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Federal Yugoslavia

After visiting England, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxemburg, Austria and Switzerland, my wife and I were obsessed with the idea of going to Yugoslavia, a communist country which vacillates between East and West. More particularly, we wanted to see the social and economic progress which has been made in the People's Republic of Macedonia.

The former triune kingdom of Serbs, Croates, and Slovenes has been given the appellation of "Yugoslavia" in 1929, and with the advent of communism in 1944, Yugoslavia was reorganized as a federal state of six "self-governing" republics—Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Montenegro.

"Nationalistic" Communism

For over a decade volumes of books, feature articles, and reports have been published praising Yugoslavia's economic, political, and social progress under Tito's communist regime. Tito has been glorified as a special type of communist—"nationalistic"—who has challenged Moscow's concept of the Marxian socialist philosophy. And, of course, people who have been influenced by pro-Yugoslav propaganda would naturally believe that Tito's "nationalistic" communism has solved the internal problems of the country and that a certain degree of economic, social, and political development really exists. For does not the Marxian socialist philosophy call for economic, political, and social betterment of masses of the people? The socialization of certain industries and resources in Sweden, England, and elsewhere, may have improved the standard of living of their people. But how has socialism under communist rule in Yugoslavia and especially that of the so-called People's Republic of Macedonia affected the people?

In Belgrade

Visiting Belgrade one would readily see a blend of the new and the old. The cobble stone pavement and dirt sidewalks would remind one of conditions when Serbia was under the rule of the Turkish

Sultans; and there one would also notice the numerous modern housing projects and huge office buildings which tend to give the appearance of Belgrade as a modern European city. Tito seems to be determined to make Belgrade a show case of Yugoslavia. Looking at the various aspects of improvement, one's impression would be that there has been some progress made since the end of World War II.

But if one would observe the general disposition of the people in Belgrade, the work which they do, and the price tags on merchandise displayed in store windows along Marshal Tito Boulevard, he will notice inefficiency and lack of material supplies. I wanted to compare prices of some of the articles on display in the stores of Belgrade with the prices of similar articles in the stores of the United States. I stopped in front of an office supply store which was opposite the "Putnik" office in the heart of Belgrade. There was a typewriter which trademark I did not get but the price tag on it was 535,000 dinars. At the "Putnik" office I exchanged American Express travelers checks at 410 dinars for a dollar. If one would divide 535,000 dinars by 410 the quotient would be over \$1280 for a typewriter. There was also a Remington typewriter with a price tag on it for the equivalent of \$900. A small adding machine which may be bought anywhere in the United States for \$100 to \$125 the price tag on it was equivalent to \$1100! Who can afford to buy such office equipment in Yugoslavia?

Child Labor In Communist Yugoslavia

On the same street as the "Putnik" office in Belgrade, an imposing office building was currently in construction. I was amazed when I saw children under 15 years of age, barefoot, pushing wheelbarrows loaded with building materials. While in the United States child labor is protected by law, in communist Yugoslavia child labor is obviously exploited. Were these children units of a youthful brigade helping to build Titoslavia's socialist society?

Taxi Cab Driver vs. Communist Official

In Belgrade we stayed in Hotel Excelsior. On the evening of August ninth while I was waiting for the clerk to hand me the key to my room, a middle aged woman carrying a briefcase walked into the lobby and asked the clerk if she could use the telephone. Naturally the clerk consented, and she proceeded to talk to someone on the other end of the line. Just about this time a cab driver walked in the lobby and stood near this woman. She was telling her party on the phone that she was an official and that she had encountered some difficulty with her cab driver. What else she was telling her party I do not know, but at this point the driver shouted at her, "You are a liar." "You are telling lies and you are supposed to be a leader!" As I understood, the whole trouble was this: The lady was an official

of some sort but she had no money to pay the cab driver's fee of 400 dinars! By using the telephone and conversing with another official she was trying, perhaps, to impress or intimidate the cab driver to "lay off" her for she was one of the elite of the communist bureaucracy!

Transportation Chaos

There is no regular plane service from Belgrade to Skopie. I was informed at the "Putnik" office that there were only two flights per week and it was impossible to procure reservations on short notice. The Yugoslav Air Transport has in service only small planes—DC3. The next best way to go to Skopie was, of course, by train. And what an experience that was!

This particular train evidently originated in Belgrade and was available long before our scheduled departure time. We arrived at the station half an hour before the train was to leave and waited for announcement of train departures. None of this occurred. The time was short and we began to follow the crowd toward the tracks. We were somewhat confused. The train which was scheduled for Skopie seemed to be already overcrowded. We entered one coach but were unable to go through. Alighting from it, we looked for someone to help us locate our reserved seats. No conductor or any other official could be seen. Boarding the train at Belgrade seemed to be a free-for-all. I approached an old man acting as "red cap," showed him my reservation tickets and asked him to help us carry our luggage to the proper compartment. We followed him rather hurriedly. The seats in the compartment for which we had reservations were occupied. An army officer, a **militioneer**, (militia man), two young civilians, and an old woman were already in it. The "red cap," after some heated argument with some of the occupants, assured me that our seats were in that particular compartment, put our luggage on the racks, and advised us not to move from there. So we stayed. A few minutes before the train started to move, the old woman in the compartment left and her daughter came in and occupied the seat. Talking about the crowded conditions of the train, this young lady informed me that her mother had to board the train several hours before its departure in order to save a seat for her. One can imagine the joy one would have to travel in communist Yugoslavia!

Railroad Workers

On the way to Skopie, I stood, for the most part of the trip, at the platform window of the train so that I may better observe the countryside of Serbia and, of course, that of Macedonia. At some distance from Belgrade, the train passed through several tunnels and immediately south of the last tunnel, repairs and reconstruction of the rail-

road tracks were currently going on. Hundreds of workers were engaged on this project. One would admire the suntan which these workers had attained. On the other hand, one cannot help but feel sorry for their physical appearance, one would be able to count the ribs on some of these young and middle aged people.

Lined up along the tracks, it was a spectacle to observe their uniformed overseers. One's impression would be that it was a gang of prison workers under police supervision. Their tents erected nearby on the hillside were also an indication that these workers, obviously, had to live close to the project under construction.

Menace to Roadbed

The Belgrade-Skopie railroad follows for quite some distance the current of the Vardar River. Prior to our journey through the Vardar valley, there apparently had been some floods. The muddy appearance of the area was indicating that. The river is so zig-zagging, that at many places the current is about to undermine the bed of the railroad tracks. One would notice recently thrown rocks to prevent the inevitable erosion. The river bed is on rather level ground, and it takes no engineering genius to plan and correct the river's current at these points. A steam shovel or a good sized bulldozer could push or throw the dirt and rocks against the railroad bed and at the same time straighten the river's current near the points where it endangers the road bed. It seems as though no one cares or worries about the situation. Is one to assume that state ownership of public utilities such as railroads under Yugoslav communist rule, spells indifference and managerial inefficiency?

