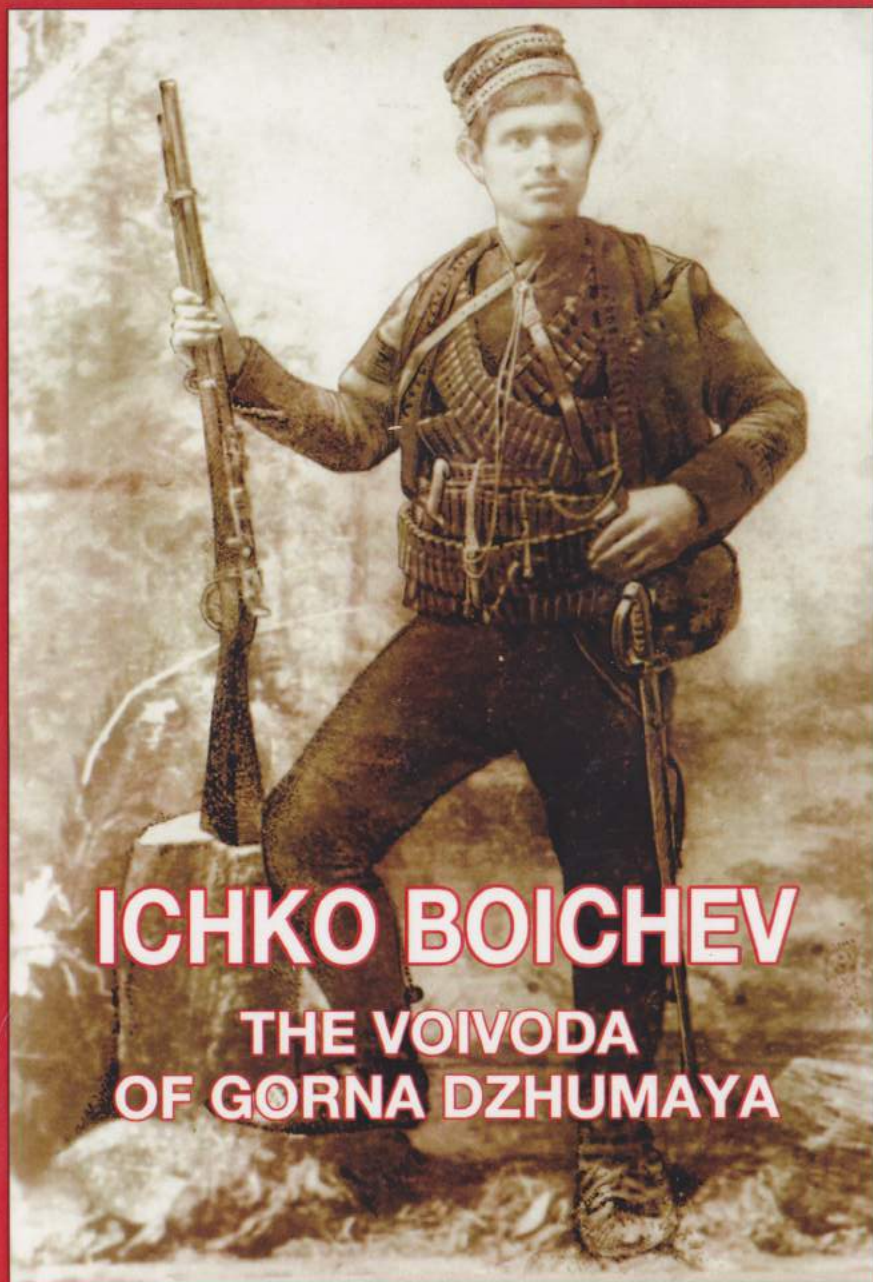


Hristo Grigorov



ICHKO BOICHEV

THE VOIVODA OF GORNA DZHUMAYA



Litse Publishing House

Hristo Grigorov

ICHKO BOICHEV
THE VOIVODA OF GORNA DZHUMAYA

a monsieur de Gabares
Favier Lapeyre
Sincerment
Hristo Grigorov
18/11/14
Sofia

Dedicated to the 100th anniversary
of the liberation of Gorna Dzhumaya
(current day Blagoevgrad)
1912 – 2012

***“I am a Macedonian Bulgarian
and will not deny my nationality
to anyone...”***

Ichko Boichev

From a declaration made in 1946
to the Blagoevgrad authorities who
wanted to force him to register his
nationality as “Macedonian”.

© Hristo Grigorov, 2014
© Dr. David Mossop, translation, 2014
© Prof. Dr. Dimitar Gotsev, 2014
© Litse Publishing House, 2014
ISBN 978-954-9428-33-5

Hristo Grigorov

**ICHKO BOICHEV
THE VOIVODA
OF GORNA DZHUMAYA**

**Life and Revolutionary activities
(1882 – 1960)**

**Research consultant
Prof. Dr. Dimitar Gotsev**



**Litse Publishing House
Sofia 2014**

To the reader,

I am neither a professional writer nor a historian. I was prompted to write this book by my exceptionally strong feelings of love and gratitude towards my grandfather and grandmother. These feelings were born out of the heroism of their lives and their devotion to the struggle for the liberation and unification of their Motherland. My motivation was further enhanced by the legacy of documents in the family archives which until now has not been published.

My father died in 1945 in tragic circumstances. My grandmother, Sanda, and my grandfather, Ichko, helped my widowed mother raise her two children and I grew up under their care. In 1946 when they refused to register as "Macedonian" they were interned to the village of Byala Cherkva, near Pleven. I went with them. I was only a young school boy in the second grade but I was made to sit alone on the back row in school. This was my punishment as the personification of the "people's enemy". No one sat next to me or in front of me. I will never forget the nights of my childhood spent with my grandmother and grandfather in Byala Cherkva. Every evening my grandmother would sing and teach me the most beautiful songs from Macedonia, while my grandfather would recount his adventures as a komita rebel, voivoda and member of the national liberation movement in Bulgaria. During these nights I was nourished with the feelings of patriotism, respect for traditions and charity. We might have had nothing but still we managed to help others.

My grandfather Ichko had spent all his life fighting

Turkish domination and at the time I could not understand why he said his best friends were Turks. Now with the benefit of experience I can understand that this was due to the profound sense of ethnic tolerance in Bulgaria. Proof of this is that when my grandfather was the Voivoda of the Gorna Dzhumaya IMARO (Internal Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary Organization), not only Bulgarians but Turks turned to him for justice.

I believe that my grandfather's ideals regarding the liberation and unification of the Motherland have now come to fruition as a consequence of Bulgaria's integration into the common family of European countries. I also believe that we owe a huge debt to the luminaries who did so much to preserve and uplift the Bulgarian spirit and national awareness.

I dedicate this book first of all to my mother, Veneta Ichkova Grigorova, who stoically endured the changing fates of our family and brought us up in a spirit of humanity and loyalty to our family and Motherland.

I make no claim that this book encompasses all the historical events during the period under discussion, or that I have described all the events of the life and revolutionary or patriotic activities of my grandfather, Ichko Boichev.

If any members of the public, public figures or descendants of his comrades have any additional documents of information, I would be very grateful if they could make them available. I will find a place for them in the third edition which I believe will very soon see the light of day.

Hristo Grigorov

The history of the affirmation, survival and liberation of the Bulgarian people from five centuries of Turkish domination is filled with stories of heroism. Particularly important in this heroic period of history are the struggles for the liberation of the Bulgarian population in the Macedonian and the Odrin region of Thrace after the Berlin congress in the summer of 1878. A number of great Bulgarian patriotic and revolutionary figures came to prominence during the struggles. One of these figures was Ichko (Hristo) Dimov Boichev.

Ichko Voivoda was the classical figure of a revolutionary fighting for the liberation of the Bulgarian population in Macedonia from five centuries of the Ottoman yoke. In the region of Gorna Dzhumaya there is no gathering of komita rebels, revolutionary meadow or water well, or indeed any other such area which is not in some way linked to the name and deeds of the legendary voivoda.

It should be noted that until now the life and revolutionary activities of Ichko Voivoda has not been described in any depth or detail in academic or historical research documents.

There are a number of historical collections and publications which contain interesting facts about this courageous, exceptionally intelligent revolutionary who was unswervingly loyal to the cause of Macedonian liberation¹. However, these publications are but fragmentary and do not focus in their entirety on the subject under discussion here.

Ichko Boichev's personal archive, preserved by his daughters Veneta and Elisaveta Boichev, is of particular interest². Ichko Voivoda's documented recollections contain particularly valuable information about his life and revolu-

tionary activities and also cast more light on his charming personality³.

Ichko Boichev was born in 1882 in Gyumendzhe, Enidzhevardar region in Aegean Macedonia. He was the only son of Lina and Dimo Boichev, a family of agricultural small holders. He was orphaned at the early age of 12. Without the warm support of a family, without parental care and affection, he had to face the cruelty and un pitying severity of life alone. As a young schoolboy and teenager the future Voivoda of Gorna Dzhumaya lived in joyless poverty.

During the second half of the XIX century, the town of Gyumendzhe was one the biggest and ethnically pure settlements in the region. At the end of the XIX century the population consisted of about 3150 Bulgarians⁴. The patriotic Bulgarian population of Gyumendzhe was actively involved in the campaign to establish a new Bulgarian school and independence for the Bulgarian church. The injustice meted out to them by the Berlin congress of 1878 whereby Macedonia and Odrin were to remain under the authority of Abdul Hamid was a cause of great pain for them.

The situation in Macedonia and in Gyumendzhe was to remain unchanged, just as it had been before the Russo-Turkish war of Liberation (1877-1878). In certain aspects it deteriorated since the Turkish authorities treated the Bulgarian population with disdain and hatred, blaming them for their unsuccessful military campaign.

The constant deterioration of the national and socio-economic situation and the complete lack of any prospects for development led to a deep discontent in Macedonia. With every successive year this discontent only grew. Ichko Boichev's childhood was thus marked by the romanticism of the Bulgarian Renaissance in which the leading idea in the life of the Macedonian Bulgarians was the idea of national liberation and the overthrow of Ottoman despotism. Ichko was nurtured with this idea at him mother's breast and remained loyal to it until the end of his life.

Gyumendzhe's Bulgarian population were relatively politically aware and loyal to the traditions of upholding the struggle for school and church independence. They occupied a deserved place in the nascent national liberation movement led by the IMARO after its creation in 1893. The young Ichko Boichev grew up in this political and historical context with his revolutionary ideas.

