

Trajan Belev – Goce

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“Unforgotten” Editions

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Trajan Belev – Goce

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The publication of the series "Unforgotten" represents a program of the Municipal Council of the Union of the fighters of the NOB – Bitola. The series is comprised of many publications of famous people and events from the recent revolutionary past of Bitola and its environs. People who in the Liberation battle and the socialist revolution showed themselves to be heroes and their names and their achievements are celebrated in the "Unforgotten" series by the people.

The series "Unforgotten" begins with this first book.

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HUMANITY CANNOT ACHIEVE PROGRESS IF THERE ARE NOT
SACRIFICES, IF THERE ARE NO PEOPLE WHO SACRIFICE
THEMSELVES. IF PEOPLE SACRIFICE THEMSELVES IN THE
DEFENCE OF FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE – THAT IS THE
PINNACLE THAT HUMANITY CAN ACHIEVE

TITO

TRAJAN BELEV – GOCE
BITOLA 1987

GJAVATO AND THE BELEV FAMILY

Gjavato is a village 37 km northwest of Bitola directly on the foothills of Derven. The village is on the site of a very old settlement which in the Turkish documents is noted in 1513 as a mountain pass village¹ and in 1568 has approximately 453 residents.²

At the time of the Ottoman Empire the residents of Gjavato were dedicated to surviving. There is a legend among villagers which recounts that the village was burned to the ground destroyed by outlaws and its residents escaped from the mountain pass Derven to the current location of the village³. In 1638/9 they supported the rebel Belche with arms such as rifles, arrows, swords and rocks in a fight against the Turkish army⁴. They showed that same approach in the battles in the struggle for the church seeking that the school and church service be conducted in their own Macedonian language.

The villagers came together to resolve community problems together and this confirmed their self-belief. The love of freedom became a part of everyday life woven into the education of the children. As a result of that, there was a spirit of belief in liberation in the village. On such a basis when the Macedonian revolutionary organisation was growing in Bitola Gjavato was one of the more organised and core supports of the organisation. For the Ilinden Uprising, Gjavato villagers contributed 5 companies with local leaders comprising 273 people.⁵

¹ Historical Archive Bitola, Sidzhil No. 4, page 52

² Gjorgji Dimovski-Colev and Gjorgji Gramoski, New Statistical Details on Bitola and the Bitola Region, Attachments, Bitola 1983, No 38, p156

³ Dimovski Gjorgji and Kochanovski Jovan, Gjavato Hronika 1964, p14

⁴ Dr Aleksandar Matkovski, Details about Certain Rebels in Western Macedonia, Glasnik of INI, Skopje 1961, V, No 1 p 111

⁵ Dimovski Gjorgji and Kochanovski Jovan, Gjavato Hronika, Bitola 1964 p21

During the uprising there was a significant battle on Derven the Ottoman forces bombed Gjavato with artillery fire which apart from two houses was entirely destroyed.⁶ The organisation relocated the elderly, the women and children in neighbouring villages and some escaped to Bitola. Amongst those who escaped to Bitola were Koste and Chona Belevi where their first son was born. They called him Trajan. Having few resources and no work, they gathered themselves and joined relatives in Capari. Getting minimal aid help – flour from USA, children's clothing and blankets from Serbia – they stayed for a long while in Capari, until their house was rebuilt in Gjavato. They then moved to Gjavato, finished their house and did their best to survive. They were poor. Trajan spent his childhood in such impoverished circumstances. Like other children in Gjavato after the Ilinden Uprising he was not spared from physical labour such as tending the livestock or working in the family garden. When Trajan turned 8 his brother Risto was born. In the meantime, Trajan attended the village school where the books were in Bulgarian but because the teachers were Macedonian speakers, education was in Macedonian. With the establishment of Serbian rule there was the use of the Serbian language and Trajan probably completed his primary school education before the first world war commenced or just after.⁷

The establishment of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in Bitola SRPJ(k) with Ratko Zhunik at its head saw the emergence of communism. Zhunik in collaboration with the teacher communists spread communist ideas among the population. At that time⁸ Sotir Angelkovik, Milisav Bujisik

⁶ Ibidem p 22

⁷ There is no information as to whether the school operated during the 12 month Bulgarian occupation between 1915 and 1916. Likewise, there are no details about the school's operation during the Serbian re-occupation between 1916 and 1918. However, in 1918 Trajan was too big for mandatory education. He was 15 turning 16

⁸ For the 1918-19 school year and 1920-21 we have no details about the teachers who taught in Gjavato. In the school year 1920-21 Sotir Angelkovik taught grades I and III; and Milisav Vujisik taught grades II and IV (from 1

(temporary) and Teodosije Tomik were appointed teachers in Gjavato. The first two were identified by the government as communists⁹ because of their communist and anti-government activity. The arrival of these progressive teachers with views diametrically opposed to the official Greater Serbia bourgeoisie government made a strong impact on the Gjavato villagers especially amongst the young in whose circle Trajan Belev found himself. Belev heard from the teachers about exploitation, how it arises, what classes are and what are classes in society, socialism and the socialist revolution and something more about the Russian where the bourgeoisie order was removed and replaced with soviet socialism where the villagers and workers ruled. A new vision opened before young Belev. The communist ideology appealed to Belev and his fellow villagers in light of their material situation. Meanwhile the ban on the communist party delayed their further action and became their ideology and an anti-government attitude. At this time, we do not see any particular manifestation of a political character in Gjavato which Belev and others were part of. The everyday struggle of many families was harsh, as it was for the Belev family. Belev too was aware of the need for hard work to help the family. He married at the age of 18 and to support his increasing family he followed his father's lead and worked as a pedlar – trading fish, apples and grapes from the Prespa villages in Bitola or nearby Bitola villages. This sort of business took a lot of effort. He usually travelled by horse so that he could load up with products but on the way back he walked. This happened daily and often the weather was bad. The income he earned from this was very modest.

September to the end of December) and then Teodosije Tomik from 1 January to 7 March and Sotir Angelkovik from 7 March until 24 June. School Records from Village Gjavato COU "Trajan Belev" village Capari-Bitola
⁹ Dr Marija Jovanovik. Politico-educational opportunities in Vardar Macedonia) 1918-1929, Skopje 1983, p 139, F 449 Bitola.

Emigrant work

At the height of his life trajectory, Trajan Belev did not feel encircled by that unwritten law, like others in the village including his father, that “when you do not have land and livestock then you must emigrate to work.” But just after getting married Trajan left his pregnant wife and set off to work in France. He got a job as a labourer in one of the mines. Then, after working for about a year, he set off illegally, without a passport, for Canada, dressed as a waiter. From there he snuck into the United States of America. While he was overseas, his son was born – Metodija – but working as an emigrant did not allow him to celebrate the birth of his first son with his family¹⁰. As a result of difficulties with the mother in law, his wife left the Belev family and also left behind the 6 week old baby. The breakdown of the marriage was contributed to by Trajan’s absence working as an emigrant overseas. There was no formal divorce and Metodija grew up in Gjavato with Trajan’s parents.

In the USA Trajan got a job in the steel industry in Gary Indiana. He found Macedonians including people from his own village of Gjavato in Gary who had also arrived as emigrant workers including: Mitre and Vangel Chatalovski, Trajan Tomov, Ognen Stankov, Apostol Murdzhev, Kole Bendev and others. The heavy manual work they all did, brought them closer. Together they felt part of a whole. Among them were some union organisers who got Trajan involved in the labour movement. He took active part in just about all the worker events and meetings. In USA Belev formed into a firm and uncompromising internationalist.

¹⁰ Metodija was born 9/22 August 1923 when Trajan was 20 years old, Historical Archives Bitola. Register of Births from the church Bogorodica, village Gjavato. Book III p 23, No 55

In 1928 Trajan Belev, Kole Bendelev and Tashko Chatalov joined the communist part of America, paid their fees and got membership cards. In 1929 Trajan was the most active and became the head of a branch of the communist party where the Gjavato villagers mentioned above were members. In 1929 Trajan took part in the massive demonstration that was held in Chicago. Trajan and Kole Bendelev, handed out pamphlets and demolished the shopfronts of some reactionary newspaper publishers. For their involvement Trajan and Kole Bendelev were fined \$50 and were imprisoned for 7 days. The leadership of the party noticed his activism and in 1930 he was sent to complete a course in Detroit Michigan, where he learned about Marxism and oratory skills¹¹. Trajan's revolutionary conduct in USA was also noted: "... at a meeting in Gary Indiana, where about 2,000 workers were present Belev spoke about the Soviet Union and praised the red flag which had been held by a Spanish woman, and asked her to wave it above the whole crowd."¹² Trajan Belev was jailed a number of times because of his activism against the regime and his efforts on behalf of workers.

Then the capitalist world was gripped by the huge economic crisis which in the USA resulted in 12 million workers being flung from work. The crisis hit the emigrant workers hardest including those from Gjavato. In those circumstances Trajan, filled with the communist spirit, tried to illegally travel to the Soviet Union. He thought if there was a classless society being built there, he should help in building it. He believed that society was ideal in the Soviet Union. He admired Stalin and even sent him a pipe as a mark of respect. He was fired up about socialism and thought that was what was being built in

¹¹ Mijal Grbevski and Kole Bendelevski, *The Revolutionary Work of Trajan Belev-Goce, Bitola and Bitola Area in NOV 1943 and 1944 Bitola 1982, Book II, p 585*

¹² Dimovski Gjorgi and Kochanovski Jovan, *Gjavato Hronika, Bitola 1964 p120*

the Soviet Union. His attempt to sneak into the Soviet Union failed. He was found out and deported from the USA as an undesirable. After a decade long stay working and learning about Marxism and experiencing a revolutionary spirit he returned to his homeland, to Gjavato.

BACK IN GJAVATO

In Gjavato he found that his parents had aged and his son Metodija had grown up. Realising his son needed care and his mother some help – and he himself needed a partner – and even though he was not formally divorced, he travelled to the Prespa villages for work and met Zora Joncheva from Perino, Resen region. Once he told her about his situation he asked her to join him and share the good and the difficult in life, she agreed and went with him to Gjavato. In this informal marriage Trajan and Zora had a son Cane in 1934 and twin girls Velika and Verka in 1941. Zora treated Metodija like her own son which Trajan valued very highly. He “never raised a hand to me” as some husbands do¹³. This was a real marriage even though not formally recognised.¹⁴

In Gjavato in the 1930s even before the return of the emigrant workers there emerged a feeling of strong opposition to the local government connected to individuals, but without any authoritative leaders.

With the arrival of the emigrants especially Trajan Belev (who was already politically mature) that strong opposition began to grow further and directed at the bourgeois government. Belev’s presence in Gjavato was felt especially among those with those villagers who were the keenest on liberation and Belev was in close contact with them. As a result, a small group started to

¹³ According to the oral account from Zora Beleva

¹⁴ The marriage between Trajan Belev and Zora Joncheva-Beleva was officially recognised in 1946 in Trajan Belev’s absence. He died in 1943

form: Mitre Chatalov Tashko Chatalov, Todor Chatalov, Kole Bendelev, Dimitrija Filipovski, Sotir Bubev, Krste Ilievski, Todor Perdulov, Metodija Macanov and others. Their passion for the living situation of others, workers in France and the USA, for the position of the working villager in the Soviet Union and a long list of other issues, Belev satisfied their interest with detailed descriptions and, importantly, photos. Further, he continued to be active in relation to the USSR, a country he spoke about with admiration. Metodija Micanev was particularly interested in these discussions and he asked many questions of Belev about that "great Slav nation ..."¹⁵ The political activism of the Gjavato villagers especially the youth emerged in the lead up to elections and also during elections among the political parties of the time.

After the 6 January dictatorship a political movement emerges in Gjavato especially before the 5th May parliamentary elections in 1935.

Belev who often went to Bitola for work established contacts with Josif Hristovski -Dzvoncharo and Kiro Milenkov. He shared political discussions with them and learned a lot about what was going on in the political landscape - in the world and in the country itself. On one occasion when Belev was in Bitola "... at a conference, held in 1935,... in the hotel Eftik, the hotel called Makedonija today, at which the president of the Democratic party of Yugoslavia spoke, Luba Davidovik and others, Trajan Belev and Kole Bendelev attended. After the formal speech by Davidovik there were questions. Trajan Believe asked: What is the policy of the Democratic party on the Macedonian question. Luba Davidovik without hesitation said that the Macedonian question had been solved in 1912 and there was nothing further today. After that speech by Luba Davidovik Trajan said,

¹⁵ According to the oral account of Metodija Micanev of Gjavato

in front of everyone, if that was the position of the Democratic party then it could not hope for much in the way of success at the elections."¹⁶

The Greater Serbian government had already noticed Trajan as inconvenient to the regime and so he often had problems with the gendarmes stationed in Kazhani. Belev was often jailed in the lead up to an election, during election campaigns with the goal of preventing his anti-regime activism. Trajan got used to it and suffered through those imprisonment and intimidations. He was not afraid of the police and after every time he left jail he gained greater authority among the honest residents of Gjavato and the surrounding villages. It was already being said about Belev that he spoke to truth and the truth about the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was – myth, corruption, affairs, rapes, poverty, oppression of workers, exploitation and national oppression...

MEMBER OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF YUGOSLAVIA

From the establishment of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia the bourgeois regime counted on the educated people in Macedonia. It expected of them a subtle task: the gradual denationalisation and assimilation of the Macedonians. Against all the efforts to secure the assistance of these key people the Ministry for Education confronted one truth. That is, a large number of their teachers were progressive people's teachers and a good proportion of them were members of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia.

The teachers Todor Angelevski, Boris Strezovski, Ilija Jankulovski, Penko Zdravkovski, Dragoljub Murganik and some others belonged to the "Third group of people's teachers." This group represented a people's movement among the teachers in

¹⁶ Mijl Grbevski and Kole Bendeovski ... op cit article p.566

the Yugoslav Kingdom and was especially active in Macedonia. Its goal was to for the public to recognise the harsh life in Macedonian villagers. The group was led by teachers who were members of the Communist party of Yugoslavia.

In the school year 1936/37, Todor Angelevski was appointed teacher in Gjavato who was popularly called Tosho the Teacher and who was from the Bitola village of Lafci. Tosho, when coming to be a teacher in Gjavato found an appealing place where there was a rich cultural and educational and political work. That environment included progressive Gjavato residents that Tosho was close to including Trajan Belev and the young worker Jonche Murdzhevski. The conceptual determination brought them close together very quickly. They organised the villagers from Gjavato into political activities. One was a demonstration in which about 120 residents took part in Gjavato where they went to Capari where at a joint meeting with the Capari residents they resolved to put forward as candidates for president of the municipality people from their own midst and not those close to the government. On the day of the election when it was clear that there was falsification in the elections, the Gjavato residents at the election place created an incident, that is they tore the ballot papers. The gendarmes quickly became involved and some of the Gjavato villagers were jailed. Prosecutions followed as well as fines and judgments.¹⁷ In the broad political action by the progressive Gjavato residents Tosho Daskalo and Trajan Belev did not directly take part but the action was a natural result of their political work among the villagers on Gjavato. In addition to the adverse action by the police the goal of the Gjashtani was reached that is, for the elections to be held again and for their candidate to be put forward with 500-600 votes more than the

¹⁷ For broader information on the actions see: Gjorgi Dimovski and Kochanovski Jovan, op cit Hronika p 36-38

opposition candidate. This success encouraged the Gjavashtani and the authority of Todor Angelevski (Tosho Daskalot and Trajan Belev were raised even higher.

The other large political action was the successful strike of the few workers from Gjavato employed in the mill in Kazhani owned by D Tiljevik from Struga, and the formation of the village cooperative in which bit by bit gained about half of the village families as members. The coop building became a focal meeting point for the youths and adults. In part it was because of the battery operated radio and the establishment of a reading room which mostly offered progressive reading material. The villagers were mostly interested to find out more about events in the world such as the war that divided Germany and the approach of England, France, USA and the Soviet Union toward Germany and later the beginning of the second world war, the fall of Poland, the approach of Yugoslavia toward all of those events and so on. After the news there would follow discussions: questions, answers, debates about different political figures (Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini etc) and the military events. In the debates, apart from the teachers, Belev often jumped in with explanations of fascism, its ideology, racist theories etc. There were often discussions about the peace loving policies of the Soviet Union and the lives of the working class and of villagers in that proletarian country. In these discussions, Trajan Belev would frequently speak for the USSR and would even glorify its political successes and its building up of socialism. As a result of this, the gendarmes regarded Belev as suspicious and searched the Belev home. Trajan himself was jailed in the Kazhani gendarme lock up where his discussions were monitored. As there was no basis to accuse him of any crime, he was released from jail after being jailed for a short time.

The political struggle received a more severe blow in the parliamentary elections held in 11.XII.1938. In that period, the KPJ was supporting candidates which were in opposition to the pro fascist candidates connected to Milan Stojadinovik. Trajan took part in the pre-election campaign. Coming to Bitola he learned from the students Josif Hristovski – Dzvoncharo and Kiro Milenkov that they were preparing to agitate for the representative of the united opposition Petar Valjanov who was a well know trader and democrat in Bitola. In the discussions about the action, Belev gave them his unconditional support that is, he made it clear to them that he would selflessly help in their action, because their representative was the lesser of two evils. Josif Hristovski Dzvoncharo and Kiro Milenkov went to Gjavato for that pre-election campaign in Gjavato with Trajan Belev. They distributed leaflets to the villagers with content opposing Milan Stojadinovik -leader of the Yugoslav Radical Union (Prime Minister of Yugoslavia 1935-9) and supporting the United Opposition.

In the same pre-election campaign Trajan Belev and Kiro Milenkov went to Capari to carry out actions. They gave a speech to the villagers of Capari. The speech was given from the balcony of the house of Petre Karanfilov. In his speech, along with other comments Trajan said "we the workers are mistreated and that is why we have to open our eyes on who we elect. We should lend ourselves a hand and free ourselves from those that take advantage of us." During the speech the teacher Bozho stood on the neighbouring balcony and threw eggs at Belev but it had no effect on him at all. The villagers accepted what he was saying and showed approval with frequent applause. While he was speaking the gendarmes

came from Kazhani but Belev did not let them catch him but rather hid in the house of Sotir Mukjev.¹⁸

Apart from speaking at mass gatherings, Belev also spoke to the villagers skilfully against the current regime – whether through ordinary everyday conversations whether in the pre-election leaflets. As he had a talent to be an appealing speaker and a gently nature that allowed him to get close to most people, Trajan Belev was able to succeed in his activism. Belev undertook activism in neighbouring villages which led to the number of like-minded people growing increasing.

The political actions, pre-election campaigns and targeting the government led to the formation of a group who were anti-regime in Gjavato (other than the teachers Todor Angelevski and Ilija Jankulovski) and which included: Trajan Belev, Dimiltrija Filipovski, Kole Bendev, brothers Mitre, Tashko and Todor Chatalovski, Metodija Macanov, Krste Iliovski, Sotir Bubev, Todor Perdulov and others. Belev served the others as spokesman in all political actions and discussions.

