

Mincho Fotev

**And
The National Liberation Movement
Of the Macedonian people
From Greek occupied Macedonia
(1941-1949)**



**By
Dr. Mihailo Minoski**

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

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Foreword

There is much testimony given about the armed struggle involving the Macedonian people from Greek occupied Macedonia in the period of the anti-fascist war and during the Greek Civil War. Included in this testimony are views, evaluations and polemical articles published by several of the Macedonian leaders who participated in the Macedonian national liberation movement. Included among the contributors are Paskal Mitrevski, Vangel Aianovski-Otse, Mihailo Keramitchiev, Pavle Rakovski, Naum Peiov, Andreia Chipov, and later scientist-historians Dr. Risto Kiriazovski and Todor Simovski, publicist Hristo Andonovski and other historians including Dr. Stojan Kiselinovski and Tashko Mamurovski. Their presentations were based on relevant facts and authentic, first-hand information that defined both the size and intensity of the armed struggle. In addition to that they each offered their opinions, assessments and sometimes divided views, especially regarding fundamental issues such as ethnic equality between the Macedonian and Greek people in a democratically governed Greece, one side, and a United Macedonia, on the other.

Mincho Fotev was one of the leading Macedonian figures in the PLM (People's Liberation Movement) (SNOF and NOF) from Greek occupied Macedonia. For various reasons, Mincho Fotev never did publish his testimony or make any other contributions and opinions regarding the armed struggle in which he participated from its beginning to its end with DAG's defeat. But he did leave behind a great deal of relevant information regarding his views and assessments about the Macedonian participation in defending Greece against fascist Italian aggression, about Greece's capitulation in WW II, about the division of Greek occupied Macedonia by the occupying forces, about Bulgarian propaganda and the creation of a pro-Bulgarian movement and, above all, about the Macedonian national liberation movement in Greek occupied Macedonia from 1941 to 1949.

I was very honoured by the faith the Fotev family placed in me to publish this book and for entrusting me with Mincho Fotev's accumulated records. The book consists of two authorized documents which Mincho Fotev had written at different periods of

time. The first is entitled “About the counter-bands” completed in April 1969, and the second is entitled “The emergence of the National Liberation Front (NOF) from the Aegean part of Macedonia”, completed in November 1986.

The intent of this book is to bring light to Mincho Fotev’s activities as a revolutionary and as a participant in the PLM. The book intends to highlight his testimony regarding the Macedonian armed struggle, in which the Macedonian people from Greek occupied Macedonia participated during the Anti-fascist struggle and during the Greek Civil War. It will present his testimony regarding the CPG’s attitude towards the Macedonian national movement and its policy towards the “Macedonian National Question”. It will draw attention to Mincho’s testimony regarding the CPY’s position in this struggle and the role the CPM and the leadership of the People’s Republic of Macedonia played. These testimonies will exclusively be based on the materials made available to us, to the extent that we were permitted by Mincho Fotev.

There are no other or different pretensions.

The reader may find that some of Mincho Fotev’s facts, opinions, views and outstanding issues, presented in this book, may vary and conflict with those of other people. But what is represented here are Fotev’s views and assessment of the role of the many leaders and participants in the movement. We hope that both the academic world and the general public will find this book of interest.

The book itself is divided into three parts: Part I deals with Mincho Fotev’s life and work as a revolutionary, Part II deals with the PLM of the Macedonian People from Greek occupied Macedonia, 1941-1949, and Part III includes an index.

We hope that this book, being printed on the 60th anniversary of the exodus of the Macedonian people who were exiled from Greek occupied Macedonia, will contribute to the mourning of this event.

Part I

MINCHO FOTEV'S LIFE AND REVOLUTIONARY CONTRIBUTIONS

According to an undated “Short Autobiography” (Brief biography of Mincho Fotev (typed in Latin letters B.M. – B.D.) Family archive-Fotev (hereinafter: CA-Fotev), 4-5.) Mincho Fotev comes from a revolutionary family which had actively participated in the Macedonian revolutionary liberation movement since the Ilinden uprising. Members of the Fotev family, which included his grandfather, his grandfather's brother and uncle, have fought in the Ilinden Uprising and have laid their lives for Macedonia's liberation. Then, in the years 1941 to 1949, the entire Fotev family actively participated in the Macedonian struggle in Greek occupied Macedonia. Mincho's father was a fighter in the ELAS units. His brother was a veteran in the war which he joined in 1941 and was killed as a partisan officer in 1944. His mother and his two sisters were also actively involved in the PLM. In 1946 his mother was arrested by the Greek authorities, for participating in the PLM, and was sentenced to 8 years hard labour by the Greek military court. She became gravely ill from the brutal torture in prison. She was released from prison in 1954 and died the same year.

Mincho Fotev was born into a “working family” on September 30, 1922 in the town Rupishsta, Kostur Region, Greek occupied Macedonia. In 1938, while still in high school, Mincho joined the Union of Communist Youth in Greece where he began his revolutionary activities. Unfortunately his involvement and activities with the communists were soon exposed by the Greek police. In September 1939 he was arrested and sentenced to six months in prison. A few months after serving his prison sentence he was again arrested for the same offense and, in 1940, he was again convicted to six months in prison. He served both sentences in the Kostur Region prison.

After Greece capitulated to Italy during WW II, and after the Italian occupation authorities established themselves in western Greek

occupied Macedonia, Mincho Fotev, in April 1941, joined the resistance movement.

As a proven activist and a young revolutionary, Mincho Fotev, in May 10, 1941, became a member of the Communist Party of Greece. But because he was registered as a “dangerous communist” he was constantly followed by the occupying authorities. In June 1941, before he was arrested, Fotev became involved in strictly illegal activities by fully dedicating himself to organizing and managing a youth antifascist movement in Kostur Region. At that time he was a member of the Secretariat of the Municipal Committee of the Communist youth in the town Rupishsta and a member of the Secretariat of the Regional Committee of EPON in Kostur Region. In the fall of 1941 he began preparations for the start of the armed struggle. As one of the organizers, Mincho Fotev directly participated in the formation of the first ELAS unit in Kostur Region which then transferred to Mount Gramos. The unit was formed on December 7, 1942 and consisted mainly of fighters from Rupishsta. Fotev personally joined the unit and became part of the ELAS Headquarters Staff. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, 33.)

Fotev actively participated in the implementation of political propaganda to win over the Macedonian pro-Bulgarian counter-band movement that was formed by the occupiers to fight against the Macedonian PLM. He aimed his efforts at freeing those who were seduced by Bulgarian propaganda or were forced to fight against their people by the armed occupiers. On March 12, 1943 Mincho Fotev, Paskal Mitrevski and Periklis approached the armed counter-bands in the Macedonian village Starichani and, through long discussions, managed to convince the counter-bandits to surrender their arms to the Macedonian partisans led by Gligor Kiosev from the town Rupishsta. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, 51.)

(Paskal Mitrevski was from the village Chuka, Kostur Region. He was born in 1912. He participated in the PLM along with the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia. He also participated in the Greek resistance movement and the Greek Civil War. He led the Macedonian propaganda section responsible for winning over the pro-Bulgarian counter-band movement. He was also SNOF Regional Secretary for Kostur Region, a member of the

CPG District Committee for Macedonia and Thrace, NOF Central Committee Secretary, NOF Central Council Chairman, and Minister in the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece - Representative of NOF. Following DAG's defeat and the partisan withdrawal to the territory of Albania, Mitrevski was charged by the leadership of the Communist Party of Greece as "Tito's agent" and arrested by the CPG security services. On October 7, 1949 he was imprisoned in the prison in Bureli, then on October 13 he was sent to the Central prison in Tirana where he spent time until December 14, 1949, at which point he was loaded onto a Soviet ship destined for Odessa. From there he was taken to Moscow where he was imprisoned from January 1950 to April 19, 1952. He was prosecuted in Moscow and sentenced to 25 years in prison with his sentence to be served in the camps in the northern part of the USSR. After his early release from the camp in 1956, he returned to the People's Republic of Macedonia and remained there until the end of his life. He worked in various high government positions including as a judge in the Constitutional Court and as its president. He died in Skopje on November 10, 1978.)

(Periklis was CPG Regional Committee Secretary for Kostur Region.)

On March 14, 1943, as the duty officer at unit headquarters in the village Langa, Kostur Region, Fotev received Lazo Trpovski, a member of the CPG Regional Committee for Greek occupied Macedonia and Thrace, who had arrived in the capacity of instructor and was accompanied by Periklis, CPG Regional Committee Secretary for Kostur Region. On March 21, 1943 Mincho Fotev participated in the military and political body Conference held in the Village Nestram in Kostur Region, together with the anti-fascist people's liberation leaders and representatives belonging to the organizations CPG, EAM, OKNE, EA and ELAS. After everyone had their say, a common position was considered and measures for further action were adopted. Some of the measures adopted included strengthening the armed struggle in Kostur Region by increasing the partisan units and preparing for large-scale action. Other measures sought were confirmation and agreement from the CPG and the other Greek anti-fascist organizations, and confirming the Macedonian participation in the struggle against the fascists and in

opposition to Bulgarian propaganda, and actions taken to end the pro-Bulgarian counter-band movement. From April 2 to April 4, 1943, as a staff officer, Fotev accompanied Lazo Trpovski on his travels from the village Nestram to the village Charchishta, Kostur Region, and from there to the town Tsotili, Anaselichko Region, during his appointment with Simos Karasidis, member of the CPG Political Committee for Greek occupied Macedonia and Thrace and other political and military leaders. After safely delivering Lazo Trpovski and Stratos Kendros to Tsotili, Fotev went to the unit headquarters in the village Nestram, Kostur Region.

(Lazo Trpovski was born in the village D'mbeni, Kostur Region in 1900. He was educated in the USSR where he acquired higher education in the political sciences. In 1935 he returned to Greek occupied Macedonia and became a member of the CPG and VMRO (United). Because of his revolutionary activities he was arrested and sent to prison on the island Acronaphplion where he served a sentence from January 1939 to June 1941. He later joined the resistance movement. He was a member and CPG instructor for Greek occupied Macedonia. He was killed on April 11, 1943 in Imere, Kozhani Region, by the PAO, a Greek armed organization.)

(Stratos Kedros was from Lerin. He was Trpovski's personal friend and collaborator who decided to accompany Trpovski from the village Charchishta to Tsitoli (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, 37.)

Fotev occupied senior leadership positions in the ELAS XXVIII Regiment ranging from Party Secretary and Political Commissar of a Unit, to Regiment Headquarters Department Chief. In his capacity he performed various investigative duties. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, 11.) In early October Mincho was appointed Deputy Chief of Staff of the counter-intelligence services, in the same ELAS regiment. (Mincho Fotev's Notes under the title "National Liberation Front and other Macedonian organizations in Aegean Macedonia (1945-1949)" by Risto Kiriazovski, manuscript (CA-Fotev) 15.) He also personally participated in 83 combat actions against the occupying forces. (According to his own notes, he was wounded and received a contusion (CV 1).) After the formation of the Macedonian battalion in 1944, Fotev was appointed political

commissar of a unit. In that capacity, as part of the 3rd unit of the Battalion, on September 3, 1944 he participated in the attack to take the city Kostur. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, 57.)

In September 1944 the CPG leadership decided to disband the Macedonian units. They were no longer to be considered as separate units in ELAS. Up until now these units were viewed as an act of recognition of the Macedonian people and the “Macedonian National Question”. The Macedonian fighters who refused to be disbanded, with arms in hand, crossed over the Yugoslav border and entered the territory of the now Republic of Macedonia, then known as “Vardar Macedonia”. Mincho Fotev was part of those fighters who crossed over. Then these same fighters, from Greek occupied Macedonia, were assembled in Bitola and transformed into the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade” with Ilia Dimovski – Gotse as their commander. Fotev was appointed Secretary of SKOJ and a member of the Party Committee. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, 2.)

(The “First Macedonian Assault Brigade” was formed on November 18, 1944 and participated in the clean-up of the Balist (Nazi Albanian) armed groups.)

(Ilia Dimovski Gotse was born in 1905 in the village Statitsa, Lerin Region. He was a member of the CPG and a brave revolutionary ready to act. In 1941 Ilia Dimovski Gotse founded an independent Macedonian communist organization with its own Macedonian national platform. He participated in the armed people’s liberation movement and, from February 28, 1943 to October 12, 1944, he was commander of the partisan unit “Vicho”, then Political Commissar, Commander of the Lerin-Kostur Battalion and Commander of the Macedonian Lerin-Kostur Brigade. On November 18, 1944 he was appointed commander of the “First Aegean Assault Brigade”. In September 1946 he led the Macedonian partisan units in Vicho and in 1947 he was Commander of a DAG battalion. He was also a member of the main NOF Board. He died in Skopje on July 26, 1961.)

During the month of April 1945, after the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade” was dissolved on April 2, 1945, by decision of NOV and

POM General Headquarters, Mincho Fotev was ordered by the CPM Central Committee to deploy as a Political Commissar in the headquarters of the KHOJ Division in Skopje, at the rank of captain. Then, in May 1945, the CPM Central Committee selected a number of people to lead the Macedonian movement in Greek occupied Macedonia that was to organize and lead a national liberation front in that part of Macedonia. At that point Fotev was discharged from the army and recruited as part of this organizing body. Other members who were also recruited into this body included were Paskal Mitrevski, appointed political secretary and members Giorgi Urdov – Dzhodzho, Mihailo Keramitchiev, Atanas Koroveshovski, Pavle Rakovski and Mincho Fotev who was elected as political secretary of the Main Board of NOMS from Greek occupied Macedonia. The organizational and party leadership acted on CPM Central Committee directives and was under the direct control of the person in charge of it. That role was performed by Nikola Minchev, Dimitar Aleksievski and Tsvetko Uzunovski.

(The Macedonian revolutionary Giorgi Urdov-Dzhodzho was born in 1914 in Voden. He was a member of the Communist Party of Greece and a participant in the Greek resistance movement as part of the PLM of the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia in 1941. In 1942 he was appointed CPG District Committee Organizing Secretary for Macedonia and Thrace. In June 1944 he was appointed Political Commissar of the Macedonian Voden Battalion. In April 1945 he was appointed member of the Governing Committee in the formation of the NOF leadership. In November 1947 he became a member of DAG Headquarters for Western Greek occupied Macedonia. He died in Pieria, Olympus on June 21, 1947.)

(Mihailo Keramitchiev was born in 1915 in the village Gabresh, Kostur Region. He participated in the PLM for the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia. He was a member of the Communist Party of Greece since 1935 and was arrested because of his revolutionary activities in 1939. He served his prison sentence in the Kostur prison until he was released in May 1940. He participated in the October 1940 Greek war against fascist Italy. He was arrested for being involved in “communist activities” and was interned on Kafalonia Island. In 1943 he joined the PLM and was appointed commander of a SNOF reserve unit. In 1944 he was chosen as a

political candidate of the PEEA in Kostur Region. He received the rank of colonel in DAG. In November 1944 Keramitchiev was appointed political commissar of the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade”. In May 1945 he was appointed a member of the Governing Body for the establishment of NOF. On May 20, 1947 he was appointed secretary of the NOF Coordinating Bureau. From January 13 to August 8, 1947 Keramitchiev was Chairman of the NOF Central Council. In August 1948 he crossed over into the People’s Republic of Macedonia where he was active in the Republic’s political life. He died in Skopje on May 31, 1981.)

(Atanas Koroveshovski was from the village Smrdesht, Kostur Region. He was a participant of the PLM for the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia. In October 1943 he was appointed Commander of the Macedonian unit “Lazo Trpovski” operating within ELAS. Later he was appointed battalion commander in the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade”. He was a lieutenant in the Yugoslav National Army and a member of the NOF Central Board Secretariat. He died in battle near the village Kornishor, Enidzhevardar Region, on September 3, 1945.)

(Pavle Rakovski was born on May 23, 1913 in the village Dolno Kleshchina, Lerin Region. He was a revolutionary and a communist. He participated in the PLM with the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia and was a NOF leader. After DAG’s defeat, following the Greek Civil War, Rakovski, on October 7, 1949, was arrested in Albania and jailed in the “Bureli” prison. On October 13, 1949 he was transferred to the Central prison in Tirana and on December 14, 1949 he was loaded onto a Soviet ship and, along with the other NOF, NOMS and AFZH leaders, was transferred to Odessa and from there to Moscow to central interrogation. There he was interrogated from January 1950 to April 19, 1952, when he was sentenced to 10 years in prison. He was ordered to serve his prison sentence in the camps in Siberia. After his early release in 1956 he returned to the People’s Republic of Macedonia where he died in Skopje in 1990.)

Before the end of May 1945 the organizational leadership, among whom was Fotev, received a directive to go to Greek occupied Macedonia and begin to organize the Macedonian people in a mass

national liberation movement by creating NOF, NOMS and AFZH regional and local organizations. As a political secretary in charge of NOMS, Mincho Fotev's role was to massively strengthen NOMS in Greek occupied Macedonia.

In early 1946, at the request of the CPM Central Committee, Fotev arrived in the People's Republic of Macedonia (PRM). From January to June 1946 he regularly attended classes at the Party school until he completed the political course offered by the CPM Central Committee in Skopje. After he completed the course he returned to Greek occupied Macedonia. After he was released from his function as secretary of the youth in the "First Macedonian Assault Brigade", he joined the eight member NOMS delegation for Greek occupied Macedonia and was to participate in the People's Republic of Macedonia's People's Youth 2nd Congress. During the 1st NOF Congress of the People's Republic of Macedonia, held August 2, 1946, Fotev was elected member of the NOF delegation for Greek occupied Macedonia. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, 3-4.) He was unable to participate in the Congress because the overall composition of the "First Macedonian Assault Brigade", along with its headquarters in which he was a member, was moved to the western part of PRM to conduct operations against the Albanian Balist formations.

The organized political actions carried out by NOF, NOMS and AFZH in Greek occupied Macedonia were not welcomed by the Greek Monarcho-Fascist regime, which took fierce paramilitary measures to persecute the activists, and all the Macedonian people, through terror and violence. Given the situation, the Macedonian leadership decided to organize an armed defense and transform the struggle into a mass armed resistance. The Macedonian national liberation movement in Greek occupied Macedonia decided to follow the PLM World War II example of the People's Republic of Macedonia and reorganize. The organizational leadership renamed itself to NOF Main Board and held a Board meeting on July 7, 1946, during which it reorganized its duties. Mincho Fotev was now directly responsible for the formation and dispatch of partisan units in the area of Mounts Vicho and Gramos. (M. Fotev, Developments through NOF, 17.) A short time later two partisan units were formed

which, by October 1946, numbered 930 fighters ready to defend the people. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, 2.)

By decision of the CPY Central Committee, the independent developments in the Macedonian people's liberation movement in Greek occupied Macedonia were ordered to stop. At this point the Macedonian organizations were ordered to subordinate to the CPG leadership. The CPY-CPG Central Committees had agreed that NOF should be subordinated to the CPG and that the CPM Central Committee and the Government of the People's Republic of Macedonia were in charge of this transition. Towards the end of October Paskal Mitrevski, Ilia Dimovski-Gotse and Mincho Fotev were invited to travel to Skopje where Lazar Kolishevski personally informed them of the Agreement reached in Belgrade between the CPY and the CPG Central Committees, with which it was envisaged that the PLM for the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia was to unite with the Greek anti-Monarcho-Fascist movement under the leadership of the CPG. Under this "unification" Agreement Paskal Mitrevski was appointed to the CPG Regional Committee Secretariat, Giorgi Urdov-Dzhodzho was appointed member of DAG Regional Headquarters and Mincho Fotev was appointed to the Presidency of EPON, the CPG Regional Board youth organization for Greek occupied Macedonia and Thrace. After that Kolishevski ordered the leaders to immediately depart for Greek occupied Macedonia to inform the other Macedonian members of these changes. The group left PRM on October 19 and arrived in Greek occupied Macedonia through Albania. They arrived in Korcha. On October 20 Fotev went to Kostur to inform the NOF District leadership and to begin implementing the CPY-CPG Agreement. (M. Fotev, Development through NOF, 22.) In mid-November Mincho Fotev and a group of Macedonian fighters stayed over in the village Vrnik, located in the territory of Albania but inhabited by Macedonians, where, on November 16, Fotev met with Lambro Cholakov, German Damovski-Stariot, Iani Pirovski and a group of Macedonian fighters. Here they confirmed the NOF and DAG senior leaders Paskal Mitrevski as Political Secretary of NOF and Nikos Theoharopoulos-Skotidis as Assistant Commander of DAG General Staff, and through the villages Besfina and Rulia, escorted them to Mount Vicho.

On November 21, 1946 Mincho Fotev attended a meeting held in the village Bapchor. The meeting was between NOF, CPG and DAG representatives and members of the NOF, NOMS and AFZH district leaderships for Lerin and Kostur Regions. The next day, on November 22, 1946, he attended a NOF Main Board meeting held in the same village. These meetings were dedicated to implementing the CPY-CPG Agreement with regards to “uniting” the Macedonian partisan units with the DAG units. (M. Fotev, Development through NOF, 23.) Towards the end of November Mincho Fotev, accompanied by Micho Koroveshovski (acting as a courier), left for Mount Paiak and arrived there in early 1947. (M. Fotev, Development through NOF, 25-26.) On January 7, 1947 the NOF District Board held a meeting in the village Barovitsa to discuss the situation in the region and the problems that NOF, NOMS and AFZH were experiencing in their strained relations with the CPG and with the Greek partisan movement in Central Greek occupied Macedonia, due to Captain Panos’s hostile behaviour. Panos was Commander of the Greek partisan units. (Ibid, p. 26, 39.) On January 8, 1947 Fotev went up Mount Paiak and met with Captain Panos, Lefteros, Stavros and other Greek political and military leaders to settle these problems and to continue with the implementation of the “unification” Agreement. (Ibid) Fotev also participated in a joint meeting between NOF, CPG and DAG representatives, held in the village Kupa, Gumendzhe Region. This meeting was dedicated to the unification of the Macedonian partisan units on Mount Paiak with those of DAG. The resolutions adopted during this meeting practically completed the entire “unification” Agreement process. (M. Fotev, Development through NOF, 28.) Fotev remained at Partisan Headquarters until the end of January, 1947 where he waited for Paskal Mitrevski to arrive so that he could accompany him on his travel to Solun. In Solun they expected to meet with the CPG Regional Committee and come up with an agreement regarding the operational aspects of the NOF-CPG Agreement provisions for cooperation between the Macedonian organizations NOF, NOMS and AFZH with the CPG and other mass organizations under its leadership. There were also other outstanding issues that needed to be discussed. But as soon as the CPG representative found out that Mitrevski wanted to travel to Solun, he categorically refused to provide him with a secure route. He also insisted that Paskal Mitrevski travel alone and through CPG

representation in Yugoslavia. By his own advocacy, Paskal accepted this solution as the only possible option. (Ibid, p. 29, 30.) At the end of January Mincho Fotev left for Central Greek occupied Macedonia to coordinate regional NOF activities in Enidzhe-Vardar and Gumenidzhe Regions. (Ibid, p. 29)

(Micho Koroveshovski was from the village Smrdeshe, Kostur Region. He was a participant in the NLM of the Macedonian people from Greek occupied Macedonia and was Corporal in the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade”. He also served as a courier for the NOF Main Board and was Commander of a DAG platoon. He died in 1947.)

Towards the end of March 1947, with the NOF Main Board Secretary being absent, Fotev went directly to Panos, a CPG representative, and asked him if he could make contact with EPON (the all Greek National Youth Organization) and become a member under the NOF-CPG unification Agreement. But, even after repeated requests, Panos’s answer was always “no”. Given the current situation, in early April 1947, accompanied by courier Micho Koroveshovski and by Giorgi Rachev (Paskal Mitrevski’s personal courier), Fotev took a trip to the free territory on Mount Vicho. On his way to Vicho, Fotev made a couple of stops in the villages Krontselevo and Dolno Rodovo where he held meetings with Vangel Aianovski, NOF District Board Secretary, Petre Shorev-Fidan, head of NOMS, Risto Bukuvala-Zhukov, Giorgi Manchov and other NOF district leaders. The purpose of holding the meetings was to exchange information regarding the political and military situation in the Voden and Enidzhe-Vardar districts and to evaluate the activities carried out by NOF, NOMS and AFZH in relation to the CPG, EPON and DAG. (M. Fotev, Development through NOF, 31.) Upon his arrival in the free territory on Mount Vicho, in the village Prekopana, Fotev, through the NOF village secretary, made contact with German Dimovski-Stariot, NOF District Board Secretary. In the village Smrdeshe he met with Lambro Cholakov, NOF District Board Secretary, and with other District leaders including Krsto Mangov, Iani Pirovski, Nikola Panov, Tpaiko Supelov, Panaiot Karadzha and Hrisanti Tsanzovska to discuss NOF activities and the situation in Kostur Region. (Ibid. p. 32.) From May 15 to 18, 1947 Fotev traveled with the NOF

Kostur District delegation and attended a NOF working committee meeting in Kaimakchalan in the locality “Mishovi Kolibi” near the Greek-Yugoslav border. In his capacity as member of the NOF Main Board and as NOMS Secretary, Fotev strongly protested to Mihailo Keramitchiev for convening a NOF meeting in the absence of Secretary Paskal Mitrevski and without consulting with the other NOF Main Board members. (Ibid, p. 34.) Fotev also spoke up in Paskal Mitrevski’s defense about the untruths expressed by CPG representative Georgios Eretriadis-Petris, regarding Mitrevski’s long stay in Yugoslavia. Eretriadis’s aim was to remove Mitrevski from his position as NOF Secretary and from every other function. During the meeting Fotev said: “Comrade Petris, I am familiar with the situation. I was personally witness to Paskal Mitrevski’s plans to go to Solun via Yugoslavia at the request of Evripidis Kapetanos-Panos, member of the CPG Political Committee, and not for what you are blaming him.” (Ibid, p. 35.) On May 20, 1947, during the NOF working committee meeting, Fotev was not elected to the new body of the NOF Coordinating Bureau but was tied to the EPON Regional committee Secretariat for Greek occupied Macedonia and Thrace. (Ibid, p. 36, 51.) Following the decision of the Coordinating Bureau to dismantle NOMS, Fotev was removed from the Political Committee of EPON. (Ibid, p. 37-38.)

(Vangel Aianovski-Otse from Voden was born on February 5, 1909. He was a revolutionary and a participant in the 1928 labour movement in Greece. He was a member of OKNE and the Communist Party of Greece, CPG Regional Committee Secretary in Voden (1941), deputy political commissar in the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade”, NOF District Committee Secretary for Voden Region (from April 1947) and NOF Central Committee Organizational Secretary for Macedonia. He died in Skopje in 1990.)

(Krsto Mangov from the village D’mbeni, Kostur Region, was a fighter in ELAS and a participant in the PLM of the Macedonian people from Greek occupied Macedonia. He was deputy political secretary in the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade”, NOF District Committee Secretary for Kostur Region, member of the NOF Central Council Executive Committee and a representative of the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece for local people’s

government. He died on August 11, 1949 in the village Breznitsa, Kostur Region.)

(Iani Pirovski was from the village Kosinets, Kostur Region. He was a fighter in ELAS and a participant in the PLM of the Macedonian people from Greek occupied Macedonia. He was Secretary of SKOJ in the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade”, member of the NOF District Board for Kostur Region, NOMS Secretary for Kostur Region, member of the CPG District Committee for Kostur Region and assistant political commissar of a DAG brigade. He died in February 1949 during the battle for Lerin.)

During the 2nd NOF Congress, held on March 25, 1949, Fotev was elected member of the NOF Central Council Executive Committee. (Ibid, p. 55.) From the Executive Committee he was elected President of the NOMS Main Board responsible for the recovery of the youth organization, as well as to manage the NOF District organizations in Kostur and Lerin Regions. (Ibid, p. 57.) On April 3, 1949 he was appointed assistant political commissar at DAG Headquarters. (Ibid, p. 59.) Then, after the Informburo resolution and the deterioration of relations between the CPY and the CPG, as well as the change in attitude towards the “Macedonian National Question”, Mincho Fotev along with the other Macedonian NOF leadership, under strong pressure from the CPG leadership, began a propaganda campaign against Yugoslavia and against the Macedonian state leadership. Nikos Zahariadis, Secretary General of the CPG Central Committee, became personally involved in this matter. (M. Fotev, Development through NOF, 62-63.)

As a DAG officer, under the command of Lt. Gen. Georgios Protopappas-Kikitsas, Mincho Fotev participated in the battles of Gramos. On August 29, 1949, after DAG’s defeat, Fotev, together with the other Macedonian officers and DAG fighters who crossed over into Albanian territory, found himself in the Albanian camps. (Ibid, p. 67.) On September 9, 1949 he attended a meeting with other DAG military personnel. The meeting was called by Mitchos Vlandas, Minister of War and member of the CPG Central Committee Presidency, who announced the CPG Central Committee’s conclusion that Yugoslavia and NOF as its agent were the main culprits that caused DAG’s defeat. (M. Fotev Development

through NOF, p. 67-68.) Shortly afterwards, on September 30, 1949, the CPG leadership decided to arrest the NOF leaders, including Fotev. At the time Fotev was President of the NOMS Main Board and member of the NOF Central Council Executive Committee. On October 7, 1949 Fotev, together with the other arrested Macedonian leaders, was imprisoned in the “Bureli” prison in Albania. Then, on October 13, 1949 they were transferred to the central prison in Tirana. On December 14, 1949 they were transferred to the port of Durres, loaded onto a Soviet cargo ship and transported to the port of Odessa in the Soviet Union. On December 25, 1949, upon arriving in Odessa, the Soviet police took them to Moscow. On January 1, 1950 Fotev was taken to the prison “Liublianka” by members of the USSR Ministry of Security. (Ibid, p. 68-69.) He was held and interrogated in the Moscow prison until April 19, 1952 when he was sentenced to 10 years in prison and sent to the concentration camp “Varkuta”, in the far north of the USSR. (Ibid, p. 72.)

In 1956, after the normalization of relations between the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Yugoslav Communist Party, Mincho Fotev and the other PLM leaders from Greek occupied Macedonia were released and repatriated in the People’s Republic of Macedonia.

Upon his arrival in the People’s Republic of Macedonia, Fotev was sent to school in Skopje to upgrade his education in Administrative Studies. After he finished the course he was appointed adviser to the State Secretariat for general administration. When that position was closed in 1965, Fotev went to work for the Secretariat of Justice. Mincho Fotev died in Skopje on May 28, 1987.

Fotev was awarded 6 times for his contributions to the PLM of the Macedonian people from Greek occupied Macedonia. (Ibid.)

Part II

PEOPLE'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT OF THE MACEDONIAN PEOPLE FROM GREEK OCCUPIED MACEDONIA (1941-1949)

Participation of the Macedonian people, from Greek occupied Macedonia, in the defense of Greece against Fascist aggression (1940-1941)

On October 28, 1940 Italian armed forces in the territory of Albania began to invade Greece without the knowledge of Germany. On April 7, 1939 the Italian army invaded and occupied Albania. On April 12, 1939 Italy officially annexed Albania and stationed a strong armed force for a projected invasion and occupation of Greece. Bulgaria abstained from entering the war against Greece and officially declared its neutrality after being warned by Turkey, which threatened Bulgaria with military intervention. Until February 1941 Bulgaria's position was to remain out of the conflict as a result of Bogdan Filov's government reaching a non-aggression Agreement with the Turkish government.

The Macedonian people from Greek occupied Macedonia, unexpectedly for the Bulgarian government and for the Supremacists, decided to massively participate in the defense of Greece despite the harsh measures such as the denationalization and assimilation policies carried out against them by the Greek state, especially during General Ioannis Metaxas's dictatorial rule. Mandated by King George II, Metaxas established his government in April 1936 and declared Greece a dictatorship on August 4. Metaxas died in January 1941. After about a month of bitter fighting, with air support from the United Kingdom, the Italian army was pushed back to Albania from where it continued its military operations. The first British air force hostilities against the Italian fleet took place on November 11, 1940. About 20,000 Macedonians fought in the Greek army composition against the Italian and German military forces from October 28, 1940 to April 15, 1941. The German attack on Greece had been planned since December 13, 1940 when Adolf Hitler gave a directive to prepare for implementing the "Marita" operation. In December a strong German

force was stationed in Bulgaria from where it was ordered to prepare for invading Greece. The stationing of a British military force of 58,000 troops and fighter planes in Greece, in February 1941, accelerated Hitler's "Marita" plan, and after a quick occupation of Yugoslavia in April 1941 the German forces invaded Greece. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, 3.)

Greek capitulation and the triple occupation and the division of Greek occupied Macedonia by fascist Germany, Italy and Bulgaria

After Greece capitulated on April 20, 1941, Germany decided to allow Western Thrace and Eastern Greek occupied Macedonia and Kavala to be occupied by its ally Bulgaria. According to the Triple Pact agreement, Bulgaria was given access to the Aegean Sea. Bulgaria signed the Agreement on March 1, 1941 when it joined the Pact. After the Bulgarian army took control of the territory it established a Bulgarian government. Germany kept the central part for itself and Italy occupied the western part of Greek occupied Macedonia. Part of Epirus and western Greek occupied Macedonia, the Pind-Gramos Region where there was a large Vlach population, was declared a free principality. Italy, with agreement from the Romanian government, and with collaboration from the Romanian Embassy in Athens, declared the creation of the free Pind Principality. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, 12.)

There was a quisling Greek government organized in the German and Italian occupation zone.

Bulgarian aspirations and supremacist Bulgarian propaganda in Greek occupied Macedonia (1941-1944)

The government of fascist Bulgaria refused to give up on its pretenses towards the entire Greek occupied part of Macedonia. It began to strengthen its "Greater Bulgaria" propaganda by activating its "supremacist agents" in the German and Italian occupied zones to prepare the ground for consent to extend Bulgarian authority on the entire territory of Greek occupied Macedonia. Bulgaria wanted to annex all of Macedonia by creating a pro-Bulgarian movement through the activation of "mercenaries and supremacist agents" on

the ground and by recruiting Macedonian emigrants in Bulgaria, who were organized and managed by Bulgarian intelligence. (Ibid, p. 2.)

(Fotev: “The Bulgarian government, like it did during the 1903 Ilinden Uprising through its supremacists, wanted to do the same during the national liberation struggle, i.e. during the Second World War 1940-1945. By fascist means it wanted to organize an intensive Bulgarian propaganda, through threats, violence and cruel terror. In cooperation with the German and Italian occupation authorities it persistently tried and tried to organize a pro-Bulgarian counter-band movement in Greek occupied Macedonia.” (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, Skopje, 1969, 1.)

Bulgarian organized actions in Greek occupied Macedonia began before the Second World War reached the Balkans. They began in 1939, right after Italy occupied Albania. The actions of the powerful Bulgarian propaganda began in Tirana, Albania and were directed against Greece in Greek occupied Macedonia. Bulgarian propaganda and intelligence activities were operating through five central points; two in Tirana, one in Korcha, one in Bilishta and one in the border village Vrbnik, inhabited by a Macedonian population. Bulgarian agents operating from these points were engaged in covert activities through secret channels infiltrating the Macedonian population in Greek occupied Macedonia and creating a network of Bulgarian agents.” (Ibid, p. 2-3.)

Outside of intelligence and information gathering, the Bulgarian supremacist agents were also involved in other activities performed in the service of the Bulgarian fascist regime. Shortly before Greece was attacked by the Italian and German armed forces, the terrain was strengthened with anti-Greek propaganda to hinder the mobilization of Macedonians into the Greek army. By demonstrating that it was capable of obstructing Macedonians from participating in the defense of Greece, Bulgaria established its loyalty to fascist Italy and made its contribution to their common cause. But the real intent behind all this was to show that, through propaganda, Bulgaria was capable of controlling the “Macedono-Bulgarian” population in Greece. Because of this Bulgaria was

expecting to be recognized as the sole contender for the governance of Greek occupied Macedonia after the Greek state was liquidated.

Bulgaria wanted to exploit the tragic situation experienced by the Macedonian people who were going through economic hardships, denationalization, systematic persecution and brutal terror perpetrated by the Greek Monarchic regime. Under these conditions, by use of strong propaganda, Bulgaria wanted the Macedonian people to believe that the Bulgarian invasion and occupation and its establishment of a Bulgarian government was a liberating mission. Bulgaria's plan should have worked because its supremacist agents were busy showing the Macedonian people that Greece was systematically planning their physical extermination and reminding them of the hardships they endured under Greek control. The Macedonian people were also, through propaganda, encouraged to boycott the mobilization of Macedonians into the Greek army and their participation in the war against the Italian and German invaders." (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 3.) This task was assigned to those Bulgarian agents who arrived from Bulgaria and who were working in the field in Greek occupied Macedonia under the direct leadership of the Bulgarian state.

(Fotev: "The Bulgarian supremacist agents were using the difficult social, economic, political and national situation the Macedonian people were experiencing in order to convince them to boycott the Greeks. The Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia had experienced national oppression, prohibition in speaking their native language, cruel economic exploitation, political persecution, police repression and harassment...".)

But, despite its large financial investment and use of specialized personnel, Bulgarian propaganda still failed to win much support. However, during the Greek-Italian war, Bulgaria and its supremacist agents, through their propaganda, succeeded in recruiting around 250 Macedonians who had deserted the Greek army. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 4.) The Italian authorities took all the deserters and, through Albania, shipped them to Bulgaria and surrendered them to the Bulgarian authorities. The Italian military authorities took the deserters first to Korcha and from there, via Elbasan and Ferrari, moved them to Italy to the city Parma. Then, at

the request of the Bulgarian Embassy in Rome, all Macedonians deserters were transferred to Bulgarian authorities, and, through Rieka, transported to Sofia where they were given Bulgarian uniforms and sent to join the Bulgarian army units in the field. (M. Fotev about the counter-bands, p. 4.)

Pro-Bulgarian political movement in Western and Central Greek occupied Macedonia

After Greece's capitulation and Greek occupied Macedonia's occupation in April 1941, Bulgaria received the eastern part of Macedonia where it established its government. In the meantime in central and western Greek occupied Macedonia, now occupied by allies Germany and Italy, the Bulgarians began to organize activities in order to create pro-Bulgarian committees and organizations for organizing a pro-Bulgarian political movement. In order to do that, the Bulgarian authorities engaged Macedonian immigrants living in Bulgaria. These Macedonians originated from Greek occupied Macedonia, immigrated to Bulgaria and declared themselves Bulgarians.

Included among the first Bulgarian propagandists to surface in western Greek occupied Macedonia under Italian occupation were Andon Kalchev born in the village Zhuzhultse, Kostur Region, Spiro Vasilev born in the village Zagorichani, Kostur Region, Lazar Kiselincev born in the village Kosinets, Kostur Region, Vasil Stumbov born in the village Blatsa, Kostur Region, Kiriazo Shkurtoev born in the village Staricheni, Kostur Region and Tome Bakrachev born in the village Visheni, Kostur Region. They came from Sofia in the beginning of May 1941 on a mission to establish pro-Bulgarian organizations in order to create a mass pro-Bulgarian movement. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 4.) In July 1941, in order to strengthen its propaganda position in Greek occupied Macedonia, the Bulgarian authorities sent a delegation from Sofia and while accompanied by representatives of the German supreme command in Greece visited Macedonian political prisoners in the various prison camps. Many of these Macedonian political prisoners were released at the request of the delegation. Just before the Greek-Italian war began the Greek authorities carried out massive arrests that included Macedonians, communists and anti-fascists. These

people were charged with being “anti-Greek elements struggling for the Bulgarian cause”. In this way the Greek authorities had jailed over 2,000 Macedonian patriots, communists and other anti-fascist fighters. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 6.) The Bulgarian delegation freed these people in order for them to spread Bulgarian propaganda among the Macedonian population. It was hoping to win the Macedonian people over to the Bulgarian cause. However, as it turned out, the vast majority of the people freed were Macedonian patriots, anti-fascists and communists who refused to play the Bulgarian card. Included among those released from the “Akronaphlion” concentration camp were Lazo Trpovski, Andrei Chipov, Anastas Karadzha, Ziso Delevski and Trpe Kalimanovski, all CPG members. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 6.)

The organizing of the Bulgarian propaganda campaign was carried out with the approval and support of the Italian military occupational authorities. Propaganda campaigns were organized in Kostur, Lerin and Voden Regions. The propaganda campaign in Lerin and Kostur Regions was organized and implemented by the supremacist organization “Macedono-Bulgarian Committee” with cells in both urban and rural centres. In Voden Region the pro-Bulgarian organization “Ohrana” was created. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 4.) Local committees were formed with local Bulgarian agents and with Italian and German military occupational collaborators. Included among the local collaborators were Hristo Rukov from the village Kosinets, Vasil Maniolov from the village Starichani, Paskal and Vasil Ianakiev from the village Maniak, Pando Makriev from the village Chetirok, Paskal Kalimanovski from the village Dobrolishta, Kuze Gligorov from the village Zhelevo, File Bekiarov from the village Zhelevo, Minela Gelev a lawyer from the city Lerin, Mino Iani from the village Setomo, Risto Naskovski from the village Ezerets and Luka Damianov from the village Drenoveni. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 4.) All these people were known associates of the Greek police who collaborated with the Greek regime during the Metaxas dictatorship. They also collaborated with the German and Italian occupational military authorities and with the Bulgarian agents. (Ibid.) They worked as activists in the Bulgarianization of Greek occupied Macedonia, and according to Fotev: “Spiro Vasilev openly admitted that the people mentioned above were Bulgarian agents, German-

Italian collaborators and bearers of the Bulgarian idea in Greek occupied Macedonia.” (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 4.) Their main interest was to win over the surviving participants of the Ilinden Uprising and the families of those who died during the Ilinden period. Their main aim was to organize a propaganda campaign to promote Macedonia as a Bulgarian country and the Macedonian people as Bulgarians. They, themselves posed as Bulgarian revolutionaries aiming to liberate Macedonia. They promoted the idea that with a German, Italian and Bulgarian victory, a historic moment would be reached that would include the creation of a strong Macedono-Bulgarian movement for a “free and unified Macedonia with Bulgaria.” (Ibid, p. 101, 4.) To strengthen its position for a more efficient operation in the implementation of its propaganda campaign, the Bulgarian government, in the summer of 1941, with German approval and consent from the quisling government in Greece, opened a representative Bulgarian club staffed with numerous employees. For the same purpose the Bulgarian government opened several other Bulgarian institutions including a Church for the Bulgarians to worship, a Bulgarian elementary school with Bulgarian teachers which, during the occupation from 1941 to 1944, accommodated about 250 students (ibid, p. 8), a boarding school and a hospital. (Ibid, p. 7.)

As its nominal president, the Bulgarian club in Solun was officially operated by Shanev, a Macedonian from Kukush. The aim here was, through convenience, to win over as many Macedonians as possible, primarily higher education and high school students. All affiliated students, as Bulgarians, would then be allowed to study in Bulgaria and their education would be paid for by the Bulgarian state. Secondary school students could study in the Bulgarian schools in Macedonia. During the 1941 to 1944 occupational period, about 150 high school students from Kostur, Lerin and Voden Regions enrolled in the Bitola high school with assets from the Bulgarian charities, run by committees of Macedonians loyal to the Bulgarian occupying power. Included among those who assisted this Bulgarian program were Petre Asprovski from the village Oshchima and Lambro Bogoev from the village Kolomnati. Later, after the establishment of the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade”, Asprovski and Bogoev joined its ranks. (Ibid, p. 8.)

The Bulgarian club in Solun was a major data gathering, intelligence and propaganda centre for the Bulgarian state. The overall intelligence aspect of it was managed by General Zhilkov, liaison officer at German command in the city. The day to day intelligence and propaganda operations were directly managed by Major Mitkov, a Bulgarian Army officer. (Ibid, p. 7.) To actively monitor the internal situation, especially for the management of Bulgarian propaganda, in accordance with German High Command in Solun, the club sent Bulgarian officers to the German military commands in Lerin and Voden. The officers selected to perform those duties were Andon Kalchev and Georgi Mladenov Dimchev. (Ibid, p. 8.)

The Bulgarian organizations “Macedono-Bulgarian Committee” and “Ohrana” used an intense propaganda campaign to condemn Greek government anti-Macedonian policies regarding the cruel treatment of the Macedonian people who were persecuted and terrorized by the Greek police and gendarmerie. The Bulgarians promised to protect the Macedonian people against such acts in order to win over their support and to form local pro-Bulgarian committees in the cities Kostur, Lerin, Voden and in most of the Macedonian villages including Dobrinishte, Chetirok, Tikveni, Maniak, Izglebi, Kosinets, Zhupanishta, Staricheni, Gabresh, Pozdivishta, Konomladi, Zagorichani, Prokopana, Gorentsi, Zhelino, German, Banitsa, Eksisu, Zhelinich, Mocreni, Shishteno, Chereshnitsa, Bomboki, Setoma and others, about 40 villages in total. (Ibid, p. 9.) These committees were responsible for the Bulgarization of the Macedonian population. They acted according to the following established program:

1. To create local organizations in order to organize a mass pro-Bulgarian movement;
2. To require the occupying German and Italian authorities to open Bulgarian language schools;
3. To require the churches to introduce Bulgarian language worship;
4. To break and shatter the communist and other anti-fascist organizations. (Ibid, p. 9.);

5. To recruit supporters from the Macedonian villages who suffered the most under Greek terror and violence.

In 1941 the “Macedono-Bulgarian Committee” organized and carried out the murder of the notorious Nikola Dailaki, known as Captain Laki. (Ibid, p. 9-11.)

The strongest propaganda that these “Bulgarian” organizations waged was aimed against the Macedonian national liberation movement led by the Macedonian communists and by the Greek EAM and ELAS resistance movement. With the development and massive Macedonian participation in the People’s Liberation Movement, Bulgarian propaganda became even fiercer. It took an anti-communist and, above all, an anti-Macedonian character. The Bulgarians closely cooperated with the Gestapo, the Italian Carabinieri and the quisling Greek government. They closely cooperated with the Greek police, the gendarmerie and their agents, led by officers of the Italian and German military occupation forces. Members of the pro-Bulgarian committees actively participated in criminal acts against the Macedonian population and violently persecuted Macedonian communists and activists of the Macedonian National Liberation Movement. According to Fotev: “Members of these committees were paid to commit crimes by the Bulgarian Government and by the German and Italian occupiers. They were rewarded for their criminal acts...” (Ibid, p. 11.) However, not everything was done just for Bulgarian loyalty... At issue here was the realization of Bulgaria’s maxima-list aspirations. These deeds were done to show and prove to Germany and Italy that a Bulgarian movement cooperated in their armed forces and fought for the unification of Greek occupied Macedonia with Bulgaria. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 11.)

The Macedonian communists fought back against the Bulgarian propaganda by unmasking it and showing it for what it really was; purely “Bulgarian propaganda”. Many thanks to the Macedonian communists for making these Bulgarian intentions clear. The communists were well aware of the Bulgarian intentions and had no illusions about the fate that awaited them after the German, Italian and Bulgarian fascists occupied their country. They were well aware

that one slavery was replacing another slavery; a harder and darker slavery. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 3.)

Collaborationist movements in Greek occupied Macedonia

With the development of the Greek anti-fascist movement and with the People's Liberation Movement of the Macedonian people from Greek occupied Macedonia, the Italian and German military occupation authorities assessed the quisling Greek government and found it unable to withstand the pressures created by the resistance. They decided to activate the various Greek monarchic and anti-Macedonian organizations such as PAO and EKA, as well as the Vlach collaborators and the Bulgarian agents and with them created armed formations to fight back against the communist led resistance movement.

The aim of these collaborationist movements, with their appearance and actions, was to create internal divisions between the Macedonians, Greeks and Vlachs, sharpen their ideological differences and create conflict between them. (Ibid, p. 14.)

Greek anti-Macedonian legal and secret armed terrorist formations and organizations

The Greek organizations IVE (Northern Greece Protector), later taken over by the PAO (Pan-Hellenic Liberation Organization), EKA (National Social Defense) and other Greek associations consented to the creation of secret armed terrorist bands. Greek armed gangs were formed and led by Greek officers who collaborated with the occupiers. Such armed terror gangs were formed in most cities in the central and western part of Greek occupied Macedonia; in Kostur, Lerin, Voden, Kozhani, Kaliari and other places. In the spring of 1943 secret Greek terrorist gangs, created by the PAO, appeared in Anaselichka Region. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 38.) Armed gangs were formed in Kaliari Region by the Turkish Christian settlers and colonists who were deposited in Greek occupied Macedonia from Asia Minor during the 1920s. The German occupiers formed a Greek detachment of about 500 fighters in Enidzhe-Vardar Region, consisting mainly of criminals, thugs and assassins, and placed them

under the command of the Greek and German collaborator Lieutenant Colonel Poullos. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 26.) These terror gangs were granted freedom of action and to act together with the quisling Greek police and gendarmerie. They were allowed to carry out blockades in the Macedonian villages and other populated areas to terrorize the people, especially those people who were associated with and supported the people's liberation movement. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 30.) The gangs were allowed to place curfews, especially in the places where they were stationed, strictly controlling the people's movements. Movement in and out of the settlements was not possible without their special approval. Only those who worked outside the settlement or those who were very sick and needed to see a doctor were allowed to travel. (Ibid, p. 30-31.) In the spring of 1944, the PAO, EDES, the Vlach Legion armed gangs and the quisling Greek police systematically and brutally terrorized the population in western Greek occupied Macedonia. They undertook coordinated armed actions to terrorize the population and the partisan movement.

The Vlach Legion

Italian military command created an armed formation of Vlachs called the "Vlach Legion" in the Vlach populated area in the Italian occupied territory. The main aim for creating the Vlach Legion was to fight against the anti-fascist Greek and Macedonian armed people's liberation movement. (Ibid, p. 12.)

Appearance and activities of the armed pro-Bulgarian counter-bands and movement

According to Mincho Fotev, the pro-Bulgarian armed collaborators were called "Komitadzhi" by the Macedonian people.

The rise of the Macedonian liberation movement hastened the development of pro-Bulgarian organizational activities, the forming of pro-Bulgarian armed detachments and the establishment of a wide pro-Bulgarian political movement in Greek occupied Macedonia under the German and Italian occupational zones. In mid-February 1943 a Bulgarian three-member military delegation, led by the Bitola Commander, arrived in Kostur. Among the three-member

delegation was Lieutenant Ivan Kalchev. Italian military command in Kostur, led by Major-General de Luigi, received the Bulgarian delegation which requested that the Italians form pro-Bulgarian armed units to fight against the People's Liberation movement. According to Fotev: "Around 11 pm on February 16, 1943 a Bulgarian military delegation composed of three Bulgarian officers, a colonel, a captain surnamed Dimitrov and that criminal Lieutenant Andon Kalchev, arrived in Kostur. And as I was later informed at Partisan Headquarters in Kostur, the Bulgarian colonel was commander of the Bulgarian division in occupied Bitola. A meeting was held in the office of Italian commander Major General de Luigi which lasted about three hours. The subject discussed was the situation in western Greek occupied Macedonia after the ejection of the partisan units and the possibilities of forming counter-bands from the local population in order break up the partisan movement." (Ibid, p. 26.) It was agreed that the "Macedono-Bulgarian Committee" was going to form the counter-bands. (Ibid, p. 26.) Immediately afterwards they proceeded with implementing the agreement.

A meeting was held on February 18, 1943 and was attended by the Bulgarian delegation and Commander Luigi and his staff officers Geovani Ravaneli, head of counter-intelligence services, Lieutenant Marietti and Dzhona, Chief of the Kabinieri in Kostur, on one side, and by the leading figures from the "Macedono-Bulgarian Committee" on the other, which included Risto Rukov, Pando Makriev, Vasil Manoilov, brothers Vasil and Paskal Ianakiev, Luka Damianov, Risto Naskovski, Iani Mino, Paskal Kalimanovski, Boris Shekrov, Apostol Gambrola, Kolio Shistevarov (Bai-Kolio), his brother Kuze Shistevarov and others. The decision reached during the meeting required the formation of armed counter-bands with instructions to fight against the people's liberation movement. The information about the decisions made during the meeting was immediately passed on to Partisan Headquarters in Kostur by the informants Iani Kalapupov from the village Nestram, Vasil Vlahov from the village Maniak and Giorgi Todorovski from the town Rupishsta. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 27.) During the meeting Andon Kalchev called for creating a mass armed movement to defend against "the Greek andartes" (fighters of the anti-fascist movement) and the annexation of the entire Greek occupied part of

Macedonia to the Bulgarian state. The chief of the Bulgarian delegation used this meeting to seek approval for the entry of Bulgarian troops to restore order and peace and to protect the population from bloodshed and chaos created by the Greek “andartes of ELAS” to which General Luigi reacted strongly with the following words: “Who are you, Mr. Colonel, who can establish order, which we cannot do ourselves?” (Ibid, p. 28, 126.)

