

TRADING MINORITIES IN BALKANS LEADS MANY OUTRAGES AGAINST YOUNG AND OLD



—Photo From Junius B. Wood.

Top: Six families of "voluntary" emigrants from Boutim, near Drama, and all their belongings they were permitted to carry into Bulgaria.

Bottom: Centenarian emigrant from Dichobanki and a veteran of 80 years forced out of Greece for which country they fought in two wars.

Murder Serves As Means Of Hurrying Exodus Of Macedonians

BY JUNIUS B. WOOD

Special Correspondent The Birmingham News and The Chicago Daily News Foreign Service. © 1925, by The Chicago Daily News Co. SVILENGRAD, Bulgaria, Aug. 15.—'I've killed a little Bulgarian dog,' calmly remarked a Greek gunman who had just shot a 12-year old girl.

The murder was committed in the village of Evrinkokoy on March 8, a Sunday and a day on which the orthodox Catholic peasant does not work and the villages are given over to worship and simple amusements. Radka Kurtuva had coaxed a coin from her parents and, happy in her Sunday finery, had gone to the village square to purchase a handful of sweets. As she walked slowly under the trees where other children were playing the shot was fired and she fell. She died almost instantly.

Women ran to pick up the child. Men of the village were as quick to seize a young stranger who stood unconcerned a few feet away, the smoking pistol still in his hand. He said his name was Yani Kabardil. He made no effort to run away. Greek soldiers who were nearby, came up and took possession of the murderer to protect him from the outraged villagers.

'I've killed a little Bulgarian dog,' he calmly explained to the soldiers. That was sufficient. The soldiers escorted him away. The stricken parents carried the dead child to their home.

The Murderer Allowed To Depart
That night, the villagers report, the Greek commander went to the house and, despite the supplications of the parents who wanted a Christian burial service for their child took the body by force and buried it in the dark. The Greek gunman disappeared.

The above is a synopsis of Report No. 3737-4 to the mixed commission of the League of Nations. The commission has many other similar in character.

The treaty of Neuilly, of 1919, provides for the exchange of minorities between Greece and Bulgaria, the Geneva protocol of 1924 specifying the exchange shall be voluntary. The treaty of Lausanne, of 1923, provides for compulsory emigration between Greece and Turkey. Any citizen of those countries who is not of the same racial stock or of the same religion as the dominant element in the country, is classed as part of a minority. Families of those minorities in Macedonia or western Thrace which now are Greek territory—though their ancestors have lived there for centuries, are being driven into Bulgaria because they use the Slavic language in their churches, schools and homes, and because they recognize the Bulgarian instead of the Greek patriarch as the head of their church.

By No Means A Fair Exchange
The arithmetic of the exchange of minorities between Greece and Bulgaria at a glance that there is no exchange. Less than 15,000 Greeks, mostly shopkeepers, have left Bulgaria for Greece and about 200,000 Macedonians and Thracians, mostly farmers, have emigrated from Greece to Bulgaria. The figures for 11 months ended Nov. 30, 1924, show that 9,036 Greeks left Bulgaria, while 20,351 Macedonians and 7,478 Thracians entered Bulgaria from Greece.

Few Greeks want to leave Bulgaria and they are not compelled to do so. At present 32,000 are in that country and have elected to remain. The Macedonians and Thracians do not want to leave their homes in Greece, but are forced to do so.

The difference in the figures of the so-called exchange is accounted for by what is called "voluntary" emigration. The murder of children, the outraging of women, the imprisoning of fathers, the forcible removal of entire villages to desolate Greek islands, slow starvation and unending persecutions are incentives to this emigration. Desperadoes, like the gunman who killed little Radka Kurtuva, do the work. If the murderers are not discovered, the authorities have a habit of accusing the villagers of responsibility and using the crime as a pretext for expelling hundreds of families from their homes and lands.