In the 1938 elections Belev left for Belgrade to look for work but did not stay there long. He returned to Gjavato with his friend Gjorgi Ognenov without getting a job or earning anything.¹⁹ He continued his hard work in Gjavato – travelling, transporting, trading, and selling fish and fruit for wheat, to ensure his family managed to survive.²⁰ Belev kept in contact with Josif Hristovski-Dzvoncharo in Bitola and always received from him key information about what was happening in the country and abroad. In their discussions Dzvoncharo discovered that Trajan was a man who was ready to sacrifice

¹⁸ Gjorgi Dimovski -Colev and Boris Pavlovski – Those who did not give in. Bitola 1982, p 226

¹⁹ Belev took 2 books to Gjavato on that period: one was “Workers library” AL Stanje, and International Unions, translated by Rudolph Vichtner, Belgrade 1928. Belev’s daughter Velika Beleva holds the book in Bitola.

²⁰ In the meantime, Belev’s brother, died at the young age of 24.

himself for the good of the working class, for a better society for all.

In the period after 1938 and especially in 1939 the military organs began a divisive action which was popularly called 'military exercise.' People were allocated in different ways to the exercises, some had 11 days while others got 25 days while others 5-6 or 8 months. Some were called back a month after having left the exercises. In this period, the military issued a requisition for carriages, horses, donkeys and other necessities for the military and artillery. The military mobilisation was a great burden for the population, especially the villagers, because it interrupted daily life and work. Trajan Belev was called up in the summer period of military exercises in Prilep but was not kept for long and returned to the village after a short period.

From the middle of 1939 to the start of 1940 efforts were made by a number of Bitola communists to form a local committee of the KPJ in Bitola. Svetozar Vukmanovik visited MK KPJ Bitola at the start of 1940 and later Orce Nikolov provided instructions for the organisation of party work. In the Spring of 1940 Svetomir Vukmanovik and Sreten Zhujovik returned and then later only Zhujovik who provided more instructions the work of MK KPJ Bitola grew stronger and developed into a more successful effort. Its success could be seen in the growth of party cells in the town and in the villages. The progressive Gjavato group decided to form a party organisation in the village as Josif Hristovski- Dzvoncharo²¹, a member of the MK KPJ in Bitola, knew the anti-regime and communist ideology of the teachers and Trajan Belev in Gjavato. Todor Angelevski²²

²¹ Josif Hristovski Dzvoncharo, at this time was in the camp Bileka

²² Bogoja Fotev, Recollections of Events in the Bitola region between the Two World Wars in NOV 1941-1942, Bitola 1978 Book I p508

did the set up. During March the Gjavato party cell was visited by MK KPJ party member Bogoja Fotev.

In the review of party cells that Cane Svetija and Josif Hristovski–Dzvoncharo carried out, the members are noted: Trajan Belev, secretary, members Todor Angelevski and Ilija Jankulovski (teachers in Gjavato), Kole Bendelev, Krste Ilievski, Dimitrija Filipovski, Metodija Macanov, the brothers Mitre, Tashko and Todor Chatalovski and Sotir Bubev (farm workers). The election of Trajan Belev as secretary was not by chance. he had all the attributes of a communist. He was modest, very honest, right minded, straight-forward and close to the people, with a sound political and Marxist foundation and what was most important completely dedicated to the socialist revolution. On the other hand, Belev was active, he knew the people well, in Gjavato and neighbouring villages and also Prespa and could regularly communicate with MK KPJ in Bitola. As a result of this and the broad ranging area he covered when working, he was entrusted with party work with the Prespa villages.

In becoming the secretary of the party organisation in Gjavato, with his accuracy and diligence in completing the tasks allocated by MK KPJ, Belev was an example for the members of the party cell and Belev looked to them to develop the same qualities. The first main task allocated by MK KPJ to the Gjavato party cell was to recruit more youths. To get this done, it was necessary to form a SKOJ organisation which, through its political educational groups comprised of supporters of communist ideas would grow the support base. They also had to arrange it so that the members worked with the supporters on the communist ideology in the village or neighbouring villages, so that, as their consciousness is raised they will be ready eventually to become members of the KPJ. To make sure they succeeded in getting this done Belev asked all of the

members of the village cell to assist. Metodija Macanov, who was well read and younger than the others, was given the task of working with the youth of Gjavato. In 1940 he took steps to form a SKOJ organisation. For the youths he considered would be suitable for SKOJ, with Belev's agreement, he gave them tasks and responsibilities, to see if they were in fact dedicated when tested by hardships and difficulties. He kept Belev up to date with all the successes and failures with the youths who, for his part, guided him on how to deal with the situations which arose.²³ In a short time a political educational group of youths was formed comprised of Jonche Murdzhevski, Laze Laskovski, Mijal Grbevski, Goga Bendev and others.

KPJ, an illegal party, often used propaganda literature in its activism. Todor Angelevski and Trajan Belev acquired a printing press to produce material and kept it in the house of supporter Gjorgji Jurukovski where Todor Angelevski lived. What the press produced is not known as only Todor and Trajan used it.

"At this time the political situation in the country became more explosive and the members were asked for greater activism and greater skill in implementing the party instructions, while we had not finished growing and were not ready for such intense activism. That is why all the local committee members in Bitola were all round up and arrested."²⁴

Meanwhile the Provincial committee of the KPJ for Macedonia intervened a few times with the objective of increasing activism of the party organisation in Bitola. However, it was not possible to increase activism without a program of actions and leadership. At the suggestion of the Prilep students who knew Stevan Naumov–Stiv as a school child and active student, the Provincial committee persuaded him to return from Belgrade.

²³ According to the oral accounts of Metodija Macanov from Gjavato

²⁴ Bogoja Fotev, op cit article, p 509

Stevan Naumov-Stiv returned to Bitola at the end of September and the start of October 1940. Soon after Kuzman Josifovski arrived in Bitola and joined Stiv and Stavre Bojchevski and told them that an authorised person would soon arrive to form a local committee. After a few days the organising secretary of the KPJ for Macedonia, Pero Ivanovski–Tikvar who was authorised to form a local committee in Bitola. Stevan Naumov – Stiv was elected secretary at the meeting. After completing the task in Bitola Pero Ivanovski -Tikvar took advantage of the opportunity to visit the party organising committee of Gjavato. At the party meeting with Tikvar they discussed how to increase member numbers. The discussion with the organising secretary of PK was a great benefit for Belev in his future work with the members of the KPJ in Gjavato and more broadly.

The autumn of the same year, 1940, after increased activism by the Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (PK KPJ) Macedonia Blazhe Orlandik who was occupied with reviewing many party organisations. This time Belev called a meeting with the party cell at which Orlandik was present. The main agenda item was the broadening of the Gjavato cell with more members the formation of party cells in neighbouring villages and the forming of the Union of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia ("SKOJ") in Gjavato with members involved in the educated youth group. After the meeting in Gjavato Orlandik left for the Prespa village Podmochani guided by Kole Bendev.

The young but energetic Stevan Naumov–Stiv was at the head of the new Local Committee (Mesten Komitet or MK) in Bitola and immediately commenced significant action in Bitola but also strengthened ties with the village. "After that (ie December 1940) the Local Committee organised, and we organised as many people from the village as possible into the Local

Committee so that the village was directly represented in the Local Committee in Bitola rather than through us. Gjavato proved itself and its Local Committee "Trajan Belev" had jurisdiction of the villages above Bitola and toward Prespa and also with Prespa itself. Trajan Belev had many tasks so in January 1941 he left the Local Committee and Petre Novachevski took his place in the Local Committee.²⁵ In a short time after becoming a member of MK KPJ (Local Committee Communist Party of Yugoslavia) Bitola Belev got to know the members of MK KPJ Bitola but also the tasks given to the Provincial Committee ("PK") and the methods of working in higher party forms. At the time, the basic steps were to grow the party. In that regard, Trajan Belev and the members in the Gjavato cell discussed with the villagers of the neighbouring villagers what they would do and each took upon himself to form political educational groups in a particular village. Kolev Bendelev took on the formation of party cells in Lera, Dolenci and Capari, Dimitrija Filipovski took on Ramna, and Krste Iliovski in Gorno Srpici. The implementation of the work was done in different ways – with informal or arranged encounters during village festivals, weddings, market days. Even though different members had taken different sectors, Trajan joined them if he was available. With his help and the help of Todor Angelevski, Kole Bendelev managed to form political educational groups in Lera and Dolenci²⁶ while his efforts in Capari did not achieve good results. Dimitar Filipovski and Krste Iliovski did not succeed in their efforts to form political education groups but did identify some sympathisers who could help with specific tasks. At the same as there were efforts being made to form political education groups in the neighbouring villagers, two

²⁵ Notes about the meeting with the participants of the People's Revolution from former Bitola region... in Bitola p 22-3, 14, 79

²⁶ There are thoughts that this educative group was a party cell but considering the manner in which it was organised it appeared to be an educative group instead.

formidable people joined the Gjavato party cell as members in Strezhevo, Boris Strezovski and the young labourer from Gjavato Jonche Murdzhevski.

Trajan Belev knew the young man from before and because of his keenness do party work, he was given the task to immediately form a SKOJ from the youth political educational group.

The increased activism of all of the members of the KPJ in Gjavato especially by Trajan Belev is quickly felt by the Gjavato villagers and those of nearby villages in so far as there was an increase in sympathisers for KPJ except in Lera and Dolenci, and the villages of Rotino, Bratindol, Strezhevo, Ramna, Srpci and others.

Since leaving his membership in MK KPJ Bitola (January 1941) Trajan Belev was given the task of organising a party channel Bitola – Gjavato – Prespa through which various party functionaries could travel or party resources could be moved, whether legally or illegally. Trajan worked tirelessly on organising that channel and many important people used it and the Belev house was always open for them.

The other important task that Belev was handed was achieved with Murdzhevski. "Often Trajan Belev, Jonche Murdzhev and Metodija Macanov met in the Co-op and other places and we discussed particular events in the world, read pamphlets and considered some issues that were unclear to us and they would explain these to us. They also gave us tasks to do so that they could assess our capabilities and how dedicated we were to the communist ideals.²⁷ In March 1941 the first SKOJ group was formed in Gjavato with members from the prominent youths, tested in the political education groups including Laze Lasovski,

²⁷ Gjorgji Dimovski and Kochankovski Jovan, op cit, Hronika, p 53

Mijal Grbevski and Naum Tuntevski. The secretary of the SKOJ group was Jonche Murdzhevski. Through the SKOJ group the work of the party could be spread to the Gjavato youths and those of nearby villages. They also took steps to activate the female youths. At first, that was very difficult because of the dominance of the patriarchal attitudes and reluctance for the young women to mix with young men.

The increased activism established more contact between KPJ and SKOJ with similar groups in Bitola and other villages. The meetings were called or were arranged through acquaintances, but the collaboration was always foremost. Belev's collaboration can be seen in the instance where he presented his fellow villager Kole Bendev to Stevan Naumov–Stiv as a cobbler, "...Bendev believed that Stiv was a cobbler because he carried two pairs of shoes and one bag."²⁸

OCCUPATION

With the German army getting through Derven during the April war the Gjavato party cell found itself in a new situation. In the short lasting battle near the village apart from the dead soldiers and horses there was also discarded military equipment, arms, ammunition, tent wings, rifles and similar items. The Gjavato villagers and those of the neighbouring villagers took advantage of the congestion to collect what they could which they could use in everyday life such as – blankets, tent wings carts, shovels, spikes etc. Trajan Belev told the members of KPJ and SKOJ to gather arms. Listening to Belev, the members and sympathisers gathered all the arms they could (rifles, bayonets, tent wings, etc). The slogan "The more arms the better" was taken to heart. Belev set an example himself as he and Metodija and Jonche Murdzhevski, either on their backs or

²⁸Gjorgji Dimovski -Colev and Boris Pavlovski "Nepokoreni" p253

with horses, they gathered arms from Derven and then hid it.²⁹ The remaining arms were hidden by members of KPJ and SKOJ in Gjavato.³⁰ Shortly after the April battle in Bitola and its environs, the Bulgarian occupation started. Bulgarian fascist army arrived, police, administrative, educational and spiritual apparatus. With the goal of showing itself to be a liberating force, the occupier started propaganda in every sphere of life. At the same time the occupier regime was also threatening to those who would not serve the interests of the Bulgarian Empire.

At this time, there was an issue with the attitude of the attitude of the secretary Metodija Shatarov–Sharlo in PK KPJ to the occupation of Macedonia, shown in correspondence CK – KPJ – BRP – Comintern. The ties with MK KPJ Bitola (with Stevan Naumov-Stiv at the head) stagnated, Stiv took steps on his own initiative to expose the occupying forces, explaining to the population what the objectives of the occupying forces were, spreading the message of the KPJ and collecting arms together etc. Trajan's revolutionary intuition detected hesitation among some of the KPJ members. Some of them were influenced by the Bulgarian propaganda about the occupation of Macedonia or fear about what would happen to their families if they were discovered to be communists. Nevertheless, none of those who dropped out revealed their former colleagues' revolutionary activity.

Trajan Belev and the other members of the party cell spent the Spring and Summer months in 1941 completing the task that they had previously set for themselves. they managed to form party cells in neighbouring villages such as Strezhevo, Rotino,

²⁹ Belev's son Metodija although not 'organised' was always available to help his father. However, Trajan for security, was very careful with confidential information in front of his son

³⁰ Weapons were hidden at Gjorgji Jurukovski in the garden of the Chatalovski brothers, in the barns of Lze Laskovski, Mijal Grbevski, Todor Nachov and a reasonably large number near the tap at Turska Cheshma.

Dolenci, Lera and later in Bratindol. The teacher Boris Strezovski formed the cell in Strezhevo where there developed a rich political activism. In the Dolenci party cell Trajan Belev himself got involved: "The first time after the occupation when I went ploughing Trajan Belev approached me and started to talk around and around. Then he read me a pamphlet...and asked me if I would like to work with them. I agreed. After a little time Belev came to my house and spoke as before. He then asked me which people in the village would take part. I put forward two: Alekso Nanevski and Mijal Chakov."³¹ At the same time, Trajan Belev going to market in Bitola took the opportunity to speak personally to Chakov. When he satisfied himself that Chakov was indeed someone who he could work with, in May 1941 a party cell was formed in Dolenci. Its members immediately took on the task to spread the word and continue as before to work with the two Albanians from that village.³² In August 1941 the party cell was formed in Lera by Kole Bendev.³³ Kole Bendev and Trajan Belev worked together for the formation of a party cell in Rotino. When they established a solid basis at the end of August or the start of September 1941 Trajan Belev got to Rotino and a "tall young man with a dark complexion, 25 years of age... Trajan Belev with his usual skill and a touch of humour and urgency, managed to acquaint the Rotino villagers with the visitor. The unknown youth read pamphlets to them and then explained the situation with the fronts speaking especially about the red army and its tactic in withdrawing, about the battles in Yugoslavia and at the end he told them that the occupier was relentless, that the occupier would kill and torture those it discovered

³¹ According to the recollections of Spire Ivanovski from Dolenci

³² Those were Cadres Kerim Rushidi and Baftir Veliu

³³ The name of the female activist the Rotino villagers did not find out even after liberation. See: Micko Lozanovski and Stavre Unchevski, in the second world war Rotino and the work of the party cell in 1941-2, Bitola, Bitola region in NOB 1941 and 1942, Book II, p421

mistreats its families and so on... noted that there were only 3 of us in the whole village... We ... proposed to them a further 5 people, and he, with Trajan Belev made a time for a meeting the next night."³⁴ From then the Rotino party cell regularly met and occasionally Trajan Belev attended and soon they were given tasks by him.³⁵

In the village Bratindol there was a group that did not accept the occupation from its very first days. All they needed was for someone to organise them in the battle against the occupier. Trajan did that. Relying on his acquaintance from USA with the Bratindol villager Petre Ristevski he visited him at home. Belev explained his visit that is he told him that KPJ existed and was working, told him the actions that KPJ was taking during the occupation etc.³⁶ From there Ristevski took steps to acquaint those who thought like him in Bratindol of this and at a meeting they resolved... "to call in a person who could explain these tasks to them... After a few days, at the request of Petre Ristevski Trajan Belev arrived in Bratindol. At once, they called a meeting ... about 9 people with which the party cell was formed. Trajan provided a speech to them on theory about the goals of the struggle against fascism about the class struggle of the proletariat, about the revolution in the Soviet Union and he told them about the path of suffering of every communist as well as the shining future of a classless society. Belev suggested tasks for the party cell and for individuals. Specifically, collaboration to complete every task requested by the secretary, agitation in the village at every possible moment against the occupying force, exposing the occupier and so on."³⁷

³⁴ Gjorgi Dimovski-Colev and Boris Pavlovski "Nepokoreni" p289-290

³⁵ Ibidem p 291

³⁶ Ibidem p 296

³⁷

While doing the work of forming party cells Trajan Belev regularly met with the members of KPJ Gjavato and specific tasks were allocated: unmasking the occupying regime by showing the shortage of food, the coupon system, requisitions and so on, and also taking part in the massive stagings like the Ilinden demonstration and the manifestation in Bitola, the boycotting and reduction of influence of the bishop (who had origins in Gjavato) who came to the village to conduct a service and speak against the bourgeoisie Russia.

In the echo of the successful spreading of the party organisation through the villages a directive was announced that all hidden arms should be handed over to the occupier. This directive came from PK KPJ for Macedonia which still had Sharlo at the head. Trajan Belev conveyed this directive but asked members to discuss the purpose of the directive. In the Gjavato party cell different views emerged - on the one hand to give up the hidden arms and the other view was not to. Finally, it was resolved "... as the directive was from the Provincial Committee, some of the arms were handed in to the Bulgarian ruler on the part of the communists ... But soon there were some arms held by each communist."³⁸

THE SECRETARY OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE IN THE FIRST REGION

The party activism after the formation of the party cells in the villages below Pelister required firmer and more regular communications between the cells and with the higher party organisation. So, in summer 1941 the Regional Committee of KPJ for the First Region was formed with Trajan Belev as secretary.³⁹ Belev was elected to this office because of his skilful leadership with the party cells in the different parts of

³⁸ Ibid p 296

³⁹ Dimovski Gjorgji and Kochankovski Jovan, Gjavato ... p 63

the region which could not escape the notice of the secretary of MK KPJ Bitola Stevan Naumov–Stiv.

