at creating an attitude of insecurity within the Macedonians so that they themselves would give up the recognition of their minority rights and eventually seek safety by moving to Bulgaria. The Greek governments also skillfully used the Yugoslav-Bulgarian disagreements on the question of the Macedonians in Greece, and with organized pressure on the Macedonian population, as was the case in the village of Trlis, tried to dismiss the Macedonian ethnic question from the agenda through forced resettlement of the Macedonian population outside of Greece.

The ABECEDAR, which actually never reached the Macedonian children, is in itself a powerful testimony not only of the existence of the large Macedonian ethnic minority in Greece, but also of the fact that Greece was under an obligation before the League of Nations to undertake certain measures in order to grant this particular minority their rights” (Hristo Andonovski).

Here’s what happened back in 1925;

During this period of immense suffering, the Macedonian people had a glimmer of hope that conditions might improve as a result of the Treaty of Serves which Greece signed earlier in August 10, 1920. According to conditions of the Treaty, under Articles 7, 8 and 9, the Greek government was to undertake certain obligations regarding “the protection of the non-Greek national minorities in Greece”. These Articles specifically stated free use of language and education. Initially Greece sought to neglect its obligations, however in March 1925 the League of Nations directed Greece to fulfill its obligations. By May 1925 an elementary school reader was published in the Macedonian language, it was known as the ABECEDAR. The ABECEDAR was to be used by Macedonian children in Macedonian schools which were yet to open in Aegean Macedonia.

Strong reactions immediately came from Serbia and Bulgaria.

Serbia and Bulgaria were caught totally by surprise, both were furious that the Macedonian book ABECEDAR was not printed in the Serbian or Bulgarian language respectively.

Serbia threatened to break its treaty of alliance with Greece and to commence negotiations with Bulgaria for the division of Aegean Macedonia. Threats came from the Bulgarians, protesting loudly that they had previously signed an Accord with Greece which recognized the Macedonians as “Bulgarians”.

What occurred next is truly a rare example, the Greek representative at the League of Nations Vasilis Dendramis responded by defending the Macedonian language as being “neither Bulgarian nor Serbian, but an independent language”. He listed various linguists and linguistic maps as evidence to support his claim of the independence of the Macedonian language. This high-ranking Greek official representing the Greek state not only recognized the existence of the Macedonian identity, but openly defended and supported it.

However, Serbian and Bulgarian objections, together with internal opposition in Greece, prevented the Abecedar from ever reaching the Macedonian children. The Abecedar was destroyed but remains as a reminder to the Greek government of the Macedonians as a separate national entity.

OLD INTERNATIONAL NEWSPAPERS PROVE MACEDONIANS EXIST

Another thing worth mentioning here is what was found in newspaper archives. While the Greeks were screaming and yelling that Tito created the Macedonian and that no Macedonians existed before Tito, western libraries began to digitize their archival materials, especially the newspapers from the early 1900’s. And guess what?

These newspapers were saying Macedonians existed and were fighting against the Ottomans during the 1903 Ilinden Uprising and not “Bulgarians” as the Greeks were claiming.

Before major libraries started digging up old newspapers, scanning and digitizing them and making them available online and accessible from the internet, the Greeks had us convinced that Macedonians did not exist; they had all died off a long time ago. But when we pointed out that there are people today who call themselves Macedonians and showed them examples, they brushed that off and said those people were not “real” Macedonians but “Slavs.” But when we asked for an explanation as to how they become Macedonians, the Greeks explained that “Tito created them when he created the People’s Republic of Macedonia.” And what purpose would Tito have to create these Macedonians, we asked? Most Greeks believed that “Tito created these Macedonians in order to lay claim to Greek-Macedonia!” You know, the one that the Greeks “liberated” in 1913.

The Greeks had convinced the entire world that “Macedonians did not exist” and that “the Modern Macedonians were created by Tito.” To this day I get e-mails from Greeks attesting to this “fact!”

