# *Refugee Children from Aegean Macedonia in Yugoslavia*

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

# Refugee Children from Aegean Macedonia in Yugoslavia

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This book is dedicated to the many "mothers", teachers and staff of the children's homes (boarding schools) in Yugoslavia, who unselfishly gave part of their lives to grant us the gift of childhood and to point us on the right path of life…

INDEX

PREFACE .....7
AGAINST WHOM HAVE WE SINNED? - THERE IS BUT ONE DESTINY .....11
INTRODUCTION .....12
CHAPTER ONE .....15
LEAVING THEIR BIRTHPLACE .....15
EVACUATION OF THE CHILDREN .....15
A WELL-PLANNED AND EVEN BETTER EXECUTED CAMPAIGN .....17
INCLUDED IN THE PROPAGANDA .....21
IN DEFENSE OF THE MACEDONIAN LANGUAGE .....23
REASONS FOR EVACUATING THE CHILDREN .....25
FLEEING FROM HORROR .....27
FACTORS DICTATING THE RESETTLEMENT .....28
YUGOSLAVIA AS A TRANSIT COUNTRY .....29
THE REFUGEE CHILDREN'S RECEPTION WAS WELL-PREPARED .....29
UNDER THE CARE OF NOF AND AFZH .....31
TESTIMONIES OF THE UPROOTING .....40
CHAPTER TWO .....43
THE CHILDREN'S HOMES AND SHELTERS IN YUGOSLAVIA .....43
FORTY ONE SHELTERS AND HOMES .....43
CHAPTER THREE .....45
CARE OF THE REFUGEE CHILDREN IN SERBIA AND VOIVODINA .....45
FROM BELGRADE TO BELA TSRKVA .....45
FUNCTIONING OF THE CHILDREN'S HOME IN BELA TSRKVA .....54
WORLD PRESS ECHOES REGARDING THE REFUGEE CHILDREN IN BELA TSRKVA .....57
THE YUGOSLAVS DRESSED THIS GROUP .....59
SUCCESSES IN THE SCHOOL "LAZAR KOLISHEVKI" IN BELA TSRKVA .....63
LETTER FROM THE "MOTHERS" IN DEFENSE OF THE CHILDREN .....68
START OF REPATRIATION .....72

A LETTER SENT FROM A HOME IN BELA TSRKVA TO THE NEWSPAPER “VOICE OF THE AEGEANS”.....74
PASSENGERS IN A BLIND ALLEY – SUFFERERS FOREVER .....75
TWO MACEDONIAN SETTLEMENTS – GAKOVO AND KRUSHEVLIE IN VOIVODINA.....82
HARD WORK LED TO A DECENT LIFE.....88
CHAPTER FOUR.....91
FOUR CHILDREN’S HOMES .....91
MEMORIES FROM THE MALINSKA HOUSE .....92
TEACHING WAS DONE IN THE MACEDONIAN LANGUAGE .....94
THE CHILDREN’S HOME IN TSRIKVENITSA .....99
SATISFACTION FROM VICTORY .....101
LIFE AT THE TSRIKVENITSA HOME.....102
FURTHERING EDUCATION .....106
STUDY OF TRADES – A PRIORITY TASK.....108
LOOKING FOR PARENTS.....110
FOREIGN YOUTHS VISIT THE CHILDREN IN TSRIKVENITSA .....111
STUDENTS FROM SAMOBOR ON VACATION IN OHRID...113
LIFE - COLLECTED IN A BUNDLE .....113
ON THE RIGHT TRACK .....117
CHAPTER FIVE.....119
THE CHILDREN’S HOMES AND SHELTERS IN SLOVENIA119
THE FIRST SHELTERS .....119
THE CHILDREN’S HOME IN STARA GORA.....120
THE CHILDREN’S HOME IN DUTOVLIE.....121
CHILDREN LEAVING FOR AUSTRALIA .....125
PARENTS GAVE ME THEIR CHILDREN.....126
CHAPTER SIX.....128
THE CHILDREN’S HOMES AND SHELTERS IN MACEDONIA .....128
IN THE FREE PART OF MACEDONIA .....128
ANOTHER HOME FOR THE REFUGEE CHILDREN .....130
THE CHILDREN’S HOME IN BITOLA.....135
THE CHILDREN FROM THE BITOLA HOME GO ON VACATION TO THE BUKOVSKI FOREST .....136
“11 OCTOBER” - HOME FOR STUDENTS .....137
FULFILLED OBJECTIVES.....140

THE CHILDREN'S HOME IN STRUGA .....146
THE CHILDREN'S RESORTS IN OHRID.....148
MASS SCHOOLING OF THE REFUGEE CHILDREN.....150
AMONG THE STUDENTS FROM THE GRAPHIC SCHOOL IN SKOPJE .....152
VACATIONING CHILDREN FROM THE VALANDOVO HOME .....154
CHAPTER SEVEN - DOCUMENTS .....156
INTERIM DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT OF GREECE - MEMORANDUM .....156
FIRST UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION FOR THE REPATRIATION OF THE GREEK CHILDREN .....158
ANOUNCEMENT FROM THE LEAGUE AND FROM THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS COMMITTEE.....159
THE LEAGUE SEEKS ASSISTANCE FOR THE GREEK CHILDREN .....160
INACCURATE NEWS FROM RADIO ATHENS.....161
LETTER FROM THE LEAGUE AND COMMITTEE TO THE YUGOSLAV RED CROSS REGARDING THE INACURATE RADIO NEWS FROM ATHENS.....162
RED CROSS LEAGUE AND THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS COMMITTEE .....162
LETTER FROM THE LEAGUE TO THE GREEK RED CROSS .....163
LEAGUE AND INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE.....164
PRESS SECRETARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS .....165
UNITED NATIONS - SECOND RESOLUTION.....166
GENERAL ASSEMBLY.....166
YUGOSLAV RED CROSS TERMS FOR RETURNING THE CHILDREN TO THEIR PARENTS.....167
STATEMENTS MADE BY DR. OLGA MILOSEVICH DURING A RED CROSS LEAGUE MEETING IN GENEVA .....168
REPATRIATION OF THE GREEK CHILDREN .....172
THIRD UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION.....173
RED CROSS STAFF WORKING AT THE CHILDREN'S HOMES IN BELA TSRKVA FROM 1948 TO 1958 .....175
MACEDONIAN STAFF FROM THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA .....176

CHAPTER EIGHT .....178
TO NEVER FORGET – AS A LEGACY .....178
A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE "MOTHERS", THE TEACHERS AND THE STAFF THAT WORKED IN THE CHILDREN'S HOMES.....178
WHATEVER THERE WAS... .....180
CHAPTER NINE.....183
FROM THE MEETINGS IN SARAI TO THE THIRD WORLD MEETING.....183
EVERYTHING BEGAN WITH INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS.....183
THIS IDEA CAME FROM TORONTO .....184
UNDENIABLE SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE .....188
MORE MEMORABLE MOMENTS.....189
A CONCRETE START – ESTABLISHING THE ASSOCIATION OF REFUGEE CHILDREN .....192
A SECOND WORLD MEETING FOR THE ESTRANGED.....194
WHERE ARE YOU YOUNG MACEDONIANS? .....198
IN PLACE OF AN EPILOGUE –HAVE WE PASSED OVER THE THRESHOLD OF NATIONAL REDEMPTION?.....199
CONSULTING AND REFERENCES .....206

## PREFACE

The idea of preparing and publishing a book dedicated to the refugee children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia was born and accepted in the former Yugoslavia at about the same time when preparations for holding the Third Refugee Children World Meeting began. The Meeting was to be held in 2003.

There was already a book out, a monographic edition, about the Refugee Children entitled "We too are children of Mother Earth" by Dr. Fana Butskova, which covered the topic of Refugee Children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia in the various former Yugoslav republics (People's Republic of Macedonia, People's Republic of Serbia, Autonomous Province of Voivodina, People's Republic of Croatia and People's Republic of Slovenia), which later became independent states as well as in the former Eastern bloc people's democracies (Poland, Romania, former Czechoslovakia, former East Germany, Hungary and Bulgaria). The Monograph, we felt, gave more space to the refugee children in the eastern European countries and there was plenty of space available to be filled in former Yugoslavia. And this was sufficient reason for us to take on this project and present a more detailed view about the lives of the refugee children in the boarding schools in former Yugoslavia.

However, the first to research and publish such a book was Petre Nakovski who, in the eighties, published a monograph entitled "The refugee children from Aegean Macedonia in Poland". Using existing documents and well-prepared arguments, Nakovski wrote about their arrival, accommodation, education and development in the children's homes in Poland. One can say that Nakovski's monographic edition raised the need for more books to be written on the subject of the refugee Children...

An extensive number of poems, short stories and novels have been written about the exodus of the refugee children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia in Macedonian literature by writers such as Tashko Georgievski, Petre Shirilov, Kata Misirkova-Rumenova, Ivan Chapovski, Liubisha Taskovski, Vasil Puiovski, Risto Iachev and many others who were part of the flood of uprooted refugee children. There are also the writers Atso Shopov,

Slavko Ianevski, Gogo Ivanovski, Lazo Karovski and others who were born in the Republic of Macedonia.

Professor Dr. Milan Ristovich published his book "Dolgo vrakianie doma" (Long return home) in Belgrade which he dedicated to the Aegean Macedonian refugee children in Yugoslavia. His work opened the child refugee issue for discussion and offered interesting insights into their forced uprooting, exodus and prospects of "returning home".

It is important at this point to mention that the question of refugee children leaving their homes in Aegean Macedonia was also tackled by Dr. Nikifor Robovski in his book "Makedontsite od Egeiska Makedonia vo Chekoslavakia" (Macedonians from Aegean Macedonia in Czechoslovakia), and by Vangel Popovski in his book "Detsata Begaltsi vo Chekoslavakia" (Refugee children in Czechoslovakia). Other authors to tackle this subject included Lazar Minkov in his book "Makedontsite vo Ungaria" (Macedonians in Hungary", Giorgi Donevski in his book "Bapchor", Sokrat Panovski in his book "V'mbel", Nikola Kichevski in his book "Trsie i Trsiani", Tome Miovski in his book "Orovo i Orovchani", and Hristo Ristovski and Goche Drbitski in their book "Grazhdeno". Two books have been written about the village "D'mbeni" by authors Atanas Bliznakov and Lazar Pop Ianevski, a book about the village "Pozdivishta" by Dr. Fana Butskova and Risto Shanev, a book about "Buf" by Done Panovsky, a book about the memory of German by Todor Iovanovski, a book about "Visheni" by Dimitar Prstenarov, a book entitled "Chiflidzhik selo vo Egeiska Makedonia" by Nikola Balkanov and Angel Balkanski, and others. All of these books have tackled the refugee children issue regarding the Macedonian children in Aegean Macedonia, in the former Yugoslavia and in the Eastern European countries.

More information about this ordeal (Child refugee exodus) and Europe's biggest embarrassment in the twentieth century can be found in contemporary editions of the newspapers "Nova Makedonija", "Glas na Egeitsite" (Voice of the Aegean) in Skopje, "Borba" and "Politika" in Belgrade, "Dnevnik" of Novi Sad, "Viesnik" and "Novi list" from Zagreb and Rieka, "Delo" from

Lubliana, as well as Red Cross bulletins and releases in Yugoslavia, and others.

Apart from the above-mentioned publications, which helped us shape this document, we found Stanoia Obranov's work most helpful. Obranov at that time was director of the homes for refugee children in Bela Tsrkva. His grasp of the problem was really important, offering numerous facts about the children's destiny and life.

Our goal is modest. This document is an attempt to glance at how we all lived, how we, as refugee children from Aegean Macedonia, survived in the homes (boarding schools) in some of the republics in the former Yugoslavia. We used the strength of argument and memories to tell at least part of the story of the great ordeal and unprecedented exodus that was played out in the middle of the twentieth century on the territory of Aegean Macedonia in Greece.

We used authentic documents and counted on our personal experience to prepare as much of a realistic picture as possible in order to portray the fate and ordeal of over twenty thousand refugee children who had been estranged from the homes… this is a warning and a testament directly addressed to our descendants and future generations, to be careful and never again repeat such evil… to never forget who you are and where you come from... We have been marked with scars but worse than that a fire burns within us, a fire of desire to return to our paternal homes and the fireplaces of our ancestors... We live in sorrow that we have spent most of our lives uprooted and replanted. If this is indeed what the book portrays to you the reader, then we have done our job and justified its publication.

Note: As can be seen from the text, we have used terms that are now historically obsolete. This was dictated by the conditions themselves and by the then terminology. We did this primarily because we wanted to maintain the authenticity of the described events!

We would like to thank all our contributors and express our love and gratitude to them because without their boundless contributions and love, this book would not have been possible, which we hope will be

a roadmap for future researchers. That they too will feel everything we felt being out of our homes and neighbourhoods, away from our loved ones. We can say that we are children without a childhood... with sad and bloody memories, with many scars and tears, hopes and suffering for our return home. Indeed, if ever there will be a return to our homes and to our childhood memories...?

Also we would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Red Cross of Yugoslavia, to the Historical Museum - Belgrade, to the Republic of Macedonia State Archives, to the Institute of National History Archives and to Slobodanka Filipovska, employee of the archives, who enthusiastically helped us collect materials for this book.

Our exodus from our homeland is indisputable and the greatest shame civilized Europe has experienced in the last century. Words are always stronger than bullets and hostilities.

The Authors - September 2002

## AGAINST WHOM HAVE WE SINNED? - THERE IS BUT ONE DESTINY

We were children, against whom have we sinned?
We were guilty but without guilt.
Why have we been cursed so badly?
To spend our life in exile around the world.

And cry, cry, the mountains are crying for us,
The shadows under the olive trees,
But within us, it hurts forever within us it hurts,
A wound that burns, that will not heal...

And across the world, in us everywhere,
Our hearts they have opened,
Only there, there is no return.
The gates for us have been forever closed.

And cry, cry, the mountains are crying for us,
The shadows under the olive trees,
But within us, it hurts forever within us it hurts,
A wound that burns, that will not heal…

Oh, how heavy there the mountains are,
Just as heavy is the bitterness,
Of our cursed fate,
The distance pains us just the same!

Wherever we are, we will never forget,
Our childhood there, which we left…

Vasil Puiovski

## INTRODUCTION

As is well-known, the Greek Civil War ended around the second half of 1949 with DAG experiencing defeat. The tragedy of the burned Macedonian villages and murdered Macedonian people was so great that it could be compared to the disaster that was experienced by various regions and by various nations in World War II. The Macedonian people in Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia were massively involved in both the Second World War and later in the Greek Civil War, believing that their historical moment had arrived when the Macedonian National Question in Greece could finally be resolved and that the Macedonian people in Greece could finally obtain their national freedom.

Unfortunately, despite the unprecedented massive Macedonian participation and heroism expressed during the Greek Civil War and the constant encouragement and guidance received from the Communist Party of Greece, it proved once again that the Macedonian people were lied to and laid to rest on the altar of the victimized. The Communist Party of Greece and the DAG leadership, under great pressure from the Greek Monarcho-Fascists and their foreign supporters, took concrete measures to "deal" with the population in Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia. In doing so, one of the primarily political (Party) objectives was to collect the children in Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia and send them out of the country to Yugoslavia and to other Eastern European countries… to the so-called people's democratic countries.

In the first half of 1948 columns of small children (ages 2 to 14) began to move from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia into the People's Republic of Macedonia, and from there to the Yugoslav republics and to the other democratic countries. The children were accompanied by women called "mothers" who dedicated themselves to lead the column of children to safety and to deliver them to the free countries where the children were placed in homes and boarding schools. The paths taken during the long trek led the children through gullies and mountains to the territory of the People's Republic of Macedonia, and hence to Bitola, Brailovo and beyond to Skopje, Belgrade, Gakovo, Bela Tsrkva, Tsrkvenitsa, Stara Gora and other places.

The new Macedonian people's government, together with the Yugoslav and Macedonian Red Cross, became involved in this activity and led the struggle to rescue every child, giving them medical care, housing and education.

The majority of the Macedonian refugee children, after they were given medical assistance, food and clothing, were sent to Belgrade and from there were deployed in Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia and the Autonomous Province of Voivodina. This is where the majority of the centres were set up to accommodate the Macedonian refugee children, whose numbers, although negligible to the total number of children uprooted and displaced, was still rather significant. Several researchers have pointed out that the figure of displaced children was 28,600, 90% of whom were Macedonians and the others were from the other national and ethnic groups living in Greece.

A Greek settlement was established in Bulkes, Autonomous Province of Voivodina, from 1945 to 1949 to accommodate Greek party leaders, fighters and other staff as well as Greek refugees. The entire overall policy regarding the Greek refugees, including the refugee children, regardless of the fact that the vast majority were Macedonians, was led from Bulkes. The "Committee for helping the children" was formed here. Their job was to place the refugee children in homes (boarding schools) in Yugoslavia and to make sure they received a proper education. Here they printed newspapers and brochures and created all the political means to deal with the refugee children.

After the Informburo Resolution was adopted in mid 1948, which publicly proclaimed that there was a conflict between the then Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, two things came out: first, the Greek leadership in Bulkes adopted the Informburo Resolution and began to brutally and mercilessly attack the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. This was done regardless of the fact that Bulkes was right in the middle of Yugoslavia. Secondly, the Greeks in Bulkes attempted to exploit the refugee children for their own propaganda purposes. Besides printing leaflets attacking the social and political system in the former Yugoslavia, they insidiously began to organize riots in the

refugee shelters and in children's homes. They informed the foreign media, especially the media in Eastern European countries, to publish fabrications and rumours that the children in orphanages in Yugoslavia lived under extremely difficult conditions because they were exploited. They were forced to work hard in physical labour camps instead of being educated in schools.

Naturally, these were lies perpetrated by the Greeks which the Yugoslav and Macedonian authorities had to fight against with the strength of argument and the truth. They organized visits for several foreign journalists to visit the homes that sheltered the refugee children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia, and to show the world that the children were indeed being well looked after as well as being educated. This, the journalists had to see for themselves and verify how the children lived. In the end their articles were published in several prominent newspapers. The articles were impartial and showed the actual conditions under which the refugee children lived and were educated in Yugoslavia. This was a slap in the face for Greek and Eastern European propagandists. It showed the world that the situation in Yugoslavia was completely different and positive and that there should be no concern for the wellbeing of the refugee children living there.

# CHAPTER ONE

## LEAVING THEIR BIRTHPLACE

The child refugee evacuation program was well-planned, well-organized and even better executed when it came to ethnically cleansing the Macedonian refugee children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia.

## EVACUATION OF THE CHILDREN

In one of his manuscripts, Macedonian historian Dr. Risto Kiriazovki, among other things, wrote about the evacuation of the refugee children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia and described the reasons for it. As an expert of historical events in this period of time in Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia, he attributed the following to the children's exodus and uprooting from their homes:

"In the spring of 1948 the two warring parties: DAG on one side and the Athenian government on the other, had it in their plans to have a mutual showdown in 1948, by which they were going to take tens of thousands of children from their parental embrace, mostly from the Aegean (Greek occupied) part of Macedonia, and send some over the borders and the others into Greece and the Greek islands.

Both sides were claiming that their actions were motivated by humanitarian reasons and that they would yield poisitive results. They were claiming that the children would be rescued from the throes of the civil war and would be evacuated to conditions that had been created to gain all levels of vocational education. The evacuation was not an exodus, as it was purported to be, but a well-planned, well-organized and even better implemented act.

There is no question that the children were rescued from the horrors of the civil war but their removal from their home, in the end, contributed to the ethnic cleansing of the Macedonians from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia."

In addition to the above, Dr. Kiriazovski wrote:

“One of the essential reasons for the evacuation of the children was to create conditions for solving the problem of DAG reserves and new fighters. Exempting the parents from child care allowed them to be mobilized in the war effort and in the upcoming tough and decisive battles in Western Aegean Macedonia. And that is exactly what took place. Immediately after the child evacuation, new mobilizations took place and all those citizens who, up to this point, were not mobilized were sent to DAG’s ranks and to its auxiliary units. During the great Gramos offensive, in the summer of 1948, the entire free territory was turned into a workshop in which all people incapable of carrying a weapon were put to work for DAG. Women’s teams were formed to transfer the wounded, deliver weapons and ammunition to the fronts, dig trenches, make bread, fish in Lake Prespa and so on.

In 1948, while preparing its calculations and implementation plans, the CPG leadership spoke about evacuating the children. On January 30, 1948 Petros Roussos, a CPG representative, was tasked in seeking help from the Yugoslav authorities. He requested that Yugoslavia accept some of the children from the Aegean free territory who, unfortunately, suffered from hunger and lack of clothing. Telegrams with similar requests were also sent to other people’s democratic countries.

On February 15, 1948 Yiannis Ioannidis, Vice President of the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece, arrived in Belgrade where he discussed the children’s evacuation with Yugoslav authorities. After Ioannidis received consent from the Yugoslavs and from other people’s democratic countries, on February 21, 1948 the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece decided to evacuate the children, particularly from the hot areas where fierce fighting between DAG and government forces was most likely to take place. The CPG leadership’s position and motivation for the evacuation was explained as a need to rescue the children from the horrors of war and this, the CPG claimed, was done at the request of the parents.”

Dr. Kiriazovski also wrote:

"On March 7, 1948 the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece Ministry of Internal Affairs issued the following statement: 'The people and the organizations that provide care and protect the children in free Greece, as well as thousands of parents and guardians, have long addressed the aid organizations and the people's democratic countries with appeals urging them to provide care and protect the Greek children who are in danger of starvation and barbarism from the Monarcho-Fascists. Aid agencies, organizations for the protection of children, as well as youth organizations in these countries, with extraordinary joy and satisfaction, have accepted these pleas and have decided to look after the Greek children for as long as they need it'."

The Provisional democratic government seeing that a disastrous policy had been put in place in Greece, since 1945 by foreigners and local exploiters, and that this policy had been systematically enforced and implemented by the Monarcho-Fascists, which had become a burden on the people and their property, and which had reduced opportunities for adequate nutrition for their children, decided to organize a broad campaign among the general population with aims at convincing parents to not only accept the idea of the evacuation but to make it look like it was their idea. This resulted in parents sending written requests to have their children evacuated.

## A WELL-PLANNED AND EVEN BETTER EXECUTED CAMPAIGN

In his articles Dr. Kiriazovski cited the following:

Markos Vafiandis, President of the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece, by telegram, on February 20, 1948 notified Vice President Yiannis Ioannidis in Belgrade that preparations for the evacuation of children were going well and that 2,500 children were to be evacuated from Lerin Region and 3,500 were to be evacauated from Kostur Region, while he still had no data for Koniatsa, Zagoria and Epirus Regions.

The evacuation campaign was well-planned and organized. Several political and other organizations, including NOF, AFZH, the National militia, the People's Councils and DAG units, were to

participate in its implementation. Special committees and collection centres were formed and food drives were organized. A care giver was assigned to each group of 20 to 25 children, whose task was to take care of the children. The care givers were called “mothers” and played a big role in the care of the children as well as in minimizing their trauma.

The child evacuation program began in late February and early March 1948 and lasted until June 1948.

The children from Epirus and from parts of Kostur Region were to be evacuated to Albania. The children from Western and Central Aegean Macedonia were to be evacuated to Yugoslavia and the children from Eastern Aegean Macedonia and Thrace were to be evacuated to Bulgaria.

Yugoslavia took responsibility for transporting the children from Western and Central Aegean Macedonia to Albania and to the other so-called People’s Democracies.

About this Dr. Kirazovski said:

“In connection with the decision to evacuate the children and the existing agreement for their acceptance, the Yugoslav Red Cross Executive Board on March 16, 1948 issued a statement which, among other things, said that recent actions and terror acts committed by the Monarcho-Fascist military against the democratic population in Greece, such as burning of villages, arrests, killings and other violence, have caused refugee flows over the Yugoslav border. Among the refugees there were many children who were fleeing naked, barefoot, hungry and completely exhausted, needing urgent assistance. Because of this the Yugoslav Red Cross immediately took steps to arrange assistance and care for the refugee children. In order to positively solve these kinds of problems, the CPG Central Committee has appealed to the various national Red Cross organizations to assist in the care of the children who were forced to leave their native soil and seek salvation outside of their homeland.”

From the statement made by the Yugoslav Red Cross we can see that the Yugoslav government's intention to allow passage for the refugee children into Yugoslavia was a result of terror and not of a planned action as was the case.

On March 23, 1948 the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece announced its official position regarding the refugee children. Its position was designed to target the Balkan public and the people's republics. It said: "In areas under their control, the Monarcho-Fascists are snatching children and taking them away. The population is persistently struggling to avoid this by sending their children towards the borders of neighbouring democracies and pleading with these countries: 'Save our chidren. Save our children along with our population from the free territories which we are sending towards your borders. Our forces are determined to ease their transition. Please speed up the admission of our children'."

Reception points were organized in the territory of Yugoslavia. These points were in Bitola, Matka, Skopje and Belgrade.

The first group of refugee children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia arrived in Belgrade on March 30, 1948.

According to incomplete data, some 14,028 children were transported out of Greece and into the people's democratic countries from March 30, 1948 to September 1949. Yugoslavia took about 11,000 children, of which 2,000 were placed in special homes especially prepared for those children. Of the ten special homes, most were located on Serbian territory (primarily in Voivodina), in Croatia, Slovenia and Macedonia. Their care was primarily led by the Yugoslav Red Cross, which struggled with enormous difficulties to provide space for accommodation, food, clothing, medical treatment, health care, education and so on. It was especially difficult and a complex task during the first post-war years.

The issue of the Refugee Children from Aegean Macedonia also appeared before International organizations and became public at the beginning of the Cold War and even became one of the segments in the ideological, political and propaganda war between the Greek royal government and its neighbours. This issue was also an

instrument used in a wider context in the tense relations between East and West.

The conflict between Yugoslavia on one side and the the Soviet Union and people's democracies on the other, that broke out in the summer of 1948, soon led to the termination of relations between the Yugoslav and Greek communists. Because of this, the refugee children from Greece were caught in the middle of this so-called conflict, which at first seemed like it was a "family dispute". Some were moved to other countries.

After DAG's defeat in Greece, Yugoslavia accepted the United Nations Resolution and began to repatriate the children with their parents in Greece and with those who in the meantime had emigrated to Australia, Canada and the USA. For doing this the Greeks and Eastern bloc countries started a wave of accusations against the Yugoslav regime claiming that the children were used for "political trade with the Monarcho-Fascists" and for "courting the West". Later, however, the successful repatriation of several hundred children in Greece, in the early fifties, helped normalize relations between Athens and Belgrade.

The waves of uprisings in the children's homes, which were operated by groups of dissatisfied residents, motivated by the dismissal of teachers and poor living conditions, created desire in the children to want to be transferred to Eastern European countries. The restlessness of the Yugoslav authorities towards these outbursts of anger, frustration and disappointment on the part of the refugee children, also had their own political and ideological dimensions. It took a long time for reconciliation to take place, which was primarily achieved by the Yugoslav Red Cross leadership that had to endure numerous moral dilemmas which led to having to address the highest representatives of the Yugoslav authorities, in an attempt to find the flaws that were causing discontent in the refugee children.

The refugee children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia, who remained in Yugoslavia, were given the same opportunity as the Yugoslav children who lived under the same conditions, to obtain an education, to find a job and a place in Yugoslav society.

The children and main actors in these scenes were real and symbolic victims of internal Greek contradictions as well as of the entire complex postwar international relations. This had a big impact on their lives. They were exposed to numerous traumatic experiences that left lasting traces of neglect in them. This was also due to separation, loss of emotional protection from the family and not growing up in a normal family environment.

There is a variation in the data on the numbers of evacuated children. According to UN and Greek government statistics, the number of children evacuated was around 28,000, and according to CPG data that number was about 25,000.

**INCLUDED IN THE PROPAGANDA**

Referring to the Aegean Macedonian children's evacuation to Yugoslavia and to other Eastern European countries, author Dr. R. Kiriazovski stated the following:

"Many children in fact were sent to other Eastern European countries, they did not remain in the first country in which they were accepted. They were moved to these countries in order to join their parents or other relatives. Some children who left Greece at age 16 to 17 very quickly ceased to be on the children's lists, a fact that changed the numbers from year to year. At the end, by 1954, about 5000 children joined their parents in Greece, Canada and Australia.

The evacuation of children by the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece was strongly condemned by the Greek government in Athens. The Athens government used the evacuation as an opportunity to start a violent and ruthless propaganda campaign against the Greek Communists, accusing them of grabbing the children by force, committing genocide against Hellenism, creating squads of Janissaries and so on.

The Americans too joined the Greek propaganda campaign. American historian Lawrence S. Vitner called the child evacuation 'one of the worst cases of psychological warfare in the Greek conflict'. US diplomat Rankin termed the child evacuation 'a great psychological error' which may be used by the US and by the world

abroad as ‘useful anti-communist propaganda’. As a result of this American and Greek propaganda, the world was led to believe that the children were abducted.

At the request of the Greek government to the UN and the International Red Cross the question of returning the children back to Greece was raised, regardless of where their parents were at the moment. The UN however rejected this Greek government request and decided to send the children to their parents or relatives.

The Greek government continued to demand that they be returned to Greece, based on a request signed by the parents of 9,837 children. The CPG leadership however rejected the above Greek government request on account that that particular request was a forgery.

Regarding the monitoring, care and educational needs of the children, the CPG and the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece, in May 1948, established the Eastern European Commission for Child Assistance (EVOP). Its first seat in East Europe was in Budapest, then in Bucharest. In Eastern Europe on the side of the Macedonians, the first people to join this organization were Andon Sikavitsa and later Stavro Kochev.

In its futile efforts to find a solution to DAG’s reserve problems, the CPG leadership, which proclaimed that the children were evacuated to be saved and that their effort had been humanitarian, took a turn in direction. In April and May 1949, DAG General Staff and the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece decided to conduct recruitment of new fighters from among the evacuated children who were evacuated in the Eastern European countries. For this purpose they issued appropriate orders and directives and sent special emissaries. Recruitment of children was conducted with wide propaganda and by applying pressure. Recruitment was not conducted by age but by size, resulting in the recruitment of children ages 12 to 15. They recruited several hundred children from Romania and Czechoslovakia. They then organized training centres in the village Strkovo, Lerin Region, and after a few days of training sent the children to join DAG units in the front line.”

Here is what Dr. Kiriazovski had to say about the decision taken by the top CPG and DAG leaderships:

"This decision, or action taken by the CPG and DAG, caused dismay and a sharp outcry in the parents of these children. On May 18, 1949 thirty-three mothers from the evacuated children from the village Konomlati, Kostur Region, sent a sharp protest to DAG General Headquarters seeking the return of the children to either the homes in the Eastern European countries or to their parents here in Greece.

On April 14 of the same year Paskal Mitrevski, NOF Secretary and minister in the provisional government of Greece, sent a letter to the CPG Central Committee Politburo condemning the recruitment of the children and reminding the CPG of the serious consequences that it caused through the recruitment of these children from the children's homes. Mitrevski demanded that this mobilization be stopped and that the children aged 12 to 15 be returned back to the children's homes from where they came.

Under intense pressure from parents and from the public, the Greek CPG Party leadership, on May 22, 1949, ordered the suspension of mobilizing children under 15 years of age and returned all mobilized under age children back to the homes. However, the order was not fully carried out. Most of the mobilized children, untrained, were thrown into battle and quickly killed. Tragic was the case of 130 children who, on their way to Thessaly, fell into an ambush and were all killed by the government army.

**IN DEFENSE OF THE MACEDONIAN LANGUAGE**

Here is what Dr. Risto Kiriazovski said, not only about the care the children received but also about their education:

"Of the total number of evacuated school age children, 60% were illiterate, 17.5% had completed the first grade, 14% the second grade, 5% the third grade and only 3.5% attended school past third grade."

After they were evacuated, the children were allowed to attend primary, secondary, high school and higher education. All the children's homes operated Macedonian schools and taught subjects such as Macedonian grammar, reading and writing, Macedonian literature, Macedonian history, Macedonian songs and dances and Macedonian and Greek geography.

Instruction in Macedonian schools was conducted in the Macedonian language or, more accurately, in the Macedonian literary language applied to the People's Republic of Macedonia. However, following the clash between the CPY and the Inform attempts were made to politicize the language. Namely, in 1950, the CPG leadership, influenced by Bulgaria, decided to suspend the use of the Macedonian language claiming that it was strongly influenced by the Serbian language.

This however led many Macedonians, especially intellectuals, to fight a determined and persistent fight against the CPG decision and as a result managed to restore the use of the Macedonian literary language in the schools. It was a long fight but ended in success creating the right conditions for developing Macedonian national culture and literacy abroad.

The textbooks, the educational materials, the printed literature such as prose, drama, poetry and other valuable material were all written in the Macedonian literary language.

And finally one more thing. Although the Macedonian children did nothing to be blamed for what happened in Greece during the Greek Civil War, or for having been sent far away from their parents and homes, the Greek authorities, as part of their policy in dealing with the Macedonian national minority, refused to repatriate them and deprived them of their inherited property rights through the application of anti-democratic laws including law no. 1068841 of December 29, 1982, which allowed repatriation of only "Greeks by genus" political refugees and law no. 1540 of October 5/10, 1985 for the return of confiscated properties to only political refugees who are "Greeks by genus".

The Athens government implemented a similar program to collect children. According to Queen Frederica's memoirs, the Athens child collection program (Pedomazoma) was unleashed in July, 1947 shortly after the Royal voluntary Society was founded. However, the planned mass gathering of children did not begin until March 1948 when the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece started its mass evacuation. The Athens child collection program was personally led by Queen Frederica in which she included the army, local authorities, police, schools and other institutions and organizations. Her plan was to collect 10,000 to 12,000 children. She collected 6,000 children in March, 1948. The American mission to help Greece and the UN Special Committee on the Balkans were well-aware of the existence of this campaign.

In early March 1948 the government in Athens announced that it had made preparations to evacuate 14,000 children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia and from the Peloponnesus.

According to claims made by Queen Frederica about 24 thousand children were collected, while others claimed that only 14,494 children were gathered, mainly from the Aegean (Greek occupied) part of Macedonia. The children were moved to Leros, Kifissia, Solun and other places in 54 organized homes, in "children's towns" and in shelters where they were exposed to severe denationalization and assimilation programs.

## REASONS FOR EVACUATING THE CHILDREN

In searching for reasons for the uprooting of the Aegean Macedonian children from their homes, in her monograph entitled "We are children of mother earth", Dr. Fana Butskova wrote:

"The main motive for evacuating the children from the free and half-occupied territories under the control of the Democratic Army of Greece, as has been written by many Greek and Macedonian historiographers, was for humanitarian reasons. We may accept this as a fact but not as the only motive, because events that developed during the course of the struggle point to other reasons. Prior to this most often emphasized component, i.e. 'the humanitarian component', there was another motive and that was the unresolved

problem of DAG fighters and reserves, which the CPG leading the movement had failed to solve, as well as the mass terror which the nationalist forces committed against the Democratic and Macedonian people in Greece."

Given this situation, the Greek nationalists seized the opportunity to ethnically cleanse the Macedonian people from Greek occupied Macedonia. This was evident from the demands that they threw around, such as the one stated by the Weekly Republican Newspaper "Eleftherios" number 28, which on January 1946 wrote: "The Slavo-Macedonians must disappear from here. They should be expelled… let them go to any neighbouring country…"

The Monarcho-Fascists, through their paramilitaries, began a consistent policy of exterminating the Macedonian population. Patrolling through the Macedonian villages, they threw slogans around calling for the extermination of Macedonians. They threatened the population with expulsions and even death, saying that when the king comes to Greece there will be not a single Slav (Macedonian) to find. These were not just slogans and empty threats but actual acts perpetrated against the Macedonian civilian population. In Kostur, Lerin, Voden and Enidzhevardar Regions, from February 1945 to May 1947, 278 Macedonian people were put to death without a trial, 297 Macedonian women were raped, 6,456 people were detained, 4,200 were tried, 3,215 were sentenced to multiple years in prison, 1,449 were jailed, 13,449 were tortured and abused, 1,191 houses were burned, 13,938 villagers were expelled and displaced from 45 villages.

To achieve their aims, with respect to the Macedonians, both the Greek nationalists and the Greek Communists were calling on their forces to join the campaign to expel the Macedonian people from Greece. The CPG, on the other hand, opposed these actions based on the fact that: "The Macedonians along with all anti-fascist forces were at the vanguard in the fight against Metaxas, fought heroically on the Albanian front and played an important part in the national resistance against the Hitler-fascist occupation and against the domestic traitors…" So the CPG was against the policy to expel the Macedonians from Greece.

On account of the terror acts committed by the political right, many Macedonian families were forced to seek safe haven in neighbouring countries, mainly in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria but some left for overseas. Many of those refugees who left together with their children followed a path of uncertainty. These waves of parents and children leaving together lasted throughout the entire civil war period, unlike the organized evacuation of more than 20,000 children, which lasted through March and April 1948, conducted under the initiative of the CPG.

## FLEEING FROM HORROR

The gathering and escorting of children from their homes, as indicated above, was carried out by the authorities of the people's government and by the national liberation organizations (NOF and AFZH) under DAG's direct control and protection. The children from the villages close to the borders were sent over the borders at night, on foot, in order to avoid possible attacks from the government's aviation. They walked during the night and hid in villages and in the forests during the day. Only the youngest children who could not walk were transported on carts and on the backs of animals while the rest walked on foot in rain and mud in long columns.

According to CPG Central Committee official data, published in October 1950, the total number of immigrants from Greece accepted in the Eastern European countries and in the Soviet Union were 55,881, of whom more than 20,000 were Macedonians. Those who left for Yugoslavia numbered about 45,000 to 50,000.

The total number of uprooted children, according to various sources, was 28,000 to 30,000. First to report on the number of evacuated children organized in 1948 was Petros Roussos, a senior CPG official, who in his report wrote: "Because of the need to save the children from the dangers of war, more were accepted and taken care of in Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. In total the number of these children is closer to 20,000, of whom the majority are Slavo-Macedonians."

In early 1949 the number of children and homes in Yugoslavia were as follows:

- Bela Tsrkva - 544 Macedonians
- Tsrkvenitsa - 358 Macedonians and 152 Greeks
- Dutovlie - 144 Macedonians and 55 Greeks
- Stara Gora - 195 Macedonians
- Shent Vid - 134 Macedonians
- Osiek - 86 Macedonians, 19 Greeks
- Stenievich, Senvit - 30 Greeks

Total number of children was 1,857, of whom 1,581 were Macedonians and 276 were Greeks.

According to Dr. Fana Butskova there were 90 teachers teaching the children in the homes, of whom 17 were Macedonian and 10 Greek. There were also other educational and support staff working there which included 33 Macedonians and 30 Greeks.

## FACTORS DICTATING THE RESETTLEMENT

Serbian historian Dr. Milan Ristovich, professor at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade in his book entitled "Dolgo vrakianie doma" (Long return home), underlined the following:

"During the civil war many children lost one or both parents. The children from war zones near the northern Greek border, from the beginning of 1948, had become protagonists of dramatic and controversial consequences, especially during the most severe episode of the Greek Civil War. According to some interpretations, about 25,000, and to others about 28,000 children had been transferred (organized by the 'interim government'), or fled accompanied by their parents and other adults to the territory of neighbouring and other countries of the 'people's democracies'. According to the United Nations Special Committee for the Balkans and to the International Red Cross, 23,696 children were taken from that country.

It should be mentioned here that this phenomenon had its own 'other' hand in the action, which led the government in Athens to

also organize the ‘gathering of children’ from the war zones. From a total of 43,000 children covered by these actions, about 15,000 were evacuated by the authorities of the royal government in Athens.”

## YUGOSLAVIA AS A TRANSIT COUNTRY

Similarly Professor Dr. M. Ristovich noted the following:

“The first news of children to be transported to Yugoslavia came out on February 20, 1948. Markos Vafiadis, representative of the interim government, sent a report to ‘Dionisis’ in Belgrade, informing him that the preparations for the evacuation were going well. It was estimated that about 2,500 children from Lerin Region and 3,500 from Kostur Region would be transported while no details were available from Kinitsa – Zagorie Region. The total number of collected children, according to Markos, was ‘not going to be more than 10,000’. This is because it was a well-planned campaign organized by a special commission with collection centres and organized food drives. At the same time women volunteers were organized to accompany the various groups.