The regional committee was comprised of the secretaries of each village party cell and Jonche Murdzhevski as the secretary of SKOJ in the region.⁴⁰

At first the ties between the party cells were either hit and miss or non-existent. Accordingly, Trajan Belev started off with the establishment of connections between the party cells so that the party work could be done more efficiently. The contact was usually done by direct contact. The regional committee for KPJ established contact points in the Local Committee in Bitola to assist in the spread of party work, individuals in each village party cell who would be the first point of contact for distribution of material for agitating – bulletins, leaflets, taking illegals. In that way the central tie from the Regional Committee to MK KPJ Bitola was held by Trajan Belev who was known by almost all the members of MK KPJ Bitola and who Trajan Belev also knew. At the same time also held the tie with Prespa that is with the villages where there were party cells. Along with the central tie, he also had ties to individual members of MK KPJ Bitola and that was used when Trajan himself had too much to do and needed to get something done.

The activism of the First region started when the Provincial committee of KPJ for Macedonia had changes in its leadership body, that is Lazo Kulishevski the secretary of CK was put in place of Metodija Shatarov - Sharlo who had enlivened the resolution of CK KPJ to commence an armed uprising. So that this resolution could be implemented the new PK KPJ for Macedonia sent its members out across the country.

⁴⁰ For more information about SKOJ see: Gjorgji Dimovski-Colev, Revolutionary efforts of Boris Strezovski and Jonche Murdzhevski, Bitola and Bitola Region in NOV, 1943 and 1944, Bitola 1982, book II, p 595

Mirche Acev came to Bitola and as an instructor of the new PK he sought to go to the First region. His goal was to do a review of the situation of the First region, the work of the Regional committee and at the same time to give referrals for future work. Through his ties with the Gjavato party cell, that is its secretary Kole Bendev, Mirche Acev arrived in Gjavato in November 1941. In Gjavato he met Trajan Belev whose house he stayed in. That night, Belev and Acev spoke at great length about the top of the party organisation about the changes in cadres and the new style of working and about the party cells in the area. The next day Acev held a meeting with some of the members of the regional committee in the hut in Belev's fields. At the meeting, both Acev and Belev spoke. In essence Mirche Acev informed those present about the actions of the former secretary Metodija Shatarov – Sharlo, about the directive given in Sharlo's time for arms to be handed over to the occupier, the politics of protecting the cadres and not the armed uprising, and the stance of KPJ for the changing of Sharlo from duties as secretary of CK and for all the other changes in PK after which he read them a letter from CK KPJ and SKOJ about the errors of Sharlo and the need for an armed uprising as well as the actions of the Prilep partisan unit on 11 October. At the same time Mirche Acev revealed to them the difficulties that awaited revolutionaries in their justified battle. Once he had finished what he had to say Acev asked the members if any of them held to Sharlo's policies. All of those present denied support for Sharlo and said they were in favour of the stance of KPJ for an armed uprising.

At the end of the meeting Acev and Belev remained together. At Acev's request Trajan Belev organised a meeting for the next day using his party contacts, this time in Lera, with another member of the Regional committee present. At this meeting Belev was present and the topic, chiefly was the same

as the previous meeting in Gjavato. After this meeting Belev returned to Gjavato while Acev remained in Lera for two days so he could then go to Strezhevo to meet a contact arranged by Trajan Belev. After his review of the terrain of the First region, Mirche Acev returned to Bitola.

The arrival of Mirche Acev in the First region and the understanding that he found him at Trajan Belev's place was felt in the party cells. In the Gjavato party cell the members each resolved to work a sector each. At a later meeting it was stated that the cell, working with a large number of sympathisers in various tasks, the sympathisers were trusted enough to be accepted as members in KPJ. That approach was also applied to the youth education groups that is that they were mature enough to be accepted as members in SKOJ. The arrival of Vangel Todorovski- Majoro in Gjavato on 24 XI 1941 it was a good time to accept new members into the party organisation of Gjavato. Vangel Todorovski – Majoro's arrival in Gjavato was arranged through illegal channels previously put in place by Trajan Belev. He stayed at Belev's place. That same night in Belev's house and in his presence he held a meeting with the people who Belev had previously identified as sufficiently trustworthy to become members of the Party. At the meeting Majoro spoke to them about the continuing Macedonian battle for national and social liberation "... he showed them photographs with the face of Goce Delchev and then explained to them that Gove Delchev was a fighter for the liberation of Macedonia and that the KPJ in the new conditions continued that battle... He suggested to them that the Macedonians had risen up and that the uprising would have to expand. He noted that the Macedonians in the battle against the occupying forces were not alone, that they were together with the other peoples who live in Yugoslavia and with the allies England, USA and USSR. He took time to explain that the

USSR supported the battle of the Yugoslav peoples against the Bulgarian occupying force.⁴¹ After that, new members were admitted to KPJ with which the Gjavato party cell numbers increased. For practical reasons it was divided into two cells. The newly admitted members formed the "youth" cell and the other was the "senior" party cell.

Shortly after the formation of two party cells two SKOJ groups were formed in Gjavato including: 1. Stojan Bendev, Tode Nachov, Dana Jurukovska, Slavka Fidanova, Luba and Blaga Chatalovu; 2. Cane Stojkov, Menka Laskovska and Cane Shturev.

Trajan Belev as secretary of the Regional committee was constantly on the move. He had already left his home duties aside and dedicated himself entirely to the party organisation work. He criss-crossed the countryside day and night an hour in Bitola at a meeting with the Local committee getting tasks to be implemented in the First region – an hour in Bratindol, Rotino, Dolenci, Strezhevo, Lera sharing out the tasks he'd been given by MK KPJ Bitola. Belev often went to these villages especially in Strezhevo and Lera. He always found a reason to explain why he was going in the case of the curious. In Lera he took some sewing to the tailor Serafim Bogdanovski – Cano (who at this time was the secretary of the party cell in the village of Lera) so that he could get a garment made. In other "villages sometimes he was "buying," sometimes he was "selling", or he had "sold" wheat, a piglet or something similar. Those outside the organisation did not suspect him because of his sweet nature but those in the organisation seeing him knew that there would be a meeting or that they would get a task. Trajan Belev was in regular contact with the secretary and members of the party cells in the Region, so that he was

⁴¹ Gjorgji Dimovski-Colev and Boris Pavlovski "Nepokoreni" p 305-6

always aware of what was going on in the region. He found out about all the changes in the occupying forces in the territory, he knew who was collaborating with the occupier and what sort of actions the occupier was taking, what actions the Party was taking, he insisted that information be treated as confidential at virtually every meeting, he allocated specific tasks, he often took pamphlets personally and distributed them in villages, and regularly he took an interest in how things were among the sympathisers and which people were candidates for the Party and SKOJ. The growth in the party organisation was his constant concern, but not at any cost but rather only with trusted cadres. In that connection the tireless Belev had the great help of the village party cells in that the First region party cells grew. In Gjavato and the other villages in the region, new members were accepted and there were also established education groups, one type of group for checking the readiness of the people and from which later party cadres were recruited. In the village Rotino a large number of sympathisers joined the education groups. In Bratindol almost all the villagers were sympathisers. The position was the same in the village Lera with sympathisers and new members in the party cells. The Lera party cell divided into two - one in the Upper part and one in the Lower neighbourhood (also known as "maala"). The Strezhevo party cell was not behind in its activism and in attracting more people to the education groups while the party cells in the village Dolenci grew with new members from the Albanian population.

The growth of the Party and numbers of KPJ sympathisers in the First region was not Belev's personal goal but rather was the work of party cells as can be seen in the tasks allocated to the secretaries of the party cells by the secretary of the Regional committee Trajan Belev. Those tasks included chiefly:

- Unmasking of the occupier's propaganda using leaflets which were regularly taken and distributed among the population in the First region. These leaflets were transported by the members of KPJ or SKOJ and often by Belev himself, with a portion of the material always allocated for Prespa;
- Organising propaganda against the occupier by painting slogans in public places;
- Giving effect to the slogan "not a grain of wheat for the occupier." Despite all the measures taken by the government to ensure requisitions were fulfilled, the action by the Party members to implement that slogan was adopted by the whole population. A great resourcefulness emerged amongst the villagers, innovation. The villagers hid wheat, wool, butter, milk from the occupying ruler and the same people, voluntarily without pressure they put aside food "from the mouths of their children" to give to the future fighters.
- Sabotage; they occurred every time there was an opportunity.
- Even though keeping arms was banned, in the First region, arms were hidden, bought sold. It was the same with ammunition.
- Demonstrations were also arranged by the Party;
- First aid and other sectors of work such as storage of food, arms, and so on, operated continuously. They were in effect organs of the battle which did the work of the government while not saying so expressly. Through those different types of actions as organs of the struggle "... collecting different types of aid from the people, brought the people closer to the people's liberation struggle and provided background support."⁴²

All of this activity was carried out while there was a fascist occupier in place, an occupier that was harsh and merciless.

⁴² Dr Vlado Invanovski, Actions and activism of the revolutionary organs of the battle and the government of Macedonia 1941-2, Glasnik of INI, Skopje 1967, IX, No 3, p 151

This activity was organised by the Party and the first person in the First region was Trajan Belev without whose knowledge no actions could have been taken under the conditions of strongly centralised Organisation.

The broad activity of the Party required the establishment of new ties or party channels between Bitola and Prespa. "Those measures were taken at the beginning of August 1941 when it was heard in Resen that the police in Kazhani had started to carry out searches of travellers, on buses, in trucks, on horse drawn carts and carts drawn by bullock. The answer came in the formation of a new channel - "a channel for ties between village party cells and KPJ" from Bitola to Resen and from Resen through Galichnica to Ohrid.

Movement through that channel was slow but secure. The channel went from Bitola and then through the villages: Bratindol, Rotino, Lera, Dolenci and Gjavato. After that you would enter the Prespa region through the village Sopotsko, then to Resen... after Trajan Belev became an illegal, the tasks were done directly through Gjavato villagers to Sopotsko...

In Bitola the people and the places used to keep the ties with the village party cells and KPJ, in the Bitola region – Gjavato – Resen were: Trajan Belev... through several inns and shops in the old market, Beno Ruso through various Jewish shops, Jorgo Hristovski–Dzvoncharo with his own shop, Nikola Pavlovski – Kole with his inn "Kosovo," Zisa Kostovski with his barber shop in Dragor and a number of others.⁴³

Apart from the places mentioned Trajan Belev had others. One was "Vinski Inn" where Belev most often waited for people but the other places of MK KPJ Bitola in the town were not excluded such as the inn of Poce Purdev, the coppersmith

⁴³ Boris A Stavreski The Ties and collaboration of the organisations of KPJ for Bitola and Prilep, Bitola and Bitola region in NOV 1941 and 1942 Bitola, 1978, book II, p534

Metodij Mitrevski, the furnace of Temelko Ristevski, the home of Blazhe Rogosinaro and others.

The noted party activities of the First region of KPJ Bitola were just one segment of the general preparations for the formation of a partisan unit. In the Region, cheese, double baked bread, sugar and honey were collected and stored. Arms were also stored: rifles, a machine gun and ammunition. Trajan Belev was very engaged in the preparations especially in the transfer and storage of food and arms. A unit was not formed for a number of reasons.⁴⁴

In November 1941 the secretary of PK KPJ for Macedonia fell into the hands of the Bulgarian police. In PK at that time a stance was taken by the Prilep partisan unit because winter was approaching, that they should not disband but rather that they should divide into a number of groups which would spend winter in different parts of Macedonia so that they could resume activism in the Spring. One of the Prilep partisan groups was planned to cross the area near Bitola and the MK KPJ Bitola took serious steps to work on transferring and accommodating the partisans. They identified the villages where they would stay and in which houses that is, with which members of the KPJ and their families and what the financial position of the families was, and what support would be required. When everything was ready, at the end of December 1941 the Bitola leaders arrived in Prilep at the appointed time and place. They connected to the Prilep communists to take the group of partisans that were to go to Bitola. There were 8 in the group: Kiro Krstevski–Platnik; Venda Temelkova (Trendova)–Dzvezda; Mara Josifovska–Gjurgja; Stevan

⁴⁴ More broadly on this Dr Trajche Grujoski, "Liberation Movement in Bitola and the Bitola region, 1941-42, Bitola and Bitola region in NOV... book I p49-50

Sazdovski–Kremenski;⁴⁵ Gore Velkoski, Ilija Igeski–Cvetan; Ordan Mihajloski–Ocka (Vostanikov, Mishko) and Joska Ordanoska–Sandanski. The Local Committee in Bitola allocated this serious and important task to Trajan Belev and Tome Angelevski from Lafci (brother of Todor Angelevski–Tosho the Teacher, Tosho Daskalot).⁴⁶ before going to Prilep Belev and Angelevski got detailed information from Mirche Acev, documents, time and place for the meeting. In Prilep after making contact, Trajan and Angelevski set off together with the partisan group on the night of 26 December 1941, for Bitola on foot. Passing various paths that were not known to the police, they securely reached the village of Lafci so that from there they could be moved to specific houses and villages.⁴⁷ Some of them left with Belev to go to the First region area. “At the end of November (sic but it is known that it was actually December) Serafim (the secretary of the party cell in Lera) called me from home and told me to get ready for the following night when with him we would go to Evlov Dol to transfer 4 comrades from the Prilep unit to go to Lera. He told me to prepare food and bedding and to take them to Jonche Mulovski. That night we went with Serafim on the road to Strezhevo where we met Trajan Belev and took transfer of 4 comrades from him - 3 men and one woman (sic it was actually 2 men and 2 women). We secretly led them to the home of Jonche where they remained three days but because of the cold weather we took them to

⁴⁵ After the question about how many fighters from Prilep had come to Bitola, 7 or 8, see this clarification: Gjorgji Dimovski-Colev, Prilepski partisan in the Bitola Detachment “Pelister”, Prilep and Prilep region in NOV – 1942, Skopje, 1978, book II, p10, f. 5

⁴⁶ The transfer of the group of partisans from Prilep to Bitola and the Bitola region in December 1941 was thought to have happened twice. See: Lazo Hadzhi Popovski, the Organisation and activism of the Local Committee of KPJ in Bitola in 1941-2, Bitola and Bitola region in NOV 1941-2, 1978, book I, p472-3; Gjorgji Dimovski-Colev Prilepski Partisans p11, f.6

⁴⁷ The transfer of the partisans from Prilep into several villages gave the impression that they were, at the same time, in the winter of 1941-2 in the one village together. However when you have regard to their stay was at a specified time then the ambiguity is clarified.

the home of Laze Naumovski.”⁴⁸ Venda Temelkova–Dzvezda and Mara Josifovska–Gjurgja remained in Lera 19 days, until Belev placed the others in Gjavato, including in his own home for a while. After a time Platnik and Mara Josifovska-Gjurgja left for Lafci while Venda Temelkova-Dzvezda from Lafci was taken to Gjavato, initially to Trajan Belev’s house. While Joska Ordanovski-Sandanski and Venda Temelkova -Dzvezda were in Belev’s home, they visited Mirche Acev. Belev and Acev spoke to “dawn”⁴⁹ with those from Prilep. We do not know what they spoke about, but we can surmise. At that time, the issues were the front location, especially the Eastern front, the partisan movement, the situation in PK KPJ for Macedonia and securing the partisan illegals.

After a while Sandanski made his first visit to Lafci which Dzvezda from Gjavato remained the whole winter, changing homes.⁵⁰

The illegals who stayed in Belev’s home hid in his cellar during the day but spent the evenings upstairs with the Belev family. Trajan or his wife Zora took them food. Zora Beleva was not an organiser but like Trajan’s son, Metodija Belevski, she did various tasks which were required by Trajan’s partisan work. In the same way, during the winter stay, Zora baked bread for the illegals as well as her family, cooked them meals, washed their clothing and bedding. She was relentless in all of her work. However, when she was alone with her husband she did ask him why he did not stay at home especially as he had small children and a large family. Trajan would find something to say to comfort her at these times. “Sometimes he would make a joke, sometimes say something serious but he would find

⁴⁸ Boris Sterjovski, *The Village Lera and lera villagers in NOV 1941-42, Bitola and Bitola region in NOV 1941 and 1942* p407-8

⁴⁹ According to the oral recounts of Zora Beleva

⁵⁰ From the Belev place, Venda went to the place of the teacher Boris Strezovski (who lived as a tenant in Gjavato) and then to Kole Bendev’s place saying that she was his niece who had come from Jankoe to stay. After that she was moved to the village of Lera.

something good to say to me. You could not have cross words with him. He was a good person.”⁵¹ Even though they were very poor the party organisation did not leave the illegals to find their own way in so far as material support. Using the ties in Gjavato the party transferred food and other groceries. They brought flour, cheese, meat, charcoal and food from Bratindol and Rotino. Belev brought the illegals honey occasionally from Bitola.

Trajan Belev’s house was always open for the partisan activists and illegals who would stay for one, two or more days or would leave immediately. In that house Trajan and his wife Zora Beleva greeted and saw off many whose names and functions are not known today because of Trajan Belev’s secrecy.

However we do have details of some of them including: Kuzman Josifovski–Pitu, who stayed at Belev’s home for several days and who with the Regional Committee held a special meeting; Kuzman Josifovski-Pitu and Dragan Popovik had Belev and Tashko Chatalovski as guides when they travelled to Prespa. Stevan Naumov–Stiv went to Trajan Belev’s home from time to time on the way to Prespa and Josif Josifovski–Sveshtarot (Gjorche), Gjore Velkovski and others did too when travelling to Prespa. The police sought the illegals all over and offered rewards for information about their whereabouts but at the risk of the most serious repressive measures against his own family Trajan Belev showed a high revolutionary consciousness at a time of great trials. Knowing all of what could happen, as secretary of the Regional Committee personally carried out many tasks and showed bravery and exceptional resourcefulness.