Young Turk Revolt

Yugoslav communists may boast of their "modernization" in agriculture; they may publish in their propaganda sheets pictures of modern tractors and other mechanical agricultural machines, but one sees none of these devices along the farms from Belgrade to Skopie. On the contrary, the century-old oxen drawn wooden plow was quite evident. Barefoot and illclad peasant children could be seen tending a cow or two in the pastures between plots of corn fields; raggedy older peasants could be seen tending to small flocks of sheep or swine. It is the same old practice and way of life as it existed for centuries before. The communist regime has done nothing to improve the economic lot of the masses of the people.

Titoism has changed the appellation and the form of things but not the substance: it brought forth nothing more than a mere Young Turks revolution! No apparent material improvement has taken place even since I left Macedonia 45 years ago. One thing is quite obvious:

poverty in Yugoslav Macedonia under communist rule is far more widespread than ever before in the history of the Macedonian people.

In Skopie

Forty-five years ago, when Macedonia was in its geographic extent under Turkish rule, Skopie and Salonica were the two largest cities of the country. They still are, of course, but with this difference however: Salonica is now under Greek rule, while Skopie is the capital of the so-called "self-governing" People's Republic of Macedonia which is a unit of federal communist Yugoslavia. It is strategically situated on the banks of the Vardar River. I was told that its population is nearly 160,000 people. Some of the major streets are well paved but one does not have to go very far to witness dirt sidewalks and streets. Viewing it from **Kourshoumly Hann**, the city has the appearance of a picturesque panorama. One would notice the numerous new homes and public office buildings. The headquarters of the communist party of Yugoslav Macedonia is a recently built three story building only a few hundred yards below. A few blocks to the right of this building one would encounter the whole sector of dilapidated homes and artisan's work-shops, narrow and unsanitary streets.

At the Skopie Station

The railroad station of Skopie is rather good comparing it with Balkan standards. As one emerges from the main entrance to the street, he would naturally look for some conveyance to get to a hotel. Before I had a chance to glance over for a taxi cab, my wife and I were surrounded by a dozen **hamali** (carriers) begging to carry our luggage. But that was not my idea to search for hotel accommodation in a strange city.

Across the street there were four horse-drawn carriages, which reminded me of Turkish days. To my left, near the station, there were several taxi cabs of various descriptions. Neither the cabs nor the carriages were inviting. After some hesitation and discussion with my wife, I picked up our luggage, crossed the street, and at a distance from the station, I asked a gentleman to point us out the location of Hotel "Makedonia."

At The Hotel

The hotel was only two blocks away. We decided to walk, and when we arrived there we discovered that no rooms were available. The manager of the hotel informed us that currently an exposition (saem, as he called it) was taking place in Skopie and that the hotels were all booked. Of course, there are only a few small hotels in Skopie. The manager of Hotel "Makedonia" was kind enough to telephone to

several other places for room accommodations. The answers were negative. Then he suggested we go to the students' dormitory (*ston-denskia dom*) which we, of course, gladly accepted. The trip from Belgrade to Skopie was a hectic one. My wife and I were both tired and any sort of room accommodation was good enough.

At the Students' Dormitory

The students' dormitory is a recently built two-story building. Since there were no summer sessions at the University of Skopie, the facilities of the dormitory were used to accommodate travelers who were unable to procure hotel accommodations in Skopie. The management of the dormitory, that is, the receiving and assigning of rooms to arriving guests, was handled by a group of young school teachers who were holding a seminar during August. I approached the "clerk" who was seated behind an ordinary classroom desk, and told him in Bulgarian, of course, that we were sent there by the manager of the hotel "Makedonia" to procure a room for the night. When they heard me speaking Bulgarian to them six of these young teachers approached me and began to ask me who I was, where I came from, and how long I was going to stay in Skopie.

Conversation With Teachers

We were assigned to a room and half an hour later I returned to the "lobby" to converse with my new acquaintances. They stood around me long after midnight. After I told them that I am also a teacher the subject matter of our conversation centered around class work, subject matter taught, pedagogy, school facilities, and finally we came to the subject of the new "Macedonian language." I spoke to them in Bulgarian which they well understood. And why shouldn't they? The fact that their vocabulary contained a mixture of Serbisms and words of a local dialect did not necessarily mean they could not speak Bulgarian. Answering some of their questions, I told them that I was born in Aegean Macedonia and that forty-five years ago I went to the United States where I completed my secondary and university education.

"But how do you remember the Macedonian language. You are speaking it very well," asked one of them who is currently assigned to teach the new "Macedonian language" in a school in Titov Veles.

"Young man," I said, "the language with which I am now conversing is not "Macedonian language." It is Bulgarian. It is the language of your father and mother as it was the language of my father and mother. I am of Macedonian descent as you are. I learned to speak Bulgarian in the village where I was born and in the city where we moved to live—Lerin, which is now, as you know, under

Greek rule. I left Macedonia in 1912 while the country was under Turkish rule. In what is now Greek or Aegean Macedonia and also Yugoslav or Vardarska Macedonia, there were hundreds of Bulgarian primary and secondary schools, churches and monasteries. Where are they now," I asked.

"Here in Skopie prior to 1912," I continued, "there were several primary schools and the well-known St. Kyril and Methody Gymnazia. What happened to them? Huh? In addition, there was also a Bulgarian pedagogical school in Skopie whose director was the noted Bulgarian Macedonian revolutionist Christo Matoff from Struga. What became of this school?" I asked again.

Aware of Facts

My listeners began to show signs of bewilderment. No one was in a position to answer my inquiries. On the way to my room at the end of our interesting discussion, one of these young teachers approached me and said in a low voice that his father had told him about Bulgarian schools in Bitolya and also about those in other cities and towns throughout Macedonia prior to 1912. "Yes," I said. "Your father has told you historic facts. My brother who now lives in Sofia, Bulgaria, attended the Bulgarian Gymnazia of Bitola. But can you tell me," I asked, "What became of the Bulgarian Gymnazia of Bitola?" At this time, the young man's reluctance of indulging in further discussion of such matters was obvious.

Places to Visit

Our scheduled program for the following day was to visit some points of interest in Skopie. We wanted to visit St. Spass (Our Savior) church, where Delcheff's bones are now resting; the historic fortress prison Kourshoumli-Hann; the spot near the Vardar bridge where Mara Bouneva in 1928 assassinated Prelich, the Serbian tyrant of the Macedonian people and then took her own life; bookstores, schools, and the headquarters of the communist newspaper, "Nova Macedonia!"

