

VIA: air mail

DISPATCH NO. 104-5418
22

CLASSIFICATION

TO : Chief, FDP
FROM : [redacted]

DATE: 20-16
**RETURN TO CIA
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SUBJECT: GENERAL- Operational
SPECIFIC- Escape of Seven Bulgarian Refugees
Reference - [redacted] 4934, 5310, 5311, 5309, 5065, 5066, [redacted] 629

1. Attached herewith is the combined explanation of subjects' activities prior to their escape to Greece. The men were individually interrogated by [redacted] and [redacted] in order to get an organized report on their activities and to check their individual statements against each other in an effort to find out if any of the individuals may be a Bulgarian agent. They were also interrogated to ascertain their future possible operational use. The report was prepared by RAJBER. Their individual reports will be pouched shortly.
2. It should be noticed that there appear to be several illegal groups in the mountains around the Plovdiv area, including a so-called "Dorjant Group"; however, none of this information has been confirmed thus far.
3. While several arrests have resulted from subjects' escape, it has not been ascertained whether any of the arrested persons have been Bulgarian I.S. agents, nor has it been ascertained as yet whether any of the above men are also Bulgarian I.S. agents.
4. The three Paltakov bodies and the two Nikolov bodies have expressed a willingness to undertake missions into Bulgaria. Their PPOs have been forwarded to headquarters for that reason. In order to properly evaluate their operational potentials and to formulate operational plans, plus preventing them from getting contaminated in the Lavrion camp, it is requested that they be put in safehouses where they can be properly handled, bearing in mind the views presented in the preceding paragraphs. In the meantime the bodies will be individually evaluated and every effort will be made to pick up any additional information bearing on the security factor.

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FORM NO. 51-28
MAR 1960

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5. It is presently visualized to place the Feltakovs and the Nikolovs in separate safehouses. If a sound operational plan is formulated for each group, a project outline will be forwarded soonest, bearing in mind that we can hold one member of each group here as a hostage in order to be reasonably sure that the men who go on a mission will not double-cross us.
6. If permission to move the men to safehouses is granted, it is requested that the necessary expenditures be charged to [MOL] until a project outline, budget and PRQ's Part II are forwarded. o
7. Request operation's cryptonym.

LBJ

Lloyd K. Desmond

Attach - Escape of Seven
Bulgarian Refugees

Wash-2
File-1
Ex A-1

KAPK

APCK

SUBJECT: Escape of Seven Bulgarian Refugees

REFERENCE: FOA-a-5310; 5311; 5309; 4934

1. The following seven Bulgarian refugees arrived in Greece 21 June 1951:

| | |
|----------------|------------------|
| Petur NIKOLOV | Stevan PELTEKOV |
| Ivan NIKOLOV | Zdravko DAMJANOV |
| Petar PELTEKOV | Spas RAIKIN |
| Boris PELTEKOV | |

2. After studying the Greek report and the report of our Kavalla sub-station (FOA-A-478), it was decided to interrogate all seven of the refugees again individually with the help of GASP and GASP/8 to check their stories, analyze their accusations, and to determine their operational possibilities.
3. To make the story easier to understand, the seven persons may be divided into three groups:
 - a. Three Trudovaks who wanted to escape to Greece: Stefan PELTEKOV, Zdravko DAMJANOV, and Spas RAIKIN.
 - b. Ivan NIKOLOV and Petur NIKOLOV, members of an alleged anti-Communist group in the Plovdiv area which helped the Trudovaks to escape.
 - c. Petur PELTEKOV and Boris PELTEKOV, the father and uncle respectively of Stevan PELTEKOV, who served as intermediaries between the Trudovaks and the anti-Communist organization in order to arrange the escape of the Trudovaks. They became so involved arranging the flight that they had to flee themselves in order to avoid arrest.
4. RAIKIN and DAMJANOV, two close friends from the Plovdiv area serving in the same Trudovak unit in Feeder, decided to desert and escape to Turkey, the nearest non-Communist country. In March 1951 the two Trudovaks were transferred to a Trudovak unit in Balcik, where they became friendly with another Trudovak, Stevan PELTEKOV. PELTEKOV wanted to escape to Greece. PELTEKOV was sure that he could get the assistance of his father, Petur PELTEKOV, a farmer in Branipole, and Vasil LAZAROV, his brother-in-law, who was a non-commissioned officer in the 9 Infantry Regiment in Plovdiv. Since RAIKIN and DAMJANOV were unable to organize a safe escape to Turkey, they decided to join PELTEKOV in his flight to Greece.
5. Since the winter of 1950 Stevan PELTEKOV had been urging his father to help him to escape to Greece, Petur PELTEKOV then approached Vasil LAZAROV, a non-commissioned officer whose wife is Maria PELTEKOV, the sister of Stevan. LAZAROV agreed to help and made contact with Stevan in order to

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signals his escape to Greece. From that time all correspondence with Stefan concerning the escape was carried by Vasil LAZAROV and his wife, Maria. Maria sent her brother a civilian suit, and the father sent him 5,000 leva. By the end of April 1951 LAZAROV informed Stefan that he had found a guide who would take him to Greece if Stefan could come to Plovdiv before 7 May 1951.