ILLEGALITY

At the beginning of November 1941 in the Regional Committee of KPJ for Macedonia with the changes in leadership (the fall of

⁵¹ According to the oral recount of Zora Beleva

Lazo Kolishevski into the hands of the police and the appointment of others to PK) there arose a passivity. During the passive stance of PK in that time the end of 1941 and the start of 1942 MK KPJ Bitola continued its activism and in fact got stronger. Party life continued on in the Regional Committee – First region. The party material (bulletins, leaflets and the History of SKP (b) in the second heading) were taught at meetings about theory. In essence advantage was taken of the winter period for the improvement of the KPJ SKOJ members' understanding of theory. Trajan Belev was the person who most often brought the materials from Bitola for the Region. In the winter of 1941/42 Trajan Belev was had to carry out a sort of survey among the members of the KPJ to find out how many from Gjavato would agree to be partisans. From the survey Trajan Belev concluded that the villagers of Gjavato were ready for armed uprising. With the same aim, Belev and Anesti Panovski from Bitola held a meeting with the Rotino party cell and the membership there, as in Gjavato, affirmed they were ready for armed battle. Taking account of this Belev gave a directive that some of the collected arms should be taken to Glavishte with the goal that it would not fall into the hands of the police in eventual searches. A day or so after the directive was given Gjavato was blockaded.⁵² At the time of the blockade Trajan Belev was in the village, at home. Noting the movements of the police, agents and army, he said to his wife Zora "Wife, they are looking for me." As Belev was strong in his activism and often present in the villages of the First region and had a revolutionary past, the police were suspicious of him. On the other hand, even before the blockade, Belev told his wife that one of the people he worked with had gone to jail, and so it was possible that the same would happen to him. For

⁵² During the blockade the Chatalov brothers managed to transfer weapons outside the village and into their gardens. To read more about this see: Dimovski Gjorgji and Kochankovski Jovan, Gjavato... p 73

every eventuality Belev quickly prepared and descended into the cellar and from there he went to the river, and he was not seen by anyone in the village and disappeared. It is difficult to know where he stayed. He had many contacts from his work and knew many locations where illegals stayed so perhaps he stayed at one of those.⁵³ After a time in February 1942, two people from the occupying forces (one a civilian and one in uniform) sought Trajan at home. At the time Belev was in Bitola. "When I saw unfamiliar people, especially as one was a Bulgarian police officer, I sensed that something was not in order and my father said to me – if someone unfamiliar asks after him, I should immediately tell Jonche Murdzhevski or Kole Bendev. I took some straw for the bullocks and all the leaflets, bulletins etc that we had, and I gave them to Reis Shakiri and a man called Bobe from Sopotsko because they were at our home in the village at the time. I told them that people were asking about my father. When I got home, the people asked me who I am. When they understood that I was Belev's son they asked me where Trajan is. I had prepared an answer. I told them that my father was away, trading on the villages of the plain. They remained at the front door. When I sought to leave they prevented me, so I went to Jonche Murdzhevski's place and informed him and he told Kole Bendev. Jonche met my father at the place called Prevalec and told him that the police were after him. Trajan handed all of the things that he had on him over to Murdzhevski and he returned to Bitola. From that time he became an illegal. He did not return to live in Gjavato lawfully but visited from time to time and not always home but at an appointed place in the lower border area called Golemi Nivi. He would leave his backpack there in the shrubs. I knew – if anything had happened to him, that his backpack

⁵³ Notes from the meeting from the participants in the People's revolution from the former Bitola region...p 147 meanwhile, when Kamenko speaks about Belev's stay at his place he is likely thinking about the winter of 1941-2 because in 1941 Belev was not an illegal.

would be there for a longer time and if not, everything is as it should be.⁵⁴ At the start Trajan Belev often went to the First region area and from there returned to Strezhevo distributing leaflets.⁵⁵

After he became illegal Trajan Belev spent a lot of time in Lera. Through his party ties he based himself in Lafci in the home of Tode Derievski, a member of KPJ in the same village. After that Belev went to Bitola and spent some time at the furnace of Temelko Ristevski. The people that Trajan encountered while he was staying with Temelko Ristevski recall him as a person who "never spoke about himself – not about who he is, what he is, his name or where he was from; but it was easy to get him to involve himself in political discussions."⁵⁶ However, MK KPJ Bitola well knew that all the people that Belev stayed with were activists so that at any time it was possible for a search by the police which would lead to Belev being found and jailed. Valuing Belev's qualities MK KPJ Bitola decided that the wisest course would be to find him a place to stay with the Bitola resident Dora Fundali where Vangel Todorovski – Majoro had safely stayed when an illegal. The room for Belev was selected so that the police suspicions would not be raised that anyone they might want to arrest lived there. The room was in a building immediately adjacent to the police headquarters where the owner Dora Fundali worked as a typist.⁵⁷ Trajan Belev was taken to this room by MK KPJ Bitola member, Goga Georgievski.

In the new environment Trajan Belev was treated like a member of the family which was large. "Trajan was medium height and chubby. He wore hunting style clothes and a peaked cap over his eyes. He was particular about his appearance, far

⁵⁴ According to the oral recount of Metodija Belevski

⁵⁵ Gjorgji Dimovski-Colev and Boris Pavlovski "Nepokoreni" p 333

⁵⁶ The brothers Konstantinovi and Kosta Cigarovski Anecdotes, Bitola 1961 p7

⁵⁷ Dora Fundali is the mother of the fighter Niko Fundali

more than usual. His hands did not look like the hands of a farm labourer. He was naturally intelligent and a keen conversationalist and very kind. He was interested in everything but by contrast with Vangel Todorovski–Major, Trajan did not read and did not write. He had his own room at our house, just for rest, while at other times he was with us. We had a full house: my father who sewed village clothing, my mother, sister, my sister's children who were always at my house and my three children. When we got together at night Trajan would often entertain us. Especially with stories about his travels. He told us about when he was in France, America; he knew all the American presidents by heart, their first and last names. He spoke to us about when he smuggled himself aboard a ship pretending to be a waiter and who knows what else. My mother listened to him open mouthed. He was also very careful with information. He told us nothing, the whole time he was with us he did not once tell us where he was from nor what his name was nor that he was married nor that he had children. Nothing. When my sister's children's clothes were drying he would get the clothing and hug it. My mother would see this and say, 'This man has a great burden. He must have small children that makes him do this. Who knows where he is from that he cannot see them.' She felt very sorry for him. Just because of the children. But Trajan also knew how to cheer us up. He would often say to my daughter Fanula: 'Come on and sing the song from the neighbourhood ' and she would sing the song 'Dress up Sulte mori, ...' If someone came to the house during the day to see my father – he sewed at home – Trajan would sit next to them do start a conversation. He even did it with the Bulgarian police. Once there was a blockade. When they came to our place, they knew me. They sat and Trajan went to chop wood and then brought the wood in and started to chat with them. He was pleasant to them and flattered

them. You would wonder to see how believable his chat was, as though he were speaking the truth. When they asked us about who Trajan was, we said he was a villager who was unable to go home because of the blockade. They trusted me because I worked for them. They did not for a moment think that I could harm my family to assist someone from the village and they believed me. And Trajan played along. You would not suspect you were speaking to an illegal. He would go out before lunch, before 10. Every day. Without fail. He would put a bag on his shoulder and a hat low above his eyes and we would not ask him where he was going and he did not tell us. He stayed with us the winter of until 8.VI.1942. that is the day when Beno Ruso came, took him and he did not return after that."⁵⁸

The secrecy of Trajan Belev is evidence also by the following: "When in the winter of 1942 I met Belev for the first time and he told me he was a fisherman from Prespa. Although physically fit he could manage to leave a café limping. My apartment was a place where Belev often went and he told my landlady that he was my friend and my landlady wondered at that."⁵⁹ because Belev was a lot older than Petar Lutovski who at this time was a student in the high school and a member of SKOJ.

Trajan Belev while living illegally in Bitola kept in contact with MK KPJ Bitola especially with Stevan Naumov-Stiv who informed him about the situation in the First Region. With Belev becoming illegal, there were changes in the committee of the First region. Kole Bendelev occupied the position of secretary (acting in place of Trajan) and after that Serafim Bogdanovski – Cano from Lera. All the same, Belev did not lose the contacts with the people from the Regional committee of the First region

⁵⁸ According to the recount of Dora Fundali from Bitola

⁵⁹ Dimovski Gjorgji and Kochankovski Jovan, Gjavato p 123-4

to whom he gave instructions and advice on political work in the area.

At the end of February or the beginning of March 1942 under a warrant from MK KPJ Bitola, Trajan Belev and Orde Chopela, who at the time was a member of MK KPJ Bitola and responsible for first aid, went to the villages within the First to undertake a review of the party cells. As Belev was in regular contact by Belev with the secretary of the Bratindol party cell and the situation with the party cell was well known to him Chopela and Belev went directly to Rotino. Their plan was to go from Rotino to Gjavato. However, the planned meeting in Gjavato fell through because there was a lot of police and army in Kazhani and all the roads were blocked.

After a few days Belev and a person called Borka (at present, unidentified) came to Lera where they held a meeting with the members of the Regional Committee. At the meeting, the fundamental directive was "to get as much weaponry and ammunition as possible" from all the party cells in the Region. At the same time (March 1942) at a meeting in Gjavato Belev proposed to his colleagues to take advantage of the dissatisfaction with the shortage of food products to get the villagers to demonstrate. The communists from Gjavato not only accepted the proposal but skilfully, successfully and unobtrusively implemented it. They demonstrated in front of the municipal building in Kazhani then in Bitola in front the Commissariat demanding salt, sugar, petrol and so on.⁶⁰ That was one of the noteworthy demonstrations of villagers in Bitola in which apart from Gjivashtani, there were also residents from other villages.

Along with the many ties it was possible that Trajan Belev could remain without a party connection which did also occur. "On one occasion Trajan Belev lost a connection and sought

⁶⁰ More on this see: Gjorgji Dimovski-Colev and Boris Pavlovski, *Nepokoreni* p343

and sought that I put him in contact with them. (Belev sought connection with Stevan Naumov – Stiv). But that day when one fasts for at Easter when they took us from school to church, I was arrested on the street and I did not know why I had been arrested. There was no one in the jail and no one could get me out. However, I was overheard in that jail and they were only interested in Trajan Belev. It seemed that they were following him or someone had told on him...:⁶¹ when Stevan Naumov–Stiv understood that Trajan was moving through the town without a connection he became agitated and got cross. He was concerned with Belev’s safety as he valued him as a capable organiser who in moving around could easily be jailed because he was illegal and the police was on his tail. In essence Trajan Belev was an illegal but did things his own way. Often he would freely move through the streets of Bitola and would meet villagers from Gjavato who were there for the market. Some of them knew the police were after him and that if they told on him, they would get a reward from. But no one did that. Trajan Belev did not have any personal enemies. In the meantime, in Gjavato the searches of Belev’s house became more frequent.⁶² As did the family’s restlessness. All the worry sat on Zora Beleva. Trajan’s parents were old and apart from Metodija, who was capable of work, the others were small children. Seeing the police mistreat Zora Beleva some of the villagers in Gjavato had the good intention of helping her suggested that they find Trajan and persuade him to return to the village as the police could do nothing to him if he gave himself up. This type of thinking was naïve and resulted from the Bulgarian propaganda and Zora was persuaded by the suggestion as those making the proposals were close relatives. Persuaded that she was giving Trajan

⁶¹ Notes from the meeting...p308 (Dojchin Apchevski)

⁶² According to the oral recount of Zora Beleva

good news she went to Bitola. "When I got to Bitola I found Trajan in an inn where he was sitting with some villagers from Bratindol and they were drinking. Near them, at an adjoining table were some Bulgarian police officers. When Trajan saw me, he gave me a signal that I should not approach them. We met when the Bulgarian soldiers left. I told him that the children were crying, that they were not sleeping, they were not eating, that they were asking for him, and I told him to return as nothing would happen to him. Trajan answered me with a question – "Who has been lying to you? Wait for me after four years. If I remain well and am still alive."⁶³

What was Trajan's state of mind when Zora spoke to him about the children, only he knew. And in this we can see the greatness of the revolutionary Trajan Belev who sacrificed a lot in his life for the people.

In the Spring of 1942 under the pressure from the local party organisations on the Provincial military headquarters and certain members of the Provincial committee, directions were given for armed battle. MK KPJ had been working on that plan for a long time so that it was ready when the new direction was taken. The MK KPJ Bitola stood for the decision for readying a partisan unit in the First region. Intensive preparations were being made to achieve that objective. The members of KPJ, SKOJ and the sympathisers (including the many women that had been activated) transferred large quantities of food products: rice, sugar, cheese and other products – capes, backpacks, clothing and so on. People worked without issues between them. Everything evolved as planned and in order. The last stage of the preparations was to review the preparedness of the party cells: their confidentiality, their numbers and readiness to join the unit, and with what type and number of weapons and ammunition that would be.

⁶³ Dimovski Gjorgji and Kochankovski Jovan, Gjavato p125

This task had been allocated to them by the leading activists of KPJ, including Stevan Naumov – Stiv, Todor Angelevski - Toshko, Trajan Belev, Jonche Murdzhevski and others.

In April 1942 Orde Chopela alone and then joined by Belev and Stiv and Todor Angelevski, found themselves in Bratindol, where almost the whole night with Bratindol communists thrashed out their preparedness relating to arms, ammunition, and food supplies that they had. While Chopela left for Rotino with a guide, Trajan Belev with Stiv and Todor Angelevski set off in a different direction without a guide because Belev was so familiar with the terrain. During this time, the three of them frequently returned at different times to Bratindol and Rotino. Belev made these visits most often.

After returning from the First region in Bitola, Orde Chopela was quickly discovered and killed by the police. That was the time of the April raid in Bitola. So that the other illegals did not also fall into the hands of the police the party leadership resolved to withdraw them and form a partisan unit. On 22 April 1942 above the village Lafci the partisan detachment "Pelister" was formed. The unit was quickly discovered and broken up by the Bulgarian army and police. During those days Belev was in Brusnik and from there went directly to Gjavato to tell the party membership about events.

As is well known, on 6 May 1942 Stiv killed the regional police chief Aleksandar Kjurchiev. As a result of that event Bitola was locked down, Beno Ruso transferred Belev from his illegal hideout in the apartment of Dora Fundali, because there were concentrated searches for illegals throughout Bitola at that time. Trajan crossed the First region terrain, going from Gjavato to other neighbouring villages. He stayed with relatives or with sympathisers of the movement. He stayed for a long while with sympathisers Trajan Batkov and Todor Zhulev – Begot and two others from Gjavato and after a while he stayed

with his aunt Lenka Nikolova and Serafin Bogdanovski – Cano in Lera.

In the Spring of 1942, the local party leadership in Bitola brought a resolution at Bigla to establish a unit. "Stiv Naumov and Trajan Belev were allocated the responsibility to carry out this task... Perhaps without exaggerating it should be said that the establishment a unit ... is the action of the two outstanding leaders and revolutionaries."⁶⁴

Along with the other tasks, Trajan Belev had the task to organise the transfer (using party cells in the villages of the First region) of large quantities of wheat and ammunition from the Second to the First region and quantities of materials from Bitola into the First region. In the conditions of occupation and persecution, the many members of KPJ, SKOJ and sympathisers, men and women were engaged in getting the task done.⁶⁵ Using well established ties made through the party, the action was completed without delay. The resourcefulness of the Macedonian villager was evident again whether in relation to how materials were concealed or whether it was dealing with the searches randomly undertaken by the police. In the same way, arms from the Second region (the villages from Bistrica to the Greek border) were organised to be transferred. And that was through Strezhevo to Smilevo where Trajan Belev received the items. Some of these arms were immediately sent to meet the needs of the mountain unit, and another part stored in Smilevo.⁶⁶

In the meantime, it became necessary to move some of the foodstuffs to Strezhevo and from there to the place called Popovo Kladenche with the aim of helping the Krushevo

⁶⁴ Beno Ruso, The Revolutionary Person Trajan Belev, Jubilee Newspaper "Pelister" 22 April 1971 No 3

⁶⁵ More generally see: Gjorgji Dimovski-Colev and Boris Pavlovski, *Nepokoreni...* p 357-368

⁶⁶ Beno Ruso, Dimche Milevski and Peco Bozhinovski, *Fighting Bitola in 1942*, Nova Makedonija, 9 XI -14.XI 1967

partisan unit.⁶⁷ On this occasion Trajan Belev himself helped in the transfer.

As the people's liberation movement was gaining ground a need arose for an organising body in the area to be called the Regional Operational Headquarters to be responsible for Bitola, Prilep and Kruzhevo. These headquarters were established on 4 July 1942 above the village Lera in the presence of Stevan Naumov–Stiv, Trajan Belev, Kiro Krstevski–Platnik and others. The Operational Headquarters comprised of Mishe (Evtimovski), "Petre" commander, from Krushevo, alternate commander and political commissar Todor Engelevski – Toce, Strogov, a teacher from Lafci Bitola region, and as the alternate political commissioner and person responsible for party work, comrade Trajan Velev (ie Belev)-Goce from Gjavato."⁶⁸

The new responsibility which was entrusted to Belev did not change him at all. He continued diligently and with great care to carry out whatever duties were allocated to him. As a result of all of that, he was highly regarded by all in MK KPJ Bitola headed by Stevan Naumov-Stiv. Stiv, noting in Trajan a capable organiser, a person who knew the terrain of the First region incredibly well, "... consulted Trajan Belev, Todor Angelevski – Daskalo and others for all the problems which arose. The meetings with Trajan Belev were highly satisfactory because in Belev, Stiv saw a copy of himself. Strict with himself and with others, reliable in performing the tasks allocated to him, fast thinker and an unlimited affection for the principles of the socialist revolution. Stiv often liked to have discussions with Belev as he would learn from him all the details about the surrounding villages and people, followed by a good dose of humour. Immediately before the formation of the partisan unit,

⁶⁷ Ibidem

⁶⁸ Kiro Krstevski-Platnik, Faktografski material on the Prilep partisan Division, INI P-31-32, p55-56; Gavro Panovski, the Formation of the partisan detachment "Dame Gruev" Bitola and Bitola Region in NOV 1941 and 1942, book I p 116

Belev was often with Stiv and Todor Angelevski–Daskalo.⁶⁹ That was logical because the weight of the organisation fell on them. During the time when they were establishing the partisan unit, Trajan Belev, in addition to his duties, occupied himself with finding a meeting point in the First region and a camp for the unit.