Walking in Skopie

The transportation facilities in Skopie are limited. The few double decker busses which they have serve only a certain section of the city. As for taxicab or horse-drawn carriage service, well, that is out of the question. Because of this situation I asked one of my new acquaintances at the students dormitory to accompany us as guide. He graciously agreed. The next morning instead of one, two of these young men came along. And from eight o'clock in the morning until eleven in the evening we walked together to the places which we

wanted to see.

Visiting Bookstores

We stopped at several stores trying to purchase a copy of the history of the People's Republic of Yugoslav Macedonia as written since 1944. At the first two book stores, no copies were available. We were told to try at **Gotse Delcheff** printing and book shop. Across the street of Delcheff's book store, there is an elementary school. Several workmen were doing some repair work on the building. I asked my companions if it would be possible to visit the school. It was agreeable with them and so we went there. As we entered the school, to the right was the school library which happened to be open. On the library tables and on the shelves around the room there were many magazines. There were no books visible on the shelves of the library except a few volumes of which some were in French and some in English enclosed in two small bookcases. The presumption is, of course, that the children of this school had no appropriate books to read but plenty of communist propaganda sheets!

Visiting the "Saem"

Currently there was an industrial exposition in Skopie called by the new "Macedonian language" **Saem**. The products of agriculture and industry of Macedonia were well displayed in a good-sized-three-story building. Here we spent several hours and visited every display booth. There was some beautiful household furniture with price tags from \$650 to \$800 per set. There were on display three washing machines, products of the Koumanovo factory with price tags on them from \$140 to \$175 each. Who can afford to buy these products of Macedonia's industry where the teacher's salary is 11,500 dinars per month (about \$29.00) and that of a waiter 9,000 dinars (\$22.00) per month?

"We are making great progress," said one of our companions "In Bitola," he said, "The government built a tannery factory and also a frigidaire factory."

"I am glad to hear that," I said. "Let us see some of the frigidaires which are on display here," I said.

"I don't think they have them here," my companion replied.

"Why not," I asked.

"The frigidaire factory in Bitola was only recently completed. I don't think they are in production yet," he answered. And, of course, there was not a single frigidaire to be seen at the exposition.

"Largest Factory in Europe"

As we were looking around in the textile displays my wife noticed embroidery threads of different colors. She wanted to buy some of this thread just to compare quality. Since the exhibits were not for sale, one of our companions said: "On our way to St. Spass Church we will stop at the department store on Marshal Tito Boulevard and buy the thread there." And so we proceeded. But the thread department which was on the second floor of the store was closed for that afternoon. It was Wednesday and all government stores close on Wednesday afternoon.

"In Shtip," one of our companions said, "we have built the largest textile factory in Europe."

"That is fine," I said. "How many people do they employ in the Shtip textile factory," I asked.

"Oh, about several hundred people," he answered.

"Since there is such a large textile factory in Shtip," I said, "it must be producing plenty of materials. But why are so many ill-clad children and young people in Skopie? Look," I said, "look at that woman across the street with her four ill-clad children."

"She is a gypsy," he explained, "and you know the gypsies are always that way."

"But look," I said, "except for her children, that gypsy woman is better dressed than any one of the three young ladies standing by that tree there. And again," I said, "that group of Albanians which we saw a while ago in front of the "Putnik" office they were really destitutes. Their trousers were so patched up that the original fabric has lost its identity. Even their burlap knapsacks were patched. They were so ill-clad, barefoot, and unshaven. That is really a pitiful spectacle of poverty to be seen on the streets of Skopie," I said.

"Oh, yes," my companion answered, "there are many Albanians leaving Yugoslavia and are settling in Turkey."

A Skopie Section of Antiquity

The other places of interest which we wanted to see in Skopie were Kourshoumli-Hann, Kalet, and St. Spass, (our Saviour) church. The neighborhood where these institutions are located is as old as ancient Rome. The dirt sidewalks and streets paved with irregular slabs and cobble stones is characteristic of its antiquity. Skopie for the most part is good but certain sections of the city still retain an oriental appearance.

Delcheff's Tomb

Walking the distance from the restaurant of hotel "Makedonia"

to St. Spass church is long enough to make any one fatigued. When we arrived in the church courtyard, my wife and I, and our two companions sat on a bench to rest awhile. In front of us is Delcheff's tomb with an inscription on it: "Gotse Delchev, 1872-1903." A group of visitors emerged from the church and soon left. An old man and a middle aged one who accompanied the group remained in the courtyard. Our companion and I were discussing phases of the new "Macedonian language." The middle aged gentleman approached us and asked me where I came from. I informed him that I was born in a village in Aegean Macedonia. Then he asked me what was my business and I told him that I am a teacher.

"You speak the Macedonian language very good," he said.

"Yes, but the language with which I now converse with you is not "Macedonian language." It is the Bulgarian language which I have learned many years ago," I said.

"You are a teacher and naturally you have studied it," he replied.

"Yes, I am a teacher, but I teach school in America," I said." And there, as you probably know, the language of the people and schools is the English language. For the past forty-five years I have lived in the United States and there the Bulgarian language is not required or taught in the schools. The language with which you and I are now communicating is Bulgarian which I learned from my father and mother, and the Bulgarian school which I attended in my native village of Turie, now under Greek rule. You understand everything I am saying, don't you?" I asked.

"Yes, I do," he answered.

"Well, I understand you, too," I replied. "But some of the words in your vocabulary," I continued, "are Serbian and no doubt are of recent substitution to the vocabulary of the Bulgarian language which is spoken by the Macedonian Slavs including, of course, those of Skopie."

"Sir, what is your occupation?" I asked.

"I am Chinovnik" (an official), he answered.

The Box In Which Delcheff's Bones were Shipped

At this time I suggested to our companions that we go into the church. We were now accompanied also by an old man who acted in the capacity of a guide and lecturer. In this respect, he was good. With an electric light in his hand (the interior of the church is quite dark) he covered every part of the iconostases and explaining to us in detail the theme of each carving. There to the left of us was the wooden box in which Delcheff's bones were transported from the resting place in Sofia, Bulgaria, to that in the courtyard of St. Spass church in Skopie, the capital of Yugoslay Macedonia. It was the most

disgraceful act on the part of Bulgaria's communist regime. In what respect did Delcheff serve the cause of Serbia's nationalism? The box which contained the bones is a square shaped with pyramid-like top. On one side of the box was Delcheff's carved portrait, on the other side was carved Macedonia's revolutionary flag with the initials of V.M.R.O. (I.M.R.O.), on the third side was carved the insignia of the "republic" of Macedonia, and on the fourth side was the insignia of federal Yugoslavia.

History of St. Spass Church

St. Spass church, which one would notice by its steeple, is located near the right side of Kourshoumli-Hann (an ancient fortress castle) and on the left bank of Vardar River. It was built in the 18th century, after the big fire of 1689, during which the bigger part of Skopie, together with the former medieval church, was burned down.