In 1894 he completed the two-class Bulgarian school in Gyumendzhe with excellent academic results. Guided by his desire to continue his education, the young man set his sights on the most prestigious school in Macedonia at the time – the Thessaloniki Bulgarian High School. Once again Ichko was one of the top pupils. He distinguished himself with a wide range of interests, particularly in history and geography.

At that time the Thessaloniki Bulgarian High School offered education to some of the brightest young Bulgarian boys from all corners of Macedonia.

They frequently held impassioned discussions, each describing the intolerable situation in their home towns and villages. All their stories contained the threads of an enslaved Macedonia. The natural reaction of these inspired young men was to search for a way to throw off the chains of slavery. The idea of revolution prevailed above all⁵.

The years spent at the Thessaloniki High School were to shape Ichko Boichev's political ideals for the rest of his life. His teachers included eminent Bulgarian educators and cultural figures who inspired the hearts and minds of their pupils with their own combatant spirit and erudition. While in Thessaloniki Ichko avidly read works of literature as well as accounts of the Bulgarian wars of liberation. He discovered the ideas and deeds of the great Bulgarian revolutionaries: – G. S. Rakovski, V. Levski. H. Botev and L. Karavelov. He also read the biographies of world renowned figures such as D. Mazzini, Garibaldi, Lafayette, Dombrovski and others.

In Thessaloniki Ichko Boichev took an active part in the secret sections and branches of IMARO. The role of these

sections was to train the future revolutionaries to take their part in the struggle for the liberation of Macedonia and Odrin. His involvement in these sections also acquainted Ichko Boichev with the works of Pushkin, Gogol, Tolstoy, V. Hugo and other celebrated authors who were to exert a profound influence on his revolutionary views.

The young men in the sections had a favourite song:

*Thundering Vardar,
foams and eddies,
and looks over its waters
while the wretched Mother pitifully
groans and bewails her troubles...*

Ichko Boichev gradually became profoundly persuaded of the conviction that the revolutionary struggle against Ottoman domination was the only means of achieving freedom for the Bulgarian population in Macedonia and Odrin Thrace.

On graduating from the Thessaloniki High School most of the bright young men, pure in heart, continued their education either in the Sofia Military Academy or the Plovdiv Gymnasium. However, due to constrained financial circumstances, Ichko was faced with the painful decision of terminating his studies. Nevertheless, resolutely devoted to his revolutionary activities, he committed himself to the thorny path of the Macedonian struggle and joined the brigade of Apostol Petkov, the voivoda of Enidzhevardar.

As a member of Apostol Petkov's brigade, Ichko was deeply impressed by the charismatic personality of the voivoda who was to become his ideal in the future deeds. The experienced revolutionary and the young man who had just joined their ranks were to become the closest, life-long friends. Ichko also met many other revolutionaries with whom he was also to develop life-long friendships.

In January 1903 IMARO held a congress at which it resolved to step up the activities of the partisans and cheta bri-

gades in those regions where a mass uprising had not been planned. As a result the revolutionary organisation and cheta brigades in the Enidzhevardar region began eager preparations. Voivoda Apostol's cheta brigade, where Ichko Boichev by this time had become deputy voivoda, was assigned to assist the rebels in the Bitola revolutionary district.

On the 5th August, 1903, at the height of the rebellion, Voivoda Apostol's cheta alongside the cheta of Krastio Asenov⁶, a total of about 205 men, mustered in the village of Kornishor for the ritual dedication of their battle colours. After the assassination of Voivoda Krastiu Asenov, Voivoda Apostol, aided by his deputy Ichko Boichev, led his cheta against the Turkish troops, routing them at the village of Kriva in Enidzhevardar district. On the 12th August, they threw several bombs into the Gyumendhze barracks and the cheta engaged in a fire fight against the 120 Turkish cavalry troops. The ensuing exchange of fire lasted for about two hours. The cheta withdrew unharmed while the barracks were consumed with fire caused by the bombs. The panic-stricken Turks fled in all directions.

In September the cheta were involved in four more battles in the region of Enidzhevardar. Three of the engagements were led by chetnik partisans from Voivoda Apostol's brigade supported by the cheta of Ivan Karasuliya – at the village of Ramno on the 9th September; Gandach summit in the Payak Mountains on the 12th September and Gola Chuka in Payak Mountain on the 14th. The longest and bloodiest battle lasting for ten hours took place on Gandach summit. One of the chetniks of the brigade was killed. Deeply impressed by the courage and self-denial of Ichko Boichev, Apostol extolled his praise to the entire cheta after the battle and told them that the *life of this brave revolutionary would become a beautiful legend...*⁷

For several days afterwards the Turkish authorities cordoned off the area of the battle, denying access to the local villagers in order to prevent them from seeing the large number of Turkish dead and wounded.

The Ilinden Preobrazhenie uprising was put down by the

Turks in many regions, including the Enidzhevardar district. As a result the Central Committee of the IMARO instructed that the cheta brigades be disbanded in order to preserve their weapons. Ichko Boichev and a number of his comrades-at-arms then transferred to the Kukush brigade led by Hristo Chernopeev⁸.

The reason for this transfer was that after the rebellion the Struma revolutionary district found itself faced with extraordinary difficulties. Besides the disillusionment of defeat, the consequences of the quelling of the rebellion and other attendant difficulties, the internal organisation in the Struma district now found themselves under attack from armed Greek and Serbian groups⁹.

In the summer of 1904, Hristo Chernopeev's Kukush cheta, of which Ichko Boichev was now a member, cleared the region of Greek "andarta" brigades and Turkish bands. The cheta quickly became a true bastion of support for the long-suffering Bulgarian population in this area. Ichko and his comrades-in-arms in the Kukush cheta routed the marauding bands of Mehmed bei, Iusein effendi and Captain Esref, which had frequently been called upon by the Turkish authorities to fight their revolutionary organisation¹.

The most celebrated joint military action undertaken by Hristo Chernopeev, Ichko Boichev and Andon Kioseto's cheta was in June 1904 at the river near the village of Popchevo, Struma district. The chetniks waged a savage five-hour long battle losing eight of their number and killing 20 Turks.

Another celebrated armed engagement involving Ichko Boichev was the bombing of a railway bridge at the village of Amatovo in Kukush district, in September, 1904. The Greek andarta bands which had been causing havoc amongst the Bulgarian population were driven back and undermined by the bomb attack.

The unsuccessful rebellion, however, revealed the defi-

¹ Information from Andon Kioseto noted by Boyan Mirchev, S., 1933, pages 71-72

ciencies not only of individual leaders of the IMARO, but of the entire movement as a whole. Certain members of the revolutionary movement called for radical changes within the internal organisation, while others supported maintaining the status quo. For several months between 1904 and 1905, they held discussions about the serious state of affairs. Two main factions began to emerge at their meetings – in the history of the national liberation movement they were to become known as the left and the right. Ichko Boichev, like the vast majority of the active members of the organisation, found the growing partisanship of the liberation movement of the Bulgarians in Macedonia and Thrace to be unacceptable. He managed from this position to win the respect of all the active members, notwithstanding which faction they supported.

In the summer of 1905, the revolutionary district in Seres held its first congress since the rebellion. Most of the other districts had already held their congresses to discuss their future policy and preparations for the general congress of the entire organisation¹⁰.

The second (regular) congress of the Seres Revolutionary district began on the 29th July, 1905 at Belemeto. The congress was chaired by Todor Popantov while Iliya Balatov held the post of secretary. Elected delegates were: Lazar Tomov, Vladimir Blagoev, Yane Sandanski, Taskata Serskiya, Stoyu Hadzhiev, Vasil Hadzhipetrov, Dimitar Arnaudov, Petar Milev, Georgi Skrizhovski, L. Kolchagov, M. Kolchagov, Ichko Boichev, Bogatinov, Pavlov and others. The delegates adopted a directive requiring the introduction of democratic centralism within the leadership of the organisation. The congress elected the following voivoda: Yane Sandanski for the region of Melnik, T. Vranski for the Seres region, G. Skrizhovski for the Razlog region. P. Milev for the Nevrokop region, Iliya Karchovaliyata and Stoyu Hadzhiev for the Demirhisar region and Ichko Boichev for the Gorna Dzhumaya region¹¹.

In the middle of August 1905, Ichko Boichev was appointed to the revolutionary post of Gorna Dzhumaya voivo-

da. Thus at the age of 23 three he became the voivoda of an extremely important region within the organisation. He remained in this post until the uprising of the Young Turks in 1908, when the IMARO legalised its armed cheta brigades.

Documents indicate that Ichko Voivoda managed very quickly to impose his authority as a leader of the organisation amongst the local population in the Gorna Dzhumaya region. The Bulgarian population saw him as their leader, patron and defender against the aggression of the Turkish army and authorities. With his unflinching revolutionary activities and persuasive power of speech, Ichko Voivoda made an enormous contribution to the elevation of the revolutionary spirit in Gorna Dzhumaya, preparing the population for their liberation from Turkish domination.

As the voivoda of the Gorna Dzhumaya district, Ichko Boichev's priority task was to broaden the social basis for the revolutionary movement by introducing new forms and methods of propaganda. With his approachable disposition Ichko Voivoda managed easily to win over many new supporters for his cause. Despite often finding himself in difficult situations he possessed the skills to resolve any problem and preserve the integrity of the organisation against compromise and intrigue. In a short space of time his name became legend throughout the Gorna Dzhumaya region. Ichko Voivoda impressed others with his modest and comradely attitude to others. The young voivoda was no different to his comrades-in-arms and made no attempt to place himself above the ordinary chetniks¹².

As the regional voivoda Ichko Boichev led a series of battles against the Turkish army and the Basibozuk. Ichko recounted his first military action against the Turks at Gorna Dzhumaya in his memoirs: "As voivoda, my first encounter with the Turkish army was in the village of Marolevo. Yane had brought his cheta to join me and we settled down for the night in the village of Marolevo. I sent a villager into town to buy sugar and tea for the whole brigade. We drank tea, talked until late at night and went to bed. At midnight my landlord

woke me and told me that the village was surrounded by the Turkish army. I immediately woke all the chetniks – about 25 – 30 men. Together with about 15-20 militiamen from the village we found a good position.