6. The three Trudovaks decided to leave, and on 6 May they deserted their unit. They traveled on foot to Varna, and from Varna to Plovdiv by train. They arrived in Plovdiv on 7 May without incident. They were met by LAZAROV and his wife, and they were then taken to a hiding place outside the city where they could be contacted at night by one of LAZAROV's associates who would provide food and weapons. Because of confusion in recognition signals, no contact was made during the night of 7 - 8 May 1951. Therefore, on 8 May the Trudovaks went to Plovdiv to see LAZAROV. On this trip the Trudovaks met Boris LAZAROV, Stefan PELITZOV's uncle. The Trudovaks, accompanied by LAZAROV, his wife, Maria, and Boris PELITZOV, left Plovdiv immediately and went toward a safer hiding place near the village of Markovo. This same day they came in contact with the alleged anti-Communist organization, and from the contact many misunderstandings arose which led to numerous arrests, and to many changes in the escape plan.
7. According to statements of Petar and Ivan NIKOLOV, there is at least a rudimentary anti-Communist organization in existence in the Plovdiv area. The NIKOLOV brothers were initiated into the organization in March 1951 by one Angel KRISTOV, a farmer, who is allegedly the head of the organization in the village of Markovo, Plovdiv district. There were similar groups in other villages. The village groups received their orders from the district headquarters in Plovdiv. One Angel OKANOV, apparently plays an important role in the Plovdiv organization because his authority extended over the Markovo village group. Contact between the Plovdiv headquarters and Markovo was maintained by Angel OKANOV and Angel KRISTOV. Vasil LAZAROV was also a member of the Plovdiv group in spite of his pro-Communist past. LAZAROV was probably the leader of the anti-Communist organization in the 9 Infantry Regiment, if that unit had an organization. The organization is allegedly in contact with some Turkish service.
8. In the mountains in the Plovdiv area there were several groups of rebels called Gorjani. There are supposed to be 50 to 300 Gorjani in the Lestensko Mountains. They allegedly had a clash with regime forces during the night of 19-20 May 1951. Another group of four rebels had a clash with police in the Ferdinandovo village area. In both cases there were casualties on both sides. These "Gorjani" groups allegedly are under the anti-Communist organization (which may be called Nova Republika). Contact with the group in the mountains is maintained by Hristosov and Tiliav OCUROV (Lina), a woodcutter from the village of Isver, Plovdiv district.

ZAMK

9. Although LAZAROV stated that he had a guide available, he actually did not have a guide at his disposal, nor did he have any personal contact with the "Gorjani". He may have reported to the underground group that the Trudovak deserters were to arrive in Plovdiv. The underground organization may have decided that the three young men would be a valuable addition to their strength, especially since they had been compelled to live illegally and would fight for their lives. The underground organization may not have been sure that the Trudovaks would be willing to join the Gorjani instead of going to Greece, and they may have decided not to say anything to the Trudovaks or to Petur and Boris PALTSEV, the father and uncle of Stevan PALTSEV, and to present them with a fait accompli. They could say that there was no guide to Greece available, but a guide could be found to take them to the Gorjani.
10. During the night of 8 May Petur NIKOLOV hid the deserters in a hiding place near the village of Markovo. He gave them rifles, ammunition (allegedly obtained from sympathetic soldiers in Plovdiv), and some food. The following day, 9 May, another member of underground in the village of Markovo, Rivan Todorov Stojanov, visited them and showed them how to operate the weapons they had received. The same day the Trudovaks were taken by Petur NIKOLOV to a place called Gola Mogila which is in the mountains about twenty kilometers south of Markovo. Waiting for them there were Vasil LAZAROV and his wife, Maria. Gola Mogila was supposed to be the final hiding place until their departure to Greece. Until his arrest, Vasil NIKOLOV was providing the group with food. After NIKOLOV's arrest, the group was given food, very irregularly, by Boris PALTSEV.
11. Vasil LAZAROV and his wife tried all day 10 May to persuade the Trudovaks to join the Gorjani because there was no guide available to take them to Greece. The Trudovaks refused the suggestion emphatically and insisted that they wanted to flee to Greece only. LAZAROV left them with the promise that he would find a way to organize the escape and that he and his wife would join them.
12. For several days the Trudovaks were left at Gola Mogila without any contact and without food. They lost confidence in LAZAROV and decided to go to Markovo and Plovdiv to find Stevan PALTSEV's father and uncle. On 14 May they met Boris PALTSEV in Plovdiv. PALTSEV told them to return immediately to Gola Mogila and he would bring them some food the next day. The following day Boris brought them food.
13. On 16 May Ivan NIKOLOV brought a guide, Vasiliev Mirov, to Gola Mogila who was supposed to take the Trudovaks the following night to the Gorjani. The Trudovaks, not having a guide to take them to Greece and being unable to remain alone in Gola Mogila, agreed to join the Gorjani. The next night no guide came, and the Trudovaks later learned that he had been arrested. The Trudovaks were now desperate, and they wandered