The outward appearance of the church St. Spass is quite simple. Several stone steps take you down to it. The interior of the church consists of three naves. The middle nave is vaulted in the form of an arch, while the two side naves are flat and covered with boards. In the western part of the church a gallery for the women has been erected. The church got the aspect it has at the present time, during the 19th century. The iconostases and the icons were finished in 1824, and in 1867 a part of the throne icons were painted.

Of the preserved iconostases of the Macedono-Bulgarian churches, that of St. Spass of Skopie, with its ornaments, style, composition, themes drawn from social life and figures from the fauna and flora of the country, is particularly remarkable.

At the end of our visit to the church, I asked the guide-lecturer if there is any literature pertaining to the history of St. Spass Church. Before he answered my inquiry, the other fellow interjected and said: "Yes, there were some Bulgarian brochures but none are available now."

Discussion About the New Macedonian Nation

Emerging from the church and to the right, I noticed Gotse Delcheff's portrait hanging on the church courtyard wall. Before we left the premises, the question of the new "Macedonian nation" came up. Addressing myself to our new companion, the official, I said: "For centuries before Delcheff was born, during his period and until 1944 no one has ever heard of such nonsense as a "Macedonian language" or a "Macedonian nation." The Macedonian liberation movement which was led by Delcheff, Grueff, Tosheff, Todor Alexandroff and now by Ivan Mihailoff has been working for the freedom of Mace-

donia. And the language which they used in their agitation and organizational work among the peasants and city folks of Macedonia was Bulgarian. Participating in the Macedonian liberation movement as district leaders," I continued, "there were also Macedonian Rumanians such as Mitre Vlaho and Pito Goule. They, too, had to use the Bulgarian language. Why? Because the bulk of the Macedonian population among which they worked was Bulgarian. Anyone who is familiar with the Macedonian question would tell you that Macedonia was cut off, in 1878, from the then liberated Bulgaria and put under the rule of the Turkish Sultan. Delcheff's aim was to free Macedonia and create a self-governing country," I said.

"You are telling me now that you are 'Macedonian' but not Bulgarian. Of course you are Macedonian," I said. "I, myself, am from Macedonian extraction. When someone wants to know my racial belonging, I would say I am Macedonian Bulgarian. I am saying this," I said, "just to indicate from what ethnic group of Macedonia's population I have originated."

"Sir," I said, "look at that minaret to the left and beyond St. Spass Church. Is not that a Turkish or Mohammedan church?"

"Yes, It is an old Turkish *djamia*," he answered.

"How long has that *djamia* been here?" I asked.

"Oh," he said, "there are a number of them built when the Turks ruled Macedonia."

"Then there are Turks living in Macedonia. Aren't they?" I asked.

"Yes," he answered.

"We saw a wooden bridge over the Vardar River," I said "and my two companions told me that it was *evreiskiot most* (the Jewish bridge). The reason for its name they explained to me was the fact that the neighborhood there was Jewish. The presumption then is, of course, that in Skopie, like in many other Macedonian cities, there lived Jewish people. Then again," I continued, "we saw a group of Albanians in front of 'Putnik' office, which also indicated that there are Albanians living in Macedonia. Since these people were born here and live in Macedonia, they also call themselves Macedonians. Do they not?" I asked.

"Yes," our acquaintance answered.

"As you very well know," I said, "there are Greeks living in Aegan Macedonia. The language of the Macedonian Turks, Albanians, Jews, and Greeks is different from that of the Slav population of Macedonia. When one would ask a Macedonian Greek what he is he would naturally tell you that he is Greek from Macedonia. He will not simply say I am Macedonian. He would qualify his ethnic belonging. So would a Macedonian Turk, Albanian, Rumanian, and Jew

answer. That is logical. For they all are Macedonians but of different linguistic and ethnic groups. "Sir, you are telling me that you are Macedonian. Granting that you are. But to what ethnic group of the Macedonian population do you belong?" "I know," I said, "You are not a Turk, a Greek, an Albanian, nor a Jew. That is quite obvious because we both speak the same language. What are you then?" I asked. The gentleman shrugged his shoulders, I bade him goodbye and we left St. Spass Church courtyard.

Macedonia's Prison Fortress

Kourshoumli-Hann still retains its prison characteristics. The massive gates, the thick and high walls, the watch towers are typical of an oriental Turkish fortress. Under the former Turkish regime in Macedonia, thousands of Bulgarian liberation workers were, at one time or another, imprisoned in this fortress. Looking at it, my mind shifted to IMRO's (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) philosopher and tactician, the noted director of the Bulgarian pedagogical school of Skopie—Christo Matoff. I was wondering what particular prison cell he was occupying here. And then again my mind shifted to IMRO's recent idol, Todor Alexandroff, and figuring how he managed to escape in 1904 from this gruesome prison castle. Then, too, I began to think how many Macedonian Bulgarians were thrown in this prison by King Alexander Karageorgievich of Serbia just because they professed their Bulgarianism. And what part of this prison is currently used by the Serbo-communist of Skopie to imprison those who dare to challenge their Serbian assimilative policy, I do not know. Under the circumstances I was in no position to ask for this sort of information.

Our Last Dinner in Skopie

The time to leave Skopie was approaching. We invited our school-teacher companions for a farewell dinner. Since we had our breakfast and lunch together at hotel "Makedonia" restaurant, we decided to go elsewhere for our dinner. One of them suggested a new restaurant which is on the roof of a recently built four-story building a block or so near the railroad station. It was a very good up-to-date restaurant. My wife and I ordered our food but our companions were more or less reluctant to do so. They were very courteous and obliging young men but timid. I know their names but for obvious reasons I refrain to mention them here. "Young men," I said, "don't be bashful. Order anything you want. You were kind and gracious enough to be with us all day which, of course, we greatly appreciate it. You are our guests now and don't

hesitate to order anything you desire." One of them said, "Mr. Anastasoff, you have spent too much money on us today (vie mnogo se troshite' za nass). We don't want to impose on you," he concluded. "Well," I said, "you just don't worry about us. Think nothing of it. You just order your food and drinks. We are happy to spend American money in Skopie." And at the end my wife had to order the food for them. Obviously, they have never been used to eating in a restaurant since they did not know how to order food from the menu.

Suspicious of American Dollars

The food was excellent and quite reasonable. For four of us, the bill was 1280 dinars or a little over three dollars. When the waiter presented me with the bill, instead of dinars I gave him four dollars and told him to keep the change. He looked at me suspiciously and then looked at the dollars and said, "Mister I cannot take American dollars."

"Why?" I said.

"If I take them," he said, "I might be accused of speculation."