The first ‘organized group’ of 500 children was to be ready for its trip on February 25, 1948 but Markos still did not have all the information about its acceptance, where the contact was to be made, how many children could be transported in a day and so on. This, however, does confirm (and is confirmed by other correspondence documents between Markos’s Headquarters with Yugoslav and other representatives) that the first mass transfer of children across the border began in the last days of February and early March, 1948.”

## THE REFUGEE CHILDREN’S RECEPTION WAS WELL-PREPARED

In his politicological-historiographical study, Professor Dr. M. Ristovich said the following:

“On March 16, 1948 the Executive Board of the Yugoslav Red Cross issued a press release, in which it said that recent actions and the ‘nonstop terror committed by the Monarcho-Fascist military

against the democratic population in Greece; burning villages, mass arrests, murders and violence' and other perpetrated measures of terror have driven waves of refugees to flee to the Yugoslav border. Included among these refugees are 'an increasing number of children who are traveling barefoot, naked, starving and exhausted. These children are in need of swift aid'. Therefore, the Yugoslav Red Cross has taken immediate action and has organized help and care of these refugee children. However, for the problem to be resolved quickly and effectively the Yugoslav Red Cross is urging all national Red Cross organizations 'to assist in taking care of these innocent children who are forced to leave their native soil and seek salvation outside of their homeland'.

In March 1948 the Yugoslav government entrusted the entire organization around the reception and care of the refugee children to the Committee on Social Welfare and to the Yugoslav Red Cross, which had an extremely difficult task. They needed to immediately find sufficient and suitable space to accommodate the large number of children of all ages. They needed to organize homes, create certain sanitation, organize health care and treatment, and ensure a food supply, clothing and footwear. Yugoslavia at that time was still suffering from the consequences of World War II and still lived in general poverty. But due to the sudden population growth from the influx of the evacuated children and the large number of problems related to their acceptance and accommodation, in May 1948 the Yugslav Red Cross Central Board established the department for protection of the Greek children.

Immediately after the arrival of the first large group of children in the territory of Yugoslavia, the Yugoslav government prepared a plan of action. It divided up the chores and formed teams for solving specific refugee problems. The team consisting of the Social Welfare Committee and the Yugoslav Red Cross was tasked with finding buildings to accommodate the refugees, primarily in Voivodina. Refugees were accepted immediately after crossing the Yugoslav border and given emergency food and clothing by the Yugoslav Red Cross stationed in Bitola, Matka, Skopje and Belgrade. The Yugoslav Red Cross with help from the federal, state and local authorities, along with activists of mass organizations such as the Anti-Fascist Front for Women (AFZH) and the Popular Front,

organized the division of food, bathing, disinfection, changing of clothing and medical examinations for the children. The groups of children were then quickly directed to organized shelters and homes.

Outside of the groups that had to remain under Yugoslav Red Cross surveillance, Yugoslavia was the main transit station where children temporarilyy recovered before they were dispatched to other destinations. According to unofficial information, about 14,028 children from Greece passed through Yugoslavia and went to other 'people's democratic countries' from March 30, 1948 until the end of September 1949. According to official figures the Yugoslav government spent some 3,600,000 dinars only for their transportation. The children who were transported also had medical examinations, received clothes, shoes and food and other needs for their trip. Their transportation through Yugoslavia was conducted by the Ministry of the Interior, assisted by the Yugoslav Red Cross. The children in transit were not recorded and no data was gathered about them.

According to data collected by the Yugoslav authorities, the Yugoslav Red Cross, during March-April 1948, assisted 2,492 children who were sent to Czechoslovakia, 3,300 children who were sent to Romania and 2,254 children sent to Hungary.

On June 9, 1948 the Yugoslav Red Cross sent an appeal to the Red Cross League (LDCK) in Geneva asking for help with clothing. According to the information included in the appeal there were 1,300 girls and 1,000 boys ages 3 to 6, 2,500 girls and 1,500 boys ages 6 to 12 and 400 girls and 300 boys ages 12 to 16."

**UNDER THE CARE OF NOF AND AFZH**

One of the participants in the save the children program was Evdokia Foteva Vera. Vera was an AFZH veteran, a direct participant in the DAG divisions and a Party worker during the most dramatic war years up to the end of the Greek Civil War. Her authentic testimony, as dramatic as it was, praises the heroism of the Macedonian women, mothers and sisters of Aegean Macedonia, who contributed a great deal in the battlefield, and because they loved their roots, their lineage and wanted them to continue into the

future they let their children go outside their homes and outside their ancestral lands. Allowing their children to be uprooted from their chests was another sublime act of courage and heroism for these women. Here is what Vera had to say:

“No war has ever spared lives not even of the most innocent lives, those of the children. It was the same during the Greek Civil War which lasted from 1945 to 1949.

The Greek Civil War was imposed on Greece on December 4, 1944 by our longtime allies with the English intervention in Athens. Then in 1947 the US imperialists rushed in to ‘protect Greece from its own people’.

Since the beginning of the Greek Civil War, the Macedonian population found itself on the frontlines. It was organized and led by the People’s Liberation Front (NOF) for Aegean Macedonia which was formed on April 23, 1945. Constituents of NOF were the organizations NOMS and AFZH.

The modest, quiet, brave and courageous Macedonian women fighters in NOB-G showed the enemy and the whole world that they were capable of fighting on the battlefield and in the political field, and were willing to fight for their survival. They already had experienced the Ilinden uprising and were particularly encouraged by the successes achieved by the women in Yugoslavia after the victory over fascism, and especially from the blessings they received from the Macedonian women in the newly created People’s Republic of Macedonia. The Macedonian women from the Aegean part of Macedonia were organized and acted through their AFZH organization.

The Macedonian women in Greece, over the years, were subjected to many injustices, humiliations and abuses. They had to endure draconian measures of being forbidden to speak their native language and raise their children in Macedonian ways. But now, for the first time in a long time, they can join their own Macedonian woman’s organization and in full light, reveal themselves for who they are. They are determined, at any price, to preserve their national identity. And now I can say with confidence that AFZH was a

powerful factor during the Greek Civil War, recognized by the CPG, DAG and by the interim democratic government of Greece.

During the disastrous days in 1948 the Macedonian women of AFZH took it upon themselves to care for the children. Every day the children were exposed to danger from Monarcho-Fascist bombardments and other atrocities. There was no life or education for them under such conditions and because of the war they were even subjected to various diseases and hunger. Because of all this the interim democratic government of Greece, the CPG, NOF and other antifascist-democratic organizations decided to call on the free socialist countries to help them save these children. They decided to appeal to them to take all the children under 14 years of age and save them. Among the first countries to respond to these appeals were Yugoslavia, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria and later East Germany.

An evacuation program was then organized covering the hot spots where the Civil War was most active and most children were of Macedonian nationality. These were mainly children from Central and Western Macedonia, Epirus and the hot spots in the Belasitsa, Paiak, Kaimakchalan, Vermio, Siniak, Vicho and Gramos Regions.

There were numerous mass protests and appeals, like the appeals from the interim government of Greece to the Athens regime and to the United Nations through the Balkan Commission to spare the civilian population and the children from the daily bombings, but nothing bore fruit. They remained deaf to the appeals. So the only salvation was the interim government's decision to evacuate the children. There were many events that took place that justified this decision.

The Monarcho-Fascist governments in Athens, one after another, kept folding under pressure from the people in the large cities like Solun and Athens. On a daily basis the Monarcho-Fascist army 'cleansed' all democratic-minded soldiers from its ranks and sent them to concentration camps in Makronisos and Dura. Their defeat on the battlefields of Vicho and Gramos in 1947 and 1948 pushed the Monarcho-Fascist army to thrust itself upon the civilian population, including against the children. Queen Frederica

introduced the child collection program which the people aptly named the “horror show” when, instead of showing compassion and care, she ordered the kidnapping and forceful confiscation of children from their mothers arms in order to turn them into “Janissaries” by brainwashing them to hate their own people.

When the Monarcho-Fascists arrived at the village Zagorichani in Kostur Region, they forcibly tried to gather all the children. Many Macedonian mothers were forced to hide their children in the ovens and take them to the free territory in the dark of night. Unable to find all the children the Monarcho-Fascists were enraged and slaughtered 17 women and threw their dead bodies into Lake Kostur.

These mothers did everything in their power to stop their children from being taken by the Monarcho-Fascists. But because they did that, they were killed, flogged, tortured and imprisoned.

Evidence of the women from the village Zhupanitsa, Kostur Region, wanting their children taken by queen Frederica to be returned to them can be found in an article published on November 16, 1948, in the PDEG newspaper “Mahitria”.

Even expectant Macedonian mothers were not immune from Frederica’s grasp. Many expectant mothers were taken and many newborns came into the world in Frederica’s grasp. These women stoically endured all the horrors of war but did not depart from their national ideals.

Given the brutality of the Greek Civil War and seeing what awaited the children in the hands of the Monarcho-Fascists and under the American airplanes, the mothers looked to the interim democratic government of Greece for the salvation of their children. The interim government, along with many anti-fascist and democratic organizations, gave the mothers the opportunity to willingly give up their children to be evacuated to the free countries, confident that the children would be safe and happy there. Their maternal pain was immeasurable being separated from their little ones but the mothers did the right thing and chose the path shown to them by this organization (AFZH).

United Nations representatives held meetings in every village to explain to the people that the measures the interim democratic government of Greece and the other organizations had taken were for the safety of the children. The lists of children who qualified to be evacuated were compiled by NOF and by AFZH. One caregiver was assigned to every 10 children and one teacher to every 20-25 children. We paid careful attention to make sure the caregivers and teachers were from the partisan families which lost a family member or members or had a family member or members who were disabled during the war. Everyone unanimously agreed with this approach. We had selected comrades who undertook the obligation to speak to the parents and to assure them that we (the organization) would take care of them like they were our own. There were some cases, for example, like Malina Raleva from the village D'mbeni who had 4 young children who needed to be evacuated. I suggested to her that she leave with them, to which she replied: 'No, I will not leave my husband, my sister and my brother alone to fight here… I can't go with the children. I know they will be safe; I have full confidence in the caregivers and teachers you selected… I will stay here and contribute to the struggle'.

When AFZH regional secretary Alexandra Panovska completed her placement of the children in the village Zhelevo, Lerin Region, where they were to stay in the houses overnight and continue on their way to their destination the next day, Commander Iani Lukrov from the village V'mbel, Kostur Region, arrived. When he addressed Alexandra he asked: 'In which house is my son Pando located? Please take me to see him now because I am leaving immediately to join my unit.' Together they toured all the houses that accommodated children calling 'Pando! Pando!' but got no response because Pando and the rest of the children were very tired and quickly found themselves in a deep sleep. The brave and poor commander unfortunately did not see his son… he was later killed fighting bravely for the freedom of his people.

There are many examples like this one. Every child and every parent has their own heartbreaking story from that period."

The campaign to send the children to the socialist republics was well-organized and conducted voluntarily. There was at least one member from NOF and one from AFZH assigned to accompany and care for the children in each socialist state. Each member was connected to the NOF and AFZH Central Board. NOF put Done Sikavitsa in charge of all the Macedonian children in all the socialist republics. A Greek person was put in charge of the Greek children. These two people worked together to care for both Macedonian and Greek children.

Mothers were happy that their children were living in the people's republics, far away from the horrors of the cruel war. They demanded only one thing: that their children continue to live and study until they return when we are free.

Letters from the children were sent to their parents. Their delivery was organized through AFZH.

The following was written in a fragment of a diary belonging to a woman and member of AFZH, published in September 1948 in "Nova Makedonija": "Today everyone is in tears. We were moving like never before. We sat in the shade under a poplar tree. Some of us were still sleeping. It was getting dark and we had to go to work (they worked at night). And here was comrade Tsveta from AFZH… she just arrived. We rejoiced at her arrival. I don't know why but we were not afraid when she was with us, not even from the cannons.

This time she brought letters from our children who were in people's republics. We read the letters and shook our hands in the air. Our hearts were beating hard but our dear ones were away. Oh, how nice it would have been to kiss them a bit!

But the airplanes come here. Our villages are being bombed by artillery shells, how nice that our government sent our children to be saved.

Now our eyes are filled with tears. They are writing to tell us that they live well. They say: 'We think of you, our mothers, in the war...'

Our poor children. When will we see them again?

We will see them again when we free ourselves. How nice that would be... But in order for that to happen we must defeat fascism. And to make this happen sooner we need to fight harder, and fight we will...

7.IX. Last night we built three bunkers, more than usual.

We do this so that our children can return home sooner… So that we and our husbands can return home sooner..."

And this is what the Macedonian women, wives, mothers and fighters were thinking about in those difficult and fateful days... On top of that the Macedonian women, led by AFZH, also showed the world that they were a rare example of educator and teacher. The Macedonian women were captivated by the first Macedonian elementary textbooks introduced in the already established People's Republic of Macedonia within the Yugoslav community, where the Macedonian language was freely spoken.

The Macedonian people from the Aegean (Greek occupied) part of Macedonia, who were able to read and write in the Macedonian language, took responsibility for educating the evacuated Macedonian children. They acted in a direct way, modestly and quietly in the countries unknown to them. They tried hard, persistently keeping a watchful eye around the clock over the children's lives. They looked after the children and raised them in the People's Republics, constantly urging them to: 'Learn, dear children. You are Macedonians. You need to learn, to become doctors, engineers, professors... because when we go back to Macedonia you need to be exemplary, to help rebuild our devastated Macedonia. Those Greek reactionary regimes refuse to educate us… even in Greek.'

Those feelings were instilled in the evacuated children. They, in addition to studying in the language of the host country, also studied in Macedonian and Greek.

Cultural life for the evacuated Macedonian children in all the socialist countries was a requirement. The children studied and sang Macedonian songs, performed plays... The textbooks and other educational materials were provided by the People's Republic of Macedonia and by the NOF publishing board.

The Macedonian teachers received their first Macedonian language courses in the liberated territory in Prespa, in the People's Republic of Macedonia and in the People's Republic of Romania.

In 1948, I (Vera) visited the homes (boarding schools) in Bela Tsrkva and Vrshats. Our children from Aegean Macedonia and those from Greece had all the necessary conditions for normal life and for good upbringing in these homes.

In March 1949 the interim democratic government of Greece made a decision to send a five member panel of mothers to visit the schools and homes accommodating our children. Three women in the panel were members of AFZH. They were Donka Kalkova, AFZH Secretary from the village D'mbeni, Kostur Region, and member of the Regional Board, Sofia Chuleva from the village Zagorichani, Kostur Region, and Sofia Danova from the village Oshchima, Lerin Region. The other two women were mothers of Greek nationality and members of the interim democratic government of Greece.

Professor Petros Kokalis, Minister of Education in the interim democratic government of Greece, on June 19, 1949 sent an open letter to all the socialist countries looking after our children and thanked them. Among other things he wrote:

'Our children are living happily in the People's Republics. By seamlessly respecting the rights of everyone; their native language, national feelings and folk customs, in addition to Greek schools there are also Slavo-Macedonian schools operating. But regardless of how the schools are divided, our children are together and are strengthening their unity, like their fathers and older brothers who are engaged in the armed struggle.'

Petros Kokalis also made this same statement on March 25, 1949 during his speech on the occasion of Teresa Moroz's visit. Ms.

Moroz was the United Nations representative of scientific and educational programs. The speech was carried on the radio.

On December 18, 1948 the Wall Street Telegraph in New York wrote: “There are hundreds of children dying due to lack of food, shelter and clothing. There are 25,000 children without care so we beg you to please immediately send everything you have, because for each day that passes more children die.” Yet no one said a word about how many children died from being bombed!?

The evacuated children who were cared for outside their homeland are now academics and qualified experts. The education they received was in the language of the host country. In time, not being allowed to return home, most of them went to the Republic of Macedonia. Some, under various circumstances, found themselves in overseas countries like Canada, Australia and the USA.

We are grateful to the people and to the countries for not only caring for our children, but also for giving them the opportunity to be educated and to become mature and capable professionals… and good patriots. At that time they were evacuated to escape the horrors of the Greek Civil War, but later, after the infamous Informburo Resolution in 1948, they found themselves between the hammer and the anvil. For them this was a second war, an unknown war of special character, from which no inexperienced person could cope and survive. However, although they were minors, they fought against injustice, against defamatory attacks on their homeland, against attacks on NOF, NOMS and AFZH and survived… and even thrived.

We should never forget the contribution and merit of the people who did their best to rescue the children and help educate and bring them up. Hundreds of NOF and AFZH members, mothers and teachers, took up this task and stayed with the children around the clock. Included among the many people deserving to be mentioned are Done Sikavitsa, Paskal Paskalevski, Risto Poptraianov, Olga Popova and Alekso Dukovski.

Today, 55 years later, after having left their native homes and homeland, after the children were evacuated and expelled from

Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia and from Greece, they have gathered here from around the world to meet. The gathering of these children, now grown and well-educated, are scientists, artists of every rank, academics… This shows that these people exist. Their presence here tells the world and the Greek government that they exist and are now all over the world… that they are decent peaceful people and enjoy the peace and cooperation between nations and peoples… that what happened to them should never be allowed to happen to other children… to suffer their fate… the fate of the children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia and Greece. Let it be known that these children and we the fighters from the Greek Civil War want to go back and visit the ruins of what once were our homes… the house that we were born in… we want to raise a monument to our fallen parents who struggled for justice and national freedom… we want to lay wreaths on the graves of our loved ones... What an irony of time this is! A long time ago, 55 years ago, the Athens government demanded that these children be returned to Greece, and now it does not want them at all… and will not let them back into Greece… not even for a short visit..."

This is what Evdokia Foteva Vera had to say having lived through the ordeal and having been a direct participant in the Greek Civil War.

## TESTIMONIES OF THE UPROOTING

In 1948 Lena Sulevska from the village Gorno Kotori, Lerin Region, made the following statement:

"On March 26, 1948 I, two other women, and 40 children left the village after it was attacked by government troops. That day the government soldiers kidnapped 13 children belonging to parents who were DAG fighters. We had to hide to avoid capture. The village was also bombed. We traveled in the snow at night and hid during the day.

Two government airplanes attacked us near the village Trnovo but fortunately no one was injured. We joined a group of about 400 children being led by several women. They were from Kostur Region. The women told us that their group had been repeatedly

attacked by government planes. Four children were killed. More refugees joined us near the village Mavrochori, women and children from four villages (Dolno Kotori, Lagem, Turia and Tren)."

Lena Sulevska continued:

"About 500 children and 20 women were gathered and we headed north, walking only at night. The entire time the women carried a child on their backs and held two more by the hands. We ran into a blizzard after we passed the village Konomladi and had to walk in heavy snow. We constantly had to massage the children's feet to avoid frostbite. When we arrived in the village Strkovo and went inside the village to take a rest, the village was attacked by planes. We, the children and the people from the village all fled to the mountains where we spent the day. The children were crying from fear and from being cold so we lit a fire. But then the planes came again and we had to put the fire out fast. We threw our clothes on it and the children gathered rocks and threw them at it until it was out.

After that we were not allowed to start fires. That was a very sad day, the saddest of our trip. We continued our trek during the night and two days later we arrived in the village German, in Prespa Region. The next night we crossed the Yugoslav border but we did not know that. In the morning we ran into a group of women from the Yugoslav Red Cross. When they saw us all miserable and barefoot, they began to cry and led us to Bitola. They brought us to the Red Cross shelter there and gave the children milk, jam and other foods.

The difficulties of having to travel in the snow and cold left visible marks on the children who kept crying, even after we arrived in Bitola. Most were vomiting and feeling sick. Our hands were swollen, our necks and backs were bruised and our shoulders were in terrible pain from having to carry the children. We were all flea-ridden and dirty because we had not had a bath all this time. We walked for 8 days and traveled over 100 km. Everyone's eyes were bloodshot and our clothes were in tatters."

Elena Eftova from the village Turie, Lerin Region, who left her village with 114 children testified as follows:

“The Monarcho-Fascists were bombarding the village with cannons and completely demolished 6 and burned down another 34 houses. They then stormed the village, looted it and took 500 sheep. They did this while we watched them, hidden in the mountains. There were no soldiers from our side which made the Monarcho-Fascists even angrier and they took their anger out on the civilian population in the village. During the bombing a 10 year old girl named Lefteria Doneva was wounded in the chest and abdomen. She was badly wounded and was taken to a basement while the village was being bombed. After that they tried to evacuate her to the mountains but she died on the way in terrible pain near the village Rula. We buried her there. Her mother fled with us but then we lost her and did not know where she went. On the way, we the women carried 2 to 3 children each.”

Vasilka Delova from the village Lagen fled with two other women and a girl, taking 71 children with them. She remembers the following:

“While the attacks from the government troops were taking place we hid in trenches outside of our village. We then returned to the village during the night to look for food. After that we were joined by a second group of mothers and children near the village Konomladi and from there we fled to Yugoslavia. In the next five months or so the children were placed in homes but they still could not get rid of the trauma they experienced during the attacks on the village and the difficulties they suffered while attempting to flee from the Greek military.”

Iordana Ianchova from the village Trsie, near Lerin, had the following to say:

“After my husband died I was left alone with five children. I was continually persecuted by the traitors of the Greek people and by the Burandari who wanted to kill me at all costs, just like they killed my husband. When I decided to flee across the border, the mothers from my village entrusted me with their children, to save them from the horrors of being bombed by the American, British and Greek aircraft.”

# CHAPTER TWO

## THE CHILDREN'S HOMES AND SHELTERS IN YUGOSLAVIA

- People's Republic of Macedonia - 12
- People's Republic of Serbia - 2
- Autonomous Province of Voivodina - 13
- People's Republic of Croatia - 6
- People's Republic of Slovenia - 8

## FORTY ONE SHELTERS AND HOMES

The Yugoslav government, the Yugoslav Red Cross and the humanitarian national boards of the various Yugoslav republics all showed great care in accepting the refugee children from Aegean Macedonia. All Yugoslav republics, with the exception of Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, opened children's homes and shelters for the children. Unlike the older shelters that operated only for a short time, these shelters operated until mid-1960. The children's homes in the republics were under the jurisdiction of the Yugoslav Red Cross Central Committee and under the republic Red Cross Committees, assisted by various appropriate ministries.

Children's homes (boarding schools), shelters, homes for various apprentice programs, etc., for the refugee children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia were opened in Yugoslavia in the following locations:

People's Republic of Macedonia: - Valandovo, Bitola, Strumitsa, Kumanovo, Tetovo, Ohrid, Petrovats, Struga, Resen, Prilep, Veles and Skopje.

People's Republic of Serbia: - Belgrade and Bogovogja.

Autonomous Province of Voivodina: - Banat Plamdishte, Kovilj, Sajlovo, Bela Tsrkva, Krushevlje, Strazha, Gakovo, Novi Sad, Churuk, Bulkes, Panchevo, Shid and Vrsats.

People's Republic of Croatia: - Gerovo, Osijek, Zagreb, Rovinj, Malinska and Tsrikvenitsa.

People's Republic of Slovenia: - Borl, Okroglo, Dutovlje, Stara Gora, Kranj, Shend Vid, Mekinje and Shishka.

From what we know: in 1948 12 Yugoslav Red Cross children's homes were opened in the Autonomous Province of Voivodina, Slovenia and Croatia, accommodating about 2,000 children. But from the available data we see that 41 shelters and children's home existed and operated in Yugoslavia from 1949 onward as follows: 12 in the People's Republic of Macedonia, 15 in the People's Republic of Serbia and in the Autonomous Province of Voivodina, 6 in the People's Republic of Croatia and 8 in the People's Republic of Slovenia.

# CHAPTER THREE

## CARE OF THE REFUGEE CHILDREN IN SERBIA AND VOIVODINA

### FROM BELGRADE TO BELA TSRKVA

As previously mentioned, the refugee children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia accepted in the children's homes in the People's Republic of Serbia were accommodated in Belgrade and Bogovogja.

The children's home in Shent Vid in Pristichna, People's Republic of Slovenia, was scaled down in May 1952. At the time there were 58 girls and boys living there. Some were moved to other homes and other environments. As a result 13 children were sent to Belgrade for repatriation and 12 were sent to boarding schools in Bela Tsrkva. The remainder, 33 Greek girls ages 18 to 21, remained there. There were plans to relocate the Greek girls to a home in Kumanovo but because they could not be repatriated with their parents, the Yugoslav Red Cross continued to look after them in Shent Vid.

But as the years passed and the refugee children living in homes in the People's Republic of Croatia and in the People's Republic of Slovenia grew up, their numbers began to diminish and so it was decided that they should be discharged from the homes and sent to seek employment in private. Fortunately they were not left completely on their own. Human compassion again came to the fore and they were allowed to seek employment in the agricultural plants Podlenika and Shent Iuri, in the People's Republic of Slovenia. However, that only lasted about three months after which they asked for assistance from the Yugoslav Red Cross Central Committee. The Red Cross, again behaving humanely, accepted the task and, in the beginning of August 1952, moved them to Belgrade and placed them in the first home for economic studies. But after spending some time there they refused to work for just "anything" that was given to them (very low wages) and so the Yugoslav Red Cross stepped in and paid 4,000 dinars a month for each girl, for their support. In addition to that, the Belgrade Red Cross City Board

organized a special tailoring and sewing course and workshop. The course lasted 6 months (from October 1, 1952 to April 1, 1953) from which 30 girls graduated. The other 3, in the meantime, were repatriated with their parents in Greece. At its own expense the Yugoslav Red Cross Central Committee then sent these girls to Makarska on a 15 day vacation.

In September 1953 9 more girls from the Bela Tsrkva boarding schools were sent to work in the agricultural plant "Glogonski rid" where they remained until December 21, 1953. They later left the plant and again returned to Bela Tsrkva where they were again admitted to the children's homes. The other girls who came from Shent Vid, Podlenika and Shent Iuri in Belgrade, who had completed the tailoring course, remained in the large agricultural plant "Glogonski rid" until the beginning of November 1953. Since there was no more seasonal work they lost their jobs and received material assistance. Being in this situation they again decided to seek assistance from the Yugoslav Red Cross Central Committee and as a result the Red Cross paid the "Glogonski Rid" plant for the care given to these girls. This was done until January 7, 1954, after which they were told to seek new employment...

The home in the monastery Bogovogja, where refugee children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia were sheltered and cared for, began to operate on November 14, 1949. The house that was part of the monastery was approximately 30 kilometres away from Valjevo. It housed 136 children, both boys and girls, of whom 56 were girls and 75 boys under the age of 14. Among them was 1 girl over 14 and 4 very young girls. The five girls were brought to Skopje from the children's home in the People's Republics of Slovenia and Croatia between September 14 and 21, 1949 before they were transferred to Bogovogja. They were all Greek by nationality.

In fact, before the girls were sent to Skopje they were looked after in Belgrade but because of some problems that needed to be solved in Czechoslovakia they were sent to the home in Bogovogja where they experienced discontent. Some time later the children changed their minds and withdrew their application for leave to Czechoslovakia. They wanted to go to Czechoslovakia because they

were told that all Greeks who had inhabited the Bulkes settlement had gone there.

With the closing of homes in the republics, the number of children in this home kept increasing. Children who had been living in Dutovlje, People's Republic of Slovenia, were moved to Bogovogja. In December 1949 38 children aged 7 to 14 and 8 women of Greek nationality were moved. Bogovogja kept accepting and accommodating newly arrived refugees until the end of December 1949. By then the number of people cared for jumped to 173 children and 8 women of Greek nationality. Two girls were sent to a shelter in Kumanovo.

However, as the number of refugees grew, the monastery complex in Bogovogja was unable to fully meet all requirements so it was decided to close it down. This decision was made after the complex was visited by prominent Yugoslav Red Cross officials. The children and other residents were then moved to other homes.

The Bogovogja boarding house was closed down in early March 1950 and the refugee children were transferred to a newly opened children's home in Kovilj, Autonomous Province of Voivodina. According to unofficial estimates, the Yugoslav Red Cross spent 1,877,810 dinars in support of the home in Bogovogja.

The children's home in Kovelj, located about 20 km from Novi Sad, began to operate in early March 1950. It immediately accepted 171 refugee children and 8 "mothers" previously housed in boarding houses in the People's Republic of Slovenia. This home operated for only three months. By decision of the Yugoslav Red Cross Central Committee, this house was closed on June 6, 1950 and the children were transferred and accommodated at the children's home in Shent Vid in Pristichna, People's Republic of Slovenia.

By order of the Yugoslav Red Cross Central Committee, the refugee children who had arrived in Bogovogja were immediately given 107 male winter suits, 62 female winter suits, 107 short pants, etc. These were made by the tailoring and sewing workshop that existed and operated within the central administration of the boarding homes in

Bela Tsrkva. These children were also given other things that were made in similar Red Cross workshops in Belgrade.

Knowing that Greek refugee children were accommodated in the Bogovogja home, the Red Cross sent Greek teachers with a request to immediately begin teaching Greek. But this request was flatly rejected by the Greek refugee children who demanded to be transferred out of Yugoslavia. And so, on May 20 18 children were moved out of this home and to a home in Churug, 3 to the home in Stari Bechej and 7 were sent to Panchevo to learn a craft.

On October 1, 1949 a shelter for refugees from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia was opened in Shid. The shelter was located in a place were living conditions were good. Refugees and those unable to work and did not want to go to Gajovo or Krushevlje were accommodated here.

According to available information the Shid shelter, in October 1949, accommodated 118 refugees, of whom many were children 3 months to 14 years of age, boys, girls, women, old people and former DAG fighters. In the middle of October 1949 the shelter accepted another 20 Greek women who had left Bela Tsrkva and other shelters for refugees. Then in the middle of December 1949, under pressure from Informburo propaganda, the Greeks sent a request to the Yugoslav Red Cross, which they criticized, and demanded to be sent to one of the Eastern European countries. There was talk about 102 recognized refugees signing a petition in front of 5 Greek women, which was then followed by a visit from the Yugoslav Red Cross Central Committee, at the end of December 1949, composed of Dr. Olga Milosevich, Secretary General and Militsa Dedier head of the Yugoslav Red Cross social department. But in spite of the assurances given to them that they should remain in Yugoslavia where they would be provided better living conditions, the Greeks would not retract their application, which was finally accepted, under one condition: they would be sent only if the Hungarian border officials allowed it. After that, action was taken to close down the Shid shelter, supposedly because of lack of good living conditions, and move the residents to the new shelter in Churug, at Novi Sad.

The total number of refugees accepted in Churug was 193, of whom 168 were adults and 25 children. Even though living conditions in Churug were significantly better than those in Shid, the same Greeks insisted that they be sent to Czechoslovakia or Hungary. Because of this the Churug shelter, on January 25, 1950, was visited by Dr. Olga Milosevich, Yugoslav Red Cross Secretary General, who tried to explain the reality of the situation, i.e. that the problems experienced were due to Informburo propaganda. Unfortunately the explanation was not accepted and the Greeks continued to cause unrest. This situation lasted until July 1950 when the Hungarian authorities opened the border to the Greek refugees from Churug. They left Churug on July 7, 1950 and arrived in Budapest early the next morning.

But all Greeks did not leave Churug. Two adults requested to remain in Yugoslavia (a general labourer and a lawyer). Included among those who also did not leave Churug for Hungary were 18 children who came from Kovilj, 3 children who came from Star Bechej and 7 other children under 17 years of age... The total number of Greek refugee children remaining in Churug was 29. Most of them had one parent or both parents living in Czechoslovakia. It was explained to those who did not leave Yugoslavia that they could only leave if their parents or guardians asked for them.

However the Greek “Committee to help the children” EVOP, which up to now existed for two years and operated in Bulkes and later in Budapest, continued to make demands that “all” refugee children from Yugoslavia be sent to Hungary. But despite the strong propaganda and political pressure put on by Eastern European countries and their communist parties, the Yugoslav Red Cross did not give up the refugee children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia. This was strengthened by the two resolutions already adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (the first on November 27, 1948 and the second on November 18, 1949).

To bring the accommodations and living conditions in Churug to a satisfactory level, the authorities decided to turn the shelter into a children’s home. This decision was implemented on July 8, 1950 after the buildings were renovated and the space was remodeled.

The children's home in Churug was officially opened on August 1, 1950. On August 22, 1950 35 children and 3 Greek women were brought there from the Kumanovo shelter. During this time, this home sheltered 64 refugee children and 4 refugee women. The work done on the home was funded by the Yugoslav Red Cross Central Committee.

Unfortunately this home operated for only a short time. It was closed on November 9, 1950, 3 months after it was opened. The refugee children and young men and women who lived there were moved to the children's home in Sajlovo at Novi Sad, which opened the same day. This home accommodated 64 children, young men and women and the 4 Greek women from the Churug home. The living conditions in this home were better than good. This also applied to the food served at the shelter. The Red Cross Central Committee in Belgrade made sure the home was stocked with good food products. On top of that the International Children's Fund – UNICEF made sure the home recived proper textile products. We can freely say that the refugee children sheltered at this home enjoyed all the benefits of a well-organized and well-equipped children's home. Several children were repatriated in 1951. At the end of March 1951 31 children were sent from the home in Sajlovo to the home in Shent Vid, People's Republic of Slovenia, and a select number of people from that home were sent to the home in Sajlovo. A total of 52 dependants with a Greek teacher and 3 Greek women arrived at Sailovo.

At the beginning of April 1951 there were 72 dependents, 1 teacher and 5 women refugees, a total of 78 people at the home in Sajlovo. They were looked after by 9 employees.

It is interesting to note that on February 1, 1951 this house was visited by American journalist Sarah Godwel who, after talking to the residents, wanted to have a press release in the American press. But that failed because the residents refused to answer her questions and to be photographed. She was also fiercely attacked with accusations that the Americans and the British were to blame for the children's fate of becoming refugees and being driven out of their birthplaces in Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia.

Unfortunately the same picture was also repeated in the homes in the People's Republic of Croatia and the People's Republic of Slovenia where rebellions broke out among the accommodated refugees with demands to be immediately sent to Czechoslovakia. These demands were also made by letter to Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito.

Repatriations and transfers of individuals continued with refugees being transferred to the homes in Bela Tsrkva and Shent Vid. By mid-June 1951 17 residents were sent to apprenticeship programs and placed in suitable boarding schools for apprentices in Vrsats, Kacharevo and Zrenjanin, and later to Bachka Palanka, Kovilj, Sombor, Vrbas, Apatin and Kula, as well as in Shid and Sremska Mitrovitsa.

It should be noted that after the homes were closed in the People's Republic of Croatia and in the People's Republic of Slovenia, the refugee children and other residents were relocated in the children's homes in Bela Tsrkva and other places. In April 1952 26 residents were transferred to the home in Sajlovo.

The Sajlovo home stopped operating on October 22, 1952. The decision to stop its operation was made by the Yugoslav Red Cross Central Committee. As a result 14 residents had to be transferred to the children's homes in Bela Tsrkva and 39 residents were placed in the home for apprentices in Novi Sad. They were sent to learn a trade in the local industrial enterprises and to vocational schools.

Due to the need for vocational training, in mid-March 1949 50 youths arrived in Novi Sad and stayed at a home in Crikvenitsa, People's Republic of Croatia. Of the 50, 22 were Macedonians and 28 were Greeks. They were placed in a dormatory in Novi Sad from where they attended trade school in the three local factories: locksmith, machinist, electrical, etc.

The young people were doing well in the homes and factories until August 1949 when some began to make requests to leave Yugoslavia. Militsa Dedier, head of the social department at the Yugoslav Red Cross, tried to appease them but was not successful. On September 7, 1949, under the leadership of their teacher Ianis Panagouris, they left Novi Sad and joined the people in Bulkes who

from there went to Hungary. They then continued their journey to Czechoslovakia.

Despite this, refugees continued to arrive in Novi Sad to learn trades. After the home in Sajlovo was closed at the end of October 1952, 32 young people arrived in Novi Sad and continued their studies in the trades. From these and from the others, 8 students joined the electrical, 14 the locksmith, 16 the machinist and 1 the tailor trades.

Funding for the care of these young people was provided by the Yugoslav Red Cross Central Committee (for accommodations, clothing and part of their meals. The rest of their meals were provided for by the companies where they studied). From the beginning of 1953, in support of the food program for the students, the Yugoslav Red Cross had to pay the home in Novi Sad 3,400 dinars per month. At the beginning of July 1953 24 apprentices were sent on vacation to Makarska.

It is interesting to mention that in 1953 11 students left for Greece and 3 students, due to lack of discipline, were expelled because students from the home collective complained about them.

In 1954 there were 22 students left at the home in Novi Sad. Some left to join their parents in Eastern European countries. Of those who remained, in June 1955, 17 passed the exams and obtained a diploma in their craft.

Like in Novi Sad, on May 20, 1950, 6 young people were sent to Panchevo to continue their education. They were placed in a children's home in Kovilj. Before that some of them lived in children's homes and shelters in Malinska on the island Krk, Tsrikvenitsa, in Skopje in Bogovadja and in Kovilj. Most of them did not know where their parents were so, in October 1950, one of them was sent to the People's Republic of Slovenia, one of them was sent to Chufug and another one was sent to a home for apprentices in Kacharevo near Panchevo.

The house in Vrsats was actually a children resort. Situated outside of the city, in the beginning of April 1948, it was converted into a

home (boarding school) for the refugee children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia. Initially it housed 49 refugee children and by the middle of the same month another 16 children were admitted. In total the number of refugee children cared for was 65, of whom 32 were boys and 33 girls. All the children were Macedonian and so were the staff who fled with them from Greece to save themselves from the Greek Monarcho-Fascist terror.

Unfortunately this house only operated for 6 months and was closed down at the end of September 1948. At the end of July 1948 the preschool children from this home were sent to the children's homes in the People's Republic of Slovenia.

From a report submitted by Bora Gichkov to the Yugoslav Red Cross Central Committee, among other things, the following was noted: "The children in the home are clean, well-dressed and are progressing well given the circumstances. The impact of their educational work is well felt. The organizational work is well-conducted and well-performed in accordance with house rules. There are two people assigned to advocate for the care of the children who regularly make sure there is food and clothing for them and their health is taken care of. One young woman is assigned to assist the educator and do the menial work. Friendship between staff and children is good and everyone is happy..." After the home in Vrsats was closed the refugee children and staff were redistributed in the children's homes in Bela Tsrkva and the building that was previously a children's summer resort was returned to the municipality.

Children's homes were opened in three buildings in Banat Plandishte which, at the beginning of April 1948, housed 154 children. Another 47 refugee children were added in May 1948. The "mothers" and other women from Aegean (Greek Occupied) Macedonia who accompanied the children, and also arrived together with the refugee children, were also moved to these homes. By mid May 1948 the number of children in these homes was increased to 201, of whom 106 were boys and 95 girls. They were all Macedonians.

Similarly 12 women refugees with their children came to the home, for a total of 27 of whom 16 were boys and 11 girls. Included among them were:

Elena Shulevska, 4 children – Dolno Kotori
Vasilka Delova, 1 child – Lagen
Elena Delova, 1 – Lagen
Maria Shulevska, 6 - Gorno Kotori
Tomaia Bozhinova, 4 - Gorno Kotori
Mitra Milankova, 2 – Dolno Kotori
Mitra Germancheva, 2 – Turie
Ristana Lazarova, 1 – Turie
Parashka Panova, 1 – Turie
Fania Doneva, 1 – Turie
Elena Eftova, 2 – Turie
Mitra Koleva, 2 - Turie.

At the end of July 1948 24 preschool children were sent to children's homes in the People's Republic of Slovenia.

The person in charge of the home was Vladimir Veselinovich and after him the teacher Dobrila Iovanovska.

This home too only existed for 6 months after which, in September 1948, it was closed down. The children and staff were transferred to the homes in Bela Tsrkva.

**FUNCTIONING OF THE CHILDREN'S HOME IN BELA TSRKVA**

A separate chapter is dedicated to the acceptance and placement of the refugee children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia to the children's homes in Bela Tsrkva in the Autonomous Province of Voivodina.

Care of the refugee children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia was provided for by the village Strazha located between Bela Tsrkva and Vrsats. But this house too operated for only 6 months, and during its operation it housed only 70 children. Although the building that housed these refugee children was okay,

it did not serve its main purpose. This was due to the poor road accesss causing difficulties to get there. As a result, in September 1948, it was decided to close down this house and send the children to the homes in Bela Tsrkva.