After successful preparations were completed, on 6 July 1942 the detachment was formally established and was given the name Dame Gruev, a leading revolutionary from Smilevo in the Ilinden period, making an unbroken connection between the two Ilinden days. "The decision was announced to the assembled fighters by Trajan Belev -Goce as a member of the Provincial Headquarters [sic] (the Regional Operational Headquarters must have been intended) and with a few words he explained to them to goal of the battle and what the Unit would have to do."⁷⁰

The partisans also then took on pseudonyms as their partisan names. Trajan Belev selected the name Goce. It is not known who selected this name for him and he may even have selected it himself. It is also not known when he took on the pseudonym – whether from when he became an illegal or when he started to liaise with the Unit. Trajan Belev – Goce was not a member of the Unit but was frequently with it. As a more mature person and one with some military experience "... he schooled the fighters of the Unit on handling the arms."⁷¹ Goce did not think of his tasks as 'significant' or 'routine'. He handled all tasks in the same serious and diligent way even if they were routine everyday tasks such as getting food for the Unit. He was so brave, calm, confident in himself and in the most difficult

⁶⁹ Gavro Panovski, Formation... p115; Beno Ruso, Revolutionary portrait of Trajan Belev... Gjorgji Dimovski-Colev, Stevan Naumov-Stiv, Skopje 1971 p152, 155

⁷⁰ Krste Sokolovski, meeting of destiny, Nova Makedonija 4 July 1972

⁷¹ Dimovski Gjorgji and Kochankovski Jovan, Gjavato, p 126; according to the recollections of Petar Lutovski-Malchik from Bitola

moments how he managed to simplify complex matters using humour is demonstrated by the following example: "One night we descended the forest path with Goce and Junosha (Gavro Panovski) to get some food. We asked Goce what we would do if someone called out "Stop". He was walking in front with his revolver in his hand and with a reed hanging from his neck and, witty as he was, he smiled and replied to us: "We will manage if someone calls out, but the problem is if no one calls out."⁷² Trajan Belev-Goce encouraged the others with his bravery and was very much liked by them.⁷³ The fighters of "Dame Gruev" during recreation time told stories about good and bad incidents that they had been involved in. "The 'Priest' was the most interesting storyteller and Strogov was not far behind (Todor Angelevski–Daskalo) and nor was Todor."⁷⁴ As a result of some practical issues that arose with the Krushevo unit "the Regional committee of Prilep and the Operational Headquarters of the partisan units decided it was important to help shake it up so using the connections between Prilep and Krushevo, during July in the partisan unit "Pitu Guli" the following comrades from the Operational Headquarters arrived: Trajko Boshkovski – Tarzan, commander of the Operational Headquarters, Kiro Krstevski–Platnik, commissar of the Operational Headquarters and Trajan Belevski–Goce, who stayed in the unit for about 10 days to seek out behaviours in the unit, to update the unit with political big picture in Macedonia and Yugoslavia and to take all the directives of the Regional Committee and the Chief Headquarters in Macedonia."⁷⁵ Trajan Belev–Goce was a member of the Operational Headquarters but he still joined his members in the

⁷² Petar Lukovski-Malchik, Bitola partisan group (3), Bitolski Vesnik 7 June 1972 p2

⁷³ According to the recollection of Petar Lutoski-Malchik

⁷⁴ Petar Lutoski-Malchik, Prespa partisan group, Bitolski Vesnik 5 July 1972 p 2

⁷⁵ Slatko Biljanovski, The connections between the Odred "Pitu Guli" with the Prilep party organisation in 1942. Prilep and Prilep region in NOV 1942 Book II p 404

unit "Pitu Guli" as a member of the Regional headquarters and as an experienced organiser to convey his experiences and those of his comrades from Bitola and the Bitola area to the fighters.

During July the Regional Operational Headquarters got a directive that in the shortest amount of time it should develop a plan of actions which the Bitola, Prilep and Krushevo partisan units would have to take and in that way to mark the Macedonian national day Ilinden.⁷⁶ Trajan Belev-Goce took part in the action planned by the leadership of the detachment "Dame Gruev". Once it was decided to undertake an action in Smilevo the Regional Operational Headquarters engaged the Smilevo villager Kiro Matlievski to do a sketch of the village Smilevo showing important village locations such as the council, the mayor's ("kmet") house and so on. Matlievski met with the members of the Headquarters twice and carried out the allocated task producing a precise sketch and explaining orally what it showed. There was a directive given to the party cells to cut telephone lines in the evening when the unit was carrying out its activity.

On 2 August 1942, Ilinden, the partisan detachment "Dame Gruev" successfully completed its undertaking in Smilevo and Trajan Belev-Goce took part in it along with other members of the Regional Operational Headquarters.⁷⁷

For the second action that the unit undertook the Regional Operational Headquarters undertook operational activity as it did with the first (consultation on the location for the attack, a sketch of important landmarks, arranging for those responsible for cutting telephone lines, appointing guides for the unit

⁷⁶ Kiro Krstevski-Platnik, Stenographer's Notes about the Bitola-Prespa Detachment "Dame Gruev" – 1942, INI R-32-1, p114

⁷⁷ Boro Mitrovski, important Events in the Development of the People's Liberation Struggle in the Bitola Prespa Region in the period 1941-43, Glasnik of INI, Skopje 1963, Skopje 1963, Godina VII, No 1, p 63, Petar Lutovski-Malchik, Formation of the Odred, Bitolski Vesnik from 19 July 1972

(Stojan Bendev, Laze Lasovski and Mijal Grbevski among others). This action by the detachment "Dame Gruev" was its second but its first armed action. The object of the attack was the police station in the village Kazhani and other locations administered by the occupier in the same village. The action was taken at night between 18 and 19 August 1942. Goce and Strogov did not take part personally in the armed action but were close to where the action took place that is in the Pitropchevite Vodenici. When they saw that the group which included Stiv was withdrawing, the two of the members of the Regional Operational Headquarters also withdrew. According to the plan, once all the groups had withdrawn the Unit met to undertake an analysis and assessment of what had happened. They identified successes and misses to take account of in the future.

Immediately before the attack three people arrived from Bitola through the partisan's channel of travel, to join the unit. Two of them were planted by the police. As they arrived at the time of the attack, they took advantage of the cover of night to return to Bitola. They then put themselves to the service of the police, telling them the partisan channel for travel to the Detachment: Bratindol, Rotino, Dolenci; they passed on all the names of the activists with whom they had been in contact and which they had memorised. Following this the police started to arrest the members of KPJ named by the provocateurs. The police also implemented a tactic of its own: they released some prisoners with the aim of giving the impression that they had no actual knowledge of what was going on but only had suspicions.

On 22 August at the request of Trajan Belev-Goce and Todor Angelevski – Strogov there was a meeting with the members of KPJ of Gjavato, Jonche Murdzhevski and Laze Lasovski at Lisichini Dupki. Murdzhevski informed Goce and Strogov about

the mass arrests, about those currently in jail and those who had been jailed but had subsequently been released.

“Trajan comforted us – nothing will come of it – they will let the others go. J Murdzhevski informed them that Lera and Kazhani are filled with police and army officers. Trajan joked and told us it was all just steam and that they would go⁷⁸.

Murdzhevski’s request to leave with them and become an illegal was knocked back as it was thought that it would inform the police who did not until then know about the communist party of Gjavato. “On 27 August Jonche (Murdzhevski b.m.) met me and said tonight we are going to the Headquarters. He told me he had been in Bitola and met Cano (Serafim Bogdanoski - Cano, the secretary of the Regional committee of the First region) from Lera, who was sent to jail, and told him that the occupier did not know anything, the Bulgarians are just arresting people under suspicion, that the jailed ones would be released, and that Cano told him he had to join Trajan who would sort Jonche.⁷⁹ However in the meantime Jonche Murdzhevski was jailed, and then there was a new meeting Strogov and Goce on one side and with Laze Lasovski and Mijal Grbevski and on the other. At this meeting it was said “...it is being said that Cano from Lera has become theirs ...” but Trajan Belev had a huge trust in the secretary of the Regional Committee so “... all of that talk is enemy propaganda. Such a communist! It is not possible. A communist does not tell anything...”⁸⁰ After a short time Mijal Grbevski and Laze Laskovski were jailed. At that, Serafim Bogdanovski–Cano who really had gone into the service of the police managed to make contact with the Detachment, that is with Stevan Naumov-Stiv, but Goce and Strogov were not with the Detachment at that

⁷⁸ Laze Lasovski, Recollections about the revolutionary activity of Jonche Murdzhevski, p 20 (handwritten and owned by the author)

⁷⁹ Ibidem p 21

⁸⁰ Ibid p 22

moment. They had left, Strogov to Lafci and Goce to Gjavato. Trajan Belev -Goce could not believe that Cano could be a collaborator with the Bulgarians. Serafim Bogdanovski-Cano made contact Stiv and the Unit, which was still in the First region after the attack in Kazhani. "That person (Cano) went to ..tell the Unit to withdraw that night... that it would be dangerous to stay where they were. That is what he had been ordered to do... with the aim of leading the unit into an ambush that would be arranged."⁸¹ Cano was doing the bidding of the police but also pretending that he was an honest communist and took the instructions to the Unit. The location where the Unit was meant to reach was occupied by the Bulgarian army and police. A trap was set for the unit.

Toward midnight when the fighters crossed the river Shemnica, there was a hellish attack. There was a bright moon so even though it was night-time, there was good visibility. The shooting lasted 15-20 minutes. The partisans managed to escape the attack without a casualty. The Unit broke into groups and travelled to Prespa where they regrouped. Other fighters from Prespa visited the unit. They concluded that the attack was accidental and was not a result of betrayal.

Trajan Belev -Goce tried to get into contact with communists who were not yet jailed. However, once they too were jailed Goce moved to another area, that is to Prespa where he found the unit. After a short time, Trajan Belev– Goce arrived in Lafci where he joined up with Storgov, another member of the Regional Operational Headquarters. Meanwhile Todor Angelevski- Strogov with the direct help of MK KPJ Bitola worked to form a new detachment.⁸² On 8 September 1942 in

⁸¹ From the recounts made before the investigative organs of OZNA of Asen Nikolov Hristov

⁸² In many places in the recollections, literature and documentation this detachment is named a **cheta/company** which joined with the detachment "Dame Gruev." In his Diary Kiro Krstevski-Platnik calls it a **cheta**; Boris Pavlovski, Efforts and Implementation of the Headquarters for the joining of "Gjorche Petrov" and "Jane Sandanski," Prilep and Prilep regions in NOB 1942, book II, p 207 folio 5

the forest above Lafci the unit "Jane Sandanski" was formed by Trajan Belev and Todor Angelevski – Storgov.⁸³

Arriving in Lafci after the formation of the unit "Jane Sandanski", Trajan Belev-Goce "... sought that a group be formed from the newly arrived fighters ... like a version of the "Dame Gruev" detachment ... the party leadership agreed with this and that night Goce set off with 5 partisans for Bigla. The group was comprised of Miki, Aron, Vando and Pande.⁸⁴ "On the road to Bigla Trajan Belev-Goce and the group reached the outskirts of Lera and through Vasil Tolevski from the same village he made contact with Serafim Bogdanovski-Cano who he still believed to be loyal to the Party. He dismissed the thought that Cano was a collaborator with the Bulgarian police because he had been until then one of the most active members of the KPJ in the Region and because he was appointed secretary of the RK in the First Region and had in fact replaced Trajan in that role and so could be trusted. Later, following the many that were jailed after the action in Kazhani, Cano was released, and the members from the Lera party cell were also released. Goce and Strogov thought that only those who had made confessions were kept in jail. In any case, the greatest support for the belief in the integrity of Cano was the fact that the illegal from Bitola, Ilija Gjokanovski–Gjokano sentenced to death in his absence, was in the Lera region and Cano knew of this. At the meeting with Goce and Strogov, Cano said "where have you been all this time that I have not heard from you, all of the comrades from the village have pulled back and Laze and I are under strict control from the police and have managed with great difficulty to keep Ilcho Gjokano safe for two weeks without being able to connect him

⁸³ Dr Dushko Hr Konstantinov, Dr Milosh Hr Kontantinov and Kosta Ai Cigarovski-Koch, Hronika p 144

⁸⁴ Beno Ruso, Dimche Milevski, Peco Bozhinovski, The formation and Activity of the partisan detachment "Jane Sandanski" Bitola, People's Liberation Partisan Detachments, Bitola 1982, p293

with you.”⁸⁵ That night, Cano spent a bit of time with the two members of the Regional operational Headquarters and managed to persuade them that he remains as he always was – a member of KPJ. “It was then that Tosho asked Serafim to bring Gjokano and some food the following day (Saturday) as some other fighters were to going to arrive.”⁸⁶ After the meeting with Goce and Strogov, Cano devised a plan with the Bulgarian police to destroy the group of partisans. Namely, poison would be put into the food that was brought for the partisans and after consuming it, they would either be incapacitated or would die. After a short while, Todor Angelevski–Strogov left the group but Goce stayed. Because many officers of the army and police were moving about in the area, it was difficult to reach Bigla. For that reason, Goce and Nisim Alba-Miki left for Bitola with the intent of connecting with Peco Bozhinovski-Kocho. Before they left, they had a bit to eat and on the road, Goce felt sick and vomited a number of times. Once they were a long distance from the place called Spori Dol where the group had remained, Goce and Miki heard gunshots. The group had been betrayed by Cano and in the unfair battle, Aron Aruesti died while Pande Jovanovski and Ilija Gjokanovski–Gjokano were arrested. At the place called Batici, Gjokan was shot and Pande Jovanovski was taken to jail. In the same battle Vando Lazarevski was wounded but managed not to be caught. He was wounded and dragged himself to Dolenci. From there he left for Rotino where he met Goce and Miki. “Trajan was very worried about me. He went and collected grapes for me and later with Miki they took me to Pelister to the place called Shiroka. As they had to make contacts with the party but did not want to leave me they took me to the place called Jorgov Kamen and only then did they leave.”⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Boris Sterjovski, *The village Lera and its residents...* p416-7

⁸⁶ *Ibidem* p 445

⁸⁷ According to the oral recount of Vando Lazarovski-Stojan from village Nizhepole

After this event Trajan Belev-Goce, when visiting his home in Gjavato said that he believed Cano was a traitor and his wife Zora and his son Metodija witnessed this. Goce also told the members of the party in Lafci that he had reached this conclusion. The news of the treachery of Serafim Bogdanovski-Cano spread quickly amongst all the organisers and the sympathisers of the KPJ.

Other, more tragic news also spread quickly, news that Stevan Naumov–Stiv had died. All of the communists of Bitola and the Bitola region mourned Stiv. Trajan Belev – Goce was one of them because he had much in common with Stiv, but above all the passionate belief in what they were fighting for.

After the betrayal by Cano in the First region there was a huge raid that took in Prespa as well. The occupying government organised a court process to scare the members of KPJ, SKOJ, sympathisers and the general population. During the court proceedings the person who had the largest number of charges against him made allegations against Trajan Belev–Goce, Jonche Murdzhevski and Boris Strezovski. "Those of us who were paraded three days before that murky court ... we were aware of the danger that we were facing... It was clear to us that something frightening was being prepared for us. That is why we decided to stand firm for the whole process – no one should confess. What you will see written in the records of that court trial was written by police agents and is the result of torture..."⁸⁸ On 30 October 1942 there was a court ruling in the Skopje court in which Trajan Belev-Goce was sentenced to death by hanging, in his absence.⁸⁹

In the meantime, the searches of Trajan Belev-Goce's house continued. All the same at the beginning of November Goce

⁸⁸ Laze Lazevski, Recollections... p 1

⁸⁹ The others sentenced to death were Bavitir Velju (in absentia), Jonche Murdzhevski and Boris Strezovski (hanged in the Bitola prison), nine souls to life imprisonment and 6 to 15 years in jail. Zbornik Dokumentacija i podataka o Narodnooslobodilackom ratu jugoslovenskih naroda, Beograd 1954, vol VII, book 4, p 393-4

and Miki came to the area near Lera so that they could assess the situation after these terrible events. In doing this they were seen by some anti-chetnik sympathisers and they went and spent some time in Gjavato and then went to the village Zlatari in Prespa, where the detachment "Dame Gruev" was then located. But Goce did not stay there long. He returned to the unit "Jane Sandanski." "A month after the decision was made to form the unit, it was decided to split it into 3 because the conditions required for it to continue were not in place, ... and Strogov, Krste, Sermen, Dobri, Koki, Kocho, Goce, Tunelo, Iljo and Plamen remained as the core of the Unit."⁹⁰

In November the leadership of the Unit which included Goce resolved to plan another attack which would be on a target that would take the attention of the Bulgarian police, but which would also lift the fighting spirit of the people. The target selected was the railway station in Srpci Beranci (today known as "Dame Gruev"). Trajan Belev–Goce was not a fighter in the detachment but was rather a member of the Regional Operational headquarters but joined in the armed attack himself. According to the plan, the unit "Jane Sandanski" set off at night on 15 November 1942 with a speedy march and then hid in a small group of trees. There they made a plan for the attack. When darkness fell, the Unit approached the station and then one fighter left to do what he had been tasked to do. "The attack on the main station building was to be done by Sermen and Goce (Trajan Belev) and to be covered with gunfire by Koki (Beno Ruso) and Junosha (Gavro Panovski) and the others were allocated to groups according to the plan. On entering the yard of the station this group immediately met a Bulgarian low-ranking officer. On being directed to put his hands up, he reached for his belt to take out a weapon so

⁹⁰ Garo Panovski-Junosha, Formation and Activity of the partisan detachments "Dame Gruev" and "Jane Sandanski," Bitola and Bitola region in NOV, 1941-2 Book I, p 605

Sermen shot him with his yellow Kraguevka hunting rifle without hesitating. Gunfire started up, coming from the buildings where a large number of soldiers were positioned. We did not know about this. After a battle which went for more than an hour the Unit withdrew, with two Bulgarian soldiers being killed.”⁹¹

In this attack, Trajan Belev–Goce managed to use his revolver to shoot out the lamp which put the Bulgarian soldiers into a panic.⁹²

After the action the Unit withdrew first to the village Brusnik. Meanwhile, a huge number of soldiers and police officers from the city searched the Bitola area for the Unit. From a military viewpoint the action was only partially successful but the people commented on it positively as it brought confusion and hesitation to the enemy. In the retelling the number of partisans was exaggerated, and this frightened the Bulgarian occupying soldiers.

After the Unit fighters went to the forest near Lafci, they asked Belev about the lamp which they had heard about: “Goce, what happened with the lamp?” and Goce with his way of simplifying things answered: “Well, forget the lamp. What about the swift move we pulled on Ganjo! Now they will search and search for us. They will wear themselves out searching through the fields.”

These and other similar discussions and occasional jokes helped the fighters which were far from their families and in talking to Trajan Belev–Goce they found a connection. He knew how to revive the fighters even in the toughest times.

The detachment camped close to the village Lafci. The weather conditions were very harsh. Trajan Belev–Goce with Vancho Prke-Sermen and Gjore Velkovski–Koste left for Lerin to make a

⁹¹ Dimche Milevski-Dobri, Recollections about Sermen, Jubilee Vesnik “Pelister,” 2 April 1963

⁹² Dr Dushko Hr Konstantinov, Dr Milosh Hr Kontantinov and Kosta Ai Cigaovski-Koch, Hronika p 156

connection with the groups of partisans. Sermen left for Lerin while Goce and Koste stayed in Kleshtino.