The battle began. We were under attack from the entire Turkish division from the town. During an exchange of fire a Turkish bullet found the barrel of my rifle and split it in two. I threw it aside and picked up another. The darkness and the position of the village contributed to our success in breaking the siege. Under our covering fire Yane and his people were able to slip out of the besieged village, after which we followed. We escaped unharmed. After an investigation I discovered that we had been betrayed by a penny-pinching grocer. When he had seen a poor villager from Marolevo buying sugar and tea in unusually large quantities, he immediately realised something was going on and told the Turks. The penny pincher subsequently killed himself...”¹³

Ichko voivoda took upon himself almost all the authority for dispensing law and order in the Gorna Dzhumaya region from the Turkish state courts. Like the entire Turkish administration at that time the Turkish courts were corrupt, slow and completely lacking in authority. In many cases the organisation was called upon to resolve disputes not only between the Bulgarian population of the district but even between the Turkish residents. Ichko Boichev wrote in autobiography, “We resolved disputes quickly, free of charge and justly. Our decisions were accepted and implemented correctly by the parties to the dispute...”

At that time the district was plagued by bandits, most of whom were of Turkish or Gypsy origin. They committed acts of arson, rape, robbery and murder. Ichko Voivoda skilfully dealt with them as well. First of all he would issue warnings to them but the most stubborn and unrepentant were condemned to death. An example of Ichko Boichev’s justice the case of Cauk Ali. He was infamous in the Gorna Dzhumaya region as the perpetrator of all manner of crimes and felonies. Everyone, young and old, in the district was up in arms at

his pillaging and looting. The complaints of the local people soon reached the ears of Ichko Voivoda. Cauk Ali was in fact employed by the Turkish administration on the Turkish Bulgarian border, about 5-6 kilometres from Gorna Dzhumaya along the Rila river. On a number of occasions Ichko Voivoda sent his people to warn him to keep his hands off the peaceful people and mind his own business if he wanted to avoid punishment.

However, Cauk Ali, did not heed the warnings and was condemned to death. Ichko Voivoda took it upon himself to carry out the sentence. He realised, however, that if the sentence was carried out in Turkish territory in Gorna Dzhumaya, the Turkish authorities would take much harsher reprisals against the Bulgarian population. Therefore, the voivoda chose to carry out the execution in Bulgarian territory. They began to follow Cauk Ali. They learnt where he went and who his friends were. Cauk Ali frequently crossed the border to visit a friend in the village of Kocherinovo, 2km from the border. One day, having learnt that he had crossed the border, Ichko and two chetniks crossed into Bulgarian territory. They found Cauk Ali in a tavern in the village and they carried out the death sentence in broad daylight. Enormous panic ensued. The entire police force along the Rila River region and all the guards were called out. Ichko and his comrades-in-arms managed to cross the Rila River and return unhindered into Turkish territory...

The execution achieved its aim. The aggressors – Turkish bei, exploiters and ordinary criminals realised that they were no longer impunible and could not wreak havoc and pillage the Bulgarian population at will. As a consequence Ichko Voivoda's authority in the region was even further enhanced.²

This and a number of other actions led by Ichko Voivoda put the Turkish authorities in Gorna Dzhumaya and the region

² From 1905–1908 Gorna Dzhumaya as a border region played an important part in the revolutionary activities of the IMARO. Two of the most secure routes connected the free territories of Mother Bulgaria with the interior of enslaved Macedonia passed through the town. Autobiography of Ichko Voivoda

on alert. They began arresting local Bulgarians, beating them savagely and torturing them. Ichko's own cheta found themselves ambushed on a number of occasions, leading to losses.

In his memoirs Ichko Voivoda recalls a Turkish ambush in the summer of 1905, when his cheta was on the move between the villages of Marolevo and Gradevo. It was evening but the moon was shining as bright as day. Georgi Daskala, as close friend and assistant of Ichko Voivoda, was leading the cheta. As they entered a narrow, shallow gorge, a volley of gunshots from about 20-30 rifles echoed through the mountains.

The chain quickly broke and Ichko Voivoda lay down with three other chetniks lay down to return fire. The Turks were hidden behind some rocks only 30-40 metres from them. Ichko returned fire but suddenly a bullet lodged in the barrel of his rifle and it jammed. His rifle was useless. One of the chetniks panicked and shouted out: "Oh my God, the voivoda's rifle's jammed..." The chetniks ceased firing for a moment. The Turks, however, misread the break in fire. The leader of the Turks stood up from behind the rock and shouted out in Turkish: "You Bulgarian f.....! Surrender!" and he moved out to attack the voivoda's positions. The voivoda lay in wait calmly until the enemy came close enough for him to shoot at him with his "Mauser" revolver, fatally wounding the Turkish leader. "Unfortunately the commander was a Bulgarian Muslim pomak", Ichko commented. After the death of their leader, the rest of the Turkish brigade crept away and disappeared into the countryside.

After a series of other heroic skirmishes, the glory of Ichko's cheta grew enormously and their fame spread through the population of the Gorna Dzhumaya district. The grateful Bulgarians composed a song dedicated to Ichko voivoda's cheta which is still sung to this day in the Pirin region:

*"It is so lovely to see, mother,
and dear to see, mother,*

*how the rebels wear their capes, mother,
and carry their bandanas, mother,
and their revolvers..."*

In his capacity as district voivoda of Gorna Dzhumaya close to the Bulgarian border, Ichko was also responsible for sending arms and literature into Macedonian as well as smuggling cheta and couriers across the border from Bulgaria. He also led couriers and activists of the organisation and refugees from the interior of Macedonia¹⁴ into the free territories.

In addition to his other activities, Ichko also worked to overcome the ignorance and superstitions of the local population. At a gathering in the village of Bistritsa, one of the men present interrupted Ichko and asked that a window be opened so that he could "fly out". The voivoda turned to the rest of the people and said, "Make way for him!" Ichko opened the window and beckoned to him: "Fly out then!", thus discrediting the charlatan. The charlatan later apologised and promised that he would no longer try to deceive people. As far as he was able to, Ichko tried to disseminate his social and democratic ideas amongst the local population. He campaigned against chauvinism and promulgated the idea that all the nationalities in his region, not only the Bulgarians, were equal before the law and needed to live together as friends, rather than in conflict.

As the district voivoda, Ichko Boichev displayed the qualities of a fearless revolutionary and talented orator. His words were a powerful weapon and over a short period of time he managed to win over many new supporters for his cause. The Turks were dumbstruck by the courage of the brave young Bulgarian and his cheta. They had no idea of the true number of chetniks in the brigade. The Turkish authorities left no stone unturned in their search for Ichko, the elusive voivoda. They set many traps and ambushes to try and catch him. However, the people loved the legendary voivoda and hid him from the authorities. Ichko recounted a number of such events in his memoirs:

"As far as I recall it was in the village of Selishte. One Easter day I was sitting with the miller in front of his mill having a chat. There was a huge meadow in front of us full of people celebrating Easter. There were villagers, young and old, dancing circle dances. Someone suddenly called out: "The army's coming!" We had no time to run and hide, nor was there any suitable place... I was impressed by the people's composure. They continued playing their flutes and the people carried on dancing. A group of young boys and girls came over to me and in front of everyone, they dragged me into the circle dance. I didn't know the steps to the dance. So they just narrowed the circle of dance until I was concealed in the centre. The Turkish cavalry stopped in front of the circle dance and watched the young boys and girls dressed in their festive clothes and said, "Masala, masala" a couple of times before they left. In this way was I saved".

Something similar happened in 1906. "I had gone alone to the village of Pokrovnik to see our yatak, who provided us with provisions. We were sitting there drinking buttermilk when we saw his daughter-in-law running towards us out of breath. As she got closer she began to cry out: "Run, the army's coming!" I had not time to run. I quickly went inside and saw another door. I opened it, went into the other room and closed the door. I saw a trapdoor in the floor, raised it and went down the steps into the pantry. I hid behind the steps with my pistol at the ready in my hand. The Turkish soldiers outside were asking the yatak why his daughter-in-law, who by this time had left the scene, had run back to the house. He replied that she was frightened of them. They asked him who had been drinking buttermilk out of the second cup. He replied: "My daughter-in-law". The Turks didn't believe him and went into the house. They came into the room above me, raised the trap door, looked into it without descending into the pantry. One of them said in Turkish: "Bir sey yok" ("Nothing here") and they left".

In another incident a woman from the village of Padezh,

near Gorna Dzhumaya, displayed enormous composure, resourcefulness and heroism, saving the life of Ichko voivoda. . "I had gone to visit the house of our yatak," wrote Ichko Boichev, "when the lady of the house come in and said that the army was coming to search the house. She told me lie down on the carpet, then she rolled it up and arranged it with the other carpets. The soldiers came into the room, looked around it and one of the asked the lady of the house: "Where have you hidden the rebel?" She replied quite calmly: "What rebels, effendi, no rebels come here. You can search the whole house from the attic to the cellar, if you want". The soldier searched the entire house and when he didn't find anything, he left".

During his revolutionary activity in Gorna Dzhumaya, Ichko found himself in similar dangerous situations on a number of occasions, but with his resourcefulness and courage, he always managed to escape. The local people loved their voivoda and even at the risk to their own lives they did everything they could to help him and hide him. Ichko Boichev's memoirs contain another example.

"I had just arrived at the house of a woman in the village of Padezh and she immediately offered to make me some coffee. There was no one else in the house. While she was making the coffee, I went out in front of the house to look over the village and the locality from a small elevation. Imagine my surprise when I saw a group of Turkish soldiers coming down the road towards the house. The first thing which occurred to me was to hide in the house, but I quickly rejected that thought, since I assumed that someone must have seen me and that was why the soldiers were coming to find me. I didn't have time to alert the woman, so I took a large basket and went off in the opposite direction. The Turks entered the house and the woman turned to them and offered them some coffee. They asked her who she had been making coffee for and she quite calmly replied: "For the apprentice". When they came out of the house, they saw me walking in the opposite direction with the big basket and believed her. Unfortunately,

the woman's dog had run after me and bit my leg, and I was dragging it along by the teeth. The soldiers asked who I was, and she repeated that I was her apprentice. "So why's the dog biting his leg?" The woman replied, "That's his way of playing with it". When I managed to hide a little bit further down the road, I kicked the dog and manage to escape".

"In the autumn of 1906", Ichko Boichev mentions in his memoirs, "The cheta was camped out in the village of Bistritsa and we had to cross from one hamlet into the other. It was foggy and cold. I had my suspicions that the Turks had set an ambush for us. So I stopped the cheta and said that we needed to reconnoitre the area. A number of men were willing to go. However, I didn't let anyone go, I went alone, crossed the small river and climbed up the other side, when suddenly someone spoke to me in Turkish. "Don't make such a noise, oaf, the rebels will hear you..." I apologised in Turkish and immediately went back to the cheta. I took the boys back the way we had come and went to the other hamlet. We were lucky to avoid an encounter which could have had fatal consequences for us".