As we said earlier homes were opened in the People's Republic of Serbia, particularly in the Autonomous Province in Voivodina; in Vrsats, Banat Plandishte, Strazha and Bela Tsrkva.

The children's homes in Bela Tsrkva began to accept refugee children from Aegean Macedonia in the spring of 1948. These homes had a set of 9 buildings located in the centre of the city. One was located near the river Nera. Unfortunately the one located near the River Nera was closed down and the children were transferred to the children's homes in Bela Tsrkva centre.

The primary school "Kolishevski" began to operate in 1949 in one of the buildings where lectures were conducted in the Macedonian language. Located in the same buildings were sewing and shoe-making workshops operated by the central administration. There was a clinic located in one of the buildings. Also housed in other buildings were schools for managing economy, pig farming, fruit growing, grape growing, metalworking and other workshops. The People's Board of Vrsats had also acquired 26 hectares of arable land to be used by the children's home in Bela Tsrkva. All these buildings were available to house the refugee children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia.

One of the buildings housed the preschool children 3 to 7 years old, while the other three buildings housed children ages 7 to 14 years old. The facilities in which the children were placed were immediately transformed, or adapted, to create the right conditions for these children. Proper hygiene facilities were maintained for newcomer "mothers" who at the time assisted with various activities. The women worked during all hours, mornings, afternoons and evenings, with one goal in mind; to care for the uprooted children and to give them the parental care they needed so that they wouldn't feel lonely...

In addition to the four factories, there was also a building in Bela Tsrkva dedicated and equipped for ambulatory functions.

The first wave of refugee children to arrive was 912. They arrived in Bela Tsrkva in April and May 1948, where they were well received and immediately placed in 4 regulated facilities. The Yugoslav Red Cross was responsible for administering the children's home. The refugee children who arrived in Bela Tsrkva and were placed here were from the following villages:

Armensko, Banitsa, Bapchor, Borovitsa, Baovo, Buf, Gabrish, German, Gorno Kotori, Dolno Kotori, D'mbeni, Zhelevo, Zhelin, Kosinets, Krushoradi, Lagen, Ludovo, Medovo, Mikolini, Mokreni, Neokaz, Nivitse, Ovcharani, Oshchima, Pesochnitsa, Psoderi, Rudari, Robi, Sakulevo, Sveta Nedela, Strnishte, Trnovo, Trsir, Chegan, Chuka, Shtrkovo and Tsakoni.

At the end of September 1948 all the children's homes for the refugee children in the People's Republic of Serbia and in the Autonomous Province of Voivodina were closed and all the refugee children were moved to Bela Tsrkva.

The teacher Stanoie Obrenov was appointed top administrator of the Bela Tsrkva children's home, whose responsibility included adapting buildings and civic works, organizing functions, implementing educational activities in the schools, managing the work and more.

Besides the agricultural economy, which provided many agricultural products that were used in the canteens to feed the refugee children, towards the end of September 1948 the Red Cross management of children's homes in Bela Tsrkva decided to organize a sewing workshop in which it employed 10 skilled tailors and seamstresses and appointed Traiko Terzievski, a refugee from the village Zhelevo, as its foreman.

In his diary about his work in the children's homes and about the work done by the sewing workshops in Bela Tsrkva, top administrator Stanoie Obrenov wrote the following: "At that time we had no clothing and no means to purchase them from somewhere

else. Therefore opening the workshop was the most economical and necessary choice. Thanks to Traiko Terzievski and all the tailors and seamstresses in this workshop we managed to fashion many hundred of coats, overcoats and suits in a relatively short time for all residents and wards of the Red Cross in children's homes in Bela Tsrkva. They were very well dressed and supplied with clothes and other things. The homes too were supplied with linens, beautiful curtains, sheets and other materials. We also sewed Aegean style folk dresses and costumes for the needs of children's folklore groups, as well as clothing for sports and dances."

In mid-September 1948 a shoemaker's shop was opened in the same building as the sewing workshop. This shop created ready made shoes for the refugee children and served as a shoe repair shop. This shop also made belts for pants, shoes for the children's folk groups and others necessary materials.

Besides the two workshops, a carpentry workshop was also opened as part of the children's homes which served as a manufacturing and repair shop for desks, chairs, doors, windows and more.

A large farm was also established for the needs of the children's homes. For this purpose, the People's Board in Vrshats Region granted the children's homes in Bela Tsrkva several buildings, 26 hectares of good arable land along the river Nera and two and a half hectares of vineyards. Among other things the farm also raised 100 pigs and employed permanent and seasonal workers.

## WORLD PRESS ECHOES REGARDING THE REFUGEE CHILDREN IN BELA TSRKVA

We will digress for a moment from the activities in the Bela Tsrkva homes and focus our attention on the effort made to fight against the Informburo, its fierce propaganda campaign and against pressure from Greece against the Yugoslav authorities to have the refugee children returned. The Yugoslav authorities tried hard to sway public opinion in many ways, primarily in the Eastern European countries, and to show them that the refugee children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia in Yugoslavia were well-received, well placed in children's homes and well looked after. They were

progressing well, were learning and were happy in spite of being separated from their parents. A good example and proof of that was the following.

With the approval of the Yugoslav Red Cross, on August 10 and 11, 1948, the refugee children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia placed in the homes in Bela Tsrkva were visited by Handler Mair, a correspondent from the newspaper "New York Times", by Omer Biggart, a correspondent from the newspaper "New York Herald Tribune", by Ozgord Karuterst a correspondent from the news agency AP International, by correspondents from the Daily Worker Associated Press and by correspondents from other newspapers.

The journalists - correspondents published various articles regarding their visit with the refugee children in the children's homes in Bela Tsrkva.

On Sunday, April 11, 1948 the "New York Times" newspaper had published an article entitled "Greek girls refute report of stealing children". The article was subtitled "The group from Macedonia says they fled to Yugoslavia to avoid the air strikes".

On April 8, 1948, regarding Bela Tsrkva in Yugoslavia, the newspaper "New York Times" specifically had said:

"The girls from Greek (occupied) Macedonia who arrived in Yugoslavia on April 4, with a group of about 240 children, told us today about their march through the mountains over the border. They denied that they had been abducted by Greek partisans and were expelled from their land, but that they fled to avoid the air strikes."

With permission from the Yugoslav government, two American and one British correspondent went by car to Bela Tsrkva, to a village in Banat, where the Yugoslav Red Cross had temporarily placed several groups of children from Greek (occupied) Macedonia. The group who these correspondents visited was one part of the 5,000 children from Greek (occupied) Macedonia who was reported to have crossed the Yugoslav border at the beginning of this month.

Due to bad road conditions and because of the short time they had to do their visit, the journalists were only able to visit one group of about 240 children housed in a renovated building that was formerly used as a children's nursery. Another group of about 290 children, ages 3 to 17, was located about 3 miles from Bela Tsrkva. Most of these children were ages 5 to 7. A small group of girls, ages 13 to 17, was dropped off in the Republic of Macedonia by their parents, left there to be cared for by the Yugoslav authorities.

In continued texts it was highlighted that:

**THE YUGOSLAVS DRESSED THIS GROUP**

"The Yugoslav Red Cross had put clothes on this group. Every child was given a pair of new shoes… some were large but wearable shoes… They were dressed with pants, sweaters, scarves and hats… both new and old… and in good condition. The children were thin but also in good condition.

The older girls seemed to be in better condition and were happier. We asked them questions in the presence of 60-year-old Dimitrios Georgiadis, their Greek teacher, through an interpreter.

The Yugoslav authorities even gave us a person who spoke English. He addressed a Yugoslav Macedonian who then translated the questions into Greek for Georgiadis and the girls. Their answers were translated into Serbo-Croatian and into English.

This is their story according to statements made by Georgiadis and the girls:

'This entire group came from the villages Trigono, Andartiko, Agios Germanos, Lemos, Pisoderi and other villages in the vicinity of Florina. Some of these villages were occupied by Greek government troops. Day and night the villages were bombed and leveled to the ground, some were bulldozed.

One part of the population fled to the mountains. Before their escape they entrusted their children to the elders in the family. Some

children were handed over to the people who came to the border. This group was led by Dimitriadis, a peasant who has his own country.

The children walked at night from village to village through the mountains to avoid being bombed by the airplanes. The local population of some villages fed and housed them but the children also passed through villages that had no people.

The march to the border lasted 8 days. The group crossed the border near Prilep (it should say Bitola) where they were gathered by Yugoslav guards and taken to the nearest village where the Yugoslav Red Cross took care of them. The parents who followed their children remained in Yugoslav Macedonia, while their children were taken by train to Bela Tsrkva.'

The Girls from Greek (occupied) Macedonia said that they were satisfied with the treatment they received from the Yugoslav Red Cross and seem to be happy to be outside of the war zone. They said that the aerial bombings caused many casualties and there was great fear from the Greek government troops who ruthlessly dealt with people suspected of helping the partisans and their sympathizers."

Here is another article written by the journalists who visited the children's homes in Bela Tsrkva, as reported by the Associated Press:

Bela Tsrkva, April 10, 1948,

"In this small village in Banat the Yugoslav Red Cross delivered 240 Greek children who had fled their country and who deny that they were taken by force. Their ages are from 3 to 15 years old. After a week of hiking from their villages in Florina through the mountains they finally arrived at the Yugoslav border and crossed it at night. These children were followed by 5 Greek peasant girls and a number of elderly people.

Over 5,000 refugee children were admitted to Yugoslavia and are cared for by the Red Cross, which has two million members

providing their contribution to help these children who have now turned to the Red Cross to help them out to the end.

The Yugoslav government, which last week strongly protested against allegations that these children were taken by force, as claimed by the Greek 'Monarcho-fascist army', and that it is using these children as pawns in the Greek Civil War, has now given approval to the correspondents from the agencies 'Associated Press', 'New York Times' and the London 'Daily Worker' to come and visit these children and to freely ask them questions.

The children said that the only thing that forced them to leave their homes were the daily bombardments of their villages. Many of their brothers and sisters were killed by shelling, by starvation, or by the winter cold. Their relatives are fighting in General Markos's ranks and some have been slain for doing so.

With their medical examination, upon their arrival, it was determined that these children were undernourished, excessively thin and their clothing was pitiful. As soon as these children heard the sound of an aircraft flying above they all dropped down to the ground and began to scream. Even the appearance of an eagle in the sky had the same effect on them. These children were so exhausted that they fell asleep while playing. Now they are recovering in this Serbian village near the border with Romania, where they are placed in a clean school building. For many this is the first peaceful home that they have ever had."

On April 12, 1948 the New York Herald Tribune published a report from Vrshats entitled: "Yugoslavia takes good care of the children who escaped from Greece" with the subtitle "The reporter visited a village near the Romanian border and heard statements that refute the Athenian charges of children being kidnapped and himself, as a witness, saw that the children were fed well and were healthy and in great shape."

Similar reports came out of Bela Tsrkva from reporters, foreign newspapers and other agencies proving that the children were not taken by force from their parents, that they were not taken from

Greece against their will and that they had emigrated to escape the horrors of war.

Sadly, at that time, the Western press had also printed many untruths claiming that the refugee children who had fled from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia were taken by force from their parents and lived in camps in poor conditions and so on.

This first visit of the refugee children by correspondents of foreign newspapers, for the first time, objectively informed the Western public on the true state of these children and about the real reasons why they emigrated.

With the adoption of the Informburo Resolution, in mid-1948, the attitude of the Greek teachers, party leaders and Greek personnel significantly changed not only towards the Macedonian children placed in homes but also towards the overall Yugoslav political system in that country. Despite the extraordinary reception, hosting and accommodation provided to them, the Greeks openly attacked Yugoslavia with lies and fabrications, inciting discord between the Greek and Macedonian children and creating unrest in the homes. The Greeks behaved inappropriately and attacked their hosts for no reason. Unfortunately, despite all that was done, this situation continued, even in 1949, until they were removed.

At the same time the question of learning in the native Macedonian language, in some children's homes, was resolved with the best possible outcome. The Greek teachers were replaced with Macedonian teachers. In Bela Tsrkva this was done at the beginning of the 1949/50 academic year.

Remaining in the Bela Tsrkva refugee homes were 15 Macedonian "mothers" along with 51 children. The Macedonian mothers were:

Elena Eftova with 10 children,
Parashka Panova with 1 child,
Kata Milankova with 2 children,
Tomania Bozhinovska with 4 children,
Dafina Filkova with 3 children,
Elena Shulevska with 4 children,

Krsta Tasheva with 4 children,
Vasilka Doleva with 1 child,
Marika Gorchilova with 3 children,
Vasilka Kuleova 2 with children,
Vana Kochova with 4 children,
Iordana Ianchova with 4 children,
Stoia Kizova with 2 children,
Nada Spirova with 1 child, and
Vasilka Mishovska with 4 children.

At the end of 1949, at the request of the Bela Tsrkva Central Administration for the homes, the Association of Aegean Macedonians in Skopje sent a number of refugees to work in children's homes. The following were sent to Bela Tsrkva:

Mihailo Atanasov, Lazo Angelovski, Tasho Bozhinov, Blagoia Bulev, Giorgi Donev, Kiro Donev, Vasil Iovanov, Lazo Karaiovanov, Dimitria Petsev, Petar Poshinov, Vane Ranelov and Atanas Reshevsky.

**SUCCESSES IN THE SCHOOL "LAZAR KOLISHEVKI" IN BELA TSRKVA**

One of the many victories in Bela Tsrkva was the opening of a primary school for the refugee children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia and the ability to teach them in their native Macedonian language. More about this can be found in the newspaper "Glas na Egeitsite" (Voice of the Aegeans), including the following:

"By decision of the Yugoslav Ministry of Science and Culture, a school that appropriately bears the name 'Lazar Kolishevski' was opened in Bela Tsrkva for the academic year 1949-50…"

The number of students attending this school was 221. In total there were six classes from which four were first grade and two second grade. The total number of students, together with those attending elementary school, was 522. These were all refugee children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia. The number of teachers at the end of the year was 12, including the director.

Despite the various difficulties the school had to struggle with, thanks to the persistent efforts of the teachers and the educational materials supplied by the People's Republic of Macedonia's Council of Education, Science and Culture, the students were given exactly what was needed.

Here is what a journalist wrote about this:

"Recently a celebration was held, at the end of the school year, on the premises of the gymnasium "Kolishevski" in Bela Tsrkva. The ceremony highlighted the learning success of refugee children from Aegean Macedonia, who are under the care of the Yugoslav Red Cross…"

With the persistent efforts of the teachers and educators who work hard with the refugee children from Aegean Macedonia in Bela Tsrkva, the success the school achieved at the end of the school year was quite satisfactory. It did considerably better compared to last year. The success factor (average) last year was 3.65 (out of 5). There were 45 students who had to repeat a grade. This year the success factor (average) of this gymnasium was 3.90, while the primary school success factor was 4.07, or overall 3.98. Only 12 students had to repeat a grade.

Among other things that contributed to this success was the discipline demonstrated by the children, which was quite high.

The excellent students who demonstrated greater success in learning and behaviour were rewarded with a book. During the school year the students from the gymnasium gave an excellent performance for the citizenry of Bela Tsrkva, for which they received great attention.

The newspaper "Glas na Egeitsite" (Voice of the Aegeans) published a lengthy article entitled "Bela Tsrkva - centre of education for our children", which described the life of the refugee children housed in the buildings and homes. The article informed its readers about the work carried out; the effort of the women caregivers and "mothers", the artwork and its exhibition, the choir, as well as the kindness and commitment demonstrated by the

administrators running the homes in Bela Tsrkva, - Stanoie Obren. Among other things the article said:

“A woman about 40 years old greeted us at the entrance. She looked familiar to me. She immediately recognized me and greeted me warmly.

‘And here too it is a struggle, my friend…’ said Pandovitsa cheerfully, from the village Turie.

‘Many of these children have lost their parents in the struggle back home. Now I am both their mother and father…’ she added modestly while peeking cautiously towards the bathroom checking on the children taking a bath...”

Further down the article said:

“Exhibited here are sketches painted with blue paint, various toys, dolls, toy cats, elephants, roosters, rabbits, and what not... One side of the sea presentation is surrounded by palm trees and swimming in it are boats of various sizes. Hanging on the wall is a well-made frame with a picture of Marshal Tito... The swallows Leta Dimova made are hanging from the ceiling by a thread otherwise they would have flown off to the warm south a long time ago. The various images that Rina Ponsirova and Tsena Popova have made immediately draw the attention of every visitor. The popular children’s stories ‘Snow White’ and ‘Red Riding Hood’ occupy their place here. Lenka Siderova, who has now gone to Australia, Ristana Kostadinova from Turie who played the piano with four fingers, Tinka Spirova and Tena Bamova, the ballet dancer who danced well, are now all far away from here, from their beloved home, but they have not forgotten their contribution to this exhibition. Hot tears spring up from these children’s gentle eyes when they are reminded of their joyous life and the time they spent in Bela Tsrkva. But now they are far, far away...”

A little further down the article said: “Outside, in the corridor, with knitting needles in her hands, knitting something, sat Elena Shulevska, the “mother” of a group of children from Gorno Kotori. Her husband, a partisan who fought in the Democratic Army of

Greece, was killed in Grevena. While knitting she listened to the children's conversations and smiled.

She then looked at me and said: 'We took the children out of the wolf's teeth. We then traveled for seven days and nights over the mountains to get away…' after which two large tears rolled out of her eyes. She remembered the horrors well… those difficult days when the Monarcho-Fascists bombed and destroyed the villages and killed frail elderly people and children. 'They who did this to us will never be able to hide it… the burned down houses and the gaping ugly ruins in Bapchor, Besfina, Rudari, Orovnik and wherever else they caused destruction, are witness to it! The school in the village German was the most beautiful building in the entire region. Today it is in ruins, torn apart from the bombing. If the students had left that school a half hour later that day in the spring of 1948, there would be over 300 less gentle creatures enjoying life today,' she said.

Here is what else was published in the same article in the newspaper "Voice of the Aegeans":

"The skilled movements of fifteen year old conductor Stavre Dzhigomanov gave the audience the appearance of a mature artist and musician. Stavre also played several pieces of music on the piano. He is a villager from Lerin Region. After him came young Vangel who also demonstrated his talent on the piano. When I asked them if they played piano at home in the village where they were born, the children just laughed... Together with them was singer Stoianka from the village Lichishta, Kostur Region. That poor girl had no sight in both eyes but she learned to sing and to even play the piano…"

With regards to the upbringing of the children, the following was highlighted in the same article:

"The refugee children were raised in line with the principles of child-rearing in a socialist country. They were taught to be honest citizens, good patriots and true internationalists. The teachers and educators made great effort to give the Macedonian children the sense that they are Macedonians and that they belong to the

Macedonian nation and to the Macedonian people. Much effort was made to educate the children so that tomorrow they would become fair and productive citizens in our society.

There were various activities organized to raise the children. The most important ones were physical education and sports. The children had football, basketball, volleyball and other athletic teams. They also belonged to various chess teams. Every day they started their day with morning gymnastics.

The school had a hygienic and intellectual section, in which children were taught in groups or individually. They also formed various circles to read books, learn history, learn about nature, organized literary evenings, and so on.

Included among the other activities that the children enjoyed and supported were drama, folklore, ballet, choir, music and dancing. Last year alone the choir section learned 14 new songs. The ballet section had 172 members who achieved outstanding results. There were 35 members in the music section who learned how to play the piano, how to read music notes and how to do various other things. The folklore section had 42 members who last year alone learned 14 Macedonian folk dances. The drama club had 75 members.

The children also had home economic, sketch work and modeling sections. Last year alone they did 11 successful performances in the various programs. Some of the handicrafts made by the children were even sent abroad.

The home had its own library with about 800 books. The school also had its own library. The children were very interested in reading newspapers. They read the newspapers “Borba” (Struggle), Nova Makedonija (New Macedonia), “Glas na Egeitsite” (Voice of Aegeans) and “Pioner” (Pioneer). There were also organized outings and excursions.

The home has two educational institutions: a primary school named “Gotse Delchev” and a high school named “Kolishevski”. The school staff consisted of 11 teachers but was in need of more. It called upon the teachers from Aegean Macedonia to fill that gap.

Last year the primary school achieved a 4.02 average (out of 5) and the high school achieved a 3.70 average.

## LETTER FROM THE "MOTHERS" IN DEFENSE OF THE CHILDREN

A reorganization of the homes in Bela Tsrkva took place at the beginning of October 1949, during which the smaller dormitory buildings were closed down and the children were moved to other major centres which, in the meantime, had been renovated and refurbished.

The first children's home in Bela Tsrkva housed 45 girls ages 11 to 14 years old. The teachers assigned to these children were Giurgievka Siiki (main teacher) and Stoia Iankovska. The caregivers assigned were Mara Shteger (main), Elena Eftova and Tomania Bozhinovska. Hosting duties at the home were assigned to Mihailo Atanasov.

The second children's home housed 71 male and 81 female children ages 9 to 11. The administrator of this home was the teacher Dobila Iovanovska. The main teacher was Militsa Michin and the teachers were Fania Terzievska and Katina Markova. Appointed caregiver was Radmila Obrenov and host was Kiro Donev.

The third children's home in Bela Tsrkva housed 60 boys, ages 13 to 14. The administrator of this home was the teacher Liubitsa Ugrinovich. The main teacher was Ielena Karanovich. The caregiver was Emilia Veselinovich and the host of this home was Petar Pashinov.

The fourth children's home housed 223 boys and girls ages 9 to 13. This home was administered by teacher Ikonia Rosich. The main teacher was Vukosava Ianokovich and the other teacher was Vasilka Grozdanova. The caregiver was Margita Paunovich and the host was Tasho Bozhinov.

The fifth children's home housed 90 children. The administrator was Melania Despotovich. The other teacher was Tronda Petkova. The caregiver was Aurelia Vasich and the host was Lazar Karaiovanov.

The first clinic had 27 hospital beds and was administered by Vane Ranelov. The second clinic had 11 rooms and 46 beds.

It can be seen from this that there was huge concern for the health and protection of the refugee children who were placed in these facilities and children's homes in Bela Tsrkva.

After the Greek teachers, educators and caregivers left the children's homes in Bela Tsrkva a completely new environment was created for the refugee children. An elementary school and a high school (gymnasium) were opened which taught in the native Macedonian language. The Government of the People's Republic of Macedonia, to this end, acquired more qualified teachers and placed them in these educational institutions. Kosta Markovski was appointed manager of the schools. Rizhitsa Bura was appointed assistant manager of the Red Cross central administration homes in Bela Tsrkva.

It is interesting to note that those conducting the Informburo propaganda campaign, which forced the Greek party figures and the committee for child assistance (EVOP) to act negatively, never did investigate or contribute to finding the truth. They not only put pressure on the children, pushing them to seek going to Czechoslovakia, but used all kinds of means to vilify the Macedonian cadres and "mothers" who worked in the children's homes in Bela Tsrkva.

Even though they and the children were placed in a difficult situation, these cadres and "mothers" refused to be discouraged by these Informburo lies and slander spread through propaganda. Fifteen "mothers", who were also teachers and educators, signed a letter and sent it to the Yugoslav Red Cross in Belgrade.

Here is what the letter said:

"Recently we were contacted by Bulkes and told that the children will have to go to Czechoslovakia. We do not want that at any cost. Between us and the children there is fear. We have traveled and suffered enough. Here we have peace and a good life. Yugoslavia is

taking care of us and treating us and the children like family. The parents of these children in Greece entrusted us to bring them to Yugoslavia. Therefore we are the only authority who can speak on their and on their parent's behalf. You have the power to stop Bulkes from sending us to other countries. We want to stay here and help educate the children in their native language. We who have our own groups of children want to remain with them. Please do not allow anyone, except the Red Cross, to interfere in our affairs. We will stay here with the children and we will go only if Yugoslavia does not want us to be here.

Please reply to us soon so that we can assure ourselves and the children that everything will be okay and that this problem will be solved as per our request. All the women and girls in all the homes here agree with this plea."

The letter was dated August 27, 1949, Bela Tsrkva.

The following people signed on behalf of the parents and children:

Stoia Jankovska, Krsta Tashevska, Olga Zdravkovska. Kata Milankova, Fania Terzievska, Vasilka Delova, Elena Eftova, Tronda Petkova, Tomania Bozhinovska, Iana Ianchova, Vasilka Grozdanova, Tsila Mishevska, Elena Shulevska, Tsela Kuleova and Elena Delova.

As was mentioned earlier, several student sections functioned successfully in the primary school "Gotse Delchev" and in the high school "Kolishevski", catering to the educational needs of the children in the homes. Included among the various sections was a physical education section, a gymnastics section, a hygiene section, an intellectual and artistic section, a choir section, a music and folklore section, a rhythmic dancing and ballet section, a drama and art section, a modeling section, a history section, a geography section and a biology section.

In 1950 members of the physical education section participated in four friendly football games and three chess matches between the refugee children and the students from the middle school in Bela Tsrkva.

Members of the history section put on a festive celebration for Ilinden and for the New Year. They also occasionally held literary reading sessions.

In 1950 the choral section, consisting of 74 members, competed in several festivities. In its repertoire it had 14 choral songs, 4 solo songs and 4 duets. It sang the songs in the Macedonian language.

In 1950 the folklore section, consisting of 42 members, put on 14 Macedonian folk dances. The children's folk costumes which were used during the performances were tailor made to accurately reflect those worn in Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia. The folklore section performed in Skopje and Belgrade, and many times performed for the citizens in Bela Tsrkva.

In 1950 the ballet section, consisting of 72 members, along with members from the music and folklore and choir sections competed in events in Belgrade and Skopje.

In 1950 the drama club, consisting of 75 members, prepared 6 plays, 18 recitations in the Macedonian language and 10 in the Serbo-Croatian language.

In 1950 the art section, consisting of 36 members, painted over 100 images and participated in various children's shows. Some of the art work was sent abroad.

We can say that much had been achieved in cultural and entertainment events with significant results. In January, February and March of 1950, for example, 11 performances had been put on in Bela Tsrkva alone by members of these sections.

As a result of the quality programs achieved, in May 1950 members of several sections in Bela Tsrkva organized a tour during which they visited Belgrade and Skopje where they showed off their cultural and artistic talents. The total number of participants in the tour was 116. The tour itself lasted 15 days.

On May 13 and 14, 1950 two shows were put on at the University of Kolarchev. The performances were filmed and a documentary was created. One of the events was broadcast over the radio.

On May 18 to 22, 1950 members of the cultural and artistic group from Bela Tsrkva performed in Skopje. They put on four performances.

Many members from most sections participated in numerous events at various festivities organized in Bela Tsrkva, during all the years the children were there.

**START OF REPATRIATION**

With regards to the worker activities, it can be said that they participated in 9 different work projects including cleaning the main city drainage system, tending the park, cleaning the streets, trimming the forest at Deliblatska Cave and working around and tending to the children's homes. The refugee children and employees were members of the Bela Tsrkva Red Cross.

In early April 1952 17 "mothers" were sent from the children's homes in Bela Tsrkva to Gakovo. They were:

Olga Nichova, Kata Milankova, Ristana Lazarova, Vasilka Mishevska, Sofia Koleva, Krsta Tasheva, Penelopi Atanasiou, Dafina Filkova, Marika Gorchilova, Elena Eftova, Elena Shulevska, Dosta Kurti, Sofia Argirova, Maria Doneva,Vasilka Delova, Mahi Paleva and Vana Kochova.

Forty-four refugee children were also sent with the "mothers".

Included among others who left Bela Tsrkva were:

Vasil Iovanov, Lazo Angelovski, Kiro Donev, Giorgi Donev, Petar Pashinov, Vane Ranelov and Tosho Bozhanov.

As we have seen from the evidence provided, the children's homes in Bela Tsrkva operated for an entire decade, from 1948 to 1958.

According to official statistics, the number of refugee children accommodated in the children's homes in Bela Tsrkva was as follows:

- 1948 212, 1949 570, 1950 537, 1951 492, 1952 455, 1953 395, 1954 354, 1955 326, 1956 266, 1957 103, and 1958 80.

As for the repatriation of refugee children with their parents, the final number was as follows: 469 refugee children living in the homes in Yugoslavia were repatriated with their parents in Greece from November 1950 to March 1952.

Due to the closing of the refugee children's homes in the People's Republic of Croatia and in the People's Republic of Slovenia in April 1952, all the refugee children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia residing in those homes were moved out before the repatriation had started. Bela Tsrkva was the only place that served as a repatriation centre. As a result 163 children were repatriated from October 1952 to September 1958.

Seventy children and fifty adults left for Australia from May to November 1950.

Eight refugee children from the homes in Bela Tsrkva left for Australia, to be with their parents, from May 1953 to June 1956.

Iordana Ianchova from the village Trsie, Lerin Region, left with her four children for Australia in July 1950.

Twelve refugee children from the homes in BelaTsrkva were repatriated with their parents in Romania from November 1955 to July 1958.

Seventy-three refugee children were repatriated with their parents in Poland from February 1955 to July 1958.

Sixty-eight refugee children were repatriated with their parents in the Soviet Union from February 1955 to March 1958.

Six refugee children were repatriated with their parents in Bulgaria from March 1955 to January 1956.

Fifteen refugee children were repatriated with their parents in Hungary from December 1955 to August 1957.

Ninety-four refugee children were repatriated with their parent in Czechoslovakia from August 1956 to November 1958.

The Red Cross Children's homes, housing the refugee children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia in Bela Tsrkva, operated from the beginning of April 1948 until the end of August 1958.

## A LETTER SENT FROM A HOME IN BELA TSRKVA TO THE NEWSPAPER "VOICE OF THE AEGEANS"

The following is a letter about the children's homes in Bela Tsrkva. More accurately, this letter is a typical example of what the refugee children wrote to their readers about the homes in Bela Tsrkva. The letter was published by the newspaper "Glas na Egeitsite" (Voice of the Aegeans) in Skopje. Here is what it said:

"Dear friends,

We the pioneers of the home in Bela Tsrkva, located in the III pavilion, welcome you with warm fraternal greetings.

Although we were small, we still remember the plight and suffering of our parents, our people, as well as our troubles. Many of our brothers and sisters were tortured and killed in prisons only because they fought for the rights and freedom of our enslaved people. The struggle that was led by our brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, against the Monarcho-Fascists was very hot and demanding. It forced our parents to separate from us and send us to Yugoslavia in order to save us.

One part of us is placed here, in a home in Bela Tsrkva.

Our life here is excellent; we have good food and nice clothes. Each child has his or her own bed and everything they need is provided for them...

For the first time in our lives we learned to speak, read and write in our own mother tongue here in Yugoslavia. We had no such opportunities in Greece, not because we did not have conditions for development but because we had no rights. We were forbidden to speak our mother tongue and we had to learn Greek, a foreign language. If any of our elders were caught speaking Macedonian by the gendarmes, they would be detained and put in jail.

We can not forget the plight and the suffering we endured in our enslaved country from our enemies. And so we promise that we will never forget the blood that was spilled by our brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, killed in the fierce fight against the Monarcho-Fascists.

We send you warm greetings and we ask that you please pass this on to our brothers and sisters everywhere through the newspaper 'Voice of the Aegeans'..."

Similar letters were also sent to the editorial board from many other "pioneers", including Gona Potsova and Lena Iotevska.

The care of the refugee children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia was always in the editorial board's spotlight. The newspaper "Voice of the Aegeans" carried a large number of stories about them. On several occasions it even published extensive reports about the homes in Bela Tsrkva where they lived.

**PASSENGERS IN A BLIND ALLEY – SUFFERERS FOREVER**

Most of the hundreds of "mothers" who left their homeland in Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia, in that great uncertainty in order to lead and care for the vast columns of refugee children wherever they were sent, remained with the children. Among them was "mother" Stoia Iankovska whose memories of her experience still live on and circulate and so do the footprints of the children she

led from the start of the long trek to the end. When she speaks about her ordeal she calls the road taken “the road soaked in children’s tears”; a trek stretching from Rudari, her native village, all the way to Bela Tsrkva. Every time she speaks about it she re-lives not only her personal ordeal but also those of the countless others who bear the same scars...

“In the dark of night, just before dawn on March 24, 1948, hundreds of mother emptied their nests; nests which will forever remain empty and cold. They cast off their chicks prematurely, untrained, unprepared… The children left their dear mothers... their homeland… their grandmotherly care… and became dirt and human bitterness, witnesses to a dirty conscience, travelers in a wasteland, suffering for generations…” That’s what Stoia Iankulovska from the village Rudari, one of these “mothers” who accompanied the children, said and continued: “The young children were gathered together in the Rudari village square, very early in the morning… then they were separated from their mothers... it was a day I regret witnessing… I wish I had never seen what I saw… children torn away from their mothers… mothers who could not say goodbye to their children… Oh! Is there anything wilder and more painful than that… than the maternal pain of her child being taken away from her...

Risto, Lena, Hrisula, Sandra, Goche, Kosta ... hundreds and hundreds of children, beautiful little children from Rudari, Zhelevo, German, Shtrkovo, L’k, D’mbeni, Medovo, Rabi… More than five hundred left their villages that early morning and took to the road… a road without a destination...

The reason given for evacuating over 500 children (in the first group) from several villages in Prespa was to remove them from daily shelling of the schools and other facilities in the area. Towards the end of April (February?) or perhaps the first days of March 1948, I can’t remember exactly when, the largest school and biggest building in the village German was leveled to the ground. Immediately after that several meetings were held during which the Secretariat of the Youth organization, as mandated by the interim national councils and DAG, began preparations for the evacuation…” said “mother” Stoia Iankovska.

“When the lists of children ages 1 to 10 were compiled and when, with every passing moment, there was looming danger from the Monarcho-Fascists re-occupying the free territories in Prespa, we had to act very quickly. The evacuation day, the black day chosen, was March 24, 1948. The drama of separation began in the evening. In Rudari, my village, we gathered about 100 children and divided them into four groups of 25. I was responsible for one of those groups. My two youngest brothers Vasil and Goche were among the children. We loaded them on an oxcart and we left...

While leaving many mothers ran behind us giving us their last messages... ‘Sandra, remember your mother...’ one of them kept yelling. ‘Hrisula, my dear daughter, don’t cry… you will be coming back soon…’ a mother cried out. ‘Kosta, be careful, son...’ yelled another.

How can I describe Lena to you? She was a tiny little child, barely three years old. She was terrified and cried a lot. How can I describe Tashko, Risto, Sotir, Vangelia... I was heart-broken and I weep thinking about them. The other “mothers’ tried to give me courage saying: ‘Stoia, you should not be crying, you are a soldier, a partisan, you must be brave...’ But still, no matter how hard I tried, I could not hold back my tears. I took my separation from my father very hard. I was ill for a long time. Later I found out he was wounded at the front. He suffered for several years and died in Poland in 1952. My mother and sister, who remained in Rudari, also suffered greatly from his suffering and passing.

We arrived in German in the morning of March 25th and left for Bela Tsrkva after crossing the Yugoslav-Greek border. Before crossing the border we met up with other groups of children from German, Medovo, Rabi, Strkovo... with whom we hid all day from the airplanes. Here too we caught up with our guides Stoio Gelin, Sondra Popova and Lazo Angelovski. They brought us bread and cheese and a final goodbye from the children’s mothers.

In the evening when there were no black birds (airplanes) in the sky, which searched for us all day long unsuccessfully, we left for the border on the path to freedom! We arrived on a large plain where we

took a long rest. We gathered the children together. Many fell asleep. We covered them with whatever we had; rags, leaves, branches... Then some of the adults leading the groups, including myself, went to look for the guards who were going to escort us over the border...

Our hearts were pounding. We were anxious and afraid of running into the wrong guards… Minutes seemed like hours… Then finally we ran into them. They wore uniforms with the five pointed red star symbol, which reminded me of fresh blood… But it was good to see them and we were happy had we run into them instead of the wrong guards. Then in a moment of tense anticipation and in complete silence one of them yelled out, 'Hands in the air!' in a stern voice.

We were surprised and startled… but when we saw the olive blue uniforms we were relieved… but disappointed. When we explained to the guards that we were here leading a large group of children who needed to cross the border into Yugoslavia, one of then said: 'We have no orders to allow such a crossing.' The situation soon became even more painful for us. We were completely confused and didn't know how to react, what to do or what to say, especially in the name of those five hundred little souls and martyrs… Should we cry… pray… yell…?" asked Stoia Iankovska.

"The border guards, who minutes ago we had seen as our sole saviours, did not seem to be confused. They told us to go back to the children and explained to us what paths to take along the border that would lead us to the village Dolno Dupeni. They also told us to make sure no one saw us. Happy and full of courage we took their advice and returned to the children. On our way to freedom we first climbed over a hill, we then went through a grove and as we got closer to Dolno Dupeni we realized that we had crossed the border and were finally walking on free territory. We were finally rescued... Both we the adults and the childen were jumping with joy, kissing the ground, kissing the stones, the grass, the trees and everything around us...

Here we felt like we were at home, we were greeted by the entire village without exception, and among the people here we found some of our relatives. They cried as they greeted us all, one by one,

hugging and kissing us and the children. Each wanted to take as many children as they could to accommodate them in their homes; to warm them, feed them and give them a bed to sleep in. There were comrades from the National Liberation boards and from AFZH who organized our reception and accommodations.

The morning of March 26, 1948 was our first morning of freedom away from the ominous iron birds. That morning the column of over 500 children made its way to the nearby village Liuboino. Here too we were warmly welcomed by the people, among whom we found friends and relatives. Here too the National Liberation Board and the Antifascist Front for women provided us with a warm meal and accommodations in people's homes.

This was probably the first warm and hearty meal we had had in months. It was impossible at home to stand still… even for a moment, without that terrible sound of planes hovering above, looking for signs of life to destroy. We were always on the run… we had no time to light a fire, never mind cook a meal. Most of the children were rested by now and from time to time we heard their little voices calling each other by name or singing a partisan song. We lovingly taught them these songs in our schools. But there was still this uncertainty, which drowned our feelings, hovering over us like a dark cloud before a storm. Our momentary joy was being sapped deep inside our souls. We didn't know what was happening at home on the other side of the hill, over the border, if there were bombs still falling on the heads of our loved ones and if they were already dead... And yet, each in themselves secretly wished and believed that everything was going to be okay and everyone would be alive and healthy... and exactly at those moments we broke into tears. We acted very strange… a momentary joy followed by tears… we were an army of tiny sufferers…

Next we went to Bitola and from there to Prilep, to a village called Brailovo, where we remained for two days. Here new groups of children were established. I was given 54 children to look after. From here we were sent to Skopje. It was a long trip during which I had a lot of time to think about the uncertainty that lay before us. How will they treat us in Bela Tsrkva? This was one of my concerns. What kind of people were they? What kind of life and

conditions did they live in? This was my first time out of my home and I didn't know what to expect. I had a very difficult task before me and a huge responsibility; practically being a "mother" to 54 children ages 3 to 11.

It was a nice and warm day when we arrived in Skopje. The children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia were welcomed with a heartfelt welcome on the railway platform. The children were allowed to get off the train for a short break before they boarded again. During this time they were welcomed by the 'aunts' in white uniforms from the Red Cross and AFZH. They gave the children sweets which they had never had before.

What a joy that was! My little children did not know what they were given. The candy was wrapped in paper, something they had never seen before...!

We again were packed on the train and, after many long hours, went through Nish to Belgrade. We were again welcomed warmly at the Belgrade railway station. Here the children stayed close to me, hanging onto each other all around me.

The people from the Red Cross bathed my children, fed them and gave them new outfits. We spent the night resting and sleeping and the next morning we were loaded onto trucks. They welcomed us in Bela Tsrkva with wide open arms. It was April 3, 1948. I will remember that day as long as I live. From that day on Bela Tsrkva became our second home.

Bela Tsrkva was a tame town on the river Nera near the Yugoslav-Romanian border. The people too were tame and good and did everything for the children to make them feel welcome and at home. They aways smiled. Here life was genuine and flowed comfortably for them. It was a carefree life, free from fear and suffering.

We were settled in the house of health. There were 100 children from Zhelevo, looked after by Tena Bundeva. There were 50 children from Trnaa and 50 from Oshchima. The pavilions were very clean. I worked in the first pavilion with 46 children.

The work we did was difficult but we enjoyed looking after and teaching our children because we loved them and cared for them a lot.

A typical day in Bela Tsrkva began with waking the children with a kiss, fixing their beds, doing compulsory gymnastics and then breakfast. We took them to school and brought them back. We then gave them lunch and took them for a walk. They rested in the afternoon and had their dinner at 19:00 hours. After dinner we did free activities including reading books in the Macedonian language.