But when old newspapers, especially major dailies from the late 1800’s and early 1900’s were made available on the internet, we began to see that Macedonians did exist even before Tito was born. This was indeed a puzzling problem, especially if we were to believe both the Greeks who tell no lies and all the major daily English language newspapers which reported on the Macedonians even before Tito was born.

Faced with this dilemma a number of us got together and after many hours of brainstorming, thanks to a fellow called True Macedonian, we found our answer.

The only thing that explained how Tito could have created the Modern Macedonians as per Greek testimonies and how Macedonians existed before his time, as documented by all those newspapers, was that “Tito must have had a time machine and went back in time to create the Macedonians”.

Like today’s major dailies that report on world events on a daily basis, so did the dailies of a century or so ago. The newspapers were reporting on all sorts of activities in the Balkans and in Macedonia,

including on the Macedonians preparing and executing the 1903 Macedonian National Ilinden Uprising against the Ottoman Empire.

If we “must” believe that Josip Broz Tito, the Yugoslav dictator, along with the Communists, “invented” the Macedonians then we must also believe that Tito possessed a “Time Machine” because the Macedonians existed way before Tito’s time.

Almost every e-mail I have received from Greeks in the last half dozen years or so mention the name “Tito” as the “creator” of the Macedonian ethnic identity. “You are not Macedonians, you are Slavs and you came to the Balkans in the 6th century AD” seems to be the standard Greek definition of a Modern Macedonian. But if we are all Slavs and came to the Balkans in the 6th century AD then how did we become Macedonians? Well the Greeks have a ready answer for that too. They say “Tito created the Macedonian ethnic identity”.

Greeks, it seems, feel very uncomfortable when a question pops up for which they have no ready made answers but on the question of “How did the Macedonians become Macedonians?” they are pretty sure Tito created them.

“Greek propagandists and Greek government officials have brainwashed their Greek citizens into believing that Josip Broz Tito, the Yugoslav dictator, along with the Communists, ‘invented’ the Macedonians. The Bulgarians too, like the Greeks, are in denial when it comes to the existence of a Macedonian nation,” says True Macedonian.

One puzzling question however. “What identity were these people before Tito ‘made’ them into Macedonians”? I guess we will have to turn to the Greeks for that answer!

Following are old newspaper articles that prove Macedonians existed before Tito’s time;

“Iron and Steel Supplement – Labor...Macedonians...17” (“Annual Report of the Secretary of Internal Affairs of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania”, Part III, Industrial Statistics, Vol. XXXV, 1907, page 73)

By the way registered on page 73 you will also find Greeks...159 and Slavish...3,408.

“Labor Supplements – Sole and Harness Leather...Macedonians...43” (“Annual Report of the Secretary of Internal Affairs of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania”, Part III, Industrial Statistics, Vol. XXXV, 1907, page 191)

Registered on page 191 you will also find Greeks...20 and Slavonians...285.

“Labor Supplements – Tanning Extracts...Macedonians...3” (“Annual Report of the Secretary of Internal Affairs of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania”, Part III, Industrial Statistics, Vol. XXXV, 1907, page 247)

“Saklabah, The Sclavonians, supposed by the Arabians to be descended from Seclab, a son of Japhet. Under this name, however, the Mahometans comprehend often the Servians, Bulgarians, Moesians, Thracians, Albanians, Macedonians and the northern parts of Greece.” (“An English Arabic Dictionary” by Josiph Catafago, 1858, page 131)

“Mr. Gladstone and the Balkan Confederation. – The Byron Society, which is actively engaged in disseminating appeals in Greece and Bulgaria to help the cause of the Macedonians, has communicated to its agents a letter from Mr. Gladstone for distribution in the vernacular in South-Eastern Europe. The Society aims at inducing the Greek, Servian and Bulgarian governments to come to an early agreement in reference to the Macedonian question. The letter is as follows: - ‘Hawarden Castle Jan. 19, 1897. Dear, Sir, the hopelessness of the Turkish Government should make me witness with delight its being swept out of the countries which it tortures. Next to the Ottoman Government nothing can be more deplorable and blameworthy than jealousies between Greek and Slav and plans by the states already existing for appropriating other territory. Why not Macedonia for the Macedonians as well as Bulgaria for the Bulgarians and Servia for the Servians? And if they are small and weak, let them bind themselves together for defense, so that they

may not be scattered by others, either great or small, which would probably be the effect of their quarreling among themselves. Your very faithful, W. E. Gladstone.” (“New York Times”, February 6th, 1897.)

