

*Bright Figures From
Aegean Macedonia
(1945-1949)*



By

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

**BRIGHT FIGURES FROM AEGEAN
MACEDONIA
(1945-1949)**

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FOREWORD

After Macedonia was divided between Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria, as a result of the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), its territorial and national integrity was shattered, further complicating the Macedonian people's situation. The Macedonians who were already facing danger and temptation were now facing direct threats to their national survival.

The Macedonian people in the Aegean (Greek occupied) part of Macedonia, as were the Macedonian people in the other parts of occupied Macedonia, were set apart by their national oppression and cruel economic exploitation carried out by various Greek regimes. The goal of Greek bourgeois governments was to totally assimilate or physically exterminate the Macedonian people. They did this without hesitation or care for the Macedonian identity and culture. For example, history has well documented the Greek dictatorial regime, led by the infamous General Ioannis Metaxas (1936-1940) banning the Macedonian people from speaking Macedonian, their mother tongue. Metaxas implemented policies to punish everyone, even old people who spoke no other language but Macedonian, for speaking it. He didn't even allow old women to wail in Macedonian at the graves of their loved ones.

In an effort to expel or exterminate the indigenous Macedonian population from its homeland as soon as possible, based on the Neuilly Convention of 1919, the Greek government entered into an agreement with the Bulgarian government for a "voluntary" exchange of Macedonians from Greek occupied Macedonia with so-called Greeks who had lived in Bulgaria for a long time. A similar Convention was signed with the Turkish government in Lausanne in 1923. Using these Conventions at all costs, the Greek government sought to Hellenize the entire Macedonian population in Greek occupied Macedonia in an attempt to totally change the national composition of the terrain.

A little later, in 1926, the Greek government initiated special laws to change all toponyms, hydronyms and place names from Macedonian to Greek in all inhabited Macedonian villages, towns and cities. Using the same laws, the Greek government also changed all

Macedonian given and last names from Macedonian to Greek. The Greek government did all this in order to prove to the world that Macedonia was Greek territory and that only Greeks lived in it.

However, despite the rigorous measures the Greek government took against them, the Macedonian people remained faithful to their glorious national and revolutionary traditions and adhered to the Ilinden insurgent vow to continue the struggle for the liberation of their homeland.

The Macedonian people's struggle to gain their national and democratic rights in Greek occupied Macedonia took place under very difficult and complex conditions. The Greek reactionary regime regarded the expression of Macedonian patriotism as a potential enemy of Greece. If the Macedonians publicly declared that they were a separate, non-Greek people, it was enough for the Greek government to accuse them of being "autonomists" and "dangerous" enemies of the Greek state to be arrested and harassed by the police, punished, sentenced to long prison terms, or even killed.

In the newly created oppressive conditions and cruel economic exploitation, the Macedonian people firmly linked their struggle with the struggle of the Greek working class. Led by the Communist Party of Greece and other progressive forces, together with the Greek working class, the Macedonian people participated resolutely and en masse in many anti-fascist demonstrations and protests. They also participated in a number of other revolutionary activities organized all over Macedonia in Macedonian villages and towns.

The role and activities of the organized Macedonian leaders and fighters came to full expression during the Second World War and the Greek Civil War. During the Second World War they fought against the German-Italian and Bulgarian fascist occupiers and the Greek reactionary regimes. They were the first initiators, founders and organizers of the Macedonian anti-fascist organizations: SNOF, NOF, NOMS and AFZH. Thanks to these organizations, a strong popular Macedonian national liberation movement was created in Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia.

It should be underlined that despite the inconsistency of the Greek leadership in the resistance against the Macedonian national liberation movement (SNOF's dissolution, ELAS attacking Macedonian units, etc.), the Macedonian people participated en masse on the side of the Greek democratic forces and made many sacrifices. According to some Greek sources, about 5,000 Macedonian fighters joined the ranks of ELAS voluntarily, and over 15,000 served in the reserves. More than 20,000 Macedonian fighters served in the ranks of DAG and its auxiliary units during the Greek Civil War, of whom about 4,000 were girls and women.

Over 20,000 fighters of ELAS and DAG and active members of the CPG, SNOF and NOF lost their lives in their long struggle, led by the Greek progressive forces, in the war against the domestic reactionaries and the Anglo-American interventionists. Several hundred of these people were prominent fighters, organizers, leaders of the organizations SNOF, NOF, NOMS and AFZH, and ELAS and DAG commanders and political commissars.

However, the purpose for writing this book wasn't to just emphasize the Macedonian people's mass participation in the anti-fascist struggle for national and social rights, which may be the subject of a separate study, but to briefly present the life and revolutionary activities of some of the more prominent fighters and leaders of the Macedonian National Liberation Movement (NOF) who, as successors of their Ilinden ancestors, died in the period from 1945 to 1949. We also wanted to present a general picture of the activities in which these people were involved during the struggle.

We will only talk about those personalities for whom we had ample information that described their involvement in the struggle.

In order to compile this book we used existing literature, information supplied to us by other fighters as well as memoirs provided by their comrades. Multiple sources of information were used in order to resolve any existing controversial issues relating to their activities. We have also discovered indirect information in our historiography about a number of personalities about whom nothing had been written and who deserved to be mentioned and remembered.

Even though, for objective reasons, this book doesn't cover all the fighters who died in the whirlwind of the Greek Civil War, we still believe it will greatly contribute to our historiography.

I would like to dedicate this book to all the fighters from the Aegean part of Macedonia who gave their lives for the Macedonian people's freedom and for the affirmation and protection of the Macedonian national dignity.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the reviewers Dr. Stoian Kiselinski, Hristo Andonovski and Dr. Gligor Todorovski.

I would also cordially like to thank all those fighters and comrades who survived the war and their close relatives who provided me with their biographical information.

The author

GIORGI (DZHODZHO) URDOV (1914-1947)

Giorgi (Dzhodzho) Urdov was one of the most prominent Macedonian fighters and revolutionaries who dedicated his entire life to the struggle and fought for the national and social liberation of the Macedonian people. He was born to a poor, working class family in 1914 in Voden. Even though his father, Lazo, didn't have the means to educate his children, he raised them to be honest and respected people. Thanks to his father's efforts, Dzhodzho, as he was affectionately known, was different from his peers in his honesty, long-suffering virtue and diligence but also in his strictness towards those who showed despondency. Later these qualities manifested themselves in his revolutionary activities and struggle which made him stand out as a good organizer and a brave fighter.

As a child Dzhodzho was engaged in gardening but when he turned eighteen he got a job as a textile worker in Voden, his hometown. There he personally experienced the exploitation of the working class and decided to join the local textile workers' trade union and, together with other members, began a struggle to improve the living conditions of the working class.¹

Giorgi Urdov joined the OKNE youth organization during the Metaxas dictatorship in Greece (August 4, 1936) and later joined the CPG. He fought against the totalitarian Greek government under the banner of OKNE and CPG under the strictest illegal conditions.²

When Mussolini's Italy invaded Greece (October 28, 1940) Dzhodzho, along with hundreds of other Macedonians, was mobilized into the Greek army and immediately sent to the Albanian front to fight the fascist aggressor. He took part in all the battles on Albania's territory until April 1941, when Nazi Germany invaded Greece. Then, after Greece was occupied by the German army, Dzhodzho returned to his hometown.

¹ This was according to Lambro Urdov's memoirs. Lambro was his younger brother, one of the youth movement organizers in Voden Region and, since the autumn of 1943, the district secretary of EPON in Seres Region.

² This was according to Vangel Aianovski-Oche's memoirs "Critical Review of the development of the Worker, Communist and National Liberation Movement in Voden and Voden Region". Memoirs, kept in INI, pp. 365-367.

Dzhodzho was one of the first people in the city of Voden to join the anti-fascist movement in the summer of 1941. Then, in October of the same year, he was elected secretary of the CPG City Committee.³

Dzhodzho wasn't shy about showing his fighting spirit, devotion and courage. He fought front and centre with his comrades and other citizens from the first days of the occupation and was a leading factor in the resistance movement.

Dzhodzho and his Voden comrades were instrumental in involving many of the Voden residents in the resistance movement in the spring of 1942. Instead of joining EAM, a Greek organization, the people of Voden saw a need to become involved in a special Macedonian anti-fascist organization and Dzhodzho and his comrades made it happen. Pressure on the Party (CPG) in that regard was growing.

According to Angel Gatsev's memoirs, the Macedonian activists held a meeting at the end of March 1942 in Voden where they discussed the need to create a special Macedonian anti-fascist organization.⁴ The situation, place and role of the Macedonian anti-fascist activities led by the CPG were also discussed. The meeting participants stressed the need to establish a special Macedonian anti-fascist organization, in which Macedonians would become involved and work with far greater enthusiasm than as members of EAM in which, for many reasons, they wouldn't have much trust. If they didn't join a Macedonian organization, chances were that these Macedonians would join the Bulgarian Vancho-Mihailovist fascist organization which, through its propaganda, accused them of allegedly working exclusively for the Greek national cause.

After agreeing that a special Macedonian anti-fascist organization needed to be created, the meeting participants, which included Vangel Aianovski, Angel Gatsev, Vane Akochkov, Risto Kordalov

³ Again according to Vangel Aianovski-Oche's memoirs.

⁴ Angel Gatsev was a resident of Voden. He was an activist and member of MAO in Voden Region and a member of the EAM City Committee. Later he became a member of the Macedonians under Greece Political Commission.

as well as CPG City Committee secretary Dzhodzho Urdov, unanimously agreed to urgently seek approval from the CPG District Committee for Voden Region to create the Macedonian organization, given the seriousness of the situation. It was very important that the request to form this special Macedonian anti-fascist organization be expedited so that a general mobilization of the Macedonian masses could be carried out by the Macedonians instead of the Bulgarians. A general mobilization was planned not only for the city but also for the entire Voden District. It was decided that this would be the best weapon to completely eliminate the Bulgarian fascist propaganda, which was skillfully used to manipulate the Macedonian people by telling them that they struggled for the Greek cause because they had no Macedonian organization that was expected to fight for their national and social rights.

And that's exactly what happened. According to Vangel Aianovski-Oche, Dzhodzho Urdov, who was then serving as Organizational Secretary of the CPG District Committee for Voden District, on April 6, 1942, attended a CPG Regional Committee Meeting, held at teacher Vane Akochkov's house where, after analyzing the general and organizational situation in the city and the district, he reported that anti-fascist organizations were growing at an unstoppable rate while focusing on the Macedonian situation.⁵ Dzhodzho pointed out that even though Macedonians had much trust in the Communist Party, they couldn't accept EAM as their organization because it had a strong Greek national character. He said that Macedonians would be more willing to join a Macedonian national anti-fascist organization if it had the same rights and obligations as EAM, and they wouldn't mind if it was run by the CPG.⁶ At the same meeting, Dzhodzho pointed out that harmful activities were being conducted against the Macedonians by various Greek nationalist and quisling organizations and by their propaganda. On top of that there were attempts made by the Bulgarian fascist propaganda machine to skillfully use the absence of a Macedonian anti-fascist organization to seduce the Macedonians to join the Bulgarians and to strike a blow to the brotherhood and unity forged between the Macedonian

⁵ Vangel Ajanovski-Oche, *Aegean Storms. The Revolutionary Movement in Voden and NOF in Aegean Macedonia*. INI, Skopje, 1975, p. 91.

⁶ This was according to Angel Gatsev and Vangel Aianovski-Oche's memoirs...

population and the Asia Minor settler and colonist population that was settled on Macedonian lands in the Voden Region after the Lausanne Convention.

After presenting his arguments, supported by all the Macedonian cadres that attended the meeting, Dzhodzhov convinced the CPG District Committee to establish a Macedonian organization, but its operations were limited to within Voden and the surrounding area. This was better than nothing and acceptable to the Macedonians who hurried to realize it as soon as possible.

Following the April 6, 1942 meeting, the Macedonian activists held another and more extensive meeting during which Dzhodzhov informed everyone of the “good news”, namely that the CPG District Committee had accepted the proposal to form a special Macedonian organization with the right to publish its own newspaper. The organization was to be formed on the same principles as EAM with the same rights and obligations, and it was to be managed by the CPG.

The meeting attendants decided to name the organization “Macedonian Liberation Organization”, known by the abbreviation MAO (Makedoniki Apelefterotiki Organosis). In other words, because of some misunderstanding or inexperience, the acronym of this Macedonian organization was chosen in Greek. But, unlike the Organization’s Greek acronym, the newspaper called “Tsrvena Dzvezda” (Red Star) was purely Macedonian. The meeting attendants also decided to publish an informative bulletin to go with the newspaper, called “Novini Ut Tsrvenata Dzvezda” (Red Star Bulletin). In addition to covering current issues, the newspaper’s role was to deal with Macedonian history, while the Red Star bulletin dealt mainly with the latest events from the fronts and the partisan struggles in Europe and the Balkans, with special emphasis on political and other activities taking place in Greece.⁷

According to claims made by Vangel Aianovski-Oche, a MAO District Committee was elected during the same meeting. Vangel Aianovski-Oche was elected political secretary and Angel Gatsev,

⁷ This was according to Angel Gatsev and Vangel Aianovski-Oche’s memoirs...

Vane Akochkov, Dine Papaiankov and Risto Kordalov were elected members. Shortly afterwards the MAO District Committee membership was expanded to include 11 members.⁸

After MAO was created, its leadership began to publish the Red Star and its bulletin which soon attracted a growing number of Macedonians. The Macedonian people began to join the anti-fascist Macedonian organization, bringing joy to the MAO leadership. As CPG Organizational Secretary for Voden Region, Dzhodzho Urdov often attended meetings and stressed the need for an even greater Macedonian participation in the struggle against the foreign occupiers and their domestic servants.

As expected, even a larger number of Macedonians began to join MAO's ranks, convinced that in this way they could best fulfill their national and international obligations.

MAO's rapid growth and the Macedonian people's involvement in the mass anti-fascist struggle in Voden Region seriously upset the Voden CPG District leadership and apparently the CPG senior leadership, prompting the CPG to disband MAO in the fall of 1943. The CPG's explanation was that MAO allegedly had detrimental effects on the Asia Minor settler and colonist population which, because of MAO, refused to join EAM en masse.⁹

MAO's membership, the District Committee, as well as Dzhodzho Urdov himself accepted the CPG's decision with much indignation. The Macedonian leadership warned the CPG that this kind of action would result in negative consequences for the struggle. They warned that the Macedonian people wouldn't want to join the struggle because such CPG actions would raise doubts about the CPG's sincere intentions regarding the Macedonian national question. As expected, Macedonian resentment towards the CPG increased and so did the people's suspicions about the CPG's real policy towards the Macedonian people. This was especially true when people found out that several Macedonians, led by Pando Dzhikata from the village Chegan, Voden Region, were liquidated without any serious explanation. It was found out that these Macedonians were

⁸ Vangel Ajanovski-Oche, *Aegean storms...* p. 92.

⁹ *Ibid.*: p. 99.

liquidated because they maintained ties with the Macedonian partisans from the Republic of Macedonia, who belonged to the “Strasho Pindzhur” battalion and at that time frequented Mount Kaimakchalan.¹⁰

Despite these warnings, the CPG leadership remained adamant. Having no other choice, the Macedonian leaders accepted the CPG’s decision and warned that this was going to lead to opposition and would split the joint Macedonian-Greek struggle in Voden District.¹¹

Following the directives issued by the CPG Macedonian Bureau and the CPG Central Committee, the CPG Voden District leadership, during the winter of 1943-1944, after SNOF (Slavo-Macedonian National Liberation Front) was created in Lerin and Kostur Regions, no longer pursued resurrecting MAO in Voden, even though many Macedonians felt there was a need. However, pressure from the Macedonian people to bring back MAO never stopped. So, in order to placate the Macedonian people in Voden Region the CPG, during their Plenum, appointed Dzhodzho Urdov member of the CPG Provincial Committee for Aegean Macedonia. However, the appointment was only on paper, Dzhodzho in fact was never given the position and remained as CPG Organizational Secretary for Voden District. Knowing the true wishes of the Macedonian activists in Voden, the CPG decided to keep a close eye on them. The CPG was well aware that many of the Macedonians in Voden not only longed to belong to Macedonian organizations but also wanted to maintain contact with the Macedonian partisans from the Republic of Macedonia, including the activists in the CPM Central Committee, the National Liberation Army and POM, which at the time were frequenting Meglen and Voden Regions. The CPG didn’t want the Macedonians from Voden to have contact with any of the Macedonians from the Republic of Macedonia. Those who did, such as Dimitar Leskata from the village Chegana, Gele Popov

¹⁰ For more information on the murder of Pando Dzikata and his six comrades, see: Todor Simovski, “Moments from the Aegean Macedonian National Liberation Struggle”. Published under: “The Liberation War and the Revolution in Macedonia”. Published by MANU and INI, Skopje, 1973, pp. 224-225.

¹¹ Vangel Aianovski-Oche, *Aegean Storms ...*, p. 98.

from the village Vladovo, Voden Region and others who ventured out of Voden in the summer of 1944 paid with their lives.¹²

At the initiative of Wehrmacht, in May 1944, Vancho Mihailov's Bulgarian fascist propaganda intensified and, with help from the Germans, succeeded in forming armed Macedonian quisling counter bands. They called themselves autonomous Macedonians and operated in Voden and in some of the surrounding villages. Using their propaganda machine, the Bulgarian fascists were able to seduce various Voden Region adventurers into working for them. They even managed to seduce some honest Macedonian villagers who also joined them. To strengthen these counter bands, adventurous elements from Bulgaria and other parts of the fascist world were brought to Voden. The Bulgarians also brought Macedonian autonomist Giorgi Dimchev from Bulgaria to lead the counter bands.

In time the CPG Voden District leadership found itself in a precarious and unprotected position. Its bad policies were well exploited by its enemies. Once formed, the counter bands were difficult to destroy. To completely eliminate them the CPG District leadership had to convince the counter bandits to leave the counter bands and join the Macedonian struggle. For that CPG Voden District leadership needed to create an all Macedonian anti-fascist army. The Macedonian army's task would be to dismantle the counter bands and carry out a general mobilization. At the same time the Greeks in the District CPG leadership were worried that once created, the Macedonian army might decide to follow its own narrow Macedonian nationalist policies. But having no other choice the District CPG leadership decided to ask the CPG Macedonian Bureau if it could create such an army but only on a temporary basis. The army would be disbanded after it completed its task.

After the CPG Macedonian Bureau accepted to hear the CPG Voden District leadership's recommendation, the Voden CPG District Committee scheduled an extended meeting to present its case under the emerging situation. The meeting took place on May 27, 1944, at the "Sveta Troitsa" (Holy Trinity) monastery just below Voden in

¹² Todor Simovski, "Moments from the Aegean Macedonian National Liberation Struggle"... p. 235.

the L'got locality. Included among those who attended the meeting were the Macedonian cadres from Voden District. The meeting was chaired by Takis Papadopoulos (Barba Nikos), CPG Political Secretary who, after the discussion, given the general situation officially accepted the Macedonian request to create an all Macedonian army with its primary task to completely liquidate and eliminate the Macedonian counter bands.¹³

It is interesting to note that the May 27, 1944 extended meeting and decision to create an anti-fascist army in Voden coincided with the time when the SNOF organizations in Kostur and Lerin Regions were banned. The banning of SNOF naturally upset many Macedonian activists and fighters in Kostur and Lerin Regions causing them to abandon the ranks of the CPG and ELAS and join the Macedonian partisans in the Republic of Macedonia.¹⁴ Takis Papadopoulos (Barba Nikos) as well as Dzhodzho Urdov, who supported the need for a Macedonian army in Voden, said nothing about the banning of SNOF in Kostur and Lerin Regions. We suspect Takis Papadopoulos knew about it but not Dzhodzho Urdov, who simply wasn't informed.

The Macedonian cadres who attended the meeting didn't object to the recommendation to create a Macedonian army in Voden and thought it was the right thing to do. Even though it was long delayed, they accepted the task and showed readiness to do their best to eliminate the counter bands which, at the time, were seen as a black mark on the Macedonian struggle. But soon afterwards the same cadres began to realize more and more that something was

¹³ For more information see the letter written by Evrepidis Kapetanos, CPG Macedonian Bureau instructor, addressed to Alekos Stringos, CPG Macedonian Bureau Secretary. Here Evrepidis Kapetanos talks about the formation of the Macedonian Communist military organization in Voden. "CPG and the Macedonian national question 1918-1974". "Party documents about Greece's position towards the Macedonian National Question 1918-1974". Selection, editing, commentary and translation by Dr. Risto Kiriazovski. Macedonian Archives, Skopje, 1982, doc. 71, pp. 195-197 and doc. 88, pp. 223-224.

¹⁴ For more information see "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War 1944-1945", T. I. Documents on the participation of the Macedonian people from the Aegean part of Macedonia in the anti-fascist war 1941-1945. Edited by Risto Kiriazovski, Vasil Peiov and Todor Simovski. Macedonian Archives, Skopje 1971, doc. 105, pp. 118-119, doc. 106, pp. 119-121, doc. 107, pp. 121-122, doc. 112, pp. 126-128 and doc. 116, pp. 130-133.

wrong in the ranks of the CPG leadership which made concessions in favour of the Macedonian movement only when it was in a tight spot and when there was no other alternative solution.

In fact the idea of creating a Macedonian army was just a clever CPG maneuver to deceive the Macedonians and calm their spirits while the CPG's basic strategic goal remained the same.

Despite the urgent need for such an army, and after much hesitation on the part of the CPG senior leadership, it was finally decided to create a special Macedonian army unit which was to be part of the XXX ELAS Regiment.¹⁵

According to Pavle Rakovski who at the time served at the Voden District headquarters where the Macedonian battalion was created, the building of the army unit was initiated in mid-June (June 16, 1944) which received massive support from the Macedonians. But when Macedonian fighters began to join en masse, a limit was placed on its growth. Dzhodzho Urdov was appointed political commissar and as the army unit began to act, the Macedonian quisling counter bands began to disintegrate.¹⁶

At the same time, Pavle Rakovski-Gotse, member of the Macedonian Battalion Headquarters, wrote a proclamation in the Macedonian language which also received a wide response from the Macedonian population. Among other things, the proclamation said:

“Brothers!

Please know that this struggle is not a struggle between Greeks and Bulgarians, between Bulgarians and Serbians, or restricted here to the Balkans. This is a general struggle between all the people fighting against the damned fascists. The same struggle is being

¹⁵ For more information on the ELAS Macedonian Voden Battalion see Tashko Mamurovski, “ELAS Voden Macedonian Battalion, Thirty-eight years since its formation”. INI Gazette, Skopje, 1981, XXV, No. 2-3, pp. 185 -197.

¹⁶ For more information on this see Pavle Rakovski, “Looking towards the Historical Truth”. Views (Magazine for Social Issues), Skopje, 1980, XVII, No. 8, pp. 171-172. Also see Pavle Rakovski “CPG, EAM, ELAS and the Macedonian National Liberation Movement”. (Contribution to the perception of the historical truth.) INI Gazette, Skopje, 1982, XXVI, No. 2-3, pp. 243-267.

waged all over the world. All nations together with the Red Army have risen to wage a life-and-death struggle against the tyrannical fascists. The people's forces here in the Balkans fought to repel German and Italian fascism, but as the fascist hordes took root they armed the Greek and Bulgarian dogs, the likes of Kalchev, Dimchev and others, to seduce our children to follow them. They gathered several of our children and lied to them. They gave them weapons and turned them into scoundrels working for the German fascists...

...In the same way, the Greek fascists have also deceived our children to take up arms and fight for the fascists alongside the Greek gendarmes... Kalchev, Dimchev and the other deceivers are united with the Greek gendarmes under German fascism and are fighting not for Macedonia but for fascism against the Macedonian people's army, against the Macedonian people!

...Children of Macedonia!

Forward in the ranks of the Macedonian People's Army against the cursed tyrants, against the Greek fascists, against all fascists!

...Raise the rifles of our old fathers and become soldiers of the Macedonian people. We should have our own people's army as a separate nation.

Forward! ...Rifle in the hand and forward!...

...Death to the fascists - freedom to the people!

Long live the Macedonian name!...

Macedonian Army General Staff:

Dzhodzho, Blazhe, Gotse, Gushi, Sotir...^{17 18}

¹⁷ Dzhodzho - Giorgi Urdov, Blaze - Giorgi Atanasov from the village Prebdishte, Meglen Region, Gotse - Pavle Rakovski from the village Dolna Kleshtina, Lerin Region, Gushi - Giorgi Iakata from Voden and Sotir - activist from Solun.

¹⁸ See Hristo Andonovski, "Macedonians under Greece in the struggle against fascism (1940-1944)". INI, Skopje, 1968, p. 179. See Pavle Rakovski, "In the deep night dawn is born" (memories, thoughts, knowledge). Skopje, 1976, pp. 29-30. Memoirs, kept in INI.

The proclamation received wide response in Meglen and Voden Regions. This is what Hristo Andonovski, an activist, wrote:

“...The first call to join the Macedonian battalion, outlining the goals of the anti-fascist struggle in the Macedonian language, was met with great response from the Meglen and Voden Region population... There is no memory in history of such a massive turnout as was the case with the Meglen Region villagers, especially from Baovo and Pozharsko. These two villages alone produced over one hundred armed fighters. They rushed to join with weapons in hand. The weapons, now relics, had been left behind by their grandfathers from a past era. They were hidden and preserved for such an occasion.”¹⁹

The formation of the Macedonian battalion created quite a stir in the ranks of the so-called “Ohrana” organization.²⁰ The birth of the Macedonian battalion became worrisome to Giorgi Dimchev, commander of the Voden “Ohrana” formations. Worried about his own fate, Dimchev made inquiries on how to get in touch with ELAS Voden Macedonian Battalion headquarters.²¹

A meeting was held in the village Teovo, Voden Region sometime in the first half of September 1944, where Giorgi Dimchev and Dzhodzho Urdov met to decide what to do next.²²

Dzhodzho proposed the following:

1. Dimchev to disband his “Ohrana” military formations;
2. “Ohrana’s” weapons to be handed over to the Macedonian battalion;

¹⁹ Hristo Andonovski, “Macedonians under Greece in the struggle against fascism (1940-1944)”..., p. 178.

²⁰ “Ohrana” was a Bulgarian military organization created in Voden in May-June 1944 by Bulgarian agents and emissaries in order to attract misled Macedonians to join the service of the occupiers.

²¹ Hristo Andonovski, “Macedonians under Greece in the struggle against fascism (1940-1944)”..., p. 180.

²² See Dragan Kliakich, “General Markos”. Globus Edition, Zagreb, 1979, p. 74. Also see Pavle Rakovski, “In the deep of night dawn is born”..., pp. 33-34.

3. The Macedonian people seduced to join “Ohrana” be allowed to return to their homes or join the ranks of the Macedonian battalion;
4. Those in “Ohrana” who committed murders to be handed over to the people’s court for punishment.²³

Not seeing any guarantee for his own safety in Dzhodzho’s proposal, Dimchev had a counter-proposal. He proposed that his “Ohrana” units remain intact and armed with all their weapons while they join the Macedonian battalion. Dzhodzho Urdov didn’t accept his proposal.

There was no way the Voden Macedonian Battalion leadership or fighters would accept or allow intact “Ohrana” units to autonomously operate within ELAS. No agreement was reached. A little later, when the “Ohrana” fighters found out the reason why Dimche’s units didn’t join the Macedonian battalion, they voluntarily left Dimchev²⁴ and in groups joined the ranks of the Macedonian battalion. “Ohrana” was liquidated without firing a shot.

The Greek CPG and ELAS leaderships became deeply disturbed as more and more young Macedonians enlisted in the ranks of the Voden Macedonian Battalion. Faced with its growing popularity and explosive growth, the Greek leadership began to fear that the Macedonian Battalion would grow into a real armed Macedonian force. For that reason they decided to stop any further mobilization.

This, however, was nothing new. Kostur and Lerin Districts faced the same situation and for the same reasons the CPG and EAM leaderships disbanded the battalions. Also it was a precondition for entering George Papandreou’s coalition government. At the end of September 1944, the CPG Central Committee disbanded all Macedonian battalions. The official reason given for this, as explained by the Greek leadership, was to ease Greek concerns. The special Macedonian units apparently had allegedly awakened

²³ Giorgi Dimchev, Doklad, 10.IX.1944 collection: “Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War”, K. 1944, AE: 241/1. Hristo Andonovski, “The Truth about Aegean Macedonia”. Mislja, Skopje, 1971, p. 13.

²⁴ Dragan Kliakich, General Markos ..., p. 75.

“nationalism” and “separatism” in the ranks of the Macedonian people, which were detrimental to the common Greek-Macedonian struggle.²⁵

The explanation given for disbanding the battalions wasn't believable and completely transparent. The Macedonian leaders knew that the CPG and ELAS Greek leaderships wanted to destroy the Macedonian army so, in order to avoid a clash, the Macedonians decided to withdraw from ELAS. A decision was made to leave ELAS altogether and around mid October 1944 the battalions crossed over into the Republic of Macedonia.²⁶ The Voden Battalion was led out by Battalion headquarters headed by Dzhodzho Urdov, its political commissar.

It would appear that the CPG didn't want the battalions to leave. At least not the Voden battalion because in the afternoon of October 14, it sent Takis Papadopoulos, CPG District Committee Secretary for Voden District, and Iraklis Meletiadis (Kiriakos), CPG District Committee Secretary for Meglen District, to the village Vatasha in Kavadarsti Region, where the Voden Macedonian Battalion was temporarily stationed, to convince Dzhodzho Urdov to bring the battalion back. Dzhodzho Urdov, however, gave them a worthy answer and refused to listen to their advice. He also accused the CPG of leading narrow nationalistic and counter-revolutionary policies, especially with regards to the Macedonian national question.

The CPG Greek leadership's pursuit to have the battalions returned didn't end there. CPG leaders from Voden, as well as those who'd arrived from Kostur, decided to talk to the CPM Central Committee, to the National Liberation Army General Staff and to POM in Gorno Vranovtsi, emphasizing the need to have the Macedonian battalions returned. They also talked about other issues related to the Macedonian national question. But in the end, the Greeks accepted the suggestions offered by the CPM leaders as well as their opinions

²⁵ Pavle Rakovski, “Towards perception of historical truth”..., p. 172.

²⁶ Ibid.

and position on the Macedonian national question and returned empty-handed, without the battalions.²⁷

About a month later, a new brigade was created from the Macedonian fighters who had fled ELAS. The brigade was created on November 18, 1944, in Bitola just after that territory was liberated. It was named the First Strike Aegean Brigade. It enlisted the Macedonian battalion fighters and newly arrived fighters from the Aegean part of Macedonia. After it was created it engaged the occupier and domestic traitors until the Republic of Macedonia was completely liberated.

After the Macedonian battalions transferred to the Republic of Macedonia, there was a need to create a political body to support them. There was also a need to assume responsibility for developing a program and platform on how to continue the struggle under the new circumstances back in their own homeland, especially after the British intervened in Greece and after the Varkiza Agreement was signed.²⁸ While Greece was occupied by the British and under their domination the Greek political right organized and planned terror attacks against the entire Macedonian population with the intent to physically liquidate it or drive it out of Greece's borders.

After the Macedonian political body "Political Commission of the Macedonians under Greece" was created to lead the struggle in

²⁷ CPM Central Committee Archives, box 232, item no. 2 / 7-3 to 11-3. A photocopy of the document is with Todor Simovski, expert advisor at the Institute of National History - Skopje. Part of this document was also published in the INI Bulletin in an article written by Pavle Rakovski entitled: CPG, EAM, ELAS and the Macedonian National Liberation Movement, (Contribution "Towards perception of historical truth"). INI Bulletin, Skopje, 1982, XXVI, 2-3, pp. 265-266.

²⁸ The Varkiza Agreement was signed on February 12, 1945, in Varkiza near Athens. The Agreement was signed between representatives of the Greek government and representatives of the CPG and EAM to end the Greek Civil War, which began on December 4, 1944 in Athens. With this Agreement, ELAS commenced the demobilization of its fighters and surrendered its weapons. But immediately after the Agreement was signed, the Greek government mobilized its police and gendarmerie forces and confronted the democratic movement in Greece. (See "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War 1944-1945", T.I. doc. 200, pp. 298-301.

Greek occupied Macedonia, Dzhodzho Urdov was appointed Deputy Secretary.²⁹

ELAS was finally liquidated just after the armed conflict in Athens and the signing of the Varkiza Agreement. With ELAS out of the way the Greek reactionaries, with British help, became masters of the country usurping the government and imposing a terrorist regime. The reactionaries fought with all their might against the democratic movement and, above all, against the Macedonian people. Their aim was to physically exterminate the Macedonians, not only because of their national identity but also because they sided with the anti-fascist forces in Greece during the People's Liberation Struggle during which they resolutely fought for their national and social rights. Day by day the terror against the Macedonian people intensified. After the reactionaries consolidated their power they began to harass, arrest, persecute, rape, rob and murder people. Living conditions became so difficult that something had to be done to save the Macedonian people. For that purpose, on April 23, 1945, i.e. before Hitler's Germany capitulated, NOF for the Macedonians under Greece, a national liberation organization, was formed in which Dzhodzho Urdov was one of the leaders. NOF was purely a Macedonian organization.

From this moment on, Dzhodzho Urdov resumed his patriotic duty and became even more engaged in his revolutionary activities with zeal and devotion. He organized and coordinated the Macedonian people's struggle against the Greek Monarcho-Fascists and Anglo-American imperialists. There is ample evidence of this from the numerous reports he sent at that time to the NOF Main Board leadership.³⁰

²⁹ Hristo Andonovski, "Macedonians under Greece in the struggle against fascism (1940-1944)"..., p. 203.

³⁰ See "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945", Vol. II. Documents on the participation of the Macedonian people from the Aegean part of Macedonia in the Greek Civil War in 1945. Translated and edited by Risto Kiriazovski and Todor Simovski. Macedonian archives, Skopje, 1973, doc. 103, pp. 193-194, doc. 113, pp. 207-208, doc. 114, pp. 209-210, doc. 130, pp. 245-246, doc. 131, p. 247, doc. 135, p. 258, doc. 201, p. 378. doc. 203, pp. 383-384, doc. 215, pp. 406-407 and doc. 241. pp. 462-464. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1946", Volume III Documents on the participation of the Macedonian people from the Aegean part of Macedonia in the Greek Civil War in

In November 1946, the Macedonian NOF partisan units combined forces with the ELAS Greek partisan units. (A meeting was held on November 21, 1946, in the village Bapchor, Kostur Region, on Mount Vicho. The meeting was between NOF and CPG representatives who were given the task to implement a previously reached agreement to unify the Macedonian and Greek partisan groups and place the Macedonian partisans under DAG command for a joint struggle against the Greek Monarcho-Fascists.³¹

The reason for combining Greek and Macedonian units was so that they could jointly carry out actions against their common enemy. And, as previously agreed, Dzhodzho Urdov was to be appointed member of DAG Headquarters for Southwest and Central Macedonia and representative of NOF at DAG Headquarters. (As previously agreed, Paskal Mitrevski, NOF Secretary for Aegean Macedonia, was co-opted into the CPG Bureau for Macedonia and Thrace Secretariat, Giorgi (Dzhodzho) Urdov was to be appointed member of the CPG Provincial Committee Plenum.³² But as it turned out, the Agreement wasn't implemented. Dzhodzho was appointed NOF Representative at the DAG Headquarters for Southwest and Central Aegean Macedonia. Mincho Fotev, former NOMS Secretary for Aegean Macedonia, was appointed member of the EPON (National Greek Youth Organization) Secretariat for Aegean Macedonia and Thrace.

Giorgi (Dzhodzho) Urdov was put in charge of DAG operations and growth until June 21, 1947, when in a fierce battle with the enemy in Pieria, Mount Olympus, he was surrounded and, so as not to fall alive into enemy hands, committed suicide.^{33 34}

1946. Translated and edited by Risto Kiriazovski and Todor Simovski. Macedonian archives, Skopje, 1976, doc. 91, pp. 216-217, doc. 155, pp. 353-354, doc. 164, p. 366 and doc. 179, pp. 395-396.

³¹ See November 21, 1946, DAG Headquarters "Vicho" Proclamation to the people and the Greek state armed forces in Lerin District. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1946", Vol. III ..., doc. 189, pp. 418-419.

³² See AM, "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War 1945-1949" collection, AE: 445/1/46

³³ According to Mincho Fotev's unpublished work entitled "The National Liberation Front (NOF) development path for the Aegean part of Macedonia, pp. 40-42.

This is how the life of Giorgi (Dzhodzho) Urdov, a devoted Macedonian revolutionary, ended. His merits for the Macedonian national liberation movement were undoubtedly remarkable.

DAG General Staff posthumously promoted him to lieutenant colonel.

³⁴ See statements made by Giorgi Petrichevski (Gogo) to the DAG General Staff political commissar about the CPG and DAG's incorrect attitude towards NOF and the Macedonian people in Voden Region. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1948", T.V. Documents from the Macedonian people's participation (from the Aegean part of Macedonia) in the Greek Civil War in 1948. Translated and edited by Dr. Risto Kiriazovski and Fani Butskova - Martinova. Macedonian Archives, Skopje, 1981, doc. 201, p. 385.

MIRKA GINOVA (1916-1946)

The Macedonian women occupy a prominent place in the long-standing Macedonian people's struggles for national and social liberation. Women fought heroically side by side with the men and made many sacrifices for the freedom of their homeland.

Mirka Ginova is standing tall in the constellation of prominent Macedonian women fighters, organizers and leaders of NOF, the Macedonian liberation organization for Aegean Macedonia, who laid down their lives in the struggle for the Macedonian people's national and social liberation.³⁵ Mirka Ginova was born to a Macedonian revolutionary family in 1916, in the village Rusilovo, Voden Region.³⁶ Mirka was left without a father at age two and was looked after by her mother until she died during a major flu epidemic.³⁷ After finishing primary school in the village Katranitsa, Voden Region,³⁸ Mirka still longed to learn so she enrolled in a practical school for advanced home economic studies in the town Voden,³⁹ and after graduating from there she moved to Lerin to continue her education at the local home economics school. Later she moved to Kostur where she finished her education to become a

³⁵ Much has been written about the revolutionary activity of Mirka Ginova in the Macedonian press. But the most important articles published so far were written by Hristo Andonovski entitled "Irina Ginova - Mirka", published by Voice of the Aegeans, Skopje, 1952, July 2, III, 24; "Mirka Ginova", published by Nova Makedonija, Skopje, 1971, July 26-30, XXVII, 8804-8808, 16; "The Teacher from Rusilovo" (On the occasion of International Women's Day), "Nova Makedonija", Skopje, 1967, March 7, XXIII, 7323. Other articles included Vangel Aianovski-Oche's "The Aegean Iovanka Orleanka" (Memories), Nova Makedonija, Skopje, 1970, August 5-9, XXVI, 8455-8459; "The heroic daughter of Aegean Macedonia" - Irina Ginova Mirka, Nova Makedonija, Skopje, 1951, October 11, VIII, 2124; "Our unforgettable Mirka". 27 years since Mirka Ginova's execution. According to Sofia Poptraianova-Kalpaka Spis's memoirs, "Macedonia", Skopje, 1973, July, XX, 243.

³⁶ Mirka Ginova's father, Kosta Ginov, was a participant in the Ilinden Uprising. See Hristo Andonovski, "Mirka Ginova", 25 years since her death. "Nova Makedonija", Skopje, July 26, 1971, p. 2.

³⁷ Vangel Aianovski-Oche, "The Aegean Iovanka Orleanka." "Nova Makedonija", Skopje, 1970, August 5, p. 8. Vangel Aianovski-Oche was one of the NOF leaders in Voden District, Aegean Macedonia, who remembered Mirka Ginova's life and struggle.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

teacher.⁴⁰ Mirka Ginova endured much difficulty during the years she attended school.

According to Hristo Andonovski⁴¹ and to statements made by her fellow villagers, Mirka was unable to find employment for six years. The reason for that was because she was Macedonian. The Greek authorizes rarely ever employed Macedonian teachers in their school system in Macedonian villages, particularly in Voden Region where the people supposedly spoke “Bulgarian”.

According to Vangel Aianovski-Oche, Mirka Ginova got a job as a teacher in the village Kutugeri, Voden Region, just before World War II broke out.⁴² The village Kutugeri is located in Voden Region and was inhabited by Christian Turkish settlers and colonists from Asia Minor deposited in Greek occupied Macedonia in the 1920’s. According to Hristo Andonovski however, Mirka Ginova was first appointed teacher in the village Vngeni, Voden Region.⁴³ But most likely Mirka worked in both Kutugeri and Vngeni at the same time because those villages are close to one another.

During the start of the occupation when fascist Italy and later on Hitler’s Germany⁴⁴ attacked Greece, Mirka Ginova was working as a teacher in the Macedonian village Vikoianevo, Voden Region.⁴⁵ Because of the tense war situation she was forced to return home and, together with her villagers, immediately joined the People’s Liberation Movement against the occupiers.

After the youth organization EPON was created in the spring of 1943, Mirka joined the EPON Regional Committee. In her role she

⁴⁰ Hristo Andonovski, “Mirka Ginova”, 25 years since her death. “Nova Makedonija”, Skopje, July 26, 1971, p. 2.

⁴¹ Hristo Andonovski, “The Teacher from Rusilovo”. On the occasion of International Women’s Day. “Nova Makedonija”, Skopje, 1967, March 7.

⁴² Vangel Aianovski-Oche, Aegean Iovanka Orleanka. Memories... August 6, p. 8.

⁴³ Hristo Andonovski, Mirka Ginova 25 years since her death, Nova Makedonija, Skopje, July 26, 1971, p. 2.

⁴⁴ September 6, 1941.

⁴⁵ Vangel Ajanovski-Oche, Aegean Iovanka Orleanka. Memories... August 6, p. 8.

became a favorite among the population in the Island district and, above all, among the Macedonian youth.⁴⁶

In 1943 Mirka also became an active member in the Party and a prominent CPG and EAM agitator and organizer in the Macedonian villages in Ostrovo District. Her revolutionary character became stronger day by day as she fought in the struggle against the German-Bulgarian occupiers and the domestic traitors.⁴⁷

Her determination to fight against the occupier to the end came to full expression at the end of 1943 when she came into contact with Macedonian partisan units from the Republic of Macedonia, which at that time were patrolling the Kozuv and Kaimakchalan mountains.⁴⁸

After the formation of the Macedonian Voden Battalion within ELAS, in the summer of 1944, Mirka Ginova tirelessly agitated the Macedonian youth to pick up a rifle and join the Macedonian Battalion en masse and fight against the occupiers and domestic traitors. Thanks to her tireless effort, a large number of Macedonian young men and women from Ostrovo District joined the ranks of the Voden Macedonian Battalion at Mount Kaimakchalan.⁴⁹

Mirka Ginova also showed special courage and heroism on August 2, 1944, during a battle fought near Muaren-An located between the villages Ostrovo and Voden. Here ELAS partisan units attacked a German army depot loaded with ammunition. With a rifle in hand, she was among the first ELAS fighters to attack the enemy.⁵⁰

Before the fascist occupiers were expelled from the country and after ELAS capitulated as a result of the Varkiza Agreement, Mirka Ginova not only didn't surrender her weapons, but with great optimism and deep patriotic feeling stood on the side of her people

⁴⁶ For Mirka Ginova's revolutionary activities during this period see Todor Simovski's, "Memories of Mirka Ginova". Memoirs, kept in INI.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Hristo Andonovski, Mirka Ginova, 25 years since her death..., July 26, p. 3. Also see Todor Simovski, Memories of Mirka Ginova...

⁴⁹ Todor Simovski, Memories of Mirka Ginova...

⁵⁰ Hristo Andonovski, Mirka Ginova. 25 years since her death... July 26, p. 3.

and fought against the new Greek reactionary authorities who, with even greater fanaticism, continued to terrorize and murder innocent Macedonians in this part of Macedonia.

In March 1945, Mirka Ginova, through Vangel Shamardanov-Ilindenski,⁵¹ got in touch with the leadership of TOMO,⁵² the new Macedonian liberation organization in Voden.

Regarding the dispute of where and when TOMO was created, Hristo Andonovski, a NOF activist in Voden region at the time, said the following in a conversation with the author (Tashko Mamurovski) of this book: "... It was around February 20, 1945, after the Varkiza Agreement was signed. I know that because I was invited by Vangel Aianovski and I attended that founding meeting. But when I passed through the village Dolno Pozharsko on February 26 of the same year, I found Pavle Rakovski and Todor Anastasov-Director, by order of the Political Commission of the Macedonians under Greece, had already set up basic organizations of TOMO in Gorno Pozharsko, Dolno Pozharsko, Gorno Rodivo and Dolno Rodivo and were preparing to go to Tresino and Sarakinovo..."

Hristo Andonovski not only gave meaning to the goals and tasks of TOMO but said people were prepared to fight the Greek Monarcho-Fascists and their nationalist gangs with even greater conviction.⁵³

The first TOMO District Conference was held on June 20, 1945, near Tupcheto located between the villages Kronselovo and

⁵¹ For more information on Vangel Shamardanov's revolutionary activities see Tashko Mamurovski, Vangel Shamardanov-Ilindenski (1921-1948). INI Bulletin. Skopje, 1979, XXIII, 1, pp. 263-269.

⁵² There are two versions to the story of where and when the organization TOMO was created. According to Vangel Aianovski-Oche, TOMO was created in Voden on January 20, 1945 (Vangel Aianovski - Oche, "Aegean storms, the revolutionary movement in Voden and NOF in Aegean Macedonia), INI, Skopje, 1975, p. 158.) According to Pavle Rakovski, TOMO was created on February 22, 1945, in the village Dolno Pozharsko, Meglen Region. (Pavle Rakovski, "In the deep night dawn is born", memories, thoughts, knowledge. Memoirs, kept in INI, p. 37.)

⁵³ Vangel Ajanovski-Oche, The Aegean Iovanka Orleanka. Memories... August 7, p. 8.

Vlkoianevo, near the city Voden.⁵⁴ After analyzing the work done by the local TOMO organizations, the Conference decided to rename TOMO to NOF for Voden Region.⁵⁵ But because the Political Commission of the Macedonians under Greece ceased to exist in the beginning of April 1945, Pavle Rakovski was unable to attend. According to Rakovski himself he never attended such a Conference.

From the archived reports filed at the time by both Vangel Aianovski-Oche and Pavle Rakovski, it's clear that there isn't enough information to determine if a TOMO District Conference took place on April 28, 1945 in Voden Region. In fact, Aianovski himself in his report dated June 16, 1945, still talked about TOMO.⁵⁶

Whenever it took place, it's clear that the NOF District leadership for Voden Region was appointed during this Conference. The NOF Executive Board was composed of the following members: Vangel Aianovski-Oche, political secretary; Vangel Shamardanov-Iindenski, organizational secretary; Risto Kordalov, responsible for NOF party affairs; Petre Popov, responsible for propaganda and agitation; Risto Bukovalov, responsible for financial issues; Tashko Hadzhiianev, head of youth; and Mirka Ginova, responsible for women's issues.⁵⁷

From that moment on Mirka Ginova dedicated herself with even greater vigour and drive in the struggle against the Greek

⁵⁴ As reported by Pavle Rakovski on June 27, 1945 regarding the political situation in Voden Region. Pavle Rakovski was a member of the NOF Main leadership, See "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945", Vol. II. Documents on the participation of the Macedonian people from the Aegean part of Macedonia in The Civil War in Greece 1945. Translated and edited by Risto Kiriazovski and Todor Simovski. Macedonian Archives, Skopje, 1973, doc. 47, pp. 91-92.

⁵⁵ According to Vangel Aianovski-Oche, the TOMO District Conference was held on April 28, 1945, which was attended by representative from the Political Commission of the Macedonians under Greece and Pavle Rakovski was the one who suggested to the Political Commission to change TOMO to NOF for Voden. Aegean storms ..., p. 167-169.

⁵⁶ "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945", T. II, doc. 54, pp. 101-104.

⁵⁷ Vangel Aianovski-Oche, Aegean Storms..., pp. 169-170.

reactionaries and their armed gangs. Together with her comrades, Mirka created NOF, NOMS and AFZH organizations in several Macedonian villages in Voden Region. While attending village gatherings she knew how to ignite the hearts of many young Macedonians prompting them to join the anti-fascist struggle. Thanks to her national feelings as well as activities that she carried out for the Macedonian people's liberation, she became very popular among the Macedonian masses and became a sweetheart of the Macedonian people in Voden.

Unfortunately, thanks to the Varkiza Agreement, the Greek reactionaries were able to consolidate their power in Greece, and with all their might, attack the democratic movement and, above all, the Macedonian people with aims to physically exterminate them.

In response to the unbearable terror waged against the Macedonian villages in Voden Region, the NOF partisan detachments⁵⁸ in Kaimakchalan, together with Greek groups and former ELAS members and fighters who were persecuted by the reactionaries, carried out several successful attacks against the Monarcho-Fascist strongholds in the area. First they destroyed the gendarmerie stations in the villages Lukovets, Pozharsko and Sarakinovo, and then they attacked the military watchtowers in Iankulovi kolibi at Kaimakchalan and those in the village Gorno Rodivo.⁵⁹ NOF saboteurs also liquidated several traitors and collaborators who worked for the Greek police.

As a member of the NOF District Board and AFZH Secretary for Voden Region, Mirka Ginova worked tirelessly organizing resistance activities against the enraged Monarcho-Fascists and former collaborators of the fascist occupiers. Because of that, the Greek police and gendarmerie tried their best to capture her in order to put an end to her revolutionary activities.

⁵⁸ In the spring of 1946, a partisan battalion was formed on Mount Kaimakchalan from three NOF partisan Voden Region detachments. It was called the Third Macedonian Battalion. This is according to reports provided to the Voden Region General NOF leadership on April 11, 1946 on the situation and NOF's activities in the District. ("Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1946", T. III. Macedonian Archives, Skopje, 1976, doc. 114, p. 261.)

⁵⁹ Vangel Aianovski-Oche, Aegean Iovanka Orleanka. Memories..., August 9, p. 15.

On June 28, 1946, while traveling from the village Vlkoianevo to the village Krontselovo (NOF headquarters), Vangel Goglev-Bezandako and Tashko Bobev, NOF couriers and Voden Detachment fighters, suddenly ran into a Greek government unit and a firefight broke out. Unfortunately the scuffle alerted the Greek government forces that NOF partisan groups were circulating around the village Vlkoianevo. Shortly afterwards, the same government unit snatched a couple of goat herders from Vlkoianevo and, under threat of harm, pressured them to disclose where the partisans were located. The goat herders told the Monarcho-Fascists that the NOF partisan detachment was stationed near the village Pocheap in the Pocheap forest. But, as luck would have it, Vani Barev, a NOF leader located in Vlkoianevo, acted quickly and promptly informed the partisans in the forest of the impending danger.⁶⁰

On June 30, 1946, Risto Kordalov, NOF Detachment Commander in Voden, together with Captain Adamidis Filotas-Katsonis, CPG Commander of the Voden partisan detachment, were assigned to a group of fighters and ordered to leave for Mount Karakamen to pick up the weapons belonging to the partisan detachments led by Captain Christos Palamas-Mavros and return them to Voden Region.

The partisan group, consisting of about 50 fighters, which was left behind was led by Risto Bukovalov-Zhukov, political commissar of the NOF Third Macedonian Battalion. To better secure the area these fighters were placed around Staro Vlkoianevo and divided into four groups. The first group was placed on the Vladovo - Vlkoianevo road. The second group was placed near the railway bridges. The third group was placed on the Voden - Vlkoianevo road. And the fourth group was placed on the Lukovets - Vlkoianevo road. The fighters were ordered to remain still and hidden during the day. They were told that they would have their

⁶⁰ This was according to Risto Bukavalov-Zhukov's memoirs. Risto Bukavalov-Zhukov was from the village Teovo, Voden Region. He was a political commissar serving in the Kaimakchalan Third Macedonian Battalion. He was also a member of the NOF District Board for Voden Region responsible for financial issues and an active participant in the National Liberation War and DAG.

food delivered by the NOF organization volunteers from the village Vikoianevo.⁶¹

On July 4, 1946, Dimitar Limbov from the village Vladovo, member of NOF Regional Board for Ostrovsko, Tashko Sapundzhiev-Kuliman and Vangel Goglev-Bezandako, all NOF members and fighters of NOF, received orders from Risto Bukovalov-Zhukov to set up an ambush in the Dupen Most area, located between the village Vladovo and the city Voden, to liquidate Giorgi Pantsev and Giorgi Bapka-Daskalot, both spies, expected to travel from the village Vladovo to Voden. They, however, didn't carry out their orders. Dimitar Limbov alone took full responsibility for that and, as he explained, instead of killing them was certain that he could convince them, in a peaceful way, to join the partisans. So the spies were left alive and free to go to Voden. Unfortunately Dimitar Limbov was wrong. As future events will show, his carelessness made him a victim of the Greek Monarcho-Fascists.

The same day after completing their task on Mount Karakamen, the group of fighters, led by Risto Kordalov and Captain Katsonis, returned to Voden Region happy and singing songs as they settled in the "Kusa and Dolga Livada" locality. The next day, Risto Kordalov sent a letter to Risto Bukovalov-Zhukov asking him and his group of fighters to report to the above-mentioned locality. Bukovalov-Zhukov and his fighters arrived at the camp around midnight. Others who arrived earlier were a group of NOF staffers, among whom were Mirka Ginova, Giorgi Atanasov-Blazhe, Vangel Shamardanov-Ilindenski and Lazo Kamchev. Included among the others who arrived at the camp were CPG political cadre Georgios Mustakidis-Aleko, former leader of ELAS reserves in Voden Region during the German occupation, his wife Chrisula, member of the CPG Neighbourhood Committee for Meglen Region (Karadzova), a man called Tarzan from the village Orizartsi and a nurse from Voden named Irina.

Among other things, the NOF staffers and their Greek comrades met to discuss outstanding organizational issues and the possibility of establishing a partisan hospital on Mount Kaimakchalan.⁶²

⁶¹ Ibid.