Teaching was difficult. We had no experience. We had no professional teachers. I taught fourth grade.

The situation had forced us, the teachers from Bela Tsrkva, to take teaching courses in Tulgesh, Romania.

In August 1948 my colleagues and I were sent to take a teaching course taught by Macedonians. It was easier for us when we came back to Bela Tsrkva because we now had some basic training. Then during the academic year 1948-49 we got our first professional teachers. They came from Skopje. Our first director was Kosta Markovski. His wife Marika was also a teacher.

But despite the excellent living conditions, despite the outpouring of care they received, the children kept asking for their mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters… sometimes tearfully pleading with us to take them to see their families.

We looked for their parents all the time, through embassies and consular offices and through the Red Cross. We constantly asked people from their villages when we met up with them… we sent letters back home… and often we received positive responses. After making contact we then helped the children correspond with their relatives; mother, father, sister, brother. The children enthusiastically practiced writing warm and loving letters. After that, whenever possible, we arranged for the children to meet with their relatives. These were moments of joy and tears…” said “mother” Stoia Iankovska.

The children in Bela Tsrkva attended school up to grade 8. After that they were sent to Skopje, Bitola, or Kavadartsi to further their education. They were taught by volunteer teachers who were not paid for their work. Everything was done voluntarily. About this "mother" Stoia said:

"In the ten years of my stay in Bela Tsrkva, from 1948 to August 1958, when the home was closed down, we developed a rich, elegant, highly cultural, artistic and sporting life. We had a ballet, musical, literary and string orchestra section. We went to Skopje in 1950 and put on two performances, one in the Officer's house and the other in the old theater. To this day I can not forget the spontaneous, long applause we received from the massive audience. The people applauded straight from their heart and soul.

I must admit, our children were good at what they were doing. They were good gymnasts and great football and handball players.

All separations were sad. This is how it was for us in August 1958, when the home in Bela Tsrkva was closed down. But for me those ten years were a dream. All those children who were at the home, I had them as my own. I constantly gave them motherly love and they returned the favour with so much more love and warmth. When the home was closed down I and some others moved to Kalugierstvo, 10 km from Bela Tsrkva. We stayed there for about 4 years. In 1962 I went to Skopje and stayed there," concluded "mother" Stoia Iankovska.

## TWO MACEDONIAN SETTLEMENTS – GAKOVO AND KRUSHEVLIE IN VOIVODINA

The forced exodus, ordeal and migration of Macedonian families from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia to the Autonomous Province Voivodina, is a special page in the history of the Macedonian people.

Initially, since 1945, Bulkes was inhabited by Greek refugees but later, in 1948, new refugee groups began to arrive. They were Macedonians from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia. And thus

began their settlement in the abandoned German-built houses in Gakovo and Krushevlie, in Sombor.

The first Macedonian settlement in Gakovo took place in late February and continued to the beginning of March 1948. The Macedonian refugees came from Kostur, Lerin and Voden Regions and some from Thrace. According our statistics 8,729 refugees in total had arrived, of whom 4,749 were adults and 3,980 were children under 14. Of that total around 6,000 refugees were settled in Gakovo and about 2,000 were settled in Krushevlie. Most of the refugees were women and children whose husbands and parents had been killed in the fighting or were imprisoned and taken to the Greek island prisons and concentration camps. There were also a number of children without parents, disabled people and some elderly. A separate house was opened for them in 1950. Twenty-five people were settled in this house. An orphanage was also opened for the orphans, which housed around 50 refugee children.

One more fact: there were 3,234 children under 14 in Gakovo who came with their parents and relatives, while there were 746 children under 14 in Krushevlie and over 100 children who had no parents with them.

The Yugoslav government granted 15 million dinars worth of aid, followed by the Government of the People's Republic of Macedonia which provided another 6 million dinars in support of obtaining accommodation and nutrition for the refugee children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia. This aid greatly assisted the administration in securing housing and other necessities for the children. This action was repeated by the Yugoslav Red Cross Central Committee which also awarded the refugees many items including food products.

It is important to mention at this point that, after the outbreak of the Informburo Resolution on June 28, 1948, many Greek settlers, who for several years lived in Bulkes, asked to be moved out of the settlement. Their request was granted. Among them were 20 Macedonians and about 10 Greeks who refused to leave Bulkes. They were moved to Gakovo.

Because the Macedonian migration to Gakovo and Krushevlie took place in the spring, these Macedonians were immediately organized and put to work in agriculture to cultivate the land, with one goal in mind to engage them as equals in economic life. They created a machine and tractor station and began to seed crops on the allocated farmland. They were also allowed to form their own people's government that was independent of the municipality. The first elected president of the Gakovo Municipality was Mino Delkovski. Included in his jurisdiction was the village Krushevlie.

The project was very successful and as a result two rural cooperatives were formed in 1949. The cooperative "Gotse Delchev" was formed in Gakovo and the cooperative "Lazo Trpovski" was formed Krushevlie. The Gakovo cooperative "Gotse Delchev" was managed by Mini Aianovski. Both cooperatives operated until the end of February 1950, at which time they were closed down. After that the Gakovo and Krushevlie residents established a farm called "Granichar".

Within these agricultural businesses they also operated a carpentry workshop, a blacksmith workshop and a footwear and seamstress workshop, which employed about 60 workers.

It is worth mentioning here that in mid-April 1949 the local Gakovo people's committee, whose president was V. Tanev, took a census. According to this census there were 195 children in Gakovo of whom 92 were male and 103 female, all under the age of 3. There were 217 children of whom 115 were male and 102 female, ages 3 to 7. There were 467 children of whom 255 were male and 212 female, ages 7 to 14. The census also revealed that there were 1,439 adults in a total population of 2,318 inhabitants living in Gakovo.

Because Krushevlie was under the Gakovo jurisdiction, the local people's committee here too took a census with the following results: There were 79 children under the age of 3 of whom 37 were male and 42 female. There were 90 children ages 3 to 7 of whom 50 were male and 40 female. There were 308 children ages 7 to 14 of whom 150 were male and 158 female. There were 399 adults in a total population of 876 inhabitants.

From the above numbers we can see that in 1949 there were 1,356 children and 1,838 adults, a total of 3,194 residents living in the two settlements.

In March 1948 there were 3,980 children and 4,749 adults, a total of 8,729 residents living in Gakovo and Krushevlie.

In mid-January 1949 the Red Cross took 216 children from the children's homes in Gakovo and Krushevlie and sent them to the children's homes in Rovini, Croatia.

It is worth mentioning at this point that immediately after the refugees arrived in Gakovo and Krushevlie, two units were dedicated to opening elementary and high schools in the interest of educating the refugee children. The children were taught in the Macedonian language. It was estimated that 1,300 students were enrolled in the primary schools. A dormitory was opened for those students from Krushevlie who attended high school in Gakovo. The teachers who taught in Gakovo and Krushevlie were qualified professionals sent there by the Ministry of Education from the People's Republic of Macedonia. Teaching was done in accordance with the teaching curricula of schools and students. The students were provided with proper textbooks and teaching aids, the same kind as those used in schools in the People's Republic of Macedonia. Milan Krstevski was appointed director of the schools in Gakovo.

A delegation consisting of representatives from the Aegean Macedonian main board in Skopje, representatives from the Macedonian government and from the Macedonian Red Cross main board arrived in Gakovo and Krushevlie towards the end of 1950. The delegation also visited the various refugee homes in the People's Republic of Serbia, including those in the Autonomous Province Voivodina, the People's Republic of Croatia and the People's Republic of Slovenia. The delegation was composed of Dinko Delevski, head of the refugee office from the Ministry of Social Protection, Atanas Kirovski from the Red Cross main board, Steria Vangelova, member of the Aegean Macedonian main board, and Spiro Mechkarov, city council secretary of the association of

refugees from Aegean Macedonia in Skopje. While touring Gakovo and Krushevlie they also visited the schools and kindergartens.

Among other things, members of this delegation, in a report dated January 25, 1951, noted the following: “The kindergartens were clean and well arranged and the children were well cared for. The Gakovo kindergarten accommodated anywhere from 40 to 70 children on a daily basis and so did the kindergarten in Krushevlie. About 570 students attended classes in the school. In conversations with the teacher we found out that the children were good students…”

A cultural centre with a cinema was opened in Gakovo for the Macedonian population, which initiated the formation of a cultural and educational society. It had three sections: folklore, drama and public education. The folklore section came first at the festival in Sombor and was named best in the region. The drama section came second in the district drama festival competition. The Macedonian people in Gakovo and Krushevlie also formed working brigades. In 1948 the first brigade participated in the construction of the Shamats – Sarajevo railway section. The second brigade participated in the 1949 highway construction “Brotherhood and Unity” extending from Belgrade to Zagreb. In 1949 the third brigade participated in the construction of New Belgrade.

The Macedonian people in Gakovo and Krushevlie also formed a special general purpose brigade which in the fall of 1949, under the leadership of Giorgi Cholakov, took part in protecting the properties in Bulkes after the Greek settlers left.

The Macedonian refugees residing in Gakovo and Krushevlie came from the following places in Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia:

Aslanovo, Aposkep, Banitsa, Bahovo, Bobishte, Bosilevo, Borovotsa, Besfina, Buf, Voshtareni, Vrbeni, German, Dobrolishta, Embore, Krushoradi, Lukovets, Mokreni, Nanitse, Neokaz, Papadia, Pozharsko, Prokotia, Rantsi, Rabi, Radevo, Sakulevo, Studen, Setina, Tushin, Tsakoni and others.

Included among many others, the following people lived in Gakovo and Krushevlie:

Iarusa T. Abadzieva, Tronda Golcheva, Kosta Avkov, Marika Gorchilova, Lefteria I. Avramova, Tina Gianina, Pinelopi G. Anastasova, Giorgi Ginev, Lazar Angelevski, Naidenka Dafova, Ristana Andrievska, Emilia P. Dafova, Sofia Argirova, Vasilka Delova, Lena Arnautovata, Mino Delkovski, Tomania Asprova, Risa M. Delkovska, Tronda Babinkostova, Petrusa H. Dechkova, Giorgie Belimovski,Spiro Dibranov, Olympia Betsova, Kuzman Dimov, Tina Bogdanova, Elena A. Dimitrova, Dimitra B. Bogleva, Naum Dichovski, Stoia Bogleva, Kiro Donev, Tosho Bozhanov, Giorgi Donev, Fania N. Bozhinova, Velika Doichinova, Blaguna Boiadzieva, Done Dudev, Taksho Boichevski, Petre Duketovski, Dimka D. Borisova, Dimitra Ivanova, Fana Bosheva, Maria Itskova, Tena K. Botsova, Kole Giurkov, Dine Botev, Elena Eftova, Done Branov, Eleftheria K. Iadrova, Spasa D. Branova, Pashalina S. Iankova, Kata Buleva, Dimitra Ianevska, Sofia Vanchova, Slavka Iankova, Sofia Voseva, Hristo Iankulov, Kosta Vasilevski, Dine Ianchevski, Stoianka Vasileva, Risa Ianchova, Tasho Galov, Marika Iancheva, Elefteria Gakova, Petar Iovanovski, Stiliana Gatseva, Vasil Iovanov, Giorgie Genchev, Tronda Kaicheva, Fania Kaichevska, Anastasia Menchova, Gligor Kamburov, Ivan Menchov, Traianka Kalaianova, Trond Melianova, Sofia Kalkova, Paskal Mesaiakov, Sofia Kapetanova, Maria S. Miga, Maria Karanova, Kata Milankova, Vangel Karaiashovski, Maria Miova, Tina Karaiovanova, Tasa Mangova, Petkana Karaiaskova, Maria Mitreva, Pando Karanfilov, Olga Mishevska, Tronda Kazanova, Sofia Misheva, Sava Kachakova, Vasilka Mishovska, Nikola Kachandonov, Iovan Mitskov, Iovanka Kovacheva, Iordana Naseva, Ristosia Koleva, Sofia Nikovska, Sofia Koleva, Olga Nichova, Velika Konstevcheva, Dimitar Nolev, Vana Kocheva, Liuba Olieva, Dimitar Karnishevliev, Mitra Olieva, Dimitra Krsteva, Andromahi Pavlova, Done Kudalov, Stojan Paikov, Maria Kuzmanova, Tsvetko Paikov, Grena Kukuvikova, Danka Petkova, Lena Kurteva, Elena Petrova, Dosta Kurti, Giva Petrova, Ristana Lazarova, Traiko Petlicharov, Kitsa Lamova, Petre Petsev, Stoianka Lamova, Anastasia Petsova, Maria Lamova, Menka Petkasinova, Pena Landova, Fana Pleskova, Petkana Lakova, Tsana Pinzova, Ioshe Marchevski, Iana Padarovska, Florina Madzheva, Maria Popova,

Tsveta Madzheva, Lena Popova, Elefteria Madzheva, Pashalina Popcheva, Dosta Madzheva, Fania Popova, Tina Popstefanova, Argira Stoicheva, Dita Poptasheva, Maria Stoicheva, Petre Poshinov, Rina Stoianova, Vane Ranelov, Fotia Taneva, Mitra Raieva, Tina Tasheva, Alekso Risafov, Elena Tasheva, Risa Ruseva, Krsta Tasheva, Menka Ruseva, Mitra Tanurova, Fana Ruseva, Ilo Tolevski, Todor Rusev, Sotir Tolevski, Katerina Sasova, Sondra Torkova, Kitse Staievski, Lena Totseva, Kosta Stanishev, Eftimia Traikova, Stavrula Stefova, Kata F. Trgovcheva, Dimka Steriova, Filip Trgovchev, Dosta Trpenova, Maria Tsotseva, Gena Trpenova, Sofia Chapkanova, Sondra Trpova, Risto Cholakov, Lazo Uzunov, Fana Chakova, Maria A. Farmakova, Atanas Chopov, Rada Filina, Krsta Dzhingova, Dafina Filkova, Krste Dzhogov, Urania Hadzieva, Vasilia Dzhogov, Vasil Tsakonchev, Giorgi Dzhuriki, Eftimia Tsakoncheva, Giorgi Shmarganov, Tsana Tsapova, Elena Shulevska, Iula Tsvetkova and Danka Shuleva.

But during the following years many refugees who were settled in Gakovo and Kurshevlie began to leave. By end of 1954 everyone had left Krushevlie and only 15 families remained in Gakovo. Almost everyone went to the People's Republic of Macedonia and settled in Skopje, Veles, Tetovo and other cities.

## HARD WORK LED TO A DECENT LIFE

It would be of interest to point out that, during those years, the newspaper "Voice of the Aegeans" published a report outlining how the people lived and what they did in Gakovo, Voivodina. Among other things, this is what the report said:

"On October 13, at 4 o'clock we, together with a group from our cultural and artistic association, arrived in Gakovo. Tushi Kordaloz, the union official in the village, was informed of our arrival and greeted us at the station. We were placed in various houses designated for travelers.

The sun had just risen when I went out to explore the village. It was not exactly a village; it looked more like a modern town. Two streets ran north to south and four streets east to west, cutting Gakovo in half. Both sides of the streets were lined with properly spaced

houses. Both sides of the streets were decorated with trees. All the houses were one-storey tall with a modern bedroom and a dining room, kitchen, lounge and cellar, in which were stored wine, pickled vegetables, etc. The wide courtyards were paved and lined with barns and stalls for horses and cows, chicken coops, swine stalls and other compartments. Most of the house walls were built with stone about half way up. Most of the yards were also laid with stone and so were some sidewalks. The houses tell a story of their former wealthy Austrian colonists who lived in Voivodina during the Austro-Hungarian occupation.

Among other things, the following was also recorded in the report about the living conditions of the Macedonians in Gakovo:

"Around 8,000 refugees from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia were settled here in 1948. The first year was difficult for them, getting used to the climate, organizing schools, opening bakeries, shops, etc. But in 1949 they received help from the agricultural labour union in Gakovo, one of the first in Bachka, whose cooperative administration helped them open a kindergarten. This kindergarten is operating to this day. The manager in charge is Penta Tanuroza. Penta comes from the Tanurovtsi revolutionary family from the village Baovo.

There is also a nursing home still operating here. Most of the elders living here had participated in the Ilinden Uprising. Here I met old Todor Nastev from the village Neokazi, Lerin Region who was very proud of what he did. He said he fought in the Ilinden Uprising alongside Leko Zorle. He told me about the great battle in Ekshitsa, in Kaimakchalan. They fought bravely and managed to slay 40 Turks but lost 20 rebels from his cheta (squad). I also shook the hand of Ilia Bozhinov from the village Armensko. He is 73 years old but says he refuses to give up. As a rebel he fought along side Giorgi Hristov from Bitola Region. Ilia also told me a story about his participation in the Ilinden Uprising.

'In Psoderi,' he said, 'our rebel band fought against 2,000 Turks, a battle that lasted all day long. By the end of the day about 100 Turks and 6 of our rebels were killed. The battle took place at Lizargiorgova glava in Bigla. Mitre Vlaot, a fearsome voivoda

(rebel leader), was wounded during this battle. In 1911-1912, after he returned from America, Vlaot and Krsto Liondov formed a small guerrilla band in Lerin Region and fought against the Turks.' Here I also met a sympathetic old man named Petar Stoikov from the village Pozharsko, Meglen Region.

Here they also formed a production company called 'Krste Misirkov' which was joined by teachers, workers and employees. The company first appeared before an audience with the play 'Terror in Aegean Macedonia'. The play was performed in Gakovo, Krushevlie and in the villages Rizhitsa, Stapishniki and Rastiva. The company also created and performed plays like 'Last Night' and others, but its greatest success was achieved with the drama 'Migrant Workers'. The 'Misirkov' drama company competed in various regional and district competitions and folk ensembles in the Autonomous Province Voivodina.

After that each family was assigned a plot of land where vegetables and other crops could be planted. There are families in Gakovo today who produce about 1000-1500 kg of corn in their plots. In the summer the administration also gave each family a number of pigs and an appropriate amount of corn with which to feed them. Each house was also given 20-50 chickens, ducks, and geese. They received wood on a regular basis.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## THE CHILDREN'S HOMES AND SHELTERS IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

- Malinska – Krk
- Crikvenitsa
- Osiek
- Samobor
- Zagreb
- Steniavats
- Rovini

### FOUR CHILDREN'S HOMES

On January 12, 1949 the island Krk opened a children's home in the Malinska settlement in order to house the refugee children arriving from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia. When it was ready it accommodated 114 refugee children who, up to now, had been living in hotels in Tsrikvenitsa due to lack of space in the local children's home. The refugee children who were here had come from Kostur, Lerin, Kukush and Voden Regions. Manager of this house was Ivan Pregorets and head teacher was Atanas Kirovski.

Refugee children were also sent to other children's homes in other cities in the spring of 1949, including to Novi Sad, Autonomous Province Voidodina, to learn various skills. Later children were sent to children's homes in Osiek and Zagreb in Croatia and to Krani in Slovenia, as the homes became available. The children from Malinska were sent to the children's homes in Tsrikvenitsa. The children's home in Tsrikvenitsa received 69 children and another 45 children were sent to a home in Gerovo. The home in Malinska closed down in June 1949.

A children's home was opened in Rovini and began to operate in January 1949. It housed 218 children ages 8 to 14. Originally these children were from the Lerin, Kostur, Voden and Drama Region villages. They were moved here from the children's homes in Gakovo and Krushevlie. Because of the long and difficult trip, 3

children became severely ill and were taken to Zagreb. They were Vangel Stoian Iovanovski, born in the village German in 1937, Katarina M. Karamichova, born in 1936, and Vangelia Zheova.

The children's home in Rovini was opened in mid-January 1949 and operated for only three months. After that the children were placed in a pioneer home acquired by the People's Republic of Croatia Red Cross Main Board. Manager of the Rovini house was Maria Pintar and head teacher was Dinko Kozinakov.

After three months of operation, at the end of April 1948, the children's home in Rovini closed down. Most of the 155 children who were housed there were sent to a children's home in Tsrikvenitsa, while 63 of them were sent to homes in the People's Republic of Slovenia.

## MEMORIES FROM THE MALINSKA HOUSE

Here is what head teacher Atanas Kirovski. from the village Ludovo, Kostur Region, had to say about the days he spent in the children's home in Malinska:

"At the end of 1948, after completing a course in Bulkes, Autonomous Province Voivodina, I qualified as people's teacher and was sent by the political-immigrant organization in Bulkes to the town Tsrikvenitsa in the People's Republic of Croatia.

There were about 500 children in the home in Tsrikvenitsa, aged 6-15. These children had fled Greece to escape the daily Monarcho-Fascist bombardment of their native villages. Their parents were in the ranks of DAG and, together with the Greek antifascists, fought against the anti-people Monarcho-Fascist government. The aim of the struggle was to liberate Greece from the Monarcho-Fascists and to create a democratic state in which the Macedonian people could enjoy the same rights as the Greek people.

In Tsrikvenitsa I met with the Macedonian teachers Dinko Kozinakov, Risto Poplazarov, Aleko Papasirov and Zhifko Mandzufov and with the Greek teachers Savas Kahrimanidis,

Aristidis Karidis, Ianis and some other teachers whose names I forgot.

Then in March 1949 we left Tsrikvenitsa with about 160 students and went to the city Malinska located on Krk Island in the Adriatic Sea, about 30 kilometres south of the city Rieka. We arrived at noon and stayed in a huge chateau. We were greeted by staff designated to work at the home, which was just then opened for us. Included among the staff were a Croatian Red Cross manager, a supplier, four cooks, a nurse and three housekeepers responsible for cleaning the home. Everyone was very kind to us. Looking at the children being alone, and after learning that their parents were still fighting to establish a free and democratic state, they showed us compassion and gave us their full support.

Before we left Tsrikvenitsa I was appointed manager and, together with the Croatian Red Cross manager, took care of the overall home functions. We grouped the children according to their age and knowledge and arranged them in 3 grades. The youngest ones were placed in second grade, the middle were placed in third grade and the older ones and those who were most advanced were placed in fourth grade. The chateau was big enough to house us all and to provide us with classrooms for holding classes.

Besides myself there were also two younger teachers, Zhifko Mandzufov from the village Kosinets, Kostur Region who taught literature, history and art in the Macedonian language, and Karidis Aristidis from the Kailari Region villages who taught history, mathematics, literature and physical education in the Greek language. I taught mathematics, geography and physics. Teaching started in the morning at 8am and lasted until 2 pm, every day except Sunday.

The food was of good quality. The meals started with breakfast, snack, lunch, afternoon snack and ended with dinner. They were served five times a day. Outside of the food, the Croatian Red Cross authorities took care of everything else: the health of the children, clothes, trips, organizing various events, cultural functions, etc.”

## TEACHING WAS DONE IN THE MACEDONIAN LANGUAGE

Here is what teacher Dinko Kozinakov had to say about the days he spent in the children's home in Robini:

"In the summer of 1948 I was summoned by Secretary Mihalis Soustas from the branch office of the Provisional Democratic Government and by Pandos Tsangas, born in Kozheni Region, who informed me that I was appointed teacher of the Macedonian children at Sveta Katerina in Rovini, Croatia. Just here, in this house, on the western coast of Istria, I found about a hundred Macedonian children from the Voivodina villages Gakovo and Krushevlie sent here through the Red Cross. These were children from different parts of Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia whose parents were fighting in the ranks of DAG. There were other, smaller homes near Rovini with children from Greece, such as the so-called Osiek home where older children were taught trades. Similarly there were children in Krani where the younger children were placed in the village Dutovlie, Slovenia, which I visited and registered their problems and developments... There was only a single but lavish home on the small coastal island Sveta Katerina. It was built by a certain Russian count on top of a barren rock. But later he brought soil by ship and built up the land on which he then planted a pine forest and created a great park around the residence. Here too we had refugee children from Aegean Macedonian housed who enjoyed all the amenities, thanks to the care provided by the People's Republic of Croatia Ministry of Education and the Red Cross. With regards to teaching and the school system, we collaborated with our Croatian colleagues who were appointed to be here and, of course, with the remaining technical service personnel, mainly with the Italian national minority who were living there..."

Here is what else teacher Dinko Kozinakov had to say about the days he spent in the children's home Sveta Katerina in Robini:

"The children, all Macedonian, were divided by grades according to their previous level of education and age. Teaching was to be carried out in the Macedonian language. For this purpose, right from the start, I supplied myself with teaching aids purchased in Skopje, such

as the ones I used in my educational work in Bulkes, Voivodina. Bulkes was the place where cadres were groomed and where the newspaper 'Edinstvo' (Unity) was published. This was the first bi-weekly newspaper published in the Macedonian language. It was NOF's organ in which I wrote an article here and there, which then were published in the newspaper 'Foni tou Bulkes' (Voice of Bulkes) in the Greek language, as well as other printed matter. There was also a local radio broadcast which broadcast news and songs in the Macedonian language. This was the place where, for the first time, we heard the voices of Macedonian singers over the speakers, singing Macedonian songs. Singers such as Vania Lazarova, Vaska Ilieva, Nikola Badev, Alexander Sarievski, Kiril Manchevski and other wonderful singers singing and playing Macedonian folk songs were broadcast over the air waves.

But teaching was not an easy task, I knew that and that's why when I was called to do the job I clearly stressed to the authorities that I was not trained to do such work and that my knowledge was insufficient. I had some experience in teaching when I attempted to teach in my native village Pochep in late 1944 where, after the occupation, we were expected to develop teaching programs from nothing. We were expected to teach the Macedonian children in their Macedonian mother tongue, not taught for generations, without any teaching aids and without any assistance. The only scarce textbooks available to us were in Greek. We had almost the same problem here in the school in the Sveta Katerina home in Rovini. The approach taken was almost the same: 'Our skill was good enough for us to start the program, which would later be improved as we gained knowledge…' And, as one can see, we launched the educational process. However, to overcome certain problems and to fine tune the process, we selected five or six assistants from the older children to help us out with the tutoring. The selected assistants were Risto Poplazarov, Traiche Milianovski, Iani Kalimanov, Vangel Popovski, Kiro Shekrov and Evgenia Mushmanovska. In fact, they were like selected leaders for the others...

While we were attempting to do this, the Croatian Ministry of education and the Red Cross ordered new textbooks and teaching aids for us. In addition to this we organized various trips and

excursions in the city and surrounding Rovini areas so that the children would not feel isolated from the rest of the world. For example, we visited the Institute of Biology, the tobacco processing plant, the 'Miria' fish canning factory and the modern hospital and sanatorium for treating tuberculosis where two of our children as well as some DAG fighters were being treated. After that we visited the Osiek boarding school, where a group of girls belonging to the refugees from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia were studying in the textile factory in Dutovlie and Stara Gora near the Slovenian border. We also went by boat to Tsrven Otok where President Tito and others took short vacations. We also participated in cultural and artistic events organized in the city. And, on occasion, we arranged trips for our visiting guests who came to visit us.

Unfortunately these successes did not last long. The domestic situation and educational process soon began to experience difficulties, something which caused discomfort in everyone. All this was mainly due to the general conditions arising from the growing dissent and mutual misunderstandings between the Yugoslav and Greek communist party leaderships; a result of the growing Informburo dispute between Russia and Yugoslavia. This was also a critical time in the war at home when, at the end of 1948, a counter-offensive was in effect and hostilities between opposing sides were growing, particularly in Vicho and Gramos where battles were growing larger and bloodier. There was also an increase in foreign intervention in Greece which gave the Monarcho-Fascists open military, political and economic support. The Anglo-Americans and the Greek government continued to tighten the narrow circle of space in which the liberation army operated and rapidly exhausted its reserves. This invasion and increasing pressure and coercion from the Greek government and from the foreign factors also created a rising wave of refugees. Among them were children, sick, elderly men and women; all fleeing to Eastern European countries. On the way they were confronted by the Greek government army, the Greek government aviation and artillery, burning and razing everything in their way...

These were daily dramas taking place in our homeland which we monitored remotely from this island here in the Adriatic through the radio station 'Free Greece' and through the press. We all gathered

together and listened to the news. We then all cheered with the familiar slogan 'Stalin-Tito-Dimitrov-Zahariadis-Hoxha', hoping that the international community would not allow the situation to worsen and would not allow the resistance to be broken..."

Here is more of what teacher Dinko Kozinakov had to say:

"So one day, under all these circumstances, we were suddenly told that the Croatian authorities had decided to move us out of Sveta Katerina Island and relocate us in the coastal town Tsrikvenitsa, southeast of Rieka, to be together with another group of refugee children. This was a home that housed both Greek and Macedonian children. We were moved to Tsrikvenitsa in early May 1949 and were warmly accepted by about 200 children, their teachers and the staff who worked there. The home was composed of several linked villas which had courtyards, pavilions, playgrounds and other secondary facilities.

To make room for us newcomers the authorities freed space by moving about 100 children to a home in Malinska, located on the island of Krk near Rieka. My friend and co-fighter Atanas Kirovski from the village Ludovo, Kostur Region, was put in charge of that home. Also located in Tsrikvenitsa was the head office responsible for the homes which was run by Savas Kahrimanidis, a teacher by vocation. He was from the village Note, Meglen Region and was here with his wife and two daughters. After I was placed in my new post I was treated equally with my Greek counterparts by the home administration. My assistants, about whom I mentioned earlier and with whom I worked with in Sveta Katerina, also came with me and continued to do the same work here. The Croatian teachers and all the staff I worked with were left in Rovini. Here we had similar staff who were already engaged in their duties and were happy to be here.

At the same time a group of about a dozen older children, who looked and behaved more like grownups, were sent to study and practice in a profession of their choice. The group was sent to Zagreb, placed in a boarding school and given jobs to work in the metalwork plants where the young people became apprentices in the locksmith, metalwork, electrical and other trades. We visited them

once or twice to make sure they were well cared for outside of their former home.

In the meantime our status and role began to change and deteriorate. With DAG's withdrawal from the war zones many residents took their possessions, which also included livestock, and fled, mainly towards the Albania border, because the Yugoslav corridor was unavailable to them. As mentioned earlier, this was due to the dispute between the Yugoslav and Greek communist Parties as a result of the Informburo problem. The Macedonian people fleeing were caught in the wave of attacks without protection and suffered immensely. That was also the time when the CPG top leadership coined the famous slogan 'hit from behind'. That was the time when CPG General Secretary Nikos Zahariadis said that if he had known ahead of time that Tito would do this, he would not have chosen this path for the National Liberation Movement in Greece. He would have chosen a different path. But others interpret Zahariadis's statements as an excuse for DAG's defeat. At that time, as a result of these disputes, our links with the central East European committee leadership for the protection and assistance of the children expelled from Greece, located in Budapest, was cut off. The only connection we had with this committee was through Nikolaos Georgiadis, an experienced teacher from Kukush Region. Then after our Greek colleagues, Savas Kahrimanidis with his family (wife and two daughters), Ianis Eritropoulos from the village Trstenik, Meglen Region, Partena Avgitidou and Partenopi Kesidou, left Yugoslavia for Czechoslovakia our staff was weakened. It was completely disabled in terms of providing education in the Greek language for the large number of Greek children in the home. At the same time, in late summer 1949, we were shocked and mourning the death of a well-respected prominent revolutionary and fighter for the rights of all enslaved peoples, Georgi Dimitrov, then President of the Bulgarian government. There was also the growing anxiety in the children who were thinking aloud about their parents and relatives and the new and more tragic situation they had found themselves in back home. The children were anxiously asking questions and demanding answers about their loved ones, answers which we did not have...

In early October 1949, I sent my last report by mail from Tsrikvenitsa to the central East European committee leadership for the protection and assistance of the children expelled from Greece in Budapest, informing them of the children's progress, health and general situation in this home. Unfortunately I received no answer and wondered if the report ever made it to its destination. At that time the home was also visited by a delegation of high ranking officials from Zagreb, which included the Ministers of Education and Social Welfare and the Red Cross president. At that time Husnia Chengich, the official responsible for monitoring the home, also informed us that the entire child care program, responsibility and services would fall under 'newly emerging opportunities'... After this, two Macedonian teachers arrived from Skopje. They were Pero and Risto Popovski. Unfortunately they did not fit into this environment because the children refused to accept them. A little later this home too was closed down. Then, after my expulsion to Czechoslovakia, my colleagues who remained in Tsrikvenitsa, which included Atanas Kirovski, Risto Poplazarov, Zhivko Mandzufov and Aristidis Karidis, moved away. Most moved to Macedonia to continue their education. Some went abroad to join their friends and relatives, etc." concluded Dinko Kozinakov.

## THE CHILDREN'S HOME IN TSRIKVENITSA

A home for the refugee children from Aegean Macedonia was opened on November 13, 1948 in the town Tsrikvenitsa, located on the coast of the Adriatic Sea in the People's Republic of Croatia. The home consisted of several buildings with adequate accommodations and inventory made available by the Ministry of Social Welfare and by the Croatian Red Cross Main Board.

The children's home in Tsrikvenitsa began to operate in mid-November 1948, with the admission of 519 refugee children, both boys and girls. The actual home housed 296 children while 223 children were placed in hotels in Tsrikvenitsa. There were 16 women "mothers" who cared for the children as well as several young ladies who came to Tsrikvenitsa with them from their villages. The accommodations and care of the children in this home were well-organized. In addition to receiving regular health care and quality food, the children were engaged in various physical fitness

activities and were regularly trained. This was well reflected by the numerous statements made by members of delegations who visited this home and wrote their comments in the home's journal.

At the end of November 1948 115 more children were placed in Tsrikvenitsa. These children were transferred here by the Red Cross from the children's homes in the People's Republic of Slovenia. The children were accompanied by 16 women who had come with them from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia. Then in January 1949 114 more children were taken to Tsrikvenitsa and placed in the children's home in Malinska. After that, in March 1949, 104 older children were sent to study a craft in Osiek, Krani, Novi Sad and Zagreb. Then 63 children were moved from Tsrikvenitsa to children's homes in the People's Republic of Slovenia.

The number of children housed in the Tsrikvenitsa home in May 1949 was 328. The number of children housed in homes for apprentices in the People's Republic of Slovenia, the People's Republic of Croatia, the People's Republic of Serbia and the Autonomous Province Voivodina was 254, of which 150 were male and 104 female.

In mid-June 1949, at the request of the Croatian Red Cross Main Board, a children's home was opened in Gerovo which housed 49 children. These children came from the Malinska home after it was closed. Similarly from a total of 80 children from the Tsrikvenitsa home, 35 children went to Gerovo, 59 were Macedonian and 21 Greek.

After the homes in Rovini and Malinska on Krk Island were closed, the only refugee homes for the refugee children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia, operating in People's Republic of Croatia, were the two children's homes, one in Tsrikvenitsa and the other in Gerovo. The children's home in Tsrikvenitsa accommodated 496 children while the home in Gerovo looked after 80 refugee children. In 1949 the total number of refugee children from Aegean Macedonia living in the People's Republic of Croatia was 576.

At the end of September 1949, 21 children from the children's home in Gerovo were transferred to children's homes in Skopje, while

another 59 were moved and placed in the children's home in Tsrikvenitsa. Because the home in Rovini had no children at the end of September 1949, it was closed down.

## SATISFACTION FROM VICTORY

In early September 1949, at the beginning of the new academic year, the 8 existing Greek teachers were replaced with new ones. As for the Macedonian students, qualified professional teachers were sent from the People's Republic of Macedonia to teach them in the Macedonian literary language.

The following teachers taught at the children's home in Tsrikvenitsa:

Petar Markovski, Risto Popovski, Veselinka Ivanovska, Viktoria Trpkova, Dushanka Chuguntsalieva, Nada Levkova, Vera Mamkova and Stoian Popovski.

Risto Popovski was appointed school trustee.

The Macedonian refugee children were taught in the Macedonian language in accordance with the curriculum applied in the People's Republic of Macedonia. The students were also supplied with relevant educational materials that included textbooks, school supplies and other materials in the Macedonian language.

In mid-September 1949 the children's home in Tsrikvenitsa was visited by Penko Zdravkovski, Government Secretary in the People's Republic of Macedonia, Risto Iankulovski, President of the Aegean Committee, and Aegean Committee members Vasilka Chosova, Filip Nikolovski, Vasilka Divkova and Tome Krstovski. During the same month the home was also visited by Inspector Blagoia Kondarko from the People's Republic of Macedonia's Ministry of Education.

Additionally the children's home in Tsrikvenitsa was visited by several delegations and responsible officials from the People's Republic of Croatia and the Yugoslav Red Cross.

In mid-September 1949 139 children from Tsrikvenitsa and 21 children from Gerovo were moved to Skopje. After the home in Gerovo closed down the remaining 59 children were moved to Tsrikvenitsa.

In late October 1949 another 63 children were sent to Skopje to be educated in the economic sector.

So at the end of 1949 the Red Cross run Tsrikvenitsa children's home housed 219 refugee children.

In late May 1950 the children's home in Dutovlie, People's Republic of Slovenia, sent 122 school age children to the children's home in Tsrikvenitsa and another 51 children to the Red Cross homes in Bela Tsrkva, in order for the children to continue their education in the "Kolishevski" Macedonian high school.

In 1951 there were 213 school age children in the children's home in Tsrikvenitsa who attended classes in the Macedonian elementary school.

In early April 1952 the children's home in Tsrikvenitsa was closed down. Soon afterwards other Red Cross children's homes in the People's Republic of Slovenia and the People's Republic of Croatia were also closed down. The reason for this was a shortage of children due to the massive repatriation of these children with their parents. After the numbers decreased considerably, those children who remained were moved to the children's home in the Bela Tsrkva.

In mid-March 1949 50 children were transferred from the children's home in Tsrikvenitsa to Zagreb in order for them to learn a trade. Of the 50, 35 were Macedonian and 15 Greek. In mid-September 1949 15 young people were sent from Zagreb to Skopje and 4 were sent from Tsrikvenitsa to Zagreb to learn a trade.

## LIFE AT THE TSRIKVENITSA HOME

At this point we would like to present the reader with an article published in the newspaper "Voice of the Aegeans", which talks

about life and education of the refugee children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia housed in Tsrikvenitsa. Here is what was written in the article:

“The town Tsrikvenitsa is located on the Croatian coast near the beautiful Adriatic Sea. It is a tourist town and in it is located a nice and tidy home belonging to the Yugoslav Red Cross. This home houses 292 refugee children from Aegean Macedonia. The Yugoslav Red Cross is responsible for their care and has done everything in its power to make this place beautiful and comfortable for these children; victims of war.

The buildings where the children live are located along the sea coast and are surrounded by nice large park. The home has its own beach where the children spend much of the day sunning and swimming.

Hygiene in the home and in the outdoors is exemplary. The children are well looked after and kept clean and tidy.

The home management team makes sure everything is provided for their needs and for a comfortable life. That includes good nutrition and new clothing.

Much attention is paid to educating the children. The teachers are mainly responsible for that but so are the staff and management. The children are encouraged to learn everything possible about life including the necessary cultural habits of today’s society and so they are educated in the spirit of today.

There is the elementary school ‘Gotse Delchev’ within the confines of the home, in which children learn their native Macedonian language. The children are provided with all the necessary conditions and resources for normal learning. This includes textbooks, school materials and teaching aids. The school has its own library with about 450 books which are used regularly.

Last year many children strived to learn and achieved very good results. They made a pledge to Marshal Tito that they would finish the school year with very good results and indeed they were successful in doing so, with an average of 3.83 (out of 5). Following

its success, this school was rated number one in Tsrikvenitsa Region. It was rated 'best school in the region' by the Trustee Committee for Education.

The pioneer organization is working actively. The pioneer unit has twice received praise from the Tsrikvenitsa local committee of the National Youth Organization. There is also a youth organization, a wing of the Red Cross, which has been very active and has received a diploma from the People's Republic of Croatia's Main Board.

Much attention is given to cultural education which has shown satisfactory results. The home has its own pioneering choir, folklore and singing and recital groups. The cultural education activities are run by the teachers and by the administration which helps this wing to function and stay active. The pioneer choir and folklore groups in Tsrikvenitsa received much praise, not only for their general activities but also for their participation in the district festival in Rieka, in May of this year, where they won first prize. This year the pioneers performed in Rieka, Tsrikvenitsa and surrounding regions, and during the summer season put on performances for the working people vacationing in the 'Terania' resort in Tsrikvenitsa.

There are various household groups in the home. These groups work in the kitchens, do seamstress work, knit, do laundry, work in the gardens, etc. Through these groups the older children are taught how to do basic household work. They also help out with some of the work in the dorms as well as keep the yards and parks clean and tidy.