Stream Of Pitiful Victims

Svilengrad, a little frontier railroad station on the Maritza river, is the gateway through which these emigrants pass from Greece to Bulgaria. The human stream has been flowing for more than a year, some days a few hundred, other days several thousand. The emigrants bring only what they can carry—a few household possessions, a blanket or a straw mat to sleep on, and clothing in rags. They have been despoiled of their habitations, their livestock, their carts and tools.

from Asia Minor, or of native Greeks who desire better property, is installed by the local Greek authorities in each of the Macedonian homes, in a village. The owners of the homes are restricted to one room in their house.

Until they became helpless victims of the treaties which the great powers dictated, they were peaceful, prosperous, God-fearing peasants. Now the men are distraught and hopeless, children are sick or dying from lack of food and the women are prematurely aged and broken. In jolting freight cars, under trees along the road or under tents, mothers give birth to children that they cannot nurse. Starvation and terror have dried their breasts.

Rarely in the stress and devastation of war is seen such misery as passes through Svilengrad every day, in the dust or mud of summer and the snow and frost of winter. When the Greeks were deported from Asia Minor a sympathetic world responded to the appeals for assistance. Christianity was appealed.

Religious Difference The Cause

The emigration of today is not forced by war's campaigns. It is a heartless campaign of peace, merely sowing the seeds of future wars in the Balkans. It goes on in the name of Christianity—religion being largely a political division in this part of the world. Though victims and persecutors are of the same orthodox Catholic church, there is a rivalry of patriarchs. It is a campaign of spoliation. The victims are weak and Greece wants their lands and is strong enough to take them. The emigration is not only under the auspices of the League of Nations but, according to the league's report, is speeded up by that organization. It has colonization projects in Greece and demands more lands for the purpose—regardless of the inhumanity by which they are obtained.

Except by a few French newspapers which recently voiced their horror, little has been said of the deportations from Greece. The American and British relief organizations working in Greece have their hands full and what they have accomplished makes a pleasanter story than the recital of what they cannot prevent.

The deportations now going on in the Balkans are the darkest stain on civilization today.

Twelve box cars—a car in this part of the world is about half the size of an American car—containing 406 emigrant refugees arrived at this frontier station from Greece the evening before I came. Some days only a few hundred refugees find their way here. Other days bring 2,000 or 3,000. Virtually all are in the same condition of physical and mental misery and practically destitute.

Usually the last of any cash they may have saved from their wrecked and despoiled homes has been used to pay their railroad fare from Dedegatsch in Greece to the Bulgarian border. One of the injustices inflicted on these unfortunate people of Macedonia and western Thrace is that after they have been driven from their homes and forced to leave their possessions behind, they must pay between \$25 and \$40 for a diminutive car to bring them the last 90 miles from Greece to Bulgaria. But that is not all. A present of \$15 to the railroad officials is customary in order to get a car. If the refugees cannot pay, they can live in the fields around Dedegatsch and face starvation until others of their fleeing countrymen with resources take them aboard.

Sacrifice Crops And All

A family that has a car for itself and its possession is a rarity. Last night's train, averaged 34 persons, or between five and six families, to each of the tiny cars. In addition to the human beings—dirty, hungry and many of them ill from the hardships—was all the property which the Greeks would permit them to bring from their once prosperous homes. That was not much.

For the possessions they leave behind, the refugees may receive a trifle, but usually they get nothing. The fields and homes in which they and their forefathers have lived and toiled for centuries are taken by the Greek government. This is a favorable season for driving Macedonians and Thracians from their homes—they leave the standing crops planted earlier in the year.

If he can, the emigrant may sell his movable property and live stock before leaving. As it is known that he is being forced to leave within a few days or weeks, he seldom finds a buyer. It is easier to wait and get the goods for nothing. Every emigrant is supposed to receive a certificate showing the value of his farm and the property he has been forced to leave. All with whom I have talked have insisted that the Greek authorities refused to give them such papers.