Unbeknownst to the NOF and CPG attendants, the “Kusa and Dolga Livada” locality was no longer a secret place. It had been discovered by the enemy almost a week before the meeting took place. At the same time no one was the wiser that the Monarcho-Fascists were planning an attack.

On July 6, 1946, Giorgi Mitrev-Gunush, a courier from the village Pochev, arrived at Pochevska forest in the “Kusa and Dolga Livada” locality around 8 o’clock in the morning panting and drenched in sweat from having to run through an enemy ring to get there.⁶³ According Giorgi Mitrev-Gunush, an enemy unit composed of about 600 well-armed soldiers, together with armed gangs from the village Dragomantsi, was approaching the Pochevska forest.⁶⁴

Risto Kordalov, Risto Bukovalov and Captain Katsonis, leading the two partisan detachments, immediately started an investigation. It was determined that precautions needed to be taken. But since no one from the nearby villages of Vlkoianevo, Teovo, Lukovets, or Krontselevo had reported enemy movements on that ground they came to the conclusion that these may have been armed Dragomans who often patrolled that area. However, in any case, the unit leaders decided to take precautionary measures.

The fighters agreed that in case they had to retreat, they should go through “Staro Vlkoianevo”. They also agreed that both units should get involved if a firefight broke out and that Risto Kordalov and his group of fighters should protect the NOF and CPG personnel from the rear. They were still preparing their defense plan when they were suddenly surprised to find the enemy in front of them. The fighters immediately opened fire.

Aside from the 60 armed partisans there were an additional 30 NOF political leaders and staffers in the group. Some of the newly arrived

⁶² Vangel Aianovski-Oche, Aegean Iovanka Orleanka. Memories..., August 9, p. 15.

⁶³ Giorgi Mitrev-Gunush was sent to the camp by Tashko Mamurovski-Iskrata, also born in the village Pochev; CPG activist in Voden Region. Member of the NOF Regional Board for Ostrovsko, NOF AKE secretary.

⁶⁴ According to Risto Bukovalov-Zhukov’s recollection...

partisans, including several communists from Voden, weren't yet armed. The firefight was fierce. After a three-hour bloody skirmish the enemy closed the encirclement even more. As a result a dozen or so fighters were forced to withdraw from their defensive position. The enemy took advantage of that and, after regrouping, stormed the camp. During this critical moment some of the NOF and CPG staffers, led by Mirka Ginova, took a different direction instead of following the path to Staro Vlkoianevo, as was previously agreed. For some unknown reason, they went in a completely different direction and fell into the hands of the Monarcho-Fascist gendarmes.

A short time later, Captain Katsonis with his group of fighters left their position and joined Risto Bukovalov and his fighters. After the camp was taken by the enemy and the ring around them kept tightening, the partisans were sure they would be captured alive so they decided to break through and fight their way to the hills located between "Kusa and Dolga Livada". And so they did. Fortunately, the hills were free of enemy soldiers and they were able to take up new positions.⁶⁵ Before dark, Bukovalov and Katsonis sent Toli, one of their fighters, to Vlkoianevo to find out from his fellow villagers what had happened in the area. When he returned he brought tragic news. Toli informed his comrades that the Monarcho-Fascists had captured Mirka Ginova during the battle at Pochevska forest. Along with Mirka they had also captured Tome Mihailov, a NOF regional activist from the village Gugovo; Dimitar Limbov, a NOF regional activist from the village Vladovo; Giorgi Proiov, a NOF regional activist from Voden; Petre Popdimitrov-Direkot, a NOF regional activist from Voden; Risto Stoianov, a NOF regional activist from the village Messimer; Georgios Mustakidis, a CPG activist in Voden Region from the village Karasinantsi, Gumendzhe Region; his wife Chrisula, a member of the CPG District Committee for Meglen Region (Karadzhova) and the nurse Irina from Voden.⁶⁶

At this point Risto Bukovalov and Captain Katsonis took the 20 fighters or so that were with them and overnight left Vlkoiansko

⁶⁵ According to Tashko Mamurovski-Iskrata and Risto Bukovalov-Zhukov's recollections...

⁶⁶ List of killed NOF and AFZH activists from Voden Region after the Varkiza Agreement was signed. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1947", T. IV. Macedonian Archive, Skopje, 1980, doc. 137, p. 428.

locality and moved to Kronzelsko locality, arriving at a place called “Momin Grob” at dawn. They spent the day there hiding and in the evening continued their journey to the NOF main base located at the so-called “Bunarot” (Well) in Rodivsko Place. Here they met up with their comrades Risto Kordalov, Vangel Shamardanov-Ilindenski, Giorgi Atanasov-Blazhe, Lazo Kamchev and about 20 fighters who had managed to break through enemy lines.⁶⁷

As for the group of NOF and CPG political leaders and staffers led by Mirka Ginova and Georgios Mustakidis, they withdrew from “Kusa and Dolga Livada” and, instead of following the path recommended by the NOF detachment, took a different direction to avoid the ambush and simply fell into the hands of the Monarcho-Fascists. Of those present only Mirka was armed with a pistol. After firing all her bullets, the Monarcho-Fascists stormed the group and captured everyone in a physical fight. Immediately after that the savage fascists began to harass everyone, especially Mirka.

After it was captured, the group was taken to a local monastery, located above the village Vlkoianevo, and imprisoned. The captives were held there as the Greek gendarmes quickly tried to find their identity. For that purpose they summoned some of their collaborators from the surrounding villages. After they found out they had the famous Mirka Ginova and several NOF leaders in their hands, they began to harass them in the most brutal way. They beat the prisoners with rifle butts and fists and pulled their hair. They wanted them to look pathetic when they paraded them through the streets of Voden. They wanted to convince the people in Voden and the surrounding villages that these people were miserable. Mirka, for example, was stripped of her clothes and dressed in rags. She was dragged by her hair through the streets exposing her to ridicule in front of the crowds. But instead of seeing what they were meant to see, the people saw the vicious Monarcho-Fascists demonstrate their brutality and great hatred.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ According to Mitse Kukulev-Prilep’s recollections. Mitse Kukulev-Prilep was from the village Baovo, Voden Region. He participated in the National Liberation War and DAG. Also according to Risto Bukovalov-Zhukov’s recollections...

⁶⁸ Hristo Andonovski, “The Rose That did not bloom”. Magazine “Macedonia”, Skopje, 1959, VII, no. 69, p. 16.

But that was only the beginning of what the captives were about to experience. Mirka herself was taken several times outside Voden, near the locality “Giavaliotsitsa”, buried in the ground up to her neck and then shot at with blanks.⁶⁹ While being tortured for three days and three nights, a motorcycle was continuously buzzing under Mirka’s cell window to block her screams as her tormentors put splinters under her nails, iron hoops around her head, hot eggs under her armpits and other beastly methods of torture that her Greek torturers invented. But no torture could break Mirka. She remained solid as granite until the end.⁷⁰

A few days later, on July 23, 1946, the prisoners were taken to Enidzhe Vardar where their trial by a military court was to take place. The court was going to use the newly passed law 509, which called for sentencing to death all those who propagated “secession of part of the homeland or engaging in subversive actions against the state”⁷¹

The Greek reactionaries used the trial to prove to the Greek people and the world public in general that the seven NOF leaders being tried and NOF, the Macedonian National Liberation Movement in the Aegean part of Macedonia, belonged to an autonomous movement with alleged aims to separate Aegean Macedonia from Greece.

The trial took place behind closed doors inside the First Primary School in Enidzhe Vardar. No one except the military and gendarmes were present in the courtroom. We have no minutes or record of what went on inside. The only thing we do know is Mirka’s defense and what she said to the military court. Among other things, this is what she said:

“... I am a NOF leader. During the occupation I fought against the Germans and against the executioners Kalchev and Dimchev who attacked like thugs, especially against us Macedonians, in order to seduce us into the clutches of the fascist “Ohrana”. We fanatically fought against “Ohrana”, as we fought against the German occupier.

⁶⁹ Vangel Aianovski-Oche, *Aegean storms...*, p. 220.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Hristo Andonovski, “Mirka Ginova, 25 years since her death”, July 27, p. 3.

NOF is not a military organization. It is a democratic political organization which struggles for equality for our people within the Greek state. We are fighting for freedom and democracy ...”⁷²

Mirka Ginova, together with her comrades Tome Mihailov, Dimitar Limbov, Giorgi Proiov, Petre Popdimitrov-Direkot, Risto Stoianov and Georgios Mustakidis-Aleko, was sentenced to death by firing squad.⁷³ Georgios Mustakidis’s wife, Chrisula and nurse Irina were sentenced to long prison terms. Three days after the verdict was reached, Mirka, together with the others, was taken to the Enidzhe Vardar cemetery and placed in front of a Monarcho-Fascist firing squad. Mirka greeted her death by singing the International anthem.⁷⁴

Mirka Ginova’s heroic stand and that of the others before the firing squad was even recognized by their opponent. A report written by Supreme Headquarters of the regular Greek army, among other things, said: “...The seven executed people cold-bloodedly interrupted the firing squad by refusing a blindfold. The greatest cold-bloodedness was demonstrated by the teacher Irini Gini (Mirka Ginova), who sang the International anthem and shouted slogans praising the Communist Party...”⁷⁵

⁷² V. Giorcevska, “Mirka Ginova died bravely”. Bright figures, our revolutionaries. Nova Makedonija, Skopje, 1970, July 26, XXVI, 8445, p. 14. Also see Vesnik, Ellinikos Voras, July 27, 1946.

⁷³ Memorandum from the EAM District Committee to the UN, on the terror committed by the Monarcho-Fascist right in the Voden Region, Annex No. 4. List of Democratic Citizens Sentenced to Death and Executed by a Military Court in Enidzhe Vardar, Applying Extraordinary Security Measures in the Same District. “Aegean Macedonia in NOB, 1947”, T. IV, Skopje, 1980, doc. 25, pp. 120-121.

⁷⁴ On the occasion of the two-year anniversary of heroic Mirka Ginova’s death. Evdokia Baliova-Nikolova (Vera), AFZH Main Board Secretary for Aegean Macedonia, said the following in one of her articles: “...The immortal and celebrated Irina Ginova (Mirka) fearlessly raised her voice before her executioners and delivered a slap, the first slap on the face of Monarcho-Fascism.” “Down with fascism!”...” Vera Balova, “A stage for new and great victories over Monarcho-Fascism. They did not die; they will live among us forever.” “Nova Makedonka”, 1948, No. II, p. 7. AFZH Main Board for Aegean Macedonia Magazine.

⁷⁵ Mirka Ginova. From the book “For the Holy People’s Freedom”. Bright figures, fallen national fighters. Political and literary publications. 1962, pp. 16-17. Also see Vesnik Ellinikos Voras, July 26, 1946.

With their heroic stand before the Enidzhe Vardar military court, the NOF cadres, led by Mirka Ginova, and the CPG cadres, led by Georgios Mustakidis-Aleko, not only gave emphasis to the principles of the joint struggle against the Greek Monarcho-Fascists but also, with their common spilled blood, cemented the joint brotherhood and unity struggle of the Greek and Macedonian people.

Mirka Ginova's death sentence, and that of the others, aroused great interest in the world public and received wide publicity in the world press.

The Associated Press reported the following the same day: "July 26. Solun. Early this morning, Irini Gini and her six comrades convicted of committing political crimes by the military court in Enidzhe Vardar were executed by firing squad. She is the first woman shot in Greece for political reasons."⁷⁶

Outraged by the brutal Monarcho-Fascist actions, many people from around the world wrote Free Greece Radio to express their thoughts, calling Mirka Ginova's execution "Hitleric barbarism."⁷⁷

But the most glittering testimony of Mirka's heroic death came from an anonymous letter sent to her father by a military reporter from a Greek newspaper.

The anonymous author with the initial "M" wrote:

"Enidzhe Vardar July 26, 1946

Mr. Kosta,

At six o'clock this morning, sadly, Irini lost her life. My respects for your daughter who faced her end with a smile on her face singing courageously to the astonishment of everyone present. She was amazingly heroic and showed no fear in the face of death. It was the same for the other six but mostly for her. I'm not writing you to

⁷⁶ Vangel Aianovski-Oche, "The Aegean Iovanka Orleanka". Memories... August 5, p. 8. Also see Vesnik Ellinikos Voras, July 27, 1946.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

compliment your daughter but to tell you the truth as I witnessed it...”⁷⁸

Mirka Ginova gave her life for Macedonia’s and for the Macedonian people’s freedom. She suffered immensely but died a hero and that is why she will forever be remembered as a fighter and a legend and will remain in the hearts and minds of all Macedonians.

With her shed blood for Macedonia’s freedom Mirka Ginova became synonymous with a deserving national fighter and legend who crossed the borders of her homeland and even reached the United Nations.⁷⁹

In recognition of Mirka Ginova’s heroic death, Spilios, a Greek writer, wrote the following verses:

“For you, a laurel wreath has been knitted for centuries,
and your modest songs invite to struggle!
In cities, villages, their strength echoes...
At your grave our fury will shine like a candle.
You were a modest teacher in a school of harrow.
But all of Greece today is learning from your teaching.”⁸⁰

Macedonian folk singers sang this song:

Gently Mirka fell asleep In the middle of the night they arrived
at the Pochevski Mountains, the second company of commissars.
at the Pochevski Mountains, their voices Mirka heard,
down there in the meadows. Mirka woke up suddenly.

They arrived at dawn, alive Mirka they caught,
wretched fascist spies, to Voden they took her,
they fenced the place well, deeply Mirka they tortured,
alive Mirka they caught. alive in the grave they put her.⁸¹

⁷⁸ As quoted by Hristo Andonovski, Mirka Ginova in Greek literature. Reviews, magazines on art, culture and social issues. Skopje, January 1959, I No. 5, p. 589.

⁷⁹ Hristo Andonovski, Mirka Ginova. 25 years since her death. July 29, p. 3.

⁸⁰ Hristo Andonovski, Mirka Ginova in Greek Literature... p. 589.

⁸¹ “The eagle flies high”. A collection of original revolutionary and lyrical folk songs from Aegean Macedonia. Collected and prepared for publication by Giorgi

Mirka Ginova's courage and heroism will serve many Macedonian generations in the future as a shining example of how the Macedonian people fought and died for their freedom.

ATANAS KOROVESHOV (1918-1945)

Atanas Koroveshov was one of NOF's most prominent Macedonian fighters and activists from the Aegean part of Macedonia who gave up his life in the struggle for the Macedonian people's national and social liberation. Atanas was born in 1918, in the village Smrdesh, Kostur Region. After completing his primary education in his native village, Atanas, or Naso as his friends used to call him, went into farming following in his father's (Filip) footsteps.

In 1939 Naso was drafted into the Greek military and deployed to serve in a border unit.

So when the German-Italian and Bulgarian occupiers invaded Greece and Aegean Macedonia, Naso was prepared to fight them off. The moment the fascists occupied his homeland he joined a CPG resistance group that operated in Smrdesh. This group, consisting of Lambro Cholakov, Giorgi and Socrates Papaianov, Lambro Mitanov and others, was created before the Second World War started. Their aim was to develop a wide range of activities to fight against the occupiers.⁸²

In June 1941 the above-mentioned group of resistance fighters, from Atanas Koroveshov's native village Smrdesh, together with other similar groups from nearby villages such as Dmbeni, Gabresh, Kosinets, Breznitsa, etc. organized a gathering to celebrate the 38th anniversary of the glorious 1903 Lokvata and Viniari battle. This battle took place during the Ilinden Uprising in 1903 where an unequal fight between the Macedonian insurgents and Ottoman army took place, during which 13 fighters from the village

⁸² This was according to Lambro Cholakov's recollection. Lambro was from the village Smrdesh, Kostur Region. During the National Liberation War Lambro was Party leader of the "Lazo Trpovski" detachment, and later served as a member of the Political Committee of the Macedonians under Greece. From 1945 he served as secretary in the NOF District Board for the Kostur and Prespa Districts. From May 1947, he served in the NOF Main and Executive Boards. From January 1948 he served as a member of the NOF Central and Executive Council for Aegean Macedonia. From February 1949, he served as Chairman of the NOF District Board for Kostur Region. From March 1949, he served as a member of the Main Board and the Executive Council of NOF for Aegean Macedonia. He was also imprisoned by the Greeks and served in Greek prisons for more than 10 years.

detachments died in battle. Some of these fighters were from the village Smrdesh. Speeches and wreaths were laid at the site where the insurgents were killed.⁸³

On July 1, 1941, the same resistance group from Smrdesh used another traditional village gathering to promote its resistance against the occupiers in the Kostur Region. This gathering was held every year at a place called “St. Vrach. Atanas took front stage during this occasion.⁸⁴

In the fall of 1941, Atanas accompanied his father’s flock of sheep and spent the winter in the vicinity of Larissa. The Koroveshov family owned property here and every year brought their flock to winter in this area.

Towards the end of 1941 and the beginning of 1942, the CPG began to intensify its activities in Larissa and the surrounding region and formed the first partisan groups. The Koroveshov family dairy farm facilities located at the foot of Mount Olympus served as basic strongholds to feed and accommodate the partisan groups. Atanas Koroveshov, together with Perikli Koroveshov, Todor Koroveshov, Micho Koroveshov and the other young people who stayed in the facilities that winter, regularly supplied the partisan groups with food, information, courier services, etc.

In the summer of 1942, Atanas returned to his native village and immediately joined the Smrdesh CPG village committee.⁸⁵ His main responsibility was to deal with military issues but at the same

⁸³ “Lokvata” Viniari” and Lazo Poptraikov. From our historical past. Voice of the Aegeans, Skopje, June 2, 1951, II, No. 10, p. 2. Also according to Vasko Makrievski’s recollections. Vasko was from the village Smrdesh. He was a fighter and served in the “Lazo Trpovski” detachment. Later he served as secretary of the CPM Committee in the Macedonians from Greece First Strike Brigade and deputy political commissar in the same brigade.

⁸⁴ According to Micho Karandzhovski’s recollections. Micho was from the village Smrdesh. He served as secretary of the EPON Youth Regional Committee in Korestata, Kostur Region. Later he served as Deputy Political Commissar of a detachment belonging to the Karaorman Battalion.

⁸⁵ Naso Koroveshov. Our fallen fighters. Voice of the Aegeans, Skopje 1951, September 4, II, no. 14, p. 4. Also according to Lambro Cholakov and Vasko Makrievski’s recollections...

time worked tirelessly to popularize the CPG village party organization and, together with the other members of the village committee, established close ties with the surrounding villages and the CPG District Organization.⁸⁶

In mid 1943, Atanas's village organization began preparations to create an armed partisan detachment which was to include fighters from Smrdesh as well as from the surrounding villages.

In the second half of August 1942, Atanas Koroveshov, Lambro Cholakov, Risto Shamandurov, Vasil Makrievski, Pando Shiperkov, Todor Koroveshov, Micho Koroveshov, Perikli Koroveshov, Perikli Kovachevski, Miltiadi Kovachevski and Micho Galiovski joined the partisans.⁸⁷

In the fall of 1943, the "Lazo Trpovski" Detachment was created from the above-mentioned group of partisans and the other fighters from the surrounding villages who had also joined the partisans. Atanas Koroveshov participated in all the combat actions the "Lazo Trpovski" Detachment was involved in until it was disbanded.⁸⁸

In November-December 1943 when SNOF, the Macedonian anti-fascist organization for Kostur Region, was formed, members of the Greek CPG leadership appeared in Kostur Region and used their influence to systematically limit SNOF's activities, believing that the Macedonian organization was a problem for them. This so-called problem was even discussed by the CPG leadership that led the SNOF organization in the village Smrdesh. Even though the SNOF village organization was an all Macedonian organization, the Greek CPG leadership and some SNOF leaders insisted that a Greek by nationality be appointed to lead the village organization.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ According to the recollections of Micho Karandzhovski, Lambro Cholakov and Vasko Makrievski...

⁸⁸ This was according to the recollections of Miltiadi Kovachevski, from the village Smrdesh who was an active participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG. Also according to the recollections of Vasko Makrievski, Lambro Cholakov and Micho Karandzhovski...

⁸⁹ Ibid.

It is worth mentioning at this point that the SNOF Macedonian village organizations in Kostur Region nearly replaced all EAM organizations. That was one of the main reasons why the CPG District leadership restricted SNOF's growth. Also, the CPG leadership never missed an opportunity to belittle the SNOF Macedonian leaders, intimidating them (especially the most active members) and so on.⁹⁰

A resistance activist meeting was held in the village Smrdesh at the end of November 1943, amidst these political tensions. Included among the resistance activists who attended were Atanas Koroveshov, Lambro Cholakov, Pando Shiperkov, Vasil Makrievski (partisans from the "Lazo Trpovski" Detachment), Lambro Mitinov, Giorgi Papaianov, Socrati Paparonov, Vanketo Shamandurov and Micho Karandzhovski (CPG Regional Committee members). The meeting's discussion focused mainly on the bad attitude the CPG senior leadership had taken towards the Macedonian CPG and SNOF activists and condemned the SNOF proposal to appoint a Greek as the head of the SNOF village organization in Smrdesh. Antonis Andonopoulos-Periklis, CPG District Committee secretary for Kostur District, was immediately alerted about the meeting which he deemed to be illegal even though he had been officially informed about it. In connection with that, the "Lazo Trpovski" Detachment fighters located at ELAS 28th Regiment Headquarters, members of the Smrdesh CPG Regional Committee, meeting participants, party members and so on who attended the meeting were reprimanded for participating in so-called illegal activities (not approved by the CPG leadership).⁹¹ What happened here at this time was later used by the CPG District Committee secretary for Kostur District to "prove" that the Macedonians in Kostur Region weren't reliable CPG allies.

In the spring of 1944, the "Lazo Trpovski" Detachment fighters were included in the "Vicho" Battalion, which was part of the 28th ELAS Regiment. Atanas Koroveshov was appointed commander of the first platoon of the second company in this battalion.⁹² He took

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Tanas Vrazhanski and Micho Karandzhovski, Smrdesh. Organizing Committee of the "First Meeting in Smrdesh". Skopje, 1976, p. 13. Also according to the

part in all the battles led by the “Vicho” Battalion on the fields and hills of Vicho. The most important activities that Atanas participated in, however, were the battles to disarm the counter bands, the attacks on German positions on the Bigla and Vicho mountains and the surrender and disarming of the Armenian units armed by the Germans and deployed along the Lerin - Korcha line. Atanas was well praised by his battalion commanders for his courage and determination.⁹³

But despite the sincere effort the ELAS Macedonian partisans demonstrated, by fighting jointly alongside the Greeks against the occupiers and domestic traitors, to prove that they desired the same common goals and equality with the Greeks in this part of Macedonia, the CPG and ELAS leaderships in Kostur Region continued to pursue a policy of suspicion and distrust. Greek disdain for the Macedonian people was felt in the daily life of the SNOF Macedonian fighters and in SNOF organizations. The Greeks particularly disliked the Macedonian partisans in ELAS for harbouring Macedonian patriotism, especially after it was encouraged by the Republic of Macedonia’s Macedonian units and parts of the Macedonian General Staff present in Koreshtata in April 1944. The desire for creating special Macedonian units in the Aegean part of Macedonia were inflamed during contacts with the Macedonian partisans from the Republic of Macedonia. Also, many Macedonian partisans in ELAS frequently inquired about the possibility of moving to the Republic of Macedonia’s partisan units, which later did take place. This happened during the time when the Republic of Macedonia’s partisan units made their way to Prespa and Karaorman. Several young people from the Vicho villages joined them.⁹⁴

recollections of Mincho Fotev, from Rupishta. From November 1944, Mincho was secretary of SKOJ in the First Strike Brigade of the Macedonians from Greece, and from April 1945 he was member of the organizational leadership, i.e. the immediate NOF leadership (Main Board) responsible for NOMS for Aegean Macedonia. After the Macedonian and Greek partisan units were unified, he was appointed member of the EPON Provincial Committee for Aegean Macedonia and Thrace Secretariat. At the Second NOF Congress, held in March 1949, he was appointed member of the NOF Executive Board and President of the NOMS Main Board for Aegean Macedonia.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

At the beginning of May 1944, in protest of the negative attitude of the CPG and ELAS towards the Macedonian national question, Atanas Koroveshov, along with a group of Macedonian partisans from the “Vicho” battalion, left ELAS and joined the Republic of Macedonia’s First Macedonian-Kosovo Strike Brigade stationed on Mount Karaorman.⁹⁵

The group of Macedonian partisans from Kostur Region which left ELAS was initially deployed in the first battalion of the First Macedonian-Kosovo Strike Brigade. Later, a special detachment was created with Atanas Koroveshov appointed as its commander.⁹⁶

In June 1944, another group of Macedonian partisans from Kostur Region joined the First Macedonian Strike Brigade. At the end of June 1944, a special battalion was created from the fighters from Kostur Region who were part of the First Macedonian Strike Brigade. Atanas Koroveshov was appointed commander of this battalion. This was the first large Macedonian partisan battalion exclusively composed of Macedonian fighters from Greek occupied Macedonia.⁹⁷ This battalion operated as part of the First Macedonian Assault Brigade until mid July 1944.

After an agreement was reached, in the second half of July 1944, between the CPG and CPM for the Macedonian battalion to go back to Greek occupied Macedonia, the fully armed battalion returned to

⁹⁵ “Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1944-1945”, TI Macedonian Archives, Skopje, 1971, doc. 108, pp. 122-123. Also according to Vasko Makrievski’s recollections...

⁹⁶ According to the recollections of Evdokia Baliova (Foteva) - Vera, from the village D’mbeni, Kostur Region. Vera was appointed member of the SNOF District Committee for the Kostur Region and served as secretary of the Macedonian women in Kostur Region. From May 1944 she was appointed deputy political commissar of the First Macedonian-Kosovo Strike Brigade. From November of the same year she was appointed Deputy Political Commissioner of the Second Company in the IV Battalion of the First Strike Brigade of the Macedonians from Greece. From July 1945 she was appointed Secretary of the NOF District Board for Sorovich-Kailari District. She was appointed AFZH secretary for Lerin Region for a year, and from November of that year she was appointed AFZH secretary for Aegean Macedonia. From 1949 she was appointed vice-president of the Greek Women’s Union of Greece.

⁹⁷ According to Vasko Makrievski and Evdokia Baliova-Vera’s recollections.

the ranks of ELAS.⁹⁸ After the fighters arrived at Vicho, the Macedonian population gave them an enthusiastic welcome and many young people voluntarily began to join them.

The Macedonian battalion was reorganized on August 2, 1944, in the village Pozdivishta, Kostur Region, and was named “Gotse”. A battalion headquarters was created and leaders and staff were appointed. The leading composition consisted of Atanas Koroveshov appointed Commander, Ilia Dimovski-Gotse⁹⁹ appointed Capetanos¹⁰⁰ and Risto Kolentsev-Kokinos appointed political commissar. However, this composition didn’t last long. A few days later a new composition was created. Dimitar Tupurkovski was appointed Battalion Chief, Ilia Dimovski-Gotse was appointed Commander, Risto Kolentsev-Kokinos was appointed Political Commissar and Atanas Koroveshov remained a member of the Staff.¹⁰¹

Despite the agreement reached between the CPG and CPM to return the Macedonian battalion (later named Gotse) to active duty back in

⁹⁸ This was according to a letter, dated July 30, 1944, from Blagoia Taleski, Secretary of the CPM Second Regional Committee, sent to the CPM Central Committee’s power of attorney in Skopje. Sources for the liberation war and the revolution in Macedonia 1941-1944. T. I, book 5. INI, Skopje, 1975, doc. 26, p. 102.

⁹⁹ Ilia Dimovski-Gotse was born in the village Statitsa, Kostur Region. During the National Liberation War he was among the first to join the partisans and lead the resistance movement. In October 1944, he was appointed leader of the Lerin-Kostur battalion “Gotse”. After the disagreement with the CPG and ELAS, he moved to the Republic of Macedonia where he was appointed commander of the First Strike Brigade of the Macedonians from Greece after it was created. He was also commander of a large DAG unit in the Greek Civil War. He died in Skopje in June 1961.

¹⁰⁰ Capetanos is a Greek word which in the Greek ELAS military structure meant political commissar of a given unit.

¹⁰¹ According to the recollections of Urania Iurukova-Pirovska, from the village Izglibe, Kostur Region. During the National Liberation War Urania served as regional activist of EPON, the youth organization for Popole, Kostur Region, and then served as a fighter in the battalion “Gotse” and the First Strike Brigade of the Macedonians from Greece. She joined NOF-AFZH in August 1945 and worked as a regional and district activist, i.e. member of the AFZH Main Board for Aegean Macedonia. Later she served as a member of the Organizing Committee and in the leadership of KOEM. Also according to the recollections of Evdokia Baliova-Vera, Vasko Makrievski and Mincho Fotev...

Greek occupied Macedonia, the CPG and ELAS leaderships in Kostur and Lerin Regions sought to disband it at all costs. At first the CPG and ELAS leaderships demanded that all fighters who had left and returned, sign a document that:

1. Condemns all Macedonian partisans who left Greek occupied Macedonia and joined the units that belonged to the Republic of Macedonia.
2. Prohibits all Macedonian fighters from wearing scarves with the five-pointed red star around their necks.
3. Prohibits Macedonian fighters from greeting each other with a clenched fist.
4. Prohibits Macedonians from taking leadership positions in the Battalion.
5. Prohibits new fighters from joining the Battalion without CPG and ELAS leadership approval.

CPG officials often met with the most active Macedonian fighters and unit commanders and tried to “convince” them that they were on the wrong track.¹⁰²

The rapid increase in the number of Macedonians joining the Battalion seriously worried the CPG and ELAS Party and military leaderships. As a result, the CPG and ELAS leaders began to appoint people they trusted into the Battalion’s leadership positions. These people were Macedonians who came from the ranks of ELAS. Their job was to infiltrate the Macedonian Battalion and take it over. But the devoted Macedonian fighters expected that and refused to obey them, thus affirming their Macedonian patriotism.¹⁰³

In October 1944, the CPG and ELAS leaderships issued an order to merge the Macedonian Battalion with other ELAS units and transfer them to the Greek interior (outside of Greek occupied Macedonia) to supposedly strengthen the ELAS units on the ground there. But their

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

goal was clear to many Macedonians... The Greeks wanted to disband and destroy the Battalion. As a result the Battalion fighters vigorously opposed the order calling it unjustified. As a sign of protest the Battalion, once again, fled Greek occupied Macedonia and crossed over into the territory of the Republic of Macedonia.¹⁰⁴ After the Battalion entered the Republic of Macedonia it landed in the village Dragosh, Bitola Region, where it was reorganized into a special battalion. Its orders were to illegally return to the field in Vicho and Kostur Region and participate in the liquidation of the German units which, at the time, were withdrawing to Albania. Then it was to visit the Macedonian villages in Kostur Region and make appearances to promote the Macedonian people's rights within the Greek state. At the time Atanas Koroveshov was commander of the battalion. The battalion made several appearances and held rallies in the villages Koreshtata, Zhelevo (in Lerin Region), Breznitsa, Kosinets, Lobanitsa, Vmbel, Smrdesh and so on.¹⁰⁵

However, the moment the Macedonian Battalion entered the territory of Kostur and Lerin Region, the CPG and ELAS leaderships mobilized their units in an attempt to prevent it. The first time the ELAS units encountered the Battalion was on Bela Voda, above the village Zhelevo. The leaders of both armies met there and came to an agreement without incident. After their march ended and before the Battalion left Koreshtata, the fighters were given time to rest in the village Smrdesh. On their second day of rest, on November 29, 1944, a large ELAS unit suddenly attacked the Battalion by mortar and machine gun fire.¹⁰⁶ After the clash Atanas took his battalion and crossed over into Albanian territory and, while traveling through the villages Vrbnik, Bitinsko, Treni, Zvezda and Pustets, arrived in free Bitola where he joined the newly formed First Strike Brigade composed of Macedonian fighters from Greek

¹⁰⁴ The Macedonians were well aware that the Greek government in exile didn't want Macedonians as part on the Greek military. As far as the Greek government was concerned, Macedonians didn't exist. And since the CPG and EAM were prepared to participate in the Lebanon Conference to form a Greek coalition government that was to include the CPG and EAM, as a prerequisite all Macedonian organizations including the Macedonian revolutionary press had to be banned. Hristo Andonovski, *Macedonians under Greece in the fight against fascism (1940- 1944)*. INI, Skopje, 1968, Chapter Eight, pp. 190-197.

¹⁰⁵ According to the recollections of Vasko Makrievski and Micho Kardzovski...

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

occupied Macedonia. The newly formed Brigade was composed of the fighters from Lerin, Kostur, Voden, Kailari and other places who were led out of Greek occupied Macedonia by Commander Ilia Dimovski-Gotse and Political Commissar Mihailo Keramitchiev.¹⁰⁷ In his new role Atanas Koroveshov still remained commander of his former battalion. When the First Assault Brigade of the Macedonians from Greece left for Western Macedonia, Atanas successfully led his battalion against the remnant Balisti bands acting on this terrain.

After the First Aegean Strike Brigade was disbanded and NOF for Aegean Macedonia was created, Atanas Koroveshov emerged as one of NOF's founders and immediately afterwards was appointed a member of its Main Board leadership.¹⁰⁸

At the end of July 1945, as a member of NOF's Main Board leadership, Atanas Koroveshov, together with other NOF activists,

¹⁰⁷ Program of the commemoration of events and characters from the Macedonian people's revolutionary past in Skopje. Skopje, 1973, part III / bisti /, p. 10. Manuscript, kept in INI. Also, according to the recollections of Mihailo Keramitchiev, from the village Gabresh, Kostur Region. After Greece capitulated to the occupiers Mihailo was appointed in charge of weapons in Korestata. He was appointed commander of the SNOV reserve unit in Korestata in 1943. In November 1944 he was appointed political commissar of the First Strike Brigade of the Macedonians from Greek occupied Macedonia. He was also a member of the Political Commission of the Macedonians under Greece. A member of the immediate NOF (Main Board) leadership and president of NOF. He served in DAG as lieutenant colonel. He died in Skopje in 1981. Also according to the recollections of Urania Yurukova-Pirovska...

¹⁰⁸ Minutes of the NOF General Leadership Secretariat meeting dated July 19, 1945. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945", Vol. II. Macedonian Archives, Skopje, 1973, doc. 90, pp. 167-172. Also see V. M., Atanas Koroveshov, Characters of our revolutionaries, Nova Makedonija, Skopje, 1971, September 6. Also, according to the recollections of the late Paskal Mitrevski, from the village Chuka, Kostur Region. From December, the day Paskal was appointed, until May 1944 he was secretary of SNOF in Kostur Region, and from December 1944 Paskal Mitrevski was appointed Political Committee Secretary of the Macedonians under Greece. From April 1945 he was appointed secretary of NOF for the Macedonians from Aegean Macedonia. In 1946 he was appointed member of the CPG Macedonian bureau. In April 1949, at the first NOF congress he was appointed NOF secretary of the Macedonians from Aegean Macedonia. Later he was appointed Minister in the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece.

went to Gumenzhe and Enidzhe-Vardar Districts to expand the NOF organization in this territory.

In the first half of August 1945, Atanas Koroveshov, escorted by his courier Traian Aitov, born in the village Barovitsa, Gumenzhe Region, arrived at Mount Paiak in the valley above the village Barovitsa and immediately began to work.¹⁰⁹ Later, Atanas together with Todor Anastasov, Risto Krlev and Bozhin Karanfilov, escorted by a group of about 10 fighters, left and went to the village Kornishor in Enidzhe-Vardar. The others, including Ivan Nichev, Ivan Kovachev-Orfas and Kocho Hadzhigeorgiev, all members the NOF regional composition for Gumenzhe Region, remained in Gumenzhe District.¹¹⁰

Immediately after arriving at the village Kornishor, Atanas Koroveshov and the others came in contact with Dedo (grandpa) Ivan Bogdanov, an old Macedonian activist who found a safe place for them to stay and make contact with others. Two or three days later they went to the village Krushari, near Enidzhe Vardar where they were again met by Dedo Ivan Bogdanov who informed them the safe place near Kornishor was no longer safe and that they needed to move to another safer place as soon as possible. Unfortunately most villagers in both Kornishor and Krushari knew of their arrival and some were hostile towards the Macedonian liberation movement. That's why Dedo Ivan Bogdanov correctly suggested that they leave these places as soon as possible so as not to fall into the hands of the Monarcho-Fascists. Unfortunately they didn't heed his warning and remained in the village Krushari to do their organizational work. After they returned to their safe place near Kornishor, Risto Puchepov took some of them to nearby places to

¹⁰⁹ According to a report Tanas Koroveshov wrote and addressed to the NOF general leadership regarding the NOF military and political situation and activities in Gumenzhe and Enidzhe Vardar Regions. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945", Vol. II, doc. 116, pp. 222-224.

¹¹⁰ This was according to the recollection of Ivan Nichev, from the town Gumenzhe. Ivan was an active participant in the National Liberation War and from 1945 he actively participated in NOF for the Macedonians from Aegean Macedonia.

acquire food.¹¹¹ As they continued on their way they had no idea that the Monarcho-Fascists were looking for them.

Included among those who were present in the safe place near Kornishor at the time were Atanas Koroveshov, Kosta Dzhinov-Babiancheto,¹¹² Todor Anastasov, Risto Krlev, Bozhin Karanfilov and Atanas Liuvchev.¹¹³

On the night of September 2, 1945, the Monarcho-Fascists arrived near the safe place and immediately surrounded it. Those hiding were unaware of the danger they were in. The first on guard was Atanas Koroveshov who for a long time saw nothing. Late at night he was replaced by Atanas Liuvchev who at dawn ran around yelling, “We are surrounded! ...” Those who were sleeping were surprised and immediately ran off towards the village Kornishor. Atanas Liuvchev, the guard, who was also the youngest in the group fled first and ran for the hills. But before he could escape the Monarcho-Fascists shot him dead. Bozhin Karanfilov, who was carrying a machine gun, opened fire on the enemy. During the unequal fire fights two other NOF leaders, besides Atanas Liuvchev, were killed. They were Atanas Koroveshov and Kosta Dzhinov-Babiancheto. Todor Anastasov managed to take shelter under a thick

¹¹¹ According to the recollections of Risto Krlev, from the village Barovitsa, Gumendze Region. Risto Krlev was a participant in the National Liberation War and later was appointed NOF activist in Gumendze District.

¹¹² Kosta Dzhinov-Babiancheto was born in 1916, in the village Babiani, Enidzhe Vardar Region. He joined EAM in July 1943. He joined the CPG the same year. In April 1944 he was appointed member of the CPG Regional Committee in Kalinitsa, Enidzhe Vardar Region, and served as party organizer in the villages Babiani, Mavreinovo, Mandalevo and Drenovo. He was later appointed a member of the NOF District Board for Enidzhe Vardar District. On September 2, 1945, he, along with some others, surrendered near the village Kornishor. September 1945, NOF organizational activities and the situation in Gumendze and Enidzhe Vardar Regions. “Aegean Macedonia in NOF, 1945”, T. II. doc. 145, pp. 273-274.

¹¹³ Atanas Liuvchev was born in 1921, in the village Barovitsa, Gumendzhe Region. In October 1942 he was appointed CPG organizer. In 1943 he served as head of ETA in his native village. In April 1945 he joined the Macedonian National Liberation Movement. In May 1945, he joined the NOF military group on Mount Paiak. On September 2, 1945, he surrendered with some others. He died heroically near the village Kornishor. September 1945, NOF organizational activities and the situation in Gumendze and Enidzhe Vardar Regions. “Aegean Macedonia in NOF, 1945”, T. II. doc. 145, pp. 273-274.

blackberry bush. ¹¹⁴ Risto Krlev and Bozhin Karanfilov also managed to escape.

Shortly afterwards, Risto Krlev, having escaped, arrived at the NOF leadership's main base at Gandach Heights. There he met with Lazo Poplazarov, a NOF official, and told him in detail what had happened to his comrades. ¹¹⁵

A while later Todor Anastasov and Bozhin Karanfilov also arrived at Gandach Height.

The same day (September 3, 1945), the Monarcho-Fascists loaded the dead bodies of the NOF leaders on horses and took them to Enidzhe Vardar to intimidate the people.

This was how Atanas Koroveshov, one of the most faithful sons of the Macedonian people, Kosta Dzhinov-Babiancheto and Atanas Liuvchev, former fighters of the Macedonian liberation movement, died at the time when they were most needed by their people.

¹¹⁴ T. Anastasov, *First NOF Blood... Voice of the Aegeans*, Skopje, 1951, September 4, II, 14, p. 4. Also see Hristo Andonovski, *Farewell Naso and Kosta. Emigrant Calendar*, Skopje, 1969, p. 158-160.

¹¹⁵ "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945", Vol. II, doc. 145, pp. 272-272.

VANGEL SHAMARDANOV - ILINDENSKI (1921-1948)

The Macedonian people continued their national liberation struggle in World War II in the spirit of Ilinden. By naming Macedonian military units after prominent Macedonian Ilinden activists, the Macedonian people symbolized the continuity of the Macedonian struggle. The revolutionary Vangel Shamardanov ¹¹⁶ had the rare honour of bearing the pseudonym “Ilindenski.”

Vangel Shamardanov was born in 1921 in the village Krontselovo, Voden Region, to a poor agricultural family but with a rich revolutionary tradition. He lost his father Vani when he was one year old. Vani was killed in 1922 by an unknown gang of robbers. ¹¹⁷ But thanks to his mother he was able to go to school. He finished primary school in his native village. According to his relatives and friends, as a child Vangel was very bright, smart and hardworking. After school he always helped his family by working around the farm to help them earn a living.

Vangel often went to the city Voden and visited with friends and more enlightened youth who helped him understand the difficult and bitter life the Macedonian people had to endure. He had a great desire to continue his education in the Voden high school but he couldn't afford it. So his longing to further educate himself couldn't be realized.

During the German occupation Vangel Shamardanov, like many other young Macedonian people from Voden Region, joined the CPG and EAM effort. However, seeing how the Greek authorities discriminated against the Macedonian people and due to the CPG and EAM leadership's negative attitude towards the Macedonian national question, he showed no special interest in becoming actively involved. ¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ This article, with some minor changes and additions by Tasko Mamurovski, was published in the INI Bulletin, Skopje, 1979, XXIII, No. 1, pp. 263-269.

¹¹⁷ Commemoration program of events and characters from the Macedonian people's revolutionary past in Skopje, Skopje, 1973, part III, (bisti), pp. 39-40. Manuscript kept at INI.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

The presence of Vangel's Macedonian national consciousness and his love of his people came to full expression in the summer of 1944 when the Kaimakchalan Macedonian partisan battalion was created. Even though he wasn't a direct participant in its ranks, Vangel Shamardanov showed great joy and admiration.

After its formation in the beginning of 1945, Vangel Shamardanov joined TOMO, the Macedonian liberation organization, and as a member of the TOMO District Board for Voden he became more active in the struggle against the Greek Monarcho-Fascists.

After TOMO took root on Mount Kaimakchalan it began to assemble its own partisan detachment from the ranks of Macedonian activists and fighters serving in EAM and ELAS, who were persecuted by the Greek police and gendarmerie after the Varkiza Agreement was signed.¹¹⁹

In order to organize and synchronize the Macedonian national liberation movement in the Aegean part of Macedonia to fight against the Greek reactionary terror, on April 23, 1945 NOF, the national liberation organization for Aegean Macedonia, was created. On June 20, 1945, a TOMO Regional Conference was held a few kilometres outside of Voden, between the villages Krontselovo and Vлкоianevo, to analyze the work of the already established local and rural TOMO organizations. After conducting the analysis, a decision was made to rename the organization from TOMO to NOF for Voden District. Vangel Shamardanov was appointed a member of the newly created NOF District Board for Voden Region.

Vangel Shamardanov, already known by his pseudonym "Ilindenski", accepted his new role with even greater love and sacrifice and began to work. From the end of October 1945 onwards he was given responsibility to look after NOF's finances for the District Board for Voden Region.¹²⁰ From November, 1945, he was responsible for the press and, together with Mirka Ginova, was in charge of forming local NOF organizations in Meglen District.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Vangel Aianovski-Oche, *Aegean Storms*. INI, Skopje, 1975, p. 163.

¹²⁰ "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945", Vol. II, doc. 179, p. 341.

¹²¹ *Ibid*: doc 197, p. 372.

By a decision made by the NOF District Administration for Voden Region, in the second half of February 1946, he and Petre Popov from the village Dolno Rodivo were sent to Ostrovo District to organize NOF, NOMS and AFZH local organizations.¹²² And from April 1946 onwards he was given the responsibility to carry out ideological work for the NOF District Board for Voden Region.¹²³

Paskal Mitrevski, until then NOF Main Board secretary, together with the other members of the NOF leadership¹²⁴ arrived at the NOF District Board for Voden Region at the end of 1946¹²⁵ Their goal was to implement the CPG-NOF Agreement in Voden Region as was previously done in Kostur and Lerin Regions. In addition to the NOF representatives, CPG representatives also attended the meeting. Paskal Mitrevski went over the agreement principles to convince the NOF leaders that such an agreement was necessary, that NOF would remain a separate organization but would be run by the CPG.¹²⁶

In addition to confirming the CPG-NOF Agreement during this meeting, changes were also made to NOF, especially to the NOF District Board for Voden Region. For one, Vangel Shamardanov-Ilindenski was appointed political secretary and remained in that position until May 1947.¹²⁷

After the CPG-NOF Agreement was signed some unresolved organizational and political issues between the CPG and NOF began to get in the way, and given how the Monarcho-Fascists were terrorizing the democratic movement, whose terror had intensified, it was necessary to clear them up and synchronize the struggle

¹²² “Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1946”, Vol. III, doc. 44, p. 110.

¹²³ Ibid. doc. 116, p. 268.

¹²⁴ Vangel Aianovski-Oche, *Aegean Storms ...*, p. 232.

¹²⁵ The exact date is unknown but according to Vangel Aianovski-Oche, they arrived in Voden Region in November 1946 (Vangel Aianovski-Oche, “Aegean storms ...”, p. 232), and according to statements made by the late Mihailo Keramitchiev, who after NOF’s agreement with the CPG, was appointed NOF Main Board secretary for Aegean Macedonia, they arrived at the end of December 1946.

¹²⁶ Vangel Aianovski-Oche, *Aegean Storms ...*, p. 232.

¹²⁷ Ibid: p. 243.

against their common enemy. For that purpose, on May 20, 1947, the NOF Main Board in the area “Mishovi Kolibi” in Kaimakchalan, convened the so-called NOF for Aegean Macedonia “Earth Conference”¹²⁸ during which Mihailo Keramitchiev, Secretary of the NOF Main Board for Aegean Macedonia, submitted a report explaining the internal and external situation in the country, the strengths and weaknesses of the organization and the remaining tasks NOF had to undertake.¹²⁹ The meeting also served to unite the NOF Gumendze and Enidzhe Vardar Region organizations with the NOF Voden Region organization. All these organizations were placed under the management of the NOF District Board for Voden Region. Also at this meeting Lazo Poplazarov from the village Dobrolishta, Voden Region, was elected political secretary in the new NOF District Board for Voden Region. Also, by decision of the NOF Main Board and in accordance with the CPG Provincial Committee, Vangel Shamardanov-Ilindenski, the current NOF secretary for Voden Region, was appointed political commissar of a larger DAG unit in Kaimakchalan (known as the 576th DAG Battalion.) composed of about 800 fighters, mostly Macedonians.¹³⁰

From the first days of the struggle, Vangel Shamardanov-Ilindenski had been harassed by the Greek chauvinistic CPG and DAG leaderships. He despised their discriminatory policies against the NOF political leaders and the Macedonian fighters in this field. He strongly opposed these wrongs and strongly defended the goals and principles of the Macedonian national liberation movement. And for that he was despised by the senior DAG leadership.

In one of his reports, dated July 30, 1947, sent to NOF’s General Staff, Vangel criticized the “dire situation” in DAG and recommended urgent action be taken to eliminate and suppress the “wrong” CPG and DAG leadership policies, noting that otherwise this harmful situation would lead to catastrophic consequences for

¹²⁸ AM, Collection: Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945-1949, AE: 142. Also see Vangel Aianovski-Oche, Aegean storms..., pp. 236-242.

¹²⁹ Ibid: AM, Collection: Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945-1949, AE: 142.

¹³⁰ Program for the commemoration of events and characters from the Macedonian people’s revolutionary past..., p. 40.

the movement. Among other things, this is what he wrote in the report:

“... Despite the massive Slavo-Macedonian participation in the struggle in which 70 to 75 percent are Macedonians, despite the military, material and economic assistance provided for DAG, despite DAG’s great development in our district, which is due to the effort of Slavo-Macedonians and their NOF organization, there is a serious disease in the Greek comrades. They have no trust and respect for the Slavo-Macedonians, even though the Macedonians are more combative, more sincere, more revolutionary, more politically and ideologically constructed and fight without any hesitation compared to the Greek element, which does the opposite. Greeks deserting in larger numbers can serve as an example of this, while there are no such occurrences on the part of the Macedonians, and if there are any they are insignificant and are probably due to the bad attitude of their Greek leaders, which you are all familiar with...”

“...During the two-year struggle against the Monarcho-Fascists, our people, led by NOF, ideologically and politically built and raised our national consciousness and see the situation through a different prism. Our biggest request today is to build the DAG leadership and see more Slavo-Macedonians leading DAG. This, however, isn’t done and hasn’t been done as it should have been done a long time ago. One can experience this if they serve in DAG’s ranks and if they listen to comments made by the Macedonian partisans. There is a lot of chauvinism in the Greek element and that is a result of the leadership not taking enough action to eradicate it. There is no chauvinism in the Macedonian element, it has disappeared and if it exists it is insignificant. Specifically, I want to talk about my situation. My fellow Greek officers and colleagues don’t know many of the things that I do. They are only interested in what our military commander Andrea (Andreas Andonakis-Orestis) wants. I have to do a lot of things secretly because most of the battalion’s correspondence often ends up in the Commander’s hands, without me getting acquainted with its contents.”

“...I am asking the leadership to pay special attention because the main burden and responsibility depends on it, because this kind of

relationship can cause great damage to the general struggle. Instead of taking steps forward in this critical situation, we are taking steps backwards. This selfish, unfriendly, unpopular behaviour and poor assessment of the situation is harming us and will break our peoples' brotherhood and unity which today is a factor for our final victory and should be given priority. In any case, this kind of relationship cannot be justified..."¹³¹

In the fall of 1947, Vangel Shamardanov received an order from DAG General Headquarters to leave Kaimakchalan and take his battalion south to Southwest Aegean Macedonia and Epirus. At the same time DAG was preparing to lead a frontal attack against the Monarcho-Fascists around Mount Gramos and was concentrating its units there.

On December 25, 1947, the DAG units belonging to the 670th Battalion were ordered to attack and capture the town Konitsa, in Epirus.¹³² Konitsa's capture was considered an act of great importance because Konitsa prevented DAG's free movements and unification with the DAG forces located in the so-called Zagoria area with the DAG forces on Mounts Gramos and Vicho.¹³³

Vangel Shamardanov's battalion took part in the bitter battles to capture Konitsa.¹³⁴ After the fighting was over it was reported that Vangel Shamardanov died in a mysterious manner.¹³⁵ But to date no document has been found claiming where and when Vangel had died and that indeed he wasn't murdered.¹³⁶ Statements made by

¹³¹ See report by Vangel Shamardanov-Ilindenski, political commissar of the 576th DAG Paiak-Kaimakchalan Battalion Headquarters. AM, Collection: Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945-1949, AE: 170. Also see Vangel Aianovski-Oche, Aegean storms..., pp. 245-249.

¹³² Ilo Dimovski-Gotse, Action taken to capture Konitsa. Voice of the Aegeans, Skopje, 1950, December 1, I, No. 4.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Program to commemorate events and characters from the Macedonian people's revolutionary past..., p. 40; Also see Vangel Shamardanov-Ilindenski. Voice of the Aegeans, Skopje, 1952, November 13, III, no. 28.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ The battles in which DAG units participated to capture the city Konitsa lasted from December 25, 1947 to January 10, 1948. (See Ilo Dimovski-Gotse, Action taken to capture Konitsa...) The First NOF Congress for Aegean Macedonia, however, was held on January 13, 1948 during which Vangel Shamardanov was

some people who knew him claimed that he died as a DAG officer in the battles for Gramos in 1948.¹³⁷ But even that isn't certain. There is suspicion that Vangel Shamardanov Ilindenski was murdered viciously. This stems from a conversation he had with Pavle Rakovski a few months before he died. Pavle Rakovski at the time was a member of the top NOF leadership for Aegean Macedonia and was responsible for running the agitation and propaganda department for the NOF Main Board. This is what Rakovski wrote in his memoirs: "In a confidential conversation I had with Vangel Shamardanov, then Commissar of the DAG battalion and former president of the NOF regional board for Voden Region, he said to me that he was afraid of his Greek 'comrades' and was worried that one day they would make him 'disappear!' This took place under the following circumstances: I was passing through Kaimakchalan sometime in April-May 1947,¹³⁸ when I met a group of Macedonian fighters. They were reading a leaflet. It was a Greek leaflet written in Greek – it was Vangel Shamardanov's leaflet. Written on it were the names of the DAG General Staff personnel who were there. The content of the leaflet was exclusively addressing the Greek people. Not a word about the Macedonian people, about the Macedonian fighters, or about those Macedonians who I found reading the leaflet. And even though the majority of the fighters in some DAG units were 80-85% Macedonians, they weren't mentioned in the leaflet. And not only that! I learned from the fighters that they themselves were registered not as Macedonians but as Greeks in the Headquarters' registry. In other words no one there was Macedonian. Namely, members of DAG General Staff didn't recognize the existence of the Macedonian people. All Macedonians were represented as Greeks... I was so surprised that Vangel Shamardanov, Commissar of the battalion to which this group of fighters belonged, and former president of the NOF District

still alive. He was nominated and his name was placed on the candidate list for electing a new NOF central leadership. (See Vangel Aianovski-Oche, *Aegean Storms...*, p. 256). Consequently Shamardanov could not have died in the battles fought to capture Konitsa.