Great attention is paid to physical education. The children participate in physical activities such as soccer, volleyball, tennis… Sports that are useful for physical development.

All the people who work in the home are dedicated to improve the children's lives. From all of this it is apparent that the children are well looked after and are living in good conditions for versatile development so that one day they will become true socialists."

To better reflect on the lives of the refugee children in the children's homes we will include another news article published in the

newspaper “Voice of the Aegeans”. This is the most authentic way of capturing a picture of the time. The event is a holiday in Ohrid and the title of the article is “The meeting...” Here is what the article recorded:

“The time was 19:30 hours. There was great movement at the train station in Skopje. Groups of boys and girls, men and women anxiously walked around and talked. Everywhere I heard similar questions being asked. Will they come tonight? I told them I have a letter. They will pass through Skopje on August 8, said one girl. A group of about 30 boys and girls entered the station at that very moment. They were all well sun tanned. We asked them where they lived. One of them said that they lived at the ‘11 Oktomvri’ home and that yesterday they returned from Galichnik where they spent a month of their summer vacation. They came here to meet with other compatriots and to exchange thoughts and experiences. They wanted to learn more about the Aegean children living in Osiek and Slovenia. Giorgi Nakovski from the village Krchishta told us that when he came to Yugoslavia with his friend Ilio Karadza and the other Aegean refugee children fleeing the Monarcho-Fascists who were burning their villages with artillery fire and bombs dropped from aircraft, without giving any regard to innocent people and children, he first came here to the People’s Republic of Macedonia, to his free homeland. Not only were they saved, but within 18 months they were educated and managed to become semi-skilled craftsmen, exceeding all norms on a day to day basis. Our conversation ended the moment the train entered the station. The children waiting for the train moved towards the cars like an irrepressible wave in a storm. We could hear Macedonian revolutionary songs emanating loudly from the two train cars they boarded.

‘Welcome back. How was your vacation at Lake Ohrid?’ I asked.

‘Excellent. We will never forget the time we spent there. We are all grateful to the Macedonian Ministry of Social Welfare for giving us the opportunity,’ one of them said. Tsana Domovska from the village Krchishte informed us that there were 86 children from Aegean Macedonia residing in the home in Osiek. They were all in school and learning a trade. In mid-1948, she said, they left their

village because life became impossible. Many children were killed playing in the yard of their own homes when they were bombed. The Monarcho-Fascists were ruthless. The children had to flee, she said. They crossed the border and came to free Macedonia. Here the Yugoslav Red Cross did everything to make them forget their troubles and suffering from the war, she said. When they arrived in Osiek, she said, Zahariadis's treacherous clique put Greeks in charge of the home who then begun to gradually poison the children and make them hate everything Macedonian. They spoke against the interests of the Macedonian people as well as vilified the same Yugoslav people who were trying to help them, she said. They spoke against the CPY leadership and against Tito and refused to allow the children to learn their own Macedonian language. That's when the children began to demand the removal of the Greeks, she said. After that the children were looked after by Macedonians which completely changed their lives, she added.

Today, she said, the children are proud of their accomplishments and their contributions in accelerating the pace of constructing socialism in their free and glorious homeland.

The children delivered on Tito's request to learn, she said. The children dedicated themselves to learning tirelessly in the schools and in the factories in order to become worthy citizens and builders of their country so that the Party and Comrade Tito would be proud of them. In the factory 'Mara Trikotazha' where about 30 Aegeans work, the children's desire for Tito is expressed through songs. They begin work with a song about Tito, she said, and after that they follow the rhythm of the running machines...

**FURTHERING EDUCATION**

There were 39 apprentices in total studying trades in the 1949/50 academic year, 27 were studying in Samobor and 12 in Zagreb.

The trades they were apprenticing for in Zagreb and Samobor included mechanical works, tailoring and radio technology. Following are the names of these apprentices:

Giorgi Donevski from the village Bapchor, Nikola A. Afkov, Hristo K. Badzhov from the village Ludovo, Lazo R. Gemishov from Starichino, Vasil B. Digalov from V'mbel, Krsto N. Dimov from V'mbel, Mihail P. Donev from Kosinets, Lazo P. Giorgiev from Mokreni, Metodi R. Giurgiov from Dolno Kotori, Tanas M. Shaldarov from Sarakinovo,
Risto M. Zhuglovski from Dolno Kotori, Krste T. Zaparenkov from V'mbel, Nikiga Zikov from Prokopana, Mikio T. Zoliev from Ezerets, Vangel S. Jovanchev from Dolno Kotori, Tanas V. Kuluveov from Bapchor, Leko M. Koroshovski, Nase P. Kostov from Smrdesh, Naso K. Lazovski from Konomlati, Lazo V. Lafazanov from Krchishta, Vasil G. Miov from Srebreno, Mite S. Mishovski from of Srebreno, Giorgi P. Mishovski from Trsie, Risto K. Nanchov from Trsie, Done P. Naskov from Dolno Kotori, Timio V. Naskov from Ludovo, Filip P. Nikovski from Ludovo, Aleksandar P. Nikovski from German, Mite N. Oshenski from German, Vasil D. Pavkov from Zhupanishte, Naso L. Raliov from Smrdesh, Giorgia S. Sterio from Bapchor, Iani T. Steriov from Bapchor, Iraklie L. Trepenov from Kondoropi, Giorgi K. Uzunov from Dolno Kotori, Ziso V. Hadziev from V'mbel, Pando V. Chamovski from Blatsa, Vasil T. Shaldarov from Konomlati, and Tashko F. Schutev from Kondorobi.

Accompanying these students in 1950 were the teachers Liubomir Galevski, Strahil Traichov and Giorgi Mankovski.

Some of the students who were studying trades were visited by a delegation in the beginning of January 1951. The delegation was headed by Dinko Delevski, administration chief for the refugees from Aegean Macedonia in Skopje.

Similarly, a student delegation consisting of 10 young people from these trade schools was sent to attend the "October 11" celebration - the day the Macedonians in Skopje rose up. In the summer of 1950 these students were sent on vacation to Ohrid where they spent 22 days, courtesy the Yugoslav Red Cross.

In addition to the 27 refugee students who lived in the Samobor home, another 19 were added in 1950. These were refugee children

from Aegean Macedonia who were previously housed in the People's Republic of Croatia.

In 1950, after completing their studies in the various trades, all these students were sent to Skopje where they were employed.

## STUDY OF TRADES – A PRIORITY TASK

In early 1949 the Yugoslav Red Cross Central Committee asked that 250 children be admitted to study trades in the People's Republic of Croatia. These young people, of whom 104 were girls, were placed in a children's home in Tsrikvenitsa. They began to study their trade in the factory "Iodip Krash" and in other enterprises in the city Osiek. In Osiek boarding schools were organized in which the young apprentices learned about weaving, knitting, tailoring, hairdressing, floriculture and confectionary.

In September 1949 the Osiek home for apprentices was visited by a delegation from the People's Republic of Macedonia. The delegation consisted of Petar Zdravkovski, Secretary of the government of the People's Republic of Macedonia, Risto Iankulovski president of the Aegean Committee, and Aegean Committee members Vasilka Chosova, Filip Nikolovski, Vasilka Divkova and Tome Krstovski. In addition to visiting the Red Cross homes and the homes for apprentices in Osiek, where the refugee children from Aegean Macedonia were housed, the delegation also visited other homes. Similarly the young people in Osiek were visited by Blagoia Kondarko, an inspector from the Ministry of Education in the People's Republic of Macedonia.

In early September 1949 there were 116 children in Osiek, of whom 93 were Macedonians and 23 Greeks. Of these children, in the middle of September 1949, 18 were sent to schools in Skopje and 93 remained in Osiek. They were:

Mitra B. Argirova from the village Besfina, Marika S. Bironchanova from the village Mokreni, Tina I. Bironchanova from Mokreni, Steria H. Vasileva from Sveta Nedela, Vasilka V. Galanovska from Stena, Sofia K. Gueleva from Mokreni, Paresa P. Georgiova from Sveta Nedela, Mara V. Gushilova from Kosinets, Tonka L.

Damanovska from Chuka, Stoianka I. Dimitrova from Konomlati, Fata T. Dimitrovska from Snichane, Sultana I. Dimovska from Drobitishta, Vana T. Dimova from Statitsa, Sofa I. Diova from Zagorichani, Gena L. Donevska from D'mbeni, Leftera P. Donevska from Lobanitsa, Tsana L. Damovska from Krchishte, Vasilka M. Giakova from Rabi, Sevda R. Giakova from Rabi, Gina R. Zifirakova from Zagorichani, Dana K. Zunzurova from Smrdesh, Tana P. Itsova from Mokreni, Tsveta T. Ianchova from Trsie, Mara P. Ieftimova from Kosinets, Sofia M. Iovanovska from Oshchima, Leftera H. Kalchova from Zhuzhok, Vasilka V. Kalaianova from Stensko, Olga D. Kalaianova from Marchishte, Spase M. Karaliova from Bapchor, Dinka M. Kostadinova from Kumanichevo, Konstantina A. Kostova from Kosinets, Olga A. Kostova from Strkovo, Olga L. Kostovska from Stensko, Olga T. Klunova from Statitsa, Dita C. Kuburova from Kolomlati, Lena H. Kufeva from Armansko, Hrisula I. Lavdina from Besfina, Dina C. Lambrova from Statitsa, Tsena S. Lavovska from Ludovo, Neda H. Lafazanova from V'mbel, Lena S. Lafazanova from V'mbel, Leftera M. Lorova from V'mbel, Liatsa S. Maleganova from Trsie, Lena T. Mandrusheva from Rabi, Lefteria K. Marnova from Blatse, Sandra M. Mirchova from Nivitsi, Trprna S. Mladenkova from Zhupanishte, Spasa A. Mihailovska from Rudari, Todora M. Mihailovska from Rudari, Hrisa H. Neckovska from Marchishte, Gena D. Novachevo from Lok, Traianka L. Novacheva from Lok, Tsana N. Noleca from D'mbeni, Donka S. Nikolovska from Lok, Lena I. Palkova from V'mbel, Marika P. Petkovska from Medovo, Fana F. Petrevska from Chereshnitsa, Nata P. Petrovska from Popli, Kotsa K. Petkovska from Besfina, Gena H. Popovska from Shkadar, Tsana V. Popovska from Kosinets, Lena S. Raikova from Oshchima, Germania S. Ristova from Shtrkovo, Itza P. Sarieva from Kolnomlati, Letsa L. Sarova from Konomlati, Vesa P. Siova from Zagorichani, Sofia M. Stefanovska from Lok, Olga D. Stoicheva from Kumanichevo, Lena D. Tambova from Kosinets, Kristina D. Tambova from Kosinets, Sofia T. Tashovska from Bukovik, Petra S. Tashovska from Lok, Tulia H. Tashovska from Mokreni, Viktoria R. Todorovska from D'mbeni, Giurgia S. Fotevska from Rudari, Tina B. Tzalovska from D'mbeni, Stavrula N. Tsapanova from Kosinets, Leftera S. Shandovska from Lobanitsa, and Tina I. Shonkina from Mokreni.

The Osiek children were on vacation in Ohrid from mid-July to August 8, 1950.

The newspaper "Voice of Aegeans" published a letter written by Tula Tanevska and Mitra Atrovska, residents of the home in Osiek, which among other things said:

"…The home in Osiek houses 77 girls from Aegean Macedonia. Life is good. We are satisfied with the care we receive from the Yugoslav Red Cross and from the national government, which saved us from the hands of the Monarcho-Fascists and today are caring for us. At this home we are learning the Macedonian language. We are also learning a craft. We strive to become worthy daughters of our tormented people. We often participate in voluntary work projects and have recorded a sum of 38,500 dinars for the national loan..."

This is what the article said according to the letter written by the two girls, but according to official information we have from that time there were 75 girls learning a trade in Osiek at the end of 1950. Also there were 12 in Zagreb, 25 in Samobor and 134 in Skopje. These were refugee children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia who were learning a trade in Yugoslavia.

**LOOKING FOR PARENTS**

We should add that in Osiek, during the 1951/1952 academic year, there were 60 students studying trades, with 27 young ladies studying needlework, 19 studying to be tailors, 10 to be weavers, 2 to be confectioners and 1 to be a florist and a hairdresser.

In January 1951 the children in the Osiek home were visited by a delegation from the People's Republic of Macedonia, which consisted of Dinko Delevski, administration head from the ministry of social affairs and care for the refugees, Atanas Kirovski from the People's Republic of Macedonia's Red Cross Main Board, Steria Vangelova, member of the Aegean main board, and Spiro Mechkarov city council secretary of the Aegean Association in the city Skopje.

In May 1952 52 girls successfully completed the three year practical training trade course, after which the Croatian Red Cross Main Board sent them to be employed in Skopje.

In August 1950 there were 7 Greek girls learning a craft in Panchevo, People's Republic of Serbia and 26 Macedonian students learning a craft in Samobor, People's Republic of Croatia. They were placed in a separate dormitory dedicated to them along with a teacher. Similarly, there were 78 Macedonian students placed in a separate dormitory with two teachers in Osiek, Croatia. There were 12 apprentices studying economics in Zagreb, Croatia. They were housed in a dormitory and lived with other students who were studying trades in the economic sector.

At this point it is important to thank the various Red Cross organizations including the Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian and Macedonian Red Cross for their contribution to the care of the refugee children from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia, which included providing homes, boarding schools, education and other assistance, making their stay pleasant, making their lives comfortable and helping them to further their education.

At the same time the above-mentioned Red Cross organization made every effort to find the parents of the refugee children living in these homes in Yugoslavia so that the children could be repatriated with their families and continue to live their lives together. But this was a hard road to travel mainly due to strong resistance from the Greek government and from the Greek Red Cross which were demanding that the refugee children be returned to Greece. The Greeks wanted the hospitality offered by the Yugoslav Red Cross and by the Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian and Macedonian Red Cross to end. The Greeks applied unprecedented pressure to have the refugee children, at all costs, returned to Greece...

## FOREIGN YOUTHS VISIT THE CHILDREN IN TSRIKVENITSA

At the end of August and early September 1949, the Tsrikvenitsa home was visited by foreign youths who participated in the construction of the campus in Zagreb.

Eight youth teams visited the home, most of whom were French, but several young people from Vietnam were also included in the ranks of these brigades.

Among other things, the visitors told the Macedonian children about their own life and heroic people's struggles for freedom in Vietnam.

The children were especially attracted to an Indian student in France, who since 1946 had been many times in our country working in construction and by now had learned a few Macedonian folk songs and dances. He participated with the children singing folk songs and dancing.

The refugee children in Tsrikvenitsa were also visited by the Aegean Youth Brigade. Some of the youths in the brigade found their siblings and relatives and were happy to be reunited.

The children put on performances for each brigade showing off what and how much they had learned in these homes, especially about the Macedonian culture and language. In doing so the children demonstrated the kind of lives they were living and how well they were learning. This was another way of countering the propaganda waged against Yugoslavia by its enemies.

On the occasion of the "Week of the Red Cross" celebration, held in Tsrikvenitsa, the newspaper "Voice of the Aegeans" published a special report in which, among other things, it said that in the children's homes in Tsrikvenitsa, where refugee children from Aegean Macedonia were housed and educated, there existed a Red Cross youth wing organization in which all the children were members.

The main task of these young people, as per the house rules, was to take care of the general and personal hygiene of its members, to make sure all basic hygiene rules are learned in order to avoid various diseases and to correspond with other organizations.

Besides the above-mentioned duties, members of the Red Cross youth wing were obliged to participate in the "Week of the Red

Cross" celebration. For this celebration they organized and conducted 4 very successful performances.

The folk group performed on several occasions; one for the city students, one for the citizens and two for the people of the Novi and Seltse surrounding areas.

With that, the refugee children in the Tsrikvenitsa home expressed their gratitude to the Croatian Red Cross and to Yugoslavia for the enormous care they were given.

## STUDENTS FROM SAMOBOR ON VACATION IN OHRID

The newspaper "Voice of the Aegeans" made it its mission to monitor and report on the refugee children's lives and activities in Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, Voivodina and those in the homes in the People's Republic of Macedonia. So we can safely say that many articles were written about the refugee children. This was also the case with regards to the refugee children from Aegean Macedonia housed in the children's home in Samobor, People's Republic of Croatia, who were sent on Vacation to Ohrid. By doing so the newspaper has given us a picture of their conditions for development. Here is what the article said:

"All students from the Samobor home, Aegean Macedonians and Croatians, spent their vacation together in Ohrid. They were placed in the 'Goritsa' and 'Sveti Stefan' summer homes. Their vacation lasted 22 days during which they swam, visited places and read books. They visited the surrounding areas and were acquainted with the abounding cultural and historical monuments in this region. Upon completion of their stay they sent a letter to the editorial office of the newspaper 'Voice of the Aegeans' in which they said that they were very satisfied with their stay in Ohrid and that they would now embark on their education with renewed force..."

## LIFE - COLLECTED IN A BUNDLE

Ilinka Oliacha Bukovich's recollection of the refugee children's arrival from Aegean Macedonia to the Tsrikvenitsa children's home in Croatia is a very valuable testimony for the simple reason that,

through her, we can see and experience the drama that occurred on the "other side" of the refugee ordeal. In fact, her testimony is true because it reveals how the children were treated by those in charge during those dramatic moments. Here is her testimony:

"I was in charge of the hotel kitchen in Tsrikvenitsa, when one day my manager Toma called me and confidentially said: 'Listen carefully, tomorrow we will be receiving some very unusual guests.' I was a bit confused and did not understand what exactly he meant by that so he quietly said: 'You will see, prepare yourself'.

During a subsequent preparation meeting I found out that we would be receiving 'refugee children from Aegean Macedonia' who we needed to look after and help in order for them recover from everything that was happening to them. When I heard that I felt a sharp pain in my heart and a constriction in my throat like there was not enough air for me to breath. After that we accelerated our preparations to accommodate the children. The kitchen had to be readied like never before.

They were supposed to arrive by ship from Rieka, so I occasionally rushed to the terrace of the hotel to see if the ship had arrived. Finally when we heard the ship whistle blow, I ran to the terrace. It was a sight that I will never forget. The sea was calm and the sun was setting and just below it was a column of children holding hands and moving towards our hotel. Their little well-disciplined bodies moved slowly in unison and in complete silence. I felt as if something in me had broken and out of my soul came a cry stronger than the strongest thunder. At that very moment it became clear to me that indeed I was truly waiting for someone who meant more to me than anything. I ran down the stairs to the children. When I watched the children, who were coming towards me, it was as if I was watching myself. It was an emotional scene. The children were dressed in rags and almost all of them, with their skinny little hands, held onto a bag, a small bundle of things, containing all their earthy possessions. They clung to the little bags that they had brought from home, given to them by their parents, whose whereabouts now was unknown, or even worse, who now may be dead. Perhaps that's why they held onto their small bundles fiercely, as if they were carrying everything from their lives both past and present, holding onto their

future and to their hope. The poor children were exhausted from their long and arduous trip, suffering from fear and uncertainty. Their eyes seemed somehow impersonal, as if looking at blank space, but only seemingly. When I looked in their eyes I saw immense sadness, pain, suffering, fear, despair and a boundless sense of powerlessness. I continued to search through their pale and sunken faces. I saw an image of human sadness, unhappiness, pain and suffering in the children entering the hotel, two by two, holding hands. We put them in rooms with two children per bed. Unfortunately we had more children than beds, which made me feel infinitely sadder and gave me terrible pain which tore at my chest.

When we began to serve dinner the children quietly sat at the tables and then something wonderful happened. We heard children's voices, quiet at first, then louder and louder. I felt like life was coming back again. I felt as if something was reborn. This overwhelmed my heart. I felt like life was strong and nothing could stop it.

A few days later the children started to behave more like children. I made every effort to devote every free moment of my time to them, to give them something I had never received as a child: love, at least a little bit of love and understanding. I often played with them on the hotel terrace, which was a big enough place to accommodate all of them. I gathered them around me and the poor children enjoyed my company and the love I had for them, a mother's love because none of them knew where their mothers were.

One day a quiet child came up to me. He did not talk much but wanted to be with me. I think his name was Angel. Since then, even though we had a little trouble communicating, we became inseperable; Angel did not want to leave me. Another day I looked down the coast line and saw a child playing in the sand alone. Who knows what he was thinking and dreaming and who he was missing? I went to him and played with him a while. This child too became attached to me. I think his name was Kosta.

Since my own childhood was crippled, I tried as best as I could to help the refugee children, with whom I lived for a period of my life.

And I know, even though they were not aware, they helped me a lot too.

Among the first people I came into contact with was a woman, who for me at that time was an adult. Her name was Stefania Micheva and her husband's name was Atanas. This woman and her children were refugees from Aegean Macedonia. We often spent hours together telling stories about our destinies that had similar characteristics: pain, suffering and anguish..." concluded Ilinka Oliacha Bukovich.

We have more testimonies about the studying of trades in Osiek, Croatia, from Hristina Tambov, married name Petrovska. She is one of the many girls who came to this city to learn a trade in a course that lasted from 1949 to 1952. She graduated with a diploma. All these girls eventually returned to Skopje where they were employed as skilled workers in the various factories. This is what she said:

"In 1948 we were forced to leave our native village Kosinets. I left with my older sister and cousin and with many other 11 to 15 years old children from Kostur Region. Strictly speaking, this was the second group that left Aegean Macedonia and went to the People's Republic of Macedonia.

We left barefoot and traveled on foot to the village Liubojno, Resen Region, and from there by truck to Bitola where we slept over.

Then we took a freight train which brought us to Brailovo, Prilep Region. A few days later they took us to a monastery in the village Slepche where we spent 30 days. Then we took a train to Skopje and traveled on foot to Matka where again they placed us in a monastery. The Skopje Red Cross organized and took care of our travels from Liubojno to Matka.

After a few months of stay in Macedonia, the Macedonian Red Cross submitted us to the Serbo-Croatian Red Cross which then placed us in Tsrikvenitsa. There we were housed in hotels. After that we were separated by age and the younger children were sent to Bela Tsrkva, Autonomous Province Voivodina.

I was not sent with the younger children because I refused to leave my older sister Elena. After that 80 girls, including myself, were sent to Osiek on vocational training. I was selected to learn the craft of sewing. Training lasted from 1949 to July 1952.

Our education was conducted in the Serbo-Croatian language. But because of the difficulties we had studying in a language we did fully understand, we sent a request to the Ministry of Education in People's Republic of Macedonia to send us Macedonian teachers who could help with language interpretation. Our request was fulfilled and we managed to successfully complete our education, thanks to our Macedonian teachers Liupco, Vera and Danitsa.

Our desire was to return to Macedonia. The Macedonian government fulfilled our wishes and after we arrived we were all employed in our vocations.

I want to express my gratitude to the then Red Cross, which took care of us during the entire time we stayed in the children's homes and boarding schools and for our education..."

**ON THE RIGHT TRACK**

Among the teachers who were sent by the People's Republic of Macedonia's Ministry of Education, to teach in the Macedonian language primary schools that operated in the children's homes, was also Liubomir Galevski. He was a qualified and educated teacher especially trained in the arts of teaching. Even though he was designated to teach in Voivodina, instead of going there he was sent to Osiek. The reason for this was because he was good at disciplining disobedient students, particularly girls. He was sent to Osiek to take care of the problems they were having with the refugee children. This is what he said:

"In August 1949 there was a lot of anger among the children in the children's home in Osiek. This anger was primarily a result of the already aggravated Informburo situation during a time when a fierce propaganda campaign was waged against Yugoslavia on one hand, and the impact the Greek teachers (two male and one female) were having on the students in Osiek, on the other. Let's just say that, at

that time, the home in Osiek housed 107 children, of which 86 were Macedonian girls and 21 were Greek girls. They refused to eat and constantly revolted... The problem was particularly exacerbated when a group of them refused to eat and dumped their food on the street. This caused a justified reaction in the citizens who were not particularly happy about such behaviour and complained bitterly to the home administration and to other authorities in Osiek. The Yugoslav Red Cross and the People's Republic of Macedonia's Ministry of Education were also informed of this. But what surprised me the most was that during every meeting I had to convince the girls not to do what they were doing, they all spoke Greek. But the majority of them here in Osiek were Macedonians. However on one occasion, quite unexpectedly, a girl named Dimana spoke Macedonian. It was a happy sign that she admitted that she could no longer stand to speak Greek and that all the girls in the facility spoke Macedonian but were afraid to do so because they were threatened with punishment by the Greek teachers. After she spoke up they realized that their fears were unfounded and since then everything went in a positive direction. Subsequently, threats made by the Greek teachers were ignored and the girls continued to speak only in their native Macedonian language and accepted discipline..."

After this unfortunate negative situation was resolved, according to Liubomir Galevski, a number of children were sent to other children's homes in the other Yugoslav Republics including Bela Tsrkva, Krani and Skopje, where they continued their education learning a trade. After that Liubomir Galevski was sent to work at the Steniavats School in Zagreb. The local home housed 47 male refugee children who continued their education learning a trade at the "Iedinstvo" factory. But their story does not end here. The children from the Steniavats School, along with Liubomir Galevski, were moved to the children's home in Samobor where Galevski resumed his work as a teacher.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## THE CHILDREN'S HOMES AND SHELTERS IN SLOVENIA

- Shishka
- Borl kaj Ptui
- Stara Gora
- Dutovlie
- Mekinie
- Shest Vid

## THE FIRST SHELTERS

The first children's home to be opened in the People's Republic of Slovenia, for the refugee children from Aegean Macedonia, was in Shishka. This home began to operate in 1948 and housed the first 166 refugee children who arrived on August 11, 1948. These children were taken from the various homes in Voivodina: 16 were taken from Vrshats, 25 from Banatsko Plandishte, and 125 from Bela Tsrkva. Of these, 81 were boys and 85 were girls ages 3 to 7. They came together with 6 women "mothers" and 6 young ladies who took them from the villages in Aegean Macedonia and accompanied them here.

Before coming to their new home, while their new home was being prepared for them, the refugee children stayed 15 days in Zagreb where they were examined by medical staff and provided with medical care and treatment. Their stay and accommodations were taken care of by the Slovenian Red Cross.

The shelter in Shishka was closed on August 25, 1948.

The Macedonian teachers who taught at the children's home in Shishka were Dusan Georgievski, Luben Apostolovski, Metodia Naumovski, Kosara Galevska and Danitsa Basnarkova.

The children's home in Borl, Ptui was opened on the same day the children left the children's home in Shishka.

The refugee children stayed in Borl more than three months and, in the beginning of December 1948, were moved to the newly opened children's homes in Stara Gora and Dutovlie. These homes were specifically tailored for the children by the Slovenian Red Cross. After they were moved the home in Borl was closed down.

A new shelter for the refugee children was opened in the beginning of April 1949 in Mekinie, near Kamnik, Slovenia. This shelter housed the children who were moved from the homes in Croatia. This shelter also housed the 40 children who left the children's home in Tsrkvenitsa. Later 23 more childrem from Tsrkvenitsa were accepted here and another 32 arrived at the end of April 1949. The total number of children housed in the Mekenie children's home was 95, all refugee children from Aegean Macedonia.

In May 1949 the Slovenian Red Cross moved the children from the Mekinie home and placed them in children's homes in Dutovlie, Stara Gora and Shent Vid.

The shelter in Mekinie was closed down at the end of May 1949.

It should be mentioned at this point that the first group of Aegean Macedonian refugee children arrived in the People's Republic of Slovenia in August 1948. These children arrived in Slovenia from the children's homes in Voivodina. The children were immediately placed in temporary shelters in Shishka and Borl while the Slovenian Red Cross and the Slovenian government made preparations to permanently house them in the children's homes in Stara Gora near Goritsa, and in Dutovlie.

## THE CHILDREN'S HOME IN STARA GORA

The children's home in Stara Gora opened at the end of November 1948 and housed all the children who came from the Borl shelter as well as the refugee children who came from the shelters in the People's Republic of Croatia. In total 330 children came to Slovenia in the period from August 11 to November 25, 1948. The Stara Gora home housed 136 refugee children. The rest were housed in the Dutovlie home.

The number of refugee children in this home, in May 1949, grew to 195, of which 194 were Macedonian and 1was Vlach. But the number of children accommodated in the Stara Gora home kept growing. By mid-October 1949 the home accommodated 212 children, of whom 96 were boys and 116 girls. Included in this number were 84 pre-school age children and 128 school age children. This home also accommodated 19 women "mothers" and young ladies who care for the children.

It should be pointed out at this time that the Stara Gora children's home had two teachers who taught Macedonian. They were sent here by the Ministry of Education from the People's Republic of Macedonia.

In the middle of September 1949 this home was visited by a Macedonian delegation headed by Petar Zdravkovski, secretary of the Government of the People's Republic of Macedonia. The home was also visited in October of that year by school inspector Filip Nikolovski from Skopje, whose job was to inspect schools and educational work. He visited the home with various Yugoslav Red Cross officials.

The children placed in the Stara Gora children's home were originally from Lerin and Kostur Regions. In 1950 located at this home were 148 children, in 1951 there were 167 and 9 "mothers" who came with them.

At the end of March 1952, after this home ceased to operate, 86 children from here were sent to the children's homes in Sailovo and Bela Tsrkva. The Stara Gora children's home was closed down by the Slovenian Red Cross and by the Slovenian government at the beginning of April 1952.

**THE CHILDREN'S HOME IN DUTOVLIE**

The children's home in Dutovlie, Slovenia was opened on November 25, 1948. This home housed the refugee children who had stayed in other shelters and children's homes in Slovenia.

The Slovenian Red Cross sponsored children's home in Dutovlie began to operate at the beginning of December 1948 after it received 194 children of whom 156 were Macedonian and 34 were Greek. In May 1949 the number of children placed in the home was 154. Placed here were also 15 women "mothers" who came with the children. In early October 1949 the home accommodated 181 refugee children and 15 women, of whom 6 were Macedonian, "mothers", and 9 were Greek women.

The refugee children placed in the children's home in Dutovlie were from the following villages:

Armensko, Zhupanishte, Blatse Krchishta, Besfina, Kotori, Breshchani, Konomlati, V'mbel, Krushoradi, Gabresh, Lak, Galiste, Ludovo, German, Medovo, Zhelevo, Oshchima, Orovnik, Trsie, Rabi, Turnovo, Rudari, Strkovo and Tiolishta.

The children's home in Dutovlie had enough rooms and equipment to house all the children and to provide them with ample good quality food. There were 28 Slovenians employed at the home.

Also residing in the same children's home, in 1949, were the "mothers" who came with the refugee children. They were:

Mitra Germancheva, Tena Bundova, Ristana Lazarova, Maria Shulevska, Parashka Panova, Mitra Kolova and Katina Markova.

In September 1949 this home was visited by a Macedonian delegation comprised of Petar Zdravkovski, Risto Iankulovski, Vasilka Chesova, Vasilka Divkova, Filip Nikolovski, and Tome Krstovski. Similarly, this home was also visited by inspector Blagoia Kondarko from the Ministry of Education in Skopje.

In October 1949 a seminar was held at the Dutovlie home to inform the administrators, and accountants about the refugee children from Aegean Macedonia. The seminar was conducted by Dimitrie Goncharov, financial department head from the Yugoslav Red Central Committee. All the children's homes where refugee children from Aegean Macedonia were housed were the responsibility of the Red Cross.

In December 1950 the children's home in Dutovlie was also visited by a delegation from the Skopje Committee of Aegean Macedonians. This delegation was composed of Dinko Delevski, Atanas Kirovski, Steria Vangelova and Spiro Mechkarov.

In 1951 this home, and all other homes in which the Yugoslav Red Cross housed refugee children, was visited by a delegation from the Swedish Red Cross. This delegation was headed by Professor Dr. Erich Holmberg. In addition to this delegation, the children's homes, where refugee children from Aegean Macedonia (Greece) were accommodated, were visited by several foreign delegations. They came here in order to determine if the children were treated accordingly with regards to their care, diet, housing and education. After their visits, the delegations emphasized in their written reports that the Yugoslav government made every effort to allocate sufficient resources to create good conditions for the care and education of the refugee children. With that they countered the numerous negative rumours that were spread, not only by Greece but also by Eastern European governments (which also accepted and took care of refugee children) that Yugoslavia was mistreating the children.

At the beginning of the 1949/50 academic year, the Yugoslav Red Cross Central Committee decided to move the Macedonian children from the children's home in Tsrikvenitsa and send them to the children's home in Dutovlie where they could study in their Macedonian mother language. The 38 Greek children and 8 "mothers" in Dutovlie were moved to the children's home in Tsrikvenitsa.

However, influenced by the Informburo propaganda campaign, the Greek women and children expressed dissatisfaction at being moved and rebelled on their way to Tsrikvenitsa, forcing the authorities to bring them back to the children's home in Dutovlie. By then the Macedonian children had already arrived in Dutovlie and were already placed in the children's home and there was no room available for the Greeks. The Greek women and children had to be temporarily placed in a makeshift shelter that used to be a cafeteria. They stayed there until December 1949 and then were moved to a

children's home in Bogovadia, Serbia, and placed with other Greeks.

Because of repatriations, in 1951 the number of refugee children, in the various children's homes located in the People's Republic of Slovenia and in the People's Republic of Croatia, had significantly decreased. Later these homes were closed and the remaining children were moved to a children's home in Bela Tsrkva.

The Dutovlie home was closed at the end of September 1951.

The Okroglo children's home, located north of Liubliana, was opened in February 1949. It housed 26 children. That home also served as a hostel for children recovering from illnesses. The Slovenian Red Cross sent recovering refugee children to this home from all other homes in its jurisdiction as well as from homes in the other republics.

In addition to the Okroglo facility, there was another facility opened to care for recovering children, this facility was located near Bela Tsrkva, in the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains.

In 1952 the children being cared for at the Okroglo facility were from the Sailovo, Tsrikvenitsa, Stara Gora and Bela Tsrkva children's homes. The facility had well-organized health services, which helped the children recover quickly and then return to their children's homes.

In mid-February 1952 a conference was held in Okroglo. All the directors from the children's homes in the People's Republic of Slovenia were invited to attend in order to discuss the children's repatriation with their parents.

The Okroglo health facility operated for 3 years before it was closed down on March 18, 1952. The facility had 36 patients at its closing date, 22 were moved to the Shent Vid children's home, 12 were moved to the children's home in Bela Tsrkva and 2 were moved to children's home in Sailovo.

## CHILDREN LEAVING FOR AUSTRALIA

Fifty six refugee children from Aegean Macedonia, housed in Yugoslavia, left for Australia on October 26, 1952 to join their parents who were already in Australia. Before leaving young Olga Ivanova said the following on behalf of the group that was leaving:

"Dear friends,

We, the children from Aegean Macedonia who were forced to abandon our homes, families and native lands because of the Greek Civil War, because of the atrocities committed against our people, and because of the bombs the Monarcho-Fascists dropped on us and on the civilian population, have found fraternal sanctuary here in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The Yugoslav Red Cross did everything it could do for us from the moment we crossed the border. We were placed in homes. We were given the opportunity to learn in our native Macedonian language. And we were cared for, fed and dressed; as well as a good mother would care for her own children.

We are grateful to the people's government for the care it has given us and, in leaving Yugoslavia and our free homeland the People's Republic of Macedonia, we promise that we will never forget everything that you have done for us. Among us here there are children who in their villages were farmers and shepherds, but today, in Yugoslavia, those children have become professionals and skilled workers. Many of us were illiterate when we came here and now we all know how to read and write in our own Macedonian native language.

Through letters and correspondence, here in Yugoslavia, we had the opportunity to follow the lives of our brothers and sisters who are in the Informburo countries. They wrote to us and told us that we are lucky to have remained in Yugoslavia where care for the younger generations is excellent. They even told us that they were forced by the local authorities in those countries to learn in the Greek language and were encouraged to speak and act against their own parents and siblings. In some letters they openly said that they did trust what the

people from the Informburo were telling them. Many of the children even wanted to come to Yugoslavia but were afraid of publicly making such requests. They also told us that the Informburo was propagating lies; ideas that the Yugoslavs were fascists.

Dear friends,

We very well know exactly what is happening in Yugoslavia and no amount of slander and lies can convince us otherwise. It doesn't take 'great men' to tell us that the Yugoslav nations are building socialism.

Once we reach our destination oversees we will make sure the people know the truth about Yugoslavia. We will tell them that our friends in Yugoslavia are building socialism; they are building better living conditions for a happy and prosperous future for their people, and especially for the younger generations. The truth cannot be denied by Zahariadis's lies and slander, or by the traitors who are making similar claims.

On behalf of the children who are going to join their mothers and fathers, I sincerely and wholeheartedly thank the Yugoslav people, their government, and most of all Comrade Tito, who have taken care of our generation. Thank you for everything you have done for us and for making it possible for us to now join our mothers and fathers.

I also want to thank the Yugoslav Red Cross for its direct interest in us."

**PARENTS GAVE ME THEIR CHILDREN**

Here is another story depicting the agony the refugee children had to live through after they were uprooted from their native homes. The story is told by Iana Delianova - Karlevska:

"We left our village Bapchor in May 1948. It was Easter Sunday. We followed the same path other groups of children from our village had taken before. When we arrived in Bela Tsrkva the children were divided. I, with several younger children, was sent to Stara Gora in

Slovenia. Elena Delianova and Ristana Borshova, with some older children, were sent to Czechoslovakia. In Stara Gora we were responsible for about 200 children. There were 7 women, caregivers, who came with the children from Aegean Macedonia. The rest were local staff from Slovenia.

The people of Bapchor selected me to go with the children as requested by children's parents who knew me as the wife of a man who has long been abroad in Australia.

The following children were in my group: Dosta Delianova, Lozana Delianova, Sofka Delianova, Tanas Dimirov, Sofka Kochova, Dosta Kochova, Ristana Kochova, Kosta Ognenov, Kotsa Peikova, Kole Peikov, Risto Peov, Mite Peov, Tome Rimpapov, Valilka Trpina, Kole Fotin and Ilio Fotin."

# CHAPTER SIX

## THE CHILDREN'S HOMES AND SHELTERS IN MACEDONIA

- Bitola
- Brailovo
- Skopje
- Prilep
- Kumanovo
- Matka
- Petrovets
- Valandovo
- Liubojno
- Struga

## IN THE FREE PART OF MACEDONIA

From the documentation available to us, it appears that 912 refugee children entered the People's Republic of Macedonia from Aegean Macedonia in the period from April 1 to May 10, 1948. These children were received by the Yugoslav Red Cross and placed in the children's homes in Vrshats, Banatsko Plandishte, Strazha and Bela Tsrkva in the Autonomous Province Voivodina. Similarly, in 1948, 11,934 refugee children passed through the People's Republic of Macedonia and were sent to Eastern European countries. During the same year another 3,184 refugee children with their parents left Macedonia and settled in Gakovo and Krushevlie in Voivodina.

In the first half of 1948 there were approximately 5 thousand refugee children in the People's Republic of Macedonia, and of that number approximately 4,080 children were with their parents residing in various places in the republic. But as larger groups of new arrival began to emerge, the Macedonian Red Cross and the Macedonian Ministry of Social Welfare were forced to open new homes and shelters, as was the case with the homes in Matka and in the village Petrovets, near Skopje.

As we said earlier, the accommodation and care for these children was organized and coordinated by the People's government.

After being examined by medical professionals, the refugee children were sent to several shelters and children's homes.

But after the Informburo Resolution was introduced in 1949, various Eastern European countries began a negative propaganda campaign against Yugoslavia. At this time there were Greek Party leaders and personnel living in Bulkes who were in favour of the Resolution and against Yugoslavia. These people began campaigns of their own to bring dissension among the refugee children. They managed to turn the Greek refugee children and a very small, an insignificant number, of Macedonian children against Yugoslavia. These children began to be disruptive. They repeatedly broke house rules and were intolerant of other children and the staff. After careful consideration the administration decided to move 248 of them from the children's homes in Croatia and Slovenia and send them to the children's homes in Skopje. A large part of this group was taught various trades and lived in the homes for economy students.