The leader of the Bulgarian delegation spoke to the representatives of the “Macedono-Bulgarian Committee” emphasizing the importance of the local armed counter-bands that they were about to form and their “great historical significance”. Among other things he said: “To you belongs the great honour to be in the vanguard of the great Bulgarian patriotic formation to achieve the great ideals of our dear mother Bulgaria. Your mission is sacred. The Bulgarian population from this part of Macedonia, with its willingness and determination to fight together with the famous and invincible allied German and Italian armies against ‘Greek bandits’ and ‘communist anarchists’ is a continuation of the combat liberation traditions of the Bulgarian population in this part of Macedonia. Be assured that after smashing these Greek bandits you will pave the way to our victory for the liberation and integration of this Bulgarian end to the Bulgarian state. We are all familiar with the Greek andartes, our old and potentially dangerous enemies. Their goal was and remains the same; to exterminate the Bulgarian population from this end of Macedonia, but we will not allow it...” (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 27.)

Kalchev said: “We will not be limited only to the formation of several armed militias should all the Bulgarian population of this part of Macedonia massively organize, arm itself and actively engage in the holy battle against the Greek ELAS bandits. If this happens then we will be able to protect the Bulgarian population from the dangerous ELAS andartes criminals... There is no alternative for saving the Bulgarian population from being cleansed from attacks from the Greek andartes, or to free this part of Macedonia and to create an overall unified Macedonia with mother Bulgaria.” Kalchev finished talking with his arms raised up in the air yelling: “We are approaching the historic hour when the bells and

cannon will greet the day of our great victory and the final liberation of all slaves in our dear Macedonia...” (Ibid, p. 27-28.)

Immediately after it was decided to form the pro-Bulgarian counter-bands, Italian military command notified the quisling Greek authorities. Included among those notified were Greek Police Chief Konstadinos Androniou, public prosecutor Ioannis Costopoulos, Stavros Petrovas Chief of the quisling Greek authority in Kostur Region (Ibid, p. 28.), Kostur Bishop Nikiforos, the leadership of the Greek organization PAO, retired general Filolaos Piheon and Doctor Saranti Tsemani (Ibid, p. 28.). They were told that the counter-bands were exclusively created to fight against the communist partisan movement and against the “Slavs” who were exclusively joining the ELAS partisans. They were also told that the counter-bands were under the tight control of Giovanni Rabali, head of the Italian counter-intelligence service. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 28-29.) The Greek officials accepted their establishment and accepted Italian staff officer Marietta to liaise with the PAO in order to prevent conflicts between the various armed Greek detachments with those of the “Macedonian-Bulgarian Committee” and to coordinate their actions against the people’s liberation movement and against ELAS. (Ibid, p. 29.)

In September 1941, after organizing and strengthening the collaborationist movements, the commander of Italian command in Kostur formed a special battalion to act against partisan actions, persecute and liquidate the communists and seek and dismantle the anti-fascist groups and organizations in the region. The new battalion was composed of 800 members; Italian officers, investigators, military and police operatives, a group of Macedonian collaborators; translators and informers (spies). The group of collaborationists and translators, according to Fotev, were Boris Stoianov, Luka Damianov, Risto Lapas, Mihail Lichkos, Risto Naskovski, Kuze Kiriazovski and others. The informants and spies were Stavro Temo, Zisi Karatasho, Todi Mitruli-Karakapna, Kuze Ivanovski, Giorgi Tambura, Stavro Gurgushev and others. (Ibid, p. 18.) The newly created battalion operated in conjunction with the Greek collaborating police and gendarmerie. Joint actions were undertaken during nightly raids, systematic searches of homes in towns and villages, and arresting and brutally terrorizing members

of the population. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 18.) The new battalion also cooperated with the “Macedono-Bulgarian Committee” led by Kalchev, Mladenov, Dimchev and others. (Ibid, p. 18.) Blockades of suspect settlements sometimes lasted up to two months. The emergency measures regime in western Greek occupied Macedonia was blockaded for nine months, from September 1941 to May 1942. The organizations mostly affected by this were the communist youth organization OKNE in Rupishsta and in the villages Nestram, D’mbeni, Dobrolishta and Sliveni. In that period, according to Mincho Fotev, in Kostur alone, arrested and convicted were 395 communists and other members of the people’s liberation movement (Ibid, p. 19), of whom 9 were sentenced to death and executed. About 3,000 men and women were detained and brutally tortured. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 20.) From the village D’mbeni, Naum Sgurkov, Zhivko Kenkov, Naum Moskov, Nikola Shekrov, Anastas Skivinov and Risto A. Andriovski were shot. From the village Drenoveni, Done Bitovski, Leonida Dinev and Naso Liumankin were shot.

After the “Macedono-Bulgarian Committee” took on the task of forming the armed counter-bands as per the February 18, 1943 Agreement, the first counter-band unit was created in Kostur and consisted of about 150 armed members. According to Fotev these people were “criminals”, speculators and collaborators of the occupiers who fled their villages and went to Kostur after the first ELAS partisans appeared on the scene...” (Ibid, p. 29.) The newly formed counter-bands were led by Luka Damianov from the village Drenoveni, Kostur Region and his deputy Risto Naskovski from the village Ezerets, Kostur Region. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 29.) After the successful formation of the first armed counter-band unit, action was taken to form more armed bands in order to stem the growth of ELAS. Activists from the “Macedono-Bulgarian Committee”, the likes of Lazar Kiselinchev, Spiro Vasilev, Vasil Stumbov, Kiriazi Shkurtoev and others (Ibid, p. 29.), escorted by the Italian carabinieri, surrounded the Macedonian villages and coerced the villagers into accepting Italian weapons under threats of arrest for being Hellenophiles and members of ELAS. By the end of March, under these conditions and fierce pressures, the “Macedono-Bulgarian Committee” managed to infiltrate 38 villages. According to Fotev, included among those villages were Chetirok, Dobrolishta,

Starichani, Maniak, Izglebi, Tikveni, Zhelegozhe, Kosinets, Lobanitsa, V'mbel, Breznitsa, Gabresh, Drenoveni, Cherenovishta, Konomlati, Statitsa, Blatse, Nereshnitsa, Olisha, Bomboki, Zagoricheni, Bobishta, Mokreni, Komunichevo, Gorentsi, Linishta, Kondorop, Tiolishta, Sheshtevo, Setomo, Aposkep, Prekopana, Oshchima, Zhelevo and German. (Ibid, p. 29-30.) The pro-Bulgarian armed counter-band movement in the towns Kostur and Rupishsta had one volunteer unit each. There were armed units present in the villages Chetirok, Staricheni, Gorentsi, Zhelevo and Dobrolishta. These bands were reinforced with volunteers from other villages. There were central band units stationed in the two cities commanded by Luka Damianov, Risto Naskov, Kolio Sheshtevart and Vasil Ianakiev. (Ibid, p. 30.)

By directly engaging the Italian military occupational authorities, the pro-Bulgarian armed movement recruited approximately 3,000 members in western Greek occupied Macedonia, of whom about 350 were volunteers. (Ibid, p. 30.)

In March 1943 the armed counter-band unit from the village Starichani attacked the villages Zhuzheltsi, Ludovo, Gosnovo and Breshtani. It terrorized the local villagers and forced them to take weapons and fight against the partisans. Those who refused were severely beaten and many were beaten to death. The priest Risto, a priest serving in the village Gosnovo, was arrested, taken to Kostur and executed without a trial. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p 31.) Armed detachments from the villages Chetirok and Dobrilishte, led by Pando Makriev and Kuze Kiriazovski, attacked the villages Dranichevo, Tsakoni, Grache and Dolno Papresko and a detachment led by Luka Damianov attacked the village D'mbeni. The counter-bandits forced arms on the villagers and forcefully recruited them into their movement against the partisans. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 31.)

The collaborationist armed movement was required to provide security support for the bases and movement of the occupying forces as well as to inform the occupiers of imminent partisan attacks. The collaborationists were deployed on the entire road network from the Yugoslav-Greek to the Greek-Albanian border in order to protect the bridges, telephone and telegraph lines, and to participate in arrest

operations in clearing the ground of Partisans. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 31.) They were also required to join the occupying forces in combat operations against the partisan units in the liberated settlements. On March 13, 1943 200 members of the pro-Bulgarian movement were involved in the Italian offensive against re-occupying the town Rupishta. The Italian force consisted of a battalion of 600 soldiers with 12 guns and air support. (Ibid, p. 32.) Over 70 houses and other buildings were destroyed and heavily damaged during the attack on Rupishta from the bombing alone. (Ibid, p. 32.) After Rupishta was taken another 26 Macedonian houses and shops were burned down. Included among the houses and shops burned down were the homes belonging to Lazo Fotev, Tomo Changov, Kosta Filio, Kiro Ivanovski, Vasil Kotsanov, Stepio Kotsanov, Giorgi Kotopulovski, Gligor Mitrevski and Kosma Kolichevski. (Ibid, p. 32.) About 300 houses were also robbed the same day. Included among the items taken were 300 cattle, 1,200 sheep and about 20,000 pieces of blankets, carpets, clothing and dowries. (Ibid, p. 33.) About 50 commercial stores and craft workshops were also robbed. (Ibid, p. 33.) After the town was re-occupied the pro-Bulgarian faction established its own command with Vasil Ianakiev in charge, right beside the Italian Carabinieri, the Greek police and the gendarmerie. Also stationed in Rupishta was Luka Damianov's "elite" detachment of about 300 armed counter-bandits. And as Fotev said: "All living side by side in a peaceful brotherly co-existence..." (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 32.) They maintained friendly relations and followed the same goal: "Destroy the partisan movement..." In a joint operation, carried out during the end of March 1943, the collaborationists arrested about 350 people who belonged to partisan families and who supported the people's liberation movement. Included among those arrested were Tome and Tsana Belotsrkvenov, Evtimia and Sofia Changov, Lazo and Aleksandra Fotev, Vasiliki Mavranza, Konstandin and Fota Polihroni, Gligor Mitrevski and Petro Mirchev. (Ibid, P. 32-33.) They executed 68 Macedonian patriots without a trial. More than 10 Macedonians from Rupishsta alone were executed. Included among those executed were Mihail Mangiliatov, Vangel Ianovski-Angi, Dimitar Ziguri, Stati Evstatiadi, Lazo Atanasiadi-Zangochi, Giorgi Bakali and Ilia Apostolou. (Ibid, p. 32.)

Members of the collaborationist movement broke into houses during the night and robbed them and raped the girls and young women. Over 30 girls and young women were abducted and raped in Rupishta alone but that number was much larger because many women did not report the rapes. Most of these abductions and rapes were carried out with the knowledge of Commander Luka Damianov. Sometimes abducted women were brought to him so that he personally could rape them. (Ibid, p. 33.) The greatest cruelties were demonstrated during the blockades of the Macedonian settlements that strongly supported the PLM and assisted the partisans. Many partisans who actually left the mountains and came home to their families, just to avoid being tormented by the collaborationist, were themselves forced to be armed and fight against the partisans. Members of the “Macedono-Bulgarian Committee”, the likes of Vasil Manoilov, Petro Padzhov and Kiriazo Shkurtov (who came from Bulgaria, Plovdiv, born in that village), accompanied by Italian regiment soldiers, terrorized and coerced the villagers of the village Staricheni to re-arm. As a result a pro-Bulgarian unit was formed and reinforced with volunteers from neighbouring villages. The unit consisted of about sixty members armed with rifles, five heavy machine guns (shmaizer), three light machine guns and a large supply of hand grenades. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 51.)

After Fascist Italy capitulated on September 9, 1943, the pro-Bulgarian movement found itself in a difficult situation. Partisan units of ELAS XXVIII Battalion took intrusive measures to crush it. The movement’s position became very critical. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 48.) Its members individually and in groups began to leave the counter-band units to join the partisans. (Ibid, p. 48.)

To maintain its integrity the “Macedono-Bulgarian Committee” turned to the Bulgarian government for help. In the second half of September 1943, the “Macedono-Bulgarian Committee” sent a four member delegation that included Paskal Kalimanovski, Risto Rukov, Dinko pop-Andonov, led by Andon Kalchev, to Sofia. The delegation traveled from Kostur via Lerin and Bitola to Sofia which, according to Mincho Fotev, was received by the Bulgarian interior minister. The delegation, according to confirmed confidential information submitted to Mincho Fotev by Giorgi Todorovski,

informed the interior minister of the critical situation the “Macedono-Bulgarian Committee” movement was in and that it was in need of support from the Bulgarian state after Italy’s capitulation. (Ibid, p. 49.)

The Bulgarian government decided that an active Bulgarian army officer should be leading the “Macedono-Bulgarian Committee” movement in Greek occupied Macedonia. Major Matkarov was selected for the job and sent to Kostur together with the delegation.

During the months of September and October 1943, the partisans were making headway in disarming the village counter-bands and managed to disarm the bands in the villages Kosinets, Lobanitsa, Aposkep and other villages. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 51.) In time more and more counter-bands were disarmed. The “Macedono-Bulgarian Committee”, however, took rigorous measures to prevent its counter-band members from leaving their movement. Many of those who returned to their villages were threatened and intimidated into taking up arms again.

Matkarov, the Bulgarian officer, assumed command of the counter-bandits and appointed Pando Makriev and Iani Mino as his assistants. Gestapo officer Lieutenant Reish of German command was appointed liaison officer. (Ibid, p. 49.) To boost morale and to consolidate the ranks of the counter-bands, Matkarov and Riesch organized a joint rapid combat action against the partisan units in Kostur and Lerin Regions. On October 3, 1943 250 counter-bandits joined up with a German unit of about 300 soldiers and attacked the partisan positions in the areas near the villages Nestram, Radigozha and Chuka, all populated by Macedonians. During the three days of fighting many houses were destroyed by fire and a large number of crimes were committed. Kosta Kirovski and his wife Kostandina, in the village Nestram, were burned alive inside their house. (Ibid, p. 49.)

In early 1944 the counter-bandits strengthened their defensive positions against attacks from the partisans in the villages Dobrolishta, Chetirok, Tikveni, Izglebi and Gorentsi by arming the villagers in those villages. (Ibid, p. 53.) In April and early May, 1944 the counter-bandits, together with German forces, participated

in military operations against the partisan units in the areas around Mount Vicho, and in mid-May they fought against the partisans in the area near the village Prekopana in Lerin Region. (Ibid, p. 53.) On May 24, 1944, when the German units withdrew from Kostur and Rupishsta, the pro-Bulgarian counter-band movement, under the command of Luka Damianov, took over defense of the two towns and several surrounding villages. The same day the ELAS XXVIII Battalion attacked the counter-bands, many fled and many were captured by the partisans. (Ibid, p. 53-54.)

In June 1944, an “Ohrana” unit from Voden Region arrived in Kostur Region to aid the local pro-Bulgarian counter-band movement. The “Ohrana” unit remained in Kostur Region for several days and then retreated back to Voden Region. During the “Ohrana” unit’s absence in Voden Region, local partisan units intensified their attacks on the counter-band bases in the villages Oshmeni, Gutovo, Iavoreni, Mesimeri and other villages in Voden Region. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 54.)

A number of armed pro-Bulgarian units, created and managed by “Ohrana”, acted in central Greek occupied Macedonia which then was under German occupation. In the spring of 1944 “Ohrana”, with support from the German military authorities, formed armed counter-bands in the villages where there was no communist party presence. Such bands were formed in the villages Eksisu, Aitos, Zeleniche and Srebreno, as well as in the Voden Region villages Nisia, Gugovo, Iavoreni and Oshleni. There was also an armed counter-band detachment acting inside Voden. It was an all volunteer composition numbering about 700 men. It was led by Bulgarian officer Georgi Dimchev. (Ibid, p. 30.) These counter-bandits were armed with modern German and Italian weapons; rifles, pistols, heavy machine guns, light machine guns, hand grenades, etc. (Ibid, p. 30.) In order to amass the pro-Bulgarian combat movement against the partisans and against the people’s liberation movement, the two quisling organizations, the “Macedono-Bulgarian Committee” and the “Ohrana”, intensified their actions in the Macedonian villages and forcefully recruited and armed more Macedonian villagers.

The pro-Bulgarian counter-bands, through betrayal, were particularly interested in liquidating the leaders of SNOF. In March 1944, through treason, Vasil Aleksovski member of the SNOF Regional Committee from the village Drenoveni, Kostur Region, and Kiro Pop Vasilev member of the SNOF Regional Committee Secretariat from the village Dobrolishta were liquidated. Aleksovski was killed on March 4 near the village Chereshnitsa by Stavro Temo from the village Setoma, Kostur Region. Temo was a member of the pro-Bulgarian movement. The counter-bandits took Aleksovski's body to Kostur and dumped it in the street outside his shop as a means of intimidating the Macedonian people, especially the families of those who were involved in the people's liberation movement. Pop Vasilev was ambushed and wounded near his village of birth by the pro-Bulgarians and, to avoid capture, he committed suicide. (Ibid, p. 44-45.)

On June 12, 1944 a local 100 member pro-Bulgarian detachment, led by Mino Iani, a Bulgarian officer and domestic traitor, together with a company of German soldiers, attacked a partisan platoon in the village D'mbeni. A fierce battle ensued during which two Germans were killed and two were wounded. On the partisan side two were killed and nine were severely wounded. Include among the partisans killed were 19 year old Apostol Chapovski from the village Maniak and Mimi Tungaridi from Rupishsta. (Ibid, p. 45.) The wounded partisans were all captured. Two of them were hung in public and the other seven were tortured and killed. Their heads were smashed with stones by the counter-bandits. (Ibid, p. 45.) The villagers Lambro Moskov, Risto Kalkov and Vasilka Karakashova were injured during the firefight. After that 41 people were taken hostage. Included among those taken hostage were Trpo Angelkov, Andon and Dimitar Terziovski, Atanas and Kosta Musmanov, Vasil and Tpaiko Ralevski, David and Giorgi Balov, Todor Vlahov, Lambro Stanishev and Zhivko Shurkov. (Ibid, p. 45.)

The pro-Bulgarian counter-bands actively participated alongside the quisling Greek government gendarmes, the Albanian Balists and the PAO Greek armed gangs during the grand July offensive that lasted from July 3 to July 22. They joined the German forces that fought against the partisan movement and robbed and burned, mostly Macedonian villages, while terrorizing the population and carrying

out mass killings. (Ibid, p. 55.) The failure of this offensive, however, marked the beginning of the end of the pro-Bulgarian political movement. In early August the first all-Macedonian battalion took offensive actions against the counter-bands to curb their positions in Kostur Region. The local counter-band units in the villages Mokreni, Bobishta, Zagorichani and Komunichevo were disarmed first, after that the partisans destroyed their last strongholds in the villages Prekopana, Chereshnitsa, Olisha, Tiolishta, Setoma, Shestrevo and other villages. By early September the pro-Bulgarian movement in Greek occupied Macedonia was as good as liquidated; its members were disarmed, with only a few escaping to Bulgaria before Bulgaria capitulated.

All the while the pro-Bulgarian “Macedono-Bulgarian Committee” movement existed and operated in Greek occupied Macedonia, its agents Boris Stoianov, Luka Damianov, Mino Iani, Pando Makriev, Risto Naskovski, Kuze Kiriazovski, Stavro Giurbushev, Vasil Manoilov and all the others, according to Fotev, spied on over 3,000 Macedonian people who were then betrayed to the Italian and German military occupational authorities. Of the 3,000, about 1,000 were jailed long term in concentration camps, while the others were temporarily jailed and “horribly tortured”. (Ibid, p. 74.) Over 150 Macedonian girls were raped by the counter-bandits. (Ibid.) About 3,000 Macedonian homes were plundered, about 25,000 sheep and goats and about 10,000 cattle were stolen by the pro-Bulgarian counter-bands. On top of that, they completely destroyed about 2,000 Macedonian houses over 5,000 rural stables, barns, cottages and more than 100 rural mills and rural schools. With help from the occupying forces, the pro-Bulgarians completely devastated and destroyed the Macedonian villages Nestram, Chuka, Radigozhe, Nestime, Ludovo and other villages. “This is how the pro-Bulgarians guarded the Macedonian villages, the Macedonian people’s honour and the Macedonian people themselves,” said Fotev. (Ibid, p. 75.)

People’s Liberation Movement in Greek occupied Macedonia (1941-1944)

After IMRO (United) was dissolved in Greek occupied Macedonia, the Macedonian Communists took over the leading role in the

Macedonian national liberation movement. They came in step with the Comintern directive for anti-fascist unity and for the liberation movement in Greece to fall under the leadership of the Communist Party of Greece. This was also done in Serbian (Vardar) occupied Macedonia where the Macedonian communists came under the leadership of the Yugoslav Communist Party and in Bulgarian (Pirin) occupied Macedonia where the Macedonian communists came under the leadership of the Communist Party of Bulgaria. In Greece the communists began to organize actions to restore the shattered Party organizations. From May to September 1941 the communists worked hard to renew their Party organizations, particularly the communist youth organizations in the cities and most villages, through the creation of the first anti-fascist militant groups before forming EAM, the Liberation Front in Greece, in September 1941. Macedonian participation in these organizations was massive. In September 1941 the Macedonians occupied about 60% of the positions in the CPG Party organizations, the OKNE communist youth organizations and in the anti-fascist groups in Rupishta and surrounding areas. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 15.) Special groups within the Party organizations were responsible for collecting arms, ammunition and other war material for the partisan movement. In Kostur Region these groups collected massive amounts of arms, left behind by the Greek soldiers withdrawing from the Albanian front. A large amount of arms, ammunition and other war material was also collected in the Rupishta city streets, left there by the fleeing Greek soldiers and officers when the German forces entered Greece. These war materials belonged to a complete infantry division and to specialized military units. Included in the arms, ammunition and other military materials collected in Rupishta were 830 maliheri type rifles, 24 automatic rifles, 6 machine guns, 400,000 bullets, 1,500 hand grenades and large amounts of sanitary and other medical material. (Ibid, 16.) When the Germans surrounded Rupishta the Greek army officers and soldiers, so as not to be captured with uniforms, arms or military equipment, dropped everything they had, put on civilian clothes and joined the civilian population. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 16.) When conditions were right the Macedonian national liberation organization was established and an armed liberation struggle to liberate the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia was initiated. The CPG, by all possible means,

tried to prevent the creation of a Macedonian liberation organization. However, responsibility for not creating a Macedonian liberation organization fell on the Macedonian communists who, as senior executives in the CPG, the likes of Atanas Hadzhis, Andrea Chipov, Kiro Pilaev-Petro, Stavro Kochev, Lazo Trpovski, Anastas Karadzha, Trifon Hadzhiianev, Trpo Kalimanovski, Ziso Delevski and others, made no attempt to form such an organization. They, according to Fotev, “did not accept or support such an initiative. They diligently implemented the policy of the Communist Party of Greece against the Macedonian National Question and promised the Macedonian people that after the victory over the fascist occupiers and the liberation of the country, they would receive equality within the Greek people’s democratic state.” (Ibid.) This unfortunately delayed the start of the organized armed resistance.

The occupying forces, in cooperation with the quisling Greek police and gendarmerie and with the pro-Bulgarian movement, fiercely repressed and slowed down the formation of ELAS partisan units in western Greek occupied Macedonia until the second half of 1942.

The partisan movement in Kostur Region

The first partisan detachment in Kostur Region was formed on December 7, 1942 and consisted mostly of Macedonian men and women fighters, with a smaller number of Greeks. Included among those Macedonians who joined the first partisan detachment were Nikola Belocrkvenets, Gligor Kiosev, the brothers Mincho and Foti Fotev, the brothers Tomo and Alkiviadi Changov, Taki Pop Dimitrovski, Stepio Mavpandsa, Aleko Ivanovski, Lazo Kachela, Hrisuli Filipovski, Anastas Manaka, Aristidi Gedzho, Kosta Kuteki, Anesti Evotatiadis, Pinelopi Manaka-Op, Korneli Pop-Ianeva, Froso Iankovska-Ivanovska, Hristos Karas, Naum Blagoi, Petros Xanthopoulos, Sideri Zigari, Vasili Veveri (all from Rupishsta), Kosta Palo, Mihail Pacho, Atanas Karakushev, Vangel Tsutsulianov, Dimitar Masadovski, Zhivko Shanev, Andon Zisovski, Foti Bochevski, Giorgi Rizopoulos, Sterio Kalchev, Stepio Kozarov, Nikola Diovski, Ilia Shabanidi, Panaiotis Kirizakis, Atanas Sulas, Panaiot Koliopoulo, Argir Karaianovski and others. Of the total number of people in the detachment 70% were Macedonians. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 22-23.) On February 24, 1943 the

second Kostur detachment was formed from the existing partisan fighter groups in Kostur. On December 24, 1942, while clearing the terrain in the village Shak, Kostur Region, the first Kostur detachment captured seven Greek gendarmes. And because the gendarmes were cooperating with the occupier and for crimes committed against the population; terrorizing and pillaging, they were sentenced to death. They were tried in a partisan court chaired by Kosta Bezdeka from the village Loshnitsa, (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 24.)

More new partisan detachments were formed in Kostur Region in early 1943. The third Kostur partisan detachment was formed in March 1943. Each detachment consisted of about 70 fighters of whom 70% were Macedonians. The rest were Greeks and Vlachs. (Mincho Fotev, Views and notes about Blagoia Taleski's book "The First Macedonian Aegean Brigade" Nezaboravnik, Skopje, "Communist", 1985, p. 15-16.)

The partisan detachments and other partisan combat groups were operating in the entire western part of Greek occupied Macedonia. They continued to destroy Italian outposts and Greek gendarmerie stations, eventually creating a free territory consisting of about 60 villages, 40 of which were inhabited by Macedonians. In Kostur Region they destroyed 4 Italian carabinieri stations and 6 Greek gendarmerie stations. These were in the villages Nestram, Breshtani, Bogasko, Charchishta (Skolohori), Burbusko and Kalevishta. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 23-24.)

Armed village partisan groups were formed in all the villages in the liberated territory and from them new partisan detachments were created. Early in 1943 the partisans in Kostur Region undertook measures to free the larger settlements. On March 3, 1943 the first Kostur detachment, led by Iani Pachura, attacked and freed Nestram, a Macedonian village with about 2,800 residents, all Macedonians. After the village was freed 20 young men and 3 young women voluntarily joined the detachment. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 24.) From Nestram the first Kostur partisan detachment headed for Rupishta to join up with the second Kostur detachment led by Giorgi Rizopulo. On March 8, 1943 the two detachments, supported by seven local partisan groups, freed the town of 5,000

inhabitants, of whom 55% were Macedonians. Included among the other identities living in Rupishsta were 20% Vlachs, 20% Christian Turkish colonists and settlers from Asia Minor and 5% Roma and Albanians. After Rupishsta was freed a National Liberation Committee was formed. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 24.) Rupishsta was the first large town in Greek occupied Macedonia to be freed by the PLM partisans. After the town was liberated the neighbouring villages Dupiak, Maniak, Zhelino, Zhupanishta and others were also freed. New fighters began to join the partisan movement including 72 from Rupishsta and 40 others from the neighbouring villages Dupiak, Pesiak, Vitani, Gosno and others, all with their own weapons. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 25.) Twenty-two collaborators, who collaborated with the occupiers and with the Greek quislings against the PLM, were arrested in the liberated settlements. They were tried in a revolutionary court presided by Lazo Trpovski. Of the 22 arrested 10 were sentenced to death and liquidated, the others were released. Included among those convicted were Iani Dialaki, Tode Mitruli-Karakapnia, Zisi Karatasho, Bilios the mayor of the village Dupiak and Stavrakis Pandazis a former Greek policeman. (Ibid, p. 25.)

In March 1943 partisan detachments were also formed in Lerin Region. The first detachment was formed on March 4, 1943. Towards the end of May, by a decision made by the CPG District Committee for Lerin Region, a special detachment composed exclusively of Macedonian fighters was created and Paskal Mitrevski was appointed its commander. (Ibid, p. 16.) In addition to performing combat actions, this detachment was also responsible for spreading propaganda aimed against the “Macedono-Bulgarian Committee” in convincing the Macedonian counter-bandits not to support it. (Ibid.) But despite this detachment’s successes, it was dismantled by the CPG leadership. According to Fotev, the CPG leadership disbanded the all Macedonian detachment “for unknown reasons”. (M. Fotev, Views and notes, p. 16.)

In time the Macedonian communists stepped up their propaganda campaign against the pro-Bulgarian factions in an attempt to prove to the armed counter-bandits that they were being deceived by the Bulgarians and pressured to fight for the occupiers against the people’s liberation movement. They were told not to sacrifice their

lives for someone else's interests, to drop their arms, leave and return to their homes. They were told that the PLM struggled for the local people's interests. The propaganda campaign worked. By making personal contact with counter-band figures Paskal Mitrevski, on March 9, 1943, managed to win over twenty-three counter-bandits who surrendered their arms voluntarily. On March 12, 1943 Paskal Mitrevski, Periklis and Mincho Fotev, accompanied by a group of partisans led by Gligor Kiosev, negotiated the surrender of weapons from the majority of the villagers from the village Starichani. (Ibid, p. 50.) In the months of March and April, about 100 counter-bandits from the Kostur Region villages abandoned their weapons and returned to their families. This was mainly a result of the great contribution made by the communists and activists Kiro Ivanovski, Mihail Dimovski-Mishe, Aleko Dimitrovski-Tsande, Sotir Ivanovski, Petro Mirchev and others, all of them from Rupishsta. (Ibid, 50.) During the summer of 1943, about 150 pro-Bulgarian members of the village movement in the villages Dobrolishta, Zhupanishta, Izglibe, Maniak and others left the movement and defected to the ranks of the partisans. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 51.) In March and April 1943 partisan units from western Greek occupied Macedonia freed about 150 villages, which became part of the compact liberated territory. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 25.)

(Gligor Kiosev was an ELAS fighter from Rupishsta. He participated in the PLM in Greek occupied Macedonia and was NOF District Board Secretary for Kostur Region as well as NOF Secretary for Rupishsta. He died in Rupishsta in 1946.)

Advisory meeting in Nestram

Around mid-March 1943 more attention was given to the question of laying down measures for further developing the armed liberation movement. Moreover, it was projected that an advisory meeting would take place before the end of the month. The aim of this meeting was to get all organizational leaders and activists of the CPG and other anti-fascist organizations to advise all military and political assets of the developing situation. Preparations for this began on March 14, 1943 with Lazo Trpovski's arrival at the headquarters of the First Kostur detachment in the village Langa,

Kostur Region. Trpovski, then, was a member of the CPG Regional Committee for Greek occupied Macedonia and Thrace. He was accompanied by Periklis, CPG Regional Committee Secretary for Kostur region. There they were received by Mincho Fotev, then officer at the Detachment Headquarters. A meeting was held the same day. Also present at the meeting were Iani Pachura commander of the detachment and Theodoros Mariolis-Lefteris EAM District Committee Secretary for Kostur Region. Even though Theodoros Mariolis-Lefteris was a former sergeant of the Greek gendarmerie, he was appointed EAM Regional Committee First Secretary on September 27, 1941. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 62.) On March 15, 1943 the CPG members, together with the PLM activists that included Paskal Mitrevski, Geros and Hristina Pupti, accompanied by a partisan unit, arrived in the village Nestram, which at the time was the centre of the CPG Regional Committee. The advisory meeting took place on March 21, 1943. Participating in it were military and political staff from Kostur Region, consisting of about 50 leaders and representatives from the various organizations including the CPG, EAM, OKNE-EA and ELAS. According to Fotev, the following people also attended the advisory meeting: Kosta Bazdeka, Mihail Pacho, Hrisuli Pacho, Evgenia Kiriakova, Lazo Kachela, Petro Xanthopoulos, Nikola Belotsrkvenets, Giorgi David - Geros, Kozma Kaloianov, Pando Terpovski and others. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 34.)

The following items were reviewed during the meeting:

1. The general situation in Kostur Region;
2. The condition of the People's Liberation Movement organizations;
3. The condition of the partisan movement.

After the reviews were over, the current situation with respect to the people was evaluated, particularly the readiness of the people in view of the deteriorating economic situation and repression caused by the Italian military occupational forces, the quisling Greek government and counter-revolutionary organizations and their armed formations. Also examined were measures and actions that should be taken to strengthen the partisan movement. Giorgi Ianuli, commander of the First Kostur Detachment, informed the members

of the current situation and what needed to be done to further strengthen the partisan movement. One of the things he mentioned was to increase the numbers and empower the units to act on a larger scale. (Ibid, p. 34-35.)

Paskal Mitrevski spoke about the difficulties the Macedonian people had found themselves in with regards to the Bulgarian propaganda and actions. He pointed to the danger the Bulgarian agents were posing, especially the representatives of the “Macedono-Bulgarian Committee” who were “dragging the Macedonian people towards Bulgarian imperialism and against their own national interests”. (Ibid, p. 35.) The Macedonian people faced even greater risks with the emergence of the counter-bands, the pro-Bulgarian movement and the Italian and German occupying forces. The partisan struggle was no longer simple, it was complex and difficult but, despite all that, there was mass Macedonian participation everywhere in the partisan movement. That is why it was very important for the CPG and EAM leaderships to find a political solution and to apply the appropriate policy tools to effectively manage it. It was requested from the CPG, EAM and ELAS leaderships that they appoint Macedonians in leadership functions in all bodies of the anti-fascist movement. It was asked of them to establish a special partisan unit comprised only of Macedonians to fight against members of the pro-Bulgarian counter-band movement. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 35.)

Lazo Trpovski, in his capacity as representative of the CPG Regional Committee for Greek occupied Macedonia and Thrace, spoke last at the meeting. He spoke about the current political situation, emphasized the Party’s historical role in organizing the ELAS partisan movement and gave his impression of the PLM development in Kostur Region. (Ibid.) In speaking about the “Macedono-Bulgarian Committee” he said: “Its appearance and action have marked one of the darkest pages in the history of the Macedonian people...” (Ibid, p. 36.) His antagonists Risto Rukov, Luka Damianov, brothers Paskal and Vasil Ianakiev, Kuze Kiriazovski and the other agents of the Greek police became agents of fascist Bulgaria and collaborators of the German and Italian occupiers, and were “prepared to serve the devil”. (Ibid, p 36.) Trpovski called for increased political action to denounce them and

deter the Macedonian people from joining them, especially those who were under pressure from the occupier and from the great Bulgarian false-Macedonian propaganda, and those who had not joined to serve the occupier by their own will. All those pressured to join the counter-bands were welcome to join the people's liberation struggle and fight for the freedom and rights of the Macedonian people, together with the Greek people, under the leadership of the CPG. It was asked that the war against the counter-bands which terrorized the people, pushing them to their own demise, be escalated. (Ibid.)

On the orders of Lazo Trpovski, on March 25, 1943, led by Iani Pachure, the first Kostur detachment invaded and crashed the "Macedono-Bulgarian Committee" counter-bands stationed in the village Dobrolishte. The counter-bands were led by Paskal Kalimanovski, one of the "Committee's" leading personalities. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 37.)

(After the attack on Dobrolishte, Trpovski returned to the village Nestram. On April 2, 1943 he left and, through the village Charchishta, traveled to the liberated town Tsotili, Anaseli Region, where he met with members of the CPG Regional Committee Secretariat for Greek occupied Macedonia and Thrace and with the CPG, EAM and ELAS military and political leaders. On April 9, 1943 Lazo Trpovski along with Keradis Simos, a member of the CPG Regional Committee Secretariat, and their escorts were killed near the village Imera, Kozhani Region. They were ambushed by a PAO armed unit. (Ibid, p. 38.))

In time the partisans improved their combat skills and began to inflict larger losses on the occupying forces and their collaborators. In April 1943, Italian command in Kostur Region decided to initiate offensive action to break up the partisan movement. On April 26 two infantry battalions, two artillery batteries of mountain guns, 8 mortars, 6 armoured vehicles, carrying about 250 counter-bandits in 3 squads, started their offensive against the partisans in the Nestram area. Just before the infantry forces began their attack, the Italian air force pounded the terrain for about an hour. Italian planes bombarded the Nestram area with napalm bombs and burned down many houses including partisan headquarters. After four days of

fighting, the partisans were forced out. They completely withdrew from the Nestram area during the night of April 29, 30 and went south towards Kostur and Kostenaria Region. During the four days of hostilities on the Nestram area, the villages Chuka, Stensko and Radigozha were badly damaged. The counter-bandits looted 180 and burned 130 houses, most of which belonged to partisan families. (Ibid, p. 39.)

After withdrawing from their positions in the Nestram area, the partisan units continued their armed actions. On May 1, 1943 they attacked the village Starichani, occupied by a company of 22 members of the pro-Bulgarian counter-band movement, led by Vasil Manoilov. During the battle the partisans killed five counter-bandits, among whom was Manoilov, and captured 17. On the partisan side 4 were killed and 6 wounded. Iani Pachura, commander of the first Kostur detachment, was one of the wounded. While the fighting was going on, in order to stop the villagers from joining the partisans, the counter-bandits shot and killed two young people and wounded an 18-year-old young woman who managed to escape and cross over into the partisan ranks. The two young people killed were Vangelitsa Popianeve and Nikola Todorov. Todorov was killed by Kolio Manoilov. The young woman who was wounded but escaped was Filareta Radeva. (Ibid, p. 39.) After the village was liberated, the 17 captured counter-bandits were tried in their village partisan court and 15 were sentenced to death by firing squad. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 39.) In the days that followed, in the first half of May 1943, the partisans managed to recruit 150 new volunteers from the villages Nestram, Chuka, Kalevishta, Radigozha, Stensko, Ianoven, Pilkat and Grache. (Ibid.) Towards the end of May and early June 1943, with the arrival of new volunteers, the number of partisan units dramatically increased in Kostur Region. In the second half of June in the areas around Kostenarichko and Nestram, 7 partisan units acted with about 600 fighters of whom about 450 were Macedonians. From the liberated territory alone, consisting of about 60 villages, there were more than 500 partisans who joined the reserve of ELAS. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 40.)

Because the Italian occupying forces and the collaborationist armed formations were unable to suppress the armed partisan movements in Kostur Region, German Military Command sent reinforcements

to assist them. Before the end of June 1943 a German SS unit of about 300 soldiers and officers and Greek collaborators formations, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Pulios, was sent from Solun to Kostur to assist. (Ibid, p. 40) So now the Italians in Kostur Region in effect had the XIII infantry battalion, one artillery battalion, 6 armoured vehicles and 150 Carabinieri. The quisling Greek government had about 200 gendarmes, the “Macedono-Bulgarian Committee” movement had a detachment of 350 counter-bandits and about 2000 armed villagers forced to fight against the partisans. (Ibid.) All these forces were effectively put in a mobile state to assume an offensive against the partisan units.

Partisan headquarters, which followed enemy preparations, as well as the CPG Regional Committee and local organizations, informed the people in the villages to hide their belongings and food and, with partisan protection, to evacuate their livestock to the mountainous areas in Grusha, Volia, Odre and Gramos. (Ibid.) To assist the evacuation, 3 partisan units with about 150 fighters arrived from Lerin Region. (Ibid.)

On July 6, 1943, enemy forces launched an attack on partisan positions in the villages Semasi, Shkrapar, Bela Tsrkva, Nestime, Zhuzhultse, Libishevo, Psore, Ludovo, Galishta, Radigozha, Chuka and Nestram. Fierce battles were fought from morning until night with enemy forces retreating to their well-protected bases in Rupishsta, Dobrolishta, Chetirok and Kostur. These tactics continued from July 6 to August 16 when a major operation was initiated. According to partisan headquarters, 52 battles were fought during this offensive. On the enemy side 182 fighters were killed and 250 wounded. On the partisan side 37 partisans were killed and 58 wounded. The enemy forces killed 29 villagers and destroyed about 500 houses, 600 buildings of food and livestock, 14 schools and a convent and the monastery of St. Archangel in the village Chuka. Included among the villages that suffered the most were Nestram, Chuka, Radigozha, Galishte, Ludovo, Nestram and Charchishta. (Ibid, p. 41.)

It was not until mid-July 1943 that the partisan units in Kostur and Lerin Regions began their large-scale operations. (Ibid, p. 52.) Particularly successful was the Lerin-Kostur “Gotse” battalion.

(Ibid, p. 51.) During the night of July 23/24, 1943, units of the 28th ELAS Regiment, Kostur Macedonian detachments and partisan detachments from Vermion, Voden Region, attacked and in a few hours took Rupishsta. During the attack on the pro-Bulgarian movement Headquarters, in a hand to hand battle, the partisans killed 15 counter-bandits led by Vasil Ianakiev who was wounded, surrendered and, along with 12 other counter-bandits, defected to the partisan side. The partisans withdrew from the town in the morning of July 24, 1943. (Ibid, p. 52.)

After Italy's capitulation in early September 1943, the number of partisan detachments increased and so did their combat actions. On October 10, 1943 the 28 member "Lazo Trpovski" unit was formed from the partisan group led by Atanas Koroveshevski and by the newly arrived fighters, of whom 16 had just returned from Bulgaria, more precisely from Sofia and Plovdiv and joined the people's liberation movement in Greek occupied Macedonia. (M. Fotev, Views and notes, p. 16-18.) Naum Peiov, who had just arrived from Bitola, was appointed commander of the "Lazo Trpovski" unit. According to Fotev, the decision to form this detachment was made by the CPG District Committee for Kostur Region and was done on October 10, 1943 by the ELAS Headquarters of Regiment XXVIII and political commissar Micho Shishkov. (Ibid, p. 6-17.) The unit, which lasted only two months, was part of ELAS and the fighters carried the sign of ELAS on their hats, and not the five-pointed star. (M. Fotev, Views and notes, p. 16.) At the request of the fighters and communists, the commander and political commissar were quickly changed. (M. Fotev, Views and notes, p. 16.) Dimitar Tupurkovski-Titan was appointed commander and Naum Shupurkov-Leon was appointed political commissar. (Ibid, p. 17.)

In October and November 1943 combat actions against the pro-Bulgarian movement were intensified. The partisans disarmed the counter-bandits in the villages Gabresh, Pozdivishta, Konomlati, Chernovishta, Drenoveni and Stanishta. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 52.) During the night of November 11/12, 1943, units of the 28th ELAS Regiment attacked German and Italian positions in Rupishsta. During the attack the partisans killed 63 enemy soldiers, captured 4 Italian soldiers and 1 officer. They raided their armoury and seized 40 rifles, 1 heavy machine gun, 2 machine

guns, a large quantity of ammunition, hand grenades, other military material and 33 mules. (Ibid, 52.) By the end of 1943 a large free territory was created encompassing about 100 villages, 80 of which were inhabited by Macedonians only. The villages in the area around Mount Vicho, including Gabresh, Drenovani, Pozdivishta, Konomlati, Kosinets, Pobanitsa and V'mbel, were disarmed and freed from the pro-Bulgarian counter-band movement. This area became a secure base for the partisan movement. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 42.)

While the German forces and the quisling Greek gendarmerie and police concentrated their effort in securing the towns and cities, the quisling, armed Greek organizations and pro-Bulgarian collaborators used their resources to secure the roads and communication channels. After the pro-Bulgarians sustained many losses, the "Macedono-Bulgarian Committee" movement gained some support from the German occupation authorities and the Bulgarian agents who still retained their structure and had impact on the Macedonian population.

While this was going on, the partisan movement continued to intensify its ideological and political struggle. Even before the end of 1943, under the CPG's leadership, the armed Macedonian national movement began a higher stage of development.

The partisans, most of whom were Macedonians, created a large free territory in Greek occupied Macedonia and raised the question of solving vital political and national issues regarding the Macedonian people's involvement in the people's government, opening Macedonian schools and other such needs for the Macedonian people. The CPG unfortunately did not respond positively to these vital Macedonian interests and created much dissatisfaction in the Macedonian people. (Ibid, p. 43.) It was required of the CPG to accept the reality of the current situation and comply with the demands of the Macedonian people. It was required of the CPG to establish equality and national rights for the Macedonian people from Greek occupied Macedonia since it depended on them to further develop the joint liberation and anti-fascist struggle with the Greek people in which the Macedonians participated en masse.

Given the overall situation, the Macedonian CPG leadership in Greek occupied Macedonia deemed it necessary to take a tactical change in attitude towards the Macedonian people and their aspiration for organizing an independent PLM within the Greek armed anti-fascist movement. Due to changes in circumstances, the tactical change did not occur until the second half of September 1943 when the “new” Party line was realized. At about the same time Hristo Kalfas-Andreas, CPG District Committee Secretary for western Greek occupied Macedonia, arrived in Kostur Region. At a meeting with the CPG, EAM, ELAS and EPON leaderships, which was attended by Macedonian activists and partisan unit veterans, a number of Macedonians belonging to the CPG and ELAS spoke and highlighted the Macedonian participation and contribution to the armed anti-fascist struggle. After that the Macedonian situation and problems the Macedonian people were facing were discussed and solutions sought. This meeting was followed by a triple meeting held in Osnicheni, Kostur Region, in Sterio Buklev’s house. (Ibid, 43.) Here Kalfas met with Periklis, CPG District Committee Secretary, and Paskal Mitrevski, commander of the partisan detachment stationed in the village. During the meeting Mitrevski made a categorical request to establish a Macedonian People’s Liberation Organization which, as a national and political representative of the Macedonian people, would solve the current political problems experienced by the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia. He indicated that only a Macedonian national political organization could and would mobilize all the potential of the Macedonian people in the struggle against fascism and against the pro-Bulgarian “Macedono-Bulgarian Committee movement, as well as deal with the acute problems and issues vital to the interests of the Macedonian people. That organization would act as a carrier and a consistent scorer for the brotherhood and unity with the Greek people and for the attainment of full equality. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 43.) This is what the CPG was asked to do in order to solve the Macedonian National Question.

After receiving the report from Kalfas, the CPG leadership began to deviate from its former attitude. A few days later the CPG Regional Committee for Kostur Region received a directive to form a Macedonian People’s Liberation Organization, with the right to form organizations in other districts of Greek occupied Macedonia.

But the directive required that the organization created be called “Slavo-Macedonian”. It would appear that the Greeks were prepared to recognize the existence of a Slavic population in Greek occupied Macedonia, which appeared as a respectable factor in the struggle against the occupation and to assist the CPG to seize power in Greece. In every case the CPG leadership consented to an autonomous Macedonian people’s liberation movement. According to Fotev: “The establishment of the Macedonian revolutionary organization SNOF and the creation of the Macedonian partisan units was the only correct decision the CPG made regarding the ‘Macedonian Question’ during the Liberation War (1941-1945)”. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 45.) Immediately afterwards, on October 10, 1943, the Macedonian detachment “Lazo Trpovski” was formed which consisted of 27 exclusively Macedonian fighters. This affirmed the struggle of the Slavo-Macedonians fighting for their freedom and independence, for organizing and building institutions and for promoting the uniqueness of the Macedonian people.

Establishment of the Slovo-Macedonian National Liberation Front (SNOF)

The Macedonian National Liberation Front for Greek occupied Macedonia was established in the fall of 1943 under the name SNOF. The founding meeting was held on October 20, 1943 in the village D’mbeni, Kostur Region, in Kiriako Tsalev’s house. Tsalev was appointed member of the District leadership. Appointed First Secretary of SNOF was Paskal Mitrevski. (Ibid, p. 44, and M. Fotev, Views and notes, on Blagoia Taleski’s book “First Aegean Macedonian Brigade”, Skopje, NIP Nova Makedonija (1985), p. 26.) Later, on December 25, the 1st SNOF Conference was held in the village Krchishta, Kostur Region. (Ibid, p. 44, and M. Fotev, Views and notes, p. 26.) About 200 delegates from 75 villages and from Rupishta participated in the Conference. (M. Fotev, views and notes, p. 26.) Included in the delegates were representatives from the CPG, EAM, ELAS and EA district organizations. (M. Fotev, development through NOF, p. 46.) Paskal Mitrevski, in his capacity as secretary, submitted a report in which he especially emphasized the strong Macedonian acceptance of SNOF as an expression of the Macedonian people’s will to achieve their national aspirations for an

independent organization in their struggle to attain “free national, political and social development”. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 44.) This was a big and courageous step for the further affirmation of the Macedonian people and for their struggle for democracy together with the Greek people. (Ibid.) A number of people were appointed officers of SNOF during the Conference. Kiro Popvasilev and Andon Tsalev were appointed members of the SNOF Secretariat, Vasil Aleksovski, Lazo Poplazarov, Simo Kaltchev, Lazo Hadziev and Evdokia Baleva-Vera, who was responsible for the organization of women in Kostur Region, were appointed members of the District Board. (M. Fotev, views and notes, p. 26.) Also adopted during the Conference were the national programs on educational, cultural and informational activities; opening Macedonian language schools, fostering and promoting national traditions and folk customs, organizing cultural and artistic performances, national holidays and other events that mark the Macedonian people’s history. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 46-47.) A Bureau was created, headed by Lazar Poplazarov, to implement these cultural and educational activities. (M. Fotev, views and notes, p. 31.) There was also a newspaper under the name “Slavo-Macedonian voice”, an organ of the SNOF District Board of Kostur Region, initiated with Vasko Karadzha as its language translator and proofreader. (Ibid.)

In addition to SNOF for Kostur Region, a SNOF organization for Lerin Region was also formed with Petre Pilaev appointed as its secretary. (M. Fotev, views and notes, p. 27.) Both regional organizations acted independently and were managed by district boards. A unique SNOF national organization was never created. (Ibid, p. 28.) Due to the lack of a common governing body, the district leaderships often held joint meetings to inform each other of the situation on the ground and the position their organizations were taking. (Ibid.)

On November 10, 1943 the CPG Regional Committee leadership for Kostur Region unexpectedly made a decision to disband the all Macedonian detachment only one month after its formation. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 71.) The dissolution of the unit was accepted without protest or resistance, even though the true CPG intentions and policy objectives towards the Macedonian

people and the Macedonian Question were not obvious. The Macedonian communists who were in the district's leadership still remained loyal to the Communist Party of Greece and continued to implement its policies.

SNOF, amid its limited opportunities and without a unique leadership, but with "modest informational resources and total commitment of its activists, broadly awakened the national consciousness and affirmation of the uniqueness of the Macedonian people". (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 47.) Since its establishment, SNOF acted as a political and revolutionary factor for strengthening Macedonian national unity. According to Fotev: "One of SNOF's main tasks was to realize and strengthen the moral, political and national unity of the Macedonian people. Its formation was necessary in order, in the eyes of the people, to expose the dangerous role of the Bulgarian agents and the Bulgarian committee, and to unmask Bulgarian claims on Greek occupied Macedonia". (Ibid, p. 45-46.)

The SNOF Kostur and Lerin Region District leaders held a meeting on January 28, 1944, in the village Trsnovishte, Kostur Region, to review the situation and inform each other of the state of affairs of the SNOF organizations in those regions. (M. Fotev, views and notes, p. 27-28.)

Fotev does not agree with what Dr. Risto Kiriazovski wrote about the Trsnovishte meeting. Fotev does not agree that the meeting was a debate about the Macedonian National Question, Macedonia's fate in the war, Naum Peiov's participation, the Kostur District SNOF leadership and, especially, Naum Peoiv and the SNOF leadership which, according to Kiriazovski, persistently advocated that Greece should be organized under a federal principle composed of two federal republics; the People's Republic of Greece and the People's Republic of Aegean Macedonia. This, according to Kiriazovski, was possible and could have been accomplished had the SNOF leadership officially requested it because it was desired by the Macedonian people. This is what Fotev wrote about that: "What Kiriazovski is saying is absurd and unprecedented! The meeting in Trsnovishte was not about Macedonia's fate and not about discussing the Macedonian National Question. It was about

maintaining regular contact between the SNOF district administrations and about mutually informing each other on the status of the organizations and on the situation of the Macedonian people and their problems... A great and important issue, such as the creation of a People's Republic of Aegean Macedonia, could not be, or be expected to achieve only at the good will of the CPG, because it did not depend exclusively on the CPG but on the entire organizational coalition including EAM and ELAS, as well as on the readiness of all progressive forces, the Greek people and even on the international factors, especially the anti-fascist allied and anti-Hitler coalition, which were directly interested in the future of Greece.” Regarding the claim that the leaders Mihailo Keramitchiev and Naum Peiov participated in the meeting, Fotev wrote: “That is a lie! Mihailo Keramitchiev was never a managing asset of SNOF. Keramitchiev became a participant of the PLM in Greek occupied Macedonia in February 1944; from 1941 to September 1943 he was living in Bulgaria, in Sofia. He returned to his native village Gabresh in October 1943 after Italy capitulated. In February 1944 he joined the ELAS reserves. Naum Peiov was not part of the SNOF District leadership. He became a SNOF activist for the first time during the 1st Conference held on April 12 and 13, 1944, and was appointed in charge of SNOF in Koreshtata sub-Region in Kostur Region.” (M. Fotev, views and notes, p. 27-28.)

