EXTRACTS FROM THE MEMOIRS OF HRISTO SHALDEV:

Summary

The Slav-Macedonian Student Society in St Petersburg

Recollections of
Todor Alexandroff & Ivan Mihailoff

MACEDONIAN REVOLUTIONARY 1876 - 1962

I SCHALDEW

EXTRACTS FROM THE MEMOIRS OF HRISTO SHALDEV: MACEDONIAN REVOLUTIONARY 1876-1962

Prepared from his original Bulgarian hand-written manuscript

by Ilia Schaldew

and dedicated to the memory of his father

© Macedonian Patriotic Organization "TA" Australia Inc 1993

Printed MPOTAA Inc, Adelaide, Australia

ISBN 0 646 14906 7

PREFACE

I hope that a few introductory words may be of value to the reader. It is sad but true, that until reading my father's memoirs I had never understood the extent his whole life had been dedicated to the Macedonian struggle for freedom and independence.

While these summarized memoirs may be of limited interest to the general public, his complete memoirs (some 300 pages), which I hope one day will be published in their entirety, constitute a permanent and living historic record very relevant to today's debate on this subject. Although the title "Revolutionary" is quite fitting to describe my father's activities perhaps an even more appropriate depiction is that of a worker (*"Deez"*).

Finally I wish to express my thanks to Dr George Phillipou, Chairperson of the "Macedonian Patriotic Organization Todor Alexandroff Australia Inc." without whose help this publication would not have come to pass.

I Schaldew

CONTENTS

Summary of Memoirs 1

The Slav-Macedonian Student Society in St Petersburg 13

Recollections of Todor Alexandroff and Ivan Mihailoff 22

Acknowledgement of Hristo Shaldev's years of service as a teacher 30

NL, GE/566/93
26/9/94

I was born on 25th December 1876 in the picturesque village Gumendje, located in the beautiful and fertile valley at the eastern base of the Pajak mountains. Gumendje is encircled by vineyards, mulberry trees and a variety of mediterranean and other fruit trees. Its people who are Bulgarian, mainly work in the vineyards or the silkworm industry. Most of Gumendje's requirements for vegetables, corn and timber are met by the surrounding villages.

Along the "*Big River*", flowing down the nearby steep valley, are located 18 water mills, including one of a more modern design rebuilt in the 1890s but still, as for all the others, relying only on natural water energy. Until the 1860s Gumendje had a silk factory owned by a Jewish merchant from Salonika. The factory was subsequently purchased by the citizens and converted into a Bulgarian school. The town also had two other schools and the nunnery "*Zogravskia Metoch*". During the 1880s, after construction of a new Church in the town-center, a new two-story school was built for education of the Bulgarian and *Greekophile* children. However because the building was owned by the Greek Metropolit from Voden, the school later became exclusively Greek.

Gumendje had two churches, an older one used by the Bulgarians and a newer one frequented by the *Greekophiles*. There were also three monasteries ("*Metochs*") - Zogravski, Iberski and Bozigrobski - which all owned buildings and land.

During the Ottoman era, the Turks referred to Gumendje and the three nearby villages of Kriva, Baroviza and Zurna Reka, as the "*four Wakawski towns*", and granted them certain self-governing privileges as well as prohibiting any Turk to live there. In return for these Turkish concessions the towns' people had to supply the Turkish army of the Vardar valley area (1500 cavalry) with overcoats.

During the 19th century the citizens of Gumendje, which is within the Enidjevardar district, were the first to begin the religious struggle against the Greek bishop. Subsequently these activists, which included my grandfather (Risto Shaldev) were often imprisoned in Enidjevardar and Salonika, or other districts. Their release could only be achieved by paying their gaolers large bribes.

The townspeople were both religious and studious, and thus during the period 1850 to 1900 they sent their children to study in Gabrovo, Plovdiv, Salonika, Adrianople (Catholic high-school), Voden, Berne, Athens and Russia. Some of the students graduated from Universities in Bulgaria, Austria and Greece. Included in this list, amongst others, were Gono Mindoff (Moscow), Tanas Tankoff (Zagreb), Ivan Kandieff (Sofia), Dr Ivan Aleff (Athens) and the author (St Petersburg).

Because of Gumendje's productive agriculture yielding two harvests, grapevine and silkworm, and also due to the presence of the Silk-factory and the numerous water-mills, the townspeople were in a strong economic position. Furthermore as the town was far removed from the main thoroughfares, such as Salonika-Veles-Skopje or Salonika-Voden-Bitolia, it served as the commercial centre for all people in the Lower Boimia and Vardar regions. Accordingly this also increased its wealth and the diversity of its social life.

The magnificent landscape of the district have left an lasting impression in my mind and a deep appreciation of everything that I treasure about my country. Moreover the self-governing of the community, the elections of town-councils and mayors, the management of the properties of the church-houses, hotels, vineyards and mulberries by public auctions, the cooperative activities for the overall town maintenance, have imparted a sense of democracy which has been a guiding factor throughout my life.

While my primary and secondary education occurred in Gumendje, at the insistence of my grandfather, I was sent, jointly with two other local boys to study in a theological college in Istanbul. It was on 17th August 1895, the third day of the Church holiday, when the town fair is visited by many people of the region, that the head teacher of Enidjevardar, Grigor Mokreff, a guest of my uncle (also a teacher), inducted me into the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization. In that first political lecture I heard he told me:

Because we, the members of this Organization being Bulgarian, are fighting for an autonomous Macedonia, some prominent officials of the Exarchate and some chorbadjis refer to us as separatists. If our belief in the importance of achieving the freedom of Macedonia is classified by them as separatism, then we accept this charge and its political consequences

At that time I was in my last year of High-school, but two days later I was bound for Istanbul.

When I reached Istanbul my first concern was to form a Macedonian revolutionary group within the college. Its first devoted members were: Hristo Mancheff from the village Woiniza-Veles district; Spas Zwetkoff from the Resen region later to be a teacher in the Adrianople district; P Deleff Karkaliasheff from the village Bogdanzi-Gevgeliia district; and Milan Jordanoff from Veles. During the Christmas vacation we attempted to raise the patriotic spirit of our classmates in the boarding house by staging the play "*The Pretty Bogdanka and the Assassination of the Consuls*". We also established a secret library of nationalistic books including the works of Zahari Stoyanoff, Hristo Boteff, Luben Karaveloff, Ivan Vazoff, the newspaper "*Justice*" and others. These were all purchased from the monies raised by the choir I conducted and which sang at christenings, weddings, masses etc.

During the following college year 1896/1897 and while rehearsing the stage play "*Prince Potemkin*", the boarding house's master learnt about the existence of the revolutionary group and the library. The master after consultation and with the approval of the Exarchate, expelled all the group's leaders, which included myself from the college. Accordingly in February 1897 we were all returned to our respective home-towns. Two months later in Salonika, Ivan Nikoloff suggested to me that I frequent his bookshop, which was a meeting place for members of the Organization and a centre for the exchange of correspondence. At that time I was lodging in one of the boarding houses of the Greek ladies Andromacha and Kaliopa, the place where Damian Grueff, the district's school inspector, was also staying. This provided me the opportunity to meet all the members of the Central Committee of the Organization. Shortly afterwards carriers working routes through Malashevo, Struma and the surrounding Salonika area delivered a lithographic machine, sent by Gotze Delcheff from Kiustendil. I carried it to my room, and from there the revolutionary publication "*Buntovnik*" began to be printed.