After its arrival in Skopje, this small group of children continued to create unrest so it was divided into two parts. The Macedonian students who wanted to study or to learn a trade remained in Skopje while the Greek students who did not want to study here were sent to Bogovadia, the People's Republic of Serbia, where a special home had to be opened just for them. At the same time on October 22, 1949, 29 young girls, 4 young boys, 2 younger children and 3 women, all Greeks from the same group, were sent to a shelter in Kumanovo, which was run by the People's Republic of Macedonia's Ministry of Social Welfare. Unfortunately, here too the group continued with its negative outbursts and acting out. The students refused to go to school or to learn a trade, persistently demanding to be sent to Czechoslovakia. As a result, on July 15, 1950 the Yugoslav Red Cross Central Committee put in a rush request to have this group partnered with other Greek children who at that time were placed in Kovili and Churug. The request was signed by EPON (the organization of Greek youth). The situation in this home became even more dramatic when, on August 17, 1950, the children rebelled demanding to immediately be sent to Czechoslovakia,

where they claimed their parents were. But because the Yugoslav Red Cross had not received any requests from their parents it decided to ignore their demands. Unfortunately, the explanation given to the Greeks by house manager Kiro Pesevski was not acceptable. As a result, Red Cross Central Committee in Belgrade decided to close down the Kumanovo shelter and send the group of refugees to the children's home in Churug, Voivodina.

The shelter in Kumanovo was closed on August 25, 1950.

The children's home in Matka, near Skopje, was opened by the Red Cross, in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Care, in May 1948. This home housed 332 refugee children from preschool age to 14 years old. There were also 10 women, "mothers", with the children who had accompanied them from their villages in Aegean Macedonia and who had crossed the Yugoslav border with them.

The home in Petrovets, near Skopje, was opened in early October 1948. It housed 208 school age refugee children. However, the children placed in this home did not attend primary school in Petrovets because the building was too small. There was no sufficient space to accommodate any of the refugee children because the existing school was used to teach the children of the local villages. Only one teacher taught in this school.

## ANOTHER HOME FOR THE REFUGEE CHILDREN

We find more testimony on the opening of the children's home in Petrovets in the newspaper "Voice of the Aegeans". Here is what was written:

"Last month, in 1948, a shelter was opened in the village Petrovets, near Skopje, exclusively for the refugee children from Aegean Macedonia. The home was designed to house up to 60 children. Up until now only 16 children have been placed here but more are expected to arrive soon. The home was opened by the Macedonian Ministry of Social Care which has also provided the necessary inventory of beds, blankets, sheets, tables, kitchen inventory, etc. Moreover the Ministry has made available a sufficient amount eggs, milk and cheese for consumption.

Upon their arrival at this home each child will be given new clothing and shoes. All the people working at the home, except for the teachers, are refugees from Aegean Macedonia. The manager of the home is Argir Kuzovski, a former DAG officer.

The Aegean children are already accustomed to life in shelters and will not be disappointed here. The staff too has shown great affection for the children and will look after them like they were their own.

Included among the staff in this home is Iordana Lebanova from the village Setina, Lerin Region. Her black head kerchief and her melancholic look give one the impression that she is in pain. And indeed she is; she was badly wounded during the war. Her husband died as a DAG fighter. Her only hope and joy now are her children, 11year old Vangelia and 10 year old Giorgi. In order to save her children, before the Greek Civil War, Iordana sent her children away with the other children from her village. They eventually ended up in Hungary. Now they are far away from her. And who knows how they are where they live. This poor mother constantly worries about them. She constantly dreams of how nice it would have been if they were here, beside her, playing and learning along the other children in this home! She can't understand how the heartless Informburo can keep mothers separated from their children, ignoring their rights to be together, causing them so much pain! Her hope is that one day all the children will be allowed to return to their parents… and this too will pass."

The Aegean Macedonian refugee children placed in the children's homes in Matka and Petrovets were from the following villages:

Zhupanishte, Rudari, D'mbeni, Strkovo, V'mbel, Lok, Starichino, Oshchima, Mokreni, Besvina, Ezerets, Statitsa, Lobanitsa, Aetos, German, Krchishta, Dichishta, Krushoradi, Sveta Nedela, Orovnik, Trsie, Kotori, and Ludovo.

Because the number of refugee children arriving in the People's Republic of Macedonia was steadily growing, and there was lack of space to accommodate them there, the Yugoslav Red Cross Central

Board was asked to find space for them elsewhere, in other republics outside of the People's Republic of Macedonia. So on November 13, 1948 421 children and 13 women "mothers" were taken from the children's homes in Matka and Petrovets and moved to a new Red Cross home in Tsrikvenitsa, the People's Republic of Croatia. Similarly a small group of Greek refugee children was taken from these two homes and moved to a local children's home in Bulkes, Voivodina.

On December 15, 1948 the home in Petrovets, near Skopje, was closed down. The home in Matka continued to operate.

By April 1949 the children's home in Matka housed 40 refugee children ages 6 to 12. The home was run by a manager, an administrator, a teacher, a cook and two maids who came from Aegean Macedonia. But by order of the Macedonian Ministry of Social Care, in May 1949 this children' home too was closed down and ceased to operate in mid-June 1949. The children were relocated to a children's home in Prilep.

In 1948 there were children's homes housing refugee children in Liuboino, Brailovo and other places in the People's Republic of Macedonia. The older children from these homes were sent to learn a trade; 60 were sent to the children's home in Tsrikvenitsa and 120 to the home in Bulkes.

The children's home in Prilep was opened on May 12, 1949 under the auspices of the People's Republic of Macedonia's Red Cross and Ministry of Social Care. Initially the home housed 40 children who, until then, had been housed in children's home in Matka, and had arrived as new refugees from the village Brailovo. Another 65 children came from Prilep and 25 more from Skopje, Veles and Kochani. Similarly there were refugees housed in the children's home in Prilep whose parents were already accommodated and lived in Galichnik.

Housed at the children's home in Prilep, at the end of November 1949, were 110 refugee children of whom 20 were children ages 3 to 7, 74 were children ages 7 to 14 and 16 were children over the age of 14. Of these, 88 had both or one parent living in the People's

Republic of Macedonia, 17 had both parents remaining in Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia, 4 had both or one parent living in Poland and 1 child was without parents.

The refugee children housed in the children's home in Prilep were from the following villages:

Aetos, Zagorichani, Aposkep, Kromni, Buf, Kupa, German, Mokreni, Gornichevo, P'pli, Gumendzha, Trsie, Zhelevo, Chegan and Zabrdeni.

I.e. from Lerin, Voden, Kostur, Drama and Solun Regions.

In the middle of 1950 the Yugoslav Red Cross Central Committee decided to close down the home in Prilep. A committee to address the situation was formed, which included Red Cross members Dimitrie Goncharov, head of the financial department, and Militsa Pamuchina, a clerk from the Yugoslav Red Cross Central Committee. This committee arrived in Prilep on August 26, 1950 and selected 33 school age children to be sent to the children's homes in Bela Tsrkva. At the same time the committee selected 11 pre-school children to be sent to the Red Cross children's home in Stara Gora, Slovenia. The committee also reconnected 10 children with their parents. Many more parents were invited to come to Prilep and pick up their children but due to lack of housing, lack of jobs, lack of good living conditions, etc., many parents did not respond to the invitation. This also applied to the parents who were placed in Galichnik.

Because of this lack of response on the part of some parents, the Yugoslav Red Cross Central Committee decided to send some children to live with their parents anyway. If, for example, both parents were alive and living in Yugoslavia they were to receive their child or children. If only one parent was living in Yugoslavia then their child or children would remain in the children's home.

However, there were some care organizations which did not agree with the Red Cross decision regarding this approach. Included among those who disagreed were the trustee for social care in Prilep and the main board of the Macedonians from Aegean Macedonia in

Skopje. These organizations argued that some families were not materially ready to look after their children under the current condition and that the children were better off staying in the children's homes.

At the end of January 1951 30 children from the children's home in Prilep were sent to learn a trade. Of the 30, 10 were sent to "11 October" in Skopje and 20 were sent to "Tome Zhelezarcheto" in Bitola. This enabled the children to be educated in practical schools and become proficient in their trades. This move was sponsored by Dimche Mire, Minister of Education, Reis Shakiri, Minister of Social Welfare, and Dimche Delevski, head of the refugee program in the Ministry of Social Care.

At the end of January 1951 31 more children were reconnected with their parents and the Red Cross children's home in Prilep was closed down.

The children's home that was opened in Valandovo in 1952, in the care of the Ministry of Social Welfare, in 1953 housed 238 children ages 8 to 16. These children were sent to Valandovo from other children's homes and stayed there until they were reconnected with their parents who lived in various other places. This home became necessary because many parents did not have the means to support both themselves and their children.

The people responsible for running the Valandovo home were Gligor Todorovski and M. Pavlovski. The children accommodated in this home were from the following Aegean Macedonian villages:

Lerin Region villages:

Armensko, Neokazi, Asano Selo, Nivitse, Banitsa, Ofchareni, Bapchor, Oshchima, Buf, Papazhani, German, Prokopana, Gornichovo, Rakovo, Gorno Kotori, R'bi, Dolno Kotori, Rudari, Embore, Sekulevo, Zhelevo, Setina, Krushoradi, Trnovo, Kupa, Chegan, Chegan, Negochani and Strkovo.

Kostur Region villages:

Gabresh, Nevin, Zhirovish, Pliashchishta, Kosinets, Preshchani, Lichishta, Chetirog and
Mokreni.

Voden Region villages:

Bahovo, Iuguntsi, Pozharsko, Rodivo, Tushima and chernishevo.

The Valandovo children's home housed refugee children who, from 1948 to 1952, were housed in Red Cross children's homes Bela Tsrkva, Tsrikvenitsa, Stara Gora and other such homes. In addition to their regular schooling, the children living in the Valandovo home also participated in numerous other extracurricular activities. There was a choir, a soccer team and a library in this home. The children were also regularly taken to see movies and presentations.

On October 7, 1952 the Valandovo home was visited by Bent Oman, a Red Cross delegate from Sweden. In his report on the Valandovo children's home, among others, he wrote: "From individually examining many of these children I found that a large number of them have parents in Yugoslavia. There are also a small number of children whose parents are not in Yugoslavia…"

The Valandovo home in 1953 housed 229 Macedonian children from Aegean Macedonia, 1 child from Serbia and 8 German children from Voivodina.

## THE CHILDREN'S HOME IN BITOLA

The opening of the refugee children's home in Bitola, for the refugee children from Aegean Macedonia, was marked with a special story published by the newspaper "Voice of the Aegeans". This is what the paper said:

"A children's home was opened on January 1, 1951 in Bitola in order to bring together the children from the refugee families who have many children and the children who had been orphaned or were with a single parent. To date the home has housed 92 children and that number will soon grow to 120. Here the children have all the necessities for proper development. The younger children attend

elementary school at 'Sveti Kliment Ohridski' and the older ones have been enrolled in high school. The home management is responsible for supplying the children with books and other school supplies as well as a school bag. The children here have formed a folk dance group and are preparing for plays. A soccer ball was provided for the soccer enthusiasts. The children are being provided with good food and clothing. The home has a staff of 14 people who look after all the needs of the children. This home is managed by Spiro Lezovski from the village Zhupanishta, Kostur Region, who takes special care of them like they are his own.

With the opening of this home the government of the People's Republic of Macedonia has solved yet another problem for the refugee children from Aegean Macedonia and has shown that it is indeed interested in caring for them. The parents of these children are deeply thankful. They have been assured that this care will continue to be provided at no cost to them…"

Included among those housed in "Tome Zhelezarcheto" in Bitola were Goche Banushevski, Mitse and Petso Brzovski, Krste Vasilev, Mitko Gluievski, Vangel Dimitrov, Vasil Iapranovski, Stevo Kirkov, Krsto Kirkovski, Stavre, Fote and Sotir Kondovski, Mitse Kronevski, German Langovski, Tsone Mangarov, Vasil Naumovski, Ahilei Papanaumov, Kosta Pishelarov and Tipe Totsev.

## THE CHILDREN FROM THE BITOLA HOME GO ON VACATION TO THE BUKOVSKI FOREST

Another news article, published by the newspaper "Voice of the Aegeans", also testifies to the fact that much effort had been made by the Macedonian government to provide the refugee children not only with decent living conditions and an education, but also with decent vacations during the summer breaks. The newspaper article that follows, talks about the refugee children living in the Bitola home who, one summer, vacationed in Bukovski Forest.

"On June 23, ninety-seven Aegean Macedonian refugee children from the Bitola home found themselves vacationing in the Bukovski monastery 'Sveti Sotir'.

The good food and clean mountain air is excellent for developing and strengthening the children's bodies. They have already added weight but now it was time to turn that weight into muscle by devoting themselves to physical education, sports and other activities.

All the children who came to the monastery were given summer shoes and short pants. The home also supplied the children with a variety of gym equipment and encouraged them to form and organize their own soccer team. This team beat the local team during soccer matches.

The top chess players in this group were Kuzman Mitsevski and Vasil Shapakov.

In the morning, from 8 to 10 am, the children were lectured by their teachers in history, geography, physics and other subjects. After that the children were free. From 1 to 4 pm they rested in bed or slept and from 4 to 6 pm continued with lectures. They used their free time playing games and developing their skills in folklore, folk dancing, singing, reciting poems, etc., as well as organizing events. After that they were free until 9 pm.

The People's government demonstrated its great care for the Aegean refugee children by providing them with a 70 day paid summer vacation in the fresh air in the mountains, which cost the government 4,000 dinars a month for each child.

The children also issued their own bulletin which gives special attention to cleanliness, discipline and doing homework. They even have their own mailbox. Along the walls of the halls where they sleep they have written slogans: "Long live the CPY Central Committee Politburo led by Tito', 'Long live the Yugoslav army, a vigilant guardian of our borders' and so on. The Macedonian and Yugoslav flags, as well as pictures of Comrades Tito and Lazo, fly up high, a sight for all visitors to see."

**"11 OCTOBER" - HOME FOR STUDENTS**

One of the many children's homes opened in the People's Republic of Macedonia, after World War II ended and Yugoslavia was liberated, was the children's home "11 October", opened in Skopje to accommodate the war orphans and any other children who had no parents. The home was founded in 1947 on the initiative of GNO.

This home now houses 93 residents of whom 69 are Aegean refugee children, of whom 40 are girls.

Head teacher of this home is Comrade Dushan Pavlov, an elegant young man who is fully aware of his responsibility. Among other things he told us the following:

"The children here perform two useful things for themselves; they educate themselves and learn a trade. Events in the home are organized to allow the children to develop a versatile routine. They get up early in the morning and do gymnastics before breakfast. After breakfast everyone goes to their trade school. They usually work for five hours. After lunch they rest and then do school work at home. The staff in the home usually helps them with their homework and with other problems that they may have. After that they go to night school.

The cost for each student ranges from 2,500 to 2,800 dinars paid by the GNO in Skopje. From our earnings the children receive 20% in cash and the remaining amount goes to the treasurer of the home. The children receive 3 pairs of shoes annually. This year every student was given one suit and two shirts. Last year they received a work uniform. Every student has their own bed, a mattress, two blankets, a duvet and two sheets. They also regularly go to the cinema and to the baths.

For summer vacation last year the administration, with help from the People's government, sent the children for a month's stay at the village Tresontse, Debar Region. This year too they will be sent somewhere to spend their summer. On May 1 the administration organized a picnic for the children in the Skopje surrounding area and gave the children new clothes. The school inspectors are satisfied with the overall performance of the students. The average mark was 3.8 (out of 5) in the first half of the school year. The

students are hopeful that their average will be even higher by the end of the school year. At the end the best students will be rewarded for their performance with school supplies and books."

We asked the children how they felt living at the home and what life was like there. Alexander Durmovski, one of the top students, said the following:

"I am from the village German located in Prespa. My brother died as a DAG fighter in Gramos. He died for the freedom of his people. My closest relatives are scattered in the various Informburo countries. I work at the Radio Centre and I am trying to learn the secrets of the art. I want to become a master in radio technology. I learn as much as I want to. There are no restrictions or conditions placed on me about what I can learn. It is not like it was back home, in my village, where there were no such opportunities (under the Greek regime)."

Another excellent student Kole Mihailovski, from the village P'pli, Prespa, said the following:

"I am deeply grateful to the People's government. I come from a poor Macedonian family. Back home we really worked hard and still we had no money to buy things. We walked barefoot, half-naked and hungry. We were exploited and others benefited from our labours. I was never properly dressed or ate as much as I have here. I am learning a trade, going to school and learning things in my own mother tongue, something I could never do back home."

There are also former DAG partisans at the home. One of them is Kolio Grozdanovski from the village German, Prespa. He fought in Malimadi, Vicho and Snezhnik. Another is German Popovski from the village Nikli, Prespa. He was a headquarters courier. When he fell ill he was sent to a Yugoslav hospital for treatment.

Another partisan here is Stefan Mishkov from the village Liumnitsa, Giumenzhe Region. He was a partisan since 1946. He participated in a number of battles and was wounded four times. Every time he was wounded he was sent to a Yugoslav hospital for treatment. Mishkov is grateful to the People's government for the care it has given to all

the people, especially the children from Aegean Macedonia, and hopes that each child will strive to become a master in their craft and contribute to building this country.

Included among the people placed at the "11 October" home were Tsana Takova, Kata Golchevska, Fania Iankulova, Mara Kamshikova, Lena Kroneva, Notsa Poitova, Lena Subasheva, Lena Taneva, Vangelia Fiorova and Mara Shaprdanova.

**FULFILLED OBJECTIVES**

As mentioned earlier, the Informburo, with its Greek political party factors in Bulkes and with its propaganda campaign full of lies and falsehoods, attempted to influence and incite the refugee children from Aegean Macedonia placed at various children's homes in the People's Republic of Croatia and in the People's Republic of Slovenia. The "effects" however were short-lived because the vast majority of the children were Macedonians who refused to buy into the Informburo propaganda. From the small number of children who accepted the lies and untruths and demonstrated negative actions (breaking of inventory, expressing disobedience, inciting other children, rebelling, etc.), the vast majority were Greeks with only an insignificant number of Macedonians.

To end the trouble the Yugoslav Red Cross Central Committee decided to take a select number of children and young refugees who were accommodated in the homes in the People's Republic of Croatia and in the People's Republic of Slovenia and move them to Skopje. The hope was that they would stop much of their negativity and actively become engaged in their education and apprenticeship programs in the new environment.

Thus was born the idea to house a number of children in Skopje. This idea was realized with the arrival of 139 children from the children's home of Tsrikvenitsa and 21 children from the facility in Gerovo. Another 23 children were then added from Osiek, 50 from Krani and 15 from Zagreb.

This group of children consisted of 119 Greek and 3 Macedonian refugee children aged up to 14 years old. There were 49 Greeks and

72 Macedonians aged 14 to 18 and 3 Greeks and 2 Macedonians over the age of 18.

In the group that came from Croatia and Slovenia there were 171 Greeks and 77 Macedonians of whom 163 were male and 85 female.

The refugee children in Skopje were placed in two homes. Of the 248 children who arrived in Skopje 77 boys and 52 girls up to 14 years old and 5 adolescents older than 14 years old were placed in the "Kuzman Iosifovski Pitu" home. Housed at the boarding secondary industrial school were 86 male and 28 female children. Unfortunately, despite how well these children were looked after, they continued their rioting, loudly voicing their displeasure and demanding to be sent to Eastern European countries.

To overcome the situation 29 Greek girls, 2 Greek refugee girls and 4 older Greek girls were separated from this group in October 1949 and sent to a home in Kumanovo. They remained in this home until August 22, 1950, after which they were again moved and placed in a children's home in Churug, Voivodina.

Similarly, another group of 136 Greek refugee children were separated from this group in mid-October 1949 and sent to a children's home in Bogovogia in the People's Republic of Serbia. Of these, 84 were boys and 52 girls. The Bogovogia home remained open until March 3, 1950. After that the children were moved to the children's home in Kovili, near Novi Sad. For similar reasons more children from both homes in Skopje were moved outside of Macedonia.

It is important at this point to mention that 77 Macedonian children remained in Skopje and were able to see beyond the Greek and East European propaganda that was distorting the image of life in the homes and the general care they were receiving in Yugoslavia. They asked to remain in Skopje to continue their education in Macedonia. Some learned their trades in Skopje.

This kind of determination was demonstrated by more Macedonian refugee children. Some 65 children in Tsrikvenitsa, People's Republic of Croatia, asked to be moved to Skopje to continue their

schooling there. We should also mention that on November 25, 1949 3 boys and 2 girls reconnected with their parents, while 2 boys were placed in a home for the disabled and 2 boys were sent to a boarding school in Skopje.

At the end of 1949 132 children were brought to Skopje from Croatia and Slovenia, of which 102 were boys and 30 girls. These children were placed in the trade boarding schools.

The following young people were accommodated in the "Kuzman Iosifovski Pitu" home in Skopje:

German A. Angielkovski from the village P'pli, Goche M. Atanasov from the village R'bi, Vasil Atanasov from Lichishta, Nase Belimov from Krushoradi, Risto M. Bekirov from Tushin, Gele K. Belchev from Mokren, Panaiot P. Beshliev from Sakulevo, Levko M. Blagov from Pateli, Petre D. Boichev from Strupino, Foti H. Bulgurov from Zhelin, Minela N. Velianov from Banitsa, Vasil N. Gelev from P'pli, Nase S. Grachev from Dolno Kotori, Nikola N. Grozdanov and Kole S. Danchov from German, Vasil K. Delevski from Bukovik, Risto N. Dzerdzev from Potaros, Giorgi M. Delianov, from Bapchor, Lazo P. Danevski from Krushorodi, Mitar P. Dukov from Mokreni, Alekso C. Durlovski from German, Vane W. Zlatanov from Iavoriani, Risto I. Ianchev, Petre G. Kapulichev from Nered, Dane E. Karadanov from Nivitsi, Risto F. Kolev from Buf, Kosta F. Kolev from Buf, Traiko K. Kostov from Bukovik, Lazo P. Kolchev from Chegan, Krsto T. Krkachev from Ovchareni, Risto K. Levendov from Bobishte, Vane K. Manchov from Dolno Kotori, Vasil G. Matsev from German, Alekso B. Matsev from Vandovo, Kolio A. Nuiv from P'pli, Atanas S. Milentsov from Bapchor, Stefan D. Mishkov from Lobanitsa, Vane K. Manchev from Dolno Kotori, Leonido Kaskov from Ezerets, Kole N. Ninkov from Mokreni, Stoian V. Mishilov from Log, Giorgi L. Pandov from Konomlati, Vasil P. Pankov from D'mbeni, Vangel F. Panovski from Nivitsi, Fote K. Petkov from Medovo, Vangel M. Pitropov from German, German N. Popovski from Nivitsi, Vangel S. Popovski from German, Vane T. Restanov from Kornishor, Kole I. Rusev from Setina, Stavre S. Rushev from Gorentsi, Vasil L. Slarkin from Neret, Mihailo D. Skipa from Aetos, Mitre R. Solomonov from Statitsa,

Lambro K. Chaldarev from Kondoropi, Vane M. Chapkanov from Nisia, Kole K. Dzhimlev from German, Kole M. Shapev from Mokreni, and Pando D. Shushev from Pateli.

The following children attended Graphic School in Skopje:

Kolia S. Bezov from Zhupanishte, Risto V. Vlashki from German, Iani A. Vranchev from Negochani, Kole N. Gramov from Krushoradi, Risto G. Kaichevski from German, Iorgi V. Kimov from Neret, Iani V. Kornov from Chegan, Spiro A. Lazarevski from Rulia, Vasil T. Laovski from German, Hristo N. Malievski from German, Mihailo L. Matsev from German, Kole M. Mechkarov from German, Kiro K. Milankov from Dolno Kotori, Koto N. Raikov from German, Tasho K. Panovski from V'mbel, Iani S. Panovski from V'mbel, Kitse V. Saldarov from Kondoropi, Sotir D. Stoianov from Rulia, Giorgi G. Tanurov from Bahovo, Kuze F. Trgachev from Buf, and Vangel V. Dzhuklev from German.

The following children attended Electrical School:

Giorge D. Andonovski from Krchishte, Argir M. Barkov from Srebreno, Giorgi V. Barkov from Srebreno, Spaso N. Delov from Zhupanishte, Goche T. Dimitrov from Zhelin, Risto P. Drosov from D'mbeni, Naum I. Zhundovski from D'mbeni, Pavle I. Karechov from D'mbeni, Kole T. Kichevski from V'mbel, Giro Kolovski from Zhupanishte, Vasil R. Masev from Srebreno, Vasil A. Pandov from Kolomlati, Vasil S. Rascharov from Konomlati, Ilio N. Sarov from D'mbeni, Nase R. Tarevski from V'mbel, and Iorgo L. Tersiev from D'mbeni.

The following children attended textile school in "Kuzman Iosifovski Pitu":

Vasilka M. Apcheva from Banitsa, Liuba S. Bezova from Zhupanishte, Vasilka P. Bogleva from German, Iordana N. Kaichovska from German, Katerina A. Karamichova from Izglibe, Tsveta I. Mencheva from German, Sofia T. Radeva from Bahovo, Arhonda F. Skumanova from Buf, Panaiota B. Tambova from Kosinets, Anda V. Temelkova from German, Angelina H. Hadzieva

from Povar, Tomania A. Tsvetkova from Buf, and Iana A. Chopova from Strupino.

The following children attended the school “Vera Tsiriviri Trena”:

Hrista V. Bogdanova from Bapchor, Dora S. Vangelova from Krchishta, Stavrula L. Voriozi from Krchishta, Nevenka N. Dacheva from Straichino, Blagoika I. Mangelova from Aposkep, Iva I. Mencheva from German, Traianka L. Miovska from P’pli, Hrista I. Nakovska from Krchishta, Dimana T. Panova from Zhupanishte, Mara M. Papaterpova from Nestorion, Donka T. Sakulova from Bukovik, Leta H. Stasina from Zhupanishte,
Katina K. Firbova from Teolishte, and Vangelia K. Dzhogova from Banitsa.

The following children attended school at “11October”:

Dora N. Mashinska from V’mbel and Stavrula T. Trifunovska from Krchishta.

The following children attended the “Disability Home” school:

Ioshe K. Mechkarov from Bukovik and Vangel N. Popovski from German.

The following children attended the Teacher’s school:

Vangel T. Lelifanov from German and Giorgi V. Mangov from Zhupanishte.

The following children attended Forestry School:

Vasil K. Adamulov from Ludovo, Mito I. Kunelov from Gianoveni and Ivan K. Tenovski from Krchishta.

The following children were re-united with their parents on November 25, 1950:

Dimitar V. Sapundzhiev from Voden, Petre R. Bakushev from R'bi, Mitra D. Ioleva feom Kozharsko, Gena K. Musmanova from D'mbeni and Mitse D. Popovski from Kovulevo.

The following children from the children's homes in Bela Tsrkva were sent to Skopje, during the 1954/55 academic year, in order to continue their education and apprenticeships:

"11 October":

Kala Kole Argirova born in 1938 in Oshchima, Vangelia Tanas Albazhova born in 1938 in Medovo, Filareti Andria Afkova born in 1936 in Ludovo, Petre Bekirovski,
Dora Petre Georgov born in 1939 in Rudari, Atinka Krste Georgieva born in 1939 in Rudari, Atinka Pavle Giamova born in 1939 in Trsie, Donka Kosta Damuleva born in 1936 in Ludovo, Santi Aleksa Damovska born in 1939 in Gabresh, Pavle Kotse Delkov born in 1939 in Dolno Kotori, Santi Risto Kocheva born in 1940 in R'bi, Alekso Kaichevski, Lika Stefe Kirovska born in 1937 in Zhelevo, Niki Alekso Konstantinova born in 1938 in Strkovo, Sofia Markuleva, Vasilka Risto Matina born in 1936 in Lagen,
Sofia Riste Popova born in 1937 in R'bi, Sondra Traiko Popovska botn in 1938 in R'bi,
Tona Giorgi Popova born in 1937 in Trsie, Sondra Paikova, Afrodita Krste Stoianova born in 1939 in Medovo, Vangel Stoianovski, Ksantipi Stilova, Sofia Tanas Traikova born in 1936 in Lagen, Velika Stere Tsanva born in 1936 in Zelenichevo, and Niki Tsetsova.

The City Trade school:

Goche Vasil Budovski born in 1938 in Zhelevo, Miko Georgi Vlahov born in 1939 in D'mbeni, Krste Steria Vlahov born in 1939 in D'mbeni, Iani Kotso Vavitsa born in 1940 in Kerasies, Mikio Leka Damovski born in 1939 in Medovo, Vasil Dupiakotis, Mihail Kaichevski, Lefter Kalkov, Ahileas Karidis, Giorgios Karidis, Vangel Kiriazopulos,
Lazaros Ksanthopulos, Emilios Karidis, Pavlos Lazaridis, Kosta Riste Lumburovski born in 1937 in Zhelevo, Kosmas Maropulos, Lazo Riste Markoski born in 1938 in D'mbeni,

Ivo Tasha Mitanov born in 1938 in Zhelevo, Pandili Stavre Milankov born in 1940 in Dolno Kotori, Goche Krste Milankov born in 1938 in Dolno Kotori, Dzodzi Nichopulos,
Risto Petre Nikolov born in 1938 in R'bi, Ivo Fote Pandov born in 1936 in Trsie, Risto Pande Pandov born in 1936 in Trsie, Lazaros Panteleimon, Vasilios Panaiotidis, Kostas Papadopulos, Dimitar Rashev, Vangel Riste Steriov born in 1938 in Medovo, Periklia Nikola Topalov born in 1939 in German, Emilios Fotiadis, and Lazar Ivan Shopov born in 1940 in Gorno Kotori.

Many of the children that arrived from Bela Tsrkva were encouraged to continue their education in the high school and trade school "Brakia Miladinovtsi" in Bitola. Some were placed in the Teacher's school.

Taught at the Teacher's School in Bitola were:

Urania Matseva, Menka Paikova, Vasilka Barova, Tania Iankovska, Tona Pandova, Olga Petkova, Vangelia Steriova and Pavlina Stefova.

Taught at the High School in Bitola were:

German Paikov, Vangel Babinkostov and Fani Palevski.

**THE CHILDREN'S HOME IN STRUGA**

Another children's home to house the refugee children from Aegean Macedonia was opened in Struga, the People's Republic of Macedonia. Here is what the newspaper "Voice of the Aegeans" had to say about this home:

"The 'Gotse Delchev' children's home in Struga is located on the right bank of the Tsrn Drin River at the confluence of Lake Ohrid in Struga. This home houses the youngest refugee children. The home is located in two buildings, one on each bank of the river. It is impossible for passersby rushing to work in the morning not to notice the children's stormy life getting up in the morning and preparing for their daily tasks.

The home was opened on March 1, 1950 and houses 60 children ages 7 to 16. All the children are enrolled in elementary and high school. Each child is provided with two pairs of clothes, two pairs of shoes and other children's needs.

There are 9 administrators and teaching and support staff who run all aspects of the home as per the prescribed house rules and daily work schedules.

At exactly 6 am the duty pioneer blows the wake up whistle. The children wake up and begin their physical exercises. For their morning gymnastics the boys are led by young Risto and the girls by the female duty pioneer. The early morning physical activities, near the lake, refresh the children and make them forget their suffering in life. After completing all their exercises the children quickly go back to their rooms and make their beds. After that they wash and prepare for breakfast which is served at 7 am. After breakfast they line up and march to school singing songs. Each student is provided with all necessary school items; books, notebooks, etc. One hour before lunch and at 2 o'clock after lunch, classes are held in the home in preparation for the next day's lessons. The home pioneer council has made a schedule for best use of leisure time. The home has a reading room and a library with all kinds of books, children's magazines and newspapers. In their free time the children can read books in the reading room and play various games like 'Don't be angry man' and chess. The pioneers have also organized various choral groups, folk groups, gymnastics, drawing, studies about nature and modeling. These groups are constantly active practicing singing, dancing, drawing, modeling, etc. Their achievements will be demonstrated by the end of the school year with presentations, exhibitions and performances. The physical education group has two soccer teams and four volleyball teams which will participate in various competitions. The chess team holds tournaments in the home and everyone can participate, including the youngest players. The greatest interest in playing chess was shown by Iano Liango and Vasil Pliaskov, two 7-year-olds who play strategically, study every move and follow the course of the game.

During the pioneering conference for the May 1st competitions all the pioneers have committed themselves that, at the end of the

school year, they will bring excellent and very good results; they will issue regular bulletins and will do volunteer work to keep the home premises clean. The ambulance course was also initiated during the May 1st competitions which were attended by 20 older students. The school teachers were satisfied with the results obtained in the class.

If there are possible occurrences of lack of discipline or rudeness demonstrated by children, as noted by a pioneer or by the duty pioneer and agreed to by the unit chief, those occurrences are logged in the command pioneer book. The command pioneer book is then read after dinner and all recorded events are announced; both good and bad. Those who have misbehaved are given a period of time to make repairs and are assisted by all the pioneers.

May 1st, welcoming the first day of spring, is cheerfully celebrated. This is also the day the children receive their new holiday clothes.

Since they are located right on Lake Ohrid the children, after the school year is over, will be spending their summer vacation on the beach. The children are cheerful with smiles on their faces. They spend their time singing and being happy. When the manager asks them how they are coping, they usually say: 'Sir, we are happy but we need to justify our education by becoming real builders of our motherland'.

The People's government cares for the children and has aided them in developing proper spiritual and physical characteristics which will help them to develop their homeland.

**THE CHILDREN'S RESORTS IN OHRID**

We have already mentioned that the refugee children from the various children's homes spent their summer vacation in resorts. Some spent their vacations in Ohrid. Following is an article, as reported in the newspaper "Voice of the Aegeans" which, among other things, said:

"Traveling by boat from Ohrid to the resorts, the passengers admire the beautiful lake and surrounding area scenery. At first glance one

sees Goritsa (where the students are vacationing now) with its large syndicate resort ‘Ortse Nikolov’ where hundreds of labourers from across Yugoslavia vacation. But a little to the side is located the spacious building where the children vacation.

Happy and joyful voices are heard from afar singing songs. Here our youngest generation rests and cheerfully spends its time; Tito’s pioneers. This children’s resort was completed in 1948 and could accommodate from 250 to 300 children. The resort has a gymnasium, a volleyball court, a soccer field, basketball rings, water polo equipment, various toys, a chess hall with 30 folding tables, a library with 750 books, and more. The administrators also organize various outings for them that include visits to Ohrid, Struga, museums, the fish fertility station. They also take them to compete with other groups vacationing in the area. This way the children will not only be entertained but also educated; enriched by all kinds of knowledge.

The first group of children in this home has shown great interest in the sports competitions and in the educational activities. They competed three times against the local vacationers. In volleyball they beat the pioneers from Kaliste 15 to 0 and the “Karposh” pioneers 5 to 2 and 10 to 0.

The following is an indication of how useful this vacation has been for the refugee children: The first group of children ages 6 to 10 gained an average weight of 2.1 kg. Children aged 11 to 14 gained an average weight of 4 kg and the children over 14 gained an average weight of 5 kg. Thanks to the good food and clean air the children were able to boost their body weight.

There were 61 Macedonian girls from the commercial school in Osiek, 14 girls for the ‘October 11’ apprentice school in Skopje, 15 Aegean children from the economic school in Samobor and 5 from Zagreb. They are all happy to be here and spending their free time here.

On behalf of the children, Samobor student Stavre Dimovski from the village Kosiets, Kostur Region, told us the following:

"We were forced to leave our homeland because the Monarcho-Fascists, like rabid jackals, jumped on us, killing us with their artillery and aircraft, or grabbing us by force and sending us to Frederica's camps. Here in Yugoslavia we not only found refuge but the people allowed us to continue our education in our Macedonian language. We are very close to completing our professional and school training. We are all taught something and have qualifications in various trades, which will insure our future and give us the opportunity to help our enslaved people. Back home in places, where the Monarcho-Fascists have control, our people are all doomed. The only jobs they can do are raise sheep and pigs, or work in the fields. This way the Monarcho-Fascists can easily exploit them and plunder their effort."

On behalf of the girls, Olga Kaleicheva from village Morchishta, among other things, said:

"The beastly acts of the Monarcho-Fascists are indescribable. Among the many atrocities they committed, one cold night in March they killed my father and tortured my mother inside our home. You can understand why I could not stay at home, nor can I forget the crimes committed against us. Now I am in Osiek, along with 60 other girls from our area. We are all striving to learn and in a year's time we will all be able to work in our respective fields. Among us there are weavers, knitters and hairdressers. Last year we were in Ohrid in the Goritsa resort and had an excellent time. This year too we will spend 21 days of our vacation here and then return with renewed vigour to our education and our work. We were never given such opportunities back home."

Comrade Tanuera, the manager of the home, said:

"All the girls are lively and free. They all work hard and are among the top hard workers. They are also hard at learning. We have 11 excellent and most are assessed very good. Their teachers and the managers of the companies where they work are very satisfied with them."

**MASS SCHOOLING OF THE REFUGEE CHILDREN**

The care and respect that the People's Republic of Macedonia has given the refugee children from Aegean Macedonia is not expressed only through providing accommodation, food and clothing for them, but also through being engaged in their enrollment in primary and secondary schools and in the schools for apprentices. This can best be shown through the information we come to possess. According to our information, in 1951 137 students were placed in the boarding schools for apprentices in Skopje. This program was realized under the direct care and guidance of the People's Republic of Macedonia's Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Social Care.

The process of training and educating the refugee children was also realized in the People's Republic of Croatia. According to our information, in 1951 there were 13 children educated in Zagreb, 25 in Samobor and 70 in Osiek.

In Yugoslavia, in 1951 245 students were educated in various trades and received jobs in the economy sector. This only applies to those refugee children who arrived without parents. Their accommodations, schooling and care were exclusively provided by the Yugoslav Red Cross in cooperation with the Red Cross of the republics.

In 1952 40 children were attending school in Novi Sad and 31 in Belgrade in the economy sector. There were 52 girls attending school in Osiek who, in 1952, completed their education in the economy sector in Skopje and were able to help the Macedonian textile industry. The courses were 3 years long. A group of young people who had completed the 3-year trade course in Zagreb and Samobor also arrived in Skopje that year (1952) and became engaged in the manufacturing processes and facilitated the People's Republic of Macedonia's industrial development.

We should mention at this point that 6 refugee children were still learning a trade while being housed in Bela Tsrkva until 1958, or more precisely until 1960. After that there were no more refugee children in children's homes in Bela Tsrkva. Those students who had not completed their trade education were sent to the various trade schools in the People's Republic of Macedonia to complete their education.

In 1948 there were 29 students in the People's Republic of Macedonia learning a trade and this continued until 1966 as more students were added. All of these students remained the responsibility and concern of the Yugoslav Red Cross and the government of the People's Republic of Macedonia. Every effort was made not only to educate these children but also to repatriate them with their parents and families in Macedonia and the wider world.

It is interesting to mention that in 1956 more students from the children's homes in Bela Tsrkva came to the People's Republic of Macedonia to continue their studies. Among them were 46 who attended the following schools:

Eight refugee children attended the school in Bitola.

Two students attended the industrial school in Skopje, 2 students attended the secondary music school, 11 students attended the school of construction, 4 students attended the middle technical school and 19 attended the "October 11" facility learning a trade. The following students completed their schooling in the economy sector in 1957:

Petre Bekirov, Alekso Kaichevski, Atinka Georgieva, Niki Kostadinova, Pavle Delov, Sondra Popova, Dora Giorgova, Tonka Popova and others.

**AMONG THE STUDENTS FROM THE GRAPHIC SCHOOL IN SKOPJE**

Many of the refugee children also enrolled themselves in the school of graphics. This is what the newspaper "Voice of the Aegeans" wrote about that:

"The school carries the name 'Nizhe School of Graphics' and accepts students who have completed grade II high school or equivalent. They are taught for three years. Teaching is both theoretical and practical. There are three groupings: typography, machine and bookbinding.

For better utilization of the workforce, the administration receives small orders and small print brochures that are processed by the students themselves. This is a useful way of giving the students the opportunity to practice and, at the same time, provide a service to the customers.

The students themselves have organized a choir, an amateur recital section, a soccer team, chess teams, a volleyball team, a boxing team and other sports teams. This way they are building their knowledge in cultural, educational and physical activities.

Among the many students in this school there are also 27 refugee children from Aegean Macedonia. When we asked them how they feel about this school, they said that they are fully satisfied and grateful to have this opportunity to learn, so that they can become worthy sons of Macedonia and contribute more to their people.