¹³⁷ Aianovski, Vangel-Oche, *Memoirs and Critical Review of the Development of the Workers', Communist and National Movement of the Macedonians in Voden and the Voden Region, Part II*, p. 370. Manuscript kept in INI.

¹³⁸ Shamardanov's meeting with Pavle Rakovski, which we are talking about, could not have taken place before May 20, 1947, because until then Shamardanov was not a political commissar of the battalion.

Board for Voden, would agree to this. The next time I met him I confronted him and asked him how he could allow all this? He was silent for a long time and wouldn't answer. His face turned pale and had an expression of deep pain. In the end he answered, but briefly. He said: 'I am afraid... They one day will make me disappear...' Not long after that Vangel Shamardanov was shot in the back. In the meantime Macedonian fighters were sent to the slaughterhouse en masse in the Greek South..."¹³⁹

It is interesting, and certainly not accidental that Vangel Shamardanov's name doesn't appear in the Greek book "Iroes ke martires" (Heroes and Martyrs), published by the CPG leadership in exile in 1954, even though ordinary fighters are mentioned. His name isn't even mentioned in the Macedonian book "For Holy National Freedom".¹⁴⁰

In the end, let us conclude that Vangel Shamardanov-Ilindenski's death, as well as the deaths of many other prominent fighters from the Aegean part of Macedonia, didn't stop the Macedonian people's revolutionary wave in the struggle for their freedom and national and social rights. On the contrary, these aspirations and tendencies helped the Macedonian people move upward to acquire a more massive character during the Greek Civil War. Ilindenski sacrificed his life for those rights and ideals.

¹³⁹ Quote by Pavle Rakovski: "In the deep night dawn is born". /Memories, thoughts, knowledge/, Skopje, 1973, pp. 140-141. Kept in INI.

¹⁴⁰ Bright figures of the fallen folk fighters. Political and literary edition, published in 1968 in the Macedonian language, published by the same leadership. This book contains biographies of the Macedonian activists and fighters from Aegean Macedonia.

LAZO ANGELOVSKI (1925-1948)

“...Dear uncle, when the time comes and Lerin is free, you come too, bring my mother and two sisters, look for my grave and shed bloody tears on it to soak my bones and wake me up...” Lazo Angelovski.

Revolutionaries like Lazo Angelovski were rare.¹⁴¹ They laid down their young lives on the altar of Macedonian freedom for the sake of their people. Lazo Angelovski served in DAG's free and semi-free territory as a teacher. As a teacher he could have left with his students during the child evacuation program and crossed the border into the socialist republics away from the conflict. But he refused. He said: “... I don't want to leave my home and cross the border to live free. If I die, let me at least die in my own hometown..., together with my people.”¹⁴²

Lazo Angelovski was born on August 10, 1925 in the village Graždano in Prespa, Lerin Region, to a poor family with a rich revolutionary tradition.^{143 144}

Immediately after the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) Filip, Lazo's father, left his home and went to America to seek migrant work. He returned to his native village in 1920 and became engaged in agricultural work. In 1927, Filip went to America again to seek migrant work and ten years later he again returned to his native village. After some time he again left for America, for the third time, but never returned.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ For more information about Lazo Angelovski's revolutionary and educational activities see Hristo Ristovski, “Lazo Angelovski's new dreams - educational and revolutionary activities”. History, Skopje, 1983, XIX, no. 2, p. 2, p. 235.

¹⁴² From the private archives of Veza Angelovska, Lazo's sister.

¹⁴³ Angele, Lazo Angelovski's grandfather, was a participant in the Ilinden Uprising. He was imprisoned in Solun by the Ottoman authorities. He died in the infamous Edi-Kule prison.

¹⁴⁴ Petre Angelov, Lazo's uncle, was a prominent revolutionary leader in the Prespa-Resen area, but because he opposed the Bulgarian court he was liquidated in 1933 by the mercenaries in the town Haskovo in Bulgaria.

¹⁴⁵ From Veza Angelovska's private archives...

In the years between 1931 and 1937, Lazo Angelovski attended Greek primary school in his native village. His teachers often praised him for his good learning abilities.

In the fall of 1937, after finishing his primary education, Lazo enrolled in the Lerin high school. Here, even during his first semester, the school authorities praised him for his exemplary learning abilities.

At the end of October 1940, during fascist Italy's invasion of Greece, Lazo, like the other students in the high school, was forced to stop his education. But even though they didn't finish the grade, the school authorities gave the final year students a graduation certificate.

During the first two years of the German-Italian occupation, Lazo assisted his uncle Atanas with his agricultural work.

In the second half of 1942, a group of resistance movement progressives began to move through the Prespa District villages to acquaint the people with the military and political situation in the country and to organize them to resist the occupier. When this group arrived in Graždano, it went directly to the village priest's house where the first meeting took place with the more prominent villagers of Graždano. They discussed the political situation in the district and the tasks the villagers needed to do to aid the struggle against the fascist occupiers. Although still young, Lazo Angelovski was placed in charge of performing background tasks. Later he served as the main link between the villagers and the ELAS partisan units as well with the detachments belonging to the Republic of Macedonia which often stayed in the Prespa District. Lazo was engaged in this kind of work until the end of 1944 when the German-Italian and Bulgarian occupiers were driven out of Greece.¹⁴⁶

In November 1944, an announcement was made in the Prespa Region calling on young people who had graduated from high school and who wanted to serve as teachers, teaching in the Macedonian language, to immediately go to Kostur and apply to

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

take the course. Lazo was thrilled with the news. He, along with many young people from various Macedonian villages, immediately went to Kostur where the announced course was expected to open but, to their surprise, the next day they found out from the school principal that they wouldn't be learning Macedonian.¹⁴⁷ After persistent questions directed at the principal, who was a known hardened anti-Macedonian, they got their answer. He literally said to them: "...Go home, we won't be teaching Macedonian here... Unless of course you want to learn Greek and become a Greek teacher... those who want to do that may stay... We don't need other schools... Those who are Bulgarophones and want to leave the school go to the office and take back your applications..."¹⁴⁸

With broken hearts, Lazo Angelovski and the others went back to the principal's office to take back their documents but the principal insisted that they stay and take the course. He promised them that after completing the teaching course they would be able to work as Greek language teachers, not in the villages, but in the cities. Disappointed, Lazo, returned to his native village.

A few days later, Lazo received a letter from his uncle, Atanas, who at the time was in Bitola and had joined the First Assault Brigade of the Macedonians under Greece. In the letter, Atanas asked Lazo to come to Bitola as soon as possible and enroll in a seminar for Macedonian teachers. Pleasantly surprised, three days later Lazo arrived in Bitola and immediately applied to the Bitola High School where the course for Macedonian teachers was held.¹⁴⁹

After successfully passing the exams, on January 15, 1945, Lazo Angelovski was immediately appointed the first Macedonian teacher in the village Braichino, Resen Region, where he proved to be a great teacher. And thus Lazo's greatest wish was fulfilled. He worked tirelessly and with great zeal to enlighten the Macedonian students in his mother tongue.

¹⁴⁷ Risto Kiriazovski, *The Life Path of Teacher Lazo Angelovski and His Tragic Death*. Prosvetno delo, Skopje, 1972, No. 10, pp. 639-640.

¹⁴⁸ Hristo Ristovski, *New information about Lazo Angelovski's educational and revolutionary activities...*, p. 224.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*: p. 225.

During the summer holidays in 1945, Lazo attended a second teacher's course in Bitola, after which he was appointed principal of the primary school in the village Smilevo, Bitola Region.¹⁵⁰ Here he had the opportunity to meet prominent Macedonian revolutionaries from the Ilinden Uprising. In addition to his day to day duties, Lazo often participated in organizing attacks against the Ballisti gangs that operated in this region.

In 1946, during the summer holidays, Lazo Angelovski took an exam in Marxism-Leninism and the political economy in Skopje. Thanks to his educational and political know how, the People's Republic of Macedonia's Ministry of Education, by decree number 273/1946, appointed Lazo principal of the "Merdzan" children's boarding school in Tetovo at the end of 1946. He was later appointed principal at a children's boarding school in Skopje.¹⁵¹ In addition to his daily work as a principal in the Skopje children's boarding school, Lazo taught Marxism and political economy at weekly courses organized by the Party.

Lazo Angelovski was a tireless teacher and social worker. Thanks to his political know how, he was elected CPM secretary in the Second District in Skopje and then was appointed head of the pioneer detachment in Skopje. He performed all his tasks conscientiously and on time. And that's why he was so loved and respected by everyone. It is worth mentioning here that, due to his educational and social qualities, Lazo was later appointed a member of the National Education board in the People's Republic of Macedonia's Ministry of Education.¹⁵²

At the end of 1946, the People's Republic of Macedonia's Ministry of Education made a decision to prepare and send teachers to all parts of Macedonia to open schools in Macedonian language instruction. Based on this decision, Lazo requested to be sent to the territory of Aegean Macedonia that had been freed by DAG. After being supplied with the necessary educational materials, Lazo, on March 8, 1947, loaded his supplies onto a truck and, traveling

¹⁵⁰ Risto Kiriazovski, *The Life Path of the Teacher Lazo Angelovski and His Tragic Death...*, p. 641.

¹⁵¹ From Veza Angelovska's private archives...

¹⁵² Ibid.

through Bitola and Liuboino, arrived in the village German in Prespa Region. As a member of the NOF Main Board Education Commission, he was later tasked with training Macedonian language teachers in the free territory. To fulfill this aim a school named “Gotse Delchev” was opened in German on November 1, 1947. Lazo taught courses in the Macedonian language.¹⁵³ Later in January 1948, similar courses were offered in the village Zhelevo, Lerin Region where Lazo was appointed principal.¹⁵⁴ In parallel with these tasks, Lazo also served as education inspector in the free territory of Aegean Macedonia.¹⁵⁵

Lazo Angelovski taught various courses in the Macedonian language in this part of Macedonia until the end of spring in 1948, that is until the Greek Monarcho-Fascists, aided by Anglo-American interventionists, organized daily military actions to completely exterminate the progressive Macedonian and Greek population. During these difficult times, the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece, in March 1948, decided that all children in the free and semi-free territory should be evacuated from the country to escape the horrors of war.

During this time Lazo Angelovski was tasked with preparing a list of all the children who had to be evacuated and sent in groups to the Greek-Yugoslav border. Then, as a guide for several days in a row, Lazo transferred children who arrived from the interior villages in the free and semi-free territory to the village Liuboino.

The last group of young children to leave came from the villages Graždano, Orovo, Trno, Drobitishta and Nivitsi, Prespa Region. Lazo’s young sister Veza left with this group. Lazo gave her a letter to take to his uncle, Atanas. In the letter he wrote: “Dear Uncle! This is the last group of children I’m sending, with whom I’m sending my young sister Veza. I’m sending them to you to welcome them. I

¹⁵³ On December 20, 1947, a certificate was issued to Arhir Kostov Tsanzovski showing that he’d completed the course successfully. “Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1947”, T. IV. Macedonian archives, Skopje, 1980, doc. 109, p. 370. Also see doc. 110, p. 371.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid: doc. 110, p. 371, footnote 3.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

will stay here with our people to continue the struggle. Many here insisted that I leave with the children but I didn't want to..."¹⁵⁶

From this moment on Lazo began to tour the various DAG combat positions. As a secretary of the District Board of the People's Government in Lerin Region, he toured all the villages in the free and semi-free territory and called on the people to fight against the reactionaries.

In the first days of August 1948, while returning from the village Sveta Petka where he was doing organizational work, Lazo arrived in the village Buf in Lerin Region. Here he convened a meeting with some people and, after that, held an extensive conference with the Buf villagers and others from the neighbouring villages. Among other things, at the conference Lazo advised the people to continue to struggle for their freedom. At the same time people from the village noticed a Greek Monarcho-Fascist patrol moving into the mountain above the village. But even though Lazo knew he was in danger, he decided to spend the night with a friend in a village barn in Buf.

The next day Lazo waited for a long time for his contacts to arrive but they didn't. One of the villagers told him that the road was clear and they could leave. Unaware of the danger, Lazo wanted to leave but his friend tried to persuade him not to. Lazo, however, adamantly insisted that they go and they left. Lazo walked ahead and was followed by his friend at a distance of about 50 metres. Unfortunately they were suddenly ambushed. A single burst from a machine gun was fired. The Monarcho-Fascists wounded Lazo in the right leg and he was unable to run.¹⁵⁷ His friend managed to run away and save himself. Lazo was captured and taken to Buf to be identified but the villagers didn't betray him. He was then transferred to a prison in the city Lerin. He wasn't so lucky there. Sotirakis, the Macedonian people's traitor betrayed him. Lazo was brutally tortured but didn't admit to anything regarding the revolutionary activities in which he was involved.

¹⁵⁶ Hristo Ristovski, New information about Lazo Angelovski's educational and revolutionary activities..., p. 230.

¹⁵⁷ From Veza Angelovska's private archives...

After five long days of being tortured Lazo, half dead, was thrown into a cell. Presumed dead, three prisoners were sent to pick him up and bury him. But to the surprise of the prison warden he was still alive. The warden asked him if he wanted to be spared. But in order to be spared he would have to condemn the struggle by preparing a speech for the prisoners. In his speech, Lazo would have to condemn the People's Liberation Movement. Instead of giving such a speech, Lazo secretly wrote a letter, his last one, to his beloved uncle, Atanas. In it he said:

“Dear Uncle Atanas,

I have shared both good and bad times with you. I don't know if you know what happened to me recently. I was captured by the Greek Monarcho-Fascists. Now I am in prison in the dark jail in Lerin. I have been in isolation with no contact except for the tyrannical guard who stands at my cell door and watches over me. He doesn't talk to me. I have been shot in the mouth and I am wounded. My left arm hurts. I was beaten with the butt of a rifle.

Uncle, I know that this will make you angry and that you will worry about me... I know you will be most angry with me for not listening to you but it's too late now. This is my fate. Please know that your guidance matters a lot to me. There is no one closer to me than you. I remember when we lived together, sometimes we would sit and talk all night. Please don't worry about me.

I know I'm placing a big burden on your shoulders to ask you this... I'm unloading everything on you. But please... If you receive this letter let my relatives, my father, mother and the others know about me. I have written to you about things before and I trust you will speak for me. Please give my warm greetings to all my friends, especially to my mother and sisters. This is my last chance to say goodbye. Tell everyone not to worry about me...

Uncle, if you get this letter, know that it will be my last. I will leave my mother, father and two sisters in your care. Please watch over them like you always have. I will miss you and the long talks we had for which I am grateful, especially for the advice you gave me over the years.

I am a soldier and I always expected I would die... I didn't expect to be tormented, to be severely punished, beaten half to death and forbidden to write to you. Some tell me they will give me a choice: die a miserable death or live by betraying the movement, by giving a negative speech against DAG. I will choose death, and no I will not speak ill of the movement at any cost.

A lot of our (Macedonian) comrades are paraded in front of my cell on their way to be killed. They all say goodbye as they walk away. Some are hung and others are shot... I often hear cell doors open and screams and screams and screams... I am waiting for my turn.

The prisoners shout and cry yelling goodbye to their dear mother Macedonia.

Dear Uncle, when the time comes and Lerin is free, you come too, bring my mother and two sisters, look for my grave and shed bloody tears on it to soak my bones and wake me up...

I have been writing this letter day and night. The tyrannical Greek guards and the wretched Greek policemen are always inside here doing constant inspections, so I don't have much time to write. This is how my life is inside here... But this was what I chose...

Today I was chosen to speak. I am expected to criticize Marcos's organization and the partisans.¹⁵⁸ Yes, death awaits me. Everyone who comes here dies one way or another. That is why I will not speak.

I was asked to give a speech to the prisoners tomorrow and as I said my choices were speech or death. Some encouraged me to be brave. Others encouraged me to speak. But against whom am I going to speak?

I have no one closer than you, who actually knew me for a long time. That's why I am writing this letter to you before I meet my

¹⁵⁸ During the Greek Civil War, Markos Vafiadis for some time was DAG's military commander and President of the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece.

end. As I mentioned, I will choose death over betrayal. So know that death awaits me soon.

No! Death does not scare me.

This is all I am going to write. Let the whole world know what happened to me! Let my mother, father and my two sisters also know...

Let me say good bye to you and to my loved ones for the last time.

Greetings to everyone.

Your nephew Lazo.

Death to the f...

Lerin, August 18, 1948.”¹⁵⁹

The next day Lazo was tied to a military jeep and dragged through the streets of Lerin until he died.¹⁶⁰

And this is how Lazo Angelovski, a noble and prominent Macedonian educator, fighter and revolutionary whose merits will serve as an example for future Macedonian generations, died.

¹⁵⁹ Quote by Hristo Ristovski, New information about Lazo Angelovski's educational and revolutionary activiti..., pp. 232-233.

¹⁶⁰ Iordan Konev, Message before Death. Nova Makedonija, Skopje, 1981, January 10, p. 4.

KRSTO MANGOV (1912-1949)

A huge number of fighters in the Macedonian national liberation struggle came from the revolutionary village D'mbeni, Kostur Region. Included among them were Nolio Brichenko, Lazo Poptraikov, Lazo Moskov and Lazo Trpovski. Due to the mass participation of the people from D'mbeni in the resistance movement during the Greek Civil War, the Greek Monarcho-Fascists completely destroyed the village in 1948.¹⁶¹ In the period between 1945 and 1949, the village D'mbeni lost many of its faithful sons and daughters. One of the most prominent of them was Krsto Mangov. Krsto was born in 1912 to a poor farming family. He followed the revolutionary traditions of his ancestors with great love since he was a youngster, and at the first chance he became involved in the Macedonian people's struggle for freedom and national and social liberation.

After Greece was occupied by the German and Italian fascist aggressors, Krsto Mangov was among the first in the village to join the struggle against them. He joined the CPG District Committee for Kostur District in 1943, in hopes of liberating the Macedonian people. At the same time he joined SNOF and tirelessly agitated the Macedonian people to struggle against the foreign aggressors and domestic traitors.¹⁶²

Krsto Mangov's revolutionary involvement was particularly noticeable in the struggle against the Bulgarian fascist propaganda which, in close cooperation with the German and Italian occupiers and the Greek quisling government, armed the Bulgarian propaganda elements in Kostur Region to fight against the Macedonian People's Liberation Movement.¹⁶³

When the First Strike Brigade, consisting of Macedonians from Greek occupied Macedonia, was created in November 1944, Krsto

¹⁶¹ Atanas Bliznakov, D'mbeni and the Revolutionary Past of Kostur Region. Misla, Skopje, 1982, pp. 196-198.

¹⁶² Evdokia Foteva-Vera, Krsto Mangov. Nova Makedonija, Skopje, 1971, August, XXVII, 8819, p. 5.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

Mangov was appointed political commissar of a battalion in the Brigade ¹⁶⁴ in which he served until the Second World War ended.

After the Varkiza Agreement was signed, Krsto Mangov voluntarily returned to his home and, as an experienced leader, later joined NOF. He was one of the first leaders to persuade the Macedonian people to join the ranks of NOF en masse in Kostur Region. ¹⁶⁵ After implementing NOF's General Leadership program and directives, he worked tirelessly to strengthen and expand the Macedonian national liberation movement in the area under his control. He often organized protests against the horrific terror the Greek armed gangs unleashed against the Macedonian population and, together with the progressive Greeks, fought against the bloody terror carried out by the Greek reactionary government.

On May 20, 1947, Krsto Mangov was appointed First Secretary in the Kostur Region NOF District Board. He was appointed during the NOF Earth Conference, held in the locality "Mishovi Kolibi" in Kaimakchalan. ¹⁶⁶ From the first days of his appointment he bravely fought against the Greek Monarcho-Fascist government army and was twice wounded.

Krsto Mangov made the following statement regarding the military and political situation in Kostur District in a report dated November 1947, which he then submitted to the NOF Main Board:

"...The Monarcho-Fascists have resumed their old tactics and again began to use barbaric means to control people, thinking that in this way they could achieve their goals. They are using blockades to stop people from taking things out of the city..." ¹⁶⁷

The following was reported at the last District Board meeting:

¹⁶⁴ According to Vasko Makrievski, from the village Smrdesh, Kostur Region, and according to Mincho Fotev from the town Rupishta.

¹⁶⁵ Atanas Bliznakov, D'mbeni and the Revolutionary Past in Kostur Region ..., p. 182.

¹⁶⁶ Vangel Aianovski-Oche, Aegean Storms..., p. 242.

¹⁶⁷ In other words, people were stopped from supplying the partisans with food and other necessities.

1 / killed 5;
2 / beaten 6;
3 / disgraced women 7;
4 / arrested 37;
5 / robbed sheep 1,450;
6 / looted houses 47;
7 / burned houses 5;
8 / burned barns 50 as well as many other crimes for which we have no data...

The Monarcho-Fascists used various means, including propaganda, to infiltrate and break up the ranks of our democratic movement. They spread lies through various slogans claiming that they had broken up the partisans, that the partisans had no one to rely on, that they were fighting for foreign interests, for Tito and Dimitrov's interests, that they were taking girls by force to pass their time, that NOF was a counter-revolutionary organization and that its leaders were VMRO people and that whoever was caught organizing in NOF would be tried and sentenced to death. All of the above were directed against the Macedonian people because they saw them as a danger for Greece, especially since most of the active element in both the armed and unarmed struggle came from our Macedonians, so the enemy harnessed all its forces to destroy them.

But despite all the terrible and dishonest means they used, the Monarcho-Fascists still failed to sway the Macedonian people to go their way. Quite the opposite, they managed to push more Macedonian people to join the democratic movement and give their all to the struggle.

The Macedonian people's trust in the movement has been derived from the following:

1 / the Macedonian people have become emotionally connected to the struggle;
2 / they have become more involved in the political and ideological sector and are able to understand the policies of the democratic movement and those of the imperialists;
3 / they see DAG's tactics succeeding and those of the Monarcho-Fascists' failing...

Krsto Mangov believed that the Macedonian people who were organized in NOF felt confident and trusted NOF. They believed that the NOF-led forces would be able to intensify their struggle and destroy the enemy...

He wrote: "...The Slavo-Macedonians organized in NOF and led by NOF are beginning to feel like Macedonians. Their national consciousness is at a very high level, so that if someone says something to the contrary, these Macedonians will take his eyes out. These Macedonians are proud to be Macedonian and to fight for their national rights..."¹⁶⁸

At the First NOF Congress, held on January 13, 1948, in the village Vmbel, Kostur Region, Krsto Mangov was appointed member of the NOF Main Board,¹⁶⁹ At the Second NOF Congress, held on March 25-26, 1949, in the village Nivitsi, also known as the "Africa" locality in Prespa Region, Krsto Mangov was appointed member of the NOF Main Board Executive Committee.¹⁷⁰ Before that Krsto Mangov was appointed President of the Kostur District Regional Board of the People's Government.¹⁷¹

Krsto Mangov dedicated himself to the struggle and worked hard to bolster NOF, the people's government at the regional and local people's governments and was an advocate for opening Macedonian schools, etc. But all this ended on August 11, 1949, a few days before the Greek Civil War ended, when an enemy artillery shell exploded and ended his life. This took place in the immediate vicinity of the village Breznitsa, Kostur Region. He was hit by shrapnel while fighting at the front line during a fierce battle

¹⁶⁸ According to a report written by Krsto Mangov, Secretary of the NOF District Board for Kostur Region, sent to the NOF General Directorate for NOF Activities in October 1947. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1947", Vol. IV, doc. 117, pp. 379-383.

¹⁶⁹ For a list of NOF Main Board members appointed at the First NOF Congress see "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1948", T. V, doc. 16, p. 45.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid: doc. 185, p. 347.

¹⁷¹ "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1949", Vol. VI, doc. 129, p. 265. Also see "For the holy national freedom". Characters of fallen national fighters. Political and literary publications, 1962, p. 153.

between DAG and units of the Greek Royal Army. The same shell also killed General Nikos Theoharopoulos-Skotidas, commander of DAG's Division X.¹⁷²

Like many Macedonians from the Aegean part of Macedonia, Krsto Mangov dedicated his entire life to the struggle during which he fought for freedom and for the national and social liberation of the Macedonian people, and as such he will forever be remembered by his people.

¹⁷² Evdokia Foteva-Vera, Krsto Mangov. Nova Makedonija, Skopje, 1971, August 11, XXVII, 8819, p. 5.

PANDO SHIPERKOV (1921-1948)

“...If I had five sons like him I wouldn’t be sorry to see them committed to the struggle for the Macedonian people’s freedom...”¹⁷³ said Nikola Shiperkov at the funeral of his son Pando.¹⁷⁴

Pando Shiperkov was born to a poor family on January 10th, 1921 in the village Smrdesh, Kostur Region. After finishing primary school he went to work as a tailor’s apprentice in Hristo Kalea’s tailor shop in Smrdesh.¹⁷⁵ Here Shiperkov was given an opportunity to meet with people from all walks of life and learn more about progressive ideas which were popular in those days.

Pando was working in Hristo Kalea’s tailor shop in Smrdesh when Greece was invaded and occupied by the German, Italian and Bulgarian fascist armies, but since he was familiar with prevailing progressive ideas he immediately decided to join the resistance.

In June 1941, Pando took part in a rally organized to celebrate the 38th anniversary of the glorious 1903 Lokvata and Viniari battle. This battle took place during the Ilinden Uprising in 1903 where an unequal fight between the Macedonian insurgents and Ottoman army took place, during which 13 fighters from the village detachments died in battle. Some of these fighters were from the village Smrdesh.¹⁷⁶

On July 1st during the annual traditional gathering in the local Smrdesh Church, Sveti Vrach, Shiperkov and a group of antifascists openly challenged the Bulgarian lies and propaganda that were being spread in Kostur Region. The religious gathering turned into a brawl when the Bulgarian emissaries ordered their Italian carabinieri to open fire on the protesters. Shiperkov and his

¹⁷³ Program for memorial commemoration of events and characters from the Macedonian people’s revolutionary past in Skopje. Skopje, 1973, part III /bisti/, p. 165. Manuscript, kept at INI.

¹⁷⁴ This article by the same author (slightly modified) was published in the INI Gazette, Skopje, 1982, XXVI, no. 2-3, pp. 279-284.

¹⁷⁵ According to the memoirs of Kosta Shiperkov, from the village Smrdesh; a fighter in the National Liberation War.

¹⁷⁶ According to the recollections of Vasko Makrievski from the village Smrdesh.

antifascists, however, bravely stood their ground and refused to be intimidated.¹⁷⁷

In the fall of 1941, the first CPG cell was opened in Smrdesh, in Pando Shiperkov's native village. As a member of that organization Pando became actively involved in the resistance against the occupiers, which lasted uninterrupted until his death.

In early 1943 a number of Partisans from Smrdesh initiated the formation of a Partisan organization inside Smrdesh and by mid-1943 they began to recruit fighters in what came to be known as the "Lazo Trpovski" Detachment.

In late summer 1943, Pando Shiperkov, with a group of prominent like-minded people from Smrdesh and surrounding villages, joined the¹⁷⁸ "Lazo Trpovski" detachment.¹⁷⁹ Its first commander was Naum Peiov and its first political commissar was Dimitar Shiskovski. Later, in the spring of 1944, the "Lazo Trpovski" detachment joined the second company, in the second battalion of the 28th ELAS Regiment.

Shiperkov fought in every battle in which the 28th regiment was engaged in Vicho,¹⁸⁰ under the command of Aristotelis Huturas-Arianos. Some of the most important battles Shiperkov took part in included disarming the armed brigadiers, breaking the German positions at Bigla and Vicho and capturing and disarming Armenian agents who had been armed by the Germans and spread throughout the Lerin, Kostur and Korcha Regions.¹⁸¹

Even though Macedonian fighters voluntarily contributed immensely to drive out the occupiers from Greece and put down the domestic traitors, the Greek Communist and ELAS leaderships in Kostur Region still treated the Macedonians as subordinates and

¹⁷⁷ According to the recollections of Micho Karandzhovski from the village Smrdesh.

¹⁷⁸ According to the recollections of Vasko Makrievski and Micho Karandzhovski...

¹⁷⁹ According to the recollections of Mincho Fotev from the town of Rupishta.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

with suspicion. As a sign of protest, a group of thirty Macedonian fighters, including Pando Shiperkov, from the second battalion of the 28th regiment broke off from ELAS and in May 1944 crossed over the border and joined the Macedonian Partisans in the Republic of Macedonia where they were reorganized into the First Macedonian-Kosovo Strike Brigade and continued to fight against the occupiers at Mount Karaorman.¹⁸²

Later, a special company of about 30 fighters was formed from the same group of Macedonian partisans from Kostur Region, who were earlier deployed in the first battalion of the Macedonian-Kosovo brigade.

On May 20th, 1944 in the village Seltse, just below Karaorman, Macedonians from Kostur region formed the first all-Macedonian political party. Pando Shiperkov was one of the first to join.¹⁸³

On June 8th, 1944, the first Macedonian assault brigade was formed in the village Lokovo and placed under the command of Vangel Shukalovski and Nikola Todorovski-Kaninski (political commissar) and was joined by fighters from Lerin and Kostur Regions.

During the second half of June 1944, another group of forty-five Macedonians and SNOF activists from Kostur Region abandoned ELAS and joined the first Macedonian assault brigade.

Towards the end of June the fighters from Kostur Region formed a separate all-Macedonian battalion. This was the first and largest Macedonian Partisan unit consisting solely of fighters from Greek occupied Macedonia. Atanas Koroveshov led the unit with Pando Shiperkov as the political commissar of the Second Company within the battalion.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² “Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1944-1945”, T. I, Macedonian archives, Skopje, 1971, doc. 105, pp. 118-119, doc. 106, pp. 119-121, doc. 107, pp. 121-122, doc. 112, pp. 126-128 and doc. 116, pp. 130-133.

¹⁸³ According to the recollections of Vasko Makrievski and Micho Karandzhovski...

¹⁸⁴ According to the recollection of Evdokia Baliova-Nikolova (Vera) from the village D’mbeni...

During the first half of July 1944, under agreement between the Macedonian and Greek Communist Party leaderships, the well-armed Kostur battalion returned to Kostur Region to drive out the occupiers.¹⁸⁵ Shiperkov and his associates demonstrated a willingness and determination in the struggle to liberate their homeland and fight for freedom, democracy and equal rights.

On August 2nd, 1944 in the liberated village Pozdivishcha, Kostur Region, a separate Macedonian battalion was formed and named “Gotse” in honour of Gotse Delchev. The founding nucleus of this fighting force came from the battle-hardened fighters from Karaorman.¹⁸⁶ The Gotse battalion became part of the 18th regiment in the 9th division of ELAS. Shiperkov retained his position as political commissar of Gotse and fought in every battle in which the battalion was engaged. During one battle, in the village Zelenich, he received a wound to his leg.

Towards the end of September 1944 new misunderstandings began to develop between the Macedonian Partisans and the Greek leadership (Greek Communist Party and ELAS). In early October, ELAS ordered the Gotse battalion to disband but found stiff opposition from the Macedonian fighters who again chose to cross over into the Republic of Macedonia instead of surrendering to the Greeks.¹⁸⁷ There the battalion fighters joined the Macedonian forces as part of the 49th division of the Peoples’ Liberation Army.

With the arrival of the newly acquired fighters from Kostur and Lerin Regions in Graezhnitsa, Bitola Region, a separate battalion was formed under the command of Atanas Koroveshov and political

¹⁸⁵ This was according to a letter, dated July 30, 1944, from Blagoia Taleski, Secretary of the CPM Second Regional Committee, sent to the CPM Central Committee’s power of attorney in Skopje. Sources for the liberation war and the revolution in Macedonia 1941-1944. T. I, book 5. INI, Skopje, 1975, doc. 26, p. 102.

¹⁸⁶ This comes from an August 3, 1944, report written by Traiche Gruiovski, member of the Second CPM Regional Committee, to Blagoia Taleski Secretary of the Second Regional Committee and Lazo Hadzi Popovski member of the Second Regional Committee. Sources for the Liberation War and Revolution in Macedonia 1941-1945 T. I., book 5. INI, Skopje, 1975, doc. 36, p. 138.

¹⁸⁷ According to the recollections of Vasko Makrievski and Micho Karandzhovski...

commissar Pando Shiperkov. After regrouping the battalion they again returned to Kostur Region and continued the fight against the occupier and the ELAS leadership. Unfortunately the Macedonian battalion's presence in Greek occupied Macedonia was unwelcome and short-lived. After finding itself at odds with the Greek ELAS leadership, in order to avoid bloodshed, it again left Greek occupied Macedonia and crossed over into the Republic of Macedonia.

By now the Bitola Region had been freed of the occupiers and Macedonians from Greek occupied Macedonia were regrouping under a new brigade. The First Peoples' Liberation Shock Brigade was exclusively formed with fighters from the Lerin, Kostur, Voden, Kailari and other Regions in Greek occupied Macedonia. Shiperkov, in the role of political commissar, was dispatched to put down remnants of the occupier's allies, the Balisti bands, which at the time were roaming Gostivar, Tetovo and Kichevo Regions.

In his role as political commissar of a battalion in the First National Liberation Strike Brigade, Pando participated in liquidating the Balisti bands in Gostivar, Tetovo, Kichevo, etc.

In May 1945 after the First Brigade was disbanded, Shiperkov was given a job in the Yugoslav army in Gevgelia, as Captain first class.

In the spring of 1946 Shiperkov, at his own request, was discharged from the Yugoslav army and in July he joined the People's Liberation Front in Greek occupied Macedonia, at Mount Vicho. This time he was fighting a new enemy, the Greek rightist Monarchists and their British interventionists.

In November 1946 after the re-unification of Macedonian and Greek Partisan forces, Shiperkov was appointed commander of the joint Democratic Army of Greece (DAG) headquarters in Vicho.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸ Based on the agreement reached on November 21, 1946, between NOF and CPG representatives, the DAG Headquarters for "Vicho" was established. Pando Shiperkov was appointed Commander; Kozmas Spanos-Amindas was appointed Commissar and Mihali Apostolovski-Graniti was appointed quartermaster. Program for commemoration of events and characters from the Macedonian people's revolutionary past..., p. 165.

Towards the end of 1947 when DAG headquarters was reorganized, Shiperkov was given command of a battalion ¹⁸⁹ which subsequently experienced much action around Vicho and Gramos and fought in the battles of Neveska, Lerin, Lundzer, Preseka, Sorovich, Embore and other places.

It is worth mentioning that Pando also distinguished himself as a loyal activist of NOF. During the first Peoples' Liberation Front Congress, Shiperkov walked in as a delegate but left as an elected member of the NOF Main Board. ¹⁹⁰

Unfortunately, while leading his battalion into battle near the Church Sveti Ilia, between the villages Grashe and Papratsko in Kostur Region, a piece of artillery fired by an enemy cannon exploded near him and ended his life. ¹⁹¹

Pando Shiperkov died on March 8th, 1948.

Many people from the DAG leadership, including Georgi Kikidas, Deputy Commander of DAG General Staff, spoke highly of Pando Shiperkov's personality and contributions. He said: "Pando Shiperkov was one of the most capable, best and bravest DAG commanders. Appreciating Pando's qualities, DAG General Staff had decided to appoint him Commander of a Brigade and later Commander of a Division. Unfortunately his untimely death prevented all that..." ¹⁹²

M. Tsaras, a DAG captain who served in Pando Shiperkov's battalion, said this about him: "...That simple Macedonian from Smrdesh had a secret that captured the hearts of fighters... His word was law for us fighters... He was stern like Vasil Chakalarov, modest like Pando Kliashev and you would think he was gifted by nature with the gift of the two legendary Ilinden revolutionaries

¹⁸⁹ Ibid: p. 165.

¹⁹⁰ "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1948", T. V. Macedonian archives, Skopje, 1981, doc. 16 p. 45.

¹⁹¹ Pando Shiperkov. Honour and glory of the fallen fighters. Voice of the Aegeans, Skopje, 1953, June, IV, no. 35, p. 3.

¹⁹² Program for memorial commemoration of events and characters from the Macedonian people's revolutionary past..., p. 165.

from his native village... He was swarthy and strong and had wide shoulders. When he walked and jumped he reminded you of the eagles with wide wings on the mountains of his homeland... Anyone who joined his battalion didn't want to leave..."¹⁹³

When he was captain - first class in the JNA (Yugoslav National Army) Pando Shiperkov was awarded the People's Order of Merit. He was also praised and decorated while he served as a Commander in DAG.

Pando Shiperkov's life path, although very short, will serve as an example for the young Macedonian generations because he had set himself a goal to fight against the occupier and domestic traitors, to fight for the Macedonian people's freedom and national and social liberation and to struggle for the Macedonian people's right to have their own Macedonian identity and uniqueness.

¹⁹³ N. Kitopoulos, Pando Shiperkov. In kn. "For the Holy People's Freedom." Characters of Fallen National Fighters, 1962. Political and Literary Editions, p. 306.

MIHALI APOSTOLOV-GRANITI (1923-1948)

During a critical moment when his unit was involved in a heated battle, Mihali Apostolov showed courage, fearlessness and determination and was prepared to give his life to save his comrades. He attacked the enemy fearlessly with his machine gun and cut them to pieces. That's why his comrades called him Graniti (granite). And rightly so, they had a reason to compare him to a solid impenetrable granite rock.

Mihali Apostolov-Graniti was born on November 25, 1923 in the village Krchishta, Kostur Region. He came from a working family. After he finished primary school in Krchishta his father Ilia died and he had to help his mother run the farm. Some time later he moved to the city Larisa, for a while, where he worked as a tailor's apprentice.¹⁹⁴

After the Greek-Italian war broke out, even though he was still young, Mihali was among the first in his village to join the anti-fascist resistance. Joined by his fellow villagers Lazo Poriazovski, Naum Poriazovski, Dafina Panovska, Donka Purdovska and Kole Andonovski, Mihali collected and stored weapons that had been abandoned by the Greek army after it was forced by German troops to withdraw from the Albanian front.¹⁹⁵

After Greece and Greek occupied Macedonia were overrun by the invading German-Italian and Bulgarian fascist armies, Mihali continued his patriotic work and anti-fascist activities. As a member of OKNE, the communist organization for youth, he actively participated in various meetings to discuss the forms and methods by which the armed struggle against the occupiers and domestic traitors would take place. Mihali's activities lasted until the beginning of 1943 when he and fellow villager Trpe Mihailov joined ELAS's partisan units.

In August 1943, with prior approval from the local CPG Party organizations Mihali, together with a group of partisans led by

¹⁹⁴ According to the recollections of Lefka Apostolova, Mihali Apostolov's sister, who was also an active participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

Paskal Mitrevski, actively participated in disarming the counter bands in Kosinets and Labanitsa.¹⁹⁶

In the fall of 1943, Mihali Apostolov and a number of Macedonian fighters joined the Macedonian partisan detachment “Lazo Trpovski”.¹⁹⁷ The same year while fighting a German detachment on Mount Bigla, even though he was wounded, Mihali leaned against a rock and kept the enemy back while his comrades withdrew. Because of that he gained fame among his fellow fighters who gave him the nickname “Graniti”.

At the end of November 1943, Mihali took part in disarming the counter bands in the villages Drenoveni, Chernovishta, Gabresh, Pozdivishta, Konomlati (Kolomnati), Prekopana, etc. As a fighter of the “Lazo Trpovski” detachment Mihali made good use of his machine gun. In every battle he fought in Vicho and Bigla he always attacked the enemy fearlessly.

In the spring of 1944, Mihali took part in disarming the German garrisons operating in the villages Psoderi, Rula and Smrdesh. He participated in the attacks against the bridge at the crossroads between the villages Gabresh and Breznitsa. He also participated in the disarmament of a German armed Armenian unit operating in the villages Breznitsa and Rula.¹⁹⁸

At the end of the first half of May 1944, Macedonian and Greek partisans serving in ELAS split over the negative attitude of the CPG and ELAS leaderships towards the Macedonian National Question. As a sign of protest a group of Macedonian fighters, including Mihali Apostolov, broke away from ELAS and crossed over into the territory of the Republic of Macedonia. Later, as part of the Yugoslav partisan units on Mount Karaorman, Mihali continued the struggle against the occupiers and domestic traitors.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ According to the recollections of Donka Filipova from the village Krchishta.

¹⁹⁷ According to the recollections of Vasko Makrievski, from the village Smrdesh...

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ On May 18, 1944, ELAS detachment - “Vicho” sent a letter to the Macedonian National Liberation Army units in Prespa requesting the return of the 30 fighters

In June 1944, a group of Macedonian partisans from this group joined the First Macedonian Strike Brigade. At the end of June 1944, a special battalion was created from the fighters of Kostur Region who were part of the First Macedonian Strike Brigade. Atanas Koroveshov was appointed commander of this battalion and Mihali Apostolov-Graniti was appointed deputy political commissar of the First Company in the battalion whose commander was Vasko Makrievski. This was the first large Macedonian partisan battalion exclusively composed of Macedonian fighters from Greek occupied Macedonia.²⁰⁰ This battalion operated as part of the First Macedonian Assault Brigade until mid July 1944.

In the first half of July 1944, after a CPM-CPG Agreement was made, Mihali, together with the battalion fighters, returned to the field in Greek occupied Macedonia and continued the struggle to expel the occupiers.

At the beginning of August 1944, the Kostur-Lerin Battalion “Gotse” was created in which Mihali Apostolov was appointed platoon commander in the Third Company whose political commissar was Mincho Fotev. Mihali was among the first to join the ranks of the “Gotse” Battalion and fought with even greater determination against the foreign occupiers and domestic traitors.²⁰¹

During August and September 1944, Mihali Apostolov took part in disarming the counter bands in the Kostur District villages. At about the same time the “Gotse” battalion acted along the Korcha-Lerin line where Mihali and his comrades set up ambushes to attack retreating German units, leaving Korcha and heading for Lerin. Mihali distinguished himself as a good fighter during a battle with an enemy unit that had set up an ambush to destroy “Gotse”. In the

who broke away from ELAS and joined the ranks of the National Liberation Army of Macedonia. “Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1944-1945“, T. I, doc. 108, p. 123.

²⁰⁰ According to Vasko Makrievski and Evdokia Baliova-Vera’s recollections.

²⁰¹ According to the recollections of Mincho Fotev, from Rupishta and Vasko Makrievski.

fierce battle Mihali, who was in front of the battle line, fiercely attacked the enemy soldiers sending them fleeing in panic.²⁰²

It is important at this point to mention that the Kostur-Lerin Battalion “Gotse” (which was part of the ELAS 28th Regiment and the ELAS IX Division) grew into a brigade, and there was an opportunity to create more and larger Macedonian units. But the CPG and ELAS leaderships, being very upset with the battalion’s growth and success, wouldn’t allow it to grow any further. But that wasn’t all. A little later, in October 1944, a strange order from the CPG and ELAS top leadership arrived ordering the “Gotse” battalion to transfer to the interior of Greece (south outside of Greek occupied Macedonia), allegedly to strengthen the ELAS units there. But as was later found out, the real Greek intention was to disband the battalion by force if necessary. Naturally the Macedonian fighters didn’t agree with the order. After all they were fighting for the Macedonian cause and to protect the Macedonian people. So, in protest, they again crossed into the territory of the Republic of Macedonia where they continued the struggle against the German units withdrawing from the territory of Greece to Bitola.²⁰³

It is also worth mentioning at this point that ELAS units attacked the “Gotse” Battalion during the time when the Macedonian fighters had taken combat positions on Mount Vrba against German and quisling units withdrawing from Solun and Korcha.

So, as a separate Macedonian unit, the “Gotse” battalion continued the struggle against the Balisti and counter bands on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia where, together with the Germans, they were withdrawing to Bitola to save themselves.

In November 1944, with the formation of the First Aegean Strike Brigade in free Bitola, Mihali Apostolov-Graniti was appointed Deputy Political Commissar of the First Battalion, commanded by

²⁰² According to the recollections of Urania Iurukova from the village Izglibe, Kostur Region. Urania was commander of an independent platoon in the “Gotse” Battalion composed exclusively of women.

²⁰³ Hristo Andonovski, *Macedonians under Greece in the Fight against Fascism (1940-1944)*. INI, Skopje, 1968, Chapter Eight, pp. 190-197.

Atanas Koroveshov.²⁰⁴ As part of the First Strike Brigade, Mihali participated in all the battles that were fought against the Balisti remnant bands operating in Tetovo, Kichevo, Gostivar and Sharplanina.²⁰⁵

After the First Strike Brigade was disbanded its fighters and part of the command staff were deployed in the KNOJ Yugoslav units.

In the second half of May 1945, at the suggestion of NOF General Command for Aegean Macedonia, several command personnel, including Mihali Apostolov, belonging to the former First Strike Brigade, were sent on a political training course.²⁰⁶

After completing the course, the top NOF leadership dispatched Mihali and his comrades to Greek occupied Macedonia to organize NOF cells in the various districts. Mihali, Mihailo Keramitchiev and Boris Musmanov were dispatched to Seres District to establish basic NOF cells in Seres and the surrounding area.²⁰⁷ Despite the great terror the Greek reactionaries had unleashed against the people there, Mihali and his comrades managed to establish ties with them and opened NOF cells in several villages. It is worthwhile mentioning that, in doing so, Mihali and his comrades exposed themselves to great danger and difficulties, but thanks to Mihali's resourcefulness and soberness they managed to avoid being caught.

Towards the end of March 1946, the top NOF leadership ordered Mihali Apostolov to go to Kostur Region and serve as a member of the NOF District Board for Kostur Region, responsible for NOMS.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ According to the recollections of Urania Iurukova...

²⁰⁵ According to the recollections of Urania Iurukova and Vasko Makrievski...

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ As per a report written by Mihailo Keramitchiev dated August 11, 1945, sent to the top NOF leadership, regarding the military and political situation in Seres District. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945", Vol. II, doc. 120, p. 229.

²⁰⁸ As per a report dated May 28, 1946, written by Girogi Iakovski, NOF Main Board instructor, to the top NOF leadership, regarding the NOF organizational structure and its activities in Kostur Region. "Aegean Macedonia in NOB, 1946", Vol. III, doc. 132, p. 294.

In November 1946, as part of the CPG and NOF partisan unit unification on Mount Vicho, Mihali Apostolov-Graniti was appointed third member of Headquarters responsible for quartermaster services for the “Vicho” operational zone.²⁰⁹ Later he was appointed battalion commander in the DAG 14th brigade.

From the end of 1946 until March 1948, Mihali Apostolov actively participated in DAG and fought against the Greek government army in all the battles in the sectors of mountains Vicho and Gramos, Malimadi and Faltsata, Nestram, etc. He was well-known for his fearlessness and courage. One time Mihali, with a single machine gun, fought against a low flying aircraft that was attacking his position. Despite the great danger he faced he refused to leave his position.²¹⁰

In addition to his military merits, Mihali Apostolov-Graniti also distinguished himself as a faithful NOF activist and organizer, and because of that he was appointed a candidate member of the NOF Main Board at the First NOF Congress.²¹¹ Mihali was characterized as a modest person with a sense of responsibility who worked well with others. He was a great revolutionary and fighter for the Macedonian people’s freedom.

Mihali Apostolov died on March 31, 1948, in Klepchevo locality on Mount Gramos. At the time he was political commissar of a DAG battalion which was severely attacked by the Greek government army. He and his comrades fought heroically in a very difficult battle from which he didn’t survive.²¹² He was buried with military honours in front of many of his comrades-in-arms and DAG military officers. Senior CPG and DAG military and political figures gave farewell speeches at his funeral.

²⁰⁹ Chronology of the People’s Liberation Struggle in the Aegean part of Macedonia (1945-1949). Skopje, 1973, p. 130.

²¹⁰ According to the recollections of Sotir Liamov from the village Pozdivishta, Kostur Region. Sotir was an active participant in DAG and was Mihali Apostolov’s personal courier. Also according to the recollections of Evdokia Baliova-Vera...

²¹¹ List of NOF Main Board elected members at the First NOF Congress. “Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1948”, T. V, doc. 16, p. 45.

²¹² According to the recollections of Sotir Liamov...

Shortly afterwards DAG General Staff declared Mihali a national hero.

It is worth mentioning at this point that Mihali's sister Lefka (severely wounded on June 27, 1948) and his younger brother Apostol, who died heroically on June 21, 1948 as a prominent DAG fighter, also fought actively and selflessly in DAG's ranks.²¹³ Also we mustn't forget Iordana, Mihali's mother and her virtues, who together with her children sacrificed her life for the Macedonian people's freedom.

²¹³ According to the recollections of Lefka Apostolova...

PANDO TRPOVSKI-BUNTOVSKI (1907-1947)

Pando Trpovski-Buntovski was active in politics before the Second World War started and fought for the Macedonian people's freedom, national, social and democratic rights. Because he was an adamant fighter he later earned the pseudonym Buntovski (bunt=rebellion). Pando actively participated in the national liberation movement in the Aegean part of Macedonia from 1941 until the end of his life. He was one of the first NOF organizers in Kostur Region.²¹⁴ Pando was born in the village Galishta, Kostur Region, in 1907 to a family that subsisted on migrant work. In order to provide for his family, Lazo's father Todor was forced to go America and seek work as a migrant worker. Pando was left with his mother at age eleven, and since then had to move with his uncle Ziso Trpovski. After graduating from primary school, Lazo helped his uncle on the farm.

In 1922, Pando, together with several villagers, left his village Galishta and went to work and learned a trade in the city Larisa.

In the beginning of 1934, Pando returned to Galishta and from there, together with his wife and child, moved to the village Chuka, Kostur Region, to live with his wife's father Vasil Mitrovski.

In January 1936, Pando left Chuka and went to Kostur where he rented a pastry shop in the western part of the city. There he immediately joined the progressive movement and worked with Lazo Trpovski preparing the masses for a struggle against the Greek bourgeoisie.²¹⁵

During the Metaxas dictatorship (1936-1940), terror reigned throughout the country. The Macedonian people were forbidden to speak Macedonian, their mother tongue, even in private. It was

²¹⁴ For Pando Trpovski-Buntovski's revolutionary activities see Tashko Mamurovski, "Pando Trpovski-Buntovski - NOF revolutionary and activist". INI Gazette, Skopje, 1981, XXV, No. 1, pp. 293-310.

²¹⁵ According to the recollections of Lazo Poplazarov from the village Dobrolishta, Kostur Region. Lazo Poplazarov was a member of the SNOF leadership in Kostur Region. In 1945 Lazo Poplazarov served as NOF instructor for Kostur, Gumendzhe and other regions, then he served as NOF District Board secretary for Lerin and Voden Regions and as a member of the NOF Main leadership for Aegean Macedonia.

under these difficult conditions that Pando Trpovski-Buntovski, along with other CPG members and sympathizers, agitated the people to fight against Metaxas's fascist regime.

After fascist Italy attacked Greece Pando was mobilized into the Greek army and sent to fight at the Albanian front.

Immediately after fascist Germany, Italy and Bulgaria occupied Greece, including Aegean Macedonia, there was no government in Kostur Region, the Communist Party of Greece had long since been disbanded and many of the communists had been imprisoned. In was under these chaotic conditions that those who returned from the Albanian front and those who somehow managed to avoid arrest decided on their own initiative to organize the people to struggle against the occupiers.

One of the most important tasks these activists undertook was to collect and hide the weapons and ammunition the Greek army abandoned after it withdrew from the Albanian front. In March 1943, Pando Trpovski personally collected the abandoned weapons in the village Chuka and handed them over to the First Kostur Partisan Detachment in the village Nestram.²¹⁶

Immediately after fascist Germany, Italy and Bulgaria occupied Greece, Bulgarian agents from Sofia began to arrive in Kostur Region to organize a pro-Bulgarian counter-revolutionary movement to help destroy the progressive national liberation movement put in place by the Greek and Macedonian people. In their propaganda the Bulgarian agents capitalized on the Macedonian hatred for the Greek reactionaries who exploited and nationally oppressed Macedonians. In doing so, the Bulgarian agents managed to convince some Macedonians to join their armed detachments in Kostur Region.

Pando Trpovski resolutely opposed Bulgarian aspirations to gain control of Macedonian territory anywhere, and fought against them in Chetir and Nestram Regions. He, together with his comrades, managed to sabotage measures put together by the Bulgarian

²¹⁶ According to the recollections of Mincho Fotev...

emissaries in the villages Galishta, Grache, Dranichevo, Chuka, Paracko, etc.²¹⁷

In May 1943, the CPG District Committee for Kostur Region created a special partisan group composed mainly of Macedonian fighters to disarm the Macedonian villages armed by the occupiers. The group used various methods to accomplish its objectives including distributing leaflets that called on all Macedonians who were involved with the Bulgarian sponsored counter bands to abandon them. The group was also involved in disarming counter bandits. In the end the group was involved in carrying out armed actions against the occupiers and their domestic servants.

The group in which Pando Trpovski operated managed to disarm about 30 villagers who served in the counter bands in the villages Chetirok, Dobrolishta and the town Rupishta. By persuasion almost all other villagers left the counter bands and returned to their homes.²¹⁸

In August 1943, the German army and its local servants attacked the village Chuka and severely damaged the historically significant St. Archangel monastery. The group fighting in this battle was unable to withstand the enemy's pressure and after two hours of bloody fighting it retreated. The German soldiers then burned the monastery to the ground.²¹⁹

In October 1943, the Macedonian anti-fascist organization SNOF (Slavo-Macedonian National Liberation Front) was created in the village D'mbeni, Kostur Region. Pando, now known by his pseudonym "Buntovski", was appointed leader of SNOF for Nestram Region. As a leader his responsibility was to create SNOF cells in the surrounding villages and agitate the Macedonian people to join the struggle to expel the occupiers.²²⁰

²¹⁷ According to Mincho Fotev's manuscript entitled "Counter band policies in Kostur Region during the National Liberation War" The manuscript is kept in Mincho Fotev's private archives.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ According to the recollections of Lazo Poplazarov and Mincho Fotev...

In May 1944, the CPG and ELAS leaderships disbanded SNOF in Kostur Region in a most brutal way. An ELAS partisan unit arrived at SNOF district headquarters, located in the village Krchishta, and immediately arrested the district leadership that consisted of Paskal Mitrevski, Lazo Poplazarov, Lazo Damovski-Oshenski and others. Later Naum Peiov was also arrested.