It was in June when I and my fellow expelled collegians were asked by the Exarchate to return to Istanbul and take the final examinations. My notice was a telegram delivered by the Salonika Exarchist vicar. Being unsure I asked Dame (Grueff) for advice on whether I should go to Istanbul or stay in Salonika. In reply he said

It is better to work within the legal framework, when that is possible. Therefore you should return to Istanbul to complete your final exams and also to ensure that the Istanbul region is commanded by one of our good men

The examination was not held in the seminary, but within the school of the church "*St Stephan*", located in the suburb called "Phener". Afterwards we were requested to enrol as teachers and to state our preference for locations. While his Excellency had promised me an appointment in Gumendje, the existence of a teacher vacancy in Phener caused my actual placement in Istanbul for the next two years.

During the my first year I became a member of the *Istanbul Committee*. This was also at a time when D Makedonski, the publisher of the newspaper "*News*", was killed by the Organization's gunmen on orders from the Central Committee. I held a position against such killings for both tactical and humanitarian reasons. Makedonski had promoted a policy through his newspaper of obedience to the Sultan. However after the press publicity concerning the killing, many rank and file members of the Organization were outraged by this incident and angrily accused the *Istanbul Committee* of complicity.

The executive committee of the *Istanbul Committee* assigned me responsibility to coordinate the activities of all the Macedonians living in Istanbul. Most of the Macedonians were involved in the production of dairy products and were scattered throughout the suburbs of this large city, located on the coastline of the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus. However as I was living in the suburb of Phener, and a singer in the local church to which most of the Macedonians came every Sunday or holiday, I had the opportunity to contact and organize the majority.

During the 1898/99 school year, I was given direct charge of the Committee's activities. With the support of Nano Stoijanoff and many others, our operations spread throughout the whole Istanbul peninsula. Many teachers from the Bulgarian villages along the Blacksea coast and also from Strandja came to us for consultation and advice. However during August the Organization became embroiled in a matter which ultimately caused my departure from Istanbul.

It was after the 15th of August that Ivan Nikoloff, a member of the Central Committee, arrived in Istanbul on route to Sofia. Being a Sunday I went to Pera, the European suburb in Istanbul, to collect the mail. When I returned to Phener the pastor Ivan informed me that Ivan Nikoloff was looking for me. I therefore returned to Pera and met him in the hotel "*Macedonia*", located near the Galata college. In the evening we went for a walk to the beer-gardens Shishla and Beiolu, then returned to Pera to watch the first act of a stage play in the theatre "*Tokatlian*". By 11pm we were back at the hotel where Ivan revealed the reason for his visit. He told me that the Central Committee had made a decision that Bishop Grigori of Bitolia should be killed. I immediately became agitated and thought to myself:

To kill a Bulgarian Bishop, whose appointment (by the Sultan's decree) was realization of the people's hopes and aspirations for thirty years? The Sultan would never issue another decree for a Bulgarian Bishop. And moreover what would be the judgement of the Western World on such an action? No, this should not happen

I explained all these points to Ivan and asked him:

What possible transgressions of a Bishop could justify such a ruthless act, and furthermore why did you not carry it out in Bitolia or on the way to Istanbul? Why does it have to be in Istanbul the seat of the Bulgarian Exarchate?

Because I did not want it to appear I was refusing an order from the Central Committee, I told Ivan I would carry out the Central Committee's decision once I had received official confirmation in writing. Until then I would have the Bishop placed under constant surveillance. Furthermore I told Ivan I would immediately send a letter to the Central Committee in Salonika, and he indicated he would do the same. When I returned to my home I wrote the letter that night and next morning forwarded it via Austrian post. The following day Ivan Nikoloff departed

for Sofia. After several days Lubomir Stoicheff (IMRO's messenger) arrived in Istanbul and following discussions between us the conflict between the Organization and the Exarchate was resolved.

Conditions for me in Istanbul steadily deteriorated. It became obvious that I would either have to go "underground" or depart for Bulgaria. However shortly afterwards I learnt about the possibility of obtaining a scholarship to study in Russia, and so I opted for this course of action and journeyed there in 1899.

During my period of study in Russia I organized groups in Kazan, Kiev and Odessa for the specific purpose of promoting the Macedonian liberation cause both verbally and through the press. I also had contact with the Ukraine revolutionaries, and on two separate occasions was permitted to attend their secret congresses held in Poltawa, and on one occasion given the liberty to present a discourse on the Macedonian Question. I still had direct contact with IMRO's Central Committee in Salonika, and in March 1903 we sent them 1100 gold napoleons, the proceeds of a social "*Macedonian Evening*" attended by the St Petersburg upper class and Russian academics.

Near the end of January 1903 we received a letter stating that an uprising was imminent in Macedonia and all volunteers should make for Sofia. The group from St Petersburg comprising five Macedonian and one Russian (Nikolai Blagowestenski) student, arrived in Sofia near the end of June 1903. The Russian, Nikolai, and I immediately departed for Kiustendil where we joined Dimiter Mirizchieff's band (*cheta*). We transversed the greater part of the Palanechian region and Nikolai often commented that "*we have not seen any Turks at all*". At one stage we diverged to Kratovo to meet the 3 bands of N Pushkareff in the mountain valley Maliste, and together we all proceeded to the Skopje district. Thereafter Mirizchieff decided to return to Bulgaria, however Todor Panitza, three others and I, excluding Nikolai, chose to remain and transferred to Pushkareff's band.

After travelling for several nights we arrived in the village Divle (Skopje district) where we delivered munitions and explosives. We then proceeded to the monastery "*St George*" of Vetren near Veles, and were there when the *Ilinden Uprising* was announced. Our band immediately entered into two actions: dynamiting the railway line alongside the Vardar river near Novacheni, and attacking the tunnel-bridge complex where the Pchinja and Vardar rivers met. The destruction of the railway line was only partly successful, as just several carriages of a goods-train were derailed. At the tunnel we encountered problems as our men attempting to dynamite the large bridge were observed by the Turks and after a short exchange of gunfire we had to retreat.

After passing Kojlia, and making for the monastery of Vetren, we fought a continuous running-battle with the Turks until dark, only managing to withdraw towards Divlia under cover of darkness. We then linked up with Bobi Stoicheff's band and moved further north to the high ground of the monastery Gmuresh, where the Turkish army and cavalry encircled our position. This was the most intense engagement of our campaign, lasting some 16 hours from morning to late in the evening. Our casualties however were only one killed and two wounded. The Turks who mounted several major attacks on our positions suffered over one hundred dead and wounded, according to the villagers. During the night we retreated to Divlia, then bypassing the Turk positions headed towards Kratovo and Kumanovo.

We finally arrived at the monastery Pchinia, located in the Kozik mountain range, and here we were well fed and sent the wounded and messengers to Krania. We intended to destroy the railway line near Diliani, however were told by informants it was under constant surveillance by Turkish calvary. We therefore decided to enter Serbia, which could be achieved without detection by either the Serbian or Turkish border guards. While on Serbian territory one of their border guards politely asked to move further inland so that the Turks would not observe our presence. The two wounded men were admitted to the hospital in Vrania, and we recrossed the Serbian-Bulgarian border near Bosilegrad and camped close to Kiustendil, from where the bands dispersed.

I returned to Sofia where N Pushkareff asked me to assume command of the "*Palanechko*" cheta in Kiustendil, as its present leader had been wounded. In an action that involved five bands we planned to occupy the "*Krivorechka*" region. However on crossing the border the large group was observed by the Turks and after two battles we were forced to retreat back across onto Bulgarian territory. Pushkareff's and my band crossed the border again, but were detected near Karamanzi and during this month of October engaged the Turks in our last skirmish of the Ilinden campaign.

It was near the end of October 1903 when we arrived back in St Petersburg, via Kiev, but without our friend Milan Stoicheff - a final year medical student killed near Kochani as a member of Hristo Chernopeev's cheta.

I graduated during the summer of 1905 and departed for Istanbul to secure a position as a teacher. However on arrival in Istanbul harbour I was immediately arrested and imprisoned in the gaol "*Bujucksaptie*". After about ten days, during which time I was interrogated, I was released on the condition I returned to my hometown.