After the Tsrnovishte meeting, SNOF intensified its activities in order to strengthen the organization with new fighters within ELAS and to reinforce the fight against the German and Bulgarian occupiers. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 45.) Because there was no unique Macedonian national organization at that time, there were no requests made to have independent Macedonian partisan units. Fotev does not agree with claims made by Dr. Risto Kiriazovski who asserted that a “Slavo-Macedonian National Liberation Army (SNOV) was formed under SNOF's initiative and with CPG consent, and that these unique military units were formed in the beginning of 1944 on Mount Vicho. According to Fotev: “No such decision was made to form SNOF armed forces, nor were they formed on Mount Vicho.” (M. Fotev, views and notes, p. 27.)

Very early in 1944, the partisans of ELAS in Kostur Region intensified their actions and on January 6, 1944 attacked the German

garrison and counter-bands in Rupishsta. Then, on January 11, 1944, they attacked the counter-bands in Dobrolishta and Chetirok, and on March 25, 1944 they attacked the counter-bands in the villages Izglebi and Gorentsi, all in Kostur Region. (Ibid, p. 53.)

In early April 1944 German forces in Kostur and Lerin Regions, along with pro-Bulgarian armed formations, began a spring offensive to break up the partisan units around Mount Vicho and in the wider area. Their advance, however, was prevented and they were forced to withdraw to their bases. On April 5, 1944 the partisans ambushed a motorized German unit near the village Klisura, in Dauli vicinity, killing 25 German soldiers. Upon the arrival of reinforcements from the village Sorovich, the same day, the Germans attacked the village Klisura. Klisura was then populated with Macedonians and Vlachs who were massively organized in the PLM. The Germans set the village on fire. Out of the 215 houses, they burned down to the ground 180 houses and slaughtered 285 inhabitants, men, women, children and old people. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 53.) On April 12 and May 4, 1944 the Kostur and Lerin Region German units, along with about 200 counter-bandits, again attacked the partisan positions around Mount Vicho. The attacks were repulsed both times. During the battles the Germans and counter-bandits experienced heavy losses with 6 killed and 25 wounded. (Ibid, p. 53.)

The SNOF 2nd Conference was held on April 2, 1944 in the village D'mbeni, Kostur Region, during which Paskal Mitrevski was again elected Secretary. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 45, views and notes, p. 26-27.) SNOF gave itself priority to expand its forces in all districts of Greek occupied Macedonia. As a national revolutionary organization it also took it upon itself to act as the sole legitimate representative of the Macedonian people and as an equal to EAM, the anti-fascist coalition. This was the only way the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia felt they could become equal to the Greek people. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 47.) The Macedonian national organization in Greek occupied Macedonia requested that only the CPG should be allowed to act in Greek occupied Macedonia and that all other Greek anti-fascist organizations, in which Macedonians were members, be dissolved. SNOF requested that all Macedonians be united and

organized under SNOF and that SNOF be recognized as a Macedonian national organization by EAM and ELAS. (Ibid, p. 47.)

The CPG's response to the SNOF demands was the dissolution of SNOF in April 1944. (Ibid, p. 60.) The CPG leadership not only prevented SNOF from becoming an independent Macedonian political organization but killed its activities that aided the liberation movement of the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia. This was done at a time when the Macedonian army in the Republic of Macedonia was liberating most of the country and preparing for the convening body that was to constitute the Macedonian national state, which was made official at the end of November 1943 at the Second Session of AVNOJ, held in Iaitse on November 29 and 30, 1943, by declaring and creating a federal Yugoslavia with Macedonia as a founding member of the federation.

The Macedonian revolutionaries, the Macedonian communists, the Macedonian CPG cadres, the SNOF leadership... all accepted and implemented the decision made by the Greek Party leadership to end SNOF. They all accepted this, even though they all knew that this was an anti-Macedonian political act essentially committed by the Communist Party of Greece. The Macedonian fighters and the Macedonian people, however, trusted the Macedonian communists and expected from them the realization of their national and human rights, as equal to the Greek people, after the occupiers were driven out. Unfortunately, that never happened.

On May 14, 1944 the partisans attacked the counter-band detachment in the village Prekopana, Lerin Region. While the attack was taking place, German and counter-band reinforcements arrived from the neighbouring villages Cheresnitsa and Olishita. After a two-hour battle with superior enemy forces, the partisans retreated. Six partisans were killed and five wounded. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 53.) At the end of May 1944 the German units withdrew from their positions in the cities in western Greek occupied Macedonia. On May 24, 1944 the Germans left Kostur and Rupishsta. As they were leaving they left the pro-Bulgarian counter-bands to defend their positions and those in the nearby villages. But as soon as the Germans left, units of the XXVIII ELAS Regiment attacked Kostur, Rupishta, as well as the villages Maniak, Tikveni

and Chetirok. Just as the attacks began, 50 counter-bandits retreated and through Lerin Region fled to Bulgaria. The others threw away their arms and ammunition and hid. Seventy-three were later captured. (Ibid, p. 53-54.) Included among those captured were two dangerous criminals, Risto Naskovski from the village Ezerets, Kostur Region, and Dime Kiosev from the village Maniak, Kostur Region. Included among those counter-bandits who were shot while attempting to escape was Nikola Shestevarov also known as Bai Kolio. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 54.) Two other dangerous criminals were tried in the partisan court, condemned to death and executed. (Ibid, p. 54.)

Despite all the brutality inflicted on the Macedonian people by the occupiers and their quislings, they massively participated in the armed anti-fascist struggle with enthusiasm and faith. There was also a strong desire for the creation of independent Macedonian units. One part of the Macedonian partisan units left and decided to merge with the units of the Macedonian Army in the Republic of Macedonia. In May 1944 a larger group of Macedonian partisans and ELAS fighters, along with some behind the scenes activists in Kostur and Lerin Regions, led by Atanas Koroveshovski, broke away from ELAS, crossed over the Yugoslav border and joined the NLM units in the Republic of Macedonia. They joined the Macedonian partisan units on Mount Karaorman where they formed a battalion consisting of fighters from Greek occupied Macedonia. But shortly thereafter, towards the end of July 1944, they were sent back to Greek occupied Macedonia. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 56.)

On May 28, 1944 German tanks attacked Kostur and Rupishsta, forcing the partisans to retreat. They arrested Luka Damianov, a leading figure of the pro-Bulgarian movement in Kostur Region, and shot him near the village Gorentsi as the main culprit for Kostur falling into the hands of the partisans. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 54.) After Luka Damianov was liquidated, the pro-Bulgarian movement became disorganized. After the Germans withdrew from the cities, the partisans continued with their attacks on enemy positions. On May 24 to 28, 1944, during the last battles in the region, the occupying forces, the pro-Bulgarian counter-bands and the quisling Greek gendarmerie acquired many casualties with

211 killed, 114 wounded and 320, mostly counter-bandits, captured or surrendered to the partisans. (Ibid, p. 54.) Soon ELAS took control of all of the western part of Greek occupied Macedonia and its major road traffic along the Solun-Lerin-Bitola, Kozhani-Lerin and Kaliari-Bitola roads, and the Solun-Lerin-Bitola train line which were vital escape routes for the withdrawal of the German units heading north.

To establish control over the roads, German command initiated a major offensive which lasted from July 3 to July 22, 1944, involving an armed force of 12,000 and 3,000 quisling Greek government gendarmes, PAO units, Albanian Balists and whatever remained of the Pro-Bulgarian counter-bands. The July offensive was fierce with heavy casualties on both sides. The Germans and their quislings lost about 750, killed and wounded, and the partisans lost about 200 fighters. The offensive was halted on July 22, 1944 and the German forces and their quislings retreated back to their bases. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p 54-55.) During this whole time the partisans received mass support and comprehensive assistance from the population, which sacrificed a great deal for the success of its liberation. During their military activities and particularly during their withdrawal, the occupying forces committed many crimes and devastated many settlements, mostly Macedonian. According to data collected by XXVIII ELAS Regiment Headquarters, provided to us by Fotev, 4,449 houses were burned down, 5,483 barns and other facilities for housing sheep and cattle were destroyed, 53 primary schools and 25 churches were wrecked, 161 people were killed, 427 men and women were arrested, 840 sheep and cattle were killed and 3,497 cattle and 27,755 sheep and goats were stolen. (Ibid, p. 55.)

The CPG's position on SNOF in the context of the pro-Bulgarian political movement

The Communist Party of Greece, as well as all the Greek civil parties, for the sake of preserving Greece and Greek interests, has governed against the existence of a Macedonia and of Macedonians in Greece. Every policy the CPG enacted has been contrary to Macedonian interests. The CPG never acknowledged the existence of the Macedonian nation, but only as "Slavophone" Greeks. Even though the Macedonian people massively participated in the joint

armed struggle with the Greek people against the fascist invaders, and sacrificed themselves in doing so, the CPG leadership still disbanded SNOF. It disbanded it in order to prevent it from becoming an independent Macedonian organization leading the Macedonian national liberation movement. The CPG leadership never trusted the Macedonian communists and fighters, even though they proved themselves to be capable and trusted allies in the armed struggle. The CPG never belied that the Macedonians would pledge allegiance to the Party and be loyal to Greece. From the beginning of the armed struggle against the fascist occupiers in Greek occupied Macedonia, the CPG always appointed Greeks in the Party leadership, in EAM, in the leadership of OKNE, the Party's youth organization, and so on. The CPG always appointed Greeks even if they were former officials of the Greek regime and the Greek gendarmes and fascists. Following EAM's establishment, Theodoros Mariolis-Lefteros, a Greek, was appointed EAM Regional Committee First Secretary even though he was a former sergeant of the dreaded Greek gendarmerie. Mihalīs, another Greek, was appointed Regional Committee First Secretary of the Union of Communist Youth (OKNE), even though he was a former policeman. Georgios Venetios was appointed CPG Regional Committee Secretary of a three-member Secretariat in Kostur Region even though he was a local official of the Metaxas dictatorial regime and organizer of the fascist youth organization EON. Venetios joined EAM in April 1943. (M. Fotev about the counter-bands, p. 62.) Antonis Dilianis, an immigrant from Turkey, who after the occupation was employed as a teacher in the Macedonian village Ludovo, Kostur Region, was an agent of the Greek anti-Macedonian terrorist organization PAO. Dilianis was recruited into EAM in January 1943, and in March, 1943 he was appointed EAM Regional Committee Secretary. Dilianis falsely accused three Macedonian patriots from Ludovo of being associates of the "Macedono-Bulgarian Committee" movement; they were Vangel Peni, Kosta Dimou and Giorgi Bodov. At his insistence the CPG Regional Committee had them sentenced to death and killed. By order of the same CPG Regional Committee all possessions and movable property of the families of those killed, including their livestock, were confiscated. After almost a year of being an EAM official Dilianis, in March 1944, simply left EAM and returned to again work for PAO. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 62-63.)

It was no different with ELAS military appointments in Greek occupied Macedonia. As it did with Party organizational appointments, the CPG did with military appointments in ELAS. Instead of appointing Macedonians to lead the Macedonian dominated units, the CPG appointed Greeks, even if they were fascists and enemies of the communists. The CPG appointed former officers of the Greek army and the Greek police and active members of the quisling Greek government to lead ELAS units. In early March 1943, appointed in the first Kostur detachment were Kirtsidakis, a Greek from Crete, as reserve lieutenant and head of market inspection in Kostur Region, Kosta Zizis, a Greek from the Peloponnesus, as reserve lieutenant serving in the prefecture in Kostur, Mandaropoulos, active Master Sergeant of the quisling Greek gendarmerie, and Pashalis Baskakis, active Master Sergeant in the quisling Greek police, who served in the Metaxas dictatorial regime from 1936 to 1940. Baskakis was also a police chief in Rupishsta and Chetirok, Kostur Region, and was responsible for persecuting and cruelly torturing Macedonian patriots and communists. All of these Greeks who joined the first partisan detachment were active participants in the services of the quisling Greek government. There were others too who joined the first partisan detachment, including Theodoros Efremidis, reserve lieutenant of the Greek army, and Nikos Papathanasiou, also a reserve lieutenant and a known nationalist and Greek police collaborator. (Ibid, p. 63.) After they joined the partisan units they were all appointed officers and given command duties. According to Fotev: “The CPG Regional Committee, EAM and ELAS partisan headquarters in Kostur Region welcomed these Greeks into the partisan ranks without doing identity checks or checking their intentions as to why they desired to enter the ranks of ELAS. They were appointed without due attention as to how they would be received by the fighters and the people in Kostur Region who knew who they were, who knew their origin and their past. They, immediately without hesitation, appointed them officers and entrusted them with command duties.” (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 63.) But in no time at all they showed their true intentions. They were there to basically disrupt and break down the partisan movement. Papathanassiou, who commanded a partisan detachment of 70 partisans, dissolved it and then deserted. Other officers also

deserted and later led armed Greek anti-Macedonian terrorist gangs belonging to PAO. Kirtsidakis and a group of Greek officers took up residence in the village Zabardeni, at the time exclusively inhabited by colonists and settlers from Asia Minor, and founded a terrorist gang of about 40 Greek counter-bandits. On April 5, 1943, in an insidious way, they captured and disarmed a group of Macedonian partisans who entered the village. Included among the captured Macedonian partisans were Tomo Changov, Sterio Mavpandza and Taki Popdimitrovski. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 63.) On April 9, 1943 armed members of PAO, in an ambush near the village Imeri, Kozhani Region, captured the partisan leaders Lazo Trpovski and Kerasidis Simos and liquidated them in a cruel manner. (Ibid, p. 64.) The same day ELAS partisans broke up the PAO band in Zabardeni and captured the deserters Kirtsidakis, Mandaropoulos and Efremidis, mentioned earlier, then tried them in the partisan court and sentenced them to death by firing squad. (Ibid, p. 63-64.)

Even after all these incidents, the CPG and ELAS leaderships still did not take necessary measures to clean up these Greeks and enemy agents who had infiltrated the partisan movement. On the contrary, all these “nationalist” and well-known “royalist” military and police officers were purposely given “command positions in ELAS”. (Ibid, p. 64.) Included among these Greek officers were General Dimaratos, Commander of IX ELAS Division, Lieutenant Colonel Moskovitis, Commander of LIII Regiment, and Major Lazaridis, Commander of XXVIII Regiment. About 70% of the commanders and officers in ELAS IX Division, which operated in western Greek occupied Macedonia, were former Greek army personnel. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 64.) Unfortunately there was no room to promote proven Macedonian revolutionaries and fighters into senior command positions in the ELAS partisan units. According to Fotev: “The ELAS command structure was not created that way because there was an ‘absence of revolutionary vigilance’ in the CPG and ELAS leaderships, but essentially because that is how the structure was purposely designed and implemented to serve the Greek policies in Greek occupied Macedonia.”

This CPG policy was incorporated into official party documents and was essentially anti-Macedonian. In its January 1942 CPG Central

Committee Plenum, the Party decided to treat the Macedonian people as a “Slavophone minority” so as not to let them fall under the influence of Bulgarian demagogy. According to Fotev: “Here is the kind of attitude the CPG Central Committee took during its 8th Plenum in January 1942: ‘Our party has to develop all its activities to teach the national minorities, especially the ‘Slavophone’ Macedonians to avoid being seduced by hatred because of national oppression, Greek capitalist demagogy and the current occupiers, particularly the Bulgarian imperialists who are satellites of Hitler and Mussolini’...” (Ibid, 58-59.) Fotev evaluated the above CPG paragraph as a “national insult to the Macedonian people” in Greek occupied Macedonia who, under CPG leadership, massively participated in the armed anti-fascist struggle and proved to the CPG that they wanted the German-Italian-Bulgarian occupation to end. But instead of ending their occupation, the CPG “moved them from the current occupiers back to the slavery of the Greek monarchic regimes, another more lasting and more difficult occupier.” (Ibid, p. 64.) The Macedonian nation was and remains true to its revolutionary traditions, always struggling against all oppressors, and there was no danger of the Macedonian people partnering themselves with the occupiers, “a fact that the CPG leadership should have known well.” (Ibid, p. 59.) The CPG should also have known that, from the date of its existence, more than 50% of the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia not only had joined it but were most active, particularly in the OKNE youth organization and in other CPG youth organizations. (Ibid, p. 59.) According to Fotev, the CPG leadership’s attitude and anti-Macedonian policies were deliberate because the Macedonian people never gave the CPG a reason not to trust them. Fotev earlier said that the CPG preferred to have Greek fascists in leadership positions over Macedonians. The CPG, EAM, EPON and other socialist organizations always appointed Greeks over Macedonians into their leading positions in the anti-fascist movement but, according to Fotev, they also appointed pro-Bulgarian elements, some by force, because of circumstances connected with the revolutionary events of the time. It had been known that some of these appointees, “still in 1941 had embraced the Great Bulgarian policy on the Macedonian Question and directly or indirectly helped the pro-Bulgarian movement in Greek occupied Macedonia”. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 65.) Those appointments were

transparent and essentially meaningless and without justification. By doing this, according to Fotev, the CPG had aims to employ these “former activists of the pro-Bulgarian movement” to influence the debauched movement and have it disbanded”. (Ibid.) Mincho Fotev calls these CPG leadership methods “faulty, impulsive and reckless with long-term consequences...” (Ibid, p. 58 and 65.)

The CPG information blockade

The CPG leadership established and maintained a complete informational blockade against the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia, particularly against the Macedonian ELAS partisans, about events in the other parts of Macedonia. The local newspapers, newsletters and other media did not write or transmit information from other mediums regarding the course of events, especially about the victorious end of the people’s liberation war in the Republic of Macedonia. The first time the Macedonian people heard about this was towards the end of 1943 and early 1944. This information was obtained directly from the Macedonian army units traveling through the territory of Greek occupied Macedonia. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 66-67.) After that the information blockade continued to be rigorously enforced. Party newspapers did not publish any information about the ASNOM meeting held on August 2, 1944, and about the drafting of the Macedonian national state constitution and the Republic of Macedonia being an equal founding member of the Yugoslav federation. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 66.)

Just then the CPG leadership decided to indiscriminately and massively fill the Party with people who had alien, communist political and ideological beliefs. The CPG began to accept “former gendarmes, Greek counter-bandits, pro-Bulgarian counter-bandits, active members and officials from the Greek fascist organizations who served Metaxas during his dictatorship (1936-1940), black marketers who operated during the occupation (1941-1943) and others. There was no one who was anti-Macedonian, who came knocking on its doors, that the CPG turned away. The CPG filled all its higher party forums and key functions in ELAS, EAM, EPON, etc., with anti-Macedonians without considering the consequences.” (Ibid, p. 66.) With such a composition in its grassroots

organizations, the CPG lost its vanguard role but won a position as the leading political force in Greece during the anti-fascist struggle although, according to data presented at the 7th Congress, held in October 1945, the CPG had 450,000 Party members but without the young EPON communists. (Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 66.)

For the CPG and EAM there was no Macedonian Question existing in Greece. During the entire anti-fascist armed struggle these organizations, through a wide network of bodies, agitation and propaganda, by media means including newspapers, newsletters and other media, promoted Greek only policies. The CPG, EAM and EPON agitation and propaganda departments, through their ELAS brigades and divisions, especially in Greek occupied Macedonia, by all possible means, through newsletters, brochures, flyers and other means, conducted their systematic and intensive propaganda campaigns by calling the armed liberation struggle against the fascist occupiers “a Greek revolution” associated with Greece’s past; with the legendary exploits of the Greek rebel armies in battles against the Turks in 1821, the struggles of the Greek people, especially the working class against anti-people bourgeois regimes fighting for democratic political and social rights...” (Ibid, p. 67.) Every combat action and partisan demonstration of bravery against the occupiers was equated to a staged major Greek historical event. Even attacks against the pro-Bulgarian counter-bands were celebrated as events of the Greek national revolutionary past. (Ibid, p. 67.) In their daily exploits, ELAS units sang songs about Greek heroes the likes of Theodoros Kolokotronis, Rigas Ferraïos, Karaiskakis, Athanasios Diakos and others. (Ibid, p. 68.) No ELAS fighter was allowed to mention or sing about the Macedonian people’s national revolutionary traditions. No one was allowed to even mention the Macedonian revolutionary giants like Gotse Delchev, Dame Gruev, Iane Sandanski or any other Ilinden uprising heroes. They were not even allowed to think about the historical battles and the heroic feats of the glorious Ilinden Uprising; Macedonian fighters charging against the Turkish army in Neveska, Klisura, etc., fighting for their national and social rights. No one was allowed to mention that the majority of the partisans in ELAS were Macedonians, even though some of the ELAS fighters were also “Ilinden fighters”. (Ibid, p. 67.) The CPG leadership purposely and systematically ignored the Macedonian people.

During the second half of 1943, by CPG directive, ELAS brigade and division Headquarters was instructed to form EPON youth detachments responsible for implementing cultural and artistic theater and choral programs and activities. Cultural events and staged dramas about the struggles of the Greek people, along with Greek revolutionary songs, Greek national poetry and Greek folk dances, were organized to appear in as many settlements in Greek occupied Macedonia as possible. Nothing Macedonian was ever mentioned... (Ibid, p. 68.) In September 1943 the CPG leadership opened Greek elementary schools in the areas under ELAS control in the western part of Greek occupied Macedonia, so that Macedonian children would be taught Greek. (Ibid.) The Macedonian people, including the Macedonian veterans of the liberation war, protested bitterly. (Ibid.)

The CPG openly denied the Macedonian people's most elementary rights by not only robbing the Macedonian children of learning their mother tongue, but by forcing them to learn the language of their Greek occupier. This was done especially after the Macedonian people heroically fought side by side with the Greek people in their common struggle against the German, Italian and Bulgarian occupiers and their national traitors. (Ibid.) The CPG, through its deeds, proved that it never wanted to recognize the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia as a nation or as a national minority. It proved that it only supported, implemented and adopted a policy of integration and assimilation. It also proved that it refused to acknowledge the existence of the unresolved Macedonian National Question in Greece.

The CPG's refusal to accept the existence of a "Macedonian Question" was made very clear by Leonidas Stringos, CPG Regional Committee Secretary for Greek occupied Macedonia and Thrace, during the District Plenary meeting in May 1944, held in the village Zhupan. Stringos stated that: "There is no Macedonian National Question for the CPG." He proved his point by making reference to the demographic changes in Greek occupied Macedonia which now, he said, hold true that 90% of the population living in Greek occupied Macedonia is Greek. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 11.) According to Stringos and the CPG, Greek occupied

Macedonia was now an “integral part of Greece”. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 11). Stringos did not hesitate to also mention that the Party was “wrong” in agreeing to establish SNOF and that, as soon as it realized it had made a mistake, it corrected it with SNOF’s dissolution. Stringos said: “We made a big mistake by allowing the creation of SNOF, it was our fault which we duly observed by disbanding it...” (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 11.)

Fotev, however, has a different explanation as to why the CPG disbanded SNOF. According to one of the CPG leaders, who explained this to Fotev, SNOF was dissolved because of inconsistencies and opportunism. According to Fotev: “Objectively speaking, SNOF was dissolved in 1944, but not as Stringos had claimed. It was dissolved because of CPG leadership inconsistencies and as an expression of the opportunistic and chauvinistic Greek attitude towards the Macedonian National Question.” (M. Fotev, developments, p. 11.) But in reality it was done for exactly the same reasons as mentioned by Stringos; to rob the Macedonian people of their “national equality”. According to Fotev this view was taken in the all-Greek CPG December 1942 Conference during which the CPG Regional Committee staff and officials, for Greek occupied Macedonia and Thrace, “preached to the Macedonian people that all Macedonians will receive equality and will live free in Greece after they achieve victory over the fascist axis...” (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 69.) Of course this was only done to attract the Macedonian people into the conflict in order for the Greeks to achieve their own political aims. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 69). Senior CPG, EAM and ELAS officials held the view that there were no Macedonians in Greek occupied Macedonia, but only “Slavophone” Greeks. In fact Stefanos Sarafis, Supreme Commander of ELAS, and Evripidis Bardzis, Commander of the ELAS divisions in Greek occupied Macedonia, called the Macedonian fighters in ELAS “Slavophones”. (M. Fotev, development through NOF, p. 11.) Because of that, according to Fotev, the CPG, EAM and ELAS did not regard the Macedonians as an ethnic group. According to Fotev: “The CPG and EAM leaderships treated the Macedonian people, in Greek occupied Macedonia, only as a ‘Slavophone’ linguistic group, similar to the

Vlachs, Roma, Armenians and Jews living in Greece.” (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 11.)

According to Fotev, a lot of the blame for this should be placed on the leading Macedonian revolutionaries and CPG officials, the likes of Lazo Trpovski, Atanas Karadzha, Petro Pilaev, Trifun Hadzhiiianev, Trpe Kalimanovski and others, who showed no determination to protest SNOF’s violent dissolution. By CPG and EAM decision, in May 1944, an ELAS unit, commanded by Aristotelis Huturas-Arianos, “in the most brutal manner”, arrested the SNOF District leadership in Kostur Region. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 71.) To show his loyalty to the CPG, Lazo Dimovski-Oshenski, SNOF District Committee Second Secretary, elected at the 2nd SNOF Conference, during the inquiry, falsely accused members of the SNOF leadership as being anti-party elements and Macedonian nationalists. Based on his false testimony, the SNOF leaders were accused of being autonomists and nationalists who worked under “foreign directives”. (Ibid, p. 71.) Immediately after that the CPG leadership dissolved SNOF. To prove their loyalty to the CPG, the aforementioned “Macedonian revolutionaries and communists” dedicated themselves to implementing CPG policies... (Ibid, p. 69.)

Because of the anti-Macedonian CPG position and policies, the partisan movement in ELAS, in western Greek occupied Macedonia, from March to September 1944, until Bulgaria’s capitulation, “went through a difficult crisis”. By infiltrating ELAS with their agents, and with assistance from the quisling Greek police, PAO armed units, EDES and the Vlach Legion, the occupiers strengthened their armed struggle against the partisans and not only terrorized the population in the liberated territory in Greek occupied Macedonia, but also managed to establish their own bases in the villages inhabited by Greeks, especially by the Christian Turkish colonists and settlers from Asia Minor. (Ibid, p. 64.) On top of that, the occupier’s agents and Greek quislings who infiltrated ELAS, especially command positions, caused internal strife in the partisan units. The heaviest armed conflicts took place in the villages Konstanta and Zabardeni, undertaken to liquidate the Macedonian fighters. (Ibid.)

The situation was heavily exploited by the pro-Bulgarian organizations “Macedono-Bulgarian Committee” and “Ohrana” to improve their own position and to expand their influence in Voden, Lerin and, especially, Kostur Region. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 64-65.) The CPG leadership found itself in a compromising position where it had to make temporary concessions.

The “Gotse” Macedonian battalion within the ELAS composition

In July 1944 negotiations took place between representatives of the NOV and PO Headquarters in the Republic of Macedonia and ELAS for the formation of separate Macedonian units as part of the ELAS composition. (M. Fotev, views and notes. p. 18-19.) When an agreement was reached, the CPG leadership decided to form a Macedonian battalion. On August 2, 1944, during the 41st anniversary of the Ilinden Uprising, a meeting was held in the village Pozdivishta, near Mount Vicho, during which the Macedonian battalion was formed. This meeting coincided with another meeting, held in the Sveti Prohor Pchinski Monastery, during which ASNOM proclaimed the constitution of the Macedonian national state, the Republic of Macedonia, as an equal federal unit of Democratic Federal Yugoslavia. The same day 13 armed pro-Bulgarian counter-bandits were captured and publicly tried for committing serious crimes against the people and for killing partisans. They were sentenced to death and executed in the village Pozdivishta, Kostur Region. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 56.) The first regular Macedonian units in the all-Macedonian battalion in Greek occupied Macedonia were placed within the ELAS XXVIII Regiment. In ELAS the Macedonian battalion was registered in II-A, and was known by its popular name the “Gotse battalion”. (M. Fotev, views and notes, p. 18.) The Macedonian Gotse battalion was created in the presence of CPG officials Renos Mihaelas, a representative of the ELAS IX Division, and Andoni Andonopoulos-Periklis, CPG Regional Committee First Secretary for Kostur Region, who solemnly declared that they would form a Macedonian brigade and a division. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 71-72.)

The Gotse battalion consisted of four units with a total of 500 Macedonian fighters from Kostur and Lerin Regions; about 200 partisans, who had previously served in the units of the XXVIII Regiment, about 200 from the ELAS reserve forces, about 40 from the SNOF, CPG and EAM non-combatants, and about 60 from the battalion which had returned from Karaorman. (M. Fotev, views and notes, p. 18.) Atanas Koroveshevski was appointed commander of the battalion. Unfortunately, the CPG Regional Committee for Kostur Region immediately dismissed him because he had left ELAS and had fled with the fighters to Karaorman. Kosmas Spanos Amindas was put in his place but the battalion fighters refused to accept him and the command position was given to Ilia Dimovski-Gotse. (Ibid, p. 18.) Political Commissar Risto Kolencev-Kokino and Chief of Staff Dimitar Tupurkovski-Titan remained as part of the Battalion Headquarters. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 56.) The Macedonian battalion fighters wore similar partisan hats and had the same badges as all the other ELAS units, not the five-pointed star. (M. Fotev, views and notes, p. 19.)

The battalion served as a special unit for only two months. (Ibid, p. 19.) At the same time the Macedonian battalion fought against the German occupying forces and performed actions to disarm the pro-Bulgarian “Macedono-Bulgarian Committee” counter-band movement. During August and September it disarmed the counter-bands in the villages Mokreni, Bobishta, Zagorichani, Komunichevo and other villages where the counter-bandits surrendered their arms en masse and some voluntarily joined the ranks of the Macedonian battalion and fought bravely. According to Fotev, included among those who joined the partisans and fought bravely were Vasil Zigenga from the village Zagorichani and Sulio from the village Tsereshnitsa. During the same period the following counter-band positions and village strongholds were destroyed: Prekopana, Chereshnitsa, Olisha, Tiolishta, Setoma, Shestrevo and others. (Ibid, 56.) All counter-bandits who were proven to have committed treason and crimes against the people were condemned to death and shot. Included among those shot were Pando Makriev, Stavro Temo, Pando Gamvrola from the village Komunichevo, and others. (Ibid, p. 56.) Some, the likes of Risto Rukov, Apostol Gamvrola, Stavro Gurgushev and many others, fled from Greek occupied Macedonia and went to Bulgaria before Bulgaria capitulated. (Ibid.)

At that time, in early September 1944, the Macedonian battalion attacked German positions on the Greek-Albanian border thoroughfare along the road to Lerin, destroyed the watchtowers and disabled the Korcha-Lerin and Lerin-Kostur thoroughfare. (Ibid.) On September 3, 1944 the first platoon of the 3rd unit, commanded by Mihail Apostolov-Graniti from the village Krchishta and by political commissar Traiche Tsafara from the village Smrdesh, led by detachment political commissar Mincho Fotev, entered the city Kostur just as the German military units were withdrawing. Following the 3rd unit, Commander Tashko Boinov's platoon entered and after that units of the ELAS XXVIII Regiment led by Iani Pachura who, as a high ranking officer, assumed responsibility for the city. (Ibid, p. 56-57.) The headquarters of the ELAS Regiment did not allow the Macedonian unit to take over the city. In fact the Macedonian units were sharply criticized by Headquarters for taking action without prior authorization and therefore were ordered to withdraw from the city. (M. Fotev, views and notes, p. 20.)

Bulgaria capitulated on September 9, 1944. With its capitulation and withdrawal of its army units and with the withdrawal of the German forces from Greece, a new situation was created in Greek occupied Macedonia. At this point the CPG saw it to make it a priority, in the interests of Greece, to restore Greece to its prewar Versailles borders. The Party leadership took action to make sure no separate Macedonian units existed in ELAS. Instead of recognizing the Macedonian contribution, the CPG and EAM did a complete reversal and not only did not recognize the Macedonian contribution but refused to recognize the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia, and consequently the Macedonian national liberation movement (PLM).

According to Fotev: "The CPG denied the Macedonian people their right to create their national people's liberation movement, a right they had earned as a result of their participation in World War II and the disastrous consequences they suffered." (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 58.) The only reason the Macedonian people were even recognized as "Slavo-Macedonians" was so that they could be mobilize into the armed struggle against the fascist occupiers to

liberate Greece. In no way were the Macedonians ever recognized or accepted as equals with the Greek people. It was more than obvious that SNOF was created, as a temporary measure, because it was needed to fight against the occupying forces and against the pro-Bulgarian movement in Greek occupied Macedonia. According to Fotev: “SNOF was needed, but only as a tool in Greek hands, to fight against the Great Bulgarian policy and against the pro-Bulgarian counter-bands.” (Ibid, p. 48.) This was a Greek ploy to fool the Macedonian people into believing that they were fighting for their rights and to engage them en masse and then to rob them of all gains they had made, even though those gains were made for a common cause, as was the case with the anti-fascist struggle. According to Fotev, about 80% of the Macedonian people were organized and actively participated in the struggle against the occupiers and domestic traitors. (Ibid, p. 60.) The CPG and EAM caused strong resentment among the Macedonian communists in the SNOF leadership and in the partisan units. The decision to dissolve SNOF, as well as the intolerant Greek attitude towards the Macedonian battalion, was counter-revolutionary and an anti-Macedonian act. (Ibid, p. 72.) What is even more amazing is that the CPG leadership accused the battalion of cooperating with the English, and that “through the airport in the town Rupishsta, the battalion was supplied with arms and ammunition” at a time when that airport “was under ELAS supervision...” (Ibid, p. 72.) This is what the Macedonian people had to put up with all through the conflict, which had far-reaching consequences.

There was fierce reaction from the CPG and the ELAS Regiment Headquarters against the Macedonian Gotse Battalion undertaking independent combat actions or forming new Macedonian units, battalions, or brigades. In fact, the ELAS Regiment Headquarters issued orders to dismantle the Macedonian battalion by force if necessary. As the situation intensified, commander and staff at battalion Headquarters, Ilia Dimovski-Gotse, Paskal Mitrevski, Atanas Koroveshovski, Mincho Fotev and others, decided to inform the NOV and POM Headquarters of the growing situation. Paskal Mitrevski was dispatched to see NOV and POM and seek a response. (M. Fotev, views and notes, p. 20.) While they were waiting for Paskal Mitrevski to return ELAS units initiated attacks against the Gotse battalion in an attempt to either dissolve it and

arrest 90 of its fighters, who were declared “rebels” because they refused to disband, or transfer it from Mount Vicho to Kozheni Region as ordered by the IX Division of the ELAS XXVIII Regiment. (M. Fotev, views and notes, p. 20.)

Gotse Battalion crossing over the border into the Republic of Macedonia

In order to “avoid clashing with ELAS units and unnecessary bloodshed” the Gotse battalion left Mount Vicho and crossed over the border, at “Markova Noga” checkpoint near the village Luboino, and entered the Republic of Macedonia. It then moved to the village Graeshnitsa, Bitola Region, where it remained stationary while new fighters, who individually or collectively had previously left ELAS, joined it. The battalion grew to over 200 fighters. (Ibid, p. 20-21.) The partisans in this battalion were issued new badges including five-pointed stars to wear on their hats. (Ibid, p. 21.)

While the Gotse battalion was stationed in the village Graeshnitsa it was visited by Paskal Mitrevski, Lambro Cholakov and Renos Mihaelas, ELAS IX Division Commissioner who had just arrived from NOV and POM General Headquarters. General Headquarters instructors also arrived to assist with resolving the political and organizational problems. (Ibid.)

Macedonian people’s situation in Greek occupied Macedonia under Greek monarchic post-war control

After the monarchist regime was established in Greece, to which the CPG leadership gave legitimacy by signing the Varkiza Agreement on February 12, 1945, the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia found themselves in a worse situation than before the war. It was as if they were thrown back to the Metaxas dictatorship and systematically terrorized by the Greek police and the gendarmerie, but this terror was tougher, more horrifying and more violent and was committed by the Greek paramilitary and by Greek armed terrorist gangs. These gangs were composed of fascist and destructive elements which, until yesterday, had cooperated with the occupiers. They were led by Frantsiskos Kolaras-Tsezos, a Turkish colonist from Asia Minor, who initially settled in the village

Gorentsi and then in Rupishsta, Kostur Region. During the occupation he terrorized the Kostur population then, after the occupiers withdrew, he was arrested and imprisoned. At the beginning of 1945 after the Varkiza Agreement was signed, he was released, armed and, along with other leaders of paramilitary and armed gang members, sent to terrorize the Macedonian population in Greek occupied Macedonia. Included among the other armed terrorist gang leaders that Kolaras led with, were Georgios Mitrushis-Gifas, Andreas Papadopoulos, Aristotelis Kendros, Theodoros Skotidas, Georgios Tsaris, Simos Zupas, Iordanis Spiropoulos, and Papadinas the priest from Bela Tsrkva. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 69; Development through the National Liberation Front (NOF) in Greek occupied Macedonia, p. 3.) They acted in “the most cruel way” against the Macedonian people; heinously killing innocent Macedonians.

According to Fotev: “After they killed a Macedonian they cutoff the head, hammered a spear into it and carried it around the settlements to frighten people.” (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 3.) They also raped and killed many girls as confirmed by one of Fotev’s reports. According to Fotev: “At night the Monarcho-Fascist bands from the village Zagorichani abducted 17 women, took them to Giolee near Lake Kostur and brutally killed them all...” These particular bandits were led by Stavros Haralampidis and during the night abducted Anastasia Steriovski from her home in Rupishsta, and after raping her they slaughtered her and left her dead body in the garden. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 3-4.) These gangs also often looted these women’s households and beat them to death. According to Fotev: “These Monarcho-Fascist orgies were horrible. The life and dignity of every Macedonian man and woman depended on the will of each bandit, of each gendarme, of each policeman... These monsters beat the people to death in their own homes... on the street... and were not willing to spare a woman, or even a minor. Girls were raped in front of their parents. This was done in order to force the people to abandon their homeland and leave.” (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 3-4.) Included among the armed bandits operating in Rupishsta were Georgios Mitrushis-Gifas, Aristotelis Kendros, Tomas Bendos, Eleftherios Liakos, Rigas Karageorgiou, Filipas Samaras, Stavros Halarambidis, brothers Georgios and Harilaos Livanidis, and Gregorios Saris. At

night, disguised and wearing masks, they attacked the houses of Macedonian fighters. According to Fotev's startling testimony, Evtalia Changova, who survived her torture, made the following statement: "It was midnight. My daughter Sofia and I were asleep. Then suddenly we were attacked by a group of masked men, Monarcho-Fascists, I believe. With guns pointed at us they began to beat us. They cursed and swore at us something awful, they demanded to know who we were hiding in the house. One of the attackers – Georgios Mitrushis-Gifas was holding a human head in his hand. The head was half-covered with a black handkerchief. He pushed it towards me and said it was the head of my son Tomo. I was petrified and trembling with fear. My daughter fell unconscious. After they searched the house they all, one by one, beat us by kicking and punching us. Then, when they were departing, they threatened us not tell anyone what they had done..." Kosta Tamboura from the same town was beaten nearly to death by these bandits and then buried alive. (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 69; Developments through NOF, p. 3-4.)

At the time there was no organized resistance against this Monarcho-Fascist terror and the regime allowed these gangs to operate freely. The impact of the regime, however, was not limited to terrorizing individuals; it was also targeting anti-Monarcho-Fascist Greek democratic parties and organizations. Especially targeted by the Greek police, by special military formations and by the Greek National Guard, were the CPG, EAM and EPON. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 4.) It was under these conditions that the March 31, 1946 parliamentary elections were held in Greece. Powerless to do anything to change the situation, the CPG and EAM decided to boycott the elections. Unfortunately, the Monarcho-Fascist regime legalized its rule, even without their participation, after which it escalated the terror in Greek occupied Macedonia. (Ibid, p. 15.)

The Macedonian people, especially the Macedonian fighters, who fought during the war (WW II) to free Greece from the fascists, found themselves in a frightening situation. The Macedonian people were not given any choice except to pick up guns and fight back to defend themselves. They were forced to start independent Macedonian political organizations and "boldly, in a revolutionary

way, continue their just struggle for freedom against their Greek oppressors...” (Ibid.)

Formation of the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade” and the Political Commission

A new battalion was formed in the village Velushina with the fighters who had arrived from Greek occupied Macedonia. Appointed Commander of this battalion was Atanas Koroveshovski. Krsto Mangov was appointed political commissar. (M. Fotev, views and notes, p. 21) Later the Lerin-Kostur battalion was formed with Ilia Dimovski-Gotse as its Commander. In Battalion Headquarters Pere from Prilep was appointed political commissar, Naum Shupurkovski-Leon was appointed deputy political commissar, Steve from Velushina, Bitola Region, was appointed Chief of Staff, Mincho Fotev was appointed Secretary of SKOJ and Giore Gioreski from Prilep was appointed instructor... (M. Fotev, views and notes, p. 21.) Immediately after its formation the battalion, under the command of Koroveshovski, left for Greek occupied Macedonia and took up position in Kostur Region. (Ibid.)

The Lerin-Kostur battalion entered Bitola on November 4, 1944, the same day Bitola was liberated, and it was converted into a brigade. (Ibid.) The political governing body named “Political Commission of Macedonia under Greece”, headed by Paskal Mitrevski, was also formed here at this time. (Ibid.)

Later the Voden Macedonian battalion, led by Giorgi Urdov-Dzhodzho and Pavle Rakovski, arrived in Bitola from Prilep. (M. Fotev, views and notes, p. 21-22.)

(Pavle Rakovski-Gotse was from the village Dolno Kleshtina, Lerin Region. He was born on May 23, 1913. He graduated from the pedagogical school in Solun and was a teacher at the school in the village Tsako, Meglen Region. He was a participant in the anti-fascist movement in Meglen Region and was regional leader in the ELAS reserves in Ostrov Region and a fighter in the Voden Macedonian ELAS partisan battalion. He created a special Macedonian alphabet and published a Proclamation to the Macedonian people in Voden Region. After the CPG leadership

decided to disband the battalion, in mid-October, he, along with the Macedonian units, crossed over into the Republic of Macedonia where he participated in the creation of the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade” composed of the Macedonian fighters from Greek occupied Macedonia, in which he was appointed member of the political Commission of the Macedonians under Greece. In early 1945 he returned to Greek occupied Macedonia to a locality in Meglen Region. During NOF’s establishment on April 23, 1945 he was part of a six-person leadership responsible for agitation, propaganda and publishing. He was a member of the NOF Coordinating Bureau responsible for agitation and propaganda. He published the newspaper “Nepokoren”. He was a member of NOF in the second international Congress of peace in Prague in April 1949. After the Informburo resolution and after DAG’s defeat, he and the other NOF top leaders were arrested in Albania on October 7, 1949 by DAG security organs. In Albania he was imprisoned in the “Bureli” camp prison and was later transferred to the Central prison in Tirana, and after that, in December 1949, he was sent to the USSR where he was sentenced to 10 years in prison and attached to a concentration camp in Siberia. After the liberation of the camp in 1960, he and his family returned to the Socialist Republic of Macedonia and resided in Skopje. He was awarded for his revolutionary involvement. He died in Skopje on January 10, 1990.)

In the first half of November 1944, the Brigade in Bitola was joined by about 300 new recruits, all from Greek occupied Macedonia, who lived in Bitola and who came from Bulgaria from the Macedonian units from Greek occupied Macedonia who were former soldiers and officers in the Bulgarian army. In time the number of fighters was increased to more than 2,500. More new battalions were created bringing their total number to six. This included the Lerin-Kostur battalion which had left Greek occupied Macedonia. Commanders of these battalions were Atanas Koroveshovski, Risto Iankulovski, Miltiadi Popnikolov-Cvetko, Dimitar Tupurkovski-Titan, Risto Kardalov and Sotir Andonovski. Deputy Commanders were Pando Markovski, Blagoi Dimitrov, Lefter Olevski and Metodi Bikov. Political commissioners of the battalions were Pando Shiperkov (Captain in the JNA), Pando Trpovski-Buntovski, Giorgi Iakov, Vangel Mangov, Andon Boshkov (Captain in the JNA) and Argir Kuzevski. Deputy political commissars were Dinko Delevski,

Kocho Kalinchev-Iovan, Vane Siskovski, Krsto Mangov and Mihail Apostolov-Granit. (Ibid, p. 23) In February 1945 Spiro Lazarevski was appointed deputy political commissar in the battalion commanded by Atanas Koroveshovski. (Ibid, p. 23.) On November 18, 1944 Brigade Headquarters, in accordance with the Political Committee and representatives of the National Liberation of Macedonia, ordered a reorganization. Appointed to General Headquarters were Ilia Dimovski, Gotse Commander, Mihail Keramitchiev, Political Commissar, Vangel Aianovski-Oche, Deputy Political Commissar, Steve from the village Velushina, Chief of Staff, Mincho Fotev, Secretary of SKOJ, and Gioro Gioreski, Instructor for youth issues. Even before Vangel Aianovski-Oche had a chance to take his position, the Political Committee withdrew their decision on his appointment and he was replaced with Vasil Makrievski. Giorgi Atanasovski-Blazhe was appointed permanent representative in the Headquarters by the Brigade Political Commission. (M. Fotev, views and notes, p. 22.)

In February 1945, on the orders of NOV and POM General Staff, a reorganization took place and new compositions were created from the brigade that included 3 infantry battalions, 1 special battalion and 1 heavy weapons battalion. Due to deteriorating relations in Brigade Headquarters more changes were made. General Headquarters dismissed Naum Peiov from his duty as deputy commander because he was pointed out as being “the main culprit for the bad relations...” Political Commissar Mihailo Keramitchiev was also sacked for the same reason and replaced with Dinko Delevski. (Ibid, p. 23.) The Brigade remained at that same formative composition until May 2, 1945 when it was disbanded. According to Fotev: “Perhaps there was a formal act to have the brigade disbanded on April 2, 1944, but it was actually disbanded on May 2, 1944. The brigade took part in the May Day celebration in Skopje.” (Ibid, p. 24.)

National Liberation Front for the Macedonians in Greek occupied Macedonia

The Macedonian national revolutionary organization under the name: National Liberation Front (NOF) was founded on April 23, 1945. At the same time it was decided to establish a national youth

organization (NOMS) and the Macedonian national organization for women (AFZH). According to Fotev: “The establishment of NOF, NOMS and AFZH was one of the biggest benefits for the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia, since Macedonia came under Greek dominion.” (M. Fotev, developments through NOF.)

The NOF organizational leadership, named in the documents as the “NOF Main Board” or the “NOF Senior Leadership”, was made up of six members that included Paskal Mitrevski, Giorgi Urdov-Dzhodzhov, Atanas Koroveshovski, Mihailo Keramitchiev, Pavle Rakovski and Mincho Fotev. The leadership was appointed on May 21, 1945 in Skopje, in the “Matsura” building on “Ortse Nikolov” street. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 8.). Paskal Mitrevski was appointed Political Secretary. Atanas Koroveshovski was made responsible for military affairs. Mincho Fotev was appointed Secretary of NOMS and SKOJ. (Ibid.) The NOF leadership functioned under the body of the CPM (Communist Party of Macedonia)... (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 7.) During NOF’s constitutive meeting, discussions took place to determine responsibilities for the various organs and functions of people’s Boards as well as the responsibilities of the AFZH Secretary. However, the answers to these questions were deferred to the next meeting. (Ibid, p. 7-8.)

Immediately after it was constituted, the NOF Main Board held a working meeting. Political Secretary Paskal Mitrevski spoke of NOF’s historic significance and of its upcoming tasks as well as responsibilities. He also spoke of the political situation in Greece, particularly about the internal situation and the Greek communist movement. He also spoke about the ferocity with which the Monarcho-Fascist regime terrorized the Macedonian population. Other issues discussed during the meeting included urgent organizational and personnel matters such as:

1. A decision to separate Greek occupied Macedonia into 5 districts: 1. Kostur, 2. Lerin, 3. Voden, 4. Enidzhe-Vardar and Gumendzhiski and 5. Eastern District to include Seres and Drama, and to commit to this effective separation and identify activities for the governing bodies.

2. A decision to establish the NOF, NOMS and AFZH organizational structures and the Communist organizations for country, district, city and village organizations and governing bodies.

3. The NOF Board appointed the following District Secretaries: Lambro Cholakov from the village Smrdesh of Kostur Region, a participant of PLM, was appointed Kostur District Secretary. Risto Ianovski was appointed Lerin District Secretary, Vangel Aianovski was appointed Voden District Secretary and Ivan Nitchev from Gumendzhe was appointed Enidzhe-Vardar and Gumendzhe District Secretary. No Secretary was appointed for the Eastern District but Mihail Apostolov, an instructor on the NOF Main Board, was given that responsibility.

(Mihail Apostolov- Graniti was from the village Krchishta, Kostur Region. He was born on November 25, 1923 and was a participant in the PLM. He was a fighter in ELAS in the “Lazo Trpovski” unit in 1943, as well as deputy political commissar in a unit in the Kostur Macedonian battalion, commander of a platoon in the Kostur-Lerin battalion “Gotse” and member of DAG staff on Mount Vicho in 1946. He died as commander of a DAG battalion on Mount Gramos on March 31, 1948. (Ibid, p. 8.))

4. Decision to establish an agitation and propaganda department. Paskal Mitrevski was assigned to organize this department.

5. Decision to organize national defense and armed groups to protect the people from the Greek Monarcho-Fascist regime terror and from the Greek armed gangs. To form regional and district armed groups to act under the direction of the NOF regional and district secretaries. (Ibid, p. 8.)

6. Decision to address the government of the People’s Republic of Macedonia to organize acceptance of exiles and refugees from Greek occupied Macedonia. (Ibid, p. 8-9.) This request was accepted by Skopje and a Main Committee for refugee affairs was formed and headed by the NOF Main Board. Appointed President of this board

was Georgi Bonchev from Drama Region and Paskal Mitrevski acted as its Secretary. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 9.)

NOF for Greek occupied Macedonia was created and organized under direct CPM Central Committee leadership. At the very moment when World War II was practically over, the USSR, Britain and the United States established their influence over the Balkans. With a Monarcho-Fascist regime in power in Greece, Britain and the USA took a position to safeguard Greece's territorial integrity to prewar Versailles borders. Four months earlier, however, the same leaders from the People's Republic of Macedonia, who fought fiercely with the units of the Macedonian army in the first days of January, now sought to continue the struggle to liberate the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia. The Macedonian communists and the Macedonian people were incited to start a new armed liberation struggle. According to Fotev, the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia "were encouraged to start new, hopeful and optimistic revolutionary exploits for a just cause..." (Ibid, p. 10.)

The constituent and first NOF Main Board working meeting was attended by Tsvetko Uzunovski-Abas, a representative of the CPM Central Committee, and on behalf of the CPM Central Committee he praised the formation of NOF for the Macedonians in Greek occupied Macedonia. He informed the NOF leadership that it would have full and comprehensive assistance from the CPM and from the People's Republic of Macedonia. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 9.) After the meeting the NOF leadership left the Republic of Macedonia and returned to Greek occupied Macedonia. Paskal Mitrevski returned to Lerin District, Atanas Koroveshovski to Enidzhe-Vardar and Gumendzhisko District, Giorgi Urdov-Dzhodzho and Pavle Rakovski went to Voden District, and Mihail Apostoloski-Graniti went to Seres via Bulgarian occupied Macedonia. (Ibid.)

The Macedonian communists, at this point, stopped imposed organizing and leading of the liberation struggle under the CPG leadership's "Greek flag", which was fatal to the Macedonian liberation. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 5.) After they became independent of the CPG, they formed an independent

Macedonian communist party in Greek occupied Macedonia, but this Party chose to act through NOF. According to Fotev, the formation of this Party had CPM Central Committee consent.

According to Fotev, NOF's goals were defined as follows:

1. To struggle for the national and social liberation of the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia;
2. To affirm the national identity and struggle of the Macedonian people for their national freedom and rights;
- 3 To actualize the Macedonian National Question in the political life in Greece;
4. To organize resistance against the bloody terror and genocide implemented by the Greek Monarcho-Fascist government;
5. To strengthen the moral, political and national unity of the Macedonian people;
6. To reveal and smash Vancho Mihailov's espionage organizations which, as agents of the Anglo-American imperialists, are fighting against the interests of the Macedonian people;
7. To foster and strengthen the brotherhood and unity with the Greek people and to fight a joint struggle with the progressive Greek forces against the enemies of freedom and the independence of Greece;
8. To familiarize the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia with the national and historical benefits of a new Yugoslavia and with the progress of the Macedonian people in the People's Republic of Macedonia;
9. To struggle to bridge the artificial gap between the Macedonian people and to bring the Macedonian people from all parts closer together, especially now that the People's Republic of Macedonia is the Piedmont to the full liberation of the Macedonian people. (Ibid, p. 5-6,)

With this proclamation and establishment of NOF we hope to return optimism and faith in the success of our struggle for national liberation. (Ibid, p. 6.) With NOF on the scene, the Macedonian people from Greek occupied Macedonia will finally gain their national and political leadership. (Ibid, p. 5.)