Thanks to the protests of the Macedonian population in Kostur Region, the SNOF leaders were released in mid-August 1944. After they returned to Kostur Region they immediately joined the ranks of the newly formed Macedonian battalion stationed on Mount Vicho. This battalion was part of the 28th ELAS Regiment.²²¹

In early October 1944, the CPG and ELAS leaderships demanded that the Macedonian Kostur-Lerin Battalion be disbanded and that the Macedonian fighters be forced to join ELAS. But none of the Macedonian battalion fighters wanted to do that. So in order to avoid a clash between the Greek ELAS units and the Macedonian fighters, the Macedonian battalion, including Pando Trpovski, in the middle of October 1944 left Greek occupied Macedonia and crossed over into the Republic of Macedonia.

After the First Strike Brigade was created from the Macedonian fighters from Greek occupied Macedonia, Pando Trpovski was appointed political commissar of the IV Battalion (heavy weapons). He remained in that position until May 1945, when the Brigade was reorganized.²²²

Immediately after the First Strike Brigade was disbanded, Pando Trpovski-Buntovski together with a group of Macedonians from the military and political staff of the same brigade, including Evdokia Baleva-Vera, Lazo Poplazarov, Argir Kuzovski, Mihali Apostolovski-Graniti, Urania Iurukova, Tane Naumov and Giorgi

²²¹ According to Mincho Fotev's manuscript entitled "Counter band policies in Kostur Region during the National Liberation War" The manuscript is kept in Mincho Fotev's private archives.

²²² According to the recollections of Miltiadi Popnikolovski-Tsvetko from the city Lerin. Miltiadi was one of the first people to join the National Liberation War effort and DAG. Miltiadi was commander of the IV Battalion (heavy weapons) in the First Strike Brigade...

Iakata, were sent by the NOF top leadership to attend a political training course that lasted from May to the end of July 1945. After they completed the course Pando Trpovski and the others were sent to Greek occupied Macedonia to do field work. Pando was appointed NOF secretary in the Poletto area in Kostur Region.²²³

In September 1945, a meeting took place in the village Zhupanishta between Sotir Timiovski, NOMS secretary for Poletto from the village Dobrolishta, and Pando Trpovski, NOF Secretary for Poletto. At the meeting Pando was brought up to speed on the overall NOMS organizational structure and with the newly formed organizational cells, as well as with the political situation in the villages Chetirok, Nestram, Dobrolishta, Tikveni, Izglibe, etc. After the meeting both Sotir and Lazo made their rounds around Poletto villages to get acquainted with the NOF, NOMS and AFZH organizational structures.²²⁴

In the course of 1945, the Greek government forcibly mobilized young conscripts to serve in the Greek military. The CPG and EAM leaderships took the position that all recruits should join the Greek Monarcho-Fascist army. The NOF leadership took the opposite position and appealed especially to the Macedonian youth not to join the Greek army. NOF did this because the Greek Monarcho-Fascist government began to organize a genocidal mass terror campaign against the Macedonian population. After the old bourgeois regime was reestablished in the country, as a result of the treacherous Varkiza Agreement being signed, the Greek military began to take part in carrying out the terror. Under these circumstances NOF couldn't allow Macedonians to be part of the Greek Monarcho-Fascist army and fight against their own people. Pando Trpovski consistently and with great success did his best not only to perform his existing duties but to also carry out NOF's directive to prevent Macedonians from joining the Greek Monarcho-Fascist army.

²²³ "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1946", Vol. III, doc. 9, p. 23.

²²⁴ According to the recollections of Sotir Timiovski from the village Dobrolishta. Sotir Timiovski served as NOMS secretary in Poletto, Kostur Region from 1945 to 1947. He joined DAG in May 1947, and in January 1948 he was appointed member of the People's Board in Kostur Region.

On March 31, 1946, the first post-war parliamentary elections were held in Greece. The CPG and EAM didn't take part. NOF being in solidarity with the CPG also abstained from taking part in the elections. Pando Trpovski's role in this was to visit the villages in Poleto and agitate the people not to vote. Thanks to his tireless effort the majority of the Macedonian people in his district didn't vote.

In early June 1946, Pando Trpovski and Sotir Timiovski were asked to prepare the groundwork for establishing a wider network of NOF partisan groups. They were aided by the main NOF leadership stationed at the edge of Mount Malimadi. Included among the main NOF leaders were Vasil Hristovski from the village of Dobrolishta and Sotir Kostovski-Direkot from the village Stensko. During a joint meeting held in the "Slabishta" locality, near the village Chuka, they appointed Vasil Hristovski commander of the NOF partisan detachment and Sotir Kostovski-Direkot political commissar.

After informing them of the difficult situation the people in the district were facing, Pando Trpovski and Sotir Timiovski then introduced Vasil Hristovski and Sotir Kostovski-Direkot to the village leaders in the Poleto area, who then took responsibility for helping the detachment with its food supplies. Pando Trpovski wrote a report describing what it was like at the time and sent it to the NOF Main Board. Among other things, this is what the report said:

"...Our people, with the exception of the spies, are completely on our side. They trust NOF which allowed us to form organizations in most villages including Zhupanishta, Tikveni, Maniak, Izglibe, Rupishta, Zhelegozhe, Zhelin, Bresteni, Galishta, Chetirok, Nestram, Stensko, Radigozhe, Chuka, Grache, Drenoveni, Doborlishta, Sveta Nedela, Ludovo, Ezerets, Olovradi, Marchishta, Mangila, Doleni, Buhin, Nestim, Zhuzheltsi, Libishevo, Shkrapari, Semasi, Bela Tsrkva, Markoveni and Pesiak..."

"...There are armed Greek reactionaries in the area as follows: Chetirok 35 rifles, Dobrolishta 24 rifles, Drenichevo 7 rifles, Zhelegozhe 25 rifles, Zhelin 10 rifles, Tsakoni 12 rifles, Zabrdeni 40 rifles and one machine gun, Vichishta 25 rifles, Lianga 30 rifles, Shkrapari 3 rifles, Rupishta 12 rifles, Thomsons and 6 machine guns, Sveta Nedela 12 rifles, Gorno Papratsko 25 rifles, Trstka 7

rifles, Shak 25 rifles, Revani all (are armed), Grleni 35 rifles, Kalevishta 15 rifles, Charchishta 7 rifles...”

“...The persecution of the democratic people by these reactionaries has reached its peak, especially against the Macedonian element. In the village Grache for example, three people were abducted on June 4 and 5 and are being held in the Kostur prisons. Nine more are being prosecuted and are hiding in the mountains. Two women in the village Shkrapari have been imprisoned. Evgenia’s hair was cut down to its roots in the village Tikveni. Evergenia is a member of NOMS. Four people in the village Drenichevo were beaten because they didn’t vote. Twelve people from the village Dobrolishta are on a wanted list. It is believed that they may have escaped to the mountains. People who belonged to ELAS or were revolutionaries are being persecuted. Hristo, his brother Tome and their sister, as well as four others from the village Zhelin, were beaten. Everyone between the ages 14 and 90 in the village Breshteni were deported to Kostur where they are being interrogated about their alleged cooperation with NOF.”²²⁵

A plebiscite was held in Greece on September 1, 1946, in which people were asked if they wanted to restore the monarchy in Greece. The Athenian government, which was in favour of the monarchy’s restoration, used its gendarmerie and Anglo-American help to pressure the Macedonian people to vote for the restoration. But thanks to NOF’s intervention led by Pando Trpovski, the majority of the people in the district opted for democracy.

Up until October 5, 1946, Pando Trpovski-Buntovski worked tirelessly, enduring the cruel terror perpetrated by the Greek regime, organizing the population in NOF, mobilizing armed fighters in NOF, encouraging people to participate and showing them that the way to freedom was by participating in the struggle and winning. On October 5, 1946, Pando Trpovski together with Tashko Ivanovski, from the village Rupishta, and Vangel Delevski, from the village Chuka, were sent on a mission near the village Revan at the

²²⁵ Report written by Pando Trpovski and sent to the NOF Main leadership. This report presents the political situation on the ground and NOF’s activities in Kostur Region. “Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1946”, Vol. III, doc. 143, pp. 324-326.

Albanian border. Unfortunately they were spotted by a village herdsman who informed on them. After a short skirmish the group was surrounded and captured by Greek border guards. They were then taken to the border watchtower where Pando was brutally tortured. His torturers beat him with a rifle butt and kicked him in the head with military boots, in an attempt to get him to betray NOF. But despite the severe torture, the Monarcho-Fascists failed to extract a single word from him.²²⁶

In the afternoon of the same day the captives were brought to Monarcho-Fascist headquarters in the village Nestram. The next day they were transferred to Kostur where Pando Trpovski-Buntovski and his comrades were sentenced to death. Tashko Ivanovski was probably killed in Kostur. About a month and a half later Pando and the others were taken to Kozheni. A few days later they were sent to Solun and jailed in the Edi Kule prison. After spending almost a month in Edi Kule, Pando was then sent to a prison camp on the island Giura where he was brutally tortured.

Before he was executed Pando kept encouraging the other prisoners not to be afraid... Here is what one eyewitness wrote: "...A younger man from Pando's group came over to see me. He said: 'Kiro, we are leaving tomorrow... They are taking us to Athens to execute us...' I immediately went to Pando's tent and there I found his group talking about their departure... Pando came over to me and said: 'Come and join us Kiro. This is our last day here...' At that moment, my body began to shake and my eyes pooled with tears... Pando then said: 'Kiro, we have become very close here in the prison, but I'm afraid we will now be separated and it will be forever... Please, if any of you survive take care of my fatherless children. Tell them that their father was executed because he believed in the ideals of the revolution... I want them to be proud of me and not feel sorry for me...' After I heard him say those touching words I couldn't remain indifferent... A stream of tears began to flow down my cheeks..."

"...Early the next morning I went to see Pando again. He and his group gave me their possessions and the extra clothes they had to share with the other prisoners. At the same time we said goodbye to

²²⁶ According to the recollections of Agnula Foteva-Atanasopoulou, who, along with Pando Trpovski, was also captured by the Greek border guards.

each other for the last time... Then as they were about to leave Pando raised his fist up and yelled ‘Death to the fascists and long live the people’s democracy...’ Moments later the police arrived and immediately put them in shackles. This was the last time I saw Lazo...”²²⁷

It is unknown to this day when Pando Trpovski was executed. From what we know, mostly from his comrades, he was executed at the Averof Prison in Athens in late 1947.²²⁸

Pando Trpovski’s was a great revolutionary not only because he served as a great organizer and bearer of the Macedonian anti-fascist and democratic movement, but also for his courage and heroic conduct during his trial in Kostur. Namely, he demonstrated courage and heroism in prison and during his execution when he refused to wear a blindfold.

Pando Trpovski-Buntovski proved to be a great patriot and, as a Macedonian NOF activist, belongs to the constellation of most prominent Macedonian revolutionaries who gave their lives for freedom and the national and social liberation of the Macedonian people.

²²⁷ According to the recollections of Kiro Talev from the village Konomladi, Kostur Region. Kiro Talev was a participant in the National Liberation War and served 12 years in Greek prisons.

²²⁸ According to the recollections of Malio Lambi, from Rupishta. Malio belonged to a group of prisoners who were sentenced to death at the island Giura. According to Malio Pando was executed on February 19, 1948.

TODORA ANASTASOVA-SKORNA (1922-1948)

Todora Anastasova Paskalova-Skorna was one of the prominent Macedonian women from the Aegean part of Macedonia who laid down her life in the struggle for the Macedonian people's freedom. Todora was born in 1922 in the village Nestram, Kostur Region, to a poor working class family.

In 1938, Todora together with her fellow villagers Evgenia Kiriakova, Tinka Filovska (Kaloianova), Mahi Filovska (Papaterpova) and Aleksandra Kirovska (Papaterpova) were admitted to OKNE, the organization for the communist youth in Greece.²²⁹

Under the leadership of OKNE, Todora, along with the other progressive young women from their native village Nestram, was given the responsibility to assemble material aid for the needs of political prisoners. Todora was one of the most active participants in carrying out this task.

Following the German and Italian fascist occupation, the local CPG organization in Nestram tasked its youth with collecting and storing weapons abandoned by the Greek army following its withdrawal from the Albanian front. Led by Mahi Filovska (Papaterpova) Todora Anastasova-Skorna, Evgenia Kiriakova and Aleksandra Kirovska (Papaterpova) collected 11 rifles, several hand grenades and some ammunition and handed in the find to the local Party organization in Nestram. Todora kept one rifle for herself.²³⁰

As an organized OKNE youth group, the above-mentioned young women often held meetings to become acquainted with the military and political situation in the country and to assign various tasks that they needed to perform for the movement, such as recruitment drives to draw new members to OKNE, disseminate propaganda through leaflets, personal visits, etc.

²²⁹ According to the recollections of Aleksandra Kirovska (Papaterpova), from the village Nestram, who was an active participant in the National Liberation War and a member of the CPG village party organization in Nestram.

²³⁰ Ibid.

On March 22, 1942, with help from domestic traitors Stavro Giurgushev, Kuze Kiriazovski, Tasho Kalaputov and some others, an Italian expeditionary battalion looking for communists surrounded the village Nestram. The soldiers gathered all the adults in the village square and, while aiming their machine guns and rifles at them, demanded that they hand over their cache of weapons. The villagers refused and wouldn't hand over anything at any cost. Then the above-mentioned traitors pointed out to the Italians who to arrest. As a result, the Italian soldiers arrested about 100 people, men and women, including Hrisostomo Papaterkov, Vasil Madzharov, Harito Galov, Leonid Duvalevski, Pando Duvalevski, Mahi Papaterpova, Atina Kaloianova, Aleksandra Kirovska (Papaterpova), Todoragona Anosta, Evgenia Kiriakova and Poliksena Kaloianova.²³¹ The arrested were terribly abused and brutally beaten, especially Todora Anastasova-Skorna, Evgenia Kiriakova and Poliksena Kaloianova. But they heroically endured the torture and gave them nothing. The same day, 12 people (women and girls) from Nestram were taken to the Averof prison in Athens. But because there was no specific information about their involvement in anti-fascist activities, the occupying authorities released Todora Anastasova-Skorna and Evgenia Kiriakova. The other villagers were released later. After they returned to Nestram, they immediately joined the anti-fascist movement and continued the struggle against the occupier.²³²

In January 1943, a group of ELAS partisans from the First Kostur Detachment was stationed near the village Nestram, in the "Kopanche" locality. At the same time an Italian company escorted by the Greek quisling gendarmerie was stationed inside the village. After contacting the Party organization in Nestram, the partisans asked the villagers to provide them with accurate information about the size and movement of the enemy company and supply them with food and warm clothes. On the morning of a pre-agreed date Todora Anastasova-Skorna and Evgenia Kiriakova were dispatched to the "Kopanche" locality to meet with the partisans. Apparently the women had never seen an armed partisan unit and were delighted to meet them. The group of fighters was led by Giorgi Rizopoulos from the village Langa, Gramos locality. After asking the women

²³¹ According to the recollections of Mincho Fotev and Aleksandra Kirovska...

²³² According to the recollections of Aleksandra Kirovska...

about life in the village and the terror and plunder the people had to endure under the Italian occupier, etc., the partisans discovered that the women had long been organized in the Party and that the youth in Nestram had joined OKNE en masse and were now struggling against the occupier and domestic traitors.²³³

On March 4, 1943, the partisans from Kostur Region serving in the First Partisan Detachment fought a fierce battle against the occupier and managed to liberate the village Nestram. After their victory, the village youth, as well as the entire village population, happily welcomed the partisans with tears of joy, songs and dances. Of course, also among them was Todora who was fully engaged in finding a place for the fighters to rest and lodge. A few days later the partisans left Nestram and went on another mission to pursue the enemy. Todora used this opportunity and, together with Evgenia Kiriakova, Poliksena Kaloianova and Mahi Papaterpova, voluntarily joined the ranks of the First Partisan Detachment.²³⁴

By the end of March 1943, ELAS fighters had liberated almost all the villages around Nestram. The youth organizations in the region were also reorganized during the same period. Todora was appointed as member of the EPON Nestram Regional Committee. During her service as an active member of EPON, Todora distinguished herself as a tireless agitator and organizer of the youth in the struggle against the occupier.²³⁵

In late April 1943, two Italian battalions, aided by about 300 counter bandits and other enemy military units, attacked the ELAS positions in the villages Nestram, Stensko, Chuka, Chivlik and others. Todora was among the first in the ranks of ELAS to take an active role in the defense of those villages. After four days of heavy fighting and strong pressure from the enemy, the partisans were forced to retreat in the Kostenaria direction in the vicinity of Langa.

During the summer of 1943, Todora Anastasova-Skorna served in the ranks of the youth partisan platoon at the headquarters of the ELAS 28th Brigade. In the fall of 1943, as requested by Hristina

²³³ According to the recollections of Mincho Fotev...

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ According to the recollections of Evdokia Baliova-Vera and Mincho Fotev...

Puhti, CPG District Committee secretary for Kostur District and CPG Women's Party Organization secretary for Kostur District, Todora was transferred to the CPG District Committee and tasked with working on Party propaganda to recruit more women into the women's Party organizations in Kostur District. Todora also temporarily served as CPG Party secretary for women's issues in the D'mbeni, Nestram and Bresteni Districts.²³⁶

Todora gladly accepted and successfully performed all tasks assigned to her by the CPG Regional Committee. Her very appearance at meetings instilled confidence and enthusiasm in the other women and, for the first time, women began to feel equal to men in their contribution to the common struggle.

In November 1943, Todora, who at the time was serving as acting secretary of the CPG's Nestram Regional Committee on Women's Affairs, was elected as delegate to the CPG's Kostur Region First Party Conference, held at the village school in Snicheni.²³⁷

During 1944, until the fascist occupiers were driven out of the country, Todora actively and selflessly fought for the freedom of her people. As a political organizer and leader of the movement, she gave her all for the struggle: her property, her house, her loved ones. But she didn't lose hope. In the second phase of the Revolution she continued her patriotic struggle.

In January 1945, as a delegate of the Kostur youth, Todora participated in the EPON Greek Conference in Solun.²³⁸

Immediately after the Varkiza Agreement was signed, as a youth organizer Todora Anastasova took part in all the protests organized by the CPG and EAM against the terror imposed by the Greek right. She led the women from Nestram to Kostur to protest against the Greek bands that were committing terror in Kostur Region. Because

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ According to the recollections of Evdokia Baliova-Vera and Mincho Fotev...

²³⁸ Todora Anastasova Paskalova-Skorna. Our fallen fighters. Voice of the Aegeans, 1951, October 6, II, 15.

of that she was repeatedly detained and harassed by the Nestram gendarmerie and those in Kostur and Kozheni.²³⁹

In March 1946, Kuzma Kaloianev, the first most prominent fighter from the village Nestram, was appointed NOF Nestram Regional Board secretary. Thanks to his help and with help from Todora Anastasova, after she was released from prison, the Nestram AFZH organization for women was formed in Nestram.

In September 1946, Todora was among the first women in Kostur Region to voluntarily join the partisans. One day Todora, Afrodita Duvalevska, Evgenia Kiriakova, Mahi Pekarova, Vasilka Petliganova and some other women appeared on Mount Gramos, in the “Kotelski livadi” locality where they were immediately, all but one, deployed in the partisan detachments. Todora Anastasova-Skorna and Afrodita Duvalevska were deployed in the detachment led by Ahilei Papaioanu, from the village Kalevishta, Kostur Region.²⁴⁰ Giorgi Ianoulis from the village Borbotsko, Kostur Region was in command of all the joint detachments on Mount Gramos.

In the period from the second half of 1946 until the beginning of 1947, the partisan detachments stationed on Mount Gramos attacked a number of villages where Greek gendarmeries were stationed. The purpose of these attacks was to expand the partisan’s free territory in that area. Among the most important battles fought were those for the liberation of the villages Shak, Revani and Omotsko. Another battle fought included the one against the Greek border guards at the Albanian border near the village of Kalevishta. The partisans also attacked several villages in other Kostur Region districts, including Chetirok, Dobrolishta and Krchishta.

In all of the above-mentioned battles Todora Anastasova showed great courage and heroism. At this point, it is worth mentioning that during a battle that took place between the villages Shak and

²³⁹ H. Skornu, Skornu Teodora. In the book “For the holy national freedom”. Characters of fallen national fighters ..., p. 243.

²⁴⁰ According to the recollections of Ana Mangova from the village Zhupanishta, Kostur Region...

Revani, Mahi, a woman partisan from Kostur, was captured by Greek government forces for the first time in DAG's history.

In January 1947, Todora Anastasova-Skorna, along with other DAG fighters, including Ana Mangova from the village Zhupanishta, Kostur Region, was sent to the partisan school where corporals were trained, in the village Snicheni.²⁴¹

In March 1947, a UN commission arrived on Mount Gramos to investigate the terror situation perpetrated in the Macedonian villages by the Greek political right. Members of the Commission also visited the school for training corporals and got to interview Todora Anastasova and Ana Mangova, who acquainted them with their reasons for joining the partisans. The students from the school for corporals then escorted members of the United Nations Inquiry Commission to the Kipurie locality in Grevena Region to meet with Markos Vafiadis. Vafiadis at the time was Commander of the DAG General Staff. After finishing their studies in Snicheni, Todora Anastasova, Ana Mangova and the other students from the school for corporals were sent to the villages Kaloni and Dasilio, in Grevena Region²⁴² to complete their training. After that Todora and Ana were assigned to units of the 588th DAG Battalion led by Ahileia Papaioannou.²⁴³ Todora served as a corporal in Vasil Hristovski's unit. Vasil was from the village Dobrolishta, Kostur Region. Ana Mangova served as a corporal in Sotir Ago's artillery unit. Sotir Ago was from the village Ianoveni, Kostur Region.

As a corporal in Vasil Hristovski's unit, Todora Anastasova fought against the government army during its first enemy offensive on Mount Gramos organized in May-June 1947. The operations on Gramos against the Greek government forces were led by Georgi Gianoulis, DAG commander of Gramos Headquarters.

During the first enemy offensive the government army suffered many defeats and DAG achieved significant success. DAG's free territory was expanded and the morale of the fighters was raised even more. Many more volunteers began to join DAG.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² According to the recollections of Ahileia Papaioannou and Ana Mangova...

²⁴³ Ibid.

Immediately after the unsuccessful government offensive ended, Todora Anastasova's unit, which operated in an area called "Prasa", at Kotelska visochina, was transferred to Mount Vicho. On July 14, 1947, Todora's unit, along with other DAG units, attacked the town Sorovich but failed to capture it. After that the partisans were sent back to Mount Gramos.²⁴⁴

At the suggestion of Gramos DAG Headquarters, in August 1947, Todora Anastasova and Ana Mangova were sent to the village Densko in Central Gramos to attend an Officers' course. The course lasted 6 months but, in addition being trained on a daily basis, the students also took part in a number of battles fought by DAG in that area.²⁴⁵

In December 1947, the students at the Officers' school received an order from DAG General Staff to transfer the entire DAG printing equipment from the village Densko to the village Orovo in Prespa. This was also where they wrote their final exams and then, after taking the oath, they were immediately transferred to the village Kidonies, Grevena Region, at DAG Headquarters for Western Macedonia. Todora was deployed as a platoon commander in one of DAG's units that operated in the area. After that Todora continued to fight for DAG in the battles fought in Epirus, Gramos, Vicho, etc. Todora continued to fight bravely and courageously until the middle of July 1948 when she stepped on a mine near Kopanche (Gorusha) locality on Mount Gramos.²⁴⁶

This is how Todora Anastasova-Skorna's life ended. She was a brave Macedonian and will be remembered.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Todora Anastasova Paskalova-Skorna. Our fallen fighters...

TINA ANDREEVA-TSVETA (1928-1949)

Among the most prominent Macedonian women fighters in DAG who heroically fought and sacrificed their lives for the Macedonian people's freedom was Tina Andreeva-Tsveta, the heroine of Gramos and Vicho.²⁴⁷ She was born in the beautiful village Mokreni in Kostur Region, in 1928 to a family known for its revolutionary tradition.²⁴⁸ From a very young age Tina²⁴⁹ was filled with Macedonian revolutionary ideas. During Metaxas's dictatorship in Greece, her father Kuzman Andreev was jailed by the Greek authorities on charges of allegedly spreading pro-Bulgarian propaganda in his native village. But even though she was a little girl, Tina found the strength and courage to prove to the Greek gendarmes that their accusations were false and that it was a fabricated provocation to justify Kuzman's trial.²⁵⁰

During the fascist occupation, because she was a young girl, Tina wasn't involved in the anti-Fascist struggle.

Tina's love for liberating the Macedonian people came to full expression in the summer of 1945 when NOF, the Macedonian liberation organization, was created in her village Mokreni, which included an AFZH and a NOMS cell. Tina was one of the first women in the village to join the ranks of NOMS and together with her fellow villagers Lenka, Dota, Aneta and others became engaged in collecting food and clothes for the needs of prisoners and the persecuted.²⁵¹ Tina was arrested by the Greek police for doing that but, despite being brutally tortured, she didn't admit to anything.²⁵²

²⁴⁷ For Tina Andreeva-Tsveta's involvement in the ranks of DAG see Fani Butskova, "The Heroines of Vicho and Gramos Tina Andreeva-Tsveta". History, Skopje, 1975, IX, No. 2. pp. 34-42.

²⁴⁸ Tina Andreeva's uncle, Nikola Andreev, was known as a prominent revolutionary and revolutionary leader during Ottoman times when Macedonians were treated like slaves.

²⁴⁹ The "Macedonian Bloody Wedding" starring Tsveta Voidan Chernodrinski, was first performed in 1944 in the village Embore, Kailari Region. This was when Tina took the nickname "Tsveta".

²⁵⁰ Andreeva Tina (Tsveta). In the book "For the Holy People's Freedom" ..., pp. 31-32. Also see Iroida tu Slavomakedonikou lau. Tsveta, 1949, p. 3.

²⁵¹ Fani Butskova, "The Heroes of Vicho and Gramos Tina Andreeva-Tsveta" ... p. 38.

²⁵² Ibid.

After her release from prison, Tina was forced to go underground. She later voluntarily joined the partisans and continued to struggle against the Greek terror bands with a rifle in hand.²⁵³ In a very short time she stood out as a heroic fighter.

After witnessing her military capability and her determination to struggle against the unpopular Greek regime, in early 1947 the CPG leadership sent her to attend a non-commissioned officer's course held in the village Koteltsi, on Mount Gramos.²⁵⁴

After completing the course and graduating as platoon commander, she fought bravely in the mountains Vicho and Gramos and in Siniachko, Konitsa and other places. She was often praised and decorated for her courage, bravery, determination and sacrifice. But Tina wasn't just a brave woman she was also very cheerful and had a good singing voice. She often sang for the partisan. Thanks to her talents she very quickly became famous and a favorite of the DAG fighters everywhere.

Here is an example of how Tina demonstrated heroism. During the enemy offensive on Mount Gramos in the summer in 1948, DAG units were holding positions near the mill above the village Omotsko. Tina with her platoon was holding a position on the side of the road where an ambush had taken place. In the morning, at dawn, a government unit surrounded Tina's platoon and the moment she stood up to investigate an enemy soldier rushed after her to capture her. He managed to grab her by her overcoat but thanks to her resourcefulness and dexterity she managed to get out of the overcoat and, after turning around, cut the soldier down with a burst from her machine gun, leaving him dead on the spot with her overcoat in his hands. Immediately after Tina shot the soldier a fire

²⁵³ Its unknown exactly when Tina joined the partisans. According to some she joined the partisans on September 6, 1946. See "Iroes ke martires" (Heroes and Martyrs). "New Greece" Edition, 1954. According to others, Tina joined DAG in the beginning of 1947. See "Nova Makedonka", organ of the AFZH Main Board for Aegean Macedonia, 1949, No. 2.

²⁵⁴ Tina Andreeva-Tsveta, magazine "Nova Makedonka", February, 1949, p. 11.

fight broke out and a fierce battle ensued, during which the government army suffered a major defeat and fled in panic.²⁵⁵

Because of her exemplary struggle and sacrifice, in 1949 Tina was sent as a delegate to the First Conference of the Greek Union of Democratic Women of Greece. Here Tina represented the women fighters from the DAG 18th Brigade and was appointed a member of its working presidency.²⁵⁶ Tina also represented the partisans at the Second NOF Congress in Vicho.²⁵⁷

Tina's heroism was well-known by many DAG fighters and elders, including the writer A. Pindu who spoke well of her. Among other things, this is what he wrote:

“One clear afternoon with her rifle on her right shoulder she appeared in wild Vicho and said ‘I have come to fight in your brigade, comrades.’ And since then she remained with the brigade. Wherever Tina was there was song and joy. In a short time she learned everything about the brigade, where it was, how it fought, its heroism and sacrifice – its entire history and the history of our people. When she became engaged in battle, fire and lightning rose, blazing and scorching. She rushed forward bravely shouting loudly ‘attack, attack, comrades. Ura!’...”²⁵⁸

Tina Andreeva-Tsveta, the brave darling of the DAG 18th Brigade, died heroically on May 13, 1949 in a bloody battle to take the peak of Mount Kulkuturie, over the Tsrnoglava Slope between the villages Neret and Trsie on the Neret Mountain chain.²⁵⁹

In connection with Tina's heroic death A. Pindu wrote:

²⁵⁵ According to the recollections of Ana Mangova, from the village Zhupanishta, Kostur Region. Ana was an active participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG.

²⁵⁶ “Mahitria”, DAG newspaper from March 15, 1949. Also see Fani Butskova, *The Heroine of Vicho and Gramos - Tina Andreeva-Tsveta...*, p. 41.

²⁵⁷ “Mahitria”, from April 5, 1949.

²⁵⁸ According to Fani Butskova, *The Heroine of Vicho and Gramos - Tina Andreeva-Tsveta...*, p. 41.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

“...And there at the peak suddenly there was a roar, smoke and then silence. Her voice could no longer be heard. Her friends picked her up. Only her eyes seemed to speak, whispering ‘They may have taken me away from my friends but they haven’t torn the hatred of them from my heart. Take my hatred and place it in your weapons so that I can continue to be with you and loudly shout attack, attack, comrades’ ...”²⁶⁰

This was Tina’s 90th battle. She fought to her last breath. For her heroism in this, as well as in every bloody battle she fought, she was posthumously awarded the Second Order of Courage. As a sign of recognition of her bravery, the partisans of the 18th DAG Brigade published a newspaper called “TSVETA”.²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ Ibid. According to Fani Butskova..., pp. 41-42.

²⁶¹ Ibid: p. 42.

DINO BINCHEV (1916-1948)

The revolutionary Macedonian village Kriva, Gumendzhe Region, has made many sacrifices for the Macedonian people's freedom.²⁶² Among the most prominent people in Kriva to sacrifice himself for the Macedonian cause was Dino Binchev. He was born in 1916 to a poor farming family but with a rich revolutionary tradition. After finishing primary school in his native village, Dino went to work on his parents' farm.

After fascist Italy attacked Greece, Dino Binchev and a number of fellow villagers were mobilized into the Greek army and immediately sent to the Albanian front to fight against the Italian aggressor.

From the first days of the German-Italian and Bulgarian occupation, Dino was among the first in his village Kriva to become involved in the struggle against the fascist invaders.

In 1942 Dino Binchev, together with his fellow villagers Atanas Ianakov, Dimitar Lititarov, Peno Karamutkin, Pano Mitkov and Dimitrak Zlatkin, created a basic CPG organization in Kriva²⁶³ in which Dino was put in charge of financial matters, a task on which he worked until the end of 1944 when the fascist occupiers were driven out.

With the introduction of pro-British rule in Greece, as a result of the Varkiza Agreement being signed, Dino, along with other progressive Macedonians from his native village, was persecuted by the Greek police and gendarmerie. He had no choice but to go underground. He then crossed the border into the Republic of Macedonia and stayed there for a short period of time.

After consulting with the NOF leadership for Aegean Macedonia in the spring of 1945, Dino, along with other Macedonian patriots, returned to his homeland and immediately joined the struggle

²⁶² According to the memoirs of Dimitar Lititarov from the village Kriva, regarding his revolutionary activities, kept at INI.

²⁶³ Ibid.

against the new reactionary authorities in Greece.²⁶⁴ Dino served as a courier in NOF's ranks in Gumendzhe Region and traveled to almost all the Macedonian villages agitating the people to fight against the enraged Greek gangs which fanatically terrorized the Macedonian people. Being successful at his job, Dino was later appointed member of the NOF District Board for Gumendzhe Region, responsible for its financial affairs, and secretary of the NOF Regional Board for the villages Kriva, Barovitsa, Petgas and others. Dino served in this capacity until the end of May 1947 when, with a rifle in hand, he joined the ranks of the DAG 24th Brigade of the 519th Battalion.²⁶⁵

Due to his physical exhaustion in the summer of 1948, from daily battles and marches, Dino Binchev abstained from fighting for some time. He felt severe pain in his legs and didn't have the strength to take part in distant actions. But despite that he didn't give up fighting.

In early October of 1948, the 519th Battalion, which was part of DAG 24th Brigade, was ordered to carry out a very important combat mission. Naturally Dino Binchev should have participated, but being exhausted he didn't have the strength to continue on the journey and was forced to stay at a border watchtower near the village Zhumnitsa in Gumendzhe Region. He was detained there by the border guards and two days later was handed over to the DAG 24th Brigade headquarters. Without inquiring, brigade command naturally assumed that he had deserted and immediately accused him. Dino was then detained and immediately taken to the village Notia, Meglen Region, and was handed over to fighter Aleko Pulkov to guard him.²⁶⁶ But Aleko Pulkov, who had previously learned that the 24th Brigade wanted him liquidated, informed him to take appropriate measures to save himself. Dino unfortunately didn't believe him. Dino was an honest revolutionary and had done nothing wrong and there was no need for him to flee. His situation unfortunately became worse on the evening of October 13, 1948 when he learned that his brother Risto Binchev had died in the battle

²⁶⁴ According to the recollections of Ivan Nichev from the town Gumendzhe...

²⁶⁵ According to the recollections of Aleko Pulkov from the town Gumendzhe. Aleko was an active participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

to capture the village Straishta in Meglen Region. Risto had long been a prominent fighter who fought against the foreign occupiers and during the Greek Civil War when he served in the DAG 24th Brigade as a saboteur in Gumenzhe Region.²⁶⁷

As expected, in late October 1948, Dino Binchev was executed by order of the DAG 24th Brigade.

Unfortunately the DAG 24th Brigade headquarters didn't properly question Dino Binchev nor was he brought before a military court judge to prove his guilt to appropriately punish him. Headquarters didn't do that nor did it officially sentence him. If headquarters was really convinced that Dino Binchev was a deserter, then why not officially try him? There was probably no evidence to prove that he had deserted so the decision to liquidate him was made secretly by a group of people who were anti-Macedonian. The fact that Dino Binchev didn't stand trial before the military court, and that he was held for a long time in a camp for violators of military rules gave headquarters plenty of time to investigate his case. But none of that happened, which proves that he was intentionally killed because he was Macedonian.

On top of being punished by his physical exhaustion, Dino's life was taken from him for something he didn't do. Dino was a Macedonian fighter who had struggled for a long time against the foreign occupiers and against the Greek reactionaries and didn't deserve to die this way. No matter how justified the DAG 24th Brigade headquarters was to liquidate Dino, the fact that no trial before a military court was held, qualifies as a conspiracy against Macedonian NOF activists.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

PANAOT BOZHINOV-LEFTER (1918-1946)

Panaot Bozhinov-Lefter was one of the first fighters from the village Mesimer, Voden Region, to join the resistance movement. He was born in 1918 to a poor farming family. After finishing primary school in his native village he continued his education at the Voden High School, but due to lack of money he was forced to leave school and go back to Mesimer to help his parents run the farm.

After fascist Italy attacked Greece, Panaot Bozhinov, along with others from his village, was mobilized into the Greek army and sent to the Albanian front to fight the Italian invaders.

After Greece capitulated to Hitler's Germany, Panaot returned from the Albanian front back to his native village and continued to work on the farm.

In the first half of 1942, Panaot Bozhinov began to associate with the more prominent Macedonian revolutionaries in his native village including Vangel Chobanov, under whose leadership Panaot became actively involved in the struggle against the occupier and domestic traitors.²⁶⁸

Later, in May 1943, with Vangel Chobanov's help, the young people in Mesimer created a cell of EPON, the youth organization. EPON's leadership consisted of Vangel Chobanov (secretary), Geli Gavranov, Sofia Alibakova-Lefka, Vani Indinakov and Panaot Bozhinov.²⁶⁹

From the first days of its creation EPON in Mesimer became involved in the struggle against the occupiers. Panaot Bozhinov showed himself to be great at organizing the villagers to struggle against the foreign invaders.

²⁶⁸ According to the recollections of Risto Bukovalov-Zhukov from the village Teovo...

²⁶⁹ According to the recollections of Vangel Chobanov from the village Mesimer. Vangel was one of the first fighters to join the National Liberation War in Ostrovo District.

During the first half of September 1944 units of the ELAS 30th Brigade, among which was the Macedonian Voden Battalion, attacked the city Voden.²⁷⁰ In their capacity as couriers Panaiot Bozhinov and Geli Gavranov were among the first to join the battle. Mesimer being located close to Voden helped Panaiot and Geli in successfully executing their tasks. In retaliation for the successful partisan attack on Voden, the enemy burned the village Mesimer to the ground and moved its inhabitants to Voden and the surrounding villages. But despite the fact that Mesimer was completely destroyed, the young men from that village, led by Panaiot, didn't stop struggling against the occupiers.

During the second half of October 1944, Macedonian partisans broke away from ELAS due to the problems they were having with the CPG and ELAS leadership regarding the Macedonian national question and crossed over the border into the Republic of Macedonia. There, the Macedonian activists and fighters from Voden Region reorganized and later returned to their homeland. During one of the meetings they had, Panaiot Bozhinov learned the details of the reasons why there was a split between the Macedonians and the CPG and ELAS leaderships²⁷¹

At the end of February 1945 with the formation of TOMO, the Macedonian liberation organization, Panaiot was among the first from his native village to join its ranks and threw himself into the struggle against the wrath of the Greek political right. Panaiot and his fellow villagers Kolio Giortashov and Vangel Chobanov created a TOMO village board in Mesimer.²⁷²

In June 1945, after NOF was created in Voden Region, Panaiot, now known as Lefter, was appointed member of the NOF District Board for Voden Region.²⁷³ A few days later he was appointed NOF secretary for the Mesimer area.²⁷⁴

²⁷⁰ Vangel Aianovski-Oche, *Aegean storms...*, p. 120. Also see Hristo Andonovski, *Macedonians under Greece in the struggle against fascism...*, pp. 185-186.

²⁷¹ Vangel Aianovski-Oche, *Aegean storms...*, pp. 159-160.

²⁷² *Ibid.*: p. 162.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*: p. 169.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*: p. 170.

In the second half of 1945, under a NOF District Board directive, Panaiot was assigned to carry out confidential courier assignments and deliver messages between the city Voden and the villages of Krontselovo, Teovo, Ostrovo and Mesimer. He was very diligent in this capacity and performed his assignments conscientiously and on time.

Shortly afterwards, in early 1946, Panaiot was appointed NOF Ostrovo Regional Board secretary.²⁷⁵

NOF was exposed to day-to-day hardships not only from the Greek reactionaries, but also from some people from the Greek CPG and AKE leaderships and members who slandered the NOF activists calling them “traitors”, “members of Ohrana”, “autonomists”, “separatists”, etc.²⁷⁶ During these difficult times Panaiot Bozhinov convinced the Macedonian population from his region that the Macedonians must defend their honour and freedom only with their own strength. But as he was going from village to village in an attempt to convince people, on March 23, 1946 when he was in the village Iavoriani, the Greek gendarmes, led by the traitor Sterio Vlaot, surrounded the NOF District Board hideout.²⁷⁷ Initially Panaiot was able to escape but to mislead the gendarmes he hid in the brush of a nearby river. Unfortunately he was spotted and surrounded on all sides. The gendarmes gave him the option to surrender but he yelled out “I will not surrender to you, you sold out dogs...” At that point the enemy fired in his direction and one Fascist bullet struck him fatally. He fell in the Podeska River and the

²⁷⁵ Ibid: p. 218.

²⁷⁶ From a report generated by Panaiot Bozhinov from the NOF District Board for Ostrovo, and sent to the NOF District leadership for Voden Region, regarding the organizational and political situation in the area. “Aegean Macedonia in the NOB, 1946”, Vol. III, doc. 20, pp. 49-50.

²⁷⁷ From a report generated by the NOF District Management for Voden Region, dated March 24, 1946, sent to the NOF Main Management regarding the political situation and NOF’s activities in the district. “Aegean Macedonia in the NOB, 1946”, Vol. III, doc. 86, p. 207. Also see NOF District Board for Voden Region Proclamation to the Macedonians, Greeks, Vlachs and Albanians, calling on them to unite and jointly oppose the Monarcho-Fascist terror against the Macedonian people. “Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1946”, T. III, doc. 87, p. 208.

water carried his dead body downstream. After making sure that Panaiot was dead, the gendarmes retrieved him²⁷⁸ and took him to the city Voden to terrorize the people.

In early February 1947, the partisans caught up to Sterio Vlaot, the right-wing collaborator, and his 200 sheep. He had already been punished for an earlier betrayal but was left alive. This time he wasn't so lucky and was liquidated for his betrayal of the Macedonian people.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁸ According to the recollections of Risto Bukovalov-Zhukov...

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

MATI (MATEIA) BULEV (1904-1949)

Mati Bulev was a pre-war activist and fighter in the Macedonian national liberation movement.²⁸⁰ Mati was born in 1904 in the revolutionary Macedonian village Ekshi-Su, Lerin Region, to a poor farming family.

From a very young age Mati had the character of a fierce revolutionary. In 1926 he acquainted himself with proletarian ideas and during Greece's parliamentary elections he defended the rights and interests of the candidates from the "United Front of Workers, Farmers and Emigrants".²⁸¹ Since then he actively participated in all parliamentary elections in Greece until 1932 when he took up membership in the Communist Party of Greece and came in close contact with CPG instructors carrying out various Party tasks.

After VMRO (United) for Aegean Macedonia was created, Mati Bulev became a member and loyal supporter, diligently working to popularize and strengthen it. He often participated in clashes with Greek reactionaries and the Greek police for which he was imprisoned several times. Persecuted members of the CPG and VMRO (United) often found refuge in his house where they held meetings and counseled the village CPG and VMRO (United) organizers.²⁸²

During the Greek parliamentary elections in January 1936, Mati Bulev, along with some 30 other fellow CPG members and sympathizers, accompanied by the Popular Front candidates, visited some villages in Sorovich Region and helped spread the Popular Front program. Thanks to the persistence and determination of the democratic people of Ekshi-Su, the Popular Front won a large number of votes during the village elections.²⁸³

²⁸⁰ This article by Tashko Mamorovski was published in the magazine "Cultural Life", Skopje, 1982, September-October, XXVII, No. 7-8, pp. 57-59. We are presenting it here with some small changes and additions.

²⁸¹ Mateia Bulev (Mati). Those who gave their lives. Voice of the Aegeans, Skopje, 1951, June 2, no. 10, p. 3.

²⁸² Hrisafov, K., Bulev Mati, "For the holy national freedom"... p. 57.

²⁸³ Ibid.

During the Metaxas dictatorship, Mati Bulev left Ekshi-Su and, for a while, moved to Nigrita District where he was arrested and interned on the island Chios.²⁸⁴

After Germany, Italy and Bulgaria occupied Greece and Aegean Macedonia, Mati was released from prison and immediately joined the partisan units of ELAS.

He took part in many operations, especially in bombing roads, bridges, railways and blowing up dozens of German and Italian trucks, trains and other vehicles.

After the German, Italian and Bulgarian fascist occupiers were driven out of Greece and Aegean Macedonia, and after the Varkiza Agreement was signed, Mati Bulev was forced to go underground. Then, when the CPG leadership dropped the famous slogan start a “political unarmed struggle”, he not only didn’t lay down his arms but served as one of the most active “unarmed struggle” organizers against the new Greek right-wing authorities.

Mati Bulev was one of the first and consistent Macedonian revolutionaries who didn’t agree with the CPG and EAM leadership’s unprincipled position towards the Macedonian national question. And that is why from the first days NOF, the Macedonian liberation organization, was created he joined and served as an ardent member and activist.

In the fall of 1946, when the Greek Civil War flared up, Mati was one of the first to join the armed struggle on Mount Radush. There he met other persecuted Macedonians from the villages Aitos, Ekshi-Su, Srebreno, Banitsa, and Zelenich, and together they formed a group and operated as saboteurs.²⁸⁵ This group didn’t hesitate to let the enemy in Sorovich Region know of its existence and that it could no longer easily persecute and terrorize the Macedonian people. With the first attacks Mati managed to arm his group with Brands, Thomsons, pistols, and hand grenades which they seized

²⁸⁴ Mateia Bulev (Mati). Voice of the Aegeans, 1951, June 2, No. 10.

²⁸⁵ According to the recollections of Mihali Iotev-Bitsan from the village Ekshi-Su, Lerin Region. Iote was a participant in the National Liberation War and DAG. This information is kept in INI.

from the enemy. His courage and fearlessness made the Monarcho-Fascists tremble when they heard the name Mati. All traitors and enemies of the Macedonian people were afraid of him. In order to take revenge on him, the Monarcho-Fascists burned down his house.

²⁸⁶

Mati fought many battles and skirmishes and blew up dozens of trucks, tanks, bridges and locomotives, earning the respect of his comrades as a courageous fighter and leader. Many of his enemies paid with their lives for murdering children and old people and for burning Macedonian homes and villages. To better illustrate his actions, we will list a few of them.²⁸⁷

In November 1948, the Monarcho-Fascists suffered great losses from the daily ambushes carried out by DAG partisan units which, among other things, cut telephone lines and poles, mined fields and attacked Monarcho-Fascist settlements and strongholds. These attacks were especially severe in the villages Banitsa, Ekshi-Su, Elevish, etc. So the Monarcho-Fascists decided to retaliate. They started sending troops from one of their brigades to attack and destroy the partisan positions in those areas. They started by dispatching troops from the village Banitsa in three different directions. One battalion went to the right of the village Negovan towards the villages Kuchkoveni and Kotori. The second battalion went to the left of Negovan. The third battalion went towards the old road leading to the village Neveska. This was a hostile challenge for DAG, especially for the saboteur detachment led by Mati Bulev and Kosta Hrisafov.²⁸⁸ The saboteurs, escorted by a unit of the People's Militia, set out to thwart the Monarcho-Fascist plans. Mati and his saboteurs carried out a surprise attack against government troops from their rear. They were so surprised that they began to retreat in panic, with heavy losses.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁶ Mateia Bulev (Mati), *Voice of the Aegeans*, 1951, June 2, No. 10.

²⁸⁷ The actions listed here do not cover Mati's entire activities and those of his saboteurs. Only the most important ones are listed and only from the last two years of the Greek Civil War, which inflicted heavy losses on the enemy.

²⁸⁸ Kosta Hrisafov was from the village Banitsa, Lerin Region and served as political commissar in the detachment.

²⁸⁹ From the memoirs of Stavre Popiliev from the village Aitos, Lerin Region, regarding activities and structures of the People's Militia created in DAG's free territory in the period from 1947 to 1949, p. 50. Memoirs kept in INI.

In the first half of December 1948, a government battalion stationed in the village Neveska attacked the DAG partisan units stationed near the village Zelenich. At the time Mati Bulev's sabotage group happened to be in Zelenich and immediately attacked the government battalion preventing it from occupying the village.

Around mid-December 1948, the Monarcho-Fascist battalion stationed in the village Neveska controlled all positions between the villages Neveska and Aitos allowing free movement. One day a column of Monarcho-Fascist soldiers escorting a number of trucks loaded with goods and ammunition were headed for Aitos. At the same time a Monarcho-Fascist battalion from Sorovich had just arrived in Aitos. Armed with a machine gun, a dozen or so DAG fighters from the People's Militia, stationed in the Sorovich villages, suddenly attacked the column of government troops in the "Aitoshka Korja" area. Another dozen or so fighters from Mati's group also attacked the same column near the locality "Lubotinski trap". The two sudden attacks caused the Monarcho-Fascist column to panic so the soldiers quickly loaded their goods and ammunition on mules and withdrew from the village Aitos.²⁹⁰ The fighters from the People's Militia and Mati's saboteur group then went in pursuit and started a firefight. Thinking this was a large partisan force the enemy battalion from Sorovich, which had just arrived in Aitos, in panic, also joined the battle which lasted all day. DAG captured 17 enemy soldiers including two non-commissioned officers, along with their weapons which also included two mortars and two machine guns. Frightened by the development in the field, the Monarcho-Fascist battalion in Neveska which controlled positions between the villages Aitos and Neveska, along with its informants from the villages Aitos and Zelenich, withdrew from its base in Neveska and fled.²⁹¹

Realizing that they were losing more and more positions every day and there was a need to raise the morale of their troops, the Monarcho-Fascist authorities, during the first half of January 1949, ordered their troops to evacuate all the villages from Sorovich

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ According to the recollections of Stavre Popiliev about events occurring in the village Aitos, Lerin Region.

District, from the villages located in the so-called “Dead zone” and move them to the cities and larger villages where the Monarcho-Fascists had their own army and police, and thus completely isolate DAG from the population. This took place immediately after DAG’s successes and when Division 10 had captured the city Negush. But when DAG had to retreat its forces from Negush, the fighters from Division 10 suffered heavy losses from the reinforced Monarcho-Fascist units stationed near Sorovich, Ekshi-Su, Spantsi and from the field units where the enemy had set up ambushes with large military forces.

On January 10, 1949 a motorized government brigade was spotted in the Aitos vicinity, forcibly evacuating the population from the villages Spantsi, Guluntsi, Liubetina, Aitos, Nevoliani, Gorsko, Srebreno, Ileo, etc. These forced evictions from the above-mentioned villages lasted for about ten days.

The presence of government units in the area created big problems for DAG. As a result DAG headquarters issued an order to transfer part of Mati Bulev’s saboteurs and part of the People’s Militia to the village Setina, on Mount Kaimakchalan. The remaining partisans located in the Sorovich District, consisting of fighters from the People’s Militia and Mati Bulev’s group, were ordered to stay there and, on a daily basis, carry out various saboteur actions against the enemy.²⁹² They were ordered to cut the telephone lines and telephone poles from Neveska to Zelenich and mobilize news fighters for DAG directly from the village Ekshi-Su despite the presence of government troops in the area. Naturally this was unbearable for the Greek government authorities, so in the second half of January 1949 they attacked the partisan units again. A government battalion with several armored vehicles was spotted heading towards the village Zelenich and so were enemy units from the village Klisura. Their aim was to capture the hills between the villages Ileo and Rakita and invade Zelenich. But the partisans in the area fought them off and didn’t allow the government troops to enter Zelenich. The local DAG groups and Mati’s saboteurs used their heavy machine guns and not only repelled the government troops but also inflicted heavy losses on them.

²⁹² According to the recollections of Stavre Popiliev regarding the activities and structure of the People’s Militia in the DAG free territory..., p. 25.

After the government's failure to take Zelenich, the Monarcho-Fascists ordered their battalion stationed in Neveska to try again but using a different method. This time the authorities mobilized the entire male population from the village Neveska and, one day in February 1949, used it to attack Zelenich. A government unit from the village Klisura was also dispatched to aid the attack. But thanks to the vigilance of the People's Militia and Mati Bulev's saboteurs, the enemy again failed to take Zelenich. One group of DAG fighters held the "Gradishte" heights above Zelenich and the other held positions outside the village. As the government troops came within a distance of about 250 metres, Mati's brave fighters opened fire on the enemy with snipers and machine guns from all sides, forcing them to flee in panic.²⁹³

Another incident Mati Bulev was involved in was the attack on the village Elevish in Sorovo Region. Elevish was a terrible village better known as the scarecrow to the inhabitants of the surrounding villages because this was the base of a number of armed traitors and terrorists who, on a daily basis, terrorized and robbed the people in the area. Mati Bulev decided it was time to teach them a lesson. Mati was well aware that the Elevish no-goods guarded the village well, especially overnight, and that no group could easily enter it undetected. So one day Mati loaded a mule with two "Telermine" mines, lit their fuses and chased the mule into their defensive trenches. But as the guards rushed to escape, the mines exploded killing six of them and wounding several more.²⁹⁴ And this was how Mati Bulev ejected the no-goods from the village Elevish.

On April 19, 1949, a government battalion attacked the partisan positions located above the village Zelenich but again ran into Mati's saboteur group of 16 fighters who heroically held their place and defended the partisan positions. The bloody battle lasted six hours during which heavy losses were inflicted on the enemy. After it was over, Mati Bulev ordered his saboteurs to withdraw but at that very moment an enemy bullet struck him fatally, ending his revolutionary career.²⁹⁵

²⁹³ Ibid: p. 31.

²⁹⁴ Hrisafov, K., Bulev Mati. "For the Holy People's Freedom"... p. 59.

²⁹⁵ Mateia Bulev (Mati). Voice of the Aegeans, Skopje, 1951, June, no 2.

TODOR DOICHINOV-MORAVA (1921-1947)

By decision of the Athens government's Minister of Public Security under law no. 34/509/1, December 30, 1945, Todor Doichinov²⁹⁶ and his brother Aleksandar were declared wanted bandits and for their heads, dead or alive, the Greek authorities were offering a reward of 200,000 drachmas each.²⁹⁷ Because of this their families suffered immensely. Their mother was exposed to unwarranted harassment and humiliation, and their older brothers Giorgi (34 years old), Konstantin (31 years old) and sister Marika (22 years old) were sentenced to one year in prison each.²⁹⁸

The Greek political right labeled all Macedonian fighters who fought for their freedom and their democratic rights, bandits and foreign agents. Todor Doichinov was one of the most prominent revolutionaries from Enidzhe-Vardar and a member of the NOF leadership. That is why he was at the top of the Greek list for liquidation. That is why the Greek authorities launched a hunt for him with a price on his head. Every adventurer went looking for him but this revolutionary wouldn't surrender alive.