Methods of Inducing Emigration

The system for encouraging "voluntary" emigration followed by the Greek government to obtain lands for its own refugees and to comply with the demands of the League of Nations for more and more lands for colonization, is, according to the victims, exceedingly

from Asia Minor, or of native Greeks who desire better property, is installed by the local Greek authorities in each of the Macedonian homes, in a village. The owners of the homes are restricted to one room in their house.

The Greek commandant of the village suggests to the head of the family that he go to Saloniki and get permission from the mixed commission of the League of Nations to leave Greece. They are ordered not to leave their single room after dusk and other restrictions and persecutions of varying intensity begin. The peasant and his family can work in the fields in the daytime—a Greek will ultimately harvest the crop. When life becomes sufficiently unbearable for him, and usually a revolting misery for his wife and children, he goes to Saloniki at his own expense and a permit is quickly granted for his departure from Greece. It specifies a date when he must be out of the country. When he returns to his home with the permit, the authorities move the family, with others who are leaving, outside of the village.

Their requests to be permitted to get their live stock and to load their carts with their possessions meet with explanations from the authorities that there is no hurry, that there is no room for them on the outskirts of the village and that they are better off on the farm. Finally comes the moving day and a last request to get their property is met by the firm reply that a Greek family is already settled on the farm and that to return would cause trouble. They are marched away from their own countryside with what little they can carry.

Macedonia has an abundance of fertile land that is neither cultivated nor occupied, stretching between the villages. There is room for all the Greek refugees. However, it is easier to drive the Macedonians from houses that are furnished and from farms that are cultivated and supplied with tools and animals than to build new houses and plow new fields.

Many Orphans Forced to Leave

Three children—a boy of 5 years and two girls of 13 and 9—stood near a little bundle, the last remnants of a home and family, the day I arrived at Svilengrad. Their mother had given up the fight and died in a crowded box car. The little girl of 13 was the new mother of the family. Their father was in prison in Savalia—five months without a trial.

Orphans are not uncommon among the refugees. The record shows that 6,328 have been sent across the border into Bulgaria. The fathers of many were killed fighting in the Greek army.

On Jan. 23 two itinerant Greek merchants were murdered 14 miles from Boutim, the village of the three children mentioned above. Next morning, according to the Macedonian survivors, the villagers of Boutim, Livadichta and Tzarnovo—within 15 minutes walk of one another—were surrounded by Greek soldiers. The men in the villages were bound and beaten, women and girls were outraged by soldiers, the houses were pillaged and some of them burned. After this experience the villagers were more receptive to suggestions of the Greek authorities that they emigrate voluntarily.

The villagers insist that they knew nothing of the murders until told by Greek soldiers. They say the deed was a pretext to get possession of their property. All that they had been able to bring from their village was piled under a couple of straw mats beside the railroad tracks at Svilengrad. Little children who all their lives, until the curse of Neuilly fell upon them, had lived in quiet, peaceful country homes, had haunted looks. The women dropped their heads or silently wept. The men were stolid, grim and hopeless.

Seated alone in the sunshine near a little pile of household odds and ends, at this station where refugees from Greece cross into Bulgaria, was an old man, slowly nodding his head. He had been driven from his home in Macedonia. Had he any children? No, they had died when the family had been deported to Crete. How old was he? More than 100 years. Where had he been born? In Greece. He had lived in the same village for a century. Where had his father been born? In the same village, on the same farm. And his grandfather? The same place, all forefathers, wife, sons—were buried in the cemetery of the village which the Greeks had forced him to leave.

The families from Macedonia and western Thrace that are being persecuted until they voluntarily emigrate are not recent settlers. They have been there for generations. They are being driven out because Greece wants their lands and their chattels. The fiction of the exchange of minorities and voluntary emigration in the treaties gives the excuse. When the European powers inserted this provision possibly they did not realize the meaning of uprooting more than 1,000,000 people and making them homeless wanderers.