To NOF's response, the Greek Monarcho-Fascist regime stepped up its monitoring activities and its attacks in an attempt to dismantle it. Arrested NOF activists and supporters were brutally tortured and tried by military courts. On July 26, 1946 a military court in Enidzhe-Vardar sentenced to death and executed Mirka Ginova AFZH Secretary and hero of the Macedonian people, Pando Terpovski NOF District Board Secretary, Tasho Ivanovski Head of NOMS from Rupishsta, Giorgi Proeski from Voden, Dimitar Limbov from the village Vladova, Risto Stoianov, Petre Popdimitrov, Tomo Mihailov, Giorgis Mistikidis, Vasil Delevski from the village Chuka and others. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 6.)

(Irina Ginova-Mirka was from the village Rusilovo, Voden Region. She was born in 1916. She completed her elementary schooling in her native village and after that she completed a three-year domestic studies course in Voden and took a teacher's course in Kostur. She taught in the village Kutugeri in Voden Region in an area populated by Turkish colonists and settlers from Asia Minor. After that she taught in the Macedonian village Velkoianevo in Voden Region. In 1941, after Greece was occupied by the fascist forces, she returned to her native village and joined the Greek resistance movement and the Macedonian national liberation movement. In 1943 she became member of the Regional Board of the EPON youth organization for Ostrovo Region, and then a member of the Communist Party of Greece. She canvassed, attracted and organized many young Macedonian partisans into PLM. She was an ELAS fighter in the Voden detachment in 1944 and participated in the armed struggle against the fascist forces. She was a member of the NOF District Board and AFZH District Board Secretary for Voden Region in 1945. She was captured by the Monarcho-Fascists during the struggle, tried by a military court and sentenced to death. She was executed on July 26, 1946.)

(Pando Trpovski-Bundovski was from the village Galishte, Kostur Region. He was a communist, an ELAS fighter, member of the PLM of the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia, political commissar of the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade” and NOF District Committee secretary. He was arrested by the Greek Monarcho-Fascist police, sentenced to death and shot in Athens in 1948.)

(Giorgi Proevski was from the city Voden. He was a participant of the PLM, member of the NOF Board for Voden Region and a fighter in the ELAS Voden Macedonian battalion. He was sentenced to death by a Greek Monarcho-Fascist Military Court and was executed in the Enidzhe-Vardar cemetery on July 26, 1946.)

(Dimitar Limbov was from the village Vladova, Voden Region. He was a participant of the PLM and a member of the NOF Regional Board. He was sentenced to death by a Greek Monarcho-Fascist Military Court and was executed on July 26, 1946.)

(Risto Stoianov, a NOF activist, was from the village Mesimeri, Voden Region. He was sentenced to death by a Greek Monarcho-Fascist Military Court and was executed in the Enidzhe-Vardar cemetery on July 26, 1946.)

(Petre Popdimitrov was from Voden. He was an activist and member of the NOF City Board. He was sentenced to death by a Greek Monarcho-Fascist Military Court and was executed on July 26, 1946.)

(Tomo Mikhailov was from the village Bugovo, Voden Region. He was a participant in the PLM and was a member of the NOF Regional Committee. He was sentenced to death by a Greek Monarcho-Fascist Military Court and was executed on July 26, 1946.)

Both Greek uniformed and secret police were instructed and empowered to detect NOF organizers and activists and to “execute them on the spot”! Killed by this method were Atanas Koroveshovski, NOF Main Board member, Gligor Kiosev from Rupishsta, Zhivko Popovski, Aleko Vasilev from the village

Gumendzhe, Kukush Region, and Kuzma Kaloianovski. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 6.) In the cities, in Greek occupied Macedonia, acts were organized to expel the Macedonian people. According to Fotev, during demonstrations the Greeks carried placards and chanted “Bulgarians leave!” and “Death to the Bulgaro-Communists!”

(Atanas Koroveshevski was from the village Smrdesh, Kostur Region. He participated in the PLM, was commander of the First Macedonian battalion formed in Karaorman in 1944 and was Commander of the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade”. He was killed in combat on September 3, 1945 at the village Kornishor, Enidzhe-Vardar Region.)

(Zhivko Popovski was from the village Popozhani, Lerin Region. He participated in the PLM, was an ELAS fighter and was a member of the NOF District Board and a member of the CPG Lerin Committee. He was killed in 1948.)

(Kuzma Kaloianovski was from the village Nestram, Kostur Region. He was a revolutionary and a communist before World War II. He was a participant of the PLM and a veteran. He was a NOF Regional Committee Secretary. He was killed in 1947.)

According to Fotev, after NOF was established, British and American agents in Greece initiated a strong propaganda campaign in support of Vancho Mihailov, creating an autonomist movement under the slogan “united and independent Macedonia”. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 6-7.) Their real goal was to create spy and sabotage centres to combat the PLM in Greek occupied Macedonia and to work against the People’s Republic of Macedonia with “espionage and subversive activities against the people’s democratic Balkan countries, but primarily against the SFRY”. (Ibid, p. 7.)

In spite of all the roadblocks, NOF still experienced rapid progress. By mid-June it had formed its first four NOF county boards and by the end of August it formed NOF city boards in Lerin, Voden, Enidzhe-Vardar and Rupishsta. It also formed eight district boards and a few area boards, each staffed with five members. In that

period it had formed NOF, NOMS and AFZH cells in about half of the Macedonian settlements. By October 1945 the organization had expanded its territory almost throughout the entire Greek occupied part of Macedonia. (Ibid.) The Eastern Districts, Seres and Drama, were, however, progressing much slower mainly due to difficult conditions and to lack of staff. (Ibid.) It did not take too long for NOF to grow and spread its organizations nation-wide promoting the national liberation movement and equality with the Greek people; “freedom, independence and peace in Greece”. (Ibid, p. 10.) This, according to Fotev, was due to two “historical” moments:

1. The glorious revolutionary traditions and ideals of the Ilinden Uprising and the legacy of the Ilinden revolutionaries whose offspring will continue their struggle until its final realization.
2. The winning outcome of the People’s Liberation War and the revolution fought side by side with the Yugoslav nation and nationalities in this common struggle, which created the Macedonian republic and which inspired the liberation movement in Greek occupied Macedonia. (Ibid, p. 10.) All this was achieved with “moral, political and material support from the People’s Republic of Macedonia”, consequently from Yugoslavia. (Ibid.) The Macedonian nation was united in NOF with the conviction that only “a revolutionary struggle with blood and sacrifices can deliver national and social freedom...” (Ibid.)

The CPG leadership attacked NOF with “special sharpness”. According to Fotev, the CPG during NOF’s 1st Congress labeled NOF a “nationalist and autonomist organization”. (M. Fotev, CPG’s reaction to NOF, p. 2.) Even the EAM protested to NOF’s existence. In no time at all the Greeks in the CPG and EAM declared the NOF leaders Vancho Mihailov’s agents, established to break the unity of the democratic movement in Greece. According to Fotev, the CPG and EAM did not recognize NOF; if they did then they would have to change their “chauvinistic and greater-Greece attitude” towards the Macedonian National Question. They would then have to go in front of the Greek people and tell them that they have recognized the Macedonian nation and that they would have to free it in Greek occupied Macedonia. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 7; CPG’s reaction to NOF, p. 3.)

The CPG was now facing a new reality created by NOF's establishment which represented an organized independent Macedonian national liberation movement. Supported by the Republic of Macedonia, NOF emerged as a political factor in Greece. The CPG could not claim, as it claimed up until then, that the Macedonians in Greek occupied Macedonia were only a minor isolated linguistic "Slavo-phone" group. A Macedonian people, as "part of the Macedonian nation which lived on its national territory", appeared in the political arena in Greece. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 12.) These Macedonian people were determined to fight for their liberation with arms and were led by their own political leaders. These were people who "no longer wanted to remain separated from their free brothers in the People's Republic of Macedonia". (Ibid, p. 12) And because of these reasons, the CPG continued to "attack and slander NOF and its leadership, opening the way for the Monarcho-Fascists to perpetrate even greater terror acts against them". (Ibid.) Eventually NOF, NOMS and AFZH collided with the CPG and came into sharp verbal exchanges regarding who had the right to recruitment in the Greek army. At this point the Macedonian leadership called on every Macedonian to avoid being drafted into the Greek military service, especially to avoid being drafted into the Greek army of the Monarcho-Fascist regime which perpetrated terror acts against the Macedonian people. The CPG then accused the Macedonians of "subversion against the Greek army". (Ibid. p. 14.)

The Monarcho-Fascist regime in Greece further intensified its repression through its police and terrorist formations, in an attempt to expel the Macedonian population in Greek occupied Macedonia through terror. This practice reached its peak with the return of the Greek King on October 28, 1946. (Ibid, p. 15.) The right-wing press, through its newspapers "Ellinikos Voras", "Nea Alithia" and others, called for the expulsion of the "Sudetenland of Greece". (Ibid, p. 15.) Because of the cruelty of the perpetrated daily terror, old people, men, women and children, naked and barefoot began to flee across the border into the Republic of Macedonia in an attempt to save their lives. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 15.) According to reports maintained by the NOF Main Board, in the first 6 months of 1945 alone, more than 25,000 Macedonians were

expelled from Greek occupied Macedonia. (Ibid, p. 15; M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 70.) The Macedonian fighters in ELAS were constantly persecuted and arrested. The number of Macedonian patriots and ELAS fighters detained and persecuted had risen to several thousand. According to Fotev, even in a small town such as Rupishsta around 300 Macedonians were arrested, three were heinously killed and about 100 were persecuted and exiled to the People's Republic of Macedonia. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 12-13.) Those arrested were sent to the infamous concentration camps such as "Makroniso", "Iura" and "Pavlos Melas" and to the prisons "Averof", "Edikule" and others in which many were killed by the Greek police using "medieval inquisitorial methods of torture". (M. Fotev, about the counter-bands, p. 70; Developments through NOF, p. 13.)

To protect the population, NOF organized a National Defense Strategy. Former ELAS fighters were combined with armed youth groups who had developed countermeasures against the terrorists. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 13.) The first partisan units were later formed from these armed groups, which at that time responded to Greek terrorist attacks with equal measures. According to Fotev: "No attack was dismissed without adequate punishment..." (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 13.) Slowly the people began to develop courage and became "revolutionized". (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 13.) People began to join NOF en masse and the organization spread and grew into a powerful national liberation movement. The Macedonian communists left the Communist Party of Greece en masse. According to Party reports for Greek occupied Macedonia, about 80% of the Macedonian communists left the CPG and joined NOF, NOMS and AFZH. (Ibid, p. 13.)

The CPG continued with its hostilities toward NOF, declaring it an "autonomist organization" at every opportunity. The CPG even harshly condemned the self-defense measures NOF undertook to protect the people from terrorism. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 13.) To show how strong the CPG's hostility was towards NOF is evidenced by the fact that the CPG worked with the Monarcho-Fascists against NOF. The CPG District leadership for Greek occupied Macedonia called on the Greek police and on other

law enforcement authorities to “liquidate the NOF militants and their supporters”. The CPG undertook a propaganda campaign calling on the Greek population to mobilize against NOF. In June 1945 the CPG Regional Committee for Kostur Region distributed leaflets calling on the authorities to take measures to liquidate the “autonomist NOF”. On June 28, 1945 the CPG District Committee for Voden Region called on all party members and on all the Greek people to mobilize against the “autonomists”, “separatists” and “counter-bandits” organized by NOF. (Ibid.) All this led to strained relations.

To avoid escalation, the NOF leadership responded with restraint to the violent CPG attacks and looked for a way to normalize relations, because the CPM from the People’s Republic of Macedonia insisted that NOF normalize its relations with the CPG. (M. Fotev, the CPG’s attitude towards NOF, p. 4.)

The Macedonian PLM needed to align itself with the Greek anti-Monarcho-Fascist movement to fight against the Monarcho-Fascists and in order to do that, NOF decided it needed to support of CPG and EAM organized actions such as strikes, protests and other forms of resistance. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 15.) The majority of the NOF leaders were convinced that no Macedonian victory could be achieved without “brotherhood and unity” and without all the progressive Greek forces working together in the struggle for national rights and freedom...” (M. Fotev, development through NOF, p. 19.) For that reason the NOF leadership decided it was time to normalize relations with the CPG and EAM. According to Fotev, the NOF leadership persistently tried to remove all misunderstandings that stood between itself and the CPG and EAM. Unfortunately, there was some resistance on both sides and the desired normalization could not be achieved. (Ibid, p. 19) But, according to Fotev, the resistance of a few was not really at issue here. The real issue was that the CPG did not want to recognize the existence of the Macedonian National Question in Greece. This, Fotev says, was the fundamental issue. The main obstacle was that the CPG leadership did not have the courage to openly and clearly speak the truth to the Greek people, to the working class, or even its membership, that Macedonian people existed in Greece and, for a long time, were struggling for their own rights and independence.

(M. Fotev, development through NOF, p. 19.) And because of this lack of courage the Communist Party of Greece had no intention of ever recognizing the Macedonian people!

In early January 1946 the NOF Main Board took unilateral action to establish cooperative relations with the CPG. With such a directive it ordered the NOF, NOMS and AFZH county, district, city and regional leaderships to establish links with the CPG, EAM, AKE and EPON organizations and to show them flexibility in resolving outstanding issues, mutual accusations and attacks and to avoid conflict “at any cost” in order to achieve unity with them against the Monarcho-Fascist regime. (Ibid, p. 20.)

At about the same time the CPG’s situation was exacerbated. Communists and ELAS fighters came under extreme attacks from the Athens based Monarcho-Fascist regime. According to Fotev, who personally received this information directly from General Markos Vafiadis, by June 1946 some 80,000 Greeks and Macedonians, members and supporters of the CPG and EAM, and ELAS fighters were detained and imprisoned without a trial. About 8,000 ELAS partisan, officers and commissars were expelled from Greece and exiled in Yugoslavia. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 16.) Under these conditions the CPG decided to re-arm the partisan movement and fight back. New partisan units were created from the former ELAS fighters and their numbers were increased with time. By July 1946 there were Greek partisans in the mountainous regions of Thessaly, Epirus, Greek occupied Macedonia and other places. By CPG Central Committee Politburo decision, Markos Vafiadis was appointed supreme commander of the new forces. (Ibid.) There were only a few Greek partisan units in Greek occupied Macedonia because, at that time, both the CPG and EAM were unpopular with the Macedonian people. (M. Fotev, development through NOF, p. 17.)

The NOF Main Board met to review the situation with the appearance of Greek partisan units formed by the CPG, in Greek occupied Macedonia. At that point it was decided to increase the number of Macedonian partisans and intensify partisan actions. (Ibid, p. 16.) The existing and new units were formed with Macedonians, “exclusively from volunteers”, former ELAS

partisans and fighters from the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade”. (Ibid, p. 17.)

By directive from the Main Board, the governing bodies and activists of NOF, NOMS and AFZH were required to intensify their activities in preparing the people for a mass armed struggle against the Greek Monarcho-Fascist regime. Special persons were appointed by the Main Board to implement this directive. Appointed to central Greek occupied Macedonia; Voden, Enidzhe-Vardar and Gumendzhe Regions, was Giorgi Urdov-Dzhodzho, appointed to western Greek occupied Macedonia; Kostur, Lerin, Vicho and Gramos Regions, was Mincho Fotev. Four regional operating areas were also formed by decision of the Main Board. These were: Gramos, Vicho, Kaimakchalan and Paiak Mountains with their own Headquarters.

Commanders and commissars for each operational zone headquarters were also appointed. In the Vicho operational zone Pando Shiperkov was appointed commander and Mihail Apostolov-Graniti was appointed commissar. In the Gramos operational zone Vasil Hristovski was appointed commander and Sotir Kostovski-Direkot was appointed commissar. In the Paiak operational zone Kiro Kochko was appointed commander and Ivan Kovachev-Orfias was appointed commissar. (Ibid, p. 16-17.) Fotev did not provide information on the Kaimakchalan operational zone. The various operational zone headquarters were subordinated to the NOF Main Board and were obliged to cooperate with the NOF district leadership. The Main Board also talked about forming a central military leadership headquarters but that was delayed due to the urgency of escalating the formation and execution of the armed struggle. (Ibid, p. 17.) Also discussed at the same meeting was the need to supply the partisan detachments with arms, ammunition, clothing, food, medical supplies and other essentials. It was concluded that it could be done with help from the people. (Ibid, p. 16.)

(Pando Shiperkov was from the village Smrdesh, Kostur Region. He was a fighter in ELAS, a political commissar of the regiment of the first Macedonian battalion created in Kaimakchalan, a political commissar in a battalion of the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade”,

captain in the JHA, commander of the Vicho headquarters partisan units, member of the NOF Main Board, commander of a DAG battalion and Lieutenant Colonel in DAG. He was killed at the village Papretsko, Kostur Region, in 1948.)

(Vasil Hristovski was from the village Dobrolishta, Kostur Region. He was an ELAS fighter, a commander of a Macedonian detachment and a DAG company commander. He was killed in 1948.)

(Sotir Kostovski-Direkot was from the village Stensko, Kostur Region. He was an ELAS fighter, a political commissar of a NOF Macedonian detachment and a political commissar of a DAG detachment. He was killed in 1948.)

(Ivan Kovachev-Orfias was from Gumendzhi. He was an ELAS fighter, a member of the NOF District Board, Secretary of NOMS District Board for Enidzhe-Vardar and Gumendzhisko District, a candidate member of the NOF Central Council and a DAG company commander. He was killed in a battle on Mount Gramos in August 1949.)

The headquarters for the Gramos and Vicho operational zones were completed by the end of July 1946. Five partisan units, with twelve Macedonian partisans each, operated in the area of those zones with a total strength of 736 fighters. Two Greek armed detachments with a total of 120 fighters, under the command of Georgios and Stratos, were also operating in the same area. Of the 120 fighters, 30 were Macedonians and CPG members. (Ibid, p. 17.)

At the time the first partisan detachments were being formed in the spring of 1946, the CPG was a legal political party in Greece, in opposition to the Monarcho-Fascist regime, and was contemplating whether or not to undertake an armed struggle. (Ibid.) At that time it only had a small number of Greek partisans and the influx of new fighters was very low, despite the ferocity of the Monarcho-Fascist regime. This was because the CPG leadership restricted the development of the Greek partisan movement until the fall of 1946. According to Fotev, this was “fatal to DAG’s development”. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 18.). According to Fotev, about this General Markos Vafiadis said: “The CPG Central

Committee, led by Nikos Zahariadis, performed experiments with the partisan movement. According to the instructions I received from the Politburo and personally from General Secretary Zahariadis in July 1946, I was ordered to recruit only under the following conditions:

1. Only partisans who have been persecuted, who were anti-fascists, and who were communists and patriots, and who want to voluntarily join were allowed to join the partisan ranks.
2. In no way was I to allow Greek army soldiers, especially groups, who had left the government military to join the ranks of the partisans.
3. Defensive tactics needed to be applied. In no way were cities or other centres to be attacked where units of the government regular army were stationed.

I was categorically forbidden from forming party organizations among the partisan units.” (M, Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 18.) Due to the CPG’s indecision to pursue an armed struggle, the CPG leadership showed no interest in normalizing relations with NOF, and therefore no coordinated actions with the armed partisan detachments were performed. According to Fotev, “It was solely the fault of the CPG for not normalizing relations between NOF and CPG. The absence of coordinated joint activities significantly reduced our ability to successfully combat the Monarcho-Fascists.” (Ibid, p. 18.)

The NOF leadership continued to endeavour to reach an agreement with the CPG for joint actions. Negotiating was “difficult” and with many “barriers” to overcome, erected mostly by the CPG leadership. (Ibid, p. 19.)

In early June 1946 Paskal Mitrevski, NOF Main Board Secretary, under very difficult conditions, traveled to Solun to talk with Nikos Zahariadis, CPG Secretary General, and Leonidas Stringos, CPG Regional Committee Secretary for Greek occupied Macedonia and Thrace. Mitrevski met with the senior CPG leaders and informed

them of NOF's position and program principles. (Ibid.) The negotiations ended with NOF being recognized.

On June 16, 1946, shortly after the Solun meeting took place, the CPG Regional Committee for Greek occupied Macedonia and Thrace held its 3rd Session during which Secretary General Zahariadis announced NOF's recognition as a "democratic and progressive organization" of the Macedonian minority in Greece. (M. Fotev, the CPG's attitude towards NOF, p. 5.) Zahariadis's speech, during which he recognized NOF, was published on June 19, 1946 in the CPG central newspapers "Rizospastis" and "Laiki Foni". (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 20.) The publishing of Zahariadis's speech informed the entire Greek public about NOF's recognition. This made many Greeks unhappy, including many Party leaders who quickly changed their attitude towards NOF and further deteriorated the internal political situation in Greece. But, as it turned out, the recognition was done in order to secure Macedonian support in the struggle against the Monarcho-Fascist regime. Guided purely by self-interests, the Communist Party of Greece recognized the Macedonian national organization as a respectable political and potential military factor, and according to Fotev, "As the sole legitimate representative of the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia." (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 20.)

After Paskal Mitrevski returned from the Solun meeting, a NOF Main Board meeting was held during which Mitrevski informed the Board about the negotiations and decisions reached. The negotiations were assessed as "very successful" because the Communist Party of Greece recognized NOF as a legitimate representative of the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia as a factor in democratic Greece. (Ibid.) Towards the end of June 1946 the NOF Main Board Committee, consisting of Paskal Mitrevski, Giorgi Urdov-Dzhodzho, Pavle Rakovski, Mihailo Keramitchiev and Mincho Fotev, was summoned to visit Lazar Kolishevski, CPM Central Committee Political Secretary and Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia. The meeting was also attended by Tsvetko-Uzunovski-Abas, CPG Central Committee Organizing Secretary, during which the situation in Greek occupied Macedonia and NOF's position in relation to the CPG and EAM

were discussed. Kolishevski and Uzunovski expressed support for the normalization of relations and noted that “the unity of NOF with the CPG was of vital interest to the national liberation movement of the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia.” (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 20.)

Soon after recognizing NOF, the CPG leadership decided to initiate an armed struggle against the Monarcho-Fascist regime in order to seize power in Greece. The Macedonian people and their organization began to emerge as a reliable ally in this fight. According to Fotev, the Macedonian people had no other alternative but to fight against the Monarcho-Fascist regime in solidarity with the CPG. In October 1946, under these conditions, NOF and the CPG reached an agreement to combine forces and jointly fight against the Monarcho-Fascists. (Ibid, p. 21.) Following a directive issued by the CPM Central Committee, the NOF Main Board made arrangements to have NOF put under the leadership of the Communist Party of Greece.

According to Fotev’s understanding and interpretation, the agreement had the following eight provisions:

1. NOF was to remain an independent organization, sole legitimate representative of the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia, only to be guided by the CPG;
2. AFZH and NOMS were to exist as components of NOF;
3. NOF was to issue its own newspaper – organ of the Main Board.
4. All Macedonian communists from Greek occupied Macedonia to automatically become members of the CPG;
5. All NOF partisan detachments were to merge with those of DAG and all military and political personnel were to be deployed to the appropriate command duties at DAG military headquarters;
6. Paskal Mitrevski, NOF Main Board Secretary to become a member of the CPG Regional Committee Macedonian Bureau Secretariat for Greek occupied Macedonia and Thrace;

7. Giorgi Urdov-Dzhodzho to become a member of the chiefs of DAG General Staff;

8. Mincho Fotev to become a member of the secretariat of EPON Regional Committee for Greek occupied Macedonia and Thrace. (Ibid.)

On October 18, 1946 Paskal Mitrevski, Ilia Dimovski-Gotse and Mincho Fotev were invited to visit Kolishevski at his office. After a brief conversation about an agreement with the CPG, Kolishevski ordered the NOF leaders to show absolute loyalty to the CPG and all problems that NOF had were to be solved by the CPG. According to Fotev, at the end of the meeting Kolishevski told them that: "It was of particular interest that they consistently enforce unity with the CPG on the basis of this agreement, to maintain and strengthen unity in the ranks of NOF, to maintain and strengthen brotherhood and military solidarity with the Greek people, to consistently and unreservedly fight when necessary, and any problems that arose during the fight were to be decided jointly with the CPG leadership and with DAG headquarters..." (Ibid, p. 22.) According to Fotev, after NOF was put under CPG control, all ties and contacts with the socio-political factors in the Republic of Macedonia were to be broken. (Ibid, p. 22) The next day, October 19, 1946, the NOF Main Board representatives rushed back to Greek occupied Macedonia through Albania. They were met by DAG couriers in Korcha and were escorted back in. Paskal Mitrevski, through Gramos, arrived at DAG Headquarters on Mount Hasha where he met with General Markos Vafiadis. Ilia Dimovski-Gotse went to Mount Vicho to the Regional Headquarters of the Macedonian Partisans, where the other NOF Main Board members were, and informed them of the latest orders. Mincho Fotev went to Kostur to inform the NOF district leadership of the agreement and its implementation. (Ibid, p. 22.)

(Ilia Dimovski-Gotse was from the village Statitsa, Lerin Region. He was born in 1905 and was a revolutionary, a communist and a member of the CPG. In 1941 he left the Communist Party of Greece and founded the Macedonian Party with a national platform. He participated in the PLM, was a member of the NOF Main Board, commander of the partisan detachment Vicho in February 1943, a

commissar and commander of the Lerin-Kostur Vicho detachment in 1944, commander of the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade” in 1944, commanded the Macedonian partisan units in Vicho in 1946 and commander of a DAG battalion in 1947. He died in Skopje on July 26, 1961.)

The Greek Monarcho-Fascist government intensified its preparations to break up the Greek communist movement and to liquidate the Macedonian national liberation movement. With financial aid and military equipment from Britain and the USA, the Greek government modernized its army and gendarmerie forces. Under British and American instructions and assistance, the Greek government also created special armed formations, battalions, National Guard units and special squads consisting of fascist elements to fight against DAG. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 19.)

It was under these conditions that the Markos-Mitreviski talks took place for the implementation of the unification agreement where the Macedonian partisan units were to join DAG. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 22.) General Markos appointed his assistant Nikos Teoharopoulos-Skotidas to implement the agreement. Immediately after Paskal Mitrevski, along with Markos Vafiadis, decided how to implement the unification of forces, the Macedonian partisan units were integrated into DAG. (Ibid.)

Uniting, grouping and merging of the units was done in the regions where they operated. On November 9, 1946 all DAG and NOF units in the Gramos area were gathered together in the village Drianovo, Kostur Region, and were merged together in the presence of Paskal Mitrevski, Nikos Theoharopoulos-Skotidis and their assistants. (M. Fotev, the CPG’s attitude towards NOF, p. 7.) Here they were also reorganized and a DAG regional headquarters was created for them with Giorgi Ianuli as their commander, Iani Pachura and Ahilea Papaioanou as assistant commanders and Kozma Bukovina as political commissar. With the reorganization four partisan detachments were created. Appointed commander of the first detachment was Vasil Hristovski from the village Dobrolishta, Kostur Region, a former ELAS fighter. Hristovski was later killed in 1948. Appointed political commissar to the first detachment was

Sotir Kostovski-Direktot. Appointed commander of the second detachment was Sterio Mavpandza and political commissar Tasho Mihailovski. Appointed commander of the third detachment was Vangelis Forfalias and political commissar Georgios Papadimitriou-Mavrovounis. Appointed commander of the fourth detachment was Argir Kovachev and political commissar Atanas Kaloianov. Almost the entire leadership composition was made up of Macedonians except for the third detachment in which the commander was a Vlach and the political commissar a Greek. (M. Fotev, development through NOF, p. 22-23.) When they were done in Gramos, Paskal Mitrevski and Nikos Theoharopoulos-Skotidis were quickly escorted to Mount Vicho to implement the merger there. On November 16, 1946 they arrived in the village Vrnik in Albania, inhabited by Macedonians, where they were received by Mincho Fotev, Lambro Cholakov, German Dimovski-Stariot and Iani Pirovski. From there, accompanied by a group of Macedonian fighters, they traveled through the villages Besfina and Rulia and arrived on Mount Vicho. In the locality "Tpchianska Korea" they were met by the military and political leaders Commander Pando Shiperkov, Ilia Dimovski-Gotse, Mihail Keramitchiev and others from the Lerin District leadership where they had a meeting to discuss the military and political situation in the region, the situation with the people, the situation with the partisan units and the status of NOF, NOMS and AFZH. Updates were given by Ilia Dimovski-Gotse, Pando Shiperkov, Mincho Fotev, Lambro Cholakov, Mihail Keramitchiev and German Damovski-Stariot. (M. Fotev, development through NOF, p. 23.)

On the morning of November 21, 1946 a meeting was held in the village Bapchor, among other things, to appoint the leadership of Vicho operational zone headquarters. The meeting was attended by representatives from NOF, the CPG and DAG including Paskal Mitrevski, Nikos Theoharopoulos-Skotidis, Pando Shiperkov, Theodoros Eftimiadis, Ilia Dimovski-Gotse, Mincho Fotev and Mihail Apostolov-Graniti. Appointed were Pando Shiperkov, commander, Lefteris Katsakos, a Greek, political commissar and Mihail Apostolov-Graniti, member. The same day another meeting was held in the same village that was attended by more than 30 NOF, NOMS and AFZH leaders from the Lerin and Kostur Districts. Included among them were also Bapchor residents. Newly

appointed Commander Pando Shiperkov and Paskal Mitrevski spoke at the meeting and informed everyone of the current situation in Greece, the difficult situation created by the Monarcho-Fascist government, the rise of a democratic movement led by the CPG, the agreement made between NOF and the CPG to combine forces, and the significance of building brotherhood and unity between the Macedonian and Greek people. According to Fotev, Paskal Mitrevski's speech was followed by approval and shouting of slogans like "Long live the brotherhood and unity!", "Long live NOF!" and "Death to the Monarcho-Fascists..." (M. Fotev, development through NOF, p. 23.)

DAG Assistant Supreme Commander Nikos Theoharopoulos-Skotidis, who was also at the meeting, was given a standing ovation after he said that brotherhood and unity, as well as a common struggle with the Greek people under CPG leadership, were a factor and a guarantee that the country would be liberated from the Monarcho-Fascist tyranny and from the Anglo-American imperialists. The CPG guaranteed the emancipation of the people and the country from the Monarcho-Fascist tyranny. The CPG was fighting for democratic rights and was the only way the Macedonian people would win their national equality. According to Fotev, Nikos Theoharopoulos – Skotidis's speech was also accompanied by slogans being shouted like "Long live DAG and Comrade Markos its Supreme commander!", "Long live the brotherhood and unity". (Ibid, p. 23-34.)

After the meeting ended, with singing revolutionary songs and folk dances, the new Vicho zone operational headquarters committed to reorganizing the partisan detachments. According to Commander Pando Shiperkov, his detachments had 607 Macedonian partisans and the Greeks had only 36 fighters under Stratos Kendros's command. (Ibid, p. 24.)

On November 22, 1946 the NOF Main Board met in the village Bapchor in Kole Kiandov's house. (M. Fotev, the CPG's attitude towards NOF, p. 8.) The meeting was attended by Paskal Mitrevski, Mihail Keramitchiev, Ilia Dimovski-Gotse and Mincho Fotev. Among other things, Evdokia Baleva-Vera was appointed AFZH Secretary for Greek occupied Macedonia. Paskal Mitrevski

informed the board members of the negotiations led by DAG Supreme Commander Markos Vafiadis and the status of applying the NOF-CPG Agreement for joining forces; and that priority was given to the unification of the Macedonian partisan units with DAG forces. The Board accepted Markos's request to put two Macedonian partisan divisions in the areas of Vicho, Paiak and Kaimakchalan Mountain, numbering about 500 fighters, at the disposal of DAG's General Staff. (M. Fotev, development through NOF, p. 24.)

(Evdokia Baleva-Vera was from the village D'mbeni, Kostur Region. She participated in the PLM of the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia. She was the AFZH Main Board Secretary, a member of the NOF Main Board, a member of the NOF Coordinating Bureau, vice president of the NOF Central Council, a member of the NOF Central Council Executive committee, vice president of the all-Greek Central Council Union of democratic women, member and AFZH secretariat for a joint delegation, with Malina Markova, representing the Macedonian Congress of International Democratic women in Budapest, in December 1948. In April 1949, as a member of NOF in a joint delegation of the Democratic government of Greece, she attended the international convention of peace. After DAG was defeated, members of the NOF leadership were accused by the CPG and the CPG Politburo of being agents of Tito and on October 2, 1949 were arrested and sent to prisons in Albania where they were held until December 14, 1949. After that Evdokia and the others were transferred to the USSR. She was held in prison in Moscow from January 1950 to April 19, 1952, when she was sentenced to 8 years in prison and sent to a camp in Siberia. After relations between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia normalized, she was released and went to the People's Republic of Macedonia in Skopje where she lived until this book was published.)

NOF's orders were immediately carried out. The Macedonian Vicho partisan units were combined to form a 200 partisan detachment commanded by Lazar Poplazarov. The Macedonian Kaimakchalan and Paiak Mountain units were combined to form a second detachment of 300 partisans commanded by Giorgi Urdov-Dzhodzho. These units were made available to DAG General Headquarters. (Ibid.) At the same meeting the NOF Main Board

decided to delegate the following Macedonian communists to the CPG District Committee: Zhivko Popov to the Lerin CPG Regional District and Iani Pirovski to the Kostur CPG Regional District. (Ibid, p. 25.)

Following the decision made by the NOF Main Board, adopted during the November 22, 1946 meeting, to “unite” NOF with the CPG and “merge” the Macedonian partisan units with those of DAG, members of NOF, NOMS and AFZH began an intense political campaign to persuade the Macedonian people of the importance of conducting a joint struggle with the Greek people. On top of that the Macedonian organizations worked very hard to “mobilize the entire Macedonian people’s potential” in support of DAG in whose ranks many Macedonian young people enlisted voluntarily. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 24-25.)

The CPG leadership saw the agreement with NOF as an act which NOF took upon itself to enter the Party and infiltrate its organizations. Because of this the CPG wanted the Macedonian movement to end, to cease to exist. The CPG was not bound to take, and had not taken any action to inform the Greek people about its merger with NOF. The CPG did not even inform the population in Greek occupied Macedonia of this merger. The unity agreement was yet another CPG ploy to get the Macedonian people to massively join DAG and participate in the armed struggle. (Ibid, p. 24.) The CPG Central Committee Politburo took every action it could to eliminate NOF and the Macedonian movement leaders, especially those who advocated for an independent Macedonian PLM. The Politburo, in its great wisdom, decided that Ilia Dimovski-Gotse was one of those people and decided to harass him, labeling him an “autonomist”, a “separatist” who cooperated with the British and demanded that he be isolated and stripped of all responsibility. Markos Vafiadis, Supreme Commander of DAG, ordered Dimovski’s removal from DAG. The NOF leadership was notified of this with a request to shun him. (Ibid, p. 25.)

The NOF Main Board discussed Ilia Dimovski-Gotse’s case. The NOF Board received the DAG Supreme Commander’s request “with bitterness and indignation” and condemned the actions of the CPG Central Committee Politburo and the DAG Supreme Commander’s

decision to remove him from his management of NOF functions. (Ibid, p. 25.) Only Mihailo Keramitchiev refrained from condemning these acts because of a personal grudge against Ilia Dimovski-Gotse. According to Fotev: "Mihail Keramitchiev's dislike for Ilia Dimovski-Gotse dated back to the days when the 'First Macedonian Assault Brigade' was formed and Ilia Dimovski-Gotse was appointed commander, while Mihail Keramitchiev served as a political commissar." (Ibid, p. 25.) But despite the need for an angry response, Paskal Mitrevski decided that it was more important to pursue the agreed upon merger tasks, in the spirit of the agreement, with the CPG. At the end of the meeting Mitrevski suggested that after the partisan "unification" was implemented, he and Mincho Fotev would go to Solun and meet with the CPG Regional Committee Secretary and the EPON Regional Committee Secretary for Macedonia and Thrace and get an agreement on the fulfillment of "other requirements" regarding the unification Agreement between NOF and the CPG. Before leaving for Solun, Mitrevski appointed Mihailo Keramitchiev Acting Secretary of the NOF Main Board, until his return. All motions were accepted by the NOF Main Board. (M. Fotev, development through NOF, p. 25.)

On November 24, 1946 Paskal Mitrevski, Mihaialo Keramitchiev and Evdokia Baleva-Vera went through Lerin Pole towards Kaimakchalan to Voden Region to carry out the NOF unit mergers with DAG in that district. (Ibid, p. 25.) Mincho Fotev and courier Micho Koroveshovski were dispatched to depart immediately for Solun so that they could make more merger arrangements with Nikos Akritidis, EPON Regional Committee Secretary, as per the NOF-CPG Agreement. However, Fotev's trip to Solun was prevented by Theodoros Eftimiadis, CPG Regional Committee Secretary for Lerin Region. According to testimony given by Evdokia Baleva-Vera, later Vera Fotev: "Theodoros Eftimiadis, from the city Kostur, as a communist was a Greek police recruiter during the Metaxas dictatorship years and worked for the fascist regime." According to Vera, he always worked for the Fascism regime even throughout the Greek Civil War years. Eftimiadis did this to sabotage the Agreement. Paskal Mitrevski was informed about this by a special courier, at which point Mitrevski ordered Fotev to travel to Gumendzhisko and, with the other members of the NOF Regional Committee, prepare the ground for his arrival to

implement the merger. (Ibid, p. 25.) Fotev and Micho Koroveshevski had to travel through dangerous territory controlled by the Greek Monarcho-Fascist army and gendarmerie and arrived at Paiak Mountain on January 5, 1947. On January 7, 1947 the NOF District Board held a meeting in the village Barovitsa, attended by Ivan Nichev, Vangel Nichev, Ivan Kovachev-Orfias, Sotir Hadzhimitrovski, Kocho Kirov and others. Discussions took place regarding the situation in the region and the problems facing NOF, NOMS and AFZH. (Ibid, p. 26.) The district leadership informed those in attendance of the strained relations between NOF and the CPG party organizations and about its armed groups. Ivan Kovachev informed the group that, ten days before, a member of the CPG Regional Committee and commander of a Greek partisan unit in central Greek occupied Macedonia “insidiously attacked an armed NOF Macedonian group and disarmed it...” (M. Fotev, developments though NOF, p. 26.) To stop further deterioration in relations, the next day, on January 8, 1947, Fotev, with members of the district leadership, traveled to the Greek partisan group headquarters in “Gondach”, Paiak Mountain, and met with Captain Panos, Lefterias, Stavros and other Greek leaders who “strongly reacted” when questioned about disarming the Macedonian partisans. Instead of apologizing, the Greek military and political leaders attempted to justify their actions. (Ibid, p. 26.)

On January 9, 1947 Paskal Mitrevski and Evdokia Baleva-Vera arrived at the Mount Paiak Macedonian partisan headquarters. Upon their arrival Mihailo Keramitchiev asked to be relieved of duty due to his ill health, after which he went to Skopje, the People’s Republic of Macedonia, for treatment. (Ibid, p. 26.) According to Fotev, Keramitchiev did not have a serious health problem. There are two versions to this story. According to one version, Keramitchiev traveled to Skopje on “recovery” and “to see his immediate family”. According to the other version, he left for Skopje because Mihailo Keramitchiev and a small group in NOF, his supporters and “Macedonian separatists”, were against the Agreement to unify NOF with the CPG, and some left the PLM after the Agreement was announced. According to Fotev: “Ever since the Agreement was reached a few in NOF, headed by Mihail Keramitchiev, mostly separatists, were dissatisfied. Some left the

ranks of NOF and DAG voluntarily immediately after the Agreement was reached.” (Ibid, p. 28)

Because of the Agreement, the NOF leadership was somewhat polarized and so was the PLM and the CPG. Some advocated for unity between the Macedonian and Greek people in the PLM against the Monarcho-Fascists under CPG leadership, and some wanted the Macedonian movement to stay independent. Those who wanted unity were a majority.

There were also many Greeks in the CPG and DAG ranks who were opposed to the “merger” because they believed that “the Macedonians were recognized with more rights and granted more power than they deserved...” (Ibid, p. 28-29.)

NOF and the UN Inquiry Commission in Solun

On November 10, 1945 Paskal Mitrevski met with the NOF, NOMS and AFZH District leaderships and informed them that a UN Inquiry Commission had arrived in Greece at its headquarters in Solun and that the Commission was there to examine the causes of the Greek Civil War amid allegations, made by the Greek Monarcho-Fascist government, that the governments of Yugoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria were responsible for the war. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, 26.) NOF senior officials in the district organizations were requested “to take most urgent measures and form groups of delegates, approach the UN Inquiry Commission, and submit petitions, memoranda and others materials, with irrefutable evidence, that point to the Greek government as the sole culprit for the Greek Civil War and for the causes of the unprecedented terror unleashed against the anti-fascist movement participants, who for the most part were members of EAM and ELAS, and who fought with gun in hand against the German-Italian fascist invaders. The NOF leaders were asked to also inform the Commission of the Greek genocidal attempts to terrorize the Macedonian population with aims at crushing the progressive democratic forces, which represent the vast majority of the Macedonian and Greek population. (Ibid, p 26-27.) This information was to be confirmed and accompanied by thousands of signatures signed by Macedonian fighters and supporters of the anti-fascist struggle and to testify that

thousands more Macedonians were currently in Greek prisons and in Greek concentration camps being brutally tortured by the Greek government. The people being imprisoned, without trial and being killed by the Greek police, were the leaders and fighters who had earlier fought in the anti-fascist movement. The International officials needed to learn that the majority of the chiefs of police in the Greek State apparatus and officers in the Greek army were officials of the quisling government and officers and associates of the fascist occupiers. The highest priority for the NOF leaders at that time was to inform the Commission that the Macedonian people were suffering in Greek occupied Macedonia and that “orgies and crimes carried out by the Monarcho-Fascist government” were perpetrated against them. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 27.) It was expected that when the world found out the truth, about what was going on in Greece, it would also find out that there were many Macedonians living in Greek occupied Macedonia and that they had participated en masse in the great anti-fascist war and had made many sacrifices and sustained huge material damage. On top of that it was also important to inform the civilized world and the international democratic community about the genocide the Greek Monarcho-Fascists were committing against the Macedonian population. (Ibid.) In other words, to inform the world, in the most comprehensive way, of the Macedonian National Question in Greek occupied Macedonia.

According to Fotev, the United Nations representatives were given over 50 memoranda and petitions. These were documents with evidence showing the tragic situation that existed among the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia. (Ibid.) The documents also contained requests for the United Nations “to condemn the terrorist policies of the Greek government and to demand of it to commit to providing a peaceful and democratic life for the people in Greece and to recognizing the Macedonian people as an equal nation to the Greeks”. (Ibid.)

Final activities in the implementation of the unification Agreement

The only part of the unification Agreement that remained to be implemented was the merger of forces in the Paiaik Mountain region.

On January 11, 1947 a joint meeting between NOF, CPG and DAG representatives was held in the village Kupa, Gumendzhi Region. The meeting was chaired by Paskal Mitrevski, NOF Main Board Secretary. Included among the others from NOF who participated and spoke in the meeting were Evdokia Baleva-Vera, Mincho Fotev and Ivan Kovachev-Orfias. Mitrevski opened the meeting by speaking about the brotherhood and unity between the Macedonian and Greek people, the role of NOF and the other Macedonian organizations in the struggle, and how the Macedonians were helping with DAG's development. Evripidis Kapetanios-Panos, CPG and DAG representative on the Greek side in the meeting, welcomed the NOF-CPG unification Agreement and promised that the CPG would deliver a "free Greece" and "national equality and freedom for the Macedonian people..." (Ibid, p. 27-28.) At the same meeting Kocho Kirov of NOF was appointed as a member of DAG headquarters in Paiak Mountain. (Ibid, p. 28.) And this was the end of the unification between Macedonian and Greek partisan units in the mountains Gramos, Vicho, Kaimakchalan and Paiak. About this Fotev wrote: "The Macedonian partisans enthusiastically and with a great desire to fight welcomed the unification..." (Ibid, p. 28.) And after that the unification between NOF and the CPG was realized. According to Fotev: "The result of the unification between NOF and the CPG, as well as the merging of NOF and DAG units, was much better than expected. All Macedonian fighters in Gramos, Vicho, Kaimakchalan and Paiak Mountains, wherever they were stationed, enthusiastically embraced and welcomed the mergers..." (Ibid, p. 28.)

The NOF leadership had broad support in its commitment to unity with the CPG. According to Fotev: "The Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia were closely attached to NOF and believed in the organization's liberation work and, because of that, the people sincerely accepted its unification with the PLM of the Greek people's progressive revolutionary movement. This is why the people also massively participated in DAG, in the struggle for freedom and independence for Greece and in its national and social freedom..." According to Fotev: "Brotherhood and unity between the Macedonian and Greek people was not only desired, but rooted in the soul of every honest Macedonian, within each fighter and true patriot because it was based and built on the blood and bones of the

best sons and daughters of two peoples in a long, common struggle against a common enemy. The NOF-CPG unification agreement was an expression of the will of the Macedonian and Greek revolutionaries and the will of the Macedonian and the Greek people..." (Ibid.) As confirmation of this, according to Fotev, General Markos Vafiadis, DAG Supreme Commander, had indicated that there were 18,000 Macedonian fighters in DAG of whom 3,000 were women. In addition to that there were another 3,000 Macedonian fighters, both men and women, in the auxiliary units organized into separate units and led by activists of NOF and AFZH. (Ibid, p. 28.) Fotev does not agree with what Naum Peiov wrote about the arrangement of the Macedonian people in the armed struggle, that "they were allies" and "unpaid mercenaries". According to Fotev the following was written on page 150 in Naum Peiov's book "The Macedonians in the Greek Civil War", published in 1968: "... they (the Macedonians) were an ally in the struggle, but simply treated as unpaid mercenaries. This may sound strange, but that's the way it was..." (M. Fotev, the CPG's attitude towards NOF, p. 4.)

After the merger of the partisan units was completed, the Macedonian leadership urgently called for a meeting to resolve all outstanding issues between NOF and the CPG. The NOF leaders wanted a negotiated, constructive and efficient way of collaborating. They wanted to know how cooperation between NOF, NOMS and AFZH, on the one hand, and the CPG, DAG and EPON, on the other, were going to work. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 29.) As a result, Paskal Mitrevski and Mincho Fotev requested an urgent meeting with the CPG Regional Committee in Solun to finalize the NOF-CPG unification Agreement. But it seems the CPG was not interested...

With DAG's acquisition of the Macedonian partisan units, the CPG achieved its goal of leading the armed part of the Macedonian national movement. Not only that, but it also stripped the Macedonians of their independence as a political and armed factor in Greece. But in order to achieve its full set of objectives, the CPG needed a plan to eliminate NOF completely. According to Fotev: "The CPG leadership now had different intentions. It not only broke its official commitments to the merger Agreement but now refused

to cooperate with NOF and with the Macedonian PLM.” (Ibid, p. 30.) By limiting the representation of Macedonian personnel in leading duties, the CPG prevented Macedonian influence in the party organizations and DAG units in Greek occupied Macedonia.

In spite of the new developments, Paskal Mitrevski and Mincho Fotev decided to travel to Solun to first meet with Leonidas Stringos, CPG Regional Committee Secretary, and second to meet with Nikos Akritidis, EPON Regional Committee Secretary, in order to map out activities consistent with the implementation of the unification Agreement. (M. Fotev, the CPG’s attitude towards NOF, p. 13.) Unfortunately their trip from Paiak Mountain to Solun could not be secured. Evripidis Kapetanios-Panos, a member of the CPG Regional Committee for Greek occupied Macedonia and Thrace, was in charge of their security detail and he refused to let them go. But Mitrevski defied his orders and skipped over the border into Yugoslavia to see the CPG representative there as a link to travel to Solun. But, as he later found out, the real intention of the CPG leadership, for a very long time, was to isolate NOF and set the stage for eliminating its leadership function. But this was nothing unusual for Mitrevski whose only chance was to have a direct meeting with the CPG Regional Committee and clear things up. After strong insistence from Mincho Fotev, Paskal Mitrevski agreed to travel to Solun through Yugoslavia. Before leaving Paiak Mountain Mitrevski instructed Evdokia Baleva-Vera to go the Lerin and Kostur Districts and Mincho Fotev to go to the Enidzhe-Vardar and Gumenidzhe District to manage the NOF District organizations there “until they are recalled”. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 29.) Immediately after that, via Gevgelia, Paskal Mitrevski crossed into Yugoslavia. (M. Fotev, the CPG’s attitude towards NOF, p. 13.)

Because of the presence of the UN Inquiry Commission in Solun, the Monarcho-Fascist government in Greece took rigorous measures to control the movement of people in the central and western parts of Greek occupied Macedonia. The army, the gendarmes and the police took extraordinary measures to control the settlements that gravitated towards Solun, Enidzhe-Vardar, Gumenidzhe, Voden and Ber, especially the entrances and exits to Solun. The populations in the smaller localities, in which they had difficulty controlling or

could not keep under their full control, were evicted. In October and November 1947 the police moved the entire population from the villages Barovitsa, Ramna, Petgas, Tsrna Reka, Lumnitsa, Kupa and other small villages. Part of that population was expelled and forced to flee to the People's Republic of Macedonia and the rest were interned in cities and placed under intolerable conditions. According to Fotev: "The Macedonian population in the cities lived under real drama." (Ibid.)

As a member of the CPG Central Committee for Macedonia and Thrace, Paskal Mitrevski acted in accordance with the directive of the party leadership. By a special courier he was taken to see the CPG representative in Yugoslavia. (Ibid.) After he handed over his documents Mitrevski requested to be granted immediate leave for Solun. But the Greek party representative refused because he was acting under orders from headquarters to prevent his departure for Solun. As a result, he was detained in Yugoslavia for months. According to Fotev: "It is clear that they were attempting to compromise him, to degrade him and to deprive him of his management functions. This was also a direct attack against NOF." (Ibid. p. 30.) The CPG wanted to remove the entire current, NOF leadership and replace it with people loyal to the CPG, and this was possible with Paskal Mitrevski out of the way. The CPG refused to tolerate the existence of an authoritative Macedonian national revolutionary organization. According to Fotev: "The CPG did not want the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia to have their own independent Macedonian political organizations and to manage their struggle for national and social freedom..." (Ibid, p. 31) The CPG desired even less to be in a partnership with NOF and to be bound by a unification Agreement.

After taking over the Macedonian armed units and placing them under DAG's control, the CPG leadership immediately took organized action against NOF to "discredit it before the Macedonian people in both Greek occupied Macedonia and in the People's Republic of Macedonia..." (Ibid, p. 31.) The declarative promises made for "an independent and free Greece with the Macedonian people having equal rights and enjoying all their cultural and national rights" were only Greek tactics, a ruse to get the Macedonian leaders to surrender their fighters. (Ibid.) All

connections between the NOF Regional Committee in Enidzhe-Vardar and the NOF Main Board in Vicho Mountain were suspended. Evripidis Kapetanios-Panos provided no information on Paskal Mitrevski's whereabouts for two months after he left Paiak Mountain. All requests made by Mincho Fotev from NOMS while he was member of the Regional Committee to "connect" with EPON were ignored. (Ibid.)

In early April 1947 Mincho Fotev, accompanied by Paskal Mitrevski's personal courier Micho Koroveshevski, traveled to the NOF Main Board headquarters on Mount Vicho.

A meeting was held in Voden Region in the villages Krontselevo and Dolno Radivo. Included in the NOF composition from the District leadership were Vangel Aianovski, NOF District Board Secretary, Petre Shorev-Fidan (youth leader), Risto Bukovalia-Zhukov, Giorgi Manchov and others. During the meeting updates were given regarding the military and political situation in Voden and Enidzhe-Vardar Districts, activities carried out by NOF, NOMS and AFZH, and Macedonian relations with the CPG, EPON and DAG. (Ibid, p. 31.) Aianovski informed the members of the deteriorating relations between NOF and the CPG and blamed the CPG for them because of the negative attitude the CPG leadership and the other Greek political organizations had taken towards the Macedonian organizations. Aianovski also strongly condemned the unification Agreement between NOF and the CPG and accused NOF of "abandoning its original programming principles". (Ibid, p. 32.)

(Micho Koroveshevski was from the village Smrdesh, Kostur Region. He was a corporal in the "First Macedonian Assault Brigade" and commander of a DAG detachment. He was killed in 1947.)