about between Gola Mogila, Plovdiv, and Markovo looking for help. On 17 May they were persuaded by Vasil LAZAROV to return to Gola Mogila to wait for a guide. The same day LAZAROV was arrested, and on 22 May his wife was arrested. The Trudovaks were told about the arrests by Peter PELTEKOV who visited them at Gola Mogila on 22 and 26 May. Peter PELTEKOV then assumed the task of finding a guide to take the Trudovaks either to Greece or to the Gorjani.

14. The Trudovaks remained at Gola Mogila until 7 June. On 7 June Boris PELTEKOV came and told them that they could hide in NIKOLOV's home for a while. They then went to Ivan NIKOLOV's home in Markovo and learned there that Petur NIKOLOV had been arrested on 5 June, and that Vasil LAZAROV had betrayed all of them. Stevan PELTEKOV and Soas RAHEDI returned immediately to Gola Mogila, while Zdravko DANJANOV went to Branipole to alert Petur and Boris PELTEKOV.
15. As a result of their aimless wandering about, carelessly exposing themselves to the sight of many persons, even without a betrayal the police in Plovdiv would have become suspicious. The Plovdiv police had also probably received a request from the Trudovak unit to locate the deserters. Therefore the arrest of Vasil LAZAROV was very natural, and the arrest of Miliev GITEV and Petur NIKOLOV was a natural consequence of the interrogation of LAZAROV. On 22 May Ivan NIKOLOV was arrested because of the Trudovaks but he was able to free himself the same day. After two days in jail, Petur NIKOLOV admitted his connection with the Trudovaks and he agreed to turn the Trudovaks over to the police. It is surprising that the police gave him the time and opportunity to warn the other members of the plot.
16. On 8 June Ivan and Petur NIKOLOV joined the Trudovaks at Gola Mogila and decided to flee to Greece themselves, since there was no guide to take them to Gorjani. They told the Trudovaks that they had warned Angel HRISTOV and other members of the organization, but that they had refused to flee, hoping that they could put the blame for everything on the NIKOLOV brothers. The NIKOLOV brothers felt that it was now time to persuade Petur and Boris PELTEKOV, who were also under suspicion, to join the escape.
17. On 9 June Boris PELTEKOV brought food to Gola Mogila and stated that Petur PELTEKOV did not consider the matter too serious. Therefore, Stevan PELTEKOV decided to go for his father the same day, but he was unable to reach him because of the militia. The next day, 10 June, Boris went to Branipole and brought his brother back to Gola Mogila.
18. On 11 June the whole group, consisting of the three Trudovaks, the two NIKOLOV brothers, and the two PELTEKOV brothers, started toward Greece. They passed through the villages of Chpelare, Stoikits, and Sadlen. After they left Chpelare they did not know the terrain very well, and they lost much time because of this. On 19 June they crossed the border into Greece, and on 21 June they surrendered to Greek authorities.

19. The way in which Vasil LAZAROV handled the escape plan and tried to lead the Trudovaks to the Corjani instead of to Greece caused much bad feeling among the Trudovaks and the PELTEROV brothers against LAZAROV, and also against the NIKOLOV brothers who had the same plan. The Trudovaks wanted only to come to Greece. Because of a misunderstanding or deliberate deceit, LAZAROV was arrested and the NIKOLOV brothers were forced to flee to Greece. In addition, during his interrogation, LAZAROV betrayed not only the Trudovaks, but members of the underground organization as well. /// Any persons have been or will be imprisoned for this.
20. During the first days of their flight all of them were unanimous in blaming Vasil LAZAROV for everything. Later Stevan and the PELTEROV brothers changed their mind because they could not believe that LAZAROV, their relative by marriage, would betray them intentionally. This caused deep hatred between the PELTEROVs and the NIKOLOVS, while the Trudovaks remained neutral.
21. LAZAROV's record is not very favorable. In 1940 he was a legionnaire against the Communists. Later he joined a Communist youth organization, and finally became secretary for culture and propaganda. He is now serving in the Army as a sergeant. He allegedly was promised a promotion to officer grade if he would accomplish something useful for the Communist Party.
22. If LAZAROV was supposed to deliver the Trudovaks to the police, he certainly had ample opportunity to do so because of the way in which the Trudovaks wandered about. The manner in which the Plovdiv police handled the NIKOLOV brothers is questionable, since the police had not only suspicions but evidence against them. However, they did not help the police catch the deserters even though they could have done so easily. The Trudovaks and the PELTEROV brothers could hardly be suspected of any foul play.