The next day the group from Lerin left the village and split into two sub-groups – and one set off for Velushina and the other (which Goce joined with Nikola Todorovski – Kole Kaninski and Koste) left for Porodin. In Porodin the sub-group remained to meet with the party cell, to admit new members, and Trajan Belev–Goce and Gjore Velkovski–Koste immediately set off for Kanino. In Kanino they had planned to unite the three groups of the partisan unit “Jane Sandanski” which had been divided because of the difficult living conditions. On 30 November 1942 the groups were united in the Kanino church Sv Bogorodica. While still in Lafci, the unit core met the District Provincial committee on 22 September 1942 and Kiro Krstevski – Platnik, the delegate from the Chief headquarters had arrived. In Kanino, that is, in the church in Kanino, the Headquarters of the Unit considered the District of the PK KPJ for Macedonia. “In the meantime, the head of the Unit received a letter brought by the delegate of the chief headquarters (Platnik) which required that the unit cross the mountain Kajmachkalan into Marioski terrain and to join the Prilep partisan unit. The idea of the headquarters was for the two units to form a base there and spend winter, and in due course to carry out activities with the partisans in that terrain.”⁹³

The task of uniting the two units was sufficiently serious as December approached and the weather was not much suited to walking. On the long march to Mariovo the unit (including Trajan Belev–Goce) took a rest for one day in the fields near Lerin, in the village Kleshtino. At the fall of darkness the unit set off to the border with guides, two Greeks who knew the terrain very well. However, the weather deteriorated and a

⁹³ Beno Ruso, Dimche Milevski, Peco Bozhinovski, The formation and Activity of the partisan detachment “Jane Sandanski” Bitola, People’s Liberation Partisan Detachments, Bitola 1982, p300

dense fog descended and the guides themselves lost orientation. They ended up walking aimlessly around the border itself. The unit crossed the border a few times and returned to the starting over and over. The partisans were in effect walking in a circle. "When the guides lost the track and when it became apparent that we were talking in a circle, there was awkwardness in the unit. All eyes were on Trajan Belev to resolve the situation they found themselves in. Without hesitation he offered to find the track. I was with him as I knew the Greek language. The barking of the dogs and the smell of smoke Trajan returned to the village without any errors. We reached the village Popadija and went to Krste Rusev's house. Trajan spoke to the homeowner and told him they had lost the track and as they wanted to buy some contraband in Greece he asked for help in finding their way so that they would not fall into some trap. His voice was so calm, wise and humane that the homeowner welcomed us into his home immediately. In the conversation that Trajan had with the homeowner we quickly concluded that Krste Rusev was a Macedonian, a patriot and his politics were anti-fascist and so Trajan told him the truth. At that, Krste agreed to act as our guide and to get the Unit onto the right road. He managed to procure some food that was necessary for the Unit at the time."⁹⁴ So, after the difficult march⁹⁵ the Unit reached the monastery in the village Chanishte that is the Chebrenskiot monastery which had been the agreed place to meet and join up with the partisan unit "Gjorche Petrov." The Unit stayed in the monastery from 21 to 25 December 1942. While there they got news that the partisan unit "Gjorche Petrov" had been

⁹⁴ According to the recollections of Petre Novachevski, taken from Mijal Grbevski and Kole Bendev, *Revolucionernata...* p 584

⁹⁵ On its march to Mariovo, detachment "Jane Sandanski" it went through many villages including Rakovo, Klabuchishte, Opcirina, Kalenik, Sakulevo, Ovcharani, Kroshodari, Setina, Popadija, Skochivir, Budimirci, Gradeshnica, Staravina

beaten in a battle so the unit "Jane Sandanski" had no reason to remain on the terrain near Mariovo. It could not take action because it was not familiar with the terrain in winter so it was decided that the Unit would return over the Bitola plains below Baba Mountain.

While they were in Mariovo Petre Novachevski-Gershan and Trajan Belev-Goce ended up alone. Goce, seeing a smoke coming out of the chimney of a village house which was more hut than house turned to his colleague and said: " Eh Petre, when the war is over I am longing to collect my children and wife to myself and I don't need much more."⁹⁶ As can be seen, the wishes of Goce were modest.

After its return the Detachment "Jane Sandanski" was divided into three groups of partisans. One in the Aegean part of Macedonia, another in the Second Region and the third in the villages Lafci and Oreovo. Each received their own orders. The main group was in Lafci and Oreovo and was directly connected to the partisan organisation in Bitola. In Oreovo were Strogov, Sermen, Gjore, Koki (Beno Ruso), Dobri (Dimche Milevski) and Goce and Lazo Maliot joined them from time to time. At the other end of the village Oreovo there was a group of Bulgarian border guards who did not know about the partisans and even though they were searching the nearby villages, they did not search Oreovo as it seemed the occupied could not conceive that a small village where there was a group of border guards could be the base for partisans. At this time, "... work was being done to re-establish the severed ties between villages in the western Bitola region and re-establishing organisations in those villages where they had been destroyed. We were preparing to join the detachments

⁹⁶ According to the oral recount of Petre Novachevski

“Jane Sandanski” and “Dame Gruev,” who were in regular contact.⁹⁷

In the second part of January 1943 Trajan Belev-Goce and Gjore Velkovski-Koste arrived in the village Rotino where Beno Ruso-Koki was working on the same thing. They stayed in the residence of the teacher-tailor Jordan Krstevski-Dzuni. The arrival in Rotino of the three partisans was to meet up with the SKOJ members (Skojevci) and others who were sympathisers of KPJ but which had not yet been compromised and in this they were partly successful. These were in effect the first steps toward the consolidation of the party organisation in the First region.

At the same time as they were renewing the party activity on the terrain in the First region Trajan Belev-Goce and Beno Ruso-Koki were noticed in the area between Metimir and Smilevo by some hunters from Smilevo who then went on to tell the police. A search was immediately arranged by the police and the anti-cheta group (“kontrachetata”). Goce and Koki went to Lera. Trajan Belev-Goce injured his foot on the way and left a bloody trail in the snow. That made it easier for the searchers. The mayor of Svinjishte Pero Petkov was informed who was asked to mobilise the villagers with hunting weapons and other handy weapons to secure the passage to the place Banjata and Ridot to stop the two partisans getting to Lera. The gathered villagers were playing cards in the village bar and Pero Petkov told them to go home without telling them why. At the same time shooting was heard and the villagers rushed home without asking any questions. The order the mayor had been clear – to enable the persecuted partisans to get safely to Lera. And that is what happened. Goce and Koki managed to enter the village without being noticed and they first went to

⁹⁷ Beno Ruso, Dimche Milevski, Peco Bozhinovski, The formation and Activity of the partisan detachment “Jane Sandanski” Bitola, People’s Liberation Partisan Detachments, Bitola 1982, p307

the home of Risto Naumov and then to Goce's aunt Menka Nikolova. They then moved on to Gjavato for better safety where they were received by Gjivashtanec Trajan Batkov. Knowing that the house was likely to be searched, they hid in Batkov's barn. What they expected, happened. The searchers reached Gjavato. Some followed the blood trail in the snow above Gjavato and the others searched in the village. They began to search the houses. They reached Batkov's house who. Even though he knew what awaited him if partisans were found in his house, managed to maintain calm and when asked whether there was anyone in the house apart from his family he replied to the searchers: "If there is anything here in my house I will answer with my head." That answer made the searchers move on. After they left Goce and Koki p78 remained in the barn to be safe until the evening and then they left by the river.

After 15 days or so from the events Goce returned to Gjavato where he stayed 3 days. He wanted to revive the organisation activity in the village but there was not much of a response because of fear of the occupier government.

After the unsuccessful attempts in Gjavato, Goce frequently returned to Rotino. Once in Rotino he went with Vancho Prke-Sermen, where his contact was Jordan Krstevski-Dzuni. With his help the SKOJ organisation was renewed. They also provided information on how to connect with the SKOJ organisation in Gjavato and to also form Skoevski groups in Gorno Srpici and Capari. Goce presented these actions to the Rotino Skoevski organisations as very serious.

Trajan Belev-Goce knew the terrain extremely well and also knew the leadership of the detachment "Dame Gruev" so he was given the responsible task "...to complete every preparation to join up the detachment "Dame Gruev" and "Jane

Sandanski" into one strong unit in Dolna Prespa..."⁹⁸ This decision to join the two units and their operation in the Lerin-Kostur region came as a result of the approval that the leadership got from the unit "Jane Sandanski" from the Headquarters of the Peoples Liberation partisan units of Macedonia.⁹⁹

In the evening before the responsible task which awaited him Goce and Todor Angelevski-Strogov spent two or three days and nights analysing the events that had occurred, they summarised the experiences, looked at weaknesses and then made a plan to join the two Units. Goce went to Lafci occasionally, that is he got to know the group of partisans - P79 - who were a part of those who had made decisions and plans to combine the two units in Prespa. To narrow down the time and place for the joining up "... together with Gjore Velkovski, Trajan Belev went to Prespa... to the village Pokrvenik¹⁰⁰ in the house of Mite Trpovski. They held a meeting with the party organisation, they informed themselves about the detachment "Dame Gruev" and the next day led by tanas Tasevski – Komito and Trajan Gerakarov, they went to Konjsko where the Unit was staying. Trajan and Gjore Velkovski were dressed up as livestock traders. At Sirhan a ramp had been installed on the road and there were 200-250 police and 70 financiers ("finansisti") in the inn. Trajan and Gjore had forged travel documents... the Unit was staying in a former guard barrack ... they stayed with the Unit, they agreed to join the "Jane Sandanski" Unit and after a few days they were taken by boat over the Prespa Lake and returned to the unit "Jane Sandanski"¹⁰¹ to the village Oreovo. Everything was prepared

⁹⁸ Beno Ruso, The Revolutionary Trajan Belev, Jubilee Vesnik "Pelister" 22 April 1971

⁹⁹ Zbornik dokumenti and podataka... book 1 p 253, document No 80

¹⁰⁰ The indicated data "end of January" could not be correct because all of the other materials refer to "the end of February and the start of March"

¹⁰¹ Mijal Grbevski and Kole Bendeve, Revolucionernata... p 584-5

for the two units to be combined. At the same time a need arose for a group of illegals to be taken into the partisans. At the appointed place Bimbil Kamen near Bitola, Sermen, Dobri and Goce met the group of illegals.¹⁰² "All at once, a person, a second, a third and more appeared before us. They were partisans, well dressed and armed. They had felt caps on their heads with a red 5 pointed star. They impressed me as strict and aligned in a single thought "We want freedom!... Dimche Milevski – Dobri set off first, then some of the older -p80 – partisans, then we went, and behind us Trajan Belev- Goce and Strogov."¹⁰³ The transfer of the group of illegals, most of whom were Jews, took place on 12 March the day after the deportation of the Jews in Bitola. Then the groups from Lavci and Oreovo (in effect the unit "Jane Sandansko" were led by Trajan Belev -Goce toward Prespa. That was the second half of March 1943. The road took them through Brusnik and Dihovo, Rotino and Dolenci. From there they climbed up to Serven where because of the deep snow and the difficult walking, the fighters rested. Then they went above Oteshevo and in the fields above the village Leskoec in the Resen region and around 25 March they joined the detachment "Dame Gruev". Straight after uniting, the detachment went under the name "Dame Gruev." Trajan Belev- Goce stayed on with the Unit taking part in some of their exercises. "From when the two units or bands combined until Trajan Belev-Goce went to Debarca, we stayed with the Unit. The whole time. In the Lerin- Kostur area where the Unit was undertaking exercises, and Goce took part in all of them. Even though he was older, and had greater party seniority, and greater partisan experience and tested through battle experience, confident and always at the lead of the movement, close to the military and party bodies of the Unit,

¹⁰² They were Gjorgji Tapandzhievski, Zhamila Kolonomos, Goce Trajkovski, Vasko Angelevski-Purino, Lena, Kta, Mo, Simo, Kote, Albert Aroesti

¹⁰³ Gjoko Tapandzhievski, We set of... Jubilee Vesnik "Pelister: 22 April 1963

and a member of the Regional Operational Headquarters, Goce was modest, serious in his work, responsible in getting his tasks done. Everything to him was important. A task which may have appeared small at first glance was treated by him as significant. So for example, it was with sharing out food. Others at his level might have been insulted to serve food to the fighters. Not Trajan. The whole time he was there he looked after food service. Goce shared out equally whatever we had so that no one had more and no one had less.¹⁰⁴

After combining the Unit set off for Dolna Prespa and the Aegean part of Macedonia, in the Lerin – Kostur area. It stayed on that terrain for about a month. The other group that was a part of “Jane Sandanski” (Kaninska group) with which the Unit grew significantly in number. It grew to about 60 partisans. The mission for the Unit in the Aegean part of Macedonia was to carry out propaganda to create a solid base from which it would launch into the Macedonian territory under Bulgarian occupation. The exercises of the Unit were chiefly of political-propaganda in nature; holding meetings, explaining the objectives and character of the people’s liberation movement, recruiting new fighters and so on. Meanwhile when some Greek partisan units appeared in the same area, to turn the Macedonians against them, the occupier developed propaganda about them, that they were andartes units who were fighting against the Macedonians. The occupier made some success with this sort of propaganda because the Greek partisan units did not always behave properly toward the Macedonian population. From there, to defend their families and villages, the Macedonians rejected the Italian propaganda and accepted arms. The Bulgarian propaganda operated in the same direction through its agents. So, arriving on that terrain the

¹⁰⁴ According to the oral recount of Petre Novachevski

“Dame Gruev” detachment met strong opposition at first from those fighting the units especially in Kostur.

In such political conditions the Unit brought a new sense into the villages around Kostur and Lerin, a truth about the partisan units and the anti-fascist battle. At meetings, where Macedonian was spoken they explained what the partisans were fighting for. The news of the Macedonian partisans and their battle spread quickly. The population changed its stance toward them, it became friendlier, more welcoming. They behaved toward the partisans as they would toward their own people.

At the same time, the Greek partisan unit “Vicho” operated in the same terrain and on their initiative collaboration commenced. The collaboration started with activity in the villages Gorno and Dolno Kleshtina. Later there was activity in Buf, Armesnko, Trsje and Turija, Neret, Lagen, Dolno and Gorno Kotori and others. In the villages, the Units held meetings which generally followed the same program: 1/ describing the programme of the People’s Liberation Movement (NOV); 2/ describing the international situation; 3/ the abandonment of the Macedonians and Bulgarians by the Bulgarian fascist army; 4/ .. 5/ Life under occupation; 6/ the relationship between the Macedonian and Greek people and the joint battle against fascism. “The speakers were comrades: Gjorche (Josif Josifovski- Sveshtarot; Kole (Nikola Todorovski – Kole Kaninski; Strogov (Todor Angelevski), Petre (Petre Novachevski – Gershan), Leon (Naum Shupurkov) – political commissar (“politkomo”) of the Unit “Vicho”, who spoke Macedonian – Barba, Todoros who spoke Greek, Trajan (Trajan Belev- Goce), Botev (Risto Trpenovski), Pavle (Trajce Grujoski) and comrade Cveta (Zhamila Kolonomos).”¹⁰⁵ Trajan Belev –

¹⁰⁵ Diary of the Bitola partisan detachment “Goce Delchev” Bitolski People’s Liberation partisan detachments, Bitola, 1982 p 585 from the older notes of the commissar, Nova Makedonija, 22 May 1973 p 8

Goce. Even though he was not an orator like Sveshtarot or Strogov he spoke to the gathered people. We have other confirmation that he spoke before the people gathered into a meeting by the Unit in the villages Dolno and Gorno Kotori. "These are two villages. Gorno Kotori was allocated Gjore Velkovski who spoke about the political – p83 – situation, I (Petre Novachevski) about the partisan movement in Macedonia and Trajan Belev – Goce but I don't recall what he was asked to speak about."¹⁰⁶

Outside of the meetings Goce and the others from the Unit, would explain the struggle to the population in a straightforward way, in various conversations that took place. Goce was the most persuasive in the conversations. He used the question answer format to explain the struggle for national and social freedom to the population. Goce liked these conversations the most, "...the villagers would gather in the village centre (sred selo) where the people loudly sang partisan songs and some of the partisans would gather up some smaller groups of villagers to tell them about our struggle... and immediately this would spark interest that travelled through the whole village centre. They burned the books from the Greek press. The villagers and the partisans called out "Burn down fascism! With these flames we are burning the old and the future is coming..."¹⁰⁷

FROM PRESIPA TO TIKVESHKO AND BACK

On 18 May 1943 Blagoja Taleski – Ivan visited the "Dame Gruev" detachment. he conveyed to the leadership the resolution from head quarters of NOB and PO in Macedonia that "Dame Gruev" should be split in two – one to keep the name "Dame Gruev" and go to Prespa and the other to remain

¹⁰⁶ According to the oral recount of Petre Novachovski

¹⁰⁷ The Diary of the Bitolskiot... p585-6

where it was and be the core of a new detachment to be formed. Both the military and party leadership resolved to comply with the resolution from headquarters at its meeting of 20 May 1943. "Dame Gruev" was split in two as resolved and one part of the detachment set off for Prespa to carry out the functions that had been allocated to it. "Belev really wanted to remain with us, with our group, which would form the unit "Goce Delchev" but he also wanted to be with Sveshtarot. At the end, he went with "Dame Gruev".¹⁰⁸

"Moving into the Prespa and Ohrid regions the "Dame Gruev" detachment from 21 May until 23 July (about a month) carried out more than 21 actions. The actions included political meetings in the villages: Kalugjerica (Lerin), Slivnica, Leskoec, Stenje, Olshani (Ohrid) Turije, Rajca, Ljubojno, Brajchino and Dolno Dupeni. Other actions included armed attacks on the Italian occupier officers in Brajchino, Konjsko and the elimination of collaborators with the occupier in Zlatari and Podmochani. Along with the mass gatherings or meetings, where the goal of the people's liberation struggle there were also referrals for the formation of people's liberation committees, their tasks, and also the mobilisation of new fights.¹⁰⁹

See photo
Partisans of "Dame Gruev" detachment
Belev indicated with an arrow

Prespa became a central place where new fighters arrived each day. The seat of CK KPM and the Headquarters were in Prespa and "Dame Gruev" worked regularly with them.

¹⁰⁸ According to the oral recount of Petre Novachevski

¹⁰⁹ Dr Velimir Brezoski, The Liberation War in Macedonia 1943 on the territory of SR Macedonia, Skopje 1971 p138; Jovan Kochankovski and Gjorgji Tankovski "Dame Gruev" Skopje 1982 p 76

*The chapter "From Prespa to Tikveshko and back" is based on the book Boro Chaushev-Strandzha "Na posebna zadacha" Negotino 1985. All citations are taken from the same book at pages 60, 68, 109, 119, 122, 125, 184/5, 222, 229 and 301

For the whole time that Goce was on that terrain that he well knew, he invested all of his experience in the actions undertaken whether agitating or armed.

At the end of June 1943 Ilija Igeski- Cvetan got a task from the Main headquarters, to go into the Third zone. "The task he was given was serious and onerous and to complete it he had to get through dangerous areas. The road went by Krushevo and Prilep all the way to the Tikvesh area, where the leadership of the third zone was located. Cvetan completed this task with the outstanding fighter from Gjavato, Trajan Belev – Goce and Mitko Cvetanovski – Gancho."¹¹⁰

In essence the three proven partisans had to join the group of fighters from Tikveshko which included: Aleksandar Icev – Zhivko, Blagoj Krstik- Joshka and Boro Chaushev- Strandzha. The task for the Tikvsh group was that through them. "... the regional committee and the headquarters of the Third operational zone wanted to establish a connection with the Central Committee of KPM and the Main Headquarters*.