Giorgi Kimevski from the village Neret, Lerin Region, born in 1936, is one of the best students in the school. He is here all alone. His mother is in Poland with his youngest sister. His father is in Russia and his two younger brothers are in Czechoslovakia. Giorgi came to Yugoslavia in 1948 with a group of refugee children fleeing the Monarcho-Fascists. Now he is one of the best students in the school and he dreams of becoming a specialist and, like he says, become useful to society.

Giorgi Matinovski is the oldest student from the Aegean refugees. He joined the ranks of DAG in 1947. Here is what he had to say:

'My unit, of which I was a part, participated in many of the major battles against the Monarcho-Fascists, including the battle for Konitsa, Grevena, Gramos, Malimadi, Voden, S'botsko and Lerin. But after DAG capitulated I left for Yugoslavia, that was before the end of 1949. My brother was killed in 1948 in the battle for Gramos. I was always ready to die for my homeland Macedonia. Now I am here being educated. I want to become a good graphic artist, so that tomorrow I can go back to my liberated homeland and help our people. The Macedonians back home were never taught their Macedonian language and we the Aegeans here, including the

graphic artists, are now being trained so that we can help in that direction.'

Giorgi Tanurev from the village Bahovo, Meglen Region, told us the following:

'My father fought for the liberation of Macedonia as a DAG unit commander. Zahariadis's cronies had him executed because he was a staunch Macedonian. I will never forget why my father died. I love my homeland and I want it to be free. I want our people to be the masters of their own destiny. Now I am here learning and I think this the best way to contribute to our work.'

All refugee children from Aegean Macedonia strive to master theory and practice and to achieve very good results in their education."

**VACATIONING CHILDREN FROM THE VALANDOVO HOME**

We have provided a number of articles, as published in the newspaper "Voice of the Aegeans", with many testimonies given by the refugee children from Aegean Macedonia about their experiences in the children's homes. The following article is dedicated to the children from the Valandovo children's home. This is what was noted in the article about their summer vacation:

"Last year (1952) the children from the 'Aleksandar Rankovich' children's home in Valandovo, most of them Macedonians from Aegean Macedonia without parents or with only one parent, spent their summer vacation in the resort 'Vodno' near Skopje.

This year (1953) they are planning to send the children to vacation in other resorts. So a group of 60 children left for Ohrid on June 30, 80 children left for the Liubanska forest, located north of Skopje, and any day now about 100 children will be sent to Lake Doiran.

Earlier in this book we presented several articles published in the 'Voice of the Aegeans' newspaper. We chose them for the simple reason that they are a record of events that took place from 1950 to 1954; events that have historical significance in the defense of the

Macedonians from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia and their just struggle for national freedom. We can safely say that the newspaper, the 'Voice of Aegeans', was and remains to be an indispensable witness to the refugee drama; to their uprooting. The newspaper pages carry authentic testimonials that are pieces of a puzzle that make up the mosaic of their childhood and life...

And what is to happen with the many (hundreds) articles then published on a daily, weekly and monthly basis in all kinds of newspapers and magazines in the People's Republic of Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Voivodina and Macedonia, which were not presented here? We are happy to say that a process has already been put in place. We are preparing to publish a special edition, a legacy edition to posterity, chronicling our time and ordeal that stretches out to all meridians...

# CHAPTER SEVEN - DOCUMENTS

## INTERIM DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT OF GREECE - MEMORANDUM

In May 1948 the Royal Greek government in Athens sent a petition to the United Nations General Assembly alleging "kidnapping" of Greek children.

In order to refute these allegations coming from the Royal Greek government in Athens, in May 1948 the Interim Democratic Government of Greece sent a memorandum to the United Nations. The Memorandum was signed by General Markos Vafiadis. At the same time Vafiadis submitted copies of this memorandum to the major powers and other governments in the world. On May 26, 1948 the Interim Democratic Government of Greece radio program "Free Greece" made mention of the Memorandum and, among other things, announced the following:

"The Athenian rulers, who themselves have committed so many crimes of which the world is aware, are lately insisting in covering up their ugly deeds with a systematic campaign of lies and slander. To this end, the Athens government has mobilized all types of agents and, often on their instructions, is seeking to turn the United Nations into an offensive weapon for its imperialistic policies. They want the United Nations to spread their lies and slander. Therefore it is our duty to debunk these slanders, which lately have become a regular topic in the Monarcho-Fascist propaganda. This is a program to protect the children…

The Athenian rulers have taken advantage of the situation and are abusing it to slander us. Archbishop Damaskinos, in a telegram he sent us, has alleged that the Interim Democratic Government of Greece is kidnapping children, allegedly intending to turn them into enemies of Greece. We would like to remind you that during Hitler's occupation of Greece, Archbishop Damaskinos advised the ministers to take the Nazi oath and later, in December 1944, he approved of the terror the Athens government was perpetrating

against its own people. He has also participated in anti-Greek incidents in Greece.

The aim of the Greek Monarcho-Fascists was and remains the same; the extinction of all those who want freedom and independence. But this is not all about extermination of only those who took part in the liberation struggle; this applies to all citizens who don't support and assist the Monarcho-Fascists.

There are over 50,000 people in Greece today who are in prison in the Greek concentration camps. To date 7,000 people have been executed in Greece. We need to mention that the majority of these Greeks are killed simply because they have not renounced the struggle and because they took part in the resistance movement against the Nazis. The majority of these people, whose cases are heard in the military courts, are accused of fighting in the ranks of ELAS. This is the only evidence brought against them by which the courts find them guilty.

Around 7,000 people, men, women and children, were driven out of their homes and herded into the cities where hunger, disease and the cold have literally destroyed them. The unarmed civilian population in free Greece has been systematically attacked, causing numerous casualties primarily in women and children. The blockades enacted in the liberated areas, implemented by Athenian politicians, are there to prevent food from reaching the free zones which have always been supplied by the cities.

Facing this situation, mothers in the liberated areas could not calmly stand to watch their children die of hunger or live in constant danger of being struck by bombs. And so these Greek mothers urged our government to help move their children to neighbouring countries in order to escape these dangers. We contacted many charities abroad and they in turn responded. And we joyfully established that the charities of the democratic women have accepted our request to protect and care for these innocent victims of the inhumane Athens government.

And so, on the initiative of their parents, 10,000 Greek children were transferred outside of the Greek border. Realizing that its plan

to eradicate the population in the liberated areas had failed, the self-proclaimed Athens government launched a campaign of lies and slander, claiming that we allegedly kidnapped children and this began by us removing these children from the areas adjacent to the liberated areas, where in fact it was their gendarmes and soldiers who took children from the arms of their mothers without consent and delivered them to the cities where they were put to work as servants in the homes of wealthy families.

The Interim Democratic Government of Greece made sure no child was sent abroad without consent and with the persistent desire of its parents. It was the Monarcho-Fascists who took the children hostage in the cities despite disapproval from the parents. On the issue of being a crime to 'take children'? That crime does exist but one needs to look in the Monarcho-Fascist camp to find it.

The Interim Democratic Government of Greece, being faithful to the ideals of democracy and peace, will protect all Greek people, including the children, from today's terror perpetrated by the Monarcho-Fascist regime in occupied Greece. On behalf of the Greek people the Interim Democratic Government of Greece wishes to express its gratitude to all the Greek people who have helped it in the past and will help it over the period until it establishes national independence and freedom in Greece."
(Radio "Free Greece" May 26, 1948)

**FIRST UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION FOR THE REPATRIATION OF THE GREEK CHILDREN**

The third session of the United Nations General Assembly was held in Paris on November 27, 1948, which unanimously adopted the following resolution:

"General Assembly 193 / III

RECOMMENDS that the Greek children be returned to Greece, who are now far away from their homes, if the children express a willingness they can be returned to their father or mother or, in the absence of parents, to their closest relative;

IT CALLS UPON all United Nations States and other countries, on whose territory there are children, to take necessary measures in connection with the execution of these recommendations;

The Secretary General is tasked with making arrangements with the International Red Cross Committee, the Red Cross League as well as the Crescent Moon to organize and execute this order by organizing the various national Red Cross organizations in the countries of interest. They are to empower the National Red Cross organization to take necessary measures in these countries and to carry out this recommendation."

(League Monthly Report for December 1948, p. 3)

**ANOUNCEMENT FROM THE LEAGUE AND FROM THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS COMMITTEE**

In December 1948 the Red Cross League and the International Red Cross Committee in Geneva issued the following statement:

"The United Nations Secretary General has asked his first counselor Colonel A. D. Katsin to confer with the Red Cross League and with the International Red Cross Committee regarding the implementation of this resolution.

On December 17, 1948 Colonel Katsin met with representatives of the League and the Committee. During the discussions it was decided that the United Nations Secretary General will:

- Pay attention to a certain UN General Assembly governmental Resolution and seek the cooperation of the International Committee and the League for the repatriation of Greek children;

- Officially request from the League and the Committee to make contact with the interested governments and Red Cross societies in order to develop plans for the repatriation of the children.

The League expects responses to the letters the UN sent to governments as an official request from the UN, League and

Committee to bring them in contact with the National Red Cross organizations in the interested countries."

(Rapport mensuel du Secretariat de la Ligue des societes de la croix rouge - 24.XII.1948)

**THE LEAGUE SEEKS ASSISTANCE FOR THE GREEK CHILDREN**

On June 9, 1948 the Red Cross League in Geneva sent the Yugoslav Red Cross the following telegram:

"To the Yugoslav Red Cross in Belgrade,

On the initiative of Bernadotte, President of the Swedish Red Cross, and in accordance with the President of the Council of Governors of the League we were wondering whether you would allow the League to make an appeal in favour of the Greek children who are away from their families in Greece and are now in other countries. In regards to your major commitments to these children by your own people, we think that you will appreciate this proposal if a number of children are located in Yugoslavia.

Please let us know what is needed for the Greek children in Yugoslavia according to their number, age and gender. The Yugoslav Red Cross will be asked to provide assistance with this. The national Red Cross in each of these countries will be involved in cooperation with the League.

Please reply to us as soon as possible. The same proposal was sent to the Organizations in the following countries: Greece, Bulgaria, Hungary, Albania, Romania and Czechoslovakia."

De Ruzhe, Secretary General of the Red Cross League organization number 268.

On 23 June 23, 1948 the Yugoslav Red Cross replied to the League with the following telegram:

"To the Red Cross League in Geneva,

We gladly accept your appeal in favour of Greek children. They required clothing and footwear."

The Yugoslav Red Cross number 5939.

In regards to the Greek children's appeal in Yugoslavia, on July 9, 1948, the Yugoslav Red Cross informed the Red Cross League and the International Red Cross Committee of the following requirements:

Needed are:

- 1,300 sets of clothing for boys ages 3 to 6 and 1,000 sets of clothing for girls of the same age;

- 1,500 sets of clothing for boys ages 7 to 12 and 2,500 sets of clothing for girls of the same age;

- 300 sets of clothing for boys ages 13 to 16 and 400 sets of clothing for girls of the same age;

The number of refugee children present in Yugoslavia under the care of the Yugoslav Red Cross, at the time, was around 10,000.

**INACCURATE NEWS FROM RADIO ATHENS**

On October 3, 1949 Radio Athens broadcast a statement made by the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which stated that the Yugoslav Red Cross had informed the International Red Cross that Yugoslavia was going to return the Greek children found in Yugoslavia to the Greek government.

The "Tanjug" agency immediately reacted and denied all allegations. It said that the Yugoslav Red Cross never made such a statement. It never said that the Greek children would it be returned to the Greek government. It said that it would return the children to their parents under the condition that the parents, first, request them to be returned and, second, that the parents provide reliable

documents of their relationship to the children. Each case would be decided on an individual basis.

Given the October 3, 1949 incident, i.e. the erroneous news coming out of Radio Athens, the Yugoslav Red Cross sent a letter to the League and to the Committee expressing its surprise. What was announced on the radio was not what had been said in the August 30, 1949 letter that the Yugoslav Red Cross had sent to the League.

On October 13, 1949 Dr. Olga Milosevich, Secretary General of the Yugoslav Red Cross in Geneva, held talks with representatives of the Red Cross League and the International Red Cross Committee regarding the issues of repatriating the Greek children. On this occasion Dr. Milosevich also clarified the Yugoslav position on how the children would be repatriated with their parents.

**LETTER FROM THE LEAGUE AND COMMITTEE TO THE YUGOSLAV RED CROSS REGARDING THE INACURATE RADIO NEWS FROM ATHENS**

Regarding the inaccurate news from Athens about Yugoslavia's position on the repatriation of the Greek children, the Red Cross League and the International Red Cross Committee, on October 14, 1949, wrote a letter to the Yugoslav Red Cross as follows:

**RED CROSS LEAGUE AND THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS COMMITTEE**
G 85
G 44/53 C

To Mrs. Dr. Olga Milosevich
Secretary General of the Yugoslav Red Cross
Hotel Minerva
Geneva

We are honoured to confirm the conversation which we so gladly had with you on October 13, 1949.

As we have informed you by our letter of September 15, 1949, and by our discussions with you, we did not alter our support as per your

letter of August 30, 1949 regarding the Greek children in Yugoslavia, and we have informed the Greek authorities and the Greek Red Cross in Athens. According to the wording of your letter, and the information that you have provided us, you have indicated that the Yugoslav Red Cross accepts, based on the obligations of the Yugoslav government to the United Nations, the return of the Greek children whose parents apply for repatriation. Also, according to your letter, we have added that the Greek Red Cross could submit requests from parents to the Yugoslav Red Cross.

As already mentioned, we have drawn attention to the Greek Red Cross about the error that was in the news broadcast on October 3, 1949 on Radio Athens (news of which until now we did not know) by which the Yugoslav Red Cross informed the International Red Cross that the returning children would be given to the Athens government. We added that the Yugoslav Red Cross has expressed desire for that error to be corrected.

We have asked the Greek Red Cross to inform its government of this information.

The League
D. Millson, s.r.
Secretary General
(COJCK no. 148/949)

**LETTER FROM THE LEAGUE TO THE GREEK RED CROSS**

On October 14, 1949 the Red Cross League and Society wrote a letter to the Greek Red Cross as follows:

Red Cross League
D. 85
D. 44/53 c

Geneva, October 14, 1949
To Mr. M. C. Georgakopoulos
President of the Greek Red Cross
Athens

It is our honour to refer you to your letter dated September 13, 1949, with which you informed us about the response of the Yugoslav Red Cross proposal for a meeting of representatives from the Greek and Yugoslav Red Cross in Geneva, for studying the problems of the repatriation of the Greek children found in Yugoslavia. Similarly, we informed you that the Yugoslav Red Cross "based upon a commitment from the Yugoslav government to the United Nations, the Yugoslav Red Cross accepts the return of the Greek children whose parents have submitted requests for repatriation, and that the view of the Yugoslav Red Cross is that the Greek Red Cross will obtain and submit these requests from the parents."

The Yugoslav Red Cross informed us that the Greek Government Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a radio program aired on October 3, 1949 in Athens, reportedly stated that the Yugoslav Red Cross informed the International Red Cross that the Yugoslav Red Cross is ready to return the Greek children found in Yugoslavia to the Greek government.

The Yugoslav Red Cross also informed us about the disclaimer from the Yugoslav Telegraphic Agency "Tanjug", which claimed that the news was not accurate. The Yugoslav Red Cross drew our attention to the fact that nobody ever said that the Greek children would be returned to the Greek government and that we should stick to the statement quoted above.

We consider it our duty to inform you of the specifics required by the Yugoslav Red Cross, which is asking you to adjust the message which was supposedly aired on October 3 via radio station Athens.

Please inform the Greek authorities of the content of this letter.

**LEAGUE AND INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE**

G. Millson Director General
D. de Traz Undersecretary of the Department of prisoners and interned civilians
(Reg. G. 85 Croix Rouge Internat. Geneva 1949)

## PRESS SECRETARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

On October 13, 1949 the Secretariat of the United Nations released the following statement:

"The press Attaché of the Special Commission on the Balkans in Athens sent the following telegram to the United Nations:

The International Red Cross in Geneva has informed the United Nations Special Commission on the Balkans that it has entered into correspondence with the Yugoslav Red Cross and has received information that the Special Commission is demanding the return of the Greek children who are now in Yugoslavia.

According to the first results, received from the Yugoslav Red Cross three months ago, it has been determined that there are more than a thousand Greek children in Yugoslavia and that the Yugoslav Red Cross has made efforts to ensure a food supply and accommodation for those children. Although Yugoslavia's needs are great, it has said in a statement to the International Red Cross that the Yugoslav Red Cross is capable of accommodating, feeding and dressing this significant number of children.

A survey was conducted, as requested by the UN Special Commission of the Balkans, to study the problems with the Greek children in Yugoslavia. Specifically, the Commission made a request of the International Red Cross to find out the number of children who are in Yugoslavia, the places where they live and the names of the organizations that care for their livelihood. The Commission also asked the International Red Cross find out what methods and language are used in the schools and whether the children can correspond with their parents in Greece.

The International Red Cross has indicated that it expects to receive information from the Yugoslav Red Cross on all these issues. The UN Special Commission on the Balkans also requested from the International Red Cross to ask the Albanian Red Cross to gather information about the Greek children in that country. The International Red Cross also expects a response to that question."

League Secretariat, no. 35 / XI - 1949)

**UNITED NATIONS - SECOND RESOLUTION**

The United Nations, during its Fourth General Assembly Session held on November 18, 1949, unanimously adopted the following resolution:

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

1. In studying the report submitted by the Red Cross International Committee and by the Red Cross League, on the issue of repatriating the Greek children, we give recognition to the two Red Cross international organizations for accepting to facilitate the implementation of the General Assembly Resolution 193, III C;

2. Noting that Greek children have not yet returned to their homes, as recommended by the General Assembly resolution, we believe that we should take new steps for the full implementation of the Resolution;

3. The General Secretary is to call on the Red Cross International Committee and on the Red Cross League to continue to strive to achieve this humanitarian goal and to give any assistance that will be required in the performance of this task;

4. The General Assembly calls on all states; members of the United Nations and other countries who provided accommodation for the Greek children, to take all measures, in agreement and in cooperation with the international Red Cross organizations to facilitate the rapid repatriation of the Greek children, based on the above Resolution;

5. The international Red Cross organizations are asked to inform the Secretary General and members of the UN on the progress of the implementation of this resolution.

(UN, 288 b / IV / 1949)

## YUGOSLAV RED CROSS TERMS FOR RETURNING THE CHILDREN TO THEIR PARENTS

Since the beginning of 1950 the Yugoslav Red Cross, regarding the implementation of the November 27, 1948 UN General Assembly Resolution concerning the repatriation of Greek children, has taken the position and set the conditions under which it will return the children to their parents and has informed the Red Cross League and the International Red Cross Committee.

Following are the Yugoslav Red Cross terms, manner and procedure for the repatriation:

1. Following the UN General Assembly 288 (IV) B Resolution taken on November 18, 1949, the repatriation of the Greek children will be mediated by the Red Cross League and by the International Red Cross Committee. In addition, the Greek Red Cross will submit all the necessary documentation to the League and to the International Committee, which in turn will certify them and submit them to the Yugoslav Red Cross. The Yugoslav Red Cross, in turn, will then submit the necessary documents to the league and to the International Committee and from there to the Greek Red Cross.

2. The documents that the Greek Red Cross must submit are as follows:

a) The authorities must submit a certified written request from the parents indicating that their child can be returned through the Red Cross;

b) The authorities must also submit a certificate of kinship made legal by the competent Greek authorities.

3. In addition to a request from the parents, the Yugoslav Red Cross, based on the UN General Assembly Resolution 193 (III) C, of November 27, 1948, would also require a statement from the child about whether he or she wants to return to Greece or not. Such a statement will be required only from children that are mature to make such a decision;

4. The handover of the children will be conducted on the Yugoslav-Greek border in the presence of representatives from the Red Cross League and from the International Red Cross Committee. During this process documents will be drawn up and signed. A record with all the necessary data for the handover of children will be maintained along with any medical findings on the situation of the child;

5. The Yugoslav Red Cross has requested from the League through the Greek Red Cross to get a guarantee from the Greek government that the handover of children to their parents will be executed immediately without locking the children in quarantine camps, shelters, etc.

As can be seen from the above requirement, the Yugoslav Red Cross wanted the entire repatriation process to be carried out with the help of the Red Cross League and the International Red Cross Committee, and did not want to work directly with the Greek Red Cross.

This was done because this process was in agreement with the above mentioned United Nations Resolution. But if we take into account the great Informburo campaign, which at that time was working against Yugoslavia and thereby subjecting our country (Macedonia) to attacks, we may falsely conclude that the Red Cross used this issue to repatriate the children in Greece. So by going through the international Red Cross and documenting its requirements, Yugoslavia put an end to the idea that the Greek children were being returned to the Greek fascists and placed in camps. Given all this, the Yugoslav Red Cross proposal to work through the Red Cross League and through the International Red Cross Committee was quite appropriate.

## STATEMENTS MADE BY DR. OLGA MILOSEVICH DURING A RED CROSS LEAGUE MEETING IN GENEVA

On May 10, 1950 Yugoslav Red Cross Secretary General Dr. Olga Milosevich, during a meeting with the Red Cross League Executive Committee in Geneva, outlined the Yugoslav Red Cross position regarding the issue of repatriating the Greek children.

“The Yugoslav Red Cross.” said Dr. Olga Milosevich, “has repeatedly stated its position on the return of the Greek children to parents. During the last meeting, the Yugoslav Red Cross Executive Board stressed that the Red Cross League must do its part and apply its authority in aiding the return of all children in the world to their parents, hence the Yugoslav children from Germany, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union and so on.

The Yugoslav Red Cross position on the issue of repatriation of the Greek children is based on the United Nations General Assembly Resolution, which recommends that interested countries take measures to surrender children to their parents and, in their absence, to their relatives.

In terms of the United Nations Resolution, the Yugoslav Red Cross has taken measures to address this issue by taking a whole series of concrete measures. It has also approved measures for Greek parents living in Australia and France and is preparing everything that is needed to address the repatriation of their children in those countries.

The Yugoslav Red Cross has prepared a group of children to be sent to their parents in Czechoslovakia. Regarding this, the SFRY government informed the Czechoslovakian Embassy in Belgrade, four times now, to prepare to accept these children. But since the Czechoslovakian government, to this day, has not responded, the SFRY Ministry of Foreign Affairs will continue to insist from the Czechoslovakian Embassy in Belgrade that this matter be addressed. We are receiving similar silence to our pleas to return children to their parents in Romania and Hungary.

For the purpose of returning the children to their parents, we have carefully examined the information which the Yugoslav Red Cross possesses as well as the lists of children which the Greek Red Cross requested, as delivered to the Yugoslav Red Cross through the International Red Cross Committee and through the Red Cross League.

According to the information we collected, as of May 4, 1950, there were 9,506 refugee children from Greece in Yugoslavia. Of that number 7,812 already live with their parents, 1,224 children live in Red Cross homes. The numbers living in the homes are in constant decline due to ongoing repatriation. As a result of this 151 children living in homes were handed to their parents this year.

Up to now we have concluded that, among the children living in the homes, there are 218 children whose parents are living in Eastern Europe, 15 have parents in Australia and one child has parents residing in France. The remaining are children who have parents living in Yugoslavia and who want their children to remain in the homes. The number of children whose parents live in Yugoslavia or in a Eastern European country are not definitive because, based on requirements, the identification of these children and of parents living in Yugoslavia has not yet been completed, nor have we been able to find their parents in Eastern European countries.

In further addressing the issue of returning children, we have run into difficulties due to the fact that the lists, which were supplied to the Yugoslav Red Cross, do not provide sufficient assurances to resolve the issue. Thus, based on the lists of children prepared by the Greek Red Cross and delivered to us through the International Red Cross Committee and through the Red Cross League, we have determined the identity of 123 children. However, the parents of 12 of those children whose names were on the Greek lists are in Yugoslavia, the parents of another 5 are in Australia and the parents of 1 child are in Czechoslovakia.

Similarly, the names of some children of Macedonian origin appear in both Macedonian and Greek. I.e. there are two names for a single child which leads to the misconception that these are two separate children; one child with a Macedonian surname and the other with a Greek surname, when in effect there is only one child.

Another difficulty we are facing is that the lists are prepared with different orthographies. In regards to that, it is understood that the lists submitted by the Greek Red Cross to the Yugoslav Red Cross can be taken as a starting point for solving this problem. But despite all these difficulties, the Yugoslav Red Cross will take all necessary

measures to resolve all issues and release the children to their parents or close relatives because this is in the spirit of our humanitarian objectives under which, in this case, are headed by the Yugoslav Red Cross and in the spirit of fulfillment of the commitments undertaken by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution," concluded Dr. Olga Milosevich.

1) This part of the statement, made by the Secretary General of the Yugoslav Red Cross, refers to the children from different countries and military events which separated them from their parents, an issue which the United Nations and the International Red Cross have not dealt with. This issue was left to the parents to demand their children back in various different ways; through national organizations, through the Red Cross and through other services and means. Immediately after the war, the Yugoslav Red Cross began to deal with requests for repatriation from both children and parents. This work lasted many years and ran into many difficulties. Since 1951 the Yugoslav Red Cross had processed separate requests for repatriating 761 children, of whom 294 had parents in Yugoslavia while the children themselves were living in different countries. There were 72 children living in West Germany, 115 in Austria, 31 in Italy, 4 in France, 2 in Belgium, 1 in Switzerland, 3 in the USSR, 34 in Hungary, 10 in Romania, 3 in Poland, 6 in Czechoslovakia, 2 in Bulgaria and 1 in Albania. There were 96 children outside of Yugoslavia who had parents in Yugoslavia and abroad, but it was unclear exactly in which countries they were located. So a number of requests have been made in various countries on their behalf. Eventually 69 children were found in West Germany, Austria, Italy, the Soviet Union and Bulgaria, but it was unknown where their parents were, for whom more requests were made inside Yugoslavia and in other countries. Three Yugoslav children were taken to Bulgaria in 1945 but by 1951 none had returned and nothing was known about them. Yugoslavia's enemies took entire families as prisoners from the many camps in Yugoslavia. There the children were separated from their parents. Parents who survived the war then began to search for their children after the war. There are many similar requests to search for children and parents in our country and in many other countries. There are searches on all sides but it seems that neither the United Nations nor the International Red Cross is interested. According to the Yugoslav Red Cross, in 1953 there were

Yugoslav children found as follows: 484 it in West Germany, 268 in Austria, 54 in Italy, 1 in Switzerland, 3 in England, 1 in Turkey, 1 in France, 3 in Belgium, 1 in Israel, 1 in Morocco, 2 in Australia, 4 in the US, 8 in Trieste and 2 in Argentina. Furthermore, there were 234 children in Hungary, 11 in Bulgaria, 11 in Romania, 2 in Albania, 10 in Czechoslovakia and 2 in Poland, for a total of 1,103 Yugoslav children.

According to the Yugoslav Red Cross, in 1953 there were foreign children in Yugoslavia as follows: 277 Hungarian children, 804 German children and 788 Greek children. By 1953 the Yugoslav Red Cross had repatriated 889 children in West Germany, 261 children in Austria, 9 in France, 3 in England and 1 in Switzerland. The SFRY Social Welfare Committee repatriated 337 children in West Germany and 211 in Austria.

The Yugoslav Red Cross will continue to work finding lost children and their parents.

(Yugoslav Red Cross Central Board Archives)

**REPATRIATION OF THE GREEK CHILDREN**

The Union has been concerned with this issue for a long time. It has been on the agenda of the Red Cross semiannual conference which opened on May 10, 1950 in Geneva.

Mrs. Moliere, Union Chairman of the Executive Board, wrote to Mr. Basil O'Connor, League President of the Board of Governors, begging him to use all his influence to raise this issue "in the spirit of goodwill and international understanding" and to allow it to be put in the field to which it belongs, and that is the field of humanity and the family.

It is well-known that the United Nations entrusted the care of organizing the repatriation of these children to the International Red Cross Committee and the Red Cross League.

The League Executive Board, at its May 11, 1950 meeting, passed a resolution on this issue with which it informed the United Nations

that “failure to overcome obstacles over which the Red Cross has no control, will result in failure to complete the mission it was entrusted with!”

With deep regret, the Executive Board declared that “Despite our continuous efforts, not one Greek child has been returned to Greece so far. None of the governments were interested in solving this problem, not even at the ‘most elementary or technical information level’. Once again the League has expressed ‘its willingness to continue performing the tasks applied in full compliance with the International Red Cross Committee’...”

One new fact in the Red Cross plan, said Mr. Basil O’Connor, is that the representatives of the Yugoslav Red Cross have told the Executive Board that the Yugoslav Red Cross has already decided to take all necessary measures to settle this issue and to return the children to their parents.

During the Conference of the Aegeans, held on June 2, 1950, in Skopje, a telegram was sent to the CPY Central Committee and to Tito, in which among other things it was said:

“We are happy to accept the position proposed by the Yugoslav delegation to the United Nations to return the children to their parents because, among us, there are many mothers and fathers waiting to receive their children. This act is highly principled and humane and we want to carry it out; to uphold our part and have the children who are in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania and Poland returned to us. We also welcome the Yugoslav government’s principled stand on the issue of normalizing diplomatic relations with Greece...”

(“Voice of the Aegeans”, September 1, 1950)

## THIRD UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION

During the United Nations General Assembly Fifth Sitting, held on December 1950, the Third Resolution was adopted for Greek children. This was actually a former resolution extended to cover

demands from both parents. After that to educate committee representatives from Peru, the Philippines and Sweden as well as to allow the Red Cross League representatives entry into countries where there are Greek children for the purpose of repatriation. Every time when it is needed, these countries would grant access in their territory.

December 1, 1950 Resolution:

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
1584 A / S

With great concern, we acknowledge receipt of reports from the International Red Cross Committee, from the Red Cross League as well as from the Secretary General, especially with statements like "no Greek child has been returned to Greece, with the exception of Yugoslavia, and that no country in which there are Greek children has taken any decisive action in conformity with the unanimously adopted General Assembly Resolutions of two consecutive sessions."

Recognizing the need, in the spirit of humanity, regardless of political and ideological convictions, the effort to return the children to their parents must not stop.

Recognition is given to the International Red Cross Committee, to the Red Cross League and to the Secretary General for their effort invested in implementing resolution 193 C (III) and 288 B (IV) initiated by the General Assembly.

1. The Secretary General, the International Red Cross Committee and the Red Cross League are asked to continue their efforts in conformity with the said resolutions;

2. The countries which provide protection for the Greek children are called upon to take all the necessary measures, in cooperation with the Secretary General and with the international Red Cross organizations, in order to accelerate the return of the children to their parents and each time, when needed, to grant access to the international Red Cross organizations in their territory;

3. A standing committee is formed, which includes representatives from Peru, the Philippines and Sweden, which will operate in accordance with the Secretary General and will agree to exchange views with representatives from interested countries for a rapid repatriation of the children;

4. The International Red Cross Committee and the Red Cross League are asked to cooperate with the said standing committee;

5. The General Secretary is asked, from time to time, to report to member states on the progress and implementation of this resolution. The international Red Cross organizations and the Secretary General are asked to report back during the sixth session of the General Assembly.

(UN no. 1584 A / S - 1950)

**RED CROSS STAFF WORKING AT THE CHILDREN'S HOMES IN BELA TSRKVA FROM 1948 TO 1958**

Teachers:

Menelaus Triandafilis, Greek Chief Manager Nikos Georgiadis, Macedonian Chief Manager Kosta Tolevski, Greek Chief Educator Iani Georgievski, Teacher Grigori Grigoriadis, Educator Ilias Keleshov, Teacher Nikos Traikov, Teacher Ilia Triantafilu and Teacher Vasil Tsaranovski.

Educators:

Lazaridu Despina, Simeonidu Kaliopi, Magelani Elena, Sotiri Eleonora, Kochombashi Sula, Hasu Meri and Karafilidu Panaiota.

Nurse maids:

Betsi Eneni, Muratidu Eleni, Gatidu Ianula, Nehteridu Maria, Giorgiu Panaiota, Omilidu Olga, Elefteridu Sonia, Papadopoulou Kaliopi, Ieropulu Liza, Siota Theodora, Ioannidou Eleonora, Sideropulu Aleksandra, Keridu Marta, Siropulo Eftarpi, Keridu

Sofia, Stergiu Panagiota, Surmela Fani, Tsana Tsutsulovska, Teodoridou Eftimia, Sika Kaeva, Fotografu Marianti, Mare Zhundeva, Foka Panagiota, Tsana Vasileva, and Hristoforidu Olga.

Educators:

Ristana Anastasova, Ristana Naneva, Tena Bundeva, Mara Nichova, Vasilka Grozdanova, Olga Nichova, Olga Zdravkovska, Tronda Petkova, Stoia Jankovska, Velika Traikova, Katina Markova, Fania Terzievska and Sloboda Mesaikova.

Nurse maids:

Sofia Argirova, Theodora Kurti, Tomeia Bozhinovska, Stoia Kizova, Mitra Germancheva, Ristana Lazarova, Marika Gorchilova, Mitra Milankova, Vasilka Delova, Kata Milankova, Elena Delova, Vasilka Mishovska, Maria Doneva, Parashka Panova, Elena Eftova, Nada Spirova, Iordana Ianchova, Mahi Palieva, Mitra Koleva, Krsta Tasheva, Vasilka Kuleova, Dafina Filkova, Sofia Koleva, Elena Shulevska, Vana Kochova and Marusha Shulevska.

Building hosts:

Giorgi Donev, Vane Ranelov, Kiro Donev, Petar Poshinov, Tasho Boianov, Blagoie Bulev and Vasil Iovanov.

**MACEDONIAN STAFF FROM THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

School Managers:

Kosta Markovski, Tode Iovanovski and Blagoje Iordanovski.

Trainers, Teachers and Educators:

Stefan Angelov, Petar Kotevski, Militsa Angelova, Stoian Kotsev, Stoina Anitsinova, Irina Kochiski, Lepa Aritonova, Iordan Kochishki, Natalia Arsova, Natka Levkova, Damian Atevski, Angel Liutkov, Olga Blagoeva, Marika Markovska, Vaska Gavritova, Nikola Markovski, Ratka Ivanovska, Petre Markovski, Natalia

Ivanovska, Traian Maslarovski, Nina Ianovski, Tome Mishkovski, Ivan Iankulovski, Vidoie Medarski, Mihailo Kolev, Momchilo Mitrevski, Milorad Naskovski, Blaga Sazdanova, Emilia Naskovska, Giorgi Stavrovski, Isailo Palchevski, Dushanka Stavrovska, Susana Panova, Giore Snakovski, Stoian Petrovski, Boge Sotirovski, Nikolina Petrova, Paskal Sotirovski, Marika Petrovska, Sunchtsa Stefanovska, Nada Petrovska, Marika Traikova, Vera Petkova, Dragan Topchievski, Risto Popovski, Traiko Trenkovski, Nada Pop Petseva, Pavlina Chamova, Ksenia Radosavlievich, Dushanka Churulova, Ioshe Ristevski, Dimitrie Shumanovski and Kosta Sazdanov.

# CHAPTER EIGHT

## TO NEVER FORGET – AS A LEGACY

## A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE "MOTHERS", THE TEACHERS AND THE STAFF THAT WORKED IN THE CHILDREN'S HOMES

From the first moment we began to call them "mothers" we accepted them as our surrogate "mothers" and loved them as much as our real mothers. Many times we mentioned them in this book. And always, while mentioning them, we pointed out that if it was not for them, surely all of us, without exception, would not be what we are today... because for the majority of us, who walked in the vast refugee columns following the "road of tears", our real mothers and fathers, older siblings, grandparents and relatives were not there. They remained behind, not only to defend our homes, villages, churches and altars… they remained behind the border to fight for our human rights and for our national freedom…

Hence, the glory belongs to them because:

First, they were extremely brave women and sisters, leading us through a military hell and a whirlwind. They expressed and demonstrated superhuman bravery. They demonstrated unparalleled courage carrying the younger children in their arms and on their backs for hundreds of miles. On top of that they encouraged us to endure, to not yield to the Greek Monarcho-Fascist enemy.

Second, they demonstrated unprecedented ethical and moral commitments when our parents surrendered us to them and they in turn promised them that they would take care of us… large groups of us… They promised they would care for us as if we were their own children, promises which they kept… promises which were expressed in deeds… from the first moment we left our villages to all the times we lived in the children's homes and shelters.

Third, they watched over our lives and remained with us, suffering and longing with us for our return to our parents. They cared for our

progress, for our education and constantly informed us about our loved ones, telling us everything they knew. They raised us well to be good and honest. They suffered with us when we were sick and rejoiced when we rejoiced. They led us by the hand and showed us what life was about.

Fourth, they expressed motherly love and goodness toward us and towards our childhood, always teaching us to never forget our parents, our Macedonian language and our birthplace and to love our homeland - Macedonia.

In other words, from the great motherly love we received, we, the children who left our homes, avoided becoming vast columns and lists only of numbers - and nothing more. They were our real mothers all the years we spent with them. Even though many of them had limited education, they demonstrated the desire and ability to help us in our educational development and made sure we were on the right track...

Therefore, all the glory belongs to them… as well as our immense gratitude. Sometimes words alone cannot express the warmth we feel for them, for what they did for us. We would like to say that there are only a few examples of such demonstrated commitment that can be found in our world history...

The nurse maids who also came with us, and those employed in children's homes from the local environments in which they lived, also deserve all our attention, respect and gratitude.

With regards to our Macedonian teachers, not only those who came to us from Aegean Macedonia but also those teachers who were sent to us from the People's Republic of Macedonia's Ministry of Education, to make sure we were taught properly, in our native Macedonian language and to love our homeland Macedonia, they too deserve our respect and gratitude. They not only taught us in all subjects but knew how to instill the primordial love in the spirit of the work of our fathers who died in Vicho, Malimadi, Gramos... They always had the patience to explain things to us, to educate us with positive examples, to teach us how to learn from our mistakes. They encouraged us to demonstrate curiosity and rewarded us with

their appreciation. They also had the ability to tolerate our misdeeds and child unrest. At the same time they warmed our desires to continue into higher education so that one day we too could become professionals and contributors to society. Our gratitude… a word that alone cannot express all the admiration and warmth we have for them and for their work!

If it was not for them, and if they did not invest all their love in us, we certainly would have been children without a childhood. This way our childhood was spent with them and was filled with endless and infinite love...

We would like to take this opportunity to express our enduring gratitude to our "mothers", teachers, nurse maids and other staff who looked after us, and to let them know that we have the same love for them as they have for us, and that their qualities are forever engraved in our hearts. We would also like to express our love to our families and to all the people who touched or lives.

**WHATEVER THERE WAS...**

Just after the People's Republic of Macedonia freed itself from the occupation and was still healing from the wounds of World War II, the Greek Civil War surfaced at its border. Its desire to help the Macedonian people in Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia was bigger than everything. Every effort was made, through this new struggle, to help them achieve their national and social freedom. The Macedonians in Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia had already demonstrated their militancy and desire for freedom during the Second World War, when they stood against the anti-Fascist forces and sacrificed countless of Macedonians in doing so.

Just before 1945, many Macedonians from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia began to arrive in the People's Republic of Macedonia. The vast majority were driven out of their homes by the terror in Greece perpetrated by the right wing Monarcho-Fascists. The terror took a turn for the worse, especially after the Democratic Army of Greece (DAG) began to withdraw from the free territories. During that time the Interim Democratic Government of Greece made it its priority to save the children. So, during the spring of

1948 and in 1949, it moved a large number of children outside of the Greek border and surrendered them to the Yugoslav Red Cross and to the People's Republic of Macedonia where they were first placed in shelters and then in specially organized children's homes. Apartments and houses, not only in Skopje but in Bitola, Shtip, Kavadarci, Kochani, Tetovo and other places, were built for those who fled with their families. New settlements began to spring up, as was the case with the settlement in Tri Cheshmi.