"Oh, don't worry," I said. "We are shortly leaving for Belgrade. This is good American money and you can use them to your advantage." He gladly concurred and we left.

Whether or not the waiter's remarks were castigating the Skopie communist regime, I do not know. One thing I did notice, however; some of the people in Yugoslav Macedonia with whom I had the pleasure to talk, were full of anti-communist sarcasm.

At the "Tanets" Hall

The train was scheduled to leave the Skopie station at 10:50 P. M. To assure ourselves of seats, we bought first class with reserved seat tickets at the "Putnik" office. On the way to the station, our companions led us through some short-cut streets and about two blocks from the hotel "Makedonia" we heard music and singing. I suggested that we go there and see what was going on. We all agreed, crossed the courtyard and entered a small hall.

Here was a large group of young men and women strenuously engaged in singing and dancing. They were rehearsing for a forthcoming appearance. An orchestra playing folklore music was accompanying the girls who were singing. The music director seemed to be a very capable person. In the other part of the hall the boys were rehearsing intricate steps of strenuous dances. They were made to repeat over and over again their songs and dances until the instructors were satisfied. This was the Macedonian folk ballet "Tanets" dancing group.

One of the teachers who accompanied us called the directors of the "Tanets" and introduced us to him. He was told that we were from America visiting in Skopie. He was happy to meet us and he informed me that he has spent some time in San Francisco, California, for "specialization" as he told me. For our benefit, he ordered the rehearsing group to perform "some Bulgarian" dances. The boys put every ounce of skill and energy in performing the various folklore dances. It seemed as though they were gracefully flying in space.

Unfortunately, our time was getting short and we were unable to stay any longer to enjoy the virility of these dances and the radiance of their music.

The Skopie Station Doorman

We arrived at the station about half an hour before the train was to leave. There are two entrance doors to the tracks—one at the east end and the other at the west end of the station. In front of each door there was a multitude of people waiting for the doors to open. The train for Belgrade was already there. Since we had our tickets and also reserved seats, one of the accompanying teachers suggested that we go and board the train earlier. We agreed. But there was an unforeseen obstacle which we were unable to overcome. That was *vratar* (the door man). A middle-aged man, ten per cent uniformed, a red band on his left arm with an inscription on it which read "vratar," was the law at the station. He was the supreme authority. He kept the door locked and no one was permitted admission to the waiting train unless one was an army officer, a militoner, or one who communicated his identity by mouth to ear. The rest of the passengers were held back until the time when the doorman decided to open it.

One of our teacher companions approached this official and said to him: "This man and his wife are visiting guests from America. They have their tickets and seat reservations. Will it be all right if we help them with the luggage and take them to their compartment?" With an unfriendly facial expression the doorman said no. We stood there and waited for about ten minutes.

But before we were confronted with the *vratar*, a man with a family of five somehow managed to escape the eagle eye of the doorman and boarded the train. Leaving his family in the train, he came to the station to purchase something. When this poor fellow came to the door and asked the *vratar* to open the door and join his family the answer was no. A heated argument ensued. The passenger pulled out of his pocket papers and documents to prove his identity. Even that did not help. Unkind, harsh and ugly

words were exchanged. Nevertheless the *vratar* imposed his authority. After the controversy calmed down, our teacher companion once again approached the *vratar* to plead for our cause; but in vain! The answer was again negative. Together with the multitude we stood at the east end door for another ten minutes.

The VRATAR at Lunch

Indifferent to the clamor of the waiting passengers and to further assert his inviolable authority, the doorman sat behind a desk near the door, opened a bowl containing a mixture of crushed hot peppers and tomatoes, took a chunk of bread and proceeded to eat his lunch. And after satisfying his appetite, he was then ready to do his official duty. Fifteen minutes before the train was scheduled to leave, the *vratar*, no doubt an important figure of the communist bureaucratic hierarchy, pulled a key from his pocket and opened the door. And that was a scene one should have seen!

The Law of the Jungle

To be able to obtain a seat on a Yugoslav train, it is imperative that one should be in good physical condition. An old person, an individual with bad feet or weak knees, one who is incapacitated in one form or another would have a very slim chance to board the train or compete for a seat. Here the law of the jungle seems to prevail. Only the fittest can survive the rivalry for seating space in the train.

Once the door which leads to the train tracks was open, the rush was on. People began to throw in through the open windows of the train their bags and luggage. Shouting, pushing, blocking the entrances to the cars, running from one car to the other, some getting in, others coming out, and no one was there to check on passengers' tickets and give the necessary direction. We, too, were looking for the car in which our reserved seats were supposed to be. One of our companions managed to locate the conductor and showed him our reservation tickets. Only a few minutes before the train started to move we were able to locate our seat compartment. We now bade goodbye to the two young teachers who were kind and gracious to accompany us to various parts of Skopje.

Passengers' Discontentment

There were two young men, who soon had to vacate our compartment which they occupied. The younger of the two addressing his companion bitterly complaining about the lack of train accommodations. "They are telling us that there are railroads, electric trains, omnibuses, and planes for transportation in Yugoslavia. But to get a seat on the train," he said, "one must have a knife or a revolver."

Interjecting myself at this point I said to him: "Young man, you are right. I can't help but agree with you." And before I had the chance to say anything further, he looked at me and reservedly said to himself: "I better not talk like this." "Oh," I said, "don't be afraid. I am not from Yugoslavia. Your complaint is legitimate. Anyone can see how bad and inadequate is the train service."

"Who are you?" he asked.

"I am an American," I said, "but born in Greek or Aegean Macedonia. For the past forty-five years I have been living in the United States. My wife and I came here to visit Yugoslav Macedonia."

Introducing himself, he told me that he was a chemist and that his companion was an architect. They were both from Skopie and going to Belgrade. Then I told them that I am a teacher and we are on the way returning to the United States.

"In another car of this train," said the chemist, "is a friend of mine who is professor of the University of Skopie. Would you like to meet him?"

"Yes," I said.

Few minutes later they brought the professor to our compartment. He was a well-built, middle-aged person. I extended my right hand and said: "Professor, it is a pleasure to meet you. My name is Christo Anastasoff. I am also a teacher but in the secondary level."

"I am Professor Vasil Chipov and am delighted to meet a colleague from America, especially one who is of Macedonian origin."

"Professor, what is your field of specialty?" I asked.

"I am Professor of Philology at the Skopie University," he answered.

"What are you teaching?" he asked me.

"I am teaching history," I answered.

The Professor's Confusion

After exchanging few pleasantries the Professor said to me: "In America there is one Christo Athanasoff who has been attacking Yugoslavia (evidently, at our introduction my name did not register with the Professor). Two years ago he was in this country as an official guest. He was honored, feasted, and taken by automobile to various cities and places of Yugoslavia. He appeared to be a very good friend of ours and promised to write his impression of this country. But instead, on his return to the United States, he began to write against Yugoslavia."