(Risto Bukovalia-Zhukov was from the village Teovo, Voden Region. He was a participant in the PLM, a member of the NOF District Board for Voden Region and a DAG fighter.)

After his arrival in the village Prekopana in the free territory of Mount Vicho where he was expected to meet Mihailo Keramitchiev, a member of the NOF Main Board, Fotev left for Kostur Region.

Keramitchiev was not there. Several meetings were taking place in the village Smrdesht with the NOF Main Board and with other NOF, NOMS and AFZH leaders including Krsto Mangov, Nikola Panov, Tpaiko Supelov, Panaiot Karadzha and Hrisanthi Tsanzovska. Among other things discussed at the meetings were; the situation in the district, NOF's actions, the situation with the people, especially in the occupied areas, as well as the problems and tensions experienced with the CPG, created by the arrogant attitude of CPG members towards NOF and its activists. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 32.)

(Krsto Mangov was from the village D'mbeni, Kostur Region. He was a fighter in ELAS, a deputy political commissar in the battalion of the "First Macedonian Assault Brigade", secretary of the NOF District Committee for Kostur Region, president of the People's Government in Kostur District, a representative of the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece for the local people's government and a member of the NOF Central Council Executive Committee. He was killed on August 11, 1949 near the village Breznitsa, Kostur Region.)

(Panaiot Karadzha was from the village D'mbeni, Kostur Region. He was a participant of the PLM, a communist, secretary of the NOMS District Committee, a member of the NOF District Board for Kostur Region, and head of a local DAG people's militia unit. He was killed in 1948.)

(Hrisanthi Tsanzovska was from the village Chuka, Kostur Region. She was secretary of the AFZH District Board for Kostur Region. She immigrated to Poland and then to Bulgaria, to Plovdiv.)

First AFZH Congress

AFZH, the Macedonian woman's organization for the women in Greek occupied Macedonia, grew into a women's national mass movement, actively involved in the armed liberation war. According to Fotev, there were more than 3,000 Macedonian women fighting in DAG's units alone. Many were brave, able and proven fighters who not only distinguished themselves in the battlefield but climbed up the ranks to become DAG officers. Many Macedonian women

fighters and DAG officers gave their lives in the war for the freedom of their people. Included among them were Tsveta Andreeva, Theodora Shkornu-Paskalova, Evgenia Kiriakova, Teona Pachu, Afrodita Duvalevska, Evgenia Andreeva, Niki Dinka, Katina Dumkova, Pepi Kirtsova, Germana Paikova, Angelina Popova, Lenka Rizova, Lina Raleva and Arhonda Markovska. Many great Macedonian women fighters also participated in the Macedonian women's auxiliary units. Over 500 Macedonian women involved in AFZH were imprisoned or interned in the Greek concentration camps. Some were sentenced to death and shot. The first Macedonian woman and also the first woman in Greece to be sentenced to death by a military court and executed was Mirka Ginova, AFZH District Board Secretary for Voden District, a hero of the Macedonian people. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 42.) The CPG leadership, apparently, had a little more tolerance for the AFZH.

(Katina Andreeva-Tsveta was from the village Mokreni, Kostur Region. She was a member of the NOMS Regional Board, a second lieutenant and a DAG platoon commander. She was killed in 1949.)

(Evgenia Kiriakova was from the village Nestram, Kostur Region. She was a fighter in ELAS in 1943, a member of the EPON District Board for Kostur Region, a member of the NOF District Board for Kostur Region and a DAG lieutenant. She was killed in 1949.)

(Afrodita Duvalevska was from the village Nestram, Kostur Region.)

(Katina Dumkova-Tinka was from the village Ekshisu.)

(Germana Paikova was from the village German, Prespa Region.)

(Angelina Popova was from the village Dolno Kleshtino, Lerin Region.)

(Arhonda Markovska was the daughter of Malina Markovska who was a member of the NOF District Board for Lerin Region. Arhonda was a participant in the PLM and was killed in combat as a DAG sergeant.)

On April 29, 1948 AFZH held a Congress near the village Besfina in Prespa, Greek occupied Macedonia, in an open space because of the threat of the Greek Monarcho-Fascist aviation bombing the villages. More than 420 delegates participated in the Congress from all the districts in Greek occupied Macedonia, including women DAG fighters and guests from all the organizations and parties participating in the Greek Civil War. (M. Fotev, development through NOF, p. 41-42.) The Congress chose a new AFZH Main Board. Evdokia Baleva-Vera was again elected AFZH Secretary. The main task of AFZH was to strengthen the organizations ability to act. According to Evdokia Baleva-Vera: "AFZH invited its sisters from AFZH in the People's Republic of Macedonia to take part in the First AFZH Congress in Greek occupied Macedonia. Unfortunately the People's Republic of Macedonia's delegation, comprised of Mara Minaneva, Liliana Maneva and one more member, was stopped in Korcha, Albania, and because of that it was unable to attend the Congress. Afterwards, however, the women were familiarized with the events that took place in Greek occupied Macedonia."

After the Convention was over, weaknesses began to appear in work done by AFZH, which were caused mainly by the appearance of a separatist group. (Ibid, p. 42.)

Factionalism and divisions in the NOF leadership

The CPG used every means possible to disorganize and marginalize the Macedonian people, including internal divisions and factionalism in NOF. According to Fotev: "It was within CPG aims to use Mihail Keramitchiev's sycophant attitude who led a separatist group, in an organizational sense, that existed in NOF and who, at all costs, wanted to lead NOF himself". (Ibid, p. 31.). It would appear that Mihail Keramitchiev was acquired for that purpose. According to Fotev, the CPG organized a change of leadership in Mihail Keramitchiev's faction led by Paskal Mitrevski. But at the time Mitrevski was not there. He was held in isolation in the People's Republic of Macedonia. So, without consulting the other NOF leaders, Mihail Keramitchiev, who probably organized Mitrevski's removal, took it upon himself to go to the CPG and

obtain permission to schedule a meeting with the NOF leaders in Kaimakchalan, Voden Region, near the Greek-Yugoslav border. (Ibid.)

On May 12, 1947 the NOF Regional leadership in Kostur District was informed about the NOF meeting, when and where it was to take place and that delegates from the Kostur District were invited to attend. No agenda or materials were included to let the delegates know what the meeting was all about.

To attend the meeting, the NOF District Board appointed a delegation of four people that included Lambro Cholakov, Krsto Mangov, Iani Pirovski and Tpaiko Supelov. The delegation was instructed to go to a certain place in Voden Region no later than one day before the meeting. The delegates were to get acquainted with the agenda and with any other materials so that they could take a position on imminent issues that required discussion or decisions. Mincho Fotev, NOMS secretary for Kostur Region, decided to accompany the delegation. As a member of the NOF Main Board he had the right to participate in this meeting. Fotev strongly protested against Keramitchiev for holding such a meeting. (Ibid, p. 34.)

The Kostur delegation arrived in Kaimakchalan at the “Mishov barn” in Voden Region on May 18, 1947. This was the designated location where the meeting was to take place. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 33.) Unfortunately a number of important people were not present because they were not informed of the meeting taking place. Absent were NOF Main Board member Giorgi Urdov-Dzhodzho and DAG unit commanders Pando Shiperkov and Mihail Apostolov-Graniti, as well as other NOF founding fathers. When people challenged Keramitchiev for failing to invite these people, he arrogantly said: “All those NOF leaders serving DAG no longer work for this organization...” (Ibid, p. 33.)

Keramitchiev kept the meeting agenda a secret until all the delegates arrived. When Mincho Fotev asked him to reveal the agenda and accompanying material, Keramitchiev said: “I will tell you what the agenda is tomorrow during my presentation, when our NOF work begins... Each delegate has the right to participate in the discussion...” (Ibid, p. 33.) Before the meeting started each of the

Kostur District delegates wanted to know why Paskal Mitrevski, NOF Main Board Secretary, was not there and why they had not been informed of his absence. Instead of responding to their questions, Mihail Keramitchiev directed them to Georgios Eretriadis-Petris, CPG Regional Committee representative for Greek occupied Macedonia and Thrace. (Ibid, p. 34.) Many of the delegates requested that the meeting be postponed but Keramitchiev did not accept their requests, even after some complained that having a meeting under these conditions might be damaging to NOF, because the way it was convened was apparently without good intentions. But Keramitchiev kept diverting their requests and insisting that the meeting was called under a directive from the CPG leadership. Keramitchiev, at one point, said: "Rightly or wrongly, I cannot accept your requests because the CPG leadership, under whose directive I am performing this work, does not appreciate them..." (Ibid, p. 34.) The objection that the delegates voiced; that NOF had its own rules and that they should be respected, were ignored. Later Keramitchiev informed Georgios Eretriadis-Petris of basically every comment that was made by the delegates during the meeting. Immediately after that Eretriadis invited them all to his hut, where he was residing, to hear their complaints. The delegates made the same requests to Eretriadis who informed them that it was Keramitchiev's idea to call this meeting and not the CPG's. Georgios Eretriadis-Petris made this comment even though, according to Fotev, he was directly involved in the organizing and formulating of opinions and solutions to be adopted. According to Fotev: "What Eretriadis said was not true, Keramitchiev did not decide alone, he jointly decided with Eretriadis..." (Ibid, p. 34.) Regarding Paskal Mitrevski's absence, Eretriadis informed the delegates that the CPG would not allow him to lead NOF. According to Fotev, Eretriadis, in a loud and high pitched tone of voice, said: "Paskal Mitrevski cannot lead NOF from Skopje. NOF is part of the CPG and does not belong to Paskal Mitrevski, which is why Mitrevski is not here. You should know that Mitrevski's broom no longer sweeps here and that the CPG is now officially behind Mihail Keramitchiev..." (Ibid, p. 34.) This, unfortunately, created problems and a tense atmosphere between the various NOF members. To clear the air the delegates requested another meeting, with Paskal Mitrevski present. But this was not acceptable to the CPG representative or to Keramitchiev, who did not want

Mitrevski's present anywhere. In fact the CPG leadership decided to remove Paskal Mitrevski, Giorgi Urdov-Dzhodzhov, Pande Shiperkov, Lambro Cholakov, Mincho Fotev, Nikola Tanev, Ivan Nichev, Ivan Kovachev-Orfias, Iani Pirovski and all others, who were advocates for an independent NOF, from their positions. (M. Fotev, development through NOF, p. 35.) Mihail Keramitchiev had full support from the "NOF and PLM dissidents" the likes of Lazo Oshenski and others with whom he "maintained personal relations", for replacing the current NOF leadership. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 35.)

NOF meeting

On May 20, 1947 NOF held another meeting during which 40 delegates participated. They were NOF, NOMS and AFZH leaders and representatives of the district administrations. Fifteen of them were guests and CPG, EAM, DAG, EPON and AKE representatives. The meeting was chaired by Mihail Keramitchiev who presented a report summarizing the military, political and economic situation in Greece, as well as the Macedonian people's situation and the PLM situation in Greek occupied Macedonia which, according to Fotev, did not exactly match the realistic situation on the ground. According to Fotev: "The report presented data and assessments that were not the truth..." (Ibid.) According to Fotev, all those who did not agree with Keramitchiev's assessment regarding the PLM situation were, in his view, Hellenophiles, traitors and cowards. According to Fotev: "All Macedonians who disagreed with Keramitchiev's personal views and insights were treated as Hellenophiles and traitors, to the Macedonian people. And those Macedonians, who for objective or subjective reasons were not in NOF, Keramitchiev treated as cowards". (Ibid, p. 35.) During the meeting, in the absence of the NOF Secretary and most of the NOF membership, including the NOF Main Board, Keramitchiev took it upon himself, without a vote, to abolish the main Board and elect a new NOF governing body which, at the request of the CPG Regional Committee Secretary for Greek Occupied Macedonia and Thrace, was named Coordinating Bureau. Five members were appointed to the Coordinating Bureau, among whom were Mihail Keramitchiev, Secretary, Vangel Aianovski, Organizational Coordinator, Evdokia Baleva-Vera, AFZH Secretary, Pavle

Rakovski, Agitation and Propaganda Coordinator and Lambro Cholakov, Treasurer. Appointed as the NOF Instructor for eastern Greek occupied Macedonia was Vangel Nichev. And Mincho Fotev, previous member of the NOF Main Board and member of the EPON Regional Committee Secretariat for Greek occupied Macedonia and Thrace, was elected a member of the coordinating body. Removed from the highest NOF governing body were Paskal Mitrevski, Giorgi Urdov-Dzhodzho and Mincho Fotev. (Ibid, p. 35-36.)

NOF crisis

After all the changes were implemented during the NOF meeting, the organizational governing body could no longer make policy decisions within the global CPG strategy and the Democratic Government of Greece. (Ibid, p. 36.) The CPG took over NOF's decision making responsibility and NOF was converted to an executive body to implement Party decisions. According to Fotev: "The Coordinating Body was now only a political figure, a representative body. Its role and power was only formal. It had no legal power to raise issues. It could only propose issues to the CPG and rely on the CPG to resolve them. It could only act on CPG initiatives and do what the CPG requested." (Ibid, p. 36.)

The NOF Coordinating Bureau began to act strictly on CPG orders. The CPG basically cut NOF off from its functions. All NOF leaders who served in the Democratic Army of Greece were ordered to break off their links with the Macedonian organization and with the thousands of Macedonian fighters and NOF members. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 36.) This was done despite the fact that, according to Fotev, the Macedonian National Organization (NOF) "was one of the main factors in DAG's development". According to Fotev: "The percentage of Macedonians serving in DAG was approximately 40%. DAG's main body and the war were located in the territory of Greek occupied Macedonia mainly in Gramos, Vicho, Kaimakchalan and Paiak Mountains, and in the territory of Kostur, Lerin and Voden Regions, on grounds that were densely populated by Macedonians. Gramos and Vicho were the main fronts of the two warring sides and were the places where the hardest bloody battles were fought. DAG Headquarters and the seat of the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece were located

in Prespa, in Greek occupied Macedonia. This was the largest inhabited free territory with around 80% of the population being Macedonian..." (Ibid, p. 37.) Given all this, the CPG still disbanded NOF. With a single directive from the CPG, the NOF Coordinating Bureau also disbanded NOMS and ordered all the young Macedonians to join EPON, a Greek youth organization. With the dissolution of NOMS, the CPG's aims were to isolate NOF from its most vital, most combative and most organized force; the young Macedonians. (Ibid, p. 37.) The CPG Greek operatives responsible for applying this policy were Georgios Eretriadis-Petris, Evripidis Kapetanos-Panos, Theodoros Evtimiadis, Thanassis Zogas-Spiros and others. (Ibid, p. 39.)

The CPG's main aim was to completely isolate NOF from the Macedonian masses in all parts of Greek occupied Macedonia and to form rural Greek organizations in the Greek Agricultural party and have the Macedonian villagers join them. The CPG and EAM needed the organizations of the Greek Agricultural Party in order to directly exert political influence over the Macedonian peasant population which represented about 80% of the total NOF base. (Ibid.) The CPG also removed from office all authoritative Macedonian officials in the CPG, EPON and DAG organizations. Paskal Mitrevski was removed from his position in the CPG Political Committee for Greek occupied Macedonia and Thrace, Mincho Fotev was removed from his position in the EPON Political Committee, Giorgi Urdov-Dzhodzho was removed from his position in DAG Headquarters, and so on. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 38.) By the time the CPG was done with its expulsions, NOF was no longer a respectable political factor in the PLM. NOF's coordinating body was turned into an instrument of implementing CPG policies and a gradual destructive force in the PLM for the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia. The NOF main body that was purged included the NOF founders, who were dismissed from their positions "with fabricated charges" and, as punishment, were sent to serve in DAG's ranks as common soldiers or exiled in the Greek refugee camps in Albania. Included among those who were exiled were Iani Pirovski, Ivan Kovachev-Orfias, Panaiote Karadzha, Blagoi Sholdov, Petre Georgievski, Petre Asprovski, Trpe Mihailovski, Lazo Kovachevski, Sotir Popovski (all founders and NOMS leaders), Vasil Chochov, Timo Ralev, Sotir

Hadzhidimitrovski, Trajko Tsafara, Foti Bochevski, Pando Giorgievski, Trifon Popov and Kiriako Tsalev. (Ibid, p. 38-39.) With this massive purge instigated by Mihail Keramitchiev's "separatist group", Mikhail Keramitchiev achieved internal unity in NOF. (Ibid, p. 39.)

(Petre Georgievski was from the village Oshchima, Lerin Region. He was a fighter for ELAS, secretary of the NOMS Regional Committee for Lerin Region and commander of a DAG platoon. He was killed in March 1947.)

(Trpe Mihailovski was from the village Krchishta, Kostur Region. He was a fighter for ELAS in the "First Macedonian Assault Brigade", secretary of the NOMS Regional Committee for Kostur Region and political commissar of a DAG unit. He was killed in 1948.)

(Sotir Popovski was from the village Shkrapar, Kostur Region. He participated in the PLM, was NOMS Regional Secretary and a DAG unit political commissar. He was killed on Mount Gramos in 1948.)

(Vasil Chochov was from the village D'mbeni, Kostur Region. He was a revolutionary, a communist and participant in the PLM. In 1941 he was arrested and taken to a concentration camp in Germany. After the camp was liberated, he returned home and later joined NOF and was District Board Secretary. He was killed in battle fighting for DAG.)

First NOF Congress – January 13, 1948

With the purges and persecutions carried out by the NOF Coordinating Body, opposition between the two political NOF factions deepened. The supporters of an independent NOF strived to stop the "destructive activities of the separatists", led by Keramitchiev who was striving to completely break down NOF. Towards the end of June 1947, Paskal Mitrevski was finally allowed to return to Greek occupied Macedonia. Given the crisis that had befallen the organization, he took the initiative to hold a NOF Congress. His initiative was supported by the majority of cadres and NOF members. The situation in NOF was also reflected in the

armed struggle and so the CPG realized that it had to make some concessions. The CPG Political Bureau consented to NOF holding its First Congress. Preparations for the congress started in early October 1947. District conferences were held in December and new leaders and delegates were elected for the Congress. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 39-40.)

The First NOF Congress was held on January 13, 1948 in the village V'mbel, Kostur Region, at the Sveti Dimitria Church. The introductory paper was submitted by Mihail Keramitchiev, Coordinating Bureau Secretary. Among other things, Keramitchiev emphasized that NOF, as was the case with SNOF, had the same aspirations and goals as EAM. This included the position on the Macedonian National Question which, according to Fotev, did not correspond to reality. According to Fotev: "Mihail Keramitchiev's views were not correct because the objectives and aspirations of NOF were never the same as those of SNOF, never mind EAM's goals and aspirations regarding the Macedonian National Question, which for EAM did not exist". (Ibid, p. 40) The Congress elected a new NOF governing body that consisted of 35 NOF Central Council regular members and 15 candidates for regular members. Elected President of the Council was Mihail Keramitchiev and Secretary was Paskal Mitrevski. The Central Council then elected its executive bodies. The Executive Bureau and Secretariat was the highest NOF governing body. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 40.) Ianis Ioanidis, CPG Central Committee Secretary who was there to observe the work of the Congress, was against reinstating NOMS, the already disbanded Macedonian youth organization. According to Ioanidis, the CPG was in support of Keramitchiev who opposed renewing NOMS on the grounds that EPON, the Greek youth organization, was excellent for the Macedonian youth. (Ibid.)

In order to gain full and direct control of all of NOF, the CPG leadership adopted a special decision requiring NOF to form CPG party organizations within itself. The decision was supported by the NOF leadership, expecting that the Party organizations would contribute to the "ideological, political and moral unity" of the organization. The NOF Central Council Secretary then called for "re-establishing the violated democratic norms in the functioning of NOF and AFZH" as an important condition for raising the "ability"

of both of these organizations to achieve their objectives as set out during the Congress. (Ibid.)

After the Congress, NOF was committed to carry out two priority objectives: establish National Liberation Boards as organs of the local government and intensify its activities to mobilize people to support and participate in the armed struggle.

Auxiliary units and free armed groups in Kostur and Lerin Regions

About 90% of the population living in the free partisan territory in Kostur and Lerin Regions was Macedonian from which mixed auxiliary units were formed, consisting mostly of older people who had served in DAG. (Ibid.) The auxiliary detachments were organized in units and performed specific tasks: collecting and taking care of wounded fighters, transporting food and ammunition, and building trenches and bunkers. The entire Macedonian population was organized and participated en masse in the DAG auxiliary detachments and was led by NOF and AFZH activists. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 40.) Craft workshops were organized in the Prespa free area where all sorts of products were manufactured for DAG, for the war effort and for the needs of the population, this included clothes, shoes, bread, baked goods, blacksmith materials and other goods. According to Fotev: “During the major Greek Monarcho-Fascist government offensive against DAG, which lasted from July 14, to August 21, 1948, columns of loaded animals with food and ammunition were delivered to the Mount Vicho area.” (Ibid, p. 41.) Armed groups of Macedonian volunteers called “free shooters” acted behind enemy lines and performed ambushes and sabotage actions. They cooperated with the civilian population in their gathering of intelligence, spying on Monarcho-Fascists, uncovering spy networks, as well as capturing and punishing enemy spies. These groups also staged ambushes and attacks on enemy bases. (Ibid, p. 41.) Large groups of “free shooters” existed in most parts of Greek occupied Macedonia. One such group, led by Zhivko Shanev, operated in Kostur Region. Shanev was an experienced fighter and communist from the village Zhelin, Kostur, Region. Another group, led by Mati Bulev, operated in the area of Sorovich and Mount Radosh, Lerin Region. Bulev was

from the village Ekshisu, Lerin Region. He was an ELAS fighter, an activist in the NOF District Board in Sorovich Region, a commander of a Macedonian detachment and an officer in both NOF and DAG. He was killed in 1947. (Ibid, p. 41.)

Reactivating divisions in the NOF leadership

According to Fotev, after the changes to the NOF leadership were made during the NOF Congress, the advocates of separatism, including Mihail Keramitchiev and Ilia Dimovski-Goce, “took it upon themselves to think that they could return to the 1944 events when the Macedonian battalions, in an open conflict with ELAS, separated themselves and created the First Aegean Brigade”. (Ibid, p. 42-43.) Fotev has not given the names of the other “separatists in the group” or of the “NOF and NODEM dissidents”. They could not reconcile with the fact that they had lost their positions in the governing bodies. They could not accept the fact that they no longer had influence in the decision making process. They could not accept the decisions made by the Congress. They applied double standards in their tactics with bizarre behaviour. They also behaved hypocritically toward the CPG leadership on one hand, and in secret applied factionist tactics, on the other. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 43.) Obviously the CPG was responsible for this, not only for allowing such behaviour to take place but also for encouraging these people to pursue nationalist and separatist activities that, according to Fotev, were contrary to NOF. In other words, the CPG used the NOF separatists and dissenters to cause open conflict with the NOF Central Council in which they had lost their previous positions. According to Fotev, “They (Coordinating Bureau) had their own links and regularly met in secret...” (Ibid, p. 43.) Their aim was to slander and discredit many of the Macedonian fighters and founders of NOF with innuendo, calling them “anti-party elements” and labeling them “false Macedonians”, “Hellenophiles”, “adventurers” and so on. According to Fotev: “While they criticized those Macedonians who stood in their way of achieving their sick separatist ambitions and goals, they saw themselves as ‘the best sons of the Macedonian people, courageous and consistent defenders of Macedonia’...” (Ibid, p. 43.)

The CPG Regional Committee encouraged internal divisions in preparing the ground for the removal of all NOF management functions, particularly those of the leading figures in the NOF Central Council. The leading CPG figures encouraging the NOF division were Georgios Eretriadis-Petris, Leonidas Stringos and Theodoros Evtemiadis, with whom Keramitchiev had personal ties and who, with his supporters, demanded that a Plenum of the Central Council be convened as soon as possible with intentions of taking over NOF. The CPG Central Committee, no surprise there, gave Keramitchiev the right to convene his Plenum.

NOF Central Council Plenum

In June 1948 the Informburo resolution was announced which called for isolating the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, which the CPG leadership used as an excuse to remove all NOF leading figures, because they were accused of creating internal problems, and to replace them with its own cronies.

The NOF Plenum was held on August 8, 1948 in the village Bukovo, Prespa Region. The proceedings were conducted by a high CPG Party delegation led by Ianis Ioanidis, CPG Central Committee Secretary. (Ibid, p. 45.) It took no time before a raging controversy developed between the two polarized factions in the NOF leadership. Mihail Keramitchiev accused the NOF leaders of being “anti-Party elements”. He personally and vehemently accused Paskal Mitrevski of being an anti-Party element. According to Fotev: “The entire Plenum was ignited with polemics, with the separatist group arrogantly and brazenly, in a manner similar to the style of the Bulgarian supremacists, attacking all the NOF leaders who Keramitchiev considered to be Hellenophiles and alleged anti-party elements.” Paskal Mitrevski was personally attacked by Mihail Keramitchiev. The CPG representatives used this situation to adopt a resolution to remove both Paskal Mitrevski and Mihail Keramitchiev from NOF because of the controversies they created. Mihail Keramitchiev was sacked as president and Paskal Mitrevski as secretary of the NOF Central Council and both were made available to DAG Headquarters. After their dismissal Stavro Kochev was appointed president of the NOF Central Council and Vangel Koichev was appointed Secretary. (Ibid, p. 45.) According to Fotev,

the NOF Central Council did not vote to confirm their appointments. (Ibid, p. 45.)

On August 10, 1948 the CPG Central Committee Politburo published a resolution regarding the faction-ism that had developed in NOF's Central Council, as observed during its First Plenum. The CPG, according to its own accounts, had no choice but to suspend both Mitrevski and Keramitchiev from their NOF leadership functions in order to stop their "unprincipled factionist struggle". (Ibid, p. 45.)

The CPG Central Committee Politburo decided to extricate and replace the NOF leadership during the period from June 14 to August 21, 1948, which coincided with the Monarcho-Fascist government's major offensive against DAG in western and central Greek occupied Macedonia. (Ibid, p. 50.) This was also the time when the Macedonian people were still led by NOF and bore the entire burden of fighting at the front. These were the same Macedonian people who, in the past, had fought and demonstrated mass heroism and self-sacrifice that was recognized by the CPG. (Ibid.) This was made clear during the CPG Central Committee 4th Plenum held on July 28 and 29, 1948 during which, in a resolution of the Politburo, item 8, it was said: "The CPG Central Committee Plenum underlines the extraordinary contribution of the 'Slavo-Macedonian' people for their struggle in our common cause for freedom." (M. Fotev. developments through NOF, p. 45.) In other words, the "Slavo-Macedonian" participation in the liberation was nation-wide and wholeheartedly complete. With the blood of their sons and daughters, the Slavo-Macedonian nation in this struggle had earned its solid freedom and equality in Greece which was guaranteed in the future by the people's liberation movement. (Ibid, p. 46.) The Macedonian people had massively fought in the armed struggle from the beginning of the Greek Civil War to earn their rights. They lived through the fiercest terror and persecution campaigns perpetrated by the Greek police, army special units and air force bombings by the Monarcho-Fascist regime. According to Fotev: "The Greek police and special Monarcho-Fascist army units loaded truck loads of old men, women, babies and young children into military trucks and, through the village Visheni, drove them to the free territory on Mount Vicho. All the young people over the age

of 15, from the displaced families, were put in jail. Since over 90% of the expelled families were Macedonians, and the others Vlachs, their homes were completely looted and their properties usurped... The Monarcho-Fascist army, led by US officers headed by the notorious General Van Fleet, forcibly evicted around 50 villages in the Lerin and Kostur Regions and in the Anasel Region, and gathered them in the cities in ghettos under very difficult conditions. Many of the villagers who protested at being moved were accused of collaborating with the DAG partisans and sent to prison in the Aegean islands. The Monarcho-Fascist aviation, flown by US and English pilots, bombed and destroyed the free zones on a daily basis. Flying the British military aircraft "Spitfire" and the American aircraft "Dakota" they bombed everything including flocks of cattle and sheep in their pastures. They also bombed the crop fields with flammable liquids. The Monarcho-Fascist army led a totally destructive war not only against DAG but also against the people. The lives of the people were turned into real tragedies. Their physical existence was threatened by the bombardments and from disease and hunger. The Provisional Democratic Government of Greece called on the governments of the people's republics to start taking refugees from this part of the population. Their calls were answered in the spring of 1948 when about 25,000 young children under the age of 13 were accepted. (Ibid, p. 44.)

After replacing the legitimate NOF leadership, the CPG Central Committee Politburo took over all NOF management functions.

After Paskal Mitrevski and Mihail Keramitchiev were removed from office as NOF leaders, Nikos Zahariadis, CPG Central Committee Secretary General, decided to remove them from all functions. According to Fotev: "A meeting was held in the village Rudari, Prespa Region, during which Nikos Zahariadis, while speaking to Paskal Mitrevski, said: "The CPG Central Committee Politburo has decided to send you to DAG's ranks as an ordinary fighter to fight behind the lines in the free territory." Mitrevski, without hesitation, said that he had no problem becoming a DAG partisan fighter and immediately assumed his role in the 107th Brigade. Keramitchiev, on the other hand, did not accept to be an ordinary DAG fighter, because he said he reportedly suffered from epilepsy and his nervous system could not stand the explosions of tank shells, and

particularly aerial bombardments, and asked to be allowed to go to Yugoslavia for treatment. To convince everyone that he suffered from epilepsy, Keramitchiev faked an epileptic seizure in the village Bukovo in front of some local villagers. He did the same in the village Breznitsa, Kostur Region. Then, together with his personal courier Mitre, without informing the NOF Central Council, Keramitchiev fled the struggle overnight and went to Skopje where his family was, presumably to get “treatment”. According to Krsto Mangov from the NOF Central Council, who gave a statement regarding NOF’s financial situation, before leaving for Skopje Mihail Keramitchiev took 813 gold coins from the strong box owned by NOF. Gold that did not belong to him. Many of his comrades also fled right after he did, including Vangel Aianovski-Oche. Mihail Keramitchiev was condemned by some of his closest friends for what he did. (Ibid, p. 47.)

According to Fotev: “The fault lies in the Yugoslav Communist Party and in the state officials who negotiated with the CPG to surrender the NOF Macedonian leadership to the CPG under the ‘unification of NOF and CPG’ ploy. This was not exactly a partnership but rather a CPG dominion over NOF. Regardless of what was negotiated; the CPG under Zahariadis abused the partnership to the end, turning NOF into its slave.” (Ibid, p. 47.) NOF was even turned into an anti-Yugoslav and anti-Macedonian instrument after the Informburo resolution was announced. (Ibid, p. 46.)

Origins of the divisions and rivalry in the political currents for supremacy in NOF and the PLM

The internal divisions within the PLM in the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia appeared back in 1943. According to Fotev: “This separatism, as a nationalist phenomenon and a negative situation in the PLM, namely in NOF, had a historical reason. It dates back a long time and resurfaced during the people’s liberation war in Greece and ELAS in 1943.” (Ibid, p. 48.) Unity was actually achieved following NOF’s establishment when Mihail Keramitchiev’s supporters accepted NOF’s political platform and fought under its flag, but would not accept the unity Agreement between NOF and the CPG. They called this “a second Varkiza

Agreement for the Macedonian people” and hampered its realization. They created their own political platform which, according to Fotev, had “extremely clear chauvinistic tendencies”. They pressured the NOF leadership not to merge with the CPG, but rather to “cooperate with the CPG, EAM and DAG”. They advocated for an independent PLM. They considered the sending of DAG Macedonian fighters to fight in the territory in Central and South Greece, to strengthen the armed struggle, an act “to destroy the Macedonian fighters”, and thus undermine the PLM. They sought to form Macedonian military units and fight only in Greek occupied Macedonia. According to Fotev, who was part of the current NOF leadership led by Paskal Mitrevski and who was a consistent supporter of the NOF-CPG unification Agreement considered their demands for independence and for having Macedonian units acting exclusively on Macedonian national territory in Greek occupied Macedonia, “adventurous at best” given the superiority of the Greek Monarcho-Fascist army. According to Fotev: “They did not care what would have happened if the Monarcho-Fascist army expelled the Macedonian units and where they would withdraw.” (Ibid, p. 48.) The opposing group, to which Fotev refers to as separatist, was only acting this way to secure the upper hand in the NOF leadership. According to Fotev: “Even before the NOF-CPG merger was conceived, the main bearers of these separatist ideas, in various ways, even with conspiracies, made attempts to take over NOF.” (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 48.) Their actions intensified with Lazo Damovski-Oshenski’s entry into the leadership. Oshenski was admitted into the NOF leadership after Atanas Koroveshovski died. Oshenski was a collaborator and close friend of Keramitchiev and was entrusted with the position of NOF Main Board Secretary in charge of the expelled refugees from Greek occupied Macedonia. Using his function Oshenski managed to discredit the NOF leadership in the eyes of the CPM Central Committee. According to Fotev: “Oshenski abused his position when he began to criticize the NOF leadership which led to creating friction between the Macedonian refugees, criticisms that reached all the way up to the CPM Central Committee.” (Ibid.) According to Fotev: “There were a number of dissidents involved in the PLM, mainly Bulgarian supremacist elements...” (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 48.)

The Macedonian Party (CPM) and state leadership did not obstruct the Agreement made between the NOF and CPG leaderships and did not call for an independent PLM position for the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia. The CPM Central Committee requested that the NOF Main Board convene a meeting, which took place in March 1946. Among those who attended the meeting was Dimitar Aleksovski-Pekar, CPM Central Committee functionary connected to the NOF Main Board who, during the same meeting, voiced Kolishevski's decision to remove Oshenski from the NOF leadership. According to Fotev, Pekar said: "The CPM Central Committee and Comrade Kolishevski, personally, have made a decision to have Lazo Damovski-Oshenski removed from the NOF leadership under the charges of being 'a class enemy' ..." (Ibid, p. 48.)

Oshenski's removal, unfortunately, did not halt the destructive actions of the opposing group led by Keramitchiev. According to Fotev: "Keramitchiev still maintained ties with Oshenski and that is why he was criticized by the Party and by Dimitar Aleksievski-Pekar personally." (Ibid, p. 48.) According to Fotev, in order for him to take over NOF, Keramitchiev placed himself in the service of the CPG Regional committee of Greek occupied Macedonia and Thrace and, with its agreement, called an all-NOF meeting to be held on May 20, 1947. During the meeting, supported by CPG Regional Committee representatives, Keramitchiev reorganized the NOF Main Board, after which a new NOF Coordinating Bureau was appointed under his leadership. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 48-49.) After he took control of NOF, Keramitchiev began to persecute all previous NOF and PLM leaders who did not demonstrate their solidarity to him and "declared them traitors and enemies of the Macedonian people and, as such, persecuted them..." (Ibid, p. 49 and 56.) The CPG leadership encouraged these acts because they caused division and internal turmoil in NOF and the PLM, which directly served the CPG's interests.

The ratio of forces, however, changed during the First NOF Congress in January 1948, when the Coordinating Bureau was abolished and when a new NOF leadership was elected not supporting Keramitchiev's supremacy. Keramitchiev's group surfaced as a "typical factionist group" during the First NOF Central

Council Plenum held on August 8, 1948, when the group acted aggressively by removing many of the NOF leaders including Paskal Mitrevski as the most authoritative person in the organization. Here Keramitchiev discredited the leaders in front of the membership and in front of the CPG by manufacturing allegations that they were “Hellenophiles” and Yugoslav agents who worked against the CPG. According to Fotev: “Keramitchiev’s cronies were telling Ianis Ioanidis and Nikos Zahariadis, CPG Secretary General, that these NOF leaders were Yugoslav agents who had betrayed the CPG. On the other hand, the same Keramitchiev cronies were telling the Macedonian people that these same NOF leaders were Hellenophiles and anti-Yugoslav elements...” (Ibid, p. 49.) According to Fotev, they went so far as to physically attack the NOF leaders and were prepared to liquidate Paskal Mitrevski. According to Fotev: “There are reasons to believe that Mihail Keramitchiev and his NOF dissidents had approached Tane Nikolov to assassinate Paskal Mitrevski...” (Ibid, p. 49.) After they were defeated at the NOF Central Council Plenum, the leading figures in Keramitchiev’s bunch deserted NOF, the PLM and DAG, crossed over the border to the people’s Republic of Macedonia and continued to slander and discredit the NOF leaders, accusing them of being “Hellenophiles and unpaid CPG mercenaries, anti-Yugoslav elements and traitors to the Macedonian people...” (Ibid, p. 49.)

There were also other personnel changes made. Vangel Kochev was appointed Assistant Political Commissar in DAG General Staff. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 58.) On October 15, 1948 Evdokia Baleva-Vera was elected Secretary of the AFZH Main Board and first vice president of the All-Greek Central Council of the Democratic Union of women. Other members elected into the council included Marika Elkova, Mahi Pilaeva, Andonia Filipova and Afrodita Liaku-Gechu, all Macedonians and AFZH activists. (Ibid, p. 58.)

(Marika Elkova was from the village P’teli, Lerin Region. She immigrated to Poland after the war and then returned with her family to Skopje, People’s Republic of Macedonia.)

(Mahi Pilaeva was AFZH Secretary for the Lerin District. She immigrated to Czechoslovakia to Brno and, with her Greek husband, returned to Athens.)

(Andonia Filipova was from the village Krchishte. From AFZH she was delegated to the AKE agricultural party. She immigrated to the Soviet Union in Tashkent and from there returned with her family to Skopje, People's Republic of Macedonia.)

Second NOF Congress

The unfavourable situation created for the CPG by the Greek government military buildups in Greek occupied Macedonia, forced the CPG leadership to re-evaluate its relations with NOF and take action to stop the crisis. In order to survive the Greek government onslaught, the CPG leadership realized that it needed the Macedonian people's support and to gain it, it needed to change its attitude towards the Macedonian National Question. During its 5th Plenum, held on January 31, 1949, the CPG Central Committee not only recognized the Macedonian people as equals to the Greek people but also took a further step and acknowledged their "right of self-determination..." However, only a few days later the CPG leadership retreated from its declared position of "self-determination" but committed to allowing the creation of a "free Macedonian state within a Balkan Federation..." (Ibid, p. 51.)

The CPG declaration, to resolve the Macedonian National Question within the Balkan federation at a time when CPG and CPY relations were at their lowest with the CPY and Yugoslavia being dangerously squeezed by the Soviet Union, Bulgaria and the other Eastern European countries, was pure manipulation. This was purposely done by the CPG to denigrate Yugoslavia and to create friction between the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia and those in the People's Republic of Macedonia. According to Fotev: "This kind of attitude had the stench of an anti-Yugoslav and anti-Macedonian character because NOF was neither consulted nor informed about this before it was announced. NOF was never given a chance to react or decide for itself." (Ibid.)

The situation in Greece forced the CPG leadership to again make concessions to normalize its relations with NOF. The CPG called for NOF to have another Plenum. On February 3, 1949 the Second NOF Central Council Plenum was held, during which a decision was adopted to convene a Second NOF Congress with the date set for March 25, 1949. (M. Fotev, *developments through NOF*, p. 51.)

On March 20, 1949, shortly before the NOF Congress, a DAG political commissar counseling meeting was held, during which the General Staff political secretary submitted a report praising the Macedonian fighters and officers in DAG as heroes, fighting in a heroic struggle. The paper also mentioned irregularities and the chauvinistic attitude of the Greek political secretaries taken towards the Macedonian fighters. Among other things, the report said: “The Slavo-Macedonian soldiers and officers are DAG’s best fighters. They fought and fight bravely. These heroic people gave their best. They sacrificed their children, their properties and their homes. There is no home where one could find no casualties; wounded, or killed. About 20 to 50% of the DAG units fighting on Vicho Mountain are Slavo-Macedonian...” (Ibid, p. 53.) CPG Secretary General Nikos Zahariadis personally decided to restore the suspended NOF officers to their former NOF leadership positions. This included Paskal Mitrevski who, at this point in time, was highly regarded as a fighter and military leader. According to the Secretary of DAG Headquarters, Paskal Mitrevski was a great DAG fighter and political commissar... at least this is what he said during a consultation meeting of political assets held in the village Rudari, Prespa Region. A similar opinion was also expressed by Micho, the War Minister in the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece, who said: “I personally witnessed Paskal Mitrevski fight hard in the battles in Voden and Negush which we led together. Paskal proved himself a brave fighter and a military and political leader.” (Ibid, p. 50-51.) For Mitrevski’s removal from NOF, among others, Zahariadis blamed Ianis Ioannidis and Leonidas Stringos who “maintained ties with the NOF leadership”. (M. Fotev, *developments through NOF*, p. 50.) After that, Zahariadis suspended Ianis Ioannidis and Leonidas Stringos from having ties with NOF and allowed the NOF leaders to personally take over the Macedonian organization. (Ibid, p. 61.)

Vangel Koichev, who at the time was NOF Central Council Secretary, was unable to prepare a political report for the Congress and so Zahariadis gave that task to Paskal Mitrevski. The report contained information on the Macedonian liberation struggle in the three parts of Macedonia, as well as information on the creation of the Macedonian national state, the People's Republic of Macedonia. (Ibid, p. 51-52.) Zahariadis, however, ordered Mitrevski not to present the part of his report that dealt with the success of the national liberation struggle and the creation of the Macedonian state, the People's Republic of Macedonia. According to Fotev this is how Zahariadis explained his position regarding that matter: "Today, when the Communist Party of the USSR and all communist parties and governments of the socialist countries condemn the policy of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav government, we cannot honestly, in this NOF Congress, talk about CPY revolutionary benefits for the peoples of Yugoslavia and to properly address the Macedonian National Question in Yugoslavia..." (Ibid, p. 52.) Mitrevski, however, did not agree and still wanted his presentation to go ahead. Mitrevski's reply to Zahariadis was: "My report underlines obvious and undeniable historical facts. It is about the struggles of the Macedonian people who are fighting for their national aspirations, for their national rights and for their own interests. So I believe the report should not be dismissed and must freely and openly be expressed to the Congress. On the other hand, should we reject or ignore these historical truths, then we are in open conflict with the national and political awareness of the Macedonian fighters and the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia..." (Ibid, p. 52.) Zahariadis, however, vetoed it anyway. Zahariadis said: "Facts are facts. But the fact is that the CPY has veered from the socialist path and is now a serious problem for the world communist movement, therefore we cannot talk at the NOF Congress about the revolutionary benefits of Yugoslavia when the Informburo communists and worker's parties, like all communist parties, have condemned Yugoslavia..." (Ibid, p. 52.)

As planned, the NOF Congress was held on March 25, 1949 in the village church in Nivitsi, Prespa Region. About 700 people participated, from whom about 300 were delegates who had the right to vote because they were members of the NOF Central Council. About 100 delegates were Macedonian DAG fighters. The others

were observers and guests from all over Greek occupied Macedonia, including from the free and occupied settlements and from the fronts in Vicho, Gramos, Kaimakchalan and Paiak Mountains. Several other delegations also attended the congress including delegates from the CPG, led by General Secretary Nikos Zahariadis, delegates from the Agrarian Party of Greece led by Ianis Vurnas, delegates from the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece and from DAG Headquarters led by Minister General Kostas Giftodimos-Karageorgis, delegates from the Democratic youth of Greece, from the Cooperative Union of Greece, from the Democratic Union of Greek women, from the Turkish minority in Greece and a delegation of the so-called “Macedonian Organization” from Bulgaria led by Risto Kalaidziev. (M. Fotev, development through NOF, p. 54.) There was also a delegation from the People’s Front from the People’s Republic of Macedonia invited but it did not attend. Fotev did not give an explanation for why it did not attend.

(In his welcoming speech, among other things, Kostas Giftodimos-Karageorgis said: “There are a few places on earth that are as soaked with blood as is the soil in Macedonia. Few peoples suffered and struggled under the burden of slavery as much as the Macedonian people. For fifty years the Macedonian people have persistently fought and sacrificed themselves for self-determination...” (Ibid, p. 53.))

(The leader of the Democratic Union of Greek women, among other things, said: “There is a special separate place in our great struggle for the Slavo-Macedonian women and female heroes of the Slav-Macedonian people who, for years, have been tortured by fascist tyranny, persecuted by the fascists with even greater evil in a new occupation. Among other things, the Slavo Macedonian woman stands proudly and fights organized in the Anti-Fascist Front for Women. First in the country to be brought down by enemy bullets during the new occupation was Irina Ginova-Mirka...” (Ibid, p. 53.))

(Hristo Kalaidziev was from Enidzhe-Vardar, Greek occupied Macedonia. He was born on August 28, 1886. He was a revolutionary and a communist member of the CPB, member of the CPB Central Committee Executive Bureau and a leader in IMRO

(United). He was interned in a camp in Bulgarian occupied Macedonia during WW II from 1942 to 1943. After the war he was president of the Association of Macedonian Cultural and Educational entities in Bulgaria. He died in Sofia on April 26, 1964.)

The Congress was opened by Evdokia Baleva-Vera with a minute of silence honouring the fallen soldiers and victims of the Greek Monarcho-Fascist regime. In his welcoming speech, Zahariadis tried to turn the NOF Congress into “an anti-Yugoslav debate in order to create a gap between the Macedonian people from Greek occupied Macedonia and the people from the People’s Republic of Macedonia. (Ibid.) Zahariadis exerted a lot of pressure on the NOF leadership to accept the CPG’s new political course regarding the Macedonian National Question and to lead them into an open conflict with the People’s Republic of Macedonia and Yugoslavia. (Ibid, p. 52.) The NOF leadership, however, had strong support from the Macedonian fighters and from the Macedonian masses and was able to overcome the pressure and, for the moment, to debunk Zahariadis’s plan to instrumentalize NOF and turn it into an anti-Yugoslav and anti-Macedonian propaganda machine. The Congress succeeded in preserving the unity and strength of the organization and its leadership. NOF’s position in the joint Greek-Macedonian armed struggle was confirmed. Those Macedonians who left NOF or deserted from the fronts, were declared deserters. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 54.)

The representative from the so-called “Macedonian Organization” in Bulgaria (Association of Macedonian organizations in Bulgaria) caused uproar during his presentation. He opened his speech with a hostile tone of voice immediately attacking the Yugoslav and the People’s Republic of Macedonia’s leaders. In protest, most delegates left the Congress auditorium during his speech. When the Congress was over the Bulgarian delegates were warned not to interfere in NOF’s affairs and not to advise the Macedonian people in relation to the People’s Republic of Macedonia. According to Fotev, the Bulgarians were told: “We are involved in a struggle for life and death here and we have no problems with our brothers and with those who are helping us with our armed struggle... How can we fight for our national freedom and at the same time attack the

Macedonians who created the People's Republic of Macedonia...? For us that would be absurd...!" (Ibid, p. 54-55.)

By secret ballot 51 members and 22 candidate members were elected in the new NOF Central Council during the Congress. The NOF Central Council was constituted with 5 Presidency members. Elected were Paskal Mitrevski President, Evdokia Baleva-Vera Vice President, Mihail Maliov Secretary, and Vangel Koichev and Pavle Rakovski Members. An Executive Committee of 11 members and 3 candidate members were also elected. Elected to the Executive Committee were Paskal Mitrevski, Evdokia Baleva-Vera, Mihail Maliov, Pavle Rakovski, Vangel Koichev, Mincho Fotev, Stavro Kochev, Krsto Mangov, Vangel Nichev, Urania Pirovska-Iurukova and Tashko Gushevski-Maki. Elected as candidate members were Lambro Cholakov, Done Sikavitsa and Priko Dimitar. Appointed NOF representatives in the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece were: Paskal Mitrevski Minister, Stavro Kochev Director in the Directorate for National Minorities, Krsto Mangov representative in the PLM Boards and Done Sikavitsa in charge of Macedonian education in the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece. At the suggestion of the NOF Central Council Presidency a decision was also adapted to renew NOMS, the Macedonian youth organization. Mincho Fotev, in cooperation with other former youth leaders including Todor Kochev-Victor, Tashko Hadzhiiianev, Dioko Petrichevski and Petre Asprovski, was put in charge of that task. (Ibid, p. 55.)

(Tashko Hadzhiiianev was from the city Voden. He was a member of the NOMS District Board in Voden Region, member of the EPON District Committee for Macedonia and Thrace, and member of the NOF Central Council Executive Committee. In 1949 he, along with other members of NOF, was accused by the CPG leadership of being an agent of Tito and was arrested by the DAG security authorities and imprisoned in Albania. Later he was sent to Moscow, the Soviet Union, where he was sentenced to 8 years in prison and dispatched to serve it in a concentration camp. He was released in 1955.)

The NOF Congress adopted the following action plan for the NOF Central Council and for its organizations:

1. Consolidate and strengthen the ranks of NOF and AFZH;
2. Renew NOMS, the Macedonian youth organization;
3. NOF, NOMS and AFZH are to maximize their efforts to mobilize the fighting potential of all the Macedonian people, especially in residential areas under the control of the Monarcho-Fascist Army;
4. Protect and strengthen the moral, political, organizational and national unity of the Macedonian people from Greek occupied Macedonia;
5. NOF to become a real political factor in the people's government;
6. NOF to bring into reality the national equality of the Macedonian people in all areas of the socio-political, economic and cultural life of the country;
7. The NOF Central Council will strive to establish real and equal relations with the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece and with DAG Headquarters. It will strive to create constructive cooperation with all parties and social and political organizations in Greece which actively participate in the DAG armed struggle. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 55-56.)

A few days after the Congress took place, the NOF Central Council Executive Committee met and made a number of appointments and assigned important tasks to some of its top members. Paskal Mitrevski was appointed President of the Central Council, whose role was to establish and maintain links with the governing bodies of the political parties and organizations participating in the armed anti-Monarcho-Fascist struggle. He was also to constructively cooperate, on an equal basis, with Mihail Maliov, Secretary of the NOF Central Council, regarding organizational and personnel issues inside NOF. Stavro Kochev and Krsto Mangov were appointed to deal with the local people's government. Done Sikavitsa was appointed to lead the primary education programs for the Macedonian children. Vangel Koichev was appointed to look into problems experienced by the Macedonian fighters in DAG. Pavle

Rakovski was appointed to lead the agitation and propaganda department and to run the newspaper "Nepokoren". Evdokia Baleva-Vera was put in charge of all of AFZH. Urania Iurukova was put in charge of AFZH in the Kostur District. Vangel Nichev was appointed NOF organizational secretary for eastern Greek occupied Macedonia (Seres and Drama Regions). Mincho Fotev was put in charge of restoring NOMS and appointed NOMS Main Board President in charge of running the recovery of the youth organization. He was also appointed President of the NOMS Main Board and given the task to run the NOF Kostur and Lerin Districts. (Ibid, p. 57.)

After its Second Congress, the NOF leadership was fully committed to mobilizing the Macedonian people's fighting potential in the armed struggle to its maximum. NOF was fully committed in supporting DAG to its fullest and to achieving equality between the Macedonian and Greek people. (Ibid.) The Macedonian DAG auxiliary units were expanded and had grown to over 4,000 fighters, Macedonian men and women. (Ibid.) Macedonian sabotage groups called "Free shooters" operated behind the lines in the Greek government held territory of western and central Greek occupied Macedonia and carried out sabotage missions. These groups were fully supported by local NOF organizations in the Macedonian towns and villages including in Lerin, Rupishsta, Sorovich, Ekshisu, Aitos, Zeleniche, Mokreni, Babishta, Zagorichani, Kumanichevo, Lichishta, Gorentsi, Makroviani, Gosno, Zhelin and Nestram. In total there were 150 active Macedonian free shooters operating at one time. (Ibid, p. 57.)

With their massive participation and contribution to the armed struggle, the CPG leadership was placed in a situation where it had to change its position and attitude towards the Macedonian people. This was reflected in the reorganization and expansion of the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece in which Paskal Mitrevski was appointed Minister of Provisions, Stavro Kochev was appointed Director in the Directorate of National Minorities and Krsto Mangov and Done Sikavitsa were appointed Officials in the government. Vangel Koichev was appointed as a member of the DAG Military Council. At that time Nikos Zahariadis, CPG Secretary General, was also President of the DAG Military Council.

Mincho Fotev was appointed Assistant Political Commissar at DAG Headquarters. On top of that all DAG Headquarters of battalions, brigades and divisions in which Macedonian fighters served, Macedonians were appointed as aides to the political commissars. Many of the DAG Macedonian fighters, both men and women, were appointed to military and political functions. (Ibid, p. 58-59.) The Provisional Democratic Government of Greece and DAG Headquarters now had Macedonians serving in their ranks who were responsible for enacting legislative and other legal acts. (M. Fotev, development through NOF, p. 59.)