More Aged Misery

"But we have another older man," volunteered a bright little girl. She disappeared and in a minute came running back, followed by a tottering, decrepit man. He leaned on



demanding that he be permitted to return home. He was 110, according to the other men from his village. Like the other centenarian he was without a family. In the little village where he and his family had lived and died—all except him—he had a home and the other villagers attended to his slender needs. Here they have not enough for themselves.

Near another pile of rubbish on the plain was a woman so bent and crippled by age that she could not stand. Then came a spry youngster of 80 years. He said he had fought for Greece in two wars and thought that he deserved better treatment than having his property taken from him and being expelled from the country.

At the other extreme were the children. It is an unusual family in this part of the world that does not have at least three. Like the very old folks, they did not know why they have lost their homes. It is not strange. Even the adults do not know. The ways of diplomacy and of statesmen who think they can make or destroy nations by drawing lines on maps are beyond the simple peasant.

The refugees from Greece have been put over the borders into Bulgaria and Turkey. Turkey is the land of the Moslem and has abundant room for the 762,000 Turks who have been returned within its borders. The lands and property of the Greeks expelled from Asia Minor will care for many thousands and the government has expended \$8,000,000 more. The abandoned property will be appraised in both Greece and Turkey and the refugees may be indemnified.

Bulgaria Sympathetic But Poor

Bulgaria is not happily situated, for it is small and thickly populated and 760,000 refugees have entered since 1903. The Macedonian, though he still struggles for independence, is akin to the Bulgar and Bulgaria offers him a

haven. But Bulgaria is weak and cannot insist that other countries treat its compatriots with justice. The refugees are unloaded on Bulgaria and she cannot stop the flood, even if she were unwilling to give shelter to the unfortunates. Thousands are not of Bulgarian stock—Russians, 30,000; Jews, 6,000; Armenians, 12,000; several thousand Turks and 200,000 Macedonians and Thracians.

There is no prospect that these will be indemnified for what they have lost. Nearly every city and village in Bulgaria has its refugee quarters. They are Bulgarians, Russians, Armenians, Jews, but outnumbering all these are those who have been driven from the Greek portions of Macedonia and western Thrace. They are cared for as best the little country can—a country struggling under the burdens of the peace treaties and meeting its obligations from the 40,000 Macedonians in the United States and from those in other countries have helped greatly in the task. The refugees are given land, work when it is available and the small assistance which the country can afford.

Start Anew With Good Courage

The story of every refugee group in every town and village is the same. Slowly they recover from the shock of homes destroyed and start again to toil and build anew. It is a long, hard struggle. Many do not survive it and many more do not succeed.

Around Stanimaka, a thriving town in the center of the tobacco district, several thousand refugees have been located. Those who have been there several months have been assisted in building houses. Those who have just arrived are housed in school buildings, abandoned houses or wherever there is shelter. One merchant emptied an old warehouse which shelters 15 families, strings or perhaps pieces of cloth marking off the separate sections of bare floor.

In a little schoolhouse were 16 fam-

ilies—from babies to an old woman of 82 years. In each of the little 10 by 14-foot rooms in an old house were three families, one trio, including 13 children, making 19 in the stifling room. In another little room with several families and many children; a little girl was lying sick on the floor and a fretful mother was holding a sick baby.

Among the group at the Macedonian headquarters in the town—for it was a Sunday and they were not working—was a little thin man, his hollow cheeks scarred from suffering and his sunken eyes flashing with ardor. He had been the Macedonian school teacher in Gorno Brode, arrondissement of Seres.

"See our sufferings," he said. "We have done nothing to deserve it. We dwelt peacefully in our homes, worked on our farms, had churches, schools and libraries and obeyed the laws. Now we are outcasts. For what reason? All we ask is that we be permitted to return to our homes, to the homes of our fathers and grandfathers before us, where we and our children were born and brought up, places hallowed by the memories of our lives."