“Christians in Turkey

To the Editor of the New York Times:

The writer read with much interest a letter in THE TIMES of to-day relating to the Macedonian disturbances. It has been said that ‘The worst Christian Government is better than the best Muslim Government’, but Mr. Burman, the writer of the letter in question, apparently thinks Turkish rule good enough in its way or feels that international justice demands that Turkey in Europe be preserved at any price. He speaks of ‘acts of retribution on the part of their (the Macedonians’) Turkish masters.’ As the Turks have long referred to the Christians in their dominions as ‘dogs’ the term is perhaps a very apt one.

K. C. Bataille, Orange N. J., August 11, 1900.”

“The Serai stands in an open space, near the south-east corner of the Castron: it is a vast irregular pile of buildings... The great hall of this building was crowded with attendants of every variety in costumes, from red-shawled Macedonians and turbaned Osmanli, to the Albanian with his shaggy white capote, and the Greek archon in robes of ermine and enormous calpac.” (“Travels in Sicily Greece and Albania” by Rev. Thos. Smart Hughes, 1820, page 472.)

“Since the Christian era, as we have said, a successive downpour of foreigners from the north into Greece has ensued. In the sixth century came the Avars and the Slavs, bringing death and disaster. A more potent and lasting influence upon the country was probably produced by the slower and more peaceful infiltration of the Slavs into Thessaly and Epirus from the end of the seventh century onward. A result of this is that Slavic place-names to-day occur all over the Peloponnesus in the open country where settlements could readily be made. The most important immigration of all is probably that of the Albanians, who, from the thirteenth century until the

advent of the Turks, incessantly overran the land.” (“The Races of Europe A Sociological Study”, by William Z. Ripley, Ph.D., 1910, page 408).

This is only a very minute sample of what there is out there about how Tito created the Macedonian identity as per Greek claims. I have an entire book written about this with quotes from newspaper articles from major European, American, Canadian and Australian newspapers from the late 1800’s and early 1900’s when, supposedly, no Macedonians existed. The book is called “Come take a Ride in Tito’s Time Machine”.

I am at a loss for words about how the Greek people can lie to your face with such overwhelming evidence that disproves their claims and still expect to be taken seriously!

In my opinion these Greeks have zero credibility and have done injustice not only to the Macedonians but to their own cause. But then why should they care? They are inside our homes, nice and warm, while we roam the streets freezing and looking for justice.

And who is going to provide this justice?

The Great Powers or international law wielded by the same Great Powers? When are we Macedonians going to learn?

GREEKS MARRYING MACEDONIANS TO ASSIMILATE THEM

The Greeks actually sent military and administrative personnel to Greek occupied Macedonia and ordered them to marry Macedonian women so that they could assimilate the Macedonian population. They were doing the same thing the Ottomans were doing. They were putting people in certain places to hold power. The silly thing about that is that the mother is usually the one who teaches the children who they are and the first language they speak. That is why it is called “the mother tongue” and not the “father tongue”.

And this is why Greeks are intellectually superior to the Macedonians.

IS THERE ANY MACEDONIAN LIFE LEFT IN GREECE TODAY?

Even though the world was changing all around us, the Macedonians in Greece continued to suffer abuses at the hands of the Greek government.

During the late 1950's inhabitants of several villages in the Lerin, Kostur and Voden Regions were forced to take oaths swearing loyalty to Greece and denouncing their Macedonian ethnicity and mother language.

This policy of denationalization continued to meet with resistance however, as the Macedonian people continued to feel Macedonian and speak their Macedonian language in secret.