Todor Doichinov-Morava²⁹⁹ was born in 1921 in the town Enidzhe-Vardar. He finished primary school in his hometown and from a

²⁹⁶ This article was written by Tashko Mamurovski and, with minor changes, was also published in the Bulletin of INI, Skopje, 1979, XXIII, no. 2-3, pp. 247-250.

²⁹⁷ See statement made on February 26, 1946, by Gendarmerie Lt. Col. I. H. Bafas, Commander of the Greek Gendarmerie in Voden, proclaiming that several Macedonian activists and fighters were bandits. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1946", Vol. III, doc. 59, p. 133.

²⁹⁸ See memorandum written by the Voden Region EAM District Committee and sent to the UN Inquiry Commission investigating the Terror perpetrated by the Monarcho-Fascist political right in Voden Region: Appendix No. 1. Directory of Deportees from Voden District. "Aegean Macedonia", 1947, IV. , doc. 25, p. 101.

²⁹⁹ Todor Doichinov's pseudonym; "Morava", comes from the mountain by the same name in Albania. That mountain, during the Greco-Italian War in 1940, was in the hands of the Italian army and together with Ivan Planina was an important strategic point. After Mount Morava fell, Ivan Planina fell and with it the road to Korcha was opened to the Greek army. This important event resonated widely throughout Greece, and Todor Doichinov took the name of Mount Morava as his pseudonym. According to the recollections of Ivan Nichev-Mirche from the town Gumendzhe. Ivan was NOF secretary in the District Board for Gumendzhe and Enidzhe-Vardar Districts.

young age worked as a hired hand for the rich, and as such had the opportunity to personally experience the exploitation of the working class and the poor.³⁰⁰

During Ioannis Metaxas's dictatorship in Greece, Todor witnessed the discriminatory and assimilationist policies of the Greek fascist authorities directed at the Macedonian people who were even prohibited from speaking Macedonian, their mother tongue. That's why from a young age Todor began to associate with progressive people and spread their revolutionary ideas.

When the German Nazi occupiers invaded Greece and Aegean Macedonia, Todor Doichinov joined PKNE, the Greek youth organization,³⁰¹ and since 1942³⁰² served as a member of the CPG and EAM, organizing and managing urban and rural party organizations. Todor also worked in OPLA³⁰³ with other activists from the district until the Varkiza Agreement was signed and ELAS capitulated.

As an exemplary member of the Party, Todor enjoyed his authority, especially among the Macedonian youth. Todor never forgot to emphasize to his compatriots the need for their active participation in the anti-fascist movement in Greece and Aegean Macedonia which, in his opinion, was the only guarantee for the Macedonian people's national and social liberation.

Due to the terror inflicted on the Macedonian population after the Varkiza Agreement was signed, in March 1945, Todor went underground. He was forced to leave the country and went first to Tetovo and then to Bulkesh (Voivodina).³⁰⁴ When he arrived in Bulkesh, he joined the refugees from Aegean Macedonia and

³⁰⁰ Program for commemorating events and characters from the Macedonian people's revolutionary past in Skopje. Skopje, 1973, part III, (bisti), p. 197. Information kept in INI.

³⁰¹ According to the recollections of Ivan Nichev-Mirche ...

³⁰² See short biographies of NOF activists in Gumendzhe and Enidzhe-Vardar Districts, submitted by Ivan Nichev-Mirche to the NOF Main leadership, "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1946", T. III, doc. 134, p. 299

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

became involved in their political life and worked tirelessly to spread his national ideas.

Drawn by the difficult situation of his Macedonian people back home, in November 1945, Todor returned to his homeland through Gevgelia and immediately joined NOF.

In early March 1946, Todor was appointed NOF Regional Board Secretary for Enidzhe-Vardar District, where he served as its leader until March 1947.³⁰⁵ Despite some weaknesses he faced, Todor was able to create a number of basic NOF cells in Enidzhe-Vardar and the surrounding area and even during the most critical moments he didn't abandon his post.³⁰⁶ He was especially active in agitating the young people. Unfortunately his activities didn't go unnoticed by the then Greek reactionary authorities in the district who were raining havoc on the Macedonians in Enidzhe-Vardar. The atrocities they were committing exceeded all limits. An example of this is highlighted in a report written by Todor Doichinov and sent to the NOF General leadership, dated March 7, 1946, in which, among other things Todor wrote: "...The terror against the Macedonians has reached its culmination point. Beatings, confiscations of livestock and property, and the dismissal of democratically-minded soldiers are on the rise, exhausting our element economically. Detainees are still in prisons, without any being released... On March 7, a small gendarmerie force arrived to maintain order. The police commander is Kontakos, a Monarcho-Fascist and terrorist. The following people often abuse our people: Zmirnios Theodoros, teacher; Adamakis Petros, Hadzhitimothiadis, Vuzrizdis Alekos..."³⁰⁷

Todor Doichinov led NOF in the Enidzhe-Vardar District for an entire year and, with his collaborators, traveled around the entire area agitating and organizing the people to struggle against the

³⁰⁵ Hristo Andonovski, "The Death of Captain Morava", Magazine "Idnina", Skopje, 1950, March-April, II, No. 2, pp. 59-60. Also see Program for the memorial commemoration of events and characters..., p. 197.

³⁰⁶ As per a report written by Vangel Nichev-Orivatis from the town Gumendzhe, NOF District Board Secretary for Gumendzhe District, dated May 15, 1946, and sent to the NOF General Directorate, regarding the political situation in Gumendzhe and NOF's activities. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1946", T. III, doc. 129, p. 287.

³⁰⁷ Ibid: doc. 76, pp. 174-175.

Greek Monarcho-Fascist reactionaries and their agents. Also, there was no partisan action in which Todor didn't participate.

In March 1947, under orders from the NOF Main Board for Aegean Macedonia, the NOF leadership of Enidzhe-Vardar District was tasked to organize a campaign to fundraise and collect money for NOF's needs from the local Enidzhe-Vardar population.³⁰⁸ For that purpose forms were printed bearing the Organization's seal along with a list of people who could help. The forms were to be sent to Enidzhe-Vardar and the people appointed to carry out the task were District Secretary Todor Doichinov-Morava, Regional Secretary Krste Rabushev, Kosta Popov, Risto Vatsurov and some others.

Before going to Enidzhe-Vardar, the above-mentioned people first had to go to the village Radomir and from there to other villages to agitate the population. But, for some unknown reason, they went to the village Krushari first and from there were going to take the forms to Enidzhe-Vardar.³⁰⁹

They arrived in Krushari on the evening of March 28, 1947 and went to Mayor Petar Kurtelev's house to ask the mayor, the most responsible person in the village, to help them organize the fundraising campaign. They left the Mayor's house just before midnight. Kosta Popov, along with two others, went to the upper part of the village. Todor Doichinov went with his courier Krste Rabushev and hid in the attic of his house. But as it turned out the mayor was a traitor and didn't sleep a wink that night. Pretending to be very ill, he hurried to the city to inform the Monarcho-Fascists that Morava and his comrades were in the village.³¹⁰ The Monarcho-Fascists, who were expecting the traitor Kurtelev to inform on the partisans, gave the signal to capture Morava.

³⁰⁸ According to the recollections of Vangel Nichev-Orivatis ...

³⁰⁹ According to the recollections of Atanas Meliov-Atso from the village of Kufalovo, Solun Region. Atanas served as NOF Secretary for Kufalovo Region.

³¹⁰ Hristo Andonovski, "The Death of Captain Morava". On the occasion of the 5th anniversary of the death of Todor Doichinov-Morava. Voice of the Aegeans, Skopje, 1952, March 13, III, 20. Also see the recollections of Atanas Meliov-Atso...

In the morning of March 29, 1947,³¹¹ voices were heard out in the streets all over the village. They were the voices of the fascist gendarmes searching the village, house by house. They looked everywhere but found no one. The guests were well hidden. However, one of the gendarmes went to Krste Rabushev's house and decided to look in the attic where Todor and Krste were hiding. But Morava, who was always prepared, even for the most dangerous of situations, shot the gendarme with his pistol. As soon as the shot was fired the gendarmes surrounded the house. The two then took the forms they had with them and, so as not to fall into the hands of the enemy, gave them to the women to hide and then burn. They then jumped out of a window.³¹² As they broke through the encirclement they ran away but because Krste was wounded on the leg he couldn't run fast and fell into the hands of the fascists, alive. They took him to Enidzhe-Vardar and beat him to death in Ivan Rabushev, his brother's yard, who at the time had just returned from Athens where he served in the Greek army.³¹³

As for Todor Doichinov, after Krste was wounded, he grabbed Krste's machine gun and began to fire at the enemy, managing to run away for about 500 metres. He unfortunately was also wounded from being fired at and was bleeding profusely. Feeling that he was gradually losing consciousness he knelt on the ground and, in order not to fall alive into the hands of the enemy, took out his last hand grenade, put it on the ground and lay on top of it killing himself.

The gendarmes took Morava's body and placed it in the city square in Enidzhe-Vardar to terrorize the people.³¹⁴

After Todor Doichinov-Morava was killed, Enidzhe-Vardar District was turned upside down. All the villages were emptied of their

³¹¹ According to a report written by Vangel Nichev-Orivatis, dated May 1947, sent to the NOF Main Board, regarding the political and organizational situation in Enidzhe-Vardar District. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1947", Vol. IV, doc. 34, p. 192.

³¹² According to the recollections of Ivan Nichev-Mirche and Atanas Meliov-Atso...

³¹³ According to the recollections of Vangel Nichev-Orivatis and Atanas Meliov-Atso...

³¹⁴ "For the holy national freedom." Characters of our fallen national fighters ... 1968, pp. 79-80.

people. Many were executed, prisons were overcrowded, military courts operated every day issuing death sentences, and thus the terror reached its climax.

Terror groups roamed the countryside, looting, killing and raping girls and women.³¹⁵ But the Macedonian people didn't succumb to those atrocities. On the contrary, they became even more determined and struggled harder for their freedom and national and social rights.

³¹⁵ “Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1947”, Vol. IV, doc. 34, p. 189.

RISTO DONCHEV (1921-1948)

The CPG, ELAS and DAG top leaderships have always openly showed their dislike of Macedonians publicly manifesting their national consciousness, and because of that many Macedonians were labeled “dangerous elements”, “autonomists”, “separatists”, “deserters”, “traitors” and were viciously liquidated. This was the case with Risto Donchev.³¹⁶

Risto Donchev was born in 1921, in the beautiful village Iavoriani, Voden Region. He came from a poor agricultural family but with rich revolutionary traditions. His father Giorgi Donchev served as a Macedonian teacher in his native village Pozharsko in Meglen Region. However, with the annexation of Aegean Macedonia by Greece as a result of the Balkan Wars, in 1912, Giorgi Donchev, along with many other villagers, was forced to leave Pozharsko and move to the village Iavoriani where he earned his living as a farmer.³¹⁷

In 1924, Giorgi Donchev was forced to leave Iavoriani and move to the city Voden because his family was large and he didn't have enough land to support it. As an agricultural worker, Giorgi immediately made connections with the city's progressive workers such as Perikli Paskalov, Tashi Kordalov, Dini Papaiankov, Tushi Kolkotronov, Kolio Proev and other Macedonians who had already joined the CPG in Voden. Under their influence he also joined the Party.³¹⁸ Over time, Giorgi Donchev raised all his children with revolutionary ideas. His four sons and daughter would later become strong activists and, through the CPG in Voden, perform union work for which they would often be arrested and convicted by the Greek reactionary authorities.

³¹⁶ This article, written by Tasko Mamurovski, was also published in the list of the House of Immigrants from Macedonia “Emigrant Calendar”, Skopje, 1983, p. 130. Here we provide the same article with minor changes and additions.

³¹⁷ Vangel Aianovski-Oche, *Memoirs and Critical Review of the Development of the Workers', Communist and National Liberation Movement of the Macedonians in Voden and the Voden Region*, Part II, p. 374. Records kept in INI.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

In 1934, even though he was a minor, Giorgi's youngest son Risto was employed as an ordinary worker in the "Tsitsova" rope factory. Here he immediately joined the textile workers' union and struggled for the rights and interests of the workers.³¹⁹

When the Germans, Italians and Bulgarians occupied Greece and Aegean Macedonia, Risto was working in the "Estia" textile factory where he soon joined OKNE in Voden and was actively involved in carrying out actions against the occupiers. Risto Donchev actively participated in practically every organized political function such as demonstrations, strikes, rallies, etc. Because of his strong commitment, at the end of 1941 he was accepted as a member in the CPG, and in the following year he served as a member of MAO, the Macedonian liberation organization. There he worked tirelessly to recruit members to expand the MAO in the city Voden.³²⁰

In 1943, Risto Donchev was appointed a member of the leadership of the Employment Centre in Voden. He showed solidarity with other Macedonian activists and anti-fascists in their demands to achieve national and social rights. He also participated in several unapproved meetings held in the city without the CPG District leadership's knowledge. One overriding issue discussed during these meetings was how to approach the CPG city leadership in order to achieve positive results on the Macedonian National question.

During the summer of 1944, after the Voden Macedonian Battalion was created in Kaimakchalan, Risto Donchev vigorously agitated the Macedonian population, especially the Macedonian youth in Voden, to enlist in the Macedonian army. Thanks to his hard work, many Macedonians enthusiastically joined the Macedonian army in Meglen and Voden Regions. A short time later Risto was appointed platoon commander in the Battalion.³²¹

In October 1944, Macedonian partisans from the Voden Battalion broke away from ELAS due to the problems they were having with the CPG and ELAS leaderships regarding the Macedonian national question. At that time Risto Donchev and the Battalion crossed over

³¹⁹ According to the recollections of Vangel Aianovski-Oche...

³²⁰ Vangel Aianovski-Oche, *Aegean Storms...*, p. 100.

³²¹ *Ibid*: p. 416.

the border into the Republic of Macedonia where, as platoon commander, Risto continued to fight against the occupiers.

In November 1944, with the formation of the First Aegean Assault Brigade in the Republic of Macedonia with the Macedonian fighters from Greek occupied Macedonia, Risto, as an officer in the Third Battalion, participated in all actions carried out by the Brigade against Mefail and Dzhemo's Balisti in the vicinities of Debar, Kichevo, Gostivar, Tetovo, etc.

In May 1945, after the First Aegean Assault Brigade was disbanded, as a JNA officer, Risto Donchev served in the border sectors and in early 1947, at his own request, he joined NOF for Aegean Macedonia. After he returned to his homeland, Risto was appointed NOF secretary in the NOF City Board for the city Voden.³²²

When the Greek reactionaries escalated their terror tactics against the Macedonian population and committed daily crimes not only against NOF members but also against the entire Macedonian population in Voden and the surrounding villages, Risto Donchev, like all NOF activists, didn't give up but continued to struggle even during the most difficult times. He continued to diligently carry out the duties assigned to him by NOF.

Around the middle of 1947, after the CPG-NOF Agreement was signed on May 20, 1947, at "Mishovi Kolibi" in Kaimakchalan, Risto Donchev was mobilized by DAG and was made available to DAG Headquarters in Kaimakchalan. He was appointed acting commander of a DAG partisan detachment in West Kaimakchalan, in the Banitsa-Setina sector.³²³

On top of the military duties Risto carried out in that field, he never stopped widening the Macedonian national consciousness among the Macedonian partisans in DAG and the Macedonian population in this area in general. However, some DAG leaders didn't like that and on March 26, 1948, Risto died mysteriously. He was shot by an

³²² Vangel Aianovski-Oche, *Memoirs and Critical Review of the Development of the Workers' Movement and National Liberation Movement of the Macedonians in Voden and Voden Region...*, p. 375.

³²³ Ibid.

unknown shooter when his detachment was in the village square in Setina and Risto's fighters were having a good time dancing to Macedonian music.³²⁴

Since DAG's leaders remained indifferent to Risto Donchev's vile death, we can conclude that this crime was the work of the chauvinistic and nationalistic Greek element present inside DAG. These so-called Greek communists couldn't tolerate ardent patriotic Macedonians in their ranks.

³²⁴ Ibid.

VANE DOROV (MALKOV) (1913-1947)

The name Vane Dorov (Malkov) is connected with a heroic deed that took place during the difficult battles on Mount Gramos. Namely, on July 16, 1947, Vane and two of his comrades jumped from the rocks into an abyss to avoid capture. This was at a place called Kotelska Kula.³²⁵ This incident became widely known everywhere and contributed to strengthening the DAG fighters' desire to fight with even greater fanaticism for an imminent victory over the Monarcho-Fascists.

Vane Dorov (Malkov) was born in 1913 in the village Sheshtevo, Kostur Region, to a poor agricultural family. After graduating from primary school in his native village, Vane stayed home and helped his parents with their farm work.

In 1933 Vane was drafted into the Greek military and sent to the city Seres to serve in a cavalry unit. After finishing his military service, Vane found a job in a foreign company in Seres.³²⁶

A few days before the outbreak of the Greek-Italian war, Vane was involved in an industrial accident at work and was seriously injured. But despite his injuries, after the war broke out he was mobilized into the Greek army and, like many other Macedonians, sent to the Albanian front to fight the Italians.

During the German-Italian and Bulgarian occupation, Vane Dorov and his fellow villagers assisted the anti-fascist movement in every way they could. Later, after the foreign occupiers were driven out and pro-British rule was introduced, as a result of signing the Varkiza Agreement, the Greek authorities began to persecute Vane and his villagers accusing them of being autonomists. For his involvement with the anti-Fascist movement Vane was arrested several times and imprisoned in the Kozheni prison³²⁷ where he was

³²⁵ Dorov Vane (one of three), "For our Sacred National Freedom" p. 81.

³²⁶ According to the recollections of Metodi Malkov from the village Sheshtevo, Kostur Region, Metodi was an active participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG.

³²⁷ Nikola Shalvarinov, Chronicles of the village Sheshtevo. Manuscript kept in INI.

tortured and abused. In February 1945, Vane and his villagers managed to escape from prison and crossed the border into the Republic of Macedonia. There Vane immediately joined the ranks of the First Assault Brigade, made up of Macedonians from Greece, and fought against remnants of the Balisti gangs in Western Macedonia.³²⁸ After the First Aegean Strike Brigade was disbanded Vane moved to Bitola where he worked loading and unloading train cars.

In September 1946, Vane Dorov and a group of Macedonians from Greek occupied Macedonia voluntarily left the Republic of Macedonia and, traveling through Albania, arrived at Mount Malimadi. They returned to Greece so they could fight against the Greek Monarcho-Fascists.³²⁹

At that time, Risto Iabona from the village Breznitsa, Kostur Region, was leading a partisan detachment which operated on Mounts Malimadi, Vicho and Lisets (Koreshtata). Vane immediately joined Risto's detachment and, from the first days, began to stand out with his courage. After a short time he transferred to Giorgi Kalkov's detachment where he was promoted to corporal. Giorgi was from the village Visheni, Kostur Region. As a corporal Vane fought in every battle on the field until May 1947.³³⁰

At about the same time DAG carried out the so-called first mobilization of fighters from all free villages in the Vicho and Prespa area. Based on that mobilization, new DAG detachments and battalions were created. The small detachment of a dozen, in which Vane Dorov served, suddenly grew into a company. It was led by Micho Valiakov from the village Visheni, Kostur Region. Vane's dozen grew into a platoon. After the reorganization Vane's fighters were dispatched to Mount Gramos. Vane continued to fight on Mount Gramos as platoon commander until his tragic death.

³²⁸ According to the recollections of Nikola Srbinovski from the village Seshtevo. Nikola Srbinovski was an active participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG. Also according to the recollections of Hristo Malkov from the village Seshtevo who fought in the ranks of the First Assault Brigade. Hristo also fought in DAG in the company of Giorgi Kalkov, Micho Valiakov and Atanas Karavidas, and from 1948 on he served in the People's Militia.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Ibid.

During the summer of 1947, heavy fighting broke out on Mount Gramos between DAG units and Greek government troops. Company Commander Micho Veliakov and eleven DAG fighters were killed in the first battle. As battles mounted the company in which Vane's platoon was serving was reduced from 138 to 63 fighters. To raise the fighting morale it was necessary to bring new fighters into the company. But until that was done the company continued to fight from a distance in the localities "Portite", "Gurusha" and even as far as "Kotelska Kula" and the village Mirovliti on Gramos.

One day Vane Dorov received orders to defend "Kotelskata Visochina" but after a heavy battle his platoon was reduced to ten fighters. During these critical moments, Company Commander Tanasis Karavidas asked for volunteers from Vane's platoon to help the DAG fighters in "Kotelska Kula"³³¹ locality escape before the enemy trapped them by cutting off their escape path past the church St. Ilia to "Kotelskite Livage". Vane and two others volunteered to go. Unfortunately the enemy attacked "Kotelska Kula" with all available forces, trying at all costs to cut the partisans off from retreating to "Kotelskite Livage". The brave DAG fighters in "Kotelska Kula", being bombed by enemy planes from above and by artillery and mortars from the sides, held their positions as the government forces gradually approached. They were pursued by a large enemy force from the front and behind them lay the inaccessible abyss called Haro, 120 metres high. The partisans fought heroically until their last bullet and after that they threw all their weapons, including their heavy machine gun, into the abyss. Then, not to fall into the hands of the enemy alive, they formed a circle, grabbed each other tight and began to sing before jumping into the abyss.³³²

In appreciation and to honour our heroes for their deeds our people built a monument for them and wrote the following song:

³³¹ Dorov Vane (one of three). "People's Freedom" pp. 81-82. Also see Nikola Shalvarinov, Chronicle of the village Seshtevo ...

³³² Ibid,

What flies, what falls,
what casts off from high cliffs
in the deep valleys of Mount Gramos?
It is an eagle with broken wings
or is it a disenchanted person?
It's not an eagle with broken wings
nor is it a disenchanted person,
He is a fighter from the people's army
He is our hero Vane Dorov from Shestevo.

Told by mother, father, and old grandmothers
he listened to stories until midnight
about celebrated Ilinden, about the heroes of Ilinden
in spring mornings, in summer dawns,
in the wide fields, in the broken mountains,
he collected flowers reddish and white,
he arranged bouquets, wreaths,
he decorated old graves with wreaths,
for Gotse Delchev's brave fighters.

From early childhood, from years young,
screams he heard, gallows he saw,
it was his desire, it was his love
slavery to break, wretched tyranny,
for the freedom of the people,
and when a disgusting horde of fascists
in the Aegean in Greece flew and landed,
a young company he took with him,
bloody battles he fought everywhere.

The day had not yet dawned,
the sun had not yet risen,
in the locality of Vrahos on Mount Gramos
machine guns roared, grenades exploded,
fighters brave, the entire company

in the last fight, in the last battle,
before sunset heroically jumped.
Vane invited to surrender;
he threw himself into the abyss,
he did not surrender alive.

Mihailo Keramitchiev

TINKA DUMKOVA (1926-1949)

An important place among the brave Macedonian women fighters of the national liberation movement in the Aegean part of Macedonia belongs to Tinka Dumkova.³³³ Tinka was born on February 26, 1926 in the heroic village Ekshi-Su,³³⁴ Lerin Region, to a poor agricultural family.

Like many other Macedonian women from her village, Tinka was poor and experienced poverty and hardship from an early age. In order to provide for his family, her father was forced to go to South America to seek work.³³⁵

Tinka finished primary school in her native village and was one of the best students in her school. In addition to going to school Tinka also helped her mother with the household chores.³³⁶

During the German, Italian and Bulgarian occupation of Greece and Aegean Macedonia, and especially since 1943, Tinka actively and tirelessly worked in EPON, the youth organization.³³⁷

After the withdrawal of the German occupying forces from Greece and the signing of the capitulating Varkiza Agreement, Tinka Dumkova didn't stop her revolutionary activities. From the first days after the nationalist regime in Greece was restored, Tinka actively participated in the struggle against the new right-wing authorities in Greece. Together with others from her native village, she collected food and took it to the Lerin Prison to feed the patriotic Macedonians who were imprisoned by the Greek authorities.³³⁸

³³³ This article, with some small changes and additions, was also published in the INI Gazette, Skopje, 1981, XXV, no. 2-3, pp. 397-400.

³³⁴ The village of Ekshi-Su is an old Macedonian village in Aegean Macedonia near the town Sorovich. It used to be called Vrbeni, but the Turks called it Ekshi-Su (Sour water) because it had mineral water springs.

³³⁵ According to the recollections of Pando Tashkovski, from Ekshi-Su. Pando was a fighter in the National Liberation War and in DAG.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Dumkova Tinka. "For the Holy National Freedom" ..., p. 86.

³³⁸ According to the recollections of Pando Tashkovski and Giorgi Turundzhiev, from the village Ekshi-Su. Giorgi was one of the first fighters from Lerin Region to join the National Liberation War.

While working at EPON, Tinka Dumkova was tasked with helping the prisoners in Prespa and border villages who couldn't be helped by their relatives.

During EPON meetings, which she often organized, Tinka appealed to the girls and women to knit socks, sweaters and other items of clothing for the needs of the activists. Unfortunately some of the women, including fellow villagers Menka Vodenicharova, Verka Vodenicharova and Olga Sherifova, were caught by the Greek authorities, arrested and taken to a prison in Lerin where they were subjected to terrible torture.³³⁹

On May 7, 1945, the Monarcho-Fascist National Guard broke into several houses in Tinka Dumkova's native village Ekshi-Su and abducted three villagers and brutally beat them.³⁴⁰ On May 11, 1945, the Monarcho-Fascists broke into more houses in Ekshi-Su but didn't find the men they were looking for so they abused the women and children and then robbed the houses.³⁴¹

In early November 1945, Dimitar Stumtaki, Stefan Rombov, Evangelo Kristamdzhi and Iani Sodra were arrested in Ekshi-Su and sent to prison.³⁴²

On May 1, 1946, the Monarcho-Fascists blockaded Tinka's village Ekshi-Su, arrested about 200 villagers and then beat them for 6 days.³⁴³ The same Monarcho-Fascists looted and burned 30 houses, arrested all the women, children and elderly and detained them in the village school for three days without food.³⁴⁴

In 1947, the sisters Vesa and Niki Strezov and Matka Popova were brutally tortured and then burned alive in the village square in Tinka

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945", Vol. II, doc. 24, p. 51.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Ibid: doc. 188, p. 356.

³⁴³ "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1946", Vol. III, doc. 202, p. 447.

³⁴⁴ Ibid: p. 446.

Dumkova's presence.³⁴⁵ Their torturers burned them with red hot irons until they died from their wounds. They were especially brutal against Matka Popova who was tortured in front of her husband and four young children.

In 1947, the Monarcho-Fascists stabbed Sika Strezhova in front of her ten-year-old son. Sika was Vesa and Niki's sister mentioned above. Then, after torturing her for a long time, her torturer Baburis fatally stabbed her. She died without giving up any information about her activities.³⁴⁶

The atrocities the Monarcho-Fascists committed in the village Ekshi-Su and in other Macedonian villages motivated Tinka Dumkova and her fellow villagers to fight even harder against these fascist gangs. And when the Greek Civil War intensified more than 120 partisans from Ekshi-Su joined NOF, the Macedonian liberation organization.³⁴⁷

In the summer of 1947, Tinka also joined the partisans as a volunteer. She left Ekshi-Su, traveled over Mount Radush, near the village Aitos, Lerin Region, and joined Mati Bulev's detachment. After that she, along with other volunteers, was inducted into DAG's ranks.

While serving in a DAG company in the 3rd Battalion of the 108th Brigade, Tinka was promoted to corporal, responsible for leading a number of women. There she distinguished herself as a courageous and spirited fighter who served as an example to the others. Her fellow fighters were proud of her and respected her.³⁴⁸

In the summer of 1948, when heavy fighting was taking place on Mount Gramos between the partisans and the Greek government troops, on orders of battalion command, Tinka was transferred from the first to the second line on Preval peak where the wounded partisans were kept. Her job was to encourage the fighters to

³⁴⁵ Dumkova Tinka. "For the Holy People's Freedom" ..., p. 86 and p. 94.

³⁴⁶ Chronicles about the village Ekshi-Su. Manuscript kept in INI.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ The Greek and Slavo-Macedonian people in DAG. Spis. "Makedonche", 1953, March, IV, no. 3, p. 8.

continue to hang on and fight. But the real reason for sending her there was to save her from being killed. Command knew that with her courage and determination she would have jumped into the fire and faced inevitable death. Still she wasn't content serving in the second line and persistently insisted on returning to the front line, demanding that Captain Giorgi Ratsko let her go. She insisted that her place wasn't here and that she should go to where her brigade was.³⁴⁹ After insisting for a long time Tinka eventually left and rejoined her brigade in Gramos.

On April 2, 1949, brave Tinka tirelessly traveled from Mount Vicho to Gramos along the enemy line. She ran from one place to another helping the partisans during their most difficult moments. Tinka also demonstrated her heroism when her company was cutting the barbed wire at the Alevitsa pass.

Early in the morning, on April 5, 1949, Tinka Dumkova's company was located near the rocks at "Kotelska Visochina". This is where two years before three young DAG fighters had jumped off the cliff so as not to fall alive into the hands of the enemy.³⁵⁰ Suddenly they were attacked by two large enemy units. Even though they were a smaller group, Tinka's partisans fought bravely and repelled the attack. They then helped the other DAG units liberate Gramos.

Tinka Dumkova, as always, also fought bravely at the peak of Vulgara Mountain in Kotel Region (Gramos). She walked upright all morning from place to place encouraging the fighters not to be afraid. Then, around 11 a.m., when Tinka stood up, for only a moment to help a wounded partisan lying close to her, an enemy bomb fell and wounded her in the abdomen, arm and leg.³⁵¹ Her comrades took her out of the battle zone and bandaged her. Even badly wounded she didn't want to be taken out and kept struggling to get up and join the fight, even if it was only for one last time. Despite being severely wounded she gathered her strength and yelled out to her comrades: "Forward comrades!... Fight!... Avenge our fighters!" After throwing her last grenade in the direction of the

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Dumkova Tinka. "For the Holy People's Freedom" ..., p. 87.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

Monarcho-Fascists, she slid over the rocks and jumped off the cliff yelling: “Long live the people’s democracy!”³⁵²

This is how Tinka Dumkova, one of the bravest daughters of the Macedonian people, the pride of the DAG 108th brigade died.

³⁵² About the Greek and Slavo-Macedonian people in DAG...

GIORGI KALKOV (1916-1948)

Giorgi Kalkov was one of the first founders of the Macedonian NOF partisan groups that were created on Mount Vicho in the period from 1945 to 1946. He was also the first fighter from his village Visheni, Kostur Region, to join the struggle.

Giorgi Kalkov was born in 1916 to a poor agricultural family. Due to being very poor his father was forced to find work in distant America. Unfortunately a short time after he left he severed ties with his family and never came back.

After finishing primary school in his village Visheni, Giorgi together with his older brother Nacho (Damian) helped their mother at the farm. In addition to doing household chores, Giorgi also worked as a janitor for some of the more prominent families in his village.³⁵³

In 1936 Giorgi was drafted into the Greek military and sent to Solun to serve in a cavalry unit.

After Greece was occupied by Fascist Germany, Italy and Bulgaria, the Italian authorities in Kostur Region created special search and destroy units to eliminate those who consistently fought against them. Given this unbearable situation, the Visheni resistance leadership advised the villagers to take precautionary measures against these Italian hostilities by immediately fleeing to the mountains. This continued to happen every time the Italians showed up.³⁵⁴ One day in July 1941, the people of Visheni found out that an Italian armed unit was approaching their village. And as always all the men fled into the woods. When the Italians arrived in the village they immediately searched each house looking for men. Then the villagers found out that they were only looking for communists. When Giorgi's mother found this out, she ran to the forest and asked her son Giorgi to come home, explaining that there was no danger to

³⁵³ According to the recollections of Dimitar Prstenarov, from the village Visheni, Kostur Region, Dimitar was an active participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG and was a fighter in the "Lazo Trpovski" detachment and the First Aegean Strike Brigade.

³⁵⁴ Chronicles of the village Visheni, Kostur Region. Records kept in INI.

him. But she wasn't exactly right. As soon as Giorgi came home he was immediately arrested and taken to prison in Kostur, where he spent a year in jail.³⁵⁵

After his release from prison, Giorgi continued his patriotic activities by all possible means to help the Macedonian people's anti-fascist movement struggle against the occupiers.

One day in May 1943, after spending a day in the village Bapchor, Kostur Region, the partisans from the Lerin-Bitola detachment moved to the "Koziak" locality, in the forest near "Ianchov Izvor", located on the border between the villages Visheni and Bapchor. There they hid themselves in the brush so they could have a rest. While they were resting one partisan named Kostas Kitsiridis took his mule carrying the detachment's weapons to graze in the valley.³⁵⁶ That same day Giorgi Kalkov and his fellow villager Spiro Tsulev, both working as civil guards in the village Visheni, were going through this area and happened to pass through the "Koziak" locality. At a distance of about 30-40 metres they spotted a suspicious man with a rifle over his shoulder grazing his mule. Thinking that the man was a Greek "Andart" (rebel), they decided to kill him. Giorgi fired at him but only wounded him in the arm. The moment the detachment partisans heard the rifle shot they jumped to their feet and ran after the assailants towards the village Visheni. Frightened by what they'd done Giorgi and Spiro ran and took refuge in Tiolishta, a neighbouring village. When all this was over, Giorgi went to the resistance leadership in his village and confessed that he was the one who had shot Kostas and that it was by mistake. After that Giorgi joined ELAS and continued the struggle against the occupiers as an ELAS reservist.³⁵⁷

In the spring and summer of 1945, a large number Greek gangs sprang up all over Greek occupied Macedonia and, supported by the Athenian government, intensified their terror activities against the democratic movement, above all, against the Macedonian people. During this unbearable situation, Giorgi Kalkov, wanting to avoid

³⁵⁵ According to the recollections of Dimitar Prstenarov...

³⁵⁶ According to the recollections of the late Spiro Tsulev, a fighter in the National Liberation War and in DAG.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

being arrested, fled his village and joined a group of Macedonians from his village and neighbouring villages on Mount Vicho. There, with a rifle in his hand, he fought against the new reactionary authorities in Greece and, as an experienced fighter, was soon appointed commander of an armed group which aimed to protect the Macedonian population from the Greek terror in the area. He led this group until the beginning of December 1945.³⁵⁸

In the winter of 1945, the partisan group on Mount Vicho had to disband due to the cold. Some of the fighters went home and others, including Giorgi Kalkov, moved to Bitola in the Republic of Macedonia.

At the beginning of July 1946, Giorgi and a group of Macedonians from Greek occupied Macedonia left the Republic of Macedonia and went to Mount Vicho.³⁵⁹ Here he connected with other Macedonian patriots and immediately joined the struggle against the Greek reactionaries. Thanks to his military experience and tireless effort Giorgi was appointed commander of an armed NOF group.³⁶⁰

Over time the NOF group led by Giorgi Kalkov grew into a company. Giorgi acted in the area around Mount Vicho, in Kostur, Lerin and Prespa Regions. Thanks to his excellent fighting skills he was able to liberate a large number of Macedonian villages and added to DAG's free territory in the Vicho area.

Giorgi Kalkov led his company in the Vicho area until the spring of 1947 when he was transferred to Ber Region in Hasia, to the 670th DAG unit.³⁶¹

³⁵⁸ Report written by the General NOF leadership, dated July 19, 1945, regarding the political situation in Aegean Macedonia and regarding the CPG's position on the Macedonian national question. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945", Vol. II, Skopje, 1973, doc. 89, p. 162.

³⁵⁹ According to the recollections of Metodi Malkov from the village Seshtevo, Kostur Region. Metodi was one of the first to join the National Liberation War and serve in DAG.

³⁶⁰ According to the recollections of Risto Malkov from the village Seshtevo. Risto was a fighter in the First Aegean Strike Brigade and in DAG where he was a fighter in Giorgi Kalkov's company.

³⁶¹ Kalkov Giorgi. "For the holy national freedom" ..., p. 111.

It is worth mentioning at this point that Giorgi Kalkov wasn't only an experienced DAG fighter and leader but also a prominent political organizer in the Macedonian liberation movement. Thanks to his tireless effort in the struggle for the liberation of the Macedonian people, he was appointed a candidate member in the NOF Main Board leadership during the First NOF Congress.³⁶²

At the beginning of March 1948, Giorgi Kalkov's company took part in the glorious welcoming of the newly mobilized, but still unarmed fighters arriving from Rumeli to Mount Gramos. This operation in DAG's history was known as: "The heroic campaign of the unarmed column from Rumeli".³⁶³

On March 16, 1948, Giorgi and several fighters from his company were surrounded by enemy troops in the locality "Kundzhupia", on Mount Pieria. Here Giorgi laid down his life fighting heroically in an unequal battle for the freedom of his people.³⁶⁴

Posthumously, DAG General Staff promoted Giorgi Kalkov to Major.

³⁶² . "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1948", T. V. Skopje, 1981, doc. 16, p. 45.

³⁶³ Giorgi Kalkov. "For the holy national freedom" ..., p. 111.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

PENO KARAMUTKIN (1920-1945)

Peno Karamutkin was a fighter in the People's Liberation Movement in the Aegean part of Macedonia and gave his life at an early age for the freedom of his homeland. He was one of nine NOF activists from Gumenzhe District who remained on eternal guard on Mount Paiak.

Peno was born in 1920 in the beautiful Macedonian village Kriva, Gumenzhe Region, to a poor agricultural family. He finished primary school and spent his childhood in his native village.³⁶⁵

Peno had a great desire to continue his education in the high school in Kukush but due to lack of funds was unable to realize his desires. After completing his military service in the Greek army, where he was promoted to sergeant, he returned home and helped his parents with their farm work.³⁶⁶

When Germany, Italy and Bulgaria occupied Greece and Aegean Macedonia, Peno, like many other Macedonians from his native village, voluntarily joined the struggle against the fascist occupiers.

In 1942 Peno Karamutkin and his fellow villagers Atanas Ianakov, Dimitar Lititarov, Dino Binchev and Pano Mitkov formed a basic EAM organization in their village Kriva.³⁶⁷

In 1943 Peno formed a basic EPON organization in his native village and as its leader enjoyed great authority among the youth. Peno and members of EPON also set up a guard station to monitor secluded and dangerous places and to provide contact between the activists in his native village and those in the town Gumenzhe. He often patrolled the surrounding villages, such as Petgas, Barovitsa,

³⁶⁵ This article, written by Tashko Mamurovski, was also published in the House of Immigrants from Macedonia "Emigrant Calendar", Skopje, 1982, pp. 94-95. The same article with minor changes and additions is also presented here.

³⁶⁶ According to the recollections of Dimitar Lititarov from the village Kriva, Gumenzhe Region. Dimitar was a participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG.

³⁶⁷ Memoirs of Dimitar Lititarov, about his revolutionary activity in the period 1942-1948. Kept in INI.

Ramna, etc., and solicited the young to join the struggle against the occupiers and domestic traitors.

In February 1944 Peno decided to join ELAS voluntarily, but because his contribution to the struggle in other areas was of particular importance the resistance leadership wouldn't allow him to join the partisans.³⁶⁸

Peno worked for the People's Liberation Movement in Kriva and surrounding villages until December 1944 when the German and Bulgarian occupiers were ousted from the country. After that he was appointed a member of the People's Court in Gumenzhe.³⁶⁹

At the end of December 1944, Peno became involved in collecting and storing weapons abandoned by the withdrawing occupiers from Greece. Along with others from his village, Peno transported several loads of weapons from Solun to Mount Paiak.³⁷⁰

With the arrival of the English interventionists in Greece and the introduction of right-wing rule, as a result of the signing of the Varkiza Agreement, Peno and other progressive Macedonians from his village were forced to go underground.

Understanding the very difficult situation the Macedonian people in Greece were facing, in May 1945, Peno and a number of patriotic Macedonians from Greek occupied Macedonia, with NOF's agreement, decided to go to Mount Paiak in Aegean Macedonia and join the struggle against the new reactionary authorities in Greece.³⁷¹ Upon his return, Peno immediately connected with the young people from his village and formed a NOF cell in the village Kriva.

From this moment on Peno gained even greater authority, especially among the Macedonian youth, and, with their help, managed to involve more people in the struggle against the new and unpopular regime in Greece. His activities lasted until November 17, 1945

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ According to the recollections of Ivan Nichev from the city Gumenzhe...

³⁷⁰ According to the recollections of Dimitar Litarov...

³⁷¹ According to the recollections of Vangel Nichev-Orivatis, Dimitar Litarov and Ivan Nichev...

when he was betrayed on Mount Paiak in the locality “Sheova” and brutally killed along with 8 other NOF leaders and activists who worked in Gumendzhe District.

Peno Karamutkin’s death was a great loss not only for NOF but also for the Macedonian people. Although he wasn’t a major and leading figure in the movement in Aegean Macedonia, he still played a significant role, especially in laying the foundation for NOF in his area of operation, as well as in attracting and involving young people in the Macedonian People’s Liberation Movement.

ATANAS KIZOV-GIZA (1914-1947)

Atanas Kizov was one of the many active fighters in the Macedonian People's Liberation Movement and in the Democratic Army of Greece. He was born in December 1914, in the village Neret, Lerin Region, to a large, poor family. After finishing primary school in his village, he had no means to continue his education due to poverty. At age fourteen, Atanas and several of his fellow villagers went to Mount Athos. There Atanas worked for an Arnaut (Albanian Turk) loading lumber and building materials on five mules and delivering them from the mountains to the coastline. He worked hard doing this job for several years with short breaks during which he returned to his native village to see his loved ones.

³⁷²

When he visited Solun he often met with the workers in a tile factory and had long conversations with them about being exploited by the factory bosses. From these conversations Atanas began to understand the causes of social injustice among the working class, to which he himself belonged. From this point on, he gradually began to associate with the progressives and adopt their ideas. The biggest influence on his political orientation came from Iovani, a CPG District Committee member for Solun who had been imprisoned in the Solun prison for some time by the Greek gendarmes. After being severely tortured to a point where he was presumed to be dead, Iovani was thrown out the prison window to make it look like he'd committed suicide.³⁷³ It was under Iovani's influence and thanks to his meetings with other workers that Atanas began to embrace socialist ideas.

In 1936, after completing his military service in the Greek army, Atanas returned to his native village and immediately began to install a new CPG Party cell. By then there was nothing left from the old CPG cell in Neret; no Party and no members. Anything that existed before that had been dispersed or closed down by the Greek authorities. All such organizations practically ceased to exist. Atanas

³⁷² According to the recollections of Vane Topalovski from the village Neret, Lerin Region. Vane was an active participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG.

³⁷³ Ibid.

Kizov's appearance in Neret created a new opportunity to renew the CPG Party there. After many and long discussions in the café in the village square, the creation of a future Party organization was a done deal by early 1938. During its initial phase the organization consisted of Alekso Mechkarov, Atanas Kizov, Vane Topalovski, Traiko Mechkarov, Atanas Stasev, Atanas Kolev, Atanas Kirev, Vasil Milev and Vasil Slivkin. After the CPG party organization was created in Neret it began to accept new members, by 1941 80 people had signed up.³⁷⁴

With the outbreak of the Greek-Italian war, Atanas Kizov and other villagers of fighting age were mobilized into the Greek army and immediately sent to the Albanian front. Some people in Neret, like some in their neighbouring villages, believed that fighting in this war was fighting for other people's interests. In time many progressives, including Atanas Kizov, fled the Greek army and crossed over into Yugoslavia. The CPG leadership unfortunately didn't see things their way and because Tanas and the others left for Yugoslavia they were labeled as traitors who had betrayed their own country. Nikos Zahariadis himself, as CPG secretary general at the time, called on all progressives to fight against Mussolini's army and labeled those who didn't traitors.

Atanas Kizov remained in Yugoslavia for some time and worked as a waiter.

In the spring of 1941 he returned to his native village Neret and immediately began to organize the villagers to struggle against the occupiers. At the same time Atanas and a number of people from his village began to collect weapons and ammunition abandoned by the Greek army after it withdrew from the Albanian front.

At the end of 1942, Atanas and fellow villagers Petre Markov, Pando Postolov and Pando Mialichin³⁷⁵ left the village and went to

³⁷⁴ According to the recollections of Alekso Mechkarov from the village of Neret. Alekso was a participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG. Also according to the recollections of Vane Topalovski...

³⁷⁵ Pando Mialichin spied for the Greek reactionaries during the Greek Civil War.

join the partisans. A few months later, two more people from Neret, Pando Popov and Vane Stamenov, joined ELAS.³⁷⁶

In the spring of 1943, Atanas joined an ELAS detachment which took part in a number of attacks against the Germans in Kulata, just below Vicho, where ELAS fighters inflicted heavy losses on the enemy. In retaliation, in the summer of 1943, the Germans burned down the houses of four ELAS fighters from Neret.

At about the same time schools for officers were organized on the free ELAS territory. Atanas Kizov was sent to one of these schools from which he graduated as a lieutenant. After that he fought in Greben Region until the end of the fascist occupation.

After the German-Italian and Bulgarian occupiers were driven out, Atanas went back to Neret and as the new political situation in Greece developed, after the famous Varkiza Agreement was signed, the people of Neret created the organization ACE. At this point it was too dangerous to associate with the CPG so the Neret communists, wanting to avoid persecution and arrest, transformed their CPG party organization into ACE, which was a legal organization. In Neret, ACE took an active role in organizing political actions, such as agitating the population to participate in the various manifestations and rallies taking place in Lerin against the British and the reactionary elements coming to power in Greece. Atanas was involved in all of these actions.

In March 1945, after consolidating their power in the country with Anglo-American help, the Greek reactionaries launched an unheard of terror campaign against all progressive forces in Greece and, above all, against the Macedonian people with aims at physically exterminating them. During this unbearable situation, widespread throughout all of Aegean Macedonia, Atanas Kizov and a group of Macedonians and former anti-Fascists were forced to go underground. Many crossed the border and fled to the Republic of Macedonia.

³⁷⁶ According to the recollections of Vane Stamenov from the village of Neret. Vane was a participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG.

In 1946, Atanas and many of his compatriots who had fled to the Republic of Macedonia voluntarily returned to their native village and created a Macedonian detachment. Atanas was appointed its leader. The detachment later began to operate in the Neret vicinity and on Mount Vicho. According to Dr. Giorgi Nedelkov, his comrade in arms, Atanas was a popular leader respected by his fighters. They were proud to fight under his command. This is how Dr. Giorgi Nedelkov described Atanas's fighting qualities in his memoirs:

“It was fall in 1946. After a long journey traveling over a bare rocky mountain we entered a forest... There we had a few touching moments! It seemed like we were with an old faithful friend and patron... It was like reliving our ELAS memories of localities, events, friends, comrades... I was in a good state of mind when we entered the old partisan camp. The hearths that were left behind were still there. The partisans lined up and prepared for a campaign. The commander gave them their last orders. Tall, broad-shouldered, with a broad forehead, eyes with a resolute gaze, lips tight. His body showed a man of strength with unwavering will. In general, the commander's external appearance radiated confidence and love... After a short discussion he unexpectedly spoke to me about some new divisive manifestation of certain elements... Such was the moral form of Giza (Atanas Kizov), which was supplemented with a clear political orientation...”³⁷⁷

Atanas Kizov remained on Neret Mountain and in the Vicho area until the end of October 1946.

In the second half of November 1946, after the NOF Macedonian partisan detachments were combined with the CPG partisan detachments and a joint DAG headquarters was created in “Vicho”, Atanas and his detachment left for Mount Voion. There it fought bravely against Greek government troops and Atanas was quickly elevated to prominence as an experienced fighter. He was promoted to commander of the DAG 12th Company.³⁷⁸ This is what Dr. Giorgi Nedelkov said further on in his memoirs: “I caught up with

³⁷⁷ Dr. Giorgi Nedelkov, Atanas Kizov-Giza. “For the Holy National Freedom”..., pp. 71-72.

³⁷⁸ According to the recollections of Vane Topalovski...

Atanas Kizov in the summer of 1947, when he was company commander. He was well respected by the partisans in his company and was well-known by all the partisans and the people from Vicho to Hasia...”³⁷⁹

On July 25, 1947, three DAG battalions from Epirus and Macedonia (about 900 fighters), including Atanas Kizov’s company, attacked the government installations in the town Grevena. The purpose of the operation was to seize the city but it failed. According to a report by DAG General Staff, about 200 DAG fighters were killed and wounded and a total of about 298 government soldiers were killed.

³⁸⁰

Atanas Kizov demonstrated extraordinary abilities and heroism during the battle to capture Grevena. Namely, when his company was being decimated, he decided on his own initiative to disable the enemy bunker that was mowing down his comrades. Even though this bunker was fenced with several rows of barbed wire at a distance of 100 to 150 metres from its nest, Atanas managed to cut it and got as close as 3 metres without being killed. But when he attempted to penetrate the bunker in order to destroy it, an enemy burst of machine gun fire came from an opposite bunker and cut him down.³⁸¹

Risto Kizov, Atanas’s son, visited Grevena and found the mass grave where his father and other fallen fighters were buried. The tomb is located west of Grevena in the locality of Kishlak. There is also another cemetery nearby where the Greek government soldiers, killed during the same battle, were buried.

About 1 to 2 km northwest of the partisan mass grave is a dominant hill. This is where the bunker where Atanas Kizov died is located.

³⁷⁹ Dr. Giorgi Nedelkov, Atanas Kizov-Giza, “For the Holy National Freedom”..., p. 72.

³⁸⁰ Chronology of the People’s Liberation Struggle in the Aegean part of Macedonia. Republic Board. Skopje, 19--, p. 165.

³⁸¹ According to the recollections of Petre Dimirov from the village Krapeshina, Lerin Region. Petre was a participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG. He was Atanas Kizov’s courier.

Today the bunker is fenced with a strong fence and is kept in good condition.

This was how Atanas Kizov died.

DAG Military Command for Gramos highly appreciated Atanas Kizov's fighting qualities and intended to soon promote him to battalion commander but his untimely death prevented that.

IVAN KOVACHEV-ORFEAS (1922-1949)

In July 1949, just one month before DAG was defeated, a fierce battle took place on Mount Alevitsa near Gramushta, to capture a strategic peak on Mount Gramos during which Ivan Kovachev-Orpheas, political commissar of a battalion, was killed. His two brothers Giorgi and Dimitar also gave their lives for Macedonia's freedom. Giorgi was killed during a partisan attack on his hometown Gumendzhe in August 1946 and, even though he wasn't a direct participant in the attack, he was captured by Greek government troops and burned alive. A year later, in 1947, Dimitar was killed during a partisan attack on the town Enidzhe-Vardar. Their mother also suffered. She went mad due to her severe suffering. But the death of his two brothers and his mother's suffering didn't shake Ivan. On the contrary, he became increasingly more determined, firmly believing that this was a just war and victory would be achieved.

Ivan Kovachev-Orpheus was born in 1922, in the town Gumendzhe, to a poor working class family. After finishing primary school he learned the skill and worked as a barber in Gumendzhe.

From the start of the fascist occupation in 1941, Ivan was one of the first in Gumendzhe to join OKNE, the youth organization, and later EPON and continued to struggle against the foreign occupiers.³⁸²

In March 1944, Ivan Kovachev voluntarily joined³⁸³ the 30th ELAS Brigade.³⁸⁴ Serving as Captain he actively participated in all its battles. Included among the main ones were the battles to capture the cities Gumendzhe and Enidzhe-Vardar, the Boimitsa mine, the

³⁸² Short biographical notes on the NOF activists in Gumendzhe and Enidzhe-Vardar Regions, submitted by Ivan Nichev to the NOF General leadership. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1946", Vol. III, doc. 134, p. 298.

³⁸³ Program for the memorial commemoration of events and characters from the revolutionary past of the Macedonian people in Skopje. Skopje, 1973, part III, (bisti). Manuscript kept in INI.

³⁸⁴ Thanasis Mitsopoulos (Captain Stavros), History of the ELAS XXX Brigade (Memories and Events), Part I. Translated from Greek to Macedonian by Todor Simovski, pp. 240-244. Kept in INI.

villages Sandelchevo, Vrtikopsko, Postol (Pela), Plasnichevo and Kukush.³⁸⁵

Later, in December 1944, Ivan Kovachev serving in the 30th ELAS Brigade was sent to Athens where, together with other ELAS units, he fought valiantly against the Greek nationalist government and the British interventionists who had arrived in Greece just as the German occupiers left. Ivan was wounded in the head during one of these battles.³⁸⁶

In the second half of January 1945, after the armistice was concluded on January 11, 1945 between the reactionaries and ELAS, Ivan and the ELAS 30th Brigade returned to Solun and from there went to Enidzhe-Vardar where all weapons were accordingly surrendered as per the Varkiza Agreement.³⁸⁷

In March 1945, after ELAS capitulated, Ivan Kovachev-Orpheus went underground and, in order to avoid being arrested by the Greek reactionaries, together with other patriots from his homeland crossed over the border into the Republic of Macedonia. There he immediately joined the First Aegean Assault Brigade and actively and selflessly fought against remnants of the Balisti gangs in the vicinities of Debar, Kichevo, Gostivar, Tetovo, etc.

Shortly afterwards, in late spring of 1945, Ivan Kovachev left the Yugoslav People's Army and voluntarily returned to Gumendze Region to organize Macedonians from this area into a nationwide uprising against the Greek reactionaries wreaking havoc all throughout Aegean Macedonia.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁵ Ibid: Part II, pp. 208-212.

³⁸⁶ Ibid: p. 452. Also see "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1946", Vol. III, doc. 134, p. 298.

³⁸⁷ Thanasis Mitsopoulos, History of the ELAS XXX Brigade..., pp. 461-472.

³⁸⁸ Report written by Ivan Nichev, member of the NOF District leadership for Gumendze and Enidze-Vardar Regions, and sent to the NOF Main leadership, regarding the organizational and political situation in Gumendzhe Region. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1946", Vol. III, doc. 24, pp. 59-60.