On several occasions, in speeches and newspaper interviews, Kolishevski, then Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Macedonia, had spoken about the Aegean Macedonian refugee issue. At this point we would like to quote parts of a speech he delivered to the Third People's Republic of Macedonia National Assembly Sitting, held from April 28 to 30, 1952. Among other things, Kolishevski said the following:

"As you well know, in November 1949 the question about the refugee children from Greece was put before the United Nations Political Committee. Our delegation took a positive position towards it and, with its involvement, greatly contributed to its proper management. This was in accordance with the UN General Assembly Resolution. The process of that Resolution called for the refugee children from Greece to be returned to their parents, at their expressed request, no matter in what country they are found. This was welcomed by all those people in the world who were able to see the humanity of this act and the tragedy of the parents and children who have been made redundant, who have been scattered in different countries and who are separated from each other. The parents and children have also expressed satisfaction with this and are hoping that by applying this resolution it will help them come together as families…"

Further on in his speech, Lazar Kolishevski underlined the fact that the Federal government and the governments of the Republics were committed to this project, which was implemented in aid of the children's repatriation with their parents. And thus, a total of 555 children had been returned to their parents. The parents of these children were living in Greece, Canada and Australia. Unfortunately, as pointed out by Kolishevski, outside of Yugoslavia,

none of the countries in which there were refugee children had acted on the resolution, although representatives of some of those governments participated in its adoption. Most of these countries were from the Informburo block. It was characteristic that the USSR directly and openly prevented the return of the children from those countries. Even in times when humanitarian cooperation was needed, to bring children and parents together, the Informburo countries did nothing. And so the tragedy of these children and people continued and was entirely dependent on the governments of these countries. Our government's endeavours to resolve this issue has been in vain, underlined Lazar Kolishevski, and so were those of our Red Cross and the International Red Cross. The governments of the Informburo countries have flatly refused to act under the provisions of the UN General Assembly Resolution. According to Kolishevski, it was not just a case of one or two countries: the children whose parents were living in Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, Bulgaria and other Informburo countries were seeking to be repatriated with their parents. But our repeated requests to these countries continued to go unanswered.

# CHAPTER NINE

## FROM THE MEETINGS IN SARAI TO THE THIRD WORLD MEETING

### EVERYTHING BEGAN WITH INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS

On several occasions we mentioned that the refugee ordeal involving the Macedonians from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia began in 1945. Those who settled in the People's Republic of Macedonia were welcomed and every effort was made to find homes and employment for them. But our Macedonian drama became especially sharp after the partisans were defeated in the Greek Civil War, when there were rivers of refugee children, civilians, fighters, disabled, young and old, pregnant women… all fleeing to find a safe haven.

As was already mentioned, the Aegean Macedonians refugees, i.e. inhabitants from the village D'mbeni, held their first meeting in 1950. The aim of the meeting was for the settlers from D'mbeni, who were now living in Skopje, to visit with their native villagers. From what we understand, this meeting was sponsored by people from D'mbeni who themselves had fled D'mbeni and were now living in the United States.

The first meeting was a huge success and so these people continued to organize similar meetings in the coming years, each meeting more successful than the previous one. These meeting were always held in the recreational centre Sarai near Skopje.

Given that the people of D'mbeni had such a huge success, other refugees began to organize similar village meetings, including the refugees from Bapchor, German, Rabi, Orovo, Dobritishta, Trnovo, Nivitsi, P'pli, Orovnik, Besvina, V'mbel, Trsie, Setina and Popadia. During these meetings the people formed village organizations and elected board members to run them. With the money raised they put on various performances, cultural programs and published monographs of their villages. They regularly invited the dancers from KUD "Gotse Delchev" to perform at their events, as well as

the singing groups “Kosturchanki”, “Bapchorki”, “Meglenki”, “Vodenki” and others.

The meetings also served as a forum to disseminate information, not only about their villages but also about the various settlements in which these people were now living. They also took the time to honour their fallen soldiers and praise their names for having sacrificed themselves for their freedom, for defending their homes and honour, and so that they are not forgotten.

This movement and the existence of the boards which maintain it greatly contributed to the idea of collecting all the expelled Macedonians from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia, now residing in the Republic of Macedonia.

Following in this course was the idea of holding a world meeting of all the Aegean refugee children, forty years after the exodus.

**THIS IDEA CAME FROM TORONTO**

The idea of organizing a World Meeting for the refugee children from Aegean Macedonia was initiated by Elena Pandzharovska during a meeting of Refugee Children in Toronto in 1984. The idea was accepted by brothers Giorgi and Vane Pliukovski. The same idea was also to discuss with Consul Petar Tolev in Vasko Pandzharovski’s apartment in Toronto. A meeting was also held in the same apartment in which the Refugee Children’s Toronto Board passed a proposal to hold the world meeting. It was decided that this meeting would be held in 1988 in Skopje and dedicated to the fortieth anniversary of the exodus.

It was their desire to hold a meeting in the free part of their country, in the Republic of Macedonia.

The acceptance of this idea was communicated to Skopje by Vane Plukovski. Then, in July 1984, a large group of former refugee children and their friends and families from Canada came to visit Macedonia. Included among them were Risto Chachkirovski, President of the Toronto Board, Giorgi Plukovski, Secretary and Sime Miloshevski, Member of the Board.

The Toronto Board representatives got together with refugee children representatives in Skopje and made requests to meet with the government of the Republic of Macedonia, more specifically with the Secretariat of Foreign Relations, where they pitched their idea for a world meeting. A similar meeting was also held in the House of immigrants in Macedonia. In the end, the former refugee children obtained full support for holding such a meeting.

While still visiting Skopje, the guests from the Toronto Board, together with their Skopje hosts, established the first Initiative Committee of Refugee Children from Aegean Macedonia. Included among its members were Vane Plukovski Chairman of the Advisory Board, Petre Nakovski, Mito Miovski, Krsto Kiradziev, Ilia Ainovski, Kole Mangov, Petre Kalinovski, Nikola Dumurdzhanov, Mihailo Dichevski, Naso Bekiarovski, Georgi Donevski, Dr. Hristo Trpovski, Nikola Bundovski and Pande Konstantinovski.

Even though the idea and the initiative to organize the first World Meeting of the refugee children from Aegean Macedonia had both open and hidden resistance from the then Yugoslav leadership, because of the need for Yugoslavia to have good neighbourly relations with Greece the meeting was opposed by Yugoslavia. But then consent was obtained from the socio-political organizations in the Republic of Macedonia, which steadfastly stood behind the initiative.

For that purpose, the then Conference of the Socialist Union of the Republic of Macedonia, having seen the activities established by the Initiative Committee, which continued to work as a Board for gathering, on July 15, 1987 formed its own Board, the National Board, in order to assist in organizing the gathering. Unfortunately not a single member from the other Board became involved.

As a result of this some negative remarks were made which prompted the old board to supplement this board (the National Board) with the inclusion of 5 members from the refugee board. Included among those who joined the new board from the Republic of Macedonia were Vane Plukovski, Mito Miovski, Giorgi Donevski, Naso Bekarovski and Kole Mangov. Others who joined

the National Board included Risto Chachkirovski and Giorgi Plukovski from the Canadian Board and Tome Miovski, Tanas Krlevski and Pero Bozharovski from the Australian Board.

After the National Board was supplemented with representatives from the child refugee Board, a president and a secretary were elected. Goga Nikolovski was elected President and Boge Sotirovski was elected Secretary. A Board Secretariat was also established to better organize the First World Meeting along with five committees: to advertise, to create cultural and artistic programs, to welcome guests, to raise operating finances and other material, and to organize round table discussions dedicated to the exodus.

The first child refugee world meeting was held from June 30 to July 3, 1988. The gathering offered a rich and wide program, and was attended by more than 10,000 former refugee children from Europe, Australia, Canada, the USA and other places.

The gathering was held in Skopje Fair and the opening ceremony was conducted in front of about 3,000 former refugee children from all over the world. The meeting began with the playing of the Republic of Macedonia's anthem "Today above Macedonia" and after that all the greetings were delivered by the former refugee children who came from Canada, Australia, the United states, Eastern European countries and from the various parts of Yugoslavia and Macedonia.

The first world meeting was opened by Goga Nikolovski, President of the organizing committee. Then, on behalf of the Yugoslav federation, Dr. Bozhidar Cholakovich, President of the SSRNJ federal conference, welcomed all the guests. Then M.A. Gligorie Gogovski, President of the Executive Council of the SRM Assembly took the stand and, among other things, said: "Your trek, that terrible ordeal from hell, under the harshest conditions of existence is yet another great tragic moment for the destiny of the Macedonian people in the first half of the twentieth century…"

President Milka Vraneshevich – Maleska spoke on behalf of the Yugoslav Red Cross which, 40 years ago, was responsible for organizing and accepting the refugee children in Yugoslavia, and

welcomed the former refugee children and all the guests who attended the gathering. After that, Board representatives from the Australian, Canadian, Eastern European and from the Republic of Macedonia gave welcoming speeches.

A prayer was conducted during the program to honour the fallen Aegean Macedonians and the children who died during the exodus. The prayer was conducted at the "Sveti Dimitria" Macedonian Orthodox Church in Skopje. The prayer was led by His Beatitude Archbishop of Ohrid and Macedonia, H.H. Gavril, Head of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, with a number of bishops and other venerable Fathers and deacons from the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

H.H. Gabriel, Archbishop of Ohrid and Macedonia, delivered a sermon to the gathering sitting at the long table in "Sveti Dimitria", in which he highlighted parts of the history of the Macedonian Orthodox Church. Among other things he said:

"This freedom we enjoy today, that has never before been seen in our long history, did not come easily to us; we have paid dearly for it, with much blood spilled, during our many centuries of struggle. This freedom we can easily lose if we don't protect it and cherish it. Therefore we must be vigilant at all times. You are well aware that we waited for almost 12 centuries to renew our state and church. We truly passed over the centuries through much suffering and torment. You can say that we were more or less half-dead. And now, here we are, resurrected…"

Similarly, a visit to the great Macedonian son Gotse Delchev's tomb, in the "Sveti Spas" Macedonian Orthodox Church in Skopje, was organized during the gathering, at which Delchev and his contributions to the Macedonian people were honoured. About 1,000 people attended the ceremony, the majority former refugee children who came from all over the world. They all participated in the singing of the Macedonian National Anthem, after which a representative from the National Board and 4 representatives from the other Boards laid wreaths on Delchev's tomb. Giorgi Plukovski laid a wreath on behalf of the Canadian Board, Kosta Angelkov laid a wreath on behalf of the Australian Board, Gotse Mirchevski on

behalf of the Eastern European Board, Vane Plukovski on behalf of the Skopje Board and Gora Nikolovski on behalf of the National Board.

After the wreath laying ceremony, a cultural performance inside the "Sveti Spas" yard was conducted by members of KUD "Gotse Delchev" from Skopje, and by the singing groups "Bapchorki" and "Sirma".

**UNDENIABLE SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE**

On July 2, 1988 the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts held round table talks. The theme was the exodus of the refugee children from Aegean Macedonia. The hall in MANU, where the talks were taking place, was full to capacity and could not accommodate everyone who was interested in listening… in hearing the scientific arguments… in hearing the truth about their own exodus... The introductory paper for this topic was submitted by Dr. Petre Nakovski.

During the first world meeting a declaration was adopted which called on the international community to take action to stop the suffering of children and people everywhere in the world, who are victims of war.

Among other things, the following were highlighted in the Declaration:

"…We, who went through the hell of war, through all the traumas of forced exile, know very well what personal and collective drama means... We, who remained and grew up in various countries of the world, learned how to strive in good and evil, never losing hope even in the harshness of life, that one day we will see our mothers, our fathers and our homeland... In the name of fundamental human rights and freedoms, we, once the children from Aegean Macedonia, now citizens of several countries (Albania, Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Australia, Canada and the USA) are raising our voices against all disadvantages of mankind, against all forms of discrimination: political, religious and cultural. We appeal

to you to recognize us as Macedonians… We appeal to you that the Macedonian people living in Greece be recognized as Macedonians in accordance with the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights, the Helsinki documents and all other international documents that protect humanity in the present and in the future. On behalf of all that we, the Macedonians from Aegean Macedonia, demand that we be given the right, which we have been deprived of because we are not Greeks by birth, to return to Greece. We are denied the right to visit our parents and loved ones, our homes and everything that is dearest to us. We have been denied the right to visit our cemeteries, the graves of our ancestors, the graves of our fathers and mothers. We have been denied to visit our friends in Greece... The national minorities living in the Balkans are a wealth of their own… they are a historic opportunity which, through cultural competition between nations, can build a solid foundation of brotherly cooperation for a humane future. We are aware and are convinced that the future of the Balkans should be built through cooperation, understanding, openness, communication and democratic freedom for nations and minorities in all these countries.

Today the entire world is changing and going through a process of emancipation and versatile boom. We are committed to this world and so we ask that the Macedonian minority be recognized with dignity and with all its elementary human rights... Goodwill and effort is needed in order for humanity to triumph in the century which we are about to enter. With help from the international community and from all progressive forces, we are confident that the struggle against what separates people and nations and against all kinds of injustices can be overcome. We believe in a better and brighter future."

**MORE MEMORABLE MOMENTS**

Another event that took place during the first world meeting, which was held from June 30 to July 3, 1988, was the unveiling of a monument of a woman with three children, symbolizing the exodus of the refugee children driven out from their homes, separated from their loved ones and heading to the unknown. The monument is located in downtown Skopje in "Zhena Borets" (Woman Fighter)

Park. This was the work of academic and sculptor Naso Bekiarovski and architect Danitsa Pavlovska - Tsigi.

The monument was unveiled by Tina Popovska in front of thousands of attendees. Tina Popovska was a former educator and teacher of refugee children. Another event was the naming of the newly built primary school which was just opened officially. The school was named after Lazo Angelovski, a prominent Macedonian fighter and teacher from Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia.

Another event that took place was the unveiling of a memorial plaque in the Katlanovo partisan hospital where many partisans who fought in the Greek Civil War were treated. The following message was inscribed on the plaque: “The Partisan Hospital, located in this building, treated participants from the Greek Civil War - fighters of the National Liberation Movement from the Aegean part of Macedonia, and members of the Democratic Army.”

About 20,000 Macedonians from the Aegean part of Macedonia served in the Greek Civil War from 1946 to 1949. A majority of those wounded during the fighting were treated in the Katlanovo Partisan Hospital, especially set up for that purpose.

An exhibition of photograps was opened in the “Sveti Kliment Ohridski” National and University Library. These photographs depicted various events in the refugee children’s lives at the homes where they lived and at the schools where they studied. There was also an exhibition of books authored by the refugee children. A literary meeting was also held in honour of the meeting in which 20 Macedonian authors participated. Included among the authors were former refugee children who lived in children’s homes in the various countries.

Traiche Popov, a Macedonian filmmaker who had made a documentary film about the refugee children in 1949, was also at the meeting making a new film entitled “In continuo”. Also attending the meeting was the writer Kuzman Georgievski. Producer of the film was “Vardar Films” from Skopje.

Included among those who attended the first world meeting were 239 journalists, 24 photographers and 16 cameramen. All the media outlets from the Republic of Macedonia were there as well as media outlets from several other countries.

The Macedonian Television conducted a live broadcast of the opening ceremony and then followed all the program activities by devoting special shows about them. The Radio Skopje radio program did the same. By doing so the Macedonian media defied the Yugoslav Federal Authorities which attempted to silence them. The mass media opened up this historic event for the world to see.

The world meeting ended with the holding of a picnic on Lake Treska, which was attended by thousands of guests from various different countries and a number of musicians, singers and dancers from various cultural associations. The memories of the refugee children, their lives in the homes and their scholastic achievements were celebrated with music and songs. The people at this picnic showed their true heart, of how they felt about their country when they sang the song "Makedonsko Ime Nema da Zagine" (the name Macedonia will never perish).

After the meeting the guests and former refugee children visited several cities in the Republic of Macedonia, including Prilep and Krusevo. A group laid a wreath at the "Makedonium" monument. Another group visited the village "Tri Cheshmi" where refugees from Aegean Macedonia lived. Some took a trip to Greece to visit their relatives and their homes in Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia.

Unfortunately, their effort was in vain and ended unsuccessfully because they were turned back at the Greek border by the Greek border authorities. Among the former Macedonian child refugees were also guests and participants from several western countries who witnessed all this… who saw first hand what "Greek democracy" looks like…

And finally, at the official dinner held in one of the Skopje Fair halls, where the ceremonial part of the meeting was held earlier, the song "Kade ste Makedonchinia" (Where are you young

Macedonians) was sung for the first time. Branko Georgievski from the village Drachevo, Skopje, now a resident of Perth, Australia, composed that song.

That song, in time, turned into an "anthem" for the former refugee children, which was also sung at the second world meeting. And no meeting could be imagined taking place… not even a ceremony in the Republic of Macedonia or abroad where the Macedonians and former refugee children gathered without that song being sung...

## A CONCRETE START – ESTABLISHING THE ASSOCIATION OF REFUGEE CHILDREN

The first world meeting, held in Skopje in mid-summer 1988, attended by former refugee children from several European countries as well as from Australia, Canada and the United States, was not only a tremendous opportunity to visit family and friends who had not been seen for years and even decades, but it was also an opportunity to share childhood memories, knowledge and problems. It was also a forum, of course, to find solutions to those problems. This naturally prompted the former child refugees to become organized in the form of an association. This initiative immediately gained legitimacy and the "Association of Refugee Children in the Republic of Macedonia" was born.

To this end, an initiative committee was immediately constituted whose task was to carry out preparations for the establishment of the "Association of Refugee Children from Aegean Macedonia in the Republic of Macedonia". Appointed to the initiative committee were Vane Plukovski, Mito Miovski, Georgi Donevski, Iliai Ainovski, Kole Mangov, Pero Nakovski, Kosta Ianchevski, Metodia Topevski, Eftim Chunovski, Paskal Gilevski, Naso Bekiarovski, Krsto Kiradziev, Eli Maneva, Mihailo Dichevski, Nikola Dumurdzhanov, Nikola Bundovski and Nikola Atanasov. Soon after it was formed, the initiative committee developed the first documents called "the Articles of the Association of Refugee Children in the Republic of Macedonia" as well as other documents required to register the Association. According to the requirements listed in these documents, in addition to electing members for the Presidency, members for another four separate committees had to be elected.

This included the Commission on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms Committee, the Protection of Property for the Macedonians from the Aegean part of Macedonia Committee, the Commission for Culture and Science Committee and the Publishing and Information Committee.

The Association was registered as an organization in the Republic of Macedonia on December 23, 1989, at which point it began to function in its wide scope from organizing scientific and professional meetings, rallies, protests, marches and cooperating with related associations, to publishing books about Aegean Macedonia and the regular publishing of the newspaper "Nezaborav" (Never forget). The Association immediately sponsored the publishing of a dozen or so books.

In its Constitution the "Association of Refugee Children from Aegean Macedonia in the Republic of Macedonia" defined its principles with historical significance as they pertained to the persecuted children and to their parents and relatives. According to Article 10, these principles consisted of the following: introduction and fulfillment of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Provisions, the Helsinki agreement, other documents that protect human rights and fundamental freedoms and how these principles were not followed by the Greek state. By ignoring these principles the Greek state had discriminated against the individual and collective rights of the Macedonian people living in the Republic of Greece, and against those living outside of Greece by not allowing them entry visas to visit their homes because they were Macedonians (not Greeks by birth).

The Association had been involved in numerous activities in the past years, which will be discussed at length on a separate occasion, so here we will only mention that this Association cooperated with all the other Refugee Associations, including the refugees and their children from Strumica, the Association for protection of human rights from Radovish, the Association of exiled Macedonians "Egei" from Stip, the Organization of Macedonians - descendants from Aegean Macedonia – Bitola, and so on.

As a result of this cooperation, two wonderful ideas were realized: the opening of the club "Nezaborav" (Never forget), located in the "Skopjanka" shopping centre, and the establishment of the "Union of Macedonians from the Aegean part of Macedonia", which has now been registered, confirming and affirming the current number of joint actions and activities.

Included in this joint action mentioned above, among other things, was the organizing of another former child refugee world meeting, to take place in Skopje in 1998.

**A SECOND WORLD MEETING FOR THE ESTRANGED...**

During the first world meeting, held in Skopje on July 5, 1988, the refugee Boards from Canada, Australia and the Eastern European countries held a meeting with the refugee Board from Skopje and agreed to hold another world meeting. It was decided to hold it in Skopje in 1998 to mark the 50$^{th}$ anniversary of the child refugee exodus.

The second world meeting of the former child refugees was held from July 15 to 19, 1998. The formal meeting, as the central event, took place on July 15 at the Skopje Fair. This event was attended by more than 3,500 former refugee children who came from Australia, Canada, the United States, but mostly from Eastern European countries and from the Republic of Macedonia. The opening speech during the ceremony was delivered by Giorgi Donevski, President of the organizing committee. Donevski's speech was followed by a speech delivered by Kiro Gligorov, President of the Republic of Macedonia. The speeches were followed by cultural presentations performed by the literary and musical group "Children of Macedonia" compiled by Stoiche Toshevski, during which members of the Macedonian Philharmonic Orchestra participated. Other performances were conducted by the MTV choirs, the "Lale" (Tulip) children's choir from Tetovo, the soloists Maria Muratovska, Svetlana Donkovski, Tsvetan Pavlov and Milan Fifrov, as well as recitationist Tome Vitanov and conductor Angel Shureta. The program was also attended by the Chartists Sonia Karandzulovska, Valentina Bozhinovska, Ilia Milchin, the singer Liupka Rondeva who lives in Sofia, and Malena Shomova from Melbourne. Branko

Giorgievski, writer of the song lyrics "Where are you young Macedonians" who lives in Perth, presented lyrics for a new song called "Nezaborav" (Never forget). This song was sung by the group "Bapchorki". After that performances were delivered by the ballet couple Zuitsa Purovska and Zoran Velevski, by the poets Pando Kolevski from Prague and Risto Milianovski from Toronto and by the folk song and dance ensemble "Gotse Delchev" from Skopje. The entire ceremony was broadcast live by MRTV.

An exhibition of photographs and documents was also opened during this meeting. The exhibition at the Museum of Skopje was opened by Dimitra Karchitska, where 106 photographs and documents from the lives of the refugee children living in the various children's homes were presented.

The participants of this meeting laid several wreaths; at Gotse Delchev's tomb in the "Sveti Spas" church, at the Second World War veteran's monument, at the bust of veteran Lazo Angelovski located at the primary school which bears his name and at the Child Refugee monument located in "Zhena borets" (Woman fighter) park.

The film "Inkontinuo" was primiered on July 16, 1998. This film was produced by "Vardar Films" at the request of the Refugee Children's Association. The story was written by Kuzman Georgievski and Traiche Popov, who at the same time was also the director of the film. The film, and its importance, was narrated by actor Ilia Milchin.

A memorial service was held in the "Sveti Kliment" Macedonian Orthodox Cathedral in Skopje, in memory of the fallen and in memory of the deceased refugee children who died during the exodus. The service was led by His Beatitude H.H. Michael, Archbishop of Ohrid and Macedonia, y a number of bishops and y a number of venerable Fathers and deacons from the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

An art exhibition was especially opened for this occasion during which Kole Manev and Paskal Gilevski spoke. Organizer of this

exhibition was DLUM and its title was “Art Exodus 98”, in which 64 artists from Macedonia displayed their works.

An exhibition of books and publications, written by former refugee children, was also opened in the National and University Library “Kliment Ohridski”. The exhibition was managed by Stavre Dzhikov who also held seminars on the “Ethnic changes in the Aegean part of Macedonia from 1912 to 1955”. A concert, dedicated to the world meeting, was also held with Nikola Atanasov playing the flute and Hristo Hristovski playing the guitar.

This time too a festive dinner was held for the attendees. Grigori Popovski, member of the Organizing Committee, welcomed all the guests followed by speeches from John Bitove from Canada, Archimandrite Nikodim Tsarknias and Giorgios Nadzhulis from Aegean Macedonia, Jordan Kostadinov - Ivanov from Pirin Macedonia, Strasho Angelovski from MAAK and Academic Blaze Ristovski from Skopje.

Entertainment for the cultural part of this dinner event was provided by singers Petranka Kostadinova, Gotse Kasapovski, Mitse Dimitrov, Alena Shomeva, Branko Georgievski, the orchestra “Aegean melody”, the folk song and dance ensemble orchestra “Gotse Delchev” and the orchestra “Slavna Debartsa”.

The event participants and former refugee children who were guests at the meeting visited several cities in Macedonia including Bitola, Shtip, Radovish and Strumitsa. There was also an organized excursion to the city Voden. In fact, about 300 participants from the gathering visited the city Voden on July 19, 1988. Voden is located in Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia. But not everyone was allowed to cross the Greek border. Stopped at the Mezhitlia border crossing were 42 citizens from the Republic of Macedonia, 15 Canadian citizens, 11 Australian citizens, 2 from the Czech Republic, 1 from Hungary, 1 from Poland and 1 from Slovakia. They were not allowed to enter Greece to attend the picnic in Voden.

Three books were commissioned to be published and were published for this event. They were “Settled places in Aegean Macedonia” in

two volumes by Todor Simovski, a monograph “We are children of Mother Earth” by Dr. Fana Butskova and the monograph “Trsie and the people of Trsie” by Nikola Kichevski. At the same time, the National Bank of Macedonia issued a gold coin with the symbols of the meeting.

The second world meeting was a complete success and in conformity with the noblest principles of humanity, which increasingly materialized in the consciousness of all the people in the world and in humanity as a whole, expressing demands that no child in the world should ever again experience the fate of the refugee children from Aegean Macedonia who suffered immensely as a result of the 1946 to 1949 Greek Civil War.

A Declaration was drafted during the meeting and was sent to all the peace-loving people in the world, advocating peace between people, human rights for the Macedonian people living in Greece, the right of Macedonians born in Greece to return to their homes and visit their friends and relatives, and the return of all confiscated properties confiscated by the Greek state from those Macedonians who were forcibly exiled.

During the second world gathering the organizing committee held a meeting in Skopje during which they decided to hold another world meeting in five years, in 2003.

## WHERE ARE YOU YOUNG MACEDONIANS?

One thousand nine hundred and forty eight,
Our Aegean Macedonia sheds tears,
Little children are being torn from their mother's warm chests,
And are scattered everywhere… their children's games they left behind.

Where are you young Macedonians?
Where are you… where did you go?
Mother Aegean Macedonia is shedding sad tears for you,
Macedonia is crying for you!

The spring of forty eight is distant,
Distant is the childhood, the childhood of the past,
The memory of home for the fatherland remains sad,
The mother's cry, never forget your mother.

Europe, Canada, America, Australia,
Together the Macedonians raised their voices,
And we too have the right to live free,
In our country, our fatherland, our dear Macedonia.

Branko Georgievski

The author of the above lyrics is from the village Drachevo, Skopje. He now lives in Perth, Australia. This song was sung for the first time at the first former refugee children world meeting, held in Skopje in 1988.

## IN PLACE OF AN EPILOGUE –HAVE WE PASSED OVER THE THRESHOLD OF NATIONAL REDEMPTION?

### Between corporal mortality and spiritual immortality

Naturally, the question arises: what sin had that generation committed, those little children of two to fourteen years old, that they should be branded and cursed to roam the merciless land with the mark of Cain on their forehead? What was their guilt, those children, to be snatched from their mothers' arms and then exiled beyond the seas and beyond the steppes? Some of us still remember those epic images from the Macedonian national Bible: unarmed children, loaded in baskets, spending days and nights sneaking behind the guards at the border, climbing bare mountains, hills and rocks, exiled from their native turf, separated from their fathers and mothers, naked and barefoot like those children threatened by the sword of Herod; they lay scattered in the yards of Macedonian churches and monasteries, waiting for a slice of bread or a blanket to cover themselves at night; barefoot children who waited for months at railway junctions and then were taken to foreign people and foreign lands…

Can those who remember these images today give us the answer to the question, explain what happened to our national dignity and morality in those moments? Why were those children not kept in our homes, so that we could share the terror of our national catastrophe? What sin was committed that we ourselves punished our own children and cursed them with the fate of Cain?

It is not the contemplation and explanations, but the decisiveness and the responsibility of a nation that are an answer to national tragedies.

It is the law of Cain that marks this generation and separates corporal mortality from spiritual immortality. Great national figures have risen from that accursed generation of ours: in science and music, in painting and literature. And not only in our national environment: everywhere that they grew up and created their own selves, those children left deep marks of dignity and order, as a sign

of gratitude to those who, with great human love, shared the drama and destiny of the innocent children from Macedonia.

Contemplating the mythological context of the mark of Cain, Edmund Leach says that, as a paradox of existence, it signifies the contradiction between corporal morality and spiritual immortality; the one carrying the sign stands as a metaphor between human achievement and atheism. That generation of refugee children from the Aegean part of Macedonia, who were torn from their native hearths and persecuted around the world the defeat of DAG in 1948, are that metaphor today. We give praise to that generation.

The events connected with the refugee children should not under any circumstances be seen or interpreted as separate from the basic strategy and ultimate goal of our Balkan neighbours for Macedonia: its final occupation and colonization, the annexation of the territory of Macedonia and the removal of Macedonian history. Just as a reminder, barely ten years after the Ilinden Uprising of 1903, when the great exile of the Macedonians from their homeland had begun, the ill-prepared Balkan Wars and the First World War started. The result was a great misfortune for Macedonia: hundreds of thousands of Macedonians were driven from their homeland and it was colonized by a non-national population from the coast of Asia Minor and the Black Sea, from the Caucasus and Armenia, from Serbia and Albania. At least in Macedonia, it was proved that political annexation primarily requires cultural annexation, i.e. assimilation.

Thus the entire twentieth century of Macedonians being exiled from their country. The ultimate result of that situation is: if towards the end of Ottoman rule in Macedonia, from the ethnographic point of view, our country was one of the most numerous of the Balkan nations, and was a relatively homogenous unity, the situation has changed dramatically towards the end of this century: approximately 60% of Macedonian territory has been taken by force and annexed to Greece and Bulgaria, and the number of the Macedonian population in the three parts is today smaller than that at the beginning of the century. These are the truths, persistent and bare – the bone.

Despite all the misfortunes that have accompanied us through history, it is as if we still do not have the answer to the most crucial question: what have we learned from this ordeal of our history?

We are one of the few nations in human civilization to have its own spiritual, Biblical and anti-biblical demarcation, but what is our experience through history? Is it a kind of predestination of the Macedonian people to enter each new century more deprived and more crippled, or – refusing to look the truth in the eye – have we ourselves created the history of a fragmented country and the destiny of a decimated nation? How can we uncover the mystery of our national contradictions and dubieties? While trying to go through this we will have no need of help from emotional outbursts and touching repetitions of familiar and less familiar traumas and dramas. It is high time that we all tried, together, to find the most rational answer.

The basic issue that the generation of Macedonians born in 1913, regardless of where they were born and raised, they cannot feel other than a part of a violently divided national being. They are the generation who felt the tearing apart of their homeland and the division of its national organism with unbearable pain; generations that are more and more convinced that they are a part of the body and spirit of a nation, predestined to their sacrifice being the ultimate, most exhausting expression of its existence. This is especially so after the declaration of an autonomous and independent Macedonia! Today, all Macedonians accept and feel our state not just as a historical, but almost a mystical fact as well! It is a state for all Macedonians, regardless of where they have been scattered the threshold of national redemption. However, the circumstances surrounding us do not allow us to be completely convinced of it: we are a nation that was one of the first in Europe to become Christian, a nation with an independent archdiocese of our own, and one of the oldest, but still our church is not recognized even by those who have themselves sprung from it! Eleven centuries ago, the Macedonian language from Sukho and Shiroka, near Thessalonica, became the basis of Church Slavonic, the first literary language of all the Slavs – and that language is still not accepted by some who evolved from it; we have a name – they do not recognize that name; even ten centuries ago we had our own state, one of the

strongest states in Byzantium, and still – it is as though Samuil's state had never existed; this nation has created music and visual arts that stimulated the Renaissance, but yet – they are trying to take that away too!

Precisely because of all these things, after so many national disasters, never has there existed a more emphatic need for the Macedonian to search for his own sense as a national entity and to discover his true position in the world. Unlike ours, the leading principals of the Hebrews national doctrine is the rabbi, who constantly retells stories from the mythological and historical genesis of the Jewish people to the children and their fathers! Our motto is: do not go back further than yesterday, so that you do not somehow harm your neighbours or others! Destructive thesis! A true example of the active negation of one's own worth!

**What should these things teach us?**

Our sustenance through history, for us, the Macedonians can never have a rigid, strict, precisely delimited beginning. We are all, like others around us, a circle in which every process of our founding represents a spot that leads to the following one. In the same way, the creation of our autonomous and independent state cannot be seen as something torn, detached from our yesterday and from our historical continuity, as something free from all the influences and currents of the past. In other words, our present is not a phantom leap across history, but a subtle and painful build-up of events and generations one upon another, which have all been built into the ultimate goal…

The summary of Balkan history is being constructed here in Macedonia, whether anyone likes it or not. What is the ordeal of our history like, and what is the ordeal of the history of another nation such as the Hebrews, for instance, who in many ways share the same historic destiny as we do? What does our and their experience of history teach us? I am convinced that this comparison can be of immeasurable value to us.

Thus: Halpen Lavick, a Jewish poet of the night and the apocalypse, after his persecution in Siberia and the terrible social misery that he

experienced living as a painter and poet in New York, claims every person who is Jewish, but for whatever reason does not live in Israel, the land from which his people were exiled, to be in exile. The height of that exile is in America and Australia.

When it comes to our present Macedonian situation: regardless of how radical the previous attitude may seem, we cannot find any reason not to accept it. This means that every Macedonian who, regardless of the reasons why, does not live in Macedonia, the land from which his people were exiled – is in exile. The height of that exile is in Australia, America and Canada.

A thesis such as this inevitably suggests an addition: the Macedonian individual carries within himself the destiny of the whole of Macedonian history and its most active form; regardless of where he lives, that individual longs to return to his homeland. The person who consciously rejects this and such like longings is consciously losing the essence of his national biography, which is his personal biography as well. In this way he rejects to the core the most valuable feature of his Macedonian embodiment. Whether we like it or not, it is becoming very clear that in the Balkans there is neither the time for new national and assimilating regroupings, for the creation of "great" states. There is time and space, however, for the return of violently taken national and human rights; there is time and space for democracy. One more thing: whether anyone likes it or not, Balkan history and democracy are being written here in Macedonia and through its history.

Thus we come to the next logically drawn essence, according to which the Macedonian who does not feel exiled is also, in a way losing the essence of being Macedonian! At the same time, the Macedonian in Macedonia, claiming that every Macedonian outside Macedonia no longer has any fundamental ties with the homeland, is also losing the essence and sense of being Macedonian. In other words: the famous thesis of division into big and small, "inferior" Macedonians! Or, to be more precise, a kind of national cannibalism…

I have seen some of our people who bow down and kiss the land of their ancestors as they set foot in the homeland, how they caress the

bones of their mothers and fathers… Ah, those young people, I think to myself, who love the homeland of their ancestors more than they love themselves…

It is true that Macedonians living in Macedonia should be happier, should live in greater spiritual peace with himself and his homeland! That should be the main reason to envy him and to long for such peace and such a home in the homeland! It is also true it does not give the Macedonian living in Macedonia the right to live with the arrogant supposition that he is ethnically more dignified than his exiled brother!

However, it is also true that today the Macedonian living in Macedonia keeps watch, guarding the homeland. Despite all appearances, his homeland now finds itself in the most uncertain and delicate historical situation: it will either be a state of the Macedonian people, or it will disappear without a trace in the brutality of the great programmes for division and re-division! The support for Macedonian independence that comes from America and Russia gives hope. It is perfectly clear today that the existence of our people is connected to the existence of Macedonia! The soil is something much more than just the fruits that grow on it. We could manage without any one of the people, but we could never manage without Macedonia!

**Why should we not canonize our own Macedonian Bible?**

What we have been lacking for a long time, and now proves to be more and more, is our own national programme. At no time should we neglect the fact that we are a small country, even more – that we are a colonized country, in which all newcomers living in Macedonia have their own national states unlike us Macedonians to whom Macedonia is everything, the cradle and the tomb! Naturally, Europe and the world need Macedonia with its specific national and cultural traditions, its specific summits in Macedonian, its specific democratic vision of the Balkans and the world. Europe and the world do not need Macedonia as a political nonsense with an undefined and shapeless national vision. In order to keep at least the remnants of Macedonia, it is crucial that we have that national programme which we have needed for decades and centuries.

Our national programme should be a plain and strict Macedonian book. Our book of books. Our second Bible. We have been excellent interpreters of the first Bible through the centuries; we will be even better interpreters of our own, personal Bible. Now is the time to have this Bible of ours, because tomorrow it will be too late! Times are difficult, many things are unpredictable.

This book will be neither an anthology nor an encyclopedia, not a history nor a collection of documents, but all these things together! A word and a thought running ceaselessly from the past to the future. Not the book of a period, but an open book which the generations will constantly be supplementing with their own writing and their own ordeals. That book will be our Holy Scripture and our covenant, a book respecting God's commandments and supplemented by our own, Macedonian commandments. The next century, Malrayx said, will either be a century of religion, or we will no longer exist. That book will never be completed or final, not be perfect. It will contain much wisdom and a little nonsense; there will be many dreams, but a lot of bitterness as well.

Why should we not canonize our own Macedonian Bible? It will not be a big book; one will be able to carry it with one, put it under the pillow, and give it as a present. That book will be our spiritual calendar. In that calendar, among the many holidays, the greatest and most respected will be the Day of the Separated! On that day we will all gather here in Macedonia, of course. Unless, God forbid, our end is already written in the stars, it is time we left the world a book about ourselves! A book – a personal confession!

Macedonia is an enormous historical experience. A country that stimulates high meditation, because there are not many nations that have suffered and survived all their sufferings with such dignity as have our Macedonian people. We travel through our own archaeology down numerous ages, each more mysterious, each more dramatic!

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About the authors

Misho Kitanoski was born in Vevchani in 1941. He completed his primary and secondary education in Kavadartsi and university in Skopje.

He began his career in journalism in 1963 with the newspaper "Studenski zbor" (Student's word), and, as a professional journalist, continued his career with the newspapers "Trudbenik" (Worker), "Komunist" (Communist) and the magazine "Mlad borets" (Young

Fighter). He was editor in chief of the newspaper "Prosveten rabotnik" (Enlightened worker) in Macedonia. He was also an editor of the first Macedonian political magazine "21". He was an editor of several newspapers and magazines, and 2nd editor of the newspaper "Nezaborav" (Unforgotten) - Journal of the Association of Macedonians from the Aegean part of Macedonia, published in all newspapers, magazines and journals in the country.

Misho Kitanoski has authored the following works: "Site detsa se isti" (All children are the same) and "Dzimlii i liftovi" (Marbles and elevators, poems for children). He has contributed to the publications "Informator i instructor" (Newsletter and instructor) – for twenty-five years to "Prosfeten rabotnik" (Educated worker), for thirty years to the kindergarten "Kocho Ratsin" and has co-authored the monograph "50 godini od Organizatsiata na RVS na Makedonia" (50 years from Organization RVS in Macedonia). He has published the book "Bela kniga – tsrno pismo" (White Paper - black letter), the works "Makedonski indeks na zabraneti dela" (Macedonian index of prohibited acts), and the book "Letopisi za makedonskit sela" (Chronicles of Macedonian villages). His works and articles have been published in English, Albanian, Turkish, Slovenian, Serbian, Russian, Bulgarian, Croatian and other languages. Misho Kitanoski's works were included in two anthologies of Macedonian and Yugoslav poetry for children: Serbian and Russian, and in many textbooks for primary education in Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish.

Giorgi Donevski was born in 1934 in the village Bapchor, Aegean Macedonia. He was the son of Dosta and Mitre Donevski. In 1948, during the course of the Greek Civil War, Giorgi, along with many other children, was sent to Yugoslavia.

Giorgi spent his childhood in the chidren's homes (boarding schools) in Tsrikvenitsa and Samobor in Zagreb, Croatia.

He was a very active young man and spent nearly four decades in various managerial positions in the social and political life of the Republic of Macedonia. He was honoured and awarded many times for his long-term social activities and contributions.

Under his initiative established were: The song and dance folk ensemble “Gotse Delchev” from Skopje, and the singing groups “Bapchorki”, “Vodenki” and “Sirma”. Giorgi was also an organizer of the cultural-historical event “Pesna za Gotse” (A song for Gotse) that eventually grew into an international event.

Giorgi was one of the main organizers of the World Meeting of former refugee children, held in Skopje in 1988, and the second meeting held in Skopje in 1998.

Giorgi Donevski has been one of the most active members of the Association of Refugee Children in Macedonia since it was establishment in 1989. He was secretary and president of the Association. He was also the initiator for establishing the club “Nezaborav” (Unforgotten) for the Associations of Macedonians from the Aegean part of Macedonia.