There are many examples of the courage and composure of Ichko Voivoda and his chetniks. In the spring of 1907, during a revolutionary campaign near the village of Delvino, the cheta found themselves surrounded by the Turkish army who were in a more advantageous position. The Turks advised the chetniks to surrender. Ichko Voivoda ordered that no one should shoot without his orders. He needed to win time and save ammunition. The voivoda waited for nightfall. He then issued the order to fire simultaneously from a number of places, in order to see the Turks' weakest spot. After a few minutes the voivoda pinpointed the exact spot where the Turks' return fire was at its weakest and he managed to lead his cheta out of the ambush without the loss of a single man.

In addition to his revolutionary triumphs, Ichko Voivoda was also celebrated for his persistent efforts to improve the level of education and culture of the people in his district.

Under the leadership of Ichko Voivoda the church and the schools were not only protected from external influence but they were strengthened and renewed. For example, in the villages of Harsovo and Delvino near Gorna Dzhumaya, where there had never been a school before, the local villagers gathered money and built schools for their children. The first teacher in Harsovo was Yane Taskov Mitsov. He was born in the same village and had studied at the Bulgarian Boys High School in Thessaloniki.

As the voivoda of the Gorna Dzhumaya district, Ichko Voivoda had a close relationship with Yane Sandanski, the leader of the Seres revolutionary district and his comrades-in-arms Alexander Buinov, Chudomir Hadzhimov and others. He was particularly close with Yane and was later to become his best man at his wedding and the godfather of his son, Victor.

In May 1908, as voivoda of the Gorna Dzhumaya district, Ichko attended the general assembly of the Seres and Struma revolutionary district. The congress was held in Bansko and other attendees included Hristo Chernopeev, Misho Shkartov the Tikvesh voivoda, Pavel Deliradev.

The most important matter discussed in Bansko was the future of the campaign to liberate Macedonia.

In early 1908, the Committee of Union and Progress of the Young Turks rose up and forced Sultan Abdul Hamid to introduce constitutional government within the Empire, promulgating "fraternity and equality" between all nationalities. The uprising was greeted with joy and hope on the part of the Bulgarian population in Macedonia and Odrin Thrace. The Young Turks officially asked the IMARO for political and moral support¹⁵. All the revolutionary activists in the IMARO were offered amnesty and the 30 000 thousand strong army of informants and the Turkish secret police in Macedonia were disbanded. Parliamentary elections were scheduled and conditions were established for legitimate political activities¹⁶.

Given this new situation the armed cheta brigades also became legitimate. On the 25th July 1908, the members of

the Central Committee of the Internal Organisation met in Bitola. They included Petko Penchev, Pavel Hristov, Milan Matov, Georgi Traichev, Krastio Germov and other revolutionary activists representing other town in Macedonia. The subject of the discussion was the new situation in the country. They recognised that the great powers were sympathetic to the constitutional regime and that the Bulgarians in Macedonia would be compromised if they continued to support their armed struggle in the new conditions. The members present, therefore, took the decision to cease their campaign. The decision, however, was by nature temporary and in the event of any breach of the rights of the Bulgarian population in the Empire, or indeed any sign of a breach of the equal rights of all nationalities in the Ottoman Empire as proclaimed by the Young Turks, the organisation reserved the right to renew their campaign.

In the Gorna Dzhumaya district the news of the changes and the establishment of the Hurriyet³ was seen as the end of tyranny, feudal and national oppression and as the beginning of a completely free life. The local population was overcome by indescribable joy. Turks and Bulgarians alike embraced each other with tears in their eyes.

Two days after the proclamation of the Hurriyet, the entire Bulgarian population of Gorna Dzhumaya gathered to witness the meeting of Turkish Kaymakam and Voivoda Ichko Boichev with his rebels outside the town. The Kaymakam stared at the voivoda for some time. Ichko asked him why he was staring at him and he replied: "I thought I would be meeting an old rebel with a white beard, but I'm standing before a young man who has carried out such good deeds for the liberation movement".

In the town square the Kaymakam asked Ichko why he was not joyful and happy after the proclamation of the Hurriyet. Boichev replied that not everyone in the town was enjoying the celebrations and gestured towards the prison near the

³ Hurriyet – freedom

centre of the town. The Kaymakam realised what the voivoda meant and told him that he had not yet received the amnesty orders from the Sublime Porte. The voivoda replied that in such a case the Hurriyet had not yet reached Macedonia. In order to recover from his embarrassment the Kaymakam suggested that Ichko take the risk of releasing the prisoners himself. Without further ado Ichko Boichev went and released all the prisoners. They bore him aloft on their arms. The voivoda then turned to the Kaymakam and the Bulgarian population saying that he could now enjoy the freedom.

It is important to note that all records speak of the exceptionally friendly attitude of the Young Turks towards the Bulgarian population throughout Macedonia during the first months after the rebellion. General Paprikov's report to Prince Ferdinand stated that "in Macedonia the Bulgarians, their voivoda and the whole of Bulgaria society enjoy particular respect, they have complete freedom... The border is open. Travel to Macedonia is completely unhindered. The Bulgarian chetniks who fell for freedom are also revered by the Turkish population as national heroes. This may be incredible but it is true..." concludes Paprikov¹⁷.

The positive side of the Hurriyet was that it allowed for open political campaigning, it gave freedom to the spoken and printed word, offered amnesty and released prisoners, created a parliament which provided a platform for the deputies and Bulgarians in Macedonia and Odrin Thrace to defend the interests of their voters.

However, the "Committee of Union and Progress" did not actually implement a single one of the promises which were so boldly proclaimed in their programme. In fact, once they had concentrated all the power in their hands, the Committee of Young Turks focused their efforts on transforming Turkey in a centralised nationalist empire dominated by the Turks, rather than a democratic state with freedom and equality for all nationalities. They began to insist that all citizens notwithstanding their faith and nationality should consider themselves "Ottomans".

Disappointed with the attitude of the Young Turks and the lack of any guarantees that the promised freedoms would be implemented, on the 12th August 1908, the Central Committee of the internal organisation sent a letter to all their district and regional committees. The letter was a directive and consisted of 14 points. It contained a detailed description of all the measures needed to retain the organisation's military preparedness and arms, taking into account the new conditions in the country after the establishment of the *Hurriyet*. The Central Committee wanted the organisation to remain in a semi-legal state of preparedness in accordance with the political situation existing in Macedonia and Odrin.

All chetniks were advised to return home and conceal their personal weapons. The voivoda were given a direct instruction that "they must not leave their districts and they must travel constantly between the villages to maintain the fighting spirit of the population"¹⁸.

The so-called left wing of the IMARO, comprising rebels from the Seres, Thessaloniki and Struma revolutionary districts took a similar stance. On the 8th August, 1908, they published their own declaration in Thessaloniki, proclaiming their own demands.

The declaration began with the categorical statement that "the revolutionary organisation is in its battle positions and is prepared at any moment to use the power of its weapons", in the event of any offensive by the Young Turks against the Bulgarian population in Macedonia. Their stance was further developed in the "Declaration" which notes that the IMARO operates in "legal forms without recourse to the power of weapons", since subsequent to re-establishment of the 1876 constitution, "the Empire has introduced the first elementary conditions for legal political action". Despite the positive changes, the "left-wing" activists also declared that their weapons had not been surrendered and if the freedoms promised to the Bulgarians were not fulfilled they were prepared at any moment to take up arms and continue the illegal forms of their struggle.

As the administrative leader of the Kresna Nahia⁴, Ichko followed the development of events in Macedonia and kept in constant contact with his comrades-in-arms and the leaders of the IMARO. During the first months of 1909 he spoke to them and insisted that "the constitutional regime has only revealed itself as a reactionary regime, while the Young Turk revolution has quickly turned into the Young Turk reaction". He appealed to all the organisation's activists in Gorna Dzhumaya to be observant and if necessary ready to be recalled to the revolutionary struggle against the enslaving Turkish forces⁵. In the villages of Padezh, Delvino and Gradevo he recommenced shooting practice for the members of the village militias.

In the spring of 1910, Ichko Boichev set up home with Alexandra (Sanda), the daughter of a wealthy family from Gorna Dzhumaya. Sanda was a hard-working and home-loving woman as well as a courageous and utterly devoted wife. They had four children, Viktor, Veneta, Boicho and Elisaveta.

At the beginning of 1910 the Turkish government began its campaign of "disarming" the local population in Macedonia. It was carried out with no less brutal force and terror than the campaigns of Abdul Hamid. This was soon followed by the Law on banning national parties and organisations. This policy completely revealed the true nature of the government of the "Committee for Union and Progress" as a nationalist and reactionary organisation¹⁹.

In late 1909 and early 1910 in particular, dissatisfied with the deteriorating conditions for the Bulgarians in Macedonia and Odrin and seeing that the Young Turks were not prepared to undertake any serious steps to implement their promises, the IMARO decided to renew their revolutionary struggle.

⁴ Nahia – (Turkish) – commune

⁵ In late 1908 and early 1909, the Young Turk government allowed activists of the Seres revolutionary district to be appointed to state posts, mainly as municipal district officials etc. Ichko Boichev was appointed to the post of administrative director (mudurin) of the Kresna Nahia where he fulfilled his duties in an exemplary way.

On the 14th December, 1909, Hristo Chernopeev, Konstantin Samardzhiev (Dzhemoto) and Mihail Dumbalakov, were the first rebels to go "underground". The three covert "illegals" went to the Struma region where they visited all the local villages in the aims of restoring the Struma revolutionary district. They also intended to restore IMARO's illegal channels from Strumitsa to the Bulgaria and Turkish border. In early 1910 they were joined by Stefan Chavdarov, Apostol Voivoda and others²⁰.

At the end of December, 1909, in an attempt to widen the struggle against the regime, Hristo Chernopeev addressed not only the Bulgarians but the entire Christian population of Macedonia and Odrin. In his address he stressed that in the name of "Pan-Islamism" the Young Turks were intent on clearing the country of former Bulgarian chetniks and voivoda. Since the state clearly had no intention of improving the real conditions for the population, Chernopeev called up the oppressed peoples to claim their rights by armed struggle²¹.