In a letter sent to the NOF General leadership, dated November 1945, regarding the Macedonian people's difficult situation in this region, Ivan, among other things, wrote:

"...The situation in our area is unbearable. The terror is enormous. In addition to the 25 ³⁸⁹ Burandars (reactionary bands) arrested, now others are being persecuted... The people are very upset... In general, there is a lot of terror committed in the entire country... Two people were beaten in Barovitsa when the Burandars found a copy of the newspaper "Laiki Foni" on them... ³⁹⁰

As a member of the NOF District Board for Gumendzhe and Enidze-Vardar Regions (responsible for NOMS), ³⁹¹ Ivan Kovachev worked tirelessly day and night and successfully performed all the tasks assigned to him. He remained in this position until May 20, 1947 when NOF held a general meeting in the "Mishovi Kolibi" locality in Kaimakchalan, where a decision was made for part of the NOF leadership, which had previous experience in warfare, to join DAG and thus strengthen its ranks. Here Ivan voluntarily joined DAG and immediately stood out as an experienced commander during the numerous battles he'd fought in Central and Southwest Macedonia, in Epirus and Thessaly, etc. Later, the DAG leadership entrusted him with a relatively large unit which, as its commander, he led in the most difficult battles in Gramos, Vicho, Prespa, Epirus, etc.

As a DAG fighter Ivan Kovachev fought heroically against the Greek reactionaries and because of his dedication to the liberation of the Macedonian people, during the First ³⁹² and Second ³⁹³ NOF

³⁸⁹ The letter also includes a list of the arrested anti-fascists.

³⁹⁰ Letter from Ivan Kovachev-Orpheus, to Ivan Nichev, regarding the terror in Gumendze. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945", Vol. II, doc. 207, pp. 390-391.

³⁹¹ NOF Main Management Annual Report, dated January 12, 1946, on NOF's organizational structure and activities in Aegean Macedonia. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1946", T. III, doc. 9, p. 32.

³⁹² List of NOF Main Board of members appointed during The First NOF Congress. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1948", T. V, doc 16. p. 45.

³⁹³ List of NOF Main Board members proposed at the Second NOF Congress. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1949", Vol. VI. Documents

Congresses, he was appointed a candidate member of NOF's central leadership.

Ivan Kovachev-Orpheus, a brave leader in NOF and exemplary fighter in DAG, died heroically in July 1949 in a difficult and unequal battle against the enemy while attempting to capture the "Gramushta" locality on Mountain Gramos. He was serving as a political commissar when he died.³⁹⁴

on the participation of the Macedonian people from the Aegean part of Macedonia in the Greek Civil War. Macedonian Archives, Skopje, 1983, doc. 74, p. 155.)

³⁹⁴ According to the recollections of Aleko Pulkov...

KOSTA KUZEV-DINI (1913-1950)

Kosta Kuzev was born in 1913 in the town Voden to a poor working class family.

In 1924, after Kosta's father Tushi died suddenly, little Kosta was sent to a boarding school in Voden. After finishing his primary education, Kosta continued his education at the military school on the island Krv.³⁹⁵ From the very beginning he was one of the best students in his school. A short time later he connected with other students, and with their help joined OKNE, the youth organization. There he learned new and revolutionary ideas.

In 1930, Kosta was caught by the military authorities at the school, arrested for being involved in revolutionary activities and then sentenced to seven months in prison.³⁹⁶ After serving his sentence he returned to his hometown and, as an OKNE member, continued to work to expand the OKNE organization in Voden.

In the period between 1932 and 1933, many labour union related manifestations took place in Voden during which Kosta, on behalf of OKNE, worked tirelessly and with great enthusiasm to get people to join the rallies and demonstrations.³⁹⁷

In 1934, Kosta Kuzev was drafted into the Greek military in Voden. There he immediately joined the anti-fascist Committee of the 30th Infantry Regiment, headed by the CPG District Committee for Voden Region.³⁹⁸ Being an experienced OKNE activist, Kosta disseminated revolutionary propaganda in military barracks at his own risk. In addition to writing propaganda slogans, he distributed leaflets, talked to people, etc.

Kosta was a member of the CPG City Committee in Voden when Ioannis Metaxas's dictatorship took root in Greece, and as such he

³⁹⁵ Vangel Aianovski-Oche, Critical Review of the Development of the Workers', Communist and National Liberation Movement of the Macedonians in Voden and Voden Region, Part II, p. 371. Kept in INI.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ According to the recollections of Vangel Aianovski-Oche.

³⁹⁸ According to the recollections of Angel Gatsev.

fought against the crimes committed by the Greek regime against the innocent Macedonian population.

In late October 1940, Kosta was mobilized into the Greek army and sent to the Albanian front to fight the Italian Fascists. In the spring of 1941, he left the Albanian front and returned to Voden where he immediately joined the struggle against the new fascist occupiers. Thanks to his commitments to liberate his homeland, he was re-appointed to the CPG Committees for the city Voden.³⁹⁹

Later with the formation of MAO, the Macedonian Liberation Organization, Kosta was appointed a member of the MAO District Committee for Voden Region.⁴⁰⁰ In that capacity, Kosta continued to struggle against the foreign occupiers and their domestic servants.

At the end of the spring of 1943, Kosta Kuzev was appointed a member of the CPG District Committee for Voden Region in charge of finances.

In mid-July 1943, in addition to giving the Fascist Bulgarians the eastern part of Aegean Macedonia, the German occupiers gave them control of parts of Central Aegean Macedonia and thus divided Macedonia yet again. Naturally the Macedonians in Voden weren't happy and received the news with great indignation. A two-day general strike was organized in the city and towards the end of the month more people began to protest in the streets. A rally was held which was attended by about 1,000 protesters. The rally was led by a special board consisting of Vani Mandev, Tashko Aianovski, Dini Papaiankov, Kosta Kuzev and some others.⁴⁰¹

After the German-Italian and Bulgarian occupiers were driven out, Kosta was appointed District Public Prosecutor in Voden Region and worked in that capacity until ELAS capitulated as a result of signing the famous Varkiza Agreement.

³⁹⁹ Vangel Aianovski-Oche, A Critical Review of the Development of the Workers', Communist and National Liberation Movement in Voden and Voden Region..., p. 372.

⁴⁰⁰ According to the recollections of Angel Gatsev...

⁴⁰¹ Vangel Aianovski-Oche, Aegean Storms..., p. 159.

Later, with the formation of TOMO, the Macedonian liberation organization in Voden Region, Kosta was among the first to join its ranks and worked tirelessly to expand it. Unfortunately at the same time the CPG leadership was pursuing a nationalistic policy towards the Macedonian liberation movement, which worked against the Macedonian national question. And because of those chauvinistic policies the CPG exposed TOMO to great difficulties. The CPG didn't want Macedonian organizations to exist but wanted to recruit the Macedonian people into its own organization to aid in the struggle against the reactionaries who were wreaking havoc all throughout Aegean Macedonia. But despite the threats and slander the CPG nationalist elements exacted against TOMO, its Macedonian activists managed to attract a large number of Macedonians not only from the general population but also Macedonians from the CPG activists and officials from Voden and Voden Region, including Kosta Kuzev-Dini. Unfortunately being Macedonian Kosta was on a collision course with the Greek CPG leadership in Voden Region.

As a member of TOMO, Kosta developed a wide range of propaganda activities. So, together with a number of prominent Macedonians, Kosta agitated the Macedonian population in Voden Region to struggle against the Greek regime. Because of Kosta's rigorous involvement with TOMO, he was appointed a member of the TOMO City Board responsible for agitation and propaganda.⁴⁰²

Later, after NOF cells began to appear in Voden Region, Kosta Kuzev joined NOF and continued his patriotic struggle until the end of his life.

At the end of December 1945, a conference between NOF and CPG representatives took place in Solun. It was also attended by CPG delegates from Voden Region including Trifun Shindev and Kosta Kuzev. During the discussions Trifun and Kosta demanded that the CPG recognize NOF as a progressive and revolutionary organization. They also demanded that the CPG end its defamation campaign against NOF and its members. Unexpectedly and to the surprise of those who were present, Nikos Zahariadis, CPG

⁴⁰² Ibid: p. 161.

Secretary General, did recognize NOF as a Macedonian national liberation organization of Aegean Macedonia.⁴⁰³

Kosta Kuzev's revolutionary activity in the ranks of the Macedonian National Liberation Movement lasted without interruption until his arrest in the second half of 1946. He was arrested and thrown in a Voden prison where he was brutally tortured. He was then transferred to a concentration camp on the island Macronisos where he was held until 1950. After that he was taken to a camp in Solun where he was murdered in a mysterious way, probably by poisoning.

⁴⁰³ According to the recollections of Trifun Shindev from the village Teovo, Voden Region. Trifun was an active participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG.

IANI LUKROV (1922-1948)

Iani Lukrov was a prominent fighter in the Macedonian National Liberation War and in the Democratic Army of Greece. Iani was from the village of Vmbel, Kostur Region. He was born in 1922 to a poor farming family with a revolutionary tradition.

In 1936, after finishing primary school in his native village, Iani and his father Risto went to work for shoemaker Naso Tolev, in the village Rula, to learn how to make shoes.⁴⁰⁴

In 1937, after mastering the shoemaking craft, Iani opened his own shoemaking workshop in the village square.⁴⁰⁵ His shoemaker's workshop was successful right from the start. He was kind to his customers and people in general so they respected him.

Iani was working in his shop when the fascists occupied Greece. During the occupation Iani's workshop was turned into a safe place for people to meet and have conversations, which gave Iani a chance to become acquainted with progressive ideas spread around by the more enlightened villagers. The older villagers often spoke of life under Ottoman rule in Macedonia, about the Ilinden Uprising and about the new Greek rulers who, after the Balkan wars, carried out unheard of terror campaigns and assimilation practices against the Macedonian population in the Macedonian villages. These kinds of conversations naturally greatly influenced Iani's development of his Macedonian national consciousness.⁴⁰⁶

At the end of 1942, Iani and a number of more enlightened young people from his native village joined OKNE, the communist run youth organization. As an active member of this organization, Iani was responsible for the youth in the village Vmbel. Thanks to his tireless efforts in the struggle against the occupier, in 1943 he was included in the CPG village party organization secretariat.⁴⁰⁷ His

⁴⁰⁴ According to the recollections of Sotir Lukrov, Iani Lukrov's brother. Sotir was a participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ According to the recollections of Nikola Panovski from the village Vmbel. Nikola was NOF secretary of the Local and District Boards in Kostur Region.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

responsibility in the ranks of the Party was to agitate the people and get them to struggle en masse against the occupiers and domestic traitors.

At the end of 1943, Iani and several of his fellow villagers voluntarily joined the ranks of ELAS and fought in its combat units with zeal.

In early May 1944, Iani and a group of Macedonian ELAS partisans vigorously opposed the CPG and ELAS's incorrect stance on the Macedonian national question and in protest left ELAS and crossed over into the Republic of Macedonia where they continued to fight against the occupier.⁴⁰⁸

In the second half of July 1944, after an agreement was reached between the CPG and CPM, Iani and a group of Macedonian partisans from Kostur and Lerin Regions returned to their homeland and immediately joined the ranks of "Gotse", the newly formed Macedonian battalion.⁴⁰⁹

At the beginning of October 1944, there was another misunderstanding between the Macedonian ELAS partisans and the CPG and ELAS leaderships. For its own reasons,⁴¹⁰ ELAS command issued orders to disband the Macedonian "Gotse" battalion. The Macedonian fighters vigorously opposed the order arguing that the reasons⁴¹¹ given by the CPG and ELAS leaderships were unjust. So, in order to avoid bloodshed, the Macedonian fighters again crossed over into the Republic of Macedonia. Iani Lukrov crossed with them. When they arrived in the village Velushina, near Bitola, the fighters were reorganized into a special battalion. Iani was promoted to deputy commander of a company in that battalion. Everyone in the special battalion was a Macedonian

⁴⁰⁸ According to the recollections of Evdokia Baliova-Vera, Vasko Makrievski and Miltiadi Kovachevski.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ The Greeks in CPG and ELAS commands didn't want Macedonian armed organizations within their compositions.

⁴¹¹ The official reason given for this, as explained by the Greek leadership, was to ease Greek concerns. The special Macedonian units apparently had allegedly awakened "nationalism" and "separatism" in the ranks of the Macedonian people, which were detrimental to the common Greek-Macedonian struggle.

from Kostur and Lerin Regions. As a special battalion, the fighters from Kostur and Lerin Regions were added to the 49th Division of the Macedonian National Liberation Army.⁴¹²

Later the First Aegean Assault Brigade was created, consisting of Macedonians from Greece. Iani was appointed deputy commander of a company in the special battalion of the assault brigade. As part of this brigade, Iani participated in all the battles fought in the Kichevo, Gostivar, Tetovo and other areas.⁴¹³

In May 1945, after the First Aegean Assault Brigade was disbanded, Iani Lukrov was deployed in KNOJ, in the Fourth Brigade whose headquarters was in the city Bitola. Iani was praised and decorated several times for his achievements in the JNA units.⁴¹⁴

In mid-1946, at his own request, Iani was demobilized by the JNA and immediately left for the Aegean part of Macedonia to fight against the new Greek reactionary authorities in Greece and their British supporters. On December 20, 1946, he voluntarily joined DAG and in a very short time reached responsible positions. As an exemplary and experienced fighter, he conscientiously performed all his assigned duties in a timely manner. He showed special courage and heroism in the dramatic battles fought against government units on Mounts Karakamen and Kaimakchalan. While fighting in those battles, Iani was promoted to the rank of captain and commanded a company.⁴¹⁵

In 1947, during a fierce and bloody battle on Mount Karakamen, Iani lost his hearing due to a nearby detonation. With great sorrow and pain in his heart, he was forced to leave his post and go for treatment in one of DAG's partisan hospitals. During his treatment, Iani also spent some time with his family in his native village Vmbel.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹² According to the recollections of Micho Karandzhovski and Vasko Makrievski.

⁴¹³ According to the recollections of Evdokia Baliova-Vera, Vasko Makrievski and Micho Karandzhovski...

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ T. Karameshev, Lukrov Iani. "For the Holy National Freedom"... p. 149.

⁴¹⁶ According to the recollections of Evdokia Baliova-Vera and Miltiadi Kovachevski...

A few months later, after his health improved, Iani received orders from DAG leadership to form an independent partisan unit to act in the background and maintain a watch for possible enemy attacks. Iani was appointed leader of the unit and the unit was dispatched to act in Koreshtata, Vicho and surrounding areas.⁴¹⁷

In early April 1948, the entire DAG 18th Brigade was decimated after fighting a fierce battle. Later, when it assembled in the village Breznitsa, Kostur Region, the 18th Brigade's composition was supplemented with fighters from DAG's rear units acting in the surrounding areas, which included Iani Lukrov's company.

On April 20, 1948, after the 18th Brigade was reorganized, Iani's unit received orders to ambush the road leading from Kostur to Rupishta, in the "Kosturazh" locality,⁴¹⁸ near the village Bogatsko. An unequal and fierce battle broke out during which Iani Lukrov and many of his fighters were killed. They laid down their lives fighting at the altar for the Macedonian people's freedom.⁴¹⁹

The Monarcho-Fascists treated Iani Lukrov's body brutally. They took it to Kostur and dragged it through the streets to frighten the people.

DAG's leadership posthumously promoted Iani to the rank of Major.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ According to the recollections of Dimitar Pankov from the village Vmbel. Dimitar was Iani Lukrov's courier.

⁴¹⁹ T. Karameshev, Lukrov Iani. "For the Holy National Freedom"... p. 149.

SOTIR LIUTIKOV (1916-1948)

Sotir Liutikov was the first fighter to come out from his village Zagorichani, Kostur Region. Zagorichani is well-known for its revolutionary tradition. Sotir was born to a Macedonian agricultural family in which the Ilinden traditions were nurtured and persistently passed down from generation to generation. Gotse Delchev, the legendary leader of the Macedonian people, was always remembered in the Liutikov house. During his travels through Macedonia, Delchev always found hospitality in Hadzhi-Iani Liutikov's house. Hadzhi-Iani was Sotir's grandfather.⁴²⁰

From his early years Sotir had felt the weight of national and social oppression on his shoulders and because of that he began to express his dissatisfaction politically.

Two years after he completed his military service in the Greek army, Sotir and hundreds of other Macedonians like him, in October 1940, were sent to fight in the Greco-Italian war where Sotir was severely wounded.⁴²¹

In 1942, after recovering from his wounds, Sotir left the hospital and returned to Zagorichani where he immediately took up arms to protect his villagers from oppression perpetrated by the Greek nationalists.

In the second half of October 1944, due to the unprincipled attitude of the Greek resistance leadership towards the Macedonian national question, Sotir and other Macedonian fighters in protest crossed over the border into the territory of the Republic of Macedonia.⁴²²

In November 1944, the First Aegean Strike Brigade was created in Bitola exclusively consisting of Macedonians from Greek occupied

⁴²⁰ Hristo Andonovski-Polianski, "Gotse Delchev". Kultura, Skopje, 1972, p. 200. This information comes from Stoiche Kuzmanov's "Recollections".

⁴²¹ According to the recollections of Vasil Chulev from the village Zagorichani. Vasil was a fighter in DAG and head of the workshop for heavy weapons repair.

⁴²² According to the recollections of Alekso Sugarchev and Kuzo Nanev both from the village Zagorichani, both fighters of the First Aegean Assault Brigade and later of the DAG 18th Brigade.

Macedonia. Sotir was part of that composition and among the first to join the Brigade and to continue to fight against the occupier and against the Balisti gangs led by Dzhemo and Mefail in the liberation of Kichevo, Gostivar, Tetovo and Sharplanina. Sotir fought until the end of April 1945 when the Strike Brigade was disbanded.⁴²³ Sotir also took part in the battles at the Srem Front for the final push to expel the German occupiers from Yugoslavia.⁴²⁴

After the end of World War II, Sotir was still in Yugoslavia and was appointed assistant shopkeeper in the Bakery Detachment of the Belgrade Commandant's Office. On December 17, 1945 he was transferred to the military department in Bitola where he served until April 9, 1946. Sotir served in the JNA for seven months.⁴²⁵

At the end of 1946, Sotir voluntarily returned to the territory of Aegean Macedonia and immediately afterwards joined the struggle against the new Greek nationalist gangs that terrorized the Macedonian population with even greater ferocity.

At the end of April 1947, DAG General Staff issued an order to form a special military cavalry unit in "Vicho".⁴²⁶ The following people were placed in charge of implementing the order: Former Platoon Commander Argir Volchev from the village Bmboki, Kostur Region, Platoon commander Sotir Liutikov, Fighter Angel Dolev, Fighter Dimitar Samardzhiev all from the village Zagorichani and Fighter Pavle Chikov from the village Gorentsi, Kostur Region.⁴²⁷ For the first time in DAG's history a military cavalry unit was formed, which in a very short time grew into a cavalry squadron with about 100 cavalry fighters, most of them Macedonians. This cavalry squadron was growing day by day so fast that after several months, several villages in Lerin, Kostur and Kailari Regions were placed under its control.

⁴²³ A list of the names of fighters who joined the First Aegean Strike Brigade can be found in the late Mihailo Keramitchiev's private archives.

⁴²⁴ According to the recollections of Risto Mishevski from the village Mokreni, Kostur Region. Risto was a participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG. He was also Sotir Liutikov's comrade-in-arms.

⁴²⁵ JNA military service card issued to Sotir Liutikov under number 395907.

⁴²⁶ Recollections of K. T. Kept in INI.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

In the beginning of August 1947, the cavalymen carried out several successful actions and captured the villages Biraltsi, Rokita, Chor, Palior, Trebishta and Lipintsi in Kailari Region.⁴²⁸ During the night of August 12, 1947, the cavalymen stormed the village Embore in Kailari Region and attacked the MAI (Provincial Security Unit) gendarmerie station.⁴²⁹

A few days later, the horsemen attacked the village Lipintsi, Kailari Region. A company from the DAG 18th Brigade led by Lambro Gakidov-Dzhavela also took part in the attack. The moment the joint force attacked, the armed villagers panicked and fled to the town Kailari.⁴³⁰

In the second half of August 1947, the cavalry attacked enemy strongholds in Shestevska Buka in “Bukovik”, Kostur Region. Unfortunately its action ended without success. After three or four fierce attempts, the cavalry retreated to the village Gabresh, Kostur Region.

During September 1947, the cavalry squadron carried out several successful operations in the Kostur villages, which until then were still in the hands of the Greek gendarmerie. Among the villages liberated were Mavrovo, Zdraltsi, Sliveni, Zhupanishta, Sveta Nedela and Gorentsi.⁴³¹ It is important to mention at this point that Sotir Liutikov fought heroically in all these operations and served as an example to his comrades.

During January and February 1948, the cavalry squadron operated near the village Rakovo, Lerin Region. From there the horsemen

⁴²⁸ According to the recollections of Gligorios Lucris from the village Psoderi, Lerin Region. Gligorios was a participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG, an inductee in the cavalry squadron who served in the DAG units of DAG “Vicho” Headquarters.

⁴²⁹ Information bulletin of DAG “Vicho” Headquarters, dated August 15, 1947, regarding DAG unit activities in the area of Vicho. Macedonian archives. Collection: “Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War 1945-1949” AE: 182/47.

⁴³⁰ According to the recollections Lambro Gakidov Dzhavela from the village Srebreno, Lerin Region. Lambro was commander of a battalion in the DAG 18th brigade.

⁴³¹ Recollections of KT...

attacked the villages Sveta Petka, Klabuchishta, Negochani, Kalenik, Kleshtina and the airport near the city Lerin.⁴³²

At the end of February 1948, by order of DAG “Vicho” Headquarters, the cavalry squadron moved to the village Zherveni, Lerin Region. At about the same time DAG Lt. Col. Nestoras Tsogas arrived in Zherveni from Hasia, Thessaly with about 35 cavalrymen. Upon his arrival Tsogas requested that DAG General Headquarters combine the two squadrons into a battalion. The unification took place in the village Zherveni and it was announced that a special DAG cavalry battalion was created.⁴³³ Nestoras Tsogas was appointed commander of the battalion and Kiriako Tsalev was appointed political commissioner. Tsalev was from the village D’mbeni, Kostur Region. Sotir Liutikov was appointed platoon commander leading about 25 cavalrymen.

In the beginning of March 1948, after the two cavalry formations were combined, the cavalry battalion moved to the Mount Paiak-Kaimakchalan sector where it began military operations against the armed villagers in Voden, Gumendze and Enidzhe-Vadar Regions. A third cavalry unit, with about 40 fighters, joined the cavalry battalion at the village Tushim, “Kaimakchalan”.⁴³⁴

In the second half of March 1948, the cavalry battalion arrived on Mount Paiak. During its first operation involving the attack on the village Europos, Gumendzhe Region, Sotir demonstrated special courage.

At the beginning of April, 1948, the cavalry carried out successful attacks against the villages Trifulchevo and Nedirchevo in Enidzhe-Vardar Region, Boimitsa in Gumendzhe Region and Vladovo and Krontselovo in Voden Region. The cavalry also repulsed enemy counterattacks in the villages Mala and Golema Livada in Gumendzhe Region and in the village Severiani in Meglen Region.

⁴³² According to the recollections of Gligorios Lucris...

⁴³³ For more details of the DAG cavalry battalion formation and its activities: Tashko Mamurovski. DAG cavalry battalion and its military actions. INI Bulletin, Skopje, 1979, XXIII, no. 1, pp. 177-198.

⁴³⁴ According to the recollections of Gligorios Lucris...

In mid-April 1948, one of the fiercest battles was fought on the slopes of Mount Skra in which the cavalry battalion took part.⁴³⁵ It was an unequal fight in which DAG Platoon Commander Sotir Liutikov and many of his cavalrymen heroically laid down their lives at the altar for the Macedonian people's freedom.

Posthumously DAG General Staff promoted Sotir Liutikov to Captain.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

VANGEL MANGOV (1912-1947)

Vangel Mangov was among one of the more prominent Macedonian revolutionaries and activists from Kostur Region, who dedicated his entire life for the freedom of his people. Vangel was born in 1912, in the village Zhupanishta, to a poor agricultural family but with progressive and revolutionary ideas. In 1926, after finishing primary school in his native village, eager to learn more, Vangel continued his education first at the Kostur High School and then at the Tsotil High School.⁴³⁶

As a high school student, Vangel became acquainted with progressive working class ideas and decided to support labour movement programs in the country. Because of this he was expelled from high school.

In 1930, Vangel delivered a fiery speech against the exploitation of the working class at a rally in the church above the village of Drenoveni, Kostur Region. Because of that he was arrested by the Greek police and sent to prison in Kostur.⁴³⁷

In the period from 1933 to 1936, Vangel Mangov, well-known propagandist of progressive ideas in his district, actively promoted propaganda during the pre-election campaign for parliamentary elections in Greece. Because of this he was again arrested by the Greek police and sentenced to four months in prison.⁴³⁸

In 1939, during Ioannis Metaxas's dictatorship in Greece, Vangel, along with hundreds of other progressives from Kostur Region, was arrested for the third time by the Greek authorities, brutally tortured and sentenced to nine months in prison. It is worth mentioning at this point that because of his revolutionary ideas, Vangel's house was constantly searched by the Greek police and the gendarmerie.⁴³⁹

⁴³⁶ Mangov Vangel. "For the holy national freedom"..., p. 151.

⁴³⁷ According to the recollections of Ana Mangova, Vangel's sister. Ana was a participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG.

⁴³⁸ Mangov Vangel. "For the holy national freedom"..., p. 151.

⁴³⁹ According to the recollections of Micho Shishkov from the village Zhupanishta. Micho served as commissar in the "Lazo Trpovski" detachment. In

After his release from prison, Vangel Mangov was mobilized into the Greek army and sent to the front to fight the Italian Fascists.

Later, after the Albanian front fell, Vangel threw himself with enthusiasm and sacrifice into the struggle against the German-Italian and Bulgarian occupiers. He also participated in the collection and storage of abandoned weapons left behind by Greek troops withdrawing from the Albanian front. Vangel was also instrumental in organizing the villagers to struggle against the foreign occupiers and domestic traitors.

In 1942, Vangel was arrested by the occupying authorities for the murder of the traitor Captain Lakis and sentenced to 11 months in prison. His tragedy became even greater when his wife Sofia and their child were thrown into prison. His child died from cruel torture. ⁴⁴⁰

After his release from prison, Vangel didn't stop struggling. He immediately joined the anti-fascist movement, first as a leader of political organizations in Kostur Region, and then as an ELAS political commissar of a partisan detachment. ⁴⁴¹ He also tirelessly agitated the Macedonian population against the danger of Bulgarian fascist propaganda whose aim was to throw the Macedonian people into a fratricidal war.

In May 1944, Vangel and other ELAS Macedonian fighters, who disagreed with the CPG and ELAS's incorrect policy regarding the Macedonian national question, left ELAS in protest and crossed over the border into the Republic of Macedonia. There they formed armed units composed exclusively of Macedonians from Greek occupied Macedonia and resumed their fighting against the occupiers and domestic traitors. ⁴⁴²

1945 Micho was appointed NOF District leadership secretary in Kostur-Prespa District.

⁴⁴⁰ Mangov Vangel. "For the holy national freedom"..., p. 151.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² Pressured by the CPG leadership, SNOF in Kostur Region made an announcement to the Macedonian people condemning Naum Peiov's actions for encouraging the Macedonian fighters to leave ELAS. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War 1944-1945", Vol. I, doc. 105, pp. 118-119. Also see

Later, in November 1944, serving as political commissar of a battalion in the First Aegean Strike Brigade, consisting exclusively of Macedonian fighters from Greek occupied Macedonia, Vangel bravely fought for the final push to evict the occupier and put down the Balisti gangs around the cities Tetovo, Kichevo and Gostivar.

After the First Aegean Strike Brigade was disbanded Vangel Mangov and a group of Macedonians from Greek occupied Macedonia were sent to a political party course in Skopje. Upon their successful completion they were made available to the NOF leadership for assignments.

In late spring in 1945, Vangel Mangov and others returned to their homeland and went to Mount Malimadi where they began to struggle against the new reactionary authorities in Greece.

Later, in 1946, thanks to his tireless effort and sacrifice in the struggle against the Greek reactionaries, Vangel was appointed political commissar of a partisan detachment.⁴⁴³ He proved himself a capable leader and fighter in a very short time, standing out among the other DAG fighters. Vangel was already an experienced revolutionary and fighter for Macedonian rights so it was by no coincidence that in 1946 the Greek authorities put a price on his head. It was announced in the newspapers that a reward of 250,000 drachmas was offered for his liquidation.⁴⁴⁴

On March 26, 1947, Vangel Mangov left for a combat mission that was to take place at the Sliven Monastery where an enemy unit was stationed. Unfortunately he was betrayed and was surrounded by government troops waiting for him on the road on his way there. Vangel ran, but knowing he would be captured he threw himself

letter from ELAS detachment - "Vicho" to the Macedonian National Liberation Army unit in Prespa, requesting the return of the 30 fighters who broke away from ELAS and joined the ranks of the Macedonian National Liberation Army. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War 1944-1945", Vol. I... doc. 109, pp. 122-123.

⁴⁴³ Mangov Vangel. "For the Holy People's Freedom" ..., p. 152.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

from a high rock into the Bistritsa River hoping to save himself, but during the leap an enemy bullet fatally pierced his body.

The next day villagers from the village Sliveni found Vangel's dead body lying on the bank of Bistritsa.⁴⁴⁵ The Monarcho-Fascists retrieved him and transported him by truck to the police station in Chetirok. There they cut off his head and put it in a box. Then they gave it to a little boy named Paskal, for him take it to Kostur to frighten the people.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁵ According to the recollections of Ana Mangova...

⁴⁴⁶ Mangov Vangel. "For the holy national freedom" ..., p. 152.

TANAS MANOV (1926-1947)

Tanas Manov was born in the village Bapchor, Kostur Region, in 1926 to a poor farming family. After finishing primary school he and his brothers, Giorgi, Mane and Iovan, helped their parents look after the farm and livestock.

During the German, Italian and Bulgarian occupation, although still young, Tanas got involved in the struggle against the occupier and worked doing background activities and, with other young people, served as a courier. He did this until the end of the fascist occupation.

After the Varkiza Agreement was signed Tanas and his family, former members of the anti-fascist movement, were persecuted by the then reactionary regime in Greece.⁴⁴⁷ During this unbearable situation Tanas, along with other patriots from his village, was forced to go underground.

Towards the end of the spring in 1945, after a NOF cell was opened in Tanas's village, Tanas joined NOF and served as an activist. During the same time EAM was organizing protests and demonstrations in the city Kostur against the Greek reactionary regime. The NOF organization from Bapchor as well as other NOF organizations from the surrounding villages participated in those demonstrations. Tanas Manov was among the protesters who openly shouted slogans against the monarchy. Demonstrations like these were often organized.⁴⁴⁸

It is worth mentioning at this point that Tanas's father Risto, who was also a progressive, was often harassed by the Greek police because he harboured revolutionary ideas and because his children were involved in radical activities.

⁴⁴⁷ According to the recollections of Tanas Andreev from the village Bapchor. Andreev was a participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG. During the Greek Civil War he maintained the telephone connection between the Headquarters of the 18th DAG Brigade, i.e. the 11th DAG Division, DAG General Staff and some DAG units.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

When the first NOF armed groups began to appear on Mount Vicho in the first half of 1946, the fighters in these groups were welcomed in Bapchor because the village had already been organized to struggle against the Greek reactionaries.

Around the end of March 1946, the Greek police blockaded Bapchor and conducted house to house searches. Tanas and his comrades immediately informed the local activists and helped them escape and take refuge in the “Shipkovo” locality on Mount Vicho.⁴⁴⁹

During the night of August 18, 1946 a NOF military unit, led by Giorgi Kalkov from the village Visheni and his deputy Giorgi Sharin-Liliak from the village Bapchor, attacked the Bapchor police station. The NOF fighters however were unable to destroy the police station because the NOF unit was ill-prepared and the attack ended without success. After the failed attack the partisans retreated to Mount Vicho. Greek troops were immediately dispatched from the villages Visheni and Konomlati (Kolomnati) and blocked the village so no one else could leave. But some people from Bapchor, including Kole Peikov, Stase Andreev, Tanas Andreev, Vasil Bogdanov, Stratigo Bogdanov, Naum Dimov and others who were outside the village during the blockade, after long deliberation, decided to return home in hopes that the Greek troops wouldn't burn their houses down.⁴⁵⁰ But other villagers, including Tanas Manev, Vasil Manev, Iovan Manev, Vasil Shamanovski, Giorgi Peiov, etc., who decided not to return, avoided the fate of those who did return. Those who returned were immediately arrested along with several dozen other villagers and brutally tortured in the village school. They broke Vasil Bogdanov's arms. They broke Risto Apostolov's head, etc. Later they all joined Giorgi Kalkov's detachment.⁴⁵¹

All prisoners, a total of 64 people, were taken to the village Zherveni where the villagers helped the wounded. They were then

⁴⁴⁹ Information on the village Bapchor in Kostur Region can be found in INI.

⁴⁵⁰ According to the recollections of Risto Tsigulev from the village Bapchor. Risto was a participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG. Also according to the recollections of Tanas Andreev...

⁴⁵¹ According to the recollections of Giorgi Peikov, from the village Bapchor. Giorgi was a participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG. Giorgi was also commander of a company in the DAG 18th brigade.

transferred by truck from Zherveni to Kostur. There they were again harassed and ridiculed by the reactionary elements. Of the 64, 15 were sent to the Kozheni prison and brought before a military court. A few days later the others were also taken to Kozheni. They remained there in prison from August 1946 until January 1947. It wasn't until the following year that they were brought back to Kostur and brought before a military court. With the amnesty 59 were released and the other 5 were kept in prison because they were considered "dangerous" by the regime.⁴⁵² A short while later they were all released.

On March 12, 1947, Tanas's father Risto and his son Giorgi were re-arrested through betrayal by the Greek police and kept locked up in Risto's barn. The two were then tried by a military court in Kostur and sent to the notorious Greek prisons to serve their ten year sentences in various concentration camps on the dry Greek islands.⁴⁵³

Tanas Manov, since the NOF and CPG forces were combined to form joint units in November 1946, continued to serve in Giorgi Kalkov's detachment fighting for DAG. Tanas took part in the numerous battles fought on Mount Vicho during which time he was wounded on the leg. After his recovery Tanas returned to the ranks of DAG and continued to fight at various places in Aegean Macedonia and Greece.

On March 31, 1947, during the battle to capture the village Revani in Kostur Region, Tanas Manov was hit by an enemy bullet.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵² Information on the village Bapchor in Kostur Region... Also according to the recollections of Giorgi Peikov...

⁴⁵³ Mane Manov's virtues can't be forgotten. Mane Manov was Tanas Manov's brother. He was born in 1924. For a short time during the Greek Civil War Mane served as a personal courier for Pando Shiperkov, a prominent Macedonian revolutionary and DAG fighter. He later joined the ranks of the DAG 18th Brigade and served in Giorgi Peikov's company. During the summer enemy offensive on Mount Gramos in 1948, Mane was severely wounded and died of his wounds in the city Korcha.

⁴⁵⁴ According to the recollections of Giorgi Peikov... Also see Information on the village Bapchor...

The Monarcho-Fascists brutally mistreated Tanas's dead body even after his death. They beheaded him and placed his head on a spear and then took it to the city Kostur. There they paraded his head through the city streets to scare the people and prove to them that the reactionaries were capable of killing even the bravest of Macedonians like Tanas Manov.

In recognition of Tanas's deeds, a third victim from the village Bapchor to die in DAG's ranks, the following song was composed by a folk singer:

Is it for you, Macedonia, that I fought with great desire,
I fought with great desire to set you free.

From the first wound I survived, the second wound did not leave
me,
to walk our terrain, our dear Macedonia.

Tanas's mother is waiting for him to come back to her,
but Tanas is gone, he fell and died.

Cry mother, cry father, cry sister, for my youth,
cry terrain for your leaves.

You for your leaves terrain, I for my youth,
your leaves my sister terrain, will return to you again.
But my youth, terrain, will not come back.

SOTIR MIOVSKI (1923-1949)

The villagers from the beautiful Prespa village Orovo as well as hundreds of villagers from other Macedonian villages in the Aegean part of Macedonia, together with the democratic forces of Greece most actively participated in the Greek Civil War and made great sacrifices for the freedom of their people. Sotir Miovski was among the most prominent citizens of Orovo who laid down their lives for the Macedonian people's freedom. Sotir was born in 1923 to a poor farming family. After finishing primary school in his native village, eager to learn science, Sotir had a great desire to continue his education at the Lerin High School. But even though he was an excellent student, his family was too poor to fulfill his desires. His father Lazo left home when Sotir was just a child and went to work in distant Australia. Because of this Sotir, from a young age, was forced to work on the farm to provide for the family.⁴⁵⁵

Despite the difficult economic conditions at home, Sotir still found time to educate himself. He learned to read and write in the Macedonian language from Macedonian newspapers and other printed material illegally brought to Greek occupied Macedonia by Macedonian partisan units from the Republic of Macedonia. He was later able to read progressive literature with revolutionary content.⁴⁵⁶ This progressive literature correctly oriented him and taught him to see the reasons for the national and social exploitation of the Macedonian people. Through it, he came to the realization that the Macedonian people needed to liberate themselves and this could only be done by their own effort. He accepted the idea that only Macedonians would struggle for Macedonian interests. Macedonians needed to accept the idea that their freedom and national rights could only be gained by their own endeavour.

During the Second World War, even though he wasn't a direct participant in the anti-fascist struggle, Sotir Miovski worked tirelessly to help ELAS partisan units by any means possible. He also did everything he could for the units from the Republic of

⁴⁵⁵ According to the recollections of Kosta Miovski, Sotir's brother. Kosta was an active participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG.

⁴⁵⁶ Tome Miovski, Fallen for their Homeland. Skopje, 1968, p. 21.

Macedonia when they found themselves in Prespa, from time to time.⁴⁵⁷

Thanks to his tireless efforts in the struggle to liberate the Macedonian people, in early 1943 Sotir was appointed a member of OKNE, the youth organization. That same year, Sotir was appointed leader of EPON in his native village. He was later invited to join the CPG, which he did and in that capacity continued to struggle against the occupiers and domestic traitors.⁴⁵⁸

At the end of 1943, after SNOF, the Macedonian anti-fascist organization, was created in Lerin Region, Sotir Miovski was put in charge of producing propaganda. As a result he became its ardent propagandist and called on the Macedonian people to struggle for their liberation.

In about mid-1944, Sotir picked up a rifle and joined the struggle to expel the foreign occupiers. Selflessly and heroically he took part in almost every battle that took place in Prespa and the surrounding region.

After the fascist occupiers were driven out, as an experienced activist in the movement, Sotir continued his revolutionary activities. As a leader in the Prespa Region movement, Sotir visited the various Prespa villages and agitated the people to struggle against the new regime in Greece. Because of this, in August 1946, he and some other movement leaders in Prespa Region were arrested by the Greek police and sent to prison. After his release in November 1946,⁴⁵⁹ Sotir was again re-arrested and sent to prison in the village P'pli where he experienced horrific torture and harassment by the Greek police and gendarmerie. He was left without food and water for several days. But despite the brutal torture, Sotir and his comrades didn't betray anyone. They remained true to their Macedonian ideals until the end. They fiercely fought for freedom and equality for all.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid: pp. 21-22.

⁴⁵⁸ According to the recollections of Dimitar Ionovski from the village Orovo, Prespa Region. Dimitar was a participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG.

⁴⁵⁹ Tome Miovski, *Fallen for their Homeland...*, p. 22.

At the end of 1946, the Third Prespa Detachment was created in Prespa Region and was led by Lefter Olevski from the village Banitsa, Lerin Region. The Prespa Detachment was created to protect the Macedonian population from the terror perpetrated by the Greek terrorist detachments operating in the Macedonian villages in the Prespa Region. Later in May 1947 this detachment, led by Pando Markovski from the village Zhelevo, Lerin Region, grew into a company.⁴⁶⁰

On March 25, 1947, after his release from prison, Sotir Miovski and his fellow villagers voluntarily joined DAG. In the beginning Sotir joined Pando Markovski's company as his courier. At the same time he was also responsible for carrying out agitation and propaganda tasks.⁴⁶¹

Sotir was convinced that the enemy could only be destroyed with a rifle in hand. So, from the first days of joining DAG he bravely and heroically fought against the enemy units on Mounts Gramos, Vicho, Lk, Lerin and other places.

Appreciating his courage and determination in the struggle for liberation, DAG General Staff sent Sotir to the officer's school on Mount Gramos. Upon successfully completing the course, Sotir was kept there and given a job to teach.

Sotir Miovski wasn't only a good soldier but also a prominent political worker. He actively participated in NOF, NOMS and AFZH. He was also a delegate in NOF and other Congresses.⁴⁶² In general Sotir was an exemplary fighter and political leader.

In recognition of his fighting abilities and courage, on January 23, 1949, DAG General Staff promoted Sotir Miovski to the rank of 2nd

⁴⁶⁰ According to the recollections of Pando Markovski from the village Zhelevo, Lerin Region. Pando was a participant in the National Liberation War and a deputy commander of a battalion in the First Aegean Strike Brigade. While serving in DAG Pando was company commander in the DAG 107th Brigade.

⁴⁶¹ Iroes ke martires (Heroes and Martyrs). "Nea Elada" (New Greece) Edition, 1954, p. 172. Also according to the recollections of Pando Markovski...

⁴⁶² According to the recollections of German Nelkovski from the village Orovo, Prespa Region. German was a participant in DAG.

lieutenant. Then on July 29, 1949, he was promoted to the rank of 1st lieutenant.⁴⁶³

In early August 1949, while Sotir was part of the 670th unit of the DAG Officer's School, he and his students were ordered to defend Lisets to allow DAG units to retreat. After taking their positions Sotir's students were attacked from all sides by a large number of enemy troops. A bloody and uneven battle ensued. Realizing that the enemy was increasingly tightening the noose around his position, Sotir launched the last attack in the name of freedom. In that difficult struggle, on August 11, 1949, he laid down his life for the freedom of his people.⁴⁶⁴

Posthumously, DAG General Staff promoted Sotir Miovski to the rank of Major and declared him an honorary hero.

⁴⁶³ Iroes ke martires..., p. 172. Also see "For the holy national freedom"..., p. 160.

⁴⁶⁴ Tome Miovski, Fallen for the Homeland..., p. 23. Also see "For the holy national freedom"..., p. 160 and Iroes ke martires..., p. 172.

GERMANIA (GERA) PAIKOVA (1931-1949)

Germania Paikova was one of the youngest Macedonian women DAG fighters to give her life at an early age in the fight for the Macedonian people's freedom. Germania was born to a large agricultural family in 1931, in the village German in Prespa, Lerin Region. From an early age, during the Ioannis Metaxas dictatorship, she worked in the family blacksmith workshop belonging to her father Stoian and uncle Metodija Paikovski. Germania, like her sisters and brother Todor, grew up in conditions where she couldn't even finish primary school.

After the German-Italian and Bulgarian fascist occupation, young Gera (as her relatives aptly called her) continued to work in the family blacksmith workshop.⁴⁶⁵

In the spring of 1943, individuals and groups of anti-fascists began to appear in the Paikov family blacksmith workshop to have their weapons repaired. Even though she was still a young girl, Gera showed remarkable abilities in carrying out these difficult and complex tasks. Her uncle Metodija Paikovski was very impressed with her abilities and the quality of work she was turning out. This is what he wrote in his memoirs:

“...One day at the end of 1943, a Yugoslav partisan came to our workshop and asked us to repair his machine gun. I was sick that day and unable to work. Our little Gera took the partisan's machine gun in her small hands and with my help repaired it. The Yugoslav partisan left satisfied...”⁴⁶⁶

Young Gera worked in her parents' blacksmith workshop until the fascist occupiers were expelled from the country. When the reactionary authorities in Greece and Aegean Macedonia came to power, as a result of the Varkiza Agreement, and began to escalate their terror tactics, Gera, although still young, became involved in the movement. During meetings, organized by prominent villagers,

⁴⁶⁵ According to the recollections of Stoian Paikovski, Germania's father. Stoian was a participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG.

⁴⁶⁶ Metodija Paikovski from the village German - his revolutionary activities in the period 1941-1949. Kept in INI

Gera learned a lot about the horrific atrocities Greek gangs were committing against the innocent Macedonian population in the area. Later, under her father's personal responsibility, she began to work as a courier. She often carried secret correspondence from the city Lerin to various places in Prespa Region. Gera also carried correspondence from the rural areas and immediately delivered it to the mountains in German and the Prespa villages. Secret correspondence from Lerin was given to her by Done Arnautov, Iani Shoferov, Stoian and Simo Kolachkov...⁴⁶⁷

At the end of August 1946, Gera, through Nikola Langov who picked up the ballots from Lerin, distributed those ballots to the homes in the village German and agitated the villagers to vote for "Democracy".

In September 1946, thanks to her hard work for the struggle, Gera was recruited into EPON, the youth organization, where she continued to work hard.

The skills Gera learned at her family's workshop also served the struggle. DAG leaders entrusted her with difficult and responsible tasks. She was to continue working in the family workshop repairing equipment and manufacturing implements to serve the struggle. Day and night, even under the most difficult conditions, Gera and her cousin Menka Paikovska manufactured 500 nails a day to nail horseshoes on DAG owned horses.⁴⁶⁸ Appreciating her noble work in her family's workshop, poet Paskal Paskalevski⁴⁶⁹ wrote the following: "...With her tough hands she held the hammer firmly and hit the red iron with force, like her comrades hit the enemy at the front. Fatigue she did not know. Her eyes shone brightly and every blow was a knife in the heart of the enemy..."⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁷ According to the recollections of Stoian and Metodija Paikovski...

⁴⁶⁸ According to Menka Paikovska from the village German, participant of DAG.

⁴⁶⁹ Paskal Paskalevski was born in the village Doleni, Kostur Region. During the Greek Civil War Paskal was a member of NOF agitation and propaganda and a poet whose poems were published in the newspaper "Nepokoren" and the magazine "Nova Makedonka", organs of the NOF Main Board and of AFZH for Aegean Macedonia.

⁴⁷⁰ Quoted by Paskal Paskalevski, Paikova Germania. "For the Holy People's Freedom"..., p. 183.

Gera worked at her family's workshop until the end of September 1947.

In October 1946, while doing her daily work, Gera contracted jaundice at which point the movement leadership ordered her to scale down and only make 200 nails a day. But Gera continued making 500 nails a day.

In March 1948 Gera joined the cooperative in the DAG free territory. Because of her strong work ethic she was often praised by the NOF press.

In October 1948, Gera, with rifle in hand, voluntarily joined DAG. Because she was still too young to carry weapons, her family advised her to go to school in the Republic of Macedonia. However, Gera flatly refused suggesting that: "First we need to get rid of the Greek Monarcho-Fascists and then we will go to school..."

On February 12, 1949, as a fighter in the DAG 14th Brigade, Gera took part in the battles for the capture of the Agricultural School in the city Lerin. They faced fierce and bloody battles. DAG suffered a catastrophic defeat. Gera was severely wounded in the face. When the fighters left the city they took the wounded with them but left Gera behind because they thought she was dead. After she regained consciousness the Greek soldiers captured her and temporarily placed her in a hospital in Lerin. The next day, her fellow villager Petre Muchkarov came to the hospital with doctor Spiropoulos to advise her on what to say to the military court so she could be saved. But she categorically refused and didn't agree to speak out against the struggle of her people. A short time later, without any trial, Gera and a number of other prisoners were shot and killed in Lerin.⁴⁷¹

Germania Paikova died in her prime but the people didn't forget her or her courage. Folk poet Paskal Paskalevski dedicated the following poem to her:

⁴⁷¹ According to Petre Muchkarov from the village German.

BLACKSMITH

Out of misery and innovation, she worked as a blacksmith
She entered the working world as a little girl
Immature in youth, early in the morning
The same heavy human oppression.

She held the hammer firmly in her hand,
And waved it with the force of a sweaty devil
When the fire sparked her hatred,
With a hammer she defended her father's doorstep!

In her eyes her flames shone,
And grief gathered in the chests of the young
From class hatred and class awareness
To deliver the people from the fascists.

The sixteen-year-old girl,
Germania knows what black labour means,
At her age the girls in town
Play with dolls and look like flowers.

In Germania's hands, the hammer sings,
Sparks fly in a miraculous rain,
At every blow freedom shines,
And a knife is angrily thrust in a fascist's heart.⁴⁷²

⁴⁷² Quote taken from the Monograph with a memorial album - the village German
- Prespa Region. Skopje, 1979, p. 75.

IANI PIROVSKI (1923-1949)

Iani Pirovski's name is associated with the heroic deaths of hundreds of Macedonian DAG fighters who fought in the bloody battle to capture the city Lerin in February 1949.

Iani Pirovski was born in 1923 in the village Kosinets.⁴⁷³ After finishing primary school in his native village, Iani continued his education at the Kostur High School. Along with a high school education, Iani also received lessons in music. As a high school student, Iani had the opportunity to personally experience the brutal exploitation of the Greek ruling circles. That is why in 1938 he joined OKNE, the youth organization, and as an active member spread and propagated revolutionary ideas to the working class.⁴⁷⁴

In 1941, well-informed about exploitation, especially about the working class, Iani was one of the first activists in Kostur Region to join the struggle against the German-Italian and Bulgarian occupiers. Thanks to his efforts in organizing anti-fascist resistance cells in Kosinets and surrounding villages, Iani was appointed OKNE secretary in his native village.⁴⁷⁵ Shortly afterwards, in 1942, he was appointed member of the OKNE Regional Committee in the Smrdesh-Kosinets area.⁴⁷⁶ In 1943, Iani was appointed secretary of the EPON Regional Committee for Recreation and after a short time he was appointed secretary of EPON in three regions.

In the fall of 1943, Iani was appointed member of the EPON District Committee for Kostur Region. In this capacity Iani was in charge of agitation and propaganda in which he fought tirelessly against the Bulgarian and other propagandists in Kostur Region, whose goal

⁴⁷³ Kosinets is located at the foot of Mount Malimadi which in Macedonian history symbolizes two bright and bloody dates from the Macedonian people's revolutionary past in this area: the heroism of the Macedonian insurgents who fought against Ottoman tyranny and the decisive battle that took place in the summer of 1948, in which DAG units inflicted heavy blows and defeated the Greek government army.

⁴⁷⁴ According to the recollections of Urania Iurukova from the village Izglibe, Kostur Region. Urania was Iani Pirovski's wife...

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁶ According to the recollections of Lambro Cholakov from the village Smrdesh...

was to prevent the development of a Macedonian national liberation movement in this area.⁴⁷⁷

Iani demonstrated a special effort in agitating the young people in Kostur to join ELAS en masse. As an experienced revolutionary and activist, Iani was able to convince the Macedonian youth of the necessity to join the armed struggle and to do it with love and patriotic feelings. In his opinion, in these fateful moments for the Macedonian people, mass Macedonian participation was a decisive factor in gaining freedom and national and social rights.

Iani was very happy to see the formation of SNOF, the Macedonian National Liberation Organization in Kostur Region. This event was a turning point in the development of the Macedonian national liberation movement and because of that Iani became even more engaged in organizing and amassing Macedonian youth in the struggle against the occupiers.

Iani's love to see the Macedonian people liberated came into full expression in August 1944 when, with rifle in hand, he joined the ranks of the Macedonian battalion "Gotse" and continued to fight for the final push to evict the occupiers.⁴⁷⁸ Later, with the formation of the First Aegean Strike Brigade in the Republic of Macedonians, Iani was placed in charge of leading a battalion in the Brigade where he continued his anti-fascist struggle until the Brigade was disbanded.

Thanks to his tireless effort in the liberation movement, Iani and a group of young activists from the First Aegean Strike Brigade, including Micho Karadzha, Vasko Karadzha, Evdokia Baliova-Vera, Steriana Vangelova-Slavianka and Hrisanti Tsangranovska, participated in the Second NOMS Congress held in Skopje on January 6, 1945.⁴⁷⁹

Immediately after the Varkiza Agreement was signed, the Greek reactionary authorities, with help from the Anglo-American

⁴⁷⁷ Lambro Cholakov, Iani Pirovski. Nova Makedonija, Skopje, 1971, February 12, p. 10.

⁴⁷⁸ According to the recollections of Urania Iurukova and Lambro Cholakov...

⁴⁷⁹ According to the recollections of Evdokia Baliova-Nikolova (Vera)...

interventionists, began to terrorize the Macedonian population to force as many Macedonians as possible to leave their ancestral lands. Realizing that this amounted to genocide, Iani Pirovski, by decision of the NOF Main Board leadership for Aegean Macedonia, at his own request was sent back to his homeland in May 1945 and immediately joined the struggle against the Greek reactionaries.⁴⁸⁰ As an experienced organizer and leader in the Macedonian liberation movement, Iani was immediately appointed member of the NOF District Board for Kostur⁴⁸¹ and Secretary of the District Board of NOMS for Kostur Region.⁴⁸² In that capacity Iani immediately became involved in the struggle against the reactionaries. He constantly moved around from village to village getting acquainted with the details of the difficult situation in which his people were involved. In a letter he sent to the NOF leadership on August 24, 1945, among other things, he wrote:

“On August 22, 1945, Greek reactionary soldiers caught three of our comrades outside the village German. Two of them were activists from the Prespa District Board. According to the information we have, these comrades surrendered to the reactionaries at 12 midnight after they were surrounded. The soldiers took them inside the village and beat them mercilessly...”⁴⁸³

Another report, dated January 10, 1946, sent by NOF activists and leaders Iani Pirovski, Kole Panov, Urania Iurukova and Traiche Tsafarov, from Kostur Region, to the NOF Main Board regarding the terror in Kostur Region, among other things, said:

“...The terror throughout the district continues. Reactionary units regularly move and block villages...”

From December 18 to 20, 1945, the reactionaries beat Taki Belchev and Pandeli Vlahov in the village Ianoveni. Taki is CPG regional secretary.