The conditions in Gumendje were intolerable. Hilmi Pasha had allowed his local authorities to support the Greek "*andartes*" in their persecution of the local Bulgarian population. The Turk's accomplices were killing, even in broad daylight, the peasants and townspeople, burning the water mills and destroying the vineyards and mulberry trees. The Bulgarian population of Boima and Vardaria, which covered the land from the Paiak mountain to the walls of Salonika, was so terrorized that the people only ventured outside the settlements to work the fields in large groups.

On 9 October 1905 I received my appointment as a teacher in Adrianople but when I went to Enidjevardar to arrange for a travel permit this was refused. On my way home that evening I met a group of townspeople aroused by the murder of the well known Bulgarian merchant Tano Zarinoff by Greek "*andartes*" in the marketplace. A meeting was held in the rooms of the old Bulgarian Church and it was decided to organize two protest delegations. The first would approach the Lord-mayor of Enidjevardar to convey the unbearable situation in the town and district caused by the Greek "*andartes*". The second, and smaller group in which I was included would attempt to meet Hilmi Pasha and the Councils. Receiving the necessary clearance to travel to Adrianople I left without delay.

The political atmosphere in Adrianople was more relaxed, the police force polite, and the movements of the population in the town and villages not so restricted. It was as if Adrianople belonged to a different government. This probably reflected the more conciliatory manner in which the "*Valia*" (senior Turkish official) enforced Turkish government policy. The conditions for the Bulgarians in Adrianople and surrounding districts contrasted sharply with the unendurable situation I had left in Macedonia.

The Exarchate appointed me to teach the history of Bulgarian literature, a subject I had not specialized in. Accordingly I sought guidance from Professor Jasimirski of St Petersburg. The philologist G Grasheff taught the Bulgarian language in the 4th and 5th grades, while I also had to teach Eastern Orthodox singing to all classes. The Exarchate assigned me to teach literature because of my 300 page thesis "*The Spiritual Condition of the Bulgarian during his Bondage under the Turks*", which had been highly regarded by Professor Iv Pilmoff and the Academic Council. For the students' final written exam I proposed three titles to the Exarchate: (1)- *The Bulgarian Literature during the Century of Simeon.* (2)- *The Importance of the History of Paiisi for Bulgaria's Revival.* (3)- *How the Bulgarians living under the Ottoman Empire may be assisted to ensure their Economic and Religious Salvation.* The Exarchate chose the latter title. The high-school graduates performed quite well on this topic and the school council jokingly remarked my marking of the papers was almost as extensive as the exam itself.

With respect to my teaching of Church singing I departed somewhat from that normally expected. When in St Petersburg, and due to the influence of our musician Al Nikoloff, I became taken by the idea of re-establishing Old-Bulgarian singing because of its original religious significance. On this subject I have written several articles published in "*The Musical Newspaper*" and published in 1916 "*Psalm Mass of the Old and New Bulgarian Songs*". In this endeavour I was encouraged by some national songs I had heard sung by the people of Lozengrad, which were similar the Old-Bulgarian songs. Accordingly the pupils of the higher grades sang the popular Old-Bulgarian instead of the usual Mass songs. Through the pupils singing in the Churches of the different districts I was able to open a dialogue with the local worshippers and recruit them into the Organization.

The boys high-school "*Peter Beron*" had eleven staff members. We shared a close existence although we had not known each other previously. Some of my fellow teachers were Peter Alekoff, Peter Andreeff and Stoyan Simeonoff who were also members of the Organization. I also was elected to the committee as the treasurer, the chairman was P Waskoff and the secretary S Simeonoff. Waskoff had been at the school for a considerable time and enjoyed the respect of the whole community. Although by nature he was hot-tempered, he exercised self-control and was very tactful. His areas of expertise were mathematics and physics. Being a moralist who did not drink nor smoke he promoted the concept that committee members should be role models for the community.

After the "*Preobrazhenski Uprising*" coordination of activities in the Adrianople district, like that for other revolutionary districts, was difficult. Furthermore it was particularly important to organize the East Thracian region as it was not included in the "*Mürzsteg reform program*". Since the Central Committee had effectively been relocated to Sofia, management of individual districts depended almost entirely on their respective committees. The decisions of the "*Rilskia Congress*" had not been reported to the districts. Accordingly it became necessary to hold a meeting of the legal and illegal representatives of the district. This occurred during the Christmas vacation and was attended by Waskoff, Boiko Chawdaroff (just arrived in Adrianople) and myself. Chawdaroff, who I met for the first time, impressed me with his intellect and organizational skills. His report confirmed the dis-organization within the district and the immediate necessity to correct the situation before further deterioration occurred. Thus it was agreed that the District committee should coordinate the activities of all official and unofficial local committees. Furthermore it was also decided that I would start publication of a revolutionary newsletter. Helped by the primary school teacher, M Maleef, we began to print the newsletter "*Struggle*" using lithographic equipment hidden in the "*Ildaramskata Bulgarian Church*". Maleef contributed poetic prose while I prepared the main articles and information using the pseudonym "Lefter". The

editing of material was performed in the high-school without knowledge of its head, N Waskof. The newsletter was only published thrice, and I believe copies were forwarded by an Adrianople Bulgarian merchant to the Ministry of External Affairs.

I was also given the responsibility of organizing the suburb "*Saruk-Magdanskata mahala*", situated near the fortifications of Adrianople. According to P Waskoff, the residents of this area were not strong supporters of the Organization. With a number of the older students I started to attend service in the local Church and sing during Sunday service. I managed to convince the members that the finances of the school and Church would benefit by cultivating some land. A number of the younger boys took up this challenge and planted onions, later these same boys became active workers within the Organization.

During the summer holiday period I journeyed to Dedeagach, staying for about three weeks. The committee was in disarray and unfortunately I could not improve the situation. I re-established contact with previous members of the Organization, both merchants and teachers, but they were all very apprehensive.

When I returned to Adrianople the headmaster handed me a letter from the Exarchate which informed me I had been relocated to Skopje. I am not certain of the reasons for this transfer but I suspect that the headmaster had been displeased with production of the newsletter "*Struggle*" being associated with the high-school. Since East Thrace was not part of the "*Mürzsteg reform program*" (only Macedonia), perhaps a different strategy was necessary and this should have been considered by the committee after my departure. In Dedeagach, where the Church dignitary was Pastor Nikoloff, the chairman of the local Organization and Boiko Chawdaroff were assassinated during the following summer.

I decided that in Skopje I would maintain a low profile and not join the Organization activities. However after being there less than four weeks a Local committee member informed me that the District committee had ordered that I assume leadership of the Local committee. The other members of this committee were Stephan Petroff, Atanas Jakimoff Albanski, Hristo pop Pandoff (teacher in Kavadartsi) and Jancheff from Shtip who failed to attend a single meeting. The region's *voivoda* was Mishe Rasvigoroff, who I knew since the 1903 Uprising. During a reconnaissance trip to Shtip, he was killed, or more precisely burnt to death in a house set on fire by the *askers*. Because of the ongoing harsh oppression of the Bulgarian population by the Turkish administration no investigation was possible, however it was rumoured that Jancheff was involved.