"Professor," I said, "the person which you have in mind is not 'Christo Athanasoff' but, perhaps, Stoyan Christov."

"Yes, yes (da, da)," replied Professor Chipov. "Do you know him?" he asked.

"No," I said, "but I have heard of him. I also heard of him visiting Yugoslavia several times. But I can assure you, Professor, that that gentleman has never written anything to offend Yugoslavia. As far as I know, he is still a friend of Yugoslavia even though he originates from Aegean Macedonia."

The arrival of the rightful assignee of the other two seats in our compartment made it necessary for Professor Vasil Chipov and I to separate.

A Country of Fear and Suspicion

The people of Yugoslavia, and more particularly those of Yugoslav Macedonia, are inflicted by constant fear and suspicion. No one seems to be in a position to speak freely or express himself in public. If one wishes to say something which is unorthodox to communism, he has to look to the right and to the left to be sure that there is no one there before he expresses himself.

Shadowed by Police

Secret service men, neatly uniformed **militiioners** with side arms, officials of all types are spotted everywhere. They, too, are afraid of one another and at the same time terrorize the masses of the people.

Getting off the airport bus at Belgrade, we were greeted by two well-dressed young men who approached us and asked: "Are you coming from America?" "Yes," I replied. My wife quickly interjected and said to one of them: "Why do you ask?" "Well," he said, "my companion here thought you were Italians." Arriving at hotel Excelsior, and before we had a chance to go to our assigned room, two **militiioners** walked in and checked with the clerk. In Skopie the police surveillance appears to be more systematic. When we arrived at Hotel "Makedonia," we were told that there were no rooms available but the director of the hotel assured us that he was going to get us one at the Student's Dormitory.

Meanwhile, we were sitting near a table in front of the hotel office. Two **militiioners** walked in the lobby, approached the office counter and said to the hotel director: "Did they arrive here?" "Yes," answered the director. "They are here but we have no room for them. I just now called at the Students Dormitory (Studentskia Dom) and I will send them there." The two **militiioners** left. About eight-thirty in the evening we arrived at the Students Dormitory and fifteen minutes later two other **militiioners** walked in, saw me talking to several young teachers, and they left. Did my presence there constitute a menace to People's Republic of Macedonia?

"The Iron Curtain"

Freedom is the same in every language. The aspiration of humanity for justice, truth, and mercy are the same in every language. A new term and its old implications stand across our path. This term is the "Iron Curtain"—a result of the world's ideological differences.

Now again the world reads of countries in the shadow of the "Iron Curtain"—Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Rumania. Ideologically and to high degree politically, in these groups of states we find Yugoslavia the most grotesque and the most disliked by its constituent races and nationalities. A hybrid of recent creation, Titoslavia now aspires to achieve what the ultra imperialists of the former Serbian dynasty failed to accomplish.

Macedonia

In the heart of the Balkan Peninsula lies the region known from ancient times as Macedonia. It is the same country that St. Paul saw in his vision:

"There stood a man of Macedonia and prayed Him saying, "Come over into Macedonia and help us!"

Yet it is the same country which now stretches hands across the seas and pleads for redeeming help.

Division of Macedonia

The tragic history of the Balkan states, especially since the turn of the century, has been connected with Macedonia, often referred to as the "Powder Keg of the Balkans." This geographic and economic unit of 25,000 square miles between Shar Mountain and the Aegean Sea, inhabited by nearly 3,000,000 has been conquered and divided at Bucharest in 1913 between Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria.

Perverted Nationalism

Faced with the story of the past and present conditions in Macedonia, it is only the most callous person whose heart does not respond with mingled feelings of sympathy and an outraged sense of justice, and who would not make any contribution toward a better future of that land. There is doubtless no other part of the European continent that has been subjected to such a merciless battle of physical violence and pressure propagandas, more particularly exercised over a long period of time. Strange fate it is that the justifiable aspirations of the Macedonian people for an expression of their rights, should have been thwarted by the perverted nationalism of other peoples.

Closing of Bulgarian Schools and Churches

Upon entering into Macedonia during 1912, the Serbian authorities, in that part of Macedonia which was occupied by Serbia, closed 761 Bulgarian churches and 640 schools, while the Greek authorities in that part of Macedonia which was put under Greek rule, closed 376 Bulgarian churches and 340 Bulgarian schools. Both the Serbians and the Greeks expelled from Macedonia the Bulgarian Macedonian teachers and priests.

False Propaganda

The Serbians have assiduously written for the uniformed public that the Bulgarian Exarchate had carried on propaganda, Bulgarianized the Slavs of Macedonia, and thus established the above Bulgarian churches and schools. That means, of course, putting the cart before the horse. For long before there was a Bulgarian state and a Bulgarian Exarchate, as early as 1830, to be exact, there appeared a widespread Bulgarian movement for an independent church and education. It was, for the Bulgarians, their greatest movement since the Turkish ascendancy in the Balkans. That was the Bulgarian Renaissance which was the most enthusiastically undertaken by the Macedonian Bulgarians. Their efforts were crowned in 1870, by a **Firman** of the Turkish sultan, which created the Bulgarian Exarchate as the supreme authority of the newly recognized Bulgarian national church. Then, let us repeat, the entire Bulgarian nation was under Turkish domination, so that no one could maintain that the propaganda of the yet nonexistent Bulgarian state played any part in the matter.

Bulgarian People's Plebiscite

By its own strength and means, but its own consciousness and initiative the Bulgarian nation carried on a struggle to an ultimate triumph. There was executed then a most significant plebiscite through which the Bulgarian people, while still under Turkish rule, indicated the extent of its ethnographic frontiers. The whole of Macedonia was included in these boundaries, as well as the entire province around the Morava River with its chief city of Nish, which in 1878, was given to Serbia by Russia.

What are the Macedonian Slavs?

The Bulgarianism of the Macedonian Slavs has been recognized in a series of international conferences and agreements. In regard to the geographical distribution of the Bulgarian element in Macedonia, the following documents contain unquestionable testimony:

1. The **Firman** of February 29, 1870, establishing the Bulgarian Exarchate, whose diocese covered the greater part of Macedonia.

2. The establishment of the two autonomous "Bulgarian" **vilayets** by the Constantinople Ambassadorial Conference in 1876. The southern **vilayet**, with its capital at Sofia, embraced the greater part of Macedonia.

3. The **Treaty of San Stefano** of 1878, which included all of Macedonia in the "Big Bulgaria."

4. The Reform Area laid down by the Murzsteg program in 1904 (after the Bulgaro-Macedonian revolt of the previous year). This excluded the Greek districts in the extreme south.