⁴⁸⁰ According to the recollections of Lambro Cholakov and Mincho Fotev...

⁴⁸¹ “Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1946”, Vol. III, doc. 9, p. 23.

⁴⁸² Ibid.

⁴⁸³ “Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945”, Vol. II, doc. 129, p. 245

In Kostur, a court consisting of Ahilis Alvano, Ioani Voitsi, Rusili the doctor and Andrea Papadopoulos continues to judge armed individuals, black marketers who got rich during the war, members of SNOF, etc., without interruption. The usual verdicts are death, life imprisonment, ten years in jail and confiscation of personal property...⁴⁸⁴

In his long struggle for freedom, democratic and social rights for the Macedonian people, Iani Pirovski demonstrated extraordinary abilities and qualities. And because of that, in the second half of 1946, he was appointed member of the CPG District Committee for Kostur Region.⁴⁸⁵ Later, on December 22, 1946, Iani joined the EAM Executive Committee for Kostur Region.⁴⁸⁶

In December 1947, after a year of intense fighting, Iani became seriously ill. The CPG leadership sent him for treatment to Tirana, Albania. After he recovered Iani was sent to Camp Suk near Tirana where the DAG hospital and DAG food warehouses for the partisans were located. Here Iani was responsible for receiving and distributing food to DAG units. He also often held meetings with the wounded fighters and gave them lectures on field combat.

In October 1948, Iani Pirovski and a group of DAG fighters left Albania and returned home where they immediately joined the ranks of the DAG IX Division. A short time later DAG headquarters sent Iani to the DAG 107th Brigade where he was tasked with managing Macedonian affairs.

While serving in the ranks of the DAG 107th Brigade, Iani fought valiantly until his heroic death in the battle for the capture of the city Lerin on February 12, 1949. His comrades managed to pull Iani's dead body out of Lerin and took it to the village Buf, in Lerin Region, where he was buried.

⁴⁸⁴ "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1946", Vol. III, doc. 6, pp. 17-18.

⁴⁸⁵ "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1947", Vol. IV, doc. 3, p. 17.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

From what we know we can conclude that Iani Pirovski was a valiant fighter and earned the right to be remembered for his contributions to the liberation movement. He was always distinguished for his courage, principles, modesty and for consistently performing his assigned tasks.

ALEKO PISHUTOV (1918-1947)

Aleko Pishutov was a prominent fighter from the city Gumenzhe. He dedicated his entire life to the struggle for the Macedonian people's liberation and social rights. Aleko was born in 1918 to an agricultural working family and spent his childhood and early years in his hometown Gumenzhe.

After fascist Italy attacked Greece and Aegean Macedonia, Aleko and other Macedonians from his hometown were mobilized into the Greek army and immediately sent to the front to fight the Italian aggressor.⁴⁸⁷

In late spring of 1941, from the first days the Germans, Italians and Bulgarians occupied his hometown, Aleko was among the first in Gumenzhe to join the struggle against the foreign occupiers. Thanks to his effort and determination to fight against the foreign fascists, in 1943 he was accepted as a member of the Communist Party of Greece.⁴⁸⁸

In March 1944, Aleko and his hometown comrades Ivan Kovachev-Orfeas, Aleko Zelenkov, Tomo Sadrazanov, Vangel Kara-Giorgiev, Ivan Muianchev, Ivan Shlipkov and others voluntarily joined the ranks of ELAS XXX regiment which operated on Mounts Paiak and Kaimakchalan. While serving in the ranks of this regiment Aleko quickly rose to platoon commander and fought in the battles for the capture of the cities Gumenzhe, Enidzhe-Vardar, Kukush, the Boimitsa mine and the villages Sandelchevo, Postol (Pela), Plasnichevo, etc.⁴⁸⁹

In December 1944, Aleko and other ELAS fighters from the XXX Brigade went to Athens to assist the ELAS fighters in the city to

⁴⁸⁷ According to the recollections Aleko Pulkov from the city Gumenzhe. Aleko was a prominent fighter in the National Liberation War and in DAG.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁹ Tanasis Mitsopoulos (Captain Stavros), History of the ELAS XXX Brigade (Memories and Events), Part I... Translated from Greek to Macedonian by Todor Simovski, pp. 240-244 and Part II, pp. 208-212. Document kept in INI.

fight against British interventionists and Greek nationalist government units.⁴⁹⁰

After the armistice between the reactionary government and ELAS was concluded in January 1945, Aleko and the ELAS fighters of the XXX Brigade, after a long and arduous journey, returned to their base in Enidzhe-Vardar. When they arrived the Varkiza Agreement had already been signed and they had to surrender their weapons. After they were disbanded everyone went home.

In March 1945, after ELAS capitulated, Aleko and other Macedonian fighters and former members of the resistance were forced to go underground to avoid being arrested by the Greek police. At this point Aleko crossed over the border and, with his compatriots, fled to Bulkesh in Voivodina⁴⁹¹ where he became involved in the political affairs of the refugees from his homeland.

In March 1946, Aleko voluntarily returned to Gumendzhe to help his compatriots in the struggle against the Greek reactionaries terrorizing Aegean Macedonia.⁴⁹² With help from his hometown comrades Aleko Zelenkov, Vangel Karadzhordzhev, Aleko Pulkov, Tomo Sadrazanov, Risto Valkanov and others, Aleko created the first NOF armed formations to protect the Macedonian population and NOF's membership from Greek nationalists.⁴⁹³ Kocho Kirov from the village Tsrna Reka was appointed commander of the NOF armed groups for Gumendzhe District. Vancho Venov from the city Enidzhe-Vardar was appointed political commissar and Aleko Pulkov was appointed platoon commander. Aleko participated in almost all actions that took place on Mount Paiak and in the Gumendzhe District.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid: pp. 461-472.

⁴⁹¹ According to the recollections of Aleko Pulkov...

⁴⁹² Ibid.

⁴⁹³ According to the recollections of Vancho Venov from the city Gumendzhe. Vancho was a prominent fighter in the National Liberation War and in DAG. He was also a political commissar of a NOF armed unit operating on Mount Paiak. Also according to the recollections of Risto Valkanov from the city Gumendzhe. Valkanov was a prominent fighter in the National Liberation War and in DAG as well as NOF Secretary for the city Gumendzhe.

At the end of November 1946, with the formation of the joint (NOF-CPG) DAG Headquarters at Paiak and Kaimakchalan, Aleko and a number of other Macedonian fighters were transferred from the NOF groups to the DAG units. And like before, Aleko fought heroically in all the battles led by the DAG 24th Brigade against the enemy at Mounts Paiak and Kaimakchalan.

In April 1947, by order of DAG Headquarters to the 24th Brigade, Aleko and his comrades Aleko Pulkov and Kocho Kirov were put in charge of intelligence services for Gumenzhe District.

During the winter of 1947, the Greek air force sudden attacked the Gardini locality on Mount Paiak and severely wounded Aleko who two days later succumbed to his wounds.⁴⁹⁴ Aleko Pishutov was an honest and sincere fighter. He gave his life for the Macedonian people's freedom and social rights.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

ZHIVKO POPOV (1922-1947)

Zhivko Popov was an active fighter in the Macedonian anti-fascist movement in Lerin Region.⁴⁹⁵ Zhivko was born in 1922 in the village Papazhani to a poor agricultural family. After finishing primary school Zhivko helped his parents with the livestock and farm work.

Following the example of his ancestors, Zhivko became involved in the revolutionary movement at an early age. Like many Macedonians from his homeland, Zhivko was treated harshly during Ioannis Metaxas's dictatorship. According to his relatives and friends, at the end of 1936, Greek authorities in the village caught Zhivko speaking Macedonian and immediately locked him up in the village gendarmerie station where he was tormented for three days in a row and forced to eat salted fish and drink castor oil. He was tortured and abused inhumanely.⁴⁹⁶

During the German occupation Zhivko was among the first in his village to join the struggle against the foreign occupiers and domestic traitors. He often gathered young people in the village square to inform them of the new political situation in Greece.

In July 1943, the Macedonian anti-fascists from Neokas Region held a meeting in Zhivko Popov's house. Among those who attended was Vangel Koichev from the village Banitsa representing the CPG for Neokas Region, Stoian Traichev-Stefo from Nevoliani also a CPG official from Atanas Rusevski's area representing the village Popadia, responsible for agitation and propaganda in Neokas Region.⁴⁹⁷ During the meeting the attendants discussed the military and political situation in the country and the need to form basic CPG Party cells in the Neokas Region villages. At this point Zhivko was

⁴⁹⁵ For more information on Zhivko Popov, see Tashko Mamurovski, Zhivko Popov's revolutionary activities (1922-1947). INI Gazette, Skopje, 1980, XXIV, no. 3, pp. 243-254.

⁴⁹⁶ According to Atanas Rusevski's manuscript about Zhivko Popov's revolutionary activities. Manuscript kept in INI.

⁴⁹⁷ Atanas Rusevski, Memories from events that took place in the period 1941-1945. Atanas Rusevski's personal recollections of his participation in the National Liberation War. Kept in INI.

admitted to the CPG and, as a member, was put in charge of creating a CPG cell in his native village.

Taking into account the activities Zhivko Popov was involved in so far, the Neokas CPG Regional Committee, in May 1944, decided to appoint him a member of the Regional Committee. As a member of the CPG Regional Committee, Zhivko was put in charge of organizational issues in the villages Vrbeni, Petoratsi, Papazhani, Asanovo Selo and Nov Kavkas during which he excelled in his duties. In a very short time he was able to establish basic CPG cells in all of the above-mentioned villages. He organized meetings with other members of the Party and often visited the villages in person, calling on the people to struggle harder against the occupiers. The greatest difficulty Zhivko Popov faced in his daily work was his inability to establish basic EAM cells in the Macedonian villages. The objective reason for that was because the Macedonian people didn't trust the EAM Greek leadership.⁴⁹⁸ The Macedonian people preferred to join SNOF, the Macedonian organization which they joined en masse. SNOF was a Macedonian national organization which protected the rights and wishes of the Macedonian people. Suffice it to say that the people from the villages Papazhani, Vrbeni, Asanovo Selo, Popadia, Setina, Krushoradi, etc., all joined SNOF's ranks en masse.

But the joy of the Macedonian anti-fascists did not last long. At the end of April 1944, the CPG leadership decided to disband SNOF in both Kostur and Lerin Regions. Of course the fighters and members of SNOF were very upset with the CPG's decision and their distrust of the Greek resistance leadership worsened.

Immediately after the CPG announced its decision to disband SNOF, a number of Macedonian fighters left and crossed over into the Republic of Macedonia. As a result a number of instructors from the CPG Regional Committee held a meeting in the village Krushoradi to discuss the reasons why the SNOF fighters had left and what further action the CPG was going to take. Everyone present at the meeting was forced to take a critical stance against the Macedonian fighters who left.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid.

In August 1944, the CPG leadership in Neokas Region decided to mobilize some reservists from that Region in order to strengthen the ELAS regulars. Zhivko Popov, who at that time was a CPG instructor in the Neokas Region villages, was one of the first to get involved in the mobilization. He toured the various villages and, through agitation, convinced the Macedonians that the long-awaited freedom was near.

In addition to his daily organizational work in the region, Zhivko Popov also carried out various propaganda activities. Among other things, he wrote anti-fascist slogans on the walls of houses in the villages.

One day Zhivko persuaded Atanas Rusevski to go with him and write the slogan “Long live the KKM”, which in Greek means the “Communist Party of Macedonia”. Although there was no Macedonian Communist Party in Greece, Zhivko, carried away by his Macedonian national feelings, persuaded his friend to write that slogan anyway. The same day, as soon as he saw the slogan, fellow instructor Vangel Koichev immediately made a sharp remark about it. With fear in his voice Vangel advised Zhivko and Atanas to immediately delete the slogan after they had their meeting.⁴⁹⁹

At the same meeting, in August 1944, the issue of opening Macedonian public schools came up. In his speech Zhivko pointed out that there were now many freed villages in the district where classes could be conducted in the Macedonian language. Suffice it to say that the villages in question were located in the upper reaches of Stara Reka River.

The Greek comrades from the Neokas CPG Regional Committee didn't like Zhivko Popov's proposal. With irony one person asked Zhivko why was he in such a hurry to open schools when Lerin hadn't yet been liberated from the occupiers. And what kind of school was he dreaming of? These words were said by Lambros Kombos an EAM instructor in Neokas Region who was from the village Petoratsi. Lambros Kombos was a Turkish Christian colonist

⁴⁹⁹ Atanas Rusevski, Recollections of events in the period 1941-1945...

from Asia Minor deposited in Greek occupied Macedonia by the Greek government in the 1920's.⁵⁰⁰

Around the same time the village boards were preparing for elections. Included among those who were in charge of the preparations and were given instructions on how to conduct elections were Giorgi Banichotov-Perikli, Micho Nedelkov, Atanas Rusevski, Dine Robev, Tanas Ashlakov, Risto Vasev-Dobri and Stavro Kochev-Ianko. Zhivko Popov was in charge of visiting the villages in his area and agitating the population to vote.⁵⁰¹

In the beginning of October 1944, as campaigning for the election intensified things began to deteriorate. One by one ELAS reservists began to flee. Some went home while others crossed over the border into the Republic of Macedonia where they joined the ranks of the Yugoslav partisan units and continued to fight against the occupier. A group of fighters led by Giorgi Turundzhiev moved to the village Bach in Bitola Region. Those Macedonian fighters from ELAS, who didn't agree with the CPG and ELAS's negative behaviour towards the Macedonian national question were forced to leave ELAS. They too crossed over to the Republic of Macedonia and joined Giorgi Turundzhiev's unit.

In November 1944, the CPG Regional Committee for Neokas Region held a meeting to discuss why the Macedonian partisan units had left ELAS. Also among those who attended the meeting was Lambros Kombos, the EAM instructor mentioned earlier. Using vulgar language Kombos denigrated the Macedonian resistance leaders calling them traitors. He told his audience that Ilia Dimovski-Gotse and his "clique" were deserters.⁵⁰²

There were sharp words exchanged at the meeting and most of those present condemned the CPG and ELAS for being insensitive to the Macedonian national question.

⁵⁰⁰ According to the recollections of Atanas Rusevski about Zhivko Popov's revolutionary activities...

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

⁵⁰² Ibid.

When Zhivko Popov found out about this, especially about the unprincipled attitude the CPG and ELAS took towards the Macedonians from this part of Macedonia, he and a group of Macedonian fighters, in protest, also crossed the border into the Republic of Macedonia and immediately joined the ranks of the First Aegean Strike Brigade. Zhivko was appointed political commissar of a company.⁵⁰³

After the First Aegean Assault Brigade was disbanded Zhivko Popov and a number of Macedonians from the brigade's military and political staff were sent on a political training course at the suggestion of NOF General Command.

After they completed the course, Zhivko and the others including Kosta Dzhingov from the village Krushoradi, Kole Patkov from the village Asanovo Selo, Tane Karkachov from the village Voshtareni and Alekso Bozharov from the village Setina returned to their homeland illegally and explained to the people why there was a rift between the Macedonian fighters who had crossed into the Republic of Macedonia and the CPG and ELAS leaderships.⁵⁰⁴

In August 1945, by decision of NOF District Board for Lerin Region, Zhivko Popov was dispatched to the field in Lerin Region to maintain contact with the people and provide information that would acquaint the District leadership with the situation in the population.⁵⁰⁵ In addition to that Zhivko was also responsible for arranging organizational systems in his area.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰³ Atanas Rusevski, recollections of events in the period 1941-1945...

⁵⁰⁴ Report written by Dzhodzho Urdov, dated August 25, 1945, addressed to the NOF General Directorate regarding the situation in Lerin Region. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945", Vol. II, doc. 130, p. 246. Also see Report from NOF District Board for Lerin Region to NOF Main leadership regarding organizational activities and the general situation in the district. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945", T. II., doc. 127, p. 242. Also see Lerin Region participants in the National Liberation War and in DAG.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid: "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945", Vol. II, doc. 127, p. 242.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid: "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945", Vol. II, doc. 130, p. 246.

From this moment on, Zhivko Popov stepped up his involvement in the struggle against the Greek Monarcho-Fascists and because of that, at the end of October 1945, he was appointed NOF District Board secretary for the Lerin Region.⁵⁰⁷ He remained in that position until the end of 1946, i.e. until his tragic death.

Although he had little means to do organizational work in the district where Zhivko Popov worked he still, in a very short time, managed to create several basic NOF, NOMS and AFZH cells in all the villages in Banitsa and Vostareni Regions.⁵⁰⁸

Thanks to his great effort and responsibility, Zhivko had the opportunity to get acquainted with the difficult situation the Macedonian people were facing in this area. An example of this is given in one of his reports, dated January 18, 1946, sent by Zhivko to NOF General Staff. Among other things, he wrote: “The same situation continues in both Voshtareni and Banitsa Regions, terror is carried out by the Burandars (Monarcho-Fascists) and their local reactionaries. Court summonses have been sent to all the villages and the villagers are being sentenced from 3 to 100 years in prison, being accused of being members of the counter bands, German, Bulgarian and Gotse’s collaborators, etc. They are terrorizing and robbing the democratically-minded people without end...”⁵⁰⁹

On January 5, 1947, the CPG District Committee for Lerin Region ordered Zhivko Popov, Ilia Tsrnakov, Gigo Adzhikirov and Trifko Popov to enter the village Patele and find the people who knew where the weapons were hidden so that they could transfer them to Mount Vicho. In other words, these men were tasked with the

⁵⁰⁷ As reported by Lazo Poplazarov in a report dated November 13, 1945, regarding the terror situation in Lerin Region. “Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945”, Vol. II, doc. 186, p. 352. Also see report by Hristo Kolentsev, dated December 19, 1945, sent to the NOF General leadership regarding NOF’s organizational activities from 15. XI to 15. XII 1945, and the situation in Lerin Region. “Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945”, T. II., doc. 227, p.437.

⁵⁰⁸ “Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945”, Vol. III, doc. 9, p. 26.

⁵⁰⁹ Report written by Zhivko Popov, on the NOF organizational situation in Voshtareni, Banitsa and Lerin Regions. “Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1946”, Vol. III, doc. 19, p. 47.

responsibility of establishing connections with the CPG and NOF party cells in Patele and assist those who wanted to join DAG.⁵¹⁰ The group was informed in the village Belkamen that Spiro Blagoev from Patele would be waiting for them in Patele. Spiro agreed to provide accommodations for the group in Metodija Dzhogata's house.⁵¹¹

The group left Belkamen on the evening of January 6, 1947 and, when it arrived near Patele, even though he knew the police station was located in Dimche Parpulov's house, in the upper part of the village next to the railway, Ilia Tsrnakov still decided to cross the railway with the group. Why he did this is unknown to this day.

The partisans were spotted by the Greek police when they arrived at the "Machorvi Dol" locality but decided not to open fire and allowed the group to enter the village. In order to confuse the police officers, Ilia Tsrnakov decided not to enter the village immediately and they headed towards the mountain in the direction of a local church. A short time later the group went back and entered an open tunnel. After they went into the tunnel walking forward, they came back out of the tunnel walking backwards so as to deceive the police into believing they were still inside the tunnel. After doing this they headed for the church Sveta Petka down the valley and entered the village there. They decided to settle in Vancho Olev's house. Vancho was startled at their sudden appearance and didn't want them to stay in his house. Under the circumstances the group left and went to an empty house which Vancho Olev used as a barn.⁵¹²

At dawn noises were heard coming from the train station. At that moment, the group saw a car full of Greek soldiers and policemen run outside from the tunnel⁵¹³ where Spiro Blagoev was waiting for them.

⁵¹⁰ Spiridon Blagoev, About the heroic action of a group of DAG fighters: Ilia Tsrnakov, Zhivko Popov, Gigo Adzhikirov and Trifko Popov. Document kept in INI.

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ "For our Sacred National Freedom." Characters of the Fallen People's Fighters. Political and Literary Editions. 1962, p. 223.

From there the soldiers and policemen went to search the houses and immediately surrounded Spiro Blagoev and Pavel Popmitrev's houses, located in the village square where the group of partisans was hiding. After moving to the ground floor the group locked the door and barricaded it with crates. At the back of Dzogata's house was a doorway leading to Kole Kleanev's yard. The group decided to also lock that door fearing the Monarcho-Fascists might enter from there but they were too late. The army with machine guns in hand stormed into Kole Kleanev's yard preparing to break into the house where the partisans were hiding. The partisans had previously decided that if anything like this were to happen, they would break through the encirclement at any cost and meet in the village Liubetino.

The partisans decided, if need be, to attack the soldiers who were preparing to attack them from Kole Kleanev's yard. A group of soldiers came to the door and started knocking loudly. Mitko Kleanev's wife, Gena, yelled at the soldiers not to knock on that door because no one would open it, explaining that only a blind man lived in that house. The soldiers then left the yard and went to Dzhogota's house where the partisans were hiding at the time. When the partisans realized that they were going to be attacked from the yard of the house where they were hiding, they decided to open the door and run into Mitko Kleanev's yard but were unsuccessful. One of the soldiers probably spotted them and stormed the yard of the house where they were hiding. The partisans ran back to the ground floor and came out into Boris Bagrev's yard and, after jumping a wall, found themselves in Boris Iarev's yard. The partisans then agreed to run along the road together single file with Ilia Tsrnakov leading the bunch and Spiro Blagoev leaving last to close the yard gate.

The partisans managed to get out of Boris Bagrev's yard at the Iarev house and found themselves on the street near the Smilaikov house. Unfortunately Spiro Blagoev, who left last, lost contact with the others. He didn't know which direction they took.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹⁴ Spiridon Blagoev, On the heroic action of a group of DAG fighters...

Zhivko Popov and Ilia Tsrnakov managed to reach Vancho Olev's house and through his yard entered the same barn where they'd hidden when they entered the village. Gigo Adzhikirov and Trifko Popov ran into soldiers and policemen before reaching Olev's house and were forced to turn into the street where the Alilomovs lived. There they jumping over a wall and found themselves in Fere Ristev's house.

Unfortunately the soldiers and policemen spotted Ilia and Zhivko entering the barn and immediately surrounded it and began firing at the barn with their machine guns. Feeling that they would be shot Ilia and Zhivko decided to hide in the attic. The barn unfortunately didn't have a ceiling, only bare beams. As the younger of the two, Zhivko climbed up the wall and stood on top of a beam. He then lowered his machine gun to help Ilia climb. After Ilia climbed up and hid in a corner Zhivko pulled up his machine gun to retrieve it. On its way up the machine gun trigger got caught on a nail and fired a couple of rounds. Zhivko was hit on the head and fell to the floor.

The soldiers and policeman heard the shots and decided to do something so they ordered Vancho Olev to burn down the barn. But Vancho refused. He didn't want to be responsible for murdering Ilia Tsrnakov and Zhivko Popov. Because of that the police tortured him severely. In the end they forced him to pour a bin of flammable material on the barn door and set it on fire.⁵¹⁵

Ilia held out for as long as he could but when he could no longer breathe because of the thick smoke he lowered himself near a window. There he saw Giorgi, a Greek policeman he knew, standing in the corner. Ilia decided to jump out of the window and run away to avoid being shot at and threw a hand grenade at the policeman's feet. The policeman was startled and ran for the other corner. The grenade didn't explode but while the policeman was waiting for it to go off, Ilia jumped out of the window and rolled into a ditch about 10-15 metres high. He managed to escape and saved himself.

At night, around 11 pm, all Patele residents were summoned with church bells to gather in the village square to see a burnt human

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

body. The people didn't know whose body it was. All the villagers were forced to pass by and look at the body. It was Zhivko Popov's body. It was a horrible sight to see. Immediately after that the Greek police began to arrest villagers. There were terrible screams everywhere. People were yelling and crying...⁵¹⁶

The only witness to Zhivko Popov's tragic death was Ilia Tsrnakov who, on the night of January 6 and 7, informed Spiro Blagoev via courier that Zhivko was dead.

This is how Zhivko Popov, one of the first NOF organizers in Lerin Region died. But with his revolutionary devotion he set a rare example of a man who was faithful to his people and remained so to the end of his life.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

PETRE POPOV (1908-1962)

Many prominent NOF activists and leaders fell directly into the hands of the Greek police and gendarmerie. Some were immediately liquidated but many were given long prison sentences where they lost their lives as martyrs or were released before they died. This was the case with Petre Popov.⁵¹⁷

Petre Popov was born in 1908, in the village Dolno Rodivo, Meglen Region, to a poor agricultural family. After finishing primary school in his native village, Petre helped his parents with farming and animal husbandry.

In late October 1940, Petre and a number of other men from his village were mobilized into the Greek army and immediately sent to the Albanian front to fight the Italians.

After the Albanian front fell, Petre came back home and, together with his village comrades Giorgi Iatchev, Petre Peikov, Mitsi Mitsanov, Giorgi Kostov and others, began to create CPG cells in order to organize the people to struggle against the occupiers.⁵¹⁸ Petre's involvement lasted until the summer of 1942, when the CPG and EAM staff in Voden Region successfully connected with the political activists from Dolno Rodivo and other neighbouring villages in Meglen Region.

The first ELAS partisan units began to appear in the summer of 1943 around Mount Kaimakchalan, in the Bela Voda locality. With help of members of the party from his native village, Petre Popov immediately connected with ELAS headquarters in Kaimakchalan and agreed to supply its units with food and clothes.

In September 1943, larger ELAS partisan units began to operate in Kaimakchalan. At the same time, the Meglen Region villages began to organize various manifestations and protests on their own

⁵¹⁷ Even though Petre Popov wasn't killed in battle, taking into account his revolutionary commitments for which he sacrificed his life, we decided to include him in the constellation of fallen fighters.

⁵¹⁸ According to the recollections of Vani Adzhiev from the village Dolno Rodivo, Meglen Region. Vani was a TOMO and NOF activist in Voden Region.

initiative, during which they expressed their dissatisfaction with the occupiers and thus began to more actively organize against them. This was primarily due to Petre Popov's tireless agitation as well as to the involvement of other political organizers.

From this moment on, Petre became even more actively involved in the struggle against the foreign occupiers and their domestic traitors. Thanks to his effort in the struggle against the German and Bulgarian occupiers, in the summer of 1944, Petre was appointed a member of the CPG Tresino Regional Committee based in the village Tresino, Meglen Region.

Although he wasn't a direct participant in the ranks of the ELAS Voden Macedonian Battalion, which consisted of Macedonian volunteers from Meglen and Voden Regions, Petre Popov tirelessly agitated the Macedonian population in his area to join the ranks of the Macedonian army. Shortly afterwards, when the Macedonian ELAS partisans split from ELAS because the Greek CPG and ELAS leaderships showed disregard for the Macedonian national question, Petre remained on the ground in his area and continued his anti-fascist activities against the occupier and domestic traitors.⁵¹⁹

At the beginning of 1945, with the formation of TOMO, the Macedonian liberation organization in Voden Region, Petre Popov was appointed member of the TOMO Regional Board for Meglen Region responsible for agitation and propaganda.⁵²⁰

As a political leader in the Macedonian liberation movement in Voden Region, under very difficult conditions, Petre tirelessly agitated the Macedonian population to join TOMO fighting groups based on Mount Kaimakchalan.

Later, in June 1945 at a TOMO District Conference held in the "Tupcheto" area located between the villages Krontselovo and Vлкоianevo, Petre Popov joined the NOF District Board for Voden Region and was responsible for agitation and propaganda.⁵²¹

⁵¹⁹ Vangel Aianovski-Oche, *Aegean storms...*, pp. 159-160.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*: pp. 169-170.

In the first half of February 1946, in accordance with directives from the NOF General leadership, the NOF District Board for Voden Region reorganized its staff. Vangel Aianovski-Oche (NOF District Board Secretary) was sent to Meglen District; Mirka Ginova remained in the same district leading AFZH; Iani Iakita-Tempo and Iani Sarakachanov-Nano from the NOMS City leadership were transferred to the NOMS District leadership; Lazo Kamchev and Takis Sotiriou-Samiotis were sent to Negush and Petre Popov and Vangel Shamardanov-Ilindenski were sent to Ostrovo District in order to organize local NOF, NOMS and AFZH cells in this area.⁵²²

The Greek reactionaries at the time were waging terrible terror everywhere. The Greek government, through its police and gendarmerie, was arresting, harassing and killing Macedonians on a daily basis under the pretext that they were autonomists.

On March 23, 1946, a Greek gendarmerie unit treacherously encircled the NOF Regional Board in the village Iavoriani and, in an unequal skirmish, killed Panaiot Bozhinov NOF secretary for that area. Petre Popov was severely wounded and together with Atanas Lachkov, a courier from the village Mesimer, was arrested. The two men were then taken under guard to the Voden prison where the gendarmes brutally tortured them. Giorgi Kostov-Sandanski from the village Dolno Rodivo, an instructor at the NOF District Board, managed to escape through a rain of bullets.⁵²³

Following an investigation in Voden, Petre Popov was sentenced to life in prison and was then sent to Solun to serve his sentence. After serving 16 years in the infamous Greek prisons, Petre contracted tuberculosis and before he died the Greek authorities decided to

⁵²² Minutes of the NOF District Board for Voden Region meeting, dated February 12, 1946, regarding NOF's organizational structure. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1946", T. III, doc. 44, pp. 109-110.

⁵²³ Report from the NOF District Board for Voden Region to the NOF General leadership, dated March 24, 1946, on the NOF political situation in the district. Also see doc. 86, p. 86, p. 207. And the Proclamation made by the NOF District Board for Voden Region, dated March 24, 1946, to the Macedonians, Greeks, Vlachs and Albanians, calling on them to unite and jointly oppose the Monarcho-Fascist terror waged against the Macedonians. Also see doc. 87, p. 208. This proclamation was probably wrongly published in: "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945", T. II, doc. 63, p. 113-114.

release him. A few months later, in 1962, he died in his native village.⁵²⁴

⁵²⁴ Vangel Aianovski-Oche, *Aegean storms...*, p. 417. Also according to the recollections of Vani Adziev...

KOCHO ROBEV-DINE (1915-1947)

Kocho Robev-Dine was a Macedonian national liberation movement leader in Lerin Region. He was born in 1915, in the village Banitsa, to a poor family. Due to the family's economic hardship his father Trifun was forced to leave his native village and seek employment in America. A short time later Trifun died abroad without ever seeing his family again.⁵²⁵ Despite the great economic difficulties, Kocho's mother raised her children to be worthy and honest Macedonians.

From a very young age Kocho and his older brother had to seek work outside of their own farm. As a result they found employment as servants working for the richer families in their village. When Kocho turned 15 he went to work in the Banitsa mine⁵²⁶ where he personally experienced the cruel exploitation of the miners by their employers. Working in the Banitsa and other neighbouring mines during these very difficult conditions, pushed Kocho to think about the revolutionary ideas being discussed by the workers. Eventually he adopted the ideas and later distinguished himself as an active organizer in the miners' union. His work made him popular not only in the Banitsa mine but also in the other mines, such as the Novograd and Krushorad mines.⁵²⁷ While working in these mines Kocho, along with some like-minded workers, fought for an eight-hour shift for the miners. Kocho also often took an active part in organizing strikes to improve the working conditions and raise the workers' wages.

⁵²⁵ According to the recollections of Kosta Hrisafov from the village Banitsa, Lerin Region. Kosta was a participant in the National Liberation War and later, during the Greek Civil War, he served as a political commissar in a DAG sabotage unit.

⁵²⁶ Ibid.

⁵²⁷ According to the recollections of Kosta Dzhangov from the village Krushoradi, Lerin Region. Kosta created the CPG cell in the village Krushoradi and served as a member of the CPG Regional Committee for Neokazi. He later served in the NOF District Board for Lerin Region. Also according to the recollections of Tane Ashlakov from the village Voshtareni, Lerin Region. Tane was a member of the CPG Regional Committee for Neokazi and later the NOF Regional Committee for Neokazi.

In 1932, Kocho Robev joined the “Workers’ Aid” organization and, in the next two years, worked hard to establish the “Association of Miners”.⁵²⁸

In 1936, Kocho was inducted into the Greek military to serve his term in the city Lerin where he was promoted to the rank of sergeant. His service in the Greek army gave him the opportunity to show his fellow villagers that he really was a great patriot and a true protector of his people. Namely, on Easter in 1936, Kocho was permitted to go home to his native village. The people of Banitsa had a custom where during the holidays they were required, from the oldest to the youngest, to go to the village square in the afternoon to a place called “Petkov’s Chinar”. The older villagers were required to bring tables and chairs and the younger ones had to dance. The Banitsa folk dance was characterized by the fact that men, when they danced, had no right to interrupt the dance of the one who was conducting it. The same was true for women. And the one who conducted the women’s dance was the fiancée of the leader of the male dance.⁵²⁹

That day Kocho led the dance called “Bairacheto”. This was Kocho’s favourite Macedonian dance. But, unexpectedly, the Greek police arrived during the festivities to disperse them. Kocho, who at the time was wearing his Greek military uniform, revolted and, in a very short time, fights broke out between the police and the people. The crowd attacked the policemen and beat them. They broke their clubs and smashed their rifles. The police then asked for help from the border guards. When the soldiers arrived their major, seeing that Kocho was wearing a Greek military uniform, asked him to speak against his fellow villagers. But Kocho not only categorically refused but fought the police and soldiers most vigorously. For doing so he was severely punished. Following the incident, he was arrested by the soldiers and sent into exile on the prison island Aistratis, along with four others who actively participated in the

⁵²⁸ Robev Kocho. “For the Holy National Freedom”..., p. 235.

⁵²⁹ According to the recollections of Lefter Olevski from the village Banitsa, Lerin Region. Lefter was an active participant in the National Liberation War, and later served as a political commissar in a DAG company.

fight.⁵³⁰ Kocho remained exiled in prison until the end of October 1940 when fascist Italy attacked Greece.

On October 29, 1940, a day after Italy declare war on Greece, Kocho and about 20 of his villagers who were exiled in Aistratis were transferred to the island Chios.⁵³¹

At the same time hundreds of Macedonians from Lerin, Kostur, Kailari, Voden and other Regions were sent into exile on the Aegean Islands and in the Peloponnesus. Dictator Metaxas was afraid of them and therefore kept them away from the Greek-Italian front.

In May 1941, Kocho Robev and a number of other prisoners escaped from Chios and went home. Kocho returned to Banitsa and immediately began organizing CPG party cells in the surrounding villages and collecting weapons that had been left behind by the Greek troops after their withdrawal from the Albanian front. Being affiliated with the Party, Kocho and several other CPG activists and sympathizers in Lerin Region managed to come into contact with the famous Macedonian revolutionary Lazo Trpovski-Tsrniot from the village D'mbeni.⁵³²

Kocho Robev was one of the most active Macedonian fighters who consistently fought against the Bulgarian fascist propaganda in Lerin Region. Later in the second half of 1943, thanks to his tireless anti-occupier activities, he was appointed a member of the CPG Banitsa District Committee.⁵³³

On January 18, 1944, Kocho and activist Lazo Kochev were captured by the German occupiers, charged with treason and jailed in the Pavlos Melas concentration camp in Solun. At about the same time hundreds of Macedonians were also arrested from the villages Chegan, Popadia, Krushoradi, Setina, Vosthareni, etc. and jailed in the Pavlos Melas, Dimokos and other concentration camps.⁵³⁴

⁵³⁰ Robev Kocho. "For the Holy People's Freedom"..., p. 236.

⁵³¹ Ibid.

⁵³² According to the recollections of Kosta Hrisafov...

⁵³³ Ibid.

⁵³⁴ Robev Kocho. "For the Holy National Freedom"..., p. 237.

A few months later, Kocho and other Macedonian patriots who were jailed in the Pavlos Melas prison were released. Upon his return to his native village, Kocho immediately became involved in the struggle against the occupiers.

After the fascist occupiers were forced out of Greece, right-wing elements took power in the country. They carried out an unprecedented terror campaign against all the fighters who, during the fascist occupation, fought against the foreign occupiers. So, to avoid being arrested, Kocho and others who struggled in the anti-fascist movement went underground. Kocho fled the country and went to Bulkesh, Voivodina, where he spent some time. There he was among the first to become involved in the political life of the refugees from his homeland.⁵³⁵

In September 1946, directed by the resistance leadership, Kocho returned to Lerin Region and, as a Party leader, joined the struggle against the new fascist authorities in Greece. He was a very brave and courageous fighter and because of that the local population respected him. Kocho took part in organizing the Macedonian people in almost every village in Lerin Region from Prekopana to Popadia, from Prespa to Patele, in the struggle against the Greek reactionaries.

At that time, the Greek reactionary authorities made every effort to arm the Lerin Region villages to fight against the democratic movement. This was the case with the village Papazhani, Lerin Region.

Sometime in January 1947, activists from Papazhani informed Kocho that the village municipal government was making efforts to arm the villagers in Papazhani to fight against DAG. So Kocho and his comrades Kosta Dzhingov and Tane Ashlakov immediately left for Papazhani to convince the local municipal government not to do that.⁵³⁶

⁵³⁵ According to the recollections of Dimitar Adzhievski from the village German, Lerin Region. Dimitar was a participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG.

⁵³⁶ According to the recollections of Kosta Dzhingov and Tane Ashlakov...

The three arrived in Papazhani in the dark of night and immediately went to the house where the people of the municipality had gathered. There they found several villagers including Boris Moschakov, the village mayor who was well-known for committing atrocities against the Macedonian people. Kosta Dzhingov and Tanas Ashlakov covered the windows as Kocho Robev entered through the door. The moment Kocho made himself know he yelled “hands up”. But someone fired a rifle and hit the lamp that was illuminating the room. Kocho fired several rounds with his machine gun. At the same time the Mayor Boris Moschakov fired back and killed Kocho.⁵³⁷

Kosta Dzhingov and Tane Ashlakov managed to escape but didn’t know what had happened to Kocho. The two arrived in Krushoradi the morning after where they were informed that Kocho had been killed.

The Greek soldiers who came to retrieve Kocho’s dead body mistreated him even in death. They tied him to a military truck and dragged him from Papazhani to Lerin and then they dragged him through the main city streets to frighten the people.⁵³⁸

⁵³⁷ Monograph - A burning Krushoradi. Skopje, 1980, p. 44. The materials for this monograph were collected and organized by Ziso Karaliev from the village Krushoradi.

⁵³⁸ According to the recollections of Filip Bozhinov from the village Krushoradi. Filip was a participant in the National Liberation War and later served as a NOF political leader in Krushoradi. After Kocho Robev was killed and the Monarcho-Fascists found out who he was, they arrested 20 people and sent them to prison. Also, according to the recollections of Ziso Karaliev, a participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG.

PETSO ROMEV (1919-1949)

Shortly before DAG was defeated, in the second half of August 1949, the enemy air force was very active. At that time the 426th Battalion Headquarters, led by Petso Romev, was located in a bunker at elevation 2,322 metres, in “Kiafa” locality on Mount Gramos. An airplane dropped a bomb, hit the bunker and killed all nine leaders. Petso Romev was among those killed.

Petso was born in 1919, in the village Gornichevo, Lerin Region, to a poor agricultural family. Since he was a child, Petso lived a hard, poverty-stricken life. He grew up in such misery and poverty that he barely finished primary school. But later, thanks to his Macedonian upbringing, he grew up to become a worthy Macedonian patriot and revolutionary.

During the fascist occupation Petso, with a rifle in his hand, was one of the first people from Gornichevo to join the People’s Liberation Movement to fight against the occupiers. In August 1943, as an organizer in the Macedonian anti-fascist movement in his native village, Petso joined ELAS where he demonstrated his exceptional courage.⁵³⁹

In protest against the negative attitude of the CPG and ELAS towards the Macedonian national question, towards the end of the first half of October 1944, Petso and a group of fighters from his homeland crossed over the border into the Republic of Macedonia.

In November 1944, while still in the Republic of Macedonia, Petso joined the partisans of the First Aegean Strike Brigade consisting exclusively of Macedonians from Greek occupied Macedonia⁵⁴⁰ and continued to fight against the fascist occupiers and the Balisti gangs led by Dzhemo and Mefail, which acted around the cities Debar, Kichevo, Gostivar, Tetovo and Mount Shar Planina.

⁵³⁹ T. Popovski, Romev Petso. Honour and glory of the fallen fighters. Voice of the Aegeans, Skopje, 1952, March 13, III, no. 20, p. 4.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

At the beginning of May 1945, after the First Aegean Assault Brigade was disbanded, Petso, still in the Republic of Macedonia, was sent to military school.

In the fall of 1946, Petso was among the first to voluntarily join NOF, the Macedonian liberation organization for Aegean Macedonia and its armed groups where he continued the struggle against the Greek reactionaries to defend and protect the Macedonian people's freedom.

In November 1946, after the Macedonian NOF partisan detachments were combined with the Greek CPG units under a single headquarters in "Vicho", Petso joined Pando Vaina's detachment.⁵⁴¹ He then continued to fight against the Greek right as a platoon commander in that detachment.

One of the first battles Petso fought was to capture the village Neveska. But even though DAG failed to take the village, it caused the enemy a lot of losses. From his first battle Petso proved to be a good fighter and earned his position as platoon commander.⁵⁴²

Time and time again, in subsequent battles Petso proved himself to be an excellent leader and fighter. This included the battle for the village Srebreno in Lerin Region, fought on January 8, 1947 against a large number of Greek forces from the Sorovich garrison, which ended successfully,⁵⁴³ as well as the battles to capture the villages Lehovo, Negovan, the locality Vrapchinia, Tsereovo (Kili Derven), etc. During these battles Petso Romev confirmed his qualities as a

⁵⁴¹ The following detachments were part of DAG "Vicho" Headquarters: the Vicho Detachment under Pando Vaina's command with Commissar Giorgi Hristovski-Fotinos. The Kailari Region Detachment under Karaberas's command with Commissar Zanis. The detachment led by Giorgi Kalkov from the village Visheni, Kostur Region. According to the recollections of Lambro Gakidov-Dzhavela from the village Srebreno, Lerin Region. Lambro was a participant in the National Liberation War since 1943. He also served in DAG as company commander, and then led a DAG battalion as a Major in the DAG 18th brigade.

⁵⁴² Ibid.

⁵⁴³ Recollections of Lambro Gakidov-Dzhavela for the period 1945-1949. Kept in INI.

fighter and stood out with great authority among his fellow fighters. Petso was also an exemplary commander well-respected by all. ⁵⁴⁴

On April 25, 1947, during an attack on the gendarmerie station in the village Zagorichani, Pando Vaina, commander of the attacking detachment, was wounded. The next day, after Pando was sent to the hospital for treatment, his detachment, numbering about 180 fighters, by order of DAG “Vicho” headquarters, was divided into two units. Lambro Gakidov-Dzhavela ⁵⁴⁵ was appointed commander of the first unit and Petso Romev of the second unit. This event is historically important for DAG in Vicho because this was the first time DAG “Vicho” Headquarters created units from existing detachments. ⁵⁴⁶

On April 30 and May 1, 1947, the Mount Vicho partisan units, assisted by other DAG units, attacked the village Neveska for the second time. Petso Romev’s unit, as tasked by DAG “Vicho” Headquarters, was to attack and destroy the gendarmerie station in Neveska. That task was successfully completed. The village was captured and so was the surrounding area which became DAG’s free territory. ⁵⁴⁷ Petso again proved himself a good commander and gained even more combat experience in his new role.

A few days later, on May 8, 1947, Petso was given orders to destroy the gendarmerie station in the village L’k in Prespa. After a short battle the station was completely destroyed along with the 30 or so Monarcho-Fascists defending it. In fact, by being assisted by DAG units in joint actions, the entire Prespa area was cleared of Monarcho-Fascists and became part of DAG’s free territory.

A short time later, Petso Romev’s unit, assisted by other DAG units, moved from Vicho to the Siniak area and, together with local units, participated in the battles against the Greek government held Kailari Region villages. Petso was ordered to destroy the gendarmerie and other Greek forces protecting the area and liberate the village Blatsa

⁵⁴⁴ V. Shamanovski, Petso Romev. “For the holy national freedom”. Characters of fallen national fighters..., p. 239.

⁵⁴⁵ Recollections of Lambro Gakidov-Dzhavela for the period 1945-1949

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.

in Kailari Region populated by Greeks, which was to become an integral part of the free DAG territory on Vicho.

After these successful actions carried out by the DAG units, the enemy was ejected from the countryside and forced into the cities Kostur, Kailari, Sorovich and Lerin.

After the enemy was driven out of the villages, Petso's unit and other DAG units stationed on Vicho were tasked with defending the Vicho free territory from possible enemy attacks. DAG's sudden burst of victories inspired many young people to join the partisans and DAG battalions began to form out of the previous detachments. Petso's unit became part of the battalion led by Argir Kovachev from the village Zreltsa, Kostur Region. As part of this battalion, Petso continued to fight against the Greek government armies on Vicho, Siniak and Kaimakchalan.

At the end of August 1947, the battalion led by Argir Kovachev, which included Petso Romev's unit, was given to Pando Vaina to lead after he came back from the hospital.⁵⁴⁸

On September 1, 1947, Monarcho-Fascist government special units from Kostur, Kailari, Sorovich and Lerin were launched to begin the so-called "fall offensive" against DAG on Vicho in order to capture DAG's free territory. Pando Vaina's battalion successfully repulsed the first attacks that came from Kostur and Sorovich.⁵⁴⁹ Petso Romev's unit demonstrated special courage when, on September 27, 1947, it obliterated an entire enemy platoon. Petso's unit was especially praised for this heroic act.⁵⁵⁰

After the enemy failed on its mission, Petso Romev's unit, still part of Pando Vaina's battalion, continued to fight against government

⁵⁴⁸ According to the recollections of Argir Kovachev, from the village of Zreltsa, Kostur Region. Argir was an active participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG.

⁵⁴⁹ Agitation and propaganda Newsletter No. 19 from DAG Vicho Headquarters dated September 22, 1947, regarding military actions DAG "Vicho" carried out in September 1947. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1947", Vol. IV, doc. 76, pp. 290-291.

⁵⁵⁰ DAG Vicho Headquarters daily order for DAG units achieving success in this area. See doc. 81, p. 302.

forces on Vicho. Petso's unit was also tasked with performing independent actions at Siniak and Kaimakchalan.

After they were defeated on Vicho, the Monarcho-Fascist government forces withdrew to the cities, leaving behind detachments in strategic places to monitor and control partisan movements. Government detachments were stationed in the villages Neveska and Srebreno and a battalion was stationed in the city Klisura. That way the enemy was able to restrict the free movement of partisans going in and out of the Sorovich Pole and Siniak areas during the day. In order to remove these restrictions imposed by the enemy, in November 1947, Pando Vaina's battalion was ordered to organize an attack against a government company stationed in the village Strebreno. Petso Romev's unit played an important role in winning this battle and destroying the enemy company.⁵⁵¹ As a result the road to Sorovichko Pole was cleared. In appreciation, Battalion Command entrusted Petso Romev with even more complex combat tasks.

At the beginning of March 1948 the DAG 18th Brigade, which included Pando Vaina's battalion and Petso Romev's unit, by order of DAG General Staff, was dispatched to Mount Gramos. It traveled through Siniak, Burino, Ventsa, Hasia and Antihasia in order to meet and escort a heroic but unarmed column coming from the south of Greece in order to facilitate its way to Mount Gramos. But before this order was executed, DAG 18th Brigade command staff was reorganized. Pando Vaina replaced Kozmas Spanos-Aminda as commander of the brigade. Pando Vaina's Battalion was taken over by Lambro Gakidov-Dzhavela. Ianis Kevrekidis-Fokas was appointed commander of the 2nd Battalion. Petso Romev remained unit commander in the same battalion now under Lambro Gakidov-Dzhavela's command.⁵⁵²

The incoming unarmed column was met by two battalions from the DAG 18th Brigade composition. After leaving the Siniak terrain the brigade fighters arrived in Burino where they were immediately engaged in heavy fighting by units from the 9th government division that had arrived from the city Kozheni. The 18th Brigade resisted all

⁵⁵¹ According to the recollections of Lambro Gakidov-Dzhavela...

⁵⁵² Ibid.

enemy attacks and didn't allow government troops to block the road to the unarmed column. Fighting heroically, the 18th Brigade repulsed the enemy attack and continued on its way crossing the Hasia and Antihasia fields and arrived in time to help the unarmed column escape danger. In other words, the 18th Brigade completed its mission successfully.

At the same time all food supplies were running out because the entire village population from all the neighbouring villages had been evacuated to the cities and there was no way of supplying the brigade with food. To solve that problem the partisans came up with a plan to attack the village Agnadia and acquire food from there. Petso Romev and his unit were dispatched to destroy the enemy defenses. After Petso's unit broke through the main bunker the gendarmes abandoned their posts and fled in panic. The brigade fighters confiscated large quantities of food and took about 4,000 head of livestock.⁵⁵³

Throughout the entire campaign, Petso Romev proved his military qualities again and again. As a result brigade headquarters decided to promote him to battalion commander as soon as the opportunity arose. That happened sometime later.

In April 1948, DAG Headquarters for Western Macedonia ordered Lambro Gakidov-Dzhavela's battalion to separate from the DAG 18th Brigade and go to Mount Vicho, and Ianis Kevrikidis-Fokas's battalion was to remain on Mount Gramos.

After arriving on Vicho, Lambro Gakidov-Dzhavela's battalion immediately engaged the enemy, attacking the cities Sorovich and Lerin in the Siniak vicinity. Petso Romev's unit was ordered to attack the village Chegani in Voden Region, which it did and kept the enemy blockaded throughout the day.

On May 25, 1948, Petso Romev and his unit played a decisive role in the operation to destroy the enemy stronghold in the village

⁵⁵³ According to the recollections of Naum Dimovski-Chakalo from the village Opsirino, Lerin Region. Naum was a participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG. He was commander of a company in Petso Romev's battalion.

Gorentsi.⁵⁵⁴ A little later, in June 1948, Petso successfully led his unit against the gendarmerie forces during the attack on the villages Gorna and Dolna Kleshtina, where all the enemy strongholds were destroyed. Petso also fought bravely in the “Tsrna Voda” locality, outside the village Zelenich, Sorovich Region, where he obliterated a convoy of cars. During the same battle he also captured Lieutenant Vegli, a Greek agent who at the time was serving in the Sorovich intelligence service.

At the beginning of July 1948, Lambro Gakidov-Dzhavela’s battalion which included Petso Romev’s unit, by order of DAG Headquarters for Western Macedonia, left for Mount Gramos. This is where the main DAG operations against the government forces were taking place in response to the so-called “summer offensive” initiated by the Greek government on Mount Gramos. Petso Romev and his unit were deployed to the “Gupata” locality, one of the most sensitive places in the defense system. During the daily bloody battles, even though the enemy had larger forces and more military equipment, Petso and his fighters didn’t give up an inch. In one of those fierce battles, Petso was wounded in the left leg and was immediately sent to the DAG main hospital for treatment.⁵⁵⁵

After Petso recovered from his injuries he and several other fighters were transferred to Vicho. This coincided with DAG’s forced withdrawal from Mount Gramos. Here Petso was immediately deployed as a unit commander in the DAG 18th Brigade, in the 425th Battalion, whose commander was Lambro Gakidov-Dzhavela.

Petso Romev demonstrated extraordinary courage and special organizational skills during the battles fought by the 18th Brigade on the Siniak field.

⁵⁵⁴ According to the recollections of Vasil Batakoia-Karafotias who was a participant in the National Liberation War from 1941, and a commissar at Vicho headquarters. While serving in DAG he was appointed battalion commander and commissar of a group of artillery units. By rank he was a lieutenant colonel of the artillery.

⁵⁵⁵ According to the recollections of Lambro Gakidov-Dzhavela...

On November 1, 1948, as part of the DAG 18th Brigade, Petso took part in the battles to capture the town Eratira located on the road leading from Kozheni to Kostur. Eratira was an enemy stronghold.

On the 10th and 11th of November, 1948, the DAG 18th Brigade started out in the village Vlashka Blatsa and carried out a successful attack on the town Siatista, near the city Kozheni. Here too Petso Romev demonstrated extraordinary abilities.

On November 20, fighters from DAG 18th Brigade successfully attacked the town Kailari for the second time.

During the Brigade's withdrawal from Siniak to Antihasia, Ianis Kevrekidis-Fokas, commander of the 426th Battalion, was wounded. Command of his battalion was immediately passed to Petso Romev who until then was one of the most capable and brave commanders of a unit.

On December 19, 1948, the DAG 18th Brigade led by Pando Vaina with its two battalions led by Petso Romev and Lambro Gakidov-Dzhavela, as well as a company of saboteurs, arrived on Mount Karakamen with aims at imminently attacking the city Negush. These forces were joined at Karakamen by the two unit battalion led by Captain Tolis.

The goal of these DAG forces was to destroy the suburban strongholds in Negush, meaning they had to penetrate the city, locate enemy nests and destroy them. By taking control of Negush, the partisans were hoping to cut off enemy forces from sending help from Solun to Voden, which was simultaneously being attacked by other DAG forces.⁵⁵⁶

Petso Romev's battalion was ordered to destroy the bunkers on the access road leading into Negush and then to proceed to the city centre and cut off the gendarmerie.⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵⁶ Major Petso Romev - A brave DAG fighter. Spis. "Ilinden". Political body of the Central Committee of the organization "Ilinden", 1954, July-August, III, no. 4, pp. 25-26.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

The DAG units successfully completed their mission and kept Negush under control all day and all night. In the morning of December 23, 1948, they retreated to Mount Karakamen and then moved to Mount Kaimakchalan.

A little later, during a second DAG attack on Negush, Petso Romev did the same thing again but this time destroyed the gendarmerie and captured a large number of police officers, including the police chief.

In the period from February 12, 1949 to August 10, 1949, Petso Romev's battalion acted in the same locations bolstering its defenses according to the slogan, "The enemy will not pass Vicho".

On August 10, 1949, at around 4.30 am, the Greek Monarcho-Fascists launched a general offensive against the DAG units on Mount Vicho. A large group of government infantry troops reinforced with artillery and aircraft began to move in the direction of Lerin, through the villages Neret and Lageni. Petso Romev's battalion met the enemy head on and not only inflicted heavy damage on them, but didn't allow them to cross the partisan defensive line.