The group that Trajan Belev – Goce was in reached Prilep in July. At that time the member of the group, Gancho entered Prilep because of party work, while to other two partisans Cvetan and Goce continued toward Tikvesh. When they got close to the village Trstenik they met partisans from the Tikvesh region who were implementing a special order. They then agreed on their long and difficult path. Moving at night they reached the village Nikodin in Prilep where they stopped to rest. Having regard to the special task that they were carrying out. Cvetan made a plan for the next day. Cvetan talked about how they were well sheltered, how they had a good defence position, how, if they encountered someone

¹¹⁰ Ljuben Georgievski, Ilija Igeski-Cvetan (II) Makedonski Chapaev, newspaper "Komunist" of 7 August 1964 p 10; Ljuben Georgievski-Ljupta, From the battle path of the national hero Ilija Igeski-Cvetan, Večer 28 and 29 March 1964.

working in the forest they would have to take him hostage, that is, he covered how they should act when different circumstances arose. In reply, Trajan Belev – Goce responded in good faith to those words of Cvetan: “All right then Cvetan, you have described it all to us. Why don’t you leave something to us to deal with using our own heads.”

We joked. In that sort of situation, humour was a comfort to the soul. That is part of being human, an integral part of life.

As day dawned the partisans learned something about the occupation, the readiness of the fighters and the group, and Goce thought very carefully about it. “The optimistic Goce joined in the serious discussion: ...I understand that we have to be aware and think about everything. But this is war. We are dealing with an organised, dangerous and well-armed occupier. The occupier is also thinking about things over and above how to squash our struggle. The Bulgarian occupier is using cunning and spreads propaganda. What if the occupier surprises us? We, for example, have come up with a plan but he surprises us and fires on us...

Goce was a mature man and an experienced revolutionary...” It was not a random comment that he made to turn our minds to the Bulgarian occupier... Goce wanted to plant in us the understanding that a good plan is a half win. He wanted to maximise our enthusiasm to experience all that we could in the following days...” And that is how Goce through his conversations renewed the spirit of the young fighters.

At the fall of night, the two groups which were in essence one big group, set off on the road for Markovi Kuli–Prilep area. Cvetan separated from the group at dawn and walked down to Prilep, while the group settled at the Markovi Kuli, just opposite the Prilep barracks. In the morning the partisans observed the Bulgarian soldiers in full shooting formation were marching

toward the podnozhie of the Markovi Kuli. Concluding they had been discovered the group of partisans resolved to take on the battle to their last bullet and breath. Grabbing each other by the hands and looking each other in the eye the fighters swore their allegiance once again. However, the excitement soon ebbed as the soldiers did not head toward them but headed back for the barracks. They had been undertaking a military exercise on hilly terrain. The danger for the group passed but their task and their decisiveness to fight remained. In the meantime, two partisans arrived in Prilep - Gancho and Cvetan with another who was an illegal and remained with them. That night the group set off for Krushevo. They travelled through the Pelagonia plain. Steering clear of the roads they travelled through wheat fields, corn fields, and fields of tobacco and other crops which made their passage slow. As a result of all of that the group did not reach Krushevo as planned but saw dawn in the fields. Markovi Kuli were far away and Krushevo was still about two hours away. Goce's suggestion was simple – to stay in the wheat fields. And that is what they did. They stayed in the wheat fields during broad day light with each person sheltering as best as they could.

At daylight, the field workers began to arrive, men, women and children. The field stirred with activity and filled with people. The group heard voices of the field workers, especially the children. "Goce lay on his back and I saw that he was absorbed in thought. My thoughts are on him. I asked myself a question and answered it for myself. Surely, I said to myself, he is thinking of Gjavato. Perhaps he is wondering what is happening with his family: his wife and children? Are they still in the village or have they been taken to Bulgaria? Do not think that, I say to myself. Goce is a revolutionary, I vacillate. His thoughts must be deeper than that and free of sentimentality.

Surely here in the wheat field he is thinking about the future farms that we will establish after liberation.”

All the same, the group did not leave everything to chance. On the contrary Cvetan carried out reconnaissance from time to time. However, the group’s water supply ran out that day. They were thirsty and they were close enough to hear the click of the wheel of the bore well. They saw that apart from the field workers, there were no others about, the group resolved that they would send Goce, as the most resourceful, to fill up with water. In his careful way, he did a manoeuvre in moving toward the well that would not give away the location of the partisans, he got to the well and filled up the flask. Cvetan followed his movement and kept the fighters informed that he saw Goce speaking to the nearby villagers after filling up. In the same way as he had left the group, he returned, calmly and with a slow step, using a roundabout path. After Goce returned the water was quickly drunk – each having a bit. Once the fighters had quenched their thirst they were keen to know what Goce had been talking to the villagers about at the well. Trajan Belev- Goce told them the field workers asked him where he was from and why he was at their well and Goce replied that he had arrived with his cousin from Resen to work as field workers (“chetvrtchki”) because they did not have their own land and God had given them children and they had to be fed. Once Goce felt that he had persuaded them with his story, that is that he had become acquainted with the people at the well he said to them “...the times were tough – they will even take this little bit of wheat from us... I heard that the Russians pushed the Germans back, and I do not know whether you have heard that there are partisans in Macedonia. They say they are fighting for a free Macedonia.” After Goce finished speaking some of his colleagues from the group spoke to him and said that he should not be agitating in such circumstances

but “all of knew this man closely, this revolutionary, this kind man, this true son of the Macedonian people who deeply believed in the goal of the struggle and who had class awareness and was determined. He simply could not contain himself and had to tell the villagers the truth.

Passing the day without water, the few gulps they had made the fighters even more thirsty. Encouraged by the successful first run by Goce, an hour later they decided to send someone else to bring water. Without thinking twice Goce got the flask and again, as before, with slow careful steps reached the well. However this time, there was an armed man at the well, armed with a rifle. Goce stayed calm but casually greeted the people who were there and began to fill up with water. Immediately, the armed man brusquely spoke to him, “Who are you, eh?” Trajan Belev – Goce saw that the man was a forest ranger and repeated what he had told the villagers. The armed man did not believe him and asked him for an “okrit list” (an official note that permitted free travel) from one place to another. Goce did not have such a note but pretended to search in his pockets and said to himself, “ look at that, it seems that it is still in my coat...” the ranger insisted that he be shown the official note. “Don’t you believe me? Well then follow me where I am working on that field with my co-workers” – and Goce indicated with his hand toward the field where the group was hiding Goce spoke quietly, and persuasively. They set off toward the group of fighters. When they got closer, Goce called out, “Cvetan Strandzha, Zhivko, would you get out my official travel note! This guy with the gun does not believe that I am a field worker!” In saying “this guy with the gun” – Goce told the fighters that he was in a difficulty. “As they got closer the partisans aimed their guns at the ranger. They quickly disarmed him. As they did not have time for discussions they

decided not to permit any of the villager/field workers to go to the village but instead, whoever passed by their hiding spot, would be held up, so that none of them could tell what had happened at the well. As it happened the group of partisans acted as the circumstances required – as Goce had often spoken about.

Before it got dark, there were about 100 people with the group. The villagers were wondering how a group of partisans had sprung up in the middle of the field. The group immediately described their politics. They spoke to the villagers and at the end, Trajan Belev - Goce stepped forward as the spokesman. He spoke of the sufferings of the Macedonian people who had been robbed, enslaved, but who never bowed their heads, but who always found strength to fight and die for freedom. Goce told how in those hard days, the partisans were the ones who were fighting the occupier and their servants. Among other things, Belev emphasised that in their fight they were not alone, but rather that they were fighting alongside all of the Yugoslav people and with the Soviet Union, England and USA. "You should know that they are our partners" he said and continued to speak about the readiness of the partisans to fight even if it was at the cost of their own lives, and that their lives would not be lost in vain but to gain lasting freedom. Goce did not leave out a description of the position of the bigger fronts, about the monstrosity of the occupier in Prilep and Tikvesh so that at the end he could say to the villagers, "To finish, friends! This struggle will change our lives to the core. The Macedonian people will have a country of its own and will live equally with the other Yugoslavian people. What is most important, the people will elect their own government. The people will decide all things, and we will all have the same rights. You should know this. Our struggle which we fight today is an additional

step to the journey started by our ancestors in the Ilinden uprising.

“We listened to Goce carefully with the gathered mass of people. He was articulate. His thoughts were connected, clear and easy to follow for all who were listening. A true propagandist. The party had taught him not to waste words.”

Darkness fell slowly on the fields. After Goce’s speech, the villagers invited the partisans to a meal and then left. Only the ranger was detained. After they took his ammunition and advised him not to draw away from the people and not to serve the occupier for money, then they let him go.

As it had already got dark, the group set off in a column for Krushevo, each five metres from the other. It reached Mechkin Kamen about midnight. At Goce’s suggestion the partisans paid their respects to Pitu Guli and his brave unit, and they stood at ease, raised their rifles and then bowed. Feeling that they were continuing the work of the Ilinden fighters the partisans continued toward Ledinje where they had to meet Zlate Biljanovski – Mihajlo. They did not get to meet Mihajlo as planned at the appointed place. The group was worried – had they been late or had something happened to Mihajlo? Again with his wisdom and experience, Goce suggested that the situation would have to be worked out a different way. While they were discussing their next step, some sheep appeared nearby without a shepherd. Goce set off toward the sheep and walked slowly acting as if he was looking for his lost sheep. He was watching the forest and got closer to the sheep. To the group, which was carefully watching his movement, it seemed an eternity. He moved closer to the forest and then disappeared from view of the group which was waiting for the outcome. Soon Goce appeared with two young shepherds and

they were speaking to each other. They then learned that the two shepherds were the connection. Mihajlo had waited a day or two and then he had been obliged to leave.

The group then set off for Kichevo and on their way got some food. Goce and Joshka got a goat and learned that the same morning an anti-guerrilla bands and some Bulgarian police had been brutalising the villagers and stealing their goods.

Continuing their march, the group easily gained the mountain Kozjak and started to pass over the difficult slopes of the mountain Baba Sach. To help them relax during their rest times, Goce would tell them about the great Chinese march, the October revolution and similar events. Step by step, and with great effort, the partisan group got over the rocky Baba Sach. When they reached a mountain spring, they had a wash, shaved, combed their hair and freshened up. After the difficult march, the group was comfortable with each other. The group then set off and by evening they camped above the village Vraneshnica. They roasted the goat, divided it into 7 even portions and ate the part cooked meat. They quickly got to sleep. The next day, very early, they continued their travel. They quickly reached the "border" that is the part which was under the occupation of the Italians. Propelled by the desire to cross the "border" they entered some fenced orchards which were difficult to get through and made their trip that bit harder. This made the group anxious. Then "Goce, who was next to me, quietly whispered to me – Strandzha, now that we have lost ourselves in these fences, all that we need is for the Bulgarians to start shooting. Who knows how we will pull out of this." That is what Trajan Belev- Goce was like. Even when things were most difficult, he would make a joke or to encourage others, to find a release in every situation and to find a way to build the optimism of the fighters.

The "border" was first crossed by Goce and Cvetan and after them, the rest. First they sheltered in a little forest and then they entered into the village [95] Kladnik where they were joyfully greeted. There for the first time since they set off they ate their fill of a hot meal. That night they had a meeting in the village and then left for the village Karbunica. On the next day after walking for three hours they reached the camp of the Kichevo- Mavrovski Unit from which they set off for the village Vrbajani going through the villages Vrzhdani, Svinjishta, Kozica and Belica. Other partisans joined the group for the greater safety in numbers and soon it doubled in size. Together they walked through free territory visiting many villages at the base of Karaorman. Before dark, the group reached the village Crvena Voda – Ohrid region, where they saw people moving about. In essence, at the village centre many people were gathered as there had been an announcement that there would be a meeting. The group of partisans joined the other people to join in the meeting, and after that, when a huge celebration commenced, the group met with Josif Josifovski – Sveshtarot (Gjorche) which he was expecting. In his discussion with the newly arrived partisans Sveshtarot told them that their arrival was very important for CK of KPM and the Headquarters because of the statement that they conveyed. At the same time Sveshtar said to them that " ...Cvetan, Goce and Gancho have a message from CK KPM here, in the village Crvena Voda, to get their new tasks and when they have to carry them out."

Separating from the partisans from Tikvesh with Cvetan, Goce and Gancho was hard for them. They were all silent. Goce noted this and this time he found a warm word for them. "Why are we silent, friends?... that is how it is... the seven of us .. we have been through 12 hard days and nights. We have gotten close. We became as one soul. We will part today. You will go

on your path and will make new acquaintances, and we who remain will have new meetings. "We hugged for a long, long time... with the wish that we would see each other again.

The group from Tikvesh in the final phase of their travel were led by Vangel Nechevski – Tunelo and Gavro Panovski – Junosha from Bitola. During one rest time the Tikvesh partisans asked their leaders if they knew Trajan Belev – Goce. The answer was not just that they did but with they also added comments about the fighting path that Goce had followed which they now heard for the first time. They then realised "... during the days when they had shorter or longer rests, Goce would go off on his own and think. He must have been thinking of his family. It was awkward for us to think we had disrupted him with comments "Hey Goce, what film are you watching?" and things like that. I don't recall that he was cross with us ...now that we knew his family was not an obstacle in him fighting by hand and with weapons against the occupier, Goce grew in our eyes as a Great of the revolution.

ACTING POLITICAL COMMISSAR IN THE FIRST MACEDONIAN REGULAR UNIT DETACHMENT "MIRCHE ACEV"

The events of this time, summer 1943 were clearly to the advantage of NOV and the People's revolution. On 10 July the allied armies converged on Sicily, so the Italian occupier was not free to openly fight the partisan units that is, to attack them; instead it was obliged to be on the defensive only. From that situation and the importance of Western Macedonia for the flame up of the armed struggle, CK KPM and the Headquarters "... brought down a resolution that the detachment "Dame Gruev" ...to move to the territory under Italian occupation near Debarca and in unison with the Mavrovo- Kichevo unit ... to operate in the area of Debarca-Struga-Debar and for that area

to become a spark for the liberation movement as soon as possible.¹¹¹ The Unit implemented the direction on 17 July when the greater part of Ohrid (45 fighters) set off for Debarca in Ohrid. The Unit reached the indicated area on 19 July and at the end of the same month made contact with the Mavrovo-Kichevo Unit.

In Debarca, through mass meetings-gatherings the two units developed an effective agitation-propaganda operation in the villages Soshani, Ozdoleni (21 July). Mramorec, Godivje, Crvena Voda (28 July). In these actions as always, Trajan Belev-Goce¹¹² took an active role. In this region, as elsewhere, his demeanour was optimistic. he was able to influence those near him with his calm manner. "we knew Trajan Belev – Goce mostly as Goce. I met him before the surrender of Italy, in Debarca, through Dzhamila Kolomonos- Cveta. It was in the village Crvena Voda. We spoke together and I found his conversation appealing. There was respect for him in the whole "Dame Gruev" detachment. He told us all about the battles of the unit. in Crvena Voda there was a meeting and after the meeting we sang battle songs. We had a great celebration."¹¹³ In essence the meetings were one of the methods mass communication with the people when it was not possible to meet one on one, to explain the struggle. The meetings had great political significance "... in the whole region and a great response from the people. In whichever village we called the people to step out under the Macedonian flag and to give their

¹¹¹ Dr Velimir Brezovski, Liberation Battle... p 139

¹¹² In Sources of the liberation battle and revolution in Macedonia 1941-45 vol I, 4th book, Skopje 1975 p 57 and 103 through the text there are references to Trajan and this is clarified in the footnotes as Trajan Belev. This clearly overlooks the situation because at this time Belev was in Debarca. This Trajan was actually Tran Kostovski. See: Zbornik Dokument and podataka vol VII, book 1p304-305; Dr Velimir Brezoski, Osloboditelna ... p143

¹¹³ According to the oral recounts of Levko Stefanovski-Tarzan

word they would join the struggle and heroically fight to defend the Macedonian national flag."¹¹⁴

The successes of the partisan bands were more and more evident and the number of new fighters was growing. These circumstances allowed for the resolutions of the CK KPM made on 2 August 1943 at the meeting in Oteshevo, for the formation of larger military units. Following the completion of preparations on 18 August 1943 the first battalion of the Macedonian NOV was formed called "Mirche Acev" "... at Slavej on the mountain Karaorman, which is a beautiful place, set on a flat and surrounded by a forest with a large number of falls flowing with clear mountain water. At the forming of the battalion there were the fighters that joined as well as many people from the surrounding areas. The huge celebration was huge with fighters and the people who lived nearby ... There were fighters in the battalion that were from many parts of Macedonia. In accordance with the orders from the Debarca headquarters the battalion was comprised mostly of partisans from the Kichevo-Gostivar units and the Bitola-Prespa units, then fighters from Prilep, Veleshko, Krushevsko and others. The Headquarters of the Second operational zone formed the First battalion "Mirche Acev" from all of those forces.¹¹⁵ The leadership of the Battalion was formed from the following people:

Commander: Naume T Veslievski – Ocharo

Assistant commander: Mite Trpovski-Vojvodata

Political commissioner: Stoilko Ivanovski-Daskalo

Assistant political commissioner: Trajan Belev-Goce

Intendant Vojne Pavlovski – Stevo¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Zbornik dokumenata ... vol VII, book 1, p 315

¹¹⁵ Naum Naumovski, Foration of the Battalion "Mirche Acev" in "Brigade of Brotehrhood and Unity" Skopje 1958, p 54-55

¹¹⁶ Zbornik dokumenata and podataka.... Vol VII book 1 p 391-2

In the first regular Macedonian military unit Trajan Belev-Goce was appointed to a high leadership role. This was not a random appointment. Goce was known by all as a man without higher education but who had great life and revolutionary experience, a man who knew how to speak to the people. These were the qualities that were respected by the military and political leaders and even the party leaders. Goce was known to all as a man without higher education but with great life and revolutionary experience, a man with great tact and sensitivity in his interaction with people. It was exactly those qualities that were respected by the higher military and political leaders and party leaders. The fact that Goce had the tact of a political leader who could resolve issues is also evidenced by the following example from that time (about a partisan who is not named): 'We held a wider (extensive) meeting about his weaknesses.... let him fall into the mud by being led quite easily after the whim of others ... he said: - I resign from the KP. I will be a disciplined partisan, but I give up the KP. - The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Macedonia was immediately informed about this procedure and did not respect anything. In Debarca ... he was supposed to be interrogated by Goce (Trajan b.m.), who was in charge in KP "Mirce Acev". But Goce told him: - Now we will become a battalion, we will need commanders and we will give you a good position. This something ... knocked him on the head again ...¹¹⁷ Here are the problems of fighters with labile characters that Goce faced. His natural intelligence and great fighting experience were at all times very valuable to the Party to which Goce was completely committed. His natural intelligence and his great battle experience were valuable to the Party in every moment and Goce was totally dedicated to the party.