5. The Protocols of the Berlin Treaty of 1878 in which Macedonia is referred to as Bulgarian.

6. The general and local insurrections in Macedonia—the Male-shevo in 1876, the Kresna in 1878, that of Ochrida in 1881, the one of Pirin in 1878, the Vinitza in 1897, the Melnik in 1902, and the Bitola, or Illinden insurrection, of 1903, in which took part more than 30,000 Bulgaro-Macedonians.

7. The Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty of March, 1912, in which the Serbians solemnly recognized that Macedonia is Bulgarian.

8. The statistics of the Bulgarian churches and schools in Macedonia, according to which the Bulgarians in 1910 possessed 1,359 schools with 79,519 pupils, and 1,201 churches and monasteries with 1,132 priests.

David Lloyd George's Testimony

Let us also consider testimonials of statesmen like David Lloyd George and Sir Winston Churchill, who have definitely pointed out the truth, that in Macedonia live Bulgarians. In his **Memories of the Peace Conference**, Vol. 11, page 899, Lloyd George writes: "By many authorities the most tragic instance of minority oppression in violation of the 1919 Treaty is held to be that of the 600,000 Macedonians now resident within the borders of Yugoslavia. Of this community an overwhelming majority are of Bulgarian stock and language, in other words, Bulgaro-Macedonians."

Winston Churchill's Testimony

During the period of the first World War, Winston Churchill interceded in behalf of Bulgaria and pleaded with Serbia to cede to Bulgaria the provinces in which the Bulgarians population predominated. In his book, **The World Crisis** (1915), pages 460-62, Churchill writes:

"The imminent peril in which Serbia stood, and the restricted

conditions under which the Allies could afford her protection, made it indispensable that she should cede, and if necessary be made to surrender, the uncontested zone in Macedonia to the Bulgarians, to whom it belonged by race, by history, by treaty, and—until it was taken from them in the second Balkan War—by conquest.

“Serbia, even when at the last gasp during the first Austrian attack upon her in 1914, had found it necessary to keep large numbers of troops in the Bulgarian districts of Macedonia to hold down the native population. Right, reason, and claim of justice, counseled the Serbians to surrender at least the uncontested zone.”

Must we resort to further authentic testimonials on the ethnic character of the Macedonian Slavs?

Tito's Centralization Policy

After Marshal Tito took over the administration of Yugoslavia, he organized the country into six federal units each with a constitution patterned after that of Soviet Russia. Some people would be inclined to think that King Alexander's policy of centralization would be reversed by the scheme of decentralization on the principle of federation, in which the local historical provinces would enjoy the right to govern themselves. Such a supposition would be quite erroneous. Tito, like the pre-war Serbian dynasty, is guided by the principle of strong centralization as it was exemplified by the Fascist and Nazi regimes.

A Fiasco

Out of the six federal units of Tito's Yugoslavia is that part of Macedonia which Serbia acquired in 1913. She is governed today by the Skopje Serbo-communists as she was during the time of King Alexander's rule. The local Macedonian Bulgarians were forbidden then, as they are now, to use their centuries-old mother tongue—the Bulgarian. Before 1919 Belgrade called the Macedonian Bulgarians “pure Serbs.” Ignoring the geographic historical concept of Macedonia, the Belgrade regime renamed the country as “southern Serbia.” Using every possible means of assimilation between 1919 and 1939, Belgrade failed to Serbianize the Macedonian Bulgarians.

“Ich” to That of “Ski”

Familiar with this fact and working to attain the same objective, Tito and his chief of police, Rankovich, began to apply a different but far more crafty method. They announced to the world that they would recognize the name of Macedonia, and permit the local population to use a “Macedonian” language. While before the war King Alexander's regime was changing the names of local Bulgarians by adding to their

last name the suffix "ich," instead of "off," Tito's Skopie emissaries now changed the suffix "ich," to that of "ski," which is supposed to be a Macedonian ending.

The Macedonian Slavs

For centuries it has been known that in Macedonia the local Slavic population speaks the Bulgarian language. This fact has been scientifically proved by leading Slavic philologists such as Kondakoff, the Czech historian Shafarick, Vatroslav Yagitch, Professor Florinski, Professor N. S. Derjavin, and Professor Paul N. Milyukoff. But in Macedonia live also the following ethnic groups which speak their own language: Albanians, Turks, Greeks, Arumanians (Vlachs), and Jews. The Serbians called the Macedonian Bulgarians "Bougari," the Greeks are calling them "Voulgaros," while the Turks called them "Boulgarimillet." These facts are known to everyone who had visited Macedonia.

No "Swiss" Language

In Switzerland, as it is well known, there also live different nationalities: French, German, and Italian. Each one of these ethnic groups respects the spoken language of the other. Until now to no one in Switzerland has ever occurred to say that the French, the German, or the Italian speak a separate "Swiss" language. Such a language never did exist and it never will.

Not Bulgarians but "Macedonians"

Has it ever occurred to anyone in the United States and Canada to say that we speak a separate "American" or "Canadian" language? Such an assertion would be absurd and laughable. Similarly, in Macedonia there is no "Macedonian" language. The language which the Macedonian Slavs speak is Bulgarian, phonetically and in its grammatical construction. By creating a new "Macedonian" language Tito, Rankovich, and company are attempting, by an indirect method, to Serbianize the Macedonian Bulgarians. They are hoping to install in the minds of the Macedonian Slavs the idea that they are not Bulgarians but simply "Macedonians," and that they should renounce their Bulgarian past, their traditions, and their culture. Should they succeed in this effort, the process of assimilation and Serbianization would be hastened more and more.

No Bulgarian Newspapers in Skopie

While in Skopie, I was interested to find a newspaper published in communist Bulgaria. None was to be found. Not even "Rabotnichesko Delo," the official organ of the Bulgarian communist party. Why are

Tito's Serbo-communists of Skopie afraid to allow Bulgarian newspapers in Macedonia?

The New "Macedonian" Language

Newspapers and books which are being published today in Skopie, the so-called capital of the federal People's Republic of Macedonia, are written in a dialect spoken only in northwestern Macedonia. The other parts of Macedonia were neither asked nor taken into consideration when the new "Macedonian" language was organized. But even this Macedonian dialect—the basis of the new "Macedonian" language—is greatly distorted. It has been mixed more and more with Serbian words which were never before used by the local population. For example, let us refer to some of these words.

Example of Serbian Words in the "New Language"

In the new "Macedonian" language the following Serbian words are used:	The local population speaks them in Bulgarian thus:
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Ouloga	(participation)	Ouchastie
Zazebna	(separate)	Otdelna
Yavnost	(worldly)	Obshtestvenost
Stransky	(foreign)	Choujdi
Pohlepnost	(fear)	Strah
Obichno	(usually)	Obiknoveno
Podmoukla	(deceitful)	Loukava
Prosechno	(average)	Sredno
Slichno	(the same)	Ednakvo
Popaz	(breaking)	Razbivane

There are, of course, many more Serbian words like the above which are intentionally inserted into the new "Macedonian" language.