The organizational network of the district was in chaos and the *voivodas* nominated from Sofia were not always wisely selected. To destroy the Organization's activities the Turkish government condoned the actions of Serbian "*chetnizi*" who attacked Bulgarian villages, murdered village officials and demanded that the people swear allegiance to "Patriarch" (Greek) rather than the "Exarch" (Bulgarian). The village militia were constantly engaged in resisting these Serbian forays, which consumed most munition stores. The desperate nature of the predicament necessitated a meeting of representatives from all Local committees in the district. As a result I was delegated to journey to Sofia and secure appropriate material assistance for the district. I arrived in Sofia shortly after D Petkoff was assassinated, and when most Macedonian activists had been arrested or had fled into the countryside. However I made my submission the Minister of External Affairs on the following points: the policy of Hilmi Pasha and his attitude towards Macedonian unity; the cooperative Greek-Serbian military action to control Porechieto, Asot, Struma, Muglen, Lerin and Moril and thereby isolate northwest and southwest Macedonia and destroy the Organization (a plan which was later realized by the Belgrade and Athens governments in the Balkan Wars). Finally I stated that the survival of the Organization was totally dependent on the help of the Bulgarian government. These arguments were accepted and Michail Savoff, the Army Minister informed me that material would be sent to the district through Boris Sarafov.

At the same time (1906) we finally received the new decisions and regulations of the General Congress held at Rila monastery in 1905. However these regulations appeared more applicable for a government and not a clandestine revolutionary organization such as IMRO. Because the new regulations aimed at establishing numerous smaller independent "cells" many *voivodas* attempted to interfere in the activities of school bodies, commercial grievances and even divorces! In the absence of astute judgement such endeavours would be detrimental to the reputation of the Organization. Resolution of these matters was the domain of local councils or the Metropolit's deputy and not the Organization. Furthermore the new regulations required that a General Congress be held every year, something that failed to eventuate in 1906 and 1907 because of the political situation and the extra independence afforded each district.

All these inadequacies formed the basis of a meeting held by the District committee and which finally decided to

1. re-establish, with modification, the old centralized system.
2. elect a Central Committee located within the territory of IMRO to deter the activities of other separatists.
3. coordinate the activities of the Organization and the Exarchate, each working within its own special realm.

4. intensify IMRO's activities to secure introduction of the "*Mürzsteg reforms*" and thereby finally the autonomy of Macedonia.

That summer vacation was spent in Gumendje where I received notice from the Exarchate that I had been dismissed from my teaching position and banned from any position within Exarchist districts. Later I learnt that Hilmi Pasha had decreed that sixty Bulgarian teachers had to be removed from the Ottoman Empire. I went to Sofia where I secured a position as tutor at a Teachers college, which later became the No. III high-school. The military coup in Turkey (Young Turks Revolt-1908) occurred during this period.

I was next offered by H Lafchieff, head of the Exarchist teaching division, a position as manager for all schools in Prilep. I remained there until 1912 when I transferred to the Salonika girls high-school immediately prior to the outbreak of the Balkan War.

A few days before the declaration of hostilities between Bulgaria and the Greece-Serbia alliance (2nd Balkan War-1913), a meeting of all teachers was convened and the impending crisis explained with the strong suggestion that we immediately return to Bulgaria. At this meeting I stated that the Macedonian intelligentsia should stay with its people and we should all face this situation together. The war started on 16 June 1913. After the capitulation of the Bulgarian Salonika garrison, the few remaining teachers, the Archimandrite Evlogi, his secretary Hristo Bostandgieff and the Bulgarian citizens of Salonika were arrested. They, together with prisoners from the whole of Macedonia were placed on ships and exiled in the Greek Islands. My group which comprised some 1000 people was sent to the island Itaki in the "Pontiiskoto More". Together with another 1000 soldiers we remained there until mid November 1903. My internment left an indelible memory of the fact that during all this time we only heard the cursing and swearing of our new masters and not a single word of sympathy. The following translation of a passage written by a Turkish officer is most appropriate:

The Greeks take pride of being the bearers of Christianity in Eastern Europe, but christian morals and religion have not touched their souls

After my release from exile, on the pretext that I was migrating to Russia, I immediately journeyed to Bulgaria where my wife and four young daughters joined me one month later.

During the school year 1913/14 I taught at Aitos and in the following year relocated to the high-school in Kiustendil. When WWI started I was mobilized and served in the 5th Macedonian regiment under the command of Boris Dringoff. After WWI I continued my teaching at the girls high-school and later in the Institute for Teachers. At this time the Serbian (Yugoslavian) press started to publish articles suggesting I was responsible for the re-establishment of IMRO in

Vardar Macedonia. I was relocated to Pazarjik near Plovdiv and later to the No. III high-school in Sofia, where in 1934 I retired after a 34 year teaching career in Macedonia, East Thrace and Bulgaria.

In Sofia, for many years I was secretary of the "*Ilinden Organization*", editor of the newspaper "*Ilinden*" and later the magazine "*Iliustratsiia Ilinden*". For four years I was also editor of the magazine "*Geographic Reading Matters*" which produced sixty issues of enjoyable reading matter for the people.

I am saddened that I cannot spend the remaining years of my life in Gumendje, and at the same time I am indignant that the youngest generation of Vardar Macedonia has disavowed both the achievements and self-determination of their fathers, grand-fathers and great-grand-fathers and has been misled by the Serbian theories of Professors Novaković, Cvijić and Belić.

Sofia, 18th August 1947.

★ ★ ★

THE SLAV-MACEDONIAN STUDENT SOCIETY

IN ST PETERSBURG

It is worthwhile to elaborate on a minor incident associated with the Serbian embassy that occurred during ticket-sales for the Macedonian social. Marin Stamov, the future Bishop Makariy of Nevrokop, and I were assigned to sell tickets in a district where the Serbian embassy was located. According we decided to call on the Consul and offer him the opportunity to purchase tickets. The door-man, coming from the Consul's office said that he would receive us and to proceed up the stairs. Stamov however remained in the main waiting-room.

After I had entered his office and explained the purpose of my visit, possibly as a reaction to the recent Russian press descriptions of the "*Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising*" as an act of oppressed Bulgarians in Macedonia and the preparations for a larger uprising he casually stated "*Why haven't you organized the Social jointly with the Serbian students?*". I replied that the holding of a music-dance Social was raised in passing at a meeting of the *Bulgarian Student Society* as a means to help the Macedonian refugees as a result of the fighting in the Dzhumaia and Petrich districts. It never occurred to anyone to ask other student organizations for support. However if the *Serbian Student Society* undertook a similar venture and requested our assistance we would only be too glad to help. The consul then asked where I came from and I answered "*South Macedonia, Salonika district*" to which he retorted "*Then you should be aware how many Serbian teachers, priests and civilians IMRO has murdered*". I informed him I did not know the answer, but I knew that whoever attempted to obstruct IMRO in its liberationist goals, no matter what nationality they were, would be punished according to their degree of guilt. However I reiterated that the Social was a humanitarian undertaking, to mainly help the desperate during the forthcoming winter, and that is why we came to offer tickets. He replied "*No I'll not come to your Social, nor will I buy any tickets*". I said goodbye and returned to join my colleague. On the way he jokingly said "*It only remains for us to visit the Turkish Embassy and the day will be complete!*"

As far as I could ascertain Professor Novaković is the founder of the theory that the Macedonian Slavs lack a national conciousness and may be *moulded* into "Greeks", "Serbs" and "Bulgarians" as long as some suitable cultural characteristics exist amongst them. This theory was later adopted by Professors Cvijić and Belić. As a Serbian diplomatic representative in St Petersburg, Novaković probably also promulgated his theory amongst members of the Slavonic Humanitarian Society and some public figures. I suspect he was implicated in the postponing of our Social from during the Christmas holidays until the 25th of January. Novaković's ideas and influence can also be credited with the formation at that time of the Slavomacedonian Student Society in St Petersburg, which comprised young Macedonian students educated in Serbia.

* * *

When in the autumn of 1902 the *Vrhovists* and in defiance of IMRO, launched the "*Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising*" which was restricted merely to the Gorna Dzhumaia and Petrich districts, the Russia press unanimously declared it an act of Bulgarian Macedonians against the Turkish rule and their miserable life. The newspapers also noted that the people were preparing for an even larger rebellion in the near future which would include the whole of Macedonia.