In March 1910, the revolutionary movement gradually began to be bolstered by new additions. In order to avoid arrest by the authorities, the former chetniks of Voivoda Apostol Petkov from the Enidzhevardar villages of Bozets, Babayani, Petrovo and others began covert underground activities. They mustered in the vicinity of the Enidzhevardar marshes and formed into a multitude of cheta brigades prepared for action.

In the early spring of the same year, small cheta brigades of covertly operating villagers were created in Maleshevo and Struma. Other brigades were formed under the direct command of Ichko Boichev in Gorna Dzhumaya. However, these brigades lacked proper organisation. Consequently they were unable to carry out any propaganda or organisational activities and were only able to carry out armed activities in self-defence. However, they provided excellent concealment for covert activists who gradually strengthened the armed formations of the Bulgarian population in Macedonia.

In the last three months of 1910 alone, the Bulgarian con-

sulates in Thessaloniki, Seres, Bitola and Skopje informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Religious Faiths in Sofia of the activities of many Bulgarian cheta brigades in Gorna Dzhumaya, Petrich, Struma, Kochano, Shtip and Skopje.

The existence of Ichko Voivoda's cheta in the Gorna Dzhumaya district did not remain a secret to the authorities for very long. However, the Turkish authorities did not succeed in arresting any of the chetniks. At the beginning of July, 1910, infuriated by their lack of success, they began to wreak havoc amongst the peaceful Bulgarian population on the pretext of disarming them.

In 1910 Ichko Boichev managed completely to restore his organisational network in the Gorna Dzhumaya district. He was also able to conceal the entire armament of the organisation to avoid it falling into the hands of the Young Turk authorities²².

The Young Turks disarming campaign was accompanied by unheard-of savagery, the prohibition of the two Bulgarian political parties. In 1910 the Young Turk parliament decided to resettle between 600 000 and 1 000 000 Turks from Asia Minor and Bosnia in Macedonia and expel the same number of Bulgarians. All this led to renewed activities by the IMARO. The new Central Committee was created by activists from the different factions within the organisation. They included T. Alexandrov, Hr. Chernopeev and Petar Chaulev. P. Yavorov and Todor Lazarov were elected as foreign representatives.

In March 1911, the new Central Committee of the IMARO issued Directive No.3 to all activists and voivoda instructing them to undertake actions to oppose the anti-Bulgarian laws and actions of the Young Turk government.

In May 1911, the first IMARO cheta appeared in Macedonia. Amongst them was Ichko Voivoda's cheta. They were active in the Gorna Dzhumaya region, the Struma valley and the region of Maleshevo²³.

Their main *modus operandi* consisted of highly disruptive attacks against railway lines, bridges and public build-

ings. These operations were aimed at attracting the attention of European society to the intolerable conditions of the Bulgarians in Macedonia and Thrace⁶. For the first time since the Berlin congress in 1878, in 1911 the IMARO and the Bulgarian government circles rejected the idea of autonomy as a phase in the unification of the Bulgarian people and decided to fight against Turkey to ensure liberation and unification²⁴.

However, in order to wage a war against Turkey, Bulgaria needed either to neutralise or win over Serbia and Greece to their cause. The situation in the Balkans and internationally was so complex that Bulgaria found itself obliged to begin negotiations with Serbia and Greece under Russian patronage. After difficult negotiations on the 29th/13th March (Julian/Gregorian calendar) 1912, the Serbian Bulgarian pact was concluded. It contained a secret clause envisaging the division of Macedonia into a "disputed zone" covering the lands to the west of the line between Kriva Palanka and Ohrid lake. It was envisaged that after the war had ended, the Russian emperor would serve as "arbiter" to decide to which country this "zone" should be awarded, Bulgaria or Serbia.

Negotiations between the Bulgarian and Greek diplomats were to prove even more difficult. Greece insisted on Thessaloniki, while Bulgaria having already compromised in their negotiations with Serbia, would hear nothing of it. So on the 16th May, 1912, a treaty was signed between the two countries without any territorial delineation which was eventually to prove detrimental to Bulgaria. Bulgaria also reached a verbal

⁶ Pandev, K. and K. Paleshutski. The Bulgarian National Liberation Movement after the Berlin Congress (1878-1941) – Ipr. 1981. No. 3-4, page 103. Dynamiting as an element of diversionary activities was not new in the revolutionary practices of the IMARO. For example, in March 1903, Gotse Delchev carried out a celebrated attack at the Angista River causing serious damage to the railway line between Dedeagac and Thessaloniki and cutting the telephone lines. Other leading activists in the organization – Mihail Gerdzhikov, Konstantin Nunkov and Petar Mandzhukov were also advocates of the idea of diversionary actions against key communications and other enemy facilities and took an active part in them.

agreement with Montenegro. So in 1912 the Balkan Alliance was formed and it was officially directed against Turkey.

The IMARO activists welcomed the establishment of the Balkan Alliance as well as its aim of waging war against Turkey. However, they were not informed of the clauses of the treaties, and in particular the secret clause in the Serbian Bulgarian treaty envisaging the cession of the Skopje district of Macedonia which was inhabited by a compact Bulgarian population²⁵.

On the 1st October, 1912, Tsar Ferdinand sent a note to the Turkish Sultan on behalf of the allied Balkan countries. The note demanded immediate autonomy for Macedonia and Odrin Thrace in accordance with art.23 of the Berlin treaty. On the 3rd of October 1912 instead of replying to the note, Turkey declared war on the allies. On the 5th October the Balkan countries engaged in war against Turkey. This was the beginning of the Balkan war in 1912. The prime reason for the war was the liberation of the Bulgarians in Macedonia and Odrin Thrace and the national unification of Bulgaria. Consequently the Bulgarian government sent its army to fight alone in Thrace against the main Turkish forces. The Bulgarian army sent only the VII Rila division to Macedonia. It operated along the valley of the Struma river and the left bank of the Vardar. In addition to the Bulgarian army, about 100 cheta brigades of the IMARO were fighting on the front guard of the "allied" Serbian and Greek armies. The chetniks were the first to enter and liberate Shtip, Veles, Skopje, Bitola, Ohrid, Govedartsi, Gevgeli, Voden, Lerni, Kostur, Bansko, Razlog, Nevrokop, Kavala and other towns²⁶, where they established Bulgarian rule. These local Bulgarian governments were elected by the local population and were supported and maintained by the Bulgarian troops when they entered subsequently. However, in those villages which were occupied by Serbs and Greeks, the representatives of the local IMARO government were arrested, killed or expelled.

During this colossal struggle for the liberation of the Bul-

garians in Macedonia from Turkish domination, Ichko Boichev the Gorna Dzhumaya voivoda fulfilled his patriotic duty in the most heroic way. On the 3rd October, 1912, he received a communiqué that in two days' time the Bulgarian army and the IMARO cheta would take the offensive to Gorna Dzhumaya. On the 5th and 6th October, the voivoda declared Debrova, Bistritsa, Marolevo and other villages to the east of the town, to be liberated. On the 7th October, 1912, his cheta fought alongside the soldiers of the VII Rila division to liberate Gorna Dzhumaya.

On the 10th October, the voivoda armed his 64 chetniks and 100 volunteers and led them into positions in the region of St. Petka in the Kresna valley. The chetniks were divided into groups of about 10-15 men and the Turkish army entered the valley from the direction of Kresna, they opened fire on command in rapid successive salvoes. When the last group stopped firing, the first had already reloaded and the salvoes continued. This well-coordinated chain of salvoes caused the Turks to panic, believing that the valley under the control of a massed army of the enemy which had cut off their offensive towards Gorna Dzhumaya. The heroic battle lasted for two days, allowing the Bulgarian army and the VII Rila division to approach and take their positions to rout the Turkish army. By managing to hold off the Turkish army with its many thousands of soldiers until the arrival of the Bulgarian army regulars, Ichko Boichev saved Gorna Dzhumaya. The capture of the town by the enraged Turkish army would have resulted in pillaging, destruction and the certain massacre of the population. This was one of the greatest personal feats of the voivoda, not only did he save Gorna Dzhumaya, but this was to lead to the crushing and expulsion of the Turkish army from the entire Pirin region.

On the 17th May, 1913, a peace treaty was signed between Turkey and the allies. This was the end to the war but a number of unresolved matters remained between the allies. In a complete breach of their agreements, Serbia and Greece

declared that they would not leave the occupied territories in Macedonia and that they were prepared to fight Bulgaria for these lands.

On the 19th May, a secret Serbian Greek treaty directed against Bulgaria was published. The great powers did not support Bulgaria's national demands despite "ethnic rights and the decisive role of the Bulgarian army in routing Turkey". The tense political situation and a number of incidents of clashes between Serbian and Greek soldiers with IMARO chetniks and the Bulgarian army regulars led on the 16th June, 1913 to the beginning of the Second Balkan War, the war between allies²⁷.

A couple of dozen IMARO cheta brigades took an active part in the Second Balkan War. As the front guard of the Bulgarian army they captured hundreds of enemy soldiers and acquitted themselves heroically in the rear of the Serbian and Greek armies. They liberated dozens of villages on both sides of the Vardar and established Bulgarian rule in them.

Ichko Voivoda with his cheta took an active part in the Second Balkan War as part of the Macedonia Odrin volunteer division which was also on the front line against the enemies of Bulgaria. The celebrated voivoda led his cheta into a number of savage encounters with the Serbian occupying army at Sultantepe, Kochani and the region around Govedartsis close to the village of Kamenitsa near Tsarevo Selo, where he dealt a massive blow to the enemy.

However, the political and military events of the time did not favour the Bulgarian people. Despite being surrounded on all sides, Bulgaria had managed to deal massive blows to the Serbian and Greek armies without suffering any military loss. Nevertheless Bulgaria was forced to capitulate.

The Bucharest treaty was signed on the 10th August, 1913. It envisaged the pillaging of Bulgaria. Vardar Macedonia was given to the Kingdom of Serbia and Aegean Macedonia was given to the Kingdom of Greece. Only the Pirin district in Macedonia, in the region of Strumitsa, was granted the freedom it had

long yearned for when it was brought within the boundaries of the Bulgarian state. Bulgaria was granted an egress onto the Aegean sea in the area between the rivers Mesta and Maritsa.

The very next day after the promulgation of the Bucharest edicts, the Central Committee of the IMARO issued a wide-ranging memorandum to the governments of the great powers. The memorandum protested against the Bucharest treaty branding it a taint upon European civilisation and condemning the Bulgarians in Macedonia to an even crueller fate than under the Turkish yoke. The memorandum appealed for a review of the Bucharest treaty and for greater autonomy to be given to Macedonia under the patronage of the great powers²⁸.