NOF became an organizer and an influential factor in the people's government in the liberated territory of Greek occupied Macedonia. In its new capacity NOF recommended its own candidates for the district, city, regional and village Boards, as well as leaders in the people's militia. Krsto Mangov was elected President of the NOF National Board in Kostur Region. Risto Kolentsev was elected President of the NOF National Board for Lerin Region. Members of the leadership and NOF activists were appointed commanders of the People's Militia. Macedonians were also asked to lead the Kostur, Lerin and Voden Region militias. (Ibid.)

NOF also cared for the Macedonian people who were evacuated to the Eastern European countries. Done Sikavitsa was appointed guardian of their rights... (Ibid.)

External relations in the PLM in Greek occupied Macedonia

The PLM, as a political factor and as a representative of the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia, in external relations, in relations with foreign parties, progressive organizations and international forums, was well represented by NOF and AFZH. These organizations worked independently and in conjunction with the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece and with other Greek progressive organizations.

AFZH, the Macedonian Women Organization, participated with its representatives in a joint delegation with all the other delegations of Democratic Greece. AFZH was led by Evdokia Baleva-Vera, Secretary of the AFZH Central Committee, and by Malina Markova

from the village Zhelevo, Lerin Region. Markova was an AFZH activist and a member of the NOF District Board for Lerin Region. After the Greek Civil War she immigrated to Poland, and from there she went to Skopje, the People's Republic of Macedonia, along with her family. In 1948 a Convention of the World organization of democratic women was held in Budapest. The Convention was attended by Macedonian women wearing Macedonian folk costumes. Evdokia Baleva-Vera was elected candidate member of the World Organization of Women leaders. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 60.)

A NOF delegation together with a Greek democratic delegation, as part of the PLM, took part in the International Congress of Peace held in April 1949, in Prague, Czechoslovakia. Included among the NOF delegates were Evdokia Baleva-Vera, Pavle Rakovski and Done Sikavitsa. On April 22, 1949 a tribute was held for the 34th anniversary of Iane Sandanski's death in the People's Republic of Bulgaria, in which NOF leaders Evdokia Baleva-Vera, Vice President of the NOF Central Council, Pavle Rakovski and Done Sikavitsa participated. (M. Fotev, development through NOF, p. 60.)

In May 1949 NOF met with a French delegation, made up of four leftist parties, while visiting Greece. Included among the French delegates was Paul Eliar, a prominent French poet and member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of France. (Ibid, p. 59.) The delegation was received by Paskal Mitrevski President of the NOF Central Council and by Secretary Mihail Maliov. (Ibid.) The meeting took place in the Sveti Nikola Church in the village Shtrkovo, Prespa Region. The event, during which the Macedonians identified themselves ethnically, culturally and linguistically as Macedonian, was hosted with a celebration that included a Macedonian style lunch served by Macedonian young ladies dressed in Macedonian folk dresses. Delegates from the CPG and AKE were also in attendance. (Ibid, p. 59-60.)

In July 1949 in a joint delegation with the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece, the Macedonian People's Liberation Movement (PLM) attended Giorgi Dimitrov's funeral in the People's Republic of Bulgaria. The PLM was represented by Paskal Mitrevski, President of the NOF Central Council and cabinet

minister of the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece. (Ibid.)

Measures taken by the CPG to subdue NOF by use of anti-Yugoslav misinformation

In an attempt to break up the unity in the NOF leadership, Nikos Zahariadis made use of the following individuals: Stavro Kochev, Pando Vaina, Tasho Gushopolu-Maki and other Macedonians. (M. Fotev, *developments through NOF*, p. 63.) He personally invited these people separately and one by one to assure them that Yugoslavia had strayed from the path of socialism and was leading an anti-Soviet policy. He told them that it was a “political decision” to create the People’s Republic of Macedonia and that the People’s Republic of Macedonia was a “nationalist hotspot”. The CPG leadership had no position of its own regarding the Macedonian Question that conformed to the Informburo resolution so that it could pressure the NOF leadership to accept. But Nikos Zahariadis put a lot of pressure on the NOF Central Council and personally undertook to manage and attend its meetings. (Ibid, p. 61.) His purpose was “to discredit the Macedonian communists and NOF inside the country and abroad, and create confusion in the PLM”. (Ibid.)

However, the CPG was unable to take other drastic measures against NOF and so it decided to establish a Macedonian Communist organization in Greek occupied Macedonia to take the leading role in the Macedonian national movement. This was because the NOF leadership refused to implement the CPG’s policies regarding the Macedonian Question, break relations with Yugoslavia and aligned itself with the Soviet Union and with the other Eastern European countries.

Establishing KOEM (Communist Organization of Aegean Macedonia)

Even before the Second NOF Congress, Zahariadis had prepared the groundwork for creating KOEM in order to put strong pressure on the NOF delegates to comply with his demands. After he failed to impose his policies during the NOF Congress, a founding meeting of

KOEM was called at his request and in his presence. About 160 Macedonian communists and CPG members attended. The founding meeting was held on March 21, 1949 and was attended by Nikos Zahariadis, Secretary General of the Communist Party of Greece, Michos Partsalidis, President of the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece, and Miroviglis Periklis, Chief of Intelligence. An interim organizational governing body was appointed with Mihail Maliov as its secretary. (M. Fotev, *developments through NOF*, p. 62.) In his welcoming speech, Zahariadis, among other things, said that KOEM was created by the CPG as a need to fill the big gap caused by NOF's weakness, which had "chauvinist tendencies". (Ibid, p. 62.)

According to Fotev, KOEM did not build an organizational structure and did not become a true organization. It remained a forum and a tool for the CPG through which it enforced its anti-Yugoslav and anti-Macedonian policies. According to Fotev: "There was no justification for creating KOEM. In other words, it was not formed to serve the vital interests of the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia. The main objective for KOEM's establishment was to deprive NOF of its leading role and to throw NOF onto the side lines while the CPG imposed its own version of the Macedonian National Question on the Macedonian people. In fact, KOEM was not a Party organization but a forum for the CPG without any fundamental organizations. KOEM was an instrument which Nikos Zahariadis, CPG Secretary General, used to manipulate the Macedonian people." (Ibid.) The Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia were informed about KOEM's formation a few months after it was established, with the publication of the speech Zahariadis gave during its founding meeting. The speech was published on July, 16, 1949 in the newspaper "Nepokoren". (Ibid. p. 62.)

The strong pressure the CPG applied against the NOF leaders continued even after KOEM was created. The CPG demanded that Paskal Mitrevski, Evdokia Baleva-Vera, Mincho Fotev and the other NOF leaders fall in line behind the spirit of the Informburo and to prove their loyalty to the Informburo by writing their criticisms of Yugoslavia and the Macedonian people in the People's Republic of Macedonia, so that they could be read over the radio waves of "Free

Greece” and published in the Eastern European newspapers, especially in the “Lasting peace and People’s Democracy” newspaper, organ of the Informburo. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 61-62.)

Maliov from KOEM was instructed by Zahariadis to summon Mincho Fotev and the others. According to Fotev: “We were summoned by Mihail Maliov, KOEM Secretary, who was sent by Zahariadis to invite us back to the village Viniani, Prespa Region. I followed Maliov who led me to the house where the DAG Chief of Security and DAG Main Staff were housed. Here we were greeted by those present and we talked for almost an hour and a half. Zahariadis personally addressed me and said, ‘Comrade Fotev, as it is well-known, all communist Parties and governments in the socialist countries have condemned the communist Party of Yugoslavia because it has veered from the socialist road, broke away from the family of socialist countries and is in sharp conflict with them all and with the international communist movement. Our party, the CPG, is in solidarity with the Informburo and with the Soviet Union. Accordingly, all communists in this regard should be unique and decisive. This is our duty as was instructed by the great Stalin. All communists must walk the path that leads to the Soviet Union headed by Stalin. You, Comrade Fotev, and all the Macedonian Communists, leaders of NOF, etc., have to depart from Yugoslavia. All of you need to follow Moscow, and not Skopje and Belgrade. This is the CPG Central Committee’s position that every Communist and member of the CPG must respect...’ In the end he asked us to write an extensive article about NOF’s relationship with Yugoslavia and our general attitude towards the PLM. They promised us that our article would be read on the radio ‘Free Greece’ and published in the Informburo newspaper ‘Lasting peace and People’s Democracy’...” To this, Fotev replied: “Comrade Nikos, from the moment I became a DAG fighter and a CPG member, I have fought against the Monarcho-Fascists and against the Anglo-American occupiers. I fought for the freedom and independence of my country and my people, and my position on this is as clear as daylight. As for the article you are looking for us to write, give it to someone else because it’s not my job, but I simply do not believe this is the way it is with Yugoslavia because NOF never received any suggestions or directives from Yugoslavia to go

against DAG and against the revolutionary movement in Greece. You are well aware of how and why NOF was set up and what its objectives are... That's all I can tell you..." (Ibid, p. 63-64.)

New and bitter accusations were leveled against NOF in June 1949, when the CPG received a letter from Mihail Keramitchiev and Ilia Dimovski-Gotse. The letter was delivered to the CPG Central Committee Politburo by Pavle Rakovski on June 2, 1949. By personally delivering this letter, Pavle Rakovski proved himself to be in a "different circle of people" and because of that he was excluded from the NOF Central Council. (Ibid, p. 64.) The CPG interpreted this letter as a letter from the CPM Party and Macedonian state leadership and used it for propaganda purposes to "defame and brutally attack the People's Republic of Macedonia and Yugoslavia by twisting the truth..." (Ibid, p. 64.) The letter was used to publicize a new resolution, especially prepared by Zahariadis himself on behalf of KOEM, showing that the CPG had proof that the Macedonian public, the Macedonian communists and the Macedonian fighters had denounced the CPY and its policies. (Ibid, p. 64) And with this resolution, Zahariadis wanted to "engage the Macedonian people in an anti-Yugoslav smear campaign..." (Ibid.) The resolution text was adopted at the extended KOEM meeting held on June 19, 1949.

According to Rakovski: "A wider KOEM meeting was held during which 45 Macedonian CPG cadres were in attendance in the presence of a number of CPG functionaries. The Resolution text, prepared and dated June 15, 1949 by the CPG Central Committee Politburo, was divided among the participants. The participants were asked to read it and vote on it with an open vote. Their votes were then to be confirmed by signing the paper showing who had adopted the Resolution. (Pavle Rakovski, Significance of KOEM and the document "KOEM Resolution", Skopje, 1989, p. 5.)

The CPG continued its propaganda campaign against Yugoslavia via "Radio Free Greece" and, on July 6, 1949, accused the Yugoslav government of cooperating with the "Monarcho-Fascist government" in Athens and planning joint actions against DAG and the democratic government of Greece. In a statement released by the same radio station, the CPG hinted that "Yugoslav army officers met

with officers from the Greek Monarcho-Fascist army” in the Kaimakchalan vicinity and were planning to take action against DAG via their installed agents who were concentrated in NOF. (M. Fotev, *developments through NOF*, p. 64.) Reacting to this, the CPG organized protests and anti-Yugoslav rallies using its conscripted Informburo supporters, and took punitive measures against the NOF leaders, and against all Macedonian communists who “refused to speak out against the People’s Republic of Macedonia and against Yugoslavia”. The protests and rallies were initiated by Nikos Zahariadis and by Vasilis Bardzhotas-Fanis, DAG General Staff Political Commissar. The protests would subsequently be used to place political and criminal responsibility on NOF and repress its supporters. (Ibid, p. 64.) The CPG leadership then activated its DAG Security Services and unleashed them against the Macedonian population in the Vicho Region villages to prove that they were disloyal and then asked the CPG Central Committee Politburo for its approval to arrest them all and send them to labour camps. The official act AE, K-20/291, among other things, required that “all these people be arrested and sent to hard labour, disabling them from escaping to Tito, the enemy, and from going to the front. These people were to be accompanied with ‘our people’ to gather information from them. It is proposed that other means be also utilized, especially minefields, dogs, traps, bells, etc.” (Ibid, p. 65.) The request was accepted and implemented. Hundreds of Macedonians and NOF supporters were arrested and then taken to concentration camps to perform hard labour. (Ibid, p. 66.) And even under conditions such as these, NOF still remained intact and continued to serve the Macedonian people as a leader in the armed struggle, a fight for the realization of national equality.

DAG’s defeat

On August 10, 1949 the Greek Monarcho-Fascist army, consisting of 80,000 troops, artillery, tanks and aviation, launched a major offensive against DAG and its units in the DAG free territory in Greek occupied Macedonia. By August 17, 1949 it poked a hole in DAG’s positions and evicted two DAG divisions and several smaller units and occupied Mount Vicho and Prespa. The Macedonian civilian population in that region was pounded by the Greek Monarcho-Fascist artillery and aviation. With fanatical hatred, the

DAG divisions stationed at the Greek-Yugoslav border prevented refugees from fleeing into the territory of the People's Republic of Macedonia and coerced them to withdraw to the territory of Albania. Any Macedonian who attempted to cross the Yugoslav border was shot. There were many such incidents. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 66.)

Then, after some fierce fighting that lasted from August 20 to 29, 1949, Gramos too fell into enemy hands and DAG was completely defeated. Nikos Zahariadis along with the Chief of General Staff and the Ministers of the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece, who at the time were at the Greek-Albanian border, after receiving a radiogram with the tragic news, immediately crossed the border into the territory of Albania. The defeated DAG units, under the command of Lt. Gen. Georgios Protopappas-Kikitsas, among whom were many Macedonian fighters and DAG officers, crossed into Albanian territory in the evening of August 29, 1949 where they were disarmed. According to Fotev: "These moments, it seems, were the hardest for those DAG fighters who survived the long battles. After heroically fighting against the enemy, the Monarcho-Fascists, for three long years, they lost the war. Even though this was primarily due to the failure of the military and political leadership, it was hard to describe how the DAG fighters felt deep down in their souls. Many wept loudly. Most of them, with tears in their eyes, put their guns on their chests and kissed them before surrendering them. They were sad and tired as they continued the journey on foot, without having a clue as to where they were going and what was going to happen to them. No one knew anything of the fate of their loved ones, parents, spouses, children... The fighters looked at each other... They all looked sober and no one wanted to ask the unanswered question... Why they lost? It was a real tragedy..." (Ibid, p. 67.) They were all sent to camps. (Ibid, p. 67.) The withdrawal of the regular units was followed by about 2,000 Macedonians belonging to the DAG auxiliary units who were "firmly determined to continue the fight to the end". (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 68.)

Repression of NOF, NOMS and AFZH

Even after escaping to the territory of Albania, the CPG leadership continued with its fierce attacks against Yugoslavia and at the same time accused NOF and the Macedonian leadership as the main culprits of DAG's defeat. On September 9, 1949 General Michos Vlandas, Minister of War in the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece and member of the CPG Central Committee Politburo, held a meeting with his military and political staff in the Albanian camp. There were about 3,000 fighters and DAG officers, including Macedonians fighters and officers in the same camp. The CPG Central Committee Politburo, in the presence of 200 officers, announced its conclusion as to why DAG was defeated and that blame was placed squarely at Yugoslavia and NOF as being the main culprits for losing the war. According to Fotev, who was present at that meeting, General Michos Vlandas said: "When our Party opted for an armed struggle it relied on Yugoslavia for its unwavering support promised to us. We relied on Yugoslavia because of its radiant glory in its victory in the People's Liberation War and Revolution. But here we are, at the most critical and decisive moment of our struggle, Tito turned his back on us... he sold us out... he surrendered us and, through his agents (alluding to NOF), he undermined our national-movement and DAG". (Ibid, p. 67 -68.) Vlandas then ordered all the Party secretaries to inform the DAG units of his conclusion. (Ibid, p. 68.)

After that, all NOF leaders were systematically watched around the clock by the DAG Security Services and their activities were recorded in pre-existing files. According to Fotev: "It has been proven that, since 1945, the CPG had open files and followed the life and activities of all the NOF leaders. CPG representatives in the People's Republic of Macedonia have been monitoring NOF activities since NOF was created in the summer of 1945. They have been spying on both NOF and the People's Republic of Macedonia." (Ibid, p. 70-71.) It would appear that the CPG Greeks were preparing "a court case" against the Macedonian activists and supporters well in advance of losing the war.

On September 30, 1949 the CPG Central Committee Politburo adopted a decision to arrest the leaders and activists of NOF, NOMS

and AFZH. Over 100 Macedonians, 30 of them women, DAG fighters and NOF activists were arrested and handed over to the Albanian police. According to Fotev, “nothing is known of their fate.” (Ibid, p. 71.) They were detained without being tried and carried off to the concentration camps. Then on October 2, 1949, with agreement from Mehmet Shehu, Albanian government President, and in the presence of Petrov, a representative from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in Albania, ten of the top executives from NOF, NOMS and AFZH were arrested. (Ibid, p. 71.) Included among those arrested were Paskal Mitrevski, NOF Central Council President, Evdokia Baleva-Vera, NOF Central Council Vice-President and AFZH Central Committee Secretary, Mihail Maliov, KOEM Secretary and NOF Central Council Secretary, Mincho Fotev, member of the NOF Central Council Executive Committee and NOMS Main Board President, Urania Iurukova, member of the NOF Central Council Executive Committee, Lazar Poplazarov, member of the NOF Central Council, Risto Kolentsev, member of the NOF Central Council and President of the Lerin District Board of the People’s government, Tashko Hadzhiiianev, member of the NOF Central Council, Lambro Cholakov, President of the NOF District Board for Kostur District and candidate member of the NOF Central Council Executive Committee, and Pavle Rakovski, former member of the NOF Central Council Presidency. On October 7, 1949 these 10 people were imprisoned in the “Bureli” prison camp. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 69.) Their arrest was publicly announced at a gathering of DAG officers and soldiers in the camp where they were all stationed. The gathering was attended by all members of the CPG Central Committee Politburo, members of the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece with its president, Petrov the representative of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in Albania, and representatives of the Albanian Labour Party. Some of the arrested NOF leaders were paraded in front of those attending the meeting. (Ibid, p. 71.)

(Lazo Poplazarov was born in the village Dobrolishte, Kostur Region. He was a communist and a member of the CPG, an ELAS fighter and a member of the NOF Central Council. After the Greek Civil war he, along with other NOF leaders, was charged with being a spy for Tito, arrested and sent to the USSR where he was

convicted and sent to a prison camp in Siberia. He was released in 1955 and returned to the People's Republic of Macedonia, to Skopje, where he died in 1991.)

The gathering was specifically organized to serve as a public forum for making new and bitter accusations against Yugoslavia. According to Fotev: "Nikos Zahariadis was first to speak at the gathering, accusing the NOF leadership of being Tito's agents. Among other things Zahariadis said: 'Paskal Mitrevski and his associates, as Tito's agents, continued to implement Yugoslav policies up until the last moments in order to undermine DAG and the armed struggle, actively opposing the CPG and its policies... At the trial in Hungary against Paik it was proven that Tito's clique were agents of the Anglo-American imperialists. Tito had created his own agents everywhere, including in Greece. Tito had his own agents in NOF, led by Paskal Mitrevski, who undermined DAG by organizing defections of Macedonian fighters fleeing to Yugoslavia... The CPG must arrest all of Tito's agents and completely destroy them... these Yugoslav agents committed devastating acts in our ranks' ..." (Ibid, p.71) Paskal Mitrevski and Evdokia Baleva-Vera, who were paraded in front of the gathering, were allowed to speak and they did protest against the accusations leveled, calling them unfounded. Paskal Mitrevski said: "I, as president of the NOF Central Council, followed the policies outlined in the NOF program. All charges leveled against us are baseless..." After he said that he was ordered to stop talking. (Ibid, p. 72.) Evdokia Baleva-Vera spoke in the defense of NOF, NOMS and AFZH by saying: "These organizations faithfully served the Greek liberation movement. The Macedonian people fought massively and heroically under the Greek leadership and therefore bear no historic responsibility for DAG's defeat. The main culprit for DAG's defeat is the CPG Central Committee." After she said that Zahariadis interrupted her and, with a high tone of voice, addressed the audience: "What does Vera want us to say, call her out by the pseudonym under which she serves OZNA?" According to Fotev, Vera did not wait for a response from Zahariadis and immediately responded by saying: "Comrade Zahariadis, the entire world knows my pseudonym, it is Vera," she yelled out and continued: "You know, and everyone else here knows my name is Evdokia!" To which the audience, both DAG fighters and officers, were heard

shouting: “Long live NOF!”, “Long live AFZH!”, “Long live NOMS”. Others shouted: “Death to Tito’s agents!” Then members of the DAG police jumped on Vera and Paskal, handcuffed them and took them away, after which the gathering ended. The arrested leaders were then handed over to the Albanian police and the same evening they were taken to the notorious “Bureli” prison. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 72.)

CPG Central Committee Sixth Plenum and the Macedonian Question

The Sixth CPG Central Committee Plenum was held on October 9, 1949. Vasilis Bardzhotas, member of the CPG Central Committee Politburo, submitted a paper which presented the Party’s position on the Macedonian Question announced a change. The CPG changed its position by abandoning the slogan “self-determination for the Slavo-Macedonian nation” and returned back to its previous position of “national equality”. It did this, it said, because the overall situation had changed. It was no longer possible for the People’s Republic of Macedonia to be “the centre of national unification”, and because of that there was need to introduce the “Slav-Macedonian nation” and because of that the CPG Central Committee Politburo had to decide what to do with the organizations NOF and KOEM and clean up those who were “traitors to the Party” and “Tito’s agents”.

According to Fotev, Bardzhotas said: “The Party’s Fifth Plenum introduced the slogan ‘self-determination’ over establishing a ‘Slavo-Macedonian nation’. That slogan was chosen during an unsuitable moment. We chose the slogan “self-determination” so that we could oppose the actions of Tito’s agents and attract the Slavo-Macedonian people into the armed struggle. Today the situation has changed and we needed to re-examine the slogan. Stalin has taught us that a national question must be subordinated to the general interests of the revolution and then changed again to serve the general interests of the Party. This too needs to happen today in our country... We need to embrace the slogan of ‘national equality’, which we chose during the CPG Sixth Congress for the following reasons:

1. The slogan 'self-determination' will hinder the development of the mass struggle and unity of the democratic forces and will give opportunity to the Monarcho-Fascists to continue with their demagoguery about the issue and in the end it will hurt the Slavo-Macedonian people.

2. The situation in the People's Republic of Macedonia has completely changed. In no way can Skopje now be regarded as a centre of national unification for the Slavo-Macedonian people.

3. We also need to take into account the ethnic changes which were properly evaluated during the Party's Sixth Congress when the slogan 'national equality' was coined. For all of the above reasons we need to embrace the slogan 'national equality' and let the Slavo-Macedonian people know that we have made this change. The Politburo must also consider what to do with NOF and KOEM and with their members and 'traitors of the Party' and 'Tito's agents.' (Ibid, p. 69-70.)

According to Fotev, Bardzhotas also said: "What is now needed is to clarify the cases of Tito's agents Mitrevski, Fotev, Rakovski and the others and put an end to their destructive activities. These traitors should be excluded from our Party. The Politburo will implement whatever decision is made during the Party Conference..." But, according to Fotev, that decision had already been made and implemented long before the 'party conference' took place. (Ibid, p. 70.)

Macedonian revolutionaries in Albanian and Soviet prisons and concentration camps

The 10 arrested NOF leaders were kept in prison in Albania from October 7 to October 13, 1949, mostly in the Central prison in Tirana. On December 14, 1949 they were taken to the port of Durres, loaded on the Soviet freighter ship the "Michurin" and transported to the port of Odessa. From Odessa the Soviet police took them to Moscow. From there members of the State Security Ministry took them to the "Liublanka" prison. (M. Fotev, development through NOF, p. 69.) There they spent more than two years, from January 1950 to mid-April 1952, being continuously

interrogated in the Greek language. According to Fotev: “The interrogations in Moscow were conducted by a group of Soviet officers and interrogators from the USSR Ministry of State Security that included Major Pandelev, Lieutenant Colonel Viktor Petrovich Firsov, Lieutenant Nikitin, Major Atanasov and Lieutenant Andrei Pogrebniak... Sometimes other state security officers took their place, among who was Colonel Rubliov, State Security Chief of the Second Department responsible for matters related to overseas. The interrogations were conducted in the Greek language through Soviet officers from Greek origin that included Captain Ioanidis, Captain Hristos Dzhumiadis and Lieutenant Aristotelis Papounidis. (Ibid, p. 72.) The interrogations were conducted to demonstrate their connection with the People’s Republic of Macedonia in order to blame Yugoslavia. Included among those indicted from the CPM were Kolishevski, Cvetko Uzunovski-Abas, Nikola Minchev and Dimitar Aleksovski. (M. Fotev, development through NOF, p. 72.)

On April 19, 1952 the Macedonian NOF leaders were sentenced to long prison terms ranging from 8 to 25 years to be served in hard labour concentration camps. Paskal Mitrevski was sentenced to 25 years, Mincho Fotev was sentenced to 10 years, Lambro Cholakov, Risto Kolencev and Tashko Hadzhianev were each sentenced to 8 years in prison. They were sent to serve their sentences in the concentration camps in Vorkuta, Komi, in the north part of the USSR, “where the temperature dips 56 degrees below zero”, to work in the coal mines. Pavle Rakovski was sentenced to 10 years. Evdokia Baleva-Vera, Urania Iupukova and Lazo Poplazarov were each sentenced to 8 years in prison. All of them were sent to the concentration camps in Siberia. (Ibid.)

Other senior NOF figures detained in Albania included Todor Kovachev-Victor member of the NOF Central Council and member of the NOMS Main Board Presidency, Nikola Panov member of the NOF Central Council and NOF District Secretary for Kostur Region, and Tpaiko Supelov member of the NOF District for Kostur Region. These people were taken to Poland, via a Polish ship, and from there were sent to a camp in Czechoslovakia. There they found other Macedonian prisoners including Kosta Roidev. Without being tried, they were then taken to the city Vintava and put to work at a brick manufacturing plant. (Ibid, p. 73.)

There were Macedonian NOF leaders arrested and imprisoned in other Eastern European countries. Arrested and imprisoned in Poland were German Damovski-Stariot member of the NOF Central Council and President of the NOF District Committee, Kosta Kirkov member of the NOF District Committee for Lerin Region, and Tane Naumov NOF District Secretary for Lerin Region. Arrested and interned in the People's Republic of Romania were Done Sikavitsa NOF Central Council Executive Committee candidate and representative of the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece, Foti Ilkovski, NOF Central Council candidate, and Risto Poptpaianov and Vasiliki Karandza-Kula, NOF activists from the village Smrdesht, Kostur Region, Aleko Dukovski from the village Besfina and other NOF activists. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 73.)

Monitoring and interrogating Macedonians who were members of the CPG continued in the Eastern European countries. All those who were members and activists of NOF and who did not take part in the negative campaign against Yugoslavia and the People's Republic of Macedonia, were expelled from the Party, labeled "nationalists and Tito's agents" and persecuted. (Ibid, p, 75.) According to testimony given by Mincho Fotev: "Great Greek chauvinism had definitely manifested in the CPG Greek leadership..." (Ibid, p. 76.)

NOF in the PLM and its opposition

According to Mincho Fotev, "Enemies of all stripes" actively fought against NOF and the PLM of the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia:

1. Those Macedonians associated with the Greek Monarcho-Fascist regime not only performed espionage activities but also actively participated in the actions of the Greek police terrorizing the Macedonian population in an attempt to destroy NOF and the PLM. According to Fotev: "A number of degenerate Macedonians and class enemies, closely related or associated with the Greek Monarcho-Fascist regime, spied on and persecuted Macedonian patriots, communists and NOF supporters and personally

participated in terrorist acts organized by the Greek police against the Macedonian population. (Ibid, p. 77.)

2. Members of Ivan Mihailov's VMRO propagated slogans such as "united and independent Macedonia" under English and American patronage in an attempt to mislead the Macedonian people. In addition to that, they also carried out espionage operations against NOF and the PLM. (M. Fotev, developments through NOF, p. 77.)

3. Macedonians who were CPG cadres actually made attempts to break the national unity of the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia by abiding by the Informburo resolution calling for the liquidation of Macedonian national organizations such as NOF, NOMS and AFZH. According to Fotev: "Some Macedonians who were CPG staff and workers, and who had no Macedonian national consciousness or Macedonian patriotism, dangerously undermined the moral, political and national unity of the Macedonian people by performing special anti-NOF tasks for the CPG. They vilified NOF calling it a 'nationalist' and 'autonomist' organization allegedly threatening the PLM in Greece. By abiding by the Informburo Resolution they became bearers and executors of the CPG and Informburo anti-Yugoslavian policies. They were the initiators of the damnation and dissolution of NOF, NOMS and AFZH..." (Ibid, p. 77-78.)

4. The so-called "Macedonian separatists" were against a common Greek-Macedonian struggle. They were against the Greek anti-Monarcho-Fascist communist movement which would have solved the Macedonian National Question in Greek occupied Macedonia. According to Fotev: "The Macedonian separatists damaged NOF and the PLM. They placed a moral wedge in the political unity of the Macedonian people and soured the Greek fraternity of the progressive forces. They saw the resolution of the Macedonian National Question outside of the victory of the popular revolution in Greece..." (Ibid, p. 78.)

Dissolution of NOF, NOMS and AFZH

Nikos Zahariadis and the CPG Greek leadership continued their intensive anti-NOF and anti-Macedonian campaign to discredit the

Macedonian people, even outside of Greece in the Eastern European countries. The Macedonian organizations which organized and led the Macedonian people from Greek occupied Macedonia in the armed struggle against the Greek Monarcho-Fascist regime, and which made great sacrifices under Zahariadis's leadership for Zahariadis's cause and Party, were vilified to no end. Even after doing all that, NOF was still blamed for implementing "Yugoslav policies" to break up the unity of the Greek people and to damage the Democratic Army of Greece. Even after all the sacrifices it made, NOF was found as the only culprit for causing DAG's disastrous defeat. Imagine that!

According to Fotev: "NOF was one of the most decisive factors for creating and strengthening DAG. Thanks to NOF about 20,000 Macedonian fighters joined DAG and fought in Greek occupied Macedonia, Thrace, Epirus, Thessaly, Rumelia and even in the Peloponnesus and remained consistent to the end of the Greek Civil War. More than 6,000 Macedonians were killed as fighters of DAG and members of NOF, of whom 3,000 died outside of Greek occupied Macedonia. No fewer Macedonians fighters were disabled in the Greek Civil War, victims in the truest sense of the word..." (Ibid, p. 76.)

NOF's role was highly appreciated by Zahariadis during the armed struggle and was highly praised during his welcoming speech in the First Lerin Region Conference. According to Fotev: "Zahariadis told the truth about NOF, praised it and acknowledged it when it suited him... Then he attacked it when it suited him..." (Ibid, p. 77.)

By vilifying NOF, Zahariadis wanted to achieve several goals; show and prove his loyalty to Stalin and his position of being an important factor in the ideological war against Tito's leadership in Yugoslavia, to provide an alibi for his new position towards the Macedonian National Question and, last but not least, to excuse himself from the Greek Civil War tragedy he created.

The Macedonian people were imprinted with the idea that NOF was created by Yugoslavia and was part of DAG's "most dangerous enemies", much more dangerous than the Greek Monarcho-Fascist regime. According to Fotev: "The CPG leadership sought to

convince the Macedonian fighters and communists that NOF's role during the Greek Civil War was negative and harmful, and that NOF was Tito's creation". (Ibid.) And by using this excuse the CPG leadership sought formal ways to dissolve NOF, NOMS and AFZH, whose activities were terminated after DAG's defeat. According to Fotev: "After DAG's defeat, NOF existed only as an object in the CPG campaign against Yugoslavia and against the Macedonian Question." A decision to dissolve NOF, NOMS and AFZH was adopted by the CPG leadership in January 1952. (M. Fotev, development through NOF, P. 75.)

The "Ilinden" organization

Macedonian members of the CPG, the likes of Pando Vaina, Stavro Kochev, Tasho Gushevski-Maki and others, "blindly attached" themselves to Nikos Zahariadis and were used by him to create the anti-Macedonian Organization "Ilinden". (Ibid.) On behalf of the CPG Central Committee, while in Poland, Zahariadis petitioned the Polish Worker's Party and received approval to hold a founding Congress for "Ilinden". The Congress was held on April 2 and 3, 1952 in the village Kroscienko, which was attended by about 500 Macedonians. The organization was formed in order "to mobilize the Macedonian emigrants in Eastern European countries" to conduct anti-Yugoslavian propaganda on behalf of the Informburo. (M. Fotev, development through NOF, p. 75.)

Conclusion

Mincho Fotev comes from a revolutionary family of fighters stretching back to the Ilinden Uprising. His entire immediate family has actively participated in the national liberation armed struggles in Greek occupied Macedonia in both World War II (1941-1945) and in the Greek Civil War (1945-1949). Several of his family members lost their lives in these wars.

Mincho Fotev was one of the organizers, an active fighter and a member of the immediate PLM leadership of the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia, from 1941 to 1949. In his position he occupied and duties he performed, Fotev was well aware of the facts and was capable of making judgments in regards to the Macedonian national liberation movement in Greek occupied Macedonia, the Greek Monarcho-Fascist perpetrated terror against the Macedonian people, the fascist occupation and the divisions existing in Macedonia during the fascist occupation, the Bulgarian propaganda and the pro-Bulgarian counter-band movement, the existence of various organizations, and the PLM's rise and achievements. For the objective and subjective internal reasons as to why DAG was defeated and why the Macedonian population fled its homeland, which had far-reaching tragic consequences for the compact existence of the Macedonian people in their own country in Greek occupied Macedonia, Fotev has his own explanation. The reasons why these things happened, according to Fotev, were because of internal weaknesses and divisions, relations with the Communist Party of Greece, relations with the Communist Party of Macedonia and with the People's Republic of Macedonia, the role played by the Yugoslav Communist Party, and the dominant role played by the world powers such as Britain, the US and the USSR.

In any case, as a revolutionary, Mincho Fotev has left behind an authentic account of events with historical significance, which took place during the long decade in which the Macedonian people's armed liberation struggle took place in Greek occupied in World War II and in the Greek Civil War. He also left us relevant information on hundreds of Macedonian leaders and activists who participated in the Macedonian political organizations NOF, NOMS and AFZH and lost their lives.

Mincho Fotev also left for us polemic texts describing his views, opinions and assessments of the other leaders and participants in the movement, as well as the views of researchers and historians, in order to contribute to the objective clarification of events and to explain the role of individuals in the Macedonian national liberation movement in Greek occupied Macedonia. According to Fotev, there are also events that were simply invented and that documents were written to make them look real. Unfortunately, one of our regrets is that Fotev did not give us his own views, for example, on the organizations MAO, TOMO, and KOEM, to name a few.

Based on the data and opinions that Mincho Fotev left behind in written form we can see that he covered a wide variety of subjects, events and people, especially from the period 1945 to 1949. We can also say that, to some extent, his views are different than those of Dr. Risto Kiriazovski. His disagreements with historian Risto Kiriazovski, who was also a participant in the movement, arise from the different approaches they took in their presentation and evaluation of the movement.

Part III

ATTACHMENTS (Compiled by Mincho Fotev)

APPENDIX 1

List of NOF, NOMS and AFZH leaders and activists who were killed from 1945 to 1949

1. Andonovski Kosta was born in the village Krchishta, Kostur Region. He participated in the PLM in 1943 as a member of ELAS, was an activist of NOF, and DAG company commander. He was killed in 1947.
2. Andonovski Nikola was born in the village Krchishta, Kostur Region. He was communist before World War II, an ELAS fighter, a company commander in the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade”, a Yugoslav National Army (YNA) lieutenant, and a DAG platoon commander. He was killed in January 1948.
3. Andreeva Katina-Tsveta was born in the village Mokreni, Kostur Region. She was a member of the NOMS Regional Board, a lieutenant, and a commander of DAG platoon. She was killed in 1949.
4. Apostolovski Mihail-Graniti was born in the village Krchishta, Kostur Region. He was commander of a platoon in the Kostur Macedonian battalion, deputy political commissar of a battalion in the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade”, instructor on the NOF Main Board, secretary of the NOMS District Board for Kostur Region, candidate member of the NOF Central Council, member of the chiefs of the NOF partisan headquarters in Mount Vicho, and political commissar of a DAG battalion. He was killed in 1948 in the area of “Paliokrimini-Gurusha” on Mount Gramos.
5. Apostolovski Kosta Vasilev was born in the city Voden. He was a communist and a member of the NOF District Board for Voden Region. He was killed in 1946.

6. Apchev Vangel was born in the village Banitsa, Lerin Region. He was a courier for the Lerin District Board, and a DAG company commander. He was killed in 1948.
7. Apchev Pavle was from the village Banitsa, Lerin Region. He was NOMS secretary in the village and was arrested and shot by the Monarcho-Fascist police in 1947.
8. Ashbakova Sofia-Levka was born in the village Mesimeri, Voden Region. She was a member of the AFZH Regional Board and a DAG partisan. She was killed in 1948.
9. Babevski Tashko was born in the city Voden. He was an ELAS fighter and a member of the NOF City Board for Voden. He was killed in 1948.
10. Babaicheto Dino was born in the village Babiani, Enidzhe-Vardar Region. He was a member of the NOF Regional Board. He was killed in 1946.
11. Bobeva Aleksandra was born in the city Voden. She was a member of the NOMS City Board for Voden and a DAG fighter. She was killed in 1948.
12. Bogeov Risto was born in the town Ostrovo, Voden Region. He was commander of a partisan platoon in the Voden Macedonian battalion, secretary of the NOF Regional Committee, and DAG company commander. He was killed in 1948.
13. Boglev Tpaiko was born in the village Gornichevo, Lerin Region. He was an ELAS fighter and a partisan in the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade”, a member of the NOF District Board, and a DAG commander. He was killed in 1947.
14. Bozhinov Panaiot-Levter was born in the village Mesimeri, Voden Region. He was a member of a NOF District Board and Secretary of a NOF Regional Committee. He was killed in 1946.
15. Bonichotov Lambe was born in the village Boreshnitsa, Lerin Region. He was a fighter in the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade”,

and a NOF District Board courier for Lerin Region. He was killed in 1946.

16. Bitsev Andrea Sotirov was born in the village Aitos, Lerin Region. He was a DAG platoon commander. He was killed in 1948.

17. Bochevski Foti was born in the village Pesiak, Kostur Region. He was an ELAS veteran, a political commissar of an ELAS regiment, NOF Regional Secretary for Kostur Region, and a political commissar of a DAG detachment. He was killed in 1948.

18. Boshkovski Andon was born in the village Lobanitsa, Kostur Region. He was platoon commander in the Macedonian Kostur Battalion, a political commissar in a battalion in the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade”, captain in the YNA, and a DAG company commander. He was killed in 1948 on Mount Gramos.

19. Bulev Mate was born in the village Ekshisu, Lerin Region. He was a participant in the National Liberation War as a member of ELAS, an activist of the NOF District Board in Sorovichko, commander of a NOF partisan group, and commander of a DAG diversionary group. He was killed in 1949.

20. Vasilev Aleko was born in the village Gumenidzhe. He was a NOF District Secretary killed by the Monarcho-Fascists in November 1946 at Paiak Mountain.

21. Georgievski Pande-Iupcheto was born in the village Ekshisu, Lerin Region. He was a member of the NOF District Board, and a political commissar of a DAG detachment. He was killed in 1948.

22. Georgievski Petre was born in the village Oshchima, Lerin Region. He was a participant in the National Liberation War as a member of ELAS. He was secretary of the NOMS Regional Committee for Lerin Region, and a DAG platoon commander. He was killed in March 1947.

23. Gizov Atanas was born in the village Nered, Lerin Region. He was an ELAS officer, a NOF activist, commander of a NOF partisan

detachment, and a DAG company commander. He was killed in 1947.

24. Ginova Irina-Mirka was born in the village Rosilovo, Voden Region. She was a teacher by profession. As a youth she was an EPON leader in Ostrovo Region, she was a member of the NOF District Board and AFZH Secretary for Voden Region. In 1946 she was captured, sentenced to death by a Monarcho-Fascist military court and executed.

25. Gluvchev Todor was born in the village Polozhani, Lerin Region. He was a participant in the National Liberation War as a member of ELAS, a NOF District Board activist for Lerin Region, and a DAG detachment Commissar. He was killed in 1949.

26. Goglev Vangel-Pezandako was from the city Voden. He was a communist, a participant in the PLM, a commander of a diversionary group, a company commander in the Macedonian Voden battalion, a commander of a NOF detachment, and a member of the NOF District Board for Voden Region. He was killed in 1948.

27. Davov Kiro born was born in the village Aitos, Lerin Region. He was a courier for the Lerin Region NOMS District Board. He was killed in 1948.

28. Daskalov Tomo-Vlaot was born in the city Voden. He was a member of the NOF District Board, and secretary of the NOF City Board. He was killed in 1948.

29. Dimitrov Iane-Mucheto was born in the village Buf, Lerin Region. He was a commander of an ELAS platoon, a NOF activist, and a DAG company commander. He was killed in 1948.

30. Doichinovski Todor-Morava was born in Enidzhe-Vardar. He was a participant in the National Liberation War as a member of ELAS, and secretary of the NOF District Committee for Enidzhe-Vardar Region. In 1947 he was ambushed and fatally wounded. He killed himself to avoid capture.

31. Donchev Risto-Ichko was born in the city Voden. He was a commander of a platoon in the Macedonian partisan battalion, secretary of the NOF City Board, and DAG company commander. He was killed in 1948.
32. Dragomanov Tushi was born in the city Voden. He was a member of the NOF City Board for Voden. He was killed in 1948.
33. Zenov Kosta was born in the village Rumenichko. He was a NOF activist and a member of the NOF District Board for Enidzhe-Vardar. He was killed on September 3, 1945.
34. Ivanovski Atanas-Tasho was born in the town Rupishta, Kostur Region. He was communist since 1941 and a participant of the Second World War. In March 1942 he was arrested by the occupational authorities and taken to a concentration camp in Germany. During the Greek Civil War he was NOMS secretary in the town Rupishta. The Greek police arrested him and a Monarcho-Fascist court sentenced him to death. He was executed in Athens in 1948.
35. Iskov Kolio was born in the village Pozharsko, Voden Region. He was a member of the NOF Regional Board and a DAG fighter. He was killed in 1948.
36. Kalkov Giorgi was born in the village Visheni, Kostur Region. He was a commander of the First Platoon in the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade”, commander of a NOF detachment, and a DAG company commander. He was killed in March 1948.
37. Kaloianovski Kuzma was born in the village Nestram, Kostur Region. He was a communist before World War II, a veteran of the Second World War, and secretary of a NOF regional committee. He was killed in 1947.
38. Kamchevski Kiro-Lazo was born in the town S’botsko, Voden Region. He was a member of the NOF District Board in Voden Region and a DAG officer. He was killed in 1949.

39. Karamangov Petar was born in Gumenichko. He was an activist in the NOF District Board for Gumenidzhe. He was killed in 1945.

40. Karadzhov Panaiot was born in the village D'mbeni, Kostur Region. He was a communist from early age, participated in the Second World War, was Secretary of a NOMS District Board, member of the NOF District Board for Kostur Region, and managed the office of the DAG people's militia. He was killed in 1948 on Mount Gramos.

41. Karev Petar-Petse was born in the city Voden. He was a member of the NOF City Board for Voden. He was killed in 1946.

42. Kartovski Traiche was born in the village Vladovo, Voden Region. He was a courier for the NOF District Board in Voden Region and a DAG fighter. He was killed in 1948.

43. Karshakov Iani was born in the village Kosinets, Kostur Region. He was a fighter in the Macedonian Kostur Battalion, NOF activist, and a political commissar of a DAG platoon. He was killed in 1948.

44. Kiradziev Krsto was born in the village Nevoliani, Lerin Region. He was a fighter in the "First Macedonian Assault Brigade" and NOF Regional Secretary for Lerin Region. He was killed in 1946.

45. Kiriakova Evgenia was born in the village Nestram, Kostur Region. She participated in the Liberation War in 1943 as a member of ELAS, was a member of the EPON District Board for Kostur Region, member of the NOF District Board for Kostur Region, and a DAG lieutenant. She was killed in 1949.

46. Kovachev Ivan-Orfeia was born in Goumenidzhe. He was a participant in the National Liberation War as a member of ELAS, was member of the NOF District Board and Secretary of the NOMS District Board for Enidzhe-Vardar and Gumenichko Regions, candidate member of the NOF Central Council, and a DAG company commander. He was killed in August 1949 at Mount Gramos.

47. Koranov Lazo was born in the city Voden. He was commander of a NOF detachment and commander of a DAG platoon. He was killed in 1948.

48. Koroveshovski Atanas was born in the village Smrdesh, Kostur Region. He was a commander in ELAS, a commander in the first Macedonian Battalion formed on Mount Karaorman in 1944, commander in a battalion of the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade” a lieutenant in the YNA, a member of the NOF Main Board Secretariat, and a member of the Party responsible for military affairs in NOF. He was killed in an unequal battle fought against a Greek gendarmerie unit on September 3, 1946, near the village Kornishor, Enidzhe-Vardar Region.

49. Koroveshovski Micho was born in the village Smrdesh, Kostur Region. He was a Corporal in “First Macedonian Assault Brigade”, a courier for the NOF General Council, and a DAG platoon commander. He was killed in 1947.

50. Kostovski Sotir -Direkot was from the village Stensko, Kostur Region. He was a participant in the National Liberation War as a member of ELAS, political commissar of a NOF detachment, and a political commissar of a DAG detachment. He was killed in 1948.

51. Kulev Hristo-Spiro was born in the village Baovo, Voden Region. He was a fighter in the Voden Macedonian battalion, commander of a NOF detachment, and a DAG company commander. He was killed in 1948.

52. Liakushev Risto was born in the village Rosilovo, Voden Region. He was a member of the NOF Regional Board. He was killed in 1946.

53. Lushev Tasho was born in the village Teovo, Voden Region. He was a member of the NOF District Board for Voden Region. He was killed in 1947.

54. Liovov Vasil was born in the city Voden. He was a member of the NOMS City Board. He was killed in 1946.

55. Liuvchev Tanas was born in Gumenichko. He was a NOF activist. He was killed on September 3, 1946.

56. Liumbov Dimitar was born in the village Valdovo, Voden Region. He was a member of the NOF Regional Board. He was convicted and executed by the Monarcho-Fascists together with Irina Ginova-Mirka in 1946.

57. Mangov Krsto was born in the village D'mbeni, Kostur Region. He was a participant in ELAS, deputy political commissar of a battalion in the "First Macedonian Assault Brigade", secretary of the NOF District Committee for Kostur Region, a representative of the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece in the local people's government, and a member of the NOF Central Council Executive Committee. He was killed on August 11, 1949, near the village Breznitsa, Kostur Region.

58. Mangovski Vangel was born in the village Zhupanishta, Kostur Region. He was a communist before the Second World War and a participant in the PLM, a political commissar of a battalion in the "First Macedonian Assault Brigade", and a member of the NOF District Board for Kostur Region. He was killed in 1948 in the area near the village Sliveni in Kostur Region.

59. Markovski Petre was born in the village Nered, Lerin Region. He was a participant in the National Liberation War as a member of ELAS, commander of the First Platoon in the "First Macedonian Assault Brigade" and commander of a NOF partisan group. He was killed in 1946.

60. Mirkovski Vangel was born in the village Dobrolishta, Kostur Region. He was a communist before the Second World War, an officer of ELAS, and a member of the NOF District Board for Kostur Region. He was killed in 1949.

61. Mihailov Tomo was born in the village Bugovo, Voden Region. He was a member of the NOF Regional Board. He was convicted and executed by the Monarcho-Fascists together with Irina Ginova-Mirka in 1946.

62. Mihailovski Trpe was born in the village Krchishta, Kostur Region. He was a participant in the National Liberation War as a member of ELAS, a young leader of a unit in the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade”, secretary of the NOMS Regional Committee for Kostur Region, and a political commissar of a DAG platoon. He was killed in 1948.

63. Nakov Domin was born in the village Boshovtsi, Kailiari Region. He was a member of the NOMS District Board for Lerin Region, and a DAG platoon commander. He was killed in 1947.

64. Naney Naso was born in the village Moreni, Kostur Region. He was a NOF Regional Secretary and a DAG platoon commander. He was killed in 1947.

65. Nepkov Prokop was born in the city Voden. He was a NOMS Regional leader and a DAG fighter. He was killed in 1948.

66. Nepkov Risto was born in the city Voden. He was a member of the NOF City Board and a DAG officer. He was killed in 1946.

67. Nushev Kolio was born in the village Pozharsko, Voden Region. He was a member of the NOF District Board for Voden Region and a DAG officer. He was killed in 1949.

68. Odzhov Geli was born in the village Vladovo, Voden Region. He was a fighter in the Voden Macedonian battalion, commander of a NOF partisan group, and a DAG officer. He was killed in 1947.

69. Paskov Ilia was born in the village Krontselevo, Voden Region. He was a member of the NOF Regional Board and a DAG fighter. He was killed in 1949.

70. Peiov Vane was born in the village Trsie, Lerin Region. He was secretary of a NOF Regional Committee. He was killed in 1946.

71. Peshov Giorgi-Tsironka was born in the village Strupino, Voden Region. He was a fighter in the Voden Macedonian battalion, commander of a NOF partisan group, and a DAG officer. He was killed in 1947.

72. Pirovski Iani was born in the village Kosinets, Kostur Region. He was a participant in the Second World War as a member of ELAS, Secretary in SKOJ in a battalion of the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade”, member of the NOF District Board, NOMS Secretary for Kostur District, member of the CPG Regional Committee for Kostur Region, and an assistant political commissar of a DAG brigade. He was killed in February 1949 during the attack on the city Lerin.

73. Popdimitrov Petre-Direkot was born in the city Voden. He was a participant in the Second World War, and a member of the NOF Voden City Board. He was convicted and executed together with Irina Ginova-Mirka in 1946.

74. Popdimitrovski Giorgi-Dzhodzhi was born in the town Rupishsta, Kostur Region. He was a participant in the National Liberation War as a member of ELAS, a courier for the NOF Main Board, and a DAG company commander. He was mortally wounded in 1949 after which he died.

75. Popnikolov Ianche was born in the village Pochep, Voden Region. He was a member of the NOF Regional Board. He was killed in 1948.

76. Popov Trifon was born in the village Ekshisu, Lerin Region. He was a communist before the Second World War and participated in the National Liberation War. He was a NOF activist, member of the NOF District Board for Lerin Region, and a commissar of a DAG platoon. He was killed in 1948.

77. Popovski Zhivko was born in the village Popozhani, Lerin Region. He was a participant in the National Liberation War as a member of ELAS, secretary of the NOF District Committee, and a member of the CPG Lerin Committee. He was killed in March 1949.

78. Popovski Petar was born in the village Dolno Rodevo, Voden Region. He was a member of the NOF District Board for Voden Region. He was wounded and taken prisoner by the Monarcho-

Fascists and sentenced to life imprisonment. He died in prison in 1962.

79. Popovski Sotir was born in the village Shkrapar, Kostur Region. He was a participant in the PLM, NOMS Regional Secretary, and political secretary of a DAG platoon. He was killed in 1948 on Mount Gramos.

80. Popovski Tasho-Popadaki was born in the village Strupino, Voden Region. He was a fighter in the Voden Macedonian battalion, commander of a NOF partisan group, and a DAG officer. He was killed in 1947.

81. Pochepova Nikoleta was born in the city Voden. She was a member of the NOMS City Board and a DAG platoon commander. She was killed in 1948.

82. Poevski Giorgi was born in the city Voden. He was a participant in the National Liberation War as a member of ELAS, a fighter in the Voden Macedonian battalion, and a member of the NOF Voden City Board. He was killed together with Irina Ginova-Mirka in 1946.

83. Proshev Kolio was born in the village Baovo, Voden Region. He was a fighter in the Voden Macedonian battalion, a commander of a NOF detachment, and a DAG officer. He was killed in 1947.

84. Romev Petso was born in the village Gornichovo, Lerin Region. He was a participant in the National Liberation War as a member of ELAS, commander of the First Platoon in the "First Macedonian Assault Brigade", commander of a NOF partisan group, and commander of a DAG battalion. He was killed in 1949.

85. Sefanov Rade was born in the town Ostrovo, Voden Region. He was a participant in the Second World War and Secretary of a NOMS regional board. He was killed in 1948.

86. Suliov Kosta was born in the village Cheresnitsa, Kostur Region. He participated in the PLM, was commander in the "First Macedonian Assault Brigade", commander of a NOF detachment,

and detachment commander in a DAG battalion. He was killed in 1947. After his death, the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece promoted him to the rank of Major and declared him a hero.

87. Terpovski Pando-Bundovski was born in the village Galishte, Kostur Region. He was a communist before the Second World War and participated in the National Liberation War as a member of ELAS. He was a political commissar in a battalion in the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade”, and Secretary of a NOF District Committee. He was arrested by the Greek fascist police and a Greek military court sentenced him to death. He was executed in Athens in 1948.