¹¹⁷ Izvori za Osloboditelnata... vol I book 5 p 18

Immediately after the formation of the battalion "Mirche Acev" was given a command to undertake in the villages near Kichevo, Struga and Ohrid. The first battles fought by the battalion were with the Italian carabinieri in the villages of Belchishta, Velmevci, Leshani, Slivovo. The heaviest battle was in the village Belchishta.

After the named battles Italian surrendered and the battalion gained a new task which was to disarm the Italian fascist forces wherever they were encountered. The battalion fully disarmed the Italian forces located in the Kichevo villages of Kozica, Belica, Slivovo, Karbunica and others. The battalion then set off for Kichevo itself. On 11 September Kichevo was liberated. The local committee of KPM prepared a grand reception for their liberators and after that there was a celebration involving all.¹¹⁸ "Immediately after the liberation of Kichevo the members of the headquarters joined ... Then... a military parade was arranged in which the battalion "Mirche Acev" participated and a big meeting of the population of Kichevo was held ... Kichevo was in our hands 21 days."¹¹⁹

In liberating Kichevo CK KPM and the Headquarters considered the military political situation resolved to send the group of battalions ("Mirche Acev", the Second Shiptarski Battalion and the Kosovo battalion) to the territory which was under Bulgarian occupation.¹²⁰ according to the plan it was necessary to go to Krushevo, Porechje, Velshko, Prilep, to attack the Drazhikjevci (Chetnik Organisation of Macedonia 1941-44) of Vojcho Trbik, to form peoples liberation committees in the villages to attack the Bulgarian police and to generally lift the spirit of the population by their very existence and activity on

¹¹⁸ Dushan Ristoski, Hronologija na Nastani od NOV, Kichevo and Kichevo region 1941-5 (vtoro dopolneto izdanie) Kichevo 1984, p54

¹¹⁹ Naum Naumovski, Formiranje na Bataljonot... p 56

¹²⁰ Boro Mitrovski, Povazhni nastani vo NOB za zapadna Makedonija, Glasnik na INI Skopje, 1959, god. III, br. 1 str 23

the terrain as the occupier had developed a powerful propaganda campaign: that the partisans had been defeated and no longer existed. With such tasks the "Mirche Acev" battalion and with it Trajan Belev-Goce. "Immediately ... "Mirche Acev" left Kichevo and left for the villages Karbunica, Vraneshnica and on 15.9.1943 we crossed the Bulgarian border... and continued in the direction of the villages Dvorci, Plasnica then to Drenovo – Makedonski Brod moving toward the mountain Bab Sach.

After walking for a whole day, the battalion "Mirche Acev" reached the forest above the village Drenovo early in the morning. After three or four hours rest in the forest the commissar of the battalion called a meeting with all of the communists...

At this meeting a resolution was made that all of the new fighters from the Kichevo and Struga villages be returned to Kichevo but for a head Shtab should be formed for them... and for a temporary Shtab were the following comrades: Mitre Trpevski-Vojvdata from Pokrvenik, Prespa, and as commissar, Trajan Belev from Gjavato, Bitola and the delegate Mitre Trajchevski-Starejko born in Slatari, Prespa."¹²¹

After the formation of this Shtab, on 16 September 1943 the fighters that had been identified for return were taken aside. The same night, under the leadership of Vojvodata, Goce and Starejko the fighters set off back to Kichevo. So Goce found himself back on liberated soil.

In the meantime, after the surrender of Italy the main Headquarters of NOV and PO in Macedonia with the goal of establishing brotherhood and unity with the Albanian population in these regions and to make sure they were not pulled into the ballistic bands they made contact with the

¹²¹ Krste Mitreski-Gospod, Recollections on the formation of the battle road of the battalion "Mirche Acev" Prilep and Prilep region in NOV 1943, Skopje 1981, book II, p 230; Zbornik dokumenata...tom VII, book 2, p125-7

former gendarme of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the ballistic leader Mefail Shehu. Mefail agreed to the terms of the Shtab, that without reservation he would submit to the command of the Shtab and that he would move as commanded. Lefko Stefanovski – Tarzan from the village of Karbunica was appointed to lead Mefail and his people to Kichevo. "Mefail was waiting 3 days between Sateska and Kasarnite. Tempo called me and told me to bring him. I greeted him with "Death to fascism" in Albanian. He did not say anything to me but extended his hand to me and said "Besa, and three times we nodded heads. I informed him that the Head Shtab agreed for him to come to Kichevo and to work together. "Thank God as you have decided" he said and ordered his people to line up and they did line up as soldiers do, four by four, we set off for Kichevo.

He was totally illiterate and had an officers bag with binoculars and a rifle.

They shook hands with Tempo at the municipality and Tempo held a short talk and ordered that arms be allocated to them. They all surged forward and the weapons were all gone. Then 400 prisoner/internees from Tirana and the village Burel arrived. There were women among them. In the circle around the barracks Tempo gave an inspiring speech and in the name of the main headquarters called on them to fight against the general enemy. He sought volunteers. Only 48 of them refused the call to volunteer. Two battalions were formed of these Kosovo citizens. We had a hard time getting enough weapons for them.

Since Mefail joined us he was sent between the villages Bigor Dolenci and Turje. He fought the Bulgarians. I was nearby and I saw that he did a good job leading the battle against the Bulgarians. The Germans arrived while we were in Gostivar. The Ballisti leader Dzhemo they had promoted to major, spoke

to them; they had promoted Mefail a captain. They had given them large sums (around 5 million marks) and all types of weapons so that they would join the Germans. By letter Dzhemo informed Mefail about it all. The muslim holiday Bajram was approaching. All of those who were muslim sought permission for leave to celebrate it. I went a tour of Bukovik. The Friday, after midnight, near dawn, the telephone rang. Mirko Malevski-Urosh from Poloec in Kichevo, told me that we had been attacked by the Ballisti. I told him to withdraw. When he returned to telephone, they killed him. Mefail then attacked their backs. Only 3 out of 32 remained alive... Mefail mobilised the population from Friday into Saturday. They went with lanterns from one house to another. On Saturday a wide front formed of about 12 km in width by about 9 o'clock ...Germans wearing short yellow pants and white Albanian keche (felt hat). The Ballistiⁱⁱ were spoiling for robbery and hit Kppachka, Izvor, Preseka. In Preseka I found Apostolovski-Doncho. He told us to take a rest and if we wanted to get a political lecture then we should go see Goce. Trajan Belev-Goce had a small bag that was for the cartridge of an automatic pistol, village clothes, cap. We shook hands and he continued his lecture on the politico-military situation in the world. At the same time, news arrived that the Ballisti had prevailed in the villages Turje, Goljak and Izvor. It meant that we were in danger of being surrounded and for the liberated territory to be occupied. Doncho set out actions, who should go where. Goce got an order to go with the comrades to the village Klenoec and to join up with the others and organise a defence and they sent me to Malkoec and the mountain Goljak. Goce's political lesson was not held. At once we got onto meeting our orders. We shook hands and we never saw each other again.¹²²

¹²² According to the oral account of Levko Stefanovski

DEFENCE OF THE LIBERATED TERRITORY AND GOCE'S LAST TASK

From September 1943 the German military forces in Yugoslavia undertook their sixth offensive against the NOVJ units.

In the framework of this offensive, the chief attack in Macedonia was made against the liberated territory in Western Macedonia.¹²³ At this time the German occupier took advantage of the Albanian ballisti units led by Dzhemo and Mefail. The goal of the enemy forces was to occupy the liberated territory again, to secure their pathway to Struga – Debar – Kichevo and to connect with the German forces in Struga. "To protect the liberated territory we had one unit at Bukovik between Kichevo and Gostivar and the division "Slavej" was in the village Botun, at the south side of the liberated territory. Those divisions protected the liberated territory while the operational units were freed to operate in the Bulgarian occupied territory.¹²⁴

"The headquarters organised the defence of the liberated territory and Josif Josifovski-Sveshtarot, co-fighter and close friend of Goce, was appointed to the fighting position at the village Klenoec. After being given this order, Sveshtarot would have had the full help of Goce and energetically worked on the reinforcement of the defence positions of the village Klenoec. The railway workers who were working on the connection which would pass through the liberated territory were engaged to find food for the fighters, which they did that very same night. Each fighter was given a fighting position. However, the occupied terrain "...approximately one and a half kilometre long was difficult ... the bigger part was covered with rocks and many boulders, bare, with little vegetation; so-called 'barren'

¹²³ Mihajlo Apostolski, *From Kozhuv do Bogomila I Kozjak*, Skopje, 1959, p13-14

¹²⁴ Mihailo Apostolski, *Recollections about Josif Josifovski-Sveshtarot*, taken from Vladimir Kartov and Svetozar Naumovski, *Josif Josifovski-Sveshtarot*, Skopje 1985 p241

land. It was hard on our bodies during battle, and especially in finding a different spot...¹²⁵

The battles at Klenoec began on 3 October 1943. The attack by the ballisti led by Mefail and the Germans was not only beaten back but they lost a lot of people in that attack. The battle at Klenoec was a fight for positions and went on through the following days, that is 4 – 5 October. At the cost of many lives the Germans and the ballisti failed to achieve their objective which was to take the fighting positions defended by the people's liberation movement army.

The battles at Klenoec continued further to 6 October and began at 5 in the morning. We will examine a few documents from that period:

"The bastards gather at night and start their attack. The battle lasts 4 hours. The battle is fierce - the enemy uses mine-throwers... After the battle on Klenoec the fight is transferred to Dushegubica and lasts into the dusk."¹²⁶

"The attack on Klenoec taken by the Montenegrins in a difficult position had no let up and was a graveyard.

Lambe said to me, a man from Klenoec, my brother. He was taken to make contact and said: when the Arnauti from Debar came they went to Klenoec and sought a position to fight alongside our people. Our people sent them to near Dushegubica. When the battle unfolded those with Mefail began to pull out but they could not go to Klenoec because the Debar fighters were on it. The Debar fighters connected with the Mefail fighters and then started shooting at us... firing was from the Debar fighters on all sides. In this group were Gjorche, Vojvodata, Goce. About 20 partisans."¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Zlate Treneski-Vangel, *The Last Days of Josif Josifovski-Sveshtarot*, taken from Vladimir Kartov and Svetozar Naumovski, *Josif Josifovski-Sveshtarot, skopje 1985 p242*

¹²⁶ Notes from Mihailo Apostolski, komandant na Glavniot Shtab na NOV I POM, Kichevo and Kichevsko in NOV 1941-5 dokumenti, Kichevo 1985 p 204

¹²⁷ Notes of Elizie Popovski, Komandant na Prvata operativna zona na NOV and POM, Kicvhevo and Kichevski vo NOV... p 206

Another document from that time: "the enemy with about 1000 people set off an offensive action and with 600-700 at the head, to Izvor and Kopachka... we the main forces (2 battalions) had them on our left flank... a heavy battle developed at Izvor, Klenoec, Malkoec and Popoec. Especially at Izvor and Klenoec. The enemy was badly hit at these locations. There were about 70 dead and many injured. We had 20 dead among whom were the best leaders – Gjorche, Goce and the Vojvoda Mite."¹²⁸

In the battle at Klenoec the life of 40 year old Trajan Belev-Goce ended forever, in the defence of the Revolution. One of the survivors of that battle, Boshko Stefanovski gave us a shocking account of Goce's death: "I will talk about the battles of the Battalion another time. This time I will talk about the battle at Klenoec. When the battalion "Mirche Acev" set off over the territory occupied by the Bulgarians, then after that toward southern Albania near Korcha, to the village Drenovo, Krushevo region, they found out that some fighters from Debarca had expressed a wish to return. They said: "We are going to a different territory and we do not want to leave Debarca so that it can be burned to the ground. We want to stay and defend it." Just then the Shtab of the battalion resolved that a few of the more experienced comrades should return with the Debarca fighters and to form a unit on that terrain which would defend Debarca and Kopachijata.

Personally Mihajlo Apostolski and Strahil Gigov ordered the members of our Shtab: "You must not permit the enemy to break through toward Preseka. If necessary, the battle will go until the last drop of blood."

The first battle started at the village Izvor. It was the end of September or the start of October and the summer was almost gone, the wheat was ready and the beans and leeks were

¹²⁸ Zbornik of documents and details... volume VII Book 2, pages 164-4

being harvested. The battle was heavy. Hard going. We repelled the attack by the Ballisti until about 4 o'clock in the afternoon. There were a few thousand of them; we were only 70. The weather was rainy and cold. That night there was a new order: we were to withdraw from Izvor and to take position near Klenoec immediately above the springs on Treska.

We climbed up to Klenoec which would give us a clear line of sight of the road coming in to Kichevo which then split: one to Jama, and the other to Ohrid

... I don't need to say: when we took our position before Klenoec 10 Albanians joined us. They said to us: "We are partisans of Adzhi Lesh and he is coming to help you at Lama." We shook hands and we accepted them because our battle is the same battle as that of Lesh.¹²⁹ I could speak Albanian ... I was a rifle shooter... I had a fever and shook from that or a flu. Or perhaps I was shaking from a fever ... that night I only wanted one thing... that God would prevent me from being captured – let them kill me, just not to capture me... the fighters were not fighters with an ideal... they had no greater good to fight for... if they capture you... they would chop up a person, piece by piece. And that is why I thought, let them not capture me!

Early the next morning the battle started. From the start, whoever they got, they would also turn on us. We shot only at people's flesh because we did not have very much ammunition. We pushed them back once, then again, a few times.

Everything around me was thundering. The ballisti were firing, we were firing and the Germans were directing artillery at our positions. It was like being in hell. I still do not hear very well from that time...

¹²⁹ [omitted from original]

I am shooting and I also looking around – some of our fighters are falling face first and naturally: if a bullet hits you from the front you fall, face into the ground. That is a law of nature. However, others of our fighters fell with their backs on the ground which meant someone was beating them from behind! It became clear to me at once: those 10 or so people who said they were partisans under Lesh were actually fanatic ballisti. They were behind our positions and were picking us off one by one from behind. In such moments you have no time to consult. Starejko was lying next to me. I turned toward him and said: "oh man, Starejko, these people are knocking us off from behind.!" And without waiting for an answer I turned my machine gun toward them...

We defended 4 enemy advances. It was a day when they had already approached our position 5 times. We had no ammunition left – we met them with bare hands. Some had a knife but most greeted them with the butts of rifles. They were like ants, and we were already exhausted ... we beat off the ballisti a fifth time.

A new command reached us: withdraw to Preseka.

What withdrawal can we make, when the bigger part of the fighter group was lying dead around Klenoec... wherever you stepped on the ground you would step in blood as though it had been raining blood all night...

The command to withdraw was given and at a few metres from me the political commissar Trajan Belev-Goce appeared and just as he did so, a bullet hit his left shoulder: blood spouted from his shoulder as though from a tap – Goce lost his left arm. At his shoulder there was just raw and torn flesh, like a blossoming peony. Goce did not fall but tried to climb toward my position. He took a few steps and stopped. Whether from pain or because he saw that his injury was likely to bring his death I do not know, but importantly: he raised the revolver he

had in his right hand and he shot himself in the temple. Whether he shot once or twice – I do not recall I was captivated by all that I saw. I forgot about the battle: I stood and looked at the dead body of the commissar... around me the bullets whirred... and I stood upright and looked at Goce.
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The Klenoec battles are comparable to those at Mechkin Kamen in 1903 and had a comparable number of deaths to those in Kadinjacha.

see PHOTO at p 112
MEMORIAL AT KLENOEC

See PHOTO at p 113
MEMORIAL AT KLENOEC

Those closest to Goce, his mother, wife and 4 children, after internment in Bulgaria in the village Kolarovo – Petrishko, returned to Gjavato. They were impatient to hear something of their beloved son, husband and father, for whom they had been interned despite knowing nothing about his activities. The news they heard was the harshest: Trajan died at Klenoec.

See PHOTO
"Trajan Belev- Goce" in the
village Capari- Bitolsko

¹³⁰ Jovan Pavlovski, Borbata kaj Klenoec – Makedonska Kadinjacha, Bitolskitie narodnoosloboditelni partisanski odedi, Bitola 1982, pages 272-3

See PHOTO p 114
MEMORIAL BUST
TRAJAN BELEV GOCE

Extracts from the reviews

This work represents a solid monograph that is well presented with a relatively learned approach including footnotes from many documents and recollections of various individuals. The whole life journey of Trajan Belev-Goce is recounted, from his birth in Gjavato to his heroic death carrying out his last command.

The work gives an account of a time which was in the distant past but which is still with us. Especially moving is the final and difficult part of the story which tells of the final moments of the hero ...

The style of the author suits the subject. It starts simply with the early life and builds on this to create drama. The most effective are those parts which contain personal accounts of the events.

Looking at the style and the content, the work is of sufficient quality which in my modest opinion will attract the interest of the reader (especially the younger reader) and attract their interest.

In light of this I warmly recommend the work "Trajan Belev - Goce" by Gjorgji Dimovski-Colev.

From the review by Professor Dr Trajche Grujoski

The author Gjorgji Dimovski very effectively recounts not only the lifestory of this revolutionary but also tells about the start

of the revolutionary organisation in this part of Macedonia, the start of NOB, not just in the Bitola region but also in the territory of western Macedonia and Prespa, as well as in the Aegean part of Macedonia...

With this work Macedonian historiography gains another valuable work which is first rate and uses first-hand accounts of those who fought alongside Goce and tells of a good person, a harrowing time and a significant page in the history of Macedonia and also the Macedonian people...

I think that there could not be a greater memorial to this important but tragic person in our history than this work...

From the review of Dr Vlado Ivanovski

ⁱ **Јосиф Јосифовски - Свештарот**

https://military.wikia.org/wiki/National_Liberation_War_of_Macedonia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Josif_Josifovski_Sveshtarot.JPG

<https://www.facesofresistance.org/site/face/grujoski-trajce/en-US>

ⁱⁱ The Ballisti were followers of the **Balli Kombëtar** (literally *National Front*), known as **Balli**, was an [Albanian nationalist anti-communist](#) paramilitary movement and political organization established in November 1942.^[3] It was led by [Ali Këlcyra](#) and [Midhat Frashëri](#)^[4] and was formed by members from the landowning elite, liberal nationalists opposed to communism and other sectors of society in Albania.^{[5][6][7]} The [motto](#) of the Balli Kombëtar was: "*Shqipëria Shqiptarëve, Vdekje Tradhëtarëve*" (Albania for the Albanians, Death to the Traitors).^[8] Eventually the Balli Kombëtar joined the Nazi established puppet government and fought as an ally against communist guerrilla groups.

General resources

[КРАТЕНКИ — Wikibooks](#)

https://clicktime.symantec.com/3Sc7qauhsFUdJ2qJy3fLr17Vc?u=https%3A%2F%2Fen.wikipedia.org%2Fwiki%2FRegional_Committee_of_Communists_in_Macedonia

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