While peaceful supplications continued, the IMARO began extraordinarily rapidly to renew its revolutionary activities. In 1913 it raised a partial rebellion in the regions of Ohrid, Struga and Debar. The rebels expelled the Serbian occupying forces and established Bulgarian revolutionary government in Ohrid and Struga²⁹.

Between 1915-1918 the revolutionary activities of the IMARO helped the Bulgarian army liberate the greater part of Macedonia³⁰.

In early 1914 the Central Committee of the IMARO issued Directive No.22 to the district leaders and voivoda. The directive stressed that the organisation's network in Vardar and Aegean Macedonia needed to be revived as quickly as possible in the aims of effectively countering the Serbian and Greek occupiers. In 1914-1915 the massed Bulgarian population of Vardar Macedonia in particular began a war of national liberation against the Serbian occupiers. Voivoda Ichko Boichev was initially sent to Maleshevo by Hr. Chernopeev, a member of the Central Committee of the IMARO. In Mala-shevo he took command of a cheta of 26 men against the Serbian army and opposing cheta. At the end of 1914 he began operations in Tikvesh, and in the summer of 1915 he reached the Bitola revolutionary district where he engaged the Serbian armed forces in serious combat³¹.

In the meantime the war was at its height. On the 28th July 1914, the First World War broke out. Bulgaria maintained neutrality for more than one year. During this time the diplomats of the warring sides did everything they could to bring Bulgaria onto the side of one of the two military blocks. The diplomats of the Entente promised to restore to Bulgaria the lands lost in the Bucharest treaty in Macedonia, on the condition that it joined their block. However, this was to happen after the war and on the condition that they were victorious. On the other hand, the diplomats of the Central Forces guaranteed to Bulgaria the immediate return of the entire Vardar Macedonian lands and Nish, as well as Aegean Macedonia, if Greece breached its neutrality³².

In the ensuing situation on the 6th September, 1915 Bulgaria allied with Germany and Austro Hungary. On the 17th September the Bulgarian army was mobilised and on the 1/14 (Julian and Gregorian calendars), October, 1915, Bulgaria entered the war on the sides of the Central Forces. Its key priority was to achieve national unification.

The Bulgarians in Macedonia greeted the Bulgarian liberating army with extraordinary displays of joy. They were especially overjoyed to see all the IMARO activists in the ranks of the army. In total more than 150 000 Macedonian Bulgarians served in the glorious XI Macedonian division. They bore arms in the ranks of the Bulgarian regular army fighting to liberate Macedonia from Serbian, Greek and Entente enslavement.

Along with all the other IMARO voivoda, Ichko Boichev was mobilised to the XI Macedonian division in Demir Hisar, where he was promoted to the rank of non-commissioned officer. The voivoda was put in command of a special unit and fought on many different sectors of the frontline from the beginning to the end of the war. He fought against the Entente army at Krivolak, Gevgeli, Doiran, Bitolya, the bend in the Cherna River and many other battles, right up to the victory at Dobro Pole in September, 1918.

On the 29th September, 1918, the peace treaty was signed in Thessaloniki between Bulgaria and the Entente commanders. As a result the Bulgarian army was to be demobilised immediately. On the 5th October, 1918, at the recommendation of his military commanders, Ichko Boichev was appointed as district commander of Gorna Dzhumaya. He was entrusted with the task of bringing the district back to life and making the transition to peacetime. Such posts were granted to people with extraordinary civic qualities, virtues and in recognition of great deeds.

One of the greatest accomplishments of district commander, Ichko Boichev, was to save the town from destruction by the Entente. One day the commanding general of the French and British troops was passing by the town and asked Ichko Boichev for food and lodgings for thousands of troops in the town. Boichev replied that there was a terrible epidemic in the town. The interpreter, a Bulgarian Jew named Maniel Saltiel, confirmed Boichev's words that there were many sick and dead in the town. The conversation took place close to the town cemetery just at a moment when a funeral procession happened to be passing. Boichev pointed to it as proof of what he had just told him. The commanding general issued an order for the troops to continue on their way without entering the town. As parting words the general said to the interpreter: "Tell the citizens of Gorna Dzhumaya to thank Mr. Ichko Boichev for saving the town from the most undisciplined Senegalese army of which I am in command".

When the Neuilly was agreement signed on the 27th November, 1919, leading to the partition of Bulgaria, the Bulgarian population in Macedonia were the first to react sharply. At the end of the 1919 the IMARO renewed their campaign against the Serbian and Greek occupiers.

The Central Committee at that time was made up of Todor Alexandrov, Alexander Protgerov and Peter Chaulev.

In 1922 Todor Alexandrov issued a special edict promulgating the creation of an auxiliary IMARO organisation in Pirin

Macedonia, which was to form the base and rear-guard of the illegal militarised organisations in Vardar and Aegean Macedonia. Local cheta and militia were formed in every settlement. In addition a government structure with defence, repressive, judicial and financial capabilities was established in parallel to the official government. They would be prepared to stand up to any external threat to the organisation³³. The official slogan of the campaign by the Macedonian Bulgarians was once again focused upon autonomy for the Bulgarians in Vardar and Aegean Macedonia. However, this time the form was much different to the autonomy demanded from the Turkish regime. Up to 1912 the IMARO had been fighting only for political autonomy, since the Bulgarian population already possessed national cultural autonomy. Now, however, the slogan contained a minimum demand, i.e. a campaign for the preservation of the Bulgarian nationality in Vardar and Aegean Macedonia, the establishment of Bulgarian schools, churches, cultural institutions and subsequently a path to the unification of the divided parts of Macedonia³⁴.

In this new struggle Ichko Boichev, the former voivoda, fulfilled his patriotic duty to an enslaved Macedonia by becoming a member of the local command of the auxiliary IMRO in Gorna Dzhumaya. He wrote about his organisational and public works between the two wars in his memoirs. In 1922 at the instruction of certain eminent IMRO activists he was appointed to the duty of cashier of the IMRO town leadership. However, shortly afterwards he resigned in protest at the fratricidal internal war within the organisation, the fragmenting of the organisation into political structures which had nothing in common with the basic idea of liberation and unification of the motherland. He wanted to be involved in other types of public and economic activities. "I remember", he continued in his memoirs, "that during the events of 1923 the IMRO pursued and crushed the division from Gorna Dzhumaya which had gone to Dupnitsa in order to participate in the rebellion. The government arrested a number of

my neighbours, including the two brothers Spas and Angel Katsarski. I interceded for them most fervently and they were released that same evening”.

Between 1923 and 1928 Ichko Boichev served the IMRO as director of the “Bokhcha” tobacco cooperation in Gorna Dzhumaya. He was sent to Czechoslovakia on two occasions to sell tobacco. His first trip took place in September, 1924, during the events in Gorna Dzhumaya.

In 1929 he was elected to the post of municipal councillor and became deputy mayor to Kiril Timchev, the mayor of Gorna Dzhumaya. In 1933 without even being asked he was once again elected as member of the organisation’s town leadership, he recalls in his memoirs. He was actively involved in the leadership until the 19th May, 1934. It should be noted that during his entire life as a revolutionary Ichko Boichev always placed the national cause above parties and personalities. It was for this reason that he had always openly condemned factionalism and fratricide within the organisation both during the Turkish regime and subsequently. It was only his great personal authority, patriotism and commitment to the cause of liberation which had saved him on more than one occasion from almost inevitable death³⁵.

On the 19th May, 1934, the Military Alliance and the Political Circle “Zveno” carried out a coup d’etat. One of the most important acts of Kimon Georgiev’s government was to issue a law on the 14th June, 1934 banning all national liberation organisations, and the IMRO in first place. Many IMRO activists including Ichko Boichev were repressed and interned³⁶. He was interned in Stara Zagora along with a number of his former comrades-in-arms. Quite by chance in Stara Zagora he came upon the local garrison commander who was aware of Ichko’s accomplishments as the voivoda of Gorna Dzhumaya. He asked Ichko what he was doing in the town. Ichko revealed that he had been interned there and the garrison commander invited him to dine in the garrison. Ichko Boichev declined since he had been interned with a number of other former com-

rades. The garrison commander then invited them all to dine in the garrison. This was so paradoxical – the military had exiled him Gorna Dzhumaya, while the same military welcomed him from with open arms in Stara Zagora.

Upon returning from Stara Zagora Boichev withdrew from all political activity. Ichko's family was supported financially by his daughter, Veneta, a teacher in a remote hamlet in the village of Bistritra, Gorna Dzhumaya region. She later moved to work in Barakovo. In 1936 Ichko was appointed to the post of chairman of the supervisory board of the Popular Bank in Gorna Dzhumaya. He was given the job of drawing up a list of all the names of people who had taken part in the Ilinden Uprising. He compiled the list accurately and objectively and submitted it to the authorities.

In the summer of 1939, he submitted an application to the National Assembly to be granted a pension in accordance with art. 1, letter E, of the Law on National Pensions for Meritorious Revolutionaries actively involved in the wars of liberation for Macedonia and Odrin. The following evidential documents were appended to the application:

1. *Certificate no.3279 issued by the Gorna Dzhumaya municipality.*
2. *Certificate No.27 issued by the "Ilinden" association.*
3. *Certificate issued by the "Macedonian Volunteers" association.*

These certificates were submitted in support of Ichko Boichev's application for a national pension³⁷. Elisaveta, his daughter, confirmed that his application was approved. However, he was granted a minimum pension hardly sufficient to make ends meet.

In order to form an objective assessment of the activities of IMRO in Pirin Macedonia, one needs to be aware of the organisation's ideological programme and to understand the specific conditions under which it operated. After the First

World War the Bulgarians in Vardar and Aegean Macedonia once again found themselves under Serbian and Greek occupation. The Pirin region of Macedonia was the only part to achieve complete liberation. As such it became the base for the liberation movement of the Macedonian Bulgarians led by the IMRO. It was completely natural given this situation that the Internal Organisation did everything it could to ensure the security of this base. They needed to protect it from political and social conflicts and as well as external anti-Bulgarian influence. For this reason the organisation did not permit any political parties to be established within the territory of Pirin Macedonia. They argued that the national energy and material resources of the population should not be wasted on party-political or partisan matters, until Vardar and Aegean Macedonia were liberated from Serbian and Greek occupation.

After the 9th September, the new communist government initially treated Ichko Boichev with respect. The pension which Ichko had been granted for his deeds in the national liberation movement in Macedonia and Odrin Thrace and involvement in the Ilinden Uprising was maintained. However, the conflict between Ichko Boichev and the new communist government developed as a consequence of the BCP's flawed policy on the Macedonian question.