88. Trpchev Todor was born in the village Kotari, Lerin Region. He was secretary of a NOF regional committee. He was killed in 1946.

89. Kiosev Gligor was born in the town Rupishsta, Kostur Region. He was an ELAS officer and a veteran, member of the NOF District Board for Kostur Region, and NOF Secretary in Rupishsta. He was killed in 1946 in his hometown.

90. Ugrinov Kosta-Goche was born in Enidzhe-Vardar. He was a member of a NOF regional committee, a unit commander in a NOF detachment, and commander of a DAG diversionary group. He was killed in 1948.

91. Urdov Giorgi- Dzhodzho was born in the city Voden. He was a communist before the Second World War. He was an organizing secretary of the CPG District Committee for Voden Region, member of the Secretariat of the Political Commission of Macedonia in Greece, member of the NOF Main Board Organizational leadership, member of the party agencies in Greek occupied Macedonia, and a member of the DAG chiefs of staff for western and central Greek occupied Macedonia. He was killed in 1948 on Mount Pirena (Pieria).

92. Hristovski Vasil was born in the village Dobrolishta, Kostur Region. He was an ELAS partisan, a political commissar of a NOF detachment and a DAG company commander. He was killed in 1948.

93. Tsalev Kiriako was born in the village D'mbeni, Kostur Region. He was communist before the Second World War and participated in the PLM as a member of ELAS. He was a political commissar of a regiment in the "First Macedonian Assault Brigade", a member of the NOF District Board for Kostur Region, and a political commissar of a DAG cavalry detachment. He was killed in 1948 in Prespa.

94. Tsafara Tpaiko was born in the village Smrdesht, Kostur Region. He participated in the PLM since 1943, was a commander of the First Platoon in the "First Macedonian Assault Brigade", a NOF activist, and a DAG unit commissar. He was killed in 1947.

95. Chobanov Sotir was born in the city Lerin. He was a communist before the Second World War and participated in the PLM as a member of ELAS. He was a NOF activist and a DAG lieutenant. He was killed in 1949.

96. Chochov Vasil was born in the village D'mbeni, Kostur Region. He was a communist before the Second World War. As a participant in the National Liberation War in 1941 he was arrested and taken to a concentration camp in Germany. Later he was secretary of a NOF District Committee. He was killed as a DAG fighter.

97. Shamardanov Vangel-Ilinden was born in the village Kroncelevo, Voden Region. He was secretary of the NOF District Committee for Voden Region, a member of the NOF Central Council, and a political commissar of a DAG battalion. He was killed in 1948.

98. Shiperkov Pando was born in the village Smrdesht, Kostur Region. He was an ELAS partisan, a political commissar of a regiment in the First Macedonian battalion formed at Mount Karaorman, a political commissar of a battalion in the "First Macedonian Assault Brigade", a captain in the YNA, commander of NOF partisan headquarters located on Mount Vicho, commander of a DAG battalion, a DAG lieutenant, and a member of the NOF Main Board. He was killed in 1948 near the village Papretsko, Kostur Region.

99. Shishkov Aleko was born in the village Zhupanishta, Kostur Region. He was a fighter in the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade”, a secretary of the NOMS Regional Committee for Kostur Region and a sergeant in the DAG people’s militia. He was killed in 1948.

100. Sholdov Blagoi was born in the village Aposkep, Kostur Region. He was a participant in the National Liberation War as a member of ELAS, a young leader of a unit in the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade”, Secretary of a NOMS Regional Committee and a DAG platoon commander. He was killed in 1948.

Note: The list of dead NOF, NOMS and AFZH leaders and activists for the period from 1945 to 1949 is long, especially if we consider all the regions of Greek occupied Macedonia. Unfortunately this is all the information that we managed to gather from their comrades and only about those persons who were referred to in this list (Mincho Fotev).

APPENDIX 2

CPG's attitude towards the Macedonian PLM and Macedonian National Question

The text that follows reflects Mincho Fotev's thoughts and views in reference to how Dr. Ivan Katardziev has treated events that took place in Greek occupied Macedonia after World War II, especially during the period from 1940 to 1949, in his works entitled "Revolutionary traditions - factor of self-determination for the Macedonian people from the Aegean part of Macedonia". We were unable to find the actual paper under this title even after interviewing Academic Ivan Katardziev. We assume that the title was derived from the content of some of his latest works.

According to numerous historical documents, it is a fact that the Communist Party of Greece, since its inception in 1918, recognized the existence of the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia. Ever since this part of Macedonia was occupied by Greece and fell under Greek domination, the Macedonian people have been struggling and have been closely linked with the labour and progressive movements of the Greek people under the CPG's leadership, hoping that the CPG would protect their national identity and provide them with their democratic and national rights.

The Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia have been focusing their struggle against the harsh anti-Macedonian measures perpetrated by the Greek regimes. For the longest part, the Macedonian people have fought back against Greek government denationalization and assimilation policies and against harsh economic exploitation in an attempt to preserve their lives and national survival as Macedonians. Between the two world wars, the Communist Party of Greece was the only political party in Greece which sought to recognize the Macedonian people as equals to the Greek people, to provide them with democratic and cultural rights and to publicly protest against their persecution. Unfortunately the Communist Party of Greece never organized mass protests and demonstrations against the state sponsored terror and persecutions, or against the harsh political and economic conditions that the Greek regime imposed on the Macedonian people. Outside of writing about

protests in articles in the pages of their newspapers and withdrawing some of its MPs from the Greek parliament, the CPG leadership never did any real demonstrating in support of the difficult Macedonian situation in Greek occupied Macedonia. All the CPG did, between the two world wars, was “talk” about protecting the “minority rights” of the Macedonian people and all this, including its campaigns, was done verbally.

As stated above, the Communist Party of Greece did not deny the existence of the Macedonian people, but it never developed the right attitude towards the Macedonian National Question, or more precisely, it did not recognize the Macedonian National Question. If it did recognize it, then it would be forced to find a solution. Hence, the CPG developed an inconsistent attitude towards the Macedonian people’s national liberation movement. Before we argue the facts about the CPG’s attitude towards the Macedonian national liberation movement, we want to quote something that Nikos Zahariadis, CPG Secretary General, said as quoted in the book “Testaments by Nikos Zahariadis” published by “Glaros” in Greece in the Greek language, in April 1986. Nikos Zahariadis said: “...our attitude towards the Slavo-Macedonian minority was always correct. Equality. This was the CPG’s old position. This honour belongs to the first Party in the Balkans that did not agree with the position of the Third International for the autonomy of Macedonia in the spirit of the Balkan federation. The Communist Party of Greece was and is the most patriotic party in Greece. It never challenged the sovereignty of the Greek territory. It never gave an inch of the Greek homeland to anyone... The national question was a question that dealt with the victory of the revolution; it was part of the revolution as is the agrarian question. That was the Leninist attitude.” (Quote taken from page 52 and 53.)

From the above quote and from other sources it is clear that no Macedonian National Question existed for the Communist Party of Greece. Therefore the CPG’s attitude towards the Macedonian national liberation movement was destructive and, at certain times, openly hostile. An example of that would be the CPG’s May 1944 attack on the SNOF forces and SNOF’s dissolution at a critical time when the Macedonian people were struggling against the occupiers. After NOF, NOMS and AFZH for Greek occupied Macedonia were

created in April 1945 the Communist Party of Greece refused to accept these organizations and looked for opportunities to attack them calling them autonomist, nationalist and hostile to the Greek people's PLM. There are irrefutable facts that prove this.

In June 1948, after the Informburo drafted its resolution against the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and after DAG's defeat in August 1949, the CPG suspended and later disbanded NOF, NOMS and AFZH, arrested over 50 Macedonian officers and began to harass NOF supporters en masse.

According to the above-mentioned book, "Testaments by Nikos Zahariadis", Zahariadis talked about NOF. Among other things he said the following: "We made a mistake in recognizing NOF with regards to the national question. The need to recognize it was imposed on us by the then situation. It was a necessary evil, an error. We could not avoid it because Skopje persistently insisted on it. NOF acted negatively, it distorted things, it did autonomist work and organized DAG desertions to Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia then accepted the deserters. This was the work of Skopje..." In addition to this quote, we would like to present another quote by Nikos Zahariadis, something he said during his speech at the First KOEM (Communist Organization of Aegean Macedonia) Conference in Lerin Region, held on July 15, 1949. Among other things Zahariadis said: "NOF represents the Macedonian liberation movement. NOF has actually expressed the aspirations of the Macedonian people who fight to win their freedom..." There are many other, very similar, contradictory statements made by high-ranking CPG officials, DAG leaders and officials from the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece.

The fact is the CPG treated the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia the same way as it treated the other ethnic groups and minorities living in Greece, such as the Vlachs, Roma, Armenians, Jews, etc. During certain periods, depending on the situation and developments in the Macedonian national liberation movement, the CPG leadership tended to appear with pro-Macedonian declaratives and political platforms as the protector of the Macedonian people's national rights. But it was all tactics in order to win over the Macedonian national movement and turn it

towards Greek interests and towards the Greek national and class liberation movement.

At its Third Extraordinary Congress, held in December 1924, the CPG accepted the Comintern's directive for creating a "United and independent Macedonia". However, the CPG never did take measures to implement this directive. Given the circumstances, it would have been normal for the CPG to have created a Macedonian national governing body, to have appointed Macedonian personnel to create Macedonian national organizations that would have followed Macedonian national liberation policies. But the CPG never did any of those things... purely because of chauvinistic reasons. The CPG was always against the Comintern position regarding a "United and independent Macedonia" but did not have the courage to speak up in front of the Comintern. The CPG was even reluctant in accepting the creation of IMRO (United) because it did not want to help affirm the Macedonian organization as a national liberation and revolutionary factor of Macedonia in the Balkans.

The only real commitment the CPG made to the Macedonian people was what was written in the second paragraph for "full equality of minorities" adopted at the CPG Sixth Plenum in December 1935. This is the only valid position the CPG had taken. Unfortunately the CPG, for its own reasons, remained inconsistent throughout the war period. Following are some examples of the CPG's attitude expressed towards the Macedonian people during the national liberation struggle from 1941 to 1945. After Greece was occupied in 1941 and during the Second World War, the Communist Party of Greece did not find it necessary to initiate and establish a unique Macedonian People's Liberation Organization in order to give to the Macedonian people the opportunity to create their own national liberation movement, which would have mobilized all their fighting potential against the fascists and domestic traitors; would have affirmed their participation in the fight against the fascists and would have organized a national and cultural life for them while struggling for national equality in Greece. Instead of doing all these things, the CPG promised the Macedonian people equality and national and cultural rights in an independent and sovereign Greece, after they achieved victory over the fascists in Greece. This was the

kind of policy the CPG practically enforced. The Communist Party of Greece, however, did manage to organize a broad and intensive national and political propaganda and used every means to agitate the development of a Greek national resistance movement for the massive participation of the Greek people in a struggle against the fascist occupiers and against the national traitors and with it strengthened itself, EAM and ELAS. With its daily propaganda, the CPG strongly condemned the perpetrated fascist terror waged against the people that included mass arrests and shootings of Greek patriots, and so on. The CPG also organized an extensive propaganda campaign for the national liberation struggle of the Greek people and for the liberation of Greece from the Turks, as well as the struggles of the Greek working class against the anti-people regimes in Greece. All Greek national holidays were marked with military functions and with other events including rallies, cultural and artistic performances, etc. In the free territories, members of EPON in the ELAS units organized and put on cultural and artistic events performed by the youth groups. The Communist Party of Greece regularly informed the ELAS partisans and the people about the situation in the Eastern and Western Fronts and how the Allies were doing, especially the Red Army and its successes and victories. Unfortunately, the CPG provided no information on the development and status of the Yugoslav people's national liberation struggle. The CPG and EAM said absolutely nothing about the massive participation of the Macedonian people in the struggle against the occupiers and the domestic traitors in Greece, or about the longstanding national and revolutionary traditions of the Macedonian people. No word was spoken about the glorious Macedonian Ilinden Uprising, the Krushevo Republic, the first Balkan Republic, etc. The CPG was not only not interested in celebrating Macedonian national holidays, but made every effort to criticize them.

In the spring of 1943 the southwestern Kostur District was completely liberated by ELAS partisan units composed of over 60% Macedonian partisans. There were approximately 60 villages located in the freed territory of which about 40 were inhabited by Macedonians. But, in time, this liberated territory was enlarged with heavy and bloody fighting so that by early 1944 about 80 Macedonian villages were freed in the western part of Greek

occupied Macedonia, mainly in Kostur and Lerin Regions. A people's authority was established in all the villages that were freed and the system functioned normally. Broad cultural and educational activities were formed under the CPG and EAM leaderships in preparation for the opening of primary schools. Macedonian schools, teaching in the Macedonian language, were opened in Greek occupied Macedonia without objections. This was because there were frequent cases of Macedonian communists, at various party forums, asking for Macedonian schools to be opened and for classes to be conducted in the Macedonian language. Similarly, there was demand for the consistent implementation of national equality principles. The responses to that, in general, were as follows: "How can we possibly allow fulfilling the wishes of 150,000 Slavo-phones and having the entire Greek population turn against the CPG. This will be realized after we achieve victory in our revolution..."

Another characteristic fact of the CPG and its attitude toward the Macedonian people was that it never told the Macedonian people, and especially the Macedonian communists and fighters who supported it, what was happening in Yugoslavia, what the Communist Party of Yugoslavia's position was regarding the Macedonian National Question and the decisions made by AVNOJ. But, in spite of all this, a fair number of Macedonians and pre-war communist leaders and Party workers, such as Kiro Pilaev-Petro, Lazo Trpovski, Stavro Kochopulo, Anastas Karadzha –Tasho, Atanas Hatzhis and others, still supported the CPG.

All that was done for the Macedonian people in Yugoslavia, including the CPY's position towards the Macedonian National Question, the people in Greek occupied Macedonia, including the fighters and communists, was found out from the partisan units that crossed over from the Republic of Macedonia into Greek occupied Macedonia. Anything the Macedonian people said, thought, or did that was Macedonian, the CPG considered "nationalist" and "autonomist", even claims for human and national rights. The same was true about SNOF, the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, which we will discuss later.

This was the CPG's attitude towards the Macedonian national liberation movement and towards the Macedonian people in general.

Despite the attitude expressed by the CPG towards the Macedonian people and towards the Macedonian national liberation movement in general, the Macedonian people accepted the CPG line for a joint struggle with the Greek people under its leadership because they had no alternative or exit from this situation. They accepted the CPG line hoping that with the victory of the USSR against the fascist axis, the Macedonian people, with their struggle and blood, would get their freedom and national rights. But the CPG, as it turned out, was playing with their hopes and aspirations.

Unfortunately the Macedonian people, particularly the Macedonian communists and patriots, had no other choice. Had they not accepted to fight side by side with the Greek people, under the CPG's leadership, they would have been in greater danger. First, there was the real danger for Macedonians to become victims of Supremacist Bulgarian policies, a danger which appeared in 1941 with the arrival of the Bulgarian fascist emissaries from Sofia, the likes of Andon Kalchev, Spiro Vasilev, Kiriazo Shkurtov, Kiselinchev, Stumbov, Giorgi Dimchev, Mladenov and others. They would have also been in danger of falling into the hands of the so-called "Macedono-Bulgarian Committee" and the organization "Ohrana". Second, there was the danger that Macedonians would have fallen prey to Hitler and sent as hostages to work in the mines and factories in Germany.

Regardless of the unfair treatment they received from the CPG and EAM, the Macedonian people from Greek occupied Macedonia, thanks to their glorious revolutionary traditions and high patriotic consciousness and aspirations, massively participated in the national liberation movement in the Liberation War against the German, Italian and Bulgarian occupiers and against the domestic traitors. About 5,000 Macedonians voluntarily entered the ranks of ELAS and another 10,000 served in the ranks of the ELAS reserves. You can say about 80% of the Macedonian population was actively involved and organized in the ranks of the CPG, EAM, SNOF and ELAS and in organizations in the people's government. As a result of fighting against the fascists, the Macedonian people suffered immensely with massive losses of life and material damages.

Unfortunately, to this day, no one knows what the entire toll was against the Macedonian people.

The CPG policies which the CPG implemented were diametrically different from those it promised the Macedonian people. What was said was completely different from what was done but illusion and misinterpretation were always handy tools for the CPG to fool the ignorant, mislead the helpless and misinform the masses. The CPG was a master of misinformation and misinterpretation of certain events.

Developing the Macedonian national liberation movement was a very hard and very difficult path to take, not only because of the difficult and bloody conditions imposed by the Greek state reactionary regime and fascist foreign invaders, but also because of the chauvinistic CPG attitude and destructive policies. The CPG's attitude towards the Macedonian people and towards the Macedonian PLM caused severe long-term consequences for the Macedonian nation and people.

We will now provide some examples to illustrate the “incorrect” measures taken by the CPG. After the Informburo Resolution was adopted in 1948, Informburo communists and worker Parties took a stand against the CPY, among who was also the CPG which joined them in a provocative and even malicious manner, severing its relations with the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and declaring Yugoslavia a hostile state and an enemy of the Greek people and the Democratic Army of Greece. It not only took the Stalinist Informburo position and launched an open attack against Yugoslavia but the CPG also attacked the People's Liberation Movement in Greek occupied Macedonia, which was led by NOF. During the Monarcho-Fascist army's final operations against DAG and during DAG's withdrawal from Mounts Vicho and Gramos, i.e. DAG's evacuation from the Lerin and Kostur Districts, in August 1949, and during DAG's withdrawal to the territory of the People's Republic of Albania, the Macedonian population in the liberated villages was ordered to evacuate the liberated territory and flee to the people's Republic of Albania. These orders were issued by the President of the DAG Military Council, by Nikos Zahariadis, CPG Secretary General, and by Mitchos Partselidis, President of the Provisional

Democratic Government of Greece. Any Macedonians attempting to cross the Yugoslav border were to be shot on sight by DAG's border guards. Many Macedonians were killed this way. As a result of these CPG measures, about 50 Macedonian villages in Kostur and Lerin Regions were completely emptied of their populations and looted. This was done by the CPG in order to expel and exile the Macedonian population from its own homeland.

In September 1949 the CPG Central Committee Politburo issued an order to round up and arrest around 50 Macedonian NOF, NOMS and AFZH leaders. On October 2, 1949, after being arrested, all these leaders were imprisoned in the infamous Albanian "Bureli" prison in Tirana and in some other prisons. These rigorous CPG measures were aimed at beheading the Macedonian People's Liberation Movement and blaming DAG's defeat on NOF.

The organization "MAO" was part of the Communist Party of Greece. MAO was a Greek name meaning "Makedoniki Apelefterotiki Organosi" (Macedonian Liberation Organization) and not "Macedonian Anti-fascist Organization". In 1942 MAO was formed under a CPG directive by Giorgi Urdov-Dzhodzho, CPG District Committee Second Secretary for Voden Region, and existed only in the city itself and only for a very short time. Hristo Andonovski who was from Voden Region, a journalist and publicist and a participant in ELAS, NOF and DAG, in his review of Tashko Mamurovski's works entitled "Important Personalities from Aegean Macedonia (1945-1949)", among other things, wrote: "MAO was a short-lived organization that never extended beyond the city itself and we must not exaggerate about it..." (Skopje, NIP "Studentski Zbor", 1987.)

The Macedonian Revolutionary Organization SNOF (Slavo-Macedonian National Liberation Front) was formed on October 20, 1943 at the persistent insistence of the Macedonian communists from Kostur Region and after extensive discussions with representatives from the Communist Party of Greece. SNOF's founding meeting was held in the legendary village D'mbeni, Kostur Region, in Kiriako Tsalev's house where he was elected in the district's leadership. The following comrades were appointed to the Secretariat leadership: Paskal Mitrevski was appointed Secretary

and Ivan Tsalev and Kiro Popvasilev were appointed members. On December 25, 1943 the First SNOF District Conference was held in the village Krchishte, where a District Board was elected with the following members: Paskal Mitrevski – Secretary, Andon Tsalev, Kiro Popvasilev, Lazo Poplazarov, Evdokia Baleva-Vera, Vasil Aleksovski, Simo Kalchev and Lazo Hadzhiev.

SNOF's formation strongly resonated with the Macedonian people and influenced their feelings and national aspirations en masse in Greek occupied Macedonia. They saw SNOF as a prominent all-Macedonian national liberation organization that would fulfill their aspirations, deliver their national rights and free them to develop their own Macedonian national culture and society. SNOF's formation was a bold step towards the affirmation of the Macedonian identity and for the Macedonian nation's struggle in the fraternal communion with the Greek people and with all democratic progressive forces, fighting a bloody fight against the fascist German and Bulgarian occupiers for the freedom of their country. SNOF's great historical significance was apparent from its progressive principles and from its basic tasks performed at a national level.

The principles that SNOF persistently advocated to implement were:

- Further develop the Macedonian national consciousness;
- Develop cultural and educational activities in the Macedonian language;
- Foster national and revolutionary traditions in the Macedonian people;
- Mobilize the full combat potential of the Macedonian people in the struggle against the fascist occupiers and domestic traitors;
- Beat back the Great Bulgarian policy towards Macedonia and liquidate the culprits responsible for it and their Supremacist agents;

- Maintain and develop moral and political national unity in the Macedonian people and brotherhood and unity between the Macedonian and Greek people.

SNOF especially advocated and urged the CPG to form a single SNOF for all of Greek occupied Macedonia, to be admitted as a full member in the EAM coalition as the sole and legitimate representative of the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia. The SNOF leadership also sought to establish links and cooperation with the National Liberation Front in the Republic of Macedonia and demanded that the CPG allow it to form special Macedonian partisan units within ELAS. The SNOF District Board Secretary for Kostur District, expressing the wishes and aspirations of the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia, wanted SNOF to be regarded as a national equal to other organizations in Greece because, in his opinion, this was the only way it could prospectively achieve its national goals and ideals - unification of all the Macedonian people. SNOF, as noted above, was not only a great national asset during the Second World War but also a major revolutionary factor with a clear ideological and political commitment to further develop the Macedonian national liberation movement in Greek occupied Macedonia.

The CPG never wanted SNOF to have political status, or to play a political role with a national program and an objective and realistic political orientation. The CPG did not even want to hear about SNOF's status or role. This is because the CPG harboured a hidden, great Greek chauvinistic agenda. The CPG openly put pressure on SNOF and demanded of it to:

1. Limit SNOF's organizational structure to only the villages and only where Macedonians lived. Only EAM was to function in villages with mixed populations.
2. Limit its national activities in the narrowest way, and use the sharpness of its policies to move against the Great Bulgarian propaganda campaign and against the activities of the Supremacist agents and armed gangs belonging to the "Macedono-Bulgarian Committee".

3. Mobilize the Macedonian people and limit their activities to assisting ELAS only.

This means that the Communist Party of Greece wanted to turn SNOF into an instrument to carry out only certain political and organizational tasks of practical nature.

When the SNOF leadership disagreed with the CPG's demands, the CPG insisted that SNOF be disbanded. And, in the end, it did exactly that and with its actions prompted a group of Macedonians fighters to break away from the ELAS composition and, in May 1944, depart for Karaorman to the free territory in the Republic of Macedonia.

The road to the development of the Macedonian national liberation movement and struggle in Greek occupied Macedonia was not opened by Lazo Oshenski but by the SNOF leadership in October 1943. This is a historical fact! In regards to Lazo Oshenski's letter of January 24, 1944, I, as a direct participant in DAG on the ground in Kostur Region at that time, can attest that what was said in the letter is a real puzzle. SNOF at the time was not aware of such a letter, nor were the Macedonian communists and fighters... no discussions had ever taken place about such a letter. I say that categorically. I was there at that time and in that place and I was in a position of responsibility which would have given me access to such a "letter". Besides, there are many people still alive who were participants in the PLM in Kostur District, who can attest that they never saw such a letter. In April 1944 the SNOF Second Conference was held in the village D'mbeni, Kostur Region. Lazo Oshenski attended the Conference as a delegate but never mentioned anything about this "letter", and no discussions ever took place where Lazo Oshenski expressed any views about this alleged letter.

When it comes to Lazo Oshenski we need to say a few things about his personal role in the Macedonian national liberation movement. It is well-known that Lazo Oshenski added no special merit to the creation and development of the Macedonian PLM. He did not participate in the formation of the Macedonian national liberation organizations, the formation of the Macedonian battalions, or the formation of the "First Macedonian Assault Brigade" in Greece,

because at that time he was not there. He was outside of the Greek occupied Macedonian territory. During the occupation he first arrived in Kostur Region towards the end of January 1944, and in February 1944 the CPG District Committee made him available to the SNOF District Board in Kostur Region where he remained as a SNOF activist until early May 1944, that is until the CPG and ELAS forcibly dissolved SNOF. After that the CPG released him at his own disposal. Lazo Oshenski then went to Yugoslavia together with the Macedonian battalions. He arrived in Yugoslavia in March 1945 after the Varkiza Agreement was signed and after ELAS was disarmed. In October 1945 he was admitted to the NOF leadership and tasked to manage the economic and cultural Macedonian refugee committee based in Skopje. In March 1946, by CPM Central Committee decision, Lazo Dimovski-Oshenski was charged as a class enemy and was dismissed from duty, then expelled from NOF. He did not take part in the Greek Civil War. He lived in Skopje until he died in 1970.

Regarding Argir Kuzevski's retirement which supposedly took place at a joint CPG and Macedonian resistance fighter Conference, held on November 20, 1943, during which, in the name of Naum Peiov, Lazo Oshenski on his own behalf expressed his desires. First of all this was not a Conference between CPG representatives and Macedonian resistance fighters, but simply a gathering of villagers in the village D'mbeni, which was organized by the local NOF activist.

Regarding the pressure the CPG placed and the separation of part of the Macedonian units and their transfer to the Republic of Macedonia under Naum Peiov's leadership... It is not true that the Macedonian units that transferred to the Republic of Macedonia were under Naum Peiov's leadership. At that time in May 1944, when the split took place, the Macedonian partisans were serving in the ranks of ELAS. Peiov crossed over into the free territory with only six SNOF supporters. It was Atanas Koroveshovski who broke away with the group of Macedonian ELAS partisans. Overall about 60 Macedonians from Greek occupied Macedonia gathered in Karaorman, from whom a Macedonian battalion was formed under the command of Atanas Koroveshovski and with Micho Shiskov serving as political commissar.

The group of Macedonian ELAS fighters splitting from ELAS and crossing over into the free territory of the Republic of Macedonia was a voluntary step which took place without the SNOF leadership's knowledge. The group's departure from Kostur and Lerin Regions to Karaorman, according to the manner and conditions under which it took place, was impulsive and extreme. This act inflicted serious and irreparable consequences on the Macedonian national liberation movement in Greek occupied Macedonia. They made a serious mistake by leaving. The actions they took to leave ELAS were contrary to SNOF's policies. This was even justified by the fact that those who left were then ordered, by National Liberation Headquarters from the Republic of Macedonia and personally by political commissar Tsvetko Uzunovski-Abas, to return back to Greek occupied Macedonia to continue to fight in the ranks of ELAS, led by the CPG. The motives of this thoughtless act were unjustified... In other words, they arbitrarily separated from ELAS and, of course, from SNOF and went to Karaorman without seriously thinking of what would happen back home and what the implications and consequences for SNOF and for the Macedonian people in that part of Macedonia would be.

And who do we have to blame for all this? The Macedonian communists, the Macedonian fighters and the Macedonian people in general were disgusted by the way they were treated by the CPG and most of what was happening was in response to the CPG's negative attitude towards the Macedonian PLM and people in general. But, in spite of all that, it never was justifiable to act on feelings of indignation alone and to revolt. Acts like that had a price associated with them. And, as it turned out, we paid dearly for these extreme acts. The consequences of our secession were indeed severe and irreversible. In the end they were made the cause for the Macedonian PLM severing ties with the CPG and ELAS. Because of the secession, the CPG leadership characterized the Macedonian national liberation movement in Greek occupied Macedonia as nationalist, autonomist and secessionist and publicly denounced the secessionists as counterrevolutionaries and traitors. The same CPG leadership also accused SNOF of being an instigator in the group of Macedonian fighters who separated themselves from the Greek

resistance movement and ordered its ELAS units to arrest all the SNOF leaders in Kostur District and forcibly dissolve all local SNOF organizations. At the same time the Communist Party of Greece organized and waged a dangerous and sharp political propaganda campaign against SNOF. The CPG also undertook a number of other political, disciplinary and repressive measures against prominent Macedonian fighters. There were even arbitrary killings of Macedonian patriots, as was the case with Kosta Makrievski, a teacher from the village Kosinets, Kostur Region. The CPG took immediate measures to prohibit all Macedonian cultural activities and other Macedonian national events scheduled to take place. The stand that the CPG took against the break-away group of Macedonian fighters was both irrational and negative because at the time, when the secessionists left for Karaorman in May 1944, there were many Macedonian fighters serving in the ranks of the ELAS XXVIII Regiment. On the ground in Kostur Region alone there were over 1,000 partisans. There were over 2,000 Macedonian fighters in the ranks of ELAS in Kostur and Lerin Regions and they had freed over 80 villages. It is worth mentioning that over 100 Macedonian activists and CPG, EAM, EPON and EA leaders acted on the same ground behind the scenes. The SNOF leadership in Kostur District alone consisted of over 40 officers and behind the scenes workers. Out of all the thousands of Macedonians serving in the PLM only 4 SNOF officials, about 20 ELAS fighters and only about 35 members of the military organizations left Greek occupied Macedonia and went to Karaorman.

Before this incident took place, on January 28, 1944, a meeting was held in the village Tsrnovishte, Kostur Region, between representatives of the Lerin and Kostur Region SNOF District Committees. The two districts were represented by four people. There were three items on the agenda but the following two attracted particular attention:

1. The Macedonian National Question concerning Macedonia's fate after the war.
2. Creating a single national liberation organization for the whole of Greek occupied Macedonia...

The Kostur District delegation also put forth the proposal that, after victory over the fascists was achieved, Greece should be transformed into a federal state composed of two federal units, one being the “People’s Republic of Aegean Macedonia”.

It appears, however, that such topics were never discussed at the meeting held in the village Tsrnovishte, Kostur Region, between the SNOF Lerin and Kostur Region delegations and the agenda was pure fiction. The purpose of that meeting was to exchange information on military, political and economic matters in the districts, to discuss the status of the struggle and problems experienced by the people, and to exchange opinions and experiences on the activities of both SNOF organizations. Since there was no single SNOF organization for all of Greek occupied Macedonia, because the CPG would not allow it, the Kostur and Lerin Region SNOF organizations often held joint meetings. It is true that a meeting did take place in Tsrnovishte on January 28, 1944, and from this meeting it is clear that the Kostur and Lerin Region SNOF leaderships were not familiar with Lazo Oshenski’s “letter” of January 24, 1944. This is more proof that such a letter did not exist.

Besides that, the SNOF District leaders for Lerin and Kostur Regions were not in a position high up in the political hierarchy to make such demands, especially about deciding the Macedonia Question or establishing a single Macedonian national organization for the whole of Greek occupied Macedonia. The only thing those SNOF delegates had the authority to do was ask questions. In other words, the best they could have done was to “ask” if a single SNOF organization could be formed for the whole of Greek occupied Macedonia. Establishing such an organization depended exclusively on the CPG because the CPG managed the PLM in Greece. The matter for a single SNOF organization for all of Greek occupied Macedonia was raised by the SNOF District leadership the same day SNOF was formed, but the Communist Party of Greece flatly rejected the request, the same way it refused the request to form separate Macedonian partisan units within ELAS.

The idea of turning Greece into a federal state in order to form a “People’s Republic of Aegean Macedonia” is absurd! Such an idea

had never been discussed and had never entered the minds of any of the Macedonian communists. Not only for subjective but also for purely objective reasons this could not be true. At that time, in 1944, the Macedonian population was only one third of the total population in Greek occupied Macedonia. Besides, turning Greece into a federal state not only depended on the Communist Party of Greece, but also on all the political parties in Greece that made up the national liberation front - EAM, as well as other democratic socio-political structures.

Even if all these “Greek parties” agreed to create a “People’s Republic of Aegean Macedonia”, they still would have needed the consent of the external factors such as the “anti-Hitler coalition” who were directly interested in the fate of Greece and in the fate of the Balkans. On top of that, why would the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia call for the formation of a historically elusive “People’s Republic of Aegean Macedonia” when the Macedonian people to their north had already created a People’s Republic of Macedonia? Why not follow the original plan of joining the Macedonian state that was already formed, thanks to the joint struggle with all the other Yugoslav nations within Democratic Federal Yugoslavia, based on AVNOJ? No such demands had been made or questions raised until now. The voices that were calling for a “People’s Republic of Aegean Macedonia”, it would appear, were raised by those Macedonians who “voluntarily left SNOF and the armed struggle” and abandoned their homeland in Greek occupied Macedonia.

To get to the bottom of what took place at the Tsrnovishta meeting when the two SNOF delegations met, another meeting was held in October 1985 at the request of the Federal Republic of Macedonia’s Institute of National History at the INI, which was attended by about 20 invited participants, organizers and activists of the PLM from Greek occupied Macedonia. The participants in this gathering contested the meeting agenda and called it a “work of fiction”. The gathering was also attended by Giorgi Turundzhiev, a member of the SNOF District Board Secretariat who personally, as a member of the Lerin delegation, participated in the Tsrnovishta meeting.

Up until December 1944, the term “Aegean Macedonia” was unknown to the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia. It was neither used nor mentioned in public anywhere. The first time the term was mentioned in public was in Bitola, in December 1944, in front of the Macedonian people from Greek occupied Macedonia. This was during Dimitar Vlahov’s opening speech at the first conference of the Macedonian Political Commission from Greek occupied Macedonia.

The name of the Macedonian brigade referred to in this document as the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade”, initially was not referred to as the “First Aegean Macedonian Assault Brigade” but rather as the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade from Macedonia under Greece”. These were the words that were written on the Brigade’s flag. Also, the correct name of the Political Commission was “Political Commission of Macedonia under Greece”. In other words, the authentic historical document written on the ground in Greek occupied Macedonia, up to the time the “First Macedonian Assault Brigade” was formed and up to the time the “Political Commission” was created, does not contain the words “Aegean Macedonia”.

The question about unifying Macedonia was never raised by anyone in SNOF or in NOF. That question was not even raised by the People’s Republic of Macedonia. The only discussions that took place and questions raised were about the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia achieving their national rights, freedom and equality. But that does not mean that the Macedonian people did not want a Macedonian people’s unification. That was the ideal of every Macedonian fighter who fought for freedom and for national and social rights. As for the desire to have “national equality” between Macedonians and Greeks there are two different trends among the Macedonian people. A small number of Macedonian communists, mostly old members of the Communist Party of Greece, strictly followed the CPG policy regarding the Macedonian National Question - national equality for the Macedonians within Greece. The vast majority of Macedonians, Macedonian communists and Macedonian fighters, however, persistently advocated and urged the Communist Party of Greece to change its policies towards the Macedonian National Question and allow the creation of a national

political and managerial entity to manage and prepare the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia for the PLM.

As was mentioned earlier, both SNOF and NOF persistently promoted the embodiment of true national equality between Macedonians and Greeks, which was a realistic approach to unifying the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia.

Many massive Macedonian military formations were created during the liberation war between 1941 and 1949, a testament to the Macedonian people's determination to achieve freedom. But treating all of these formations as exclusively "Macedonian" is also incorrect. For example, the Kostur partisan group, formed in May 1943, and the partisan detachment "Lazo Trpovski" did not have an exclusive Macedonian national hallmark. They were units like any other ELAS units but consisted of only Macedonian fighters. Saying that a "Slavo-Macedonian" army (SNOB) was formed in January 1944 is arbitrary and fictional. Such an army was never established because the CPG and ELAS would not allow it.

The only Macedonian national army units that were formed during that period were the Kostur Macedonian battalion, formed in June 1944 at Karaorman, the Voden battalion formed in June 1944, the "Gotse" Lerin-Kostur battalion formed on Ilinden in 1944 and the "First Macedonian Assault Brigade" established in November 1944. The brigade actually united all the other above-mentioned partisan units.

Skopje, August 20, 1986
Mincho Fotev

APPENDIX 3

Notes analyzing Risto Kiriazovski's book "The National Liberation Front and other Macedonian organizations from Aegean Macedonia (1945-1949)", published by "Kultura" in Skopje in 1985

Through this book, Risto Kiriazovski has made an attempt to reveal the historical role of the Macedonian organizations, especially of NOF from Greek occupied Macedonia.

Following are also Fotev's views and opinions regarding Great Britain's policies and its relationship to the Soviet Union as well as to the Communist Party of Greece and its relationship to the English...

At this point in time, I (Fotev) would like to take the opportunity to reply to some of the remarks Kiriazovski made about the Macedonian organizations, especially about NOF, some of which I believe are flawed, untrue and wrongly interpreted. These are particularly important topics which need to be explained without bias and without excesses and intimidation, especially the role of the individual personalities and leaders of the national liberation movement. I can say with certainty that Kiriazovski was not sufficiently familiar with the events and different situations and conditions that the Macedonian national movement organizations experienced, because in his study of the organizations Kiriazovski, for his own reasons, found it unnecessary to consult the SNOF, NOF, NOMS and AFZH leaders and founders of these organizations, so that he could get their side of the story and a wider perspective on the subject.

Kiriazovski was not familiar with many of the events involving the Macedonian PLM as was the case with the NOF assets and what took place during their meeting of May 20, 1947. Regarding some events, he made allegations and assumptions and then explained them in general terms. He was not familiar with the organizational structures, political structures and changes that took place during NOF's development and existence. He is also unclear and has misrepresented NOF's program principles and the program

principles of other Macedonian organizations. He has poorly defined the CPG's policies towards NOF and generally towards the Macedonian national liberation movement. He has wrongly explained the methods and forms of destructive policies the CPG used against the Macedonians organizations and he has not specifically and clearly defined relations between NOF and the social and political organizations in the People's Republic of Macedonia. He has ignored the particular importance of the national liberation movement's development and the problems NOF had with Mihail Keramitchiev and his associates, who were against the unity of the Macedonian people's democratic national movement with the Greek people's progressive movement, believing that the Macedonian National Question regarding the Macedonian people, in Greek occupied Macedonia, could be solved by the People's Republic of Macedonia and by Yugoslavia. This was when Keramitchiev called NOF's unification Agreement with the Communist Party of Greece the "second Varkiza", a betrayal of the Macedonian people. (See: Vangel Aianovski-Oche, "Aegean storms: the revolutionary movement in Voden Region and the People's liberation war in Aegean Macedonia", Skopje, INI, 1975, p. 233.)

Yes! Yugoslavia was a major factor that could have influenced how the Macedonian National Question would have been tackled in Greece, but solving this Question depended primarily on the joint Macedonian-Greek struggle, on the Macedonian and Greek people's victory over the Monarcho-Fascist regime in Greece and on creating a free people's democracy in Greece. It also depended on the Macedonian people's segregation in Greek occupied Macedonia and achieving their full national equality rights and the right to self-determination. In other words, to create normal conditions for solving the Macedonian National Question. It is an illusion to believe that the problems in Greek occupied Macedonia could have been solved without a victory on the part of the revolutionary movement in the joint Macedonian- Greek people's struggle.

By NOF's program principles, the NOF leadership was obligated to struggle for the realization of moral and political values and for national unity among the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia. NOF was a national and democratic organization. Every Macedonian who accepted its political program had the right to join

it. The separatists unfortunately did not want that and those who did join NOF were labeled either “trusted” or “Hellenophiles” by the separatists. The Macedonian fighters, on the other hand, were labeled “old” and “new” members of NOF. With this the separatists managed to place a wedge in the Macedonian people’s national unity and to split NOF’s integrity. But, by their own beliefs and actions, the separatists foiled themselves and were unable to hold together on their own, that is without NOF’s knowledge and approval. And so in September 1948 they left NOF, the armed struggle and DAG, and during the most fateful days for the Macedonian people, they left the territory of Greek occupied Macedonia and, overnight, found themselves and their families in the Peoples Republic of Macedonia. Kiriazovski not only defended this act, he exalted it.

SNOF was created and acted during the German-Bulgarian fascist occupation at a time when ELAS and EAM and the Anglo-Americans were allies and fighting against Hitler’s fascist axis. NOF was created and acted during the Greek Civil War against the Greek government, which was recognized by members of the international community and by the United Nations. In other words, NOF was struggling against “yesterday’s allies”, the Anglo-American imperialists who directly participated in the fighting against NOF and DAG.

Another characteristic fact is that the CPG, and not NOF, was the main creator of the national strategy and tactics and the initiator and leader of the revolutionary movement in Greece. NOF had to adapt its national strategy to fit the revolutionary movement of the Greek people and, of course, without being detrimental to the Macedonian PLM. We should also bear in mind that the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia could not hold on their own, much less go against the Greek people in the PLM in order to achieve their national and social rights and freedom, whose organizer and leader was the CPG. In fact, even objective contradictions existed between the Macedonian PLM and the Greek PLM arising from their different national interests, goals and aspirations.

Risto Kiriazovski’s book is largely based on archival materials, a good part of which are not authentic and unverified, which have led

him to make wrong assessments and arrive at inaccurate conclusions, especially about important events and actions involving NOF... There is no information in the large historical files, available to us from the various documents, real or fabricated, from the various quotations and statements made by Macedonian and Greek CPG and PLM leaders that do not deflate the revolutionary values and the historical role of the Macedonian National Liberation organizations.

Even before World War II ended, the Macedonian and Greek people became victims of English imperialism, thanks to the British military intervention in Greece in December 1944, and to the CPG and EAM's capitulatory policies. The Macedonian and Greek people again became victims of a four-year bloody anti-fascist war against English imperialism and against the domestic Monarcho-Fascists it supported. The Macedonian people had no chance of fulfilling their expectations because they were set to fail. After the old anti-people's bourgeois establishment was restored in Greece, the Macedonian people were again faced with hellish days even more difficult than those seen during the German occupation, because now the Greek Monarcho-Fascist regime began to perpetrate genocide against the Macedonian people. They commenced a terrorist wave of murders, rapes, bloody beatings, robbing and looting of Macedonian people's properties... and other daily Monarcho-Fascist gang practices. But the daily atrocities did not stop there... There were also the mass evictions of Macedonian people from their homes and villages, trumped up arrests, trumped up trials, illegal confiscations, usurping of properties and so on. The bloody terror was designed to totally annihilate the Macedonian people... The reason for these aggressive Greek Monarcho-Fascist attacks against the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia was to break the Macedonian people's spirit and stop them from orienting themselves on the side of the democratic forces in the country. It was also to break their willingness and determination to fight against the reactionary forces and the foreign interventionists and, most importantly, to stop them from building a Macedonian national consciousness and from committing themselves to achieving their national and social rights and freedom. The one thing that irritated the Greek Monarcho-Fascists and nationalists in Greece the most was the existence of the People's

Republic of Macedonia within the new Yugoslavia. The Macedonian people in this democratic republic, quite understandably, could not stand idle and be indifferent towards the tragic situation of their brothers and sisters in Greek occupied Macedonia, and not be interested in their care and national survival. The creation of the People's Republic of Macedonia was and is a thorn in the eyes of the Greek Monarcho-Fascists and nationalists who, at all costs, intended and still intend to totally exterminate the Macedonian population.

Therefore it is important to point out that, because of the CPG and EAM's inconsistent, opportunistic and capitulatory policies, especially after the signing of the Varkiza Agreement on February 12, 1945, towards the Macedonian National Question, the Macedonian people, to a great extent, lost confidence in these organizations. The CPG and EAM proved that they were no longer willing to protect the Macedonian population from the Monarcho-Fascist infestation. That is why, after NOF was created, a large number of Macedonian communists broke ranks with the CPG and other Greek democratic organizations such as the EAM and EPON and, en masse, joined NOF, NOMS and AFZH.

Due to the difficult and dangerous conditions created by the Monarcho-Fascists, the Macedonian nation was facing genocide. As a result NOF was created on April 23, 1945, under the initiative of the Macedonian communists. At the same time AFZH, the organization for the Macedonian women, and NOMS, the organization for the Macedonian youth, were created and became integral parts of NOF.

The establishment of NOF was a great historical achievement for the Macedonian people. NOF was a national Macedonian revolutionary organization with its own Macedonian political leadership. Its aims were to halt the traditional, negative CPG conditions imposed on the Macedonian people forcing them to organize under the Greek Democratic Peoples and to fight under the Greek flag. Past events had clearly confirmed how much the CPG had hurt the Macedonian national liberation movement.

Kiriazovski wrote: "...the NOF program declaration of the founding assembly was not saved..." (p. 108.) Why did he say such a thing when such a document does exist? As a participant in the first meeting when NOF's tasks and objectives were defined, I find it necessary to mention them as follows:

- To mercilessly struggle for the national and social freedom of the Macedonian people;
- To affirm the national identity in the Macedonian people's struggle for national rights and freedom;
- To re-introduce the Macedonian National Question in Greek political life;
- To organize resistance against the bloody terror and genocide perpetrated by the Monarcho-Fascist regime against the Macedonian people;
- To strengthen the moral, political and national unity of the Macedonian people;
- To uncover Vancho Mihailov's autonomists and smash their terrorist and espionage organizations which, as agents of the Anglo-American imperialists and the international bourgeois reactionaries, fought against the national interests of the Macedonian people;
- To struggle against Anglo-American plans to turn Greek occupied Macedonia into a terrorist base for subversive activities against the People's Republic of Macedonia and the whole of Yugoslavia, and against all the Balkan people's democratic republics;
- To foster and strengthen brotherhood and unity with the Greek people and, together with the progressive forces in Greece, fight a common enemy for a free and independent Greece;
- To inform the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia of the historical development and social progress in the People's Republic of Macedonia;

- To struggle to bridge the artificial divide between the Macedonian people, i.e. rapprochement and fraternal cooperation with the people from the other parts of Macedonia, especially with the People's Republic of Macedonia, the Piedmont for the national liberation and unification of all the Macedonian people.

Risto Kirazovski did not even know the actual date when the NOF leadership was appointed and what it was correctly called. I would like to inform Kiriazovski that the NOF leadership was constituted on May 21, 1945, and the right name given to it was "Organizational leadership". In the documents we often encounter that it was called "Organizational leadership of NOF", or "Main Board", or "Senior management", or "Main Board leadership". The organizational leadership along Party lines was called "Party Delegate". The organizational leadership was the highest governing body of the Macedonian people's national liberation movement from Greek occupied Macedonia. It was an all-Macedonian national liberation organization run by Macedonians. Its leadership consisted of six equal members and they were Paskal Mitrevski – Secretary, Giorgi Urdov-Dzhodzho, Atanas Koroveshovski, Mihail Keramitchiev, Pavle Rakovski and Mincho Fotev. During its first NOF meeting, the NOF organizational leadership was introduced to the certain duties and tasks for which its members were responsible. Paskal Mitrevski was responsible for following the NOF and Party line, Giorgi Urdov-Dzhodzho was Paskal Mitrevski's assistant performing similar duties, Pavle Rakovski was responsible for agitation and propaganda, Mincho Fotev was Secretary of NOMS in charge of the communist youth organization, Atanas Koroveshovski was responsible for military affairs, and not responsible to follow the party line. (p. 117.) Discussions took place during the meeting to determine who was going to be responsible to follow the line of the People's Government. In other words, NOF at that time was close to being included in the people government, but no NOF member was designated in charge to follow the People's government line. There was also discussion, at the same meeting, as to who from the NOF leadership was going to be appointed responsible for the AFZH line.

The first NOF organizational meeting, which took place on May 21, 1945, was devoted to organizational and personnel issues. It was decided to form 5 district boards: 1. Kostur District, 2. Lerin

District, 3. Voden District, 4. Enidzhe-Vardar and Gumendzhe District, and 5. Seres and Drama District. The organizational structure was based on the principle of strict centralization. The organizational structure for inside the Districts was also established in a similar manner. There were district, city and regional governing bodies of NOF, NOMS and AFZH as well as Party agencies and communist youth organizations established as the basic grassroots organizations. Decisions were made during the meeting as to who was going to do what... and certain individuals were appointed to perform certain functions. Selected to perform the functions of Secretaries in the NOF Districts were Lambro Cholakov for Kostur District, Risto Ianovski for Lerin District, Vangel Aianovski for Voden District and Ivan Nichev for Enidzhe-Vardar and Gumendzhe District. There was no Secretary appointed for the Seres and Drama Districts, only an organizational instructor, whose name was Mihail Apostolov-Graniti. Each of the NOF governing bodies were composed of 5 members, which included the NOMS and AFZH Secretaries.

During the meeting it was decided to form:

- A department of agitation and propaganda responsible for issuing bulletins, to be an organ of NOF from Greek occupied Macedonia;
- A committee that would accept refugees from Greek occupied Macedonia into the People's Republic of Macedonia, refugees fleeing the Monarcho-Fascist terror, and
- Armed groups of resistance fighters to counter the Monarcho-Fascist terrorist gangs.

The first NOF organizational leadership constituent meeting was also attended by Tsvetko Uzunovski-Abas, CPM Central Committee representative, who was there to establish relations and cooperation between NOF, the CPM and other organizations in the People's Republic of Macedonia.

Risto Kiriazovski has written nothing concrete in his book about NOF's constitution, the appointment of NOF's organizational

leadership, or about the decisions made during this first working meeting.

The establishment and appointments of the NOF organizational leadership during its first meeting took place in Skopje, on “Ortse Nikolov” street in the “Matsura” building which was later destroyed during the July 26, 1963 earthquake.

After selecting NOF’s organizational leadership, all members were immediately sent to the field where, most energetically, they formed NOF district and city boards. Their aims were to implement the decisions taken at the first meeting. Paskal Mitrevski was tasked with going to Lerin District, Atanas Koroveshovski left for Enidzhe-Vardar and Gumendzhe District, Giorgi Urdov-Dzhodzho and Pavle Rakovski left for Voden District, Mihail Keramitchiev and Mincho Fotev went to Kostur District, Mihail Apostolov-Graniti went to Seres and Drama in Eastern Greek occupied Macedonia as an instructor of the NOF organizational leadership.

According to Risto Kiriazovski, “Paskal Mitrevski went to Kostur District and Mihail Keramitchiev went to the eastern part of Greek occupied Macedonia to form NOF district leaderships...” (p. 119.) On the same page Kiriazovski wrote: “NOF was established on May 9, 1945 during which a meeting of 16 activists took place and, in the presence of the NOF main leadership, Paskal Mitrevski and Mihail Keramitchiev chose Micho Koroveshovski as Secretary to lead a 4 member district board...” If that were true how could Mihail Keramitchiev find himself in both Kostur District and in Seres and Drama Districts at the same time, when he himself claims he was in the eastern part of Greek occupied Macedonia on the ground forming a district leadership?

Paskal Mitrevski did not participate in the formation of the NOF Kostur District committee. He was sent to Lerin Region. Also, Micho Shishkovski was never elected Secretary of the NOF Kostur District Board. The first NOF District Secretary for Kostur District was Lambro Cholakov.

Risto Kiriazovski wrote that: “The NOF main leadership secretary made substitutions in the district leaderships and in place of Micho

Shishkovski he appointed Lambro Cholakov. This was because of some misunderstanding between Shishkovski and Mitrevski about organizational and other issues. This was simply work of fiction.

Risto Kiriazovski is not familiar with NOF's highest governing body and with the changes it underwent during its existence. In his book he calls the governing body "NOF Delegates", "The Main NOF leadership", "NOF's high leadership", etc. The name of the highest NOF governing body has undergone several changes. During its formation NOF's leadership was called the "Organizational leadership". After it was agreed to unite NOF and the CPG, in November 1946, the NOF leadership decided to call itself the "NOF Main Board". On May 20, 1947, during a NOF meeting, the CPG put in a request for the name to be changed from "NOF Main Board" to "Coordinating Bureau". Then during NOF's First Congress, held on January 13, 1948, the name "Coordinating Bureau" was replaced with "Central Council". This last "nickname" given to the highest NOF governing body remained until NOF was dissolved.

About the devastation SNOF experienced in Kostur and Lerin Regions, Kiriazovski wrote: "With aims at forcing the CPG to correct its attitude, the two groups of Macedonian partisans and SNOF activists in Kostur and Lerin Regions broke away from ELAS and joined the partisan movement in Vardar Macedonia..." (p. 49.) The secession was seen as a Macedonian provocation against a CPG decision to dissolve SNOF. This statement, however, is incorrect. The group of Macedonian fighters fled to Karaorman before SNOF was dissolved. In fact, it was their separation from the ranks of ELAS which prompted the CPG leadership and gave it a reason to dismantle SNOF.