Then after celebrations to commemorate the battle of the "*Shipka Pass*" the two Russian foreign ministers, Counts Lamsdorf and Ignatiev, met in Sofia representatives of the Macedonian immigrants, the Macedonian intelligentsia, social workers and representatives of IMRO who handed each of the two distinguished guests their exhibitions and maps of Macedonia and the Adrianople district. It was then that several students, sons of *Serbomans* from NW Macedonia, who had completed their primary and secondary education in Serbia and were pursuing their higher education in St Petersburg, inspired by hatred for everything Bulgarian decided to form a Slav-Macedonian Student Society (SMSS). The aim of this society was to promote through conversations with Russian public figures, journalists and Slavophiles that the Macedonian Slavs are not Bulgarian but represent a separate South Slavic people.

I regard the "originator" of this thesis as being Professor Stoyan Novaković, who as the Kingdom of Serbia's diplomatic representative to St Petersburg publicised this view among the members of the Slavonic Charitable Society. Perhaps that is why this latter society allowed its premises to be used by the small Slavomacedonian group of students to hold meetings along similar lines to those by Serb, Bulgarian and Czech students. This theory of Professor Novaković was later scientifically presented by Professors Cvijić and Belić to advance Serbian propaganda in NW Macedonia, where it actually succeeded in influencing a certain part of the population within the sub-districts of Porochieto, Gorni and Dolni Polog, Azot and the regions about Kumanovo.

Being aware of the position of prominent Russian and other Slavists and Historians on the question of the language and ethnicity of the Macedonian Slavs, and as secretary of the Macedonian group in St Petersburg, I did not attach any particular importance to the establishment of the SMSS. This lack of concern was influenced by the very small number of individuals involved and the limited scholastic abilities of the instigators with respect to an understanding of questions of a historic and linguistic nature.

However, I subsequently pressured Milan Stoilov, a first year in the Military Medicine academy, to attend the second meeting of the SMSS and obtain information on both its aims and number of members. He went and was actually

elected temporary secretary of the meeting. Stoilov reported his findings to a branch meeting of the Organization of Macedonian Societies and left a written report for the archives. His report stated that the second meeting of the SMSS was held on 29th December 1902 and included the following agenda items:

1. Election of a vice-president (G Konstantinovich) and librarian (Rusalenchich) to the Executive committee; both proposed and elected by the meeting.
2. Defining the borders of Macedonia as based on the ethnographic map issued several years previously by the Slavonic Charitable Society.
3. To send a letter of thanks to the Slavonic Charitable Society for allowing its premises to be used for the meeting.
4. To inform by letter the Bulgarian, Serbian and Czech student associations concerning the formation of the SMSS.
5. Each member was to select several characteristic Macedonian words to be forwarded to the secretary of the SMSS, who would enter them in a special note-book comprising four column headings - Macedonian, Bulgarian, Serbian and Russian.

This report highlights several salient features. The SMSS was established in St Petersburg in December 1902 and had so few members present at its inaugural meeting that an election of an Executive committee was deferred to the second meeting. Furthermore at that second meeting it was decided to compile in a special note-book specific Macedonian words existing in every speech and ethnic community, which the promoters of the SMSS would use to influence Russian academics and public figures that the language of the Slav Macedonians is closer to Russian than Bulgarian or Serbian.

Although small in number, the members and activities of the SMSS became subject to the private concerns of members of the Macedonian Liberation Society (MLS) because the SMSS represented a new group which directly opposed the national unity of the Macedonian Slavs. The same Slavs who a century before had re-awaken to reject the Phanariot spiritual and Turkish political bondage, relying only on their own efforts and paltry material means to build and support national schools, and to arm for a final struggle against the centuries old political and economic oppression. Furthermore on its inception the SMSS hastened to conspire with the Turkish government, in particular the policies of the chief inspector of Macedonia - Hilmi Pasha - who was quick to support any enterprise which had a divisive potential towards the activities of the Bulgarian Macedonian community represented by IMRO. And later I shall detail how the "creators" of the SMSS led by its president D Chupovski, colluded with the Turkish embassy in St Petersburg to be given the right to travel freely throughout Macedonia as provocateurs, and to also have contacts within Sofia in an attempt to recruit devotees to their idea amongst the Macedonian Brotherhoods.

However at that time our group was completely preoccupied planning and preparing an important fund-raising Macedonian social - for example tickets, artists, musicians, conducting and drawing two lotteries before the end of May, collecting old items and selling them to pawnbrokers. We also constantly searched for old rifles to forward to IMRO, collected voluntary donations for the same as well as recruiting and training volunteers for the imminent uprising in Macedonia. Naturally under these circumstances the MLS has little time to dwell on the SMSS. However when the *Ilinden Uprising* commenced and had continued for several months the Russian newspapers, written by the editors and their special correspondents described the rebel activities as the dissatisfaction of Bulgarian Macedonians and Macedonians in general at Turkish rule. Thus these articles effectively countered any activity of the SMSS with respect to their verbal national-separatist preachings.

It was one year later that the true underlying ideology of the SMSS and especially that of its president Dimiter P Chupovski and his 5-6 followers was uncovered. Near the end of February 1904 a student member of the Moscow MLS came to St Petersburg and showed us a letter that Chupovski had sent to Nikola Nichota, a Moscow University student and a Kutsovlach by ethnicity. I made a copy, returned it to the student with strict instructions that it be delivered to the addressee by whatever means were most appropriate. Chupovksi's letter is of interest not only for its contents but also because its style is comparatively correct Bulgarian literary language and not the author's *Myak* speech. The full text of the letter is reproduced below:

St Petersburg, 17 February 1904

Dear Kolio,

When I found a free minute after receiving your letter (from 15/02/1904) I decided to answer you straight away. Firstly I am glad for your success as regards the scholarship and secondly about your gratefulness to me and your commitment to our common idea. Be assured that on my part for everything that you wrote steps will be taken for your benefit. Your self-realization in the Slav Macedonian nationality (as far as it is sincere) can only bring gladness to me and every sincere patriot and nothing else. I will be very pleased if you successfully fulfil the assigned task concerning the Serbian propaganda in Macedonia and its destructive influence amongst the people.

I cannot accept the contention that in Moscow there is no basis for the SMSS idea to develop. I think it is inertia, mainly because you as a student of only two months could not meet or become acquainted with all circles amongst whom our idea could evolve. Also because you had associated with Serbs, Bulgarians and Macedonians who are fanatical with their own ideas and Russians who have become accustom to viewing a Macedonian as a Serb or a Bulgar and not as a representative of a different tribe. However when you begin to move within the Russian Slavophile community and cultivate in them the notion that the Slavs of Macedonia are

not the same as Serbs and Bulgars but a separate tribe representing something different from them both, then the people and many representatives of its intelligentsia will come to recognize themselves as sons of a Slav Macedonian tribe which has closer links to the Russians than to the Serbs and Bulgars. Then we may be assured that many Russian activists will change their first impressions to support a Slav Macedonian identity. The same strategy should be used to influence the Macedonian, but do not reveal this idea to everyone. Initially raise it as an obscure concept and then let develop under its own momentum.

As regards myself, as you say they both (Bulgars and Serbs) have a bad opinion about me but it does not concern me as they detest the idea and its adherents. And tell me who likes me here from the mentioned idiots.

You ask about my visit to the Turkish embassy. We had an audience with the first secretary, who is also an adviser to the Consul, and expressed our views regarding Macedonia - that we want to be delivered from the mercy of the Serbs, Greeks and Bulgars and to live in peace under the protection of the PadiShah. He thanked us for such consideration and recognition for the Turkish Empire ideas. He also advised us to describe in detail our aims regarding the Macedonian Slavs - in a written submission as a petition or memorandum to be presented before the Sultan. We decided to follow that course, but because of the unexpected news from the Far East we postponed in time so that the Bulgarians and Serbs did not find out and rebel against us.