With the imminent breakup of Yugoslavia, the oppressed Macedonians in Greece also began to feel the fervor and started to form their own movements, which gave birth to such organizations as the Macedonian Movement for Balkan Prosperity and Vinozhito.

In regards to developments with the Macedonians in Greece, on September 8th, 1995 members of the ethnic Macedonian political party in Greece, the RAINBOW PARTY, also known as the "VINOZHITO PARTY" in Macedonian, opened an office in Lerin.

On January 19th, 1997 a Second Conference of the "RAINBOW" party was held in Lerin and was attended by 76 delegates of all local units. A Political Manifesto and Organizational Principles were adopted and a Central Council comprised of 19 members was elected.

The Central Council held its first session in Voden on January 26th, 1997 and elected a five-member Political Secretariat, an Economic Commission, an Editors Council, etc.

In its Political Manifesto "RAINBOW" has aired its wish to cooperate with all democratic and anti-nationalist forces in the country in its struggle for peace and European integration.

The RAINBOW PARTY is a member of the European Free Alliance which has been standing up for the rights of stateless nations, peoples and regions for decades.

Other development with regards to the Macedonians in Greece includes the opening of the Greek branch of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages (EBLUL), an organization dedicated to the preservation of lesser used languages in Europe.

Across the European Union, no fewer than forty million people speak languages in their everyday lives, which are different from the official language of the state in which they are living. At present this figure represents 10% of the total European population but shortly, with the expansion of the Union, the number of people speaking a different language from the official language of their state will be much, much greater. Greece, too, is no exception; however vigorously the state may deny it, the facts tell their own story. A by no means negligible section of the Greek population is bilingual. It is not possible to provide precise figures, since none of the censuses carried out to date has included a question on language. The one exception was the census of 1920, yet the figures it yielded for the northern regions of the country were never published.

Moreover, the long-standing policy of marginalization and suppression has succeeded, naturally enough, in reducing the actual number of those speaking the non-official languages. This hostile treatment of heteroglossy in Greece had its beginnings in the early days of the modern Greek state, 190 years ago. In those areas of the country where Arvanitika (Albanian) was prevalent, every effort was made to discourage its use. There was perhaps some justification for this in the desperate efforts being made to unite the regional populations into a single Greek state, using as a means to this end a policy of homogenization of the various populations.

Macedonians such as Nase Parisis, who is currently President of the Greek branch of EBLUL, are striving to introduce the Macedonian languages into the Greek educational system.

In 1995 Human Rights Watch - Helsinki condemned Greece for the oppression of its ethnic Macedonian minority, which Greece denies exists. Both Amnesty International and the European Parliament urged Greece to recognize the Macedonian language and to stop oppressing ethnic Macedonians living within its borders.

IS THERE ANY MACEDONIAN LIFE LEFT IN BULGARIA TODAY?

In regards to Macedonians in Bulgaria, political changes after the capitulation of fascist Bulgaria and the September 9th, 1944 coup d'état positively influenced the Macedonians in Pirin. On August 9, 1946 the Communist Party of Bulgaria, under the leadership of Georgi Dimitrov, officially recognized the Macedonian nation and the right of the Bulgarian controlled part of Macedonia to attach itself to the People's Republic of Macedonia. After World War II the Macedonians in Bulgaria were recognized as a separate and distinct ethnicity. Demographic data from a free census in 1946 revealed that the majority of the population in Pirin Macedonia declared itself to be ethnic Macedonian. There was a period of cultural autonomy and affirmation of Macedonian national and cultural values. The Macedonian literary language and national history were introduced into the educational system and almost 32,000 students were taught Macedonian. In 1947 in Gorna Djumaja (Blagoevgrad) the first Macedonian bookstore, reading room and Regional Macedonian National Theater were opened. Macedonian newspapers such as "Pirinsko delo", "Nova Makedonija", "Mlad borec" etc. were also published. Literary, cultural and artistic associations were founded, contributing to the spread of Macedonian culture.