The Macedonian group's secession from ELAS and SNOF and their departure to the free territory in the Republic of Macedonia was an arbitrary act which occurred without the knowledge of the SNOF leadership. The departure of the Macedonian group of about 60 partisans from Kostur and Lerin Regions going to Karaorman, according to the manner and circumstances in which it took place, was reckless, impulsive and extreme. Their action inflicted serious and irreparable damage to the Macedonian national liberation

movement in Greek occupied Macedonia. Whatever it was they were hoping to accomplish did not materialize because their calculations were wrong. The secessionist action those fighters undertook was contrary to SNOF's policies. The secession was unjustified as confirmed by the fact that the secessionists were ordered to go back to Greek occupied Macedonia by NOV and POM Headquarters, and personally by Political Commissar Tsvetko Uzunovski-Abas. They were ordered to return to the ranks of ELAS and continue to fight under the CPG's leadership. (See letter from Tsvetko Uzunovski-Abas, a member of the CPM Central Committee, to Dobrivoie Radosavljevich, CPY Central Committee Instructor, dated June 2, 1944, which can be found in the Macedonian Archives.) The consequences of having seceded were really heavy. Macedonian relations with the PLM, CPG and ELAS deteriorated. The CPG leadership, because of the secession, totally and unjustifiably demeaned the Macedonian PLM, characterizing it as nationalist, autonomist and secessionist and publicly condemning its supporters as counter-revolutionaries and traitors. SNOF was also accused of being the instigator which encouraged the group of Macedonians to separate from the Greek resistance movement. Right after the group left, the CPG ordered an ELAS unit to arrest the main SNOF leadership which, at that time, was headed by Secretary Paskal Mitrevski and use force to break up all SNOF organizations. At the same time the CPG initiated a dangerous anti-SNOF propaganda campaign aimed at the Macedonian people, advising them to dissociate themselves from the SNOF leadership. The CPG even expanded its attacks against the most prominent leaders in the Republic of Macedonia. The CPG also enacted political, disciplinary and repressive measures against prominent Macedonian fighters such Kosta Boskovski, a fighter and a communist who as a result of being beaten badly by the Greek communists became mentally deranged, and Kosta Makrievski, a teacher in the village Kosinets, Kostur Region, who was killed by members of ELAS. The CPG also shut down all Macedonian cultural and artistic activities and all other Macedonian national events.

The irrationality and negative consequences of the Macedonian group's secession can be seen in the following: The moment the secessionists left for Karaorman, in May 1944, there were over

1,000 Macedonian partisans serving in the ranks of ELAS in Kostur and Lerin Regions. There were over 2,000 Macedonian fighters serving in the ELAS reserves. Over 80 Macedonian villages were freed which assisted ELAS. It is worth mentioning here that, on the same ground, there were over 100 activists working behind the scenes who were leaders and members of the CPG, EAM, EPON, EA and ETA. SNOF in Kostur District as well as SNOF in Lerin District had over sixty people working behind the scenes. Out of all the large number of Macedonian fighters, partisans and political activists serving in the PLM in Kostur and Lerin Districts, only 5 SNOF behind the scenes people, 20 ELAS fighters and 35 Macedonian villagers left for Karaorman. But even though the number of “secessionists” was insignificantly small, the CPG in its wisdom decided to attach great importance to their act.

Kiriazovski wrote: “...the First Macedonian detachment named ‘Lazo Trpovski’ was created in September 1943, in Kostur Region. This Macedonian detachment was comprised exclusively of Macedonians and had its own agitation agenda and wore military uniforms with the five-pointed star symbol to distinguish it from the other ELAS units...” (p. 56.) This, however, is incorrect. This is how it was: “On October 6, 1943 the CPG Regional Committee for Kostur Region decided to form a detachment which was to bear the name ‘Lazo Trpovski’, named after the late, prominent Macedonian fighter and communist. The CPG District Committee’s decision was made at ELAS XXVIII Regiment Headquarters in which I, Mincho Fotev, was serving as deputy chief of counter-intelligence services. The detachment was formed on October 10, 1943, and not in September as Kiriazovski has indicated, and it was done at the foot of Mount Malimadi near the village D’mbeni, Kostur Region. When it was formed the detachment had 28 fighters. It was created from a local partisan group of fighters, mostly of the villagers from the village Smrdesht, Kostur Region, who earlier acted in that area under ELAS, and from a group of Macedonians who had just returned from Bulgaria. The detachment was part of the ELAS XXVIII Regiment and acted under ELAS command. The “Lazo Trpovski” unit lasted only two months before it was disbanded in December 1943 and its fighters were absorbed into the XXVIII regiment units which acted in the area of Mount Vicho. The detachment’s commander was Naum Peiov, who was replaced by Dimitar

Tupurkovski- Titan only ten days after he was appointed. The claim that the fighters of the “Lazo Trpovski” unit wore the five pointed star on their hats is not true. They wore ELAS symbols just like the rest of the ELAS fighters in all other ELAS units.

On page 58 in his book, Kiriazovski wrote: “Effort to create a single Organization for all Macedonians in Aegean Macedonia was made at a SNOF joint district meeting between Kostur and Lerin Districts, held on January 28, 1944, in the village Tsrnovishte...” The meeting led to major conflict and discord, during which the SNOF Lerin District representatives disagreed with the position taken by the SNOF Kostur District representatives. Their disagreement was over whether SNOF should formally request that Greece be reorganized as a “Confederate State” to be composed of two federal units, the “People’s Republic of Greece” and the “People’s Republic of Aegean Macedonia”, as a transitional stage for the unification of the whole of Macedonia. Because no agreement could be reached the meeting ended in failure.

No such discussion took place at the Tsrnovishte meeting and whoever informed Kiriazovski was talking pure fiction because not only was there no document to prove that such a discussion took place, but no one at that meeting had the authority to discuss solutions to the Macedonian National Question. The purpose of this “distorted” meeting was as follows:

The reason that no single “national” Organization existed in Greek occupied Macedonia was because the CPG would not allow it. The SNOF Kostur and Lerin District leaderships periodically held joint delegation meetings in order to exchange information on military and political matters as well as on the economic situation in the districts, the problems the people experienced and so on. These were simple working meetings to review activities and to exchange experiences between the two districts. It is true that a meeting was held in the village Tsrnovishte on January 28, 1944 but there is no evidence of matters of national importance ever being discussed.

It is also true that the issue of establishing a single Macedonian Organization for the whole of Greek occupied Macedonia was raised by the SNOF leadership in Kostur District. This question, however,

was raised in October 1943, the first day SNOF was founded, but the CPG flatly refused the request as it flatly refused the request to create special Macedonian units in ELAS.

The issue of federalizing Greece to create a “People’s Republic of Aegean Macedonia” was never raised nor discussed. This claim is false and a fantasy of those who claim it happened. Not only for subjective but also for purely objective reasons this could not be true. At that time, in 1944, the Macedonian population was only one third of the total population in Greek occupied Macedonia. Besides, turning Greece into a federal state not only depended on the Communist Party of Greece but also on all the political parties in Greece that made up the national liberation front - EAM, as well as other democratic socio-political structures.

Even if all these “Greek parties” agreed to create a “People’s Republic of Aegean Macedonia”, they still would have needed the consent of the external factors such as the “anti-Hitler coalition” who were directly interested in the fate of Greece and in the fate of the Balkans. On top of that, why would the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia call for the formation of a historically elusive “People’s Republic of Aegean Macedonia” when the Macedonian people to their north had already created a People’s Republic of Macedonia? Why not follow the original plan of joining the Macedonian state that was already formed, thanks to the joint struggle with all the other Yugoslav nations within Democratic Federal Yugoslavia, based on AVNOJ? No such demands had been made or questions raised until now. The voices that were calling for a “People’s Republic of Aegean Macedonia”, it would appear, were raised by those Macedonians who “voluntarily left SNOF and the armed struggle” and abandoned their homeland in Greek occupied Macedonia.

To get to the bottom of what took place at the Tsrnovishta meeting when the two SNOF delegations met, another meeting was held in October 1985 at the request of the Federal Republic of Macedonia’s Institute of National History at INI, which was attended by about 20 invited participants, organizers and activists of the PLM from Greek occupied Macedonia. The participants in this gathering contested the meeting agenda and called it a “work of fiction”. The gathering was

also attended by Giorgi Turundzhiev, a member of the SNOF District Board Secretariat who personally, as a member of the Lerin delegation, participated in the Tsrnovishta meeting. All the meeting participants contested Risto Kiriazovski's claims, raising a new question: "How would the creation of a "People's Republic of Aegean Macedonia" have led to the unification of all of Macedonia if there were two separate republics in two separate federations?"

Kiriazovski wrote: "Before NOF emerged in the territory of Aegean Macedonia, local organizations acted and were run by local organizers, activists and campaigners of various political commissions who had agreed to form local organizations in Kostur Region in an attempt to bring back SNOF; in Lerin Region to bring back SOF from the time of the people's liberation war; and in Voden Region to create a new organization, TOMO... which preceded NOF..." (p. 103.) These, however, were only assumptions and arbitrary conclusions... Any attempt to regenerate SNOF and SOF were not made by local organizations because the local organizations did not exist until after NOF was established on April 23, 1945. As for the formation of any other organizations such as TOMO in Voden Region, even though TOMO preceded NOF, it had no basis. Historians need to further investigate the cases of TOMO and MAO.

The organization "MAO" was part of the Communist Party of Greece. MAO was a Greek name meaning "Makedoniki Apelefterotiki Organosi" (Macedonian Liberation Organization) and not "Macedonian Anti-fascist Organization" like Vangel Aianovski and Risto Kiriazovski called it. In 1942 MAO was formed under a CPG directive by Giorgi Urdov-Dzhodzho, CPG District Committee Second Secretary for Voden Region, and existed only in the city itself and only for a very short time. Hristo Andonovski who was from Voden Region, a journalist and publicist and a participant in ELAS, NOF and DAG, in his review of Tashko Mamurovski's works entitled "Important Personalities from Aegean Macedonia (1945-1949)", among other things wrote: "MAO was a short-lived organization that never extended beyond the city Voden and we must not exaggerate about it..."

There are also claims being made that the British diplomatic missions in Greece, with help from the Greek police, had created some opportunities for the formation of an autonomist movement in Greek occupied Macedonia, which included adventurous elements, counter-bands, collaborators, known Hellenophiles, agents of the Greek police and so on. I can assure you that there was no chance that such an autonomist movement existed in Greek occupied Macedonia in the period when NOF and DAG were active... During the Greek Civil War there were only some sub-units or adventurers, in other words “autonomists” made up of former collaborators and American service agents. That was all there was. Included among the “numbered” autonomists were also some well-known “Hellenophiles”. Who ever heard of “Hellenophiles” being active autonomists?

Regarding the bloody Greek Monarcho-Fascist terror, perpetrated against the Macedonian people, the NOF organizational leadership at its first meeting, held on May 21, 1945, decided to take a stand and, along with the other factors of the resistance movement, formed armed groups to confront the extreme Monarch-Fascist gangs and traitors who were persecuting the Macedonian people to no end. The NOF armed groups were instructed to only attack the armed terrorist gangs if they attacked the Macedonian villages and to stop them from looting and terrorizing the Macedonian people. Given that the Monarcho-Fascist armed gangs and Greek gendarmerie squads crossed the grounds on a daily basis, the NOF armed groups responsible for their safety, along with the safety of the NOF, NOMS and AFZH leaders and activists, had their hands full. The NOF armed groups and their actions were managed by the NOF district and regional board secretaries. At that time there was no other way to protect the lives, honour and properties of the Macedonian people from these Greek terrorists. The evil needed to be prevented with organized countermeasures. Unfortunately, the CPG strongly condemned NOF's armed group activities even though in practice they confirmed that they played a positive role in preventing terrorist waves. No Monarcho-Fascist gang attack on the innocent Macedonian population was left without the proper punishment. Another benefit from this armed self-defense was that it encouraged more people to join the revolution and bolster its

militant actions. In a nut shell, this was the situation with the NOF armed groups in 1945.

NOF never come into conflict with the CPG in regards to the struggle's direction; political or armed. In regards to the Greek Civil War, it is necessary to emphasize that NOF had no historic responsibility for its strategy and tactics and for the form of action the revolutionary movement had taken in the struggle against the enemy. That was solely the responsibility of the CPG. NOF indeed had armed groups that were led by the organization, but they had a specific task and that was to defend themselves and the people from the Monarcho-Fascist gangs and their attacks.

After the signing of the Varkiza Agreement, the CPG did not immediately opt for an armed struggle against the enemy as did NOF. The CPG, hoping for a political solution, did not immediately recruit its fighters, not even its own members who were then swept up by the government army recruitment program. But that's not all true. NOF never compromised with the enemy and did not allow its members to enter into the government army. In the spring of 1945, after the old anti-people regime was installed in Greece, the government military authorities began to recruit young people for military service, in the consolidation of the Greek government army. Since the Greek government army units directly participated in the terror acts perpetrated against the Macedonian people, the Macedonian leadership forbade the Macedonian people from answering the Greek army recruitment call. NOF, NOMS and AFZH urged the Macedonian youth advising them that no Macedonian must answer the call for recruitment into the Greek military. NOF would not allow Macedonian young people to serve in the Greek Monarcho-Fascist army and participate in its actions to physically exterminate the Macedonian people; parents, brothers and sisters of the fighters. This was NOF's main motive for taking a stand to prevent the Macedonian youth from entering the Greek army. NOF's stand towards this never changed but the CPG was quick to condemn it. Clearly it was obvious that the CPG and EAM did not want to understand the essence and justification of this NOF view. The CPG's hesitation to recruit its fighters left no choice for them but to answer the call and be recruited into the Greek government army... or face consequences. As a result, almost all Greek

communists and some Macedonians responded to the recruitment call. Unfortunately all those who were known supporters of the CPG position, tragically, were sent to the concentration camps on the islands Makronisos, Giura and others...

The main reason for the negative relationship, i.e. CPG hostility towards NOF, was because, for the first time since Macedonia was occupied by Greece and fell under Greek dominion, the Macedonian people formed their own national movement, against the CPG's will, and gained their political national and revolutionary organizations with their own Macedonian leadership that was willing to fight for their national and social freedom, willing to fully resolve the Macedonian National Question, and to unify all the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia. It should be no surprise that NOF revived the Macedonian National Question, thrived for the affirmation of the Macedonian national identity and struggled for the national rights and freedoms of the Macedonian people. With the CPG and EAM's permission, NOF endeavoured to be the only political, national and legitimate representative of the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia. In fact, these were the primary reasons for NOF's existence. But for their own great Greek chauvinistic reasons, the CPG and EAM did not want to recognize NOF or accept that a Macedonian National Question existed.

Unfortunately NOF's actions and its very existence seemed to aggravate the CPG. And like we said earlier, NOF's organized armed groups created to oppose terrorism in Greek occupied Macedonia, even NOF's advice to the Macedonian youth to avoid the Greek army draft, irritated the CPG prompting it to attack NOF. But what was most upsetting to the CPG leadership was the fact that 80% of Macedonian Communists broke away from the CPG ranks and joined the Macedonian organizations NOF, NOMS and AFZH. In March 1946 about 500 ELAS fighters, refugees from the ELAS camps in Bulkes and Voivodina, left the CPG en masse and joined NOF. But in spite of all the challenges, attacks, accusations, slanders, and everything else the CPG could throw at NOF, the NOF leadership remained coolly restrained, always trying to avoiding confrontation. NOF's only and most orderly response to all this was its consistent defense of the Macedonian people's real interests...

Regarding the unification Agreement between NOF and the CPG. It may be said that this agreement was a major landmark for the Macedonian national liberation movement and for the people in Greek occupied Macedonia. By this Agreement, NOF, NOMS and AFZH were recognized as Macedonian organizations. By this Agreement relations between the Macedonian PLM and the progressive democratic movement of the Greek people, led by the Communist Party of Greece, were normalized. By recognizing NOF, the CPG created favourable conditions for reaching an agreement to normalize relations on a solid basis. In October, 1946, after a difficult and arduous journey, an Agreement was finally reached to unite NOF and the CPG. I want to mention at this point that NOF was not represented during the final talks to determine the conditions under which the unification was to take place. The NOF leadership participated only in the preliminary discussions.

I am categorically stating that all the conditions listed in Kiriazovski's book are inaccurate. I can make that claim because I, Mincho Fotev, along with Paskal Mitrevski and Ilia Dimovski-Gotse, are personally familiar with the content of the Agreement. The contents of the Agreement were as follows:

1. NOF was to remain an independent organization, sole legitimate representative of the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia, only to be guided by the CPG;
2. AFZH and NOMS were to exist as components of NOF;
3. NOF was to issue its own newspaper – organ of the Main Board.
4. All Macedonian communists from Greek occupied Macedonia to automatically become members of the CPG;
5. All NOF partisan detachments were to merge with those of DAG and all military and political personnel were to be deployed to the appropriate command duties at DAG military headquarters;
6. Paskal Mitrevski, NOF Main Board Secretary, to become a member of the CPG Regional Committee Macedonian Bureau Secretariat for Greek occupied Macedonia and Thrace;

7. Giorgi Urdov-Dzhodzho to become a member of the chiefs of DAG General Staff;

8. Mincho Fotev to become a member of the secretariat of EPON Regional Committee for Greek occupied Macedonia and Thrace.

On October 18, 1946 Paskal Mitrevski, Ilia Dimovski-Gotse and Mincho Fotev were invited to visit Kolishevski at his office. After a brief conversation about an agreement with the CPG, Kolishevski ordered the NOF leaders to show absolute loyalty to the CPG and all problems that NOF had were to be solved by the CPG. According to Fotev, at the end of the meeting Kolishevski told them that: "It was of particular interest that they consistently enforce unity with the CPG on the basis of this agreement, to maintain and strengthen unity in the ranks of NOF, to maintain and strengthen the brotherhood and military solidarity with the Greek people, to consistently and unreservedly fight when necessary, and any problems that arose during the fight were to be decided jointly with the CPG leadership and with DAG headquarters..." According to Fotev, after NOF was put under CPG control, all ties and contacts with the socio-political factors in the Republic of Macedonia were to be broken. The next day, October 19, 1946, the NOF Main Board representatives rushed back to Greek occupied Macedonia through Albania. They were met by DAG couriers in Korcha and were escorted back in. Paskal Mitrevski, through Gramos, arrived at DAG Headquarters on Mount Hasha where he met with General Markos Vafiadis. Ilia Dimovski-Gotse went to Mount Vicho to the Regional Headquarters of the Macedonian Partisans, where the other NOF Main Board members were, and informed them of the latest orders. Mincho Fotev went to Kostur to inform the NOF district leadership of the agreement and its implementation. The NOF leaders were expected to prepare the ground for the Agreement to be implemented and were waiting for Paskal Mitrevski to return from DAG Headquarters...

At this point it is important for me to voice my concerns and say that those from the Yugoslav and Macedonian party and state leaderships, who drafted the Agreement on behalf of NOF, gave the CPG leadership, headed by Nikos Zahariadis, far too much power and far too many rights over NOF. The trust and authority attributed

to the CPG leadership was overly abused placing NOF in a terrible predicament which, over time, stifled and hindered its normal development.

There are also many wrong historical dates in Kiriazovski's book. Regarding the merger negotiations, Kiriazovski wrote: "Negotiations on the unification between NOF and the CPG began in May and ended on November 21, 1946 when the Agreement for the unification was finally signed..." (p. 156.) The Agreement was actually reached in October 1946. Its practical implementation began in October 1946 but was never fully implemented because the CPG repeatedly postponed it....

On page 160 in his book, Risto Kiriazovski wrote: "The Greek side commenced the negotiations conditionally requesting that Ilia Dimovski-Gotse be excluded..." Markos Vafiadis, DAG supreme commander, suspended Gotse from DAG. In September 1946, when Paskal Mitrevski met with Markos Vafiadis at DAG General Headquarters to get a timeline for implementing the merger Agreement, Markos categorically demanded that Ilia Dimovski-Gotse be removed from DAG's ranks. Mitrevski, however, as NOF Main Board Secretary, insisted that Ilia Dimovski-Gotse remain in DAG because he was a special figure in the Macedonian PLM, but Markos declined with the following comment: "The CPG Central Committee Politburo has already adopted a decision to publicly denounce him as an autonomist and an English collaborator, and that decision stands. Therefore, as a member of the CPG Central Committee Politburo, I am obliged to respect this decision and under no circumstances am I to disavow it..." This is what happened with Ilia Dimovski-Gotse's suspension.

On May 20, 1947 NOF held a meeting on Mount Karaorman... this meeting was over-emphasized and turned into a terrestrial Conference and a first massive event... However, if we want to see things objectively, according to decisions made and results achieved, we need to properly present those decisions made and solutions achieved and record the time, place, method of adoption, conditions maintained, intents and purposes, and so on... In other words the entire experience must be documented for historic purposes so that historians who love the truth can be afforded the

chance to study it. In this particular case during the May 20th Karaorman meeting, the NOF participants did all that and clearly identified all CPG aims against NOF. Similarly, the intentions and activities of the Macedonian separatists and dissidents were also identified. These separatists were clearly working against the moral, political and national unity of the Macedonian people. I would not be exaggerating if I said that this was a real conspiracy against NOF to inflict severe consequences against the Macedonian PLM in Greek occupied Macedonia. Judging by the way the NOF personnel were convened and the style of work conducted during the meeting, it is obvious that the organizers achieved their objectives. The NOF meeting was convened by Mihail Keramitchiev personally and, like he said, as ordered by the CPG Regional Committee for Macedonia and Thrace. At that time the top NOF leadership consisted of 6 rather than 9 members. They were Paskal Mitrevski, Mihail Keramitchiev, Giorgi Urdov-Dzhodzho, Pavle Rakovski, Evdokia Baleva-Vera and Mincho Fotev. Unfortunately Paskal Mitrevski was not there. After Mitrevski announced that he would be going to Solun, to the CPG Regional Committee Headquarters for Macedonia and Thrace, to negotiate and define the criteria for applying the NOF-CPG unification Agreement, he was provocatively isolated for almost four months. Giorgi Urdov-Dzhodzho was also not invited. Urdov at the time was at DAG headquarters for Western and Central Macedonia and not only was not invited, but was not even aware that such a meeting was taking place. Mincho Fotev too did not know about the meeting and was not invited. Fotev found out from Lambro Cholakov, NOF Board District Secretary for Kostur Region, who was inquiring why Fotev did not attend when, according to him, he was invited to the meeting. Almost all participants in the meeting, unless they were close associates of Mihail Keramitchiev, were not aware of the reasons for the meeting being convened. Almost all participants, except for the separatists, were interested and demanded to know why Paskal Mitrevski, the top person in NOF, was not there. Responding to questions, Mihail Keramitchiev said: "Questions regarding Paskal Mitrevski should be directed at the CPG leadership..." All those interested to know the whereabouts of Mitrevski were directed to see Georgios Esteriadis-Petros, CPG representative for Macedonia and Thrace. When Esteriadis was questioned on the issue he nervously said: "Paskal Mitrevski is in Skopje and he can no longer use his broom to sweep from there."

NOF now belongs to the CPG...” After he made that statement the atmosphere became very tense and the situation became explosive. The separatists, led by Mihail Keramitchiev, tried to calm the participants by saying, “everything will be okay and that we should have confidence in the CPG...”

The following conditions were imposed on NOF by the CPG leadership and by Mihail Keramitchiev, dealing a severe blow against it:

1. All NOF leaders and representatives in the CPG, EPON and DAG will no longer be representing NOF, NOMS and AFZH.
2. The “NOF Main Board” is to be renamed to “NOF Coordinating Bureau” and will consist of 5 members led by a secretary.
3. NOF’s personnel matter is now the problem of the CPG leadership.
4. NOMS is to be disbanded and the Macedonian youth are to become members of EPON, the Greek youth organization, but they cannot be members of NOF.
5. ACE’s (Agrarian Party of Greece) right to form its own organizations in the Macedonian villages is no longer recognized.
6. The “NOF Coordinating Bureau”, as the supreme body of the Organization, will consist of only 5 members that will include Mihail Keramitchiev as Secretary, Vangel Aianovski Oche responsible for organizational issues, Pavle Rakovski responsible for agitation and propaganda, Lambro Cholakov responsible for finance and Evdokia Baleva-Vera as Secretary of AFZH in Greek occupied Macedonia. It was also decided to appoint Vangel Nichev as NOF instructor for Eastern Macedonia. Mincho Fotev was to remain a member of the EPON Regional Committee Secretariat for Greek occupied Macedonia and Thrace. But about a month later, due to conflicts over Mihail Keramitchiev’s policies, Fotev was dismissed from his position and replaced by Todor Kovachev-Viktor.

These imposed conditions on the Macedonian organizations caused a severe blow against the Macedonian PLM and against the Macedonian people in general.

After this meeting the NOF membership fell into a severe crisis. But, instead of helping NOF out of this crisis and strengthening its role as per the unification Agreement, the CPG leadership did the opposite. It took measures to discredit and disqualify NOF. As for the concessions and compromises made by Mihail Keramitchiev, they were inconsistent with NOF's policies and totally irresponsible. His sick ambition to take over the top NOF leadership was exactly what made him make the above-mentioned concessions.

The consequences of the decisions made can be grouped into the following six points:

1. The internal situation and internal relations in the Organization significantly changed. With the appointment of the "NOF Coordinating Bureau", the Organization was practically deprived of its central governing body. It lost its leadership and its ability to decide on matters of importance in its own domain and to support its policies, of course within the global CPG strategy and within the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece. The NOF Coordinating Bureau practically became an instrument of the CPG. Its role consisted only of formally taking initiatives that were offered by the CPG and using proper methods to resolve them and taking care of practical tasks initiated by the CPG.

2. With the creation of DAG, the needs of the Macedonian PLM called for the expansion of the main NOF leadership composition and to be given greater rights and powers. But instead of doing that, the CPG not only reduced the NOF leadership composition but also stripped the leaders of the top NOF leadership from their independence to solve problems in their own domain.

3. All NOF and AFZH personnel matters were left in the hands of the CPG leadership. The CPG was the only authority with powers to promote or appoint NOF activists to higher functions. As a result, almost all NOF appointments at almost all levels required CPG Party approval. Then, at CPG representative Georgios Eretriadis-

Petros's proposal, the NOF Coordinating Bureau agreed to dismiss from NOF all NOF leaders serving in DAG. Under no circumstances should the NOF Coordinating Bureau have allowed this to happen because, by doing so, NOF practically severed all its ties with thousands of Macedonian fighters. NOF had a duty, through its political and military personnel, to be present in DAG and to be in constant and uninterrupted contact with the Macedonian fighters in order to look after their interests, moral and political unity and to strengthen their fighting spirit. Only NOF could properly care for and act on behalf of the Macedonian fighters and address their problems in DAG. The Macedonian fighters too had a right to be members of NOF and to be in constant contact with their parent political organization because NOF was one of the main factors that created and developed DAG. Of the total number of fighters in DAG more than 40% were Macedonians. DAG's principal forces and the war itself were located on the territory of Greek occupied Macedonia in Gramos, Vicho, Kaimakchalan and Paiaik Mountains, as well as in Kostur, Lerin, Voden and Gumendzhe Regions. Gramos and Vicho were the main fronts of the two warring sides, both located in Greek occupied Macedonia. These were the battle grounds where the bloodiest and hardest battles were fought. DAG General Headquarters, DAG General Staff and the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece were also located in Greek occupied Macedonia. Kostur and Lerin Regions, also located in Greek occupied Macedonia, were the largest free zones freed by the partisans where more than 80% of the total population was Macedonian. Therefore NOF had the right to be there and to be the sole political representative of the Macedonian people. It had the right to help DAG and participate in the front lines with its fighters and to continue its strong relationship and ties with the Macedonian people fighting in DAG.

4. The NOF Coordinating Bureau accepted Georgios Eretriadis-Petros's proposal to disband NOMS and his recommendation to have the Macedonian youth join EPON, the Greek youth organization. As a consequence of that, NOF distanced itself from the Macedonian youth and from the most vital strength of the Macedonian people.

5. The NOF Coordinating Bureau accepted the CPG's recommendation to form Agrarian Party organizations in the Macedonian villages. But the Macedonian villagers had no need to become members of a Greek Agrarian Party because NOF consistently represented their interests. The existence of the Agrarian Party of Greece in the Macedonian villages only complicated the Macedonian position among the villagers. It was obvious that the CPG and EAM needed the Greek Agrarian Party in the Macedonian villages so that their political interests would be looked after. The existence of both a Greek and Macedonian political position in the Macedonian villages, however, was practically a wedge in the moral and political unity of the Macedonian people. Given that the village population in Greek occupied Macedonia consisted of almost 80% farmers, some CPG leaders insisted that NOF be managed by the Agrarian Party of Greece.

6. For the sake of the Macedonian PLM it was vital that NOF and the other progressive democratic parties and organizations in Greece establish closer links and program cooperation on an equal basis. This was the only way that NOF could have affirmed its position and be recognized as a democratic and revolutionary factor in Greece and as the sole legitimate representative of the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia. Only this way could it properly struggle for common interests and harmonize its position on all issues. But in order to achieve this it had to remove all contradictions and all misunderstanding. But how could it do that when it had no support from the CPG? The CPG had no desire to affirm NOF as an authentic and equal national and political organization. As a result NOF's unity, which was based on agreed principles set out in the unification Agreement, was interrupted. Unfortunately the CPG blamed NOF for all of this and removed Paskal Mitrevski and Mincho Fotev from the CPG and EPON District Committees and Giorgi Urdov-Dzhodzho from DAG Headquarters.

By caving in to CPG demands, NOF and its Coordinating Bureau turned from a massive centralized organization into an isolated and decentralized organization, distanced from the Macedonian fighters

and the Macedonian people, whose only purpose was to perform narrow tasks for the CPG.

At this point in time the CPG cracked down on NOF and on all those Macedonian cadres who expressed dissatisfaction with its views and policies. More than 40 NOF and NOMS leaders were dismissed from their leadership duties for supposedly being counter-revolutionaries and were sent to DAG's ranks to serve as common fighters. Some were arrested and sent to the Greek concentration camps in the People's Republic of Albania. These actions not only dealt a severe blow to NOF but were also harmful to the PLM, the armed struggle and to DAG.

Reacting to what had been done to NOF by the CPG Regional Committee, many Macedonian leaders and activists strongly protested and demanded an end to the persecution. They also demanded that the interrupted unity process resume based on the Agreement. Fighters, communists and NOF supporters demanded that the CPG leadership stop all negative activities against NOF by the CPG leaders, including by Georgios Eretriadis-Petros, Evripidis Kapetanios-Panos, Kiriakos, Theodoros Evtimidiadis and Tanasios Dzhogas-Spiros. The CPG was also asked to annul all the destructive decisions it had made against NOF, remove the separatists and return the rightful NOF leaders, who were unjustifiably dismissed and degraded, to their former positions.

On January 13, 1948, after many protests, the Macedonians were finally given permission to convene the First NOF Congress, in an attempt to overcome the great difficulties they were facing and to consolidate their positions in this historic mission...

One of NOF's basic programming principles was to unify all Macedonians, including people of other nationalities living in Greek occupied Macedonia. In other words, everyone living in Greek occupied Macedonia who agreed with NOF's objectives and program principles had the right to join NOF. The new people who Risto Kiriazovski calls "controversialists" (p. 220) were all Macedonians. They were DAG fighters and CPG members, all Macedonian communists. Risto Kiriazovski was one of them. The CPG itself was enriched with more members, especially after the

merger Agreement when all NOF members became CPG members. It is true that some Macedonians, communists, even CPG members, including Risto Kiriazovski, who were traditionally Orthodox, strictly followed the CPG line even towards NOF and towards the Macedonian National Question. Unfortunately contradictions existed among these particular Macedonian communists. One cannot be a pro and anti Macedonian at the same time. While they were calling themselves “Macedonians”, they followed the CPG line which was anti-Macedonian. This means that there was a radical difference between being a “Macedonian” and being a “Communist Macedonian” who follows the CPG line. But regardless of that, the new people, about whom Risto Kiriazovski speaks, eventually adopted the NOF line and that is why they were elected into NOF positions during the NOF Congress.

Here is what Kiriazovski had to say about the conflict in the NOF Central Council between President Mihail Keramitchiev and Secretary Paskal Mitrevski. On page 223 Kiriazovski wrote: “From the statements that NOF leaders made and from the documents I found during my research, I have discovered that the conflict in the ranks of the NOF Macedonian leadership was due to the various views they had on the strategic goal of the Macedonian liberation movement. Mihail Keramitchiev, Vangel Aianovski-Oche and the other old NOF leaders believed that a victory in the revolution would afford the Macedonian people the right to self-determination. Mitrevski, on the other hand, advocated for full equality with the Greek people within Greece.” Unfortunately Kiriazovski’s conclusions are both superficial and naïve. It would not only be naïve but absurd to think that in the whirlwind of the Greek Civil War, in the middle of the armed struggle where people were fighting for their lives in 1948, while DAG was being beaten to a pulp on Mount Gramos, when victory for the revolution was becoming more and more elusive and an uncertainty, when the main preoccupation of the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece, the CPG, DAG and NOF was to mobilize all potential combatants in Macedonia and Greece, that NOF would be holding debates to decide the Macedonian National Question! These kinds of debates are usually held during peacetime under normal circumstances and after victory is achieved. How was NOF going to solve the Macedonian National Question when its own survival and the

survival of the PLM were at stake? It would also be ridiculous to believe that Mihail Keramitchiev, Vangel Aianovski and the others had the authority to tackle such a task. The arguments Kiriazovski was referring to were caused by a tiny separatist group led by Mihail Keramitchiev. The reasons for causing these problems were, because of the policies they were leading, they were losing their positions of influence in NOF and, being encouraged by dissidents from the Macedonian PLM, they engaged in insane attacks against the other leaders in NOF who did not see things their way. This behaviour finally led them to leave DAG and the struggle, but they did it in 1948 during the most difficult moments in the Greek Civil War. The ideas they were preaching about the Macedonian question, i.e. Macedonians achieving self-determination, served only as smoke screens for them to hide their real intentions; taking control of NOF. In any case my impression is that it was a conscious effort on Kiriazovski's part to protect the holders of the negative phenomena in NOF caused by the separatists and dissenters during the Macedonian PLM.

On page 253 Kiriazovski wrote: "On September 25 and October 3, 1948, the NOF Executive Board Secretariat held a session to discuss the deployment of the suspended NOF leaders that included Paskal Mitrevski, Mihail Keramitchiev, Ilia Dimovski-Gotse and Vangel Aianovski-Oche. It was decided to send Mihail Keramitchiev, Ilia Dimovski-Gotse and Vangel Aianovski-Oche to Yugoslavia to recruit fighters for DAG from the pool of the Macedonian emigrants in Yugoslavia. The decision made by the NOF Secretariat was actually dictated by Zahariadis..." The claims that Kiriazovski made here are not true. The First NOF Plenum was held on August 8, 1948. The CPG Central Committee Politburo made a decision during this Plenum to suspend the NOF leaders Paskal Mitrevski and Mihail Keramitchiev. Both Paskal Mitrevski and Mihail Keramitchiev, after their suspension, were deployed to new duties which were personally decided by Nikos Zahariadis and Vasilis Bardzhotas. Paskal Mitrevski was sent to the ranks of DAG as an ordinary fighter. Mitrevski accepted the decision by saying: "I am a communist; I will go where the Party sends me..." The same was ordered for Mihail Keramitchiev but he refused to accept the order saying that it was dangerous for him because he could not tolerate explosions caused by bombs and shells, because according to him he

suffered from seizures. About Ilia Dimovski-Gotse and Vangel Aianovski-Oche, they were not suspended during the First NOF Plenum and there was no explanation of where they were deployed. It is also not true that Mihail Keramitchiev and Vangel Aianovski-Oche were sent to Yugoslavia by Zahariadis to recruit new fighters for DAG from the Macedonian immigrants, as claimed by Kiriazovski.

Kiriazovski claims that “the latest CPG action sparked new anger and stronger distrust of the CPG, which was manifested by Macedonians leaving NOF and DAG...” At the same time we have the CPG joining the Informburo Resolution against the CPY and Yugoslavia and openly attacking Yugoslavia and taking rigorous measures against NOF. And as was indicated earlier, Kiriazovski reported that Mihail Keramitchiev, Ilia Dimovski-Gotse and Vangel Aianovski-Oche were sent by Zahariadis to Yugoslavia to recruit fighters for DAG from the Macedonian immigrants. How is it possible, on the one hand, for Kiriazovski to claim that Macedonians were leaving NOF and DAG and, on the other hand, to say that the suspended NOF leaders were sent to Yugoslavia to recruit the same Macedonian immigrants who had left DAG? How was it possible to recruit from inside Yugoslavia when the CPG was fiercely attacking Yugoslavia on account of the Informburo Resolution? All this is absurd!

Regarding the evacuation of the children to the people’s democratic countries, Kiriazovski has concluded that “it was done to counter-act the Athens regime which had its own motives for rescuing the children from the horrors of war. But that was not the only motive. With this action the CPG leadership had aims at freeing the parents of the evacuated children and mobilizing them into DAG in the regular units and in DAG’s support services, immediately following the evacuation...” This too was an unrealistic and naïve conclusion. The evacuation of the children was done at the request of the parents; they were worried about their survival with the war escalating. The children were placed in a dangerous and difficult situation and the parents demanded that a solution be found to save them from the horrors of the war and from the barbarism of the Monarcho-Fascists. Their parents were already strongly involved in DAG even before the children were evacuated. Many parents and

their older children were already DAG fighters. Some of the evacuated children were orphans, their fathers were killed fighting for DAG or were executed by the Monarcho-Fascists. Also among the evacuees were the children whose parents were in prison or interned because of their participation in the PLM.

It is well-known that the Monarcho-Fascist army evacuated the population from the villages it could not fully control and took the people to the cities where living conditions were difficult and miserable. The Monarcho-Fascists wanted to cut ties between the people and DAG so that they could not assist DAG. DAG made many attempts to free the people, especially the children for whom the Monarcho-Fascists had plans to turn them into janissaries. The evacuation of children under the war conditions was a great human deed, saving thousands of children from the horrors of war. NOF, and especially AFZH, were active participants in the implementation of this noble humanitarian act. NOF and AFZH undertook all possible measures to find countries to accept the children, house them, educate them, and so on. For each group of 10 children a support worker (a mother) was sent with them as well as Macedonian teachers, and so on. This is what happened with the evacuation of the children.

Most of the items reported to be discussed and decisions made during the Second NOF Congress, as reported by Kiriazovski, are biased and fictitious at best. Kiriazovski seems to be oblivious to the truth because he has made numerous errors and unjustifiable serious accusations regarding what took place during the Second NOF Congress. Kiriazovski does not even know where the NOF Second Congress was held. On page 287 he said that it was held in the village P'pli, Lerin Region, which is not true. The Second NOF Congress was held in Prespa in the village Nivitsi, Lerin Region. About the work done and decisions made during the Second NOF Congress, Kiriazovski said: "One of the goals was to escalate the anti-Yugoslav campaign..." a rather subjective and tendentious assertion. The Second NOF Congress was convened during dire and difficult times and under very complex conditions. The Monarcho-Fascist army had taken intensive actions and was preparing to deliver a devastating blow against DAG. The Informburo campaign was in full swing and was bitterly attacking Yugoslavia. Let us not

forget that Yugoslavia at that time was the CPG and DAG's most reliable friend and helper. By attacking Yugoslavia and by putting pressure on NOF, the CPG and DAG were in effect breaking the national, moral and spiritual ties between the People's Republic of Macedonia, i.e. Yugoslavia, and Greek occupied Macedonia. The Congress was in fact not convened with aims at proclaiming a new position on the Macedonian National Question, nor to initiate an anti-Yugoslav campaign, as claimed by Kiriazovski on page 291 of his book, nor to interrupt NOF's national revolutionary liberation process. Despite the difficult trials it suffered from the CPG, NOF to its end remained true to its original principles and ideals and did its best to struggle, together with the Macedonian people, in a life and death scenario until the last possible moment. Also despite all the innuendos, speculations and various accusations that Nikos Zahariadis made against the Macedonian people and against its leaders, NOF still remained true to the Macedonian cause to the end. It is not right to say that the devoted leaders of NOF neglected their principles for the sake of carrying out CPG policies. That is simply not true.

The Second NOF Congress was in fact convened to consolidate NOF's ranks, to increase and intensify its capability to act and to provide the Macedonian people with new impetus and enthusiasm in the struggle against the Monarcho-Fascist army and lead them to their final victory. NOF, with its own sacrifices in battle, with a massive participation of Macedonians in DAG and in the armed struggle managed to expand and consolidate its positions in the people's democratic armed movement in Greece and to assert itself as an important military and political factor in the country. NOF participated equally in the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece and had its own ministerial portfolio in the Directorate for National Minorities. NOF has a representative in the DAG Military Council and an official in DAG Headquarters as an assistant political commissar. The Presidents of the Kostur and Lerin Region National Liberation Committees (People's Councils) were members of the NOF Central Council and so were most of the Central Committee responsible for DAG. Risto Kiriazovski, it seems, sees all this as a tactical move made by Nikos Zahariadis. Clearly and consistently he defends the views of the NOF separatists and dissidents...

On page 291 of his book, Kiriazovski implied that the Congress resolution did not call those NOF leaders, who did not agree with the Informburo resolution, traitors, thugs, etc., The real traitors, according to Kiriazovski's account of the Congress, were those fighters who voluntarily left NOF, the armed struggle and the territory of Greek occupied Macedonia. The initiative for that view was carried by the 400 delegates who attended the Congress and by the DAG units whose fighters attended the Congress, who after the Congress died heroically in battles against the Monarcho-Fascist army in the legendary mountains Vicho and Gramos. In connection to the NOF Second Congress, I would like to emphasize that, at the request of the NOF leadership, the People's Republic of Macedonia produced all the necessary propaganda materials as decided during the Congress, including posters that symbolized the brotherhood and unity of the joint struggle between Macedonian and Greek people against the Monarcho-Fascists. This material was used to advertise the struggle to the people.

Regarding the question of NOMS's dissolution... Claims made that it was decided to dissolve NOMS during the unification discussions are not true. In fact it was explicitly stipulated in the merger Agreement that NOMS should remain active. At that time I was NOMS Secretary for Greek occupied Macedonia and was personally aware of the decisions made by the contracting parties. As NOMS secretary, I was authorized to implement the Agreement with respect to NOMS. The claim that Kiriazovski made on page 327, that the CPG leadership put NOMS under its control was wrong. The CPG failed in that respect and that is why it continued to insist that NOMS should be disbanded. An agreement to dissolve NOMS was reached between Mihail Keramitchiev and Georgios Eretriadis-Petros, as well as by other members of the central committee and by NOF on May 20, 1947.

Claims made that NOF had decided to appoint Todor Kovachev-Victor and Tashko Hadzhiianev as members in the EPON district office of Macedonia are not true. The Agreement called for the following: "Mincho Fotev, NOMS Secretary to be appointed a member of the EPON Regional Committee of Macedonia..." (see: Vangel Aianovski, "Aegean storms" p. 242.) In July 1947, after

NOMS was dissolved, Mincho Fotev was replaced by Todor Kochev-Victor. NOF never appointed Tashko Hadzhiianev as a member of the EPON district leadership. Chosen for EPON Central Council, as speculated by Kiriazovski on page 329, were Mincho Fotev, Secretary, Pando Vaina, Tashko Hadzhiianev and others. But here too Kiriazovski was wrong.

With all his circus acts and theatrics, personal authority and various means, CPG Secretary General Nikos Zahariadis still failed to bring NOF to its knees and turn it into a Greek political weapon against the Macedonian National Question, and to engage it in the Informburo anti-Yugoslav propaganda campaign. This was mainly due to a strong commitment shown by the Macedonian communists, the Macedonian fighters and the Macedonian people in general who were committed to NOF's ideals and national liberation goals. This was also due to the moral, political, national and spiritual attachment of the Macedonian people in Greek occupied Macedonia to the Macedonian people in the People's Republic of Macedonia. The claim that Zahariadis took NOF under his control is another of Kiriazovski's assumptions. Zahariadis may have followed NOF's progress but he never took control of it. Zahariadis's failure to get control of NOF, in fact drove him to create KOEM so that he could achieve his political objectives concerning the Macedonian Question. Here is how Zahariadis motivated KOEM's formation: "NOF not only represented the Macedonian liberation movement but actually expressed the Macedonian people's aspirations to fight in a struggle for the Macedonian people's national liberation. But there was a major gap in the history of the Macedonian people's national liberation struggle. Missing was the governing core for the people's revolutionary movement. That gap was the reason for having serious hazards in the movement. KOEM was created to fill that gap and to consistently fight for the rights and freedom of the Macedonian people." Unfortunately those were only empty words, Zahariadis's pure delusions to mislead the Macedonian communists, draw them in and away from NOF. If Zahariadis indeed had the Macedonian people in his heart and truly cared for them and for the Macedonian national liberation movement, if he was principled and his Communist Party was consistent with the internationalist communist obligations then, as early as 1941, immediately after the German, Italian and Bulgarian fascist occupation, the CPG would

have given the Macedonian people the opportunity to form their own Macedonian national liberation organizations, which would have reaffirmed the Macedonian nation, its struggle for its national rights and freedoms, and it would have advocated for a reasonable solution for the Macedonian National Question. Unfortunately all the CPG wanted to do was destroy NOF as it did SNOF in Kostur and Lerin Regions. The CPG severely and consistently kept attacking NOF from its inception until it was completely destroyed...

And now a few words about KOEM. The CPG and Zahariadis's personal objectives for creating KOEM were to create a new political entity, a new so-called Macedonian management centre that would conform to the CPG's ideological and political principles on the Macedonian Question and a good partner to fight against Yugoslavia. The CPG strived to destroy NOF by disqualifying it. But in spite of what the CPG and Zahariadis did personally, their plans backfired. The Macedonian communists did not accept KOEM because its authority was never accepted by the Macedonian people.

Pando Shiperkov, in the "First Macedonian Assault Brigade", was Commissar of a battalion not a company commander. He was a captain in the Yugoslav National army and a battalion commander in DAG under the rank lieutenant colonel.

Krsto Mangov was not only Secretary of the NOF Regional Board and President of the National Liberation Committee in Kostur Region, but also a member of the Central Committee Executive Board and a NOF trustee (government official) in the Provisional Democratic Government of Greece responsible for issues of local people's government.

It was Giorgi Urdov-Dzhodzho who, under a CPG directive, created the organization MAO, and not Vangel Aianovski-Oche as claimed by Kiriazovski.

Evdokia Nikolova Baleva-Vera was not only Secretary of AFZH for Greek occupied Macedonia but was also vice president of the NOF Central Council, first vice president of the All-Greek Union of Democratic Women of Greece (PDEG) and a candidate-member of the Secretariat of the International Democratic Women's Federation.

Mincho Fotev was not only leader of NOMS. He was one of the founders of NOF in Greek occupied Macedonia, a member of the NOF Organizational Leadership (Main Board), a member of the CPM Party Delegation for Greek occupied Macedonia, a member of the NOF Central Council Executive Committee and assistant political commissar of DAG General Staff.

Tashko Hadzhiianev was presented as a member of the EPON District Committee delegated by a decision from NOF and an active member of the NOF Central Council Executive Board. But that is incorrect. He never occupied those positions.

Lazo Poplazarov was presented as an instructor and as secretary the NOF Main Board for Greek occupied Macedonia. He never occupied those positions. He was NOF secretary for Lerin and Voden Districts and a member of the NOF Central Council.

Naum Peoiv was presented as a direct participant in the people's liberation war in Greek occupied Macedonia in 1941. That is also not true. From the fall of 1941 to September 1943 he was in Bulgaria, a regular student in the Bitola Bulgarian gymnasium.

Mihail Keramitchiev was presented as a commander of a partisan unit in the Slavo-Macedonian Liberation Army in 1943. That is not true. There was no Macedonian army in 1943 in Greek occupied Macedonia. Mihail Keramitchiev was involved in the people's liberation war in Greek occupied Macedonia after February 1944. From 1941 to October 1943 he studied in Sofia.

Vasko Karadzha was presented as a direct participant in the people's liberation war in 1941. Not true. In 1942 and 1943 he was a regular student at the Bitola Bulgarian gymnasium.

Nikolaos Kolaris was presented as a collaborator, war criminal and leader of an armed Monarch-Fascist gang. This is not only false but an injustice to the man. Kolaris was from the town Rushishta where I (Mincho Fotev) was born. He was a soft-spoken and honest man who had nothing to do with what was written about him. The collaborator whom I believe was referred to was a dangerous

criminal and assassin, who led a Monarcho-Fascist armed gang. I believe the collaborator's name was Frantsiskos Kolaris-Tsevos, a colonist from Asia Minor who lived in the village Gorentsi and who for many years also lived in Rupishsta.

Skopje, November 1986,

Mincho Fotev

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mihailo Minoski was born on October 18, 1938, in the village Dolgaets, Prilep Region. He received his MA in Philosophy at the University of “Sveti Kiril and Metodi” in Skopje in 1975, and acquired his Doctorate of Historical Sciences in the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade in 1981. From 1986, until his retirement he worked as a professor at the Institute of History in the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje.

Minoski has published over 200 scientific papers in the field of historical sciences. This includes books, articles, press releases, reviews, etc. Included among his best accomplishments are the books “Liberation movements and uprisings in Macedonia (1564-1615)”, 1972 (212 pages); “Austro-Hungarian policies towards Macedonia and the Macedonian Question (1878-1903)”, Skopje, 1982 (376pages); “Federal ideas in Macedonian political thought (1887-1919)”, Skopje, 1983 (372 pages); “The USA and Macedonia (1869-1919)”, Skopje, 1994 (227 pages); “AVNOJ Yugoslavia and the Macedonian National Question (1943-1946)”, Skopje, 2000 (398 pages); “Macedonia in international agreements, I, (1913-1940)”, 2006 (618 pages), and “Macedonia and Bulgaria, historical confrontations”, Skopje, 2008.

Mihailo Minoski is a member of the Center for Strategic Research (CSI) Council at MANU. In 2008 he was awarded the “October 11” lifetime achievement award in science.

ABOUT MINCHO FOTEV

Mincho Fotev (1922-1987) was born in the town Rupishsta, Kostur Region. He was born to a “working family”. As a youngster he joined the Communist Youth Union of Greece and later the CPG. He served several prison sentences for his work and for his involvement with communist activities. Immediately after the Italian occupation of Western Greek occupied Macedonia, he actively became involved in the resistance movement and was one of its leading figures. Among other things, he served as an officer in ELAS. Later, during the Greek Civil War (1946-1949), he was one of the founders of Macedonian liberation organizations (NOF, NOMS and AFZH), a member of the NOF Main Board, President of NOMS since its inception, Assistant Commissar in DAG General Headquarters, and member of the KOEM Main Board... In September 1949, the top Macedonian leaders, including Mincho Fotev, were arrested by the CPG and accused of being the main culprits for DAG’s defeat. After that they were interned in the USSR. Mincho Fotev spent two years sentence in the Moscow prison “Liublianka”, after which he was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment in Siberia (Varkuta). In 1956, after the normalization of relations between the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Yugoslav Communist Party, he and the other leaders were released and repatriated in the People’s Republic of Macedonia. Mincho Fotev died in Skopje in 1987.

Acronyms

AFZH - Women's Anti-Fascist Front
ASNOM – Anti-Fascist Assembly of National Liberation of Macedonia
BRP(k) – Communist Party of Bulgaria
CPG - Communist Party of Greece
CPM - Communist Party of Macedonia
CPY - Communist Party of Yugoslavia
CVG - Greek Civil War
DAG – Democratic Army of Greece
EAM – National Liberation Front
ELAS – National Liberation Army of Greece
EON – National Youth Organization
EPON – All Greek National Youth Organization
KOEM – Communist Organization of Aegean Macedonia
KOS - Counter-intelligence Sector of JAN
NKVD – People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs
NOBG - Peoples Liberation Struggle in Greece
NOBM - Peoples Liberation Struggle in Macedonia
PLM – People's Liberation Movement
NOF - Peoples' Liberation Front
NOMS - Peoples' Liberation Youth Organization
OKNE - Communist Youth Organization of Greece
ONOO – Local People's Liberation Council
OZNA – People's Defense Division
PAO - Pan-Hellenic Liberation Organization
PDEG – Pan-Greek Democratic Union of Women
PDOG – International Federation of Democratic Women
POJ - Partisan Units of Yugoslavia
PRM – People's Republic of Macedonia
SID - Information Services of the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs
SNOF - Slavo-Macedonian National Liberation Front
SKP(b) – Communist Party of the Soviet Union
UDBA - Directorate of State Security
USSR – United Soviet Socialist Republics