After the Second World War the Bulgarian Communist Party and the Patriotic Front accepted the Greater Serbian policy of the Yugoslavian Communist Party with regard to the Bulgarian nationality and culture of the population of Macedonia. This policy was not only restricted to Vardar Macedonia. The government of the Patriotic Front even considered a policy of forcibly declaring all the Macedonian Bulgarians in Bulgaria to be Macedonians with a separate history and language, even in the Pirin region³⁸.

Unhindered by the Bulgarian authorities, emissaries from Belgrade and Skopje spared no effort in subjugating and exploiting the refugee organisations in Bulgaria for their

Greater Serbian and anti-Bulgarian campaigns for the purposes of "Macedonianising" the Bulgarian population in the Pirin region.

Some of the older IMARO (IMRO) activists resisted this Greater Serbian nationalistic and hegemonistic policy and condemned the mistakes made by the Bulgarian Communist Party in relation to the Macedonian question. These included A. Tomov, P. Deligradev, Hr. Ampov, Ichko Boichev amongst others. They found the courage publicly and resolutely to reject S. Nakovich's concept of "Macedonianism". They insisted that the Slav population in Macedonia was Bulgarian and that the concept of a Macedonian nation was just a cunning political trick used by politicians to advocate Serbianism in the aims of destroying all traces of Bulgarian culture and history in Macedonia³⁹.

In 1946 a census of the population in Bulgaria was carried out in support of this very detrimental anti-Bulgarian policy on the Macedonian question. The party issued an edict that the nationality of the Bulgarian refugees from Vardar and Aegean Macedonia in Bulgaria, as well as the Bulgarian population in the Pirin region should automatically (even forcibly) be recorded as "Macedonian". However, the reaction of the Bulgarians in Pirin Macedonia as well as the refugees in Bulgaria was openly hostile. The Bulgarians did not want to deny their Bulgarian names and vehemently opposed the concept of Serbian "Macedonianism"⁷.

Veneta Boicheva in her memoirs recalls the time when during the census, representatives of the authorities and the Central Committee of the Patriotic Front came to their house.

⁷ Even many representatives of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party at that time have admitted that during the 1946 census force was used upon the Bulgarian population in the Pirin region to make them register as Macedonians. This is a quote from such a document:

At the Xth plenum of the CC of the BCP on the 9th and 10th August 1946, Evtim Georgiev declared on behalf of the delegates from the Pirin Region: "We have given ourselves the task of imposing Macedonian consciousness upon the population..."

They were carrying blank questionnaires and insisted on filling them in for Ichko Boichev and the members of his family and registering them as "Macedonian" nationality. Ichko told them that he was sufficiently literate to be able to fill out the questionnaire himself. When he came to the question of "nationality", wrote "Bulgarian" and underlined it. – The representatives of the PF reacted sharply and said that this did not fit in with the party directive on the census in the Pirin region. Ichko in response to them said,

"I am a Macedonian Bulgaria and I have no intention of denying my nationality to anyone."

He also criticised the party and the government for making such a fatal political blunder in relation to the Macedonian question. The census officials reported Boichev's reaction to the authorities and, of course, they were unable to forgive such disobedience and the temerity to oppose the Bulgarian Communist Party.

At the end of July, 1950, Ichko Boichev in his capacity as a respected activist and participant in the Ilinden Uprising was invited by the Regional Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party to take part in a session of the presidium of the cultural centre to mark the 47-th anniversary of the Ilinden Preobrazhenie Uprising. However, that same evening, much to the astonishment of Ichko Boichev and his family, two militia officers arrived at their house with instructions from the Regional Directorate of the Ministry of Interior that they be expelled from the town. They told him that he and his family would be "voluntarily resettled" to the interior of the country.

When he asked on what grounds the authorities had taken this step, the militia officers replied that they were just carrying out the instructions of their senior officers and could not give him an answer. Ichko then turned to them with the words,

"History will judge you! And her judgement will be my resurrection!..."

Boichev, his wife Alexandra and their daughter Elisaveta were forcibly resettled to the village of Byala Cherkva, in Pavlikene region, where they spent four long years.

In his memoirs Ichko recalls these events.

“On the 1st August, 1950, I was exiled from Blagoevgrad to the village of Byala Cherkva, near Pavlikene. I had an invitation to take part in the presidium of the Ilinden celebrations for the 2nd of August. My wife and I and our youngest daughter left Blagoevgrad and settled in Byala Cherkva. We remained there until instruction No.418 was issued on the 03.02.1954 by the Ministry of the Interior in Sofia, repealing the expulsion order for me and my family”. During their time in exile our daughter Veneta, who was a teacher in Sofia, supported them almost entirely.

“We came back to Blagoevgrad. My home was being lived in by Mircho Iurukov, a party functionary and editor of the “Pirin News”, Ichko Boichev recalls in his memoirs. “Only after much wrangling did he move out of the house. Later my pension was also reinstated, but I remained very offended by my unjust treatment at the hands of the authorities in Blagoevgrad. I later received their apologies but this could do nothing to erase the four years of exile and the pain remained deep within my heart...”

Boichev wrote further in his memoirs, “In my many years of commitment to the cause as a rebel and chetnik, district commander, cooperative activist and deputy Mayor I have never been guided by material interests. As far as my strength and abilities have allowed me, I have always fought against oppressors for the prosperity of our nation. I have always aspired to be useful to Bulgaria and the Bulgarian people. I believe that I have worthily fulfilled my human and civil duty and that my contribution to the fatherland cannot easily be erased”.

Veneta Boicheva in her memoirs about her father recalls how two or three months before their family was exiled from Blagoevgrad, their lodger, a girl called Manka, had been

telling everyone around where they lived, "It won't be long now before I get their house and their vineyard". At that time Manka was working in the Ministry of the Interior and was on close terms with the director of the Regional Directorate. According to Veneta Boicheva, Manka was to blame for their expulsion to Byala Cherkva by making false accusations to the authorities against the old respected fighter for the liberation and unification of enslaved Macedonia.

However, the deeper reasons were much more obvious, Ichko Boichev, the honest patriot, was unwilling to accept the deeply mistaken policy of the Bulgarian Communist Party in relation to the Macedonian question.

With a bitter heart Ichko Boichev completed his earthly journey on the 17th January, 1960. On a cold winter's day a large group of relatives, close friends and grateful citizens accompanied Ichko Boichev on his last journey to eternal rest on the northern side of the chapel in the old cemetery in Blagoevgrad. A handful of his surviving comrades-in-arms attended the funeral ceremony.

Of the three priests invited to attend, only one had the courage to hold a Christian ceremony and sing the ritual hymns. There was no one bold enough to retell, even in the most general terms, of the tempestuous and heroic life of Ichko Voivoda, or to say a good word about this worthy man and patriot – a man who had devoted his entire life to the patriotic cause of Macedonian liberation...

No-one and nothing can erase the memory of the legendary voivoda from the collective conscience of the Bulgarian people, especially in the region of Blagoevgrad, where to this very day the older people still tell almost legendary stories about him... The name and the work of Ichko Boichev are and will be forever an example and legacy for Bulgarian generations to come of how they should love and serve their homeland.

It is the duty of today's generation to clean off the dust of oblivion accumulated over the years in the hearts and minds

of the Bulgarian people, and to remind ourselves of the names of our worthy patriots and to exalt them in the pages of our history. It is also our duty to speak of the heroic deeds undertaken in the name of the Motherland and to bow our heads before the dignity of their accomplishments. Thus do we dedicate this small book to Ichko (Hristo) Boichev, a modest and noble man, but also a hero who devoted his entire life to the service of national ideals. It was he, as we have already noted, who with the risk of his life on the 17th October, 1912, during the struggle for the liberation of Gorna Dzhumaya (present day Blagoevgrad) twice saved the town and its citizens from pillage and destruction. Once as voivoda on the 11th and 12th October, 1912 when he led his cheta in a savage battle against the Turkish troops in the Kresna gorge and cut off their retreat to the town. On a second occasion in November, 1918 when as district commander he did not permit the Entente (French, British and Senegalese) troops to be quartered in the town.

His deeds themselves talk of Ichko voivoda's charismatic personality and heroism. He lives in the memory of the nation. Boris Keremehiev, a close friend, said of Ichko Boichev, "His life as a revolutionary is well known to all the older people in the town. I do not know a more generous, kinder and more modest person than him. There were years when his family went hungry, but even then he was willing to give everything he possessed to people poorer than him. Everyone who knew him well, knew that about him". The contents of this book will acquaint younger people with him. They will learn from a life dedicated to the service of the Bulgarian people. Because a people which does not know its history and does not honour its heroes, "gradually loses its national identity".

Bibliography

1. Silyanov, Hr. *The Liberation Struggles of Macedonia*. S., 1933, v. I, pp. 349-351 and v. II, pp. 370-372; Illustration – "Ilinden", 1930, # 7 (27), p.; *Macedonia. Collection of documents and materials*. S., 1978, pp.630-631, "Pirinsko delo", #40, Nov. 29, 1992; *Encyclopaedia-Pirin district*. Blagoevgrad, 1995, p. 105. *The national liberation movement of Macedonian and Thracian Bulgarians 1878-1944*. S., 1977, p. 291, 298, 328, etc.
2. Interesting recollections of Ichko Voivoda recounted by his daughters Veneta and Elisaveta were recorded by the author.
3. The most significant of these are: *Picturesque notes*. S., 1949 (*Historical Museum-Blagoevgrad*), 3.2. Inv. #7603; *Picturesque note (Short autobiography)*. Blagoevgrad, 1984 (See *Picturesque note, Historical Museum-Blagoevgrad*, inv. # 343).
4. Kanchov, V. *Ethnography and Statistics*, S., 1900, pp.447-448
5. Vlakhov, T., *Kukush and its Historical Past*, S., 1963, p. 171
6. Krastiu Assenov is nephew of the legendary Hadzhi Dimitar. He was born in Sliven in 1877. He studied at Sofia University. In 1900 he became a teacher and revolutionary in Macedonia and Adrianople Thrace. Together with Y. Sandanski and H. Chernopeev, he participated in the capturing of Miss Ellen Stone, an American missionary, for whom IMARO received a ransom of 14500 Turkish liras.
7. Silyanov, H., *Quoted works*, v. I, p. 351
8. Hristo Chernopeev – a sergeant major in the Bulgarian army, born in 1863, in the village of Dermantsi, near Lukovit. Accepted into the Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary Movement in 1899. The next year he became a revolutionary in Macedonia and in 1901 he became a voivoda of the Kukush detachment, leading a battle in an unprotected snow-covered field against significant Turkish forces at the village of Bajaltsi. He became one of the most popular Macedonian voivoda after this battle. He died as an officer in the First World War at Krivolak in 1915. He is buried in Novo Selo, close to Shtip, Vardar Macedonia.
9. Vlakhov, T., *Quote works*, p. 213.
10. Paleshutski, K., *Yane Sandanski*, Blagoevgrad, 1982, pp. 18-19.
11. McDermott, M., *Biography of Yane Sandanski*, S., 1987, p. 183.
12. CDIA, f.1508, op.2, a.e. 541.