In the 1956 census conducted by the Bulgarian government, 63.7% of the population living in Pirin Macedonia declared itself Macedonian. Since that census, and after Tito broke relations with Russia and Bulgaria, Bulgaria changed its attitude and negated the existence of Macedonians thus forbidding the expression of the Macedonian ethnicity and language. Another census conducted in 1965 shows only 8,750 or less than 1% of the total population living in the district of Blagoevgrad to be Macedonians. This was a region

with the highest percentage of Macedonians shown to live there by a previous census.

In 1989 a group of Macedonians formed the United Macedonian Organization - Ilinden (OMO Ilinden) with aims at gaining cultural and national autonomy for the Macedonians in Pirin. OMO Ilinden PIRIN was a political party of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria. It was registered as a political party in 1999 and participated in municipal elections in October 1999, where it elected five local officials. However, on February 29, 2000 the Constitutional Court in Bulgaria declared OMO "Ilinden" - PIRIN unconstitutional. This was in direct violation of the right to freedom of association and the right to freedom from discrimination.

The Bulgarian government refuses to acknowledge the existence of the large Macedonian minority in Pirin Macedonia and continues to violate its basic human rights. Members and supporters of OMO Ilinden PIRIN (political party and human rights organization) and OMO Ilinden (human and minority rights organization) have been videotaped, harassed, beaten, fined and even imprisoned simply for asserting their ethnic Macedonian identity.

IS THERE ANY MACEDONIAN LIFE LEFT IN ALBANIA TODAY?

In regards to the Macedonians in Albania, at the local elections in Albania, held on February 18, 2007, a Macedonian from the party Macedonian Alliance for European Integration (MAEI) was, for the first time, elected as mayor. Edmond Temelko, a 36-year-old veterinarian turned politician won the mayoral position in Prespa municipality, making him the first Macedonian elected in Albania.

Macedonians in Albania are still unable to fully exercise their basic human rights such as obtain schooling in their mother tongue, using Macedonian national symbols and participation in state institutions. Macedonians fought hard to register their political party, the Macedonian Alliance for European Integration with success which is a major accomplishment for Macedonians, because they demonstrated maturity and voted for themselves. By doing so they

showed Albanian society that they were part of it and would take an active role in dealing with issues in the country.

The Prespa municipality has nine towns, inhabited mostly by ethnic Macedonians who speak their own language and foster their own cultural heritage. The Macedonian language will become the second official language and all Macedonian landmarks will be given their original names which were changed during Enver Hodza's regime.

Albania gained the Mala Prespa region from Greece in 1919 in exchange for some Albanian lands in Epirus.

ACRONYMS

AFZH - Women's Anti-Fascist Front
ASNOM – Anti-Fascist Assembly of National Liberation of Macedonia
BRP(k) – Communist Party of Bulgaria
CPG - Communist Party of Greece
CPM - Communist Party of Macedonia
CPY - Communist Party of Yugoslavia
CVG - Greek Civil War
DAG – Democratic Army of Greece
EAM – National Liberation Front
ELAS – National Liberation Army of Greece
EON – National Youth Organization
EPON – All Greek National Youth Organization
KOEM – Communist Organization of Aegean Macedonia
KOS - Counter-intelligence Sector of JAN
NKVD – People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs
NOBG - Peoples Liberation Struggle in Greece
NOBM - Peoples Liberation Struggle in Macedonia
NOF - Peoples' Liberation Front
NOMS - Peoples' Liberation Youth Organization
OKNE - Communist Youth Organization of Greece
ONOO – Local People's Liberation Council
OZNA – People's Defense Division
PAO - Pan-Hellenic Liberation Organization
PDEG – Pan-Greek Democratic Union of Women
PDOG – International Federation of Democratic Women
POJ - Partisan Units of Yugoslavia
SID - Information Services of the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs
SNOF - Slavo-Macedonian National Liberation Front
SKP(b) – Communist Party of the Soviet Union
UDBA - Directorate of State Security
USSR – United Soviet Socialist Republics