At the last meeting I read a composition on "About the centuries-old identity of the Macedonians" and on Sunday will read Filcho (now he is not Nikolich but Nikolovski), under the title "What reasons have the Russians and travellers or ethnographers in general to confuse the Macedonian Slavs with the Serbs and Bulgars". He became friendly with me and now regularly attends our meetings. The same also applies for Mr Jolevski.

Today I received a letter from Marko, his address is - 33 Liulin Planina, Sofia, c/- Mrs Donka Stanisheva. See that you become acquainted with Nikola N Durnovo, a Serbo-Grecophile and Bulgarophobe. I think he lives in Moscow and agrees with our idea. You only have to tell him that in Macedonia there are no Serbs or Bulgars. Give him the encouragement that the pure, real Slav Macedonians thank him for his impartiality.

D Chupovski

On the last page of the copy (p8) dated 10/06/1904 I scribbled the following
To Filip Nikolich from the village of Bukovo (Bitolia district) the Turkish Embassy has issued a travel document for unrestricted travel throughout Macedonia.
And later under this note the reply to my question to Chupovski on what he wanted at the Turkish Embassy and why he slandered me, he answered
I do not want you to think that I spied on you for the Turkish ambassador. I like idealistic people, I respect them and I would not allow such a thing to occur.
However he could not readily conceal his inner emotions, expressed by his paled face.

Dimiter Chupovski is originator of the SMSS in St Petersburg, its president and the main exponent of the theory on Slavomacedonism by Professors Cvijić and Belić. Chupovski was born in the Kichevo district, son of a Serboman family of the *Myak* tribe. He had his primary education within his native village, and his secondary schooling in Serbia from where he left for advanced studies in St Petersburg. There he was awarded a scholarship in the St Petersburg Theological Academy about a year before I arrived. He lived with the academics and not in the dormitory (*Schilseburg No. 4*) specifically reserved for the South Slav students. Amongst the latter was Peter Rosich, the future Debar-Kichevo Bishop Varnava and later patriarch of the Serbian church, who in many arguments about Macedonia categorically insisted its people were Serbian. Chupovski was of medium build with a thin gaunt face which resembled that of a Tatar. He had a thin short moustache, a short thin dual beard and a characteristic "sly" smile. He kept his distance from both us and the Serbs and led a somewhat isolated existence. His academic prowess was only average but he was a hard and diabolic man. The Serbian propaganda had instilled in him hatred for everything Bulgarian. He maintained a totally biased knowledge of history and ethnography although he expressed himself in essentially correct literary Bulgarian. Concerning the nationality of the Macedonian Slavs he flatly declared that foreign propaganda had made them into "Bulgars", "Serbs" and "Greeks" - whereas they are Slav Macedonians with their own identity and language.

Chupovksi completed his studies one year before me and disappeared and I had no knowledge of his whereabouts. The society he established in St Petersburg represented only a small group of 5-6 individuals, former Serbian students divested of any ethnic sense. Faced with the fact that Russian journalists and academics highlighted the Bulgarian nature of the Macedonian Liberation Movement and above all the power of IMRO, this group proceeded to preach an opposing view that the Slavs of Macedonia have for centuries their own identity and language. And in their zeal to promote this cause this small group of "intellectuals", led by their inspired leader, dedicated themselves to directly serve the Turkish Embassy in St Petersburg (see D Chupovski letter). Chupovski and his fellow members of the SMSS presented themselves to the first secretary of the Turkish Embassy, declared their allegiance to the PadiShah, and asked for deliverance from the Bulgars, Greeks and Serbs.

Our colleagues in Kiev had warned us that two Macedonians with Turkish passports, who they considered as Turkish spies, regularly commuted between Odessa and St Petersburg, stopping in Kiev and Moscow and always asking for assistance from the local Slavonic Charitable Organizations. However we knew that those two individuals were non-student members of the SMSS in St Petersburg. One was called Trayko and the other was the brother of Chupovski who I had seen

several times as a guest at meetings of the organizations of Bulgarian students. From Chupovski's letter we knew that he had had correspondence with a Marko living in Sofia as well as Donka Stanisheva. As a reward for the SMSS's service to the Turkish Embassy, we are aware that Filip Nikolich from Bukovo had received a passport to travel throughout Macedonia.

All this information prompted the MLS to prepare a detailed report on the St Petersburg SMSS's activities for IMRO's Central Committee, and requested any necessary action, if required, to be taken. The report was sent to Salonika and a copy to the Exarchate for information. Unfortunately the carbon copy was not preserved in the MLS archives. As far as I may recall within it was detailed - the formation of the SMSS, its aims and composition, the connections with the Turkish Embassy, the sending of their followers into Macedonia to promulgate the notion of Slavomacedonism, their decision to print 1500 primers in the local dialect with which to teach the children of the 34 villages working for the establishment of an independent Macedonian Church and the willingness to work for the protection of the Turkish Empire. We received a reply from Salonika that we should collect information about the SMSS individuals travelling to Macedonia - names, places of birth and to intercept their letters and be wary they do not do the same to us. In their letter, our Salonika brothers amongst other things state the following *"It appears your Slavomacedonians are real Turkish spies"*

The members of the SMSS, or more specifically its president D Chupovski, had described me to the secretary of the Turkish Embassy in such a manner that when in September 1905 I arrived in Istanbul to secure a teaching position in Macedonia I was arrested and after questioning by the head sergeant sent onto Salonika. There I was kept more than two weeks before being sent to my native village, Gumendje, without any rights to travel to any of the neighbouring villages or towns. These ordeals refute Chupovski's claim to me that he was not a "spy". The situation was now such that my return to my Fatherland meant that contact with my colleagues in St Petersburg was no longer possible.

Surveillance of the SMSS's activities however continued by my colleagues in St Petersburg and predominantly by the Central Bureau of the Federated MLSs in Russia. That bureau under its administrative powers not only could view the actions of the Slavomacedonians but also could influence Russian Slavists, historians and journalists to write about the ethnic picture of Macedonia and the national belonging of the Macedonian Slavs, to discuss the introduction of the Mürzteg reform proposed by the foreign ministers of Russia and Austria-Hungary which represent financial, judicial and administrative changes within the geographic borders of Macedonia. In the introduction of such reforms I could foresee changes

as a result of the *Ilinden Uprising* leading to self-government of this enslaved and predominantly Bulgarian territory and a the resolution of the Bulgarian question.

Unfortunately subsequent historic events favoured the enemies of Macedonia. Ten years later Macedonia was partitioned and the largest parts were added to the territories of Serbia and Greece. The Yugoslav and Greek politicians and statesmen did not abandon their imperialistic policies during the two world wars. The Greeks by nature of the Greco-Bulgarian Agreement for the exchange of minorities succeeded in expelling the greater part of the Bulgarian population from Aegean Macedonia. The Yugoslavian politicians willingly enlisted the support of the Slavomacedonists to help their chauvinistic policy in the Balkans and the denationalization of the enslaved Bulgarian population in Vardar Macedonia.

★ ★ ★

RECOLLECTIONS OF

TODOR ALEXANDROFF

&

IVAN MIHAILOFF

TODOR ALEXANDROFF

During that same fatal month of December 1907 I became acquainted with Todor Alexandroff, who until recently had been a teacher somewhere in the Burgas region. I was introduced by Hristo Matov on the footpath in front of the *Shouman* bar and gave them my address and invited them to come to my home as my guests.

After a short time Todor came by himself and we discussed at some length the situation within Macedonia and the faction struggle in Bulgaria. At the end he asked whether I would agree to visit the official regional committees in Salonika, Skopje and Bitolia and explain to them the necessity for a general congress. Without thinking I agreed, even though I was one of the expelled teachers from Macedonia and most likely would be followed throughout my journey by the Turkish police.