Hristo Grigorov
ICHKO BOICHEV
THE VOIVODA OF GORNA DZHUMAYA

Bulgarian First Edition

Translation
Dr. David Mossop

Editor of the Bulgarian Edition
Prof. Dr. Dimitar Gotsev

Publishing Editor
Pavel Slavyanski

Typesetter
Mariana Hristova

Format
16/60/90

Printed folios 4,25

Publishing House "Litse"

ISBN 978-954-9428-33-5



Hristo Genadiev Grigorov was born on the 14th of October, 1944, in Gorna Dzhumaya (current day Blagoevgrad). He studied at the Polytechnic High School and subsequently the Higher Medical Institute – School of Pharmacy, in Sofia. He began his career as a Master Pharmacist. He was initially a pharmacy manager and subsequently worked in the Pharmacy Directorate of the Ministry of People's Health where he was in charge of local pharmaceutical production. In 1973 he became representative of "Bristol Meyers", the American pharmaceutical company. Since 1987 he has managed "Medabik", the first Bulgarian–German Association. He has a postgraduate qualification in "International economic relations". Hristo Grigorov is also Chairman of the Supervisory and Management Council of Commercial Bank – Sredets, member of the Board of Directors of the Bulgarian-American Bank for Investments and Development, member of the Board of Directors of the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce, President of the Metropolitan Committee of the Bulgarian Red Cross. In 2013, Hristo Grigorov was elected for a third term as the Chairman of the Bulgarian Red Cross.



*A session of the Congress of the Seres Revolutionary District (1905).
Ichko Boichev is elected as the Voivoda of Gorna Dzhumaya.*



The voivoda Ichko Boichev.



Hristo Chernopeev's Struma regional cheta – Ichko Boichev is standing next to him in the centre – 1905



Welcoming the Gorna Dzhumaya cheta to mark the Hurriyet (1908) with Ichko Voivoda (third row, upper left), next to him is the Turkish Kaimakanin of Gorna Dzhumaya (7th row)



Sanda Stoilova Boicheva – wife of Ichko Boichev (1914)



Sanda and Ichko Boichev, Gorna Dzhumaya, 18th of January, 1914

Неврокопска Митрополия

Кръщелно

ВР 25

СВИДѢТЕЛСТВО

№ 25

Извлечение изъ регистра за ражданията за год 1911 № 93 на регистра.

Дава се настоящето на Викторъ Ичковъ Бойчевъ

Българинъ, православенъ изъ гр. Горно Джумалъ околия Горно
Джумалийска въ удостоверение на това, че той, споредъ регистритъ за
ражданията, е роденъ на 23-и день отъ мѣсець Май

Л. С. хиляда деветстотинъ и шестдесетъ година (1911)

отъ православни родители, Ичко Бойчевъ изъ

гр. Горно Джумалъ околия Горно Джумалийска и

законната му съпруга Санда Станислава изъ

гр. Горно Джумалъ околия Горно Джумалийска

На 23-и день

мѣсець Май 1911 година той

е кръстенъ по источно православния редъ въ Гръбвнъ св. Богородица

въ гр. Горно Джумалъ отъ Благовѣйнаго

свещеника Авраамъ Г. Младеновъ при възприемничеството

на Яне Сандански изъ с. Влахи (Мелишъ)

Гр. Горно Джумалъ, 30/VI 1911 год.

Авраамъ Младеновъ, Ичъ. Авра. Г. Младеновъ

Печатница Микоръвъ — Дупница.

Baptism Certificate of Victor Ichkov Boichev, the son
of Ichko Boichev, with his godfather Yane Sandanski.



The family of Ichko Boichev



МИНИСТЕРСТВО
НА
ВЪТРЕШНИТЕ РАБОТИ
НАРОДНОТО ЗДРАВЕ

ОТДЕЛЕНИЕ АДМИНИСТРАТИВНО-НАДЗОРНО

№ 4540

21 IX 1918

Г. СОФИЯ

До Господина
ХРИСТО БОЙЧЕВЪ

Съобщава Ви се Господине, че сте на-
значен за Окол. Началник на гр. Горна Джумая
съгласно № 1351 от 21 септ. т. година.



НАЧАЛНИК

СТЕТО

*Appointment of Ichko Boichev as district governor
of Gorna Dzhumaya (1918)*

А К Т Ъ

Днесъ 5-и Октомври 1918 год. гр. Горно-Джаумая, съгласно заповѣдта на Министърството на Вътрешнитѣ Работи и Народното Здраве отъ № 407 т. г. под № 454 съ която се уполнява досегашния Околийски Началникъ Димитър А. Поповъ по която причина е даде управлението на околията на новоназначения съ същата заповѣдъ Околийски Началникъ при Горно-Джаумаяско Околийско Управление Хр. Поитевъ, като вложилъ въ настоящия актъ първия отъ насъ предаде, а втория прие следниятъ нѣма:

1. Две табии прѣписки и
2. Единъ вѣдъръ

За удостоверение на горното се състави настоящия актъ въ петь еднообразни екземпляра, отъ които по едѣнъ на страницѣ, единъ за архивата на управлението, единъ за Струмянското Окрѣжно Управление и единъ на Министърството на Вътрешнитѣ Работи и Народното Здраве.

Прѣдалъ досегашенъ

Околийски Началникъ:

Получилъ назначението

Околийски Началникъ:



[Handwritten signatures: Dimitar A. Popov and Hristo Poitev]

Order approving acceptance of the functions of district governor.



*Ichko Boichev as district governor in Gorna Dzhumaya (1919)
together with General Vladimir Vazov*



*Members of the Gorna Dzhumaya municipal council (1929–1932)
Ichko Boichev is sixth from left to right – deputy mayor*



*Public figures participating in a voluntary work brigade in the centre
of Gorna Dzhumaya. Deputy-Mayor Ichko Boichev.*



*Ichko Boichev as the director of the Tobacco Industry in Gorna
Dzhumaya – 1925*



Headquarters of the 35th Artillery Regiment on the Seres Front during the First World War, June 16th, 1917. Ichko Boichev is the first standing, left to right. The picture was sent as a post card to his wife Sanda Ichkova in Gorna Dzhumaya.



Ichko Boichev with a group of public figures and municipal councillors in Gorna Dzhumaya among a crowd in the city square. The picture was probably taken during the 1930's. Ichko Boichev is the second right to left. The first (left to right) is Gyorchopopangelov, followed by Mikhail Yanev.

W 1437 N 26

Федерстонъ — Годлей

Председатель Английскитъ запасни военин.

А Н Г Л И Я.

Отъ страна на българското воинство приемамъ съ особена благодарностъ любезната Ви покана представи на българското запасно воинство да бждатъ гости на Британскитъ легионъ, и въ изпълнението на решението на българскитъ запасни воени делегати ще бждатъ: генералъ Вазовъ Владимиръ, почетенъ членъ на сгъза на запаснитъ офицери, Робевъ Иосифъ Председатель сгъза на запаснитъ подофицери, и Гиздовъ Георги Председатель на сгъза на военитъ инвалиди, секретаръ преводчикъ на делегацията ще бжде г. Викторъ Ичковъ.

МИНИСТЕРЪ НА ВОИНАТА

Луковъ Христо
ГЕНЕРАЛЪ МАЮРЪ

Документътъ се съхранява в Ний. музей
Владиславъ Върко и други



Order issued by the Minister of War, Hristo Lukov, approving a visit to England (at their invitation) of a delegation in 1936, led by Vladimir Vazov. Secretary-Interpreter — Victor Boichev, son of Ichko Boichev

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL-BLAGOEVGRAD
38 from Feb. 27, 2003

To.....
.....
Transcript excerpt

PROTOCOL

3

**FROM A MEETING OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL-
BLAGOEVRGAD,
HELD ON FEB. 27, 2003**

.....

Art. 6. Motion regarding the 125-anniversary of the Liberation of Bulgaria from the Ottoman oppression and the centenary of the breaking out of the Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising.

Rep.-K. Kastelova- chairman of KOKV

DECISION # 38

2. MC- Blagoevgrad agrees to the erection of monuments to Georgi Izmirliiev – the Macedonian, and to the Gorna Dzhumaya Voivoda – Ichko Boichev.

Chairman: /signature/ G. Vassev

True /stamp/

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL-BLAGOEVGRAD
137 from June 12, 2003

To.....
.....
Transcript excerpt

PROTOCOL

8

**FROM A MEETING OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL-
BLAGOEVRGAD,
held on June 12, 2003**

DECISION # 137

1. The municipal council of Blagoevgrad renames "Bistritsa" street, located in "Varosha" district from the Youth House to the house of "George Izmirliiev as Ichko Boichev street.

Chairman: /signature/ G. Vassev

True, /stamp and signature/



The monument to Ichko Boichev



The monument to Ichko Boichev – the Voivoda of Gorna Dzhumaya, was inaugurated on August 2nd, 2003, by President Georgi Parvanov of the Republic of Bulgaria, on the occasion of 100th anniversary of the Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising.



"Ichko Boichev" Professional Technical High School in Blagoevgrad



Inauguration of the memorial plaque in front of the home of Ichko Boichev the Voivoda of Gorna Dzhumaya, on the 100th anniversary of the Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising (1903).



"It is so lovely to see, mother,
and dear to see, mother, how
the rebels wear their capes,
mother, and carry their bandanas,
mother, and their revolvers..."

*Folk song dedicated
to Ichko Voivoda's cheta brigade*



Ichko Boichev

**IMRO's badge of honour bearing
the traditional motto "Freedom or death"
and the original ritual tricolour.**

**The silk ribbon in white, red and green
is a clear display of the feelings of all members
of the Macedonian Organization and of the people
in the three parts of Macedonia...**