On the nights of August 10th and 11th, 1949, the enemy managed to break DAG's defensive line in several places and surrounded Petso's battalion. But Petso didn't lose control of his fighters. Together with his company commanders, Petso coordinated his fighters to create a complex situation.

Then, on August 11 and 12, 1949, Petso himself led a number of fierce and bloody battles and managed to pull his battalion out of the enemy ring.⁵⁵⁸ During the night his fighters left the battleground and went in the direction of Mount Vrba. During the next two days Petso's battalion strongly resisted the enemy while making its way into Albanian territory as ordered. In fact all DAG units at the time were ordered to head for Albania.

⁵⁵⁸ Recollections of Lambro Gakidov-Dzhavela for the period 1945-1949...

A few days later, as ordered by DAG General Headquarters, Petso and the DAG 18th Brigade were dispatched to Mount Gramos. The enemy didn't waste much time and it too immediately transferred its own units to Mount Gramos.

On August 28, 1949, the enemy began a general offensive on Mount Gramos from all sides using all available forces and military equipment. DAG units were forced to abandon their positions and tactically retreat towards the highlands of Gramos peak (elevation 2,322). Petso and his battalion retreated to Kiafa locality.

In the morning of August 30, 1949,⁵⁵⁹ due to heavy enemy bombardments, Petso's bunker where the entire battalion headquarters was located was hit. Petso and nine of his comrades were killed, including Battalion commissar Mihalakis Roidis, company commissar Dorche Gluvchev from the village Papazhani, Lerin Region and company political commissar Ianis from the village Rudnik, Kailari Region.

This is how Petso Romev's life ended. Besides being an exemplary DAG fighter and commander, Petso was also an active participant in the Macedonian liberation movement during the National Liberation War. Petso distinguished himself with outstanding military merits. He died just ten hours before DAG General Headquarters issued the order for all DAG units to withdraw from the territory of Greece.

⁵⁵⁹ According to the recollections of Naum Dimovski-Chakalo...

IANKO RUSEVSKI (1925-1949)

Ianko Rusevski was born in 1925, in the village Popadia, Lerin Region, to a poor farming family with a rich revolutionary tradition.⁵⁶⁰ Even though he lived under very poor conditions in a family that was constantly under the control of the Greek reactionary authorities, young Ianko, carried away by the idea of a free Macedonia, following in the footsteps of his grandfather Giorgi who died in the turbulent days of the Ilinden Uprising, remained faithful to his people until the end of his life.⁵⁶¹

In 1942, Ianko voluntarily joined OKNE, the youth organization, and actively fought against the occupiers. Because of his dedication to the struggle for the liberation of his country, Ianko was later accepted as a member of the CPG. Ianko consistently and with confidence performed all tasks assigned to him by the resistance leadership. During the anti-fascist struggle his house served as a shelter for ELAS fighters and for the fighters from the Bitola partisan detachment who often sang a beautiful song about Ianko's mother Lenka when they visited her home:

“Our Baba Lenka, our second dear mother,
feeds us when we rest, and when we are sent away,
the empty flask she fills with honey...”⁵⁶²

Petre Novachevski and Giorgi Drzovski's fighters from the Bitola Detachment remembered this song for a long time.

On January 18, 1944, Ianko and his father Todor were arrested by the German-Bulgarian fascist army for their involvement in the liberation of the Macedonian people and were taken to the infamous Pavlos Melas concentration camp in Solun. They burned down their house and looted all their property.⁵⁶³ After they were released from prison, Ianko resumed his anti-Fascist activities in the ranks of the

⁵⁶⁰ According to the recollections of Atanas Rusevski-Natse from the village Setina, Lerin Region. Atanas was an active participant in the National Liberation War.

⁵⁶¹ Chronicles of the villages Setina and Popadia, Lerin Region. Kept in INI.

⁵⁶² Monograph of the villages Setina and Popadia. Skopje, 1978, p. 35.

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

village Party organization and continued his struggle against the occupiers.

After the occupiers were driven out and ELAS was forced to capitulate as a result of the Varkiza Agreement, the Greek reactionaries took power in Greece and became the new masters attacking the democratic movement with all their might and, above all, attacking the Macedonian people with the intent to physically exterminate them. It was under these difficult conditions when, in March 1945, Ianko's family was driven out of its home by Greek fascist gangs and found refuge in Voivodina, Yugoslavia.⁵⁶⁴

During 1946, Ianko actively participated in Yugoslavia's reconstruction as a member of the youth group "Brchko Banovich".

In August 1948, he returned to his homeland and voluntarily joined DAG. He fought heroically and selflessly as part of the DAG 108th Brigade in the battles at Gramos and other places in his homeland.⁵⁶⁵

In September 1948, Ianko was wounded and captured by the enemy in a battle that took place on Mount Malimadi. He and his comrade-in-arms and fellow villager Pandil Muchov were taken to an enemy hospital in the city Kozheni for treatment.

In February 1949, after his wounds had healed, Ianko was forced to dig his own grave, and was then brutally murdered by his Monarcho-Fascist executioners.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁴ According to the recollections of Vane Aitov from the village Setina, Lerin Region. Vane was a participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG.

⁵⁶⁵ Monograph on the villages Setina and Popadia..., p. 35.

⁵⁶⁶ Atanas Rusevski, Recollections from the Period 1941-1945. Kept in INI.

APOSTOL SIMOVSKI (1922-1947)

Apostol Simovski belongs to the constellation of Macedonian fighters who laid down their lives at a young age for the Macedonian people's freedom. Apostol was born in 1922, in the village Izvor, Gumendze Region, to an enlightened farming family.⁵⁶⁷ After finishing his primary education Apostol helped his parents at the farm and grew up under very difficult economic conditions. He was a well-built, handsome, hardworking, honest, sociable and very cheerful young man, which is why he was loved by his peers.

During the Greek Italian war, Apostol was only 18 years old which is why he wasn't mobilized into the Greek army.

Apostol tended to dabble in progressive ideas and was an OKNE sympathizer since before the war. But immediately after the German, Italian and Bulgarian occupation took place he became active in the struggle against the foreign occupiers. His initial contribution to the cause was to gather weapons and other military equipment which, on April 9, 1941, was left behind by the Greek soldiers during the arrival of a German vanguard on the night of April 8 to 9 near the town Boimitsa. At the same time, as a member of OKNE, Apostol actively participated in sabotaging the breeding of silkworms in his native village, so they couldn't produce raw materials for German parachutes.

In August 1941, Apostol voluntarily participated in partisan actions organized by the resistance leadership. At the beginning of September, 1941, the first partisan group, consisting of seven members, was formed in the village of Izvor, in which Apostol also participated. The partisan group was armed with the Greek weapons left behind which included two machine guns. The group was to serve as a sprout for a larger unit that would include other fighters

⁵⁶⁷ Most of Apostol Simovski's revolutionary work is based on the memoirs of his brother Todor Simovski, an expert adviser at the Institute of National History in Skopje. Apostol was secretary of OKNE for Gumendzhe District, and from May 1943 to the end of January 1946 he worked as an EPON activist in several regions of Aegean Macedonia. He also joined NOF. See brief biographical characteristics of NOF activists in Gumendzhe and Enidze-Vardar Regions submitted by Ivan Nichev to the NOF General leadership. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1946", Vol. III, doc. 134, footnote 6, 7, 8, p. 299.

from the surrounding villages. However, due to the events in eastern Aegean Macedonia where the uprising was drowned in blood, and the German reprisals in Kukush and Kailari region where the enemy burned several villages and killed hundreds of innocent people, the group was disbanded by the Party (all partisan groups in Greece at that time were disbanded by the same directive). Apostol returned to his home and so did the other partisans in his group.

In 1942, for most of the year, Apostol stayed home working on the farm but always kept in touch with the local youth attending meetings, conferences, building contacts with like-minded individuals, delivering material aid to the only partisan group in the area composed of the dispersed partisan groups from Kukush and Drama Regions led by Captain Christos Moschos-Petros. This particular partisan group was camping on Mount Kozhuv, above the village Noti, since the summer of 1942. Apostol Simovski also participated in the transfer of weapons and ammunition from Kukush Region to Mount Kozhuv. He was one of the few people who knew about the existence of the partisan group and supplied it with information, food and clothes.

The first action this partisan group saw was in December 1942, when it attempted to blow up the railway bridge near the Boimitsa railway station. This in fact was the first action of its kind in Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia. A few days later the same group sabotaged the lead mine in the Izvor-Maidag area. Apostol Simovski assisted in performing these actions.

In the first half of 1943, because of his dedication to the struggle against the occupiers, Apostol was appointed a member of the OKNE-EPON District Committee for Gumendzhe District. In mid-July 1943, he was one of the first organizers tasked with planning a demonstration in Boimitsa against the extended Bulgarian occupation of other parts of Aegean Macedonia. A few days later, summoned by a Party group of young people from his native village, Apostol left and joined a partisan group on Mount Paiak where the XXX ELAS Regiment was being created. As a partisan, Apostol participated in all the actions in which this regiment was involved. On January 12, 1944, Apostol also took an active part in the joint actions between the Macedonian units from the Republic of

Macedonia and those of the XXX ELAS Regiment. A battle broke out near the village Leskovo during which entire enemy units were literally decimated. Apostol often proved himself as a courageous fighter and capable of carrying out bold actions, especially during sabotage missions carried out by the XXX ELAS Regiment. For that Apostol was highly respected and appreciated by regiment command.

In the summer of 1944, Apostol was appointed leader of a unit consisting of about a dozen Macedonian fighters, which was to serve as a sprout to attract more Macedonians to the regiment, similar to the one that was formed in the Voden Macedonian Battalion.

Unfortunately, as a consequence of the Voden Macedonian Battalion breaking away from ELAS and crossing over into the Republic of Macedonia on October 12, 1944, this group was disbanded and Apostol Simovski fell under suspicion that he too might have maintained ties with the “Serbs”, as the Greeks called the Macedonian partisans from the Republic of Macedonia. But, all in all, the Greeks didn’t take action against Apostol and he remained an ordinary fighter in the unit.

After the riots broke out in Athens in December 1944, Apostol Simovski and the ELAS XXX Regiment left for Athens to help the DAG fighters in the city who were facing aggression from the British and their domestic servants. When they arrived they clashed with English forces outside Atalanda. However, a truce followed and the regiment had to return on foot from distant Attica to its base in Enidzhe-Vardar. The fighters traveled for a long time under adverse weather conditions and as they arrived in Enidzhe-Vardar, the Varkiza Agreement had already been signed. As a result ELAS was obliged to surrender its weapons and its fighters were dismissed and sent home. In other words the ELAS fighters were robbed of their victory in Athens due to no fault of their own. A short time later, those who took power in Athens unleashed a never before seen wave of terror against the very people who fought and forced out the Fascists. The terror waged was even worse for the Macedonians, especially against those who fought in the anti-Fascist war. Both as an anti-Fascist fighter and as a Macedonian, Apostol Simovski was hit hardest and to escape being arrested and persecuted, he was

forced to immediately and illegally flee the country. In September 1945, he crossed the Greek-Yugoslav border and landed in the Republic of Macedonia where, along with some other Macedonians, he left for Bulkesh in Voivodina.⁵⁶⁸ Invited to return home by his brother Todor Simovski, in March 1946, Apostol left Bulkesh. He returned to his homeland with a group of Macedonians from Gumendzhe Region and immediately joined NOF after which he was sent to Mount Paiak. Because he was an experienced ELAS fighter, the NOF leadership entrusted him to lead a NOF partisan unit. There Apostol was joined by his faithful friend but inexperienced fighter, Aleko Pishutev from Gumendzhe.⁵⁶⁹ Apostol's unit quickly proved itself and stood above the others in carrying out its bold duties, especially in the city Gumendze. But it seems being good at his job wasn't what the Greeks wanted from Apostol and he found himself in a difficult position, constantly being harassed by the Greek leadership. It would appear the Greeks didn't want an independent Macedonian armed unit to exist and this was the primary reason why the Greeks wanted to amalgamate the Macedonian units into the Greek ones. Apostol wasn't happy about that and informed his brother Todor about it. But then he decided to express his dissatisfaction publicly during a meeting which didn't go unnoticed by the Greek leadership.

Apostol Simovski had a hard time accepting his father's death. In September 1946, his father Risto was literally slaughtered by the Greek Monarcho-Fascists. After his father was killed Apostol's wish was to see his mother one more time. In December 1946, he wrote to his brother and said: "Dear brother, do whatever you can from your side to help me come and see our mother one more time before I die..."

In the winter of 1947, Apostol's friend Aleko Pishutov was killed by a machine gun burst.⁵⁷⁰ Shortly afterwards in early spring 1947, a large unit of hardened fighters from Mount Paiak, by order of DAG General Headcounters, was dispatched to go to southern Greece to strengthen the DAG armed presence there and to provide assistance to the local units. On the way there, the DAG unit clashed several

⁵⁶⁸ According to the recollections of Ivan Nichev from the town Gumendzhe...

⁵⁶⁹ According to the recollections of Vangel Nichev from the town Gumendzhe...

⁵⁷⁰ According to the recollections Aleko Pulkov from Gumendzhe...

times with enemy forces but not for a moment did the hardened fighters lose their courage or their fighting morale.

Apostol remained unit commander and wasn't promoted despite his courage and excellent abilities as a fighter and leader. The Greek CPG and DAG leaders never lost sight of the fact that Apostol faithfully served the Macedonian national cause and that his participation in the common Greek-Macedonian struggle was a debt to the national liberation of his Macedonian people.

On June 21, 1947, Apostol fought a fierce battle in Greece, in an area called Evritania near the village Kastanula. There Apostol Simovski laid down his life for the freedom of his people.

Two years later, when the Greeks needed more Macedonians for necessary raw material for DAG, DAG General Headquarters, on May 7, 1949, ordered the DAG Second Division to promote Apostol Simovski to the rank of lieutenant.

PETRE TANUROV-DONE (1915-1948)

Greek nationalists and chauvinists who managed to infiltrate leading positions in the CPG and DAG secretly worked against the Macedonian national liberation movement. They hindered the advancement of Macedonian leaders in DAG and even went as far as physically liquidating them. Petre Tanurov-Done was a victim of such practices.⁵⁷¹ After many years of sacrifice and dedication to the struggle, in both the ranks of ELAS and DAG, Petre was found guilty of “despondency” and in July 1948 was liquidated by order of DAG General Staff.

Petre Tanurov-Done was born in 1915, in the village Baovo (Bahovo), Meglen Region, to a farming family. After he finished primary school he helped his parents on the farm.

In 1935, during his military service in Athens, Petre very quickly became acquainted with members of the CPG.⁵⁷² After completing his military service, Petre returned to his native village and, as a member of the Party, immediately connected himself to the then newly formed basic CPG cell in the city S’botsko where he operated until fascist Italy attacked Greece.⁵⁷³

During the triple occupation, like many other Macedonians from his native village, Petre joined the struggle against the occupiers with vigour and great enthusiasm and because of this in 1942 he was appointed secretary of the CPG cell in his own village.⁵⁷⁴

In the spring of 1943, partisan sabotage groups were being created in the city Voden and in Voden Region, which were tasked with

⁵⁷¹ For more information on Petre Tanurov-Done’s revolutionary activities see Tashko Mamurovski, “Petre Tanurov-Done, a fighter in the National Liberation War and DAG” (Attachment to his biography). INI Gazette, Skopje, 1980, XXIV, no. 1, pp. 221-228.

⁵⁷² According to the recollections of Nikola Tanurov from the village Baovo, Meglen Region. Nikola was a participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG.

⁵⁷³ Vangel Tanurov, Petre Tanurov-Done and the people of Baovo. Voice of the Aegeans, Skopje, 1952, July 2, III, no. 24.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid.

carrying out uninterrupted attacks against the occupiers and domestic traitors.

In late December 1943, ELAS partisan units ambushed a German convoy of several trucks on the main road leading from S'botsko to Voden, near the village Lukovets. During the ambush 2 trucks were destroyed and several Germans were killed.⁵⁷⁵ A group of Macedonians from the villages Baovo and Tsrneshevo, led by Petre Tanurov, also took part in the ambush.

On January 6, 1944, ELAS units attacked the town S'botsko. Twenty five German soldiers, a major and his aide were killed and ten were wounded during the fierce battle. Of the ten wounded four died. On the ELAS side one was killed and one wounded.⁵⁷⁶ Petre Tanurov also fought in that battle.

After the three-hour battle was over, the ELAS units withdrew in the direction of the villages Sarakinovo and Dolno and Gorno Rodivo. The ELAS reservists including Petre Tanurov's group were sent home by ELAS Command. The Germans didn't forget their tragic loss for a long time.

In mid-January 1944, the German occupiers organized a major offensive to clear the ground of partisan units in the Paiak-Kaimakchalan sector. On January 18, 1944, a German force of about 6,000 troops flooded the entire Meglen Valley. At the same time, their spies informed them that the people from Baovo had taken part in the S'botsko attack.⁵⁷⁷ A short time later the occupiers blockaded the village Baovo and went from house to house searching for those who had taken part in the attack on S'botsko. With help from two or three traitors, the Germans gathered all the men between the ages 18 and 60 in the village square and, using a pre-prepared list, called on the most active people to separate themselves from the others. The spies who helped the Germans were Palikaras, Giorgi Poshinov and

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁶ Hristo Andonovski, *Macedonians under Greece in the fight against fascism (1940-1944)*. INI, Skopje, 1968, pp. 136-137.

⁵⁷⁷ Vangel Tanurov, *Petre Tanurov-Done and the people of Baovo...* Also see Hristo Andonovski, *the Macedonians under Greece in the struggle against fascism ...* pp. 135 and 137.

Ianis Avramidis. The Germans arrested 23 people from Baovo - all members of the ELAS reserves. Three were shot outside S'botsko on January 20, 1944. The other 20 were taken to the Pavlos Melas concentration camp in Solun where 10 were executed. Four were sent to labour camps in Germany and one who was seriously ill remained in the Pavlos Melas prison hospital. He was soon executed. Of the four villagers sent to work in Germany, two died in the Dachau prison camp.⁵⁷⁸

In the summer of 1944, when the Voden Macedonian Battalion was being created on Mount Kaimakchalan, Petre Tanurov was among the first from his village to voluntarily join and distinguish himself with his courage and military skill. In August 1944, an unforgettable moment in time, Petre Tanurov led a group of about 150 fighters, most of them from his village Baovo, to voluntarily join the ranks of the Macedonian battalion.⁵⁷⁹

The first unit belonging to the Voden Macedonian Battalion was created in the village Gorno Rodivo. Petre Tanurov-Done was appointed to lead it with Perikli Iovchev from Voden as its Political Commissar. The unit was well-trained in a very short time and began to carry out a successful campaign against the German fascist occupiers and Greek nationalist gangs - collaborators of the occupier. But immediately after it was put in service, Greek command of the ELAS X Division, which was suspicious of the battalion's fast growth, sent the unit to Mount Paiak under the command of the ELAS 30th Regiment. That is how Petre Tanurov found himself on Mount Paiak.⁵⁸⁰

One of the fiercest battles in which Petre Tanurov's unit took part was the battle of Stara Pella, Enidzhe-Vardar Region, at the beginning of October 1944, where the Germans received heavy casualties with 150 dead and many wounded. After this battle the

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁹ Vangel Tanurov, Petre Tanurov-Done and the people of Baovo...

⁵⁸⁰ Pavle Rakovski, In the deep night dawn is born (memories, thoughts, knowledge). Skopje, 1976, pp. 29-30. Kept in INI.

fighters of the first Macedonian unit were dressed in German military uniforms and equipped with German heavy weapons.⁵⁸¹

A few days later, the same ELAS force in which Petre Tanurov's unit was included carried out a fierce attack on the town Plasnichevo, Enidzhe-Vardar Region, during which the entire collaborationist unit was shattered. The partisans captured about 400 collaborationists - members of the fascist organization PAO.⁵⁸²

Due to the negative attitude of the Greek CPG and ELAS leaderships towards the Macedonian national question, and before ELAS Command had a chance to disband the Macedonian Voden Battalion stationed on Mount Kaimakchalan, a large number of Macedonian partisans from the Voden Battalion abandoned ELAS in October 1944 and crossed over the border into the Republic of Macedonia. But even if the Voden Macedonian Battalion managed to escape being disbanded, Petre Tanurov's unit didn't. A few days later on October 28, 1944, under special orders, the ELAS X Division Headquarters disbanded the Macedonian unit.⁵⁸³ A little later, Petre Tanurov and a group of Macedonians, whom he trusted, secretly crossed into the Republic of Macedonia where he immediately joined the ranks of the First Aegean Strike Brigade exclusively made up of Macedonians from Greek occupied Macedonia.

In May 1945, after the First Aegean Strike Brigade was disbanded, Petre voluntarily returned to his homeland to fight against the new, unpopular Greek authorities who came to power with British help right after the German, Bulgarian and Italian occupiers were driven out.

The moment it took power in Greece, the new Greek regime began to terrorize the democratic population, particularly the Macedonians, especially those who fought in ELAS. In order to protect them, a new Macedonian liberation NOF was created in the Republic of Macedonia and sent to the Aegean part of Macedonia. NOF formed

⁵⁸¹ Vangel Tanurov, Petre Tanurov-Done and the people of Baovo... Also according to the recollections of Nikola Tanurov...

⁵⁸² Ibid.

⁵⁸³ Pavle Rakovski, In the deep night dawn is born..., p. 33.

its own armed groups in the Kostur, Lerin, Voden, Gumendze and Enidzhe-Vardar Regions. NOF's headquarters for Voden Region was located on Mount Kaimakchalan and one of the most prominent fighters in its ranks was Petre Tanurov-Done.⁵⁸⁴

The NOF detachment in Voden Region, which later grew into a battalion, was divided into three groups. The first group, which included the detachment's headquarters, held the Kaimakchalan sector, the second group, led by Petre Tanurov, maintained the Mount Kozhuf sector around the Baovo area and the third group maintained the Mount Karakamen sector.

At the end of November 1946, after NOF and the CPG agreed to form joint partisan forces, DAG detachments began to appear on the territory of Aegean Macedonia. Petre Tanurov was appointed commander of the so-called DAG 5th neutral unit and, immediately afterwards, together with the other DAG units, was dispatched to Mounts Karakamen, Pieria and Olympus where he fought fierce battles against the enemy.

In January 1947, after returning to Voden Region, Petre's unit attacked the villages Severni, Nivor, Kapiniani, Rudino and Ostrovo. Petre demonstrated bravery and great heroism in these battles also.⁵⁸⁵

In February 1947, several DAG units, including Petre Tanurov's unit, were moved from Mount Kaimakchalan to Mount Karakamen. But due to strong pressure from the enemy, the DAG units were forced to retreat to the Pionia locality in Karakamen. From there they crossed the river Bistritsa and moved to Mount Pieria in Kozheni Region. Petre Tanurov and his unit remained on Mount Karakamen to disorient the enemy and protect the units crossing the river. After successfully completing this task, Petre returned to Kaimakchalan.⁵⁸⁶

Due to strong pressure exerted by the enemy, the DAG partisan units stationed on Mount Pieria were forced to move to

⁵⁸⁴ Vangel Aianovski-Oche, *Aegean Storms...*, pp. 181-182.

⁵⁸⁵ Vangel Tanurov, Petre Tanurov-Done and the people of Baovo...

⁵⁸⁶ According to the recollections of Nikola Tanurov...

Kaimakchalan where they joined other DAG units and together attacked the villages Kosturiani and Ostrovo. Petre was wounded on the head during the battle for Ostrovo and was immediately taken to the Paiak-Kaimakchalan DAG Headquarters partisan hospital.⁵⁸⁷

At the end of August 1947, Petre returned to his unit and was then transferred to the villages Setina and Popadia in Lerin Region.

At the end of September, 1947, Petre was transferred to the free territory in Prespa. In October 1947, he was moved from Prespa to Mount Gramos where he and his unit remained until July 1948 when he died.

During this period Petre's unit fought bravely in the battles to capture the cities Metsovo and Konitsa. He then fought in the summer offensive organized by the enemy in 1948 on Mount Gramos.

In the beginning of July 1948, Petre received orders to defend the "Sveti Ilia" peak near the Gurushia locality on Mount Gramos.⁵⁸⁸ Government forces aided by aviation and artillery kept attacking the "Sveti Ilia" peak for three days in a row. Petre's unit fought fiercely and successfully repulsed the first enemy attack. But after the government regiments regrouped, the attack resumed for a second time. Petre sent a courier during this critical situation asking for help but no help arrived. Petre's unit lost half of its composition and was no longer able to withstand the enemy pressure. At this point Petre concluded that all his fighters would be killed without achieving his goal as ordered. So he decided to retreat and save the lives of the remaining partisans.⁵⁸⁹ Personally taking all responsibility for his actions, including all consequences that might result, Petre withdrew his unit. This withdrawal was the reason why DAG General Headquarters sentenced Petre Tanurov to death and then had him liquidated by shooting him.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁸ According to the recollections of Kosta Tsironka from Voden. Kosta was commander of a company in the National Liberation War and fought in DAG.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid.

We don't want to go into analyzing military regulations and we are far from thinking that Petre Tanurov was deliberately liquidated because he was a Macedonian even though this was confirmed by the shouts "Death, Death"! by a group of Greek DAG chauvinists who were told to do that while simultaneously protesting and condemning the DAG General Staff verdict of having Petre shot by honest fighters, who spared no effort for the success of the struggle.

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It is well-known from military practice that sometimes, at critical moments, military leaders take harsh measures against any soldier who shows despair in combat and, to avoid that despair, violators of military discipline are severely punished (degraded, transferred to punitive battalions, etc.) But in this case, when DAG needed military personnel the most, the question arises: "Was the liquidation of military personnel for offenses similar to Petre Tanurov's the best solution to raise the morale of the fighters, and whether the shooting of a valuable commander in the eyes of his comrades really raised fighter morale or did it act the other way around? And did Petre Tanurov's entire dedication to the cause create doubt about his personal courage and loyalty to the ideals of freedom? Or by killing Petre Tanurov, or DAG brigade commander Georgi Ianoulis for that matter, did the architects of this conflict try to absolve themselves of their responsibility for the catastrophic defeat? And maybe someone thought because Petre Tanurov was Macedonian he fought primarily as a Macedonian?"

⁵⁹⁰ According to the recollections of Sido Kolichevski from the village Tsakoni, Kostur Region. Sido was a participant in the National Liberation War and in DAG.

ILIA TSRNAKOV (1910-1947)

Ilia Tsrnakov was a prominent Macedonian revolutionary and activist from Lerin Region, born in 1910 in the village Patele to a poor farming family. After finishing primary school Ilia went to train as a blacksmith.

Ilia joined the revolutionary labour movement at age 16, first in the ranks OKNE, the youth organization and then in the ranks of the CPG. He was employed as a blacksmith in the town Sorovich where he joined the movement. The workshop where he worked often served as an outlet for illegal revolutionary activities.⁵⁹¹

During the Metaxas dictatorship, Ilia was repeatedly arrested, tortured and imprisoned by the Sorovich police but he never betrayed his like-minded associates. The torment and harassment made him fight harder. He never broke down. During the difficult times in the Metaxas dictatorship he worked tirelessly to expand and strengthen the shattered party core organizations, to preserve the CPG membership from further arrests, to raise the people's revolutionary morale and so on. Because of his involvement he was later appointed secretary of the CPG cell in his village Patele. A little later he was appointed a member of the CPG Regional Committee for Sorovich, whose secretary was Mihali Klianov also from the village Patele.⁵⁹² Ilia Tsrnakov was determined to protect the Party organizations and their members from various attacks which were prevalent at the time. In general, the CPG in Sorovich District was only able to remain active during this difficult time because of Ilia Tsrnakov's bravery and determination. He remained on duty until October 1940. Immediately after that he was mobilized into the Greek military and sent to the Albanian front to fight against the Fascist Italian aggressor.

After Greece was occupied by the German fascists, Ilia left the Albanian front and returned to his native village. As an experienced

⁵⁹¹ G. Dishkov, Tsrnakov Ilia (Lazaridi). "For the holy national freedom...", p. 293.

⁵⁹² Recollections of Kosta Vragoterov from the village Patele, Lerin Region. For Kosta's participation in the revolutionary movement in the period 1936-1949, see part I, p. 96. Kept in INI.

revolutionary, he immediately began to organize and regroup the revolutionary forces, first in his own village and then in his district. From the very beginning Ilia and other like-minded individuals began to reorganize the existing party organizations and cells. Ilia took charge of the organization in the capacity of CPG District Committee second secretary for Sorovich. At the same time he served as acting secretary of the CPG cell in his native village.⁵⁹³ Ilia Tsrnakov was also instrumental in making the necessary preparations for an armed struggle against the occupier and domestic traitors. In addition to that Ilia became involved in the struggle against the Bulgarian fascist propaganda in his village as well as in the surrounding area, which required political maturity and skill to successfully carry it out and with dignity.

In the summer of 1942, the CPG District Committee for Lerin Region appointed Ilia Tsrnakov a CPG instructor and sent him to tour the Sorovich District villages and prepare the people for the struggle against the occupier and domestic servants.⁵⁹⁴ Ilia was also responsible for exposing much of the Bulgarian propaganda in the area.

As a prominent revolutionary and activist who was deeply involved in the struggle since the Metaxas dictatorship days, Ilia strongly influenced the Macedonian environment. He was able to convince many Macedonians who thought they could protect themselves from the Greek counter bands if only they had weapons. Ilia convinced them that just protecting themselves wasn't enough. They needed to be organized and join the democratic people's struggle. They needed to fight to gain their national and social rights. We can freely say that thanks in part to Ilia Tsrnakov's tireless effort in this area, the resistance movement led by the CPG, EAM and EPON became very effective and massive. Later a large number of fighters voluntarily joined the ranks of ELAS.

⁵⁹³ Ilia Tsrnakov's biography by Kosta Vragoterov. See memoirs pp. 28-31.

⁵⁹⁴ According to the recollections of Spiro Blagoev from the village Patele. Spiro was one of the first participants in the National Liberation War and in DAG. In the period 1946-1947 Spiro was a member of the Vicho Staff, comrade-in-arms and personal friend of Ilia Tsrnakov. Also, according to the recollections of Kosta Vragoterov.

At this point it's important to mention the fact that throughout the fascist occupation, Ilia Tsrnakov's workshop served as a safe house for illegal immigrants, as a place for holding illegal meetings and for out of town activists to spend the night.

After the foreign occupiers were driven out of the country until March 1945, Ilia Tsrnakov was part of the CPG Regional committee headquartered in Sorovich where he continued to perform his revolutionary activities.⁵⁹⁵ After the Greek reactionary authorities took control of Sorovich Region, and after they implemented their terror and persecution tactics against the resistance fighters, Ilia was forced to go underground. But he never stopped encouraging the people to fight against the Greek reactionary authorities. He was exposed to danger many times but was always able to escape, managing not to fall into enemy hands. Eventually he became a wanted man. The Greek authorities declared him a wanted criminal, number one on their list.⁵⁹⁶ They searched for him everywhere and set traps to arrest him but didn't succeed. He had the option of crossing over into the Republic of Macedonia to avoid arrest but he didn't want to distance himself from his people.

At the end of June 1945, over 85 people were arrested en masse in Patele. Ilia again managed to avoid arrest and even under these severe conditions continued his patriotic activities until the fall of 1946. At the end of 1945, Ilia was among the first people from his village to join the ranks of DAG and continued to fight until his death.

On January 5, 1947, Ilia and five other DAG fighters were ordered to go to Patele, Ilia's native village, on a combat mission.⁵⁹⁷ Unfortunately the six were discovered by the enemy, which surrounded Patele with two army battalions of soldiers and gendarmes that were immediately dispatched by train from Sorovich. The six unfortunately couldn't break through the

⁵⁹⁵ According to Kosta Vragoterov's recollections about Ilia's participation in the revolutionary movement in the period 1936-1949..., part I, p. 30.

⁵⁹⁶ According to the recollections of Spiro Blagoev and Kosta Vragoterov...

⁵⁹⁷ Spiridon Blagoev, On the heroic action of a group of DAG fighters (Ilia Tsrnakov, Zhivko Popov, Gigo Adzikirov and Trifko Popov). Recollections kept in INI.

encirclement or take shelter in a safe place so they decided to fight. In those difficult moments, when they clashed with the Greek forces in the streets, Ilia and Zhivko Popov⁵⁹⁸ took shelter in a barn in the eastern part of the village. Unfortunately a short time later they were discovered and immediately surrounded. Climbing over compressed straw, Zhivko slipped and dropped his machine gun on the floor at which point it fired a burst of bullets and seriously injured Zhivko. He stood there motionless.

The gendarmes immediately surrounded the barn and called on the two to surrender but they refused, so the enemy set fire to the barn. The smoke became so thick the two were gasping for air. Zhivko passed out. Under this difficult situation Ilia, not being able to help Zhivko, decided to make a run for it. The ground outside was covered with a thick blanket of snow. To break through the enemy ring Ilia threw a grenade out the window at the gendarmes and immediately jumped into the snow. The gendarmes didn't expect this so they ran to avoid the blast, which gave Ilia enough time to distance himself from them.⁵⁹⁹

With the machine gun in full readiness, Ilia Tsrnakov ran through the village streets and managed to lose the gendarmes. He then jumped into Pande Smilaikov's yard and hid there. The army and gendarmerie searched but failed to find him. Severely wounded Zhivko Popov burned inside the barn. The others also managed to escape and caught up with Ilia on Mount Vicho.

In October 1947, during a battle that took place near the town Klisura in the Vicho sector, serving as a unit commissar, Ilia Tsrnakov was fatally struck by an enemy mortar shell and died.⁶⁰⁰

This is how Ilia Tsrnakov's life ended. He was an ardent and long-standing revolutionary.

⁵⁹⁸ More information on Zhivko Popov's revolutionary activities is available in this book. Zhivko was from the village Papazhani, Lerin Region

⁵⁹⁹ Spiridon Blagoev, On the heroic action of a group of DAG fighters...

⁶⁰⁰ There are two versions of the date when Ilia Tsrnakov died. See "For the holy national freedom" ..., p. 294.

NIKOLA CHETELEVSKI (1913-1949)

German, the largest village in Prespa, as well as dozens of other Macedonian villages from this part of Macedonia, stands out for the large number of people it sacrificed at the altar for the Macedonian people's freedom.

Nikola Chetelevski was one of the more prominent fighters from German who laid down his life for Macedonia's freedom. Nikola was born in 1913 into a large farming family. His family, as well as many other Macedonian families from that area, lived under very poor conditions. But the peak of their poverty was reached during the Metaxas dictatorship in Greece when the villagers of German were forcibly deprived of their pastures, which were then turned into pastures for the sheep herds of the Greek nationalists, the "Sarakachans" (Vlachs).⁶⁰¹

From a young age, Nikola felt the weight of his fellow villagers being exploited by the Greek oppressors. But when there was a clash between his villagers and the "Sarakachans", Nikola always supported the villagers.

When Fascist Italy attacked Greece, Nikola and dozens of Macedonians from his area, were mobilized into the Greek military and immediately sent to the Albanian front to fight against the Italian aggressor. Not wanting to support Greek capitalist interests, Nikola and a group of Macedonians abandoned the Albanian front and crossed over into Yugoslavia. For the Greek government this was desertion.⁶⁰²

After Greece capitulated to the German, Italian and Bulgarian armies, Nikola went back to his native village and immediately connected with the progressive workers and began to organize resistance against the foreign occupiers.

⁶⁰¹ Recollections of Pando Kaichevski from the village German, about his revolutionary activities in the National Liberation War and Revolution. Kept in INI.

⁶⁰² Biographies of prominent people from the village German, collected and organized by Pando Kaichevski. Kept in INI.

In the spring of 1943, with partisan units from the Republic of Macedonia visiting Lerin Region, Nikola and a group of his fellow villagers made sure they were well accommodated in the houses in their village and supplied with food. Also, as a sign of solidarity in the struggle against a common enemy, Nikola presented the “Damian Gruev” visiting Detachment in Pelister with a “Hotski” rifle.⁶⁰³

In the second half of 1943, Bulgarian agents and emissaries from Andon Kalchev’s headquarters arrived in the village German from Kostur in order to organize a counter band movement in Prespa District. Nikola, with help from like minded villagers, managed to “convince” the Bulgarian agents that in the beginning it was enough to give the villagers 20 rifles, not 200, as they had previously planned. It is important at this point to mention that those 20 rifles were later handed over to the Pelister partisan detachment “Damian Gruev”.⁶⁰⁴

After Nikola presented the “Damian Gruev” Detachment with the “Hotski” rifle, he and a dozen of his fellow villagers tried to voluntarily join the visiting detachment. They were also already fully armed... But for some objective reason their wish was not fulfilled. Nevertheless, Nikola never could stay outside of the conflict. Wherever the opportunity arose he was always at the forefront. When the “Damian Gruev” detachment partisans were dispatched to attack a German unit on Mount Bigla, Nikola and two of his comrades showed them the way.⁶⁰⁵

In the beginning of 1944 Nikola, with a rifle in hand, joined the ELAS reserve that operated in Prespa Region.

In the fall of 1944, a number of Macedonian fighters left ELAS and crossed the border into the Republic of Macedonia. Nikola, with another group of Macedonian fighters, also left and immediately joined the First Aegean Assault Brigade exclusively composed of

⁶⁰³ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁴ According to the recollections of German Velianovski from the village German. German was a member of the NOF District Board and KOEM for Lerin Region.

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid.

Macedonians from Greek occupied Macedonia. Nikola stayed with the brigade until it was disbanded.⁶⁰⁶

In the spring of 1945, Nikola and several others from his homeland voluntarily left the Republic of Macedonia and returned to Mount Bela Voda where they continued to struggle against the new Greek regime.

Shortly afterwards, the Macedonian movement leadership from the Republic of Macedonia summoned Nikola and a dozen other fighters and charged them with collaborating with the Greek reactionaries. Of course that was a misunderstanding. Without investigating the situation, one of the leaders unjustifiably slandered the fighters accusing them of being traitors. It took them a long time to prove that they weren't traitors but proven fighters who fought for the Macedonian liberation movement. When their charges were cleared Nikola and the others returned to the Republic of Macedonia and worked to rebuild the Yugoslav people's economic and social life.⁶⁰⁷

In the spring of 1946, Nikola and the other fighters were again summoned by the movement leadership and, as proven and experienced fighters, offered the opportunity to go back to Aegean Macedonia and fight against the Greek regime.

In mid-July 1946, one of the first partisan detachments consisting of about 30 fighters was formed on Mounts Vrba and Malimadi. It was led by Nikola Shapkov from the village German with Ilia Kuzmanovski as its political commissar.⁶⁰⁸

From that moment on Nikola Chetelevski fought bravely in NOF and in DAG on Mounts Vrba, Malimadi, Vicho, Siniak, Hasia, Murgana and Epirus until his death. He fell heroically in February 1949, in the "Porta" locality on Mount Gramos.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁶ Monograph, with a memorial album, of the village German, Lerin Region. Skopje, 1979, p. 80.

⁶⁰⁷ Biographies of prominent people from the village German...

⁶⁰⁸ Monograph with a memorial album from the village German..., p. 80.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid.

It is worth mentioning at this point that in the heroic struggle led by the Macedonian people during the Greek Civil War, Nikola's brother Vangel was viciously killed by the Monarcho-Fascists in Lerin on October 22, 1948, along with twelve other fellow villagers.⁶¹⁰ The same year Nikola lost his nephew Tsvetko Chetelevski who heroically died in Meglen Region as a fighter in the DAG equestrian unit.⁶¹¹

Nikola Chetelevski believed that the Macedonian people would eventually achieve victory and for that reason he sacrificed his own life.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid: p. 52.

⁶¹¹ Ibid: p. 81

THE TRAGIC FATE OF NINE NOF ACTIVISTS ON MOUNT PAIAK

After the German fascist occupiers were ejected from Greece and the Varkiza Agreement was signed, ELAS, in accordance with the Varkiza Agreement, began to demobilize its units and hand over its weapons to the Greek government. At the same time, the Greek government was violating the Agreement and arming its police and gendarmerie to consolidate its power. But the Greek government, run by reactionaries didn't have enough power to be able to fully establish its rule in the entire country. As a result it mobilized yesterday's collaborators who had supported the occupiers, such as the gangs led by Kolaras, Papadopoulos, Andon Chaush and others, and then let them loose on the population to kill, plunder and commit acts of terror.

Facing the terror waged against them, the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia were left with a couple of options, either endure all the humiliations including their physical destruction, or fight an armed struggle again with weapons in hand. In this critical situation, like before, the Macedonian people chose the path traditionally followed by previous Macedonian generations. They chose to fight and defend their honour and freedom on their own.

However, in order to avoid the wrath of the Greek Fascist gangs, a certain number of Macedonians were forced to leave their homes and flee to neighbouring countries or hide in the mountains. As members of NOF and former participants in the struggle against the occupier, many young patriots fled into the woods and began to prepare to resist the new right-wing regime. Included among the many who began to prepare a new resistance movement were activists from the village Barovitsa in Gumendzhe Region.⁶¹² To avoid being cruelly persecuted by the Monarcho-Fascist gangs, the activists from Barovitsa fled to the forest on Mount Paiak in Sheova locality and took refuge in a barn in Letkata.⁶¹³ Prior to that, the

⁶¹² This article was also published in the magazine *History*, Skopje, 1979, XV, no. 2, pp. 131-136. Here we just made some small additions and clarifications.

⁶¹³ Report by Angel Gatsev, dated November 19, 1945, to the NOF General Directorate on the death of the nine NOF activists on Paiak Mountain. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945", Vol. II, doc. 193, p. 365.

NOF leadership for Gumenzhe District held a meeting during which a decision was made to send some of the persecuted anti-fascists across the border, and the others to remain there and act on the ground. After spending some time on Mount Paiak, the young people from Barovitsa were scheduled to spend the winter in Gevgelia.⁶¹⁴ Unfortunately their hideout was discovered by spies from the village Barovitsa. So in the early hours of the morning of November 17, 1945, a detachment of 29 Monarcho-Fascists led by a sergeant from the “Security Battalions” armed with four machine guns and other automatic weapons were led there by Mitso Duiamov, the famous beast of PAO,⁶¹⁵ wearing a military uniform. Following him were other famous spies the likes of Hristo Pipchev from the village Kriva, Gumenzhe District, Tano Tulupov from the village Barovitsa, Tomas Tsikalidis a Turkish Christian from the Caucasus and his son Dionisos, as well as the Talkas children who resided in the village Kriva, who surrounded the barn.⁶¹⁶

The weather was rainy and foggy that day and the young activists didn't have guards posted outside the barn so the Monarcho-Fascists took advantage of this and when they got close to the barn they yelled for the young activists to surrender.

But even though they had insufficient weapons to fight back, the activists refused to surrender. A fire fight broke out and because the Burandars⁶¹⁷ had the numbers and were better armed, they

⁶¹⁴ According to the recollections of Vangel Nichev-Orivatis, NOF secretary for Gumenzhe District.

⁶¹⁵ After the Varkiza Agreement was signed and ELAS was demobilized, the prisoners in Greece were taken over by the Greek government armies and the British. Thus, the “Pavlos Melas” camp in Solun was taken over, where, along with other collaborators of the foreign occupiers, Gono Duiamov and his son Mitso Duiamov, born in the village of Barovitsa, were captured and released. In June 1945, Mitso Duiamov appeared in his district and, as part of an armed gang cruised the villages, looting and killing innocent villagers, just as he had done during the occupation.

⁶¹⁶ Proclamation by the NOF General Directorate regarding the vicious murder of the nine NOF activists on Paiak Mountain. “Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945”, Vol. II, doc. 206, p. 389.

⁶¹⁷ The name Burandars was given to the Greek Quisling government soldiers who fought on behalf of Commander Burandas, an infamous criminal from Athens who served the occupiers during the occupation. He was a well-known criminal who committed crimes against his own people.

overpowered the young activists. The following is a list of names of the people who died in the unequal battle:

1. Aleko Vasilev from the town Gumendzhe, born in 1914 - responsible for the NOF cells in the Gumendzhe villages.
2. Giorgi Iudov from the village Barovitsa, born in 1918 - responsible for the Gumendzhe District youth.
3. Peno Karamutkin from the village Kriva, born in 1920 - member of the NOF District Board for Gumendzhe District.
4. Gorgi Shashev Krlev from the village Barovitsa, born in 1920 - responsible for the NOF cells in the mountain villages.
5. Traio Penov Aitov from the village Barovitsa, born in 1924 - courier.
6. Giorgi Traev Shashev from the village Barovitsa, born in 1920 - assistant to Giorgi Shashev Krlev.
7. Icho G. Trtev from the village Barovitsa, born in 1922 - courier.
8. Mina P. Parlapanov from the village Barovitsa, born in 1914 – coworker.
9. Hristo D. Gatov, from the village Valgatsi, Gumendzhe District, born in 1913 - coworker.⁶¹⁸

Along with the others in the barn was Vasil Papadopoulos from the village Valgatsi, born in 1913. Although severely wounded, Vasil managed to escape and hide in the vicinity of the village Kupa. A soldier saw him but allowed him to escape. The soldier must have known Vasil or was somehow connected to him. But when Mitso Duiamov, leading the Burandar group, found out he killed the soldier.

⁶¹⁸ “Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945”, Vol. II, doc. 193, p. 365.

The village Kupa borders the place where the nine young activists were killed. And as Iovan Dzhevelevkov wrote in his memoirs, the villagers who were working in their fields at the time heard the shots but didn't know what had happened. Dragging himself through the terrain, Vasil Papadopoulos arrived near the fields where the villagers from the village Kupa were working. He was very tired and had lost a lot of blood. He fell on the road from exhaustion. Some time later, when the villagers headed for home, Maria Palamura and Giorgi Shinikov, both from Kupa, found him on the road covered in blood. He was still alive. They asked him what had happened and who'd shot him, Vasil asked them to help him as he explained what had happened. Maria and Giorgi had two horses loaded with potatoes. They unloaded one of the horses and, after bandaging Vasil's wounds, put him on the horse and took him about 5 km near the village Kupa. They were afraid to take him inside the village because they didn't know what the situation was like in the village that day. That's why they took him to Vasil Zarkadov's barn in the Strbo locality where they lit a fire and told him to spend the night there. They also told him they would immediately inform the organization and his friends would come and get him.⁶¹⁹

In the evening when Maria and Giorgi arrived in the village, Giorgi informed the organization about Vasil, and Maria, daughter of Risto Palamura the village mayor who was a close associate of the reactionary authorities, informed her father about Vasil. But instead of going directly to inform the reactionaries, the village mayor went to see Vasil's associates and told them about the tragic event. At the same time he told them that he had to report the incident to the Greek authorities but he would do that the next day. In other words the mayor warned NOF what was going to happen.⁶²⁰

In the meantime a Vlach somehow had also found out about Vasil Papadopoulos and the same day went to inform the Burandars about him.⁶²¹ Upon receiving the news, the Monarcho-Fascist Burandars

⁶¹⁹ Iovan Dzhevelevkov, Information about certain events in the village Kupa... Manuscript kept in INI.

⁶²⁰ Ibid.

⁶²¹ Letter from Mincho Fotev, to Lazo Damovski regarding the death of the nine NOF activists in Paiak and other NOF activities. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945", Vol. II, doc. 211, p. 396.

rushed into action, immediately blockaded the village Kupa and began a house to house search. But they found nothing. When the situation became less tense, according to Iovan Dzhevelevkov, NOF transferred the wounded Vasil Papadopoulos to the Yugoslav border. There he was taken over by a group of Macedonian patriots and looked after.⁶²²

The only witness to the tragic death of the nine young activists was Giorgi Trtev, Icho Trtev's father. At that time, Giorgi Trtev was staying in another barn not far from the barn where the activists were staying. When he heard the gunshots, Giorgi Trtev ran towards the barn from where the gunfire was coming and when he came close, about three hundred metres, he opened fire on the assailants. But his machine gun suddenly jammed and he failed to chase them away. When he was convinced that the Burandars had fled he went back to the barn and saw the tragedy. At this point he took his son's body and hid it in the forest.⁶²³

The next day, a Sunday, when the Barovitsa villagers found out their children had been murdered they went to the barn to retrieve their bodies. The Burandars also ordered them to bring back their weapons which they had failed to take the previous day.⁶²⁴

When the villagers arrived they found the dead men in a horrific state. They weren't only shot with bullets but had also been pierced with sticks. Their abdomens were cut open and their intestines were left hanging outside their bodies. These were acts that testified to the barbarism and atrocity of their killers.

The villagers from Berovitsa took the bodies of their children first. Later in the afternoon villagers from other villages came and took the bodies of Aleko Vasilev, Hristo Gatev and Peno Karamutkin. Giorgi Trtev however wasn't with them. He had gone to see the main activist leadership and let them know about the tragic event.⁶²⁵

⁶²² Iovan Dzhevelevkov, Information about certain events that took place in the village Kupa...

⁶²³ "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945", Vol. II, doc. 193, p. 365.

⁶²⁴ Ibid.

⁶²⁵ Ibid.

According to Giorgi Trtev's testimony, more than ten gunmen took part in the murder of the Macedonian NOF activists. But later it was determined that their number was 29. It was also established that Ivan Gagev's wife from the village Barovitsa, also a famous informer, met her nephew Giorgi Krvev in the mountains with a number of activists. Immediately afterwards, she went to see the Burandars Captain Gono and his son Mitso Duiamov and told them about the NOF activists in the area. She also visited Gogo Zhelkov who informed on Icho Trtev and Peno Karamutkin.⁶²⁶

So, it would appear that the group of NOF activists who were murdered were probably betrayed by Gogo Zhelkov and Ivan Gagev's wife.

In order to intimidate the people, the Monarcho-Fascists transferred the dead bodies of the murdered from Barovitsa to Gumendzhe and left them in the village square with their intestines hanging out and kept them there for several days. Then they took them from Gumendzhe to Enidzhe-Vardar and buried them. But after people strongly protested their bodies were returned to their mothers.

Couriers who passed through the villages where the atrocity took place found out that the horrific event had shocked people and instilled fear and panic in them.

The tragic event also had a negative effect on NOF activists in the local organizations. The tragic deaths of their comrades left a wide gap in NOF's ranks, which was difficult to fill leaving the organizations short staffed. As a result connections between Gumendzhe and the surrounding villages began to break down.⁶²⁷

Even though NOF suffered a severe blow with the killing of the nine activists, the people still didn't lose their morale and hope for a final victory. This was due primarily to the NOF leadership's renewed contacts with the local population and the left-wing Greek press, which condemned the crime and launched a wide-ranging campaign against the Greek reactionaries, blaming them not only for the

⁶²⁶ Ibid.

⁶²⁷ Ibid: 231, p. 445.

deaths of the nine activists but also for other crimes they committed against the innocent population. Public condemnation of the horrific terror by the progressive forces was also great encouragement for the general population. Special commissions were sent by the people to Solun, demanding the perpetrators of these crimes be punished.

Under strong public protest, an Anglo-American commission was set up to investigate the heinous killings of the nine activists. Unfortunately, apart from the questions they asked the local population, they didn't take any measures to either prevent further perpetration of terror or to punish the perpetrators.

Again, under fierce protests from the population, the fascist spies and traitors were forced to flee their villages and hide in Gumenzhe.⁶²⁸ With the informants out of the way the democratic forces were able to expand and intensify their struggle against the Greek reactionaries.

The tragic death of the nine activists echoed all throughout the Gumenzhe and Enidzhe-Vardar Districts causing greater resentment towards the Greek reactionaries. There were poems written and songs sung about the young activists everywhere in Voden Region. The following is one of those songs:

Listen, listen young and old, does the flute play, do the girls sing?
No flute plays, no girls sing, only nine mothers cry.

One of them - Aleko's wife, sadly mourns, painfully weeps:
Get up, get up, dear Aleko, get up and look at your young children,
Who you left wretched and fatherless, Wretched and fatherless,
without a home and without a father.

I can not, dear Shilia, I can not get up, the black earth has covered
me and is squeezing...

But tell my children, that their father died for the people.

⁶²⁸ Letter from Angel Gatsev, dated December 14, 1945, to NOF General Directorate, with details regarding the murder of the nine NOF activists on Paiak Mountain. "Aegean Macedonia in the National Liberation War, 1945", Vol. II, doc. 222, p. 429.

His son Giorgi yelled out: I will go to school, dear father, and leader
I will become, then those Fascists will be sorry, they will be sorry
for killing you.⁶²⁹

⁶²⁹ Kocho Hadzigeorgiev composed this song. The text was given to me by Atanas Meliov-Atso, a member of the NOF District Board for Gumendzhe District and NOF Secretary for Kufal Region, Solun District.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACE - Agricultural Party of Greece.
AFZH - Anti-fascist Women's Front (Aegean Macedonia).
VMRO (United) - Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (United).
DAG General Staff - Democratic Army of Greece - General Staff.
EAM - National Liberation Front.
ELAS - National Liberation Army.
EON - National Youth Organization.
EPON - National Greek Youth Organization.
ETA - Partisan Supply Committee.
INI - Institute of National History - Skopje.
KNOJ - Corps of the National Defense of Yugoslavia.
CPG - Communist Party of Greece.
CPY - Communist Party of Yugoslavia
CPM - Communist Party of Macedonia.
KOEM - Communist Organization of Aegean Macedonia.
MAO - Macedonian Liberation Organization.
NOB - National Liberation Struggle.
NOV – People's Liberation Army.
NOMS - National Liberation Youth Union (Aegean Macedonia).
NOF – People's Liberation Front (Aegean Macedonia).
OKNE - Organization of the communist youth of Greece.
OPLA - Organization for the Protection of People's Fighters.
PAO - Patriotic Liberation Organization (Fascist).
PDV - Provisional Democratic Government (of Greece).
PEEA - Political Committee for National Liberation.
SKOJ - Union of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia.
SNOV - Slavo-Macedonian Liberation Army.
SNOF - Slavo-Macedonian National Liberation Front.
TOMO - Secret Macedonian Liberation Organization.
Ts K - Central Committee.