Subsequently an authorization was published in the Government Gazette that as a Bulgarian citizen I had right of travel beyond its borders. Later on Todor informed me that there was no further need for my trip because the problems had been resolved in another way.

* * *

After lunch I went to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to meet N Milev. In his office I found G Bazhdaroff, T Alexandroff, K Parlitcheff and two other men. I began discussing with the first that we should be working towards the autonomy of Macedonia as a geographic whole when he interrupted me with the words "*Do you know what autonomy means?*". To which I replied "*I know, but let us substitute that meaning with another that of an independent Macedonia*". Afterwards we all assembled in the room adjoining Milev's office, and I proceeded to describe the plight of the population in the Macedonian border areas and what I had instituted so far to eradicate the smuggling and looting there. Todor told me we would soon meet in Kiustendil, words which brought some satisfaction since it meant he would be assuming general leadership of the interior.

Later in the evening I met Panche Mihailov, and during the conversation he announced that he wanted to enter Macedonia clandestinely. I promised my full cooperation and now regarded him as an follower of our cause. He was a journalist-reporter at that time.

* * *

In Kiustendil I met and described my journey from Gorna Dzhumiia to Todor Alexandroff who had just arrived from the interior. He said he would be returning to Sofia for urgent work, possibly staying for some time and that I might also be called to go there. He then left.

In the early spring of 1920 Ivan Brlio arrived, and informed me he was heading for the Shtip district. Before he left I ask him to keep a ledger of all expenses and income so that he could provide a report when he came back. On his return he gave a complete accounting and what remained he distributed amongst his men. I told him that such a distribution of surplus funds should not be repeated as all the fighters on leave have access to restaurants that provide free food. He was upset by my advice but still remained the same Brlio.

For the interior departed another three new detachments, those of Mitre Opilski, Pancho Mihailov and Lazar Divlenski. The latter was the father of a large family of young children and I advised him against going. He refused and headed for the Skopje district. To Kumanovo went Krsto Lazarov where he fought several battles with police and army detachments.

When Todor Alexandroff had returned to Sofia I received a message from a former Exarchist teacher in Kochani that three Croatian deputies expressed a willingness to meet him. They wished to discuss procedures to unite the activities of the Croatians and Macedonians against the hegemonistic position of the Serbs in ruling the Kingdom of Serbo-Croat-Slovenian. The names of the three parliamentary deputies were not revealed to me. I was happy to receive this information in expectation that any future union between Croatians, Macedonians and Slovenians would severely counteract Serbian chauvinism and ultimately eliminate it. I immediately wrote to Todor and sent the letter by special courier. However he was not in any hurry, not even replying what answer I should give the teacher intermediary. It seems he was particularly pre-occupied with questions concerning the emigrant organizations and the relationship of the government towards them.

* * *

Before my conversation with Giorche, Todor Alexandroff had gone into the interior for a second time and now contacted me from Sofia and asked I meet him. At this meeting he informed me that an agreement on the Macedonian Question and a general understanding had been reached between IMRO and the government of Stamboliskii. However the exact nature of the agreement was not revealed to me. Todor Alexandroff simply instructed me to meet with the chief of the General Staff, Topaljikov if I remember correctly. The latter told me that the military contact in

Kiustendil would be the chief of the garrison Colonel Zahov with whom the IMRO representative should liaise.

When I returned to Kiustendil I proceeded to immediately introduce Simeon Georgiev to Colonel Zahov. This took place in the city park during the evening on a festive day. Subsequently Zahov met me one day in the square fronting the Library and told me it would be to my advantage if I made personal contact with Alexander Dimitrov, who often could be found in his ranch near the city. I replied that I saw no reason for such a meeting, however if as a minister he wished a meeting he only had to invite me. No meeting subsequently occurred as a consequence of this indirect invitation. Generally I maintained a tactic to appear as a legal activist in the Macedonian Liberation Struggle - as a member of the Brotherhood Organization and as a teacher.

* * *

During the spring of 1924 I met Todor Alexandroff and his wife Vangelia in the home of Toma Bayaltsaliev, which was situated on the corner of Salonika St and '*Hristo Botev*' Boulevard. When Vangelia saw me enter the passage she called to Todor who meeting me at the door said

Are you satisfied with my declaration for which you had written me from Pazarjik? But I tell you that the Serbian public dignitaries will not consider these declarations - the worse it will be for them. The important issue is that these declarations are directed to the Yugoslav and Western European politicians and public figures and they establish how IMRO agrees to lay down its arms and lead the Macedonian community in a legal struggle for party-political freedom and national emancipation.

The second topic we discussed concerned the fighters in the Petrich district and I confronted him directly

Don't you feel the time has come to dispense with those helmets and uniforms which our fighters wear so provocatively in the Petrich district? The time is overdue for them to be seen as civilians and real revolutionaries and not some legion which only appeals to Alexo Pasha and G Atanasov. These actions irritate the Bulgarian government and only impress the foreign observers.

He acknowledged my argument and added that it would happen but not straightaway.

I continued to converse only on this subject, when without explanation he remarked that quite soon he would be making a trip throughout western and central Europe. I stated that because of the current prevailing interest within the European community and its governments concerning the Macedonian Question his initiative would be beneficial for our liberation struggle. Moreover I mentioned he should show some reservation with the Italian and German officials and employ a more

open and direct approach with the English and French. This was to be my last meeting with Todor Alexandroff who always extended me an audience whenever I requested one. Of the fact that he would be stopping in Vienna for a conference with people from the Third International and D Vlahov, now a member of the clique established in this capital termed the "Federalists", to whom had also been drawn another IMRO Committee member, P Chaulev, Todor Alexandroff made no mention. Then again perhaps this event happened by chance or unintentionally.

During the latter half of May 1924 the newspaper "*Ilinden*" published information from the "*Times*" (19 May 1924) which stated that members of IMRO's Central Committee and representatives of the Third International had met in Vienna to discuss the Macedonian Question. Furthermore the "*Times*" notes that even though IMRO is a nationalistic association it is doubtful whether it can prevent most *Macedonists* who are influenced and swayed by the promise of Russian assistance, from voting for the communists in the pending Serbian parliamentary elections.
As is obvious the confidentiality of both the meeting and discussions which occurred on 6 May 1924 were not kept.

A abbreviated manifesto based on the drafted protocol appeared on 15 July 1924 and subsequently in "*Ilinden*" (No.1, 2 August 1924). The latter edition was confiscated by the police by order of the Sofia government. Because of the immense displeasure of the government and a majority of the Bulgarian community, Todor Alexandroff and Alexander Protogerov, whether for invented or tactical reasons, in a declaration issued 9 August 1924 repudiated the manifesto saying their signatures were forged. This matter and several others are the main factors contributing to the tragic death of Todor Alexandroff near the village of Lopov by assassins sanctioned by the jealous Aleko Vasilev and the vain G Atanasov. Todor Alexandroff and Protogerov were travelling to a regional Congress to report on the manifesto and other IMRO business.

I am fully convinced that the death of Todor Alexandroff was engineered by foreign agents and carried out against all the rules, practice and morals of IMRO so that it may not only be "beheaded" and its unity broken, but also that it may be subordinated to outside factors.

★★

IVAN MIHAILOFF

The assassination of Todor Alexandroff profoundly affected the organization both within and outside Macedonia, but the Gorna Dzhumiia affair convinced them that IMRO could withstand such major assaults and immediately respond to punish those who sought to undermine its role. Accordingly the loyalty of the rank and file members to IMRO was maintained for a decade.