The "Grammar" of the "Macedonian" Language

Nevertheless, with the announcement of the new "Macedonian" language, it was necessary that this new language should have its own grammar. Tito's Skopie emissaries were incapable of writing such a grammar. For that purpose two Soviet philologists came to Macedonia to study the speech of the local population, according to which they were to organize the grammar for the new "Macedonian" language. After several months of work these Soviet philologists completed their project. When they compared the grammar which they compiled on the basis of the local speech of the population, they saw, to their amazement, that it was identical with the grammar of the Bulgarian language.

Ehrenburg's Testimony

The well-known Russian journalist, Illya Ehrenburg, had visited Macedonia nine years ago. In writing his observations, Ehrenburg pointed out that the language which the local population speaks is Slavic, but it is much nearer the Bulgarian than that of the Serbian language. While this passage of Ehrenburg's article was published in Bulgarian communist newspapers, it was intentionally deleted from Tito's paper, "Nova Makedonia," edited and published in Skopie, Macedonia, by Serbo-communists. The significance of this distortion, of course, is self-explanatory.

Characteristics of the Bulgarian Language

Anyone familiar with the Slavic languages can easily determine that the language of the Macedonian Slavs is Bulgarian. Among many other things, there are these most characteristic distinguishing features, by dint of which generally the Bulgarian language is distinguished from the rest of the Slavic languages namely:

1. In Macedonia all dialects use the article for the noun, characteristic of no other Slavic language except the Bulgarian.
2. There are no case forms.
3. The comparative and superlative degrees are expressed by the prefixes **PO** (more) and **NAY** (most).
4. There is no infinitive (indeterminate mood).
5. Personal pronouns are used in double form, for example:

TEBÉ TÉ

(you, thou)

MENÉ MÉ

(me, the objective case of "I")

6. The future tense of the verb is formed by the use of the little word.

SHTÉ (shall)

KÉ (will)

After all, languages are not artificially created. A given language is the result of constant growth and development, and it takes centuries for its perfection.

The new "Macedonian" language cannot be so easily imposed upon a people whose ancestors, Sts. Cyril and Methody of Salonica, had given the written Slavic language to the entire Slavic world.

Switzerland of the Balkans

Doubtless, the Macedonian people will emerge from this difficult period which they are undergoing. They will obtain their happiness only when liberty and freedom permeates in their country. The Macedonian liberation movement aims to achieve a united, free, and independent Macedonian state in which all the races and nationalities thereof would enjoy the same rights, obligations, and respect for each other's language.

A united, free and democratic Macedonian state would be an emulation of a Switzerland in the Balkans.

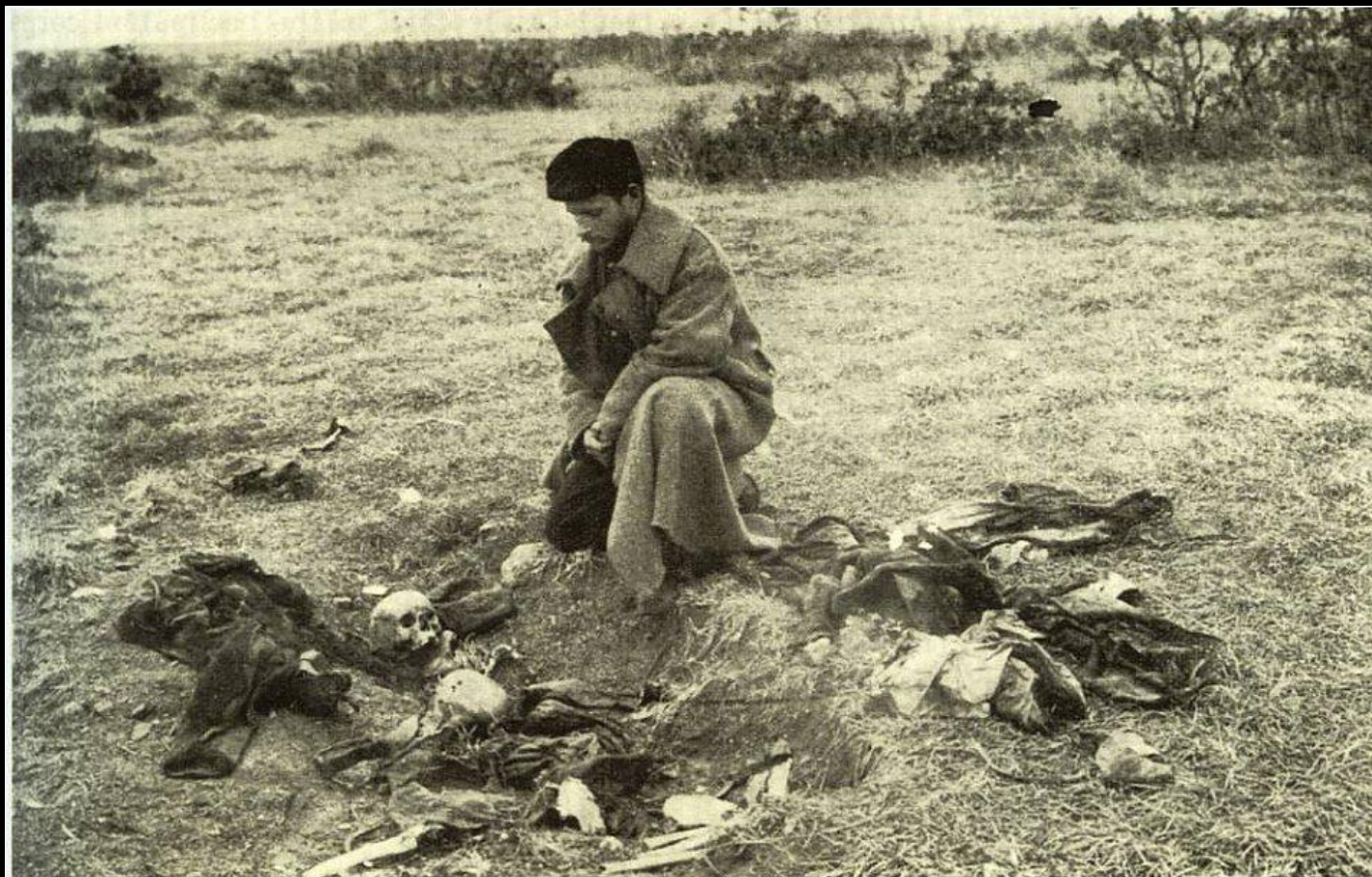


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Voivode Dimiter Madjarov before the remains of two comrades in arms killed in the battle of Ferres