This unity was illustrated at the IMRO General Congress held in the first half of February 1925 at the village Serbinovo, Gorna Dzhumiia region. I attended this congress in my capacity as editor of the newspaper "*Ilinden*", but with the full rights of a delegate. After normal procedural matters and discussions on altering the IMRO constitution a new Central Committee was elected - Alex Protogerov, Georgi Pop-Hristov and Ivan Mihailoff; and as members of the Foreign Committee - Georgi Bazhdaroff and Kyril Parlitcheff. The Congress defined the responsibility of the Central Committee was to represent the collective ideology of IMRO as exemplified by Todor Alexandroff before his death.

However within the Congress proceedings several unsatisfactory decisions were either perpetuated or adopted. First, the practice of the Congress members appointing a "Foreign Committee", an idea originating from the 1905 Congress, was not altered. Even though the concept of two separate committees effectively undermined the supreme authority of IMRO's Central Committee. Second, a proposal of P Shandanov that all individuals who had complicity in Todor Alexandroff's murder be identified and punished was accepted. A further decision was that all the leading personnel of IMRO and the "voyvodas" be paid an appropriate wage for their expenses, as one of the voyvodas Ivan Brlio said "*the wage could be like older times*".

* * *

During the first months of 1927 I went to Petrich to visit my brother-in-law. Here I met Giorche Vandev, a regular *voyvoda* in the Salonika district. He invited me to his home to discuss in private some important matters which had arisen. I accepted and proceeded to his house. There I learnt about the subversive activities of Protogerov with respect to Ivan Mihailoff. It appears Protogerov had contacted Vandev and asked him to befriend Mihailoff so he could keep a record of his movements. I saw letters which indicated that there could no longer be a working relationship between the two members of the Central Committee. The courageous and unpretentious Vandev, although flattered by the prospect of becoming a future Central Committee member realized that not only was an improper course being followed but one that potentially might destroy the unity of IMRO. I advised him

to maintain his objectivity on organizational matters and to accept the decisions of the forthcoming Congress when ratified by the majority of delegates present.

The dispute between Protogerov and Mihailoff became even more intense when the Foreign Committee representatives Georgi Bazhdaroff and Kyril Parlitcheff with the support of Naum Tomalevski proposed that in future both the Central and Foreign Committee members be pre-selected and their appointment merely sanctioned by the General Congress. Mihailoff opposed this amendment because it effectively rescinded the role of the General Congress as the supreme body of the movement. The matter was debated at a joint meeting of the Central and Foreign Committees and added as a supplement for consideration by all delegates at the next General Congress, which from then on began to be continuously postponed.

In my opinion the real reasons behind this dispute were several. First, Protogerov was fearful that evidence would be uncovered linking him to the assassination of Todor Alexandroff following the decision of the 1925 Congress on this matter in which Protogerov was discredited. Second, the Foreign Committee representatives had grown accustom to and therefore wanted to continue and maintain their affluent lifestyle. Although three or four special meetings were held to resolve this dilemma, no compromise could be achieved.

In one of these meetings, I am think it was the final one, Ivan Karajov a teacher from Gorna Dzhumiia took part. We were students at Istanbul then colleagues at St Petersburg where he studied at the Conservatorium. He was also a member of the local Macedonian Students Union and finally a fellow teacher at the Salonika Girls High School where we became friends. After the meetings he would visit my house and explain the attempts to resolve the issues but always expressing his doubts that a compromise could be achieved because of the stubborn position of the Foreign Committee members. He also used to attend private meetings with Bazhdaroff who lived close to me. At our final meeting he said "*reconciliation cannot be achieved*" and asked "*how would you settle this dispute?*". I answered that its only resolution lay in all members of both parties attending and stating their arguments before a General Congress of delegates. Anyone not present would be noted and asked to answer for their behaviour. He looked me straight in the face and without comment on my suggestion said "*farewell*" and departed for Gorna Dzhumiia.

During the initial stages of the "special meetings" when major efforts were made to resolve the stalemate between the leaders of IMRO, I learnt that Ivan Mihailoff was in Sofia. Through his associates I asked for a personal meeting which eventually took place at George Kulishev's house in the "journalists" suburb.

When I entered the yard Kulishev and wife, who were going to the city, told me Mihailoff was waiting inside. I rang the door-bell whereon I was led to a room where Mihailoff was sitting at a writing table. As I entered he stood up and offered his hand. On the writing table I noticed a pistol, an indication of the instability of these times. I sat on the closest chair to him and immediately began to discuss the issues which brought me here and occupied my thoughts after the meeting with George Vandov. I explained:

I have documented evidence that Alex Protogerov pursues a secret plot against you. Perhaps you engage in a similar plan against him. This is no good and will reflect badly on the overall affairs of the Liberation struggle. Make every attempt to resolve your differences and if that is not possible then minimize the effect of those differences. I regard it as my duty to tell you these matters and plead with you to heed me, and not let the situation deteriorate to the extreme.

During our conversation Mihailoff assured me he would pursue all paths to resolve the issue. And indeed as the future showed, Protogerov agreed to resign as a member of the Central Committee and announced his retirement from active duty. But the dispute involving selection of the Foreign Committee representatives remained and re-emerged with added vehemence, until the fateful date of July 1928 when Alexander Protogerov was assassinated.

★ ★ ★

№ [redacted]

Ний Борисъ III

съ божия милость и народната воля

Царь на Бѣлгаритѣ

Въ знакъ на НАШЕТО особенно благоволение наградяваме

учителя въ III. Софийска мѫжка гимназия

Христо Шалдевъ

съ офицерския кръстъ

отъ нашия

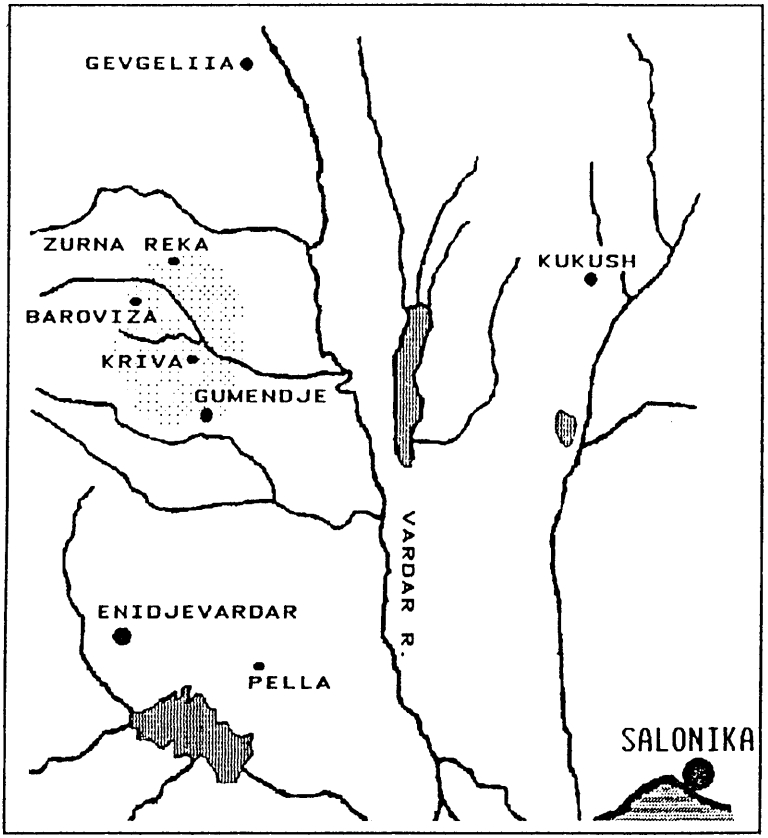
Народенъ орденъ за гражданска заслуга

Заповѣдваме да му се даде настоящата ГРАМОТА скрепена съ печата.

София. 22. юний 1929 г.

Канцлеръ на Орденитѣ: [signature]

Секретарь: [signature]



Gumendje, birthplace of Hristo Shaldev, and the surrounding towns located within Aegean Macedonia

ISBN 0 646 14906 7